
SCHOOLS' FORUM

Tuesday 16 September 2025 – 10am

**Conference Suite
Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning,
Brierton Lane**

A G E N D A

- | | | |
|-----|--|------------------|
| 1. | Apologies | Chair |
| 2. | Minutes from Schools' Forum meeting on 3 March 2025 and 17 June 2025 and matters arising.
Minutes from Schools Capital Sub-Group and matters arising. | Chair |
| 3. | Statutory Duties 2026/27 (D) | Amanda Whitehead |
| 4. | Schools and Central School Services Block Budgets 2026/27 (D) | Amanda Whitehead |
| 5. | Growth Fund Disbursement 2025/26 (I) | Amanda Whitehead |
| 6. | High Needs Block Projected Outturn 2025/26 (I) | Amanda Whitehead |
| 7. | SEND & Inclusion Sustainability (D) | Fiona Stobbs |
| 8. | Permanently Excluded Pupils (PEXs) (Standing Item) (V) | Emma Rutherford |
| 9. | Kingsley Update (V) | Amanda Whitehead |
| 10. | Capital Sub-Group Membership (V) | Chair |

Date and Time of Next Forum Meeting –
Tuesday 14 October, 10am at the CETL

Schools' Forum Meeting

3 March 2025

Attendees:

Members

David Turner (Primary)
 Jo Wilson (Academy Primary)
 Gillian Hood (Academy Primary)
 Lee Walker (Academy Primary)
 Toni Ray (PVI)
 Caroline Reed (Academy Primary)
 Linda Richardson (Early Years PVI)
 Sue Sharpe (Governor)
 Zoe Westley (Academy Special)
 Collete Hogarth (Diocese RC)
 Leanne Yates (Academy Primary)
 Carole Bradley (Academy Primary – Chair)

Local Authority Officers

Lisa Adams (LA) (Head of Service, Early Help)
 Sandra Shears (SSh) (Childrens' Finance)
 Fiona Stobbs (FS) (Inclusive Learning and SEND)
 Jane Watt (JW) (Children's Finance)

Agenda Item	Action
1 Apologies - Mark Tilling (Secondary) Chris Connor (Primary) – received after the meeting closed Rebecca Stephenson (HBC – Assistant Director (Early Intervention, Performance and Commissioning) Emma Rutherford (Horizon) Amanda Whitehead (HBC – Assistant Director (Education))	
2 Early Years – Hourly Rates to Providers 2025/26 JWa reminded Forum of the feedback raised at the last meeting on 19 February and summarised this under 3 areas: 1. Concern over the proposed removal of the historic teaching pay and pension supplement; 2. Moving away from a single rate for 2 year old provision to include a deprivation supplement for 2 year old disadvantaged entitlement; 3. Consideration whether a deprivation supplement should be added for the 2 year old and under 2 year old working parent entitlements. A handout (see appendix A) was provided outlining the original consultation and new consultation responses and results. The second round of consultation yielded only 4 additional responses – 35%	

52% of respondents to the second consultation agreed that the historic teaching pay and pension supplement should be removed. 57% of respondents to the second consultation agreed that separate 2 year old hourly rates should be implemented, with a deprivation supplement for the 2 year old disadvantaged entitlement. LA read an individual provider comments received during the second round of consultation – the provider asked to remain anonymous. Forum asked that any future comments such as this were routed via Forum representatives. Forum were asked to vote on each hourly rate proposal presented at appendix B. Although Forum acknowledged the consultation result of 52% in favour of removing the 3 to 4 year old supplement, Members explained that they continued to feel the low response rate was unsettling. They also referred back to the original intention of the previously separate grant for the 2019 teaching pay award and pension increase and felt strongly that this should be preserved. CR reminded Forum of the comments made by JH at the meeting on 19 February 2025 concerning the need for a deprivation supplement for 2 year old disadvantaged entitlement to send a “message” of commitment to this group of children and their additional needs. DT commented on the high level of deprivation across the town in all nursery settings. He mentioned that liaison with private nurseries had improved in recent years. TR stressed the widening gap that would come from the increase in working parent entitlement to 30 hours from September 2025. She suggested that all providers should carefully consider their admissions policy several Forum Members asked whether there were ways the local authority could assist. The negative impact on 2 year old disadvantaged places linked to earlier code releases for working parent entitlement was discussed. LA reminded Forum that settings should be proactive in applying for Disability Access Funding for their eligible children as this was a significant annual amount that not all providers were accessing in full. Decision • That proposal B be recommended to Committee for the 3 to 4 year old hourly rate from April 2025 (10 for, 2 against, 0 abstentions). • That proposal A be recommended to Committee for the 2 year old disadvantaged hourly rate from April 2025 (12 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions)
--

	• That the proposal for 2 year old working parent hourly rate from April 2025 be approved (12 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions) • That the proposal for under 2 year old working parent hourly rate from April 2025 be approved (12 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions)	
3	Meeting concluded 11am Date and time of next Forum meeting – Tuesday 17 June at 10am at the CETL Rooms 1 and 2.	

Appendix A

Early Years - Consultation Responses

February 2025

Provider Type	Number of Settings	Original Consultation Responses	Additional Consultation Responses
Schools	30	7	13
PVI's	14	3	4
Childminders	39	15	12
TOTAL	83	25	29

**Overall
Response Rate %** **30** **35**

Early Years Consultation 2025/26 - Responses	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total	% Agreed
1: A pass-through rate of 96% is proposed. This proposal is expected to provide the budget required to effectively administer and manage the extended offer. Do you agree that 96% should be passed through to providers across all hourly rates in 2025/26?	23	0	2	25	92%
2: Do you agree that the separate supplement for historic teaching staff pay and pensions support should cease and be transferred to the base rate?	20	0	5	25	80%
3: Do you agree that funding for deprivation should be part of the base rate for 2-year-old and under 2-year-old provision instead of setting a separate deprivation supplement? Please note that deprivation remains a mandatory supplement for 3- and 4-year-old provision.	18	2	5	25	72%
4: Take up for the newer entitlements continue to bring a greater degree of uncertainty to funding levels and payments to providers for the local authority. This is why the Council is proposing to continue to set aside a contingency amount within each hourly rate split, with a larger contingency rate on the newer entitlements. This position would be reviewed before April 2026 when the take up is expected to have stabilised. Do you agree that a contingency should be set aside to help manage the uncertainty?	16	6	3	25	64%
5: A greater level of Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is emerging within the early year's sector. This highlights the importance of using some of the hourly rate funding for a SEN inclusion fund across all provisions. Do you agree with this approach?	18	5	2	25	72%

6: As in 2024/25, the Council is proposing to operate a single rate across both additional support 2-year-old provision and working parent 2-year-old provision. Do you agree that a single rate should be set?	20	3	2	25	80%
---	----	---	---	----	-----

Supplementary - Early Years Consultation 2025/26 - Responses	Yes	No	Total	% Agreed
Do you agree that the separate supplement for historic teaching staff pay and pensions support should cease and be transferred to the base rate? Option A outlines the hourly rate to Providers should the supplement cease. Option B outlines the hourly rate to Providers should the supplement be retained. The supplement only affects 3- to 4-year-old provision. Option A – removing the supplement Providers with a qualified teacher £5.60 per hour All other Providers £5.60 per hour Option B – retaining the supplement Providers with a qualified teacher £5.65 All other Providers £5.36	15	14	29	52%
Should the Authority move away from a single rate for 2-year-old provision and pay a deprivation supplement for 2-year-old <u>disadvantaged</u> provision? The local authority is proposing to introduce a deprivation supplement of 7p per hour by reducing the current contingency of 10p per hour to 3p per hour. Option A - keeping the single rate across all 2-year-old provision All Providers would receive £7.82 per hour for 2-year-old disadvantaged provision (and the same amount for 2-year-old working parent provision) Option B – moving to a separate hourly rate for 2-year-old disadvantaged provision that includes a deprivation supplement	16	12	28	57%

All Providers would receive £7.89 per hour for 2-year-old disadvantaged provision (and £7.82 for 2-year-old working parent provision)

For Hartlepool settings with the highest number of 2-year-old disadvantaged children, the annual increase per setting would range from £1,287 to £1,780.

Appendix B

Early Years – Provider Hourly Rate Proposals

3-4YO Provision

Proposal A - Remove historic teaching pay award supplement

3- to 4-Year-Old Provision	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£5.90	100%	£5,978,641
Retained by local authority	£0.24	4%	£243,199
Proposed split for the 96% pass through to Providers			
Base rate	£5.60	98.9%	£5,674,642
Deprivation Supplement	£0.01	0.2%	£10,133
Teacher Pay / Pension Supplement	£0.00	-	-
Contingency	£0.02	0.4%	£20,267
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.5%	£30,400

Proposal B – Retain historic teaching pay award supplement

3- to 4-Year-Old Provision	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£5.90	100%	£5,978,641
Retained by local authority	£0.24	4%	£243,199
Proposed split for the 96% pass through to Providers			
Base rate	£5.36	94.6%	£5,431,443
Deprivation Supplement	£0.01	0.2%	£10,133
Teacher Pay / Pension Supplement	£0.24	4.2%	£243,199
Contingency	£0.02	0.4%	£20,267
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.6%	£30,400

2YO Provision – Working Parent

2-Year-Old Provision (working parent)	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£8.28	100%	£3,658,776
Retained by local authority	£0.33	4%	£145,821
Proposed split for the 96% pass through to Providers			
Base rate	£7.82	98.4%	£3,455,510
Contingency	£0.10	1.2%	£44,188
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.4%	£13,256

2YO Provision – Disadvantaged

Proposal A – Introduce deprivation supplement of 7p payable to all providers

2-Year-Old Provision (disadvantaged)	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£8.28	100%	£1,669,653
Retained by local authority	£0.33	4%	£66,544
Base rate	£7.82	98.4	£1,576,894
Deprivation	£0.07	0.8%	£14,115
Contingency	£0.03	0.4%	£6,050
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.4%	£6,050

Proposal B – Retain single rate across all 2YO Provision

2-Year-Old Provision (disadvantaged)	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£8.28	100%	£3,658,776
Retained by local authority	£0.33	4%	£145,821
Proposed split for the 96% pass through to Providers			
Base rate	£7.82	98.4%	£3,455,510
Contingency	£0.10	1.2%	£44,188
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.4%	£13,256

U2YO Provision

Under 2-Year-Old Provision	Hourly Rate	Percentage	Funding Split (using estimated PTE)
Total funded hourly rate	£11.27	100%	£2,949,085
Retained by local authority	£0.44	4%	£117,754
Proposed split for the 96% pass through to Providers			
Base rate	£10.69	98.8%	£2,797,313
Contingency	£0.10	0.9%	£26,168
SEN Inclusion	£0.03	0.3%	£7,850

OUTSTANDING ACTIONS LOG

Meeting	Description	Owner
15/10/24	Meeting to discuss principles arising from year 1 and 2 of the Special School Cost Model Arrangement Initial meeting has taken place and a Memo of Understanding has been drafted and circulated. Follow up meeting to be scheduled.	AW / JWa / SSh

Financial Year 2024/25: Children's Services Committee – Log of Schools' Forum Recommendations and Committee Decisions

Last Updated: 6 December 2024

Committee Date	Report	Recommendation and Decision Details
19/11/24	Dedicated Schools Grant (Former Education Services Grant rate per pupil) – Disapplication Request	The Committee: a) Agreed the 2025/26 funding rate at £60 per pupil/place. b) Agreed to submit the disapplication request to the Secretary of State to set the Education Services General Duties rate at £60 per pupil/place for 2025/26. c) Noted this will be the ninth consecutive year the local authority has applied for disapplication and that the previous eight applications have been successful.
04/02/2025	DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT – SCHOOL BUDGET SHARES 2025/26 AND CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK 2025/26	The Committee: a) Noted the contents of this report; b) Noted the agreement by Schools' Forum to centrally retain funding of £0.595m, updated to £0.608m to reflect the increased copyright licence cost; c) Noted the agreement by Schools' Forum to transfer 0.5% of schools block funding (£0.436m) to the High Needs Block; d) Agreed the MFG to be used for 2025/26 and noted the recommendation from Schools' Forum of applying an MFG of 0.0%, alongside an appropriate cap which has been calculated at 0.38%; e) Approved the School Budget Share for 2025/26;

		f) Noted the agreement by Schools' Forum to transfer the residual funding from the Central School Services Block to the High Needs Block (£0.080m).
--	--	---

