

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS' FORUM
HELD on 16th DECEMBER 2025
VIRTUAL MS TEAMS MEETING
(10:00AM TO 12:00PM)

Present	Maintained Primary Representative	
	Scott Halliwell (SH) (Co Chair)	HT, Southwood Primary School
	Jamie Bell (JB)	HT, Warren Juniors School
	Gill Massar (GM)	HT, William Bellamy Primary School
	Richard November (RN)	HT, Valence Primary School
	Simon Abeledo (SA)	HT, Rush Green Primary School
	Lauren Pearce (LP)	HT, Parsloes Primary School
	Sara Rider (SR)	HT, Monteagle Primary School
	Maintained Secondary Representatives	
	Tony Roe (TR)	HT, Barking Abbey School
	Lisa Keane (LK)	HT, Jo Richrdson Community School
	Maintained All-through (A/T)	
	Russell Taylor	HT, Robert Clack School
	Governor Representatives (1 Pri & 1 Sec)	
	Vacant	
	Vacant	
	Academy & Free Primary	
	Sarah Kinnaird (SK)	HT, Goresbrook Primary School
	Academy & Free Secondary	
	Andy Roberts (AR)	HT, Riverside School
	Academy & Free Schools (A/T)	
	Roger Leighton (RL)	Chief Executive, Partnership Learning
	Maintained Special Schools Representative	
	Jo Long (JL)	HT, Trinity School
	Maintained PRU Representative	
	Cathy Stygal (CS)	HT, Mayesbrook Park School
	Early Years Representative	
	John Trow-Smith (JTS)	Early Years, Local Authority
	Trade Union Representative (shared role)	
	Dominic Byrne (DB)	NUT
	John McGill (JMcG)	NASUWT
	Church of England Representative	
	David Huntingford (DH)	HT, William Ford C of E Junior School
	Catholic Representative	
	Clare Cattle	HT, All Saints Catholic School
	14-19 Representative	
	Natalie Davison	Principal, BDC

Also present: Jane Hargreaves (JH) – Commissioning Director, Education; Jessica McQuaid (JMcQ) - Head of School Performance and Partnerships Councillor Elizabeth Kangethe (CEK) – Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment and School Improvement; Kofi Adu (KA) – Head of Finance, Local Authority Finance; Florence Fadahunsi (FF) – Senior Finance Business Partner, Local Authority Finance; Gurmit Kaur (GKa) – Schools Senior Accountant, Local Authority Finance; Kamber Qema (KQ) - Accounting Technician Apprentice; Kwesi Adobah (KAd) - Principal Accountant; Amrita Kaur (AK) - Schools Senior Accountant; Ronan Fox (RF), John McGill (JMcG) – NASUWT, Dominic Byrne (DB) – NUT, Rikke Damsgaard (RD) – Strategic Lead for Early Years and Childcare); Clare Cross (CC) - Sydney Russell School, Simon Abeledo (SA) - Rush Green School, Tracey Whittington (TW) Beam County Primary; Mairead Pryor (MP) Furze Infants; ~~James Smith (JS) Thames View Junior School, Holly Wolf (HW) Mayesbrook Park~~; Bei Braithwaite-Cotton (BBC) – Local Authority Minute Clerk.

Roger Leighton chaired the meeting

1.0	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u>				
	John Trow-Smith,				
2.0	<u>DECLARATION OF INTEREST</u> None				
3.0	<u>MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</u>				
	The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2025 were confirmed as accurate.				
	Update on previous actions:				
	No	Date of Meeting	Item No	Action	Owner
	1	21.10.2025	7.5	Early Years Capital funding data to share with RN before the next meeting. Update: the total required places that the LA targeted 283 early years places but achieved 318, exceeding the target by 35 places, and listed the nurseries and PVIs where expansion occurred.	KA/RD
		21.10.2025	9.3	Clarify the planned expansion status and PAN for Thames View Junior and other schools listed for growth funding, consulting with Andy Carr and the capital team, and report back to the forum. Update: Complete	
	REPORT FROM HEAD OF FINANCE/GROUP FINANCE MANAGER				
4	Update on Schools, Central, High Needs, and Early Years Block				
4.1	The DfE has published a revised allocation for the 2025/26 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), in November 2025. The current DSG allocation for LBBD is a total of £399.392m				

across the four blocks (excluding academy recoupment). Adjustments have been made to the latest allocation published on the 24th of November. There has been an increase of **£0.411m** to the overall DSG allocation.

