

United Learning Guidance
Mainstream Inclusive Fund 2026
Secondary Academies

The Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF) is ring-fenced funding provided to mainstream schools to strengthen inclusion “by design”. This funding does not replace statutory SEND funding or fund individual pupils in isolation.

As a large organisation, we believe that by joining together and combining a percentage (30%) of funding per school, this will enable us the opportunity to have greater impact across all schools. This approach ensures that schools can also allocate the 70% funding on what they feel will meet the needs of their students and members of staff.

Its core purpose is to:

- Improve universal and ordinarily available provision
- Enable earlier identification and support
- Reduce avoidable escalation to statutory processes
- Embed whole-school inclusive practice, beyond SENCO-led intervention alone

The fund **must be used alongside**, not instead of:

- Core school budget
- Notional SEN budget
- High Needs top-up / EHCP funding (Element 3)

Where funding can be directed:

DfE guidance makes clear that spending should be strategic, preventative, and whole-school, mapped to inclusion principles and reflected in a published Inclusion Strategy.

Whilst there are many areas that the fund can be used for, the guidance makes clear what it cannot be used for, this includes plugging budget shortfalls, staffing that does not link specifically to inclusion needs, one off initiatives that are not robustly evaluated or used as a replacement for EHCP top-up funding and or to fund support that meets individual need.

Centralised use of IMF

In order to ensure that we can use our scale to generate greater impact, United Learning will use the top slice percentage of 30% to support the following offer to all secondary academies:

- Strategic Leadership, Systems & Planning;
 - Inclusive Leadership Course – 1-2 funded place per school for a Senior Leader
This will provide opportunity for leaders to gain further insights in to inclusive leadership and management and provide opportunity for self-audit, action planning and evaluation.

- All schools to work towards achieving the Inclusion Quality Mark. This is the only national award for inclusion. Offers both recognition and a practical framework for addressing the challenges of diverse learning needs, growing accountability, and the pressure to provide consistent, high-quality provision.
- Inclusive Environments & Accessibility;
 - Developing Secondary Pedtech with school leaders: Launch and deliver effective implementation of inclusive and assistive technology through national and cluster-based school support via identified Pedtech leaders.
- Early intervention and targeted support;
 - All schools to be provided with the Arbor Vulnerability tracker to support with early identification of fixed and flexible vulnerabilities.
 - 1 x place per school for Young Carer Champion CPD.
 - Each school to be provided with set hours of Educational Psychologist time.
 - Each school to be provided with set hours of Speech and Language therapist time.
- Workforce Development & Training;
 - Central online CPD offer from identified experts with bespoke training for teachers around specific learning needs i.e. Speech and Language, cognition and learning etc
 - Central online CPD offer from identified experts with bespoke training for support staff around specific needs and interventions i.e. SEMH interventions.
- Improving Universal and Ordinarily Available Provision;
 - Quality of Education Conference in the Autumn Term (2 x spaces per school) which focusses specifically on inclusive teaching practice across the 4 areas of need.
 - Online CPD through Whole Education which focusses on meeting the needs of students better in the classroom.

Schools use of IMF

Schools will have 70% of the funding to use as they see appropriate to meet the needs of their students, members of staff and community.

To ensure that schools are spending the IMF in line with expectation, below is an outline of where leaders can choose to direct the funding within their Inclusion Strategy for 2026-27:

Improving Universal and Ordinarily Available Provision;

- High-quality adaptive teaching strategies
- Universal classroom adjustments (e.g. scaffolding, flexible grouping)
- Curriculum accessibility and redesign

- Inclusive behaviour and attendance approaches

Workforce Development & Training;

- Staff CPD on inclusion, SEND and adaptive teaching
- Training teaching assistants for impact in classrooms
- Coaching models and professional learning communities
- Time for staff to develop inclusive practices collaboratively

Early Intervention & Targeted Support (Non-Statutory);

- Evidence-informed short-term interventions
- Small group support delivered by school staff
- Tools to support early identification of need
- Preventative emotional wellbeing and regulation support, for example Place 2 Be:
https://unitedlearning-my.sharepoint.com/personal/laura_moore_unitedlearning_org_uk/Documents/SEND%20and%20Inclusion/IMF/Place2Be%20Service%20Offer%20-%20United%20Learning.pdf

Inclusive Environments & Accessibility;

- Improve physical accessibility (within reasonable scope)
- Create calm/sensory-friendly spaces
- Invest in inclusive resources or assistive technology
- Adapt communal areas to improve belonging and engagement

Strategic Leadership, Systems & Planning;

- SEN and inclusion audits
- Developing or refining the Inclusion Strategy
- Evaluating provision effectiveness
- Time for leaders to embed inclusive systems and accountability

Accountability & Evidence Expectations

The additionally funding for 2026-27 comes within guidance linked to accountability and evidence based evaluation. Schools are expected to complete the following as a condition of receiving the funding:

Schools are expected to:

- Publish an **Inclusion Strategy** by December 2026
- Show how IMF spending improves **universal provision**

- Evidence impact through outcomes such as:
 - Reduced escalation to statutory support
 - Improved engagement, attendance, and belonging
 - Staff confidence in meeting diverse needs

United Learning academies must include the central trust offer as well as how the school's remaining funding will be used. This is provided on the below template for you.

