

LEARNING SKILLS AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS or DISABILITIES (SEND) POLICY

1.0 Policy Statement

- The policy takes cognizance of the Equality Act 2010, The Children and Families Act and the SEND Code of Practice 2014.

The Equality Act 2010 retains the previous definition of disability: 'A physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long term adverse impact on a person's ability to carry out normal everyday activities'. This has some overlap with the definition of 'special educational needs' in the Children and Families Act 2014 (which includes pupils with significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his/her age, or a disability which means that a pupil cannot make full use of the general educational facilities provided for pupils of their age in mainstream state schools) but not all pupils are disabled by their SEN and vice versa.

- This should be read in conjunction with the Differentiation, the Admissions, English as an Additional Language (EAL), Neurodiversity and the More Able Policies.

2.0 Purpose

Downe House wishes to support all its pupils to become effective, independent learners and thereby to achieve their maximum potential. The school is committed to providing equal access for all pupils to a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum. As a school we recognise that pupils may be neurodiverse and have special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) and we will endeavour to make every possible arrangement to provide for their individual needs.

This policy describes the way in which we meet the needs of children with special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND). SEND may relate to neurodiverse pupils that have specific learning difficulties, sensory or physical impairment, emotional or social development, or other such factors as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice 2014.

3.0 Definition of SEND

A pupil is recognised as having SEND when their learning, emotional, behavioural, or physical needs are significantly different from those of most pupils of the same age at a given time.

4.0 Downe House in Context

Downe House is an independent boarding school for pupils from 11-18 years. Among the School's population there is a proportion of pupils who are neurodiverse and are autistic, here are pupils that have mild/moderate dyslexia, mild/moderate dyspraxia, low level attention deficit (hyperactive) disorder, mild speech and language difficulties, semantic pragmatic language disorders and hearing impairment.

Review Date: September 2026 - DHO

The School has a Learning Skills (LS) Department consisting of

***Miss Sophie Appleton Malhotra, BA, PGCE, OCR Level 5 and 7 Diplomas SpLD**

Mrs Heather Kennedy BA, CertTESOL

Mrs Naomi Lomax, BSc, PGCE, OCR Level 5 and 7 Diplomas SpLD

***Mrs Nicola South-Klein, BSc, PGCE, CELTA, CAML+ Assessing Multi-lingual Learners for SpLDs**

Miss Emma Stonebridge, BA, OCR Level 5 Diploma SpLD

Mrs Claire Williams BA, PGCE, OCR Level 5 Diploma SpLD, CPT3A Assessment qualification, ADHD Coaching Level 1 qualification

Miss Luce Pickford, BA, PGCE, ADHD Coaching Level 1 qualification

Ms Elke von Mering- Ashton, BA, MA, PGCE, NPQ SEN and SEN Teaching Diploma

***Head of Department**

The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCo) designate in the school is the Head of Academic Support.

5.0 Aims

The School and specifically the Learning Skills Department aim to:

- Endeavour to identify and meet the needs of any pupil in the school who has SEND, by following guidelines set out in the SEND Code of Practice 2014 as closely as possible.
- Offer pupils with SEND full access to a broad, balanced, and relevant education and provide the necessary support to achieve this.
- Ensure that the views of parents and pupils are considered in any decision making.
- Ensure that no pupil is discriminated against, in any area of school life, based on their SEND.
- Manage SEND assessment and provision with the utmost sensitivity and care.
- Support and contribute to whole school initiatives which aim to develop further all pupils' learning skills.
- Extend support to pupils who may benefit from a programme of individual specialist teaching, regardless of whether they have SEND.
- Follow the principle of an 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review procedure', checking that appropriate evidenced-based interventions are in place, followed by a regular review of progress and adaptations to the support provided, as required.

