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Brent

Schools Forum

Tuesday 10 November 2026 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

SCHOOL MEMBERS	
Nursery	
Nisha Lingam	Head
Angela Turner	Governor

Primary	
Siobhan Ali	Head
Michelle Ginty	Head
Raphael Moss	Head
Vacancy	Head
Vacancy	Governor
Vacancy	Governor
Michael Odumosu	Governor
Ernest Toquie	Governor

Secondary	
Vacancy	Head (maintained)

Special Education Needs	
Nick Cooper	Head

Pupil Referral Unit	
Ranjna Shiyani	Head

ACADEMY MEMBERS	
Primary	

recycle for Brent

Vacancy	Head
Jo Jhally	Governor

Secondary	
Vacancy	Head
Jude Enright	Head
Martin Beard	Governor
Mike Heiser (Chair)	Governor
Mahendra Negi	Governor
Vacancy	Governor

Special Education Needs	
Jayne Jardine	Head

NON SCHOOL MEMBERS	

Early Years PVI	
Paul Russell	
Wioletta Bura	

Trade Union	
Lucy Cox	

16-19 Provider Representative	
Vacancy	

For further information contact: Abby Shinhmar, Governance Officer
Email: Abby.Shinhmar@brent.gov.uk

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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 of 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	**Vice Chair Appointment** To seek nominations and confirm the appointment of a Vice-Chair for the Schools Forum.	
5	**Minutes of the Previous Meeting** To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 17 June 2026 as a correct record.	1 - 6
6	**Actions Arising** To consider any actions arising from previous meetings.	
7	**DSG Budget Monitoring Report 2026-27** This report provides Schools Forum with an update on the projected financial position for 2026/27 financial year, based on data at the end of September 2026.	7 - 22
8	**Update on DSG HNB and Brent's SEND Reform Plan** This report provides an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position, including the current and projected deficit, key cost pressures, progress against the management and recovery plan and risks alongside mitigating actions.	23 - 30
9	**Any Other Urgent Business**	

10 Dates of Future Meetings

Members are asked to note the schedule of dates for meetings of the Schools Forum during the 2025-26 Municipal Year as follow:

- Monday 7 December 2026 (additional meeting if required)
- Monday 25 January 2027
- Monday 22 February 2027

Date of the next meeting: Monday 7 December 2026 (if required)

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MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM
Held as an online meeting on Wednesday 17 June 2026 at 6:00pm

Membership	Representing
PRESENT (all in remote attendance):	
Governors	Mike Heiser (Chair) Martin Beard Jo Jhally Michael Odumosu
Headteachers	Siobhan Ali Jude Enright Jayne Jardine Michelle Ginty Ranjna Shiyani Nick Cooper
Non School Members	Wioletta Bura
Trade Union	Lucy Cox
Officers	Nigel Chapman, Corporate Director Children, Young People and Community Development Shirley Parks, Director Education, Partnerships and Strategy Ravinder Jassar, Deputy Director Corporate and Financial Planning Folake Olufeko, Head of Finance Roxanna Glennon, Head of Inclusion Abby Shinhmar, Governance Team

1. **Apologies for Absence and Membership**

Apologies for absence were received from Nisha Lingam and Raphael Moss.

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 26 February 2026 as a correct record.

5. **Actions arising**

Minutes 26 February 2026 – DSG High Needs Block Budgets 2026-27

Confirmation was provided that in response to the action agreed at the previous meeting, details of the latest forecast and place numbers on which individual school allocations had been based had been provided for members of the Forum.

6. **Appointment of Vice-Chair**

Nominations were sought were sought for the position of Vice-Chair on the Forum.

As no nominations were received, it was **AGREED** that the appointment be included for consideration as an item on the next meeting Forum agenda in November 2026, with officers and the chair advising they would be willing to provide further detail on the nature of the role following the meeting for any interested members of the Forum.

7. **Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Outturn 2025/26**

Folake Olufeko (Head of Finance, Brent Council) introduced a report that set out the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) outturn against the budget set for 2025/26. The Forum noted the following key points as part of the update provided:

- The financial year had closed with an in-year DSG deficit of £6.6m in addition to the brought forward deficit of £13.6m from 2024/25, resulting in a cumulative DSG deficit of £20.2m as of 31 March 2026.
- The in-year deficit had mainly been driven by an £8.2m overspend within the High Needs Block, which had been partially offset by an underspend of £1.0m within the Early Years Block, an underspend of just under £0.4m within the Schools Block and an underspend of £0.2m within the Central School Services Block.
- The High Needs Block overspend reflected ongoing pressures relating to independent and residential placements, top-up funding for pupils attending non-maintained special schools and academies and a £3.5m overspend relating to out-of-borough placements. Members were advised that these pressures had been partially mitigated by underspends within top-up funding for pupils attending Brent maintained schools and Additionally Resourced Provisions alongside underspends within SEND services and support services.
- The continuing increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) remained a significant cost driver, with the number of EHCPs increasing from 3,892 in March 2025 to 4,306 in March 2026, representing growth of 10.6%.
- The current year deficit was expected to place further pressure on the 2026/27 financial position, where a deficit of approximately £20m was already forecast.
- The Government had announced proposals to support Local Authorities by funding up to 90% of accumulated DSG deficits of March 2026, with similar arrangements expected to apply for future years.
- Maintained school reserves had increased overall by £1.6m during 2025/26, representing the first increase following previous years of declining balances.

- Of the 54 maintained schools, 31 had increased their reserves whilst 23 had seen reserves decrease.
- Four schools had cleared their deficits during the year, although four additional schools had entered deficit positions, leaving eight schools in deficit as at 31 March 2026.
- Schools in deficit would be required to enter into licensed deficit agreements and recovery plans, with support provided through the Finance and School Effectiveness Teams.
- Members also noted the outline provided in relation to forthcoming developments relating to the expansion of Free School Meal eligibility from September 2026 and the awaited announcement on teachers' pay awards.

The Chair thanked Folake Olufeko for the report and welcomed any questions or comments from the Forum with Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children, Young People & Community Development) advised that wider comment and discussions regarding the impact of SEND pressures and the actions being undertaken to address the DSG position would be covered under the SEND Reform Update item.

