

Our new SEND and Inclusion Strategy (2024-29) sets out our core aspiration: **A child-friendly borough where children and young people from all backgrounds thrive, are listened to, achieve their best, and have opportunities.**

To do this we will prioritise:

1. Timely, effective, and well-coordinated support for children and young people with SEND.
2. User-friendly services for children and young people with SEND and their families.
3. Early identification and support for the under-fives.
4. A great education and support for every school-age child with SEND.
5. Opportunities and support for young adults with SEND.
6. A borough that welcomes and celebrates children and young people with SEND.

The Local Area Partnership

There have been significant changes to the senior leadership in Tower Hamlets SEND Services since the last inspection.

These include the recent permanent appointment of a director of children's services, director of education and head of special educational needs. A new senior transformation lead for CAMHS and transforming care as part of the local authority and NEL ICB integrated children's commissioning service is now in place.

Our SEND context

Children and young people with EHC plans held by LBTH (Source: [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

- 4463 EHCPs for 0-25-year-olds held in Jan 24. (rising to 4704 July 24)
- 72% male; 28% female.
- 40% are Bangladeshi; 8% are from a Black background; 6% from a Mixed ethnic background; 14% from a White background; 2% from another ethnic group; and 28% from an unknown background.
- 6% are pre-school age; 34.6% aged 5-10; 29.2% aged 11-15; 17.7% aged 16-19; 12.4% aged 20-25.
- 35% have Speech, Language & Communication Needs (SCLN) as a primary need; 26% have Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- From those children and young people with an EHCP; 10.4% are Children in Need, 0.51% are subject to a Child Protection Plan and 1% are Children in Care.

Pupils in Tower Hamlets Schools (Source [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

- 19.2% of pupils have SEND; 12.4% receiving SEN Support; 6.8% with an EHCP.
- 51% of pupils with SEN are eligible for free school meals compared to 37.5% of pupils with no SEN.
- 56% of pupils with SEN have English as an additional language, compared to 61% of pupils with no SEN.
- 21 children with EHCPs are electively home educated.

Progress against our Written Statement of Action (WSOA)

Tower Hamlets continues to make good progress on their WSOA priorities (Department for Education, March 2024)

- 48% of EHCPs were issued in 20 weeks in 2023, in line with national average.
- Average ASD assessment waiting time is 88 weeks, reduced from 144 weeks in 2022.
- 3-5s Speech & Language Therapy (SLT) treatment pathway launched; waiting times for assessment reduced from 35 weeks in 2022 to just over 10 weeks in 2024.
- Integrated Therapies Early Years Model launched.
- New full-time Designated Social Care Officer in place to support links between social care, health and education.

Our Strengths

- Strong partnership and secure governance which support the identification of strengths, areas for development and maximise allocation of resources.
- Comprehensive Family Hub and locality based integrated therapies provision; this will enable us to identify children at the earliest opportunity.
- Excellent schools: high attainment and attendance for pupils with SEND relative to national and London peers.
- Inclusive schools with the highest percentage of EHCPs nationally.
- Well established relationships with parents and carers support our drive for co-production.
- An ambitious culture of innovation linked to evidence-based research is supporting our improvement journey.

Areas for focus over the next 12 months

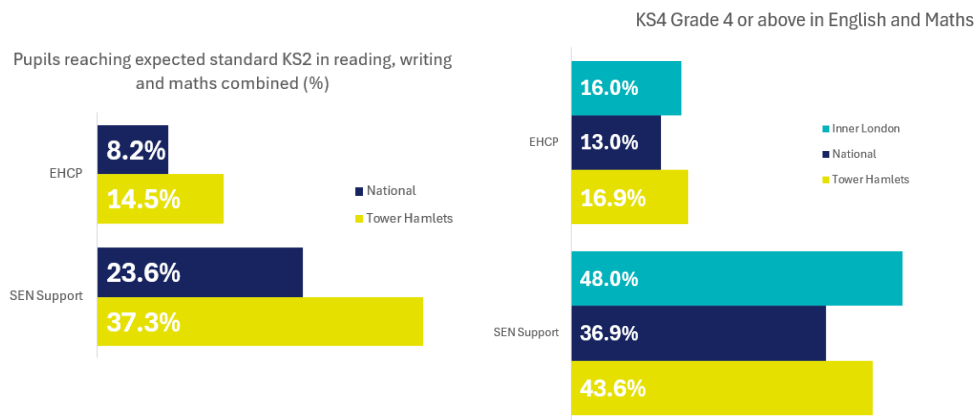
- Finalise and implement the SEND and Inclusion strategy; strengthen the SEND Improvement Board.
- Improve internal systems and processes – particularly around EHCP timeliness, annual reviews, quality assurance and our use of data – “on time, every time”. Strengthening child voice in EHCPs remains a priority.
- Implement the DBV programme, including tackling the DSG cumulative High Needs deficit through a funding review of resource bases and EHCP banding.
- Build on existing early help and intervention systems so that we can both support schools, settings, parents, and carers before they feel that they need to pursue a statutory assessment, particularly targeting the under 5s.
- Launch the Inclusion framework with schools to enable schools to hold each other to account for good practice in SEND.
- Support children and families at transition points, including Post 16 vocational opportunities.
- Embed innovation, including research projects into the prevalence of ASD amongst Somali children, the Phoenix specialist classroom autism pilot.
- Streamline our local offer, co-production and communication channels for parents, carers, children, young people and professionals.
- Secure sufficiency across local provision utilising capital investment and enhancing existing services, particularly to address the increasing demand for specialist provision in autism and speech and language. E.g. pilot Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs); move of Phoenix College to create more autism places in Phoenix special school and Phoenix college.

