



## Dedicated Schools Grant 'Safety Valve' Agreement: Bexley

1. This agreement is between the Department for Education and the London Borough of Bexley, and covers the financial years from 2022-23 to 2028-29.
2. The authority undertakes to reach a positive in-year balance on its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) account by the end of 2027-28 and in each subsequent year. The authority undertakes to control and reduce the cumulative deficit as follows, not including any contribution made by the department through this agreement:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Forecast DSG Deficit Profile at year end<sup>1</sup></b> <b>£m</b>
<b>2022-23</b>	£19.2m
<b>2023-24</b>	£20.9m
<b>2024-25</b>	£24.7m
<b>2025-26</b>	£29.0m
<b>2026-27</b>	£31.8m
<b>2027-28</b>	£31.3m
<b>2028-29</b>	£29.9m

3. The authority agrees to implement the DSG management plan that it has set out. This includes action to:

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<sup>1</sup> This profile includes contributions that the council will make from its own resources to reduce the DSG deficit.

- 3.1. Expand special school provision for children and young people with severe learning difficulties, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, ensuring a local offer for Bexley learners so that fewer placements are required in out of borough independent specialist provision;
- 3.2. Seek to repatriate learners from independent special settings at key points of transition. This aims to return at least 16 learners per year to Bexley at a cost avoidance/saving of an average of £32,000 in high needs funding. This will also have an impact on Special Educational Needs (SEN) travel assistance costs;
- 3.3. Develop inclusive practice and knowledge in Bexley mainstream settings by delivering a new outreach programme from the special schools to enhance the offer in mainstream schools for children and young people with more complex needs;
- 3.4. Ensure local children with higher level of needs can access local provision/SEN places, by offering a broad range of provisions in the local offer that support parental choice, thus reducing the need for parents to seek costly out of borough provision;
- 3.5. Expand the work of the existing SEN strategic partners by recruiting a further role to this team. The team will work with partners on best practice models, ensuring that peer to peer learning and support is available for our settings, and enhancing inclusive practice;
- 3.6. Offer early intervention to children requiring SEN Support to reduce the need for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), including implementation of Early Talk Boost for 3 and 4-year-olds. Bexley will also create 4 full time specialist teaching assistant posts to support 80 children in both primary and secondary settings with SEMH needs, aiming to reduce the growth in numbers of EHCPs required for SEMH children by 48 in 6 years' time;

- 3.7. Expand Supported Internships through supporting 10 learners per year from September 2025.
4. The authority also agrees to ongoing monitoring of its performance in fulfilling this agreement. The authority will:
- 4.1. Report tri-annually (as a minimum) in writing to the Department (Funding Policy Unit) on its progress towards implementing the plan as per the conditions set out in paragraphs 2 and 3;
  - 4.2. The monitoring reports should include progress against the conditions of grant and a financial dashboard detailing various metrics relating to demand and cost. DfE will provide a template for this;
  - 4.3. Inform the Department (Funding Policy Unit) of any unforeseen difficulties or impacts of carrying out the agreement, or any significant risks to reaching the agreed financial position as soon as they arise;
  - 4.4. Meet with the Department at any time when the Department deems it necessary to discuss progress towards the agreement.
5. The Department agrees to pay to the authority an additional **£11.96 million** of DSG before the end of the financial year 2022-23. In subsequent financial years, subject to compliance with the conditions set out in paragraph 3, the Department will pay DSG sums as follows. This funding will be provided in instalments and subject to continued satisfactory progress. Subject to full compliance, Bexley should therefore eliminate their cumulative deficit no later than 2028-29.

<b>Year</b>	<b>The Department agrees to pay to the authority an additional £m of DSG by year end</b>
<b>2022-23</b>	£11.96m
<b>2023-24</b>	£2.56m
<b>2024-25</b>	£2.56m
<b>2025-26</b>	£2.56m

<b>2026-27</b>	£2.56m
<b>2027-28</b>	£2.56m
<b>2028-29</b>	£5.13m

6. The Department has also sent a commission relating to the authority's capital plans for the creation of new places for children and young people with SEND or those requiring Alternative Provision (AP). It is critical that the authority considers its revenue and capital plans holistically. The Department will assess and review proposals against set criteria which have been outlined in the commission. Subject to that assessment, the Department will consider making a capital contribution to these plans in 2023-24 as a top-up to the local authority's High Needs Provision Capital Allocation (HNPCA), which will be announced in spring. Progress against delivery of those capital plans should then be integrated into the tri-annual reporting to the Department as part of the monitoring of this agreement.
7. This agreement is subject to review at any time, for example as a result of the following events:
- 7.1. Higher or lower DSG formula funding levels for the authority in future financial years than those the authority has assumed;
  - 7.2. Significant changes to national SEND policy, which impact on elements of the plan;
  - 7.3. Insufficient progress being made towards the authority reaching and sustaining an in-year balance on its DSG account as set out in the plan;
  - 7.4. Whether Bexley is awarded additional capital funding support following the capital application process.

The review process will include an assessment of the impact of the change in circumstances.

On behalf of the London Borough of Bexley, signed by:

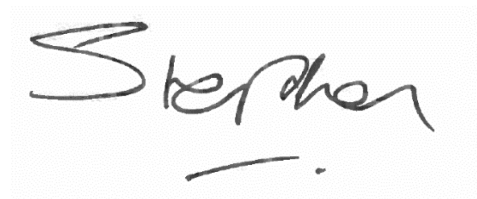
Jackie Belton - LA Chief Executive

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Paul Thorogood - Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer)

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Stephen Kitchman - Director of Children's Services

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On behalf of the Department for Education, signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Goldman', with a horizontal line underneath.

Tom Goldman – Deputy Director, Funding Policy Unit