

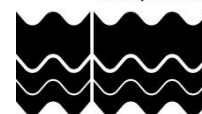
East Sussex County Council Schools Forum

Friday 16th Jan 2026

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 14th Nov 2025	Y	Chair	Approval
3.	Matters Arising and Declaration of Interests	N	Chair	Discussion
4.	DSG Budget 2026/27	Y	Ed Beale	Information
5.	Growth Fund / Falling Rolls Fund	Y	Gary Langford	Approval
6.	DSG – Central School Services Block 2026/27	Y	Ed Beale	Approval
7.	DSG Budget 2026/27 – Early Years	Y	Jane Spice	Approval
8.	Follow Up from previous Schools Forum Meeting	Y	Elizabeth Funge / Sarah Speedie	Information
	AOB			

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EAST SUSSEX SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of a meeting of the Schools' Forum held remotely with Microsoft Teams on 14 November 2025

MEMBERS

Primary

Richard Blakeley (Parkside Primary)

Laura Cooper (St John's CE School)

Primary Governors

Robert French (Weald Federation)

Secondary

Emily Winslade (Priory School)

Caroline Barlow(Heathfield Community College)

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

Jonty Clarke (Beckmead Trust)

Pupil Referral Unit

Neil Miller (LSEAT)

Non School Members

Justin Wynne (Trade Union representative)

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

Sarah Speedie (H of Ed SEND & Safeguarding)

Honor Green (Head of Finance for Children's Services & Schools)

Sarah Rice (Finance Manager - Schools)

Edward Beale (Finance Manager - Education and Schools)

Kirsten Coe (Finance 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.

Apologies have been received from:

James Freestone
Sam Cornelius
Laura Cooper

2 Agenda Item 2: Minutes Of Previous Meeting 12 September 2025(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: High needs block -Nathan (Approval)

This item was in relation to High Needs Funding which included an overview of the LA's current financial position and a request for an inter block transfer from the Schools Block into the High Needs Block.

4.1 Recommendations:

Schools' Forum were recommended to agree an interblock transfer for 2026-27 and to confirm the amount of the transfer.

4.2 Comments:

Questions were raised asking whether the proposal would address the size of the deficit, through the interblock transfer, or whether the deficit would still remain.

It was also asked whether the purpose of the interblock transfer was primarily because the DfE expects the Local Authority to consider it first in order to help mitigate the level of the deficit.

It was clarified that the proposal would not fully address the deficit, and that the interblock transfer should be considered by the local authority in order to help reduce the deficit as much as possible.

Concerns were expressed that the current proposals will exacerbate the challenges faced by schools and feel punitive.

Forum members highlighted that schools are being asked to do more for students and families with reduced resources and there is a strong consensus among maintained secondary schools that the move was detrimental.

Acknowledging the challenges, it was emphasised that proactive local decision making is essential to maintain control. Although the situation is difficult, the information from the forthcoming white paper is limited and decisions had to be made now to manage the county's position effectively.

Forum members raised concerns about the impact of funding reductions on maintained and academy mainstream schools and how reducing school budgets could negatively impact efforts to increase mainstream places and alleviate pressure from private providers.

--It was emphasised that the local authority has been investing in schools over the years, including increasing top up values for mainstream schools, allocating £5 million to inclusion projects, and supporting schools through the change programme. It was also noted that there was ongoing investment in specialist facilities and mainstream schools to help mitigate pressures.

It was noted that local authorities are facing significant deficits across the country and some opposition from schools regarding interblock transfers. They also highlighted concerns regarding upcoming teacher pay increases without extra funding.

It was noted that in many local authorities, an interblock transfer is made every year and for higher amounts than being proposed in East Sussex. Reducing the deficit required system-wide change with schools as active partners in managing a challenging, national environment.

Forum members raised concerns about high costs of independent non maintained schools and stressed the need for short and medium term planning to invest in state schools and reduce tribunal cases.

It was noted that East Sussex had kept costs for independent special schools lower than many authorities and continued to invest in specialist facilities.

The challenge of tribunal cases was also highlighted and it was stressed that addressing the issue required partnership with mainstream and special schools to provide alternatives and support the local authority in defending tribunals.

A comment was made about special school funding in East Sussex. Concerns were also raised about variable quality of independent provided.

