



Schools Forum

Tuesday 11 November 2025 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 by viewing the live webcast which it will be possible to access [HERE](#)

Membership representing

SCHOOL MEMBERS

Nursery

Nisha Lingam	Head
Angela Turner	Governor

Primary

Vacancy	Head
Michelle Ginty	Head
Melissa Loosemoore	Head
Raphael Moss	Head
Vacancy	Governor
Vacancy	Governor
Michael Odumosu	Governor
Ernest Toquie	Governor

Secondary

Vacancy	Head (Maintained)
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Special Education Needs

Nick Cooper	Head
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Pupil Referral Unit

Ranjna Shiyani	Head
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ACADEMY MEMBERS**Primary**

Vacancy	Head
Jo Jhally	Governor

Secondary

Andy Prindiville	Head
Jude Enright	Head
Vacancy	Governor
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

Lucy Cox/Jennifer Cooper

16-19 Provider Representative

Vacancy

<p>For further information contact: Abby Shinhmar, Governance Officer Email: abby.shinhmar@brent.gov.uk</p>
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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

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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 18 June 2025 as a correct record.	
5 Actions Arising	
To consider any actions arising from previous meetings.	
6 Forward Plan	9 - 10
To note the Forward Plan of items scheduled for consideration by Schools Forum.	
7 DSG Budget Monitoring Report and funding updates 2025/26	11 - 26
This report provides Schools Forum with an update on the projected financial position for the 2025/26 financial year.	
8 Any Other Urgent Business	
9 Dates of Future Meetings	
Members are asked to note the remaining schedule of dates for meetings of the Schools Forum during the 2025-26 Municipal Year as follow:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monday 1 December 2025 (additional date if needed)Monday 26 January 2026Thursday 26 February 2026	
These meetings have all been scheduled to be held online starting at 6pm.	

Date of the next meeting: Monday 1 December 2025

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MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Held as an online virtual meeting on Wednesday 18 June 2025 at 6.00pm

Membership

Representing

PRESENT (all in remote attendance):

Governors

Mike Heiser (Chair)
Jo Jhally
Ilana Myers
Martin Beard

Headteachers

Jayne Jardine
Raphael Moss
Andy Prindiville
Ranjna Shiyani
Melissa Loosemore
Michelle Ginty
Herman Franks (attending as a substitute for Nick Cooper)
Simrita Singh

Councillor/s

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

Officers

Nigel Chapman, Corporate Director Children, Young People & Community Development
Shirley Parks, Director Education, Partnerships and Strategy
Pallavi Shah, Senior Finance Analyst
Roxanna Glennon, Head of Inclusion
Folake Olufeko, Head of Finance
Abby Shinhmar, Governance Team

1. Apologies for Absence and Membership

Apologies for absence were received from Wioletta Burra, Nick Cooper (with Herman Franks attending as a substitute) and Jude Enright.

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 Thursday 13 February 2025 as a correct record.

5. **Actions arising**

None.

6. **Dedicated Schools Outturn Financial Outturn 2024-25**

Folake Olufeko (Head of Finance, Brent Council) introduced a report, which set out the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) outturn against the budget set for 2024/25 and provided detail on the in-year 2024/25 deficit of £0.4m.

The Forum noted the following key points as part of the update provided:

- The in-year deficit was mainly due to overspend of £2.1m against the High Needs (HN) Block offset by a £1.5m underspend against the Early Years (EY) Block, £0.1m underspend against the Schools Block and £0.1m underspend against the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB).
- The High Needs Block budget was £77.4m and the allocation included a contribution of £1.4m (or 0.5%) of Schools Block income. This excluded £8.9m, which was recouped by the DfE to allocate directly to academies.
- The High Needs block supports pupils in specialist provisions and mainstream settings. It also covers specialist support services and costs in relation to post-16 provision. The main reason for the £2.1m overspend was the top-up funding for children placed in special schools and academies due to an increase in the number of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and an increase in average unit costs since January 2025. The number of children requiring EHCPs was 3,892 at the end of March 2025 compared to 3,598 in March 2024, an increase of 8.2%. This had led to increases in the top-up funding for in-borough mainstream academies and special schools, additional placements in independent day special schools and alternative education settings for children awaiting placements, as well as increased pupils in post-16 provision.
- Additionally, an overspend of £0.3m had been incurred for the cost of placing Brent children in settings out of borough due to increased rates.
- A £1.2m pressure against the independent day and residential top-up funding is due to the increased number of pupils placed in these settings in addition to an increase of fees for some settings. The number of pupils placed in independent school pupils had increased by 9% in 2024/25.
- The £1.2m underspend against the SEN Services budgets was due to unutilised funds held for contingencies. Additionally, a further £0.6m underspend was reported across the SEN support and support for inclusion budgets.
- The £1.5m underspend against the EY Block was mainly a result of additional funding from the DfE to cover the increase in provision of free childcare for working parents from September 2024 to 30 hours. This allocation was provided based on an estimated take-up of hours by working parents in Brent. However, take-up had been lower than predicted leading to underspends of £0.5m and

£0.7m reported against the under 2- to 2-year-old and the 2-year-old working parent entitlements respectively.

