

## EMPOWER MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

# Inclusion Strategy 2026–2028

*with built-in School Inclusion Plans*

**INSPIRE • EMPOWER • ACHIEVE**

**AUTHENTICITY • COLLABORATION • OPPORTUNITY**

|                  |                                                                            |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Trust            | Empower Multi-Academy Trust                                                |
| Phase            | Primary (8 schools)                                                        |
| Strategy period  | Academic years 2026/27 to 2027/28 (multi-year strategy, reviewed annually) |
| Annual review    | Each September, with republication by 31 December each academic year       |
| Accountable lead | Strategic Lead for Inclusion                                               |
| Supported by     | Strategic Lead for SEND and Trust SENCO                                    |
| Status           | Ratified by the Trust Board                                                |

*This is a multi-year inclusion strategy. In line with DfE guidance and the conditions of grant for the Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF), it is reviewed annually and republished on each school's website by 31 December every academic year.*

### Our Commitment

Empower Trust is committed to ensuring that every child, regardless of their needs, has access to high-quality, ordinarily available provision within an inclusive mainstream setting. Inclusion is not a placement — it is a practice. This strategy sets out how we will meet the commonly occurring, predictable needs of our pupils, remove barriers to learning and participation across all eight of our primary schools, and invest our Inclusive Mainstream Fund allocation alongside our core budgets (including the notional SEN budget) to build schools that are inclusive by design.

## Strategy Overview

| Detail                                                    | Date                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Academic years that our current Inclusion Strategy covers | 2026/27 to 2027/28 (reviewed annually)                                                                     |
| Date this statement was published                         | December 2026 [insert exact date on publication]                                                           |
| Date on which it will be reviewed                         | September 2027 (annual review); full strategic refresh summer 2028                                         |
| Statement authorised by                                   | Empower Trust Board and Strategic Lead for Inclusion; adopted by each Headteacher and Local Governing Body |

## Statement of Intent

Empower Multi-Academy Trust believes that inclusion is not a placement — it is a practice. Guided by our values of Authenticity, Collaboration and Opportunity, our ultimate objective is that every child in our eight primary schools — including every child with SEND and every child facing disadvantage — Achieves, Belongs and Climbs (our ABC of Empower). Every child should feel that they are known, that they belong, and that the curriculum and environment have been designed with them in mind.

Our objectives for whole-school inclusion are that:

- high-quality, adaptive teaching is the first and most powerful form of inclusion in every classroom, every day, supported by our FAME adaptive teaching framework;
- leaders proactively plan for the predictable, commonly occurring needs of their cohort, rather than reactively responding to individual crises;
- relational practice is the backbone of our culture, so every child has a reason to belong and attends well;
- we build Advanced Skills Practitioners (ASPs) in every school so expertise is grown, shared and sustained;
- families and communities are genuine partners in their child's learning, and all stakeholders help shape our provision;
- equity means all pupils are supported to achieve — we reject deficit narratives and hold the highest expectations for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND;
- the Inclusive Mainstream Fund is used transparently and purposefully, alongside our core budgets, to sustain and develop provision.

This strategy works towards these objectives through three trust-wide key priorities: embedding a culture of high-quality adaptive learning; ensuring high-quality relational practice; and building advanced skills practitioners. Our chosen activities deliberately address all seven DfE principles of inclusion: ambitious leadership and governance; evidence-based early intervention (including our new HIVE early intervention hubs); high-quality adaptive teaching; enriching provision beyond the classroom through our SPARK Passport and Empowered Enrichment Promise; a safe and respectful culture fostering belonging, attendance and participation; strong partnerships with families and wider services; and inclusive, accessible environments.

This strategy has been developed collaboratively with headteachers, SENCOs, staff, governors and trustees, and shaped by consultation with families, pupils and our local communities, alongside our partners in the local authority, health and specialist services. It is written to be accessible to children, young people and parents, and each school's built-in Inclusion Plan (Part Two) shows how the strategy comes to life in their own community.

