



STARFISH AP
The Starfish Way
SEND & Inclusion Policy
Academic Year 2026-2026

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Document Purpose

This policy sets out The Starfish Hub's commitment to providing an inclusive, ambitious and child-centred educational environment in which every child and young person is supported to thrive, regardless of their individual strengths, needs or starting points.

At The Starfish Hub, we recognise that many children referred to Alternative Provision have experienced disrupted education, unmet special educational needs, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), neurodivergence, social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, communication differences or other barriers that have affected their confidence, engagement and educational progress.

Our approach is founded upon the belief that inclusion is not an additional provision or a separate responsibility; it is the foundation of everything we do. We strive to understand every child as an individual, recognising their strengths alongside their needs, adapting our practice to remove barriers to learning and ensuring that every child has equitable opportunities to participate, succeed and develop a genuine sense of belonging.

This policy outlines how The Starfish Hub identifies and responds to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), works collaboratively with families, commissioning schools, Local Authorities and external professionals, implements the graduated approach, and makes reasonable adjustments to ensure that every child receives the support they need to flourish academically, socially and emotionally.

This policy should be read alongside The Starfish Hub's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Behaviour, Relationships & Relational Practice Policy, Attendance, Engagement & Belonging Policy, Positive Handling, Physical Intervention & De-escalation Policy and the wider policies forming part of The Starfish Way Governance & Practice Framework.

The Starfish Way

At The Starfish Hub, we believe that every child deserves to feel that they belong.

We recognise that every child learns differently, communicates differently and experiences the world in their own unique way. Diversity of thinking, learning and communication is valued and celebrated as an essential part of our community.

Many of the children and young people attending The Starfish Hub have experienced disrupted education, unmet needs or environments where they have felt misunderstood, overwhelmed or unable to demonstrate their true potential. Our role is not simply to support children to access education.

Our role is to create an environment where education adapts to the child, rather than expecting the child to adapt to education.

We believe that meaningful inclusion is achieved when children experience emotionally available adults, consistent relationships, adaptive teaching and environments where they feel physically, emotionally and psychologically safe.

Every child is viewed as an individual with their own strengths, interests, aspirations and potential.

Rather than asking:

"How can this child fit into our provision?"

we ask:

"How can our provision adapt to help this child succeed?"

The Starfish Way is built upon eight guiding principles:

- **Safety** – Every child has the right to feel physically, emotionally and psychologically safe.
- **Trust** – Strong relationships provide the foundation for learning, confidence and belonging.
- **Attunement** – We seek to understand each child's individual profile, recognising both strengths and barriers to learning.
- **Regulation** – Children learn most effectively when they feel calm, supported and emotionally regulated.

- **Flexibility** – We adapt our teaching, environments and approaches to meet individual needs whilst maintaining ambitious expectations.
- **Inclusion** – Every child has the right to participate, contribute and experience success as a valued member of our community.
- **Support** – We work collaboratively with families, commissioning schools, Local Authorities and partner agencies to achieve the very best outcomes for every child.
- **Humanity** – Every interaction is rooted in dignity, compassion, respect and hope.

These principles underpin every decision we make.

We recognise that inclusion is not measured by whether a child is present within a classroom. It is measured by whether they feel accepted, understood, valued and able to participate meaningfully in learning and school life.

At The Starfish Hub, we believe that difference should never be viewed as a barrier to success. It is something to understand, embrace and celebrate.

Inclusion Begins with Belonging

At The Starfish Hub, we believe that true inclusion begins with belonging.

Every child has the right to feel welcomed, respected and valued for who they are. We recognise that many children referred to Alternative Provision have experienced environments where they have felt misunderstood, overwhelmed or unable to demonstrate their strengths. Some may have identified Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), whilst others may have emerging needs that have not yet been formally recognised.

Our role is not simply to identify barriers; our role is to remove them.

We believe that inclusion is achieved when children experience education that is responsive, flexible and centred around their individual strengths, aspirations and needs. Rather than expecting children to fit within a predetermined model of education, we adapt our provision to ensure every child can participate, engage and succeed.

Inclusion is therefore not viewed as a separate aspect of our work. It is embedded throughout every relationship, every learning experience and every decision we make.

Our Commitment to Inclusive Practice

The Starfish Hub is committed to ensuring that every child receives a broad, balanced and ambitious education that enables them to achieve their full potential. We maintain high aspirations for every child regardless of their starting point, diagnosis or identified need.

