



LEARNING SUPPORT POLICY

Ethos

Almond College offers students from all walks of life the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential and to develop their interests and talents in a caring and stimulating environment. Almond College is an inclusive community that actively promotes equal opportunities for all students and staff regardless of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, disability or any other protected characteristic. Almond College is committed to making all reasonable adjustments to ensure that every student can take a full part in the academic and activities programmes available, and the Learning Support Policy gives due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the SEND Code of Practice 2014 (amended 2015).

Aim

The aim of the Learning Support Department is to support students who have a recognised learning need or Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) and/or who are identified as needing support to successfully access the school curriculum.

The umbrella term learning support covers the academic support of students who may require assistance because of:

- a) an identified learning need related to SEND; or
- b) challenges in areas of study that may require additional academic support

Staff

The Learning Support Department is staffed by two teachers of learning support:

- Head of Department (HoD) and SENDCO
- Learning support teachers:

1 Learning support – special educational needs and disability (SEND)

1.1 Strategies for support

1. To effectively use information from previous schools, parents, outside agencies, school-based diagnostic testing, criteria for identification, experience and expertise to provide the best support necessary to enable students to make progress.
2. To use information noted above and/or from referral to further investigate possible needs to support and work with students and parents/guardians at the various stages of identification.
3. To make use of outside agencies where necessary as part of a planned and graduated response to individual need.
4. To work closely with the admissions team to gain relevant information from feeder primary schools and parents to support students with SEND entering Almond College
5. To inform and support academic departments, houseparents and other staff in meeting individual needs through sharing information, student passports, action plans, targets and strategies.
6. To review student progress termly or as and when appropriate.
7. To work collaboratively with parents/guardians, teaching staff, Heads of Department and houseparents to ensure that barriers to learning are removed and

students are enabled to achieve.

1.2 Definition - SEND

The definition of SEND in this policy is based on the definition as outlined in SEND Code of Practice 2014/2015.

A young person has a SEND if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

A young person has a learning difficulty when:

- they have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than most others of the same age, or
- they have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantially adverse and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Almond College recognizes that definitions of SEND often reference challenges that young people may have but we strive to support from a strength-based approach.

1.3 Communication

- Learning support staff can be contacted by phone, in person, by email (preferably through individual email addresses)
- Parents can request a meeting with learning support staff to discuss their child/children at a mutually convenient time.
- Students will be informed of appointments for assessment or discussion via the school email system and/or Teams; houseparents and tutors will be copied into the email when needed.
- Learning support sessions will be part of an individual's timetable and they will be expected to attend the lesson as they would any other curriculum subject – they will be advised as to when these sessions will take place.

1.4 Admissions

Almond College is an academically selective school and all applicants are assessed and interviewed not only to make sure that they will be able to keep pace with the academic demands of the school, but also to find out whether they will contribute to and benefit from the wider life of the school community. We are therefore looking for what a child can do now, signs of potential to develop in the future and the spirit in which they tackle challenges and tasks.

The assessment process may differ slightly at each of our main points of entry (into Year 7, Year 9 or Year 12).. The school will consider reports from the child's current school but offers are made based on our own selection process and criteria.

Educational, physical, behavioural or other additional needs do not preclude application for a place at Almond College

The school will make reasonable adjustments, where practicable and possible, and provide reasonable aid for applicants placed at a disadvantage because of a disability or special educational need and will comply with its responsibilities under the relevant legislation.

Parents/guardians of children with SEND are advised to consult with the school to discuss adjustments that can reasonably be made for their child's strengths and requirements before making an application.

Parents/guardians of children with SEND are required to inform the school in writing and provide copies of any relevant referrals and reports relating to their child's requirements (eg medical reports, clinical or educational psychologists' reports, etc) as part of the application process, so that we can ensure we are able to make suitable provision for them.

It is recommended that parents of a child with SEND discuss the reasonable adjustments that can be made for their child with the Head of Learning Support before accepting a place at Almond College. At all times during the process, the intention of the learning support team will be to have a clear ongoing dialogue, taking into account the wishes of parents/guardians, and to ensure the right support can be made for the young person so that school is a positive experience.

1.5 Identification and assessment of SEND

SEND can be identified through the Almond College Screening Process which includes:

- admissions information
- ongoing formative and summative teacher assessment
- information/referrals from parents/guardians, teachers, houseparents, tutors, external agencies and other school staff;
- Second Form (Y7).
- end of year assessments information shared with the school
- information shared in Welfare Team meetings;
- standardised assessments carried out by the learning support team, including screening assessments

Inevitably the screening process will not identify all additional learning needs and pupils may come to the team's attention at any time during their school career through various channels. All members of the community are encouraged to voice any concerns about academic (and other) difficulties to the learning support department.

