# Rotherham Opportunities College

## Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy

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## 1. Introduction

Rotherham Opportunities College (ROC) provides education and support for young people aged 16–25 years with a wide range of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including:

- learning disabilities;
- communication and interaction needs;
- autism;
- physical disabilities;
- sensory impairments;
- social, emotional and mental health needs;
- complex and multiple learning needs.

The college is committed to providing an inclusive, person-centred and aspirational environment in which all students are supported to achieve their full potential, develop independence and prepare successfully for adulthood.

ROC recognises the importance of:

- valuing diversity;
- promoting equality of opportunity;
- removing barriers to learning;
- supporting wellbeing and safeguarding;
- working collaboratively with families and professionals.

## 2. Legislative and Statutory Framework

This policy is informed by:

- Children and Families Act 2014;
- SEND Code of Practice: 0–25 years (2015);
- Equality Act 2010;
- Care Act 2014;
- Mental Capacity Act 2005;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE);
- Further Education guidance relating to SEND and inclusion;
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 (as amended);
- UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 (as amended).

The college recognises its legal duties to:

- make reasonable adjustments;
- prevent discrimination;
- support accessibility;
- promote inclusion and participation;
- safeguard vulnerable students.

## 3. Aims and Objectives

The aims of this policy are to:

- provide high-quality, individualised educational opportunities;
- support students to achieve positive outcomes linked to Preparing for Adulthood;
- enable all students to fulfil their potential;
- support independence, self-advocacy and decision-making;
- work collaboratively with parents, carers and external agencies;
- provide an inclusive environment where students feel safe, valued and respected;
- ensure equality of opportunity for all students;
- provide appropriate support and intervention;
- support students to become active participants within their communities;
- develop staff expertise to meet a wide range of SEND needs.

The college supports the four Preparing for Adulthood outcomes:

- employment;
- independent living;
- community inclusion;
- good health and wellbeing.

## 4. Definition of Disability and SEND

Under the Equality Act 2010, a disability is defined as:

"A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."

Long-term generally means:

- lasting, or likely to last, at least 12 months.

The college recognises that disabilities and additional needs may include:

- autism;
- learning disabilities;
- communication difficulties;
- sensory impairments;
- physical disabilities;
- medical conditions;
- mental health needs;
- specific learning difficulties.

The college recognises that physical disabilities do not necessarily impact cognitive ability and is committed to removing barriers to participation and learning.

A young person has special educational needs where a learning difficulty or disability calls for special educational provision. For those aged 16 or over, this is provision additional to,

or different from, that generally made for others of the same age in mainstream post-16 institutions. Disability and SEN may overlap, but one does not automatically establish the other. A diagnosis is not a prerequisite for identifying support needs.

The college will make reasonable adjustments to prevent disabled students being placed at a substantial disadvantage. This is an anticipatory duty and includes reasonable changes to practices, physical access, auxiliary aids and services. Agreed adjustments and their effectiveness will be recorded and reviewed with the student.

**5. Admissions**

ROC only accepts applications from students with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Admissions decisions are made following consultation with:

- the student;
- parents/carers;
- the relevant Local Authority;
- involved professionals.

The college will consider whether:

- the student's needs can be met appropriately;
- placement is compatible with the efficient education of others;
- appropriate support, staffing and resources can be provided.

Students may join throughout the academic year subject to consultation and agreement with the Local Authority.

Prior to admission, the college will aim to:

- obtain relevant educational and professional reports;
- review EHCP documentation;
- meet with the student and family;
- liaise with current providers and professionals;
- identify support, equipment or training needs;
- provide transition opportunities and visits;
- develop an appropriate transition plan.

Admissions consultations will receive an individual, evidence-based response which considers reasonable adjustments and explains any barriers and proposed solutions. The college will distinguish its consultation response from the Local Authority's decision about naming a placement and maintaining an EHCP. Any statutory duty to admit when named will be applied in accordance with the college's legal status and the Children and Families Act 2014.

**6. Curriculum and Access**

The college provides a broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated curriculum tailored to individual needs and aspirations.