6.0 To achieve these aims, the LS Department seeks to:

- Identify, as soon as possible, any pupil who may have a specific learning difficulty or disability.
- Ensure all staff (academic, pastoral, and medical) are familiar with the SEND Policy and are aware of their role in implementing it.
- Ensure all School staff have the appropriate SEND information, including the nature of a pupil's specific learning difficulties, to be able to support their needs as effectively as possible and reinforce the guidance being offered. Staff are encouraged to regularly check SchoolBase where such information will be held and updated.

- Ensure pupils are offered appropriate specialist teaching based on an agreed programme of individual learning plans (ILPs) or, where appropriate, Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.
- Ensure pupils' progress is reviewed regularly, via a close analysis of whole school assessment data, together with appropriate use of specialist diagnostic tools with the Director of Curriculum Assessment.
- Ensure parents are involved in decisions about a pupil's progress and, if necessary, any future SEND provisions or assessments, e.g. an updated educational psychologist's report. Communication is in addition to the whole school systems, such as parents' meetings and the reporting process.
- Provide whole staff training or advice on supporting pupils with SEND.
- Employ specialist teachers of SEND/Specific Learning Difficulties and provide suitable Insets and skills training
- Review the effectiveness of any programme, IEP or EHC plan, as required.
- Ensure that appropriate examination concessions are in place, in line with the guidelines and criteria specified by examination boards and meet the Joint Council for Qualifications regulations for Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.

7.0 Guidance

7.1 Admission Arrangements

As requested on the registration form, parents should disclose the nature of any learning disabilities/difficulties. Parents are urged to discuss with the Registrar any reasonable adjustments that need to be put in place in advance of an application for a place in the school. Once the School's admission procedures are met, parents must pass on relevant assessment reports from external professionals, for example educational psychologists, and ensure completion of the electronic Learning Skills and EAL online entry form on My School Portal. This information is added to the pupil profile in SchoolBase when the annual update for the new academic year is completed in late July. The Head of Academic Support has access to information passed on by parents via My School Portal.

7.2 Identification of Pupils with SEND

In accordance with the SEND Code of Practice 2014, we recognise that the identification of SEND should be built into the overall approach to monitoring the progress and development of all pupils.

At the start of each academic year, the Head of Academic Support will liaise with the Headmistress, Registrar, Medical Centre, Exams Officer, and other relevant members of staff to ensure all SEND information pertaining to a pupil is disseminated and uploaded onto SchoolBase. All teachers are expected to refer to the pupil profile to keep fully informed of their needs and any suggested strategies for support and/or exam arrangements.

7.3 Other Means of Identifying Pupils with a Possible Specific Learning Difficulty or SEND

- Lucid Exact digital screening tests for new pupils on entry.
- Continuous monitoring of a pupil's academic progress through the School's assessment procedures.
- Analysis of MidYis results.
- Meetings with the appropriate Head of Section after each series of examinations and, when deemed necessary, continuous monitoring of a pupil's progress in Learning Skills lessons.
- Referrals from the Headmistress, the Head of Section, House Staff or Tutor.
- Meetings with the English Department or other Heads of Departments as required, to discuss individual concerns.
- Internal assessments undertaken by Head of Academic Support and other suitably qualified members of the Learning Skills Department.

7.4 Procedures for Referral to an External Professional

- Once enough evidence of a possible SEND has been gathered by Head of Academic Support, parents will be contacted to discuss a referral to an educational psychologist or other relevant external professionals.
- Assessments will periodically need to be updated. The Head of Academic Support will contact parents to discuss this prior to the assessment.
- The Head of Academic Support may recommend that a suitably qualified professional conducts an assessment on a pupil. All costs are agreed and settled by parents directly with the external professional.
- Once the assessment has been completed, the written report should be passed to the Head of Academic Support where, if appropriate, the information will be uploaded onto the LS database.
- If relevant, the Head of Academic Support / Head of Access Arrangements will apply for Access Arrangements in accordance with the Joint Council for Qualification and exam body regulations and pass on any examinations adjustments to the Exams Officer.

