The Stacey Pre-School
Play • Explore • Discover • Learn

13 SEN POLICY

1. Policy statement and commitment

The Stacey Pre-School welcomes children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as valued members of our community. Every child has the right to an inclusive, safe and stimulating early years environment in which they can play, learn, participate and develop alongside their peers. We recognise each child's strengths, interests and individual needs and work closely with families to ensure that barriers to participation and learning are identified and addressed.

We promote equal opportunities, respect differences and make reasonable adjustments for disabled children. We aim to identify emerging needs early, provide appropriate support without unnecessary delay, and work collaboratively with parents/carers and relevant education, health and care professionals.

2. Legislative and guidance framework

This policy is informed by the Children and Families Act 2014; the Equality Act 2010; the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015, as updated); the current Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for group and school-based providers (effective September 2026); and applicable data protection legislation, including the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

Under the SEND Code of Practice, a child has SEN where a learning difficulty or disability calls for special educational provision. Not every developmental difference or disability means a child has SEN; support is based on the individual child's needs. The Pre-School seeks to provide appropriate support and adjustments regardless of whether a formal diagnosis is in place.

3. Aims

- Ensure children with SEND can access a broad, balanced and inclusive EYFS curriculum through play.
- Identify children who may need additional support as early as possible through observation, assessment and family discussions.
- Listen to children and involve parents/carers as equal partners in decisions about support.
- Follow a consistent graduated approach to support and regularly evaluate the impact of strategies.
- Work effectively with external services and facilitate positive transitions into and out of the setting.
- Maintain confidential, accurate records and invest in staff knowledge, resources and inclusive practice.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Pre-School Manager

The Pre-School Manager has overall responsibility for implementing this policy, ensuring staff understand their duties, enabling appropriate training and resources, overseeing inclusive practice and handling escalated concerns under the Complaints Policy

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)

- Co-ordinate SEND provision and advise staff on inclusive practice, strategies and reasonable adjustments.
- Work with Key Persons and families to identify needs, agree and review individual support plans and monitor progress.
- Liaise with the local authority Early Years inclusion services, health professionals and other agencies where appropriate.
- Co-ordinate meetings, including settling-in reviews, SEN Support reviews, Team Around the Child meetings and transitions, as needed.
- Maintain confidential SEND records, co-ordinate referrals and support applications for additional resources or funding where eligible.
- Identify and support staff development needs, maintain the setting's SENCO action plan and keep updated on local guidance.

Key Person and all staff

The Key Person builds a close relationship with the child and family, observes and assesses development, incorporates agreed strategies into daily practice, shares progress with parents/carers and contributes to reviews. All staff are responsible for inclusive interactions, appropriate adaptations, confidentiality and implementing agreed support consistently.

5. Early identification and assessment

Staff use ongoing observations, professional knowledge, the child's interests and developmental information provided by parents/carers to understand each child's progress. The statutory progress check at age two is completed by a practitioner who knows the child well and shared with parents/carers in a written summary. Development is considered holistically and not by rigid comparison with other children.

Where a parent/carer, Key Person, another practitioner or SENCO identifies a concern, the setting discusses it sensitively with the family and considers practical adaptations, further observation and additional assessment where appropriate. Support will not be withheld pending a diagnosis. With parental involvement and relevant consent, advice may be sought from the local authority or external professionals.

6. Graduated approach: Assess, Plan, Do, Review

Assess

The Key Person and SENCO work with parents/carers to build a clear picture of the child's strengths, barriers, progress and needs, drawing on observations, assessment records and relevant specialist advice.

Plan

Where targeted provision is needed, we use Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Individual Behaviour Plans (IBPs), where appropriate, to provide targeted support for children's individual needs. These plans are developed collaboratively by the SENCO, Key Person, parents/carers and relevant external professionals. For example, if the child is under porterage the setting will also use their identified goals for inclusion in the IEP to maintain consistency.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Individual Behaviour Plans (IBPs) are developed in partnership with parents/carers and, where appropriate, relevant external professionals to ensure that each child's individual needs are effectively supported. These plans identify specific, achievable targets and outcomes, alongside agreed strategies, interventions, resources and staff responsibilities. Support may include adaptations to everyday activities and routines,

as well as additional or tailored provision to meet the child's needs. IEPs and IBPs are normally reviewed every six weeks to evaluate progress, assess the effectiveness of the support provided and agree appropriate next steps to promote the child's continued learning, development and wellbeing.

Do

The Key Person and staff implement agreed strategies in everyday play, routines and activities, including small-group or one-to-one support where appropriate. The SENCO offers advice, guidance and oversight.

Review

Support plans are ordinarily reviewed every six weeks, as described in the setting's existing practice, or sooner when needs change. The child's progress, family views and the effectiveness of approaches are considered, and the plan is revised or discontinued as appropriate. Reviews and decisions are documented and shared with parents/carers.

