



Inclusive Settings: Place Sufficiency Design Charter

Delivering the Right Place, at the Right Time for Every Child

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Foreword: Inclusive Design Charter

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Every child and young person in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole deserves to feel that they belong, to be supported to thrive, and to have access to the right help in the right place at the right time.

This Inclusive Design Charter supports the delivery of our Inclusive Place Sufficiency Strategy, which sets out a clear and ambitious approach to planning provision across our area, so that children, young people and families can access high-quality education and support as close to home as possible. It reflects our commitment to inclusion, early intervention and stronger local pathways from cradle to career.

This is an important charter for BCP. It recognises that place sufficiency is not only about numbers and buildings but about creating an education system that is inclusive by design, responsive to need, and sustainable for the future. It has been shaped by a strong understanding of local need and by our ambition to work in partnership with schools, settings, families and wider services to build capacity in our communities.

I welcome this charter and the direction it sets for the next decade as we work together to improve outcomes, strengthen belonging and ensure that children and young people can succeed within their local communities.

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1. Purpose of the Charter

BCP's Inclusive Place Sufficiency Strategy sets out a clear and ambitious approach ensuring that all children and young people have access to childcare and education within safe, inclusive, welcoming and well-organised sites which promote positive experiences, feelings of belonging and increase participation.

This Inclusive Design Charter sits alongside the Inclusive education capital programme to deliver this strategy and give practical effect to the Schools White Paper ambition that every child should access the right provision, in the right place, at the right time, close to home. These documents have been developed in collaboration with key partners including parents and carers, schools and practitioners.

This Charter sets out BCP's agreed expectations for the planning, design, expansion and adaptation of childcare, nurseries, schools and education settings, ensuring they collectively deliver:

- ✓ **Sufficiency** – enough places, of the right type, in the right locations
- ✓ **Inclusion** – environments where children, including those with SEND can belong, thrive and remain locally within their community
- ✓ **Quality** – high-quality places and environments for learning, wellbeing and community life
- ✓ **Sustainability** – buildings and grounds that are resilient, adaptable and future-ready

The Inclusive education capital programme and Inclusive Design Charter also seek to clarify the responsibilities of partners to work together to effectively utilise the resources available to them to deliver place sufficiency.

This includes:

- Schools and settings effectively and purposefully using of the capital resources, spaces and assets available to them to maintain and develop environments that are safe, inclusive, welcoming and well-organised

- BCP Council utilising the education capital resources strategically and effectively to address gaps in provision and strengthen local sufficiency.

2. Strategic Context and Alignment

2.1 This Charter aligns with:

- the **Schools White Paper *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*** (DfE, 2026)
- BCP Council's Inclusive Place Sufficiency **Strategy 2026-36**
- BCP Council's **SEND Strategy and Improvement Plan**
- Local Plan, climate commitments and capital investment programmes
- Section 3 of the Equality Act, which requires schools to produce an accessibility plan to improve the physical environment of the school
- National guidance on the design and performance standards for schools, including those for SEND and Alternative provision

Together, these documents establish that **place sufficiency is not solely a numerical exercise**, but a test of **appropriateness, inclusion, accessibility and sustainability**.

2.2 Governance

The Council's Three-tiered Education Capital Strategy will ensure that all capital proposals demonstrate how this charter has been used to develop and approve projects, including how assistive technology has been considered and integrated in line with this Charter.

Business cases should clearly distinguish between:

- capital-funded infrastructure and assets
- school-funded provision
- high needs or specialist service provision

Proposals that rely on revenue-funded technology to compensate for poor design will not be supported.

2.3 Assistive Technology and Inclusive Digital Design

Assistive technology (AT) forms part of BCP Council's approach to inclusive design. It includes built-in accessibility features, digital infrastructure, and specialist equipment that enable children and young people to access education, communicate, and participate fully in their setting.

The effective use of AT is a shared system responsibility, delivered through a combination of:

- inclusive design in capital investment
- quality first teaching and school-led practice
- specialist assessment and support from wider services

3. Status of the Charter

This Charter applies to:

- All childcare settings, schools and colleges
- new schools (mainstream, special and alternative provision)
- expansions, remodels and adaptations of existing schools, childcare or educational settings
- SEND resourced provisions, units and specialist facilities
- capital investment decisions relating to childcare and education provision

The Charter is to be used by:

- school trusts and governing bodies
- council officers (education, SEND, estates, planning, regeneration)
- developers, architects and design teams

4. Charter Principles

Principle 1: Right Place, Right Provision

BCP Council will support the development and delivery of childcare and early years provision and plan schools and SEND provision **where evidence shows need**, considering:

- population and housing growth
- SEND trends and complexity
- cross-border movement of pupils
- access to early years, health and community services

Implications

- New provision must clearly demonstrate why *this place* improves access and inclusion.
- Long travel distances, delayed placements, or reliance on out-of-area provision indicate **insufficient local planning**, even where total place numbers appear adequate.
- Childcare and education settings should be located to maximise walking, cycling and public transport access and minimise car dependency.