- The EY Block was a self-contained block based on headcount and therefore there was a risk that the DfE could claw back the surplus following a final in-year adjustment expected in July 2025. The accounts had been adjusted to make a provision for this potential clawback.
- The Central Block allocation of the DSG totalling £2.1m which funded central services for schools. This budget had seen an underspend of £0.5m.
- At the end of the financial year 2024/25, the DSG deficit had increased to £13.6m. This was based on the DSG reserves opening balance at the start of the year of £13.2m and the in-year DSG deficit of £0.4m, as detailed in Appendix A of the report.
- The DSG deficit would be disclosed as an earmarked unusable reserve in line with DfE regulations (the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023). These regulations required any DSG deficit balance to be held within the Local Authority's overall DSG and carried forward to be funded from future year's funding and/or recovery plans agreed with the DfE.
- Of the 45 maintained primary schools, 22 (49%) compared to 18 (38%) in 2023/24 had increased their reserve balance by an average of £73k, and 23 (51%) compared to 26 (55%) in 2023/24 decreased their reserve balances by an average of £85k.
- Two schools had cleared their deficits, and three additional schools had moved into deficit in 2024/25, resulting in eight schools being in deficit at the end of 2024/25. Of the 45 maintained primary schools, 18 had closed with balances of 8% or more and 27 have closed with balances of less than 8% reserve
- Of the two maintained secondary schools, one had seen no significant change in reserves and the other had seen a 210% decrease in reserves.
- The only maintained special school saw an increase in reserves of 12% with a £1.5m reserve balance. One of the two PRUs decreased their reserves by 29% and the other saw an increase of 269% (from £75k to £276k) compared to balances in 2023/24.
- The government had announced the national Spending Review on Wednesday, 11 June 25, which had included an increase in core school budgets in England by 0.4% or £2bn (£3bn increase in 2025/26) in real terms on average over the next three years, reaching £69.5bn by 2029, compared to 2025/26, which ensured average real terms growth of 1.1% a year per pupil. The DSG budget for Brent had increased by 4.3% in 2025/26 with a 1.7% increase seen against the Schools Block.
- The impact of the extension of Free School Meal provision to around 500,000 more children whose parents were receiving benefits was noted and that this would likely cost around £1bn up to 2029.
- The financial pressures on the HN Block continue to present a significant challenge, both locally and nationally. The HNB position continues to be closely monitored with cost containment measures being implemented in line with the Delivering Best Value (DBV) plan.
- The arrangement for the statutory override set out in the School and Early Years Finance Regulations 2021, which required Local Authorities to either carry forward any cumulative DSG deficit to set against the DSG in the next funding period or carry forward some or all the deficit to the funding period after that was due to end in March 2026. At the time of Schools Forum, there was no confirmed plan for how DSG deficits would be treated beyond March 2026 with the Brent

continuing to work towards deficit recovery through local planning and continuation of the DBV initiatives. Further updates will be provided for the Schools Forum as more information became available from the DfE.

- Folake Olufeko added an amendment to paragraph 12.1, and it should read:
Core schools' budget in England to go up by 0.4% or £2bn (£3bn increase in 2025/26) in real terms on average over the next three years, reaching £69.5bn by 2029, compared to 2025/26, which ensured average real terms growth of 1.1% a year per pupil. Brent schools' core budgets increased by 4.3% in 2025/26 with a 1.7% increase seen against the Schools Block.

The Chair thanked Folake Olufeko for her report and as no questions or comments were raised the Forum **RESOLVED** to note the report.

7. Update on the DSG High Needs Block Deficit Management Plan and the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND Programme

Shirley Parks (Director Education, Partnerships and Strategy, Brent Council) introduced a report, providing a further update on progress to date against the DSG Management Plan and an update on Brent's participation in the Department for Education's (DfE) Delivering Better Value (DBV) in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) programme, aimed at supporting a reduction in expenditure against the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG)

The Forum noted the following key points as part of the update provided:

- The Delivering Better Value programme was focussed on understanding and testing elements of how the SEND system worked and to see if efficiencies and better value could be found in the use of High Needs Block Funding.
- A rise in demand of Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) had been noted over the years and there was a concern that the budget would not keep pace with the growth in EHCPs. Allocations for EHCPs had increased by 3% in 2024-25 and 6% in 2025-26, however EHCPs increased by 8-11% over the same period.
- To manage the rising demand of EHCPs, it is important to only maintain EHCPs for as long as they are needed, to make use of all available funding and to ascertain whether a child's needs could be met through ordinary provision.
- Much work was being done to improve the sufficiency of school places and work with schools to consider setting up satellite provisions or expanding existing special school places.
- The Delivering Better Value programme had officially come to an end in March 2025. However, as detailed within the report some of the DBV pilot projects were being taken forward into business as usual. These included work in relation to Intervention First, SEND Assurance, Workforce, inclusive environments and Commissioning and a focus (working with a group of Head Teachers) to develop the structure of SEND support services across the borough.
- Roxanne Glennon highlighted the concern around the pressure on spend for children placed in independent sector placements and the need to ensure appropriate and robust commissioning arrangements.

