

SEND Briefing

Primary SENDCOs &
Heads

23.09.26

Please write your name, role, and
school in the chat



OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL

- Alternative Education Provision
- Section 19
- SEND Reform in Oxfordshire
- EHCP Casework Team updates
- EOTAS – your questions
- SEND Strategic Early Intervention Team project links
- SENDSCO CPD

Oxfordshire
SEND

Alternative Provision (AEP) & Section 19



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Alternative Provision – Autumn 2026 briefing

Agenda:

- Strategy, policy and guidance updates
- Section 19 refresher
- Response to demand – Alternative Learning Pathways Team



Section 19 policy and AP Strategic Plan Updates

A number of new and updated documents are to be published this term:

- 3 year AP Strategic Plan: New strategy co-produced by the partnership, led by the AP steering group (previously AP Board)
- "Ensuring education for children unable to attend school policy" AKA Section 19 policy: Update to previous local policy [occ medical needs policy](#) from 2023
- AP commissioning and good practice toolkit: enhancement to current advice from 2023 [AP-commissioning-guidance.docx](#)

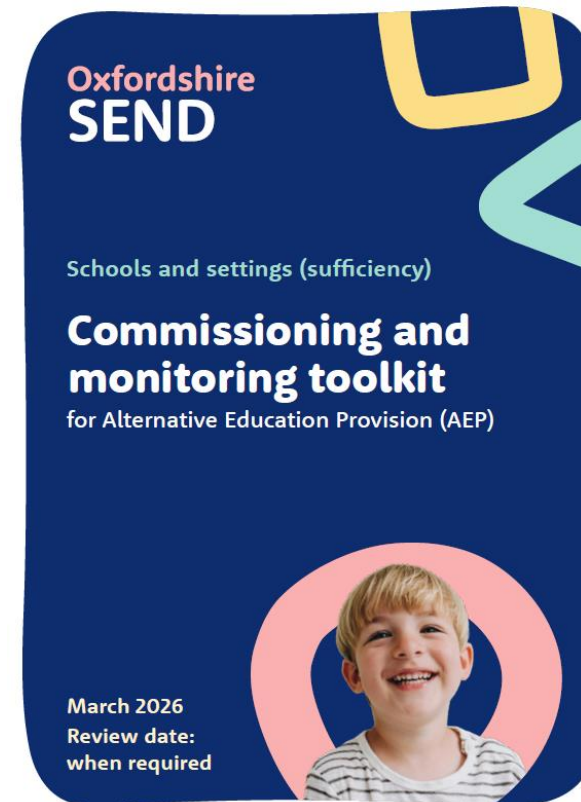
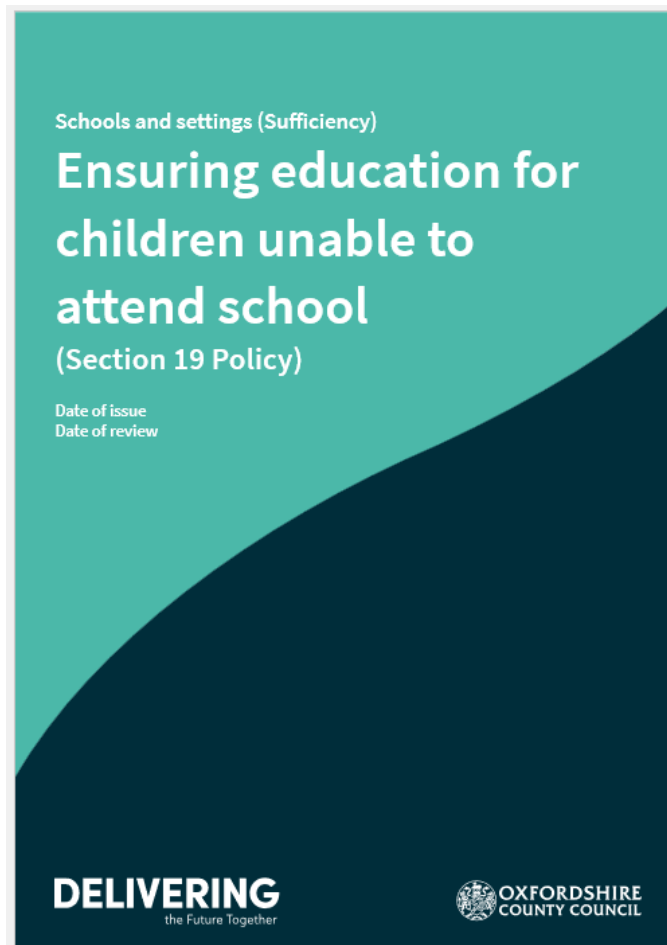
A significant response to demand in section 19 and AP oversight area: Launch of Alternative Learning Pathways Team



