

SCHOOLS FORUM

AGENDA

Wednesday 25th March 2025

via videoconferencing

Membership: Tony Eginton (Chair), Phil Haigh (Chair of Sub-Groups), Shabana Aslam, Kate Needs, Kris O'Sullivan, Mel Penney, Carly Rissen, John Buckingham, Jo Palmer, Dan Cowling, Jenny Rigby, Harshinder Buttar, John Garner, Nicola Edwards, Nicola Kelly, Helen Manwaring, Liam McGillicuddy, Ben Spinks, Sudhi Pathak, Paul Chambers, Elaine Caffary, Naazish Haq, Jonathan Jacob.

Shadow Reps/Observers: Debbie Gilder, Eleesa Dowding, Graham Wells, Bryony Smith, Pearl Greenwald.

Officers: Abi Preston, Luisa Hansen, Ndenko Asong, Michael Hawkins, Julie Kelly, Richard Ennis, Philip Ryan, Nav Minah, Gary Binstead, Sanjaya Gunatilake, Kate Boulter (Clerk)

AGENDA

| | Item | Approx. time | Lead | Update |
|---|---|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Welcome, apologies & opening comments | 10mins | Chair | Oral |
| 2 | Notification of Any Other Urgent Business | 15mins | Chair | Oral |
| 3 | Minutes of previous meeting | 5mins | Chair | Oral |
| 4 | Items for Decision a) Bulge Places | 10mins | NM/GB | Report |
| 5 | Items for Consultation a) Chair & Vice Chair nominations b) 2025-26 HN Budget | 10mins 10mins | AP NA | Oral Report |
| 6 | Items for Information a) 2024-25 DSG Monitoring b) 2025-26 SEND Commissioned Places c) 2025-26 EY Budget and Hourly funding (Outcome of Consultation) d) MFG Disapplication | 5mins 5mins 10mins 10mins | NA GB SG AP | Report Report Report Oral |
| 8 | AOB / Closing remarks | 20mins | Chair | Oral |

HILLINGDON SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 28 January 2025 at 1pm via Teams

Voting members

| NAME | ORGANISATION | ATTENDANCE | TERM ENDS |
|--|--|------------|-----------|
| Maintained Nursery (1) | | | |
| Shabana Aslam | McMillan Early Childhood Centre | PRESENT | Sep 2026 |
| Maintained Primary - Schools (4) | | | |
| Kris O'Sullivan | Deanesfield Primary School | PRESENT | Sep 2028 |
| Kate Needs | Lady Banks | PRESENT | Sep 2027 |
| Mel Penney | Glebe Primary School | PRESENT | Sep 2027 |
| Carly Rissen | Colham Manor | PRESENT | Sep 2028 |
| Maintained Primary - Governors (4) | | | |
| John Buckingham | Glebe Primary School | PRESENT | Sep 2028 |
| Jo Palmer | Hillside Infant School and Hillside Junior School | PRESENT | Sep 2028 |
| Tony Eginton (CHAIR) | Minet Infant & Nursery School & Hillside Junior School | PRESENT | Sep 2028 |
| Phil Haigh | Cherry Lane Primary School & Meadow High School | PRESENT | Sep 2028 |
| Maintained Secondary (1) | | | |
| Dan Cowling | Oak Wood School | PRESENT | Sep 2026 |
| Maintained Special (counts as 1 for voting) | | | |
| Pearl Greenwald/Bryony Smith (Co-Headteachers) | Hedgewood Primary | PRESENT | Sep 2028 |
| Academies (9) | | | |
| Harshinder Buttar | Lake Farm Park Academy | PRESENT | Sep 2027 |
| John Garner | Ruislip High School | PRESENT | Sep 2026 |
| Nicola Edwards | William Byrd | PRESENT | Sep 2028 |
| Nicola Kelly | Charville | PRESENT | Sep 2029 |
| Roger Leighton | Partnership Learning | PRESENT | Sep 2029 |
| Liam McGillicuddy | Bishopshalt | PRESENT | Sep 2027 |
| Ben Spinks | Middlesex Learning Partnership | PRESENT | Sep 2028 |
| Roseline Wilkinson | Charville | APOLOGIES | Sep 2029 |
| (1 vacancy) | | | |
| Special Academies (1) | | | |
| Sudhi Pathak | Eden Academy Trust | PRESENT | Sep 2026 |
| Alternative provision (1) | | | |
| Paul Chambers | The Skills Hub | PRESENT | Sep 2027 |
| Private Voluntary & Independent Early Years Providers (2) | | | |
| Elaine Caffary | 4 Street Nursery | APOLOGIES | Sep 2028 |
| Naazish Haq | Little Companions | PRESENT | Sep 2027 |
| 14-19 Partnership (1) | | | |
| Jonathan Jacob | Global Academy | APOLOGIES | Sep 2028 |

