

Synergy Multi Academy Trust Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029

(DfE Template)

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).

Detail	Date
Academic year/years that our current Inclusion Strategy covers	2026-2029
Date this statement was published	Sept 2026
Date on which it will be reviewed	Sept 2029
Statement authorised by	CEO

No	The Core Principles (DfE)
1	Ambitious leadership and governance that embeds inclusion
2	Evidence-based support prioritising early intervention high quality adaptive teaching with curriculum designed for all learners
3	Enriching provision beyond the classroom that all children can access
4	A safe and respectful culture fostering belonging, attendance, and participation in learning
5	Strong partnerships with families and wider services
6	Inclusive environments with continuous improvements to accessibility

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

Synergy Multi Academy Trust – Contextual barriers to learning (including notable trends or themes over time, such as a growing prevalence or increasing complexity)	
1	Attendance and disengagement from school While several schools significantly strong attendance, as recognised through DfE similar schools data, schools across Norfolk continue to face challenges in improving attendance, particularly among vulnerable pupils, those with SEND, pupils eligible for Free School Meals, and secondary-age students. While attendance has improved since the pandemic, Norfolk's overall attendance remains below some regional and national comparators, with illness-related absence and severe absence remaining significant concerns. Schools report increasing levels of anxiety-based school avoidance, disengagement from learning, and difficulties re-engaging pupils once attendance patterns deteriorate. Key challenges • Persistent and severe absence among disadvantaged pupils. • Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). • Difficulty engaging families where attendance concerns are longstanding. • Balancing attendance expectations with complex mental health and SEND needs. • Increased workload associated with attendance monitoring and intervention.
2	SEND and access to specialist support Demand for SEND support in Norfolk has risen significantly, placing pressure on mainstream schools, specialist provisions, educational psychology services, and health partners. Schools are increasingly expected to support pupils with complex needs in mainstream settings while waiting for assessments, EHCP decisions, specialist placements, or external professional support. Norfolk has invested heavily in new provision, for the future but demand continues to outpace capacity. Key challenges • Growing numbers of pupils requiring SEND support. • Delays accessing specialist assessments and interventions. • Recruiting and retaining specialist staff. • Managing complex behavioural, communication and sensory needs within mainstream classrooms. • Meeting parental expectations when external services are under pressure. • Financial pressures associated with enhanced SEND provision.
3	Increasing SEMH wellbeing challenges. Schools are increasingly acting as front-line providers of emotional wellbeing support. Many Norfolk schools report increased levels of anxiety, depression, self-esteem issues, trauma-related needs, and emotional dysregulation among children and young people. Mental health concerns are often linked to attendance difficulties, social media influences, family pressures, and post-pandemic impacts. Key challenges • Increased demand for pastoral and wellbeing support. • Limited capacity within NHS and specialist mental health services. • Staff needing additional training to support complex emotional needs. • Rising safeguarding concerns linked to mental health. • Impact of poor mental wellbeing on learning, behaviour and attendance.
4	Poverty and deprivation Schools increasingly having to support families struggling with the cost of living, housing insecurity, food poverty, and limited access to services. These factors can also affect attendance, attainment, wellbeing, and parental engagement.

