Private Document Pack

Meeting	Schools Forum
Date and Time	Friday 3 July 2026 at 1.30 pm
Place	Ashburton Hall , EII Court, Winchester
Contact:	Anita Blackwell, Tel: schoolsforum@hants.gov.uk

AGENDA

	1	**Welcome and Apologies**	**Chris Anders**
	2	**Declarations of interest**	**All**
	3	**Minutes of last meeting - 23 March 2026** (Pages 3 - 6)	**Chris Anders**
	4	**Actions arising**	**Chris Anders**
	5	**Pupil Premium Plus for looked after children: Virtual School Annual Update** (Pages 7 - 32)	**Michelle Nye**
	6	**SEN Reform Plan** (Pages 33 - 58)	**Emma Steele**
	7	**Dedicated Schools Grant Deficit Management Plan Update** (Pages 59 - 74)	**Hannah Geddert** **Natalie Smith**
	8	**Schools Budget Update** (Pages 75 - 86)	**Andrew Minall**
	9	**LGR Update**	
	10	**AOB**	

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Hampshire County Council

Hampshire Schools Forum

Date	**23 March 2026**	
Time	**14:00pm**	
Location	**MS Teams**	
Present	Primary	Claire Hope Tina Nowell John Littlewood, Peter Bassett,
	Secondary	Chris Anders (Chair), Paul German, Chris Sermon, Pete Mai, Ian Waine, Sefton Lucas, Stacey Parsons Fiona Wyeth, Mark Maranda, Keith Atton
	Special	Marijke Miles,
	Nursery	Joan Kerr
	Academy	Kathryn Marshall, Hilary Manton, Keith Norman
	Post 16 Diocese	David Woolley
	TLP	Jo Ayres
	HCC	Cllr Chadd, Cllr Forster, Natalie Smith, Andrew Minall, Gemma Anderson, Annabel Hodder, Anita Blackwell (clerk)
Apologies/ *Absent*	Primary	Jason Anderson, *June Kershaw, Kishor Patel, Richard Austin*
	Special	Justin Innes, Roy Cleaver
	TLP	*Susan Kent*
	Other Members	*Diane Wycherley Nicci Atkinson Simon Evans*
	Academy	*Susan Hamilton*
	Education Centre	Vicky Essex
	Other Members	Sara Russell,

1	**Welcome and apologies.**	
	• Apologies received and recorded as above	
2	**Declarations of Interest**	
	• No change since previous meeting	
3	**Minutes of the last meeting held on 5 January 2026**	
	• All in agreement that the minutes of the last meeting (**5** January) are a true and accurate record of the meeting.	
4	**Actions Arising**	
	05/01/2026 Hiliary Manton raised a query regarding a reduction in contributions to LGPS and if Hampshire has any input into discussions – AM explained that there is a formal process undertaken by actuaries every	

	few years and a school comms will be published in due course – information available in following link if required- .Annex 2 Draft 2025 Funding Strategy Statement.pdf	
5	**Specialist Education Market Position Statement – Oliver Lane-Smith**	
	Paper shared with agenda Questions points raised **If the average cost for Hampshire is £79k per placement – how does this relate to geographic neighbours?** O L-S explained that there are some expensive providers who are part of large groups. LA is working hard to try and bring costs down as much as possible but demand for placements is high. NS explained that SEND reforms will be looking to ensure that the sector is regulated. According DfE data the average cost is similar to what Hampshire is paying **Although progress has been made in Hampshire – schools are finding it difficult to get costed provision agreed and paid – what can be done about this?** NS explained that the Digital Optimisation programme is looking to improve the process. Pete Main to link in with Emma Steele and be part of a discussion with a pilot group of HTs and to feedback in due course.	
6	**Update on High Needs Provision Discussion Workshop - 9 March 2026**	
	Slides to be circulated with minutes. Local Offer Live Events – details to be shared far and wide. (*see end of minutes)* Cllr Forster asked for all to help promote the event **Where can we find AP register please?** Link to Moodle site shared.. AP 24-25 | Leadership Moodle NS emphasised that although LA do quality assure it is for the commissioner to complete safeguarding checks.	
7	**AOB**	
	None	

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Join us at an event near you to find out about your local special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support.

Our Discovery Days offer a welcoming space for families to explore the wide range of local services and support available. They provide the chance to speak directly with the teams who work with children and young people with SEND, helping families access timely information, early support, and meaningful connections within their community.

Families can expect

- Opportunities to meet professionals from key SEND services
- Information stands from charities, providers, and community organisations
- General support and advice for children and young people aged 0 to 25
- Signposting to early help, assessment pathways, and inclusive activities
- A welcoming, relaxed environment where families can explore at their own pace

connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk/localoffer

Hampshire County Council

HAMPSHIRE PARENT CARER NETWORK

Hampshire Local Offer

Calendar of events this spring

Lyndhurst Community Centre, Main Car Park, Lyndhurst SO43 7NY	Friday 20 March	2pm to 6pm
Leigh Park Community Centre, Dunsbury Way, Leigh Park, Havant PO9 5BG	Saturday 21 March	10am to 1pm
Andover Community Church, Charlton Rd, Andover SP10 3JH	Thursday 26 March	2pm to 6pm
Farnborough Library, Pinehurst Roundabout, Farnborough GU14 7JZ	Tuesday 14 April	2.30pm to 6pm
Hampshire County Council HQ, Elizabeth II Court, The Castle, Winchester, SO23 8UJ	Monday 20 April	1pm to 5pm
Xperience Youth Centre, 70 Trinity St, Fareham PO16 7SJ	Tuesday 28 April	12pm to 4pm
Gosport Discovery Centre, High St, Gosport PO12 1BT	Thursday 30 April	2.30pm to 6pm
Alton Maltings Centre, 2 Maltings Close, Alton GU34 1DT	Thursday 7 May	2pm to 6pm
Basingstoke Discovery Centre, Potters Walk, Basingstoke RG21 7LS	Tuesday 12 May	2pm to 6pm
Pavilion on the Park, 1 Kingfisher Rd, Eastleigh SO50 9LH	Friday 15 May	2pm to 6pm
Petersfield Festival Hall, Heath Rd, Petersfield GU31 4DZ	Monday 18 May	2pm to 6pm

To find more details on these events, or for further information on the Hampshire Local Offer, visit **connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk/localoffer** or scan the QR code.

Hampshire County Council

Education and Inclusion Branch Management Team

Hampshire County Council
Schools Forum Report

Date of Meeting: 3 July 2026

Report Author: Michelle Nye, Headteacher, Hampshire Virtual School

Title of Report: Pupil Premium Plus for looked after children, Virtual School Annual Update 2025-2026

Confidential: No

Contact: Michelle Nye, 01962 835227, michelle.nye@hants.gov.uk

Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an annual overview of the looked-after child pupil premium, also known as Pupil Premium Plus (PP+). It outlines the role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) in managing this grant, explains how the centrally held portion is strategically deployed, and sets out how PP+ funding is being used to improve the educational progress and outcomes of Hampshire's children in care. This report also seeks to strengthen transparency and accountability by evidencing impact and identifying areas for ongoing improvement.

Executive Summary

2. This report draws upon scrutiny of Personal Education Plans (PEPs), which detail how PP+ funding is used, and on 'Corporate Parent' visits conducted by the Virtual School, during which the effective use of PP+ is reviewed and discussed. While reporting on Pupil Premium Plus is not a statutory requirement, it was agreed that an annual update would be provided to support transparency and reinforce collaborative working with the Schools' Forum.

Relevant Background and information

3. As of 1 April 2026, there were 1,866 children recorded as being in the care of Hampshire, a reduction of 84 compared to last year. This includes 1,207 statutory school-age children (Key Stage 1–4), an increase of 27 from the previous year. The cohort includes 202 pre-school children, 117 in Key Stage 1, 343 in Key Stage 2, 361 in Key Stage 3 and 347 in Key Stage 4. There were 457 young people in Key Stage 5 (approximately 100 more than in 2024-25).

4. Within the statutory-age cohort, 807 children (66.9%) are placed within Hampshire and 400 (33.1%) are educated outside the county. Within the post-16 cohort, 217 students (47.5%) remain in Hampshire while 240 (52.5%) are placed out of county.

5. As of 1 April 2026, 457 children (37.9%) of statutory school age had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), most under the category of social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). A further 36 children (3%) were undergoing EHC assessment, and 308 children (25.5%) were receiving SEN support, meaning that over 60% of statutory-school-age children in care have identified SEND.

6. The Hampshire Virtual School remains committed to improving outcomes for children in care through strong partnership working with education settings and wider professionals. As of April 2026, the Virtual School comprises 27.64 FTE staff, including 4.13 FTE for extended duties and 3.46 FTE supporting post-16 learners.

7. The role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) was extended to include Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) in September 2022 and further in September 2024 to include children in Kinship care. The DfE remit requires virtual schools to foster strengthened partnerships between education and social care, provide advice and guidance, and use data effectively to inform practice. The role is strategic and not focused on individual casework. While these duties remain non-statutory, the dedicated grant, reporting requirements, and formal Memorandum of Understanding signal a movement toward future statutory implementation. The Virtual School have a deputy head for extended duties supported by two education advisers, an education officer, and an education liaison officer.

8. The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act, which received Royal Assent in May 2026, strengthens and clarifies the role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) in promoting the educational outcomes of children with a social worker (CWSW). In doing so, it places the role on a firmer statutory footing and reinforces its function as one of strategic leadership across education systems, rather than solely an advisory role.

9. The Virtual School continues to act as if all Hampshire children in care are pupils of a single school, tracking their progress, ensuring appropriate provision, and supporting them to achieve strong outcomes. One of the VSH’s key statutory duties is the direct management of Pupil Premium Plus distribution, ensuring it is used promptly to address each child’s needs as identified in their PEP.

10. Children who were previously looked after are also eligible for pupil premium plus. This is provided directly to schools on the basis of eligible pupils recorded in the October 2025 school census, who were both looked after by an English or Welsh local authority immediately before being adopted, or who left local authority care on a special guardianship order or child arrangements order. The Virtual School Head has no direct responsibility for the use or distribution of this grant beyond providing advice and guidance and promoting best practice. The Virtual School extended duties team oversee this area of work for Hampshire.

11. Each September, the Virtual School provides training for Designated Teachers, School Business Managers and other school staff to support accurate census recording. In Summer 2025, 126 pupils were recorded as previously looked after children (PLAC), compared with 65 in Autumn 2025. This suggests that 61 pupils were not recorded as PLAC on transition to secondary school. Where pupils are not identified as care experienced, they may miss important pastoral and emotional support. Schools may also lose £2,690 per pupil from April 2026, significantly reducing funding for this vulnerable group.

12. The Virtual School has issued updated guidance for schools on the safe transfer of this sensitive information, available on the Virtual School Moodle. Schools are encouraged to ask parents and guardians to notify the designated teacher if they believe their child meets PLAC criteria, enabling Education Support Plan (ESP) meetings and accurate census recording.

Pupil premium plus arrangements in Hampshire

13. The statutory guidance published in April 2014 requires the Virtual School Head to directly manage the arrangements for distributing the pupil premium plus to schools on behalf of the children in care to their local authority. This must be undertaken in accordance with the annually published DfE grant conditions and outlined within a written, publicly available policy.

14. The purpose of the grant is to close the attainment gap and improve educational outcomes for children in care. The guidance emphasises that PP+ should be used promptly and purposefully to meet the needs identified in a child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) and that allocation processes should be simple, transparent and minimise delay.

15. Allocations are made on a financial year basis (April to March), although funding is distributed to schools in line with the academic year.

16. For the 2025–26 financial year, in June 2024 the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) confirmed a provisional allocation of £2,630 per eligible child. Eligibility was based on children looked after for at least one day, as recorded in the March 2023 SSDA903 return, and aged 4 to 15 as at 31 August 2023. This was updated in December 2024 to reflect amendments to the dataset. The rate will increase to £2,690 per child from April 2026.

17. As set out in the conditions of grant, local authorities may not carry forward centrally held PP+ funding into the following financial year, and any unspent funding is subject to recovery.

18. In Hampshire, the Virtual School allocates £1,600 per child directly to schools, released in three termly instalments. A further £1,090 per child is retained centrally to support Virtual School services, interventions and strategic projects. This approach is broadly consistent with practice across many local authorities.

19. A full term's PP+ is provided regardless of when a child enters care. Unlike some local authorities, Hampshire does not require schools to complete a bidding or application process, maintaining a streamlined approach.

20. The Virtual School Head is accountable for the effective use of the entire PP+ allocation, not only the centrally held portion. Therefore, where this

cannot be evidenced, for example where a PEP is incomplete or does not demonstrate a clear educational need, the Virtual School may defer release of funding until sufficient information is provided. The Hampshire Virtual School's pupil premium plus policy and guidance document is available on the Virtual School website.

21. Arrangements for allocating PP+ are reviewed annually, informed by analysis of the progress, needs and outcomes of the children in care cohort. For the 2026–27 financial year, no amendments to the existing allocation model are planned, and PP+ will continue to be issued termly at £600 (summer), £550 (autumn), and £450 (spring) for each Hampshire looked after child on roll.

