

High Needs Funding Block Review

October 2016

For Bracknell Forest
Council



THE PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW
IS TO ASSESS THE CURRENT
USE OF THE HIGH NEEDS
FUNDING BLOCK AND MAKE
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
FUTURE SPECIAL EDUCATIONA
AND DISABILITIES SYSTEM IN
BRACKNELL FOREST.

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FOR BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL

THE PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW IS TO ASSESS THE CURRENT USE OF THE HIGH NEEDS FUNDING BLOCK AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES SYSTEM IN BRACKNELL FOREST.

Executive Summary

The High Needs Funding Block Review provides a range of recommendations for the future Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system in Bracknell Forest and was carried out over a six-month period from April to October 2016.

This Review was commissioned to support future decision-making about the allocation of the High Needs Funding Block (HNFB) informed by changes to the education system and in the light of financial challenges. Bracknell Forest Council commissioned Chow Solutions Ltd to carry out the external review.

The scope for the Review is to report on:

- the effectiveness of the current school SEND system, and externally commissioned provision and how the HNFB is deployed in Targeted Services;
- emerging and future pupil demand;
- existing SEND provision funded from the HNFB and analyse against current and projected levels of need;
- options for better alignment of service provision to demand & potential for savings
- options for reinvestment of savings in an improved SEND system.

The following aspects lie outside the scope of the Review:

- early years funding, health provision and pupil premium funding;
- vulnerable children and young people who are not SEND;
- the quality of local authority provision supported by the HNFB;
- the quality of provision at College Hall and other schools funded by the HNFB.

The Review's recommendations are summarised below.

Key for table: Funding implications: - = cost increase < £50K; 0 = achievable within current funds; + = potential saving up to £100K; ++ = potential savings = £100K - £250K; +++ = potential saving >£250K.
Priority: 1 = highest priority to 3 = lowest priority. Complexity: 1 = lowest complexity to 3 = most complex.

High Needs Funding Block Review – Summary Recommendations					
Theme	Recommendation	What this involves	Benefits	Potential funding implications by 2020	Estimate: priority / complexity
6.1 Increasing strategic leadership by the school sector across the SEND system in Bracknell Forest	6.1.1 Increased school leader involvement in establishing and implementing a strategic vision for SEND	Establishing Bracknell Forest SEND Strategic Group to develop a local vision in consultation with strategic partners.	Better strategic leadership that results in more efficient, impactful use of SEND funds. More children are placed locally.	—	1 / 1
	6.1.2 School leadership of strategic accountability across the SEND system	Setting out clear terms of reference that ensure the group scrutinises and drives change, aligned with a new SEND Strategy.	Facilitates creative solutions to future demand pressures for SEND. Improved transparency and accountability for high needs funding and implementation of the local vision for SEND.	0	1 / 1
6.2 Strong Local Authority strategic leadership for planning of places and funding and commissioning	6.2.1 Remodel specialist provision to better meet future needs	A) Special School - remodelling of provision.	Fewer children going out of area, early assessment of SEND and more effective early intervention. More efficient use of funds.	+++	1 / 3
		B) Pupil referral unit - review current provision.	Improved quality of learning and attainment, and secure leadership and management. More efficient use of funding leading to improved alternative provision, including within mainstream schools.	0	1 / 3
		C) Resource centres - refocus planned places and introduce outcomes-based service level agreements.	Provide a better continuum of local provision for children and young people with ASD. More efficient use of funds.	+++	2 / 2
		D) Independent and non-maintained special schools - partnership and improved place commissioning.	More children are placed locally, over time; reducing transport costs and improving their access to community networks. More efficient use of funds.	+++	2 / 1
	6.2.2 Chief Officer approval required for high cost out of area placements	Robust process to approve and commission all high cost placements in excess of £20,000 per annum	More efficient use of funds. Helps to ensure more effective partnership working with health, social care and education to manage those with the most complex needs.	+	2 / 1

High Needs Funding Block Review – Summary Recommendations					
Theme	Recommendation	What this involves	Benefits	Potential funding implications to 2020	Priority vs complexity (scale 1 to 3)
6.2 Strong Local Authority strategic leadership for planning of places and funding and commissioning	6.2.3 Robust joint commissioning arrangements for SEND, starting with joint planning for 14-25 year olds.	Establish robust joint commissioning arrangements ensuring all assessments for EHCP, Care Act and health are coordinated. Involvement of parents / carers and young people throughout.	More efficient use of Council and health funds. Better transitions to adulthood for young people.	–	2 / 3
	6.3.1 A senior Council officer should review specific long standing SEND support contracts.	Modernising the commissioning approaches for speech and language therapy, sensory impairment and other SEND support services	Provides improved commissioned support for children and young people with SEND. More efficient use of funds.	++	2 / 3
6.3 Greater coherences to the SEND system designed with the child's need at the centre	6.3.2 Implement a continuum of support for all pupils with SEND, through building on local strengths and processes.	As part of updating the Local Offer, map pathways for all categories of SEND need.	Better information and advice and guidance for children and young people and their parents. Better multi-agency coordination	0	3 / 3
	6.4.1 Consistent, reliable and robust SEND data across the local system.	Establish a core SEND data set which is available to professionals across the system and reported to strategic leaders.	Understanding the impact of changes. Achieving improved outcomes for pupils identified at SEN support and with an EHCP or statement.	–	1 / 1
6.4 A data-rich SEND system that understands the differences it is making through planning and commissioning	6.4.2 Development of forecasting and cost projections to inform future SEND decision-making.	Model future demand for school places for SEND for up to ten years.	Better planning of provision and more efficient use of funds.	0	1 / 2

1. Introduction

1.1 Scope

Bracknell Forest Council's Children's Services, in consultation with the local Schools Forum, commissioned a review to assess the current use of the High Needs Funding Block (HNFB) across their local special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system and to make recommendations for the future. This is in response to projected financial pressures it is anticipated the HNFB budget faces in the future, as well as reviewing the financial robustness of the local system as it adapts to the new statutory arrangements under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the statutory SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015a).

The HNFB Review was carried out between April and October 2016, timed to inform strategic decision-making for 2017-18 onwards. Specifically, the scope for the Review is to report on:

- the effectiveness of the current school SEND system, and externally commissioned provision and how the HNFB is deployed in Targeted Services;
- emerging and future pupil and student demand;
- existing SEND provision funded from the HNFB and analyse against current and projected levels of need;
- options for better alignment of service provision to demand & potential for savings
- options for reinvestment of savings in an improved SEND system.

The following aspects of the SEND system in Bracknell Forest fall outside the scope of this Review:

- early years funding, health provision and pupil premium funding;
- vulnerable children and young people who are not SEND;
- the quality of local authority (LA) provision supported by the HNFB;
- the quality of provision at College Hall and other schools funded by the HNFB;
- outcomes for children and young people with SEND;
- analysis of the outcomes of pupils with SEND across LA provision, including the work of the Early Interventions Hub.

1.2 Definitions and terms used in the report

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is defined as a child or young person who has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her (DfE 2015a).

A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions. (DfE 2015a)

The Department for Education (DfE) oversees the national legislative and policy framework for all schools in England and defines specific, identifiable conditions that fall within the SEND responsibilities of schools and local authorities. These are listed in the Glossary.

The DfE, with the Education Funding Agency (EFA), also allocates the high needs funding block (HNFB): an element of the Direct Schools Grant (DSG) transferred to local authorities (LAs). The purpose of the HNFB is to fund the system to meet the educational needs of all children and young people resident in the LA with SEND high needs (see: section 3.1.2 for more details).

The HNFB allocation for Bracknell Forest is the central focus of this report.

1.2.1 LOCAL SEND SYSTEMS

A local SEND system is defined as that which supports and delivers the entitlement to education for all children and young people under 25 identified as having SEND

Under the Children and Family Act 2014, LAs have a statutory duty to identify all children and young people resident in their area who have SEND and ensure that the necessary statutory provision is made for them.

Key features of a local SEND system, as an element of the local school system, include:

- LA's have a lead for SEND, who oversees implementation of the strategy for SEND and would usually manage a team who monitor and implement the funding arrangements for all children and young people with high needs and the statutory processes to assess and identify them, via the education and health care plan (EHCP) process;
- A school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCO): a qualified teacher in a school or maintained nursery school who has responsibility for co-ordinating special educational needs (SEN) provision.
- The Local Offer: each LA must develop and publish information about provision they expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people who have SEND. This provides parents / carers of children with SEND with an important source of local information and schools are encouraged to summarise their own offer for SEND on the school's website as well.

Education and health care plans (EHCPs) were introduced in the DfE's 2015 Code of Practice for SEND (DfE 2015a) and are the culmination of a new process to identify and assess children and young people with high needs and the EHCP supersedes the previous 'statements of SEN'. EHCPs act as a single plan and define the support to be provided across education, health and social care, including setting out any additional funding from the HNFB for this support. Parent and child views should be set out in this plan and an annual review be undertaken by the child's school to assess progress and, if necessary, update the EHCP. The assessment of need and the updating of EHCPs is overseen in Bracknell Forest by its SEND Panel, chaired by the LA lead for SEND.

'SEN support' was introduced by the Code of Practice as a category covering children and young people identified with SEND, but not assessed as having high levels of need. These pupils' needs will have been assessed by the SENCO in their school and, through a graduated approach, access given to additional, personalised interventions to enable them to better access the curriculum and progress in their learning. The number and primary need of these pupils must be recorded by schools and reported in their annual census.

Some children with SEND have such complex high needs that these cannot be sufficiently supported by local, maintained specialist provision, whether in school or FE college. Following assessment, the

SEND Panel can decide that a place ought to be commissioned in a non-maintained special school (NMSS) or an independent specialist provider. NMSSs are specialist, independent education providers approved to run special schools and charge fees on a non-profit-making basis.

Social care and health are key components of the local SEND system. The LA has the flexibility to commission some services on behalf of schools and pupils with SEND. Often these are health services such as speech and language therapy (SALT) and occupational therapy (OT). There is also a significant need for support for some children and young people with SEND from local child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), services that are provided by Berkshire Healthcare NHS Trust (BHFT) in Bracknell Forest.

2. The Review Process

Bracknell Forest Council consults with its Schools Forum, a representative group of headteachers and governors, about local funding arrangements and budgets for education. In its budget consultation for 2016-17 BFC officers set out changes to “the allocation of High Needs Block income that is the most complex part of the DSG High Needs Funding” (p26 BFC 2016a). This paper identified the following challenges:

- The Education Funding Agency uses the 2012-13 levels of SEND as its baseline for financial allocations to LAs,
- There is a shortfall in the adjustment for payments for post-16 places such as for the new responsibilities for education for 19 – 24 year olds with an EHCP, and
- Some recent changes to the funding of NMSS places, which has had negative consequences for the finance model for the new ASD resource centre in Bracknell Forest.

In the light of the challenges, LA officers proposed to commission an external review of the HNFB to help with future decision-making and this was approved by the Schools Forum (BFC 2016a). This review commenced in April 2016 and completed October 2016.

2.1 Governance and the Review team

The Chrow Solutions Team consists of two experienced consultants, with extensive LA and education experience, and the head of a leading alternative provision academy and a former headteacher. More information about the Review team is in appendix 4.

The lead client relationship for the Review is with the Head of Targeted Services and this has been managed through fortnightly ‘keep-in touch’ (KIT) meetings, as well as regular telephone and email liaison. The Head of Targeted Services also chairs the Review’s Project Board made up of senior stakeholders in BFC’s Department of Children, Young People and Learning. The core membership of this group is the Principal Educational Psychologist (and Head of SEND) and the Head of Education Finance. The Project Board has met three times during the period of the Review and its terms of reference can be found in appendix 4.

The other key governance group for the Review is a Headteachers Reference Group of school leaders. Volunteers were recruited to the Reference Group in response to an invitation circulated by the Director of Children, Young People and Learning. The experience and views of Bracknell Forest schools are a key consideration of the Review and the opportunity to discuss issues and emerging themes with these school leaders has been essential. This has ensured that recommendations are firmly based on schools’ day-to-day experiences and that there is confidence in the future direction of SEND system change. The terms of reference and membership of this group is in [appendix 4](#).

2.2 Timeline and evidence gathering

The key elements of initiating and then gathering evidence for the Review are set out below. During the scoping phase, the Review team assessed in detail the challenges for data gathering and analysis, allowing for the fact that schools would only be able to participate during the summer term. Informed by these constraints and the requirements in the invitation to tender, the final scope was agreed, as set out in 1.1, and signed off in the first week of May 2016.

The period up until early July was set aside for evidence and intelligence gathering, culminating in the presentation of a Summary of Emerging Themes to the Project Board towards the end of that month. Further analysis and synthesis led to the development and agreement of the recommendations of the Review during September, with the final report and a draft SEND strategy for Bracknell Forest delivered on 14th October (see appendix 4).

2.2.1 SCHOOLS ENGAGEMENT

A core feature of the Review was to gather evidence from schools about their own planned provision for children and young people with SEND and their views about what works well across the current system and areas for improvement. A secondary objective was the engagement of the wider body of schools across Bracknell Forest, so they both feel they have had an opportunity to express views or submit evidence and are more likely to be engaged in future change and development. In addition to the Headteachers Reference Group (see: 2.1), school-level evidence was sourced from:

- visits to certain core providers: Kennel Lane School (the maintained special school in Bracknell Forest), College Hall (the PRU), Chilworth House School (a key NMSS provider for Bracknell Forest Council) and Bracknell & Wokingham College.
- interviews with a senior leader and SENCO from a range of mainstream schools in Bracknell Forest;
- additional data provided by the schools, including information for parents and provision mapping for pupils with SEND;
- an online survey of all schools in Bracknell Forest.

In preparation for the visits to the special school or PRU, a list of enquiry questions and data were circulated in advance together with a schedule for the visit (see: [appendix 2c](#)).

The mainstream schools that participated in the interviews were requested to supply a similar range of data and examples of their SEND provision mapping as well as respond to interview questions. The schedule of mainstream schools for the interviews was prepared by Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) following an invitation that was circulated to all state schools in the LA.

2.2.2 SURVEYS AND COMMUNICATION

A one-page summary about the HNFBR Review was prepared with officers from BFC and circulated in a briefing for headteachers and also accompanied the invitation to participate in the short online survey about the SEND system across Bracknell Forest. Versions of the same summary were used to inform stakeholders such as LA officers, school staff and parents of children with SEND.

The short online survey was developed to canvas the views of leaders from as many of Bracknell Forest's schools as possible (see: appendix 1). The survey questions were largely adapted from an earlier survey conducted as part of a DfE commissioned, national research project into the funding system for SEND, which reported in July 2015 (DfE 2015c). The adaptation of their questions has enabled some national comparison to be included in the analysis (see: section 4.6.1).

A short online survey for parents / carers of children with SEND was also developed and carried out, following the consultation session with Bracknell Dialogue Parents Forum. The purpose of this survey was to both seek the views of parents / carers across Bracknell Forest and to offer some

comparison of their views about aspects of the SEND system with those of school leaders (see: appendix 2). Following consultation sessions, the link to the survey was circulated via their database of members and by the disabilities team in BFC's children's social care. This resulted in 40 responses being submitted from the parents / carers of 45 children with SEND (see: 3.7.2).

2.2.3 LOCAL AUTHORITY DATA AND INTERVIEWS WITH OFFICERS

An initial list of data about SEND and the deployment of the HNFB to schools was drawn up. The Head of Education Finance and the SEND Lead ensured that time from key members of their staff was available to provide data from existing sources and additional time meet the Review team to build their understanding of the data.

Data requested included (for a three year period wherever possible):

- Breakdown by primary need and age of all pupils with statements or EHCPs.
- Breakdown by school and primary need and year group and top-up payment of all pupils with EHCPs or statements.
- More detailed budget breakdowns for Kennel Lane and College Hall.
- Detailed breakdown of the HNFB budget, including specific teams and services commissioned from the LA and elsewhere.
- Breakdown by school, year group and by primary need of all pupils recorded receiving SEN support.
- Information about the banding scales used to assess the element 3 payments.

A series of interviews with key LA officers was scheduled during the evidence gathering phase, including with members of the SEN Team as well as their manager, the manager of the Support for Learning service and with education finance staff as well as the Head of Education Finance.

2.3 Analysis and the emerging themes

The Review team's focus then moved to the analysis of data and the interview and written evidence. This culminated in the delivery of a summary of the Review's Emerging Themes to the Project Board, which was signed off in July. The final phase of the Review further tested the evidence and themes, leading to the final recommendations.

2.3.1 ANALYSIS AND SHAPING OF EMERGING THEMES

Following analysis, the Review evidence was found to fall into four overarching themes:

1. Increasing strategic leadership by the school sector across the SEND system in Bracknell Forest
2. Strong local authority strategic leadership for planning of places and funding and commissioning
3. A more coherent SEND system designed with the child's need at the centre
4. A data-rich SEND system that understands the differences it is making.

2.3.2 TESTING OF THEMES AND DEVELOPMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The final phase of the Review has involved further testing of the themes, including with the Headteachers' Reference Group, and shaping these into recommendations that the Project Board

view as achievable for Bracknell Forest. In support of implementation three case studies have been produced offering examples of practice from elsewhere in England about:

1. Approaches to traded SEND services to schools
2. Funding and commissioning arrangements with specialist school provision
3. Examples of approaches for schools to access funding to support pupils with high needs outside the statutory assessment processes.

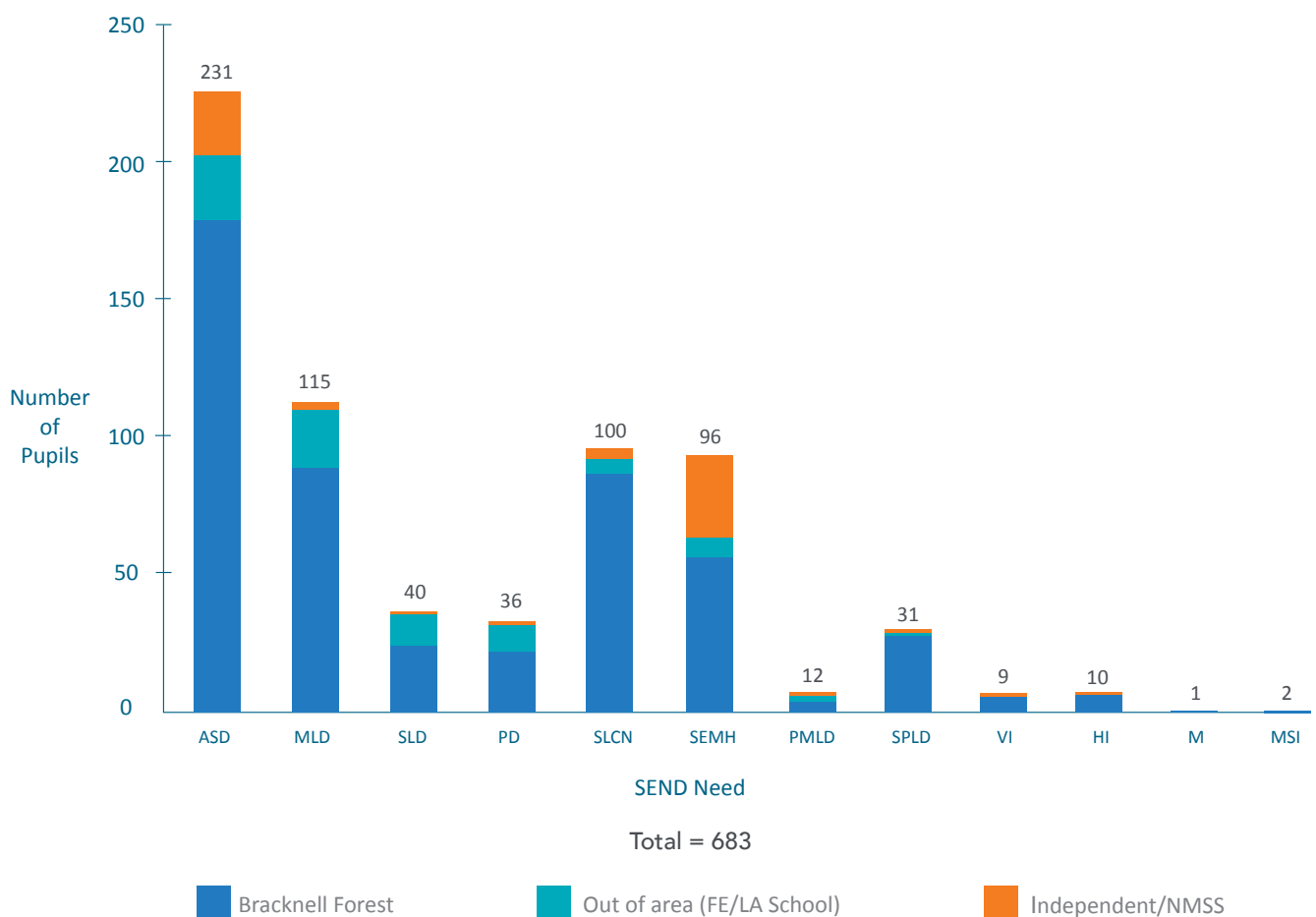
Finally, the Review's recommendations are reflected in the first draft of a new strategy for SEND for the school system across Bracknell Forest. This document will form an early element of a renewed strategic partnership across the LA, schools, voluntary sector and other partners to achieve value for money and better outcomes for all children and young people with SEND.

3. Overview of Bracknell Forest's SEND System

The SEND system is led by national government and, for England, the legislative, policy and funding arrangements are overseen by the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE's vision for the SEND system in England is *"of children and young people with SEND achieving well in their early years, at school and in college; finding employment; leading happy and fulfilled lives; and having choice and control over their support."* (p4 "Special educational needs and disability: supporting local and national accountability", DfE 2015b). A more detailed summary of the national law and policy for SEND is set out in [appendix 1](#), together with a national profile of levels of SEND need.

This section provides an overview of the SEND system as it currently operates across Bracknell Forest, in the context of national arrangements. This overview has a particular emphasis on the high needs funding block (HNFB) budget and on the parts of the system supported by it. In addition, this section includes additional detail about SEND provision in Bracknell Forest schools, including mainstream, specialist and FE colleges. More detail is also provided about the funded, out of area SEND provision and, finally, there is a summary of the findings from the two surveys conducted by the Review.

Fig 1: Total SEND Pupils with EHCP/statement (June 2016)



3.1 Summary

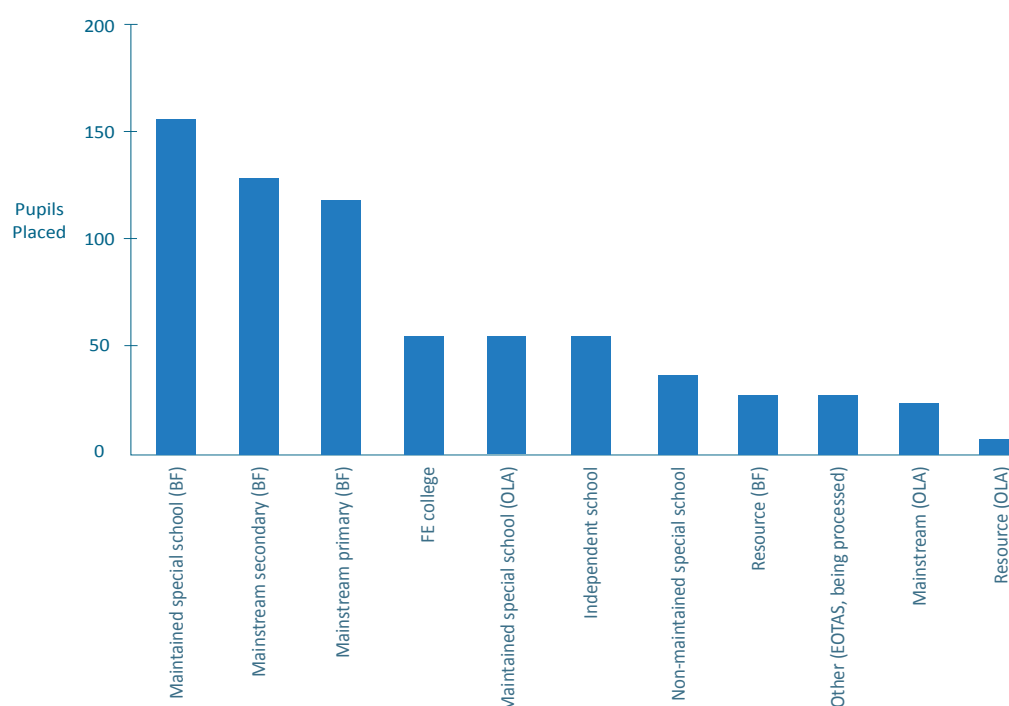
As of June 2016, there are 683 children or young people from Bracknell Forest with a statement or EHCP (*source: BFC's SEN Team*):

- 240 children attend primary phase school
- 301 young people of secondary age (years 7 – 11)
- 142 young people are 16 or older and educated at school or FE college

Figure 1 shows the primary SEND need of the children and young people as recorded on their EHCP or statement who are Bracknell Forest residents. This shows that the largest group are those with ASD, who make up 34% of these pupils. Nationally, those with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) as a primary need form the largest single group of pupils with SEND (see: appendix 1), but the proportion in Bracknell Forest is nearly 10% higher than the average for England. The graph also shows whether pupils, by need, are placed in or out of Bracknell Forest. Children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) are the largest group of pupils educated outside of Bracknell Forest (and in independent provision), followed by those with ASD.

Figure 2 gives a more detailed breakdown of where these Bracknell Forest pupils are educated. The vast majority attend either mainstream schools or resource centres (280) or Kennel Lane (157) in Bracknell Forest (BF), whilst another 82 attend either mainstream or state special schools in other LAs (OLA). These figures provide a snapshot from June this year; there were 11 cases still in the process of assessment, whilst there are lower FE and other post-16 numbers, due to young people leaving education following exams and not yet having confirmed their place for September.

Fig 2: School sector where pupils with EHCP / statement are placed



Increasing resident population is another challenge in Bracknell Forest.

- The School Places Plan (BFC 2015) estimates an increase of 21.4% in the total school population between 2015 and 2020. There were no specific analyses of future numbers of pupils with SEND carried out by BFC. However, if the number of pupils requiring an EHCP reflects this an additional 145 places will be required for pupils with EHCPs by 2020: from the 683 presently to 824 by 2020.
- Other pressures include a population ‘bulge’ that has been affecting the primary phase and is starting, from September 2016, to result in an increase in numbers needing places from year 7 in secondary schools. Since the proportion of pupils identified with SEND increases with age, this would suggest that the 824 figure, above, could be a conservative estimate.

Only basic analysis of SEN support data was possible (fig 3). An uncleaned, one-off extract of SEN support data from the summer term 2016 for 30 Bracknell Forest schools (including 27 primary schools) was provided. The largest two categories identified as primary need are ‘moderate learning difficulties (MLD)’ and ‘specific learning difficulties (SPLD)’, 23% and 22% respectively (fig 3). When comparison is made with national data (appendix 1), it is notable that the proportion identified in Bracknell Forest schools as having a ‘specific learning difficulty’ is 7% higher than nationally reported and ASD is about 2% higher. A total of 45 pupils, out of the sample of 1,370, are identified as having a sensory need, whether ‘hearing impairment (HI)’, ‘visual impairment (VI)’ or ‘multi-sensory impairment (MSI)’.

