

Special Needs Information Report: 2021-22

Columbia's Ethos

We celebrate diversity and difference, and believe that it enriches everyone's learning.

We challenge any attitude or behaviour which discriminates against groups or individuals in our school community. We take time to think about our own practice in relation to this and we help children to do the same.

All children at Columbia have equal rights to the opportunities offered by education. We have high expectations for every child's attainment.

We are committed to inclusion. This means that at Columbia our children all learn together in and out of class. This in turn means that we often make changes to the school environment, the curriculum and teaching in order to include individual children.

We expect all children to think of themselves as learners and to do their best. We encourage them to aspire. We teach creatively so that children want to learn for themselves. We teach them the skills they need to learn independently.

We involve children as much as possible in decisions which are made on their behalf.

There are many diverse needs among the children at our school, in addition to the children with special educational needs and disabilities. All children are welcomed, valued and included at Columbia.

We know that parents' involvement with their children's education is vitally important so we work with them as partners. Parents are consulted at every stage of action taken by school. We ask parents to support us in helping their children to achieve their potential.

What type of school is Columbia?

We are a community primary school with 2 classes in each year group. We admit children from the ages of 3 - 11. We have a Victorian building. The school has an early years' unit on the ground floor where nursery and reception children learn together in an open-plan setting. Years 1, 2 and 3 classrooms are on the middle floor and years 4, 5 and 6 work upstairs on the top floor. Each phase (foundation, yrs 1&2, yrs 3&4, yrs 5&6) is supported by a phase leader to make the quality of teaching and learning as high as possible. We have good links with our surrounding community.

Visitors to our school notice that relationships among children and adults are respectful and friendly. Adults and children enjoy talking to one another. We all use first names. We

believe in the power of collaboration so all our staff are organised into teams. Everything we achieve depends on good communication so we concentrate on communicating as well as possible. We talk to each other, we talk to children and we talk to parents. We listen to what children, parents and teachers say.

What is 'Special Educational Needs'?

Children are said to have Special Educational Needs (SEN) when one or more of these is true:

- they don't make enough progress, even though the teacher has planned work specially to help them
- their difficulties with literacy and numeracy affect their learning in other subjects
- they have ongoing emotional or behavioural difficulties which upset their own and other children's learning
- their sensory or physical differences affect their learning
- communicating or interacting with others is difficult.

Sometimes this is referred to as SEND- the D stands for disability.

At Columbia we have children with speech and language difficulties, autism, global developmental delay, social, emotional and mental health difficulties, learning disabilities, specific literacy difficulty, visual impairment, hearing impairment and developmental co-ordination disorder. We have previously included a child with Downs Syndrome and children with cerebral palsy.

What does Columbia do about it?

First...

Teachers assess children constantly so concerns are usually picked up quickly and can be raised at termly Pupil Progress Meetings which are attended by the SENCo. At the Pupil Progress meetings the teachers identify the barriers to learning for a child and what has already been done to support them. Suggestions are made for possible next steps. But a teacher can raise a concern at any time by talking to the SENCo who might observe the child and will talk to the other adults involved with the child in school.

If parents have their own concerns about their children's learning needs they can contact the SENCo at any time through the school office. We can often arrange to meet on the same day.

Then...

Some children receiving SEN support will make good progress, simply because talking about what a child needs and putting a plan in place has helped the teacher work out how to support the child successfully. A typical classroom will have all the practical materials and adult support a child needs to make good progress.

But some children may need help from specialists. Here is a list of the specialist services we use: Educational Psychology, Barts and the London Children's Speech and Language Therapy, Blossom Tree Speech Therapy, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Social

Services, Children's Occupational Therapy, Children's Physiotherapy, Child Development Team, Hearing Impaired Service, Visually Impaired Service , Literacy Support Team, Behaviour Support Team, School therapists and counsellors, Children with Physical and Medical Needs Advisory Team, Stephen Hawking School and Phoenix School.

