



# Wakefield Education and Inclusion Strategy 2026-2028



# Introduction

Wakefield Families Together is an umbrella term to describe our partnership that brings services together, to join up how we work, so that it's easier for everyone to find and access support when they need it, at the earliest opportunity. All partners are committed to the Children & Young People's vision and are ambitious in how it is shaped, designed, developed and delivered. This strategy sets out how we will transform education, inclusion and SEND provision across the life course-starting with strong foundations in the early years and continuing through school and into adulthood.

## Our context

Most children in Wakefield thrive and fulfil their potential at school, building strong foundations for future aspirations. However, some face interconnected challenges that impact their learning journey, including:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Attendance and persistent absence
- Exclusion and behaviour
- Inclusion within mainstream settings

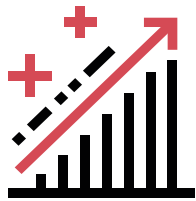
These challenges often begin early. Evidence shows the first 1001 days of life are critical to lifelong outcomes. Our integrated approach ensures early identification and intervention, linking Best Start ambitions with school-age priorities and SEND support.

The Education and Inclusion Executive and Maintained Heads' group bring together Wakefield Council's Children and Young People's Services, Multi Academy Trusts, School leaders and SEND Strategic Partnership Board to ensure coordinated action. Priority areas are Inclusion, Exclusion, Attendance, SEND sufficiency and attainment.



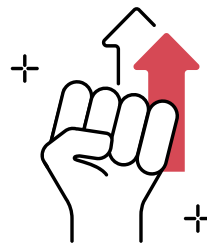


## Our success



**69.6%**

of children achieved a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS continues to rise (2025)



**92%**

schools judged to have good or outstanding leadership in Wakefield (Jul 2025)

## Our level of need

- **53,849** pupils are on roll in Wakefield schools, **27,420** Male | **26,429** Female
- **26.6%** of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals
- **90.2%** attendance of which 4.2% is authorised and 2.9% is unauthorised
- **13.2%** of pupils are EAL
- **14.5%** of school age children in the Wakefield District have Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support
- **5.3%** of school aged children have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- **75%** of children and young people with EHCPs are in mainstream settings (Sept 2025)

## Looking back at our work we want to tell you about what we have achieved together

**Highest Ofsted Performance across Schools:** Wakefield's percentage of schools with good or outstanding leadership and management at our latest inspection (94%) is at its highest level ever and exceeds the national average.

**Early Years:** Wakefield's percentage of pupils achieving a Good Level of Development is now 1.3% above the national average (69.6% compared to 68.3%); it ranks as the highest of our statistical neighbours and of all 5 Local Authorities in West Yorkshire.

**Phonics:** The percentage of pupils who met the phonics threshold by the end of year 2 in 2025 was 3% above the national average at 92% - this placed Wakefield equal 4th position out of all Local Authorities.

**Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check:** 48% of Wakefield's year 4 pupils achieved full marks in the multiplication check; this was 11% above the national average and was equal 4th when compared to all Local Authorities.

**Key Stage 2:** Wakefield's percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected standard in reading, writing and maths has increased by 5% between 2022 and 2025, nationally the increase was 3%. Wakefield is now 1% above the national average and is ranked the highest of our statistical neighbours and in West Yorkshire.

**Key Performance Measures:** Strong statutory performance across key areas including Timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans, School Admissions, Strategic School Place Planning, and a number of key performance measures.

**SEND Inspection:** Local Area Ofsted/CQC SEND Inspection March 2024



**SEND Sufficiency:** Emerging strength through Local placed based partnership working which is enhancing SEND sufficiency with schools and Multi Academy Trusts highlighted as a model of best practice in DfE Schools White Paper.

**Change Programme Partnership:** Wakefield Lead Local Authority for Department for Education (DfE) West Yorkshire Change Programme Partnership which is driving and testing national SEND reforms..

**SEND Sector Lead:** Wakefield Council was chosen as the regional lead for the DfE SEND Sector Led Improvement Programme to trial and refine proposed reforms to SEND and Alternative Provision services.

**Graduated Approach:** Co-produced and system owned Graduated Approach across SEND and Inclusion launched.

**One System Approach:** Development and Implementation of One System Approach to data and performance across Education, SEND, Inclusion, Children's Social Care and Early Help.

Commitment to innovation across the education system.

**Virtual School:** Integrated and well-established Virtual School which is driving inclusive practice across district.

Strong and committed Multi-agency Partnership

Wakefield is community focused with high performing-maintained schools, Academies, early years provision and Further Education sector with an average point score of 35.6 (nationally 34.9).



