

SCHOOLS FORUM

SEN INVESTMENT FUND 2025-26

9 SEPTEMBER 2025

Content applicable to:		School Phase:	
Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools	X	Pre School	
Academies	X	Foundation Stage	X
PVI Settings		Primary	X
Special Schools / Academies		Secondary	X
Local Authority	X	Post 16	
		High Needs	X

Purpose of the report

Content requires:		By:	
Noting	X	Maintained Primary School Members	X
Decision		Maintained Secondary School Members	X
		Maintained Special School Members	
		Academy Members	X
		All Schools Forum	

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Schools' Forum on the development of the SEN Investment Fund for 2025/26 and confirmed offers which will be launched for mainstream educational settings in the Autumn term.

Recommendations

2. Schools' Forum is asked to note the offers to be funded for the 2025/26 academic year and the approach to measuring the impact of the fund.

Background

3. Schools' Forum has previously been updated on the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit position and activity to mitigate the impact of increased demand on the SEND system through the Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL)

programme. Despite the positive impacts of the TSIL programme, pressure on the High Needs Block continues, with notable increases in requests for support for Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs which schools have noted they are finding particularly challenging to manage.

4. Schools' Forum received a report on 18th June 2024 which set out the intention to seek a 0.5% transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2025/26. A further report was presented on 17th September confirming the approach and proposing a consultation with mainstream Leicestershire schools on the establishment of a SEN Investment Fund from the transfer focusing on supporting children and young people with SEMH needs.
5. Schools' Forum received a report on 4th November 2024 which presented feedback from the consultation with schools on the proposed 2025/26 School Block transfer. The Schools Forum did not support the proposed School Block transfer.
6. On 22nd November 2024, the Cabinet agreed that the Council could seek the approval of the Secretary of State on the proposed 0.5% transfer for 2025/26.
7. The decision of the Secretary of State to approve the School Block Transfer for 2025/26 and the subsequent establishment of a SEN Investment Fund was reported to the Schools Forum on 12th February 2025.
8. Schools' Forum received an update on progress in developing the SEN Investment Fund offers for 2025/26 at the meeting held on 10th June 2025.

Development of SEN Investment Fund offers for 2025/26

9. Offers have been co-produced with a working group of School Leaders and representatives from across SEND and Inclusion support services who have met regularly between March and June 2025. A survey of school leaders was undertaken, with findings fed into the working group and used to shape the emerging proposals.
10. Final proposals were agreed at the Working Group meeting held on 16th June.
11. Work is underway to finalise the commissioning of externally provided offers, recruit new outreach staff and confirm impact measures, including baselining of KPIs to ensure we are able to monitor the impact of the enhanced offers.
12. The package of new offers available to support children and young people with SEMH needs in mainstream schools and how they can be accessed will be communicated out to schools once finalised. A school's directory is being developed which will showcase the full package of offers for 2025/26 which is scheduled for launch in October.

Summary of offers for the 2025/26 academic year

13. The Fund will be used to introduce an enhanced graduated offer of support for children and young people with SEMH needs in mainstream educational settings. Offers which will be launched in the Autumn term will include:

14. **Fully funded SEMH training offered to all schools in Leicestershire**

This will include training on

- Trauma informed approaches
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Progressive Masculinity (Secondary Schools)
- Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)
- Zones of Regulation
- Time to talk SEMH
- Reflective spaces supervision model for ELSAs

The Working Group has agreed that in addition, a contribution towards backfill costs will be made from the Fund for full-day courses to ensure this is not a barrier to attendance.

15. **Primary school in-school Alternative Provision and Outreach Support**

This will consist of an extension of the existing support offer from Oakfield to include drop-in support and additional capacity to enable a reduction in waiting times. Primary Schools will also pilot in-school alternative provision support via new Graduated Response Practitioners and Sports Coaches. A team of Speech and Language therapy professionals will support the Oakfield outreach offer for both Primary and Secondary Schools.