Strategy , policy and guidance updates



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Section 19 - Policy update

Purpose and context

- Provides updates to previous local policy [occ medical needs policy](#) from 2023

Summary and methodology

- The Council's Section 19 duty arises from the Education Act 1996, which requires local authorities to make arrangements for suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, exclusion or otherwise, may not receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made.
- The current policy published is out of date and not compliant with the latest advice from the Department for Education, which is to publish a policy related to the all duties under section 19. Many authorities have a medical policy, which has been previous advice, but lack the policy positions related to how education is provided for children who are also unable to attend school not only due to medical needs, but also exclusion or other reasons.
- Due to many unfavourable outcomes with the LGSCO regarding missed provision under this area, having a policy that is fit for purpose, transparently communicates how we work and the roles and responsibilities of schools and other partners in supporting children, will enable an up-to-date framework in which the Council can maintain integrity regarding decisions made and also reduce ambiguity and the likelihood of 'loopholes' in the process
- The policy has been updated to mirror expectations from the LGSCO (which now match service standard operating procedures) here: [Good Practice Guide: Supporting children out of school](#), and an added focus on how we prevent the likelihood of children missing education under this framework.

Expansion has been given to a number of areas, including:

- more focus on remote education
- SEND provision (GR & OAR)
- the role of health
- clearer timescales
- what evidence a child is unable to attend school looks like



Section 19 refresher

What is it?

How do we manage it?

What is my responsibility?



What is the duty?

Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 stipulates that **Local Authorities have a statutory duty to arrange suitable full-time** (unless it is not in the child's best interest) education for children of compulsory school age who, **because of illness, exclusion or other reasons would otherwise not receive suitable education**. In these circumstances the section 19 duty will apply if it is **not reasonably possible for a child to take up any existing schooling**.

There will be times where children are unable to attend school on a short-term basis. This might be because of brief illness, or an unexpected personal matter. **Short-term absences will be managed by schools, and there is no requirement for them to provide any supplementary education** for the days a child has missed. Schools are not legally required to provide work for pupils' short-term absences.

However, they are encouraged to have a robust absence management policy in place to ensure that students have suitable work during such times.

The section 19 duty is triggered when a child is **likely to be absent for 15 day or more** (consecutively or sporadically).



Other reasons - expanded

Illness and exclusion reasons are fairly straightforward – we have medical professionals or clear other evidence that shows children are too unwell to attend school and the child can access OHS or other tuition. When excluded, children access Meadowbrook. ‘Other’ – is less straightforward but, can be made simple.

If a child is not able to attend school for any other reason, and it is through no fault of their own, and no fault of the family – a S19 assessment would be suitable.

Examples;

- Safeguarding reasons where high risk child on child abuse is unable to be managed in the dynamic (local protocol in draft, new expansion of duty from September 2026)
- Bail conditions preventing access to school
- Changes of locality without a school place for CWCF – (Authority child resides in holds the duty)
- Unlawful restriction of school site



How do we manage it?

- 1) We triage concerns and assess the duty in a timely way.
- 2) We record the outcome on children's records and share with the referrer (and family where possible)
- 3) We provide advice and signposting where we have not accepted the duty
- 4) We ensure implementation of the action proposed.
- 5) We 'make arrangements' to ensure education for those in which we accept the duty.

Our timescale within our policy from request to decision outcome is a
maximum of 15 school days

Please apply these principles:

- If a parent or professional names 'S19' as a duty and asks for it – we must assess the duty and record the outcome on the child's file. Be explicit and seek advice from relevant teams where required to ensure a good decision.
- If you are unsure, please seek advice and **ensure shared decision making** wherever possible.



