

Funding for special educational needs in mainstream schools

This information is about funding for special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools. This includes academies and free schools.

What is SEN funding for?

The SEND Code of Practice says schools must:

...use their best endeavours to make sure that a child with SEN gets the support they need – this means doing everything they can to meet children and young people's SEN (6.2)

Schools should use some of their budget to buy resources and make provision for children who need additional help. This can take many forms. For example, children with SEN might need:

- changes to the curriculum
- special equipment or teaching materials
- the use of additional information technology
- small group work
- support in the classroom
- a base to work in or have quiet time.

Where does funding for SEN come from?

All mainstream schools receive money for special educational needs support and resources. Schools can decide how to spend this money. This is called “delegated” funding because it is given (delegated) to schools by local authorities or the Education Funding Agency from money they receive from central government. The SEN part of the school's income is sometimes called the “notional” SEN budget because it is not based on the school's actual numbers of pupils with special needs, but on a formula.

Funding for SEN provision is from three sources (“elements”):

Element 1

Schools get money for each pupil, based on actual pupil numbers. This is called the *Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU)* and it is part of schools' delegated funding. Some of this money is for general SEN provision. This might, for example, include the cost of providing the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and some other resources.

Each local authority sets the AWPU for their schools, and the Education Funding Agency sets the AWPU for academies and free schools. The AWPU differs according to whether the school is primary or secondary.

Element 2

Element 2 funding is SEN-specific and is to provide SEN support for children who need it. This is support that is *additional to* or *different from* the support that most other children get. SEN support is for children who used to have help through School Action and School Action Plus.

The local authority provides this funding for schools it is responsible for using a formula that determines the amount of money the school gets. The formula gives more money to schools that in the past had more children on free school meals and more children who were not doing as well as others in English and Maths. The Education Funding Agency provides this funding for academies and free schools. Element 2 funding is also part of schools' delegated budget.

Government guidance says schools should provide up to the first £6,000 (on top of the AWPU) of additional or different support for those children who need it, including those with an Education, Health and Care plan. This does not mean that the school will spend £6,000 on every child with SEN. Sometimes schools use funds to help groups of children. Some children will need less help – and some children may need more.

You can ask your school how it uses its SEN budget to support your child and whether it has enough to make all the provision they need. The local authority also publishes a Local Offer that explains what type of resources this money might be spent on.

Element 3

Where a school has children needing very expensive provision which might absorb a lot of the SEN support funding, the school can request additional funding. The local authority is responsible for managing Element 3 funding (sometimes called the 'high needs block'), which can be used to make specific provision for an individual child or a group of children, if the school or academy can show it is necessary. These funding arrangements do not override the local authority's duty to your child to ensure they receive any necessary provision that the school itself cannot make. The law says that the local authority must find out via an EHC needs assessment whether an EHC plan is needed when a child or young person may have SEN that may need the local authority to secure provision. So if your school is unable to make all the provision your child needs, you have the right to ask for an EHC needs assessment.

Who manages the school's SEN resources?

The SEND Code of Practice says:

It is for schools, as part of their normal budget planning, to determine their approach to using their resources to support the progress of pupils with SEN. The SENCO, headteacher and governing body or proprietor should establish a clear picture of the resources that are available to the school. They should consider their strategic approach to meeting SEN in the context of the total resources available, including any resources targeted at particular groups, such as the pupil premium.

(6.97)

School governors are responsible for the school's policy on SEN. The headteacher and the SENCO ensure that the policy is put into practice. The SENCO organises support for individual children, but every teacher is responsible making sure that your child's special educational needs are met in the classroom.

The SEN Information Report on the school's website tells you more about the arrangements for SEN support and how to contact the SENCO.

How can I find out what support and resources my child is getting?

The first step is to talk with your child's teacher or the SENCO. This may be at a parents' evening, a support plan meeting or a review. You can ask for a written copy of any support plan in place for your child.

If your child has an Education, Health and Care plan, it must set out the support and resources that must be provided.

Where can I get further information, advice or support?

Look for the SEN Information Report on the school website.

The Local Offer is the place to find out about services available locally and the arrangements that schools and others are expected to make for children and young people with SEN.

SENDIASS Gloucestershire can also give you:

- more information about SEN support and funding
- advice about what to do if you are not happy with the support your school is providing
- information about other organisations, support groups and information services that could help
- information and advice about your rights to request an EHC needs assessment if your child might need more than the school can provide.

Further information, advice and support:

If you would like any further information, advice or support please contact SENDIASS Gloucestershire. This service is independent, impartial, confidential and free.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service
(SENDIASS) Gloucestershire
Messenger House – 2nd Floor
35 St. Michael's Square
Gloucester GL1 1HX



Freephone: 0800 158 3603



Direct Line: 01452 389344/5



sendiass@carersgloucestershire.org.uk



www.sendiassglos.org.uk



Sendiass Gloucestershire



[@sendiassglos](https://twitter.com/sendiassglos)

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