

SEN Funding System

CONSULTATION ANALYSIS



Introduction

The consultation was designed to seek views from schools on changes to funding arrangements for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in all schools and academies in Kent. The changes proposed were designed to promote inclusive practice and incentivise a culture of local collective responsibility whereby children with SEN can be provided for and welcomed locally. Following a key decision in August 2024 to proceed with the Localities Model for mainstream schools, a review of Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) countywide and a review of special schools across the county, Kent County Council (KCC) launched the consultation for the following reasons:

- There is a need to move to a financially sustainable model to ensure that KCC can continue to provide a good quality education for all children with SEN
- There is a need to move from four different funding models to one model which encompasses the whole system for state funded mainstream schools, state funded mainstream schools with SRPs, and state funded special schools
- There is a need to give schools time to understand the model and the implications for their current provision and for future provision
- There is a need to bring equity to how KCC funds schools and to move away from the current individual 'claims based' system which is dependent on 'need type', diagnosis and relies on individual officer decisions

The consultation period ran from 19th November 2024 to 6th December 2024 and included a series of face to face, as well as virtual meetings.

The consultation was designed to seek the views of schools on the following points:

- The **principles** of a single funding system for the future
- The **formula** for how KCC will calculate the funding for the Communities of schools to implement the localities model for mainstream schools
- How funding is used to meet the needs of children who have significant needs in special schools, SRPs and mainstream schools
- How to support schools to **transition** from one model to another.

To support schools to make an informed response, the following documents were available as appendices:

- FAQ document which was collected during the Communities of schools' socialisation events in September 2024. Appendix 1.
- A PDF document which models the proposed funding for each Community of schools over the next three years. Appendix 2.
- A draft of specific allocation funding descriptors which KCC is proposing to use to assess the funding for schools to provide for needs of children with significant needs. Appendix 3.
- A document which outlines the most recent consultations which have taken place across the education sector, and which provide an evidence base for the proposals. Appendix 4.

All documentation can be found here: [SEN Element 3 Funding Consultation](#).

Contextual Analysis

The consultation period ran from 19th November 2024 to 6th December 2024 and included a series of face to face, as well as virtual meetings.

221 individual responses were received.

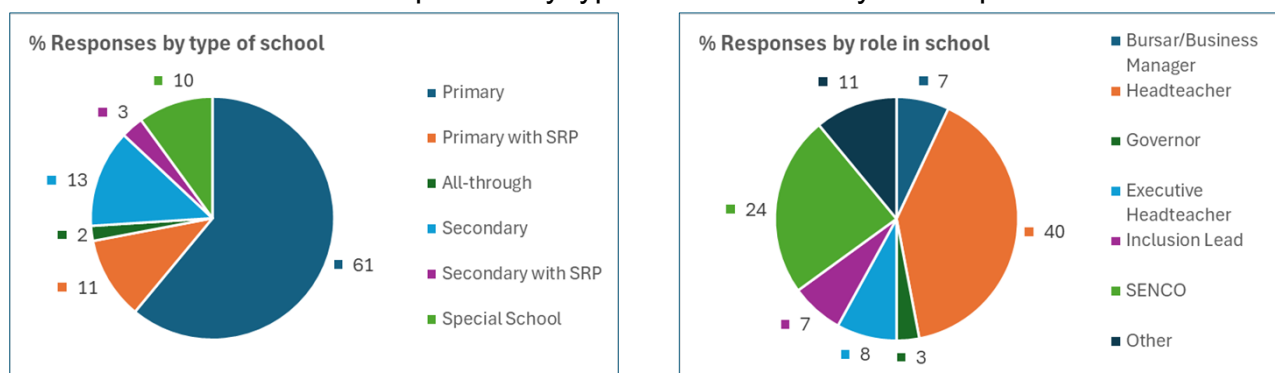
1 collective response from Diocese of Canterbury.

1 collective response received from Kent Association of Leaders in Education (KALE).

