Inclusion Strategy – Cherry Tree Academy

This statement details our school's approach to delivering inclusive practice for all children, including those with SEND, funded by our core school budget (including the notional SEN budget) and the inclusive mainstream fund (IMF).

Strategy overview

Detail	Date
Academic year/years that our current Inclusion Strategy covers	2026-27 and 2027-28
Date this statement was published	December 2026
Date on which it will be reviewed	September 2027
Statement authorised by	Adam Dawson – Executive Headteacher

Statement of intent

At Cherry Tree Academy we are committed to ensuring that every child receives an ambitious, high-quality education, feels a genuine sense of belonging and has the opportunity to participate, achieve and thrive. As part of Waterton Academy Trust, our approach is underpinned by the shared vision that "success is a shared experience" and a commitment to providing an education that recognises and responds to the strengths, needs and circumstances of every pupil.

Our Inclusion Strategy sets out how we will create a learning environment where all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and other additional needs, can succeed. We recognise that achieving equity does not mean providing the same support for every child, but ensuring that each pupil receives the teaching, adjustments and opportunities they need to achieve their potential.

Our approach is aligned with Waterton Academy Trust's Inclusion Strategy 2026–2029 and informed by the Department for Education's seven principles of inclusion. Through our school strategy, we will:

- Establish a clear inclusion offer, ensuring children and families understand the support available within our school and how additional expertise can be accessed.
- Deliver high-quality adaptive teaching, maintaining ambitious expectations and ensuring that teaching, learning and the curriculum are responsive to pupils' needs.
- Identify needs and barriers early, using assessment, observation and collaboration with families to provide timely, appropriate and evidence-informed support.
- Develop staff knowledge, skills and confidence, drawing on professional development, coaching and specialist expertise available within our school and across the Trust.
- Improve attendance, participation and achievement, ensuring children feel safe, develop positive relationships, experience belonging and engage meaningfully in school life.
- Remove barriers to learning and wider opportunities, making appropriate adjustments so that all pupils can access the curriculum, enrichment activities and successful transitions.

- Strengthen partnership working, ensuring that children, families, staff and external professionals contribute to decisions about support and provision.

We recognise that effective inclusion is a shared responsibility. Our staff will work collaboratively with children, families, Trust specialists and external agencies to understand individual needs, develop appropriate provision and review its impact. We will draw on the expertise available across Waterton's mainstream and specialist settings to strengthen our practice and respond to emerging challenges.

The views and experiences of our children, families and wider school community will play an important role in shaping our priorities. Through pupil voice, parental engagement, staff feedback and partnership working, we will identify barriers, evaluate existing provision and determine the improvements needed within our school.

We will monitor the impact of our strategy through regular evaluation of attendance, attainment, progress, participation, wellbeing and pupils' experiences of school. Findings will inform our school improvement priorities and ensure that resources and support are directed towards areas of greatest need.

Barriers to learning and participation

This details the key barriers to learning and participation that we have identified amongst our pupils, necessitating inclusive universal approaches and targeted support

	Detail of barrier to learning *(including notable trends or themes over time, such as a growing prevalence or increasing complexity)*
1	**Speech, language and communication needs** Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) have been identified as a significant area of need, with increasingly diverse and complex communication profiles presenting within our classrooms. These needs can create substantial barriers to learning and participation, affecting pupils' ability to understand and process spoken language, follow instructions, acquire and use vocabulary, express their thoughts and ideas, and engage effectively in classroom discussions. Difficulties with communication can also impact literacy development, particularly reading comprehension and writing, as well as pupils' ability to form positive relationships, regulate emotions and participate confidently in the wider life of the school. Where needs are not identified and addressed early, pupils are at greater risk of falling behind academically, experiencing frustration or disengagement, and developing additional social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.
2	**Strengthening adaptive teaching and the effective deployment of teaching assistants** The increasing diversity and complexity of pupils' needs, including SEND, communication difficulties, cognition and learning needs, and social, emotional and mental health needs, requires consistently high-quality teaching that responds effectively to individual barriers to learning. Variability in staff confidence, expertise and the application of adaptive teaching approaches can result in pupils experiencing difficulties accessing the curriculum, engaging fully in lessons and making sustained progress. Where teaching is not sufficiently responsive to individual needs, pupils may experience reduced opportunities to participate