Members were requested to vote on 2 interblock transfer proposals. Results as below:

	No. of 'Yes'	No. of 'No'	No. of Abstentions
£1.963m Inter Block Transfer	2	8	1
£1m Inter Block Transfer	5	6	0

5. Agenda Item 5 - Funding Factors - Exceptional Circumstances (Information Only)

This item was in relation to the LA highlighting its intention to ask for a Disapplication request so that some funding could be provided for Exceptional Premises (rents) costs for three small schools.

5.1 Recommendation:

Schools' Forum were asked to note the LA's intention to submit a request to use an 'Exceptional Circumstances' Funding factor for 2026/27.

5.2 Comments:

No Comments / objections to the LA submitting a request.

AOB
No AOB

Meeting concluded at 09:58
Next Meeting -to be held Friday 16th January 2026

Report to: East Sussex Schools Forum

Date of meeting: 16 January 2026

Report By: Carolyn Fair

Title: DSG Budget 2026/27

Purpose: To provide an update on the DSG budget for 2026/27

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Schools Forum are asked to note the DSG allocations for the Schools, Central School Services, High Needs and Early Years Blocks

1 Background

1.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2026/27 is, like last year, allocated by the DfE into four blocks. Each block is subject to separate regulations as to eligible expenditure and the use of the four blocks is outlined below:

- **The Schools Block** comprises the funding which must be delegated to schools and academies through the Funding Formula. Maintained schools can agree to de-delegate budgets and these are spent on their behalf by the local authority. Subject to Schools Forum approval, there are a limited number of exceptions, the Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund, which enable local authorities to hold this funding centrally. The funding for these funds goes to eligible schools and academies.
- **The Central School Services Block (CSSB)** is a block of funding that provides funding for Local Authorities to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils in maintained schools and academies. LAs' CSSB is split into funding for historic commitments and funding for ongoing responsibilities.
- **The High Needs Block** provides funding to support the provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) from their early years to age 25. This includes provision in maintained schools, academies, alternative provision, FE colleges and independent providers, as well as supporting central spending on pupils with special educational needs and disabilities from their early years to age 25.
- The **Early Years Block** funds payments to early years providers in settings and schools and supports central spending on early years pupils.

2. Appendices

2.1 The appendices below provide a breakdown of the DSG allocations:

Appendix A - DSG Summary
Appendix B - Schools Block DSG
Appendix C – Central School Services Block DSG
Appendix D - High Needs Block DSG
Appendix E – Early Years Block DSG

3. Schools Block Funding

3.1 The Schools Block for 2026/27 is based on the October 2025 pupil census data and equates to £404.6m.

3.2 The DfE have allocated £12.0m more to the Schools Block compared to 2025/26. The reasons for this are:

- 1 £10.4m relates to previously separate mainstream grants now being added into the Schools Block. These are the 'Schools Budget Support Grant' (SBSG), and the 'National Insurance Contributions Grant' (NICs).
- 2 Additional funding of £6.9m, due to an increase in the National Funding Formula rates, offset by a reduction in overall Numbers on Roll (NOR) resulting in £5.3m less funding. (Overall net increase of £1.6m).

4. Central School Services Block (CSSB) Funding

4.1 The DfE have confirmed that £4.3m has been allocated to the local authority. (£1.3m to Historic Commitments and £3.0m to on-going responsibilities)

4.2 See Agenda Item 6 for more information on this block of funding and the LA's proposed use for this funding.

5. High Needs Block (HNB)

5.1 Normally, the DfE calculate the LA's High Needs Block using a National Funding Formula (NFF). However, for 2026/27, the DfE have temporarily suspended using the NFF to calculate the funding. Instead, the 2026/27 allocation has been based on the 2025/26 allocations with some adjustments.

5.2 The DfE intend to review the methodology, for allocating high needs funding, to support the SEND reforms due to be set out in early 2026. The suspension means that the allocations will not include an update to the basic entitlement funding for pupil numbers in special schools.

5.3 For 2026/27, the DfE have allocated £99.9m which is an increase of £6.0m compared to the DfE's allocation for 2025/26. The £6.0m increase is due to the inclusion of the Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG) that was previously paid out to Special Schools/ Academies.

5.4 This means that, on a like for like basis, there has been no increase to the DfE's High Needs DSG funding allocation compared to 2025/26.

