

# Dudley Academies Trust

## Development of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

### The Link Academy

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### Trust overview

The development of the curriculum continues to be a strategic priority for all Trust schools. The performance management review process has incorporated consideration to how the curriculum is enacted for SEND learners and consideration as to how teachers are scaffolding learning.

- **Performance Management Review Process:** All leaders and teachers are required to focus on both SEND and Disadvantaged learners as a key aspect of Target 3. The extent to which leaders and teachers focus on this is as follows:

Target Three: The Quality of Education: Development of the Curriculum.	
Contribute to the ongoing development and evaluation of the SMART Curriculum for all years with an emphasis on creativity and innovation. The Impact of the curriculum should be strong outcomes for all learners, especially SEND and disadvantaged learners.	
<b>M1 to M4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan effective lessons making adaptations as required to meet all learners' needs, especially SEND and disadvantaged learners.</li> <li>• Implement VDE to ensure that there is a positive climate for learning.</li> <li>• Ensure progress indicators are clear and support all learners to make progress in each lesson.</li> <li>• Make good use of expositions.</li> <li>• <b>Actively engage with the oracy strategy.</b></li> <li>• <b>Actively engage with the digital strategy.</b></li> <li>• Model effectively.</li> <li>• Stimulate learner thinking and check for understanding <b>using effective AfL.</b></li> <li>• Check prior knowledge and understanding during lessons, <b>including guided practice and increasing independent practice.</b></li> <li>• Provide high-quality feedback <b>in line with department expectations.</b></li> <li>• Ensure learner passports are used to fully meet the needs of SEND learners.</li> <li>• Deliver a carefully sequenced and coherent curriculum.</li> <li>• Support learners to build increasingly complex mental models <b>in preparation for KS4 or GCSE examinations.</b></li> <li>• Help learners apply knowledge and skills to other contexts, <b>including application to challenge and problem solving.</b></li> <li>• Develop learners' literacy and numeracy <b>and digital skills.</b></li> <li>• Promotion of reading and subject specific disciplinary literacy.</li> <li>• Develop opportunities for the creative implementation of the curriculum to increase learners' engagement and love of the subject.</li> <li>• Ensure that you <b>fully engage with the Iris Connect Self Reflection tool.</b></li> <li>• <b>Fully engage in whole staff CPD on Adaptive Teaching and implement key strategies relating to AfL and diagnostic assessments to inform how you respond in the lesson and inform future planning.</b></li> <li>• Contribute to the sharing of best practice examples of curriculum content via the Trust Intranet</li> <li>• Actively engage with the developments of the innovation exchange at Millennium Point</li> </ul>
<b>M5 to M6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above with a particular emphasis on developing opportunities for the creative implementation of the curriculum to increase learners' engagement and love of the subject.</li> </ul>
<b>UPR 1 to UPR 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above with a particular emphasis on sharing good practice across the department <b>and increasing learner independence.</b></li> <li>• Support with any additional elements in the <b>department improvement plan.</b></li> </ul>

## School Improvement Plan SEND Focus

### Teaching and Learning:

- Departmental Quality Assurance (QA) has been completed for all departments during the Autumn term. The QA incorporates how accessible the curriculum is for

learners with additional needs and reviews how the curriculum is enacted to support SEND learners through Quality First Teaching.

- During the Spring term, the progress of departments continues to be monitored through lessons visits and books looks (at department level) whilst pupil trails are conducted by the Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning on a fortnightly basis. A pupil trail of educational, health and care plan (EHCP) learners has been completed with strengths, areas for development and next steps summarised.
- All teaching staff are completing an 'Adaptive Teaching' programme which is designed to develop quality first teaching to support all learners but particularly those with additional needs:
  1. What is adaptive teaching?
  2. Revisiting feedback approaches
  3. Anticipating barriers to learning
  4. Using assessment diagnostically
  5. Responding and adapting to the next part of the lesson
  6. Monitoring and adjustments/sharing best practice

## SEND Additional Support

To support SEND Teaching and Learning we have implemented the following actions:

- SEND placemats continue to be implemented across every department to gather a holistic overview of the learner, recognising that learner needs and strategies will need to be adapted depending on subject.
- A Teaching Assistant column has now been added to the SEND placemats, enabling TAs to provide input and enhance communication between TAs and teachers, thereby supporting SEND learners more effectively.
- SENCo (SEN coordinator) working with Curriculum Team Leaders (CTLs) to support with departments where Quality Assurance has identified a need for further work to be undertaken regarding scaffolding and Quality First Teaching to support SEND learners.
- SEND referrals made so that SENCo can manage SEND monitoring load and actions can be seen by those class teachers that have made the referral.