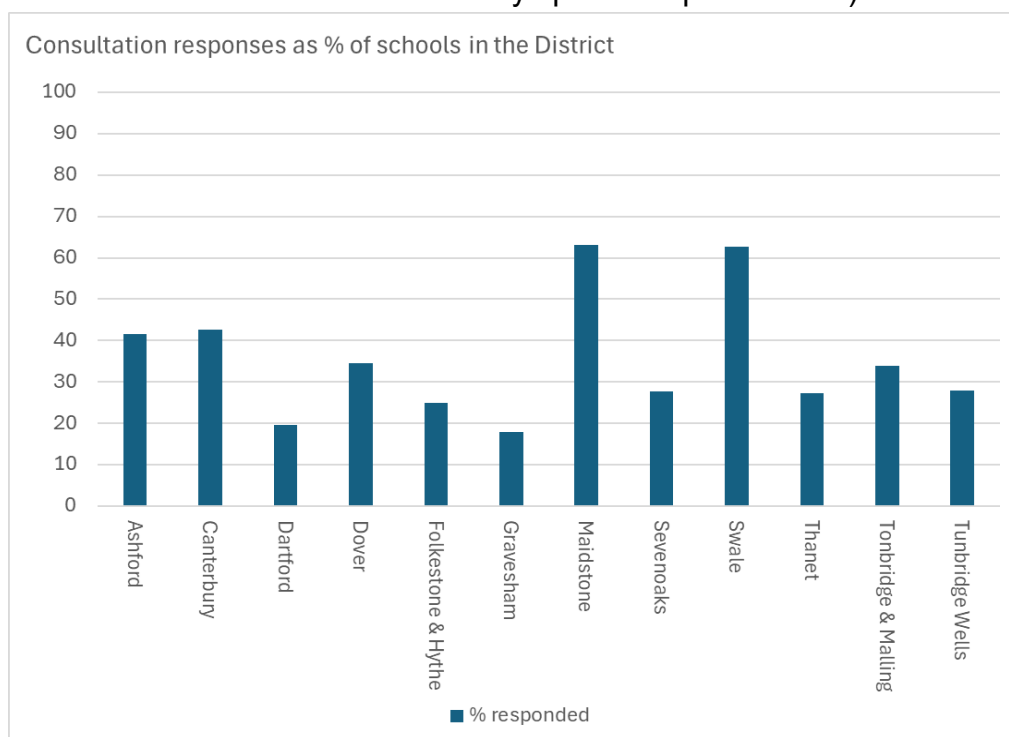
18 of the individual returns were responding on behalf of an Academy Trust (18 responses representing 57 schools in total), therefore the views received represent 260 individual settings in Kent.

This equates to a 44% response rate (260 settings out of a possible 593 settings¹)

The charts below show % responses by type of school and by the respondent's role in school.



The following graph shows the percentage of schools responding from each District in Kent, by consultation response numbers (this is based on the District selected by the respondent and will not include Trust schools where they span multiple Districts).



¹ [Facts-and-Figures-2024](#)

Qualitative Analysis

| Category / Question | Consultation comments / questions / concerns |
|--|---|
| Special school E3 Funding allocated by Specific Allocation | Agree in principle but want to see more about financial implications and the rates being proposed |
| | Queries as to the cost of large infrastructure items e.g. hydro pools |
| | Special school review did not specifically refer to funding so why is it being included in this? |
| | Special schools have greater economies of scale compared to other schools so would not need as much E3 funding. SRPs typically have less than 30 children so it is difficult to make a comparison |
| SRP E3 funding allocated by Specific Allocation | Concerns that this might be a greater administrative burden for schools |
| | If funding rates are too restrictive, is there a risk that it would discourage innovation and collaboration |
| | Funding rates need to ensure that parents have confidence in the system and not request special school or INMSS ² where it is not necessary |
| | SRPs should be funded on the number of places they provide. Funding would need to reflect the amount of staff training required |
| Specific Allocation Funding rates to be the same for mainstream, SRP, and special schools | Quality of EHCPs ³ needs to be addressed, especially around what is written in Section F |
| | SEN allowances for staff would be different in different settings |
| | Mainstream schools should have more money because SRP and special schools will have greater economies of scale and have better infrastructure and environment |
| | This could be an administrative burden |
| | This could encourage children being placed higher than necessary to attract more funding |
| | More special school and SRP places are required |
| | Proposal that schools should be allocated a proportion of the funding to provide accordingly |
| | Request that schools need to be able to make meaningful changes to Section F |
| | Funding rates need to be based on staffing costs rather than provision required |
| | Funding rates need to be based on the provision required |
| Funding descriptors | Too subjective and open to interpretation |
| | Proposed that the document should not reflect need types |
| | Should reflect age-appropriate development |
| | The statements are not funding descriptors as there is no funding attached |
| | Agreement in principle with the idea but concerned about how consistently the descriptors would be applied. Request that moderation is included |
| | Query about how the Communities of schools would determine the rate |
| Notional Budget guidance | Guidance is essential |
| | Needs to be transparency in calculation |
| | The guidance should not be treated as a shopping list for schools |

² Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS)

³ Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

| | |
|---|--|
| | Schools should not feel penalised if they cannot offer outreach |
| Proxy indicators for the Communities of schools' budget | General agreement with the idea of a formula to ensure consistency |
| | The suggested indicators oversimplify the issue |
| | Needs to include mobility, low prior attainment, and access to other services |
| | Should be needs led and should reflect no and % of SEN support and EHCPs |
| | The budget should be based on individual need in individual schools |
| | Budget should include a review of SEN registers, Mainstream Core Standards, and the SEN Information report |
| Use of historic allocation for the first 2 years of the model in the Communities of schools' budget | General comments that this could lead to underfunding so the length of time that historic allocation is used should be longer than two years |
| | Suggestion that the current notional budget formula should be used |
| Mainstream E3 funding for children with the most complex needs should be paid directly to the school | General agreement |
| | Concern raised that this could lead to a rise in EHCP numbers to attract funding |
| Cost of the Chair and administrator to be paid from the Communities budget | Disagreement with this proposal was qualified by the following: |
| | Schools should not have to bear the cost |
| | Need assurance on the quality assurance mechanism |
| | Should be a centralised team in KCC |
| | Diverts money away from schools |
| | Chairs may not have interest in or experience in SEN |
| | Not sure where else the money would come from |
| | Needs central moderation |
| | Agreement with the proposal was qualified by the following: |
| | The cost is relatively low for the importance of the role |
| | Cost could be borne from savings from INMSS over time |
| | A code of conduct, conflict of interest policy and a transparent complaints procedure needs to be in place |
| | LIFT ⁴ Executive demonstrates how collaborative working can be successful and the key principles should remain |
| | E3 mainstream SEN support to go into the Communities pot |
| Comments that targeted support could become diluted | |
| Drop in the birth rate is already causing problems for schools | |
| Comments that adult support in infant schools could be affected | |
| Flexibility could be reduced | |
| Possible staffing decisions would have to be made and a degree of protection for 2025-2026 was requested | |
| Suggestions of 75% protection were proposed £6k should be paid directly to schools | |
| E3 SEN support greater than £6k to have a greater degree of moderation | General agreement with the proposals but queries as to who was conducting the moderation |
| | Different opinions as to whether any moderation should be carried out by KCC officers or schools |
| | If KCC is assured that schools can make decisions, why is |
| ⁴ Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT) | |

