Alcester Academy

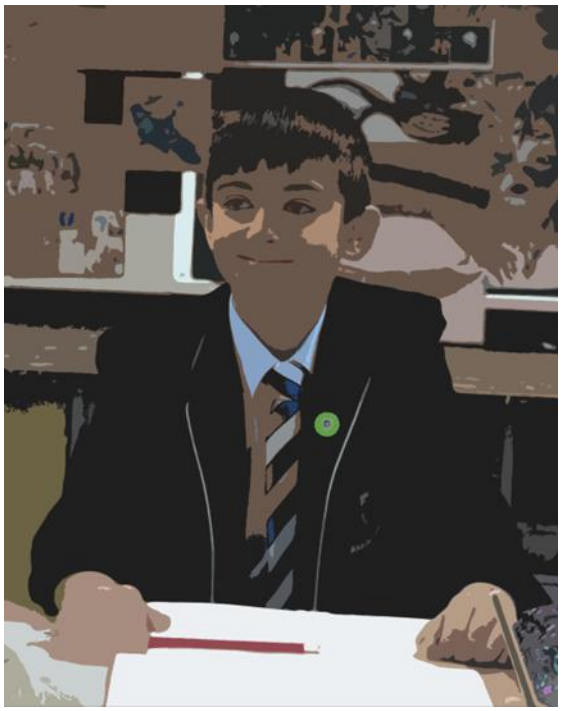
Education in Focus:

Key Government Consultations Explained

Exploring the latest education reforms
and what they could mean for our school community

Good afternoon Parents and Carers,

This week, SLT have chosen to write to you in a different way. Based upon the amount of government consultations released over recent weeks, we offer you a closer look at these areas as parents and carers. I do hope that you will find this bulletin edition useful therefore as we take you through:



- **The Curriculum Review, Building a World Class Curriculum for All, published in November 2025— Page 2**
- **The SEND Reform, Putting Children and Young People First, published in February 2026—Page 5**
- **DfE Child Poverty Strategy—Page 11**
- **The White Paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving, published in February 2026—Page 12**
- **Updates to Keping Children Safe in Education. A proposed revision was published in February 2026— Page 16**
- **Digital Discovery: A Parent's Guide to Our Pupils' Online World—Page 22**

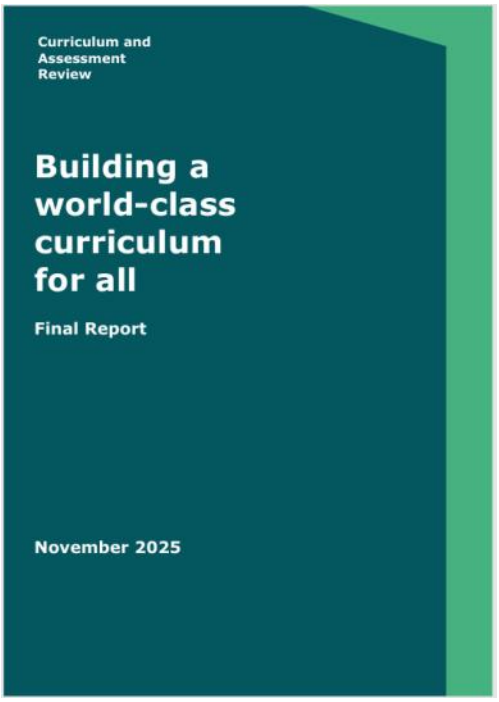
Curriculum & Assessment Review—Key Updates

Timeline for Change

- July 2024: Government review launched, led by Professor Becky Francis.
- Autumn 2024: Consultation and evidence gathering with education professionals.
- Early 2025: Interim report published outlining the initial themes.
- November 2025: Final report and recommendations released.
- Spring 2027: Final revised National Curriculum published.
- September 2028: Full implementation in all schools.

The government has been reviewing the school curriculum and assessment system to ensure it supports the needs of young people in a rapidly changing world (Curriculum and Assessment Review Final Report - GOV.UK).

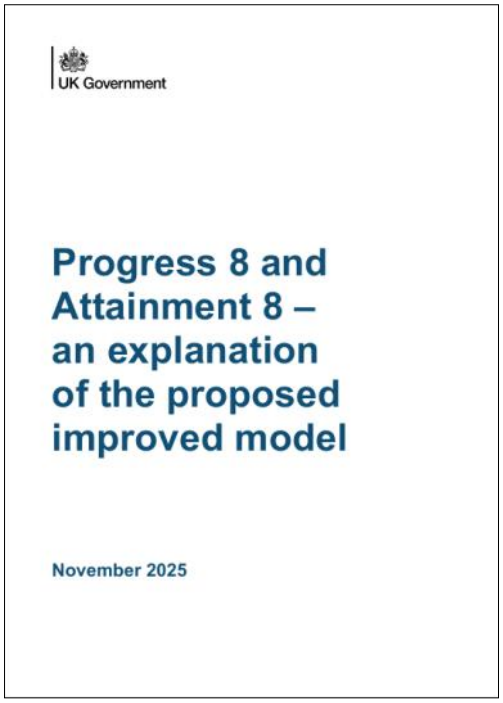
A number of important proposals have now been outlined, with full changes expected to take effect over the next few years. We understand that older children may well be unaffected by these changes, but the information below explains what measures we are taking now to respond.



What's Changing?

