

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

SEN TOP UP PAYMENT POLICY

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Northumberland County Council SEN Top Up Payment Policy

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out the arrangements for the payment of Top Up funding by Northumberland County Council in order to provide clarity and consistency in the process.

It has been produced as a result of initial work and comments provided by the Additional Educational Needs Committee, which resulted in a report to the Schools Forum highlighting issues with the current system. A need to ensure correct recording in relation to Top Up funding as part of the termly School Census exercise was also identified as crucial, in order to ensure that Northumberland has an accurate picture of SEN prevalence in the County, as the Department for Education move to National Funding Formula for allocating resources for High Needs to local authorities.

2. Background

All mainstream schools are provided with resources to support those with additional needs, including pupils with SEN and disabilities. Most of these resources are determined by a local funding formula, discussed with the local schools forum, which is also applied to local academies. School and academy sixth forms receive an allocation based on a national funding formula.

Schools have an amount identified within their overall budget, called the notional SEN budget. This is not a ring-fenced amount, and it is for the school to provide high quality appropriate support from the whole of its budget.

It is for schools, as part of their normal budget planning, to determine their approach to using their resources to support the progress of pupils with SEN. The SENCO, headteacher and governing body or proprietor should establish a clear picture of the resources that are available to the school. They should consider their strategic approach to meeting SEN in the context of the total resources available, including any resources targeted at particular groups, such as the pupil premium.

This will enable schools to provide a clear description of the types of special educational provision they normally provide and will help parents and others to understand what they can normally expect the school to provide for pupils with SEN.

3. SEN funding

Schools are not expected to meet the full costs of more expensive special educational provision from their core funding. They are expected to provide additional support which costs up to a nationally prescribed threshold per pupil per year.

It may be helpful to consider SEN funding for pupils as having three elements:

- Element 1 : Per pupil funding via funding formula
 - Element 2 : Schools notional SEN Budget
 - Element 3 : Top Up Funding
- } “Core” Funding

Element 1: Per Pupil Funding via funding formula

An amount of money for each pupil in the school (often referred to as the Age Weighed Pupil Unit (AWPU))

Schools get most of their funding based on the total number of pupils in the school. Every pupil in a school attracts an amount of money. The amount varies from one authority to another. This forms the main element of the budget and it is used to make general provision for all pupils in the school including pupils with SEN.

Element 2: School's notional SEN Budget

Every school receives an additional amount of money to help make special educational provision to meet all children's special educational needs, irrespective of whether or not they have a Statement of SEN or an EHC Plan. This is called the 'notional SEN budget'.

Schools spend this as they consider appropriate within the context of their overall budget. When funding is delegated to schools, they can spend it in the way they think is best. However, schools have a duty to identify, assess and make special educational provision for all children with SEN.

The amount in school notional SEN budgets is based on a formula which is agreed between schools and the local authority. In Northumberland the notional SEN budget is made up of the following:

- 60% of the school's Free School Meals (FSM) allocation;
- 35% of the school's Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) allocation
- 100% of schools low prior attainment figure
- 5.5% of the school's lump sum

Depending on the above the actual total notional SEN budget will vary from school to school.

The government requires schools to use this notional SEN budget to pay for up to £6,000 worth of special educational provision to meet a child's SEN. Most children with SEN need special educational provision that comes to less than £6,000.

Special educational provision is anything that is provided to meet a child's SEN that is 'additional to or different from' provision made for all children.

Schools must also follow the SEN Code of Practice 2014 and must involve parents in decisions about how their child's needs are met.

Element 3: Top-up Funding

Top Up funding is paid when a school demonstrates it requires resources over and above the core funding included in elements 1 and 2 in order to meet a pupil's needs. The vast majority of Top Up funding will be paid in conjunction with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and can be considered as part of that assessment. However there may be some circumstances where Top Up funding will be awarded, without an EHCP being in place, but this will generally be in exceptional cases, such as where specific additional support is anticipated to be required on a short term basis.

Please note all queries in relation to payment of Top Up Funding should be sent via email to : SENDFinance@northumberland.gov.uk.

Schools should continue to liaise with SEN officers / and or co-ordinators in relation to EHCPs and SEN support.