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

8. **SEND Reform Update**

Roxanna Glennon (Head of Inclusion, Brent Council) supported by Shirley Parks (Director Education, Partnerships and Strategy, Brent Council) provided a verbal update on the development of Brent's SEND Reform Plan and preparations for submission to the Department for Education. The Forum noted the following key points as part of the update provided:

- All top-tier Local Authorities had been required to submit SEND Reform Plans by 19 June 2026 outlining how additional transformation funding and the Experts at Hand programme would be utilised. The plans were intended to support the development of a more inclusive mainstream education system, improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and create a more financially sustainable system.
- Brent's proposals had been developed through extensive collaboration across education, health, social care and other partner agencies, including housing services with approximately £11m due to be received through the Experts at Hand programme over three years to expand SEND support services. Members were reminded, however, that this funding could not be used to support children and young people already holding an EHCP
- Delivery of the new support model would be based around five geographical clusters aligned with Integrated Neighbourhood Teams within the health service.
- Recruitment was underway for 34 additional specialist posts, with a particular focus on speech, language and communication needs and emotional development and regulation support. Significant work had also been undertaken in partnership with the Integrated Care Board and Imperial College Healthcare partners to develop new approaches to understanding and assessing child development.
- Extensive modelling had been undertaken in seeking to develop the SEND Reform Plan proposals. Whilst improvements in financial sustainability were

expected, officers advised it would not be possible to fully eliminate SEND financial pressures without additional growth in High Needs Block funding.

- Brent continued to experience a distinctive pattern of SEND demand, with a particularly high concentration of EHCPs in the early years age group compared with many neighbouring authorities.
- Draft plans had been submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) on 15 May 2026 and positive feedback had been received on 1 June 2026 with the DfE having welcomed the ambition, design principles and integrated approach contained within the plan whilst also requesting clearer key performance indicators and monitoring arrangements.
- Final plans were scheduled for submission on 18 June 2026 with funding allocated for delivery available from June 2027 and confirmation as to whether Brent's plans had been approved expected in Autumn 2026.
- Approval of the plans remained linked to the Government's proposal to fund up to 90% of historic DSG deficits.
- Members were reminded that the Children and Families Act framework would remain in place until at least 2029, requiring current statutory systems to operate alongside emerging reforms.

The Chair thanked Roxanna Glennon and Shirley Parks for the update with comments then invited from the Forum and the following issues highlighted:

- Reassurance was sought regarding engagement with the DfE during development of the plans. In response, Roxanna Glennon advised that Brent had worked closely with both SEND and financial advisers appointed by the DfE with feedback received on the draft submission having been positive and officers confident that the plans were progressing in a positive way.

- Clarification was sought regarding the future role of Schools Forum and the reporting arrangements linked to the wider reforms. Roxanna Glennon advised that no further guidance had yet been issued regarding the future role of Schools Forum within the national reform programme. Whilst approval of the plans rested with the Local Authority and Integrated Care Board, Brent had also sought involvement from its Parent Carer Forum.

As a further update, Shirley Parks highlighted the significance of the reform programme in relation to the DSG deficit and future funding arrangements. Members were advised that the reforms had been co-designed with schools and would influence the support provided to children and young people in mainstream settings before requests for statutory assessment were made. The proposals would also involve the provision of additional funding to school who would, by December 2026, also be expected to submit their own inclusion plans to the DfE demonstrating how they would use resources to support SEND and inclusive practice.

In relation to future monitoring, it was suggested that a further update be provided to the Forum detailing key milestones, funding arrangements and areas where Schools Forum may need to consider decisions as reforms progressed, which it was suggested could also be aligned with the updates on the DSG Deficit Management Plan.

Nigel Chapman also took the opportunity to thank schools and partners for their contribution to development of the plans, noting that the proposals represented a

genuine partnership approach. He also highlighted the very positive nature of the feedback received from the DfE to date.

Members of the Forum also welcomed the work undertaken to engage schools through cluster discussions and thanked officers for the collaborative approach adopted. In terms of ongoing monitoring of the deficit position and provision of funding support linked to delivery of the agreed plans Folake Olufeko confirmed that Government funding would be contingent upon approval and delivery of the plans and advised that, whilst Brent was forecasting receipt of the full 90% contribution, the DfE retained discretion regarding the final level of support awarded.

With no further comments raised, the Chair thanked all those involved for their efforts in producing the plans and the Forum **RESOLVED**:

(1) To note the SEND Reform update.

(2) That regular monitoring updates continue to be provided for the Forum on the wider national reform programme and delivery of the SEND Reform Plan.

9. **Updated Scheme for Financing Schools & Schools Financial Regulations 2026/27**

Folake Olufeko (Head of Finance, Brent Council) introduced a report which detailed proposed updates to the Scheme for Financing Schools and Schools Financial Regulations for 2026/27. The Forum noted the following key points as part of the update provided:

- Both documents had been updated to reflect the Department for Education's Scheme for Financing Schools guidance published in March 2026.
- The Scheme for Financing Schools for 2026/27 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 2026/27, 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.
- One of the key changes identified related to licensed deficit arrangements. Whilst existing arrangements required licensed deficit agreements where schools set unbalanced budgets, the revised scheme would also require schools closing the financial year in deficit to submit a licensed deficit agreement together with a recovery plan. The Forum was advised these plans would be required to demonstrate how schools intended to return to a balanced budget position within an agreed timeframe.

The Chair thanked Folake Olufeko for the 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 2026-27 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) To approve the amendments to the Scheme for Financing Schools 2026/27.

(2) To note (having been invited to formally comment) the Schools Financial Regulations 2026/27.

9. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

10. **Dates of Future Meetings**

Members are asked to note the schedule of dates for meetings of the Schools Forum during the 2025-26 Municipal Year as follows:

- Tuesday 10 November 2026
- Monday 7 December 2026 (additional meeting if required)
- Monday 25 January 2027
- Monday 22 February 2027

These meetings had all been scheduled to be held online starting at 6pm.

The meeting closed at 6:45pm.

Mike Heiser
Chair

	Schools Forum 10 November 2026
	Report from the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Community Development

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget Monitoring Report 2026/27

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 2026/27 Appendix 2: Change in National Funding Formula factor values from 2027/28 Appendix 3: Outcome of Local Funding Formula 2027/28 consultation
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 2026/27 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 2026. For reference, Appendix 1 of this report contains a detailed budget breakdown and forecast by funding blocks.