Fig 3: Pupils on SEN support by primary need (data from 30 BF schools)

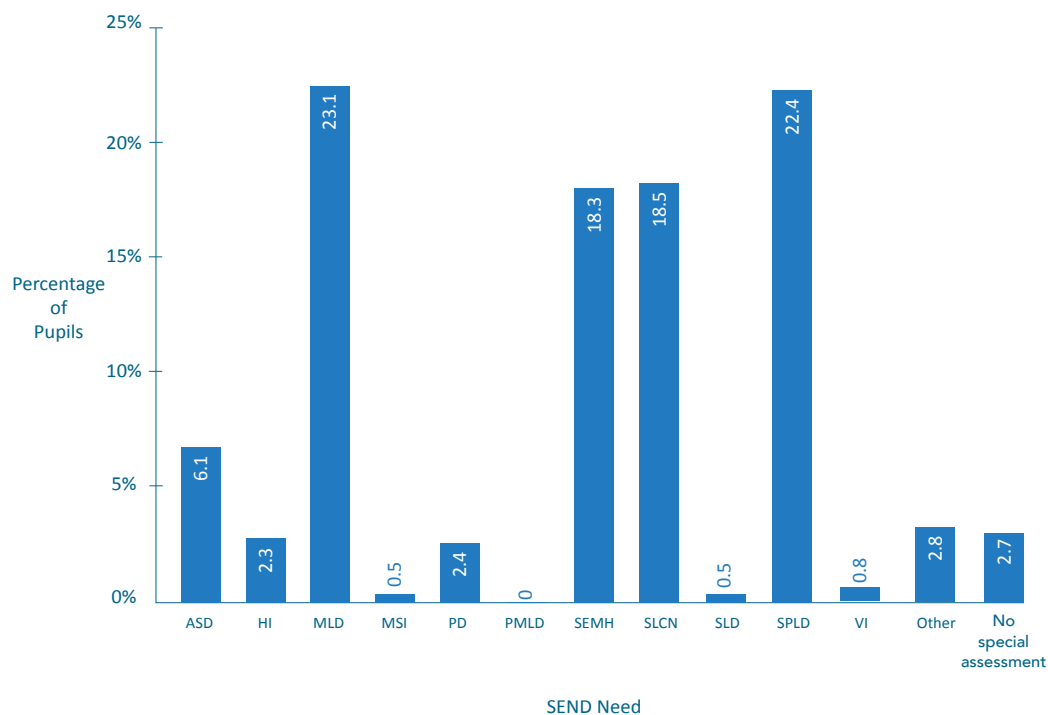


Table 1 compares the proportions of pupils with SEND for Bracknell Forest with its statistical neighbours and with England as a whole. These data indicate that the proportion of pupils with statements or EHCPs has reduced in Bracknell Forest since 2013 and, at 2.6% of the school population, is at a similar level to statistical neighbours. The reductions in Bracknell Forest contrast with the trend across statistical neighbours and England as a whole, where the proportion has plateaued. Similarly, the proportion of pupils on SEND support is reducing too, though faster in secondary schools than in primary. The data for 2016 do show an upturn across all categories, a situation that should be monitored by BFC to assess whether or not this is a trend.

Table 1: Comparison of school-age population - proportions with SEND

	% EHCP/statements all schools				% SEN support primary				% SEN support secondary			
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2013	2014	2015	2016	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bracknell Forest	2.9	2.7	2.4	2.6	14.0	13.4	12.0	12.7	13.3	12.2	9.5	10.1
Statistical neighbours average	2.7	2.75	2.75	2.65	14.2	13.4	11.3	10.7	14.2	13.8	11.0	10.6
England	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	16.0	15.2	13.0	12.1	17.0	15.9	12.4	11.0

(Source: DfE and LAIT)

A note of caution must be sounded about 'SEN support' data: schools alone assess needs and decide whether a pupil meets thresholds for SEN support. There is evidence that there is varied practice between schools, that the definition of SEN is open to interpretation and the school context can make a marked difference (NHS E Mids 2016), and this situation is reflected in Bracknell Forest too (see: [4.3](#)).

3.2 The High Needs Funding Block budget in Bracknell Forest

The HNFB is paid to LAs to support the educational needs of children and young people aged 0 – 25 with a high level of SEND; broadly whose education provision costs more than about £10,000 per annum. Further information about the direct schools grant and the per pupil payments in Bracknell Forest can be found in: [appendix 1](#).

The total allocation to BFC from the DfE was initially estimated at the start of the financial year 2016-17 as £11.719 million (after EFA deductions). The LA identified that this was insufficient for all

existing commitments and projected needs. Following discussions with the Schools Forum, a transfer, from the Schools Block of the Direct Schools Grant (see: [appendix 1](#), fig 20), of a further £2.093 million was agreed, giving a total 2016-17 initial budget of £13.812 million (table 2).

The Bracknell Forest high needs funding block (HNFB) budget for 2016-17 includes amounts retained by the Council to fund specific support services and to administer the HNFB. Table 2 gives the budget breakdown for 2016-17 (BFC 2016a plus further BFC finance data):

Table 2: Bracknell Forest HNFB budget breakdown 2016-17

	Description	Amount in 000's	
Bracknell Forest schools	Kennel Lane School	£3,271*	
	College Hall	£1,031	
	Primary mainstream top-ups	£365	
	Secondary mainstream top-ups	£328	
	Resource: Great Hollands School	£99	
	Resource: Meadow Vale School	£213	
	Resource: The Rise, Garth Hill College	£354**	
	Resource: Ranelagh School	£0***	
	Sub-Total		£5,661
Out of area, FE and independent schools	Pre-16 other LA schools (mainstream, resource & special)	£679	
	Pre-16, non-maintained specials (NMSS)	£3,060	
	Post 16 - FE	£1,294	
	Post 16 other LA schools	£188	
	Post-16 NMSS	£1,508	
	Sub-Total		£6,729
Bracknell Forest retained			£1,422
Total			£13,812

* Plus £500K for EFA grant for 6th form places and £263K top-ups from other LAs

** Plus £180K available from reserves for start up costs for The Rise.

*** Ranelagh School: as an academy its £132,000 pa allocation, deducted at source by EFA before BFC receives its HNFB allocation.

Table 3 details the breakdown of the £1.4 million from the 2016-17 HNFB that has been retained and managed by BFC. Support services to schools are organised via a mixture of Bracknell Forest SLAs, as part of a package covering the period 2016 - 19, or contracts with external providers (for example a contract with BHFT for speech and language therapy (SALT) and occupational therapy (OT)) that are brokered and managed by BFC. The approach to SLAs for support services for schools is at an early stage of development in BFC. The lead responsibility for monitoring the SALT, OT and sensory impairment contracts lies with the Head of Targeted Services.

Table 3: Breakdown of the Council retained elements of the HNFB budget 2016-17

Service area	Amount in '000 (2016-17)
SEN contingency (to schools)	£100
SALT contract	£213
Sensory Impairment contract	£251
OT contract	£37
Medical support	£37
Support for Learning	£149
Traveller Ed Service	£75
Autism and Social Communication Service (ASSC)	£84
Various services (< £35K each, e.g. EOTAS, Head of Targeted Services)	£155
Misc. recharges etc.	£213
Early years/ Child Development Centre	£108
Total	£1,422

3.3 Bracknell Forest mainstream provision (including FE)

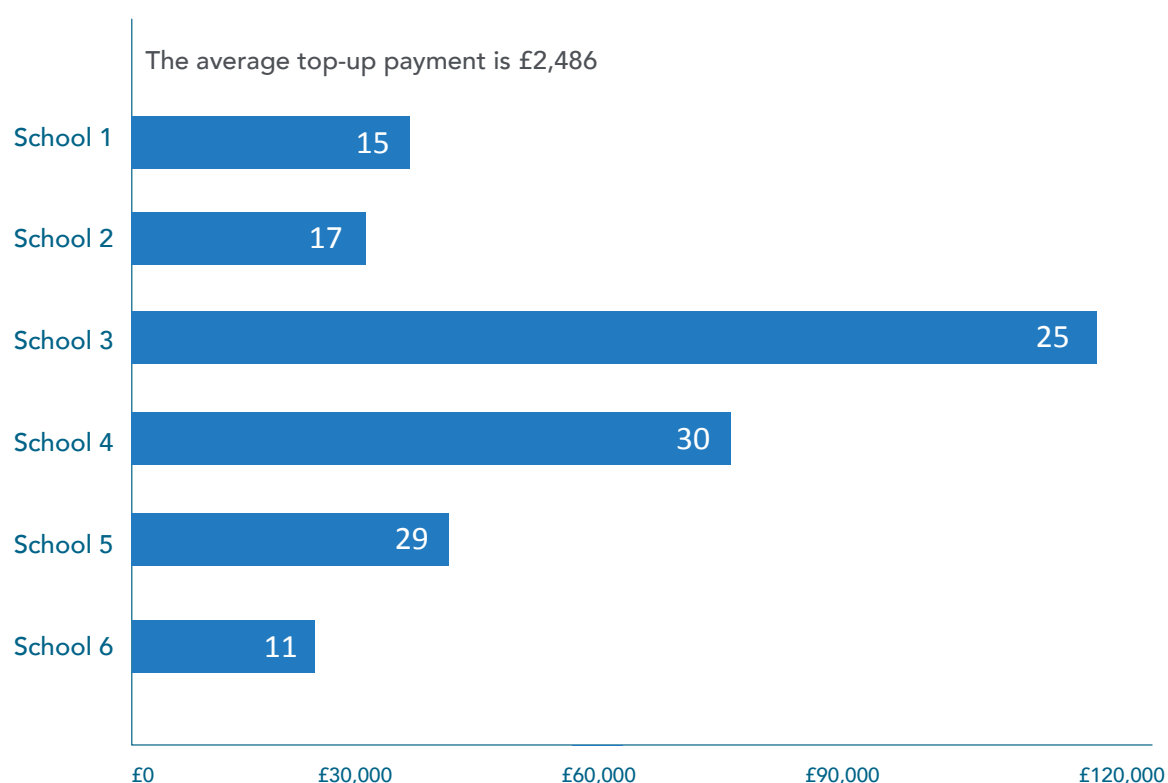
Bracknell Forest is a relatively small unitary authority in Berkshire and currently has 39 state schools within its area, including six secondary schools (all with sixth forms), 31 primary phase schools plus one special school (Kennel Lane School), a pupil referral unit (PRU) – College Hall; there is also one large tertiary or further education (FE) college: Bracknell & Wokingham College. There is a relatively

low level of academisation in Bracknell Forest: two secondary schools are academies. Work has begun on the Binfield Learning Village: a new, all-through free school that is planned to open, for year R and year 7 entrants, in September 2018. This is one of the LA's responses to the increasing school age population.

3.3.1 MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

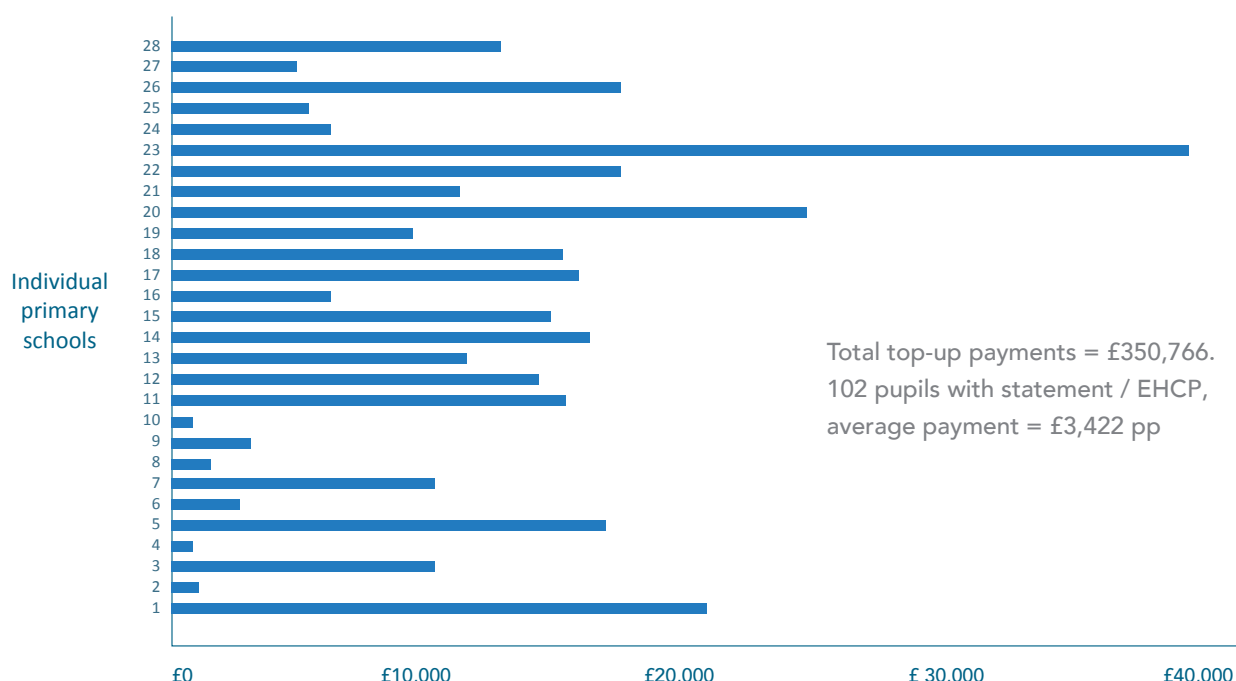
The six state secondary schools in Bracknell Forest all provide education for 11 to 18 year olds. It is worth noting that the number of students with a statement or EHCP falls to nine across all the school sixth forms. Fig 4 shows the amount of planned, top-up funding across the six schools in 2016-17 financial year, together with the number of students each school has with an EHCP or statement.

Fig 4: SEND top-ups per BF secondary school (2016), plus total students with an EHCP



There are 31 primary phase schools across Bracknell Forest, this includes three infants and three junior schools. Fig 5 shows the planned top-up payments across primary schools for support for pupils with statements or EHCPs. This reflects the range of numbers of children with an EHCP or statement: with three schools supporting between eight and ten children, whilst three schools have no children with high needs. The range of total top-up payments received by primary schools for pupils with EHCPs or statements ranges from around £1,500 up to £39,000.

Fig 5: SEND top-ups per BF primary school (2016-17)



In addition to the pupils with an EHCP or statement attending mainstream schools who are supported by the HNFB, there are several specialist resource centres at mainstream schools. These receive place payments as well as top-up funding to provide specialist support for a set number of pupils. There are no service level agreements (SLAs) in place for the provision commissioned by BFC at these resource centres. The resources centres are:

- The Rainbow Unit at Great Hollands Primary School – 6 fte early years places for pupils with speech and communication difficulties; average number on roll (NOR) for 2015-16 = 4.
- The Speech and Language Resource at Meadow Vale Primary School – 20 places for primary age with ‘speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)’; average NOR for 2015-16 = 17.
- The Rise, Garth Hill College – opened in Sept 2015, a centre for pupils with autism (ASD) and is planned to grow to educate years 7 to 13, with 7 students per year. Current year 7 has NOR of 7.
- Ranelagh School – resource centre for students with ‘specific learning difficulties (SPLD)’ currently funded for 16 places; average NOR for 2015-16 = 4.

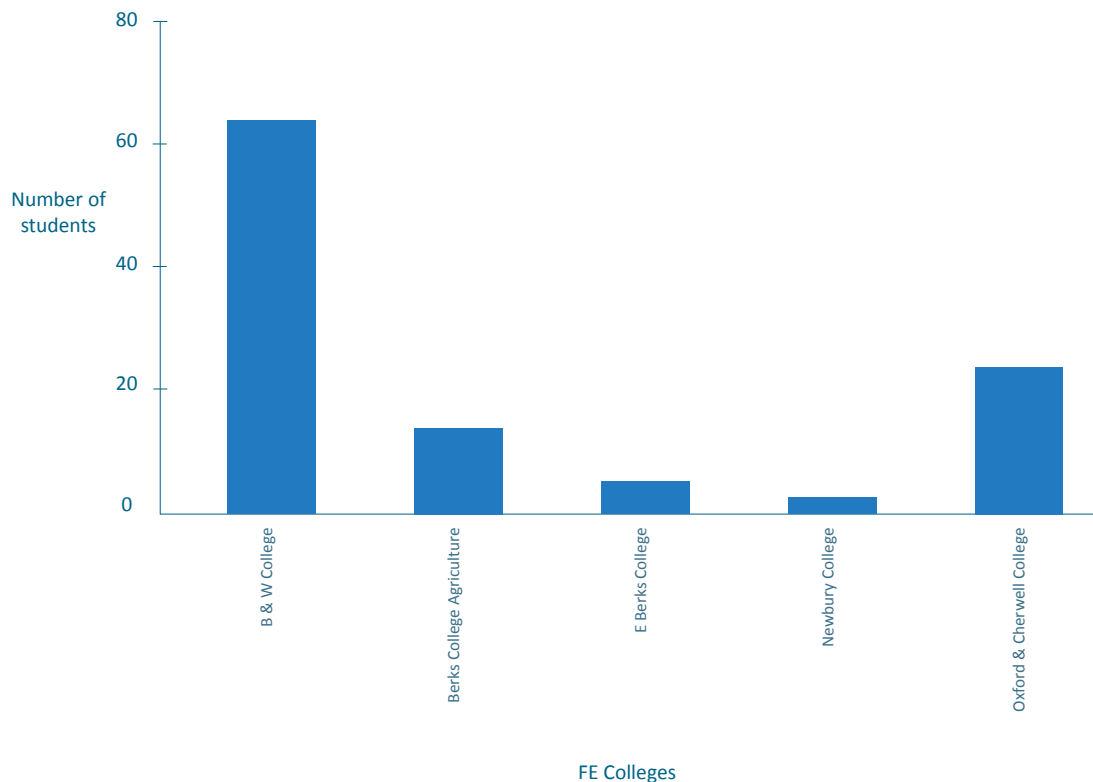
Kennel Lane School also runs a primary outreach class hosted at Birch Hill Primary School for 8 pupils with a primary need of ASD.

3.3.2 FE COLLEGES

In 2015-16 the large majority of post-16 Bracknell Forest students with statements / EHCPs attended courses at FE colleges (109). The largest number (63) attended Bracknell & Wokingham College,

followed by 25 who attended Oxford & Cherwell Valley College Group, which includes Reading College (fig 6). Nine students with EHCPs/statements attended sixth form in a Bracknell Forest school.

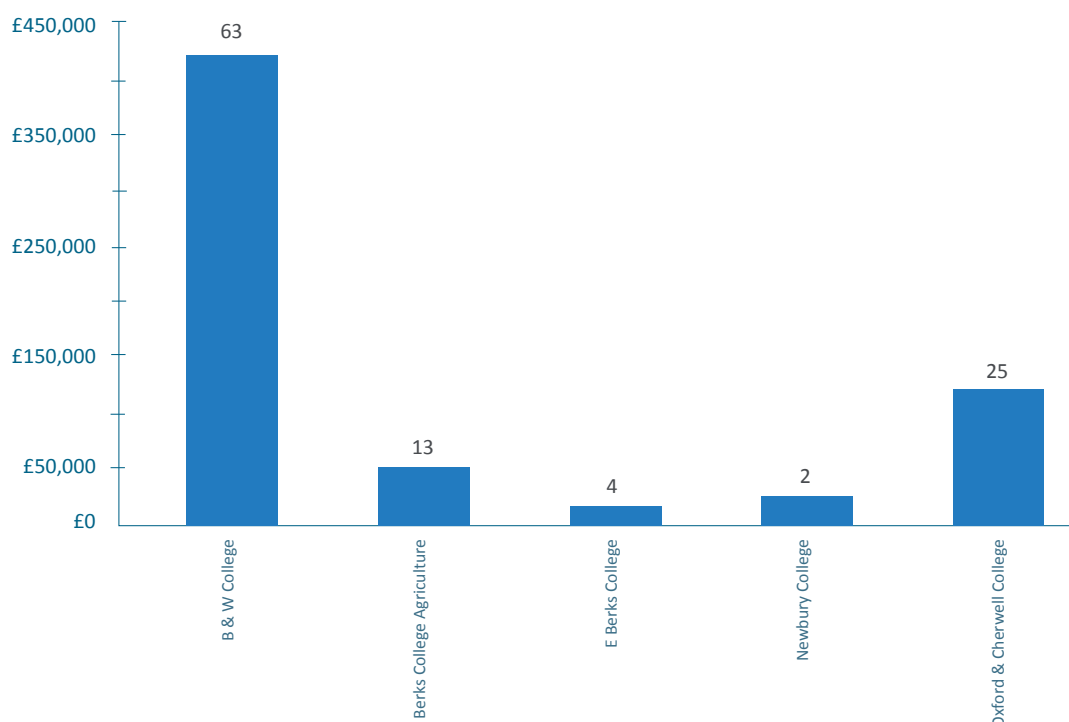
Fig 6: Number of BF students with an EHCP attending FE colleges (2015-16 financial year)



Bracknell & Wokingham College is the main local provider of education for young people with SEND. It is a large college, around 6,500 enrolled learners, although over half of these are on part-time courses. The provision base for year 12 to 16 learners with SEND is being moved onto the main college site in central Bracknell, with the aim of being able to support students nearer to the teaching programmes that they are attending. They anticipate having about 70 learners with an EHCP enrolled at the college from September 2016, together with a further 200 or so who access SEN support from the college's specialist team of assistants.

Fig 7 shows the breakdown of payments to the five tertiary colleges for the last completed financial year (2015-16). It was not possible to update this for 2016-17 because FE colleges cannot confirm final numbers until students have enrolled in September. The average, per student, payments range from £3,658 pa at East Berkshire College to £14,165 at Newbury College. Bracknell & Wokingham College cost an average of £6,765 pa per student. It is necessary to factor into these costs that the 'nominal SEN' budget for tertiary colleges of £6,000 per student is deducted by the EFA in advance of the HNFB being received by an LA (EFA 2016).

Fig 7: Total payment for SEND places to FE Colleges (2015-16), plus student numbers



3.4 Bracknell Forest special and alternative provision

Bracknell Forest is a relatively small unitary authority and has one maintained special school, Kennel Lane School, and a pupil referral unit, College Hall. As major components of the local SEND system, this section focuses solely on these schools.

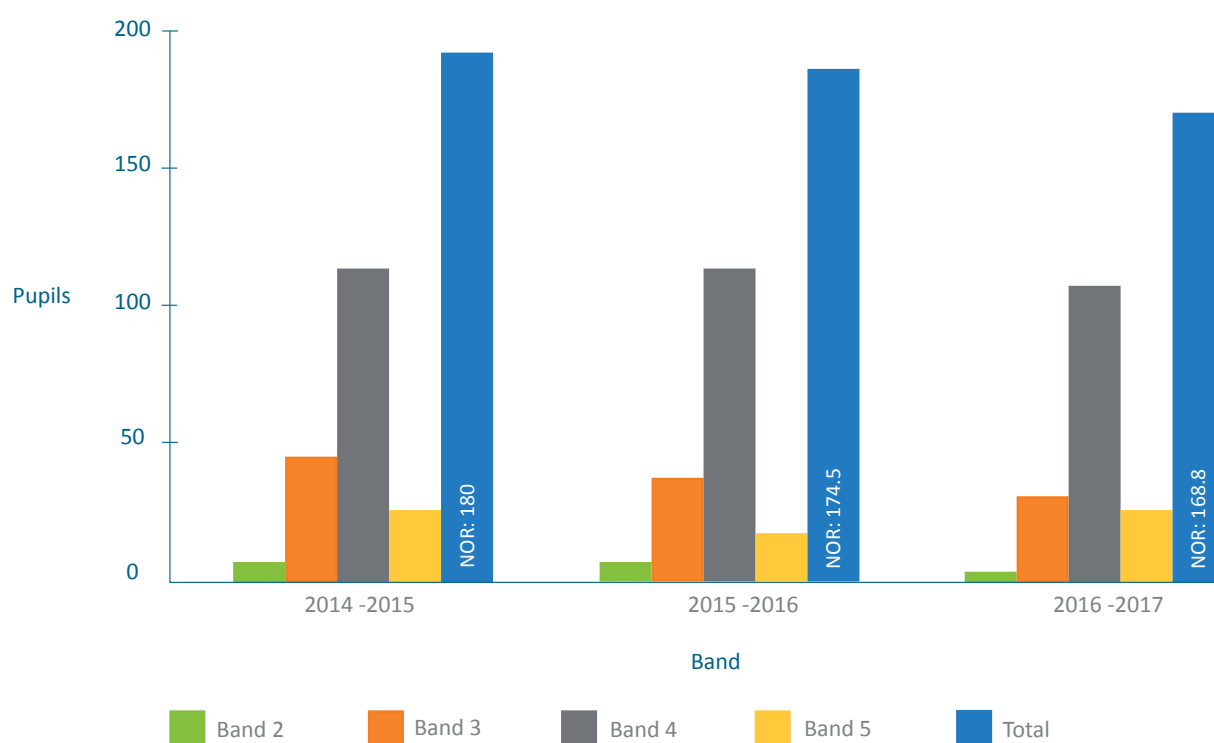
3.4.1 KENNEL LANE

Kennel Lane provides education for pupils with SEND who have a statement / EHCP aged between 3 and 19. It has a broad and deep offer for a range of pupils with complex and severe learning difficulties and pupils are taught in mixed-age groups within each key stage. The outcome data suggests that pupils make good progress and, in its 2015 inspection, Ofsted rated the school as good. The offer is comprehensive: examples include the GEM group (individual short intervention programmes), music therapy, forest school, SPLD support with high teacher input. Kennel Lane provides a personalised programme including access to specialist teachers, for example for art and science GCSEs. They commission a range of services including: counselling (Youth line), drug advice service, and it is a well-funded school offer.

The school is funded for 185 places at £10,000 per place: notionally 153 Bracknell Forest, 32 from neighbouring LAs. This place funding totals £1.85 million, whilst 'element 3' and post-16 top-ups contribute another £2.18 million funding from Bracknell Forest's HNFB. The school's total budget is £4.03 million, including £0.3 million in payments received from other LAs placing students at the school.

Fig 8 gives a high-level breakdown of the level of assessed need for support of the pupils over the past three years. Whilst the total number on roll (NOR) is on a downward trend the numbers of students at the lowest level of need (in receipt of no top-up) has reduced from 51 to 36 whilst the number of students assessed as being band 5 has increased from 25 to 31. There is a reducing proportion of Kennel Lane students from neighbouring LAs, for whom top-ups are reclaimed from the sending LA.

Fig 8: Kennel Lane – total pupils placed, by level of need (band)



3.4.2 COLLEGE HALL

College Hall is the PRU for Bracknell Forest and provides education for pupils from key stage 3 and key stage 4 who have been permanently excluded or are experiencing difficulty in maintaining a place in mainstream education, through a shared timetable. It operates the local home tuition service for pupils who have medical reasons for not attending mainstream school, this takes place both in the home and from The Cottage, which is on the College Hall site. It also provides an outreach and family support service for young people whose behaviour is challenging in school, which aims, through structured programmes, to assist young people to continue to attend and learn in their mainstream school. These different service areas are reflected in the budget streams, with separate SLAs in place for the home tuition and family outreach (table 4).

College Hall is located to the west of Bracknell in two dedicated, but limited, buildings. There is an increasing number of students referred for home tuition, whilst the budget has remained unchanged over past two years.

Accurately summarising the place profile through the academic year at a PRU like College Hall is challenging, because the numbers will fluctuate as pupils are reintegrated or excluded from mainstream schools. College Hall is funded for 46 places, and expected to achieve a 70% average occupancy, reflecting the movement of students and the fact that some are on a dual programme as part of reintegration back to a mainstream school. The January 2016 school census reported 26 pupils on roll.

The attendance breakdown provided by College Hall for 2015-16 was as follows:

- Alternative provision 4
- PRU 35
- Home tuition 25
- The Cottage 10

Table 4: College Hall summary budget:

College Hall funding stream (2016-17)	Places	Amount/ place	Amount
Place payment	46	@£10,000	£460,000
Key stage 3 top-up	10	@£8,721	£88,000
Key stage 4 top-up	22	@£9,718	£214,000
Income from moves / exclusions			-£60,000
PRU Sub-total			£702,000
Home tuition contract			£235,470
Outreach			£94,130
Total			£1,031,600

There appears to be no additional therapies commissioned by College Hall for its students. Instead there is a reliance upon goodwill support: for example pupils can access the substance misuse service, but there is patchy access to a school nurse or from the Autism and Social Communication (ASSC) service and no contract for counselling support.

3.5 SEND decision making and out of area special school provision

BFC's SEND Team manages the processes for children and young people with high levels of SEND. Amongst their work is coordinating the compilation of evidence for EHCP assessments before being presented to the SEND Panel, managing the conversion process from SEN statements to EHCPs,

updating records following annual reviews and managing placements and contacts with NMSS or independent schools or school moves for pupils with SEND.

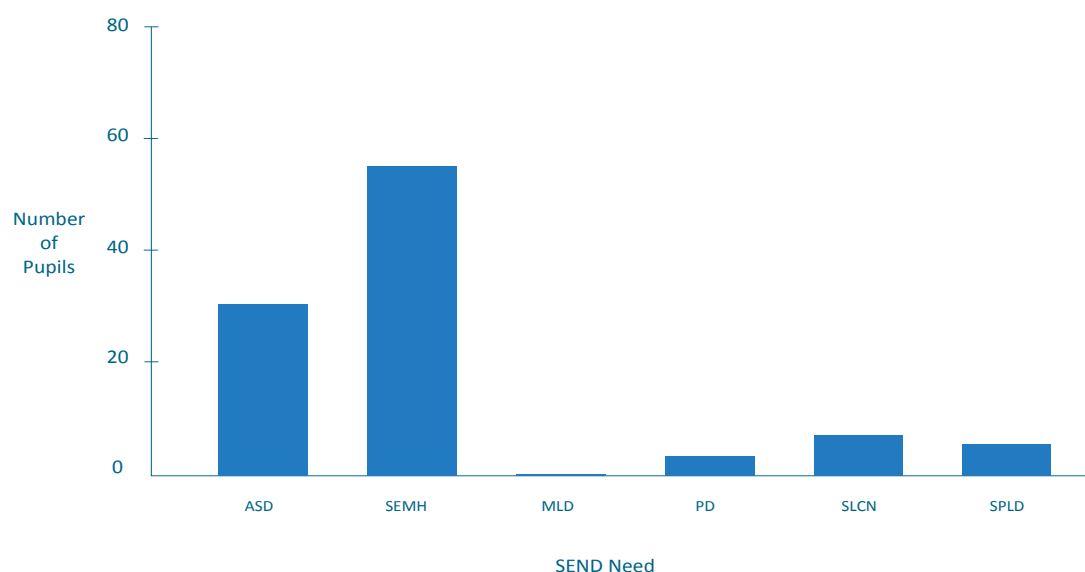
The finances for top-up payments to mainstream schools and to the special school are set by locally devised frameworks. For mainstream schools BFC has chosen to align top-up funding with the costed provision mapping that a school submits as part of the application for an EHCP, rather than just providing funding categories by the assessed SEN need of a pupil. This enables the LA to closely monitor top-up expenditure by schools and lends itself to being able to adapt the top-up paid as changes to needs are identified in annual reviews. For the special school a less detailed framework of bands based on need is applied, which has not been reviewed since the new Code of Practice. The breadth of the categories do not lend themselves to transparency or close monitoring of provision (see: [appendix 5](#)).

The analysis in this section draws mainly on the complete and audited financial data for the financial year 2015-16 (not academic year). The decision to place a pupil can be made by the SEND Panel at any time during the year, so 2015-16 figures enabled the Review team to report on actual spend in a complete year, whereas 2016-17 figures have to include a level of projection and estimate.

3.5.1 PRE-16 PROVISION

A total of 103 pupils with SEND were placed with non-maintained special schools (NMSS) and independent special schools outside Bracknell Forest during the financial year 2015-16. Fig 9 shows the breakdown of primary SEND need among these children and young people with SEMH and ASD being by far the biggest category of need accounting for over 80% of these pupils. Placement recommendations for these children and young people are made by the SEND Panel and the SEN Team are responsible for agreeing the most appropriate available school place for the pupil, in consultation with parents / carers. Price and contracting decisions are made by the SEN Team and they also monitor the EHCP for each of these pupils and, where possible, participate in annual reviews.

Fig 9: Pupils placed out of area, by primary SEND need (2015-16)



All school places purchased by BFC are with schools licensed to provide suitable education and care for particular groups of children and young people with SEND. In consultation with parents / carers, the SEN Team report selecting places in NMSS that can meet the child's needs and which are not-for-profit where possible. The SEN Team have good working relationships with the two schools that are the largest placement providers for Bracknell Forest. Many out of area placements are residential, which is reflected in the costs and are higher than places in maintained special schools either in Bracknell Forest or neighbouring LAs.

A total of £3,314,895 was spent in 2015-16 on pre-16 places for these pupils, whilst £2,896,500 is budgeted for 2016-17 (see [table 2](#)). No evidence has been available to the Review team about how the 2016-17 reduction in costs is planned to be achieved.

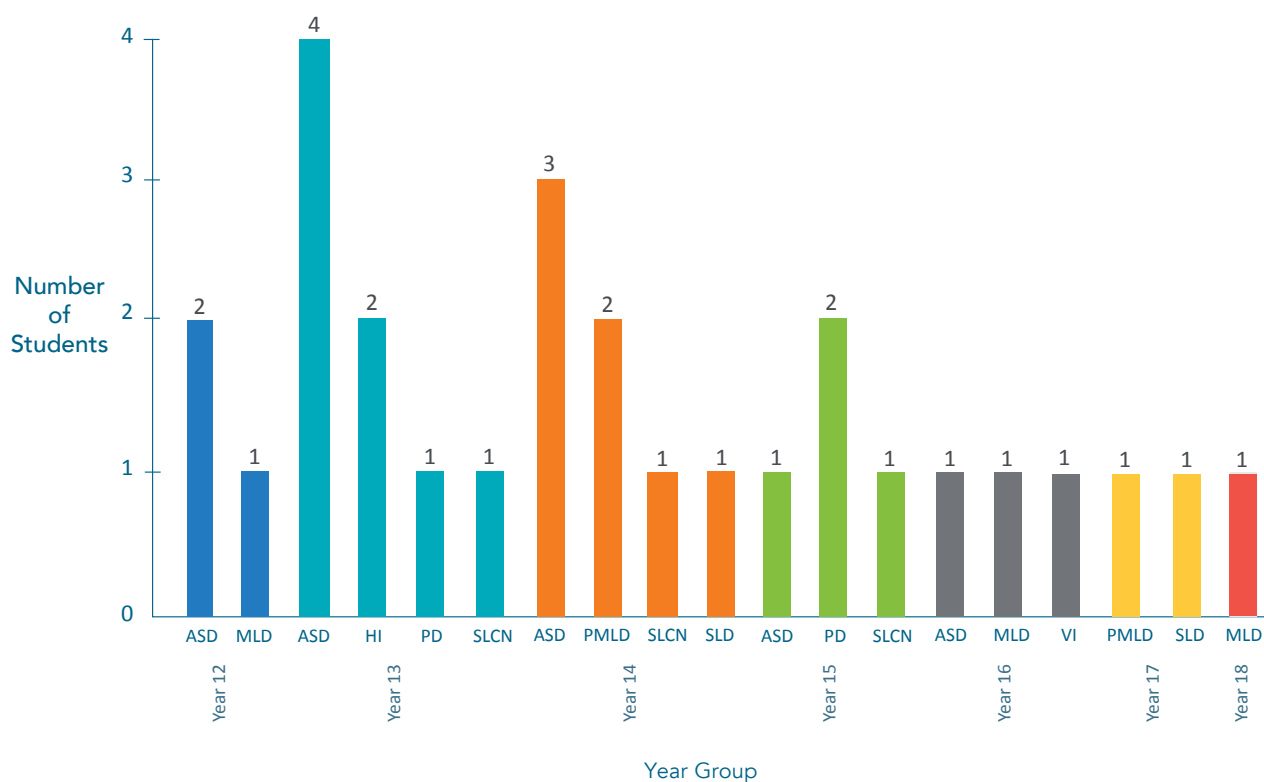
3.5.2 POST 16

A total of 135 students with statements/EHCPs are recorded to have continued to be funded for their education in 2015-16 at a total cost to the HNFB budget of £1,937,401. Most students with a statement / EHCP continued their education in a local tertiary college (see 4.3.3), but 28 students continued their post-16 education in NMSS or independent provision, placed with 25 different schools. The total cost of these placements for 2015-16 was £1,281,963, about £45,800 per student.

Although most of these young people have complex needs, fig 10 shows that the most frequently recorded primary need is autism (11). Whilst [fig 18](#) shows there has been some success with the majority of young people with EHCPs currently being educated in the FE sector rather than the costlier independent sector. The chart in fig 10 shows decreasing numbers of students the nearer they are to age 25, possibly due to transition to greater independence and adult social care support, although this was not a focus of the Review.

There are concerns about future cost pressures as a result of the entitlement to education for all young people with an EHCP up to age 25. Although recognised by both education providers, such as Bracknell and Wokingham College, and by the SEND team, there was no evidence of partnership action to both better understand this future pressure and to propose local solutions.

Fig 10: Over 16 students in NMSS by primary SEND need (2015-16 academic year)



3.6 Services funded from retained HNFB budget

Certain support services for vulnerable children and young people have been funded from the HNFB in Bracknell Forest for some years, including LA and health provision, together with sums retained to support overhead costs such as financial administration and service management. As set out in [table 3](#), this is a total for 2016-17 of £1.422 million.

Three support areas are externally commissioned by the LA: speech and language therapy (SALT), occupational therapy (OT) and support for sensory impairment. The first two areas are commissioned from the NHS provider Berkshire Healthcare Trust (BHFT) and the latter from a pan-Berkshire consortium. All have been subject to three year contracts and notionally overseen by the Head of Targeted Services. All three contracts were rolled forward when they expired in 2016 with minimal internal discussion and no consultation with schools or analysis of the level of need (for example considering the proportion of SEND pupils with VI and HI and existing capacity such as specialist teachers at Kennel Lane School).

LA services funded by the HNFB include:

1. Autism and Social Communication Service (ASSC) – providing assessment and advice on teaching strategies in support of pupils with ASD (not subject to an SLA).
2. Support for Learning - specialist teachers who are available to assess and directly teach children with SEND, in particular those with SPLD (subject to SLA and buy-back).
3. Education other than at school service (EOTAS) – support for home educated children and young people with SEND.
4. Traveller education service – support for traveller families such as to increase school attendance and effective learning by pupils who are travellers.
5. The Child Development Centre early years support.

Other services that might be anticipated to be supported by the HNFB, such as educational psychology or the SEN Team, are funded from other BFC budgets. Time has been taken up to connect budget codes to the services and some service managers were unclear that part of their service was supported by the HNFB.

3.7 Surveys with school leaders and parents / carers

The Review team conducted online surveys with two key groups of stakeholders in the local SEND system: headteachers and parents and carers of children with SEND. The purpose of the survey for headteachers was to gauge the views of the majority of headteachers in Bracknell Forest about the SEND system, identifying areas that are working well and areas for improvement, and also to communicate that the HNFB Review is taking place, so they can be alert to the recommendations.

The survey with parents and carers took place later, which enabled some cross-referencing to the views of schools and some reflection of their experience of the SEND system on behalf of their child. A summary of findings is set out below.

3.7.1 SURVEY OF SCHOOL LEADERS

A short online survey of school leaders was carried out, drawing on questions from research into high needs funding that was commissioned by the DfE (DfE 2015c).

A total of 28 (72%) of schools in Bracknell Forest responded to the survey, including all six secondary schools. The national comparison sample was of 76 schools from 13 LAs across England, meaning this sample is not fully representative.

Figs 11 and 12 suggest there is a desire for changes to be made to the SEND funding arrangements across Bracknell Forest and in the process for funding allocation to schools. In a time of scarce resources this is to be expected, but the responses to both of these questions were markedly less positive in Bracknell Forest than the national comparison group of schools.

School leaders also offered the following responses when asked to describe certain aspects of the system currently.

What is working well:

- Schools identified that aspects of the SEND system in Bracknell Forest, especially those under their direct control, work reasonably well.

- 26 out of 28 schools (92%) rated themselves as effective or very effective at identifying SEND need among pupils.
- 88% of schools in Bracknell Forest rated themselves as effective or very effective, at using their SEND funding to meet needs, compared to 92% in the national sample.
- Schools also highlighted certain Bracknell Forest support services as being strong parts of the system, in particular the SEND team.

Fig 11: How effectively do local funding arrangements contribute to improved outcomes for SEND pupils?

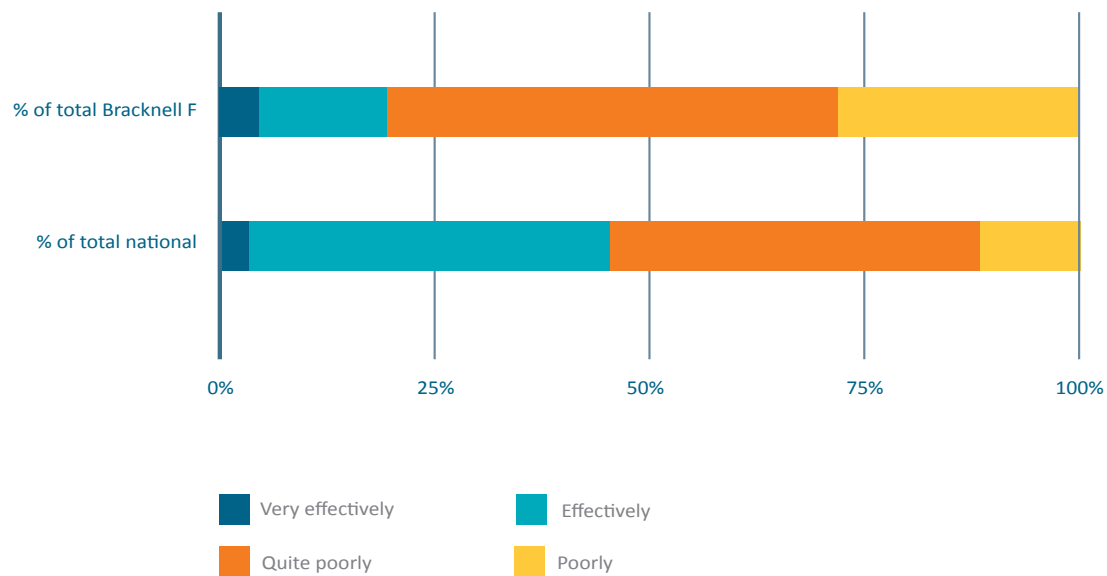
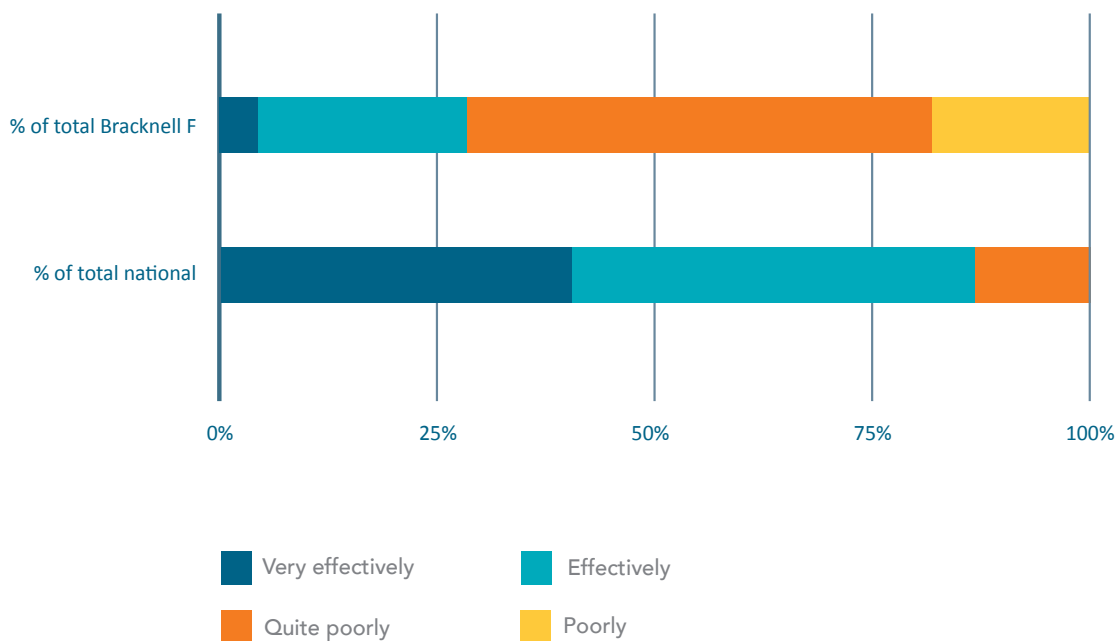


Fig 12: How effectively do you think SEND funding is allocated to your school?



Areas to improve:

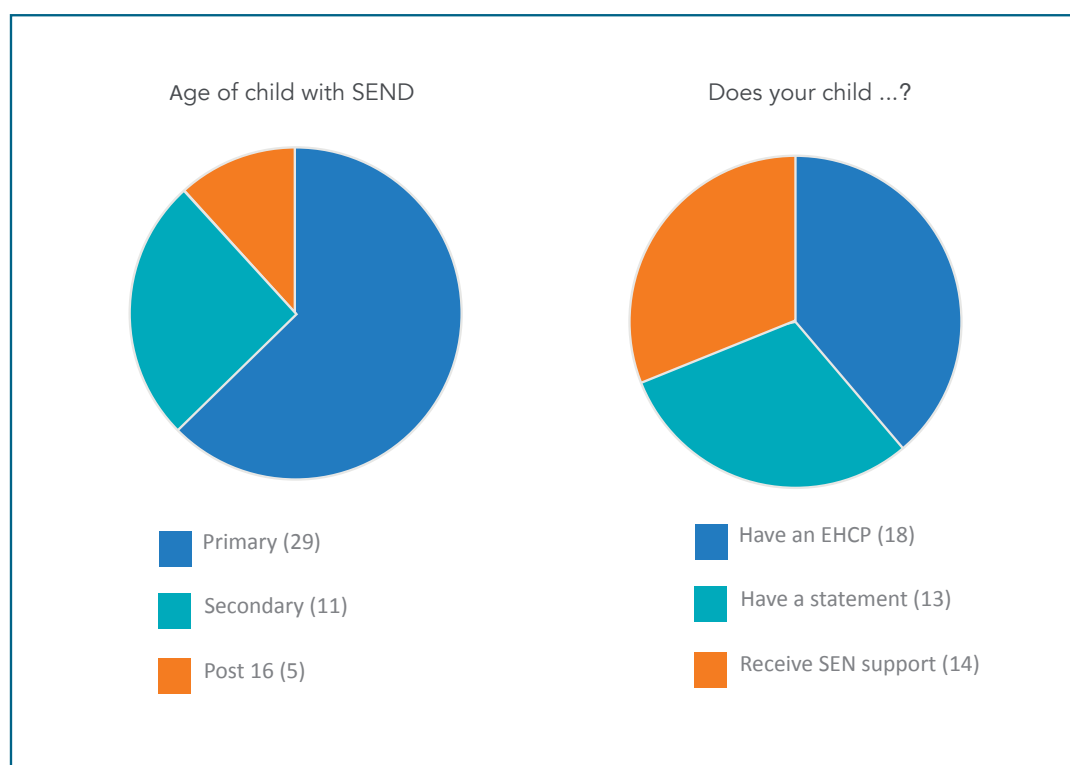
- Specific mention was made about improving the statutory SEND processes, eight commenting specifically on making the processes more straightforward and less time-consuming in terms of paperwork.
- Another eight respondents specifically raised increasing support for impactful early intervention, whilst others identified certain services (e.g. CAMHS and SALT) as in need of improvement.

3.7.2 SURVEY OF PARENT / CARERS

An online survey of parents and carers of children and young people with SEND was also carried out as part of this Review. The design of the questionnaire was informed by the questions that school leaders responded to and through two consultation sessions with those attending Bracknell Dialogue Parents Forum.

Responses were received from 40 parents / carers and predominantly from mothers (92.5%). Their families consisted of between one and four children; a total of 90 children and young people of whom half (45) have SEND. 85% of the families have one child with SEND and the remainder have two children with SEND. Two thirds of parents / carers have children of primary school age, whilst about 70% of the children have been assessed as requiring an EHCP or statement (fig 13).

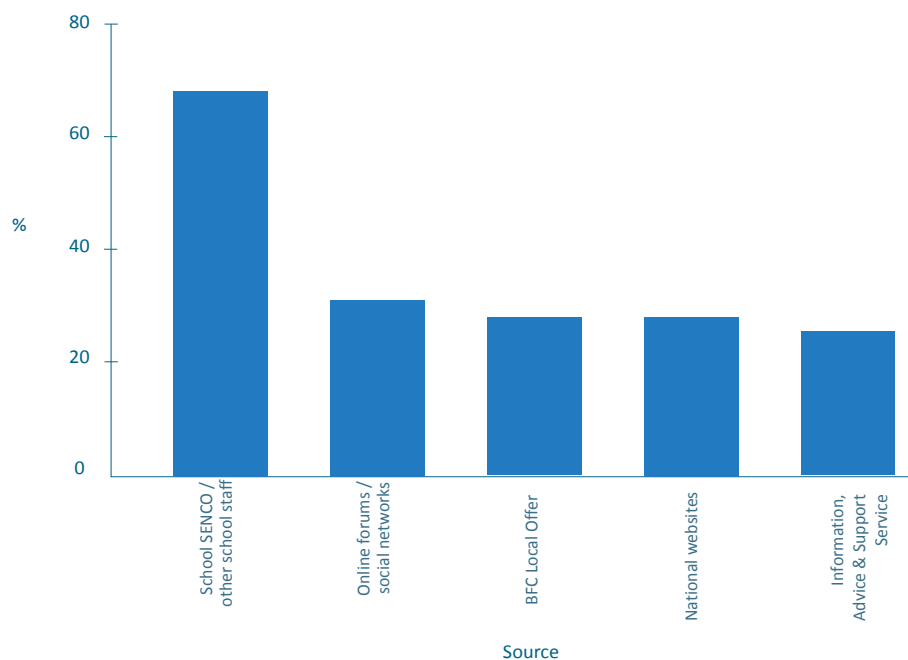
Fig 13: About your child with SEND



Parents were asked about the effectiveness of the identification of their child's need, about their relationship with the school and whether their child enjoys school. There was a consistent two-thirds split in the answers: one-third split between those describing identification of SEND or the partnership with the school as being largely positive (two-thirds) or largely negative (one-third). Of the eight responses that were consistently more negative to these statements, six of their children are in receipt of SEN support (two others have EHCP) and these were submitted by seven different parents / carers.

Feedback about parents' access to SEND information was more mixed: 59% reported that they felt they did not have enough information about the SEND system in Bracknell Forest. In terms of what the most useful sources of information listed include the staff in school, in particular the SENCO, was listed by nearly 7 out of 10 of the parents. Other sources such as social networks and the Local Offer pages were also identified by many parents (see: Fig 14).

Fig 14: Most important sources of information about SEND



Finally, those that had experienced the EHCP process (a total of 18) reported that most (60%) were broadly positive about their experience; nearly 80% confirmed they felt their views were taken into account and over two-thirds felt they had been kept informed during the process. One comment offered was: *"The change from a statement to an EHCP was great; getting an EHCP for our other child has been a living hell."*

4. Summary of the Key Evidence

The Review team analysed documentation provided by officers in Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) (see: [appendix 3](#)), together with the evidence gathered from school visits and interviews, data provided by these schools and the data from local surveys and national sources. The key evidence about Bracknell Forest's SEND system is summarised below under four themes:

1. Increasing strategic leadership by the school sector across the SEND system.
2. Strong, coordinated local authority leadership for planning of SEND places, funding and commissioning.
3. The coherence of the SEND system, designed with the needs of children and young people at its centre.
4. A data-rich SEND system that understands the difference it is making.

Three case studies of practice from elsewhere in England are included as illustration of good practice.

4.1 Increasing the strategic leadership by the school sector across the SEND system

4.1.1 INCREASED SCHOOL LEADER INVOLVEMENT IN ESTABLISHING AND IMPLEMENTING A LOCAL STRATEGIC VISION FOR SEND

"It will be the performance of local partners and settings [especially schools] which will underpin the successful delivery of the reforms." (p. 8 'Special Educational Needs and Disability Code Of Practice: 0 to 25 years'; DfE 2015b)

"We want a greater role for heads in setting the strategic direction for SEND across the area"
Headteacher interview

"Involve us, as headteachers, in developing a strategic approach to SEND across the area."
Headteacher interview

The Review team found that procedural changes set out in the SEND Code of Practice have been implemented by BFC. We found less evidence, however, of clarity being established between the Council and schools about the new SEND accountabilities and strategic priorities for the SEND system. The main focus for monitoring of the SEND system by BFC has been the implementation of the statutory processes required by the Children and Families Act 2014 including progress with the conversion of statements of SEN and learning difficulty assessments (LDAs) to education and health care plans (EHCPs) and the aim to complete the assessment of all EHCPs within 20 weeks of the process commencing. These new procedures have been a challenge for BFC, as it has for most LAs, however, following the commitment of additional resources to the SEN Team, the performance is reasonably strong: 92% of new EHCPs were completed in time during the first half of 2016 - 17. In the first half of 2016 - 17, 125 statements or LDAs were converted to EHCPs and the proportion completed in time has increased from about 39% in 2015-16 to nearly 62%. This compares favourably with their statistical neighbours (LAIT 2016).

The school survey, carried out by the Review team (see: [3.7.1](#)) reported that schools see themselves as both being effective in their identification of SEND need (92%) and in their deployment of funding to support learning (88%). This is significantly higher than schools' assessment of the operation of the local SEND system. This suggests that there is some disconnect across the system in Bracknell Forest, or that there is expertise in local schools that is not being harnessed as effectively as possible across the area. Greater school sector involvement in the vision and strategy for SEND would help to address the gaps reported in the survey and is a theme central to the Review.

Insights from other parts of England inform us of the importance of concerted strategic leadership by schools, including some evidence that school-to-school challenge to achieve more consistent inclusive practice for SEND is more effective than that solely led by a local authority. In Nottingham City for example years of delegating significant responsibilities for SEND to families-of-schools along with a budget for them to make decisions about additional support has resulted in lower levels of EHCPs, swifter early intervention and flexible support services being secured (NHS E Mids 2016 p12).

4.1.2 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP OF STRATEGIC ACCOUNTABILITY ACROSS THE LOCAL SEND SYSTEM

"A more consistent system of funding across the borough that is understood by all."

Headteachers' survey

"There is a need for greater transparency from the local authority around SEND"

Headteacher interview

National policy discussions about likely changes to school funding formulae, together with other changes, such as to responsibilities for alternative provision and excluded pupils, are important considerations for local headteachers. The current national uncertainties make forward planning more difficult for senior leaders. The Review's Headteachers' Reference Group reminded the team about the short term arrangement, approved by the local Schools Forum, for £2.093 million of DSG funding to be transferred to the high needs funding block (HNFB) for 2016-17 (see: [3.2](#)). These views also highlight the importance of headteachers being invited to scrutinise and make recommendations for the HNFB budget and SEND expenditure in the future as part of the strategic oversight of a renewed, local SEND system. Clear delineation of responsibilities between the Schools Forum and any strategic SEND group will be essential. Headteachers were also indicating that cost-savings achieved to HNFB expenditure should, at least partially, be seen to be returned to schools in an uplift to the local per pupil funding (see [table 2](#)).

In addition, the survey of school leaders across Bracknell Forest (see: [3.7.1](#)) offers evidence for the need to develop increased confidence in the local SEND funding system across the school sector. Only 20% of Bracknell Forest school leaders reported that the funding arrangements contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND, as compared to nearly 50% of the national sample (see: [fig 16](#)). Similarly, 88% of the national sample felt SEND funding is allocated

effectively to their school, as compared to 28% of the Bracknell Forest sample. Developing specific SEND accountability arrangements, especially around the HNFB, with headteachers should help to increase their confidence in the effectiveness of how local funding is deployed.

4.1.3 BETTER COMMUNICATION ACROSS A RENEWED SEND SYSTEM, IN PARTICULAR WITH PARENTS/CARERS

"We feel there was very limited information about, or provision for, my child during the transition to secondary."
Parent comment in survey

"There is a need for concerted and clear communication to parents of children with SEND about the changes."
Headteacher interviews

The SEND Code of Practice has a clear emphasis on the involvement of parents and carers (and children and young people) in decision making for individuals and about SEND strategies (NASEN 2015). The local survey of parent and carers (see: [3.7.2](#)), highlighted the value they place on school SENCOs as a source of information, together with a general perception that more local information should be available for parents and carers. Headteachers also report seeking a stronger partnership with BFC to communicate more effectively with parents and carers.

This is particularly important with the future pressures on the SEND system, as a result of the increasing local population. Responses to the parent and carers survey gave a largely positive view from those who had either experienced the process of conversion to an EHCP or assessment for a plan, both in terms of their views being reflected in an EHCP or feeling communicated with during the process. These are strengths that can be built upon.

