

CITY OF WESTMINSTER**SCHOOLS' FORUM – 13th NOVEMBER 2023****REPORT BY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY****HIGH NEEDS BLOCK MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

This report provides an update on pressures within the high needs block and activity to ensure effective management of resources.

FOR DECISION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 High needs funding operational guidance issued by the DfE sets out that where the cost of additional support to meet the special educational needs of individual pupils exceeds a national mandatory threshold (£6,000), the cost should be met from the high needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- 1.2 Places in maintained special schools and specialist resourced provision (SRPs, sometimes known as SEN units) are funded from the high needs block by a combination of place and pupil specific elements. Funding for alternative provision (AP) settings is also met from the high needs block.
- 1.3 Through our Commissioning Plan for SEN, we review and forecast demand for specialist provision and through the High Needs Block Review Group (HNBRG) we monitor demand and review the financial pressure of pupil led 'top-up' and place funding for special schools and specialist provision.
- 1.4 Westminster was able to address its deficit and reach a balanced position in its 2022/23 outturn. However, any net increase in the number of Education Health and Care plans (EHCPs) is likely to increase pressure on the high needs block.

2. BACKGROUND

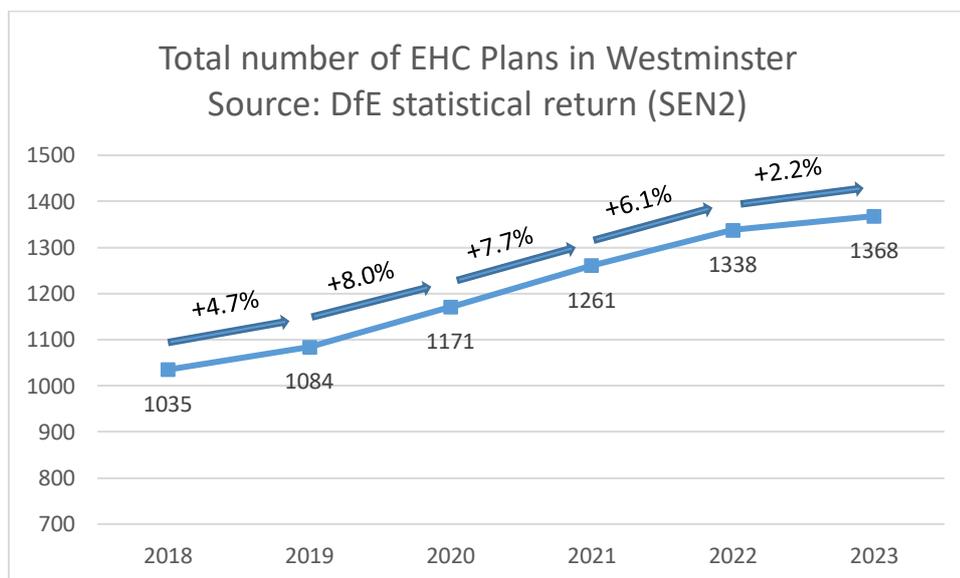
- 2.1 DfE High needs guidance sets out that top up funding does not contribute to or subsidise overheads attributable to other school budgets or costs that must be met even if the school has no pupils with high needs, for example, the role of the SEN Co-ordinator.
- 2.2 National data shows 10% year on year growth in the number of EHCPs. The pressures within the high needs block are being seen at a national level, and over 75 local authorities now have cumulative deficits attributed to expectations raised by the Children and Families Act 2014, particularly in relation to unfunded responsibilities for young people aged 19-25.

2.3 The DfE SEND & AP Improvement Plan published in March 2023 sets out proposals for an integrated SEN and AP system to deliver improved outcomes. It asserts a view of tiered AP as an intervention not a destination; a delivery model with targeted support in mainstream schools as the first tier in reducing the number of children at risk of exclusion.

3. HIGH NEEDS PRESSURES AND KEY ACTIONS BEING TAKEN TO MANAGE THE PRESSURE ON THE DSG

3.1 During 2022, Westminster undertook 162 statutory assessments. This was the highest annual number of SEN statutory assessments, representing 10% increase in volume compared to the previous peak (148) in 2020.

3.2 Although the increase in the total number of EHCPs (2.2%) is below national (10%) and London (8.6%) averages, it should be noted that this is a net increase. Westminster discontinued 144 EHCPs during 2022, compared with 36 the previous year and its annual average of 32.



