

Early Years Step into School Funding

Information Guide for Parents/ Parent Carers

What is the Early Years Step into School Funding for?

We want every child in Shropshire with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to be healthy, happy and safe. They should have the same opportunities as other children.

We aim to provide good local support so children can start their local primary school without needing an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The Early Years Step into School Fund helps children with complex needs move from nurseries or childminders to primary school. It also helps children with complex needs who have not been to nursery or a childminder when they begin primary school.

Why is the Early Years Step into School Funding needed?

Funding from [Early Years Inclusion Funding \(EYIF\)](#) stops when your child leaves their childminder or nursery. The Early Years Step into School funding helps children with complex special educational needs move into primary school. It gives time for professionals at the Child Development Centre (CDC) to assess your child and lets the new school continue supporting your child using a step-by-step approach to understand their needs.

This will:

- Give your child extra time and support, so professionals can see if their needs are just for now or will last longer. It helps decide whether a request for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment might be needed for your child in the future.
- Provide a full assessment to help write a better Education, Health and Care Plan if needed.
- Ensure families only have to share information once, making the process easier.

Early Years Step into School funding does not remove parent carers' right to apply for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment. We would encourage you to work with your child's setting to do this, if it is felt appropriate.

Your child does not need a diagnosis to be considered for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment.

How do we know it can help?

Schools have told us:

A has been able to attend school full time.

K was able to join their peers for the Christmas play.

Enabled the child to access the classroom environment and to begin experiencing social interactions alongside their peers.

M has greater sense of belonging and enjoyment within school.

D has made progress with toilet training and is now wearing pants.

Provided an invaluable recognition of the importance of transition between nursery and school.

Which children will the Early Years Step into School Funding support?

Children **supported** by the Early Years Step into School Funding may include:

- Children known to the Child Development Centre who are being assessed for communication and interaction needs, or general needs.
- Children who received a lot of support from Early Years Inclusion Funding (EYIF), covering most of their time in nursery or with a childminder.
- Children whose assessment suggests they should apply for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (ECHNA), and are waiting to hear if they will get a plan.

If your child needs an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the Step into School funding will continue until the 20-week point. After the EHCP is finished, the new funding will start from that same 20-week date, so you won't miss out. While you're waiting for the EHCP to be finalised, the school will still support your child.

Children may have a **combination of needs** such as:

- Significant challenges with speaking or understanding language. For example, children may not be communicating wants, feelings and wishes with words. Children may have challenges responding to simple one step instructions, such as get your coat, sit at the table.
- Children may move very quickly from one activity to another, not settling for any length of time. They may find it hard to pay attention to adult-led tasks or are focusing only on their own interests.
- Have challenges with social interaction. They may not notice other children and may play alone. They may experience significant challenges with turn-taking and sharing with others.
- Sensory needs, including eating non-food items (PICA).

- Needing help with self-care skills like toileting; for example, still needing support with eating, not showing readiness to begin toilet training and/ or still learning to take off and on clothes such as trousers and pants.
- Having trouble controlling their emotions, which may lead to behaviours of concern. This could be because they are experiencing frustration with communicating, social interaction and/or have sensory needs

This is not a complete list; children with other complex needs may also be supported.

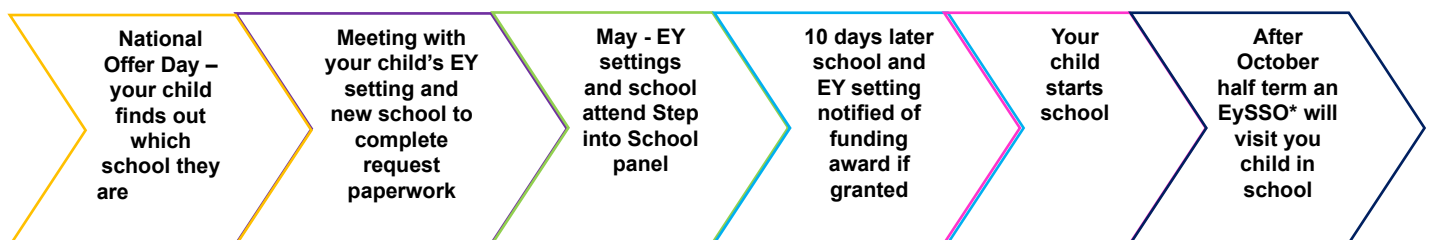
Children who **will not be supported** by the Early Years Step into School Funding may include:

- Children with an EHCP.
- Children experiencing challenges which can be met through reasonable adaptations, schools' inclusive provision offer and SEN Support such as:
 - Speech and language needs
 - Toileting needs
 - Challenging behaviour that can be managed with a good behaviour plan
- Children who are not known to any external agencies such as a paediatrician, specialist nursery nurse, portage.
- Children who have not been supported through Early Years Inclusion Funding (EYIF) or who are supported through low levels of funding.

Exception to the above will be for children who have not attended an early years setting.

This is just a guide. Each school has a SEND Information Report on their website explaining what support they offer to all children and those needing extra help.