- **New National Curriculum from September 2028**
  A fully revised National Curriculum will be introduced, aiming to modernise learning and reflect the knowledge and skills pupils need for the future. At Alcester Academy, we are constantly reviewing the quality of our curriculum to ensure it complies with statutory guidance. The new curriculum, which will be released during spring next year, will likely result in some changes to structure and content as we gather more information and knowledge - this will be communicated clearly and in advance of any required changes. We will continue to run our new curriculum palette system and KS3 assessment process throughout - we feel this work is beginning to really support our pupils and parents at home - all palettes can be found on the school website: Alcester Academy | Quality of Education. And more assessment information can be located by clicking here: Alcester Academy |Assessment together with a recording within our parent forum section of the website: Parent Forum

- **EBacc performance measures to be removed**
  The current EBacc measure will no longer be used (whereby students should study at least 1 humanity and language subject) - this will provide a broader curriculum for students. For Alcester Academy, this will result in a slightly altered options process for GCSEs - providing more breadth and choice for your child - we will start to implement changes for current year 8 pupils to ensure they benefit during their GCSE years of study. The options process for year 8 will commence next half term - including our options evening which takes place on Wednesday 29th April. We will provide more information during this event. This change also impacts Progress 8 - which is an overall performance measure which assesses how your child performs across their best 8 subjects at GCSE. For more information visit: Progress 8 and Attainment 8 - an explanation of the proposed improved model.

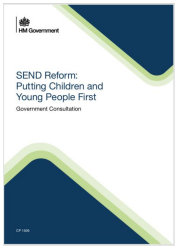


- **New oracy framework**
  A non statutory oracy framework will support schools in strengthening pupils' speaking and listening skills, helping build confidence and communication. At Alcester Academy, we will consider how this can be further embedded - alongside our current focus on oracy within our literacy policy and action plan. All policies can viewed by clicking: Alcester Academy | Policies & Statements
- **New statutory reading test for Year 8**
  A national reading assessment will be introduced in year 8 to help monitor progress through Key Stage 3. We are awaiting more information on how this will be introduced and conducted. Current cohorts will be unaffected by this change.
- **New enrichment benchmarks**
  Schools will be supported in broadening pupils' wider experiences through new enrichment benchmarks focusing on culture, character and personal development. At Alcester Academy, we already feel we offer an extensive enrichment through our residential and day trips, super learning day and club offer - the benchmarks will help to ensure your child has even more variety. For more information on our level of enrichment visit: Alcester Academy | Extra Curriculum.

Please reach out if you have any questions or thoughts by emailing: nickcooke@alcesteracdemy.org.uk.

'At Alcester Academy, we are constantly reviewing the quality of our curriculum to ensure it complies with statutory guidance. The new curriculum, which will be released during spring next year, will likely result in some changes to structure and content as we gather more information and knowledge - this will be communicated clearly and in advance of any required changes.'

SEND Reform: Putting Young People and Children First Government Consultation



After the delays and what has felt like an endless wait, the Send Reform consultation paper has finally arrived. The general consensus across educational platforms has been that the contents have thus far been well received. It has been widely reported and recognised that the SEND system in its current state is sadly 'broken.'

The SEND reform paper has considered the National views from a broad range of stakeholders including schools, specialist provisions, experts in the SEND profession, pupils and parent/ carers.

Case studies have been presented from what are seen as 'the very best schools' and it is clear that the Government are doing their very best to ensure that SEND is at the top of their educational agenda and have promised a substantial amount of funding to support these plans.

It is widely recognised that change will take time, and the Government has presented a timeline that spans across a period of 10 years. A lot can happen in this time, especially in such an unstable political climate, but it is very clear that collectively everyone agrees the SEND system desperately needs attention, and I hope to outline in my article a clear and concise summary of what the Government have proposed and set out to do.

SEND Reform Summary

Throughout the documentation there are a number of key 'golden threads' that I would like to draw your attention to:

- Sidelined to Included
- Withdrawn to Achieving
- Narrow to Broad
- Classrooms should be safe, calm and supportive places where every child feels they belong

The Government would like to see 'one inclusive education system' where SEND is fully embedded with mainstream education.

All definitions of 'Inclusion' have been welcomed, and as a school we have spent many hours focusing on what this looks like specifically at our Academy:

The SEND reform paper does now outline a generic definition stating that *"Inclusion is all staff supporting the learning, wellbeing and safety needs of all children, so that they Belong, Achieve and Thrive."*

All schools have a statutory duty to publish their SEND information reports on school websites, to outline their strategies and policy within their individual school. This is proposed to be replaced by a 'legally required' Inclusion Strategy- linked to National Inclusion Standards.

At a recent DFE webinar we questioned the panel about this 'Inclusion Strategy' and asked if there would be a generic template for all schools to complete, much like the National Disadvantaged Strategy, so that everyone is more aligned. There was a positive response that this suggestion would be taken away and considered. With the SEND reform paper stating that they want a universal system for all, the alignment of inclusion strategies would certainly be welcomed.

Even before delving into the specifics of SEND, the Government are very clear that 'inclusion' is at the heart of change. High quality teaching remains the priority and ensuring that pupils are receiving this in all classrooms Nationally. Findings highlight that 'too many children are not stretched and challenged' and that schools should all 'excite a love of learning and empower every child.'

