



Welcome to Learning Support

*Information on what can be
expected from engaging with the
Downlands SEND department.*



In Partnership with

SPaRC

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In Partnership with

SParC

Who are we?

Learning Support Staff

- Welcome to Learning Support at Downlands.
- Our SEND team works with pupils, families, teachers and outside professionals to ensure every child can access learning and thrive.
- We have specialist staff including SENDCos, Lead TAs for Neurodiversity, Dyslexia and EHCPs, and a dedicated SENDCo PA for parent communication and SENDCo admin support.



**Mrs Vicky
Cornish**

SENDCo

Assistant
Headteacher for
SEND



**Mr Zachary
Shinebourne**

Assistant
SENDCo

Neurodiversity
Lead
Nurture Maths



**Mr Chris
Runeckles**

Assistant
Headteacher
SEND Line
Manager



Mrs Kate Turner

Assistant
Headteacher
Safeguarding/
Child Protection



**Mrs Holly
Sweatman**

SENDCo PA



**Mrs Liz
Matthews**

Lead Teacher in
Adaptive
Learning

Teaching Assistants

Our approach is likely to be different from primary schools

- We have 12 non-specific TAs (5 x FT, 7 x PT); 3 Lead TAs in SEND, Dyslexia and Neurodiversity and 3 Core specific Teaching Assistants.
- TA has a small group of focus pupils with EHCPs in a class. Each TA will circulate around others with additional needs, as well as their focus students.
- The level of TA staffing relates to income and funding received from EHCPs.
- TAs are not designated to a particular pupil. This promotes independence and a better relationship with teaching staff.



Who are we?

Learning Support Teaching Assistants



Miss Lou Potter

Lead TA in SEND &
EHCP



**Mrs Claire
MacRae**

Lead TA in dyslexia
P/T



Miss Izzy Makin

Lead TA in
Neurodiversity



Miss Holly Willans

F/T



**Miss Ella-Mae
Seivright**

F/T



Mr Russell Dove

F/T



**Mrs Rebecca
Holmes**

F/T Forest School
and in class



**Mrs Andrea
Crickmore**

P/T



**Mrs Debbie
Jonnes**

P/T



Mrs Lee Clavey

P/T (job share)



**Mrs Louise
Hughes**

P/T (job share)



**Mrs Melissa
Hammond**

P/T

Teaching Assistants

Core subject TAs

- Core TAs work in English, Maths and Science and are managed by these departments. They support pupils who fall behind or work alongside teaching staff withdrawing small groups or individuals.

Nurture support English & Maths

- Students are identified by Year 6 results, reading and spelling levels, numeracy and literacy support needed and on teacher's observations and recommendations. All feeder primary schools pass on Key Stage 2 and teacher assessed levels.
- These small group lessons follow the same content as non-nurture classes however are differentiated to suit the individual needs of the group. These lessons also help with communication, social skills and organisation.

Social & Emotional Support

Who to talk to

- Class tutor
- Pastoral Support Officer
- Achievement Leader
- Learning Mentors
- Prefects
- School Nurse
- Counsellor
- Anxiety workshops
- SEMH Lead



*Year 7 Pastoral
Support Officer*

Social & Emotional Support

What do I do if....? Advice for pupils

Secondary school is all about gaining independence, promoting problem solving and resilience in your children. Sometimes this is harder for us as parents and carers! Help your child by suggesting the following.....

- Ask your tutor
- Ask your Year 11 prefects
- Ask a friend
- Ask a trusted teacher
- Ask your Pastoral Support Officer or Achievement Leader or a member of Learning Support staff
- Ask support staff (Librarian/TAs/Reception)



How do you communicate with us?