Westminster	Number of EHCPs (SEN2)					Age Percentage split 2023		
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	WCC	London	England
Under Aged 5	45	58	64	64	65	4.8%	4.4%	4.1%
Aged 5 to 10	417	422	427	438	444	32.5%	35.0%	32.6%
Aged 11 to 15	357	389	420	434	481	35.2%	33.7%	36.0%
Aged 16 to 19	228	250	269	288	272	19.9%	19.1%	20.5%
Aged 20 to 25	37	52	81	114	106	7.7%	7.8%	6.8%
Total	1084	1171	1261	1338	1368	100%	100%	100%

3.3 The proportion of new EHCPs for autistic pupils has reached 42%, well above national (30%).

Top up funding

- 3.4 Schools Forum in June 2023 agreed to increase top up rates for all specialist resourced provisions from September 2023 recognising that mainstream school budgets cannot subsidise the cost of hosting a borough wide provision. Following a detailed review of support costs and expenses, not available at the time of analysis for the previous Forum, it has been identified that there are additional cost burdens for the smallest (10 place) autism provision at All Souls. An amendment is therefore proposed, further increasing the top up to £26,400. The total additional cost in 2023/4 is £42,000.
- 3.5 Top up funding for mainstream schools is determined through the Education Banding Tool (EBT). Prior to its introduction funding was based on historic hourly rates which schools viewed as underfunding. Although the EBT offered a better mechanism, a review of affordability indicated the need for recalibration and introduced capped funding for the highest bands.
- 3.6 Following headteacher moderation, the tool is working as originally envisaged. Average allocations are £5k lower than prior to recalibration confirming duplication has been removed from the system.
- 3.7 The number of EBT banding calculations (including resubmissions) has increased from 1,008 per annum to 1,226. Unique cases processed has more than doubled, from 385 to 945. A dedicated case officer is ensured consistency in the tool's operation.
- 3.8 Since recalibration, the average band allocated has decreased from 6 to 5, and the proportion of all cases at band 8 or above has fallen to 3%.

Key actions taken

- 3.9 We continue to target the underlying drivers of demand through our local offer, signposting ordinarily available provision, maximising the role of specialist teachers in providing earlier intervention. Support for schools to develop greater capacity is targeted through strategic support from Education Psychology and the Inclusion Service.
- 3.10 Work targeting annual reviews of EHCPs has taken place to ensure inclusion in a local mainstream school, provision is in place and pupils are on track to achieve their outcomes.
- 3.11 We have increased capacity in local special schools. Satellite provision from College Park special school is being delivered at Hallfield increasing the number of special school places for autism. St Marylebone Bridge has expanded and relocated into purpose built accommodation increasing the number of special school places for speech and language needs.
- 3.12 We have increased the number nursery places for autism at Portman, Dorothy Gardner (Tree House) and Hallfield (Acorns). We have increase places for autism in primary aged pupils at Milbank (Windmill) and secondary age pupils at Marylebone Boys (KZONE). Feedback from parents and carers has been positive about all new developments.

- 3.13 In borough specialist provision represent good value for money with the overall cost of place and pupil led top up typically costing less than out of borough and non-maintained school fees. We are however concerned that recruitment of specialist teachers, particularly those who hold mandatory SEN qualifications is becoming increasingly difficult.
- 3.14 All commissioned places in Beachcroft, part Ormiston Academy Trust (OAT) were fully occupied in 2022/23, compared with 73% in 2021/22 and 62% in 2019/20. This increase in occupation has coincided with rising suspension rates and an increase in schools seeking behaviour support. Recognising the need of mainstream secondary schools, Ormiston offered outreach support to 29 pupils in Y10 (three schools) below the threshold for referral to a managed intervention centre. All those who completed the intervention remained in their mainstream schools. 80% demonstrated improved behaviour and attendance. Most pupils showed an improvement in their behaviour for learning.

Commissioning forecast

- 3.15 Given the significant increase in volume of new assessments, we remain cautious about net growth in 2022 due to the number of discontinued plans in 2022. We have therefore forecast continue growth mirroring the increase seen in 2021, albeit reducing from 6% in 2024 to 3% in 2027.
- 3.16 We have predicted that WCC will be maintaining up to 1,670 EHCPs by January 2027 and that demand for special school and specialist resource bases will average 40%.

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Specialist	480	535	570	661	670
Mainstream	970	988	1013	970	994
EHCPs	1450	1523	1583	1631	1664

- 3.17 Through the HNBRG Schools Forum can be assured Headteachers are involved in monitoring the forecast and commissioning plan.

4. DEVELOPMENT WORK

- 4.1 Plans are in place to incrementally commission additional places in satellite provision of existing special schools and specialist provision hosted in mainstream schools.
- 4.2 To meet demand, plans are in place for satellite provision of College Park for primary aged pupils at the former Westminster Cathedral site from April 2024. The site will also be the location for short breaks provision, providing an equivalent to the Tresham Centre in the South of the Borough. Building work to create new specialist provision for autism at Edward Wilson and increase capacity at Hallfield is expected to complete during 2024. A pilot specialist teaching arrangement in the north of the borough is delivering support to

primary aged pupils with learning and language difficulties for whom secondary transfer would mean travel out of the borough.