The Review team found limited evidence of a strategic approach being taken to communicating with stakeholders about the SEND system and its challenges, or the deployment of the HNFB budget for the current or future years. For example, limited evidence was found of a wider discussion with parents and carers about responding to the challenge for SEND of future population growth or the need for more robust projections for the likely increasing numbers of children with SEND (see: [3.1](#)).

Case study: high needs funding for mainstream schools outside statutory processes

This case study summarises arrangements that have been developed in three local authorities (LAs) to facilitate schools accessing 'element 3' top-up funding outside of their statutory education and health care assessment and plan processes. Common threads to the examples are active involvement by schools in the local area and flexibility that seeks to keep the needs of the pupil central. All these examples require a school to evidence, when applying, the strategies that have been implemented in support of the pupil and how these have exceeded their £6,000 notional per pupil SEN allocation.

a. Bromley – Pupil Resource Agreements

A pupil resource agreement (PRA) is a non-statutory agreement between the LA, school and parents where a higher level of support in school for the child is required. A PRA enables individual pupils' learning needs to be met quickly, in a targeted way without going through the 20 week, statutory assessment process. The school compiles evidence of the needs identified, informed by local guidance about thresholds, and the strategies that have been implemented. This summary is submitted to the LA's SEN and Disabilities Team who undertake regular assessment meetings, involving school representatives and educational psychologists and decide whether or not the process for a PRA should be started.

The PRA is produced in partnership with parents at a meeting with the school, the educational psychologist and other involved professionals, where outcomes and support levels are agreed. This is a single meeting to assess strategies, resources required and to agree the contents of the implementation plan. A PRA is reviewed annually by the school SENCO, parents and child, just like an EHCP, and the top-up funding mechanism is the same for both in mainstream schools. This means that a child with an EHCP with the same level of learning needs as a child with a PRA would get the same funding resource. It also means that an EHCP may be recommended should a pupil's needs change over time.

A PRA is a non-statutory agreement, and parents do not have the same rights that an EHCP brings. For example, parents will not be able to express a preference for a school for their child, make an appeal to the First-tier Tribunal or be offered a personal budget.

<https://bromley.mylifeportal.co.uk/assessmentofsenlo/>

b. North Somerset – All Top-up funding outside the statutory process

Agreement was reached between the LA and schools that top-up funding, to support pupils with SEND, would not be linked to the statutory assessment processes and would not require a pupil having been assessed for an EHCP. Instead, North Somerset have developed a local process for top-up funding, supported by guidance and forms, for use by schools when there are additional SEND needs. A school's SENCO summarises the needs and strategies they have implemented and additional resources required for any pupil with higher levels of SEND need. There are two deadlines for submission of applications during each academic year: the first week of November and the second week of the summer term.

These applications and the evidence in the forms, are then assessed and moderated by a panel of LA officers and health professionals. Recommendations about the needs and levels of resources are made for all applications submitted. These are then taken to a Quality Assurance Panel (QAP) meeting. This Panel is coordinated by the LA and made up of school representatives, SENCOs and senior leaders, who sample check applications and the recommendations, to ensure consistency and fairness and can also advise that the recommended decisions or the band for funding are changed. Finally, LA officers compare recommended top-ups against the budget available.

If total demand exceeds the total budget, a formula has been agreed to proportionately reduce all top-ups, in order to keep within the allocated high needs budget. Each school is notified of the decisions and this all takes place within three weeks of the application deadline.

The top-up, assessment process and the funding levels for each band were developed, with close involvement of schools, through a pilot year. During the trial, all schools participated in the assessment of applications over one day. The learning from this was applied and adapted to the on-going process, with school leaders preferring LA officers to make the initial assessments and recommendations, and for schools' voices to be heard in the QAP. Detailed guidance advises that, for certain categories and types of need, the top-up funding should apply for a three-year period, whereas for other categories of need, a school should re-submit annually. The design of the process anticipates that pupils with known levels of SEND form the bulk of those assessed in the autumn term and that the summer term cycle focuses on pupils whose needs have emerged during the school year and have undergone an assessment cycle in their school.

<http://www.nsesp.org/Page/206>

c. Wokingham – Exceptional Needs Funding through school clusters

The development of the exceptional needs funding by Wokingham District Council (WDC) was driven by an aim to make funding decisions more transparent to schools, give schools greater involvement and control in the allocation of resources and to use SEND funding more flexibly. The exceptional needs funding process builds on the established school clusters and the collaboration between schools that these facilitate. The LA oversees the process and ensures that support materials such as pro-formas for applications and guidance on thresholds are available and understood by schools, particularly their SENCOs.

Each school cluster was supported to develop a common understanding of what predictable and exceptional needs 'look like' in their schools, which was then shared across Wokingham and summarised to promote consistency and transparency. Each school cluster meets once a term to consider individual applications where a school feels that the needs of a pupil are exceptional or where they feel that their school finds itself in an exceptional situation, and the level of resource that is sought. As a result of the cluster meeting, a list of recommendations for individual or school exceptional needs funding is produced and submitted to the termly LA Moderation Meeting, which makes the final decision about the funding proposals. Each cluster is represented at the Moderation Meeting by its chair. The expectation is that many applications will be for relatively long term funding (three years) and the top-up agreed can be up to the highest funding band. There are standardised units of funding agreed across the area, for example therapeutic session rates and standard rates for support staff hours.

Schools report to their clusters about the progress being made, by the pupil or the school as a result of exceptional needs funding. This is monitored by the cluster group and updates and lessons learnt shared at the Moderation Meetings.

<http://wsh.wokingham.gov.uk/learning-and-teaching/sen/enf/>

4.2 Strong, coordinated local authority leadership for planning of SEND, including place numbers, funding and commissioning

The DfE recognises that the bulk of statutory duties in the Code of Practice lie at local level and require that the LA, with support from Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), ensures integration across the new system and to oversee that their best endeavours are used to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND (DfE 2015b). Central to this is the effective deployment and monitoring of the HNFB. Much of the evidence analysed by the Review team focuses on these areas: local specialist provision and the use of the high needs funding block (HNFB) to support local children and young people educated outside of Bracknell Forest.

4.2.1 BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL AND SPECIALIST PROVIDERS SHOULD WORK TOGETHER TO ADAPT CURRENT SEND PROVISION TO MORE CLOSELY MATCH FUTURE DEMAND

This section will consider the evidence for how nearly 90% of the £13.812 million HNFB is deployed in Bracknell Forest. This will be sub-divided between the deployment in:

- a) mainstream schools, both top-up payments and resource centres;
- b) local specialist provision – the special school and the pupil referral unit (PRU); and
- c) deployment to independent and non-maintained special schools (NMSS) outside Bracknell Forest for 16s-and-under, and to NMSSs and FE colleges for those older than 16.

Before considering these specific sectors, evidence about the future numbers of pupils with SEND from Bracknell Forest will be discussed. The local 'School Places Plan' (BFC 2015) estimates an increase in the whole school-age population of 21.4% by 2020 (see: [appendix 1](#)). Only limited evidence was found of specific work to estimate future numbers of high need SEND places (BFC 2015, annex 3). The SEND section of the report mostly focuses on the past three years and concluded that most increases in numbers had been in the post-16 age group due to new, extended duties in the Children and Families Act 2014. Fig 17 and [fig 18](#) show that BFC has marginally reduced its number of high need places over the past three years, and this has been achieved in contrast to trends across England.

It is the view of the Review team that there is no reason to assume the rate of demand for high need places in Bracknell Forest will be any less than the demand for all school places, due to inward migration and an increased birth-rate. In the absence of more robust local forecasting, the Review team has produced estimates to 2020 of numbers of high needs places, broken down by sector (table 5). Should there be no change in pattern or profile of where young people are educated there is a potential additional cost to BFC's HNFB of about £2 million.

Table 5: Estimates of SEND numbers and costs in 2020 based on current profile

	High need pupils in mainstream	Kennel Lane School	College Hall	NMSS pre-16	Post-16 FE / independent	Totals
2015-16 high need numbers	230	177.5	32	103	135	677.5
2015-16 costs (in '000s)	£723	£3750	£761	£3315	£1937	£10,487
Estimated 2020 places	279	214	38	125	164	820
Estimated 2020 costs (in '000s)	£878	£4521	£761	£4023	£2354	£12,536

The Review team found limited use of data and other intelligence to understand current levels of SEND need across BFC or to project future demands and develop strategies to meet these. There is evidence of under-utilisation of funded SEND places at some specialist Bracknell Forest provision. The Review team feel that it is important to recognise that specialist per pupil place payments of £10,000 per pupil per annum form a significant element of the HNFB. These place payments should be managed as actively as 'top-up' funding for pupils with an EHCP or statement in mainstream schools.

a) Mainstream schools

A total of £693,000 is budgeted to support high needs students attending mainstream schools in Bracknell Forest in 2016-17 (see: [table 2](#)). Figs 4 and 5 (see: [3.3](#)) show that this funding supports 229 students. From attending SEND Panel and considering examples of supporting papers, the Review team are of the view that there is good value for money achieved by BFC in the statements and EHCPs agreed, and updated through Annual Reviews; in particular, the provision mapping is very clear and specific. If there are any issues with this aspect of the local SEND system it is over-thoroughness, which is discussed below (see: [4.3](#)).

A total of £798,000 from the HNFB (including the £132,000 for Ranelagh School, deducted before allocation to BFC by the EFA) is invested in the operation of the specialist resource centres in Bracknell Forest (see: [table 2](#)). The newest of these centres is The Rise, operated by Garth Hill College. The Rise has been open for one year and taught its first group of year 7 pupils. The Rise and

the Rainbow Centre at Great Hollands Primary (early years and reception) provide specialist support for pupils with autism (ASD). This currently leaves no resource centre provision for primary-age children with ASD.

A priority, when developing The Rise, was to meet the needs locally of more complex and high-functioning pupils with ASD, so those who are currently in NMSSs could be moved back into Bracknell Forest. The Review team heard evidence that there should have been more detailed analysis, at the planning stage, about the specific needs of the target group of pupils and identification of the resources The Rise would require to best support them (for example, sufficient access to speech and language interventions). Other schools also commented that they had not felt sufficiently consulted about the development of The Rise and how it fits into the local SEND system. The other two resource centres are at Meadow Vale Primary School, support for pupils with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), and at Ranelagh School, support for secondary students with specific learning difficulties (SPLD). The Review team was provided with no evidence of a service level agreement (SLAs), or equivalent, in place for any of the school resource centres. SLAs would help to clarify the partnership arrangement with BFC, the costs to be met, the desired outcomes for the pupils and the processes for review and making changes to commissioned places. Evidence given to the Review team was contradictory about whether or not there would be the development of a new SEND resource centre in a new free school at Binfield Learning Village (see: [3.3](#)). The Chief Officer leading the project for BFC confirmed that there would not be a resource centre funded in the facilities at the new school.

The place numbers for the resource centres in Bracknell Forest, together with those for specialist provision are shown in table 6. There is significant under use of places at Ranelagh School and some under-utilisation at Meadow Vale and Great Hollands. Evidence was heard about the need for increased provision for primary aged children with ASD and that led the Review team to question the level of need for so many resource centre places for SLCN and, even more so, for SPLD students, many of whose needs should be able to be met in mainstream classes.

Table 6: Bracknell Forest specialist provision capacity

Name of provision	Planned place numbers	Av number on roll (NOR) 2016
Kennel Lane School – pre-16	135	121.3
Kennel Lane School – post-16	50	47.5
College Hall PRU	46	29
The Rise at Garth Hill College	7 (56 when full)	7
Ranelagh School	16	4
Meadow Vale Primary School	20	17
Great Hollands Primary School	6 (fte)	4 (fte)

b) Local specialist provision

There is one all-through special school in Bracknell Forest: Kennel Lane School, and a PRU: College Hall, providing education for secondary age students who have been excluded or are being tutored due to a diagnosed medical need. A total of £4.302 million of the HNFB supports just over 200 pupils educated by these two schools (see [tables 2](#) and [5](#)).

Kennel Lane School has a very comprehensive offer for its pupils, including those with complex and severe learning difficulties. The outcome data from the school indicates that pupils make good progress and the school was judged by Ofsted as being 'good' in November 2015. The school's total budget is £4.03 million, including £0.3 million in payments received from other LAs placing students at the school. As with all schools, the largest proportion of Kennel Lane's budget is committed to salaries and table 7 summarises the staffing profile. External therapeutic support is commissioned by the school for its pupils, such as counselling and physiotherapy, whilst teaching staff are equipped to offer certain specialist interventions such as music therapy and support for pupils with sensory impairment and specific learning difficulties.

Table 7: Kennel Lane breakdown of staffing (June 2016)

Role	FTE
Senior leader	5.6
Primary teacher	10.2
Secondary teacher	13.6
Higher level teaching assistant	3.2
Teaching assistant	81 (total staff not fte)

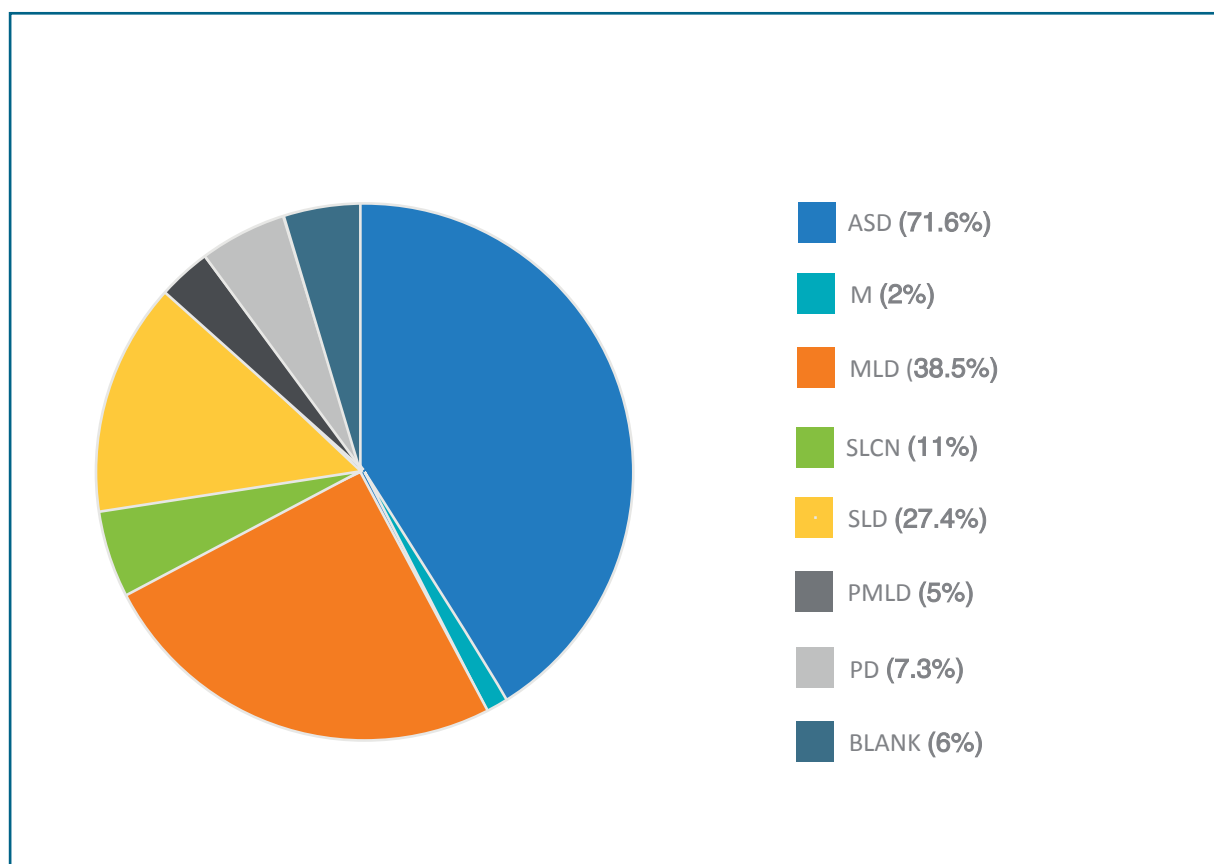
The 2015-16 key stage profile of pupils in Kennel Lane School (KLS) is shown in table 8. This shows there is an uneven distribution of ages through the school: 47 students in sixth form provision compared with 21 in the nursery and key stage 1. The Review team saw an under-utilisation of the reception and key stage 1 facilities and there is also a primary class of 8 children who spend most of their week at a shared facility located in a mainstream primary school. Evidence was given that the main entry points for pupils to Kennel Lane were at traditional school transition points: at the start of a key stage, especially year 7.

Table 8: Kennel Lane pupils by key stage (KS) (summer 2016, n = 169):

Key Stage	Nursery/ KS 1	KS 2	KS 3	KS 4	KS 5
Number of pupils	21	47	32	22	47

Fig 15 shows the recorded primary need of the pupils at Kennel Lane School. A note of caution with this data is that, particularly in specialist provision, pupils are likely to have more than one area of need which is not reflected in the primary need, for example some of the pupils with a primary need of ASD also have severe learning difficulties (SLD). The largest single group at the school are those with autism (ASD) and there are a significant proportion with severe learning difficulties (SLD). The second largest group of pupils, by primary need, is those with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) who are distributed quite evenly across the year groups in the school. This is an unusually high proportion for a special school with a core offer for those with complex and severe learning difficulties.

Fig 15: Summary of KLS pupil by primary SEND need (2016)



Case study: examples of commissioning for specialist provision

The three schools selected for this case study are as follows:

- New Siblands School, South Gloucestershire (ages 2-19)
- Uplands Special School, Swindon (ages 11-19)
- A central London, complex needs special school (ages 2-19)

Partnership and commissioning arrangements

All of these schools enjoy a strong and positive arrangement with their LA. Each of the schools have been commissioned to extend provision to meet local demand and/or provide additional services to support local mainstream schools, such as:

- outreach services for ASD;
- coordinating local SEND partnerships;
- delivering teacher professional development and coordinating SENCO networks; and
- ensuring representation of SEND leaders in strategic discussions.

The schools have an in-depth understanding of Ofsted with all headteachers qualified as Ofsted inspectors. The schools are represented on strategic SEND boards and consequently participate in commissioning discussions and decisions with the LA and health partners. One of the schools, as a teaching school, is also a member of the local Strategic School-Led Partnership, where proposals for the future of the school system are considered with the LA and representatives of the Regional Schools Commissioner. The schools are actively involved in developing new specialist SEND provision in their LA where it is needed. One of the schools provides post 19 provision and another one is planning this type of provision from 2018. All the schools act as a champion for specialist provision and inclusive practice across schools in their LA area.

New Siblands School, South Gloucestershire

The school has well- equipped classrooms and specialist facilities across two sites including: a music and art room, science / design and technology room, life skills suite, sensory diet area and sensory studios. A nursery is planned to open in January 2017 and the school is exploring the options of providing post-19 provision as a Specialist Post-16 Institution (SPI). The school enjoys an active partnership with the LA.

Places	SEN need	Key Stage	Ofsted	Pupil Premium
112	Severe learning difficulties; profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some have autism.	KS1 to KS5	Good July 2013	For 2015-2016: £40,115
Funding Settlement		Bandings used for special schools		
There are 120 planned places; 100 are pre 16 and 12 post 16. Total budget £2,260,000. As part of this the indicative top up is £945,500 although this is likely to increase to £1,261,000 as new pupils join the school.		Funding bands 2106 - 17: 1 - £1,000; 2 - £2,500; 3 - £4,500; 4 - £6,000; 5 - £8,000; 6 - £11,000; 7 - £12,500; 8 - £14,500; 9 - £19,000; 10 - £21,000; 11 - £27,000; 12 - £31,000. Only three pupils are placed at band 11 and 12. The majority of pupils with SLD are at band 4 and those with complex learning difficulties and autism are placed at bands 6 – 8. Average funding per place: £21,000 (inc place value).		

Uplands Special School, Swindon				
Uplands is a purpose built Partnership Funded Initiative (PFI) school co-located within a learning campus with mainstream primary and secondary schools and a primary special school. Uplands School is part of an academy trust, delivering outreach services and a Learning Centre (SPI) for students aged 19-25. The trust is also the proposer for a new free school – Brunel School (50 places for ASD). The school provides a number of services commissioned by the ILA.				
Places	SEN need	Key Stage	Ofsted	Pupil Premium
138 (86 pre 16; 52 post 16)	Severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or autistic spectrum disorder.	KS3 to KS5	Outstanding, July 2014	For 2014 – 15: £42,255
Funding Settlement		Bandings used for special schools		
Pre 16 is 86 places; post 16 is 52 places. Pre 16: £860,000 planned places; £1,202,303 top-up (average top up £13,980). Total: £2,233,793.* Post 16 £52,000 planned places; £697,972 top-up (average top-up £13,423). Total: £1,217,972.* Plus Visually Impaired Service, ASD Support Service, and Assisted Technology Service commissioned by the LA (circa £240,000 pa).		Average funding per place: £25,974 (pre 16). Average funding per place: £23,423 (post 16). Estimated average cost for SLD = £25,000, estimated average cost for Learning Mentor Programme (for students with ASD) = £31,000 (on site) and £36,000 off site.		
A central London, complex needs special school				
The school is a purpose built PFI school, co-located within a learning campus that also incorporates a mainstream secondary school. It is an integral part of its borough’s SEND system and a member of SLT attends all SEND Panels and works closely with the SEN Team to support mainstream inclusive practice, for example with pupils with MLD. It is a teaching school. The school has been commissioned by the LA to promote inclusive training and deliver initial teacher training and research in pedagogy and technology for SEND. The school has a Family and Inclusion team that are linked to LA disability teams and CAMHs.				
Places	SEN need	Key Stage	Ofsted	Pupil Premium
237 (24 from OLAs)	Complex needs: mainly profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, complex autism.	Nursery KS1 to KS5	Outstanding Jan 2014	For 2014-2015: £147,705
Funding Settlement		Bandings used for special schools		
For 2016/17: 210 places pre-16; 27 places post-16. The total pupil budget for the school is £7.4 million. This includes £2.1 million in place payment, plus another, £162,000 from the EFA.		The LA has two levels of banding for pupils with complex needs. The average per pupil ‘top-up’ received by the school is £21,089, including an allowance of £3,300 pp for the PFI element of the school’s budget.		

College Hall is the commissioned pupil referral unit (PRU) for Bracknell Forest and is funded for 46 planned places, 10 of these are short-term turnaround placements. The funding is based on an assumption of 70% occupancy basis, which builds in the aim to reintegrate students back into mainstream school where possible. The school was judged as good by Ofsted in December 2014. College Hall is also commissioned to provide up to 25 hours per week home tuition for students who are unable to attend mainstream school due to a diagnosed medical condition. College Hall has an annual budget for 2016-17 of £1.031 million (see tables 2 and 4). The staffing breakdown is summarised in table 9, showing staffing across the services provided. The Review team's view is that there is a high proportion of senior leaders employed and the use of unqualified teachers may impact on the delivery of a core curriculum.

Table 9: College Hall breakdown of staffing

Role	FTE
Senior leader	3.8
Teacher (incl 2 x unqualified teachers)	5.4
Outreach workers / teaching assistant	7.62
Home tuition - senior leader	1.0
Home tutors (x 15)	8.1

College Hall is located in two adjacent, converted residential properties on the edge of Bracknell Forest: one property dedicated to excluded pupils and the other to those on home tuition. In the view of the Review team, these offer limited, fragmented learning facilities. There are SLAs in place for certain services delivered by College Hall, the outreach service and the home tuition service, but the Review team found no evidence of an SLA for the PRU provision.

The SLA for home tuition is for up to 25 hours teaching per student, and the statutory minimum entitlement is for 15 hours per week. Attendance data (see: 3.4.2) records 25 students attending for home tuition in the last academic year. The Review team is unclear how, given the budget for home tuition, this provides sufficient learning time for all pupils. The evidence provided also shows that College Hall has limited capacity to commission therapeutic or other external support for its vulnerable pupils. Pupils have access to a substance misuse worker, but there is no school nursing or counselling service and this is of particular concern given the medical needs of the pupils.

The Review team understand that referral routes to access home tuition in Bracknell Forest are being reviewed to ensure that an individual healthcare plan (IHCP) is in place and that a medical clinician has oversight of the needs of the pupil. In some other LAs, access to this kind of service is only achieved through an EHCP being in place and the involvement of a third tier clinician such as a

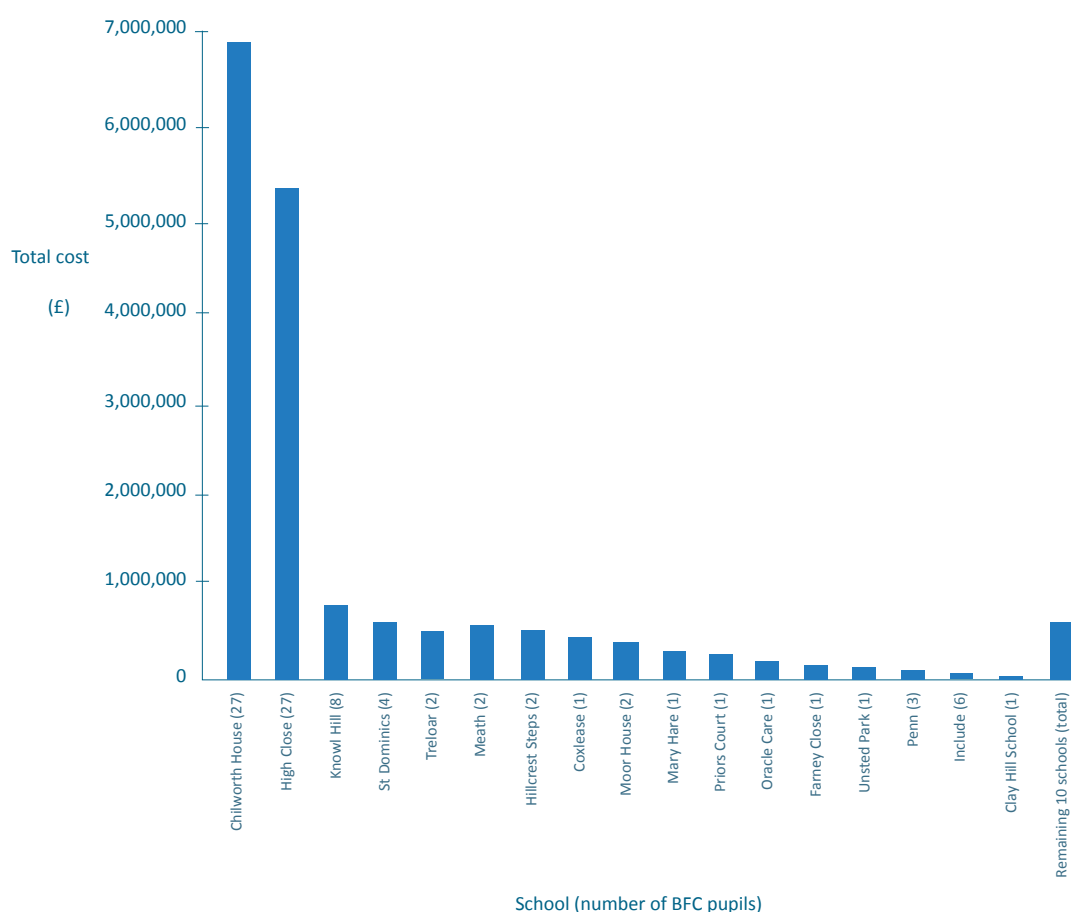
paediatrician or CAMHs psychiatrist. In some areas CCGs provide additional funding to meet the needs of children and young people with mental health needs and to support them in a home tuition service.

There was a lack of a clear performance indicator evidence for College Hall, either from within the LA or from the school, for example about attendance and attainment targets for students and achievement. A strategic dialogue involving other headteachers could help to re-shape and update these resources to make the best use of the funding available.

c) Pupils placed in independent and non-maintained special schools (NMSSs)

In common with all LAs, BFC commissions many places for pupils with specific or complex SEND from independent schools and NMSSs outside the council area and these pupils often spend their remaining 'school career' at these schools once they have a funded place. Due to the complex needs of the children and young people and also the fact that the institutions have to cover total costs, or, for some, are profit-making, these involve the commitment of large amounts of funding.

