

Total Membership 25
The Forum is quorate if at least 40% (10) of the members are present



London Borough of Waltham Forest SCHOOLS FORUM

Day/Date/Time	Venue
Wednesday 10 December 2025, 5.30 pm	VIA TEAMS
Contact:	
Clerk to Schools Forum	Dennese.White@walthamforest.gov.uk
Maintained Primary Headteacher Representatives (5)	
Claire Nairne	Handsworth Primary School
Nicola Wilson	George Tomlinson Primary School
Sian Balbouti	Gwyn Jones Primary School
Katie Jennings	Mission Grove Primary School
Zakia Khatun	Whitehall Primary School
Primary Academies and Primary Free Schools Representatives (4)	
Sean Egan	Lime Trust (Larkwood, Hornbeam)
Anne Powell	Griffin Trust (Riverley, Willow Brook, Lammas)
Maureen Okoye (Chair)	Arbor Trust (Davies Lane, Selwyn, Woodford Green, Acacia Nursery)
Luke Renwick	Barclay Primary School
Maintained Primary Governor Representatives (1)	
Aktar Beg	Edinburgh Primary School
Nursery School Representative (1)	
Helen Currie	Forest Alliance Nursery Schools (Church Hill, Low Hall)
Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representatives (2)	
Rebecca Linden (Vice Chair)	Willowfield Secondary School
Jenny Smith	Frederick Bremer Secondary School
Secondary Academies and Secondary Free Schools Representatives (4)	
Rob Mammen	Chingford Trust (North Chingford and South Chingford)
Alexander Silk	Connaught School for Girls
Rob Pittard	Exceptional Education Trust (Norlington School and Sixth Form)
Tracey Penfold	Highams Park Trust
Maintained Secondary Governor Representative (1)	
Shona Ramsay	Leytonstone School
Maintained Special School Representative (1)	
Abedah Karim	Belmont Park School
Special School and Special Academies Representative (1)	
Jo Conduit	Learning in Harmony Multi Academy Trust
PRU (1)	
Liz Rattue	Hawkswood Group
Non School Members (4)	
Hannah McCarthy (Footsteps Day Nursery)	Early Years Providers
Abena Rodman-Tay (Waltham Forest	16-19 Providers

Total Membership 25

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College)	
Paul Phillips (NEU)	Trade Unions
Carolyn Laws (Holy Family)	Diocesan

AGENDA

Agenda Item	Report Name	Report Authors
1	Welcome all and Apologies.	Chair
2	Declarations of Interest	All
3	Minutes of meeting 22 October 2025	Chair
3a	Decision Sheet from 22 October 2025	For the record
4	DSG Forecast Outturn Report – To Note	Pamela Stack
5	<p>Budget Setting /Government Update and Consultation outcome –</p> <p>To Note – Latest updates on NFF and DSG</p> <p>To Note – results of 2026/27 budget consultation on managing school block formula within funding allocation.</p> <p>To Agree – to allocation of the CSSB and retain centrally the balance of CSSB 2026/27 to support the LA’s Retained duties</p> <p>To Agree – the request for Early Years centrally retained funding for 2026/27</p>	Pamela Stack
6	<p>De-delegation Requests –</p> <p>Services to Maintained Schools –</p> <p>To Note - the number of services the LA perform on behalf of maintained schools</p> <p>To Agree – The amount to be retained by the LA.</p> <p>School Improvement - To Agree the de-</p>	Jordan McDougall

Total Membership 25

The Forum is quorate if at least 40% (10) of the members are present

	delegation for these services. Facilities Time – To Agree the de-delegation for these services.	Mary Jarrett
7	Annual Report on Early Years – For Information	Eve McLoughlin
	Date of Next Meetings: Wednesdays, 5:30pm	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 January 2026 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DSG Forecast Outturn Report Final Budget Setting & Government Updates Annual Report on Alternative Provision Annual Report on High Needs Growth and Falling Rolls Funding 2026/27
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 February 2026 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Years Block Indicative allocation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 July 2026 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Outturn 2025-26 Final Budget 2026-27 Government updates Scheme of Financing Schools & Associated Policies Review of Constitution / Membership

DRAFT MINUTES OF SCHOOL FORUM MEETING

Day/Date/Time	Venue
Wednesday 22 October 2025, 5.30 pm	VIA TEAMS
Contact:	
Clerk to Schools Forum	Dennese.White@walthamforest.gov.uk
Maintained Primary Headteacher Representatives (5)	
Claire Nairne	Handsworth Primary School
Nicola Wilson	George Tomlinson Primary School
Sian Boubalti	Gwyn Jones Primary School
Katie Jennings	Mission Grove Primary School
Zakia Khatun	Whitehall Primary School
Primary Academies and Primary Free Schools Representatives (4)	
Sean Egan	Lime Trust (Larkwood, Hornbeam)
Anne Powell	Griffin Trust (Riverley, Willow Brook, Lammas)
Luke Renwick	Barclay Primary School
Maintained Primary Governor Representatives (1)	
Aktar Beg	Edinburgh Primary School
Nursery School Representative (1)	
Helen Currie	Forest Alliance Nursery Schools (Church Hill, Low Hall)
Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representatives (2)	
Rebecca Linden (Vice Chair)	Willowfield Secondary School
Jenny Smith	Frederick Bremer Secondary School
Secondary Academies and Secondary Free Schools Representatives (4)	
Rob Mammen	Chingford Trust (North Chingford and South Chingford)
Alexander Silk	Connaught School for Girls
Rob Pittard	Exceptional Education Trust (Norlington School and Sixth Form)
Tracey Penfold	Highams Park Trust
Maintained Secondary Governor Representative (1)	
Shona Ramsay	Leytonstone School
Maintained Special School Representative (1)	
Abedah Karim	Belmont Park School
Special School and Special Academies Representative (1)	
Jo Conduit	Learning in Harmony Multi Academy Trust
PRU (1)	
Liz Rattue	Hawkswood Group
Non School Members (4)	
Hannah McCarthy (Footsteps Day Nursery)	Early Years Providers
Abena Rodman-Tay (Waltham Forest College)	16-19 Providers
Paul Phillips (NEU)	Trade Unions

Carolyn Laws (Holy Family)	Diocesan
Officers	
Clare Potter	Director of Disability Enablement Service
Dennese White	Principal Accountant
Elisha Wilkinson	Deputy Head of Early Years & Childcare
Eve McLoughlin	Head of Early Years, Childcare & Business Development
Gurpreet Kataora	Head of School Business Support
Hiran Perera	Principal Accountant
Jamel Mason	Senior Accountant
Jordan McDougall	Head of Finance Business Partner – Children & Education
Lucinda Lord	Senior Accountant
Mary Jarrett	Corporate Director of Education
Natasha Hutchin	Assistant Director Finance Business Partner
Vira Yurchenko	Principal Accountant
Umut Yeter	Principal Accountant
Observers	
Adrien Schweitzer	Barncroft Primary School
Amrine Uddin	Mission Grove Primary School
Cllr Kizzy Gardiner	Councillor
Deborah Gibbon	The Jenny Hammond School
Ellie Green	Edinburgh Primary School
Janice Chaplin	Chapel End Infant School
Michele Brown	Opossumed Schools (Newport, Oakhill, Dawlish & Thorpe Schools)
Shermaine Lewis	Frederick Bremer School
Sohana Qureshi	Greenleaf Primary School
Susan (Unverified)	

1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 Welcome: Abedah Karim, Alexander Silk, Luke Renwick, Nicola Wilson, Sean Egan, Sian Boubalti,
- 1.2 Apologies: Maureen Okoye and Rob Pittard
- 1.3 Nomination: Maureen Okoye (Chair) & Rebecca Linden (Vice Chair)
- 1.4 Thank you to Juan Hernandez, Lindsey Lampard and Rosie McGlynn for their long-standing service as members to School Forum.

2. Declaration of Interests

- 2.1 No Declaration of Interests highlighted.

3. Minutes of 22 October 2025 Schools Forum meeting

3.1 Minutes were agreed.

3.2 Matters Arising: Nursery schools not referenced in the SEND Sufficiency plan 2025-30

3a. Decision Sheet from 22 October 2025

Noted for the record.

4 Schools Forum membership and powers

4.1 This report reviews the representation of maintained schools and academies / free schools at Schools Forum following the October 2024 census.

4.2 Schools Forum to agree: That the current balance of School Representation is appropriate to continue for the 2025-26 session.

4.2.1 **To Vote:** Agree – 21, Disagree – 0

4.3 School Forum noted the contents of this report.

5 Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2024-25 and 2025-26 Forecast.

5.1 This report updates the School Forum on the 2024-25 final outturn for the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) and the latest 2025-26 forecast outturn position.

5.2 Schools Forum to Note:

5.2.1 The 2024-25 outturn position, including balances carried forward on the DSG

5.2.2 The latest DSG funding allocations for 2025-26 and the latest forecast outturn position.

5.2.3 The latest update on the statutory override position for DSG deficits.

5.3 School Forum noted the contents of this report.

6 School Improvement and Creation of a Waltham Forest Education Partnership.

6.1 This report summarises the current position and decisions required to agree funding and strategic direction for school improvement in London Borough of Waltham Forest.

6.2 The report contains an options appraisal in relation to funding and developing a learning partnership to support systemic school improvement over the next 5 years:

6.2.1 **Option 1:** to increase de-delegated funding from maintained schools to support creation of a Waltham Forest Education partnership with a school improvement provider (Haringey Education Partnership) over a 5-year period; (the 5 year period is the maximum contract length but it is determined on an annual de-delegation vote from maintained school forum members) with the LA contributing monies to support a cohesive moderation and monitoring process for KS2 SATs and work in relation to quality and consistency of learning and inclusion of SEND pupils across the Borough.

6.2.2 **Option 2:** for de-delegation (currently £8.26 per pupil) to cease and schools to purchase their own memberships of Haringey Education Partnership (or provider of choice) with the Local Authority commissioning additional Borough-wide support for SATS moderation and monitoring and work in relation to quality and consistency of learning and inclusion of SEND pupils across the Borough.

6.2.3 **Option 1** is the option recommended within this report, if agreed it will be subject to voting from both primary and secondary maintained heads in accordance with the statutory guidance in relation to agreement to de-delegate funding. The rationale for this option is set out within the body of the report.

6.3 School Forum to Note:

6.3.1 Maintained Primary and Secondary School Heads must base their vote at Schools Forum on proposals for de-delegation on the views of the group they are representing

6.3.2 To assist School Forum members with obtaining the views of the members of their respective group the Local Authority will ballot Schools immediately after School's Forum, with deadline for return 7th November 2025.

6.3.3 Schools' Forum members are expected to ensure that members from their respective group are aware of the voting process and encourage them to participate.

6.3.4 Next steps with regards to the de-delegation decision making process will be confirmed at the Schools Forum Meeting in December 2025

6.4 School Forum Noted the contents of this report.

6.5 Comment

The increase of de-delegated monies from £8.26 to £19 is not affordable for schools.

6.6 Response

This is the national standard rates across all boroughs.

6.7 Comment

I have undertaken research on this for my school and can confirm these costs are correct.

6.8 Question

Who are allowed to vote, is it heads of schools and Governors?

6.9 Response

Only Heads of Schools can vote.

7 Government Updates and 2026-27 Budget Setting

7.1 To provide the Schools Forum with an update on Government announcements relating to the National Funding Formula (NFF) and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

7.2 School Forum to Note:

7.2.1 The latest updates on the national funding formula (NFF) and the DSG

7.2.2 School Forum noted the contents of this report.

7.3 School Forum to agree:

7.3.1 The draft 2026/27 budget consultation (Annex A) on managing the schools block formula within the funding allocation.

7.3 **To Vote:** Agree - 18, Disagree – 0

8 SEND Sufficiency Strategy and next steps

8.1 This report provides an analysis of Waltham Forest's SEND population over the past five years, with forecasted EHCP growth based on current trends and developments and includes recommendations to ensure the Authority can meet its sufficiency duties sustainably.

8.2 School Forum to Note:

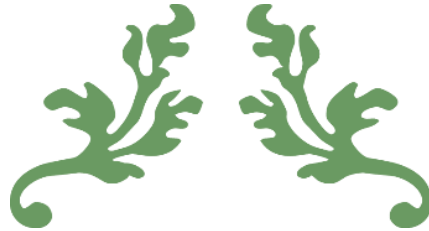
8.2.2 The aims and objectives of the SEND Sufficiency Plan

- To establish growth in EHCPs across all settings and forecast a five-year placement plan based on unmitigated activity.
- To identify prevalence of needs and gaps in provision to inform strategic developments.
- To provide an analysis of High Needs spend with recommendations to ensure best use of resources and value for money.
- To produce a sufficiency plan that delivers on the Authority's statutory responsibilities. This will set out any developments required as part of early intervention and specialist provision for the short, medium and longer term. Specifically, this includes:
 - the types and numbers of additional specialist provision required to meet needs locally
 - the developments required across the SEND services and,
 - the strategic developments necessary to ensure the Local Area Partnership can meet the holistic needs of the borough.

8.3 School Forum Noted the contents of this report.

8.4 Comment

This report is very complex, but gives detail information on the SEND Sufficiency plan.



SEND SUFFICIENCY PLAN 2025-2030

Waltham Forest



SEPTEMBER 1, 2025
AUTHOR: LEON KOKKINOS

Waltham Forest SEND Sufficiency Plan 2025-30

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Executive Summary

Waltham Forest Council has a statutory duty under *The Education Act 1996 Section 14(1)* to ensure that there are sufficient school places for all children and young people resident in the local area. The Authority has specific duties to ensure that there is sufficient specialist provision available for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), in line with their needs.

In the last five years, the Authority has seen a significant rise in the numbers of children and young people with EHCPs with the average rates of growth outstripping national and London borough comparators whilst the proportions of those on SEN support falling below national and regional equivalents. The high growth rates of EHCPs are projected to continue unless robust mitigation plans are implemented to improve early intervention, inclusive practice and support.

EHCP growth has heavily impacted on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs budget. The total expenditure recorded on the 2024/25 DSG Outturn Report was £63.323 million with a deficit position of £3.823 million. For the same year, spend on SEND transport was £5.247 million, an increase of £118,000 on the previous year.

The Authority will act on the recommendations of this report to ensure children and young people can access local specialist and alternative provision where high standards of inclusive practice are consistently applied across all settings. This will improve parental confidence and minimise the numbers placed in out of borough expensive non-maintained special schools (INMSS).

Waltham Forest's Vision for SEND

Waltham Forest shares the same ambitions as set-out in the Department of Education's SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan:

"Children and young people with SEND, will receive the right support, in the right place, and at the right time; they will feel valued, included in their communities and offered opportunities to fulfil their potential and lead happy, healthy lives".

The authority's vision is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will have what they need to achieve their full potential in their early years, at school, and in college, so they may lead happy, healthy, and fulfilled lives into adulthood.

The authority will develop sufficient high-quality specialist and alternative provisions to meet the growing needs of the borough. There will be an improved local offer for children and young people with SEND including additional specialist placements for those with complex needs with an enhanced educational support service that will work alongside schools to embed best inclusive practice.

This is in line with priority four of the authority's [SEND Strategy 2025-28](#). The ambition is that local settings will provide high quality, tailored, and inclusive support which effectively respond

to the differing needs of children and young people. Families will increasingly feel more confident that the SEND provision in local mainstream schools can meet their children's needs.

Services across early years, education, health and social care will continue to improve coproduction and collaborative arrangements across all stakeholders to progress the integrated commissioning priorities of the SEND Local Area partnership.

Aim and Objectives of the SEND Sufficiency Plan

This report provides an analysis of Waltham Forest's SEND population over the past five years, with forecasted EHCP growth based on current trends and developments and includes recommendations to ensure the Authority can meet its sufficiency duties sustainably. In more detail, this entails:

- To establish growth in EHCPs across all settings and forecast a five-year placement plan based on unmitigated activity.
- To identify prevalence of needs and gaps in provision to inform strategic developments.
- To provide an analysis of High Needs spend with recommendations to ensure best use of resources and value for money.
- To produce a sufficiency plan that delivers on the Authority's statutory responsibilities. This will set out any developments required as part of early intervention and specialist provision for the short, medium and longer term. Specifically, this includes:
 - the types and numbers of additional specialist provision required to meet needs locally
 - the developments required across the SEND services and,
 - the strategic developments necessary to ensure the Local Area Partnership can meet the holistic needs of the borough.

The primary focus of this report is on school aged children with SEND, with an overview across early years and Post 16 areas to inform the wider strategic aspects of the 0-25 SEND offer.

Background

Waltham Forest is one of 32 boroughs in London located in the northeast with a population of 285,563 based on the Office of National Statistics (ONS) June 2025 report. The authority borders five London authorities:

- Enfield (northwest)
- Hackney (southwest)
- Haringey (south)
- Newham (southeast)
- Redbridge (east)

The borough is divided in three distinct areas:

- Chingford (north of the borough)

- Walthamstow (central part of the borough)
- Leyton (south of the borough)

The population of Waltham Forest has grown by almost 2% since 2020 and is projected to grow a further 1% by 2030. In contrast, the population of early years (0-4 years) and primary school aged children (5-11 years) has dropped between 2020-25 by 8% and 3% respectively with numbers projected to drop a further 2% and 7% respectively by 2030.

The school age population of Waltham Forest (5-16 years) has dropped by 1.85% in the last five years. This is affiliated to the drop in the number of children and young people living in the Walthamstow and Leyton areas of the borough. Chingford has seen a slight increase in overall numbers for the same period with the secondary aged population contributory to this rise.

EHCP population

Based on school census data, the student population in Waltham Forest (5-16 years) has dropped by 2.5% in the last five years, from 42,965 in 2020 to 41,888 in 2025.

For the same period, the overall 0-25 EHCP population has increased by 80% to 3,663 as reported in the January 2025 SEN2 return to the DfE. Of those, approximately 70% are male and 30% female. Forecasts project a further 78% growth by January 2030 if specific mitigations are not in place to reduce the rate of EHCP growth.

The EHCP population can be proportionally divided in the following age groups:

- under 5 years: 5%
- 5-10 years: 40%
- 11-15 years: 33%
- 16-19 years: 18%
- 20-25 years: 4%

In January 2025, based on the London Alliance data, Waltham Forest was reported to be the 10th highest local authority in the London region for total number of EHCPs and the 4th highest for rates of increase of new EHCPs per annum.

Ethnicity

Waltham Forest is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the country. The school age population in the borough also reflects this and is made up proportionally by the following ethnicities:

Table 1 -Ethnicity data - school census 2025

Ethnicity	All Pupils	No SEN	SEN Support	EHCP
White	41%	42%	42%	34%
Asian	24%	24%	20%	24%
Black	15%	15%	17%	21%
Mixed	14%	13%	15%	15%
Other	6%	6%	6%	7%

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) - High Needs Block

The DSG High Needs Block pays for education, support, and services required by children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) from early years to age 25 and covers placements, top-up funding, specialist provisions, and central support services.

Table 2 - DSG High Needs Block expenditure

Financial Year	DSG High Needs Budget	DSG High Needs Spend	Balance
2022/23	£51,460,481	£51,289,000	£171,481
2023/24	£56,518,791	£57,049,445	(£530,654)
2024/25	£58,500,237	£62,323,201	(£3,823,554)

In the previous two financial years the local authority has reported a deficit budget with the highest recorded expenditure and overspend reported in 2024/25. EHCP growth including additional spend on specialist services to meet needs are contributory factors to the current deficit budget.

Types of Settings and Provision

Waltham Forest offers a range of educational provision to meet the needs of children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This includes the following types of settings:

- Early years settings
- Mainstream Schools
- Special Schools
- Resourced Provisions
- Further Education Colleges
- Alternative provision and other types of learning and support

Early Years Settings

There are different types of early years settings that cater for children under the statutory school age of 5 years. These include nurseries, pre-schools, and nursery schools. All childcare settings listed must be registered with Ofsted. Nurseries which are attached to independent schools are inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate. Early years settings are sometimes referred to as PVI (private, voluntary and independent) reflecting the mix of ownership.

Waltham Forest has a total 153 settings offering provision to children under the age of 5 years with and without SEND. More information regarding early years can be found on the early years section of this report.

Mainstream Schools

All children in England between the ages of 5 and 16 years are entitled to a free place at a state school. State schools receive funding through their local authority or/and directly from the government if they are an academy or free school. The most common types are:

- Local authority maintained or community schools, which are not influenced by business or religious groups and follow the national curriculum
- Foundation schools and voluntary schools, which are funded by the local authority but have more freedom to change the way they operate
- Academies and free schools, which are run by not-for-profit academy trusts, are independent from the local authority and have more freedom to change how they operate such as following a different curriculum
- Grammar schools, which can be run by the local authority, a foundation body or an academy trust. They select their pupils based on academic ability.
- An independent school is one which is neither maintained by a local authority nor is in receipt of grants from the Department for Education and funding is primarily from fees charged to local authorities and parents for pupils placed there.
- Alternative Provision (AP)/Pupil Referral Unit (PRU): A pupil referral unit (PRU) is set up under the Education Act 1993 to make provision for pupils who are out of school for reasons such as exclusion or illness.

Waltham Forest has a total of 73 mainstream primary and secondary schools. More information on mainstream primary and secondary schools can be found in the relevant sections of this report.

Special Schools

Special schools support children and young people with complex needs and disabilities who have an education health and care plan (EHCP) and in exceptional circumstances pupils who are undertaking an EHC needs assessment. These can be Local Authority (LA) maintained, academies or independent non-maintained special schools (INMSS).

Special schools differ from mainstream schools in that they are specifically equipped and staffed to deliver a highly personalised curriculum and support for children with complex needs. They operate much smaller classroom sizes with higher levels of adult support including therapeutic provision to meet the individual needs of pupils across the four broad areas of SEND, which are:

- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning
- social, emotional and mental health
- sensory and physical needs

Special schools can adapt their offer accordingly to reflect a particular area of expertise or specialism according to the needs of the local area. For example, some special schools cater specifically for autistic spectrum conditions (ASC), visual impairment (VI), or speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Waltham Forest has four special schools serving the local area. More information regarding special schools can be found in the relevant section of this report.

Resourced Provisions

Specialist Resourced Provisions (SRPs) are designated areas within a mainstream school/academy offering specialist and targeted support for children and young people with EHCPs. Pupils accessing a resourced provision are on the roll a mainstream school and are supported by suitably trained staff.

Pupils have a dedicated space where they are taught in small groups but also have access to mainstream lessons. The purpose of SRPs is to provide an enhanced offer to pupils who need a high-level support and to be taught in smaller class sizes to enable them to access a mainstream curriculum.

Waltham Forest currently has nine resourced provisions. More information regarding resourced provisions can be found on the relevant section of this report.

Alternative Provision

Alternative Provision is a form of education organised by local authorities or schools for children of compulsory school age who, because of exclusion, illness, or other circumstances, would not otherwise receive suitable education.

It is designed to meet the pupils' individual educational, social, emotional, and sometimes medical needs outside of a mainstream classroom setting. Alternative Provision can be delivered in various settings:

- Pupil Referral Units (PRUs): Smaller, specialist schools with smaller class sizes and tailored support.
- Specialist alternative provision academies or free schools focusing on personalised education and behaviour support.
- Hospital schools for pupils with medical needs.
- Vocational centres providing practical skills and training.
- Independent and unregistered providers, including tutoring, online learning, and outreach in mainstream schools.
- Outdoor learning centres and therapeutic settings

Waltham Forest has current arrangements in place with eight alternative providers. More information regarding resourced provisions can be found in the relevant section of this report.

FE Colleges

Further Education Colleges are institutions that provide P16 education or training in a local area with a range of study programmes to prepare young people for the world of work or higher education. They offer a range of academic, vocational, technical and professional courses.

FE colleges often work in partnership with local and regional employers, to ensure they offer qualifications reflective of the job market. Further Education Colleges are ordinarily for young people aged 16 -18 years but can extend to 25 years for those with EHCPs.

Some colleges are very large, with several sites or campuses across a geographical region and a select few are specialist FE colleges offering a range of courses and provision specifically for young people with complex needs.

Waltham Forest has three FE colleges and two sixth form colleges (16-18 years only) serving the local area. More information regarding post-16 provision can be found on the relevant section of this report.

