MERTON COURT SCHOOL

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES POLICY

To be reviewed October 2027 by: SENDCo, Headmaster and LT	
Signed by the Headmaster/ Proprietor:	
Shared with the staff on:	14/10/26
Put on Website:	14/10/26

This policy complies with:

- SEND and Disabilities Code of Practice 0-25 (2015)
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations (2014)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Equality Act (2010)
- KCSIE (Sept 2026)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2026)

Applies to:

- whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Related Documents:

- Assessment Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- More Able Policy
- English as an Additional Language Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- EYFS Policy
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Merton Court School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all pupils fulfil their potential.

Availability

This policy is made available to parents, prospective parents and staff in the following ways: via the school website, the staff shared drive and also on request a copy may be obtained from the School Office.

Monitoring and Review:

This policy will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Headmaster/ Proprietor who will undertake an annual review of this policy and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date shown, or earlier if changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Introduction: Policy Overview

As an independent school Merton Court School does not have a statutory obligation to follow the SEND Code of Practice (2015) beyond the EYFS. The School follows the Code closely, as a model of good practice, and adheres to the philosophy underlying the Equality Act, 2010.

This policy sets out the procedures for ensuring that children identified with SEND have their needs addressed in order to access our curriculum, reach their potential, and participate in the wider life of the School.

We are determined to do all that is reasonable to meet the needs of our children and are committed to achieving positive outcomes. We believe that having high expectations of all children is paramount to their academic achievement. We endeavour to equip our children with the crucial life skills of time-management, independence, adaptability, critical thinking and problem solving, as well as resilience and self-esteem. Together with an understanding that everything worthwhile requires commitment, time and effort, these skills will help them to make positive contributions in the wider community and beyond.

Although we endeavour to make reasonable provision for children identified with SEND, it may not always be possible to do so within the School's resources. Where a child is identified with SEND, which in the professional judgement of the Headmaster requires a level of support which the school cannot reasonably be expected to provide, manage or arrange, the school may require parents, after appropriate consultation, to withdraw their child. Fees in lieu of notice will not be chargeable in these circumstances.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of this policy are to:

- ensure that the special educational needs of children are identified, assessed and provided for, where reasonably possible;
- make clear the expectations of all partners in the process;
- define the roles and responsibilities of staff in providing for children's special educational needs and the overall management of SEND provision within the school;
- enable all children to have the opportunity to full access of the school curriculum;
- ensure that parents are able to play their part in supporting their child's education;
- ensure that our children have a voice in this process.
- create a safe environment that meets the special educational needs of each child.

In order to meet these aims, our objectives are:

- ensure children with special educational needs are identified as early as possible;
- assess the child to identify specific areas of difficulty and recommend external assessments;
- make all reasonable accommodations and adjustments;
- make all peripatetic staff aware of the child's needs so they are able to meet those needs within the school setting;
- keep clear children's records including information relating to their individual needs, interventions and outcomes;
- ensure staff differentiate in delivery of the curriculum to meet children's needs within the classroom;
- ensure no child with SEND is discriminated against on the basis of their disability;
- work in partnership with parents, guardians and the child themselves, in providing appropriate support and advice;
- liaise with external agencies as necessary (eg Occupational Therapists, Speech & Language Therapists etc)

What are Special and Additional Educational Needs and Disabilities?

The Equality Act 2010 provides that a disability is a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities. This definition includes sensory impairments affecting sight and hearing, as well as long term health issues. Learning difficulties such as dyslexia are also included within the scope of this Act.

SEND can be categorised into needs and/or disabilities affecting:

- Communication and interaction, including those with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).
- Cognition and learning.
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- Sensory and/or physical needs.

Children have special educational needs if they have a *learning difficulty* which calls for *special educational provision* to be made for them.

Children have a *learning difficulty* if they:

- have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age; or
- have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of the kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools (SEND CoP, 2015, p.16)

Special educational provision means provision which is additional to or otherwise different from, the provision made generally available for children of their age, for example, the wide range of teaching strategies and resources available under our commitment to 'quality first' teaching.

Within Merton Court School, children who may require additional support includes:

- children with specific learning differences, such as mild dyslexia or dyspraxia;
- children with mild emotional or behavioural difficulties;
- children with a visual or hearing impairment;
- children with social communication needs;
- children with specific medical conditions.

Additional educational needs are interpreted in this setting as those arising when a child has, for reasons other than a learning difficulty, fallen behind his or her peers and needs short term support to boost their rate of progress, enabling them to catch up. At Merton Court School our priority is to support children so that they can keep up with the rigorous pace of learning and make good progress. This may also include progress in other areas than attainment, for example, social communication needs.

Children must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or medium of communication they use at home is different from the language in which they will be taught.