- 4.3 The commissioning plan has forecast further growth. College Park Bayswater building is at capacity and an expansion will be necessary to accommodate up to 72 additional secondary aged pupils by 2027. However pressure on places will be already impacting and expansion is urgently needed to admit Y7 pupils in Sept 2024. To address this immediate pressure, plans for site sharing with a community primary school are being discussed with the respective governing bodies.
- 4.4 Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Special School does not have capacity for the most complex, profound needs (PMLD) below statutory school age. An expression of interest in hosting an early years satellite provision is being explored with a local mainstream primary school.
- 4.5 Capital expenditure to meet these developments can be met from the existing allocation.
- 4.6 It is proposed to formally establish the Beachcroft outreach pilot, expanding its reach to five Westminster Secondary Schools. Funding of £60k from the High Needs Block will provide 6-8 week intervention to circa 15 pupils in each school (75 in total) from January 2024. Schools will be selected based on the proportion of the population with identified SEMH needs and FSM (table below highlights participating schools based on this criteria). An autumn 2024 evaluation, in collaboration with participating schools will inform commissioning intentions.

	Cohort	SEMH	SEMH %	Rank	FSM	FSM %	Rank
Ark King Solomon Academy	1316	59	4.5%	4	730	55.5%	1
Harris Academy St John's Wood	1365	30	2.2%		673	49.3%	2
Marylebone Boys' School	731	26	3.6%		247	33.8%	
Paddington Academy	1240	44	3.5%		542	43.7%	5
Pimlico Academy	1134	38	3.4%		503	44.4%	4
St Augustine's High School	1032	95	9.2%	1	438	42.4%	
St George's Catholic School	1106	43	3.9%	5	280	25.3%	
The Grey Coat Hospital	1135	36	3.2%		215	18.9%	
The St Marylebone CofE School	1168	98	8.4%	2	220	18.8%	
Westminster Academy	1142	62	5.4%	3	523	45.8%	3
Westminster City School	765	16	2.1%		244	31.9%	

4.7 It is proposed to ensure specialist teacher capacity through a recruitment strategy to tackle succession planning.

5. **TEACHERS PAY ADDITIONAL GRANT (TPAG) 2023/24 FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION (AP) SCHOOLS**

5.1 The DfE have published the allocations for the TPAG for special and AP schools for 2023/24. The TPAG funds the teachers pay award cost above 3.5% nationally, as recognition that many schools budgeted for a 3.5% pay award and this level of increase was affordable within existing school budgets. The grant should therefore fund 3% of the 6.5% pay award from September 2023. Allocations are calculated at local authority (LA) level, and LAs are required to pass on 100% of the TPAG funding to their eligible specialist settings.

5.2 London LAs are funded at £315.59 per place in 2023/24 financial year including an area cost adjustment (ACA). This is for the 7 month period from September 2023 to March 2024. The first allocation uses 2023/24 academic year place numbers for special and AP academies, and 2022/2023 financial year place numbers for maintained special schools.

5.3 The second allocations for special schools and AP will be in March 2024. This second allocation will use 2023/24 financial year place numbers for maintained special schools, as well as updated data on 2023/24 place numbers for academies and free schools.

5.4 The separate TPAG grant funding will continue for the whole of the 2024/25 financial year and the DfE aim to then incorporate the grant into the high needs DSG block funding from 2025/26. Allocations for 2024/2025 will be calculated using twelve sevenths of the funding rates in 2023/24.

5.5 The initial allocations for 2023/24 and estimated allocations for 2024/25 (based on the same place numbers) are shown in the table below:

	Place numbers funded	TPAG funding 2023/24 at £315.59 per place	Estimated TPAG 2024/25
College Park School	113	£35,661	£61,134
Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee School	75	£23,669	£40,575
Ormiston Beechcroft Academy	73	£23,038	£39,493
The St Marylebone Church of England Bridge School	70	£22,091	£37,870
Total	331	£104,459	£179,072

6. RECOMMENDATION(S)

6.1 Schools Forum is asked to note:

- 6.1.1 the growth in the number of EHCPs and statutory assessments;
- 6.1.2 development work to support more children in local schools and plans; and
- 6.1.3 the ongoing role of the HNBRG in the commissioning plan.

6.2 Schools Forum is asked to agree the recommendation:

- 6.2.1 to increase top up for All Souls from September 2023 to £24,000 (paragraph 3.4);
- 6.2.2 to agree to formally establish the Beachcroft outreach pilot, expanding its reach to five Westminster Secondary Schools at a cost of £60,000 funded from the High Needs Block from January 2024 (paragraph 4.6); and
- 6.2.3 to allocate the TPAG funding as per the DfE allocations (section 5)

Julie Ely,
Assistant Director, SEN and EPS - Bi-Borough Children's Services
E-mail: Julie.ely@rbkc.gov.uk

Sarah Newman
Bi-Borough Executive Director of Children's Services

Background papers:

Commissioning plan

DSG conditions of grant 2023/24 [DSG: conditions of grant 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/dsg-conditions-of-grant-2023-24.pdf)
(www.gov.uk)

Allocations of TPAG for special and AP schools for 2023/24 [allocations for the TPAG for special and AP schools](#) and conditions of grant [conditions of grant](#)