If parents agree to it, the SENCo organises the work of these professionals in school. They usually work closely with the child for a short time and then give us, the everyday teachers, recommendations about how to work with the child. Sometimes they stay involved with children throughout their time in school. We have good relationships with all the children's services in Tower Hamlets.

How are parents and carers involved?

If your child is receiving SEN support, you and your child will meet the SENCo and class teacher regularly and in between times, parents or carers will have everyday contact with the class teacher and can choose to contact the SENCo any time by asking at the school office.

We do our best to involve parents and children in the decisions that we make about them. We are constantly working to improve the way we speak and listen to children so that what we communicate is meaningful.

How does the school adapt its teaching for children with special needs?

Children with special educational needs and disabilities are taught alongside other children but lessons are designed so that all children in the class learn and make progress. We do this by planning 'differentiated' lessons. This means that all children in the class are working on the same topic but the activities and questions teachers ask are different, so that they suit the attainment level of the child.

Teachers make lessons lively and interesting. They don't overload children with too much talk, but use lots of visual support to explain and remind. Children have time to think and ask questions. Some teachers use signing to support their children's understanding. They plan work which is manageable but challenging so that children make progress.

While pupils usually work in the classroom, there are times when they may be withdrawn for 1:1 or group work, to focus on learning a particular skill.

Teachers adapt their talk, the classroom and the equipment used by the children so that every child is able to learn. We follow our specialists' recommendations when planning how to adapt teaching for individual children with SEND.

Several children use ICT and specialist software to support their learning.

Sometimes individual children have 1:1 support from an adult for part or all of every day.

Some examples of classroom adaptations we have made are: acoustic ceiling boards to help children with hearing impairment, height-adjustable tables and chairs, individual work-stations, space for physiotherapy, hoists and other equipment to enable movement, individual sensory classrooms.

When children have physical or sensory disabilities we might need to differentiate PE lessons for them. We have specialist equipment for ball skills, for example, and our sports instructor is skilled at making team games inclusive for children with mobility difficulties. We have sometimes asked for help with planning for PE from a Tower Hamlets SEN specialist and in this way our skills have improved. We would ask for advice again in the future.

How are decisions made about the amount of support a child receives?

Part of the school's budget is set aside to support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. This is a fixed amount so we have to use the money as cost-effectively as possible and make sure we can give help to all the children who need it. It pays for:

- support services like Speech and Language Therapy and Educational Psychology,
- practical resources like specialised PE equipment and software, and
- the extra adults who support children with SEN in school, such as 1:1 TAs.

We are costing all the ways we support children in order to have a good overview. Decisions about which support to put in place for a child are made by the Inclusion team (SENCo, Headteacher, Assistant SENCo, Inclusion Manager and SEN Admin Officer) after talking to everyone involved.

Sometimes children need a high level of support which we can't afford from our own budget. When this happens we ask the local authority for extra funding. If they agree, the child might then have an EHCP. (Education Health Care Plan) EHCPs have replaced Statements of SEN. Parents can apply for an EHCP themselves. If you would like to talk about this in more detail please contact the SENCo directly.

How do we know it is working?

Teachers follow a cycle of assessing, planning, doing and then reviewing for all children, including those with SEND. Informal assessment goes on all day in class and feeds in to what the teacher plans for the next day.

Formal assessments are made every half-term and all children are tracked carefully. If they're not making good progress it shows up quickly so that we can act quickly.

Parents of SEND children are kept 'in the loop' through the regular meetings mentioned above but they can contact the school in between times to talk about any concerns.

If a child has a Statement or an EHCP the SENCo will invite everyone involved to a review meeting once a year. The child will be present and it will be a person-centred meeting.

How does Columbia support children's well-being?

