
SCHOOLS' FORUM

Monday 21st September 2026 – 10am

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

A G E N D A

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| 1. | Apologies | Chair |
| 2. | Minutes from Schools' Forum meeting on 8 June 2026 and matters arising. | Chair |
| 3. | Statutory Services provided by the Local Authority 2027/28 (<i>I</i>) | Fiona Stobbs |
| 4. | Central Schools Services Block 2027/28 (<i>D</i>) | Fiona Stobbs |
| 5. | Early Years Q1 Outturn Projection (<i>I</i>) | Fiona Stobbs |
| 6. | High Needs Q1 Outturn Projection (<i>I</i>) | Fiona Stobbs |
| 7. | Special Schools Cost Model AY26/27 (<i>D</i>) – report to follow | Fiona Stobbs |
| 8. | PRU Cost Model Proposal FY 2627 (<i>D</i>) – report to follow | Fiona Stobbs |
| 9. | Upfront HNB Funding to Schools (<i>V</i>) | Fiona Stobbs |
| 10. | Exclusions Policy Challenge (<i>V</i>) | Sandra Shears |
| 11. | Permanently Excluded Pupils (PEXs) (<i>Standing Item</i>) | Sarah Nevison |

Date and Time of Next Forum Meeting –
Monday 2 November, 10am at the CETL

Schools' Forum Meeting

8th June 2026

Attendees:

Members

Carole Bradley (CB) (Academy Primary) (Chair)
 Tim Blades (TB) (Maintained Governor)
 Alison Darby (AD) (Maintained Primary)
 John Hardy (JH) (Academy Primary)
 Phil Pritchard (PP) (Academy Primary)
 Caroline Reed (CR) (Academy Primary)
 Andy Rogers (AR) (Academy Secondary)
 Emma Rutherford (ER) (Horizon School)
 Mark Tilling (MT) (Maintained Secondary)
 Lee Walker (LW) (Academy Primary)
 Vicki Wilson (VW) (Diocese C of E)
 Sarah Nevison (SN) (Horizon School)
 Zoe Westley (ZW) (Academy Special)
 Leanne Yates (LY) (Academy Primary)
 Steve Jones (SJ) (Academy Secondary)
 David Leane (DL) (Diocese RC)
 Alison Darby (AD) (Maintained Primary)
 Toni Ray (TR) (PVI)
 Nicola Dunn (ND) (Academy Primary)

Local Authority Officers

Claire McPartlin (CM)
 (Administrator)
 Angela Lucas (AL)
 Administrator)
 Sandra Shears (SSh)
 (Corporate Finance)
 Fiona Stobbs (FS) (Inclusive
 Learning and SEND)
 Jane Watt (JWa) (Corporate
 Finance)
 Sarah Wilcox (SW) (Inclusion)

Agenda Item		Action
1	Apologies - Adam Palmer (AP) (Academy Secondary) Linda Richardson (LR) (Early Years PVI)	
2	Minutes from Schools' Forum meeting on 10 February 2026 and matters arising. The minutes of the Schools' Forum meeting on 10 February 2026 were approved.	
3	Minutes from Schools' Capital Sub-Group on 6 November 2025 and matters arising.	

	The minutes of the Schools Capital Sub-Group on 6 November 2025 were noted.	
4	Hartlepool Local Area SEND Reform Plan 2026 The Interim Assistant Director – Education presented the key elements of a report setting out plans to respond to the Schools White Paper and proposed SEND reforms. The report detailed the background relating to the Government Paper and outlined the national vision to improve outcomes, particularly those with SEND through early intervention, stronger inclusion, improved accountability and greater consistency. The Local Area Reform Plan contained three core components, and the first draft of the plan had been submitted to the SEND Advisor and Finance Advisor resulting in very positive feedback. The Plan must now be formally signed off. If successful, the Council will receive £7.914m which is 90% of the DSG Deficit with the Council funding the remaining 10% which equates to £0.879m. The Council will also be required to fund 10% in 2026/27 and 2027/28. Approval will also allow access to Experts at Hand funding commencing in June 2026. Details of the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Programme were outlined including the establishment of an Inclusion Service and the pilot of a multi-agency delivery model. The report also outlined the actions undertaken to date including a refined version of a Maturity Matrix previously developed as part of this Programme. It was reported progress had also been made in relation to data and financial planning. Co-production and stakeholder engagement has included shared delivery across partners such as the ICB as well as engagement activity with young people. 8 co-production sessions involved over 200 participants which will contribute to the develop of the plan. The vision is to create a confident, inclusive and sustainable system that supports all CYP to achieve, belong and thrive. Over the next three years, three key goals are: improving outcomes for CYP, building trust and confidence in the system and securing value for money. The plan over the next 3 years is to deliver this vision through early intervention, strong partnerships and a skilled workforce with Experts at Hand being part of the core infrastructure. 2026/27 is to be a foundation year to strengthen the core of the system with the priority being to create clarity, strengthen governance and embed	

