ACS Special Education Needs and Disability Policy

Please note:

Where ACS International Schools is operating outside of the United Kingdom the UK regulatory framework will provide the foundation for best practice as far as this policy is concerned. All ACS schools will operate in compliance with the relevant legislation of the country in which they are operating.

ACS International Schools is committed to protecting individual's personal data, and we aim to remain at all times fully compliant with data protection laws and guidance from the relevant regulators. ACS further commits to ensuring that the planning and writing of all policies and procedures that involve the handling of personal data are guided by the principle of privacy by design, and that individuals' rights to have their data safeguarded are a paramount consideration in ACS' pursuit of all its operational and strategic practices.

ACS is committed to inclusion across race, gender, faith, identity and abilities. We believe that diversity helps us to fulfil our purpose, realise our vision and exemplify our values.

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1- Legal foundations

ACS International Schools Ltd. (henceforward ACS, or “we/our”) schools provide a learning programme that seeks to cater for the aptitude and needs of a wide range of students, including those with special education needs, in line with *The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014* Part 1, 2(b)(i) and *Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards* No.16. Based on our values and accepted practice, we maintain systems to seek to identify any SEN/D a child or young person may have and provide SEN support as outlined in this policy.

As mainstream independent schools, ACS schools are not bound by the UK SEN Code of Practice. Our SEN provision, and care for students with Education Health and Care Plans are governed by the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and our duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Data privacy is regulated under UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK-GDPR) and its implementation through the Data Protection Act 2018.

2- Values, vision, and broader aims

We expect all students to be prepared as the world’s next global thinkers and doers by becoming confident individuals, caring contributors, and effective learners. With support and encouragement, we believe all students can take responsibility for their own learning. We respect the uniqueness and inherent worth of all students, celebrating difference rather than simply overcoming disability. All students, including students with SEN, are the pastoral and academic responsibility of their classroom teachers and school leaders. We aim to include students with SEN in the full life of the school, and as valued members of the ACS community.

ACS Schools are accredited by New England Association of Schools and Colleges and the International Baccalaureate, which also provide essential frameworks and support for students with SEN. We aspire for learning communities at ACS schools to exhibit a culture of inclusion that enables the diverse needs, identities, and interests of all learners and community members to be acknowledged and actively celebrated, with appropriate challenge and support.

ACS uses the definition of Special Education Needs (SEN) cited in *Special Education Needs and Disability Code of Practice (UK, January 2015)* which says that:

> A student has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.
>
> A student has a learning difficulty or disability if they have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age.

Within this definition, ACS serves students within four broad areas of need:

1. Communication and interaction
2. Cognition and learning
3. Social, emotional and mental health
4. Sensory and/or physical.

SEN at ACS is based on these key principles:

- Inclusive practice that increases access and engagement
- Identifying and removing barriers to learning and participation
- High quality teaching and learning for all students
- Early and accurate identification of students' needs using evidence-based outcomes, focused interventions, and regular cycles of review
- Participation of students and their parents in decision-making
- Collaboration within school and the larger community to meet student needs
- Improving outcomes by setting high expectations for all students
- Successfully preparing students for transitions in education and life.

SEN in an international context

ACS staff represent a broad range of international perspectives, teacher preparation programmes and individual professional experience. This diversity of practice provides benefits for students and promotes teaching excellence, underwritten by a common frame of reference, core expectations, and administrative practice.

Safeguarding in a SEN environment

Students with special educational needs and disabilities represent a vulnerable category of children in a safeguarding context, regardless of whether the child has a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). ACS staff are aware that children in vulnerable categories are more susceptible to being bullied and/or becoming victims of child and peer-on-peer abuse.

Our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy outlines the procedures to be followed for referral and for the support of children in need and children at risk of harm. All ACS staff are recognised as sharing responsibility for the safeguarding of children.

Universal Design for Learning

ACS's approach to SEN/D is informed by Universal Design for Learning, a framework to improve and optimise teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. This approach offers a set of concrete suggestions that can be applied to any discipline or domain to ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities.

UDL guides the design of learning environments that are accessible and challenging for all. Ultimately, the goal of UDL is to support learners to become "expert learners" who are, each in their own way, purposeful and motivated, resourceful and knowledgeable, and strategic and goal driven. UDL aims to change the design of the environment rather than to change the learner. When environments are intentionally designed to reduce barriers, all learners can engage in rigorous, meaningful learning.

