

School Places Commissioning Plan for Special Schools and Specialist Provision 2025/26 – 2027/28

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Glossary

Throughout this document, the following abbreviations will be used:

Bexley - When referring to “Bexley”, this document is referring to all education stakeholders within the London Borough of Bexley. These stakeholders include schools, Multi-Academy Trusts, the Strategic Education Partnership and the Local Authority of the London Borough of Bexley.

ASD – Autistic Spectrum Disorder

CofE – Church of England

CN – Complex Needs

EBSA – Emotionally Based School Avoidance

EHCP – Education Health and Care Plan

ESFA – Education, Skills and Funding Agency (part of the Department for Education)

EHE – Elective Home Educated

FSM – Free School Meals

HI – Hearing Impairment

MAT - This abbreviation will be used in place of “Multi-Academy Trust/s”

MLD – Moderate Learning Difficulties

NCY – National Curriculum Year

PAN – Pupil Admission Numbers

PD – Physical Disability

PRU – Pupil Referral Unit

RP – Resourced Provision

RP – Resourced Provision

SCAP – School Capacity Forecasts

SCN – Severe and Complex Needs

SEN – Special Educational Needs

SEP – Strategic Education Partnership in Bexley

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

SLCN – Speech, Language and Communication

VI – Visual Impairment

Section 1

Special Schools Executive Summary

- 1.1 Overview of this commissioning plan and governance
- 1.2 Overview of SEND in Bexley
 - 1.2.1 Number of pupils with SEND in all schools in Bexley
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 - 1.2.3 Number of pupils with EHCPs attending Bexley schools Versus non-Bexley schools
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- 1.4 Impact of 2014 SEN Reforms, including financial pressures and Local Area SEND Inspection

1.1 Overview of this commissioning plan and governance

As the local strategic commissioner of education, The London Borough of Bexley has the statutory duty responsibility to provide suitable Special Educational Needs provision for all Bexley pupils. Bexley have a golden thread that Bexley children should be educated within their local community, where appropriate.

This document has been produced in partnership by the School Places and Planning sub-group of the Strategic Education Partnership in the London Borough of Bexley. It aims to provide an overview of the current local picture of the current and future plans. It also aims to demonstrate the existing and forecasted pressures Bexley will experience with regards to SEN pupils in education and how Bexley can ensure they keep up our statutory duty of ensuring all of our children receive a good SEN education in the most suitable provision. Therefore, this document may be of interest to leaders and governors within local schools and Multi Academy Trusts.

There are multiple layers of governance surrounding this document, which includes sign-off by both the School Places and Planning sub-group and the Strategic Education Partnership Board prior to approval from the London Borough of Bexley.

Please note that throughout this document, Bexley refer to data from the SEN2 return to the Department for Education, the Spring School Census and live data provided by Power BI. The numbers for pupils with SEND are very slightly different across these data sets as they all track slightly different periods of time. The Spring School Census data was taken on Thursday 16th January 2025, with the SEN2 data showing data up to mid-January and the Power BI information was taken on 31st March to help provide the most up-to-date information for this commissioning plan.

Please also note that whilst Bexley acknowledges that Resourced Provisions are legally considered as Mainstream school places, they have been included in this plan to distinguish them from mainstream school place commissioning.

This plan will be reviewed again in June 2028, with a yearly interim report being provided as an appendix if required.

1.2 Overview of SEND in Bexley

As of 31st March 2025, 3366 EHCPs were held by Bexley residents aged between 0 and 25, 30% of which were held by female pupils and 70% were held by male pupils. As can be seen in the charts below, the highest proportion of EHCPs are held by children aged between 11 to 15 (35%) followed by those aged 5 to 10 (32%).

Overview of EHCPs by gender and age band
(data taken from Power BI report, 31st March 2025)

Cohort	EHCPs
All People	3366

Gender	Current	EHCPs Current % of Total
Female	1019	30%
Male	2347	70%

Age Band	Current	EHCPs Current % of Total
Under 5	20	1%
Age 5 to 10	1070	32%
Age 11 to 15	1182	35%
Age 16 to 19	799	24%
Age 20 to 25	293	9%
Age 25 +	2	0%

There are a range of schools in Bexley, including the following schools which are open as of the academic year 2024/2025 with their primary need designation:

Special school for Primary aged pupils

- Aspire Academy - Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Shenstone School Early Years (Reception to Year 4 at the Sidcup site) – Severe and/or complex learning difficulties
- Shenstone School (Years 2 to Year 6 at the Crayford site) - Severe and/or complex learning difficulties
- Woodside Academy – Autism

Special school for Secondary aged pupils

- Cleve Meadow – Moderate learning difficulties with associated additional needs
- Cornerstone School – Primary diagnosis of autism and associated additional needs
- Endeavour Academy - Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Marlborough School – Severe and complex learning difficulties
- Woodside Academy - Autism
- Shenstone School - Severe and/or complex learning difficulties

There are also independent schools and out-of-Bexley borough schools, details of which can be found on the Bexley Local Offer website. Bexley also have 14 Resourced Provisions (RPs) sitting within Mainstream schools, supporting pupils with a range of needs and this is looked at in more detail in section 4.

1.2.1 Number of pupils with SEND in all schools in Bexley

The data in the chart below shows the results of the Spring School Census 2025. Across all Bexley schools, from Nursery through to Year 14, there are 7394 pupils with SEND, 2244 pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans EHCPs, and 5150 pupils with SEN support.