There are currently three qualified specialist assessors in the learning support department who can assess for a need that may require reasonable adjustments in class, in assessments and exams, in house and around school. The school operates a graduated approach to referral and identification (see Appendix 1) and if, following the referral process, it is thought that further assessment for need is required, then further discussion will be had with parents/guardians and the student. It should be noted that the LS department does not formally diagnose or identify specific needs such as dyslexia, ADHD or autism – assessments for formal identification would need to be conducted by qualified clinical or educational psychologists or medical experts, in consultation with the school, LS department and parents. Support for students is not reliant on a labelled SEND. There is no charge for in-school assessments; however, if there is a cost for any assessment or support by an external agency, this will be borne by parents/guardians

1.6 Referrals process

- a) The graduated approach to referral should be followed (see Appendix 1)

- b) Following the graduated approach, referrals from teachers, tutors and houseparents should be made via the referral form which can be accessed via the school's main website
- c) Referrals should be made by teachers or houseparents but can have input from students, admissions, staff members, parents or external agencies as needed.
- d) The learning support team will assess student priority, taking into account assessment and documentation from staff, parents, and the school's information management system, during the weekly learning support referral meeting.
- e) The graduated approach to referral and the 'assess, plan, do, review' process is expected to be followed in school.
- f) In order of priority, students will receive an initial assessment conversation with a learning support teacher followed by standardised assessments as required to identify strengths, challenges and strategies.
- g) Following referral and assessment, students will be supported appropriately through adjustments in the mainstream classroom and boarding house, access arrangements in examinations and/or with learning support lessons.

1.7 Graduated approach and levels of need

SEND support at Almond College should follow on from a four-part cycle, known as the graduated approach, through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised, leading to a growing understanding of the student's needs and of what supports the student in making good progress and securing good outcomes. The four stages of the cycle are Assess, Plan, Do, Review.

Individualised assessment leads to a growing understanding of student's strengths, and the barriers to and gaps in their learning. Continual reflection on approaches to meeting the student's needs leads to a growing understanding of strategies that enable the student to make good progress and achieve good outcomes. In this cycle of support, the graduated approach draws on more personalised approaches, more frequent review and more specialist expertise in successive cycles to tailor interventions to meet the needs of the young people in our care.

Classification of stages of SEND and the levels of support expected

Level 1 – this is where the subject teacher has full responsibility in responding to a student's learning need.

Teachers should adapt their lessons by using a student's learner passport (if applicable) or other formal record of the student's needs to help plan for progress. At this level students can also be monitored for need in the school's graduated approach and 'assess, plan, do, review' process. There should be effective inclusion of all students in high quality lessons. High expectations should be set for everyone, and the progress of all students is monitored carefully. If students do not make satisfactory progress or concerns have been raised by members of the teaching/medical staff, by parents or the students themselves, subject teachers will be required to follow the 'assess, plan, do, review' process and adapt teaching to the needs of the student – the learning support department can be involved in discussion of strategies for learning and adaptive teaching. The learning support team may also undertake learning walks and informal observations to help with providing strategies for learning. Students at Level 1 may, but will not always, have an access arrangement, belong to a focus group such as SEAL or have a student learner passport. Examples of sources of information: teacher plans; ongoing assessment; learner profiles; parent meetings; student goals; assess, plan, do, review documentation.

Level 2 – where Level 1 adaptations are not working or the learning need is more acute.

Level 2 students require more support than that solely given by the classroom teacher. This support could take the form of learning support lessons for individual intervention or in small groups. This will be provision that goes beyond the 'normal' classroom. Subject teachers will however retain responsibility and accountability for these students in their subject lessons. The 'assess, plan, do, review' process will be ongoing. Additional testing, external assessment and possible therapy may be advised for these students to ascertain possible learning needs and further intervention that may be required. Level 2 students may be eligible for access arrangements in examinations, if evidence supports this and it is their normal way of working. These students may be classed as 'SEND support' and may have a formal SEND identification but not at statement or Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) level. Examples of sources of information: standardised assessments; educational psychologist report diagnosing a specific need such as dyslexia; learner profiles; teacher plans; withdrawal groups.

Level 3 – Specific targeted support for individual students whose needs are not met by Levels 1 or 2 interventions.