3- Roles and responsibilities

SEN/D School leader(s)

- Implement SEN/D policy with fidelity
- Respect student privacy and confidentiality of educational records
- Provide strategic direction and development of SEN/D services
- Ensure high quality provision for students with SEN
- Champion student voice and choice
- Monitor student progress to raise achievement
- Develop colleagues confidence and competence to meet SEN needs
- Establish effective partnerships with parents and community resources
- Organise effective, ongoing cycles of reflection and action

- Support the use of UDL in SEN/D practice

Parents

- Help the case manager to understand your child or young person's physical, social, developmental, and family history
- Maintain appropriate communication with the school and attend student progress meetings
- Encourage healthy attitudes about neurodiversity and learning challenges
- Support development of age appropriate self-management skills and agency in managing SEN/D needs
- Participate in developing goals and learning plans, and implement them at home
- Provide insight into your child's ambitions and future learning plans (designing effective transitions)
- Arrange required assessments and external support services

Other roles and responsibilities are outlined in ACS's SEN/D Good Practice Guidelines.

4- SEN service provision

Multi-Tier Support System

ACS provides a multi-tier support system (MTSS) that delivers universal assistance for fleeting or transient individual barriers to learning. SEN provision is available for students with long-term learning challenges. Drawing on multiple approaches, periodic review, and specialist expertise, our SEN provision aims to match interventions to individual student needs through ongoing cycles of assessing, planning, doing and reviewing.

The types and nature of SEN support varies, with multiple service models and is divided into three Tiers of Service.

Levels of support (provision)

Levels of support and provision of specific services are determined by students' individual learning needs. Service levels are not pre-determined by students' medical or psychological diagnosis, although they are informed by objective criteria such as educational progress and assessments of cognitive processing, behaviour, academic aptitude, and skills.

Service levels are reviewed at least annually, and they may change based on student needs. Emergent or changing concerns, including a lack of student progress, can trigger a review at any time at the SEN case manager's discretion.

Service levels are documented in the school's Student Information System.

Service delivery models

Dedicated SEN teachers work in partnership with teachers and other staff to ensure access to the curriculum and co-curriculum is as complete as possible.

ACS will use appropriate teaching methods to ensure the most effective delivery of the curriculum. This may include a combination of inclusive and pull-out support for SEN services, which may vary across divisional levels to accommodate students' developmental needs and to reflect the school's organisation of time and space for learning.

ACS strives to ensure that most students' individual learning needs are fully integrated within mainstream classrooms. Integrated support may include

- on-demand assistance
- individual or group "push-in" support (including team-teaching)
- Individual or group, regular or on-demand "pull out" sessions
- Individual Learning Support Assistance (1:1 support from ACS staff funded by parents or external agencies).

Services for some students may include time-tabled courses taught by SEN specialists.

ACS works with visiting specialists to provide on-site support for students with identified needs. On-site external specialist support is available at parents' expense. Case managers are responsible for developing an integrated approach that includes external educational support that students receive off-site or beyond the school day.

Student support teams

ACS values collaborative consultation and believes in the power of student support teams (SSTs) to discuss issues and solve problems associated with learning support. Regular Student Support Team meetings are held to discuss student strengths, challenges and progress.

Student support teams create, monitor, modify and report on action plans to promote student growth. Teams typically include representatives from ACS administration and student support services. Parents may also be invited to attend as appropriate, along with specialists in occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, education psychology and similar fields.

Modified curriculum

At the discretion of the Head of School and Director of Education, some curriculum and graduation requirements may be waived or modified for students with special educational needs or disabilities. Curriculum modification requires written documentation from medical or psychological subject matter experts, as well as a review of the student's academic record.

Assistive technologies

Assistive technologies include hardware, software, or other equipment that helps students work around their challenges. Some examples of assistive technology include word-to-speech applications and word prediction. Assistive technology includes low- and no-tech tools that support learning and communication and enable students with SEN to develop independence. Much assistive technology is often suitable and helpful for all learners and is usually included as a standard part of educational services that all students receive.

5- Admission to ACS SEN/D services

ACS is able to serve students with mild to moderate learning needs at all grade levels, based on the description of needs developed by *Next Frontier: Inclusion in International Schools*. Our special education resources are limited; to maintain responsible caseloads and high levels of service, we cannot always accept students with special education needs. Places are made available to qualified applicants on a first-come, first-served basis.