School census data – Spring 2025

Pupils on roll across all schools in Bexley from Nursery through to Year 14



The breakdown for this data can be seen below:

Phase of education	% of total school population	Total numbers
Primary	55.28%	20876
Secondary	38.8%	14654
All-through	3.66%	1381
Special school	2.2%	829
Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	0.07%	2

School census data – Spring 2022

Pupils on roll across all schools in Bexley from Nursery through to Year 14



When this data is compared to the School Census taken in Spring 2022 there are significant changes with these numbers, with the headlines being:

- The number of pupils with SEND has increased by 1195 pupils (+19.27%)
- The number of pupils EHCPs has increased by 619 (+38%)
- The number of pupils with SEND Support has increased by 576 (+12.59%).

1.2.2 Number of pupils with SEND in Special Schools and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in Bexley

Bexley currently have 925 pupils on roll at Special Schools in Bexley from Reception through to Year 14. As can be seen on the data below, the highest SEN Primary Need is Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) with 57% of pupils having this as their Primary Need. This is followed by Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMh) and Speech and Language Disorder (SLD) both at 14%.

Bexley recognise that a PRU a specialist provision for pupils with SEND, this data has been included to ensure that no pupils are missing from data and also due to some of the pupils at the PRU potentially having special educational needs and disabilities, whether this is accompanied by an EHCP or not.

School census data – Spring 2025

Pupils on roll across all Special Schools (including the Pupil Referral Unit) in Bexley from Reception through to Year 14



School census data – Spring 2025

Pupils on roll across all Special Schools in Bexley from Reception through to Year 6 (Primary school age)



School census data – Spring 2025

Pupils on roll across all Special Schools in Bexley from Year 7 through to Year 14 (Secondary school age)



1.2.3 Number of pupils with EHCPs attending Bexley versus non-Bexley schools

Of the 3366 EHCPs maintained by Bexley, 2520 pupils (75%) attend a Bexley school or educational institution, with 846 (25%) attending a non-Bexley education institution. The reasons for needing to attend a school outside of Bexley are varied, from meeting the needs of the child, to the location of where the child is based, through to parental choice.

1.3 Growth in SEND need – National Vs Bexley

Since 2015, demand for EHC plans in England has increased by 140%, leading to 576,000 children with plans in 2024 across England. There has also been a 14% increase in the number of those with SEN support, to 1.14 million pupils in school. These changes are reflected in Bexley and have increased the cost of the SEN system.

The National Audit Report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), published in November 2024, indicates that although the Department for Education (DfE) has increased high-needs funding by 58% in real terms from 2014-15 to 2024-25, amounting to £10.7 billion. The system still does not deliver improved outcomes for children and young people. Additionally, it does not prevent local authorities from encountering significant financial risks.

According to DfE estimates, approximately 43% of local authorities are projected to have deficits either exceeding or closely matching their reserves by March 2026. This situation contributes to a cumulative deficit ranging between £4.3 billion and £4.9 billion when considering the end of accounting arrangements that currently prevent these deficits from affecting Local Authority reserves. Consequently, the existing system is neither achieving value for money nor proving sustainable.

The DfE “Consolidated annual report and accounts” for 23-24 further identifies SEND funding as a “Likely” and “Critical Risk” it states that *“there is a risk that local authorities’ financial challenges impede delivery of essential support services and reform activity across childcare; special educational needs and disability (SEND) and alternative provision (AP); and children’s social care (CSC) worsening outcomes for the most vulnerable and exacerbating cost pressures. This risk was escalated to top-tier in the year where it is now rated Critical – Likely”* Against this national background, it is increasingly important that Bexley have robust and up to date data to ensure that they are able to forecast growth and financial pressures accurately.

1.4 Impact of 2014 SEN Reforms, including financial pressures and Local Area SEND inspection

Bexley are a Safety Valve Programme council and the business cases and reports clearly describe the initiatives they are putting in place to address the issues they have with SEN funding. Rightly, the support for children and young adults with special and complex educational continues to be a key and urgent priority across the local area. The pressure on places within our special schools and resourced provisions remains despite Safety Valve initiatives and falling birth roll.

Our plans are predicated on the clear aim that children should be educated in Bexley whenever possible and to prevent children having to travel out of borough. Bexley have reviewed, and continue to review, the current provisions within our schools in the light of emerging data on future need and are making changes to reflect this.

1.5 Anticipated changes to SEND and Education Reform

As part of the Bexley Safety Valve programme, we have already started to anticipate the new government direction of travel regarding the provision of SEND provision in mainstream settings. In September 2025, we opened 120 specialist resourced provision places in the following schools. This is detailed in section 4 of this document.

The Government has announced that there will be a White Paper in early 2026 that will set out how the SEND system in England will be reformed. To date there has been very little details given on what changes the SEND reforms will bring other than the Five Principles that will underpin the reforms:-

1. Early.

Children should receive the support they need as soon as possible. Intervening upstream, including earlier in children's lives when this can have most impact, will start to break the cycle of needs going unmet and getting worse.

2. Local.

Children and young people with SEND should be able to learn at a school or college close to their home, alongside their peers, rather than travelling long distances from their family and community. Special schools should continue to play a vital role supporting those with the most complex needs.

