POLICY 17 | 2026-27

Special educational needs and disabilities

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Version: 2026-27.1 | Approved and effective: 17 October 2026

Approved by: Martha Bache, Director and Proprietor | Next review: September 2027, or earlier if required.

1 Introduction

Crea Pax provides alternative provision for children and young people, many of whom have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, neurodevelopmental differences, communication needs, sensory differences and anxiety-related barriers to education.

Our approach is relational, trauma-informed, strengths-based and highly individualised. Crea Pax provides educational, therapeutic-support, animal-assisted and practical learning opportunities; it is not a replacement for statutory SEND assessment, specialist health provision, counselling or clinical treatment unless a separately commissioned qualified professional is providing that service.

2 Purpose and legal framework

This policy explains how Crea Pax identifies and responds to SEND within its role as an alternative provision and how it works with commissioning schools, local authorities, parents/carers and other professionals.

It is informed by the Children and Families Act 2014, Equality Act 2010, SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and relevant local authority arrangements. The commissioning school or local authority retains its statutory responsibilities for SEND, including duties relating to EHCPs, SEN support and reviews where applicable.

3 Principles

Crea Pax works from the principle that behaviour may communicate an unmet need, difficulty, distress or barrier. Staff seek to understand the learner before making assumptions about behaviour or engagement.

- learner voice and dignity are central to planning;
- reasonable adjustments should reduce barriers without compromising safety;
- strengths, interests and trusted relationships are used to support engagement;
- needs and risk are reviewed dynamically rather than treated as fixed;
- support is least restrictive and proportionate;
- partnership with the learner, family and commissioner strengthens outcomes.

4 Referral, information and assessment

Before or at the start of placement, Crea Pax seeks sufficient information to understand the learner's needs and determine whether the provision can support them safely and meaningfully. Information may include EHCPs, SEN support plans, risk assessments, behaviour/support plans, medical information, safeguarding information relevant to safe provision, professional reports, parent/carer information and the learner's own views.

Crea Pax does not diagnose SEND. Staff observations may identify emerging or unmet needs and these are shared with the commissioning body and, where appropriate, parents/carers so that statutory or specialist assessment can be considered by the responsible organisation.

5 Individualised support and reasonable adjustments

Support is matched to the learner rather than applied as a fixed programme. Reasonable adjustments are considered proactively and reviewed as needs change.

- predictable routines and advance preparation for change;
- reduced language, chunked instructions, visual prompts and additional processing time;
- quiet space, sensory breaks, movement and regulation opportunities;
- adjusted pace, task length or cognitive load;
- choice of indoor/outdoor or practical routes to engagement where appropriate;
- gradual introduction to peers, unfamiliar staff, animals or activities;
- adapted communication and supported self-advocacy;
- individual arrival, transition or collection arrangements where commissioned and safe.

6 Individual plans, risk and staffing

Relevant SEND information is translated into practical staff guidance. This may include an Individual Learner Risk Assessment & Support Plan, Staff Critical Information Summary, communication or sensory profile, medical/healthcare information, behaviour support strategies and a PEEP where evacuation needs require one.

Staffing is determined by assessed need and the commissioned arrangement. Some learners may require continuous 1:1 support and, where risk or need requires it, 2:1 staffing. Higher staffing is a safety/support measure and must not be used as a punitive response.

Learner records are organised in controlled learner files: referral and placement information, learner profile and journey, individual risk assessment and support plan, staff critical information, session records, progress and outcomes, reports, and placement reviews. Each record has a clear purpose and designated location; a shared chat, calendar entry or email is not automatically the authoritative learner record.

Relevant staff must read the current Learner Profile, Risk Assessment and Support Plan, and Staff Critical Information before providing support. A PEEP or equivalent emergency support plan is completed where an individual needs additional help. Plans are updated when need or risk changes and after relevant incidents.

