
York Schools Forum**7th May 2026**

Report of Assistant Director Education and Skills

Title: Special School Banding review

Summary

This report provides an update on the work that has taken place to review the special school banding. This work proposes the implementation of a new streamlined banding structure to be introduced from September 2026

Main Report

1. Following the update to School Forum in January, the local authority has continued to meet with representatives from Applefields, Hob Moor Oaks and the Danesgate Community to review the proposals to move to a streamlined banding system. Since January the Schools White Paper and SEND reform consultation has been published, and this has been used to provide additional context to the review of the current banding system.
2. As previously reported the existing banding system is complex. Analysis of the banding assigned to support different children shows a lack of consistency in the application of the banding and there have also been repeated requests for additional funding after the initial banding decisions have been made.
3. The working group agreed that there were advantages to reducing the number of banding descriptors being used and to move to a consistent place plus top-up funding model which would work for the vast majority of children in specialist provision, as it took in to account the context of special school small group provision and higher staffing ratios. It would also be a move towards the spirit of the SEND reforms which would be to focus on supporting education providers to more effectively plan provision through aggregating resources to meet identified and predictable needs which would minimise delays in putting provision in place.
4. The working group considered an initial proposal to move to 3 broad bands, however, further scrutiny of the proposals led to the agreement that a move to a single band of £15K for the majority of children in special school places would be the best option to achieve the aims of the review which are to provide a transparent, financially sustainable and consistent funding approach. This would mean that the majority of children will be funded at the rate of £25K per place (£10K place funding and £15K top up). This will allow the specialist provisions the ability to plan a 3-year budget without the annual volatility created by the fluctuations created through the current system of individualised top -up funding which can both increase or decrease over time.
5. The current York banding provides descriptions of need – the purpose of the revised banding is to make sure the LA meet their duty, under the Children and Families Act

2014, to ensure that the special educational provision detailed in an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is secured and adequately funded. The specialist banding recognises the costs of the smaller group size and enhanced levels of personal care required in some cases. The top up is in addition to the place funding of £10k per place which is agreed with the local authority annually through commissioning process and should be viewed as the total costs to support each place to inform curriculum planning. This approach will create opportunities to be clearer about the development of staffing and provision to meet the most predictable areas of need in specialist provision. This will be reviewed following the publication of the specialist support packages by central government.

6. The move to a single band for the majority of children in special schools is based on the provision which is ordinarily available in a specialist setting. Characteristics of this include being educated in small groups of up to 10 pupils, with a ratio of adults to children and young people of 2:1. The curriculum will be heavily adapted to their needs and they will have access to a range of appropriate learning resources including assistive technologies. Some children and young people may have medical needs and their provision could include access to SALT and OT to support them to access their education.
7. The new banding proposals also recognise that there are a small number of children whose needs are significantly above the standard provision available in a special school and this will mean that an exceptional band has been written in to the proposals. This would allow a more individualised bespoke approach to developing provision to meet their needs. The application of the exceptional band will be through a panel of professionals meeting with the school to review the provision needed for each child and to agree a provision map which outlines the costed contributions from education, health and care.

Recommendations

8. School Forum support the implementation of the new special school banding from September 2026.

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