1.2. This report also provides an update on the consultation with schools regarding the Local Funding Formula that will be used to set school budgets for the 2027/28 financial year.

2. Recommendation

2.1. Schools Forum is asked to:

- Note the DSG forecast financial outturn position for 2026/27, as of September 2026.
- Note the forecasted outturn position of the DSG reserve for 2026/27, as of September 2026.
- Note the outcome of the consultation with school regarding the LFF that will be used to set the school budgets for the 2027/28 financial year.

3. Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

3.1 This report supports the Council's Borough Plan 2023-2027, specifically the priority of The Best Start in Life, which aims to ensure that children and young people have opportunities, support and high-quality education needed to raise aspirations, achievement and attainment. Through partnership working with schools and other key stakeholders, the Council seeks to ensure fair and equitable access to education for all learners across the borough. This report provides updates on DSG position and related funding matters, ensuring that the Schools Forum remains informed and able to support the effective management and oversight of education funding in Brent.

4. Summary

4.1. The total DSG allocation for Brent, reported to Schools Forum in January 2026, was £452.2m (shown in original allocation column in Table 1).

4.2. Since the previous report, the DfE has updated the DSG allocation to reflect revised 2026/27 academy high needs recoupment data. Table 1 below sets out the resulting changes to the 2026/27 DSG allocations.

Table 1: 2026/27 DSG funding allocation

DSG 2026/27 (Including funding for academies**)**	**Original allocation (Jan 2026)**	**Changes**	**Latest allocation (July 26)**
	£m	£m	£m
Schools block	309.0		309.0
High Needs block	95.2	-0.5	94.7
Early years block	45.5		45.5
Central school services block	2.5		2.5
Total	**452.2**	**-0.5**	**451.7**

4.3. The overall DSG allocation has decreased by £0.5m, from the position approved by Schools Forum in January 2026, due to an in-year adjustment by

the DfE in July 2026. The adjustment relates to the import/export adjustment, reflecting changes in pupil movements between local authorities.

Table 2: 2026/27 DSG Forecast

Funding Blocks (Excluding funding for academies)	**Overall DSG Funding 2026/27 £m**	**Forecast Expenditure £m**	**Overspend/ (Underspend) £m**
Schools Block	126.9	127.0	0.0
High Needs Block	84.1	105.0	20.8
Early Years Block	45.5	45.5	0.0
Central Block	2.5	2.5	0.0
Total DSG	**259.0**	**279.9**	**20.8**

4.4. The DSG forecast is reflecting a deficit of £20.8m, against grant funds of £259m (excluding academies) mainly due to pressures from the High Needs (HN) Block.

4.5. The cumulative DSG deficit brought forward from 2025/26 is £20.2m. Based on current forecasts, a further in-year overspend of £20.8m is expected in 2026/27, which would increase the cumulative DSG deficit to approximately £41m by 31 March 2027. This reflects the ongoing growth in demand for High Needs provision, combined with continued pressures on top-up funding allocations.

4.6. However, following the approval of Brent's Local SEND Reform Plan, the Council is eligible to receive a High Needs Stability Grant covering 90% of its DGS deficit accrued up to 31 March 2026. Brent's allocation is £18.2m, with payment expected in November 2026. The grant will be applied against the historic DSG deficit position, alongside the utilisation of accumulated surpluses on other blocks, a residual deficit of £2m will remain. The Council has established a dedicated reserve from the additional £2.1m Revenue Support Grant received in 2025/26, which is sufficient to fund the remaining balance and support the elimination of the historic cumulative DSG deficit.

4.7. While the High Needs Stability Grant is intended to address the historic deficit position up to 31 March 2026, a further deficit of £20.8m is forecast to arise during 2026/27. The Government has indicated that it will take an "appropriate and proportionate" approach to supporting DSG deficits arising during 2026/27 and 2027/28, although such support will not be unlimited. Future funding arrangements are yet to be confirmed but are expected to take account of local authorities' successful delivery of their approved Local SEND Reform Plans, including the appropriate use of investment funding to establish an Experts at Hand offer.

4.8. 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 2026, and the forecasts provided are those prepared during October 2026.

5. Schools Block

5.1. Of the total £309m Schools Block budget allocated by the DfE to Brent, £179m has been recouped and allocated directly to academies. In addition, £2.9m has been deducted for National Non-Domestic Business Rates (NNDR) to be paid by the DfE directly to the billing authority. Unlike previous years, no transfer has been made from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2026/27. Following the deduction of NNDR and the recoupment for academies, remaining £126.9m Schools Block funding is allocated to Brent maintained schools and to fund centrally retained items including the growth fund.

5.2. The Schools Block is currently forecast to break even.

6. High Needs (HN) Block

6.1. The total HN Block allocation for 2026/27 is £94.7m. After excluding funding £10.6m recouped by the DfE and paid directly to academy providers, the funding available to the local authority is £84.1m

6.2. At the budget setting stage, the HN Block budget was approved with a planned overspend of £14.9m, reflecting the gap between available funding and forecast expenditure. However, the latest forecast as at the end of September 2026 indicates an overspend of £20.8m, an adverse variance of £5.9m against the budgeted position. This reflects continued growth in demand for SEND provision, increasing placement costs and wider inflationary pressures that have exceeded the assumptions made when the budget was approved.

6.3. The growth in EHCPs has continued to accelerate. Between September 2025 and September 2026, the number of children with an EHCP increased from 4,050 to 4,437, representing a growth of 10%, compared with 8% growth between September 2024 and September 2025. Significant pressures remain within the HN Block, driven by increasing demand for SEND support, rising costs associated with independent, residential and out of borough placements and continued growth in EHCP numbers. As a result, expenditure continues to outpace funding growth, contributing to ongoing financial pressures within the HN Block.

