



SEND Funding Framework Guidance for Mainstream Schools and Academies 2025



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Introduction

This guidance was developed by a working group as part of the Review of SEND Banding in Hillingdon in 2024 and has been updated for 2025. It reflects feedback received that it needs to include an explanation of funding received by schools through their annual budget to support all pupils, including pupils with SEND. This includes the SEND Notional budget.

This guidance has been developed for settings and schools, and early support, health and social care professionals involved in the education, care and support of children and young people with SEND.

It supports the aims and ambitions of [Hillingdon's Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy \(2023 – 2028\)](#).

It should be read in conjunction with:

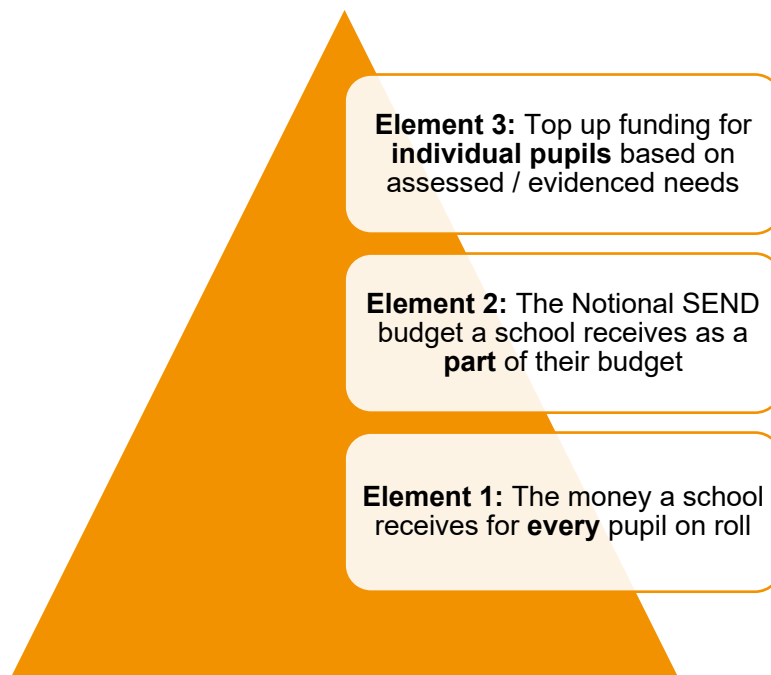
- [Hillingdon's Ordinarily Available Provision \(OAP\)](#) - provides guidance on the range of provision that settings and schools should put in place without needing top up funding.

This Guidance aims to:

- Provide transparency and develop a shared understanding of the resources available to support SEND in settings and schools.
- Support a graduated approach to identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people (CYP) with SEND.
- Clarify what elements of provision should be funded through the funding generally received by schools and settings.
- Contribute to the development of consistent best practice in meeting SEND needs.
- Clarify the additional funding available at SEND Support to help settings and schools meet the range and levels of need of their children and young people.
- Provide a framework to support robust, fair and transparent decision making in relation to when a request for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) might be needed. This includes the evidence of the additional needs of the CYP beyond what could be provided at SEND Support, what has been put in place to meet their needs, and the impact of this.
- Provide a framework to support robust, fair and transparent decision making in relation to determining the top up funding that will be provided for children and young people with an EHCP.

Mainstream schools funding to meet the needs of their pupils with SEND

Schools receive funding for their pupils with SEND in a number of ways.



How Mainstream SEND Funding is calculated

For the majority of pupils, resources are provided routinely through the annual budget allocation process. Levels of funding are decided through a formula which allocates resources between schools.

The amount of funding the school is allocated varies according to the mix of their pupils' **age** (Key Stage) and **characteristics**. These are referred to as pupil-led factors. This part of the budget is influenced by pupil factors, therefore, varies across mainstream schools.

Element 1: Numbers of pupils on roll - age weighted pupil unit (AWPU) – Core Budget

Funding is allocated for the following year according to the **number, ages and characteristics of pupils** on roll at the school at each October census.

This is the main source of funding for teacher and teaching support costs **for all pupils**. It is to enable the delivery of a curriculum that is appropriately organised to meet the needs of **all** children and young people on roll.

All mainstream schools have pupils with additional needs and / or SEND on their roll. The majority will be able to have their needs met through high quality inclusive teaching (often referred to as Quality First Teaching or QFT) and an inclusive curriculum that takes account of the different ways in which children and young people learn.

All schools **must make reasonable adjustments** for pupils with disabilities, in accordance with their duties under the Equality Act 2010, whether or not they have SEN. Where a reasonable adjustment is special educational provision, the revenue cost of that adjustment may be met from the school's SEN budget.

