

Schools Forum

Minutes

Tuesday 8 July 2025

PRESENT

Voting members	Non-voting members
School Members Anne-Marie Strachan (Thames Federation) Dave Colins (Brackenbury School) Kathleen Williams (Holy Cross Primary) Michele Barrett (Randolph Beresford / Vanessa Nursery) Academies and Free Schools Gary Kynaston, Hammersmith Academy (Chair) Daniel Cundy (Senior Principal, AP Academies) Sophia Martin (Principal, AP Academies)	Observers Aiden Smith (Governor, Jack Tizard School) Alex Parker

Officers

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education)
Daryle Mathurin (Head of Assets and Resources - Education and SEND)
Valerie Irolla (Principal Accountant)
Amrita White (Committee Coordinator)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Jacqui McShannon (Director of Children's Services)

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

3. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT OUTTURN 2024/25

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education) presented the item that covered the Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn for 2024/25. He noted the High Needs in year deficit of £0.963m after all mitigations. The final High Needs Safety Valve Funding had also been received. Safety Valve monitoring continued as well as the expectation of transformation to ensure sustainability of the school budget. 2025/26 Q1

monitoring and High Needs update report would be brought to the October Schools Forum. Additionally, he highlighted the expectation of a challenging position on schools' budget and High Needs.

In response to Alex Parker's (Observer) request for further clarification regarding the challenging position on the school's budget and High Needs funding. Tony Burton explained that this position was primarily due to increasingly constrained funding increases. He noted that there was nothing in the government's recent Spending Review to suggest a significant change to this situation. He highlighted that the Spending review made it clear that funding across government departments would remain tight, while there would be some additional funding allocated to schools. The detail on how this funding would be distributed were not yet clear.

The Chair noted that following the Spending Review, *Schools Week* had carried out some interesting analysis. An article published by them provided a breakdown of funding projections over the next four years, suggesting that the increase in funding would be negligible. In addition, Tony Burton highlighted that over recent years, London had been receiving lower than average increase in school funding compared to the national level. He noted that further information and clarity on future allocations were expected to become available in autumn 2025.

Tony Burton highlighted the 2026/27 budget process which assumed a challenging financial outlook and constrained funding in all areas. The focus of work in the Autumn term would include funding update and discussion of budget setting principles. The 2026/27 funding would be advised following the government spending review in Autumn 2025.

The Chair noted that the High Needs Block remained under significant pressure, with an additional £400k overspend added to the retained DSG deficit in 2024/25

The Schools White Paper expected in the Autumn term would provide the direction of travel with respect to SEND at a national level

RESOLVED:

The schools Forum noted the report

4. DISCUSSION AND AGREEMENT OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM 2025/26 ACADEMIC YEAR DATES

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education) provided the following provisional dates for 2025:

Tuesday 7th October 2025 2-4pm

- Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025/26 Qtr1
- High Needs Safety Valve Update 2025/26 Qtr1
- Schools Funding Update 2026/27
- Updated Scheme for Financing Schools and Schools Financial Procedures

Thursday 13th November 2025 4pm to 5:30pm

- Draft 2026/27 Mainstream Schools Block Budget Modelling
- 2026/27 High Needs Block Funding Update

Tuesday 16th December 2025 2-4pm

- Early Years Budget 2026/27 update
- Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025/26 Qtr2
- High Needs Safety Valve Update 2025/26 Qtr2

Tuesday 20th January 2026 2-4pm

- Final 2026/27 Mainstream school's budget for agreement
- Final 2026/27 Early Years budget for agreement

Meeting started: 2:00pm

Meeting ended: 2:30pm

Chair

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