Table 3: DSG High Needs Block forecast

	2026/27 Budget (£m)	2026/27 Forecast (£m)	2026/27 Variance (£m)
Place funding in Brent Special Schools and ARPS	2.8	2.8	0.0
Top up funding in Brent Mainstream, Special schools, and ARPs	57.4	56.8	-0.6
Recoupment Income	-3.0	-1.4	1.6
Residential and Independent settings	13.6	14.6	1.0
Out of Borough Top ups	9.8	12.0	2.3
Post 16 Top ups	6.3	7.9	1.6
Early Years Inclusion Fund	1.1	1.1	-0.0
SEN Support Services including Education Otherwise / Awaiting Placement	10.6	10.8	0.2
SEN Support	0.5	0.3	-0.2
Total Expenditure: High Needs Block	**99.1**	**105.0**	**5.9**

6.4 The £5.9m 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 £3.3m due to increased number of pupils placed in these settings and overspend against the Post-16 top-up budget.

6.5. The forecast position is further detailed below:

i. There is a pressure of £1.0m against the education costs of children placed in independent and residential settings and £2.3m pressure against the cost of placing Brent children in schools out of borough.

ii. An overspend has been forecast against the post-16 budget based on an assumed 10% increase in pupil numbers during 2026/27. Whilst the forecast reflects the anticipated growth in demand for post-16 SEND provision, there remains a degree of uncertainty as a number of providers have yet to confirm their final charges to the local authority. As such, the forecast against the post-16 budget line is subject to change later in the financial year.

iii. The pressures of 0.2m against SEN support services, including Education Otherwise/Awaiting Placement is mitigated by the underspend against the SEN support budget.

6.6. The Council continues to monitor the delivery of its Local SEND Reform Plan, which outlines a series of strategic actions aimed at improving outcomes for children with SEND while supporting long term sustainability of SEND services. Oversight is provided 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. The Council is currently preparing

its Quarter 2 SEND Reform monitoring return for submission to the DfE, which will provide an update on progress against the approved reform plan, including demand management initiatives, the development of local provision and implementation of the Experts at Hand model. The Council continues to focus on sufficiency of places, reducing reliance on external placements and ensuring services remain financial sustainable.

7. Early Years (EY) Block

7.1 The EY Block is currently forecast to break even. At the budget setting stage, the EY Block was expected to generate an underspend of approximately £1.4m, primarily due to assumptions regarding the take-up of the expanded childcare entitlement for children aged 9 months to 2 years. However, the latest forecast indicates higher participation levels than originally anticipated, particularly for the Summer 2026 term. As a result, the previously expected underspend has been removed from the forecast. As the funding for EY Block is based on actual participation levels, any increases in take-up will be matched by additional funding received from the DfE through the termly adjustment process.

8 Central Block

8.1 The Central Block of the DSG (£2.5m) funds central services for schools. This includes a set contribution towards pension strain costs for former school employees of £0.17m, which is a long-term annual commitment.

8.2 The Central Block is currently forecast to break even.

9 Dedicated Schools Grant funding and National Funding Formula (NFF) 2027/28 update

9.1 The DfE has confirmed that the structure of the schools NFF will remain unchanged for 2027/28. All existing factors, including basic entitlement, deprivation, low prior attainment, English as an Additional language, mobility, lump sum, sparsity and premises factors, will continue to operate. The Area Cost Adjustment (ACA), Minimum Per Pupil Level (MPPL) and funding floor protections will also remain in place, although factor values will be updated and confirmed when the 2027/28 NFF allocations are published later in autumn 2026.

9.2 The DfE confirmed that funding previously distributed through the Schools Budget Support Grant 2026 (SBSG 26) and funding relating to teachers' pension contributions will be incorporated into the schools NFF for 2027/28. This continues the DfE's policy of simplifying school funding arrangements by rolling grant funding into core formula allocations.

9.3 DSG allocations are expected to be announced in December 2026, 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.

9.4 The Government's expansion of Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility to all children in households receiving Universal Credit will continue to be implemented from September 2026. The DfE has published further guidance on the funding implications of the policy and is expected to provide additional funding through separate arrangements outside of the core schools NFF.

9.5 The Early Years funding reforms introduced from 2026/27, including termly funding adjustments based on participation data and the increase in the minimum pass-through requirement to providers from 96% to 97%, continue to apply in 2027/28. The Council will continue to monitor the impact of these changes on centrally retained Early Years funding and the sustainability of services funded from the Early Years Block.

10 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

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

10.2 A consultation on the 2027/28 Local Funding Formula was undertaken with all schools in the local authority. Response rates were disappointingly low, with only 8 maintained schools together with 1 secondary academy submitting a response. This represents a limited level of engagement from the sector and means that the consultation feedback reflects the views of only a small proportion of schools. The response received will nevertheless be considered and will inform the final recommendations on the 2027/28 LLF. The outcome of the consultation is presented in Appendix 3.

11 Financial Considerations

11.1 The financial implications are set out within the body of this report. Whilst the High Needs Stability Grant arrangements provide a route to addressing Brent's historic DSG deficit position, there remains uncertainty regarding the treatment of deficits arising in 2026/27 and 2027/28. The Government has indicated that it will continue to take an appropriate and proportionate approach to managing these deficits; however, the detailed funding arrangements have not yet been confirmed. Any future support is expected to be linked to the successful delivery of approved Local SEND Reform Plans.

11.2 Since 2020, a statutory override has been in place that enables local authorities to exclude DSG deficits from their main revenue accounts. The override has been extended until 31 March 2028, pending wider reform of the SEND and High Needs funding system. This continues to provide financial protection to local authorities while the Government develops longer-term funding arrangements for SEND services.