The school's core budget covers the general running costs of a school and teaching for all pupils; the maintenance of the buildings; resources; equipment and staffing costs. Some of this budget is for general SEND provision. This would, for example, include:

- the cost of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)
- the cost of training to support inclusive practice in daily teaching (quality first teaching)
- the cost of elements of TA salaries relating to first aid (whole school)
- grouping / setting children and young people
- schools' duties under the Equality Act (2010) to make reasonable adjustments to meet the majority of SEND needs.
- exam arrangements

Element 2: Pupil led funding – Notional SEND Funding

Element 2 is part of the budget in maintained mainstream schools' delegated budget or an academy's General Annual Grant (GAG) for children with additional needs, including SEND whose needs can be effectively supported from the resources that are 'ordinarily available' at schools, i.e.

- The totality of schools' budgets, including the SEND Notional Budget, and
- Other resources available to schools, e.g. support from central services provided by the local authority or the NHS.

The school's core budget and SEND Notional Budget support schools in the delivery of their **duty** to make **best endeavours** to meet SEND needs. This includes implementing the advice from external services.

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) sets out that schools and colleges must use their best endeavours to ensure that such provision is made for those who need it. Special educational provision is underpinned by high quality teaching and is compromised by anything less.

SEND Code of Practice (COP) 2015, 1.24

It is not linked to numbers of pupils identified by the schools as having SEND. It is not a separate budget, and it is intended as a guide for schools' spending decisions. It is neither a target figure nor a constraint on what a school might put in place. School leaders can decide how this budget is best utilised to meet the broad range of needs of pupils at the school with SEND in line with a graduated approach to identifying and meeting needs. This might include staff training, adaptations to the curriculum and its delivery, and equipment / resources to support access to learning.

The school's SENDCo should be aware of their school's notional SEND budget and be actively engaged with school leaders in deciding where and how to allocate the budget.

Schools are required to set out this information in their SEND Information Report which **must** be updated annually and published on the school website and **should** be co-produced with parents / carer representatives / young people.

The notional SEND budget is **not a personal budget for individual pupils** at SEND Support.

The DfE sets out that mainstream schools should:

- **Allocate up to** £6,000 from their notional SEND budget to meet the costs of special educational provision for pupils identified as needing **SEND Support** in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice (2015); and
- **Contribute £6000 towards** the cost of special educational provision for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The DfE Operational Guidance on notional SEND funding stresses the importance of local authorities being transparent in their assessment of what provision mainstream schools in their area should make for children and young people with SEND. They should identify the resources necessary for schools to deliver both an inclusive environment for their pupils and any more targeted or specialist support that might be needed.

Hillingdon does this through the [Ordinarily Available Provision Guidance](#).

How the notional SEND Budget is calculated

The amount a school receives in its budget for this element is calculated using the **characteristics of the pupils** in the school and so it is different from school to school. The data on pupil characteristics for schools' budget allocations is notified by the DfE.

It is calculated by the local authority using a formula linked to the pupil led factors set out below.

- Age-Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU)
- Free School Meals (FSM) (2 elements - FSM and FSM 6)
- Deprivation (6 levels)
- Low prior attainment
- English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Mobility (children moving in and out of schools)

Schools Forum, a joint panel of school headteachers / governors and Local Authority officers, use a national formula with key indicators to inform the allocation of funding to schools annually.

The total notional SEND budget for each school is identified within their schools block allocation.

Accountability for Element 2 - Notional SEND Budget

School leaders, including governors / trustees, are responsible for setting and monitoring the use and impact of the SEND Notional Budget. Schools are required to update their 'SEND Information

Report' annually and must publish it on their website. Any changes to the information during the year should be updated as soon as possible. The SEND Information Report should be approved by Governors / Trustees.

The report **must** contain:

- The kinds of SEND that are provided for.
- Policies for identifying children and young people with SEND and assessing their needs.
- The name and contact details of the SENDCo (mainstream schools).
- Arrangements for consulting parents / carers of children and young people with SEND and involving them in their child's education.
- Arrangements for consulting children / young people with SEND and involving them in their education.
- Arrangements for assessing and reviewing children and young people's progress towards outcomes. This should include the opportunities available to work with parents / carers and children / young people as part of this assessment and review.
- Arrangements for supporting children and young people in moving between phases of education and in preparing for adulthood. As young people prepare for adulthood, outcomes should reflect their ambitions, which could include higher education, employment, independent living and participation in society.
- The approach to teaching children and young people with SEND
- How adaptations are made to the curriculum and the learning environment of children and young people with SEND
- Additional information about the:
 - arrangements for the admission of disabled pupils
 - steps the school has taken to prevent disabled pupils from being treated less favourably than other pupils
 - facilities it provides to help disabled pupils access the school
 - accessibility plan it has prepared under [paragraph 3 of Schedule 10 to the Equality Act 2010](#) to:
 - increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum
 - improve the physical environment to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of the educational benefits, facilities or services provided or offered
 - improve the way disabled pupils can access information that is easily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

