

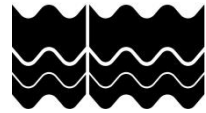
East Sussex County Council Schools Forum

Friday 12th Sept 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 11th July 2025	Y	Chair	Approval
3.	Matters Arising and Declaration of Interests	N	Chair	Discussion
4.	De delegation	Y	Honor Green	Approval
5.	High Needs Funding Update	Y	Nathan Caine	Information
6.	NJC Pay Award 2025/26 - Update	Y	Hannah Grevatt / Ruth Wilson	Information
	AOB			

Next Meeting: Friday 14th November 2025, 8.30am, Venue Remote

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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)

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

DRAFT

Report to: East Sussex Schools' Forum

Date of meeting: 12 September 2025

Report By: Carolyn Fair

Title: De-delegating budgets for Primary and Secondary maintained schools

Purpose: To advise members of Schools' Forum which budgets were de-delegated by schools in 2025/26 and seek approval on de-delegated budgets for 2026/27.

Recommendations:

1. The Primary and Secondary maintained Schools' Forum Representatives are asked to decide which services should be provided centrally by the Authority for 2026/27.

1. Background

- 1.1 Since 2013/14 the Department for Education (DfE) has required that Schools' Forum agree to de-delegate budgets for certain services provided centrally by the Local Authority (LA). The DfE have confirmed that this arrangement will continue for financial year 2025/26.
- 1.2 The funding is automatically delegated to Academies who can choose to access some of the services by purchasing from East Sussex Services to Schools or source services from other providers.
- 1.3 The services to be considered for de-delegation in 2026/27 are shown below and Schools' Forum can agree to de-delegate a service in 2026/27 where it chose not to in 2025/26.
 - Contingency
 - Behaviour Support Services (please see appendix B)
 - Support for ethnic minority pupils (please see appendix B)
 - Administration of free school meals
 - Jury service and union business
 - Headteacher Partnership (please see appendix C)
- 1.4 For 2025/26, the following decisions were agreed at Schools' Forum on de-delegated services.

	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
	De-delegated in 2025/26	De-delegated in 2025/26
Contingency	Yes	Yes
Behaviour Support Services	Yes	No
<i>Support for ethnic minority pupils*</i>	Yes	No
Administration of Free school meals	Yes	Yes
Jury service and union business	Yes	Yes
Head Teacher Partnership	Yes	Yes

*subject to a 2 year commitment for 2024/25

- 1.5 Only members of the Schools' Forum representing maintained primary and secondary schools are entitled to vote on the 2026/27 proposals. In accordance with regulations, representatives of each phase will vote separately, however it is possible that a decision not to de-delegate in one phase may affect the viability of provision overall and the withdrawal of the service for all phases.

2. The Services

- 2.1 Descriptions of the services which can be provided centrally to maintained schools are set out below in Appendix A B and C.
- 2.2 The De-delegated funding for 2025/26 to maintained schools for these services is summarised in Appendix D.
- 2.3 The calculation of amounts to be de-delegated from each school must be linked to factors within the funding formula. The calculations, applied in 2025/26, will continue for 2026/27 using the following basis:

De-delegated Heading	Formula Factor
Contingency	Per Pupil Amount
Behaviour Support Services	20% Per Pupil Amount 11% Free School Meals 22% Free School Meal Ever6 22% IDACI 25% Prior Attainment
Support for Ethnic Minority Pupils	50% Per Pupil 50% Per EAL Pupil
Administration of Free School Meals	Free School Meal Numbers
Jury service and union business	Per Pupil Amount
Head Teacher Partnership	Lump Sum Amount

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 The Maintained Primary and Secondary representatives on the Schools' Forum are requested to agree the services to be de-delegated in 2026/27, as per paragraph 1.3.

Carolyn Fair

Director Children's Services

Contact Officer: Ed Beale

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Description of De-delegated services

Appendix A

The framework for de-delegated budgets is set within the principles of shared responsibility between schools for all children and mutual support across all schools. The model allows for all maintained schools to have certainty of access to support at the point of need from services that continue to operate and provide support in a well managed and cost effective way.

Contingencies

Contingencies can be held for a limited range of circumstances

- Exceptional unforeseen costs which it would be unreasonable to expect governing bodies to plan for
- Schools in financial difficulties
- Additional costs relating to new, re-organised and closing schools
- Managing extra ordinary personnel matters

It is recommended that maintained schools continue to fund a contingency which will be administered by the Local Authority for the approved purposes.

If schools decide not to have a central contingency, they will need to ensure that all schools are able to make any extraordinary payments this can put significant additional strain on individual school budget shares.

Administration of Free School Meals

The County Council's free school meals service enables schools to meet legal requirements relating to the provision of free school meals without the administrative burden.

The free school meals service is located within the Admissions and Transport Team and as a Local Authority, we have direct links with Government Departments (DfE and DWP). This enables us to determine eligibility for free school meals with one short telephone call from schools with the vast majority of individual applications only taking 30 seconds to process. Individual schools do not have access to the checking service meaning eligibility would need to be carried out at school level as a paper exercise.

We are able to give guidance on all aspects of eligibility and provide accurate data to support schools. Weekly changes are reported to schools securely and full entitlement reports are sent to individual schools. We will ensure that free schools meals data is accurate for the census returns.

