

**School-based Nursery Capital Grant 2025 to 2026:   
local authority approval instructions and form**

The School-based Nursery (SBN) Capital Grant 2025 to 2026 provides up to £150,000 in capital funding to help schools create new or expand existing nursery provision.

As part of the application process, schools must:

* Download the local authority approval form
* Discuss the proposal with the local authority to confirm its suitability
* Share the form with the local authority for completion
* Once complete, upload the form on the online application service as part of the application

### **Responsibilities of the local authority**

The local authority must:

* Review the proposal in line with local priorities and statutory duties
* Complete and sign the form to confirm their support and send it back to the school
* Separately confirm their support as the relevant freehold landowner if appropriate
* Ensure the form is signed by both the Early Years Lead and the Pupil Place Planning Lead, or appropriate delegates if either is unavailable
* Return the completed form back to the school

Local authorities may impose conditions on a proposal relating to:

* The number of additional childcare places to be created
* The age range of the new childcare places to be created

These conditions must be clearly stated on the form. They will be considered alongside the application to ensure consistency and continued eligibility.

If a local authority does not support a proposed project, they should provide a written response to the applicant with a clear rationale as to why they are not supporting the project. Both the school and local authority should retain this as an audit trail to evidence the decision.

### **Review checklist**

Local authorities should use the following checklist when reviewing applications to determine whether to give their approval:

* Does the proposal align with the local authorities’ local early years strategies and priorities?
* Is there a plan or proposal setting out how the setting will provide EY provision to disadvantaged children? Proxies such as the 15-hour entitlements for 2,-3- and 4-year-olds, children eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium, children with SEND or looked after children could be used
* Is there clear evidence of unmet demand for nursery places in the area, having taken into account the state of local childcare and labour markets as well as additional evidence applicants may have collated?
* Consider future demand for childcare places taking into account planned housing development and demographic changes.
* Consider the quality (including Ofsted key judgements) and capacity of childcare providers and whether the new nursery will enhance the overall local offer without negatively impacting existing high-quality providers. We suggest that local authorities evaluate the quality and capacity of current childcare providers in the area and identify whether the proposed nursery will fill a genuine gap in provision or meet unmet demand
* If the proposal is utilising surplus space or taking school age capacity out of the school, does the proposal align with wider local authority strategies and need?

Local authorities should be aware that approving a school’s application may mean that they will need to support the school in any necessary Ofsted registration application.

Part B of the [Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance for local authorities](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-and-childcare--2/early-education-and-childcare-effective-from-1-april-2025#part-b-securing-sufficient-childcare) provides further details on what requirements and expectations are placed on local authorities in order to meet their statutory duties for the sufficiency of childcare places. This includes how local authorities should:

* Encourage providers to offer childcare from 8am to 6pm and during school holidays
* Aim to identify and remove barriers that prevent existing providers from expanding their provision and new providers entering the local childcare market if needed
* Encourage providers to take a sustainable business approach to planning and signpost providers to resources to support them, for example, [the business sustainability tool kit](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-business-sustainability)

### **Form approval and submission**

The form must be formally approved and signed by both the Early Years Lead and the Pupil Place Planning Lead within the local authority, confirming their formal approval of the application. In exceptional circumstances, if either of these individuals is unavailable, another appropriate colleague within the local authority may sign the form on their behalf.

Once completed, the local authority should return the signed form to the school. The school is then responsible for uploading the signed form to the online application service as part of their application.

By signing the form, the local authority confirms its formal approval of the proposal. The form should only be signed and returned to the school if the local authority supports the project. This is a mandatory requirement for the application to be considered eligible.

### **Further guidance**

Refer to the **‘Role of local authorities’** section in the [School-based Nursery Capital Grant 2025 – 2026](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-based-nursery-capital-grant-2025-to-2026) guidance for more information.

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### **Section 1 (for schools to complete)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| School name |  |
| URN |  |

### **Section 2 (for local authorities to complete)**

#### **Conditions** (if applicable)

**Age range of provision:**

|  |
| --- |
| [maximum 500 words] |

**Number of additional childcare places to be created** (state a minimum or maximum)

|  |
| --- |
| [maximum 500 words] |

#### **Other feedback** (if applicable)

This will not influence the assessment outcome or scoring of the application, as long as the project is delivered in line with the conditions detailed in the local authority approval form. However, it may inform the DfE’s approach to grant management.

|  |
| --- |
| [maximum 500 words] |

#### **Signatures**

By signing on this page, I confirm approval for this application to be submitted for the School-based Nursery Capital Grant 2025–2026.

To be signed by the Local Authority Early Years lead:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name |  |
| Signature |  |
| Date (dd/mm/yyyy) |  |
| Job title [if not EY lead] |  |

To be signed by the Local Authority Planning, Place and Provision lead:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name |  |
| Signature |  |
| Date (dd/mm/yyyy) |  |
| Job title [if not PPP lead] |  |

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