Guidance for Mainstream Schools considering applying for Capital Funding to enhance / set up an Inclusion (Support) Base

In your application you should take account of the principles, priorities and goals in Sections 1,2 and 3 and how you plan to deliver the expectations set out in Section 6. The Appendix on Page 8 provides some examples you may wish to consider. You may also wish to draw on existing effective practice within your school or from other schools. Section 6 provides some guides in the blue boxes to support reflection on your current context and practice. We have included a checklist to support you in your application.

1. Principles (from DfE Guidance June 2026)

Six key principles of effective practice for inclusion bases:

1. Supporting inclusion in the school or local area
2. High-quality curriculum design
3. Effective data, assessment and outcomes
4. Effective workforce and leadership
5. Effective partnership working
6. Inclusive and accessible physical environments

2. Reform Plan Priorities

- early
- local
- fair
- effective
- shared

3. Hillingdon's Vision and underpinning goals

Vision

We are committed to building a SEND system where every child and young person is safe, supported early, and able to achieve and thrive. Our ambition is a fully inclusive, coherent, fair and financially sustainable 0–25 system operating seamlessly across education, health and social care, with support that is timely, local and effective.

Four goals:

1. **Strengthen early identification**

Needs identified early and met through timely, effective support.

2. **High-quality mainstream inclusion**

More children and young people with SEND thrive in local mainstream provision and feel they belong.

3. **Needs-led continuum of provision**

Sufficient mainstream, specialist and post-16 provision aligned to local need and delivering value for money.

4. **Improve outcomes and confidence**

Improved outcomes for children and young people, stronger family confidence, and co-produced partnerships that shape delivery

4. Aims

- To enable children and young people to access the specialist teaching and support they need whilst remaining in their local communities, close to their families and friends.
- To deliver the right support in the right place, so that every child in a mainstream school can achieve and thrive.
- To provide targeted, needs-led support that enables children and young people to access learning, participate in school life and increase their **successful** participation in mainstream classes.

5. What is an Inclusion Support base?

- An inclusion support base offers high-quality teaching, bespoke learning environments and flexible access to specialist education or health support, helping children to achieve and thrive academically, socially and emotionally.
- Inclusion support bases are commissioned and funded by individual settings, academy trusts or local groups of schools**.**
- Inclusion support bases are part of a mainstream school and should form part of the school's wider inclusive approach and strengthen, rather than replace, high-quality ordinarily available provision.
- Inclusion support bases should operate as part of a continuum of provision within mainstream education. The balance between learning within the base and within mainstream classes should be determined by individual need and reviewed regularly.

How does it differ from general learning resource areas in schools?

Inclusion support bases are distinct from general learning resource areas in schools. For example, the special educational needs (SEN) department space or areas where

children and young people might go for universal or targeted support on an ad hoc basis are not classed as inclusion support bases.

How does this differ from a Specialist Base?

Specialist bases are commissioned and funded by the local authority specifically for children and young people with higher levels of need. A legal 'Prescribed Alteration Process' is followed usually led by the Local Authority to consult on and make decisions on setting these up. **Specialist bases are not part of this application process.**

Who are inclusion support bases for?

Children and young people with additional needs, beyond those which can be met through a strong universal offer or other interventions. This may be:

- children and young people with SEND
- children and young people who require support for behavioural or pastoral reasons, including those at risk of exclusion or low attendance
- exclusion or low attendance

The base should support children and young people to access as much of mainstream school life and learning as is appropriate to their needs, with movement between the base and mainstream provision remaining flexible and responsive to progress.

What to consider before and when applying

- Think about your current and projected level and range of needs at your school and the main barriers to learning, attendance, participation and inclusion are.
- What evidence do you have that demonstrates existing provision is not meeting needs?
- Could you improve or extend this within existing resources?
- Decide where your proposed model will sit on the continuum and how it will support increased participation in mainstream learning.

What should it provide?

- An inclusive and high-quality universal offer across the whole school is a key pre-requisite for developing an effective base offer that promotes inclusion.
- High-quality inclusion support bases have specialisms / specialist insight where evidence-based practice is strengthened, providing:
    - tailored and expert teaching and support for specific groups of children
    - a source of expertise for all other staff within the school.
    - Clear entry and exit guidance / criteria supported by information on expected starting points, needs and progress.
- Schools should ensure they draw on evidence-informed approaches to develop both their universal offer and their inclusion support base offer.

