

Schools Forum

Minutes

Tuesday 20 January 2026

PRESENT

Voting members	Non-voting members
School Members Anne-Marie Strachan (Thames Federation) Dave Colins (Brackenbury School) Michele Barrett (Randolph Beresford/Vanessa Nursery) Kathleen Williams (Holy Cross Primary) Imogen Lavelle (The Good Shepherd) Academies and Free Schools Gary Kynaston, Hammersmith Academy (Chair) Daniel Cundy (Senior Principal, AP Academies) Sally Brooks (Fulham Cross Academy and Fulham College) Non-School Members Rebecca Moore (William Morris Sixth Form) Jane Gleasure (Little People, Early Years PVI)	Aidan Smith Alex Parker Helen Pickering Jacqueline Munro

Officers

Tony Burton (Head of Finance - People)
Peter Haylock (Director of Education and SEND)
Valerie Irolla (Principal Accountant)
Satwinder Saraon (Head of SEND Services and Early Years)
Caroline Baxter (Finance Manager Education and Schools)
Liam Oliff (Committee Coordinator)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

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

3. SCHOOLS BLOCK BUDGET AND MAINSTREAM BUDGETS 2026/27

Tony Burton (Head of Finance - People) presented the report which outlined the final Schools Block allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2026/27

following the receipt of final funding allocations and the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) in December 2025.

Alex Parker (Lady Margaret School) referred Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility and Trade Union Facilities and was concerned whether all of this budget would be recouped. He added that some Academies did their own FSM eligibility checking, and may continue to do this, rather than pay a fee. He commented that if LBHF were to pass on the charge, that there needed to be clarity on what schools were being asked to pay for. Peter Haylock (Director of Education and SEND) explained that schools had been benefitting from this for many years. The auto enrolment process meant that if a single young person was enrolled as part of LBHFs process, schools would benefit from Pupil Premium and FSM and FSM6 funding in the schools funding formula. Trade Unions Facilities time was being paid for to support members in whatever way was deemed fit, but it was not up to the Council to decide how the facilities were being used. Alex Parker stressed the importance that this be in writing, so schools understood where their contribution was going. Peter Haylock noted this request and agreed to provide more clarity.

Alex Parker asked whether the FSM eligibility was completed using census data, or whether it was notifiable through the Local Authority (LA). Peter Haylock explained that an auto enrolment process had been introduced, working alongside the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to collect the relevant information. Previously there was an opt-in process where families would need to apply for FSMs, due to changes in regulation at primary school level, there was not the urgency for parents to apply for FSMs so there was now an opt-out process where LA does the searching in the background, and this in turn would add to Pupil Premium numbers. The first time this process took place, 10-20 extra pupils were identified as being eligible for FSMs. Alex Parker commented that this process needed to be explained further to provide more evidence of the difference it was making to schools.

Kathleen Williams (Holy Cross Primary) felt that the auto enrolment process was having a big impact at primary school level, as fewer parents were applying for FSMs. She asked whether the requirement for trade union facilities for staff was a statutory one? The Chair explained that the change in statutory function for trade unions was a general principle one and that the charges needed to avoid being overly bureaucratic. He added that more clarity was needed on the reasoning behind the process and what it did and didn't serve.

The Chair commented that children receiving FSMs at primary school had an impact on receiving FSM6 at secondary school. He added that LBHF did need to provide clarity on exactly how identification of pupils eligible for FSMs was impacting schools so there was an understanding of where their contribution was going. The Chair suggested that the plans in the report were put in place for the upcoming year, due to the time constraints, but Schools Forum would expect to see more detail in a future report.

Daniel Cundy (Senior Principal, AP Academies) mentioned that from an academies' perspective regarding trade union facilities time, they made a commitment to undertake union business, represent staff and the cost of that was internal so he questioned what the contribution was to LA. Peter Haylock explained that the contribution was to the wider, region trade union team.

Kathleen Williams referred to de-delegation and asked whether Academies were to be invoiced for just trade union facilities and FSMs? Tony Burton explained that the de-delegation in the budget was just for maintained schools, but that academies and free schools would need to be invoiced for their contributions.