NB Academies can buy into this service through Services to Schools.

Jury service and union business

This central budget currently pays for supply cover when members of a school's staff undertake Trade Union Duties or Jury Service. The amount each school may have to pay can vary significantly from year to year, whereas across the County the amount is more likely to be relatively stable. The benefit to maintained schools of pooling these budgets is that schools know exactly how much they will pay each year instead of facing the prospect of additional costs which are out of the schools control and which could present a significant budget pressure.

For primary schools, this budget also includes the costs of administering the County Funded Supply internal insurance schemes.

Behavioural Support, Support for Minority Ethnic Pupils and HeadTeacher Partnership–

For discussions around these areas of de-delegation please see appendices B & C.

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1. Background

- 1.1** From April 2014, funding arrangements for centrally held Behaviour Support Services (BSS) and services for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EALS) were placed under the jurisdiction of Schools' Forum to decide whether the historic budgets could be pooled by the Local Authority or distributed to maintained schools by formula.
- 1.2** The framework for de-delegated budgets is set within the principles of shared responsibility between schools for all pupils and mutual support across all schools. The model allows for all schools who de-delegate funding to have certainty of access to support at the point of need from services that continue to operate and provide support in the most cost-effective way.
- 1.3** Behaviour support sits within the Team Around the School and Setting (TASS) and is delivered through a broader agenda of inclusion support. The TASS Inclusion Advisers provide support to all maintained primary schools through delivering a range of interventions to support schools and settings around emerging needs including social, emotional and mental health needs. TASS Inclusion support cohorts of pupils, as well the individual (exceptional circumstances), where the emerging need is challenging behaviour. Using the TASS 'Menu of Support', the Inclusion Team operate in the preventative space implementing 'Trauma Informed' strategies and approaches.
- 1.4** The Inclusion and Alternative Provision team will provide support for secondary and primary aged child at risk of Permanent Exclusion through the Inclusion Partnerships (secondary) or Behaviour Support Networks (primary). A team of Inclusion Partnership Advisers are available to support with children at risk of PEX, schools can refer for support as well as applying to the primary and secondary partnership forums.
- 1.5** Support from the TASS team is bespoke to the needs of the school and includes whole school expert advice, guidance, training, which builds capacity and knowledge. TASS use Locality Multi Agency (LMSG) data analysis to offer targeted support for schools and pupils, which sits alongside whole school approaches to behaviour and inclusion. Pupils who present challenging behaviour often also present attendance difficulties. The TASS Inclusion offer is supported by the statutory, core and traded attendance offer, consisting of termly attendance meetings, forums, and the school attendance single point of contact (SPOC). Both Primary and Secondary schools are allocated a SPOC for Inclusion and Attendance. All schools are offered a core Inclusion / Attendance Targeted Support meeting prior to the implementation of any targeted work.

1.6 Schools and academies have a statutory duty to meet the needs of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL), and funding is delegated within individual school budgets for this purpose. EAL is not a special educational need, and most pupils can achieve highly when appropriate support is in place. This includes access to staff with expertise in language acquisition and cultural understanding.

1.7 The EALS team provides targeted support through specialist teachers and Bilingual Support Officers (BSOs), many of whom share the home languages of the pupils they support. The service offers:

- Direct teaching and intervention
- Advice and training for school staff
- Home-school liaison and interpreting
- Support for pupils undertaking home language examinations

This holistic support enables schools to meet their statutory responsibilities effectively, particularly when working with newly arrived pupils or those with limited English.

2. Behaviour Support: (Team Around the School and Setting - Inclusion)

2.1 Currently, resources for primary maintained schools are managed according to a published formula. Appendix A outlines the agreed allocation of support to schools. The new Inclusion offer, delivered through TASS, has reshaped the behaviour model to support emerging needs in schools and to enhance the developing inclusion agenda. The offer has been designed to ensure clarity and equity around the distribution of resource across all schools and a targeted whole school support that can focus on the emerging and bespoke need of individual schools. This system will support whole school developments around behaviour and inclusion and provide schools with access to specialist support for behaviour and guidance around inclusion. This will, in turn, support whole school improvement.

2.2 Implications for Cessation of De-Delegated Primary Behaviour Support:

- Behaviour and inclusion capacity would be significantly reduced, and the service could only focus on statutory work (i.e. permanently excluded pupils)
- Behaviour and inclusion provision could not be reinstated at a later stage
- No early intervention and or preventative work would be provided, except for statutory duties

- The number of pupils requiring support in the secondary phase could increase as their barriers to learning support may not have been addressed in a timely, preventative and robust manner in the primary phase
- A potential increase in the demand for special school provision in both primary and secondary phases
- A potential increase in permanent exclusions, breakdown of placements of pupils with EHCPs, and a related increase in the number of pupils that schools must reintegrate mid-year from other schools
- A potential deterioration of attendance
- Further pressure on High Needs Block funding and, in turn, funding available for schools

2.3 The overall impact of a reduction in funding in this area would increase the challenge for schools, potentially creating additional budget pressures or demands on already stretched alternative and specialist provision. Outcomes for pupils in East Sussex could further decline.