Following this, the Chair asked the Forum for any comments or questions with the following noted:

- Nigel Chapman highlighted that work had been ongoing with partners over the last 3 years with Brent having maintained a stable position in relation to management of its deficit and commended all colleagues involved.
- The pressures experienced by schools in regard to management of their budgets was recognised with colleagues thanked for their hard work.
- Further details were sought in regard to costs and allocations for independent schools. **ACTION:** Folake Olufeko and Roxanna Glennon agreed to provide this information at the next meeting.
- Clarification was sought on whether the Intervention First approach would be retained in the Harlesden cluster as well as expanded to other clusters. Roxanna Glennon emphasized the importance of positive and impactful intervention. This academic year, the Intervention First project had been extended to January 2026, as the ICB had started offering mental health intervention and added that it was crucial to commission accordingly to avoid any duplication.

The Chair thanked Shirley Parks for the report and as no further questions or comments were raised the Forum **RESOLVED** to note the report.

7. **Updated Scheme for Financing Schools & Schools Financial Regulations 2025/26**

Folake Olufeko (Head of Finance, Brent Council) introduced a report, which detailed the Scheme for Financing Schools and the Schools Financial Regulations for the financial year 2025-26. The Forum noted the following key points as part of the update provided:

- All changes applied in the revision were in line with the March 2025 Department for Education's Scheme for Financing Local Authority Maintained Schools – Statutory Guidance issued to Local Authorities, changes to the Local Authority's own regulations, the new EU Public Procurement Regulations and all relevant regulations.
- The Scheme for Financing Schools for 2025/26 attached in Appendix A had been updated, with the summary of changes itemised in Appendix B. The changes would be immediately effective following Schools Forum approval.
- The Schools Financial Regulations for 2025/26, attached as Appendix C, had been updated, with the summary of changes itemised in Appendix D. The changes would be 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 2025-26 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 2025/26.

- (2) Note (having been invited to formally comment) the Schools Financial Regulations 2025/26.

8. SEND Funding Allocations for Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs) and Early Years

Shirley Parks (Director Education, Partnerships and Strategy, Brent Council) introduced the report, which provided an update on the Additionally Resourced Provisions and Early Years Banding Review. The Forum noted the following key points as part of the update provided:

- Schools Forum had 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. Following consideration of that report it had been agreed that consultation would be undertaken with schools and settings in the autumn term on the proposed new approach.
- The report presented for consideration covered two proposed changes to HN funding in EY and ARPs. The Early Years Inclusion Fund (EYIF), which totals just under £1.7M, as outlined in Table 1. The funds are allocated through two main channels: 'Children with Disabilities' (CWD) places and Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) places. Additionally, EYIF provides financial support to Private, Voluntary, and Independent (PVI) settings, as well as childminders to support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) via SENIF.
- There is currently disparity in Brent in relation to how ARPs were funded.
- Currently, allocation of the EYIF was overseen by the Under 5s Nursery multi-agency panel (held monthly). CWD or ARP places are agreed using supporting evidence from a paediatrician report or an EHCP. SENIF funding to the PVI settings is awarded using a two-tier banding system, where either £2,850 or £4,560 top-up is awarded.
- Many Local Authorities do not offer enhanced nursery provision. The SENIF bandings cover most levels of need and for those children with complex needs, there were some early years resourced provisions which provide specialist support.
- Currently Early Years SENIF funding has only two bands. This means that emerging needs are either not supported or are financially over-supported. For children with more complex needs, PVI settings are not always appropriately funded to meet need. This in turn is driving demand and pressure on the enhanced nursery settings and limiting parental choice.
- Early Years providers can face a significant administrative burden in applying for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) before a child starts school, often at a stage of a child's development where it remains uncertain what their long-term needs would be. It is recognised that Early Years providers need resources to be provided in a timely manner.
- SENCOs report that they find the Graduated Approach Framework useful, but they cannot always access funding quickly enough, particularly for those children who clearly have complex needs. In addition, waiting times for EHCPs and paediatrician reports can impact on the timeliness of allocating funding.

- There is a lack of clarity about the difference between enhanced nursery placements and the nursery resourced provisions. The funding of different placements at different levels needs to be clearer, alongside clear reporting on delivery from the providers.
- The proposed approach will change Early Years terminology regarding 'CWD' and 'ARP' places, with the term 'enhanced places' used to cover all places allocated additional resource.
- The new SENIF banding system and Early Years Banding Matrix Resource Allocation System (RAS) would standardise enhanced place funding. Introduction of the new SENIF bandings would mean that emerging needs were supported appropriately and for children with more complex needs, PVI settings were appropriately funded.
- New staff resource has been put in place to quality assure settings receiving funding alongside a new SLA. Allocating staff resource to quality assure and oversee the use of SENIF and enhanced place funding, in addition to implementing SLAs (Service Level Agreements), would ensure the optimum use of funding thereby improving service delivery.
- The current requirement for a child to have an EHCP and paediatrician report to be considered for SENIF and enhanced place funding would be removed. The Under Fives Nursery Panel approving enhanced places in the absence of an EHCP and/or paediatric report could improve efficiency in filling available places.
- Increasing the enhanced place top-up value to £12,500 would bring average funding across all enhanced places to £22,500 (the agreed number of places attract £10K base funding). The EYIF currently provided funding for 60 places in MNSs and Willow Nursery at an average of £22,238.60/place. These places would see an uplift of up to £261.40 per place on average in the level of funding allocated to enhanced nursery placements.
- Benchmarking against other Local Authorities had shown that there are two main methods of allocating funding: a banded system and a set rate for each provision.
- Tables 5 and 6 within the report set out the financial modelling for increasing the enhanced place top-up value to £12,500.
- The proposed new approach for the HNB contribution to Early Years would result in an increase of approximately £44k, raising required funding from £1.698m currently to £1.743m.
- With regards to the funding of places in ARPS, the proposed new approach to standardise ARP rates at £12,500 would result in an increase of £268k against the overall annual budget allocation of £4.6m for ARPs (including the Maintained Nursery School ARPs). This would create an additional budget pressure of £168k for the 2025/26 financial year, if implemented from September. However, this approach would ensure consistent funding for all ARPs in Brent and provide schools that previously received less funding with adequate resources to continue meeting the needs of children in line with other ARPs. Additionally, it is anticipated that this could reduce the number of children requiring special school places if their needs could be effectively met within an ARP.
- The proposed funding approach is consistent with the Children and Families Act (2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (2015). An SLA would be put in place with each school and that sets out responsibilities, expectations and KPIs.