Curriculum planning considers:

- EHCP outcomes;
- Preparing for Adulthood pathways;
- communication and interaction needs;
- sensory and physical access needs;
- emotional wellbeing;
- independence and employability skills.

Students may access:

- accredited learning;
- work experience;
- community-based learning;
- therapies and specialist interventions;
- independent living programmes.

Therapeutic support may include:

- Speech and Language Therapy;
- Occupational Therapy;
- Physiotherapy;
- Counselling;
- Art Therapy
- Music Therapy.

All staff share responsibility for supporting students with SEND.

Staff are expected to:

- differentiate learning appropriately;
- create inclusive learning environments;
- support communication needs;
- promote student wellbeing and engagement.

ROC will translate EHCP provision and outcomes into practical teaching, communication and therapy arrangements, identifying who delivers support and how often. The college will check delivery and escalate gaps promptly to the Principal and the relevant Local Authority or health commissioner. Changes to internal plans do not amend the EHCP.

Support will follow an assess, plan, do and review cycle, with the student involved at each stage. Staff will consider emerging needs and seek specialist advice where progress or participation indicates that support should change. Transition and careers planning will

address education, training, employment and adult services, with an agreed handover when the student leaves.

**7. Student Involvement and Student Voice**

ROC recognises the importance of student participation in decision-making.

Students are encouraged and supported to:

- express views and preferences;
- contribute to target setting;
- review progress;
- participate in annual reviews;
- identify strengths and support needs;
- make choices regarding their education and future goals.

The college will use appropriate communication approaches to support participation, including:

- visual supports;
- assistive technology;
- advocacy;
- alternative communication systems.

After compulsory school age, SEND decision-making rights normally rest with the young person, subject to the statutory arrangements where capacity is lacking. Staff will provide accessible information, time and communication support to enable the student to exercise those rights.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 applies from age 16. Capacity must be presumed and assessed for the particular decision at the relevant time where there is reason to doubt it. Disability, communication difficulty or an unwise choice does not establish lack of capacity. All practicable support must be offered first. Where capacity is lacking, decisions must follow the Act, be recorded, reflect best interests and consider the least restrictive option, with advocacy where required.

**8. Management of SEND**

The Principal has overall responsibility for SEND provision within the college.

Delegated responsibilities include:

- overseeing implementation of this policy;
- monitoring student progress and provision;
- maintaining EHCP processes and records;
- liaising with professionals and agencies;
- supporting staff development and training;

- ensuring appropriate resources are available;
- promoting inclusive practice throughout the college.

The Principal will identify a named member of staff to coordinate each student's SEND support and EHCP review arrangements, and make their role and contact route known to the student and family. The Board will receive reports on provision, outcomes, complaints and improvement actions as part of its oversight.

The college works collaboratively with:

- parents and carers;
- Local Authorities;
- therapists;
- educational psychologists;
- social care teams;
- health professionals;
- external support agencies.

**9. Assessment, Recording and Reporting**

Students undertake baseline assessments on entry to inform:

- curriculum planning;
- EHCP outcomes;
- personalised targets;
- support strategies.

Assessment is ongoing and includes:

- tutor observations;
- work samples;
- student voice;
- photographic and video evidence;
- accredited learning outcomes;
- therapeutic assessments.

Additional professional reports may include:

- Speech and Language Therapy;
- Occupational Therapy;
- Physiotherapy;
- Educational Psychology.

Student progress is reviewed regularly through:

- EHCP reviews;
- target reviews;
- tutor meetings;

- multi-disciplinary discussions.

Where appropriate, students work towards nationally recognised qualifications and accreditation.

The college will work with the Local Authority to ensure that each EHCP is reviewed at least every 12 months, with an earlier review requested where needs or provision change significantly. Reviews will address progress, provision, aspirations and preparation for adulthood.

Where the college arranges a review on behalf of the Local Authority, it will invite the young person, relevant stakeholders and education, health and social care representatives. Advice and information will be sought and circulated at least two weeks before the meeting. The review report, including recommendations and any differences of view, will be sent to the Local Authority and those invited within two weeks of the meeting. The Local Authority is responsible for notifying its decision to maintain, amend or cease the plan within four weeks of the meeting. The college will follow up delays.