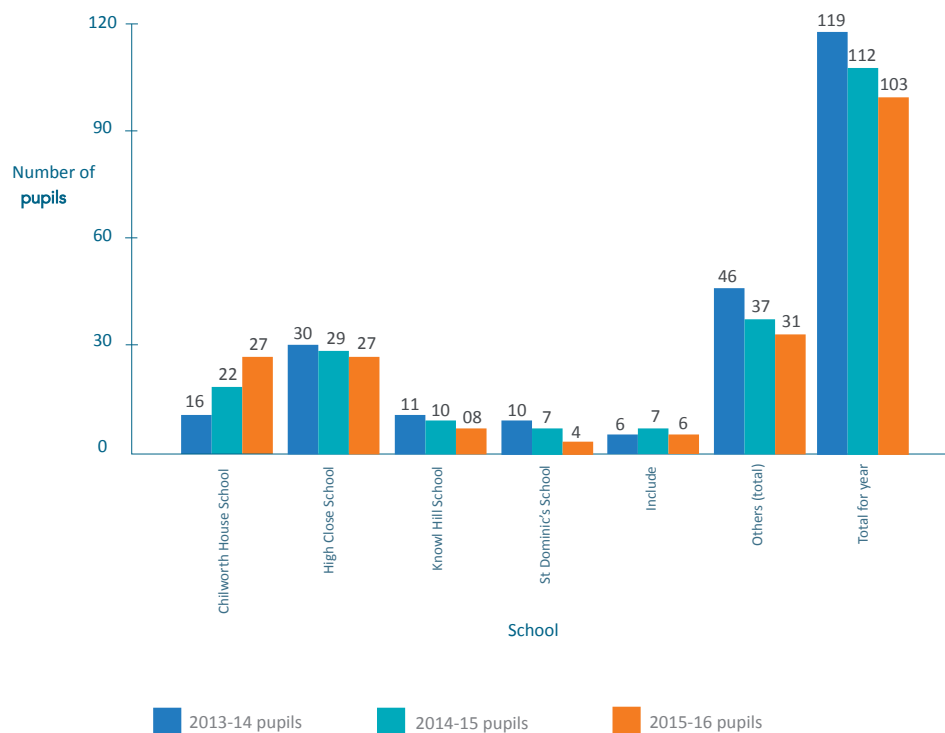
Fig 16: Pre-16 out of area placements - estimated total placement costs (based on 2015-16)



The Council's combined budget for places commissioned up to the age of 16 and for places for 16 to 25 year olds is £4.568 million in 2016 – 17 (see: [table 6](#)), which represents about a third of the HNFB and around 15% of the total population of children and young people with an EHCP or statement. Comparisons with national and statistical neighbours (LGA 2016) and with data from another region indicate that this is a high proportion for a LA (NHS E Mids 2016), about twice the level of the average across England, whilst levels as low as 4% of the 5 to 16-year-old population with an EHCP, are achievable. A small, unitary authority with only one maintained special school faces challenges of scale by comparison with larger councils, but even when compared to smaller authorities the proportion in BFC is relatively high.

For the financial year 2015-16, two providers, High Close School and Chilworth House School, educated 54 of the 103 pupils in pre-16 places (a total payment to these schools of £800,948 and £1,234,284 respectively). The average full-time placement cost per Bracknell Forest pupil at High Close School is £42,850 pa and £63,105 pa at Chilworth House School, plus £10,000pp deducted at source by the EFA (EFA 2016). Analysis of full placement costs at the main providers for BFC (from start date of placement until the proposed date of completion) is set out in fig 16. The overall costs for all providers totalling greater than £100,000 in 'total placement costs' are set out with the number of children and young people placed from Bracknell Forest in brackets. The Review team also found that out of area places tend to be one-off purchases by the BFC SEN Team, rather than part of a commissioning strategy.

Fig 17: Bracknell Forest pre-16 pupils in independent or NMSS 2013 to 2016



The total cost to Bracknell Forest to educate the 27 pupils placed at Chilworth House School would be £6,810,292, an average 'school career' cost of £252,200 per pupil, and the figure for those attending High Close School, £5,317,353: an average school career cost of £196,939 per pupil.

Over the past two years there has been some closer attention given to the management of the numbers of pupils placed out of area. Fig 17 demonstrates that, for pre-16s, there is a downward trend with the 'total pupils placed' reducing from 119 (2013-14) to 103 in the 2015-16 financial year. The principle strategy implemented during this time is the opening of the new resource centre for students with ASD at The Rise.

Another financial consideration for BFC is the cost of transport for pupils placed out of area, although this is not funded by the HNFB. Indicative costs provided by council officers for the two main providers include:

- average total travel cost per pupil in 2015-16 to Chilworth House School was: £5,843 pa and to High Close School: £4,757 pa;
- a total of about £155,000 and £128,000, respectively, for the 2015-16 student numbers.

Chilworth House School was visited by the Review team and provides a good quality of education for primary and secondary pupils with SEMH and autism. The school expressed interest in developing their partnership with BFC to ensure better provision of joined-up services for Bracknell Forest pupils, similar to partnership arrangements in place with some other LAs that place pupils with them. This would also present an opportunity to develop shared medium-term strategies for supporting the return of pupils to appropriate local provision, thus reducing the cost of placements in the medium term. If such a partnership could be successfully established, a similar arrangement might be possible with High Close School as well. Fig 17 illustrates the potential value of such a partnership, because an increasing proportion of pupils placed out of area by BFC attend these two schools. Nearly all of these students have a primary need of SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) or ASD (see [fig 9](#)). The Review team was also informed that both these schools are at, or near, their capacity.

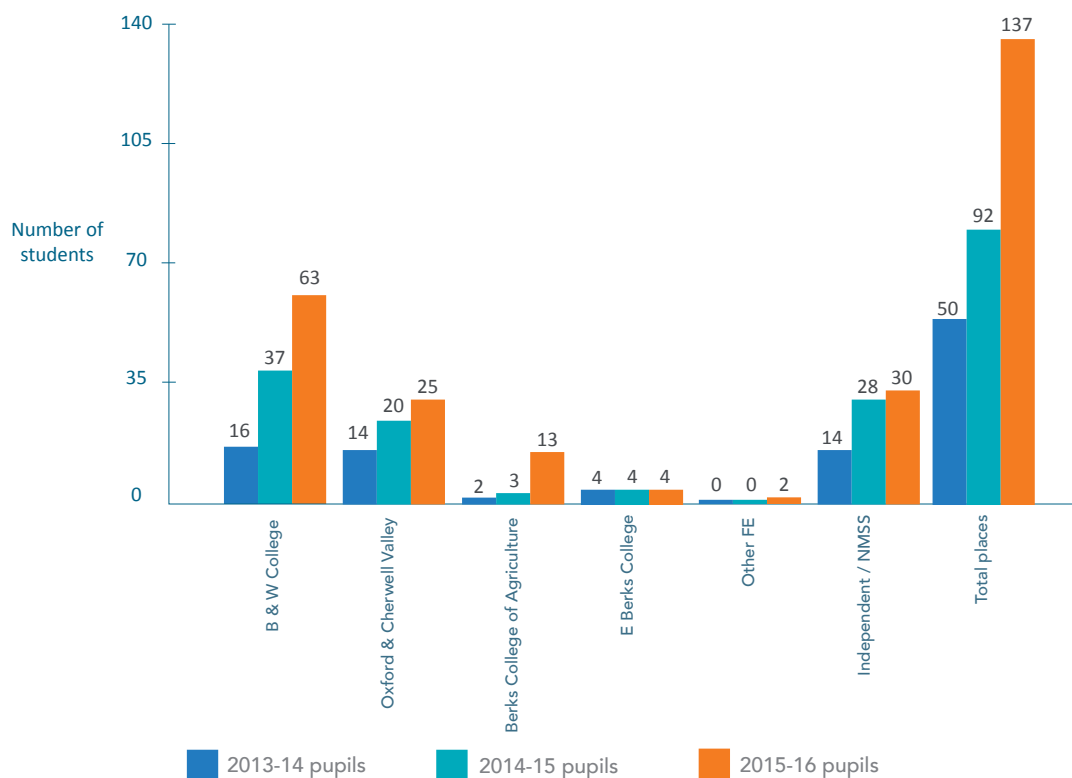
A small reduction in charges for places (for a term) that commence in the autumn term has been offered by Chilworth House School. No arrangement has been offered by Barnardo's, who run High Close School. Given the number of places commissioned it would be advisable for BFC to commission these places on a group or reduced rate basis.

The profile and trends for young people with an EHCP or statement that are over 16 are harder to assess because, prior to 2014, LAs did not have responsibility for funding all post-19 places and consequently data compiled from before 2015-16 is likely to be incomplete. Whilst the chart in fig 18 suggests substantial increases in numbers, it can only reflect incomplete data from first year to 18 months of reporting. There is undoubtedly an increase in the number of post-19 placements, but it is, as yet, hard to report on the trend and, therefore, difficult to make accurate projections for the future.

A further complication is that in BFC post-16 financial data combines together placements at FE colleges with those at independent and NMSS. The Review team have separated these data (see: [3.3.2](#) and fig 18) because the cost of placements at FE colleges are lower than placements in NMSSs,

attract a lower EFA place payment deduction (EFA 2016) and the travel costs are lower at FE colleges. BFC officers reported to the Review team that they viewed the costs charged by some FE colleges as unnecessarily high, but attempts to address this issue with a pan-Berkshire SEND consortium have so far been unsuccessful.

Fig 18: Bracknell Forest post-16 students in FE college or independent / NMSS 2013 to 2016



4.2.2 DECISION MAKING AND JOINT COMMISSIONING PROCESSES

The fortnightly SEND Panel reaches decisions on whether pupils require an EHCP and confirms conversion decisions from statements or LDAs to EHCPs and notes changes reported through the Annual Review process. The SEND Panel requires the evidence submitted to include detailed provision mapping to meet the additional needs of each pupil presented and this enables officers to use this, to set the top-up funding transferred to the school.

A separate framework for top-up funding is adopted with the special school, Kennel Lane (see: [appendix 5](#)), with very broad band descriptors, only two of which, bands 4 and 5, affect additional, 'top-up' payments. The provision mapping evidence required of mainstream schools enables BFC officers (and parents) to be well-informed about the provision being made for a pupil and able to alter levels of funding should there be future changes in need. The Review team see this as good practice, whilst the broad banding descriptors for Kennel Lane School are anomalous and should be updated. It is debatable whether bands 2 and 3 are of relevance for the funding of the needs of pupils at the school. The view of the Review team is that provision mapping in specialist provision

should be informed by the good practice with local mainstream schools and with special schools elsewhere in England.

Whilst the SEND Panel is the decision-making group for EHCPs, the SEN Team identify the school options if an independent or NMSS placement is required, in consultation with parents and carers. As reported in [4.2.1](#), the Review team found that these are 'spot purchase' decisions rather than via a commissioning framework. Despite the large sums involved, the decision to place out-of-area is currently made at middle manager level and is largely driven by availability and suitability of a placement suited to the pupils' current needs. Little or no evidence was found of consideration being given to future destinations or potential for partnership to achieve a move back into a local school in this decision-making process.

BFC has a 'statement of approach' (BFC 2013) for the joint commissioning of services for children and young people with the Bracknell and Ascot Clinical Commissioning Group (BACCG). The only specific action listed in the statement that relates to SEND is to improve the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of pre-school children. Although outside the scope of the Review, the team understands that this has underpinned positive developments at the Child Development Centre in Bracknell. Despite the number of children and young people with need of SEMH, there was little engagement by mental health professionals in annual reviews or progress with the CCG about contributing to the funding of specialist placements in NMSSs or home tuition for pupils when a clinician has advised not to attend school.

The Council also has 'A Policy and Procedure for Transition to Adulthood' (BFC 2016b). Whilst this policy adopts approaches aligned with the Care Act (2014), the Review team is of the view it does not sufficiently address statutory requirements of the SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015a). Interview evidence indicates that the procedures are not being implemented as set out in the document, for example, there is irregular attendance from education (whether LA officers or schools) at the operational Approaching Adulthood Panel. The SEN team also informed the Review team that they are unaware of Panel dates, whilst attendance by social care or health professionals at annual reviews is inconsistent.

The Review team found evidence of weak arrangements with adult social care and health to make decisions about the commissioning of care and education for those over-19 with complex needs. Little evidence was found that adult care assessments are completed systematically or in a timely fashion for all young people with an EHCP or statement whose needs meet the thresholds, including consultation with parents and carers to build their confidence in any planned changes. Elsewhere in England describes LAs and CCGs developing joint procedures so that a young person's EHCP becoming the primary joint commissioning tool for all partners (NHS E Mids 2016). The recent upper tribunal judgement (Buckinghamshire case) highlights the importance of good joint commissioning arrangements for 19 to 25 year olds. This found that whilst educational outcomes for a young person over the age of 18 might be achievable through a social care budget, until this is in place the LA needs to maintain an EHCP and its provision. Even if the young person was unable to achieve any further qualifications, this was insufficient reason for ending an EHCP (CDC 2016b).

Case study: Organising support for SEND via traded services

Overview of three traded services.

Area	South Gloucester	Kingston & Richmond	Manchester
Name of Company	Integra Schools	Achieving for Children	One Education Limited
Number Schools	139 (edu base)	78 schools Kingston; 91 Richmond upon Thames	1,000 plus schools and academies
Core Market	5 Gloucestershire primary and secondary schools. Around 80% of schools buy back Inclusion services.	School support services offered to all primary and secondary schools in Kingston and Richmond. Integrated education, health and social care services for children in the two boroughs too.	School support services offered to all primary and secondary schools in Manchester. Only forms a minority of turnover now.
Product/Services offered	Specialist professional support services & facilities management for schools and academies.	School support services with two types of membership: standard - no charge for schools and provides a core offer. Premium membership - access to further support and enhanced level of membership.	Specialist Pupil Services - support at individual pupil and whole-school strategic level, such as educational psychology and safeguarding, plus Specialist Management Services.
Type of Company/Model	LATC - Local Authority Trading Company single shareholder South Gloucestershire Council. In the process of becoming a limited company.	Social enterprise - community interest company.	Limited company with share capital – LA is 100% shareholder.
Governance Structure	Four directors and managing director. South Gloucestershire will become 100% shareholder.	Board of Directors; - The governance arrangements for the company are set out in its Articles of Association. Jointly owned by both boroughs and overseen by directors and number of NEDs.	Six directors on the Board.
No of staff	Over 700 in Integra. There are 4 fte in the inclusion team.	647 FTE including social work, teaching, health services & public sector management.	170 plus team of associates – 8 in the inclusion team
Financial	Commercially sensitive information and no figures available for inclusion in the case study but willing to discuss with BF separately	The company was incorporated on 5 February 2014 and commenced trading on 1 April 2014. Its revenue for its first trading year was £102.1 million of which £91.1million (89%) was in respect of its contract for the provision and operation of children's services to the Councils. For the reporting period the company incurred a loss of £22.369 million which is attributable in equal proportion to its parent Councils.	One Education broke even according to documents filed on company house for end 2015
Website	https://edocs.southglos.gov.uk/integra/	https://www.afcllocaloffer.org.uk/	www.oneeducation.co.uk

These examples range from the setting up of 'stand-alone' improvement services jointly owned with schools to an LA that provides a comprehensive range of services that are all traded with local schools.

a. Integra Schools

Integra Schools is the trading arm of South Gloucestershire Council providing support services for schools that includes facilities management and specialist, professional support. The LA's existing traded service was restructured in 2011 and all the support that fell under education, learning and skills became Integra. Integra Schools was relaunched in November 2015 and is currently in the process of becoming a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC). The LA is the company's only shareholder and the governance structure includes Directors from the LA and a managing director who was appointed in April 2016 from a commercial background.

Integra is a profitable company and the school improvement service benefits by being aligned with the overall operational side of the LA. This has helped to ensure that there is always sufficient funding to help manage cash flow across all services and it is felt that the school improvement service would find it much harder to exist without this back up.

Integra Schools offers schools a range of support and provides them with a choice of a School Membership service that allows them a discount on purchasing a range of products, or a 'pay-as-you-go' basis. The prices are determined using different metrics. For example, the governor support is based on number of governors in school, the curriculum support is based on number of days for the school, the therapeutic service is based on cost of counsellors. Services are offered to schools in South Gloucestershire and to other areas.

Schools are making tough decisions on what services to purchase based on finance constraints. As a result, some schools have purchased operational services from other areas but the inclusion services are still popular with schools, with 80% of S Gloucestershire schools purchasing the products. The Inclusion Team is skilled and over the past few years they have become much more commercially aware and are able to adapt their products to better meet the needs of schools. Integra also have a strong contractual system in place with schools. The area of greatest demand for the Inclusion Team is ASD and early years. Staff are employed by Integra Schools whereas some services use external staff, for example, the therapeutic service uses counsellors from other services and are sub-contracted to schools.

b. Achieving for Children

Achieving for Children (AfC) is a social enterprise company created by the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames and London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames in April 2014 to provide children's services. They were the first children's service in the UK to spin out from its local authority partners and this is a large scale business with a multimillion-pound budget.

AfC has combined staff from both LAs into one company and integrating many of the children's services into single structures, for example the disabled children's services have been co-located, and can now be accessed by children from the two boroughs. AfC have impacted on the area's children's services as a whole and transformed Kingston Council's from inadequate to good.

Services for schools are delivered by the School Performance Alliance for Richmond and schools (SPARK). It is led and governed by the Schools Improvement Strategy Group made up of representative head teachers,

the Director of Education Services and the Head of School Standards and Performance. SPARK offers two types of membership:

- standard membership – core offer and no charge to schools, funded by the LA
- premium membership – the core offer, plus an additional support including access to a range of networks and bespoke in-school support.

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames are the joint owners of Achieving for Children, which is a company limited by guarantee. Their responsibilities and the ownership are set out in an Inter-Authority Agreement and the LAs fulfil their ownership role through a Joint Committee. The Committee is responsible for ensuring that the company operates and develops in accordance with the wishes of both Councils. Decisions about the services that are commissioned from Achieving for Children are delegated to a Children's Commissioning Board. An Operational Commissioning Group is responsible for monitoring how well the company performs in terms of financial management and the services provided.

c. One Education

Manchester City Council (MCC) established One Education as a stand-alone, commercial company in 2011 and it replaced its previous Education Traded Services. The aim is to operate at arms-length from MCC and to grow its customer base beyond Manchester so that it would be a long-term, viable business.

One Education was also envisaged initially to be a Strategic Business Partner to MCC, providing services to Manchester schools in line with MCC's priorities, with 42% of its sales and support services initially directed by MCC. However, this subsequently changed due to MCC establishing a Strategic Education Partnership and the Manchester Schools' Alliance; the Council had to step-back to ensure that there was no conflict of interest in the service offered to schools.

One Education made a loss in 2013-14, which was attributed to the LA market declining at a quicker rate than anticipated: as a result of a review by MCC there was a £2.5 million reduction in central contracts. In response One Education reviewed their delivery model to ensure that they were providing services that were marketable for the changing market. Current sales projections show that trading with MCC will have reduced to less than 10% of total sales by April 2016. One Education are now working with other LAs across England and has contracts with over 500 schools from Yorkshire to Somerset and Wiltshire.

One Education's services to schools are primarily in two key areas: Specialist Pupil Services and Specialist Management Services. The SEND and safeguarding services and specialists offer support for improving attendance, dyslexia assessments, educational psychology, safeguarding support, SEND support and therapeutic interventions. There are some set fees for services but the cost of a school's contract is set according to the combination of services they require and is specified against a number of indicators such as number of days, type of support and number of pupils.

4.3 The coherence of the SEND system, designed with children and young people's needs at its centre

4.3.1 SCHOOLS FIND THEMSELVES NAVIGATING A DISJOINTED SEND SYSTEM

"Can we have a map of SEND support services and how they interconnect?"

Headteacher interview

"Can we have clearer pathways for referrals to external/support services?"

Headteacher interview

The headteachers and SENCOs who were interviewed all made comments similar to the above quotes. Schools gave the overwhelming impression that while there are pockets of effective and valued support that schools can access for pupils, there is no overview about how one service relates to another. In particular, most of the schools asked for a summary of the assessment and support pathways for the main categories of SEND and at what point different services can be accessed for support.

Headteachers reported that certain services, such as speech and language therapy (SALT), at times were reluctant to adapt working practices: they want therapists to more often support strategies delivered by TAs or teachers, rather than the therapist treating the pupil directly. There were markedly contrasting experiences of accessing SALT support reported by schools: from a primary with a resource centre and access to 2fte SALTs, to another expressing frustration about the length of waiting times for SALT and disappointment in the strategies provided. Similar frustrations were voiced about the level of mental health support for pupils and that clinical services made time to undertake diagnoses and make placement recommendations but were much less available for support and interventions.

There were calls by headteachers for more resources and responsibilities for high needs to be delegated to schools. Examples included the delegation of funds to schools to shape and lead the commissioning of alternative provision, thus being able to specify and fund external services needed.

Another shift in the system highlighted in most of the interviews was the inflexibility of the local statutory processes. Whilst acknowledging the thoroughness, there was a strong feeling that the insistence on all paperwork being presented to the SEND Panel resulted in delays to support being put in place for pupils. Headteachers, whilst understanding that an EHCP was only appropriate for pupils with the most complex needs, felt that the volume of the paperwork was a burden on school staff: three schools independently estimated a minimum of five full days of a SENCO's time per EHCP application.

A number of schools expressed a view that there is an increasing unmet need of support for children and young people with ASD. Schools are experiencing increasing numbers of children with

autism, yet there is no specialist resource centre support for the primary age group and that external support from the Autism and Social Communication Service (ASSC) was having to be rationed and was overly focused on assessment of need.

4.3.2 SCHOOLS ARE POSITIVE ABOUT SUPPORT PROVIDED BY SOME PROFESSIONALS AND WOULD LIKE OPPORTUNITIES TO PURCHASE MORE AND/OR SEE INCREASED CAPACITY

"The Educational Psychology Service is a strength. We feel the advice given does improve outcomes for SEND pupils."

School survey

"The support that we had [from the SEN Team] to transfer Statements to EHCPs was very good."

Response to school survey

Through the online survey of schools, 24 out of 28 highlighted the good support from certain teams at BFC. Nine schools remarked specifically on the good support provided by the SEN Team, four about support from educational psychologists and three about the ASSC service. Three schools also remarked positively on support from external agencies such as SALT. One school specifically reported that the SEN Team had contributed to them being able to step-down several pupils from having an EHCP to having SEN support.

This positive feedback, when sat alongside evidence in 4.3.1, illustrates the inconsistencies across the local SEND system. A further example is feedback received about the sensory impairment service: one school reported that the service visits their three pupils regularly and leads the liaison with the parents, while another school's comment was that the service feels remote and is reluctant to liaise with their SENCO.

4.3.3 THE COST AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT OF CERTAIN LONG-STANDING, SEND SUPPORT CONTRACTS

"My school and others feel we can't influence SLAs from Bracknell Forest services."

Headteacher interview

The above quote from one headteacher was echoed by most of the schools: that the current options for SLAs with services such as Support for Learning were too inflexible whereas for some other services, such as ASSC and for SALT, they would like to be able to buy-in additional support, but this option did not appear to be available. BFC has several high needs services that offer an SLA for local schools (these can be found here: <http://schools.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/services-schools/slas-2016-2019>). Several headteachers also expressed frustration with neither being able to influence the package of services provided and having to make a three year commitment.

It should be noted that not all services that support SEND, including the Educational Psychology Service and the SEN Team, are funded from the HNFB. The managers of these two services are supported by the HNFB, however, felt they lacked influence over the structure of charges and content of their service's SLA: they had no consistent mechanisms to consult with schools about the best services to offer and felt that SLAs were finance-driven rather than business driven.

A number of these teams are looking towards increasingly trading their services to schools, which is frequently the case in other areas, and the Review team holds the view that this process should be given a specific timescale for implementation. The percentage charged for management overheads for certain SLAs was also noted by the Review team: for example, 20% of the contract payment for the home tuition and for the outreach service commissioned from College Hall is retained by the Council for this reason. These levels are higher than in some LAs and should be reviewed as part of discussions with the SEND Strategic Group about the HNFB budget.

The commissioning of external services such as SALT and Sensory Impairment, funded from the HNFB, lies with the Council. Though responsible for these contracts, the Head of Targeted Services was only sent details of the agreements as part of the evidence search for this Review. Both contracts with Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT), for SALT and OT, and with the Sensory Impairment Consortium were up for renewal in March 2016 and appear to have been rolled-forward.

The view of the Review team is that there is a need to update the approach taken to services commissioned from the retained HNFB budgets and these should come into closer alignment with most LAs in England. It is unusual for schools to only have access to a 100% funded SALT service and this is partly responsible to the lack of responsiveness of the service. It is more common for services for the most vulnerable children and young people to be commissioned, or for funds to be delegated to groups of schools to commission these. For pupils with low to medium levels of SEN, it is more common for schools to commission any external support from their notional SEN budgets.

The total contract cost for 2016-17 for support for sensory impairment is £251,000. In addition to the 20 pupils with sensory impairment with an EHCP or statement in Bracknell Forest, there are about another 45 to 50 at SEN support. This contract, therefore, works out at nearly £4,000 per pupil, per annum.

The wording of the current contracts for Sensory Impairment and with BHFT include elements of performance indicators in them, but these are in need of updating to reflect the service sought by schools. There is some provision for refund if the service delivered is less than the level contracted. However, best practice would revise these clauses so they linked to clear and timely outcome indicators and regular performance management.

4.3.4 MORE CONSISTENCY OF SEND OFFER ACROSS SCHOOLS

There is good practice in SEND in place in parts of Bracknell Forest, including in many of the schools. Areas of best practice shared during the headteachers' interviews include:

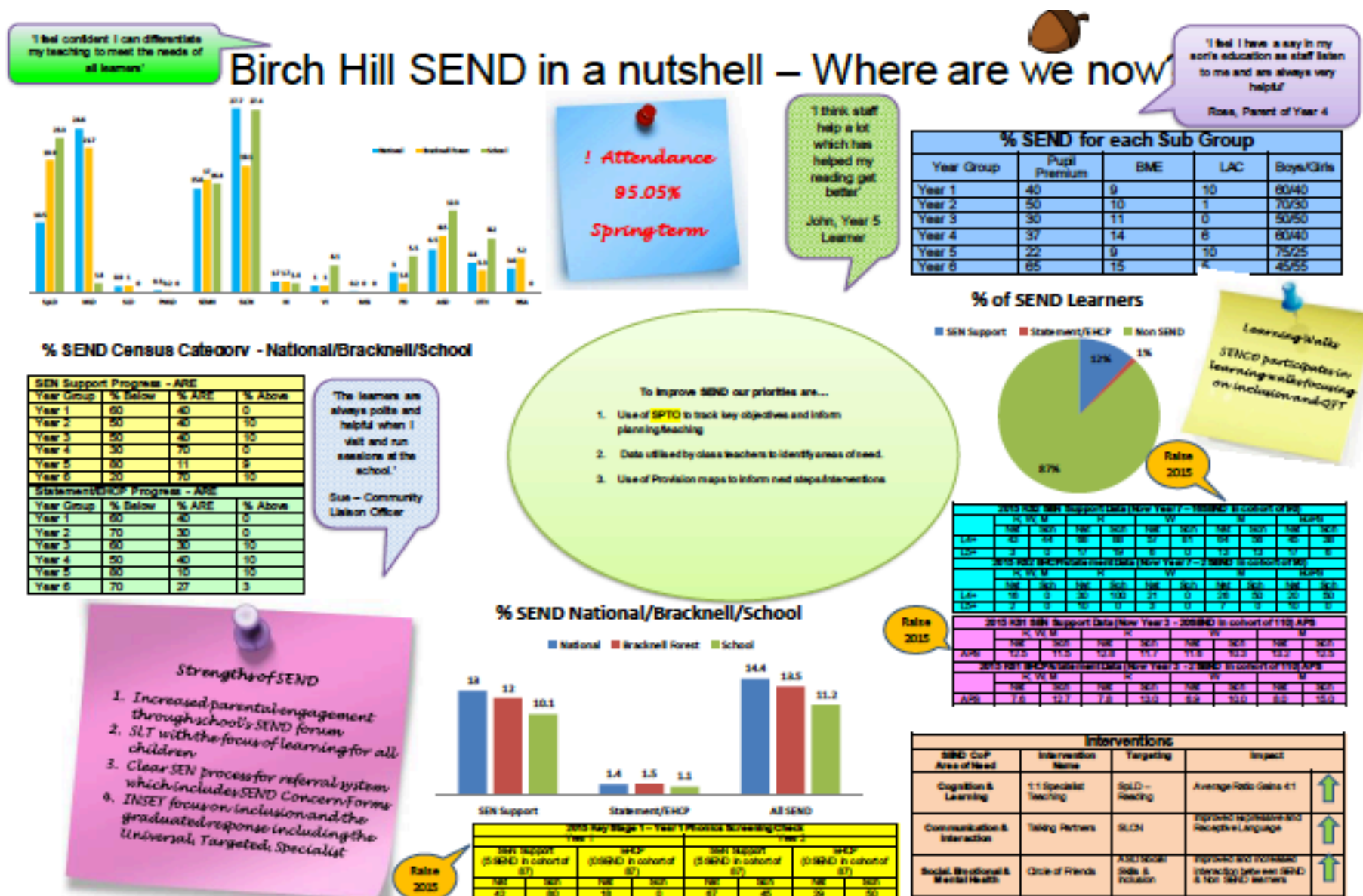
- *"Our main emphasis has been on SEND training for all staff, as well as getting inclusion structures in place so teaching assistants are now deployed across a year group & transfer up with pupils."*

- *“Secondaries have taken charge of their SENCO forum and it runs how they want it now and has a strong focus on developing practice.”*
- *“In school, years 7 and 8 literacy catch up is working well. Small bases have been set up around school, staffed by trained learning support assistants. Each has a different focus and supports a specific group of students: an ASD base, 'soft-landing' base for anxious students, and homework club (run by a higher level teaching assistant) that successfully targets SEND students.”*
- A number of primary schools have adopted a format to summarise their SEND provision and progress, which provides a good tool for communication with parents and with school staff (see: Fig 19).