12 Legal Considerations

12.1 There are no legal implications for this report.

13 **Equity Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

13.1 Not applicable.

14 **Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

14.1 Not applicable.

15 **Communication Considerations**

15.1 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 2026-27

DSG bLocks		2026-27 Budget Approved Jan 2026 A £	2026-27 Actuals to P6 to 30 Sep 2026 B £	2026-27 Forecast as at Sep 26 C £	2026-27 Outturn Variance D=(C - A) £
Schools Block					
Expenditure	**Individual Schools Budget**				
	Primary Schools	109,209,920	55,111,546	109,237,628	27,708
	Secondary Schools	15,817,678	8,594,333	15,797,678	(20,000)
Expenditure	**Individual Schools Budget**	**125,027,598**	**63,705,879**	**125,035,306**	**7,708**
Expenditure	**De-delegated Items - Schools**				
	Assessment of FSM eligibility	35,000	35,000	35,000	0
	Contingencies	450,000	10,230	448,560	(1,440)
	Maternity, Paternity and Facilities	365,000	1,228	391,039	26,039
	Licences/Subscriptions [SB]	6,502	3,204	6,500	(2)
Expenditure	**De-delegated Items - Schools**	**856,502**	**49,662**	**881,099**	**24,597**
Expenditure	**De-delegated Items - Central Provision**				
	Contribution to combined budgets [SB]	519,000	519,000	519,000	0
	Pupil Growth/Out of School places	540,000	328,334	540,000	0
Expenditure	**De-delegated Items - Central Provision**	**1,059,000**	**847,334**	**1,059,000**	**0**
Income	**Dedicated Schools Grant - Schools Block**				
	Schools Block	(126,943,100)	(69,002,830)	(126,943,100)	0
	0.5% transfer Schools Block to High Needs Block				0
Income	**Dedicated Schools Grant - Schools Block**	**(126,943,100)**	**(69,002,830)**	**(126,943,100)**	**0**
Net	**Schools Block**	**0**	**(4,399,955)**	**32,305**	**32,305**
High Needs Block					
Expenditure	**Place funding**				
	IB Place Funding [Finance]	2,751,500	1,253,991	2,824,018	72,518
Expenditure	**Place funding**	**2,751,500**	**1,253,991**	**2,824,018**	**72,518**
Expenditure	**Top-up and Targeted Funding**				
	IB Mainstream Top-ups [Finance]	15,907,897	7,088,456	16,091,914	184,017
	IB Mainstream Top-ups [Inclusion]	35,078,588	12,683,323	34,242,536	(836,052)
	IB PRUs and Special Schools: Supplementary Grant	6,428,919		6,428,919	0
	Independent Day Special	12,613,650	7,439,373	13,691,486	1,077,836
	Independent Residential Special	1,000,000	500,368	930,371	(69,629)
	OB ARPs	100,000	23,802	100,000	0
	OB Mainstream	4,187,000	648,300	6,104,424	1,917,424
	OB Recoupment Income	(3,000,000)	888,212	(1,353,984)	1,646,016
	OB Special	5,500,000	1,628,479	5,845,058	345,058
	Post 16	6,300,000	2,565,342	7,894,000	1,594,000
Expenditure	**Top-up and Targeted Funding**	**84,116,054**	**33,465,655**	**89,974,725**	**5,858,671**
Expenditure	**SEN Support Services**				
	Early Years Inclusion Fund	1,090,000	257,077	1,054,694	(35,306)
	Education Otherwise / Awaiting Placement	1,982,000	1,148,014	2,311,992	329,992
	SEN Services	7,541,051	3,386,567	7,687,132	146,081
	SEN SUPPORT	500,000	38,657	288,725	(211,275)
	SEN Transport	100,000	(35,705)	(705)	(100,705)
	Support for Inclusion	1,000,480	782,107	826,507	(173,973)
Expenditure	**SEN Support Services**	**12,213,531**	**5,576,716**	**12,168,345**	**(45,186)**
Expenditure	**Unallocated Budget**				

DSG bLocks		2026-27 Budget Approved Jan 2026 A £	2026-27 Actuals to P6 to 30 Sep 2026 B £	2026-27 Forecast as at Sep 26 C £	2026-27 Outturn Variance D=(C - A) £
	High Needs Block Deficit (-) / Surplus (+)	(14,943,445)	0	0	14,943,445
Expenditure	**Unallocated Budget**	**(14,943,445)**	**0**	**0**	**14,943,445**
Income	**Dedicated Schools Grant - High Needs Block**				
	High Needs Block	(84,137,640)	(43,751,572)	(84,137,640)	0
	0.5% transfer Schools Block to High Needs Block				0
Income	**Dedicated Schools Grant - High Needs Block**	**(84,137,640)**	**(43,751,572)**	**(84,137,640)**	**0**
Net	**High Needs Block**	**0**	**(3,455,211)**	**20,829,448**	**20,829,448**
Early Years Block					
Expenditure	**Early Years Entitlement**				
	Under 2 Year old Nursery Education - Working parents	7,970,079	5,470,412	7,970,079	0
	2 Year old Nursery Education - Working parents	8,645,988	3,540,233	8,645,988	0
	2 Year old Nursery Education	2,813,392	2,144,888	2,813,392	0
	3 and 4 Year old Nursery Education	20,983,212	9,943,854	20,983,212	0
	Early Years Central Expenditure	1,562,150	554,079	1,577,601	15,451
	Early Years Panel Funding	867,383	684,540	867,383	0
	Early Years Pupil Premium	248,225	121,921	248,225	0
Expenditure	**Early Years Entitlement**	**43,090,429**	**22,459,927**	**43,105,880**	**15,451**
Expenditure	**Supplementary Funding**				
	Maintained Nursery Schools	919,805	533,359	919,848	43
Expenditure	**Supplementary Funding**	**919,805**	**533,359**	**919,848**	**43**
Expenditure	**Unallocated Budget**				
	Early Years Block Deficit (-) / Surplus (+)	1,441,398	0	1,441,398	0
Expenditure	**Unallocated Budget**	**1,441,398**	**0**	**1,441,398**	**0**
Income	**Dedicated Schools Grant - Early Years Block**				
	Early Years Block	(45,451,632)	(23,122,172)	(45,451,632)	0
Income	**Dedicated Schools Grant - Early Years Block**	**(45,451,632)**	**(23,122,172)**	**(45,451,632)**	**0**
Net	**Early Years Block**	**0**	**(128,885)**	**15,495**	**15,495**
Central School Serv					
Expenditure	**Central Provision**				
	Contribution to combined budgets [CSSB]	1,382,700	175,921	1,373,554	(9,146)
	Termination of employment costs	300,344	311,500	311,500	11,156
	Servicing of Schools Forum	618,016	279,095	596,041	(21,975)
	Licences/Subscriptions [CSSB]	10,000		1,000	(9,000)
	School Admissions	168,733	168,733	168,733	0
Expenditure	**Central Provision**	**2,479,793**	**935,249**	**2,450,827**	**(28,966)**
Income	**Dedicated Schools Grant - Central School Services Block**				
	Central School Services Block	(2,479,793)	(1,289,492)	(2,479,793)	0
Income	**Dedicated Schools Grant - Central School Services Block**	**(2,479,793)**	**(1,289,492)**	**(2,479,793)**	**0**
Net	**Central School Services Block**	**0**	**(354,244)**	**(28,966)**	**(28,966)**
Other Expenditure					
Expenditure	**6th Form Funding**				
	6th Form Schools	4,839,392	2,537,164	4,839,392	0
Expenditure	**6th Form Funding**	**4,839,392**	**2,537,164**	**4,839,392**	**0**
Income	**16-19 Funding Grant**				