Pupil premium plus 2025-26: overview and impact

22. In Hampshire, the majority of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding is allocated directly to schools to meet the individual educational needs of children in care, as identified through their Personal Education Plans (PEPs). The accurate identification, assessment and recording of need within PEPs is therefore critical to ensuring that PP+ is appropriately targeted and that the resulting impact on progress and achievement can be clearly evidenced.

23. Since September 2023, following the introduction of the new electronic PEP system, the Virtual School has audited at least 30% of returned PEPs annually, with a specific focus on the quality of needs analysis, the ambition and precision of target setting, and the demonstrable impact of PP+ usage. While not every child's PEP is audited, the Virtual School aims to review at least one PEP per school to ensure all designated teachers receive constructive feedback.

24. Completion rates for PEPs have increased steadily since the introduction of the electronic system. The completion rate reached 95% in Autumn 2025 (up from 77.6% in Autumn 2023), and the Spring 2026 return rate remains fractionally below at 94%. This consistent improvement has strengthened the Virtual School's ability to monitor submissions, follow up promptly where PEPs are outstanding, and provide timely, targeted guidance to settings.

25. Audit activity indicates that schools' use of the Virtual School's 'PEP Toolkit' is helping staff to identify and understand unmet needs across seven domains: relationships (adult/peer), executive functioning, self-regulation, motivation, sense of self, and language development.

The toolkit has been updated and is readily available on the Virtual School Moodle, organised by domain and supported with enhanced materials, including a narrated PowerPoint created by an educational psychologist to improve accessibility.

26. Additionally, since September 2023, the Virtual School has purchased the Reach2Teach app, which is available through the PEP platform and provides a structured needs analysis tool to support effective and targeted planning. Although not all schools have Hampshire children in care on roll, many have previously looked-after children, those with a social worker, or children in kinship care. The app is available to all designated teachers, and those unable to access it via PEP are encouraged to contact the Virtual School inbox for login details.

27. Virtual School training now incorporates the use of these needs-analysis tools, over 50 delegates attended training delivered jointly by Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS) and Virtual School Designated Teacher Champions, using a team around the child approach to applying the Reach2Teach framework.

28. Given that PP+ is most effective when used to target each child's specific needs, it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of high-impact strategies. Schools continue to select from a wide range of evidence-based interventions, recognising that for some children, approaches such as circle of friends, peer mentoring, or multi-sensory programmes may offer greater benefit than subject-specific tutoring.

29. The centrally retained pupil premium funding is managed directly by the Virtual School. The governance of the operational and strategic work of the Virtual School is provided by the Education and Inclusion Branch led by the Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion. The Virtual School Head is required to produce an annual report and regular updates to the Corporate Parenting Board which includes elected members and senior leaders across Hampshire. Additionally, Virtual School has an Advisory Board which meets once a term and is chaired by the County Education Manager, Early Intervention and Vulnerable Children

30. The following subsections outline the use and impact of centrally retained PP+ within Hampshire, organised into three key areas:

    a) the Virtual School team
    b) training and capacity building
    c) partnership working

Collectively, work in these areas continues to make a significant difference to the educational experiences, stability and outcomes of Hampshire's children in care, and to the confidence and capability of the professionals who support them.

Virtual School Team

31. The Virtual School Management Team consists of the Virtual School Headteacher, a 1.0 FTE Deputy Head with responsibility for children in care, a 0.8 FTE Deputy Head overseeing extended duties (CWSW, PLAC and kinship care), and 6.8 FTE Education Advisors, including two with specific responsibility for extended duties. The Education Advisors lead the delivery of a comprehensive programme of training and support for designated teachers, social workers and foster carers, focusing on their crucial role in promoting educational engagement and progress for children in care. They also lead on 'Corporate Parent' visits to schools across their districts, ensuring designated teachers are well-supported, appropriately challenged, and equipped to fulfil their statutory responsibilities.

32. The Education Officers, Senior Education Liaison Officers and Education Liaison Officers lead on individual casework, working closely with social care colleagues to support timely school admissions, maintain educational stability, and implement early intervention when concerns arise. Their work has a strong and consistent focus on monitoring attendance patterns, identifying children at risk of fixed-term exclusion, and supporting those experiencing challenges in school or during placement transitions. The team remains committed to minimising the time any child spends out of education, particularly during changes in care placements. The Education Liaison Officers, funded through the centrally retained PP+, have had a notable positive impact, and their work, combined with the introduction of the electronic PEP system, has strengthened the monitoring of attendance and enabled swift follow-up where unusual codes are recorded.

33. Despite recent growth, the Virtual School team remains relatively small in proportion to the size and complexity of the cohort. As a result, building and sustaining capacity across the wider professional network remains a key strategic priority. The development of strong, credible relationships and the maintenance of efficient communication systems are central to the effectiveness of the Virtual School's work. These aims are supported through the combined efforts of the Education Officers, Senior Education Liaison Officers, Education Liaison Officers and

Education Advisors, who work collaboratively with schools and social care colleagues to ensure consistency, clarity and a shared focus on the educational needs of children in care.

34. The Virtual School also benefits from the work of its dedicated educational psychologist (EP), whose role provides additional flexibility and responsiveness. The EP runs weekly consultation sessions for professionals supporting children in care; these sessions are advertised via the Virtual School website and regular communications to designated teachers. Feedback from professionals indicates that these consultations are highly valued and support improved understanding and problem-solving around individual needs. The EP also completes specialist assessments where appropriate, delivers training, and provides supervision for Virtual School staff where required.

Training and capacity building

35. In Hampshire, the Virtual School's approach is centred on building capacity across a large and diverse local authority, ensuring that all professionals involved in supporting children in care have the knowledge, confidence and tools needed to meet their educational needs. Consequently, there is a strong emphasis on delivering high-quality, evidence-informed training for designated teachers, as set out in the Virtual School's training brochure.

36. We continue to enhance our statutory training for designated teachers, with a focus on supporting staff to use the PEP Toolkit and the Reach2Teach needs-analysis tool effectively. These tools enable designated teachers and lead professionals to develop a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of children's behaviour, assess needs accurately and plan high-quality interventions within the PEP. Our training offer is consistently well regarded, and participation continues to rise. Evaluation analysis demonstrates that designated teachers leave sessions with a clearer understanding of their statutory responsibilities and feel more confident in providing strong leadership within their schools to promote the educational progress of children in care. We have also seen a notable improvement in the overall quality of PEPs from staff who have attended training.

37. In October 2025, the Virtual School hosted a Designated Teacher Conference featuring keynote speakers Ashley John-Baptiste, BBC journalist and reporter, and Nick Barwick from Insights Wellbeing. Both speakers, who have personal experience of being in care, shared

powerful and compelling stories that resonated strongly with attendees. The conference was well attended, with over 150 delegates participating. The event will run again in November, featuring two additional inspirational speakers with lived experience of the care system.

38. The Attachment and Trauma Aware Settings (ATAS) programme entered its sixth year in partnership with Knowledge Change Action (KCA) in September 2026. However, following review and reflection, the Virtual School has rebranded and relaunched the programme as Supporting Trauma Attachment Aware Relational Settings (STAARS) in January 2026. STAARS is now delivered in-house, drawing on the expertise of the Virtual School team and our educational psychologist, with an enhanced focus on practical implementation. The programme incorporates use of the Attachment Research Community (ARC) audit and includes contributions from Primary Behaviour Service (PBS) and SEND Advisory teams, who deliver additional training inputs across the programme.

39. Education Advisors provide ‘buddy’ visits to schools throughout the year, supporting lead teams with implementation, offering guidance and sharing resources to embed relational, trauma-informed practice effectively.

40. The Virtual School has also secured ARC membership for all Hampshire schools and settings. As of 1 April 2026, over 270 schools and settings have requested membership. Two schools are currently working at gold level, seven at silver, and 19 at bronze, each having completed their audit, development plan and core training. Silver and gold schools have submitted case studies showcasing their work, which can be viewed on the Virtual School Moodle. The relational approach promoted through the ARC pathways aligns closely with the Hampshire Approach to Inclusion and represents a sustained, whole-school commitment to long-term cultural change.

41. During the 2024–25 academic year, all Year R, Year 6 and Year 7 designated teachers were offered bespoke training and transition support. ‘Smart Moves’ books were provided to all schools with Year 6 children to support transition planning. Termly online network meetings were held, each attended by over 150 delegates, offering regular opportunities for professional dialogue, problem solving and shared learning.

42. For Early Years children transitioning into Reception, the Virtual School provides carefully designed transition packs for early years providers, foster carers and receiving schools. These packs include books and resources focused on personal, emotional and social development and early literacy, as well as activities to support early number development. Their purpose is to promote consistency, familiarity and a sense of belonging, supporting secure relationships at the point of transition into school.

Partnership working

43. The Virtual School has continued to collaborate with a wide range of teams and services to deliver a high-quality, bespoke training and support offer for designated teachers and other professionals working with our children.

44. The strong partnership with Hampshire Futures has continued to strengthen through the work of the Education and Participation Team. The proactive support provided to the most vulnerable Year 11 pupils during their transition to post-16 destinations has contributed to a reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). As of March 2026, post-16 participation in education, employment and/or training (EET) for young people in care in Hampshire stands at 85.1%, significantly higher than the national average (77.2%) and regional average (71.9%). This reflects the impact of early planning, targeted interventions and sustained support.

45. Additionally, the Virtual School has commissioned Future You, a service that provides creative, relationship-based approaches to re-engage young people in education and support transitions into school or alternative provision. This offer has been particularly beneficial for children living in residential homes, where personalised and flexible support is often required.

46. The Virtual School has also commissioned Hampshire Outdoors to deliver bespoke one-day programmes designed to support children with emotional regulation and help them reconnect positively with learning. These sessions provide structured, experiential opportunities that build confidence, resilience and readiness to engage in education.

47. Collaboration has continued with Services for Young Children, strengthening the joint training offer for Year R teachers and improving use of the Early Years PEP Toolkit. Joint work on PEP quality assurance

and transition has resulted in consistently high return rates of around 98% for this cohort, supporting stronger early educational planning and improved continuity for children entering school.

48. During 2024–25, the Virtual School also worked closely with Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS), ensuring that specialist expertise is deployed where needed to support school-level challenge, undertake project work, contribute to PEP auditing, and deliver a range of targeted training activities.

49. The Virtual School continues to work in partnership with the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) to ensure that unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people receive a comprehensive language assessment and profile of needs, supporting their transition into mainstream school and helping ensure appropriate provision from the outset.

50. The Deputy Head for extended duties has collaborated closely with the Inclusion Support Service (ISS) to support the delivery of the termly attendance hubs across districts. 97% of secondary headteachers and 78% of primary headteachers along with attendance leads schools have signed up to attend all three hubs, ensuring an ongoing focus on improving the attendance of the most vulnerable children and young people and strengthening multi-agency efforts to reduce persistent absence.

Educational outcomes for children in care

51. As outlined, schools in Hampshire and the Virtual School remain committed and determined to improving engagement, participation and attainment for Hampshire’s children in care. We recognise the importance of focusing not only on academic results but also on the educational experiences and individual journeys of each child, many of whom have overcome significant challenges arising from complex trauma, social and emotional needs, and the wider impact of adverse childhood experiences.

52. The effective use of pupil premium plus funding by both schools and the Virtual School is evidenced within PEPs however Virtual School recognise that further improvements in educational outcomes are needed for our children and young people in care.

53. The following analysis relates to children in the ‘OC2’ or ‘published’ cohort for the 2024–25 academic year (those in care continuously for at least 12 months as of 31 March 2025).

54. Across all year groups, results vary year on year—particularly in Key Stage 1 where cohort sizes are small and individual changes can have a more pronounced effect. Outcomes are also influenced by the rising proportion of children with an EHCP or SEN support, alongside placement changes and children’s experiences prior to entering care. Additionally, around 36% of children in care are educated outside Hampshire, which also contributes to variation.

55. The table below shows good level of development (GLD) attainment for the OC2 cohort. This data includes all HCC CiC at 31-Mar of the exam year as submitted in the SSDA903, attending both HCC and Out of County (OOC) schools (with available attainment data in Nexus).

Exam Year	**GLD**			
	%	%	%	%
	National CLA	SE CLA	Total OC2 Cohort	HCC CLA
2025	**44.0%**	**41%**	**23**	**43.8%**
2024	39.0%	33%	30	36.7%
2023	41.0%	36%	28	42.9%
2022	40.0%	41%	32	41.4%

56. Data from Nexus indicates that Hampshire children in care performed 7.1% better than the previous year, broadly in line with national outcomes and 2.8% above the Southeast region. GLD performance is broken down into three prime areas, communication and language, personal, social, emotional development (PSED), and physical development and two specific areas, literacy and maths. Hampshire children in care performed above national CLA in communication and language, PSED and physical development by 4.3%, and above in literacy by 7.3%. Performance in mathematics, however, was 9% below the national CLA figure. The improvement in literacy is particularly encouraging and may reflect the positive impact of the Early Years transition packs, which support communication, language and PSED.

57. The data below presents phonics school attainment data for HCC Children in Care (CiC) in Year 1 and 2. Data is collated and presented by the Data and Information Team, (last updated 16 October 2025) and sourced from Nexus.

Exam Year	Year 1 OC2 Cohort			Year 2 OC2 Cohort		
	%		%	%		%
	National CLA	SE Region	HCC CLA	National CLA	SE Region	HCC CLA
2025	59.0%	54.0%	62.5%	39.0%	36.0%	41.7%
2024	61.0%	55.0%	62.9%	40.0%	38.0%	38.1%
2023	61.0%	60.0%	53.8%	45.0%	53.0%	55.0%
2022	60.0%	54.0%	57.1%	33.0%	51.0%	42.1%

58. Year 1 phonics outcomes continue to be broadly in line with previous years. Hampshire CLA pupils sit 3.5% above national CLA and 8.5% above the Southeast region. Year 2 phonics outcomes also improved and are 2.7% above national.

59. The data below presents school attainment data for HCC CiC (Children in Care) of statutory school age at Key Stage 2. Data is collated and presented by the Data and Information Team, (updated 6 January 2026) and sourced from Nexus, with additional data added from DQC collections.

Exam Year	Reading (OC2 Cohort)			Writing TA (OC2 Cohort)			Maths (OC2 Cohort)			RWM (OC2 Cohort)		
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	National CLA	SE Region	HCC CLA	National CLA	SE Region	HCC CLA	National CLA	SE Region	HCC CLA	National CLA	SE Region	HCC CLA
2025	**52.0%**	**49.0%**	**52.6%**	**45.0%**	**39.0%**	**39.5%**	**47.0%**	**44.0%**	**46.1%**	**35.0%**	**30.0%**	**30.3%**
2024	53.0%	46.0%	50.0%	42.6%	42.0%	48.8%	47.0%	40.0%	51.2%	34.0%	27.0%	31.7%
2023	54.0%	51.0%	50.6%	47.0%	41%	43.4%	50.0%	43.0%	48.1%	36.0%	33.0%	32.9%
2022	52.0%	47.0%	47.0%	43.0%	38.0%	30.8%	45.0%	39.0%	34.8%	32.0%	26.0%	20.0%

60. Key Stage 2 data continue to show mixed outcomes. Reading improved by 2.6% compared with the previous year and sits marginally above national CLA. However, outcomes in writing and maths declined and remain below national CLA. Combined reading, writing and maths attainment sits 1.4% below last year and 4.7% below national CLA, though Hampshire CLA remain slightly above the Southeast region by 0.3%. Of the 83 children in the OC2 cohort, 32.5% have an EHCP and 20.4% are on SEN support, meaning 55% of the cohort have identified SEND, 5% more than the previous year. The high proportion of children with social emotional mental health (SEMH) as a primary need contributes significantly to these outcomes.

61. The data below presents school attainment data for HCC Children in Care (CiC) in Year 11. Data is collated and presented by the Data and

Information Team, (updated 25 February 2026) and sourced from Nexus and supplemented by DQC collection

Exam Year	Attainment 8 (OC2 Cohort)			Progress 8 (OC2 Cohort)			Basics 9-5 (OC2 Cohort)			Basics 9-4
	National CLA	SE Region CLA	HCC CLA	National CLA	SE Region CLA	HCC CLA	National CLA	SE Region CLA	HCC CLA	HCC CLA
2025	22.9	21.7	19.8	n/a	n/a	n/a	11.0%	9.0%	2.3%	20.7%
2024	18.7	16.3	22.1	-1.29	-1.37	-1.05	9.0%	7.0%	7.5%	16.3%
2023	19.9	17.9	24.2	-1.25	-1.33	-1.23	10.0%	8.0%	10.1%	21.9%
2022	25.9	18.4	20.1	-1.06	-1.49	-1.40	14.0%	10.0%	12.2%	20.6%

62. The Year 11 outcomes for 2024-25 show a mixed pattern of attainment and progress when compared with previous years and wider benchmarks. Attainment 8 for 2025 (19.8) sits below both the national CLA (22.9) and SE region CLA (21.7) figures, marking a decrease from the higher 22.1 achieved locally in 2024. Basics outcomes reveal a widening gap at Grade 9-5, with only 2.3% of HCC CLA pupils meeting the threshold in 2025 versus 7.5% in 2024 and remaining well below national and regional averages. However, the Basics 9-4 measure shows some relative stability over time, with 20.7% achieving this standard in 2025, broadly in line with previous years.

63. Among the 141 young people in the OC2 cohort, 38.2% had an EHCP and a further 23.4% were on SEN support, representing 61.6% with SEND, an increase of 10% from the previous year. As SEMH continues to be the most common SEN designation, this has a substantial impact on attainment, particularly at GCSE. Additionally, 46.5% of Year 11 pupils were educated in other local authorities, which can contribute to variation in results.

64. There are 54 missing GCSE results in the CLA dataset. Missing or incomplete data is not uncommon due to several factors: pupils placed outside England or in unregistered settings; data-matching issues across systems such as SSDA903 and the National Pupil Database; inconsistent UPNs or frequent school moves; or pupils not being entered for GCSEs because they are following alternative qualifications (e.g., Functional Skills, Entry Level Certificates), attending specialist provision, or experiencing placement instability or significant SEN needs. The Virtual School works closely with the Data and Information Team to obtain as complete a dataset as possible.

Conclusions and recommendations

65. This report outlines how the effective use of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) supports the local authority, carers and education settings in promoting the educational needs of children in care. It highlights the strategic use of centrally retained funding, the impact of school-level interventions, and the continued development of strong multi-agency partnerships that contribute to improved engagement, stability and outcomes.

66. The analysis demonstrates clear evidence of:

- strengthened systems and improved PEP quality, supported by electronic processes and focused auditing
- high-quality training that enhances the confidence and capability of designated teachers and other professionals
- sustained partnership working that improves attendance, transitions and post-16 participation
- targeted central interventions that benefit those who require additional support.

67. Virtual School recommend that the Schools' Forum notes the content of this report.

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Hampshire County Council

Virtual School

Pupil Premium Plus Virtual School Annual Update 2025-26

Michelle Nye, Virtual School Head

Hampshire Context

- 1866 children recorded as being in the care of Hampshire.
- 1207 of statutory school age, between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4.

Pre school	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Key Stage 5
202	**117**	**343**	**361**	**347**	**457**

- Within statutory age 807 (66.9%) children were placed in Hampshire, 400 out of County (34.8%)
- 457 children (37.9%) of statutory school age had a current Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with the majority being under the category of social, emotional and mental health needs.
- 308 children are on SEN support (25.5%), meaning approximately 60% of children in care of statutory school age have SEND needs.

Source: Asset data 1 April 2026

Extended duties

- Previously looked after children
- Children with a social worker
- Kinship care

- The DfE remit requires virtual schools to foster strengthened partnerships between education and social care, provide advice and guidance, and use data effectively to inform practice.
- The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act, which received Royal Assent in May 2026, strengthens and clarifies the role of the Virtual School Head (VSH)
- Children who were previously looked after are also eligible for pupil premium plus. This is provided directly to schools on the basis of eligible pupils recorded in the October 2025 school census.
- Updated guidance produced for schools on the safe transfer of sensitive information.

Pupil Premium Plus Arrangements

- The ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) allocated to local authorities the provisional amount of £2,630 per child looked after for at least one day, as recorded in the March 2023 children looked-after data return. This allocation was updated in December 2024, based on the same data set to reflect any changes or corrections.
- Pupils from Year R to Year 11 are eligible for the pupil premium plus.
- The Virtual School allocates £1,600 pupil premium plus per child to schools paid in three termly instalments for each child.
- £1090 per child is retained to fund central services and interventions.
- A full term's pupil premium plus is provided, regardless of when a child was taken into care. There is no bidding or application process.
- For the financial year 2026-27, no change is planned to the existing arrangements.

Pupil premium plus 2025-26: overview and impact

- Since September 2023, following the introduction of a new electronic PEP system, the Virtual School has audited at least 30% of PEPs with a particular focus on effective needs analysis and target setting.
- Completion rates for PEPs have increased steadily since the introduction of the electronic system. The completion rate reached 95% in Autumn 2025 (up from 77.6% in Autumn 2023), and the Spring 2026 return rate remains fractionally below at 94%.
- Auditing of personal education plans indicates use of the ‘PEP Toolkit’ and Reach2Teach.
- All Hampshire DTs have access to the Reach2Teach APP, as well as those with our children out of County.

Impact of the pupil premium plus held centrally within Hampshire: Staffing

- Education Advisers
- Education Officers
- Education Liaison Officers
- Admin
- Educational Psychologist

Impact of the pupil premium plus held centrally within Hampshire: Training

- Designated teachers attending training had a clearer understanding of their role and felt more confident in being able to provide leadership in school to promote the educational needs of children in care.
- Designated teacher conference October 2025.
- Supporting Trauma Attachment Aware Relational Settings (STAARS) programme.
- Attachment Research Community (ARC) membership for all Hampshire settings.
- In the academic year 2024-2025, all year R, 6 and year 7 designated teachers were offered bespoke training and transition support.
- Early Years training and transition packs.

https://documents.hants.gov.uk/cic-virtual-college/training-brochure.pdf

Impact of the pupil premium plus held centrally within Hampshire: Partnership Working

- Hampshire Futures and work of the Education Participation Team (EPT) - % of looked after children in education, employment and/or training (EET) 85.1%, compared to national average of 77.2%
- Commissioning of Future You, working creatively to support young people transitioning into school and offer alternative packages of support where they may be struggling to engage.
- Commissioning Hampshire Outdoors, bespoke one day programmes, supporting with regulation and reengagement.
- Services for Young Children, joint training, visits to settings QA'ing PEPs.
- Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS), supporting PEP auditing, project work and training.
- Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) provide our unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people with a language assessment and profile of needs to support their transition into mainstream school.
- Inclusion Support Service (ISS), close collaboration to support delivery of the attendance hubs

Educational outcomes for children in care

- Early Years Foundation Stage, GLD (Good Level of Development) is above last year at 43.8%, broadly in line with national CLA, and above those in the South-East Region by 2.8%.

- Broadly in line with the previous year. Hampshire CLA sit above National CLA by 3.5%, and Nexus data indicates that Hampshire sit above the Southeast Region CLA by 8.5%. The Year 2 phonics attainment is above last year and 2.7% above national.

- Key Stage 2 attainment overall has declined by 1.4% compared to the previous year and Hampshire CLA sits below National CLA by 4.7%. Nexus data indicates Hampshire CLA sits fractionally above Southeast Region CLA by 0.3%.

- In Key Stage 4, attainment 8 has declined and sits both below national and regional CLA. Basics 9-5 remains low, however Basics 9-4 has improved.

SEN Reform Plan

23 June 2026
Emma Steele

Hampshire County Council

Team name (optional)

The SEND Reform Plan

What it is

A single, agreed plan across the local authority, ICB, education partners and parent-carer representatives.

A framework for clear accountability, decision-making and assurance.

A prioritised set of reform actions with ownership and oversight.

The main vehicle through which HCC CMT / LAPB oversees risk, progress and system drift on SEND reform.

What it is not

- ✕ Not a replacement for statutory SEN duties or BAU delivery.
- ✕ Not immediate implementation of national reforms (which remain phased).
- ✕ Not an operational service plan or case-level delivery document.
- ✕ Not owned by one service — ownership and accountability are shared across the partnership.

DfE sign off of the plan

The DfE reviews the Local SEND Reform Plan through a structured assurance process following submission.

Submission
Deadline 19 June.

After submission

- **Internal DfE Finance / High Needs Advisers** assess the financial credibility and sustainability of the plan and advise on eligibility for the High Needs Stability Grant.
- **SEND Reform policy officials (DfE)** check consistency with national reform expectations, including the Universal Offer and Experts at Hand.
- **Work begins in HCC**

DfE, working with NHS England, makes the final approval decision, drawing on adviser recommendations and confirming whether the plan meets the approval threshold or requires revision.

Once approved, the plan is used by DfE as a live document to monitor progress and inform ongoing support, challenge, and oversight. Meetings will take place quarterly to report against progress in the plan. The plan is ‘owned’ and monitored by the Local Area Partnership.

Key messages:

- This is a whole-system plan, not just SEND
- Centres on co-production
- There is an expectation that all partners contribute to delivery.

What the Plan Contains.

- **Vision and Goals**
  What are we trying to achieve?
- **Strategy and 3-Year Roadmap**
  How will we deliver this over the next 3 years?
- **Monitoring and Evaluation**
  How will we know we are making progress and achieving impact?
- **Governance and Accountability**
  How will we ensure delivery stays on track and issues are addressed?
- **Central Government Support**
  What support do we need to enable delivery?
- ***Data template***
- ***Maturity Matrix***

Goal 1:

Improve outcomes for CYP by ensuring needs are identified early and met effectively through a strong universal and graduated offer.

We will:

- Strengthen and embed the Universal Offer 0–25, including ordinarily available provision (OAP) and inclusive practice across all phases and education settings.
- Use Experts at Hand and Transforming SEND (TSEND) (UO04) workstreams to bring specialist expertise earlier, reduce escalation and support mainstream inclusion.
- Improve timeliness, quality and consistency of support at SEN Support, reducing reliance on statutory pathways.

How this will be measured:

- Improved attainment outcomes for children at SEN Support at GLD, KS2, KS4 and KS5.
- Improved attendance, with reductions in persistent and severe absence for SEND cohorts.
- Reduction in use of suspensions and exclusions for pupils at SEN Support.
- Reduction in EHCNA as needs are met at the right time.

