

Birmingham's Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG)

Section One: Principles of Inclusive Education

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OAG Section One Principles

Co-produced through activities with local area partners and through a further 169 feedback responses from settings.

Working Together with Children and Families

High Quality Adaptive Teaching and Learning

Continuous Professional Learning & Development

Creating Enabling Environments

Transition Across Whole Life Course

The Team Around the Child & Family

Leading Inclusion in Schools and Settings

Graduated Approach

Equity and Diversity

Additional Needs

Section One - Expectations for Inclusive Practice in All Settings

Section One sets out the expectations for inclusive practice that all education settings in Birmingham are expected to have in place for all children and young people, including those with SEND.

The section is structured around 10 key principles that describe what strong, inclusive practice looks like across a setting.

Use Section One to:

- Reflect on what inclusive practice looks like across your setting
- Review how welcoming environments are created and maintained
- Consider how strengths, interests and development areas are known and supported
- Support teaching & learning, development and induction
- Guide professional conversations in meetings and reviews

Leaders and governors can use the 10 key principles to reflect on what is working well and identify next steps.

Working Together with Children and Families

Working together with children, young people and their families is central to inclusive practice. Schools build relationships rooted in trust, respect and shared understanding so that decisions are made with children and families rather than delivered to them. Children and families are listened to, their expertise is valued equally, and their experiences inform planning, review and delivery. When genuine partnership is embedded in everyday practice, decision-making becomes more open and honest, support is more personalised, and children & families feel included and empowered to participate.

Expectations:

- Leaders promote a culture where children, young people and families are treated as equal partners, and relationships are built on trust, empathy and shared goals.
- Communication with families is clear, timely and accessible, using plain English and approaches that are culturally responsive and inclusive.
- Children and families have regular, meaningful opportunities to share their views in ways that feel safe and appropriate to their age and communication preferences.
- The school works in partnership with families to understand strengths and needs, anticipate barriers and agree next steps in support and planning.
- Co-production is embedded in everyday practice so that children's and families' views inform plans, reviews and decision-making, not only formal meetings.
- Leaders review and strengthen partnerships by gathering feedback from children and families and acting on what they hear.
- Staff know how to signpost families to the right local information and support, including the Local Offer, and do so consistently.

Signposts and Support:

- [OAG Parent Carer Guides](#) - One-page summaries co-produced with parents explaining each OAG principle in clear, accessible language.
- [Children and Young People's Views Guidance](#) - Guidance on gathering, understanding and using pupil views to inform planning and review.
- [Capturing the Views of Children and Young People](#) - A person-centred toolkit offering practical tools and strategic approaches for embedding views.
- [Person-Centred Thinking Tools](#) - Tools such as One-Page Profiles and What's Working/Not Working to help CYP express what matters to them.
- [Parental Partnership Guide](#) - Practical guidance on building open, respectful and solution-focused relationships with families.
- [Person-Centred Review Facilitator Training](#) - 2-day training enabling staff to lead reviews and meetings centred around the child or young person.
- [Be Empowered Workshops](#) - Parent-carer-led workshops supporting families to understand processes, rights and how to work in partnership with settings.
- [Working Together to Improve Engagement and Participation](#) - Co-produced guidance outlining what effective, meaningful engagement with families looks like.
- [SEND Co-production Award Scheme](#), and [Training](#) - City-wide framework & charter, training and recognition scheme for strengthening co-production practice.
- [Birmingham Parent Carer Forum](#) - City-wide parent-carer network offering support, information and partnership opportunities.
- [Family Hubs & community networks](#) - Local spaces offering support, information and activities for families.

High Quality Adaptive Teaching and Learning

High Quality Adaptive Teaching and Learning is the foundation of success and engagement for all children and young people. It is rooted in the belief that every learner can make progress when teaching is responsive, well-planned and based on a strong understanding of need. Assessment and professional judgement is used to remove barriers, adapt approaches and ensure every learner can access and participate in the curriculum. Drawing on the best available evidence, high quality adaptive teaching and learning combines challenge and support so that children develop confidence, independence and a sense of belonging in the classroom. Adaptive teaching ensures that every child is included, has their needs met and makes progress in their learning.

