Whittingham
C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL

OUR VISION

Hand in hand we will become ***kind***, ***collaborative*** and ***courageous*** citizens of our community and the wider world.

SEND
A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Working together to support your child to thrive



KINDNESS
We care, we show compassion and we support one another.

COLLABORATION
We work together, listen and learn from each other.

COURAGE
We are brave, we try our best and we keep going.

"Go and do the same." Luke 10:27–35

YOUR GUIDE AT A GLANCE

- Welcome and understanding SEND
- Talking to school and planning support
- Different needs and practical adjustments
- EHCPs, wellbeing and belonging
- Finding help: MARF, Early Help and CYPS
- Northumberland and North East support links
- Questions, meeting preparation and contacts

You are welcome to ask questions at any point. We want families to feel informed, listened to and supported.

1. Welcome to our inclusive school

At Whittingham, every child is known, valued and included. Our Christian vision, inspired by the Good Samaritan, encourages us to notice when someone needs help, respond with kindness, work together and act courageously. We believe that every child should feel they belong, have ambitious opportunities to learn and take part fully in school life—from classroom lessons to Forest School, trips, worship, sport and music.

This guide is based on our staff SEND handbook and the school SEND Policy and Information Report. It explains what parents can expect and where to turn for further help. It is guidance, rather than a replacement for the school's approved policies or individual plans.

2. What is SEND?

A child may have special educational needs when a learning difficulty or disability means they need educational provision that is additional to, or different from, what is generally available to children of the same age. SEND is not a description of a child's potential. Some children have difficulties in more than one area, and needs can change over time.

- Communication and interaction — for example, understanding language, speaking, social communication or interaction.
- Cognition and learning — for example, reading, spelling, memory, working with numbers or learning new concepts.
- Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) — for example, managing worries, regulating emotions, relationships or feeling secure at school.
- Sensory and/or physical needs — for example, vision, hearing, coordination, mobility or sensory processing.

A formal diagnosis is not required before school can identify barriers, make reasonable adjustments or offer appropriate SEN Support. Equally, a disability does not always mean a child needs SEN Support.

3. I am worried about my child: what should I do?

- Start by speaking with your child's class teacher. Tell us what your child enjoys, what they find difficult and what you have noticed at home.
- Together we will consider strengths, progress, classroom experiences, attendance, communication and wellbeing, and identify practical steps to try.
- The teacher may seek advice from the school SENDCo (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator). The Headteacher, Belinda Athey, fulfils this role in the school SEND policy; please contact school if you would like to discuss SEND support.
- We will agree what support is needed, how we will know it is helping and when we will meet again. Parents and children are partners in this process.

You do not need to wait for a formal diagnosis to raise a concern or ask for help. A child making slower progress does not automatically mean they have SEND; the school considers their individual circumstances carefully.

4. How support works: Assess, Plan, Do, Review

ASSESS

We listen to you and your child, look at progress and identify barriers.

PLAN

We agree clear priorities, support or adjustments, who will provide them and a date to review.

DO

Teachers and support staff put the plan into action as part of school life.

REVIEW

At least termly for pupils on the SEND Register, we look at what worked, what progress was made and whether support should change.

This cycle is called the graduated approach. If progress remains limited despite carefully planned support, school may discuss specialist assessment or advice with you.

5. What might support look like at Whittingham?

Support is tailored to the child and may include visual timetables and instructions; small teaching steps; adult modelling; pre-teaching of new vocabulary; additional phonics, reading, spelling or maths practice; communication aids; movement or sensory breaks; help with emotional regulation; assistive technology; or specialist advice. We want children to be supported while growing in confidence and independence.

Your child may have a Pupil Passport or SEND Support Plan that records strengths, what helps, agreed outcomes and review dates. Some adjustments can be made through everyday inclusive teaching without a child being added to the SEND Register.

6. Understanding different needs

Autism and differences in social communication

Predictable routines, clear language, transition preparation and recognising sensory differences may help. We respect each child's communication style.

