



**Understanding How SEND  
Funding Works at Harborne  
Primary School**

## Understanding How SEND Funding Works at Harborne Primary School

At Harborne Primary School, we are proud of our strong commitment to inclusion and our determination to ensure that every pupil, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), receives the support they need to thrive.

We know that families want to understand how SEND funding is used in schools and how this affects the support their child may receive. This guide explains the process clearly and openly, in line with both national and Birmingham City Council (SENAR) guidance.

### 1. Where does SEND Funding Comes From

All mainstream schools receive what's known as a "notional SEND budget", which forms part of the school's wider funding allocation. This is sometimes called "delegated budget" or "invisible" funding because it is built into the general budget rather than provided as a separate pot of money.

Under Department for Education (DfE) guidance, schools are expected to meet the first £6,000 of additional support costs per pupil from this notional budget. Only when a child's needs go significantly beyond this can the school request additional funding from the Local Authority's High Needs Block, typically through an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

This means that while schools receive some funding for pupils with additional needs, it rarely covers the full cost of intensive or specialist provision.

### Statutory Definition of Special Educational Provision

According to the SEND Code of Practice (2015, Section 6.15):

***“Special educational provision is provision that is additional to or different from that made generally for other children or young people of the same age.”***

At Harborne Primary School, this means that when a child receives support beyond the high-quality, everyday teaching provided to all pupils, it is considered special educational provision.

Most SEND needs can be met within the classroom through our universal offer, which includes high-quality teaching, skilled staff, adaptations, small-group interventions, and ongoing assessment.

Where pupils require something additional to or different from this universal provision, we plan more personalised support, sometimes involving specialist professionals, to ensure progress and inclusion.

## 2. The Graduated Approach

Before a school can apply for an EHCP, it must show clear evidence of following what is known as the *Graduated Approach*.

This is a continuous cycle of assessment, planning, action, and review designed to ensure that every pupil gets the right support at the right time.

The four stages are:

1. **Assess** – The pupil's needs are identified through assessments, observations, and discussions with parents and professionals.
2. **Plan** – Support strategies, interventions, and outcomes are agreed with parents and, where appropriate, external specialists.
3. **Do** – The agreed support is implemented, often through targeted interventions, in-class support, or small-group work.
4. **Review** – The impact of support is regularly reviewed to determine next steps.

This cycle repeats continuously to ensure provision remains responsive and effective.

To evidence a strong Graduated Approach, Birmingham SENAR expects a minimum of two different external agency involvements, for example, input from the Educational Psychology Service, Speech and Language Therapy, Pupil and School Support (PSS), or other relevant professionals. This multi-agency engagement demonstrates that a range of expertise has been used to identify barriers, refine provision, and ensure that all appropriate interventions have been implemented and reviewed before an EHCP request is made.

## 3. SEND Support Provision Plans (SSPPs)

In Birmingham, a SEND Support Provision Plan (SSPP) is used for children whose needs are more complex than those supported through regular in-school SEND provision, but who do not yet have an EHCP.

The SSPP:

- Outlines the child's needs, provision, and progress
- Demonstrates the Graduated Approach and professional involvement

- Helps the school apply for short-term top-up funding (where a child's needs temporarily exceed what the notional budget can cover)

SSPP funding is not permanent and is reviewed regularly. If the child's needs remain high or progress is limited, the next step may be to request an EHCP through Birmingham SENAR (Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review Service).

#### 4. EHCPs and Additional Funding

An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is a legal document that sets out:

- A child's special educational needs
- The provision required to meet those needs
- The desired outcomes

An EHCP is the only formal route to securing long-term, additional funding beyond the school's own budget.

However, even with an EHCP in place, it's important to understand that:

- The funding allocated per EHCP does not always meet the full cost of the support required.
- In Birmingham, funding is determined through Support Units, which reflect the level of additional provision a child needs (see below).
- Schools often have to top up this funding from their own budgets to ensure consistent, high-quality provision.

#### 5. Support Units and Top-Up Funding in Birmingham

Birmingham City Council uses a Support Unit model to determine how much additional (top-up) funding a pupil with an EHCP or SSPP receives.

Funding is based on a maximum £18,000 model, with the first £6,000 covered by the school's notional SEND budget.

Support Level	Funding	Equivalent Support & Range
Notional Budget Only	£0	Approx. 20% adult support, Ranges 1–3 – no LA top-up.
1 Support Unit	£500	Approx. 30% adult support, Range 4a / multiple Range 3.
2 Support Units	£1,200	Approx. 40% adult support, Range 4a / combined Range 3.
3 Support Units	£3,000	Approx. 50% adult support, Range 4a / combined Range 3.

4 Support Units	£4,800	Approx. 60% adult support, Range 4a / combined Range 3.
5 Support Units	£7,500	Approx. 75% adult support, Range 4a–4b.
6 Support Units	£12,000	Full-time (100%) adult support, Range 5+.
Above 6 Units	<i>Discretionary</i>	Exceptional / specialist provision, beyond 1:1 support.