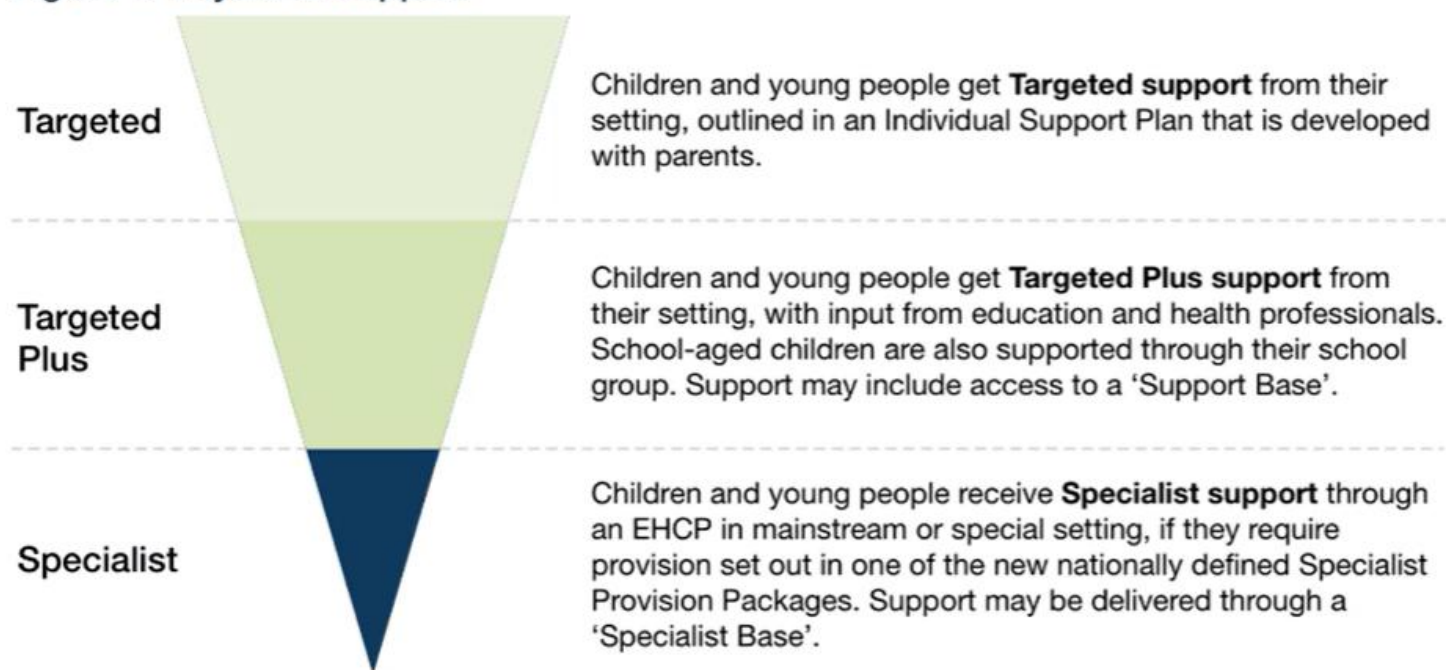
	Key challenges • Increasing demand for welfare and early-help support. • Lower educational attainment linked to socioeconomic disadvantage. • Digital poverty and lack of access to learning resources. • Funding pressures as schools seek to provide additional support. • Reduced family capacity to engage with school due to financial stresses.
5	Rural isolation and transport challenges Norfolk's geography presents unique challenges. Many pupils live in dispersed rural communities, requiring long journeys to access education and / or specialist services, if they even exist. Transport pressures are particularly acute for children with SEND, where specialist provision may be located many miles from home. Transport costs have risen substantially, reflecting growing demand and limited local provision in some areas. Key challenges • Long travel times affecting pupil wellbeing and participation. • Difficulty accessing enrichment activities, interventions and after-school provision. • Recruitment and retention challenges in rural locations. • Reduced access to specialist services compared to urban areas. • Higher transport costs and logistical complexity for SEND pupils
6	Speech, language and communication difficulties Schools are reporting increasing numbers of children entering education with delayed speech, language and communication skills. These difficulties can affect literacy, social interaction, behaviour, emotional regulation and academic progress. Demand for speech and language support often exceeds available specialist capacity, leaving schools to provide significant levels of intervention themselves. Key challenges • Identifying needs early enough for effective intervention. • Limited availability of specialist Speech and Language Therapy services. • Supporting communication needs within mainstream classrooms. • Additional training requirements for staff. • Increased risk of behavioural and emotional difficulties when communication needs are unmet.
7	Family and social challenges Schools increasingly support children experiencing family instability, parental mental health difficulties, domestic abuse, substance misuse, housing challenges and social care involvement. These issues frequently affect attendance, behaviour, wellbeing and academic attainment. Schools are often required to coordinate support across multiple agencies while maintaining strong relationships with families. Key challenges • Growing safeguarding responsibilities. • Increased demand for early intervention and family support. • Managing the impact of adverse childhood experiences • Supporting families to engage positively with education. • Coordinating effectively with health, social care and community services.

Overall Strategic Challenge for Norfolk Schools

The combination of all of these challenges presents a challenging period for schools in Norfolk, particularly those schools with a welcoming and inclusive ethos like Synergy Multi Academy Trust. Norfolk schools are managing increasing levels of need while facing workforce, funding and capacity pressures. The interaction between SEND, mental health, attendance, poverty and rural isolation means that challenges are often interconnected rather than occurring in isolation.

The long-term system vision

Figure 4: Layers of Support



(DfE July 2026)

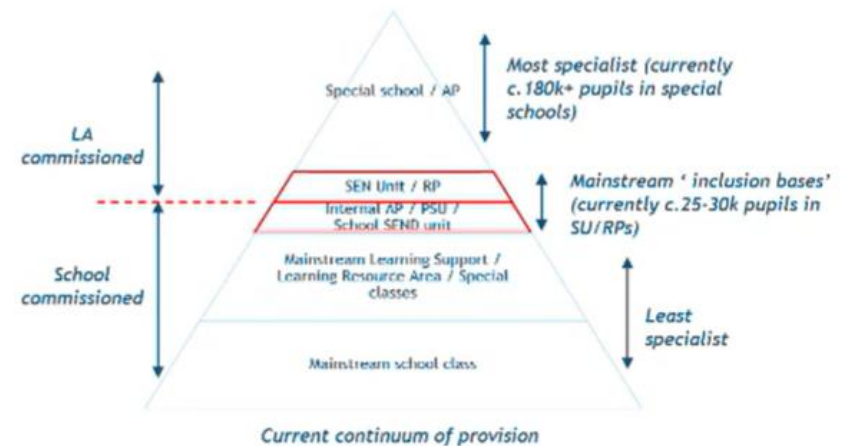
Inclusion bases form a small but growing middle tier of SEND or behavioural support provision