DSG bLocks		2026-27 Budget Approved Jan 2026 A £	2026-27 Actuals to P6 to 30 Sep 2026 B £	2026-27 Forecast as at Sep 26 C £	2026-27 Outturn Variance D=(C - A) £
	6th Form Funding	(4,839,392)	(2,313,596)	(4,839,392)	0
Income	**16-19 Funding Grant**	**(4,839,392)**	**(2,313,596)**	**(4,839,392)**	**0**
Net	**Other Expenditure**	**0**	**223,569**	**0**	**0**

7. Outturn Summary - Net					
Net	Schools Block	0	(4,399,955)	32,305	32,305
Net	High Needs Block	0	(3,455,211)	20,829,448	20,829,448
Net	Early Years Block	0	(128,885)	15,495	15,495
Net	Central School Services Block	0	(354,244)	(28,966)	(28,966)
Net	Other Expenditure	0	223,569	0	0
Net	**Overspend / (Underspend)**	**0**	**(8,114,726)**	**20,848,282**	**20,848,282**

DSG Reserves Balar		
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 Final Outturn (Surplus)	(571,585)
2023-24	DSG Brought Forward Deficit	13,256,610
2024-25	DSG Final Outturn (Surplus)	349,208
2024-25	DSG Brought Forward Deficit	13,605,818
2025-26	DSG Final Outturn (Surplus)	6,560,759
2025-26	DSG Brought Forward Deficit	20,166,577
2026-27	DSG Forecast Outturn Deficit / (Surplus)	20,848,282
2026-27	**DSG Carry Forward Deficit / (Surplus)**	**41,014,859**

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Appendix 2 – Net Change National Funding Formula (NFF) Factor Values in 2027/28

Table 1 below shows the changes to core NFF factor values arising from the incorporation of grant funding into the funding formula from 2027/28. The table sets out the reduction associated with the teachers' pension employer contribution funding adjustment and the full-year equivalent Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG 26) amounts that will be rolled into the NFF.

The resulting net change in factor values is shown in the final column. The figures shown in Table 1 are national base rates. School level allocations will continue to reflect Area Cost Adjustment (ACAs), which account for geographical variation in labour market costs.

Table 1: Net change in NFF factor values from SBSG 26 roll-in and teachers' pension funding adjustment

Factor	Teachers' pension contribution funding reduction	SBSG 26	Total
Primary basic per-pupil	-£178	£58	-£120
Key stage 3 baisc per-pupil	-£250	£81	-£169
Key stage 4 basic per-pupil	-£281	£91	-£190
Primary FSM6 per pupil	-£155	£50	-£105
Secondary FSM6 per-pupil	-£225	£75	-£150
Lump sum	-£6,600	£2,200	-£4,400

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Appendix 3 - Brent 2027/28 Local Funding Formula Consultation Response

Proposal Number	Proposal	Response received	In support of proposal	Not in support of the proposal	No Preference	Comments
1	Continue to align Brent's local funding formula with the National Funding Formula (NFF), applying NFF factors and rates wherever possible.	10	9	1	0	Whilst there was strong support for continuing to align Brent's local funding formula with the National Funding Formula (9 out of 10 respondents), a number of respondents emphasised the need for local funding arrangements to continue to reflect the specific characteristics and needs of Brent schools. Key concerns raised included the impact of unfunded teacher pay awards, wider inflationary pressures, increasing SEND and EAL needs, pupil mobility, and the potential mismatch between Outer London funding and Inner London staffing costs. These comments largely relate to the overall sufficiency of school funding rather than the principle of alignment with the NFF itself.
2	Apply a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) rate of 0% for 2027/28, in line with the Department for Education's permitted MFG range of -0.5% to 0.0% subject to the overall funding allocation and affordability	10	8	2	0	Consultation responses generally supported setting the MFG at 0%, recognising that this provides the highest level of protection permitted by the DfE and helps minimise reductions in per-pupil funding. However, respondents noted that while the proposal provides funding stability, it does not address wider financial challenges facing schools. The most common concern related to falling pupil rolls and the impact this has on school budgets. Respondents also highlighted broader funding sufficiency issues, including the need to ensure that funding arrangements appropriately reflect the needs of schools with high levels of EAL and other additional needs. These comments relate largely to wider school funding pressures rather than the principle of applying a 0% MFG.
3	Agree the proposed 2027/28 Growth Fund arrangements and eligibility criteria, in line with Department for Education requirements.	10	8	2	0	Consultation responses acknowledged the purpose of the Growth Fund in supporting schools that are required to expand and provide additional places. Respondents highlighted the importance of ensuring that growth-related costs are funded in a timely manner and that eligibility criteria are transparent, consistently applied and responsive to individual school circumstances. However, some respondents questioned the need for a Growth Fund in the context of falling pupil numbers across the borough and suggested that available funding could instead be used to support schools experiencing financial pressures arising from declining rolls. Respondents also emphasised the importance of ensuring that wider funding arrangements continue to reflect the needs of schools with significant levels of SEND and EAL pupils.