Most schools interviewed also highlighted additional resource, over-and-above the notional budget of £6,000 per SEND pupil and top-ups, that they commit to provision for their pupils with SEND. This resource is sourced from their general budgets.

Headteachers expressed the view that there is some way to go for there to be sufficient consistency of practice across schools in Bracknell Forest. Specific areas mentioned included the assessment and identification of SEN across schools, with one suggestion being to establish moderation arrangements for SENCOs to review one another's assessment of needs. Whilst there were several positive comments about the school-led secondary SENCO forum, this was not the case with networking between primary school SENCOs. Finally, the Review team heard of few opportunities to regularly share best practice in SEND support across schools in the area and heard little reference to challenge to practice being accessed from schools outside Bracknell Forest.

Fig 19: "SEND in a Nutshell" from Birch Hill Primary School



4.4 A data-rich SEND system that understands the difference it is making

High performing systems across all kinds of settings demonstrate, including outstanding schools, excellent achievement and outcomes are underpinned by good data that is understood by those leading the organisation.

4.4.1 MUCH SEND DATA IS IN SILOS AND NOT READILY AVAILABLE ACROSS CHILDREN'S SERVICES NOR SHARED WITH SCHOOLS

To both understand the way that BFC deploys its HNFB budget and to identify areas for improvement and better value for money, the Review team sought and analysed considerable amounts of data as well as generating its own evidence from interviews, surveys and visits. Support was provided from the Education Finance Team and the SEN Team and a considerable amount of information provided (see: [appendix 3](#)).

The experience of the Review was of piecemeal provision of data and information and that there are islands of data in BFC. The SEN Team has ensured that it has reports and generates updates from the school census together with its own placement and annual review information. This gives an overview of children and young people with EHCPs or statements, where pupils are placed and the cost. Similarly finance officers effectively manage the budgets for placement expenditure and for LA services supported by the HNFB by financial year. There is also regular reporting and update on some SEND Code of Practice processes through the Council's departmental performance management (the Lilac Book) and these include the progress of conversions of statements and LDAs to EHCPs and the number of EHCP assessments completed within 20 weeks.

The Review team found insufficient linking of data between teams directly involved in SEND services in Children, Young People and Learning and an absence of effective sharing of SEND data across teams, such as between children's social care and the SEN Team. An area of the difficulty was that finance data are reported by financial year, robust updates on pupil numbers are received in the January Schools Census information and, especially for post-16 data, the start of the academic year is a key update point for final college or school numbers. Improved reconciliation of SEND data at these three key data points through the year would result in better monitoring of costs and performance.

There were three areas of data where the Review team found little or no activity:

1. the collation of the SEN support data from Bracknell Forest schools and linking these with EHCPs and statements to outcomes such as attainment, attendance and exclusions;
2. projections of future SEND demand and modelling of financial pressures and scenarios;
3. surveying and collation of the view of young people about the SEND system and its performance alongside those of parents and carers.

The absence of the above data or its collation, limits the ability of the LA to discuss with schools their performance or that of the SEND system across Bracknell Forest and to rigorously address issues and gaps. Of particular relevance to the Review is that the disconnected data hampers carrying out good quality projections of future demand. Even a key metric for data management, whether to report by full-time equivalent (fte) numbers or by number of places irrespective of when the placement started, has not been clarified and has left some financial reports of limited value to assessing demand.

The absence of survey evidence about SEND across local schools or from young people, parents and carers meant the Review team carried out its own surveys (see: [3.7](#)). These, therefore, are

standalone snapshots rather than updates adding to an evolving profile the Council has developed over time.

4.4.2 THE FRAGMENTATION OF SEND DATA RISKS LIMITING LEADERS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND SUCCESSES AND PRESSURES ACROSS THE LOCAL SEND SYSTEM

"How well do LA leaders know the SEND data?"

Headteacher interview

There are significant pressures on the SEND system in Bracknell Forest. Some of these are similar to those being faced by local areas across England and others are a result of local arrangements. The Review has tested and confirmed an underlying assumption of its commissioners that there has been a gap in the strategic leadership of SEND across Bracknell Forest and that school leaders have an appetite to join with BFC to address this.

A symptom of the leadership gap is the fragmented data profile for SEND described in 4.4.1 as well as the partial performance management of the SEND system. The main on-going high level reporting of SEND performance within BFC focuses on important changes to the statutory processes that are required by the new Code of Practice (BFC 2016c). Over the past year there has also been a Departmental Management Team sub-group focussed on the financial pressures on the HNFB budgets internally in Children, Young People and Learning. An improved system leadership of SEND across Bracknell Forest, should be accompanied by reporting to a strategic body such as the Children and Young People's Partnership Board.

There is also insufficient clarity about the breadth of performance indicators for the local SEND system and a lack of strategic discussion across the LA and schools to reach cross-sector agreement on what to monitor and how. A further lever for leaders in Bracknell Forest is that Ofsted has now started to carry out local area inspections of SEND with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), as tasked under the Children and Families Act 2014. These inspections expect leaders across education, social care and health to have a well-informed picture of their SEND system and its strengths and areas for development. Linked to this, Ofsted and the DfE have proposed a core dataset (see: appendix 6) that covers educational outcomes for children and young people with SEND, as well as system-wide performance indicators. The Review team's view is that this dataset provides a good place for system leaders to consider how well they know SEND in Bracknell Forest, alongside existing process and financial data, and to select a core of local measures that will be actively monitored by leaders and with stakeholders. These should also be supported by regular canvassing of wider views from those in the SEND system and this could involve the replication of the Review's survey questions with school leaders and with parents and carers. The SEND Diagnostic Checklist for CCGs produced by the Council for Disabled Children would also help conversations involving the CCG and health providers (CDC 2016a).

5. Recommendations for a Renewed SEND Strategy Delivering Value for Money

The purpose of the Bracknell Forest HNFB Review is to report on:

- the effectiveness of the current school SEND system, and externally commissioned provision and how the HNFB is deployed in Targeted Services;
- emerging and future pupil and student demand;
- existing SEND provision funded from the HNFB and analyse against current and projected levels of need;
- options for better alignment of service provision to demand and the potential for savings
- options for reinvestment of savings in an improved SEND system.

Due to the challenges that local SEND systems such as Bracknell Forest's are facing, it is timely for partners across the local area to work together more strategically. A core aim should be to establish a strong continuum of SEND provision, with children and young people at its heart. The recommendations below are based on the evidence gathered during the Review and, if taken forward, will lead to more strategic and cost effective support for SEND across the education system in Bracknell Forest.

Table 10 provides the headline summary of the recommendations together with estimates of the potential savings. These possible savings are calculated for a three year period, and the table includes the assumptions that were used to reach these estimates. The total, indicative savings are based on an assumption the recommendations are all fully implemented (potential savings are in black and potential additional expenditure in red). The one area of likely increased expenditure that the Review was unable to make estimates for is the consequences of greater demand for post-19 places.

The detailed recommendations are presented under the same headings as the Review evidence:

- Increasing the strategic leadership by the school sector across the SEND system.
- Strong, coordinated local authority leadership for the planning of send provision, including place numbers, funding and commissioning.
- Greater coherence to the SEND system, designed with the child's need at the centre.
- A data-rich SEND system that understands the difference it is making.

Table 10: Summary of the estimated, potential future savings as a result of implementing the recommendations (against current HNFB budget**)

HNFB Area	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Assumptions
Independent chair for the SEND strategic group (one year)	£5,000			
Specialist provision: Closing Ranelagh School resource centre from Sept 17	£66,000	£132,000	£132,000	Subject to agreement with the school and agreement with EFA (post-16 places). Nov is key notification date.
Meadow Vale shift of designation to ASD (assumed for up to 10 places)	£56,250	£168,750	£281,250	Savings due to shift of the 3 primary children with ASD at CHS / HCS* from Sept 17. Then further 3 children pa not going out of area. Assume increased 'top-up' to equivalent to KLS band 5 (£25,400 pp). Hence average saving is £37,500 pp pa.
Kennel Lane School – move to place payment per pupil	£0	£0	£0	Assumes no change in 2017 due to remodelling. Then at-or-near 100% of 185 place capacity.
Changes to Kennel Lane 'top-up' bands (phased in from Sept 2017)	£100,000	£250,000	£380,000	Assumes a change to 4 top-up funded bands, to replace current 2 (bands 4 & 5). Taking 2015-16 pupil profile, assumed half of respective bands move to one lower, from Sept 17.
Re-commissioning of College Hall provision, including home tuition and outreach	£0	£0	£0	Assumes existing SLAs are re-wrapped together in a single new SLA for AP, PRU & home tuition.
NMSS / independent school places (over-and-above primary ASD places). Reduction by 5 places pa & move back to BF specialist provision from Sept 2017.***Savings against 2016-17 will continue to accrue, so are aggregated	£187,500	£375,000	£512,500	Moves back into area assumed to take up 10 'vacant' KLS places for 2 years and require band 5 'top-up' funding. Primarily pupils from CHS / HCS*. Savings average £37.5k pp in first 2 years, £27.5k pp thereafter.
BFC retained budgets: a. cut contingency payment (from Sept 17) provision from Sept 2017.***	£50,000	£100,000	£100,000	Following consultation with SEND Strategic Group.
b. move to reduction in SALT contract by 50% by 2018-19	£55,000	£113,000	£113,000	Assumes successful negotiations plus a framework agreed with provider for schools to purchase additional service.
c. reduction in sensory impairment contract by 50% by 2018-19	£63,000	£126,000	£126,000	Subject to negotiation with service prioritised for pupils with an EHCP / statement.

Table 10: Continued

d. maintain the core HNFB funding for ASSC move to traded provision to expand the service	£0	£0	£0	Move to traded arrangements ready to launch from April 2017.
e. phasing out of subsidy of Support for Learning	£0	£50,000	£100,000	Phased move to fully traded service; schools increasingly having capacity to deliver interventions and assessments.
f. phased reduction of BFC overhead charges	£25,000	£50,000	£75,000	Review charges to the HNFB with the SEND Strategic assessments. Group and change from 20%.
SEND dataset development project (one off)	£25,000			One off project currently to 10%.
TOTAL savings	£572,750	£1,364,750	£1,819,750	

* CHS = Chilworth House School; HCS = High Close School

** NMSS / independent school placement costs based on 2015-16 payments; remainder based on 2016-17HNFB budget.

*** most of these savings are already committed to support the year-on-year increase in places at The Rise.

5.1 Increasing the strategic leadership by the school sector across the SEND system

5.1.1 INCREASED SCHOOL LEADER INVOLVEMENT IN ESTABLISHING AND IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGIC VISION FOR SEND

The Review recommends:

- Establishing a Bracknell Forest SEND Strategic Group that is a partnership between nominated headteachers and the council's Department of Children, Young People and Learning (CYPL). The Group should start its work before the end of 2016 and act as champions for a renewed vision for SEND.

The views of headteachers are clear: they wish to see changes to the SEND system across the area and are willing to contribute to the strategic leadership of these developments. Local authorities (LAs) that have successfully adapted SEND provision to better meet need and have implemented demand-led budgets and achieved this through a strong partnership with local schools. Through the SEND Strategic Group, the LA should develop accountability for the commissioning of SEND specialist placements and work with the schools' sector so there is more consistent provision of support to meet locally identified need.

The SEND Strategic Group should have oversight of developing the local vision and a renewed SEND strategy and ensuring its implementation whilst retaining alignment with other changes across the local education system. The SEND Strategic Group should report to the Children and Young People's

Partnership Board and work closely with the Bracknell Forest Schools' Forum and with joint commissioning arrangements. To ensure the work of the group is driven forward and the vision becomes established locally, we suggest consideration is given to appointing a paid independent chair person, who has a strategic SEND track record, for the group's first year. This renewed vision and focus on SEND will prepare the ground for the implementation of the Review's other recommendations.

5.1.2 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP OF STRATEGIC ACCOUNTABILITY ACROSS THE SEND SYSTEM

The Review recommends:

- The terms of reference for the SEND Strategic Group ensure that the group has a clear role in decision-making and driving the changes. It should be supported to develop a business plan to take forward priority recommendations, hand-in-hand with the local SEND Strategy that will be developed.
- Consultation with schools about launching the SEND Strategic Group should start as soon as possible.
- An independent chair should be appointed and the role funded for the first year. Through employing a chair with significant national SEND expertise, this will help to set a strong foundation and also ensure there is leadership capacity for the Group in the short term.

Responsibilities of the Group should include scrutinising how the HNFB is deployed through the year, as well as being consulted about the proposed HNFB budget each year. The SEND Strategic Group will need to address some tough decisions to ensure that available high needs funding is used effectively to deliver positive outcomes and targets the children with the most need. The SEND Strategic Group should seek to keep the best interest of all children and young people with SEND central to its work and ensure there are opportunities for parents and children to be consulted and have their voices heard.

5.2 Strong, coordinated local authority leadership for the planning of SEND provision, including place numbers, funding and commissioning

A feature of strong leadership is the openness to learn from best practice, locally and nationally, and, through benchmarking, know how well the local system is performing.

5.2.1 BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL AND SPECIALIST PROVIDERS SHOULD WORK TOGETHER TO ADAPT CURRENT SEND PROVISION TO MORE CLOSELY MATCH DEMAND

The Review has identified a mis-match between some commissioned specialist places and likely demand, whilst, at the moment, there is no clear mechanism to formally amend specialist place numbers.

To action the recommendations, time will be needed for consultation and to plan the implementation of the changes. It is imperative that this work is prioritised if changes are to begin from the start of the 2017-18 academic year.

The recommended changes are set out below across local specialist provision, including Kennel Lane School and College Hall, and out-of-area place management.

a. Kennel Lane School:

There is evidence over the past three years of reducing demand for places at school (see: [3.4.1](#), fig 8), specifically, an under-utilisation of early years and key stage 1 provision (see: [4.2.1](#), table 8). Despite some over-provision currently, there is demographic evidence that, over the next five years, the demand from Bracknell Forest for specialist places is likely to increase ([table 5](#)). With oversight from the SEND Strategic Group, BFC should work with school's leaders and the governing body to not only remodel provision at the school to better fit with current and future demand, but also to ensure there is a better alignment of the school's offer with rest of the local SEND system.

The Review recommends:

- a) Kennel Lane School works with BFC officers to remodel its provision, informed by more detailed modelling of future, medium term SEND demand, in terms of numbers and primary needs. This will probably include a shift of places to secondary and post-16 and more complex needs, such as ASD / SLD and away from MLD.
- b) An early assessment resource is established during the current academic year for reception and year 1 children that offers dual placement for up to two terms, with the pupil's mainstream primary within existing resources. These assessment places would ensure that the children's needs are identified and that the most effective intensive strategies that could, where appropriate, support them in mainstream schools are trialled. The Review team suggests that between eight and twelve assessment places are created. A clear assessment protocol would need to be developed to ensure that parents understand that the places are not permanent. The pupils would not necessarily need an EHCP to access an assessment placement.
- c) Kennel Lane School work with BFC officers to review the current, limited, bands for top-up funding for higher need pupils. This work should begin as soon as possible so that implementation can commence by September 2017 and be informed by good practice within and outside Bracknell Forest. The step up between bands is currently, in the Review team's view, too high.
- d) An appraisal, involving the Head of SEN and the school's leaders, of the potential to establish a partnership for the school to apply to the EFA to become a special post-16 institution (SPI). This work should commence in the current academic year. If an application is to go ahead, there will be a need for a commitment to commissioning a minimum of ten post-19 places.

If a partnership to remodel provision with the school is not forthcoming, the number of places commissioned by BFC could be reduced by ten to better fit with current student numbers. A new commissioning agreement should be implemented, which would set out arrangements for increased places if demand changes over the next three to five years.

b. Resource centres:

The Review recommends:

- a) All resource centres should have an outcome-based service level agreement (SLA). These should be monitored by the LA clearly identify the number of places funded and a process by which this can be increased or decreased based on demand. Each resource centre should

produce an annual report that demonstrates improving pupil outcomes as a result of placement in the provision. This should be signed off by April 2017.

- b) Agreement should be reached with Ranelagh School to close its resource centre that has operated well below capacity for some time. The majority of pupils supported can and should have their needs met from within mainstream schools and transition arrangements can be agreed for the top-up funding for the few pupils with an EHCP.
- c) The resource centre at Meadow Vale Primary School should have its designation extended to provide specialist support for primary age children with ASD as well as some of the more complex children with SLCN it currently supports. This should form part of its SLA agreement and be a condition of maintaining the current 20 places commissioned. Transition arrangements should be made to support a move for some children currently supported back into mainstream classes, with appropriate support. New assessment criteria will need to be developed with the speech and language therapy service.

c. College Hall:

The current scale, resource level and premises for College Hall undermines its viability as a standalone alternative provision that offers sufficient quality of education and learning for its vulnerable students, both those in the PRU and accessing home tuition.

The Review recommends the following options are considered for future PRU and home tuition provision, in consultation with the SEND Strategic Group, either:

- a) Reach agreement with one local secondary to take over College Hall and its services and remodel and update the alternative provision, in agreement with the LA and in consultation with other local secondary schools; or
- b) Reach agreement with all the local secondary schools for the responsibility for alternative provision to be shared between them and to reach a decision about the best arrangements for home tuition; or
- c) Reach agreement with another provider, such as an outstanding PRU in a neighbouring local authority or with a multi-academy trust, to agree to be commissioned to deliver College Hall's alternative provision.

The Review also recommends that:

- The SEND Strategic Group should consult with secondary schools in Bracknell Forest about their responsibilities and role in providing alternative provision.
- Whatever delivery model is selected, there should be an SLA agreed, with effective monitoring arrangements and an outcome-focused performance management framework. The separate home tuition and outreach SLAs should be incorporated into the over-arching SLA and consideration given to whether sufficient capacity is being commissioned to meet the current expectation of up to 25 hours a week for home tuition.
- The LA, with the support of the SEND Strategic Group, should ensure all mainstream schools are fully meeting their statutory responsibilities for excluded pupils. BFC are recommended to establish a clearly defined referral process for the PRU, with a pupil having been subject to two permanent exclusions being a pre-requisite.

d. Partnership with the main NMSS providers:

Bracknell Forest places a significant number of children in out of area placements: 103 pre-16 pupils in 2015/16. Pre-16 placements are considered carefully via the SEND Panel and efforts have resulted in there being a downward trend in numbers placed over the past three years (see: [fig 17](#)). This focus should be maintained.

In order to maintain this downward trend, the Review recommends that the Head of SEN establishes a partnership arrangement with each of the two main NMSS providers, High Close School and Chilworth House School, to:

- a) develop closer management of support for pupils who show the potential to move back to local provision and innovative arrangements piloted, such as what transitional support could be funded from the NMSS to facilitate this;
- b) ensure better forward planning of future demand for places from Bracknell Forest with these schools;
- c) agree a framework for payments and service contracts for places taken by pupils from Bracknell Forest that reflects the scale of the funding from BFC. Other local authorities have arranged lower costs per placement, for a minimum number of pupils.

The Review also recommends that:

- d) BFC ensures there are adequate contracts in place for all out-of-area placements and move away from the current “spot purchase” commissioning arrangement. It is recommended to move onto a framework such as the ‘Multi-supplier Flexible Framework Agreement for Provision by Independent Special School and NMSS’ led by Gloucestershire County Council. (It should be noted that there are some schools that are not part of this framework and would still have to be ‘spot purchased’).

The Review team found Chilworth House School open to new ways of working; they cited examples where they have flexible arrangements with other social care and SEN teams to develop provision near to these LAs including residential or short breaks support.

5.2.2 CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL REQUIRED FOR ALL HIGH COST OUT OF AREA PLACEMENTS

High-cost, out-of-area SEND placements are a major financial commitment: £3,314,895 from the HNFB in 2015-16 and it is not unusual for the ‘school career’ costs for a student to be in excess of £500,000 (see: [fig 16](#)).

The Review recommends:

- a) A new approval process is developed and that decision-making for high cost placements in the Department of Children, Young People and Learning: be subject to approval by the nominated Chief Officer. We recommend the new process applies to all placements over a defined figure (we suggest over £20,000 pa).
- b) The new approval process should require the SEN Team to summarise the case for the placement (including travel costs, estimated lifetime costs and how local provision within Bracknell Forest was not an option for placement). Evidence should be provided about proposed support strategies and thresholds for the pupil to potentially move back into area in the future.

- c) All current out-of-area placements in independent and NMSS schools should be assessed, between education psychologists and the SEN Team, to identify those pupils with the greatest potential for future move back into Bracknell Forest provision. For those with the most potential, there should be early consultation and discussion with parents / carers as part of assessing the time-frame for their child's return to local provision.
- d) Social care colleagues should attend all key transition annual reviews (years 9, 11 and 13) to prepare for adulthood and for services to be provided through community social care rather than educational organisations.

5.2.3 ROBUST JOINT COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS FOR SEND SHOULD BE DEVELOPED; THESE SHOULD START WITH JOINT PLANNING FOR 14 – 25 YEAR OLDS

The Children and Families Act (2014) extended responsibility for ensuring access to education up to the age of 25 for those with high needs to LAs and that a young person's EHCP should effectively capture the joint planning across health, education and social care. It is recommended that Bracknell Forest Council should develop stronger, more strategic, joint commissioning arrangements for children and young people with SEND.

The Review recommends:

- a) Bracknell Forest Council and partners update the existing joint approach to commissioning (BFC 2013).
- b) As a priority, the Head of SEN, other senior LA officers and the CCG should establish more strategic arrangements for joint commissioning. This should implement improved, joint planning for all young people with an EHCP or statement from age 14, as learners move towards adulthood. Working with the SEN case officer, the lead social worker for each young person should ensure that adult care assessments are completed in time for all young people whose needs meet the thresholds, including consultation with parents / carers. Where appropriate continuing health care assessment will need to be part of the process and feature as part of the overall EHCP.
- c) Progress with improved multi-agency planning for young people with an EHCP or statement should be monitored by a strategic joint commissioning body with representation from health, education and social care.
- d) The young person and their parents or carers should be involved throughout the process, with Mental Capacity Act assessments completed where necessary.

5.3 Greater coherence to the SEND system, designed with the child's need at the centre

As part of updating the Local Offer, BFC should map the support pathways for each major, SEND category and the SEND Strategic Group should be consulted about this. This mapping will help to identify support that schools might ask BFC to commission on their behalf and support they might commission, or provide, themselves. This should form part of establishing a strong continuum of support for children and young people and their families.

5.3.1 A SENIOR BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL OFFICER SHOULD REVIEW CERTAIN LONG-STANDING, SEND SUPPORT CONTRACTS

Tasked by the SEND Strategic Group, the Head of Targeted Support should oversee a review of the existing contracts for speech and language therapy (SALT), sensory support and occupational therapy (OT). The Group should also be consulted about BFC's move towards a traded model for other SEND support services, including the Autism and Social Communication Support Service (ASSC), Support for Learning and Traveller Education that are currently financed from the HNFB.

The Review recommends:

- a) The contracts for SALT, OT and sensory support be revised to be worded on a performance basis and more closely monitored, with a clear recharge facility at the end of the year if the level of service varies from what was originally commissioned. The funded provision for SALT and sensory impairment should be reduced and be primarily for pupils with moderate to severe needs. There should also be a purchasing framework established for schools to commission and fund additional SALT and sensory impairment support on an annual basis.
- b) Traded arrangements are established for ASSC and Support for Learning, aligned with others being developed by BFC, and that these are led by the respective team managers. The traded service should include clearly defined, funded, core services for high needs children attending mainstream schools or resource centres. Each traded service should set out costed support package options that schools can choose to sign up to annually. The view of the Review team is that the HNFB element for the ASSC service should remain the same and that traded provision facilitates an extension of the service, whilst the HNFB funding for Support for Learning should gradually be phased out.

As a result of these recommendations, mainstream schools will need to increasingly meet the costs of low to medium level support for pupils on SEN support, from their SEND delegated funding.

5.3.2 IMPLEMENT A CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT FOR ALL PUPILS WITH SEND, THROUGH BUILDING ON LOCAL STRENGTHS AND PROCESSES

The Review recommends:

- a) As part of updating the Local Offer, BFC should map and summarise the local assessment and support pathways for pupils from each primary need category of SEND.
- b) BFC should involve SENCOs and consult with parents and carers as the pathways are mapped. This will help to ensure the pathway summaries are clear and easy to use. The opportunity should be taken, through this process, to highlight best practice locally, such as when pupils can be stepped down from requiring an EHCP or when children have been supported to achieve improved outcomes.
- c) During this academic year, the SEND Panel and the SEN Team should work with SENCOs to review local EHCP evidence gathering and decision-making processes. Where possible this should include representation from the health provider and social care too. The review should aim to achieve a process that is not unnecessarily burdensome, keeps the child's needs central and develops a focus on learning outcomes, as well as the provision of support in school.

5.4 A data-rich SEND system that understands the difference it is making

Good quality, reliable data is necessary to underpin developments across the renewed SEND system in Bracknell Forest. The Head of SEN should be tasked by CYPL's Departmental Management Team (DMT) to ensure a core dataset is defined and this should underpin the Council's understanding of the performance of the system and processes that achieve greater transparency and connectivity between existing data held by teams in the Department and with other partner organisations.

5.4.1 CONSISTENT, RELIABLE AND ROBUST SEND DATA ACROSS THE LOCAL SYSTEM

The Review recommends work begins this academic year:

- a) To establish a core SEND dataset to be assembled and reported quarterly to DMT and that this is aligned with the extended reporting indicators being proposed by the DfE (see: [appendix 6](#)). The development of this should build on existing performance monitoring of EHCP conversions and completions together with HNFB financial data, in order to assess progress and pressures.
- b) To urgently ensure that data about pupils assessed at SEN support, received from schools as part of their school census reporting, is routinely collated from January 2017 alongside existing data gathered about children and young people with statements and EHCPs for inclusion in the core dataset. BFC should have a picture for all children and young people with SEND of any issues with attendance, exclusions or poor attainment. The data accessible from 'Raise Online' for pupils at SEN support should be collated to ensure individual schools are meeting the needs of these pupils.
- c) To ensure financial reports about pupil top-ups and out of area funding are compiled by academic year, calendar year (linked to school census), as well as the existing financial year and by place numbers and full costs, as well as FTE and pro-rata costs. This will better assist performance management of the commissioning of places: helping to identify successes with moving pupils back into area and to estimate the costs of future support demands for those with high needs.

A briefer core dataset should be agreed for reporting to the Strategic SEND Group, covering data about finance and the provision for children and young people with SEND.