3. Fair.

Each school education setting should be resourced and able to meet common and predictable needs, including as they change over time, without parents having to fight to get support for their children. Where specialist provision is needed for children and young people in mainstream, special or alternative provision, we will ensure it is there, with clear legal requirements and safeguards for children and parents.

4. Effective.

Reforms should be grounded in evidence, ensuring all education settings know where to go to find effective practice that has excellent long-term outcomes for children and young people.

5. Shared.

Education, health and care services should work in partnership with local government, families, teachers, experts and representative bodies to deliver better experiences and outcomes for all our children and young people.

We will be required to prepare a Local Area SEND Reform Plan after the White Paper is published and submit this plan for approval by the DfE. As the five principles align with the SEN School Place Planning Principles that Bexley has used to date and we are confident we are well prepared for the SEND Reforms.

Section 2

The Bexley context

- 2.1 The SEN needs of our children
 - 2.1.1 Number of children with EHCPs and SEN Support
 - 2.1.2 Primary needs of SEND pupils
 - 2.1.3 Capacity in our special schools
- 2.3 Projected growth in EHCPs being issued
- 2.4 Safety Valve
- 2.5 SEND and Preparing for Adulthood Strategy 2024-2028
- 2.6 SEND improvement work

Bexley is situated in the South East of London and covers an area of 23 square miles (6,400 hectares). Bexley borders the Thames to the north, the boroughs of Royal Greenwich to the west and Bromley to the south and the County of Kent to the east. The borough has one Strategic Town Centre Bexleyheath, and has four major district centres – Crayford, Erith, Sidcup and Welling.

Our Bexley Plan 2022 – 2026 discusses the following;

- Our Principles
- Our Values
- Our Mission and Priorities
- How Bexley will deliver their vision
- Action Plan

The provision of high-quality school places will support the development of a successful local economy and enhance Bexley as a place to live and work.

As at January 2025 Census 42,960 pupils are educated in Bexley schools including nursery classes, post-16 sixth forms, Special Schools and Pupil Referral Unit. These pupils are educated in 84 schools across Bexley, 63 of these educational institutions are part of a Multi Academy Trust, 7 are stand-alone academies, 12 are community schools and 4 are Voluntary Aided. There are also 402 private and voluntary early years' providers and accredited child-minders.

There are 7 primary and secondary special schools providing for children with a range of special educational needs in Bexley. There is a primary and secondary pupil referral unit, also comprising secondary alternative provision and the medical needs service. There are also 14 Resourced Provisions within our primary schools, 5 within our secondary schools, and 3 post-16. Details of these schools and provisions can be found further in section 2.2 of this document.

2.1 The SEN needs of our children

The data taken from the SEN2 data in January 2025 shows that Bexley maintained 3366 EHCPs. As can be seen in the tables below, there is a higher percentage of males with EHCPs when compared to females and the majority of the EHCPs are held with pupils aged between 5 and 15. The highest prevalence of need is ASD (36%) and SLCN (29%).

Cohort	EHCPs
All People	3366

Gender	Current	EHCPs Current % of Total
Female	1019	30%
Male	2347	70%

Age Band	Current	EHCPs Current % of Total
Under 5	20	1%
Age 5 to 10	1070	32%
Age 11 to 15	1182	35%
Age 16 to 19	799	24%
Age 20 to 25	293	9%
Age 25 +	2	0%
	3366	

EHCPs by year group

(data taken from SEN2 report, February 2025)

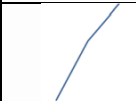


Year Group	Current	EHCPs Current % of Total	Year Group	Current	EHCPs Current % of Total
Nursery 1	4	0%	Year 13	175	5%
Nursery 2	45	1%	Year 14	165	5%
Reception	135	4%	Year 15	107	3%
Year 1	188	6%	Year 16	62	2%
Year 2	190	6%	Year 17	31	1%
Year 3	181	5%	Year 18	23	1%
Year 4	195	6%	Year 19	7	0%
Year 5	212	6%	Year 20	7	0%
Year 6	241	7%			
Year 7	261	8%			
Year 8	232	7%			
Year 9	229	7%			
Year 10	243	7%			
Year 11	219	7%			
Year 12	212	6%			

2.1.1 Numbers of children with EHCPs and SEN Support

There are currently 3267 (Spring School Census) children and young people aged 0-25 who have education, health and care plan maintained by Bexley London Borough (*please note that this number is 3366 according to the Power BI data, which was taken after Spring Census, but the information below reflects the changes within the school census*). The data from the Spring School Census 2025 also indicates that across all Bexley schools, from Nursery through to Year 14, there are 7394 pupils with SEND, 2244 pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans EHCPs and 5150 pupils with SEN support.

The SEN2 data shows that this grew by 6.2% (192) between January 2023 (3075 EHCP's) and January 2025 (3267 EHCP's). This is significantly lower than the national growth rate of 11.4% over the calendar year indicating that Bexley have accurate thresholds for agreeing to issue EHCP's and a good SEN Support offer for children in schools.

Please note that 450 plans were closed during the year (compared to 181 in prior year) following a data cleansing exercise in Summer 2024, causing an artificially small increase in plans (increase of 6.2% between 2024 and 2025 compared to increase of 11.3% between 2023 and 2024). The average percentage increase in EHCPs over the past three years is 10%.

