



Suffolk County Council  
SEND Funding Policy and Guidance Document  
2024-2026

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. Funding Special Educational Needs Placements
4. Top-Up Funding (Element 3)
5. Special Schools and PRUs
6. SEMH Schools
7. Attendance
8. Cross Border Placements
9. Payment Schedule
10. DfE Guidance
11. Schools Forum
12. Document Review

## 1. Introduction

This document is the Suffolk County Council SEND Funding Policy and Guidance Document that came into effect from September 2020. This policy applies to the following settings:-

- Mainstream schools and academies
- Further Education and 6<sup>th</sup> Form Colleges
- Special Schools (including special academies and free schools funded in Suffolk)
- Specialist Units attached to Mainstream Schools
- Pupil Referral Units and alternative provision academies
- Post 16 Private Training Providers

The policy is designed to create a fair, simple high needs funding policy, that is more understood by parents, carers and professionals across the system. It includes the universal banding system which is inclusive of all children and young people aged 5-25 (Children aged 0-5 are supported through Early Years own High Needs Funding model).

## 2. Background

In 2017 a review of high needs funding took place across Suffolk. This review was driven by the following factors:-

- the increasing pressure on high needs block funding
- the increasing number of children and young people needing to leave Suffolk's local provision to be supported in the independent non maintained sector
- a recognition that funding rates for individual learners vary significantly depending on where they are educated
- a lack of clarity for settings and parents about how the high needs funding system works
- a perception of bias and lack of transparency and accountability.

Suffolk County Council launched a consultation to address these issues and this policy sets out the arrangements resulting from the consultation and agreement from Schools Forum. This policy has been introduced successfully since 2019 and is now fully implemented.

## 3. Funding Special Educational Needs Placements

All SEND and alternative provision places funded through the high needs block are commissioned by the Local Authority (SCC) on an annual basis and in-line with the educational needs of a child or young person. Funding for these commissioned places are made up of three elements: Core Funding,

Additional Support Costs up to £6,000 and Top-Up. These elements are sometimes referred to as Element 1, 2 and 3.

- **Core Funding** (Element 1) is the first £4,000 to fund an individual's education, or in a mainstream school is the AWPU.
- **Additional Support Costs** (Element 2) is the individual's support costs required above the costs of an individual's education, up to the value of £6,000
- **Top Up** (Element 3) is support costs required by an individual above £6,000

Settings receive the three elements of funding from the following sources:-

<b>Type of Provision</b>	<b>Core Funding</b>	<b>Additional Support Costs</b>	<b>Top-Up</b>
Mainstream Schools, Academy and Free Schools	Included within the per-pupil funding through the local school funding formula (AWPU).	The first £6,000 of additional support costs are delegated within school budget and academy grant derived from local schools funding formula.	Agreed per-pupil and paid by SCC.
Specialist Units and Resource Bases in Mainstream Schools	Included within the per-pupil funding through the local school funding formula (AWPU).	£6,000 per place based on number of places commissioned by SCC.	Agreed per-pupil and paid by SCC.
Maintained Special Schools, Special Academies, Special Free Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools.	£10,000 per place based on the number of places commissioned by SCC.		Agreed per-pupil and paid by SCC.

Maintained Pupil Referral Units, AP Academies and AP Free Schools.	£10,000 per place based on the number of places commissioned by SCC.	Funding per commissioned place based on formula calculated on average pupil need (75% Band G 25% Band H)	
FE Institutions, Special Post 16 Institutions and Post 16 Private training Providers.	Received directly from the ESFA and based on 16-19 National Funding Formula.	Received either directly from the ESFA or from SCC	Agreed per-pupil and paid by SCC.

