



Scrutiny Review of Additionally Resourced SEND Provision

Children and Young People Select Committee, September 2026

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Select Committee – Membership

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Acknowledgements

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Stockton Parent Carer Liaison Forum

North East and North Cumbria ICB

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Billingham South Primary

North Shore Academy

Bishopsgarth Academy

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Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

This work aligns with the Council's priorities to ensure that all children have a bright future and a sense of belonging and giving children the best possible start in life, this is greater achieved when our children are educated and build connections within the borough. It aligns with the council vision to have a sustainable community where everyone belongs and is valued.

The review supports Stockton on Tees Plan Priority One – The best start in life to achieve big ambitions and key move – Giving children and young people the best possible start, in an inclusive community where everyone can thrive.

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

Since 2017, Stockton on Tees have had an enhanced mainstream school (EMS) model in place which supports children who require additional support than normally available in mainstream when they have a particular area of need i.e. a cognition and learning difficulty. In recent years, these placements have been overpopulated (for example for children who have language and communication needs) and underutilised in other areas (HI/VI & Physical Needs), resulting in high levels of high needs funding been distributed to settings without the children in situ to receive support.

In October 2024, the Council began a consultation to repurpose its EMS provision into Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) and SEND Units. This would allow for the flexibility to meet the demand for placement, give parents the right to choose these placements for their children and also bring the provision in Stockton on Tees in line with Department for Education guidance by registering the provisions as resourced provision.

Additionally resourced provisions in mainstream are designed to support children with SEND who require more tailored support but do not require a place in a special school.

In December 2024, the government requested that all Councils begin to consider creating resourced provision within their mainstream's schools, with an announcement of further funding awaiting in Spring 2025. This new funding can be used to adapt classrooms to be more accessible for children with SEND, and to create specialist facilities within mainstream schools that can deliver more intensive support adapted to suit the pupils' needs and this coincides with the work already in development in Stockton.

It is anticipated that creation of these provisions will reduce the number of children who are attending schools out of the area to have their needs met, this reduces the reliance on community transport and ensures that our children can foster a peer group within the local community, also potentially reducing future reliance on social and welfare services, such as housing or adult social care. It is also anticipated that placing children in the right provision at the earliest opportunity will to some extent reduce suspensions and exclusions and increase attendance within the borough.

Sustainable investment in inclusive school facilities future proofs educational infrastructure, creating accessible environments that benefit not just children with SEND, but the wider school community, leading to more inclusive, economically resilience and sustainable educational settings.

The Council is currently spending £1.9m on EMS provisions for 209 places in Stockton schools. The agreed plan is to transfer these into SEN Units/ARPs and creating up to 100 additional places for children across the borough. There has been an agreement to invest £730k per year (assuming all placements are full) from high needs funding in addition to current spend. This will be in place from September 2025.

This will ultimately save £5.3m of High Needs funding per year (assuming all places are filled).

	2023-24 £m	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m
Unmitigated Cumulative DSG deficit	3.57	5.31	11.51	21.24	34.84
Increase capacity in SBC mainstream prim/sec schools (cumulative savings).		(1.29)	(6.55)	(13.35)	(23.64)
% of overall deficit					67.8%

Cost and savings based on an additional 100 places:

Financial Year	2025/26 (part yr)	2026/27 (full yr)	2027/28 (full yr)	Total
Cost of 100 places in Independent Special #	£3.5m	£6m	£6m	£15.5m
Additional cost of 100 places in SEN Units/ARPs	£430k	£730k	£730k	£1.89m
Annual saving against unmitigated forecast	£3.07m	£5.27m	£5.27m	£13.61m

Based on average £60k p.a.

** Assume all places filled from September 2025

In January 2025, Cabinet received a report detailing the outcome of consultation relating to increasing capacity in mainstream schools within Stockton-on-Tees, by transferring current Enhanced Mainstream Schools (EMS) to Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) and SEN Units. The consultation was largely positive and Cabinet:

1. Supported the recommendation to transfer Enhanced Mainstream Schools to ARP and SEN Units from September 2025.
2. Agreed to invest up to an additional £730,000 p.a. into these provisions from the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.
3. Agreed to allocate £85,000 from the High Needs provision capital allocations for investment in the SEND Unit at Preston Primary School to increase capacity from 8 to 16 places in September 2025.

A number of schools have applied to be additionally resourced provision. However, interest from the secondary sector has been disappointing and some secondary schools with EMS have chosen not to transfer into ARPS, meaning there are less secondary schools involved in the process.

The purpose of this scrutiny will be to receive update on the implementation of the transfer from September 2025 and engage with the secondary schools to secure additional applications from the secondary sector and fully understand the barriers to the schools becoming ARPS, identifying ways in which we may overcome this to secure the provision required for children and young people in the borough.