	Bexley 2023	Bexley 2024	Bexley 2025	% change 2024-2025	Bexley trend
Number of open plans on census date *	2764	3075	3267	+ 6.2%	
Number of open plans with primary need ASD	38%	39%	36%	- 3%	
Number of open plans with primary need Speech Language and Communication	25%	27%	29%	+ 2%	

2.1.2 Primary Needs of SEND pupils

The Primary Needs of pupils with EHCPs in Bexley are predominantly Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) accounting for 36% of EHCPs, followed by Speech, Language and Communication which accounts for 29% of EHCPs.

EHCPs by Primary Need

(data taken from SEN2 report, February 2025)

Primary Need	Current	EHCPs Current % of Total
Other	74	2%
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	1225	36%
Hearing Impairment	49	1%
Moderate Learning Difficulty	172	5%
Multi-Sensory Impairment	2	0%
Other Difficulty/Disability	16	0%
Physical Disability	110	3%
Profound & Multiple Learn Difficulty	19	1%
Severe Learning Difficulty	159	5%
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	477	14%
Specific Learning Difficulties	74	2%
Speech, Language or Communication Needs	961	29%
Vision Impairment	28	1%

2.2 Current Capacity

Bexley currently has 878 commissioned places within special schools, alongside 288 places in Resourced Provisions. As can be seen from earlier in the document, Bexley are experiencing a growth in the number of EHCPs of approximately 10% year-on-year and this is being reflected in the number of places being taken up across all provisions.

The PANs of each special school are not being shared in this document as admissions to Special Schools are flexible and are dynamic to meet the needs of pupils moving in and out of the borough, along with reflecting spaces made available by pupils moving out of the Special School at the end of key phases of education.

There is a high percentage of places being taken up in the Special Schools in Bexley and frequently changes due to the issues mentioned above, so it is not appropriate to include the number of spaces available in each school in this commissioning plan.

2.2.1 Capacity in Special Schools

Bexley also currently have 878 commissioned places across all three phases of education with 833 commissioned places within a primary School, 75 within a secondary school and 4 within a post-16 setting.

There are currently 7 special schools in Bexley, including 2 all-through, 1 primary and 4 secondary, providing for children with a range of special educational needs in Bexley. There is a primary and secondary pupil referral unit, also comprising secondary alternative provision and the medical needs service. Whilst Bexley recognise that Pupil Referral Units are not legally special schools, nor are they generally most appropriate for pupils with EHCPs, Bexley found it helpful to include these numbers in our data to ensure no pupils are missing from data. There are also 14 Resourced Provisions within our primary schools, 5 within our secondary schools, and 3 post-16.

Special Schools in Bexley and the number of commissioning places for 2024-2025 and changes for 2025-2026

Special Schools (pre-16)	Primary Needs Designation	Commissioned places 2024-2025	Commissioned places 2025-2026
Cornerstone	ASD and associated needs	90	90
Aspire	SEMH	64	64
Cleeve Meadows	MLD with associated needs	120	120
Endeavour	SEMH	96	96
Marlborough	SCN	55	55
Shenstone	SCN	165	165
Shenstone (Secondary)	SCN	50	75
Woodside)	ASD	193	193
Pre-16 sub-total		833	858
Special Schools (Post-16)			
Cleeve Meadow	MLD	0	20
Marlborough	SCN	30	30
Woodside	ASD	15	15
Post-16 sub-total		45	65
Special Schools total		878	923

2.2.2 Capacity in Resourced Provisions

Bexley currently have 288 commissioned places across all three phases of education with 209 commissioned places within a primary School, 75 within a secondary school and 4 within a post-16 setting. These are the current schools with RPS, alongside their number of commissioned places and their primary need designation:

Primary Resourced Provisions 2024-2025

Resource Provision Settings	Primary Need	Commissioned Places 2024-25
Barrington Primary School	SLCN	10
Belmont Primary School	PD and VI	12
Crook Log Primary School	ASD	6
Haberdashers' Crayford Primary	ASD	12
Hillsgrove Primary School	ASD	8
Hook Lane Primary School	ASD	14
Mayplace Primary School	ASD	15
Old Bexley CE Primary School	ASD	8
Parkway Primary School	PMLD + MLD	70
Pelham Primary School	HI	14
Royal Park Primary School	PD and ASD	16
Sherwood Park Primary School	ASD	8
St Paul's (Slade Green) Primary School	ASD/SLCN	8
Upton Primary School	ASD	8
Primary sub-total		209

Secondary Resourced Provisions 2024-2025

Resource Provision Settings	Primary Need	Commissioned Places 2024-25
Blackfen School for Girls	Mixed	25
Cleeve Park School	PD	2
St Columba's, including CNPU	SLCN + CN (complex Needs)	30
Trinity School, Belvedere	ASD	10
Welling School	ASD	8
Secondary sub-total		75

Post-16 Resourced Provisions

Resource Provision Settings	Primary Need	Commissioned Places 2024-25
Cleeve Park School	PD	2
Trinity School, Belvedere	ASD	2
Post-16 sub-total		4

Resourced Provision Total (for 2024-2025) = 188

Whilst there are some places available in some of the RPs in Bexley, it was also recognised that increasing the number of places in Resourced Provisions would help to support two emerging issues – a surplus amount of spaces in schools (particularly primary schools) due to reducing rolls and also an increased demand for places in Resourced Provisions.

