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Open consultation

Upfront funding for mainstream schools: creating a 'local SEND inclusion formula' – what parents and carers of children and young people need to know

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Applies to England

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Introduction

One in 3 children are identified as having special educational needs (SEN) at some point in their education, but many of these children and young people are not getting the support they need to achieve and thrive.

The government has consulted on plans to address this by ending the postcode lottery of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support, boosting early identification of needs and creating a more inclusive mainstream system that delivers high standards for all.

As we consider the responses to our [overarching SEND reform consultation](#), we're now asking your views on whether mainstream schools should get more of their SEND funding upfront – before children need extra support – rather than having to apply for it later.

Right now, schools already receive some funding to support pupils with SEND. But when a child needs more help, schools often have to go through a separate process to access extra money from their local authority. This can take time and that can mean your child waits longer for the support they need.

We want to understand whether giving schools more funding from the start could mean help is put in place sooner and is more easily adapted as your child's needs change.

The [Upfront funding for mainstream schools: creating a 'local SEND inclusion formula' consultation](#) looks at how local authorities could test this approach from 2027, helping us understand how it works in practice before any wider decisions are made.

Why the government is looking at this

Parents and carers, schools and local authorities have told us the current system can

slow things down. Funding processes and paperwork can get in the way of children getting support quickly.

The current system can mean that:

- schools spend time navigating complex funding processes and paperwork, meaning your child waits for support while funding applications are being processed
- schools have less flexibility to respond quickly when needs change
- teachers and support staff spend time on admin rather than with children

We want to know whether changing how funding reaches mainstream schools – providing SEND funding upfront, for example – would help put support in place earlier and respond more flexibly to changing needs.

What this means for your child

If this approach works as we intend, schools would have greater certainty about the money available to support children with SEND. This could mean:

- support is put in place more quickly when your child needs it
- help can be adapted more easily as your child grows and their needs change
- teachers and specialists spend more time with children and less time on paperwork
- early action prevents needs from becoming more complex over time

Will this affect my child's education, health and care (EHC) plan?

No. Your child's legal rights and the support set out in their EHC plan will not change. This consultation is about how funding reaches schools, not about reducing funding or changing what children are owed.

Participating local authorities will still be legally required to provide the support your

child is entitled to under [section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014](#). And they will need to make sure the school has adequate funding for this provision.

Mainstream schools will still be legally required, under [section 66 of the Children and Families Act 2014](#), to use what is referred to as their 'best endeavours' to secure the special educational provision needed. This applies whether or not the child or young person has an EHC plan.

The safeguards in place to make sure this funding reaches schools

All this funding will go to schools – none will be held elsewhere. Schools will experience a smooth funding transition throughout these arrangements and the government will hold local authorities to account on this.

How this links to the government's other SEND consultations

We want to get these reforms right. That means listening to the people with the most experience of how the current system works and where it falls short.

We received thousands of responses to the overarching SEND reform consultation, which closed in May, and held more than 200 engagement events with young people, parents and carers, and professionals across the system. We will continue to work closely with everyone with a stake in our education system to make it work for all our children and young people.

We're also currently [consulting on education otherwise than at school \(EOTAS\)](#) provision.

The responses to the 3 consultations will be considered altogether.

Have your say

No decisions have been made. We are consulting because we want to hear the views of parents and carers, schools and local authorities before deciding whether to take these proposals forward.

The Upfront funding for mainstream schools: creating a 'local SEND inclusion formula' consultation is open until 18 September 2026.

Visit [Department for Education consultations on GOV.UK](#) to submit your response.

Find out more

You can also read:

- [Every child achieving and thriving](#), the schools white paper
- [further information and fact sheets about SEND reform](#)

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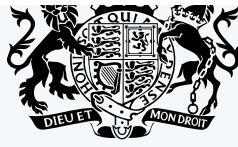
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