

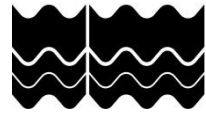
East Sussex County Council Schools Forum

Friday 11th July 2025

08.30

Remote Meeting

East Sussex
County Council



Agenda

Item	Heading	Paper	Lead	Item for
1.	Welcome and Apologies	N	Chair	Note
2.	Minutes of previous meeting 10th Jan 2025	Y	Chair	Approval
3.	Matters Arising and Declaration of Interests	N	Chair	Discussion
4.	Notional SEND Budget Deficits	Y	Nathan Caine	Approval
5.	Top Up Rates for Specialist Facilities	Y	Nathan Caine	Approval
6.	Schools Forum Membership 25/26 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Election of Chair and Vice Chair	N	Ed Beale	Approval
	AOB			

Next Meeting: Friday 12th September 2025, 8.30am, Venue Remote

This page is intentionally left blank

EAST SUSSEX SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of a meeting of the Schools' Forum held remotely with Microsoft Teams on 10 January 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)

Secondary

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

Secondary Governor

Monica Whitehead (Claverham Community College)

Special School

Vacancy

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)
Carolyn Fair (Director of children services)
Elizabeth Funge Assistant Director Education
Nathan Caine (H of Ed SEND & Safeguarding)
Honor Green (Head of Finance for Children's Services & Schools)

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.

Neil Miller- (Guy Walsh attended as a substitute)
James Freeston
Peter Hughes

2 Agenda Item 2: Minutes Of Previous Meeting 15 November 2024 (Approval)

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

3. Agenda Item 3: Matters Arising and Declaration of Interests (Discussion)

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

4. Agenda Item 4: Growth Fund / Falling Rolls Fund -Gary Langford (Approval)

4.1 Recommendations:

The Schools Forum was asked to approve an allocation of £868,100 for the 2025/26 Growth Fund.

Schools' Forum was updated on spend in the 2024/25 financial year and to seek approval for funding in the 2025/26 financial year.

4.2 Comments:

There were no comments.

Members were requested to vote and approve Growth Fund/Falling Rolls Fund. Results as below:

Number voting 'Yes'	Number voting 'No'	Number of abstentions
10	0	0

5. Agenda Item 5 - DSG Budget 2025/26 - Edward Beale (Information Only)

5.1 Recommendation:

Schools' Forum were asked to note the DSG allocation for schools, Central School Services, High Needs and Early Years Blocks

This was to provide information on the 2025/26 DSG allocations that have been allocated, to the LA, from the DfE.

5.2 Comments:

It was questioned whether the East Sussex Academy Trust funding would be taken from the High Needs Block funding for the Alternative Provision.

Action: Ed will send out a confirmation email, to the AP representative, regarding the figures stated in the paper confirming funding arrangements for them.

There were queries regarding the allocation of £13.3 million for SEN support and £3.3 million for education out of school, as stated in the document. Members asked what these figures comprise of. It was clarified that the amount relates to services provided to local schools or to direct provision for children with SEND who are unable to attend school.

A question was raised about why the post-16 commissioned places top-up funding shows no change for 2025/26, taking into consideration that rates are expected to increase next year. It was clarified that the current year's budget is projected to be underspent meaning the increase can be accommodated within the budget that has already been allocated.

Members also enquired whether the £2 billion increase in funding for schools will have an impact. Although increases are expected, we are working on planning and forecasting. School-level budgets are expected to be circulated in January and February, once they have been approved by the Department for Education (DfE).

6. Agenda Item 6 - DSG Central School Services Block 25/26- Edward Beale (Approval)

6.1 Recommendation

Schools Forum are asked to note and approve the proposals for the Central School Services Block for 2025/26

This is in relation to the funding of on-going responsibilities and the Historic Commitments which is funding that LA's are given, from the DfE, for specific areas of spend.