Good decision-making principles

A decision is strong when it is child-centred, evidenced, proportionate and recorded.

- ✓ Consider individual circumstances — assess the reason for absence and the child's context.
- ✓ Consult the right professionals — bring together education, welfare, health and care evidence.
- ✓ Choose the right route — attendance support, alternative provision or another lawful response.
- ✓ Keep under review — increase education where capacity improves and plan reintegration.
- ✓ Act without delay — reduce educational harm through prompt practical action.

Decisions are currently made through application to either the Oxfordshire Hospital School, Access to Education Panel or in shared panels in SEND service. On occasions, decisions can be made independent of these with management oversight, should the urgency be required.

Seek advice from managers and the Alternative Learning Pathways team via educationsection19@oxfordshire.gov.uk

AP Strategic Plan – New Document

Purpose

- Two linked documents: the full AP strategic plan and a shorter, family friendly version. Together, these documents set out Oxfordshire's proposed strategic direction for strengthening Alternative Provision over the next three years, with a clear focus on improving oversight, consistency, partnership working, family confidence and outcomes for children and young people

Content

- The full strategic plan explains why change is needed and sets out the local context, including the growing number of children and young people who are unable to access education consistently due to educational, emotional, health related or SEND needs. It recognises that children may be unable, rather than unwilling, to attend or engage, and positions Alternative Provision as part of a wider continuum of inclusion and SEND support rather than as a separate or standalone system.
- The strategy identifies several key challenges that the plan seeks to address. These include inconsistent oversight of children accessing Alternative Provision, variability in practice across schools and providers, gaps in provision, unclear pathways and accountability, and the need to make better use of children's and families' feedback to shape services and commissioning.

Schools AP Practice Toolkit – Updated guidance

Background and context

- Throughout development work it is clear that schools require (and request) more LA guidance on AP, and development to their understanding and application of national guidance. This is an enhancement to current advice from 2023 [AP-commissioning-guidance.docx](#), to be replaced with updated guidance and provide a practice framework and grow consistency in approaches for children and families.
- This has been developed as a single commissioning and monitoring toolkit for schools and settings that use AP. Its primary purpose is to ensure that all AP placements are safe, suitable, effective and provide value for money, while protecting children's entitlement to a full-time, high-quality education. The toolkit brings together the processes, guidance, templates and quality assurance requirements that commissioners need in one place and is explicitly aligned to statutory guidance, safeguarding expectations and national good practice
- There has also been a sister document created for internal LA Officers, due to be sent to Service Managers over the summer for use from September 2026.

Content

- It reflects the county's AP continuum and reinforces the principle that alternative provision should be viewed as an intervention rather than a destination.
- The guidance promotes early identification of need, a graduated response to inclusion, robust consideration of SEND and attendance duties, and clear pathways for reintegration back into mainstream education wherever possible.
- It places a strong emphasis on safeguarding, pupil and family voice, educational outcomes and ensuring that children continue to receive suitable full-time education.
- The toolkit provides schools with a comprehensive framework covering the full commissioning cycle. This includes guidance on when alternative provision should be considered, pre-commissioning checks, decision-making responsibilities, safeguarding expectations, attendance monitoring, quality assurance arrangements and escalation procedures.
- It also contains a suite of practical tools including a commissioning checklist, tender documentation, provider due diligence checks, safeguarding assurance checks, Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) templates, provider monitoring frameworks and procedures for addressing quality or safeguarding concerns.