Key Proposals:

There has been a promise of more funding and investment from the Government into the mainstream system. So, what does this include:

- New inclusion training as part of the ITT and ECT Framework (adaptive teaching focus and supporting children and young people with SEND)
- Extension of UNIVERSAL SEND services training programme in schools - Government funded free training and resources (online)
- Specific training for TAs to help support inclusive practice
- Requirement of all schools to ensure that staff receive training on SEND and inclusion
- A move to collaborate with local 'SEND' Hubs (Collaboration being the 'heart of the new system')

There is recognition of the 'challenges for SENCOs' and the need for a review of their role to move from being administrative to more strategic.

As line manager to the SEND department, I see the day-to-day challenges and the need for more training, support and most importantly funding, to enable the level of support that our young people and staff deserve at a mainstream level.

The Universal Offer

High-quality teaching and support for All

This will set a new baseline for mainstream education (Teacher Standards). The Universal offer is set to include:

- Ambitious leadership and governance that embed inclusion in planning
- Evidence-based support prioritising early intervention
- High-quality teaching with curriculum designed for all learners
- Accessible and enriching provision beyond the classroom
- A safe and respectful culture fostering belonging and attendance
- Strong partnerships with families and wider services; and
- Inclusive environments with continuous improvements to accessibility

Beyond this there are then three new layers of support:

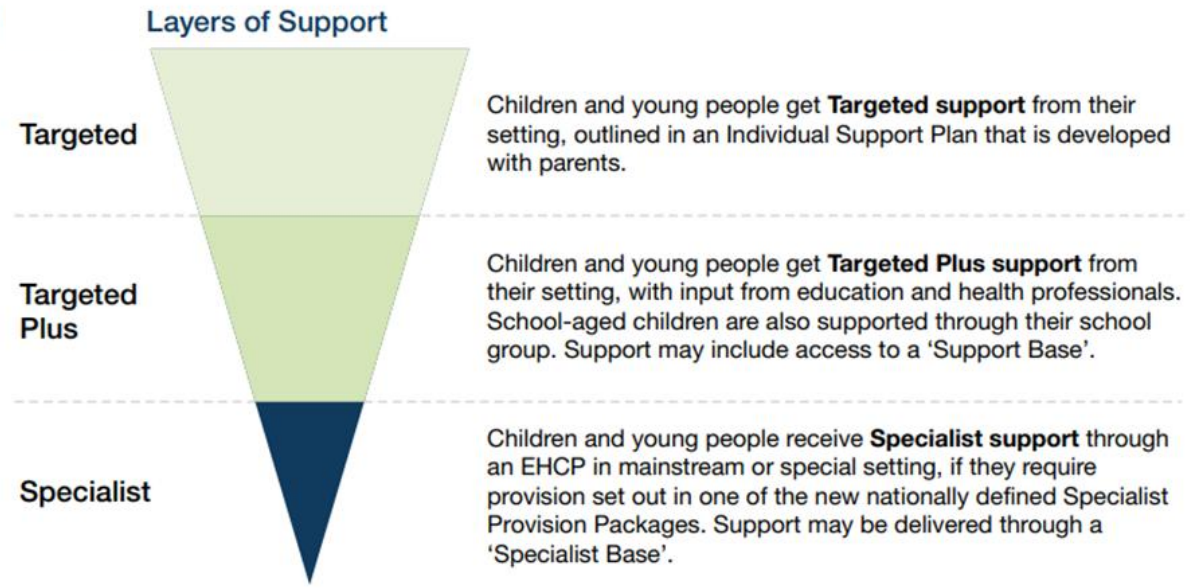
Targeted Support Proposals

Mainstream settings will provide 'Targeted Support', in consultation with parents and carers (with the emphasis on early assessment: plan-do-review process, and intervention). Targeted support will include:

- Small group interventions
- Pre-teaching key vocabulary
- Provision captured on a digitalised 'Individual Support Plan (ISP)' - reviewed regularly

What are Individual Support Plans (ISP)

Individual Support Plans (ISPs) are a key component of the proposed 2026 SEND reforms, designed to create a mandatory, digital record of support for every child with identified SEND, regardless of the severity of their needs. They aim to provide a "guaranteed baseline of support" and follow a child from nursery to school, acting as a more flexible, school-led alternative to the legally binding Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).



Key Distinctions

- **Not a Diagnosis Needed:** An ISP does not require a formal diagnosis, unlike some other forms of support.
- **Appeals:** Unlike EHCPs, parents will not have legal recourse to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) over their child's ISP and must instead use the school's complaint system.
- **No Loss of Support:** The government has promised that no child will lose their current support, with a "triple lock" of protections in place.

Targeted Plus Support Proposals

'Available to children who need more specialist support to thrive in inclusive mainstream education.'

There will be access to 'Experts at Hand' - including access to high quality health professionals and outreach and the following:

- Access to 'Inclusion Base' in mainstream settings to provide bespoke environments, equipment and expertise to meet their needs
- 'May involve time-limited support in an Alternative Provision (AP) - or specialist setting (which will allow pupils a SHORT TIME placement for their needs to be assessed, addressed, before reintegrating back into a mainstream setting
- Provision will be captured on a digitalised 'Individual Support Plan (ISP)- to be reviewed regularly.

Specialist Support Proposals (those with the most complex needs)

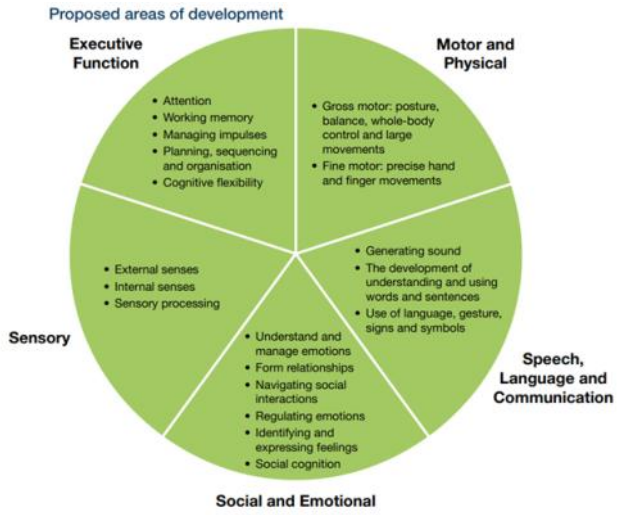
The Government state in the SEND Reform Paper that 'Only children who need the overall package of support detailed in Specialist Provision Package will be entitled to an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Provision is still to be captured on a digitalised 'Individual Support Plan (ISP)' which will be reviewed regularly. Schools and local authorities will establish collaboratively if a child requires provision that is beyond that which a setting can provide (Inclusion bases/ Specialist Bases).

SEND reforms aim to create a more consistent, inclusive national framework, moving from a, "financially unsustainable" system to one that emphasises early intervention, mainstream capacity, and a 0-25 "graduated approach" (Assess, Plan, Do, Review). Specialist support is increasingly delivered via multi-disciplinary teams and targeted, evidence-based interventions for specific learning needs.

Rebranding 'Areas of Need'

There will be an update of the SEND code of practice and most noticeably a rebrand of the 'Areas of Need' to 'Areas of Development.'



The most significant change is the removal of 'Mental Health.' The Government have outlined that for some children their 'mental health need will be their only additional need' and will be 'clearly setting out what all settings should do to support a child or young person with mental health needs, whether or not they also have identified SEND.'

As an Academy we welcome many of the proposed reforms set out across this report, and there are many positive statements of change, with the promise of additional funding to support this:

'Children's needs are <u>not fixed</u>'

'They may <u>change over time</u>, and many will face barriers to learning at <u>different stages</u> in their lives'

'ISP's will be <u>interactive</u>, <u>accessible</u> and available in a digital format, supporting consistency across the system.'

ISP's will be 'a <u>living product</u>, <u>updated</u> to reflect <u>changes</u> in a child's barriers to learning or the provision put in place for them.'

Ofsted features as another 'golden thread' and we cannot ignore how heavily 'inclusion' will be scrutinised under the new framework inspections. The Government make clear that *"Ofsted inspectors have received SIGNIFICANT additional training focused on their renewed approach to inclusion."*

With our own school Ofsted inspection imminent, it will be fascinating to see inspectors' insights and reflections into 'inclusion' and the impact of their 'training.'

For further information on the proposed 'timeline' of changes please see a helpful graphic published by the Times Education Supplement (TES):

Please find the link to the full Send Reform Paper here:

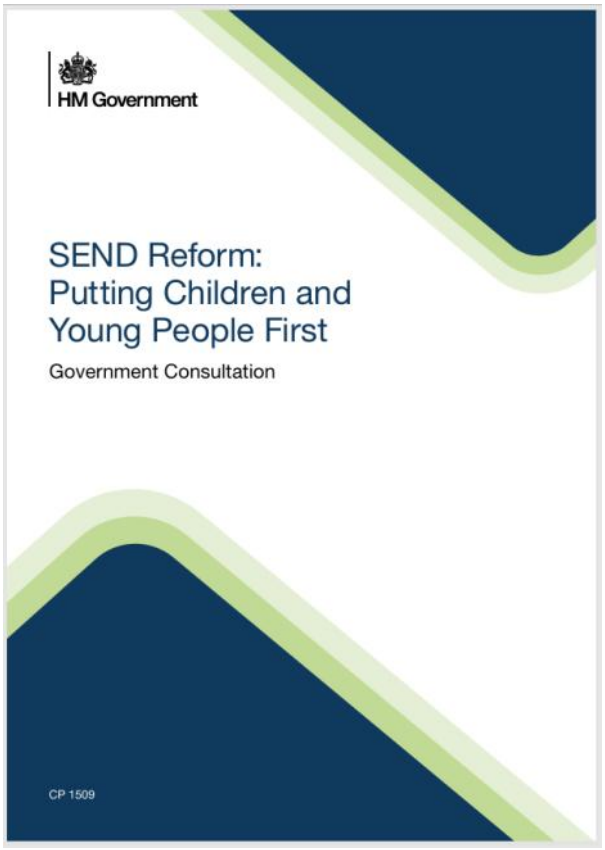
SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First

It is well worth the read and I welcome your thoughts and views so do please get in contact with me via email at

charliemckenzie@alcesteracademy.org.uk.

