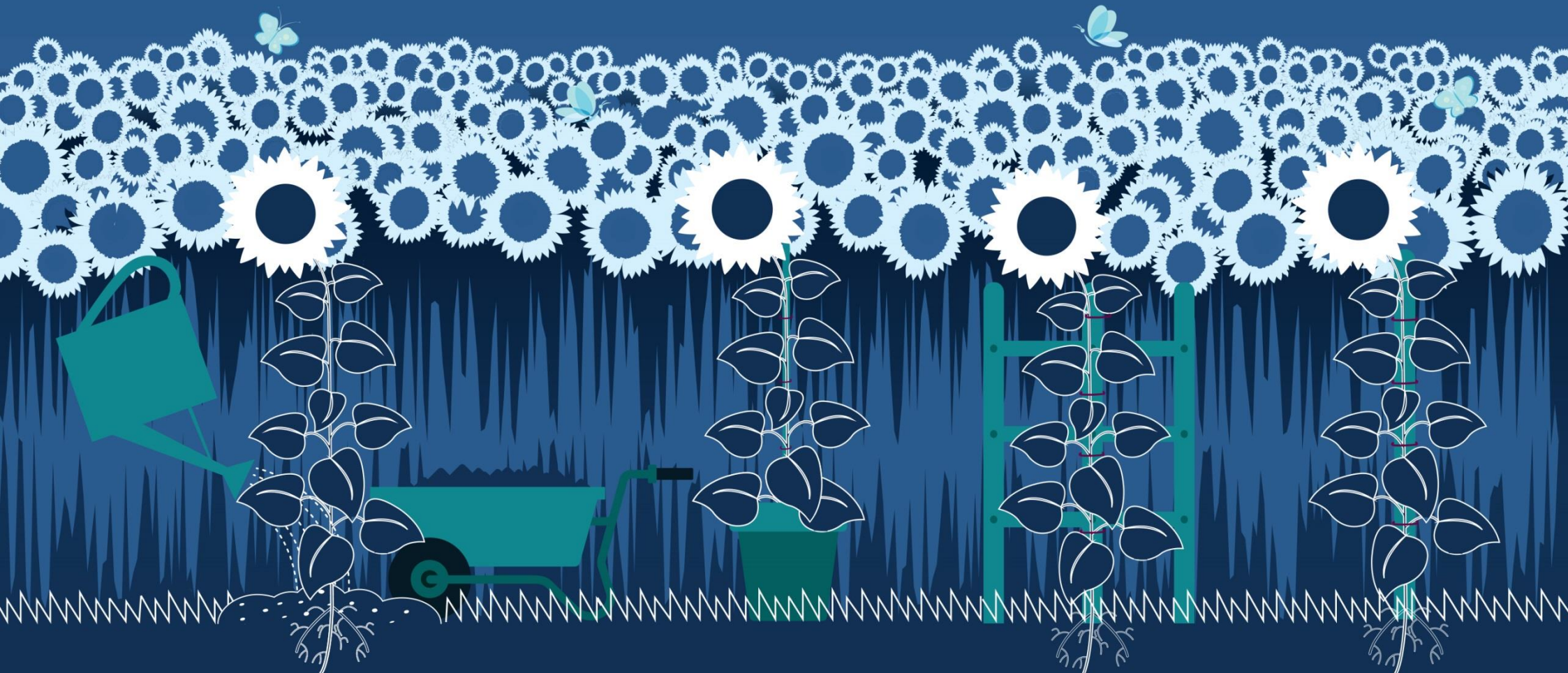


The Graduated Approach **‘Making Inclusion Work’**





Forward

As the Director of Education, I am delighted to introduce the latest version of Stoke-on-Trent's Graduated Approach. This evolving framework is the result of the dedication, collaboration, and hard work of schools, parents, young people, and professionals from a wide range of multi-disciplinary agencies. Our collective efforts continue to drive forward inclusive education practices across the City, ensuring that the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are met effectively, compassionately, and with a focus on long-term success. The Graduated Approach embodies our shared belief that inclusion is not merely a goal, but a fundamental right for every child, and it reflects our deep commitment to building a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

The 2024 update to our SEND Strategy is an important milestone in this journey. It outlines five key priorities that form the foundation of our approach to SEND support: "Nothing for us, without us," "Part of the community," "High aspirations and preparation for the future," "Meaningful support in the right place at the right time," and "Skilled and knowledgeable professionals." These priorities are not simply abstract ideals—they are lived values that inform every aspect of our work, from the classroom to the community, and from early intervention to preparation for adulthood.

