



Dedicated Schools Grant ‘Safety Valve’ Agreement: Norfolk

This agreement is currently subject to review. Payments of grant have been suspended but will be made up if a revised agreement is reached. The total paid under the agreement in the financial year 2023-24 was £2m.

1. This agreement is between the Department for Education and Norfolk Council, 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:

Year	Maximum Forecast DSG Deficit Profile at Year End ¹ £m
2022-23	£73.6m
2023-24	£93.3m
2024-25	£108.2m
2025-26	£113.6m
2026-27	£108.4m
2027-28	£91.6m
2028-29	£70.0m

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

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

- 3.1 Develop further the culture and practice of mainstream school inclusion by improving the support offer to schools, enabling inclusion with enhanced inclusion support funding, and agreeing an Inclusion Charter with schools;
 - 3.2 Improve the systems and processes for annual reviews;
 - 3.3 Develop a more robust and inclusive communication strategy, targeting school leaders, key groups, and working closely with the children and young people Strategic Alliance, Norfolk Learning Board and Schools Forum;
 - 3.4 Develop the early help and inclusion agenda by establishing School & Community Teams and Zones to provide proactive early help to children and young people, families, and professionals;
 - 3.5 Implement a school-led Alternative Provision (AP) model as a strategy to prevent exclusions and the need for an education health and care plan (EHCP) or specialist placement. This new provision should support re-integration to mainstream as quickly as possible and be funded through reconfiguration of existing AP spend;
 - 3.6 Ensure that the needs of children and young people can be addressed earlier and more effectively, thereby leading to the 'stepping down' to special educational needs (SEN) support and 'stepping-back' from the over-reliance on the independent sector, by enabling local mainstream schools to support a greater complexity of need and increasing access to state-funded specialist provision;
 - 3.7 Revise the process for commissioning independent sector placements and review existing contracts;
 - 3.8 Revise the design of care packages in line with the local authority's (LA's) "Gloriously Ordinary Lives" approach, prioritising and investing in family, friends and community when building support;
 - 3.9 Implement Phase two of the LA's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Sufficiency Capital Programme, which centres around capacity in special schools and specialist resource bases and the construction of two new special schools.
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 £28.00 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, Norfolk should therefore eliminate their cumulative deficit no later than 2028-29.

Year	The Department agrees to pay to the authority an additional £m of DSG by year end
2022-23	£28.00m
2023-24	£6.00m
2024-25	£6.00m
2025-26	£6.00m
2026-27	£6.00m
2027-28	£6.00m
2028-29	£12.00m

6. This agreement is subject to review at any time, for example as a result of the following events:
- 6.1 Higher or lower DSG formula funding levels for the authority in future financial years than those the authority has assumed;
- 6.2 Significant changes to national SEND policy which impact on elements of the plan;

6.3 Insufficient progress being made towards the authority reaching and sustaining an in-year balance on its DSG account as set out in the plan;


6.4 Whether Norfolk is successful in its bid for two special free schools.

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

On behalf of Norfolk Council, signed by:



Tom McCabe – Head of Paid Service



Simon George - Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer)



Sara Tough - Director of Children's Services

On behalf of the Department for Education, signed by:



Tom Goldman – Deputy Director, Funding Policy Unit