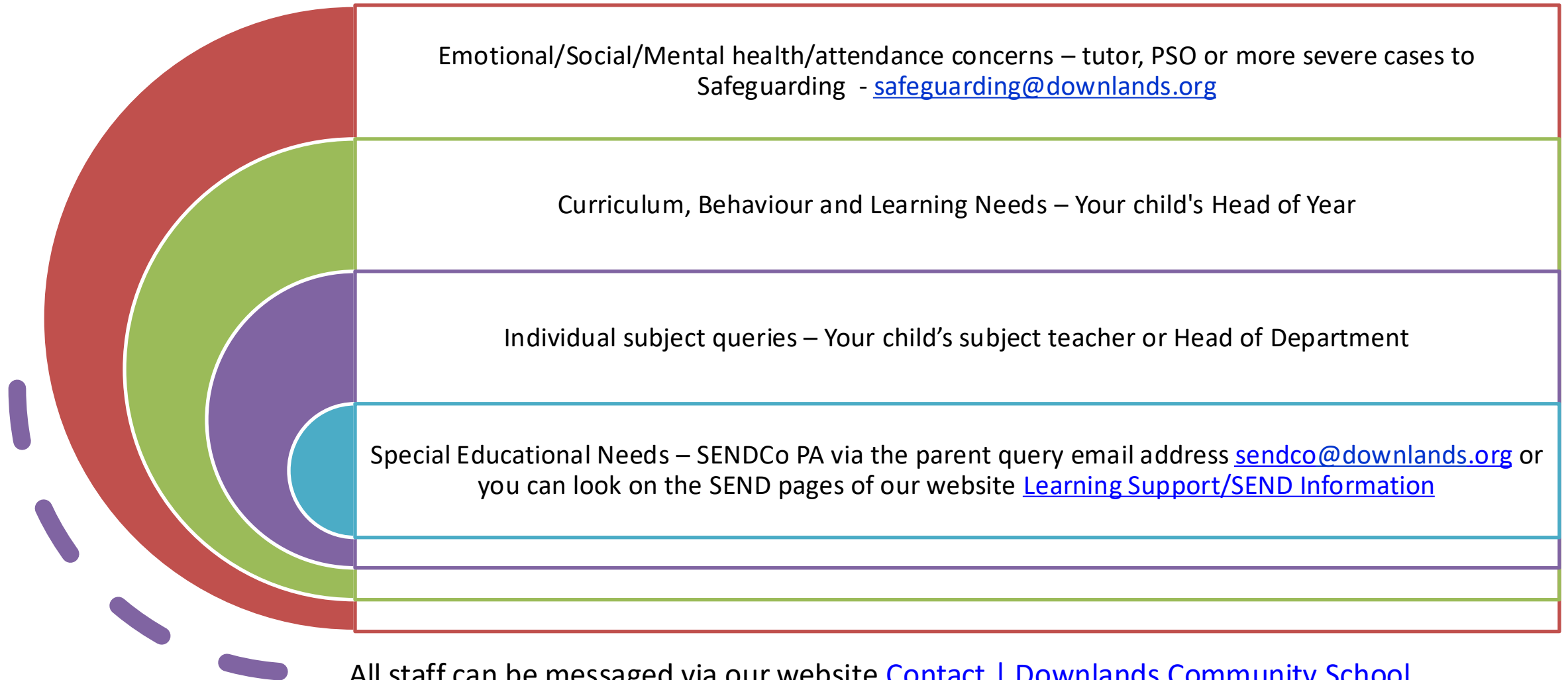


The SEND department

- For all enquiries to the SEND department please use the parent query email address sendco@downlands.org this is to ensure the right staff receives the right information at the right time.
- Both SENDCos have teaching timetables and are constantly supervising pupils needs in and out of Learning Support.
- The SENDCo PA Holly Sweatman supports both SENDCos and manages the parent query email address. She is an admin support just for SEND who runs both diaries; will book in telephone appointments, refer to other departments as needed and ensure queries are answered / acknowledged. If in any doubt Holly via the parent query email address should be your first port of call.
- All emails must be sent to the above address (and not individual staff). Emails will be acknowledged within 3 working days (but a full response could take longer depending on prioritisation)
- Initially, appointments will be by telephone to allow for maximum flexibility. Should a follow up be required this will be arranged post an initial telephone appointment. If parents/carers have additional needs that need specific communication routes, please let us know so we can accommodate this.
- Both SENDCOs are available for appointments at all consultation evenings.

