



Blackburn with Darwen L.A.

St. Thomas's Centre

Special Educational Needs & Disability Policy

2026-2027

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the approach of St Thomas's Centre to identifying and meeting the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) of children and young people attending the Centre.

St Thomas's Centre is a local-authority-maintained pupil referral unit providing alternative educational provision for children and young people who are unable to access mainstream education.

The policy is written for the whole school community, including pupils, parents/carers, staff, the Management Committee and relevant external professionals. It is intended to be a working document which reflects the needs of the pupils attending St Thomas's Centre and the provision available within the Centre.

St Thomas's Centre recognises that every child and young person is an individual. We take a holistic approach to understanding pupils' needs and recognise that special educational needs may interact with social, emotional, mental health, communication, learning, physical, sensory and other needs.

Many pupils attending St Thomas's Centre present with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. We recognise that SEMH needs may arise from a range of factors, may be multiple in nature and may present in different ways and with differing levels of severity.

We recognise that behaviour may communicate an underlying need and that pupils may require support to understand and manage their emotions, relationships, behaviour and learning.

Pupils attending St Thomas's Centre may receive support through SEN Support and some pupils may have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

St Thomas's Centre has regard to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0–25 years and relevant legislation and statutory guidance. The SEND Code of Practice applies to pupil referral units and sets out expectations for identifying and supporting pupils with SEND.

Further information is available through the Blackburn with Darwen Local Offer and St Thomas's Centre's SEN Information Report.

[Blackburn and Darwen Local Offer](#)

[St Thomas's Centre website](#)

2. Legislation and Statutory Guidance

This policy should be read alongside relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

Children and Families Act 2014, Part 3;

Equality Act 2010;

Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014;

Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0–25 years;

Keeping Children Safe in Education;
Working Together to Safeguard Children;
relevant Blackburn with Darwen local authority SEND guidance;
St Thomas's Centre's SEN Information Report;
St Thomas's Centre's Accessibility Plan;
St Thomas's Centre's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
St Thomas's Centre's Behaviour Policy;
St Thomas's Centre's Attendance Policy;
St Thomas's Centre's Equality Policy;
St Thomas's Centre's Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy;
St Thomas's Centre's Complaints Policy.

The SEND Code of Practice is statutory guidance for organisations working with children and young people with SEND in England.

3. Our Vision and Aims

St Thomas's Centre believes that all children and young people have the right to an education that recognises their individual strengths, needs and aspirations.

We aim to:

- identify SEND at the earliest appropriate opportunity;
- provide high-quality, inclusive teaching;
- remove or reduce barriers to learning;
- provide appropriate additional support and intervention;
- enable pupils to make progress academically, socially and emotionally;
- promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing;
- develop pupils' independence, confidence and resilience;
- recognise and build upon pupils' strengths and interests;
- involve pupils in decisions about their education and support;
- work in partnership with parents and carers;
- work effectively with the pupil's home school where pupils are dual registered;
- work with external agencies and professionals where appropriate;
- ensure that pupils with SEND have appropriate access to the curriculum and wider school opportunities;
- support successful transition to the next stage of education, training, employment or adulthood.

St Thomas's Centre believes that every teacher is a teacher of pupils with SEND and Responsibility for meeting the needs of pupils with SEND is shared across the Centre.

4. Equality, Inclusion and Accessibility

St Thomas's Centre is committed to providing an inclusive education for all pupils. We will not discriminate against pupils on the basis of disability or any other protected characteristic. St Thomas's Centre will make reasonable adjustments where required to ensure that disabled pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage.

We will seek to identify and remove barriers to:

learning;
communication;
participation;
social interaction;
physical access;
accessing information;
participation in wider school activities.

Accessibility arrangements may include:
adapted teaching;
visual and practical resources;
additional adult support;
small-group teaching;
reasonable adjustments to the learning environment;
specialist equipment;
communication support;
sensory adjustments;
additional processing time;
appropriate assessment arrangements;
staff training.

Further information is contained within the Centre's Accessibility Plan and [SEN Information Report](#).

5. Definition of Special Educational Needs and Disability

A child or young person has SEND if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

The SEND Code of Practice identifies four broad areas of need:

- Communication and Interaction
- Cognition and Learning
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Sensory and/or Physical Needs

These areas are not intended to be rigid categories. A pupil may have needs in more than one area and their needs may change over time. At St Thomas's Centre, we consider the needs of the whole child rather than focusing solely on a diagnosis or category of need.