Other Types of Learning and Support

Elective Home Education (EHE) is an option open to parents who choose to educate their child at home or in combination with other settings. The LA must ensure that the provision is suitable. Children with an EHCP can also be home educated but the duty to secure the provision outlined in the EHCP is the responsibility of the parents and not of the local authority. The authority is still required to review the EHCP annually to assure itself that the provision set out continues to be appropriate.

Education Other than in School (EOTAS) is an option open for children and young people with EHCPs where an early year setting, school or post 16 institution is deemed inappropriate or unsuitable in line with *section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014*.

Home tuition or online learning packages are all examples of EOTAS arrangements where responsibility lies with the local authority in terms of the quality assurance and funding of these types of provisions. More information regarding other types of provision can be found on the relevant section of this report.

Waltham Forest: EHCP Growth

Waltham Forest has seen an 80% growth in EHC plans between 2020-25 with an average annual rate of increase of 12.5%. The overall growth in EHC plans has outstripped national and regional comparators. Further growth is forecasted in line with historic rates of increase, current volume of requests in the system and complexity of needs reported by schools and SEND professionals.

Nationally, EHCPs have grown at an average 10% annually whilst the average for the London region has been approximately 9% annually.

In 2024, Waltham Forest reported an unprecedented 14.3% increase in EHCPs compared to the previous year. The rate of increase dropped in 2025 to 11.2% which was still above national and regional growth rates. Nationally, 2024 was also a record year in terms of EHCP growth (11.5%).

It is also noteworthy to mention that the authority has been experiencing considerable delays in completing EHC needs assessments which have been impacting on overall EHCP completion rates (more information can be found on the EHC needs assessment section of this report).

Table 3 – EHCP Growth 2020-25 based on reported SEN2 figures¹

Number of EHCPs						
Year (January)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
WF Total EHCPs	2,025	2,285	2,584	2,884	3,295	3,663
% Growth WF	7.7%	12.8%	13.1%	11.6%	14.3%	11.2%
% Growth Nationally	10.2%	10.4%	9.9%	9.3%	11.5%	10.8%
% Growth London	9.1%	9.9%	7.9%	8.5%	9.5%	8.7%

The authority is also currently expediting a backlog of annual reviews with early findings suggesting that a significant number of EHC plans are likely to be ceased. It is estimated that the actual figure of active EHC plans could be 3,354.

Notwithstanding, these findings could explain the higher rate of increase in EHCPs reported in 2024 (14.3%), in comparison to other years. The lower rate of growth in 2025 could be affiliated to the backlog in EHC needs assessments.

Future EHCP projections, can be calculated based on two sets of figures that will produce two different growth projections in the next five years:

- The SEN2 returns recorded over the last five years which provide an average annual growth rate of 12.5%.
- Growth based on the current active 3,354 EHC plans

Table 4 - EHCP Forecast 2026-2030

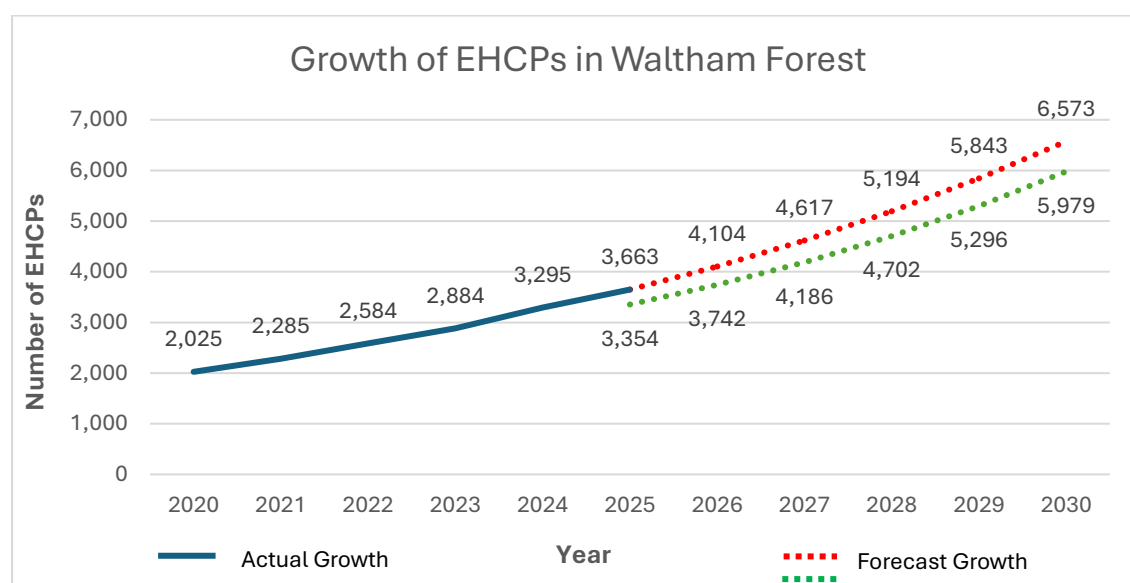
Forecast number of EHCPs					
Year (January)	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030

¹ SEN2 is a statutory return to the DfE that collects data about children and young people who the local authority is responsible for under section 24 of the Children and Families Act 2014

WF Total EHCPs (based on SEN2 returns)	4,104	4,617	5,194	5,843	6,573
% Avg. Growth WF	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%
WF Total EHCPs (based on ceasing inactive Plans)	3,742	4,186	4,702	5,296	5,979
% Avg. Growth WF	11.3%	11.9%	12.4%	12.7%	12.9%

As a result, future EHCP projections will be twin tracked as represented diagrammatically in the graph below. The red dotted line represents EHCP growth excluding the cessation of the current backlog in EHCP reviews whilst the green dotted line is based on the more likely trajectory where it is anticipated that inactive EHC plans will be ceased.

Graph 1 - EHCP growth in Waltham Forest



Overall, EHC plans are forecasted to grow by a further 78-80% by 2030, if certain mitigations are not implemented to reduce the high rate of growth.

Nationally the proportions of EHC plans for the school-aged population have been increasing in the last five years and in 2025 it was reported that 5.3% of pupils had an EHC plan. In the same period, there has also been an upward trend nationally of pupils receiving SEN support with the highest ever recorded figure in 2025 (14.2%).

Table 5 - EHCPs and SEN support as a proportion of the school population

EHCPs						
Year (January)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
WF	4.0%	4.4%	4.9%	5.4%	6.0%	6.5%
Nationally	3.3%	3.7%	4.0%	4.3%	4.8%	5.3%
London	3.5%	3.8%	4.1%	4.5%	4.9%	5.4%
SEN support as a proportion of the school age population						
WF	12.2%	12.0%	11.6%	11.6%	11.6%	12.5%
Nationally	12.1%	12.2%	12.6%	13.0%	13.6%	14.2%
London	11.5%	11.4%	11.7%	12.1%	12.7%	13.2%

Waltham Forest has considerably higher proportions of EHC plans per school population in comparison to national and regional parameters and lower proportions of pupils supported at a SEN level. This suggests that ordinarily available provision to support children and young people with SEN may not be as fully embedded in local schools as it is in other parts of the country.

Waltham Forest has been issuing new EHC plans at a higher growth rate in comparison to national figures. This changed in 2024, when significant backlogs in statutory assessments affected growth rates.

Table 6 - New EHCPs and numbers ceased

Year (end of December)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 (to-date)
New EHCPs	303	466	527	694	460*	375*
% Growth WF	14.3%	53.8%	13.1%	31.7%	-33.7%	TBC
% Growth Nationally	10.2%	11.5%	3.5%	7.3%	26.3%	TBC
Number of EHCPs ceased each year						
Ceased	-	-	-	245	69	142

* Significant backlogs in EHC needs assessments have affected EHCP timelines

Waltham Forest is continuing to experience a significant delay in completing statutory assessments. Since January 2025 to-date there have been 375 new EHC plans produced, 58% of which, exceeded the 20-week statutory timeframe.

Waltham Forest: EHC Needs Assessments

The number of EHC needs assessments has grown considerably over the years. This has been the key driver in the growth of EHCPs, mediations and tribunals.

Nationally the number of EHC needs assessment requests, and the number of assessments carried out, has continued to increase. There were 154,500 requests for an EHC needs assessment received in 2024, 11.8% higher than 2023. Decisions to proceed to an assessment reached 65.4% in 2024, slightly lower than in 2023 (67.3%).

Waltham Forest has seen the number of EHC need assessment requests more than double in three years since 2020 reaching a peak in 2023 (871 requests) as outlined in the table below.

Since January 2025 to-date, based on Capita² records, there have been 416 EHC needs assessment requests with current estimates suggesting that by the end of December 2025, numbers will reach the reported figures of 2024 (796).

London boroughs in comparison, have had a much lower number of requests on average than Waltham Forest based on the data provided by the London Alliance (based on SEN2 returns).

Table 7 - Number of EHCNA Requests and Assessments per year (London Alliance data)

Year (January)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
WF No of Requests	389	641	699	871	796
London Average	377	448	529	590	674
Waltham Forest % Assessments Agreed				84.2%	64.1%
London Average %				69.1%	68.5%
Waltham Forest % Assessments Refused				15.5%	0.0%
London Average %				23.9%	22.9%
Waltham Forest % Assessments Outstanding				0.0%	35.7%
London Average %				6.5%	8.1%
Waltham Forest % Assessments Withdrawn				0.3%	0.3%
London Average				0.6%	0.6%

Waltham Forest agreed a much higher proportion of requests for assessment in 2023 (84.2%) compared to the average figures nationally (67.3%) and the London region (69.1%).

This dropped significantly in 2024 (64.1%), however, it was recorded that 35.7% of requests remained outstanding i.e. no decision by the local authority had been recorded which may be due to the significant backlog of assessments the local authority has been experiencing.

Most of the EHC needs assessment requests relate to children in primary school settings. Based on Capita records, from January 2025 to-date, from the 349 EHC needs assessment

² Capita is the education data management system used by the local authority

requests which have been reviewed, 91% have been done within the statutory 6-week timeframe.

Table 8 - EHCNA requests reviewed January 2025 to-date (Capita records)

Year Group	Number Requests	Decision to Assess	No to Assess	Unrecorded
Under 5	116	96%	0%	4%
5-10	188	89%	0%	11%
11-15	45	91%	0%	9%

Based on table above, the EHC needs assessment requests reviewed this year to-date, can be proportionally categorised in the following age groups:

- under 5 years: 33%
- 5-10 years: 54%
- 11-16 years: 13%

Since January 2025 to-date, Waltham Forest has agreed to assess 91% of the 349 EHC needs assessment requests received which far exceed previous figures including national and regional equivalents.

Nationally there were 105,300 EHC needs assessments carried out during 2024, 15.7% higher than 2023. The decision was to issue an EHC plan in 93.6% of assessments, slightly lower than in 2023 (94.4%).

Waltham Forest in comparison to the national and regional figures has seen a much higher proportion of EHC plans agreed to be issued following an assessment in 2024 (99.6%) compared to 2023 (93.8%).

Table 9 – Assessment Outcomes and EHCPs

Year (January)	2022	2023	2024
Waltham Forest % EHCP Issued	97.5%	93.8%	99.6%
London Average	95.3%	95.7%	94.8%
Waltham Forest % EHCP Not Issued	2.5%	6.2%	0.4%
London Average	3.9%	3.6%	4.2%

There have been 295 assessments completed since January 2025 to-date, 54% have been completed within the statutory timeframe of 16 weeks from when the authority received the initial request for assessment (the authority must decide by this deadline to issue/not issue an EHC plan).

Table 10 - Completed EHC needs assessments from January 2025 to-date (Capita records)

Year Group	Assessments Completed	Agree to Issue EHCP	No to Issue EHCP	Unrecorded
Under 5	95	57%	0%	43%
5-10	143	81%	0%	19%
11-15	53	85%	0%	15%
16-19	4	75%	0%	25%

Based on table above, the completed EHC needs assessments this year to-date can be proportionally categorised in the following age groups:

- under 5 years: 32%
- 5-10 years: 48%
- 11-15 years: 18%
- 16-19 years: 2%

Since January 2025 to-date, Waltham Forest has agreed to issue EHC plans for 74% of the 295 completed assessments with the remaining 26% not having a recorded decision. This needs further investigation to determine why such a high proportion of decisions are not being recorded.

Waltham Forest: Mediations and Tribunals

The number of mediations and tribunals have significantly increased over the years at a national and regional level. Mediation and tribunal outcomes are heavily weighted in favour of the appellants and cost the authority financially and reputationally.

Parents and young people have the right of appeal, if following formal representations, they disagree with local authority decisions or actions regarding the following:

- Refusal to carry out an EHC needs assessment
- Refusal to issue an EHC plan following a needs assessment
- Refusal to carry out a reassessment of needs upon request (if one has not been completed within six months)
- Not to amend an EHC plan following an annual review or reassessment
- Cease an EHC plan
- The contents of the EHC plan including the named school or type of provision (when first issued, following an annual review or reassessment)

Mediations

Waltham Forest has seen the number of mediation requests nearly double in the past two years (see table below). This is not surprising considering the number of requests for EHC needs assessments increased by nearly 25% in 2023 compared to the previous year.

Most mediations relate to local authority decisions not to carry out an EHC needs assessment. Parents exercise their right to challenge the local authority's decision.

Mediation is a less confrontational way to discuss concerns and parents have increasingly seen this option as a way to resolve issues particularly as 80% of mediation outcomes (nationally) go in their favour.

2022-23	77 referrals to mediation
	70% of parents agreed to participate in mediation
2023-24	145 referrals to mediation
	75% of parents agreed to participate in mediation

Tribunals

Parents have the option to appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (SEND) following mediation. They can also choose not to mediate and go straight into the tribunal process.

Tribunal appeals have almost doubled in the previous two years which is in line with the number of mediation requests received and growth across EHC processes. Most appeals relate to decisions not to carry out an assessment, disagreements with school placements and the contents of an EHC plan.

Table 11 – SEND Tribunal Appeals in Waltham Forest

Number of Tribunal appeals per year						
Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 to-date
Total No	18	16	36	34	63	TBC

The tribunal appeals recorded in 2024 related to the following types:

- 27% refusal by the authority to carry out an EHC needs assessment
- 25% disagreement regarding a school placement or type of provision
- 21% disagreement with the contents of the EHC plan
- 11% refusal by the authority to issue an EHC plan following a needs assessment
- 8% disagreement with the contents of the EHC plan specifically relating to health and social care
- 6% disability discrimination appeals against schools (sent directly to schools)
- 1% disagreement regarding ceasing an EHC plan

In most cases the authority will carry out mediations and tribunals without legal representation. The authority will only request the support of the legal service for high cost/highly contentious cases.

In 2023, legal services were instructed to support nine cases at a cost of £26,197 (excluding counsel fees) and in 2024 this rose to 13 cases at a cost of £48,860 (excluding counsel fees).

Waltham Forest: EHCP Placements and Provision

Most children and young people with EHC plans attend an education setting in borough (79.3%). Of those, the highest proportions are placed in mainstream schools (52.2%) followed by maintained special schools or academies (19.4%).

Proportions of children and young people with EHC plans in mainstream schools are projected to grow considerably in the next five years as outlined further on in this document (also see *appendix 1* for projected growth across all types of provision).

Table 12 - Proportions of Waltham Forest children and young people with EHCPs in types of provision

In-Borough	2025
Early Years settings (under 5s not in reception)	1.6%
Mainstream Schools	52.2%
Special Schools	19.4%
P16 Settings	6.2%
Total	79.3%
Out of Borough	2025
Special Schools	2.2%
Mainstream Schools	3.5%
INMSS	2.0%
Independent Mainstream Schools	0.5%
Other (AP settings)	0.8%
P16 Settings	2.6%
P16 Independent Specialist Setting	0.4%
Total	12.0%
Other	2025
Home Tuition	2.8%
Electively Home Educated (EHE)	0.5%
Personal Budgets and Education Other than at School (PB/EOTAS)	0.4%
Residential Settings (included in INMSS)	0.1%
Total	3.6%
Grand Total WF	94.9%
Post 16 NEET – young people with no provision	5.1%

Waltham Forest place 12% of the children and young people with EHC plans in out of borough settings, mainly because of sufficiency and capacity limitations within the authority. However, there are other reasons as to why out of borough settings are preferred.

For example, those living near the border of another authority, may find that their nearest school falls outside of the borough. Also, young people looking for a college placement may choose an out of borough setting because they want to enrol on a particular course or study programme which is not available locally.

Not all children and young people attend school or college settings; 3.6% have other arrangements including home tuition (2.8%), elective home education (0.5%) or education packages other than at school including personal budgets (0.4%).

Waltham Forest: Prevalence of EHCPs by Area

Based on the 2025 school census, 45% of school aged children and young people with EHC plans (5-16 years) who attend a school in Waltham Forest live centrally (Walthamstow), 25% reside in the north (Chingford), 22% in the south (Leyton), and 8% come from neighbouring local authorities. The proportions of children and young people from out of borough authorities have dropped by 3.6% in the last five years.

Table 13 - Place of residence (of those with EHCPs attending a school in Waltham Forest)

Home Address	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Change
Chingford	20.8%	21.1%	21.5%	22.1%	21.7%	22.3%	1.5%
Leyton	24.1%	23.4%	25.0%	25.4%	24.6%	24.6%	0.5%
Walthamstow	43.5%	44.8%	44.5%	44.8%	45.9%	45.1%	1.6%
Out of Borough	11.7%	10.6%	8.9%	7.7%	7.7%	8.1%	-3.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0%

Most of the school settings including special schools are located centrally within the borough. This is in line with where most of the children and young people with EHCPs reside. This means that school places are close by for a high proportion of children and young people with EHC plans and contribute to shorter journey times and less expensive travel arrangements.

Table 14 - Children and young people with EHCPs attending schools in different areas of Waltham Forest

School Location	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Change
Chingford	20.0%	20.7%	21.0%	22.7%	22.3%	22.9%	2.9%
Leyton	17.3%	18.8%	19.0%	20.1%	20.6%	21.8%	4.5%
Walthamstow	62.6%	60.6%	60.0%	57.3%	57.1%	55.2%	-7.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0%

In the last five years there has been a 7.4% drop in the proportions of pupils attending schools centrally, with higher proportions attending schools in the south (4.5% increase) and in the north (2.9% increase).

Waltham Forest: Primary Needs

The highest prevalence of primary needs in Waltham Forest for children and young people with EHC plans are autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) followed by speech language and communication needs (SLCN).

Social emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) are underrepresented in the region and fall considerably below national averages. Cognition and learning needs including moderate and severe (MLD and SLD) also fall short of national and regional equivalents.

Visual impairment (VI) is overrepresented because of a specialist VI school located in the borough serving a number of authorities in the region with some families choosing to move into the authority in support of their child's education.

Table 15 - Primary needs in the last five years (for those with EHCPs based on schools census data)

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	WF 2025	London 2025	National 2025
ASC	37.3%	41.0%	44.3%	44.2%	44.2%	44.3%	41.7%	33.0%
HI	1.7%	1.9%	2.1%	2.1%	1.8%	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%
MLD	3.8%	4.2%	5.1%	4.8%	4.9%	4.5%	6.1%	8.5%
MSI	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	0.5%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%
OTH	3.2%	3.4%	4.0%	3.8%	3.6%	3.6%	2.2%	2.2%
PD	4.0%	4.1%	4.3%	3.9%	3.5%	3.1%	2.2%	3.6%
PMLD	2.6%	2.8%	2.6%	2.4%	2.4%	2.1%	2.7%	2.5%
SEMH	4.0%	5.5%	7.5%	8.7%	8.9%	9.1%	10.6%	15.5%
SLCN	8.4%	11.7%	15.7%	16.2%	17.6%	19.0%	22.0%	19.5%
SLD	5.3%	5.3%	5.0%	4.6%	4.1%	3.5%	5.6%	7.9%
SPLD	2.5%	3.4%	3.9%	4.8%	5.2%	5.7%	4.0%	4.3%
VI	4.4%	4.3%	4.4%	3.7%	3.4%	3.0%	0.9%	1.0%

In the last five years the biggest areas of growth in primary needs have been speech language and communications needs (SLCN), social emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), specific learning difficulties (SpLD) and autistic spectrum disorders (ASC).

Table 16 - EHCP primary and secondary needs (Capita records)

Secondary Needs														
Primary Needs	ASC	DS	DS	HI	MLD	OTH	PD	PMLD	SEMH	SLCN	SLD	SpLD	VI	Total
ASC				1	2	2	2		34	24		9	1	75
HI									1					1

MLD	2			3		7	6								18
OTH						1	1								2
PD		1	2			1	1	6	1						12
PMLD								1							1
SEMH		1	11	3	1			7							23
SLCN	4	1	13	4	1		17		1	3					44
SLD	1							2							3
SpLD							2	1							3
Total	4	1	3	3	28	9	7	1	63	48	2	12	1		182

Approximately only 5% of the total EHCPs have a secondary need recorded (182 EHCPs). The top four secondary needs on record are:

- Social emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) - 35%
- Speech language and communication needs (SLCN) - 26%
- Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) - 15%
- Specific learning difficulties (SpLD) - 7%

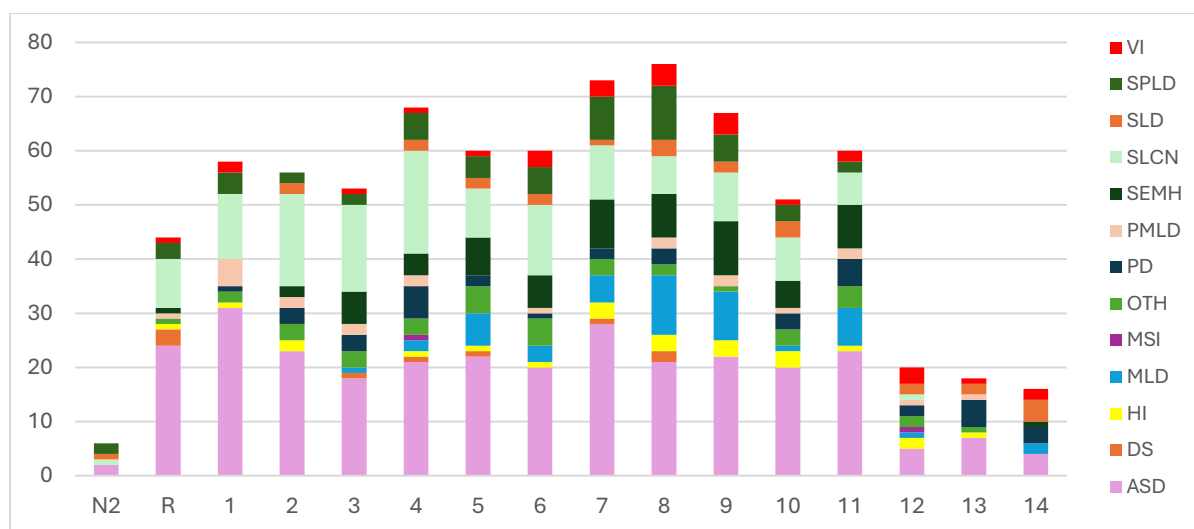
The top four primary needs where there is a secondary need recorded are:

- Autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) - 41%
- Speech language and communication needs (SLCN) - 24%
- Social emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) - 13%
- Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) - 10%

SEMH is the highest prevalent secondary need mainly presenting in children and young people whose primary needs are autistic spectrum conditions and speech language and communication needs. This may explain in part the underrepresentation of SEMH as a primary need compared to regional and national averages.

SEMH has grown in Waltham Forest over the years and it is mostly prevalent among pupils in secondary school, although increasingly, children of primary age with complex SEMH/ASC are placed in expensive independent non-maintained settings (INMSS) outside of the borough.