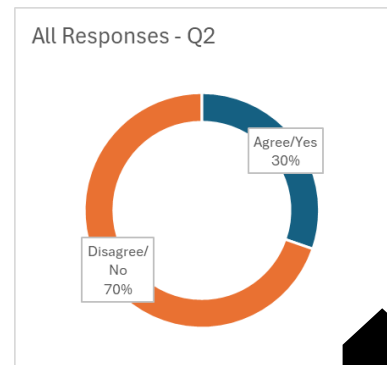
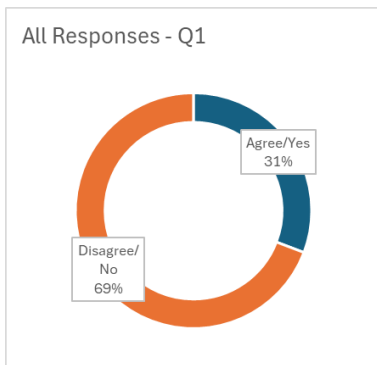
| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>further moderation required?</p> <p>Would the moderation and subsequent extra scrutiny lead to a delay in allocations?</p> <p>Comments about the quality of EHCPs and the statutory duty to fund Section F.</p> <p>Questions as to what the moderation would look like.</p> |
| E3 mainstream EHCP funding less than £6k to be included in the Communities pot | <p>General agreement in principle</p> <p>Wanted more clarity beyond March 2026</p> <p>Request that the timelines for mainstream should be the same as that proposed for SRP and Special schools</p> <p>Quality of EHCPs is important to be secure in the decision making</p> |
| New EHCPs agreed since Sept 2024 will go into the Communities pot | <p>This should be for EHCPs issued after Sept 2025 in line with other proposals</p> <p>Agreement that there needed to be timelines for implementation, but date needed to change</p> <p>This model would not fit the individualised needs in a small mainstream school</p> <p>There is a risk that children new into the system could be disadvantaged</p> <p>Children should be given a specific allocation regardless of when the EHCP is written</p> <p>Risk that the statutory requirements in Section F might not be funded so this should be centrally funded</p> <p>All new EHCPs in the system should be mapped onto the tariffs immediately</p> <p>This could lead to a rise in unnecessary EHCP requests</p> |
| Mainstream Specific Allocations and Communities budgets to be completely in operation by April 2026 | <p>Transition timeline should be the same as for SRPs and special schools which would give schools longer to prepare budgets and provision accordingly</p> <p>KCC's universal offer and professional support would need to be improved</p> <p>Must ensure that the timing of the rollout does not hinder the quality of provision in schools</p> <p>More information required regarding financial situation for individual schools</p> <p>Needs to be regular evaluation of systems and Value for Money as the model develops</p> <p>Request that the system changes completely from Sept 2025</p> <p>Careful planning, evaluation and implementation is required with milestones in place</p> <p>Risk of financial strain on schools and some disruption to the services provided</p> <p>Unintended consequences are unknown</p> |
| SRP E3 funding to be in place for Sept 2026 | <p>Agreement that SRP and special schools should have the same timescales</p> <p>The funding needs to reflect the financial challenges for each school</p> <p>Agreement with the proposals but want to see the financial implications</p> <p>Rates should be confirmed by Sept 2025</p> <p>Not enough time for SRPs to manage the change.</p> <p>Other LAs are moving away from this model</p> |
| Special School E3 funding to be | <p>Quality of Annual reviews need to be considered within this</p> |

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| in place for Sept 2026 | Should be a phased approach |
| | Need rates confirmed by Sept 2025 |
| | Who would fund any potential redundancies? |
| | Further engagement with stakeholders is necessary |
| | How would the average funding rate be calculated |
| | Could this lead to an increase in bureaucracy? |
| | An alternative proposal included funding rates to be agreed by Sept 2025, a 12-month transition period and financial support for redundancies |

Quantitative Analysis

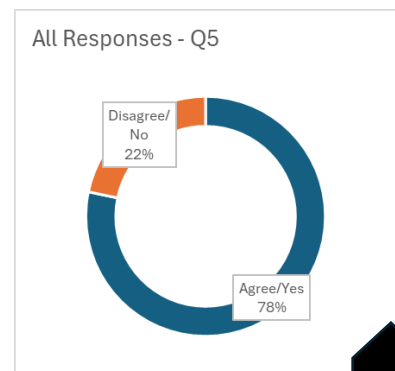
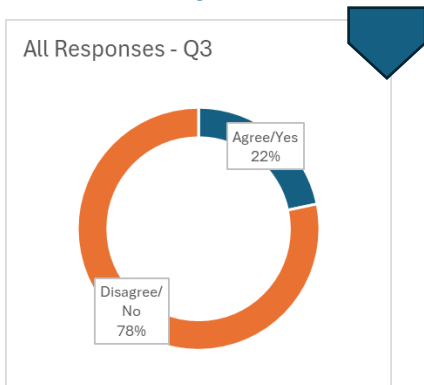
1. Do you agree / disagree with the proposal that special school E3 funding is allocated via Specific Allocation Funding?





