



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



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

**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.

1.0 Introduction

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 [SEND and alternative provision improvement plan - Right Support, Right Place, Right Time](#) (2023) confirms that meeting SEN should remain a core part of mainstream schools' role in future, and makes proposals on how schools and their teachers will be supported in that role. 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 support 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.

The following operational guides inform the implementation of High Needs SEND funding across England:

[Schools operational guide: 2025 to 2026](#)

[High needs funding: 2025 to 2026 operational guide](#)

[The notional SEN budget for mainstream schools: operational guide 2025 to 2026](#)

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. Our local implementation of the national school funding reforms (effective from April 2013) was underpinned by locally established principles including the need to:

- Create simple and transparent processes
- Maintain local moderation through SEND networks and Family of Schools structures
- Provide funding alongside other local school funding processes
- Ensure there is a fair and proportionate allocation of funding at the appropriate level, within a graduated response
- Ensure that the system is responsive to need and allows for funding to follow the pupils with the most complex needs
- Retain sufficient flexibility to refine arrangements over time
- Encourage innovative ways of using financial resources

Our priority is to ensure effective targeting to schools in the areas of greatest deprivation, and to schools which successfully include the children and young people with the most complex needs. In doing so, we also aim to ensure that the allocation of these resources is subject to appropriate monitoring and accountability arrangements and continuous review.

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 students return to full-time access to education or training in the future, at a pace that meets the young person's needs.



2.0 Elements of SEND Funding for Mainstream Schools and Settings

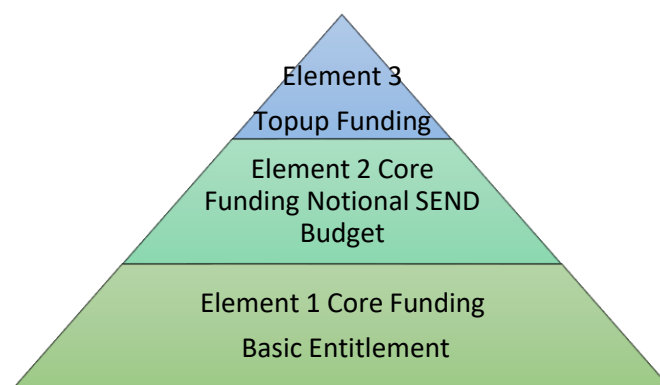
2.1 Overview of National Framework

The Designated Schools Grant (DSG) is the main source of government funding for the provision of education by local authorities and schools in England. The DSG is intended to meet the educational costs of all pupils in primary and secondary education, as well as the educational costs of special educational provision for children and young people with SEND in post-16 provision, including those aged over 19 and up to 25 who have an EHC plan.

The DSG is divided into 4 notional blocks:

1. the schools block (for mainstream schools and academies)
2. the high needs block
3. the central school services block
4. the early years block

Each of the 4 blocks of the DSG is determined by a separate National Funding Formula. (For full details of the funding formulas see [High needs funding: 2025 to 2026 operational guide](#)). All schools receive core funding via the schools block 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. If a school needs additional resource over and above this funding, they can also apply for Top-up Funding from the High Needs Block, usually held centrally by the Local Authority. Therefore, schools' budget to meet the needs of children with SEND, consists of 3 elements as shown in the figure below:



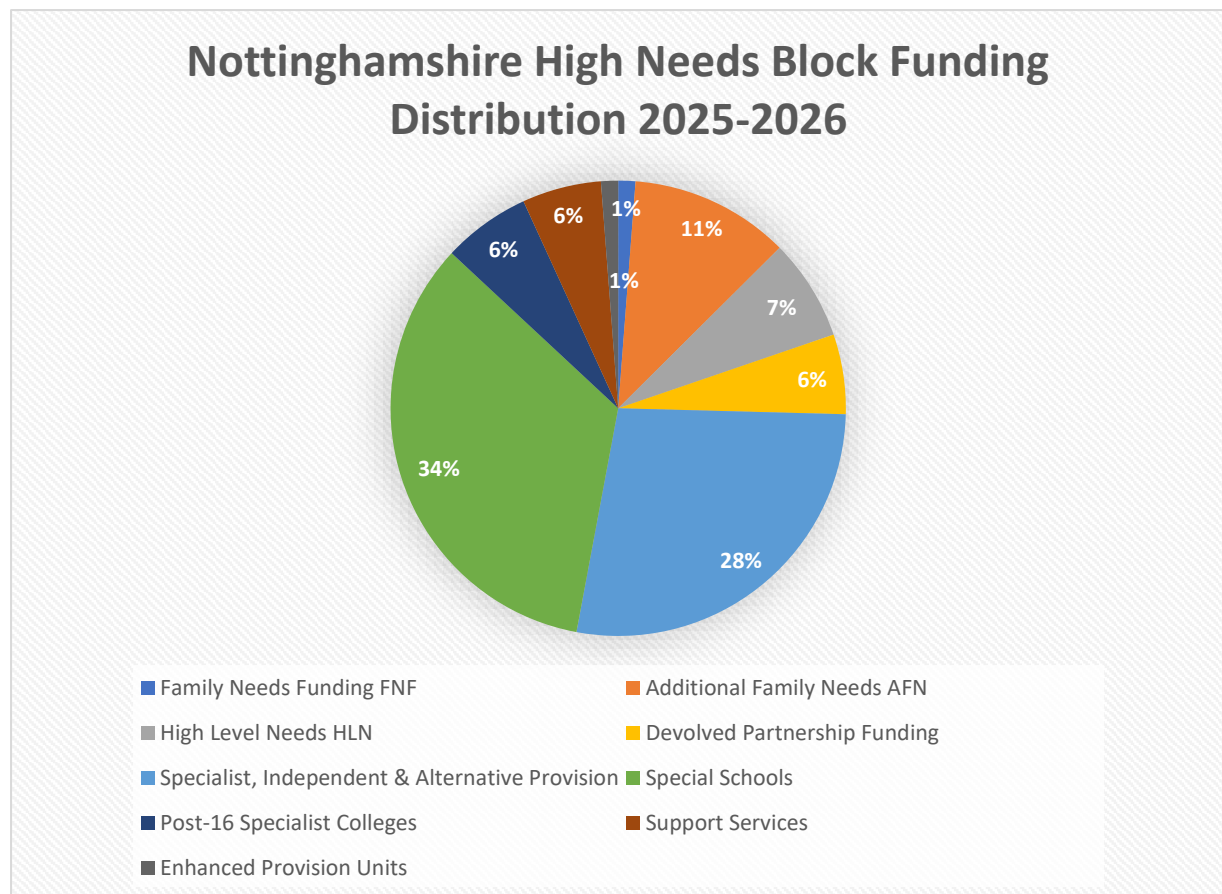
Calculations of schools' Core Funding Elements 1 and 2 are made using the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), which incorporates various factors reflecting the needs of the school population.

- Number of pupils
- Free school meals
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index IDACI
- Prior academic attainment measures



2.2 Overview of Local Nottinghamshire Framework – High Needs Funding Block

The figure below shows the planned distribution of the Nottinghamshire High Needs Block Funding for 2025-2026.



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). 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). In addition, mainstream schools can access top-up funding for their children with the most severe and complex needs via the centralised High Level Needs budget. (See Appendix 1 for Details of Local Devolved Funding Structures in Nottinghamshire.)

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 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, our 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.

In Nottinghamshire, maintained schools, academies and free schools are eligible to access these Top-up funding streams and all are treated equally. Individual school SENCOs are supported in this work by Family and District SENCOs in each area.