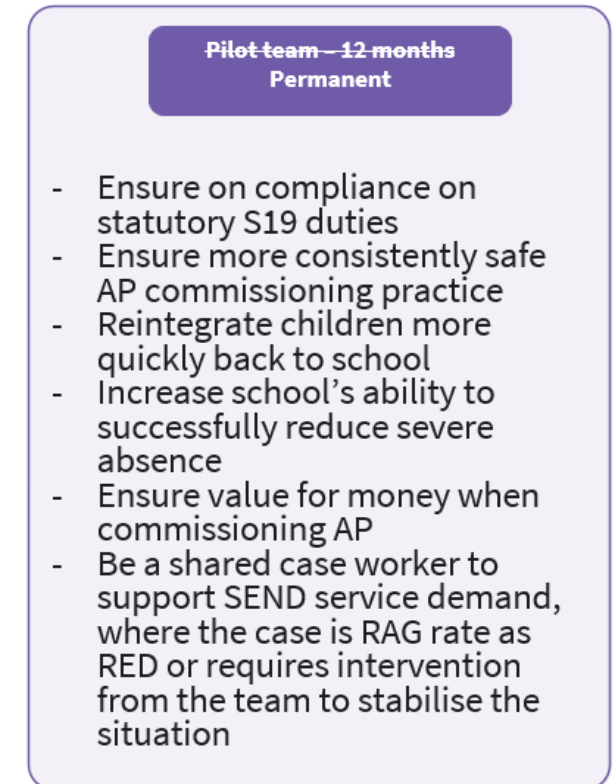
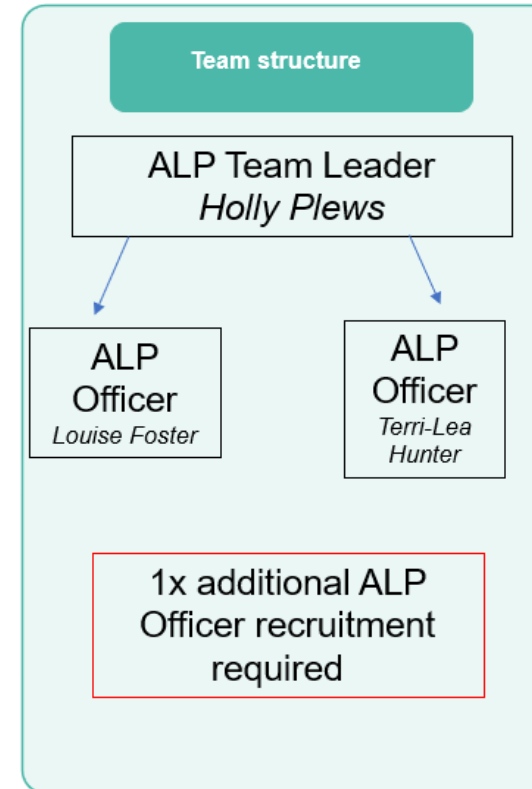