Students with **mild learning needs** have	Students with **moderate learning needs** have
high incidence learning differences,	high-incidence learning differences, but their

requiring differentiated instruction in class and interventions in identified areas. Students may qualify for formal classroom accommodations and lower-level assessment access arrangements. Students with mild profiles may also include the need for occupational, speech-language or social-emotional therapies as a primary need. Typical service delivery may range from monitoring to some direct intervention, potentially delivered through consultation and formal monitoring, co-teaching, occasional small group interventions, and "drop in" support.	profiles are more complex and may include multiple diagnoses and/or social-emotional, mental health or behavioural issues, and/or a need for allied health services (e.g. speech-language or occupational therapy). Student achievement is typically two or more years below grade-level expectations in one or more areas. Students regularly receive accommodations, require regular interventions to support skill development, and have extensive assessment access arrangements. A small number of students with moderate profiles may require curricular modifications in one or more areas. Typical range of service delivery models may include co-teaching, therapies, and ongoing (timetabled) small group interventions.

ACS does not have facilities and expertise to support students with **severe or highly complex behavioural, emotional, or learning difficulties**. Parents or guardians of students with needs outside ACS's competence will be advised during the admissions process.

ACS's Parent Contract Terms and Conditions require parents honestly to disclose all student records and prior engagement with SEN/D assessment and services. ACS may require formal behavioural and academic aptitude screening assessments at the discretion of the admissions team, at parents' expense prior to making admission decisions.

Post-enrolment access to SEN/D service

ACS initiates SEN provision (support, monitoring and review) as soon as concerns are raised by teachers, parents, school leaders or students. This process includes informing parents about the concern(s) and maintaining ongoing communication with the student's parents and support team about the success of planned interventions.

ACS welcomes students in the early years, whose rapidly changing development and wide range of knowledge and skills create difficulty in identifying and addressing special learning needs and disabilities. We work with parents, child development experts, and community resources to provide reasonable support for younger students. We also work with families to find appropriate specialist placements when we cannot meet children's medical, educational, social, emotional or mental health needs.

Although full educational psychological assessments are not always required for admission to the SEN programme, ACS reserves the right to require (at parents' expense) formal educational evaluation for students receiving SEN/D service. Typically, students receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 services have formal assessments which make recommendations on the provision of SEN/D service and effective learning support strategies.

Annual review and continuing enrolment

ACS students, including students with SEN, are all subject to continuing enrolment and staff bursary policies, and contractual terms and conditions. Parent contracts can be ended if:

- in the professional opinion of the Head of School, the school cannot continue providing adequately for a student's special educational or other learning needs, and the needs of other students
- it becomes apparent that information provided during the application process or at any

stage during the term of an enrolment contract is false, incomplete, incorrect or misleading
- material information regarding a student's academic, social, physical, emotional, behavioural, or psychological wellbeing was not fully provided in the application process.

At least annually, but during the school year if required, the SEN case manager will review student's progress and the ability of ACS to meet their learning needs. If, in the best interests of the student and the school, ACS cannot provide an appropriate level of support, we will work with families to identify suitable onward placement.

Procedures for exiting students who no longer require SEN support

The decision to exit a student from SEN/D services will be made upon completion of appropriate assessments, evaluation of students' work and with regard to teachers' recommendations. The student's progress will be monitored for one year after exiting SEN/D service, and the student may be considered eligible for additional support or readmission to the programme if deemed appropriate.

Record keeping and records transfer

For students who receive Level 2 and Level 3 services, an Individual Learning Plan will be developed in partnership with students (as developmentally appropriate), parents and teachers (see Appendix 2).

Each school will ensure that primary SEN/D records are:

- completely documented within the PowerSchool system
- accessed by class teachers to inform lesson planning and differentiated instruction
- subject to regular review in partnership with Parent/carers
- stored securely and accessible to school leaders in line with our Data Protection Policy and in compliance with General Data Protection Regulations (the Data Protection Act, 2018 in the UK and its Qatari equivalent (Public Law No. 13 of 2016) in Qatar.

Ongoing case management records must be stored in secure, access-controlled school digital systems. ACS transfers all academic records, including essential SEN files, to receiving primary and secondary schools.

6- Support for EHC plans

ACS schools can work with parents to seek or accept contributory funding arrangements for SEN/D service as the named school in a student's' Education Health and Care Plan. However, ACS does not have the same legal responsibility to provide SEN/D services as UK state (maintained) schools.

Admission of students with ECH plans is subject to our Admission and Continuing Enrolment Policy, (staff) Bursary Policy, and Parent Contract Terms and Conditions.

7- Acceptance to advanced academic programmes

Admission of students with SEN to particular courses or programmes (such as the IB Diploma Programme or the College Board Advanced Placement program) is always informed by students' motivation and prior achievement (whether at ACS or another school), on an individual basis. For all students, final decisions about admission to advanced programmes are made by the divisional principal and Head of School.

Access arrangements for external assessment

ACS facilitates access arrangements where appropriate, based on the regulations and standard practice of examining bodies. Programme coordinators work with parents to ensure that proper documentation is available to meet registration deadlines. Formal educational assessments for external assessment are not included in ACS school fees.