6.2 Comments

There was a question regarding the decision to retain the historic commitments funding to offset High Needs block pressures in 2025/26, as this information hadn't been provided at the time of the discussion around de-delegation. It was noted that the final DSG figures hadn't been released by the date of the forum at which the decision was made.

A question was raised asking for clarification on what the budget was for in relation to 'Places in independent schools for non-SEND pupils'.

Action: Ed will confirm, via email, to GW

It was mentioned that it has been challenging to explain to headteachers why certain decisions were made at the Schools' Forum. This comment was acknowledged, and it was reiterated that the LA had circulated a communication to all schools to explain the decisions made at the forum.

Members were requested to vote and approve DSG Central School Service Block 25/26. Results as below:

Number voting 'Yes'	Number voting 'No'	Number of abstentions
8	2	2

7. Agenda Item 7 - DSG Budget 2025/26 - Early Years - Jane Spice (Approval)

7.1 Recommendation:

Schools Forum is asked to note the changes to the early years education entitlements as a result of the government's early years funding reforms, which will take effect in stages from April 2025 to September 2025 and approve the Early Years DSG Budget.

There have been various additions / changes made to the Early Years DSG budget, for 2025/26, by the DfE and so a paper is being presented here.

7.2 Comments

A question was raised as to why East Sussex's funding rate is below the national average. The funding formula, which includes the area cost assessment, results in East Sussex not doing so well in this assessment.

It was asked if the funding provided for the holiday period comes from the funding stated. It was clarified that the funding covers 38 weeks of the year. For full-day care provision, the funding is stretched to cover the holiday periods.

Members were requested to vote and approve DSG Budget 2025/26-Early years.

Number voting 'Yes'	Number voting 'No'	Number of abstentions
11	0	0

8. Agenda Item 8 - High Needs (EHCP) Top Ups 2025/26- Nathan Caine (Approval)

8.1 Recommendations:

That Schools' Forum agrees the proposed uplifts to mainstream school, special school and FE College High Needs Top-Ups.

This is in relation to uplifting Top Up rates for Mainstream Schools, Special Schools and FE Colleges for 2025/26.

8.2 Comments

A question was raised to for paragraph 2.9 regarding whether there is any guidance for schools on the level of staffing required, depending on the special educational needs of pupils.

It was clarified that:

Mainstream schools: The matrix addresses the level of provision needed.

Special schools: The figures calculated took into account the broad level of staff-pupil ratios needed for different levels of need.

There is an expectation to establish how special schools will support the mainstream offer. We aim to work collaboratively with both special and mainstream schools to provide broader support.

There were questions raised regarding paragraph 2.9 about the plans for developing systems for schools that require exceptional funding which schools currently request from the local authority. In line with recommendations from Isos, we will be drawing up proposals for a peer-led system to look at these which will aim to establish transparency and equity across all schools.

It was enquired whether the top-up for special facilities attached to mainstream school impact the budgets that have been presented. More detailed work is needed and this will be brought to the High Needs working group for further consideration.

The top-up for special schools will be implemented in April 2025. Both mainstream and special schools will be included within the same financial year.

Concerns were raised regarding the health costs schools are being asked to meet and why they are being drawn from the education budget. The cost of equipment has increased. Discussions with health colleagues are ongoing and this issue has been raised.

Members were requested to vote Mainstream Top Up.

Number voting 'Yes'	Number voting 'No'	Number of abstentions
11	0	0

Members were requested to vote Special School Top Up

Number voting 'Yes'	Number voting 'No'	Number of abstentions
9	0	2

Members were requested to vote FE Colleges Top Up

Number voting 'Yes'	Number voting 'No'	Number of abstentions
10	0	1

AOB

Nathan Caine raised a request for members to join the High Needs working group. Members of the Schools' Forum should contact Nathan if they would like to be a part of this working group.

Meeting concluded at 09:34
Next Meeting -to be held Friday 11th July

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to: Schools' Forum

Date of meeting: 11 July 2025

Report By: Carolyn Fair

Title: Notional SEND Budget Deficits

Purpose: To agree proposals to address deficits in notional SEND budgets in mainstream schools.