3. Conclusions

3.1 High standards of behaviour and improved attendance are key to improving standards. While there is some evidence of progress, East Sussex continues to under-perform when compared to national and statistical neighbours in relation to both attendance and exclusions. This particularly impacts on some of our most vulnerable pupils and their outcomes. Developing and sustaining consistent, effective and inclusive practice across all schools is a shared priority. Furthermore, with changes to national policy for SEND and inclusion coming, and the way that inclusion will be inspected by Ofsted, there is a strong rationale for having a good offer to schools to support this agenda.

3.2 There is evidence that where schools have assumed financial responsibility for behaviour support there has been no correlating improvement in pupil behaviour or school performance. Indeed, evidence suggests if schools delay in adopting early and preventative interventions, to then implement remedies to address the problems are much less effective and more costly for pupils and schools.

3.3 Where pupils are permanently excluded, the financial burden falls on all schools to fund Alternative PRU Provision through the High Needs Block. Furthermore, there is a growing number of children who are not reintegrated into mainstream schools in a timely manner and end up on a pathway into specialist SEND provision, often through parental request. Due to the limit on spaces in the state-run sector, this is usually in the INMS providers. In light of the rising demand for this high-cost provision, consideration should be given to re-establishing a de-

delegation of funding for Behaviour Support Services across this sector and other approaches to ensuring consistent effective inclusive practice.

4. Recommendations

4.1 This paper sets out the rationale for continued de-delegation of primary behaviour support service, and for restoring de-delegated budgets from secondary schools for those services. The implications of any cessation of provision should be considered carefully considering the likely impact across all schools.

4.2 Schools' Forum is, therefore recommended to:

4.3.1 Continue de-delegated budgets for maintained primary Behaviour Support for 2025/26

4.3.2 Consider restoring de-delegated budgets for maintained secondary Behaviour Support for 2025/2026

5. English as an Additional Language Service

5.1 From April 2014 to 2019, support was allocated to schools using a unit-based system, based on the number of EAL pupils who had been in the UK education system for less than three years. This approach prioritised newly arrived pupils, who typically had lower levels of English and therefore the greatest need for support.

5.2 In 2019, a revised model was introduced, offering schools and academies access to the EALS service through a contribution of either 25% or 100% of their allocated EAL funding. This two-tier model has remained popular with schools, academies, unions, and staff, providing a balance between flexibility and access to targeted support.

5.3 At the time of the last consultation, there were **268** open EALS cases. By June 2025, this had risen to **446** open cases across East Sussex, covering over 50 different languages. The number of Ukrainian pupils supported increased from 149 in April 2023 to 212 in June 2025. In addition, the service responded swiftly to a sudden increase in Malayalam-speaking pupils (180 pupils since October 2022) by reallocating teaching time and recruiting a Malayalam-speaking BSO. This exemplifies EALS' responsiveness to global migration and demographic change.

5.4 Maintained primary and secondary schools may choose to de-delegate their EAL funding to access the full range of services. Academies, whose funding is not

subject to Schools Forum de-delegation, are contacted directly after the Forum decision and may opt to:

- Contribute **100%** for full access
- Contribute **25%** for advisory access
- Subscribe to a flat-rate model with limited access

5.5 To sustain the EALS offer, the Local Authority requires a total commitment of **£462,208** per year for two years from 1 April 2026. This figure represents the minimum income required to retain sufficient staffing to deliver interventions across the county.

5.6 If this funding threshold is not met, the EALS service will need to consider cessation of this offer from 31 March 2026. From 1 April 2026, schools and academies would need to make alternative arrangements for meeting their duties to EAL pupils.

5.7 The table below illustrates the potential income based on different levels of buy-in. It should be noted that should all schools opt for a 25% contribution, or for a subscription, then the income will not meet the required minimum of **£462,208** and the service will cease.

Funding Level	25%	100%
Maintained Primary	£68,868	£275,472
Maintained Secondary	£25,785	£103,138
Academy Primary	£97,158	£388,630
Academy Secondary	£84,543	£338,170
Total	£276,354	£1,105,410

5.8 Schools' Forum is asked to vote on the de-delegation of EAL funding from all maintained schools at 100%. *Note: If all schools opt for 25% or subscription only, the total income would fall below the viability threshold, and the service would need to close.*

5.9 Following the Schools' Forum meeting, the Local Authority will contact individual schools that did not vote to de-delegate, and all academies, to confirm their preferred level of buy-in.

5.10 Due to the recruitment challenges associated with sourcing appropriately skilled EAL teachers and BSOs, a two-year funding cycle is required. Only schools and academies that commit upfront for the full two years will be eligible to access the service. There will be **no in-year buy-in option**.