Schools' Forum Meeting

17 June 2025

Attendees:

Members

Carole Bradley (CB) (Academy Primary) (Chair)
 Chris Connor (CC) (Primary)
 Sara Crawshaw (SC) (Academy Secondary)
 Joanne Wilson (JW) (Academy Primary)
 Donna Hubbard-Young (DHY) (Academy Secondary)
 Phil Pritchard (PP) (Academy Primary)
 Caroline Reed (CR) (Academy Primary)
 Andy Rogers (AR) (Academy Secondary)
 Emma Rutherford (ER) Horizon School)
 Tim Blades (TB) (Governor)
 Mark Tilling (MT) (Maintained Secondary)
 David Turner (DT) (Primary)
 Lee Walker (LW) (Academy Primary)
 Lisa Grieg (LG) Academy Special)
 Vicki Wilson (VW) (Diocese C of E)
 Leanne Yates (LY) (Academy Primary)

Local Authority Officers

Claire McPartlin (CM)
 (Administrator)
 Sandra Shears (SSh)
 (Children's Finance)
 Fiona Stobbs (FS) (Inclusive
 Learning and SEND)
 Jo Stubbs (JS) (Administrator)
 Jane Watt (JWa) (Children's
 Finance)
 Amanda Whitehead
 (Assistant Director Education)

Agenda Item		Action
1	Apologies - David Leane (DL) (Diocese RC) Toni Ray (TR) (PVI) Linda Richardson (LR) (Early Years PVI) Sue Sharpe (SS) (Academy Primary) Zoe Westley (ZW) (Academy Special) – Lisa Grieg substituting Members were updated regards the changes to the membership.	
2	Minutes of the Last Meeting – 19 February 2025 – Matters Arising Minutes approved. It was noted that the minutes of the subsequent meeting on 3 rd March were not yet completed and would be brought to a future meeting. There were no matters arising from the minutes of 19 February 2025.	

3	DSG Final Outturn 2024/25 – for information The report provided an update on the outturn position for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budgets for the financial year 2024/25. Members were referred to the table included in the report which summarised the DSG actual spend against budget with an overall overspend across DSG budgets of £3.343m. Following a meeting with representatives from the Department for Education a 10 year DSG management plan had been produced and this deficit could be held as an unusable reserve until March 2026. It was unclear whether this would be extended. Post meeting note: the legislation allowing the statutory override has been extended to 31 March 2028. Details of the overall financial position across the 4 blocks in relation to early years, high needs, central school services block and schools block including growth fund were provided as set out in the report. Regards the deficit position members reiterated that the DfE needed to be informed that the funding lag for the free school contributed £0.500m to the final overspend. AW advised that DfE representatives had been informed of this at a meeting in October 2024 and acknowledged the situation but no more than that. SSh agreed that some neighbouring authorities were in deficit to higher amounts with no reserves to cover them, however Hartlepool's deficit is proportionately similar. CB referred to previous concerns about whether pupils with hearing and visual impairments were getting the best value in service. FS confirmed she had requested a copy of the service level agreement. CR reminded Forum that this had been raised previously and the response showed that the in-house cost of employing qualified teaching professionals would be more costly in comparison to an SLA with Middlesbrough Council. Decision That the report be noted	
4	Special School Cost Models Update – for information Schools Forum had previously agreed to implement a cost model arrangement for special schools on a 3 year trial basis. Year 3 cost models would need to be in place by September 2025. A Memorandum of Understanding was now in place and reporting templates had been established for each stage of the process to ensure consistency across the 2 special schools. An annual timeline had previously been agreed but this had been amended due to a number of delays. Cost model proposals should have been brought to this meeting but have been deferred to the next meeting in September. Payments would continue to be made to special schools based on AY 2024-25 until the new academic year proposals were approved.	

	LG thanked officers for their efforts. The workload on her school, particularly the finance officers, had been exceptional and she was concerned about their wellbeing. SSh agreed it was a massive piece of work the results of which needed to be justifiable to Forum and Children's Services Committee. Decision That the report be noted particularly the timing of the year 3 cost model proposals to Forum at the September 2025 meeting.	
5	The Horizon School and Alternative Provision – Financial Update – for information Members were given details of the projected outturn for 2024/25 for the Horizon School and Alternative Provision (AP services). In 2024/25 funding had been set at £1.114m based on 40 places (28 Horizon and 12 Haven). This amount would increase to £1.675m for 2025/26 based on the same number of places. However there had been a £0.236m overspend in 2024/25 largely owing to school fees relating to alternative provision. This was an improvement from the overspend projected in January 2025. ER confirmed that PEX number continue to rise with 44 children being permanently excluded this year. There had been 109 pupils on roll in 2024/25, with 15 leaving at the end of Y11. This was leading to the need to rent additional building space commercially. Schools had been approached but they were struggling for space themselves. CR referred to high number of challenging KS2 pupils who would eventually move to secondary school. ER confirmed that exclusions were rarely for one-off incidents but mainly persistent disruptive behaviour. Decision That the report be noted.	
6	Scheme for Financing Schools 2025/26 – for information Each year ESFA publish changes required to the Scheme for Financing Schools which Local Authorities are required to incorporate into their Scheme and associated documentation in consultation with their maintained schools. JWa detailed one change to the existing scheme which does not apply to maintained schools in Hartlepool Annex 1 was also updated to list those schools covered by the scheme following the latest academy conversions. Decision That the DfE change outlined in the report be agreed, confirmed in the Scheme documentation and published.	

7	Inclusion Service – for decision In January members were informed that officers were waiting for an update on the future of the Change Programme and the impact this would have on the current Inclusion Service. This update had subsequently been received and officers were working with the DfE and local partners to determine the asks and impacts on the local authority. Currently funding from the Change Programme has been used to provide a free Inclusion Service to all schools until March 2026, providing bespoke interventions to children and young people. The Inclusion Team, currently has 5 Senior Specialist Teachers, 1 Education Officer and additional roles currently in the process of being recruited. In the year the Education Officer has been in place, the number of children transferring between Hartlepool schools had reduced from 246 to 223 while the number returning into mainstream schooling from home education had increased which officers felt demonstrated the impact of the service. Therefore members were asked to support a proposal to make 6 posts permanent following the end of the Change Programme in March 2026, namely three Senior Specialist Teachers and three Education Officers. This would help to support the developmental areas of the Local Area Inclusion Plan. Previously 2 Education Officers for in-year admissions had been appointed for 18 months. One had moved on after three months so officers were requesting that the remaining Education Officer's contract be extended by 15 month at no additional cost. Members highlighted the high cost of these proposals particularly given the High Needs Block deficit. Discussion took place as to whether schools/academies have their own inclusion set ups. The positive impact of the Change Programme was acknowledged and members noted the reserves in the SEMH pot which had been retained since 2017 and could be used to support this, to allow for further impact to be established before proposing High Needs Block request. The real impact of the Change Programme and Inclusion Service would not be known for at least two years. Members requested a review of the proposal for decision in the next forum. Decision That members' comments on the proposal set out at 5.1 be noted for further consideration That the remaining Education Officer In Year Admissions role contract be extended by 15 months	
8	Permanently Excluded Pupils (PEXs) – standing items Previously considered under item 5.	
9	Date and Time of Next Forum Meeting – 16 September 2025, 10am at the CETL	

	Meeting concluded at 11:25am	
--	------------------------------	--

OUTSTANDING ACTIONS LOG

Meeting	Description	Owner
15/10/24	Meeting to discuss principles arising from year 1 and 2 of the Special School Cost Model Arrangement Initial meeting has taken place and a Memo of Understanding has been drafted and circulated. Follow up meeting to be scheduled.	AW / JWa / SSh

Financial Year 2024/25: Children's Services Committee – Log of Schools' Forum Recommendations and Committee Decisions

Last Updated: 6 December 2024

Committee Date	Report	Recommendation and Decision Details
19/11/24	Dedicated Schools Grant (Former Education Services Grant rate per pupil) – Disapplication Request	The Committee: a) Agreed the 2025/26 funding rate at £60 per pupil/place. b) Agreed to submit the disapplication request to the Secretary of State to set the Education Services General Duties rate at £60 per pupil/place for 2025/26. c) Noted this will be the ninth consecutive year the local authority has applied for disapplication and that the previous eight applications have been successful.
04/02/2025	DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT – SCHOOL BUDGET SHARES 2025/26 AND CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK 2025/26	The Committee: a) Noted the contents of this report; b) Noted the agreement by Schools' Forum to centrally retain funding of £0.595m, updated to £0.608m to reflect the increased copyright licence cost; c) Noted the agreement by Schools' Forum to transfer 0.5% of schools block funding (£0.436m) to the High Needs Block; d) Agreed the MFG to be used for 2025/26 and noted the recommendation from Schools' Forum of applying an MFG of 0.0%, alongside an appropriate cap which has been calculated at 0.38%; e) Approved the School Budget Share for 2025/26;

		f) Noted the agreement by Schools' Forum to transfer the residual funding from the Central School Services Block to the High Needs Block (£0.080m).
--	--	---



Schools Capital Sub-Group Meeting

Thursday 30th January 2025

Held remotely via Microsoft Teams



PRESENT		
Jo Heaton	CEO - Northern Lights Learning Trust	C of E Diocese Rep
Chris Connor	Headteacher - Fens Primary	Primary school Rep
Louise Robson	Head of Corporate Services - Catcote Academy	Special School Rep
Carole Bradley	Executive Headteacher - Northern Lights Learning Trust	Primary Academy Rep
Julie Reed	Pupil Place Planning, Admissions & Capital Manager (	HBC
David Mitchell	Capital Projects Officer	HBC
APOLOGIES		
Kelly Armstrong	Strategic Children Commissioner	HBC
Mark Tilling	Headteacher - High Tunstall College of Science (Chair)	Secondary School Rep
Claire Appleton	Group Accountant (Corporate and Schools)	HBC
David Turner	Headteacher - Rift House Primary (Chair)	Primary school Rep
Kieran Bostock	Assistant Director (Place Management)	HBC
Amanda Whitehead	Assistant Director (Education)	HBC
VACANT		
Roman Catholic Diocese Rep		
Secondary Academy Rep		

Item		Action
1.	Review of minutes from 24th October 2024.	
	No matters arising. Minutes of previous meeting agreed.	
2.	2024/25 Schools' Capital Works Programme - Progress Update (JR)	
	JR explained that most projects from 2024/25 were complete. However, there are five projects that are still on hold for Golden Flatts, pending the DfE's decision to rebuild or refurbish the school as part of the School Rebuilding Programme.	
3.	25/26 Schools' Capital Works Programme (JR)	
	JR confirmed that notification from the DfE regarding the SCA allocation for 2025/26 has yet to be received. Given that there was one school that converted to academy status in 2024/25 it is expected to receive less funding in 2025/26 as a result.	

Item		Action
	JH queried what the cut-off point was for academy conversion for it not to affect the capital funding in the following year. JR confirmed that any conversion had to be completed by 31st March for it to affect the funding for the following year. Discussion was held around Grange primary converting and how that impacted on the SCA. <i>For clarification - information obtained after the meeting</i> Eligibility for SCA for the 2025 to 2026 financial year - Schools with an academy order at the start of September 2024, that we expected to convert into a CIF eligible trust by 1 April 2025, have also been invited to apply for funding. It is expected that Lynnfield and Golden Flatts will convert to academy status on 1st April 2025, therefore this will not affect the LA's 2025/26 allocation. <i>Update - information obtained after the meeting</i> The academy conversion date for Lynnfield and Golden Flatts has been moved to 1st May 2025.	
4.	Finance Update (CA)	
	Update as detailed on tabled spreadsheet.	
5.	Capital Audit (JR)	
	School capital funding is currently being internally audited. The previous audit was in 2017. The audit is focussing on School Condition Allocation and High Needs Capital funding (managed by KA) which is for SEND places. The audit will look at procurement, contract management and condition data. JR has met with the auditors and provided all requested information.	
6.	School Based Nursery Capital (JR)	
	Last term DfE launched a bidding round for Nursery Based Capital Funding. JR, DM Early Years and FNE teams supported interested schools to bid for a maximum of £150,000 funding (per bid). Five schools submitted bids for this funding, these are: • Clavering • Rossmere • Throston • St Peters • Eldon Grove The successful bids will be confirmed in the Spring.	