	meaningfully in whole-class learning, develop confidence and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. This can contribute to widening gaps in attainment and progress, particularly for pupils with additional needs.
3.	**Regulation, wellbeing, belonging and attendance** An increasing complexity of social, emotional and mental health needs, alongside difficulties with emotional regulation, sensory processing and managing the demands of the school environment, can create significant barriers to learning and participation. These needs may affect pupils' ability to regulate their emotions, develop positive relationships, manage transitions, engage consistently in learning and feel safe, confident and included within the school community. For some pupils, particularly those with SEND and additional vulnerabilities, difficulties with regulation and wellbeing can contribute to behaviours that challenge, reduced engagement, disrupted learning and difficulties attending school consistently. Where underlying needs are not fully understood and appropriate support is not in place, pupils may experience increased anxiety, reduced confidence, difficulties maintaining positive relationships and a diminished sense of belonging. This can result in lost learning opportunities, widening gaps in achievement and an increased risk of disengagement from school. Although the school has secured significant improvements in behaviour, suspensions, restrictive physical interventions and attendance over time, pupils with SEND and additional vulnerabilities remain disproportionately represented in recorded behaviour incidents. This highlights the importance of continuing to strengthen relational practice, early identification, emotional regulation support and personalised approaches that enable pupils to access learning, participate successfully and experience a positive sense of belonging.
4	**Gaps in prior learning and working-memory demands** Gaps in prior knowledge, insecure foundational skills and difficulties with working memory present significant barriers to learning and participation for a number of pupils. These difficulties can affect pupils' ability to retain and retrieve previously taught information, follow multi-step instructions, process new concepts, make connections between learning and apply knowledge independently. For pupils with SEND, cognition and learning needs, or those who have experienced previous disruption to learning, these barriers can be particularly pronounced. Where essential knowledge and skills are not secure, pupils may find it increasingly difficult to access age-related curriculum expectations as learning becomes more complex. Difficulties with working memory can further increase cognitive demands, particularly when pupils are required to process several pieces of information simultaneously, recall prior learning or complete tasks independently. This can lead to reduced confidence, increased reliance on adult support, slower progress and disengagement from learning. School assessment information identifies variation in attainment and progress across year groups and pupil groups, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Although outcomes have improved over time, gaps remain for pupils with SEND and those with weaker starting points. This highlights the importance of securing foundational knowledge, systematically revisiting prior learning, reducing unnecessary cognitive demands and providing carefully targeted intervention alongside high-quality adaptive teaching. Without these approaches, existing gaps

	risk becoming increasingly significant barriers to curriculum access, independence and sustained academic achievement.
5	**Family partnership and transition** Some families need clearer, more accessible information, earlier involvement and practical support to engage with learning, SEND processes, attendance and transitions. High pupil mobility means that pupils joining in-year may require rapid induction, baseline assessment and swift transfer of safeguarding, SEND, attendance and curriculum information. Pupils with additional needs may require enhanced transition within school and between settings.

Activity in 2026/27 and 2027/28

Our planned activities reflect both the barriers identified within our school and our participation in Waterton Academy Trust's Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029. Waterton has adopted a collective approach to strengthening inclusion, using pooled Inclusive Mainstream Funding to invest in expertise, professional development and evidence-informed approaches that benefit schools across the Trust.

Description of activity *(noting evidence and barrier numbers addressed)*	**Activity type** (*whether it is universal or targeted)*	**Total budgeted cost** *(this should account for spend from IMF and core budget allocations*
1. Strengthening adaptive teaching through the **Lead Practitioner for Inclusive Teaching**. Access Trust-funded coaching, modelling, co-teaching and professional development to improve teachers' ability to meet additional needs within mainstream classrooms. From January 2027, the Lead Practitioner will work alongside school leaders, SENCOs and teachers to strengthen adaptive teaching, curriculum access, scaffolding and pupil independence.	Universal	IMF 2026/27 Lead Practitioner Jan27-Aug27 1. £4,165.07 IMF 2027/28 Lead Practitioner Sep27-Mar28 2. £3,644.44
2. Early identification of **speech, language and communication needs**. Implement Language Link and Infant Language Link to identify needs early and inform classroom adaptations. Use assessment information to identify common barriers across cohorts and improve communication-friendly classroom practice.	Universal	IMF 2026/27 Language Link 3. £1,291.21 IMF 2027/28 Language Link 4. £1,291.21
3. Targeted literacy intervention using **Lexia Core5 Reading** to support pupils identified through assessment as having gaps in foundational reading skills. Progress will be monitored through the programme's assessment tools and regular teacher review, with additional direct teaching where required.	Targeted	IMF 2027/28 Lexia 5. £1,801.49
4. Strengthening **staff expertise** in SEND and inclusion. Access Trust SENCO networks, Waterton Specialist expertise and professional development to strengthen classroom responses to commonly occurring needs, including communication and interaction, sensory regulation, literacy and relational practice.	Universal	IMF 2026/27 SEND expertise 6. £829.26 IMF 2027/28 SEND expertise 7. £725.60

5. Supporting pupils through **evidence-informed interventions.** Deliver carefully selected interventions for identified barriers to learning, including literacy, communication and other additional needs. Prioritise approaches supported by evidence, with clear entry criteria, intended outcomes and evaluation of impact.	Targeted	Core Notional Budget
6. Strengthening inclusive behaviour, attendance and participation. Use the Trust's Behaviour and Relational Practice Policy, attendance procedures and graduated approach to identify barriers early and implement suitable adjustments. Support pupils experiencing difficulties with regulation, attendance, engagement or participation.	Universal	Core Notional Budget
7. Improving **teaching assistant practice** and deployment. Strengthen the effectiveness of teaching assistants through Trust professional development, coaching and modelling. Focus on appropriate scaffolding, supporting learning and reducing unnecessary dependence on adult support, informed by evidence on effective TA deployment.	Universal	IMF 2026/27 TA release 8. £551.71

Intended outcomes

This explains the clear, realistic outcomes we want our inclusive approaches to achieve **by the end of our inclusion strategy**, and how we will measure whether they have been achieved.