Alternative Learning Pathways Team

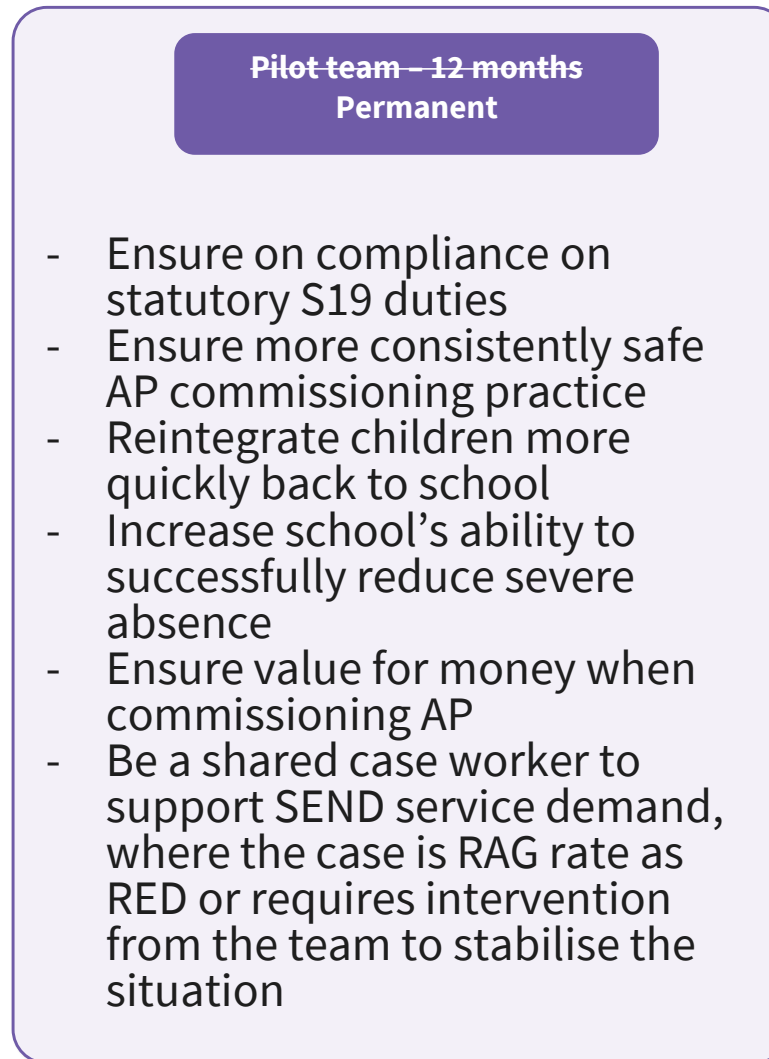
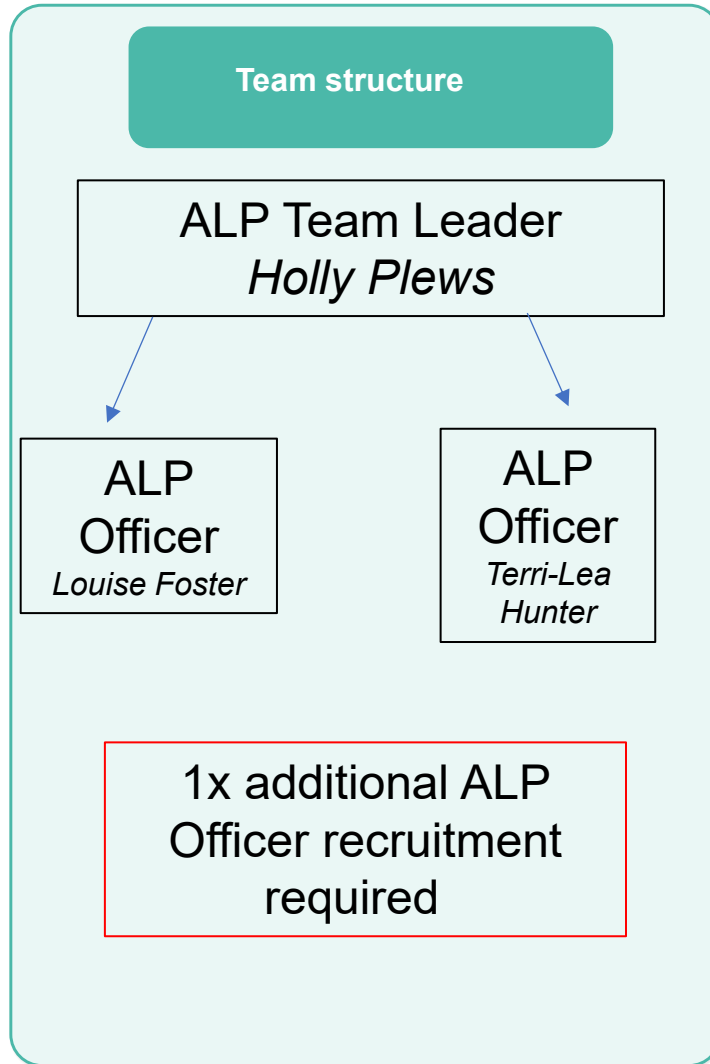
The Alternative Learning Pathways Team launch Autumn 2026 (ALP)

- In same service as ERT
- Replaces any previous workers managing Section 19 queries, requests and decisions
- Continues to manage Access to Education Panel
- Continues to use the usual email address:

Educationsection19@oxfordshire.gov.uk



What is the Alternative Learning Pathways team?



RED – ACTIVELY INTERVENE

Children who are in breach of their entitlement, or we suspect are so (incl. Where there is a risk of school placement breakdown.

AND

Complex case work for where there is significant parental distress where the case officer is finding unmanageable

AMBER - STABILISE

Children who are making limited progress

AND

Limited engagement in the provision

GREEN - MONITOR

Provision known to be going well and reviewed regularly.