Principle 2: Sufficiency as a shared system responsibility

Sufficiency is a **whole-system responsibility**. BCP Council will:

- lead strategic place planning and commissioning
- work with trusts and schools to align capacity with need
- expect all childcare, schools and educational settings to contribute to inclusion and local sufficiency

Implications

- No part of the system should displace unmet need elsewhere.
- New and existing schools are expected to engage in **fair access, inclusion and local collaboration**.
- Design, capacity and admissions policies must reinforce inclusive practice.

Principle 3: Inclusion by Design

New childcare, schools and SEND settings must be designed to **support diverse needs from the outset**, not through retrofit.

Design must:

- support sensory regulation, calm and predictability
- be easy to navigate and legible for all users
- minimise overcrowding, noise and glare
- provide appropriate space for therapy, small-group and quiet work
- incorporate **assistive technology and digital accessibility as standard**, including infrastructure to support current and future needs

Implications

- Poor environmental design increases placement breakdown, exclusion and escalation to specialist provision.
- Inclusive design is therefore a **core sufficiency and SEND improvement tool**, not an aesthetic consideration.
- Inclusive design includes both **physical and digital environments**. Failure to embed assistive technology at design stage leads to **ineffective retrofitting, increased revenue costs and reduced accessibility**.

Principle 4: Strong Mainstream Capacity

Settings and schools are expected to use the resources available to them to strengthen their whole sites with inclusion and sustainability as key priorities. Leaders in schools will be supported through the B

This includes:

- Using guidance provided through the graduated response website
- Using the checklist in appendix a / undertaking OT audits to assess their sites
- Utilising their maintenance and capital budgets creatively to respond to recommendations arising from audits.

BCP Council will prioritise design approaches that **strengthen mainstream inclusion**, reducing unnecessary escalation to specialist settings.

This includes:

- resourced provisions and specialist bases
- adaptable teaching and breakout spaces
- layouts that support collaborative and flexible learning

Implications

- Mainstream schools should be physically capable of supporting a wider range of needs.
- Capital investment from settings, schools and the Council should increase mainstream resilience and retention, not bypass it.

Principle 5: Specialist and AP Provision that is Local and Integrated

Where specialist or alternative provision is required, it must:

- be located as close to children's communities as possible
- integrate with local services and transitions
- avoid isolating pupils from mainstream opportunities

Implications

- High reliance on independent or distant provision signals a **failure of local sufficiency**.
- Specialist buildings should support outreach, shared use and reintegration wherever possible.

Principle 6: Settings as Community Infrastructure

Childcare and Educational settings are central to BCP's communities.

Design should:

- enable out-of-hours and community use
- support early help, family and therapeutic services
- provide welcoming, noninstitutional civic presence

Implications

- Colocation and shared facilities support early intervention and prevention.
- Settings should strengthen, not fragment, local service ecosystems.

Principle 7: Long Life, Loose Fit (Future-Ready Design)

Education needs changes over time. Buildings must be able to adapt.

Design should:

- allow future expansion or reconfiguration
- support changes in need profiles or designation
- minimise the need for disruptive or costly re-builds

Implications

- Flexibility is a sufficiency risk-mitigation tool.
- Investment decisions must consider long-term system value, not short-term fixes.

Principle 8: Wellbeing, Safety and Belonging

Childcare and Educational settings must feel:

- safe
- welcoming to children, families and staff
- supportive of wellbeing, mental health and dignity

Design must ensure:

- clear sightlines and passive supervision
- safe, inclusive entrances
- separation of areas without creating stigma

Principle 9: Digitally Enabled Inclusion

Settings must be designed and equipped to enable **universal, targeted and specialist use of assistive technology**.