6. Identifying SEND

Pupils attending St Thomas's Centre may arrive with identified SEND, an EHC Plan or existing professional assessments. Other pupils may require further assessment following admission.

We use a range of information to identify and understand pupils' needs, including:
information from the pupil's previous school;

information from parents/carers;
pupil views;
existing EHC Plans;
professional reports;
teacher assessment;
observations;
academic assessment;
attendance information;
behaviour information;
social and emotional information;
communication and interaction needs;
information from external agencies.

Assessment information is used to identify strengths, barriers to learning and areas requiring additional support.

Standardised and school-based assessments may be used where appropriate.

These may include:

Ruth Miskin RWI;
CAT4 testing;
AAB testing;
Progression Tools;
baseline motor skills assessment;
Do-IT profiling;
curriculum-based assessment;
teacher assessment and observation.

Assessment information will not be used in isolation. Professional judgement, pupil voice, parent/carers views and other relevant information will be considered when identifying SEND.

7. Factors Which May Affect Learning

St Thomas's Centre recognises that there are factors which may affect a pupil's learning but which do not, in themselves, mean that a pupil has SEND.

These may include:

attendance and punctuality;
health and wellbeing;
social circumstances;
disadvantage;
English as an Additional Language;
being a child looked after by the local authority;
being previously looked after;
being a child of service personnel;
changes in family circumstances;
bereavement or other significant life experiences.

These factors will be considered as part of a holistic assessment of the pupil.

Where a pupil has SEND alongside other vulnerabilities, the Centre will consider how these needs interact and will provide appropriate support.

8. Quality First Teaching

[High-quality Inclusive Teaching](#) is the first response to meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers are responsible for adapting teaching and learning to meet the individual needs of pupils.

This may include:

clear and simple instructions;
breaking tasks into manageable steps;
modelling;
repetition and overlearning;
visual supports;
practical resources;
differentiated activities;
appropriate scaffolding;
flexible grouping;
additional processing time;
checking understanding;
pre-teaching vocabulary;
retrieval activities;
opportunities for movement and regulation;
appropriate sensory adjustments;
assistive technology where appropriate.

Teachers should use information about pupils' SEND to inform planning and classroom practice. Where a teacher has concerns regarding a pupil's progress, development or additional needs, they should discuss these with the SENCO.

9. SEN Support – The Graduated Approach

St Thomas's Centre follows the graduated approach to SEN Support:

Assess → Plan → Do → Review

This is an ongoing cycle through which provision is identified, implemented, monitored and adapted according to the pupil's needs and response to support.

Assess	Plan	Do
Assessment will consider the pupil's:	Assessment information will be used to agree appropriate outcomes and provision. Planning may involve:	The class or subject teacher remains responsible for the pupil's day-to-day education and progress.

strengths; interests; academic attainment; progress; communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health; sensory and physical needs; attendance; behaviour and regulation; barriers to learning; existing provision	the pupil; parents/carers; teachers; SENCO; pastoral staff; teaching assistants; the Provision Leader; external professionals; the pupil's home school where the pupil is dual registered.	Teaching assistants and other support staff will work under the direction of teaching staff and will implement agreed support and interventions. The SENCO will provide advice and support to staff and coordinate SEND provision. Where specialist advice has been received, staff will implement appropriate recommendations and monitor their impact.
Information may be gathered from the pupil, parents/carers, teachers, SENCO, previous settings and external professionals. Where appropriate, specialist assessment and advice will be requested.	Academic, social and emotional outcomes may be recorded through the Centre's agreed systems, including IEPs. Targets should be clear, measurable and focused on the difference the provision is intended to make.	

Review The impact of support will be reviewed regularly.	Reviews will consider: progress towards outcomes; pupil views; parent/carer views; the effectiveness of interventions; the quality and consistency of provision; attendance and engagement where relevant; whether further assessment is required; whether support should continue, be adapted or be withdrawn. St Thomas's Centre currently undertakes half-termly academic review days. Where necessary, additional SEN Support meetings will be arranged involving relevant staff, professionals, parents/carers and the pupil.
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10. Specialist Support and External Agencies

Where appropriate, St Thomas's Centre will seek advice and support from external agencies.