At the heart of this strategy lies our commitment to ensuring that all children and young people with SEND are educated within their local communities. We believe that inclusion in their own communities allows students to fully participate, access, and contribute to the life of the community, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting their personal growth.

The Graduated Approach aligns closely with the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and its "assess, plan, do, review" model, which provides a structured and evidence-based method to ensure that needs are identified early and effectively. By placing Quality First Teaching (QFT) at the core of our practice, we are not only providing high-quality education for all but also ensuring that staff have the training and resources they need to support children and young people with SEND. We are committed to ongoing professional development and collaboration between educational settings, health and social care providers, and families to ensure that we are using the best possible approaches and interventions to meet the needs of our students.

I sincerely hope this document provides both clarity and inspiration to everyone working with our children and young people. By embracing the Graduated Approach, we can continue to build a future where every child in the City of Stoke-on-Trent is given the opportunity to succeed.

Acknowledgements

We offer our thanks and deep appreciation to all of you who have contributed in big ways and small ways to the development of this document. This collaboration is a great example of co-production as we sought the view, comments, expertise and skills of parents, children and young people, and professionals working in education health and social care.

It has been a labour of love and we have endeavoured to put our children and young people at the heart of all we do because we know that is exactly what they deserve.

About this document

The majority of children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs met within a mainstream setting at the level of SEND support. This means that these CYP are able to have their needs met while remaining in their local community.

This Graduated Approach (GA) guidance has been created in order to provide information about what support is ordinarily available to CYP with SEND and their families within the City and is not dependent on the CYP having any formal diagnosis.

It is our intention that this resource will provide ideas about how to provide support for CYP at the SEND support level of need and to guide decision-making about appropriate next-steps.

This document has been co-produced and the strategies, interventions and resources within it have been collected and collated in partnership with SENCOS, Specialist Advisors, Parents, Health and Social care partners in Stoke-on-Trent. Staff will be able to use this document as part of subject, faculty and whole school training as well as working with individual staff and families. There will be a series of training events during the autumn and spring terms which will support staff in schools, other professionals and families to embed this approach across all their work and in everything that they do.

Stoke-on-Trent's Disclaimer

We, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, have put together a bank of information, support and resources. The intention is to provide visitors with easy access to downloadable templates, research papers and also some weblinks to third party websites for many areas of need.

We have done our best to be helpful and link to reputable websites, however information available to the Council is limited and can be time sensitive. The third-parties are completely independent of the Council, we have no control over them or what they publish on their websites. So, it is important that you carry out your own checks before relying on third party websites or using third-party goods or services. The Council cannot accept liability for any content on these sites, and they are used at your own risk.

The Council does not endorse or recommend these third parties or their websites. Alternative websites and providers are available and should also be considered.

When using the third-party websites, please remember you should review the privacy policies of those websites and their terms and conditions to get a better understanding of how they collect and use any personal information and of any copyright and other restrictions that may apply.

The Graduated Approach

The Graduated Approach is underpinned by a commitment by Stoke-on-Trent City Council to inclusive education as outlined by 24.2 (b) of the United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities, which states:

“Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live” [Article 24 – Education | United Nations Enable](#)

This document is also aligned with the commitment of the UK Government to:

“...inclusive education of disabled children and young people and the progressive removal of barriers to learning and participation in mainstream education. Children and Families Act 2014 secures the general presumption in law of mainstream education in relation to decisions about where children and young people with SEND should be educated and the Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination for disabled people.” (Code of Practice, CoP, 2015, 1.26, p25)

The graduated approach is described in the SEND CoP (2015) which states:

“Where a pupil is identified as having SEND, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This SEND support should take the form of a four-part cycle through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised with a growing understanding of the pupil’s needs and of what supports the pupil in making good progress and securing good outcomes. This is known as the graduated approach. It draws on more detailed approaches, more frequent review and more specialist expertise in successive cycles in order to match interventions to the SEND of children and young people.” (CoP 6.44)

The graduated Approach also reflects the following principles and states:

“All children and young people are entitled to an appropriate education, one that is appropriate to their needs, promotes high standards and the fulfilment of potential. This should enable them to:

- achieve their best
- become confident individuals living fulfilling lives, and
- make a successful transition into adulthood, whether into employment, further or higher education or training” (CoP, 6.1)

The Graduated Approach in Stoke-on-Trent

The Graduated Approach is a key vehicle, supporting Stoke-on-Trent to achieve its goal in becoming an inclusive City and is an integral part of the Inclusion Partnership Strategy **‘To be the best that I can be’**. This is in response to the **‘Room to Grow’** Children and Young peoples’ Strategy and the key priority that states:

“Develop and implement an inclusion strategy that makes sure all Children & young people [CYP] with additional needs can fulfil their potential.”

Stoke-on-Trent defines Inclusion as:

“Positively responding to diversity, building upon individual differences and creating opportunities for fulfilment and enriched learning taking down barriers in all aspects of life, socially or through education, health, and employment.”

The Graduated Approach has been designed in order to support the inclusion of CYP not only within their educational setting but within in the community at large. The Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) 4 outcomes are therefore integral to the development of the curriculum and assessment processes throughout. These are employment/training, independence, community inclusion and good health.

When asked to provide an answer to ‘what does inclusion mean to you?’ the co-producers of this document responded with a range of statements (see box 1) these statements are a reflection not only of their views about inclusion but highlights the values and ethos that underpin the local commitment to inclusive practice in Stoke.

Box 1

- 'Inclusion is when everyone feels welcome and finds success'.
- 'Ensuring that all people in the academy, students and adults, feel part of the whole body and have the right to be respected and appreciated as valuable members of the community, with ambitious learning for all'.
- 'Every child is included in all aspects of school life and given the same opportunities to achieve'.
- 'We are ambitious for every pupil, ensuring they receive the therapeutic and academic support they need to succeed in education'.
- Inclusion is about ensuring everyone is able to access and take part in all layers of society and life experiences, especially social and educational opportunities. Our Service is designed to support children and young people to develop essential life communication and feeding skills to support them towards inclusion.
- 'we seek to be inclusive and to value each individual pupil. Every child is entitled to have his or her particular needs recognised and addressed and is entitled to the greatest possible access to a broad and balanced curriculum, with every child, where appropriate, being taught together with their peers, for as much time as possible.'
- 'The removal of barriers to ensure that every learner has the opportunity to learn on an equal basis free from prejudice. The learner is an active participant whose voice is valued and heard within school'.
- 'Inclusion is a welcoming culture where students feel safe, respected and have individual worth'.
- 'Support and provision for all; to allow access to learning at an appropriate level. The opportunity for development and growth regardless of need'.
- 'Our vision is to challenge each child to reach their full potential in a safe, welcoming and happy learning environment. We encourage children to become independent life-long learners by developing intellectual curiosity, a thirst for discovery and achievement, a sense of understanding and compassion for others and the courage to act on their beliefs. This will be achieved within an inclusive school that values every individual and celebrates the diversity of our community. Every teacher is a teacher of every child or young person including those with SEND'
- 'Belonging together as one'!
- From a professional /personal perspective, inclusion means that all children and young people should be able to have access to services and activities as young people who do not have a disability.
- In terms of the Team and statement around inclusion, I would say that inclusion means that every child that is open to our service gets the same equal opportunities, to access our service, to access support within the community and to be able to have opportunities to enable them to enjoy day to day life to the best of their ability. Should barriers be identified, these should be eliminated so that children and young people are able to have the same opportunities as young people who do not have a disability.