Best Wishes,

Miss McKenzie—Assistant Headteacher



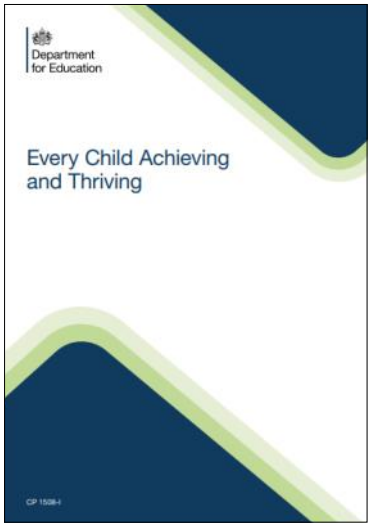
DfE Child Poverty Strategy

Our Children, Our Future: How the government is helping children and families (Child Friendly)

The DfE has published a child-friendly version of its child poverty strategy. This is intended to give children a clear and age-appropriate explanation of what the government is doing to tackle child poverty, and support staff in school in having conversations with children affected by this issue.

The White Paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving

Every Child Achieving and Thriving
(web-accessible version)



Government of the United Kingdom
Department for Education

If nothing else, the Foreword and Executive Summary attached to the document is an interesting read for you as parents and carers. These proposals are for full implementation in the academic year 2027-28.

This is the opening paragraph:

'Childhood is changing, and our education system must change with it. Children are growing up in a world that is evolving faster, with increased connectivity but also uncertainty, increased communication but growing mistrust. Our children's horizons are wider, their ambitions greater and their determination to make the world a better place even stronger.'

The paper goes on to say:

'It all begins with family. Children can achieve and thrive throughout their lives, with the core memories of a happy and fulfilling childhood, and the support of a strong, stable, loving home. This is the experience we want for every child and why this ambitious white paper sits alongside our wider plan to rebuild our public services.…

Our children have the strongest foundations when love and support at home is built on with stretching, enriching and inclusive school experiences. Great schools deliver this for every child. Teachers build children's knowledge and skills, encouraging debate and discussion, which broadens young people's horizons and challenges their ideas… This white paper is not simply a vision of the change we want to bring to our schools, but a call to parents, schools, local services, and everyone working with children and young people to join us in building a future where every child can achieve and thrive.'

'The paper aims to address attainment gaps between groups of students, the rising numbers of children identified with SEND, teacher shortages and retention concerns and high levels of student absence and disengagement.'

The white paper in its entirety sets out the **Government's long-term plan to reform education in England** so that **every child can succeed regardless of background**. It focuses particularly on **reducing disadvantage, improving inclusion, and reforming SEND support**.

The paper aims to address attainment gaps between groups of students, the rising numbers of children identified with SEND, teacher shortages and retention concerns and high levels of student absence and disengagement.

The Paper outlines:

- Plans to recruit 6500 more teachers and improve teacher training and professional development.
- An aim to reach 94% school attendance nationally. In the summer of 2024 around 1.5 million children were missing a day or more every fortnight. The target: 20 million more days of attendance per year by 2029. That's the equivalent of every single child attending school for an extra two days per year. Year 11 pupils with near-perfect attendance have almost double the odds of achieving grade 5 in English and Maths GCSE compared to similar grade 4 pupils attending 90 to 95% of the time. In other words, missing just 10 days can make a lot of difference.
- An aim to make schools more inclusive and provide funding for improved specialist support and expertise.
- New national guidance on behaviour that will ensure a consistent approach across all schools.
- How the government will provide a focus on broad enrichment opportunities for students in education including; civic engagement, arts and culture, nature and outdoor adventure, sport and physical activities and a development of wider life skills such as debating and managing finances.
- How there will be a focus on engaging with families and communities more, and additional support for wellbeing and personal development.
- How schools should collaborate in order to improve outcomes for students.
- The place of digital technology to support young people's education.
- A pledge to invest £1.7 billion into schools in 2026-27.

Stronger home-to-school partnerships

A third of primary school parents and half of secondary school parents say they don't get enough information on how to support their child's learning.

What the Paper aims to ask schools to do:

- Provide clear, timely communication about attendance, behaviour, progress and events
- Provide information on how to support your child's learning at home
- Support transitions between schools and key stages
- Offer regular opportunities to be part of school life. If you feel that we can do more towards any of these areas at Alcester Academy, please do get in touch with us head@alcesteracademy.org.uk

New tools for parents

- School Profiles: a rounded picture of your child's education, presenting the latest useful information about schools together in one place.
- Online Family Support: a one-stop shop for age-appropriate guidance on supporting your child.
- Screen time guidance: new advice for under-fives by April 2026, and for ages 5 to 16.
- Improved complaints system: when things go wrong, a clearer, more effective process will help resolve issues fairly.

‘The Paper highlights that every child deserves to feel that they belong at school—not just that they are present, but that they are seen, valued and connected to those around them. We know that when children feel this way, they attend more, engage more fully with learning, and go on to achieve more.’

Belonging, wellbeing and mental health

The Paper highlights that every child deserves to feel that they belong at school - not just that they are present, but that they are seen, valued and connected to those around them. We know that when children feel this way, they attend more, engage more fully with learning, and go on to achieve more. There are aims to create:

- A school culture where every child feels like they belong
- Dedicated Mental Health Support Teams - we're expanding Mental Health Support Teams to every school and college by 2029 to 2030, so children get timely support when they need it
- A new Pupil Engagement Framework, giving schools the tools to measure how children are engaging and experiencing and act on what they find.