While Birmingham’s model operates up to £18,000, the real cost to a school of employing a full-time Learning Support Assistant (LSA), including salary, pension, and on-costs is typically £30,000–£35,000 per year.

This means schools often contribute a substantial proportion of funding themselves to maintain the necessary level of support.

## 6. The Role of External Professionals

At Harborne Primary, we are supported by a wide network of specialist professionals who help us assess, plan, and deliver effective provision for children with additional needs.

Professional Service	Role and Contribution
Educational Psychologist (EP)	Provides detailed assessments of learning, behaviour, and emotional needs. Recommends strategies for in-class and specialist support.
Pupil and School Support (PSS)	Offers targeted advice for pupils with cognition and learning needs, such as literacy, numeracy, and working memory difficulties. Supports school staff through assessments and intervention planning.
City of Birmingham School (COBS) – Behaviour Support Advisory Service	Works with pupils presenting social, emotional, communication, or behavioural challenges. Supports schools in developing behaviour plans, nurture strategies, and tailored interventions.
Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)	Assesses communication and interaction needs, provides tailored intervention plans, and trains staff to deliver ongoing support.
Occupational Therapy (OT)	Focuses on physical, sensory, and fine motor skills that impact learning and independence. Provides strategies for sensory regulation and classroom adaptations.
School Nursing Team	Supports children with medical or health needs in school, including care plans, medication, and wellbeing management.
Sensory Support Service (Visual and Hearing Impairment Teams)	Provides specialist advice and equipment for children with visual or hearing impairments, ensuring classrooms and resources are accessible.

Communication & Autism Team (CAT)	Supports pupils who are on the pathway for or have a diagnosis of autism or ADHD. Provides training, strategies, and advice to staff and families to improve understanding, communication, and inclusion.
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These professionals form an integral part of the Graduated Approach. Their input and reports often shape SSPPs, inform EHCP applications, and support ongoing reviews for pupils on the SEND register.

## 7. The Cost of 1:1 Support

Providing a dedicated 1:1 Teaching Assistant (TA) can be essential for some pupils with complex needs. However, it represents a significant financial investment.

Cost Breakdown for 1:1 Support	Amount
Daily rate for a 1:1 TA	£147
Weekly cost (5 days)	£735
Half-term cost (7 weeks)	<b>£5,145</b>
Annual cost (190 school days)**	<b>£27,930</b>

To put this into perspective:

- The average SEND funding per pupil nationally is around £6,000, which covers only a small fraction of this cost.
- The average EHCP salary funding allocation in Birmingham is approximately £400 per support unit annually, which sometimes does not even cover the cost of one professional session.
- Even when top-up funding is received, the additional daily cost of 1:1 support is not always fully covered, meaning Harborne Primary School often contributes significantly from its own resources.

## 8. Our Commitment to Every Child

Despite national funding challenges, Harborne Primary School remains fully committed to:

- Raising attainment and accelerating progress for all pupils
- Providing high-quality, evidence-based support tailored to each child's needs
- Ensuring consistency, empathy, and care from all staff — both substantive and agency

- Using every resource effectively to maintain an inclusive and nurturing environment

## 9. Where Parents Can Get Help and Advice

We know that SEND systems can be complex and sometimes overwhelming for families. Several independent services are available to help guide parents through the process, offer impartial advice, and support families in understanding their rights.

Service	How They Help	Contact
SENDIASS Birmingham (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service)	A free, impartial, and confidential service offering advice about SEND processes, provision, and your rights as a parent. They can help you prepare for meetings, understand reports, and make informed decisions about your child's support.	<a href="http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/sendiaass">www.birmingham.gov.uk/sendiaass</a>
IPSEA (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice)	A national charity offering free legal advice and guidance on SEND law. They can support parents in making parental requests for EHCP assessments and offer model letters and step-by-step guidance.	<a href="http://www.ipsea.org.uk">www.ipsea.org.uk</a>
Birmingham Local Offer	Provides clear information about SEND services, assessments, and processes across the city, including SENAR and referral routes.	<a href="http://www.localoffer.birmingham.co.uk">www.localoffer.birmingham.co.uk</a>

Parents have the right to make a direct (parental) request to Birmingham SENAR for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment if they believe their child requires support beyond what the school can provide. These services can guide you through that process and help ensure your views are heard and understood.

*SEND funding enables schools to deliver a wide range of high-quality support, but it does not always meet the full cost of provision. At Harborne Primary School, we work in close partnership with families and professionals to ensure that every child receives the right support, at the right time, in the right way, and that all decisions are guided by care, honesty, and the child's best interests.*

*If you would like to discuss your child's support in more detail, please contact our SENDCo.*