Item		Action
7.	School Rebuilding Programme	
	St Helens (CB) There has been little progress since the last Subgroup meeting. However, during the Pre-construction Service Agreement process, a full schedule (10 in total) of client engagement meetings have now been arranged. Golden Flatts (DM) The pre-feasibility information has been completed and returned to the DfE. The feasibility is due to start in February. It is hoped that informal confirmation, as to whether they will be rebuilding or refurbishing the school, will be received by the DfE by the end of April. This in turn will allow us to make a decision regarding the Golden Flatts Capital projects which are currently approved but on hold. Wynyard (Hartlepool) Free school (JR) The group were reminded that the CE Diocese submitted a bid to DfE in (Wave13) for a new 2fe primary school Wynyard (Hartlepool) a number of years ago. However, the DfE didn't start the process. The LA had communication with DfE last term. They were confirming expected completions and proposed housing developments at Wynyard and build out rates etc, however we still have not had any formal notification whether it will be progressing any time soon or at all.	
8.	High Needs Capital Allocation (KA)	
	Update received from KA: The government have finalised their spending review and LAs have been notified there will be a further SEND allocation likely to be in late Spring. Greatham ARP is now staffed and open. Louise Allen and KA are identifying children who will access a place via the ARP admissions process. Due to the lack of secondary special school places KA's team are in the process of undertaking a Needs Analysis. The results of which will form the basis of a SEND capital strategy and will prioritise capital spend in line with allocation in the spring. A planning application has been submitted, to agree an extension to the two temporary demountables currently sited on the school field at Kingsley and is due to be considered at Planning Committee on 5th February 2025.	
9.	SEMH Funding Update (MT)	
	Decisions on the spend of this funding is still to be determined. JH raised a query as to whether the funding accrues interest.	JR

Item		Action
	<i>For clarification - information obtained after the meeting</i> This query was raised with the appropriate finance officer, and it was confirmed that the funding does not accrue interest.	
10.	Any Other Business	
	None.	
11.	Date and Time of Meetings for 2024/25 Academic Year	
	Thursday 12th June 2025 at 10:00-12:00. These meetings are to continue as Microsoft Team meetings.	

Report to Schools' Forum 16 September 2025
From Amanda Whitehead Assistant Director: Education

Agenda Item 3: Statutory Services provided by the Local Authority

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The local authority provides statutory duties for both maintained schools and academies. This report explains the funding streams for these responsibilities.

2. Background

- 2.1 Forum members will recall as part of the introduction of the National Funding Formula, the Department for Education (DfE) introduced a Central Schools Services Block (CSSB).
- 2.2 The CSSB funds local authorities for the statutory duties they hold for both maintained schools and academies which was previously allocated through the *retained duties* element of the Education Services Grant (ESG).
- 2.3 In addition, the local authority carries out statutory duties on behalf of maintained schools only. These duties were previously funded from ESG *general rate*. In 2017/18, regulations were amended which allowed local authorities to retain some of their Schools Block funding to cover these statutory duties.

3. Central Services for Schools: Retained and General Duties

- 3.1 Details on the type of *retained duties* provided to both maintained schools and academies are listed in **Appendix 1** (Column 1) and *general duties* provided to maintained schools only in **Appendix 1** (Column 2).
- 3.2 Schools Forum is required to agree the funding for retained duties (all School Forum Members) and the general duties (maintained school members only).
- 3.3 For retained duties, an indicative budget requirement of £0.214m has been included in the CSSB to cover these activities. Schools' Forum will be asked to approve this funding from the CSSB in a separate report at this meeting.
- 3.4 For general rate duties, the local authority is proposing a rate of £60 per pupil from all maintained schools to fund the cost of providing these services. The £60 per pupil rate is unchanged since 2017/18.
- 3.5 The local authority is asking schools to fund central services at a consistent rate of £60 per pupil. The nil increase since 2017/18 demonstrates the commitment of the local authority to minimise the financial burden on schools, whilst retaining appropriate funding to discharge statutory duties.

- 3.6 Had the rate kept pace with pay inflation, the rate would have been set at £88 per pupil for 2026/27.

4. **Funding of General Duties – Historic Context**

- 4.1 This £60 rate for 2025/26 was not agreed by Schools' Forum and the local authority made a disapplication request to the Secretary of State on the basis that the local authority could not carry out its full statutory duties and responsibilities without this funding.

- 4.2 The Secretary of State responded to the disapplication request as follows:

"Thank you for your disapplication request to deduct expenditure of £60.00 per pupil from maintained school budgets for the 2025 to 2026 financial year to cover the local authority's statutory responsibilities, originally funded by the education services grant (ESG).

After careful consideration of your request, and supporting evidence, the minister has approved this request for the 2025 to 2026 financial year."

- 4.3 Forum members will recall that the local authority has already absorbed a 31.9% cut in ESG funding which supports the services detailed at appendix A. The services funded from ESG cut across all departments of the Council and by their nature are not provided by a single person but by a cross-cutting team of staff, with no person contributing 100% of their time to services. These arrangements are designed to provide resilience and continuity of services to our schools. Should this funding not be agreed for 2026/27 then the local authority would not be able to maintain services at the level required by statute.
- 4.4 If the local authority and Schools' Forum are unable to reach a consensus on the amount to be retained, the matter would then need to be referred to the Secretary of State once again. This would be the tenth consecutive request for disapplication.
- 4.5 In recent years, this particular report to Forum was followed by a consultation period where the local authority offered drop-in sessions and maintained schools were given the opportunity to raise questions or points of clarification. A decision was then requested at the following Forum meeting (usually each October). As a smaller number of maintained schools are affected and because there have not been any requests for clarification for several years, the local authority is seeking a decision in this same meeting.

5. **Recommendations**

- 5.1 It is recommended that Schools' Forum:
- a) Note the contents of the report;
 - b) Approve a general rate of £60 per pupil to fund general duties to maintained schools. **Note: Only those Forum Members representing maintained schools are eligible to vote on this item.**

Appendix 1

Retained & General School Duties

Black text denotes the Responsibility,
 Blue text provides additional information of how the LA meets the responsibility
 and any additional non-statutory services provided under an SLA

School Improvement

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]
	expenditure related to core school improvement activities of local authorities with respect to maintained schools (Sch 2, 54)

Statutory and regulatory duties

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
- Director of children's services and personal staff for director (Sch 2, 15a) - Planning for the education service as a whole (Sch 2, 15b) - Revenue budget preparation, preparation of information on income and expenditure relating to education, and external audit relating to education (Sch 2, 22) - Authorisation and monitoring of expenditure not met from schools' budget shares (Sch 2, 15c) - Formulation and review of local authority schools funding formula (Sch 2, 15d)	- Functions of LA related to best value and provision of advice to governing bodies in procuring goods and services (Sch 2, 57) - Budgeting and accounting functions relating to maintained schools (Sch 2, 74) - Authorisation and monitoring of expenditure in respect of schools which do not have delegated budgets, and related financial administration (Sch 2, 58) - Monitoring of compliance with requirements in relation to the scheme for financing schools and the provision of community	Provision of individual Schools Budget Pack. Budget Setting Visit. Provision of multi year forecasts. Budget monitoring visits and provision of reports for Governors. Provision of benchmarking data. Advice and guidance regarding capital allocations and accounting treatment. SIMS Finance module support. Provision of a bank account and procurement card for purchases.

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
- Internal audit and other tasks related to the authority's chief finance officer's responsibilities under Section 151 of LGA 1972 except duties specifically related to maintained schools (Sch 2, 15e) - Consultation costs relating to non-staffing issues (Sch 2, 19) - Plans involving collaboration with other LA services or public or voluntary bodies (Sch 2, 15f) - Standing Advisory Committees for Religious Education (SACREs) (Sch 2, 17) - Provision of information to or at the request of the Crown other than relating specifically to maintained schools (Sch 2, 21)	facilities by governing bodies (Sch 2, 59) Internal audit and other tasks related to the authority's chief finance officer's responsibilities under Section 151 of LGA 1972 for maintained schools (Sch 2, 60) The Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to provide all schools with budget determination allocations each year. For maintained schools the finance team is responsible for Production, consultation and implementation of the Scheme for Financing Schools. Monitoring the schools compliance within the Scheme. In order to ensure that financial information provided by Schools is of the necessary standard for inclusion in the Councils statutory accounts the Local Authority produces and distributes a detailed financial operating handbook to all maintained schools. This manual provides advice and guidance on the requirements of the Scheme for Financing Schools. For example: leasing, contract and procurement rules, VAT regulations and processes, Financial management systems procedures and maintenance and Small Charity accounting requirements Ensuring schools set a balanced budget, this involves reviewing the submission from the Governing Body, checking the correct funding	Management of sales invoicing. Processing of income sheets. Preparation of information for statutory Consistent Financial Reporting returns. Year End procedures. VAT advice, Lease advice.

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
	determination has been used, and if not referring this back to the school. This also includes COMFACs. Taking action in accordance with the Scheme for Financing Schools should the School not agree to amend the budget in line with the issued budget determination This includes reporting to the Director of Finance, IT and Digital Services and Assistant Director of Education. Check and load Schools budget on to the Councils FMS system, for incorporation in to the Councils accounts and monitoring reports. Facilitate the deficit recovery process where a School is unable to set a balanced budget. Ensuring the appropriate VAT returns are submitted to HMRC – to reclaim / pay the correct amount of VAT. Closure of accounts and incorporation of schools accounts in to the LA accounts statutory accounts. Liaison with external auditors and any costs in relation to the external audit of the statutory accounts. Production and submission and publication of the S251 Outturn (excludes academies) Ensure all maintained schools complete and Governing Bodies approve the SFVS. The Local Authority then collates the SFVS, review and submit to EFA. Completion and submission of grant certifications. Eg Pupil Premium	

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
	Payments to the HMRC. eg for NI & Taxation deduction, CIS payments and apprentice levy Implementation of new government initiatives, for example the apprentice levy. The Audit Team carry out maintained school audits to test the compliance with the required legal and legislative framework. • Functions made under Section 44 of the 2002 Act (Consistent Financial Reporting) (Sch 2, 61) The finance team co-ordinate the annual distribution and collation of the CFR return, ensuring it is checked, reconciled and submitted in accordance with the guidance. • Investigations of employees or potential employees, with or without remuneration to work at or for schools under the direct management of the headteacher or governing body (Sch 2, 62) The HR Team: Investigations of employees, potential employees, paid and non-paid workers, in relation to issues arising from safeguarding checks required by DoE Keeping Children Safe in Education including DBS trace certificates, rejected pre-employment medical assessments, concerns arising from responses from referees, refusal to provide information in relation to gaps in employment history, false records in relation to qualification or professional registration.	• An allocated named senior HR Business Partner • Support for all casework including independent investigations, conciliation and management support in negotiations with staff representatives • Participation in any formal hearings under disciplinary, grievance, capability, sickness absence and redundancy procedures.