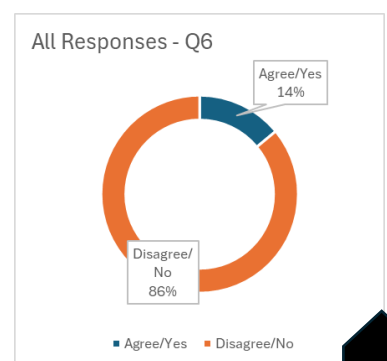
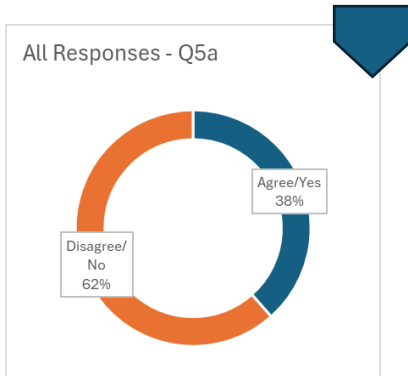
2. Do you agree / disagree with the proposal that SRP E3 funding is allocated via Specific Allocation Funding?

3. Do you agree / disagree with the proposal that Specific Allocation Funding rates are consistent, irrespective of where a pupil may be educated, whether in a mainstream, SRP, or special school?



5. Do you know about the ESFA's guidance on SEN Notional Budgets for mainstream schools?

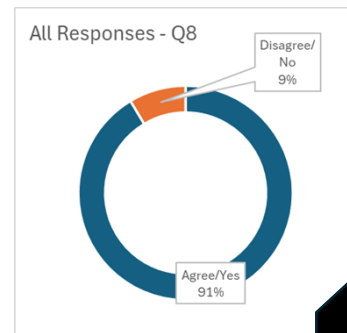
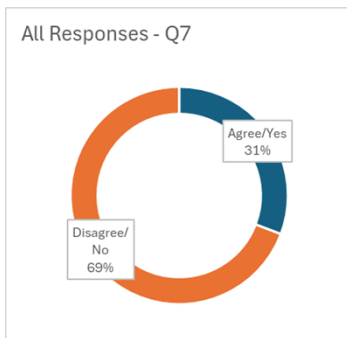
5a. Is there further guidance you feel is necessary on Notional Budgets for mainstream schools in Kent?



6. Do you agree / disagree with the proposal to use the proxy indicators of pupil numbers, IDACI and LAC to determine Community Budgets?

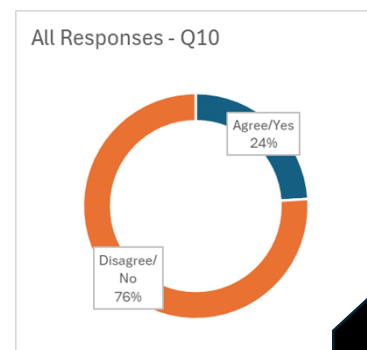
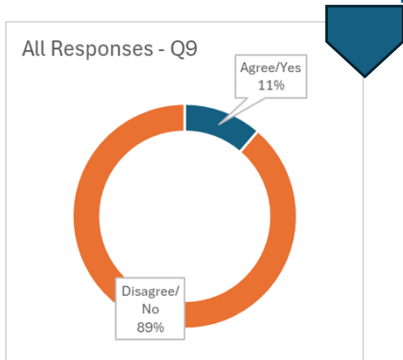
7. Do you agree / disagree with the proposal for the calculation of the Community Budget to recognise historic top-up allocation patterns in the first 2 years of implementing the model?





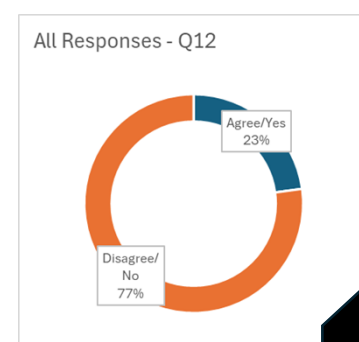
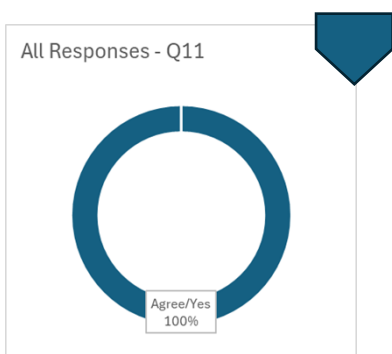
8. Do you agree / disagree with the proposal that mainstream schools E3 funding for children with significant needs is allocated directly to schools via Specific Allocation Funding rather than through the Community Budget?