2.3 Projected growth in EHCPs being issued

Within Bexley, there has been a lot of investment over the last 10 years to provide additional specialist places through the building and opening of 2 special free schools and expanding a further special school from a primary into an all-through school. This growth has enabled us to meet demand and the next phase of specialist growth is based around expanding places within our schools. This work very much links to that of the Safety Valve programme (see section 2.4) and our ambition that every child and young adult should be educated locally where appropriate. During 2024/2025 Bexley opened a new 30-place provision at Parkway Primary School and also asked every one of the schools in Bexley to express an interest in opening or expanding a Resourced Provision within their setting. There has also been a piece of work around increasing the numbers of places available in RPs, which is discussed more in Section 4 of this plan.

Working on the basis of an approximate 10% increase year-on-year of EHCPs, the following estimates on the number of EHCPs likely to be issued over the coming years:

Year	Estimated number of EHCPs being issued
September 2026	3703
September 2027	4073
September 2028	4481

Bexley are seeing growth in some areas of primary needs more than others, which can be seen in this diagram, showing the percentage change of primary need issued with EHCPs:

EHCPs issued by Primary Need (the percentage change indicates year-on-year change)

(data taken from Census data, January 2025)

EHCPs Issued by Primary Need			
Primary Need	Issued	Previous	YoY Var
	4		YoY var (+4 +100%)
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	171	161	YoY var (+10 +6%)
Hearing Impairment	4	5	YoY var (-1 -25%)
Moderate Learning Difficulty	10	19	YoY var (-9 -90%)
Multi-Sensory Impairment	1	1	YoY var (0 0%)
Other Difficulty/Disability	2	5	YoY var (-3 -150%)
Physical Disability	1	8	YoY var (-7 -700%)
Profound & Multiple Learn Diff		5	
Severe Learning Difficulty	5	16	YoY var (-11 -220%)
Soc, Em and Ment Health	134	81	YoY var (+53 +40%)
Specific Learning Difficulties	14	18	YoY var (-4 -29%)
Speech,Lang or Comm Needs	214	167	YoY var (+47 +22%)
Vision Impairment	4		YoY var (+4 +100%)

This data suggests that the increase in SEMH and SLCN will impact upon numbers of places required in both special schools and RPs, however it should also be noted that the impact of the work of the Safety Valve (along with other projects in Bexley, such as Talk Matters) are not yet being seen in these numbers. There has also been an increase in the number of pupils declaring EHE, often due to Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) which is likely to impact on the number of pupils attending schools with these needs as parents have the right to declare Elective Home Education, even if a child has an EHCP and not under a Child Protection Order.

These factors may also impact school places for Special Schools and RPs will form part of the work of the School Places and Planning sub-group of the Strategic Education Partnership to help ensure that the needs and demands are reflected wherever possible.

2.4 Safety Valve

The DfE invited Bexley to take part in the 'Safety Valve' intervention programme in 2022. In March 2023 [Bexley's Safety Valve Agreement](#) was published citing DfE funding of £29.9m, subject to satisfactory compliance with the agreed plan.

The plan includes £7.2m of new investment towards implementation of interventions, which will have the dual benefit of improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and helping to bring the high needs budget to a more sustainable financial position.

In May 2023 Bexley's application for £9.5m High Needs Capital, aligned with the Safety Valve Programme, was also approved by the DfE.

[Read the full March 2023 announcement on the Bexley Local Offer website](#)

Bexley's Safety Valve Interventions

As part of the Local Authority's Safety Valve Agreement, they must deliver the following proposals and interventions:

Expand special school provision for children and young people with severe learning difficulties, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, ensuring a local offer for Bexley learners so that fewer placements are required in out of borough independent specialist provision.

Seek to repatriate learners from independent special settings at key points of transition.

Develop inclusive practice and knowledge in Bexley mainstream settings by delivering a new outreach programme from the special schools to enhance the offer in mainstream schools for children and young people with more complex needs.

Ensure local children with higher level of needs can access local provision/SEN places, by offering a broad range of provisions in the local offer that support parental choice, thus reducing the need for parents to seek costly out of borough provision.

Expand the work of the existing SEN strategic partners by recruiting a further role to this team. The team will work with partners on best practice models, ensuring that peer to peer learning and support is available for our settings, and enhancing inclusive practice.

Offer early intervention to children requiring SEN Support, for children in pre-school, primary and secondary settings, to reduce the need for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Expand Supported Internships through supporting 10 learners per year from September 2025.

More information about Safety Valve can be accessed via the Bexley Local Offer website:

<https://www.bexleylocaloffer.uk/Page/37488>

2.5 SEND and Preparing for Adulthood Strategy 2024-2028

The “SEND and Preparing for Adulthood Strategy 2024-2028” applies to all children and young people with SEND aged 0 to 25 who receive SEN Support or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), including their families and carers, and/or are aged 18-25 with eligible health, care and support needs under the Care Act 2014.

This strategy sets out our vision and priorities for working with our children and young people with SEND, and their families, to build the future they deserve.

This is a joint strategy bringing together the support provided by health, social care and education, and all the partners across the Local Area who collectively support our children and young people with SEND.

In addition to learning from our recent inspection, Bexley have focused on listening to our children, young people and their families to build on our understanding of what they need and how Bexley can provide this to them; and throughout the life of this strategy Bexley will continue to listen and learn, working with them to inform our services over the next four years. This strategy sets out the vision for children and young people who have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and their families in Bexley, and how Bexley will work together to support them as they grow and develop into adulthood.

