



**First Thought
Independent School**

FIRST THOUGHT CARE SERVICES

SEND Policy

2026-2027

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Statement of Intent

At First Thought Independent School (FTIS), we believe that every pupil is entitled to an education that enables them to thrive, achieve their potential, and develop the skills and confidence needed to live fulfilling lives.

All of our pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), with primary needs in autism, complex needs, or severe learning difficulties (SLD). Our responsibility is therefore not only to identify and meet SEND, but to ensure high-quality, personalised provision across every aspect of the curriculum and school life.

Our curriculum is designed around the EQUALS Informal, Semi-Formal and Formal Pathways, supplemented by carefully chosen programmes such as Phonics for SEND, the PSHE Association SEND framework, and our bespoke Digital Skills curriculum. Through these pathways, pupils engage in meaningful learning experiences that build communication, cognition, independence, and resilience.

FTIS is committed to:

- Valuing every child as an individual with strengths, interests, and aspirations.
- Providing a nurturing environment where pupils feel safe, respected, and motivated to learn.
- Working closely with families and professionals to deliver holistic and integrated support.
- Preparing pupils for successful transition to their next stage of education and life.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to:

- Children and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010 and associated Disability Regulations
- Education Act 1996 and 2002
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Health and Care Act 2022
- The UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
- DfE (2015) SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years
- DfE (2015) Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions
- DfE (2023) Working Together to Safeguard Children
- DfE (2025) Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Independent School Standards (2014, as amended)

This policy should be read alongside FTIS policies including: Curriculum Policy; Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; Behaviour Policy; Accessibility Policy; Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy; Complaints Policy.

Objectives

Through the implementation of this policy, FTIS will:

- Deliver high-quality provision to meet the diverse needs of pupils with autism, complex needs and SLD.
- Ensure every child can access and progress through a broad, balanced, and meaningful curriculum tailored to their developmental stage.
- Promote communication, independence, self-esteem, and resilience as central outcomes.
- Ensure that EHCP outcomes are embedded in curriculum planning and regularly reviewed.
- Work collaboratively with parents, carers, local authorities, and external professionals.
- Uphold equality of opportunity, making reasonable adjustments where required.
- Safeguard the wellbeing of all pupils, recognising the particular vulnerabilities of children with SEND.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Board:

- Ensures statutory duties for SEND are met.

- Monitors implementation and effectiveness of this policy.
- Holds leaders accountable for the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils.

Head of Education:

- Holds ambitious expectations for all pupils.
- Embeds a whole-school culture where SEND is understood as every pupil's entitlement.
- Ensures resources, staffing, and training meet the needs of pupils.
- Works closely with families and external partners to promote integrated provision.

SENCO:

- Leads on strategic development of SEND across the school.
- Ensures EHCP outcomes inform planning, delivery, and assessment.
- Coordinates provision, interventions, and multi-agency involvement.
- Maintains up-to-date SEND records and supports staff in best practice.

Teachers:

- Deliver high-quality, adaptive teaching within the EQUALS curriculum and other programmes.
- Plan and review provision in line with EHCP outcomes.
- Ensure pupils can access learning through differentiated, multisensory approaches.
- Work collaboratively with support staff and therapists.

Support Staff:

- Implement personalised interventions.
- Promote communication and independence in daily routines.
- Provide pastoral and therapeutic support in line with individual needs.

Identification and Provision

All pupils at FTIS have identified SEND and an EHCP on entry. Provision is therefore not about initial identification, but about ensuring individual needs are continuously assessed and met.

Provision is structured around:

- Communication and interaction – e.g. Total Communication approaches, Makaton, PECS, sensory stories.
- Cognition and learning – highly differentiated, multisensory, and practical learning.
- Social, emotional and mental health – therapeutic approaches, Zones of Regulation, restorative practices.
- Sensory and physical needs – sensory integration strategies, adapted environments, and therapeutic input.