## EHCP and K Learner Reviews

The SEND Administrative Support role has enabled **efficient, structured, and collaborative working practices** across the SEND team. Direct access to the SENCO and Assistant SENCO calendars ensures meetings are scheduled in a timely and organised manner, allowing for **robust and meaningful annual reviews** for all pupils with EHCPs

and identified Key Learners. Ongoing communication with parents and carers is maintained through regular phone calls, emails, and updates via MCAS, ensuring continuity and clarity.

This strong working relationship has led to a **significant improvement in communication with SEND parents and carers**, as well as enhanced quality and clarity of information shared through pupil passports. Every parent/carer receives a copy of their child's **SEND Pupil Passport**, regardless of attendance at review meetings. Passports clearly identify individual barriers to learning, agreed strategies, and bespoke SEND targets, ensuring parents have a shared understanding of their child's needs and provision.

Access to SEND passports has been further strengthened through availability via **ClassCharts**, enabling teachers to access **up-to-date information** at all times and use this effectively to plan for individual needs within the classroom.

EHCP and Key Learner passports are **reviewed regularly** through a newly implemented **electronic monitoring system**. This system allows all staff working with SEND learners to **RAG-rate individual targets** and add qualitative comments relating to progress, engagement, and the effectiveness of support.

This provides the SENCO with a **comprehensive, real-time overview** of:

- Progress towards EHCP outcomes and personal targets
- Consistency and quality of SEND provision across subjects
- Strengths in current support and adaptive teaching approaches
- Areas requiring further refinement, adjustment, or additional intervention

This systematic approach enables **timely intervention, responsive adaptation**, and ensures SEND provision remains **effective, consistently implemented, and outcome-focused**.

## **PAR and SEND**

The **SENCO and Assistant Principals for Behaviour (KS3 and KS4)** continue to work collaboratively to support **Pupils at Risk (PAR)**. This partnership ensures early identification of **underlying or emerging SEND needs** that may be impacting behaviour, enabling appropriate actions and staff awareness to be put in place in a timely manner.

Through this collaborative approach, **bespoke intervention plans** are developed for individual pupils, with **clearly defined strategies and monitoring points**. These plans are regularly reviewed to evaluate impact and adapted as required, ensuring support remains responsive and effective.

Weekly **Triage meetings** provide a structured forum for joint working between the **SENCO, Assistant Principals, Learning Managers, and the wider pastoral team.** The introduction of a clear **KS3 and KS4 pastoral structure** has strengthened this process, improving communication, accountability, and consistency of support across year groups.

The focus of weekly Triage meetings has evolved to align closely with the school's key **School Improvement priorities**, specifically:

- Inclusion
- Attendance
- Behaviour
- Safeguarding
- Personal Development

Where appropriate, the relevant **SLT link** is invited to attend Triage meetings to ensure strategic oversight, timely escalation of concerns, and alignment between pastoral, SEND, and whole-school priorities.

This collaborative and structured approach ensures that pupils at risk receive **joined-up, needs-led support**, with SEND considerations fully embedded within behaviour and pastoral systems.

In addition, **bi-weekly multi-agency meetings** are held involving **Learning Managers, the Behaviour Manager, the SENCO, and Assistant SENCO.** These meetings provide a structured opportunity to review pupils causing concern, ensuring a **collaborative approach to early identification of need and timely intervention.**

The meetings enable:

- Sharing of information across pastoral, behaviour, and SEND teams
- Early identification of emerging SEND or safeguarding needs
- Agreement of targeted interventions and in-class adaptations
- Monitoring of impact and escalation where further support is required

This joined-up approach strengthens consistency of practice, ensures pupils receive **swift, needs-led support**, and prevents difficulties from escalating by embedding **early intervention within whole-school systems.**

## Trauma Informed Practice

A strategic priority for the Trust is the continued development of **Trauma-Informed Practice** across all academies, with the aim of ensuring schools are **safe, inclusive, and mentally healthy environments for all learners**.

At The Link Academy, this commitment is reinforced through **ongoing professional development** and whole-school reflection. As part of this, the **SENCO led a whole-school INSET day** focused on:

- The **role of inclusion** in everyday teaching and pastoral practice
- How well staff **know and understand their learners**, including individual barriers and strengths
- What **reasonable adjustments** look like in practice within our academy
- A shared understanding that **expectations remain consistently high for all learners**, recognising that *some pupils are on a different journey to reach those expectations*

This session supported staff in developing a common language around inclusion and strengthening **confidence in adaptive teaching**, while reinforcing the principle that SEND and inclusion are a **core responsibility for all staff**, rather than an additional layer of provision.

