

Lancashire County Council - Lancashire Schools Forum

Friday, 10 January 2025, 10.00 am in the Savoy Suite, The Exchange, County Hall, Preston

Present

Primary School Governors

Stephen Booth (*LSF Vice-chair*)
Gerard Collins
Lindy King
Micheal Nolan
Tim Young
Sam Ud-din

Primary School Headteachers

Daniel Ballard (*LSF chair*)
Sarah Barton
Jenny Birkin
Neil Gurman
Sarah Robson
Kirsty Sutton
Anna Yates

Secondary School Governors

Janice Astley
Brian Rollo

Secondary School Headteachers

Ivan Catlow
Jan Marshall

Special School Governor

Mandy Howarth

Special School Headteacher

Claire Thompson (*HN chair*)

Short Stay Governor

Sharon Bennett

Academy Representatives

John Davey
James Keulemans
John Tarbox

Nursery School Headteacher

Jan Holmes

Nursery School Governor

Thelma Cullen

PVI Members

Sharon Fenton
Philippa Perks (*EY chair*)
Sarah McGladrigan

Voting Members

George Krawiec

Observers - Non-Voting Representatives

Ian Watkinson
Kate Walker
Nicola Whyte
Rafeal Schiel

Officers in Attendance

Matthew Dexter
Toni Rafferty
Millie Parkinson
Aby Hardy



1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from the following members:

Bill Mann, CC Matthew Salter, Paul Turner, CC Andy Blake, Rebecca Lindley, Oliver Handley, Abigale Bowe, Mary Lyle, Paula Evans (NAHT), Andrew Proctor, Helen Shaw, Louise Parrish, Robert Waring, CC Ian Duxbury, Alison Daly, Deanne Marsh, Carl Roscoe

2. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members in attendance.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 14 October 2025, were agreed as the correct record.

4. Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 17 December 2025, were agreed as the correct record.

5. Matters Arising

To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2025 that are not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

The Forum:

Noted the information.

6. Recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group

The working group met on the 25th November 2025. Members considered the following reports and made a number of recommendations.

6.1 DSG Monitoring 2025/26 and 2026/27 Forecast

Members considered the most recent Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring report. Following the reporting of the council's DSG deficit of £22.43m at March 2025, monitoring has been provided showing the period 1-7 budget monitoring position of the DSG and longer-term financial forecast.

It was noted that the DSG is currently forecasting a £65.29m overspend at 31 March 2026, with a forecast cumulative DSG deficit total of £87.72m. There are however additional forecast financial implications on DSG due to the SEND recovery plan, with current forecasting showing an anticipated increase in the in year overspend to £119.16m, resulting in a forecast cumulative DSG deficit of £142.44 by March 2026. Further details are provided later within the report.

There remains significant ongoing financial pressure facing the HNB block as the demand and costs continue to rise as the number of children and young people with EHCPs continues to grow, but the HNB Block funding from DfE has not kept paced and increased in line with this growth. Over the years, this has created financial pressures on a national level resulting in many authorities holding deficit DSG balances.



The remaining DSG funding blocks are forecast to remain near to the agreed budget line. Detailed DSG monitoring was provided to members.

Statutory Override

Currently there is a statutory override in place, which specifically allows councils to exclude deficits related to HNB DSG from their main revenue accounts. This means these deficits do not count against the council's general fund and councils are not required to immediately balance these deficits by reducing budgets to finance the shortfall. The override was introduced in financial year 2019/20 and has recently been extended again, until March 2028 due to the growing scale of SEND-related financial pressure.

The working group:

Noted the report and thanked officers for the update.

This report was also noted by the High Needs and Schools Block working groups. Key points of discussion from all working groups are summarised in the papers.

6.2 Early Years Block Funding Arrangements 2026/27

At the working group, members considered a 3% proposal for an EY central fund for 2026/27, key points of discussion are included in the meeting papers. This proposal was not supported by members. As a result an extraordinary Early Years meeting was held on Monday 8th December 2025, and alternative proposals were considered to finalise the funding ahead of setting the budget.