Following this, the Chair asked the Forum for any comments or questions with the following noted:

- In expressing support for the approach outlined within the report, further details were sought on the clawback position with members were advised would depend on when a pupil joined a school as that would have an impact on funding.
- Details were sought on whether the deficit had been costed for 2025-26 and how the offset would be calculated. In response, the Forum was advised that the team addressed affordability and sustainability when doing the costings for 2025-26 and £168k had been allocated for the offset.

The Chair thanked officers for the report. As no further questions or comments were raised the Forum **RESOLVED**:

- (1) To approve the introduction of the new approach to SEND funding in Early Years settings as set out in section 4 of the report.
- (2) To approve the introduction of a standard and consistent approach to funding ARPs across the borough, as set out in section 5 of the report.

9. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

10. **Dates of Future Meetings**

Members noted the remaining schedule of dates for meetings of the Schools Forum during the 2025-26 Municipal Year as follows with all meetings to be held online starting at 6pm:

- Tuesday 11 November 2025
- Monday 1 December 2025 (additional date if needed)
- Monday 26 January 2026
- Thursday 26 February 2026


The meeting closed at 7:01pm.

M Heiser
Chair

Brent Schools Forum Forward Plan - November 2025

Date	Item
1 December 2025	Additional meeting if required
26 January 2026	DSG Schools Block budgets 2026/27 DSG Early Years Block budgets 2026/27 Brent Special Schools' banding review
26 February 2026	DSG High Needs Block budgets 2026/27 DSG High Needs Block Deficit Management Plan update Scheme for Financing Schools & Schools' Financial Regulations

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	Schools Forum 11 November 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Community Development
Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget Monitoring Report 2025/26	
Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt:	N/A
No. of Appendices:	Three: Appendix 1: DSG Period 6 Budget Monitor 2025/26 Appendix 2: Grant Additions to Core Factor Values in the 2026/27 National Funding Formula Appendix 3: SEND Phase 1 Capital progress update
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Folake Olufeko Head of Finance Tel: 0208 937 2491 Email: Folake.Olufeko@brent.gov.uk Pallavi Shah Senior Finance Analyst Tel: 0208 937 2156 Email: Pallavi.Shah@brent.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides Schools Forum with an update on the projected financial position for 2025/26 financial year, based on data at the end of September. 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 2025. 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. The table below outlines the changes made to the DSG allocations for 2025/26, including funding for academies, since the budgets were last approved by the Schools Forum in January 2025.

DSG 2025/26	Jan 25 approved by Forum	DfE updates	July 25 updated allocation
	£000	£000	£000
Schools block	298,181		298,181
High Needs block	90,325	489	90,814
Early years block	41,442	-1,696	39,746
Central school services block	2,445		2,445
	432,394	-1,207	431,187

The overall DSG allocation has decreased by £1.2m, from the position approved by Schools Forum in January 2025, due to an in-year adjustment by the DfE in July 2025. The adjustment relates to £0.5m increase in the HN Block funding mainly due to an increase in funding for additional special free school places and £1.7m decrease in the Early Years Block following the completion of the January 2025 census which saw a reduction in hours of childcare provision compared to the January 2024 census data. The Local Authority with its Best Start in Life planning and the new Early Years strategy is focusing on increasing and maximising take up of the local offer.

5. Table 1: DSG Forecast

Funding Blocks	Overall DSG Funding 2025/26	Forecast Expenditure	Overspend/ (Underspend)
	£m	£m	£m
Schools Block	126.0	126.0	0.0
High Needs Block	82.6	85.4	2.7
Early Years Block	39.7	39.7	0.0
Central Block	2.4	2.4	0.0
Total DSG	250.8	253.5	2.7

- 5.1. The DSG forecast is reflecting a deficit of £2.7m, against grant funds of £250.8m mainly due to pressures from the High Needs (HN) Block.
- 5.2. At the end of the 2025/26 financial year, the cumulative deficit stood at £13.6m. Ongoing growth in demand for High Needs provision, combined with continued pressures on top-up funding allocations, means the DSG budget is now projected to end 2025/26 with a significantly higher cumulative deficit of £16.3m. This forecast does not include potential additional pressures within post-16 education budgets, as updated rates and student numbers for the new academic year will be confirmed by providers from October onwards. In 2024/25, this area recorded an overspend of £0.8m, and a similar level of pressure, if not mitigated, could increase the cumulative deficit to approximately £17.1m.
- 5.3. 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 2025, and the forecasts provided are those prepared during October 2025.