Expectations:

- Leaders establish a consistent approach to high quality adaptive teaching so that everyone understands the most effective inclusion strategy begins with everyday high-quality inclusive teaching, which has most benefit for the those who find learning hardest and reduces the need for individual adaptations.
- Ongoing professional development strengthens staff knowledge, confidence and skill in delivering adaptive, evidence-informed teaching.
- Teachers use regular, proportionate assessment to understand strengths and barriers, and adapt teaching so that all children and young people can access the curriculum.
- Teaching promotes progress, independence and resilience, supporting both academic learning and personal development.
- Staff work with families and external professionals to personalise support and respond to emerging needs.
- Classrooms promote safety, respect and positive relationships, enabling children and young people to engage confidently and take purposeful risks in their learning.
- Leaders evaluate the effectiveness of high quality adaptive teaching and use this to inform school improvement and staff development.

Signposts and Support:

- [EEF "5-a-Day" high-quality teaching for pupils with SEND Guidance](#) - Evidence-informed daily teaching principles that support adaptive, inclusive classroom practice for all.
- [Teacher Handbook: SEND](#) - Practical guidance to understand learners and remove barriers to learning from Whole School SEND and Nasen.
- [Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants](#) - Evidence-based guidance that supports adaptive teaching by helping schools deploy teaching assistants effectively and build pupils' independence through structured professional development.
- [Birmingham SEN Toolkits](#) - Guidance that supports adaptive teaching through identifying gaps in learning, tracking small-step progress and informing planning for pupils working below age-related expectations.
- [AET Progression Framework](#) - A flexible assessment tool that supports adaptive teaching by helping staff identify learning priorities, set clear intentions and track progress in areas closely related to autism differences.
- [Assistive Technology - Call Scotland Website](#) - Information about get the most from technology to access the curriculum.

Graduated Approach

The graduated approach enables schools to respond to every child's strengths and needs through a continuous cycle of 'Assess-Plan-Do-Review'. Children, young people and their families are central to this process so that decisions are informed by what matters most to them. This enables schools to build a clear and evolving understanding of each learner's needs, reviewing what is working and adapting support as circumstances change. By connecting high-quality teaching, targeted support and specialist guidance when required, the graduated approach promotes progress, belonging and equitable access to learning for all.

Expectations:

- The Assess-Plan-Do-Review cycle is understood by all staff and embedded in classroom practice and school systems.
- Assessment and review are used proportionately to understand needs, inform planning and ensure support leads to meaningful progress.
- Children, young people and their families are involved at every stage so that decisions reflect what matters most to them.
- Support plans are personalised, strengths-based and co-produced, identifying barriers to learning and setting clear, achievable outcomes.
- Staff draw on a graduated range of universal and targeted strategies to meet individual needs.
- Leaders make sure pupils receive effective support, consult with external specialists and implement their advice as necessary, and ensure that appropriate reasonable adjustments are made in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the SEND Code of Practice.
- Schools use learning from individual cases to strengthen practice over time and reduce barriers earlier for other children and young people.

Signposts and Support:

- Framework for Intervention (Revised) – Toolkit to help school-based teams to plan, record and evidence universal, targeted and specialist support for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Provision Mapping Tools – Tools that support schools to plan, monitor and review provision across the Assess-Plan-Do-Review cycle, ensuring equity and impact.
- MAP Meetings – Multi-agency planning meetings that prioritise, coordinate and review support for children and young people.
- [SEND Advisory & Inclusion Service \(SAIS\)](#) – Professional advice, joint planning & training to support assessment, intervention and review within the graduated approach.
- [Speech and Language Therapy \(NHS\)](#) – assessment, advice and intervention for speech, language and communication needs. Access is typically through school link therapists or referral pathways
- [Paediatric Occupational Therapy Website](#) – Universal advice and support, including an advice line service, which supports with giving early help to families and professionals working with the child, as well as free downloadable resource packs and information

Leading Inclusion in Schools

Inclusive leadership sets the vision and tone for a culture where everyone feels they belong. School leaders work with staff, children, families and partners to create a shared commitment to equity, participation and high expectations for all. They ensure that policies, systems and decision-making reflect inclusive values and strengthen everyday practice. When leaders model inclusive behaviours and enable staff to do the same, the whole school community benefits. Children and young people are known, valued and supported to achieve their best; families feel respected and included; and staff feel trusted, confident and able to contribute to a positive and inclusive school culture.