7 Curriculum, learning and engagement

SEND support is embedded in Crea Pax's curriculum and therapeutic-support approach. Learning may include animal-assisted activities, outdoor learning, practical tasks, cooking, gardening, creative work, life skills, supported academic activity, emotional literacy, communication and relationship-building.

Staff distinguish between inability, anxiety, overload, communication difficulty and deliberate refusal wherever possible. Participation can be built gradually through observation, invitation, modelling, reduced prompting, supported participation and increasing independence.

8 Communication and learner voice

Learners are supported to express preferences, concerns and views in ways accessible to them. Staff allow processing time and use visual, verbal, practical or other communication supports where appropriate. A learner should not be disadvantaged because they communicate distress, consent, refusal or understanding differently.

9 SEMH, regulation and behaviour

SEMH needs are treated as SEND where applicable and are considered alongside safeguarding, attendance and behaviour. Staff use predictable routines, co-regulation, trusted relationships, de-escalation, sensory/regulation strategies and proportionate boundaries. Behaviour incidents are reviewed for unmet need, triggers, communication factors and reasonable adjustments as well as immediate safety.

10 Animal assisted and practical activities

SEND does not automatically prevent participation in animal-assisted, outdoor, cooking or practical learning. Activities are individually risk assessed and adapted where necessary. Staff consider sensory needs, allergies, mobility, communication, impulse control, fear, animal welfare and the learner's ability to understand and follow safety instructions.

Animal welfare remains a non-negotiable part of safe participation. A learner may be offered an alternative activity or increased support where an activity cannot be made safe for the learner, other people or an animal.

11 Attendance and access to provision

Crea Pax recognises that SEND, anxiety, sensory needs and SEMH can create significant barriers to attendance. Staff record attendance accurately, communicate concerns promptly and work with the commissioner to understand barriers and reasonable adjustments. Crea Pax does not independently alter a learner's statutory education entitlement or attendance expectations; such decisions remain with the responsible school/local authority.

12 Safeguarding and SEND

Children with SEND can face additional safeguarding vulnerabilities. Staff remain alert to communication barriers, dependency on adults, peer isolation, difficulty recognising or reporting abuse, online vulnerability and the risk that signs of harm may be incorrectly attributed to SEND or behaviour.

Safeguarding concerns are reported immediately in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. SEND must never be used to explain away a safeguarding indicator.

13 Working with families, commissioners and professionals

Crea Pax works collaboratively with parents/carers, commissioning schools, local authorities, SENCOs and relevant health, social care and specialist professionals. Information is shared lawfully and proportionately. Crea Pax contributes observations and progress information to reviews, including EHCP or multi-agency reviews when requested and relevant.

14 Progress, recording and review

Progress is considered against the learner's individual commissioned goals and may include engagement, regulation, communication, relationships, confidence, independence, attendance, practical skills and readiness for learning as well as educational outcomes. Staff observations and session records inform regular reports to commissioners.

Where progress stalls, risk changes or a learner's needs appear to exceed the placement's current capacity, Crea Pax will discuss this with the commissioner and seek review rather than allowing an unsafe or unsuitable arrangement to continue unexamined.

15 Equality, dignity and inclusion

Learners with SEND are treated with dignity and high expectations appropriate to their individual circumstances. Crea Pax seeks to remove avoidable barriers without lowering safety standards or assuming that every learner with the same diagnosis requires the same adjustment. Restrictive or exclusionary responses are avoided where a safe, reasonable alternative is available.

16 Roles and responsibilities

Martha Bache, Director / Proprietor & DSL, has overall responsibility for implementation, ensuring SEND is integrated with safeguarding, risk management and quality assurance. All staff are responsible for knowing and applying the individual information relevant to learners they support, recording concerns and progress, and raising changes in need promptly. The commissioning school/local authority retains the statutory SEND responsibilities that attach to the learner's education and placement.

17 Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed at least annually and sooner following significant changes in legislation or guidance, changes to Crea Pax practice, a serious incident, safeguarding learning, commissioner feedback or evidence that SEND arrangements require improvement.