2.3 Details of SEND Funding Elements in Nottinghamshire 2024-2025

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

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

2.3.1 Funding Elements 1 and 2 – Core Funding

All schools are expected to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities, in accordance with their duties under the Equality Act 2010, whether or not they have SEND. Where a reasonable adjustment is special educational provision, the revenue cost of that adjustment may be met from the school’s SEN budget. In discharging that responsibility, amongst other expectations set out in the SEND Code of Practice, mainstream schools are expected to:

- *meet* the costs of special educational provision for pupils identified as on SEN Support in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice; and
- *contribute towards* the costs of special educational provision for pupils with high needs, up to the high needs cost threshold set by the national regulations (currently £6,000 per pupil per

annum). This cost threshold is calculated by reference to the additional costs of provision, above the costs of the basic provision for all pupils in the school.

Element 1 or Basic Entitlement:

Schools will receive this funding for all learners on a per pupil basis. The funding is based on individual pupils in reception to year 11 who are aged 4 and above at the start of the academic year (October School Census). The rate is different across the Key Stages.

This element should fund:

- a curriculum that is appropriately organised and differentiated for all children and young people.
- the cost of the school Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCo) and the time required to undertake their duties.
- all aspects of Quality First teaching (*see further guidance “Inclusive Quality First Teaching” and “SEN Support in Mainstream Schools”*)

Each school will use its basic entitlement to support the majority of pupils who face moderate barriers to their learning, as well as funding the first £6,000 of provision made for identified pupils with high needs, referred to as Element 2 funding/Notional SEND Budget.

Element 2 or Notional SEND Budget:

Mainstream maintained schools and academies are notified each year of a clearly identified but notional budget, within their overall budget allocation, towards the costs of fulfilling their duty to use their ‘best endeavours’ to secure that special educational provision for their pupils with SEND. Using funds from the schools block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG), local authorities are responsible for calculating the amount of this notional budget using their local mainstream schools funding formula factors.

[National guidance](#) currently indicates this notional amount should be up to £6,000 per pupil. The notional SEN budget is not intended to provide £6,000 for every pupil with SEN, as most such pupils’ support will cost less than that. Nor is the notional SEN budget intended to provide a specific amount per pupil for those with lower additional support costs. The [SEND and alternative provision improvement plan - Right Support, Right Place, Right Time 2023](#), points to changes to the notional SEN budget in future.

As with all other local authorities, Nottinghamshire County Council, in agreement with our Early Years and Schools’ Forum, has agreed the formula which is used to calculate the notional SEN budget for all Nottinghamshire schools. The Nottinghamshire formula includes:

- 100% of the deprivation funding factor
- 100% of the low prior attainment funding factor

No other elements of the overall schools’ funding formula are used in the calculation of the notional SEN budget for Nottinghamshire schools. By using this formula, the aggregate across all Nottinghamshire schools means that 15.04% of the overall schools’ budget is identified as notional

SEN budget. This is in line with the majority of other local authorities. This percentage figure will vary between schools, depending on their pupil population. As the deprivation and low attainment factors are clearly identified in each school's budget, a school's SENCo can calculate both their notional SEN budget, and the percentage of their school's overall budget that this accounts for.

2.3.2 Funding Element 3 – Top-up Funding

Top-up funding (Element 3) is the funding required over and above the Core funding (Elements 1 and 2) a school or setting receives to enable a pupil or student with high needs to participate in education and learning. Details of the different types of Top-Up funding available to schools and settings in Nottinghamshire are detailed below.

Top-up Funding Type	Available Budget 2025-2026	Funding paid to	Type of Provision for Pupils
a. Additional Family Needs AFN	£14,011,951	Family of Schools	Individual
b. High Level Needs HLN	£8,926,148	Individual Schools	Individual
c. Family Needs Funding FNF	£1,564,152	Family of Schools	Group/Organisation
d. Devolved Partnership Funding	£7,085,704	Schools Behaviour and Attendance Partnership	Group

a. Additional Family Need (AFN) Funding – For Individual Pupils

A percentage of the local Additional Family Needs budget is allocated to each Family of Schools using the following formula from the Authority proforma tool (APT) from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). For the 2025-2026 financial year, the formula has included adjustments designed to impact fairer and more accurate allocation of AFN funds to higher local areas of need. The formula factors and weightings are presented below, followed by further explanations of the 2025-2026 adjustments.

- Number of pupils – 53% (adjusted from 64%)
- Free school meals – 15% (adjusted from 10%)
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index IDACI 12% (adjusted from 9%)
- Prior academic attainment measures 20% (adjusted from 17%)
- AFN allocations to students living outside the Family of Schools (8.5%)

1. The Nottinghamshire SEND Funding Tracker has led to an adjustment for Families of Schools where a significantly higher % of children receiving AFN live outside the Family of Schools' catchment

area, compared to the Nottinghamshire average. This is calculated using the child's current home address.

2. The relative weightings for the APT factors have also been adjusted to increase weightings for proxy indicators of SEND. This adjustment was made to consider geographical areas of high SEND need where the SEND funding tracker adjustment did not impact.

3. A final adjustment was made to ensure that no Family of Schools received a reduced FNF or AFN budget compared to 2024-2025 financial year.

Each Family of Schools, facilitated by their Family SENCO, will then, through a process of moderation, allocate AFN funding to individual students with high needs within the family.

This AFN funding should fund:

- teacher or teaching assistant support to address individual targets linked to individual, identified needs.
- structured learning opportunities. Where it is appropriate for the identified learner, this *may* take place in small groups.
- support to enable equal access to break and lunchtime activities, and other curricular and social integration opportunities during the school day.
- arrangements which are made within the classroom/setting and/or through limited periods of withdrawal from the classroom setting.

Decisions on how Family resources are allocated to each school are made by the Family of Schools itself. Each individual school (in practice the head teacher and SENCO) will then determine the practical arrangements for the use of these resources within their particular setting. Funding from different sources may be combined to secure value for money and to facilitate inclusive arrangements.

In order that funding decisions made at the AFN level are broadly consistent across the county, the local authority's recommendation is that allocations should be in line with the following:

AFN Funding Band	Topup SEND Funding per year	Notional SEND Funding per year	Total SEND Funding per year
1 Low	£2,000 - £4,000	£6,000	£8,000 - £10,000
2 Medium	£4,000 - £6,000	£6,000	£10,000 - £12,000
3 High	£6,000 - £8,000	£6,000	£12,000 - £14,000

However, AFN funds are devolved to Families of schools, so Families are able to exercise discretion in relation to their funding decisions.

b. High Level Needs (HLN) Funding – For Individual Pupils

HLN funding is provided for children and young people with the most severe and complex SEND in mainstream settings across Nottinghamshire. The schools where pupils with the most complex needs attend, is not predictable. Therefore, it is difficult to resource the schools where they attend through a formula-driven funding mechanism. Because of this, resources are allocated through a High Level Needs panel comprising:

- District SENCOs, Family SENCOs and SENCOs who represent each phase of education
- Representatives from each geographical area
- Local authority support services
- Health representation
- LA officers who support the work of the panel to ensure that the discussions and decision-making are fair, appropriate and transparent

This funding should fund:

- significant levels of regular teaching and/or support of a teaching assistant to address individual targets linked to identified individual needs.
- daily structured learning opportunities. Where it is appropriate for the identified learner, this *may* take place in small groups.
- additional support required to ensure an integrated learning experience and support to ensure equal access to break and lunchtime activities, and other curricular and social integration opportunities during the school day.
- for some pupils, HLN funding may be used to provide them with a period of alternative educational provision, with a view to considering how they might access more mainstream educational experiences.