Design should:

- Provide **connectivity, power and infrastructure** to enable assistive technology at scale
- Integrate **fixed accessibility systems** (e.g. soundfield systems, induction loops)
- Enable flexible use of **devices and specialist equipment**
- Support **accessible curriculum delivery** through digital means

Implications:

- Assistive technology is a **core inclusion tool**, not an optional add-on
- Capital investment must ensure settings are **AT-ready from day one**

Principle 10: Environmental Responsibility

BCP Council expects education buildings to:

- support climate resilience and reduction of carbon emissions
- maximise daylight, ventilation and air quality
- use outdoor space to support wellbeing and learning

Implications

- Children with SEND are disproportionately affected by poor environments.
- Environmental quality is therefore a **SEND and inclusion issue**, not only a sustainability one.

Principle 11: Evidence, Accountability and Continuous Review

The Charter supports:

- transparent decision-making
- alignment between need, capital investment and outcomes

- regular review alongside sufficiency and SEND strategies

BCP Council will monitor:

1. placement distance and delays
2. inclusion and exclusion trends
3. use of independent provision
4. parental confidence and appeals

5. Using the Charter in Practice

Through this Charter, BCP Council commits to delivering childcare and education places that are not only sufficient in number, but appropriate, inclusive and sustainable, ensuring that every child can achieve and thrive in their local community.

5.1 This Charter should be used to:

- assess proposals for new or expanded provision
- inform capital bid prioritisation
- guide redesign and adaptation of existing childcare, schools or educational settings
- provide assurance in SEND and sufficiency governance

Appendix A provides a checklist to support this use.

5.2 Responsibilities for Assistive Technology

Education Capital (Local Authority Responsibility)

Responsible for infrastructure, built-in systems and long-life assets:

- Accessibility infrastructure:
 - Soundfield systems, induction loops
 - Fixed AV with accessibility functionality
- Digital infrastructure:
 - Wi-Fi, broadband capacity, server requirements
 - Power, charging and device-ready environments
- Specialist installations:
 - Sensory rooms with integrated technology
 - Fixed AAC or eye-gaze setups where part of provision design
- Inclusion embedded in:
 - New builds
 - Expansions
 - SEND resourced provision
- Ensuring all capital schemes meet minimum accessibility specifications

Test: Is it part of the building / long-term environment / sufficiency solution

Schools and Settings (Delegated responsibility)

Responsible for **day-to-day use, teaching application and low-level technology:**

- Deployment of:

- Classroom devices (laptops, tablets)
- Accessibility features already available in systems
- Use of:
 - Text-to-speech, speech-to-text, dyslexia tools
 - Classroom-based apps and software
- Implementation through:
 - Quality First Teaching
 - SEN Support (graduated response)
- Maintenance and replacement of low-value equipment
- Staff training and embedding practice

Test: Is it part of teaching, learning, or day-to-day provision?

High Needs / SEND and Specialist Services

Responsible for **assessment, prescription and high-cost individual solutions:**

- Specialist assessments for AT need
- Provision of:
 - Individual AAC devices
 - Eye-gaze technology
 - Specialist access systems
- Advice on:
 - Appropriate technology use
 - Integration into EHCP provision
- Oversight of:
 - High-cost equipment
 - Loan / reuse models

Test: Is it specialist, individualised, or linked to EHCP-level need?

Other Services (Health, Social Care, Therapy)

Responsible where AT supports **health, care or communication needs beyond education:**

- Speech and language therapy input (AAC recommendations)
- Occupational therapy (physical access tech)
- Health-funded equipment where clinically required
- Integration with education where appropriate

Test: Is the primary purpose health, care, or functional independence?

Appendix A

Inclusive Settings: Place Sufficiency Design Checklist

Delivering the Right Place, at the Right Time for Every Child

- **Right Setting, Right Place**

- Is there clear evidence that **new or expanded provision is required**, based on:
 - population and housing growth?
 - SEND demand and complexity?
 - cross-border pupil movement?
- Does the proposal **improve local access** and reduce travel distances for children and families?
- Is the childcare or educational setting located to serve the **community it is intended to meet**, including SEND pupils?
- Are entrances conveniently located for children, families, staff and visitors?
- Can the setting be safely and easily accessed:
 - on foot?
 - by bike?
 - by public transport?
- Does the design actively **discourage reliance on private car use**?
- Are routes to the setting safe, legible and inclusive for all users?
- Can pavements, entrances and routes accommodate peak-time demand **without congestion or risk**?

