



Westmorland  
& Furness  
Council

# Children's Services

# TOGETHER

## Belonging & Inclusion Strategy - 2026-2029



"Working together to make a difference for every child in Westmorland and Furness."



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# Foreword

All the children and young people in Westmorland and Furness should feel that they belong, feel safe, valued and understood within their school and community. When this is in place, children are more likely to attend, engage, achieve and have fun.

This Belonging and Inclusion Strategy builds on what we know works. It reflects a clear and consistent approach across our system where strong relationships, early support and services work together with families.

We are starting from a position of strength, with strong partnerships across education, health and care. At the same time, we recognise the challenges we face and the need to ensure that inclusion is not an additional offer, but the foundation of everyday practice.

This strategy is about consistency and accountability. It sets out how we will strengthen inclusion across all settings, supported by clear outcomes, better use of data and a continued focus on the voice and experience of children and families.

Together we will make a difference, creating the conditions in which every child and young person feels that they belong and is able to achieve and succeed.



**Milorad Vasic**  
Director of Children's Services



**Councillor Janet Battye**  
Cabinet member for Children's Services,  
Education and Skills



# Executive Summary



The purpose of this strategy is to support and develop our inclusive education system in which every child and young person feels they belong, are supported early, and are enabled to academically achieve and thrive as members of their community - regardless of background, need or starting-point. It provides a shared framework for schools, services and partners to strengthen relationships, remove barriers and ensure that inclusion is at the heart of high-quality education.

Westmorland and Furness Council are proud of our inclusive school system where 74% of our children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) attend our mainstream schools. This is significantly higher than the national figures for other Local Authorities. This gives us a strong foundation on which to build, and this strategy gives us the framework within which we will collectively work towards our [Ambitions for Every Child](#).

Our Belonging and Inclusion Strategy commits to embedding and further developing our inclusive education system, ensuring that all our children and young people feel they belong and matter within their school communities with a system that strengthens early provision for students with additional special educational needs, wellbeing or safeguarding needs.



## National and Local Context

In Westmorland and Furness our Belonging and Inclusion Strategy is central to our Ambition for Every Child strategy, where our values of compassion, inclusivity, and aspiration translate into our plans for Children's Services. Nationally, belonging and inclusion has been given fresh focus through the publication of the Every Child Achieving and Thriving White Paper<sup>1</sup>. This sets out the government's vision for a system where every child achieves, thrives, and feels that they belong, regardless of background and need.

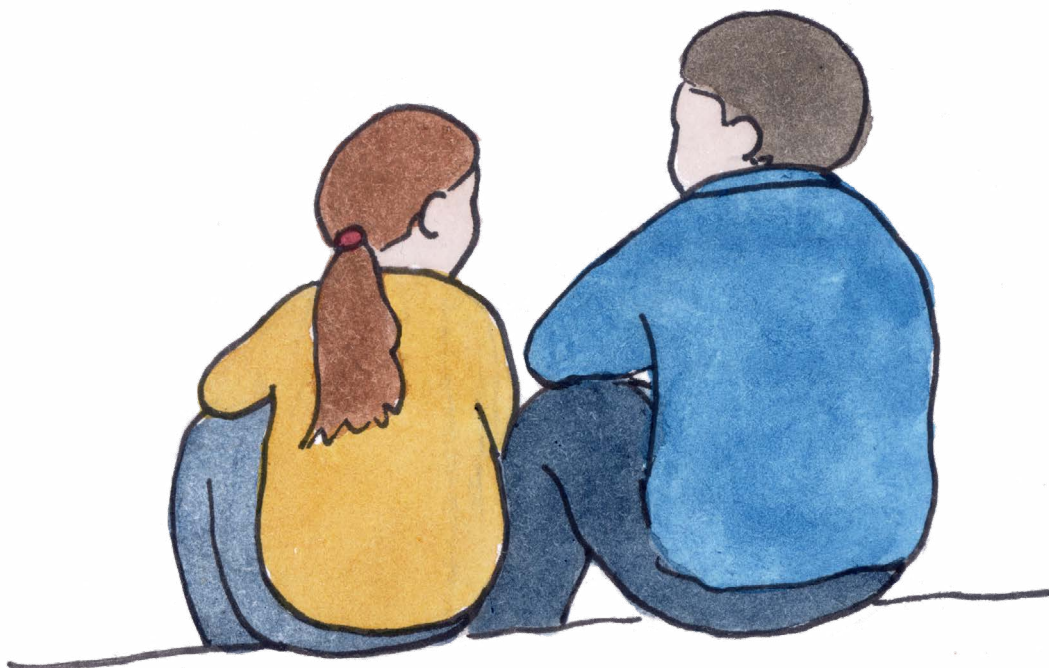
At the heart of the White Paper is the government's commitment to a universal offer in schools that will include:

