



Schools Forum

Thursday 14 November 2024 at 6.00 pm

This will be undertaken as an online virtual meeting.

The press and public are welcome to attend this online virtual meeting with the link to attend and view the meeting available [HERE](#)

Membership

Representing

SCHOOL MEMBERS

Nursery

Nisha Lingam
Angela Turner

Head
Governor

Primary

Vacancy
Michelle Ginty
Melissa Loosemoore
Raphael Moss
Vacancy
Vacancy
Michael Odumosu
Ernest Toquie
Cassie Lloyd Perrin

Head
Head
Head
Head
Governor
Governor
Governor
Governor
Governor

Secondary

Vacancy

Head (Maintained)

Special Education Needs

Nick Cooper

Head

Pupil Referral Unit

Ranjna Shiyani

Head

ACADEMY MEMBERS

Primary

Vacancy
Jo Jhally

Head
Governor

Secondary

Andy Prindiville (Vice-Chair)	Head
Jude Enright	Head
Vacancy	Head
Vacancy	Governor
Martin Beard	Governor
Mike Heiser (Chair)	Governor

Special Education Needs

Jayne Jardine	Head
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NON –SCHOOL MEMBERS

Early Years PVI

Paul Russell
Wioletta Bura

Trade Union

John Roche/Jennifer Cooper

16-19 Provider Representative

Vacancy

For further information contact: Abby Shinhmar, Governance Officer
Email: abby.shinhmar@brent.gov.uk; Tel: 020 8937 2078

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Notes for Members - Declarations of Interest:

If a Member is aware they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent and must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If a Member is aware they have a Personal Interest** in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent.

If the Personal Interest is also significant enough to affect your judgement of a public interest and either it affects a financial position or relates to a regulatory matter then after disclosing the interest to the meeting the Member must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item, except that they may first make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the matter, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for those purposes.

***Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:**

- (a) **Employment, etc.** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between the Councillors or their partner (or a body in which one has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences**- Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which the Councillor or their partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

****Personal Interests:**

The business relates to or affects:

- (a) Anybody of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management, and:
 - To which you are appointed by the council;
 - which exercises functions of a public nature;
 - which is directed is to charitable purposes;
 - whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy (including a political party or trade union).
- (b) The interests of a person from whom you have received gifts or hospitality of at least £50 as a member in the municipal year;

Or

A decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial position of:

- You yourself;
- a member of your family or your friend or any person with whom you have a close association or any person or body who is the subject of a registrable personal interest.

Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Item	Page
1 Apologies for Absence and Membership	
2 Declarations of Interest	
3 Deputations (if Any)	
4 Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 8
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 19 June 2024 as a correct record.	
5 Matters arising (if any)	
To consider any actions arising from previous meetings.	
6 DSG Budget Monitoring Report 2024-25	9 - 18
This report provides Schools Forum with an update on the projected financial position for the second quarter of the 2024/25 financial year. It also provides an update on schools' additional in-year grant allocations from the DfE.	
7 SEND Resource Allocation System	19 - 30
Schools Forum received a report on 19 June 2024 on a proposed banding SEND Resource Allocation System (RAS) to move away from the current hours led system to a needs-led, provision-based approach for mainstream schools and Additional Resource Provisions (ARPs), early years settings and post-16 settings. It was agreed that consultation would be undertaken with schools and settings in the autumn term on the proposed new approach.	
Consultation has been undertaken with mainstream schools and post-16 colleges on a proposed RAS for mainstream schools and post-16. Further work is being undertaken on application of the RAS for children in ARPs and Early Years. This report therefore sets out proposed changes to the way that Brent allocates resources for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for children aged 0-25 in mainstream schools and post-16 colleges only following consultation.	

8 Any Other Urgent Business

9 Dates of Future Meetings

To note the schedule of dates for future meetings during 2024-25 as follows:

- Tuesday 10 December 2024 (additional date if needed)
- Monday 27 January 2025
- Thursday 13 February 2025

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MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Held as an online virtual meeting on Wednesday 19 June 2024 at 6.00pm

Membership

Representing

PRESENT (all in remote attendance):

Governors

Mike Heiser (Chair)
Martin Beard
Michael Odumosu
Ernest Toquie

Headteachers

Jayne Jardine
Mellisa Loosemoore
Gerard McKenna
Raphael Moss
Andy Prindiville
Ranjna Shiyani

Councillors

Councillor Grahl, Cabinet Member for
Children, Young People & Schools

Officers

Nigel Chapman, Corporate Director
Children and Young People
Shirley Parks, Director, Education,
Partnerships and Strategy
Emma Ferrey, SEND Commissioning
Consultant
Ravinder Jassar, Deputy Director of
Finance
Folake Olufeko, Head of Finance
Kamaljit Kaur, Senior Finance Analyst
Abby Shinhmar & James Kinsella
(Governance Team)

1. **Apologies for Absence and Membership**

Apologies for absence were received from Jo Jhally (Governor), Wioletta Burra (Early Years PVI representative) and Nick Cooper (Headteacher).

2. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

3. **Deputations (if Any)**

None.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 20 February 2024 as a correct record.

5. **Actions arising**

None.

6. **Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Final Outturn 2023-24**

Folake Olufeko (Head of Finance, Brent Council) introduced a report presenting the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) outturn against the budget set for 2023/24 with detail on the year-end 2023/24 surplus of £0.6m. The Forum noted the following key points as part of the update provided:

- Appendix A set out the DSG outturn in more detail and Appendix B was a reflection of the schools reserve balances following the closure of the schools accounts for the last financial year.
- The DSG reported a surplus of approximately £0.6m against a £370.6m budget. This surplus was a movement from the forecast deficit of £0.8m reported to Forum in February 2024 and was mainly due to a £1m underspend against the Early Years (EY) Block, £0.7m underspend against the Schools Block and £0.3m underspend against the Combined Schools Services Block (CSSB), offset by an overspend of £1.4m against the High Needs (HN) Block budget.
- The cumulative DSG deficit carried forward from 2022/23 was £13.8m. This had reduced to £13.2m at the end of 2023/24.
- The Schools Block underspent by £0.7m from growth funds top sliced from school's funding allocations to cover the cost of the Choice and Fair Access Panel (CAFAI) arrangements for new arrivals to Brent schools, as well as the impact of rising rolls, mainly in secondary schools, for in-year growth in pupil numbers. The actual growth in pupil numbers during the year was less than initial projections the budgets were based on.
- The High Needs (HN) Block saw an overspend of £1.4m against a budget of £74.8m. This was mainly due to the top-up funding for Post-16 provision, which led to an overspend of £1.8m and top-up funding for in-borough non maintained special schools and academies, which saw a £1.4m increase. In addition, a £1.4m pressure had been identified against independent day and residential top-up funding due to increased number of pupils places in these settings along with £1.1m additional cost towards the education of pupils with EHCPs awaiting school placements due to increased numbers. The Forum noted this reflected an increase in the number of children with an agreed Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) which was 3,576 as at March 2024 compared to 3,309 as at March 2023 an increase of 8.1%.
- The pressures in relation to the HN Block had been offset by a £0.8m underspend against the recoupment income expected from other local authorities that have placed children in Brent schools, following finalised confirmation of pupil information from schools and actual charges processed, £1.4m underspend against the SEN Services budgets, following the DfE's mandate to all local

authorities to transfer all expenditure relating to SEN services and Education Psychology being charged to the DSG to the local authority's general fund budget and a £0.3m underspend against the SEN Support budget mainly from the budget allocated for the Graduated Approach programme.