#### 4. Top-Up Funding (Element 3)

Top-up funding is the funding required over and above the core and additional funding any setting receives, to enable a learner with high needs to participate in education and learning. The funding is to meet the needs of the individual costs above the Core and Additional Funding. This is allocated by SCC to settings from the high needs block budget. All high needs top-up funding is paid on a universal High Needs Banding system. Therefore, all children and young people in Suffolk are funded based on their needs as assessed against the banding descriptors.

All children and young people with SEND needs educated in Suffolk can be allocated a High Needs Band. These bands stay with an individual for the duration of their education and do not change unless a provider requests it or SCC identify that it needs to change through the audit process. Description of the bandings and the funding they attract can be found [on the Suffolk Learning page - High Needs Funding](#).

On a termly basis settings are required to submit a return to SCC identifying all of their learners with a High Needs Funding Band and identify any requests to change a learner's band or to request a band for a new learner. Where a band needs to be allocated for the first time or increased, a moderation process will follow. Settings will be asked to submit evidence to support the banding request and this will consist of:-

- a costed provision map demonstrating targeted support and the costs needed to provide that support over a 39-week period;

- a succinct narrative of the child/young person's needs against the categories of need outlined in the SEND Code of Practice and the Banding descriptors;
- a timetable of support for the child/young person;
- details of external specialist/agency support;
- comprehensive assessment information used to identify need and to track progress over time.

Following the submission of evidence a panel of experienced SEND specialists from a range of settings and SCC colleagues, will convene to consider all applications and make a decision on the bandings for each case submitted. Specialist settings will be moderated on a termly basis via actual or virtual meetings. The meetings allow professional dialogue to establish accuracy and equity across the settings. Evidence is scrutinised and the level of need is agreed. Further evidence is requested where an agreement cannot be reached.

Additionally there will be unannounced visits to selected settings and these visits will ensure top-up funding is used appropriately and that settings are offered the support they need to successfully participate in the moderation process.

#### Applications for Band I Funding

Individual learners with the most complex and profound needs whose additional support requires in excess of £22,000 (£6,000 Additional Support plus £16,000 Top-Up) of support can be put forward for funding at Band I level and are subject to an additional moderation process. Enhanced evidence will be requested for any Band I requests and a panel of SEND specialists will meet to discuss the level of support required. Any requests that are unsuccessful are discussed further with the setting.

## 5. Special Schools and PRUs

Funding for Special Schools, Units and PRUs is based on a lagged system where the number of FTE places funded in year 2 will be based on the number of actual places filled in year 1. Therefore if the number of learners attending the provision exceeds the number of commissioned places in year one, the commissioned number will be increased for year 2. This will be supported by an annual conversation between the provider and SCC regarding place numbers. A service level agreement is in place between SCC and each provider to allow exceptions to be made in the case of exceptional growth or shrinkage. This will be defined as plus or minus 5% of the provider's cohort. For PRUs, we acknowledge that at points throughout the

year numbers will drop below 5% due to the transient nature of this cohort. Therefore, numbers will not be reduced outside of the annual conversation, taking into consideration a full year's provision.

Suffolk County Council complete a Place Change Notification to the ESFA on an annual basis in November, to inform them of any increase in commissioned places. These result in an increase in a setting's General Annual Grant (GAG) for the following Academic Year. If the GAG is not updated 1 year after the increase in numbers has been confirmed, then SCC will pay for the additional place funding until the GAG catches up, above the agreed 5%.

Where settings have reached the total commissioned places for the year but are required to take learners in excess of their place numbers (having been named in an EHCP as the most suitable provider), they will be paid the top-up rate associated with the high need band identified via information contained in the EHCP or through the moderation process.

PRUs and AP are allocated a banding profile based on a typical cohort of attendees rather than on individual children. This is due to the nature of the provision and the high turnaround of individuals entering and exiting the provision. Therefore, they are funded at 75% Band G and 25% Band H.

