

Redirection of 0.5% to High Needs Block for 2025/26

Key Messages

Forum members are asked to:

- Note the background information below.
- Note the outcome of the consultation.
- Approve the recommendation to redirect 0.5% (an estimated £2.4m) to the High Needs Block for 2025/26.

1. Introduction/background

- 1.1. Between 2017 and 2022, the Sheffield Education Funding Forum approved a transfer of £1.5m each year from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, to support inclusion and increase access to local mainstream schools, by reducing both the number of permanent exclusions and escalations to special schools.
- 1.2. This funding was mainstreamed for 2022/23 and funded from the High Needs Block as of April 2022. Due to pressure on the High Needs Block, because of rising demand, it was agreed to transfer £1.5m from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to support mainstream schools with additional support provided through Locality Funding.
- 1.3. Locality Grant funding for Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is delegated to the seven localities to support learners in mainstream education. The funding is in addition to the basic entitlement and notional SEN available in a school's existing budget.

2. Proposed investment

- 2.1. Under the funding regulations, Local Authorities are permitted to transfer up to 0.5% between the Schools Block and the High Needs Funding Block with the agreement of the Education Funding Forum. We are proposing to continue the transfer of 0.5% (an estimated £2.4m) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2025/26, to continue to afford the existing investment levels. Investment through the locality SEND funding will increase the ability of mainstream schools to meet the needs of a growing population of children with SEND effectively and reduce the need for transfers to special schools.
- 2.2. The current funding allocation for this area including this transfer is £7.2m.
- 2.3. The increased funding will be used to:
 - Ensure that provision is in place for children with Education, Health, and Care Plans, in line with our statutory duties.
 - Fund provision in localities to meet the needs of children with SEND.

3. Consultation outcome

- 3.1. Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) guidance states that we must consult on any proposed movement of funds between blocks each year and that these proposals must be approved by the Education Funding Forum.
- 3.2. Schools were consulted during November and December We received 38 responses and 31 (82%) of those were in favour of the continued redirection of funds for 2025/26.
- 3.3. Some respondents provided additional comments, expressing concerns around levels of overall funding and the risk of transferring funding from already stretched schools' budget. Any questions raised in the consultation will be answered.

4. Recommendations

Forum members are asked to:

- **Note and approve** the recommendation to redirect 0.5% (an estimated £2.4m) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2025/26.