	consistent inclusive practice across the system. The activities being undertaken in 2026/27 to move towards the above goals and vision were set out in the report. It was reported that Experts at Hand would provide timely, practical support without reliance on diagnosis work which will be delivered through a multi-disciplinary team. Funding through the SEND and AP Programme funding means a return of £297,680 will be returned to the 'SEMH pot'. (Post meeting note - apologies for report error. Amount confirmed as £297,680). ZW asked if the final plan would be shared and if it would be shared online. FS said an executive summary would definitely be made available but due to the size and number of attachments of the full report this may not be made available. SSh also stated that publishing the financial element of the Plan would need the approval of the Advisors. ZW also enquired how consistency of advice would be maintained across all specialists. FS reported that the Nest (SEND, Inclusion and Early Years Centre) would be the co-location of the multi-agency working with professionals sharing information and best practice. ZW enquired if the Family Hubs would be giving advice and FS said the Hubs offer early years and outreach support. FS also informed the Forum that meetings have started, and work will be done with the Hubs to ensure consistency. ZW felt that some advice provided by Occupational Therapy Team is not helpful. FS confirmed plans were being looked at town wide to ensure advice is consistent. ZW felt that we need to be clear about what is expected from special schools compared to main stream schools and ARPS to be properly prepared. FS said planning needed to be done to estimate allocations around funding so time needed to scheduled to look at this. ZW reported that Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy can give contradictory advice. FS – clarified that OT is the specific element in guidance but it may not be in this financial year. ZW enquired about children who have no OT assessment and may have been to other special schools. FS acknowledged there can be difficulty for health professionals to get the ICB to commission this either within NHS or private company. However, there may not be funding for this in year 1. ZW mentioned there is a national shortage of OT's. She also understood there is an expectation that special schools should be included in Expert at Hand and wanted to know what it would look like? FS said this is a discussion we need to have	
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	CB asked what the Expert at Hand would look like because some professionals work across lots of authorities. FS reported work was ongoing on this, building it around the cluster model, looking at how do we support around that and looking at how do we allocate a psychologist to each cluster. A plan will need to drawn up. CB asked if the recommendations were noted. Decision i) the return of £297,680 to the SEMH Pot was noted ii) the contents of the report were noted	
5	Schools' Forum Membership and Constitution SSh reported that a new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Forum was required for September, along with new terms of office. The Forum's Constitution and other relevant documents were attached to the report for information. The report set out the forum membership and structure which comprises of 3 groups: school members, academy members and non-school members. The balance of membership for maintained primary, maintained secondary and academies should be broadly proportionate to pupil numbers. The minimum frequency of meetings is 4 meetings per year In the last 2 years there had been 7 meetings, owing to both the later timing of funding information being published by DfE and requests for further information from Forum to support decision making. Should Forum feel able to make decisions in a single meeting, the proposal was to move to 5 planned meetings per year. The appointment of substitutes was outlined in the Constitution however following an increase in academy members attending Schools' Forums outside of Hartlepool questions were raised around a second 'permanent' substitute. The report confirmed the terms of office are set for a 2 year long term which commences at the start of the academic year. MT asked for clarification about the rationale of 23 members being appointed to the Forum and SSh said this was custom and practice prior to academies being established. A discussion took place regarding the composition of the Forum's membership and it was felt there wasn't sufficient time left in the meeting to fully explore this issue. MT proposed a model for academy membership based on at least one representative per Trust, with additional places based on pupil numbers. It was suggested a Working Group be established to look at this further. Forum noted that the appointment of a Vice Chair from Extol Trust was dependent on the outcomes of the working group. ZW sought clarification	