The School has a separate policy for children with English as an Additional Language and More Able Children.

Safeguarding

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) face extra safeguarding challenges and additional barriers may exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. These include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
- that children may be more prone to peer group isolation, child-on-child abuse or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children;
- that children with SEND or certain medical conditions may be disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs;
- that children may have communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo)

The Headmaster/Proprietor has appointed a co-ordinator for special educational needs known as a Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo). The current SENDCo is Mrs Charlotte Jahaj. Dr Karen Faulds is SEND Consultant for our School. The SENDCo and SEND Consultant work alongside a Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) group in place to help oversee the needs of children throughout the whole school. It is the responsibility of the SENDCo to co-ordinate this group, as well as the operation of the Special Educational Needs Policy.

SEND Leaders

At Merton Court School, the SEND group consists of the SENDCo, Assistant Head and Key Stage Leaders. The group forms part of the Core Team and reports at Core Team meetings. The role of the SEND group will involve:

- overseeing the records of all children with special educational needs;
- maintaining the school's SEND list;
- liaising with and advising fellow staff;
- liaising with parents of children with special educational needs;
- working with external agencies, professionals and specialist tutors as appropriate;
- monitoring School Support Plans (SSPs) as and when required;
- supporting staff in developing strategies to meet effectively the learning needs of all children at Merton Court School.

Inclusion and SEND in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

In the EYFS at Merton Court School we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their potential by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning. In the EYFS, children's skills and levels of attainment are assessed on entry (baseline), and through a process of continuous assessment, children's development is monitored. If children have previously attended a different setting, we will request a written report or record of transfer from them. We set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception Year.

At Merton Court School we are aware that some children may not progress at the expected rate. We identify those children who do not meet these developmental milestones through a range of methods, including information from parents, information and records from previous settings or outside agencies, on-going teacher observations, the Foundation Stage Profile and termly school reports. Assessment and teaching strategies within the EYFS are a good fit with the 'assess, plan, do, review' system advocated for working with children with SEN, and our on-going system of observation, tracking and record keeping enables us to plan appropriate next steps for all children.

Please refer to our Early Years Foundation Stage Policy for examples of strategies which may be implemented by class teachers.

Admission Arrangements

The School welcomes all children who can make the most of the opportunities offered and can flourish in its caring environment. Our Admissions Policy aims to eliminate from the admissions process, as far as possible, any substantial disadvantages which may be encountered by applicants with disabilities.

The School will treat every application from a child with SEND in a fair and open minded way. However, School will assess all children for admission on the basis of its standard admission criteria.

The School endeavours to ensure that it is able to support fully the needs of all prospective children. Parents of children with SEND are advised to discuss their child's requirements with the school before the application for a place is considered. Parents are asked to provide copies of medical reports, educational psychologist reports, and any other relevant information. Before an offer of a place is made the School will assess whether it is able to adequately cater for and meet any SEN and disabilities through discussion and meeting with parents, consideration of any professional reports, references from previous schools/settings and assessment of the child at a taster day. This period may be extended if more time is required to determine whether we could meet a prospective pupil's needs with our resources. Our Admissions team and SENDCo will liaise with parents accordingly.

An offer of a place may not be made if the School determines, following consultation with parents, that they are unable to meet and provide for a child's needs. The School will always consider its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Identification of Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

It is vitally important that special or additional educational needs are identified at an early stage so that appropriate interventions, making best use of available resources, can be planned and implemented. We recognise that a range of other factors may also impact on a child's progress and attainment, but which are not special educational needs, and form teachers are alert to identify and take steps to minimise the impact of these factors.

A robust system of progress monitoring across the school takes place on a termly basis. This identifies children who are not making expected progress and may include development of skills in other domains, such as social skills. This system includes a rigorous cycle of lesson observation, learning walks, work scrutiny, monitoring of planning and lesson evaluation, and staff training. Regular key stage continuum meetings are held, where progress of individual children, interventions and strategies needed to move children on in their learning are discussed.

The SENDCo holds termly surgeries with form teachers to discuss current needs, concerns and strategies to promote good progress. Identification of SEND can be:

- on entry when specific needs are identified and recorded as part of the entrance/transition process;
- by staff recognition of a child whom they perceive as having difficulties or specific needs in their particular curriculum area;
- by staff referring a child who is experiencing emotional/behavioural problems;
- through discussion with external professionals, for example doctors or counsellors;
- through concerns expressed by parents recorded on CPOMS;

The triggers for intervention will be concerns about individual children who make little or no progress, or are working substantially below levels expected for their age.

Access to the Curriculum

All children have an entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum, which is differentiated to enable them to understand the relevance and purpose of learning activities and experience levels of understanding and rates of progress that bring about feelings of success and achievement. We support children in a manner that acknowledges their entitlement to share the same learning experiences that their peers enjoy.