In some exceptional circumstances, given pressures elsewhere in our local system, top-up funding could be used to support appropriate alternative provision where:

- A student has special school named on their Education Health and Care Plan but the current mainstream school are commissioning alternative provision for a transition phase until an appropriate placement is available.
- A student in Key Stage 4 will complete examinations and transition to a post-16 setting at the end of the alternative provision.

In these situations, the commissioning school would be required to request additional funding according to the usual criteria above. These exceptional arrangements will be reviewed annually with the intention that these scenarios would reduce over time.

HLN is allocated according to the level of need of the individual child or young person, detailed in the Descriptors of Need (See Appendix 2). The table below indicates the equivalent teaching assistant hours and alternative provision provided within each of the HLN funding bands.

As stated in the national [Education and Skills Funding Agency \(ESFA\) High Needs Funding: 2025-2026 operational guide](#) 'Top-up funding rates for individual placements should consider both the costs to the school of offering overall provision for the pupils and students with high needs and the contribution made from other elements of funding. These include mainstream schools' notional SEN budget (for the costs of additional support up to £6,000 per annum). The national guide also states that 'even where provision is specified in an EHC plan there is no statutory requirement that a local authority must pay top-up funding at a particular rate requested by a school or college.' Finally, 'When agreeing rates of top-up funding, a local authority and a school or college may wish to reflect economies and diseconomies of scale based on occupancy of places.' ...'Schools and colleges may need to adapt their approach to making special provision, focusing on the needs of the child or young person. For example, a school or college should not assume that an EHC needs assessment and plan will result in the provision of a full-time teaching assistant.'

HLN Funding Band	Topup SEND Funding per year	Notional SEND Funding per year	Total SEND Funding per year	Equivalent Teaching Assistant 1:1 Hours per week (52 weeks NJC Scale 3)*	Equivalent Alternative Provision Budget per week (39 weeks)**
1 Low	£14,000	£6,000	£20,000	25 hours (1:1 in lessons)	£512
2 Medium	£20,000	£6,000	£26,000	32.5 hours (1:1 in lessons and unstructured times)	£666
3 High	£24,000	£6,000	£30,000	32.5 hours 1:1 plus elements of 2:1	£769

*Teaching Assistant National Joint Council Scales 23-24 Scale 3 - WTD rate 01.04.23 (£) 15.04 (inc. 12.07% enhancement)

**Most-used Alternative Provisions in Nottinghamshire day rates currently range from £150.00 to £280.00

When an HLN allocation is made, the Family of Schools would usually return to its own budget any existing AFN allocations it had made regarding the pupil. However, it is up to each Family to determine how best to allocate its own resources: an HLN funding allocation does not preclude the continuation or allocation of AFN funding.

c. Family Needs Funding (FNF) – For Groups of Pupils and Organisational Resource

FNF is devolved to Families of Schools using the following formula:

- £4,500 allocated to each Family of Schools
- £3,953 per school allocated according to the number of schools

This funding should be used for:

- SEN training and development in schools
- management and co-ordination time for the Family SENCO (equivalent to 23 days a year)
- providing support for pupils with complex needs in mainstream settings during transition

Families of schools, or clusters of Families of Schools may use their combined funds to enhance the role of the Family SENCO and to develop their Family networks. This may include:

- funding increased Family SENCO time
- development of cluster networks
- joint training events across schools/families

FNF also provides a contingency element for unexpected admissions and changes in need and provides additional flexibility in resourcing schools who include pupils with more complex SEND.

d. Devolved Partnership Funding – For Groups of Pupils and Organisational Resource

As part of the implementation of Nottinghamshire’s strategy for children and young people with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs - entitled ‘5 steps to collective responsibility’ - resources have been devolved to School Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships across Nottinghamshire, subject to a memorandum of understanding. For the 2025-26 financial year, a total of £7.08 million has been devolved to primary and secondary school partnerships for this purpose. These resources complement school budget, AFN and HLN resources for pupils with SEND, including those with SEMH needs.

These resources should be used by each partnership to develop a range of local provision, including making arrangements through alternative providers where appropriate, in order to prevent permanent exclusion.

The funding now devolved to school partnerships to prevent the need for exclusion represent the funding that would previously have been used to arrange educational provision for permanently excluded pupils. Nottinghamshire Early Years and Schools Forum has agreed that if a school chooses to permanently exclude a pupil, the school will be liable for the full cost of educational provision arranged by the Local Authority, until such time as they are placed fully on roll at a new school.

3.0 Nottinghamshire Allocation and Monitoring Processes for Top-Up SEND Funding

3.1 Allocating Additional Family Need (AFN) Funding – For Individual Pupils

Applying for AFN Funding

Applications for AFN resources should be made on the [standard pro forma](#) (AFN/HLN). The published Descriptors of Need (Appendix 2) for AFN funding should be considered prior to completing a request and admissible supporting evidence should be attached as required.

Demonstrating Use of Core Funding Prior to Application

Prior to any Family's decision to allocate AFN funding for an individual pupil, a school would first be expected to demonstrate how it has spent £6,000 per year (or pro-rata) on delivering the pupil's targeted SEN provision. (Whilst this is a national expectation, there may be limited and special circumstances when a Family of Schools chooses to exercise its devolved responsibility to allow for some financial discretion when making AFN decisions.)

The nature of the contracts that schools use to employ teaching assistants will affect how schools are able to demonstrate that they have spent £6,000 on identified pupils. Inconsistencies of practice in this regard across a Family of Schools could result in unfairness in terms of the threshold for accessing AFN funding. Fairness, equity and transparency are principles which should underpin financial decision-making. Therefore, a Family of Schools should seek agreement between its schools regarding how to demonstrate £6,000 of Element 2 spend, for example, by specifying *hours* of teaching assistant support as well as actual cost.

Allocating AFN Funding

Nottinghamshire County Council recommends that that AFN allocations should be based on a 52-week year, divided into the following term lengths:

- Summer (April to August): 22 weeks
- Autumn (September to December): 17 weeks
- Spring (January to March): 13 weeks

This is intended to ensure consistency of funding for AFN-funded pupils who move between schools in different Families. This also mirrors the methodology by which HLN funding is allocated to schools. Notwithstanding the above, and in the context of ever-tighter budgets, there is a growing number of schools who are employing support staff on term-time only contracts. The decision regarding whether to employ staff on term-time or full-year contracts is a decision for individual schools to make.

Post-16 Allocations

Family resources may also be used to contribute to the cost of provision for pupils accessing mainstream sixth form, or for pupils over 16 years of age whose school leaving date has been deferred by one year or more.

Retaining Contingency Funds

Unlike High Level Needs funding, AFN and FNF allocations do not 'follow' individual pupils who move between schools and/or Families. When consulted, schools supported this position. Families of Schools will therefore need to retain a contingency for in-year movements in order to target funding to schools where pupils transfer from another Family of Schools.

3.2 Allocating High Level Needs (HLN) Funding – For Individual Pupils

Applying for HLN Funding

Applications for HLN resources should be made online using the [standard pro forma](#) (AFN/HLN). The published Descriptors of Need (Appendix 2) for HLN funding should be considered prior to completing a request and admissible supporting evidence should be attached as required.