Senior Leaders ensure that **Trauma-Informed Practice is revisited regularly through CPD**, enabling staff to reflect on their approach and consider the impact of trauma on learning, behaviour, and relationships. In addition, **solution circles**, facilitated with support from the Educational Psychology service, continue to provide structured opportunities for staff to collaboratively problem-solve and reflect on practice in relation to individual learners.

**SEND learner passports** play a key role in embedding trauma-informed practice across the academy. Passports identify any known **adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)** and clearly outline:

- Agreed reasonable adjustments
- Trauma-informed strategies
- Emotion coaching approaches

These are designed to ensure staff can respond consistently and effectively to each learner's needs, supporting emotional regulation, engagement, and learning.

Alongside this, the pastoral team is currently developing **refinements to the pastoral system**, including processes linked to the use of **'supporting expectations'**, including

have their own critical cohort for their year group, with the aim of strengthening communication, improving consistency, and increasing parental involvement in supporting positive outcomes for learners.

## SEND Department Structure and Deployment of Support Staff

There has recently been a **strategic restructure of the SEND department**, including the appointment of an additional **Level 3 Teaching Assistant**. This revised structure has enabled the two Level 3 Teaching Assistants to be based within the **Learning Support Unit (LSU)**, where they deliver **planned daily interventions** to support SEND learners' progress and ensure high-quality, consistent provision aligned to EHCP outcomes and individual needs.

As part of this model, **Level 2 Teaching Assistants have been deployed, where possible, on a departmental basis**, strengthening subject-specific support and increasing staff familiarity with curriculum demands. Current deployment includes designated support within:

- Maths
- English
- Science
- EBacc subjects
- Open Bucket provision
- Cross-curricular support

This approach promotes **inclusive classroom practice**, enables more targeted in-lesson support, and improves communication between teaching staff and support staff. The restructure has enhanced consistency, accountability, and capacity within the SEND team, ensuring interventions and reasonable adjustments are embedded effectively across the curriculum while maximising the impact of available staff resources.

### Profile of SEND learners by year group

Year	Cohort Size	No. of SEN N Learners	No. of SEN E Learners	No. of SEN K Learners	% of Cohort SEN
Year 7	210	167	4	37	19.5%
Year 8	207	165	6	36	20.3%
Year 9	211	173	4	34	18%
Year 10	197	161	3	33	18.3%
Year 11	203	158	5	40	22.2%
Total	1028	826	22	180	19.6%

## Progress and Attainment of SEND learners

2024/25

### EHCP learners

Progress 8: The national benchmark (SISRA) is  $-0.76$ . Learners were above this at  $+0.37$ . However, a significant improvement from 2020  $-0.33$  and 2021.

9 to 5 in English and mathematics: 0% The national benchmark is 12.3%.

### K learners

Progress 8: The national benchmark is  $-0.57$ . Learners are ABOVE this at  $-0.22$ .

9 to 5 in English and mathematics: 8.6% of learners achieved this. The national benchmark is 20.7%.

Attainment and progress data especially when comparing to National benchmarks demonstrates that there continues to be a need to ensure that PMR, T&L priorities, and the Teacher Development Programme focuses on developing Quality First Teaching and providing additional scaffolding for learners. KAP2 predictions suggest there will be an improvement in English and Maths attainment data for K learners (see table on page 8).

### Key Actions:

## SEND Screening and Intervention Provision

The school has strengthened its approach to early identification and graduated support through the implementation of a **range of screening tools and evidence-based interventions** to meet the needs of **SEND-K and EHCP learners**.

### Secondary Language Link

Secondary Language Link is used to support **Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)** at secondary level. To enable **early and accurate identification of need**, the Secondary Language Link screener is used with **all learners**, including both SEND and non-SEND pupils. This whole-cohort approach ensures that emerging language needs are identified quickly and that appropriate support can be put in place in a timely manner. The screener informs decisions around targeted intervention and classroom strategies.

### Catch-Up Literacy

Catch-Up Literacy is delivered to support SEND learners in addressing identified gaps in reading and literacy skills. Intervention planning is informed by **Learning Support Service reports**, alongside ongoing assessment information, to ensure provision is targeted and responsive to individual need.