How do you communicate with us?

Who to contact for different things.



Our approach to SEND

We follow a whole-school approach:

- SEND is embedded in the School Development Plan.
- Adaptive teaching training delivered through INSET, consultations, and whole-staff sessions.
- Accessible by design lessons and consistent routines in all classes.
- Pupil passports co-created with pupils, key staff and parents, shared across school. These are written in collaboration with your child and a key member of staff. Additional information can be found in the FAQ's section.
- Formal monitoring of adaptive teaching and SEND routes in classrooms.
- The Hub: new supportive environment combining SEND and mental health provision, with an evidence-based referral system via our "Team Around the Child" meetings.
- Waves of support for SEND*:
 - Wave 1 – Adaptive Teaching in class – Adaptive checklist/Communication with teaching staff
 - Wave 2 – Access to Learning Support / Pupil passport if appropriate for need
 - Wave 3 – Specialist SEND staff support – Lead TAs and SENDCos. TA targeted support for pupils with EHCPs
- *SEND staff make a professional decision based on evidence on what wave a child is on.
- Working with **SParC** a parent led community that works closely with the SEND department and the senior leadership team with the aim to create a collaborative and respectful environment where the voices of parents, carers and students are listened to, and meaningful and lasting change is achieved.

Adaptive Teaching

What is it and how is it adopted?

As part of our School Development Plan we have been targeting adaptive teaching and accessible by design lessons. This means that teaching staff are being trained on adapting their teaching for all levels of need.

This has been delivered by SEND staff through INSET, consultations with SEND staff and by our SENDCo, our Adaptive Teaching Lead and our Assistant Headteacher for Teaching and Learning in whole staff training.

We have a checklist for adaptation for all staff to use and 'preparation to teach' training so staff can get to know the information needed on each pupil and plan accordingly at the beginning of the year.

Leadership formally monitor that teachers are employing adaptive teaching techniques.



Adaptive Teaching

Checklist – previous SEND teacher training

1. Is learning accessible for all?	
Is there...	Lesson includes...
• Explicit teaching of new words • Short, clear explanations • Limited instructions • Guided practice (I do, we do, you do) • Modelling • Questioning	• Sensory/physical aspects of the classroom (noise/lights/movement) • Dual coding • Know what success looks like for each pupil • Printouts/writing frames/gap fill/enlarged work • Readability-size/amount/font 12-14 (Comic Sans/Sans Serif) • Coloured paper/screen background
2. Is learning adapted to help all students be successful?	
Is there...	Lesson includes...
• Awareness of cognitive load/chunking • Models/Examples • Closed, open and challenging questioning along with wait time • Processing time for tasks/whiteboard planning • Regular teacher check- in, if stuck	• Horizontal progress bars/mastering skill emphasis • Sentence starters / Keywords • Writing choices – gap fill/supported writing • Checking for understanding/ repeated instructions • Visuals/ multi-sensory tasks • Now – then – next
3. Is there encouragement for self-awareness, independence and challenge for all learners?	
Is there...	Lesson includes...
• Highest expectations of ALL learners/mastering of a skill • Repetition of the basics then build in gradual difficulty • Use of everyday examples – literal awareness • Self/Peer Evaluation • Praise/Reward/Relationships first	• Appropriate challenge for each task involving choice • Correct scaffolds selected for specific set of learners • Choice of method to record (bullet points/mind maps/storyboards) • Drafting is supported by peers, TAs and the teacher • Build on previous learning

Accessible by design lessons

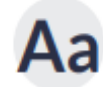
Current SEND training for teachers

- Sans serif fonts
- Size 20 minimum
- Line spacing of 1.5
- High contrast between background and text
- Uncluttered
- Visual aids not decorative distractions