Recommendations:

That Schools' Forum agrees the proposed funding transfer to schools with an identified deficit in Notional SEND Budget as a result of funding the first £6k of EHCPs.

1. Background

- 1.1 All mainstream schools have, within their budget share, an element of funding known as the Notional SEND Budget'. This budget should be used towards the costs of fulfilling schools' duty to use their 'best endeavours' to secure that special educational provision for their pupils with SEN is made. The notional SEN budget is not a budget that is separate from a school's overall budget. It is an identified amount within a maintained school's delegated budget share or an academy's general annual grant.
- 1.2 The [Operational Guide for Notional Budgets](#) (OG) specifies that: *amongst other expectations set out in the SEND code of practice, mainstream schools are expected to:*
- *meet the costs of special educational provision for pupils identified as on SEN support in accordance with the SEND code of practice*
 - *contribute towards the costs of special educational provision for pupils with high needs (most of whom have education, health and care plans (EHC plans)), up to the high needs cost threshold set by the regulations (currently £6,000 per pupil per annum). This cost threshold applies to the additional costs of provision, above the costs of the basic provision for all pupils in the school. High needs top-up funding is provided above this threshold on a per-pupil basis by the local authority that commissions or agrees the placement*
- 1.3 The OG goes on to state that: *It is important to note that the notional SEN budget is not intended to provide £6,000 for every pupil with SEN, as most such pupils' support will cost less than that. Nor is the notional SEN budget intended to provide a specific amount per pupil for those with lower additional support costs.*
- 1.4 Through discussions with individual schools, it is evident that some schools (especially small primary schools) with a disproportionate number of children with EHCPs are finding that they are unable to meet the costs of the first £6k of the cumulative costs of children placed with them. This is placing significant financial pressure on some schools and acting as a disincentive to including CYP with EHCPs in their local schools.

- 1.5 Although the HNB is not intended to offset notional SEND budgets, there is a case for addressing the challenge set out above. Firstly, there is a legal duty for the provision set out within EHCPs to be met and the funding for this comes from the HNB. Although the new top-up values do address the overall costs, they all assume schools will contribute £6k to each child's plan. Secondly, where schools are unable to make provision set out in EHCPs, this increases the risk that a child may need to be placed in a special school at greater cost.
- 1.6 Furthermore, there is an imperative to ensure that we explore every option to remove disincentives to including children with SEND in their mainstream schools and support those schools who are taking more than the average number of children with EHCPs.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 Under the current arrangements, where a school feels that they have insufficient resources to make provision outlined in an EHCP, the SEND Quality of Education Team will work with them around their notional SEND budget and make recommendations around addressing shortfall for individual pupils. In some cases, this will result in the school being allocated additional funding to meet statutory obligations.
- 2.2 Although there is an 'exceptions rule' around funding, the current formula attached to this means that it is very difficult for schools to qualify for extra resources. Even if they did, there is no established protocol about how additional funding should be calculated.
- 2.3 Over the last two terms, the High Needs Working Group have looked at different ways in which we could revise the current arrangements to create a fairer system for addressing any inequalities in funding. The subgroup agreed that any future arrangements should be:
- Transparent
 - Equitable
 - Based on a formula
 - Applied without the need to request
 - Promote inclusive practice
- 2.4 Initially, consideration was given to adjusting the local formula upon which the Notional SEND Budget is determined. Although this would have the impact of redistributing resources within schools, it would not bring any additional resource into schools. On balance, it was decided not to pursue this any further.
- 2.5 Through the data we collect locally, we can see the number of EHCPs by school and compare this to individual Notional SEND Budget allocations. From this, we can determine the average cost spent across different groups of schools by the first £6k of every EHCP and identify schools who are expected to spend above the phase average for their EHCP cohort. The table below shows the number of schools from each phase with a 'Notional SEND Budget deficit' and the cost of rebalancing school budgets to bring all in line with the phase average:

Phase	Average cost (for first £6k of all EHCPs)	Average % of Notional SEND Budget	Number of Schools in Deficit	Cost of rebalancing
Primary	£29,542	21%	50	£584,274
Secondary	£123,652	14%	11	£580,949
All-Through	£140,000	13%	1	£19,530

- 2.6 Although this work was originally initiated by discussions with small primary schools (i.e. those with less than 150 pupils), the High Needs Working Group decided that the recommendation should come to Schools Forum for consideration of this being applied to all schools. Appendix 1 shows a breakdown of what this would mean by school.
- 2.7 Should this be agreed, it is proposed that the number of EHCPs would be taken from the census count in January each year and that any adjustment is made in April for all schools who are eligible. Although this would mean that some schools would have a potential pressure should they admit further children with EHCPs after April, there would be no recoupment of funding for children who leave mid-year (or at the end of phase transfer).
- 2.8 So that there is absolute transparency of this process, the High Needs Working Group agree that this should be the only process through which there is redress of funding around the Notional SEND budget. Discussions around exceptional funding for the cost of provision for individual children with EHCPs would continue to be held directly between individual schools and the LA.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Schools' Forum is recommended to approve:
- a) A transfer of funding to primary schools whose expenditure on the first £6k of each EHCP on roll would take them above phase average;
 - b) A transfer of funding to secondary schools whose expenditure on the first £6k of each EHCP on roll would take them above phase average;
 - c) A transfer of funding to all-through schools whose expenditure on the first £6k of each EHCP on roll would take them above phase average.
- 3.2 These recommendations are made in the acknowledgement that any government reforms around SEND funding may render these null and void in future years.

Carolyn Fair

Director Children's Services

Contact Officer: Nathan Caine - Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding

Tel. No: (01273) 482401

Email: nathan.caine@eastsussex.gov.uk

Primary Phase

School Name	NOR (Lowest to Highest)	Potential Funding
St Michael's Primary School	74	£30,912
Laughton Community Primary School	76	£2,459
Fletching Church of England Primary School	79	£36,559
Phoenix Academy	79	£9,375
St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School	81	£12,926
All Saints' and St Richard's Church of England Primary School	86	£15,255
Crowhurst CofE Primary School	90	£4,076
Danehill Church of England Primary School	94	£6,151
Frant Church of England Primary School	96	£3,983
Stonegate Church of England Primary School	96	£7,585
Punnetts Town Community Primary and Nursery School	99	£3,869
Icklesham Church of England Primary School and Nursery	99	£16,524
Catsfield Church of England Primary School	105	£5,631
Chailey St Peter's Church of England Primary School	106	£13,661
Bonnors CofE School	106	£564
Ticehurst and Flimwell Church of England Primary School	106	£2,798
Dallington Church of England Primary School	109	£1,526
Barcombe Church of England Primary School	125	£30,864
Netherfield CofE Primary School	126	£11,694
Burwash CofE School	161	£2,979
High Cliff Academy	163	£8,153
Forest Row Church of England Primary School	164	£13,926
Dudley Infant Academy	167	£3,141
White House Academy	191	£51,967
Hellingly Community Primary School	196	£6,343
Guestling Bradshaw Church of England Primary School	197	£15,419
Sedlescombe Church of England Primary School	197	£1,210
Newick Church of England Primary School	204	£9,516
Rotherfield Primary School	205	£5,584
Maynards Green Community Primary School	208	£3,184
Parkside Community Primary School	208	£10,182
Western Road Community Primary School	210	£9,054
All Saints CofE Junior Academy	211	£16,943
Rocks Park Primary School	215	£884
St Marys Catholic Primary School	217	£14,976
Wivelsfield Primary School	220	£8,408