ADHD, attention and executive functioning

Short instructions, visual prompts, movement opportunities, structured tasks and positive feedback can support attention and organisation.

Dyslexia and literacy difficulties

Systematic teaching, accessible reading materials, repeated practice and varied ways to show understanding can help.

Dyscalculia and maths difficulties

Practical equipment, clear models, number sense work and carefully paced practice may help.

Speech, language and communication needs

We use clear language, visuals, extra processing time and advice from Speech and Language Therapy where appropriate.

Coordination and sensory/physical needs

Adapted equipment, classroom access, movement or sensory supports, and occupational or physiotherapy advice may be helpful.

Social, emotional and mental health needs

Trusted relationships, belonging, predictable support and understanding what lies behind distress are central.

These examples are not checklists for diagnosis. Please speak to school, your GP or relevant health professional if you would like advice about an assessment.

7. EHCPs: when might one be needed?

An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is a legally binding plan for children and young people whose needs require special educational provision to be secured through an EHC plan. Many children with SEND are supported successfully without one. If the support available through SEN Support may not be sufficient, families or the school can ask the local authority for an EHC needs assessment. The council decides whether an assessment and then a plan are necessary; neither is automatic.

Where a child has an EHCP, school will work with you to put the specified provision in place and take part in the statutory review process, normally at least annually. Parents can seek impartial support from SENDIASS.

8. Working together and preparing for change

Families know their children best. We welcome conversations at school, telephone calls and planned meetings, and we want your child's views to be heard in an age-appropriate way. Tell us about approaches that work at home, important changes and any concerns. We will share progress and explain what we are trying in school.

Moving between classes, starting nursery or Reception, or moving to secondary school may need extra planning. This can include visits, visual information, sharing key strategies and working with the next setting. For children in Bright Beginnings or Early Years, early conversations with families are particularly valuable.

9. Emotional wellbeing, attendance and belonging

A child who is anxious, overwhelmed or finding attendance difficult may be communicating a need. We work with families to understand why, make reasonable adjustments where appropriate and seek help early. We do not assume that behaviour is simply a choice or that all difficulty is caused by SEND. Concerns about bullying or discrimination will be taken seriously and addressed under school procedures.

10. Finding the right help: MARF and Early Help

What is a MARF?

MARF stands for Multi-Agency Referral Form. In Northumberland, it is a route into First Contact and can be used to request Early Help, as well as to refer concerns about a child's safety or need for social care. It is NOT only a safeguarding or social care form.

A MARF can be used to help triage a child's or family's needs—meaning information is considered by the appropriate team so that the family can be directed towards the right support at the right time. This could relate to family wellbeing, parenting support, emotional or mental health, health needs or other practical difficulties. Submitting a MARF for Early Help does not automatically mean social care will become involved, and it does not guarantee a particular service or assessment.

Parents can ask school or another professional to make an Early Help referral with them, or may make an Early Help self-referral. Early Help requests should be discussed with the family and require consent. Where there is a significant child protection concern, professionals follow safeguarding duties and may need to share information without consent where necessary to protect a child.

Northumberland MARF online form — https://form.northumberland.gov.uk/form/auto/multi_agency_ref_form

Northumberland Family Hubs: Early Help — https://www.familyhubsnorthumberland.co.uk/early-help

For advice about which route is appropriate, speak to school or contact Northumberland Onecall on 01670 536400. If a child is in immediate danger, call 999.

11. CYPS: specialist mental health help

The Children and Young People's Service (CYPS), provided by Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust, assesses and supports children and young people experiencing significant mental health difficulties. It is different from a MARF: CYPS is a specialist NHS mental health service, whereas MARF/First Contact helps identify a suitable pathway for wider family support and referrals.

CYPS accepts referrals from professionals and self-referrals where its criteria are met. School, a GP or another professional can help families think about whether a referral is appropriate. The NHS referral page sets out its current criteria, age range and consent requirements.

CYPS contact: 01670 502700 or freephone 0800 6522862. For urgent mental health help, call NHS 111 and select the mental health option; call 999 if there is an immediate danger to life.