6. Implications of Service Cessation

6.1 If the EALS service is discontinued from April 2026, the following implications should be considered:

- The service would close permanently; this decision would not be reversible
- Schools would no longer be able to access direct teaching, BSO support, or home language exams
- Alternative private providers offer less targeted support and are significantly more expensive
- EALS BSOs provide expertise in education-specific translation and validating digital translation tools - this would be lost
- Schools with disproportionately high numbers of EAL pupils who currently benefiting from the service would experience significant disruption
- No support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking pupils
- Schools would be solely responsible for arranging and administering home language examinations
- A likely increase in the number of secondary-age pupils with unaddressed language barriers
- KS2 and GCSE outcomes for EAL pupils would likely be negatively impacted
- Current trauma-informed, safeguarding and SEND-aligned work with EAL families would cease
- Parents/carers with low levels of English would lose the support currently provided, including signposting to key services (e.g. Family Hubs)

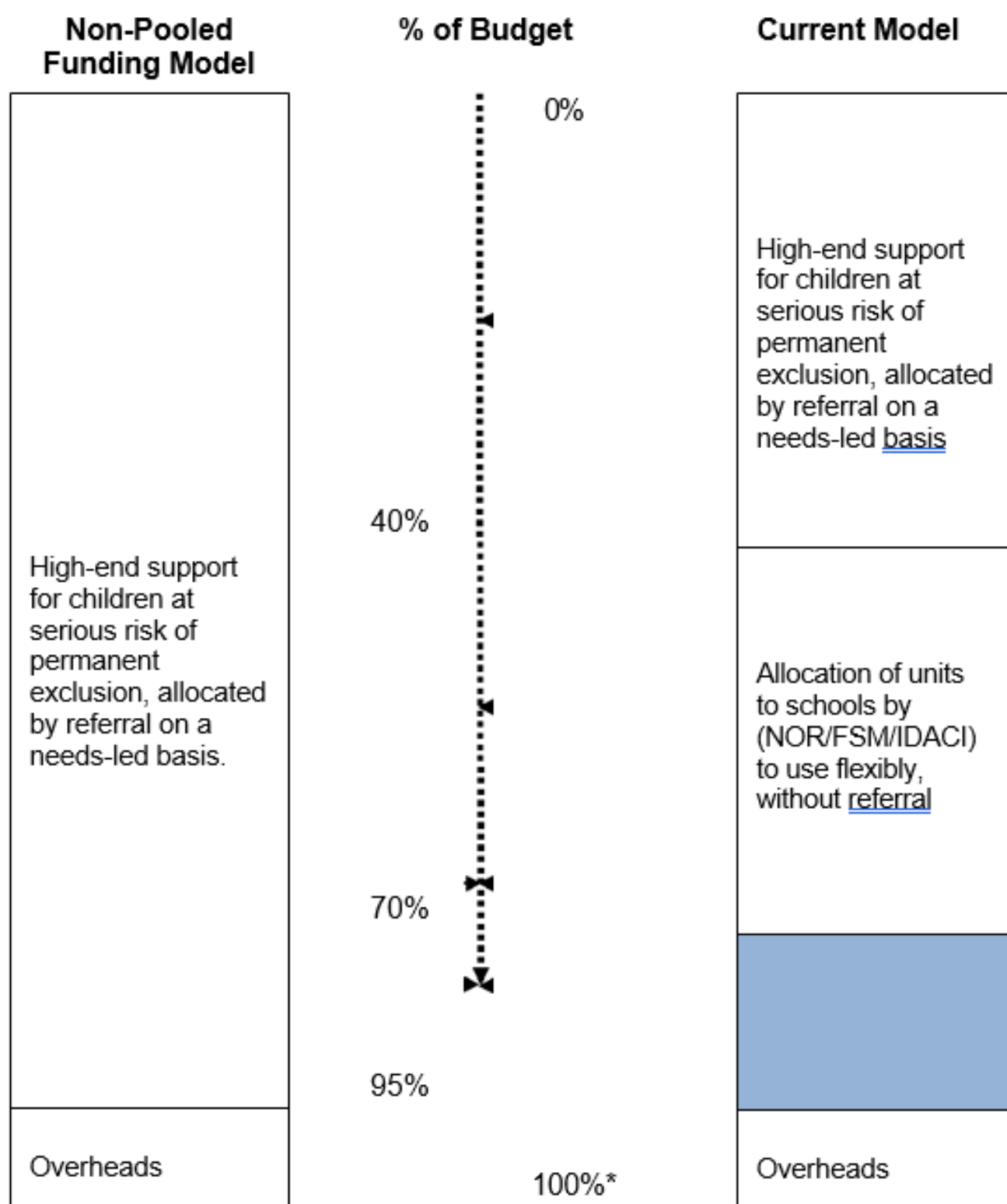
7. Summary and Recommendations

7.1 The current EALS model is a fair, transparent, and flexible solution that reflects the needs and feedback of schools since the 2019 consultation. It enables schools to meet statutory duties and supports system-wide inclusion, particularly during times of rapid demographic change.

7.2 Schools' Forum is therefore recommended to

7.2.1 Continue de-delegated budgets for maintained primary EALS for 2026-28 at 100%

7.2.2 Restore de-delegated budgets for maintained secondary EALS for 2026-28 at 100%



*This can be 'topped up' by individual schools by purchasing additional units from the Services to Schools offer.

Headteacher Partnership Contribution

1.1 A school improvement monitoring and brokering grant was allocated to local authorities from September 2017 to support local authorities in fulfilling their school improvement duties, including monitoring the performance of maintained schools, brokering school improvement provision, and intervening as appropriate. The Department for Education removed the grant in full from the financial year 2023/24 and confirmed that in future these functions should be funded from maintained school budgets through de-delegation.

