

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

**Thursday 12th February 2026 via Teams
(8.00am – 8.50am)**

Present:

LA Maintained School Representatives:

Primary Kirsten Cooper (*Chair*)
 Craig Browne (CB)
 Georgina Delmonte (GD)
 David Unwin-Bailey (DUB)
 Mike Ross (MR) (also representing the Diocese of Brentwood)

Special Emma Allen (EA)

Governor Les James (LJ)

Academy Representatives:

Secondary David Turrell (DT) (*Vice Chair*) (also representing Post 16)
 Paul Larnar (PL) (also representing Post 16)
 Neil Frost (NF)
 Scott McGuinness (SM)

Special Andy Smith (AS)

Non-School Representatives:

Early Years (PVI Sector): Emma Reynolds (ER)

Trade Unions: Julia Newman (JN) (Support staff union representative)
 George Blake (GB) (Teaching staff union representative)

Non-Members in attendance:

Marcus Bennett (MB) Head of SEND
Trevor Cook (TC) Assistant Director of Education
Katherine Heffernan (KH) Head of Finance (Business Partnering)
Michelle Morgan (MM) Clerk, HGS
Jacqueline Treacy (JT) Senior Inspector for schools causing concern (HSIS)

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

All were welcomed to the meeting.

There had been no apologies received.

It was agreed that Trudy Spillane (Headteacher Maylands Primary School) would be added to the distribution list and invited to the next meeting as the Primary Academy Representative.

ACTION: HM

2. TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15TH JANUARY 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 15TH January 2026 were received and agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1. Matters arising from the previous minutes (that were not included elsewhere on the agenda were noted as follows.

3.1.1. Falling rolls support (Minute 4): LJ sought clarification regarding the funding level period for when a cohort had falling roll. The Chair referred to the previous minutes stating that funding would be paid for that cohort for every year that it was in school, subject to an annual recalculation of pupil numbers. The amount would reduce if pupil numbers for that cohort had increased. HM advised that this was a local policy that offered protection for schools when there was a dip in pupil numbers. It was noted that once NFF came into effect, the Government may have a different approach.

3.1.2. Lunchtime costs (Early Years) (Minute 7): HM confirmed that clarification as to how lunchtime costs could be covered would be issued as part of the Early Years provider guidance.

4. EARLY YEARS

Forum members were asked to vote on the following proposed recommended arrangements and rates, following the consultation responses and EYPRG engagement, as follows:

- 1. The base hourly rate for:**
 - a. 9 months to two-year-olds (under twos) entitlement - £11.85**
 - b. two-year-olds – working parents’ entitlement - £8.64**
 - c. two-year-olds – disadvantaged families’ entitlement - £9.20**
 - d. three/four-year-olds (universal and extended) entitlement - £6.02**
- 2. The level of a quality supplement to allocate funds to schools replacing the teachers’ pay and pension grants (TPPG) – Quality factor budget of £460,000.**
- 3. Deprivation rates of funding continue to be aligned with the rates that are used for schools in the National Funding Formula**

	Hourly rate	Annual rate (38 weeks x 15 hours)
Band	2026-27	2026-27
A	£0.80	£456.00
B	£0.60	£342.00
C	£0.57	£324.90
D	£0.52	£296.40
E	£0.33	£188.10
F	£0.27	£153.90
G	£0.00	£0.00

4. SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF) to support providers total budget of £2.313m.

5. Centrally retained budget for LA support and commissioning total budget of £1.797m.

KH reported that the Early Years Block of the DSG was now more than the High Needs Block of the grant because of the increase of entitlements down to under 2s. The DfE calculated funding initially by using an hourly rate multiplied by their projection of the numbers of children eligible. The LA will then calculate from this total funding amount how much to pass on to providers, and in what format. The LA was able to retain a percentage of the funding to cover administrative costs from commissioning and quality assurance functions.

A consultation had been held with EYPRG and settings regarding the LA proposals. HM advised that in response to the sector's request for support, a different approach had been taken, which included providing the full technical consultation document, alongside a guidance document which summarised the detail. Webinars had also been provided to offer further guidance. Despite this investment in support, the number of responses to the consultation had dropped from 87 (2025) to 58. It was recognised that the sector had other conflicting priorities, however the response rate had been disappointing.

Based on consultation outcomes, the majority of responses were in favour of the proposals. A concern was raised from childminders about the 1:3 ratios with a funding rate of £6 per hour (total therefore of £18 per hour for three/four year olds) and the LA had been approached for support in engaging with the DfE to increase their funding. HM reiterated that such feedback was a very important part of the consultation process and the LA would look to put forward this issue with the DfE. Questions had also been raised regarding additional charging for Early Years settings; the Early Years team would provide clarity with their revised Early Years Operational Provider Guide (following legislative changes from 1 January 2026). DUB reiterated the importance of this guidance giving greater clarity as charging in settings was not currently aligned.

ER responded to the reduced response rate stating that colleagues within the sector were disillusioned as currently the rates were not sustainable and forecasts had shown that there would be a very limited number of private nurseries still financially viable after the next 3 years. ER also requested for a childminder representative to join the SFF group.

Recognising the sector's challenges, the Chair advised that the SFF had limited power to resolve issues raised. The Chair felt that most discussion held in this forum would not be relevant for childminders, however suggested that this might be a consideration for the EYPRG as clearly this was a voice within the sector that had legitimate concerns. TC advised

that the EYPRG had previously agreed that Celia Freeth (Early Years Quality Assurance Manager) would attend the meetings on behalf of a number of stakeholders (including childminders) acknowledging that such sessions were a demand on their time, however an action for the Summer Term meeting is to discuss how to improve representation.