- 5.5 The DfE have stated that Special Schools/ academies and Alternative Providers will continue to receive place funding at £10,000 per agreed place. They will also continue to receive the additional 3.4% place funding uplift that was introduced in 2023/24.
- 5.6 Special Schools / Academies will also continue to receive funding for the historic teachers' pay and pensions grants (introduced from 2021/22) and the previously separate CSBG funding.
- 5.7 For specialist facilities, attached to mainstream schools, as per DfE regulations the place funding will continue to be £6,000 for every occupied place and £10,000 for an unoccupied place. (Funding for occupied places is £6,000 per place because these pupils are also funded via the school's budget share.)
- 5.8 Specialist Facilities are also to receive the additional funding equivalent to the funding allocated to mainstream schools for the elements of the 2025 to 2026 National Insurance Contributions (NICs) Grant and Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG) paid in respect of special units and resourced (£539 Per Place).

6 Early Years Block

- 6.1 Appendix E is a summary of the funding allocations, for 2026/27. However, more detailed explanations are provided in Agenda Item 7.

Carolyn Fair

Director Childrens Services

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Appendix A

DSG Summary 2026/27	Schools	Central School Services	High Needs	Early Years	Total
Total DSG including Academies	£404,561,200	£4,290,600	£99,901,800	£0	£508,753,600
3 Year Olds / 4 Year Olds Funding Entitlement	£0	£0	£0	£31,005,900	£31,005,900
2 Year Old / Under 2's Funding Entitlement	£0	£0	£0	£47,372,200	£47,372,200
Total Funding Available	£404,561,200	£4,290,600	£99,901,800	£78,378,100	£587,131,700

Appendix B

Schools Block 2026/27	£	£	Comments
Schools Block DfE notification		404,561,200	
InterBlock Transfer		0	
Adjusted Schools Block Total 2026/27		404,561,200	
Distribution of Funding at LA Level			
Growth Fund			
Key Stage 1 top up	814,400		See Agenda Item 6
Additional Classes	143,700		
		958,100	
Funds allocated to Schools & Academies		403,603,100	
Total		404,561,200	

Schools Block 2025/26	£	£
Schools Block DfE notification		392,583,300
		-1,000,000
Adjusted Schools Block Total 2025/26		391,583,300
Distribution of Funding at LA Level		
Growth Fund		
Key Stage 1 top up	760,500	
Additional Classes	251,800	
Less Funds B/fwd from 2024/25	-144,200	
		868,100
Funds allocated to Schools & Academies		390,715,200
Total		391,583,300

Appendix C

Central School Services Block 2026/27	£
Central Schools Services Block notification	4,290,600
Central School Services Block Total 2026/27	4,290,600
Historic Commitments (HC)	1,290,800
On-going Responsibilities	2,999,800
Total	4,290,600

Central School Services Block 2025/26	£
Central School Services Block notification	4,331,300
Central School Services Block Total 2025/26	4,331,300
Historic Commitments (HC)	1,613,500
On-going Responsibilities	2,717,800
	4,331,300

Appendix D

HIGH NEEDS BLOCK 2026/2027	£	£
Block total (From DfE)	99,901,800	
Inter Block Transfer	0	
Distribution of Funding at LA Level		99,901,800
Funding for Commissioned Places		
Special Academy place funding (Pre 16)	14,783,300	
Maintained Special School place funding (Pre 16)	0	
Academy Special Facilities place funding (Pre 16)	928,100	
Maintained Special Facilities place funding (Pre 16)	625,700	
Maintained Special Schools place funding (Post 16)	0	
Special Academy place funding (Post 16)	860,000	
Post 16 FE Places	1,942,000	
Alternative Provision	2,200,000	21,339,100
Other High Needs Budgets		
Top up funding Pre 16	32,580,600	
Top up funding Post 16	2,654,800	
Fees for pupils at independent schools	25,500,000	
Education out of School	3,113,900	
SEN support	14,713,400	78,562,700
Total		99,901,800

HIGH NEEDS BLOCK 2025/2026	£	£
Block total (From DfE)	93,941,900	
	1,000,000	
Distribution of Funding at LA Level		94,941,900
Funding for Commissioned Places		
Special Academy place funding (Pre 16)	13,823,300	
Maintained Special School place funding (Pre 16)	300,000	
Academy Special Facilities place funding (Pre 16)	823,000	
Maintained Special Facilities place funding (Pre 16)	604,500	
Maintained Special Schools place funding (Post 16)	52,500	
Special Academy place funding (Post 16)	807,500	
Post 16 FE Places	1,724,000	
Alternative Provision	1,866,700	20,001,500
Other High Needs Budgets		
Top up funding Pre 16	28,958,300	
Top up funding Post 16	2,654,800	
Fees for pupils at independent schools	25,500,000	
Education out of School	3,113,900	
SEN support	14,713,400	74,940,400
Total		94,941,900

