

# Special Educational Needs Policy Updated - 23/09/2026

## **General Statement of Values and Beliefs**

At Little Chestnuts Preschool, we ensure that every child feels happy, valued, respected, and able to participate fully in all aspects of preschool life. We have created an inclusive environment where every child is recognised as an individual and supported effectively. We believe that children with disabilities are children first and foremost, with the same rights, needs, interests, aspirations, and opportunities as all children. We celebrate the unique strengths, talents, and contributions that each child brings to our preschool community and recognise that diversity enriches the experiences of everyone.

Inclusion is a fundamental right and lies at the heart of everything we do. We actively promote equality, celebrate diversity, and challenge discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes. By working in partnership with families, professionals, and the wider community, we have created a culture in which every child and family feels welcomed, respected, valued, and empowered to thrive.

As part of our commitment to early identification and timely intervention, priority for places are given to children with identified or emerging additional needs. We recognise that accessing high-quality early years provision at the earliest opportunity can have a significant impact on children's development, wellbeing, and long-term outcomes. By providing targeted support and inclusive experiences from the outset, we ensure that every child receives the help they need to flourish and reach their full potential.

## **Partnership with Parents**

At Little Chestnuts Preschool, we recognise that parents and carers are their child's first and most important educators. We value the knowledge, insights, and expertise that families have about their children and believe that working in partnership is essential to ensuring that every child receives the support they need to thrive.

Before a child begins their journey with us, we meet with parents and carers to gather information about their child's strengths, interests, routines, experiences, and any additional needs they may have. This enables us to develop a comprehensive understanding of each child and ensures that appropriate support can be put in place from the outset. Where required, a SEN Support Plan will be developed collaboratively with parents and carers, identifying clear outcomes, strategies, and provision to support the child's development, learning, and inclusion.

We maintain open, honest, and respectful communication with families. Parents and carers are actively involved in discussions, planning, reviews, and decision-making relating to their child's learning, development, and wellbeing. We value their views and work together to ensure that support is consistent, meaningful, and responsive to each child's individual needs.

If we have concerns about any aspect of a child's progress, learning, behaviour, attendance, or wellbeing, we will discuss these with parents and carers at the earliest opportunity. We recognise that family circumstances, significant life events, and changes within a child's environment can influence their emotional wellbeing, behaviour, and readiness to learn. By sharing information and working together, we provide coordinated support that helps children feel secure, understood, and successful both at home and within the preschool setting.

## **Partnership with other professionals**

At Little Chestnuts Preschool, we recognise the importance of working collaboratively with other professionals to ensure that children receive the most effective, consistent, and well-coordinated support possible.

We value the expertise of specialist services and understand that a multi-agency approach is often essential in identifying and meeting a child's individual needs.

With parental consent, we work closely with professionals who may already be involved in supporting a child and their family. These may include Health Visitors, Speech and Language Therapists, Educational Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Portage Workers, Advisory Teachers, Family Support Workers, and other relevant agencies. By sharing information appropriately and working towards agreed outcomes, we can provide a coordinated approach that supports each child's learning, development, wellbeing, and inclusion.

Where concerns are identified, we will discuss these openly and sensitively with parents and carers. Where appropriate, and with parental consent, we may seek advice from or make referrals to relevant services to access additional assessment, guidance, or specialist support. We recognise the importance of early identification and intervention in helping children achieve the best possible outcomes.

We actively participate in professional meetings, reviews, and information-sharing processes, ensuring that recommendations and agreed strategies are implemented effectively within the preschool environment. We also work closely with families and professionals to monitor progress, review outcomes, and adapt support where necessary to meet the child's changing needs.

Our aim is to build strong, respectful, and collaborative partnerships with both families and professionals. Through effective communication, shared expertise, and a coordinated approach, we strive to ensure that every child receives timely, appropriate, and high-quality support, enabling them to thrive, participate fully, and achieve their full potential.

## **The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice**

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice provides statutory guidance for organisations that work with and support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Introduced in September 2014, the Code applies to children and young people aged 0–25 years and sets out the responsibilities of local authorities, education providers, health services, and other agencies in supporting those with additional needs.

The SEND Code of Practice requires local authorities to publish and maintain a Local Offer, which provides information about the services, support, and provision available for children and young people with SEND and their families. The Thurrock Local Offer brings together clear, comprehensive, and accessible information about education, health, social care, and community services available within the local area. Further information can be found at: [www.askthurrock.org.uk/localoffer](http://www.askthurrock.org.uk/localoffer).

