

Title	SEND Policy
Cross References	External: • Send Code of Practice 0 to 25 years • Children and Families Act 2014 • Equality Act 2010 • Keeping Children Safe in Education Internal: • Students with Medical Needs Policy • Equality Policy • Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy • Teaching and Learning Policy • Curriculum and Assessment Policy • Behaviour and Allegations Policy • Online Safety Policy
Date	October 2026

1. Rationale

A significant proportion of students referred to Apricot Online have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or present with additional needs and barriers to learning. Many are referred because their needs have not been successfully met within a mainstream educational environment, or because anxiety, health, sensory, communication, social, emotional or other needs make attendance in a large physical setting difficult.

Apricot Online provides remote alternative education and aims to create a flexible, accessible and supportive learning environment in which students can re-engage with education, build confidence and make progress from their individual starting points.

This policy describes the key features of Apricot Online's SEND provision and should be understood within the context of Apricot's role as an alternative provision provider working in partnership with commissioning schools, local authorities, parents/carers and other professionals.

2. Principles

Apricot Online is committed to:

- providing high-quality teaching that is responsive to individual need;
- removing or reducing barriers to participation in online learning wherever reasonably possible;
- recognising strengths as well as needs;
- maintaining high but realistic expectations based on each student's starting point and circumstances;
- supporting students to develop confidence, independence and positive engagement with education;
- listening to students and involving them, according to age and understanding, in decisions about their learning;
- working collaboratively with parents/carers, commissioners, SENCOs and relevant professionals; and
- promoting equality of opportunity and making reasonable adjustments where required.

3. Apricot Online's Role

Apricot Online is frequently commissioned to provide education for a student who remains on roll with a school, or whose education is arranged by a local authority. The commissioning body therefore retains its statutory SEND responsibilities where applicable, including responsibility for statutory assessment, maintaining an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), annual review processes and securing provision specified within an EHCP.

Apricot Online's role is to deliver the agreed educational programme, implement relevant strategies and reasonable adjustments within our provision, monitor engagement and progress, identify emerging concerns and provide evidence and feedback to the commissioning body.

Apricot Online does not independently diagnose SEND. Where staff identify needs that may require further assessment or specialist input, concerns and supporting evidence will be shared promptly with the commissioning body and, where appropriate, parents/carers.

4. Information at Referral and Placement

Effective SEND support begins with good information. Apricot Online will seek relevant information from the commissioner before or at the start of a placement so that provision can be planned appropriately.

This may include:

- identified SEND and areas of need;
- the current EHCP, SEN Support information or other relevant plans where applicable;
- professional reports, assessments and recommended strategies;
- communication, sensory, physical, medical or accessibility needs;
- known anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) or barriers to engagement;
- current attainment, prior learning and relevant qualification information;
- reasonable adjustments already known to be effective;
- risk and safeguarding information relevant to learning; and
- the intended outcomes and objectives of the Apricot placement.

Where information is incomplete, Apricot will work with the commissioner and family to build an appropriate understanding of the student's needs while the placement develops.

5. Identification of Emerging Needs

Some students may display needs that have not previously been identified or fully understood.

Apricot staff may identify emerging concerns through:

- liaison with commissioners, parents/carers and other professionals;
- lesson observations and teacher feedback;
- patterns in attendance, engagement or communication;
- assessment and progress information;
- student voice;
- difficulties with literacy, numeracy, processing, organisation or memory;
- sensory, communication or interaction needs evident within online learning; and
- changes in behaviour, emotional regulation or ability to participate.

Staff should not assume that a difficulty is caused by SEND without considering other factors, including disrupted education, safeguarding, health, anxiety, trauma, language, attendance and prior learning.

Concerns will be shared with the appropriate Apricot lead and commissioning body so that further assessment, support or review can be considered.

6. Adaptive Teaching and Reasonable Adjustments

Teachers are expected to plan and deliver lessons in ways that enable students with different needs to participate and make progress. Adaptation should be purposeful and based on the individual student rather than a diagnosis alone.

Depending on need, adjustments may include:

- breaking instructions and tasks into smaller, manageable steps;
- allowing additional processing or response time;
- reducing unnecessary cognitive or visual load;
- using clear language, visual prompts, modelling and worked examples;
- providing resources in accessible formats;
- allowing different appropriate methods of responding or demonstrating understanding;
- using repetition, retrieval and overlearning where helpful;
- adjusting pace, lesson structure or task quantity;
- planned movement or regulation breaks;
- supporting executive-function skills such as organisation, sequencing and task initiation;
- using assistive technology or accessibility functions where available;
- adapting expectations around verbal contribution or camera use where this is appropriate to the student's needs and the agreed provision;
- using predictable routines and clear advance information to reduce anxiety; and
- working towards increased engagement gradually where a phased approach has been agreed.

Reasonable adjustments should support access to learning without unnecessarily lowering curriculum ambition or removing opportunities for progress.

7. Online Learning and SEND

Apricot's online model can remove some barriers associated with large physical environments, travel, sensory overload and school-based anxiety. It can also create different barriers, including screen fatigue, digital access difficulties, reduced visual communication and challenges with attention or processing.