Appendix E

Early Years Block 2026/27	£	£
3/4 Year Old Entitlement	29,776,200	
2 Year old funding entitlement	23,125,700	
Under 2 Funding Entitlement	24,246,500	
Pupil Premium funding	829,000	
Disability Access Fund	400,700	
Early Years block total 2026/27		78,378,100
LA Central Budgets		
Early Years Formula Funding (Payments to PVI's and Schools)	76,063,600	
Early Years Team (Which includes training & moderation)	2,314,500	
Total		78,378,100

Early Years Block 2025/26	£	£
3/4 Year Old Entitlement	28,377,600	
2 Year old funding	17,492,700	
Under 2 Funding Entitlement	20,095,500	
Pupil Premium funding	722,300	
Disability Access Fund	362,100	
Early Years block total 2025/26		67,050,200
LA Central Budgets		
Early Years Formula Funding (Payments to PVI's and Schools)	64,411,600	
Early Years Team (Which includes training & moderation)	2,638,600	
Total		67,050,200

Report to: East Sussex Schools Forum

Date of meeting: 16 January 2026

Report By: Gary Langford, Senior Manager School Organisation

Title: Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund

Purpose: To update Schools Forum on expenditure in the 2025/26 financial year and to seek approval for funding in the 2026/27 financial year.

Recommendation:
Schools Forum is asked to approve an allocation of £958,100 for the 2026/27 Growth Fund.

1. Growth Fund

1.1 The Growth Fund supports maintained and non-maintained mainstream schools which are required to provide additional places to meet demand in their area. Funding is provided for:

- Key Stage 1 top-up: paid to schools to enable them to comply with Key Stage 1 class size legislation, which sets a maximum class size of 30 pupils with one teacher. There are a few exceptions where class sizes can exceed 30, but there is no entitlement to Growth Fund, for example, arising from admissions through the Fair Access Protocol.
- Additional classes: where the local authority has made a formal request for a school to set up one or more additional classes or requests a permanent increase in a school's Published Admission Number.
- New school funding: when new schools open in a local authority area, they receive pre-opening funding through a formula to cover costs incurred prior to the opening and diseconomy funding to cover costs incurred while the school fills to capacity. The funding decreases year on year as more year groups in the new school are admitted.

Growth Fund 2025/26

1.2 The Growth Fund budget for 2025/26 is £1,012,300. The budget was based on estimated Key Stage 1 pupil numbers and the predicted additional classes required for the 2025/26 academic year.

1.3 The number of schools eligible for either Key Stage 1 top-up funding or additional class funding is:

- 34 primary schools eligible for Key Stage 1 top-up funding
- 2 primary schools eligible for additional class funding
- 2 secondary schools eligible for additional class funding

1.4 To date, £952,058 has been spent in 2025/26. Appendix A provides a summary of the expenditure incurred. This leaves an unspent balance of £60,242. In addition, the local authority has received a Growth Fund rebate from the DfE of £124,869 relating to academy payments for the period April to August 2025. Therefore, the total remaining balance is £185,111. We propose giving this amount back to schools before the end of the financial year. Please see point 3.3 for details of the proposed rebate.

Growth Fund 2026/27

1.5 The proposed allocation for 2026/27 is based on the following assumptions:

- Key Stage 1 top-up funding: the October 2025 pupil numbers and the estimated Key Stage

1 numbers as in October 2026. A 10% contingency has been added to the top-up element to allow for any unforeseen changes.

- Additional class funding: the predicted need for places identified through the annual update to the pupil forecasting model, most recently updated in June 2025. A 10% contingency has been added to the additional class element to allow for any unanticipated pressures.
- The employee costs for teaching and non-teaching staff have been uplifted by recent pay awards.

1.6 It is currently estimated that the following numbers of schools will be eligible for Growth Fund support in 2026/27:

- 31 primary schools potentially eligible for Key Stage 1 top-up funding
- 1 primary school eligible for additional class funding
- 1 secondary school potentially eligible for additional class funding

1.7 The Growth Fund budget required in 2026/27 is £958,100. A breakdown of the Growth Fund calculation for 2026/27 is provided in Appendix B.