## Barriers to Learning and Participation

*This details the key barriers to learning and participation that we have identified amongst our pupils across the Trust, necessitating inclusive universal approaches and targeted support. Barriers were identified through classroom observation, internal assessment, SEN registers, attendance, behaviour and attainment data, engagement with families and pupils, discussions with external professionals, and local and national trend data.*

| Detail of barrier to learning (including notable trends or themes over time) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1                                                                            | Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN): delayed language, limited vocabulary and comprehension difficulties are the most prevalent presenting need, identified earliest in EYFS. Prevalence is growing and is compounded by language poverty linked to socioeconomic disadvantage. |
| 2                                                                            | Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs: emotional dysregulation, anxiety, attachment difficulties and low self-esteem, increasingly linked to adverse childhood experiences. Complexity is rising across the Trust, escalating in KS2 and around transitions.                     |
| 3                                                                            | Cognition and learning needs: working memory difficulties, dyslexia, dyscalculia and slow processing become more pronounced as curriculum and literacy demands increase, with gaps in foundational knowledge widening where not addressed early.                                            |
| 4                                                                            | Inconsistency in adaptive teaching: variability in scaffolding, pre-teaching of vocabulary, pace, and over-reliance on written output across classes and schools; low expectations or subconscious bias can misallocate disadvantaged pupils into incorrect achievement groups.             |
| 5                                                                            | Physical, sensory and environmental barriers: sensory processing differences, motor delays and classroom environments (noise, lighting, visual clutter, lack of safe regulation spaces) not yet fully adapted for need.                                                                     |
| 6                                                                            | Attendance and belonging: poor attendance disproportionately affects pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils; anxiety around perceived failure, difficulties in peer relationships and a lack of perceived curriculum relevance reduce participation.                                     |
| 7                                                                            | Under-developed early identification and transition planning: needs not always identified before difficulties become entrenched; transition points (entry to school, infant–junior, class-to-class, Y6–secondary) insufficiently planned for pupils with additional needs.                  |
| 8                                                                            | Family engagement and unmet wider needs: some families feel nervous of services, under-informed or under-involved in their child's support; unmet physiological needs (e.g. hunger) and complex home circumstances affect readiness to learn.                                               |

## Activity in This Academic Year (2026/27)

*The activities we will prioritise this academic year to alleviate the barriers to learning and participation identified above. 'Activity' is a reporting term to help understand where funding has been allocated to build an inclusive core offer; it does not indicate only targeted provision. Activities may address multiple barriers, particularly improvements to our universal offer. Costs account for spend from both the IMF and core budget allocations (including the notional SEN budget). All activity aligns with the seven principles of inclusion and is evidence-informed.*

| Description of activity (noting evidence and barrier numbers addressed)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Activity type |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| FAME adaptive teaching framework: whole-trust CPD, coaching and 'Trust 10-minute shifts' to embed high-quality adaptive teaching, scaffolding, retrieval practice and responsive feedback in every classroom. (Evidence: EEF Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools; EEF Guide to Implementation.) Barriers 3, 4. | Universal     |
| Relational and trauma-informed practice: all-staff training, relational behaviour policy, and PINS-informed environmental adaptations to                                                                                                                                                                                   | Universal     |