The updates from November are detailed in the table below.

2025/26 DSG allocation as at July 2025				2025/26 DSG allocation as at Nov 2025			
	Before recoup't £000's (a)	Less recoup't & Rates £000's (b)	Net £000's (c) = (a) - (b)	Before recoup't £000's (d)	Less recoup't & Rates £000's (e)	Net £000's (f) = (d) - (e)	Movement (g) = (f) - (c)
Schools Block	299,589	86,875	212,714	299,589	86,875	212,714	0
Central Block	2,237	0	2,237	2,237	0	2,237	0
High Needs	62,245	5,238	57,669	62,233	5,238	56,995	-12
Early Years	34,910	0	34,910	35,333	0	35,333	423
	398,462	92,114	306,867	399,392	92,114	307,278	411

Table - Updated DSG Grant Allocation for 2025/26 (in £'000s)

4.2 There has been an increase of **£0.423m** in the Early Years funding. This change is due to an increase in take up of the 2-year-old entitlement for working parents.

4.3 The High Needs allocation has been reduced by **£0.012m** due to the revised import/export adjustment. The schools block and Central Services schools block remain unchanged.

Recommendation: School Forum are asked to:

Note the updated 2025/26 DSG funding.

All noted. No action required from the schools' forum at this time.

5 DSG projected outturn – 2025/26

5.1 The table outlines the projected DSG outturn for 2025/26. The latest forecast indicates a total expenditure of **£310.378m** resulting in an overall deficit of **£3.1m**. All the funding blocks apart from the High Needs budget are anticipated to breakeven at year end. The budget pressure of **£3.1m** on high needs block is due to growth and demand for special school places, demand for home tuition service, post-16 placements, SEND commissioned services, mainstream top up payments and historic top-up payments.

5.2 The DSG reserve brought forward from 2024/25 is **£1.158m**. The net overspend on the DSG of **£3.1m** has resulted in an overall projected net deficit of **£1.942m**. This is an adverse movement of **£0.084m** from the position reported in October.

5.3

	Dec-25			Oct-25	
	2025/26 DSG Funding £'000	2025/26 Projected Outturn Nov 2025 £'000	Surplus / (Deficit) £'000	Surplus / (Deficit) £'000	Movement from October £'000
Schools Block (ISB)	212,714	212,714	0	0	0
Central Services Block	2,237	2,237	0	0	0
High Needs Block	56,995	60,095	(3,100)	(3,016)	(84)
Early Years Block	35,333	35,333	0	0	0
	307,278	310,378	(3,100)	(3,016)	(84)
DSG reserves B/f	*1,158		1,158	1,158	0
Revised DSG Carried Forward - Surplus (Deficit)			(1,942)	(1,858)	(84)

Recommendation (ii): School Forum is requested to:

Note the 2025/26 projected outturn

All noted. No action required from the schools' forum at this time.

6

2025/26 Update on High Needs and Projected Outturn

6.1

The High needs budget continues to be under pressure due to:

-
- increased demand and complex cases of children presenting with SEND
- and the financial pressures schools are facing especially the primary phase in managing these cohort of children.

The table below shows the projected outturn forecast for the year:

