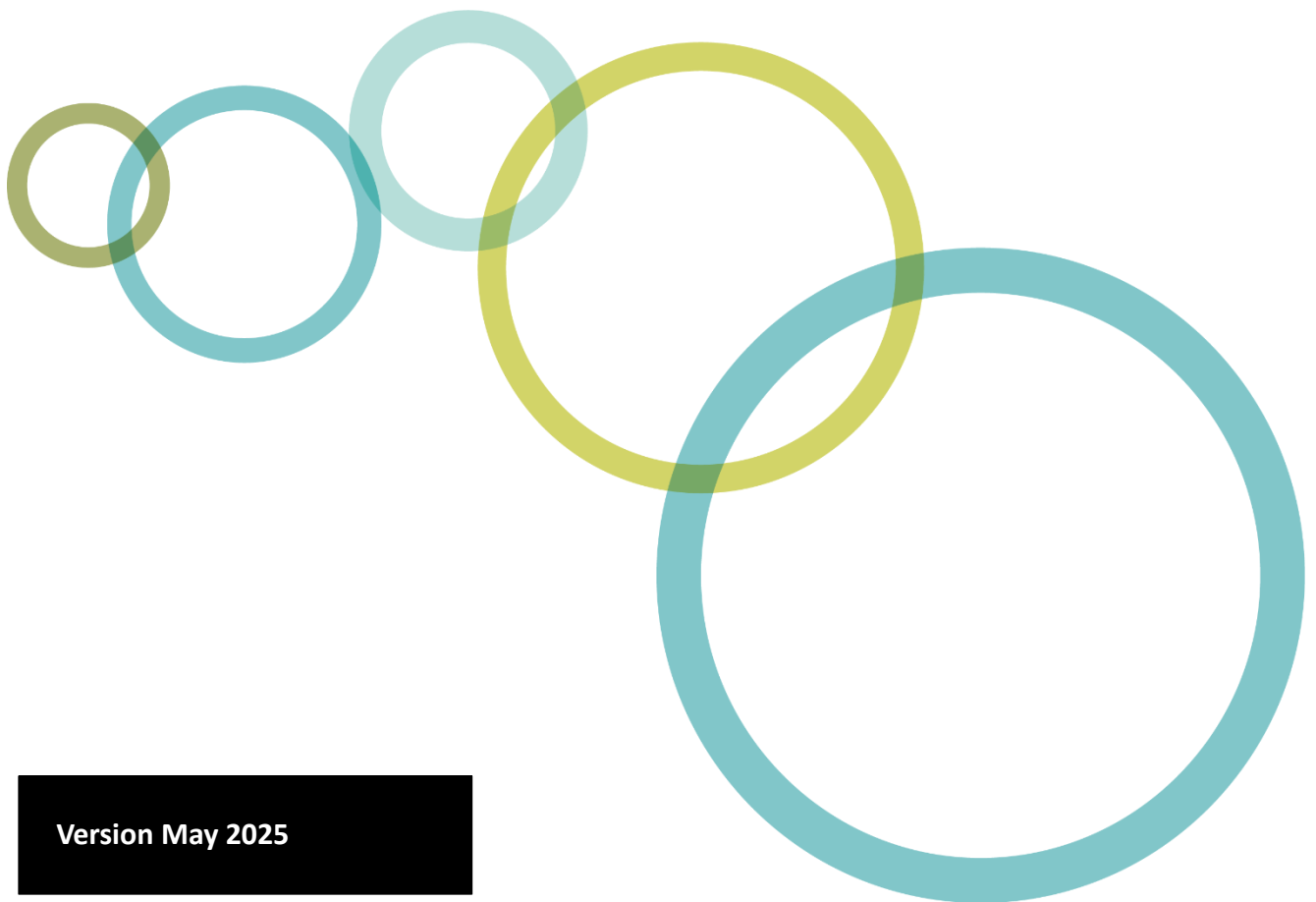


# Specialist Education Market Position Statement



Version May 2025



**Hampshire**  
County Council

# Introduction

This market position statement outlines Hampshire County Council's Children's Services priorities for external market provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Specifically, it relates to our commissioning of Alternative Provision (AP) for children needing a period of education outside mainstream provision, and our commissioning of school places in the independent sector for children with SEND, for example Independent and / or Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS). It aims to promote collaboration between the County Council and these types of education providers. By working together, we can enhance the quality of education provided to vulnerable children and young people.