	on her role as Special Schools representative as opposed to Trust membership. Decisions i) The recommendations for 5 planned meetings per year be adopted and align dates with the new timing for publication of information from DfE; ii) The review of the proposal for a second substitute be deferred pending the results from the Working Group; iii) The proposal for a Chair and Vice-Chair for a 2-year term from September 2026, the appointment of a Chair to be from secondary phase and a Vice Chair from primary phase be agreed. Andy Rogers was appointment as Chair and Caroline Reed as Vice-Chair. ; iv) The agreement of a maintained schools lead to appoint to new terms of office from September 2026 be deferred pending the results from the Working Group; v) The agreement for an academy lead to appoint to new terms of office from September 2026 be deferred pending the results from the Working Group; vi) A commitment to use the DfE self-assessment toolkit attached to the report once new terms of office agreed; vii) Instruct the local authority on any changes proposed to the local Hartlepool constitution following outcomes of the working group.	
6	Updates to Scheme for Financing Schools Each year DfE 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. Following the publication of an update on 26th March 2026 SSh reported there were no changes to the scheme which required incorporation into the Council's current scheme. However, SSh reported there are several proposed changes following a review of the Hartlepool Scheme. It was recommended by SSh that these changes be provided to maintained schools as a schedule of changes along with a link to the revised scheme. Decision i) It was noted that there were no DfE changes to the Scheme for 2026/27; ii) The planned "local" changes to the Hartlepool Scheme were noted. iii) It was noted that the changes would be listed and sent to maintained schools and the revised Scheme will be published on the Council website after the Forum meeting	
7	Dedicated Schools Grant Final Outturn 2025/26	

	The report provided an update on the outturn position for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budgets for the financial year 2025/26. 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 £3.861m. The Early Years underspend of £0.828m helped reduce the In Year deficit. 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. The overspend of the High Needs Block of £4.710m showed an improvement of £0.706m from the latest projection. There was an underspend of £0.21m against the Central Schools Services block despite ongoing financial pressure relating to pension costs for historic redundancies at Brierton School. The Government announced the High Needs Stability Grant would provide 90% of the DSG deficits with the remaining balance being met locally from the General fund reserves. Although the financial position beyond 2026/27 is not clear, we are anticipating a similar level of 90% and 10% split. Decision i) That the report be noted.	
8	Early Years Block Final Outturn 2025/26 The report set out details of the Early Years Block Final Outturn figure for 2025/26. The funding now exceeded £14m following increased expansion of the nursery entitlements. Funding and spending is captured against: • 3-4YO Universal and Extended provision • 2YO Families Receiving Additional Support (FRAS) • 2YO Working Parents • Under 2YO Working Parents Spending against the Early Years Block is difficult to predict and has resulted in an underspend of £0.828m. The primary reason for this underspend related to the differing number of children actually attending compared to those counted at census points. Contingency funding was set aside for the possibility of overspending which has not been used and the budgets have now reduced in 2026/27 with the amounts being moved into the base rate to providers.	

	It was reported that local authorities must pass through 96% of funding to providers and this increased to 97% from April 2026. However, a table showed the pass through rate to be lower which is of concern. The reduction in the contingency amounts for 2026/27 will improve the pass through rate. CR asked if the underspend could be allocated to providers to improve the pass through rate and JWa confirmed this was not the case. Once the hourly rate is set for the year ahead, the regulations do not allow for changes. CR further asked if, having such a large underspend, we could raise the pass through rate to 98% in future years. JWa acknowledged this was possible but may then result in overspending as the attendance during the year could swing to being greater than census. Decision i) The contents of this report were noted. ii) The Early Years reporting be aligned with the High Needs Block in 2026/27. The Forum will receive quarterly reports on projected spending against the Early Years Block.	
9	High Needs Block Final Outturn 2025/26 The report outlined the outturn position for High Needs Block (HNB) spending in 2025/26. The overspend by the High Needs Block improved by £0.706m resulting in a £4.710m overspend. The improvement from quarter 3 projections was mainly around the Horizon School underspend, along with additional PEX funding clawback and Free School top-ups. The High Needs Block funding for 2026/27 expects an in-year deficit of £7.360m. Decision i) The Forum noted the contents of the report.	
10	Permanently Excluded Pupils (PEXs) – standing item The following details were reported: Permanent exclusions academic year 2025-26 Sept to present day: 23 pupils Entry from Out of Authority school 2025-26 Sept to Present day: 5 pupils Comparison from previous year: Permanent exclusions academic year 2024-25: 40 pupils	

	Entry from Out of Authority school 2024-5: 3 pupils Currently have 115 on roll (including the 2 ARPs).	
	Date and Time of Next Forum Meeting Monday 21st September 2026 at 10 am, Conference Hall, Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL).	