We are committed to:

- recognising and celebrating every child's strengths
- removing barriers to learning and participation
- making reasonable adjustments in accordance with the Equality Act 2010
- promoting independence, confidence and self-advocacy
- providing adaptive teaching and personalised support
- fostering positive relationships built upon trust and respect
- promoting emotional wellbeing alongside academic achievement
- working collaboratively with families, commissioning schools, Local Authorities and external professionals
- ensuring children feel safe, included and valued as members of The Starfish Hub community.

Our aim is not simply to support children whilst they attend The Starfish Hub. Our aim is to equip them with the confidence, skills and resilience to succeed beyond our provision.

Understanding SEND at The Starfish Hub

The Starfish Hub recognises that children may require additional support for a wide range of reasons. Some children attending our provision will have an identified Special Educational Need or Disability. Others may present with emerging needs that require assessment, monitoring or additional support. In accordance with the SEND Code of Practice (2015), Special Educational Needs broadly fall within four areas:

Communication and Interaction

Children may experience differences in communication, language development or social interaction. This may include children with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) or Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).

Cognition and Learning

Some children may require additional support to access learning due to difficulties with literacy, numeracy, memory, processing or general learning. This may include children with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), such as dyslexia or dyscalculia, or those with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD).

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

Many children attending The Starfish Hub present with social, emotional or mental health needs that may affect their relationships, emotional regulation and engagement with education. These needs may arise from a range of experiences and should always be understood within the context of the individual child.

Sensory and/or Physical Needs

Some children may require adjustments due to sensory processing differences, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disability or medical needs.

Reasonable adjustments are made to enable children to participate fully within the life of the provision.

Whilst these four areas provide a useful framework, we recognise that every child presents with a unique combination of strengths, interests, experiences and support needs.

For this reason, support is always individualised rather than determined solely by diagnosis or category.

Identifying Additional Needs

The Starfish Hub works closely with commissioning schools, parents/carers and external professionals to develop a comprehensive understanding of every child before and throughout their placement.

Information may be gathered from:

- referral documentation
- Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- previous school records
- Behaviour Support Plans

- Risk Assessments
- safeguarding information
- reports from educational psychologists and other professionals
- discussions with parents/carers
- discussions with the child
- ongoing observation and assessment by Starfish staff.

We recognise that children's needs evolve over time.

Staff remain professionally curious and continually monitor children's progress, wellbeing and engagement to identify emerging needs at the earliest opportunity.

Where concerns arise, they will be discussed collaboratively with the commissioning school, parents/carers and, where appropriate, the Local Authority to determine the most appropriate next steps.

The Starfish Reflection

Labels can help us understand a child. They should never limit what we believe that child can achieve.

At The Starfish Hub, we look beyond diagnosis to understand the whole child—their strengths, aspirations, interests and potential. We believe that when children experience genuine belonging, high expectations and personalised support, they are empowered to grow in confidence, develop independence and achieve outcomes that matter to them.

The Graduated Approach

The Starfish Hub adopts the graduated approach outlined within the SEND Code of Practice (2015), recognising that identifying and responding to children's needs is an ongoing process of assessment, planning, intervention and review. We understand that children's needs change over time. Effective support therefore relies upon regular reflection, collaborative working and adapting provision to meet each child's evolving strengths and needs.

Our graduated approach is centred upon four key stages:

Assess

Before and throughout a child's placement, we gather and review information from a range of sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of their individual profile.

This may include:

- referral information
- discussions with parents/carers
- information from the commissioning school
- Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- previous support plans
- Behaviour Support Plans
- Risk Assessments
- safeguarding information
- reports from external professionals
- direct observation
- discussions with the child.

Assessment is viewed as an ongoing process rather than a one-off event. Every interaction provides an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the child.

Plan

Information gathered through assessment is used to plan appropriate support and identify reasonable adjustments that will enable the child to access learning successfully. Planning may include:

- adaptive teaching strategies
- environmental adjustments
- Behaviour Support Plans
- Individual Risk Assessments
- regulation strategies
- communication supports
- sensory adjustments
- pastoral support
- personalised learning targets
- agreed outcomes with families and commissioning schools.

Where appropriate, children and their families are actively involved in planning support, recognising that they are experts in their own experiences.

Do

Support is delivered through high-quality, inclusive teaching and personalised intervention embedded within everyday practice.

Every member of staff shares responsibility for supporting children with SEND.

Support may include:

- adaptive teaching
- differentiated learning activities
- trauma-informed practice
- restorative approaches
- Team 15
- Key Adult support
- sensory regulation opportunities
- communication adaptations
- movement breaks
- emotional coaching
- flexible learning environments
- positive behaviour support.