1.2 Members of Schools' Forum were updated at their meeting in March 2023 on how the removal of the grant would be managed in East Sussex. The local authority is managing the reduction of the grant through efficiencies in the resource allocated to the Primary and Secondary Boards, savings made as part of the re-structure of the Education Division, moving all meetings and conferences to community-based venues, and reduced spend on project activity.

1.3 The Education Division leads for the local authority on our school improvement functions. The service has a range of responsibilities and is supported by funding from different sources, including government grants and local authority funding.

1.4 The local authority has worked with schools to develop a school-led system for improvement which sits alongside the delivery of the local authority's statutory school improvement duties. The EIPs and Area Groups, supported by the Boards, are the key mechanisms for schools to work together on improving practice and raising standards. We continue to work in a school system that is characterised by overlapping responsibilities and increasing pressure on resources. In this landscape, our partnership structures play an important role in holding the system together, avoiding further fragmentation and navigating future developments. Bringing school leaders together, by phase, across the academic year provides an important forum for shaping and delivering our shared ambitions for children's education.

1.5 There are a range of costs associated with facilitating the school-led system and providing opportunities for school leaders to collaborate with each other and hear from expert speakers. The costs for this activity have been modelled so that the following functions can be delivered for approximately £43,500 per annum:

- Chairing the Primary and Secondary Boards
- Venue and speaker costs for Primary Leadership conferences
- Venue and speaker costs for 11-19 Headteacher meetings
- Aspiring Leadership course
- New Headteacher Induction programme

Through this partnership contribution, we are also able to subsidise our annual attendance conference as attendance is a key strategic priority across the school-led system. We also fund the annual Inclusion Partnerships Conference at Secondary.

1.6 Schools' Forum are asked to agree the same proposals as last financial year for the financial year 2025/26, where schools are asked to contribute to cover these partnership costs through a 'headteacher partnership contribution' of a flat fee of £250 per primary, secondary and all-thorough school. Where schools don't purchase the partnership contribution there will be an attendance fee applied.

1.7 This model continues to represent good value for money for school leaders and mirrors arrangements in other local authority areas for headteacher associations. It is proposed that, as last year, the agreed amount is de-delegated from local authority-maintained schools and that academy schools are asked to contribute through purchasing a 'headteacher partnership contribution' as a traded service through Services to Schools.

1.8 For our Special Schools, Schools' Forum are asked to agree a proposal for the financial year of 2025/26, where schools are asked to contribute to cover these partnership costs through a 'special school headteacher partnership contribution' of a flat fee of £150 per school.

- Venue and speaker costs for Primary Leadership conferences
- Venue and speaker costs for 11-19 Headteacher meetings
- Aspiring Leadership course
- New Headteacher Induction programme

Through this special school partnership contribution, we will also be able to subsidise our annual attendance conference as attendance is a key strategic priority across all of our special schools.