Goal 2:

Increase confidence of parents, carers and young people through a clearer, more consistent and more transparent SEND system.

We will:

- Improve children and families' experience by reducing escalation, delay and inconsistency across localities.
- Strengthen co-production through the LAP, Parent Carer and Youth Forums so families can see how their voice shapes system decisions.
- Include parents and the voice of young people in key decision making to shape our offer

How this will be measured:

- Positive movement in parent, carer and CYP confidence and experience measures (local feedback, co-production assurance evidence).

Goal 3:

Secure better value for money and long-term financial sustainability by using resources differently and preventing unnecessary escalation.

We will:

- Shift investment into earlier support, workforce capability and inclusive practice.
- Reduce reliance on independent and out-of-area special school placements through sufficiency planning and stronger mainstream inclusion.
- Use improved data, unit cost modelling and forecasting to support evidence-based decisions across the system.

How this will be measured:

- Reduction in growth of high-cost placements, particularly independent special schools.
- Improved alignment between demand, provision and spend through agreed unit cost measures.
- Stabilisation of the High Needs system over the medium term while protecting outcomes.

Collectively, these goals:

- Will address sustained High Needs Block pressures by reducing demand for statutory provision, increasing local sufficiency, and improving value for money through earlier intervention and joint commissioning. Financial sustainability will be achieved through a shift from reactive, high cost spend to preventative, inclusive practice, with a focus on cost avoidance, resource management, and improved unit cost efficiency.

They will:

•Prioritise earlier intervention and inclusive mainstream practice

•Improve outcomes and experience for children and families

•Support a sustainable, financially responsible SEND system

HCC Theory of Change – Pathway to Impact

Working together to deliver the right support, at the right time, in the right place for children and young people with SEND.

This pathway is informed by the Local Partnership Maturity Assessment and the local area change story, identifying the key system challenges, priorities and enablers required to deliver sustainable SEND reform.

1. LOCAL CHALLENGES

- Increasing demand for SEND support alongside rising complexity of need across the 0–25 system
- Delayed identification and intervention, with inconsistent early support at universal and targeted levels
- Too many children and young people escalating to specialist provision when needs could be met earlier in mainstream
- Variation in workforce confidence and inclusive practice across early years, schools, AP and post-16 settings
- Growing pressure on the High Needs system, creating risks to quality, equity and long-term sustainability

2. REFORM PRIORITIES

- Earlier identification of SEND needs and timely support without unnecessary escalation
- Strengthening inclusive practice in mainstream settings as the default across the 0–25 system
- Moving from reactive, statutory-led responses to preventative and needs-led support
- Greater consistency of thresholds, expectations and pathways across partners
- Closer integration between education, health and care to support shared ownership of outcomes
- Building an inclusive local system that reduces dependency on specialist and out-of-area provision

3. KEY DELIVERY ACTIONS

- Implement the Experts at Hand multi-disciplinary model as a core system mechanism
- Provide inclusion outreach, advice and coaching directly into education and care settings
- Establish a single graduated Experts at Hand pathway operating from early years through to post-16
- Strengthen universal and targeted support offers to reduce reliance on statutory escalation
- Use shared data and digital tools to identify need earlier and target support more effectively
- Embed partnership working with families, parent carers and young people through early, collaborative problem-solving and shared decision-making around support

4. WORKFORCE & SYSTEM CHANGE

- Increased workforce confidence and capability to meet SEND needs earlier
- Greater consistency in inclusive practice across early years, schools, AP and post-16 settings
- Improved shared understanding of needs, thresholds and pathways across partners
- Stronger collaboration between education, health and care professionals
- Reduced fragmentation and duplication of effort across the system
- More confident decision-making at universal and targeted levels
- Improved system maturity, with clearer accountability and learning embedded in practice

5. IMPROVED EXPERIENCES & OUTCOMES

- Children and young people feel more included, supported and understood in their local settings
- Families experience clearer pathways and earlier access to support
- Improved attendance, engagement and participation in education and learning
- Fewer exclusions and reduced escalation to specialist provision
- Improved wellbeing, learning outcomes and independence
- Better preparation for adulthood, employment and further education
- More equitable experiences and outcomes across the local area

6. LONG-TERM VISION

An inclusive, sustainable SEND system across the full 0–25 age range, where children and young people receive the right support at the right time in the right place, thrive in mainstream education wherever possible, and achieve positive outcomes and life opportunities alongside their peers.

ENABLERS

- **Strong shared leadership & system governance**
- **Partnership working across education, health, care & families**
- **Sustainable funding & aligned commissioning**
- **High-quality data, insight & evaluation**
- **Co-production & voice of a lived experience**

Our commitment: Right support | Right time | Right place | For the right child/young person with the right support | Working together for better outcomes

4 Key Workstreams

0-25

Universal Offer (strong inclusive practice)

Experts at Hand (right expertise, earlier)

Capital and Place Planning (right places, right provision)

Partnerships, Participation and Resolution (co-production, shared delivery)

Experts at Hand (EaH) Funding Allocation Hampshire

- Funding (2026/27)Hampshire allocation: **£9.87m**
- Funding forms part of the national Experts at Hand & SEND Transformation grant
- 3 years of funding although exact allocation for year 2 and 3 not yet confirmed

How the Funding Must Be Used (DfE rules)

- Minimum 80% → Frontline delivery to schools/settings
- Maximum 10% → Local authority transformation (programme delivery)
- Maximum 10% → Administration to run the EaH service
- The majority of funding is protected for direct support to settings and children

What “Direct Delivery” Funds

Investment in additional specialist capacity, including:

- Educational Psychologists
- Speech & Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Specialist Teachers & SEND Advisors

Delivered through multi-disciplinary locality teams supporting schools earlier

What Transformation & Admin Fund

- Setting up locality delivery teams and infrastructure
- Programme management and implementation capacity
- Data, evaluation, and engagement
- Systems to enable access (triage, digital tools, coordination)

Ensures the model is deliverable at scale and sustainable

What This Means for Settings

- Faster access to specialist advice and support
- Increased support at SEN Support (not just EHCP)
- Stronger early intervention and inclusion
- Reduced reliance on high-cost specialist placements over time

Overall Intent

- Shift funding from reactive statutory processes
- Towards early, preventative support in mainstream settings
- Improve outcomes while managing High Needs pressures

Experts at Hand: Universal to Specialist Support Pathway

A single, flexible graduated system of support where needs are met early, support can move up and down, and inclusion in mainstream is always the starting point.

1 Universal Support

- Inclusive teaching and Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) in all settings
- Universal CPD, tools and guidance accessed through networks and Local Offer
- Schools review and embed consistent inclusive practice
- Early advice and support available without referral or diagnosis

2 Targeted (SEN) Support

- SEN Support using assess-plan-do-review
- Early advice and consultation from Experts at Hand (Local Delivery Teams)
- Practical, time-limited input (e.g. in house SaLT, EP, OT, specialist teachers)
- Tier 1 AP
- Focus on adapting provision and preventing escalation, with families involved in planning and review

3 Targeted Plus Support

- Coordinated multi-disciplinary support through Local Delivery Teams
- Shared plan with clear outcomes, roles and a named lead
- Support delivered in the child's setting with regular joint review
- Tier 2 AP
- Focus on sustained inclusion and preventing breakdown

4 Specialist Support

- Intensive, time-limited support when earlier stages are not sufficient
- May include outreach, short-term placements and coordinated interventions
- Delivered with multi-agency input, including specialist teachers
- Tier 3 AP
- Reintegration to mainstream planned from the outset; EHCP considered where needed

Support moves up and down based on need

No diagnosis required
Support can be accessed at any stage

EXPERTS AT HAND OFFER
Spanning stages 2 to 4

Universal Inclusive Practice
The foundation that underpins every stage

Inclusion for all

Early identification

Building capacity

Better outcomes for children, young people and families

Experts at Hand Workforce Model

Specialist expertise, universally accessible, supporting inclusion, empowering outcomes.

CHILD / YOUNG PERSON & FAMILY

At the heart of everything we do

HOW SCHOOLS & SETTINGS ACCESS GRADUATED SUPPORT

- Identify need
- Single access & triage (locality based)
- Consultation & advice (default route)
- Targeted intervention & coaching(capacity-building)
- Review impact & agree next steps

EXPERTS AT HAND HUB

A multi-disciplinary team providing advice, support and targeted intervention across the graduated response, working in partnership across education, health, Best Start Family Hubs and early help services, and the community sector.

SPECIALIST PRACTICE

- Educational Psychologists
- Specialist Teachers
- Speech & Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Autism / SEMH Advisors
- Behaviour and Inclusion Support

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Practice Advisors
- Training, coaching and mentoring across education, health and early help
- Resources, toolkits and guidance
- Communities of practice

FAMILY & SYSTEM SUPPORT

- Family practitioners and coordinators (including Best Start Family Hubs)
- Transition and continuity support
- EHCP & SEND Advice
- Local Offer and system navigation

Hubs operate as locality-based delivery teams, coordinating proportionate support and building system capacity

REACHING ACROSS OUR SYSTEM

Early Years Settings
Early help and strong foundations

Mainstream Schools
Inclusive, high-quality teaching

Alternative Provision & Specialist Settings
Targeted support & outreach

Post-16 & Further Education
Inclusive SEND support & preparation for adulthood

Including out-of-area settings attended by Hampshire children and young people

Delivered through locality clusters, education centres and family hubs

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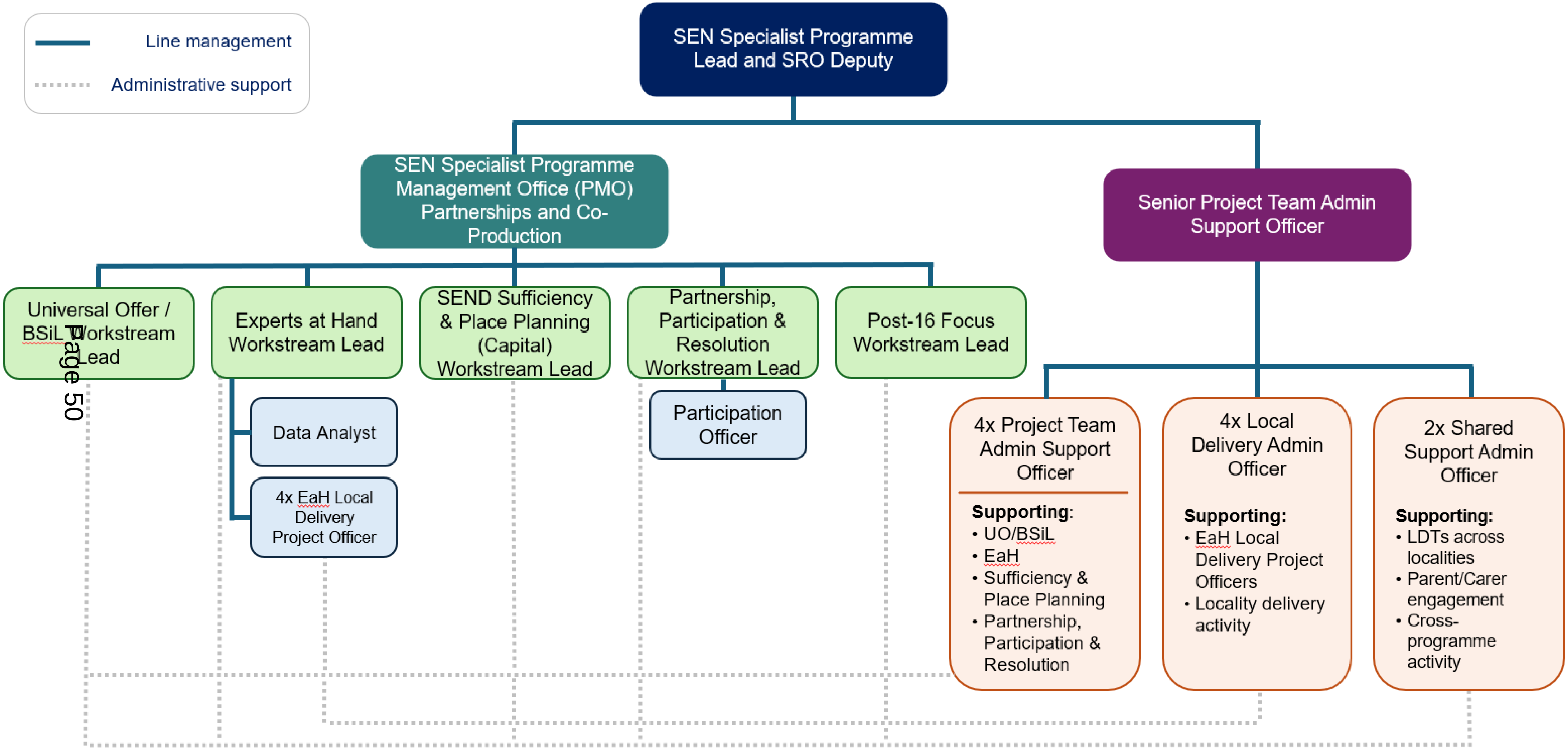
- Advice & Consultation
- Targeted Intervention
- Training & Workforce Development
- Coaching & Mentoring
- Partnership & System Working

IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES & SETTINGS

- Earlier identification & intervention
- Improved inclusion & belonging
- Better outcomes & progress
- Reduced exclusions
- Stronger workforce confidence
- Improved experience for families

RIGHT SUPPORT | RIGHT TIME | RIGHT PLACE | FOR THE RIGHT CHILD

Transformation Team Structure



Appendix for information

Experts at Hand

The delivery approach for this offer and the rationale for why the outlined approach is optimal for the local area. This will include setting out if delivery will be local authority-led, contracted to the ICB, in partnership with another area or through an external partner, and setting out the role of Best Start Family Hubs. Where delivery involves an ICB or external partner, please specify the partnership vehicle (such as an SLA or MOU) and how performance will be assured.
A summary of the partnership approach to agreeing an optimal delivery model including how all system partners were engaged and how the approach was informed by needs-based data.
How the EAH funding will enhance existing routes to access specialist input, and how the delivery model will be integrated with other services or offers funded separately.
Proposal to collaboratively recommission alternative provision to align with the 3-tier model and best practice identified through Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforces (APST) models.
Where alternative provision capacity is constrained, whether the LA will contract provision, partner regionally, or share expertise and the route chosen.
Proposals for commissioning outreach from high-quality specialist providers, where appropriate.
Proposal for timely access to health and education professionals (e.g., in educational psychology, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy) for early years, schools and colleges based on assessed local need.
A detailed year 1 implementation plan, including recruitment approach and success metrics (e.g. coverage, scale of support available), and a high-level plan for years 2–3.
A proposed governance and accountability arrangement, as part of the Local Area Partnership Board, including oversight routes, budgets and funding arrangements, reporting cadence and escalation processes. This should include a single, named LA-based SRO to drive improvement and reform.
Clear expectations for joint governance, monitoring and shared accountability across education and health partners.
Proposed approach to settings accessing support which ensures support is not disproportionately accessed by the most proactive schools and settings and includes out of area mainstream further education settings attended by local young people with SEND.