Where specialist advice has been provided, staff work collaboratively to implement agreed recommendations consistently.

Review

Children's progress is reviewed regularly to evaluate the effectiveness of support and determine whether further adjustments are required.

Reviews consider:

- academic progress
- emotional wellbeing
- engagement
- attendance
- behaviour
- regulation
- communication
- social development
- feedback from the child
- feedback from parents/carers
- feedback from commissioning schools
- advice from external professionals.

The outcomes of these reviews inform future planning and ensure support continues to reflect the child's changing needs.

The Starfish Graduated Approach in Practice

Whilst The Starfish Hub follows the statutory Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle, we bring this to life through our own relational practice.

Our approach includes:

Assess through observation, relationship-building, collaboration with families and schools, and careful consideration of each child's strengths and needs.

Plan through personalised Behaviour Support Plans, Risk Assessments, adaptive teaching strategies and individual targets.

Do through inclusive classroom practice, trusted Key Adults, Team 15, restorative conversations, sensory regulation opportunities and consistent implementation by all staff.

Review through ongoing observations, Team 15 reflections, Starfish Journey Reports, collaboration with families and commissioning schools, and regular review of individual support plans.

This continuous cycle enables us to remain responsive, reflective and ambitious for every child.

Universal Provision

At The Starfish Hub, we believe that high-quality inclusive practice is the responsibility of every member of staff and forms the foundation of our provision. Universal provision refers to the strategies, approaches and environments available to every child, regardless of whether they have an identified Special Educational Need or Disability.

Our universal provision includes:

- warm, trusting relationships with emotionally available adults
- consistent routines and clear expectations
- adaptive teaching that responds to individual learning styles
- calm, low-arousal learning environments
- flexible seating and learning spaces where appropriate
- sensory regulation opportunities
- movement breaks

- visual supports and communication aids where beneficial
- restorative approaches
- Team 15 at the end of every session
- personalised encouragement through the Starfish Recognition & Growth Framework
- opportunities to develop emotional literacy and self-regulation
- access to trusted Key Adults throughout the day.

These approaches are embedded within everyday practice and benefit all children attending The Starfish Hub. By prioritising high-quality universal provision, we aim to remove barriers before additional intervention becomes necessary.

The Starfish Reflection

The best support is often the support that every child receives.

At The Starfish Hub, inclusion is not something that happens after a need has been identified. It is built into our environment, our relationships and our daily practice from the very beginning.

Targeted and Specialist Support

Whilst high-quality universal provision meets the needs of many children, some children and young people require additional or more specialised support to achieve positive outcomes.

The Starfish Hub is committed to identifying when universal provision alone is not sufficient and working collaboratively with families, commissioning schools, Local Authorities and external professionals to implement additional support.

Targeted support is always personalised to the individual child and may include:

- individual Behaviour Support Plans
- Individual Risk Assessments
- personalised learning pathways
- additional Key Adult support
- sensory regulation strategies
- communication adaptations
- emotional coaching
- restorative interventions
- adapted timetables where appropriate
- graduated reintegration plans

- enhanced pastoral support
- targeted social and emotional interventions.

Support is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains effective and proportionate to the child's changing needs.

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

The Starfish Hub welcomes children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) where our provision is considered appropriate to meet their identified needs. We recognise that an EHCP represents a statutory commitment to meeting a child's educational, health and social care needs and will work collaboratively with commissioning schools, Local Authorities, families and partner agencies to ensure that agreed provision is delivered as effectively as possible.

Where children have an EHCP, staff will:

- familiarise themselves with the child's identified strengths and needs
- implement agreed provision and reasonable adjustments
- contribute to achieving EHCP outcomes
- monitor progress and engagement
- provide information and reports to commissioning schools and Local Authorities as required
- participate in Annual Reviews where requested
- contribute to multi-agency planning and review meetings.

We recognise that an EHCP provides important guidance but does not define a child's potential. Every child is viewed as an individual with unique strengths, interests and aspirations.

Partnership with Families

At The Starfish Hub, we recognise that parents and carers know their children better than anyone else. Positive partnerships with families are central to achieving successful outcomes for children with SEND. We are committed to maintaining open, honest and respectful communication with parents and carers throughout every child's placement.

Parents and carers will be encouraged to contribute to:

- transition planning
- support planning

- Behaviour Support Plans
- review meetings
- Team Around the Child meetings
- EHCP reviews
- identifying successful strategies
- celebrating progress and achievements

Families will receive regular updates regarding their child's progress, engagement and wellbeing through ongoing communication and Starfish Journey Reports. We value parents and carers as equal partners in decision-making and recognise the importance of listening to their experiences, insights and aspirations.