School	Contingency	Behaviour Support Service	Ethnic minority and bi-lingual	Free meal eligibility	Jury Service & union duties supply cover	Headteacher Partnership	Total
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Alfriston School	933	941	1,238	47	173	250	3,582
All Saints' and St Richard's Church of England Primary School	1,003	762	789	36	186	250	3,026
All Saints Church of England Primary School, Bexhill	2,600	5,206	2,760	390	482	250	11,688
Ashdown Primary School	4,664	3,934	4,180	106	864	250	13,998
Barcombe Church of England Primary School	1,457	984	1,835	40	270	250	4,836
Battle and Langton Church of England Primary School	4,897	5,129	4,560	400	908	250	16,144
Beckley Church of England Primary School	1,061	870	835	55	197	250	3,267
Blackboys Church of England Primary School	1,527	1,024	1,880	29	283	250	4,993
Bodiam Church of England Primary School	723	689	569	47	134	250	2,412
Bonnors CofE School	1,236	1,139	973	91	229	250	3,917
Bourne Primary School	4,582	8,111	25,131	444	849	250	39,367
Brede Primary School	1,189	904	936	29	220	250	3,528
Burwash CofE School	1,877	1,309	2,178	58	348	250	6,021
Buxted CofE Primary School	2,227	1,547	2,623	80	413	250	7,139
Catsfield Church of England Primary School	1,224	1,131	1,140	55	227	250	4,027
Chailey St Peter's Church of England Primary School	1,236	1,484	973	113	229	250	4,285
Chiddingly Primary School	1,178	1,106	927	62	218	250	3,741
Cradle Hill Community Primary School	7,217	7,130	8,335	364	1,338	250	24,634
Cross-in-Hand Church of England Primary School	4,500	4,071	5,749	197	834	250	15,601
Crowhurst CofE Primary School	1,049	1,346	826	80	194	250	3,745
Dallington Church of England Primary School	1,271	932	1,000	47	236	250	3,736
Danehill Church of England Primary School	1,096	960	1,032	40	203	250	3,581
Denton Community Primary School and Nursery	2,460	3,316	2,988	182	456	250	9,652
East Hoathly CofE Primary School	898	672	707	36	166	250	2,729
Etchingham Church of England Primary School	1,143	807	899	44	212	250	3,354
Firle Church of England Primary School	665	790	523	36	123	250	2,387
Five Ashes CofE Primary School	653	553	514	40	121	250	2,131
Fletching Church of England Primary School	921	1,034	1,093	73	171	250	3,541
Forest Row Church of England Primary School	1,912	1,936	2,608	127	354	250	7,188
Framfield Church of England Primary School	991	516	1,288	18	184	250	3,246
Frant Church of England Primary School	1,119	721	2,121	22	207	250	4,440
Groombridge St Thomas' Church of England Primary School	1,539	987	1,547	22	285	250	4,630
Grovelands Community Primary School	7,438	9,752	7,442	593	1,379	250	26,854
Guestling Bradshaw Church of England Primary School	2,297	3,486	2,327	182	426	250	8,968
Hamsey Community Primary School	1,096	1,324	1,903	62	203	250	4,838
Hankham Primary School	1,306	1,604	1,920	113	242	250	5,434
Harbour Primary and Nursery School	4,815	8,597	6,976	539	892	250	22,069
Harlands Primary School	2,565	1,978	2,899	102	475	250	8,269
Hellingly Community Primary School	2,285	1,998	2,154	106	424	250	7,215
Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School	2,390	2,142	2,231	120	443	250	7,576
High Hurstwood Church of England Primary School	1,108	804	1,035	22	205	250	3,424
Icklesham Church of England Primary School and Nursery	1,154	1,610	908	69	214	250	4,206
Iford and Kingston Church of England Primary School	2,145	2,100	2,581	91	398	250	7,564
Laughton Community Primary School	886	820	859	29	164	250	3,009
Little Horsted Church of England Primary School	1,061	821	1,327	44	197	250	3,699
Manor Primary School	4,768	4,828	6,353	324	884	250	17,407
Mark Cross Church of England Aided Primary School	1,014	583	798	18	188	250	2,851
Mayfield Church of England Primary School	1,609	1,176	3,528	87	298	250	6,949
Maynards Green Community Primary School	2,425	1,495	2,081	91	449	250	6,791
Meridian Community Primary School and Nursery	4,908	6,935	7,057	400	910	250	20,461
Motcombe Infants' School	2,600	2,788	11,170	146	482	250	17,436
Netherfield CofE Primary School	1,469	1,157	1,156	66	272	250	4,370
Nutley Church of England Primary School	769	556	775	36	143	250	2,529
Park Mead Primary School	1,073	1,233	1,023	58	199	250	3,835
Parkside Community Primary School	2,425	2,109	2,262	91	449	250	7,587
Pashley Down Infant School	2,728	3,135	6,337	160	506	250	13,115
Peasmarsh Church of England Primary School	781	813	983	36	145	250	3,009
Pevensy and Westham CofE Primary School	4,827	4,671	4,151	266	895	250	15,059
Plumpton Primary School	1,539	1,057	1,900	40	285	250	5,071
Polegate Primary School	7,287	9,163	7,326	411	1,351	250	25,787
Punnetts Town Community Primary and Nursery School	1,154	698	908	15	214	250	3,239
Rocks Park Primary School	2,507	1,909	2,500	87	465	250	7,718
Rotherfield Primary School	2,390	2,257	2,407	95	443	250	7,842
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Hastings	2,402	3,085	5,353	120	445	250	11,655
Salehurst Church of England Primary School	2,005	1,773	1,935	106	372	250	6,440
Sandown Primary School and Nursery	4,815	9,915	6,091	623	892	250	22,585
Seaford Primary School	4,734	4,184	6,020	160	877	250	16,225
South Malling CofE Primary and Nursery School	2,390	2,199	3,087	135	443	250	8,504
Southover CofE Primary School	3,160	2,867	4,127	178	586	250	11,168
St John's Church of England Primary School	2,390	2,164	2,938	51	443	250	8,236
St Mark's Church of England Primary School	781	760	615	62	145	250	2,613
St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School	2,402	2,584	4,546	76	445	250	10,304
St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School	944	918	918	44	175	250	3,250
St Marys Catholic Primary School	2,530	2,077	2,864	73	469	250	8,263
St Michael's Church of England Primary School	968	1,364	931	87	179	250	3,780
St Michael's Primary School	863	478	679	11	160	250	2,441
St Peter and St Paul CofE Primary School	4,885	6,154	10,536	284	905	250	23,014
St Philip's Catholic Primary School	2,367	2,193	4,548	106	439	250	9,902
St Thomas' Church of England Aided Primary School	1,609	1,935	1,445	84	298	250	5,620
Staplecross Methodist Primary School	1,014	1,124	798	73	188	250	3,447
Stone Cross School	4,862	4,237	5,417	215	901	250	15,882
Stonegate Church of England Primary School	1,119	856	881	33	207	250	3,346