- **A setting to be proud of**

- Does the setting provide a **positive first impression** for children, families and the wider community?
- Does the design respond sensitively to the **local context and character**?
- Is the building **clearly recognisable as a childcare or educational setting** with a strong civic presence?
- Does the design reflect the setting's **values, ethos and inclusive ambition**?
- Are all parts of the setting —mainstream, SEND, specialist or alternative provision— designed to **an equivalent standard of quality and dignity**?

- **Site Plan**

- Does the design make best use of site characteristics such as:
 - topography?
 - orientation?
 - views and daylight?
- Has the historic environment been fully considered?
- Have heritage assets been identified, conserved and, where possible, enhanced?
- Are air-quality issues identified and appropriately mitigated, particularly for outdoor play and SEND provision?
- Is the overall layout coherent, legible and calm?
- Is the site clearly zoned to support:
 - teaching and learning?
 - SEND support and therapy?
 - safeguarding?
 - out-of-hours community use?
- Have management, servicing and maintenance been considered from the outset?
- Are service areas discreet, functional and non-detrimental to learning environments?

- **Setting Grounds**

- Do outdoor spaces relate clearly and purposefully to the buildings?
- Are outdoor areas safe, inclusive and accessible for children with a range of needs?
- Are spaces provided for:
 - PE and sport?
 - informal play?
 - calm, reflective or sensory activities?
- Do outdoor environments support learning, social interaction and wellbeing?
- Has biodiversity, planting and connection to nature been actively considered?
- Can grounds support shared or community use where appropriate?

5. Organisation

- Does the layout support the setting's **educational, pastoral and SEND agenda**?
- Does the design maximise natural daylight and ventilation?
- Is the setting easy to navigate for:

- children?
 - families?
 - visitors?
 - those with additional needs?
- Are entrances clearly defined and welcoming?
- Do circulation routes:
 - minimise travel time?
 - avoid bottlenecks?
 - support calm movement?
- Are routes generous, inclusive and accessible to all?

6. Buildings

- Do new buildings work well with each other and with existing structures?
- Do they respect and respond to the historic or contextual significance of the site?
- Are buildings of **high architectural quality**, with good detailing and longevity?
- Do materials contribute positively to character and sense of place?
- Are materials robust, durable and easy to maintain over time?

7. Interiors

- Are internal spaces well-proportioned, uplifting and filled with natural light?
- Do windows and doors optimise views and connection to the outdoors?
- Have acoustics been carefully considered, especially for SEND and sensory needs?
- Are spaces well-ventilated and thermally comfortable?
- Does the design reduce glare, overheating and distraction in teaching areas?
- Will the building function effectively when **fully occupied and in daily use**?
- Are there appropriate spaces for:
 - a. small-group work?
 - b. therapy and intervention?
 - c. regulation and calm?

8. Assistive Technology and Digital Inclusion

- Does the setting have sufficient Wi-Fi, bandwidth and power to support assistive technology?
- Are classrooms equipped to support audio enhancement and digital accessibility tools?
- Are soundfield systems or equivalent included where appropriate?
- Are induction loops or hearing support systems provided?

- Is assistive technology integrated into specialist and SEND spaces?
- Can spaces accommodate emerging technologies?
- Is there provision for mounting, storage and safe use of specialist equipment?
- Is there clarity on who provides, maintains and replaces assistive technology?
- Does the design avoid reliance on retrofitted or temporary solutions?

9. Feeling Safe

- Has appropriate crime-prevention advice been sought and incorporated?
- Does the design create safe, secure and supportive environments for pupils and staff?
- Are entrances well-lit, visible and overlooked?
- Can access and movement through the building be sensibly controlled?
- Is the reception area secure without feeling institutional?
- Do site boundaries provide security while remaining welcoming and non-intimidating?
- Are public and private areas clearly defined in a way that protects privacy without singling out or stigmatising users?
- Does the design support passive supervision and avoid hidden or dead-end spaces?

10. Long Life, Loose Fit

- Does the design provide a **variety of spaces** that support different activities and needs?
- Can the building and site adapt to:
 - changing pupil numbers?
 - changing SEND profiles?
 - future expansion or reconfiguration?
- Has flexibility been designed in to reduce future disruption and cost?

11. Environmental Resources

- Does the proposal support climate-change mitigation and resilience?
- Does the design promote energy and water efficiency and reduce carbon emissions?
- Has orientation been optimised for daylight and thermal comfort?
- Can daylight reach the depth of internal spaces?
- Has overshadowing of key outdoor areas been minimised?
- Are recycling, waste reduction and sustainable drainage provided?