- Ambitious leadership and governance that embeds inclusion in planning
- Evidence-based support prioritising early intervention
- High-quality teaching with a 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
- Inclusive environments with continuous improvements to accessibility<sup>1</sup>

The White Paper makes clear that a child's sense of belonging is critical to their capacity to thrive, and to achieve to their full potential both in and out of school. An inclusive culture is not a 'nice to have': it is essential to all children's wellbeing. The creation of this culture and its continual reinforcement requires all agencies to be working together effectively, and for this to extend to our families and the wider community.

This is evidenced by international research cited in the White Paper that shows that young people who are not accessing education because they are excluded from school, not attending school or having their needs met in school are more likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET), develop severe mental health needs, or require involvement from the Youth Justice Service.

<sup>1</sup>[Every child achieving and thriving \(HTML version\) - GOV.UK](#)



The White Paper commits to the publication of a new Pupil Engagement Framework later this year to “enable all schools to measure the key factors that determine their children’s engagement in education and make improvements.” In Westmorland and Furness, the action plan and governance arrangements that will flow from this Belonging and Inclusion Strategy will describe how we as a local authority will work with schools and other partners to clearly measure their progress against this Framework.

This is consistent with the new Ofsted Inspection Framework which emphasises scrutiny of inclusion via a standalone judgement, reinforced with greater attention on how children feel and experience school, as well as their achievement and attainment. Through this, Ofsted will be measuring school performance in terms of how well they create inclusive, relational environments where every child can succeed.

Reform to provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is also a central theme in the White Paper. In Westmorland and Furness, we are developing our SEND Reform Plan with our partners to deliver change across the system, in line with the core principles: Early, Local, Fair, Effective and Shared. The SEND Reform Plan will operate in tandem with the Belonging and Inclusion Strategy to ensure the needs of all our children and young people with Special Educational Needs are met.

In addition, our Best Start in Life strategy Best Start in Life Conception to Five Ambition, describes how we will work with schools and nurseries to achieve the benchmark of 75% achievement of a Good Level of Development for our children. We will connect and link together across our partnerships to ensure all children and families have access to high quality education, high quality and sufficient childcare and health services that effectively identify any emerging needs and support children from the earliest point in time.

The Belonging and Inclusion Strategy will also apply to our Early Years settings and will support the achievement of this aim.

[<sup>2</sup>Best Start in Life strategy | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)



# Evidence Base

## Our Context

As described in the Westmorland and Furness Council Plan: “We are England’s most sparsely populated local authority area. This presents challenges in terms of sustaining and delivering services, public transport and connectivity.”<sup>3</sup> This impacts on levels of deprivation and the extent to which they can be masked by relatively high standards of living in some localised areas. For example, in the Cumbria Intelligence Observatory’s Westmorland and Furness Briefing<sup>4</sup> on the 2025 publication of the Index of Multiple Deprivation: 32 (22.5%) of Westmorland and Furness’s Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) fall within the 10% most deprived LSOAs for the Barriers to Housing and Services deprivation domain. This means that we need to ensure that our Belonging and Inclusion framework is tailored to a context of rurality and hidden deprivation.

## Our Numbers

We have approximately 43,481 children and young people aged between 0 to 19 years. There are approximately 53,474 aged 0 to 24. Under 9% of our school pupils and students are from black and minority ethnic community groups. This compares to over one-third nationally. However, there are around 80 different languages spoken in our 162 schools. While children from ethnic minority groups make up a relatively small proportion of the local population, it is essential that their experiences are fully understood and reflected in inclusive practice. This strategy promotes culturally responsive approaches, high expectations and a strong focus on belonging, ensuring that diversity is recognised as a strength and that all children and young people are able to participate fully and achieve. Through an inclusive curriculum, representation, staff awareness and strong partnership with families, schools will be supported to create environments where difference is respected and celebrated. This approach ensures that no child feels marginalised or overlooked, and that equity remains central to our ambition for all children to thrive.