Members recommended a 0.75% central fund for 2026/27 which was ratified by Schools forum at their meeting on 17th December 2025. Minutes of this meeting have been agreed by members under item 4.

6.3 Clawback Exemption Request 2025/26

In July 2025, the Forum considered the School Balances and Clawback Policy for 2025/26 and agreed that clawback should be reintroduced on excessive revenue balances at March 2026. Subsequently, the LA has received a number of exemption request.

The EYBWG considered a request from a Nursery for an exemption of £22,313 for a project to replace several carpets throughout the school building. The school intended to start the work in the Spring term, this was postponed due to potentially relocating as instructed by the LA.

The working group:

Recommends the clawback exemption requests for approval.

6.4 School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme 2026/27

Each year reports are presented to the Forum about the arrangements for the School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme. This report sets out proposals for the 2026/27 Scheme changes for consideration.



The Supply Insurance Scheme had been underspent by £131,000 for the year 2024/25. The Schools Forum agreed to hold this underspend within the Supply Reimbursement Scheme reserve. The reserves are currently held at circa £1.67m.

The proposal to the working group was for the charges to be held at the 2025/26 level and increase the reimbursement rates by 4% to recognise the level of reserves held.

**The working group:
Noted the report and supported the proposals**

This proposal was also supported by the High Needs and Schools Block working groups.

6.5 Any Other Business

Inclusion Fund Queries

A verbal update was provided from Mel on operational changes to inclusion funding processes and system improvements.

It was noted that there is no statutory deadline for processing Inclusion Fund or EHCP payments. However, the local authority aims to process approved requests within 3–4 weeks.

Funding queries should be directed to the Inclusion mailbox, not individual staff, to ensure timely responses and avoid delays.

The automated system now applies inclusion funding once an RFI is accepted, reducing manual intervention and improving tracking. While this should speed up payments, recent technical issues required a short pause to resolve errors before relaunch.

EHCP Top up and Portage

EHCP top-up funding applies to children eligible for extended hours (30 hours). However, inclusion funding is not routinely backdated once an EHCP is agreed, which may affect settings' expectations.

Portage Transition, Inclusion funding will continue during Portage referral and transition periods. Funding will not stop when a child moves into Portage support, ensuring continuity for settings and families.

School Commissioned Reimbursement Scheme

The reimbursement scheme for schools commissioning external educational psychologists has been discontinued. The local authority has rebuilt internal educational psychology capacity, reducing reliance on external providers.

The change applies across sectors, including early years. While internal capacity has improved, members noted that delays in accessing educational psychology support remain a concern.

The Schools Forum ratified the Early Years Block Working Group recommendations.



7. Recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group

The working group met on the 27th November 2025. Members considered the following reports and made a number of recommendations.

The working group considered the report and reviewed the proposed commissioned places for Special Schools, PRUs and units in mainstream schools for 2026/27.

The working group also considered a proposal to change the PRU commissioning process.

It was noted that Separate arrangements exist for commissioning places at independent and non-maintained special schools.

The LA submitted the 2026/27 High Needs Place Change Notification for Lancashire for places which are funded directly by DfE.

The place change return includes sections for:

- Special Academy Schools.
- FE Colleges.
- Mainstream Academy Schools - Post 16.
- Alternative Provision Academies.
- Hospital Education Places.
- Academy SEN Unit places.

Members queried if places will be available in September and if this will impact the commissioned places. It was noted that places for 2026 are based on discussions with headteachers, growth plans exist for each school, commissioned numbers may change. Members stated that a disconnect remains between commissioned places and actual placements, the group stressed the importance of avoiding over commissioning.

A summary of the working group discussions is provided in the papers.

**The working group:
Noted the report and supported the proposals**

7.2 Clawback Exemption Requests 2025/26

Similarly, to the Early Years Block Working Group, the High Needs Block Working Group received two exemption requests for consideration.

Request A was from an Alternative Provision school is requesting £493,385 to be exempt from clawback at March 2026. This school is seeking the exemption to build an onsite sports facility. Currently, the school only has outdoor MUGA facilities which is unusable in winter. Current PE provision costs are c£20,000 annually for venue hire and transport. The school are hoping this will provide a number of benefits to the school including saving costs and providing enriched



PE curriculum. The project funded from this year's reserves, leaving a healthy surplus for 2026/27.