Harlands Primary School	220	£13,837
All Saints Church of England Primary School, Bexhill	223	£748
Pashley Down Infant School	234	£4,198
Parkland Junior School	243	£665
Wallands Community Primary and Nursery School	265	£5,545
Chyngton School	351	£14,731
Shinewater Primary School	383	£6,231
Ashdown Primary School	400	£3,855
Harbour Primary and Nursery School	413	£6,371
Willingdon Primary School	418	£25,886
Battle and Langton Church of England Primary School	420	£31,674
Telscombe Cliffs Academy	531	£15,591
Polegate Primary School	625	£48,826
Little Common School	629	£7,838
		£584,274

	Total No. of Schools receiving exceptional funding	No. of schools with NOR < 150	No. of schools with NOR between 151 & 240	No. of schools with NOR >240	Total Funding
Avg (21%) Threshold	50	19	20	11	£584,274

Secondary Phase

School Name	NOR	Potential Funding Due
Uplands Academy	705	£47,706
Robertsbridge Community College	751	£45,093
Chailey School	869	£76,825
Peacehaven Community School	910	£89,495
St Richard's Catholic College	1034	£52,604
Willingdon Community School	1091	£110,601
Priory School	1167	£100,263
Heathfield Community College	1187	£18,910
Seaford Head School	1221	£25,603
Uckfield College	1300	£1,357
Beacon Academy	1342	£12,491
		£580,949

	Total No. of Schools receiving exceptional funding	No. of schools with NOR < 700	No. of schools with NOR between 701 & 1000	No. of schools with NOR >1000	Total Funding
Avge (14%) Threshold	11	0	4	7	£580,949

All Through Phase

School Name	NOR	Potential Funding Due
The Cavendish	1,325	£19,530

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to:	Schools' Forum
Date of meeting:	11 July 2025
Report By:	Carolyn Fair
Title:	Proposed Top-Up rates for Specialist Facilities
Purpose:	To agree the proposed uplift for EHCPs top-ups for Specialist Facilities, following a review of provision and costings.

Recommendations:

That Schools' Forum agrees the proposed uplifts to top-up rates for Specialist Facilities for 2025/26

1. Background

- 1.1 As highlighted in the January meeting of Schools' Forum, a review of top-ups for specialist facilities (also known as resourced provisions) remained the only outstanding area for consideration for 25/26. This report represents the culmination in our review of the funding for state-run provision in East Sussex.
- 1.2 Over the last two terms, we have been working with ISOS Partnership, who undertook the review of special school top-ups, to complete a similar piece of work for us to review and make recommendations for specialist facilities across the county. This work is, now, complete and the recommendations from this piece of work are set out in section 2 of this report.
- 1.3 The proposals have been discussed at the High Needs Working Group (a subgroup of Schools' Forum) and the recommendations made in this report are those that were agreed through the subgroup.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 Specialist attached to mainstream schools have been established in East Sussex for a number of years and provide a resource for children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) whose needs are greater than that of children with mainstream EHCPs, but who would benefit from mainstream provision. A full list of the current specialist facilities is set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Due to the disproportionate number of children in the specialist sector across East Sussex, it has been our policy over the last three years to expand the number of facilities so that more children can receive enhanced provision in their local communities. Specialist facilities also bring additional expertise to the school as a whole and are seen by schools as an integral part of their provision. Exploring the development of specialist facilities attached to mainstream schools is part of the national policy that we are exploring through the SEND&AP Change Programme.

- 2.3 Similar to special schools, specialist facilities receive ‘place’ funding (up front) for the number of places that are commissioned by the LA in a facility (equivalent to £10k per place - £6k from the HNB plus AWPU) and then a top-up for each child on roll. This is usually between 8 and 16 children, although some have over 20. Children are placed in a specialist facility by the LA in a similar way to how children in special schools are placed, but all children in a school can benefit from the specialist staff that these bring.
- 2.4 As with special schools, all specialist facilities have a single-value top up (SVT) for each child on roll based on the needs of the child and the phase of the facility. The SVT is an aggregate model meaning that, although the needs of individual children will vary (some costing more, some less), the overall costs will balance out. The current top-up rates are set out in the table below:

Identified Need	Primary Top-up Rate (annual)	Secondary Top-up Rate (annual)
ASD	£10,800	£12,000
SLCN	£5,400	£6,600
PD	£10,800	£9,000
SPLD	N/A	£6,000

The variation in primary and secondary settings is due to the additional resource that it takes to support the inclusion of children across different mainstream subject area classrooms.