Other attendees (non-voting)

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| Independent Non-Maintained Special School | | | |
| Debbie Gilder | Pield Heath School | | PRESENT |
| Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Schools) | | | |
| Louise Crook | Coteford Infant School | | PRESENT |
| Nicky Bulpett | Ruislip Gardens | | PRESENT |
| Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Governor) | | | |
| Graham Wells | Grange Park Junior School | | NOT REQUIRED |
| Maintained Special | | | |
| Jenny Rigby | Meadow High School | | NOT REQUIRED |
| Officers | | | |
| Gary Binstead | LA | | PRESENT |
| Kate Boulter | Independent Clerk | | PRESENT |
| Andrew Good | LA Finance | | PRESENT |
| Sanjaya Gunatilake | LA Finance | | PRESENT |
| Luisa Hansen | LA Finance | | PRESENT |
| Julie Kelly | LA Director of Children's Services | | APOLOGIES |
| Andy Moore | LA Finance | | PRESENT |
| Abi Preston | LA Director of Education & SEND | | PRESENT |
| Philip Ryan | LA Families' Information Service | | PRESENT |
| Observers | | | |
| Michael Wilmott | NEU | | PRESENT |
| Simon Warne | NEU | | PRESENT |


| | | ACTION |
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| 1. | APOLOGIES & OPENING COMMENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apologies were accepted and recorded in the attendance list (above). The Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate and could proceed to business. There had been three nominations for three vacancies for Academy Representatives: Nicola Kelly had been re-appointed for a further term, and Roger Leighton and Roseline Wilkinson were welcomed as new members of the Forum. | |
| 2. | ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS None. | |
| 3. | MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING | |
| | The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2024 were AGREED as a correct record of the meetings subject to the following amendment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance list (front page) – Paul Chambers was present. | |
| 4. | SUB-GROUP MINUTES | |
| | <p>(a) EARLY YEARS GROUP – 9 JANUARY 2025</p> <p>The Forum received the minutes of the Early Years Group meeting held on 9 January 2025, which was a one-item meeting to consider what to include in the consultation on Early Years funding proposals for 2025/26. The Chair of the Sub-Group advised that the draft consultation paper subsequently produced by the LA differed from what had been discussed and agreed at the meeting, and would be discussed again later in this meeting (see minute 6c).</p> <p>(b) HIGH NEEDS GROUP</p> <p>The High Needs Group had not met since the last Schools Forum meeting.</p> | |
| 5. | ITEMS FOR DECISION | |
| | <p>(a) TRADE UNION DE-DELEGATION 2025/26</p> <p>The Chair reminded Forum that it had decided not to de-delegate trade union facilities time for 2024/25 and there was an unspent balance of around £40K from 2023/24. Agreement needed to be reached on what to do with this balance, and whether to de-delegate trade union facilities time for 2025/26. Documents produced by the NEU had been circulated before the meeting, setting out a proposal for 2025/26 and addressing concerns put forward by Forum members at previous meetings in relation to parity across all school (maintained and academies) and transparency of reporting spend. Presenting the report, NEU representatives added that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having a pooled pot of money enabled schools to access skilled caseworkers. Having decided not to de-delegate in 2024/25, Hillingdon was currently an outlier in its approach to the statutory duty to provide facilities time. Nowhere else in London operated facilities time via individual schools rather than a shared pot. The LA commented that this could be because Hillingdon delegated all its funding out whereas other LAs retained funding for central functions. In response to a proposal in the NEU report that the LA hold the de-delegated contributions, the LA advised that it did not have the capacity to hold the pot centrally. <p>Members of Forum commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Forum noted that it could only determine de-delegation for maintained schools and could not agree any part of the proposal relating to academies' role in procuring facilities time. In response to a question asking why only maintained schools were required to