



MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Held as an online meeting on Tuesday 11 November 2025 at 6:00pm

Membership

Representing

PRESENT (all in remote attendance):

Governors

Mike Heiser (Chair)
Martin Beard
Michael Odumosu

Headteachers

Jayne Jardine
Raphael Moss
Andy Prindiville
Ranjna Shiyani
Melissa Loosemore
Michelle Ginty
Nick Cooper
Jude Enright

Non School Members

Councillors

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

Trade Union

Lucy Cox

Officers

Shirley Parks, Director Education,
Partnerships and Strategy
Roxanna Glennon, Head of Inclusion
Pallavi Shah, Senior Finance Analyst
Folake Olufeko, Head of Finance
Atera Rahman, Finance Analyst
Abby Shinhmar, Governance Team

1. **Apologies for Absence and Membership**

Apologies for absence were received from Jo Jhally and Nigel Chapman.

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 Wednesday 18 June 2025 as a correct record subject to the spelling correction of Roxanna Glennon's first name (not Roxanne).

5. **Actions arising**

None.

6. **Forward Plan**

The Forum **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the Forward Plan.

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

Folake Olufeko (Head of Finance, Brent Council) introduced a report, which provided an update on the projected financial position for the 2025/26 financial year. It also provided an update on schools' additional in-year grant allocations from the DfE. For reference, Appendix 1 of this report contained a detailed budget breakdown and forecast by funding blocks.

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

- Budget announcements were anticipated by the end of the month.
- The overall DSG allocation had 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 related to £0.5m increase in the High Needs (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 was focusing on increasing and maximising take up of the local offer.
- The DSG forecast was reflecting a deficit of £2.7m, against grant funds of £250.8m mainly due to pressures from the HN Block.
- At the end of the 2025/26 financial year, the cumulative deficit stood at £13.6m.
- Ongoing growth in demand for HN provision, combined with continued pressures on top-up funding allocations, meant the DSG budget was now projected to end 2025/26 with a significantly higher cumulative deficit of £16.3m. This forecast did 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.
- A detailed financial monitor of the DSG Schools Budget monitoring report was presented in Appendix 1. The 'Actual to P6' column represented spend to date as of 30th of September 2025 and the forecasts provided were those prepared during October 2025.
- Of the total £298.1m Schools Block budget allocated by the DfE to Brent, £168m had been recouped and allocated directly to academies. £1.4m had been transferred to the HNB and £2.6m had 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.

- The School's Block was currently forecast to break even.
- The HN budget, excluding the proportion allocated to academies was £82.6m. This allocation included a £1.4m transfer from the Schools Block.
- The HN Block allocation increased by £5.0m in 2025/26. The growth in EHCPs had 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.
- The EY Block allocation reduced by £1.7m following the completion of the January 2025 census. The census had 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 had also been a clawback of £88.7k from the initial supplementary funding allocation for Maintained Nursery schools. To support these settings, the Local Authority was not proposing to recover this clawback from its Maintained Nurseries for this financial year.
- At this stage, the forecast for the EY Block indicated a break-even position. However, this position was likely to change over the next two quarters, as children moved on from early years' settings and new take-up hours were confirmed from September 2025 and in the Spring term from January 2026.
- The DfE had confirmed that the structure of the Schools NFF would 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.
- 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 was provided in Appendix 3.
- Folake Olufeko added that there was an ongoing review of the deficit and how to best manage it with work ongoing to manage the HNB funding despite the pressures continuing to be experienced.

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

- Raphael Moss sought clarification regarding parental choice for out borough placements and if the local authority could take strategic steps to reduce. Shirley Parks clarified that parental choice was not for mainstream schools but for Special school places.
- The School Placement Strategy was being presented at Cabinet in November 2025 for additional school places, expanding existing school places and sites. Additional special school provision had been identified to manage the level of out of borough placements with the Council prioritising special schools rather than ARPs to remain ahead of demand.

- In noting the number of out of borough and independent placements, the Chair queried whether the deficit would continue year on year. Shirley Parks explained that pupils could be moved back into the borough if funding was secured. It was noted that the 19-25 year old cohort required robust education provision but it was essential to know the right time to stop that provision as well. Roxanna Glennon added that demand continued to increase and younger pupils had been assessed with a high needs profile and would require special schools. Therefore, early intervention was key. Some out of borough placements could have been made due to schools in the borough being at full capacity. It was noted that as a London borough, some out of borough schools might be closer for families than the provision available within schools in Brent. It was estimated that demand would continue to exceed supply and the department was awaiting the SEND White Paper release.
- In response to a query regarding the work being undertaken with existing schools to ensure SEND pupils needs continued to be met appropriately, Roxanna Glennon advised of the robust structures in place for specialist provision along with benchmarking undertaken and ongoing work with the inclusive mainstream schools.
- Melissa Loosemore commended the spreadsheet showing when funding will be delivered to schools. Shirley Parks confirmed that schools will continue to be informed when payments are due to be disseminated.

As no further questions or comments were raised, the Chair thanked Folake Olufeko and Shirley Parks for their work on the report and the Forum **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the report.

8. **Any Other Urgent Business**

It was agreed that the additional meeting scheduled for 1 December 2025 was no longer required and would be cancelled.

9. **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:

- Monday 26 January 2026
- Thursday 26 February 2026

The meeting closed at 6:34pm.

M Heiser
Chair