



Inclusion Mainstream Funding 2026–2027: Inclusion, Attendance, and Belonging Cannot Sit in Separate Boxes

A Strategic Briefing for Trust Leaders and Headteachers

The **new Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF)** announcement and guidance feels significant and intentional. It signals a shift where intervention and inclusion must be identified earlier and embedded directly into the mainstream offer. This is not merely another initiative; it reflects a profound evolution in education.

All schools must publish their Inclusion and Accessibility Strategy by December 31st, 2026.

The DfE is now prioritising:

- Early intervention & Inclusive mainstream practice
- Belonging and participation over punitive attendance metrics
- Leadership accountability and Sustainable systems

The Disconnected, Not the Disengaged

In our years of working with young people isolated from their school communities, we have found that those struggling with attendance are rarely disengaged from learning entirely - they are disconnected more from the experience of school. This includes medically absent pupils, those experiencing EBSNA, and students awaiting specialist support.

The challenge for school and trust leaders is clear:



How do we maintain connection and belonging whilst wider support is being implemented?

With close to 2,000 AV1 telepresence units currently utilised across the UK, we see that the strongest approaches are proactive and relational. They protect peer connection and create "gentler" reintegration pathways before disengagement becomes entrenched.

The Anatomy of a Robust Inclusion Strategy

By December 31st, your published statement must articulate exactly how your funding removes barriers to mainstream education. To satisfy governor, trustee, and Ofsted scrutiny, an effective plan should address:

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- **Proactive Intervention:** Identifying and meeting early on commonly occurring, predictable needs – such as medical absence or EBSA – the moment a student's connection to school starts to become strained.
- **Measurable and Evidencable Impact:** Interventions and systems that provide inspectors hard, evidence-informed data that tracks and proves your strategy is actively helping students back into the physical classroom.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Inclusion provision must be central to long-term planning, and both operationally realistic and financially sustainable without relying entirely on high-cost or crisis-led investment.

Mapping AV1 to the 7 IMF Principles

Alongside these core considerations, your published strategy must align to the 7 IMF Themes of Activity.

Here AV1 can serve as a practical and effective solution to anchor the IMF themes into a visible, governed reality.

Alongside these core considerations, your published strategy must align directly with the DfE's **7 Themes of Activity**. The AV1 can serve as a practical and effective solution to anchor these IMF themes into a visible, governed reality across your Trust:

- **Ambitious Leadership:** Moves leaders beyond passive observation into strategic, data-driven inclusion planning. By embedding telepresence into the School Improvement Plan, leadership teams deliver a measurable, governed reality of "continuous consideration."



- **Evidence-Based Support:** Facilitates early intervention. AVI allows schools to implement targeted support at the point of emerging need, creating the stability that makes wider therapeutic interventions more effective.
- **High-Quality Teaching:** Allows absent students to access live, adaptive teaching in real-time. It preserves familiar routines and teacher relationships, ensuring the "Universal Offer" truly is for everyone.
- **Provision Beyond the Classroom:** Because AVI is mobile, students can "attend" lunch, assemblies, and social clubs, addressing the "Belonging" mandate even when they cannot be in the room.
- **Safe & Respectful Culture:** Actively reduces the "anxiety gap" of prolonged absence. It provides a respectful window for staff to monitor a child's readiness for reintegration without the pressure of physical presence.
- **Strong Partnerships:** Provides a tangible pathway for families, reducing anxiety and evidencing a joined-up approach between the school and the home.
- **Inclusive Environments:** Acts as a "sensory bridge." It allows students to regulate their own environment and meet specific sensory needs from a safe space while remaining socially and academically integrated.

The Economics of Inclusion: A "Spend to Save" Model

Strategic use of the IMF is about building long-term financial resilience. Trust and school leaders must prove value for money and cost-avoidance.

- **Sustainable Asset vs. Recurring Cost:** External 1-to-1 tuition is a high-cost, recurring drain on budgets. An AVI fleet is a one-time strategic investment from your IMF allocation that serves multiple cohorts over 5+ years.
- **Reducing AP Escalation:** By deploying telepresence as a proactive "Early Intervention" tool, schools can often prevent the total disengagement that leads to high-cost, external Alternative Provision placements.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Managing fragmented home-schooling is administratively heavy. Integrating telepresence into your "Ordinarily Available Provision" creates a streamlined, centralised inclusion pathway.



Strategic Metric	Traditional Reactive Model	IMF-Aligned Strategic Model (AV1)
Response	Waits for "persistent absence" (90%).	Responds to the "early wobble."
Connection	Home tutoring in isolation. Group tuition online. External AP placements.	Continuous peer & classroom connection.
Cost	High recurring 1-to-1 tuition fees, with no end in sight.	One-time investment in reusable equipment.
Visibility	Behind-the-scenes "siloesd" support.	Public, transparent inclusion strategy.
Goal	Managing Absence.	Architecting Presence.

Technology as a Bridge, Not a Replacement

Thoughtful use of telepresence provides the impact and visible evidence that a school is committed to its "Universal Offer." As you finalise your 2026 Inclusion Strategy, consider this: Is your commitment to participation visible to your students, your families, and Ofsted/Inspectorate

Book a time with our education experts today to see how AV1 can anchor your mainstream Inclusion Strategy before the December 31st deadline.