

Briefing Report

2026/27 Schools Block Transfer Proposal – Strategic Investment in SEND For Consultation with Leicestershire Schools

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Schools are invited to comment on the proposal to continue a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for the 2026/27 financial year.

1.2 This transfer would sustain a ringfenced SEND Investment Fund that focuses on strengthening the capacity of mainstream schools to meet the needs of children and young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

1.3 The proposal aims to ensure early, targeted support is available to schools, reduce escalation to statutory plans, and support a more inclusive, financially sustainable SEND system.

2. Context

2.1 Demand for support with SEMH needs continues to rise both locally and nationally, placing significant pressure on schools, alternative provision, and the High Needs Block.

2.2 The transfer is not intended to offset the cumulative High Needs Block deficit, but rather to provide strategic investment that enables early intervention, reduces long-term demand for costly placements, and strengthens provision within mainstream settings.

2.3 This proposal complements wider programmes such as Transforming Special Needs and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) and the Department for Education's Delivering Better Value in SEND initiative.

3. Purpose of the SEND Investment Fund

3.1 The SEND Investment Fund has been designed to:

- Build capacity in schools to meet SEMH needs within mainstream environments.
- Enable early intervention to avoid escalation of needs and reduce reliance on statutory processes.
- Provide training and professional development for teachers, leaders, and support staff.
- Offer specialist outreach and consultation support to schools experiencing high levels of SEMH demand.
- Promote collaboration and develop a shared, countywide approach to inclusion.

3.2 The ringfenced nature of the fund ensures that every pound transferred is spent directly on initiatives that benefit schools and pupils.

4. Strategic Approach for 2026/27

4.1 The 0.5% transfer would continue to fund a coordinated, countywide approach to SEMH support.

4.2 The approach is built around three interconnected areas:

- **Workforce Development:** Building staff knowledge, confidence, and skills in SEMH support.
- **Targeted School Support:** Deploying outreach services, consultation offers, and in-school provision to where it is most needed.
- **System Collaboration:** Developing shared resources, guidance, and networks to enable schools to learn from each other and embed consistent practice.

4.3 This approach ensures that interventions are timely, evidence-based, and designed to leave a lasting impact on schools' capacity to meet needs.

5. Anticipated Benefits

5.1 Benefits for Pupils

5.1.1 Early intervention within a familiar school setting can reduce anxiety, improve attendance, and prevent escalation of needs.

5.1.2 Pupils benefit from consistent approaches to behaviour and SEMH support, regardless of which school they attend.

5.1.3 Keeping children engaged in their local school reduces disruption, helps maintain friendships and routine, and improves long-term outcomes.

5.2 Benefits for Schools

5.2.1 **Access to Expertise:** Outreach services and consultations offer schools direct access to specialist advice, enabling them to act quickly when challenges arise.

5.2.2 **Improved Staff Confidence:** Training equips staff with practical strategies, allowing them to manage SEMH challenges effectively within the classroom.

5.2.3 **Reduced Reliance on Crisis Measures:** Strengthened internal capacity means fewer exclusions, reduced need for emergency placements, and a smoother experience for pupils and families.

5.2.4 **More Predictable Resource Planning:** Having a countywide support framework helps schools plan for SEMH needs as part of their normal provision, rather than responding reactively.

5.3 Benefits for Staff

5.3.1 **Professional Development:** Staff gain access to funded training opportunities that may otherwise be unaffordable.

5.3.2 **Supportive Networks:** The approach encourages collaboration between schools, enabling peer learning and sharing of best practice.

5.3.3 Improved Wellbeing: With additional resources and guidance available, staff may feel less isolated when managing challenging situations, reducing stress and improving retention.

5.4 Benefits for the System

5.4.1 A shared, countywide approach creates a more consistent graduated response, reducing variation in how SEMH needs are met.

5.4.2 This helps ensure fair access to support and fosters parental confidence in the mainstream offer.

5.4.3 Investment in early intervention contributes to a more financially sustainable system by preventing escalation to costly provision.

6. Alignment with National Priorities

6.1 The proposal supports the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan by promoting earlier help, inclusive practice, and strengthened mainstream capacity.

6.2 By retaining SEMH as the focus, the strategy addresses one of the key drivers of demand nationally and ensures that resources are directed to where they are most needed.

7. Consultation and Next Steps

7.1 The consultation asks schools to consider:

- Continuing the 0.5% Schools Block transfer for 2026/27.
- Retaining SEMH as the primary focus for the SEND Investment Fund.
- Suggestions on delivery, monitoring, and governance to ensure equity and transparency.

7.2 Feedback will inform the decision to be made by the Schools Forum later in the autumn term. If consensus is not reached, the proposal may be referred to the Secretary of State.

7.3 Engagement from all schools is strongly encouraged to ensure that the final approach meets the needs of the whole school community.

8. Invitation to Respond

8.1 Schools are asked to complete the consultation survey by **midnight 21 October 2025**. Results will be reported to the Schools Forum on **6 November 2025**.

8.2 For any questions regarding the consultation process, please contact:

edfinance@leics.gov.uk