Staff use the assess–plan–do–review cycle to evaluate and refine provision. Assessment is linked to EQUALS frameworks, EHCP outcomes, and individual progress measures.

Safeguarding

We recognise pupils with SEND are particularly vulnerable to abuse, neglect, bullying, and exploitation. Staff receive training in recognising safeguarding concerns where communication or cognitive barriers exist. The Safeguarding Policy outlines how SEND-specific risks are managed, including:

- Careful monitoring of behaviour, mood, and injuries.
- Support for online safety at a developmental level.
- Collaboration between the DSL and SENCO in all safeguarding cases.

Admissions

FTIS admits pupils where the school is named in their EHCP by the local authority. We work closely with referring authorities, families, and previous settings to ensure smooth transition and appropriate provision.

EHC Plans

- Every pupil has an EHCP that sets out statutory outcomes.
- FTIS contributes to annual reviews and requests reassessments where needs change significantly.
- Parents and pupils (where appropriate) are fully involved in review and planning processes.

Preparing for Adulthood and Transition

Although we are a primary school, we recognise the importance of preparing pupils early for independence, self-care, and positive transitions. This includes:

- Developing communication, independence, and self-regulation skills.
- Supporting social relationships and community participation.
- Preparing families and pupils for transition to secondary placements through multi-agency planning and transition visits.

Complaints

Concerns about SEND provision are managed in line with the Complaints Policy. Where disagreements relate to EHCPs, the school will work with the local authority to resolve matters and provide parents with information about mediation and SEND Tribunal processes.

Staff Training

FTIS is committed to continuous professional development. Training includes:

- Autism-specific approaches.
- Supporting pupils with SLD.
- Communication methods (Makaton, PECS, Intensive Interaction).
- Trauma-informed practice and SEMH support.
- Safeguarding children with SEND.

Data, Record-Keeping and Information

- Records are maintained securely and in line with data protection requirements.
- The SEN Information Report is published annually on the school website.
- Provision is tracked to monitor progress against EHCP outcomes, curriculum progress, and personal development.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head of Education and governing board to ensure it remains current, effective, and aligned with statutory requirements. All staff are required to familiarise themselves with the policy and implement it consistently.

APPENDIX: SEN INFORMATION REPORT TEMPLATE

First Thought Independent School: SEN Information Report

This SEN Information Report outlines how we implement our SEND Policy and the SEND Code of Practice.

1. School Context

- Independent special primary school (ages 5–11).
- All pupils have an EHCP with primary needs in autism, complex needs, or SLD.

2. Identification of Need

- All pupils are admitted with an EHCP.
- Needs are reviewed regularly through the assess–plan–do–review cycle.

3. Teaching and Learning

- Curriculum delivered through EQUALS Informal, Semi-Formal and Formal Pathways.
- Supplemented by Phonics for SEND, PSHE Association frameworks, bespoke Digital Skills curriculum.
- Emphasis on communication, independence, and holistic development.

4. Support and Provision

- Multisensory and communication-focused teaching.
- Therapeutic support including Zones of Regulation, sensory regulation, and SEMH programmes.
- High staff–pupil ratio with skilled teaching assistants and support staff.

5. Working with Parents and Pupils

- Regular communication through reports, meetings, and reviews.
- Parents involved in planning and reviewing EHCP outcomes.

6. External Agencies

- Close collaboration with speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, educational psychology, and specialist autism services.

7. Training

- Ongoing CPD in autism strategies, SLD teaching, communication systems, trauma-informed approaches, and safeguarding.

8. Monitoring and Outcomes

- Progress tracked through EQUALS frameworks, EHCP outcomes, and personalised learning goals.
- Reports shared termly with parents.

9. Complaints

- Concerns managed through the school's Complaints Policy.
- Parents informed of mediation and SEND Tribunal rights if disputes relate to EHCPs.

10. Review

- Report reviewed annually and updated on the school website.