OUTSTANDING ACTIONS LOG

Meeting	Description	Owner
8 June 2026	Forum to set up a Working Group to review the Forum's membership.	FS/CB/MT
8 June 2026	Amend forward schedule of Forum meetings to work to 5 planned meetings per year	Jwa / AL

Financial Year 2025/26: Children's Services Committee – Log of Schools' Forum Recommendations and Committee Decisions

Last Updated: 16 June 2026

Committee Date	Report	Recommendation and Decision Details
02/12/25	Special School Growth Proposals	a) Approve the growth proposals for Springwell school recommended by Schools' Forum for AY 2025-26 of £0.179m; b) Approve the growth proposals for Catcote school recommended by Schools' Forum for AY2025-26 of £0.453m
03/02/26	DSG Schools Budget Shares and Central Services Block 2026/27	a) Noted the agreement by Schools' Forum to the budget requirement of £0.619m for the Central School Services Block and to the transfer the residual funding from Central School Services Block to the High Needs Block (£0.047m). b) Noted the agreement by Schools' Forum to transfer 0.5% of schools block funding (£0.454m) to the High Needs Block. c) Agreed MFG to be used for 2026/27 and noted the recommendation from Schools' Forum of applying an MFG of 0.0%, alongside an appropriate cap which has been calculated at 2.97%. d) Approved the School Budget Share for 2026/27.
3/2/26	DSG Early Years Block 2026/27	a) Approved the retention of £0.465m (3% of total funding) to deliver the early year's service as recommended by Schools' Forum (15 for; 0 against; 1 abstention).

		b) Approved the hourly rate for 3- to 4-year-old provision as recommended by Schools' Forum (16 for; 0 against; 0 abstention). c) Approved the hourly rate for 2-year-old Working Parent provision as recommended by Schools' Forum (16 for; 0 against; 0 abstention). d) Approved the hourly rate for 2-year-old FRAS provision as recommended by Schools' Forum (16 for; 0 against; 0 abstention). e) Approved the hourly rate for under 2-year-old provision as recommended by Schools' Forum (16 for; 0 against; 0 abstention).
03/03/26	DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT – HIGH NEEDS BLOCK 2026/27	a) noted the contents of the report; b) noted the feedback from Schools' Forum on the proposals; c) Approved the budget proposal for 2026/27 shown in the table at paragraph 5.2 of the report, acknowledging the funding gap of £7.360m.

Report to Schools' Forum 21 September 2026 From Fiona Stobbs (Interim 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.
- 1.2 Funding for **retained** duties provided to all schools is funded via the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) which forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).
- 1.3 Proposed funding for **general** duties provided to maintained schools only (in addition to retained duties) is sought via a retention of Schools Block funding (from maintained school budget shares).

2. Background

- 2.1 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).
- 2.2 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 £0.210m has been included in the CSSB to cover these activities. This equates to a rate of £16.18 per pupil (based on October 2025 Number on Roll). This rate is unchanged since the introduction of the CSSB in 2018/19. Approval for this funding is included in the CSSB budget requirement included in a separate report on this agenda.

- 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 nil increase for both retained and general duties demonstrates the commitment of the local authority to minimise the financial burden on schools, whilst retaining appropriate funding to discharge statutory duties.

4. Funding of General Duties – Historic Context

- 4.1 Until 2026/27, the £60 rate for general duties was not agreed by Schools' Forum (maintained schools only) and the local authority made an annual 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 agreed with the historic local authority requests (since 2017/18 to 2025/26) and gave permission for the regulations to be disapplied each year.
- 4.3 Forum members representing maintained schools 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 2027/28 then the local authority would not be able to maintain services at the level required by statute.
- 4.4 For 2026/27, Forum members representing maintained schools approved the proposed £60 per pupil rate. However, it was noted that should the £60 rate increase in future years, the position would need to be reconsidered.
- 4.5 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.

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 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	- 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
	Form (BIF). The scheme is vetted 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	

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only	Duties provided under the SLA
	• appropriate acoustic levels 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	

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only	Duties provided under the SLA
	asbestos which is updated as required. 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

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only
	• EYFSP school moderation and QA of data at schools' request, visits to schools not selected 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

Responsibilities held for all schools	Responsibilities held for maintained schools only
	• 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 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 21 September 2026
From Fiona Stobbs – Interim Assistant Director Education****Item 4: Central School Services Block Budgets 2027/28****1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the budget requirement for the 2027/28 Central School Services Block (CSSB).