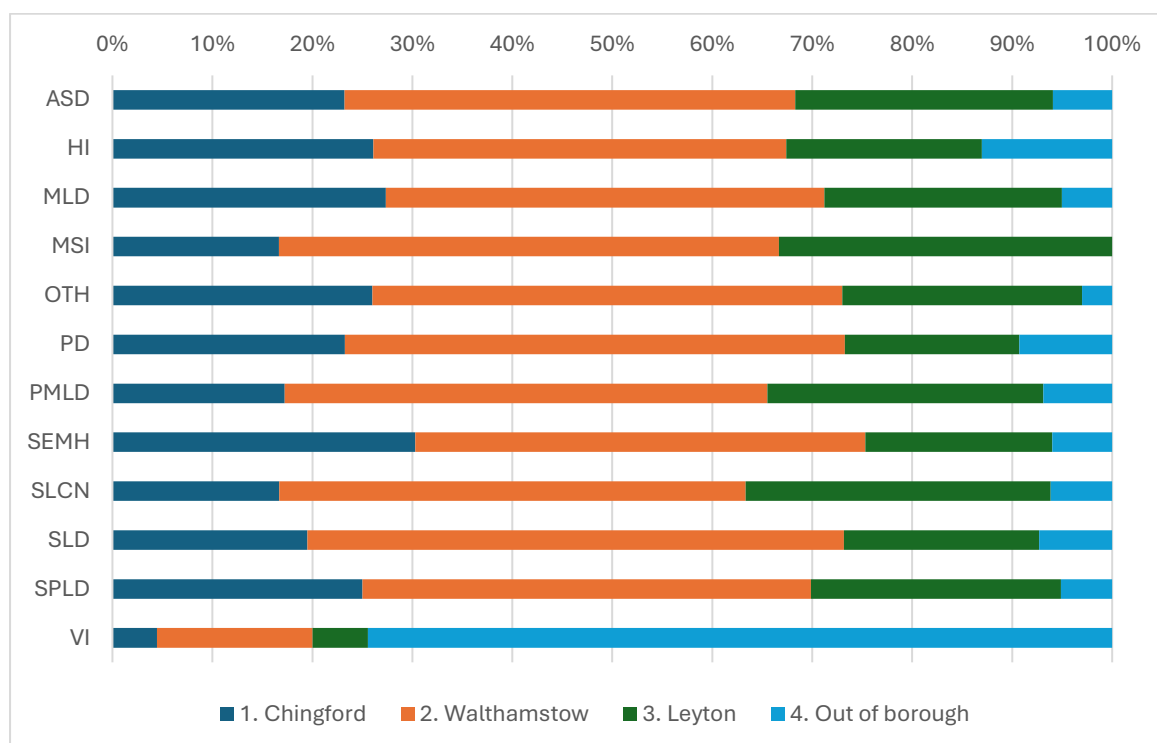
Table 17 - Primary needs across national curriculum years (for those with EHCPs based on the 2025 school census)



Autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) are the highest prevalent needs across every national curriculum year group for children and young people with EHC plans.

Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) are the second highest prevalent need particularly for primary aged children. As expected, SLCN in secondary is less prevalent and sporadic in post 16 cohorts (year groups 12-14). This pattern is similar for male and female pupils.

Table 18 - Primary needs per area of residence for those with EHCPs attending a school in Waltham Forest (2025 school census)



The local area with the highest prevalence of needs amongst all children and young people who live and attend a school in the borough is Walthamstow. Children and young people with a

primary need of visual impairment would ordinarily attend Joseph Clarke school which is a VI specialist setting. Most pupils from this school come from other local authority boroughs.

Waltham Forest: Early Years

Waltham Forest has a total of 153 early years settings for children under the age of 5 years. Of those, 58 are nurseries based in primary schools and 95 are private, voluntary or independent (PVI) settings. These settings are situated across the three main locality areas of the region as outlined below.

Table 19 - Early Years settings across the different areas of Waltham Forest

Type of Setting	Chingford	Walthamstow	Leyton	Total
School nursery	18	24	16	58
PVI	23	37	35	95
Total	41	61	51	153

Based on the 2025 January census, the highest prevalence of primary needs for children with EHC plans in reception is ASC with 58% followed by speech language and communication needs (SLCN) 25%. Primary needs for children with EHC plans in nurseries are not as widely recorded.

Most early years children with complex SEN are funded by the special educational needs inclusion fund (SENI). In the last three years, Senif has increased by £1.26 million, as outlined below.

Table 20 - Senif budget in the last three years

Financial Year	Senif Budget (£)	No of Children
2023-24	£940,000	169
2024-25	£1,700,000	158
2025-26	£2,200,000	153 (to-date)

Notwithstanding, the total numbers of children supported through Senif have dropped slightly in the last two years. The main reason being is that in 2024 there was a change to the threshold of eligibility for Senif.

The number of funded levels were reduced from four to two, targeting children with a higher complexity of need (see table below). The higher the Senif level the higher the funding and complexity of need.

Table 21 - Numbers of children expected to be in reception in September of that year receiving Senif funding

Year	Senif Level 1	Senif Level 2	Senif Level 3	Senif Level 4	Total
2023	3	102	61	3	169
2024			153	5	158
2025			151	2	153

Since these changes, support for children with lower-level needs who no longer meet the threshold for Senif, should be provided through the ordinarily available provision in place at each setting.

The number of early years children requiring a higher level of support has been increasing. This increase has coincided with the Government's expansion of the free early education

entitlement (FEEE) for working parents from 15 hours per week to 30 hours per week and to children from the term after they are 9 months old. These changes were implemented in phases between April 2024 and September 2025.

This expansion placed a statutory requirement on the local authority to set a SENIF budget that effectively provided settings with appropriate levels of funding to support all eligible children undertaking an FEEE placement. These two factors are reflected in the substantive rise of Senif spend.

The local authority recognised that the phase transition from early years to primary school is a significant step for those with complex needs particularly following the pandemic where children were isolated from their peers. As a result, a budget to provide Senif in reception was created by top-slicing the schools DSG Block. This funding supported the transition process from early years into reception between September 2023-25. The authority will evaluate how this funding has impacted on the outcomes of these children to inform long term planning beyond September 2025.

A range of information, advice and training to empower practitioners to meet the needs of children through ordinarily available provision and appropriate interventions as part of a graduated approach including Senif (which form part of the authority's Early Years Inclusion Pathway), has had a considerable impact on the number of early years and reception children with EHC plans.

Increases in the overall Senif funding has enabled settings to more effectively support a higher number of children with complex needs reducing the need for provision to be made through an EHCP.

Since 2023, the number of EHCPs have almost halved and top-up funding paid to settings through the authority's EHCP banded framework has reduced by £253,700 (see table 9 below).

Table 22 - EHCP top-up funding for early years settings

Financial Year	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Number of EHCPs (under 5 years)	98	81	52
EHCP in Nursery (schools)	£317,228	£346,183	£259,672
EHCP in PVI	£595,627	£553,912	£399,477
Total	£912,855	£900,095	£659,149

Between 2022-25, the average rate of growth for children with EHC plans in reception has been 3% which is significantly lower than the rate of growth across all other primary school year groups. However, once Senif stops at the end of reception, the number of EHC plans grow significantly for children in KS1 (see the primary school section of this report for more details).

Waltham Forest: Mainstream Schools

Waltham Forest has a total of 75 mainstream schools, made up of 56 primaries and 17 secondaries. Across all mainstream schools, there are 1,795 pupils with EHC plans from Waltham Forest and 109 pupils with EHC plans from other local authority boroughs (Jan 2025 census).

All mainstream schools have a duty to use their best endeavours to provide support to children and young people with SEN, including those with EHC plans.

The highest prevalence of primary needs across all mainstream schools are (Jan 2025 census):

- Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC): 41%
- Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN): 25%
- Social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH): 11%
- Specific learning difficulties i.e. dyslexia (SpLD): 6%
- Moderate learning difficulties (MLD): 6%

In the past five years, there has been a significant growth in the numbers of children and young people with EHC plans attending mainstream schools which has also been the case regionally and nationally. EHCP numbers in mainstream settings have approximately doubled between 2020-25.

Waltham Forest has the highest proportions of children and young people with EHC plans in mainstream schools compared to regional and national averages, although approximately 5% of those are placed in resourced provisions within mainstream settings in comparison to approximately 3.8% nationally.

In 2024/25 the authority's top-up funding for mainstream schools reached £16.4 million with an average spend of £10,000 per pupil.

Table 23 – Growth of Waltham Forest EHCPs in mainstream schools

Year (January)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Mainstream (In Borough)	875	1026	1251	1422	1664	1795
Mainstream (OLA)	66	69	70	114	115	129
Total Mainstream	941	1095	1321	1536	1779	1924
Total EHCPs	2,025	2,285	2,584	2,884	3,295	3,663
% Mainstream WF	46.47%	47.92%	51.12%	53.26%	53.96%	52.30%
% Mainstream Nationally	39.0%	39.9%	40.5%	41.3%	43.3%	43.6%
% Mainstream London	47.8%	48.1%	48.6%	50.0%	49.8%	50.9%

Imports and Exports

Based on the import/export data held, Waltham Forest is an exporter of pupils with EHC plans. This means that more local children and young people with EHC plans go to out of borough mainstream schools compared to the number from other local authorities placed in mainstream schools within the borough.

Table 24 - Mainstream schools import/export numbers

Year (January)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Mainstream Imports (other LA pupils)	42	57	63	89	98	109
Mainstream Exports (WF pupils)	66	69	77	114	115	129
Difference (more exports)	24	12	14	25	17	15

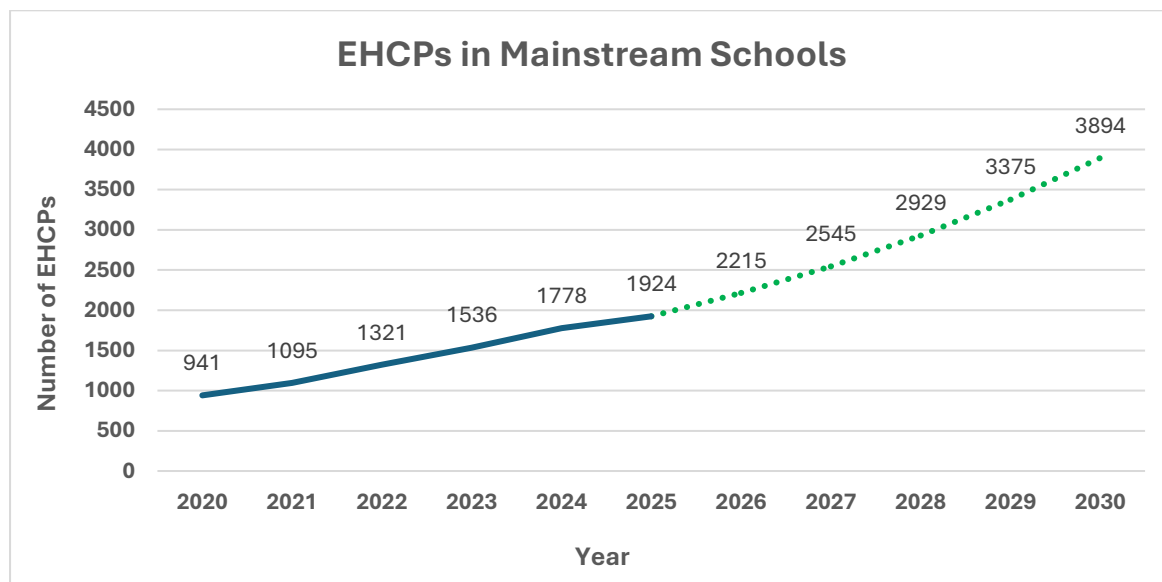
The numbers of Waltham Forest children and young people placed in other local authority mainstream schools have grown in the last five years by approximately 14% annually. It is expected that those numbers will grow further in the next five years as outlined in the table below.

Table 25: Waltham Forest pupils in out of borough (OOB) mainstream schools

Year (January) Projected	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
WF Pupils in OOB Mainstream Schools	147	168	192	220	252	288

The overall numbers of children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools is expected to rise in the next five years. This is in line with the government policy paper “*SEND and alternative provision improvement plan*” published in 2023, which sets out how the Local Area Partnership will work together to provide a more inclusive and supportive offer in mainstream settings to reduce the number of EHC plans.

Table 26 - EHCP growth in mainstream schools



The number of pupils with EHC plans in mainstream schools is forecasted to double by 2030 with proportions reaching 65% of the total EHCP population. This will be approximately 13% higher than current records (52%).

Although the projected EHCP growth in mainstream schools may seem incongruent with the authority’s SEND sufficiency strategy in developing adequate local specialist provision, a key area for development in the next five years will be to improve inclusive practice and support in local mainstream schools in line with the strategic intents of the government.

This will include developing additional specialist resourced provisions (which count as part of total mainstream population) and improve arrangements across alternative provision to meet the growing needs of the borough, whilst ensuring that children with the highest level of needs can access special school settings.

Mainstream Primary Schools

Waltham Forest has 56 primary schools with a total of 22,643 pupils (January 2025 census). Of those, 1,177 pupils have EHC plans (5.2% of the total primary school population). Most of the primary schools are located within the Walthamstow area of the borough (see below).

Table 27 – Pupil numbers in mainstream primary schools by area (Jan 2025 census)

Area	Primary Schools	All pupils	All pupils %	Number of EHCPs	EHCPs % By area	EHCPs % All pupils in area
Chingford	14	5,603	25%	258	22%	4.6%
Walthamstow	27	10,216	45%	544	46%	5.3%
Leyton	15	6,824	30%	375	32%	5.5%
Total	56	22513	100%	1,177	100%	

Chingford has the lowest number of primary schools including total number of pupils. In the last five years there has been a 2% population drop in primary aged children. The area has the lowest number of EHC plans including the lowest proportion of plans on average per primary setting (4.6%). However, in relation to secondary schools, Chingford has the highest proportions of EHC plans across the local areas (see table 31 on the next page).

Walthamstow has by far the highest number of primary schools and total number of pupils. In the last five years there has been an 8% population drop in primary aged children. The area has the highest number of EHC plans, but the second highest proportion of children with EHC plans on average per primary setting (5.3%). In comparison, proportions of EHC plans drop for secondary schools located in the area.

Leyton has one more primary school than Chingford with 1,200 more pupils and 117 more EHC plans. In the last five years there has been a 5% population drop in primary aged children. The area has the highest proportion of EHC plans on average per primary setting (5.5%). In comparison, secondary schools located in Leyton have the lowest proportions of EHC plans across the local areas.

The highest prevalence of **primary needs** across mainstream primary schools are (Jan 2025 census):

- Autistic spectrum conditions (ASC): 43%
- Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN): 31%
- Social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH): 7%
- Specific learning difficulties (SpLD): 5%
- Moderate learning difficulties (MLD): 3%

In the last three years, the average EHCP annual growth across all primary schools has been 12.44% (see below).

Table 28 - EHCP numbers in mainstream primary schools per year group (Jan 2025 census)

NCY	Recep.	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2020	63	88	88	106	89	89	89	612
2021	80	91	108	107	120	101	103	710
2022	97	119	111	120	128	137	116	828
2023	117	129	137	138	137	145	172	975
2024	138	155	170	156	166	154	181	1,120
2025	106	184	180	177	175	169	186	1,177
Avg/yr (22-25)	3.00%	15.64%	17.49%	13.83%	10.99%	7.25%	17.04%	12.44%

The total number of pupils with EHCPs in primary schools have almost doubled in five years since 2020. The biggest growth recorded has been in year 1, 2 and 6. The lowest EHCP growth recorded is in reception, which is linked to Senif funding offered to children with complex needs in reception (see the early years section of this report).

The significant rise in EHCPs for pupils in KS1 is strongly associated with the cessation of Senif funding. Children with complex needs in receipt of this funding are no longer financially supported at the end of reception. A further review is needed to understand how Senif has impacted on the needs and outcomes of children with complex needs.

The rise in EHC plans in year 6 can be associated with the phase transition to secondary education. The authority has recorded an increase in the number of EHC needs assessment requests for children in years 5/6. Many families fear that the changes in school environment/demands placed on their children in secondary settings will be overwhelming.

Based on the average annual growth across each year group, the number of pupils with EHCPs in primary schools is projected to double by 2031 to 2,488 (see table below).

Table 29 - Projected EHCP numbers in primary schools per year group (2026-31)

NCY	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2026	109	213	211	201	194	181	218	1327
2027	112	246	248	229	216	194	255	1500
2028	116	285	292	261	239	208	298	1699
2029	119	329	343	297	266	224	349	1927
2030	123	381	403	338	295	240	408	2188
2031	127	441	473	385	327	257	478	2488

Mainstream Secondary Schools

Waltham Forest has 17 secondary schools with a total of 14,473 pupils (based on the 2025 census). Of those, 727 pupils have EHC plans (4.9% of the secondary school population). Most of the secondary schools are located within the Walthamstow area of the borough (see below).

Table 30 - Pupil numbers in mainstream secondary schools by area (Jan 2025 census)

Area	Secondary Schools	All pupils	All pupils %	Number of EHCPs	EHCPs % By area	EHCPs % All pupils in area
Chingford	4	3,857	27%	218	31%	5.7%
Walthamstow	7	6,323	44%	311	44%	4.9%
Leyton	6	4,293	29%	178	25%	4.1%
Total	17	14,473	100%	707	100%	

Chingford has 4 secondary schools and the lowest number of pupils in the borough. There are 218 young people with EHC plans across the secondary schools. Chingford has the highest proportion of EHC plans on average per secondary setting (5.7%) across the local areas. In comparison, it has the lowest proportions of EHC plans in primary schools.

Walthamstow has 7 secondary schools and by far the highest number of pupils in the borough. There are 311 EHC plans recorded across the secondary schools with an average proportion of 4.9% per setting. The proportion of EHC plans for primary schools located in the area is higher.

Leyton has 6 secondary schools and 436 more pupils than Chingford. There are 178 EHC plans recorded across the secondary schools, which is the lowest in the borough, and with an average proportion of 4.1% per setting (also the lowest in the borough). In comparison, it has the highest proportions of EHC plans in primary schools across the local areas.

The highest prevalence of **primary needs** across mainstream secondary schools are (Jan 2025 census):

- Autistic spectrum conditions (ASC): 38%
- Social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH): 17%
- Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN): 15%
- Moderate learning difficulties (MLD): 10%
- Specific learning difficulties (SpLD): 8%

In the last three years, the average EHCP annual growth across all secondary schools has been 17.60% (see below).

Table 31 - EHCP numbers in mainstream secondary schools per year group (Jan 2025 census)

NCY	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total
2020	62	62	56	66	39	7	8	300
2021	93	62	74	61	65	9	3	367
2022	102	106	71	84	66	13	5	447
2023	116	111	108	82	89	7	9	522
2024	178	106	114	120	89	10	7	624
2025	164	182	117	121	123	12	8	727
Avg/yr (22-25)	17.15%	19.74%	18.12%	12.94%	23.06%	-2.63%	16.96%	17.60%

The total number of pupils with EHCPs in secondary schools have more than doubled in five years since 2020. Proportionally, the growth has far exceeded what was recorded in primary schools for the same period.

This rise is mainly associated with the growing number of children with EHC plans transitioning from primary to secondary schools. In addition, approximately 18% of statutory EHC needs assessments relate to secondary aged pupils.

Based on the average annual growth across each year group, the number of pupils with EHCPs in secondary schools is projected to almost double by 2029 (see table below).

Table 32 - Forecast EHCP numbers in secondary schools per year group

NCY	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total
2026	192	218	138	137	151	12	8	856
2027	225	261	163	154	186	12	8	1009
2028	264	312	193	174	229	12	8	1192
2029	309	374	228	197	282	12	8	1410
2030	362	448	269	222	347	12	8	1668
2031	424	536	318	251	427	12	8	1976

Waltham Forest: Specialist Resourced Provisions

Specialist resourced provisions (SRPs) are part of a mainstream school's personalised offer for pupils with EHC plans who require a high level of support. Pupils are expected to spend approximately 50% of the time in mainstream classes and the rest of the time within the SRP provision which can be a dedicated classroom(s) or nurture room(s) within the school where children can be taught/supported in smaller groups.

Waltham Forest has nine specialist resourced provisions in total, of which, five are primaries and four are secondaries. Approximately 5% of children and young people with EHC plans in mainstream schools are currently placed in resourced provisions which is above the national average of 3.8%.

The local authority works in partnership with the settings including young people and their families to secure placements accordingly.

Table 33- EHCP numbers in Specialist Resourced Provisions

Academic Year 24-25					Year Group													
School	Phase	Need	Area	Com No	Yr0	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	Yr6	Yr7	Yr8	Yr9	Yr10	Yr11	P11	Total
Buxton School	Sec	SLCN	L	10							2	1	2	1	3			9
Chingford School	Sec	ASC/SLCN	C	27							11	6	7	5	6			35
Davies Lane School	Prim	ASC	L	28	6	3	3	3	8	2	3							28
Frederick Bremer School	Sec	ASC	W	30							6	7	5	3	2			23
Heathcote School	Sec	HI	C	16							2	5	0	3	4	4		18
Hillyfield Academy	Prim	ASC	W	18	4	3	2	2	3	3	2							19
South Grove School	Prim	ASC	W	16	2	3	2	2	4	1	1							15
Woodside Academy	Prim	ASC	W	22	2	9	3	2	4	1	1							22
Whitehall School	Prim	HI	C	10	1	1	4	0	2	2	2							12
Total				177	15	19	14	9	21	9	9	21	19	14	12	15	4	181

Area: C (Chingford), L (Leyton), W (Walthamstow)

Waltham Forest commissions 177 places across all resourced provisions (SRPs), of which, 94 places are in primaries and 83 in secondaries. The location of the SRPs is as follows:

- Four in Walthamstow (86 places)

- Three in Chingford (53 places)
- Two in Leyton (38 places)

Currently, the total number of pupils placed in SRPs is 181 (four over commissioned numbers). All the provisions specialise in meeting a specific type of need. Pupils placed in each SRP should have an EHC plan with a primary need that is in line with the offer of the setting. The specialisms of the SRPs are as follows:

- Six specialise in autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) - 141 places (84 primary and 57 secondary).
- Two specialise in hearing impairment (HI) – 26 places (10 primary and 16 secondary).
- One specialises in speech language and communication needs (SLCN) – 10 places in secondary.

Most SRP places are for pupils with ASC which is indicative of the highest prevalence in primary needs in the borough. Further specialist ASC placements are required for young people in secondary schools as most SRP places currently are for primary school children.

There are also gaps in provision for children in primary school with SEMH needs. Currently, there is no local specialist setting that can be named in an EHC plan for children with social, emotional and mental health needs.

Primary school children with SEMH are offered alternative provision at Hawkwood school where the authority currently commissions 20 placements. Arrangements are for short-term specialist interventions and pupils are then expected to reintegrate back into their mainstream settings.

Waltham Forest: Special Schools

Waltham Forest has four special schools which provide highly specialist provision and a bespoke curriculum for children and young people with significantly complex SEND needs:

- Whitefield Academy (all through generic special school located in Walthamstow)
- Lime Academy Hornbeam (all through generic special school located in Walthamstow)
- Joseph Clark School (all through VI special school located in Chingford)
- Belmont Park School (secondary SEMH special school located in Leyton)

The total number of pupils across all special schools is 822. Whitefield and Lime Hornbeam academies, located in the Walthamstow area of the authority, offer over 80% of the special school places in the borough. In 2024/25 the authority's top-up funding for local special schools reached £13.1 million with an average spend of £17,000 per pupil.

Waltham Forest have proportionally the lowest number of children and young people in special school settings compared to national and regional averages, although with a higher proportion in resourced provisions of 5% compared to 3.8% nationally. The number of pupils in special schools have been proportionally declining locally, regionally and nationally in the last five years as EHCP numbers have grown.

For the same period, Waltham Forest have been increasingly commissioning places from out of borough special schools/academies and independent non-maintained settings because of limited specialist capacity locally.

Table 34 - Growth of Waltham Forest EHCPs in special schools

Year (January)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Special Schools (In Borough)	634	639	645	657	689	706
Special Schools (Out of Borough)	30	34	37	57	61	80
Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS)	29	31	34	49	64	73
Total in Specialist Schools	693	704	716	763	814	859
Total EHCPs	2,025	2,285	2,584	2,884	3,295	3,663
% Special Schools (All Schools)	34.2%	30.8%	27.7%	26.5%	24.7%	23.5%
% Special Schools (WF schools only)	31.3%	28.0%	25.0%	22.8%	20.9%	19.3%
% Specialist Schools Nationally	37.2%	35.8%	34.8%	33.2%	32.3%	30.4%
% Specialist Schools London	32.3%	31.1%	30.2%	28.6%	28.2%	27.6%

Import and export arrangements in special schools

Based on the import/export data, a much higher number of children and young people are placed in Waltham Forest special schools who reside in other local authority boroughs (imports) than those who live locally but attend a special school outside of Waltham Forest (exports).

