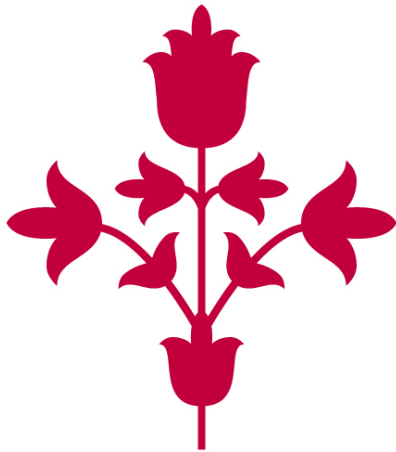




Earlscliffe



STATUTORY SCHOOL POLICY • 2026–27

SEND Policy

Policy owner	Deputy Headteacher
Operational lead	Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)
Approved by	Headteacher / Governing Body
Date of review	September 2026
Next review	September 2027
Applies to	All students at Earlscliffe, including boarders and day students

This policy has been rewritten with reference to the National College SEND policy exemplar and tailored to Earlscliffe as an independent, international, predominantly post-16 boarding school. Where statutory duties differ by school type, this policy applies the requirements relevant to Earlscliffe and adopts wider SEND Code principles as good practice where appropriate.

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Statement of intent

Earlscliffe believes that every student is entitled to an ambitious, inclusive and high-quality education that enables them to achieve their best, develop confidence and independence, participate fully in school life, and make a successful transition to university, further study, employment and adulthood.

As an international boarding school, Earlscliffe recognises that students may arrive with different educational histories, languages, diagnostic frameworks and levels of prior support. The School therefore places particular emphasis on early information-sharing, careful assessment, student voice, partnership with parents and guardians, and clear communication with teaching, pastoral and boarding staff.

This policy sets out the framework used to identify, assess, plan for, provide and review support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It also explains the School's approach to reasonable adjustments, safeguarding, admissions, examination access arrangements, transition, record keeping and partnership with external professionals.

The following principles underpin the School's approach:

- students with SEND are valued as full members of the Earlscliffe community and should be able to participate in the academic, pastoral, boarding and enrichment life of the School;
- high expectations apply to all students, including those with SEND;
- high-quality adaptive teaching is the first response to identified or emerging need;
- needs should be identified as early as possible and support should be proportionate, evidence-informed and reviewed regularly;
- students should be involved in decisions about their education and support, with their wishes, strengths and aspirations taken seriously;
- parents and those with parental responsibility should be partners in decision-making, with information made accessible where translation or clarification is required;
- the School will make reasonable adjustments for disabled students in accordance with the Equality Act 2010; and
- where appropriate, the School will work collaboratively with local authorities, health professionals, educational psychologists, therapists, examination awarding bodies and other relevant agencies.

For the purposes of this policy, a student may have SEND where they have a learning difficulty or disability that calls for educational provision which is additional to, or different from, that normally available to students of the same age, or where a disability places them at a substantial disadvantage without reasonable adjustment.

1. Legal framework and related policies

This policy has due regard, where applicable to Earlscliffe as an independent school in England, to relevant legislation and statutory guidance including:

- Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Disability) Regulations 2010;
- Children and Families Act 2014;
- Education Act 1996;
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004;
- Mental Capacity Act 2005, where relevant to older students;
- UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018;
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended;
- DfE, Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years;
- DfE, Keeping children safe in education 2026;
- DfE, Working Together to Safeguard Children, as current;
- DfE guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions, where applicable; and
- Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance on reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.

The SEND Code of Practice does not apply identically to every type of independent school. Earlscliffe nevertheless uses its core principles — inclusive practice, early identification, person-centred planning and the graduated approach — as the framework for its SEND practice, alongside the duties that apply directly to the School.

This policy should be read alongside the School's:

- Admissions Policy;
- Accessibility Plan / Accessibility Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Complaints Policy;
- Data Protection and Records Management arrangements;
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion arrangements;
- Supporting Students with Medical Conditions arrangements;
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy;
- Careers Policy; and
- Examinations and Access Arrangements procedures.