6. Schools Block

- 6.1. Of the total £298.1m Schools Block budget allocated by the DfE to Brent, £168m has been recouped and allocated directly to academies. £1.4m has been transferred to the HNB and £2.6m has been deducted for National Non-Domestic Business Rates to be paid by the DfE directly to the billing authority, leaving £126m 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 £82.6m. This allocation includes a £1.4m transfer from the Schools Block.
- 7.2. Place funding of £9.7m for academies has been recouped from the Block and allocated to directly to providers. There was a £51k in year adjustment by the DfE in July 2025 to increase the HN funding for children from other local authorities attending schools in Brent, and an additional £0.43m funding for special free school places in Brent.

- 7.3 The HN Block allocation increased by £5.0m in 2025/26. The growth in EHCPs has continued at a rate comparable to previous years. Between January 2025 and September 2025, there was a 7% (8% between January 2024 and January 2025) increase in children and young people with an EHCP, with the number increasing from 3791 to 4050 over this period. Significant pressures remain within the HN Block. These include rising costs associated with independent, residential and out of borough placements as well as the growth in associated costs of increase in EHCPs outstripping increase in funding.

Table 2 - DSG High Needs Block forecast	2025/26 Budget	2025/26 Forecast	2025/26 Variance
	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)
Place funding in Brent Special Schools and ARPS	2.7	2.7	0.0
Top up funding in Brent Mainstream, Special schools, and ARPs	47.2	45.7	(1.5)
Recoupment Income	(3.7)	(4.1)	(0.4)
Residential and Independent settings	11.4	13.8	2.4
Out of Borough Top ups	7.6	10.0	2.4
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	10.7	10.5	(0.2)
SEN Support	0.5	0.5	0.0
Total Expenditure: High Needs Block	82.5	85.2	2.7

- 7.4. The £2.7m in year deficit against the HN Block is mainly due to an increase in the expected costs of educating Brent children out of borough and in residential and independent settings totalling a projected £4.4m due to increased number of pupils placed in these settings.
- 7.5. The forecast also includes £121k uplifts to the top up rates paid to Additional Resource Provisions (ARPs) as agreed by Schools Forum in June 2025. The adjustments apply to payments from September 2025.
- 7.6. The forecast position is further detailed below:
- The in-borough mainstream schools' (including academies) top up funding includes the introduction of a new ARP top up funding rate of £12,500 with effect from September 2025 as agreed by Schools forum in June 2025. This new rate is paid only to those schools that have signed a service level agreement.

- ii. There is a pressure of £2.4m against the education costs of children placed in independent and residential settings. This is partially mitigated by an additional forecast recoupment income of £0.3m to claim back the cost of children attending Brent schools placed by other boroughs.
 - iii. £2.4m pressure against the cost of placing Brent children in schools out of borough.
 - iv. As previously noted, 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.
 - v. The above pressures are expected to be mitigated by forecast underspends of 0.2m against SEN support services, including Education Otherwise/Awaiting Placement and a further forecast underspend against the SEN support budget.
- 7.7. The Council continues to monitor its HNB management plan, which outlines a series of long-term actions aimed at bringing the cumulative deficit under control. The plan is overseen by the Corporate Director of Children Young People and Community Development and the Corporate Director of Finance who coordinate and monitor actions in the plan, which focus on cost avoidance through financial management, managing demand and improving sufficiency of places, as outlined in the school place planning strategy refresh to be discussed at the Cabinet meeting on 17 November 2025.

8. Early Years (EY) Block

- 8.1 The EY Block allocation reduced by £1.7m following the completion of the January 2025 census. The census has shown a reduction in take-up of the 3- and 4-year-old universal entitlement, a small increase in 3- and 4-year-old additional 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents and a reduction in take-up 2-year-old entitlements. There has also been a clawback of £88.7k 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 2025 and in the Spring term from January 2026.

The DfE has announced a standalone grant, Early Years National Insurance Contributions (NIC) and teachers' pay grant (EYNTPG), of £40m for the financial year 2025/26, aimed at supporting public sector early years settings with increased staffing costs. The grant is made up of £25m to support eligible providers with the increased employers' NIC costs from April 2025, and £15m to support with the 2025 teachers' pay award for the period from September 2025 to March 2026. Brent has been allocated £0.279m which will be paid in full to childcare providers.

9 Central Block

- 9.1 The Central Block of the DSG (£2.4m) funds central services for schools. This includes a set contribution towards pension strain costs for former school employees of £0.21m, which is a long-term annual commitment.
- 9.2 The Central Block is currently forecast to break even.