Usually, applications for HLN resources should be made through Families of Schools, and with agreement from the Family SENCo. Families are asked to ensure that:

- individual school funding requests are moderated against current Descriptors of Need (Appendix 2).
- if a request has not been through the Family moderation process, a clear explanation is given as to why this is the case.
- a contingency is retained in the Family's AFN budget, pending the decision of the High Level Needs panel. This is to ensure that where HLN funding for a school is not allocated in regard to a pupil with complex needs, the school is still able to access AFN funding.
- Pupils, for whom HLN funding has been allocated to their school, should continue to be discussed at each Family moderation meeting, in order to ensure that the resources allocated to the school remain at the correct level.

The HLN Panels

The HLN Panels meet termly i.e. 3 times per year. Each term, there are 3 panels

1. Early Years – New Cases (F1 and F2)
2. New Cases (School Age Key Stage 1-4)
3. Resubmissions

Resubmissions: HLN funding is usually agreed for a fixed period, which will be notified to schools at the time of its allocation. Schools/ Families of Schools should plan to submit a further application towards the end of this period. The HLN team will issue written reminders to schools during the term preceding the funding coming to an end, notifying them of the deadline for any resubmissions that may be required. HLN funding will cease automatically unless, as requested, schools resubmit an application to the specified panel.

Appeals: Each term, there is also an Appeals Panel where requests for funding that have been unsuccessful can be resubmitted with additional evidence and changes to the bid, to challenge the previous panel decision. The Appeals Panel will be provided with the previous bid and the reason for

the previous decision not to allocate funding as requested. Appeals will be considered by a small, independent panel consisting of at least a senior LA officer, a head teacher, and a SENCO.

Professional Reports: Dates for the panel meetings and deadlines for submission of requests will be provided at the beginning of each academic year. Where there has been recent involvement from an educational support service (e.g. Schools and Families Specialist Services, Educational Psychology Service, Social Emotional and Mental Health Team, Physical Disability Support Service), particularly where the professional has observed the pupil at school, a professional report should be submitted alongside the request for the panel to consider. Prior to submitting a funding request, school SENCOs are asked to indicate their intention to submit a request, to allow time for support services to prepare their reports.

HLN Panel Decision-Making

The panel decisions are intended to be through, robust and transparent and the panels are always open to observers who are interested. Contact hln.panel@nottscc.gov.uk for a panel observation invitation.

For a HLN bid to be successful, it must meet the following criteria:

- Clear **evidence of need** at a HLN level as detailed in the HLN descriptors (Appendix 2). Detail of severity and complexity of need, frequency and duration should be provided. The needs outlined in the request must be reflective of the Primary Area of Need identified from the 4 Areas of SEND, to ensure the request can be moderated against the correct Descriptors of Need i.e. Cognition and Learning, Communication and Interaction, Social Emotional and Mental Health and Sensory and Physical.
- Evidence that the **Graduated Response has been followed**. Usually, this would include the student already having access to High AFN, may include involvement from multi-agency support services, typically through the Springboard process; and evidence of multiple Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycles in the current setting. School Behaviour Partnership resources: If a school considers that a pupil's Social Emotional and/or Mental Health needs are leading to challenging behaviours, the HLN panel would expect that an HLN request would provide details of the allocation and effectiveness of Behaviour Partnership resources. Without this information, it is unlikely that a request would be successful.
- Detailed description of the **proposed use of HLN funding** and evidence of the predicted outcomes of provision for the individual pupil. This would typically include a detailed provision map with costings.

Placement Stability: Pupils with high level needs are likely to continue to require some level of additional provision for a significant period of time. The HLN panel will seek to ensure maximum stability in funding by granting allocations for specified periods. On occasion, for example, in the case of very young children, new admissions or pupils whose support arrangements are likely to be subject to imminent and/or regular changes, the panel may make an allocation for a much shorter period to support an initial placement pending review. New HLN allocations made in Year 6 will automatically transfer to the receiving secondary school and will normally be subject to review by the following May.

Notification of Decisions: Schools will be notified in writing of panel decisions within 10 working days of the date on which a case is considered. Decision letters will provide information about the decision, including brief reasons why the panel has decided not to allocate HLN funding.

Exceptional Requests for HLN Funding – Outside of the Panel Process

There will be occasions when an HLN decision has to be made outside the normal panel arrangements. These may arise in the following circumstances:

- A pupil with high needs arrives from another LA
- There is a sudden accident or unexpected deterioration in a child's medical condition or health, including their mental health
- An order is made by the SEN and Disability Tribunal
- Funding is required for:
 - Children in Care
 - Pupils who are hard to place, or whose placement is at risk

Internal guidance documents describe the processes by which these decisions are made.

If a school feels that a pupil's circumstances match one or more of the above criteria, they can enquire about [making an Exceptional Request online](#). In these exceptional circumstances, interim decisions will be made by the Chair of the High Level Needs Panel, using the current Descriptors of Need (Appendix 2). These exceptional allocations may be made for a fixed period only. For funding to continue beyond this period, a school would need at the appropriate time to submit a full request to the HLN panel.

If the main HLN panel subsequently turns down a school's request, the school should arrange appropriate provision for the pupil using its own resources and/or AFN funding. However, in contrast to other requests made to the panel, there is no expectation that the Family of Schools should automatically make a High AFN allocation for pupils whose exceptional / interim funding has come to an end.

3.3 Adjustments to School Budget Shares Following AFN/HLN Allocations

HLN budget allocations will be made automatically by the county council HLN data team. For AFN and FNF allocations, Family SENCOs must complete the Family SEN Budget virement request forms *FAM 1* and *FAM 2* following family moderation.

Where resources are allocated to support individually-named pupils through AFN or HLN funding streams they will normally be available to schools from the ***start of the term following the High Level Needs Panel or Family moderation decision.***

When the High Level Needs Panel or Family discontinues or adjusts an allocation the existing level of resources will be left in place ***until the end of the term following the High Level Needs Panel or Family decision.***

Where a pupil is accessing part time education across the week (less than 25-32.5 hours access to learning at school or otherwise), HLN funding will be allocated to their school pro-rata and increased appropriately as/when their hours of provision is increased.

When a pupil benefiting from AFN or HLN resources leaves a school, for a reason other than through planned transition, resources will be discontinued after **one month**. Schools must notify the LA's HLN Team **as soon as they become aware that the pupil is leaving**. Where a pupil remains on the school's roll but does not access educational provision for an extended period, the school should similarly notify the LA's HLN Team who may temporarily suspend the HLN funding pending the pupil reengaging with provision.

When a pupil with allocated AFN or HLN funding does not take up his or her placement, resources will be discontinued after **one month**. Schools must notify the LA's HLN Team **immediately** if this occurs.

Where appropriate, school budget shares will be adjusted as soon as possible and in arrears, to reflect both new allocations and those that are discontinued.

3.4 Monitoring and Accountability of AFN/HLN Funding

Nottinghamshire County Council collates data relating to the decisions that are made by the HLN panels. This data is used in order to monitor and evaluate trends and patterns in decision making.

In addition to district moderation, the LA has produced a self-evaluation framework (SEF) toolkit for use by Nottinghamshire schools and Families of Schools, in order to help them to evaluate and demonstrate the use and effectiveness of their SEN resources, in particular their High Needs funding (i.e. money allocated via AFN and HLN).

Families of schools should moderate requests for FNF alongside AFN requests and distribute the money accordingly. Families should retain copies of moderation and virement request documentation for monitoring and accountability purposes.