Table 35: Imports and exports of children in special schools

Year (January)	2020	2021	2023	2024	2025
Special School Imports (other LA pupils)	150	131	129	112	116

Special School Exports (WF pupils)	30	37	57	61	80
Difference (more imports)	120	94	72	61	36

Over fifteen London borough authorities place children and young people in Waltham Forest special schools, with the highest numbers coming from Redbridge, Enfield and Newham. The numbers from out of borough authorities have declined since 2020, whilst numbers of local children and young people placed in special schools outside of the borough have increased considerably.

Waltham Forest “exports” have grown in the last five years by 21.7% annually. In 2024/25 the authority’s top-up funding for out of borough placements in maintained special schools and specialist academies reached approximately £2 million with an average spend of £32,000 per pupil.

It is expected that those numbers will grow further in the next five years if sufficient provision is not developed within the borough as outlined in the table below.

Table 36: Waltham Forest pupils in other LA special schools

Year (January) Actual	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Special School Exports (WF pupils)	30	34	37	49	61	80
Year (January) Projected	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Special School Exports (WF pupils)	97	118	144	175	214	261

Waltham Forest special school numbers (2020-25)

In the last three years (following the pandemic), primary special school numbers have grown overall by 0.2% whilst secondary and post-16 numbers have grown by 2.2% in total. Over the years, numbers in nursery have fluctuated but are considerably much smaller in comparison to other year groups.

Secondary special school and post-16 numbers have remained fairly static proportionally across each year group since 2020, apart from year groups 8 and 10 where a slight increase in numbers has been recorded.

Table 37: Primary-aged children in special schools (schools census 2025)

NCY	N	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2020	7	32	35	38	44	50	43	43	292
2021	5	27	37	36	40	45	50	44	284
2022	3	24	37	42	40	40	45	48	279
2023	5	18	33	42	46	40	41	42	267
2024	1	36	25	39	49	44	48	44	286
2025	3	26	38	30	39	51	47	47	281
Avg/yr (22-25)	0%	2.8%	0.9%	-9.5%	-0.8%	9.2%	1.5%	-0.7%	0.2%

Table 38: Secondary and Post-16 young people in special schools

NCY	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Total
2020	69	64	73	65	65	61	47	48	492

2021	55	69	67	75	67	55	57	39	484
2022	70	57	70	65	77	58	47	51	495
2023	68	73	66	70	69	58	51	38	493
2024	78	69	76	69	75	53	52	43	515
2025	70	81	75	78	71	58	49	46	528
Avg/yr (22-25)	0.0%	14.0%	2.4%	6.7%	-2.6%	0.0%	1.2%	-3.3%	2.2%

Waltham Forest numbers in each special school

Based on April 2025 records, a total of 822 pupils attend the borough's local special schools (706 from Waltham Forest and 116 from other local authorities). Of those, 65% are secondary aged and post-16 pupils.

The volume of pupils from out of borough authorities is putting additional pressure on the authority to secure specialist provision for a growing number of highly complex children and young people in the area. As a result of the limited capacity, the authority has been increasingly placing children and young people in expensive out of borough settings with additional transport costs.

Table 39: Primary-aged children in special schools (numbers in red indicate additional OLA pupils)

School NCY	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	GT
Whitefield Academy	21 0	30 3	21 2	24 2	32 2	21 1	20 5	169 15	184
Lime Academy Hornbeam	6 0	4 0	6 0	7 1	15 1	21 0	15 1	74 3	77
Joseph Clarke Academy	1 0	2 1	1 0	2 3	0 2	2 4	4 3	12 13	25
Total	28 0	36 4	28 2	33 6	47 5	44 5	39 9	255 31	286

* Data received from special schools in April

Table 40: Secondary-aged and post-16 pupils in special schools (numbers in red indicate additional OLA pupils)

School NCY	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Total	GT
Whitefield Academy	24 1	26 3	15 0	19 2	26 3	22 4	20 3	21 1	173 17	190
Lime Academy Hornbeam	22 4	34 3	36 0	40 0	19 2	21 1	15 2	17 1	204 13	217
Joseph Clarke Academy	7 6	1 9	6 10	5 4	3 7	3 8	5 4	4 2	34 50	84
Belmont Park School	5 0	6 1	8 1	9 1	12 2				40 5	45
Total	58 11	67 16	65 11	73 7	60 14	46 13	40 9	42 4	451 85	536

* Data received from special schools in April

Of the total 116 children and young people from out of borough authorities placed in local special schools, 27% are in primary, 51% in secondary and 22% in post-16. Each special school has the following proportions of out of borough pupils:

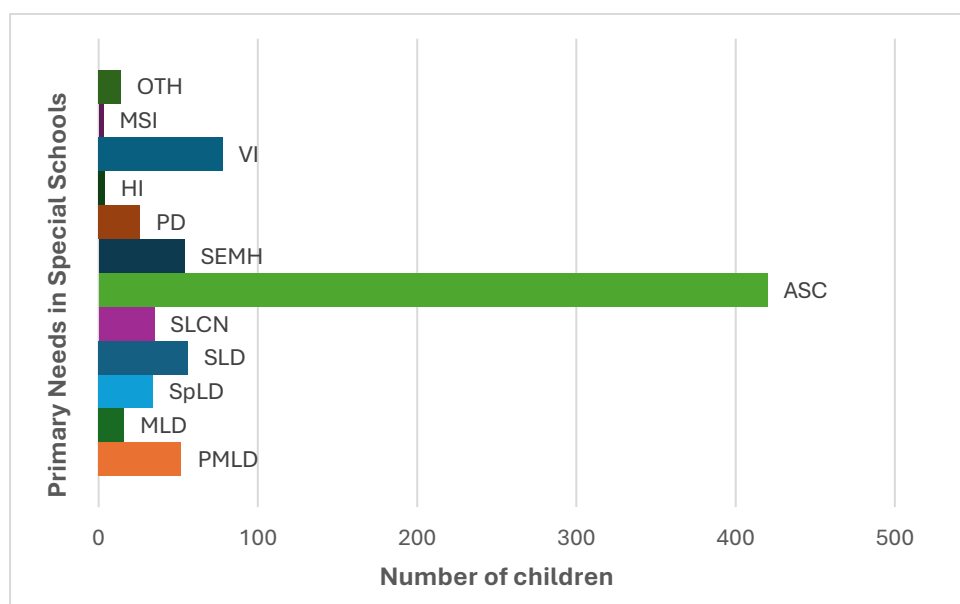
- Whitefield Academy – 28%
- Lime Academy Hornbeam – 14%

- Joseph Clarke Academy – 54%
- Belmont Park School – 4%

The majority of out of borough children and young people in local special schools attend Joseph Clarke Academy. This is because the school provides a highly specialist offer in visual impairment which serves a number of neighbouring authorities.

Most of the children and young people who attend special schools have ASC as a primary need, but often, with complexities across other broad areas of need which are not usually recorded in datasets (this is an area for improvement).

Graph 2: Primary needs across Waltham Forest's special schools



Most pupils in special schools with a primary need of autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) attend Whitefield Academy (60%) and Lime Academy Hornbeam (35%).

Pupils with complex SEMH needs are mainly placed at Belmont Park school who specialise in this type of need. However, the authority has also been commissioning high-cost placements from out of borough specialist independent settings for children and young people with complex SEMH needs including for a growing number of primary aged pupils where there is currently a gap in provision (for more information see the INMSS section of the report).

Table 41 – Primary needs in Waltham Forest special schools (school census Jan 25)

Primary Needs WF Special Schools	C & L				C & I		SEMH	S & PD				Other	TOTAL
	SLD	PMLD	MLD	SpLD	SLCN	ASC	SEMH	PD	HI	VI	MSI	Other	
Whitefield Academy	44	50		4	3	253				3	3	14	374
Lime Academy Hornbeam	6	2	10	30	31	146	13	24	4	2		26	294
Joseph Clarke Academy	6		6		1	21		2		73			109
Belmont Park							45						45
Grand Total	56	52	16	34	35	420	58	26	4	78	3	40	822

With the exception of Belmont Park school where only young people with a primary need in SEMH are placed, the other three special schools offer places to pupils with different types of needs.

Whitefield Academy's top four primary needs include:

- Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC): 68%
- Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD): 13%
- Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD): 12%
- Other Needs: 4%

Lime Academy Hornbeam's top four primary needs include:

- Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC): 50%
- Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN): 11%
- Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD): 10%
- Other Needs: 9%

Joseph Clarke school's top four primary needs include:

- Visual Impairment (VI): 67%
- Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC): 19%
- Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD): 6%
- Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD): 6%

Demand for Special School places

Belmont Park school (SEMH) is the only Local Authority maintained special school with the capacity to increase its commissioned numbers to 75. It is currently commissioned for 57 placements, 30 of which, have in the past been reserved for alternative provision placements (AP). This arrangement discontinued at the end of the academic year (2024/25) and pupils occupying alternative provision places transferred to a new AP facility at North Birkbeck Road.

Belmont Park school will have 52 children with EHC plans in September 2025. This potentially leaves a further 23 places available if the authority decides to increase their commissioned number to 75.

Belmont Park school requires financial support to ensure it remains viable following the departure of the funded AP places. This has been calculated at 67 places which include a combination of placement and top-up funding to cover the running costs of the school.

The authority should carefully plan growth at this setting to ensure the dynamics of the pupils with SEMH needs is right through a staggered approach as outlined in the table below.

Table 42: Belmont Park school projected numbers (2025-30)

Belmont Park School	Com. No	7	8	9	10	11	Total
September 2025 (planned)	67	12	10	10	10	10	52
September 2026 (projection)	67	15	14	14	12	12	67
September 2027 (projection)	75	16	16	16	15	12	75
September 2028 (projection)	75	12	16	16	16	15	75

September 2029 (projection)	75	15	12	16	16	16	75
September 2030 (projection)	75	16	15	12	16	16	75

Special School Leavers

Waltham Forest has three all-through specialist academies and a maintained SEMH secondary special school. The projected leavers in the SEMH school are all in year 11 and for the all-through special schools in year 14 as outlined in the table below.

Table 43: Special school projected leavers (2026-30)

Year	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Yr11 Belmont Park leavers	10	12	15	16	16
Yr14 Whitefield leavers	23	26	29	21	15
Yr14 Lime Hornbeam leavers	17	22	21	40	36
Yr 14 Joseph Clarke leavers	9	11	10	9	16
Total Yr14 leavers	49	59	60	70	67

Belmont Park will have available spaces each year based on the number of projected leavers and the additional commissioned numbers agreed. If the assumptions on future projections go accordingly, then Belmont Park will have a total of 25 available places in September 2026 based on 10 pupils leaving in year 11 and a further 15 available commissioned places.

In September 2027, there will be a total of 20 places available based on 12 leavers and 8 commissioned places available. As the cohorts move on every year, the majority of the available places will be required in year 7.

The all-through generic special schools will mainly have leavers in year 14. As the year groups move on internally, the spaces that will become immediately available will be in reception and then in other year groups accordingly.

Although demand for special school places can span across several year groups, the highest volume of special school placement requests are for secondary school phase-transfers.

Secondary school phase-transfers pose a significant challenge as EHCP numbers in year 6 continue to grow. The authority has a statutory obligation to name a primary or secondary setting for those undergoing a phase-transfer by the 15 February each year. If the authority has not identified a suitable setting by that time, the type of setting can be named in the EHC plan. This is not ideal and leaves the authority open to challenge by parent/carers who want to know the name of their child's school so they can begin to prepare for the transition process into secondary.

In 2024/25, there were 228 year 6 children with EHC plans requiring a secondary placement for the following academic year (186 from mainstream and 42 from special). Of those, 61 children had a special school named in their EHC plan by the statutory deadline and a further 28 children had specialist provision named by type due to limited specialist capacity.

A total of 89 children (approx. 40%) of the 2024/25 year-6 cohort have been assessed as needing highly specialist provision in secondary school to meet their needs. As current demand for specialist placements in year 7 outstrips capacity, the local authority have been consulting with a number of out of borough specialist settings to secure provision.

Secondary phase transfer numbers, based on mainstream and special school projections, will be increasing year-on-year. With the exception of Belmont Park SEMH school, all other local special schools are currently full and places will only become available each year once the school leavers have been established (unless additional capacity is created).

Based on historic arrangements, it can be presumed that approximately 40% of the future year 6 cohort with EHC plans, which includes children already in special school settings, will require specialist provision in year 7. Accounting for school leavers each year, demand for specialist placements in year 7 can be forecasted as outlined in the table below.

Table 44: Shortfall in secondary special school places (2026-30)

Year	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Mainstream School Yr6	219	255	297	346	403
Special School Yr6	44	47	33	28	36
Total Yr6 phase transfers	263	302	330	374	439
Demand for special (40%)	105	121	132	150	176
Available places in SEMH ³	19	21	12	15	16
Available places in SA ⁴	49	59	60	70	67
Available places in SRP	12	14	19	21	16
Shortfall of specialist places in yr7	25	27	41	44	77

Based on the above figures, as the year 6 cohort with EHC plans grows, demand for specialist secondary places in year 7 is also expected to grow. If an average of 40% will require a specialist setting in year 7, which accounts for children from mainstream and special schools, then the authority would have to place approximately 105 children in specialist provision in September 2026 and a further 121 in September 2027 with continued patterns of growth there on (see table above).

Accounting for the school leavers each year (see table 44), it is forecasted that a total of 68 special school places will be available for year 7 pupils in September 2026, leaving a shortfall of 25 places (the shortfall for September 2025 was 28 places). The shortfall will continue to rise each year in line with growth, assuming that demand for special school places remains at 40% of the total year group.

Special School Consultations for Placements

The local authority is responsible for placing children and young people in schools and colleges and must consult with settings prior to naming them in an EHC plan. Consultations to special schools should be specifically for children and young people with the highest complexity of needs.

Notwithstanding, if a parent requests a placement in any of the schools or institutions listed in *section 38 of the Children and Families Act* the authority must consult with that setting regardless. The tables on the next page outline the number of consultations Waltham Forest special schools have received from the authority for both primary and secondary aged pupils.

³ This refers to the leavers at Belmont Park school including the additional places available in 2026-27

⁴ This refers to the leavers in the authority's specialist academies (SA)

Table 45: Special school consultations for primary-aged pupils (24/25 academic year)

School NCY	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Whitefield Academy	8	12	7	15	3	4	2	51
Lime Academy Hornbeam	10	7	12	3	5	3	6	46
Joseph Clarke Academy	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	5
Total	18	21	20	18	8	8	9	102

Table 46: Special school consultations for secondary-aged pupils (24/25 academic year)

School NCY	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Total
Whitefield Academy	50	8	6	3	1	2	2	0	72
Lime Academy Hornbeam	35	9	6	1	0	20	18	6	95
Joseph Clarke Academy	10	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	15
Belmont Park School	6	4	0	2	0				12
Total	101	23	14	6	2	22	20	6	194

Waltham Forest: Post 16

Waltham Forest has a total of 550 post-16 young people with EHC plans who are in education. Of those, 41% attend a local post 16 setting, 23% a local special school and 25% an out of borough post-16 setting.

For the 2024/25 academic year, Waltham Forest commissioned a total 268 places from local post-16 providers (element 2 funded places at £6,000 each), totalling £1.608 million. The actual number of learners exceeded the commissioned numbers so an additional 117 places were agreed to be funded (£702,000) bringing the total placement funding to £2.310 million. This was an increase of £324,000 in element 2 funding compared to the previous year.

Post 16 - in Borough

Waltham Forest has three FE Colleges, two sixth form colleges and one post-16 alternative provision (AP). Currently 225 local young people with EHC plans attend these settings costing the authority £2.032 million in top-up funding (element 3).

Waltham College is the biggest local post-16 provider, followed by Big Creative who offer two distinct provisions in separate campuses within the borough.

These providers attract significant numbers of learners from neighbouring local authorities. Approximately 40% of the learners with EHC plans at Waltham College come from other local authorities.

At Big Creative the proportions of young people from other authorities are significantly higher (64%). There are increasing numbers of learners applying for specific study programmes from across the region and local young people may find that there is no availability on certain courses. This can be an issue as it would lead them to seek opportunities further afield in other local other London boroughs.

Table 47 – Waltham Forest learners with EHCPs in local post-16 institutions

Post 16 Institution	2023	2024	2025	Avg Top-up Cost (£)	2025/26 Com. No
Waltham Forest FE College	125	131	139	£8,800	210
Big Creative Training FE College	22	24	25	£12,900	51
Big Creative Academy FE College	8	10	14	£6,300	19
Sir George Monoux Sixth Form College	9	6	16	£4,400	7
Leyton Sixth Form College	7	13	17	£7,700	15
Really Neet (Alternative Provision)	4	9	14	£20,000	N/A
Total	175	193	225	£9,500	302

Waltham Forest's EHCP numbers in local post-16 settings have grown by an average of 19.6% annually. Placements at "Really Neet" alternative provision are the highest cost on average, although numbers are low in comparison to Waltham College. Placements at Sir George Monoux are the lowest cost on average.

Supported internships at Waltham College have paused for the academic year 2025/26 due to funding and administrative issues. This will be a key area for development so that young people

with SEND get the opportunity to experience the world of work and improve their chances in securing employment in the future.

The authority has commissioned a total of 302 high needs places from local post-16 colleges for 2025/26 which is 34 more than last year, but the actual number of learners is expected to be higher due to increased demand for places.

Local colleges have been requesting additional element 2 funding in line with the growth in EHCP placements. The authority has recently successfully negotiated element 2 funding with Big Creative Academy resulting in £60,000 savings. Negotiations with Waltham Forest College and Big Creative Training will also have to take place as potential increases can heavily impact on the High Needs budget.

EHCP numbers in local post 16 settings are expected to rise by 14.2% annually in the next five years (see table below). This is affiliated to the growing numbers of young people applying for a local college placement.

Table 48 - EHCP growth in Post 16 settings in Waltham Forest

Year (January) Actual	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Post 16 In Borough (FE/AP numbers)	88	113	133	175	193	225
Year (January) Projected	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Post 16 In Borough (FE/AP numbers)	246	280	320	366	418	477

Post 16 - out of Borough

Post 16 numbers in out of local authority FE colleges have more than doubled since 2020, although growth has slowed down in the last three years. The authority paid a total of £1.182 million of top-up funding (element 3) to out of borough post-16 providers.

Numbers are projected to grow further in the next five years (see table below). Most young people with EHC plans attend the following out of borough FE colleges:

- New City College (Epping campus)
- New City College (Ilford campus)
- Newham College
- Capel Manor College (Enfield)
- Haringey Sixth Form College

Table 49 - Waltham Forest learners in out of borough post-16 settings

Year (January) Actual	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Post 16 Out of Borough (FE numbers)	42	49	79	92	90	94
Year (January) Projected	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Post 16 Out of Borough (FE numbers)	106	114	128	139	151	163

Waltham Forest: INMSS

The local authority increasingly commissions high-cost places for children and young people with EHC plans from independent non-maintained specialist schools/settings (INMSS). This is mainly affiliated to insufficient local specialist provision.

The number of placements in INMSS has grown in the last five years by approximately 20% annually. In 2024/25 the cost of provision in INMSS was £4.315 million with an average cost per placement of £60,000. Expenditure rose by £1.390 million compared to the previous year.

Numbers are expected to further increase if local specialist school capacity is not developed and inclusive practice across mainstream settings is not sufficiently improved. This will add significantly more pressure on the High Needs budget as costs will grow further (including annual inflation).

In 2025/26 the cost of provision in INMSS is projected to rise to £5.544 million which is £1.229 million higher compared to the previous year.

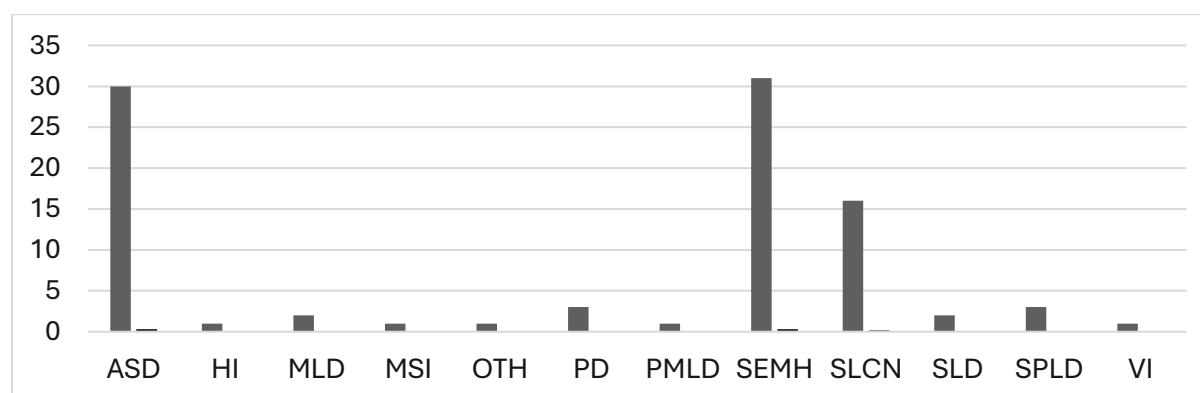
Table 50: Waltham Forest pupils placed in INMSS

Year (January) Actual	2020	2021	2023	2024	2025
Special School Exports (WF pupils)	29	34	49	64	73
Year (January) Projected	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Special School Exports (WF pupils)	88	105	126	151	182

In addition to independent non-maintained special schools, some parents prefer independent mainstream schools. This is because they offer a GCSE pathway, have smaller class sizes with a higher adult to pupil ratio, which they deem to be better suited in meeting their child's needs.

Approximately 32% of the placements at INMSS are for primary school aged pupils, 62% for secondary and 6% for post-16. The most prevalent primary need of those placed in INMSS is social emotional and mental health needs (SEMH – 33%), closely followed by autistic spectrum conditions (ASC – 32%) and speech, language and communications needs (SLCN – 17%).

Graph 3 - Primary needs in INMSS



Most placements in INMSS are made with the following providers:

- Leaways School (Hackney) – specialise in SEMH
- St John's RC School (Essex) – specialise in a wide range of needs including SLD and ASC

- The Complete Education Solution (Newham) – specialise in SEMH and ASC
- Woodcroft School (Loughton) – specialise in ASC and complex learning difficulties
- Brick Lane School (Tower Hamlets) – specialise in ASC
- Luxborough Court School (Essex) - specialise in SEMH and ASC
- The Complete Works (Southwark) – specialise in a range of needs including ASC

When considering placements in out of borough special schools, in addition to the quality of the provision and value for money, transport arrangements should also be considered. Long journey times can have a negative impact on a child's/young person's wellbeing which can lead to poor attendance and inevitably poor outcomes.

Transport arrangements for children and young people in out of borough settings usually involve expensive home to school taxi services. In 2024/25, taxi costs associated with SEN placements were up by £240,000 compared to the previous year totalling £1.677 million. Forecasts for 2025/26 project a further £280,000 rise reaching £1.957 million.

Waltham Forest: Other Types of Provision

The local authority has a legal obligation under section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure suitable education is provided for children or young people who are unable to attend mainstream schools, because of illness, SEND needs or individual circumstances such as permanent exclusion from mainstream settings.

The local authority commissions a total 155 alternative provision places, 20 of which are for primary aged pupils and the rest for secondary. More information on alternative provision placements will be provided following the “AP Sufficiency Review” which will take place later on in the year.