2. Objectives

Through implementation of this policy, Earlscliffe will:

- identify and respond to emerging and known SEND as early as reasonably practicable;
- provide access to a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum, appropriately adapted to individual need;
- remove or reduce barriers to learning, participation, communication and independence;
- make reasonable adjustments so that disabled students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage;
- promote high-quality adaptive teaching and maintain ambitious expectations for progress and achievement;
- ensure students with SEND are able to participate in school activities and boarding life alongside their peers wherever reasonably practicable;
- work in partnership with students, parents, guardians and, where appropriate, agents and external professionals;
- maintain accurate records of needs, provision, adjustments, outcomes and review;
- support successful transition into Earlscliffe, between courses and year groups, and on to university, further education, training or employment; and
- ensure safeguarding practice recognises the additional vulnerabilities and barriers that may affect students with SEND.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Governing Body

- Provide strategic oversight of SEND provision and ensure the School meets its applicable legal and regulatory duties.
- Receive appropriate assurance about the quality, inclusivity and effectiveness of provision for students with SEND.
- Ensure that SEND considerations are reflected in relevant school policies, accessibility planning and resource decisions.

3.2 Headteacher

- Promote a culture of high expectations, inclusion and non-discrimination.
- Ensure the School has appropriate leadership, staffing, systems and resources for SEND provision.
- Ensure the SENCO is able to carry out the role effectively and is supported by relevant senior leaders.
- Ensure school procedures do not directly or indirectly discriminate against disabled students or students with SEND.
- Ensure the quality of teaching, curriculum access, pastoral support and boarding provision is reviewed for students at risk of underachievement.

3.3 SENCO

- Coordinate the day-to-day operation of this policy and the School's SEND provision.
- Contribute to the strategic development of SEND practice with the Headteacher and senior leaders.
- Maintain oversight of students identified as having SEND or receiving targeted support.
- Advise teachers and pastoral staff on the graduated approach, adaptive teaching, reasonable adjustments and evidence-informed interventions.
- Coordinate Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs), pupil passports and relevant provision mapping.
- Liaise with students, parents, guardians, agents and external professionals as appropriate.
- Support admissions in understanding disclosed or suspected needs and the provision reasonably required.
- Support the Examinations Officer with evidence and applications for access arrangements in accordance with current JCQ and awarding-body requirements.
- Ensure relevant records are accurate, current, appropriately shared and securely stored.
- Provide or coordinate staff guidance and training on SEND.
- Support transition to university or other destinations, including liaison with disability or student-support services where appropriate.

3.4 Teachers

- Remain responsible and accountable for the progress and development of students they teach, including where specialist staff provide additional support.
- Know and apply the agreed strategies, adjustments and outcomes for students with SEND.
- Plan lessons that anticipate barriers, use adaptive teaching and enable students to access ambitious subject content.
- Use assessment information to identify concerns, monitor progress and evaluate the impact of support.
- Work with the SENCO and relevant staff to plan, implement and review support.
- Raise concerns promptly where a student is making less than expected progress or where new barriers emerge.

3.5 Pastoral, boarding and support staff

- Understand relevant student needs and agreed strategies where information is necessary for their role.
- Support consistency between academic, pastoral and boarding provision.
- Report changes in presentation, wellbeing, independence, communication or behaviour that may indicate emerging need or safeguarding concern.
- Contribute to reviews and transition planning where appropriate.

4. Identifying SEND

Earlscliffe recognises that early identification and effective provision improve outcomes. Identification is continuous and may begin before admission, during induction, through routine assessment, or at any point during a student's time at the School.

Evidence considered may include:

- information supplied during admissions, including previous school reports, EHC plans, diagnostic reports and professional advice;
- baseline, diagnostic, formative and summative assessment;
- teacher observations and patterns of attainment or progress;
- student self-report and pupil passport information;
- parent, guardian or agent concerns;
- pastoral and boarding observations;
- attendance, engagement and behaviour patterns where relevant;
- screening or assessment by appropriately qualified professionals; and
- information from health, therapy or local authority professionals.

Less than expected progress may include progress that is significantly slower than that of peers from a similar starting point, does not match the student's previous rate of progress, fails to reduce an attainment gap, or results in a widening gap. Slow progress or low attainment will not automatically mean that a student has SEND; equally, attainment in line with peers does not rule out SEND.

The School will consider the four broad areas of need described in the SEND Code of Practice: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health; and sensory and/or physical needs. These are broad planning categories rather than fixed labels, and a student's profile may span more than one area or change over time.

5. Safeguarding and SEND

Earlscliffe recognises that children and young people with SEND can face additional safeguarding risks and additional barriers to recognising or reporting abuse. The School's safeguarding arrangements therefore require staff to consider SEND as part of a child-centred assessment of risk.