These students will have a formally identified SEND or medical need. This would involve external assessments from educational psychologists, associated therapists, sensory services, medical practitioners and/or consultants. A high level of support will be needed, and the student will likely have an EHCP if they were in Local Authority or maintained education. Withdrawal from lessons for extra support will usually be necessary. The curriculum could not be accessed without adaptations or modifications. Examples of sources of information: Educational Psychologist report; EHCP; assess, plan, do, review documentation; specialist assessments; screening reports for difficulties from external agencies such as psychologists, audiologists and so on.

It should be noted that, while the School will take into account and endeavour to provide for needs indicated on an EHCP document, the funding for any support that may be stipulated on an EHCP that the school may not be able to provide reasonably, should be borne by parents/guardians when a local authority will not continue with the funding, due to the choice of the parents and student to pursue an independent education.

1.8 Measurement of progress

Students on the learning support register will be reviewed by the department regularly, depending on the level of need. The learning support team will have access to the Almond College academic tracking system which incorporates the following:

- attainment and effort grading available every half term, which can be tracked and meaningfully aligned to progress.
- written commentary on reports from every set teacher (based on 'snapshot' or full 'end-of-term' comments) every half term;
- annual formal examinations for all year groups
- baseline testing information for all students
- screening assessments following MidYis to check on reading and writing skills for students who may need support or monitoring;
- any internal tracking systems set up variously by academic department heads who oversee more localised information and who communicate concerns and analysis of data to the LS department.

The allocated learning support teacher will oversee the use of this information for students on the learning support register and will liaise with relevant staff as appropriate.

1.9 Access arrangements for examinations

The Learning Support Department and SENDCO are responsible for assessing for access arrangements for public exams. Management of these arrangements at examination time is overseen by the school's Exams Officer in close consultation with the SENDCO and Assistant Head, Academic. All evidence of the need for access arrangements is kept in the Learning Support Department. Most students will be identified through screening and ongoing teacher assessment; however, should there be any concern or query about a student. This is so that investigation can be undertaken, evidence of normal ways of working can be gathered, assessments can be completed, application for arrangements to exam boards can be made and students have the opportunity to practise any arrangements granted.

What are exam access arrangements?

Access arrangements are adjustments in class and exams for candidates based on evidence of need and normal ways of working. Access arrangements fall into two distinct categories: some arrangements are delegated to centres; others require prior JCQ, CAIE or Pearson awarding body approval.

Access arrangements allow candidates/learners with learning needs, special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment on a par with their peers, without changing the demands of the assessment, for example, extra time, readers, scribes and Braille question papers. In this way awarding bodies will comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

Access arrangements, both assessment and implementation, always follow the rules of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Regulations document: 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties'.

Reasonable adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires an awarding body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment. A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on several factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner and whether or not the integrity and purpose of the assessment remains intact.

Duty to make a reasonable adjustment

The duty for an awarding body to make a reasonable adjustment will apply where assessment arrangements would put a disabled candidate at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a candidate who is not disabled. In such circumstances, the awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.

In line with JCQ regulations, Christ's Hospital will make all decisions about access arrangements based upon whether the candidate has a substantial and long-term impairment which has an adverse effect on their ability to complete exams and assessments without reasonable adjustments. The arrangement must be the candidate's normal way of working at Christ's Hospital, in lessons, assessments and exams, and teaching staff will be involved in providing evidence of this need.

Identifying the need for access arrangements within Almond College

Students who may qualify for formal access arrangements in external examinations during Key Stage 4 are usually identified in Key Stage 3 or before. At KS3, needs are identified and assessed by one of the LS specialist teachers and adjustments and adaptations to teaching in lessons are then made to enable a student to access their learning and make progress. Students who are assessed at KS3 will need to be reassessed in KS4, usually in the first year of their GCSE course, to ensure adjustments made at KS3 are still required at KS4. All teaching staff are involved in monitoring the adjustments. Establishment of a normal way of

working can be made during KS3 and before exams and is an expectation of exam boards before granting adjustments in exams. However, it is recognised that some students' needs for adjustments are identified later in school life because of curriculum demands being higher and previous possible coping mechanisms no longer working. As with all arrangements, evidence of need is gathered, and robust assessment takes place to ensure no student is at an advantage or disadvantage to their peers. The school SENDCO decides, with support from the LS team and exams officer, on what accommodations should be awarded to students – a formal diagnosis by an external assessor does not automatically mean that a student will have access arrangements.

