



Funding for SEN Support in Mainstream Schools

RANi Need to Know Guides | SEND support Advisory sheet 2

Updated: April 2025

A Guide for Parents and Carers

Overview

All mainstream schools in England receive funding from the government to help them meet the needs of children with special educational needs (SEN). This funding is used to provide **SEN Support** – the help given to pupils who need extra support but do not have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

This guide explains:

- The three levels of SEN funding
- What SEN Support funding can be used for
- How decisions are made about funding and support
- What to do if your child isn't getting enough support

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The Three Levels of SEN Funding

SEN funding is divided into **three levels**, or “elements,” which apply whether or not a child has an EHCP:

◆ Element 1: Core Funding (AWPU)

- Every school receives a **basic level of funding per pupil** – known as the *Age-Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU)*.
- This is used for general teaching and running of the school and includes *universal provision* like differentiated teaching and classroom resources.
- All pupils, including those with SEN, benefit from this.

◆ Element 2: Notional SEN Budget (Up to £6,000 per pupil)

- Each school receives an additional budget called the **Notional SEN Budget**.
- This is intended to fund up to **£6,000 of additional SEN provision per pupil** (on top of the general teaching costs in Element 1).
- Schools must use this to provide **SEN Support** for pupils without an EHCP and to contribute the first £6,000 of support for pupils with an EHCP.
- This money is **not allocated per child** but is part of a general budget that the school distributes based on pupil need.

Examples of what this might fund:

- Targeted small group work or 1:1 interventions
- Learning mentor support
- Speech and language therapy sessions (delivered by trained staff)

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- Specialist equipment or resources
- Staff training

◆ **Element 3: Top-Up Funding (Above £6,000)**

- If a pupil's needs are so significant or complex that support costs **more than £6,000 per year**, the **local authority** can provide **Element 3 funding**.
- This is only available if the child has an **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)**.
- The EHCP will detail the level of provision required and the local authority will fund the difference between £6,000 and the actual cost.

How Do Schools Decide How to Spend SEN Funding?

Schools are responsible for:

- Identifying which pupils need SEN Support
- Assessing what provision is required
- Allocating resources from their notional SEN budget

Decisions should be:

- **Evidence-based**
- **Reviewed regularly**
- Made in partnership with **parents and carers**

Schools must keep a record of the SEN provision and outcomes for each pupil receiving support, and these must be reviewed **at least three times a year**.

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Legal Duties on Funding SEN Support

Schools **must**:

- ✓ Use their best endeavours to secure special educational provision for pupils who need it (Children and Families Act 2014, Section 66)
- ✓ Not refuse to admit a child just because they have SEN
- ✓ Make **reasonable adjustments** for disabled pupils under the Equality Act 2010
- ✓ Follow the SEND Code of Practice (2015)

They **cannot** say:

- “We’ve used up our SEN budget.”
- “We can’t support your child without an EHCP.”
- “We don’t have funding for that.”

Schools must do all they can within their resources to meet the child’s needs.

What If SEN Support Isn’t Enough?

If:

- The support your child receives is not helping them make progress
- Their needs are significantly greater than others the school can usually meet
- The school is spending or would need to spend **over £6,000 per year** in support

...then the school (or you) can request an **EHC needs assessment** from the local authority. If agreed, this could lead to an **EHC Plan**, which includes **Element 3 top-up funding**.

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You do **not** need to wait until all the school's funding is exhausted to request an EHC assessment.

Can Parents See How a School Spends its SEN Funding?

Schools are not required to publish individual pupil-level SEN spending. However, they **must publish a SEN Information Report**, which includes:

- How they identify and support pupils with SEN
- What kinds of support are available
- How resources are allocated

This report is usually available on the school's website. You can also:

- Ask how the school uses its notional SEN budget
 - Ask to see your child's SEN Support Plan and provision map
 - Ask for regular updates on your child's progress and support
-

Disagreements About SEN Support or Funding

If you believe your child is not receiving appropriate support:

1. Speak to the **class teacher or SENCO**.
2. Request a review of the SEN Support Plan.
3. Raise your concerns with the **Headteacher**.

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4. Contact your local **SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)**.
5. If unresolved, consider making a **formal complaint** or requesting an **EHC needs assessment**.

Key Takeaways

Funding Level	Who Provides It?	Purpose	Applies to...
Element 1	Government (core funding)	General teaching	All pupils
Element 2	Local authority to school	SEN Support up to £6,000 per pupil	SEN Support (no EHCP)
Element 3	Local authority (top-up)	Costs above £6,000	Pupils with EHCP

Support and Resources

You can get further support from:

- **RANi** – Help with advice, support and impartial information
- **Local Offer** - Help with advice, support and impartial information
- **SENDIASS** – Local impartial information and advice service for parents and young people www.iasmanchester.org
- **IPSEA** – Independent Provider of Special Education Advice: www.ipsea.org.uk
- **Contact** – A national charity supporting families with disabled children: www.contact.org.uk

If you'd like help preparing your request or understanding your appeal options, RANi can provide guidance and templates

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Remember:

Always keep a copy of all correspondence you send, along with proof of postage or delivery. If you send documents by post, we recommend using a **signed-for** service. If sending by email, request a **read receipt** if possible.

Get in Touch

If you need more information or have a question, we're here to help.

Email us: info@rani.org.uk

Please include:

- Your name
- Your child's name
- Your child's date of birth
- Your query

Or, if you prefer, you can fill out our online **contact form** and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

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