Our Market Position Statement (MPS) provides the market with information about our current and future forecast service needs which will be useful to existing and potential providers in making business and investment decisions. It should act as a starting point for discussion between providers and Hampshire County Council by highlighting the specialist education provision that the County Council wishes to commission.

Hampshire County Council wishes to continue to secure contractual relationships with high quality providers of education for groups of pupils with complex needs across the spectrum of special educational needs. The overall aim is to secure a provision pathway for pupils who have a range of complex educational, cognitive, social, emotional, mental health, communication, sensory and physical needs. This will entail commissioning a range of provision that is robust, flexible and creative to meet and respond to the range of needs of this vulnerable cohort of pupils. Providers are expected to be able to deliver services that meet the academic, vocational, social, emotional, physical, and psychological health needs of pupils identified by Hampshire County Council.

In line with our strategic plan, we want to enable all children and young people to have the best possible start in life, and we are working to close the educational attainment gap by supporting all children and young people to fulfil their potential. We want the right support for children in the right place at the right time, in line with the Government's SEND and AP review: [Summary of the SEND review: right support, right place, right time – GOV.UK](#).

Therefore, in developing this MPS the following underpinning principles apply. These include, but are not exhaustive:

- Providing education within an inclusive mainstream setting wherever possible and as appropriate, noting this will not always be feasible.
- Having a clear focus on best outcomes for the child/young person, including developing their independence and skills for life.
- Providing education within, or as close as possible to, the child's home and local community.
- Offering a holistic approach where all the children and young people's needs are met within the provision.
- Wherever possible, considering re-integration into less specialist provision, providing the necessary support to make the transition effective and long lasting.

Leaders and practitioners are highly ambitious for children and young people with SEND in Hampshire to succeed (Ofsted CQC 2020). Please read our [Ofsted inspection reports](#) for further information.

## The local Hampshire context – current data on school placements

Hampshire County Council is committed to ensuring that all children can access high-quality education, as near to their family and local community as possible. Following the introduction of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans, there has been a sustained and significant increase in demand. Between 2015 and January 2025, the number of maintained EHCPs has risen by 256%.

In January 2025, 17,784 children in Hampshire had an EHC Plan. This is a 11.2% increase from last year.

Most children with SEND can and are supported in mainstream settings, some of which have a resourced provision attached to the school.

Special schools provide places for approximately 22% of our children with SEND, and the independent school sector provides for approximately 8% of our children.

Of pupils in schools the percentage with SEN support, has increased to 14.2%, and the percentage of pupils with EHCPs has risen to 6.4%.

Sufficiency modelling to 2030 forecasts a rise in our need for school places from the independent school's sector for the next three years, to 2026-2027. At this point we expect our demand for independent and INMS school places to plateau at around 2,125 places per annum for the three years to 2028-2029. Following the plateau, as mainstream schools increase their ability to support children with SEND, along with a notable forecast rise in resourced provisions, we anticipate a decreasing demand for school places from the independent sector.

## Demand gaps and proposed strategies

As with all local authorities, Hampshire's SEND provision has had to evolve to meet the changing needs of pupils. The County Council and the Department for Education (DfE) have built several special schools in Hampshire which have enabled us to better serve the needs of SEND.

**Special schools:** There are currently two special schools under development in Hampshire: Windmill Academy will be a new severe learning difficulties (SLD) school at Whiteley, Fareham and Gosport district (DfE funded) and Luminous Oak is the new Social

Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) school at Boorley Gardens, Winchester and Eastleigh district (Hampshire County Council funded), both of which will be run by Solent Academies Trust. However, capital schemes take time to deliver. These schools will deliver 260 places from September 2026.

Therefore, the County Council will continue to need to commission independent sector provision on a rising trajectory for the next three years, and then a stable plateau of numbers for the following three financial years, before a forecasted decline.

## Current challenges and commissioning priorities

**Needs designations:** Hampshire’s greatest SEND needs are children who have Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) has overtaken Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) to be the other top priority.

The most common primary SEN needs for children and young people in Hampshire are: (1) Social, emotional, and mental health (2) Autistic Spectrum Disorder (3) Speech, Language, and Communication Needs (4) Moderate learning difficulty (**Source: School Census January 2024**).

Hampshire’s EHCP request growth is in line with national growth, approximately +65% since 2021, and slightly above the national 2024 increase of 11.8%.

