

SUMMARY OF THE SCHOOLS WHITE PAPER – MARCH 2026

The **2026 Schools White Paper**, titled **Every Child Achieving and Thriving**, sets out the UK government's long-term plan to reform the school system in **England**. It focuses on improving **standards, inclusion, attendance, and support for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND** (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities).

The white paper sets a **10-year vision for the English school system**, aiming to improve standards while creating a **more inclusive system that supports disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND**.

Below is a **clear summary of the key points**.

1. Reform of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

One of the **biggest parts of the white paper** is reforming the SEND system.

Key proposals:

- More **support for children with SEND in mainstream schools** rather than specialist settings.
- Introduction of **Individual Support Plans (ISPs)** for pupils with SEND in schools.
- A **four-tier system of support**:
 - Universal
 - Targeted
 - Targeted Plus
 - Specialist.
- **EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans)** remain for children with the most complex needs.
- New **“Experts at Hand” services** (e.g., educational psychologists and therapists) available to schools.

Funding:

- £1.6 billion for inclusive SEND provision.
- £1.8 billion for specialist support teams.

Implementation is expected **from around 2029 onwards**.

2. Reducing the Attainment Gap

The government aims to **halve the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and others**.

Key measures:

- Changes to **school funding based on disadvantage**.
 - More support for pupils from **low-income families**.
 - Regional initiatives such as **“Mission North East”** and **“Mission Coastal”** to improve outcomes in struggling areas.
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3. Improving School Attendance

The white paper sets a **national attendance target**:

- Recover **20 million lost school days each year** by 2028/29.
- Equivalent to **about 100,000 more pupils attending school regularly**.

Schools will also be expected to work more closely with parents to improve attendance.

4. Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Measures to address the **teacher shortage** include:

- Incentives of **up to £15,000 for headteachers** to work in challenging areas.
 - New initiatives to recruit **6,500 additional teachers**.
 - Improved **maternity pay for teachers** starting in 2027–28 to help retain staff.
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5. More Information for Parents

The government plans to introduce **“School Profiles”**.

These will show:

- Attendance data
- Exam results
- Enrichment opportunities
- Other key information for parents.

The paper also proposes **minimum standards for communication with parents**.

6. School System Structure and Collaboration

The white paper encourages **greater collaboration between schools**, including:

- Working in **multi-academy trusts (MATs)**.
 - Stronger oversight and accountability of trusts.
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