2. Background

- 2.1 DfE are expecting to publish indicative National Funding Formula (NFF) allocations for 2027/28 in late Autumn.
- 2.2 Although block funding for CSSB is not yet available, the authority wishes to consult with Schools' Forum on the budget requirement. This would usually be discussed each September with Forum.

3. Central School Services – Budget Requirement 2027/28

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 Schools' Forum will recall that a 20% year on year funding reduction is applied to historic commitments within the CSSB. 2027/28 will be the seventh year of the funding cut being applied. Once funding information is published, we can identify whether the cut in 2027/28 takes us below the budget needed for historic commitments.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 Since the inception of the CSSB, funding has exceeded the budget requirement. This may not be the case in 2027/28 as outlined in paragraph 3.2. Should any excess funding remain after funding the budget requirement in 2027/28, Schools' Forum are asked to approve a block transfer of this funding to the High Needs Block. In 2026/27, the amount of excess funding approved for transfer was £0.047m.
- 3.5 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 2027/28	Description
Licences	£0.067m (unchanged)	Contribution to the licence cost for the Council-wide EYES system. The introduction of the EYES system produced savings against the original CSSB funding of £0.077m. Therefore, the budget requirement in 2027/28 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. Please note that this cost relates to licences only. Funding requests for the Early Years Centrally Retained budget (not yet presented to Forum) includes development and support costs for the EYES system (not licence costs).
Termination Costs (Brierton School)	£0.031m (unchanged)	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 2027/28.</u> The remaining cost has been charged to DSG reserves in previous years.

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

Ongoing Commitment	Budget Requirement 2027/28	Description
Copyright Licences	£0.123m	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 confirmed at £0.119m. The budget for 2027/28 assumes a 3% uplift.
Admissions Service	£0.170m	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% increase from 2026/27 to reflect the estimated pay award in April 2027.
Servicing of Schools' Forum	£0.049m	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% increase from 2026/27 to reflect the estimated pay award in April 2027.

Statutory Services - Retained Duties	£0.210m	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 2027/28 is set at £16.18 per pupil (unchanged from 2026/27), with pupil volumes currently based on October 2025 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.
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3.7 This gives a total budget requirement of £0.098m historic commitments and £0.552m ongoing commitments – a grand total of £0.650m.

3.8 As the charge for Statutory Services – Retained Duties is driven by pupil numbers, the amount is subject to change once October 2026 pupil numbers are updated.

4. **Recommendations**

4.1 Forum is recommended to:

- a) Provide approval in principle to the transfer of any residual CSSB funding to the High Needs Block for 2027/28 as outlined in section 3 of the report;
- b) Agree to fund the budget requirement for historic commitments as detailed in paragraph 3.5 of the report (*Please note: a separate vote per service is required*);
- c) Agree to fund the budget requirement for ongoing responsibilities as detailed in paragraph 3.6 of the report (*Please note: a separate vote per service is required. 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 21 September 2026
From Fiona Stobbs (Interim Assistant Director - Education)****Agenda Item 5 – Early Years Block Projected Outturn (Quarter 1) 2026/27****1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the projected outturn for the Early Years Block outturn position for 2026/27. The Early Years Block forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).
- 1.2 As outlined in the report to Schools Forum on 8 June 2026, quarterly projections for Early Years spending will now be provided to Forum on a quarterly basis.

2 Background

- 2.1 Following the significant expansion of nursery entitlements, Hartlepool Early Years Block funding in 2026/27 is £16.213m. (2025/26 £14.714m).
- 2.2 Funding and spending is captured against:
- 3- to 4-year-old Universal and Additional provision
 - 2-year-old Families Receiving Additional Support (FRAS)
 - 2-year-old Working Parents
 - Under 2-year-old Working Parents
- 2.3 Settings maintain their attendance data in the EYES system. Following a monthly headcount validation process, payments are made to settings each month based on EYES information.

Monthly payments to settings are based on actual attendance hours recorded in EYES at the agreed hourly base rate, including any supplements.

- 2.4 In simplistic terms, Early Years Block funding is based on the formula:

Number of pupils recorded at census point x 15-hour entitlement x 38 weeks x the funded hourly rate.

3 Early Years Block Financial Position for 2025/26

- 3.1 There was an overall underspend of £0.828m in 2025/26. In line with regulations, this was offset against the High Needs Block overspend.
- 3.2 For 2025/26, attendance at each census point was generally higher than actual attendance (and therefore payments to settings). This excess of funding resulted in a significant underspend in 2025/26. However, this position could easily change in any given year, with actual attendance being higher than at census points.

