

Strong progress in transforming SEND education in Norfolk

Strong progress is being made by Norfolk County Council in transforming education for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), according to a new report being presented to the [Children, Families and Communities Select Committee on Friday 12th September](#).

A combination of new teams and initiatives strengthening support for inclusion in mainstream schools and hundreds of new places in specialist resource bases (SRBs) are helping children stay in mainstream schools, closer to home, with the right support for their needs.

The report outlines how the council is delivering major improvements, despite national delays to SEND reform and funding challenges.

Local First Inclusion, which is part of the Norfolk Area SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy (NASAPS), is focused on ensuring children and young people with SEND get the right support for their needs early, enabling them, wherever possible, to attend, and flourish, in mainstream schools in their local community.

Key achievements to date include:

- The SEND and Inclusion Support Model is now active in all 15 school zones, with over 300 Team Around the School meetings held and strategic partnerships with academy trusts underway
- A new Educational Psychology and Specialist Support (EPSS) service model ensures a free core level of support to schools, giving more equitable access for all to this service
- All Norfolk mainstream schools have worked with the council to assess and improve their support for children with SEND, showing clear progress in inclusive practices. Recent data highlights strong engagement across the county, with 21,400 children identified as having SEND, whether or not they have an EHCP
- Local Planning Partnerships (LPPs) are being rolled out to all secondary schools to reduce exclusions and improve targeted support to help children stay in mainstream school. In the coming years 19 new bases and centres are planned to support LPPs
- 15 School and Community Teams delivering over 3,400 group sessions and 1,400 one-to-one interventions focused on early help, emotional wellbeing, and transitions
- A dedicated SEND and Inclusion Support Line, launched in autumn 2024, has handled over 5,200 calls, resolving 93% of queries and supporting families and professionals
- Collaboration with health partners continues, focusing on neurodiversity and expanding mental health support in schools

Despite rising construction costs and national delays, the council has worked with schools to expand specialist infrastructure locally with the creation of:

- 550 Specialist Resource Base (SRBs) places at mainstream schools enabling more children to access specialist places closer to home. A total of 23 bases have been expanded and 17 new ones opened, with 10 more in active development due to open by September next year

- 670 special school places through three new schools and expansions of existing special schools with further expansions planned

Norfolk's Safety Valve agreement has secured over £130 million in joint investment with the Department for Education. And, despite a cumulative Dedicated Schools Grant deficit of £131.9m, the council has committed more than £15 million in additional funding to strengthen SEND services since the agreement was reached and continues to work with the DfE to unlock further contributions to reduce the deficit.

Councils launch package to support staff at Lotus Cars

The taskforce set up by Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk Council has launched a comprehensive support package designed to help employees and their families impacted by the recent announcement of redundancies at Lotus Cars.

The package that will be offered to Lotus employees and those affected in its supply chain, provides a holistic range of services designed around three key pillars of support, hardship and financial stability, employment and skills, and business start-ups.

The taskforce will use the time between now and the end of the financial year, when the redundancies are expected, to work with Lotus and its staff and help them navigate their next steps. The comprehensive support package offers practical assistance focused on three key areas: hardship and managing finances, finding a new job and business start-up.

More information can be found [here](#).

National Updates

Cabinet reshuffle

The prime minister has completed a reshuffle of his senior ministers following Angela Rayner's resignation from the government for breaching the ministerial code.

Of key interest are the changes at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), where Steve Reed has been appointed Secretary of State, and Samantha Dixon, Miatta Fahnbulleh and Alison McGovern have joined as junior ministers.

Previous local government minister Jim McMahon has left government, while local growth minister Alex Norris has moved to the Home Office.

The full list of new appointments can be found [here](#).

Expanded School Improvement Teams

Almost 100,000 more children in schools which have received consecutive poor Ofsted judgements will have access to support from [school improvement teams \(RISE teams\)](#). From this term the teams of school improvement experts made up of 65 advisers will double their reach to 377 schools across the country.

Ofsted confirm inspection changes

Ofsted have [confirmed](#) that it will replace single headline grades with new report cards, which the government are hoping will 'raise the bar' for standards by providing a fuller picture of school performance, giving parents key information more clearly, and schools the tools needed to improve.

Among other associated reforms, Ofsted has committed to monitoring inspections of schools and FE/skills providers where provision is not currently at the expected standard in all areas and increasing the frequency of early years inspections from every 6 years to every 4.

Latest DfE update for local authorities

The Department for Education has released its latest information update for local authorities [here](#).

Children's Commissioner's Schools Census

Rachel de Souza, the Children's Commissioner, has published the results of the [Children's Commissioner's School Census](#), which sought to better understand the challenges that children bring to school, how schools respond, and what more is needed.

This report comes ahead of the government's Schools White Paper, expected later this autumn, and presents findings that include:

- Children have a wide range of additional needs outside the classroom, but schools don't always know what they are.
- Schools are worried about wider issues than education, including the funding of other services. such as CAMHS and the impact on available support.
- The top concern for secondary schools is attendance, with the experiences and progress of children with EHCPs or on SEND support also being significant.
- There is often a lack of clarity about what effective practice is, where this support is regulated, and what schools are paying for this wider support.

New guidance on next round of Joint Targeted Area Inspections

The government has published [guidance](#) for the second round of thematic inspections focusing on child sexual abuse (CSA) in the family environment as part of their programme of joint targeted area inspections (JTAs).

Inspectors will look at how the police, children's social care, probation services, and relevant health services in a local area work together to respond to children at risk or who are victims of CSA in the family environment, how they assess and plan, protect and support, and prevent children from becoming victims.

Inspectors will also evaluate how local agencies work with education and early years providers and the voluntary and community sector to identify and respond to children who are victims of this kind of abuse.