Graduated Approach Co-producers (2021)

Our Inclusion Word Cloud



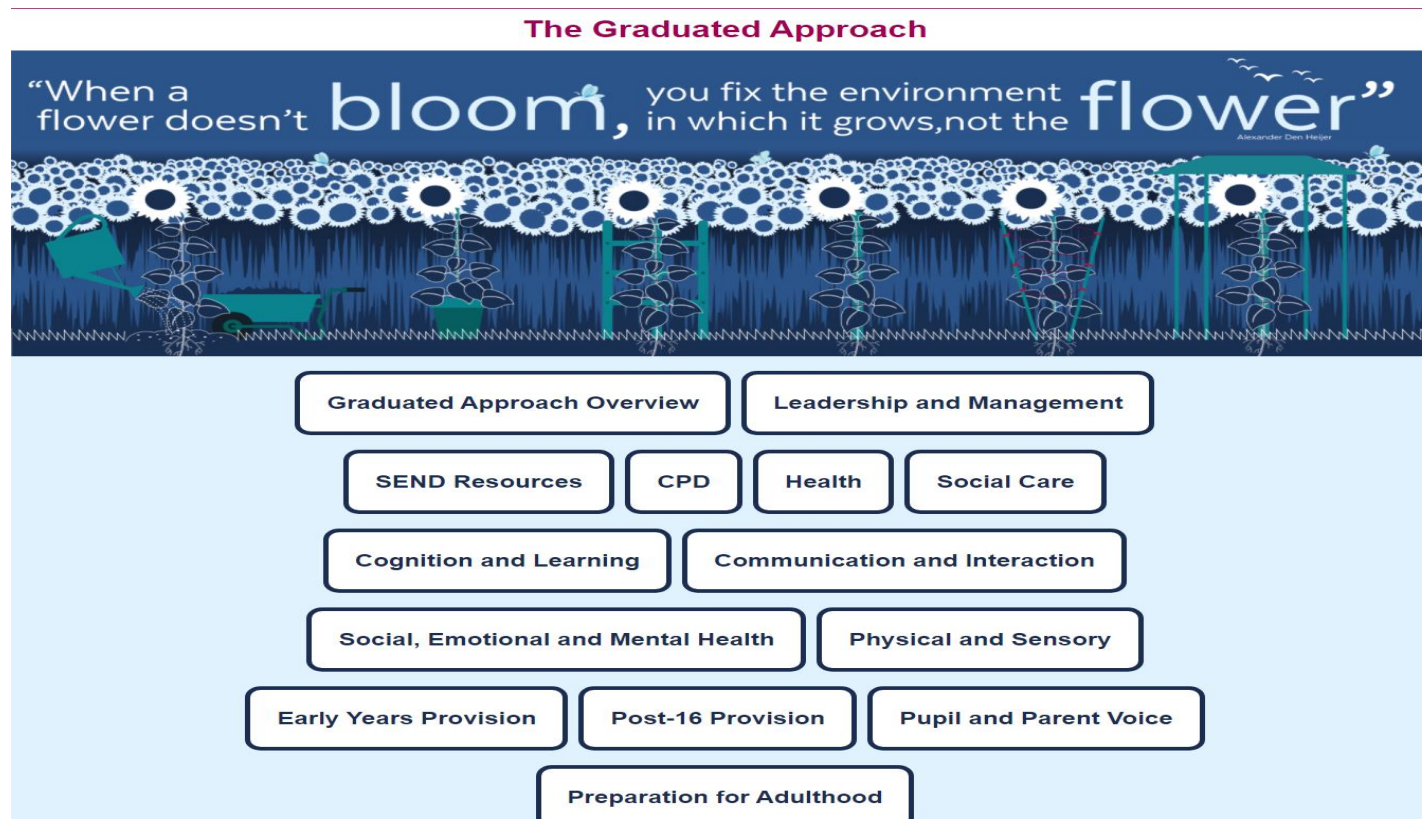
How to use this document

This document can be used as a stand-alone resource or in conjunction with the Graduated Approach Portal (GAP)

The document is divided into sections that are hyperlinked and can be reached by clicking on the headings on the home page of the portal where downloadable documents will be available. The PfA outcomes will be at the end of each of the sections on need and should be in place and embedded in the curriculum and assessment from Early Years to 25.