Not having a full complement of secondary schools taking up the places risks undermining the effectiveness and reach of this key element of the local SEND Strategy and means that there may be implications for children upon transition to secondary that there may not be the same type or level of support available to them, potentially creating pressure on special school places and missed opportunities for inclusive education in mainstream settings.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- How will the transfer improve the outcomes for children with special educational needs across our Borough?
- How does the project support the Council's vision and strategy for SEND provision?
- What does DfE Guidance tell us?
- Will the changes ensure that there is sufficient and suitable educational provision for SEND pupils in both primary and secondary?
- What are the barriers to secondary schools becoming additionally resourced provision?
- How can the number of ARP placements in secondary be increased?
- To what extent do families and schools understand the changes and how will they be engaged during implementation?
- Can lessons be learnt from the primary ARP model and the higher uptake?
- Is the funding provided to ARP adequate and sustainable for them to provide the support needed?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Cabinet, schools, parents, other stakeholders.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

Five months:

Scope and Project Plan – 11 June 2025

Evidence gathering – June to October 2025

Draft Recommendations – 12 November 2025

Final Report – 17 December 2025

Submission to Cabinet – 15 January 2026

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

Legislative background

DfE Guidance – SEND Code of Practice 2015

Review of Enhanced Mainstream Schools – Consultation Document October 2024

Cabinet reports – September 2024 and January 2025

Consultation responses from parents, schools and partner agencies

ARP Policy May 2025

Service Level Agreement – ARP

Options Appraisal – December 2024

Local Area Inclusion Plan December 2024

New information:

Views of Headteachers, specifically those in secondary schools

Views of parents

Views of partner agencies such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy

Records of monitoring

Comparisons from other local authority models.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report summarises the findings of the Children and Young People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Additionally Resourced SEND Provision.
- 1.2. At the outset of the review a number of schools had applied to be additionally resourced provision. However, interest from the secondary sector had been disappointing and some secondary schools with Enhanced Mainstream Schools (EMS) provision had chosen not to transfer into Additionally Resourced Provision (ARPs).
- 1.3. The purpose of the scrutiny was therefore to receive an update on the implementation of the transfer from September 2025 and engage with the secondary schools to encourage additional applications from the secondary sector. The Select Committee wanted to fully understand the barriers to schools becoming ARPs and identify ways that that these could be overcome to secure the provision required for children and young people in the Borough.
- 1.4. The Committee were mindful that not having a full complement of secondary schools taking up the places risked undermining the effectiveness and reach of this key element of the local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy and meant that there might be implications for children upon transition to secondary. For example, there might not be the same type or level of support available to them, potentially creating pressure on special school places and missed opportunities for inclusive education in mainstream settings.
- 1.5. The Committee agreed the following key lines of enquiry for their work:
 - How will the transfer improve the outcomes for children with special educational needs across our Borough?
 - How does the project support the Council's vision and strategy for SEND provision?
 - What does DfE Guidance tell us?
 - Will the changes ensure that there is sufficient and suitable educational provision for SEND pupils in both primary and secondary?
 - What are the barriers to secondary schools becoming additionally resourced provision?
 - How can the number of ARP placements in secondary be increased?
 - To what extent do families and schools understand the changes and how will they be engaged during implementation?
 - Can lessons be learnt from the primary ARP model and the higher uptake?
 - Is the funding provided to ARP adequate and sustainable for them to provide the support needed?
- 1.6. Contributions were obtained from Council Officers, Stockton Parent Carer Liaison Forum, North East and North Cumbria ICB and Stockton-on-Tees Primary and Secondary Schools.
- 1.7. Early in the scrutiny review, the Government announced that it would be publishing a White Paper outlining the intended approach to SEND reform. The announcement came amid increasing calls for action regarding the rising number of registered SEND pupils and the associated challenges faced by councils. Following the announcement, the Select Committee decided to pause the review to await the detail of the White Paper.
- 1.8. In May 2026 the Select Committee received a presentation on the White Paper and considered the implications for their work. The Select Committee agreed to summarise the evidence

collected and key findings and advise Cabinet that they would be concluding their work given that the Government was now making plans to direct all schools to have Inclusion Hubs.

Key Findings and Conclusions

- There has been a rise in demand for SEND provision, including increasing EHCP numbers, with a projected further 9% increase, placing ongoing pressure on the system
- Parents have low confidence in mainstream secondary provision, with 90% expressing concern that needs cannot be met without additional specialist support. Feedback from families highlights insufficient capacity, limited choice and gaps in provision, alongside practical barriers such as distance and transport. Parents report significant concerns about children's wellbeing, including anxiety, school refusal and risk of harm where needs are not adequately met, and strongly favour smaller, specialist or adapted environments. There is a consistent call from parents for a more flexible, needs-led system, with greater emphasis on tailored support, continuity, and meaningful parental involvement
- The ARP model significantly increased local capacity, with 155 additional places created across primary and secondary phases, improving the availability of SEND provision within mainstream settings
- The development of ARPs was strongly collaborative, involving the Council, schools, health partners and families
- Early evidence indicates that ARPs are enabling better outcomes for children and more inclusive practice
- Schools report that ARPs and inclusive approaches are having a positive impact on pupil outcomes, including improved attendance, engagement, independence and achievement
- Inclusive practice is also benefiting the wider school community, with improved staff skills, stronger school ethos and greater acceptance of diversity
- Site visits confirmed that inclusive, well-led school environments can deliver strong outcomes, even with high proportions of SEND and disadvantaged pupils
- The national SEND White Paper introduces significant future changes, including a shift away from ARPs and SEND units towards school-led inclusion hubs and a stronger universal offer. These reforms will require the Council to adapt its current model