Request B was from a Special school is requesting £280,981 to be exempt from clawback at March 2026. The school has experienced growth in student numbers over recent years, with further increases anticipated. This has created urgent pressures on infrastructure, particularly car parking and office/meeting space. Therefore, two building projects have been approved by governors and will commence in the next financial year. Current year balances have already been committed to cover the costs, totalling £280,981.

The working group:

Recommends the clawback exemption requests for approval.

7.3 High Needs Block Mitigation's 2026/27

A verbal update was given about the upcoming mitigations for High Needs Block spending, noting that a supplementary paper will follow and an extraordinary meeting is planned to review proposals. The approach aims to move away from traditional funding models (commissioned places and top-ups) toward strategies that deliver better value. Key discussions from the working group are included in the meeting papers.

An Extraordinary High Needs Block WG was held on 9th December to formalise the proposals. Schools Forum considered the WG recommendation at their on 17th December, minutes have been agreed under item 4.

The Schools Forum ratified the High Needs Block Working Group recommendations.

8. Recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group

The working group met on the 4 December 2025. Members considered the following reports and made a number of recommendations.

8.1 Schools Block Funding Arrangements 2026/27

The working group noted the recent DfE announcements and the publication of the 2026/27 NFF provisional funding allocations for the 2026 to 2027 financial year. Since the working group, the LA has received DSG funding allocations which will be covered in item 9.

The main funding updates are as follows

The main features in the schools NFF for 2026 to 2027 are:

- No structural changes from 2025 to 2026
- The basic per pupil rate, free school meals Ever6 values, and lump sum have increased to reflect the rolling in of the separate SBSG and NICs



grant from 2025 to 2026.

- On top of this, a further overall increase has been applied to school and pupil-led factors as follows
 - 2.11% increase has been applied to the basic entitlement; FSM6 values and the lump sum factors
 - 2.11% increase has also been applied to the IDACI, low prior attainment (LPA), English as an Additional Language (EAL), mobility, sparsity and split sites factors
 - 1.66% uplift has been applied to the FSM factor in the NFF, in line with inflation forecasts – as of the GDP deflator forecast of March 2025
- The funding floor is set at 0%. This ensures that no school will see a cash reduction in its pupil-led per pupil funding they attract, compared to the 2025 to 2026 baseline. For 2026 to 2027 the baseline includes rolled in funding to reflect the NICs grant and the annualised equivalent of the SBSG

The DfE announcements included the relevant MPF levels for primary and secondary schools, which incorporate rolling in of the NIC & SBSG grants:

- The primary schools, the MPF level will be £5,115 per pupil in 2026/27 compared to £4,995 per pupil in 2025/26.
- For secondary schools, the MPF level will be £6,640 per pupil from 2026/27 compared to £6,465 per pupil in 2025/26.

The working group: Noted the Report

8.2 Clawback Exemption Requests 2025/26

The schools block Working group considered the following clawback exemption requests. A summary of all the requests are provided in the papers.

Request A

A Secondary School is requesting £200,000 to be exempt from clawback at March 2026. The request seeks a clawback exemption to fund an extension of science facilities due to insufficient specialist space for curriculum needs.

Request B

A Secondary School is requesting £440,000 to be exempt from clawback at March 2026 for a new toilet and changing room facility, with completion targeted for September 2026.

Request C

A Secondary School is requesting £100,000 to be exempt from clawback at March 2026. the school plans to create an outdoor PE area due to lack of outdoor sports facilities.



The working group requested further information from the school.

Request D

A Primary School is requesting £120,000 to be exempt from clawback at March 2026 to contribute to extending an existing studio to create a dedicated nursery unit under Section 27. Currently, the nursery occupies two classrooms, and the proposed extension would consolidate Key Stage 1 and nursery areas, improving safeguarding by ensuring more staff presence. The nursery is vital for pupil numbers and financial sustainability. The extension, designed by external surveyors, has an estimated cost of £395,000. A bid for the remaining funds has been submitted, and the school's contribution would come from the requested exemption.