This may include:

Educational Psychology;
Speech and Language Therapy;
Occupational Therapy;
Physiotherapy;
School Nursing;
Community Paediatrics;
Mental Health Services;

Local Authority SEND Support Services;
social care professionals;
therapeutic services;
other relevant education, health and community services.

External support will be considered according to the individual needs of the pupil.

The Centre will work collaboratively with external professionals and will consider specialist advice alongside school-based assessment and the views of the pupil and family.

11. Education, Health and Care Plans

Some pupils attending St Thomas's Centre may have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

Where a pupil has an EHC Plan, St Thomas's Centre will:

- consider the outcomes identified within the plan;
- deliver the special educational provision specified in the plan, within the responsibilities of the setting;
- monitor progress towards outcomes;
- involve the pupil and parents/carers;
- work with the local authority and relevant professionals;
- contribute to statutory annual reviews;
- support transition planning.

Where a pupil does not have an EHC Plan but there is evidence that they may require an EHC needs assessment, the SENCO will discuss this with the pupil, parents/carers and relevant professionals and follow the appropriate local authority process. Where pupils are dual registered, the Centre will work closely with the home school and local authority to ensure that SEND provision and EHC Plan arrangements are appropriately coordinated.

12. Dual-Registered Pupils and Partnership with Home Schools

As a pupil referral unit, St Thomas's Centre may support pupils who remain registered at another school.

Where a pupil is dual registered, St Thomas's Centre will work collaboratively with the home school to ensure that relevant information is shared and that provision is coordinated.

This may include:

- SEND information;
- assessment information;
- EHC Plan information;
- professional reports;
- intervention information;

progress information;
attendance information;
safeguarding information;
transition information.

The Centre will work with the home school to support the pupil's educational outcomes and, where appropriate, successful reintegration.

13. Pupil Voice

St Thomas's Centre recognises the importance of listening to children and young people and involving them in decisions about their education.

Pupils will be encouraged to:

identify their strengths;
identify barriers to learning;
explain what helps them learn;
contribute to target setting;
express their views about support;
participate in review meetings where appropriate;
develop independence in managing their learning and support.

Pupil views will be considered alongside information from parents/carers, staff and professionals.

14. Working with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are important partners in identifying and supporting SEND.

St Thomas's Centre will seek to:

communicate regularly with parents/carers;
involve parents/carers in assessment and planning;
share information about progress;
discuss concerns at an early stage;
involve parents/carers in reviews;
seek their views about provision and support;
provide information about external support where appropriate.

Where a pupil is dual registered, communication will also take place with the home school as appropriate.

15. Safeguarding and SEND

St Thomas's Centre recognises that pupils with SEND may face additional barriers to communication, participation and reporting concerns.

Staff will consider individual communication needs and make appropriate adjustments to ensure pupils can express their views and raise concerns.

SEND should not automatically be assumed to be the reason for changes in a pupil's behaviour, presentation or emotional wellbeing.

Where there are concerns about a pupil's safety or welfare, staff must follow the Centre's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and current statutory safeguarding guidance.

SEND, safeguarding, mental health and behaviour should be considered together when understanding a pupil's needs.

16. Accessibility

St Thomas's Centre aims to ensure that pupils with SEND and disabilities have appropriate access to:

- the curriculum;
- learning resources;
- information;
- the physical environment;
- school activities;
- enrichment opportunities;
- appropriate assessments.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required.

The Centre's Accessibility Plan sets out how accessibility will be improved over time.

Further information is available within the Centre's SEN Information Report and Accessibility Plan.

17. Staff Training and Professional Development

St Thomas's Centre recognises that staff require appropriate knowledge and skills to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

The Centre will provide training and professional development according to identified needs.

This may include training in:

- SEMH;
- trauma-informed practice;
- attachment;
- communication and interaction;
- autism;
- cognition and learning;
- speech, language and communication;
- sensory needs;
- emotional regulation;

positive behaviour support;
safeguarding;
reasonable adjustments;
inclusive teaching strategies.

The SENCO will provide advice and guidance to staff and contribute to professional development relating to SEND.

18. Roles and Responsibilities

Management Committee

The Management Committee has oversight of SEND provision at St Thomas's Centre.