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
	Functions related to local government pensions and administration of teachers' pensions in relation to staff working at maintained schools under the direct management of the headteacher or governing body (Sch 2, 73) Day to day administration of the Teachers Pension Fund and Local Government Pension scheme. This includes the monthly deduction, accounting and payment of employee and employers contributions. Compliance with the annual return responsibilities for both the Teachers Pension Fund and Local Government Pension schemes on behalf of maintained schools. This includes the completion, reconciliation and submission of the annual returns. These returns are also required to be independently audited involving significant officer time and external audit costs. Introduction and compliance with Teachers Pension Monthly Data Collection arrangements and obligations. Provision of Local Government Scheme Discretionary Policy / review Approval of decisions made under the above policy Access to Local Authority Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure Adjudicating Officer for Stage 1	Complex issues dealt with at no additional charge

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
	appeals against decisions (not relevant to academies) - Retrospective membership of pension schemes where it would not be appropriate to expect a school to meet the cost (Sch 2, 76) Should this instance occur the Local Authority would be mindful of its obligations and ensure inappropriate costs were not charged to the School. - HR duties, including: advice to schools on the management of staff, pay alterations, conditions of service and composition or organisation of staff (Sch 2, 64); determination of conditions of service for non-teaching staff (Sch 2, 65); appointment or dismissal of employee functions (Sch 2, 66) - Consultation costs relating to staffing (Sch 2, 67) Advice to schools on the management of staff through the provision of key HR policies and procedures (excluding those where the governing body has responsibility) and signposting to the relevant policy for individual employee cases Advice to schools on pay alterations through the maintenance of pay scales for various staff groups	

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
	Advice on conditions of service through the signposting to relevant national / local terms and conditions (sections and paragraphs that apply) Advice on the composition / organisation of staff including the provision of recruitment policy/procedures and managing staffing levels policy/procedures, and signposting to relevant sections and paragraphs Determination of conditions of service for non-teaching staff through negotiation with trade unions and maintenance of the Single Status Agreement Appointment or dismissal of employee functions through the provision of appointment letter templates and drafting/sending dismissal letters • Compliance with duties under Health and Safety at Work Act (Sch 2, 68) Under health and safety legislation, the Managing Director and Executive Director of Children's and joint Commissioning Services are personally responsible for health and safety standards and performance in all schools where the Local Authority is the employer. The Health, Safety & Well Being Team (HSWT) provides the schools with an effective range of professional health and safety services which includes access to competent advice, assistance, guidance, support, training and auditing in terms of health and safety management.	The service also provides a wide range of cost effective

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
	To meet this requirement the Managing Director must appoint competent persons under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. This person will assist in developing, implementing, auditing and reviewing the health and safety management systems in schools so they may manage the health and safety risks created by activities and comply with the legal requirements. Policies and Procedures This includes development, production, and monitoring of Council wide and school specific health and safety policies and procedures. These documents assist the Managing Director, Head teacher and Governing Body to meet their statutory responsibilities. The documents establish standards to be achieved and provide relevant forms and templates which can be used to demonstrate compliance. The HSWT provide a monitoring service of the policy on behalf of the Managing Director to ensure it reflects the standards of health and safety management required by legislation. Advice and Information (including liaison with enforcement agencies) The HSWT provide advice, on health, safety & fire issues as requested. The advisory service includes guidance on: the cost effective implementation of health, safety & fire law and the development of safe systems of work and management systems;	well being services including: • Access to a full range of occupational health services • Physiotherapy services • Counselling services • Workplace health assessment following Occupational health referral • On site training • Pregnant worker assessments • DSE assessment • Additional health and safety inspections

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
	the development of practical health, safety & fire standards based on results of risk assessments and legal requirements; the development of procedures and strategies for the conduct and review of statutory risk assessments under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, the Manual Handling Operations Regulations, the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations, COSHH Regulations and The Fire Safety Order Prioritisation, on health and safety grounds, of repairs to buildings, plant and equipment. Initial fire risk assessment and competent person review as dictated by the initial assessment (3-5 yearly). The HSWT will lead on all interaction with the Health and Safety Executive, Health Protection Agency and Fire Authority. Annual Health & Safety Review The HSWT audits school health and safety performance on an annual basis. The audit involves Opening meeting with the Headteacher or health and safety co-ordinator A desk top review of health and safety records, (Including policy, risk assessments, fire risk assessments, COSHH assessments, training records, relevant minutes of meetings	

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
	where health and safety is discussed, maintenance records) Safety tour/ inspection of the building and grounds. Closing meeting with the Headteacher and/or health and safety co-ordinator to provide initial feedback and clarify points Written report and action plan The objectives of the audit is to monitor the school health and safety policy, arrangements and standards of compliance, on behalf of the Managing Director & Governing Body, to provide re-assurance that legislative compliance is being achieved and as such a safe and healthy environment is provided. Incident Investigation and reporting to Enforcement Agencies Review of incidents reported via the Metastorm Incident Reporting Portal (schools with access to the HBC network) or via a local safety incident report form (for those with no access to HBC network). Investigation of incidents & reporting to the Health and Safety Executive as required by RIDDOR Annual HSW Schools Training Programme Schools are provided with unlimited access to the Schools HSW Annual Training Programme. This includes H&S training for Headteachers and/or Business Managers; risk assessment training; H&S for maintenance personnel; Asbestos Awareness for Site Asbestos Checking Officers;	

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
	Fire Warden Training; Managing Maintenance Contractors Generic school risk assessment templates These templates cover typical school based risks which are tailored by school. Termly H&S Newsletter Access to CLEAPSS Access to the information and guidance material published by the Consortium of Local Education Authorities for the Provision of Science Services, including template science risk assessments. CLEAPSS is an advisory service providing support in science and technology for a consortium of local authorities and their schools including establishments for pupils with special needs. CLEAPSS covers: - model risk assessments for science and technology, - chemicals, living organisms, equipment, - sources of resources, - laboratory design, facilities and fittings, - technicians and their jobs, - D&T facilities and fittings. School Radiation Protection Officer (secondary schools) To comply with the Ionising Radiation Regulations, schools with radiation sources must have access to a radiation protection adviser, a radiation protection	

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
	officer and a radiation protection supervisor. The HSWT provide school's with access to Radiation Protection Adviser (current provider is CLEAPSS), Radiation Protection Officer (Council Officer) Radiation Protection Guidance containing local rules, emergency contact details, risk assessments, various pro-forma for source accountancy etc. The radiation protection officer's role is to undertake a period inspection and leakage test of radiation sources in the school and Liaise with the HPA and the school based radiation protection supervisor to resolve any local issues Schools with radiation sources must appoint a Radiation Protection Supervisor on site to manage the schools radiation sources and liaise with the Radiation Protection Officer (Council Officer). Schools wishing to arrange disposal or movement of radiation sources must contact the Radiation Protection Officer (Council Officer) and seek advice and guidance. • Provision of information to or at the request of the Crown relating to schools (Sch 2, 69) Providing information as required • School companies (Sch 2, 70)	

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
	The Local authority will ensure that if required then we would meet our statutory requirements • Functions under the Equality Act 2010 (Sch 2, 71) The provision of relevant policies and procedures to avoid discrimination in the workplace. This obligation would be met by the provision of advice or recommendations as a result of any discrimination complaint triggered via the employee grievance process or Employment Tribunal claims. The LA provides advice in respect to characteristics contained in the act, such as sex or disability or with regard to issues regarding provision of community facilities for members of the public. Advice is also provided to schools relating to reasonable adjustments needed to comply with the act. The LA will be required to report on the new requirement in respect of the gender pay gap which will include community schools • Establish and maintaining computer systems, including data storage (Sch 2, 72) In relation to the links between maintained schools and the LA we utilise the following: Anycomms provides a means of securely exchanging files between the LA and schools, provision of a security device to maintain access to corporate network post NGfL , a system for automatic transfer of	

Responsibilities held for all schools <u>and</u> academies [RETAINED DUTIES]	Responsibilities held for maintained schools <u>only</u> [GENERAL DUTIES]	SLA Duties
	data between schools/academies and the LA and a system for storing and sharing performance data between schools and the LA The LA chairs and administers the Schools Information Governance Support and the School ICT Strategy Group. • Appointment of governors and payment of governor expenses (Sch 2, 73) The local authority checks to ensure that schools have the appropriate instrument of government is in place.	

Education welfare

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only
- Functions in relation to the exclusion of pupils from schools, excluding any provision of education to excluded pupils (Sch 2, 20) - School attendance (Sch 2, 16) - Responsibilities regarding the employment of children (Sch 2, 18)	Inspection of attendance registers (Sch 2, 79)

Asset management

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only	Duties provided under the SLA
- Management of the LA's capital programme including preparation and review of an asset management plan, and negotiation and management of private finance transactions (Sch 2, 14a) - General landlord duties for all buildings owned by the local authority, including those leased to academies (Sch 2, 14b)	- General landlord duties for all maintained schools (Sch 2, 77a & b (section 542(2)) Education Act 1996; School Premises Regulations 2012) to ensure that school buildings have: - appropriate facilities for pupils and staff (including medical and accommodation) Annual condition surveys are carried out by the Building Design & Construction Team. These surveys record a detailed breakdown of the facilities in each School, identifying the use of each different room. In addition, the survey will identify condition items that require attention on a priority basis together with associated costs. This feeds into the Education Asset Management Plan and assists in the production of an agreed rolling programme of work subject to funding. When Schools wish to carry out work to the School building they complete a Building Improvement Form (BIF). The scheme is vetted	- Provision of a full design and build service to clients. - Annual review of Asbestos Survey findings to comply with the legislation, including advice and guidance on any findings. - Provision of CCTV systems, ranging from small access and intruder alarm systems through to complex single site, multi site and town centre CCTV systems, with off site monitoring, utilising up to date wireless and IP technology. - Advice and guidance on the Equality Act and its impact on the way in which all public services are run and on improving the lives of disabled people.

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only	Duties provided under the SLA
	and feedback is provided to the School. Provision of professional advice on building related matters at the Schools request. This will include advice on suitability of schemes and use of school buildings - the ability to sustain appropriate loads All proposed building schemes will include a structural engineer's input as part of the design process. In addition, advice is provided on an ad-hoc basis for any other structural issues identified by the School. As part of the annual condition survey any unusual loads would be identified and listed on the survey for review by the School/ Education department. - reasonable weather resistance Annual condition surveys carried out by Building Design & Construction Team will identify condition items that require attention on a priority basis together with associated costs. This will assist in the production of an agreed rolling programme of work subject to funding. - safe escape routes This will be picked up by Health & Safety when undertaking the Fire Risk Assessment (FRA). This will identify any necessary alterations to the building structure or management procedures which will be discussed with the School. See section 1.6.4 item 3 - appropriate acoustic levels	

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only	Duties provided under the SLA
	A Suitability Survey carried out between Building Design & Construction Team and the Education Asset Management Team records the appropriateness of the classroom / room use. Room users are asked to contribute to the survey. Ad hoc guidance is given to Schools when there is a change of use in the room. In addition, all building schemes are designed in accordance with Part E of Bldg Regs. However, any issues identified by the client would be investigated and appropriate design solutions identified. • lighting, heating and ventilation which meets the required standards • adequate water supplies and drainage • playing fields of the appropriate standards • General health and safety duty as an employer for employees and others who may be affected (Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974) • Management of the risk from asbestos in community school buildings (Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012) Annual Condition Surveys and the Suitability Surveys assess the items above to ensure that the necessary standards are met. In addition, in relation to Asbestos Management the Local Authority maintains a register of location and type of asbestos which is updated as required.	