The working group declined this request.

Request E

A Secondary School is requesting £80,000 to be exempt from clawback at March 2026 due to building up reserves to fund the future replacement of an all-weather pitch surface.

Request F

A Lancashire Secondary School is requesting £300,000 to be exempt from clawback at March 2026 due to a major building project funded partly by the Department for Education. The new school building is scheduled for completion by late 2026, with relocation planned for early 2027 and demolition of the old site by mid-2027. Certain project costs, such as furniture, fittings, and blinds, are excluded from the funded works, so the school has been saving funds to cover these items. The school notes that further exemption requests may be needed depending on project timelines. The project officially started in June 2025 and is expected to finish by August 2027.

Request G

A Lancashire Secondary School is requesting £506,000 to be exempt from clawback at March 2026.

A secondary school is requesting an exemption from the clawback of reserves for 2025/26 to retain funds for essential projects including being part of the DfE Schools rebuild programme. The school, which serves over 1,500 pupils including a significant proportion with SEND and 19% eligible for Free School Meals, is part of the DfE Schools Rebuilding Programme with a £40m+ rebuild underway. Delays in the programme have impacted financial planning, and the school must fund certain costs such as furniture and non-fixed items in later years. Existing buildings, over 50 years old, require urgent maintenance to remain safe until at least 2029, with works scheduled outside term time. Additional commitments include a future contribution to a delayed artificial pitch project. Rising staff costs and planned capital contributions are reducing reserves, and the school's three-year budget plan reflects these pressures. The exemption request covers £310K for new-build related costs and £196K for urgent maintenance.



Request H

A Primary School is requesting £35,000 to be exempt from clawback at March 2026.

The school seeks approval for a £35,000 clawback exemption to fund two projects scheduled for Easter 2026. These include tarmac, ground, and drainage works (circa £20k) required for health and safety reasons, delayed due to contractor availability and coordination with nearby building works, and an IT/CCTV upgrade (circa £15k) following an audit that revealed major deficiencies. The upgrade cannot proceed until the re-roofing project, funded through the LCC capital works programme and due for completion in January 2026, is finished. Additionally, a DfE-funded decarbonisation project is planned, though funding arrangements remain unclear.

The working group:

Noted the Report

Discussed each request and during discussion of Item 6, the group suggested several improvements for how clawback exemptions should be handled in future years – officers noted these suggestions.

The working group requested further information for Request C and did not support Request D. Requests A,B,E,F,G,H were supported and recommended for approval.

The Schools Forum ratified the Schools Block Working Group recommendations.

9. Consideration of the Schools Budget 2026/2027

A presentation setting out information about the Schools Budget for 2026/27 had been provided to members. This included information from the original report to the Forum and subsequent information from the Chairs' Working Group meeting held on 7 January. The overall DSG allocations were provided as set out in the table below and the report provided further details on how the funding blocks were calculated using the DfE's national funding formulae.

Forecast DSG Income for 2026/27

<u>Forecast DSG Income</u>	£m's
Schools Block	1,095.64 4
High Needs Block	235.510
Early Years Block	236.676
Central Schools Services Block	8.311
Gross Total forecast DSG Income	1,576.14 1
Total deduction for national school's non-domestic rates (NNDR)	-10.122



Total deductions for direct high needs payments made by the DfE	-15.614
Protected CSSB DSG Income as agreed by DfE	0.329
Net Total forecast DSG Income	1,550.735

It was noted that the in aggregate terms the 2026/27 Gross DSG allocation is some £54m higher than that received in 2025/26. This increase is due to:

- Inflationary uplifts have been applied to pupil led factors on top of the SBSG and NIC grant being rolled into the NFF, with increases applied to the additional needs factors of the NFF. This will tend to benefit pupils with SEND (including those with disabilities) and will support mainstream schools to be inclusive for pupils with SEND.
- Following the same principle as has been applied to the Schools Block, funding provided through the 2025/2026 Early Years National Insurance Contributions and Teachers' Pay Grant (EYNTPG) has been rolled into the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF), which is the main reason for the increase in funding compared to 2025/26. On top of this inflationary increases have been applied to the Early Years NFF
- Further funding has been provided to Local Authorities within the Early Years Block to support Local Authorities as the DfE move to a termly funding system for all the early years funding streams from financial year 2026/2027.

