

Education Update: Written statement

Department for Education

Made by: Mr Damian Hinds (The Secretary of State for Education)

Made on: 17 December 2018

Today, I am pleased to announce additional revenue funding in 2018-19 and 2019-20, and extra capital funding in 2019-20, to provide support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), as well as the 2019-20 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations to local authorities.

Our ambition for children with SEND is exactly the same as for every other child – to achieve well in school and college, find employment and go on to live happy and fulfilled lives. High needs funding has already risen by £1 billion, from £5 billion in 2013 to £6 billion this year. As part of our wide-ranging reforms to the SEND system in 2014, we introduced Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, to ensure that support is tailored to the needs of individuals, and families are put at the heart of the process. Already, more than 320,000 children and young people are benefiting from these.

Members from all sides of the House have raised concerns from schools, colleges and local authorities about the pressures on high needs budgets. I understand that these costs are rising, in particular the costs of special educational provision for those with more complex needs, funded from local authorities' high needs budgets.

Today I am announcing a number of changes to start to address these pressures.

First, we will provide additional high needs funding allocations across all local authorities, of £125 million in each of 2018-19 and 2019-20. This brings the total allocated for high needs this year to £6.1 billion. This additional investment will help local councils to manage pressures and I have published the individual local authority allocations today.

Ensuring that there is sufficient capacity locally for pupils in mainstream and special schools, and for young people aged 16 and above, is a priority for this Government. As part of this, I am announcing a further £100 million top-up to the Special Provision Capital Fund in 2019-20 to take our total investment to £365 million across 2018-21. This additional funding will give more children access to a good school or college place that meets their individual needs. This could also pay for more state-of-the-art facilities, such as sensory rooms and specialist equipment.

We have also received 65 bids from local authorities identifying a need for new special and alternative provision free schools. We now anticipate that all those that fully meet the published criteria will be approved, even if the number of schools exceeds the 30 or so we had originally planned for.

Of course, extra funding cannot be our only response. I want to continue engaging with local authorities, health providers, families, schools and colleges to better understand what is driving the cost pressures on high needs budgets, and to work with the sector to help manage them. Therefore, today I am writing to all local authorities to outline our plans for supporting them in their role of providing strategic leadership and oversight of the provision for children and young people with SEND. While local authorities have this responsibility, I am clear that they cannot act alone in doing so.

To equip all areas to improve planning and commissioning we are establishing a SEND System Leadership Board focused on improving joint education, health and care commissioning, as recommended by Dame Christine Lenehan's review into the experiences and outcomes of children in residential special schools and colleges. We are also establishing joint Ministerial roundtables with the Department for Health and Social Care to give providers, users and voluntary sector organisations further opportunities to input their views and insight across the SEND system.

To support local authorities in carrying out their statutory EHC plan assessment process and to support schools and colleges in their work with families, I am announcing funding for training more Educational Psychologists (EPs). We will be funding three more cohorts of EP trainees, starting in September 2020; and will increase the number of trainees from 160 to at least 206, to reflect increased demand. Classroom teachers and those in training will also have a greater focus on supporting children with SEND, as the upcoming Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy will make sure all teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of all pupils.

My department is also commissioning SEN Futures: a flagship package of long-term research and analysis to provide evidence on the impact of current SEN provision on children and young people's outcomes, and to assess the value for money of SEN provision in England. Procurement for the first pieces of work in this programme has begun today.

In addition, in order better understand the financial incentives that influence how schools, colleges and councils support children and young people with special educational needs, the Department for Education will be gathering more evidence early in 2019. This will include looking at the first £6,000 schools pay for special educational provision before accessing additional funding from local high needs budgets.

I recognise the rising demand for EHC plans for those over 19, and the need for education, health and social care services to agree a shared vision of what good life outcomes look like for an individual, and when it is right to cease an EHC plan. We have commissioned one of our delivery partners, the National Development Team for Inclusion to work with 20 local authorities to develop and model effective practice on this, and to share their findings across regions.

I also want to continue to ensure that services for young people with SEND effectively prepare them for adulthood, including employment: raising expectations and aspirations for young people, their parents, education providers and employers. My officials are working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions on this, and we are committed to finding ways to support more young people with SEND into sustainable employment. I want our wider reforms to post-16 education, including T Levels, to be accessible to those with SEND and will continue to support close working between colleges, schools and local authorities to improve pathways to adulthood.

Today I am also confirming the school and early years funding allocations for 2019-20. This announcement covers the DSG and the Pupil Premium.

The distribution of the DSG to local authorities is set out in four blocks for each authority: a schools block, a high needs block, an early years block, and the central school services block.

In July 2018, we published the primary and secondary units of funding for the schools block, the provisional allocations for the high needs block and central school services block. These have been updated with the latest pupil numbers to show how much each local authority will receive in 2019-20.

The early years national funding formula rates for 3- and 4-year-olds for 2019-20 were published on 22 November, and today we have announced initial allocations for this block.

The pupil premium per pupil amounts will be protected at the current rates.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to respond to the resolution of the House following the opposition day debate on school funding on 13 November.

Children only get one chance at a great education, which is why, as today's announcement further demonstrates, this Government has prioritised and protected school spending – even while having to take difficult public spending decisions in other areas.

Across the board, standards are rising; in 2010, 66% of children were in good or outstanding schools– that is up to 84% now. While there is more money going into our schools than ever before, and we know from international studies that our school spending is in line with or above most comparable countries, we recognise the

budgeting challenges schools face and that we are asking them to do more. That is why we've announced a school resource management strategy, setting out a wide range of practical support to help schools reduce their costs and make every pound count, while at the same time improving outcomes for pupils.

With the funding and support for schools and high needs announced today, I am confident that they will be able to continue to improve outcomes for all children and young people.