

Group funding handbook

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Part 1: Leicester City's vision and ethos for inclusion

The SEND and Education Division, in partnership with Leicester City Schools, is deeply committed to ensuring that all children and young people (CYP) with SEND are fully included in mainstream education. We recognise and value the strong inclusive practices demonstrated across Leicester City schools and remain dedicated to supporting CYP to attend schools within their local communities.

To help schools evaluate and further develop their inclusive provision, Leicester City Council launched the Best Endeavours and Reasonable Practice Framework, along with accompanying audit tools, in September 2021. Inclusive provision has been supported for many years by providing schools with access to non-statutory top-up funding for individual children and young people (CYP) through "Element 3." We have continued to provide this funding despite significant pressure on the High Needs Block, which is currently operating with a budget deficit. To further enhance opportunities for inclusion, and in response to schools requesting greater stability, the local authority (LA) more recently introduced two-year funding arrangements. This approach provides increased stability and enables implementation and impact to be demonstrated over time.

Furthermore, Leicester City schools have been at the forefront of the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) reforms, participating in the Change Programme to strengthen their already inclusive practice through the further development of Internal Alternative Provision (IAP). An IAP network has been established across both primary and secondary phases to support collaboration and the sharing of best practice.

In line with the White Paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving, Local Authority processes and funding streams encourage the development of whole school and targeted support that promotes 'belonging'. Research has demonstrated that if pupils feel they belong and matter in a setting their attainment, achievement and wellbeing are positively impacted.

Part 2: The national context

The School's White paper (Feb 2026) outlined plans for the development of inclusion bases within mainstream settings, which should be supported by £3 billion of investment. The White Paper indicates that all secondary schools will be expected to have an inclusion base, with an equivalent number in local primary schools.

The white paper defines inclusion bases as:

- 'Support Bases' – commissioned and funded by individual settings and multi-academy trusts to deliver targeted support. These are what we are currently labelling as IAPs.
- 'Specialist Bases' – commissioned and funded by the local authority to deliver specialist support. These are our LA commissioned DSPs and SEND units.

To help schools, while they await Government funding, the Local authority has developed a group funding model for 'Support Bases' which schools can apply for. This will give schools funding security to develop and staff their provision according to the needs of the school.

If you would like to find out more about opening a specialist base (DSP or Unit) please contact sendinclusion@leicester.gov.uk.

Part 3: Group funding model for primary and secondary settings

Schools have told us that Top Up Funding (Element 3 – non-statutory funding) is a highly valued and pivotal resource in supporting the inclusion of pupils with SEND. However, they have also expressed concerns about the lack of certainty around this funding, which can make long-term planning and staffing decisions challenging.

In response to these concerns about funding security, LCC has developed a group funding application process. This approach is designed to provide greater certainty and stability, enabling schools to plan with more confidence and safely resource school support bases with appropriate staffing.

Group funding – where does it sit?



The group funding resource forms part of the graduated approach for inclusion. It builds on the high quality first teaching, BERA and the ordinarily available offer. It will centre on the development / continuation of support bases.

Different schools have created Support Bases (IAPs) for different reasons.

Some examples include:

- It is part of the early intervention offer to support CYP with SEND to avoid risk of exclusion and risk of non-attendance.
- It supports CYP with Autism and complex needs who need a quiet non-stimulating environment.
- It supports CYP with learning difficulties who need a bespoke curriculum.

What are the criteria for support base funding?

Schools will need to evidence:

- Provision is within a dedicated room / building on the school site
- Provision is part of a whole school evidenced inclusion model, linking to the graduated approach.
- Provision is overseen and planned for by a teacher (as a minimum), but ideally a teacher will lead the provision (i.e. teach within in it for a proportion of the week).

- Timetabling and the curriculum offer is appropriate to meet need.
- Inclusion opportunities are built in, where appropriate.

Expectations:

Schools in receipt of group funding will be expected to:

- Engage in an Inclusive Provision Review, which will include a focused visit to the Support Base.
- Provide pupil details and progress data for each pupil on a half-termly basis.
- Receive an additional monitoring visit.

What is the amount of top-up funding?

Funding would be set at £5,000 per place in the provision. Each school can decide the maximum number of places their provision can hold, place numbers will be agreed with the LA prior to the provision opening and will be reviewed annually. This would be supplemented by an LA contribution of £5,932 for each pupil who is given a place in the provision. Rates are reviewed annually and this replaces any E3 /EHCP funding pupils are in receipt of. Schools will be expected to make an annual contribution of £6,000 per place to the overall cost of the provision from their whole school notional SEND budget. Therefore, the total funding available per occupied place will be $£5,000 + £5,932 + £6,000 = £16,932$ with £10,932 funded by the LA and £6,000 from the school.

Group funding will appear on the school's mainstream funding schedule and will be paid to schools termly in arrears. For academy schools, this will be via a BACS transfer and for maintained schools via an internal journal.

Part 4: Applying for group top-up funding

Please refer to [Appendix 1](#) of this document for the application form for group funding.

The funding application form requires information that helps the LA meet the DFE's requirement to provide evidence of 'efficient and effective use of high needs spend'.

This also links to the quality assurance processes which form part of the continuation of funding, such as the Inclusive Provision Reviews (IPRs) and monitoring visits.

In addition, schools will need to submit the names of the CYP attending the provision, along with progress updates on a half-termly basis to Commissioning and Performance Finance and the Quality Inclusion Team via a Resource Base Tracker. An example of the tracker is in [Appendix 2](#), this will be supplied as an Excel spreadsheet once funding has been agreed.

Appendix 1: Group top-up funding application form

This top-up funding is to support schools in their development of an Inclusion Base (formerly IAP).

Criteria:

- Provision in a dedicated room / building on the school site
- Provision is part of an evidenced inclusion model, linking to the graduated approach.
- Provision is overseen by a teacher (as a minimum), but ideally a teacher will lead the provision.
- Timetabling and curriculum offer is appropriate to meet need.
- Inclusion opportunities are built in, where appropriate.

Review process:

Schools will:

- Engage in an Inclusive Provision Review, which will include a focused visit to the Support Base.
- Provide pupil details and progress data for each pupil on a half-termly basis.
- Receive an additional monitoring visit.

Section A – please complete for all requests

Name of school:				
Name and contact details of person completing the form:				
Do you have an existing inclusion base on your school site, or are you looking to establish one?				
Details of pupils accessing the school base:				
Pupil name	Year group	E or K coded	Receiving E3 top-up funding Y /N	SEND needs

Outline of how the inclusion base fits into school's graduated approach (i.e. what support will the child have received prior to accessing the base)				
Staffing details (with qualification e.g. Qualified Teacher, Level 2 TA etc.)				
Provision / interventions delivered within the base (please also attach a weekly timetable)				
Mainstream inclusion opportunities				

Please return completed form to: send-ap@leicester.gov.uk.