5.4.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF FORECASTING AND COST PROJECTIONS TO INFORM FUTURE SEND DECISION-MAKING

The Review recommends:

- a) The existing BFC platform for modelling future demand for school places be extended to include modelling scenarios for the potential future demand for SEND places for up to ten years in the future. This should be led by the Chief Officer Strategy and Resources and supported by the Head of SEN.
- b) The assumptions for future modelling are reassessed annually against the improved SEND data, due to 5.4.1. In particular, more granular, high needs cost projections should be developed and projections improved for post-19 provision as both joint commissioning improves and demand is better understood.

Glossary

Abbreviation	DfE category of SEND
ASD	Autistic spectrum disorder (or autistic spectrum condition)
HI	Hearing impairment
MLD	Moderate learning difficulty
MSI	Multi-sensory impairment
PD	Physical disability
PMLD	Profound and multiple learning difficulty
SEMH	Social, emotional and mental health
SLD	Severe learning difficulty
SPLD	Specific learning difficulty
SLCN	Speech, language and communication needs
VI	Visual impairment

Acronym	Meaning
Annual review	Review of an EHCP that local authorities should ensure take place every 12 months.
ASSC	Autism and Social Communication support service (Bracknell Forest)
BFC	Bracknell Forest Council
BHFT	Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust – local mental health and community health provider
CAMHS	Child and adolescent mental health service
CCG	Clinical commissioning group
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CYPL	Department of Children, Young People and Learning (Bracknell Forest)
DfE	Department for Education
DSG	Direct schools grant
EFA	Education Funding Agency
EHCP	Education health and care plan
EYFS	Early years and foundation stage
FE college	Further education college

HNFB	High needs funding block
IHCP	Individual health and care plan
KS	Key stage (of the National Curriculum)
LA	Local authority
LDA	Learning difficulty assessment
Local Offer	Information about provision the LA expects to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEN or are disabled.
NMSS	Non-maintained special school - school which is not maintained by the state but charges fees on a non-profit-making basis.
OT	Occupational therapy
Personal budget	Money identified by the LA to deliver provision set out in an EHCP where the parent or young person is involved in securing that provision.
PRU	Pupil referral unit
SALT	Speech and language therapy
SEN	Special educational need
SEND	Special educational need or disability
SENCO	Special educational needs coordinator (in a school)
SLA	Service level agreement
SPI	Special Post 16 Institution

Appendices

Appendix 1: National context for SEND

Schools Funding and High Needs Funding

The DfE distributes funding for schools in England through the dedicated schools grant (DSG), which totals £40.22 billion in 2016-17 (DfE 2016b). Figure 20 illustrates the schools funding streams and the DSG is split into three blocks: the schools block, the high needs block and the early years block. These blocks are notional, and local authorities (LAs) have the freedom to move funds between them. The LA also has a responsibility to define the local funding formula for schools, following formal consultation with school leaders, via their local Schools Forum (DfE 2016b). The LA's agreed funding formula is used to allocate funding to both maintained schools and academies; however, the Education Funding Agency (EFA) allocates funding directly to academies.

For pre-16 pupils with special educational needs (SEN) at mainstream schools and academies, LAs provide sufficient funding in their delegated budgets to enable the schools to support these pupils' needs, up to the cost threshold of £6,000 per pupil per year. This is called the notional SEN budget. LAs specify how much of the funding a school receives through the school funding formula constitutes its notional SEN budget. Should a pupil require further support, which must be assessed through the statutory education and health care assessment process, any additional funding is met by a top-up from the HNFB of the LA placing the child at the school. Top-up funding rates are agreed locally.

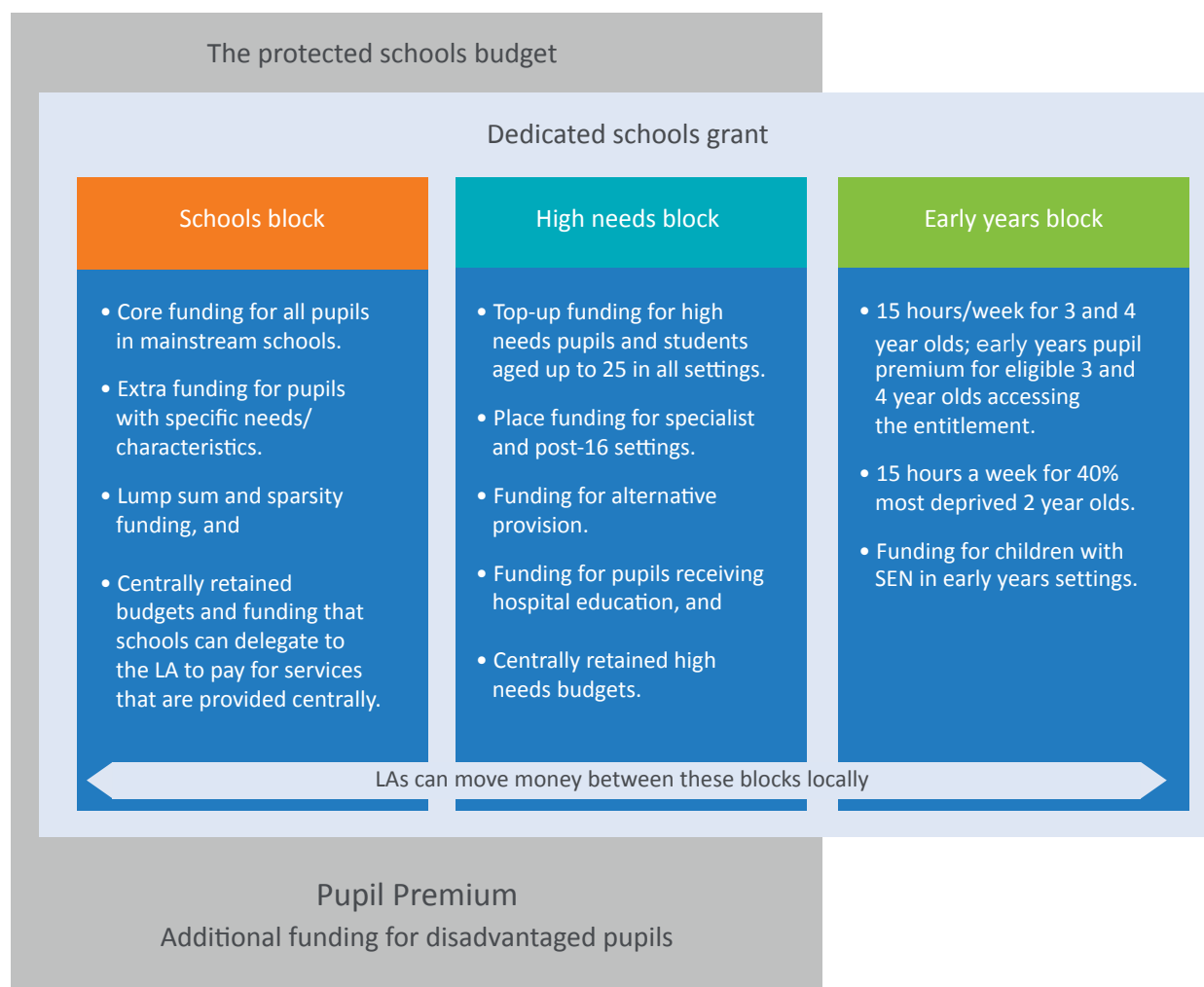
Although not the focus of this Review, the schools block, and its per pupil payment and each school's notional SEN budget (these used to be known as 'element 1' and 'element 2' funding respectively), underpin the provision for each pupil with SEND. Table 12 sets out the amount allocated to schools per pupil for the academic year 2016-17 in Bracknell Forest and compares this with that for its nearest statistical neighbours.

Table 12: Schools funding per pupil 2016-2017

Phase	Bracknell Forest	Statistical neighbours average
Primary	£3,042	£3,111
Secondary	£4,548	£4,624

(Source: BFC Education Finance Team)

Fig 20 : Schools revenue funding streams (DfE 2016b)



High needs funding supports 0-25 year olds with more complex SEND. It also supports pupils who are not in school because they are excluded or otherwise not able to attend school. Alternative provision (AP) for such children and young people includes pupil referral units (PRUs) and hospital schools. A pupil has 'high needs' if their education costs more than approximately £10,000 per year (DfE 2016b).

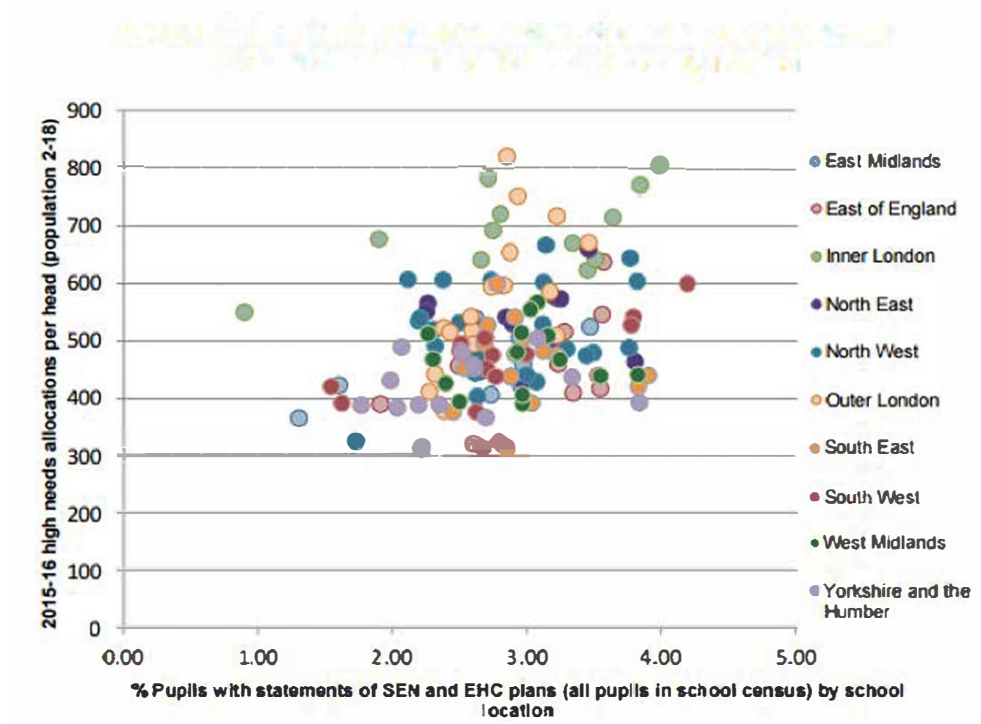
The components of the HNFB distributed to schools consists of:

- Place Funding - Special schools, and special units within mainstream schools and academies, receive place funding of £10,000 per place, which is drawn from the high needs block funds.
- Top-up Payment (also known as 'element 3') – if a pupil with SEND is assessed, through the education and health care planning process, to have additional needs, then the LA makes a top-up payment to the school according to locally set formulae (EFA 2016). The range of top-up payments in BFC can be found in [appendix 5](#).

The new funding system under the Children and Families Act (2014) makes LAs responsible for commissioning and funding all additional high needs provision across early years, schools and post-16 education and training (LGA 2014). LAs are also expected to use their HNFB to fund central services related to SEND and can also commission support services for the benefit of pupils with SEND (DfE 2016b).

All LAs are delegated powers to develop their own approach to high needs funding (element 3), and this includes top-up funding levels for mainstream schools and special schools. All special schools are funded at the same base rate of £10,000 per planned place regardless of whether the place is filled or not, however the local flexibilities ensure there is significant local variation about element 3 payments received. Research commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE 2015c) showed that the current funding distribution between LAs does not correlate well with measures of need (see figure 21).

Fig 21: 2015-16 high needs allocations per head against % SEN statements and EHCPs by region



FAIRER SCHOOLS FUNDING

In November 2015 the government announced its intention to move to a national schools funding formula (HoC 2016) and, in March 2016, the DfE launched a consultation about moving to both a national funding formula for all schools in England and for the HNFB (DfE 2016c and 2016a). The latter consultation provides for a revised HNFB funding formula based on an LA's current SEND profile combined with a weighting dependent on levels of deprivation and health need in the local area. LAs, in the proposal, would retain responsibility for the distribution of high needs funding to schools (DfE 2016a). Following ministerial changes, the DfE has delayed action on 'fairer funding' for

at least 12 months. Although the details of the reforms areas yet undecided, it is expected that further, national high needs funding reform will take place.

SEND policy and legislation

The current arrangements for the education of children and young people with SEND are largely set out in the Children and Families Act (2014). Part 3 of this act requires LAs, all schools and academies, early years' providers and NHS bodies to pay regard to the new regulations and to the new statutory Code of Practice for SEND (see: 3.3). LAs must:

- Work with health and social care colleagues jointly to commission services to deliver integrated support for children and young people with SEND aged 0-25.
- Consult children, young people and their parents, and co-operate with a range of local providers across education, health, social care and voluntary sector partners to deliver the new system, including post-16 education providers such as FE colleges and training providers.
- Work with local partners, parents and young people to co-produce and publish a Local Offer of SEND services and provision to assist young people in finding employment, obtaining accommodation and participating in society.
- Provide a co-ordinated education, health and care assessment for children and young people aged 0-25 and new education, health and care plans (EHCPs) that will replace the two existing systems of SEN statements (in schools) and learning difficulty assessments (LDAs), in FE colleges and training.

In addition to the Children and Families Act (2014) there are several other pieces of legislation that LAs and schools need to pay regard to in supporting the learning of pupils with SEND. These include:

- The Equality Act (2010): the particular responsibilities on schools to prevent discrimination against and ensure the fair treatment of all children and young people with disabilities.
- The Children Act (1989) and supporting guidance: children and young people with SEND are often additionally vulnerable and there is a need to ensure effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and consistently implemented.
- The Care Act (2014): the provides the framework for wider duties of care of local authorities for children and young people with disabilities and their families, including personal budgets and supporting transitions to adult services.
- The Mental Capacity Act (2005): provides a statutory framework to empower and protect vulnerable people who are not able to make their own decisions and is underpinned by five key principles including a presumption of capacity, a right to be supported to make decisions and actions must be in a person's best interests.

National monitoring of SEND

The national accountabilities framework sets out that the bulk of statutory duties as well as delivery for SEND lie at local level (DfE 2015b). The national roles of the DfE are summarised as:

- Monitoring the health of the SEND system and intervening where it is failing
- Overseeing the statutory framework and publishing guidance

- Publication of data
- Promoting innovative and best practice.

The established DfE and EFA monitoring arrangements are largely: financial, school population-based or focused on transitional processes for the implementation of the SEND Code of Practice. An example of a transitional process that LAs have to report on is the progress they are making towards all SEN statements and learning difficulty assessment (LDAs – for those over 16) being transferred to EHCPs by April 2018 and the proportion completed within the 20 week timescale. These indicators, together with each LA's profile of children and young people with high needs, is reported to the DfE via the annual SEN2 return.

Work is underway, linked to local area SEND inspections (see: 3.2.3), to develop and trial a core dataset of indicators for LAs to report to DfE. The aim is that these will provide a detailed picture of the outcomes and attainment of children and young people with SEND to sit alongside existing data about the SEND assessment processes and where pupils attend school.

Ofsted Local Area SEND Inspections

From May 2016, Ofsted and the CQC have been carrying out an external evaluation of all local areas in England (defined by LA) and their support for children and young people aged 0–25 with SEND. Inspection teams are assessing the effectiveness of the local system in identifying and meeting the needs of these children and young people. The local system includes: the LA, CCG, NHS services, schools and early years and tertiary providers. The inspection will review how local areas support these children and young people to achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, such as being able to live independently, secure meaningful employment and be well prepared for their adult lives (Ofsted 2016a), fulfilling the duties set out in the Children and Families Act (2014).

The report produced from the external evaluation will provide an assessment of how well the local area is meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND, and how well service providers work together to deliver positive outcomes. It will also inform national government about how well the local area is delivering its statutory responsibilities and the SEND Code of Practice. The process should promote improvement in the education, health and social care provision. (Ofsted 2016a).

The SEND Code of Practice

The statutory Code of Practice for SEND (DfE 2015a) completely revised the arrangements for children and young people with SEND. The legislation and Code of Practice has sought to focus practice on better consultation and participation of children and young people and their families in the SEND system and closer partnership working by organisations supporting them. Amongst these are the new statutory process for joint education and health care assessment and for plans (EHCPs), where there are complex needs to be met, and expectations of quality teaching and learning being available to all those with SEND, whether in mainstream schools or in specialist provision.

Among the financial guidance for schools and colleges set out in the Code of Practice are:

- That all mainstream schools and colleges are provided with resources to support those with additional needs, including pupils with SEN and disabilities. This includes an amount

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

- The headteacher / principal, governing body and SENCO should establish a clear picture of the resources that are available to the school. They should consider their strategic approach to meeting SEND in the context of the total resources available, including any resources targeted at particular groups, such as the pupil premium. As a result, schools should provide a clear description of the types of special educational provision they normally offer. This will help parents and others to understand what they can expect the school to provide for pupils with SEND.
- Schools and colleges are not expected to meet the full costs of more expensive provision from their core funding. The responsible LA, usually the authority where the child or young person lives, will have a process to assess additional top-up funding where the cost of the special educational provision required to meet the needs of an individual pupil exceeds £6,000pa.
- FE colleges are funded by the EFA for all 16-18 year olds and for those aged 19-25 who have EHCP or statement to a level of £6,000pa (deducted from a LA's high needs funding in advance), with additional support from the home LA for students with high needs (EFA 2016). Apprentices aged 19 to 25 with EHCPs are fully funded on the same terms and funding rates as 16- to 18-year-old apprentices. The Local Offer should include apprenticeships for this age group. (DfE 2015a)

The Levels of SEND Across England

There are 8.560 million children and young people recorded as attending a school in England in January 2016. Of these 991,980 (11.6%) have been assessed by schools as having a need for SEN support and 236,805 (2.8%) have been assessed as requiring a statement of SEN or an EHCP (DfE 2016d and e). In England (see Fig 22) the most frequent primary need of pupils assessed as requiring SEN support is moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Whilst for those with a statement or an EHCP, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) forms the largest group of children and young people. Professionals also expect that, over time, the proportion of these with an EHCP or statement with MLD will reduce, as their needs are increasingly met in mainstream.

Fig 22: Percentage of pupils in England with an EHCP / statement or at SEN support, by primary need (DfE 2016e)

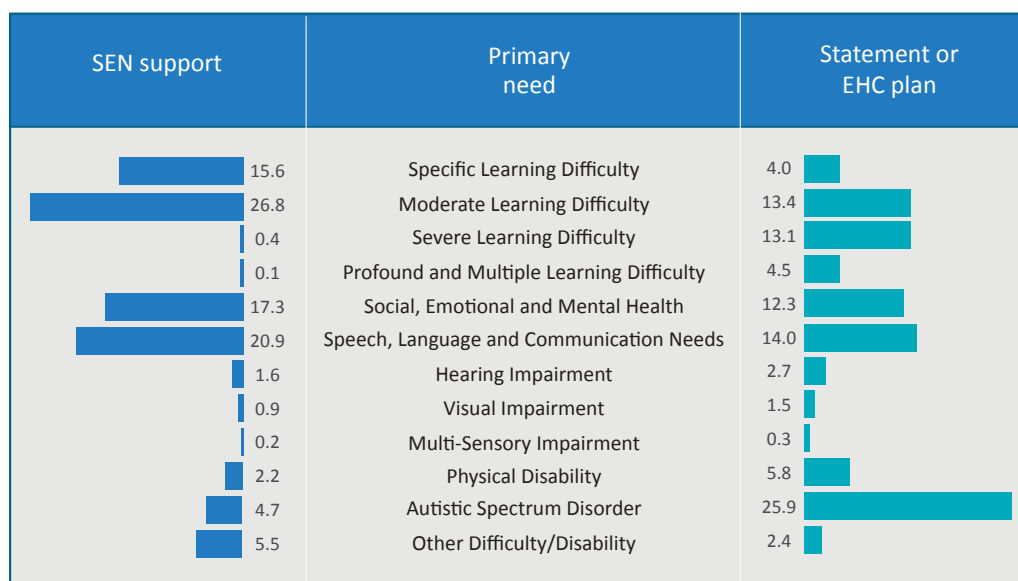
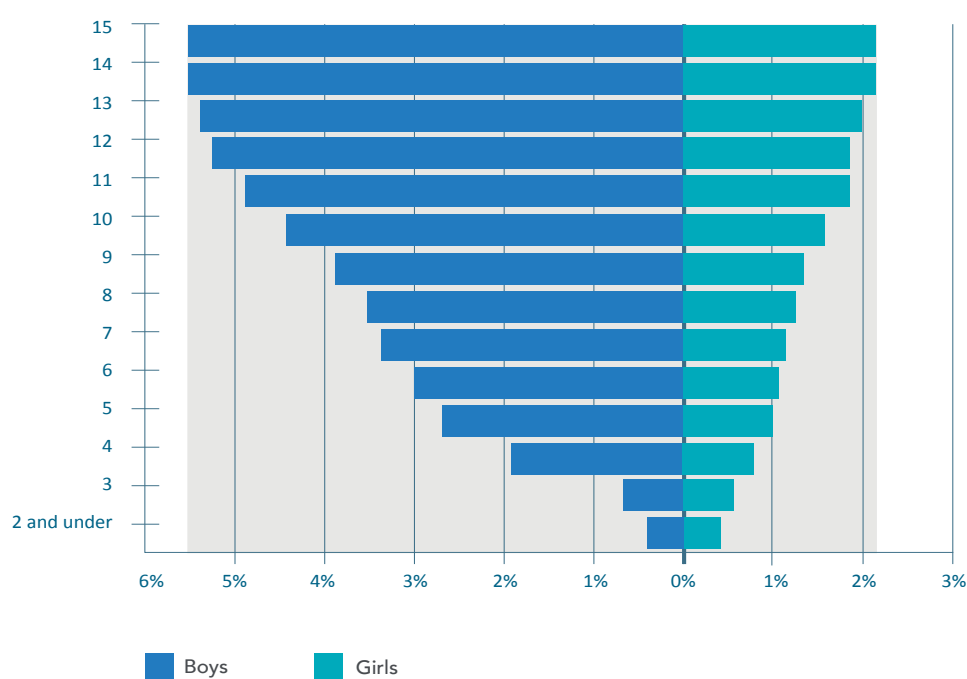


Fig 23 shows that more than twice as many boys as girls are assessed as requiring a statement or an EHCP. For the large majority of these children and young people their needs are identified and assessed during primary school. The graph suggests that for the large majority, once a need for a statement or EHCP has been confirmed, that this remains throughout their school career.

Fig 23: Percentage of pupils with a statement or EHCP plan by age and gender in state-funded schools (DfE 2016e)



Appendix 2: Surveys and visit schedule

a. Schools SEND survey

A SCHOOL SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. How effectively are the needs of pupils with SEND identified across Bracknell Forest?
2. How effectively do you identify the needs of pupils with SEND at your school?
3. How effectively do the funding arrangements in Bracknell Forest contribute to improved outcomes for SEND pupils?
4. How effectively do you think funding for SEND is allocated to your school?
5. How effectively do you think you allocate your funding to meet the needs of pupils with SEND?
6. Please identify one aspect of the current SEND system in Bracknell Forest that works well:
7. Please identify one aspect of the current SEND system in Bracknell Forest that could be improved and how.

B HNFB REVIEW SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR SCHOOLS

“Bracknell Forest Children’s Services have appointed Chow Solutions Ltd to work with us to undertake a review of how our High Needs Funding Block is currently used. Through analysing local evidence and reviewing good practice elsewhere in the country, the review will produce recommendations for the future. The specification used in the tendering for the review has previously been shared with headteachers.

BFC has been allocated a HNFB of about £11.7 million by the DfE for 2016-17. This funding is used to:

- fund places in specialist and post-16 institutions (e.g. special schools, special post-16 institutions and pupil referral units)
- top-up funding for individual pupils and students with high needs, including those in mainstream schools
- fund services that the local authority provide directly to schools, with the bulk of the funding going to schools.

The Review is taking place between May and September 2016 and a Headteachers Reference Group has been appointed to ensure that school leaders continually inform the Review and are aware of the interim findings. A series of visits and interviews will take place with a cross section of mainstream schools and with special education providers and consultations carried out with parents/carers and with partner organisations. During this time officers will work in partnership with the consultants to identify how funds are currently deployed, both to schools and other education providers and to teams run by the Children’s Services Directorate.

The Review will produce a report including recommendations for the future and the first draft of a new special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Strategy for Bracknell Forest. The outcomes will be consulted on over the autumn term, to inform spending decisions for the financial year 2017 onwards.”

b. Parent / carer's SEND survey

This survey is for parents / carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to help us get your views about how your child or children are supported at school and how the council supports learning for children with SEND (e.g. education and health care plans).

The survey was accessible online from the last week of July to September and forty responses were received from parents.

1. Are you male or female?
2. How many children under 25 do you have?
3. How many of your children have SEND (defined as have a statement or EHCP or receiving SEND support at school/college).
(Questions 4 – 10 are completed separately for each child with SEND)
4. How old is your child (with SEND)?
5. Does your child: receive SEN support / have a statement / have an EHCP:
6. How effectively was your child's special need or disability identified:
7. How effectively is your child supported at school
8. How well does your child's school listen to your suggestions and comments?
9. How well does your child's school keep you informed about their learning?
10. Does your child enjoy school?
(Questions 11 – 18 – completed by each parent / carer)
11. How easy is it to find out the information you need about SEND?
12. Please tick the most important sources of information for you as a parent of a child(ren) with SEND?
13. Do you think you have enough information about how SEND arrangements work in Bracknell Forest?
14. Does one or more of your children have an EHCP?
15. What has your experience been of the EHCP process, overall:
16. Were you kept informed sufficiently during the EHCP process?
17. Were your views as a parent / carer sufficiently taken account in the EHCP?
18. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about how your child(ren) is supported at school or the SEND assessment processes? (e.g. preparation for transfer or transition, the annual review process)

c. School visit and interviews

The following mainstream schools participated in the interviews: Easthampstead Park School, Garth Hill College, Binfield Primary School, Birch Hill Primary School, Crownwood Primary School, Meadow Vale Primary School, Whitegrove Primary School. Plus Bracknell and Wokingham College.

Example schedule for a special school visit

The purpose of the visit: to familiarise ourselves with the provision and find out more about how the school uses its funding to support its pupils. This will be carried out by visiting the school and meeting with a range of staff for the afternoon.

Proposed timetable for the visit:

12.00-12.15 Welcome and introductions

12.15-12.45 Tour of the site

12.45-1.45 Meet with the Headteacher, Business Manager and any other staff as specified by the school

1.45-2.30 Time for consultants to review any documentation provided by the school

2.30-2.45 Final meeting with the Headteacher and/or senior leader

Questions to be addressed during the visit:

1. What is the context for the school? (including staff and pupil numbers for each part of the school *)
2. How is the school structured and organised? *
3. How does BF and other local authorities consult and refer pupils to the school? Do they come in all year round? Do you have any “bulge” year groups?
4. What access to therapies is there for students? (type and sessions per week) *
5. How are the pupil’s funded currently?
6. How is this funding deployed? How well do the funding arrangements with BF work for the school? Please talk us through an overview of the budget and funding for places / top-ups.
7. What impact is the school having (school’s last 3 years’ performance data, including attendance and exclusions)?*
8. What is your experience of the SEND Panel and EHCP processes in BF? Do you have any part-time placements with mainstream schools or assessment placements where a pupil does not yet have an EHCP?

