

Your guide to how SEN funding is calculated and allocated

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The new funding structure for pupils with SEN in mainstream schools is now in place. How does it work? How, for instance, do schools secure the right budget to deliver high-impact outcomes and value for money?

With the Institute of Fiscal Studies outlining in recent reports the significant cost pressures on school spending until 2020, school business managers and special needs co-ordinators (Sencos) will have a hard fight to secure the funding needed for SEN pupils.

Creating a simpler, fairer and transparent system was a coalition aim and an intention of the special educational needs and disability (SEND) reforms brought in from last September. Underpinned by the legislation in the Children and Families Act 2014, the new

SEND code of practice emphasises "person-centred approaches" – with education, health and care plans (EHC plans) up to the age of 25 replacing statements of SEN for those aged up to 18.

SEN consultant Anita Devi (pictured) believes the reforms and the funding changes dovetail to reflect a significantly more joined-up approach. Speaking at a recent Optimus Education seminar, she outlined how SEN funding for mainstream schools is worked out from the dedicated schools grant (DSG), the core of funding given to local authorities (LAs).



3 ELEMENTS OF MAINSTREAM SEN FUNDING

NOTIONAL SEN AND DEPRIVATION FUNDING

1 BASIC PER-PUPIL ENTITLEMENT (I.E. SCHOOL PLACE)

2 HIGH-NEED, LOW INCIDENCE SEN (TOP UP FUNDING FOR SUPPORT NEEDS ABOVE £6,000)

3 HALI

SUPPORT FOR ADDITIONAL NEEDS UP TO £6,000

+

5% OF AGE WEIGHTED PUPIL UNIT

+

FREE SCHOOL MEAL FUNDING

+

IDACI
INCOME DEPRIVATION AFFECTING CHILDREN INDEX

+

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

+

EAL
ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

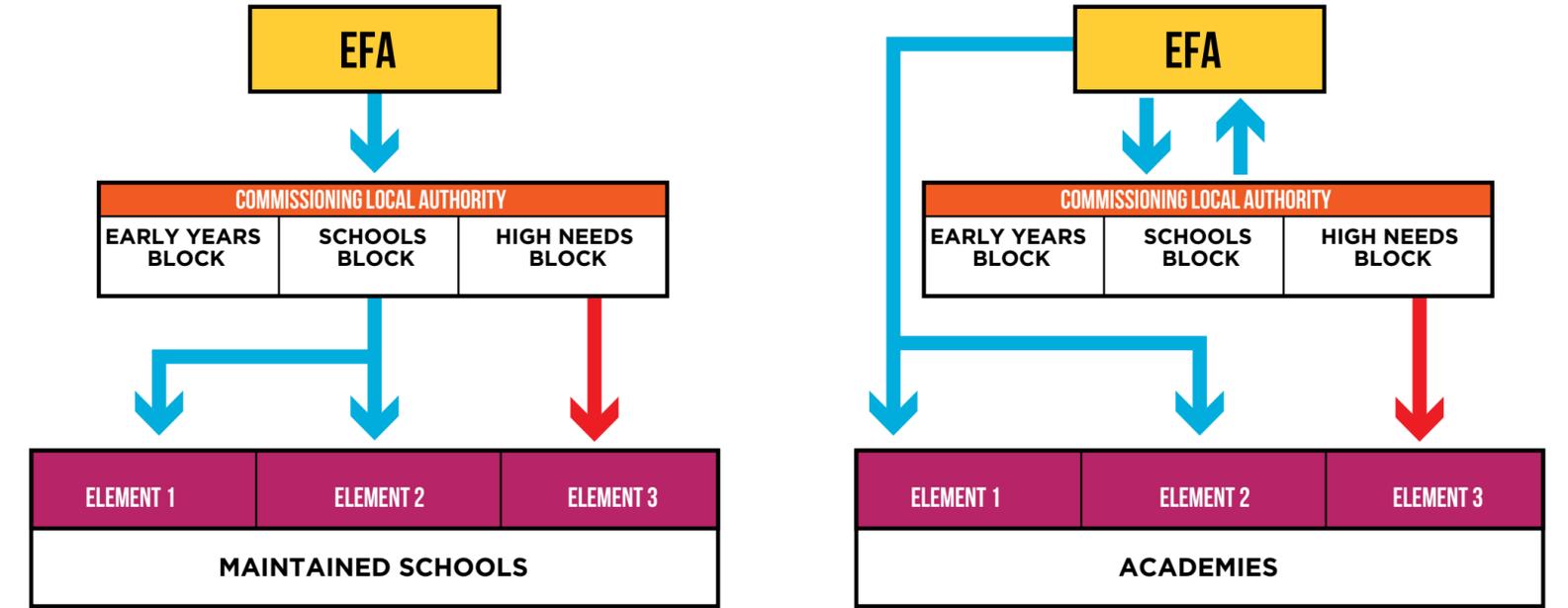
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LOW PRIOR ATTAINMENT