9. Do you agree / disagree that the cost of the Chair and the Administrator should be top sliced from the Community Budget?



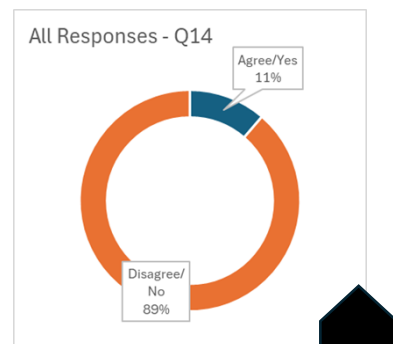
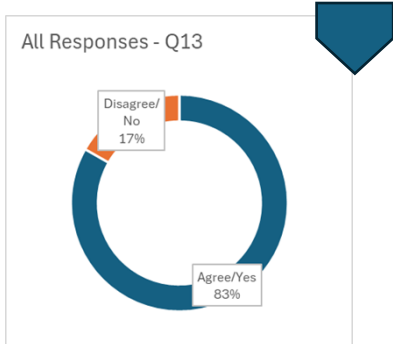
10. Do you agree / disagree that as part of the transition arrangements all E3 funding for mainstream pupils currently categorised SEN Support will form part of the Community Budget from September 2025?

11. Do you agree / disagree that as part of the transition arrangements all agreed allocations made by the Community of schools where either an individual child, or the average funding per child exceeds £6k should be open to further moderation by the Communities and KCC Officers?



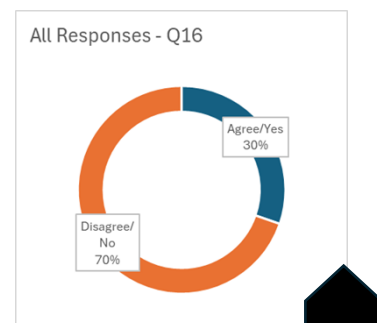
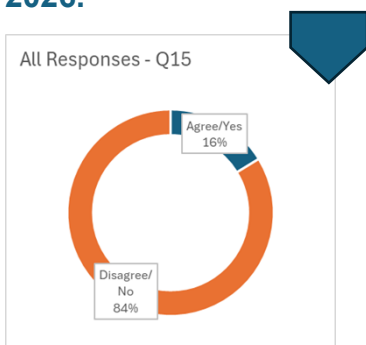
12. Do you agree / disagree, as part of the transition arrangements, all E3 funding for mainstream pupils, whose EHCP funding rate (as of August 24) is less than £6k (not including £6k notional spend) will form part of the Community Budget from September 2025?

13. Do you agree / disagree, as part of the transition arrangements, all E3 funding for mainstream pupils, whose EHCP funding rate (as of August 24) is above £6k (not including £6k notional spend) will continue to receive their agreed funding rate until March 2026 (with the expectation that from April 2026 they will be funded in accordance with their identified tariff funding stream)?



14. Do you agree / disagree, as part of the transition, all E3 funding for new mainstream EHCPs issued from September 2024 will form part of the Community Budget?

15. Do you agree / disagree: We aim to implement the proposed new funding model for mainstream pupils (Community Budgets and Specific Allocation Funding rates) from April 2026.



16. Do you agree / disagree with the proposal that there is no transition period for SRPs between the current and proposed new funding model for E3 funding (using tariff funding descriptors to determine standard funding rates), with the expectation the new model will go live from September 2026?

17. Do you agree / disagree with the proposal that there is no transition period for Special schools between the current and proposed new funding model for E3 funding (using the



tariff funding descriptors and standard funding rates to determine an average funding rate), with the expectation the new model will go live from September 2026?