EHCP Request Growth						
Metric	Calendar Years					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
EHCP Requests	2,038	1,956	2,379	3,156	3,485	3,932
Percentage Change	-	-4.0%	+21.6%	+32.7%	+10.4%	+12.8%

**Geography:** Some children and young people, including those with more complex needs, face long journeys to get to school or must attend a placement outside of their local area, taking them away from their local community. Where possible we are looking to commission local provision in, or close to Hampshire, to keep children connected to their local networks and reduce travel times or the need for residential placements. (Table below demonstrates EHCP by locality and Key Stage in December 2024.)

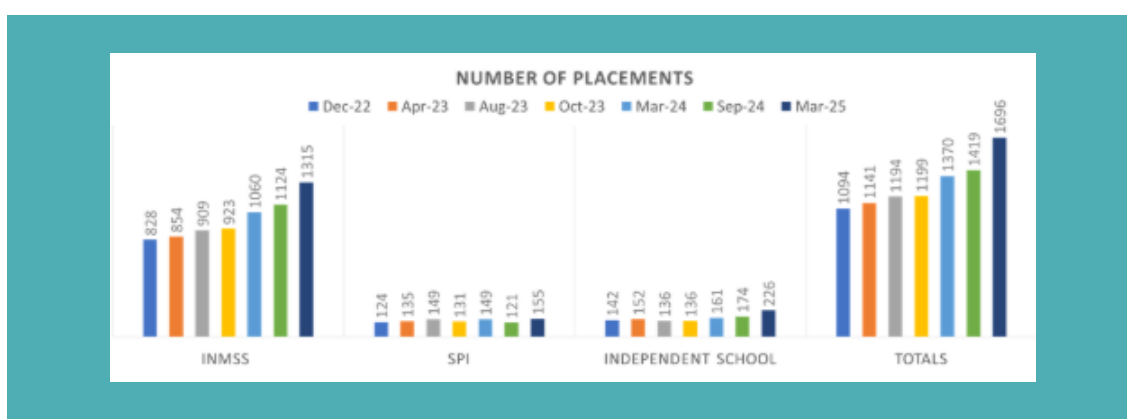
EHCPs by Locality and Key Stage								
Team	Early Years	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Post-16	Post-19	Total
Basingstoke and Deane	132	295	636	632	415	383	205	<b>2698</b>
Winchester and Eastleigh	143	236	669	659	469	388	154	<b>2718</b>
East Hampshire	43	102	277	266	188	184	91	<b>1151</b>
Hart and Rushmoor	99	223	636	618	389	353	158	<b>2476</b>
Havant	94	168	511	501	301	340	202	<b>2117</b>
Fareham and Gosport	144	208	540	539	369	432	267	<b>2499</b>
New Forest	107	176	538	528	349	369	162	<b>2229</b>
Test Valley	102	159	445	373	215	324	214	<b>1832</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>864</b>	<b>1567</b>	<b>4252</b>	<b>4116</b>	<b>2695</b>	<b>2773</b>	<b>1453</b>	<b>17720</b>

**Commissioning school places in the independent sector:** As already noted, we forecast an ongoing need to commission school places in the independent sector with a plateau in placements in the three years 2028-2029. Therefore, we would like to explore contractual arrangements with independent sector education providers.

For local independent sector education providers, we would be open to exploring longer term arrangements to support our strategy of placing children in Hampshire wherever possible.

The breakdown of places we currently commission across the independent education sector is shown below:

**Placements made in the independent sector** (Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS), Specialist Post-16 Institutions (SPI), independent schools)



The trajectory outlined above relates to provision across INMSS and independent schools. We expect to see our commissioning of SPIs reduce, as outlined in the section on 'Supporting young people to independence' below.

There are currently 126 independent non-maintained schools being used by Hampshire County Council. Schools (an increase of 14 from within the financial year) who mainly support children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs as their primary needs. We also utilise 68 independent school provisions where we support over 200 children and young people.

### Intersecting placement type, location and availability

The provision comprises both day and residential placements and may include holiday periods for both primary and secondary phase pupils. However, we are aware some placements are residential only because they are too far to travel on a daily basis.

**Data analysis:** Moving forward, we want to focus on increasing our access to local primary and secondary provision, especially where it will enable children to be educated in or near their local community, reducing their travel time and enabling them to live at home.