We have around 245 children in our care. The number of Westmorland and Furness children entering care is stable, with no significant increase or decrease in numbers. There is some increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children entering our care and we have over 400 care leavers aged 18 to 25 years.

There are approximately 2,700 children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) supported by an EHCP as of January 2026. Approximately 21% of these Children and Young People aged 0 to 25 are placed within specialist provision. 27% of our EHCPs have a primary need of SEMH. 21% have a primary need of autism. 29% are identified as having a speech, language and communication need. 4% have a specific learning difficulty (SPLD). We currently have 398 children registered as Electively Home Educated (EHE). Westmorland and Furness have 147 state-funded schools, of which 93% of schools and 100% of Early Years Settings were good or outstanding in December 2025, before the changes to the Ofsted inspection framework.

<sup>3</sup>[Council plan | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

<sup>4</sup>[Indices of Deprivation IMD 2025 Briefing Westmorland and Furness](#)

## Attainment and Attendance

Educational outcomes for most children and young people are in line with national at Key Stage 4. However, they are below national at Key Stage 2. The gap between children who are from more disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers is wider than the national average and widening.

The achievement of children and young people with SEND is mixed. There is strong achievement at the early primary stages, but achievement is lower than national by the end of primary but improves again to be at or above national for their GCSE cohort.

Westmorland and Furness attendance for all compulsory school aged children in both primary and secondary phases for the academic year 2024 to 2025 was 93.6% compared to a national average of 93.1%.

In 2024 to 2025 for all compulsory school aged children our Persistent Absence rate was 14.3% where we saw that this rate was highest in the Eden and Furness areas.

The attendance data for our vulnerable groups in Westmorland and Furness can be seen in the table below:

Vulnerable Group	Attendance (Westmorland and Furness)	Persistent Absence (Westmorland and Furness)	Attendance (National)	Persistent Absence (National)
<b>EHCP</b>	86.4%	29.5%	86.3%	36.9%
<b>SEN Support</b>	91.4%	22.4%	89.4%	29.9%
<b>FSM</b>	88.8%	31%	89.4%	33%
<b>CiN</b>	83.6%	32.7%		
<b>CP</b>	81%	51.5%		
<b>CIC</b>	89.3%	30.4%		

## Suspensions and Exclusions

In 2023 to 2024, 0.13 in 100 children were permanently excluded from state funded schools in England equating to 13 children per 10,000. Rates for some children were much higher; for example, the rate for those who receive Free School Meals is 0.33 in 100 children and those with SEND support is up to 0.41 in 100 children.

Permanent exclusion has a profound and lasting impact on children and young people. It disrupts education, damages relationships, and removes key sources of safety and belonging. Children who are excluded are nationally significantly more likely to experience poor educational outcomes, disengagement from learning and challenge in later life, including unemployment and involvement in the justice system. Exclusion, nationally and locally, disproportionately affects the most vulnerable, reinforcing existing inequalities and reducing life chances. Exclusion is not just an outcome; it is a signal that belonging has broken down.

In Westmorland and Furness, exclusion and suspension rates vary across our council's geographical area. Overall, they are broadly in line with national, slightly higher in the reporting period of 2023 to 2024, and still represent some of our most vulnerable children. Pre-pandemic we saw a figure of around 0.03 to 0.05% for all children.

The number of permanent exclusions in 2024 to 2025 was 42, higher than both previous academic years. Suspensions rates in 2024 to 2025 were also higher than the previous two years. However, the most recently published national data shows that the rate of both exclusions and suspensions was below the national rate for the Autumn Term 2024 to 2025. The main reason for exclusions in Westmorland and Furness continues to be persistent disruptive behaviour, followed by physical assault against a pupil. Nationally, the top two reasons are persistent disruptive behaviour and physical assault against a pupil.

