



Griffin Primary School

Neurodiversity Policy

2026-27

Date	Revised amendment details	By whom
September 2026	Implemented by school	Inclusion Lead
	Reviewed	
	Reviewed & Updated	

1. Our Vision

At Griffin Primary School, we recognise, respect and celebrate neurodiversity.

Neurodiversity describes the natural variation in how human brains develop, process information, communicate, learn, regulate emotions and experience the world. We understand that there is no single "right" way to think, learn, communicate or interact.

Our aim is to create a school where every child feels safe, valued, understood and able to participate. We seek to understand the individual child and adapt our environment, teaching and expectations so that pupils can thrive. We recognise that neurodivergent pupils may experience both strengths and barriers within the school environment. Our responsibility is not to make children appear more neurotypical, but to identify and reduce barriers to learning, communication, participation and belonging.

Our approach is:

neurodiversity-affirming • strengths-based • child-centred • trauma-informed • inclusive

2. Aims of this Policy

This policy aims to ensure that Griffin Primary School:

- recognises and values neurological differences;
- promotes positive understanding of neurodiversity across the school community;
- identifies and removes barriers experienced by neurodivergent pupils;
- provides reasonable adjustments according to individual need;
- supports pupils' communication, sensory, emotional and learning needs;
- recognises children's strengths, interests and preferred ways of learning;
- works collaboratively with pupils, parents/carers and professionals;
- supports pupils whether or not they have a formal diagnosis;
- develops pupils' self-understanding, self-advocacy and independence;
- ensures neurodivergent pupils have meaningful opportunities to participate in school life.

3. What Do We Mean by Neurodiversity?

All people are neurodiverse because every brain develops and processes information differently.

The term neurodivergent is commonly used to describe people whose neurological development or functioning differs from what is considered typical.

This may include, but is not limited to, children with:

- autism;
- ADHD;
- dyslexia;
- dyspraxia/DCD;
- dyscalculia;
- developmental language disorder;
- Tourette syndrome and tic disorders;
- sensory processing differences;
- other communication, learning, attention or processing differences.

We recognise that children may have overlapping differences and that no two neurodivergent children are the same.

A diagnosis is not required for a child to receive appropriate support or reasonable adjustments at Griffin.

4. Our Neurodiversity-Affirming Approach

We seek to understand what a child is communicating through their behaviour, communication and engagement, rather than focusing solely on compliance.

Staff will consider:

What is the child communicating?
What might they be finding difficult?
What sensory, communication or environmental factors may be contributing?
What can we change or adapt?
What support will help the child feel safe and able to participate?

We recognise that behaviour may communicate an unmet need, anxiety, sensory overload, difficulty understanding expectations, communication frustration or a need for regulation.

Our approach therefore prioritises connection, co-regulation, predictability and understanding before correction.

5. Strengths-Based Practice

Neurodivergent pupils should not be defined solely by areas of difficulty.

Staff will identify and build upon children's:

- interests and motivations;
- preferred communication methods;
- areas of knowledge and expertise;
- creativity;
- problem-solving skills;
- memory and attention to detail;
- individual talents;
- relationships and connections;
- successful strategies for regulation and learning.

Individual plans and discussions about pupils should reflect both their strengths and their support needs.

6. Communication

At Griffin, we recognise that communication is broader than spoken language.

Children may communicate through speech, gesture, facial expression, behaviour, body language, signing, symbols, pictures, communication boards or augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

Staff will:

- give pupils sufficient processing time;
- use clear, concise and concrete language where appropriate;
- reduce unnecessary verbal demands;
- use visual supports such as visual timetables, now-and-next boards and symbols;
- check understanding rather than assuming a child has understood;
- recognise all meaningful attempts to communicate;
- support alternative and augmentative forms of communication where required;
- avoid requiring eye contact as evidence that a pupil is listening;
- avoid placing unnecessary pressure on children to speak when another form of communication is effective.

Communication differences will be treated with dignity and respect.

7. Sensory Differences and Regulation

We recognise that children experience sensory information differently.

The everyday school environment can sometimes be overwhelming because of noise, lighting, crowds, smells, touch, movement or unpredictable events.