Expectations:

- The SENCo has sufficient authority, protected leadership time and strategic influence to shape decision-making and improve provision across the school.
- Leaders model inclusive behaviours and promote staff wellbeing, creating a culture where staff feel valued, confident and equipped to meet diverse range of barriers to learning and/or well-being, including those specific to their community and the school's context.
- Leaders work with families and professionals to identify barriers, monitor provision and take coordinated action to strengthen inclusion.
- Leaders contribute to the local area partnership by sharing expertise, aligning with city-wide priorities and strengthening inclusive practice across the wider system.
- Inclusion is embedded in the school's vision, policies and improvement plans, with policies co-produced and regularly reviewed to reflect shared values.
- The school's published SEN information report, is easily accessible and accurately describes the school's provision and support for pupils with SEND.
- Leaders make sure that any alternative provision the school uses is suitable and safe, and the decisions to place pupils in it are made in pupils' best interests.
- SEND and inclusion are integral to staff and leadership discussions, informing everyday practice, school improvement and whole-school decision-making.
- The SEND Link governor holds leaders to account appropriately and effectively for the school's SEND support and provision.

Signposts & Resources:

- [SEND Code of Practice \(2015\)](#) - Statutory guidance on the special educational needs and disability (SEND) system for children and young people aged 0 to 25.
- [EEF Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools](#) - Whole-school strategic guidance offering five evidence-informed recommendations for inclusive leadership
- [Every Leader a Leader of SEND Tool](#) - A tool for leaders to explore how inclusion is communicated through policies, in practice and experienced by stakeholders.
- [The Head Teacher Handbook: SEND](#) - Practical guidance to remove barriers and strengthen inclusive teaching from Nasen and Whole School SEND.
- [Whole School SEND Review Guide](#) - A guide for SENCOs and other senior leaders to consider how the whole school functions for pupils with SEND.
- [Ofsted School Inspection Toolkit](#) - Guidance for inspectors and schools on inspecting maintained schools and academies in England.
- [NPQ SENCO, NPQH and other NPQ Frameworks](#) - National professional qualifications supporting strategic leadership of SEND and whole-school improvement.
- [SEND Link Governor Training](#) - Training that supports governors and trustees to understand their role in overseeing SEND provision in schools.
- [Birmingham SEND & Inclusion Strategies](#) - City-wide strategies setting the vision for SEND & inclusion.

Creating Enabling Environments

An enabling environment helps every child and young person feel welcome, safe and ready to learn. It reflects a school culture where relationships, routines and spaces are designed to reduce anxiety, anticipate barriers and support participation. These environments recognise sensory, physical, communication and emotional needs and adapt proactively with input from children, families and professionals. When environments are inclusive by design and reviewed regularly, children feel a stronger sense of belonging, are better able to regulate and engage, and are supported to thrive across the school day.

Expectations:

- Leaders create an inclusive ethos and culture where every child and young person feels welcome, valued and ready to learn within the school community.
- Staff receive training to understand sensory, communication and emotional differences, and to adapt the physical and social environment accordingly.
- Staff make reasonable adjustments and adaptations when considering pupils' needs, challenges and barriers.
- Learning and social spaces are organised to reduce barriers, support accessibility and promote positive interaction, connection and belonging.
- The environment design recognises and supports diverse communication needs, using visuals, alternative communication methods and accessible resources.
- Adjustments and adaptations to the environment and policies are made in ways that support children and young people to access education.
- Adaptations are reviewed regularly with children, families and relevant professionals to ensure settings remain enabling and inclusive.
- Schools avoid practices that may stigmatise or isolate learners, and design routines and responses that uphold dignity, safety and a strong sense of belonging.

