



## Schools Forum February 2026

*This is Issue 16 of the Lancashire Schools Forum eNewsletter, a Post Forum Edition, which outlines the key themes of the upcoming meetings.*

Schools Forum met on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2026, the main areas of discussion are as follows;

### **Schools Budget 2026/27**

At the Schools Forum on 9 January 2026, decisions and recommendations about the 2026/27 Schools Budget were agreed and recommended to Cabinet. The Cabinet met on 22 January 2026 and recommended that the Schools Budget is approved and referred the report to Full Council on 26 February 2026 as part of the overall Council budget.

The Authority Proforma Tool (APT), setting out the agreed Schools Block proposals for 2026/27, was then submitted to the DfE for compliance checking ahead of the 22 January 2026 deadline. Approval was received on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026 and individual School Budgets were released on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

### **2027/28 Block Transfer**

Due to the continuing pressures on the High Needs Block, at this stage it is anticipated that a 0.50% Schools Block transfer to the High Needs Block will be proposed for 2027/28. Whilst the High Needs Block Stability Grant is welcome, current forecasts still show a substantial High Needs Block deficit in future years, with forecasts continuing to build in the Schools Block transfer.

It is anticipated that any Schools Block transfer would be utilised in a similar way as has been implemented for 2026/27 and will be used for spend to save initiatives within the High Needs Block. A further update will be provided at the June working group meeting.

### **Banding Document Update**

Schools may be aware that over the last year a working group has been reviewing how education resources are allocated to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This work has led to a proposed updated banding system, which we would like your feedback on.

Your insights are vital in agreeing and shaping a system that fairly reflects the needs of children and young people with SEND. We are therefore encouraging all schools and SENDCos to take part in the SEND Banding Engagement Survey before it closes on the 31st of March.



Please take a few minutes to complete the survey, and share it with colleagues who may not yet have seen it. [Lancashire County Council SEND Banding System Survey 2026 – Fill in form.](#)

### **High Needs Block Mitigations 2026/27**

At their meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2026, the Schools Forum voted in favour of the proposal for Lancashire's strategic approach to mitigating High Needs Block (HNB) pressures, utilising the school's forum agreed 0.50% transfer from schools' block to HNB (c £5.5m). The aim of the proposal was for financial sustainability and improved outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and vulnerable learners. Further reports will also be presented at future meeting to update members on the progress.

## **National News**

The [High Needs Stability Grant](#) is a new government measure announced in February 2026 to help local authorities manage substantial deficits in their High Needs (SEND) budgets. Its purpose is to stabilise council finances and support reforms to the SEND system.

The government have announced this grant will cover 90% of councils accumulated high needs deficits by the end of the current financial year with further announcements expected. To be eligible for the grant, councils must secure DfE approval of a local SEND Reform plan to ensure long-term stability. The LA is currently reviewing the guidance and working towards submitting the SEND reform plan to the DfE.

Further updates will be provided at a later date.

## **SFVS**

There is a statutory requirement on all maintained schools to complete the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) each year and to provide a copy of the completed return to the authority, by 31 March each year.

A formal core agenda item is included on the spring term governors meetings and governing bodies must formally discuss the SFVS annually with the head teacher and senior staff and ensure that the standard is completed in full.

The approved SFVS spreadsheet should be uploaded on the 'Forms' section of the Schools Portal. This can be accessed via the schools portal home page under Forms > Finance > Schools Financial Value Standard.

The DfE's SFVS website is available [here](#) and contains links to the financial benchmarking.



## Clawback at March 2026

Please remember that Schools Forum has agreed to reintroduce the clawback policy on excess school balances at 31 March 2026. The current guideline balance is 8% of Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) income for all phases of maintained school.

The Clawback Policy can be found on the [Schools Forum Website](#). Schools Forum will review the Clawback Policy in July 2026. The outcome of this will be shared with schools.

## School Teaching & Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme

The deadline for submitting claims is 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026. Claims received after this date will not be payable.

If you have any queries with your offer, please email [supplyinsuranceclaims@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:supplyinsuranceclaims@lancashire.gov.uk)

## School Budget Setting Process

Schools are asked to ensure that following approval of the budget plan for 2026/27, this is submitted to the Authority. The budget plan is to be submitted using a web based form titled "Income and Expenditure Form" (I&E Form). It is located in the Forms > Finance section of the menu on the left of the portal homepage. The I&E forms are required no later than **Friday 15 May 2026**.

### Forum Update

The draft minutes from the last Schools Forum meeting held on 9 January 2026 have now been added to the Schools Forum website.

All Schools Forum agendas and minutes are in the public domain and can be accessed [here](#).

The schools forum is currently reviewing the membership ahead of the 2026/27 academic year. Any vacancies that arise will be advertised on the Schools Portal.

### Questions?

Remember, if you have any questions about the Schools Forum, please contact Millie Parkinson, Schools Forum Officer, 01772 534844, or email [schoolsforum@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsforum@lancashire.gov.uk)