2. Falling Rolls Fund

2.1 The Falling Rolls Fund is used to support good or outstanding schools that have temporary, but significant, falling rolls, but where local planning data shows the places will be needed soon. It is designed to avoid the need for a school to restructure and then recruit again shortly afterwards. The funding is for maintained and non-maintained schools. The circumstances in which a payment is made from the Falling Rolls fund are:

- The school is judged to be good or outstanding at their last Ofsted inspection (this is a mandatory requirement from the DFE).
- The number on roll has dropped by more than 5% between the October 2024 census and the October 2025 census.
- Local planning data (East Sussex County Council pupil forecasting model) predicts that the number on roll will, in October 2027, be equal to or exceed their number on roll as in October 2024.

Falling Rolls Fund 2025/26

2.2 The Falling Rolls Fund budget for 2025/26 is £42,000. No schools qualify for the fund in this financial year, so we propose giving this amount back to schools before the end of the financial year.

Falling Rolls Fund 2026/27

2.3 Under the current criteria, no schools will qualify for the fund in 2026/27 financial year. As a result, we do not require any additional funding for the Falling Rolls Fund next year.

2.4 Given the increasing number of schools experiencing falling rolls, we propose reviewing the current eligibility criteria ahead of the 2027/28 financial year. We will report the outcome of the review to Schools Forum in January 2027.

3. Conclusion and recommendation

3.1 In conclusion, the report updates Schools Forum on Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund spending in the 2025/26 financial year and sets out the rationale for funding in 2026/27.

3.2 Accordingly, Schools Forum is recommended to approve an allocation of £958,100 for the 2026/27 Growth Fund.

3.3 As referenced in 1.4 and 2.2 above, we propose giving the combined 2025/26 Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund balance of £227,111 back to schools before the end of the financial year. The rebate will amount to £3.62 per pupil based on the October 2024 census.

Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund summary 2025/26

Key Stage 1 top-up funding	Amount
Alfriston School	£46,090
Hankham Primary School	£1,495
Laughton Community Primary School	£33,000
Park Mead Primary School	£9,877
Punnetts Town Community Primary School	£6,986
Westfield School	£6,986
Beckley Church of England Primary School	£26,271
Burwash C of E School	£9,877
St Peter's Church of England Primary School, Chailey	£36,180
Crowhurst C of E Primary School	£15,658
Danehill Church of England Primary School	£6,986
East Hoathly C of E Primary School	£21,315
Etchingham Church of England Primary School	£16,360
Fletching Church of England Primary School	£26,271
High Hurstwood Church of England Primary School	£31,225
Bonnors Church of England Primary School	£1,205
Peasmarsh Church of England Primary School	£36,180
Bodiam Church of England Primary School	£33,000
Staplecross Methodist Primary School	£12,767
St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School, Hartfield	£36,180
All Saints' and St Richard's Church of England Primary School	£41,135
Little Horsted Church of England Primary School	£30,110
Mark Cross Church of England Primary School	£51,045
St Thomas' Church of England Primary School, Winchelsea	£21,315
High Cliff Academy	£12,767
The Baird Academy	£12,677
Sir Henry Fermor Church of England Primary School	£9,877
Breakwater Academy	£16,806
Phoenix Academy	£41,548
Castledown Community Primary and Nursery School	£8,548
Oakwood Academy	£23,000
Ringmer Primary School	£33,000
St Andrew's Church of England Infants School, Eastbourne	£1,495
Annecy Catholic Primary School, Seaford	£9,877
TOTAL	£727,108

Additional Class Funding	Amount
Wivelsfield Primary	£38,950
Wallands Primary	£52,000
Willingdon Secondary School	£56,000
Hailsham Academy	£78,000
TOTAL	£224,950

Growth Fund Requirement 2026/27

Funding type	Funding required
Key Stage 1 top-up funding	£814,400
Additional class funding	£143,700
Total	£958,100

Report to: East Sussex Schools Forum

Date of meeting: 16 January 2026

Report By: Carolyn Fair

Title: Central School Services Block (CSSB) 2026/27

Purpose: To provide an update on the CSSB allocations for 2026/27

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Schools Forum are asked to note and approve the proposals for the Central School Services Block for 2026/27.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2026/27 will again be allocated by the Department for Education (DfE), into four notional blocks: Schools, High Needs, Early Years and Central School Services Block (CSSB). Each block is calculated on a different basis and subject to separate regulations as to eligible expenditure.
- 1.2 This paper specifically relates to the CSSB. This block includes funding that has been allocated to Local Authorities (LAs) to carry out functions on behalf of pupils in both maintained schools and academies and has two distinct elements:
 - **Ongoing responsibilities** This comprises:
 - funds specified by the DfE and retained centrally (Admissions, Copyright Licencing Agency (CLA) Licence and Servicing Schools Forum)
 - funds that were previously known as 'Retained Duties Education Services Grant' which, up to 2017/18, the LA received and held separately for its ongoing responsibilities to maintained schools and academies
 - Funds previously received as separate grants (Support and NI Grants) for Centrally Employed Staff.
 - **Historic Commitments** This is funding for LA's historic financial commitments.