| Description of activity (noting evidence and barrier numbers addressed)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Activity type |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| reduce triggers and support regulation. (Evidence: EEF SEND guidance; Mentally Healthy Schools.) Barriers 2, 5, 6.                                                                                                                                                                                       |               |
| Language-rich curriculum: Word Aware vocabulary instruction, oracy across the four strands, pre-teaching of vocabulary and communication-friendly classroom audits in all eight schools. (Evidence: Speech and Language UK; EEF oral language interventions.) Barriers 1, 4, 5.                          | Universal     |
| HIVE early intervention hubs: launch of two hub sites (Greenacres – South; Market Drayton Junior – North) providing early, evidence-based targeted support and nurture provision without the need for formal assessment or diagnosis, in line with DfE inclusion bases guidance. Barriers 1, 2, 7.       | Targeted      |
| Expanding ELSA and nurture provision: ELSA-trained staff in all eight schools, with capacity prioritised at transition points and for pupils with ACE-related presentations. (Evidence: EEF social and emotional learning.) Barriers 2, 6, 7.                                                            | Targeted      |
| Structured literacy programmes: training and materials, including dyslexia-friendly approaches, precision teaching and time-limited catch-up interventions evaluated for impact. (Evidence: EEF Promising Programmes; structured literacy evidence base.) Barriers 3, 4.                                 | Targeted      |
| Early identification and transition: EYFS language screening within the first six weeks, Boxall profiling, SENCO-to-SENCO handover protocols and enhanced Y6 secondary transition programmes for pupils with SEND. Barriers 1, 2, 7.                                                                     | Targeted      |
| Belonging, attendance and enrichment: the ABC of Empower belonging and attendance strategy, removal of practical barriers (uniform and breakfast support), and the SPARK Passport ensuring all children access clubs, trips and cultural experiences. (Evidence: DfE attendance toolkit.) Barriers 6, 8. | Universal     |
| Family partnership and co-production: low-threat parent sessions, SENCO drop-ins, co-produced SEN Support Plans, and family engagement work with Early Help and wider services. (Evidence: EEF parental engagement.) Barriers 7, 8.                                                                      | Universal     |
| Leadership, SENCO capacity and quality assurance: Trust SENCO network and coordination time, SENCO strategic time and workload reduction, Advanced Skills Practitioner development, inclusion review visits and annual Inclusion Conference. (Evidence: EEF Guide to Implementation.) Barriers 4, 7.     | Universal     |

*In line with DfE guidance, we are focusing on implementing fewer approaches well, prioritising high-quality adaptive teaching within a strong universal offer, and layering targeted support where our universal offer alone cannot meet need. A proportion of the IMF is held at Trust level, with suitable financial governance, to fund shared CPD, Trust SENCO coordination and quality assurance — reflecting the DfE's encouragement of collaborative working across school groups. IMF spend is reviewed termly by the Trust SENCO and Strategic Leads, reported to the CEO and shared at Executive meetings; it does not fund statutory EHCP provision, which is separately resourced.*

## Intended Outcomes

*The clear, realistic outcomes we want our inclusive approaches to achieve by the end of this inclusion strategy, and how we will measure whether they have been achieved.*

| Intended outcome                                                                                                                           | Success criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| High-quality adaptive teaching is consistently embedded across all eight schools, so pupils with SEND access the full curriculum in class. | Trust monitoring and inclusion review visits show consistent FAME practice in all schools; the attainment and progress gap between pupils with SEND / disadvantaged pupils and their peers narrows year on year against national benchmarks. |
| Needs are identified early and met early, before difficulties become entrenched.                                                           | 100% of Reception pupils screened for language within the first six weeks; time between concern raised and support in place reduces; HIVE hubs demonstrate measurable impact for referred pupils and reduced escalation of need.             |
| Pupils with SEMH needs are better regulated, engaged and supported.                                                                        | Boxall profile and ELSA entry/exit data show measurable gains; suspensions and exclusions for pupils with SEND reduce; behaviour data disaggregated by SEND and disadvantage shows improvement.                                              |
| Attendance improves and gaps close for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils.                                                          | Attendance for SEND and disadvantaged cohorts improves against prior year and national comparators; persistent absence in these groups reduces.                                                                                              |
| Every child feels they belong and participates fully in school life.                                                                       | Pupil, parent and staff voice surveys show improved belonging measures; SPARK Passport data shows equitable access to clubs, trips and enrichment for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils.                                             |
| Families are genuine, confident partners in their child's support.                                                                         | Termly SEN Support Plan reviews consistently attended by families; parental voice surveys show increased confidence; co-production evident in plans and annual reviews.                                                                      |
| Inclusion expertise is built and sustained across the Trust.                                                                               | Advanced Skills Practitioners in place and deployed across schools; all SENCOs hold or are working towards NPQ SENCO; SENCO strategic time protected and workload measurably reduced.                                                        |

## Review of the Previous Academic Year

This is the first published Inclusion Strategy under the Inclusive Mainstream Fund conditions of grant, so there is no previous IMF-funded strategy to review. This section will be completed from the 2027/28 publication onwards, drawing on national assessment and qualification data, our internal summative and formative assessments, and school data on access to learning, attendance, engagement, belonging and early identification, disaggregated by SEND and disadvantage.