Northumberland CYPS service and referrals — https://www.cntw.nhs.uk/services/children-and-young-peoples-service-northumberland-cntw165

12. Helpful organisations and services

Northumberland SEND Local Offer

Local information for families with children and young people aged 0–25; education, health, social care, leisure and support.

Find out more — https://www.northumberlandsend.co.uk/your-send-local-offer

Northumberland SENDIASS

Free, impartial and confidential SEND information and advice for children, young people and parents, including SEN Support, EHCPs and disagreements.

Find out more — https://www.northumberlandsend.co.uk/getting-help

Northumberland Parent Carer Forum

Parent-to-parent connection, information, events and a voice in shaping SEND services; enquiries@npcf.co.uk.

Find out more — https://npcf.co.uk/

Northumberland Family Hubs

Family and parenting support, early help and links with local community services.

Find out more — https://www.familyhubsnorthumberland.co.uk/

Be You Northumberland

Emotional health and wellbeing support and signposting to levels of help for children and young people.

Find out more — https://www.beyounorthumberland.nhs.uk/

Be You supports children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing. Its Mental Health Support Teams offer early help for mild to moderate difficulties, work with schools and families, and signpost to other services. Availability of direct support depends on the locality and referral pathway.

Primary Mental Health Work (PMHW)

Early help with your child's emotional wellbeing

It can be difficult to know where to turn when your child is worried, anxious, unhappy or finding it hard to manage their feelings. You do not need to manage these concerns on your own.

What does the service do?

Northumberland's Primary Mental Health Work service supports children and young people with moderate emotional wellbeing and mental health difficulties. It offers assessment, early intervention and advice to children, young people and their families.

HOW SUPPORT CAN PROGRESS

Be You > Primary Mental Health Work (PMHW) > CYPS

This is a guide, not a required sequence: support is matched to each child's needs.

When might it help?

Examples include persistent worries or anxiety, low mood, difficulty managing emotions, or distress following bereavement, bullying or a change in family circumstances. The service is particularly relevant when difficulties are affecting day-to-day life and initial support has not been enough.

How can families access support?

Your GP is often a helpful first contact. You can also talk to your child's class teacher, the school SENDCo or another professional. Northumberland PMHW accepts referrals from professionals and self-referrals by parents and carers. The service will consider needs and explain if another form of support would be more suitable.

How is it different from Be You and CYPS?

Be You offers school-linked early mental health support, including in the Alnwick and Coquet areas. PMHW offers targeted early intervention across Northumberland. CYPS is a specialist NHS service for children with significant mental health difficulties. Families can ask for help identifying the most appropriate route.

Northumberland Primary Mental Health Work

Telephone: 0191 293 3012 | Email: PMHW@northumbria-healthcare.nhs.uk

Service information and referral options (click here)

For urgent mental health help, call NHS 111 and select the mental health option.

Be You Padlet – resources, practical ideas and information about support: https://padlet.com/nies1/beyou

Parents and carers can also explore https://www.beyounorthumberland.nhs.uk/support/parents-carers-support or talk to school about the most appropriate route.

Northumberland HINT and school SEND services

High Incidence Needs Team and other educational specialists; school can discuss whether school-led advice or involvement would help.

Find out more — https://northumberlandeducation.co.uk/send/

NHS children's therapies and SEND health services

Ask school, GP or health visitor about Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, physiotherapy and appropriate referral routes.

Find out more — https://www.northumberlandsend.co.uk/your-send-local-offer

Growing Healthy Northumberland (0–19)

Health visiting and school nursing services; advice on health, development and wellbeing.

Find out more — https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/

Contact (national)

Advice and guidance for families with disabled children, including benefits and family life.

Find out more — https://contact.org.uk/

IPSEA (national)

Free SEND legal information and resources about education rights, EHCPs and appeals.

Find out more — https://www.ipsea.org.uk/

Council for Disabled Children

Accessible information about rights, services and support for disabled children.

Find out more — https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/

13. Questions parents often ask

Does my child need a diagnosis to receive help?