- behaviour, mood, distress or injury must not automatically be attributed to a student's disability or condition without further exploration;
- students with SEND may be more vulnerable to isolation, prejudice-based bullying, child-on-child abuse, exploitation, grooming or online harm;
- communication differences may make disclosure more difficult or affect how a student describes an experience;
- some students may have a different cognitive understanding of risk, consent, fact and fiction, or online content;
- teaching about safeguarding, healthy relationships, consent and online safety will be adapted where required; and
- the DSL and SENCO will liaise closely where safeguarding concerns involve a student with SEND.

Any safeguarding concern must be reported and managed in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. SEND must never be used to minimise, explain away or delay action on a safeguarding concern.

6. SEND support and the graduated approach

High-quality adaptive teaching is the first response to students who have or may have SEND. Additional intervention is not a substitute for strong classroom teaching.

Where a student requires support beyond ordinarily available classroom adaptation, Earlscliffe will use a graduated approach: Assess, Plan, Do, Review.

- Assess – build a clear picture of strengths, needs, barriers, prior support and desired outcomes using evidence from the student, teachers, family and, where appropriate, professionals.
- Plan – agree the adjustments, interventions, support, responsibilities, expected outcomes and review date. Relevant staff will be informed on a need-to-know basis.
- Do – teachers remain responsible for the student's day-to-day education. Agreed strategies and interventions are implemented, with the SENCO supporting staff and coordinating specialist input where required.
- Review – evaluate the impact of provision against agreed outcomes and decide whether support should continue, change, increase, reduce or cease.

Where appropriate, provision and outcomes will be recorded through the School's provision mapping arrangements and/or a Personalised Learning Plan. Parents and guardians will be kept informed and the student will be actively involved in review.

If progress remains a concern despite relevant and purposeful action, the School may recommend specialist assessment or advice from an educational psychologist, specialist teacher, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, medical professional or other appropriately qualified practitioner.

7. English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Earlscliffe has a significant international student population. The School recognises that English as an Additional Language (EAL) is not, in itself, a special educational need.

Where a student is experiencing difficulty, staff will consider language acquisition, prior educational experience, culture, subject-specific vocabulary, attendance and adjustment to a new educational environment before concluding that SEND may be present. Where concerns persist across contexts or are not explained by EAL, the SENCO will coordinate further assessment.

8. Admissions

Applications from students with SEND or disabilities will be considered fairly and in accordance with the School's Admissions Policy and the Equality Act 2010. The School will not discriminate unlawfully against an applicant because of disability or SEND.

Parents, guardians and agents are expected to disclose known or suspected SEND, disabilities, medical conditions, EHC plans, previous access arrangements and relevant professional reports at the earliest opportunity. For international documentation, an accurate English translation may be required.

Early disclosure enables the School to understand a student's needs, consider reasonable adjustments, assess whether specialist input is required and plan support before arrival. Failure to provide relevant information may delay the School's ability to put suitable provision in place.

As part of admissions and induction, the School may:

- review existing diagnostic or professional evidence;
- seek further clarification from parents, previous schools or professionals with appropriate consent;
- ask the student to complete a pupil passport or learning-profile questionnaire;
- undertake baseline or diagnostic assessment; and
- discuss the reasonable adjustments and support likely to be required.

Admission decisions will take account of the School's ability to provide the education and boarding experience applied for, the reasonable adjustments available, the safety and welfare of the student and others, and the applicable legal framework. Where an applicant has an EHC plan, the School will cooperate with parents and the relevant local authority as appropriate to the statutory arrangements for independent provision.

9. Diagnostic assessment and specialist advice

A diagnosis made overseas will be considered carefully. Where the evidence does not provide sufficient information for UK educational planning or examination access arrangements, the School may recommend or require further assessment by an appropriately qualified UK professional.

Any recommended assessment will be discussed with parents or guardians in advance. The School will explain the purpose of the assessment, how the findings will be used and whether any external cost is involved.

The SENCO will translate professional recommendations into practical classroom, pastoral and boarding strategies. Where information is incomplete, the School will use the evidence reasonably available but may be limited in the specialist provision it can plan until adequate information is supplied.

10. Personalised Learning Plans and pupil passports

Students with higher or more complex levels of need may have a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP). The PLP will set out strengths, barriers, agreed adjustments, provision, desired outcomes and review arrangements.