Table 51 - Waltham Forest's alternative providers 2025-26

AP SETTING	TYPE OF PLACEMENT	25-26 NO	COST
Hawkswood Primary KS1 & KS2	Day 6 /PX /Intervention	20	£24,924
Hawkswood Secondary	Day 6 /PX /Intervention	20	£24,924
Burnside KS3 & KS4	Day 6 /PX /Intervention	46	£24,924
North Birbeck Road	Day 6 /PX /Intervention	30	£24,924
The Oak Secondary (Heathcote)	Intervention	15	£15,000
St Raphael Secondary (Holy Family)	Intervention	12	£15,000
Big Creative (independent school)	Yr10 and Yr11 placement	12	£22,000

Not all children and young people with EHC plans attend a nursery setting, school or college. Parents have the right to electively home educate (EHE) their child, and the authority can arrange educational provision other than at school (EOTAS), if a school environment is inappropriate or incompatible with a child’s or young person’s needs in line with *section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014*.

There are currently 23 children and young people with EHC plans who are electively home educated and 98 children with tutoring arrangements in place. Home tuition is offered as a temporary arrangement for children and young people who are not in school for reasons such as:

- Permanent exclusion or risk of exclusion with limited availability in local specialist provision.
- High levels of anxiety or/and emotionally based school non-attendance (EBSNA).
- New to city/country with high needs where specialist provision is limited or an EHC needs assessment has not yet taken place.

Table 52 - Tuition packages for children and young people with EHCPs

Year (January) Actual	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
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Tuition Numbers	23	28	30	81	98
Year (January) Projected	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Tuition Numbers	115	129	145	163	183

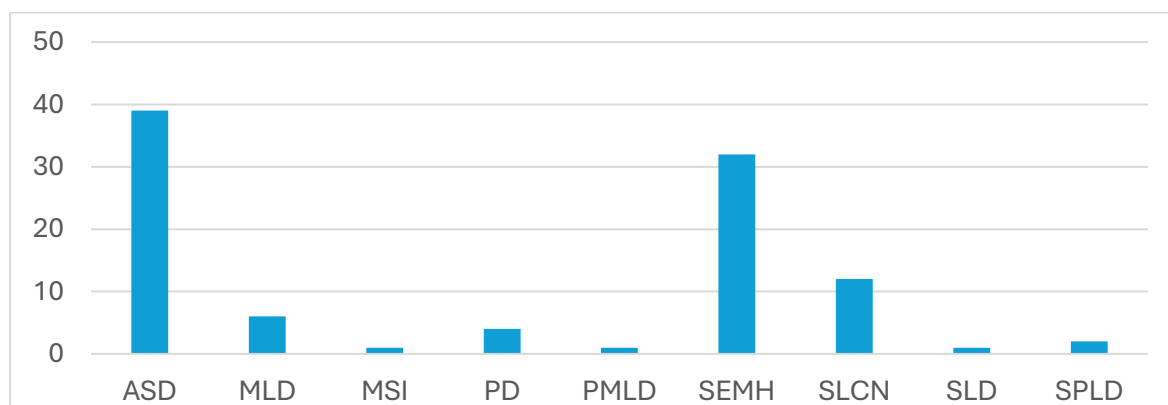
Home tuition packages for children and young people with EHC plans have been rapidly growing in the last two years with numbers more than tripling since 2023. Of those, 23% are primary school aged, 56% secondary and 21% post 16.

For most children and young people of Waltham Forest, home tuition is arranged on a short-term basis to ensure education can continue in line with their needs whilst a reintegration plan back to school or college is in place. There is no fixed legal time limit for how long home tuition packages should be in place as it depends on individual needs - in some cases tuition packages have been in place for over 12 months.

In 2024/25, Waltham Forest spent £1.455 million on home tuition packages for children and young people with EHC plans. This was £463,000 more than the previous year.

The highest prevalent primary needs of this group are autistic spectrum conditions (ASC – 40%), social emotional and mental health needs (SEMH – 33%), and speech language and communication needs (SLCN – 12%).

Table 53 – Primary needs of those with EHCPs on home tuition packages



Waltham Forest does not currently operate a framework for tuition services to quality assure and monitor provision. Whilst registered alternative providers are monitored by Ofsted, unregistered providers such as tutoring services must be checked/monitored regularly by the authority to satisfy the following:

- Providers must have robust safeguarding and child protection policies
- Staff must have DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) clearance
- Staff must be suitably qualified and trained
- Evidence of educational engagement, attendance, and pupil progress
- Service performance must be in line with the authority's expectations and contractual obligations

Waltham Forest: Summary of Findings

- In the last five years, Waltham Forest has been experiencing a higher rate of EHCP growth annually (12.5%) with a higher proportion of CYP with EHCPs per school population (6.5%) and a lower proportion supported at notional SEN level (12.5%) compared to National and London region equivalents.
- The 2024/25 DSG High Needs budget (£58.5 million) was overspent by £3.823 million mainly due to significant increases in spend across specialist settings, the highest being in INMSS.
- SEND transport costs in 2024/25 were £5.247 million which was an increase of £118,000 from the previous year with projections of a further £182,000 expected this financial year.
- There has been considerable EHCP growth in mainstream settings whilst capacity in special schools has not increased much over the years. This is putting additional pressure on mainstream schools to meet a higher complexity of needs.
- The number of EHC needs assessment requests have more than doubled between 2020-23. The number of those agreed for assessment is higher than national and regional equivalents and almost all assessments lead to an EHCP.
- The EHCP 20-week statutory timelines have significantly dropped over the years from 90% previously to 50% in 2024 and 31% to-date. This is mainly affiliated to a backlog in statutory assessments and staffing shortages in the educational psychology service (this is a national issue).
- The number of mediations and tribunals have also doubled in the previous two years with most appeals relating to decisions not to assess, disagreements regarding school placements and the contents of EHC plans.
- There is an overrepresentation of ASC primary needs whilst SEMH, MLD and SLD are underrepresented. Walthamstow is the biggest area of need having 45% of the local school population with EHC plans and 55% of all school settings.
- There is a growing complexity of needs among early years children but increases in Senif funding has contributed to a reduction in EHC plans. However, once Senif funding ceases at the end of reception, there is a significant increase in EHC plans in KS1.
- Specialist resourced provisions (SRPs) mainly cater for ASC needs. There are gaps in specialist provision for complex SEMH and learning needs particularly in primary settings.
- Special schools in Waltham Forest are currently full (822 pupils). There are 116 pupils from out of area local authorities occupying a space in local special schools (14% of the special school population).
- There are almost double the numbers of secondary and post-16 young people than primary children in Waltham Forest's special schools and more than 50% of all consultations for special school places are for year 7.
- Increasingly, the highest level of demand for specialist provision is for year 7 placements as EHCP growth in year 6 continues to be high. Many specialist placements are sought from out-of-borough settings due to local capacity issues. This is also the case for a smaller number of primary school aged children with SEMH needs.
- Special schools are all-through schools (apart from Belmont Park) which means that year 7 places are mainly taken up by existing year 6 cohorts moving up a year. Availability in local specialist provision is low for mainstream secondary transfers with complex needs.

- There are growing numbers of P16 learners placed within and out of borough college settings. Local post-16 providers have a high proportion of learners from out of borough authorities. Local post-16 settings are increasingly requesting additional placement funding as numbers across the region grow. The authority is not consistently tracking outcomes of post-16 learners which can lead to poor value for money.
- Most children and young people placed in out of area INMSS and maintained special schools/academies have ASC (32%) and SEMH (33%) needs. Of those the vast majority are secondary school aged (62%). Those placements are far more expensive compared to in-borough specialist placements (£60,000 on average).
- There is a growing cohort on home tuition packages mainly because of insufficient specialist provision to meet needs. The majority of those are secondary school aged (56%). The most prevalent primary needs of this cohort are ASC (40%), SEMH (33%) and SLCN (12%).

Waltham Forest: Priorities and Recommendations

Waltham Forest has a statutory responsibility to ensure there is sufficient provision for children and young people with SEND locally. As EHCP numbers grow, mainstream schools, are at the frontline of EHCP processes and are increasingly under pressure to deliver good outcomes with limited resources.

In contrast, developments regarding local specialist provision have been limited for years which has led to significant growth in out of borough specialist placements (including expensive INMSS) and home tuition packages.

Sufficiency duties for children and young people with SEND concern the Local Area Partnership more widely but specific developments are necessary to embed inclusive practice and secure additional specialist provision to meet the growing needs of the borough.

A five-year implementation plan to improve specialist capacity in the borough is outlined below including costings which are set out in *Appendix 2*.

1. Additional Specialist Provision (2026 – 2030)

a. Secondary Specialist Satellite Provision (capacity of 100 places)

It would take a long time for a new special school to become operational and is not part of the strategic intents of the authority. A secondary satellite specialist school with capacity to incrementally grow to 100 places (or two satellite sites with capacity to grow to 50 places each) would be ideal, in line with the offer at the Limes Hornbeam or Whitefield schools to meet the growing demand for secondary special school places.

By doing so, more specialist places will become available in primary for highly complex children transitioning from early years settings. Careful placement management will be required to ensure the highest level of needs are prioritised and placements are filled incrementally so that provision is not exhausted in the short term (i.e. start with year 7 and 8 classes and then expand the year groups annually).

The satellite provision(s) would ease demand pressures for special school places. This provision could also potentially instigate capital development plans to improve existing special school sites where facilities/buildings require attention. These plans would have to be led by the multi-academy trust(s) as part of their responsibilities in maintaining their buildings.

For example, capital planning at the Limes Hornbeam sites in the longer term, could potentially include a separate post-16 facility. This could create 50 additional places at the school whilst also enhancing the offer for young people as part of their preparation for adulthood.

b. Secondary ASC Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP)

A secondary SRP provision for young people with predominantly ASC needs and SEMH secondary needs including emotionally based school non-attendance (EBSNA). The vast majority placed in out of borough settings and on home tuition packages are secondary school

aged and predominantly have ASC and SEMH needs (ideally 20-30 places will be required to be filled incrementally).

c. *Secondary SEMH Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP) for girls*

A secondary SRP provision for girls with ASC needs including EBSNA (10 places). Most pupils in existing SRPs are male and girls are more likely to mask their needs.

d. *Two Primary SEMH Specialist Resourced Provisions (SRP)*

Two primary SRPs for SEMH with capacity of 10 places in each provision. There is currently a gap in specialist SEMH provision for primary pupils.

e. *Repurposing of Buxton Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP)*

Buxton SRP has falling numbers, and the area of need (SLCN) is not as prevalent in secondary aged pupils as it is in primary. The authority has more urgent areas of provision that require development such as those with SEMH/EBSNA needs who drop out of mainstream settings and have EOTAS or tutoring arrangements in place.

2. Improve SEND Support and Inclusive Practice (September 2025-27)

a. *Specialist Outreach Service (SOS)*

Improve SEND support in mainstream schools through consolidation and repurposing of the advisory teaching services to create a specialist inclusion team.

The authority is currently reviewing the existing contract in place with Flourish with a view to enhance the mainstream school offer to better support the implementation of SEND strategies and embed best practice.

b. *Improve the Graduated Pathway of Support*

Schools are expected to follow a graduated pathway of support for children and young people with SEN. Data indicates that the authority has proportionally less pupils on SEN support and more pupils with EHC plans than regional and national comparators.

There should be a level of consistency across all mainstream settings regarding the implementation of support plans for pupils that need it. SEN support plans should be devised to provide sufficient evidence of how schools are supporting pupils with SEN through what is ordinarily available provision and the wider local SEND offer in the borough. The authority could lead on the coproduction of SEN support plans in partnership with the SENCO network to ensure consistency in practice. This has worked well in other local authority areas.

The SENCO network should be further developed to improve communication and awareness of the wide-ranging services available to support SEND in line with the local offer including health and social care services. There should be a training and development framework for new Sencos and continuous personal development for teachers to improve their SEND skills and inclusive practice.

c. *Develop Therapeutic Arrangements*

Therapeutic arrangements with health partners also need to be reviewed for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and for those experiencing difficulties or barriers to learning due to their fine gross motor skills, sensory or emotional dysregulation.

d. *Further develop the SEND Dashboard to monitor additional KPIs*

The authority should further develop the current SEND dashboard to track and monitor additional KPIs in line with the SEND sufficiency parameters set out in this document. For example, tracking places in special schools, resourced provisions and high-cost placements in out of borough settings. This should also include an overview on spend to ensure the authority better manages its allocated DSG High Needs budget.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - EHCP placements forecast across types of provision

Unmitigated Position

WF Pupil Placement Numbers (EHCPs)

	Actual (Jan)	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
In-Borough	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Early Years (under 5s not in reception)	57	64	72	81	91	103
Mainstream	1618	1883	2192	2552	2970	3457
Resourced Provision (RPs)	177	185	185	185	185	185
Special Schools	706	710	719	732	746	753
P16	225	257	293	335	383	437
Total	2783	3099	3461	3885	4375	4935
Out of Borough						
Special schools	80	97	118	144	175	214
Mainstream	129	147	168	192	220	252
INMSS	73	88	105	126	151	182
Independent Mainstream	18	15	14	13	12	12
Other (AP setting)	29	30	31	32	33	34
P16 FE	94	102	110	118	126	131
P16 Independent Specialist	13	14	15	16	17	18
Total	436	493	561	641	734	843
Other						
Home tuition	104	117	130	140	150	162
EHE	18	19	19	20	20	21
PB/EOTAS	13	14	15	16	17	18
Residential (included in INMSS)	5	6	6	7	7	8
Total	133	144	155	164	173	186
Grand Total WF	3354	3742	4186	4702	5296	5979
Jan SEN2 Numbers	3663	4104	4617	5194	5843	6573
Difference (NEET)	309	362	431	492	547	594

Appendix 2 - SEND Sufficiency Implementation Plan 2025-30

SEND Provision	Satellite Special School (100 places)	Secondary ASC Resourced Provisions Two settings (30 places – 15 in each setting)	Primary SEMH Resourced Provisions Two settings (20 places – 10 in each setting)	Secondary ASC/EBSNA Resourced Provision for girls (10 places)
Autumn 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion with key stakeholders Agree site location and implementation process including financial arrangements Places to be filled incrementally Lead special school agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion with key stakeholders Vision, expectations and financial arrangements Places to be filled incrementally Settings identified & budget agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion with key stakeholders Vision, expectations and financial arrangements Places to be filled incrementally Settings identified & budget agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion with key stakeholders Vision, expectations and financial arrangements Places to be filled incrementally Setting identified & budget agreed
Spring 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff move and capital works Relocate existing children on site Relocate existing staff on site Capital improvements/furnishings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Level Agreement Settings sign SLA Capital improvements/furnishings Staff training plans confirmed LA identifies pupils for each setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Level Agreement Settings sign SLA Capital improvements/furnishings Staff training plans confirmed LA identifies 6 pupils for each setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Level Agreement Setting signs SLA Capital improvements/furnishings Staff training plans confirmed LA identifies 4 pupils for the setting
Summer 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils and Staffing Staff recruitment Pupils identified for the setting (potentially 20 yr7 and 20 yr8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils and Staffing Staff recruitment Pupil transition plans for each site (3 yr7 pupils and 3 yr8 pupils in each site to begin with) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils and Staffing Staff recruitment Pupil transition plans for each site Two separate classes in each site 6 pupils in each site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils and Staffing Staff recruitment Pupil transition plans for each site (potentially 2 yr7 and 2 yr8)
Financial Impact 2026/27	Estimated costs of provision (including transport): £1.551 million Estimated cost avoidance (OOB places including transport): £993,599 Net value: £556,921 deficit	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £423,072 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places including transport): £560,015 Net value: £136,943 saving	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £455,800 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places including transport): £379,755 Net value: £76,045 deficit	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £227,900 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places inc. transport): £186,672 Net value: £41,228 deficit
Autumn 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting opens Transition process for pupils Two classes of yr7 (10 in each class) Two classes of yr8 (10 in each class) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settings open Transition process for pupils Site1: Yr7 (3 pupils), Yr8 (3 pupils) Site2: Yr7 (3 pupils), Yr8 (3 pupils) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settings open Transition process for pupils Site1: 4 pupils, cohorts/year groups will be decided based on needs. Site2: 4 pupils, cohorts/year groups will be decided based on needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting opens Transition process for pupils Cohort: Yr7 (2 pupils), Yr8 (2 pupils)
Spring 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New starters LA identifies cohort for Sep 27 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New starters LA identifies yr7 cohorts for Sep 27 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New starters LA identifies eligible pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New starters LA identifies yr7 cohorts for Sep 27

SEND Sufficiency Plan 2025-30

Summer 2027	Cohort and Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruitment (as necessary) Transition plans for new starters (potentially 20 yr7s) 	Cohort and Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruitment (as necessary) Transition plans for new starters (3 yr7 pupils for each site) 	Cohort and Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruitment (as necessary) Transition plans for new starters 2 pupils in each site 	Cohort and Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruitment (as necessary) Transition plans for new starters (3 yr7 pupils for each site)
Financial Impact 2027/28	Estimated costs of provision (including transport): £2.367 million Estimated cost avoidance (OOB places including transport): £2.275 million Net value: £91,957 deficit	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £597,810 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places inc. transport): £1.092 million Net value: £494,621 saving	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £510,053 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places including transport): £741,077 Net value: £231,024 saving	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £255,026 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places inc. transport): £364,144 Net value: £109,117 saving
Autumn 2027	New Academic Year 27/28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New starters transition into setting Two classes of yr7 (10 in each) Two classes of yr8 (10 in each) Two classes of yr9 (10 in each) 	New Academic Year 27/28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New starters transition into setting Site1: Yr7 (3 pupils), Yr8 (3 pupils), Yr9 (3 pupils) Site2: Yr7 (3 pupils), Yr8 (3 pupils), Yr9 (3 pupils) 	New Academic Year 27/28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition process for pupils Site1: 6 pupils, cohorts/year groups will be decided based on needs. Site2: 6 pupils, cohorts/year groups will be decided based on needs. 	New Academic Year 27/28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New starters transition into setting Cohort: Yr7 (2 pupils), Yr8 (2 pupils), Yr9 (2 pupils)
Spring 2028	New starters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA identifies cohort for Sep 28 	New starters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA identifies yr7 cohorts for Sep 28 	New starters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA identifies eligible pupils 	New starters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA identifies yr7 cohorts for Sep 28
Summer 2028	Cohort and Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruitment (as necessary) Transition plans for new starters (potentially 20 yr7s) 	Cohort and Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruitment (as necessary) Transition plans for new starters (3 yr7 pupils for each site) 	Cohort and Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruitment (as necessary) Transition plans for new starters 2 pupils in each site 	Cohort and Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruitment (as necessary) Transition plans for new starters (2 yr7 pupils)
Financial Impact 2028/29	Estimated costs of provision (including transport): £3.213 million Estimated cost avoidance (OOB places including transport): £3,926 million Net value: £712,911 saving	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £804,398 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places inc. transport): £1.714 million Net value: £909,741 saving	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £666,332 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places inc. transport): £1.173 million Net value: £506,310 saving	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £333,166 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places inc. transport): £571,380 Net value: £238,214 saving
Autumn 2028	New Academic Year 28/29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New pupils transition into setting Two classes of yr7 (10 pupils in each) Two classes of yr8 (10 pupils in each) Two classes of yr9 (10 pupils in each) Two classes of yr10 (10 in each) 	New Academic Year 28/29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New starters transition into setting Site1: Yr7 (3 pupils), Yr8 (3 pupils), Yr9 (3 pupils), Yr10 (3 pupils) Site2: Yr7 (3 pupils), Yr8 (3 pupils), Yr9 (3 pupils), Yr10 (3 pupils) 	New Academic Year 28/29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition process for pupils Site1: 8 pupils, cohorts/year groups will be decided based on needs. Site2: 8 pupils, cohorts/year groups will be decided based on needs. 	New Academic Year 28/29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New starters transition into setting Cohort: Yr7 (2 pupils), Yr8 (2 pupils), Yr9 (2 pupils), Yr10 (2 pupils)
Spring 2029	New students LA identifies yr7 cohort for Sep 29	New starters LA identifies yr7 cohorts for Sep 29	New starters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA identifies eligible pupils 	New starters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA identifies eligible pupils

SEND Sufficiency Plan 2025-30

Summer 2029	Cohort and Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruitment (as necessary) Transition plans for new pupils (potentially 20 yr7s) 	Cohort and Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruitment (as necessary) Transition plans for new pupils (3 yr7 pupils for each site) 	Cohort and Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruitment (as necessary) Transition plans for new starters 2 pupils in each site 	Cohort and Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruitment (as necessary) Transition plans for new pupils (2 yr7 pupils)
Financial Impact 2029/30	Estimated costs of provision (including transport): £4.089 million Estimated cost avoidance (OOB places including transport): £5.531 million Net value: £1.442 million saving	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £1.019 million Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places inc. transport): £2.003 million Net value: £983,876 saving	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £663,425 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places inc. transport): £1.374 million Net value: £710,718 saving	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £331,712 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places inc. transport): £667,671 Net value: £335,959 saving
Autumn 2029	New Academic Year 29/30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New pupils transition into setting Two classes of yr7 (10 in each) Two classes of yr8 (10 in each) Two classes of yr9 (10 in each) Two classes of yr10 (10 in each) Two classes of yr11 (10 in each) Satellite reaches capacity, number of starters will depend on leavers. 	New Academic Year 29/30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New starters transition into setting Site1: Yr7 (3 pupils), Yr8 (3 pupils), Yr9 (3 pupils), Yr10 (3 pupils), Yr11 (3 pupils) Site2: Yr7 (3 pupils), Yr8 (3 pupils), Yr9 (3 pupils), Yr10 (3 pupils), Yr11 (3 pupils). Settings reach capacity, number of starters will depend on leavers. 	New Academic Year 29/30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition process for pupils Site1: 10 pupils, cohorts/year groups will be decided based on needs. Site2: 10 pupils, cohorts/year groups will be decided based on needs. Settings reach capacity, number of starters will depend on leavers. 	New Academic Year 29/30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New starters transition into setting Cohort: Yr7 (2 pupils), Yr8 (2 pupils), Yr9 (2 pupils), Yr10 (2 pupils), Yr11 (2 pupils) Settings reach capacity, number of starters will depend on leavers.
Spring 2030	Review sufficiency plans for special school placements	Review sufficiency plans for ASC provision	Review sufficiency plans for SEMH provision	Review sufficiency plans for ASC/EBSNA provision
Summer 2030	Prepare sufficiency proposals for 2031-36	Prepare sufficiency proposals for 2031-36	Prepare sufficiency proposals for 2031-36	Prepare sufficiency proposals for 2031-36
Financial Impact 2030/31	Estimated costs of provision (including transport): £4.164 million Estimated cost avoidance (OOB places including transport): £5.989 million Net value: £1.825 million saving	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £1.015 million Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places inc. transport): £2.105 million Net value: £1.090 million saving	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £676,854 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places inc. transport): £1.444 million Net value: £766,704 saving	Estimated costs of provisions (including transport): £338,427 Estimated cost avoidance (INMSS places inc. transport): £701,614 Net value: £363,187 saving

Schools Forum, 22 October 2025

Summary of Decisions

4 Schools Forum membership and powers

4.1 Schools Forum to agree:

- 4.1.2** That the current balance of School Representation is appropriate to continue for the 2025-26 session.

5 Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2024-25 and 2025-26 Forecast.

5.1 Schools Forum to Note:

- 5.1.1 The 2024-25 outturn position, including balances carried forward on the DSG
- 5.1.2 The latest DSG funding allocations for 2025-26 and the latest forecast outturn position.
- 5.1.3 The latest update on the statutory override position for DSG deficits.
- 5.2 School Forum noted the contents of this report.

6 School Improvement and Creation of a Waltham Forest Education Partnership.

6.1 School Forum to Note:

- 6.1.1 Maintained Primary and Secondary School Heads must base their vote at Schools Forum on proposals for de-delegation on the views of the group they are representing
- 6.1.2 To assist School Forum members with obtaining the views of the members of their respective group the Local Authority will ballot Schools immediately after School's Forum, with deadline for return 7th November 2025.
- 6.1.3 Schools' Forum members are expected to ensure that members from their respective group are aware of the voting process and encourage them to participate.
- 6.1.4 Next steps with regards to the de-delegation decision making process will be confirmed at the Schools Forum Meeting in December 2025
- 6.2 School Forum Noted the contents of this report.

7 Government Updates and 2026-27 Budget Setting

7.1 School Forum to Note:

7.1.1 The latest updates on the national funding formula (NFF) and the DSG

7.1.2 School Forum noted the contents of this report

7.2 School Forum to agree:

7.2.1 The draft 2026/27 budget consultation (Annex A) on managing the schools block formula within the funding allocation.