Teachers use a range of strategies to meet children's special educational needs. Lessons have clear objectives, and formative assessment is used to inform the next stage of learning.

Provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

- form teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress of every child in their class;
- form teachers ensure that all children are included within the whole curriculum and have equal opportunities;
- form teachers identify children's individual needs as early as possible;
- form teachers differentiate everyday activities to ensure that all children make progress at an appropriate level. Differentiation is noted in planning documents, specific targets set, and parents are involved and consulted so that they are aware of their child's targets, and equipped with useful suggestions for home support;
- form teachers monitor and review the progress of low achieving children. If after a reasonable time has been given to allow selected strategies to work, differentiation does not appear to be sufficient, teachers complete an *Identification of Need* form and arrange a SENDCo Surgery Meeting to discuss next steps. Actions and progress will be reviewed and next steps agreed;
- A graduated approach to school support ensures that resources are used to best effect (assess → plan → do → review). This means that all resources available to the form teacher by adapting strategies are tried, monitored and reviewed before concerns are escalated;
- Where a concern is raised requiring provision beyond that available in the classroom, the child's name will be entered on the SEND list, together with a brief outline of planned action, within the resources stated on the provision map;
- The *Identification of Need* form summarises the difficulty, what has already been tried, and the agreed action plan, and acts as an interim target plan, to bridge the gap between everyday differentiation, where targets are noted in planning, and *School Support Plans;*
- form teachers seek parents' permission before additional diagnostic assessments are administered;
- A wide range of diagnostic assessments are available in school to pinpoint specific difficulties and target interventions.
- If the plan of action agreed between the form teacher, parents and SENDCo does not result in satisfactory progress, and resources other than those available within the classroom are required, a meeting will be held between the teacher, SENDCo, parents and Key Stage Leader to formulate a School Support Plan. Key Stage Leaders ensure that action is consistent throughout the school, and may allocate additional resources;

- If, after provision of additional resources, progress remains unsatisfactory, parents are involved in decisions to refer the child to outside agencies for further assessment and/or support;
- In addition to the SEND register, Merton Court keeps a Monitoring List. This list includes children with diagnoses who do not require more than reasonable adjustments to be successful at school. It also includes children who may be preforming under age-related expectations to ensure their progress is carefully monitored and that additional support can be provided in a timely manner, if necessary. Both the SEND register and Monitoring List are reviewed regularly, and children may move between the two, or removed from the lists altogether if no additional support/monitoring is required.

School Support Plan

A child receiving extra support beyond classroom differentiation and resources available to the form teacher who will have a SSP (Target Sheet) outlining the personal targets they are working towards. SSPs are written in collaboration with children and parents and reviewed each term. SSPs require a small-step approach, and generally focus on three or four individual targets, specifying how these targets will be worked on, and with whom. The SSP is distributed to the teachers involved in the child's learning, and parents of the child, as soon as they are written and have been agreed by all parties. Care will be taken to involve the child when composing the documents, to use precise terminology, particularly in relation to success criteria, to clearly indicate which teachers and subjects will be involved, and to link the targets and success criteria with other assessment and recording procedures in school.

At Merton Court School SSPs:

- are based on sound knowledge of the child;
- take account of child's strengths and interests;
- state realistic time scales;
- are linked to resources in school;
- involve parents at setting and review stages.

Progress is closely monitored and reviewed termly. Children with an SSP will have their progress tracked so that reords are available against which outcomes may be evaluated. When sufficient progress is achieved, SSPs will be discontinued.

Entitlements to Additional Time and /or Support in External Assessments

Children who have been identified as having a learning difficulty may be entitled to support, such as additional time or modified provision, to complete external assessments. Parents should speak with their child's class teacher and SENDCo

about any application for additional time/support as soon as reasonably practicable. The SENDCo will process applications for appropriate examination access.

Accessibility Plan

A copy of the School's Accessibility Plans are available to view on the school website and can be provided upon request via the School Office. This Plan sets out the School's plan to increase the extent to which children with disabilities can participate in the School's curriculum; improve the physical environment of the School for the purpose of increasing the extent to which all children are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the School, and improve the delivery to children with a disability from information which is readily accessible to children who do not have a disability.

Provision Mapping

Each term a provision map showing the provision of support currently available within the School is drawn up. Interventions are written up for any additional provision that takes place within the year group. These outline details of the provision that is currently available. Teachers monitor the child's progress and make note of any improvements made, or whether the provision should continue.

Timetabling

The amount and type of support offered to a child is dependent on need. Merton Court School believes that children should not be withdrawn from lessons unless it is necessary to do so. Children with additional needs should spend as much time as possible in the classroom with the most effective teachers, and removal from class should be avoided wherever possible. All subjects are important to the child's development and every child is entitled to a broad and balanced curriculum. Therefore, timetabled lessons should not be sacrificed for support unless entirely necessary.