In areas where we see these types of needs growing, we are keen to work with providers on commissioning a pipeline of provisions for Hampshire children, but this should be coupled with an agreed approach to reviews and an active focus on children making progress to support their transition into settings where lower levels of support are needed, including returning to mainstream. Ultimately, we are clear that all settings should be supporting children and young people to be as independent as possible.

### Independent sector placement supply

	No. of Placements as of March 2025	Increase from 2024
<b>INMSS</b>	1,315	255
<b>SPI</b>	155	6
<b>Independent School</b>	226	65

**Supporting young people to independence:** Hampshire’s post-16 Further Education (FE) footprint comprises mainstream, specialist and vocational provision, which supports the successful transition into adult lives of independence, choice and control, and employment, where appropriate. Nationally there has been a rise in the number of EHC Plans and those pupils with SEN support (SEN without an EHC Plan). Provisions are expected to successfully manage this cohort through a graduated approach. There is a good range of post-16 provision in Hampshire for young people with SEND, so at this transition we aim for the majority of our young people who may have been in externally commissioned provision to move out of the independent sector into local post-16 provision within local maintained sector higher and FE institutions, or to access local skills and training opportunities. There are also specialist opportunities in local Independence Hubs and Future Skills Pathway projects.

As a result of the quality and availability of options for young people aged 16 years and over **we are not looking to commission post-16 provision from the independent education sector.**

Additionally, **we will prioritise working with education providers in the independent sector who actively support young people's transitions at 16 years into the local provision** outlined above and we are open to exploring contractual incentives to underpin these transitions.

### Alternative Provision (AP)

AP is education for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.

AP is used in Hampshire to reduce suspensions and to reduce and prevent permanent exclusions.

It is also used to re-engage pupils with education and with school.

It can be used for periods of time when a pupil is too unwell to attend mainstream education regularly where it provides a more comprehensive offer of education for that period.

It is also sometimes used whilst a child is waiting for a specialist placement.

If a pupil is in receipt of alternative provision, it is part of their regular timetable for a period of time.

The aim is always for the AP to support a return to a full-time education placement. In Hampshire, on occasion we require AP to provide specialist support, for instance where a child with speech and language difficulties has additional therapeutic support as part of their provision. More information about [Alternative Provision is available](#).

The County Council currently commissions AP through an approved provider framework. The main objectives of alternative education provision are to:

- Ensure that children and young people placed in alternative provision have the best chances of securing positive outcomes.
- Support academic attainment.
- Meet specific personal, social and academic needs, including those set out in an Education, Health, and Care Plan, where relevant.
- Improve learner motivation, self-confidence, attendance and engagement.
- Ensure that clearly defined learner objectives are met, including reintegration into a school setting, where appropriate.

Our commissioning of AP is underpinned by the [Department for Education's SEND and AP improvement plan](#).

It is envisaged that the following groups of children and young people may require access to AP, which may also include Children Looked After by the local authority:

- Children and young people who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools.
- Those children and young people without a school place.
- Children and young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan and whose needs cannot be met in local authority maintained or academy provision.
- Children and young people who have an identified Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) need as well as complex physical health needs.
- Children and young people who are disengaged from school and who are at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
- Juvenile, young offenders and ex-offenders.
- Pregnant teenagers and teenage parents.

For children and young people with EHC Plans the most prevalent groups utilising AP are those whose needs cannot be met within a maintained or academy provision, those disengaged from school and at risk of becoming NEET and those with identified Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.

### **A reformed and integrated role for Alternative Provision**

Hampshire County Council is making Alternative Provision (AP) an integral part of local SEND systems by requiring the new local SEND partnerships to plan and deliver an AP service focussed on early intervention.

There are currently 80 providers on Hampshire County Council's AP provider framework. The provider list commenced in July 2022 and runs for a period of four years, until June 2026, through the In-tend procurement portal. The tender reference is CS18368. Learners requiring provision will have diverse needs and placements are made using different categories, which include location, key stage, primary SEN needs and learning pathway.