7.3 **To Vote:** Agree - 18, Disagree – 0

8 SEND Sufficiency Strategy and next steps

8.1 School Forum to Note:

8.1.2 The aims and objectives of the SEND Sufficiency Plan

- To establish growth in EHCPs across all settings and forecast a five-year placement plan based on unmitigated activity.
- To identify prevalence of needs and gaps in provision to inform strategic developments.
- To provide an analysis of High Needs spend with recommendations to ensure best use of resources and value for money.
- To produce a sufficiency plan that delivers on the Authority's statutory responsibilities. This will set out any developments required as part of early intervention and specialist provision for the short, medium and longer term. Specifically, this includes:
 - the types and numbers of additional specialist provision required to meet needs locally
 - the developments required across the SEND services and,
 - the strategic developments necessary to ensure the Local Area Partnership can meet the holistic needs of the borough.

8.2 School Forum Noted the contents of this report.

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Meeting / Date:	SCHOOLS FORUM December 2025	Agenda Item	4
Report Title:	Dedicated Schools Grant 2025-26 Forecast Outturn		
Action Required	For Information		
Author/Contact	Pamela Stack		
Email:	pamela.stack@walthamforest.gov.uk		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report updates the School Forum on the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) latest 2025-26 forecast outturn position.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. To note the latest DSG funding allocations for 2025-26 and the latest forecast outturn position.
- 2.2. To note the latest update on the statutory override position for DSG deficits.

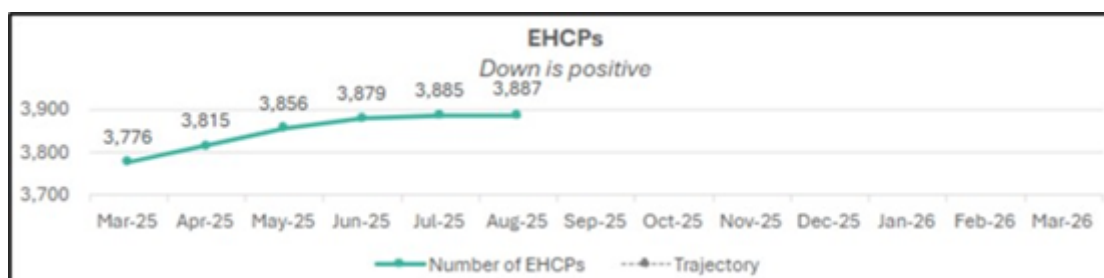
3. 2025/26 FORECAST OUTTURN REPORT

- 3.1. In line with national pressures, the high needs block continues to experience pressures as demand and cost increases have far exceeded the additional funding received. Across our local schools, year on year growth in EHCPs was 12% (from 2,309 to 2,579), with costs also increasing due to complexity. Across independent schools and other provision, costs have increased by 24% - we are seeing increases in the market rates set by independent providers. Post 16 spend also increased by 25%
- 3.2. The DSG Statutory Override has recently been extended from March 2026 to March 2028. This allows the Local Authority to record the deficit as an Un-Useable Reserve and it does not need to be offset by other balances in the LA accounts. There remains uncertainty about the long-term solution of management of high needs deficits and this presents a significant risk given the scale and ongoing economic conditions.

4. 2025/26 FORECAST OUTTURN REPORT

- 4.1. The 2025/26 DSG allocation following academy recoupment is £364.239 million across all four funding blocks. The following tables sets out the DSG Local Authority allocations by block for 2025/26, the forecast outturn and in year deficits.

- 4.2. The Schools Block and the Central Schools Services block (CSSB) are forecast with nil variance as expenditure is mainly formula driven or fixed with few risks.
- 4.3. The Early Years block is forecast net variance at this time as the outturn is dependent on actual in year delivery of Early Years provision / take up and adjustments made by the Department for Education (DfE) in year. Early indications from the January 2025 census and Summer 2025 take up of places is that the number of PTE's actually taking up a place was higher than the DfE's initial budget, therefore we are likely to make more payments in respect of these children, but would expect that a balancing payment would be made in Summer 2026 to reflect the additional 2025-26 budget required to cover this.
- 4.4. Expenditure is forecast to be contained within the available centrally retained budget envelope. It is not expected that there will be a reduction in the DSG Early Years block grant due to lower numbers. However, the Early Year Reserves will cover any unlikely shortfall in Early Years DSG block funding.
- 4.5. The High Needs Block forecast is a deficit of £9.446 million due to increase in demand, complexity and cost pressures linked to the increasing number of Education & Health Care Plans (EHCP's) and increasing complexity against a backdrop of limited funding increases. This is a favourable movement from the October report of £0.066m primarily due to an increased allocation within the High Needs Block and a decrease in Academy Recoupment. There are some other minor movements that offset each other.
- 4.6. In line with national pressures, the high needs block continues to experience pressures as demand and cost increases far exceed the additional funding received for 2025/26. The below graph shows an increase of 111 in the number of EHCPs since March 2025 to August 2025, which represents a 3% increase.



- 4.7. High level modelling of the high needs block has been undertaken, based on recent funding increases and demand growth. The estimated deficit on the high needs block is to increase to c.£60 million at 2029/30.
- 4.8. The government announced a Schools White Paper in the Spending review in June 2025. This was due to be published in Autumn 2025 and was widely expected to make significant changes to SEND provision with an implementation date of Financial Year 2027/28. It has been delayed to Spring 2026 with an anticipated implementation date of 2028/29. From this date SEND will be funded centrally but there have been no announcements regarding the treatment of existing deficits.

- 4.9. The following table shows the 2024/25 outturn and 2025/26 forecast outturn for the High Needs Block.

24-25 Outturn	Description	Budget 2025-26 Draft Version 2	Forecast		
			M3	M4	M7
	INCOME		Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
58,500,237	Gross Allocation	62,375,857	62,375,857	62,375,857	62,435,857
-9,683,167	Recoupment for Academy and Further Education	-9,704,000	-9,959,001	-9,959,001	-9,947,335
48,817,070	TOTAL HIGH NEEDS BLOCK INCOME	52,671,857	52,416,856	52,416,856	52,488,522
	EXPENDITURE				
	LBWF SCHOOLS				
13,075,991	Special Schools	13,100,000	13,058,679	13,258,679	13,258,679
2,744,556	Special Resource Provision	2,800,000	2,904,866	2,904,866	2,904,866
16,427,929	Mainstream Schools	18,200,000	19,238,403	20,238,403	20,238,403
150,483	Hawkswood & Burnside Top up funding	160,000	160,000	160,000	160,000
32,398,959	TOTAL LBWF SCHOOLS	34,260,000	35,361,947	36,561,947	36,561,947
	OTHER SCHOOLS				
4,976,189	Independent and NM Special schools	5,792,700	5,792,700	5,792,700	£ 5,792,700
2,691,526	Other LA Schools	3,567,538	3,567,538	3,567,538	£ 3,567,538
2,527,226	Alternative Education	3,350,309	3,350,309	3,350,309	£ 3,350,309
10,194,941	TOTAL OTHER SCHOOLS	12,710,547	£ 12,710,547	£ 12,710,547	£ 12,710,547
	ALTERNATIVE PROVISION				
829,431	AP College Provision	754,778	754,778	754,778	755,000
	LA supprt staff cost	222,222	222,222	222,222	222,000
30,509	Family Resilience	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000
286,250	SEMH Support Provisions (until Aug 2025)/(Oaks/St Ra	168,750	405,000	405,000	405,000
300,000	SEMH Assesement places (Belmont park Until Aug 2025	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000
	NELFT invoice - Risk			200,000	200,000
1,446,190	TOTAL ALTERNATIVE PROVISION	1,670,750	1,907,000	2,107,000	2,107,000
	PRU				
860,000	Place funding	860,000	1,035,000	1,035,000	1,035,000
53,546	Additional Funding for PRU places(Claw backs and Top	22,451	134,912	371,185	371,185
	Start up funding		150,000	150,000	150,000
140,000	PRU SEND Place funding	140,000	140,000	140,000	140,000
205,492	Additional SEND place funding at 14k/place	212,000	212,000	208,950	208,950
1,259,038	TOTAL PRU	1,234,451	1,671,912	1,905,135	1,905,135
	POST 16 PROVISION				
3,960,661	Top up funding and Spot Purchases	4,518,684	4,518,684	4,518,684	4,518,684
3,960,661	TOTAL POST 16	4,518,684	4,518,684	4,518,684	4,518,684
	OTHER HN COSTS				
728,430	Special Schools ADF - Historic (23-24)	759,262	819,262	819,262	706,953
	PRU ADF - Historic (23-24)	43,027	43,027	43,027	44,472
735,495	Historic HN Settings Pay & Pension Allocations 20-21	735,495	735,495	735,495	733,389
265,327	Home Hospital	315,000	324,450	324,450	324,450
710,150	SEND Success (Flourish) Excluding EY	675,000	695,250	695,250	713,355
	EY Team SEND Support	83,000	83,000	83,000	83,000
	EY Inclusion Work	108,000	108,000	108,000	108,000
270,320	S75 funding agreements (incl SLT & OT)	277,000	277,000	277,000	277,000
274,522	SEND Service	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000
324,000	BACME				100,231
72,000	FAP	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000
659,149	EY Top ups	770,000	770,000	770,000	770,000
4,039,393	TOTAL OTHER COSTS	4,035,784	4,125,484	4,125,484	4,130,850
53,299,181	TOTAL HIGH NEEDS BLOCK EXPENDITURE	58,430,216	60,295,574	61,928,797	61,934,163
4,482,111	HNB overspend	5,758,359	7,878,718	9,511,941	9,445,641

5. DSG HISTORIC BALANCES AND 2025/26 FORECAST OUTTURN

5.1. The historic DSG balances reported for each block are summarised in the following table, including a forecast balance for 31st March 2026.

DSG Block	31 March	31 March	31 March	31 March	31 March
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Schools Block	0.88	0.89	0.95	1.04	1.04
High Needs	(4.69)	(4.51)	(5.04)	(8.87)	(18.32)
CSSB	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06
Early Years	1.00	1.22	3.10	2.39	2.39
Total	(2.77)	(2.34)	(0.93)	(5.38)	(14.83)

6. STATUTORY OVERRIDE UPDATE

- 6.1. The financial challenges being experienced across many local authorities (LAs) with HNB budget deficits is widely known. The Association of Local Authority Treasurers Society (ALATS) has indicated that the nationwide SEND deficit currently exceeds £3 billion across English councils and is projected to rise to £8 billion in 2026/27.
- 6.2. Some of the key factors affecting the financial pressure are Increasing numbers of pupils with an EHCP, a shortage of local provision which results in an over reliance on more costly out of borough placements and increases in grant income from the DfE which have been insufficient to finance the increase in expenditure annually.
- 6.3. The DfE recognises that many LAs are facing prolonged and significant financial challenges in managing their HNB budgets. As of June 2025, the government has confirmed an extension to the statutory override for DSG deficits, allowing local authorities to continue excluding these deficits from their formal financial statements until the end of the 2027/28 financial year. This extension provides temporary relief for councils facing significant pressures from HNB expenditure, while a phased transition process is developed to reform the funding and delivery of SEND services.

- 6.4. In November 2025, it was announced that the government will centrally fund the full cost of SEND provision from 2028/29. The government has not stated how existing liabilities will be dealt with at the end of the statutory override.
- 6.5. As at March 2021 the Waltham Forest DSG reserves moved into a net deficit balance for the first time: £942,000 comprising a deficit on the HNB which has accumulated over several years, offset by surplus reserves on the other DSG blocks. The DSG deficit is projected to be £14.83 million as at 31 March 2026 with the movement caused mainly by spend from the HNB exceeding its funding allocation.

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Meeting / Date:	SCHOOLS FORUM December 2025	Agenda Item	5
Report Title:	Government Updates and 2026-27 Budget Setting		
Action Required	For input / approval / discussion		
Report Author/Contact details	Pamela Stack, Finance Business Partner Pamela.stack@walthamforest.gov.uk		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. To provide the Schools Forum with an update on Government announcements relating to the National Funding Formula (NFF) and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the schools forum notes the latest updates on the national funding formula (NFF) and the DSG
- 2.2. That the schools forum notes the results of the draft 2026/27 budget consultation on managing the schools block formula within the funding allocation.
- 2.3. That Schools Forum **agrees** to retain centrally the balance of the CSSB in 2026/27 (after the deduction for copyright licences and LA teachers' pensions, NICs and School Budget Support grants) to support the LA's Retained Duties held for all schools.
- 2.4. That Schools Forum **agrees** the request for Early Years centrally retained funding for 2026/27.

3. NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA 2026 TO 2027

- 3.1. On the 19 November 2025, the Minister of State for School Standards made a written statement setting out the schools and central school services (CSSB) national funding formulae for 2026 to 2027.
- 3.2. Provisional funding for mainstream schools through the schools NFF will total £50.9 billion in 2026-27. To simplify the funding system, the 2026-27 schools NFF includes funding for pay and national insurance contributions costs that were previously allocated outside the NFF. The funding for teachers' pay has been converted to a full-year equivalent, so that it will support the costs of the 2025 teachers' pay award across the whole 2026-27 funding year.

- 3.3. On top of this rolled-in funding, the core factor values in the schools NFF are rising by 2.1%, to increase the funding available to schools. Average per pupil funding in the NFF will rise to £6,771 in 2026-27. The funding “floor” will be set at 0%, continuing to ensure that the NFF protects schools against cash-terms reductions in their pupil-led per pupil funding. The NFF will continue to apply minimum per pupil funding levels.
- 3.4. The DfE published the 2026/27 [operational guidance](#), [technical guidance](#) and provisional allocations for local authorities in England together with notional school-level allocations. 2026/27 is the ninth year of the NFF for schools, high needs and central school services. All the information on funding allocations is **provisional** and subject to being recalculated based on October 2025 actual census information, it is also dependent on local factors. Final allocations will be published in December except for the early year’s block which will be determined by the separate national formula for early years.
- 3.5. It is important that schools understand that the DfE published school level allocations **are not** what the school will receive in funding for 2026/27. This is because of several reasons; demographic pressures (e.g. increases in the number of children attracting a particular formula factor i.e. free school meal funding), local measures for managing pressures (including growth, lagged funding, rates increase) and transfers between funding blocks.
- 3.6. LAs will also still only be funded at an average unit of funding for primary and secondary pupils so the very nature of the different models (i.e. how the money comes into the LA and how it is calculated to go out to schools through the formula) will likely mean that there will be an overall difference that will need to be managed.

4. SCHOOLS BLOCK

- 4.1. Formula structure remains similar to 2025/26 but
 - Unit values increased across most factors of approximately 2.11%
 - Funding from NICs Grant (£772m) and Schools Budget Support Grant (£465m) (worth £1.24bn in 2025–26) is now integrated into the NFF. These have been annualised and added into the Basic per-pupil rates, FSM6 and Lump sum factors
 - Minimum per pupil funding levels raised to reflect these additions.
- 4.2. The Core NFF funding (which accounts for the majority of the Schools Block) is made up of the following factors:
 - Pupil-led factors: Basic per-pupil, FSM, FSM6, IDACI, Low Prior Attainment, EAL, Mobility.
 - School-led factors: Lump sum (£152,700), Sparsity (up to £58,600 for primary, £85,200 for secondary).
 - Protection: Minimum per pupil funding (£5,115 primary; £6,388 KS3; £7,018 KS4) and funding floor.

- Area Cost Adjustment (ACA): Reflects regional labour market costs.
- 4.3. The funding floor ensures that schools receive at least the same per-pupil funding as in the previous year, plus the agreed uplift. For 2026–27, the floor operates alongside the Minimum Per Pupil Funding (MPPF) levels:
- Primary: £5,115
 - Secondary: £6,640
- 4.4. These increases largely reflect the rolled-in grants rather than real growth in budgets.
- 4.5. Updated allocations of schools and central school services funding for 2026-27 will be published to the usual timescale in December through the Dedicated Schools Grant allocations, taking account of the latest pupil data at that point. The publication of high needs allocations will follow by the end of the year.

5. CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK

- 5.1. The CSSB will continue to fund local authorities for the ongoing responsibilities they deliver for all pupils in maintained schools and academies. The total provisional funding for ongoing responsibilities is £379 million in 2026 to 2027. This includes funding for the rolling in of the centrally employed staff elements of both the SBSG and NICs grant into the CSSB for 2026 to 2027 – with the SBSG grant element recalculated on a full-year basis. Funding for ongoing responsibilities in the CSSB is calculated using a simple per pupil formula, the structure of which is unchanged from 2025 to 2026. 90% of the funding will be distributed through a basic per pupil factor, and 10% of the funding through a deprivation factor based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals within the past six years (FSM6) in mainstream schools.
- 5.2. Local authorities will continue to be protected so that the maximum per pupil year-on-year reduction in funding for ongoing responsibilities is at -2.5%, while the year-on-year gains cap will be set at the highest affordable rate, of 2.13 %
- 5.3. In Waltham Forest the actual percentage change to per pupil funding for ongoing responsibilities in 2026/27 is -2.06%, a reduction of £6,227.
- 5.4. The retained responsibilities held for all schools are shown in appendix A. for 2026/27 we are following the same approach taken in previous years. The NICs and School Budget Share Grants were paid as separate grants in 2025/26 and the value of the element being rolled into the CSSB was given by the DfE. The current allocation for 2025/26 and initial allocation for 2026/27 are shown in the table below:

INDICATIVE CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK 2026-27

Service	Initial 2025-26	Actual 2025-26	Initial 2026-27
Schools Forum	£37,000	£37,000	£37,000
Admissions	£745,000	£745,000	£745,000
Retained Duties	£388,816	£433,531	£384,271
LA Teachers Pay and Pensions	£161,821	£162,381	£162,381
NICs grant			£198,267
School Budget Support Grant			£146,348
Subtotal available to Council	£1,332,637	£1,377,912	£1,673,267
Copyright Licences	£379,112	£308,803	£315,319
TOTAL	£1,610,554	£1,686,715	£1,988,586

5.5. Schools Forum are asked to agree the planned use of the CSSB for 2026/27.

6. DE-DELEGATED SERVICES

6.1. De-delegated services are for maintained schools only and funding for these services must be allocated through the formula but can be passed back or de-delegated for maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools. The request for 2026/27 de-delegated services is included in agenda item 6 of this meeting. At this stage there is no further information for future years on how and if this will be affected by the introduction of the hard formula.

7. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK

- 7.1. The high needs block technical guidance has not yet been published so further information on this will be presented at the January 2026 schools forum meeting.
- 7.2. The government confirmed Statutory Override would be in place to 31st March 2028 and that after that date, SEND would be centrally funded. We are awaiting further details, which should be included in the White Paper due to be published in Spring 2026.
- 7.3. A full review of the high needs budget for 2026/27 is currently taking place to reflect increases in demand and will be reported to future Schools Forums.

8. EARLY YEARS BLOCK

- 8.1. The early years entitlement, LA funding operational guide is due to be published shortly, along with the funding rates and funding allocations.
- 8.2 The proposed Early years Funding Formula for 2026/27 will be presented to Schools Forum on 11th Feb 26, following a full consultation with all early years providers in January 2026.

Early Years Central Funding

- 8.3 The total central funding request for 2026/27 is £1.571m (2025/26 £1,353m) a net increase of £0.218m. These figures are an estimate based on a 3% top-slice, as the DfE have not yet published the 2026/27 EYDSG budget. Local Authorities are required to plan to pass-through a minimum percentage of their funding from the government to early years providers. This pass-through requirement ensures that most of the government funding reaches providers so that they can deliver the government's free entitlements.
- 8.4 An important change to note is that the DfE have announced that they will be increasing the pass-through requirement to 97% in 2026/27 (The minimum pass-through funding level for 2025/26 was 96% and prior to that was 95%). This is to reflect the fact that the government extended the free entitlement offer to include children of working parents from the age of 9 months and confirmed that the pass-through requirement now applies to all of the age group entitlements.
- 8.5 As discussed at the recent Early Years Task and Finish Group (EYTFG), it was permissible for the LA to retain a 4% top-slice of the EYDSG in 2025/26. However we applied a 3% top-slice for central expenditure in our 2025/26 budget to cover our expected total expenditure of £1.6m. This allowed a greater pass-through rate to providers. The EYTFG recommended the LA apply a 3% top-slice again for 2026/27 which should cover the expected expenditure of £1.571m.
- 8.6 The expansions of the FEEE entitlement to children from working families from 9 months old have required the LA to take on more responsibilities and manage increased workload across the various services who support the early years sector, and this has been reflected in costings for 2026/27. It is also important to ensure all inflationary uplifts to pay and changes to national insurance have also been reflected in our costs, whilst ensuring the core staffing is an accurate representation of employees' time across the Council to cover the LA's statutory duties in relation to free early education and childcare and early years sector priorities in order to retain and improve on the outcomes in relation to the number of children achieving GLD at the end of the EYFS. (currently 75% but target has been increased by the DfE to 80% by academic year 2027/28).

- 8.7 The functions and services that are funded from the centrally retained element of the Early Years Block will be covered in Agenda Item 7.

9. GENERAL – DSG DEFICIT REPORTING

- 9.1. An increasing number of LAs including Waltham Forest have been incurring a deficit on their overall DSG account, largely because of overspends on the high needs block. As a result, the LA continues to report to the DfE on the management of the high needs block deficits. According to current regulations the entire DSG deficit is an unusable reserve. Surplus balances on blocks other than High Needs cannot be spent.

10. ANNEX A – 2026/27 School Funding Consultation Outcome

- 10.1. There were a total of 7 responses received, 5 from Maintained Schools and 2 from Academies.
- 10.2. **NFF Factors and Rates**
- 10.3. Q. Do you agree that the NFF factors and rates should be used for 2026/27?
- 10.4. All respondents agreed on this. They cited fairness and consistency.
- 10.5. **Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)**
- 10.6. Q: Do you agree to use the maximum allowable MFG for 2026/27?
- 10.7. If not, please explain what MFG value you think should apply and why.
- 10.8. There were 6 yes and 1 no. Positive feedback included consistency and protecting schools. The negative response cited a concern that it will slow the transition to the NFF and limits increases in the core entitlement.
- 10.9. **Unallocated Funds**
- 10.10. Q. For 2026-27 after running the formula, if there are unallocated funds, should these be allocated through raising the rates for Basic Entitlement (AWPU), subject to the maximum permitted?
- 10.11. All respondents agreed citing fairness and consistency with prior decisions.
- 10.12. **Growth Fund**
- 10.13. Q. If the limit to changes to the Basic Entitlement rates is reached, should any further funds would be applied to the Growth Fund in 2026-27?
- 10.14. There were 6 no and 1 yes. Feedback included increasing funding for schools with split sites or falling rolls, transfer to High Needs Block and supporting a range of factors.
- 10.15. **Split Sites**

10.16. Unfortunately, the question relating to split sites was missed from the consultation. Members are welcome to give their views on the following question:

10.17. Q: How do you think the split site funding factor should be applied in LBWF for 2025/26? Use the NFF rate or the minimum or maximum?

Meeting / Date	SCHOOLS FORUM 10 December 2025	Agenda Item	6
Report Title	Services for Maintained Schools 2026-27 (ESG)		
Decision/Discussion/ Information	For Decision by Maintained School members of Schools Forum (primary, secondary, special, and the PRUs only)		
Report Author/ Contact details	Pamela Stack, Finance Business Partner Pamela.stack@walthamforest.gov.uk		
Appendices	Appendix A: Responsibilities local authorities hold for maintained schools Appendix B: Illustration of the cost to each maintained school		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report requests that maintained schools continue to allow the Local Authority (LA) to retain centrally funding towards the costs of services that maintained schools cannot perform for themselves. These services include preparing annual consolidated accounts and performance information; pensions administration; and health and safety and asset management responsibilities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Maintained School members of Schools Forum (primary, secondary, special and the PRUs) to note:

- 2.1.1 That there are a number of services that that local authorities have to provide for maintained schools which they cannot perform themselves.
- 2.1.2 Academies are required to perform these functions for themselves or pay their MATs to do so for them.
- 2.1.3 The agreement between maintained schools and the Local Authority in response to the cessation of the Education Services Grant (ESG) that maintained schools would contribute towards the cost of functions that they cannot perform for themselves.
- 2.1.4 If the LA and Schools Forum are unable to reach a consensus on the amount to be retained by the local authority, the matter can be referred to the Secretary of State.