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- access to quieter or low-arousal spaces;
- movement and sensory breaks;
- sensory resources;
- ear defenders;
- alternative seating;
- reduced visual clutter;
- adapted uniform expectations where appropriate;
- flexibility around assemblies, lunch, transitions and other busy environments;
- access to sensory circuits or regulation activities;
- additional preparation for changes to routines;
- opportunities for movement and outdoor learning.

Sensory and regulation strategies should not normally be used as rewards that must be earned. Where a child requires them to access learning and regulate, they form part of that child's provision.

8. Emotional Regulation and Behaviour

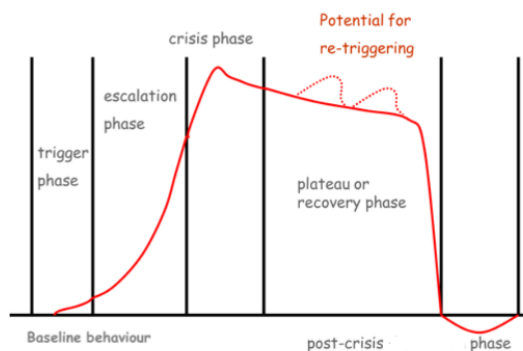
At Griffin, we understand that regulation comes before learning.

Children experiencing dysregulation may temporarily have reduced capacity to communicate, reason, process language or follow adult instructions. Our practice is informed by PACE, Emotion Coaching and trauma-informed approaches.

Adults will aim to:

- remain calm and predictable;
- reduce language during periods of dysregulation;
- provide appropriate space and time;
- use co-regulation;
- acknowledge and validate emotions;
- reduce demands temporarily when appropriate;
- identify triggers and patterns;
- repair relationships following difficult situations;
- explicitly teach regulation strategies when the child is calm.

Where appropriate, we create individual regulation plans based on the escalation cycle.



Consequences will be considered carefully where a pupil's SEND or neurodivergence has contributed to an incident.

Children will not be penalised for involuntary or necessary forms of regulation such as appropriate stimming.

9. Teaching and Learning

High-quality teaching is the starting point for all pupils.

Teachers remain responsible for the progress and development of every pupil in their class, including where pupils receive additional support from teaching assistants or specialist staff.

Adaptations may include:

- breaking instructions into manageable steps;
- visual modelling;
- pre-teaching vocabulary;
- repetition and overlearning;
- additional processing time;
- reduced written recording;
- use of technology;
- alternative methods for demonstrating learning;
- movement breaks;
- adapted resources;
- structured routines;
- individual workstations where appropriate;
- reduced language or task demands;
- learning linked to children's interests;
- targeted small-group or individual teaching.

Adaptation does not mean lowering aspirations. We maintain high expectations while recognising that children may need different routes to achieve meaningful success.

10. Masking

We recognise that some neurodivergent children may mask their difficulties in school.

A child who appears quiet, compliant or academically able may still be experiencing significant anxiety, sensory overload or exhaustion.

Staff will therefore take seriously information from pupils and families about difficulties that may not be immediately visible within school.

We recognise that presentations of neurodivergence can differ between children and that some pupils, including girls and children with internalised presentations, may be less readily identified.

11. Special Interests and Focused Interests

We recognise that strong or focused interests can provide children with:

- enjoyment;
- regulation;
- security;
- motivation;
- opportunities for connection;
- pathways into learning.

Where appropriate, staff may incorporate children's interests into teaching, communication and relationship-building rather than automatically seeking to restrict them.

12. Enhanced Provision at Griffin

Griffin Primary School provides enhanced and specialist opportunities for children requiring additional support.

EYFS Enhanced Provision

Our EYFS enhanced provision supports Nursery and Reception children with significant communication, interaction, sensory and developmental needs.

Our Specialist Nursery offer provides eligible children aged 3–4 with 15 hours of targeted support each week, subject to local authority processes and allocation.

Our Reception enhanced provision supports children, including pupils with EHCPs, who benefit from a smaller, low-arousal environment alongside opportunities to access the wider EYFS.