Members noted that for 2026/2027 allocations, the DfE have temporarily suspended the high needs national funding formula, which previously was used to calculate local authorities' high needs allocations. Instead, local authorities' allocations will be based on their 2025/2026 allocations and therefore means there will be no inflationary uplift for the High Needs Block in 2026/27. The DfE will review the methodology for allocating high needs funding so that it supports the wider SEND reforms – no timescales are stipulated.

An initial estimate of the Schools Budget 2026/27 was also provided, as set out in the table below. The DSG will be set as a deficit budget in 2026/27, with a forecast shortfall of £75.90m.

	£m's
Total forecast Dedicated Schools Grant Income 2026/27	1,550.735
Total Forecast Dedicated Schools Grant Allocations 2026/27	1,626.632

The current forecast DSG position at the end of November 2025, shows a forecast in-year overspend within the DSG of £73.08m due to pressures on the HNB, leading to an increasing DSG deficit of £95.51m by March 2026. There is currently a statutory override in place which allows local authorities to carry DSG deficit and



not effect local authority general reserves, however this is currently due to end by March 2028.

Members considered the information provided and discussed the proposals for each funding block and made a number of observations and comments.

Concerns around the HNB remaining cash flat for 2026/27 were raised by members and the overall impact this will have on the DSG going forward. It was noted that this was the first year the LA will be setting a deficit budget and a significant in year deficit has accumulated in 2025/26. It was noted the SEND reform is expected in Spring but this has not been confirmed. Members were concerned on the impact of the deficit costs to the LA's revenue budget and how this may affect the services the LA's provides to the community. Officers in attendance were not able to comment on this.

There was also discussion around the Statutory Override, which is currently in place until March 2028. Members discussed that this is the first DSG deficit budget that has been formally approved by Forum, many other authorities have reported deficits prior to this. Members will continue to lobby MP's and raise the issue of HNB funding and increasing LA deficits, especially the cash flat HNB funding for 2026/27. DSG monitoring will also continue to be shared at Schools Forum and with Cabinet.

It was also noted that there were concerns around the High Needs Budget deficit and the current mitigations not meeting the current demand trends. Officers confirmed there are substantial plans outside of the HNB mitigations involving capital funds.

Overall, The Schools Forum have approved the 2026/27 Schools Budget whilst recognising the continuing financial constraints within the High Needs Block. Members thanked officers for their work on the School Budget given the quick turnaround time.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the report, including the 2026/27 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations and the budget proposals for each of the 4 funding blocks for 2026/27.**
- b) **Noted the information from the Forum Chairs Group meeting on 7 January 2026.**
- c) **Voted on the 2026/27 Schools Budget Proposals, as follows:**

Unanimously supported the Schools Block proposals, as follows:

- **Confirm that the DfE's NFF methodology should continue to be used as the Lancashire formula for 2026/27**
- **Confirm 2026/27 MFG set at +0.0%**
- **The use of the circa £2.27m of the Growth Fund allocation to be applied in full in 2026/27 to support growing and expanding schools**
- **The use of the Minimum Pupil Funding (MPF) rates contained in the NFF for any new Growth Fund allocations from April 2026**
 - **Primary £4,995 per pupil**
 - **Secondary £6,465 per pupil**



- The transfer of circa £5.48m (0.50%) of Schools Block funding to the High Needs Block for block transfer by utilising the basic entitlement factor, with this being 98.44% of the 2026/27 NFF factor and within the 2.50% allowable.