Helpful Approaches & Signposts:

- [Classroom Checklist](#) - Autism Education Trust Resource
- [Design Principles for schools](#): Autism Education Trust Resource
- [C-SENSE Environment Audits](#) - A FREE checklist that can be used to evaluate the mainstream school environment used by children with sensory processing differences
- [Birmingham Local Offer](#) - Communication-Friendly and Sensory Processing audits
- [Trauma Informed Multi-Agency Working Resource Pack](#) - Pages 21 and 22 provide visual ideas for creating a regulating environment
- [Equality Act 2010](#) - Government legislation making provisions that reduce inequalities
- Communication-friendly environment tools e.g. symbol-supported resources, AAC guidance and visual communication _ e.g. [Widgit Symbols](#)

Transition Across Whole Life Course

Transitions are significant moments in a child or young person's educational journey, whether moving into a new setting, changing year groups or preparing for the next phase of education. Effective transition support is planned, relational and informed by the needs and experiences of the individual. Schools work closely with children, families and other professionals to share information, reduce uncertainty and build confidence. Transitions are approached proactively so that support is in place early, expectations are clear and every learner feels prepared and welcomed into their new environment. When transitions are well supported, children and young people settle more quickly, sustain relationships, and are better able to engage and thrive.

Expectations:

- Leaders support and communicate clear, consistent processes that support successful transitions at every stage, with children, families and other settings involved throughout.
- Transitions are planned across the whole life course – within the school day, between classes and year groups, between settings and phases, and into post-16 pathways – so that children experience a continuous and coherent journey.
- Communication with children, families and receiving settings is clear, timely and accessible, with opportunities to visit new environments and meet key staff.
- Information, records and relevant documents are transferred promptly and securely to support smooth handover.
- Schools identify early any children and young people who may need enhanced transition support and plan this with them and their families.
- Person-centred approaches help children and families share what matters to them and shape their transition plans so they feel prepared, informed and heard.
- Where support beyond universal provision is needed, transition planning follows the Graduated Approach, with clear outcomes, actions and responsibilities.
- Transition handovers are joined-up and multi-agency, with education, health, social care and other partners working together to coordinate information, plans and support.

Helpful Approaches & Signposts: (*To see examples of what this looks like in practice, see ['Additional Resources'](#) downloadable section online.)

- Visual supports such as maps, virtual tours, timetables, social stories.
- Transition events for CYP & families e.g. open evenings, welcome meetings, induction days, workshops, stay & plays, city-wide transition days.
- Robust One Page Profiles/Passports updated with CYP, families and staff, shared with new setting
- Buddy system or opportunities for previous CYP to meet and speak with current cohorts.
- Early communication with new setting identifying vulnerable CYP and sharing of SEND and medical information to enable new setting to be proactive with relevant training.
- Individual person-centred transition meetings/ SEND reviews with new school staff and families in attendance.
- Additional bespoke transition support involving CYP and families with key staff in new settings.
- SEND specific parent carer workshops/ coffee mornings focusing on transition.
- Signpost and advertise admission information, open events, induction and welcome events to families.

Continuous Professional Learning and Development

Ongoing professional learning ensures all staff feel confident, knowledgeable and empowered to support children and young people with diverse needs. Effective CPD is part of a culture of continuous improvement, shaped by local context, staff feedback and the needs of children and young people. It prioritises practical, evidence-informed learning that strengthens classroom practice and builds professional confidence. When leaders invest in staff development and communicate these priorities clearly, it enhances the quality of provision, supports staff wellbeing and contributes to a positive and inclusive school culture.

Expectations:

- All staff understand how their role contributes to children and young people feeling safe, included, confident and able to learn.
- Ongoing SEND-focused CPD is planned for all staff and is tailored to the needs of the cohort, setting and local community, complementing whole-school priorities.
- Early Career Teachers and new staff receive SEND-specific training as part of their induction.
- Staff contribute to their own professional learning through co-designed processes that recognise their strengths, interests and development needs.
- Leaders identify learning and development needs through a range of approaches and provide targeted training, evaluating its impact on practice and outcomes.
- Professional learning promotes staff wellbeing, confidence and a positive culture of support.
- Schools communicate key CPD priorities to families to build shared understanding of how staff are developing their SEND practice.
- Professional learning draws on expertise from Local Authority SEND Services, therapy teams, external partners and locality networks such as SENCO Consortia.