2.2 Maintained School members of Schools Forum (primary, secondary, special and the PRUs) to agree:

- 2.2.1 To allow the Local Authority to retain centrally a per pupil amount of £25.00 which will represent no more than 0.5% of any maintained schools' budget share expressed as a per-pupil amount; with a matching per-place amount applied to the maintained special school and the PRUs in financial year 2026-27. This would create a budget of approximately £482,400, based on the Autumn 24 Census figures.

3. REASON

- 3.1 LAs can fund some services relating to maintained schools only from maintained school budget shares with the agreement of maintained school members of the Schools Forum.
- 3.2 The relevant maintained schools' members of the Schools Forum: primary, secondary, special and pupil referral units (PRUs), should agree the amount the LA will retain.
- 3.3 If the LA and Schools Forum are unable to reach a consensus on the amount to be retained by the LA, the matter can be referred to the Secretary of State.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Education Services Grant Exit Strategy

- 4.1.1 The Education Services Grant received by the local authority for 2016-17 was £2.6 million. This grant ceased in 2017-18. It comprised two elements: Retained Duties (for all schools and academies) funded at £15 per pupil and General Duties (for maintained schools only) funded at £77 per mainstream pupil and significantly more per place for the PRU and the maintained special school.
- 4.1.2 The Retained Duties funding was transferred to the Dedicated Schools Grant and now forms part of the Central School Services Block (CSSB) but the General Duties funding ceased.
- 4.1.3 In 2017-18 Schools Forum agreed an ESG exit strategy with the LA which included maintained schools agreeing that the LA retain centrally £19.78 per pupil towards the costs of services that maintained schools cannot perform themselves (such as preparing annual consolidated accounts and performance information; pensions administration; and health and safety and asset management responsibilities); and the LA ensuring that services are supported by dealing with the remaining shortfall through its Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

- 4.1.4 The rate of £25.00 per pupil was retained centrally in 2025/26. This represented less than 0.5% of any school's budget share and created a total budget of £482,400.
- 4.1.5 The list of responsibilities local authorities hold for maintained schools that may be funded from maintained school budgets with agreement of the maintained school members of the schools forum is attached as Appendix A.
- 4.1.6 An illustration of the amounts proposed to be retained centrally from the budget share of each maintained school in 2026/27 is attached as Appendix B. These figures will be updated when the DFE releases the 2026/27 APT with the October 2025 census and the budget allocations for 2026/27 are confirmed.

4.2 Methodology permitted

- 4.2.1 LAs should set a single rate per 5- to 16-year-old pupil for all mainstream maintained schools, both primary and secondary;
- 4.2.2 LAs can choose to establish differential rates for special schools and PRUs, if the cost of fulfilling the duty is substantially different for these schools. The rate will be expressed per-place rather than per-pupil for special schools and PRUs. We have set the same rate based on place numbers.
- 4.2.3 As with de-delegation, the amount to be held by the local authority will be determined after MFG has been applied.
- 4.2.4 Services can also include administrative costs and overheads relating to these services for:
- Expenditure related to functions imposed by or under Chapter 4 of Part 2 of the 1998 Act (financing of maintained schools), the administration of grants to the authority (including preparation of applications) and, where it's the authority's duty to do so, ensuring payments are made in respect of taxation, national insurance and superannuation contributions
 - Expenditure on recruitment, training, continuing professional development, performance management and personnel management of staff who are funded by expenditure not met from schools' budget shares and who are paid for services
 - Expenditure in relation to the investigation and resolution of complaints
 - Expenditure on legal services.

4.3 Schools that convert to academy status

- 4.3.1 If a school converts to academy status, the ESFA will recoup the amount retained for that school from the local authority's DSG for the remaining months of the financial year that the school is an academy.
- 4.3.2 The academy will be reimbursed in its monthly general annual grant (GAG) payment from the point of conversion.
- 4.3.3 Unlike for de-delegated services, there will be no phased transfer of funding following conversion so there will be immediate recoupment of this part of the budget.
- 4.3.4 For example: if a school converts on 1 January 2024 (three months prior to the end of the financial year), ESFA will recoup three twelfths of the retained amount relating to that school.

Appendix A – Maintained Schools

Schools operational guide: 2026 to 2027, Updated 19 November 2025

50.2 Responsibilities held for maintained schools only

School improvement

- expenditure related to core school improvement activities of local authorities with respect to maintained schools (Schedule 2, paragraph 53)

Statutory and regulatory duties

- functions of local authority related to best value and provision of advice to governing bodies in procuring goods and services (Schedule 2, paragraph 58)
- authorisation and monitoring of expenditure in respect of schools which do not have delegated budgets, and related financial administration (Schedule 2, paragraph 59)
- monitoring of compliance with requirements in relation to the scheme for financing schools and the provision of community facilities by governing bodies (Schedule 2, paragraph 60)
- internal audit and other tasks related to the local authority's chief finance officer's responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 for maintained schools (Schedule 2, paragraph 61)
- functions under regulations made under section 44 of the Education Act 2002 (Consistent Financial Reporting) in so far as the functions related to maintained schools (Schedule 2, paragraph 62)
- investigations of employees or potential employees, with or without remuneration to work at or for schools under the direct management of the headteacher or governing body (Schedule 2, paragraph 63)
- functions related to local government pensions and administration of teachers' pensions in relation to staff working at maintained schools under the direct management of the headteacher or governing body (Schedule 2, paragraph 64)

- HR duties, including advice to schools on the management of staff, pay alterations, conditions of service and composition or organisation of staff (Schedule 2, paragraph 65)
- determination of conditions of service for non-teaching staff (Schedule 2, paragraph 66)
- appointment or dismissal of employee functions (Schedule 2, paragraph 67)
- consultation costs relating to staffing (Schedule 2, paragraph 68)
- compliance with duties under Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (Schedule 2, paragraph 69)
- provision of information to or at the request of the Crown relating to maintained schools (Schedule 2, paragraph 70)
- school companies (Schedule 2, paragraph 71)
- functions under the Equality Act 2010 (Schedule 2, paragraph 72)
- establish and maintaining computer systems, including data storage (Schedule 2, paragraph 73)
- appointment of governors and payment of governor expenses (Schedule 2, paragraph 74)
- budgeting and accounting functions relating to maintained schools (Schedule 2, paragraph 75)
- retrospective membership of pension schemes where it would not be appropriate to expect a school to meet the cost (Schedule 2, paragraph 77)

Education welfare

- inspection of attendance registers (Schedule 2, paragraph 80)

Asset management

- general landlord duties for all maintained schools (Schedule 2, paragraphs 78a & b (section 542(2)) Education Act 1996; School Premises (England) Regulations 2012) to ensure that school buildings have:
 - appropriate facilities for pupils and staff (including medical and accommodation)
 - the ability to sustain appropriate loads
 - reasonable weather resistance
 - safe escape routes
 - appropriate acoustic levels

- lighting, heating, and ventilation which meets the required standards
- adequate water supplies and drainage
- playing fields of the appropriate standards
- general health and safety duty as an employer for employees and others who may be affected (Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974)
- management of the risk from asbestos in community school buildings
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012

Central support services

- clothing grants (Schedule 2, paragraph 54)
- provision of tuition in music, or on other music-related activities (Schedule 2, paragraph 55)
- visual, creative, and performing arts other than music (Schedule 2, paragraph 56)
- outdoor education centres (but not centres mainly for the provision of organised games, swimming, or athletics) (Schedule 2, paragraph 57)

Premature retirement and redundancy

- dismissal or premature retirement when costs cannot be charged to maintained schools (Schedule 2, paragraph 79)

Monitoring national curriculum assessment

- monitoring of National Curriculum assessments (Schedule 2, paragraph 76)

Therapies

- this is now covered in the high needs section of the regulations and does not require schools forum approval

Additional note on central services

Services set out above will also include administrative costs and overheads relating to these services (regulation 1(4)) for:

- expenditure related to functions imposed by or under chapter 4 of part 2 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (financing of maintained schools), the administration of grants to the local

authority (including preparation of applications) and, where it is the local authority's duty to do so, ensuring payments are made in respect of taxation, national insurance, and superannuation contributions

- expenditure on recruitment, training, continuing professional development, performance management and personnel management of staff who are funded by expenditure not met from schools' budget shares and who are paid for services
- expenditure in relation to the investigation and resolution of complaints
- expenditure on legal services

2026/27 Estimate uses 2025/26 Pupil Numbers and Pupil characteristics. It is a Base Line estimate only
Per Pupil Estimate uses October 2024 census

School Name	25/26 Estimate (Baseline: 24/25 Post MFG Budget)	NOR As at October 24	Per Pupil	MAX 0.5% of budget share
			£25.00	
	£130,817,740	19,296.00	£482,400	0.37%
Chase Lane Primary School	£3,977,416.31	614.00	£15,350.00	0.39%
Whitehall Primary School	£2,364,921.98	407.00	£10,175.00	0.43%
Downsell Primary School	£2,646,529.79	353.00	£8,825.00	0.33%
Newport School	£4,358,662.22	788.00	£19,700.00	0.45%
Chapel End Infant School and Early Years Centre	£1,410,787.30	198.00	£4,950.00	0.35%
Edinburgh Primary School	£1,361,083.33	186.00	£4,650.00	0.34%
Greenleaf Primary School	£2,299,300.40	406.00	£10,150.00	0.44%
Handsworth Primary School	£2,247,417.38	419.00	£10,475.00	0.47%
Thorpe Hall Primary School	£2,038,651.01	335.00	£8,375.00	0.41%
The Winns Primary School	£3,379,394.33	583.00	£14,575.00	0.43%
Oakhill Primary School	£1,193,996.09	196.00	£4,900.00	0.41%
Henry Maynard Primary School	£3,985,731.36	724.00	£18,100.00	0.45%
South Grove Primary School	£2,764,372.10	413.00	£10,325.00	0.37%
Dawlish Primary School	£1,155,114.46	180.00	£4,500.00	0.39%
Gwyn Jones Primary School	£2,249,452.95	404.00	£10,100.00	0.45%
George Tomlinson Primary School	£2,809,489.16	490.00	£12,250.00	0.44%
Mission Grove Primary School	£4,247,401.54	716.00	£17,900.00	0.42%
Coppermill Primary School	£1,086,836.15	172.00	£4,300.00	0.40%
Stoneydown Park School	£3,355,862.44	582.00	£14,550.00	0.43%
Parkside Primary School	£3,624,723.91	619.00	£15,475.00	0.43%
The Jenny Hammond Primary School	£2,224,531.90	384.00	£9,600.00	0.43%
Ainslie Wood Primary School	£2,319,925.02	403.00	£10,075.00	0.43%
Barn Croft Primary School	£1,102,033.09	172.00	£4,300.00	0.39%
Chingford CofE Primary School	£2,306,683.65	418.00	£10,450.00	0.45%
St Mary's Catholic Primary School	£1,185,410.61	210.00	£5,250.00	0.44%
St Joseph's Catholic Junior School	£830,294.78	125.00	£3,125.00	0.38%
St Joseph's Catholic Infant School	£670,227.35	91.00	£2,275.00	0.34%
Our Lady and St George's Catholic Primary School	£1,968,161.53	306.00	£7,650.00	0.39%
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School	£1,980,793.14	333.00	£8,325.00	0.42%
Frederick Bremer School	£7,729,686.76	884.00	£22,100.00	0.29%
Heathcote School & Science College	£7,793,182.75	897.00	£22,425.00	0.29%
Willowfield School	£8,150,195.27	1,010.00	£25,250.00	0.31%
Leytonstone School	£7,921,933.43	1,021.00	£25,525.00	0.32%
Walthamstow School for Girls	£6,949,321.17	895.00	£22,375.00	0.32%
Kelmscott School	£8,951,302.80	1,085.00	£27,125.00	0.30%
Holy Family Catholic School	£7,866,530.48	961.00	£24,025.00	0.31%
Buxton School	£8,310,382.17	1,119.00	£27,975.00	0.34%
Belmont Park		67.00	£1,675.00	
PRUs		130.00	£3,250.00	

Meeting / Date	SCHOOLS FORUM	Agenda Item	6
Report Title	School Improvement and Creation of a Waltham Forest Education Partnership.		
Decision/ Discussion/ Information	For Decision		
Report Author/ Contact details	Mary Jarrett: Corporate Director for Education. Mary.jarrett@walthamforest.gov.uk		
Appendices			

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the current position and decisions required to agree funding and strategic direction for school improvement in London Borough of Waltham Forest.
- 1.2 This report contains outcome of Primary and Secondary votes in favour of creating a Waltham Forest Education partnership building on the existing relationship with Haringey Education Partnership
- 1.3 This report sets out contractual next steps to secure School Improvement delivery for the next 5 years.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1.1 Maintained School members (primary, secondary) of school forum to agree:

- 2.1.2 That Schools Forum endorse the creation of a Waltham Forest Education Partnership for the next 5 years subject to the annual de-delegation vote in accordance with Schools Financial regulations.
- 2.1.3 That the Local Authority and maintained schools undertake a joint procurement exercise to secure a contract with Haringey Education Partnership to develop and deliver a Waltham Forest Education partnership overseen by Schools Forum and the Waltham Forest Strategic Education Partnership Board.
2. 1.4 That the governance arrangements ensure that all parties work together with clear contractual arrangements to continue to deliver outstanding outcomes for children and young people and to offer consistent and high-quality support to Education leaders and their staff to ensure that Waltham Forest continues to be a Borough which supports and values its teaching staff.

3. REASON

3.1 The reasons for this recommendation are as follows:

- The combined commissioning arrangements will allow an amalgamation of resources which will ensure a shared ownership and consistency of practice across the Local Authority Maintained schools and that the Local Authority investment benefits all children in Borough regardless of where they attend school (the SEND support and SATS moderation and monitoring will be for all schools in Borough to align with the Local Authority's statutory duties.) This borough-wide approach will be supported by HEP developing School Improvement Cluster Groups across the Borough which will facilitate membership from Academy Schools within the geographical clusters and ensuring that local expertise does not get 'lost' within this system. This approach will ensure schools are routinely supported to prepare for inspections under the new Ofsted Framework and prepared for SEND changes implicit in indicative new Schools white paper (due in 2026).
- Due to the high value of the contract, and the need to evaluate the continued delivery of the Waltham Forest Education partnership legal advice has been sought by Council officers. The advice suggests that a full procurement exercise is undertaken from April- September ensuring that Local Government and Schools financial regulations are followed and allowing for a 5 Year School improvement contract to be awarded with a direct award to the preferred partner (Haringey Education Partnership) whilst these governance arrangements are put in place.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In July 2024 Maintained School Heads met with the newly appointed DCS to advise her that they were disappointed with the lack of a school improvement offer and further that they wished to utilise monies which had been de-delegated for this purpose to purchase an offer from a neighbouring borough in the absence of an existing resource.
- 4.2 Following due diligence by Maintained Schools Heads, it was agreed that the Local Authority would fund HEP for the academic year 24/5 and this was extended until March 26 to align with budget cycle and allow for due diligence to be undertaken in advance of any further changes.
- 4.3 From May- July 2025 a group of Heads and School Leaders met together to consider options, costs and impact of the HEP contract. During these meetings the following issues emerged:
- High levels of satisfaction with HEP offer.
 - Reported alignment of HEP values with Waltham Forest values
 - Concerns that HEP offer needed to become more Waltham Forest facing, with recognition that longer-term contractual relationships would be required to facilitate this.
 - Concerns that without leadership and co-ordination this could quickly become a fragmented offer with some schools buying in and others feeling excluded.
 - It was noted that the HEP membership includes an allocated School Improvement Partner, plus access to additional school improvement work

(curriculum resources and 'deep dives', specific subject matter expertise and access to leadership support and collaborative working. It does not include access to the CPD offer, although this has been heavily discounted for schools in Waltham Forest.

- It was noted that the HEP offer in Waltham Forest has been restricted due to lack of longer-term engagement and more bespoke local offers and ways of working could be co-produced if a longer-term and financially sustainable partnership arrangement is made.

4.4 The consultation group considered statutory duties in relation to school improvement, which sit in the main with schools as funding is allocated directly to schools for this duty. However, the Local Authority retains a number of statutory duties in relation to School Standards and these will need to be reflected in the quality and standards of education partnership work. A joint commissioning contract co-ordinated by the Local Authority and overseen by a borough-partnership would allow for scrutiny and quality assurance of the offer to be maintained and supported by the relevant data (outcomes for children at the end of each key stage.)

4.5 The schools were advised that they could choose to buy individual membership of HEP which is costed at £19 per pupil but capped at £12.5k pa for the larger schools and £13k for secondaries with a sixth form. The minimum annual cost for smaller schools is £6k (to cover costs) there is a reduction in costs to £3k each as a special arrangement for the nursery schools and AP these reductions are managed as part of a collective commissioning arrangement but would need to be negotiated separately should schools choose to commission their own packages of school improvement.

4.6 Following October Schools Forum an independent vote (circulated by the Early Years Team) was distributed and 74% of maintained schools in Borough voted in favour of increased de-delegation to create a Waltham Forest Education Partnership. (100% maintained Secondary Schools and 61% maintained Primary Schools).

4.7 Following receipt of the outcome of the vote school's forum the Council sought legal advice regarding the governance and due diligence to ensure all parties are bound by robust contractual arrangements. The advice received that undertaking a joint, focussed procurement exercise would protect all parties in the case of financial or delivery issues and ensure compliance with financial regulations.

5. PREDICTED BUDGET SHARES FOR 2026-27

5.1 Due to HEP caps the de-delegated amount will be lower than the originally proposed £19 per pupil and the Local Authority will make a small contribution to ensure that all caps (lower and higher rate) are adhered to.

5.2 The Local Authority will also contribute towards the contract, including the costs of the SAT moderation and monitoring (costs to be agreed annually) and a contribution of £50k from the High Needs Block to cover the co-ordination and development of the SENCO forum, the creation of SEND school Standards and SENCO Support Partners. Each School's individual payment will be detailed in their APT.

6. THE DfE OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1 For de-delegation to be agreed in accordance the Schools Forum there must be votes from both primary and secondary schools. 100% Maintained Secondary Schools voted in favour of de-delegation and 61% of Primary Schools voted in favour of the de-delegation.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 It is proposed that oversight and delivery of the Waltham Forest Education Partnership and the procurement exercise is delegated to the Education Strategic Partnership Board with annual reporting to school's forum in advance of and following the annual de-delegation vote.

Internal Governance Report

Agenda Item:	6
Meeting / Date:	Schools Forum December 2025
Report Title:	Facilities Time 26/27
Action Required	For input / approval / discussion
Author/Contact	Mary Jarrett
Email:	Mary.jarrett@walthamforest.gov.uk

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To give the maintained school members of the Schools Forum the opportunity to agree to de-delegate funding during the 2026/27 financial year for the specific purposes outlined in this report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Maintained Scholl members of school Forum (primary, secondary) to agree:

- 2.2 That maintained **primary** school members approve the de-delegation of £87,469 funding for the Facilities Time for teaching staff. This is calculated by multiplying the number of maintained primary pupils 11,482 by the cost of releasing trade union representatives from the host school.
- 2.3 That maintained **secondary** school members approve the de-delegation of £58,708 funding for the Facilities Time for teaching staff. This is calculated by multiplying the number of maintained secondary pupils 7,444 by the cost of releasing trade union representatives from the host school.

3. REASON

- 3.1 To request annually de-delegation of trade union facility time.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Maintained schools can collectively agree annually through a vote at the schools' forum, that a service should be centrally funded because it provides better value or pools risk. This only applies to specific items as set out in The School and Early Years Finance Regulations 2025.
- 4.2 For any item not de-delegated, the service will not be provided by the Local Authority from 1 April 2026. Schools will be expected to procure the service directly using their school budget share.
- 4.3 For any item that is de-delegated an amount will be deducted from the school budget share to create a central budget held by the Local Authority, ring-fenced

within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). This deduction would apply to all the maintained schools within the sector. It does not apply to academies, special schools, nurseries or PRUs, although they may be offered the opportunity to buy into any de-delegated service by local agreement.

- 4.4 If there is an underspend on any of the budgets de-delegated in a previous year, the balance will be carried forward and used for the purpose it was originally de-delegated, reducing the de-delegation requirement in the following year or be repaid to schools if the service ceases to be de-delegated.

5. Context for Waltham Forest

- 5.1 Over the past few years, the Schools Forum has decided not to de-delegate budget provision for the cost of providing cover for professional association representatives representing teaching staff, so that trade union duties can be undertaken. These duties include:

- Negotiations with the employer, or other functions connected with the subjects of collective bargaining, such as terms and conditions, redundancy and dismissal arrangements
- Preparations for negotiations, including attending relevant meetings
- Informing members of progress and outcomes of negotiations
- Carrying out statutory requirements, notably the statutory right to be accompanied at a disciplinary or grievance hearing
- Attending training in aspects of industrial relations relevant to carrying out their trade union duties. This training must be approved by the Trades Union Congress or by the trade union of which he/she is an official.

- 5.2 The union duties have been carried out by Trade Union representatives, with paid release time from their host school. The current arrangement whereby schools have chosen to **not** de-delegate Facility Time funding and instead have the option to buy-in to an SLA to meet the costs of paid release time is not working. The table below shows the number of schools purchasing an SLA for Facilities Time over the last 3 years and the cost of funding release time.

5.3 Schools' contribution to TU facilities time over the last 3 years

2022-2023	£20,764.40	
2023-2024	£39,778.10 - £66,023.03	£26,244.93 shortfall
2024-2025	£29,699.05 - £62,598.37	£32,899.32 shortfall

- 5.4 The short fall in schools funding their statutory obligations under trade union legislation has been met by the Council and this cannot continue. It is important that schools are aware of the risks involved in not de-delegating funding for

Facility Time as the statutory obligation to consult, release, train and provide facilities will fall to the individual school.

- 5.5 The professional associations have agreed a new facilities agreement, and the release time based on membership numbers is as follows:

ALLOCATIONS

Trade union/Association Membership	Release From Teaching Duty
1-100	½ day per week
101-300	1 day per week
301-600	2 days per week
601-1000	3 days per week
1001-1500	4 days per week
1501-2100	5 days per week
2101-2800	1 week + 2 days (1.4fte)
2801 – 3500	1 week + 3 days (1.6fte)

- 5.5.1 The formula to calculate individual school contributions is based on each union's membership numbers, cost of paid release time and the number of pupils in individual schools. Historically, the Head Teacher unions have been excluded from this calculation, but we have rectified this so that they too get paid release time for carrying out statutory trade union duties. Unlike other Local Authorities we have not asked schools to pay a contribution to the support staff unions, where the Council employs full time officials (except for the NEU), but this may change in future.

The cost per school is to cover the release time for those teachers/trade union officers and is paid to the host schools.

5.5.2 2026/27 De-delegated Service

Union/Professional Association	Membership numbers	Release time costs
NEU	1771	£74,344
NASUWT	436	£29,512.80
NAHT	203	£30,320
ASCL	36	£10,000
	Total	£ 144,176.80

Proposed per pupil costs for Maintained Primary schools: £7.62

Proposed per pupil costs for Secondary schools: £7.62

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 There is a clear case for a school or employer to pay into local authority facility time pools, not least that funding for facility time is included in the general school funding. This was separate until 1988 but was then combined in general funding.