What the Alternative Learning Pathways Team offer looks like

Support to schools and partners

- Advice on when Section 19 may be engaged
- Rapid problem-solving where provision is not happening
- Guidance on evidence, AP requests, review cycles and reintegration planning
- Support to avoid inappropriate drift into no-action or unmanaged reduced provision

Support to OCC inclusion services

- Specialist input to Access to Education Panel, SEND, attendance, CME/EHE and exclusions pathways
- RAG-rating and allocation advice for complex cases
- Coordination where roles/responsibilities are unclear
- Escalation route for AP quality, attendance or safeguarding concerns

Support to children and families

- Named contact for agreed ALP cases
- Clear explanation of what is being assessed, decided and reviewed
- Child and family voice captured within planning
- Education plan that identifies short-term provision, outcomes and next steps

System assurance

- Central overview of children educated outside school or under S19
- Regular pupil-level review and quality assurance every 6 weeks on commissioned packages
- Tracking of attendance, hours, suitability, safeguarding and outcomes
- Learning from cases to improve pathways, commissioning and training
- * Data ownership and review for children on S19

Alternative Learning Pathways Team: three-stage delivery model

Purpose: a supportive, complementary team offer to strengthen inclusion pathways for children at risk of missing education under S19, currently missing education under S19, or requiring resolution under Section 19.

Who the team supports

Children and young people who are:

- at risk of missing a suitable education due to an inability to attend school
- currently missing suitable education due to an inability to attend school

The team does not replace existing casework functions; it adds specialist oversight, challenge and practical pathway coordination to services working to deliver S19 and AP commissioning and oversight procedure compliance - with a focus on ensuring those with clear roles and responsibilities are enacting their duties

1. TRIAGE

- Receive referral, query or escalation
- Compliance check: Clarify presenting issue and legal frameworks at play
- Safety check: Check whether child is on roll, receiving suitable education and without safeguarding risk
- Information gathering: Screen for CME, attendance, safeguarding, SEND/EHCP, exclusion, health and AP quality concerns
- RAG-rate need and agree immediate hold, advice or allocation

2. ASSESS

- Build a holistic picture with school, family, child and partners and hypothesis of barriers to learning
- Test suitability of current education: age, ability, aptitude, SEN and wellbeing
- Consider Section 19 duty: illness, exclusion or “otherwise”
- Identify barriers to access, reintegration and participation
- Agree pathway: school-led support, LA intervention, AP package, statutory route or escalation

3. INTERVENE

- Identify the lead education professional and ensure they are taking action, providing advice and guidance
- Support timely commissioning or adjustment of provision (advisory or directly for children where no action is being taken by others)
- Monitor attendance, quality, safeguarding and progress
- Convene or attend reviews; challenge drift and delay (dependent on risk)
- Broker reintegration, transition or alternative pathway
- * Coordinate a clear education plan and next steps to an allocated officer where without this, no action would be taken

Core principle: assess → plan → do → review, with child/family voice, safeguarding and suitable education checks at every stage.

FAQs

What does a shared case worker mean?

- Be an additional contact for families to share concerns, worries, queries related to the alternative learning pathway being commissioned
- No decisions are made without the agreement of the SEND CO
- Deliver action where timeliness is not being maintained

What about the SEND CO's responsibilities?

- This does not remove the statutory obligation of the SEND CO to maintain the EHCP for the pupil
- Continue to follow usual procedures to ensure provision in place via brokerage for children not on school roll
- For children on roll of a school – schools should be referring to AP and commissioning directly and top ups allocated where S19 agreed

Do you support from 0-25?

- Statutory school age children only
- Children who are within 6 weeks of becoming statutory school age (advisory only)
- 6 weeks post children leaving statutory school age (advisory only)

Tranch 1 – Autumn 2026/7 transitional arrangements for children with an EHCP to the ALP:

Need to identify the children that require urgent assistance. This would include RED cases. The team will assist with a stock take of the children's plans and consider barriers and levers to engagement.

We will start to shared case work of the following children:

- Children who have been permanently excluded without sufficient provision
- Children who are CME without sufficient provision

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SEND Reform



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Key elements of SEND reform

Strengthened universal offer in all mainstream settings

National inclusion standards

New inclusive mainstream fund & national SEND training

Investment in early years

Inclusion bases – support bases & specialist base

Individual Support Plans (ISP) for children with additional needs

Three-tiered model for alternative provision

Develop transition planning – from early years to post-16

Experts at Hand

Legal duty for every school to publish an Inclusion Strategy, and inclusion embedded in Ofsted frameworks