7. Working with specialist services and Education, Health and Care Plans

When additional expertise is required, the SENCO works with parents/carers to seek advice or make referrals to appropriate local authority, education, health or care professionals. This may include an Early Help Assessment, a Team Around the Child approach or specialist assessments where relevant. Information is shared lawfully and with appropriate consent or another valid legal basis.

Where a child has complex and continuing needs that may require support beyond that available through SEN Support, the setting may help the family consider requesting an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment from the local authority. The local authority decides whether to assess and whether to issue an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP); an EHCP is not automatically produced because progress is limited.

8. Inclusive curriculum and reasonable adjustments

Our learning environment, interactions and activities are planned to be inclusive and flexible. Staff use observations to tailor experiences to each child's interests, abilities and communication preferences, enabling all children to participate meaningfully in EYFS learning.

- Use visual supports, picture prompts, signs and Makaton where appropriate, including as universal communication supports.
- Consider specific strategies and interventions e.g. "Bucket Time", play based learning, "Now & Next" boards.
- Adapt routines, activities, environments, resources, group sizes and adult assistance to individual needs.
- Provide positive representations of difference, including through stories, play resources and persona dolls.
- Consider access to indoor and outdoor activities, personal care, sensory needs and children's well-being.
- Review accessibility and make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010.

9. Partnership with parents and carers

Parents/carers know their child best and are invited to contribute at every stage of identification, planning, support and review. The setting maintains an open-door approach, daily conversations, Key Person contact and updates through Tapestry, where used. Families are invited to share information through "All About Me" materials, individual support plans and transition discussions. We communicate sensitively, explain decisions clearly and take account of family views, culture and communication needs.

10. Transition and continuity

The SENCO and Key Person work with families and receiving settings or schools to prepare children for transitions. With appropriate information-sharing arrangements, this may include transition plans, meetings, visits, agreed support strategies and transfer of relevant records. Support is also considered when a child first joins the Pre-School or changes groups or routines.

11. Specific Strategies and Interventions

This document describes examples of our everyday SEND provision. It supports, but does not replace, individual support plans, the SEND Policy, safeguarding procedures or specialist professional guidance.

Our inclusive approach

At The Stacey Pre-School, we recognise that every child develops at their own pace and may benefit from different approaches to learning, communication and participation. We provide a welcoming, inclusive environment in which children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are supported to learn, develop confidence, build relationships and participate alongside their peers.

Support is tailored to each child's strengths, interests, developmental stage and identified needs. Strategies are incorporated into everyday play and routines, and may be used individually or in combination. We work closely with parents/carers and relevant professionals to agree appropriate support, monitor progress and adapt approaches when needed.

How we use our strategies and interventions:

Tailored routines and predictable structure

We adapt the pattern, pace and demands of the pre-school day to suit individual children. A consistent routine can help children understand what happens next, manage change and feel secure. Where needed, practitioners allow additional processing time, prepare children for changes and build preferred or calming activities into the day.

SEN bucket time and focused attention activities

We use structured, motivating "bucket time" activities to encourage shared attention, curiosity, listening and participation. Adults present engaging objects or short demonstrations in a calm, predictable sequence. Sessions are adapted to the child's interests, attention span and readiness to join in; children are not expected to participate for longer than is appropriate for them.

Sensory cabin and sensory breaks

Our sensory cabin can offer a calm, supported space for children who benefit from reduced stimulation, sensory exploration or time to regulate. Adults consider each child's sensory preferences and responses and support access to the space according to their individual plan. The cabin is used as a supportive resource, never as punishment or isolation; appropriate supervision is maintained.

Sensory and tactile play

We provide opportunities to explore different textures and sensations through activities such as sand, water and tactile resources. Sensory play can support exploration, early concepts, fine-motor skills, communication and engagement. Practitioners offer choice and gradual exposure for children who are sensitive to particular sensations, without requiring them to touch materials they find uncomfortable.

Edible sensory materials

Where appropriate, supervised sensory activities may use food-based materials such as cereals and suitable non-staining food colouring. These can provide alternative textures for children who explore materials orally. Staff check allergies, dietary requirements, choking risks, hygiene and individual care plans before activities and select materials that are suitable for each child. "Edible" does not mean risk-free.

Visual timetables and transition songs

We use photographs, pictures, symbols, visual timetables and familiar songs to show the sequence of activities and signal changes, such as tidy-up time, snack time or moving outdoors. Consistent cues reduce reliance on spoken instructions, provide processing time and support smoother transitions. Visual supports are matched to the child's level of understanding.

PECS and supported choices

Where included in a child's communication plan, the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) may be used to help a child communicate a request or make a choice by exchanging a picture. Practitioners follow the individual approach agreed with parents and the relevant communication professionals; PECS is a specific structured approach

and is not simply a general name for picture cards. Other choice boards, gestures and symbols may also be used as appropriate.

