

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HAVERING SCHOOLS FUNDING
FORUM**

**Thursday 16th January 2025 at CEME.
(8.00 – 9.20 am)**

Present:

Representative Groups

LA Maintained School Representatives:

Primary: Kirsten Cooper (Chair)
Georgina Delmonte
Hayley McClenaghan
Chris Speller
David Unwin Bailey
Mike Ross

Academy Representatives:

Primary: Chris Hobson (CH)

Secondary Neil Frost
Scott McGuinness
David Turrell (Vice Chair)

Special Schools Emma Allen (maintained)
Andy Smith (Academy)

Alternative Provision Tony Machin

Non-School Representatives:

Early Years PVI Sector: Emma Reynolds

Trade Unions: John McGill (Teaching staff union representative)
Peter Liddle (Support staff union representation)

Non Members in attendance:

Angela Adams (AA)	Clerk, HGS
Marcus Bennet (MB)	Head of SEND
Trevor Cook (TC)	Assistant Director of Education
Katherine Heffernan (KH)	Head of Finance (Business Partnering)
Hany Moussa (HM)*	Principal Education Finance Officer
Jacqueline Treacy	Senior Inspector (Schools Causing Concern)

*for part of the meeting

1. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW MEMBERS, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS OR OBSERVERS

All were welcomed to the meeting.

There were no apologies for absence to receive. It was noted that Michael Ross was attending on behalf of cluster B.

2. TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28TH NOVEMBER 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2024 were received and agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

The following were matters arising from the previous minutes that were not included elsewhere on the agenda:

3.1. Union facility time (minute 3.2 refers): Forum members were advised that H Moussa was still working on the Union Facility Time calculations, an update would be shared when available.

ACTION: HM

3.2. Health and Safety de-delegation (minute 3.3 refers): Forum members noted that a letter had been circulated giving more information about the services provided for health and safety under de-delegation.

3.3. Apprenticeship rates (minute 3.4 refers): It was agreed to close this action.

3.4. Schools funding (minute 4 refers): The consultation on schools and High Needs Funding 2025 -26 had been circulated before Christmas and responses had been received.

3.5. Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) (minute 4 refers): Forum members were advised that this would be looked at after April 2025 and would link into the restructure of the Early Help Offer. Going forward it may or may not be a traded service. This would be finalised and would be ready for September 2025.

ACTION: TC

3.6. Sickness risk fund (minute 5 refers): Forum members were advised that the sickness risk fund would come to an end on 31st March 2025. It was questioned what would happen with regards to those who were currently sick and schools were accessing the fund. In response it was noted that this would need to be reviewed on a case by case basis and existing providers would be looked at to fill the gap.

4. FORUM COMPOSITION

Forum members were asked to

1. Review the proposal to increase the primary phase academy membership from one representative to two representatives.
2. Note the LA engagement with the Diocesan Board and Post 16 provision, with Forum to be updated on the progress at the next meeting

Forum members noted that it needed to be ensured that the membership of the forum represented the make-up of the local area. In order to establish the membership a breakdown of the number of pupils in the Borough were considered alongside the cluster system which was strong in the Primary schools, which needed to be maintained. The representatives needed to support the decisions made across the year including the De-delegation. It also needed to be ensured that there was a balance of representatives.

	Proposal			Current
	Head Teachers	Governors	Total	Total
Primary Maintained	5 6	1	6 7	6
Primary Academies	2		2	1
Secondary Maintained	0	0	0	0
Secondary Academies	6 5	1	6	6
Special Maintained	1		1	1
Special Academy	1		1	1
AP Academy	1		1	1
Total	17		17 18	16

The following was noted:

- It was agreed that there should be 1 governor representative from the maintained sector and 1 from the academy sector. Volunteers would be asked for at the Informal Chairs meeting to held the following week.

ACTION: HGS

- Secondary Headteachers would look to recruit to fill the 2 vacancies.

ACTION: Secondary Heads

- The sixth form representative post could be filled by a Headteacher of a secondary school with a sixth form. It was suggested that Ms V Qurrey, Headteacher at Sacred Heart Secondary School could be approached to fill this post.

ACTION: HM / KH

- Chris Hobson undertook to contact the CEOs of primary academies in Havering for a Headteacher representative.

ACTION: CH

- The Diocese of Chelmsford and The Diocese of Brentwood had been contacted with regards to seeking representatives to sit on the funding forum. However it was proposed that M Ross could represent the Diocese of Brentwood and C Speller could represent the Diocese of Chelmsford. This would be confirmed with the Diocese.

ACTION: HGS

- Cluster B needed a maintained Headteacher representative so there was a representative from each of the 6 clusters.