The following screenshot shows the home page of the Graduated Approach website:

[Graduated Approach Home \(stoke.gov.uk\)](https://stoke.gov.uk/graduated-approach-home)



What does good SEND support look like?

‘SEND support: research evidence on effective approaches and examples of current practice in good and outstanding schools and colleges’ (ASK research, DfE and Coventry University, 2017) identify seven key ingredients, in this document we have that extended to include the services that wrap-around the educational provision and the wider community as we support our children and young people with SEND 0-25.

The 7 key ingredients

1. Culture, leadership and management

- Strong commitment to SEND seen as a ‘high priority’ by educational settings, support services and the community;
- All Children and young people with SEND are valued and reflected positively;
- Heads and senior leaders of educational settings, services and the community lead by example;
- The ethos and vision of the educational setting, service and community is based on a commitment to inclusion;
- There is transparent, appropriate and accountable resource allocation.

2. High quality teaching/services

Educational settings, services and the community have staff/volunteers/supporters that are:

- knowledgeable and well informed about supporting individuals with SEND needs (i.e. who can identify barriers to learning and/or the environment, match needs to appropriate support and effectively monitor and review progress)
- adept at adapting and differentiating support to meet individual needs
- are able to use the graduated approach ensuring that the ‘right’ children and young people are receiving appropriately tailored support.
- able to implement and oversee interventions to ensure they have the desired impacts
- able to take responsibility for the progress of CYP with SEND
- able to work cooperatively and in partnership with parents and pupils themselves (Stoke addition)

3. Use of expertise

- A range of staff across teams who are knowledgeable about SEND so that capacity is not just concentrated amongst a few staff

- Staff delivering and overseeing support (teaching, pastoral, leaders and assistants) who are trained so they are skilled and equipped to do so
- Professional development that is continuous, comes from various sources, and covers theory as well as practice
- High quality expertise that is readily available and reactive to need
- Clear processes (and the appropriate knowledge) for how and when to work with specialists, both those within the school and external
- A SENDCo and SEND or Learning Support team who are being used as consultants, to advise and support all staff in the range of interventions and adaptations to the curriculum

4. Personalisation

- There are individually tailored packages of support of high quality that addresses the whole range of a child and young person's needs
- The curriculum is bespoke and provides a tailored personalised pathway
- Staff have a thorough understanding of a child and young person's needs
- There are high expectations for the child and young people with SEND in terms of progress, achievements and outcomes
- There are systems and processes in place to support children and young people to develop independence and smoothly transition between settings and into adulthood
- Strengths, abilities and success are celebrated
- Children and families are treated as equal partner. Their contributions are respected and valued and the role of the wider family unit in a child and young person's success appreciated

5. Flexible use of evidence-based strategies

- Practitioners implementing the graduated approach
- Strategies are chosen for a specific purpose which are linked to assessed needs, outcomes and agreed measures of success
- Delivery is by trained staff with need, focus, delivery and desired outcome being clearly understood
- Strong processes for monitoring progress and impact
- Minimal withdrawal from mainstream learning curriculum

6 Progress tracking

- Quantitative and qualitative data is regularly collected to facilitate the early identification of need
- Assessments provide a full picture of a specific child's needs
- Progress being appropriately collated, monitored and used to underpin decisions
- Clear systems of accountability for progress of pupils and young people with SEND
- Classroom teachers are accountable for the attainment, the personalised curriculum and support of pupils on SEND support
- Robust systems are in place for: using data to identify, assess and review impact and progress, detailing all the strategies used

7. Communication and collaboration

- All staff, other agencies, children and young people and families sharing information and forming trusted and supportive relationships
- Everyone who is working with the child or young person focused on the same goals

The National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN) has developed the SEND Gateway with a wide range of resources that are there to support leadership and strategic thinking with regards to implementing whole school SEND strategies, see [Home page | Nasen](#) for further information.

**“When a flower doesn’t
bloom, you fix the
environment in which
it grows not the flower”**

By Alexander Den Heijer