4.0 Additional Funding Information

4.1 Pupil Premium Funding

Additional targeted funding is provided to schools in respect of:

- Pupils who have been designated as Children Looked After (CLA), referred to in Nottinghamshire as 'Our Children'. The Pupil Premium for one of Our Children is £2,630 per year, and eligible pupils are those who have been designated as one of Our Children for a single day in the previous financial year. Pupils who have been adopted, are under a special guardianship order, or child living arrangement following at least one day designated as a Child Looked After are also eligible for £2,630 Pupil Premium Plus.
- Pupils who are or have been eligible for Free School Meals (FSM 'Ever 6'). For the financial year 2025-26, FSM 'Ever 6' has a value of £1,515 for a primary-aged pupil and £1,076 for a secondary aged pupil.

Schools are held accountable for the way in which this funding is used; they are required to report annually to the Department for Education on how these funds are being used, and the impact of these measures. The use of this funding is also a focus for Ofsted inspections where the impact at an individual child level is likely to be evaluated. ([Using Pupil Premium: Guidance for School Leaders 2025](#)).

The fact that a school accesses Pupil Premium should not affect decision-making regarding the allocation of AFN, HLN or other devolved partnership funding. Pupil Premium is not part of the High Needs funding 'block' and to deny access to High Needs funding for a pupil for whom Pupil Premium has been allocated would represent discrimination against one of Our Children.

4.2 Recoupment of Costs for Pupils Belonging to Other Local Authorities

[Pupils who belong to other Local Authorities](#) are eligible to receive additional funding allocations (AFN and HLN) in Nottinghamshire schools, provided they meet the relevant criteria and funding descriptors. These pupils may live in another LA's area or may be looked after by another LA but live in Nottinghamshire. Nottinghamshire LA may then recoup from the responsible Authority the additional funding amount allocated for these pupils.

Following consultation with schools, it has been agreed that Nottinghamshire LA will continue to undertake all recoupment of these costs on schools' behalf. Schools and Families will therefore need clearly to identify pupils who belong to other Authorities, so that Nottinghamshire is able to recoup the full costs of additional funding. Schools and Families should therefore provide this information on the relevant sections of Nottinghamshire's funding documents, including:

- Family SEN Budget virement request forms *FAM 1* and *FAM 2*
- AFN / HLN request forms
- The Family SEND Tracking tool

4.3 Early Years SEND Bridging Funding

Where children with SEND attend Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Nurseries, these settings can access additional top-up funding from the Early Years block of the DSG, via the [Early Years Inclusion Fund and the Early Years Transition Grant](#).

From April 2024, for a 2 year pilot period, a new Early Years SEND Bridging Funding arrangement will be in place in Nottinghamshire to support transition to school for these children i.e. Foundation 1 Nursery and Foundation 2 Reception. For all children who have been allocated Early Years Inclusion Funding in their PVI setting, Nottinghamshire County Council will provide their new school with similar funding in line with AFN and HLN bandings, from the first day the child attends until the end of Foundation 2 (F2). At the end of F2, or before, the new school can then apply for Top-Up funding through the usual AFN and HLN routes, if needed. If the new school thinks a higher level of funding is required, they can also request via these usual routes.

This new process will apply to new students joining school settings in F1 or F2 from 1st September 2024. This can include children moving from F1 into F2 only if the child has been attending F1 for 1 academic term or less.

This funding will be allocated from the High Level Needs budget during the pilot phase. Schools must contact hl.n.panel@nottsc.gov.uk to request this funding, when they learn of a new student arriving who has existing Early Years Inclusion Funding. Schools must provide key information via the following link [Request for Early Years Bridging Funding](#).

This funding will be allocated as follows and should be used in the same way as AFN and HLN funding.

Equivalent Funding Bands	Early Years Inclusion Funding	% of Funded Hours	SEND Top-Up Funding AFN and HLN	Level	£ Total of Top-up Funding
1	Targeted	10	Additional Family Need	Low	£3,000
2		20		Medium	£5,000
3		30		High	£7,000
4	High Level Needs	40	High Level Need	1 – 25h	£14,000
5		80		2 – 32.5h	£20,000
6		100+		3 – Elements of 2:1	£24,000

The new school will also be responsible for providing Element 1 and 2 Core Funding, as per the usual SEND funding processes. If a child is attending part-time in Foundation 1, Core Funding and Top-Up funding will be calculated pro-rata.



In addition to the Early Years Bridging Funding process, from September 2025 for the 2nd year of the pilot, to address inequity where a child with SEND has not attend a Private Voluntary or Independent setting before starting school, school settings will be enabled to request Early Years Inclusion Funding for any student in F1 or F2 meeting the descriptors of need who has not previously had SEND top-up funding. For the duration of the pilot, these requests can be made to the [Early Years Inclusion Fund](#) and will be paid for F1 children as a % of their total school hours (38 weeks at £12.21 per hour) and for F2 children at Early Years Bridging Funding rates (see table above). This process currently involves a different form and panel process to the AFN and HLN requests process. If a school feels that the young person meets the criteria for AFN/HLN funding in either F1 and F2, they can and should request this funding through the usual AFN and HLN routes. If the pilot is successful and agreed to continue, work will be undertaken to simplify the application process for all schools.

This pilot is intended to support the successful inclusion of children with SEND in our mainstream schools. The impact of the pilot will be reviewed by a multi-agency working group including school and Family SENCOs at the end of the two years, to consider next steps. This working group will convene in Autumn 2025 and report by Spring 2026.

4.4 Additional financial support for the most pressured inclusive mainstream schools

Within [the notional SEN budget for mainstream schools: operational guidance 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#) - Section 4: Targeted Funding to Supplement the Notional SEND budget, there are options available to local authorities to provide additional funding for schools in exceptional circumstances where there are significant mismatches between the schools allocated SEND budget and the needs of the school cohort. The national guidance refers specifically to small schools where the school size creates diseconomies of scale in making provision for pupils with SEN. Nottinghamshire County Council have made provision to also include schools that are including a significant number of children with SEND compared to the Nottinghamshire average. Given the significant current pressures on school budgets, particularly in relation to SEND provision across the system, there is a need to have a fair and transparent way of identifying those schools defined as exceptional in the current context. These arrangements are to be reviewed annually and historic arrangements will also need to be reviewed annually, within this new context.

Nottinghamshire County Council hold a new centralised data system comparing school-level data to identify schools in the most exceptional situations as follows. An individual school that is significantly above the Nottinghamshire average in all of the following areas:

Compared to the national and Nottinghamshire average, a significantly higher % of the school population is currently accessing SEN Support, Free School Meals, EHC Plans and existing SEND Top-Up Funding (AFN, Behaviour Partnership Funding, HLN).

This information will be reviewed regularly by the District Education Inclusive Practice Team (See Appendix 3) and requests for support should be directed to this team in each district, through the education support teams involved.

The package of support will be bespoke to each individual school, designed and agreed with the District Education Inclusive Practice Team, in consultation with the Education Learning and Inclusion leadership team at Nottinghamshire County Council. Individual support packages will include a relevant combination of the following support:

- Work closely with school leaders to manage EHCP placement consultations on an individual basis, with consideration of their exceptional status.
- Flexibility in requiring school to evidence the use of initial £6,000 Notional SEND Funding when requesting High Needs top-up funding.
- Guarantee existing HLN allocations to the end of the child's time at the current school without resubmission (some additional progress reporting may be required).
- Explore bespoke support service involvement for school leadership teams using a multi-agency Team Around the School approach.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Details of Local Devolved Funding Structures in Nottinghamshire.

