

Schools Forum

7th May 2026



Coventry City Council

coventry.gov.uk

Funding Update




Coventry City Council

coventry.gov.uk


Inclusive Mainstream Fund

- Announced as part of the governments SEND reform.
 - Will support the transition towards a reformed education system that is inclusive by design alongside schools' core funding allocations.
- Schools must develop & publish an inclusion strategy to show how a school will use their overall funding allocation to identify & meet the needs of their cohort.
- Base funding rates:
 - Lump sum of £3,000 per school
 - £16 per primary pupil & £14 per secondary pupil
 - £79 per primary low prior attainment pupil & £88 per secondary low prior attainment pupil
- Primary average funding - £19k
- Secondary average funding - £39k
- Calculator tool - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-mainstream-fund-2026-to-2027>


Inclusive Early Years Fund

- Early years element of the Inclusive Mainstream Fund
 - Estimated Coventry allocation - £300k
 - Funding is intended to:
 - Help providers adopt setting-wide inclusive practices
 - Reduce reliance on individual child-based funding applications
 - Enable early intervention for children with SEND
 - Funding distribution methodology & indicative allocation to be communicated with providers by the end of May 2026
- 

Inclusive Early Years Fund

- DfE recommended approach for distribution:
 - Total allocation distributed by mirroring the local early years funding formula
 - Base rate (75% of funding) & deprivation rate (25% of funding)
 - Based on 3 & 4 year old universal hours
 - Local authorities can use a de-minimis limit of £1,000
 - Final allocations must be confirmed by the end of August 2026
 - Payments must be made to providers by the end of September 2026.
- 

Experts at Hand & SEND Transformation


- Funding is for investment in services that individual EY settings, schools & colleges cannot commission alone
 - E.G. specialist health & education support
 - Coventry indicative allocation for 2026/27 - £3m
 - At least 80% of funding must be spent on EAH direct delivery
 - No more than 10% can be spent on admin costs for delivering the EAH offer
 - No more than 10% can be spent on LA transformation costs
- 

High Needs Provision Capital


- Paid to LA's to support the provision of places for children & young people with SEND and those pupils requiring alternative provision.
- Coventry 2026/27 allocation - £5.1m



Free School Meal Expansion

- Eligibility criteria being expanded from September 2026 to include all children from households in receipt of universal credit.
 - Reminder that this only covers the provision of meals, not other funding that uses FSM as an eligibility criteria.
 - Separate grants for both mainstream and special/AP schools will be issued. Further information has not yet been published.
- 

DfE Finance Meeting

- Meeting with Simon Hampson from the DfE took place on 25th March 2026
 - Productive meeting, agreed to have open dialogue
 - Simon agreed to consider some of our concerns when developing future plans/consultations
 - Opportunity for us to share further information & or case studies so if anyone wants to send anything in to us they can.
- 

SEND Reform Plan 2026-29




Coventry City Council

coventry.gov.uk

Goals for SEND Reform

The Government's SEND Reform programme aims to deliver:

- Earlier identification and help, with support put in place quickly
 - Consistent national standards and clearer accountability for SEND
 - More inclusive mainstream provision, with strong specialist options where needed
 - Simpler, less adversarial pathways, including improved EHCP processes
 - Better coordination across education, health and care services
 - Quicker access and fewer delays, including reduced waiting times
 - Better outcomes and preparation for adulthood, with better value for money
- 

Experts at Hand Offer and Inclusion Bases

The first phase of the plan focusses on two core initiatives:

Experts at Hand

- A consistent, easily accessed offer of specialist advice and coaching for mainstream settings
- Helps schools act earlier, reduce escalation, and improve outcomes

Inclusion bases in mainstream schools

- Building local capacity through more specialist places and staff
- Enables more children and young people to be supported closer to home, with clear standards and oversight

SEND Maturity Assessment

All Local Areas have completed a system maturity assessment. This is:

A rapid baseline of local SEND system strengths and gaps

Structured around key themes across governance, practice, outcomes and experience

Uses clear descriptors to rate maturity and pinpoint priority improvement actions


Directly aligned to the SEND Reform Plan to support readiness and implementation

Creates a shared view of where we are now, and what 'good' looks like

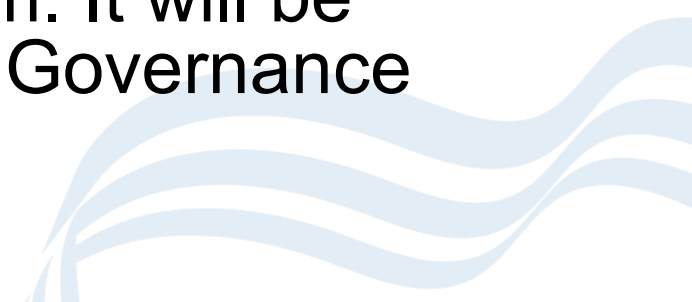
Co-produced in Coventry and used to inform SEND planning and delivery

SEND Reform Plan

The Reform Plan:

- Sets a clear local vision for inclusive SEND support and improved outcomes for children and young people.
 - Provides a three-year change story and roadmap (2026–29): workstreams, milestones and measures of success.
 - Confirms the one-year plan: priority actions, owners, timelines and deliverables to build momentum.
 - Makes key risks and mitigations explicit (capacity and workforce, demand/thresholds, quality, financial sustainability).
 - Clarifies co-dependencies and governance: partner roles, decision routes, escalation, reporting cadence and embedded co-production.
- 

Coproduction of Coventry's Reform Plan

- The timescale for completing the plan is tight; a first draft must be ready to share by mid May with the final version submitted in June.
 - To date, co-production has taken the form of workshops, meetings with individual groups (such as the PCF) and joint document revision.
 - A first draft of the document is now ready and will be reviewed at a workshop on 12 May.
 - The plan forms the first step toward SEND Reform. It will be reviewed and revised through a refreshed SEND Governance structure.
- 

Our Local Goals for SEND Reform

Children and young people with SEND will experience positive outcomes and a genuine sense of belonging. The majority will be supported successfully in **inclusive local early years settings, schools and colleges**, with improved attendance, participation and progress across all phases.

Families will have confidence in the SEND system because their experience of using it is positive and straightforward, and because they can see the outcomes it helps them achieve. Co-production with parents, carers and children and young people will be embedded, with transparent decision-making and clear feedback on how lived experience shapes services.

Mainstream settings will be confident, capable and supported to meet children's needs earlier and know where to seek support where needs are more complex. A fully embedded **Experts at Hand** offer and strengthened ordinarily available provision will enable earlier identification and support, reducing avoidable escalation of need.

Coventry will have a sustainable, high-quality and timely local SEND offer that reduces reliance on out of city provision. Investment will be increasingly focused on strengthening local capacity, reducing dependence on independent, out-of-area and long-term alternative provision, and supporting a more sustainable financial position.

A skilled, accountable and collaborative partnership will drive continuous improvement. Strong system leadership, a stable and skilled workforce, and intelligent use of data and lived experience will underpin shared accountability and sustained improvement across education, health and care.