ACS is committed to the highest standards of professional standards in supporting access arrangements for external assessments. Testing accommodations are expected to have been consistently in place for classroom assessment (including mock exams), and they must be documented in students' individual learning plans.

8- Behaviour management and disciplinary consequences

All students, including students with SEN, are responsible for the same standards of good behaviour. ACS cannot compromise our legal and ethical obligations for the safety and wellbeing of all students. However, when students with SEN breach school policies, school leaders must consider the context of the offense, including possible relationships between the student's behaviour and their special education need(s), available support, and possible future interventions. Disciplinary consequences must take into account the impact of the student's disabilities on their behaviour, and where relevant, be made in consultation with the student's SEN/D case manager.

Students with SEN who are subject to suspension, exclusion, or planned transfer must have a written plan to manage their learning and SEN/D needs, which has been approved by the Head of School and DSL (or their designees).

9- Staff training

ACS provides teachers with the appropriate qualifications and experience to provide SEN/D services within the framework set out in this policy. A regular programme of professional learning and growth for SEN/D and general education teachers provides ongoing support from ACS practitioners, local experts, and international leaders in the field of access and inclusion.

10- Accessibility

ACS Schools operate in historic buildings, grounds and facilities which cannot always be modified to meet the needs of students with some disabilities. Reasonable accommodations and future improvements are outlined in each school's Accessibility Plan. These plans document an ongoing commitment to improving the physical environment by removing barriers where possible so that students with special education needs and disabilities can take advantage of the educational benefits of the facilities, services, and programmes that ACS provides.

Where feasible, ACS provides sensory-controlled settings and learning environments that support neurodiversity and perception differences.

11- Policy development, monitoring, evaluation, and review

This policy was developed in consultation with subject matter experts and regulatory advisors,

along with ACS school leaders and SEN staff.

ACS regularly reviews this policy and the associated accessibility plans that support it.

12- Related Policies and Documents

This policy is associated with, and should be read in conjunction with, the following school documents and policies:

Behaviour Policy (including physical restraint and use of reasonable force)
Bursary Policy (staff)
Child on Child Abuse Prevention and Response Policy
Curriculum and Assessment Policy
Admissions and Continuing Enrolment Policy
Data Protection Policy
Data Security Policy
Language Policy
Online Safety Policy
Privacy Policy
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
School Accessibility Plans

Appendix 1

SEN Service levels

Tier		Services required	SL	Core Provision	Review
I	mild		X1	Exit- Monitor Year 1 no direct SEN provision	ongoing
			X2	Exited programme	-
			0	(registered SEN, but no ACS services required)	annual
		Limited, managed, transitional or intermittent needs	1	Classroom teacher (mainly) SEN consult/ train/ case manage	annual
II	mild to mod-erate	Ongoing intervention	2	SEN specialist direct delivery (limited, occasional) single external support service; short term SEMH or behaviour support	annual / (less typically) semester
	mod-erate	Complex, multiple needs Detailed case management	3	SEN specialist direct delivery (intensive, frequent); extensive or multiple coordinated external services; long-term complex SEMH or behaviour support	semester
		1:1 support	4	+ Learning Support Assistant Complex	semester
		Extensive administration	5	EHC Plan support	semester
		Referral/ child study	CS	Study team	< 1 year

Students may receive learning support services for a limited time without being identified as having a Special Education Need. Their status and level of services received are recorded, but they are not entered on the SEN register.

Students have Referral/Child Study status when they are awaiting a formal assessment; they are not entered on the SEN register.

Students on the SEN register (or receiving learning, behavioural or SEMH support) are identified to all teachers and school leaders in the Student Information System, with appropriate information about goals, classroom strategies, and assessment access arrangements.

Appendix 2

Individual Learning Plan (template)

Demographic Information			
Case Manager			
Service Level/ Provision		External Services	
Special Education Need(s)		(1)	(2)
ACS Care Plan	ACS Behaviour Plan	ACS Medical Plan	EHC Plan
Parent/Carer Contact Information			
Classroom strategies & Accommodations	*Engagement*	*Representation*	*Action & Expression*
Assessment Access Arrangements	Classroom, Semester Examinations and Mock Exams	Examining Body 1 status	Examining Body 2 status
Goal 1	Intervention	Progress/ Impact	Notes
Goal 2	Intervention	Progress/ Impact	Notes
Student strengths (as identified by educational testing)			

Student strengths (as identified by teachers)		
Recommendations/ Transition plan		
Case notes and documents		
Educational Psychology Assessment	Y / N	Date