16. **Secondary school in-school Alternative Provision and Outreach Support**

A new multidisciplinary SEMH team will offer outreach support in Secondary Schools from the new Oakfield Secondary. Secondary Schools will pilot in-school alternative provision offers via Graduated Response Practitioners, Sports Coaches and a Music pilot. Additional AP support is under development for young people who are in school but not accessing lessons.

17. **Online consultations focused on supporting professionals working with children and young people experiencing EBSNA**

A new bookable consultation offer led by Educational Psychology will be available to all schools as part of the graduated offer.

18. **Directory of support and advice for parents of children with SEMH needs**

A more accessible directory of information for parents on support available for SEMH is being developed which will be hosted on the Local Offer website and shared with schools for dissemination.

19. Directory of SEMH support and advice for schools

This will bring together existing resources into a single place for supporting SEMH needs, identifying additional support available and setting out how to access. This directory will showcase the SEN Investment Fund offers for 2025/26 and include booking details.

Measuring the impact of the SEN Investment Fund

20. In order to measure the impact of the offers being introduced through the Fund, impact measures have been developed which are due for further discussion at the next Working Group meeting on 25th September. Regular monitoring and reporting will ensure that early feedback on training, outreach offers, online consultations and support directories is used to tailor services to ensure they are impactful and delivering the expected benefits.
21. It is proposed that Schools' Forum continues to receive regular reports on monitoring of SEN investment fund benefits to ensure accountability and impact.

Sustainability

22. Ongoing pressure on the High Needs Block continues to be a significant risk to the sustainability of Local Authority finances, and it is anticipated that the offers introduced through the SEN Investment Fund will build capacity within schools to support children and young people with SEMH needs within mainstream educational settings, working to make mainstream schools somewhere they feel they belong and to live their best life.
23. The SEN Investment Fund offers have been developed with both initial impact and broader systemic support for inclusion in mainstream schools in mind. Where possible, training offers will use a train-the-trainer approach in order to enable a broader group of school staff to experience dedicated SEMH training and embed sustainable practices into school culture.
24. A significant proportion of the Fund will be used to support individualised advice and support for specific pupils or groups of pupils through outreach, in-school alternative provision and online consultations as an extension of the existing graduated response. While this advice will be specific to individual circumstances and needs, specialists providing advice and support will work with school staff and pupils with SEMH needs to put sustainable strategies in place and provide coaching to support ongoing staff development.

Financial Implications

25. The Schools Block transfer for 2025/26 has created a SEN Investment Fund of just under £2.8m which will be spent on delivering the offers set out in this report. This budget includes £2.1m of expenditure on staffing to support Outreach, facilitation of

Training and Online consultations, £0.4m on Training including externally commissioned training and contributions towards backfill costs, and the remaining £0.3m on In-school alternative provision offers.

Equality Implications

26. The SEN Investment Fund by its nature is targeted at children and young people with SEMH needs, however will support wider inclusive mainstream practice which should benefit all children and young people.

Background papers

Report to the Schools Forum on 10 June 2025, "SEN Investment Fund Update"
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s190092/SEN%20investment%20fund.pdf>

Report to the Schools Forum on 12 February 2025, "2025-26 Schools Budget",
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s188368/5.%202025-26%20Schools%20BudgetV3.pdf>

Report to the Cabinet on 22 November 2024, "Proposed Transfer of Funding From The Schools Block to The High Needs Block of The Dedicated Schools Grant"
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s186577/Resetting%20SEND%20Finance%20Cabinet%20report.pdf>

Report to the Schools Forum on 4 November 2024, "Resetting the SEN Finance System"
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1018&MId=7978&Ver=4>

Report to the Schools Forum on 17 September 2024, "SEN Investment Fund and Schools Block Transfer"
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1018&MId=7957&Ver=4>

Report to the Schools Forum on 18 June 2024, "Resetting the SEN Finance system"
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1018&MId=7734&Ver=4>

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