- 3.3 From 2026/27, the regulations state that local authorities must pass through at least 97% of funding to providers (96% in 2025/26). Actual pass-through rates in 2025/26 were below the threshold. This is linked to the significant underspend.
- 3.4 Managing spending effectively against the early year's block continues to be a difficult balance between ensuring at least 96% of funding (97% in 2026/27) is passed directly to settings, whilst avoiding overspending should actual attendance exceed census point attendance.

4. Projected Funding 2026/27

- 4.1 Unlike Schools Block funding which is unchanged based on the October census, the Early Years Block funding is adjusted in-year to reflect the latest census point. This adds complexity to projections, as projections are calculated for funding and attendance.
- 4.2 From 2026/27, all provisions will be funded using 3 census points for the first time. This adds new uncertainty into funding levels moving forward.
- 4.3 The starting point for funding in 2026/27 is £16.213m. This is based on the following levels of provision:

Funded Area	£m
3-4YO Universal (1,238.88 PTEs)	4,413,510
3-4YO Additional (475.25 PTEs)	1,693,079
2YO FRAS* (312.40 PTEs)	1,536,727
2YO Working Parent (621.36 PTEs)	3,056,532
U2YO (755.31 PTEs)	5,032,858
Pupil Premium	371,395
Disability Access Fund	109,200
Total Initial Funding 2026/27 (before census adjustments)	16,213,301

*Families Receiving Additional Support

5 Budget and Projected Outturn 2026/27

- 5.1 Using the funding of £16.213m outlined above, budgets were approved by Children's Services Committee ensuring that 97% of funding is passed to providers, in line with national guidance. The remaining 3% of funding forms the Centrally Retained budget which funds the staffing, systems and processes needed to operate the service.

Funded Area	Budget £m
3-4YO Universal	4,265,218
3-4YO Additional	1,636,191
2YO FRAS	1,485,087
2YO Working Parent	2,907,778
U2YO	4,869,258
Centrally Retained	464,351
SEN Inclusion	104,823

Pupil Premium	371,395
Disability Access Fund	109,200
Base Budget 2026/27 (before census adjustments)	16,213,301

- 5.2 Using actual data from EYES to the end of Quarter 1, along with trend analysis from prior years, a projection of both funding and spending has been compiled. The table below shows the current budget, the projected changes to funding and the projected spending by funded area. Quarter 1 projections show an underspend of circa £0.500m.

Funded Area	Base Budget	Projected Funding Adjustment	Projected Spend	Projected Variance (+over / (-) under)
	£	£	£	£
3-4YO Universal	4,265,218	(122,913)	4,001,769	(140,536)
3-4YO Additional	1,636,191	198,438	1,779,481	(55,148)
2YO FRAS	1,485,087	(162,939)	1,282,739	(39,409)
2YO Working Parent	2,907,778	634,654	3,383,692	(158,740)
U2YO	4,869,258	(185,834)	4,577,257	(106,167)
Centrally Retained	464,351	12,105	476,456	0
SEN Inclusion	104,823	11,079	115,902	0
Pupil Premium	371,395	0	371,395	0
Disability Access Fund	109,200	0	109,200	0
Total 2026/27	16,213,301	384,590	16,097,891	(500,000)

- 5.3 The projected underspend reflects the difference between attendance funded by DfE at each census point and actual attendance month by month. The underspend also includes contingency amounts set aside at budget setting of £0.082m.
- 5.4 The funding adjustment estimates the expected DfE (Department for Education) update in response to the first of three in-year census points. Overall, additional funding of £0.385m is expected, although certain entitlements are estimating a clawback position within this total.

6 **Recommendations**

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

Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 21 September 2026
From Fiona Stobbs (Interim Assistant Director - Education)

Item 6: High Needs Block (HNB) Projected Outturn 2026/27

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the projected 2026/27 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 2026/27 based on worse-case, mid-case and best-case have been prepared.
- 2.3 The final position for 2025/26 was an in-year deficit of £3.861m. When added to the opening DSG deficit for 2025/26 of £4.932m, the deficit stands at £8.793m.
- 2.4 Children's Services Committee approved proposals from Officers to set a budget requirement exceeding the available HNB funding by £7.360m in 2026/27. Before accounting for the High Needs Stability Grant, the budget shortfall would increase the deficit to £16.153m by 31 March 2027.