Proposal Number	Proposal	Response received	In support of proposal	Not in support of the proposal	No Preference	Comments
4	Continue to review pupil place planning data and consider the need for a Falling Rolls Fund for 2027/28, in line with the DfE's guidance.	10	7	2	1	Consultation responses supported the proposal to continue reviewing pupil place planning data and considering the need for a Falling Rolls Fund in line with DfE guidance. Respondents emphasised the importance of adopting a proactive approach to identifying schools experiencing temporary reductions in pupil numbers while ensuring that clear and transparent eligibility criteria are applied. Feedback highlighted the challenges faced by schools in maintaining staffing and provision, particularly where levels of SEND and EAL need remain high despite fluctuating pupil numbers. Conversely, one respondent expressed concern that support should not be used to sustain schools experiencing long-term and significant declines in pupil numbers where there is limited evidence of future demand, and that wider considerations of financial sustainability and place planning should be taken into account.
5	No transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block is proposed at this stage; however, this position will be kept under review in light of High Needs pressures and the affordability of the overall funding formula.	10	8	1	1	Consultation responses were generally supportive of the proposal not to transfer funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block at this stage. Respondents recognised the financial pressures facing mainstream schools and the importance of retaining Schools Block funding to support the delivery of education and additional provision for pupils with SEND and EAL needs. There was also a view that any future proposal to transfer funding should be subject to transparent consultation and a clear assessment of the potential impact on mainstream school budgets. Additional comments referred to the timeliness of funding processes and the extent to which the proposal would directly benefit individual schools.
6	Continue de-delegated funding arrangements for maintained schools in 2027/28, subject to affordability and approval by maintained school representatives on the Schools Forum.	10	6	2	2	Consultation responses were broadly supportive of continuing de-delegated funding arrangements for maintained schools where services provide clear benefits and represent value for money. Respondents emphasised the importance of transparency around the operation of de-delegated services, including information on costs, take-up, impact and outcomes. Concerns were also raised regarding the increasing scale of some de-delegated budgets, particularly for redundancy-related services, and the need to demonstrate that services continue to offer the most economically advantageous means of support. Overall, respondents supported the continuation of de-delegation, subject to affordability, effective review and clear evidence of benefit to maintained schools.

	Schools Forum 10 November 2026
	Report from the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Community Development

Update on Brent's SEND Reform Plan

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt:	N/A
No. of Appendices:	One Appendix 1: Brent SEND Capital Projects Phase 1 Progress update
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Roxanna Glennon, Head of Inclusion Tel: 0208 937 2785 Email: Roxanna.Glennon@brent.gov.uk Folake Olufeko, Head of Finance Tel: 0208 937 2491 Email: Folake.Olufeko@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position, including the current and projected deficit, key cost pressures, progress against the management and recovery plan and risks alongside mitigating actions**.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 To note and discuss the contents of the report.

3.0 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

3.1 This report supports the Council's Borough Plan 2023-2027, specifically the priority of The Best Start in Life, which aims to ensure that children and young people have opportunities, support and high-quality education needed to raise aspirations, achievement and attainment. This report provides updates on DSG's High Needs Block (HNB) budget position and related funding matters, ensuring that the Schools Forum remains informed and able to support the effective management and oversight of education funding in Brent.

4.0 Detail

Financial Update

Table 1: 2026/27 DSG Quarter 2 forecast

Funding Blocks	Overall DSG Funding 2026/27	Forecast Expenditure	Overspend/ (Underspend)
	£m	£m	£m
Schools Block	126.9	126.9	0.0
High Needs Block	84.1	104.9	20.8
Early Years Block	45.5	45.5	0.0
Central Block	2.5	2.5	0.0
Total DSG	259.0	279.8	20.8

4.2 The DSG funding allocation for the financial year is £259m and the current in-year deficit projection is £20.8m.

4.3 The cumulative DSG deficit brought forward from 2025/26 was £20.2m. and without funding support from the government, the deficit was forecast to rise to £41m by year end March 2027. However, the Council submitted its SEND Reform Plan in support of its application for the High Needs Sustainability (HNS) grant in June 2026 and has recently received confirmation that the plan has been accepted and, subsequently, that 90% of the deficit to March 2026 will be covered by the HNS grant (£18,2m). £2m has been earmarked in the General Fund reserves to mitigate the remaining 10%.

4.4 The extension of the statutory override to March 2028 provides continued protection by allowing DSG deficits to be held outside the General Fund. The combination of HNS grant funding and the Council's dedicated reserve provision is expected to eliminate the historic DSG deficit position (i.e. deficits accrued up to March 2026). While the DfE had indicated further support will be forthcoming, uncertainty remains regarding deficits that will arise in 2026/27 and 2027/28, as the nature and extent of future Government support, and any conditions attached to it, have yet to be confirmed. Consequently, some financial planning uncertainty remains until further details are published by the Government.

Update on the SEND Reform Plan

4.5 Submitted in June 2026, Brent's SEND Reform plan was co-produced with all relevant stakeholders. The plan details Brent's response to the Government's 'Experts at Hand' (EAH) programme. Every top-tier local authority had to submit plans, and each set of plans is bespoke to the region they cover. Brent has articulated a model of early educational support delivered at 'cluster' level (to match the four clusters utilised by health within the borough) and designed to meet needs earlier and support inclusive practice in mainstream schools without the need for an education health care plan (EHCP) where appropriate. The support will be delivered by a multi-disciplinary team, recruitment for which is underway and progressing positively.

4.6 It has been projected that, if successful, EAH could reduce EHCP percentage increases to 5%/annum by March 2029. The financial impact of this reduction is currently being modelled, but early calculations that assumes an average cost per EHCP per annum of £23,000, suggests that if percentage increases were reduced to 5% (from 10%) the cost avoidance per annum would be at least £5m/annum (not including costs for e.g. SEND travel assistance). EAH could, therefore, not only provide better and earlier support for children and families but also help to bring about a more financially sustainable SEND system.

4.7 The EAH work is funded by a separate grant, the SEND Reform grant, the value of which in 26/27 is £2,564,843 with indicative funding for 27/28 and 28/29 given as £4,488,475 and £5,071,977 respectively. The funding comes with criteria specifying on what type of support/resource the money can be spent. Brent is adhering to all grant conditions.

4.8 The EAH offer will launch officially in January 2027, with the additional staff (41 in total for the 26/27 AY) adding to and expanding Brent's well-regarded SEND Outreach service. The long-term aim is to integrate this educational offer with health, early help and where needed social care support to create a holistic approach to meeting child development needs within the borough. Work to develop co-ordination with placed based approaches such as Harlesden's 'Working in Neighbourhood' model is in train.