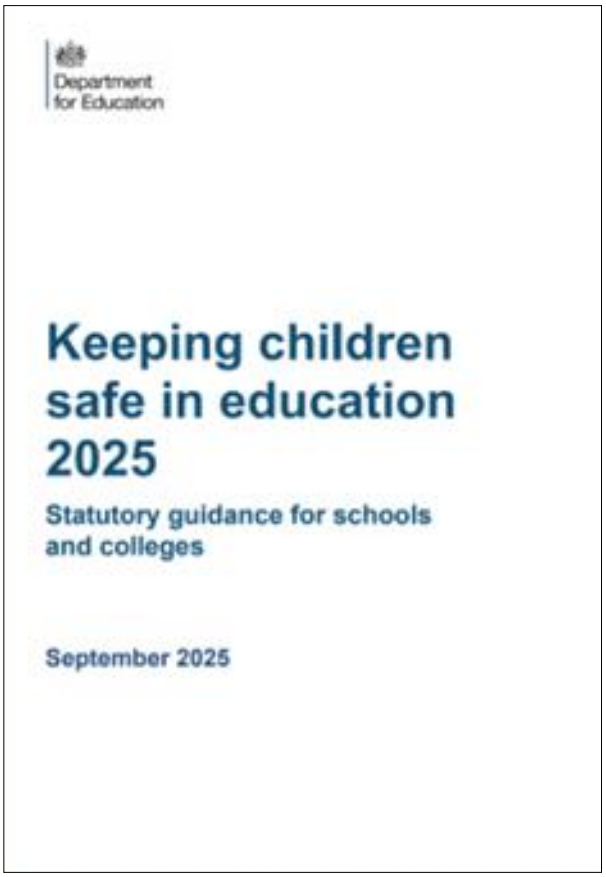
Best Wishes—*Sarah Mellors—Headteacher*

Safeguarding Update:

KCSIE: A Simple Guide for Parents

KCSIE is the statutory guidance that shapes safeguarding in every school in England. This guide explains Keeping Children Safe in Education in plain language for parents and carers. Learn what it means, how it protects children, and what you should know.

Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK



What Is KCSIE and Why Does It Matter to Parents?

KCSIE is issued by the Department for Education. Because it is statutory guidance, schools are legally required to follow it. It is not optional and it is not a suggestion. It is a duty.

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' applies to all schools and colleges in England. This includes maintained schools, academies, independent schools and further education providers.

The guidance is updated regularly to reflect new risks and new safeguarding learning. Schools must review the most recent version and make sure their policies reflect it.

'Keeping children safe in education works best when schools and parents work together. KCSIE provides the structure. Families provide partnership. Together, this creates a safer environment for every child.'

At its core, KCSIE exists to make sure that every child in education is safe, listened to and protected.

What Does Keeping Children Safe in Education Cover?

Keeping children safe in education is broader than many people realise. It does not only deal with serious cases of abuse. It focuses on prevention, early support and creating a safe culture inside schools.

KCSIE covers:

- Safeguarding responsibilities for all staff
- Child protection procedures
- Safer recruitment practices
- Online safety requirements
- Managing concerns and allegations
- Working with local authorities

All of these areas are designed to work together. The aim is to make safeguarding consistent across the country so that every child receives the same level of protection.

For parents, this means that your child's school should have clear systems in place. There should be no uncertainty about who is responsible or how concerns are handled.

Why Does KCSIE Exist?

Children spend a significant part of their lives in school. Teachers and school staff often notice changes in behaviour or wellbeing before anyone else does.

KCSIE exists to make sure that safeguarding is structured and consistent. It builds on existing law, including the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. These laws make clear that protecting children is everyone's responsibility.

Without national guidance, safeguarding standards could vary. KCSIE ensures there is a clear national framework. It promotes early identification of concerns and encourages staff to act quickly when something does not feel right.

Early action can prevent small worries from becoming serious risks.

Who Must Follow KCSIE?

Safeguarding is not just the responsibility of the headteacher. KCSIE applies to everyone working within a school or college environment.

Every adult in a school must understand their safeguarding duty. This includes teachers, support staff, volunteers and governors. All staff must read at least Part One of KCSIE so they know how to recognise concerns and who to report them to.

Schools must provide regular safeguarding training. This ensures that staff stay aware of emerging risks, including online harm and child-on-child abuse.

For families, this offers reassurance. Safeguarding is not left to chance. It is embedded across the whole school.

How KCSIE Protects Children in Practice

KCSIE requires schools to have clear safeguarding systems that operate every day.

Every school must appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead. This trained senior member of staff is responsible for managing concerns, keeping records and working with local authorities if needed. Parents can usually find the name of this person on the school website.

Schools must also follow strict recruitment checks before employing staff. These checks include verifying identity, checking references and completing Disclosure and Barring Service checks. These measures reduce the risk of unsuitable adults working with children.

Why KCSIE Matters to Parents and Carers

As a parent or carer, your child's safety comes first. Knowing that schools must follow KCSIE provides peace of mind. It means safeguarding is structured, monitored and inspected.

If your child raises a concern, there are clear steps staff must follow. If you have worries, there are clear points of contact within the school.

Understanding KCSIE allows you to feel confident in conversations with school leaders. It also helps you recognise when processes are being followed correctly.

Reassurance for Families

Safeguarding discussions can feel serious because they deal with important issues. However, the purpose of KCSIE is protection, not alarm.

When schools follow KCSIE properly, children are listened to, concerns are addressed early and families are supported.

Keeping children safe in education works best when schools and parents work together. KCSIE provides the structure. Families provide partnership. Together, this creates a safer environment for every child.

What Is Safeguarding in Practical Terms?