We know that children thrive and learn best when they feel safe and well. We value good, respectful communication and we encourage openness. We have a strong, positive behaviour policy and an anti-bullying policy which we talk about regularly with the children. We teach and support children to sort out their own conflicts and give them a language to do it with. We follow the Golden Rules and children are rewarded for following them with Golden Time every Friday afternoon.

We have introduced Wellbeing Wednesday; on the first Wednesday of each half term the whole school focuses on one strand of the NHS recommendations for being well.

Teachers then thread that strand into their classroom talk making links to it whenever they can. The strands are:

- Help someone else,
- Be physically active,
- Learn something new,
- Take time to notice the world around you,
- Enjoy time with friends and family.

Children explore issues that arise in their school lives through planned PSICHE lessons. Children are taught explicitly about SEN and disability. They learn to accept and value difference so that children with all kinds of additional needs feel included here.

As a result of Covid and lockdown measures, children have been under increasing physical and mental health pressures over recent years. Consequently, we have put extra measures in place to support children's mental health and wellbeing. We now have two learning mentors who are trained to support children with everyday social, emotional and mental health concerns and a qualified mental health specialist who is able to work with children therapeutically. In addition, there is a children's counsellor working 1:1 in school for one day a week and an artist-in-residence runs 1:1 therapeutic Talk and Draw sessions once a week.

In Year 6, children apply to become members of Friendship Squad which is a team of buddies who help younger children to feel safe and happy in the playground.

What training do the staff receive?

All teachers and teaching assistants at Columbia have 1:1 meetings with their line managers at least once a fortnight. These meetings have been invaluable for developing our understanding of what each of us needs to do next to make our work with children as good as it can be.

Experienced phase leaders and subject leaders work alongside teachers in class and in planning sessions to raise the standard of their teaching and children's learning.

All staff are included in the whole-school INSET days at Columbia. In addition to this, if teachers and TAs need to understand more about a specific type of SEN, or develop the way they work with a child, we can arrange for them to attend training outside school.

Some members of staff are trained by the outreach teachers who visit from Phoenix and Stephen Hawking special schools.

Is everyone included on school trips? Can anyone join a club?

School trips are an important part of children's learning and everyone is included. Teachers plan trips carefully with all their children's needs in mind. We make risk assessments to be sure we've thought of everything and these include what we need to do for the children who have additional needs. If a child needs close supervision an extra adult accompanies the group. Sometimes parents are invited to come on trips to support their own children.

Breakfast, lunchtime and after-school clubs are open to everyone. The school will make all possible adjustments to include children with additional needs. This might mean providing adult support, altering the environment, adapting the plans or using adapted tools.

Is the school accessible for everyone?

Our school is increasingly accessible. There is a ramp into the playground from the street. The playground has been modified to make a better play environment for children with mobility difficulties.

Inside the building on the ground floor there is an accessible toilet. There is a lift which makes it possible for wheelchair users to reach the first and second floors. On the first floor, the children's toilets are accessible for walking-frame users. There is also an accessible toilet on the top floor. Some classrooms have been fitted with acoustic boards to help reduce background noise for hearing impaired children and some children use radio aids for their hearing.

We are continuously working to improve accessibility.

How does the school help children with SEND when they join our school and through transitions within the school?

When a child with a disability joins Columbia (either from another school or at the beginning of his or her education) we will make reasonable adjustments in order to include the child meaningfully. To date we have made a wide range of modifications for individual children which range from the size of a font and colour of writing paper all the way through tweaks in the timetable and to buying specialist furniture, hoists and modifying the playground structures. Modifications are decided on in partnership with the children themselves, the parents and the specialist professionals from external agencies who advise us.

All modifications are made with the aim of maximising opportunities for learning alongside peers and developing meaningful relationships.

Sometimes children with SEN or a disability join Columbia from another school. When this happens we find out as much as we can by meeting the child and his parents or carers, and we talk to the SENCo from the previous school. If necessary we modify the learning environment (see previous paragraph)

We might ask a TA to support him/her to begin with. We'll find him/her a buddy and help him/her get used to our routines. We'll make sure all the adults involved and in the wider school are briefed about what s/he needs.