- Brent was a part of the DfE programme called Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND to provide dedicated support and funding to help Local Authorities reform their high needs systems. The Council had received £1m grant funding allocated over two financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25 to deliver the actions in the Management Plan as well as cost benefits identified as part of the programme with the four workstreams developed with the DBV funding focussed around Intervention First, SEND Assurance, workforce and inclusive environments and commissioning and a further update on progress due to be provided for the Forum in November 2024.
- The Early Years Block budget was £24.4m for 2023-24 with an underspend of £1m, which was mainly due to the DfE's in year adjustment to Early Years Block funding following completion of the January 2023 census. The EY Block was a self-contained block based on headcount and The Forum therefore noted the risk that the DfE may claw back funding following a final in-year adjustment expected in July 2024 with the surplus will be held in reserves to offset any potential clawbacks.
- The school balances had seen a decrease in reserves of £1.9m from the £15m reported in 2022-23 to £13.1m in 2023/24 (as detailed in Appendix B of the report). Of the 56 maintained schools, 23 had increased their overall reserves balance (increase of £2.0m) and 33 decreased their balance over the 2023/24 financial year (decrease of £3.9m). Of the 47 maintained primary schools, 18 (38%) compared to 16 (34%) in 2022/23 increased their reserve balance by an average of £81k, and 26 (55%) compared to 31 (66%) in 2022/23 decreased their reserve balances by an average of £99k. Four schools had cleared their deficit but four new schools had gone into deficit resulting in seven primary schools being in deficit at the end of 2023/24. Of the 47 maintained primary schools, 18 had closed with balances of 8% or more and 29 had closed with balances of less than 8%. Of the 2 maintained secondary schools, one had seen no significant change in reserves and the other had seen a 233% decrease in reserves, moving from a surplus reserve position in 2022/23 to a deficit in 2023/24. The only maintained special school saw an increase in reserves of 67% with a £1.3m reserve balance. One of the 2 PRUs decreased their reserves by 3% and the other saw a 59% reduction compared to balances in 2022/23. Two of the four Nursery schools had increased reserves and the other two reported decreased reserves with one remaining in deficit since 2022/23.
- In summary, the position regarding school balances presented a mixed picture in terms of how individual schools were managing their financial position with the figures suggesting that in 2023/24 schools in Brent had mostly continued to experience financial difficulty with many facing pressures to manage or improve their financial positions. The decrease in balances was partly due to the impact of falling rolls, where some primary schools have had a reduction in funding, as well as the impact of rising inflation which had led to increased costs of services and increased energy bills for schools.
- It was expected that the funding and expenditure pressures within Brent schools would persist with the requirement for schools to take action to balance their budgets. Licensed deficit agreements to recover the deficit over a 3-year period would be arranged with the 4 additional schools in deficit who would be closely

monitored throughout the year to review performance against their recovery plans and 4 schools will be supported by the DfE as part of the School Resource Management programme to identify ways to make better use of their resources to drive savings.

The Chair thanked the officer for her report and welcomed any questions from the Forum with the following noted:

- As part of the agreement of the Schools funding formula for 2023/24 members were reminded that this had included an additional contribution towards HN Block where it confirmed that £1.4m had been allocated from the Schools Block to support pupils with high needs in mainstream schools which had been designed to support schools in managing the growth in demand being experienced alongside Additionally Resources Provision (ARPs). The ARPs programme was for targeted support for pupils in school and had been designed to relieve pressure in mainstream schools. This funding ensured that every pupil was in the right place for the support that was required.
- The Forum noted that some schools appeared to be managing more significant balances and levels of reserves than others with members advised in response of the actions being taken to monitor the position and ensure schools remained fully inclusive and best practice was shared.
- Councillor Gwen Grahl (as Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools) recognised the recent tough times that schools had been facing in balancing budgets and managing demand in relation to SEND and highlighted that there were a lot of other expenses like staffing and infrastructure and promised to continue lobbying for the best possible funding for Brent schools.

As no further questions or comments were raised the Forum **RESOLVED** to note the report.

7. **Scheme for Financing Schools & Schools Financial Regulations 2024-25**

Folake Olufeko, Head of Finance introduced the report, which informed the Schools Forum of the changes to be implemented to the Scheme for Financing Schools and the Schools Financial Regulations for the financial year 2024/25, following the initial update to Schools Forum in February 2024. The Forum noted the following key points as part of the update provided:

- The initial update presented to the Forum in February 2024 was focussed on the introduction of an accounting standard for Local Authorities from April 2024.
- This new standard would end the distinction between the operating and finance leases, where previously Brent maintained schools needed to approach the Local Authority before engaging in any leases. The DfE now had a list of all the items schools could lease without the need for consent. Anything outside of this would still need to be approved by the Local Authority, which would then need to be submitted to the Secretary of State for their consent.
- The Scheme for Financing Schools for 2024-25 had been attached as Appendix A to the report and updated, with the summary of changes itemised in Appendix B of the report and changes to become immediately effective following Schools Forum approval.

- The updated Schools Financial Regulations for 2024-25, had been attached as Appendix C to the report, with the summary of changes itemised in Appendix D. These changes would become immediately effective after consultation with Schools Forum.

The Chair thanked Folake Olufeko for her report and asked the Forum if they had any questions in relation to the information provided. In noting that approval of the proposed changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools and consultation on the 2024-25 Schools Financial Regulations would only be open to maintained school members on the Schools Forum it was **RESOLVED**, with no further comments having been raised, that the maintained schools representatives on the Forum:

- (1) approve the amendments to the Scheme for Financing Schools 2024/25.
- (2) Note (having been invited to formally comment) the Schools Financial Regulations 2024/25.

8. **Brent Mainstream School's Banding Matrix Review**

Shirley Parks, Director, Education, Partnerships and Strategy, introduced the report, which set out how a SEND Resource Allocation System (RAS) could improve transparency and consistency of decision-making and provide some savings against the High Needs Block (HNB). The Forum noted the following key points as part of the update provided:

- Schools Forum were informed on 20 February 2024 that a banding review was underway. This followed a benchmarking exercise with other Local Authorities as well as research with the High Needs Block Subgroup and Early Years colleagues around developing a new resource allocation system approach. This would be for mainstream settings including ARP school places and in both early years and post-16 settings. This offer had been extended to post-16 settings as part of the Developing Better Value Programme to allow for a more needs led based allocation and for transparency.
- Emma Ferrey (SEN Commissioning Consultant) was then invited to outline the detailed proposals and informed the Forum that Option 3 was being recommended as the preferred option, which would involve the introduction of the proposed RAS for all children and young people with an EHCP from age 0-25 years in mainstream schools and settings, including ARPs.
- Ahead of the banding matrix review and as part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme, SEND Assurance work had been carried out (as a desktop exercise) to review all EHCPs of children (initially those aged up to 7, but subsequently widened to all ages) allocated 26 hours or more of support. This review, which included visits to schools and meetings with SENCOs and other staff, concluded that up to 80% of these Plans (with 26 hours+) were over-allocated.
- Benchmarking information on funding allocated to children with SEND in early years, mainstream schools and post-16 provisions was provided at both the High Needs Working Group and Early Years' Working Group meetings. This showed that Brent is broadly in line with other neighbouring authorities for school-age children. For early years, Brent fund significantly more (from the HNB) than all neighbouring authorities.