Appendix 2 – Additional Family Needs (AFN) and High Level Needs (HLN) Funding Descriptors of Need

Appendix 3 – District Education Support Teams Inclusive Practice Framework April 2025

Appendix 4 – Nottinghamshire Schools Update April 2025: High Needs Funding Support for Mainstream Schools 2025-2026



Appendix 1- Details of Local Devolved Funding Structures in Nottinghamshire.

District	Bassetlaw	Newark	Ashfield	Mansfield	Gedling	Broxtowe	Rushcliffe
Families of Schools	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elizabethan 2. Retford Oaks 3. Serlby Park 4. Tuxford 5. Worksop 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dukeries 2. Joseph Whitaker 3. Minster 4. Newark Town 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ashfield 2. Holgate 3. Kirkby College 4. National 5. Quarrydale 6. Selston Sutton Centre 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All Saints 2. Brunts 3. Garibaldi 4. Manor 5. Meden 6. Queen Elizabeth Samworth 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arnold Hill 2. Carlton Academy 3. Carlton le Willows 4. Christ the King 5. Colonel Frank Seely 6. Gedling 7. Redhill 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alderman White 2. Bramcote 3. Chilwell 4. Eastwood 5. George Spencer 6. Kimberley 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Becket 2. East Leake 3. Rushcliffe 4. South Notts 5. South Wolds 6. Toothill 7. West Bridgford

Primary Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships	Bassetlaw Primary Behaviour Partnership (BPBP)	Newark and Minster Schools Behaviour and Attendance Partnership (SBAP)	North Ashfield Schools Behaviour and Attendance Partnership (SBAP)	Mansfield and Sherwood (SAP)	Gedling Area Partnership (GAP)	SHENK	South Broxtowe Schools and Attendance Partnership (SBAP)	Rushcliffe Primary (Social Emotional and Mental Health Partnership)
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Appendix 2 – Additional Family Needs (AFN) and High Level Needs (HLN) Funding Descriptors of Need



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

These descriptors of need are to help schools, Families of Schools and the High Level Needs Panel to determine the appropriate resource arrangements in mainstream settings for individual children and young people with additional and special educational needs. The descriptors have been revised in line with the SEND Code of Practice issued in 2014. Additional funding is moderated and allocated according to the individual pupil's needs in relation to these descriptors.

Please note that:

- The descriptors are cumulative – For example, the AFN indicators assume that indicators relating to Core Funding Elements 1 and 2 have already been met.
- The High Level Needs Panel may allocated variable amounts of additional resource, depending upon assessed need. The column *Additional funding level 6 (HLN 3)* provides a set of indicators for pupils that are likely to be supported by the highest level of individually-assigned resource

COGNITION AND LEARNING NEEDS

Key theme	CORE elements 1 and 2 (school resources)	ADDITIONAL funding levels 1 – 3 (AFN)	ADDITIONAL funding level 4 (HLN 1)	ADDITIONAL funding level 6 (HLN 3)
Cognitive development, attainment and progress	Attainment is at lower level than majority of peers even with some additional support. Progress is at slower rate than majority of peers.	Attainment is significantly lower than majority of peers – gaps in comparative attainment levels increasing. Attainment is likely to be within Pre-key Stage Standards; below 4 in primary and below 6 in secondary. Slow progress, even with significant and increasing levels of intervention.	There is very little and very slow progress, even with high levels of intervention. Attainment is likely to be below Pre-key Stage Standard 4 for much of their school career	Progress is minimal or regressive even with high levels of intervention.
Communication and participation	Some language and communication difficulties.	Significant communication difficulties inhibit regular participation, understanding and contribution to activities in classroom/setting.	Extreme communication difficulties seriously inhibit participation, understanding and contribution to activities in classroom/setting.	Extreme communication difficulties preclude participation, understanding and contribution to activities in the majority of settings.
Curriculum access/pupil participation	Some difficulties with concentration and retention even with some intervention and curriculum modification. Limited ability to transfer skills and knowledge.	Significant difficulties with concentration and retention requiring adult intervention and curriculum modification. Little evidence of skill and knowledge transfer.	Requires extensive adult support and a highly adapted curriculum.	Totally dependent on adult support and requires an individualised curriculum.
Social development	Some difficulties in making and maintaining friendships and relationships.	Significant difficulties in making and maintaining friendships and relationships, likely to occur as a result of delayed learning	Extreme difficulties in making and maintaining friendships and relationships, resulting in frequent social isolation vulnerability, with some disengagement. Likely to occur as a result of delayed learning	Little evidence of positive social relationships, resulting in extreme social isolation, vulnerability and disengagement.
Motor skills	Some delay in fine and gross motor skills.	Significant delay in fine and gross motor skills, requiring some adult intervention.	Extreme delay in fine and gross motor skills, requiring extensive adult intervention.	Motor skills at a level that prevents access to the curriculum without high levels of adult support.
Self-help skills	May need some additional support to develop independence in organisational skills and personal care needs.	Requires significant additional input to develop age-appropriate independence skills for daily living and personal care needs.	Requires extensive additional input to develop age-appropriate independence skills for daily living and personal care needs.	Totally dependent on adult for daily living and personal care needs.

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION NEEDS

Key theme	CORE elements 1 and 2 (school resources)	ADDITIONAL funding levels 1 – 3 (AFN)	ADDITIONAL funding level 4 (HLN 1)	ADDITIONAL funding level 6 (HLN 3)
Communication and participation	Some language and communication difficulties.	Significant communication difficulties inhibit regular participation, understanding and contribution to activities in classroom/setting.	Extreme communication difficulties seriously inhibit participation, understanding and contribution to activities in classroom/setting.	Extreme communication difficulties preclude participation, understanding and contribution to activities in the majority of settings.
Social interaction	Some difficulties in making and maintaining friendships and relationships.	Significant difficulties in making and maintaining relationships.	Extreme difficulties in making and maintaining relationships, resulting in frequent social isolation and vulnerability, with some disengagement.	Little evidence of positive social relationships, resulting in extreme social isolation, vulnerability and disengagement.
Curriculum access/pupil participation	Some difficulties in following instructions and accepting adult direction and maintaining attention to task.	Significant difficulties in following instructions and accepting adult direction and maintaining attention to task.	Extreme and persistent difficulties following instructions and accepting adult direction and maintaining attention to task. Requires highly adapted access to curriculum.	Unable to follow instructions and accept adult direction in a classroom setting. Requires highly adapted access to a highly individualised curriculum.
Response to sensory stimuli	Unusual response to some sensory stimuli, requiring adjustments.	Unusual response to some sensory stimuli, requiring significant adjustments.	Unusual and frequent response to some sensory stimuli. Requires major adjustments, linked to complex sensory profile	Extreme and frequent response to a wide range of sensory stimuli. Requires major adjustments, linked to complex sensory profile
Flexibility of thought	Some evidence of inflexible thought. Support is required to manage change in everyday school situations.	Evidence of rigid thought, making the pupil inflexible and unlikely to cope with change, resulting in significant signs of stresses and anxiety.	Evidence of rigid thought, making the pupil inflexible and unlikely to cope with change, resulting in an extreme response.	Evidence of rigid thought, making the pupil totally inflexible and unable to cope with change, resulting in an extreme response.
Developmental profile	May have uneven developmental profile.	Uneven progress between subject areas due to problems with particular aspects of communication development.	Limited progress across subject areas due to problems with particular aspects of communication development which have an extreme impact on learning.	Little evidence of progress across subject areas due to problems with all aspects of communication development which have an extreme impact on learning.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