Sufficiency and Place Planning

A summary of local sufficiency pressures and how planned place growth addresses demand trends, including EHCP drivers and opportunities to meet need through capacity in mainstream settings.
How the planned increases in capacity across setting types will reduce reliance on special schools, especially out-of-area placements and independent specialist provision.
How collaboration between LAs and MATs could be strengthened to identify suitable sites and jointly plan the development of inclusion bases.
Assurance that proposed inclusion bases in early years settings, schools, and colleges would reflect local demographic need, maintaining high quality standards and clear expectations on type of provision.
How existing school premises are factored in when planning new inclusion bases, including opportunities created by falling rolls.
Detailed plans to meet need for specialist places, by increasing capacity in mainstream settings through inclusion bases, and to improve the suitability of the physical environment. This should set out how the investment would align with local need and reduce future pressure. Where plans propose use of high needs capital to create additional special school places, this should clearly explain why need cannot be met in mainstream, including how the investment would align with local need and reduce future pressure.
Proposals for flexibility to accommodate rurality and local variation, ensuring provision remains viable and context appropriate.
Evidence that an impact assessment of travel arrangements has been carried out for any capital, inclusion base or special school expansion proposal, demonstrating expected changes to travel distances, journey times, and reliance on out of area placements. Including any explicit travel related mitigations.

Capital:

We have announced at least £3 billion in high needs capital between 2026-27 and 2029-30 to support children and young people (CYP) with SEND, or those requiring alternative provision (AP). This funding is intended to support place delivery across the full 0-25 age range, including early years and post-16. We expect funding to support the following outcomes:

a. **Inclusion at the core of high needs sufficiency strategy, resulting in more children and young people with SEND accessing suitable places in mainstream settings, across all phases of education**

b. **Every child or young person who needs a place in an inclusion base can access one**

c. **Fewer children and young people with SEND needing to travel a long way to access a suitable placement**

d. **Improved suitability of the mainstream estate to support children and young people with SEND, with adaptations to improve inclusivity and accessibility of the physical environment**

We also welcome innovative uses of high needs capital to drive inclusion, for example, investment in assistive technology for use in mainstream settings.

Please outline your strategy for how this funding will meet the outcomes above, with reference to the core minimum requirements and other workstreams in this reform plan where appropriate. We would like to see detail around your plans to increase capacity for inclusion bases (formerly known as SEN units, resourced provision and pupil support units – SU/RP/PSUs), such as schools, colleges or early years providers identified, engagement with relevant settings and trusts, and target cohort of needs.

If your plans include increases to places in special schools or specialist post-16 institutions, please include a clear rationale, showing the need that is being met, and why it cannot be met through other types of provision, such as inclusion bases.

If you are receiving additional capital funding to replace one or more planned special or AP free schools, please set out how this funding will meet need in your area, and plans for engaging relevant trusts in your sufficiency planning.

Strengthen Effective Partnerships and Practice

UNVERSAL OFFER:

Proposal to co-develop, and regularly refresh, a partnership-wide universal offer agreement with schools, MATs, early years settings and post-16 providers which will be underpinned by up-to-date, needs-based data and signed off by the local authority, ICB, MAT and school representatives and Parent Carer Forum (PCF). The agreed universal offer should draw on approaches that will be set out in the National Inclusion Standards.

Evidence of the processes and mechanism through which MATs and PCFs are engaged in the development of the universal offer.

How early intervention services will be strengthened, with enhanced mainstream support to prevent escalation of need.

How a strengthened universal offer will support mainstream settings to meet the most commonly occurring and growing areas of need. This should include how well evidenced early intervention approaches focused on speech and language (e.g. ELSEC/NELI), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH), could be deployed.

How a strengthened universal offer and group level specialist support will reduce escalation into out-of-area placements with significant travel-assistance requirements.

Early Years (plans should align with LA Best Start in Life plans:

Proposal for assessing sufficiency of current level of childcare provision for 0–5s, detailing: (a) availability of early years places; (b) availability of specialist SEND early years places; and (c) any local gaps for children with complex and emerging needs and plan to address these including the role of wider partners such as Best Start Family Hubs.

Proposal to improve early years identification and intervention strategies, including the role of Best Start Family Hubs.

Proposal to strengthen transitions from early years to primary school, ensuring effective information flow and timely specialist input.

POST 16:

Proposal to strengthen pathways to adulthood, supporting young people to access education, training, employment and supported internships.

A clarification of pathways into and out of post-16 settings, informed by consistent information flow and timely, effective specialist support.

Experts at Hand Offer model should be commissioned with partners, which is likely to include cross-border collaboration.

Continued

Effective Partnerships: Evidence of effective, shared, partnership leadership and governance across all system partners, with clear and mutually understood accountability arrangements.
Evidence of formal representation from early years, schools, MATs and further education on partnership boards, with appropriate links to Schools Forums to support coherent engagement across all settings.
Proposal to underpin partnership working with shared, high-quality data, including joint dashboards and use of a partnership maturity matrix to assess effectiveness.
How proposed/agreed mechanisms for engaging all schools, early years providers and post-16 providers (including out of area mainstream colleges accessed by local young people with SEND) would support collective responsibility for inclusive practice.
Proposal to strengthen dispute resolution and decision-making processes so system partners can address issues early and consistently, supported by transparent escalation routes.
A single named SRO who is part of the leadership team, to provide operational leadership and drive reform across the partnership. The SRO should be a senior local authority official.

Effective co-production practices: Proposal to strengthen co-production arrangements so that parent carer forums are properly resourced and consistently engaged in shaping decision making.
How the voice of children and young people is captured directly and distinctly from parent voice, with clear evidence of how their views influence decisions.
How SENDIASS will be used to support parents carers with high quality, independent information and guidance, and how the local area will address variability in service quality where it exists, with reference to the minimum SENDIASS service standards. Please include proposed mitigation to any parental concerns about the perceived independence of SENDIASS within mediation processes.
Proposal to adopt a minimum co-production benchmark (based on NHSE guidance) and self-assess against it in year one, identifying improvement actions where needed.

Mediation: A description of local mediation and dispute resolution arrangements, demonstrating how they incorporate the voices of parents and children and young people.
Proposal to maintain metrics for timeliness, resolution rates and effectiveness to support monitoring and accountability.

Data, Digital , Finance

1. Data tasks -

- **Describe current data capability**
  - Strengths and gaps at partnership level.
- **Explain how data will support reform**
  - Monitoring demand, delivery and outcomes.
  - Supporting decision-making.
- **Confirm DfE reporting readiness**
  - Ability to complete quarterly data returns.
  - Use of dashboards or performance reports.
- **Set out Year 1 improvements**
  - Data quality, consistency or accessibility – what will be the year 1 plan?

Outputs required

- Text for: *Monitoring & Evaluation*, *Annex A workstream*
- Confirmation of data return processes.

2. Finance tasks -

- **Set and maintain a clear SEND financial baseline**, including High Needs pressures and cost drivers, to support credible reform decisions.
- **Provide assurance that SEN reform actions are affordable**, sustainable and do not undermine statutory delivery.
- **Identify, manage and report financial risks**, including DSG High Needs exposure and mitigation plans.
- **Align SEND reform activity with available funding**, including access to national investment and stability support.
- **Ensure transparent financial reporting** that links spend, reform actions and outcomes for partnership and DfE assurance.
- **Support strong system governance**, enabling informed decisions across the Local Authority, ICB and education partners

Outputs required:

- Finance benchmarking data
- Text for: *Monitoring & Evaluation*, *Annex A workstream*
- Finance data sheet sign off
- Confirmation of finance return processes for Q1