- Other Local Authorities, such as Greenwich had already implemented the new matrix banding scheme and received positive feedback around ease of use. The Children's Social Care team were also using the same system in the same format. The new system would provide good join up with Social Care teams and allocating funding.
- In terms of the approach recommended the proposed SEND RAS would be used across mainstream and ARP placements in early years' settings, schools and Further Education institutions. The descriptors for the RAS in early years would be slightly adapted to ensure it appropriately reflected both children's needs and how need was met in these settings. Currently in Early Years, there were two bands of funding and with the new banding system, this would increase to four bands of funding available. The recommended Option (3) would involve the introduction of an RAS across all ages which would improve transition at key stages and between settings, promoting similar descriptions of levels of need. The RAS would also support conversations with parents, schools and settings about the right intervention, and creative solutions, for each child building on the Graduated Approach Framework with the key change in approach focussed around an increase of banding levels for Early Years designed to deal with emerging needs and an increase in the maximum funding in the top banding up to £7,000.
- The options identified for implementation of any new approach (as detailed in section 3.5 of the report) with introduction of the RAS to be carried out in conjunction with the SEND Assurance work and the RAS expected to increase top-up costs for many of the school ARPs, balanced out with some savings from mainstream EHCPs (based on annual reviews informed by SEND Assurance work), as well as early years and post-16 settings with the new system designed to provide a needs-led rather than an hours-led approach.
- In terms of development of the option outlined The Forum was advised that both the High Needs and Early Years Working Groups had provided direction and support for the banding matrix review with views of parents and carers sought through Brent Parent Carer Forum. More detailed work on the descriptors and the functionality of the RAS had been undertaken with school and setting leaders and SENCOs with the banding descriptors now being revised based on feedback from early years and school SENCOs, and with parent carer input.
- Once the preferred option had been approved, the accompanying descriptors would need be finalised and a process of formal consultation undertaken with schools in September 2024.
- Modelling was being done with schools to look at their current resource allocations for SEND pupils and to assess impact if matched onto a RAS.

The Chair thanked Shirley Parks and Emma Ferrey for the update and asked the Forum if they had any questions in relation to the information provided with the following noted:

- In highlighting and expressing concern at the potential impact on his school given the ARP attached, Raphael Moss felt that additional information was needed. For example, the SEND assurance work that was described in the report stated that 80% was over funded with further detail on the review therefore being sought. Concerns were also highlighted in relation to delays in the EHCPs process and financial impact being experienced by schools as a result which had also contributed to the financial pressures being experienced. Additionally, when

EHCPs were agreed, the hours and funding agreed were insufficient and only increased following an appeal, therefore it was falling upon schools to pick up the shortfall. The expectation to move to the new system by April 2025 was, he felt overly ambitious and would have cost implications for schools. Shirley Parks stated that some of the SEND assurance work was done as part of the DBV work followed by consultation with schools and as a desktop exercise, which she would be willing to share. Additional resources may be allocated to assist in moving to the new system with schools also to be formally consulted and officers willing to liaise with the Raphael Moss in seeking to address the specific issues raised.

- It was clarified that £1m was received from the DBV programme and was used to provide targeted funding for various projects. The funding was not allocated for schools and was for test and learning projects. **Action Point 95: Forum to be provided with an update on use of funding under the DBV Programme.**
- In terms of the approach to be applied to Special Schools officers advised that the banding matrix had been subject to a separate approach which had been reviewed during 2022-23 with officers advising that they would provide details on this when seeking formal approval of any changes to be introduced to the banding matrix following the formal consultation process. **Action Point 96: Forum to be provided with the established banding arrangements for Special Schools.**
- There was concern about what the impact will be on schools when switching to the new RAS, in relation to the proposed April 2025 timescale and the increase in workload for SENCOs. Shirley Parks stated that whilst the RAS had been designed to improve the existing system it was recognised that the implications for each school would be dependant on funding allocated to each banding rate, which were being finalised and with SENCOs to be given support to ensure that this was embedded in the system.
- As an additional assurance Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children & Young People) advised of the supporting internal review process which had been established in relation the DBV programme which would be extended to include any new banding review.
- Once the consultation document was finalised with the updated rates, the Forum would more than welcome to provide further comment with the HN Block Subgroup also being asked to review the final option and members of the Forum also welcomed to engage in that process and additional modelling with schools and SENCOs to ascertain impact.

As no further questions or comments were raised the Forum **RESOLVED:**

- (1) To approve (with 1 member voting against the decision) Option 3 to introduce the proposed Resource Allocation System (RAS) for all children and young people with an EHCP from age 0-25 years in mainstream schools and settings, including ARPs.
- (2) Following on from (1) above (with 1 member abstaining from the decision) to consult on the new approach during the autumn term.
- (3) (with 1 member abstaining from the decision) that the LA and schools/settings work in partnership to implement the RAS for all children and young people based on an initial timescale of April 2025, subject to consultation with schools and settings and a further report being provided for the Forum on the outcome of the consultation process and final timescale.

9. **Any Other Urgent Business**

The Forum noted that it was Gerard McKenna's last meeting with the Schools Forum, as he would shortly be retiring. As a result the Chair took the opportunity to thank Gerard for his many years of service on the Schools Forum and hard work.

The Forum was also advised of the following query that had been submitted by Nick Cooper via email seeking clarity on the 3.4% increase applied to SEN additional funding this year and how this had impacted on previous years funding. Clarification was therefore sought on whether the increase applied to 23/24 and or 24/25, as this it was felt this could be misleading in terms of any ongoing lobbying of the DfE.

In response, Folake Olufeko advised that a detailed response would be provided outside of the meeting but clarified that the 3.4% increase had also been applied for 2024-25.


10. **Dates of Future Meetings**

To note the change in the schedule of dates for 2024 - 25 as follows:

- Thursday 14 November 2024 at 6pm via Zoom (previously October)
- Tuesday 10 December 2024 at 6pm via Zoom - *Additional meeting if required*
- Monday 27 January 2025 at 6pm via Zoom
- Thursday 13 February 2025 at 6pm via Zoom

The meeting closed at 7:15pm.

M Heiser
Chair

	<p align="center">Schools Forum 14 November 2024</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p>Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget Monitoring Report 2024/25</p>	
Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	N/A
No. of Appendices:	One Appendix 1: DSG Period 6 Budget Monitor 2024/25
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	<p>Folake Olufeko Head of Finance – CYP 0208 937 2491 Email: Folake.Olufeko@brent.gov.uk</p> <p>Kamaljit Kaur Senior Finance Analyst – CYP Email: Kamaljit.Kaur@brent.gov.uk</p>

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides Schools Forum with an update on the projected financial position for the second quarter of the 2024/25 financial year. The position is reported against the budget set in consultation with the Schools Forum and submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) in the Section 251 budget return in June 2024. It also provides an update on schools' additional in-year grant allocations from the DfE. For reference, Appendix 1 of this report contains a detailed budget breakdown and forecast by funding blocks.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Schools Forum is asked to note the contents of this report.

3. Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

3.1 This report is linked to the Council’s Borough Plan which aims for children and young people to get the best start in life, by working in partnership with schools and other partners to make sure access to education is fair and equal. This report provides updates to ensure the Schools Forum is kept abreast of the DSG funding.