Risks and Mitigations

4.9 Whilst there is some cautious optimism regarding the potential positive impact of the EAH offer on children, families and schools, the broader proposed changes to SEND in England – especially the proposal to replace significant numbers of EHCPs/potential EHCPs with non-statutory support plans - has caused significant anxiety within some communities. Currently, this anxiety is being partly expressed through a marked increase in the number of parents (not schools) requesting education health care needs assessments (EHCNAs) for their children. This carries a financial risk – both in terms of additional plans should they be agreed and legal costs should the LA contest the applications. The volatility of referral rates over the past year makes this risk difficult to quantify. Work is ongoing to model the potential impact of a range of scenarios.

4.10 Whilst the EAH offer is funded until the end of the 28/29 FY, the Government has not shared what funding will be available after this point. This creates a risk in terms of trying to plan for long term financial sustainability. It also creates a risk to recruitment as the funding end-date approaches. Due to a lack of certainty of future funding, EAH staff have been recruited on short-term (2 year) contracts, which will make it hard to recruit and retain staff as time progresses, in particular in already hard to recruit roles. To mitigate this risk, the need for clearer longer-term plans has been shared with colleagues within the Department for Education.

4.11 As stated in 3.5, above, whilst the approval of Brent's SEND Reform plan unlocks funding to clear 90% of Brent's cumulative HNB deficit up to the end of the 25/26 FY, it has not been communicated what funding may be available after this point to support deficits accrued in current and future financial years. This is

a cause for concern with currently no clear mitigation other than continued scrutiny of spend in areas of highest cost pressure i.e. spending on independent and post-16 placements.

4.12 To address the educational and financial challenges presented by a lack of sufficiency of in-borough, maintained specialist placements, Brent has a comprehensive set of SEND capital development plans. These plans, known as Phase 1 and Phase 2 (with Phase 3 currently in development) will have added over 594 additional specialist places by January 2030 (for full details see Appendix 1). It was estimated that the Phase 2 plans to secure an additional 212 specialist places could achieve cost avoidance of £5.6m (£4.3m one off cost avoidance on the HNB, £1.3m/annum on travel assistance). A third phase of the SEND Capital programme is likely to propose a significant expansion of 100-120 places in additionally resourced provision alongside the development of an 80-100 place special school that could also act as a centre of excellence for training and staff development to support inclusive practice in Brent's mainstream schools, using SEND capital grant. The development of Phase 3 and the completion of Phase 1 is predicted to support further cost avoidance as in-borough, maintained places are circa. £18k/place/annum less expensive than placement in independent settings and carry less associated travel costs.

4.13 Delivery of the SEND phase 3 capital programme is dependent on spare capacity/space being used in the local mainstream school sector as a result of falling school rolls. Further detail will be provided in the November School Place Planning Strategy Refresh.

Benchmarking

4.14 Brent's EHCP rate has increased, although below national levels over the last three years (Table 2). While positive, this relatively lower increase does not successfully mitigate against the fact that the funding that Brent receives from central Government to meet costs associated with EHCPs has not risen in line with EHCP numbers. For example, in the 24/25 FY, EHCPs increased by 8% but Brent's HNB allocation increased by only 4%. In the 26/27 FY, the HNB allocation did not increase at all, whilst EHCP numbers rose by 10.4% as of January 2026. If this pattern continues, the HNB deficit will grow exponentially, compounded by price rises in the independent special school sector.

Table 2- EHCP Comparison	**January**	**January**	**January**	**January**	**January**	**January**
Financial year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Number of EHCP	2,784	2,938	3,251	3,500	3,791	4,186
Brent Year on Year EHCP % increase	15%	6%	11%	8%	8%	10.4%
National Year on Year EHCP% increase	**10%**	**10%**	**9%**	**11.4%**	**11.5%**	**12.5%**

5.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

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

5.2 School leaders have been consulted in development of Brent's response to the SEND Reforms and the development of the local Experts at Hand offer.

6.0 Financial Considerations

6.1 The financial implications are set out within the body of this report.

7.0 Legal Considerations

7.1 The proposed SEND Capital Programme Phase 1 and Phase 2 developments will be delivered in accordance with the Council's statutory duties and applicable legal, planning and procurement requirements. The design and delivery of the capital works will also seek to align with good environmental standards and sustainability principles, ensuring that the new and expanded educational facilities provide high-quality, inclusive learning environments while supporting the Council's wider environmental objectives. Any necessary approvals, consents and contractual arrangements will be secured in accordance with the relevant legislative and regulatory framework.

8.0 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

8.1 SEND provision is aimed at ensuring all children and young people have access to appropriate education.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

9.1 The SEND Capital Programme Phase 1 and Phase 2 developments will seek to incorporate sustainable design and energy-efficient measures, where practical and affordable, in line with the Council's climate objectives and relevant building standards. The projects are expected to enhance the sustainability of the school estate and support the Council's commitment to addressing climate change.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 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

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Appendix 1 – Brent SEND Capital Projects Phae 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	Complete
Newman CC ARP	25	25	Oct 2025	Complete
St Gregs ARP	28	28	Jan 2030	Part of DfE SRP school rebuild. Planning application to be submitted Oct/Nov 26
Phoenix Arch Expansion	*13*	*0*	*N/A*	*Move to Phase II SEND – see update in Phase II*
Manor School Expansion	36	54	Dec 2023	Complete
TVS Expansion	*20*	*0*	*N/A*	*Move to Phase II SEND – see update in Phase II*
Woodfield Expansion	40	40	Sept 2029	Scheme currently paused
London Road SEND School	150	150	Sept 2025	Complete
Fryent Primary ARP	0	7	Aug 2022	Complete
Totals	427	382		

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.

Brent SEND Capital Project - Phase II Progress update

	Original Places to be provided	Actual / Forecast Places to be provided	Date completed / Forecast Completion	Comments
The Avenue	34	34	January 2026	Complete
Phoenix Arch on Strathcona Site	50	50	April 2028	Kier Construction appointed and working on designs
The Manor School 1 (on St Mary's RC School site)	72	72	April 2026	Phase 1a complete 27 Sept and pupils using space. All works to complete Dec 27
The Manor School 2	16	16	April 2026	Complete
The Village School (on Kingsbury High School site)	40	40	September 2029	Heads of Terms on Lease agreed with Kingsbury High School. Consultant procurement underway.
Totals	**212**	**212**		**(138 Primary, 74 Secondary)**

The plan approved by the Cabinet in January 2026 can be found at Decision - Phase II Capital Investment Programme for School Place Sufficiency for Children and Young People with SEND