Key theme	Core elements 1 and 2 (school resources)	ADDITIONAL funding levels 1 – 3 (AFN)	ADDITIONAL funding level 4 (HLN 1)	ADDITIONAL funding level 6 (HLN 3)
Pupil participation in education	Some SEMH inhibit participation, understanding and contribution to activities and learning in the classroom, which results in limited progress in many areas.	A pattern of frequent SEMH inhibiting regular participation, understanding and contribution to activities and learning in the classroom, resulting in very limited progress in most areas.	A pattern of persistent SEMH inhibiting most participation in, understanding of & contribution to activities & learning in the classroom, resulting in extremely limited progress in all areas.	SEMH inhibiting any participation, understanding and contribution to learning activities. SEMH is barrier to all learning.
Emotional health and wellbeing	Some periods of disruption to social and emotional wellbeing, resulting in an impact on learning. Without familiar & consistent adult support, anxiety significantly limits ability to recognise and manage emotional responses	A pattern of frequent disruption to social and emotional wellbeing, resulting in regular impact on learning. Mood is frequently very low, affecting self-esteem and limiting ability to engage. Anxiety significantly affects ability to engage in everyday life, including family life.	A pattern of extreme and persistent disruption to social and emotional wellbeing, resulting in extreme unhappiness/ stress. Possible prolonged periods of absence/disengagement.	Complete disruption to social and emotional state, leading to extreme isolation and disengagement.
Pupil response to education	Some unpredictable responses to learning tasks, resulting in periods of uncooperative behaviour and/or emotional withdrawal.	A pattern of frequent unpredictable responses to learning tasks, resulting in periods of uncooperative behaviour and/or emotional withdrawal.	A pattern of persistent extreme responses, resulting in prolonged periods of uncooperative behaviour and/or emotional withdrawal.	A sustained pattern of extreme responses, precluding the ability to engage with any formal learning situations.
Impact on self and others	Some behaviour which may be injurious or endanger self/others.	A pattern of frequent behaviours which may be injurious or endanger self/others, resulting in some social isolation and rejection.	A pattern of repeated extreme behaviours which are injurious to or endanger self/others. High level of rejection & social isolation, despite a carefully planned support package	A sustained pattern of behaviours resulting in significant risk of harm to self/others, despite close adult support, leading to extreme social isolation, vulnerability & disengagement.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS *continued*

Key theme	Core elements 1 and 2 (school resources)	ADDITIONAL funding levels 1 – 3 (AFN)	ADDITIONAL funding level 4 (HLN 1)	ADDITIONAL funding level 6 (HLN 3)
Social interaction	Some difficulties in making and maintaining friendships and relationships, despite adult support intended to prevent social isolation.	A pattern of significant difficulties in making and maintaining appropriate relationships, despite adult support intended to prevent social isolation.	A pattern of extreme difficulties in making and maintaining relationships, resulting in frequent social isolation and vulnerability, with disengagement from education, social and family life.	Little evidence of positive social relationships, resulting in extreme social isolation, vulnerability and disengagement.
Intervention	Some modification of teaching styles. Increasing incidents of disruption/dissatisfaction despite appropriate curriculum & strengthening of other classroom/setting strategies. Support requires parents'/carers' active participation.	A pattern of significant modification of teaching styles and an individualised curriculum in some areas are in place. Teaching and learning is disrupted frequently.	Teaching and learning is persistently disrupted despite an individualised curriculum being provided for most of the time. Support needs to be flexible and responsive, to reflect changes in need that may occur even on a daily basis.	A highly individualised programme is required.
Exceptional, complex circumstances	Alternative provision for SEMH is unlikely to be applicable for pupils matching the descriptors for place funding and AFN.		Exceptional safeguarding evidence demonstrates a high risk of significant harm as a consequence of SEMH issues not previously supported through SEN procedures.	Exceptional safeguarding evidence demonstrates a high risk of significant harm as a consequence of SEMH issues not previously supported through SEN procedures, which cannot currently be managed in a mainstream setting.

SENSORY, MEDICAL AND/OR PHYSICAL NEEDS

Key theme	CORE elements 1 and 2 (school resources)	ADDITIONAL funding levels 1 – 3 (AFN)	ADDITIONAL funding level 4 (HLN 1)	ADDITIONAL funding level 6 (HLN 3)
Curriculum access/pupil participation	Is able independently to participate in most classrooms/settings and activities. Progress requires some additional adult support.	Is able independently to participate in some classrooms/settings and activities. Progress requires significant adult support. Curricular information requires repetition/rephrasing/visual reframing. Classroom information and curriculum materials require significant modification to enable access.	Is only able to participate in limited classrooms/settings and activities. Progress requires extensive adult support. Classroom information and curriculum materials require extensive modification to enable access mostly using tactile and multi-sensory approaches. Pupil requires BSL interpretation to access much of the curriculum.	Pupil is totally dependent on adult support to meet all physical, medical care and educational needs. Pupil's sole access to curriculum requires BSL interpretation. Totally dependent on tactile approaches such as Braille or Moon.
Care/Mobility needs	Has care or mobility needs requiring some adult intervention. Pupil may have a personal and intimate care plan/ manual handling plan	Has care or mobility needs requiring significant adult intervention. Pupil will have a personal and intimate care plan / manual handling plan	Has care or mobility needs requiring extensive adult support.	Pupil is totally dependent on adult support to meet all care or mobility needs. Some interventions will require support from more than one adult e.g. hoisting
Medical needs	Has medical needs requiring some adult intervention. Pupil may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need regular medication • receive funding from medical needs panel • have a health care plan 	Has medical needs requiring significant adult intervention. Pupil will have a health care plan. Pupil requires supervisory support as there is a predictable risk of harm requiring immediate adult intervention e.g. pupil with heart condition will need supervisory support during aerobic activities, break time, PE etc.	*Has medical needs requiring extensive adult support. Pupil will require supervisory support to ensure immediate intervention is available in foreseen, life-threatening circumstances which may occur at any time. Pupil's age and / or cognitive ability may impact upon their ability to self-manage their condition	*Pupil is totally dependent on adult support to meet all medical needs. Some interventions will require support from more than one adult.
Social interaction	Some difficulties in making and maintaining friendships and relationships, requiring some additional adult support.	Significant difficulties in making and maintaining appropriate relationships, requiring significant adult support.	Extreme difficulties in making and maintaining relationships, resulting in frequent social isolation and vulnerability, with some disengagement requiring extensive adult support.	Little evidence of positive social relationships, resulting in extreme social isolation, vulnerability and disengagement.
Language and/or written/oral communication	Communication/language difficulties requiring some specialist support and approaches.	Communication/language difficulties requiring significant specialist support and approaches.	Communication/language difficulties requiring extensive specialist support and approaches.	Pupil is totally dependent on specialist support and approaches.

*Pupil's health care plan **must** be submitted with the HLN request.

Inclusive Practice in Nottinghamshire Schools and Education Settings – Working Together for Every Child.

Appendix 3: District Education Support Teams Practice Framework
April 2025

Introduction to this Document

This document outlines a shared framework for Education, Learning and Inclusion inclusive practice support teams across Nottinghamshire Districts i.e. Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood, Mansfield, Ashfield, Broxtowe, Rushcliffe, Gedling. The document aims to provide a structured approach to ensure that all children, regardless of their background and challenges, receive the support they need to succeed in education. This framework has been developed from conversations with Nottinghamshire education settings leaders and Nottinghamshire County Council Education, Learning and Inclusion teams at individual district-level events between June 2024 and April 2025.