2025-26 High Needs Projected Outturn						
High Needs Budget and Outturn	2023/24 Outturn £	2024/25 Outturn £	2025/26 Budget £	2025/26 Outturn Forecast £	+Surplus (Deficit) Month 7	+Surplus (Deficit) Month 6
Alternative Provision (excl PRU)	3,369,139	4,145,018	4,083,002	4,339,020	(256,018)	(300,000)
ARP Funding	9,789,848	10,001,189	10,276,640	10,107,353	169,287	(454,320)
Education Inclusion	1,945,955	1,866,872	2,392,321	2,395,480	(3,159)	0.00
SEN - Non maintained	5,501,905	3,901,597	3,993,776	2,894,541	1,099,235	0.00
High Needs Top Ups - OB	2,661,046	3,109,263	2,939,727	3,814,224	(874,497)	0.00
SEND (Commissioned Services)	1,369,200	2,045,491	1,016,317	2,146,174	(1,129,857)	0.00
Legal fees & CiC Residential Education	839,121	1,219,200	1,460,850	1,260,747	200,103	0.00
HN Top Ups - Post 16	2,664,888	3,977,999	4,055,150	5,693,454	(1,638,304)	0.00
Mainstream Top Ups	5,474,350	5,175,066	5,750,000	6,801,770	(1,051,770)	0.00
Provisional Payments	2,790,000	2,440,000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Aspire Vitual School	380,035	377,667	382,324	421,752	(39,428)	0.00
Initiatives (Rapid Response)	903,872	817,251	791,917	791,917	0.00	0.00
Special School Funding	14,438,249	16,930,529	18,175,947	17,339,981	835,966	(1,261,449)
EY Portage & Youth Service	471,527	404,597	395,049	530,049	(135,000)	0.00
Wordfirst & Salt Projects	570,315	1,130,509	568,000	568,000	0.00	0.00

Gatekeeping		620,580	713,651	0.00	713,651	0.00
Historic Pressure			0	1,000,000	(1,000,000)	(1,000,000)
Total Expenditure	53,169,450	58,162,829		60,104,461	(3,109,790)	(3,015,769)
Total Budget	49,836,711	51,567,397		56,994,671		
Variance (Overspend)	(3,332,739)	(6,595,432)		(3,109,790)		

Table – High Needs Outturn

6.2

The pressures in the budget are driven by the following:

- Growth & Demand for Special school places.
- Demand for Home Tuition Outreach service
- Historic top-up payments
- Post 16 placements
- SEND commissioned Services
- Mainstream top-up payments for LBBD schools

6.3

Growth & Demand for Special school places

The table below shows the increased commissioned places within local special schools for 25/26. Oxlow Bridge is a new special school that opened in September 2025, specifically for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, capacity will increase to 90 in the coming years.

Special Schools Commissioned Numbers 2025-26			
	24-25	25-26	Growth
Pathways	60	72	12
Riverside Bridge	210	246	36
Trinity	303	320	17
Oxlow Bridge	0	30	30
Total	573	668	95

6.4

Post 16 placements

There is ongoing increase in demand for post 16 SEND places. The table below shows the trend in demand for post 16 places.

Post 16 Special Schools & College Places	2024/25	2025/26	% Increase
Post 16 College Places	330	352	7%
Post 16 Special School places	63	59	-6%
Grand Total	393	411	5%

6.5

SEND commissioned Services

Barking and Dagenham continue to face significant financial pressures in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND, particularly due to a sharp increase in demand from families newly arriving in the borough.

6.6

The requirement to secure interim placements—often at short notice—has led to

a substantial rise in expenditure. This is driven by unprecedented levels of demand and the high number of children and young people moving into the area who require specialist provision.

6.7 The SEND Code of Practice 2015 sets out a clear statutory duty for local authorities to secure suitable education for all children and young people with SEND, ensuring their needs are met without delay. When a child or young person with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan moves into Barking and Dagenham from another authority, the previous authority must transfer the EHC plan to the new authority on the day of the move, or within 15 working days if prior notice was not given. Upon transfer, Barking and Dagenham becomes responsible for maintaining the plan and securing the special educational provision specified within it, as well as arranging interim tuition if a suitable placement is not immediately available. This statutory duty, combined with lagged funding mechanisms and a shortage of local specialist places, means the borough must often resort to costly interim solutions to uphold its legal obligations, further stretching already limited resources.

6.8 The High Needs working group met on 2nd December 2025 and reviewed the in-year position and ongoing pressures. The group also discussed the following:

- New membership and new terms of reference for the group.
- Appointment of a new chair
- Funding model for mainstream top-ups for non-EHCP pupils.

6.9 Update on Mainstream top-up funding for non-EHCP pupils

The table below shows the funding position for mainstream top-up payments.