PLPs will normally be reviewed at least three times each academic year, or more frequently where need or risk requires. Reviews will involve the student and relevant staff and will include parents or guardians as appropriate. SMART outcomes will be used where suitable.

A pupil passport may be used for students with SEND or other additional needs to capture the student's own view of how they learn best, what helps, what creates barriers and how staff can support them. Relevant strategies will be shared with staff through the School's agreed information systems, including Provision Mapper where used.

The SENCO may observe lessons, review work and assessment evidence, and meet with teachers to evaluate whether agreed strategies are being implemented effectively and whether further staff development is required.

11. Examination access arrangements

Examination access arrangements are designed to remove disadvantage caused by a disability, learning difficulty or other qualifying need without changing the demands of the assessment.

The SENCO and Examinations Officer will work together to identify, evidence and apply for access arrangements in accordance with current Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations and the rules of the relevant awarding body.

- An existing diagnosis or previous access arrangement does not automatically guarantee the same arrangement at Earlscliffe.
- The School must be able to evidence the student's current need and, where required, that the arrangement reflects their normal way of working.
- Formal assessment by an appropriately qualified assessor may be required for some arrangements.

- Evidence may include classwork, teacher feedback, internal assessments, prior examination evidence and professional reports.
- Where external assessment is required, any cost implications will be discussed with parents or guardians in advance.
- A student may choose not to use an approved arrangement; however, an arrangement cannot normally be applied retrospectively after an examination has been completed.

12. Transition and preparation for adulthood

Earlscliffe recognises that a well-planned transition is particularly important for international students and for students with SEND. Transition planning will consider academic, pastoral, boarding, medical, accessibility and independence needs.

The School will, where appropriate:

- obtain relevant information from previous schools and professionals before entry;
- plan induction and orientation arrangements, including boarding routines where applicable;
- support movement between courses, year groups and examination programmes;
- ensure careers and university guidance is accessible and ambitious;
- support students in identifying reasonable adjustments and disability support available in higher education;
- liaise with university disability or student-support services, with consent, where this will facilitate transition; and
- help students develop self-advocacy, organisation, independent living and study skills.

13. Involving students, parents, guardians and agents

The student's views, wishes, strengths and aspirations are central to decision-making. Support planning will focus on the individual rather than on a diagnostic label.

The School will communicate with parents and those with parental responsibility in clear language and, where reasonably practicable, will make information accessible where translation is needed.

Where an educational agent is involved, the School may communicate with the agent where authorised and appropriate, but this does not replace the rights and responsibilities of parents, guardians or the student.

For students receiving targeted SEND support, the School will agree how and when progress will be reviewed. Where a PLP is in place, there will normally be three formal reviews during the academic year.

14. Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans

Some students may have, or may be undergoing assessment for, an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. Where this is the case, Earlscliffe will cooperate with the relevant local authority, parents and professionals as required by the legal framework applicable to the placement.

The School will provide relevant educational information when lawfully requested and will contribute to reviews where appropriate. Where a student is placed at Earlscliffe through an EHC arrangement, the School will have regard to the provision and outcomes specified in the plan insofar as these apply to the placement and any commissioning arrangements.

Where a student's needs have changed significantly or current provision is not securing appropriate progress, the School may advise parents to discuss an EHC needs assessment or reassessment with the relevant local authority.

15. Funding, reasonable adjustments and external provision

The School will make reasonable adjustments for disabled students in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. The School will not charge families for adjustments that it is legally required to make.

Some students may benefit from optional or externally commissioned specialist assessment, therapy, tuition, equipment or one-to-one provision that falls outside the School's standard educational offer or beyond the adjustments the School is legally required to provide. Where this arises, the nature of the service, responsibility for commissioning and any cost will be discussed and agreed in advance with parents or guardians.

Decisions about provision will consider individual need, evidence of likely benefit, proportionality, available expertise, health and safety, impact on access to the curriculum and the student's overall school and boarding experience.

16. Preventing bullying and discrimination

Earlscliffe recognises that students with SEND or disabilities may be disproportionately affected by bullying, prejudice, social isolation or harmful behaviour and that some students may find it more difficult to recognise or report what is happening.

The School's Anti-Bullying and Behaviour Policies apply to all students. Staff will remain alert to disability-related harassment, mocking of communication or sensory differences, exploitation, exclusion, harmful recording, online abuse and other forms of prejudice-based behaviour.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to reporting and investigation processes where a student's communication, cognition, language or disability affects their ability to describe an incident or participate in an investigation.

