

EAST SUSSEX Schools' Forum

Minutes of a meeting of the Schools' Forum held remotely with Microsoft Teams on Friday 11th July 2025

MEMBERS

Primary

Richard Blakeley (Parkside Primary)
Laura Cooper (St John's CE School)
Vicky Anderson (Catsfeld CEP School)

Primary Governors

Peter Hughes (South Malling Primary School)
Robert French (Weald Federation)

Secondary

Emily Winslade (Priory School)
Helen Key (Chailey School)

Secondary Governor

Allan Pinner (Uckfield College)

Academies

James Freeston (King Offa Primary Academy)
Gavin Bailey (Swale Academy Trust)
Sam Cornelius (University of Brighton Academies Trust)
Zoe James (MARK Education Trust)-Chair
Sally Hill (Aquinas Trust)

Special Academy

Kirsty Prawanna (Glyne Gap)

Pupil Referral Unit

Neil Miller (LSEAT)

Non School Members

Phil Clarke (Trade Union representative)
Joanna Sanchez (Diocese of Arundel and Brighton)
Jon Gilbert (Diocese of Chichester)
Hannah Caldwell (Post 16 East Sussex College Group)

ESCC representatives

Cllr Bob Standley (Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability)
Elizabeth Funge Assistant Director Education
Nathan Caine (H of Ed SEND & Safeguarding)
Honor Green (BSD Finance)
Sarah Rice (Finance Manager - Schools Accountant)
Edward Beale (Finance Manager - Education and Schools)
Kirsten Coe (Funding Manager - Reporting and Systems)
Sarah Allen (Clerk)

1 Welcome and Apologies (Note)

- 1.1 It was confirmed the meeting was quorate, recognising the apologies below.
Jon Gilbert
Sam Cornelius

Welcoming new Forum members Robert French and Allan Pinner

2 Agenda Item 2: Minutes of previous meeting

- 2.1 The minutes for the meeting held on the 10th January 2025 were agreed as a true record and will be signed by the Chair.

3. Agenda Item 3: Matters Arising and declaration of interests.

- 3.1 Matters arising - none
3.2 Declaration of interest -none

4. Agenda Item 4: Notional SEND Budget Deficits (Approval)

4.1 Recommendations:

Nathan Caine led on this paper which is following up on work carried out in conjunction with the High Needs Working group. The purpose was to look at ways of supporting schools with disproportionate numbers of pupils with EHCP's whose provision has cost for individual schools above the average notional SEN Budget cost threshold. Recommendations were made to allocate funding to all schools who are disproportionately affected by above local average costs to their notional SEND budgets, based on the number of children with an EHCP at the January Census count.

4.3 Comments:

It was queried that with smaller schools having smaller budgets, will they be provided with a sufficient allocation to make up the difference in the notional budget?

This was discussed, and while some schools' proportion of the notional SEN budget is above average, the current model will aim to place sufficient resources to at least meet the first £6k of costs in an EHCP to all schools. This, combined with individual top-up funding should be sufficient to cover the costs associated with statutory provision.

A question was raised about whether a school can request a recalculation of the formula if their circumstances change.

The model will be utilise the count of pupils from January which means that schools will get full costs for children who may leave their school before the end of the financial year. There will be children who are placed after the count for whom schools would not be funded, but this should balance out. The aim of the model is to be a simple calculation and to move away from the current process which is burdensome for schools. was made clear that schools are always encouraged to engage in ongoing conversations throughout the year should any challenges arise.

A question was raised about whether this could lead to moving or borrowing funds from the High Needs Block (HNB).

There is a risk, and is the possibility of this is being actively considered. It is possible that this issue will return to the Schools Forum in the summer or autumn for further discussion around inter-block transfers.

It was suggested that due to the uncertainty surrounding this proposal, it may be more appropriate to revisit the idea in 12 months' time, accompanied by a detailed analysis to support any future decisions. This was agreed.

Members were requested to vote and approve the Notional SEND Budget Deficits adjustments. Results as below:

Notional SEND Budget Deficits	No. of 'Yes'	No. of 'No'
Primary	10	1
Secondary	10	1
All through	10	1

5. Agenda Item 5: High Needs Top Up rates for Special Facilities - Approval

5.1 Recommendations:

Nathan Caine led on this paper. This is in relation to a recent review of the current High Needs top up funding rates for Special Facilities and recommendations for revised top-ups were made.

5.2 Comments:

It was noted that values in the table are generally higher at secondary level. However, the rate for physical disability (PD) is higher in primary than in secondary.

It was also highlighted that the designated Physical Disability facility at secondary level has not been admitting pupils with physical disabilities for some time. As part of this ongoing review, discussions will take place with that facility to explore how their provision can be adapted and potentially re-purposed to meet current needs.

ACTION: Nathan to review the table in respect of the Secondary Phase ASD rate and amend the value if applicable.

It was questioned whether the additional cost of £57k is based on an increased number of commissioned places? it was confirmed that the £57k relates to existing commissioned places, not an increase in numbers.

It was queried as to when conversations regarding designation will take place and who will have the final say over which autism designation units will have. The designations are set and this will be an individual child level instead of designation of the facility, which is how the process currently operates.

It was questioned as to what the process is for ongoing moderation and monitoring of the reintegration model to ensure it is being used for its intended purpose? It was clarified that there will be regular visits to the facilities and the facilities will be required to submit reports detailing the support in place for the children.

A member inquired what positive impact is anticipated from the additional £57k on the way these schools are operating. There is no explicit focus on mainstream integration within this funding. However, as part of the review, feedback from ISOS highlighted what is working well and identified positive outcomes. The review concluded that our facilities are currently well funded and that the existing financial model adequately supports their needs, with no significant additional funding required at this time.

It was requested that reassurance be provided that funding for this is not being taken from other departments. It was noted that the SEN funding envelope is currently under significant pressure nationally. We will not know our High Needs Block funding allocation until the spring and we are also awaiting the details of a SEND White Paper in the autumn which may have an impact on this.

Members were requested to vote and approve the High Needs Top Up rates for Special Facilities. Results as below:

High Needs Top Up rates for Special Facilities	No. of 'Yes'	No. of 'No'
	9	1

6. Agenda Item 6: Schools Forum Membership 25/26 - Approval.

6.1 Recommendations:

Ed Beale led on this agenda item.

It was explained, to forum, that Zoe has indicated she is happy to continue to be chair from Sept. Forum members were asked to approve/agree to Zoe.

Ed also explained that James indicated that he was happy to continue as Vice Chair. Forum members were asked to approve this and it was agreed.

The Schools Forum approved Zoe to serve as Chair for the forthcoming year.
The Schools Forum approved James to serve as Vice Chair for the forthcoming year.

6.2 Comments:

It was raised that the Schools Forum attendance list should be updated to reflect that there is currently no maintained special school representative and no second representative for special academies.

Due to changes within special schools, Kirsty Prawanna will no longer attend schools' forum. Jonty Clarke will represent the special schools going forward. Kirsty will send an email to confirm this change.

The SEND membership, including representation from special schools, will be reviewed to ensure appropriate level of representation.

7. AOB

Nathan Caine requested additional members to join the High Needs Working Subgroup.

Robert French has requested to join the High Needs Working Subgroup.

Special schools have agreed to provide a list of potential representatives.

A formal request for membership will be sent out.

It has been noted that Jon Gilbert has resigned as the Diocese representative.

Meeting concluded at 09:23am

Next meeting - To be held Friday 12th September 2025