1.9. Overall, the evidence shows that the move from EMS to ARPs and SEND Units has been a positive and necessary step in modernising SEND provision in Stockton-on-Tees. It has created additional capacity, improved local access to education, and strengthened inclusive practice within mainstream schools. Feedback from school visits and early indications suggest better outcomes for children and a more sustainable financial position for the local authority.

1.10. Looking ahead, the Council will need to adapt its current model to respond to national SEND reforms, which may require further transformation towards inclusion-focused approaches within mainstream schools. Ongoing focus on early intervention, workforce capacity, and co-production with families will be critical to ensuring that all children with SEND receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

Recommended

1.11. That Cabinet note the contents of the report.

2.0 Summary of Evidence

Background

- 2.1. Since 2017, Stockton-on-Tees had an enhanced mainstream school (EMS) model in place which supported children who required additional assistance than normally available in mainstream schools when they had a particular area of need i.e. a cognition and learning difficulty. In recent years, these placements had been overpopulated (for example for children with language and communication needs) and underutilised in other areas (HI/VI & Physical Needs), resulting in high levels of high needs funding been distributed to settings without the children in situ to receive support. The EMS review confirmed that the EMS model was oversubscribed and revealed that the admissions criteria was not reflective of current cohort, funding was not enough to meet need, and the model was too rigid in meeting needs.
- 2.2. In October 2024, the Council began a consultation to repurpose its EMS provision into Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) and SEND Units. This was to allow for flexibility to meet the demand for placements, give parents the right to choose these placements for their children and also bring the provision in the Borough in line with Department for Education guidance by registering the provisions as resourced provision. The Council consulted with service users, with 64% of responses strongly agreeing with proposals and 19% agreeing. Comments received included:

Parent: "I strongly agree we that need this in Stockton; it is so important that my child attends a provision that meets their needs."

Governor: "In my opinion, there is a significant shortage of provision to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children in the borough."

School: "Schools are really underfunded and overstretched. We want to support our children, but we don't have the environment, skills or resource to do so. Some children need more."
- 2.3. In December 2024, the Government requested that all Councils begin to consider creating resourced provision within their mainstream schools, with an announcement of further funding awaiting in Spring 2025. Additionally, the Department for Education (DfE) announced a £740 million investment to create 10,000 new specialist places for pupils with SEND, focusing on mainstream schools. This funding will help create more inclusive environments and address the gap in provision, with a particular focus on SEN units and resourced provisions within mainstream schools. This coincided with the work already in development across the Borough.
- 2.4. In January 2025, Cabinet received a report detailing the outcome of consultation relating to increasing capacity in mainstream schools within Stockton-on-Tees, by transferring current Enhanced Mainstream Schools (EMS) to Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) and SEN Units. Cabinet supported the recommendation to transfer Enhanced Mainstream Schools to ARP and SEN Units from September with an investment of up to an additional £730,000 per annum into these provisions from the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

- 2.5. The Council was spending £1.9m on EMS provisions for 209 places in Stockton schools. The agreed plan was to transfer these into SEN Units/ARPs and create up to 100 additional places for children across the Borough, with an additional investment of £730,000 per year (assuming all placements were full) from high needs funding from September 2025. It was estimated that this would ultimately save £5.3m of High Needs funding per year (assuming all places were filled).
- 2.6. Additionally resourced provisions in mainstream were designed to support children with SEND who required more tailored support but did not require a place in a special school. It was anticipated that the creation of these provisions would reduce the number of children attending schools out of the area to have their needs met, thereby reducing reliance on community transport and ensuring that children could foster a peer group within the local community, also potentially reducing future reliance on social and welfare services such as housing or adult social care. It was also anticipated that placing children in the right provision at the earliest opportunity would to some extent reduce suspensions and exclusions and increase attendance within the Borough. Sustainable investment in inclusive school facilities would future proof educational infrastructure, creating accessible environments that benefit not just children with SEND, but the wider school community, leading to more inclusive, economically resilient and sustainable educational settings.
- 2.7. The Local Area Inclusion Plan (LAIP) requires that all mainstream schools provide high quality provision, embedding inclusive practice throughout and that there will be sufficient educational placements to meet the current and future needs of children and young people in the local area.
- 2.8. At the time of the scrutiny review there were 4,216 children aged 3–16 registered as SEND Support in Stockton-on-Tees and 2,650 children had an EHC Plan aged 0–25.

SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Service

- 2.9. The service is responsible for executing the duties laid out in The Children and Families Act 2014 which states that councils are responsible for the following:
- Identification, Assessment and Planning for Children and Young People 0-25 with SEND
 - Ensuring sufficient and suitable SEND and AP placements
 - Coordinate statutory Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC) Needs Assessments, ensuring compliance with legal duty
 - Working with health, social care and parents collaboratively to co-produce services that meet the needs of the local area
 - Ensuring that services are accessible to families, publishing a clear and informative local offer

ARPs and SEND Units – Primary

- 2.10. To access provision, children had to have an EHC Plan, places are additional to a school's PAN (Pupil Agreed Number) and parents are able to preference the provision. Funding is in additional to the recommended funding from DFE.
- 2.11. The Admissions criteria was co-produced with schools and placements opened September 2025.

Primary	SEND Unit	
Communication and Interaction & Cognition and Learning		64
St John the Baptist CE Primary School	SEND Unit	24
Preston Primary School	SEND Unit	16
Hardwick Green Primary Academy	SEND Unit	16
High Clarence Primary Academy	SEND Unit	8
Yarm Primary School	SEND Unit	8
Pentland Primary School	SEND Unit	8
Communication and Interaction & Social, Emotional and Mental Health.		16
Bowesfield Primary School	SEND Unit	8
Vacant		8

Primary	ARP	
Area of Need	Type of provision	Total Places
Communication and Interaction		60
Junction Farm Primary School	ARP	10
Rosebrook Primary School	ARP	10
Preston Primary School	ARP	10 (From January 2026)
Priors Mill CE Primary School	ARP	10
Vacant	ARP	10
Cognition and Learning		50
Myton Park Primary School	ARP	10
Billingham South Community Primary School	ARP	15
St John the Baptist CE Primary School	ARP	20
Social, Emotional and Mental Health		30
St Marks CE Primary School	ARP	6
Pentland Primary School	ARP	10
Vacant	ARP	10
Sensory and Physical		15
Billingham South Community Primary School	ARP	5
St John the Baptist CE Primary School	ARP	10
Speech and Language	ARP	
Mill Lane Primary School		10 (TBC)

ARPs and SEND Units Secondary

Secondary	ARP	
Area of Need	Type of provision	Total Places
Communication and Interaction		50
Northfield School	ARP	10
North Shore Academy	ARP	10
Thornaby Academy	ARP	10
Vacant	ARP	20
Cognition and Learning	ARP	40
Outwood Academy Bishopsgarth	ARP	25
Vacant	ARP	15
Sensory and Physical	ARP	10
Outwood Academy Bishopsgarth	ARP	5
Northfield School - HI/VI	ARP	5

Evidence from North East and North Cumbria ICB on ARP Implementation

- 2.12. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council worked closely with schools, stakeholders, parents and carers to transform the existing Enhanced Mainstream School (EMS) model into Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs). This collaborative approach resulted in the creation of 155 additional school places, including 60 in secondary schools and the remainder in primary settings, complementing existing ARP provision across the borough.
- 2.13. The introduction of ARPs, implemented from September 2025, ensured that children and young people with SEND were supported in the right place, at the right time, and as close to home as possible. This expansion significantly increased the number of school places within the Borough to meet a wider range of needs and strengthened inclusive practice across mainstream education.
- 2.14. The North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) was fully sighted on the development of the ARP programme, which was reflected in jointly produced strategic documents including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF). Strengths of the approach included earlier identification of need, particularly in primary settings, increased local provision for younger children, and improved pathways of support. Rising levels of need, including an increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in the early years, meant that children's needs were met more effectively as they entered school, while established pathways into health services remained unaffected.
- 2.15. Partners maintained existing pathways into health provision, with continued oversight through the JSNA, SEND Development Group and SEND Strategic Group. Any emerging risks or issues identified by the ICB were escalated through these governance structures via the Strategic Lead for SEND, ensuring a coordinated and responsive approach.
- 2.16. Members noted the scale of the additional provision and expressed confidence that the ARP programme would be able to meet the needs of children with SEND more effectively within mainstream schools. However, it was recognised that a key challenge was ensuring that children

were placed on the most appropriate pathways at the right time so they received the support they needed as early as possible.

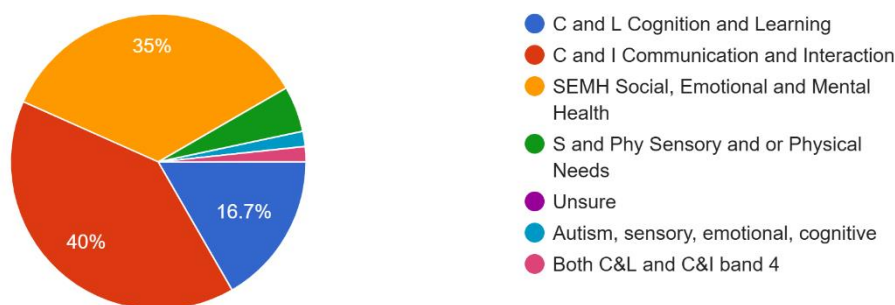
- 2.17. Officers highlighted that funding arrangements, including the £730,000 annual investment, had been co-produced with stakeholders to reflect the actual costs of delivery and would be kept under annual review. Robust performance measures were established, supported by dedicated capacity to monitor provision, including regular visits to schools. Members also noted an anticipated 9% increase in demand for places and emphasised the importance of continuing to support mainstream schools over the following 12–18 months, particularly as meeting needs earlier could reduce demand for more specialist provision later in a child’s educational journey.