17. Managing complaints

Concerns about SEND provision should usually be raised as early as possible so that they can be resolved promptly.

Parents or guardians should normally raise a concern first with the relevant teacher, Senior Tutor or SENCO. If the matter remains unresolved, it may be escalated to the appropriate senior leader or Headteacher. Formal complaints will be handled under the School's Complaints Policy.

Where a matter concerns an EHC plan, local authority decision or statutory SEND process, parents may also have rights to disagreement resolution, mediation or appeal through the relevant statutory arrangements. The School will cooperate with lawful requests for information or attendance arising from those processes.

18. Staff training and improving practice

The School is committed to continuous improvement in SEND practice. The SENCO will support the identification of staff development needs and will provide or coordinate training, briefings and professional guidance.

Training may include adaptive teaching, specific learning difficulties, autism, ADHD, communication needs, sensory needs, mental health, examination access arrangements, reasonable adjustments, safeguarding vulnerabilities and inclusive boarding practice.

SEND practice will be considered through lesson observation, quality assurance, student progress review, pastoral review and professional development processes.

19. Use of data, confidentiality and record keeping

Information about SEND is sensitive personal data and will be handled in accordance with the School's Data Protection and Records Management arrangements.

Records may include:

- diagnostic and professional reports;
- EHC plans and review documentation;
- pupil passports and PLPs;
- provision maps and records of interventions;
- records of reasonable adjustments and access arrangements;
- assessment evidence and review notes;
- communications with parents, guardians, agents and professionals; and
- records of outcomes and the impact of support.

Information will be shared with staff on a need-to-know basis so that they can teach, safeguard and support the student effectively. Relevant information may also be shared lawfully with external professionals, awarding bodies, universities, local authorities or safeguarding agencies where consent, legal obligation, vital interests or another lawful basis permits.

When a student transfers to another educational setting, relevant SEND and safeguarding information will be transferred securely in accordance with legal requirements and school procedures.

20. Publishing information and partnership working

The School will make appropriate information about its SEND approach, accessibility arrangements and admissions arrangements available to parents and prospective families, including through the School website where appropriate.

Earlscliffe will work constructively with relevant local authorities, health services, educational psychologists, therapists, universities and other agencies where this supports the student's education, wellbeing, transition or statutory planning.

The School will have regard to relevant Local Offer information where this is useful to students and families, while recognising that many Earlscliffe students are international or ordinarily resident outside the local authority area.

21. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or earlier where there is a significant change in legislation, statutory guidance, examination regulations, school organisation or identified practice.

The SENCO and senior leaders will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the policy through review of student outcomes, provision, complaints or concerns, staff practice, safeguarding information and feedback from students and families.

All staff are expected to familiarise themselves with this policy and with the specific strategies and adjustments relevant to the students they teach or support.

Next scheduled review: September 2027.

Appendix A – Graduated approach: Assess, Plan, Do, Review

Stage	Key question	Earlscliffe practice
Assess	What is the barrier and what evidence do we have?	Gather information from the student, teachers, parents/guardians, prior schools, assessment data and relevant professionals. Consider EAL and context before identifying SEND.
Plan	What will we do, who will do it and what outcome do we expect?	Agree adjustments, teaching strategies, intervention, responsibilities, success criteria and review date. Record in Provision Mapper/PLP where appropriate.
Do	Is the agreed support being implemented consistently?	Teachers retain day-to-day responsibility. The SENCO supports implementation, specialist advice and coordination across academic, pastoral and boarding teams.
Review	What impact has the support had and what happens next?	Evaluate progress and student experience. Continue, adapt, increase, reduce or cease support. Seek specialist advice where evidence indicates a higher level of need.

Appendix B – Four broad areas of need

Communication and interaction

May include speech, language and communication needs and differences associated with autism. Students may experience difficulty understanding or using language, social communication, interaction or flexible communication across contexts.

Cognition and learning

May include specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia or dyscalculia, or broader difficulties with processing, memory, literacy, numeracy, organisation or acquiring new learning.

Social, emotional and mental health

May include needs affecting emotional regulation, attention, engagement, relationships or mental health. A diagnosis such as ADHD may sit within this broad area, although individual profiles differ.

Sensory and/or physical needs

May include visual, hearing, multi-sensory or physical impairment, medical needs, sensory processing differences, mobility needs or requirements for specialist equipment or environmental adjustment.