Defining Inclusion: An ongoing conversation

Ofsted Feb 2025, Working Definition of Inclusion: ‘Inclusive providers are at the heart of their communities. They have high expectations and aspirations for every child and learner. They are particularly alert to the needs of those who need the most support to achieve well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.’

Nottinghamshire Education, Learning and Inclusion Department, Nottinghamshire County Council, April 2025: ‘We want all children and young people in Nottinghamshire, regardless of their background, to experience an educational environment where they can feel safe, valued, listened to and inspired to achieve their full potential. We want every child to feel a sense of belonging, confidence, and enjoyment about their learning journey, knowing they are supported and encouraged every step of the way. Additionally, we will continue to prioritise the needs of children in the most vulnerable situations (including children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Our Children in care and previously in care, and children in need of help, care and protection), ensuring they receive the necessary additional support and resources to thrive.’

District Support Teams: Values and Guiding Principles

We want our district-based inclusive practice work to be grounded in the Nottinghamshire Approach illustrated in the strengths-based practice tree below.



For our District-based inclusive practice teams, this will look like:

- **Collaboration:** Strong relationships; sharing knowledge, experience, and skills.
- **Respect:** Courtesy, openness, trust, and inclusivity in addressing challenges.
- **Child-Centred:** Focus on listening to children and recognising their needs.
- **Solution-Focused:** Emphasis on finding solutions and continuous improvement.
- **Local Knowledge:** Effective use of local knowledge and resources.
- **Partnerships:** Enhanced cooperation between local schools and settings, education, health and care services.
- **Developing Inclusive Practice:** Celebrating and learning from inclusive schools by sharing good practice and making space for creative new approaches.

District Support Team Operations

District Team Membership

- Core team members: District SENCO, District Senior Educational Psychologists, District Lead Integrated Children’s Disability Service (ICDS), District Lead SEMH/Partnership Team, SEND Inclusion Service (SIS) Locality Leads, District Virtual School link.
- Wider team members: Education Learning and Inclusion Teams, health and social care partners, school and education settings, Family SENCOs.
- Each district team can agree the frequency and format of their meetings and focus of work. However, the core team members should meet a minimum of monthly.

Tasks and Responsibilities

- Build on the Review of Inclusive Practice in Nottinghamshire Schools and Education Settings District Reports (July 2024) to develop an annual District Inclusive Practice Plan.
- Maintain an overview of local district educational needs and support processes with particular focus on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) assessment of need, educational placements and provision and additional funding.
- Understand district-level strengths and challenges and coordinate a response to specific issues. Over time, as part of the SEND Improvement programme, we intend this will include decision-making and escalation/de-escalation routes.
- Act as a Team Around the School for schools needing additional support.
- Agree a relevant data set to inform district working. Focus on young people’s school attendance, attainment and suspensions/exclusions in the district. Data should be used as a complement to on-the-ground context, not as the primary driver of activity.

Governance of District Teams

- In addition to continued reporting to individual line managers, a representative of each district team will report termly to Education, Learning and Inclusion divisional leadership team and each district will be required to contribute to an annual review of inclusive practice in Nottinghamshire schools and education settings through written reports or presentations at in-person events.



Appendix 4 – Nottinghamshire Schools Update: High Needs Funding Support for Mainstream Schools 2025-2026

This matter is being dealt with by:

Peter McConnochie

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09 April 2025

Private and Confidential
To be opened by addressee only

School Leaders
Nottinghamshire Schools

Dear School Leader

High Needs Funding Support for Mainstream Schools 2025-2026

We are writing to share details of the financial support for mainstream schools, as part of the High Needs Funding budget for the financial year 2025/2026. As a Local Area Partnership across Nottinghamshire, we are committed to working together to promote inclusion and better outcomes for our children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). We know that our educational settings are experiencing financial challenges locally and nationally in supporting this work. It is within this context that we are continuing to invest in SEND provision within our mainstream schools this financial year to support and build upon existing inclusive practice. The details below illustrate the plans and we encourage you to review with local school colleagues and support services to consider the impact for your setting and your students. The following changes came into effect from 1st April 2025.

1. Increased High Needs (SEND) Top-Up Funding for all Mainstream Schools

- Retain the **increased level of High Level Needs (HLN) and Schools Behaviour and Attendance Partnership (SBAP) funding** from 2024/2025.
- Continue the **Early Years SEND Bridging Funding pilot for a 2nd year** to support transition into school for children with SEND.
- **Increase the Additional Family Needs (AFN) funding overall budget by 7.6%.**
 - Increased % of AFN funding will be allocated to Magnet Families of Schools defined as a family of schools where a high number of children currently accessing AFN funding live outside the Family of Schools'

catchment area. The New SEND Funding Tracker will inform this allocation of AFN funding within Families of Schools.

- Creative use of AFN to be explored by SENCO and Family SENCO working party using feedback from the recent SENCO and Headteacher SEND Survey.

2. **Additional financial support for the most pressured inclusive mainstream schools**

- ***New centralised data system to identify schools*** with significantly higher than national and local average numbers of children accessing SEN Support, Free School Meals, EHCPs and existing High Needs Top-up Funding (AFN and HLN). Definition document to be shared with all schools within the *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*.
- ***Exceptional support available:***
 - Work closely with school leaders to ***manage EHCP placement consultations*** on an individual basis, with consideration of their exceptional status.
 - Flexibility in requiring school to evidence the use of ***initial £6,000 Notional SEND Funding*** when requesting High Needs top-up funding.
 - Guarantee existing HLN allocations to the ***end of the child's time at the current school without resubmission*** (some additional progress reporting may be required).
 - ***Explore bespoke support service involvement for school leadership teams using a multi-agency Team Around the School approach.***

3. **New Local Special Educational Provision Options within Mainstream Schools**

- ***New Enhanced Provision Units*** in mainstream schools.
- Test and learn ***SEND Units*** in mainstream schools.
- ***Additional support from District SEND teams*** for mainstream schools setting up their own in-school SEND support hubs.
- For information – ***144 new special school places at Horizons Mansfield*** (Jan 2026).
- See '***Types of Educational Provision for Pupils with SEND in Nottinghamshire***' infographic for more details.

4. **Interim support for students with special school named on their EHCP who remain on mainstream school roll awaiting a place**

- Guarantee existing HLN allocations to the ***end of the child's time at the current school without resubmission*** (some additional progress reporting may be required)
- ***Additional SEND funding to be targeted to groups of children waiting for special school places, details to be confirmed.***
- ***Explore bespoke support service involvement for school leadership teams using a multi-agency Team Around the School approach.***

We have launched new infographics to share local processes for SEND funding and provision that can be accessible to all partners including parents and carers, see attached. We will also work with school SENCOs and Family SENCOs to understand and implement the changes

detailed in this letter. If you have any clarification questions relating to the content of this letter or the infographics, please submit [here](#). We will answer Frequently Asked Questions in a follow up communication later this term. We appreciate the ongoing pressures we face as a Local Area SEND Partnership however we continue to work collectively to address this. Alongside this investment, we are committed to ongoing system improvement locally and contributing to the national conversation about SEND reform.

Yours faithfully,

Peter McConnochie

Director of Education and Inclusion

Karen Hughman

Head of Education Access, Standards and Safeguarding

Tracy Ayers

Head of Partnership, Provision and Governance

Dr. Órlaith Green

Head of Psychology & Inclusion Services

Claire Sampson

Head of Integrated Children's Disability Services

Stephanie McGill

Head of Virtual School

For full details of education, health and care services available for children and young people with SEND across Nottinghamshire, visit the [Nottinghamshire SEND Local Offer - SEND Journey Map](#)