The procedure for internal referral can be found in appendix A

8.0 Programme of Support

- All pupils who have a SEND will be offered a programme of support by a specialist Learning Skills teacher, although support is not necessarily required in all instances, and is determined by individual need via discussion with parents and pupils.
- Any specialist materials required in order to access the curriculum must be provided by the parents and will be chargeable if sourced by the School. Examples of such materials include but are not limited to laptops, tablets, reading pens, electronic or audio textbooks, assistive software or similar.
- Permission is sought from parents prior to the commencement of lessons and any queries relating to the nature of a pupil's programme can be discussed directly with the Director of Pupil Progress.
- Lessons are arranged on a one to one basis at a mutually convenient time. Pupils are not removed from academic lessons, except in very exceptional circumstances.
- Targets and/or individual learning plans (ILPs) are created by the LS teacher in conjunction with the pupil incorporating the pupil voice and reviewed each term or when targets are achieved, changed or added to. Notes made by LS staff during lessons are both captured on the lesson plan and used to inform future teaching or to update ILPs.
- Lessons are tailored to the curriculum and LS teachers and School staff meet regularly to ensure a pupil's specific difficulties are supported as effectively as possible.
- Lessons are multi-sensory, structured and cumulative. Skills of independent learning are actively promoted in order to develop self-belief and a 'growth mind-set'.
- Typically, as a result of poor performance in lessons or examinations, where possible lessons are extended to those pupils who require development of skills in such areas as examination technique, study skills and reading comprehension.
- Pupils and parents may make a referral to the Learning Skills Department, after discussion with a pupil's Tutor.
- Parents should contact the Head of Academic Support to review a pupil's programme, including termination of lessons, in which case a half-term's notice is required.
- After completion of a programme of support, a pupil is welcome to seek additional help and guidance at any time.

9.0 Learning Skills on SchoolBase

The information required to best support pupils with SEND in lessons is held on individual pupil profiles on SchoolBase. It is updated regularly by LS teachers and holds details on the nature of a pupil's SEND profile, for example Moderate Dyslexia. If parental approval is given, the database will allow staff access to a pupil's assessment report, including findings of her strengths and weaknesses, and termly

targets or ILP/EHC plans. The pupil profile also holds information relating to exam arrangements or concessions.

10.0 Charging

- Assessments by an Educational Psychologist or other professionals are chargeable and will be billed directly by the practitioner. The practitioner is asked to complete a 3rd party Agreement
- Internal assessments to establish eligibility for examination arrangements are chargeable and parents will be consulted and informed of charges that apply.
- The School charges all pupils who receive Learning Skills lessons. These charges are reviewed on an annual basis.
- Charges are made clear to parents before any assessment or support lessons are agreed.
- A half-term's notice is required for the termination of lessons.

11.0 Evaluation

Downe House adheres to the principle of Quality First Teaching and adaptive teaching. This means that high quality inclusive teaching ensures that planning and implementation meets the needs of ALL pupils, and builds in high expectations for all pupils, including those that are neurodiverse or have Specific Learning Difficulties. Teachers carefully consider and adapt their teaching to promote the progress and development of all pupils, in addition to support by specialist staff.

Intervention programmes are adjusted on a termly basis, in the light of the progress the pupils are making, drawing on a rich variety of assessment data available within the school context, and responding appropriately to the 'pupil voice'.

Revision History:

Revision	Date	Description of changes	Requested By
	September 2014	Reviewed	Areti Bizior
	September 2015	Reviewed	Areti Bizior
	September 2016	Reviewed	Areti Bizior
	October 2016	Addition of Appendix B	Paula Bell
	September 2017	Amendments in red	Paula Bell
	October 2017	Addition of Appendix C	Paula Bell
	January 2018	Addition of point 2 in section 8	Areti Bizior
	September 2018	Change of wording in 7,4 and 8.0. Addition of last point in 10.0	Areti Bizior
	September 2019	Amendments highlighted in red	Areti Bizior
	September 2020	Amendments highlighted in red	Philippa Toogood
	September 2021	Reviewed and updated	Charlotte Jones Philippa Toogood
	September 2022	Reviewed and updated Amendments in red	Charlotte Jones Philippa Toogood
	September 2023	Reviewed and updated Amendments in yellow	Charlotte Jones
	August 2024	Reviewed and updated to reflect change in roles and My School Portal	Charlotte Jones
	September 2024	Reviewed and updated Amendments in yellow	Sophie Appleton Wyeth Philippa Toogood
	September 2025	Reviewed and updated Amendments in yellow	Sophie Appleton Malhotra Philippa Toogood