USUALLY WITH STATEMENT OR EHC

ADAPTED FROM RESEARCH BY BARNEY ANGLISS

NOTIONAL SEN FUNDING REFORMS



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Local authorities receive the dedicated schools grant for all maintained schools and most academies in their areas via the Education Funding Agency (EFA). The LA then consults with the "schools forum", a body of local stakeholders, and they jointly set a local formula for funding maintained schools and academies. Based on this, maintained schools then get their allocated funding from the LA, while funding for academies is recouped – a fancy word for "taken back" – from the LA by the EFA (from 2015-16 about 10 per cent of academies that are "non-recoupment academies" will also be brought into this process). The agency then gives the funding back.

In January 2015, LAs in England submitted their formulae for allocating their DSG schools block funding for 2015/16 to schools in their area. Schools are funded using a maximum of 13 clearly defined factors. Mandatory pupil-led factors include the basic per-pupil entitlement, deprivation (using one or both of two indicators: children eligible for free school meals or the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index), and optional pupil-led factors including looked-after children, prior attainment, and English as an additional language.

A requirement for the new formulae is that a minimum of 80 per cent of block funding must be allocated through pupil-led factors.

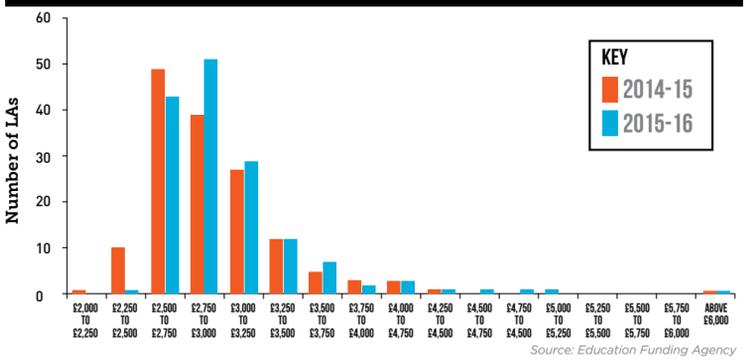
WHERE DOES SEN FUNDING COME FROM?

Element 1: Basic per-pupil entitlement
This is used to make general provision for all pupils in the school, including pupils with SEN, and goes directly to schools.
It is the basic per pupil entitlement, with every pupil in a school attracting an amount called the age-weighted pupil unit (AWPU).
There has been a general belief that the amount of AWPU funding per pupil is about £4,000, but LAs are permitted to choose different rates. The EFA's schools block funding formulae 2015/16 states LAs must specify a primary AWPU of at least £2,000 and key stage 3 and 4 AWPU values of at least £3,000. Most (81 per cent) of primary AWPU are in the range of £2,500 to £3,250, although there are a few significant outliers of more than £4,000.
For key stage 3 AWPU, 81 per cent of local authorities are allocating between £3,500 and £4,500 per pupil; for key stage 4 most (79 per cent) are allocating between £4,000 and £5,500 per pupil. Across all authorities, 76.2 per cent of funding is being allocated through basic