4. Summary

4.1. As of the close of the 2023/24 financial year, the cumulative deficit stood at £13.2m. Due to rising demand for High Needs provision, coupled with the pressures on top-up funding allocations, the DSG budget is now projected to end the 2024/25 financial year with a slight increase to the cumulative deficit, which is now forecast at £13.5m.

4.2. A detailed financial monitor of the ‘DSG Schools Budget monitoring report is presented in Appendix 1. The ‘Actual to P6’ column represents spend to date as of 30th of September 2024, and the forecasts provided are those prepared during October 2024.

5. Table 1: DSG Forecast

Funding Blocks	Overall DSG Funding 2024/25	Forecast Expenditure	Overspend/ (Underspend)
	£m	£m	£m
Schools Block	121.6	121.6	0.0
High Needs Block	77.0	77.3	0.3
Early Years Block	35.2	35.2	0.0
Central Block	2.1	2.1	0.0
Total DSG	235.9	236.2	0.3

5.1. The DSG forecast is reflecting a deficit of £0.3m, against grant funds of £235.9m for 2024/25, mainly due to pressures from the High Needs (HN) Block.

5.2. The overall DSG allocation has decreased by £0.6m, from the position approved by Schools Forum, due to an in-year adjustment by the DfE in July 2024. The adjustment relates to £0.1m decrease in the HN Block funding for Brent children attending schools in other local authorities and £0.5m decrease in the Early Years Block following the completion of the January 2024 census which saw a reduction in hours of childcare provision compared to the January 2023 census data. There was a 9.5% decrease in take-up of the two-year free entitlement in Brent and this is reflective of a 7% decrease in take-up nationally. This decrease is attributed to three factors including falling birth rate in recent years, the transition to universal credit from legacy benefits and income thresholds for the eligibility criteria remaining unchanged whilst average incomes have risen in recent years.

6. Schools Block

- 6.1. Of the total £274.4m Schools Block budget allocated by the DfE to Brent, £149.1m has been recouped and allocated directly to academies. £1.4m has been transferred to the HNB and £2.3m has been deducted for National Non-Domestic Business Rates to be paid by the DfE directly to the billing authority, leaving £121.6m directly allocated to Brent maintained schools and to fund centrally retained items including the growth fund.
- 6.2. The Schools Block is currently forecast to break even.

7. High Needs (HN) Block

- 7.1. The HN budget, excluding the proportion allocated to academies, is £77.0m. This allocation includes a £1.4m transfer from the Schools Block.
- 7.2. Place funding of £9.3m for academies has been recouped from the Block and allocated to Special Academy providers. There was a £0.09m in year adjustment by the DfE in July 2024 to decrease the HN funding for Brent children attending schools in other local authorities.
- 7.3. Although the HN Block allocation increased by £2.8m in 2024/25 (£6.9m in 2023/24), as in previous years, the number of children with EHCPs has continued to rise. As a result of this growing demand, there is continued pressure on the HN Block. Growth in EHCPs is a national and London trend with the number of children assessed as meeting the threshold for support continuing to increase. However, the HN funding has not increased in line with the growth in demand creating financial pressures. Between January 2024 and September 2024, there was an 8% increase in children and young people with an EHCP, with the number increasing from 3508 to 3782 over this period and this represents a 12% increase when compared to September 2023.

Table 2 - DSG High Needs Block forecast	2024/25 Budget	2024/25 Forecast	2024/25 Variance
	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)
Place funding in Brent Special Schools and ARPS	2.5	2.5	0.0
Top up funding in Brent Mainstream, Special schools, and ARPs	42.3	42.7	0.4
Recoupment Income	(3.5)	(3.6)	(0.1)
Residential and Independent settings	11.5	11.8	0.3
Out of Borough Top ups	8.0	8.7	0.7
Post 16 Top ups	5.0	5.0	0.0
Early Years Inclusion Fund	1.1	1.1	0.0
SEN Support Services including Education Otherwise / Awaiting Placement	9.6	8.9	(0.7)
SEN Support	0.5	0.2	(0.3)
Total Expenditure: High Needs Block	77.0	77.3	0.3

- 7.4. The £0.3m deficit against the HN Block is mainly due to an increase in the expected costs of out borough and in-borough academies and special schools' top up funding.
- 7.5. The forecast also includes another small adverse adjustment of £0.09m following confirmation of the import/export adjustment by the DfE in September 2024. This is the net impact of Brent children attending educational settings outside the borough and children from other local authorities attending Brent schools.
- 7.6. The forecast position is further detailed below:
- i. £0.4m forecast pressures against in-borough mainstream schools' (including academies) top up funding due to the introduction of a new Band 7 top up funding rate. This is further detailed in a separate report to be presented to this Schools Forum.
 - ii. There is a further pressure of £0.3m against the education costs of children placed in independent and residential settings. This is partially mitigated by an additional forecast recoupment income of £0.1m to claim back the cost of children attending Brent schools placed by other boroughs.
 - iii. £0.7m pressure against the cost of placing Brent children in schools out of borough. The post-16 budget is projecting a breakeven position as it is difficult at this stage to accurately forecast the post-16 costs due to

delays in various settings confirming their charges to the local authority. New pupils also join in the spring term which makes it difficult to predict the forecast based on pupil numbers. As such, the forecast against the post-16 budget line is subject to change later in the financial year.

- iv. The above pressures are expected to be mitigated by forecast underspends of 0.7m against SEN support services, including Education Otherwise/Awaiting Placement and a further forecast underspend against the SEN support budget due to slippage against the training budget earmarked for the graduated approach programme.

7.7. The HNB management plan is regularly reported to Schools Forum, which includes longer-term actions to mitigate the deficit. A task group chaired by the Corporate Director of Children and Young People coordinates and monitors actions in the plan, which focuses on cost avoidance through managing demand, improving sufficiency of places and financial management. The updated plan will be presented at the February Schools Forum.

8. Early Years (EY) Block

8.1 The EY Block allocation reduced by £0.5m following the completion of the January 2024 census. The census has shown an increase in take-up of the 3- and 4-year-old entitlement and a reduction in take-up 2-year-old entitlements. There has also been a clawback of £28.5k from the initial supplementary funding allocation for maintained nursery schools. To support these settings, the local authority is not proposing to recover this clawback from its Maintained Nurseries for this financial year.

8.2 At this stage, the forecast is for the EY Block indicates a break even position. However, this position is likely to change over the next two quarters, as children move on from early years' settings and new take-up hours are confirmed from September 2024 and in the Spring term from January 2025.

9 Central Block

9.1 The Central Block of the DSG (£2.1m) funds central services for schools. This includes a set contribution towards pension strain costs for former school employees of £0.3m, which is a long-term annual commitment.

9.2 The Central Block is currently forecast to break even.

10 DSG funding 2025/26 update

- 10.1 The autumn 2024 budget announced that core schools funding will increase by £2.3b in 2025/26 and £1b of this will be allocated to support work to reform the system for pupils with special educational needs. It is not clear at this stage how the funding will be distributed at local authority level and between the DSG Blocks.
- 10.2 The indicative 2025/26 Schools Block DSG allocations have not been published at the time of writing this report due to the timing of the recent general election. The expectation is for the final DSG allocations to be announced by DfE in December 2024. The Council will continue to set a local funding formula (LFF) for mainstream schools in 2025/26 and will continue to move its funding factor rates closer towards the National Funding Formula (NFF) factors as plans remain to move towards the direct NFF.
- 10.3 Employers' national insurance contributions will increase by 1.2% and the Treasury has said the DfE will get some money to help schools cover their costs, but won't confirm how much until spring 2025.