Children follow an individualised curriculum informed by the EYFS Framework, Cherry Garden assessment and individual outcomes, including EHCP targets where applicable.

Whale Room Enhanced Provision

The Whale Room provides enhanced provision for identified pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 with autism, communication differences and/or additional learning needs.

Pupils may access targeted teaching, communication support, pre-teaching, sensory regulation and work towards individual or EHCP outcomes within a lower-arousal environment.

Where appropriate, pupils continue to access their mainstream class and the wider school community.

Enhanced provision is intended to increase pupils' access, participation, regulation and belonging, rather than unnecessarily separating children from their peers.

13. Inclusion and Belonging

Neurodivergent pupils are valued members of the Griffin community.

We aim for pupils to access:

- educational visits;
- Forest School;
- assemblies;
- performances;
- clubs;
- sports;
- lunchtimes;
- celebrations;
- wider curriculum opportunities.

Where barriers exist, staff should first consider what reasonable adjustments could enable participation rather than assuming a pupil cannot take part.

Inclusion does not mean that every child must participate in exactly the same way.

14. Pupil Voice and Self-Advocacy

Children should increasingly be supported to understand their own strengths and needs.

Depending on their age and developmental level, we will support children to communicate:

- what helps them learn;
- what they find difficult;
- sensory preferences;
- how they communicate;
- signs that they are becoming overwhelmed;
- what helps them regulate;
- how adults can support them.

Children should be involved in decisions about their support wherever possible.

Our long-term aim is for children to develop self-understanding, self-advocacy, confidence and independence.

15. Working with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers have invaluable knowledge about their children.

We aim to work in partnership with families through open, respectful and collaborative communication.

We will:

- listen to parental concerns;
- share information about children's strengths and progress;
- discuss reasonable adjustments and provision;
- involve parents in SEND support planning and EHCP processes;
- work together when seeking support from external professionals;
- provide opportunities for families to discuss SEND and neurodiversity.

Griffin also provides half-termly SEND parent coffee mornings, offering opportunities for training, information-sharing and peer support.

Where appropriate, families may also be supported to access Early Help and family support services.

16. Working with External Professionals

Where appropriate and with relevant consent, Griffin works collaboratively with professionals and services including:

- Speech and Language Therapy;
- Educational Psychology;
- Occupational Therapy;
- CAMHS and health professionals;
- Early Help;
- Local Authority SEND services;
- Early Years Inclusion services;
- other specialist professionals.

Professional recommendations are considered alongside the views of the child, family and school staff to develop appropriate support.

17. Safeguarding Neurodivergent Pupils

We recognise that pupils with SEND and communication differences can experience additional safeguarding vulnerabilities.

Some pupils may:

- find it difficult to communicate what has happened;
- interpret language literally;
- have difficulty recognising unsafe situations;
- be particularly trusting of others;
- have difficulties understanding social boundaries;
- communicate distress through changes in behaviour;
- be more vulnerable to bullying or exploitation.

Staff must remain professionally curious and should never assume that changes in behaviour are simply part of a child's SEND or neurodivergence.

Where a pupil is pre-verbal or communicates differently, staff will pay particular attention to changes in behaviour, presentation, emotional regulation, sleep, eating, engagement or communication.

Safeguarding concerns must always be reported in accordance with Griffin Primary School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. We will work closely with parents, carers and relevant professionals to safeguard pupils with SEND while always maintaining our statutory safeguarding responsibilities.

18. Attendance

We recognise that some neurodivergent pupils may experience barriers to attendance linked to anxiety, sensory needs, emotional regulation, transitions or unmet SEND needs.

Where attendance becomes a concern, the school will seek to understand the underlying reasons and work collaboratively with the pupil, family and relevant professionals.

Support may include reasonable adjustments, individual transition arrangements, increased predictability, pastoral support and involvement from external services.

SEND should never be viewed as a reason to lower expectations for attendance; equally, attendance difficulties should not be considered solely as a behavioural or compliance issue where underlying needs may be contributing.

19. Bullying and Discrimination

Bullying, discriminatory language or negative stereotypes relating to disability or neurodivergence will not be tolerated.

