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 SEND RAPID RESPONSE

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EHCP Threshold Is Rising. A Twelve Month Plan For School Leaders Before September 2030.

Walk into your SENCo's office on a Monday morning. Look at the desk. Count the EHC applications that have not been submitted. Count the annual reviews waiting for write-up. Every one of those documents is a child without protected funded provision and a tribunal risk for your school.

That pile is not an admin problem. It is a strategic risk.

What is changing

The 2025 Schools White Paper sets out a three-tier model for SEND. Tier 1 is high-quality inclusive teaching as the universal expectation for every pupil. Tier 2 introduces the Individual Support Plan (ISP), a non-statutory framework for pupils who need targeted support but do not meet the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) threshold. Tier 3 retains the EHCP for children with the most complex and significant needs. The transition completes by September 2030. Source: SEND Reform Schools White Paper 2025.

The headline change for your school is simple. The EHCP threshold is rising. More children will be supported under your ISP and Tier 1 budget. Fewer children will arrive with banded funding attached.

Why this matters to your funding pipeline

EHCPs carry money. Under section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 the local authority is statutorily required to fund the special educational provision specified in Section F of an EHCP. ISPs do not carry that obligation in the same way. When you support a child under an ISP, the cost sits in your notional SEN budget unless the school can evidence need that meets the new EHCP threshold.

Worked example. In one academic year I led EHC drafting at a primary school in East London. The applications I drafted secured £155,000 of high-needs funding for that single year. That money funded specialist provision, specialist staff time and external commissioning. Without that drafting, the same provision would have come out of pupil-led budgets that were already tight.

The window to lock in this kind of funding under the current statutory framework is now. Once the 2030 transition completes, the bar to clear is higher and the LA panel scrutiny is sharper.

Why this matters to your inclusion offer

Ofsted's inclusion focus is sharper under the new National Inclusion Standards. Your school will be expected to demonstrate that high-quality inclusive teaching is a lived practice in every classroom, not a paragraph in the SEND policy. The graduated approach (assess, plan, do, review) becomes a teacher responsibility, anchored in chapter 6 of the SEND Code of Practice 2015. If your teachers cannot describe what assess, plan, do, review looks like for the children with SEND in their class, your Tier 1 offer is not yet built.

Three actions for the next twelve months

1. Audit the EHCP pile. List every open EHC application, every overdue annual review and every plan with vague Section F provision. Triage by panel risk and by child impact. Set a written deadline to clear the list. Under regulation 20 of the SEND Regulations 2014 the school has two weeks to send the annual review report to the local authority after the meeting, and the local authority has four weeks to notify

parents of its decision. If your reviews are slipping past these windows, the school is the bottleneck.

2. Build the ISP framework before it is imposed on you. Decide what an ISP looks like in your school. Who writes it. Who reviews it. What evidence sits behind it. What it costs in staff time and resource. Schools that wait for the LA template will be reactive. Schools that design their own version become the model.
3. Train teachers, not just the SENCO. The graduated approach belongs to every teacher in every classroom. Build it into performance management, into planning protocols, into your classroom monitoring schedule. The SENCO should be the strategic lead, not the sole owner of SEND.

The strategic question

If an Ofsted inspector walks your school in twelve months and asks your Year 4 teacher to describe how they assess, plan, do and review for the children with SEND in their class, what will they say. If the answer is “the SENCO does that”, your inclusion offer is not yet built. If the answer is a confident description of what they do every week, you are ready for the new system.

Where SEND Rapid Response fits

If your SENCO is sat on a stack of EHC applications that have not gone out, SEND Rapid Response clears the backlog as a paid service for the school.

Visit www.sendrapidresponse.co.uk and request a school services call.

At one East London primary the same approach unlocked £155,000 of funding in a single academic year. That could be your school.

Sources

Children and Families Act 2014, Part 3, especially section 42.

SEND Code of Practice 2015, chapter 6 on the graduated approach.

SEND Reform Schools White Paper 2025, the three-tier model and transition timeline to September 2030.

Equality Act 2010, sections 20 and 85, on reasonable adjustments and duties of schools.

SEND Regulations 2014, regulation 20, annual review timescales.