11 Core School Budget Grant (CSBG) 2024/25

- 11.1 On 29 July 2024, the DfE announced almost £1.1b of funding through the CSBG to support schools with their overall costs in the 2024/25 financial year, in particular following confirmation of the 2024 teachers' pay award. The indicative grant allocation for Brent mainstream schools (excluding Special Schools) in 2024/25 is £2.56m and special schools will be funded at £703.05 per place. The funding for mainstream primary, secondary and all through schools will be incorporated into core budget allocations for 2025/26, by being rolled into the schools NFF for 2025/26. Funding for Centrally Employed Teachers will be rolled into the Central Schools Services Block funding for 2025/26.
- 11.2 The 2024/25 mainstream base funding rates are as follows:
- Basic per-pupil rate of £76 for primary pupils, including pupils in reception class
 - Basic per-pupil rate of £108 for key stage 3 pupils
 - Basic per-pupil rate of £122 for key stage 4 pupils
 - FSM6 per-pupil rate of £70 per eligible primary pupil
 - FSM6 per-pupil rate of £100 per eligible secondary pupil
 - Lump sum of £2,900

- 11.3 For special and AP schools and hospital education, the government will combine the CSBG, teachers' pay additional grant (TPAG) and teachers' pension employer contribution grant (TPECG 2024) allocations into a single grant and paid to local authorities to allocate to these settings.

12 Pending Schools Forum Actions

- 12.1 In response to **Action Point 95** regarding the request for an update on the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in Brent Programme, an update on the DSG Deficit Management Plan which will include an update on the DBV programme will be presented to Schools Forum in February 2025.
- 12.2 In response to **Action Point 96** Section 5 of the following link to the June 2021 Schools Forum report provides details of the agreed banding arrangements for Special Schools: [Review of Special Schools' Banding June 2021](#).

13 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 13.1 Cabinet Members are kept abreast of the DSG forecast deficit position as part of the quarterly finance reports submitted to Cabinet.

14 Financial Considerations

- 14.1 The financial considerations are mentioned in the body of the report. However, there remains a risk that the number of children and young people with EHCPs will continue to grow but the HN Block funding will not increase in line with continued growth. Over the years, this has created financial pressures with many authorities holding deficit DSG balances.
- 14.2 The government has announced that the regulations that are in place to carry forward a deficit balance against the DSG are due to end in 2025/26 and this poses a significant risk for the council as the expectation is that local authority's depleting General Fund reserves should cover any accumulated deficit at the end of that period.

15 Legal Considerations

- 15.1 There are no legal implications for this report.

16 Equality Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 16.1 Not applicable.

17 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

17.1 Not applicable.

18 Communication Considerations

17.1 All School Forum papers are published for access by members of the public.

Report sign off:


Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children and Young People

Appendix 1 - DSG Period 6 Budget Monitor 2024-25

			2024-25 Budget Approved Jan 2024 A £	2024-25 Actuals to P6 to 30 Sep 2024 B £	2024-25 Forecast as at Oct 2024 C £	2024-25 Outturn Variance D=(C-A) £
Schools Block						
Expenditure	Individual Schools Budget					
		Primary Schools	106,073,951	52,972,148	106,073,951	0
		Secondary Schools	13,545,048	6,757,377	13,545,048	0
Total	Expenditure	Individual Schools Budget	119,618,999	59,729,525	119,618,999	0
Expenditure	De-delegated Items - Schools					
		Assessment of FSM eligibility	25,000	25,000	25,000	0
		Contingencies	475,400	(66,988)	475,400	0
		Maternity, Paternity and Facilities	283,000	(28,987)	283,000	(0)
		Licences/Subscriptions [SB]	6,500	5,953	6,500	0
Total	Expenditure	De-delegated Items - Schools	789,900	(65,021)	789,900	(0)
Expenditure	De-delegated Items - Central Provision					
		Contribution to combined budgets [SB]	519,000	519,000	519,000	0
		Pupil Growth/Out of School places	656,000	223,854	656,000	0
Total	Expenditure	De-delegated Items - Central Provision	1,175,000	742,854	1,175,000	0
Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - Schools Block					
		Schools Block	(122,944,356)	(63,931,064)	(122,944,356)	0
		0.5% transfer Schools Block to High Needs Block	1,360,457	1,360,457	1,360,457	0
Total	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - Schools Block	(121,583,899)	(62,570,607)	(121,583,899)	0
Total	Net	Schools Block	0	(2,163,249)	0	0
High Needs Block						
Expenditure	Place funding					
		IB Place Funding [Finance]	2,548,500	1,310,885	2,548,500	0
Total	Expenditure	Place funding	2,548,500	1,310,885	2,548,500	0
Expenditure	Top-up and Targeted Funding					
		IB Mainstream Top-ups [Finance]	11,799,985	5,822,590	11,765,410	(34,575)
		IB Mainstream Top-ups [Inclusion]	28,651,606	15,834,971	29,092,970	441,364
		IB PRUs and Special Schools: Supplementary Grant	1,824,790	1,796,729	1,796,728	(28,062)
		Independent Day Special	10,200,000	5,696,259	10,852,109	652,109
		Independent Residential Special	1,300,000	540,058	947,886	(352,114)
		OB ARPs	200,000	5,405	66,000	(134,000)
		OB Mainstream	2,816,629	325,104	3,679,372	862,743
		OB Recoupment Income	(3,470,000)	179,578	(3,551,965)	(81,965)
		OB Special	5,000,000	1,682,273	5,012,650	12,650
		Post 16	5,000,000	669,751	5,016,667	16,667
Total	Expenditure	Top-up and Targeted Funding	63,323,010	32,552,718	64,677,827	1,354,817
Expenditure	SEN Support Services					
		Early Years Inclusion Fund	1,089,160	593,145	1,089,160	0
		Education Otherwise / Awaiting Placement	1,982,000	1,089,815	1,783,519	(198,481)
		SEN Services	6,418,200	1,730,249	5,984,152	(434,048)
		SEN SUPPORT	500,000	59,061	212,700	(287,300)
		SEN Transport	138,987	6,460	63,767	(75,220)
		Support for Inclusion	1,000,480	845,028	950,143	(50,337)
Total	Expenditure	SEN Support Services	11,128,827	4,323,757	10,083,442	(1,045,385)
Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - High Needs Block					
		High Needs Block	(75,639,880)	(39,332,737)	(75,639,880)	0
		0.5% transfer Schools Block to High Needs Block	(1,360,457)	(1,360,457)	(1,360,457)	0
Total	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - High Needs Block	(77,000,337)	(40,693,194)	(74,673,626)	0
Total	Net	High Needs Block	(0)	(2,505,834)	2,636,144	309,432
Early Years Block						
Expenditure	Early Years Entitlement					
		Under 2 Year old Nursery Education - Working parents	4,862,547	721,719	4,862,547	0
		2 Year old Nursery Education - Working parents	3,982,288	1,098,473	3,982,288	0
		2 Year old Nursery Education	2,419,351	3,326,550	2,419,351	0
		3 and 4 Year old Nursery Education	20,817,227	10,526,467	20,919,849	102,622