This is the old typology we use to describe 'mainstream units'

Satellite special school	Special school places co-located on a mainstream site, with CYP spending majority of time in the special school's provision. CYP on roll of the special school. Arrangements between LA, special school, and mainstream vary and can be complex.
SEN Unit (SU)	Special provisions within a mainstream school where children are taught mainly within separate classes. Must be recognised by LA and receive HN funding.
Resourced Provision (RP)	Places are reserved at a mainstream school for children with a specific type of SEN, taught mainly within mainstream classes, but requiring a base and some specialist facilities around the school. Must be recognised by LA and receive HN funding.
Internal AP (IAP)	In-school behavioural support units which aren't an 'official' or recorded form of provision but referenced in AP statutory guidance. Sector recognised term.
Pupil Support Unit (PSU)	Support model for CYP who require additional behavioural or pastoral support, or those at risk of exclusion, from within the school. Defined term in behaviour in schools and AP guidance.
Schools' own unit	School run model which often tries to mirror SU/RP provision. Practice varies widely, sometimes including sensory / destimulation spaces, and is used as a planned response. Not recognised by LA, funded by core school budgets.

"Inclusion bases"

Bases sit in a continuum, but the pyramid is lopsided with limited middle-tier capacity currently



(DfE July 2026)

Synergy Inclusion Mainstream Strategy- Overview
September 2026 – September 2029
Lead – Alastair Ogle

Barrier	Relation to Trust Priorities 2025-2028	Key Objective and lead A	Key Objective and lead B	Key Objective and lead C	Key Objective and lead D	Key Objective and lead E
1.Attendance and disengagement from school	4,5,8,9	Continue to develop school curriculum	Remodel of post 16 provision	Develop Sheringham College as a Centre of Vocational Excellence	Share best practice across schools	Provide additional careers support to all vulnerable pupils
2.Capacity challenges to support pupils with SEND	1,4,5,6,8,9	Successfully implement the SEND Improvement and Development Plan including: Improving in class support, Maximising SEND income, Leadership Capacity, Trust wide efficacy and consistency				
3.Lack of access to specialist SEND support	1,3,4,6,8,9	Maximise effectiveness of current SRBs	Grow the number of SRBs within the Trust	Develop in house learning resources and facilities	Develop CPS as a Special School Site	Review leadership capacity to enable development
4.Increasing SEMH wellbeing challenges.	3,4,5,6,8,9	Successfully implement the SEND Improvement and Development Plan including: Improving in class support, Maximising SEND income, Leadership Capacity, Trust wide efficacy and consistency				
5.Increasing No of families experiencing greater poverty	8,9	Support as many families as possible to apply for FSM	Establish a Synergy Charitable Foundation	Utilise PP funding effectively in all schools	Maintain inclusion above catchment data (Sutton Trust)	Share all local holiday club and other opportunities
6.Rural isolation and transport challenges	3,8,9	Continue to lobby for appropriate transport routes	Provide cost effective transport wherever possible	Work in partnership with other schools and Sixth forms	Review term dates in line with other Trusts and schools	Enrichment Benchmarks 15-6-26
7.Speech, language and communication difficulties	4,5,6,8,9	Successfully implement the SEND Improvement and Development Plan including: Improving in class support, Maximising SEND income, Leadership Capacity, Trust wide efficacy and consistency				
8.Increasing No of families facing social challenges	3, 5,8,9	Continue to develop PSHE programmes	High Performance Foundation partnership	Work with individual families to address individual challenges	Utilise data from Selective Inclusion	Utilise data from Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory

Appendix A

Request for Inclusion Funding

Schools can apply for additional funding once per year, in the Spring Term, to access one off funds to support additional and sustainable inclusive practice / resources / facilities / environment in the school.

School	
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Up to £10,000	Authorisation by CEO, DCEO and CFO (maximum of 1 approval per academic year)
£10,001 to £20,000	Synergy Board (Termly meeting, as per dates in the Trust Handbook)

Please detail below all expenditure requested, how it will be utilised, details of the monitoring of impact and the intended impact. A completion report will be required detailing the impact.

Are there any additional costs not included in the amount being requested	
How do you intend to fund the total expenditure?	
Please attach additional information you feel appropriate to explain the expenditure.	
Please also attach the required like for like quotes/tender documentation, where appropriate, in line with the Financial Operational Handbook.	

Requests will be judged based on the following:

- Amount of funding requested
- Match funding amount
- No of children impacted over time (details of the next three years are expected as part of this application.
- Sustainability
- Impact

Submission sign off		
Name	Date	Signature
Head of School / Headteacher		

Authorisation sign off		
Name	Date	Signature
CEO		
DCEO		
CFO		
Trust Board		