This policy makes reference to the following School policies, copies of which can be located on SchoolBase in the 'Documents' section:

Admissions (Reviewer: HM)

Differentiation (Reviewer: DHA)

English as an Additional Language (EAL) (Reviewer: AHO)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Belonging (Reviewer: DHR)

More Able (Reviewer: DHA)

Review Leader: Deputy Head (Operations & CCA)

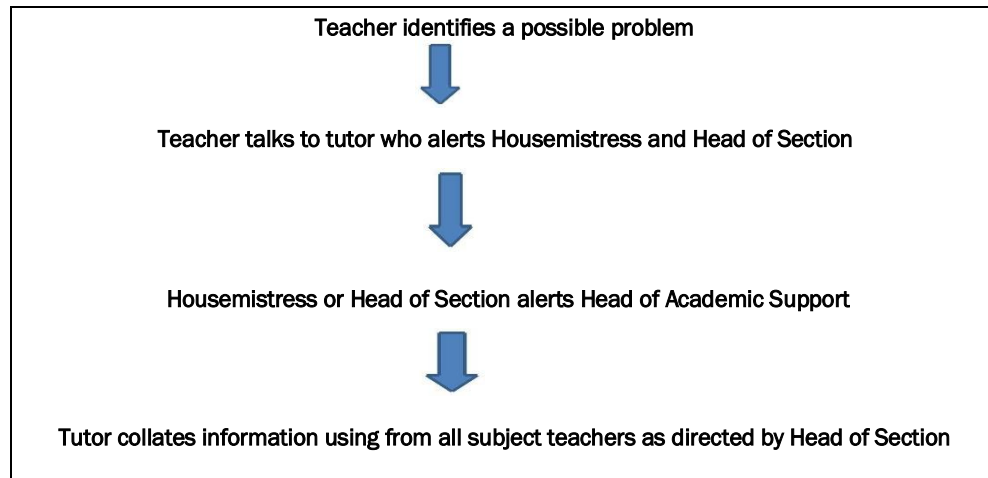
Reviewed: September 2025

Next Review: September 2026

Appendix A - Learning Skills Standard Referral Procedure

Stage 1

Until you have the green light from both the Head of Academic Support and the Head of Section please do not discuss with student or parents a possible referral.