Accessible design

For teachers & schools

v1 APR25

✓ Do...	✗ Avoid...
• Use sans serif fonts (eg. Arial) • Use generous line spacing (eg. 1.5) • Use left-aligned text 	• Avoid styled fonts (eg. Comic Sans) • Avoid underlining, italics & upper case • Use bold sparingly 
• Use dark text on pale backgrounds • Keep handwriting legible and big enough to read 	• Avoid coloured font on coloured, textured, or smudged backgrounds (esp red/green combos) 
• Use consistent slide/booklet design • Highlight key points & use hierarchy • Use whitespace liberally 	• Avoid large blocks of text on slides • Remove redundant words and images (eg. decorative graphics) 
• Speak at a measured pace • Use economy of language, pauses for processing & repetition for memory 	• Avoid using ambiguous or complex language (eg. idioms) • Don't digress 
• Use simple & predictable pedagogical patterns (eg. I-We-You) • Chunk instructions 	• Don't force students to hold instructions in their heads • Reduce distractions 

For more, visit pepsmccrea.com

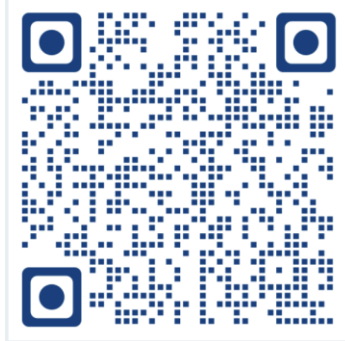
SPaRC

A forum that consists of staff members, governors, parents and carers in which we discuss a range of relevant issues that reflect both the interests of parents, carers and the school.

To find out more or to join please visit:

<https://forms.gle/adkD1jaqRn1aNzgw8> or scan the QR code.

Here you will be asked to share some details that will allow the team to share more details with you including their charter, the minutes from all meetings with the school as well as providing both email and WhatsApp groups which are used for mutual support.



The SEND Register

What is it?

- A record of pupils requiring additional support due to SEND.

How do I engage with it and what does it mean?

- All pupils will remain on the SEND register if they were identified at primary unless manually reviewed and removed.
- Parents may request addition with a new diagnoses or if there is significant evidence they need SEND support. This will be done in consultation with the SEND team, and you should contact them to enter the process for review. Being on the pathway for assessment does not always mean addition to the SEND register, as this is a request to be assessed by parents or carers, where there may not be evidence in school.
- Pupils are then kept on the SEND register unless parental request or needs are no longer seen to be needing specific SEND support. Parents will be notified and consulted.
- At the end of Year 7 we check needs and SEND interventions used and may take pupils off at this point by notifying parents.
- Year 9 pupils on the SEND register have a broader set of option choices. More information will be available in the options process starting in January of Year 9.



Assessment & Intervention

How do we understand your child's needs?

During transition SENDCos meet with all primary SENDCos to discuss pupils with special needs. Pupils that need extra visits are recommended by primary SENDCos.

The SENDCos, Achievement Leader and Pastoral Officer meet to discuss needs of the whole year group and continue to do this throughout the year to signpost pupils to the relevant support.