## What we want to achieve over the next 2 years - Our Aim

We will create a joined-up system from early years through education and into adulthood so every child, regardless of circumstance, receives the right support to thrive. This includes:

- Working as a system on the Best Start ambition of reaching 77.7% Good Levels of Development by 2028.
- Meeting increased demand for SEND provision and specialist places.
- Reducing permanent exclusions and improving school attendance.
- Creating inclusive schools and early years settings.
- Equipping the workforce with high-quality training to manage diverse needs.
- Ensuring early years support builds strong foundations for learning and inclusion.
- Supporting smooth transitions into adulthood with pathways to independence, employment and community participation regardless of prior lived experiences.
- Committing as a system to being the best corporate parent for children and young people.

### Children and Young People told us:

“I want to do well so it helps me get ready for my dreams”

“Learning new things makes me feel smart and happy”

“It’s important that to feel included and that I belong so I can do my best”

“We are all different, so it is important our schools understand this and be child centred”

“Just because I have a special learning need shouldn’t mean I can’t go on to achieve; I might just need to take a slightly different path to get there”

## Policy context

### Our work aligns with:

- Wakefield District Children and Young People’s Plan 2025–28
- National policy commitments, including Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life and the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan (DfE, 2023)
- Statutory frameworks: Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- Equality Act 2010
- Regional priorities set by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority



## Strategic themes

### Enhancing SEND Sufficiency and Practice

#### We will do this by

- Expanding and improving SEND provision in mainstream schools and early years.
- Developing specialist pathways and satellite provision, including preparation for adulthood.
- Providing high-quality training for all staff.
- Strengthening accountability for EHCP delivery and improve local support offers.
- Investing in facilities and resources for special schools.
- Supporting children with SEND from the earliest opportunity.
- Ensuring children and young people with intersectionality and vulnerability receive tailored support.

### Reduce Permanent Exclusions & Promote Inclusion

#### We will do this by

- Agreeing a shared definition of inclusive practice across all phases.
- Introducing a new Fair Access Protocol and review home education support.
- Using a graduated approach for social-emotional and behaviour needs.
- Strengthening early intervention through the Team Around Model.
- Promoting inclusive practice in schools and early years settings.
- Prioritising and support the inclusion of vulnerable groups through the extended duties of the Virtual School with wider agencies.

## Reduce Extended & Severe Absence

### We will do this by

- Defining educational neglect and create a multi-agency response.
- Using data to identify vulnerable children and provide early support.
- Developing school-family attendance agreements and transition plans.
- Establishing clear reintegration protocols.
- Exploring flexible learning options, community support, and early college entry.
- Ensuring the multi-agency prioritise the attendance of our most vulnerable groups and for those where the authority is the corporate parent.

## Strengthen Early Years Pathways

### We will do this by

- Delivering a universal Best Start in Life offer for babies and young children.
- Providing inclusive early years provision and targeted SEND support.
- Promoting Home Learning and speech, language, and communication development.
- Ensuring affordable childcare and high uptake of free entitlement.
- Building a skilled early years workforce aligned with education priorities.

## Improve Attainment & Achievement

### We will do this by

- Setting ambitious targets for progress at all key stages, including SEND and disadvantaged learners.
- Embedding early years readiness as a foundation for success.
- Supporting schools to deliver a broad, balanced curriculum for all learners.
- Using data to identify gaps and implement targeted interventions.
- Strengthening transitions for all learners between early years, primary, secondary and into Post 16 education, employment or training.
- Working with families to create positive home learning environments.



## Delivery and Accountability

### We will:

- Set measurable targets for improvement across priority areas that improve year on year.
- Publish our Annual Report to families, schools and the public setting out what we have achieved and its impact to the:
  - Education & Inclusion Executive
  - Maintained Leaders Group
  - Integrated Education Partnership
  - Early Years Strategic Board
  - SEND Strategic Partnership Board
  - Children and Young People's Partnership Board
- Align with other Wakefield strategies (Best Start, Early Help, SEND, Inclusion, All-Age District Plan).
- Conduct regular quality assurance and gather feedback from children and families that improves our service.
- Have empowered children, young peoples and family voice groups to hold schools and services to account.





## Conclusion

This integrated strategy will drive systemic change across the life course—starting with the earliest years and continuing through education and into adulthood—to ensure every child and young person in Wakefield has the tools, support and opportunities to thrive.

### The Children's Health Service App

To get the latest information, advice and local support from Wakefield Families Together direct to your mobile phone download the Children's Health Service App.

[www.hdft.nhs.uk/services/childrens-services/wakefield-0-19-service](http://www.hdft.nhs.uk/services/childrens-services/wakefield-0-19-service)