This strategy has been produced in consultation with children, young people and their families, and involves all partners in Bexley who have a responsibility for commissioning and providing services for children and young people with SEND, including Local Authority services, health providers, education settings and the voluntary and community sector.

Delivery of this strategy is set within the context of the SEND Code of Practice 2014, the Department for Education’s (DfE) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan: Right Support, Right Place, Right Time (published in March 2023), our [Local Area SEND Priority Action Plan](#) for improvements following the 2023 Ofsted/CQC inspection, and as part of our Designated Schools Grant [Safety Valve Agreement](#) with the Government.

Bexley are putting in place a range of approaches to service delivery over the next five years, that will ensure Bexley have a sustainable local SEND System in Bexley. This strategy aligns with the national and local SEND context Bexley are working within, as well as other local strategies as they are developed and refreshed, including the Council’s corporate plan ‘Making Bexley Even Better’, the Autism Strategy, our Children’s Social Care Vision and priority framework, and the Adults Social Care Vision.

More information about SEND and Preparing for Adulthood strategy can be accessed via the Bexley Local Offer website: <https://bexleylocaloffer.uk/Services/2368>

2.6 SEND improvement work

The London Borough of Bexley and the NHS South East London Integrated Care Board published the SEND local area partnership priority action plan on the 23rd of April 2024. The plan outlines the actions Bexley will take to make the required improvements in response to Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission’s Inspection report. The partnership will continue to work with the Department for Education and NHS England on prioritising actions to secure immediate improvement for children and young people with SEND.

The Bexley SEND Improvement Plan (Priority Action Plan) sets out what will be achieved across three priority action areas:

- Preparing young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities for Adulthood
- Ensuring all of the Education, Health and Care Plans Bexley issue are of good quality and ensuring they are reviewed and amended, if required, in a timely way
- Reviewing the joint commissioning arrangements Bexley have for Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy to ensure that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities have access to the therapy they have been assessed as needing.

The Local Area SEND Partnership is committed to meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and believes the plan Bexley have in place will achieve the improvements required.

Updates to the project include:



SEND Improvements Update October 2024

You Said	We did	How will you know?
"It is difficult to contact my SEN Case Officer"	<p>We have increased the number of SEN Case Officers in the SEN Team so that each SEN Case Officer is allocated less casework and will be able to respond to telephone calls and emails in a timely way.</p> <p>We have added the contact details of the SEN Case Officers and their Support Officers to The Local Offer here Bexley SEN Statutory Assessment Service - Contact details for SEN Case Officers and SEN Management/Administration Bexley Local Offer</p>	Your allocated SEN Case Officer and their Support Officers will respond to your emails and telephone calls more promptly.
"The waiting list for an ASD assessment is too long"	We have increased the number of ASD Assessments we can complete by asking Helios to complete some for us.	The time your child is waiting for an ASD assessment is now shorter.
"Some children and young people's Education, Health and Care plans are not being reviewed annually."	We have reviewed the way we track annual reviews and recruited two officers to oversee the annual review process	Your child/young person's Education, Health and Care Plan will be reviewed annually and any amendments required will be completed promptly and communicated to you.

#MakingBexleyEvenBetter

The full Priority Action Plan can be found via the Bexley Local Offer website:

<https://www.bexleylocaloffer.uk/Services/7048>

Section 3

Special Schools

- 3.1 The role of the Local Authority
- 3.2 Current numbers of pupils on roll in our special schools
- 3.3 Demand for places and EHCP assessment requests
- 3.4 Implications on Funding

3.1 The role of the Local Authority

The Local Authority has statutory duties including that children and young people with identified special educational needs (SEN) are assessed via the statutory assessment framework and if deemed necessary, issued with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan to meet assessed needs and to ensure appropriate special educational provision is secured.

The SEN Team in London Borough of Bexley is responsible for the co-ordination of education, health and care needs assessment and the annual review of each child and young person Education, Health and Care Plan. Following the Children and Families Act 2014, there have been significant increases in the number of children identified as having SEN, particularly those with education, health and care (EHC) plans specifying a need for support in more expensive settings.

Since 2015, demand for EHC plans has increased 140%, leading to 576,000 children with plans in 2024 across England. There has also been a 14% increase in the number of those with SEN support, to 1.14 million pupils in school. These changes are reflected in Bexley and have increased the cost of the SEN system.

The National Audit Report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), published in November 2024, indicates that although the Department for Education (DfE) has increased high-needs funding by 58% in real terms from 2014-15 to 2024-25, amounting to £10.7 billion, the system still does not deliver improved outcomes for children and young people. Additionally, it does not prevent local authorities from encountering significant financial risks.

According to DfE estimates, approximately 43% of local authorities are projected to have deficits either exceeding or closely matching their reserves by March 2026. This situation contributes to a cumulative deficit ranging between £4.3 billion and £4.9 billion when considering the end of accounting arrangements that currently prevent these deficits from affecting Local Authority reserves. Consequently, the existing system is neither achieving value for money nor proving sustainable.

In response to this, Bexley began to look at how to best support the needs of the pupils and schools and details about this were shared in the Commissioning Plan from 2021-2023. This document outlines the plan to increase capacity in special schools through the expansion of existing special schools, such as Shenstone, whilst also building or expanding new special schools, such as Marlborough, Cleeve Meadow and Cornerstone, to help meet the demand. These developments have meant that there has already been an increase in capacity to reflect the increasing demand.