de-delegate if all schools had a statutory requirement to provide facilities time, the NEU advised that all schools were required to contribute to facilities time, but LA schools received their funding via the LA so could de-delegate, whereas academies received their funding directly via the Annual General Grant (GAG) and part of that had to be used to contribute to facilities time or cover the release of staff representatives. Members observed that the DfE guidance indicated that the statutory requirement was to give staff members who were representatives reasonable time off but did not specify how schools should manage facilities time. | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DfE guidance also specified that de-delegation should be proposed by the LA, however the proposal had come from the NEU, and the LA had indicated it was unable to fulfil the role for it set out in the NEU proposal. • The Chair and Vice Chair had met with the NEU before the meeting and an alternative proposal had been suggested, which was to use the money currently in the pot (£40K) to fund facilities time for 2025/26 which would enable schools to be assured regarding parity, transparency and reporting ahead of making a decision on de-delegation for 2026/27. • At the last meeting, the Chairs of Primary Forum and HASH had been asked to consult their respective members on their views. 87.5% of maintained primary heads had voted not to de-delegate for 2025/26, and 54% had voted for the £40K surplus to be re-distributed to schools. Across all schools (maintained and academies), 84% had voted for facilities time to be 'level playing field' with no de-delegation. <p>Having been put to a vote, Forum AGREED as follows:</p> <p>The proposal to de-delegate for 2025/26 (maintained primary representatives):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary members: 2 in favour, 7 against (de-delegation refused) • Secondary members: 0 in favour, 1 against (de-delegation refused) <p>The proposal to use the £40K surplus in the pot to fund facilities time for 2025/26 (maintained primary and maintained secondary representatives voting together):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 in favour, 0 against (proposal agreed) | |
| | <p>(b) GROWTH/FALLING ROLLS FUND 2025/26 <i>Before considering this item, the Forum considered the report on Bulge Places 2025/25 (see minute 7b).</i></p> <p>The Forum considered a report which proposed a Growth Fund of £260K for 2025/26. This information had been presented at previous meetings and was now put forward for formal approval.</p> <p>Members of Forum commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At a previous meeting Forum had requested that a per pupil figure be provided so members could understand the impact on individual schools, however the figure was not provided in the report. • Growth funding was normally paid to expanding schools, however the report did not state which schools the funding would be paid to. A spreadsheet shared by officers at the meeting indicated that the £260K Growth Fund proposed for 2025/26 included schools which had bulge classes in 2024/25. This was incorrect as, after the first bulge year, pupils were included in the census and funded in the usual way. A report on bulge classes for 2025/26 (see agenda item 7b) gave a figure of 30 places being needed for 2025/26, and re-calculation at the meeting estimated £100K Growth Fund would be required in 2025/26 to fund 30 pupils for 7 months at £5,712 per pupil. • Members expressed frustration at the inaccuracy of the information provided in the report and proposed deferring a vote to enable an accurate report to be provided, however it was decided that it was necessary to decide the matter at this meeting to enable budgets to be set. <p>It having been put to a vote, the Forum AGREED (i) to make provision for £100K Growth Fund for 2025/26, and (ii) that a decision on allocation of bulge places for 2025/26 would be considered at the next meeting.</p> | |
| | <p>(c) CENTRAL SCHOOLS SERVICES BLOCK (CSSB) 2025/26 The Forum considered a report which set out the services and support which the LA proposed to fund from the 2025/26 CSSB grant together with the budget allocations. The CSSB allocation for 2025/26 was £2.511M which represented an increase of £0.048M from last year.</p> <p>Members of Forum commented that, at £0.9M, Education Support Grant (ESG) retained</p> | |