Dave Colins (Brackenbury School) asked what could be done in terms of liaison with other LAs as at some schools within the Borough, 80% of students could live in a different LA and therefore would not be picked up within the Council's auto enrolment process. He also questioned what the consequences would be if large national multi academy trusts didn't like the changes and didn't contribute and this led to a shortfall, he added that it would be problematic if maintained schools were forced to make up shortfall. Peter Haylock was in agreement that a system needed to be implemented to work with neighbouring boroughs to identify pupils with FSM eligibility. Tony Burton added that they would not be asking maintained schools to contribute more.

The Chair suggested that in the summer term a group of Schools Forum members met and looked at the implications of the loss of funding that was to take place over the coming years.

RESOLVED That:

1. The January 2026 APT for the recommended model is submitted to the DfE for the 2026 to 2027 schools budget share. This is with the revised uplifted NFF rates detailed in paragraph 4 and in appendix 1 and an MFG value of minus 0.50% per pupil.
2. The Schools Forum confirmed agreement of the disapplication request to transfer 1% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2026/27 as part of the recommended model based on principles agreed in the Autumn Term Schools Forum meetings. The 1% transfer is now approved by Minister of State at £1.262m.
3. It is recommended that maintained school representatives at Schools Forum agree to the proposed 2026-27 de-delegation budget of £0.564m.
4. It is recommended that maintained school representatives at Schools Forum agree to the proposed 2026/27 Education Functions budget of £0.285m.
5. Schools Forum agree the approach to ensure statutory trade union facilities and free school meals eligibility costs are sustainable with contributions from school's budgets following further information and engagement from officers.

4. EARLY YEARS BUDGET 2026/27

Tony Burton (Head of Finance - People) presented the report which outlined the initial allocation of Early Years Block funding for 2026/27 including the extended entitlements for working parents of two-year-old children and children from age 9 months.

Jane Gleasure (Little People, Early Years PVI) mentioned that in the early years childcare sector, funding was stretched over the entire year, and this led to budgetary issues in the summer term. She explained that in 2027 there was to be a 21 week summer term but they would only get paid for 13 weeks. She added that there were fewer issues in the autumn term as more weeks calculated when funding was allocated. She commented that it made sense in a school system but not in the PVI sector as children were joining at all points of the year.

Tony Burton mentioned that this was something that lots of settings would experience, including schools, but that there was an added complication in the early years childcare sector. There would still be 38 weeks of funding available to providers but over a different profile.

Tony Burton told the Forum that there had been an update on calculator for schools on 3-4 year olds thresholds and maintained nursery schools for budget setting.

The Chair asked whether the budget setting was based on census data for autumn and spring. Tony Burton confirmed that the budget used Department for Education (DfE) data. He added that for 2026-27 a termly census model will be used. He added that the LA has always provided its funding on a termly basis but now the DfE would be doing the same, whereas previously they had been funding on a yearly basis for some entitlements and funding. It was agreed that Officers would work with early years providers to understand the implications of the termly funding change on their settings.

RESOLVED That:

1. Schools Forum noted the engagement, and briefings were undertaken with schools and Early Years providers from 12th January 2026 ahead of Schools Forum on 20th January.
2. Schools Forum approved the proposed deployment of central budget in Table 4 above and noted the impact of the impact of passthrough requirement on available central funds from 2026/27.
3. Schools Forum noted the proposed 2026/27 Early Year budget across all entitlements including the revised base rates, deprivation and local formulas proposed.
4. Schools Forum noted the change in termly funding proposed from April 2026 to align termly funding paid to providers on the same basis as funding to be received by the local authority. Funding would now be provided to all settings on the basis of 13 weeks in the summer, 14 weeks in the autumn and 11 weeks in the spring for all the early years funding streams. This was a change from the 12.66 weeks per term used to calculate termly funding per the census and headcount in 2025/26.

Meeting started: 2:00pm
Meeting ended: 2:59pm

Chair

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