2 2026/27 On-going responsibilities

- 2.1 The DfE fund Ongoing responsibilities on a per pupil basis and use the October census. For 2026/27, the funding rate has increased from £43.41 to £48.62 per pupil. However, within the 2026/27 per pupil rate, £6.46 has been added which relates to funding that used to be received, by the Local Authority, as a separate grant for Centrally Employed Staff.
- 2.2 Therefore, on a like for like basis, the per pupil rate has decreased by £1.25 from 2025/26. Table 1 shows a summary of the change in funding from 2025/26 to 2026/27.
- 2.3 As with 2025/26, the LA is asking to retain the full amount that the DfE is allocating for 2026/27.
- 2.4 Table 2 shows the 2026/27 proposals for the 'Ongoing Responsibilities' element of the CSSB which totals £3.00m. (Please note that this is separate funding from the Schools Block DSG which funds Maintained school budget shares / Academy General Annual Grants (GAGs).

Table 1: Summary of Funding Change

2025/26 Allocation	£2,717,700	
Movement due to change in Per Pupil Rate	-£78,200	
Movement due to change in Numbers on Roll (NOR)	-£38,300	-£116,500
Movement due to external grants now received within the DSG.	£398,600	
2026/27 Allocation	£2,999,800	

Table 2: Proposals for 2026/27 On-going Responsibilities

Category	Responsibility	2025/26 Allocations	Funding Adjustments for 2026/27	2026/27 Proposed Allocations
Specified by the DfE	Admissions	£574,800	£13,000	£587,800
	Copyright Licences	£464,500	£32,500	£497,000
	Schools Forum	£25,700	£0	£25,700
Statutory and Regularity Duties	Revenue budget preparation, preparation on income and expenditure relating to education, and external audit relating to education. Formulation and review of the LA Schools Funding Formula	£153,000	£0	£153,000
	Leadership of Children's services and support staff / Planning for the Education Service as a whole.	£240,900	£0	£240,900
	Provision of information to or at the request of the Crown other than relating to specifically maintained schools.	£55,400	£0	£55,400
	Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)	£12,100	£0	£12,100
	Internal Audit and Chief Finance Officer / S151 Officer	£30,000	£0	£30,000
	Consultation Costs relating to non-staffing issues. Plans involving collaboration with other LA services or public or voluntary services	£40,600	£0	£40,600
Asset Management	Management of LA's capital programme including preparation and review of an asset management plan, and negotiation and management of private finance transactions	£112,600	£0	£112,600
Education Welfare	Functions in relation to the exclusion of pupils from schools, excluding any provision of education to excluded pupils. Responsibilities regarding the employment of children.	£139,300	£31,000	£170,300
	School Attendance	£360,300	£0	£360,300
Other Ongoing Duties	Places in Independent Schools for Non SEN Pupils	£193,000	-£193,000	£0
	Employer Contributions for Centrally Employed Staff (Previously received as separate external grants)	£315,500	£398,600	£714,100
	Total	£2,717,700	£282,100	£2,999,800

3. Historic Commitments

- 3.1 The Historic Commitments are funded by the DfE as a lump sum amount and for 2026/27 the DfE are allocating £1.29m to ESCC for Historic Commitments. This is a reduction of £323k when compared to 2025/26.
- 3.2 The LA proposes to use these funds to offset some of the High Needs Block 2026/27 spending pressures.
- 3.3 Table 3 is a summary of the proposals for 2026/27 funding for historic commitments.

Table 3: Proposals for 2026/27 Historic Commitments

Historic Commitments	2025/26 Allocations	CSSB Changes	2025/26 Proposed Allocations
	£1,613,500	-£322,700	£1,290,800
*Total	£1,613,500	-£322,700	£1,290,800

**Please note that the DfE reduce the Historic commitments value by 20% each year. This means that for 2026/27, the value has reduced by £323k.*

4. Summary and Conclusion

- 4.1 This report sets out the proposals for the retention of the £3.00m for 'on-going responsibilities' and the £1.29m 'Historic Commitments'. Schools Forum members are asked to approve these proposals.