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Children's Services

Dedicated Schools Grant Deficit Management Plan Update

03 July 2026

Natalie Smith

Assistant Director, Education & Inclusion

DSG position - the big picture

DSG Deficit Cumulative Outturn 2024/25

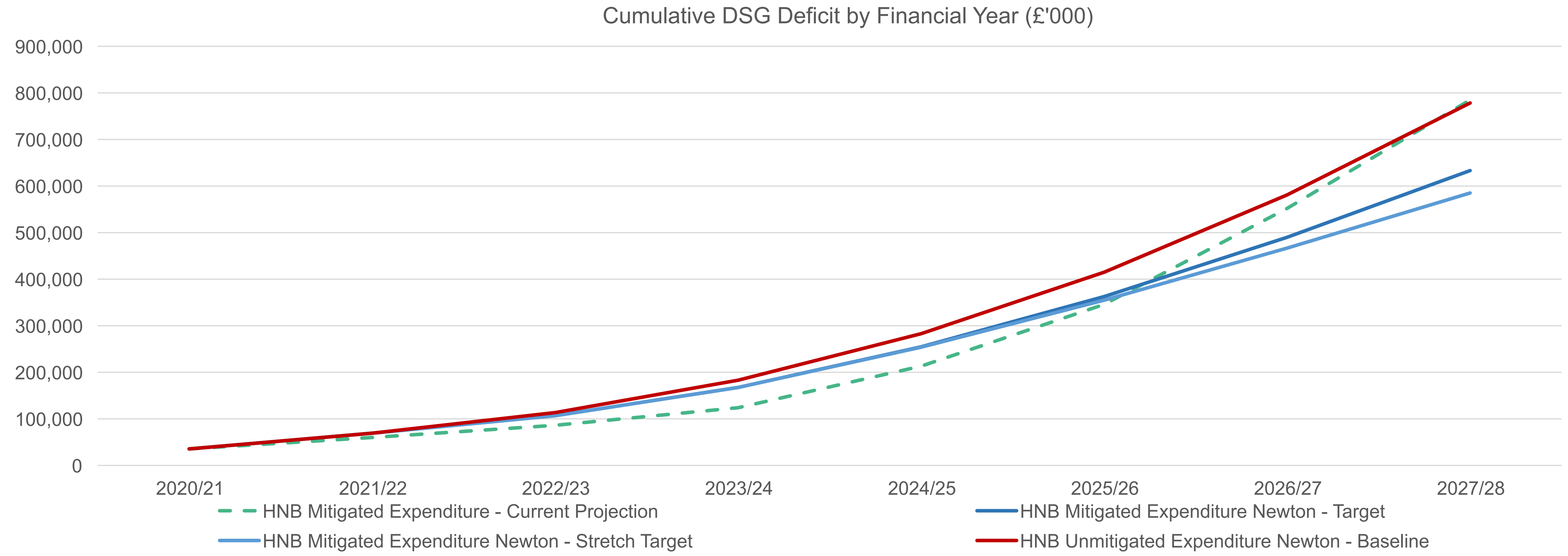
£213m

DSG Deficit Cumulative Position 2025/26

£346m

DSG Deficit Cumulative Forecast 2026/27

£547m

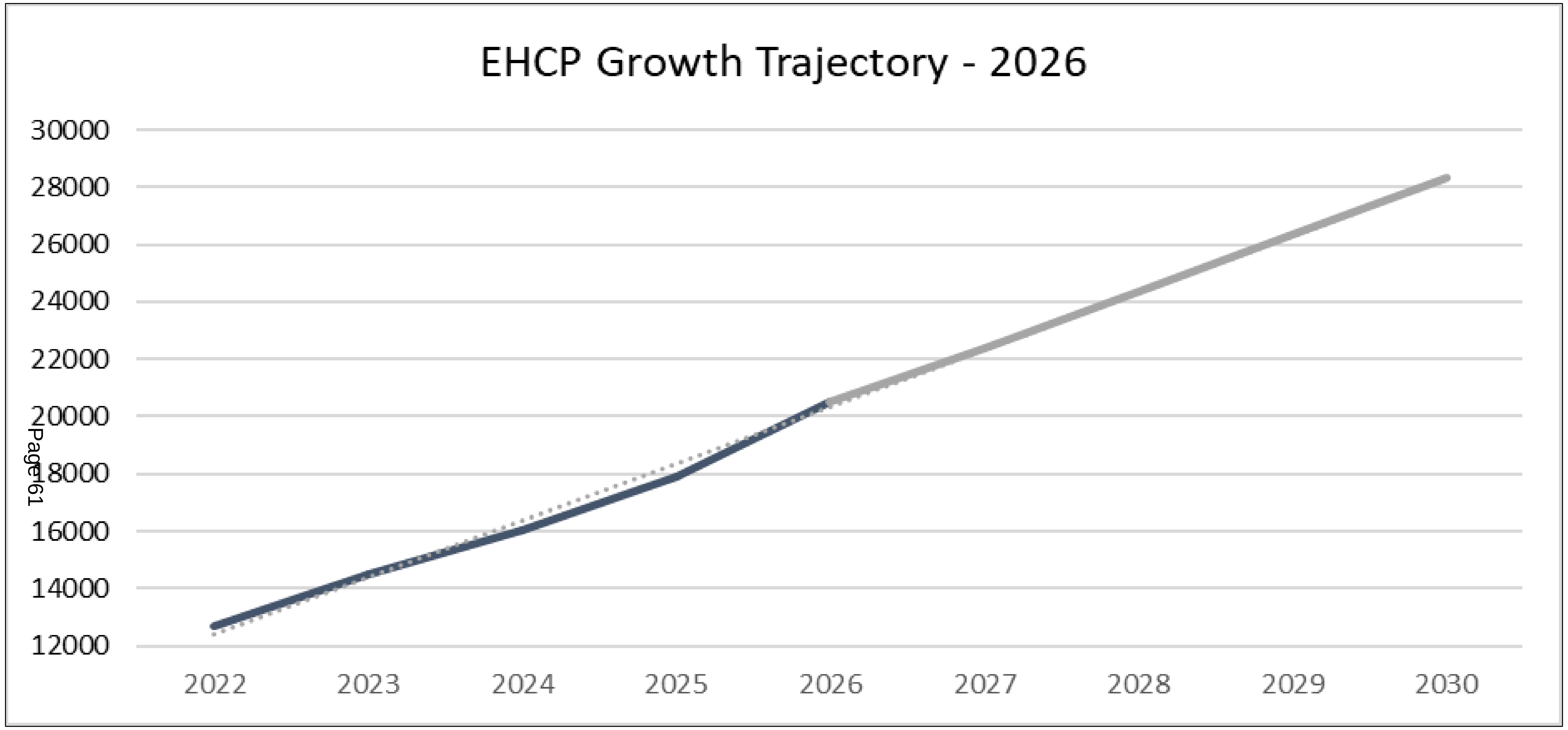


	Cumulative DSG Deficit (£'000)							
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
HNB Mitigated Expenditure - Current Projection	35,445	60,022	86,149	123,920	213,149	345,788	546,568	793,214
HNB Unmitigated Expenditure Newton - Baseline	35,445	69,209	113,433	183,010	282,904	414,898	580,937	778,334
HNB Mitigated Expenditure Newton - Target	35,445	69,209	106,834	167,450	254,716	362,614	489,916	633,179
HNB Mitigated Expenditure Newton - Stretch Target	35,445	69,209	106,834	167,450	253,885	354,889	466,703	585,051

Key Messages

- The DSG deficit continues to outpace available funding, forecast to rise by over £341m in two years.
- Sustained growth in EHCP volumes remains the primary cost driver.
- The cumulative DSG deficit is projected to continue increasing under current growth trends (c.£201m in 2026/27).
- Long-term sustainability requires continued system improvement and demand management.
- High Needs funding is being used to drive system change and sustainability.

Growth in EHCPs continues to reshape the system



Future projections based on current EHCP growth trends; national SEND reforms may affect longer-term patterns of need.

+58%
Growth 2026 to 2030

c.24,382
projected EHCPs in 2028

28,000+
projected EHCPs by 2030

Key message:
Growth in **EHCP numbers** is **increasing pressure** across inclusion, specialist provision, workforce capacity and High Needs sustainability.

Sustained increases in both **volume** and **complexity** are **reshaping expectations** of the **local SEND system**.

Growth in EHCPs continues to reshape the system cont.

- **2025/26 requests** are **10% higher** than in **2024/25 (+302 requests)*.**
- **Since 2015**, the number of **EHCPs has increased 311%**, demonstrating the significant growth in the volume of requests and level of need that was already evident prior to the announcement of the SEND Reforms.
- We **anticipate requests will continue to rise**, likely driven by **increased anxiety and uncertainty** associated with the forthcoming **SEND Reforms.**

**May 2026 internal data*

Growth in EHCPs continues to reshape the system cont.

Requests for EHCPs between September and May by source and key stage

Requests for EHC Needs Assessments **continue to rise**. The rise is driven by a **surge in requests** from **KS2 settings**, alongside **continued increases** in **KS1***.

EYs setting-led requests show a **marginal increase**, but **parental requests** remain **significantly higher** than historic levels.

Parent-led requests are increasing across **most Key Stages from EYs to KS3**

**May 2026 internal data*

Delivering system change differently

Earlier intervention & prevention

- Strengthening early support and reducing escalation
- Targeted support at key transition points (early years, primary to secondary, post-16)
- Expanding access to early advise, therapies and multi-disciplinary support

Strengthening inclusive practice

- Strengthening inclusive practice in mainstream settings
- Building workforce confidence and inclusive practice
- Reducing reliance on specialist placements where needs can be met locally

Building local sufficiency

- Expanding specialist places within the local area
- Developing flexible local provision models
- Reducing reliance on high-cost independence and out-or-area placements

Improving long-term outcomes

- Strengthening pathways to independence and employment
- Developing local post-16 provision and support options
- Improving long-term outcomes and reducing dependency on specialist provision

Together these approaches strengthen inclusion, reduce escalation, and improve long-term sustainability across the High Needs system.
underpinned by:

IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, FAMILIES & SCHOOLS

- **Co-production & participation**
- **Joined-up working & system collaboration**
- **Workforce capability & support**
- **Data, insight & accountability**

Our existing delivery model is already aligned with the direction of SEND Reform, positioning us strongly for implementation

Early intervention – preventing escalation

Early support is helping reduce unnecessary escalation into statutory pathways

Transition to school (Early Years)

97% success preventing escalation to statutory pathways in year one
64% increase in how **confident** parents were about their child starting school
86% success rate in preventing escalation to statutory pathways cohort 1 – end of Year 1 in school

Team around the school (Pilot)

Reduction in classroom closures in supported schools:
(School C) **31** in **2023/24 reduced** to **0 December 2024**

Person Centred Planning (PCP) Training

489 professionals trained with **100% parents** reporting **increased confidence** in school staff **meeting** their child's **needs**

Person Centred Planning (PCP) Training

87% of **parents did not re-apply** for **EHCP** *(24/25 FY)*
96% of **parents did not re-apply** for **EHCP** *(25/26 FY)*

What we are doing

- Strengthening early identification and support through the Universal Offer
- Providing early access to multi-disciplinary advice and support
- Targeting support at key transition points, including entry to school
- Increasing access to therapies and specialist input at SEN Support

What difference it is making

- Strong early evidence from transition and early intervention programmes
- High proportion of children supported effectively without escalation to EHCP
- Improved confidence and engagement from schools, with more sustainable inclusive practice becoming embedded
- Reduced reliance on statutory pathways in initial cohorts indicating positive system capacity and behaviour change

Why this matters

- Prevents avoidable escalation to high-cost statutory provision
- Reduces reliance on EHCPs over time
- Supports longer-term High Needs sustainability through reduced escalation pressure
- Supports earlier identification and intervention for children and young people, building the foundations for improved outcomes over time as impact is monitored, and evidenced

Early intervention remains a long-term system strategy requiring sustained implementation over multiple years.

Strengthening inclusive practice in mainstream settings

Building inclusion in mainstream schools is reducing reliance on specialist and high-cost provision

80 schools signed up to Hampshire Approach to Inclusion
Growing engagement across schools, embedding inclusive practice at scale

Team around the school (Pilot)
Reductions in suspensions in supported schools:
(School A) **30 days** in **2023/24 reduced** to **0.5 days** in **2024/25**
(School B) **217 days in 2023/24 reduced** to **158 days** in **2024/25**

Needs-led training and SEN support
Schools increasingly equipped to meet needs within mainstream settings

Inclusion across workstreams
More children supported successfully in mainstream rather than specialist provision
43.2% CYP with EHCPs educated in **mainstream schools** compared to **39.7% nationally***

What we are doing
- Strengthening inclusive practice through the Hampshire Approach to Inclusion
- Embedding Ordinarily Available Provision to ensure schools can meet common and predictable needs
- Targeted whole-school support to strengthen inclusive practice
- Building workforce capability to meet needs within mainstream settings

What difference it is making
- Increased engagement from schools in inclusion-focused activity
- Improved ability of schools to meet needs within mainstream settings
- Reduced reliance on reactive response and external support
- Early evidence of more needs being met without specialist placement

Why this matters
- Reduces reliance for specialist and independent placements
- Supports more children to attend local mainstream schools
- Improves outcomes through stable, inclusive environments
- Contributes to long-term sustainability of the High Needs system

Building inclusion in mainstream schools is increasing system capacity and reducing reliance on specialist provision

**SEN2 data published June 2025. Aligns with Hampshire having more plans*

Building local sufficiency

Expanding and reshaping local provision is reducing reliance on high-cost independent and out-of-area placements

Specialist Provision expansion
233 new specialist places delivered (Sept 2025), with further growth planned

Sufficiency strategy
Plan to deliver c.1,000 additional specialist places by 2030

Local provision models
Development of resourced provisions and flexible local models
18 new **Specialist Inclusion Bases** (Resourced Provisions) being progressed for **Sept 2027**

External placement reduction
Reduced reliance on high-cost independent and out-of-area placements

What we are doing
- Expanding specialist provision within the local area
- Developing resourced provisions and flexible local models
- Increasing capacity to meet a wider range of needs locally
- Strengthening commissioning approaches to reduce reliance on external placements

What difference it is making
- Increased availability of local specialist places
- Improved ability to meet needs within Hampshire provision
- Reduced reliance on independent and out-of-area placements
- Greater alignment between need and provision type

Why this matters
- Reduces high-cost external placement spend
- Keeps children and young people closer to home
- Improves continuity of support and outcomes
- Contributes to long-term sustainability of the High Needs Block

Building local sufficiency is reducing reliance on high-cost external provision and strengthening local system resilience

Preparing for adulthood and independence

Strengthening pathways to independence is improving long-term outcomes and reducing reliance on high-cost provision

PfA & Post-16 strategy
Will deliver a coordinated strategy across education, health and care

Early and structured transition planning
Introducing earlier, consistent planning across education phases
Yr9 Vocational Profile completed with **100 learners**

Developing local post-16 pathways
Expanding provision, independence hubs and alternatives to college routes
41 active learners in **SEND Independence Hubs**
27 mainstream learners across two colleges on the **Future Skills Pathway**

Strengthening multi-agency support & CYP outcomes
Earlier and more coordinated working with adult services and partners, supported by job fairs and wider employer engagement opportunities
5 SEND Employment Forums **2025/26 academic year**
3 Reverse Job Fairs* attended by **48 learners**. **1 job offer** made on the day, **3 interview invites** & **2 invites to virtual pre-application sessions**
20 YP experienced **mock interviews*** with **11 organisations**

What we are doing
- Co-producing the PfA and Post-16 strategy across education, health and care
- Introducing earlier, structured transition planning across all key phases
- Expanding local post-16 pathways and provision, including independence hubs and alternative provision
- Embedding life skills, independence and employment outcomes across all settings
- Improving clarity, information and navigation for families

What difference it is making
- Transition planning beginning earlier in education pathways
- Greater consistency in how life skills and independence are delivered
- Increased availability of local post-16 options and pathways
- Stronger alignment between education, health and care partners

Why this matters
- Improves long-term outcomes and independence for young people
- Reduces reliance on high-cost specialist provision over time
- Supports progression into adulthood, employment and community inclusion
- Contributes to long-term sustainability of the High Needs system
- Helps mitigate future demand on services by ensuring needs are effectively met earlier in life

Strengthening pathways to adulthood is supporting independence and reducing long-term reliance on high-cost provision

**Hampshire Achieves Data*

Progress towards sustainability

System impact and progress towards sustainability

Key indicators at a glance

233 additional local specialist places created
(Further 342 places planned Sept 2026)

Cumulative EHCP timeliness improving to 52% + 11% on last year
(*SEN2 data*)

11 TSEND workstreams delivering cost avoidance

£39.0m cost avoidance
2025/26 year-end position

Governance, oversight & delivery

Local Area Partnership (LAP)
LAP oversight strengthened through aligned governance and clear accountability arrangements.