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only	Duties provided under the SLA
	Duties and responsibilities in relation to general Health & Safety are covered in Section 1.6.4	

Central support services

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only
No functions	- Clothing grants (Sch 2, 53) - Provision of tuition in music, or on other music-related activities (Sch 2, 54) - Visual, creative and performing arts (Sch 2, 55) - Outdoor education centres (but not centres mainly for the provision of organised games, swimming or athletics) (Sch 2, 56)

Premature retirement and redundancy

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only
No functions	Dismissal or premature retirement when costs cannot be charged to maintained schools (Sch 2, 78)

Monitoring national curriculum assessment

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only
No functions	- Monitoring of National Curriculum assessments (Sch 2, 75) - Statutory assessment and moderation - Early Years moderation and assessment activities – in line with 2017 EYFS Assessment and Reporting Arrangements statutory guidance; Section 3 and Section 7.4 LA EYFS moderation plan 2017; - Attendance at Learn Explore Debates – includes updates on EYFSP, provided by Action for children (appointed by DfE) to disseminate information, share good practice and facilitate discussion and consultation with key LA staff and other key stakeholders - STA assessment training (EYFSP)- Attendance at central training events provided by STA for LA personnel for the implementation and delivery of statutory assessments - Tees Valley EYFS moderation - meet with colleagues from across the Tees Valley to plan procedures, evaluate moderation process and carry out cross LA moderation and standardisation to ensure consistency of judgements - Moderator training/update – training for moderators to ensure all are clear about current developments and understand the moderation process. Includes moderation and standardization - EYFSP moderation meetings - provided for school staff for evidence trialling and cross school moderation and standardization - Meet the moderator meeting – to ensure selected schools are sufficiently prepared for the moderation visit. - EYFSP moderation visits –actual visits to schools to moderate school judgements - EYFSP school moderation and QA of data at schools' request, visits to schools not selected

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only
	by LA but who have requested external LA validation • Quality Assurance of data at data collection, (includes, review of data, telephone calls to schools and visits if needed) • Moderation admin. • Strategic planning • KS1 and KS2 assessment and moderation activities – in line with STA statutory guidance for schools and local authorities regarding KS1 and KS2 Assessment and Reporting Arrangements 2017; 2017 teacher assessment external moderation key stage 1; 2017 teacher assessment external moderation: key stage 2 writing • STA assessment training (KS1 and KS2: Attendance at central training events provided by STA for LA personnel for the implementation and delivery of statutory assessments • KS1 and KS2 STA Lead moderators training attendance at STA training for LA nominated Lead Moderators • KS2 Lead moderator testing – statutory STA standardisation exercise for LA Lead moderators • KS1 Lead moderator test – Facilitation and adjudication of statutory standardisation exercise for KS1 moderator • Delivery of KS2 moderator training –training for KS2 moderators to ensure all are clear about current developments and understand the moderation process. Includes invigilation of online statutory STA standardisation exercise • School based moderators' attendance at KS2 moderator training • Delivery of KS1 moderator training (LA staff) training for KS1 moderators to ensure all are clear about current developments and understand the moderation process. Includes

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only
	invigilation of written statutory STA standardisation exercise • School based moderators' attendance at KS1 moderator training (above) • Assessment of KS1 written statutory STA standardisation exercise • Delivery of KS1 and KS2 SATs training for schools – dissemination of key messages around statutory testing and teacher assessment requirements to teaching staff in Y2 and Y6 • Preparation for all moderator training and sats training – essential preparation time for delivery of all training listed • Prep and delivery of English and mathematics Subject leaders meeting for SATS etc To ensure subject leads are clear about statutory assessment and reporting arrangements for their area of responsibility, and of training programme available to support school staff with the process • KS1 & KS2 moderation activities - (10 schools) • Formulation of Moderation plans • Training for moderation visits • Data checks for moderated schools • Strategic planning (self explanatory – ref KS1 and KS2 LA moderation plans) • Phonics checks - 10% of schools • Test monitoring & Test storage monitoring • KS2 SATS monitoring – 10 % of schools (including storage and package checks)

Therapies

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only
• No functions	• This is now covered in the high needs section of the regulations and does not require schools forum approval

Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 16 September 2025
From Amanda Whitehead – Assistant Director Education

Item 4: Indicative Schools and Central School Services Block Budgets 2026/27

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline the key decisions needed from Schools' Forum concerning the 2026/27 Schools Block and 2026/27 Central School Services Block (CSSB) funding once indicative funding information is issued by the Department for Education (DfE).

2. Background

- 2.1 DfE have delayed publishing indicative National Funding Formula (NFF) allocations for 2026/27 until the Autumn. The delay is owing to the multi-year spending review concluding in June 2025. At the time of writing this report, no expected date for publication has been provided.
- 2.2 DfE have confirmed that the structure of the NFF will remain the same, however the currently separate grants for the Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG) and National Insurance Contributions Grant will be mainstreamed into the core NFF for 2026/27.
- 2.3 Despite the delayed information, the authority wishes to consult with Schools' Forum on a number of key principles for budget planning. These key principles are usually discussed each September with Forum.
- 2.4 Firstly, any transfers to and from the Schools Block can be considered.
- 2.5 Secondly, a local approach to setting both a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) and Capping can be considered.
- 2.6 Finally, the budget requirement for Central School Services can be outlined to Forum for review.

3. Proposed Block Transfers

- 3.1 For 2025/26, Schools Forum agreed to transfer 0.5% of School's Block funding to the High Needs Block to support the significant and increasing financial pressure. For 2025/26, this equated to a transfer of funding for £0.436m.
- 3.2 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Management Plan assumes the continuing transfer of 0.5% from Schools Block for 2026/27.
- 3.3 The budget requirement for CSSB in 2026/27 is presented at section 5 of this report. Should Forum agree the budget proposal for 2026/27, it is likely that there will be a small amount of funding remaining to transfer from CSSB to the Schools Block (£0.080m in 2025/26). Forum are asked for their approval in principle to transferring any surplus CSSB funding to the High Needs Block as agreed for 2025/26.

4. **Setting a Local Policy for MFG and Capping**

- 4.1 The regulations continue to allow a local policy for a minimum funding guarantee (MFG) and cap so that any excessive year-on year changes can be protected against.
- 4.2 For 2025/26, a local MFG could be applied in the range of -0.5% to +0.00%. We do not know if this policy will be unchanged for 2026/27.
- 4.3 For 2025/26, a local policy was applied on the basis of the maximum allowable MFG of +0.00%. In order for the 0.00% MFG to be affordable, a cap of 0.38% was applied. This meant all schools received at least the same amount of funding per pupil as 2024/25 and no more than 0.38% per pupil in 2025/26 ISBs.

5. **Central School Services – Budget Requirement 2026/27**

- 5.1 Upon introduction of the National Funding Formula, DfE established a CSSB to fund local authorities for the statutory duties and other commitments they hold for both maintained schools and academies. The CSSB brings together:
- funding previously allocated through the retained duties element of the Education Services Grant (ESG)
 - funding for ongoing central functions, such as admissions, previously top-sliced from the Schools Block
 - residual funding for historic commitments, previously top-sliced from the Schools Block.
- 5.2 Schools' Forum will recall that a 20% year on year funding reduction is applied to historic commitments within the CSSB. 2026/27 will be the sixth year of the funding cut being applied. Once funding information is published, we can identify whether the cut in 2026/27 takes us below the budget needed for historic commitments.
- 5.3 DfE has agreed to protect any local authority from having a reduction that takes their total historic commitments funding below the total value of their ongoing prudential borrowing and termination of employment costs, in recognition of the lead in times required for such costs to unwind.
- 5.4 Schools' Forum are asked to approve the following budget requirement for **historic commitments**. As per the regulations, values are frozen so unchanged from previous financial years.

Historic Commitment	Budget Requirement 2025/26	Description
Licences	£0.067m	Contribution to the Council-wide EYES system. The introduction of the EYES system has produced savings against the original CSSB funding of £0.077m. Therefore, the budget requirement in 2026/27 is a reduced contribution of £0.067m towards the costs of these licences. The EYES system supports a number of wider Council operations and funding from Council service teams, including Early Years to fund the Childcare module, supports the overall EYES system cost.

Termination Costs (Brierton School)	£0.031m	Covers the ongoing termination costs for ex-Brierton staff. This historic pension commitment will only diminish on the death of the ex-employees. Although the historic budget was set at £0.031m, the ongoing budget requirement is actually £0.044m. The difference is linked to an error in the original pension cost estimate provided upon the school closure. As the regulations do not allow for budgets for historic commitments to be increased, <u>Schools' Forum is asked to approve the original funding amount of £0.031m for 2026/27.</u> The remaining cost has been funded from DSG reserves in previous years.
-------------------------------------	---------	---

- 5.5 Schools' Forum are asked to approve the following budget requirement for **ongoing commitments**.

Ongoing Commitment	Budget Requirement 2025/26	Description
Copyright Licences	£0.098m	The DfE has negotiated copyright licences for schools with most copyright holders. The licences are purchased by the DfE, who charge the local authority by way of a reduction in DSG. The licence cost for 2026/27 is estimated at £0.098m.
Admissions Service	£0.165m	It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure that admission arrangements are compliant with the Admissions Code (2014). Local Authorities are expected to incur costs for requirements in relation to admissions and retain central DSG funding which contributes towards an Admissions Team. The budget requirement includes a 3.2% increase from 2025/26 to reflect the estimated pay award in April 2026.
Servicing of Schools' Forum	£0.048m	The cost of delivering Schools' Forum, including the preparation and attendance of at least four meetings per year. This includes staff costs for preparation of reports. The budget requirement includes a 3.2% increase from 2025/26 to reflect the estimated pay award in April 2026.
Statutory Services - Retained Duties	£0.214m	Details regarding this element of funding are covered in a separate report on Statutory Services presented to Schools' Forum at this same meeting. The budget requirement for 2026/27 is set at £16.18 per pupil (unchanged from 2025/26), with pupil volumes currently based on October 2024 school census data. The charge reflects the cost of services delivered by the local authority to all schools, including academies. A list of services provided is included in the appendix attached to the separate report.

- 5.6 This gives a total budget requirement of £0.098m historic commitments and £0.525m ongoing commitments – a grand total of £0.623m.
- 5.7 As the charge for Statutory Services – Retained Duties is driven by pupil numbers, the amount is subject to change once October 2025 pupil numbers are updated.

6. **Recommendations**

6.1 Forum is recommended to:

- a) Provide approval in principle to the transfer of any residual CSSB funding to the High Needs Block for 2026/27 as outlined in section 3 of the report;
- b) Provide approval in principle to applying the maximum MFG, along with a necessary cap to ensure affordability of ISBs in 2026/27 (as outlined in section 3 of the report). *Please note that budget models will be presented to future Forum meetings to illustrate the impact of this before final approval is sought for 2026/27 ISBs;*
- c) Agree to fund the budget requirement for historic commitments as detailed in paragraph 5.4 of the report (*Please note: a separate vote per service is required and all Forum members are eligible to vote*);
- d) Agree to fund the budget requirement for ongoing responsibilities as detailed in paragraph 5.5 of the report (*Please note: a separate vote per service is required and all Forum members are eligible to vote. However, a vote is not required for copyright licences as these are agreed on a consultation-only basis*).

Voting: All Schools' Forum members are eligible to vote on these recommendations.

Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 16 September 2025 From Amanda Whitehead – Assistant Director Education

Item 5: Growth Fund Disbursement 2025/26

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Schools' Forum on Growth Fund Disbursement relating to 2025/26 which will be paid in 2026/27.

2. Background

- 2.1 Hartlepool has received a Growth Fund allocation through the Schools Block of the National Funding Formula (NFF) since 2019/20. The original policy was based on increases to pupil admission numbers requested by the Local Authority. Two secondary schools received disbursements over a 5-year period ending 2023/24.
- 2.2 Following a review of the Growth Fund Policy, and with no active disbursements in 2024/25, the Local Authority proposed a revised policy aimed at addressing in-year pupil growth. Schools Forum agreed this policy on 24 September 2024.
- 2.3 This policy ensures that any school with pupil growth exceeding 15 pupils (equivalent to half a class size as defined by the Department for Education (DfE)) between the October census point to the subsequent January, May and October census points will be eligible for a Growth Fund Disbursement.
- 2.4 The first Growth Fund disbursement under this policy has been issued. A total of 5 schools were eligible for funding, having met the criteria for pupil growth during the 2024/25 financial year. The total amount disbursed was £104,674.
- 2.5 A copy of the policy is attached in **Appendix 1**

3. Growth Fund 2025/26

- 3.1 For the Spring and Summer Terms 2025/26 financial year, modelling has assessed pupil growth between the January and May 2025 census points against the October 2024 baseline, identifying one school eligible for a Growth Fund Disbursement at the first census point, with no schools qualifying at the second. A final review will be undertaken following October 2025 census before figures are finalised for payments in 2026/27.

3.2 Historic Growth amounts since 2019 are in table below.

Financial Year	Growth Funding £
2025/26	177,340
2024/25	333,560
2023/24	185,935
2022/23	275,715
2021/22	217,208
2020/21	343,365
2019/20	156,915

4. **Recommendations**

4.1 Forum is recommended to note the contents of this report.

APPENDIX 1

Growth Fund Policy: Eligibility and Disbursement Process

ELIGIBILITY

A school (both maintained schools and academies for the avoidance of doubt) would become eligible for growth funding where the following applies:

Eligibility for Growth Funding: If a school experiences an increase in pupil numbers greater than 15 that is linked to basic need (as opposed to the popularity of a particular school), the school will be entitled to Growth Funding for each additional pupil beyond the 15. The threshold of 15 pupils represents a half class size as per DfE recommendation.

DISBURSEMENT

The disbursement of growth funding will follow a structured process to ensure schools receive additional financial support.