Element 3 – Top Up Funding

Element 3 is funding allocated for a named individual child / young person, usually linked to an EHCP, and is often referred to as 'top-up' funding. The school funds the first £6000 through their SEND Notional Budget (Element 2).

The amount of top up is identified based on the assessed needs of the child / young person linked to [Hillingdon's Banded Funding Guidance](#). The amount of top-up might increase or decrease over

time, for example, if a child or young person's needs change, or they go to a different type of school or setting.

Top up funding in an EHC Plan will follow the child or young person if they move to a different school.

Some pupils with SEND will also receive pupil premium funding.

Additional adult support as part of SEND provision

Some children and young people will need additional adult support in the classroom to help them to make good progress. This may be through targeted group work, access to adult support when needed (an adult is observing or working with other children or young people and able to step in and support when needed), or individual support for a specific activity. This may include support for specific programmes, or a child / young person may require access to more adult support for some, most or all their school day. Where this is the case, this adult support must form part of the expectation of high-quality teaching as well as the wider implementation of the child / young person's EHCP.

It should not be expected that **all** provision is delivered via 1:1 support, or that provision delivered by a suitably trained and experienced teaching / learning support assistant replaces high-quality teaching. The class teacher remains responsible for every child / young person, and SEND is everyone's responsibility.

Wherever provision is delivered on a 1:1 basis, this should be kept under review, including with the child / young person. The child / young person's progress must be balanced against dependency on adult support to complete a task. It is important that children / young people are supported to be as independent with their learning and development as they can be, and that change in how that support is delivered is managed in a planned way to support their progress and confidence.

Quality First Teaching should include scaffolding to support the child / young person to become less dependent on adult prompt and support. This should be implemented consistently and where possible involve the child / young person in determining what helps them to learn.

The Education Endowment Foundation provides guidance on the effective use of Teaching Assistants which is helpful for schools to consider.

[Deployment of Teaching Assistants | Education Endowment Foundation](#)

Effective Practices

1

Deploy TAs in ways that enable all pupils to access high-quality teaching

TAs should supplement – not replace – the teacher. This means that pupils who struggle most should spend at least as much time with the teacher as other pupils, if not more.

- Ensure all pupils have access to high-quality teaching with their class teacher.
- Ensure working relationships between teachers and TAs meet all pupils' needs, with the teacher retaining responsibility for all pupils.
- Support teachers and TAs to identify practices which inhibit pupil learning and engage in effective alternatives.

2

Deploy TAs to scaffold learning and to develop pupils' independence

Leaders should ensure TAs are prepared to engage in scaffolding practices that support pupils' learning and ability to learn independently. Supporting pupil independence should be a key consideration of TA deployment.

- Equip TAs with a range of scaffolding strategies appropriate to the age, subject, and specific individual needs of pupils they work with.
- Remove scaffolds over time to promote independent learning, with teachers supporting TAs to make those judgements.
- Ensure pupils have the opportunity to attempt tasks independently before intervening appropriately when they can't proceed.

3

Deploy TAs to deliver well-chosen, evidence based, structured interventions where appropriate

The evidence shows that TAs can support pupils effectively through structured interventions. However, these need to be carefully considered, monitored, and linked to the classroom to ensure positive outcomes for pupils.

- Reflect on the purpose of interventions and engage with the evidence base before deploying TAs to deliver structured interventions.
- Monitor progress to be sure the benefit of the intervention outweighs time away from the classroom.
- Support teachers and TAs to engage in bridging practices that connect learning between interventions and the classroom.

4

Prepare and train staff around effective TA deployment

School leaders should ensure staff are on the same page about the role of the TA and how they can most effectively support pupils. Ensuring teachers and TAs are well prepared to work in these roles increases the likelihood that TA deployment can have a positive impact on pupils.

- Provide clarity on the role of the TA for all in the school.
- Enable TAs to be effective in their role and teachers to work effectively with TAs, through effective professional development.
- Develop ongoing coordination and communication so that teachers and TAs are prepared for their day-to-day roles.