Appendix 3: documentary evidence accessed

Key:

P = policy or strategy; F = financial; S = SEND; R = BFC report; D = other;

Sc = school documents

Document number	Document	Content	Date received / accessed
D 1	LAIT stat neighbours tool	Downloaded by team	20/06/2016
D 2	binfield-learning-village-exhibition-boards.pdf	Overview of new free school	Jul-16
D 3	SEND Public Health Needs Assessment 2016_BFC.docx	Final draft of SEND needs analysis from BF Public Health	June-16
D 4	BFC Services to Schools Customer Satisfaction Survey 2015	Summary of responses from schools about the contracted services from BFC	Jul-16
F 1	HN Pupil tops up in BF Mainstream Schools 16-17.xls	Individual top-up payments budget for BF mainstream schools 2016-17	31/05/2016
F2	HN Pupil tops up in BF Mainstream Schools 15-16.xls	individual top-up payments budget for BF mainstream schools 2015-16	31/05/2016
F3	pre+16+non-lea+15-16+	Individual list & payments of NMSS up to age 16 2015-16 (v3 includes our graphed analyses)	31/05/2016
F4	post+16+non-lea+15-16+	Individual list & schools & actual payments of NMSS post 16 2015-16 (v2 includes our graphical analyses)	31/05/2016
F5	BF Centrally Managed HNB budgets - v5 June 2016	Detailed financial breakdown of HNFB for 2015-16 & 16-17 incl detailed LA breakdown (2 versions)	28/06/2016
F6	HN Pupil top-ups for BF pupils on roll OLA Establishments 15-16.xls	Top-ups by indiv & school for BF pupils in other LA schools 2015-16	16/06/2016
F7	HN Pupil top-ups for BF pupils on roll OLA Establishments 16-17	Top-ups by indiv & school for BF pupils in other LA schools 2016-17	16/06/2016
F8	a. LA funding data_AWPU 2015-16 b. statistical+neighbours+15-16+awpu+rates+and+ratio.xls	Data from finance about comparative levels of per pupil funding in BFC	Jun-16
F9	pre+16+non-lea+15-16+v2.xlsx	2015-16 complete expenditure on OOA places for up to year 11/12.	Jun-16
F 10	Summary of pupil top-ups in BFC HN resources 16-17.xls	Per pupil payments to resource bases at mainstream schools 2016-17	Jun-16

F 11	BFC SEND mainstream Cost Codes_bands.pdf	Cost coding for top-ups for mainstream schools	31/05/2016
F12	Summary of pupil top-ups in BFC HN resources 15-16.xls		Jul-16
P1	BFC Direct Payments Policy.pdf		Jul-16
P2	BFC EHCP Transfer Process Guidance for Schools.pdf		31/05/2016
P3	BFC ehcp-thresholds guidance Sept14.pdf	Guidance for schools about the local EHCP processes	17/05/2016
P4	BFC Personal Budgets policy Jan16.doc		Jul-16
P5	BFC Post 16 Transport Policy 2016-17 V2.0 FINAL.pdf		Jul-16
P6	BFC SEN Education Transport Policy 16-17.pdf		Jul-16
P7	BFC Family Info SEND-support-school-leaflet.pdf		May-16
P8	BFC Approaching Adulthood: policy and procedure	Joint policy & procedures for ASCHH & CYPL about 14 to 25 transfer	01/08/2016
P9	BFC cypl-commissioning-framework-2013-16.pdf	CYPP statement on approaches to joint commissioning	Jun-16
R1	BF SEN working group - update report Q4 FINAL received July16	Report to CS DMT about SEND finances 2015-16	13/07/2016
R2	BF SchoolsForum 2016-17 Funding Allocations report March 2016	Report to Schools Forum incl HNFB proposed budget for 2016-17	Apr-16
R3	BFC School Places Plan 2015 - 2020	Report setting out developments to meet projected demand for school places	Apr-16
R4	BFC mins March 2016 Schools Forum_incl HNFB.pdf	Schools Forum papers about funding plans for the year ahead	May-16
R5	Update (for Schools Forum) on cost pressures being experienced on supporting high needs pupils & proposals for the 2015-16 budget	Outline of cost pressures under new SEND Code of Practice, proposal to release funds to set up The Rise & to transfer £1.9M from DSG to HNFB	Jul-16
R6	BFC SEN working group - update Q2	Update to DMT about working group's progress to address HNFB financial pressures	Jul-16
R7	BFC SEN working group - update Q3	Update to DMT about working group's progress to address HNFB financial pressures	Jul-16

R8	BF SEN working group - update report Q4 FINAL received July16	Update to DMT about working group's progress to address HNFB financial pressures	Jul-16
R9	Children, Young People & Learning. Service Plan, April 2015 – March 2016	Director's summary of Dept of CYPL's performance during the year.	Jul - 16
S1	BF Q1 2016-17 Lilic Book Data	Lilac book return for EHCP conversions	13/07/2016
S2	BFC SEN Funding Indiv YP Dataset update	List of all EHCP/statements by school & primary need - updated June2016	05/07/2016
S3	BFC SEND EHCP Base Sheets 2010-16 - Updated LDA	EHCP/S data by primary need over 2011-16 - Jan16 census update	05/07/2016
S4	Berks_sensory_consortium_contract.pdf	Berks sensory consortium contract	July-16
S5	SEN Team Structure 2016-17 structure v6	Team structure map	Jun-16
S6	BFC SEND leaver_NEET data Virtual School	Leavers information about those with SEND	Jun-16
S7	SALT_contract_BHFT_signed.pdf	Contract with BHFT for SALT 2013-16	Jul-16
S8	TASS_S4L SLA charges 2016-17	Charges for the Support for Learning service	Jul-16
S9	BFC SEND HNS template FE_post16.xlsx	Templates for EHCP provision mapping provided to colleges/schools by SEND team	31/05/2016
S10	Staffing_Support for Learning	Staff family tree	Jul-16
S11	support-for-learning-SLA.pdf	Services delivered as part of the school SLA from Support for Learning	Jul-16
S12	BFC support-for-learning-costed-additional-packages.pdf	Costings for schools of additional packages that can be bought in	Jul-16
S13	ASSC SLA 2016.docx	Draft service spec for ASSC service	Apr-16
S14	BerkshireFE cost analysis Report_201015 v1.pdf	Copy received from SEND manager. Part of review of place costs at FE colleges across Berkshire	May-16
S15	BFC-conversion-to-EHCP-plan2014.pdf	Transition plan for conversion of statements to EHCPs in BF	31/05/2016
Sc1	Top-up Funding for all pupils in Kennel Lane 16-17.xls		
Sc2	College Hall Budget 2015-16.xls		

Sc3	College Hall Budget 2016-17		
Sc4	KL Top-up Funding 14-15		
Sc5	KL top-up+funding_15-16.xls		
Sc6	KLS band descriptors 2014.pdf		
Sc7	4.3 KL staff FTE role July 16		
Sc8	1. KL School Context Autumn 2015.docx		
Sc9	2.2 KL attendance data (incomplete).xlsx		
Sc10	3.1 KL Nos in each year group.xlsx		
Sc11	3.2 KL Range of Needs Across School.xlsx		
Sc12	3.3 KL Anonymised Class List - June 2016.xlsx		
Sc13	4.1 KL SLT organisational chart April 16.doc		
Sc14	4.2 KL Staff Role FTE June 16.xlsx		
Sc15	6. KL 15-16, 16-17 budget information.xls		
Sc16	2.1 KL Data Report 2014-2015 V3 Governors.doc		
Sc17	5. KL Provision Mapping Headings.docx		
Sc18	2016-17 High Needs Resource Rise Garth Hill		
Sc19	Kennel Lane Ofsted Nov15.pdf		
Sc20	Chilworth Early placement discount letter 2016		
Sc21	Chilworth OFSTED 2012.PDF		
Sc22	Chilworth-House-School-info-sheet.pdf		
Sc23	GHC Reading group interventions.docx		
Sc24	GHC SEF.docx		
Sc25	GHC SEN and Inclusion policy 2015.doc		
Sc26	GHC SEN Case Studies 2016.docx		
Sc27	GHC SEND report.docx		

Sc28	2016-17 High Needs Resource Rise Garth Hill	Budget for financial year places	
Sc29	Interview Schools Website Info SEND		
Sc30	Local Offer Garth Hill College		
Sc31	KLS band descriptors 2014.pdf	Band descriptors used with KL with top-ups / assessing need	
Sc32	College Hall 3 years academic data		
Sc33	College Hall Attendance Analysis 2013 -16		
Sc34	College Hall context data 2013-16		
Sc35	College Hall Exclusion Analysis 2013-16		
Sc36	College Hall OFSTED Dec14.pdf		
Sc37	College Hall Outreach data		
Sc38	College Hall Pen Portraits		
Sc39	College Hall Staffing Structure - Summer Term 16		
Sc40	College Hall student risk factors June 2016 anon		

Appendix 4: HNFB Review materials – terms of reference, reviewer biographies and detailed timeline

INVITATION TO TENDER DOCUMENT

RFQ Reference:	HNB funding review	Issue Date:	11/03/2016
Brief Description:	Independent review of the use of the High Needs Funding Block including SEND provision in Bracknell Forest.		

To Contractor:			
Representative	E-Mail	Telephone	Fax (Optional)

You are invited to quote your best price(s) and delivery date(s) for the items detailed below.
Please return to the nominated Council Representative at the Issuing Office below by email.
Your quotation should reach the Council on or before **10 am Tuesday 29th March 2016**.

The Contractor understands and agrees that any contract resulting from this RFQ shall be subject to Bracknell Forest Borough Council Standard Conditions of Contract: Orders. (Copies available from <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sellingtothecouncil> then download from the Documents section or on request), subject also to any Instructions to Contractor detailed above and any specification provided.

Unless otherwise agreed and detailed specifically in the order, payment will be made within 30 days of receipt and agreement of invoices following satisfactory completion and/or acceptance of the items.

Issuing Office:	BRACKNELL FOREST BOROUGH COUNCIL Times Square Market Street Bracknell RG42 1YJ		
Representative	E-Mail	Telephone	
Christine McInnes	christine.mcinnnes@bracknell-forest.gov.uk	01344352000	

Background

Bracknell Forest has 39 schools, of which

- six are secondary (one with a newly opened Autistic Spectrum Disorder resource base and the Academy hosts an integrated Specific Learning Difficulties unit),
- 31 are primary phase schools (one with an Early Years ASD unit, one with a resource base run by the special school, one with a Speech and Language Therapy resource and six running nurture groups),
- one is a special school EY to KS5 and
- one is a secondary Pupil Referral Unit.

Pupils with special needs are placed in a variety of educational provision outside of the borough and this pattern continues with post-16 provision resulting in a significant cost pressure.

Benchmarking against other SE region LAs shows Bracknell Forest has a higher than average percentage of pupils with statements/EHCP for the region and substantial difference to some other unitary authorities although the trend is downward.

Key Stage / Age	Resource Placements	Maintained Special Placements	Independent Specialist Provision	Cost £m (excluding transport)
1	2	4	4	£0.221m
2	1	3	14	£0.550m
3	2	16	21	£1.024m
4	3	11	34	£1.583m
Age 16-19	0	11	19	£1.186m
Age 20+	0	0	10	£0.405m
Total	8	45	102	£4.970m

Changing needs

Data shows an acute pressure in relation to ASD needs (as evidenced by CAMHS waiting list for diagnosis and feedback from headteachers about the paucity of specialist commissioned services to support pupils both pre and post- diagnosis), there is a cohort of PMLD children currently attending the local special school who will require specialist post-18 provision in the next two years which presently would require costly out of borough provision.

Requirements

An independent review is being commissioned to assess and make recommendations on

- current effective SEND, Targeted Services and externally commissioned service provision which should continue
- emerging and future pupil and student demands
- improving the alignment of current service provision (including commissioned services) to current demand, identifying the potential for savings
- the development of new ways of working and service provision to meet emerging and future needs funded from savings

and to reflect recommendations in the development of a draft Bracknell Forest SEND strategy.

Areas for consideration

1. To assess if the current SEND funding system in the range of maintained education provision, meets needs, delivers effective outcomes and value for money
2. Identify existing good practice and make recommendations on improvements in SEND processes and funding allocation specifically the SEN panel process which considers whether or not pupils should be given an Education, Health and Care Plan and the current base funding and bandings used to agree top up funding
3. Analyse the use of funding in
 - a 20% sample of mainstream schools,
 - the local special school and one other comparable special school where BF places pupils
 - two post-18 providers
 - the secondary PRU

and benchmark against schools and providers that the review team consider have good practice; collect and analyse the views of a focus group of key stakeholders including parents/carers about the provision

4. Analyse the evidence base for the model used in some LAs of devolving a higher level of funding to schools (sometimes to geographic school clusters) to meet SEND needs prior to the formal EHCP processes and comment on the desirability of this approach in BF.
5. Analyse the existing LA wide provision against current and projected needs and make recommendations on
 - how mainstream provision could be developed to better meet needs
 - the best use of existing specialist provision
 - the scope for re-directing resources into additional specialist provision locally in the medium and long term.

The intention is to conduct the review during the summer term 2016, with a final report available at the end of September 2016 so that the findings and recommendations can inform budget planning for the 2017-18 financial year.

Governance

Governance will be through three interim reports to the Director's Management Team

- April - project plans, intentions, timelines
- June - update on progress, emerging findings
- August - draft report for comment
- September – final report.

A Project Board will meet monthly with the team to monitor progress, guide, advise and support the work and consider the findings. The Project Board will include representation from SEN, targeted services and finance.

Updates on progress will be reported to Schools Forum through the Head of Finance report and to the Director's meeting with Headteachers.

Following consideration of the recommendations arising from the review, the LA will formulate proposals for consultation with key stakeholders to agree on future use of the High Needs Block.

Day to day management of the project will be through the Head of Targeted Services.

Outputs

- A report which describes the process, the evidence base and makes recommendations on points 1-5 above
- A draft SEND strategy reflecting the recommendations made.

Expectations of the contractor

We are seeking the following expertise to be represented in the team

- Headteacher with successful leadership experience of both mainstream and SEND provision
- LA officer with experience of managing at least one SEND service.

Selection process

Your quotation should reach the Council on or before **10 am Tuesday 29th March 2016**.

Contractors will be informed by the **evening of Tuesday 29th** if they being invited to interview.

Interviews will be held on **Friday 1st April** in Bracknell and will include a 10 minute presentation on *What value will you add to the review process?*

TIMELINE

Activity	Description	Proposed date	Delivery date
1.	Drafting of Project Initiation Document and project timeline completed and submitted.	6 th May	6 th May
2.	Project Initiation Document signed off by Bracknell Forest Council commissioning officers	13 th May	13 th May
3.	Nomination and agreement with mainstream and special schools to take part in the review	13 th May	13 th May
4.	Sign off questions and communications for schools survey	13 th May	18 th May
5.	Notification to Chrow Solutions of finance and data officers to support the review	13 th May	20 th May
6.	First HT reference group & visit to school	16 th May	16 th May
7.	List of SEND data (LA & school-level) requested	20 th May	20 th May
8.	Nomination and agreement with a post-16 provider and an out-of-area special school to take part in the review.	20 th May	31 st May
9.	Consultation meeting with parents of children with SEND <i>Delayed due to time availability in meetings of the Bracknell Parents Dialogue Group</i>	w/c 23 rd May	5 th July
10.	Close online survey <i>Delayed to allow for reminders and late responses</i>	27 th May	8 th June
11.	Receipt of first tranche of data from BFC	27 th May	27 th May
12.	Interviews with mainstream schools	w/c 13 th June	15 th June
13.	Cut off for remaining data from BFC	17 th June	21 st July
14.	Second HT reference group & visit to school	20 th June	20 th June
15.	Visit to post-16 provider & out-of-area special school	w/c 20 th June	School – 22 nd June; FE College – 12 th July
16.	Focus groups with health / social care / vol sector <i>Delayed to consult on emerging themes</i>	w/c 27 th June	w/c 3 rd Oct
17.	Emerging themes presentation to Project Board	12 th July	12 th July
18.	Feedback on emerging themes from BFC	15 th July	20 th July
19.	Proposal to allow for short extension of review to allow for delays in accessing certain data	10 th Aug	10 th Aug

20.	Writing draft report	Through Aug / early Sept	End of Sept
21.	Presentation of recommendations and elements of draft report	20 th Sept	20 th Sept
22.	Third HT Reference Group	27 th Sept	27 th Sept
23.	Feedback on draft recommendations received	30 th Sept	30 th Sept
24.	Final HNFB review report and draft SEND Strategy	14 th Oct	14 th Oct

The specific items to be delivered from the Review are:

- An interim presentation of emerging themes and issues.
- A final report and recommendations for a future funding system across Bracknell Forest to achieve improved outcomes and better value for money.
- A draft SEND policy for Bracknell Forest.

Outputs include:

- Project Initiation Document – signed off by Project Board
- Framework for case studies and an SEND strategy
- SEND survey for schools and one for parents / carers
- Findings from the SEND surveys
- Three case studies of practice from local authorities; the proposed focus for these is:
 - a local approach to traded SEND support,
 - local area where high needs funding is not attached to an EHCP and
 - case examples of funding arrangements in specialist provision.

REVIEWER BIOGRAPHIES

a. Kate East – Education Consultant

Kate has over 25 years' experience of delivering education, social care and public health programmes in both the public and the private sector. She has demonstrable abilities to operate not only at a strategic board/senior officer level within local authorities but also as a leader within the private sector of education services and contracts.

Her excellent track record involves delivering positive impact through setting strategy, implementing change and ensuring high levels of stakeholder engagement – working as a senior local authority leader and external consultant at DfE, DH and Public Health England. Working as Head of Education, for Mouchel Management Consultancy she led contracts with local authorities and central government, including ensuring quality delivery on new academies and free school projects for the DfE, together with school improvement and project management.

Kate is a Chartered Psychologist, HCPC approval, Member of British Psychological Society and Royal Society of Medicine.

b. Chris Owen – Children and Young People’s Specialist

Chris has over twenty years’ experience as a service leader and programme manager across health, education and local authorities. He has a proven track record of leading and delivering innovative projects and working across different sectors. Chris has delivered measurable improvement for children and young people at local, regional and national level and many of these successes have been built on cross-sector partnerships that he has developed and often have schools at their heart. He has a strong children and young people’s health and education knowledge base and excellent abilities to communicate with professional and community audiences.

Currently he is supporting change projects and strategy development to improve children and young people’s mental health and provision for those with ASD. He led the initiation and development of England’s first health research network for schools and universities, overseeing the transfer of its hosting to a charity, the Anna Freud Centre. Prior to working for UCL Partners, he was a senior consultant for Mouchel, and provided leadership consultancy to the National Healthy Schools programme and advisory support to local authorities.

c. Mark Vickers – Director, Olive Education

As Headteacher of Manhood Community College from 2005 to 2009, Mark led its transformation from a school placed in special measures (November 2004) to a thriving, over-subscribed school described by Ofsted in 2008 as a “good and rapidly improving community college.” All subsequent inspections that Mark has been involved in as a consultant have had either ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ outcomes.

Mark’s passion for helping young people develop their own strategies for supporting each other has led to him advising numerous other secondary schools and PRU’s in London and the South-East over the last five years. He now also works with the National Children’s Bureau (NCB) to help develop their strategies for supporting and working with young people.

Mark’s work with PRU’s and alternative providers across the South-East has ensured that improvements have been secured in a range of challenging and complex contexts. Mark has supported strategic leaders and staff to implement the changes required. This work has included leading a reviews of alternative education in local authorities as well as being a member of the London’s Councils’ ‘Back on Track’ Advisory Group.

Mark also works as a School Improvement Partner and consultant in West Sussex, Islington, Camden and Waltham Forest. He combines this work with being the Chair of the PSHE Association and a governor at Chichester College.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR HEADTEACHERS REFERENCE GROUP AND HNFB PROJECT BOARD

Headteachers Reference Group:

Terms of Reference

1. Overall Purpose of Group	To inform the process of the High Needs Funding Block Review. To act as champions of and critical friends for the review.
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2. Specific Objectives / Scope	<p>The focus of the three meetings will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Perceptions and views of the current SEND system in Bracknell Forest – Comment and discussion on emerging themes – Review and discussion of draft recommendations
3. Accountable To	The Chief Officer for Achievement and Learning
4. Reporting	None.
5. Chair	Ian Dixon, Head of Targeted Support
6. Members	<p>6 - 8 headteachers or senior leaders: Liz Cook (Easthampstead Park School), Chani Morris (Garth Hill College), Andrea de Bunsen (Kennel Lane School), Antoinette Butler-Willis (Crown Wood Primary School), Michael Dillon (Birch Hill Primary School), Karen Davies (Whitegrove Primary School), Lee Parsons (Meadow Vale Primary School), Marion Bent (College Hall).</p> <p>Ian Dixon from BFC.</p> <p>Members of the HNFB Review team.</p>
7. Minutes/Notes	Informal notes are kept from each meeting to inform the Review. No formal record will be kept or circulated
8. Confidentiality	Any points in the final report drawn from specific comments will be anonymised or checked with the individual before being ascribed to them.
9. Frequency	Three meetings during the period of the Review: May, June and September.
10. Lifespan of Group	For the duration of the project (until the end of Sept 2016).

HNFB Review Project Board

Terms of Reference

1. Overall Purpose of Group	To monitor progress with the delivery of the agreed deliverables against the timeline as stated in the PID
2. Specific Objectives / Scope	Provide strategic overview, insight and information to the project Monitor the progress of the project and that risks are being dealt with Ensure that the project delivers on time and provides the agreed deliverables.
3. Accountable To	The Chief Officer Achievement and Learning.
4. Reporting	Monitoring of progress with the project. Risk and issues register. Comment on project reports.
5. Chair and other roles	Ian Dixon, Head of Targeted Services
6. Members	Head of SEN, Head of Finance and Head of Targeted Services
7. Quorum	Non-voting group.
8. Minutes/Notes	Notes are kept from each meeting, including the recording of key decisions.
9. Confidentiality	Financial and performance information will be discussed and presented and is to be kept within the group, until after the final report is accepted.
10. Frequency	6 weekly.
11. Lifespan of Group	For the duration of the project (until the end of Sept 2016).

Appendix 5: Bracknell Forest Banding Frameworks for SEND Top-Ups.

A. TOP-UP CODES FOR MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
	Old Format NWPU 2012 - 2013 Sorted in ascending value		Top Up funding				New Format NWPU 2013 - 2014	Top-up funding	Equivalent Hrs above 16	Total equivalent hrs provided including 16 in delegated budget
	Additional hours	Add 5	TOTAL							
1T	0	5	5	0		1T	0			
1U	4	5	9	1520		1U	0	0		9
1V	5.5	5	10.5	2090		1V	0	0		10.5
1W	5.5	5	10.5	2090		1W	0	0		10.5
2T	7	5	12	2660		2T	0	0		12
1X	9	5	14	3420		1X	0	0		14
2U	11	5	16	4180		2U	0	0		16
3T	11	5	16	4180		3T	0	0		16
2V	12.5	5	17.5	4750		2V	570	1.5		17.5
2W	12.5	5	17.5	4750		2W	570	1.5		17.5
3U	15	5	20	5700		3U	1520	4		20
2X	15.5	5	20.5	5890		2X	1710	4.5		20.5
3V	16	5	21	6080		3V	1900	5		21
3W	16	5	21	6080		3W	1900	5		21
3X	20	5	25	7600		3X	3420	9		25
1Y	21	5	26	7981		1Y	3801	10.0		26.0
4T	21	5	26	7981		4T	3801	10.0		26.0
4U	25	5	30	9501		4U	5321	14.0		30.0
2Y	26	5	31	9881		2Y	5701	15.0		31.0
4V	26	5	31	9881		4V	5701	15.0		31.0
4W	26	5	31	9881		4W	5701	15.0		31.0
4X	29	5	34	11021		4X	6841	18.0		34.0
3Y	30	5	35	11401		3Y	7221	19.0		35.0
1Z	F/T 1:1			13929		1Z	9749	25.7		41.7
4Y	37.4	5	42.4	14194		4Y	10014	26.4		42.4
2Z	F/T 1:1			15955		2Z	11775	31.0		47.0
3Z	F/T 1:1			16766		3Z	12586	33.1		49.1
	F/T 1:1			20245		4Z	16065	42.3		58.3
	F/T 1:1			27101		5Z	22921	60.3		76.3

1 Schools were expected to provide 5 hrs additional support per week from their delegated budget before asking for additional finance and pupils were then given a NWPU, as above (column B). (calculated at the rate of £380 per hour for the year)
£1,900

2 Additional funding has been given to provide a further 11 hrs additional support further to the funding reforms. (calculated at the rate of £380 per hour for the year)
£4,180

3 Total funding of 1 and 2 above: £6,080 Note that this does not include the per pupil entitlement

4 As from April 2013, top-up funding is therefore given when a pupil requires more than 16 hrs additional support

5 Only pupils allocated a NWPU with a value greater than £4180, as shown in column F, would trigger top-up funding (italicised)

6 The top-up funding is as shown in column I, with total number of hours it is meant to cover, including those within schools delegated budget, shown in column K

B. TOP-UP BANDS FOR KENNEL LANE SCHOOL

There are band descriptors for less complex SEND set out in Bands 1 – 3 but the school does not receive top-up payments for those pupils.

Funding levels:

Band 4 = £12,372 per pupil per year.

Band 5 = £25,414 per pupil per year.

Band 4

These pupils will have more severe and complex learning and/or communication difficulties together with challenging behaviour when compared with their peers in the same setting.

These pupils require a teaching ratio of 1:8, as well as a qualified assistant at 1:8 and unqualified assistant ratio of 1:4.

Requirement
smaller group teaching (max of 6) for the majority of the week
high levels of teaching input from a qualified and experienced teacher
a substantial component of individual instruction provided by a teacher and/or LSA
individual based pupil management strategies to respond to severely disruptive, aggressive and/or self injurious behaviour
regular access to multi-professional cooperation and planning, with weekly access to therapeutic staff on an individual or paired basis
close individual supervision and consistent management approaches to ensure safety of themselves as well as others and to ensure both access to school curriculum and community activities (eg: off site visits, whole/part school activities – assemblies, concerts).

Band 5

These pupils may have dual sensory impairment, acute medical needs or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Alternatively they may have extreme requirements for support with their behavioural and social needs. There will be little separation of teaching, therapy and physical care. Curriculum experiences will be developmental and reflect the principles of the National Curriculum rather than its detailed content.

These pupils will require at least additional 1:1 support.

Requirement
a high level of specialist teaching to establish basic communication
specific teaching in very small groups (up to 3) plus individual adult support, if any progress is to be made in alleviating the effects of the disability and allowing meaningful curriculum access
either 1:1 support at all times or 2:1 support for 75% of the school day.
daily withdrawal from the small group for either specific activities or to prevent harm to themselves or others.
complex multi-professional planning and cooperation plus a therapeutic programme requiring individual specialist delivery (more than once per week).

Band 5+

Appendix 6: DfE / OFSTED SEND Proposed Dataset**Learning outcomes for children and young people:**

% good level of development (EYFS) – pupils on SEN support	
% good level of development (EYFS) – pupils with EHCP / statement	
Achievement of KS2 level 4 / national expectation for pupils on SEN support <i>Option to break down by maths, reading & writing</i>	
Achievement of KS2 level 4 / national expectation for pupils with EHCP / statement <i>Option to break down by maths, reading & writing</i>	
GCSE 5 A* - C (inc E & M) for pupils on SEN support	
GCSE 5 A* - C (inc E & M) for pupils with EHCP / statement	
GCSE 5 A* - G for pupils on SEN support	
GCSE 5 A* - G for pupils with EHCP / statement	
% E Bacc for pupils on SEN support	
% E Bacc for pupils with EHCP / statement	
Absence rates for pupils on SEN support	
Absence rates for pupils with EHCP / statement	
FP exclusion rate – SEN support	
FP exclusion rate – pupils with EHCP / statement	
Permanent exclusion rates - SEN support	
Permanent exclusion rates – pupils with EHCP / statement	

Preparation for adulthood:

% 19 year olds qualified to level 2, including Eng & maths – on SEN support	
% 19 year olds qualified to level 2, including Eng & maths – with EHCP / statement	
% 19 year olds qualified to level 3 – on SEN support	
% 19 year olds qualified to level 3 – with ENCP / statement	
% of KS4 on SEN support in education, employment & training 1 year later	
% of KS4 with EHCP / statement in education, employment & training 1 year later	
% of KS5 on SEN support in education, employment & training 1 year later	
% of KS 5 with EHCP / statement in education, employment & training 1 year later	
(per 100,000 population) number of young adults (18 – 25) with SEND whose long term support needs are met by admission to residential / nursing home care	

Demographic / census information (by LA & by school by primary need by gender by ethnicity by age)
(school census)

Number & % pupils on SEN support	
Number & % pupils with EHCP / statement	
Number & % pupils on SEN support who are looked after	
Number & % pupils with EHCP / statement who are looked after	

Demographic – LA level information

SEND – S251 outturn weekly unit costs (approx.)	
% children in need with EHCP / statement	
% children in need on SEN support	
Number of personal budgets taken up	
Statements to be converted to EHCP – Sept 2014 baseline & March 2016	
Proportion new EHCPs issued within 20 weeks (inc exemptions & excluding exemptions)	

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