Helpful Approaches & Signposts:

- [Using the OAG Training Slides](#) - Three sections. A set to share with SLT, a set for Parents and a set to introduce the OAG Section Two to teachers and support staff.
- [SENCO Noticeboard](#) - Regular updates containing valuable information for SENCOs and SEND Leads.
- [SENCO Induction Training](#) - Support to SENCOs new in post; complements the 'Aspiring SENCo' programme and the NPQ SENCo
- [SEND Occupational Therapy Training Offer](#) - Training to help improve confidence in daily activities, build independence and support sensory regulation.
- [Language, Learning and Strategic Support Team \(LLSS\) Training Offer](#) - Courses for education professionals to help support children with learning and language needs.
- [Communication and Autism Team Training Offer](#) - Training, practical tools, and a wealth of free resources to better support autistic children.
- [Physical Support Team Training Offer](#) - Courses for professionals to help support children with physical difficulties.
- [Nasen Whole School SEND Online SEND CPD Units](#) - Exploring some of the most common barriers in learning environments.
- [Autism Education Trust \(AET\) Training -The Bell Foundation Guidance](#) - Guidance focuses on different aspects of supporting EAL learners.
- [Birmingham Local Offer Website](#) - CPD and training from the Local Area Partnership - e.g. Educational Psychology, Health, SEND Therapy Teams, Social Care training offers.
- [WalkThrus](#) - System for professional development.

Equity and Diversity

Equity and diversity are essential to creating a school where every child feels represented, respected and able to succeed. Equality means offering everyone the same, whereas equity means recognising that children may need different support to achieve fair outcomes. Diversity means valuing the full range of identities, languages and experiences within the community. Schools anticipate and remove barriers before they limit participation and ensure that policies, environments and curriculum choices reflect the community they serve. When equity and diversity are embedded in everyday practice, children feel seen and valued, and all have equal access to opportunities to learn, participate and feel included.

Expectations:

- Equity, diversity and inclusion are reflected in the school's ethos, policies and everyday practice, with clear action to address racism, discrimination and bias.
- Children, young people, families and staff are treated with dignity and respect, and diversity is recognised and celebrated across school life.
- Reasonable adjustments are planned proactively to remove barriers to participation and learning and are reviewed to ensure they meet individual needs.
- Everyone has equal access to and participates in relevant extra-curricular activities, high-quality careers education opportunities and personal development opportunities.
- Communication with families is inclusive and accessible, using translated materials, interpreters and approaches that reflect the languages spoken in the community.
- The school's accessibility plan meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, is implemented effectively and is reviewed regularly.
- Curriculum design represents community diversity, uses resources that reflect a wide range of identities and experiences, and actively challenges stereotypes and stigma.
- Parent carers' views are gathered and used to inform decisions about provision, adjustments and school practice, with clear processes for acting on feedback.
- Leaders work with education, health, social care and community partners to identify and remove barriers so that support is coordinated and inclusive.

Helpful Approaches & Signposts:

- [Accessibility Planning Toolkit](#) - A PDNet toolkit to effectively evaluate and plan improvements to access for people, particularly those with a physical disability.
- [Equality Act 2010](#) - Part 6 (Education) statutory duties relating to equality and diversity.
- [Raising Awareness of Physical Disabilities Training](#) - Free online training modules to develop awareness of physical disabilities and the impact this can have on learning.
- [NDCS \(deaf awareness and support\)](#), [RNIB \(vision impairment\)](#) and [Guide Dogs \(mobility and access support\)](#) - Specialist organisations and resources
- Curriculum & resources - inclusive texts and materials
- [Information for Professionals](#) - Information from Birmingham Children's Trust

The Team Around the Child and Family

Working as a co-ordinated team around the child and family ensures that support is joined-up, timely and centred on the needs of the whole child. Schools collaborate with families, staff and professionals across education, health, social care and community services to build a shared understanding and agree clear actions. This partnership approach promotes consistent communication, shared responsibility and early intervention. When the team around the child works well, families feel included and informed, and children receive support that is joined-up, consistent and focused on their whole needs, strengthening their wellbeing, progress and sense of belonging.