In addition to the development of special schools, there has also been a large piece of work around the expansion of Resourced Provisions in Bexley. This is looked at further in section 4 of this document.

3.2 Current numbers of pupils on roll in our special schools

School census data – Spring 2025

Pupils on roll across all Special Schools in Bexley from Reception through to Year 14



Bexley currently have 833 pupils attending one of our pre-16 special schools, with 45 pupils attending a post-16 special school or setting, totalling 878 pupils. This differs from the data provided in the census data above as pupils attending a Bexley special school may have their EHCP maintained by a Local Authority other than Bexley. Likewise, Bexley have pupils who have their EHCPs maintained by Bexley but attend schools not identified on the list below.

Special Schools		2024-2025 Commissioned places	2024-2025 Number of pupils on roll	2025-2026 provisional
Cornerstone	Pre-16	90	99	90
Aspire	Pre-16	64	64	64
Cleeve Meadows	Pre-16	120	138	120
Endeavour	Pre-16	96	95	96
Marlborough	Pre-16	55	88	55
Shenstone	Pre-16	165	163	165
Shenstone (secondary)	Pre-16	50	46	75
Woodside	Pre-16	193 93 – prim 114 – sec	207 93 – primary 114 – secondary	193 93 – prim 114 – sec
Pre-16 sub-total		833		858

Special Schools		2024-2025 Commissioned places	2024-2025 Number of pupils on roll	2025-2026 provisional
Cleeve Meadow	Post-16	0	17	20
Marlborough	Post-16	30	41	30
Woodside	Post-16	15	13	15
Post-16 sub-total		45		65
Special Schools Grand Total		878		923

3.3 Demand for places

The demand for special school places and specialist provision has risen over the last few years. Bexley has seen an increase of 124 EHCPs issued between 2023 and the end of 2024 and this picture of increasing number of EHCPs being issued continues into 2025 so far.

EHCPs issued

Month	2023	2024	2025
Jan	14	27	64
Feb	16	39	41
Mar	36	32	42
Apr	37	57	45
May	30	48	43
Jun	47	64	49
Jul	39	56	
Aug	34	51	
Sep	39	47	
Oct	34	36	
Nov	51	35	
Dec	38	46	
	2438	2562	284

Bexley have also seen an increase in parental requests for a place in a mainstream setting for their young person with SEN and EHCP and are complying with this parental preference wherever possible and appropriate. There was an increase of 134 requests for assessments between 2023 and 2024. This is particularly prevalent in the age 11-15 age band where between 2023 and 2024 Bexley saw an increase of 95 requests for assessments.

	2023	2024	2025
No Source Recorded	3	4	2
Parental request	156	290	56
School request	520	549	154
Social Worker	8	5	0

Age Band	2023	2024	2025
Under 5	218	222	59
Age 5 to 10	323	386	101
Age 11 to 15	186	281	68
Age 16 to 19	46	56	10
Age 20 to 25	2	4	2

3.4 Implications on Funding

Bexley, like many Local Authorities, experiences acute financial pressures when covering the cost of educating pupils with SEN, hence the need for the Safety Valve programme to reduce the deficit caused by this. Therefore, it is important that the most cost-effective way of education children with SEND is used.

There are robust processes and procedures in place to ensure equity when funding individual pupils, in addition to the close monitoring and scrutiny of the High Needs Budget by SEND leaders.

Section 4

Resourced Provision expansion

4.1 Current numbers and demand for spaces in Resourced Provisions

4.2 Expansion of our Resourced Provisions

4.1 Current numbers and demand for spaces in Resourced Provisions

Bexley currently have 288 commissioned places across all three phases of education with 209 commissioned places within a primary School, 75 within a secondary school and 4 within a post-16 setting.

These are the current schools with RPS, alongside their number of commissioned places and their primary need designation:

Primary Resourced Provisions

Resource Provision Settings	Primary Need	Commissioned Places 2024-25
Barrington Primary School	SLCN	10
Belmont Primary School	PD and VI	12
Crook Log Primary School	ASD	6
Haberdashers' Crayford Primary	ASD	12
Hillsgrove Primary School	ASD	8
Hook Lane Primary School	ASD	14
Mayplace Primary School	ASD	15
Old Bexley CE Primary School	ASD	8
Parkway Primary School	PMLD + MLD	70
Pelham Primary School	HI	14
Royal Park Primary School	PD and ASD	16
Sherwood Park Primary School	ASD	8
St Paul's (Slade Green) Primary School	ASD/SLCN	8
Upton Primary School	ASD	8
Primary sub-total		209

Secondary Resourced Provisions

Resource Provision Settings	Primary Need	Commissioned Places 2024-25
Blackfen School for Girls	Mixed	25
Cleeve Park School	PD	2
St Columba's, including CNPU	SLCN + CN (complex Needs)	30
Trinity School, Belvedere	ASD	10
Welling School	ASD	8
Secondary sub-total		75

Post-16 Resourced Provisions

Resource Provision Settings	Primary Need	Commissioned Places 2024-25
Cleeve Park School	PD	2
Trinity School, Belvedere	ASD	2
Post-16 sub-total		4

This equates to a total of 288 places available in our Resourced Provisions.