3. 2026/27 Block Funding

- 3.1 Before recoupment of academy place funding, the latest Hartlepool HNB allocation for 2026/27 is £22.877m. Schools Forum will recall their agreement to transfer £0.454m (0.5%) of the School's Block and the residual Central School Services Block (CSSB) of £0.048m to the High Needs Block. This provides total funding of **£18.900m** after recoupment of £4.479m for academy place funding, or **£23.379m** before recoupment.
- 3.2 The latest funding allocation has resulted in a decrease of **£0.054m** from the original budgeted figure of **£18.954m**. This is owing to a change in academy place funding to be recouped compared with the estimated amount originally budgeted. The £0.054m change is shown in the table at paragraph 4.2.

4. 2026/27 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 £6.572m overspend best case to £7.913m 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 £7.217m.

High Needs Expenditure 2026/27	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		
Academy place funding (recoupment)	4.479	0.054	4.479	0.054	4.479	0.054
Place funding (LA)	0.717	-	0.717	-	0.717	-
Independent school fees	5.232	(0.003)	4.972	(0.263)	4.863	(0.371)
Out of Area top-ups	0.300	(0.084)	0.300	(0.084)	0.300	(0.084)
Top-up funding and support	16.826	0.686	16.390	0.250	15.851	(0.287)
Horizon, Haven & AP	1.415	(0.100)	1.415	(0.100)	1.415	(0.100)
Post-16 top-ups	1.587	-	1.587	-	1.587	-
Support services	0.735	-	0.735	-	0.735	-
Approved budget shortfall	-	7.360		7.360	-	7.360
Total projection	31.291	7.913	30.595	7.217	29.947	6.572

4.4 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.

4.5 Independent school fees (£0.263m underspend)

The budget for 2026/27 of £5.235m is made up of £4.558m for existing placements at summer term 2026 and £0.767m for anticipated new placements in year (based on previous trends). These estimates are offset by budgeted DfE grant income of £0.090m to support the rising costs of provision.

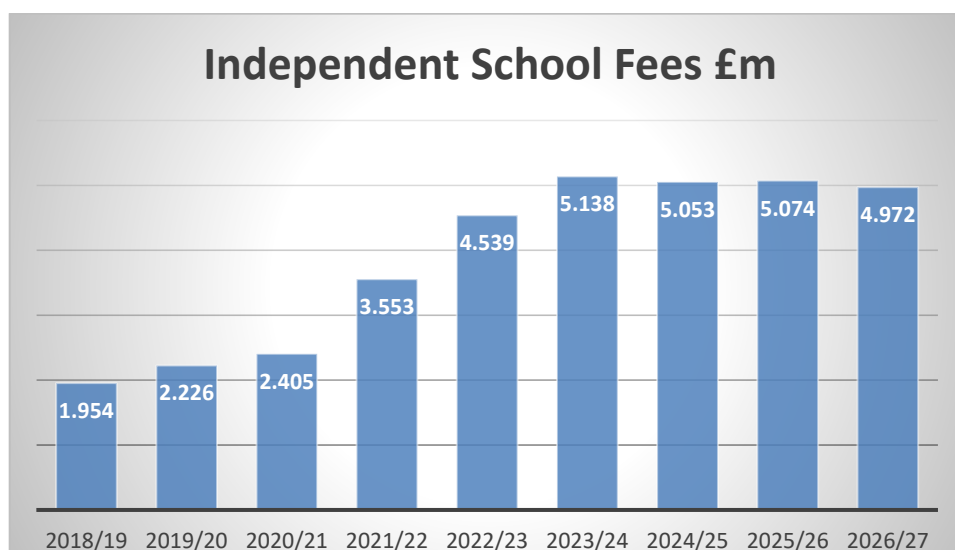
Projections at quarter 1 for *existing provision* expect expenditure of £3.881m against the £4.558m budget. The reduced expenditure is linked to:

- 9 pupils expected to continue with the provider post-16 elected not to continue (£0.389m saving)
- 3 placements (including one high cost) did not continue as expected (£0.212m saving)
- 2 placements that were expected to end actually continued (£0.068m pressure)
- Overall costs of existing placements being £0.144m less than anticipated. The Council's Commissioning Team continue to work to negotiate fees with providers

Projections at quarter 1 for *new placements* in year expect expenditure of £1.091m against the £0.767m budget. The cost pressure has arisen for:

- 8 new places at an overall cost of £0.675m was included in the budget estimate. There are 6 new places confirmed to date at the higher overall cost of £0.717m.
- Based on historic trends and information from the SEND Team, projections include 5 further new starters at a part year cost of £0.282m

The projected spend of £4.972m compares to total expenditure of £5.074m in 2025/26.