To establish our starting point, we have baselined 2025/26 data across the Trust — SEN registers, attendance, suspensions, attainment and progress, pupil and parent voice — and this analysis directly informed the barriers and priorities in this strategy. Notable existing strengths we are building on include our trauma-informed and relational practice foundations, established ELSA provision, the Word Aware approach, and our Outstanding early years practice. Areas the baseline told us to prioritise include consistency of adaptive teaching between classes and schools, earlier identification of SLCN, and attendance for pupils with SEND — all reflected in this year's activity.

## Further Information

### Statutory and regulatory context

This strategy has been developed in line with: the Children and Families Act 2014; the SEND Code of Practice 2015; the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty); the Schools White Paper 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving' (2026) and the SEND reform consultation 'Putting children and young people first'; DfE guidance 'Developing an inclusion strategy using the inclusive mainstream fund' (June 2026) and the IMF conditions of grant; DfE guidance on inclusion bases in mainstream schools; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and Working Together 2026; DfE attendance and behaviour guidance; DfE guidance on restrictive interventions including use of reasonable force; and the Ofsted inspection framework. The IMF requires us to demonstrate that schools maintain 'ordinarily available provision' — the full range of support any mainstream primary should be able to offer without specialist or high-needs funding.

### Governance, leadership and accountability

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Trust Board</b>                  | Receives annual inclusion report; scrutinises IMF spend; approves and ratifies this strategy; assures publication by 31 December annually                                                    |
| <b>Strategic Lead for Inclusion</b> | Accountable lead trust-wide; executive oversight of inclusion across all eight schools; champions inclusive culture; reports to the Trust Board                                              |
| <b>Strategic Lead for SEND</b>      | Leads SEND policy, systems development and quality assurance; oversees statutory compliance including EHCPs                                                                                  |
| <b>Trust SENCO</b>                  | Operational coordination; facilitates Trust SENCO network; coordinates CPD; conducts inclusion review visits; supports school SENCOs with complex cases                                      |
| <b>Headteachers</b>                 | Accountable for inclusion in their school; ensure the school Inclusion Plan is live, staffed and reviewed; high-frequency monitoring of individual pupil progress; SENCO succession planning |
| <b>School SENCOs</b>                | Operational SEND lead; maintain SEN register; coordinate support; liaise with families and agencies; yearly action plan; implement legislative change arising from SEND reform               |
| <b>Class teachers</b>               | First and primary point of responsibility for meeting all pupils' needs through high-quality adaptive teaching                                                                               |
| <b>Teaching assistants</b>          | Deliver targeted support under direction of teachers and SENCOs; key relationship holders for many pupils with SEND                                                                          |

### Commonly occurring, predictable needs across the Trust

Analysis of SEN registers, pupil progress data and referral patterns identifies four primary areas of need occurring consistently and predictably across our schools. Schools plan and resource for these as part of their core, ordinarily available provision:

| Area of need                         | Common presentations                                                                                                 | Trust-wide provision                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SEMH                                 | Emotional dysregulation; anxiety; attachment difficulties; low self-esteem; attendance concerns                      | Relational and trauma-informed practice; nurture provision; ELSA-trained staff; relational behaviour policy; PINS-informed environmental adaptation |
| SLCN                                 | Delayed language; comprehension difficulties; limited vocabulary; social communication differences; selective mutism | Language-rich classrooms; widgets; Word Aware; SALT programmes; communication-friendly environments                                                 |
| Cognition & learning (inc. dyslexia) | Working memory difficulties; reading/writing challenges; slow processing; dyscalculia                                | Quality-first teaching with scaffolding; structured literacy; pre-teaching; adaptive curriculum materials                                           |
| Physical & sensory                   | Sensory processing differences; fine/gross motor delays; physical disability; visual or hearing impairment           | Sensory diet programmes; adapted resources; OT/physio liaison; accessible environments; individual risk assessments                                 |

## Our tiered offer: how provision is organised

**Universal provision (all pupils):** high-quality adaptive teaching in every lesson through the FAME framework; retrieval practice; a consistent, evidence-informed relational behaviour policy; a structured, language-rich curriculum with explicit vocabulary and oracy teaching; a 'keep up not catch up' approach to foundational knowledge; clear routines, visual timetables and visual materials; high-quality feedback and responsive teaching; proactive attendance strategies that remove practical barriers and build belonging; and accessible, enriching provision beyond the classroom for every child through the SPARK Passport.

