



High Needs Funding for Nottinghamshire Mainstream Schools

Arrangements for accessing additional funding for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

2025-2026 Financial Year



## Summary

The [Children and Families Act 2014](#) states that the majority of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) should be educated in mainstream education settings. The [Equality Act 2010](#) states that schools have a statutory duty to make reasonable adjustments for children and young people with protected characteristics, including disabilities. Where these needs relate to SEND, schools can use their SEND budgets and additional funding to make these adjustments. This guidance document provides detail on the local processes through which Nottinghamshire County Council implement the [national guidance](#) relating to High Needs Special Educational Needs and Disabilities SEND Funding in mainstream schools.

All schools receive Core Funding to help them meet the needs of children with SEND, which includes a basic per pupil rate of funding (Basic Entitlement) and a Notional SEND Budget (up to £6,000 per pupil). A school's overall budget also provides support for quality first teaching and inclusive provision for all children and young people with SEND, as part of the school's core offer. If a school requires additional resource over and above this funding, they can also apply for Top-up Funding from the High Needs Block, usually held centrally by Local Authorities. Evidence of the effective use of the notional SEND budget is required nationally to support moderation and decision-making in response to requests for top-up funding.

Nottinghamshire County Council acknowledges the current funding pressures faced by schools and education settings locally and nationally. Within this context, the Council is committed to working together across the Local Area SEND Partnership to explore effective use of resources to improve outcomes for our children and young people with SEND. The Nottinghamshire High Needs budget process for 2025-2026 includes new measures to ensure fairer allocation of SEND funding (Additional Family Needs: AFN) according to level of need and to support inclusive Families of Schools. Newly formed District Inclusive Practice Teams will also work together with inclusive mainstream schools experiencing the most financial pressures within our local system to attempt to address some of these pressures (See Appendix 4 for details).

In Nottinghamshire, our local model of SEND funding means that some elements of Top-up High Needs funding are devolved to local school partnerships (e.g. Families of Schools and School Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships, See Appendix 1). Some funding is allocated to group-level provision (i.e. Family Needs Funding, Devolved Partnership Funding) and some is allocated to individual-level provision (i.e. Additional Family Need Funding – AFN). In addition, mainstream schools can access top-up funding for their children with the most severe and complex needs via the centrally retained High Level Needs (HLN) budget.

This system is designed to provide earlier intervention and support within a Graduated Response to meeting children's needs, in line with the [SEND Code of Practice 0-25, current national statutory guidance](#). The [Education and Skills Funding Agency \(ESFA\) High Needs Funding: 2025-2026 operational guide](#) grants local authorities this *'flexibility to provide high needs funding outside the statutory assessment process for all children and young people with high needs up to the age of 19.'* The local authority retains ultimate responsibility for the provision and fair allocation of resource, through this operational arrangement. Therefore, in Nottinghamshire, schools can access additional Top-up High

Needs funding to support students, without the need for an Education, Health and Care Plan. This separation of our SEND funding streams from the statutory assessment processes and devolution of funding to local school partnerships can support earlier intervention and support within a Graduated Response to meeting children’s SEND.

For an individual AFN/HLN bid to be successful, it must meet the following criteria:

1. Clear **evidence of need** in line with the appropriate level on the Descriptors of Need (see Appendix 2).
2. Evidence that the **Graduated Response has been followed**.
3. Detailed description of the **proposed use of HLN funding** and evidence of the predicted outcomes of provision for the individual pupil.

The table below shows an overview of the SEND Funding Elements in Nottinghamshire and their financial values for 2025-2026.

Funding Element	Budget	Funding Level	Funding Amount 24-25		Application/Calculation
<b>3</b>	Top-up Funding  DSG High Needs Block	<b>High Level Need HLN</b>	3 High	£24,000	<a href="#">Online Application Process</a> – HLN Panels
			2 Medium	£20,000	
			1 Low	£14,000	
		<b>Additional Family Need AFN</b>	High	£6,000 - £8,000	Family of Schools % according to APT.*  <a href="#">Online Application Process</a> Moderation – Family SENCO
			Medium	£4,000 - £6,000	
			Low	£2,000 - £4,000	
<b>2</b>	Core Funding	<b>Notional SEND Budget</b>	Up to £6,000 per pupil		October 2023 School Census Data
<b>1</b>	DSG Schools Block	<b>Basic Entitlement</b>	Between £3,500 and £5,700 depending on Key Stage		<a href="#">Authority proforma tool (APT) from Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)</a>

*\*Authority Proforma Tool (APT) from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)*

The SEND funding detailed in this guidance is intended to support the inclusion of children with SEND in our mainstream education settings across Nottinghamshire. While a student with SEND may at any time, due to the nature of their needs, be accessing part-time, bespoke, individualised or alternative educational provision, there should be a clear plan to support the student’s return to full-time access to education or training in the future, at a pace that meets the young person’s needs. Within our local SEND funding structures, there are also systems through which we can respond to exceptional circumstances to support children and young people.