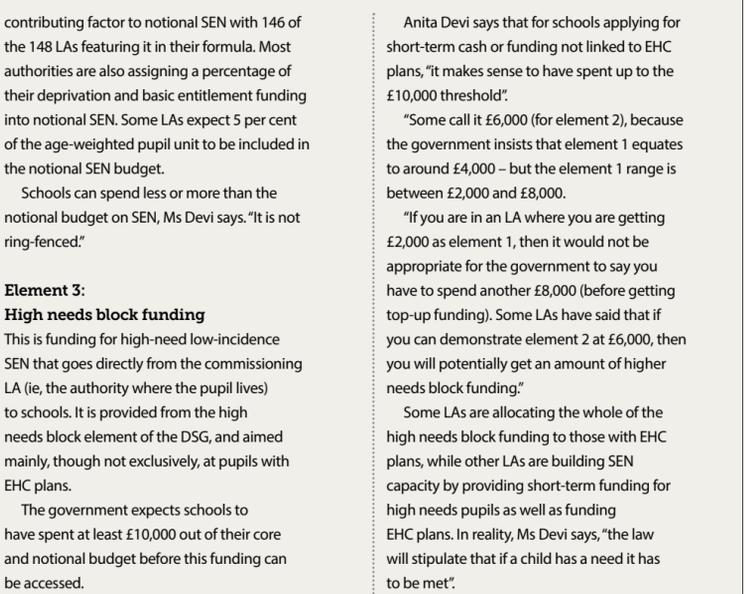
entitlement in 2015-2016.
The Department for Education's initial £4,000 AWPU assumption is therefore incorrect for many schools.

Element 2: Notional SEN budget
This is an additional amount of money to help make special educational provision meet the needs of children with SEND. It's called notional because schools can spend it in the way that they think is best. Like element 1, it goes directly to schools.
In their funding formulae for 2015-16, LAs specify what percentage of funding allocated through each factor contributes to the notional SEN budget. The government has recommended schools use the notional SEN budget to pay for up to £6,000 worth of special educational provision to meet a child's SEN.
Some 126 (83 per cent) of authorities are allocating between 5 and 15 per cent of schools block funding as notional SEN.
Prior attainment is the most common

BASIC ENTITLEMENT PRIMARY AWPU-PER-PUPIL VALUES CHOSEN



FORMULA FACTORS USED TO ALLOCATE NOTIONAL SEN



MAXIMISING FUNDING, COSTING PROVISION – AND WHAT VALUE FOR MONEY LOOKS LIKE

What does SEN consultant Anita Devi think is the best way for schools to identify what they have provided up to the "£10,000 threshold"? She says the threshold embraces elements 1 and 2 of the funding and covers quality inclusive and personalised teaching of a whole class (including reasonable adjustments), short-term additional interventions (wave 2) and low-cost elements of wave 3 higher needs interventions. She says that if schools "align their provision management systems to the school improvement cycle, then it is relatively easy to evidence what is the core offer, and what has been provided additionally at wave 2 and 3 up to the £10,000 threshold".

Paul Newby (pictured) is headteacher and Senco at Brickhouse Primary School in Sandwell in the West Midlands. A quarter of the pupils at his school were on the SEN register in summer 2014.

He says schools can use provision mapping to cost provision and interventions to maximise funding, ensure value for money (VFM) and identify high-impact interventions. He uses it to provide an evidence base fully linked to money that can show how much "top up" funding a child requires.

In his view, schools must be able to articulate their SEN spend, and school business managers must make sure their Sencos have that information. "It's a collective senior leadership responsibility."

Costing provision involves analysing accountability, VFM, time and personnel. The average intervention at the school runs for eight weeks – but might continue for two terms. This allows time to assess outcomes at the start and the end of the intervention. "VFM needs very clear investment points."

The focus has to be on linking data to impact. In his school, the most expensive interventions are one-to-one, and he

says he has had "more success with an £8.22 phonics intervention". One-to-one support is only used with pupils with complex needs.

The school's provision maps include a three-tier system for the whole school, year group and individuals. Each intervention in the area of need – such as cognition and learning – is listed and costings collected for provision. The year group maps cover group size, frequency and cost, while the individual provision maps cost the wave 2 and 3 interventions for more complex needs.

Impact is assessed using goal attainment setting (GAS), a common scale for assessment. The six-point scale of measurement runs from three – where progress is higher than expected, to minus three – where progress is considerably below baseline. "If I see an intervention in two or three, it is clicking into the area of VFM."

Mr Newby says the class teacher must review what the pupil can do now that he or she couldn't do before. "Staff know they need to talk about what new skills they are seeing."

One-off spends, money for SEN that has "been top-sliced out" of the budget and the costs of external agencies must be included in the provision mapping, he adds.