School	Contingency £	Behaviour Support Service £	Ethnic minority and bi-lingual £	Free meal eligibility £	Jury Service & union duties supply cover £	Headteacher Partnership £	Total £
Ticehurst and Flimwell Church of England Primary School	1,236	2,013	1,314	211	229	250	5,253
Wadhurst CofE Primary School and Nursery	2,705	2,181	2,827	102	501	250	8,566
Wallands Community Primary and Nursery School	3,090	4,117	3,967	288	573	250	12,284
West Rise Primary School	7,240	11,440	9,339	684	1,342	500	30,546
Western Road Community Primary School	2,448	1,535	2,633	55	454	250	7,374
Westfield School	2,122	2,958	2,008	153	393	250	7,884
Willingdon Primary School	4,873	4,149	5,253	215	903	250	15,644
Wivelsfield Primary School	2,565	1,406	2,371	44	475	250	7,111
Chailey School	13,178	9,940	10,422	593	115	250	34,497
Claverham Community College	17,409	17,092	12,752	1,273	151	250	48,927
Heathfield Community College	18,000	14,305	15,455	974	156	250	49,141
Priory School	17,697	18,262	17,279	1,192	154	250	54,833
St Richard's Catholic College	15,680	16,440	15,370	718	136	250	48,595
Uckfield College	19,714	16,317	19,586	1,001	171	250	57,039
Willingdon Community School	16,544	17,954	12,274	1,121	144	250	48,287
primary maintained	210,385	226,302	275,472	12,181	38,995	22,750	786,085
secondary maintained	118,222	110,309	103,138	6,872	1,028	1,750	341,319
Total	328,607	336,611	378,610	19,053	40,022	24,500	1,127,404

Unit rates for allocations

Primary total pupils	11.66	2.96	9.18		2.16	250.00
Primary total FSM		6.71		3.64		
Primary total FSM Ever 6		13.29				
Primary total IDACI total units		7.81				
Primary total Prior Attainment		13.65				
Primary total EALs			151.29			
Secondary total pupils	15.16	3.82	8.34		0.13	250.00
Secondary total FSM		8.38		5.44		
Secondary total FSM Ever 6		16.14				
Secondary total IDACI total units		10.49				
Secondary total Prior Attainment		20.58				
Secondary total EALs			396.86			

Report to: East Sussex Schools Forum

Date of meeting: 12 September 2025

Report By: Carolyn Fair

Title: High Needs Block Update 2025/26

Purpose: To provide an update on the current position with the High Needs Block (HNB) in respect of identified pressures.

Recommendations:

1. That East Sussex Schools' Forum representatives note the implications of costs for maintaining the current level of placements in special schools and the risks associated with this for broader school budgets.
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1. Background

- 1.1. At Schools' Forum in September 2024, we set out the in-year and forecast future pressures on the High Needs Block, alongside the potential implications for schools in meeting in-year, and future, overspends.
- 1.2. Since this meeting, the LA has undertaken further work to update the projections and to model different options for Schools' Forum to consider in addressing the financial challenges. This included continuing our work with partners across the sector to review requests for increases in fees with a view to establishing long-term and sustainable options for meeting increasing demands. This work is ongoing and remains a high priority.
- 1.3. Since 2017, in collaboration with stakeholders, the LA has made a concerted effort to avoid the need for inter-block transfers, from individual school budgets into the HNB, in ensuring that the costs of provision for children with SEND are met within the available resources This has included:
 - 1.3.1. ensuring that schools have access to high quality support and guidance from dedicated specialist support services;
 - 1.3.2. ensuring transparent models of funding for state-run provision;
 - 1.3.3. challenging unreasonable costs in the independent sector;
 - 1.3.4. developing cost-effective provision in the state sector (new special schools and specialist facilities);
 - 1.3.5. investing in systems to improve inclusion in mainstream schools through the Enhancing Mainstream Practice Fund.
 - 1.3.6. ensuring that mainstream schools are funded appropriately to support children with EHCPs.
- 1.4. Collectively, this work has been instrumental in allowing us to mitigate the impact of the rising costs of SEND provision that other LAs have seen over recent years. However, the current position in East Sussex means that our mitigations will no longer meet the costs. This is due to the following factors: a much higher proportion of children with EHCPs placed in special schools than is the case nationally; significant increases in costs in provision within the independent and non-

maintained special (INMS) sector; a comparatively low allocation of HNB funding for the current year.

- 1.5. In November 2024, Schools' Forum approved an interblock transfer of £1m in 2025/26 from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to support our forecast pressures in the 25/26 financial year. This was implemented in April 2025.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1. At the end of 2024/25, East Sussex had an in-year HNB overspend of £15.075m and a cumulative HNB deficit of £2.917m. The in-year overspend was mitigated by £15.814m reserves brought forward from 2023/24 and £2.979m in-year underspends on the other DSG blocks. The overall East Sussex retained DSG position at the end of 2024/25 was a cumulative surplus of £2.837m.
- 2.2. Separately, there was also £16.036m maintained schools' balance brought forward at the end of 2024/25.
- 2.3. This year, the quarter 1 DSG forecast indicated an in-year overspend of £20.424m. £900k of the brought forward Early years block surplus is being returned to the DfE this year as an adjustment for pupil numbers, so there is a likely year-end DSG cumulative deficit position of £18.487m. This means that we have less flexibility to offset any pressures in the HNB next financial year.
- 2.4. The DSG statutory override was recently extended, meaning that Local Authorities can continue to retain DSG deficits on their balance sheets without them being offset against reserves until March 2028. However, the longer-term implications for this are still unknown and there is no guarantee for further concessions beyond March 2028.
- 2.5. At quarter 1, ESCC is forecasting £97.707m spend against the £77.283m budget. This is broken down into:
 - 2.5.1. £70.602m on top-up funding
 - 2.5.2. £0.711m on transport
 - 2.5.3. £2.339m on personal budgets/EOTAS
 - 2.5.4. £1.676m on the Interim Provision Service
 - 2.5.5. £1m on CITES
 - 2.5.6. £1.7m on exceptional funding
 - 2.5.7. £19.679m on other services, including staffing
- 2.6. The single most significant pressure on the SEND budget continues to be the costs from the INMS sector. This is due to two main factors: the increase in the number of children for whom there is a request for a special school; and the unregulated price increases in this sector for all children placed which is above inflation in most cases. Of the £86.288m HNB spend in 2024/25, £25.887m of it was on INMS placements. This equates to 30% of spend on 11.6% of placements.
- 2.7. It is important to note that, with a few exceptions, the INMS sector is not providing anything that local, state-run provision (in both mainstream and special schools) are not providing. INMS are, therefore, only picking up 'overflow' where local provision is full, or where mainstream schools are stating that they cannot meet needs. For this reason, we are paying a premium for educational provision for children who might otherwise be supported in their local special or mainstream schools and who are not achieving discernibly better outcomes in the INMS sector.