4. SEN Panel

Top Up funding will also be subject of the agreement of a SEN Panel, or equivalent body. This Panel has a key role in ensuring fairness and consistency across all schools in the provision of appropriate support, whether in terms of funding or specialist resources (e.g. specialist staffing or equipment).

The SEN Panel also has responsibility for ensuring the review of EHCPs and Top Up payments, in order to ensure that the assessed level of support remains appropriate.

It is intended that the Top Up funding rates should reflect both the current needs of the individual pupil and the cost of meeting those needs.

5. Management of Top Up Payments

Top Up payments will be made on a termly basis, when the following criteria has been met:

- An application has been made to the SEN Panel (usually via an Education Health and Care Plan);
- SEN Panel agreement of support;
- Verification to School Census data; and
- Submission of an SEN register by the School to Northumberland County Council (See example at Annex B);

The above steps are felt to be an appropriate and proportionate level of control prior to payments being made. This should help avoid problems identified in the past e.g where payments have continued for pupils after they have left a school. The speed of this process can be influenced by the sharing of School Census data directly with the data team to enable earlier verification, otherwise Northumberland County Council will need to rely on the release of census data by the DfE.

Top Up payments will only be made while a student is on roll and attending school. Where a student leaves a school, the Top Up Payment will cease on the date a pupil leaves even when this is during a term, or at short notice. It is not considered appropriate to pay a “notice period” or similar payment as this could result in the Council paying two schools for the same pupil and is neither affordable nor equitable.

Similarly where an overpayment has been made, e.g. where a payment has continued after a pupil has left a school, this will be recovered from the School. This will generally be by deduction from future Top Up payments.

6. Payments during absence from School

The basic principle behind top up funding is that it is intended to enable additional support to pupils while they are attending school. Where a pupil is not attending school due to a prolonged period of absence, Northumberland reserves the right to withdraw or suspend payment unless the school can demonstrate how it is continuing to provide additional support to the pupil. It is accepted that in some exceptional circumstances (e.g hospital admission) a pupil will remain on roll but may face a prolonged period of absence. In such circumstances the top up payment will be made for a further calendar month in order to allow for staffing to be effectively managed or redeployed during the pupil's absence.

7. Current Rates

A copy of the current Top Up rates for pupils in Maintained Schools and Academies is attached at Annex A. Different rates are used for Special Schools and Units, also attached. It is intended to review both the bandings and descriptions ("requirements") over the next 6 months.

Separate banding structures are applied to Nursery and pre-school.

SEN FUNDING FOR PUPILS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

Band	Number of Hours of Support	Funding £	Requirements
Band 1	1-15	0	
Band 2	16-19	2,000	Access to regular and additional targeted teaching in small groups and/or individually to address the pupil's individual needs, including social skills and self help skills. Some intensive individualised programmes may be required with long term adaptation of the curriculum to address the attainment levels which will be significantly below age related expectations in NC subjects. Input from specialist outside agencies.
Band 3	20-24	4,000	As above plus individualised programmes will be required with adaptations for specific skills development and to ensure access to the curriculum. Additional and different activities may be required with regular opportunities for over learning. Additional access to specialist equipment may be required. Ongoing advice and support from specialist outside agencies.
Band 4	25-28	6,000	As above plus extensive individualised programmes and someone to one support to enable the pupil to concentrate and access the curriculum. There may be some multi-agency direct involvement.
Band 5	29-32	8,000	As above plus curriculum access through the usual mainstream groupings may not be appropriate for some areas of the curriculum. Extensive individualised programmes will be required which may involve the use of specialist teaching techniques, alternative communication methods, appropriate equipment and materials. On-going direct support and advice from external agencies. Support during un-structured times for health and safety reasons.
Band 5A	33-36	10,000	
Band 6	26-29	8,000	Additional support will be required for most or all the time the pupil is on the school premises. Pupils will require interventions to address a combination of learning, communication, behavioural and emotional difficulties. TAs will require additional qualifications appropriate to meet the specific needs of the pupil.
Band 7	30-33	10,000	
Band 7A	34-37	12,000	Teaching interventions will be part of a multi-disciplinary approach.