Evidence from Stockton Parent/Carer Liaison Forum

- 2.18. Views were sought from parent carers on the current situation regarding secondary ARPs in Stockton. Sixty responses were received, of which 83% were from parents of children with an EHCP. Ninety percent of respondents expressed concerns that their child’s needs could not be met in a standard mainstream school. The child’s /young person’s need were identified as:

What is your child/young persons primary need

60 responses



- 2.19. In response to the question, “What are your current feelings about secondary education, thinking about your individual child’s needs being met?”, the feedback showed overwhelming concern and a lack of confidence in the secondary SEND system. Although examples of effective practice were cited, the dominant message was that mainstream provision was insufficient, specialist capacity was too limited, and families feared serious negative outcomes for their children without significant changes to provision, resourcing and approach.
- 2.20. Key themes from the comments received included a strong preference for specialist or small-scale provision, with many parents feeling that mainstream secondary schools could not meet needs. There were repeated calls for smaller class sizes, higher staff-to-pupil ratios, and specialist or SEN units (ARPs/bases). Respondents also highlighted insufficient local provision and limited availability, including too few SEND and SEMH placements, a limited number of schools offering ARPs or SEN bases, and geographical barriers such as distance and transport difficulties.
- 2.21. Parents reported high levels of anxiety, fear, and distress, with concerns focusing on deterioration in their child’s mental health, the risk of school refusal, anxiety or disengagement, and fears of

bullying, exploitation, or harm. Mainstream schools were seen as unsuitable or overwhelming, with a common perception that secondary schools were too large, busy, and overstimulating. Additional concerns included a lack of individualised support, one-size-fits-all approaches, gaps in SEND support and poor implementation, difficulties in transition from primary to secondary education, and concerns about inclusion in practice. Parents feared significant consequences if needs were not met.

- 2.22. In response to the question, “Why is having additional choice for your child’s education important?”, the feedback showed that additional choice was fundamentally about ensuring appropriate, needs-led education rather than increasing options for its own sake. Parents wanted a broader and more flexible system of provision that enabled children with SEND to access education safely, maintain wellbeing, and achieve their potential, rather than being placed in unsuitable settings with negative consequences.
- 2.23. Key themes included the need for provision that matched individual needs, the importance of tailored and flexible support, and a desire for children to thrive rather than simply cope. Parents emphasised mental health and wellbeing, equity and fairness, and the importance of avoiding negative outcomes such as exclusion or lost education. They also highlighted the value of specialist and smaller environments, the importance of parental insight and involvement, and the need for continuity of support. Additional comments highlighted significant dissatisfaction with the current SEND secondary system, particularly in relation to lack of provision, limited flexibility, and barriers to accessing support, with calls for a more inclusive, better planned, and needs-led system to improve outcomes for children and families.
- 2.24. Other comments invited highlighted significant dissatisfaction with the current SEND secondary system, particularly around lack of provision, limited flexibility, and barriers to support. Parent called for a better planned, more inclusive and needs-led system, with greater specialist capacity, improved mainstream support, and clearer guidance, to prevent poor outcomes for children and families.

School Presentations

- 2.25. Kerry Coe, Headteacher, St John the Baptist Primary reported that the school had two ARPs with a total of 30 places, a 24-place SEND unit. It had also taken in children excluded or at risk of exclusion and ran a virtual school hub for 32 children who had been in care.
- 2.26. She challenged the narrative that some children were too difficult to include. The new provision had resulted in improved progress and attainment although the impact on overall school performance could be an issue for some schools, and for some children it could take a long time to see small progress.
- 2.27. Another barrier was that some children had multiple, overlapping and complex needs. However, barriers to learning needed to be removed and children with SEND needed to be able to access activities the same way as other pupils. Funding was not considered to be a barrier and schools were challenged to think more creatively about how they used their funding.
- 2.28. The presentation from Kerry Coe, Headteacher, St John the Baptist Primary outlined:

Defining Our Moral Purpose as:

- Every decision is rooted in doing what’s best for children
- We are driven by equity, compassion, and ambition and most of all LOVE
- Education as a tool for transformation

- Inclusive practices in teaching and leadership
- Celebrating diversity and removing barriers

The strategy for Improving Outcomes included:

- High-quality teaching and learning
- Targeted support and interventions
- Data-informed decision making
- Staff development and wellbeing
- Parental involvement
- Multi-agency

Our Wider Officer: Inclusion in Action:

- Every child deserves access to enriching experiences — regardless of background or need.
- Trips and experiences are free or heavily subsidised
- ARP pupils are included in all mainstream opportunities
- Examples : ice skating, farm visits, theatre, sleepovers, residential

Impact so far:

- Improved progress and attainment for individuals
- Positive pupil voice and engagement
- Staff reflections on inclusive practice
- Strong parent feedback
- Positive impact on mainstream pupils

Barriers:

- Complexity - Many pupils present with multiple and overlapping needs, including often unmet SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health), which make daily school life a challenge — for them, staff, and peers
- Data vs. Humanity - These children may impact headline data, but they are not just numbers. Their stories matter. Their progress may not always be linear, but it is meaningful
- Beyond Categories - Pupils don't fit neatly into boxes. We must move beyond labels and see the whole child.
- We must challenge the narrative that some children are too difficult to include

Call to Action:

- Encouraging reflection and collaboration
- Identify and remove barriers
- Funding – to suit the needs of the child
- Invest in supporting parents
- Reaffirming collective responsibility

2.29. Andrew Murphy, Senior Executive Principal at Northern Education Trust and former head of North Shore Academy which has a communication and interaction ARP, encouraged every school to have an ARP in their building as it added so much to school life. He advised that parents had reported a real difference in their relationships with their children at home and that children were succeeding under the new provision. It had also made a huge difference to the children that were not yet diagnosed but needed extra support. He commented that it was not just about GCSEs, but the life chances and making sure those children could communicate and add to society.

2.30. The presentation from Andrew Murphy, Senior Executive Principal, North Shore Academy outlined:

- ARPs across the Northern Education Trust
- The ARP at North Shore was referred to as the “Hub” – a protected area of the school

Why we have said yes to an ARP?

- We recognised that we need to adapt in response to the levels of need coming through our doors
- We needed to have a provision that promotes inclusivity and can adapt to meet the needs of our complex EHCP students
- We wanted a space that bridges the gap between school and home. A mainstream school that caters for students who may have not been successful or be able to transition to secondary school
- A space that provides their key person and an opportunity to regulate in a safe space
- We wanted these students to be successful, to achieve GCSEs, to develop life skills and to be able to go to their local school
- We wanted the resources and funding to be able to develop expertise and provide appropriate ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) support working with Stockton Local Authority to develop and improve

What does it bring to our Academy and Trust?

- It brings inclusion
- It develops our CPD (Continuing Professional Development), our expertise, our experiences
- It promotes a school wide commitment to HQT (Highly Qualified Teachers), adaptive practice and meeting student's needs – being a core part of the school ethos
- It brings a richer, more diverse learning environment
- It allows NSA (North Shore Academy) students to fully accept inclusion and potential differences
- It upskills our staff to use expertise from our Hub into mainstream lessons

Opening the Hub doors...

- It allows the expertise we develop and space we have created to access other vulnerable students in our academy
- We promote social inclusion - so hub students regularly interact with other students

Enrichment/ PFA (Preparing for Adulthood)

- SEND / Hub specific enrichment
- Trips

The Impact

- One student had never attended a PE lesson at primary school – he now attends
- One student couldn't change himself – he now is independent in changing for PE
- One student refused technology lessons – it took a while, but he now goes
- One student refused to engage with other students – he now has friends
- One student hid under the table in transition – he finished year 7 at 98% attendance
- One student would bolt home to play on this play station – he now stays for enrichment twice a week
- One student never received praise in an educational setting but now floods the room with positive praise cards
- One student wouldn't leave the safety of the Hub but now goes to meet friends at social time
- One student would never give themselves credit but now is understanding he can overcome challenges he couldn't in the past
- One student will now attend 1:1 maths tutoring with a separate member of staff

Challenges – Things to consider

- NSA go through a formal EHCP consultation process for students being named in our ARP
- It is really important that we (NSA and Stockton LA) get the right students named
- Too complex needs “unsettles”, consumes resources, impacts on the success of other students
- Early intervention before barriers escalate
- Parent/ carers, LA and setting to work together
- Clarity and strong parental engagement from the start is crucial with a clear understanding of what our expectations are and what provision will be in place
- In the current “SEND crisis” the importance of innovation and shared success
- We constantly need to develop and evaluate our inclusive practice so it becomes a thread across everything that we do

Observations from Member site visits

North Shore Academy

- 2.31. The visit included a tour of SEND facilities, including The Bridge, ARP Hub and Abbey Hill classrooms, alongside observation of English lessons. Discussions with staff highlighted the strong benefits of collaborative working between specialist and mainstream provision, enabling pupils with additional needs to access inclusive education and aspire to GCSE outcomes. Conversations with pupils demonstrated improved attendance, resilience and pride in achievement. The Bridge was used to transition pupils back into the school in a non-threatening environment.
- 2.32. The school presented as calm, inclusive and well-structured, with pupils engaged and keen to learn. Inclusivity was clearly embedded, with SEND pupils fully integrated into mainstream classes and supported through tailored EHCPs and Individual Learning Plans. Practical approaches, such as the Red/Amber/Green system, effectively removed barriers to participation.
- 2.33. A strong culture of praise was evident across the school, with recognition systems encouraging confidence, motivation and a sense of achievement among pupils.
- 2.34. Despite a high proportion of SEND and disadvantaged pupils, the school maintained high expectations and strong outcomes. Leadership was clearly focused on a child-centred, outcomes-driven approach, with inclusive practices benefiting all pupils.
- 2.35. Educational attainment was extremely good given the high numbers of SEND and pupil premium students with 55% of pupils achieving a 4 and above in English and Maths.
- 2.36. Overall, the visit was highly positive, with the school providing an inspiring and supportive learning environment for its pupils. A strongly inclusive approach to integrating SEND pupils into school life was evident.