We explicitly promote:

- acceptance of difference;
- empathy and understanding;
- respectful communication;
- disability awareness;
- positive representation of neurodiversity.

Incidents involving disability-related bullying or discrimination will be addressed in accordance with the school's relevant policies.

20. Staff Training and Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for inclusion.

Staff will receive appropriate training and professional development relating to SEND and neurodiversity. This may include:

- autism and neurodiversity-affirming practice;
- ADHD;
- communication and language;
- sensory processing;
- Emotion Coaching;
- trauma-informed practice;
- PACE;
- reasonable adjustments;
- WellComm;
- supporting pupils with complex communication needs;
- safeguarding pupils with SEND.

The SENCO and Assistant SENCO support staff through advice, coaching, modelling, training, observation and liaison with external professionals.

However, responsibility for neurodivergent pupils does not sit solely with the SEND team. Every adult has a responsibility to promote an inclusive culture.

21. Language

Language relating to neurodiversity changes over time and individuals may have different preferences. Staff should listen to how children and families describe themselves and respect individual preferences wherever possible. We aim to avoid language which unnecessarily presents neurological difference as a deficit or implies that a child needs to be "fixed". We will use language that is respectful, strengths-based and affirming, while recognising and clearly describing genuine areas of need when this is necessary to secure appropriate support.

22. Equality and Reasonable Adjustments

Griffin Primary School is committed to meeting its duties under relevant equality, SEND and education legislation. Reasonable adjustments will be considered according to the individual needs of pupils. Equality does not always mean treating every child in exactly the same way. Some children require different resources, environments, communication approaches, levels of adult support or ways of demonstrating their learning in order to have equitable access to education.

23. Monitoring and Review

The SENCO and Senior Leadership Team will monitor the implementation of this policy through:

- learning walks;
- pupil and parent voice;
- SEND reviews;
- analysis of progress and participation;
- staff feedback;
- monitoring reasonable adjustments;
- safeguarding and attendance information;
- review of enhanced provision;
- professional development and training.

The policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier where there are significant changes to statutory guidance or the needs of the school community.

24. Our Commitment

At Griffin Primary School, we want children to understand that difference is a normal part of being human.

We do not expect every child to learn, communicate, play, regulate or participate in the same way.

Our role is to understand the individual child, recognise their strengths, identify the barriers they experience and provide an environment in which they can feel safe, belong and make progress.

Every brain is different. Every child belongs.

Our Approach to

Neurodiversity

Different minds. A brighter world.

Every brain
belongs
at Griffin



Neurodiversity-affirming



We recognise and celebrate neurodiversity as a natural and valuable part of human variation.

- We value different ways of thinking, learning and communicating.
- We challenge stereotypes and promote positive understanding.
- We create an environment where every child feels safe, accepted and included.

Strengths-based



We focus on and build upon children's strengths, interests and talents.

- We recognise what children can do.
- We use interests to motivate and support learning.
- We celebrate progress in all areas.
- We help children to develop confidence and independence.
- We recognise that every child has unique strengths.

Child-centred



We see and understand the individual child.

- We get to know each child and what helps them.
- We listen to children and involve them in decisions about their support.
- We adapt our environment, teaching and expectations to meet individual needs.
- We ensure all children can access, participate and belong.
- A diagnosis is not required for a child to receive support at Griffin.

Trauma-informed



We recognise that children's behaviour, emotions and communication may be influenced by their experiences.

- We prioritise safety, relationships and regulation.
- We use PACE and Emotion Coaching approaches.
- We reduce demands and remove barriers.
- We provide calm, predictable and supportive environments.
- We respond with curiosity and understanding.
- We recognise that regulation comes before learning.

Inclusive



We remove barriers so that every child can thrive.

- We make reasonable adjustments.
- We ensure full access to learning, play and wider school life.
- We promote a culture of respect, empathy and belonging.
- We work in partnership with families and professionals.
- We celebrate difference and create a school community where everyone belongs.

Understand
Include
Respect
Celebrate



Different
minds.
A brighter
world.