The Code of Practice promotes a graduated approach to identifying and supporting children with SEND and places children, young people, and their families at the centre of decision-making. It emphasises the importance of early identification, partnership working, and effective support to help children achieve the best possible outcomes.

“All children and young people are entitled to an education that enables them to:

- Achieve their best
- Become confident individuals living fulfilling lives, and
- Make a successful transition into adulthood, whether into employment, further or higher education, or training.” *SEND Code of Practice (2015)*

At Little Chestnuts Preschool, we follow the guidance within the SEND Code of Practice to ensure that children who may have additional needs are identified and supported as early as possible. Through ongoing observation, assessment, and monitoring of children's progress, practitioners identify any areas where a child may be experiencing difficulties in accessing learning or achieving expected developmental milestones within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Where concerns arise, staff will carry out focused observations and assessments to gain a clearer understanding of the child's strengths, areas of need, and any barriers to learning. These findings are shared with parents/carers in a private and supportive meeting arranged at a convenient time. Together, staff and families will discuss the child's progress and agree on appropriate strategies and interventions to support their development.

Where additional support is required, a graduated approach following the Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycle is implemented. If appropriate, and with parental consent, referrals may be made to relevant external professionals or agencies to access specialist advice and support. Parents/carers are fully involved throughout the process, ensuring that decisions are made collaboratively and in the best interests of the child.

## The Graduated Approach

We follow the graduated approach as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice. This approach ensures that children receive support that is carefully matched to their individual needs through regular assessment, planning, implementation, and review. It places the child and their family at the centre of the process and enables support to be adapted as a deeper understanding of the child's strengths and needs develops over time.

The graduated approach is a continuous cycle of four stages: Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR). Decisions and actions at each stage are revisited, refined, and revised to ensure that support remains effective and responsive to the child's progress and changing needs.

### Assess

A child's strengths, areas of need, and any barriers to learning will be carefully assessed.

Assessment may include:

- Ongoing observations by practitioners.
- Discussions with parents/carers regarding their views, concerns, and aspirations for their child.
- Information from previous settings or professionals involved with the child.
- Reviews of assessments, records, and developmental information.
- Consultation with specialist professionals where appropriate.

Assessment is an ongoing process and will be reviewed regularly to ensure that support continues to meet the child's individual needs.

### Plan

Following assessment, practitioners, parents/carers, the SENCO, and where appropriate, other professionals, will agree:

- The child's identified needs.
- Desired outcomes and targets.
- The support and strategies to be implemented.
- The roles and responsibilities of all those involved.
- A date for reviewing progress.

## **Do**

The agreed support and interventions will then be put into practice. Key persons and practitioners working directly with the child will be responsible for implementing the planned strategies on a daily basis.

The SENCO provides guidance and support to staff, monitors the effectiveness of interventions, and liaises with parents/carers and other professionals as required.

Support may include adaptations to teaching approaches, targeted interventions, environmental adjustments, or specialist strategies recommended by external agencies.

## **Review**

The effectiveness of the support will be reviewed on the agreed date. The review process will consider:

- The child's progress towards agreed outcomes.
- The impact of interventions and support strategies.
- Feedback from parents/carers, practitioners, and professionals involved.
- The child's views where appropriate.

Following the review, decisions will be made regarding next steps. Support may be continued, adapted, increased, reduced, or concluded depending on the child's progress and current needs. This review then informs the next cycle of assessment and planning.

## **Principles of the Graduated Approach**

The graduated approach at Little Chestnuts Preschool:

- Focuses on the child as an individual.
- Enables children and their parents/carers to express their views, wishes, and feelings.
- Ensures children and parents/carers are actively involved in decision-making.
- Uses clear, accessible language free from unnecessary professional jargon.
- Identifies and celebrates the child's strengths, achievements, and capabilities.
- Recognises the importance of the child's interests, experiences, and aspirations.
- Is tailored to support to meet individual needs and circumstances.
- Minimises unnecessary demands on children and families during assessment processes.
- Promote effective partnership working between parents, practitioners, and professionals.
- Delivers coordinated, outcome-focused support that enables children to make meaningful progress.
- Ensures children are fully included in all aspects of preschool life and learning.

