SEND Funding Gaps: How Schools Can Advocate for Better Support

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We are all too familiar with the growing gap between the needs of our pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and the funding available to support them. Despite government promises of increased investment, many schools continue to struggle to provide the necessary resources, interventions, and specialist staff required to meet the needs of SEND students.

The Reality of SEND Provision

The number of pupils identified as having SEND has risen to over 1.49 million, but the funding allocated to support these children has not kept pace with demand. Schools are frequently forced to make difficult decisions, often delaying assessments, reducing support staff, or cutting back on essential interventions. For many students, this means falling behind their peers and not receiving the education they deserve.

Leadership in Action: What Schools Can Do Now

While we cannot solve the funding crisis on our own, school leaders can take specific actions to ensure that the needs of our SEND pupils are met.

- **Utilize Available Grants and Funding**: The government has announced an additional £2.6 billion in SEND funding as part of the 2024-2025

spending review, specifically targeted at increasing the number of specialist places in schools and improving access to mental health services. School leaders should work with local authorities to ensure they are accessing the maximum amount of funding available to them.

- **Implement the SEND Green Paper Reforms**: The government's **SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper** outlines several reforms aimed at improving the efficiency of SEND services, including streamlining the assessment process and increasing collaboration between schools and local authorities. School leaders should familiarize themselves with these reforms and advocate for their implementation within their local authority.
- **Access Training for SEND Staff**: Ensuring that your SEND staff have access to high-quality professional development is key to improving outcomes for pupils. The **National Award for SEN Coordination (NASENCO)** offers training for Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) that equips them with the knowledge and skills to lead effective SEND provision in schools. Leaders should invest in this type of training to ensure their staff are well-prepared to meet the challenges ahead.
- **Engage with Local SEND Forums**: Collaboration is key when it comes to addressing SEND challenges. School leaders should engage with local SEND forums and parent groups to ensure they are part of the broader conversation about SEND provision in their area. These forums can be invaluable in advocating for better funding and resources while also providing a platform for sharing best practices.

While the funding shortfall remains a significant challenge, school leaders can take steps to ensure they are making the most of the resources available to them and advocating for the support their SEND pupils need.