Whilst demand for places in Resourced Provisions is high, there are few spaces available so that Bexley can ensure support is provided where needed. There is now not the requirement for a pupil to have an EHCP to access the RPs, as Bexley recognise that there are pupils waiting for diagnosis whose needs should be met in the interim, especially where there are long waiting lists.

4.2 Expansion of our Resourced Provisions

As demand for spaces within Resourced Provisions is growing across Bexley and it was recognised that this need to be increased to support and therefore work to address this began in 2024. During the academic year of 2024/2025, all schools were contacted to see if they would like to either increase their existing provision or provide a new provision within their school. As a result of this piece of work, Bexley has 9 new Resourced Provisions opening in 2025/2026 (8 new RPs in primary schools and 1 new RP in a secondary school) and 3 existing RPs will be increasing the number of commissioned places.

This means that there will be an increase of commissioned places from 288 to 412, consisting of 323 within a primary school (+114 places), 89 within a secondary school (+14 places).

The number of RPs, with their phase of education, primary need and number of commissioned places for 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 can be seen here:

Primary Resourced Provisions for 2025/2026

Resource Provision Settings	Primary Need	Commissioned Places 2024-25	Commissioned Places 2025-26
Barrington Primary School	SLCN	10	10
Belmont Primary School	PD and VI	12	12
Belvedere Infant School	ASD/SEMH		8
Bishop Ridley CofE Primary School	To be confirmed		16
Brampton Primary School	ASD		10
Christ Church (Erith) CofE Primary School	ASD/SEMH		12
Crook Log Primary School	ASD	6	6
Fairford Academy	ASD/SEMH		14
Haberdashers' Crayford Primary	ASD	12	12
Hillsgrove Primary School	ASD	8	8
Hook Lane Primary School	ASD	14	18
Lime Wood Primary School	To be confirmed		10
Mayplace Primary School	ASD	15	15
Old Bexley CofE Primary School	ASD	8	6
Parkway Primary School	PMLD + MLD	70	70
Pelham Primary School	HI	14	14
Royal Park Primary School	PD and ASD	16	12
Sherwood Park Primary School	ASD	8	8
St Micheal's CofE Primary School	SLCN		5
St Paul's (Slade Green) Primary School	ASD/SLCN	8	12 (original RP increase) new RP of 12 places Total 24
Upton Primary School	ASD	8	8
Primary sub-total		209	298

Secondary Resourced Provisions for 2025/2026

Resource Provision Settings	Primary Need	Commissioned Places 2024-25	Commissioned Places 2025-26
Blackfen School for Girls	Mixed	25	25
Cleeve Park School	PD	2	1
Leigh Academy (Bexley)	ASD	0	15
St Columba's Catholic Boys School, including CNPU	SLCN + CN (complex Needs)	30	30
Trinity School	ASD	10	10
Welling School	ASD	8	8
Secondary sub-total		75	89

Post-16 Resourced Provisions for 2025/2026

Resource Provision Settings	Primary Need	Commissioned Places 2024-25	Commissioned Places 2025-26
Blackfen School for Girls	SLCN	0	0
Cleeve Park School	PD	2	1
Trinity School	ASD	2	2
Post-16 sub-total		4	3

Resourced Provision total 2024-2025 = 288

Resourced Provision total 2025-2026 = 395

From 2026/2027, there will also likely be an additional primary Resourced Provision opening with 40 places, a potential further 17 places also being added to existing primary Resourced Provisions and 10 further spaces available at an existing secondary Resourced Provision.

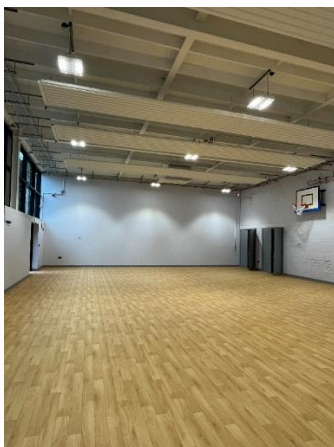
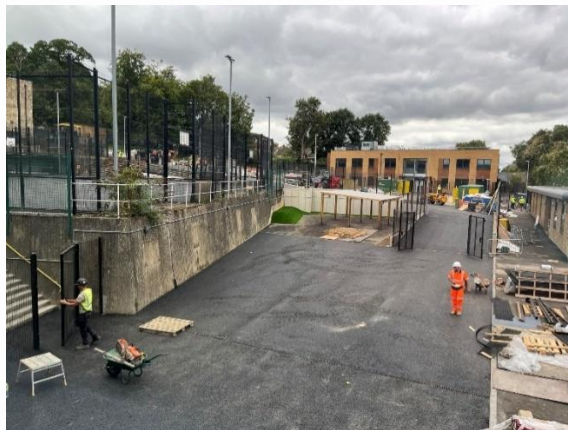
Work around RPs will continue to develop as data becomes available. The Strategic Education Partnership will continue to identify areas of need and how spaces within schools can be best utilised to support pupils with SEND.

Section 5

Capital projects

Bexley has responded to the growing demand for school places for pupils with SEN by working with schools to open and expand Resourced Provisions (as discussed in section 5) and by expanding the secondary cohort of Shenstone School. This project involves building a new secondary site in Belvedere, which will open in September 2025.

Photograph showing the work being carried out to build a secondary branch for Shenstone School



A Post-19 provision for Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) has also been opened in Belvedere, which will be run by the Learning and Enterprise College, Bexley. This provision opened in Autumn 2024.