Expectations:

- Communication between all partners is clear, timely and accessible, with agreed processes for sharing information and updates.
- Information sharing is transparent and family-centred, with consent, confidentiality and data protection requirements understood and followed.
- Families know how and why information is shared, who is involved and what the next steps will be.
- Partners use a common, strengths-based language to build a shared understanding of the child or young person.
- The school participates fully in Early Help, Team Around the Family and Multi-Agency Planning meetings, including preparation, review and follow-up.
- Meetings are inclusive and accessible, with interpreters, alternative formats and reasonable adjustments provided where needed.
- Leaders provide clear oversight of multi-agency work, ensuring roles, responsibilities and actions are agreed, followed up and monitored.
- Joint planning focuses on the strengths, needs and aspirations of the child and family, ensuring support is coordinated and not duplicated.

Helpful Approaches & Signposts:

- [Early Help](#) - Early Help enables timely, proactive support around the child and family, helping partners respond early and work together before needs escalate.
- [Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) - BSCP oversees how organisations work together to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children.
- [School Attendance](#) - advice and resources to assist with improving attendance.
- **Multi-agency planning meetings** - MAPMs are offered on a regular basis. These meetings are used to discuss key strategic actions and individual pupil cases.
- [NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board \(ICB\)](#) - NHS Birmingham & Solihull ICB is part of the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System.
- [Change for Children and Young People: 2023-2028](#) - A five-year Children and Young People's Plan from Birmingham Children and Young People's Partnership.

Additional Needs

Children and families may face additional needs that affect wellbeing, participation or engagement in learning, even when these are not special educational needs. These may relate to health, housing, family circumstance, emotional wellbeing, caring responsibilities or experiences linked to migration, trauma or linguistic background. Understanding these contextual factors helps schools create a culture where every child feels safe, included and ready to learn.

Expectations:

- Staff understand the diverse additional needs within its community, informed by local context, cultural awareness and the views of children, young people and families.
- Leaders prioritise strong, trusting relationships with children, young people and families so that emerging needs are identified early and barriers are reduced.
- Staff receive training to recognise and respond to additional needs, including mental health, adverse childhood experiences, caring responsibilities, disadvantage and experiences linked to migration or trauma.
- Support for learners who use English as an Additional Language is evidence-informed and includes structured opportunities for language and vocabulary development.
- Early Help, safeguarding and multi-agency processes are embedded within school systems so that children are kept safe and families receive early coordinated support.
- Policies, decision-making and reviews reflect the evolving needs of the community and ensure that support is equitable, anticipatory and joined-up.
- Leaders use Pupil Premium and other contextual funding strategically to remove barriers, strengthen engagement and support wellbeing.

Helpful Approaches & Signposts:

[The Bell Foundation](#) - A range of CPD and free resources to support EAL learners in the mainstream school.

[Keeping Children Safe in Education \(KCSIE\)](#) - Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment.

[Birmingham Children's Trust](#) - Partnership resources

[Birmingham's Local Offer Website](#) - Find out about our Local Area Partnership across Education, Health & Social Care on the Local Offer website.

[NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board \(ICB\)](#) - NHS Birmingham & Solihull ICB is part of the area's Integrated Care System.

[Pupil premium: overview](#) - GOV.UK , [Using pupil premium guidance for school leaders](#) and [The EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium | EEF](#) - guidance on spending pupil premium.

[Service pupil premium \(SPP\)](#) - GOV.UK - Service Pupils Premium guidance

[Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) - BSCP oversees how organisations work together to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children.

[Early Help](#) - Early Help enables timely, proactive support around the child and family, helping partners respond early and work together before needs escalate.

[City of Sanctuary](#) and [Support for Asylum Seekers](#) - Information about Birmingham as a City of Sanctuary, where we welcome and support people seeking asylum.

[Support for families and friends of prisoners](#) - Support and advice about how to support children with a relative in prison.