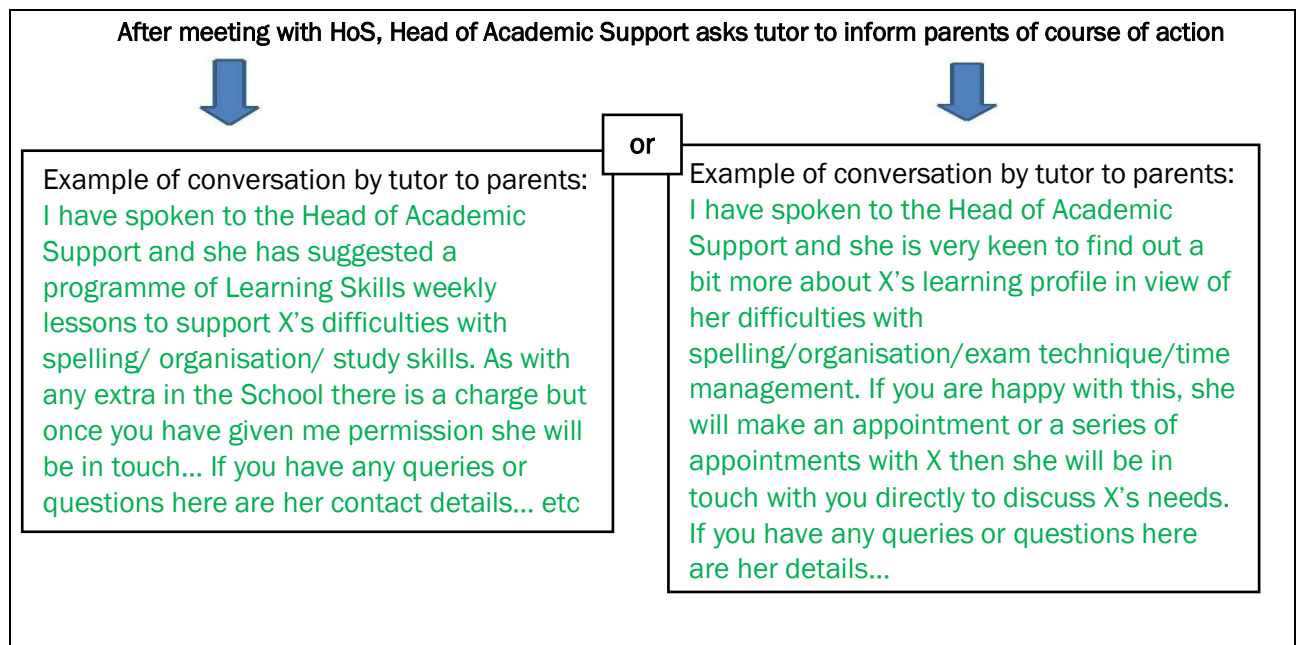
Stage 2

After meeting with HoS, Head of Academic Support will monitor the situation until further information comes to light. Referral may be placed on waiting/monitoring list.

Stage 3

Please DO NOT mention to student or parents:

- a likely specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia or ADHD □
- the likelihood of extra time or any other access arrangement(s) □



Tutor speaks to tutee once parents have given permission



Tutor alerts Head of Academic Support who will contact student and parents

Appendix B - Specific Visual Difficulties

The following guidance applies in relation to those pupils who experience specific visual difficulties when reading. This would include any degree of visual stress which is alleviated by reading through colour.

Identification of Individuals

- Any individual with visual stress will have this identified on their Individual Education Plan, copies of which are available on SchoolBase.

Coloured Overlays and Paper

- Pupils are expected to bring their own-coloured overlay for reading purposes (appropriate to their needs) to every subject lesson.
- If subject departments would like to have their own stock of overlays, they can purchase them through resources.
- Tinted A4 paper will be available in the Resources Department for pupils to access.

Emailing Work to Pupils

For those worksheets which require a written element, staff are encouraged to email these to the pupils in advance of lessons, so that the pupil in question can print out the worksheet herself onto her preferred colour. Pupils will have a personal supply of coloured paper in House, for this particular use. Alternatively, some pupils may prefer to type directly onto the worksheet, if it is emailed to them as a Word document. In this instance, we will check that they have an application on their computer enabling them to tint their screen appropriately (e.g. the 'Tint and Track' software)

NB. The functionality of the Microsoft Surface Pro device can facilitate this process due to the various accessibility options provided.

Appendix C- Policy on the Use of Word Processors in Public Examinations

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Learning Skills and Special Educational Needs or Disabilities Policy. It has been compiled in accordance with the JCQ booklet 'Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties, Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments'.

The following extract is taken from the AA regs 2025-2026 5.8 Word processor

[JCQ-AARA-25-26FINAL.pdf](#)

5.8 WORD PROCESSOR

There **is not** a requirement to process an application for a word processor using *Access arrangements online*. No evidence is needed to support the arrangement for inspection purposes. (This also applies where a candidate is using a word processor on a temporary basis because of a temporary injury.)

- 5.8.1 Centres are allowed to provide a word processor, with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text switched off, where it is the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

For example, due to the candidate's problems with planning and organisation when writing by hand, their quality of language significantly improves when using a word processor.