10 Dedicated Schools Grant funding and National Funding Formula (NFF) 2026/27 update

- 10.1 The DfE has confirmed that the structure of the Schools NFF will remain unchanged for 2026/27, with all existing factors such as basic entitlement, additional needs, and minimum per pupil funding continuing to operate as in 2025/26.
- 10.2 In March, the DfE published details of the NIC grant for mainstream schools, covering the full financial year from April 2025 to March 2026, to support increased employer costs for both teachers and support staff. This was followed in May by the announcement of the Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG), which provides funding for the seven-month period from September 2025 to March 2026, linked to the 2025 teacher pay award. The DfE has confirmed that the mainstream elements of both grants will be rolled into the schools' block of the NFF for 2026/27. It is anticipated this will follow the methodology used in previous years of uplifting the age weighted pupil units (AWPU) and FSM6 values in line with the values used in the grant, including an uplifted rate to reflect the full year impact of the SBSG (appendix 2). The DfE have said they will decide in due course how the additional element for mainstream schools with special units or resource provision, and the core school budget grant for special schools and pupil referral units, will continue in 2026/27.

- 10.3 DSG allocations are expected to be announced in December 2025, in line with previous years, following the conclusion of the multi-year Spending review in June 2025. The Authority Proforma Tool (APT), used for submitting the local funding formulae, will be released in mid- December.
- 10.4 Following the formal consultation with Brent schools in October 2021 and subsequent approval by the Schools Forum in November 2021, the Council will continue to apply a local funding formula (LFF) for mainstream schools in Brent in 2026/27. The Council will also maintain its approach of aligning local funding factor rates progressively with those of the NFF, in line with ongoing plans to transition to the DfE's direct NFF.
- 10.5 In June 2025, the government announced that from September 2026, Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility will be extended to all children in households receiving Universal Credit. This marks a significant expansion of the current criteria, which limits FSM access based on income thresholds. For the 2026/27 financial year, the DfE has confirmed that no changes will be made to the NFF to reflect this policy. Instead, the additional funding required to support the FSM expansion will be provided through a separate grant, with further details on its calculation and distribution to be published in due course. The DfE has not yet confirmed whether the newly eligible pupils under the expanded FSM criteria will also attract pupil premium funding.
- 10.6 From April 2026, the DfE will implement significant reforms to the DSG Early Years Block. Funding for all early years' entitlements will be based on termly headcount submissions rather than the January census, enabling more accurate and responsive allocations. The minimum pass-through rate to providers will increase from 96% to 97%, ensuring a greater proportion of funding reaches frontline settings. This increase will reduce the proportion of funding that the local authority can retain centrally, limiting resources available for delivering essential central services. The increase in the pass-through rate is estimated as a £107k reduction in allocations for central expenditure, based on allocations for the current financial year.

11 Pending Schools Forum requests

- 11.1 In response to a request from the February 2025 Schools Forum meeting, for an update on the £44m capital investment plan approved by Cabinet in January 2022 for additional SEND places, an update on project progress is provided in Appendix 3.
- 11.2 In response to a request at the Schools Forum meeting in June 2025 details of expenditure in independent schools, has been shared with Special Schools.

12 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 12.1 Cabinet Members are kept abreast of the DSG forecast deficit position as part of the quarterly finance reports submitted to Cabinet.
- 12.2 Consultation has been undertaken with Special Schools on revised banding rates following a review of current funding and costs, benchmarking with other local authorities, analysis of pupil distribution and spending patterns and a review of the financial position of the HNB. Proposed changes were discussed with Special School representatives on 22 October. Following this meeting, further work will be undertaken before any proposed changes are shared with Schools Forum.

13 Financial Considerations

- 13.1 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. However, 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.
- 13.2 Since 2020, a 'statutory override' has been in place that allows local authorities to hold deficit balances on their Dedicated School Grants (DSG) spending from their main revenue budgets, meaning that local authorities' DSG deficits could be separated from their wider accounts. This override has been extended to 2028 under the current government, pending wider reform of the system to be announced early in 2026.

14 Legal Considerations

- 14.1 There are no legal implications for this report.

15 Equality Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 15.1 Not applicable.

16 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 16.1 Not applicable.

17 Communication Considerations

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

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director Children, Young People and Community Development