## **Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)**

An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is a legal document that sets out a child or young person's special educational needs, the outcomes they are working towards, and the support required to help them achieve these outcomes. EHCPs take a holistic approach by identifying a child's educational, health, and social care needs, ensuring that services work together to provide coordinated and effective support.

EHCPs are intended for children and young people whose special educational needs require support that goes beyond the resources normally available through SEN Support within an educational setting.

EHCP assessments and plans are coordinated by the Local Authority in partnership with families, education providers, health professionals, and other relevant agencies.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, a Local Authority must carry out an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment if:

- A child or young person has, or may have, Special Educational Needs (SEN); and it may be necessary for special educational provision to be made through an Education, Health and Care Plan.

## **The EHCP Process**

The typical Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment process involves the following stages:

- Identification of Need  
Parents/carers, preschool staff, or other professionals identify concerns regarding a child's development, learning, or ability to access the curriculum and make expected progress.
- Gathering Evidence  
Parents/carers, practitioners, and relevant professionals work together to collect evidence demonstrating the child's strengths, needs, and the support already provided through SEN Support.
- Request for Assessment  
A request for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment is submitted to the Local Authority, supported by evidence of the child's needs and the interventions already implemented.
- Local Authority Decision  
The Local Authority will consider the request and must decide whether to proceed with an assessment, usually within six weeks of receiving the application.
- Assessment and Plan Development  
If agreed, information will be gathered from parents/carers, educational settings, health professionals, social care services, and the child where appropriate. This information is used to develop a draft Education, Health and Care Plan.

## **Consultation on the Draft Plan**

Parents/carers are given the opportunity to review the draft EHCP and have at least 15 days to comment, request amendments, and express a preference for an educational setting.

## **Final EHCP Issued**

The final Education, Health and Care Plan should normally be completed and issued within 20 weeks of the original request for assessment.

At Little Chestnuts Preschool, we are committed to supporting children and families throughout the EHCP process. Where it is felt that a child may require provision beyond that available through SEN Support, we will work closely with parents/carers and relevant professionals to gather evidence and, where appropriate, support a request for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment.

We will actively contribute to assessments, attend meetings, provide detailed observations and reports, and implement any recommendations outlined within a child's EHCP. We recognise the importance of collaborative working and maintaining open communication with families throughout the process.

## A Child-Centred Approach

Little Chestnuts Preschool embraces the child-centred principles that underpin the SEND Code of Practice. We believe that children and their families should be at the heart of all decisions regarding support and provision.

Our approach focuses on:

- Listening to the views, wishes, and feelings of the child and their family.
- Recognising and building upon the child's strengths, interests, and achievements.
- Identifying what is important to the child both now and in the future.
- Promoting independence, confidence, and participation.
- Supporting meaningful inclusion within the preschool and wider community.
- Working collaboratively with parents/carers and professionals to achieve positive outcomes.

Through careful planning and effective partnership working, we aim to ensure that all children, including those with an EHCP, receive the support they need to thrive, participate fully in preschool life, and achieve their full potential.

## Disabled Children and the Equality Act 2010

We provide an inclusive environment where all children are valued and supported to reach their full potential. We work within the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, ensuring that disabled children are not treated less favourably and have equal access to all aspects of preschool life.

We will make reasonable adjustments where required, remove barriers to participation, and work closely with parents/carers and other professionals to meet each child's individual needs. We believe that inclusion benefits everyone by promoting understanding, respect, and equality, helping all children to feel safe, valued, and included.

## English Additional Language (EAL)

We recognise and value the linguistic and cultural diversity of our families. We provide an inclusive environment where children who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) are supported to develop both their home language and their English language skills.

The EYFS Framework (2021) states:

*"For children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home. Providers must also ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS."*

We work closely with parents/carers to understand each child's language background and stage of development. Translation tools, such as Google Translate, may be used to support communication with families and to help children access learning opportunities within the setting.

Practitioners understand that children learning English as an additional language typically progress through stages of language acquisition:

**Stage 1:** New to English – Children may appear quiet, reluctant to speak, or withdrawn while they listen to and begin to understand the sounds and patterns of English.

**Stage 2:** Early Acquisition – Children begin to understand and use simple English, follow instructions, ask basic questions, and take part more confidently in activities and conversations.