Distribution of Mainstream Top-Up Funding		
Top-up Budget	5,750,000	
Central Services Savings	1,004,332	
Total funding Available		6,754,332
EHCP Payments (30th June)	-4,149,755	
EHCP Payments (July - Oct)	-253,877	
Total EHCP Payments		-4,403,632
Distribute Equally to Non-EHCP		2,350,700

- Budget Allocation for the year is £5,750,000
- One-off in year savings from centrally managed High needs services is £1,004,322
- Total budget available for top-up payment is £6,754,332
- Payments made for 792 pupils with EHCP @ 30 June 2025 was £4,149,755
- Further payments for 61 pupils (53 prim & 8 sec) issued with EHCP between July – October will be paid. (£253,877).
- Balance available for distribution to non-EHCP pupils is 2,350,700. This amount will be distributed equally to 738 primary pupils only. This is the preferred option by the HN working group.

- A second option was considered, which involved distributing the balance of £2,350,700 to the number of non-EHCP applications above 1% of respective school's population. This option was not preferred.

Recommendation (iii): Schools forum is requested to:

- (a) Note and comment on the 2025/26 High Needs outturn position
- (b) Note the distribution of mainstream top-up funding for pupils with EHCP & Non-EHCP.

All noted. No action required from the schools' forum at this time

Comments

- **TR** asked about discrepancies between month 6 and month 7 forecasts and questioned why the budget for SEND Commission services was set at £1 million when actual spending has been closer to £2 million for both the previous and current years and what the budget should be for the next year, noting a trend of consistent overspending.
- **KA** responded while the budget has stayed at around £1 million, actual spending has been about £2 million for two years in a row. The budget for next year will depend on the available funding and ongoing discussions with the relevant teams, especially if the trend of higher spending continues. Once the overall High Needs budget is confirmed, it will be reviewed whether an increase is needed to reflect these costs.
- **JMcG** asked why the previously reported deficits of £3.3 million for 2023/24 and £6.6 million for 2024/25 were no longer shown, with the current figures only displaying a deficit of £3.1 million. Where the earlier deficits went and why they do not appear in the latest financial summary.
- **KA** responded that the £1 million referenced was a one-off provision for historic top-up payments to other local authorities, which had not been an issue in previous years. The deficits from 2023/24 and 2024/25 were covered by reserves, but these reserves are now nearly exhausted. As a result, unless there is an unexpected positive change, a financial deficit is expected for the current year.
- **JH** commented that spending on SEND Commission services remains high due to the numbers of in-year arrivals eg. 160 new children needing support this year and explained the aim is to avoid reliance on expensive interim agency packages and instead place these young people in regular educational settings. JH suggested the budget should be set realistically but still encourage efforts to reduce costs by focusing on local education provision rather than emergency solutions.
- **RL** confirmed the appointment of Lauren Pearce and Lisa Keene as joint chairs of the High Needs Working Group, representing primary and secondary.
- **JMcG** raised concerns about making savings in the SEND training budget, especially since the number and needs of SEND pupils are rising and questioned how these savings could be made without affecting the vital training teachers need.
- **LK** explained that schools are using their own experts, like highly trained SENCOs, to deliver training. This means staff are still getting the training they need, but it's now provided internally instead of paying for outside trainers.
- **JH** stated the savings are a one-off, temporary measure because of financial pressures. The budget should return to normal next year. During this time, some