Staff should therefore consider:

- whether the student can access and navigate the learning platform;
- whether font size, layout, colour, audio or visual presentation creates a barrier;
- whether lengthy screen-based activities need to be broken up;
- whether verbal instructions also need to be written or visually supported;
- whether the student needs additional time to process questions before responding;
- whether camera use increases anxiety or creates a barrier to engagement;
- whether a student's communication needs require an alternative way to participate;
- whether technical difficulties are being mistaken for disengagement; and
- whether attendance or engagement patterns suggest that the current programme requires review.

8. Timetables, Attendance and Engagement

Many students begin Apricot provision with a reduced or phased timetable. Where this has been agreed with the commissioner, progress should be considered against the student's individual starting point and placement objectives rather than against an assumption that every student will immediately access a full timetable.

Apricot will encourage regular attendance and punctuality while recognising that SEND, health, anxiety and other barriers may affect a student's ability to engage consistently.

Where attendance or engagement is declining, staff should seek to understand the barrier, share concerns with the commissioner and consider whether adaptations or a placement review are required.

9. Students with EHCPs

Where a student has an EHCP, Apricot will seek a current copy of the plan and relevant supporting information. Staff will use the information within the EHCP to inform teaching and reasonable adjustments within the scope of the commissioned provision.

Apricot may provide progress information, reports or professional input to the commissioning school/local authority for annual reviews, interim reviews or other statutory processes. Where invited and appropriate, Apricot staff may attend relevant review meetings.

Any concern that the commissioned provision is unable to meet an identified need safely or effectively will be raised with the commissioner promptly.

10. Planning, Monitoring and Review

Apricot will monitor students' learning, engagement and progress using information appropriate to the individual programme. This may include assessment, teacher feedback, attendance, engagement, work completed, confidence, independence and progress towards agreed placement objectives.

Targets should be meaningful, achievable and relevant to the student's starting point. Progress may be academic, but for some students important early indicators can include increased attendance, tolerating longer periods of learning, communicating with a teacher, attempting work, improved confidence or reduced anxiety around education.

Apricot will contribute to placement reviews and share relevant information with commissioners and parents/carers in accordance with agreed arrangements.

11. Working with Parents, Carers and Commissioners

Effective support depends on constructive partnership. Apricot will communicate with relevant parties to understand what is working, identify changes in need and support consistency where appropriate.

Parents/carers and commissioners are encouraged to share changes in circumstances, new professional advice or updated SEND information that may affect the student's provision.

Where there are differences of view about a student's needs or provision, Apricot will provide evidence from its own involvement and work collaboratively with the commissioner, while recognising the statutory responsibilities of the relevant school or local authority.

12. Working with External Professionals

Where appropriate and with relevant information-sharing arrangements, Apricot may work with professionals such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, CAMHS or other health professionals, social workers and specialist SEND services.

Advice relevant to the online educational programme will be shared with appropriate staff and incorporated into teaching where reasonably practicable and within the scope of the commissioned provision.

13. Support and Training for Staff

SEND training and professional development are available to staff and may be informed by the needs of the current student cohort, quality assurance, lesson observation and emerging practice.

Department Heads and senior staff support teachers to develop adaptive teaching and share effective practice. Where a student has specific or complex needs, relevant information and strategies should be made available to the staff teaching that student on a need-to-know basis.

14. Safeguarding and SEND

Children with SEND can face additional safeguarding challenges and may experience additional barriers to recognising or disclosing abuse. Behaviour, communication difficulties or changes in engagement must not automatically be attributed to SEND.

Staff must follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy where there is any concern about a student's welfare. In an online setting, staff should be particularly alert to changes in attendance, communication, behaviour and engagement where visual indicators may be limited.

15. Student Voice, Confidence and Independence

Apricot aims to help students develop confidence as learners and increase their ability to express their needs, preferences and views.

- Students should be given opportunities to say what helps or makes learning difficult.
- Success should be recognised in ways that are meaningful and appropriate to the individual.
- Feedback should support confidence while remaining honest and useful.
- Students should be encouraged to develop independence at a pace appropriate to their needs.
- Achievement should be understood broadly and in relation to the student's individual starting point and agreed outcomes.

16. Equality and Accessibility

Apricot Online will not discriminate unlawfully against a student because of disability or SEND. Reasonable adjustments will be considered in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the nature of the service being provided.

Where Apricot cannot reasonably provide an adjustment or where a student's needs fall outside the safe or effective scope of the commissioned online provision, this will be discussed with the commissioner so that appropriate alternative or additional support can be considered.

17. Complaints

Concerns about Apricot's SEND provision should normally be raised with the relevant Apricot contact in the first instance so that they can be addressed promptly. Formal complaints will be managed in accordance with Apricot Online's Complaints Policy.

Complaints relating to a commissioning body's statutory SEND decisions or responsibilities should be directed to that organisation through its relevant procedures.

18. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where changes to legislation, statutory guidance, Apricot's operating model or identified student needs make this necessary.

Authorised by: Jodie Phillips, Operations Director

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