Carolyn Fair

Director Children's Services

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Report to: East Sussex Schools Forum

Date of meeting: 16 January 2026

Report By: Carolyn Fair, Director of Children's Services

Title: Early Years Funding Reforms

Purpose of Report: To update Schools Forum on the government's early years funding reforms.

Recommendation:

Schools Forum is asked to note the changes to the early years' education entitlements due to the government's early years funding reforms, which came into full effect from September 2025 and approve the Early Years DSG Budget from April 2026.

1. Introduction

1.1 As announced previously by the government, from September 2025 eligible working families of children aged 9 months+ can access 30 hours of funded childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year. This offer is in line with the Extended 30 hour offer that was already in place for eligible three- and four-year-olds. To ensure fair distribution of funding across all age ranges the DfE has updated the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) from April 2026. The refreshed formula will distribute funding entitlements for children aged from 9 months, building on the existing formula used to fund the three- and four-year-old entitlements.

1.2 The framework outlines how councils will be expected to pass funding on to providers. Councils will have support and flexibility to deliver the childcare offers whilst ensuring funding reaches providers in a fair and transparent way.

2. Changes

2.1 From April 2026, early years funding will now include funding of 30 hours, for 38 weeks of the year, for children aged 9 months+ of working parents. Eligible two-year-olds of Families in Receipt of Additional Support (FRAS) will continue to receive 15 hours of funding, for 38 weeks of the year.

2.2 The funding formula will include a statutory deprivation supplement for 3- and 4-year-olds, Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) and Disability Access Fund (DAF) payments across all age groups.

2.3 Funding provided through the 2025/26 early years national insurance contributions and teachers' pay grant (EYNTPG) has been rolled into the national average funding base rate for three- and four-year-olds, two-year-olds and 9 months to two-year-olds. Councils will not receive a separate EYNTPG allocation in 2026/27.

2.4 For the financial year 2026/27 the minimum pass-through requirement for councils to providers will increase from 96% to 97%. Councils will be required to hold a contingency fund to ensure funding is available to fund all children throughout the year and there will be less flexibility for councils to move funds between the different streams.

2.5 Councils are also required to expand their Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) to include all eligible children from age 9 months who are taking up the universal and extended funded entitlements. The SENIF is funded from the Early Years Block grant.

3. Funding rates

3.1 For 2026/27, the DfE is increasing the national minimum base funding rate for three and four-year olds in East Sussex to £6.49 per hour, a £0.52 per hour increase. This increase includes an additional £0.18 per hour to reflect termly adjustments due to changes in how early data will be collected from April 2026. The funding rate in East Sussex is just over the national average base rate of £6.45 per hour for the universal 15-hour entitlement. For the extended 15-hour entitlement the national average base rate is £6.37 per hour. The Council has considered how much we can increase the per hour rates for providers in East Sussex within the constraints of the funding regulations for the different funding streams and with the new requirement to hold a contingency fund.

3.2 The Council is proposing to pass on 97% of the total early years funding received to providers, in line with the DfE requirements. The 97% passed on includes the statutory deprivation supplement, SENIF and Special Educational Needs Enhanced Funding (SENELF) for eligible children. Also included is a contingency fund to cover the impact of moving to data returns three times a year in line with School Census data collections.

3.3 This means that the per hour rates to providers in East Sussex will increase in 2026/27 to:

- £6.00 per hour for three- and four-year-olds, an increase of £0.31 from this year.
- £8.44 per hour for eligible two years olds of FRAS and two-year-olds whose parents are in employment, an increase of £0.24 from this year.
- On top of the base rate for two-, three- and four-year-olds there will deprivation supplement, EYPP and SENIF payments for eligible children.
- £11.54 per hour for under twos, whose parents are in employment, an increase of £0.39 from this year. On top of the base rate there will be SENIF payments for eligible children.

3.4 The funding for under twos enables providers to offer funded places for working parents of children aged under two and reflects the commitment of the Council to support economic growth for families in East Sussex.

3.5 The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) payment is additional funding for early years settings to improve the education they provide to disadvantaged children. Historically EYPP has only been paid to three- and four-year-olds but in the 2026/27 financial year this will include eligible children aged 9 months+. The EYPP rate for 2026/27 will be £1.15 per hour for each eligible child for a maximum 570 hours a year. Once eligibility for EYPP has been confirmed children attending an early year's setting retain EYPP funding until they are rechecked as they take-up a school place.

