



SEND Newsletter Summer 1 2026

Alongside being Head of School and Acorn Class teacher, I am SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator) for Heptonstall Junior and Infant School.

If you have any concerns regarding your child's educational needs please speak to their class teacher in the first instance or make an appointment at the school office to speak with them and/or myself.

Miss Dodd



Supporting Neurodivergent Children Navigate the Online World: Top Tips

1 TREAT ONLINE LIKE THE REAL WORLD



You wouldn't allow a child to cross a road without guidance – you'd hold their hand, use a pedestrian crossing, and model safe behaviour. In the same way, a neurodivergent child's first experiences online should be supported by an adult who can guide and explain safe and responsible digital behaviour to them from the outset.

2 CONSIDER AGES AND STAGES



For older children and teenagers, agreed limits are important. Screen time can be beneficial, but it should form part of a balanced lifestyle. Neurodivergent children may find online communication easier than real-world conversation, supporting their social interaction. However, it shouldn't be their only option. Encourage a range of activities, including creative play, physical exercise, and opportunities for real-world connections.

3 KEEP CONVERSATIONS OPEN



Discussions about online safety should begin early and continue as children grow. However, neurodivergent children may worry about getting things wrong or being misunderstood, meaning these kinds of conversations should feel open and fair, rather than like a lecture. If a child encounters a problem – such as a scam or inappropriate content – they need to feel able to speak to a trusted adult without fear of judgement or embarrassment.

4 UNDERSTAND AI CONTENT



The internet now includes large amounts of AI-generated content, including images, videos, and stories. These can be difficult to identify. Children should be encouraged to question what they see and check the information using trusted sources. Neurodivergent children may interpret content literally, meaning adult guidance is important in helping them recognise what's real and reliable – and what isn't.

Neurodivergent people tend to be early adopters of technology and many influential innovators in this space are neurodivergent themselves. It's therefore likely that a neurodivergent child or young person may be drawn to the online world from an early age. This in itself isn't a concern but understanding both the benefits and potential risks is essential. Here are 4 key considerations to support safe and positive online experiences for neurodivergent children.



Mainstream
Inclusion
Calderdale

Mainstream Inclusion Calderdale (MIC) is a new guidance resource that explains how schools across Calderdale are working to promote inclusive practice and support all learners, particularly children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The guidance aims to help parents and carers understand the types of support and provision that mainstream schools can offer, as well as how schools identify and respond when a child may need additional help with their learning or development.

MIC is not a checklist of compulsory strategies. Instead, it is a flexible toolkit of ideas, approaches and examples that schools can use to develop inclusive practice in ways that best meet the needs of their pupils.

Families may also find some of suggested strategies useful to try at home to support their child's learning, communication, emotional wellbeing and independence.

Calderdale's approach is needs-led, meaning support is based on a child's individual strengths and needs rather than relying solely on a formal diagnosis.

This is a free resource and is accessible to both schools and parents/carers.

Further information can be found below:

[MIC Guide for Families](#)

[MIC Parents' Page](#)

Please click on the link below to find out more about the amount of support available to children, young people and their families with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Calderdale.

<https://calderdalelocaloffer.org.uk/>