St John the Baptist Primary

- 2.37. The school demonstrated a strong culture of inclusivity, where all pupils were clearly valued equally. Children with complex needs were very well integrated into the school community and supported effectively.
- 2.38. The relatively large staff team (including part-time staff) enabled children with additional needs to be taught in smaller groups, ensuring they received more tailored support.

- 2.39. The outdoor provision was a significant strength. The school benefited from a large, well-equipped outdoor area, including gardens and trees, where children were actively encouraged to play and explore.
- 2.40. Pupils also benefited from a wide range of enrichment opportunities. These included educational visits and residential experiences, such as trips to Robinwood, where they were able to take part in outdoor activities and develop confidence and independence.
- 2.41. The school clearly went above and beyond in supporting its pupils.

Billingham South Primary

- 2.42. The visit included discussions with senior staff and a tour of the school, including two ARP units supporting pupils with physical/medical needs and cognition/learning needs. The school had a high proportion of SEND pupils, with around 100 identified and approximately 40 with EHCPs. Strong systems were in place to assess pupils prior to admission and ensure appropriate placement.
- 2.43. The ARP provision was well-integrated, with pupils accessing mainstream classes where appropriate, supported by tailored adaptations and access to on-site therapies such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy. A satellite provision with Ash Trees further supported inclusion, allowing pupils to integrate socially and academically with their peers.
- 2.44. The school environment was highly nurturing and child-centred, with a clear focus on inclusion, belonging and positive outcomes. Individual programmes were developed for all pupils, with staff making informed adaptations without waiting for formal diagnoses. There was a strong emphasis on flexibility, with provision regularly reviewed to meet changing needs.
- 2.45. Outdoor provision was a notable strength, with extensive, well-adapted spaces supporting a range of abilities and offering opportunities for both active play and quieter, sensory experiences.
- 2.46. Leadership demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusive practice, and the established ARP model was well embedded. Positive transition arrangements to secondary school were also evident, supported by close partnership working.
- 2.47. Overall, the school provided a highly supportive and inclusive learning environment, with strong leadership and a clear focus on meeting the diverse needs of its pupils.

Bishopsgarth Academy

- 2.48. The visit highlighted a school in transition from an Enhanced Mainstream School to an ARP, with increased SEND provision and plans to further align staffing and budgets in the following year. The ARP cohort had grown significantly, with a focus on Year 7 pupils who had experienced enhanced transition arrangements and gradual integration into mainstream school life. SEND pupils were supported effectively to access mainstream lessons, often with one-to-one assistance, and were able to make good progress, including working towards GCSE outcomes.
- 2.49. Discussions with staff demonstrated a strong commitment to pupil achievement and tailored support, particularly through targeted reading interventions and the use of varied learning resources to meet individual needs. Pupils were engaged and supported to develop confidence and independence, as reflected in conversations with both KS3 and KS4 students.

- 2.50. The school environment was welcoming and inclusive despite an increased pupil population. SEND pupils were well integrated while still able to access specialist provision when required. A strong emphasis was placed on balancing academic progress with life skills, enrichment activities and external opportunities, which contributed to positive outcomes, including apprenticeships and reduced exclusions.
- 2.51. The school responded proactively to its challenging catchment through family engagement and careers support, particularly for SEND pupils. While challenges remained around attainment measures and recruitment of teaching assistants, leadership had addressed needs through strategic staffing, including appointing specialist primary-trained teachers.
- 2.52. Overall, the visit presented a positive environment, with pupils appearing engaged and supported.

Schools White Paper – SEND Reform

- 2.53. The SEND White Paper “Every Child Achieving and Thriving” was published in February 2026 and set out the Government’s plan to overhaul support for children with special educational needs. The reforms are intended to create a system where help is provided earlier and easier to access. The White Paper also places strong emphasis on inclusion in mainstream schools and earlier intervention. A key impact on the review was that schools are to have their own inclusion hubs rather than SEND Units and ARPS.
- 2.54. The Select Committee received a presentation outlining:

White Paper Vision

- Inclusive Mainstream System
- Specialist Support for Children that need it
- Effective and efficient local delivery.
- Stretching, enriching and inclusive school experience for all.
- North East Mission – emphasis on disadvantaged, white working-class children

Curriculum

- Every teacher a teacher of SEND
- National curriculum refreshed for first teaching from 2028
- Updated GCSEs from 2029
- Changes include: integrating oracy, digital and media literacy, financial literacy
- Introduction of a new enrichment entitlement
- Reform of Progress 8 to place greater weight on creative, language, and humanities subjects alongside core academic subjects
- Investments: money to go in over three years to support up to 400 schools in deprived areas meeting enrichment benchmarks

Consultation Phase

- Strong universal offer for SEND
- Schools to produce inclusion strategies backed by national inclusion standards and changes to complaints process re: SEND Support.
- Updated 0-25 SEND Code of Practice and new primary areas of need.
- Universal – Targeted – Targeted Plus – Specialist
- Updated Tribunal Powers

- Experts at Hand
- SEND Practitioners in Family Hubs
- Schools to have their own inclusion hubs – no more SEND Units and ARPS as they will transition into specialist units commissioned by the council with schools.