**Targeted provision (identified additional needs):** SEN Support Plans on Insight with SMART outcomes reviewed termly with families; time-limited small-group or 1:1 interventions evaluated for impact; early, evidence-based support (SLCN and SEMH groups) at the right time — including through our HIVE hubs — without the need for formal assessment or diagnosis; forensic use of data (e.g. Boxall profiles) to meet pupils at the point of need; designated SEMH support via ELSA/nurture; adapted materials, scaffolds and assistive technology; transition support at all key points; and persistent, low-threat parental engagement.

**Specialist and enhanced provision (complex needs):** EHCP annual reviews managed within statutory timescales; multi-agency support for unmet needs; external referrals and joint working (SALT, MHST, EP, CAMHS, OT, SEND Advisory, Outshine, EAS); in-school or HIVE hub-based nurture provision where need warrants it; and bespoke risk assessments and individual support planning. Statutory EHCP provision is separately resourced and not funded from the IMF.

## Staff development and capacity building

|                    |                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| All teaching staff | Annual SEND awareness and adaptive teaching training; Word Aware; FAME framework training and Trust 10-minute shifts                                 |
| All TAs            | Annual targeted intervention training; need-specific training relevant to caseload; ELSA for designated staff                                        |
| School SENCOs      | NPQ SENCO (or equivalent); Trust SENCO network; external specialist CPD; supported by Trust SENCO                                                    |
| Trust SENCO        | Professional development led by Strategic Lead for SEND; sector networks; specialist agency partnerships; national CPD and conferences               |
| Senior leaders     | Inclusion leadership development; SEND governance training; inclusion data review with Strategic Lead for Inclusion; Leveraging Leadership programme |
| Whole Trust        | Annual Inclusion Conference; Advanced Skills Practitioner development; cross-school sharing of best practice; EYFS-focused CPD                       |

## HIVE: our early intervention hub model

From September 2026, our HIVE hubs at two sites — Greenacres (serving the south of the Trust) and Market Drayton Junior (serving the north) — provide early, evidence-based targeted intervention for pupils whose needs cannot yet be met through the universal offer alone. HIVE embodies the DfE's vision for inclusion bases within mainstream schools: children remain rooted in mainstream classrooms while accessing time-limited, closely evaluated support for regulation, language and learning, with reintegration planned from the outset. HIVE also builds staff expertise that flows back into universal provision across all eight schools.

## Partnership in SEND reform

Empower Trust is committed to being a key partner with Shropshire Council, health and social care in local SEND reform. We contribute to local area partnership arrangements, share our inclusion data and practice openly, and are positioning our HIVE hubs and Inclusive Mainstream Framework as system resources ahead of the DfE's proposed local group and funding-pooling arrangements. As the national inclusion standards are published, we will use them to inform future iterations of this strategy.

## Monitoring, evaluation and review

The Strategic Lead for Inclusion, supported by the Strategic Lead for SEND and Trust SENCO, monitors this strategy through: termly pupil progress meetings explicitly tracking SEND pupils' outcomes; a trust-wide SEND data dashboard reviewed termly; annual inclusion review visits to each school; annual pupil, parent and staff voice surveys; scrutiny of exclusion, suspension, attendance and behaviour data disaggregated by SEND and disadvantage; each school's annual SEN Information Report; and an annual report to the Trust Board including IMF expenditure and outcomes. Evaluation is treated as an ongoing process: implementation follows the EEF's guide to implementation, staff wellbeing and workload are actively considered, and approaches that do not demonstrate impact are refined or stopped. This strategy is reviewed annually each September, republished by 31 December, with a full strategic refresh at the end of the cycle in 2028.