Unanimously supported the High Needs Block proposals, as follows:

- Agreed the proposed commissioned places
- Confirm the WPN/banding to be held at £5,440
- Supported school specific factors increased by 0.50% in line with average schools block NFF increases for special schools and Alternative Provision/Pupil Referral Units
- The use of the updated intervention cap methodology for Alternative Provision/Pupil Referral Units
- Agreed the Central High Needs Block central expenditure

Unanimously supported the Early Years Block proposals, as follows:

- Recommends the funding rates as per the table below, to be fully funded from the EY block:

Funding	Basis	2026/27
3 and 4-year-old entitlements	Per Hour	£5.94
2-year-old entitlement	Per Hour	£7.85
Under 2-year-old entitlement	Per Hour	£10.81
Supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools	Per Hour	£6.05
Early Years Pupil Premium	Per Child Per Year	£655.5
Disability Access Fund	Per Child Per Year	£975
Early Years SEN Inclusion Fund	Full Year Allocation	£1.65m
Early Years Central Fund	Full Year Allocation	£1.703m

- The continuation of Deprivation Supplements on the existing methodology for 2026/27
- Recommends the continuation of the SEN Inclusion Fund at £1.65m for 2026/27

Supported the Central School Services Block proposals, as follows:

- The proposals for the Central School Services Block in 2026/27, including uplifts for cost and demand led pressures.
- d) Supported formal approval of the budget lines requiring Forum agreement (as set out at item 6d of the Forum report)

Unanimously supported the Central School Services Block and High Needs Central Service proposals, as follows in the tables below:



Central Schools Service Block		2026/27	
	Prior Year Approved Budget	Central School Services Block	Variance
	£m	£m	£m
Central School Services Block			
ESG Retained Duties (transferred to DSG)	2.591	2.638	0.047
Overheads	0.875	0.913	0.038
Rates appeals	(0.111)	(0.010)	0.101
Copyright Licence	1.210	1.558	0.348
Pupil Access (Admissions)	0.868	0.793	(0.075)
School Forum	0.188	0.210	0.022
Subtotal CSSB	5.620	6.101	0.295
Historic Costs			
PFI - Sixth Form	0.682	-	(0.682)
PFI – Special	2.332	2.539	0.207
Subtotal Historic Cost	3.013	2.539	(0.474)
Total	8.633	8.640	0.007

<u>Commissioned/Central Services</u>	<u>Prior Year Budget</u>	<u>High Needs Budget</u>	<u>Variance</u>
	£m	£m	£m
Private Finance Initiative (PFI)	1.594	1.963	0.369
Commissioned Alternative Provision services	1.650	2.000	0.350
Hospital Provision	1.167	1.209	0.042
Independent Specialist Provision - Pre 16	34.500	70.000	35.500
Independent Specialist Provision - Post 16	4.750	6.500	1.750
Out of County Top Up - Mainstream / academies places	3.500	5.500	2.000
SEND - Specialised Equipment	0.700	0.600	-0.100
SEND Inclusion Engagement Support Team (IEST)	0.750	0.787	0.037
SEND - Specialist Teaching Service (0.50% schools block transfer)	4.350	7.385	3.035
SEMH Outreach (0.50% schools block transfer)	-	0.281	0.281
SEND - SEMH Pilot District (0.50% schools block transfer)	-	0.200	0.200
SEND - Inclusion Hubs (0.50% schools block transfer)	-	1.050	1.050
Overheads	1.504	2.319	0.815
Total HNB Commissioned Services	56.114	101.444	45.329



e) Unanimously approved the budget lines requiring Forum agreement, as set out below:

Function	LA proposals 2026/27	Proposed Expenditure 2026/27 £m
Consultation on Formula Changes		
No local formula factor changes are proposed for 2026/27 in any funding block, beyond incorporating the DfE National Funding Formula (NFF) alterations into the local Schools Block formula	The Forum have previously agreed to use the DfE's NFF as the Lancashire funding formula for the Schools Block budget, and NFF updates for 2026/27 introduced by the DfE are incorporated in the Schools Budget proposals for 2026/27	
Movement of up to 0.5% from the schools block to other blocks	Schools Forum agreed to transfer 0.50% from the schools block to the high needs block at the 14 October 2025 meeting. Details are contained in the Schools Budget 2026/27 report	5.48
De-delegation for mainstream schools	LA proposals for: Schools Requiring additional Support Museum service (primary only); Staff Costs Public duties/Suspensions; Approved by the Schools Forum on 14 October 2025	1.094
Contracts (where the LA is entering a contract to be funded from the schools budget)	No Proposals currently	
Financial issues relating to:		
arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding	Proposals contained in the High Needs Block Working Group recommendations report to the Forum and the Forum budget papers	186.519
arrangements for use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school, in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding	Proposals contained in the High Needs Block Working Group recommendations report to the Forum and the Forum budget papers	11.308
arrangements for early years provision	Proposals contained in the Early Years Block Working Group report to	233.323