Attendance and Suspensions

- Target: Improve overall attendance by 1.3 percentage points by 2028–29
- Introduction of pupil engagement framework measuring belonging and engagement
- Behaviour reforms include Reintegration Support Partnerships, Attendance and Behaviour Hubs, and new suspension supervision options

School Governance

- Gradual movement of all schools into trust structures, with new Trust Standards and systemic inspection
- Enhanced local authority role for strategic planning, admissions, SEND sufficiency, and attendance oversight
- LA or groups of un-academised schools can create trusts - but doesn't give a date of when this needs to happen by
- New independent school standards

What does this mean for the Council?

- Local area partnerships are to deliver LARPs
- Govt will use these plans (and from regular progress reviews) will support decision making
- When each LA has approval for their LARP from the SoS; investment will be put in place to clear 90% of SEND debt through a debt relief offer
- Local Area SEND Reform Plan must include Vision, Strategy, the Plan, Monitoring, Governance
- Plan to be jointly owned by the LA and the ICB but written by the LA
- Must be an ongoing and embedded plan deployed across all educational settings, EAH offer to be in place by 2028/29
- Key Expectations – EAH offer, Sufficiency and place planning, Universal offer, Effective partnerships, Effective co-production strategies
- Year One expectations – clear, testable workstreams, robust financial baseline, steps toward the experts at hand,; strengthened governance and partnership arrangements; workable system for monitoring and evaluation
- Experts at Hand - provide a defined route for mainstream settings to access specialist support (EPs, Ots, SALT); shifts away from 1:1 to group offers; build embedded capability within mainstream
- Health ICB role in developing plan: Joint vision and KPIs, Commissioning plan and funding approach, Workforce and Capacity plan, Pathways and access standards; Assessment and review participation

Key Dates:

- Response to consultation deadline – 18th May 2026
- LARP Deadline – 1st Draft – 14th June 2026
- Planning & Legislation Changes – 2026-2028
- Experts at Hand to commence - 2028/29
- Assessments under new framework to begin 2029
- ISP to be in place from 2030

Next Steps

- DFE Advisor - monthly
- Change of Governance and oversight arrangements i.e. SEND Operational Group.
- Briefings & Webinars
- High Needs Funding Deficit – Statutory Override
- Expert at Hand Guidance – expected late May
- High needs Capital Allocation – expected late May
- Guidance on Inclusion Bases – expected late May
- Submit Local Area SEND Reform Plan

Glossary of Terms

ARP	Additionally Resourced Provision - A specialist provision within a mainstream school offering targeted support for pupils with particular needs.
CPD	Continuing Professional Development - Ongoing training and learning activities for staff to maintain and improve professional skills.
DfE	Department for Education - The UK government department responsible for education policy and children's services.
EAH	Experts at Hand - A core element of SEND reform providing mainstream settings with access to specialist education and health professionals (e.g. EPs, SALT, OTs).
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan - A statutory plan for children and young people (0–25) with significant special educational needs, outlining required support.
EMS	Enhanced Mainstream School - A mainstream school with additional resources, expertise, and staffing to support pupils with more complex SEND needs while remaining in a mainstream setting.
EPs	Educational Psychologists - Specialists who assess children's learning, behaviour, and emotional needs, and advise on support.
HI&VI	Hearing Impairment & Visual Impairment - Refers to specialist services or needs relating to pupils with hearing or vision impairments.
HQT	High Quality Teaching - An approach emphasising inclusive, effective teaching strategies to meet the needs of all learners, including those with SEND.
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - A local authority and NHS assessment identifying current and future health and wellbeing needs of a population.
LAIP	Local Area Inclusion Plan - A locally developed plan outlining how inclusion will be improved across education services in an area.
NENC ICB	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board - NHS body responsible for planning and commissioning health services in the North East and North Cumbria.
OTS	Occupational Therapy Service - Provides support to help children develop skills for daily living, sensory needs, and participation in school activities.
PFA	Preparing for Adulthood - A framework supporting young people with SEND to transition to adult life, focusing on employment, independence, health, and community inclusion.
SALT	Speech and Language Therapy - Specialist support for children with communication, speech, and language difficulties.
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health - A category of SEND relating to difficulties in emotional regulation, behaviour, and mental wellbeing.
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - Refers to children and young people who need additional support due to learning difficulties or disabilities.