1. **Calculation of Funding:** The additional funding is calculated based on the number of pupils above the 15-pupil threshold, using the current year's Average Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU). These calculations will be completed at each census point.
2. **Fund Transfer:** The calculated growth funding is paid in full at the beginning of the following financial year, reflecting the lagged funding approach.
3. **Disbursement:** The allocated funds are then disbursed to the school, through the local authority, to help manage the increased student numbers. This will be completed via journal entries for Local Authority Schools and external payment to Academies.

ANNUAL OVERVIEW

1. **Notification of Allocations:** Growth funding allocations from the government are included in the DSG figures, which are typically published in December each year.
2. **Reporting to Schools Forum:** A report will be presented to the Schools Forum as part of the annual budget process, detailing any disbursements from the Growth Funding that have been calculated. Calculations will always relate to the prior year.
3. **Addressing Shortfalls:** If there is a shortfall in growth funding in a particular year, the disbursement will be top sliced to the level of growth funding available.
4. **Managing Excess Funding:** Any remaining growth funding following disbursement will be used towards the School Block transfer to the High Needs Block. In line with the Council's DSG management plan at least a 0.5% transfer will be requested in future years.

Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 16 September 2025
From Amanda Whitehead, Assistant Director – Education

Item 4: High Needs Block (HNB) Projected Outturn 2025/26

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the projected 2025/26 outturn for high needs services based on spending to the end of quarter one.

2. Background

- 2.1 Financial pressures affecting the provision of services for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are reported to Schools' Forum at regular intervals.
- 2.2 Projected outturns for 2025/26 based on worse-case, mid-case and best-case have been prepared.
- 2.3 The final position for 2024/25 was a year-end overspend of £3.343m. When added to the DSG deficit balance from 2023/24 of £1.589m, the DSG deficit stands at £4.932m.
- 2.4 Children's Services Committee approved proposals from Officers to set a budget requirement exceeding the available HNB funding by £4.257m in 2025/26. The budget shortfall would increase the deficit to £9.189m by 31 March 2026.

3. 2025/26 Block Funding

- 3.1 Before recoupment of academy place funding, the latest Hartlepool HNB allocation for 2025/26 is £21.575m. Schools Forum agreed to transfer £0.436m (0.5 %) of the School's Block and the residual Central School Services Block (CSSB) of £0.080m to the High Needs Block. This provides total funding of **£18.115m** after recoupment of £3.976m for academy place funding. The current allocation of £18.115m includes an increase in funding of £0.216m compared to the original funding estimate for 2025/26.
- 3.2 Forum will recall that an in-year adjustment called the import/export adjustment is proposed by Department for Education (DfE) each summer. Work to finalise the adjustment for this year is still in progress. Discussions are underway with Department for Education (DfE) to finalise the adjustment and Forum will be updated once these are complete.

4. 2025/26 Outturn Projection

- 4.1 Based on spending to quarter one, along with estimated expenditure for the remainder of the financial year, the projected outturn position for high needs ranges from £4.779m overspend best case to £5.793m overspend worse case. This is summarised by each area of spend in the table below.
- 4.2 The paragraphs that follow explain the main variances to budget based on the mid-case projection of £5.033m.

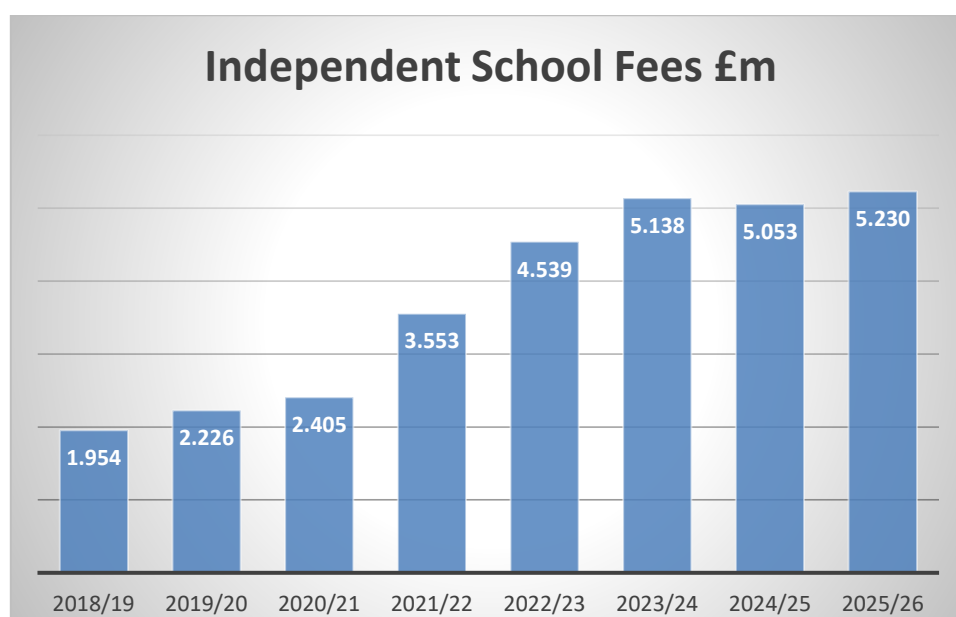
High Needs Expenditure 2025/26	Worse Case		Mid Case		Best Case	
	Projection	Variance Over/(under) Spend	Projection	Variance Over/(under) Spend	Projection	Variance Over/(under) Spend
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
DSG High Needs Block Grant		(0.216)		(0.216)		(0.216)
ESFA recoupment – academy place funding	3.976	-	3.976	-	3.976	-
Place funding (LA)	0.696	-	0.696	-	0.696	-
Independent school fees	5.322	0.041	5.230	(0.051)	5.184	(0.097)
Out of Area top-ups	0.405	(0.037)	0.405	(0.037)	0.405	(0.037)
Top-up funding and support	13.257	1.171	13.137	1.052	12.929	0.846
Horizon, Haven & AP	1.976	0.586	1.428	0.038	1.428	0.038
Post-16 top-ups	1.539	(0.009)	1.539	(0.009)	1.539	(0.009)
Support services	0.713	-	0.713	-	0.713	-
Approved budget shortfall		4.257		4.257		4.257
Total projection	27.884	5.793	27.124	5.033	26.870	4.779

4.3 Local authority place funding (on budget).

This budget head covers payment of place funding to ARPs within maintained schools. Outturn is expected to be in line with budget. New primary school ARP provision has been agreed but this will be paid on the basis of staffing cost as opposed to place funding and top-up in 2025/26 until the new provision is established.

4.4 Independent school fees (£0.051m underspend)

The mid-case projected spend for independent school placements is £5.230m. This represents current active commitments of 71 places at an average cost of £73,020 and assumes a further 3 new placements will be commissioned for autumn 2025 and spring 2026, based on the lower end of placement costs. These new placements are forecast at £23,000 per annum, with a total of £46,000 included for the 2 terms.



The initial estimate for 2025/26 was £5.282m, based on assumptions including 2 additional high-cost placements and inflationary increases on placement fees. The Quarter 1 revised forecast has been adjusted to £5.230m, reflecting a cost saving where actual placement costs have been lower than originally anticipated.

4.5 Out of authority top-ups (£0.037m underspend)

The mid-case projected spend for out of authority placements is £0.405m, compared to £0.395m in 2024/25. The underspend relates to six school leavers 2025/26, with only one new starter to offset the leavers.

4.6 Horizon, Haven & AP (£0.038m overspend)

The Horizon School and Haven 2025/26 budget was initially approved at £1.675m. However, following an improved final outturn position for 2024/25 after the budget was set, the Executive Head Teacher proposed a reduced budget requirement of £1.390m for 2025/26. This revised budget was subsequently approved by the Management Committee. The initial outturn estimate at quarter 1 is indicating a small overspend of £0.038m.

4.7 Top-up funding and support (£1.052m overspend)

This budget heading includes funding for Individual Pupil Support (IPS) and funding for Special Schools, the new SEMH Free School and ARP top-ups.

The mid-case projected spend for Individual Pupil Support (IPS) is £3.987m. This represents current commitments and the assumption to fund a further 10 new funding agreements for 9 months over autumn 2024 and spring 2025 at a range of 5i. We have also assumed growth in exceptional/group funding of £0.150m. This gives a projected overspend of £0.648m. The newly established Seeking Support Panels continue to challenge and scrutinise all new funding requests.

The cost of ARPs is showing a projected spend of £2.586m which is a overspend of £0.565m when compared to the original budget. The primary reason for the overspend relates to the expansion of Horizon ARPs, the original budget assumed one new Horizon ARP of 6 places at £30,000, but following further discussions and identification of need, two 12 place units were commissioned, increasing costs beyond initial estimates.

The projected spend on Catcote and Springwell Special Schools reflects a part year effect of the cost arrangements for Academic Year 2024/25 capped at 3%. Additional places were commissioned for both Springwell and Catcote that were not included in budget assumptions. The additional pupils were funded at cost so were outside of the 3% budget cap. Cost proposals for AY2025-26 are yet to be presented to Forum and Children Services Committee. Once finalised and agreed, outturn projections will be updated.

Places at the SEMH Free School for the 2025 academic year will increase from the initial 30 to 41. The HNB formula for 2025/26 includes funding for pupils on the January 2025 census, along with additional funding from DfE to support the Council during the transition period. These two elements provide new funding of £0.364m. Places at the Free School are now being recouped by DfE from the Hartlepool formula at a cost of £0.364m. Although an improvement on the funding lag of £0.514m in 2024/25, a funding lag impact of £0.243m continues as a financial pressure in 2025/26, once top-up payments are considered.

The top-up funding for the SEMH Free School includes provision for 41 places, one agreed exceptional funding placement, and an additional estimate for pupils requiring support beyond the standard top-up.

The Hearing/Visually impaired joint agreement is showing a projected underspend of £0.011m, based on an early indication from Middlesbrough Borough Council that a 4% uplift in fees will be requested. Formal confirmation is still awaited. This uplift was not known at the time of budget setting and is lower than originally anticipated.

4.8 Post-16 top-up funding (£0.009m underspend)

The mid-case projected spend for Post-16 Top ups is showing an underspend of £0.009m. Costs for this area are not possible to predict until September admissions are confirmed and Commissioning Team negotiate packages with providers. Therefore the assumption has been made using last year's outturn plus 5% at this stage.

4.9 Support Services (on budget)

Nil Variance.

- 4.10 The approved budget shortfall of £4.257m is added to the outturn position as this represents unfunded expenditure included in the budget headings above.

5. DSG Balances Summary

- 5.1 There is a negative reserve balance recorded against the DSG Block of £4.932m. Should the mid-case projection of £5.033m included in this report materialise, there would be a total high needs block deficit reserve of £9.965m. This remains subject to the statutory override, which has now been extended until the end of 2027/28 financial year, allowing councils to exclude DSG deficits from their general fund balances while longer-term reforms are developed.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Forum is recommended to note the contents of this report.

Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 16 September 2025
From Fiona Stobbs (Senior Advisor Inclusive Learning & SEND)

Item 5: SEND & Inclusion Sustainability

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to propose additional funding to create sustainability following the end of the SEND & AP Change Programme. The funding would allow the local authority to continue the work of the Hartlepool Inclusion Team, aiming to strengthen the capacity of mainstream schools to support learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and continue to support and develop inclusive mainstream practice.

2. Background

- 2.1 Forum will recall from June's meeting, a report was provided as an update on the SEND & AP Change Programme and as a scoping exercise of potential future methods of sustainability.
- 2.2 We have been fortunate to be able to test reforms as part of the SEND & AP Change Programme since 2023 and we know from working with the DfE, The SEND reforms and Autumn 2025 White Paper, emphasize inclusive mainstream provision, early intervention and strengthening local support networks.
- 2.3 There is a stress on local authorities to develop their Local Inclusion Support Offer (LISO), where early identification and prevention are key.
- 2.4 The reforms want to shift the focus of local systems towards greater inclusion, using available resources, more effectively across partners and between settings to identify and meet needs in mainstream education. It aims to work towards:
- More joined-up provision that responds to local needs and reflects a more consistent national approach
 - Greater capacity for prevention, early identification and intervention to avoid needs escalating
 - Consistent and comprehensive offer of support for inclusion that is valued by settings and has confidence of families
 - Upskilling staff working in mainstream to be able to identify needs and suitable interventions, including by utilising specialist workforce differently
 - Better use of resources across local areas, with investment in earlier support and targeted intervention

What will a Local Inclusion Support Offer involve?