	the Forum and the Forum budget papers	
administration arrangements for the allocation of central government grants	No Proposals currently beyond passporting DfE allocations to schools	
Minimum funding guarantee (MFG)	Consultation responses on MFG reported to Forum on 14 October 2025 and recommended that the level of MFG to be used in the Lancashire funding formula for 2026/27 be set at +0.0%. This is incorporated into the Forum budget papers	
General Duties for maintained schools Contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for maintained schools	No Proposals at this time	
Central spend on and the criteria for allocating funding from:		
funding for significant pre-16 pupil growth, including new schools set up to meet basic need, whether maintained or academy	Policy previously agreed by the Schools Forum. Proposal to increase the growth fund unit values in line with increased NFF Minimum Pupil Funding levels each year Final budget proposals are contained in the Schools Budget 2026/27 report	2.269
funding for good or outstanding schools with falling rolls where growth in pupil numbers is expected within three years	No Proposals currently	
Central spend on:		
early years block provision (SENIF)	Final budget proposals are contained in the Schools Budget 2026/27 report	1.65
early years block provision (Central Fund)	Agreed by Schools Forum at 17 December 2025 meeting to retain 0.75% for an early years central fund for 2026/27	1.703
funding to enable all schools to meet the infant class size requirement	No Proposals currently	
back-pay for equal pay claims	No Proposals currently	
remission of boarding fees at maintained schools and academies	No Proposals currently	
places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils	No Proposals currently	
admissions	Final budget proposals are contained in the Schools Budget 2026/27 report	0.793
servicing of Schools Forum	Final budget proposals are contained in the Schools Budget 2026/27 report	0.210



Contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for all schools	No Proposals currently	
contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for maintained schools	No Proposals currently	
Central spend on:		
capital expenditure funded from revenue: projects must have been planned and decided on prior to April 2013 so no new projects can be charged	No Proposals currently	
contribution to combined budgets: this is where the Schools Forum agreed prior to April 2013 a contribution from the schools budget to services which would otherwise be funded from other sources	No Proposals currently	
existing termination of employment costs (costs for specific individuals must have been approved prior to April 2013 so no new redundancy costs can be charged)	No Proposals currently	
prudential borrowing costs – the commitment must have been approved prior to April 2013	No Proposals currently	
SEN transport where the Schools Forum agreed prior to April 2013 a contribution from the schools budget (this is now treated as part of the high needs block but still requires Schools Forum approval as a historic commitment)	No Proposals currently	
Central spend on:		
high needs block provision	2026/27 funding level presented as part of the Schools Budget setting proposals	101.444
central licences negotiated by the Secretary of State	2026/27 funding level presented as part of the Schools Budget setting proposals	1.558
Funding of brought forward deficits	No Proposals at this time	

A summary of the members vote below:

School Budget 2026/27 SF Members Vote	
For	32
Against	0
Abstain	0

10. Forum Correspondence

There were no items of correspondence received.

11. Any Other Business

The chair wished to raise one item of another business.



11.1 LCC Revenue Budget Consultation

Daniel Ballard, Schools Forum Chair, received a letter from Jacqui Old, Executive Director of Education and Skills, encouraging members to complete the recent LCC Budget Consultation. The consultation will be distributed to members after the meeting.

The Forum:

Noted the information.

12. Date of Future Meetings

To note that the next scheduled Forum meeting will be held at 10.00 am on Friday 20 March 2026. Arrangements for the meeting will be confirmed in due course.