Safeguarding means protecting children from harm and promoting their welfare. Under KCSIE, safeguarding is not just about responding to abuse. It is about prevention, awareness and early support.

In practical terms, safeguarding includes recognising warning signs, listening carefully to children, keeping accurate records and working with external agencies when needed.

Keeping children safe in education means creating a school culture where children feel safe to speak up and where adults know exactly how to respond.

Recognising Different Types of Harm

KCSIE makes clear that staff must be able to recognise different forms of harm. This includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

It also includes child-on-child abuse. This can involve bullying, harassment, or harmful behaviour between pupils. Schools are expected to take these concerns seriously and respond appropriately.

Online harm is another growing area of risk. Children may experience exploitation, grooming or cyberbullying through digital platforms. KCSIE requires schools to address these risks directly rather than treating them as separate from safeguarding.

The guidance emphasises that staff should not dismiss behaviours as "just friendship issues" or "normal teenage behaviour" if they may indicate harm.

Online Safety Under KCSIE

Online safety is now a central part of keeping children safe in education. Children use technology daily, both in school and at home. This brings opportunity but also risk.

Schools must have filtering and monitoring systems to reduce exposure to harmful content. They must also teach pupils about safe online behaviour as part of the curriculum.

Education around digital safety includes understanding privacy settings, recognising inappropriate contact and knowing how to report online concerns.

For parents, this highlights the importance of consistent messaging between school and home. Open conversations about online activity strengthen safeguarding

The school has a designated teacher for child protection:

Miss K Buckthorp
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Mrs J Bennett
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Office in LSU

Mrs J Austin
Member of the Safeguarding Team
Office in LSU

Ms L Hatcher
Member of the Safeguarding Team
Office in LSU

Mrs S Bove
Member of the Safeguarding Team
Office in LSU

Apps for young people to use that support mental health & wellbeing

These apps are highly regarded as useful tools for young people to learn more about their mental health and emotional wellbeing. They can help with developing skills that support wellbeing and building resilience to support staying well:

Think Ninja – a mental health app designed for 10- to 18-year-olds. Using a variety of content and tools, it allows young people to learn about mental health and emotional wellbeing and develop skills they can use to build resilience and stay well. Available from app stores.

Kooth is a free mental health provider who offers anonymous and personalised mental health support for Children and Young People online and through an app.

Calm Heart – an app for sleep, meditation and relaxation.

Clear Fear – an app, developed for teenage mental health charity stem4 by Dr Nihara Krause, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, that uses the evidence-based treatment CBT to focus on learning to reduce the physical responses to threat by learning to breathe, relax and be mindful as well as changing thoughts and behaviours and releasing emotions. The Clear Fear app is recommended for the ages of 11-19 years.

Molehill Mountain – an app to help autistic people understand and manage anxiety.

My Possible Self – Mental health support created by world-leading healthcare professionals. Teaming up with their friends at Priory Healthcare, world leaders in mental health, they have created interactive tools and techniques, using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), customised for digital use.

Feeling Good Teens | Waiting Room – offers Positive Mental Training audio programmes for 10 to 15-year-olds to develop self-esteem, resilience and goal-focused motivation. Feeling Good's research in the NHS shows that this can help with letting go of worries, cope better with stress, and sleep better.

If you have any comments or questions regarding the *KCSIE: A Simple Guide for Parents* safeguarding update, please contact karenbuckthorp@alcesteracademy.org.uk.

Digital Discovery: A Parent's Guide to Our Pupils' Online World

As we navigate the academic year, we recognise that the digital landscape is a significant part of our students' lives. While the internet offers incredible opportunities for learning and connection, it also presents challenges that require a collaborative approach between school and home.

This newsletter outlines the apps most commonly accessed by our 11–16 year olds, providing a balanced view of their benefits and the safety considerations you should be aware of.

Social Media & Communication Apps

Most social media platforms have a minimum age requirement of 13. In 2026, the UK government is actively consulting on stricter age verification to further protect young people.

TikTok

- **Age Requirement:** 13+
- **The Positives:** A powerhouse for creativity and "micro-learning" (revision hacks, DIY, and hobbies).
- **Safety Concerns:** The "For You" algorithm is highly immersive and can lead to excessive screen time. There is a risk of encountering unsafe "challenges."
- **Parent Tip:** Use Family Pairing mode to set screen time limits and content filters from your own device.

Snapchat

- **Age Requirement:** 13+
- **The Positives:** Used for rapid, informal communication with close friends. Features like "Snap Maps" help friends coordinate meet-ups.
- **Safety Concerns:** The "disappearing" nature of messages can lead to a false sense of security regarding "sexting" or bullying.
- **Parent Tip:** Ensure "Ghost Mode" is enabled on Snap Maps so their precise location isn't visible to others.

Yubo

- **Age Requirement:** 13+ (separate communities for 13–18s and adults)
- **The Positives:** Focused on "friend-finding" rather than following influencers. It allows teens to find communities with shared niche interests through live-streaming.
- **Safety Concerns:** It uses a "swipe" mechanic similar to adult dating apps, which can impact self-esteem. The live-streaming feature allows strangers to comment in real-time.
- **Parent Tip:** Yubo has robust Age Verification (using facial analysis); ensure your child hasn't bypassed this by using a fake birthdate.