Children in our care are not less likely to struggle, but they are more likely to be protected from permanent exclusion. Nationally around 0.09% of looked after children are permanently excluded each year, slightly lower than the overall rate. However, this masks an overall picture that looked after children are significantly more likely to experience suspension and repeated disruption to their education. Lower rates of permanent exclusions reflect greater system oversight and efforts to avoid exclusion, rather than reduced need.

At a system level, we can see there are strengths on which to build, in terms of good attainment in the early years, and the majority of our SEND children being educated in mainstream schools. However, our most vulnerable children often have their education disrupted and the 'safety net' is not always there to catch them. This informs the strategic priorities for belonging and inclusion.

## Consultation with Partners

This strategy has been developed through consultation with a wide range of partners across the system, including schools, education services, health and care professionals, and families. Their insights have been instrumental in shaping the priorities, ensuring that the strategy reflects both local need and effective practice. This collaborative approach has strengthened a shared understanding of inclusion and belonging and has ensured that the strategy is grounded in the realities of practice. It also establishes a strong foundation for continued partnership working in delivering the strategy.

It has been co-produced with:

- Children and young people
- Parents and carers
- Education leaders
- Health colleagues
- Social care colleagues
- Public Health colleagues



The overwhelming message that emerged was that our partners are all committed and dedicated to promoting belonging and inclusion across our education system to improve the attendance of our secondary aged students post COVID, raise attainment for all our children and young people and work together so that permanent exclusions are rare and only ever used as a very last resort.



# Our Vision

"Together we will create an inclusive education system where every child and young person is known, valued and feels they belong: enabling all to achieve, thrive and succeed in their community."

# Our Values

The Belonging and Inclusion Strategy is underpinned by the values and ambitions of Westmorland and Furness Council and reflects a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children, young people and families. It reinforces the council's values, particularly of Inclusion, Ambition, Needs-Led, Collaboration, Responsible and Outcomes Focussed recognising that positive outcomes are achieved through strong relationships, shared responsibility and a collective commitment to ensuring that every child feels safe, valued and can thrive in life.

Through this approach, the strategy supports the council's ambition to create strong communities and opportunities for all children and young people to succeed within their local area.

Drawing from this, our principles within the Belonging and Inclusion Strategy are:

- **Relationships First:** strong, trusting relationships are the foundation of belonging, inclusion and success.
- **Belonging to Support Improved Attainment:** children learn best when they feel safe, valued and connected.
- **Family Help, Not Late Intervention:** needs are identified and supported early to prevent escalation.
- **Every Child in Their Community:** children should be supported to learn and thrive within their local mainstream school wherever possible.
- **Shared Responsibility:** inclusion is everyone's responsibility, across education, families and services.

For many children and young people in Westmorland and Furness, belonging is their everyday, positive reality. Our aim with this Belonging and Inclusion Strategy is to make sure that this is the lived experience for all our children and young people.

This strategy has been developed to turn our ambition for belonging and inclusion into consistent, everyday practice across all settings and we will support leaders at all levels to translate national policy into local practice, ensuring that belonging and inclusion is consistently understood and effectively delivered across Westmorland and Furness.



# Our Strategic Priorities

In the light of new government priorities and to address the challenges revealed in our evidence base, we have developed six strategic priorities that will guide our implementation plan.

- 1. Culture:** inclusion in all our schools and settings
- 2. Early identification:** effective support from the outset
- 3. Access to education:** promoting improved attendance, engagement and participation, including our young people in Elective Home Education
- 4. Reduced suspensions and exclusions:** specialist intervention to support
- 5. Partnership:** building effective collaboration across school communities
- 6. Sufficiency:** Ensuring sufficient local provision to meet the needs of all our children and young people.

In summary:

Belonging is the foundation.



Inclusion is the practice



Achievement is the outcome.



## Delivering the Strategy

The successful delivery of this strategy will be driven through strong engagement from schools and partners in implementing the identified priorities and making full use of the support available through the local authority toolkit. Schools and educational settings are central to this work, and the impact of the strategy will be realised through consistent, high-quality adaptive teaching and at whole-school level. The priorities set out in this strategy are supported by a range of practical tools, guidance and training which are set out in our toolkit. The toolkit sits alongside this strategy as a practical resource to support schools and partners to bring its priorities to life. It offers guidance, tools and training to support inclusive, relational practice and strengthen belonging across all settings. Importantly, the toolkit is not a fixed set of resources, but a living and evolving offer. It will grow over time, shaped by the experiences, insights and effective practice of schools and partners across the system. By sharing what works and learning together, we will build a collective approach to inclusion that is grounded in real practice and responsive to the needs of our children and communities. The toolkit is designed to enable schools and educational settings to strengthen inclusive practice, improve outcomes and ensure that every child feels they belong.