SEN FUNDING FOR PUPILS IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND UNITS

	Top-Up Funding per fte	Staffing Ratio		Requirements
		Teacher	TA	
Band A	£0	1:10	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated curriculum with teaching in small groups. • Regular focussed teaching each week • Regular supervision throughout the day, use of time out and other such approaches. • The pupil's needs could be met in a mainstream school.
Band B	£750	1:10	1:20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiation of the curriculum by delivery and outcome including individual/small group work. • Access to small group and individual support for some core curriculum areas. • Level of difficulty where pupil is achieving less than the expected progress as measured against NC levels/P Scales • Teaching programmes and strategies to meet the needs of the individual as assessed by school staff, including occasional use of supervised time out, if required. • Direct delivery of specific interventions, supported by specialist outside agencies, to address the requirements of the pupil's programme plan.
Band C	£6,750	1:8	1:8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to the National Curriculum in a small group setting with some specialist programmes to address learning difficulties in literacy. • Some individual tuition, on a daily basis, may be required to address learning difficulties and/or behavioural issues • Adult support and intervention is required regularly to manage prolonged and sometimes violent behaviours, maintain appropriate behaviour, to promote self-organisational skills, opportunities to promote self-esteem and positive relationships • Level of difficulty where pupil is achieving significantly less than the expected progress as measured against NC levels/P Scales • Functional communication skills, verbal and non-verbal, with specialist approaches available (e.g. Makaton), but language skills significantly delayed • Use of specialist teaching materials and approaches to address the challenging behaviour of pupils with a range of underlying SEN.

Band D	£8,250	1:7	1:7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An enhanced level of curriculum differentiation and support required across most of the timetable to facilitate small steps learning • Curriculum based assessments indicate that the pupil is working at least two key stages below the level expected for their age • Direct teaching of specific skills and individual specialist teaching approaches to address the requirements of the pupil's programme plan. • Needs support for self-help skills/Life skills • Access to adapted ICT equipment may be appropriate • Supported needed with communication e.g. visual cues, signing • Advice and training and support from specialist staff from health/mental health and/or education, individual or small group therapeutic input.
Band E	£10,500	1:7	1:4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small steps approach to learning which are within the NC/P Scale framework and often addressed through highly structured teaching systems • The pupil remains at early levels of development throughout statutory education and may achieve NC Level 1 in some areas by the end of Key Stage 4 • Pupil needs a high level of support to participate in class routines • Pupil may be very active and highly mobile • Behaviour may be unpredictable, aggressive, self-injurious, destructive of property associated with ritualistic or stereotypical behaviour • Self-help skills are addressed by individual programmes for dressing, feeding, eating and toileting which require adult supervision • Communication skills are a high priority with signing or visual systems to supplement any verbal skills • Behavioural difficulties which may put the pupil and/or others at risk • May be ambulant or non-ambulant.

Band F	£14,000	1:6	2.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An individually planned curriculum to accommodate the pupil's physical/language/learning needs • The pupil remains at early levels of development throughout statutory education achieving P Scales throughout • Emphasis on the teaching of functional skills with the delivery of additional programmes for mobility/life skills/social skills/independence skills • Individual prompting needed to engage with the environment and to participate in group activities • Pupil needs a high level of support to participate in class routines • Pupil may be very active and highly mobile • Behaviour may be aggressive, self-injurious, destructive of property • Access to communication aids and appropriate software • Staff with additional training to meet the physical care needs and to differentiate the curriculum • Access to support and advice from multi-agency support services about programmes of work, specialist resources and equipment • Direct care is provided e.g. change of position • Support is required to use non-verbal communication such as eye pointing/switches etc.
Band G	Variable	Variable	Variable	According to individual requirements which significantly exceed any of the above, e.g. there are clear Health and safety issues that if not addressed immediately an uncontrolled life threatening situation could develop.
Boarding Band	£19,750	Variable	Variable	Additional allocation for boarding provision for a pupil being resident Monday morning to Friday teatime, during term time.

Assumptions:

Qualitative judgement will be made by panel on observed and written evidence
 With all 6 levels all staff will have access to appropriate training opportunities
 Assumption that all Children and young people will have a CAF
 Provision management approach fully understood by commissioners
 The LA determines which school the pupil will be admitted