	commissioned training is still available, and the priority is to keep children in school. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• KA confirmed the cut is only for this year and that training is continuing in other ways. The budget will be restored next year to minimise impact on schools and staff.																														
7	Early Years Update																														
7.1	The 2026–27 Early Years allocation & funding formula, and provider funding rates will be presented to Schools Forum in January 2026. We are expecting the publication of the EY allocation by DfE, later this month, December 2025.																														
7.2	<p>The following changes to local rules have been applied from 2025-26:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pass-through requirement has increased from 95% to 96% in 2025-26, with plans to move to 97% once the new entitlements are sufficiently embedded.• On the timing of local funding rates to providers: The DfE has abolished the 8-week window within which LAs need to communicate providers’ rates. Instead, from 2025-26, the Early Years funding operational guidance has been updated for all LAs to inform providers of their rates no later than 28th February, this will be formalised in regulations from 2026-27 onwards.																														
7.3	<p>The table below shows the projected forecast for early years for 2025-26.</p> <table><tr><th>2025-26 Early Years Funding</th><th>Budget Allocation</th><th>Actual Spend @ Month 8</th><th>Projected Forecast</th><th>Variance (Deficit) Underspend</th></tr><tr><td>Centrally Retained</td><td>1,396,407</td><td>999,554</td><td>1,609,601</td><td>-213,194</td></tr><tr><td>Total 3&4 YO EY Block</td><td>19,717,931</td><td>11,070,011</td><td>17,405,016</td><td>2,312,915</td></tr><tr><td>Total Entitlement 2 Y O</td><td>8,331,638</td><td>5,805,696</td><td>8,708,544</td><td>-376,906</td></tr><tr><td>Under 2 Funding Total</td><td>5,887,330</td><td>2,772,969</td><td>4,759,453</td><td>1,127,877</td></tr><tr><td>TOTAL EY BLOCK</td><td>35,333,306</td><td>20,648,230</td><td>32,482,614</td><td>2,850,692</td></tr></table>	2025-26 Early Years Funding	Budget Allocation	Actual Spend @ Month 8	Projected Forecast	Variance (Deficit) Underspend	Centrally Retained	1,396,407	999,554	1,609,601	-213,194	Total 3&4 YO EY Block	19,717,931	11,070,011	17,405,016	2,312,915	Total Entitlement 2 Y O	8,331,638	5,805,696	8,708,544	-376,906	Under 2 Funding Total	5,887,330	2,772,969	4,759,453	1,127,877	TOTAL EY BLOCK	35,333,306	20,648,230	32,482,614	2,850,692
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7.4	The provisional forecast is estimated to be circa £2.8m underspend, this is due to low take-up of places for 3- & 4-year-olds and under 2-year-old places.																														
7.5	<p>The service is modelling different options to increase the hourly rate paid to nurseries & Private, Voluntary & Independent providers. This will be presented to schools’ forum for approval at the Spring meeting.</p> <div><p>Recommendation (iv): Schools forum is requested to:</p><p>Note the provisional outturn forecast for Early Years for 2025/26.</p><p><i>All noted. No action required from the schools’ forum at this time.</i></p></div>																														
8	National Funding Formula (NFF) - Indicative Funding 2026/27																														
8.1	On 19 November 2025, the Department for Education announced provisional funding allocations through the National Funding Formula (NFF) for the 2026/27 financial year. Please note that these figures do not include High Needs funding, as details for that allocation will be published later. The total provisional funding for mainstream schools																														

nationally is **£50.9bn**. The comparator figure for 2025/26 was **£48.7bn** which is a 4.6% increase from last year's allocation. The **£50.9bn** incorporates the Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG) and the National Insurance Contributions (NICs) grant, which the DfE previously distributed as separate grants in 2025/26. For 2026/27, these grants have been "rolled into" the NFF to simplify and streamline the funding system

- 8.2** Starting from September 2026, the government have committed to extending the Free School Meals (FSM) to all children in households in receipt of Universal Credit. The DfE is not proposing any changes to the NFF FSM allocation, instead the additional funding for the FSM expansion will be provided through a separate grant.
- 8.3** Local Authorities will continue to determine the funding allocations to individual schools by adopting their own Local Funding Formulae (LFF) but for authorities which are not already mirroring the NFF will be required to move their values at least 10% closer to the NFF values than the previous year.
- 8.4** The 2 grants paid separately in 2025/26 will now be rolled into the core school budget these are:
- **Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG):** – additional funding to support schools with overall costs, including the costs of the school's teacher pay award and the local government services pay award for support staff.
 - **National Insurance Contributions (NICs):** funding to support schools with the increased NICs costs. The DfE provided the grant to support both teachers and support staff as they are both affected by the increase to NICs.
- 8.5** There has been no change to the overall structure of the schools NFF. The funding factors remain the same as for 2025 to 2026. Funding protections will continue to be based on a minimum per pupil level (MPPLs) and a funding floor will be cash flat at 0% so that schools will be protected from cash reductions in their pupil led funding.
- 8.6** The LA will take advantage of the flexibility to model different basic entitlement values to achieve the optimum values to get closest to the NFF cash envelope. The DfE have set minimum and maximum values for the basic entitlement for primary, KS3 & KS4. Keeping within this range of values enforces 'tightening', bringing the local funding formula closer to the NFF.

Factor	2026 to 2027 national funding formula (NFF) value including area cost adjustment (ACA)	2026 to 2027 authority proforma tool (APT) minimum value	2026 to 2027 APT maximum value
Primary basic entitlement	£4,576.71	£4,462.30	£4,691.13
KS3 basic entitlement	£6,403.35	£6,243.26	£6,563.43
KS4 basic entitlement	£7,218.69	£7,038.22	£7,399.15

8.7 The provisional NFF allocation for LBBB Schools block is shown in the table below.

LBBB NFF Allocation	2025-26	2026-27	Change	% change
Pupil Nos*	40,519	40,641	122	0.30%
Primary Unit of Funding (PUF)	£6,165	£6,427	£262	4.25%
Secondary Unit of Funding (SUF)	£8,351	£8,732	£381	4.56%
LA Allocation excl growth & premises factors	£285,227,768	£299,158,150	£13,930,382	4.88%
LA Allocation through premises funding	£11,721,990	£11,952,138	£230,148	1.96%
Allocations through additional grants	£7,386,954	£0	-£7,386,954	
Total SB baseline (excluding growth)	£304,336,712	£311,110,288	£6,773,576	2.23%
Baseline per pupil (excluding growth)	£7,511	£7,655		0.01%
Provisional % change in 2026/27 DSG Baseline			2.23%	

Table – Estimated provisional allocation.

**NOR is yet to be updated: we are waiting the release of 26/27 Pupil numbers via APT (Authority Proforma Tool).*

Recommendation (v): Schools forum are requested to:

Note the National Funding Formula allocation for 2026/27

All noted. No action required from the schools' forum at this time.

Comments

- A number of members raised concerns about the accuracy of the figures shown for national funding percentage. There was particular confusion over the reported increase for per pupil funding, which was said to be as low as 0.01%. Many felt this did not match other calculations, which suggested the increase should be closer to 1.9%.
- **RL** emphasised the importance of accurately recording the reality, noting that the initial figure omitted multiplying by 100, resulting in an incorrect percentage. The correct increase is 1.92% and was agreed by members.
- **KA** further clarified that, although the error was identified and will be corrected, this does not affect the actual allocations schools will receive.
- **SH** asked about the extension of free school meals to Universal Credit recipients and its impact on pupil premium funding,
- **KA** confirmed that official guidance is awaited and any changes will be communicated once available.

9 Schools Block Funding Formula- 2026/27

9.1 LBBB will continue to use its restricted local budget setting powers, to set the 2026/27 individual school's budget. The national funding factor rates will be adopted across all the mandatory factors except for the basic entitlement (AWPU). The DfE have set limits on the amounts that can be allocated to Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU), this ensures a move closer to the NFF.

9.2 Pending the publication of the Authority Pro-Forma Tool (APT), we will consult schools on the principles to be adopted for setting 2026/27 school level budget. The principles are the same as previous years and are stated below:

	<p>(a) To Apply National Funding Formula (NFF) rates for all funding factors including area cost adjustment with the exception of basic entitlement (AWPU)</p> <p>(b) To adjust the AWPU rates to remain within the cash limit and to achieve a ratio to shift funding between primary and secondary phases or as close to it as possible.</p> <p>(c) To apply no capping and scaling unless necessary to allow the formula to operate in a reasonable, fair and stable manner. This means that schools will retain all their gains under the formula. However, it may be necessary to apply capping and scaling to ensure that the formula remains affordable.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Recommendation (vi): Schools forum is requested to:</p> <p>(a) Note the principles to be consulted with schools for the funding formula calculations</p> <p>(b) Note deadline for consultation with schools will be on 19 January 2026.</p> <p><i>All noted. No action required from the schools' forum at this time.</i></p> </div> <p>Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members raised concerns about the consultation process for school funding. LK asked whether the consultation genuinely influences decisions or if the local authority has already made up its mind. It was noted that the voting process may favour primary schools due to their greater numbers. KA explained that while they have flexibility to adjust funding between primary and secondary phases, the final decision must fit within government guidance and financial limits. TR felt previous consultations offered limited genuine choice, as some funding options presented were unaffordable. KA clarified that the process is required by government regulations and provides schools with advance notice of their indicative allocations, even if it doesn't always feel like a true consultation.
10	2025/26 Growth Fund
10.1	<p>Growth funding is allocated to Schools to manage an increase in pupil numbers in 2025/26 before the lagged funding catches up. The DFE allocate growth funding based on the differences between primary and secondary pupils at school within each Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) between the October 2023 and October 2024 census figures. Only positive MSOA growth will be used in calculating the number of pupils to be funded. The criteria set by LBBd for the growth fund is as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support growth in Pre-16 pupil numbers to meet basic need. Support additional classes needed to meet the infant class size regulation. Meet the costs of new schools. Where a school or academy has agreed with the local authority to provide an extra class to meet basic need in the area (either as a bulge class or as an ongoing commitment).