Appendix 1 - DSG Period 6 Budget Monitor 2025-26

			2025-26 Budget Approved Jan 2025 A £	2025-26 Actuals to P6 to 30 Sep 2025 B £	2025-26 Forecast as at Oct 2024 C £	2025-26 Outturn Variance D=(C - A) £
DSG blocks						
Schools Block						
	Expenditure	Individual Schools Budget				
		Primary Schools	108,251,611	54,092,941	108,251,611	0
		Secondary Schools	15,648,701	7,858,827	15,648,701	0
Total	Expenditure	Individual Schools Budget	123,900,312	61,951,768	123,900,312	0
	Expenditure	De-delegated Items - Schools				
		Assessment of FSM eligibility	25,000	25,000	25,000	0
		Contingencies	475,400	12,582	472,709	(2,691)
		Maternity, Paternity and Facilities	283,000	47,843	285,968	2,968
		Licences/Subscriptions [SB]	6,500	3,464	6,000	(500)
Total	Expenditure	De-delegated Items - Schools	789,900	88,890	789,677	(223)
	Expenditure	De-delegated Items - Central Provision				
		Contribution to combined budgets [SB]	519,000	519,000	519,000	0
		Pupil Growth/Out of School places	782,180	216,450	782,180	0
Total	Expenditure	De-delegated Items - Central Provision	1,301,180	735,450	1,301,180	0
	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - Schools Block				
		Schools Block	(127,468,953)	(66,047,848)	(127,468,953)	0
		0.5% transfer Schools Block to High Needs Block	1,477,561	1,477,561	1,477,561	0
Total	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - Schools Block	(125,991,392)	(64,570,287)	(125,991,392)	0
Total	Net	Schools Block	0	(1,794,180)	(223)	(223)
High Needs Block						
	Expenditure	Place funding				
		IB Place Funding [Finance]	2,671,000	1,302,868	2,671,000	0
Total	Expenditure	Place funding	2,671,000	1,302,868	2,671,000	0
	Expenditure	Top-up and Targeted Funding				
		IB Mainstream Top-ups [Finance]	13,961,042	6,642,151	13,877,042	(84,000)
		IB Mainstream Top-ups [Inclusion]	31,413,136	13,039,037	29,985,693	(1,427,443)
		IB PRUs and Special Schools: Supplementary Grant	1,886,072	1,925,354	1,886,072	0
		Independent Day Special	10,294,756	5,275,531	12,661,733	2,366,977
		Independent Residential Special	1,200,000	146,440	1,200,000	0
		OB ARPs	40,000	31,081	100,000	60,000
		OB Mainstream	3,013,793	810,341	4,483,761	1,469,968
		OB Recoupment Income	(3,700,000)	666,260	(4,099,040)	(399,040)
		OB Special	4,500,000	2,335,036	5,461,060	961,060
		Post 16	5,000,000	2,205,487	5,036,353	36,353
Total	Expenditure	Top-up and Targeted Funding	67,608,799	33,076,719	70,592,674	2,983,875
	Expenditure	SEN Support Services				
		Early Years Inclusion Fund	1,089,160	651,926	1,089,160	0
		Education Otherwise / Awaiting Placement	1,982,000	989,699	1,982,000	0
		SEN Services	7,605,151	3,040,234	7,440,971	(164,180)
		SEN SUPPORT	500,000	17,781	468,504	(31,496)
		SEN Transport	138,987	32,383	138,987	0
		Support for Inclusion	1,000,480	887,258	984,186	(16,294)
Total	Expenditure	SEN Support Services	12,315,778	5,619,282	12,103,808	(211,970)
	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - High Needs Block				
		High Needs Block	(81,118,016)	(42,181,368)	(81,118,016)	0
		0.5% transfer Schools Block to High Needs Block [B9HNdB]	(1,477,561)	(1,477,561)	(1,477,561)	0
Total	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - High Needs Block	(82,595,577)	(43,658,929)	(82,595,577)	0
Total	Net	High Needs Block	0	(3,660,061)	2,771,905	2,771,905
Early Years Block						
	Expenditure	Early Years Entitlement				
		Under 2 Year old Nursery Education - Working parents	7,332,935	3,957,020	7,332,935	0

			2025-26 Budget Approved Jan 2025 A £	2025-26 Actuals to P6 to 30 Sep 2025 B £	2025-26 Forecast as at Oct 2024 C £	2025-26 Outturn Variance D=(C - A) £
DSG blocks						
		2 Year old Nursery Education - Working parents	4,919,857	1,493,092	4,919,857	0
		2 Year old Nursery Education	3,424,874	3,753,329	3,424,874	0
		3 and 4 Year old Nursery Education	21,013,275	11,151,440	21,013,275	0
		Early Years Central Expenditure	1,185,789	524,937	1,106,135	(79,655)
		Early Years Panel Funding	757,104	624,762	757,104	0
		Early Years Pupil Premium	200,612	80,627	200,612	0
Total	Expenditure	Early Years Entitlement	38,834,446	21,585,207	38,754,791	(79,655)
	Expenditure	Supplementary Funding				
		Maintained Nursery Schools	912,046	583,673	912,046	0
Total	Expenditure	Supplementary Funding	912,046	583,673	912,046	0
	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - Early Years Block				
		Early Years Block	(39,746,492)	(20,668,175)	(39,746,492)	0
Total	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - Early Years Block	(39,746,492)	(20,668,175)	(39,746,492)	0
Total	Net	Early Years Block	0	1,500,705	(79,655)	(79,655)
Central School Services BI						
	Expenditure	Central Provision				
		Contribution to combined budgets [CSSB]	1,332,704	238,340	1,400,444	67,740
		Termination of employment costs	210,916	210,916	210,916	0
		Servicing of Schools Forum	10,000		3,127	(6,873)
		Licences/Subscriptions [CSSB]	300,344	304,469	304,469	4,125
		School Admissions	591,439	287,523	591,439	0
Total	Expenditure	Central Provision	2,445,403	1,041,248	2,510,395	64,992
	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - Central School Services Block				
		Central School Services Block	(2,445,403)	(1,271,610)	(2,445,403)	0
Total	Income	Dedicated Schools Grant - Central School Services Block	(2,445,403)	(1,271,610)	(2,445,403)	0
Total	Net	Central School Services Block	0	(230,362)	64,992	64,992
Other Expenditure						
	Expenditure	6th Form Funding				
		6th Form Schools	4,759,527	2,592,220	4,759,527	0
Total	Expenditure	6th Form Funding	4,759,527	2,592,220	4,759,527	0
	Income	16-19 Funding Grant				
		6th Form Funding	(4,759,527)	(2,492,914)	(4,759,527)	0
Total	Income	16-19 Funding Grant	(4,759,527)	(2,492,914)	(4,759,527)	0
Total	Net	Other Expenditure	0	99,307	0	0
Outturn Summary - Net						
	Net	Schools Block	0	(1,794,180)	(223)	(223)
	Net	High Needs Block	0	(3,660,061)	2,771,905	2,771,905
	Net	Early Years Block	0	1,500,705	(79,655)	(79,655)
	Net	Central School Services Block	0	(230,362)	64,992	64,992
	Net	Other Expenditure	0	99,307	0	0
7. Outturn	Net	Overspend / (Underspend)	0	(4,084,591)	2,757,019	2,757,019
DSG Reserves Balance						
19.20 FY	2018-19	DSG Brought Forward (Surplus)				(2,445,741)
19.20 FY	2019-20	DSG Final Outturn Deficit				7,362,361
20.21 FY	2019-20	DSG Brought Forward Deficit				4,916,620
20.21 FY	2020-21	DSG Final Outturn Deficit				5,609,457
21.22 FY	2020-21	DSG Brought Forward Deficit				10,526,077
21.22 FY	2021-22	DSG Final Outturn Deficit				4,654,519
22.23 FY	2021-22	DSG Brought Forward Deficit				15,180,596
22.23 FY	2022-23	DSG Final Outturn (Surplus)				(1,352,401)

