



# Report to Schools Forum

**Date:**

**Title: High Needs Block Update:** Independent Schools Budget focus

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**Schools affected:** All maintained schools and academies, FE Colleges and Early Years Settings

**Recommendations:**

**Schools Forum is asked to note the impact of the year end budget position on the High Needs budget for 2020-21 for independent placements.**

**This paper follows on from the paper presented to Schools' Forum in October 20, reporting back on work undertaken following proposals presented, and the impact of this on spend for the financial year 20-21.**

1. Purpose of the Report

- The purpose of this report is to outline the year end budget for the independent schools budget for 2020-21 and mitigating actions taken aimed to achieve a close to budget spend, but resulting in an underspend against this budget line within the High Needs Block. This is a follow up to the detailed analysis of spend within the independent sector detailed in the Schools Forum Paper of October 2020 (7) 'High Needs Update'.
- This paper will further breakdown the allocated budget by school type; independent mainstream, independent special and non-maintained special to give an in depth analysis of the cohort of children attending these settings.

2. Budget position at year end 20-21

The year end budget for the financial year 20/21 for this budget is £14,103,227 against a budget set for the financial year of £14,530,286, equating to an **underspend of**

**£427,059.** At the midpoint of the year, when this element of the budget was previously reported on (Oct 20) an overspend of £247,483 was forecast for 20-21.

For the previous year (19-20) spend was recorded as £15,324,436, with the budget set at £14,219,724, meaning an overspend of £1,104,712 was recorded. £1.2m less was spent on the independent sector in 20-21 compared with the previous year (19-20). This was for a total of 302 children and young people with EHCPs.

The largest proportion of these are in Independent Special Schools (43%). The most commonly recorded primary need (35%) across this area is Autism which is in line with the fastest growing area of need nationally for those with an EHCP (30%).

### 3. Context – Children, young people and Schools

#### Independent Mainstream Schools

This cohort includes parents' private placements where top up funding is provided, in line with the value paid to a maintained mainstream or academy, as well as those where school fees are paid in part or fully by the LA.

34% of those placed within these settings have a primary need of Autism. Children and young people with a primary need of Autism or speech, language and communication needs account for 60% of placements in independent mainstream schools. The national picture for those with an EHCP is that these areas of need account for 45% of those with an EHCP.

#### Independent Special Schools

The fees for these schools are paid in full by the Local Authority from the high needs block.

39% of those placed in these schools have a primary need of Autism, and 27% have a primary need of Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH). 50% of these are recorded as being high functioning.

#### Non-maintained Special Schools

The fees for these schools are paid in full by the LA from high needs block. T

Children and young people with a primary need of Autism account for 28% of placements.

### 4. Actions taken

4.1 Weekly and monthly tracking systems have been in place to ensure this information is up-to-date, maintains accuracy and suitable check and challenge is undertaken.

Monthly meetings scrutinising spend and suitability of high cost placements involving the iSEND service, finance and commissioning teams have been established since 2019.

4.2 Risks are reported into monthly ISP monitoring meetings and are now routinely built into the forecast. 82 placements within the independent special and non-maintained special sector are within residential schools. 56% of these placements

now have some contribution from social care and / or health partners to their education, with clear procedures in place to ensure care needs identified as requiring a residential school, have some element of other agency contribution upon agreement.

4.3 Since September 2020, the Educational Psychologists (EPs) have offered a non-statutory service to schools and Specialist Teachers have introduced a tiered approach to support that is enabling them to support more mainstream settings earlier. This academic year (Sept 21) the EPs are widening that offer, largely due to a highly successful recruitment campaign, and a public consultation on the modernising and more inclusive offer from specialist teachers is also planned for this time.

4.4 Re-design of EHC Needs Assessment request form and subsequent training to roll out, alongside ordinarily available provision initiative in early 2020. The ceasing of EHC Plans when outcomes are achieved or young people progress to employment or higher education is now systematically in place. Impact on number of EHCPs in January 21 was that there were 4910 EHC Plans maintained by Buckinghamshire. This is an increase of 315 or 6.9% since 2020. In the previous year the number of plans maintained by Buckinghamshire increased by 13.3%.

Across England the number of EHC plans has increased by 10% in each of the previous 2 years. Increases in our statistical neighbours group were higher than the national average, with an increase of 12.7% in the year to January 2021.

	Number of EHCPs maintained			% increase	
	Jan-19	Jan-20	Jan-21	Jan-19 to Jan-20	Jan-20 to Jan-21
Buckinghamshire	4054	4595	4910	13.3%	6.9%
Statistical Neighbours				11.6%	12.7%
England				10.2%	10.4%

4.5 Individual ARP Development Enquiries carried out with ARPs across the county in order to ascertain where key areas of development are and ensure are ready for moderation to set budgets, following the needs-led banded funding model in April 22.

4.6 Robust decision making on requests for ARP, specialist or independent settings has been in place from September 2019 through a multi-agency panel. This increased scrutiny has significantly contributed to this underspend.

4.7 In September 2019, a new primary specialist provision was opened in Buckinghamshire with 42 new places available, primarily for those with high functioning SEMH and ASD needs (Chiltern Way Academy). From September 2020, schools specialising in communication and interaction needs with learning difficulties across the county have also increased their places (Furze Down School by 12;

Heritage House School by 20; Stony Dean School by 10). Westfield School has also increased their capacity by a further 14 places from April 2021.

4.8 Special schools have now moved to the banded funding needs-led model (April 21) with one academy due to join in September 21.

4.9 The Autism, SEMH Sufficiency Impact Group – in place due to the significant current and projected increases in need in this area, feeds into the wider Local Area Improvement work / SEND Integrated Services Board. Individual workstreams chaired by Headteachers from Buckinghamshire’s maintained special sector (ASD) and Primary PRU (SEMH) are focusing on the development of mainstream school capacity to support these key areas of need. Key updates from this group are:

- Widening of the Primary PRU offer to support schools with children who have EHCPs and a primary need of SEMH.
- Gap analysis of Designated Mental Health Leads within schools and training needs in relation to SEMH.
- Definition on what ‘autism friendly’ is and devising structures for enabling all settings to become this and monitoring of this in terms of the impact on children and young people.
- Issuing of the Education: SEND and Inclusion Sufficiency Consultation on 7<sup>th</sup> June 21, open for six weeks, with subsequent publication of the strategy planned for the autumn term of 21.

4.10 Commissioning capacity has been agreed to have SEND placement focus, with the post self-funding as a result of the additional scrutiny capacity it would create. This would include two posts, one at a total cost of £69,369 and the other at £52,179 focused on the monitoring, review and securing of new placements within the sectors examined in this paper (total cost to HNB £121,546) and the post is now being advertised.

4.11 Similarly, the business case for a post of a SEND Business Manager to maintain records, provide scrutiny and challenge and ensure closely working with the SEND Commissioners to facilitate good value for money, has been approved. This will also be intended to be self-funding at a cost of £77,137 to the HNB.

4.12 The DSG Recovery Board is now in place (separate item on Schools’ Forum).