AP is in the recommissioning phase and the current AP framework will be succeeded by the SEND Alternative Provision Register, contract reference CS25116. This transition reflects a refinement of the needs of the SEN Team informed by experience and evolving service requirements. Contracts established under the current agreement are expected to conclude by the end of the Autumn Term 2025 (where appropriate), with the new register scheduled for implementation at the beginning of the Autumn Term 2025. Providers currently on the existing framework will be required to submit a new application to join the register. For information on how to apply to the register please use the following link: [Hampshire County Council Electronic Tendering Site – Tenders – Current \(in-tendhost.co.uk\)](https://tendhost.co.uk)

### **Quality**

The quality of all specialist education provision is measured through four processes:

- Self-assessments and validation.
- Site visits by the Hampshire Inspector and Advisory Service (HIAS).
- Performance indicators agreed with the SEN service when contracting AP for a child for a specified period.
- Contract management reviews.

## Alternative education provision – requirement to register as an independent school

Advice from the Department for Education (DfE), entitled 'Registration of independent schools' published in January 2016, stipulates that any alternative education provider (as defined by Section 4 of the Education Act 1996) would need to be registered as an independent school, if it is providing:

- Full-time education for five or more learners of compulsory school age or where one or more such learners have an EHC Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs.
- Full-time education for five or more learners of compulsory school age or where one or more learner is 'looked after' by the contracting authorities.

Because of this requirement, there may be some providers who were originally categorised as alternative providers of education, but who will ultimately need to become registered as independent schools.

Any school providing AP will need to be registered with Ofsted or the Care and Training Inspectorate for Wales and be able to supply evidence of successful relevant inspections. Where judgements or quality ratings are not 'Good' or better, our School Improvement (SI) service will work with the setting to determine if we are content to continue using that provision, which might include agreement to an improvement schedule that is monitored by the SI service. Hampshire County Council reserves the right to suspend any provider from the approved provider list in the circumstances that they do not work with us in this way after receipt of a judgement or quality rating that is not 'Good' or better.

Provision must demonstrably meet the standards set out in the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, or any subsequent statutory requirements in relation to the quality of education; spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; welfare, health and safety of pupils; suitability of staff, supply, and proprietors; premises of and accommodation at schools; provision of information; manner in which complaints are handled; and quality of leadership and management of schools.

## Support for providers

The County Council aims to develop closer working relationships with providers through provider workshops, market development discussions and contract management arrangements.

Provider forums and workshops are an opportunity to open a dialogue between Hampshire County Council and INMS schools, independent schools and AP providers and help ensure the market is responsive to changing service user need. As well as being an opportunity for the County Council to share information and provide support to providers, forums are an opportunity for providers to network, raise questions and bring fresh ideas to discussions.

Hampshire County Council manages its tender processes through [In-tend](#), where organisations can view contracts and apply for tender opportunities.

The County Council has a duty to ensure it secures **best value** for any AP it commissions, which is an underpinning principle of the existing framework and the new SEND Alternative Provision Register, along with **quality of provision** and **transparency** in its commissioning.

### A recap of our commissioning priorities:

- To ensure the identified outcomes for children are met.
- To commission a blended approach to specialist education services, developing block contracting arrangements (INMSS) to improve parity of provision across the county, reduce travelling time and transitioning from out-of-county to increased numbers of in-county placements.
- To procure provision that offers value for money.
- To enter longer term contractual arrangements with relevant providers in Hampshire.
- To strengthen and improve outcomes for children and young people accessing specialist education provision, raising attainment and narrowing the attainment gap with their peers by providing personalised learning to meet individual needs through clear learning pathways and transitions.
- To prepare children and young people for the next phase in their education and preparing them for adulthood, supporting transitions to lower levels of support and back into mainstream settings.
- To promote and support transitions through incentivisation and flexible contracting.
- To increase our commissioned independent sector and AP capacity in line with the needs profiles of our children and young people.
- To reduce our commissioning of specialist post-16 placements in the independent sector because we believe these can be well met by existing local provision.

## So, what next?

We invite you to join with us on our mission to provide high-quality specialist education provision for children with SEND in Hampshire. By working together, we can have a significant impact on the lives of young people in Hampshire.

We would like to encourage any providers in the specialist education sector for SEND children, or who may be considering expanding or setting up provision in or close to Hampshire, to talk to us.

*Your organisation has a crucial role to play...*

- **Have questions, ideas, want to talk?**  
Get in touch or request a call back: [CategoryManagement@hants.gov.uk](mailto:CategoryManagement@hants.gov.uk)
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See our Children's Services [Sufficiency Duty Strategy](#) and [Hampshire Children and Young People's Plan \(CYPP\)](#) which set out how we aim to meet our sufficiency duties and our priorities for the coming years.