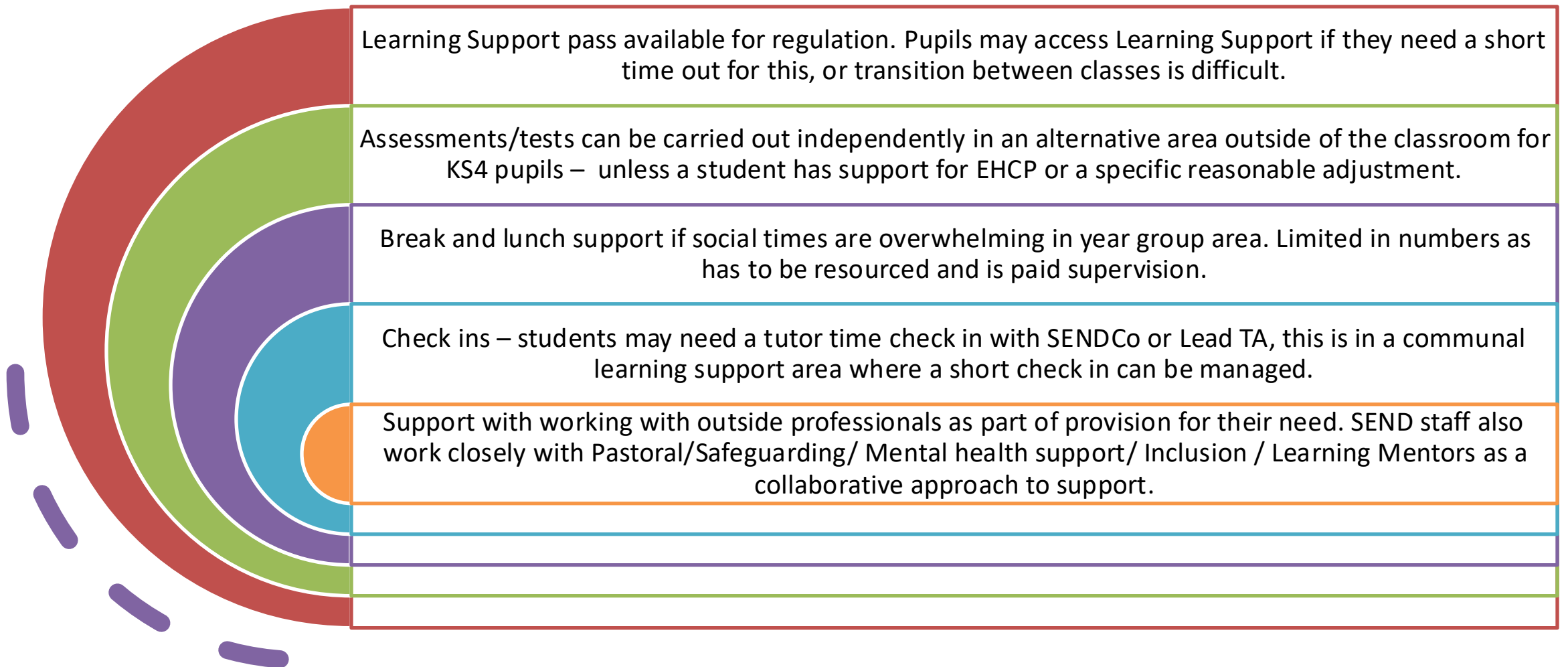
Once at Downlands, all teaching and support staff can access information about pupils with SEND via BROMCOM, including information about how they were supported in primary if given.

Staff registers have subtle flags that identify pupils with SEND. Staff can access all information on that pupil by clicking on their name and seeing documents and strategies added. Additionally SEND staff can add specific strategies and relevant documents they need that will help that child in the classroom.



Assessment & Intervention

Common SEND interventions



Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP)

- An Educational Health Care Needs Assessment is usually needed for pupils that need a high level of TA support in class to be able to access learning, a change of educational setting (usually specialist) or an intensive need for specific support around a high degree of a medical need and / or disability.
- Pupils with EHCPs have a higher level of SEND intervention and work closely with WSCC and SENDCos to ensure their provision allows them to access equal learning opportunities. It can also allow some outside professionals from County to work with those pupils if resources allow. Sometimes it can offer extra funding, but this is decided by WSCC not the school.
- EHCP provision depends on the individual plan which states the support needed from SEND specialist staff.



Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP)

- Schools will apply for pupils they feel need an EHCP and evidence is clear for this. This can take up to 6 months minimum as evidence required is to show 3 cycles of unsuccessful support that is significantly different. Schools will only apply for an EHCP if they cannot accommodate the pupil within the resources and funding they have and the pupil is at an extreme level of need. If there is not enough evidence at school for an EHCP, parents can apply themselves. Details of this can be found on the WSCC website. School will then be notified and asked to show what evidence they have of the pupil in school. This information is factual not opinion based.
- If a pupil does not have an EHCP support will be provided as per need with our SEND interventions and liaising with Head of Year and Pastoral support. Any concerns will be brought to the Team Around the Child meetings by the professionals in school for recommendations of further support.



