

£280m capital funding boost for children and young people with SEND

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or requiring alternative provision in England will benefit from a £280 million investment, the government has announced today (09 April).

Councils will receive the funding to create new places in schools, academies, colleges and early years settings. The funding will improve existing provision to create modern, fit-for-purpose spaces suited to a wider range of pupil needs. This could be by contributing to the cost of creating a whole new special school, or by improving accessibility, such as installing ramps, handrails or ceiling hoists.

The funding is part of the government's commitment to ensuring pupils with SEND receive the specialist support they need to get an excellent education.

Minister for the School System Baroness Berridge said:

It is so important that all children and young people, whatever their background, are able to attend a good school that helps them thrive and gives them the building blocks they need to go on to fulfil their potential.

For pupils with more complex needs or disabilities, it is especially important that the right facilities and support are in place at whatever school they attend, so they can learn in a modern, adaptable environment.

This funding will help councils provide targeted support to level up outcomes for some of their most vulnerable pupils.

The allocations announced today build on the government's continued investment in the Free Schools programme. 59 special and 49 Alternative Provision free schools have already opened across the country since 2010, and more than 80 specialist settings or alternative provision projects are set to open in the coming years.

The investment, which represents a significant single-year increase in high needs capital investment, follows £365 million allocated through the Special Provision Capital Fund to create places and improve facilities for pupils with SEND across 2018 to 2021.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

Every child or young person with SEND should go to school feeling confident that they will get the tailored support they need at

school, and every teacher should be equipped with the right facilities to teach those pupils.

We have already increased the high needs budget by nearly a quarter over the past two years. This additional investment will enable local authorities to invest more in creating excellent school places or enhancing existing provision so that pupils with additional needs and disabilities get the same opportunities as any other.

The funding adds to the Government's programme of work to level up outcomes, including the ongoing SEND Review which is looking at ways to make sure the system is consistent, high-quality and integrated across education, health and care.

The funding is for the financial year 2021-22, to support the provision of high needs places needed by September 2022. Up to an additional £20 million will be used to support High Needs capital projects in a small number of the local authorities facing the highest Dedicated Schools Grant deficits.

Professor Adam Boddison, Chief Executive of NASEN, said:

Given the growing demand for high-quality specialist provision, this increase in high needs funding is a welcome investment. I hope that Local Authorities will work in partnership with schools, specialist settings and families so that this funding is targeted to secure long term benefits for learners with SEND.

Graham Olway MBE, National Chairman of the Education Building Development Officers Group, said:

We welcome this announcement of extra High Needs funding to help support the work of local authorities in meeting the needs of children with a range of needs in schools. The funding allows more opportunities and projects to be fulfilled in an area of growing need for local authorities.