## Catch-Up Numeracy

Catch-Up Numeracy is used to support SEND learners with identified gaps in mathematical understanding. Interventions are guided by **Learning Support Service reports**, as well as input from class teachers and the maths department, ensuring a collaborative approach to identifying and addressing learning gaps.

## ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant)

ELSA interventions begin with a **baseline assessment** to identify areas of emotional and social need. From this, **individual or group targets** are set and sessions carefully planned. ELSA support is **time-limited**, typically running for a minimum of **six sessions (half a term)**, though this may be extended where appropriate. Progress is supported through the development of a **warm, secure relationship** and a reflective, safe base, with a focus on building emotional resilience and coping strategies that enable pupils to develop their own solutions to challenges.

## Reading Plus and Phonics

Reading Plus and phonics interventions continue to be delivered for learners identified through **NGRT and GL assessment data**. These interventions support reading fluency, comprehension, and decoding skills, enabling learners to better access the wider curriculum.

### Year 11 25/26 KAP2 data

	<u>Year 11</u>	<u>NON-SEN Learners</u>	<u>SEN EHCP Learners</u>	<u>SEN K Learners</u>	<u>% of Cohort SEN</u>
Cohort Size	206	159	5	42	23%
Predicted Progress Score					
Predicted Attainment 8	38.72	42.48	22.70	26.39	
7+ in English and Maths	1.5%	1.9%	0%	0%	
5+ in English and Maths	35.9%	44%	0%	9.5%	
4+ in English and Maths	54.9%	66%	0%	19%	
7+ in English	3.4%	3.8%	0%	2.4%	
5+ in English	43.7%	52.8%	0%	14.3%	
4+ in English	61.2%	71.1%	20%	28.6%	
7+ in Maths	7.8%	10.1%	0%	0%	
5+ in Maths	45.1%	54.7%	0%	14.3%	
4+ in Maths	61.2%	71.7%	0%	28.6%	

*\*\*Above data is based on KAP2 Predictions*

### Key Actions:

- **Continuing to ensure** that all SEND learners, including those identified as SEND-K and those with EHCPs, **access the same ambitious and broad curriculum**, with high-quality inclusive teaching as the foundation and appropriate

scaffolding and reasonable adjustments in place to enable success alongside their peers.

- **Continuing to review and refine** the SEND register to ensure pupils are accurately identified, and that SEND-K and EHCP learners are recorded **only where provision is additional to or different from Quality First Teaching**. Emerging or changing needs are identified promptly to enable early and proportionate intervention.
- **Continuing to strengthen Quality First Teaching (QFT)** for learners with SEND, ensuring teachers explicitly plan for and evidence how learning is scaffolded in response to individual needs, including communication and interaction, cognition and learning, sensory needs, and SEMH.
- **Continuing to embed a shared staff understanding** that SEND does not equate to low ability, reinforcing consistently high expectations for all learners and recognising that effective QFT benefits the whole cohort while being particularly impactful for learners with SEND.
- **Continuing to revisit and embed Trauma-Informed Practice** through CPD and solution circles, ensuring staff deepen their understanding of emotional and social factors affecting learning and apply trauma-aware strategies consistently across teaching and pastoral teams for identified learners of concern.
- **Continuing to reduce the number of SEND learners receiving Fixed-Term Suspensions** through proactive and collaborative work between the SENCO, pastoral teams, and the SE Manager, with a focus on:
  - Supporting SEND learners to continue accessing appropriate curriculum work while in SE
  - Reducing repeated SE visits through early identification, reasonable adjustments, and adapted provision
- **Continuing to embed SEND-focused quality assurance** across all subject areas, ensuring that learning walks, lesson observations, and book looks consistently include SEND learners. Staff and learner voice is used to evaluate the effectiveness of provision, with identified actions feeding directly into department-level CPD and improvement planning.
- **Continuing to deliver targeted 1:1 or small-group English and Maths interventions** for identified learners, focusing on closing significant gaps in knowledge and developing key examination skills. Intervention impact is reviewed regularly using the graduated approach (assess, plan, do, review) to inform next steps and ensure sustained progress.
- **Continuing to ensure that all SEND learners are identified early** and are given **sufficient time and opportunity to practise and become familiar with**

**their access arrangements**, so that these adjustments are embedded confidently into everyday classroom practice and formal assessments.

- **Continuing to ensure early identification of SEND learners**, with timely implementation of agreed access arrangements and **planned opportunities for learners to rehearse and use these adjustments consistently**, enabling them to access learning and assessments with confidence.