		2025-26 Budget Approved Jan 2025 A £	2025-26 Actuals to P6 to 30 Sep 2025 B £	2025-26 Forecast as at Oct 2024 C £	2025-26 Outturn Variance D=(C - A) £
DSG blocks					
23.24 FY	2022-23 DSG Brought Forward Deficit				13,828,195
23.24 FY	2023-24 DSG Final Outturn (Surplus)				(571,585)
24.25 FY	2023-24 DSG Brought Forward Deficit				13,256,610
24.25 FY	2024-25 DSG Forecast Deficit				349,208
25.26 FY	2024-25 DSG Brought Forward Deficit				13,605,818
25.26 FY	2025-26 DSG Forecast Deficit / (Surplus)				2,757,019
8. DSG Rese	2025-26 DSG Carry Forward Deficit / (Surplus)				16,362,837

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Appendix 2 - Grant Additions to Core Factor Values in the 2026–27 National Funding Formula (NFF)

Table 1 below shows the amounts that the DfE will add to the core factor values in the 2026/27 NFF in respect of the grants. For the Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG), this represents the full-year equivalent amount. An Area Cost Adjustment will be applied to these factors to reflect geographical variation in labour market costs.

Table 1: Factor value uplifts from the rolling in of grants			
Factor	NICs	SBSG	Total
Primary basic per-pupil	£78	£55	£133
Key stage 3 basic per-pupil	£68	£78	£146
Key stage 4 basic per-pupil	£77	£88	£165
Primary FSM6 per-pupil	£75	£49	£124
Secondary FSM6 per-pupil	£60	£72	£132
Lump sum	£2,400	£2,086	£4,486

Table 2 below shows the amounts that will be added to the Minimum Per Pupil Levels in the 2026/27 NFF in respect of the grants. This also reflects the full-year equivalent uplift in respect of the SBSG grant.

Table 2: Minimum per pupil (MPPL) funding uplifts			
MPPL	NICs uplifts	SBSG uplifts	Total
Primary MPPL	£93	£66	£159
Secondary MPPL	£83	£91	£174

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Appendix 3 – Brent SEND Capital Project - Phase 1 Progress update

	Original Places to be provided	Actual / Forecast Places to be provided	Date completed / Forecast Completion	Comments
Elsley ARP	10	10	August 2024	Complete
Newfield ARP	10	10	April 2024	Complete
Carlton Vale ARP	7	7	Sept 2021	Complete
Kilburn Park ARP	14	14	Sept 2021	Complete
Wembley Primary ARP	25	0	N/A	Withdrew from programme
Mount Stewart ARP	21	0	N/A	Withdrew from programme
Preston Park ARP	21	21	Sept 2025	Complete
St Margaret Clitherow ARP	7	16	Feb 2026	In construction (RIBA 5)
Newman CC ARP	25	25	Oct 2025	Complete
St Gregs ARP	28	28	Jan 2030	Part of DfE SRP school rebuild
Phoenix Arch Expansion	13	0	N/A	Move to Phase 2 SEND
Manor School Expansion	36	54	Dec 2023	Complete
TVS Expansion	20	0	N/A	Move to Phase 2 SEND
Woodfield Expansion	40	40	Sept 2027	Contractor to be appointed in Oct 25
London Road SEND School	150	150	Sept 2025	Complete
Fryent Primary ARP	0	7	Aug 2022	Added to programme to provide required accommodation
Totals	427	382		

Both Wembley Primary School and Mount Stewart Schools withdrew from their respective ARP projects meaning that the target of 427 will not be met. A refresh of the school place planning strategy will be discussed at the Cabinet meeting on 17 November 2025.

The plan approved by the Cabinet in January 2022 can be found at [Decision - Capital Investment Programme for School Place Sufficiency for Children and Young People with SEND](#).

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