- 2.8. As the demand for placements in special schools continues to increase and, as the funding from central government is insufficient to pay for the costs associated with this, we need to make some collective decisions about how we respond to this challenge. This is more acute this year as there are insufficient resources within the overall DSG to cover any pressure in the HNB. As we have already undertaken a lot of work to address many of the cost pressures, the only options are either to reduce the number of pupils who are placed in special schools or fund the additional costs from elsewhere in the school funding system.
- 2.9. Where there is a projected overspend in the HNB, Local Authorities must liaise with Schools' Forum to agree how this will be met. As the regulations around the funding of the HNB do not allow for the transfer of non-DSG into the HNB, any shortfall in the HNB must be met from other DSG budgets.
- 2.10. As the pressure we are seeing is predominantly from the number of placements of children in INMS schools, and the average cost of these placements is now £59.5k, the only way of avoiding the projected overspends is a reduction in the number of placements in special schools. This would require a significant change of approach, in order to meet the needs of more pupils in mainstream provision.
- 2.11. Following recent confirmation by the DfE on the processes for interblock transfers, we are currently completing our second DSG deficit management plan which will articulate the pressures in the HNB and the measures we are taking to address these. We will bring this to Schools' Forum on 14 November 2025. We will provide an updated financial position at this meeting, along with any request for a funding transfer from schools' budgets to the HNB to address the in-year 2025/26 pressure.
- 2.12. We have reviewed and brought to Forum the top-up funding for mainstream schools, state-run special schools, and FE Colleges. The HNB Working Group had been consulted on these recommendations. However, it is important to flag that the costs of the current pattern of educational provision in East Sussex exceed the HNB funding available and these will have to be met through the DSG.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. In light of the above, it is recommended that Schools Forum note the pressures on the HNB budget and the risks associated with this for broader school budgets.

Carolyn Fair

Director of Children's Services

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Report to: East Sussex Schools Forum

Date of meeting: 12 September 2025

Report By: Ruth Wilson, HR Manager

Title: NJC Pay Award 2025/26

Purpose: Inform the schools forum members of upcoming changes to the single status pay scale resulting from the NJC pay award.

Recommendations:

- i) Note the impact of the deletion of single status 2 from 1 April 2026.
 - ii) Note the proposed course of action being taken to review and address the impact on recruitment and retention.
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1. Background

- 1.1. The NJC pay award was confirmed on 23 July 2025 and was applied retrospectively to 1 April 2025 in August 2025.
- 1.2. The pay award agreement includes the deletion of pay point 2 from the NJC pay spine. Pay point 2 on the NJC scale is equivalent of scale point 4 on the local East Sussex Single Status pay scales. This will delete Single Status 2. Everyone who is paid on Single Status 2 will automatically move to Single Status 3.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1. HR attended the Bursars forum to outline the change and provide an impact assessment for schools. The impact includes:
 - Assistant Caretakers. They have a career progression bar where staff are required to do additional tasks to progress to single status 3. Schools can consult with staff in single status 2 about requiring them to do the additional tasks required at the single status 3 level from 1 April 2026.
 - Cleaners. There will be no change of duties required and there is no impact on more senior roles in the career structure.
 - Club and wrap around care roles e.g. playleaders and playworker assistants. There will be no change of duties required and there is no impact on more senior roles in the career structure.
 - Exam invigilators. Senior invigilators, who supervise Exam invigilators, are single status 4. There is no immediate issue however the pay difference between the invigilator and senior role will be reduced.
 - Midday supervisory assistant and Senior midday supervisory assistants. Both roles are paid on the same grade following the deletion of single status 1 in a previous year.
 - Nursery assistants (unqualified). Staff can progress to single status 3 when they obtain an appropriate qualification. Both roles will be paid the same from 1 April 2026.
- 2.2. The increase in the grade for these roles will also create recruitment and retention issues for other roles. Teaching Assistants are paid Single Status 3 or single status 4 and will be paid the same as the above roles from 1 April 2026.
- 2.3. HR are organising working groups to review the impact on the following roles:

- Nursery Assistants
 - Teaching Assistants
- 2.4. The working groups will recommend changes to job descriptions to support updates. This may include re-grading requests.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Note the impact of the deletion of single status 2 from 1 April 2026.
- 3.2. Note the proposed course of action being taken to review and address the impact on recruitment and retention.

Ros Parker

Chief Operating Officer

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