5

Engage all staff in the process of implementing effective TA deployment

Effective TA deployment is complex and dependent on a range of factors. School leaders should focus on implementation as they look to embed effective practices.

- Ensure TA deployment is informed by both the underpinning evidence and the challenges of putting it into practice.
- Engage and align the school community to build a shared understanding of good TA practice.
- Be deliberate about deployment decisions, which should be taken in the context of the school and its current priorities.

Provision of Specialist Equipment and / or Training

A child / young person may require specific specialist equipment and/or training provided to adults working with them, some of which may be considered educational or medical in nature, or both. The provision of equipment or training may have a cost that may be one-off, required very few times across a child / young person's school career or more frequently. This does not necessarily mean that the provision of equipment or training increases the child / young person's needs or places a child / young person in a higher band. Similarly, a high level of need may not necessarily mean that a young person falls into a higher band if that need is met through the provision of equipment, e.g., a need relating to a sensory impairment being met by equipment or technology. The provision of equipment or training is subject to individual assessment of need. Training can be provision or can be the expertise to deliver provision. Please follow [School Equipment Policy for Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) to apply for support with equipment.

Targeted Funding to supplement the Notional SEND budget (non-statutory SEND Funding)

While we recognise that many of the pupil led factors that inform a calculation of schools' notional SEND budget are often part of a profile of a SEND child / young person, this is not always the case.

We also recognise that schools' approaches to identifying pupils with SEND does vary, and that a child / young person identified as SEND in one school might not be in another. This is exemplified by the variation in percentages of pupils identified at SEND Support across Hillingdon.

Sometimes there is a significant mismatch between the notional SEND budget and the actual costs of provision made by a school because the school has a disproportionate number of pupils with EHCPs. This may be for a range of reasons.

The Funding Regulations allow the Local Authority to provide targeted funding to supplement the SEND Notional Budget from the High Needs Budget to schools in such exceptional circumstances. There must be clear criteria for such exceptional cases.

Currently, Hillingdon provides such funding to schools with very high levels of EHCPs (Threshold Funding) discounting those pupil numbers in Specialist Resourced Provisions and Designated SEND Units, as these are funded differently. This is to recognise the fact that these schools are funding the first £6,000 of provision for a higher percentage of pupils than other schools. This non-statutory funding is reviewed annually and is dependent on the resources being available.

Other SEND Funding available to support pupils at SEND Support

This funding is reviewed annually and is dependent on the resources being available.

Early Support Funding (ESF)

ESF is the process Hillingdon uses to allocate High Needs Block Funding to support **schools** to make additional / different provision for pupils of statutory school age who do not have an EHCP but have significant additional needs beyond those that might be expected to be funded from the SEND Notional Budget. This funding is intended for children with needs that exceed what SEND support can manage, providing short-term additional support to help close the gap for these pupils. ESF is a non-statutory funding stream available to support Hillingdon CYP (residents) who are of statutory school age children and is reviewed annually.

SEND Exceptional Funding (SENDEX)

SENDEX is a form of non-statutory funding which can support a pupil who does not have an EHCP but is likely to meet the threshold for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment, or where an EHC assessment has been initiated.

SENDEX provides additional support in exceptional circumstances and where the school cannot access appropriate levels of support through the usual pathways, such as Early Support Funding or

through an existing Education, Health and Care Plan where there is no evidence of an Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle. Examples might include pupils who are new to the country, new to the area where there is no evidence of what has been provided by a previous school / setting in another LA area, or where a child has not accessed any provision previously.

Schools can request SENDEX to provide urgent and immediate financial support to help educate a Hillingdon pupil who requires immediate support for the short to medium term, and where such support is likely to be at additional cost to the school's budget. Schools are expected to make an EHC Needs Assessment (EHCNA) request in a timely manner so that the assessment informs information on the child / young person's needs and the support they require. SENDEX ceases if the child / young person changes school and when the EHCP is in place.

SENDEX is non-statutory funding provided whilst the LA has the available resources to support schools. It is reviewed annually.

Hillingdon SEN Inclusion Funding (SENIF) (Early Years)

This is intended to support local authorities to work with providers to recognise and support the low-level and emerging needs of children with SEND who are taking up the early years entitlements.

Pupil Premium

Schools have access to other funding. For example, any school where children are eligible for free school meals will also receive 'pupil premium' funding to spend on improving the rate of progress those children. This is because there is a gap in educational attainment between the group of children receiving free school meals and the majority of children who do not. Across the country, there is a significant overlap between children eligible for free school meals and having special educational needs.