- Support from the inclusion support base for children and young people should be needs led and a mix of:
    - enabling children and young people to gradually transition or reintegrate to full participation in mainstream classes
    - helping children and young people access mainstream learning, education and their wider community in a way that works for them.
- Will typically deliver targeted plus support

What to consider before and when applying

- The proposed Inclusion Support Base should be clearly positioned within the school's wider graduated and inclusive offer. Schools should explain how the base will complement universal and targeted provision and, where relevant, connect with Targeted Plus support, including advice and input from Experts at Hand.
- Applications should demonstrate how specialist expertise accessed through the base will strengthen capacity across the wider school, rather than creating a separate SEND system within the school.

What it should not be:

Access to an inclusion support base, even for behavioural or pastoral support, should never be used as a sanction or for removal from the classroom

Schools should carefully consider and guard against the risks of children receiving a lower-quality or less-expert offer than their peers by not being full-time in mainstream classrooms.

6. What schools should have in place / put in place when considering / setting up an inclusion support base

What to consider before applying

Current provision – space

- What spaces do you currently have available to support pupils with additional needs and how are these being used?
- Are existing spaces sufficient, accessible and suitable for the needs of the pupils requiring additional provision?
- Could existing space be reconfigured or used more effectively to meet identified needs?
- What limitations exist within existing accommodation affect your school’s ability to deliver effective support?
- What additional accommodation, adaptations, equipment or facilities would the proposed inclusion support base require, and why?

Current provision – interventions and support

- What SEND interventions and targeted support are currently provided, and which pupils access them?
- What evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of current interventions and their impact on pupil outcomes?
- What gaps, capacity constraints or unmet needs have you identified within existing provision?
- How would the proposed inclusion support base complement and enhance existing provision without duplicating current support?
- What staffing and specialist expertise are currently available to support pupils with SEND, and how would the proposed inclusion support base add to this?

Leadership

- Be able to clearly evidence leadership that ensures a whole-school approach to inclusion that demonstrates an inclusive and high-quality universal offer across the whole school / group of schools (including MATs). This would be evidenced in their School Inclusion Strategy, SEND Information Report and Accessibility Plan.
- Be able to evidence commitment to ensuring a skilled workforce and a shared commitment to securing positive outcomes for children and young people who access the base.
- Leaders should consider staff workload and wellbeing when designing and operating the base. This includes ensuring expectations for planning, assessment, collaboration and movement between mainstream and the base are proportionate and manageable; that staff have access to supportive line management, supervision or mentoring; and that professional development is planned in a way that strengthens practice without creating undue burden.
- Senior leaders should ensure that the base is embedded within wider whole-school policies, processes and practice.
- Monitoring of impact arrangements should be as rigorous as they are for all parts of the school.
- Schools should ensure that all the children and young people who attend the school and their families understand the purpose of the base and the strengths and needs of those accessing it.
- Taking account of the school's Equality Duty, children and young people accessing a base should have the same opportunities to access wider-school support, activities, celebrations and events, regardless of the arrangements for their child's educational provision.
- Schools should always engage with families when considering whether a child or young person accesses a base. Schools should not place children in a base without involving their parents or carers in this decision.
- There should be explicit entry and exit criteria for the inclusion support base.
- The Inclusion Support Base must operate within the school's existing safeguarding arrangements.

When applying:

- Identify the specific purpose of the proposed inclusion support base, which pupils will it serve, and how the proposed capacity has been determined?
- Consider how the location, design, staffing and operation of the base support effective safeguarding, appropriate supervision and children's safety, while avoiding unnecessary isolation from the wider school community.

What to consider before applying

- How effective is your universal SEND offer, including ordinarily available provision such as adaptive teaching and reasonable adjustments? See Hillingdon OAP guidance and OAP Checklist
- How does the school currently support pupils' access to mainstream lessons, attendance, behaviour, emotional regulation and wider school life?
- What changes to whole-school practice would accompany the establishment of the inclusion support base?
- What changes / adaptations to whole-school practice would accompany the establishment of the inclusion support base?
- How do you currently actively involve pupils, parents and carers in decision-making, target setting and reviewing practice and how would you extend this to the inclusion support base provision? (Coproduction / pupil and parent voice.)