- 2.5 Over the last two terms, a range of engagement activities have been undertaken with existing specialist facilities, including online and face-to-face meetings as well as on-site visits to five facilities by the ISOS lead. In relation to funding, the feedback from the schools was:
- Most wanted to retain the SVT system as it provided for certainty in the planning and retention of staff
 - A route for exceptional funding should continue for children with higher level needs than the facility would normally provide for
 - The difference in primary and secondary facility funding does reflect the additional challenges in supporting children into mainstream classes in secondary schools.
- 2.6 When undertaking national comparisons, the funding rates for specialist facilities in ES are favourable compared to those in other areas which suggests that facilities are funded (broadly) correctly to meet the needs of the children. However, during the site visits, it is evident that there is some inconsistencies in the level to which different schools are prioritising reintegration of children into mainstream classrooms which, therefore, has an impact on their onward placements.
- 2.7 In light of the above, and to promote the drive towards inclusion, it is proposed that an additional element is included within all top-up rates to a) support inclusion within mainstream classes and b) facilitate planning between mainstream primary and secondary schools at points of transition. If agreed, the SLA with facilities would be updated to reflect this.
- 2.8 For simplicity moving forward, it is proposed that there are four groupings of facility, each with a different SVT for primary and secondary facilities. Two different levels of provision for autistic children are being put forward to reflect the additional needs of those children with autism who may also present behaviours that challenge. The

proposal would be to confirm with specialist facilities which cohort of children they best fit with and all children would be paid at this new rate.

- 2.9 So as to ensure parity with mainstream, state-run special and FE, all the costs have been based upon indicative teacher/LSA-to-pupil ratios and include the costs of a facility lead, which is specified within SLAs. The table below sets out the revised SVT for each of the areas of need:

Identified Need	New Primary Top-up Rate (annual)	Inclusion /reintegration uplift (included within)	New Secondary Top-up Rate (annual)	Inclusion /reintegration uplift (included within)
Language and Communication	£5663	£500	£6741.20	£500
PD	£10981.50	£1000	£12059.20	£1000
Autism	£8751.00	£700	£8751.00	£700
Autism (enhanced)	£10981.50	£700	£12059.20	£700

- 2.10 Although subject to discussions around the associated need of each facility, it is expected that full-year costs of the changes outlined above will be £57,000.

- 2.11 If agreed, these changes will be applied from 1 September 2025.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Schools' Forum is recommended to approve the proposed changes to specialist facility (resourced bases) top-ups as outlined above.

Carolyn Fair

Director Children's Services

Contact Officer: Nathan Caine - Head of Education: SEND and Safeguarding

Tel. No: (01273) 482401

Email: nathan.caine@eastsussex.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1

Primary:	Category
All Saints CE Primary School, Bexhill (<i>new provision Sep-22</i>)	ASD
Ark Little Ridge Primary Academy	SLCN
Churchwood Primary Academy	ASD
Denton Community Primary School and Nursery	ASD
Grovelands Community School	ASD
Manor Primary School	ASD
Meridian Community Primary School and Nursery	ASD
Wallands Community Primary School	SLCN and ASD
West St. Leonards Primary Academy	PD
Secondary:	
Bexhill High Academy	ASD
Hailsham Community College	ASD
Heathfield Community College	ASD
Peacehaven Community School	ASD
Priory School	SPLD - with associated additional SEN e.g. autism or anxiety
Robertsbridge Community College	SPLD - with associated additional SEN e.g. autism or anxiety
The Eastbourne Academy	ASD
The Hastings Academy	SLCN
The St. Leonards Academy	PD
Uckfield College	ASD

This page is intentionally left blank