There was a short discussion about the central retention for Q&A, and it was acknowledged that the service is found to support those providers for their statutory responsibilities.

The Chair thanked KH and HM for their summaries noting that although engagement in the consultation may have been disappointing, sometimes a new approach did take time to embed.

All eligible School Funding Forum representatives then voted on the following:

- 1. Funding Forum Members unanimously agreed with the following base hourly rates:**
 - a. 9 months to two-year-olds (under twos) entitlement - £11.85**
 - b. two-year-olds – working parents’ entitlement - £8.64**
 - c. two-year-olds – disadvantaged families’ entitlement - £9.20**
 - d. three/four-year-olds (universal and extended) entitlement - £6.02**
- 2. Funding Forum Members unanimously agreed to the level of a quality supplement to allocate funds to schools replacing the teachers’ pay and pension grants (TPPG) – Quality factor budget of £460,000.**
- 3. Funding Forum Members unanimously agreed that deprivation rates of funding would continue to be aligned with the rates that are used for schools in the National Funding Formula.**
- 4. Funding Forum Members unanimously agreed to the level of SEN Inclusion Fund (SENI) to support providers would total a budget of £2.313m.**
- 5. Funding Forum Members unanimously agreed to the centrally retained budget for LA support and commissioning of £1.797m.**

5. HIGH NEEDS FUNDING

It was noted that the report set out the proposals for 2026-27 relating to:

- An increase to unit placement funding rates, and
- Updated top-up funding levels for pupils in mainstream schools, based on agreed needs bandings.

The report also provided the financial context for these proposals, including current expenditure pressures within the High Needs Block (HNB).

These topics had been considered by the High Needs Working Group, and the recommendations were presented for Schools Forum members’ agreement.

KH reported that the High Needs block continued to be overspent; the forecasted in year overspend for 2025-2026 was £31.5m. There was also the risk that this would increase further as there remained backlogs and delays in getting assessments completed and payments

distributed. The cumulative high needs deficit would be approximately £67.5m at the end of March 2026.

The Government had announced on Monday that part of the final settlement of local government funding arrangements would be a High Needs Stability grants which would cover 90% of the agreed accumulative deficit at March 2026 (subject to audit checks). As the Government were effectively writing off 90% of the deficit, this implicitly meant that the other 10% fell to the Local Authority. The override within Local Government did currently still exist, however when this override is removed, the Local Authority had to ensure that enough funding was set aside to cover the remaining 10% deficit. Therefore, although a large amount of deficit had 'gone,' there would be even more scrutiny from corporate finance, as this £7m would be added to the Local Authority's current deficit position. The Government had not provided further details as yet; there were 2 more years before funding arrangements switched to be held centrally. The awaited SEND reforms and subsequent implications had also yet to be published.

Discussions had been held with the High Needs Group about future funding and had also been shared more widely at ESP (Education Strategic Partnership). It was noted that funding high needs would be in bands. As part of the review of the arrangements for funding 2026-2027, the band values had been uplifted by 3% to reflect pay pressures. The unit placement rate of pupil's supported in special units would also increase from 2026-2027 from £30K per place to £30,800. The increase would ensure that unit provision remained financially viable and supported inclusive local provision. The Finance team would continue to work with the High Needs working group to ensure that fair arrangements were in place, whilst not increasing the deficit. KH advised that the figures provided in the report had been submitted (due to required deadlines) and would go to Cabinet. If SFF colleagues did not agree with the proposals, then further discussion would be required.

DUB questioned why the 3% band values top up, was not reflected in the SEN units which was 2.5%. KH referred to the papers provided and the additional money provided for ARPs.

MB referred to the banding figures provided and confirmed that these were different to the figures presented at ESB; the financial amounts were correct, however the bands had been moved along to stop at Band F. Band G would be bespoke. KH advised that Cabinet would likely not require the level of detail, however she would advise officers present so that it could be explained, if required. There were however potentially further financial implications; an update would be brought to the March SFF meeting.

ACTION: KH

The Chair reflected that the news regarding SEN funding had indeed first appeared as good news, however if there was no change to the funding, then it would become even more challenging for Local Authorities and schools, which would lead to even more scrutiny.

All eligible School Funding Forum Members were asked to:

- 1. Note the financial position of the High Needs Block for 2026-27. Noted.**
- 2. Unanimously agreed to the proposed increase to unit placement funding rates for 2026-27.**
- 3. Unanimously agreed to the proposed 2026-27 mainstream top-up band values:**

The proposed banding rates for 2026-27 are as follows:

Band (Finance)	Weekly Notional SEN	Weekly SEN Top-up	Total weekly amount of support
A	£153.06	£0.00	£153.06
B	£153.06	£156.56	£309.62
C	£153.06	£259.56	£412.62
D	£153.06	£362.56	£515.62
Ep (Primary)	£153.06	£517.06	£670.12
Es (Secondary)	£153.06	£568.56	£721.62
F	£153.06	£723.06	£876.12
G	£153.06	£1,186.56	£1,339.62

4. **Notes that the proposed increases are funded through a transfer from the Schools Block and do not address underlying demand pressures within the High Needs Block. Noted.**

6. NEXT MEETINGS

Thursday 11th June 2026

Meetings to start at 8.00am at CEME either in room 233 or 235.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no additional business items.

The Chair thanked Forum members for their contributions.

Meeting closed at 8.50 am.