Continuous Improvement Framework
Established TSEND Continuous Improvement Framework to oversee delivery of the DSG Management Plan, monitor impact, and drive ongoing improvement.

Muli-agency workstreams
Workstreams focused on priority area delivery actions, tracking progress, and identifying cost avoidance opportunities.

Strong governance and disciplined delivery underpin impact.

System impact and improvement

Earlier intervention and support embedded across the system
Increased focus on early identification and support through schools and services is reducing escalation to statutory assessment where it is not needed.

Improved statutory performance and timeliness
EHCP timeliness improving following a targeted recovery plan; however, increasing volumes of statutory activity continues to place pressure on statutory services.

Strengthened inclusion and local capacity
Investment in mainstream inclusion and growth in local specialist provision is supporting more children and young people closer to home.

More children and young people supported in the right setting, earlier and closer to home.

Sustainability impact and cost avoidance

Cost avoidance is being delivered
£39.0m cost avoidance delivered in 2025/26, based on strengthened, evidence-based assumptions following full validation. This represents and increase of £10m from the £29.0m cost avoidance recognised in 2024/25.

Impact driven by targeted investment in earlier intervention and local provision
Investment through the DSG Management Plan is reducing escalation to high-cost placements through early support, strengthened inclusion, and increased local capacity.

Benefits building over time but not yet closing the gap
Financial benefits will increase as system change embeds; however, growth in need and system pressures mean the DSG deficit continues to rise.

Sustained system improvement and strengthened local provision continue to support High Needs sustainability.

The challenge remains

The scale of need continues to outpace progress

System change is beginning to reduce pressure, but sustained investment is required to achieve long-term stability.

What this means for schools

A system under pressure, with targeted investment to strengthen support and sustainability over time

Short-term reality

Continued system pressure in the short term

- Request for SEND support continues to rise across all phases
- Schools will continue to experience pressure around capacity, inclusion and resource
- The DSG deficit and wider system pressures will not immediately reduce

What is changing

Targeted investment to strengthen mainstream support

- High Needs funding is being used to strengthen:
  - Early intervention and prevention
  - Inclusive practice in mainstream settings
  - Access to specialist advice and support
- Increased focus on supporting needs earlier, reducing escalation into statutory pathways
- Expansion of local provision is improving access to appropriate placements closer to home
- Sustained focus on professional development of the school workforce

What schools will see / experience

What schools will see in practice

- Increased access to advice, guidance and specialist input at an earlier stage
- Greater clarity on pathways and support available
- More consistent approaches to inclusion across schools
- Improved ability to meet a wider range of needs within mainstream settings
- More development opportunities and support from experts to embed consistent practice
- Strong support for schools in meeting children and young people's needs incl. Half day support for those signed up to the Hampshire Approach to Inclusion

Over time (future state)

Improved support and sustainability over time

- Volumes of requests for EHCNAs and, subsequent numbers of EHCPs and cost pressures are expected to stabilise as system change is embed
- Greater local capacity will reduce reliance on high-cost placements
- A more sustainable system will enable resources to be used more effectively
- Schools will be better supported to meet needs within their communities
- Workforce more skilled and confident in inclusive practice

This is a long-term approach, with sustained investment focused on building a more inclusive and sustainable system for children, young people, and schools.

How SEND Reform supports high needs sustainability

A connected approach to reducing escalation and improving long-term sustainability

Earlier intervention and prevention
Strengthening early support to prevent needs escalating.

Reduced escalation into statutory pathways
Fewer children require EHCPs or more intensive interventions.

Increased inclusion within mainstream settings
More children's needs are met inclusively in local settings.

Reduced reliance on high-cost specialist provision
Reduced need for expensive, out-of-area or independent provision.

Improved local sufficiency and workforce capability
Stronger local offer, confident workforce, and sustainable practice.

More sustainable High Needs system over time
Pressure on DSG reduces and resources are used more effectively.

Key Messages

- SEND Reform reduces escalation pressures by supporting needs earlier and closer to home.
- Inclusion and provision development reduce reliance on high-cost specialist placements.
- A stronger local system improves outcomes and reduces the need for statutory support over time.
- This is a long-term approach – sustained implementation is essential to deliver impact.
- National pressures relating to need and complexity remain significant.

Future reporting will be based on the SEND Reform Plan, which will replace the DSG Management Plan as the framework for tracking progress.

It is important to note that SEND reforms are expected to take up to 10-years to be fully implemented and for their impact to be realised

Any questions?

Useful Information

- Hampshire Approach to Inclusion
- SEN Support Line
- Supporting Complex Learners in Mainstream Schools – e-learning modules
- Hampshire Local Area Partnership
- Sign up to the Hampshire Local Area Partnership Newsletter
- Schools White Paper & SEND Reforms

Hampshire County Council

Schools Forum

3rd July 2026

Schools Budget Update 2025/26

Report of the Director of Corporate Operations and Director of Children's Services

Contact: Andrew Minall, 03707 790138; andrew.minall@hants.gov.uk

1 Summary

1.1 This report sets out the final outturn position of the 2025/26 school's budget, which is an overspend of £132.6m.

2 2025/26 school's budget

2.1 The final position is an overspend of £132.6m, summarised as follows:

Block	Current budget	Actual outturn	Variance	
	£000	£000	£000	%
Early Years	222,052	213,441	(8,611)	(3.9)
Schools	721,482	722,321	839	0.1
High Needs	209,186	349,597	140,411	67.1
Central School Services	8,946	8,946	0	0.0
Dedicated Schools Grant	1,161,666	1,294,295	132,629	11.4
Other school grants	109,185	109,185	0	0.0
Total Schools Budget	**1,270,851**	**1,403,480**	**132,629**	**10.4**

2.2 The budget has been updated for the following changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations:

- The Early Years Block DSG allocation has been updated to reflect the estimated adjustment for the January 2026 Spring term census, which is a reduction of £3,848,000.
- The Schools Block budget (excluding specific one-off adjustments to growth fund) has been reduced by £15.6m, £13.1m in relation to the business rates allocation for maintained schools, £2.3m in respect of academy conversions and some small accounting adjustments.

2.3 The final position on the DSG deficit reserve at the end of 2025/26 is £345.5m:

	£000
Balance brought forward from 2024/25	(**213,148**)
2025/26 overspend	(132,639)
DSG reserve as at 31.03.26	**(345,787)**

2.4 Following the government announcements in March, local authorities were commissioned to create a SEN Reform plan including initial proposed plans to create a new Experts at Hand offer for schools. Supported by additional funding, this is intended to support need at an earlier stage, reduce escalation of need and support improved financial sustainability. This plan was created at pace but with full engagement with stakeholders including schools as part of the Local Area Partnership.

2.5 The SEN Reform plan has been submitted to the DfE for approval which will form the basis of local improvement activities and will replace the DSG management plan for future monitoring and reporting.

2.6 Approval of the plan will also enable additional funding support from the government through the High Needs Stability Grant which will provide additional one-off funding to meet up to 90% of the cumulative deficit reserve as the end of 2025/26. The grant is expected to be received during the current financial year.

2.7 It is recognised in the short term at least, financial pressures on the High Needs Block will continue to grow therefore the deficit is expected to increase in future years. Government has provided an indication that some additional financial support may be provided however, no details are currently available.

2.8 Regular updates and developments will continue to be shared with Schools Forum based on the new SEN Reform to inform members of progress or discuss new proposed strategies.

3 2025/26 budget variances

3.1 The most significant budget variances are discussed below. A detailed breakdown of the 2025/26 figures is provided in Appendix 1.

3.2 The final position is £8.5m lower than the forecast position reported to Schools Forum in January. This decrease relates to the Early Years block.

Early Years Block

3.3 The overall position on the Early Years block is an underspend of £8.6m.

Budget Area	Annual Budget £’000	Outturn Forecast £’000	Outturn Forecast Variance £’000	(%)
Early Years ISB	646	666	20	3.1
Two Year Olds Free Entitlement Funding	56,180	53,106	(3,074)	(5.5)
Three to Four Year Olds Free Entitlement	93,422	92,418	(1,004)	(1.1)
Under 2 Yr Olds Free Entitlement Funding	64,919	61,480	(3,439)	(5.3)
Early Years Central Expenditure	6,885	5,770	(1,115)	(16.2)
Early Years	**222,052**	**213,441**	**(8,611)**	**(3.9)**

3.4 Based on the January 2026 Spring term census submitted to the DfE, an overall reduction of £3.848m is expected to the 2025/26 DSG allocation. The 2025/26 budget has been adjusted to reflect the reduction, however this will not be confirmed by the DfE until summer 2026.

3.5 The £8.6m underspend is predominantly due to underspends on existing entitlement funding and the more recently introduced extension to under 2 year old entitlements. Together these areas contribute £7.5m of the underspend (3.4% of the total budget).

3.6 Whilst the value of the underspend is significant, this represents only a small variation from planned spend and is of similar scale to previous years. The value is however higher than previous years reflecting the significant increase in funding through the Early Years Block.

3.7 The reason for this underspend is due to the complexities and timings of the DfE funding methodology. Provider rates are set prior to the start of the year based on projected grant allocations and expected uptake within Early Years settings (activity), that cannot be changed once published. This can be difficult to forecast due to the variability in take up and the impact of new entitlements where there is no historic trend data. The Early Years grant is allocated based on census data taken over one week of each term. Variances between census data and the actual uptake, for which providers are funded, can be material and create a risk of a significant over or underspend with a contingency held to manage risk.

3.8 When the census data includes a higher level of uptake than that seen over the remainder of the term then an underspend will occur. In 2025/26, the summer term census had lower uptake than the average for the remainder of the term. However, the autumn and spring census was higher than the forecast average take-up, this information was only available after the previous reporting period resulting in the significant movement from the previously reported forecast outturn.

3.9 This budget will be monitored closely with available data and assumptions reviewed to try and ensure financial risks are managed prudently whilst ensuring funding is allocated as much as possible to providers.

3.10 The other area contributing towards the overall variance is the £1.1m underspend on the central early years budget which mostly relates to the central contingency (£932,000 underspend), due to an increased overall allocation in funding from the DfE in March, as well as small underspends on staffing across multiple teams.

3.11 There is a small pressure on the SEN Inclusion Fund of £364,000, comprised mostly of pressure for 3&4 year olds (£320,000) reflecting the continued pressure on provision.

Schools Block

3.12 The overall position on the Schools Block is an overspend of 0.1% (£839,000), which is mainly due to overspends on the growth fund.

Budget Area	**Annual Budget £'000**	**Outturn Forecast £'000**	**Outturn Forecast Variance £'000**	**(%)**
Budget Shares	710,383	710,441	58	0.0
Schools De-delegated	2,605	2,602	(3)	(0.1)
Growth Fund	1,929	2,760	831	43.1
Responsibilities for maintained schools	6,565	6,519	(46)	(0.7)
Schools Block	**721,482**	**722,321**	**839**	**0.1**

3.13 Whilst there is no significant variance in the budgets for de-delegation and responsibilities for maintained schools, there are several detailed variances. Where significant continued pressures have been identified such as suspension of school staff and redundancy, the budgets have been adjusted for 2026/27 to reflect the high volume or cost of activity.

3.14 The overall underspend of £46,000 on responsibilities for maintained schools has been apportioned between the Schools and High Needs Blocks, in line with the relative contributions funded from schools.

3.15 The growth fund is overspent by £1,443,000 in relation to new/re-organising schools (£300,000) and Primary and Secondary Growing Schools (£1,143,000). This is offset by an underspend (£649,000) on temporary classrooms. £500,000 of the pressure is due to the opening of three new primary academy schools that were not on the APT and therefore agreed with the DfE as a one-off draw from growth fund. There were also 3 new schools from September 2025, 2 reorganising schools and an increase in secondary pupil numbers.

3.16 The spend on growth is unpredictable in its nature and a number of the pressures during 2025/26 were one off occurrences. That paired with an increase to DSG growth allocation for 2026/27 of £124,000, and underspends in previous years, provide reassurance that this level of pressure should not be ongoing.

High Needs Block

3.17 The final outturn position for the High Needs Block is an overspend of £140.4m (67.1%). This reflects an increase in expenditure of £61.7m (21.4%) in 2025/26 compared to the previous year, which is broadly in line with the £62.1m (27.5%) growth reported in 2024/25. While expenditure growth is significant, the rate of increase has slowed slightly year on year. This may indicate that savings workstreams from the Transforming SEND programme are beginning to take effect.

3.18 Growth may also reflect capacity constraints within existing provision and assessment teams. Demand continues to rise, as evidenced by growing numbers of cases awaiting placement, alongside a backlog of assessments which has been significantly reduced using the current capacity. However, current system capacity does not meet the requirements to respond to the ever-rising need. It is hoped that the SEND Reform plan and approach will enable more capacity in the system to better meet the needs as early as possible to avoid unnecessary escalation. This should also mean positive learning from the Transforming SEND programme are able to be scaled for maximum impact.