Assessment & Intervention

Access arrangements

- In Key Stage 3 assessments and tests are done in a more informal way as concessions are not tested until Year 9 for GCSEs. This means that assessments are conducted in 40 minutes leaving the remainder of the lesson free, if extra time is needed.
- Reading support is identified through our reading interventions in all our English library lessons and reading tests.
- Laptops can be used for illegible handwriting or if they were a normal way of working at primary, but this has to be evidenced through classwork examples. Some pupils with dyslexia use their own laptops as agreed by our Lead TA for dyslexia and the SENDCo.
- In Year 9 all pupils are screened by online testing during their computer lessons. This gives us an idea of any pupils that are below threshold in any learning area that will show they need further assessment for exam concessions. The threshold for this is set by the exam boards, not the school.
- At the beginning of Year 10 the recommended pupils are tested by an independent exam assessor who will look at the screening, test the pupils further and identify what is needed. This may be done in small groups or individually. The assessor will also talk to the pupils about anything they find difficult and their normal way of working. Teaching staff will be asked to evidence what they think the pupils need based on class experience and examples of work. The assessor will meet with the SENDCo who will cross reference the findings from teaching staff and the special needs registered for that pupil to ensure the right concession is agreed. Independent reports are not needed for this process and are not recognised as evidence by the exam boards, but can be given to the exam assessor for reference as needed.
- All concessions are trialled at the practice mocks before the end of Year 10 to ensure they work for the child, modifications are agreed by the exam officer and SENDCo. This will then be set for all Year 11 exams.

Assessment & Intervention

Monitoring Progress

- All pupils are given targets in all subjects.
- At the end of every term subject teachers assess pupils work against National Curriculum Levels. These are tracked and recorded throughout their school life.
- You will have received a settling in report and have had the opportunity to discuss this with your child's tutor. They see your child at the beginning of every school day so are a vital source of communication and a consistent adult for your child at school.
- If you would like to track your child's progress, you can find all the information you need on the BROMCOM Parent App or on the school website.



*Head of Year 7
Matt Stokes*

Handy Home Tips & Homework Help

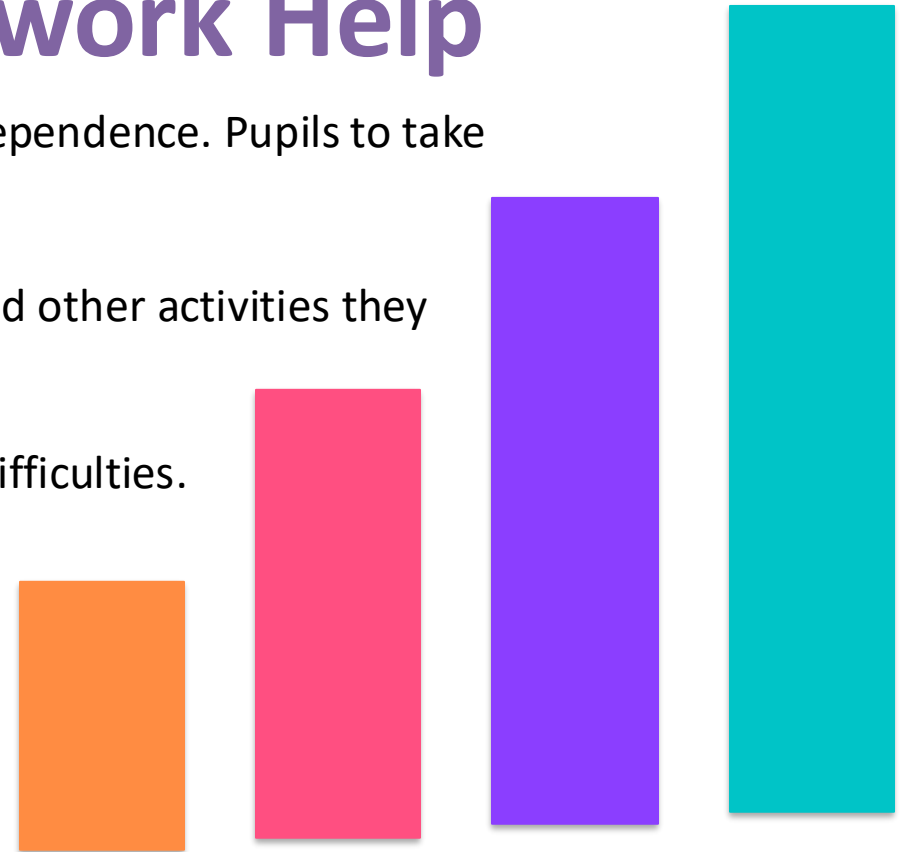
Ensuring homework areas are quiet, calm and organised, make homework a part of your daily routine. Make sure a minimum of 30 mins is spent per piece and you can see what they are doing. Help to find books that are enjoyable and accessible to read.