Intended outcome	Success criteria
Strategic Priority 1: Early Identification and Intervention Children and young people with SEND, additional needs and emerging barriers to learning are identified at the earliest opportunity and receive timely, evidence-informed support through a graduated approach, enabling needs to be addressed before they become entrenched barriers to achievement, participation and wellbeing.	• 100% of pupils in identified year groups are screened using Infant Language Link or Junior Language Link within the agreed assessment window. • 100% of pupils identified with SLCN have a documented intervention plan, clear review cycle and recorded outcomes. • Language Link is embedded within the school's graduated approach and assessment pathways. • Identified pupils begin appropriate intervention within agreed timescales following screening or referral. • Provision maps evidence that interventions are matched to assessed need and adapted following review. • Staff demonstrate confidence in recognising indicators of SLCN and implementing agreed referral procedures. • SEND reviews and provision audits demonstrate timely identification and support for pupils with emerging communication needs. • School monitoring evidences consistency of practice across classes and key stages.
Strategic Priority 2: Communication, Participation and Belonging All pupils, including those with SEND, develop the communication, confidence and social skills required to participate fully in learning, build positive relationships, contribute to school life and experience a strong sense of belonging within their school community.	• Termly reassessment demonstrates measurable progress for at least 80% of pupils receiving targeted language intervention. • Pupils achieve agreed communication and participation targets. • Pupil voice demonstrates increased confidence in communicating, contributing to learning and seeking support when required. • Pupils with SEND actively participate in lessons, enrichment activities, educational visits and wider school opportunities. • Attendance, behaviour and engagement data show positive trends for identified pupils where these have previously been barriers. • Parents and carers report improvements in communication, confidence and participation. • SEND reviews demonstrate that pupils are increasingly able to access learning and social opportunities alongside their peers. • Evidence from pupil voice, family voice and school monitoring demonstrates that pupils feel included, valued and represented within the school community.
Strategic Priority 3: Inclusive and Adaptive Teaching **Intended Outcome** All pupils experience ambitious, inclusive and adaptive teaching that removes barriers to learning, promotes participation and enables every child to	• All classrooms consistently demonstrate agreed adaptive teaching practices. • Trust and school quality assurance activities confirm that adaptive teaching approaches are embedded across subjects and phases. • Lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutiny evidence effective adaptation and reasonable adjustments without lowering expectations. • Planning demonstrates ambitious curriculum access for pupils with SEND.

achieve well from their individual starting points.	• Pupils with SEND report that they can access learning, understand expectations and participate successfully in lessons. • Progress information demonstrates that pupils with SEND make expected or better progress from their starting points. • Staff confidently articulate how adaptations are used to remove barriers and support learning. • School and Trust SEND reviews demonstrate year-on-year improvement in inclusive classroom practice.
Strategic Priority 4: Independence Through Effective Adult Support **Intended Outcome** Additional adult support is deployed strategically to promote independence, self-regulation and confidence, ensuring that pupils access high-quality teaching and develop the skills required for successful lifelong learning	• Teaching assistant deployment is reviewed at least termly and informed by pupil outcomes. • Quality assurance activities demonstrate consistent use of scaffolding, least-help-first approaches and evidence-informed support strategies. • Lesson observations show teaching assistants promoting independence rather than dependency. • Pupils receiving adult support continue to access learning directly from the class teacher wherever appropriate. • Pupil voice demonstrates increasing confidence, resilience and ownership of learning. • Provision reviews evidence that support is adjusted in response to progress and increasing independence. • Monitoring demonstrates reductions in unnecessary adult reliance and increased independent task initiation and completion. • Staff demonstrate a shared understanding of effective teaching assistant deployment informed by current evidence and best practice.

Review of the previous academic year

From year two, you should outline the progress you made towards your intended outcomes during the previous academic year and explain how this was assessed. In doing this, you should note the impact that your strategy had on pupils' engagement, participation, attendance, sense of belonging, and attainment. This should include a reflection on the positive outcomes achieved for children and young people with additional needs and SEND.

You should critically review what aspects of your strategy worked well / did not have the intended impact and explain how this has informed your drafting of this year's strategy.

To support this, you should use:

- *Data from the previous academic year's national assessments and qualifications, once published (a note of caution can be added to signal that pupils included in the performance data will have experienced some disruption due to Covid-19 earlier in their schooling, which will have affected individual pupils and schools differently).*
- *Information from summative and formative assessments the school has undertaken.*
- *School data and observations used to assess wider issues impacting inclusion, including access to learning, attendance, engagement, and early identification.*

Further information

This school's Inclusion Strategy forms part of Waterton Academy Trust's wider Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029, which sets out our shared approach to inclusion, the specialist support available to schools and how we use the Inclusive Mainstream Fund to strengthen provision. The full Trust Inclusion Strategy is available on the Waterton Academy Trust website.