SEND Reform - a guide for Oxfordshire

Find out about changes and improvements planned for children, young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and their families in Oxfordshire.

Summer 2026

Oxfordshire SEND

SEND Reform - government initiative

Nationally, education is preparing for major reform following the publication of the Schools White Paper, *Every child achieving and thriving*, and the SEND consultation, *Putting children and young people first.*

Oxfordshire has written its own local SEND Reform plan following these publications. If approved by the Department for Education, the Council will receive a high needs stability grant which could cover up to 90 per cent of the dedicated schools grant deficit.

We will be holding a series of events to share our plans and discuss the changes set out in the National SEND Reform plan.

Look out for an invitation to find out more about SEND Reform and the changes planned for Oxfordshire.

What does it mean for me?

The government is planning changes to SEND education in England. The aim is for children and young people to get the right help earlier, wherever they learn. The changes are built on 5 guiding principles: Early, Local, Fair, Effective and Shared.

- Most support should happen through good teaching, early help and inclusive schools.
- Every child on the SEND register will have an Individual Support Plan, showing their needs and the help they should get day to day.
- Parents, carers and teachers would help create and review the plan.
- Children and young people who need additional help will be able to access three flexible layers of support – Targeted, Targeted Plus and Specialist – on top of the universal offer.
- Some children may get extra specialist help, such as speech and language therapy, educational psychology or occupational therapy. This may come from a new initiative called 'Experts at Hand'. These extra resources will improve support for SEND children and young people in mainstream settings and is backed by £1.8bn of funding nationally.
- A £200 million new training programme, will ensure that every teacher knows how to support every child in their classroom.

There are also plans for more staff training, more inclusion bases in mainstream schools, and more specialist places in nurseries, schools and colleges.

The government says no child should lose the support they need, and major EHCP changes will not start before September 2030.

We will continue to work with and listen to parents and carers as we develop our response in Oxfordshire.

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FAQs

What is SEND Reform?
SEND reform is a major overhaul of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities system in England, aimed at improving inclusion, early support, and outcomes for children and young people. It is happening partly in response to the increasing demand for services and support.

What will SEND Reform mean for me and my child/young person?
The aim is for children and young people to get the right help earlier, wherever they learn. Every child on the SEND Register will get an Individual Support Plan which will have been created with input from parents/carers, schools and the child/young person.

What is an Individual Support Plan (ISP)?
An ISP is a proposed plan setting out the day-to-day support a child receives in school or college. It is intended to be used for children receiving SEND support, whether or not they have an EHCP.

Will this make it harder to get support?
No. The intention is the opposite. The aim is that children can access support more quickly and more locally, without always needing to wait for needs to escalate before getting help.

Will my child still be able to get specialist support?
Yes. The reform plan includes specialist support, specialist provision, outreach from special schools, therapists and specialist professionals. The aim is to make specialist expertise more accessible and available earlier.

What will happen at school as a result of SEND Reform?
Schools act as "anchor institutions," co-ordinating support from health, social care, and local services, leading to faster access to professionals like educational psychologists and therapists where needed. Children with SEND will have an Individual Support Plan to support their daily needs.

What are 'Experts at Hand'?
'Experts at Hand' is a proposed team of education, health and care professionals working together to provide earlier, more joined-up support for children and young people with SEND. This includes professionals such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and specialist teachers.

Will waiting times improve?
A key aim of the reforms is to increase access to specialist expertise and earlier support through models such as 'Experts at Hand'. The intention is to improve access to help, although individual waiting times will depend on implementation and service capacity.

When will I see change happening?
Change will begin from summer 2026 as we implement the Oxfordshire SEND Reform plan. 'Experts at Hand' and Individual Support Plans will be rolled out throughout the next academic year. EHCPs will be in place until 2030.

Where can I find out more?
There are resources online, including the government's proposal Every child achieving and thriving - GOV.UK

You can also find more information on the Oxfordshire SEND Local Offer website - Oxfordshire SEND local offer | Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Parent Carers' website - Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum | SEND

Click on the image to have your say on the draft SEND Strategy

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