To recognise and celebrate effective practice, the council will introduce a Belonging and Inclusion Recognition Award. This will support the implementation of the government's framework where schools can evidence and reflect on their practice, supported by an audit process led by the local authority. The award will acknowledge schools that are successfully embedding the principles of belonging and inclusion, while also supporting continuous improvement and the sharing of effective practice across the system.



## Priority 1: Culture

### Attachment and Trauma Training for whole school communities

Attachment and trauma-informed practice training will be offered to whole staff teams as a core part of this toolkit. It recognises that behaviour is a form of communication and that many children have experienced disruption, loss or adversity. The training supports adults to build strong, trusting relationships, respond in ways that reduce distress, and create environments where children feel safe, valued and that they belong. This shared approach is fundamental to improving engagement, reducing exclusion and enabling all children to thrive. This ensures that inclusion is not dependent on individuals but embedded across whole teams and systems.

This strategy also supports schools and educational settings to move away from a traditional behaviour policy to a relational approach which will reflect a deeper understanding of what children need to feel safe, connect and support them to learn better. Rather than focusing solely on managing behaviour, relational practice prioritises building trust, understanding individual experiences, and responding in ways that strengthen a child's sense of belonging. It recognises that children and young people are more likely to engage positively when they feel valued and understood. This approach supports more inclusive environments, builds positive relationships, improves attendance and reduces reliance on exclusion.



## Priority 2: Early Identification

### Best Start in Life (BSIL)

The Westmorland and Furness BSIL strategy will also support our Ambition for Every Child Strategy, working in partnership with other organisations, schools, local communities, and, most importantly, parents and families. We understand from research that the first 5 years of a child's life are most important in helping them get established in life, with their relationships, understanding of themselves, and starting to enjoy learning.

The ambition for the BSIL strategy is for children to be set on a positive trajectory for future success by:

- Inspiring ongoing achievement and building on having achieved a Good Level of Development at the end of reception
- Developing resilience to support them throughout their lives
- Promoting positive wellbeing and good health
- Supporting healthy relationships and secure attachment
- Building on early communication and language skills
- Striving to improve outcomes for all our children
- Working in partnership with families and professionals
- Ensuring equity of support for everyone
- Children and young people having a strong sense of self and feeling they 'belong' in their communities

The Early Years Team works in close partnership with services across Westmorland and Furness Council, including: Family Hubs, SEND services, Public Health, the Virtual School and Health Visiting. This joined-up approach ensures that children and families receive coordinated support at the earliest stage, promoting inclusion, reducing barriers and supporting successful transitions into school and beyond.

A comprehensive Early Years offer is available, supporting high-quality, inclusive practice across all early years settings. This includes provision for Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings, maintained nursery schools, schools with early years classes and childminders. The offer is designed to strengthen practice, build workforce confidence and support early identification and intervention, ensuring that children develop a strong foundation for learning, wellbeing and belonging.

The Early Years Team provides a wide range of support, including professional networks for baby rooms, two-year-old rooms, childminder and PVI managers, cluster groups for settings and schools, and targeted support for new leaders and SENCOs. A structured programme of training and development is available, including the Level 3 SENCO award, alongside a comprehensive annual CPD offer and bespoke training responsive to local need.

Settings are supported through inclusive practice visits, support for children with emerging SEND needs, and quality assurance processes such as EYFS setting reviews and welfare visits. Safeguarding is strengthened through the designated safeguarding clusters and early years-specific training.

In addition, we have a digital offer, including access to shared resources, updates and professional communities to support ongoing communication and collaboration across the sector. This offer plays a vital role in ensuring that inclusion and belonging are embedded from the earliest stages of a child's development.

