

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 12th March 2026

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director – Children’s Services

PORTFOLIO: Children and Young People

SUBJECT: High Needs Provision Capital Allocation –
Proposed Expansion of Special Educational
Needs & Disability Provision

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The Council has previously received High Needs Provision Capital Allocation funding from the Department for Education to expand its Special Educational Needs and Disability provision in Halton.
- 1.2 In March 2025 the Council received notification from the Department for Education that it would be allocated a further circa £1.2M in High Needs Provision capital funding to support the provision of new places and/or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs at LA maintained and academy schools.
- 1.3 This report seeks the Board’s approval for the proposals made with regard to the continued expansion of special educational needs and disability provision in Halton’s schools.

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That**

- 1) the Board approves the commencement of the statutory consultation process for those schools where the Local Authority is designated as the “Decision Maker” (detailed in Appendix A), with regard to the implementation of new SEND provision;
- 2) the Board approves the progression of projects and capital expenditure for any school (LA maintained or academy) where a statutory consultation is not required (detailed in Appendix A);
- 3) the Board approves the allocation of funding for capital expenditure incurred at those academy schools detailed in Appendix A providing those schools undertake their own statutory consultation if required, and

4) The Board receives a further report detailing the outcome of any Local Authority led statutory consultations (providing the Board agree at this meeting to commence with those consultations).

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In March 2025 the Council received notification from the Department for Education that it would be allocated a further circa £1.2M of capital funding (High Needs Provision Capital Allocation) to support the provision of new places or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs.
- 3.2 In the autumn term 2025, officers wrote to all schools to seek expressions of interest from them in offering new or additional SEND provision at their school, based against the required need as set out in the most recent SEND Sufficiency Strategy.
- 3.3 Eighteen Expressions of Interest from schools were received, fourteen were identified for progression as detailed in Appendix A, as those Expressions of Interest met the priority needs identified within the SEND Sufficiency Strategy.
- 3.4 Table 1 in Appendix A details the Expressions of Interest proposed for progression and indicates whether a statutory consultation is/is not required, and also indicates the responsible body required to lead the consultation i.e. the LA for maintained schools or academy trust for academy schools. A statutory consultation is required where a school has no existing SEND Resource Base or SEND Unit, or where there is existing SEND provision, but the Expression of Interest submitted by the school is for a different category of SEND provision than the school currently has.
- 3.5 Table 2 in Appendix A is for information only and details the Expressions of Interest received which will be funded from the balance remaining from previous High Needs Provision Capital allocations up to 2024/25 – this spend has previously been approved by the Executive Board on the 12th December 2024.
- 3.6 This report seeks the Executive Board's approval to commence a statutory consultation process for those schools that the Local Authority is responsible for (identified within Table 1 in Appendix A) and to approve capital spend for academy schools (subject to statutory consultation if required).
- 3.7 Based upon the Fourteen expressions of interest proposed to be taken forward, this would provide up to a further 178 additional SEND places within Halton at our existing mainstream schools, thereby supporting the Council's Inclusion Agenda. Officers have undertaken visits to those schools to establish their requirements in terms of capital investment with a view to progressing to feasibility stage with those proposals.

3.8 Some schools already have existing SEND provision and we are offering to expand their current provision or offer additional new provision. For other schools the offer would be a completely new provision and would therefore require the publication of a statutory notice (a consultation) in accordance with the Making Significant Changes (“Prescribed Alterations”) to Maintained Schools 2023 guidance set against the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

3.9 Through this additional offer of specialist educational provision and support, Halton resident pupils will have access to provision in-borough where previously they may have attended out of borough provision which is costly. In addition, with out of borough placements there is usually a requirement to provide assistance with transport, and through the provision of in borough offers, that requirement for assistance with transport, and associated costs, should significantly decrease.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The proposed programme of works will ensure that the Council can continue to offer and expand its in-borough special educational needs provision wherever possible, helping to reduce expensive out-borough placement and transport costs, and meet need more locally within Halton.

4.2 The Council has a duty under the Department for Education’s Special educational needs and disability code of practice 2015 to support high quality provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, with a focus on inclusive practice and removing barriers to learning. Through the offer of more localised specialist provision, the local authority can further build on its existing provision and continue to demonstrate the fulfilment of its duties in accordance with the code.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 All projects proposed will be funded from the High Need Provision Capital Allocation Grant allocated to the Council by the Department for Education.

5.2 Should the initial overall value of the projects proposed exceed the amount of capital funding available, then the projects will be value engineered to be met within budget. This has already been discussed with those schools who have submitted an expression of interest.

5.3 By investing in additional SEND provision in-borough, either through expansion of existing provision, or through completely new provision at existing schools, the Council will reduce its High Needs expenditure, which is currently funded through the High Needs

block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, a significant amount of which is currently spent on out of borough provision. It is important that preventative action is taken now to help reduce financial costs to the Council in the future, and by retaining Halton resident pupils at local provision, this will help drive down placement and travel costs for the Council longer term.

- 5.4 Circa £1.2M has been set aside for the capital works as proposed in Appendix A table 1, but these costs are subject to feasibility studies and procurement processes and will be value engineered in agreement with schools to meet the capital funding available. It is intended that these projects will be phased in terms of opening based on the capital work required, with the intention that some could open in September 2026, and the remainder by September 2027.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The Capital Programme will support continuing demand for in-borough special educational needs provision, allowing Halton resident pupils to remain in-borough where possible.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

NA

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The Capital Programme will support continuing demand for in-borough special educational needs provision, allowing Halton resident pupils to remain in-borough where possible.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

NA

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Where new lighting is required, LED panels will be installed which will contribute to Halton's Carbon Management Programme by helping to produce more energy efficient buildings.

Through the introduction of local provision, there will be a reduction in the number of children and young people needing out of borough provision, which in turn will help reduce fuel costs/emissions.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

NA

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The demand for specialist support for children and young people with SEND is increasing, and places are currently limited within the

borough. By expanding existing provision, and creating additional places, children can receive the support they need within the borough and help to reduce expenditure within the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

7.2 The Council has been allocated this funding from the Department for Education, as they also recognised a need for additional specialist places and provision in Halton, and through these proposed works, the Council demonstrates expenditure against need.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The High Needs Provision Capital Allocation provides capital funding to deliver new places, supporting learning in both mainstream and special provision and allows Halton resident pupils to be educated in-borough where possible. All schools have duties under the Equality Act 2010 towards individual disabled children and young people, as set out in the Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Through the introduction of local provision, there will be a reduction in the number of children and young people needing out of borough provision, which in turn will help reduce fuel costs/emissions.

10.0 **REASON(S) FOR DECISION**

10.1 The Council is required to demonstrate appropriate identification of need against spend from the High Needs Capital Allocation Grant.

10.2 To deliver and implement the capital programme.

11.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

11.1 None.

12.0 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

12.1 It is intended that the first phase of additional provision could be offered from September 2026 and the remainder by September 2027.

13.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
High Needs Provision Allocation 2021-26 Department for Education	Children's Services Directorate	Catriona Gallimore
Special educational needs and disability code of practice 2015	Children's Services Directorate	Martin West