The strategy template must be reviewed by the Principal and Governors and placed on the school website by 31 December 2026.

DFE Template: [Inclusion_strategy_template.docx](#)

United Learning Inclusion Strategy Template 2026-27

*** ACADEMY

Purpose of this Strategy

This Inclusion Strategy sets out how the academy ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), are supported effectively within a mainstream environment, through high-quality teaching, inclusive practice and early intervention.

It outlines how the academy uses its universal offer, notional SEN budget, and Mainstream Inclusive Fund (where applicable) to meet commonly occurring and predictable needs, reduce barriers to learning, and promote belonging.

Inclusive Vision - *Brief statement of the school's values and commitment to inclusion:*

School Context and Profile of Need - *Outline key contextual information including age range, phases, number on roll, percentage of Pupil Premium, SEND, cultural representation, relevant geographical information and local context etc. You may also wish to outline patterns of need rather than individual student's needs:*

Leadership and Governance – *Outline the leadership structures within school that support inclusion, including middle leadership, senior leadership the Principal and Governors:*

Universal Offer: Inclusive Practice for All Pupils – *Include information on Teaching and learning, curriculum, behaviour, attendance and belonging:*

Targeted Support and Early Intervention – *Provide key information around your offer linked to evidence-informed non statutory interventions and early help:*

Inclusive Environments and Resources – *Link here to your accessibility plans, key resources internally and strategic consideration around look and feel:*

Workforce Development and Staff Confidence – *Outline the training on offer to members of teaching and support staff around inclusion. Deployment of key members of staff:*

Impact monitoring and review – *Outline how you will measure impact and what the review cycle will look like in your setting:*

End of year impact review:

Use of the mainstream fund – *Outline how the money will be spent and a summary of the detail:*

Challenge	Planned activity and spend	Intended outcome
Central costings 30%		
<i>Leadership – a shared understanding within the leadership team of inclusion, how inclusion can support the school, and how the school can better refine inclusive practice</i>	<i>1–2 leaders to take part in the Difference Inclusive Leadership Course (aligned with The Difference Inclusive Leadership approach), at a cost of £2,000 per person (discounted due to scale), taking place over the 2026–27 academic year</i>	<i>Improved ability of the school to audit and refine its practice, ensuring an inclusion lens is applied to all leadership decisions and strategic developments</i>
<i>Identification and support of young carers</i>	<i>An identified Young Carer Champion to complete the MyTime Young Carers Champion Course during the 2026–27 academic year, at a cost of £600 (Discounted due to scale).</i>	<i>Increased identification of young carers within the school and improved support, leading to better attendance, behaviour, and academic outcomes</i>

<i>Culture of inclusion</i>	<i>The school to complete an Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) audit and work towards achieving the award, at a cost of £400, as an ongoing activity</i>	<i>School practice recognised as best practice, with successful achievement of the Inclusion Quality Mark and a sustained culture of inclusion</i>
<i>High-quality inclusive teaching for all</i>	<i>All teachers and pupil-facing staff to have access to the Whole Education online platform, enabling access to CPD related to SEND and adaptive teaching, at a cost of £20 per identified member of staff.</i>	<i>Staff use CPD to upskill their understanding of adaptive teaching and trial a range of approaches to better meet the needs of all students; improved whole-school knowledge of adaptive teaching leading to improved outcomes for all pupils, particularly vulnerable learners</i>
<i>Meeting specific needs more effectively (teachers and SEND team)</i>	<i>Use of a Speech and Language Therapist and an Educational Psychologist to provide CPD to targeted teams (teachers, teaching assistants, and the SEND team), supporting the development of interventions for pupils with speech, language and communication needs, as well as social, emotional and mental health needs, costings per school approximately £4,500.</i>	<i>Students with specific needs engage more effectively with school, showing improved attendance, behaviour, and attainment; earlier identification of needs and improved ability across staff to meet a wider range of learning n</i>
<i>Limited understanding of technology that can be used to support individual needs</i>	<i>Identified members of staff to be upskilled around PedTech. Training to be completed to understand resourcing and use of technology that integrates in to lessons and better supports different needs.</i>	<i>Removal of barriers to learning through technology to support improved outcomes for SEND students.</i>
<i>Centralised specialised support offer linked to Inclusive Practice.</i>	<i>A range of support from Central Teams linked to meeting more needs better: Inclusion CPD and frameworks, templates and intervention CPD etc.</i>	<i>Ensure that all students needs are better met in the classroom and around school.</i>
School personalised spend 70%		

Completion date:

Completed by:

Approved by Principal:

Approval date:

Approved by Governors:

Approval date:

Annual Review date: