

## TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOLS' FORUM

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### Notice of Meeting – Schools' Forum

A meeting of the Schools' Forum will be held on **March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 5pm. This will be held virtually using Microsoft Teams, the link will be sent via email.** The agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA		Decision Making
1.	Welcome and apologies. <i>Chair</i>	
2.	Minutes of the meeting held on 16 <sup>th</sup> January 2025, including matters arising. <i>Chair</i>	
3.	Schools' Forum Membership Update <i>Chair</i>	
4.	DSG Budget Monitoring 2024-25 Summary <i>DSG Finance Business Partner</i>	
5.	DSG High Needs Budget 2025-26 <i>Strategic Finance Business Partner</i>	
6.	Falling Roles 2025-26 <i>DSG Finance Business Partner</i>	✓
7.	Schools Forum proposed Meeting Dates and indicative agendas. <i>DSG Finance Business Partner</i>	
8.	Agenda items for next meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DSG Outturn 2024/25</li> <li>• Maintained school balances 2024/25 and budgets 2025/26</li> <li>• Review of the Schools' Forum constitution</li> <li>• Scheme for Financing for Schools update</li> <li>• SEND update</li> </ul>	
9.	Any other business	

Next Meeting: June 26, 2025, at 5pm – To be held virtually via Teams



## Minutes of Schools' Forum Meeting

16 January 2025

### Members Present

Richard Rolfe – Governor at Micklands (Chair); Dave Dymond – Governor at Alfred Sutton (Vice-Chair), Justine McMinn – Head Teacher of EP Collier; Rebecca Brown – Head of Geoffrey Field Juniors; Nikki McVeigh – Head Teacher of Christ the King; Simon Uttley – Head Teacher of Blessed Hugh Faringdon; Jo Budge - Executive Head Teacher of Reading Early Years Schools Federation; Laura Mathews – Head Teacher of Highdown; Claire Willmott – Head of Cranbury College; Karyn Stiles – Business Manager of Blessed Hugh Faringdon; Julia Cottee – Governor at Reading Early Years Schools Federation; Annal Nayyar – Finance Director of Baylis Trust (Reading Girls); Symon Cooke – Head Teacher of The Avenue; Isabelle Sandy – Business Manager of Kendrick; Dorothy Company – Business Manager of King's Academy Prospect; Cathy Woodcock – Finance Director of Reading School; Alison McNamara – NEU

### Apologies

Ita McGullion – Manager of Kennet Day Nursery; John Salberg – Principal of The Wren

### In attendance

Brian Grady – Director of Education; Carly Price – Strategic Lead for SEND; Fiona Hostler – Head of Education Access and Support; Steven Davies – Strategic Finance Business Partner; Grahame Craig – DSG Business Partner; Clare Warren – School Finance Business Partner; Lara Manning – Accountancy Assistant, Vanessa Hurdle – minute taker

	Item	Notes
1	Welcome and apologies – Chair	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Grahame Craig read out the protocol for the virtual meeting and voting was confirmed for:</p> <p>Item 2 – Approval of the previous minutes</p> <p>Item 5 – DSG Schools' Formula 2025/26</p> <p>Item 6 – Central &amp; Early Years' Retained Budgets for 2025/26</p> <p>Recording of the meeting commenced. The recording will be retained until the minutes have been approved</p>
2	Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December	Minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting from 5 December 2024.



	2024 and matters arising - Chair	<p>Matters Arising – RR to contact the Primary Heads’ Association to fill the two vacancies - RR confirmed that he had not yet done this as he had been contacting those members whose membership had expired or was about to expire. Most members wish to remain on the Forum, although there have been a couple of changes to the membership. The membership list will be updated for the March meeting.</p> <p>Electronic Vote re-request to increase funding for School Effectiveness Service – GC confirmed that an email was sent to members, requesting that they replied if there were any abstentions or disagreements. No emails were received so funding for the School Effectiveness Service will be increased by the requested amount.</p>
3	Schools’ Forum Membership Update - Chair	RR will ensure that the membership list is fully up-dated for the next Schools’ Forum meeting. An amendment needs to be made for the new Head Teacher at Cranbury College, Claire Willmott. There are still two Primary Head vacancies.
4	DSG Allocation 2025/26 – DSG Finance Business Partner	<p>Grahame Craig presented</p> <p>GC reminded the Forum that there had been an update on the 2025/26 DSG Allocations at the December meeting and that the DfE intended to include the Teachers’ Pay Grants. This has now been published by the DfE.</p> <p><b><u>Appendix 1</u></b> – This details the changes for 2025/26.</p> <p><b><u>Schools’ Block</u></b> - The Primary Unit of Funding (PUF) has increased by £412.99, whilst the Secondary Unit of Funding (SUF) will rise by £587.48. These figures now include three grants, which were previously paid separately in 2024/25. Primary Pupil numbers have seen a decline to 13,102, whilst Secondary pupil numbers have increased slightly to 8,192.</p> <p>Premises factors have also risen slightly. This is in part due to the National Funding Formula (NFF) factors as well as the NNDR. The Growth Funding has decreased from £1m to £0.75m, but overall the Schools’ Block has increased by £9.7m. The additional grants make up approximately £8m of this figure.</p> <p><b><u>Central Schools’ Block</u></b> – This block has remained stable with a minimal loss of £665, even with the historic elements reducing by 20% each year. This is a reduction of £45k, but the non-historic elements have seen an increase of £44k.</p>



		<p><b><u>High Needs Block</u></b> – The Government confirmed at the last Budget that there would be an additional injection of funding for schools, with some further funding for the High Needs element. Reading will, therefore, receive a £2.1m increase for the High Needs Block. This means that the base rate will now increase by £1,900, and the hospital base rate will also increase. Place funding has remained relatively stable, having only decreased by 0.06p. Place numbers have increased by 275 pupils. The imports/exports figure won't be known until later in the year, but Reading is a net exporter and it is, therefore, very likely that Reading will pay more than £2.7m than has been predicted. GC estimates that this figure will be closer to £3m. Total High Needs Block spending has increased by £2m.</p> <p><b><u>Early Years' Block</u></b> – This block is showing a significant increase of £8m. However, this includes the expansion of the two year old offer, which has greatly increased eligibility and, therefore, the funding required.</p> <p>The 3 and 4 year old rates have increased by 0.16p, the 2 year old rate by 0.30p and the under two year old rate by 0.52p. Pupil Premium has increased by £70, the Disabled Access Fund by £25 and the Maintained Nursery Grant by £124.</p> <p>Overall the DSG is expected to rise by almost £19.5m</p> <p>Isabelle Sandy wondered if there would be any adjustments in funding due to the announced increase in National Insurance that employers will have to pay from April 2025. GC confirmed that the DfE has confirmed that they will be creating a grant that will provide a contribution towards this increase.</p>
5	DSG Schools' Formula 2025/26 – DSG Finance Business Partner	<p>Grahame Craig presented.</p> <p>This paper refers to the Schools' Block funding formula for 2025/26 and a vote will be required to transfer from the Schools' Block to the High Needs Block to fund the RISE Team. Agreement for the Primary and Secondary funding allocations for 2025/26 is also requested. The de-delegations will also be reviewed. This area relates to maintained schools only.</p> <p>GC confirmed that revised NNDR figures have only just been issued.</p> <p><b><u>Schools' Formula for 25/26</u></b> – This has been developed according to the agreement reached at the December 2024 Schools' Forum. This means that Reading has used the highest NFG value, balancing on AWPU and mirroring the National</p>



		<p>Funding Formula (NFF) as closely as possible. Table 1 shows that the Growth Fund will reduce from £1m in 2024/25 to £0.75m in 2025/26. It is expected that the Growth Fund will reduce by £300k to cover Falling Rolls. Reading has received a charge of £0.75m for the new school, River Academy. This has been covered by the Growth Fund. It is currently unknown if any further demand will be made on the Growth Fund in 2025/26.</p> <p>In terms of transferring from the High Needs Block, £484k has been transferred in previous years to pay for inclusion funding. Schools have been consulted with the idea that the transferred funds should be used to fund the RISE Team in 2025/26 instead. There were 13 responses from schools to this request and all responses were positive. The Forum can transfer up to 0.5% from the Schools' Block to the High Needs Block, but Reading is requesting just over 0.4%, which is £564k.</p> <p><b><u>De-delegations</u></b> – This covers the following:</p> <p><b>Behaviour Support</b></p> <p><b>School Improvement</b></p> <p><b>Union Duties</b></p> <p><b>General Duties</b></p> <p>Behaviour Support will remain the same in 2025/26. For the School Improvement Team, it was previously agreed that the funding could be increased. The Union Duties also remain the same but a slight increase of £2k is being requested for the General Duties to cover the increased running costs.</p> <p><b><u>Funding Formula Factors</u></b> – All LAs are required to move towards the NFF and mirror these. Reading has been doing this for several years now, with the exception of basic entitlement (AWPU). Reading now uses this as a balancing item which was agreed by the Forum in December 2024. All factors are mirrored including the lump sum and split site, but the AWPU rates are slightly lower. For Primary, Reading is approximately 0.5% below the NFF rate and 0.8% lower for Secondary.</p> <p><b><u>Minimum Funding Guarantee</u></b> – In previous years, it has been possible to set at 0% to 2%, but for 2025/26 the criteria is - 0.5% to 0%. Reading has used 0%.</p> <p><b><u>Appendix 2</u></b> – Indicative budgets will be sent to schools shortly. Appendix 2 compares the 2024/25 and 2025/26 budgets. The Teachers' Grants that were delivered in 2024/25</p>
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		<p>are shown as a separate item in the table. For the 2025/26 indicative budgets, the figures are based on the pupil numbers in the October 2024 Census. There are a couple of schools which will see their budgets decrease due to a reduction in numbers.</p> <p><b>Voting – Maintained members only are eligible to vote for all items. With regards to the de-delegations, School Improvement is not included.</b></p> <p><b>12 members voted in agreement to all</b></p>
6	<p>Central &amp; Early Years' Retained Budget 2025/26 – Strategic Finance Business Partner</p>	<p>Steve Davies presented.</p> <p>This report relates to both Central and Early Years. SD explained that the Central Schools' Block is services that are provided by the Council. Agreement is needed from the Forum on most elements of Table 2.</p> <p>SD confirmed that no services will be changed and that all statutory requirements will continue to be met. SD reminded members that the historic elements of the Central Block continue to reduce by 20%. All Members are eligible to vote.</p> <p>There are two parts to the Early Year's Block. One of which is the retained element. The biggest change in this area is how much can be retained. In previous years, it was possible to retain 5% of the entitlement block to pay for services relating to Early Years. The entitlement has been increasing quite considerably, especially with the extension of three year old and nine month to two year olds and the 30 hours for working parents from September. The Government has, therefore, decided that the retained element will be reduced to 4% for 2025/26. This is actually still a larger amount to retain than the amount retained in 2024/25.</p> <p>SD confirmed that the payments for 2025/26 have not significantly differed to how the retained element was used in 2024/25. The retained Early Years budget is shown in Table 3.</p> <p>Table 4 shows the rates that will be funded. The LA is funded based on hourly rates. Table 5 shows the hourly rate less the retained amount and it is proposed that these rates should be put in place from April 2025. The Maintained Nursery Schools Supplement Funding and the Disability Access Fund (DAF) cannot be altered and have to be paid out in full. The Early</p>



		<p>Years' Pupil Premium funding has increased from £0.68 to £1.00.</p> <p>In previous years, the retained funding mainly came from the 3 and 4 year old budgets but for 2025/26 the retained funding has been spread more evenly across all three areas – under 2s, 2 year olds and 3 and 4 year olds.</p> <p>The Executive Head of Reading's Early Years' Federation, Jo Budge, questioned why the increase was only 2% for two year olds when schools are being encouraged to take two year olds. Jo reminded the Forum that staffing costs had been at 4.5%. SD explained that he had tried to make the rates as fair as possible and that Table 5 was just a proposal and that he could revert to the previous method that had been used. The Forum doesn't need to approve it, but they can challenge it if they felt that was required. The March Schools' Forum will see how the Early Years' Block is made up in budgetary terms, rather than hourly rates.</p> <p><b>The vote took place for agreement on the Central Block and the Early Years' Retained Block. There were 10 votes in agreement, with one abstention.</b></p>
7	Agenda Items for Next Meeting	<p>The next meeting will be held on <b>20 March 2025 at 5pm</b> as a virtual meeting. <b>(Please note that this is a change of date).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Needs Budget 2025/26</li> <li>• Update Early Years' Budget 2025/26</li> <li>• Falling Rolls Fund 2025/26</li> <li>• Budget Monitoring Summary 2024/25</li> <li>• Agree Schools' Forum meeting dates for 2025/26</li> <li>• Update on SEN strategy</li> </ul>
8	Any Other Business	<p>SD introduced Carly Price, who has replaced Roxanna Glennon as the Strategic Lead for SEND</p> <p>RR thanked all attendees.</p> <p>The meeting finished at 5.43pm.</p>

## Summary of Actions Outstanding

SF Date & Item no.	Action Required	Responsible Person
5/12/24 – 3	Contact Primary Heads' Association to recruit two new members	Richard Rolfe







Agenda Item 3

SCHOOLS' FORUM MEMBERSHIP	Mar-25
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Group / Sub Group	Votes	Position	Name	School	First elected / appointed to SF	Last elected / appointed to SF	Period of office as member	Due for re- election / appointment
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School Members:

Nursery (2)	1	Head teacher	Jo Budge	Reading EY Schools Federation	Jan-17	Jun-22	3 yrs	Jun-25
	2	Governor	Julia Cottee	Reading EY Schools Federation	Mar-20	Mar-23	3 yrs	Mar-26
Maintained Primary (7)	3	Head teacher	Rebecca Brown	Geoffrey Field Junior		Jan-25	3 yrs	Jan-28
	4	Head teacher	Justine McMinn	EP Collier	Nov-13	Jun-22	3 yrs	Jun-25
	5	Head teacher	Nikki McVeigh	Christ the King	Jul-21	Jan-25	3 yrs	Jan-28
	6	Head teacher	Vacant				3 yrs	
	7	Governor	Dave Dymond	Alfred Sutton	Dec-22	Dec-22	3 yrs	Dec-25
	8	Governor *	Richard Rolfe	Micklands	Dec-16	Dec-22	3 yrs	Dec-25
	9	Vacant	Vacant					
Maintained Secondary (1)	10	Head teacher	Simon Utley	Blessed Hugh Faringdon	Jan-17	Jan-25	3 yrs	Jan-28
Academy Primary (2)	11	Vacant						
	12	Academy Member	Howard Seymour	Churchend	Mar-20	Mar-20	3 yrs	Mar-23
Academy Secondary (5)	13	Academy Member	Isabelle Sandy	Kendrick	Feb-12	Jun-22	3 Yrs	Jun-25
	14	Academy Member	David Littlemore	Propsect	Feb-12	Dec-22	3 Yrs	Dec-25
	15	Academy Member	Laura Mathews	Highdown	Jan-25	Jan-25	3 Yrs	Jan-28
	16	Academy Member	Annal Nayyar	Reading Girls	Dec-17	Jun-22	3 Yrs	Jun-25
	17	Academy Member	Andy Johnson	Maiden Erlegh School	Sep-21	Sep-21	3 Yrs	Sep-24
		Observer/Substitute	Louise Baker	John Madjeski				
		Observer/Substitute	Cathy Woodcock	Reading School				
		Observer/Substitute	Jonathan Nicholls	UTC				
		Observer/Substitute		The River Academy				
		Observer/Substitute	John Salberg	The Wren				
Maintained Special (1)	18	Head teacher	Vacant	Holy Brook				n/a
Academy Special (1)	19	Academy Member	Symon Cooke	The Avenue	Mar-18	Mar-21	3 Yrs	Mar-24
Alternative Provision (1)	20	Head teacher	Claire Willmott	Cranbury College			On-going	n/a

Non-School Members:

Early Year's PVI (1)	21	PVIs	Ita McGullion	Kennet Day Nursery	Oct-17	Oct-24	3 yrs	Oct-27
Trades Unions (1)	22	Trades Unions	Ali McNamara	NEU			On-going	n/a
			Katie Gumbrell	NEU			On-going	n/a
16 - 19 Provision (1)	23	FE College						

Non Members

Observer	-	RBC	Cllr Lead Member for Education
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\* Chair

\*\* Vice chair

Elected October 2020

VACANT





Reading Schools' Forum

March 20, 2025

Agenda Item 4

# Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget Monitoring 2024/25 Period 10

☐ For decision

☐ For discussion

☒ For information

## SUMMARY

This report sets out the DSG budget monitoring for 2024/25 for Period 10

## AUTHOR

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## VERSION

V1

## DATE

20/03/2025

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## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the updated position on the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2024/25.

## 2. DSG Allocation 2024/25

- 2.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring-fenced specific grant and can only be used in support of the schools' budget and spent on school/pupil activity as defined by the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations (2023).
- 2.2 The Authority must ensure that DSG is correctly spent and must report the outturn position to inform the impact upon the following year's budget position. The budget monitoring of the Authority distinguishes between how services are funded, namely by DSG or by the Local Authority.
- 2.3 The LA receives its DSG allocation gross (including allocations relating to academies and post-16 provision), and then the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) recoups the actual budget for these settings to pay them direct, leaving a net or LA allocation.
- 2.4 The current DSG allocation for 2024/25 is summarised in Table 1 below.
- 2.5 The allocations shown in the table are prior to any transfers between blocks. For the 2024/25 budget the Schools' Forum has agreed a transfer of £484k from the school's block to the high needs block.
- 2.6 Allocations were updated on the 21 January 2025 with no changes since last reported in November 2024. Previous changes include updated Early Years allocations from January 2024 census and updated export and import provisions within the High Needs Block. Next update would be July 2025 when the January 2025 census updates the Early Years Block.

**Table 1: Readings Current DSG allocations for 2024/25 (January 2025)**

BLOCK	REVISED DSG ALLOCATION 2024/25				
	Gross DSG Allocations £m	Less Recoupment relating to Academies. £m	Draft LA DSG Allocations March 2024 £m	In year allocation changes £m	Current Allocation January 2025
Schools Block	126.102	(71.929)	54.173	(0.739)	53.433
Central Schools Block	1.138	0.00	1.138	0.014	1.152
Early Years Block	21.317	0.00	21.317	0.304	21.621
High Needs Block	31.317	(4.524)	26.793	(0.126)	26.667
<b>Total</b>	<b>179.873</b>	<b>(76.453)</b>	<b>103.421</b>	<b>(0.547)</b>	<b>102.874</b>



### 3 DSG Budget 2024/25 Budget Monitoring

3.1 Appendix 1 contains the original 2024/25 budget as agreed/notified at previous meetings of the Schools' Forum. This is split between the four funding blocks and broken down by the main reporting lines for the DSG.

3.2 There is a forecast in-year deficit of £15.060m on the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, as summarised in Table 2. This is £7.124m higher than the deficit that was forecast when the 2024/25 budget was set.

**Table 2: Summary Expenditure Budget per Block 2024/25**

	<b>Current Budget (£m)</b>	<b>Forecast (£m)</b>	<b>In Year Variance (£m)</b>	<b>C/Fwd (£m)</b>	<b>Cumulative Variance (£m)</b>
Schools Block	54.173	54.682	0.509	(2.391)	(1.882)
Central Schools Block	1.138	1.138	0.000	0.000	0.000
Early Years Block	20.938	21.180	0.242	(0.599)	(0.357)
High Needs Block	26.727	41.786	15.060	12.395	27.454
<b>Total</b>	<b>102.975</b>	<b>118.786</b>	<b>15.811</b>	<b>9.404</b>	<b>25.215</b>

This current budget was set in March 2024 and allocations have changed since and will continue to change (see table 1).

#### 3.3 Schools Block (SB)

- Due to the change in service regarding Behaviour Support Services De-delegation. We are estimating a saving of £100k. This will mostly likely be passed back to schools via the same formula.

#### 3.4 Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)

- Most of the central school services budgets are contributions and the majority will not therefore have a variance. There is a small variance on copyright licences, as this is a national contract agreed in advance.

#### 3.5 Early Years Block (EYB)

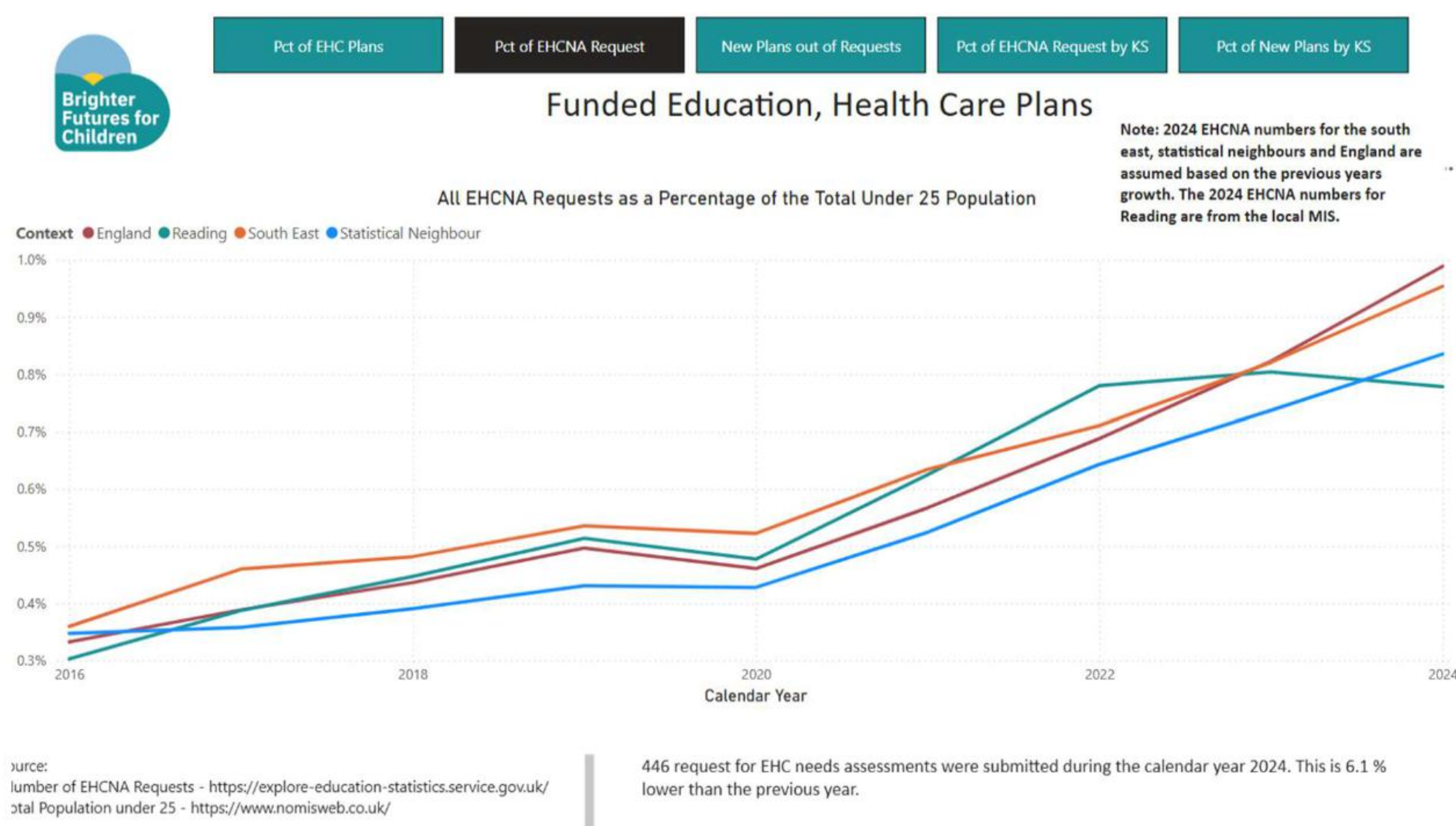
- Over 95% of Early Years Funding is relating to the free early year's entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 - year-olds. The budget for 2024/25 is based on the draft Spring 2024 census hours at the set hourly rates laid out in March 2024 Schools Forum paper. The DSG funding due to be received this year is based on an average of January 2024 and January 2025.
- Due to the new national entitlements, these strands of funding will be based on termly census that will change the allocation supplied.

#### 3.6 High Needs Block (HNB)

- The financial position of the High Needs Block is challenging with an in-year deficit of £15.060m projected at the end of Period 10; this is due to the increase in demand for SEN support against the smaller increase in funding. Although this is recognised as a national issue, there is a requirement for Brighter Futures for Children to manage this. These priorities contribute to reducing the High Needs deficit through better use of resources linked to developing greater capacity across all types of education provision, including diverting children from starting in Independent Specialist Provision (INMSS)



- Detailed analysis of the High Needs Block has been undertaken across December and January to fully analyse the financial position across period 9, with robust modelling taking into consideration national data trends around growth and demand across the SEND system, operational data and evaluation of the impact of Reading's Delivering Better Value investment.
- By the end of 25/26, Reading could be facing a deficit of £40m within the High Needs Block and the local area SEND system believes the statutory override will continue due to the well documented pressure on the High Needs Block nationally due to the increase in demand and lack of specialist provision locally. The Department for Education's Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND programme aimed to support local authorities and their partners to improve the delivery of SEND services for children and young people whilst working towards financial sustainability. Through the analysis to inform the 5-year forecast, it is evident that there are early signs that the DBV programme has delivered a levelling off of demand and number of EHC needs assessments (EHCNAs) compared to the national average and Reading's historic trends. Reading had 6.1% lower EHCNA requests in 2024, compared to the previous year which was also lower than national and southeast averages. This data supports the recommendation to continue the existing mitigations delivered through the RISE service.



- The financial impact of this demand has been evidenced in the Local Government Association report [Towards an effective and financially sustainable approach to SEND in England](#) published in July 2024 which is calling for national reform of the SEND system.
- This increase in demand is being seen within the number and complexity of requests for support for SEND needs across the partnership, alongside the increased pressure on local provision and increased reliance on high-cost independent placements. The cost of meeting these demands has caused and continues to cause vast financial pressures on Reading and urgent action is required achieve an effective and financially sustainable approach.



## Appendix 1 – Summary DSG Budget 2024/25

Ref.	Description	Budget £m	Forecast £m	In year £m
<b>Schools Block</b>				
1	Individual Schools Budget - Maintained Schools	52.428	52.428	0.000
2	Growth Fund & Falling Roles	0.609	1.218	0.609
3	Behaviour Support Services (de-delegation)	0.286	0.186	(0.100)
4	Staff costs supply cover (trade unions) (de-delegation)	0.047	0.047	0.000
5	School Improvement (de-delegation)	0.235	0.235	0.000
6	Statutory/regulatory Duties (ESG) (de-delegation)	0.084	0.084	0.000
7	Additional high needs targeted funding (0.5% Transfer)	0.484	0.484	0.000
8	<b>Sub Total Schools Block Net Expenditure</b>	<b>54.173</b>	<b>54.682</b>	<b>0.509</b>
<b>Central Schools Services Block</b>				
9	Contribution to combined budgets	0.202	0.202	0.000
10	School admissions	0.272	0.272	0.000
11	Servicing of school's forum	0.020	0.020	0.000
12	Prudential borrowing costs	0.021	0.021	0.000
13	Other Items (copyright licences)	0.135	0.135	0.000
14	Statutory/regulatory Duties (ESG)	0.488	0.488	0.000
15	<b>Sub Total Central School Services Block Net Expenditure</b>	<b>1.138</b>	<b>1.138</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Early Years Block</b>				
16	Early Years Funding (free entitlement)	19.990	19.990	0.000
17	SEN support services (Portage/Dingley)	0.514	0.514	0.000
18	Central expenditure on early years entitlement	0.434	0.676	0.242
19	<b>Sub Total Early Years Block Net Expenditure</b>	<b>20.938</b>	<b>21.180</b>	<b>0.242</b>
<b>High Needs Block</b>				
20	SEN placement, PRU & ARP Funding	6.054	6.397	0.343
21	Additional high needs targeted funding (Inclusion Fund)	0.650	0.400	(0.250)
22	Top up funding - Special Schools	12.526	13.439	0.913
23	Top up funding - Resource Units	0.305	0.705	0.400
24	Top up funding - Mainstream	4.450	6.628	2.178
25	Top up funding - Nursery	0.100	0.160	0.060
26	Top up funding - FE Colleges	1.355	2.190	0.835
27	Top up funding - Alternative Provision	0.691	1.516	0.825
28	Top up and other funding - non maintained & independent schools	6.043	7.827	1.784
29	Personal Budgets	0.100	0.215	0.115
30	Hospital education services & Medical Education	0.249	0.230	(0.019)
31	Therapies and Sensory Consortium	0.913	0.853	(0.060)
32	Support for Inclusion	0.260	0.260	0.000
33	SEN support services	0.366	0.366	0.000
34	Children Missing Education	0.219	0.219	0.000
35	Teachers pay & pension grants to special schools/PRU	0.296	0.296	0.000
36	Central Services	0.085	0.085	0.000
37	Budgeted Overspend as of April 2024	(7.935)	0.000	7.935
38	<b>Sub Total High Needs Block Net Expenditure</b>	<b>26.727</b>	<b>41.787</b>	<b>15.060</b>
39	<b>Total All Blocks Net Expenditure</b>	<b>102.975</b>	<b>118.786</b>	<b>15.811</b>





# Reading Schools' Forum

March 20, 2025

Agenda Item 5

High Needs Block Budget  
2025/2026

☐ For decision

☐ For discussion

☒ For information

## SUMMARY

This report sets out a breakdown of the high needs block funding allocation and budget for 2025/26

## AUTHOR

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## VERSION

Version 1

## DATE

February 2025

## REVIEW DATE

February 2026

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Brighter Futures for Children  
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## 1. Recommendations

- 1.1 NOTE: The forecasted deficit (section 3)
- 1.2 NOTE: The high needs block funding for 2025/2026 (section 4)
- 1.3 NOTE: The proposed budgets for the high needs block in 2025/2026 (section 6)

## 2. Background

- 2.1 The High Needs Block (HNB) supports the delivery of the Council's Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy (2022–2027). The strand 1 work stream which includes representative members of Schools Forum incorporates the analysis of data and information, including financial information, to inform future provision and joint commissioning.
- 2.2 The HNB is currently in deficit, and the monitoring of this position is updated in the budget monitoring report brought to each meeting of the Schools' Forum. In recent times, the number of pupils receiving EHCPs which the Council is legally obliged to fund continues to grow but at a much slowly pace that of 2023/2024. The council will review its forecasting at every census time to see if the strategies are starting to work. The SEN strategic lead will report back in due course via various groups and school forum.
- 2.3 In the Autumn budget, the chancellor announced an additional £2.3 billion for mainstream schools and high needs for 2025/2026. £1 billion of this increase is allocated to High Needs funding due to recognising the continued increase in costs. For 2025/2026 the High Needs NFF will include a funding floor that provides a minimum increase of 7% per head of a local authority 2 to 18 population. Gains under this formula will be limited to 10% per head. For Reading the increase totalled an additional £2.2 million
- 2.4 The local authority decides the high needs budget but welcomes comments and suggestions from the Schools' Forum.

## 3. High Needs Block Deficit

- 3.1 The financial position of the High Needs block is challenging with an in-year deficit of £14.109 million projected at the end of Period 10; this is due to the increase in demand for SEN support against the smaller increase in funding. Although this is recognised as a national issue, there is a requirement for Brighter Futures for Children to manage this. These priorities contribute to reducing the High Needs deficit through better use of resources linked to developing greater capacity across all types of education provision, including diverting children from starting in Independent Specialist Provision
- 3.2 Detailed analysis of the High Needs Block has been undertaken across December 2024 and January 2025 to fully analyse the financial position across period 9, with robust modelling taking into consideration national data trends around growth and demand across the SEND system, operational data, and evaluation of the impact of Reading's Delivering Better Value (DBV) investment.
- 3.3 By the end of 2025/2026, Reading could be facing a deficit of £40 million within the High Needs Block. The local area SEND system believes the statutory override will continue due to the well documented pressure on the High Needs Block nationally which is due to the increase in demand and lack of specialist provision locally. The Department for Education's DBV in SEND programme aimed to support local authorities and their partners to improve the delivery of SEND services for children and young people whilst working towards financial sustainability.



**Table 1: Percentage increases of High Needs Block Allocations and Expenditure. (£m)**

Year	Allocation	Variance	% Increase	Spend	Variance from allocation	Cumulative Deficit
2019/2020	£18.322			£18.167	(£0.155)	£2.091
2020/2021	£18.916	£0.594	3.24%	£18.957	£0.041	£2.132
2021/2022	£20.947	£2.031	10.74%	£22.227	£1.280	£3.412
2022/2023	£23.877	£2.930	13.99%	£25.772	£1.895	£5.307
2023/2024	£26.340	£2.463	10.32%	£33.428	£7.088	£12.394
2024/2025	£26.667	£0.327	1.24%	£40.776	£14.109	£26.503
2025/2026	£28.909	£2.242	8.41%	£43.163	£14.354	£40.757
		<b>£10.587</b>	<b>57.78%</b>	Cumulative Deficit by Income		<b>140%</b>

- 3.4 Income from 2019/2020 to 2025/2026 has increased by 57.78% (£10.6 million) but within the same time frame the costs have arisen by 135% (£24.6 million)
- 3.5 If forecasts become true, then the High Needs deficit as at the 31 March 2026 will equate to 140% of the 2025/2026 income allocation.
- 3.6 Major investment has been implemented into the current strategy and we believe these strategies will bring savings and cost avoidance within the next few years.

## 4. High Needs Block Funding 2025/2026

- 4.1 The HNB element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2025/2026 was announced on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and further information on the funding arrangements can be found in ESFAs High Needs Operational Guide. [High needs funding: 2024 to 2025 operational guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-2024-to-2025-operational-guide)
- 4.2 For 2025/2026 the High Needs NFF will include a funding floor that provides a minimum increase of 7% per head of a local authority 2 to 18 population. Gains under this formula will be limited to 10% per head. The increase for Reading currently equates to 8.41%.
- 4.4 At the January 2025 meeting of the Schools' Forum, it was agreed to transfer up to the maximum 0.5% of funding from the schools' block to the high needs block, to financially fund the RISE Team. This is to replace the inclusion fund that supplied funds to schools with disproportionate numbers of pupils with EHCPs. Since the creation of the ARP project this funding has become obsolete.
- 4.5 The allocation for 2025/2026 is broken down as shown in Table 2 (also comparing to the 2024/2025 allocation).



**Table 2: High Needs Block Funding Allocation 2024/2025 and 2025/2026**

National funding formula (NFF) allocations	2024/2025	2025/2026	Variance
Total high needs elements in the funding floor and gains calculation	£31,267,296	£33,169,127	£1,901,831
Unit of funding	£4,913.17	£4,913.23	£0.06
Number of pupils (in special schools and academies)	440.5	496.5	56
Total basic entitlement	£2,164,252	£2,439,419	£275,167
Number of pupils (net amount imported/exported)	(445)	(445)	0
Total import/export adjustment (based on January 2024)*	(£2,700,000)	(£2,700,000)	£0
Total additional funding for special free schools	£144,000	£144,000	£0
Total hospital education and teachers' pay and pension	£315,052	£332,486	£17,434
<b>Total high needs block before deductions</b>	<b>£31,190,600</b>	<b>£33,385,032</b>	<b>£2,194,432</b>
Deductions to high needs block due to direct funding of places*	£4,523,500	£4,476,000	(£47,500)
<b>Total high needs block after deductions</b>	<b>£26,667,100</b>	<b>£28,909,032</b>	<b>£2,241,932</b>

\*These figures will be updated for March 2025 Allocation based on January 2025

## 5. Inflation Uplift to Top-up Unit Values from April 2025.

5.1 Reading Borough Council recognise the national inflation being over the Bank of England target and thankfully has reduced since last year's double-digit inflation. Officers have discussed potential increases in Reading banding levels for 2025/2026 but with the severity of the current High Needs Block deficit, the difficult decision to freeze all Reading banding top-ups for mainstream, special, resource units and other lump sum funding to schools has been made. This freeze is intended to be in place for at least 3 years but will be reviewed annually based on new national data.

5.2 For commissioning purposes we will reject and challenge any independent provider who asks for more than 3% to make sure all educational settings are treated in a fair way. The inflation amount is based on the increasing National Insurance and Teachers Pay agreements where maintained and academy schools received separate grants for these additional spend areas.

## 6. High Needs Block Budget 2025/2026

6.1 The budget proposed for **2025/2026 is £43.162 million**, which is £8.560 million (20%) above the in-year HNB DSG allocation of **£28.909m**, which will mean a continued increase to the deficit by £14.354 million.

6.2 All Reading owed top-ups' budgets have been frozen for 2025/2026

6.3 Table 3 sets out the current and proposed budget for 2025/2026. The paragraphs that follow set out further information for each budget line.



Table 3: High Needs Budget 2024/2025 and 2025/2026

REF to PARAGRAPH BELOW	DESCRIPTION	CURRENT BUDGET 2024/2025	PROPOSED BUDGET 2025/2026	Variance between 2024/2025 and 2025/2026
<b>7</b>	<b>Centrally Retained Budgets</b>			
7.1	Inclusion support posts	£210,200	£299,300	£89,100
7.2	Inclusion Support – Therapeutic Thinking	£50,000	£50,000	£0
7.3	Inclusion Support – ASD outreach	£42,000	£42,000	£0
7.4	Early Intervention Funding	£500,000	£500,000	£0
7.5	Early years inclusion funding	£200,000	£200,000	£0
7.6	Contract - Sensory consortium	£393,000	£405,000	£12,000
7.7	Contract - Speech/language & occupational	£520,000	£520,000	£0
7.8	Contract - Speech/language for Early Years	£45,000	£45,000	£0
7.9	Virtual School – Children looked after	£223,900	£249,600	£25,700
7.10	Hospital Education Funding (Cranbury)	£180,000	£180,000	£0
7.11	Central overheads	£85,000	£90,000	£5,000
7.12	Teachers Pay & Pension grants	£296,000	£315,000	£19,000
7.13	Commissioning	£100,000	£100,000	£0
7.14	Medical Tutoring (Children Missing Education)	£50,000	£100,000	£50,000
7.15	Hard-to-Place Funding	£50,000	£50,000	£0
7.16	Children Missing Education Team	£168,700	£168,700	£0
7.17	Medical Hospital Tuition (Tier 4)	£19,000	£10,000	(£9,000)
7.18	EP support	£0	£80,000	£80,000
7.19	Special School Improvement Fund	£448,000	£0	(£448,000)
	<b>Total Centrally Retained Budgets</b>	<b>£3,580,800</b>	<b>£3,404,600</b>	<b>(£176,200)</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Placement Funding</b>			
8.1	Resource Unit Base Funding	£120,000	£92,000	(£28,000)
8.2	Special School Base Funding	£320,000	£320,000	£0
8.3	Academy Base Funding (Recouped)	£4,590,000	£4,476,000	(£114,000)
8.4	Pupil Referral Unit Contract	£780,000	£905,000	£125,000
8.5	Maintained Additional Resourced Provision	£3,477,000	£4,095,000	£618,000
8.6	Academy Additional Resourced Provision	£664,000	£1,253,000	£589,000
8.7	Early Years Additional Resourced Provision	£692,990	£663,600	(£29,390)
Adjust	Recouped by DfE to passport to Academies	(£4,590,000)	(£4,476,000)	£114,000
	<b>Placement Funding</b>	<b>£6,053,990</b>	<b>£7,328,600</b>	<b>£1,274,610</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>EHCP Top Ups</b>			
9.1	Mainstream schools	£4,500,000	£5,952,300	£1,552,300
9.2	Special Schools	£11,973,400	£14,143,000	£2,169,600
9.3	Resource units	£305,000	£300,000	(£5,000)
9.4	Independent & Non-Maintained Special	£6,043,000	£8,120,000	£2,077,000
9.5	Further Education Colleges	£1,355,000	£3,244,000	£1,889,000
9.6	Other Independent Alternative Placements	£691,000	£570,000	(£121,000)
9.7	Personal Budgets	£100,000	£100,000	£0
	<b>Total EHCP Top Ups</b>	<b>£24,967,400</b>	<b>£32,429,300</b>	<b>£7,561,900</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>High Needs Block Expenditure Total</b>	<b>£34,602,190</b>	<b>£43,162,500</b>	<b>£8,560,310</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>High Needs Block DSG Indicative Income</b>	<b>(£26,667,000)</b>	<b>(£28,909,000)</b>	<b>(£2,242,000)</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Net Budget Variance (Deficit / Surplus)</b>	<b>7,935,190</b>	<b>£14,253,500</b>	<b>£6,318,310</b>



- 6.4 The RISE team has been funded from School Block funding for 2025/2026 with full agreement from all School Forum members. This is the key driver in supporting schools with SEN and fundamental to any new strategic work to reduce the in-year deficit while supporting all Reading children who requires additional SEN support.
- 6.5 SEND banding system has been deferred and will be picked up in 2025/2026. Schools Forum will be notified in due course when further updates are available. It is intended that any change in banding will be implemented over a 2-to-3-year period to reduce any upheaval.

## 7 Centrally Retained Budgets – following from Table 3

- 7.1 **Inclusion support posts (£299,300)** – this budget includes the cost of three posts retained by the Local Authority. They carry out a range of statutory functions relating to monitoring exclusions, part time timetables and other issues relating to vulnerable pupils, and ASC advisory support/outreach.
- 7.2 **School Inclusion Panel (Therapeutic Thinking Approach) (£50,000)** – Supplied to the Educational Psychologist service to support the Therapeutic Thinking Approach within Reading Schools.
- 7.3 **ASD Outreach (£42,000)** is provided by Christ the King School.
- 7.4 **Early Intervention Funding (£500,000)** – Second year of the pilot scheme that will provide schools additional funds for pupils within NCY -1/0/+1 within maintained and academy schools.
- 7.5 **Early Years Inclusion Fund (£200,000)** - It supports inclusion of children in early years' settings in the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector to assist all children to be able to receive their early years entitlements.
- 7.6 **Sensory Consortium (£405,000)** – This is a joint arrangement with other Berkshire Local Authorities.
- 7.7 **Speech and Language (SALT) and Occupational Therapy (OT) Contract (£520,000)** – Contract via Wokingham Borough Council.
- 7.8 **Speech and Language (SALT) contract for Early Years Settings (£45,000)** – contract via NHS
- 7.9 **Virtual School Children Looked After (£249,600)** - This contribution towards the Virtual school for Children Looked After.
- 7.10 **Hospital Education (£180,000)** - This budget funds a teaching team at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and is hosted by Cranbury College. It is required to support pupils from any Local Authority area who are in hospital in Reading.
- 7.11 **Central overheads (£90,000)** - This contributes towards the cost of council overheads.
- 7.12 **Teachers Pay & Pension Grants (£315,000)** – This amount has been added to the HNB DSG for the local authority to pay over to special schools and alternative provision these grants based on the actual number of pupils recorded in the October 2021 census. New grants since September 24 will continue as separate grants outside of the dedicated schools grants.
- 7.13 **Commissioning (£100,000)** – SEN Placement costs are the main driver of spend within the High Needs Block and BfC are focusing on the procurement of high-cost placements to see better arrangements, contracts and partnership working can bring down the average costs of placements.



- 7.14 **Medical Tutoring (Children Missing Education) (£100,000)** – To ensure the local authority are able to discharge their statutory duty in providing appropriate tuition to pupils who are medically unfit for school.
- 7.15 **Hard-to-Place Funding (£50,000)** – To create a fund to support children going through the fair access protocol or requiring intervention to prevent permanent exclusions.
- 7.16 **Children Missing Education (CME) (£168,700)** – To maintain the offer of service regarding Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education where numbers have increased considerably since the pandemic. In conjunction with the growing statutory duties with the attendance support team, the CME will adopt service roles from them to ensure continued service delivery.
- 7.17 **Other hospital funding (£10,000)** - This budget funds the cost of pupils' education while they attend tier 4 specialist independent mental health hospital provision which is commissioned by NHS England.
- 7.18 **Preventative work in schools (£80,000)** – EP employment to reach the children who most need this timely identification and coordinated support. EPs input enables those children who need ordinarily available provision and SEND support to be effectively identified.
- 7.19 **Special School Improvement Fund (£0)** – Removed due to special school having an improved OfSTED.

## 8 Placement Funding – following from Table 3

- 8.1 **Primary Resource Unit (£92,000)** – EPC resource unit.
- 8.2 **Holybrook Special School Place Funding (£320,000)** - £10k each 32 placed special school
- 8.3 **Academy Schools (Recouped and paid by ESFA)**
- 8.4 **Pupil Referral Units top up funding (£905,000)** – Cranbury College receive this sum for PRU placements. Funding removed from schools for permanent exclusions are credited against this budget if the pupil is subsequently placed in a PRU.
- 8.5 **Maintained Additional Resourced Provisions (£4,095,000)** – Continuing support for ARPs with financial year 2025/2026
- 8.6 **Academy Additional Resourced Provisions (£1,253,000)** – Continuing support for ARPs with financial year 2025/2026
- 8.7 **Nursery Additional Resourced Provisions (£663,600)** – Continuing support for ARPs with financial year 2025/2026

## 9. EHCP Top Ups – following from Table 3

- 9.1 **Mainstream schools Top Up (£5,952,300)** – this is based on the actual number of top ups as at January 2025 with forecasted numbers for 2025/2026



- 9.2 Special School Top Up (£14,143,000)** – this is based on the actual number of top ups as of January 2025 with forecasted numbers for 2025/2026. Including 3% increase for other local authorities' schools increases.
- 9.3 Resource Unit Top Ups (£300,000)** - this is based on the actual number of top ups as of January 2025 with forecasted numbers for 2025/2026. Including 3% increase for other local authorities' schools increases.
- 9.4 Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS) (£8,120,000)** – this is based on the actual number of top ups as of January 2025 with forecasted numbers for 2025/2026. Including 3% increase for inflation.
- 9.5 Further Education Colleges (£3,244,000)** – this is based on the actual number of top ups as of January 2025 with forecasted numbers for 2025/2026. Including 3% increase for inflation.
- 9.6 Other independent alternative placements (AP) (£570,000)** – this is based on the actual number of top ups as of January 2025 with forecasted numbers for 2025/2026. Including 3% increase for inflation. This area will be tightly contained to stop double funding of providing education for EHCPs.
- 9.7 Personal Budgets (£100,000)** – Demand led budget based on parent/carers choice.





# Reading Schools' Forum

March 20, 2025

Agenda Item 6

Falling Rolls



For decision



For discussion



For information

## SUMMARY

Falling Rolls Policy.

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## VERSION

Version number 1

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None

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## 1. Recommendations

- 1.1 AGREE: To consult Schools' Forum on an amendment to the Falling Rolls criteria for 2025-26 and to approve the proposal from Brighter Futures for Children.

## 2. Falling Rolls Fund Operation Guidance

- 2.1 Local authorities may set aside schools block funding to create a small fund to support with falling rolls, where schools capacity data 2022 (SCAP) shows that school places will be required in the subsequent three to five years.
- 2.2 Following the change in the Ofsted system of rating schools, The Department for Education have removed the requirement for schools to be rated either Good or Outstanding to be considered for eligibility for any local falling rolls funding.
- 2.3 The Schools' Forum should agree both the value of the fund and the criteria for allocation, and the local authority should regularly update the Schools' Forum on the use of the funding. As with the growth fund, the Falling Rolls Fund is also within the NFF schools block. Any in-year reduction to the Falling Rolls Fund needs to be agreed with the Schools' Forum or Secretary of State if appropriate.
- 2.4 Criteria for allocating the Falling Rolls Fund should contain clear objective trigger points for qualification, and a clear formula for calculating allocations. Differences in allocation methodology are permitted between phases
- 2.5 Compliant criteria would generally contain some of the features set out below:
  - a. SCAP shows that school places will be required in the subsequent three to five years. **(this is a mandatory requirement)**
  - b. surplus capacity exceeds a minimum number of pupils, or a percentage of the published admission number
  - c. formula funding available to the school will not support provision of an appropriate curriculum for the existing cohort
  - d. the school will need to make redundancies to contain spending within its formula budget
- 2.6 Methodologies for distributing funding could include:
  - a. a rate per vacant place, up to a specified maximum number of places (place value likely to be based on basic per pupil funding)
  - b. a lump sum payment with clear parameters for calculation (for example, the estimated cost of providing an appropriate curriculum, or estimated salary costs equivalent to the number of staff who would otherwise be made redundant)
- 2.7 Where Falling Rolls funding is payable to academies, the local authority should fund the increase for the period from the additional September intake through until the following August
- 2.8 Local authorities should report any Falling Rolls Fund remaining at the end of the financial year to the Schools' Forum.



- 2.9 Funding may be carried forward to the following funding period, as with any other centrally retained budget, and local authorities can choose to use it specifically for falling rolls.

### 3. Reading's Falling Rolls Policy 2024-2025

- 3.1 We are proposing eight criteria (as seen below) to help assist schools with falling pupil numbers.

**a. Judged Good or Outstanding at their last Ofsted inspection.**

This is a mandatory requirement by the DfE.

**b. Falling roll greater than 5% in latest year, and below 80% of overall school PAN**

Removing the review of reception only and treating the falling rolls over the entire school year groups. Including that the school has to be under 80% of Total planned school roll number. (1 form entry primary totalling 210 places)

**c. Schools must not have more than 8% of reserves as at 31 March of previous financial year**

It is within the best interest for Reading for schools to use their surplus reserves prior to requesting any share of the Falling Rolls Fund, to which there is a limited amount of agreed funding to which the Council and Schools' Forum have at their disposal. 8% has come from the previous removed mechanism of Primary school's surplus balances review.

**d. Formula funding available to the school will not support provision of an appropriate curriculum for the existing cohort without making teacher redundancies**

Additional funding is awarded to schools where without funding they would have to consider closing a classroom and as a result impact the education of the pupils within the school. The fund is not to pay for teacher redundancies.

**e. Business Case required for funding request prior to coming academic year**

No school is automatically entitled to this funding. The Director of Education and School Effectiveness team along with School Finance will assess a business case on how the school plan to use the funding before any agreement has been put in place. This will involve conversations between the school and the School Finance and School Effectiveness teams. In some cases, this may also be accompanied by a Licensed Deficit application if the school is budgeting a deficit balance.

**f. Minimum Per Pupil funding (2024/25 Rate £4,610 primary) fund up to 80% of PAN with a maximum pay-out of £100k**

We acknowledge that every school is unique and needs and circumstances can vary. Schools Funding guidance from the ESFA suggests that 80% of total PAN is on average the level that schools should be able to have the minimum required resources to educate the national curriculum. We do accept that the need can be very different in each school, but as a general limit we have proposed this rate. We have also limited the total pay-out for one school in one year to £100k due to the affordability. Schools' Forum and BfC reserve the right to change levels due to business case discussions and the overall level of funding.



**g. Funding awarded for maximum of 2 consecutive years**

This funding cannot be maintained for more than 2 years due to the funding coming out of uncommitted growth funding reserves. We believe this funding will support and provide time for the school and local authority to manage the situation.

**h. Schools' Forum and Director of Education reserve the right to change levels of funding or supply discretionary funding based on in year applications (business cases) and regarding the overall level of funding.**

#### 4. Review of 2024-2025

4.1 Caversham Park, St Anne's and St Martin's were the only schools to meet the criteria for this fund. No other requests or payments were made in 2024-2025.

4.2 The policy was introduced due to the number of primary schools with falling numbers of reception class children. This could leave the school in financial difficulty whilst trying to maintain education standards for all year groups. Particularly after seeing a bulge of pupils come through Primary education and have now reached Secondary education. Many reasons can be attributed to this and are not always within a school's director control, but is critical as funding is connected to pupil numbers.

4.5 There is particular concern over the Caversham Park area (bordering Oxfordshire County Council) where the numbers of children/young families have dropped and there is limited space for new homes which has caused a low growth area for children and young families. This is not uncommon as other LAs have also experienced similar patterns in communities and it can take up to a generation or growth in the economies to change the need. LAs have to plan for the long term future in school places.

4.7 Due to changes made by the DfE with regards to mandatory factors for falling rolls, we are proposing new criteria for the Falling Rolls Fund for 2025-2026. This will hopefully provide stability to schools whilst the LA assesses and puts into place plans for future school place needs.

#### 5. Proposed 2025-2026 Criteria for Falling Rolls Fund.

5.1 We are proposing nine criteria (as seen below) to help assist schools with falling pupil numbers.

**a. SCAP shows that the school places will be required in subsequent three to five years.**


This is a mandatory requirement by the DfE.

**b. Falling roll below 76% of overall school PAN**

Removing the year-on-year movement check eliminates a school being penalised for trying to increase pupil numbers. Decreasing the PAN comparison figures compensating for the removal of this secondary check.

**c. Schools must not have more than 8% of reserves as at 31 March of previous financial year**





It is within the best interest for Reading for schools to use their surplus reserves prior to requesting any share of the Falling Rolls Fund, to which there is a limited amount of agreed funding to which the Council and Schools' Forum have at their disposal. 8% has come from the previous removed mechanism of Primary school's surplus balances review.

**d. Formula funding available to the school will not support provision of an appropriate curriculum for the existing cohort without making teacher redundancies**

Additional funding is awarded to schools where without funding they would have to consider closing a classroom and as a result impact the education of the pupils within the school. The fund is not to pay for teacher redundancies.

**e. Business Case required for funding request prior to coming academic year**

No school is automatically entitled to this funding. The Director of Education and School Effectiveness team along with School Finance will assess a business case on how the school plan to use the funding before any agreement has been put in place. This will involve conversations between the school and the School Finance and School Effectiveness teams . In some cases, this may also be accompanied by a Licensed Deficit application if the school is budgeting a deficit balance.

**f. Minimum Per Pupil funding (2025/26 Rate £4,955 primary) fund up to 80% of PAN with a maximum pay-out of £100k**

We acknowledge that every school is unique and needs and circumstances can vary. Schools Funding guidance from the ESFA suggests that 80% of total PAN is on average the level that schools should be able to have the minimum required resources to educate the national curriculum. We do accept that the need can be very different in each school, but as a general limit we have proposed this rate. We have also limited the total pay-out for one school in one year to £100k due to the affordability. Schools' Forum and BfC reserve the right to change levels due to business case discussions and the overall level of funding.

**g. Funding awarded for maximum of 5 consecutive years**


In line with the mandatory DfE element for SCAP to show a need within three to five years, a school may need support until the expected need occurs. We believe this funding will support and provide time for the school and local authority to manage the situation.

**h. Falling rolls will only apply to Primary phase schools**

The issue of declining numbers of school age pupils is, at the moment, confined to the primary sector both within Reading and nationally. As the criteria is reviewed annually the opportunity to extend or move to the secondary phase will occur each year.

**i. Schools' Forum and Director of Education reserve the right to change levels of funding or supply discretionary funding based on in year applications (business cases) and regarding the overall level of funding.**

The funding is based on the £300k approved from January 2025 Schools' Forum. Any expenditure over this allocation will be taken from the growth fund carried forward from 2024/25.





## 6. Impact

- 6.1 The table 1 below shows which schools would be eligible to submit a business case to access funding based on the criteria above. This only shows the maximum funding that can be supplied, and the actual funding agreed would be based on the business case and approval of the Director of Education.

Table 1: School	Total School Capacity	Current NOR	Surplus Capacity	Spaces occupied	Eligible for funding	80% of PAN @MpPF rate	Maximum Funding
Moorlands	420	284	136	67.6%	Yes	£257,660	£100,000
Caversham Park	210	115	95	54.8%	Yes	£262,615	£100,000
Micklands	420	319	101	76.0%	Yes	£84,235	£84,235
St Anne's	210	146	64	69.5%	Yes	£109,010	£100,000
St Martin's	210	136	74	64.8%	Yes	£158,560	£100,000
Whitley Park	630	476	154	75.6%	No	£0	£0
<b>Total cost</b>						<b>£872,080</b>	<b>£484,235</b>

Only five schools have a surplus capacity below 76% of their PAN and where the Pupils will be required within three to five years.



## Appendix 1 – Analysis of Reading Schools

School	Total School Capacity	Current NOR (Oct-24)	Surplus Capacity	Spaces Occupied
Alfred Sutton Primary School	630	624	6	99.0%
Caversham Primary School	420	405	15	96.4%
Coley Primary School	210	205	5	97.6%
E P Collier Primary School	420	379	41	90.2%
Geoffrey Field Junior School	360	352	8	97.8%
Geoffrey Field Infant School	270	257	13	95.2%
Oxford Road Community School	210	202	8	96.2%
Redlands Primary School	210	193	17	91.9%
The Hill Primary School	420	393	27	93.6%
The Ridgeway Primary School	420	385	35	91.7%
Park Lane Primary School	420	385	35	91.7%
Wilson Primary School	420	409	11	97.4%
Emmer Green Primary School	420	417	3	99.3%
Southcote Primary School	630	551	79	87.5%
St Michael's Primary School	420	391	29	93.1%
Moorlands Primary School	420	284	136	67.6%
Thameside Primary School	420	344	76	81.9%
Katesgrove Primary School	630	605	25	96.0%
Caversham Park Primary School	210	115	95	54.8%
Micklands Primary School	420	319	101	76.0%
Manor Primary School	315	287	28	91.1%
All Saints Church of England Aided Infant School	60	60	0	100.0%
St Anne's Catholic Primary School	210	146	64	69.5%
English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School	420	389	31	92.6%
Christ The King Catholic Primary School	315	285	30	90.5%
St Martin's Catholic Primary School	210	136	74	64.8%
Whitley Park Primary and Nursery School	630	476	154	75.6%
Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School	870	929	-59	106.8%
All Saints Junior School	120	94	26	78.3%
Meadow Park Academy	420	330	90	78.6%
Battle Primary Academy	420	402	18	95.7%
The Palmer Primary Academy	420	386	34	91.9%
Civitas Academy	420	390	30	92.9%
The Heights Primary School	350	363	-13	103.7%
Ranikhet Academy	210	201	9	95.7%
New Town Primary School	420	385	35	91.7%
Churchend Primary Academy	420	409	11	97.4%
St Mary & All Saints Church of England Primary School	420	326	94	77.6%
New Christ Church Church of England Primary School	210	199	11	94.8%
St John's Church of England Primary School	420	411	9	97.9%
UTC Reading	250	140	110	56.0%
Maiden Erlegh School in Reading	900	885	15	98.3%
The WREN School	868	834	34	96.1%
Reading Girls' School	947	906	41	95.7%





Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre	1280	1212	68	94.7%
Reading School	750	753	-3	100.4%
King's Academy Prospect	1200	1058	142	88.2%
Kendrick School	576	641	-65	111.3%
John Madejski Academy	900	651	249	72.3%





# Reading Schools' Forum

March 20, 2025

Agenda Item 7

Schools' Forum Meeting Dates  
2024/25

☐ For decision

☐ For discussion

☒ For information

## SUMMARY

This report proposes the dates and agenda items for the 2025/26 financial year.

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## VERSION

Version 1

## DATE

20 March 2025

## REVIEW DATE

None

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## 1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Note: The Schools' Forum dates and agenda items for the 2025/26 financial year

## 2. Proposed Dates

- 2.1 The Schools' Forum is a statutory and public meeting, which is required to meet as a minimum four times a year. In Reading, the Forum met four times in the last financial year with September Schools Forum cancelled due to late releases of information and staff shortages. We plan to have 5 meetings for 2025/26 financial year.
- 2.2 The meetings need to be scheduled at appropriate points in the year to tie in with decision making deadlines in relation to the setting of the school budget, and release of key data and information from the Department of Education (DfE). The frequency and timing of meetings need to be agreed in advance of each financial or academic year.
- 2.3 In 2024/25 the dates worked with the ESFA deadlines and It is proposed to keep to similar dates in 2025/26. The meetings will continue to be held on Thursdays at 5pm virtually and scheduled for maximum two hours.
- 2.4 The dates proposed are set out in Table 1. The agenda and papers need to be dispatched one week in advance and published on the website so that all interested parties can access the papers and can make representations to Schools' Forum Members.

**Table 1: Proposed Schools' Forum Dates 2025/26 Financial Year**

MEETING DATE	DISPATCH OF AGENDA
June 26, 2025	June 20, 2025
September 25, 2025	September 19, 2025
December 11, 2025	December 5, 2025
January 22, 2026*	January 16, 2026*
March 19, 2026	March 13, 2026

*\*depending on APT submission date*



### 3. Agenda Items

- 3.1. The key agenda items for each meeting are set out below. Other ad hoc reports will be added as and when, for example to discuss school funding based national announcements or consultations launched by the ESFA.
- 3.2. June meeting agenda items:
  - DSG outturn 2024/25
  - Maintained school balances 2024/25 and budgets 2025/26
  - Review of the Schools' Forum constitution
  - DSG Budget 2025/26
  - Scheme for Financing for Schools update
  - SEND update
- 3.3. September meeting agenda items:
  - DSG budget setting strategy for 2026/27
  - Initial proposals for school funding formula for 2026/27
  - Budget monitoring 2025/26 month 5
  - SEND update.
- 3.4. December meeting agenda items:
  - DSG budget overview for 2026/27
  - Final proposals for school funding formula for 2026/27
  - Budget monitoring 2025/26 month 8
  - Agree de-delegations for 2026/27
  - Agree central school services budget for 2026/27
- 3.5. January meeting agenda items:
  - DSG actual funding settlement for 2026/27
  - Final school funding formula for 2026/27
  - Agree Falling Rolls & Growth fund for 2026/27
  - Agree Early Years centrally retained budget for 2026/27
  - Early Years funding rates for 2026/27
- 3.6. March meeting agenda items:
  - High needs budget (Including SEND Top-Ups) for 2026/27
  - Confirm Early Years Budgets
  - Budget monitoring 2025/26 month 11
  - Agree Schools' Forum meeting dates for 2026/27
  - SEND update.