ACTION: Primary Headteachers

Forum members

- 1. Reviewed and agreed the proposal to increase the primary phase academy membership from one representative to two representatives.**
- 2. Noted the LA engagement with the Diocesan Board and Post 16 provision, and a full update on the membership would be shared at the next meeting.**

ACTION: HM / KH

5. SCHOOLS' FUNDING

Forum members were asked to

1. Consider the responses to the Consultation on Schools and High Needs Funding 2025-26 submitted by schools and academies.
2. Agree Havering adopts the national funding formula rates for the funding of schools and academies in financial year 2025-26 with a minimum funding guarantee of 0.00% per pupil and a gains cap of 0.85% per pupil.
3. Agree £1,290,899 (0.50%) of the DSG Schools Block is transferred to the DSG High Needs Block.
4. Agree £429,196 of the DSG Schools Block is used to support Pupil Growth and Falling rolls in addition to the £1,293,804 funding received for this.

Funding forum members noted the following:

- There would be an increase in the top slice.
- Gains cap would be 0.85% per pupil.
- The consultation had been circulated with real figures; this had been the reason for it being circulated late.

- Some responses had been received, all were favourable and some had felt that an increase in the top slice to fund High Needs would be acceptable.
- This was in line with what had been agreed previously.

All Funding forum members

- 1. Considered the responses to the Consultation on Schools and High Needs Funding 2025-26 submitted by schools and academies.**
- 2. Agreed that Havering adopted the national funding formula rates for the funding of schools and academies in financial year 2025-26 with a minimum funding guarantee of 0.00% per pupil and a gains cap of 0.85% per pupil**
- 3. Agreed £1,290,899 (0.50%) of the DSG Schools Block was transferred to the DSG High Needs Block**
- 4. Agreed £429,196 of the DSG Schools Block was used to support Pupil Growth and Falling rolls in addition to the £1,293,804 funding received for this.**

Colleagues were thanked for the quick turnaround.

H Moussa joined the meeting at this point, 8.30am

6. HIGH NEEDS FUNDING

Forum members were asked to

1. Note the DfE Final Allocation for financial year 2025-26.
2. Note the High Needs Task and Finish Group meeting to discuss present and next financial year funding levels and arrangements.
3. Note the year forecast of expenditure for financial year 2024-25.

Forum members were advised that the National Funding Formula (NFF) would distribute £11.3 billion of the total high needs budget for 2025-26. They also noted that for 2025-26, the high needs budget would be £11.9 billion. This represented a 9% increase compared to the baseline established for 2024-25.

It was also noted that under the NFF, Havering was projecting an increase in it's per pupil level for high needs by 8.91%. Changes to the high needs block had been discussed and a report would be presented to the cabinet in February with regards to the prospective cost of the uplift that would contribute to the in year deficit of £21m for 2024-25 by £2.61m. The total carry-forward deficit to 2025-26 was projected as £36.3m. The in-year deficits would continue to increase.

It was further noted that the number of pupils with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) had increased by more than 11%. There were significant costs from the non-maintained / special school sector which was linked to the complexity of the pupils' needs and the high cost of the provision and support.

A forum member stated that a breakdown of the costs used to be circulated which showed how much out of borough and private settings provision cost Havering. It was further noted that the Headteachers were all aware of the complexity of the needs and questioned what it would look like next year. Some parents applied for EHCPs for their children even when they did not need them. It was agreed that there were more pupils with more complex needs and schools now had to look at how they could support them. It was noted that they were moving away from the hours of support allocated under EHCPs to bands. Forum members noted the breakdown of the spend in appendix 6A. It was questioned if there was still a high number of pupils being placed in settings outside of the Borough. In response it was advised that some pupils were difficult to place in Borough and they had been turned down by a number of schools, also respite care was more expensive locally. Some pupils were costly to support as provisions could charge what they wanted to. The situation was challenging.

Forum members also advised that at Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) they could not take on anymore pupils with special education needs (SEN).

There were more children who needed support which led to increased costs and which contributed to the in year deficit of £21m and the overall carry forward of £36m for High Needs. The grants were not keeping up with the demand and the increase in costs leading to the in year deficit increasing every year.

In response to a further question it was noted that deficit formed part of the council's borrowing and it was not been funded by the schools. Effectively the local authority (LA) could ignore the deficit until March 2026 when the statutory override finished. It was further noted that nationally there was an over spend of £1.7 billion for High Needs. Historically Havering had been poorly funded for SEN.

The LA were now spending £60m of which £20m was used for high needs top ups, £20m supported special schools and the remaining third / £20m supported ARPS, alternative provision and support from various central teams at the Borough. 60% of pupils with EHCPs in the Borough were placed in mainstream schools which was above the national average. As far as possible pupils were moved to placements that were less expensive. However once pupils were in an out of borough placement, parents were often reluctant to move them. Many pupils were not in the correct provision to meet their needs which impacted on the costs. Costs in Havering were higher when compared to other Boroughs.

Havering were awarded funding under the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme from the DfE, they received £1m, however, other boroughs received more under the Safety Valve programme. The funding for the DBV that Havering received was not to cover the deficit, and it was for enabling the LA to engage with stakeholders for a number of objectives, working collaboratively with the DfE.

Funding forum members commented that any increase they received in funding was wiped out straight away by other cost increases such as salary increases and national insurance increases, which did not leave anything extra to spend

on the pupils. Although the teachers' pay increase was funded the non-teaching staff pay increase was not funded. Some of the costs was supported by the DfE's new CSBG grant but it did not wholly cover all the costs.