			2024-25 Budget Approved Jan 2024 A £	2024-25 Actuals to P6 to 30 Sep 2024 B £	2024-25 Forecast as at Oct 2024 C £	2024-25 Outturn Variance D=(C-A) £
		Early Years Central Expenditure	1,404,597	489,065	1,259,320	(145,277)
		Early Years Panel Funding	684,450	543,400	684,450	0
		Early Years Pupil Premium	176,588	51,096	176,588	0
Total	Expenditure	Early Years Entitlement	34,347,048	16,756,770	34,304,393	(42,655)
	Expenditure	Supplementary Funding				
		Maintained Nursery Schools	886,328	593,378	928,708	42,380
Total	Expenditure	Supplementary Funding	886,328	593,378	928,708	42,380
	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - Early Years Block				
		Early Years Block	(35,233,376)	(18,321,355)	(35,233,376)	0
Total	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - Early Years Block	(35,233,376)	(18,321,355)	(35,233,376)	0
Total	Net	Early Years Block	0	(971,207)	(275)	(275)
Central School Services Block						
	Expenditure	Central Provision				
		Contribution to combined budgets [CSSB]	992,494	209,760	992,494	(0)
		Termination of employment costs	263,644	263,644	263,644	0
		Servicing of Schools Forum	10,000	0	10,000	0
		Licences/Subscriptions [CSSB]	270,000	227,525	270,000	0
		School Admissions	558,139	291,706	558,139	0
Total	Expenditure	Central Provision	2,094,277	992,635	2,094,277	(0)
	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - Central School Services Block				
		Central School Services Block	(2,094,277)	(1,089,025)	(2,094,277)	0
Total	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - Central School Services Block	(2,094,277)	(1,089,025)	(2,094,277)	0
Total	Net	Central School Services Block	0	(96,390)	(0)	(0)
Other Expenditure						
	Expenditure	6th Form Funding				
		6th Form Schools	4,111,386	2,055,693	4,111,386	0
Total	Expenditure	6th Form Funding	4,111,386	2,055,693	4,111,386	0
	Income	16-19 Funding Grant				
		6th Form Funding	(4,111,386)	(2,031,229)	(4,111,386)	0
Total	Income	16-19 Funding Grant	(4,111,386)	(2,031,229)	(4,111,386)	0
Total	Net	Other Expenditure	0	24,464	0	0
Outturn Summary						
Net		Schools Block		(2,163,249)	0	0
Net		High Needs Block		(2,505,834)	2,636,144	309,432
Net		Early Years Block		(971,207)	(275)	(275)
Net		Central School Services Block		(96,390)	(0)	(0)
Net		Other Expenditure		24,464	0	0
Net		Overspend / (Underspend)		(5,712,216)	2,635,869	309,157
DSG Reserves Balance						
	2018-19	DSG Brought Forward (Surplus)	(2,445,741)			
	2019-20	DSG Final Outturn Deficit	7,362,361			
	2019-20	DSG Brought Forward Deficit	4,916,620			
	2020-21	DSG Final Outturn Deficit	5,609,457			
	2020-21	DSG Brought Forward Deficit	10,526,077			
	2021-22	DSG Final Outturn Deficit	4,654,519			
	2021-22	DSG Brought Forward Deficit	15,180,596			
	2022-23	DSG Final Outturn (Surplus)	(1,352,401)			
	2022-23	DSG Brought Forward Deficit	13,828,195			
	2023-24	DSG Forecast Deficit / (Surplus)	(571,585)			
	2024-25	DSG Forecast Deficit / (Surplus)	309,157			
	2023-24	DSG Deficit Carry Forward	13,565,767			

	<p align="center">Schools Forum 14 November 2024</p>
	<p align="center">Report from Corporate Director of Children and Young People</p>
<p>SEND Resource Allocation System (RAS)</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
List of Appendices:	<p>Two</p> <p>Appendix 1: SEND and AP Improvement Plan matrix/ banding for funding guidance</p> <p>Appendix 2: Consultation pack sent to all Brent EY, Primary, Secondary and post-16 providers October 2024</p>
Background Papers:	Previous Schools Forum papers
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	<p>Shirley Parks Director Education Partnerships & Strategy Email: shirley.parks@brent.gov.uk</p> <p>Roxanna Glennon Head of Inclusion Email: Roxanna.glennon@brent.gov.uk</p>

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Schools Forum received a report on 19 June 2024 on a proposed banding SEND Resource Allocation System (RAS) to move away from the current hours led system to a needs-led, provision-based approach for mainstream schools and Additional Resource Provisions (ARPs), early years settings and post-16 settings. It was agreed that consultation would be undertaken with schools and settings in the autumn term on the proposed new approach.
- 1.2. Consultation has been undertaken with mainstream schools and post-16 colleges on a proposed RAS for mainstream schools and post-16. Further work is being undertaken on application of the RAS for children in ARPs and Early Years. This paper therefore sets out proposed changes to the way that Brent allocates resources for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for children aged 0-25 in mainstream schools and post-16 colleges only following consultation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Schools Forum agree to the introduction of a RAS for all children and young people with an EHCP in mainstream schools and settings.
- 2.2 It is recommended that the LA and mainstream schools and settings work in partnership to implement the RAS for all children and young people commencing with new EHCPs from December 2024.
- 2.3 Schools Forum are asked to note that a report on the adoption of the RAS for ARPs and Early Years settings will be brought to a future meeting following consultation in the new year.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 The development of a RAS falls within the Brent Plan priority of 'Best Start in Life' so that children and young people "receive the support they need when they need it". The recommendations specifically meet the outcome to 'raise attainment and aspirations [through] working with schools and partners [to] make sure access to education is fair and equal" (Appendix 1).

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 The previous government's SEND and AP Improvement Plan published in March 2023 sets out the intention to introduce a national banding system to ensure clarity and fairness across England and Wales. The Plan stated that local authorities should continue to implement and review their own banding systems in the meantime. The local authority will follow this policy until the new government issues any revised guidance.
- 3.2.2 Currently, Brent allocates financial resources based on the number of hours of one-to-one teaching assistant (TA) support that a child is considered to need by the SEND advisory panel, in accordance with their EHCP. Brent is an outlier in allocating resources in this way. The proposed SEND RAS would move Brent to a system of allocating resources to children with an EHCP based on an assessment of the child's level of need, as determined through the use of banding matrices applied to their EHCP at the SEND advisory panel. There is one banding matrix proposed for children aged 5-25 and another for children in early years aged 0-5. The RAS includes 12 areas to support the assessment of the child's needs and each is scored according to a ranking system:

- no additional support
- some support
- high level of support and
- exceptional level of support.

The scores are totalled and correspond to a funding level.