## Family Help Strategy

The Family Help Strategy forms a key part of Westmorland and Furness's wider system approach to inclusion and belonging, recognising the central role of families in supporting our children and young people's wellbeing, development and engagement. Building strong, trusting relationships with parents and carers is fundamental to this work. When families feel valued, understood and respected, they are more likely to engage openly with support and work in partnership with services.



The strategy places a strong emphasis on empowering families through access to the right resources, knowledge and support at the earliest opportunity. This enables parents and carers to respond confidently to their child's needs, reducing the likelihood of challenges escalating and the need for more intensive intervention. Practitioners work collaboratively with families to understand their individual circumstances and co-design support that is meaningful, relevant and effective.

A range of evidence-informed interventions are delivered through Best Start Family Hubs, working in partnership across Westmorland and Furness Council and wider services. Our joined-up approach ensures that families receive coordinated, accessible support, strengthening early help, promoting inclusion and enabling children to thrive within their home, school and community.

Strong partnerships with families are essential to building a system where every child feels supported, understood and able to belong.

### [Family Help Strategy](#)

### [Family Help | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)

### [Family Help Resources | Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

## Support and guidance on Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP)

Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) sets out the inclusive approaches, adaptations and support that should be part of everyday practice in all schools and settings. It is rooted in the understanding that belonging, participation and progress are enabled through high-quality relationships, teaching and environments. By clearly defining what should be ordinarily available, the framework supports schools to meet a wide range of needs early, reducing reliance on specialist provision and ensuring that more children and young people can learn, develop and feel that they belong within their community. It makes clear that inclusion is not additional; it is what every child should experience, every day.

### [Ordinarily available provision at SEN support - guidance for schools and settings | Westmorland and Furness Council](#)



## Priority 3: Access to Education

### Rolling out the ATTEND Framework to support improved attendance, particularly in our secondary schools

The ATTEND Framework, originally developed by Brighton and Hove City Council, supports a shift from viewing attendance as compliance to understanding it as a reflection of belonging. The framework helps schools to explore the underlying reasons for absence and respond through strong relationships, early support and inclusive practice. It reinforces the principle that children attend when they feel safe, connected and valued, and provides practical guidance to support schools in creating conditions for sustained engagement.



### Implementing our Emotional Barriers to School Attendance (EBSA) Pathway

This is a structured pathway for responding to Emotional Barriers to School Attendance (EBSA), led by our Educational Psychology Service. This pathway provides schools with a clear, graduated response to identifying, understanding and supporting children experiencing anxiety-related barriers to attendance. It emphasises early intervention, relational practice and partnership with families, alongside practical strategies to support reintegration and sustained engagement. By embedding a consistent, evidence informed approach the pathway aims to reduce escalation, improve attendance outcomes and ensure that children and young people remain connected to their school community. It shifts the response from managing absence to understanding and addressing the needs behind it.

### Strengthening engagement and reducing the number of children and young people in Elective Home Education (EHE)

The number of children who are electively home educated is increasing, with the reduction of these numbers being a priority for the local authority. While recognising the rights of parents to choose home education, this strategy emphasises the importance of children being educated within school wherever possible, where they can benefit from high-quality teaching, social interaction and a strong sense of belonging.

Through this strategy, the council will work proactively with schools, families and partners to understand the factors contributing to EHE and to reduce the need for children to leave school. This includes strengthening inclusive practice, improving early support, addressing unmet need and ensuring that families feel confident that their child can be supported within their local setting. Where children are educated at home, we will continue to work in partnership with families to ensure that children are safe, supported and able to achieve positive outcomes.



## Priority 4: Reducing Suspensions and Exclusions

### Ensuring effective practice in the use of suspensions and exclusions set out in the Westmorland & Furness Permanent Exclusion and Suspension Protocols for Headteachers, Governors and trustees

Our **Westmorland & Furness Permanent Exclusion and Suspension Protocols** set out clear, consistent guidance for schools and partners in relation to suspensions and permanent exclusions and are designed to promote effective practice, ensure fairness and transparency, and support decision-making that is rooted in inclusion, proportionality and the best interests of the child. Our protocols recognise that exclusion is often a point at which principles of belonging have broken down and set out expectations for how schools can respond in ways that prioritise restoration wherever possible. The aim is to support schools to use exclusions proportionately and appropriately, while maintaining a strong focus on reintegration, relationships and the child's ongoing connection to their community. They support a shift from managing behaviour at surface level to understanding need, and from exclusion to inclusion wherever possible.