Partnership with Commissioning Schools and Local Authorities

As an Alternative Provision, The Starfish Hub works alongside commissioning schools and Local Authorities to ensure that support for children remains consistent, coordinated and child-centred. Successful outcomes are achieved through effective collaboration and shared responsibility.

The Starfish Hub will:

- contribute to planning meetings
- share information regarding progress and engagement
- provide attendance and behaviour information where appropriate
- contribute to Annual Reviews and EHCP processes
- participate in Team Around the Child meetings
- work collaboratively to review support strategies
- support reintegration planning where appropriate.

We recognise that the commissioning school retains statutory responsibilities for many aspects of a child's education. Our role is to complement, strengthen and contribute positively to the wider network of support surrounding each child.

Working with External Professionals

The Starfish Hub values the expertise of external professionals and recognises the importance of multi-agency working in supporting children with SEND.

Where appropriate, we work collaboratively with professionals including:

- Educational Psychologists
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- CAMHS practitioners

- Paediatricians
- Specialist Teacher Advisory Services
- Social Workers
- Early Help practitioners
- School Nurses
- Family Support Workers
- Virtual School professionals where appropriate.

Recommendations provided by external professionals are considered carefully and, where appropriate, incorporated into everyday practice, Behaviour Support Plans and individual support strategies. Regular communication with professionals helps ensure that support remains coordinated, consistent and responsive to the child's evolving needs.

The Starfish Reflection

The best outcomes are achieved when children are surrounded by adults who work together with shared purpose, mutual respect and unwavering belief in their potential. At The Starfish Hub, we recognise that no single professional has all the answers. By working in genuine partnership with families, commissioning schools, Local Authorities and specialist services, we create a network of support that enables every child to feel understood, valued and empowered to succeed.

Adaptive Teaching and Inclusive Practice

At The Starfish Hub, we believe that high-quality teaching is the most effective support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Our staff adapt teaching, learning environments and communication to meet the needs of individual children whilst maintaining ambitious expectations for all. Adaptive teaching is embedded within everyday practice and is not viewed as a separate intervention.

We recognise that children learn in different ways, at different rates and through different experiences. Staff therefore use professional judgement to adapt their teaching in response to each child's strengths, interests and needs.

Adaptive practice may include:

- breaking learning into manageable steps
- adapting the pace of learning
- providing visual supports and practical resources
- modelling tasks and expectations

- pre-teaching or revisiting key concepts
- using clear and accessible language
- providing additional processing time
- adapting questioning techniques
- reducing unnecessary cognitive load
- offering alternative methods for recording learning
- flexible grouping arrangements
- providing opportunities for movement and regulation
- celebrating progress through the Starfish Recognition & Growth Framework.

Adaptive teaching enables children to access ambitious learning whilst experiencing success and developing increasing confidence and independence.

Communication, Regulation and Sensory Needs

The Starfish Hub recognises that communication, emotional regulation and sensory processing play a significant role in children's ability to engage successfully in education. Many children attending Alternative Provision experience differences in how they communicate, process information or respond to sensory experiences.

Staff work proactively to create environments that support regulation and reduce unnecessary barriers to participation.

Support may include:

- calm, low-arousal learning environments
- predictable routines
- visual timetables and prompts
- sensory resources
- movement breaks
- access to regulation spaces where appropriate
- emotional coaching
- alternative communication strategies
- flexible approaches to participation
- opportunities for co-regulation with trusted adults
- adjustments to lighting, noise or classroom layout where appropriate.

We recognise that emotional regulation is fundamental to successful learning. Children who feel safe, understood and emotionally regulated are better able to engage positively, develop relationships and experience success.

Monitoring Progress and Outcomes

At The Starfish Hub, progress is viewed holistically.

Whilst academic progress remains important, we recognise that success also includes improvements in emotional wellbeing, confidence, relationships, attendance, independence and engagement.

Progress is monitored through a range of approaches, including:

- ongoing teacher assessment
- observations
- Team 15 reflections
- Behaviour Support Plan reviews
- Individual Risk Assessment reviews
- attendance monitoring
- engagement in learning
- communication with families
- feedback from commissioning schools
- contributions from external professionals
- Starfish Journey Reports.

Children are encouraged to reflect upon their own progress and celebrate personal achievements.

Through our Growth Skills and Connection Stars, children are supported to recognise the progress they make in areas such as resilience, communication, emotional regulation, respectful disagreement, listening, reflection and collaboration.