Assessment

For those students potentially requiring access arrangements, formal assessment and application to JCQ is carried out no earlier than Year 9 as standard. Assessments may also be carried out at other points, where necessary.

Any student with scores which indicate a substantial impairment will be considered for access arrangements. The most recent tests are binding and determine any subsequent arrangements.

Specialist assessments for access arrangements will be carried out by an appropriately qualified assessor. There are three specialist assessors in school on the LS team, and this is the JCQ, preferred route of assessment for access arrangements.

Parents may request an independent assessment. However, Almond College may elect to accept or reject a privately commissioned report. If rejected, the SENDCO or a member of the

Senior Leadership Team will provide a brief written rationale to support this decision which must be available for inspection purposes. Where privately commissioned assessments and reports are undertaken and used as evidence for exam arrangements, the relevant documentation, such as a Form 8, must be completed by the private assessor. No privately commissioned assessment should take place without consultation with the school in the first instance – this will allow the school to agree that there is a potential underlying learning need, to be able to provide evidence of need if required, and also for the purposes of completing access arrangements applications and documentation, such as the Form 8 requirement that Section 1 is completed by the SENDCO prior to assessment.

Examination officers, specialist assessors, the SENDCO and teaching staff all work together to ensure that appropriate access arrangements are put in place in lessons and for all tests and examinations. If a student chooses not to use the agreed access arrangements, either because their needs change or they do not feel it aids their learning or achievement, then access arrangements can be removed. If the SENDCO and/or specialist assessor considers that access arrangements stop being the student's 'normal way of working', they reserve the right to withdraw the access arrangement, providing written confirmation to parents/guardians if needed.

A list of students that receive access arrangements is made available to all teaching staff on the school's learning support register and the school information management system).

1.10 The management of special educational needs at Almond College

The overall management of special educational needs is the responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team and the Head of Learning Support.

The Head of Learning Support is responsible for:

- a) the day-to-day operation of learning support, in line with the School's SEND policy;
- b) liaising and advising fellow teachers;
- c) co-ordinating provision for students with special educational needs and/or learning support needs;
- d) maintaining the school's learning support register and information on ACES and overseeing the records of all students with special educational needs and/or learning support needs; and
- e) Liaising with parents/guardians of students with special educational needs and/or learning support need.

2 Learning support

Information on how to contact the learning support team is available in every boarding house and on learning support notice boards. Any student in the school is welcome to drop into the learning support department or contact any member of the team to request some additional skills coaching, emotional support or academic support. Students may refer themselves, or the referral may be from a member of staff or parent or guardian. For further assessment to investigate possible access arrangements or adjustments, the referral process must be followed and there must be a referral from a teacher. Support will be allocated in order of priority and there may be a short waiting time before a student can be seen.

2.1 Aims

- 1. To teach and support any student that has been referred for learning support.
- 2. To assess and identify educational needs effectively to enable students to make progress for them.

3. To inform and support departments in meeting individual need through sharing baseline information, plans, targets and strategies if appropriate.
4. To work collaboratively with teaching staff, Heads of Department and houseparents to ensure that barriers to learning are removed and students are enabled to achieve.

2.2 Approach

The type of support provided is an extension of everyday teaching at Almond Colllge. The sessions may be ad hoc, may last one session or may be ongoing. They are bespoke to the student or students involved. Due to the nature of this type of support, the process is less formalised and does not adhere to any particular programme of learning, although these can be followed if the need of the student indicates this. Parents will not be contacted as a matter of course unless there are ongoing support needs or if there is any further need of assessment by a specialist assessor. The learning support department will also run drop-in sessions where any student in the school can come to the department for help or advice.

Sometimes during 1:1 teaching, SEND can be more apparent. If this is the case, further assessment may be required, and the graduated approach will be followed as outlined in Section 1.

3 Training and professional development

At the start of every academic year, the SENDCO provides an overview to new staff of learning support at Almond.College Further training, workshops, information and strategies are also provided and shared throughout the academic year.

The school commits to ensuring the ongoing professional development of teachers in relation to meeting the needs of students. This professional development and training may be run by members of the learning support team and/or external experts in specific areas. The school will enable the learning support team to keep up to date with their own professional development and knowledge of SEND to ensure the right support is available to teachers and learners.

Date of last review: September 2025

Date of next review: September 2027

Appendix 1 – The Graduated Approach for Referral to Learning Support

Appendix 1

The Graduated Approach for Referral to Learning Support (Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycle)