3.6 The Disability Access Fund (DAF) is for early years settings to support children with disabilities or special educational needs. It aids access to early years places by supporting providers to make reasonable adjustments to their settings. The DAF rate for 2026/27 will be £975 per eligible child, per year.

3.7 Council's must consult with early years providers to set the value of their local SENIF. Early Years providers will be consulted during the spring of 2026 to agree how the grant available will be distributed to best support the needs of children in their care. This will include consulting on cohort funding of children as well as individual children.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

4.1 In conclusion, Schools Forum is asked to note the changes to the early years' education entitlements because of the government's early years funding reforms, which were fully implemented from September 2025, and approve the Early Years DSG Budget for the financial year 2026/27.

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PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

East Sussex Headteachers and Principals

Date: 21 November 2025

Dear Headteachers/Principals

I am writing to all school leaders to update on the discussions at Schools' Forum meeting on Friday 14 November. We had an important item regarding the High Needs Block (HNB) budget and a decision on whether to make an interblock transfer from the schools' block to the HNB block. A copy of the papers can be found at the following link and they set out in detail the context for this discussion: [Agenda for East Sussex Schools Forum on Friday, 14th November, 2025, 8.30 am | East Sussex County Council](#)

There was a long and detailed conversation at Schools' Forum about the current HNB deficit, the drivers for this deficit and the potential impact of an interblock transfer. Members of the forum then voted on two options: a transfer of £1m or of £1.963m from the schools' block to the HNB block to partially mitigate the projected deficit of £22.658m this financial year. It was a close vote on the first amount but the decision of the forum was **not** to make an interblock transfer this year.

Following this decision, I had to consider whether to make an application to the Secretary of State (SoS) to override the decision of the Forum and request approval for the interblock transfer. There are a broad range of factors to consider in reaching this decision and I think we all recognise the extremely challenging financial environment that we are working in across schools and the local authority. On balance, I have decided not to make an application to the SoS this year and so the interblock transfer will not proceed.

In reaching this decision, I have considered all the factors carefully and discussed with Becky Shaw, the Chief Executive of the local authority. I listened carefully to the points that were made by school colleagues at the meeting. Their concerns particularly focused on the timing of the proposed SEND reforms, impact on already stretched school budgets and the ability of mainstream schools to meet the needs of children with SEND. It has been a difficult decision to reach, not least because of the financial impact that this will have on the council's budgets which are already heavily overspent.

However, on balance, I have decided to take in good faith the commitments that were made by members of the forum to work collaboratively over the next year to address the HNB deficit through collective action across the SEND system. In particular, school

leaders signalled their commitment to working with us to deliver earlier intervention and support in mainstream, and to drive down the demand for high cost, specialist placements.

We will now work through the joint board, area groups, EIPs and headteacher meetings to discuss how we move this forward and translate these commitments into actions that will deliver tangible savings on the HNB. We agreed to monitor these actions and the impact on the HNB budget at Schools' Forum over the coming year. We have an opportunity to work differently during this time and to demonstrate that we can make system change that delivers tangible benefits for learners and a budget that is sustainable. This builds on work to date but there is an imperative now to ensure that we go both further and faster. Hopefully, central government will also deliver policy changes in this period that support these ambitions.

As I set out at the forum meeting, East Sussex is in an unusual position of having requested an interlock transfer for the first time last year since the 2017/18 financial year. This is a reflection of the actions that the local authority has taken over a number of years to manage cost pressures and is not the position across the majority of councils in the country. This provides us with a strong basis upon which to work this year. However, I must emphasise that this is not a position that we can maintain if we are unable to deliver change across the system over the next 12 months. The rising demand, and associated costs, that we are experiencing across the SEND system will mean that the council is no longer able to hold the entire deficit beyond this period. We will need to have this discussion again in a year's time at Schools Forum and I may need to make a different decision if we are unable to make significant, system wide change before then. As a council, we will continue to invest in the development of facility placements and other actions to support the inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream education. Sarah will be writing to school leaders tomorrow with an update on current work to support inclusion in mainstream.

I fully acknowledge and appreciate the difficult environment that we are all working in; the pressures across the SEND system are significant and unsustainable. I do not take any of these decisions lightly and I know that we are all working incredibly hard to do our best for children and young people. I look forward to continuing these discussions; please do not hesitate to contact Elizabeth or me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Fair
Director of Children's Services