No. Support is based on identified needs and barriers. A diagnosis may help inform provision, but it is not a prerequisite for reasonable adjustments or SEN Support.

Will my child automatically get one-to-one support?

Not necessarily. Support is planned around needs and outcomes; this may be through classroom adaptations, small groups, specialist strategies or individual assistance where required.

Can I ask for a meeting?

Yes. Speak to the class teacher or the SENDCo to arrange a conversation.

How often will support be reviewed?

The school's SEND Policy and Information Report specifies at least termly reviews with parents for pupils on the SEND Register.

WHITTINGHAM C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

MORE HELP FOR FAMILIES

North Northumberland • local groups and early support

Be You — Alnwick and Coquet Trailblazer area

Be You Mental Health Support Teams work with schools to help children with mild to moderate emotional wellbeing needs, build resilience, and support staff and families. Alnwick and Coquet are included in the expanded programme. Ask school about the most appropriate route to support. The Padlet also shares practical resources and service information.

Be You information:
www.northumbria.nhs.uk/our-services/childrens-services/childrens-mental-health-services/be-you

Visit: https://padlet.com/nies1/beyou

National Autistic Society (NAS) — North Northumberland branch

This local volunteer-led branch provides family understanding-autism workshops, peer activities and occasional autism-friendly Forest School sessions near Alnwick and Chatton. Contact the branch about current dates and eligibility.

Email: northnorthumberland.branch@nas.org.uk

Visit: https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/branches/north-northumberland/events

The Toby Henderson Trust (TTHT)

Northumberland autism charity offering family support, information, practical strategies, sensory advice, webinars and social activities for young people and siblings. Families do not need a confirmed autism diagnosis to enquire about support.

Telephone: 0300 365 3055 | Email: support@ttht.co.uk

Visit: https://www.ttht.co.uk/

WHITTINGHAM C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

SUPPORT CLOSE TO HOME

Free activities, outreach venues and routes into help

Alnwick Family Hub

Family Hubs offer parenting advice, play and learning activities, emotional wellbeing information and signposting. Alnwick Family Hub is on the St Michael's School site, Howling Lane, Alnwick. Ask about SEND-friendly activities and family programmes.

Telephone: 01670 620 430

Visit: https://www.familyhubsnorthumberland.co.uk/north-locality

Wooler, Berwick and Rothbury family support

North Northumberland Family Hubs have locations in Wooler and Berwick and an outreach venue in Rothbury. Their local What's On information includes SEND Connect and CALM Stay and Play activities, subject to current availability.

Berwick/Wooler: 01670 620 461 | Rothbury enquiries: 01670 620 430

Visit: https://www.familyhubsnorthumberland.co.uk/north-locality

Independent information and parent connections

Northumberland SENDIASS offers impartial information and advice about special educational needs, school support and EHCPs. The Northumberland Parent Carer Forum gives families opportunities to share experiences and contribute to SEND service development.

Visit: https://www.northumberlandsend.co.uk/your-send-local-offer

A helpful starting point: speak to your child's class teacher or the school SENDCo. Support can often begin before a formal diagnosis, and groups may change their timetables or referral criteria.

Can I request an EHC needs assessment myself?

Yes. Parents can request an assessment from the local authority; SENDIASS can explain the process and your rights.

14. Preparing for a SEND conversation

You may find it helpful to think about the following before a meeting:

- What are my child's strengths and interests?
- What is most difficult at school or at home?
- What does my child say helps them feel safe, confident and successful?
- Which strategies have already helped?
- What are the two or three most important things we would like to improve?
- What will happen next, who will do it, and when will we review progress?

15. School information and keeping this guide current

First point of contact: your child's class teacher. For SEND coordination and further discussion, contact school ??

This parent guide is adapted from the Whittingham SEND Staff Handbook (Autumn 2026) and the school SEND Policy and Information Report (2026). External services may change their eligibility criteria and contact routes, so please use the linked official webpages for up-to-date information.

Our commitment: to listen carefully, identify needs early and work hand in hand with families, so every child can flourish.