**Stage 3:** Developing Competence – Children become increasingly confident communicators, engage in conversations with peers and adults, respond to open-ended questions, and begin using a wider vocabulary and more complex sentences.

We promote inclusion by:

- Working closely with families to understand each child's culture, language, and experiences.
- Respecting and using the correct pronunciation and spelling of names.
- Valuing and celebrating different cultures, languages, and traditions.
- Including home languages in books, displays, and resources where possible.
- Using visual aids, symbols, gestures, and translation tools to support communication.
- Encouraging families to share their cultural heritage and experiences with the preschool community.

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) states:

*"Identifying and assessing SEN for young children whose first language is not English requires particular care. Early years practitioners should look carefully at all aspects of a child's learning and development to establish whether any delay is related to learning English as an additional language or if it arises from SEN or disability. Difficulties related solely to learning English as an additional language are not SEN."*

We therefore carefully monitor children's progress and work in partnership with parents/carers to distinguish between language acquisition needs and any potential Special Educational Needs or Disabilities. Through positive partnerships and inclusive practice, we aim to ensure that all children with EAL feel welcomed, confident, and supported to achieve their full potential.

## Speech and Language Development

To support the early identification of speech, language, and communication needs, we use the **WellComm Speech and Language Toolkit**, a screening and assessment tool that helps practitioners evaluate children's communication skills and identify any gaps, delays, or areas requiring additional support. The assessment enables us to gain a clear understanding of a child's current stage of communication development and informs the planning of targeted strategies and interventions to support their progress.

For children who speak **English as an Additional Language (EAL)**, we work closely with parents and carers throughout the assessment process. Families are invited to complete a home-language assessment,

enabling us to compare the child's language development in both their home language and English. This helps us to distinguish between the normal process of acquiring an additional language and a potential speech, language, or communication need, ensuring that any support provided is appropriate, targeted, and accurate.

The information gathered through the WellComm assessment is used alongside practitioner observations, parental contributions, and other relevant assessments to build a comprehensive picture of each child's communication development. Where additional support is identified as necessary, strategies and interventions will be implemented and reviewed regularly in partnership with parents and, where appropriate, other professionals.

If a child is identified as having a speech and language delay, we will discuss our observations and assessment findings with parents/carers. We may recommend that parents seek further advice and support from a **Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT)** and, where appropriate, support them with making a referral.

We believe that partnership working is essential to achieving positive outcomes. Therefore, Wellcomm activities and strategies are shared with parents/carers so that they can continue supporting their child's development at home. Regular communication between practitioners and families ensures that children receive consistent support across both home and preschool environments.

## Record Keeping

At Little Chestnuts Preschool, records relating to each child's development, wellbeing, and additional needs are kept accurate, up to date, and stored securely in line with GDPR.

Information is treated as confidential and will only be shared with parents/carers, relevant staff, and other professionals involved in supporting the child with parental consent, unless there is a safeguarding concern.

Records may include:

- Assessments and observations
- Attendance records
- Medical information
- Individual Support Plans
- WellComm assessments
- Meeting notes and communications with parents
- Referrals and reports from external professionals

Maintaining accurate records enables us to monitor progress, review support effectively, and ensure children receive the provision they need.

## Special Needs Co-ordinator

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) at Little Chestnuts Preschool is Gina Halls.

The SENCo leads and coordinates SEND provision across both settings, ensuring that children with additional needs receive appropriate support and are able to make the best possible progress.

Supporting children with SEND is a shared responsibility across the preschool. The SENCo provides leadership, effective coaching, guidance, and specialist advice to practitioners, ensuring a consistent and inclusive approach that enables every child to achieve their full potential.

The SENCo works closely with parents/carers, staff, and external professionals to identify needs, plan support, monitor progress, and review outcomes. The SENCo is also responsible for maintaining the SEND Register and ensuring that records are kept accurate and up to date.

## Support Services

There is a range of local support services available:

- *Thurrock SEN Services* - [sen@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:sen@thurrock.gov.uk)
- *Speech and Language Therapy* – available through referral from yourself or your health visitor, GP, or from Nursery with parental consent
- Services for children with hearing or visual impairment
- Educational Psychologist
- Occupational Therapy – help with fine motor and spatial awareness difficulties.
- Physiotherapy – for children with mobility difficulties
- The Parent Advisory Team – provides information and support for children with disabilities and their families - [info@patt.org.uk](mailto:info@patt.org.uk)