When children move from one year group to another, information about SEND is shared between the old and new teachers. TAs also handover what they know to their colleagues. Towards the end of the year, some children with SEND might spend time visiting their new classrooms and teachers. In this way they can get used to the changes before they happen. Children with disabilities can contribute to planning adjustments for their new classrooms.

When children with EHCPs are in year 5 we think about their secondary schools. We encourage parents to visit as many as possible and can help them to do so. Our learning mentors can contact schools, arrange appointments and go with parents to visit. They support the parents to ask useful questions.

The secondary SENCo is invited to the child's year 6 annual review meeting. The transition process is the same as it is for younger children - the child may visit the new school before s/he leaves Columbia. There will be plenty of time given to asking questions and getting used to the idea of change. Once s/he starts at the new school, our learning mentors might visit him/her there and we will encourage him/her to visit us sometimes.

What does Columbia do to prevent children with SEND being treated unfairly?

Because we know that children with SEND are among the most vulnerable people in society, staff are constantly alert to changes in their presentation, mood and behaviour and are skilled at recognising causes for concern. We know that they are more likely to be bullied than other children so staff are vigilant in class and during less structured times. We recognise that playtimes and lunchtimes can be difficult for some children with SEND and have therefore increased staffing in the playground at these times.

Depending on a child's specific SEN or disability he or she might find it difficult to communicate. We will make adjustments for this so that the child is able to access classroom discussions. But in addition, it's important for us to gather children's views about their experiences so that we can continue to improve things for them in school. When we find it difficult to gather a child's views because of his SEN or disability we will take advice and work creatively to find a solution for that child. We know some children who find communication a challenge are more comfortable in small groups or pairs. We will facilitate this so that every child is able to have his or her voice heard.

Our weekly assemblies address difference, fairness, bullying and growth mindset (amongst other things) on a rolling programme. In them we teach explicitly about our values and challenge stereotypes and prejudices.

Where a child or parent has a sensory or physical disability we may need to deliver information differently, for example by using an enlarged font or by engaging a BSL interpreter. Columbia's everyday approach to communication is 'safety-netted' for children, i.e. teachers support everything they say with visuals, language is clear, children are given time to think. Practice which is supportive for children with SEND is also good for all children.

How involved are parents in school life?

We want parents to be interested and involved in their children's education.

There is a Family Friday session every week when parents are invited to come and learn about an aspect of their children's education. These sessions often involve the children working alongside their parents.

We run high quality parenting courses. Every other year we have a Family Learning Day when children come to school with their parents or carers and learn together. There is a group of parents called 'Friends of Columbia' who run monthly coffee mornings and organise the summer and winter fairs.

We have an increasingly wide range of home languages and because we want Columbia to be accessible for everyone we provide translators for parent meetings and some workshops. We are constantly looking at how we can communicate and consult with parents as well as possible.

Who to contact for more information or to discuss a concern

Your child's classteacher is usually the best person to ask first but the person responsible for SEND at Columbia is:

- Julie Fountain - Assistant Head responsible for Inclusion (SENCo is part of this role)

You can contact her by asking at the school office.

If you have a complaint about any aspect of the school's SEN provision, it's best to contact the headteacher, Olly Woodward in the first instance. If the complaint is not resolved then you should contact the governors directly. This can be done in confidence through the school office.

The school Governor with responsibility for special needs is Gwen Wright

Telephone: 0207 739 3835

Other useful contacts: **The Early Help Hub**- this the easiest route to accessing information about organisations who can help you in Tower Hamlets. They will advise and help to put you in touch with appropriate services. 020 7364 5006

The **Local Offer**- This document sets out everything that's provided by Tower Hamlets to support children, young people and families.

towerhamlets.gov.uk 020 7364 6495

This report was updated in October 2021

It will be reviewed in October 2022