Capital investment to increase sufficiency

Pooled funding between local schools

SEND Reform Timeline

THE OVERVIEW

	Spring / Summer 2026	2026-27	2028 (approx.)	2029-2030	2030-2035
REFORM PROPOSAL	Proposal consultation launch (no legal change)¹ Code of Practice review IMF methodology published² Pupil engagement framework launched³ LA SEND Reform documentation launched⁴ Specialist packages headlines released⁵ Experts at Hand guidance released, including funding rates.⁶	Draft bill to parliament Experts at Hand initial roll-out National guidance on inclusion bases in schools published⁷ IMF documentation launched.⁸ Specialist packages details launched	Inclusion standards launched Tiered support plans start - initial roll-out of Individual Support Plans (ISPs) Workforce training / career pathways in LAs and MATs Revised Code issued	Specialist packages in place	Inclusive system realised: • Fewer EHCPs • ISPs fully in place • Stronger inclusion • Tiered support • MATs become the SEND systems leaders Phase transfer EHCP reviews Transition reviews consider continuation of plans



Types of Expert at Hand activity expected to set out in Expert at Hand plan



Focused at children

- **Whole school interventions**- support from E@H to deliver whole school programmes
- **Group/class interventions**- interventions- including joint delivery with setting staff- focused on specific needs
- **Individual interventions**- potentially time-limited interventions including placements within a specialist unit with reintegration for individual children

Focused at staff capacity within settings

- **For Leaders**- SLT/SENCOs- policy review and development to improve setting wide practice, develop senior knowledge and capacity
- **For whole workforce**- Training & resources to develop skills and evidence-based interventions focused on specific needs
- **For targeted professionals**- Modelling interventions, practice development and coaching/supervision for specific staff within setting

Support for settings at place level

- Available source of advice and guidance for education settings
- Whole area training opportunities
- Problem solving clinics
- Support for schools to engage with parent carers

EAH Universal Offer – serves to achieve consistent baseline of inclusion in mainstream education settings

- 1. Access & Navigation** (SENCO Helpdesk +)
- 2. Advice, Guidance & Best Practice:** (Information sheets/LO)
- 3. Workforce Development:**
- 4. Digital & Self-Serve Offer:** (webinars)
- 5. Tools & Early Identification:** (WellComm)
- 6. Targeted & Phase-Specific Support:** (transition supports)

EAH offer at-a-glance

Oxfordshire Vision for the Experts at Hand Offer

- Collaborative MDT spanning universal through specialist support
- Proactive district/cluster delivery through a digital request, triage and response route
- Transition from BAU while the workforce is recruited

EAH Universal Offer to achieve consistent baseline of inclusion in mainstream education settings

- Consistent mainstream inclusion baseline
- Easy access to advice, best practice, workforce development and digital self-service
- Early identification tools

Intervention, programme delivery, training, workforce development and engagement

- Time-limited modelling, co-delivered programmes and targeted interventions
- Screening and early-identification approaches
- Bespoke training, coaching for schools and settings, core training for clusters, learning walks, school relations programmes, parent support and support-plan review

EAH Targeted/Targeted Plus

- Integrated education and health input across clusters, schools, families and communities
- Shared consultations, themed clinics and complex-case support, SENDCo/staff supervision
- Targeted transition support
- Routes across EaH professionals and specialist services

EAH Specialist

- Multi-context specialist engagement and assessment, building on CYP, family and setting insight

Experts at Hand - SEND/Inclusion Staff Supervision Groups

- The supervision groups are **free of charge for schools** and are available across the city, north and south localities.
- Further information can be found on Schools' News:
- [Experts at Hand - Educational Psychologist Led SEND/Inclusion Staff Supervision Groups](#)
- Places can be booked via the Education Services portal:
- [Oxfordshire Education Services](#)

Purpose and function of the 'front door'

- A single point of access for schools and settings to seek support from the Experts at Hand team
- Provide information for triage processes
- Provide data to inform individual service delivery and wider SEND Reform planning
- Provide measurable criteria for work that the Experts at Hand team deliver

EAH Success Measures

- Getting help early and easily
- Increasing number of CYP supported by professionals without an EHCP
- Coordinated EAH/MDT approach (reducing duplication)
- Improving the breadth of the local offer
- Improving skill, knowledge and confidence of workforce
- Improving parental confidence in mainstream offer
- Improving access to education