10.2 The 2025/26 DFE growth fund allocation is **£1.302m** and the growth fund requirement, following the admissions data being revised is **£0.451m**. The rate of growth allocation per pupil is **£1,771.05** and **£2,650.94** for primary and secondary schools respectively.

10.3 The Boroughs admissions team has confirmed the expansion in class sizes for September 2025, as detailed in the table below. This growth reflects the revised allocations for schools that meet the criteria for the Growth Fund. The Department for Education (DfE) rates referenced in section 7.2 have been applied to the updated growth figures.

School	Prim Nos	Sec Nos	Prim. Growth	Sec. Growth	Total Growth Allocation 2025/26 incl ACA
			£1,771	£2,651	
Greatfields Secondary School		30		£79,528	£79,528
Riverside Primary (Free School)	60		£106,263		£106,263
Robert Clack School of Science	60	60	£106,263	£159,056	£265,319
Payment to Academies (Apr 25-Aug25)					
Riverside Primary (Free School)			£66,429		£66,429
Riverside School				£49,714	£49,714
Greatfields Secondary School				£49,714	£49,714
Total	120	90	£278,955	£338,013	£616,968
DFE Growth Fund Allocation 2025/26					£1,302,413
Falling Rolls					£373,794
Surplus/(Shortfall)Growth Allocation to be held in contingency					£311,651

Table: 2025/26 Revised Growth Fund

10.4 The following changes have been made to the provisional growth fund allocation reported at last Schools forum:

- Eastbrook – planned expansion in the secondary school of 90 did not materialise as the school is currently operating at lower PAN.
- Thames View Junior School – there is no real growth at the school as the school is operating at a lower PAN across its year groups.
- Greatfields Primary School – The growth for this new school will be included in the APT rather than via the LA growth fund as the school qualifies as a new and growing school.

10.5 Following the changes outlined above, the total Growth Fund requirement has decreased to **£0.616m**. Of this, **£0.165m** has been allocated to three academies (as detailed in Table 7.3) to cover growth costs for the period April to August 2025. The Schools Forum is now required to determine how the remaining surplus of **£0.685m** should be utilised. It should be noted that, as reported in October, **£0.373m** had previously been earmarked for falling rolls.

Recommendation (vii): Schools forum are requested to note:

- (1) Approve the revised growth fund allocations for 2025/26.
- (2) Note that falling rolls allocation to be funded from the growth funding balance.

Approved and Noted by Schools Forum pending clarification on Eastbrook

11	Charging Arrangement for Permanently Excluded Pupils					
11.1	<p>The report is to update Schools Forum on the funding arrangements for permanently excluded pupils.</p> <p>Local authorities are responsible for adjusting the budget shares of mainstream maintained schools if a pupil is permanently excluded, so that funding follows the child.</p> <p>Academies are also covered by the same policy once a formal agreement with the Council has agreed.</p> <p>Please refer to Appendix B for full details of the charging arrangement to be introduced from September 2025/26.</p> <div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Recommendation (viii): Schools forum are requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Comment & agree the arrangements for making funding adjustments for permanently excluded pupils from maintained schools and academies; and (2) Note that, following the agreement, the LA will contact each academy and free school to enter into an Exclusions Agreement. <p><i>Agreed & noted by Schools Forum.</i></p> </div>					
12	Any Other Business					
	Nothing to report.					
6	Date of Next Meeting					
	27 th January 2026					
7	Action Log					
	No	Date of Meeting	Item No	Action	Owner	
	1	21.10.2025	10.1	Add column to table of a percentage reduction on falling rolls.	Kofi	
	2	16.12.2025	10.4	Check the Eastbrook growth fund allocation with the admissions team and respond to Claire regarding the accuracy of the data.	Kofi	