It was questioned that as the borough was a lower funded borough, could they lobby for more funding. In response, it was noted that the council were lobbying on a number of fronts for more funding. An area cost adjustment was allowed for at 8% but currently the local government funding formula used 2014 figures to calculate funding.

It was also noted that there was an 11% increase in the number of EHCPs, however the High Needs Block grant increased in line with the increase in population but this was less than 11%. It was noted that overall there was not enough money at a national level to cover the ever increasing demand in SEND in education. The increases in funding is not enough to cover the deficit, the year on year increases is not sufficient in closing the existing gap.

The DfE does not have an advanced formula in place, that is able to predict high needs demand at national level.

Funding forum members were advised that the borough had had to write an action plan for funding awarded under the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme and although the DfE were happy with the progress made, the deficit continued to increase in line with the projected levels.

It was agreed that this situation could not continue and a national approach was needed.

The level that top up funding increased was a forum decision but it was also drawn to members' attention that schools' deficits were also increasing.

However it was noted that they were aware of why the deficit was high, this was driven by volume and increased in line with the general population. This year, there had been an increase in expenditure of £4m and this linked to the increase in costs rather than the increase in population which had been small this year and had only contributed £250k increase in funding.

The LA continued to increase the spend on High Needs but it was agreed the system needed to change. Pupils were very different but it was about ensuring the same standards for all pupils. Early intervention was needed but choices needed to be made about what support should be provided.

It was further noted that there was a higher rate of EHCPs in EYFS but an EHCP was not needed to get funding at a higher rate, which is funded as part of the Early Years SENIF.

The DBV programme was designed to increase parental confidence but changes needed to be implemented locally, as changes nationally would be not be made any time soon. The demand for EHCPs needed to be reduced in some way. A high number of children were starting at a school with an EHCP as some parents felt this would help them get into their school of choice.

A report would also be going to Cabinet the following week with the proposal to spend capital funding on 4 new SEN Units and the expansion of existing SEN Units to expand capacity within the borough.

Forum members noted

1. **The DfE Final Allocation for financial year 2025-26**
2. **That the High Needs Task and Finish Group meeting to discuss present and next financial year funding levels and arrangements would follow on after the funding forum.**
3. **The year’s forecast of expenditure for financial year 2024-25**

7. CENTRAL SCHOOLS SERVICES BLOCK (CSSB)

Forum members were asked to

1. Note the final allocation of CSSB for 2025-26.
2. Consider the revised funding retention for central statutory services.

Forum members noted that the CSSB allocation funded statutory services. Costs were increasing due to the increasing number of pupils which resulted in an increase in the demand for the services provided.

Ongoing responsibilities were noted as follows:

- LA responsibilities for all schools- this covered support for finance, safeguarding and Havering School Improvement Service (HSIS).
- Copyright licences – The costs for this would increase by £45,918 in 2025-26. This cost was set nationally and could not be paid locally.
- Admissions - costs would increase for this service due to staff pay increments but also there had been an increase in workload which resulted in the team needed to expand. This area also contributed to the costs incurred for appeals panels.

Voting	
Yes	All in attendance with voting rights
No	0
Abstained	0

Forum members all agreed the allocations for CSSB for 2025–26.

8. EARLY YEARS FUNDING 2025-26

Forum members were asked to

1. Note the indicative funding allocations for 2025-26.
2. Note the process and timeline for determining funding rates for 2025-26.

Forum members were advised that a consultation would take place for Early Years Funding for 2025-26 and once the consultation was closed a vote on the funding rates would take place.

The DfE was increasing the pass through rate made payable to providers to 96% (from 95%) and the same % increase uplift would be proposed to be passed on via the base rate.

Forum members noted that later that day there would be an extra-ordinary meeting for Early Years to review funding and the consultation. It was noted that SEN was impacting Early Years providers.

HM advised that they were looking at working with health providers to look at how to target support for those with SEND.

Final funding rates would be published by 28th February 2025, once Forum has reviewed and agreed the rates following the consultation.

Audit has been commissioned to ensure the funding delegated to providers is meeting all the regulations for Early Years.

Forum members noted:

- 1. The indicative funding allocations for 2025-26.**
- 2. The process and timeline for determining funding rates for 2025-26.**

9. NEXT MEETINGS

Forum members noted the dates of the upcoming meetings for the remainder of the academic year.

Thursday 13th February 2025 (room 233)
Thursday 12th June 2025 (room 235)

Meetings to start at 8.00 a.m. at CEME room 233 or 235.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- HM asked funding Forum members if they wanted to change the venue for the funding forum meetings to the Town Hall. After some discussion it was agreed for the meetings to continue to be held at CEME.
- Forum members were also advised that the Junior Free School Meals (KS2) would continue for a further 3 years until the end of the term of office of the current Mayor of London.

There were no further items of any other business raised.

Meeting closed at 9:20 am