We recognise that alternative provision (AP) plays a key role in supporting inclusion and can work to reduce the need for suspensions and permanent exclusions. High-quality AP can provide targeted, time-limited support for children and young people whose needs cannot be fully met at that time within their education setting. AP should support in stabilising engagement, addressing underlying needs and support reintegration in to mainstream education wherever possible. Through this strategy, AP will be positioned as a supportive intervention, focussed on re-engagement and reintegration, rather than a destination. It is imperative that where AP is used, it is reviewed regularly with the young person, their parents/carers and their education setting, so that all parties understand how it is supporting the young person's education and what the plans are for reintegration.



## Priority 5: Partnership

### Working together to ensure collective oversight of implementation and outcomes

We will establish a system-level oversight group, which will also be responsible for developing a more detailed action plan for each of our strategic priorities, bringing together actions and measures of success into a single, accessible shared outcome framework. This approach is designed to provide clarity of direction whilst supporting consistent delivery across the system. It will enable leaders and practitioners to easily understand what is expected, track progress, and maintain a strong focus on impact. The plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains responsive to need and continues to drive improvement.

The government's Engagement Framework will be published later this year. This will enable us to measure the impact of this strategy with a combination of quantitative data and qualitative insight, ensuring a clear and comprehensive understanding of outcomes for our children and young people.



## Priority 6: Sufficiency

### Ensuring sufficient local provision to meet the needs of all our children and young people

Ensuring sufficiency of local provision is a key priority, particularly within the context of our large and rural geography. Demand has increased for specialist and alternative provision, alongside limited availability of places, which leads to more children being educated at a distance from their home community. This strategy aligns with the local authority's SEND Reform Plan and Sufficiency Strategy, with a focus on developing the right provision, in the right place, at the right time.

Our approach is twofold: to strengthen inclusive practice within mainstream settings so that more children can be successfully supported locally, and to ensure that high-quality specialist and alternative provision supports children where it is needed. This will ensure that children and young people can access appropriate support without unnecessary disruption, maintaining connections to their families, communities and local schools wherever possible.

### Priorities are reinforced through the graduated response

#### SEND Local Offer | Westmorland and Furness Council

The graduated response describes how early identification of need and prompt access to the right, reviewed and amended as needed, enables children to thrive.

#### **Universal (for all our children and young people)**

Every child experiences, every day:

- Warm, respectful relationships with trusted adults
- Calm, safe and predictable environments
- High quality, adaptive teaching with reasonable adjustments as needed
- Clear, inclusive, relational behaviour approaches
- Partnership working with families
- A strong sense of belonging within the school community

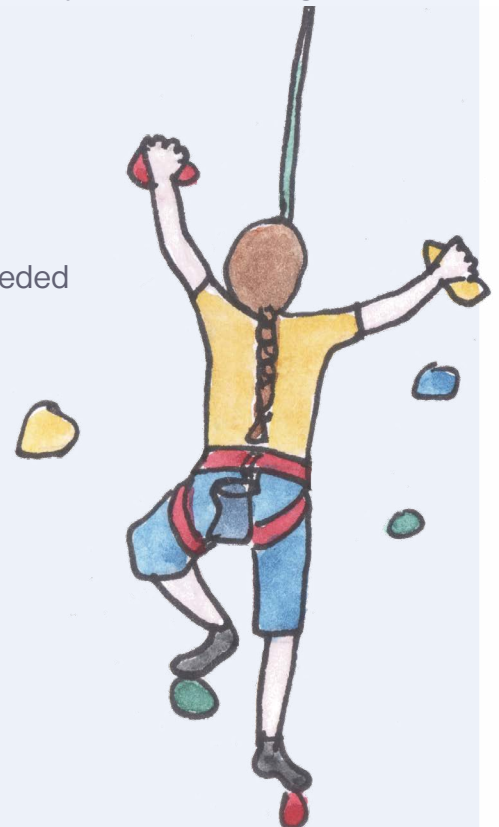
**Outcome:** Children feel safe, valued and ready to learn

#### **Targeted (for children and young people with emerging needs)**

Additional support when barriers begin to emerge:

- Early identification of need
- Pastoral and wellbeing support
- Flexible, relational responses to behaviour
- Use of OAP and toolkit approaches (e.g. EBSA Pathway)
- Partnership working with families
- Advice from Experts at Hand to support the learning environment and intervention approaches

**Outcome:** Needs are addressed early, preventing escalation



### Specialist (for children and young people with more complex needs)

Co-ordinated multi-agency support:

- Involvement of specialist services (e.g. Educational Psychology, special school Outreach, Specialist Advisory Teachers)
- Individualised specialist plans and adaptations
- Multi agency working (education, health and care)
- Careful transition and reintegration planning

**Outcome:** Children and young people remain connected to education and their community



## Measuring Impact

We will monitor key performance indicators including attendance, suspension and permanent exclusions, outcomes for children with SEND and those who are cared for, and levels of participation and engagement. This will be complemented by pupil, parent and staff voice to understand lived experience, particularly in relation to belonging, safety and inclusion.

In practice, delivery of our strategy will mean:

- More children and young people attend and engage in school or college
- Fewer children experience suspension or exclusion
- More children with SEND are successfully supported in mainstream schools and colleges
- Children report a stronger sense of belonging
- Staff feel more confident and consistent in their practice
- Fewer children are Electively Home Educated

**Inclusion being visible in everyday interactions, not just in policy.**

# Appendix 1: Roles and Responsibilities

Delivering OUR strategy requires a shared commitment across the whole system.

Creating a culture of belonging and inclusion is the responsibility of all partners, with each playing a distinct and complementary role in ensuring that every child is supported to achieve and thrive.

## Local Authority

**Our role** in the Local Authority is to provide strategic leadership and system coordination.

- Set the vision and strategic direction for inclusion and belonging
- Develop and maintain the toolkit (OAP, protocols, training, pathways)
- Ensure sufficiency of provision and early support
- Commission and coordinate services (for example, Educational Psychology)
- Monitor performance and hold the system to account
- Support schools through guidance, training and challenge
- Champion the needs of the most vulnerable children

**Our responsibility is creating the conditions for inclusive practice to succeed**

## Schools, colleges and education providers

**Role** - Our education providers are at the heart of delivery through daily practice and culture.

- Create safe, inclusive and relational environments
- Deliver high-quality teaching and ordinarily available provision
- Identify and respond to needs early
- Work in partnership with families and other services
- Use suspensions and exclusions only as a last resort, in line with guidance
- Promote strong attendance through belonging and engagement
- Embed consistent, whole-school approaches to behaviour and inclusion

**Responsibility:** Ensuring every child experiences belonging in practice

## School Leaders and Governors

**Role** - Leaders ensure strategic and operational alignment within settings.

- Set the culture and expectations for inclusion
- Ensure staff are trained and supported
- Monitor outcomes for all children and young people and particularly vulnerable groups
- Ensure policies reflect inclusive, relational approaches
- Provide challenge and accountability

**Responsibility:** Driving inclusive culture and accountability within schools

## Education, Health and Care Partners

**Role** - Partners provide specialist expertise and coordinated support.

- Work collaboratively with schools and families
- Provide early advice, assessment and intervention
- Support implementation of pathways (e.g. EBSA)
- Contribute to multi-agency planning and review
- Promote joined-up, child-centred approaches

**Responsibility:** Strengthening support around the child

## Families and Carers

**Role** - Families are essential partners in children and young people's success.

- Work in partnership with schools and services
- Share knowledge of their child's needs and experiences
- Engage with support and interventions
- Contribute to planning and decision-making

**Responsibility:** Working collaboratively to support their child's wellbeing and engagement

## Children and Young People

**Role** - Children are active participants in their own journey.

- Share their views, experiences and aspirations
- Engage with learning and support
- Contribute to shaping inclusive environments

**Responsibility:** To support the development of our education settings' approach to belonging and inclusion.



Belonging and Inclusion is not the responsibility of one service or one role – it is a shared commitment across the whole system.





## Translation Services

If you require this document in another format (e.g. CD, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone: **0300 373 3300**.

للوصول إلى هذه المعلومات بلغتك، يرجى الاتصال 0300 373 3300

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