Budget Area	**Annual Budget**	**Outturn**	**Outturn Variance**	
	£'000	**£'000**	**£'000**	**(%)**
Budget Shares	44,105	44,105	0	0
Maintained top-up	151,839	167,493	15,654	10.3
Independent Provision	132,075	127,407	(4,668)	(3.5)
SEN Support Services	7,698	4,697	(3,001)	(39.0)
Support for Inclusion	4,248	4,434	186	4.4
Hospital Education Service	1,803	1,284	(519)	(28.8)
Responsibilities for maintained schools	178	177	(1)	(0.8)
Projected Deficit	(132,760)	0	132,760	100.0
High Needs	**209,186**	**349,597**	**140,411**	**67.1**

3.19 SEN2 reporting shows that the number of education, health and care plans (EHCPs) continues to increase year on year:

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026*
Total EHCPs	**10,507**	**12,750**	**14,583**	**15,994**	**17,784**	**20,495**
Growth on Prior Year %	**16%**	**21%**	**14%**	**10%**	**11%**	**15%**

* Note 2026 represents the provisional SEN2 figure currently under review

Independent Provision – underspend of £4.7m

3.20 Independent provision continues to experience significant growth. Outturn expenditure of £127.4m represents an increase of 26.7% compared with the 2024/25 financial year. The table below summarises changes in both the average number of full time equivalent (FTE) placements and the average cost per placement compared with 2024/25:

	Average FTE 2025/26	% change from 2024/25	Average cost 2025/26	% change from 2024/25
INMSS	1,517	25.68%	£79,452	3.30%
SPI	189	11.37%	£35,935	-20.73%

3.21 Demand for independent placements has continued to rise in line with recent years, driven by sustained growth in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and increasing complexity of need. Although additional places have been developed during the year, maintained provision has not been able to fully meet demand, resulting in continued reliance on independent providers.

3.22 Despite this increase in activity, total expenditure of £127.4m represents an underspend of £4.7m against the budget of £132.1m. A key driver of this variance is a lower number of INMSS pupils than originally forecast, with an average FTE 2.3% below budget. This has contributed to a favourable financial impact of £2.3m associated with pupil numbers.

3.23 While the average INMSS unit cost was within £200 (0.3%) of the budgeted figure and reflective of a reasonable level of inflation, the average SPI unit cost decreased significantly compared with both 2024/25 and the budgeted 2025/26 unit cost. Over the last year the service has been able to move towards greater use of more cost-effective providers as more opportunities have opened up in the market following concerns with respect to the quality and cost of provision of some of the larger providers. Overall, movements in unit costs, primarily for SPI, have resulted in a favourable financial impact of £2.4m.

Top-up funding (maintained) – overspend of £15.7m

3.24 There continues to be significant pressure on top-up funding budgets driven by increasing demand and the growing complexity of need across all provision types.

3.25 The year-on-year changes in the average number of full-time equivalent (FTE) placements and average unit costs are set out in the table below:

Provision	FTE 2025/26	Change from 2024/25 (%)	Average Cost 2025/26 (£)*	Change from 2024/25 (%)
Special schools	3,525	4%	14,106	21%
RP	629	7%	8,381	12%
Mainstream	8,006	18%	5,872	9%
FE college	1,564	19%	6,071	7%
OLA	668	10%	13,714	11%

* Excludes Local Authority place funding, DfE recoupment, import/export adjustments, discretionary payments and any other non-High Needs Block funding

- **Special schools top-up**; overspend of £4.79m. This pressure includes £1.04m relating to legacy payments from prior years, with the remaining overspend driven by increasing complexity of need, resulting in higher average cost per pupil.

- **Resourced provision (RP) top-up**; overspend of £0.30m reflecting continued growth in pupil numbers and increasing complexity of need.

- **Mainstream schools top-up**; overspend of £6.25m, driven by a significant rise in the number of pupils with EHCPs supported in mainstream settings, alongside increasing complexity of need.

- **Education centres top-up**; overspend of £0.14m, primarily due to increased demand for placements.

- **FE Colleges top-up**; underspend of £0.19m. This reflects a £1.5m reduction following a review of costs associated with the Future Skills Pathway and Independence Hubs. This saving has been partly offset by increased learner numbers in the 2025/26 academic year and greater complexity of need.

- **Pupils in Other Local Authorities (OLA) top-up;** overspend of £2.19m, mainly due to increased placement numbers and higher average costs.

- **Discretionary payments;** overspend of £0.17m. This budget supports bespoke packages for pupils in mainstream and special schools, helping to prevent more costly placements in independent or non-maintained settings. Demand has increased significantly in line with growing EHCP numbers, particularly within mainstream provision.

- **Other SEN (Direct payments etc.);** overspend of £2.0m. This budget includes Direct Payments, which provide personal budgets to families of children with EHCPs or are paid to suppliers on their behalf, where this approach delivers improved outcomes. These packages are agreed on a case-by-case basis and give families greater influence over how EHCP outcomes are delivered. While the average value per package has remained broadly stable at around £10,700 per pupil per term, the average number of packages has increased from approximately 115 in 2024/25 to 165 in 2025/26 (an increase of 43%).

3.26 Other material variances within the High Needs Block include:

- **SEN Support Services**; underspend of £3.0m. The majority of this relates to £1.2m of additional grant funding for centrally employed teaching and support staff to meet National Insurance, pay and pension cost increases, thereby reducing pressure on the block. SEN Inclusion Funding (SENIF) for early years pupils with EHCPs reduced by £0.9m following an increase in the Early Years Block allocation and realignment of costs. Further underspends arise from vacancies within Specialist Teacher and Therapy Services (£0.7m) and delays in implementing spend to save initiatives (£0.15m).

- **Hospital Education Service**; underspend of £0.52m. This comprises £0.23m from lower-than-expected expenditure on independent hospital placements, where demand can fluctuate year on year. A further £0.29m relates to underspends across Bluebird, Austen and Serenity Path provisions, reflecting reduced numbers of young people in secure residential and hospital settings. While the development of new secure units and associated NHS workforce constraints have limited capacity in the short term, learner numbers and associated costs have increased throughout the reporting period.

Central School Services Block

3.27 The final position for the Central School Services Block is balanced. The main area of pressure relates to additional school improvement activity (£0.26m). This has been offset by underspends primarily arising from staffing vacancies within Elective Home Education (£0.09m), the Inclusion Support Service (£0.06m), and Admissions (£0.07m), alongside lower than anticipated copyright fee costs (£0.08m).

4 2026/27 budget variances

4.1 Following an update of our 2026/27 allocation and EHCP forecasts there have been some changes to forecast spend within the High Needs block and projected £200.8m deficit in 2026/27.

4.2 The current position is £11.8m higher than the original budget position reported to Schools Forum in January. This increase mainly relates to higher spend because of increased demand and complexity of need for discretionary funding in secondary schools (£4.03m), special school top-up (£3.40m), direct payments (£2.92m), mainstream top-up (£2.41m), FE colleges top-up (£2.37m) and OLA top-up (£1.23m). These increases have been mitigated by reductions to Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools (£3.06m) and Specialist Post 16 (£2.04m) reductions following a lower year end position in 2025/26 than forecast.

4.3 The statutory override for Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits, which allows local authorities to keep these deficits off their balance sheets, is in place until March 2028.

4.4 Approval of the SEN plan will also enable additional funding support from the government through the High Needs Stability Grant which will provide additional one-off funding to meet up to 90% of the cumulative deficit reserve as the end of 2025/26. Indications have been given from government regarding further funding support until 2028 however, not details have been confirmed beyond confirming this support will be limited and subject to progress towards SEN reform.

4.5 The pressure on the high needs block continues to be mitigated by our saving workstreams managed by the Transforming SEND Hampshire board and recorded on our DSG management plan. In 2025/26 £39.0m cost avoidance has been recognised in relation to our savings workstreams, this represents £10m growth from the £29.0m recognised in 2024/25.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Following the announcements in March regarding proposals for SEN Reform, further details have been published regarding associated grant funding:

- Inclusive mainstream funding for schools and 16-19 providers: [Inclusive mainstream fund: 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK]

- Inclusive early years fund: [Inclusive early years fund: 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK]

- Experts at Hand & Local Authority SEND Transformation Fund: [Experts at Hand & Local Authority SEND Transformation Fund - GOV.UK]

Free School Meal (FSM) Expansion Grant

In June 2025, the DfE announced an expansion to free school meal (FSM) eligibility to all households in receipt of Universal Credit. This will take effect from the start of the 2026/27 academic year, and applies to all settings that are currently required to provide free school meals to eligible pupils.

To support with the costs arising from the expansion, additional funding will be provided to mainstream schools and high needs settings through the FSM expansion grant for the period September 2026 to March 2027 (with an additional April 2027 to August 2027 payment for academies.)

To ensure there is no shortfall or excess of funding, the Universal Free School Meal (UIFSM) take-up will be reduced by a DfE estimate of 20% to reflect the transfer between the two different funding streams. This will be adjusted based on actual uptake in the summer 2027.

Further details are available :

- Updated free school meals guidance for schools and local authorities, setting out how the new FSM entitlement should be administered; and
- The methodology and conditions of grants documents for the FSM expansion grant.

Universal Free School Meal (UIFSM)

Updated allocations and conditions of grant have now been published including an increase in the rate of funding to £2.66.

Further details are available including information relating to the temporary funding adjustment due to the expansion of FSM eligibility:

5 Policy Pack

5.1 The School Funding Policy Pack has been updated for the new financial year to reflect the current 2026/27 funding rates. No changes have been made to the policies agreed through Schools Forum. This will be published alongside the current year funding information: Schools' budget shares 2026/27 | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council

6 Recommendations

6.1 It is recommended that Schools Forum notes the final position for 2025/26 and updates for 2026/27 onwards.

6.2 It is recommended that Schools Forum notes the updates to the Policy Pack to reflect the current year funding rates.

Appendix 1 – Schools budget position as at 31 March 2026

Budget Heading	Annual Budget	Actuals YTD	YE Variance	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Early Years ISB	646	666	20	3.0
Two Year Olds Free Entitlement Funding	56,180	53,106	(3,074)	(5.5)
3&4 Year Olds Universal Entitlement 15h	57,513	56,748	(765)	(1.3)
3&4 Year Olds Additional Entitlement 30h	30,697	30,286	(411)	(1.3)
Other 3&4 Year Olds Funding	5,212	5,385	173	3.3
Three to Four Year Olds Free Entitlement	93,422	92,418	(1,004)	(1.1)
Early Years Central Expenditure	6,885	5,770	(1,115)	(16.2)
Under 2 Yr Olds Free Entitlement Funding	64,919	61,480	(3,439)	(5.3)
Early Years	222,052	213,441	(8,611)	(3.9)
Schools Budget Shares	710,383	710,441	58	0.0
Staff Supply Cover (Not Sickness)	669	1,031	362	54.1
Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service	1,457	1,376	(81)	(5.5)
Schools Contingency	293	17	(276)	(94.3)
Licences and Subscriptions	186	178	(8)	(4.3)
Schools Dedelegated	2,605	2,602	(3)	(0.1)
Growth Fund	1,929	2,760	831	43.1
Responsibilities for maintained schools	6,565	6,519	(46)	(0.7)
Schools Block	721,482	722,321	839	0.1
Projected Deficit	(132,760)		132,760	(100.0)
Special Place Funding	34,079	34,079	0	0.0
Education Centres Place Funding	5,990	5,990	0	0.0
Resourced Provision Place Funding	4,036	4,035	(1)	(0.0)
High Needs Block Budget Shares	44,105	44,105	(0)	(0.0)
Special School top-up	44,939	49,728	4,789	10.7
Resourced Provision top-up	4,971	5,275	304	6.1
EC Top-Up & Commissioned Service	3,951	4,093	142	3.6
Mainstream School top-up	40,757	47,010	6,253	15.3
Post-16 top-up	11,589	11,396	(193)	(1.7)
Pupils in OLA Schools top-up	7,970	10,159	2,189	27.5
Discretionary Payments	33,917	34,087	170	0.5
Other SEN (Direct payments etc.)	3,745	5,745	2,000	53.4
Maintained	151,839	167,493	15,654	10.3
Independent Provision	132,075	127,407	(4,668)	(3.5)
High Needs Top-Up Funding	283,914	294,901	10,987	3.9

SEN Support Services	7,698	4,697	(3,001)	(39.0)
High Needs Support for Inclusion	4,248	4,434	186	4.4
Hospital Education Service	1,803	1,284	(519)	(28.8)
Responsibilities for maintained schools	178	177	(1)	(0.8)
High Needs	209,186	349,597	140,411	67.1
Fees to Independent Schools without SEN	140	163	23	16.1
Servicing of Schools Forum	40	38	(2)	(5.9)
Admissions	1,605	1,537	(68)	(4.2)
Copyright	1,349	1,274	(75)	(5.6)
Central schools expenditure	3,134	3,011	(123)	(3.9)
Termination of Employment Costs	658	658		0.0
Historic Commitments	658	658		0.0
Other Functions	3,656	3,779	123	3.4
Asset management	476	476		0.0
Strategic Management	178	178		0.0
Centrally Employed Teachers Pensions	844	844		0.0
Other central education expenditure	5,154	5,277	123	2.4
Central School Services	8,946	8,946	(0)	(0.0)
Pupil Premium	44,553	44,553	(0)	(0.0)
Other Schools Grants	64,632	64,632	(0)	(0.0)
Schools Grants	109,185	109,185	(0)	(0.0)
Overall Result	1,270,841	1,403,480	132,639	10.4