

Briefing note

Annual Report for High Needs.

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Schools Forum on the delivery of SEND support in Milton Keynes and provide an understanding of current pressures and actions to address the pressures.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To **note** this report and make any recommendations as appropriate.

3 Financial Impact

- 3.1 The High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) became ring fenced in April 2018. This combined with continued demand for provision in relation to SEND means that it remains a highly pressured and potentially volatile element of the DSG.
- 3.2 In order to ensure a sustainable position on the HNB it is a priority to reflect this volatility by ensuring that a contingency is maintained.
- 3.3 There was a predicted carry forward of HNB funding of £4.6m as of April 2024, however we are currently predicting an in year over spend for 2024/2025 resulting in the predicted carry forward reducing to £3.5m which represents 5.6% of the current year allocation.

4 Issues

4.1 National Context

Under the previous government there were three key national developments aimed at addressing the challenges in the system and to drive forward improvements for children with special educational needs and disability:

- The government's review of services for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Green Paper 'Right Support, Right Place, Right Time', was published in Spring 2023 [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Improvement Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1181117/Special_Educational_Needs_and_Disabilities_(SEND)_and_Alternative_Provision_(AP)_Improvement_Plan.pdf)

- The Department for Education (DfE) announced a range of funding to support with sufficiency of specialist places, which is viewed as an area of pressure nationally. In March 2022 the DfE announced 2 years of high needs provision capital allocations funding covering 2022 to 2024 amounting to £1.4 billion of new investment. This funding forms part of the £2.6 billion being invested between 2022 and 2025, with a special free school and Alternative Provision (AP) wave programme announced in summer 2022 that will fund 60 new centrally delivered free schools or AP provision
- Our new Government are aware that around two thirds of all LAs are in deficit in their HNB, with reported pressures escalating, this is driven by high-cost placements, especially within the Independent sector, an increased demand of EHCPs through parental expectation and rights and schools requesting additional funding to meet the needs of their most complex children and young people. There is also a demand on private Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy assessments increasing the cost of meeting the provision set out in Section F of a child/young persons EHCP.
- A recent overview from the EFSA indicated all National Funding Formula (NFF) factors are to be reviewed in detail for 2026/27 in particular the historic spend factor from 2017/18 that currently represents 25% of the formula. This work will be carried out in such a way to support future SEND reforms with further announcements in relation to reforms being made later this year.

4.2 SEND Strategy

The Additional Needs and Disability Strategy ensures greater integration between the priority areas and the performance indicators in relation to all areas in SEND. The strategy outlines how partnership working is detrimental to driving forward change and improvement. Governance over the SEND Strategy sits with the Partnership Board

There are five priority areas, with membership from all areas of the partnership, these working groups drive forward the areas for development outlined in the SEND Action Plan. The groups consist of LA staff from education, social care and finance, Health, schools, settings and parents and carers.

The five priority areas are:

- Inclusion
- Emotional and Social Wellbeing and Mental Health
- Complex Needs and Specialist Provision
- Transitions and Preparing for the Future
- Autism

In order to ensure continued improvement a Self-Evaluation Framework has been developed through the Additional Needs and Disability partnership board, many of the themes within the SEF support the changes outlined in The Green Paper and highlight what our areas of development are. Milton Keynes Local Area had their SEND Local Area inspection in March 2024 with the outcome:

The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements. This is the middle judgement.

The next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately three years.

4.3 Increasing Demands

SEND Teams continue to see an increase in demand. In the light of this rising demand it is helpful to consider the growth in demand and how MK compares nationally:

| Academic Year | Total School Population | EHC Plan (school age from census) | EHC Plan (total across all provision and ages from SEN2) | MK EHC Plan % (across all provisions and ages from SEN2) | National EHC Plan % | Attending MK Special School | % Attending Special School from Census | National% in Special School |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|---|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 2015/16 | 46442 | 1152 | 1641 | 2.9% | 2.8% | 750 | 1.6% | 1.3% |
| 2016/17 | 47561 | 1366 | 1725 | 2.9% | 2.8% | 787 | 1.7% | 1.3% |
| 2017/18 | 48133 | 1365 | 1782 | 2.9% | 2.9% | 794 | 1.6% | 1.4% |
| 2018/19 | 48680 | 1371 | 1807 | 2.9% | 3.1% | 823 | 1.7% | 1.4% |
| 2019/20 | 49448 | 1543 | 2068 | 3.2% | 3.3% | 859 | 1.7% | 1.5% |
| 2020/21 | 49661 | 1596 | 2276 | 3.5% | 3.7% | 861 | 1.7% | 1.6% |
| 2021/22 | 51050 | 1761 | 2439 | 3.6% | 4.0% | 872 | 1.7% | 1.6% |
| 2022/23 | 51644 | 1993 | 2642 | 4.0% | 4.3% | 920 | 1.8% | 1.7% |
| 2023/24 | 51760 | 2007 | 2769 | 4.9% | 4.8% | 965 | 1.9% | 1.8% |
| Sep-24 MK EHCP Numbers | | | 3019 | | | | | |

There has been a sharp increase between 2023 and 2024 in terms of the EHCP percentage for MK. The figures show that MK is now slightly higher than national averages whereas from 2018-2023 MK was lower than the national average. We are now back in line with the trends seen in 2016 and 2017.

4.5 – Place Numbers Table

| | Sep-24 | Sep-25 | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Schedule of High Needs Places | Total Funded Places | Total Funded Places | Changes to Places |
| Special Schools: | | | |
| The Redway | 181 | 181 | - |
| Romans Field | 66 | 66 | - |
| Slated Row (incl KHP second site) | 228 | 228 | - |
| The Woodlands (Previously The Walnuts) | 202 | 212 | 10 |
| White Spire | 165 | 170 | 5 |
| Stephenson Academy | 157 | 157 | - |
| The Woodlands High Complex Need Provision | 16 | 24 | 8 |
| Total Special School Places | 1,015 | 1,038 | 23 |
| Special Units/Resourced Provisions: | | | |
| Bradwell Village - ASC | 8 | 16 | 8 |
| Germander Park - ASC | 8 | 16 | 8 |
| Priory Common - ASC | - | 6 | 6 |
| Southwood - ASC | 8 | 16 | 8 |
| Charles Warren Academy - Language | 6 | 6 | - |
| New Bradwell - Communication | 24 | 32 | 8 |
| Shepherdswell Academy - Communication | 8 | 8 | - |
| Orchard Academy Communication | 12 | 16 | 4 |
| Romans Field - ASC | 16 | 24 | 8 |
| St Paul's Catholic School - Emmanuel | 16 | 24 | 8 |
| Radcliffe - Social Communication | 15 | 15 | - |
| St Paul's Catholic School - Social Comm | 28 | 28 | - |
| St Paul's Catholic School - HI | 10 | 10 | - |
| St Paul's Catholic School - VI | 11 | 11 | - |
| Stantonbury Campus - Social Comm | 1 | - | 1 |
| New Unit Provision Opening Jan-26 | - | 24 | 24 |
| Total Special Unit/Resourced Provision Places | 171 | 252 | 81 |
| Post-16 SEN Places (non-special school) | | | |
| MK College | 170 | 170 | - |
| Total Post-16 SEN Places | 170 | 170 | - |
| Total Places Funded | 1,356 | 1,460 | 104 |
| Alternative Provision | Sep-23 | Sep-24 | |
| MK Primary PRU | 25 | 35 | 10 |
| The Bridge Academy | 195 | 205 | 10 |
| Total Alternative Provision | 220 | 240 | 20 |

4.6 Place Planning and Provision Development

Demand for special school places remains high and work on future demand and provision continues to be progressed through a Specialist Provision Place Planning Group. In the financial year 2023-2024 75 specialist placements were provided through the opening of new Unit provisions at Romans Field School, Bradwell Village, Germander Park, Southwood School and Priory Common.

The Local Authority are about to start Phase 2 of opening more planned Unit provisions with expressions of interest documentation being sent to schools in December 2024.