



Voice of the child for Our SEN Students

At Linchfield our most vulnerable students, some of whom have profound and multiple learning disabilities, rely heavily on knowledgeable staff and adults to serve as advocates on their behalf. With only limited cognitive abilities, these students cannot independently identify or communicate their needs or determine when to seek assistance. Communication is often non-verbal, complex, personal, unique, one-of-a-kind ways, and sometimes inconsistent or not feasible. Instead, expressions of need typically manifest as behaviours—such as happiness, unhappiness, discomfort, or pain. These behaviours often present as changes in mood, engagement, or physical responses—expressions that require careful observation, interpretation, and adherence to best-practice policies and procedures for recognising, recording, and reporting such presentations.

Furthermore, these students depend entirely on supporting adults for personal care tasks, including changing, personal hygiene, medical procedures (where appropriate), and feeding. These routines must be carried out with sensitivity, respect, and consistency. Adults must remain vigilant to any signs of distress or concern and take prompt action where necessary. Due to their complex needs, they are often exceptionally vulnerable, and their voices are conveyed through the supporting adults who intimately understand them and advocate on their behalf.

At Linchfield this is supported by ensuring that all staff are trained to recognise and respond to the individual and often unique ways pupils with additional needs communicate. This includes developing strong relationships with pupils to understand their unique behaviours and communication styles, and using tailored approaches such as visual supports, communication aids, and consistent routines. Staff follow clear safeguarding and recording procedures, carefully observing any changes in behaviour that may indicate a need or concern. Collaboration with parents, carers, and external professionals is essential to build a full understanding of each child's needs. By adopting a child-centred approach and acting as advocates for pupils who cannot express themselves easily, schools can ensure that all children feel safe, understood, and supported in their learning environment.