How is a request for Early Years Step into School Funding made?



*Early Years SEND Support Officer (EySSO)

Once you know which primary school your child will be attending in September, you'll have a meeting with your child's current setting and their new primary school. People who should be included are:

Current Early Years Setting	New Primary School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your child's key person • The setting SENDCo (Special 	Staff attending may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reception teacher

Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School SENDCo• Headteacher
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Together, you'll fill out a request form and look at your child's current plan. You'll talk about your child's needs, what's most important for their development, and set goals for the coming year, including smaller steps to work on. These focus on where your child is now and the targets should help your child move smoothly from their early years setting to school.

The nursery or childminder and school will work together to decide what support your child will need to reach these goals. This will be written in a weekly plan explaining what help your child will get and why. The weekly plan helps everyone understand what support your child needs. This information is used to decide if your child should get extra funding to help them at school. It's good to know that your child probably won't have one-to-one support all the time, as research shows this can slow their progress and make them rely too much on adults. Instead, your child is likely to have a mix of short one-to-one sessions, lots of help while playing, and support in small groups or whole class activities. There may also be additional resources or changes to help your child.

The early years setting and your child's new school should work together with you to make a transition plan for your child's move to school. This plan should help your child get used to school life and make the change easier over the summer term. The plan is made to fit your child's needs, using ideas from both their current setting and their new school class.

- Staff from the new school might visit the nursery or childminder to get to know your child and play with them.
- Your child might visit their new school with a familiar nursery staff member or their childminder to help them feel comfortable.
- The school may give advice on things to practise, like using a lunch box or changing nappies while standing up, but these should match what your child is used to.
- The school could share photos of your child's new teacher and teaching assistant, which you can look at together, so your child knows who they'll see at school. You can use these photos for games and play at home.
- You might get pictures or videos showing the way into school, the classroom, and important areas of the building.
- The school can suggest a simple timetable showing what your child might do each day.
- Other helpful things might be suggested, like special toys, activities, or ways to talk with school staff, to make your child's move to school smoother.

All these steps are meant to help your child feel happy, safe and ready for their new school.

What happens if my child has never attended an Early Years Setting or have not had their complex needs identified in their current Early Years Setting?

If your child has not attended nursery or their special educational needs haven't been spotted yet, here's what will happen when they start school:

- **Getting to Know Your Child:** During the first few weeks of the school year, teachers will spend time getting to know your child and learning about their needs.
- **If Extra Help Is Needed:** If your child needs more support and hasn't been referred, the school will help you to speak with your Health Visitor.
- **Asking for Specialist Advice:** The school will contact an expert in early years support called an Educational Quality Advisory (SEND and AP) who will ask an Early Years SEND Support Officer to visit and give advice.
- **Making a Support Plan:** By week five, the school will put together a plan to support your child.

This includes:

- Talking with you about your child and watching how they get on at school.
- Using assessments to help understand your child's needs.
- Looking at any advice from other experts from the past year.
- Making a list of goals and ways to help your child.
- Working out what resources and support will help your child.

This plan helps make sure your child gets the right support to settle into school happily and safely.

What happens once I have met with my child's setting and/ or school?

When the Local Authority gets your request, your child's early years setting and school will be asked to join a short meeting (called a panel). At this meeting, staff will share a simple summary of your child's needs and explain what support they will offer, including how they will help your child move into school after summer if the request is received before they move to primary school. This meeting helps everyone understand your child better. You don't need to go to the panel yourself.

These panels take place in May and October.

Funding

Decisions about funding are made together by the panel. They decide based on the evidence from your child's school or setting about what help your child needs. Sometimes funding is given, but sometimes it isn't, and getting funding doesn't mean your child will always get the same amount if they later receive an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). If Step into School funding is given, the Local Authority doesn't need to write a plan.

Graduated Support Pathway (GSP) funding can't be given to children already receiving Step into School funding.

If your child's school gets funding but hasn't asked for an EHC Needs Assessment (EHCNA), the school must follow a process called A-D-P-R for two school terms. This means they need to Assess your child's needs, Plan what help to give, Do the support, and Review how things are going, making changes if needed. If a Multi-Disciplinary Assessment (MDA) shows your child needs an EHCNA, the school can ask for one earlier. When Step into School funding is nearly finished, schools might ask for more funding for another year using the Graduated Support Pathway (GSP) process if that seems best

If funding isn't given, schools must use their own resources to help your child. Every school has a SEND Information Report on their website that explains what help is available for all children and those needing extra support. If schools need more help, they can ask for outreach support from Early Years SEND Support Officers (EySSOs).

Checking the Use of Step into School Funding Checking

During the autumn term, schools that get Step into School funding will have a visit from an Early Years SEND Support Officers (EySSOs). This is to check how your child's move into school is going, make sure the funding is being used properly, and offer extra help if needed. In rare cases, funding may be reviewed.

Related links:

[The Graduated Approach](#)

[Graduated Support Pathway \(GSP\)](#)

[Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment \(EHCNA\)](#)