

THURROCK SCHOOLS FORUM REPORT

DATE: 18 June 2026
SUBJECT: Inclusive Early Years Fund 2026/27
REPORT OF: David May
THE REPORT IS: For Information

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The inclusive early years fund is being paid to eligible local authorities in England. The Secretary of State for Education attaches the following conditions to the grant payable, alongside guidance on how the inclusive early years fund should be managed by local authorities locally.
- 1.2 This report provides details of the grant methodology and indicative funding allocation for Thurrock in 2026/27.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 In February 2026, DfE announced the [inclusive mainstream fund](#), worth over £500 million per year. As part of this, the inclusive early years fund will provide £47 million of additional early years funding in 2026/27 to support the early years sector to become more inclusive of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- 2.2 This funding marks a first step towards a more coherent and inclusive early years SEND funding system. It is upfront funding intended to:
- help providers adopt setting-wide inclusive practices
 - reduce reliance on individual child-based funding applications
 - enable early intervention for children with SEND
- 2.3 In 2026/27, the inclusive early years fund complements existing funding such as special educational needs inclusion fund (SENIF), disability access funding (DAF), and high needs funding, while signalling the direction of future reform to create a simpler, more consistent approach to supporting inclusion across all early years providers.
- 2.4 Final allocations will be published in July 2026. There will not be any adjustment to the inclusive early years fund allocations. The calculations for these allocations will be as follows:
- the number of part-time equivalents (PTEs) taking up the 3 and 4-year-olds universal 15 hours entitlement as recorded on the January 2026 schools, early years and alternative provision censuses
 - multiplied by the local authority's PTE rate of £60.87.

- 2.5 DfE expects to pay the inclusive early years fund to local authorities in a single payment in July 2026, to cover the 2026/27 financial year.

3. LOCAL AUTHORITY DUTIES IN MAKING PAYMENTS

- 3.1 Local authorities should ensure providers receiving an allocation from the IEYF receive an amount that is substantial enough to effect meaningful change in inclusive practice at setting level.
- 3.2 The DfE recommend this is in the region of £1,000 per setting. This is to ensure providers receiving the grant have a sufficient level of funding to develop mainstream inclusive practice. As such, local authorities are not required to fund all providers in their area and could apply a minimum funding threshold to achieve meaningful allocations.
- 3.3 Local authorities should ensure that providers not receiving an inclusive early years fund allocation in 2026/27 are able to access support to adopt setting-wide inclusive practices. This should be a consideration when prioritising their existing SEND support including special education needs (SEN) inclusion funding, and other local authority support for providers.
- 3.4 The inclusive early years fund also provides funding for the 2027/28 and 2028/29 financial years. The approach to distributing this funding in future years will be confirmed alongside the annual early years funding formula.

4. DfE RECOMMENDED APPROACH FOR LOCAL DISTRIBUTION

- 4.1 The DfE recommends that local authorities take the following approach to allocating funding locally.
- Distribute the total allocation to providers based on a base rate, plus an additional needs factor, deprivation supplement.
 - Local authorities can determine their own weightings but may choose to replicate the national inclusive early years fund formula which is weighted 75% base rate and 25% additional needs factors.
 - Local authorities could implement a de minimis threshold by redistributing from allocations falling below the chosen threshold, to ensure all providers receiving the grant receive a meaningful amount.

For example, using the £1,000 de minimis, local authorities may choose to exclude providers whose initial calculated allocation would fall below £1,000 and redistributing that funding across the remaining providers.

- 4.2 The purpose of the minimum funding threshold would be to support value for money by avoiding small allocations that would be insufficient to support the development of mainstream inclusive practice.
- 4.3 Allocating funding based on 3 and 4-year-old universal hours PTEs because, as a universal offer, this represents a full cohort of children and there is an increased likelihood of identifiable SEND needs emerging at this age. However, while we recommend the funding is distributed based on 3 and 4-year-old universal entitlement PTE numbers, the funding is intended to help

providers adopt setting-wide inclusive practices and should be used to benefit children across the setting.

5. DISTRIBUTION TIMING

5.1 DfE expect local authorities to:

- communicate details of the local approach to distribution and indicative allocations to DfE and providers before the end of May 2026
- confirm allocations before the end of August 2026
- to pay providers before the end of September 2026, as a single lump-sum payment.

6. PERMITTED USE OF FUNDING – ELIGIBLE SPEND

6.1 The inclusive early years fund must be distributed to providers to help them become more inclusive of children with SEND. While the specific use of funding will vary between providers, it should support activities such as:

- strategic planning
- workforce development
- adaptations or resources to create an inclusive environment

7. ASSURANCE

7.1 Local authorities should ensure that providers are using the fund for its intended purpose and should expect early years providers to retain financial records (for example, a detailed spreadsheet or receipts if appropriate) showing how the funds have been spent. We expect local authorities to take a proportionate approach to oversight which may include:

- requesting a summary from providers of how they have used the funds
- using existing accountability mechanisms, such as review forms already used for SENIF applications
- sampling a range of provider types and sizes through existing engagement forums to understand the use of funding and any emerging trends

7.2 DfE will work with local authorities to understand how the inclusive early years fund has been spent and how it has supported improvements to mainstream inclusive practice. A short questionnaire will be issued by regional leads at the end of the 2026 to 2027 financial year.

7.3 The questionnaire will request high-level summaries from local authorities including:

- the approach taken to allocate funding, including average amounts per provider and the proportion of providers funded
- the typical ways in which providers have used the fund
- how the fund has contributed to mainstream inclusion in early years settings
- the mechanisms the local authority has used to ensure compliance.

7.4 Local authorities will be able to respond using evidence gathered through their existing monitoring processes. Full details will be confirmed in the additional guidance to be issued later in 2026.

7.5 Local authorities should also consider this funding stream as part of their local SEND reform plan.

8. THURROCK APPROACH

8.1 Thurrock has followed the DfE recommended approach for the distribution of funding to providers:

- A Base Rate equivalent to 75% of funding.
- An additional needs factor, using 3&4 year old deprivation, equivalent to 25% of funding.
- A de minimis threshold of £1,000.

8.2 The indicative funding allocation calculated is £167,271.

- Weighted Base Rate £125,453
- Weighted Additional Needs £41,818.
- Of the 145 providers who received funding in Spring 2026, the indicative allocations shows 65 Providers to receive funding with 80 Providers receiving no allocation as below the £1,000 threshold.

8.3 Appendix A shows the Providers indicative allocation for 2026/27.

8.4 The formula will be recalculated once the final allocation is confirmed. Providers will be notified in August 2026, and a one off payment will be made in September 2026.

9. REFERENCES TO OTHER KEY DOCUMENTS / PREVIOUS REPORTS

- [Inclusive early years fund for 2026 to 2027: conditions of grant and operational guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK](#)
- [Inclusive early years fund for 2026 to 2027: methodology.](#)

10. CONTACT DETAILS OF LEAD OFFICER / AUTHOR

If you have any queries or comments in advance of the Schools Forum meeting about this report, please contact.

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Indicative Inclusive Early Years Fund 2026/27				Appendix A
65 A de minimis threshold of £1,000 applied.		£125,453	£41,818	£167,271
No.	Provider	Weighted Base Rate	Additional Needs	Total
1	2 Little Birds Pre-School - 2062 - Day Nursery	£1,375	£153	£1,528
2	Abbots Hall Primary Academy School - 2187 - School Nursery	£1,805	£703	£2,508
3	Aveley Primary - Nursery Class - 1939 - School Nursery	£1,546	£205	£1,751
4	Belmont Castle Academy - Nursery Class - 678 - School Nursery	£3,517	£1,074	£4,592
5	Benyon Primary School - Nursery Class - 516 - School Nursery	£2,185	£1,282	£3,467
6	Bluebirds Day Nursery - 1235 - Day Nursery	£1,066	£236	£1,301
7	Bonnygate Primary School - Nursery Class - 517 - School Nursery	£1,599	£752	£2,350
8	Busy Bees Day Nursery at Chafford Hundred - 138 - Day Nursery	£2,544	£236	£2,780
9	Busy Bees Day Nursery at Chafford Hundred Station Side - 150 - Day Nurs	£1,919	£262	£2,180
10	Chadwell St Mary Day Nursery Ltd - 451 - Pre-School	£1,912	£873	£2,785
11	Chafford Hundred Preschool Playgroup - 136 - Pre-School	£1,894	£289	£2,183
12	Chafford Tots to Teens Childcare Services Ltd - 1664 - Pre-School	£1,337	£179	£1,516
13	Corringham Primary Preschool - 1758 - School Nursery	£1,659	£369	£2,028
14	Dilkes Academy - Nursery Class - 518 - School Nursery	£2,980	£803	£3,783
15	East Thurrock Kids Club - 394 - Day Nursery	£3,329	£365	£3,694
16	Explorers (Aveley) - 2147 - Day Nursery	£959	£132	£1,091
17	Fobbing Village Pre-school Limited - 2186 - Pre-School	£1,197	£28	£1,226
18	Goldcrest Day Nursery Ltd - 1428 - Day Nursery	£1,492	£104	£1,596
19	Graham James Primary Academy - Little J's Nursery - 1680 - Pre-School	£2,136	£217	£2,352
20	Harris Primary Academy Chafford Hundred - Nursery Class - 513 - School N	£2,558	£320	£2,879
21	Harris Primary Academy Mayflower - 1942 - School Nursery	£2,398	£236	£2,634
22	Headstart Day and Afterschool Care LTD - 420 - Day Nursery	£1,492	£603	£2,095
23	Headstart Nursery - 1752 - Day Nursery	£959	£518	£1,478
24	Headstart Pre school - 2144 - Pre-School	£1,013	£471	£1,484
25	Headstart PreSchool 1 - 2244 - Pre-School	£1,013	£818	£1,830
26	Helping Hands Day Nursery - 858 - Day Nursery	£746	£542	£1,288
27	Herringham Primary Academy - 1957 - Primary School	£2,132	£1,661	£3,793
28	Holy Cross Catholic Primary School - Nursery Class - 519 - School Nursery	£959	£351	£1,310
29	Horndon On The Hill C Of E Primary School - 1982 - School Nursery	£1,428	£226	£1,654
30	Kenningtons Primary Academy - Nursery Class - 515 - School Nursery	£1,573	£163	£1,736
31	Lansdowne Primary Academy - Nursery Class - 523 - School Nursery	£4,210	£3,657	£7,867
32	Little Angels Day Nursery - 1501 - Day Nursery	£3,731	£1,885	£5,615
33	Little Angels Day Nursery Til - 2154 - Day Nursery	£615	£468	£1,083
34	Little Bunnies Nursery - 2209 - Pre-School	£1,539	£302	£1,840
35	Little Chestnuts Preschool - 2050 - Pre-School	£2,742	£973	£3,715
36	Little Chestnuts Preschool Limited - 2258 - Pre-School	£1,332	£311	£1,643
37	Little Friends Pre-School - 2098 - Pre-School	£1,622	£198	£1,820
38	Little Roo's Pre-School 2 - 2137 - Pre-School	£2,577	£721	£3,298
39	Little Thurrock Primary School - Nursery Class - 1756 - School Nursery	£2,272	£104	£2,376
40	Little Treasures Nursery And Pre-School - 2023 - Day Nursery	£1,002	£249	£1,251
41	Monarchs Childcare Ltd (64) - 1786 - Day Nursery	£3,624	£1,319	£4,943
42	Pier Lodge Day Nursery - 1741 - Day Nursery	£5,189	£1,932	£7,120
43	Play 2 Learn Day Nursery - 462 - Day Nursery	£2,078	£391	£2,470
44	Playaway Pre-School - 2263 - Pre-School	£1,226	£330	£1,556
45	Purfleet Primary Academy - Nursery Class - 528 - School Nursery	£2,078	£1,206	£3,285
46	Quarry Hill Academy - Nursery Class - 1047 - School Nursery	£3,144	£328	£3,472
47	Quince Tree Day Nursery LTD - 235 - Day Nursery	£1,087	£549	£1,636
48	Rose Buddies Childcare Ltd - 2213 - Day Nursery	£1,652	£198	£1,850
49	Somers Heath Primary School - Nursery Class - 521 - School Nursery	£1,386	£648	£2,034
50	Sparkling Angels Day Nursery & Preschool - 1662 - Day Nursery	£1,287	£75	£1,362
51	St Mary's Catholic Primary School - Nursery Class - 526 - School Nursery	£1,599	£1,098	£2,697
52	St Marys Pre-School - 193 - Pre-School	£916	£353	£1,269
53	Stifford Clays - Nursery Class - 679 - School Nursery	£2,345	£662	£3,007
54	Surestart - Where Kids Come First - 398 - Day Nursery	£1,172	£686	£1,858
55	Thameside Primary School - Nursery Class - 504 - School Nursery	£1,919	£874	£2,793
56	The Gateway Primary Free School - 1965 - Primary School	£2,984	£2,330	£5,315
57	Thurrocks Little Learners - 2307 - Day Nursery	£746	£535	£1,281
58	Tilbury Pioneer Academy - Nursery Class - 524 - School Nursery	£2,868	£2,271	£5,139
59	Treasure Children Forever Pre-school - 357 - Pre-School	£3,187	£970	£4,157
60	Tudor Court Primary School - Nursery Class - 505 - School Nursery	£2,238	£141	£2,380
61	Warren Primary School - Nursery Class - 506 - School Nursery	£1,972	£0	£1,972
62	West Thurrock Academy - Nursery Class - 501 - School Nursery	£1,492	£330	£1,822
63	Willow Garden Day Nursery (WGDN) - 1083 - Day Nursery	£1,172	£0	£1,172
64	Woodlands Pre School & Nursery (Purfleet-on-Thames) - 1290 - Day Nurse	£1,754	£876	£2,630
65	Woodside Academy - Nursery Class - 514 - School Nursery	£1,972	£679	£2,650