## 6. SEMH Schools

In May 2024 it was agreed by Schools Forum that SEMH schools would have a funding arrangement outside of the banding system. It was agreed that each occupied place within an SEMH School would receive top-up funding of £18,500, Band I requests would only be made for costs over £25,500 and there would be a cap on the overall funding that a school can receive. SEMH Schools are expected to submit termly spreadsheet outlining all the pupils currently on the roll of the school and only submit Band I applications as an exception over £25,500.

## 7. Attendance

When schools submit their High Needs Funding spreadsheet on a termly basis, they are asked to identify when a pupil is only attending part time. If a pupil is attending less than 25% of the time the setting will be contacted and the funding may be pro-rated for the following term.

Schools will be given a term to increase the attendance before the funding is reduced. i.e. the pupils attendance is identified as below 25% in the Autumn term. The HNF moderation team will write to the school to ask for a new provision map for the following Spring term. After discussion the Spring term funding may be pro-rated.

## 8. Cross Border Placements

The LA where a child lives is responsible for the Element 3 top up funding.

Where a learner has an EHCP, the EHCP is determined by the child's address and, it is the responsibility of the home county to pay for their High Needs Funding. Therefore, if a child attracts Top Up Funding (Element 3) it is the settings' responsibility to claim this Funding from the home Local Authority. i.e. if a learner lives in Essex but attends a Suffolk setting, the setting should claim Top Up funding from Essex County Council.

This arrangement also applies to children in care. From April 2024 a change in policy and agreement across the Eastern Region now enforces that it is the LA where a child in care lives who is responsible for all costs of an education placement including Element 3 top up funding.

High Needs Funding Guidance now makes this explicit: "Under the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities are responsible for children and young people with SEN who are wholly or mainly resident in their area. These duties are based on where the child or young person lives and not on where they are educated. Where a child or young person is educated outside the local authority area where they usually live, it is the local authority where the child normally lives that is responsible for conducting the EHC needs assessment and issuing an EHC plan, where necessary, and for securing and funding that provision." High needs funding: 2023 to 2024 operational guide - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

Suffolk County Council will secure and fund the SEND provision for children living in Suffolk including those who are CiC from other Local Authorities and will not seek to recoup. There is an expectation that all Local Authorities will adopt this process and do the same.

On an annual basis the ESFA undertake an Import/Export adjustment exercise. This reflects the cross-border movement of learners and ensures that local authorities are compensated within their budget if they have more children coming into the county for education compared to those who are going out. The purpose of the import/export adjustment is to remove any financial inequity; for every high needs learner that Suffolk takes in from another area (imports), that is above the number of Suffolk's learners that other areas take (exports), the ESFA will fund £6,000. This represents the cost of the place funding less the basic entitlement in special schools, or the equivalent in mainstream schools and post-16 settings.



## 9. Payment Schedule

Existing settings are paid in advance on a termly basis, and payments are made based on the previous terms data. Therefore, settings are paid in December, April and July, for the Spring, Summer and Autumn terms.

For new specialist settings opening after September 2020 payments are made for the current term. For example the banding values in the November moderation are paid for the autumn term, March for the spring term and June for the summer term.

Changes to how the payments are made will only be made in exceptional circumstances and with agreement from both the Provider and Suffolk County Council.

## 10. DfE Guidance

The DfE update their funding guidance for the use of the High Needs Block on an annual basis. Suffolk County Council are governed by the guidance within this document and adhere to the processes and policies within it. The latest version of this document is available on the DfE [website](#).

## 11. Schools Forum

If a significant change is required to this policy and guidance document, approval is required from Schools Forum. Representatives from Schools Forum make up the membership of the High Needs Working Group who are responsible for overseeing the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. Any changes to funding levels, agreements for additional grants and lines of income provided by central government are discussed by the working group and taken to Schools Forum for approval.

## 12. Document Review

<b>Document Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Date to be reviewed</b>
Version 2	February 2023	July 2025
Version 3	September 2024	September 2026

To be reviewed by the Head of Send Funding and the High Needs Working Group.