The Management Committee will:

- ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to support pupils with SEND;
- monitor the effectiveness of SEND provision;
- provide appropriate challenge and support to school leaders;
- ensure relevant statutory duties are considered;
- receive information regarding SEND provision and outcomes;
- consider SEND within the wider strategic development of the Centre.

SEND link member: Charlotte Hesketh

Headteacher – Angy Saaiman

The Headteacher in Charge will:

- provide strategic leadership for SEND;
- ensure SEND provision is appropriately resourced;
- work with the SENCO;
- ensure staff understand their responsibilities;
- ensure SEND is considered within school improvement planning;
- report to the Management Committee as appropriate.

SENCO: Miss Shafina Bibi

The SENCO will:

- coordinate SEND provision across the Centre;
- support the identification and assessment of SEND;
- advise staff regarding appropriate provision;
- coordinate the Assess–Plan–Do–Review cycle;
- monitor the effectiveness of interventions;
- maintain appropriate SEND records;
- liaise with parents/carers;
- liaise with external agencies;
- support EHC Plan processes and annual reviews;
- contribute to staff training;
- support transition arrangements;
- promote inclusion and access to the curriculum;

contribute to the SEN Information Report and SEND policy;
work with home schools where pupils are dual registered.

Teachers

Teachers are responsible for:

- providing high-quality inclusive teaching;
- adapting teaching to meet individual needs;
- monitoring progress;
- implementing agreed SEND provision;
- working with teaching assistants;
- contributing to assessment and reviews;
- identifying concerns and discussing them with the SENCO;
- involving pupils in their learning and target setting.

Teaching Assistants and pastoral Support Staff

- implement agreed support;
- support pupils to develop independence;
- work under the direction of teachers;
- contribute to assessment and review;
- provide feedback to teachers and the SENCO;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries and confidentiality.

19. Transition

Transition is particularly important for pupils attending St Thomas's Centre.

St Thomas's Centre will work with pupils, parents/carers, home schools, receiving schools, colleges, training providers and relevant professionals to support successful transitions.

Transition support may include:

- information sharing;
- transition meetings;
- visits;
- individual transition plans;
- visual supports;
- gradual introduction to new environments;
- liaison with receiving settings;
- sharing SEND and EHC Plan information;
- careers and preparation for adulthood support where appropriate.

The Centre will aim to ensure that relevant information about a pupil's SEND and provision is shared appropriately when the pupil moves to another setting.

20. Monitoring and Evaluating SEND Provision

The Centre will monitor the effectiveness of SEND provision through:

assessment information;
pupil progress;
review of individual outcomes;
intervention monitoring;
pupil voice;
parent/carer feedback;
staff feedback;
professional advice;
attendance and engagement information;
analysis of SEND provision;
review of EHC Plan outcomes where applicable.

The SENCO will report to school leaders and the Management Committee as appropriate.

The findings will be used to identify strengths, areas for development and priorities for the Centre's improvement planning.

21. SEN Information Report

St Thomas's Centre will publish a SEN Information Report in accordance with statutory requirements.

The SEN Information Report will provide information about the Centre's current arrangements for supporting pupils with SEND. The report will be reviewed and updated at least annually and updated when significant changes occur.

The [SEND Policy](#) and [SEN Information Report](#) should be read together.

22. Complaints and Concerns

St Thomas's Centre welcomes comments and feedback regarding SEND provision. In the first instance, concerns should be raised with the SENCO or an appropriate member of the school's leadership team. Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, the Centre's [formal complaints procedure](#) should be followed.

23. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

SEND information will be recorded and managed in accordance with the Centre's data protection, information management and safeguarding procedures. SEND records will be maintained appropriately and kept up to date.

Information will be shared with staff and professionals where necessary to support the pupil and in accordance with applicable legal requirements. Where a pupil transfers to another educational setting, relevant information regarding their SEND and special educational provision will be shared appropriately.

The SENCO will ensure that SEND records are maintained in accordance with the Centre's procedures. The SEND Regulations include specific expectations around maintaining SEND records, communicating with parents and transferring relevant information when pupils move settings.

24. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly and whenever there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, local authority arrangements or the Centre's SEND provision.

The policy will be reviewed by the SENCO and school leadership and presented to the Management Committee for approval.