

News story: New funding to support children with special educational needs

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are set to benefit from an extra £350 million funding to provide specialist support and tailored facilities, helping those with complex needs to succeed.

The Education Secretary Damian Hinds has today (Sunday 16 December) announced that councils will receive an additional £250 million over the next two years on top of the £6 billion already provided for the high needs budget this year, to provide much needed support for children and young people with complex SEND.

Families will also benefit from more choice for their child's education through an extra £100 million investment to create more specialist places in mainstream schools, colleges and special schools, giving more children and young people access to a good school or college place that meets their individual needs. This could include more state-of-the-art facilities, such as sensory rooms and specialist equipment.

On top of this, more special free schools will get the green light, as the Education Secretary confirms he will approve all high quality bids in the current round of special and alternative provision free schools applications, creating even more choice for parents.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Being a parent, we all want the very best for our children. We want them to attend a school that supports them to thrive, go on to higher or further education or training, find a job that's right for them, and to live happy and fulfilled lives.

For children with special educational needs this is no different. It is important that they have the right support in place at school – whether that is in a mainstream setting, with additional support, or in a special school.

We recognise that the high needs budget faces significant pressures and this additional investment will help local councils to manage those pressures, whilst being able to invest to provide more support.

Every school or college should be one for a young person with special educational needs; every teacher should be equipped to teach them, and families need to feel supported.

The Government has also confirmed an expansion of the funding to train more educational psychologists, who are responsible for assessing children's needs and providing tailored support as part of the Education, Health and Care needs assessment process. Educational psychologists also provide outreach to teachers and families, providing new support strategies when the complex needs of a child are not being met. From September 2020 there will be a further three training rounds and an increase in the number of trainees from 160 to at least 206, to help keep up with demand for this specialist advice.

Ofsted's HMCI Amanda Spielman said:

I welcome today's announcement from the Department for Education, which is good news for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families.

Our inspections show that we still have a long way to go before children and young people with SEND are getting all the support they deserve. In too many local areas, the implementation of the 2014 SEND reforms is not living up to expectations.

We are halfway through our inspections of local areas and have just started to re-visit areas where inspectors have identified significant concerns. We will continue to give real weight to the experience of children and young people with SEND in our inspections of schools.

It is vital that this additional investment makes a much-needed difference to the quality of provision and outcomes achieved by this group of children and young people.

Classroom teachers and those in training will also have a greater focus on supporting children with SEND, as the upcoming Teaching Recruitment and Retention Strategy will make sure all teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of all pupils.

Local authority education services will be encouraged to work more closely with health and social care to commission local services that meet the needs of the families and children in their area, as a new advisory SEND System Leadership Board is to be set up. This new expert board will include representatives of local health, social care, and education services, and will work closely with charities, school and families.

To better understand the financial incentives that influence how schools, colleges and councils support children and young people with special educational needs, the Department for Education will be gathering more evidence in the New Year. This will include looking at the first £6,000 schools pay for SEND support costs before accessing additional funding from local high needs budgets.

Graham Olway, Head of School Organisation & Capital Planning, West Sussex County Council and National Chairman of the Education Building Development

Officers Group (EBDOG) said:

The introduction of additional SEN capital grant is very much welcomed and will enable the completion of much needed SEN improvements across the country. The growth in SEN is now recognised and this investment will help local authorities continue the work to ensure they can better meet the needs in their community for some of the most vulnerable children in society.