Identifying and meeting needs

A multi-disciplinary team will deliver 3 primary functions that support mainstream settings to better meet a wider range of need.

- Training
- Advice
- Direct delivery of support to CYP (at both cohort and individual level)



Delivering provision through a locally designed offer

The exact offer will be determined by settings and provided by the LA and ICB, incorporating core components and building on existing evidence-based programs and interventions. Most of the provision aims to enhance settings' capacity to proactively address more needs over time.

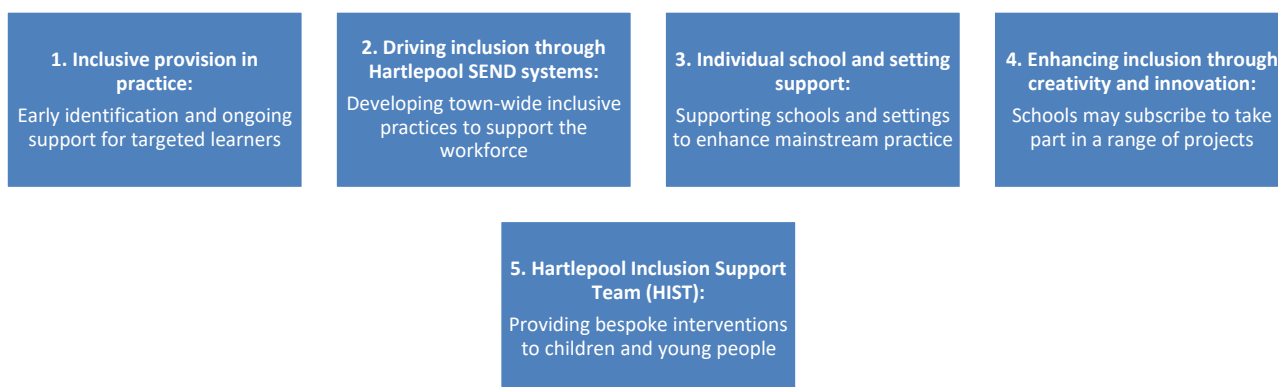


By enabling access to specialists

This offer will provide access to specialist workforces, utilising insights from programmes like PINS and ELSEC, and deploying specialist practitioners. These may include specialist teachers, educational psychologists, allied health professionals (e.g., speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists), and other professionals like youth workers or mental health specialists.

3. **Current Local Inclusion Support Offer**

- 3.1 Due to funding obtained from the SEND & AP Change Programme, we have been fortunate to be able to set up an Inclusion Service. (Please see attachment 'Hartlepool Inclusion Service 2025-2026').
- 3.2 The Inclusion Service is offered free to all schools April 25- March 26.
- 3.3 The team is working in partnership with settings and schools to enhance inclusive mainstream provision. It is built based on 5 key strands of work:



4. **Sustainability of Hartlepool's Local Inclusion Support Offer**

- 4.1 The hope is now to make the support on offer to school's sustainable post the end of the SEND & AP Change Programme. Once the Programme has ended, we wish to have the following posts made into a longer term structure:
- 3 x Senior Specialist Teachers
 - 3 x Education Officers

Post	Role	Remit
Senior Specialist Teacher Inclusion	Social, Emotional & Mental Health Alternative Provision	All 3 posts will provide support to schools through the work outlined in Strand 1-4
Senior Specialist Teacher Inclusion	Communication & Interaction	
Senior Specialist Teacher Inclusion	Lead SENDCo Cognition & Learning Transition	
Education Officer	In-year admissions	All 3 posts will provide direct support to children and their families
Education Officer	Pupil Voice & Advocacy	
Education Officer	SEND Navigator	

- 4.2 Strand 5 of the above model will only be possible if funding is made available to Local Authorities for the implementation of the White Paper. We would expect this to consider ELSEC and APST if this is the case.
- 4.3 Our Local Area Inclusion Plan (LAIP) identifies 6 key developmental areas for the SEND, Inclusion and AP system which are currently providing a focus and steer to the SEND, AP & Inclusion Ops group and the work being carried out across the SEND partnership.

- Development of Ordinarily Available Provision
- Improve our understanding of SEMH to ensure that needs are identified at the earliest opportunity
- Review and ensure appropriate sufficiency of specialist provision
- Development and implementation of AP strategy
- Improve transitions for children with SEND
- Establish Quality Assurance Framework that allows the system to know what works and what needs improving

4.4 The Inclusion Service would provide a significant structure to drive LAIP objectives 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6, with a strong emphasis on supporting our parents and capturing the voice of children with SEND to inform our systems.

5. Impact of Hartlepool's Local Inclusion Support Offer

5.1 Whilst it is difficult to demonstrate full impact of the service at this point, we have produced a case study overview to provide an example of the work carried out in schools over the last year by one of the Senior Specialist Teachers (in post since September 24). This is attached to the report. (HIST Case Study)

5.2 Forum have previously been updated on the impact of the Education Officer- in year admissions, which over the first 2 terms of employment has seen fantastic results.

5.3 Further intended outcomes of the Inclusion service include;

- Improved Inclusive Practice in Mainstream Schools
- Consistency of early identification and targeted support
- Stronger workforce development
- Enhanced Support for Families
- Amplified Pupil Voice
- Improved transition processes
- Strengthened development, quality assurance and moderation of the cluster model
- Stronger Multi-Agency Collaboration

6. Financial model

6.1 Forum will recall that there is an allocation of money, called 'The SEMH Pot'. In June 2024, an agreement was made to recruit 2 x Education Officers- in-year admission post from this pot (this was amended to 1 post in June 25 with an extension of their contract following decision in June 2025's Schools Forum). The sum of £627,740 still remains in the pot.

As a result of the SEND & AP Change Programme we have been able to replace £23,511 into the pot, therefore leaving a remaining £651,251 unallocated.

6.2 The following table demonstrates the cost of the model:

Date:	Role:	Financial implication:
1 st April 26 - 31 st August 26	Senior Specialist Teacher x3 Education Officer x3	£60,736
	Workforce development	Grant funded
	£60,736	This will be covered by LA funding
1st September 26- 31st August 27:	Senior Specialist Teacher x3 Education Officer x3	£311,980
	Workforce development	£10,000
	£159,484	This will be covered by LA funding
	£162,496	Requested
1st September 27- 31st August 28:	Senior Specialist Teacher x3 Education Officer x3	£366,027
	Workforce development	£10,000
	£376,027	Requested
Total:	£538,523	

6.3 We acknowledge that there is an imminent White Paper due in the Autumn Term. We will review the service if needed and if there is additional funding made available to Local Authorities then we will return to Schools Forum with an updated plan.

7. **Recommendations**

7.1 Forum is asked to review the proposal set out in 6.3 and vote on the release of funds from the SEMH pot to support the local authority to create a sustainable model for Inclusion, post the SEND & AP Change Programme.

Please note: All Forum Members are eligible to vote on this recommendation.



Hartlepool Inclusion Service



Hartlepool Inclusion Service

Working in partnership with settings and schools to enhance inclusive mainstream provision

inclusion@hartlepool.gov.uk



Hartlepool Inclusion Service

Hartlepool Vision Statement for Inclusion:

Children and young people are enthusiastic about attending Hartlepool's empowering learning environments where passionate staff and partners work in collaboration to provide person centred learning with high aspirations for all. Everyone feels a sense of belonging, they feel safe and listened to and this enables them to succeed. Education is the springboard for children to progress to live their best adult life.'

Hartlepool Inclusion Service:

The core principles of the team are to work in partnership with colleagues in settings and schools to enhance inclusive mainstream provision. Through providing advice, guidance and support, colleagues will be empowered to develop practice in a way in which enables children and young people to grow and maximise their ability to thrive in a culture of equity. This work is underpinned by the Ordinarily Available Inclusive Mainstream Practice Framework, which sets out the expectations for inclusive practice within Hartlepool schools. The framework provides a shared foundation for identifying, implementing and sustaining strategies that meet the needs of all learners, ensuring that inclusion is not an add-on, but a fundamental part of everyday teaching and learning. Most inclusion services are funded via the SEND & AP Change Programme from the Department for Education. This means that most of the support provided by the team are free to settings and schools in Hartlepool (where there is a cost to schools, it is identified below) during 2025/2026.

How can settings and schools seek support from the team?

If you wish to access any support outlined within this document, please contact the team at:

inclusion@hartlepool.gov.uk

Strands of support:

The Inclusion service work across a wide remit which span across 5 strands of support:

1. Inclusive provision in practice:

Early identification and ongoing support for targeted learners

2. Driving inclusion through Hartlepool SEND systems:

Developing town-wide inclusive practices to support the workforce

3. Individual school and setting support:

Supporting schools and settings to enhance mainstream practice

4. Enhancing inclusion through creativity and innovation:

Schools may subscribe to take part in a range of projects

5. Hartlepool Inclusion Support Team (HIST):

Providing bespoke interventions to children and young people



Hartlepool Inclusion Service

Strand 1

Inclusive Provision in Practice: Early Identification and Ongoing Support for Targeted Learners

The Inclusion Team work in partnership with schools to support pupils with emerging or identified additional needs.

We collaborate with staff to enhance inclusive teaching and learning, ensuring all children can engage with the curriculum. Our support may focus on early identification, developing provision for pupils with existing diagnoses, or offering targeted input for individuals, small groups, or specific cohorts. We aim to build school capacity, empowering staff to deliver high-quality, inclusive education for all learners.

1. Identification of Need: Individual or Group Assessment with Report and Recommendations

Following a school's request, a member of the Inclusion Team will work with staff to observe and assess pupils or small groups with emerging or identified needs. This may involve learning walks, pupil observations, staff discussions, and a review of relevant documentation.

A short report will be provided, outlining key findings and practical, evidence-based guidance to support next steps in inclusive practice. To inform this, low-level assessment tools - such as the Boxall Profile, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), STEPS, and Thrive - may be used to build a holistic understanding of pupils' needs and ensure recommendations are appropriately targeted.

2. Individual/Group Intervention Support

Once needs are identified, the team can offer targeted interventions for individuals or small groups. These interventions address barriers to learning by implementing tailored strategies that support both academic and social-emotional development. Support may include one-to-one sessions, small group work, or flexible inclusion models with school staff. The team will guide staff on effective delivery, regularly reviewing progress and adjusting interventions to maximise impact.

3. School-Based Training Offer

The Inclusion Team offers tailored, school-based training to build staff capacity in inclusive practice. Key areas of focus may include strategies for supporting pupils with diverse learning needs, inclusive pedagogy, and targeted intervention planning. Training is delivered through whole-school sessions or smaller workshops, equipping staff with practical skills to support all learners using evidence-based approaches.



Hartlepool Inclusion Service

Strand 2

Driving Inclusion Through Hartlepool SEND Systems: Developing Town-Wide Inclusive Practices to Support the Workforce

1. Supporting Cluster and Seeking Support model

The Inclusion service works collaboratively with town wide cluster SENCO's to support professional discussion around seeking support (high needs block funding) for identified individuals or groups with emerging high needs. Clusters use expertise and best practice to support colleagues across the four areas of need – talking through possible solutions, problem solving and trialling new strategies/approaches to use with identified individuals.

2. Providing opportunities for sharing ideas and practice (Knowledge Exchange events)

Inclusion service can provide town-wide sessions to share best practices across schools. These sessions focus on key inclusive educational topics, such as strategies for diverse learners and evidence-based practices. Town-wide training fosters collaboration, enabling staff to learn from each other and deepen their shared understanding of inclusion across Hartlepool.

3. Quality Assurance of High Needs Block Funding

Working with school partners the inclusion service will offer opportunities to quality assure funding (mid-way through funding cycle) with a view to embedding high quality inclusive provision whilst evaluating the impact of funding on identified learners. This will be to support schools to evaluate areas of strengths and build strategies moving forward.

4. Town wide workforce development across the four broad areas of need

Inclusion team (working with multi agency stakeholders) will support and strengthen relationships, especially with our parents, through programmes of support and training. We aim to enable collaborative working partnerships to ensure that every child has access to the best support and will thrive through our inclusive practices.