When a child needs to be withdrawn for learning support, every effort is made to ensure that a child does not miss core curriculum subjects. Individual strengths are also taken into account in addition to the advice of staff members and parental requests, for example, withdrawal from a second language, in order to ensure extra support is given for English and Maths, may be appropriate. Support lessons may also be delivered at the same time as the timetabled subject following the same lesson objectives, but to a smaller group with a narrower ability range.

Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

Merton Court School caters for children with mild emotional and behavioural difficulties primarily through effective pastoral care and implementation of our

Behaviour Management, Safeguarding and Anti-Bullying Policies. Children need to feel valued, confident and secure to make best progress at school and we are committed to promoting the social, emotional and mental well-being of our children through a range of activities, including playground buddies, friendship groups, School Council meetings and Lunchtime Clubs.

We aim to promote behaviour in children which shows care and consideration for others and respect for their environment. We strive to provide a secure and stimulating environment within which they can feel comfortable and happy. Children with SEND are among those who may become targets for bullying and we take a proactive approach to promote an inclusive ethos.

Support for All Children in Merton Court School

Any child is welcome to visit the SENDCo's room whether or not they receive special provision. They are welcome to discuss any learning difficulties they may have with a member of the SEND group.

Children with an Education Health Care Plan (EHC Plan)

The needs of the majority of children with SEND will be met effectively through the school's SEND support. However, where the child or young person has not made expected progress despite the SEND support in place, parents and the school have the right to ask the Local Authority (LA) to make an assessment with a view to drawing up an EHC Plan for their child. Parents are asked to consult with the school before exercising this right. The school will always consult with the parents before exercising this right.

If the LA refuses to make an assessment, parents have a right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal. The school does not have this right of appeal.

Where a prospective child has an EHC Plan, the School will consult with the parents and the LA (where appropriate) to ensure that the provision specified in the EHC Plan can be delivered by the school. Any additional services that are needed to meet the requirements of the EHC Plan may need to be charged, either directly to the parent or to the LA if the LA is responsible for the fees and the school is named in the EHC Plan. In all other circumstances charges may be made directly to parents, subject to the school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The school co-operates with the LA to ensure that the relevant annual reviews of EHC Plans are carried out as required.

Access to NHS and other specialist services/ multi-agency working

As an independent school, we may not have access to NHS-commissioned, school -based services such as Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) or Occupational Therapy (OT) that are routinely available within maintained mainstream school. Pupils may still be eligible for NHS assessment or treatment through the relevant referral pathway.

Where concerns arise indicating that specialist assessment or therapy may be appropriate, the School will discuss this with parents/carers and may provide information to support a referral. Where additional provision is not available through the NHS, parents may need to arrange and fund this privately. The School has links with various outside agencies and can liaise with parents as necessary.

This does not affect any provision specified in Education, Health and Care Plans or the School's duties under the Equality Act, 2010.

Partnership with Parents

We will inform parents when we first identify that their child has SEND, and provide them with the necessary information to make decisions about school-based support and interventions, as well as outside agencies. Teachers have regular meetings with parents of children with SEND to share progress and discuss forward plans. Parents' permission is sought before any additional school-based assessments are conducted, and results are shared sensitively.

Merton Court School works closely with parents and carers in the support of children with SEND. Children's home environments are crucial to academic success and children's lives outside school have a huge impact on who they are as learners. We encourage an active partnership through on-going dialogue with parents. We also aim to provide guidance and support so that children's home-learning experiences complement and enrich school learning. Parents have much to contribute to our support for children with SEND.

Monitoring and evaluation

The SENDCo supports teachers, where necessary, in drawing up SSPs for children. The SEND group reviews the work of the school in this area, within Core Team meetings. The Headmaster reviews this policy annually and considers any amendments in the light of the annual review findings.

Staffing and Resources

A range of teaching resources are used to enhance learning and memory. These include computer-based training programmes. Teachers are supported by Teaching Assistants.

Complaints

The school has a Complaints Policy. However, parents are encouraged in the first instance to discuss any concerns with the child's class teacher, SENDCo, relevant SEND group member, members of the Leadership Team or the Headmaster (Please also refer to our Complaints Policy).

Record Keeping and Storage of Information

Minutes of SENDCo Surgeries and Identification of Needs forms are retained in the SEND Coordinator's file. School Support Plans are also stored in the SEND Coordinator's File, with copies to the class teacher to retain in the Academic and Pastoral File.

SEND diagnostic assessment records are retained in the SEND Assessments File while active and archived with the child's main file records in accordance with the GDPR.

Any relevant SEND information is also added to CPOMs, a system used to monitor children's records.