If you are unsure of what the homework is please check the BROMCOM App or email teaching staff. Encourage your child to check it the day it has been set so your child can ask the teacher for more clarity next lesson if needed. There are school homework clubs your child can attend after school, either in Learning Support, department subjects or as a year group.



Handy Home Tips & Homework Help

- Organisation - use visual timetables and checklists, reward independence. Pupils to take responsibility for packing their own bags.
- Encourage them to be part of our community through clubs and other activities they may not have been interested in before.
- Using coloured overlay rulers or sheets to assist with reading difficulties. Highlight key words and practice subject specific words.



Frequently Asked Questions by Parent/Carers.....

- Where a child is going to be / is late, (not as a result of normal lateness, but if would not have made it into school at all, but have been able to, albeit late), the students or parents can report what appears to be uncertain attendance sanctions to the Pastoral team. If SEND related to the SEND team, who will assess and notify HOY/Pastoral support.
- It has been agreed that students take off / put on their jumpers in a classroom environment without needing to seek permission.
- Where there is an appropriate reason have a short-term change of uniform, e.g. wearing trainers if a broken foot, polo top if having an allergic reaction. This is only for short-term requirements. This will be managed by the student bringing in a note from their parent / carer. This MUST be taken to the Head of Year at the entrance gate to sign if they accept it is appropriate. If signed, can then be presented when challenged. No sanctions for this uniform variation to be given if agreed by the HOY. Note this is NOT a reason for reducing uniform standards and is at the HOY's discretion as to if it is reasonable. For any SEND based long-term reasonable adjustments these should be made via the SEND team as normal, with any such adjustments being documented and registered on BROMCOM.
- When a child is unable to attend school for due to SEND related reasons whilst Pupil Entitlement at WSCC are carrying out their country wide review, parents should continue to provide what evidence they are provided by GPs and Downlands will provide this to Pupil Entitlement to help inform the process. Downlands will continue to try to work constructively with parents and acknowledge at times Drs are unable to provide what they would like.
- When communicating with the school in the first instance Parents / Carers should be approaching with a simple and clear communication. Explaining the issue and desired outcome. They should avoid using lengthy AI generated emails, with multiple education acts quoted as they carry a different weight of expectation and are difficult to unpick for Downlands SEND staff. This delays responses and means that what could have been managed in a practical and informal way is no longer possible and they must now be managed in a more formal way which may well not give the desired outcome. It also takes up significant resources.
- As per the SParC Charter it is recommended that in all cases initial contact be made informally with an informal request to the SEND inbox and if needed, a call appointment slot arranged. The SEND team want to work with you collaboratively and you will get the best outcomes from them when approached as such.