(This also extends to the use of electronic brailers and tablets.)

Centres should refer to [paragraph 5.7.5](#) for the use of a word processor with the spelling and grammar check switched on.

- 5.8.2 The use of word processors in non-examination assessment components will be considered standard practice unless prohibited by the specification.
- 5.8.3 A candidate may use a word processor in an examination to type questions requiring extended writing and may handwrite shorter answers.

NB Examinations which have a significant amount of writing, as well as those that place a greater demand on the need to organise thought and plan extended answers, are those where candidates will frequently need to type. Examinations which require more simplistic answers are often easier to handwrite within the answer booklet, as the candidate avoids the difficulty of visually tracking between the question paper and computer screen.

- 5.8.4 For the regulations on the use of word processors in written examinations, please see the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations* (commonly known as the JCQ 'ICE' document):
jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

An awarding body may require a word processor cover sheet to be completed.

A word processor **cannot** simply be granted to a candidate because they now want to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard or because they use a laptop at home.

The use of a word processor **must** reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre. For example, where the curriculum is delivered electronically and the centre provides word processors to all candidates.

The centre may wish to set out the types of candidates which it considers would benefit from the use of a word processor. For example, a candidate with:

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly;
- a medical condition;
- a physical disability;
- a sensory impairment;
- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand;
- poor handwriting.

This list **is not** exhaustive.

A member of the centre's senior leadership team **must** produce a word processor policy, specific to the centre, which details the criteria the centre uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations and assessments. This policy **must** be available for inspection.

Examples – Word processor

- A candidate who cannot write legibly because she has significant learning difficulties asks to use a word processor in her examinations. It is her **normal means of producing written work within the centre** because her teachers cannot read her writing. She is very proficient in using a word processor. The SENCo allows her to use a word processor in her examinations.
- A candidate does not have a learning difficulty but is a 'messy' writer. His handwriting is hard to decipher. He requests the use of a word processor. This is granted by the SENCo because it reflects his **normal way of working within the centre**.
- A candidate wishes to use a word processor in her examinations since this is her **normal way of working within the centre**. However, the candidate additionally wishes to use the spelling and grammar check facility. Given that she does not meet the published criteria for a scribe, the candidate cannot use the spelling and grammar check facility. The SENCo allows her to use a word processor in line with the regulations set out in the JCQ 'ICE' document.
- A candidate, who has significant learning difficulties, has quite legible writing. However, he makes many omissions and cannot order his ideas correctly. His written scripts are legible but covered in crossings-out and omission marks. He requests a word processor and this is granted by the SENCo. The use of a word processor allows him to correct text, sequence his answers and reflects his **normal way of working within the centre**.
- A blind candidate asks to use a word processor in his examinations. He also requests the use of a screen reader to allow him to 'read' back and check the answers he has typed. These arrangements are permitted when using a word processor in his examinations. However, if the candidate also wants to use predictive text and/or the spelling and grammar check facility, he **must** meet the published criteria for a scribe, with an approved application in place.

Examples – Word processor and 25% extra time

- A candidate has a below average free writing speed when handwriting. However, using a word processor is her **normal way of working within the centre**. When typing she can produce her written work effectively. The SENCo awards the use of a word processor, as it removes the barrier presented by her slow handwriting. The SENCo will consider whether 25% extra time is required when she writes by hand, such as in GCSE Mathematics and Science examinations. The candidate's cognitive processing will need to be assessed, as she will require two below average standardised scores or one below average standardised score **and** one low average standardised score to be awarded 25% extra time.
- A candidate with significant learning difficulties has a below average speed of writing and below average scores in areas of cognitive processing and reading speed. As using a word processor is his **normal way of working within the centre**, he has been able to improve his typing speed to match the equivalent average writing rate. However, he has **persistent and significant difficulties** in interpreting questions and formulating his typed answers. He is given 25% extra time and the use of a word processor, as both arrangements are appropriate to his needs.