SEND records, including assessment images and videos, will be relevant, accurate, securely stored and accessible only to authorised people. The college will document the lawful basis for processing and, for health or other special category data, the applicable additional condition. Retention and sharing will follow its data protection arrangements and privacy information; consent will not be assumed to be the only lawful basis.

**10. Resources and Accessibility**

ROC is committed to maintaining accessible environments and appropriate resources for students with SEND.

The college provides:

- accessible facilities;
- specialist hygiene and personal care facilities;
- moving and handling equipment where required;
- specialist teaching resources;
- assistive technology where appropriate.

The college's Accessibility Plan outlines arrangements for improving:

- physical access;
- curriculum access;
- communication access.

Accessibility will include accessible learning materials and digital systems, communication aids and support during community learning and work placements. Individual emergency evacuation arrangements will be agreed where needed. Medical, personal care and moving and handling support will be planned with the student and relevant professionals, with staff training and competence checked before delivery.

## 11. Staff Training and Development

ROC is committed to maintaining and developing staff expertise in SEND and inclusive practice.

Staff training may include:

- safeguarding;
- autism awareness;
- communication approaches;
- positive behaviour support;
- moving and handling;
- mental health awareness;
- therapeutic approaches;
- equality and inclusion.

Training needs are identified through:

- supervision;
- quality assurance processes;
- learning walks;
- observations;
- service reviews.

The college values input from external professionals and specialist agencies.

Induction and refresher training will reflect students' individual needs, reasonable adjustments, the Mental Capacity Act and child and adult safeguarding. The college will keep training records, check staff competence and arrange specialist advice where required.

## 12. Partnership with Parents and Carers

ROC recognises the important role of parents and carers in supporting student outcomes.

The college aims to:

- maintain positive communication;
- involve families in planning and reviews;
- provide opportunities for discussion and feedback;
- work collaboratively to support progress and wellbeing.

Parents and carers will be invited to:

- annual reviews;
- meetings regarding support and progress;
- transition planning meetings where appropriate.

Family involvement and information sharing will reflect the young person's wishes, capacity and any lawful representative's authority. Parents and carers do not automatically acquire decision-making rights for an adult student. Staff will explain any safeguarding or other lawful reason for sharing information without consent, where it is safe to do so.

**13. Safeguarding and Wellbeing**

The college recognises that students with SEND may be more vulnerable to:

- abuse;
- exploitation;
- bullying;
- discrimination;
- mental health difficulties.

Safeguarding arrangements will:

- consider individual vulnerabilities;
- support communication needs;
- promote emotional wellbeing and safety.

All staff receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role.

Safeguarding procedures will distinguish students under 18, covered by child safeguarding arrangements and KCSIE, from those aged 18 and over, covered by adult safeguarding arrangements. Adult referrals will consider care and support needs, abuse or neglect and the person's ability to protect themselves under section 42 of the Care Act 2014.

Staff must not attribute signs of abuse, neglect, distress or changes in behaviour solely to SEND. The college will provide accessible ways to report concerns and address online risks, exploitation and abuse between students. Concerns must be reported promptly through the designated safeguarding route, with immediate danger referred to emergency services. Staff will follow safeguarding procedures if the designated lead is unavailable or a concern involves staff.

**14. Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where:

- legislation changes;
- statutory guidance is updated;
- operational needs require revision.

The effectiveness of SEND provision will be monitored through:

- student progress and outcomes;
- EHCP review processes;
- quality assurance activities;
- student and parent/carer feedback;

- safeguarding and wellbeing monitoring.

Responsibility for monitoring implementation rests with the Principal and Senior Leadership Team.

Monitoring will check delivery of EHCP provision, the impact of reasonable adjustments, review timeliness, attendance, participation and destinations. Findings will inform recorded improvement actions and the next policy review.

**15. Concerns and Complaints**

Students and their families can raise concerns about SEND support with their named contact or the Principal and use the college's complaints procedure. The procedure and response times will be provided in an accessible format, with communication support or advocacy where needed. A concern about the Principal will follow the route to the Board set out in that procedure.