4.6 Out of authority top-ups (£0.084m underspend)

A forecast underspend of £0.084m is projected against the 2026/27 budget. Although demand has exceeded the assumptions included in the budget, with 14 new placements forecast compared to seven budgeted placements, effective commissioning activity has helped contain costs and minimise inflationary pressures. The underspend has been further enhanced by four placements ceasing since the budget was set and reductions in the cost of several existing placements.

4.7 Horizon, Haven & AP (£0.100m underspend)

The Horizon School, Haven and Alternative Provision 2026/27 budget was initially approved at £1.515m. The latest outturn forecast indicates an underspend of £0.100m. The favourable variance is primarily attributable to lower than budgeted Alternative Provision costs, reflecting a reduction in the number of provision days required during the year. As pupil numbers, placement requirements and Alternative Provision arrangements continue to fluctuate throughout the year, the forecast will continue to be monitored closely and updated to reflect any significant changes in activity or expenditure.

4.8 Top-up funding and support (£0.250m overspend)

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

The mid-case projected spend for Individual Pupil Support (IPS) is £4.865m. This estimate includes 21 new funding agreements, each assumed to be in place for seven months across Autumn 2026 and Spring 2027, at a range of 5i. In addition, it has been assumed that 50% of active Group, Exceptional and IPS funding agreements that are to expire during 2026/27 will be approved for continuation. Based on these assumptions, the budget is currently forecasting an overspend of £0.250m.

The Seeking Support Panels continue to challenge and scrutinise all new funding requests.

The projected spend for ARPs is £3.034m, an underspend of £0.012m against budget, with underspends across existing ARP top-up budgets partially offset by additional costs associated with the recently established Engage and Haven ARPs based at Horizon School.

The projected spend on Catcote and Springwell Special Schools is currently assumed to be in line with budget. Funding for these schools is determined through the annual cost model process, and work is ongoing to undertake the true-up of Academic Year 2025-26 costs and consider proposals for Academic Year 2026-27. At this stage, no variance is forecast, and the position will be reviewed once the cost model process has been completed and funding requirements have been confirmed.

Top-up funding for the SEMH Free School includes provision for 41 places, together with additional funding for pupils requiring support beyond the standard top-up allocation. Places at the SEMH Free School will increase from 41 to 49 in the 2026-27 academic year and have been fully accounted for within the budget. The SEMH Free School is forecasting an overspend of £0.028m, which relates to an increase in exceptional funding for the 2026-27 academic year.

The Hearing/Visually impaired joint agreement is showing a projected underspend of £0.012m, based on an early indication from Middlesbrough Borough Council that a 7% uplift in fees will be requested over a three year period. Formal confirmation is still awaited. This uplift was not known at the time of budget setting and is lower than originally forecast.

4.9 Post-16 top-up funding (on budget)

Provision for post-16 education for pupils with SEND appears to be levelling out following significant increases in recent years. The current projection assumes expenditure will be in line with budget, as September 2026 intake numbers are not yet available. The position will be reviewed and updated once confirmed pupil numbers are received.

4.10 Support Services (on budget)

Nil Variance.

- 4.11 The approved budget shortfall of £7.360m is added to the outturn position as this represents unfunded expenditure included in the budget headings above.

5. DSG Deficit and Mitigation

- 5.1 The DSG reserve currently has a deficit balance of £8.793m, reflecting the cumulative High Needs deficit as at 31 March 2026. The Government has announced that the High Needs Stability Grant will provide funding equivalent to 90% of historic DSG deficits at that date, subject to the submission and approval of a Local SEND Reform Plan and continued compliance with Department for Education (DfE) requirements.

- 5.2 Based on the current deficit position, the Council would be eligible to receive approximately £7.914m in grant funding, providing significant support towards the recovery of the DSG deficit position. The remaining deficit balance of approximately £0.879m would need to be funded from the Council's General Fund.

- 5.3 The financial position beyond March 2026 is less clear, although DfE have referred to a similar level of grant and assurance process in future years until the High Needs Block funding reform is fully reviewed and implemented.
- 5.4 The High Needs Block is currently forecasting an in-year deficit of £7.217m in 2026/27. If this projected overspend materialises, it would increase the cumulative DSG deficit position to £16.010m prior to any receipt of the High Needs Stability Grant.

6. Recommendations

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