Curriculum

- The approach to the curriculum in a base should be underpinned by a belief that all children and young people can engage with the mainstream curriculum with access to high-quality and expert provision, including specialist input, advice and training.
- Where appropriate, schools should consider extending evidence-informed interventions and adaptations that are used in the base across the wider school to support greater inclusion. This may include training and specialist advice around the use of tools and strategies for children and young people, for example tools and strategies for those who do not communicate verbally.
- Schools should ensure the provision supports increased independence and preparation for the next stage of life / education.
- Schools will need to consider trade-offs in curriculum design by balancing:
  - delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum offer that aligns to the curriculum in mainstream classes;
  - focussed delivery that supports reintegration to mainstream classes. For example, a focus on literacy, core concepts, and prioritising learning the knowledge and skills that are required for future mainstream curriculum topics;
  - where applicable, significant adaptations to the national curriculum with specialist input, and

- delivery of specialist interventions, for example therapeutic or medical support

When applying, consider:

- What educational offer, curriculum, interventions and specialist support will the inclusion support base provide?
- How the base curriculum will align with the mainstream timetable to ensure pupils maintain access to a broad, ambitious curriculum and recognised qualification pathways?
- What evidence informed strategies will be used to support pupils to reintegrate into mainstream classes?
- For primary age pupils, schools should explain how the base will support independence and successful transition to the next stage of education.
- For secondary and post-16 age pupils, schools should explain how the base will support preparation for adulthood, independence and successful transition to the next stage of education, training or employment, where relevant to the cohort.

Assessment

Practice should include:

- robust baselining at point of accessing the base
- use of validated, reliable assessments to track progress
- regular review of progress against intended outcomes.

Where required, schools might carefully consider use of:

- qualitative assessments - these can be valuable if carefully identified in relation to a specific intended outcome and where there are clear baselines and review points against the stated outcome
- carefully selected adapted assessment tools - for example, following the recommendation of a specialist teacher, education professional, or health professional
- gathering the voices of children and young people and the perspectives of their parents and carers

Schools should take a timely and multi-layered approach to gathering evidence of progress across a range of sources.

Assessment, intervention and review arrangements within the base should connect with the child / young person's wider individual support planning and should avoid creating parallel or duplicative systems.

Schools should demonstrate how children's needs, agreed support, outcomes and progress will be recorded and reviewed with the child or young person and their parents/carers.

When applying:

- Think about what specific improvements in pupils' educational outcomes, attendance, engagement, wellbeing and inclusion you expect the inclusion support base to achieve.

Monitoring and keeping practice under review – using learning to inform adaptations and change

- The progress of individual children and young people should be reviewed against the entry and exit guidance / criteria.
- Schools should regularly review the profile of children and young people accessing the base to identify any potential trends.
- Children and young people accessing the base and their parents / carers should be involved in monitoring and review through having opportunities to provide feedback and share their views on how the provision is working for them.
- All practice must be consistent with the duties set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- Schools and trusts in partnership with the local authority should use data and information from observations by specialist staff of teaching and learning or support, in the base to understand and review the effectiveness of the base.
- Destinations data and post-base tracking should be used to support the long-term development plans for the base.
- There should be regular review of suitability, quality and capacity to meet the strengths and needs of children and young people accessing the base.

What to consider before applying

How do you currently monitor, review and adapt interventions in response to pupils' progress?

Quality Assurance

- Schools, commissioners, and responsible bodies should ensure that timely and rigorous quality assurance processes are in place.
- Quality assurance processes should build upon existing whole-school arrangements put in place by the relevant responsible body.
- Where a school has an inclusion support base this is inspected by Ofsted as part of the school inspection.

What governance arrangements and multi-source quality assurance processes will be put in place to evaluate the base's effectiveness on an annual basis?

Partnership working and specialist expertise

Inclusion Support Bases should be integrated with the wider network of support around the school and child.

Schools should consider:

- how you will work with parents/carers and children and young people;
- how the base will access education, health and other specialist expertise;
- how advice from Experts at Hand and other relevant professionals will inform provision;
- how knowledge and effective practice will be shared between specialist professionals, base staff and mainstream teachers; and
- how multi-agency input will support children to remain successfully included within their local school.