The Council recommends that schools de-delegate the budget for facilities time because it ensures:

- The promotion of good industrial relations and constructive solutions to issues.
- Section 168 of the Trade Unions and Labour Relations Act 1992 (TULRA) gives representatives of recognised trade unions the right to claim reasonable paid time off for specified purposes. The specified purposes include negotiations over collective bargaining, which is defined in law as relating to terms and conditions of employment; the physical conditions in which workers are required to work; engagement and termination of workers; allocation of duties; matters of discipline; trade union membership; facilities for officers of trade unions; and arrangements for consultation or negotiation.
- Pooled arrangements are the most cost-effective way for schools to meet their legal obligations.
- The alternative would mean that the unions would have to train individual school-based representatives to the required standard, at considerable cost.
- In addition to the visible work local trade union representatives undertake in schools, there is substantial hidden work primarily advising members and resolving issues before they even come to the attention of school managements. This unseen work saves schools considerable amounts of both time and money.
- Many workforce disputes, exit arrangements and effective solutions to workforce matters in schools are resolved at local level, which prevent employment tribunal or court cases.
- Although many of the unions employ regionally based staff to deal with high-level cases, it is beneficial to all parties to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity. This is why supporting paid time off for local union representatives makes sound business sense.
- Ensures that council employees in schools can access their legal right to representation in disciplinary, grievance, redundancy consultation and any other employment matters that might lead to dismissal

- It provides economies of scale and a level of expertise that would be difficult to match by local representatives within schools undertaking this role in addition to their day job.
- The ongoing relationship between the union representatives, the school and HR helps to shorten processes and nip issues in the bud. This may be negatively impacted with representatives who are not so familiar with the schools and Council's employment policies

7. CONSEQUENCES OF NOT DE-DELEGATING

7.1 The consequence of not having de-delegation approved is that:

- Staff may not receive representation at the early stages of a problem and are more likely to feel unfairly treated. Headteachers benefit from access to lay officials for early resolution of individual or collective issues. There would be no advantage to the school/employer in waiting for a full-time official to be involved in local negotiations/casework.
- If members are dismissed without adequate representation, the relevant trade union may take the matter to an employment tribunal case, which is extremely costly for the employer.
- There may be a lack of meaningful consultation in cases of redundancies, reorganisation and policy changes, which is a statutory obligation.
- Representatives in each school would need time off from their normal duties for extensive training and to represent members when casework arises. If the school has a large membership, more than one representative may be necessary due to conflicts of interest or situations where more than one member of the same union is involved or indeed simply because of the workload involved. Ensuring that the representative is able to represent members at meetings/hearings etc. may present a logistical problem.
- Each school would have to consult with all recognised trade unions in schools on employment issues, including consultation on policies.
- Each school would have to develop their own agreement on working with the trade unions for all their staff.
- Each school would have to put arrangements in place to ensure that employees had access to representatives of their recognised trade union and release the representative from their substantive role to attend individual and collective processes as this is their legal right. If there was not a recognised representative based in their school, they would have to give the employee the

opportunity to find someone to represent them. This may potentially slow processes down as regional officers do cover large areas.

- Each school would be required to retain records to provide information on facilities time undertaken within their school and the associated cost in order to fulfil the requirements of the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017. The Council is required to publish this on an annual basis, and this would be co-ordinated centrally.

DfE advice on trade union facility time (Published in 2014, updated in 2015)

The DfE Advice on Trade Union Facility Time sets out what each school's responsibility is in respect of facilities time. It is recommended that you read this before making any decision.

Teaching Trade Union Representatives.

At the end of each term, we request that the invoice is directed to the following mailbox schoolsHR.helpdesk@walthamforest.gov.uk. The invoice will need to detail a breakdown of hours and activity undertaken and which school this relates to. We will only reimburse for work undertaken for schools that pay into the facilities time.

Meeting / Date	SCHOOLS FORUM	Agenda Item	7
Report Title	Early Years Update 2025-26		
Decision/ Discussion/ Information	For Information		
Report Author/ Contact details	Eve McLoughlin eve.mcloughlin@walthamforest.gov.uk Assistant Director Early Years Childcare		
Appendices			

1. SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Schools Forum with an update on the latest duties and participation rates for funded early years education in Waltham Forest as compared to the wider local and national picture, and provide information regarding next steps by the Early Years Task and Finish Group in that context.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Schools Forum notes:

2.1.1 The work undertaken in relation to Early Years DSG in financial year 2025/26 to date

2.1.2 The principles that the Early Years Task and Finish Group indicated that they would like the funding formula for 2026/27 to be based on

3. REASON

3.1 The Local Authority is required to consult annually with Schools Forum on arrangements for Early Years provision.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Access to a high quality place

4.1.1 Access to high quality early years education can have a positive and long-lasting impact on children's outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children. Furthermore, access to flexible and affordable childcare provision can also

remove a significant barrier that restricts parents from returning to work to improve their family's financial position.

4.1.2 Local authorities are expected to play a strategic, and supportive role within the local early years sector, rather than directly delivering provision, and have the following statutory duties:

- 1) Secure sufficient places to enable access to free early education entitlement (FEEE) places for those who are eligible.
- 2) Provide information, advice, and guidance to parents regarding their entitlements and encourage access for those that would benefit.
- 3) Secure information, advice, and guidance to new early year providers or those which have been judged less than 'good' by Ofsted, regarding:
 - a. meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework,
 - b. meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities, vulnerable and disadvantaged children; and
 - c. effective safeguarding and child protection.

4.1.3 98% of Ofsted registered early years providers achieved an Outstanding or Good Overall judgement in their most recent Ofsted inspection outcome. This is broadly in line with London and national, although the number of settings achieving an Outstanding overall Ofsted inspection outcome is slightly lower than London and national averages.

Table 1: Overall effectiveness Ofsted inspection outcome for active early years Ofsted registered providers as at 31st March 2025

Provider Type	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
National	14	84	2	1
London	11	86	2	1
Waltham Forest	9	89	2	0

4.2 The local early years marketplace

4.2.1 Local authorities are reliant on Private, Voluntary, and independent providers, and school based early years provision to fulfil their duty to secure sufficient provision for those who need it. Providers within the early years marketplace deliver provision through a variety of operating models to ensure that there is the flexibility available to meet the needs of children and their families.

4.2.2 Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) and childcare places are provided by childminders, preschools, schools and full daycare settings. These providers operate from a variety of different premises (including purpose-built facilities, shared community buildings, schools, churches, and domestic premises). The remainder of the sector consists of maintained nursery schools and nursery classes within schools. These providers offer a mixture of full day care or sessional care dependent upon the type of setting to provide parents with a mixture of choice to meet needs of families across the Borough.

- 4.2.3 An analysis was undertaken of the number of children taking up an FEEE place by eligibility type across Autumn 2024 (when the new entitlement was rolled out to children from 9 months olds who could access up to 15 hours per week) and Autumn 2025 (when the new entitlement was rolled out to children from 9 months olds who could access up to 30 hours per week). Table 2 below shows that there has been an increase in the number of children from working families taking up their FEEE entitlement across all age cohorts, and a slight decrease in take up of universal places by 3&4 year olds as well as 2 year olds eligible for up to 15 hours per week FEEE under benefits related/disadvantaged criteria.

Table 2: Numbers of places being delivered by age cohort and eligibility criteria for Autumn 2024 vs Autumn 2025

Age Cohort	Autumn 2024	Autumn 2025	Increase/Decrease 24 vs 25
Under 2's (working families)	1,096	1,436	340
2 year olds (disadvantaged/benefits related)	549	488	-61
2 year old (working families)	1,192	1,321	129
3&4 yr old universal	3,350	3,295	-55
3&4 yr old (working families)	1,454	1,558	104

- 4.2.3 In Waltham Forest, the number of Ofsted registered places has remained relatively stable between Aug 2024 and March 2025 with the number of places available slightly decreasing by 21 places, the majority of these being places delivered by Childminders (15). This represented a 1.59% decrease in Childminder places in Waltham Forest as opposed to a 4.36 percentage point decrease in London and a 2.94 percentage point decrease nationally.

Table 3: Change in number Ofsted registered early years places between 31st Aug 2024 and 31st Mar 2025

Childminders	Places at 31 st Aug 2024	Places at 31 st Mar 2025	% increase/ decrease
All England	158,096	153,441	-2.94
London	27,766	26,556	-4.36
Waltham Forest	916	902	-1.59
Childcare on Non Domestic	Places at 31 st Aug 2024	Places at 31 st Mar 2025	% increase/ decrease
All England	1,112,167	1,127,012	1.33
London	200,701	204,372	1.83
Waltham Forest	5,959	5,953	-0.10

- 4.2.4 Waltham Forest maps the current and projected future supply and demand for early education provision across the Borough and publishes the information annually.

- 4.2.5 Whilst this is complicated by the variety of operating models for providing early education, and the fact that parents can pay to access additional sessions, this information can be used by local providers to identify potential gaps and opportunities across the borough. Local providers are able to cross reference this information with their own market intelligence and are usually quick to progress opportunities to fill any potential gaps in the local marketplace.

4.3 Access to free early education

- 4.3.1 Currently families can access the following free entitlements:

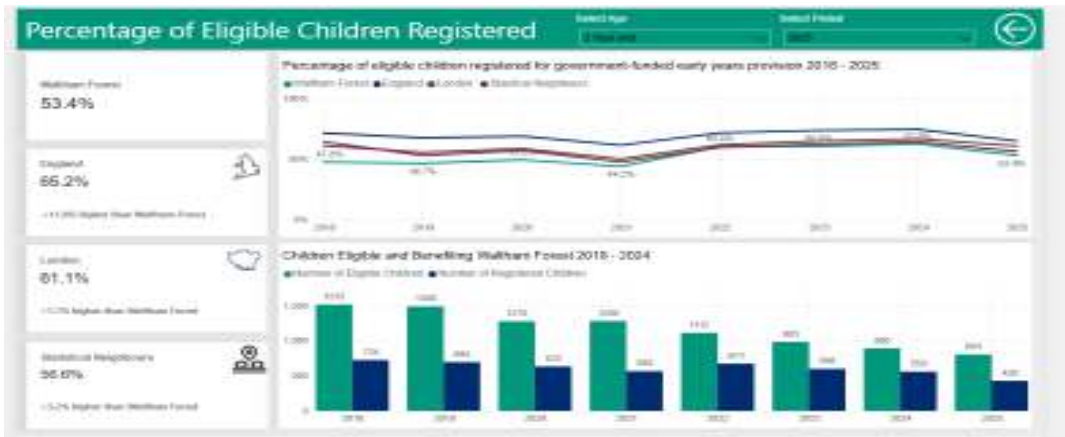
- Disadvantaged two-year-olds (benefits related) - the equivalent of 15 hours a week for 38 weeks per annum
- All three- and four-year-olds – the equivalent of 15 hours a week for 38 weeks per annum (universal entitlement).
- Working parents (extended entitlement) –the equivalent of up to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks per annum for children aged 9 months to 4 years old (between April and Aug 2025)
- Working parents (extended entitlement) – the equivalent of up to 30 hours per week for 38 weeks per annum for children aged 9 months to 4 years old (from September 2025)

- 4.3.2 Whilst there is no legal obligation on parents to access early education provision, the evidence is clear that accessing good quality early years provision can generate immediate positive impacts on development, and sustained, significant improvements on children's long-term outcomes, reducing inequalities in later life, particularly for those otherwise disadvantage children. For example, research has shown that pupils who enter reception with pre-school experience are better equipped to access learning in the reception class.

4.4 Two-year-old entitlement for children eligible for a place under benefits related criteria

- 4.4.1 In recognition of the reduced take up in 2021, a participation project and promotional campaign was implemented and has been running ever since, using centrally retained funding from the early years block. This work includes providing information on our webpages, our Best Start in Life e-newsletter (which has 16,779 of subscribers as of Nov 25), writing directly to inform families of their entitlements and speaking directly with the eligible families to identify their individual barriers to accessing, supporting them to overcome these.
- 4.4.2 There is also a particular focus on improving direct engagement with families where their child has been identified as not making expected levels of progress by age 2 as part of the EYFS 2 year old Progress check or the Heath Review at 2-year-old undertaken by the Health visiting Service. This has resulted in 7.9% of children taking up a place who require SEN Support as opposed to 5.5% in London and 5.1% nationally.
- 4.4.3 There has also been a significant reduction in the number of 2-year old's eligible for a place, reducing from 1515 in Jan 2018 to 804 in Jan 2025. This is mainly due to changing demographics within the Borough.

Table 4- Take up of 2 year old places under benefits related criteria over time



4.5 Universal three- and four-year-old entitlement

- 4.5.1 Historically, Waltham Forest participation in universal three- and four-year-olds has been reported as being broadly in line with other London LA's, however the DfE do state the accuracy of the data is impacted by the accuracy of the population data that they use for this analysis. As a result additional work has been undertaken on an LA basis to try and establish more accurate figures.
- 4.5.2 An analysis has been undertaken of children who took up a Reception and year 1 place in September 2025. Based on Autumn 25 census data there were 3189 Reception children and 3193 year 1 children on roll. This would suggest that the DfE estimates regarding total population numbers for 3&4 year olds are higher than the actual population numbers. (see table 5&6 below)

Table 5- Take up of places under universal criteria by 3 year olds over time

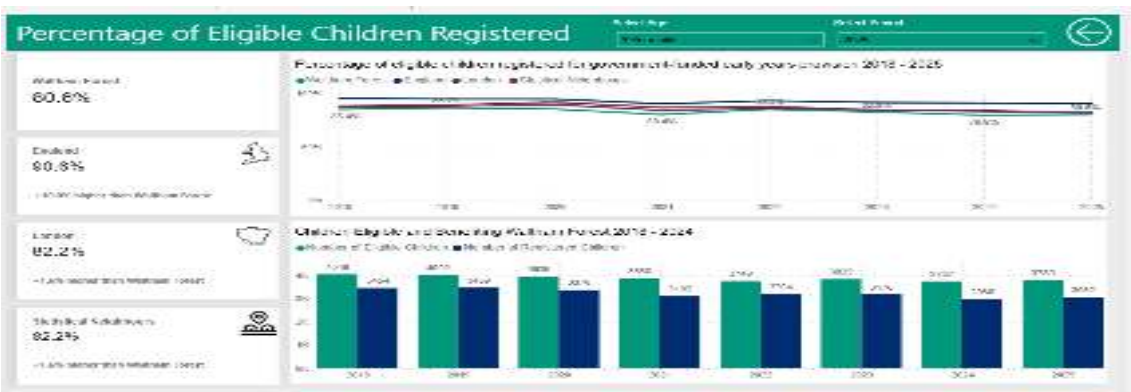
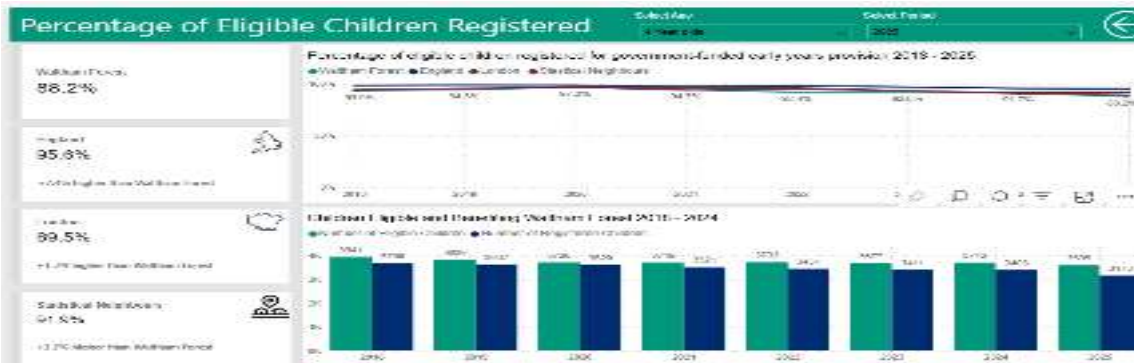


Table 6 - Take up of places under universal criteria by 4 year olds over time



4.6 Extended entitlements for working parents

4.6.1 The Spring 2023 budget announced a range of phased national changes to the early years sector. The aim of the measures is to support parents to access affordable, high-quality childcare so they can return to work more easily. A summary of the announcement can be found below:



4.6.2 The LA's Early Years and Childcare Team have worked in partnership with the early years sector to consider and progress the actions required across the sector to meet these new duties, which included:

- Online and in person information and advice sessions in relation to delivery models, calculating fees and charges to cover unit cost of delivery and developing written fees and charges documents for parents/carers for approx. 250 providers who have an agreement in place with the LA to deliver FEEE places.
- Developing and implementing a process to apply for revenue grant funding to create additional places (e.g. resources and /or a minimum funding guarantee to develop and pilot new delivery models)
- Developing and implementing a process to apply for capital grant funding to create additional places which included support with space planning, feasibility and obtaining quotes for works.
- Supporting schools with applications for School based Nursery Capital grants

- Facilitating area based meeting to discuss supply and demand and development of models to support capacity building and financial sustainability
- 4.6.3 As a result of this work all 3 phases of the expanded entitlements; 15 hours for eligible working parents of 2-year-olds from April 2024, 15 hours for eligible working parents of children from 9 month olds from September 2024 and 30 hours for eligible working parents of children from 9 month olds from September 2025 have successfully been rolled out
- 4.6.4 Whilst to date there have been minimal issues with parents being able to access provision, it is possible that there may be some areas of Waltham Forest where demand for places may be higher than current provision capacity for the last phase of entitlement expansion, particularly for Summer 2026 term when take up levels of places are highest. As such, we are proactively engaging with the sector, to review supply and demand data in order to inform business and place planning strategies to ensure sufficiency of places.
- 4.7 Information, advice, and guidance to providers**
- 4.7.1 All early years providers are able to access a universal/core offer of information, advice and training in relation to:
 - meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework,
 - meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities, vulnerable and disadvantaged children; and
 - effective safeguarding and child protection
 - meeting FEEE funding and business and premises related requirements
- 4.7.2 Providers are also able to access specific forums in relation to EYFS-Early Years Leads, SENCO's, Safeguarding and Childminding.
- 4.7.3 Details of this offer can be found on the via the Hub website¹
- 4.7.4 A regular Early Years Hub newsletter is sent to all Waltham Forest early years providers, to ensure they are kept updated of important local and national information, initiatives, or changes.
- 4.7.5 Additional information, advice and training is also given to all early years providers, as and when required, to ensure quality and accessibility of provision and appropriate support for children with learning and developmental delay /SEND (including those in receipt of SENIF funding), or vulnerable/disadvantaged children.
- 4.7.6 The LA's Early Years and Childcare Service provide a range of information and support for new providers in relation to safeguarding, premises suitability and business operations. Providers are also required to undertake an FEEE compliance check in relation to these areas as part of the LA's due diligence process in order to be offered a funding agreement to deliver FEEE places.

¹ <https://thehub-beta.walthamforest.gov.uk/childcare-providers>

4.7.7 For providers judged by Ofsted as being less than Good ², the LA's Early Years and Childcare Service provides direct support, advice, and guidance in relation to the areas of specific identified need via our Team Around the Setting (TAS)³ process.

4.8 Impact on school readiness

4.8.1 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Outcomes

Table: Number of children in Waltham Forest achieving a good level of development (GLD)

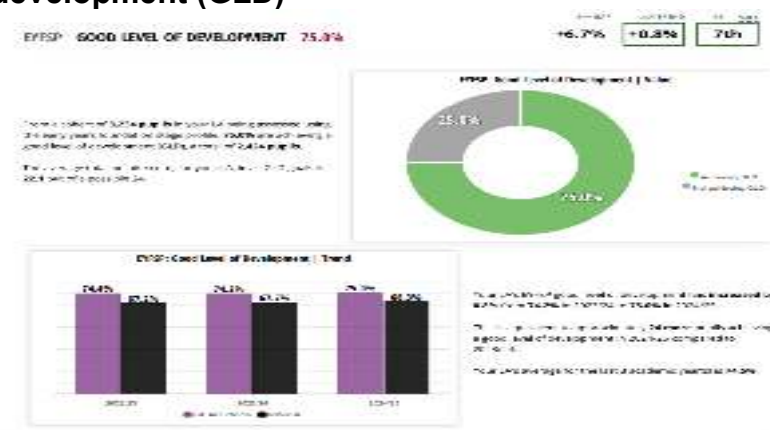
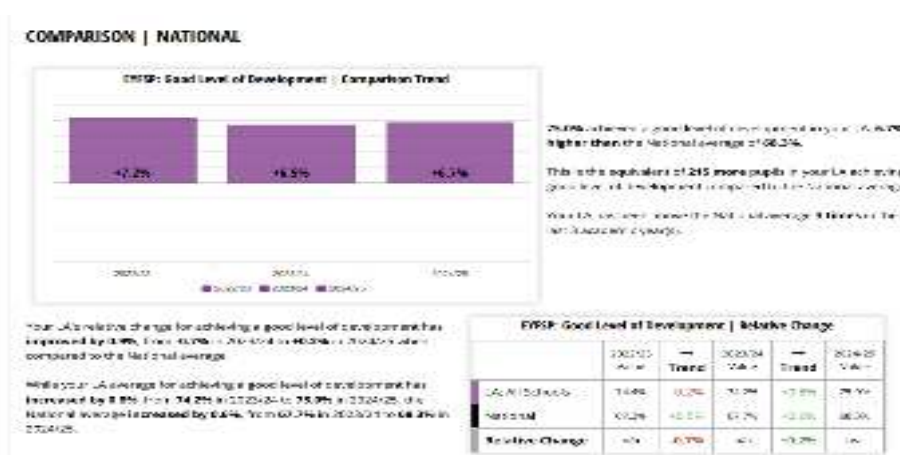


Table: Number of children in Waltham Forest achieving a good level of development compared to national



4.8.2 The DfE have recently revised the GLD targets for Waltham Forest by academic year 2027/28. These new targets are 80% of all children achieving a GLD (an increase of 5 percentage points and 66.5% of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and achieving GLD (an increase of 4.7 percentage points).

² this criteria will be reviewed in line with new Ofsted inspection outcomes which became effective in Nov 25

³ <https://thehub-beta.walthamforest.gov.uk/runningyourbusiness#tas>

4.9 Early education funding

- 4.9.1 For providers to be able to access free places for their children they must agree to comply with their FEEE funding terms and Conditions document and the Waltham Forest FEEE Funding Guidance, both of which are based on the national funding guidance for local authorities and is reviewed and refreshed annually.
- 4.9.2 Funding for 'free' two-, three- and four-year-old entitlement places is provided to local authorities via the Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The funding received is based on the number of eligible children accessing places on the January census. High levels of participation are therefore important, not only because this provides high quality investment in children's education from an early age, but also because a drop in participation will drive a drop in funding the amount of funding received.
- 4.9.3 Local authorities have a responsibility for distributing funding to local early years providers, based on participation and in line with a locally agreed funding formula, which must align with national guidelines. Whilst the funding Waltham Forest receives from central government is based on the January Headcount, it must be paid to providers based on termly participation rates.
- 4.9.4 The local hourly funding rates are determined by each local authority, but Waltham Forest Council does this in collaboration with providers by setting up an Early Years Task and Finish Group, which is made up of representative from across all areas of the early years sector and LA officers. In addition, a comprehensive consultation with all providers is conducted annually in January. The outcomes of this consultation inform the report presented to the Schools Forum in February, setting out the proposed Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) for the financial year commencing in April.
- 4.9.5 To support high quality delivery and provider sustainability, at the first meeting of the Early Years Task and Finish Group meeting on 4th November 2025 indicated that they would like the funding formula for 2026/27 to be based on the following principles:
- To pass 97% of funding through to providers with the remaining 3% able to be used flexibly for 'central costs' and to ensure that the LA meets its statutory duties in relation to early education and childcare and can continue to provide a range of information, advice and training that is free at the point of delivery.
 - To maximise base rate to providers and by keeping the proportion of the EYDSG allocated to supplements which increase hourly rates for all FEEE hours delivered based on a single set of Census data, such as deprivation, low.
 - To support disadvantaged and vulnerable children through elements of the funding formula that are based on the individual needs of children e.g. EYPP, DAF
 - Supporting system leadership and peer to peer support programmes.
 - Ensuring SENIF budget is sufficient to support the increased number of children that will be eligible for up to 30 hours of funding following the expansion of the FEEE offer to working families in September 2025

- Base funding and SENIF budgets facilitate the provision of a graduated response to meeting the needs of children that are making less than expected progress through inclusive practice, ordinarily available provision and additional support/funding where this is appropriate
- SENIF budget is sufficient to commission specialist support such as the All Talk and Support4Talk offer from SaLT's.

The EYFF will therefore be developed and consulted on over the coming months on this basis and presented to Schools Forum in Feb 2026.