Stay informed

- Schools News (weekly in term time)
- [Subscribe to schools news | Oxfordshire Schools](#)

SENDSCO Bulletin (fortnightly in term time)

- [Oxfordshire County Council \(list-manage.com\)](#)
- [SEND Reform Oxfordshire | Oxfordshire Schools](#)
 - A [SEND Reform leaflet](#) which is a general overview of the Reforms.
 - A [PowerPoint Presentation](#) giving detail of the work taking place in Oxfordshire.
 - A **webinar** delivered to parents and carers in July 2026 (this also includes information on SEND Strategy) [Oxfordshire SEND Strategy | OxPCF](#). This may be useful to share with your parent and carer contacts.

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EHCP Casework team update

Nick Field



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- 9,227 students with EHCPs as of the end of August 2026 (13.5% increase on 2025)
- 1,371 EHCNA requests received as of the end of August 2026 (8.2% increase on 2025)
- Positive impact in 2026 on 20-week timeliness compared with previous years
- Additional focus currently on Phase Transfer and Annual Reviews

EHCP Casework Team Update – process changes

Consultations

A review of mainstream consultations was carried out last year with changes made designed to ensure consistency, reduce administrative burden, and support equitable, timely placement decisions.

The EHCP Casework Team will now only consult with one setting in the majority of mainstream consultations. Further consultations may be sent in specific circumstances, including where parental preference is not the nearest option or is for specialist placement, to support transport eligibility requirement or during appeals.

We have also outlined a new standard process for considering school consultation responses, in order to work with settings to ensure any concerns are addressed as much as possible.

Further guidance documents will be created for officers and settings and further training implemented, alongside the development of clear information for parents and carers.

We will review this process after six months with stakeholder feedback.

EHCP Casework Team Update – process changes panels

Panels

A review of several panel processes was carried out last year with changes made from the start of the academic year. The aim is to streamline panel decisions, improve timeliness, and make decision making more consistent.

The key changes are:

1. The introduction of a triage process for decisions whether to issue an EHCP following a statutory assessment
2. Requests for a Change of Placement following an Annual Review being considered by a one panel process rather than two

Further information has been shared via the SENDCO Bulletin and on Schools News this week.

If anyone is interested in attending and participating in our Multiagency Panel (MAP) please do contact me

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What questions do you have?



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SEND Strategic Early Intervention Team

Targeted School Support

- [Enhanced Pathways](#)
- [Special School Outreach](#)
- [Relational Schools Programme](#)
- [Behaviour Inclusion Officers](#)

Professional Development

- [Ordinarily Available SEND Provision](#)
- [Inclusive Support Series](#)
- [SEND Framework](#)
- [SEND Indicators Tool](#) **SEND**
Indicators tool [Evaluate My School](#)
- [SEND CPD Programme](#)
- [SENDCO Helpdesk](#)

Autumn Term

- SENDCO Essentials Your Statutory Role
- SENDCO Essentials: SENDCO Essentials: Ordinarily Available SEND Provision (OASP)
- SENDCO Essentials: The Graduated Approach: making the APDR cycle work for you
- EHC Needs Assessment Requests
- The sections of an EHCP & Smart Outcomes in EHCPs
- Provision Mapping *new*
- Annual Reviews

Spring Term

- SENDCO Essentials Preparing for Ofsted part 1 & part 2
- Responding to Local Authority EHC Plan consultations

Summer Term

- School age Phase Transfer
- Post 16 Phase Transfer

Booking link: [Training & Events | Oxfordshire | Education Services](#)

Free self-led online learning

- [Online CPD Units | Whole School SEND](#) 20 units under these headings;
- Foundations of inclusive classrooms
- Speech, Language and Communication
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs
- Physical and Sensory
- Cognition and Learning
- Preparation for Adulthood

Training and CPD opportunities

[SEND framework | Oxfordshire Schools](#)

Oxfordshire-specific training is available to help you meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

- [SENDCO training](#) (school age)
- [Early Years SEND Training offer](#)
- [School Support Staff](#) induction tools
- [Oxfordshire SEND CPD offer](#) for all staff
- [Special School Outreach SEND Clinic offer](#)