Appendix 1 Quick Guides for schools from DfE Guidance when planning their Inclusion Support base

Effective workforce and leadership

Schools will need to consider what works in their context, however, these are examples of strategies schools may wish to consider:

- a named member of the senior leadership team has overall responsibility for the base
- a named member of staff maintains day to day oversight
- senior leaders and key decision makers regularly spend time in the base
- whole staff continuous professional development to support the base takes place regularly
- updates from the base team are a regular part of whole school meetings
- schools allocate protected time for staff to reflect on their professional practice and to engage with, and learn from, practices implemented in other schools
- experienced staff coach newer staff in supporting complex needs
- time is protected for supervision and mentoring
- feedback from staff around the school about the base is used to inform school development priorities
- where appropriate, movement of staff between mainstream and base environments is facilitated to support flexibility within the continuum model and an inclusive culture across the whole school
- new teachers in the base receive additional time to learn on the job
- staff model social interactions as an important means of developing peer awareness and positive peer relationships

Supporting inclusion in the school

Schools will need to consider what works in their context, however, these are examples of strategies schools may wish to consider:

Whole school approaches

- where appropriate, interventions and adaptations that work well in the base are extended across the wider school
- teaching of communication systems used in the base might be extended to children across the mainstream school (e.g. visual timetables)

- children and young people not formally accessing the base are able to spend time there - 'reverse integration' - to promote inclusion

Peer relationships and belonging

- accessible opportunities are sought for children and young people who access a base to participate in - for example, school plays and school trips - and children and young people accessing the base are involved in the wider school, such as school council and prefect roles
- children and young people accessing the base have the opportunity to bring a friend to the base at an appropriate time, outside of lesson time
- a well-structured 'buddy system' could help children accessing the base to feel better supported when accessing mainstream provision. For example, children in the base are paired up with a peer in their mainstream form class who acts as a familiar face when they are transitioning from the base to mainstream activities and classes
- welcome packs are produced for when children and young people access a base for the first time

Communication and engagement with families

- all parents, carers and children and young people receive information about the base, and its value for the whole school community is shared
- parents evenings are held at same time for children who access the base and peers in mainstream classes. Appointments might be longer or held in a different location (for example away from a busy hall)

High-quality curriculum design

Schools will need to consider what works in their context, however, these are examples of strategies schools may wish to consider:

- the curriculum in the base is part of wider subject short, medium and long-term plans
- teachers from the base and mainstream classes jointly design the curriculum to reduce barriers to learning and support all pupils in accessing the mainstream curriculum
- the curriculum timetable in the base follows the mainstream timetable as much as possible to facilitate reintegration
- keeping topics and foundational skills in the base and mainstream classes the same enables staff in the base class to provide intensive teaching and support around key vocabulary, using visual and object supports to reinforce this, which then supports children in the base to access and use this core vocabulary when they are in the mainstream class
- where the curriculum is adapted it retains links to the mainstream curriculum, adapted for pace and starting points
- expert and specialist advice is sought to adapt the curriculum
- regular curriculum reviews are carried out, including establishing what children and young people have engaged well with, and where the adaptation of the curriculum needs to be different
- strategies are used to support children and young people with hearing and/or visual impairments to access the curriculum - for example use of large print, high contrast materials, adopting total communication approaches

Effective data, assessment and outcomes

Schools will need to consider what works in their context, however, these are examples of strategies schools may wish to consider:

Individual children and young people

- progress is tracked digitally
- progress and next steps are presented to families in a clear, simple and regular format
- a single unified system records assessments in one document, which is used to demonstrate progress over time
- progress continues to be tracked for a period of time after children / young people are no longer accessing the base to make sure it's sustained
- preparation for adulthood and life skills outcomes are tracked

In the base

- 'you said / we did' is used alongside pupil voice to feedback how children and young people's views are taken into account
- duplicative systems are minimised where existing school systems can be used
- at least 3 different sources of quality assurance are sought each year, options might include:
    - review by responsible bodies e.g. academy trust or governing body
    - workforce self and peer evaluation
    - child, young person, and parent and carer voice
    - local authority review
    - review from peer schools, special schools or external specialists
- schools have a working relationship with a relevant local system leader to review practice
    - For example, a special school, health professional, alternative provision provider, or local authority
- reports to governors and trustees fully include the base. For example, a curriculum report on mathematics includes both mainstream provision and provision in the base