- 3.2.3 The proposed banding matrices have been developed as part of Brent's engagement with the Department for Education's (DfE) 'Delivering better Value' (DBV) programme. The matrices were co-produced with members of Brent Parent Carer Forum (BPCF) and representatives from Brent early years (EY), primary and secondary providers and relevant professionals within the Inclusion Service (Educational Psychology, Early Years Inclusion and SEND 0-25 teams), as well as the Schools Forum High Needs Block Working Group and the Early Years Working Group.
- 3.2.4 Modelling the impact of changes on a sample of primary and secondary schools has informed the banding rates, alongside benchmarking information on funding allocated to children with SEND in mainstream schools and post-16 provisions. This showed that Brent is broadly in line with other neighbouring authorities for school-age children.
- 3.2.5 In June 2024 Schools Forum agreed to consultation on a new RAS. All Brent primary, secondary and post-16 providers have been consulted on the proposed RAS for children in mainstream schools, with the consultation period opening on 11 October 2024 and closing on 1 November 2024. Education providers were sent an email on the 11 October 2024 notifying them of the consultation process, with details of the proposed changes and how to feedback via Microsoft Forms. A copy of the email sent to providers is provided in Appendix 2 for reference. A reminder email was sent to providers on the 28 October 2024.
- 3.2.6 The feedback received from providers as part of the consultation can be summarised as follows. 16 responses were received, of which 5 were from secondary schools and 11 from primary schools. In answer to the question "Do you understand the proposed changes?", 13 participants stated that they understood the proposals and 3 responded "maybe". In answer to the question "To what extent do you agree with the proposed changes?" (scored 1-10, with 1 being strongly disagree and 10 being strongly agree) the average (mean) response was 5.38 (marginally positive), the average (modal) response was 7 (positive) and the response range was 1-8.
- 3.2.7 In terms of qualitative data, overall respondents supported the move away from resources being allocated in terms of 1:1 TA hours and towards a needs-based system (which was the central question of this consultation). Respondents commented that the proposed new system of resource allocation would be clearer and more consistent. However, one respondent expressed concern that parents may be made anxious by the move away from 1:1 TA hours and that this proposed change must be communicated carefully. Many participants commented positively on the implementation of Band 7 funding for children in mainstream awaiting a place in special. Two respondents requested more information and training on the matrix (should it be implemented), especially for SENDCos. Of the respondents who scored the proposal at 1 and 2 (3 participants in total), feedback referred to concerns that the proposal would not solve the issue of high needs funding failing to match the cost of meeting the needs of some children with SEND. It was not intimated that the proposal would make the funding situation worse; only that it would not resolve it.

3.2.8 Following consultation responses, officers recommend that Schools Forum approve implementation of the proposed new resource allocation process for children with an EHCP in mainstream schools. The new process will be implemented from 1 December 2024, with it being applied initially to new plans and at phase transfer annual reviews. The aim is for all Brent EHCPs to have been placed onto the new bands by September 2025.

3.2.9 The new bands do not represent in themselves a change to the level of financial resources that children will receive (see Table 1 below). As can be seen, the only financial changes that are proposed are as follows:

- a) A 'rounding' of amounts attached to each band. Three bands have been rounded down, two have been rounded up, the overall financial impact of this on funding allocated to schools and colleges will be negligible.
- b) The introduction of the higher Band 7 funding. This band is only for children who are in mainstream school whose EHCP states that special school would be an appropriate setting. In response to headteachers raising concerns about the increasing complexity of children they are supporting whose EHCP states that special school would be an appropriate setting, this change was implemented in from 1 September 2024 with headteachers notified of this via the Headteachers Bulletin on the 3 October 2024. The implementation of Band 7 will replace any previous funding arrangements for this cohort.

The introduction of Band 7 reflects the preference of many Brent families for their children with SEND, including significant SEND, to attend mainstream provision. In this context and, given the current capacity issues within special schools that means there are children in mainstream schools waiting for special school places, it is appropriate that mainstream schools are provided with the support to meet the needs of this cohort.

The introduction of Band 7 funding has placed an in-year pressure on the high needs budget (HNB) of £380k. However, failure to implement Band 7, or something similar, would lead to an increased rate of placement breakdown. Placement breakdown carries a significant emotional cost for all parties and can have significant financial implications if, for example children become unplaced and need to be placed within the independent sector. The current average per place cost of Brent children placed in the independent sector is £59k.

Table 1: The new banding system

Old banding			New banding		
Band	Hours	Top-up	Band	Points	Top-up
Band A	Up to 15hrs	£0	Band 1	0-97	£0
Band B	Up to 19.5hrs	£6,378	Band 2	98-125	£6,400
Band C	Up to 22.75hrs	£8,441	Band 3	126-153	£8,400
Band D	Up to 26hrs	£10,504	Band 4	154-170	£10,500

Band E	Up to 29.25hrs	£12,567	Band 5	171-205	£12,600
Band F	Up to 32.5hrs	£14,630	Band 6	206+	£14,600
			Band 7 – only for those awaiting special school place		£19,000

3.2.10 Consultation has not yet taken place on the use of the Resource Allocation System for the funding of ARPs or non-statutory early years funding. This delay has been caused by a decision, since the report to Schools Forum in June 2024, to remodel some of the initial DBV data set assumptions given the changing needs profile of children placed in ARPs and in the presenting needs in early years cohorts. Further analysis is aimed at ensuring need is not underestimated to ensure that appropriate funding is allocated.

3.2.11 A consultation on ARP and EY funding is anticipated to commence January 2025, which will be informed by modelling of the impact of proposed rates and benchmarking information. For early years, Brent provides significantly more funding from the High Needs Block than *all* neighbouring authorities. The only neighbouring local authority that provides any funding from the HNB to early years is Camden (£500k), whereas Brent allocates £1.1m to early years and a further £500k for early years' specialist provisions (referred to as early years additionally resourced provisions). A report will be brought to Schools Forum after consultation in January 2025 has been completed.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 Both the High Needs and Early Years Working Groups have provided direction and support for the banding matrix review. Views of parents and carers have been sought through Brent Parent Carer Forum.

4.2 More detailed work on the descriptors and the functionality of the RAS has been undertaken with school and setting leaders and SENCOs, as well as a range of professionals within the Inclusion Service.

4.3 Formal consultation with schools and settings was undertaken in October 2024 as set out above.

5.0. Financial Implications

5.1 As discussed above, the financial implications of the new bands (determined by application of the new proposed banding matrices) are in themselves negligible. However, the introduction of Band 7 funding has caused an in-year pressure of £380k on the HNB and an estimated forecast cost of £650k in the next financial year. This pressure must be taken in context in view of the cost avoidance that would be achieved if a child was to be otherwise placed in an independent setting averaging a cost of £40k more per pupil. The in-year pressure will be mitigated by spend controls within the SEN Services budget of the DSG.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 The proposed banding matrices are consistent with the Children and Families Act (2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (2015).

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 It is considered that there have been no changes in equality implications of the proposals set out in this report compared to the current systems for funding that are in use. In addition, there is no disproportionate effect on any protected characteristic group and no adverse equalities implications.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 These changes will not impact on the Council's environmental objectives and climate emergency strategy.

9.0 Communication Considerations

9.1 Communications with all stakeholders, including parents, will be a key part of the successful introduction of the new RAS.

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director, Children and Young People

Appendix 1 – SEND and AP Improvement Plan matrix/ banding for funding guidance

The following extract is from the previous government's SEND and AP Improvement Plan published in March 2023. The local authority will follow this policy until the new government issues any revised guidance.

We will introduce a national framework of banding and price tariffs to support commissioners and providers to meet the expectations set out in the National Standards. Whilst there will always be some local variation, to have a consistent, national SEND and alternative provision system and ensure value for money, we must move to a world where similar types of support are backed by similar levels of funding. Bandings will cluster specific types of education provision and tariffs will set the rules and prices that commissioners use to pay providers to deliver what is set out within the National Standards. This will be implemented alongside our broader changes to the national funding system and the development of National Standards.