Leaders create an environment in which effective practice and multi-agency working can flourish.

- Refreshed SEND Improvement Board (SIB) provides strategic oversight for multi-agency working, informed by recommendations from the LGA Peer challenge and peer support from DfE funded Sector Led Improvement Partner LB Islington.
- The LGA peer review recognised *strong system leadership from headteachers and senior leaders who are ambitious for continued improvement in schools and settings*.
- During 2022/23, 136 professionals engaged in the SENCO and Inclusion Leadership Network convened by the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership. SENCOs are supported through a programme of continuous professional development and termly conferences. 92% rated the autumn 2023 conference as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’.
- Royal London Hospital’s emergency department holds an Autism Inclusion Award accredited by the National Autistic Society.
- Interventions to support wellbeing and safety of children with additional vulnerabilities include: close integrated working between education and children’s social care; review of home education provision for children with SEN by an experienced SENCO; our Online Safety Conference included a focus on SEND; training to support young people who have exhibited harmful sexual behaviour delivered to SENCOs and Designated Safeguarding Leads.
- Our Virtual School assigns a trained teacher to every school with a child in care, working closely with the SENCO, attendance and welfare officer and SEN colleagues.
- Tower Hamlets and City of London Youth Justice Service is renewing its Youth Justice SEND Quality Mark and is on track to achieve SEND Quality Lead status, with Child First commendation. Its Breaking the Cycle team has received core training from the SEND service.

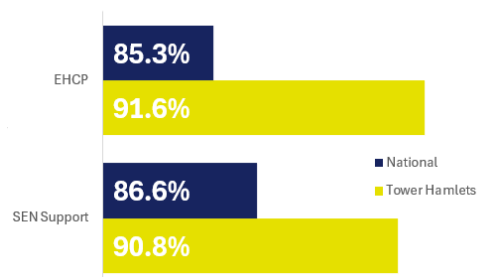
Children and young people achieve strong outcomes and are well prepared for their next steps.

- 97.5% of pupils attend schools rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted; 3 of our 5 Special Schools are rated Outstanding.

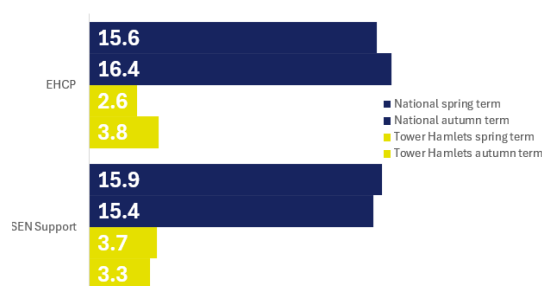


- There were no permanent exclusions in 2022/23 for pupils with an EHCP, and one pupil with SEN Support.

Attendance for secondary school pupils (%)



Suspension rates



- Senior Leaders committed to an effective joint response to increasing levels and complexity of need.
- Our Parent and Young Person SEND Ambassadors: an exemplar of good practice.
- 95% of young people with SEND post 16 are in education, employment, or training; for young people with EHCPs, 16.7% attend further education (14.6% nationally).

Needs are identified accurately, assessed promptly and effectively; the right help at the right time.