Songs, rhymes and story bags

Songs and rhymes provide repetition, rhythm and predictable language, helping to develop attention, turn-taking, vocabulary and memory. Story bags contain objects or props linked to a story, making spoken words more meaningful through hands-on exploration. Practitioners repeat key phrases, model language and invite children to join in through words, sounds, gestures or actions.

Peer-supported play

We create carefully supported opportunities for children to play alongside or with other children. Practitioners may model sharing, turn-taking, requesting and joining in, and choose activities based on common interests. Support is sensitive and inclusive: children are encouraged to participate at their own pace and peers are not expected to take responsibility for another child's care.

One-to-one and small-group support

Some children benefit from short periods of focused adult support or a smaller group with fewer distractions. Sessions can target agreed outcomes, such as attention, communication, motor skills or early learning. We then help children use emerging skills in natural play and daily routines, so that individual support strengthens participation in the wider setting.

Working with parents and external professionals

Parents/carers are central to planning and reviewing support. We listen to their knowledge of the child, share observations and agree practical strategies that can be used consistently at pre-school and, where helpful, at home. With appropriate consent and information-sharing arrangements, we work with external professionals including speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, educational psychologists, Portage workers and health services.

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) coordinates referrals and professional advice, supports the Key Person and wider staff team, and helps ensure agreed strategies are understood and used consistently. Support is monitored through observation and review, with adjustments made according to the child's response and progress. Referrals, specialist programmes and individual plans are undertaken according to the child's needs and applicable local processes.

Summary of key SEND strategies

Area of need	Strategies used	Intended support
Communication & interaction	Visual timetables, gestures, PECS where appropriate, story bags, simplified language, songs and repetition	Support understanding, expressing choices, attention, language and shared interaction.
Cognition & learning	Learning in small steps, repetition, sorting and matching activities, structured routines, sensory play	Build understanding and skills through achievable, engaging experiences.
Social, emotional & mental health	Safe and calming spaces, predictable routines, trusted Key Person relationships, peer-supported play, praise and encouragement	Support a sense of security, emotional regulation, confidence and positive relationships.
Sensory & physical needs	Adapted environment, tactile/visual prompts, accessible equipment and routes, sensory breaks, physiotherapy-informed strategies where relevant	Improve comfort, access, movement and participation according to individual needs.

Planning, safety and review

Strategies are selected to meet an identified purpose and are not automatically suitable for every child. Practitioners consider accessibility, supervision, individual health requirements, allergies, safe use of resources, and any relevant risk assessments or specialist advice.

The SENCO and Key Person review how well approaches are working with the child and parents/carers, recording agreed adjustments through the setting's usual SEND support arrangements.

12. Funding, resources and training

The Pre-School plans and allocates resources to support children's individual needs. Where eligible and appropriate, the SENCO and Manager may seek local authority SEND Inclusion Funding or Disability Access Funding and use the support towards reasonable adjustments, additional staffing, specialist equipment or learning resources in accordance with the relevant funding conditions. Funding applications and awards are not guaranteed.

Staff have access to induction, ongoing professional development and advice through Portsmouth City Council Early Years services and other relevant providers. Training needs are considered at least annually, and the SENCO action plan helps prioritise improvements.

13. Records, confidentiality and information sharing

The SENCO oversees secure, appropriately restricted records for children receiving SEND support, including observations, assessments, meeting notes, correspondence, referrals and support plans. Information is handled in accordance with the setting's Privacy Notice, record-retention arrangements, safeguarding duties and data protection law. Records are shared only when appropriate and lawful, with parents/carers kept informed as required.

14. Concerns and complaints

Parents/carers are encouraged to discuss concerns initially with their child's Key Person, the SENCO or the Pre-School Manager. A meeting will be offered to discuss the concern and agree possible next steps. If the concern remains unresolved, the Pre-School's formal Complaints Policy applies. The Complaints Policy is available through the setting's usual parent information channels, including the parent noticeboard, website or Tapestry where available.

15. Monitoring, evaluation and review

The Manager and SENCO review implementation of this policy at least annually and sooner if legislation, statutory guidance or setting arrangements change. Evaluation includes the effectiveness of early identification, plans and interventions, record-keeping, use of resources, staff development, inclusive environments and feedback from children, families and professionals.

16. Local Offer and sources of further support

Portsmouth's SEND Local Offer provides information about services, support and advice for children and young people with SEND and their families. The SENCO can help families find relevant local guidance and support, including Portsmouth Parent Voice and appropriate local education, health and family services.

- Portsmouth SEND Local Offer: https://www.portsmouthlocaloffer.org/
- Portsmouth City Council, SEND and inclusion: https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/children-and-families/early-years-and-childcare/send-and-inclusion/
- SEND Code of Practice: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25
- SEND guide for early years settings: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-early-years-settings
- EYFS statutory framework: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2