Most local authorities already make use of banded funding arrangements, based on local levels of available provision and costs. We know that an effective funding system is one that is consistent but is also flexible, transparent and simple. The introduction of a national bands and tariffs funding system that sets expectations for the cost and delivery of provision, with appropriate flexibility, is dependent on other policy proposals, particularly the development of National Standards, so this will be developed alongside them. It will be designed to appropriately reflect the needs of children and young people, including the most complex needs, and to meet the cost of the provision that they need. It will give providers clarity on how much funding they should expect to receive in delivering support or a service and enable commissioners to determine the funding required.

SEND & AP Improvement in Post 16

We are very conscious of the distinct funding issues for colleges and the further education sector, and the many calls on the 16-19 disadvantage funding that is partly allocated to support students with SEND and other additional needs. We have heard a great deal about the challenges across the sector, including the variable approaches to commissioning and funding that colleges experience from the local authorities that they deal with, and, in some cases, the sheer number of authorities that they have to engage with. We know that reform is needed, and we will continue to work with the college sector and local authorities as we consider any changes for the future that may be needed, in addition to the introduction of the National Standards and funding bands and tariffs.

SEND & AP Improvement in Early Years

In early years, local authorities are required to establish a Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) to provide additional top-up funding to providers to improve outcomes for children with SEND. Funding for the SENIF can come from both the early years and high needs funding blocks of the DSG. We are very aware that the early years sector is facing economic challenges – similar to challenges being faced across the economy – making it more important than ever that the early years funding system is effectively supporting children with SEND. We will work with local authorities, early years providers and stakeholders to consider whether changes to the SENIF and other associated elements of the wider current early years funding system are needed, to ensure early years SEND funding arrangements are appropriate and well-targeted to both improve outcomes for all pre-school children with SEND, and to support the introduction of a national framework for bands and tariffs.

The full document can be accessed here: [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Improvement Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1142222/Special_Educational_Needs_and_Disabilities_(SEND)_and_Alternative_Provision_(AP)_Improvement_Plan.pdf)

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Appendix 2 – Consultation pack sent to all Brent EY, primary, secondary and post-16 providers October 2024

Consultation Pack – Mainstream Schools New banding matrix and Resource Allocation System (RAS) Autumn 2024

Details for how to feedback your views on these plans can be found on page 4.

Introduction and Overview

The government's SEND and AP Improvement Plan (for further details of which see Appendix 1) sets out the intention to introduce a new national banding system to ensure clarity and fairness across England and Wales. The Plan states that local authorities should continue to implement and review their own banding systems in the meantime.

Over the past 6 months, the local authority has undertaken a banding matrix review, the scope of which covered mainstream schools, early years and post-16.

A note on terminology: the terms 'banding tool', 'banding matrix' and 'RAS' are used interchangeably in this (and associated) documents. It should be noted that within our parent carer community 'banding tool' is the preferred term to prevent confusion with a different RAS (utilised by social care).

Why are we proposing to change the funding system?

The number of children and young people with SEND is increasing, as is the complexity of the needs of those children. In order to continue to meet this demand, we need to have a robust system in place which ensures transparency, consistency and equity of resource allocation for these children.

Feedback from schools, early years settings and other stakeholders confirmed the need to develop, a funding system that is more clearly based on the needs of the child, rather than the current assumption of 1:1 hours needed to support them.

Key challenges within the current system which need to be addressed:

1. Brent currently has **4 separate banding matrices**: one for Early Years, one for mainstream, one for Additionally Resourced Provisions and one for special schools. Young people in post-16 Further Education are supported through individual arrangements with different colleges. The system is unwieldy and time-consuming for officers and can feel inconsistent for families and providers.
2. **Mainstream** banding is currently decided and allocated based on the number of hours of support from a Teaching Assistant (TA) that is deemed to be required for that child. This sets up an expectation from both schools and parents that 1:1 is the only solution for pupils. It is also clear that for most schools the amount funded does not always cover the actual costs of a TA. There is growing evidence nationally that, often, 1:1 support does not deliver the most positive impact and outcomes for children, as compared with other methods of support.
3. **FE providers** submit costed provision maps to the LA late in the autumn term and this process is time-consuming and costly; both for the providers and the LA to check the costs.

There is clear evidence that the average top up in FE is significantly higher than the average in mainstream secondary.

What have we done to date?

- The High Needs Working Group and the Early Years Sub-Group, both sub-groups of Schools Forum, have been involved in looking at alternatives for the current banding system and supporting the development of the banding tool.
- Parent carers views have been gathered from a Brent Parent Carer Forum (BPCF) meeting in late 2023 and a small group of parents were brought together to help develop the descriptors for the new banding tool. SENCOs from both the early years sector and from schools have been consulted on the options available for new banding systems and the new descriptors have been developed in partnership with them. They have also been involved in testing the banding tool, along with LA officers, including the Educational Psychology service.

The proposed new banding tool will help to ensure consistency and parity across settings and for all ages. The same tool will be used across early years (with adjusted descriptors), through school-age and up to and including post-16.

What are the key changes being proposed?

- Funding allocations will be based on needs not hours. A child’s level of need will be determined using all available evidence. The evidence will then be applied to the relevant banding tool to calculate the level of funding required, with a banding tool for children aged 5 and over, and a separate banding tool for children in the early years.
- All children and young people in mainstream settings will have funding calculated in the same way (namely, using the banding tool).
- The early years banding tool will be used to calculate both EHCNA and SENIF funding for children aged 0-statutory school age.
- An additional band (Band 7) is being introduced which is ONLY for children in mainstream who are awaiting a place in a special school (where ‘special’ is indicated in Section I of their EHCP). This would replace any current arrangements for additional funding being provided for this cohort of children.
- At this point in time, there are no planned changes to the funding of additionally resourced provisions (ARPs). However, this will be subject to review once the position regarding special school place planning has been clarified.
- Banding may be reviewed at Annual Review

What does the new system look like?

Table 1: The new banding system

Old banding			New banding		
Band	Hours	Top-up	Band	Points	Top-up
Band A	Up to 15hrs	£0	Band 1	0-97	£0
Band B	Up to 19.5hrs	£6,378	Band 2	98-125	£6,400

Band C	Up to 22.75hrs	£8,441	Band 3	126-153	£8,400
Band D	Up to 26hrs	£10,504	Band 4	154-170	£10,500
Band E	Up to 29.25hrs	£12,567	Band 5	171-205	£12,600
Band F	Up to 32.5hrs	£14,630	Band 6	206+	£14,600
			Band 7 – only for those awaiting special school place		£19,000

What will be the process for determining the band?

The band will be agreed using the banding matrix at SEND advisory panel.

Implementation process and timeline:

Jul-Aug 2024	SEND Officers to undertake: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing of the RAS • Link new bands to old ones for easier transition 	Completed	
Sept/Oct 2024	Consultation with all education settings on new RAS system	In progress	
Dec 2024 onwards	Application of RAS to new plans. SEND case officers will work with schools to review existing EHCPs at point of Annual Review using the RAS.	Not started	Following consultation and approval by Schools Forum.
September 2025	All Brent CYP 0-25 moved onto new banding	Not started	

Feedback on our plans

We are keen to hear your thoughts on the plans to amend the banding system. Please follow this link to complete the online consultation form. This should take less than five minutes.

[Proposed banding matrix for mainstream schools & ARPs: Consultation \(office.com\)](https://office.com)

The deadline for responses is: 5pm Friday 1 November.

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