- 309 children receive SEN Inclusion funding; Early Education Childcare (EEC) settings have a named Inclusion Co-ordinator; Since Spring 2023 over 1,200 EEC provider staff have attended training facilitated by the EEC Inclusion Team.
- Family Nurse Partnership & Health Visiting rated by the CQC as GOOD in 2022.
- School Health & Wellbeing Service delivers hearing and vision screening for 4-5-year-olds.
- £616k Start for Life bid secured for workforce pilot including screening for social communication difference / speech & language needs at 12 months old.
- Well-received Stay & Play sessions at Stephen Hawking Special School for pre-school children with profound & multiple learning disabilities provides interim support whilst families wait for assessment or placement; 100% of parents and carers attending Play & Connect sessions reported increased confidence using therapy strategies to support their child.
- The under 5s complex needs therapies team provides high quality intensive and long-term support for children at home with complex needs, which is particularly valued by parents.
- The roll out of Verbo across primary schools, funded by the NHS, will allow schools to share communication targets and strategies with parents and help parents more easily engage and share understanding of their children's needs.
- All 248 final EHCPs for secondary phase transfer due on 15 February 2024 were issued on time.
- 81% of young people in acute need accessing CAMHS assessment seen within 5 weeks of referral. (March 2024)
- We have an active group of SEND Parent Ambassadors who support families in understanding services available to support them.
- Monthly Dynamic Support Register meetings are well attended by partners; risk assessment tool viewed as best practice.
- Social workers .. are effective advocates for disabled children* (2022 OFSTED focused visit).

Participation in individual plans and support; valued, visible and included in communities.

- Our Time Youth Forum has local and national visibility and produces regular newsletter.
- Well-established parent and young person SEND Ambassador scheme supports families to access impartial advice; Ambassadors attended 45 events from April 2023 - February 2024. Young person SEND Ambassador training empowers engagement with peers to raise awareness of post-16 options.
- Autism cards designed by young people to use in situations where communication may be difficult. These have had positive impact in highlighting hidden disabilities; over 2000 cards issued.
- Established weekly dedicated sessions for young people with SEND at a youth centre, in response to feedback.
- SENDIASS caseworkers worked with 1,192 families in 2023; 76 young people received support from the Young Peoples Advice Centre; 99% of service users surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied that SENDIASS was neutral from the Local Authority (LA); 94% reported having a better understanding about SEN & the support their child was entitled to.
- Regular EHCP workshops are delivered by SENDIASS; most parents agree or strongly agree that this helps them understand more about EHCPs & the assessment process.
- Travel training made more readily available by increased Travel Training offer with parental advice.
- Wide ranging & well-attended short breaks offer and holiday offer.
- Parent Carer Forum active membership has grown from 85 to 245.
- Commitment to further improving the Local Offer.

Leaders commission services & provision to meet the needs & aspirations of children & young people, including alternative provision; evaluate services and make improvements.

- Decisions relating to needs assessment, provision, & placements, & decisions on joint funding are made by the multi-agency SEN panel.
- Joint decision-making on packages by Continuing Care (NHS) & Personal Care (social care) since 2022 has led to clearer & more holistic packages, with opportunities for families to attend the funding panel with their social worker.
- A range of joint initiatives are underway: Pilot Additionally Resourced Provision to address shortfalls in specialist placements; and the Phoenix Specialist Classroom pilot - a multi-agency project led by Phoenix School supported by the LA, Bart's Health, NHS NEL & schools.
- We were successful in our bid to open a new 5-19 alternative provision Free School with the Mulberry School's Trust.
- Our commissioned alternative provision is recognised as being an example of best practice.
 - The LGA peer review noted that the fair access procedures *work well resulting in appropriate placements of 'hard to place' young people*, commending the *strong multi-agency offer within the London East Alternative Provision (LEAP) provision*.
 - 70-80% of pupils at LEAP are reintegrated into mainstream schools.

Leaders are ambitious for & actively engage with children & young people; there is an accurate, shared understanding of needs.

Strong, well-established partnerships supported by robust governance arrangements.

- *Senior council leaders are visible and accessible, and both schools and parents commented on how their leadership has driven change.* (LGA peer review)
- DCS chairs the SIB, which includes parent and young person representation.
- Projects and support to ensure our young people can access employment opportunities.
 - Since 2021, 62% of our most vulnerable young people referred to the Tower Project & Tower JET Services have progressed into employment.
 - 80% of interns on the Queen Mary University of London Project SEARCH programme successfully transitioned into employment with a 100% retention rate after 3 months.
 - Council-based apprenticeship programme for young people with SEND established.
 - *Let's Work* event attended by over 300 young people with SEND & 30 employers.
- *You Said, We Did* report allows leaders to feedback to young people & parents on changes made in response to their comments.
- SEND Annual Report is commissioned by the SIB & facilitates multi-agency accountability.
- Seeking, listening to, working with voices of young people with SEND is embedded as an area of strength.