Progress information is used to review support, celebrate success and identify where further adjustments may be required.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Quality Assurance

The Starfish Hub is committed to continually reviewing its inclusive practice to ensure that all children receive the support they need to thrive.

The Director & Head of Provision monitors the effectiveness of SEND provision through:

- regular review of children's progress and outcomes
- monitoring Behaviour Support Plans and Risk Assessments
- review of attendance and engagement
- feedback from children and families

- feedback from commissioning schools and Local Authorities
- consultation with external professionals
- quality assurance of teaching and learning
- staff supervision and reflective practice
- ongoing professional development.

The effectiveness of this policy is reviewed annually or sooner where changes in legislation, statutory guidance or organisational practice require amendment.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour, Relationships & Relational Practice Policy
- Attendance, Engagement & Belonging Policy
- Positive Handling, Physical Intervention & De-escalation Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- First Aid & Administration of Medication Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

The Starfish Commitment

At The Starfish Hub, we believe that inclusion is not measured by the support we provide after barriers have emerged. It is measured by the environments we create before those barriers have the opportunity to limit a child's success.

Every child deserves to feel that they belong. Every child deserves adults who recognise their strengths before their challenges.

Every child deserves ambitious expectations, meaningful relationships and opportunities to flourish.

We are committed to working alongside children, families, commissioning schools, Local Authorities and partner agencies to ensure that every child experiences an education that is safe, inclusive, aspirational and responsive to their individual needs.

At The Starfish Hub, we do not ask children to fit into our provision.

We shape our provision around the child. Together, we create environments where difference is respected, strengths are celebrated and every child is empowered to achieve their full potential.

Every child. Every strength. Every opportunity.

Appendix A

The Starfish Inclusive Practice Framework

At The Starfish Hub, inclusion is not a separate intervention or the responsibility of one individual. It is the responsibility of every adult, during every interaction, every day. Our Inclusive Practice Framework provides a consistent approach to ensuring every child feels safe, valued, understood and able to thrive.

1. Know the Child

We take time to understand every child's:

- strengths and interests
- aspirations
- communication preferences
- individual needs
- sensory profile
- emotional presentation
- barriers to learning
- successful regulation strategies.

We recognise that no two children are the same, and support should always be personalised.

2. Build Relationships First

Positive relationships underpin every aspect of learning. Every child has a trusted Key Adult who takes time to know them, understand them and champion their progress.

Children are far more likely to engage when they experience:

- consistency
- kindness
- clear boundaries
- genuine curiosity
- emotionally available adults.
- Relationships always come before results.

3. Remove Barriers Before Raising Expectations

Rather than asking,

"Why can't this child do this?"

we ask,

"What is preventing this child from succeeding?"

Staff continually adapt environments, communication and teaching to remove unnecessary barriers whilst maintaining ambitious expectations.

4. Teach Adaptively

Children access learning in different ways.

Adaptive teaching is embedded within every session through:

- flexible teaching approaches
- visual supports
- practical learning
- movement opportunities
- differentiated questioning
- scaffolded learning
- processing time
- sensory adjustments
- flexible recording methods.

High expectations remain the same. The route towards achieving them may look different.

5.Promote Regulation

Children learn best when they feel safe and emotionally regulated.

Staff proactively support regulation through:

- calm environments
- predictable routines
- movement breaks
- sensory resources
- emotional coaching
- co-regulation
- trusted relationships
- opportunities for reflection.

Behaviour is viewed as communication rather than defiance.

6. Work in Partnership

Successful inclusion is achieved through collaboration.

The Starfish Hub works closely with:

- children
- parents and carers
- commissioning schools
- Local Authorities
- Educational Psychologists
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- CAMHS
- social care
- other partner agencies.

Together, we develop a shared understanding of each child and work collectively towards agreed outcomes.

7. Reflect, Review and Grow

Inclusive practice is continually reviewed.

Staff reflect upon:

- children's progress
- engagement
- attendance
- emotional wellbeing
- behaviour
- regulation
- effectiveness of support.

Feedback from children, families and professionals informs future planning and ensures provision continues to evolve.

The Starfish Inclusion Promise

At The Starfish Hub, we promise to see the child before the diagnosis.

We promise to recognise strengths before difficulties.

We promise to listen before making assumptions.

We promise to adapt before expecting children to change.

We promise to maintain ambitious expectations whilst providing compassionate support.

Above all, we promise that every child will be welcomed into a community where they are respected, valued and empowered to achieve their own unique potential.