



Developing an Inclusion Strategy

(IMF Guidance, June 2026)

Purpose

This guidance explains how schools should plan, use, and evidence their Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF) through an Inclusion Strategy.

Applies to school leaders, governors, and trusts.

Strategy must be published by 31 December 2026

Must show:

- How funding is used
- What barriers are addressed
- Intended impact on pupils

Core Aim

To build a system where:

- All pupils receive high-quality, adaptive teaching
- Schools provide early intervention
- Inclusion is embedded across the whole school, not as an add-on

What Your Strategy Must Cover

Your inclusion strategy should include:

- Barriers to learning in your school
- Actions/interventions funded (universal + targeted)
- Expected outcomes and impact
- Review of previous year
- Budgeted use of IMF funding



Foundation: The 7 Principles of Inclusion

All spending must link to these:

- Leadership & governance
- Early, evidence-based support
- High-quality adaptive teaching
- Enrichment opportunities
- Safe, inclusive culture
- Family & service partnerships
- Accessible environments

Universal vs Targeted Approach

Universal Offer (Priority)

- Focus first on whole-school inclusive practice
- Aim: meet more needs without escalation
- Built on high-quality teaching and systems

Most schools should start here

Targeted Support (Where needed)

For pupils needing more than universal provision

Examples:

- Small group interventions
- Pre-teaching vocabulary
- Language support

Must:

- Align with curriculum
- Avoid fragmented learning experiences



The 5-Step Strategy Process

1. Identify Barriers

- Look beyond formal SEND labels:
- Classroom observation
- Assessment data
- Attendance/behaviour
- Pupil & parent voice
- Local/national trends

2. Use Evidence

Draw on:

- EEF guidance and research
- DfE best practice examples
- Proven interventions

Key message: don't guess—use evidence

3. Develop the Strategy

Your plan should:

- Build on existing strengths
- Target most impactful priorities
- Set clear, measurable outcomes

Focus on doing fewer things well, not everything at once

4. Deliver & Monitor

- Treat implementation as a process, not an event
- Train staff properly
- Track impact continuously

5. Evaluate & Sustain

- Review impact annually
- Adjust approach
- Embed successful practice long-term



Key Strategic Messages

Focus on impact, not activity

Prioritise strategies that:

- Remove common barriers
- Improve outcomes for many pupils

High-quality teaching is central

- Biggest lever for improving outcomes
- Especially for pupils with SEND

Start small, build strong

- Prioritise a few high-impact actions
- Scale once embedded

An effective inclusion strategy is:

- *Data-informed (knows the barriers)*
- *Evidence-based (uses what works)*
- *Focused (few priorities, done well)*
- *Whole-school (not just SEND team)*
- *Accountable (published and reviewed)*

Whole-school responsibility

Strategy should involve:

- SLT
- SENCO
- Teachers
- Governors

Practical Implementation Tips

A strong strategy will:

- Combine IMF + core budget (incl. SEN funding)
- Be cohort-driven, not label-driven
- Be rooted in evidence and data
- Be reviewed annually
- Be transparent to parents and Ofsted