Facebook & Messenger

- **Age Requirement:** 13+
- **The Positives:** Useful for "Groups" related to local community events, sports clubs, and school-wide announcements. Messenger is often used for family group chats.
- **Safety Concerns:** Often seen as "old fashioned" by teens, it can lead to a lack of privacy awareness. The "Marketplace" and public "Groups" can expose teens to scammers or inappropriate advertisements.
- **Parent Tip:** Review the Privacy Checkup tool to ensure their profile is not "Public" and searchable by strangers on Google.

Instagram

- **Age Requirement:** 13+
- **The Positives:** A visual space for identity-building and following positive role models or educational creators.
- **Safety Concerns:** Pressure to present a "perfect" life can impact body image. Public comments on "Reels" can be a source of negativity.
- **Parent Tip:** Set the account to Private and use the "Hidden Words" tool to automatically filter out offensive comments.

WhatsApp

- **Age Requirement:** 13+
- **The Positives:** Essential for project coordination and staying in touch with family. End-to-end encryption ensures messages are private.
- **Safety Concerns:** Large group chats can lead to persistent notifications and "exclusion" bullying if a child is removed from a group.
- **Parent Tip:** Set "Privacy > Groups" to "My Contacts" so strangers cannot add them to random group chats.

BeReal

- **Age Requirement:** 13+
- **The Positives:** Encourages authenticity by requiring one unedited photo at a random time, reducing the "social pressure" of other apps.
- **Safety Concerns:** Students may accidentally capture their school uniform or home interior. The "Discovery" tab shows posts to people outside their friend group.
- **Parent Tip:** Remind your child to only share with "Friends" and never use the "Discovery" (public) option.

Discord

- **Age Requirement:** 13+
- **The Positives:** Excellent for collaborative study and hobby communities (gaming, coding, art).
- **Safety Concerns:** Public servers can be unmoderated. Direct messages (DMs) from strangers in shared servers remain a key risk.
- **Parent Tip:** Use the Family Center in Discord settings to see which servers your child has joined and who they are messaging.

Gaming & Community Platforms

Roblox

- **Age Requirement:** No minimum (but 13+ for full social features)
- **The Positives:** Teaches basic game design and coding. It fosters problem-solving and social interaction.
- **Safety Concerns:** User-generated content can occasionally bypass filters. In-game chat can be a vector for grooming or scams (e.g., "Free Robux" scams).
- **Parent Tip:** Enable a Parental PIN so safety and privacy settings cannot be changed without your permission.

Telegram

- **Age Requirement:** 13+
- **The Positives:** High-speed file sharing and massive group capacities for technical hobbies.
- **Safety Concerns:** Very low moderation. "Secret Chats" and public channels make it easier to encounter inappropriate material compared to more regulated apps.
- **Parent Tip:** Generally discouraged for secondary students due to the high volume of unmoderated content.

Internet Matters: "My Family's Digital Toolkit"

We highly recommend parents use the My Family's Digital Toolkit from Internet Matters. This is a free, interactive tool designed to take the guesswork out of online safety by providing a "made-to-measure" experience.

How it works:

The toolkit asks you 7-9 targeted questions about your children's digital habits, the devices they own, and the activities they enjoy (streaming, gaming, socialising).

Why it is so useful for Parents:

- **Layered Safety Advice:** It teaches you how to "layer" your protection. It moves beyond just app settings to show you how to set controls at the Network level (your home Wi-Fi), the Device level (Apple/Android settings), and the Platform level (individual apps).
- **Specific Risk Management:** If you select that your child enjoys "Online Gaming," the toolkit will provide specific guides for Roblox or Fortnite. If you select "Spending Money," it will show you exactly how to disable in-app purchases or set spending alerts.
- **Bite-Sized Resources:** The advice is sent directly to your email in digestible, "bite-sized" packs, so you aren't overwhelmed by a 50-page manual. You can save these to your phone for quick reference.
- **Conversation Starters:** Perhaps its most valuable feature is a set of age-appropriate "Digital Life" prompts. These help you talk about difficult topics like cyberbullying, self-esteem, and "fake news" in a way that feels like a shared exploration rather than a lecture.
- **Regular Updates:** Because technology moves fast, the toolkit allows you to update your profile as your child grows or starts using new apps, ensuring your safety advice remains relevant for their entire journey through secondary school.

Who to Contact if You Have Concerns

If you are worried about your child's safety online, these organisations offer expert support:

Organisation	Purpose	Contact Details
NSPCC Helpline	Support for adults worried about a child.	**0808 800 5000** or **help@nspcc.org.uk**
Childline	Support for young people (under 19).	**0800 1111** or childline.org.uk
CEOP	Reporting online sexual abuse or grooming.	ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting
Internet Watch Foundation	Reporting criminal online content.	iwf.org.uk
Report Harmful Content	Help with removing bullying or impersonation.	reportharmfulcontent.com
School	Please inform the school if your child is experiencing online bullying or if something online is impacting their wellbeing or learning. We can offer support and guidance.	

NSPCC

childline
ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME
childline.org.uk | 0800 1111

CEOP

IWF Internet Watch Foundation
Working together to stop child sexual abuse online

REPORT HARMFUL CONTENT

We are offering an SLT drop in on Wednesday 15th April,
3.30-4.30pm, if you wish to discuss any of these areas with us.
No appointment is needed.

Equally, if there are any areas that you wish to comment on in person there is a Google form for you to make these.

Click here to give feedback:- Government Consultations

I hope that you have found today's summary of use.

Wishing you a lovely weekend.
Mrs Sarah Mellors—Headteacher