

# Practice guide

## SEND & Alternative Provision Enhanced Reception Offer, Blackpool

### Background, purpose and rationale

The Blackpool SEND Strategy 2024-2027 seeks to resolve some of the challenges and inequalities facing some of our youngest and most vulnerable children with SEND. Providing the right help at the right time enables children to make the best possible progress in their education and in everyday life. We want parents/carers to be confident that they will receive the support they need from education, health and care services. There were not enough appropriate school placements for four-year olds in Reception. This was due to the increasing numbers of four-year-olds with plans and significantly more complex needs. Mainstream schools were not confident at meeting the needs of Blackpool children with special needs (increase in refusals to consultations and placements breaking down). Mainstream school buildings not able to meet the needs of the changing cohort (increase in capital requests for sensory rooms, toilet changing and break out spaces). Also, the lack of parental confidence in mainstream schools to meet needs (SEND inspection 2022). In December 2022, we reviewed all the EHCPs of that current reception cohort as well as the supporting information of children undergoing assessment. We were looking for recommendations for provision and whether we needed to commission additional special school placements or advisory teacher support. There were no obvious markers indicating whether a child needed specialist or mainstream provision. What we found is that most of the children had a very similar description of their needs (regardless of whether they were in mainstream or a specialist setting):

- Not toilet trained
- Dysregulated behaviour
- Support required for speech
- Support required for sensory regulation
- Waiting for assessment from Blenheim (ASD)

### What we did to improve children's outcomes and experiences

Blackpool Council, in partnership with local schools, sought to create a specialist offer of provision for reception children with EHCPs that can be delivered within mainstream schools. It is a 'pop-up' approach which means it reflects areas of the town with the most need at a specific point in time. We did a pilot project in 2023/24 which involved working with three primary schools to develop a specialist offer of provision that could be delivered within mainstream:

- Classes between 6 and 8 children
- Teacher led
- Commissioned support from a special school
- Therapeutic support
- Additional training support

Annual review gathered all views as to whether the child; remained in mainstream; moved to a resource provision or moved to a specialist setting. The positives were children attended the same school as their siblings, it upskilled staff in mainstream schools, improved inclusion within mainstream, raised confidence and expectations of parents and a significant number of children at the end of the year did not need to move into specialist provision. Some elements that needed improving were more time to embed the support, parents wanted improved communication, and we needed to intervene when the placement started to break down. We built on this learning from the previous year and opened six enhanced reception classes to meet the needs of 42 children who would have previously gone into special schools.

We also delivered:

- Half-term support from Advisory Teacher
- Term review of progress with Advisory Teacher
- Half-termly enhanced cluster meetings
- Curriculum development
- Assessment review
- Creation of a parental information booklet
- Term meetings with SEND Officer to review placements
- Created application process for schools interested in creating their own class.

In terms of resources, we used; a teacher (Top of MPS with two SEN) including PPA allowance; support staff (TA2, Grade D), term-time only, 32.5 hours per week; and lunchtime supervisor (Grade A), term-time only, 7.5 hours a week.

### What was the impact?

- 80% of the children are continuing in the enhanced classroom for a second year
- 10% of the children are moving into mainstream classrooms at the end of this academic year
- 10% of the children are moving into specialist settings at the end of this academic year
- All settings are continuing with the provision for a second year
- Three settings have requested to take an additional cohort next academic year

We have received positive responses from schools that this approach works for them and their cohort and secured positive and robust place planning. We have also observed a reduction in complaints and tribunals, alongside a trend of reducing placement breakdowns and children in reception accessing part-time timetables. Parental feedback indicates the improved experiences of children and their families: *"The Blossoms unit at school\* has enabled my daughter to attend mainstream school but also caters for her needs with the support of the staff allowing The Blossoms to be her 'safe space' should the classroom get too overwhelming for her. Since starting at school, my daughter has come on leaps and bounds developmentally and academically with the amazing support both she and I receive."*

### Resources

Presentation Slides including further feedback from parents  
Enhanced Classroom Guide for Parents

### Find out more

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