Hartlepool Inclusion Service

Strand 3

Individual School and Setting Support: Supporting Settings and Schools to Enhance Inclusive Mainstream Practice

1. Updating School Inclusion Self-Evaluations and Development Plans

Schools will be supported to regularly review and update their Inclusion Self-Evaluation tools, ensuring they reflect current strengths and areas for development. This process will inform targeted development plans with clear, achievable goals that align with the Hartlepool Inclusion Framework. Inclusion Team members will work alongside school leaders to co-produce and implement these plans, embedding inclusive values across the whole school ethos.

2. Embedding Inclusive Practice into Early Years

Early Years settings will receive tailored support to embed inclusive practice through developmentally appropriate strategies. This includes identifying and responding to emerging needs, promoting inclusive environments, and integrating SEND considerations into everyday routines and interactions. Support will focus on high-quality provision that fosters participation, communication, and emotional development from the earliest stages.

3. Coaching and Mentoring for High-Quality First Teaching

Inclusive pedagogy will be modelled and shared through coaching and mentoring cycles. Staff will engage in reflective practice, explore adaptive teaching strategies, and develop confidence in applying high-quality first teaching approaches that meet a range of needs. Support is bespoke and will be responsive to individual setting and staff development needs, promoting professional dialogue within and across settings.

4. Developing Inclusion Knowledge and Skills Across Staff Teams

Professional development will be embedded through bespoke training, peer learning, and access to evidence-informed strategies. This will build the confidence, knowledge, and skills of all staff to meet diverse learner needs, enabling inclusive attitudes and practices to become embedded across the school. Resources, tools, and reflective frameworks will be shared to sustain ongoing learning.

5. Adapting Strategies, Resources and Curriculums for Secondary-Aged Pupils

Secondary settings will receive targeted support to adapt curriculum delivery and classroom practice in ways that address the complex and often subtle barriers to inclusion experienced by older pupils. This includes differentiated teaching, accessible resources, alternative pathways, and supporting emotional regulation. Staff will be guided to develop whole-school and subject-specific strategies that ensure engagement, equity, and success for all learners.

6. Preparedness for Predictable Needs

Schools will be supported to plan proactively for pupils with predictable needs (e.g. ASC, ADHD, speech and language needs). This includes creating inclusive environments, using graduated approaches to support, and ensuring early identification and intervention are in place. Inclusion Leads will work with schools to review and strengthen their readiness, building staff confidence to respond with empathy, flexibility, and high expectations.



Hartlepool Inclusion Service

Strand 4

Enhancing Inclusion Through Creativity and Innovation

Schools may subscribe to a range of project

1. Using artificial intelligence to develop Inclusive Mainstream Practice

Schools engaged in this initiative will become part of a collaborative network dedicated to enhancing inclusive mainstream practice through AI-driven solutions. By harnessing the power of AI, teachers can share best practices, streamline workload and develop adaptive approaches that support diverse learner needs. Staff will be equipped with knowledge and tools to integrate AI effectively, enabling personalised strategies and accessible learning for pupils. Schools will strengthen inclusive provision, ensuring that all learners can engage, achieve and thrive in their educational environment.

2. Preparation for Adulthood

The Inclusion Team will offer support and advice around life as a teenager and adolescence. This may involve training as a whole school or for individual staff members. This may also involve parent groups as young people, and their families navigate life post 16 and as they begin to think about moving on from school and attending a college or taking on an apprenticeship and entering the world of work. Support will also be offered on supporting young people manage transitions from EYFS through to Post 16.

3. Setting appropriate curriculum and assessment models for KS1 learners with complex needs

The Inclusion Team offers advice and training on appropriate curriculum and assessment models for our youngest pupils with complex needs. This training can include whole school training, or the team can offer small group or individual training. Training can include discussions around pedagogy, embedding a new, motivating curriculum and accurately assessing those learners who are just beginning to engage in school life.

4. Developing alternative provision and interventions to support learners with SEMH difficulties

Settings will receive targeted support to review and develop alternative provisions that address the complex and often subtle barriers to inclusion experienced by learners with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties. This includes evaluating existing provision, generating detailed reports, and crafting strategic action plans that enable schools to adapt curriculum delivery and classroom practice effectively. Support will cover differentiated teaching approaches, accessible resources, alternative pathways, and emotional regulation strategies, ensuring that staff are equipped to embed both whole-school and subject-specific interventions that foster engagement, equity, and success for all learners.

5. Understanding and responding to Trauma in children and young people

Schools participating in this project will receive targeted support to recognise, understand, and respond to trauma in children and young people, fostering a safe and supportive learning environment. Participating staff will gain insight into therapeutic practice and guidance on how to embed trauma-informed approaches within whole-



Hartlepool Inclusion Service

school and subject-specific strategies, ensuring that all learners receive the understanding, stability, and care needed to thrive academically and emotionally.

6. Developing strategies which hold high aspirations and caters for the increasing needs of children at secondary school

The Inclusion Team will support schools to develop strategies that reflect high aspirations and meet the increasing needs of secondary-aged pupils. This will involve working collaboratively with staff to adapt teaching approaches, resources, and support structures that ensure accessibility and engagement for all learners. Through targeted guidance, modelling, and planning support, the team will help embed inclusive practices that promote independence, participation, and strong outcomes for pupils with additional needs, while maintaining ambition for every learner.



Hartlepool Inclusion Service

Strand 5 - Hartlepool Inclusion Support Team (HIST):

Providing Bespoke Interventions to Children and Young People

The Hartlepool Inclusion Support Team, part of the Inclusion Service, is a psychology-led team committed to promoting inclusive mainstream education. The team consists of highly skilled Teachers, Practitioners, Family Support Workers, and Assistant Psychologists, that work collaboratively to provide tailored support for children and young people (aged 4-16) who experience difficulties in their education.

Our focus is on ensuring that children and young people receive the right support, at the right time, in their mainstream setting. Our work is centred on providing interventions to help students thrive within their educational environment.

The Inclusion Support Team's vision is that every child and young person feels safe, listened to and has a sense of belonging, enabling them to engage with learning in their mainstream school and having their aspirations and ambitions recognised.

Strands of support:

The Hartlepool Inclusion Support Team have three main strands: in-reach and out-reach support to children and young people, and support to schools regarding in-year transfers and mobility.

Out-reach: Early Intervention Support

Schools can refer into the service to access 1:1 or small group interventions that address a range of SEND and SEMH needs at an early stage. Interventions are bespoke to the needs of the individual and/or group.

Some examples include: Resilience, Emotional Regulation, Executive Functioning, Anxiety, Friendships, Understanding Feelings and Behaviours, Understanding Self and many more.

In-Reach: PINES

PINES is a 12 week intervention designed to support KS2/KS3 pupils experiencing Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), specifically those whose anxiety and withdrawn behaviours are preventing engagement with school and learning.

Conversations regarding whether the intervention may be suitable for a young person are welcomed, and a specific referral form is required for the intervention to be requested.

In-Year Transfers and Mobility

We understand that sometimes families indicate that they are wishing to move schools outside of the main rounds of entry. Our Education Officer for In-year Admissions will work with families, young people and schools to support the young person to stay in their chosen education establishment and, in the event that a transfer is deemed appropriate, will support with the transition information sharing process.



Hartlepool Inclusion Service

This document provides guidance on how professionals can refer into the service. There are four referral routes available:

1. Direct School Referral (via email)

Schools can refer directly to the service by emailing the designated service address: inclusion@hartlepool.gov.uk

A completed referral form must be submitted along with the email.

2. HIP Referral

Referrals can also be made through the Hartlepool Inclusion Panel (HIP). This route is ideal for schools seeking guidance, partnership working, or escalation through existing HIP processes. A recommendation from HIP may be for the Inclusion team to provide support.

3. Seeking Support Model

Colleagues can refer through the established Seeking Support model. This route allows for early identification and graduated support planning, ensuring needs are met at the right level with appropriate input from wider professionals. Colleagues may request this through cluster discussions and/or it may be a recommendation from the town-wide Seeking Support panel.

4. Commissioned Provisions Network

Recommendations for support may come from the Commissioned Provisions Network.

For further guidance or support with the referral process, please contact Fiona Stobbs (Senior Advisor- Inclusive Learning & SEND).



Hartlepool Inclusion Support Team

Case Study

Over the course of the year, the Hartlepool Inclusion Support Team have delivered a variety of work across the town. Most of this work has been focused on working in partnership with schools to develop their own Alternative Provisions and raise

CPD delivered:

- Trauma Informed Practice
- ACEs and the neuroscience of mental health and ill-health
- Understanding emotional development
- Stages of emotional crisis
- Emotional regulation
- Restorative conversations
- Supporting pupils with anxiety
- Writing IEPs for pupils with SEMH
- Adapting learning for pupils with SEMH
- Mainstream Inclusive Practice

Other support delivered:

- Whole school inclusion/SEMH reviews
- Developing Alternative Provisions
- Support to re-integrate children and young people back into mainstream education (including EBSA and pupils accessing alternative provision)
- Support to develop co-ordinated support plans for individual pupils
- Observations of pupils with follow up reports of advice and guidance
- Coaching and modelling support to staff
- Supervision for SENDCos
- Collaborating with school to deliver coffee mornings to parents offering advice and guidance

confidence and skill's of staff through CPD.

“The support we have received this academic year has been phenomenal. Support initially focussed on developing our new provision (The Phoenix Room) for Key Stage 1 autistic and SEMH children. The provision has evolved over the year, with support and guidance from Sarah. Children are now more settled than at any other time, with less explosive behaviours and more established routines. They are spending an increasing amount of time back in the classroom. Sarah has provided key reports for leaders and governors on the new provision, which has resulted in the school wanting to split the provision to cater for separate needs in 2025/2026 hence Phoenix Room I and II.

Sarah has provided lots of CPD for staff, for example on: adaptive teaching, IEP planning, cognitive overload/working memory and executive functioning/emotional regulation. She has also worked with lunchtime supervisors on ACE, brain neurochemistry/de-escalation strategies and playground relationships. The benefit of this CPD has ensured all staff are upskilled with regard to adaptive teaching strategies, and there is a consistent approach to the varying needs within school. Staff now have more confidence in delivering the ordinarily available offer and even delved into the world of AI to help!”

Mark Atkinson, Headteacher of Throston Primary School

Impact

The impact of the support offered to schools has been considerable. Some examples of this have been highlighted on this page.

CPD

Leaders have shared that CPD, particularly that which has developed understanding of trauma and emotional regulation, has promoted and improved relational practice within schools. Staff in schools have shared that they feel they understand their pupils better, and as a result are able to respond more appropriately to dysregulated behaviour, both preventing it from happening and restoring it effectively when it occurs.

Developing APs

Some schools have received support to develop alternative provisions to meet the growing SEND needs of their school communities. This has involved designing a thoughtful provision, incorporating appropriate resources, a well-balanced timetable and targeted interventions to support student engagement. The impact has been significant - pupils are more settled, actively participating in learning, with suspensions reduced and attendance noticeably improved.

Whole School Reviews

Schools who have had whole school reviews have commented that they've found the advice, guidance and support offered to be invaluable in developing their school improvement plans. They shared that having an opportunity to reflect on their offer for SEMH, guided by the process, has helped them evaluate what their graduated response for vulnerable pupils looks like and what next steps they need to take. This has resulted in schools improving their offer for vulnerable children, including amending and adapting policies and systems to ensure positive impact.

Re-integrating Pupils

Schools have been facilitated to support the re-integration of pupils accessing alternative provision in a variety of ways, including supporting teachers in adapting planning to meet the diverse needs of learners, carefully exploring timetables for appropriate reintegration opportunities and applying psychological frameworks to understand student requirements. Schools have reported that pupils have improved engagement in learning, stronger relationships with peers, increased attendance, and a reduced reliance on alternative provisions, creating a more inclusive and sustainable educational environment.

Coaching and Modelling

Through coaching and modelling support, staff have been helped to plan inclusive learning that meets the needs of pupils with SEMH and SEND. By facilitating reflective conversations, offering in-lesson support, and providing constructive feedback, teachers have been empowered to refine their practice. Many have found this process 'therapeutic,' gaining valuable insights into their increasingly complex classrooms. As a result, they have implemented new strategies that enhance their teaching and strengthen relationships with pupils, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.