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| | <p>services took the largest share of this block, yet schools did not have a clear sense of what this covered. Officers advised that a substantial proportion went on statutory attendance services provided for all school (maintained and academies), which was different from services only for maintained schools which were funded through de-delegation. Members asked whether the outturn figures for 2023/24 showing spend in each area could be shared.</p> <p>It having been put to a vote, the Forum AGREED the CSSB allocation and spending for 2025/26 as set out in the report.</p> | AG |
| 6. | ITEMS FOR CONSULTATION | |
| | <p>(a) DSG ALLOCATIONS 2025/26</p> <p>The Forum NOTED a report which provided an overview of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding announced by the Government on 18 December 2024 and the indicative amounts of each block of the DSG that would be allocated to Hillingdon for 2025/26.</p> | |
| | <p>(b) SCHOOL BLOCK REPORT 2025/26</p> <p>The Forum NOTED a report which (i) provided a briefing on the final Schools Block allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2025/26 following the receipt of final funding allocations and the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) in December 2024, and (ii) outlined the principles under which the Council would set the local Hillingdon school funding formula for 2025/26. The figures were based on a transfer of 2.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2025/26, and it was noted that this was subject to change pending the outcomes of the LA's disapplication request to the DfE.</p> <p>Members of Forum observed that the report stated the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) would be set at -0.5%. In previous years Forum had been consulted on the MFG level, and members expressed surprise that the LA had set a negative MFG. Officers advised that the MFG could be re-modelled when further information was known, which could include the impact of changing to a positive MFG, and officers would welcome input from the Forum on which elements to adjust. Forum requested that, if the block transfer approved by DfE was less than the amount requested by the LA, the MFG should be set at the highest level of +0.5%.</p> | |
| | <p>(c) EARLY YEARS BLOCK 2025/26</p> <p>The Forum considered a report which sought Forum's views on proposals to be included in the consultation on the Early Years Funding Formula for 2025/26. Due to the need for a decision to be made before the next meeting of Schools Forum, it was proposed that Forum delegate review of the consultation responses to the Early Years Sub-Group.</p> <p>Members of Forum commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EY Group had discussed at its meetings in October 2024 and January 2025 potential changes to the way the SEN supplement was calculated. The Group supported the principles behind the proposal to move to a 'real time' funding methodology to support current children, but was concerned that reducing the supplement at short notice could result in some settings receiving an unanticipated reduction in their funding for 2025/26, which could have a significant financial impact on some PVI's. • Normally consultations would include a 'no change' option. • In view of the changes the LA had made to the proposed consultation since the EY Group meeting on 9 January 2025, the Chair and Vice Chair of Forum had met with the LA yesterday to agree information to be included in the consultation document to enable settings to understand how the proposed changes would impact them. A further meeting with the LA would take place later that week to review the consultation document before it was issued. <p>On the basis that representatives of Forum would be meeting with the LA to review the final consultation document before it was circulated, Forum NOTED the proposed consultation and AGREED to delegate final review of the consultation responses to the Early Years Group.</p> | |
| 7. | ITEMS FOR INFORMATION | |
| | <p>(a) SCHOOL BALANCES</p> <p>The Forum NOTED a report which provided the latest update position of Hillingdon</p> | |

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| | <p>maintained schools which had a deficit. It was noted that the closing balances should be viewed with some caution as most of the school's forecasts were produced in May 2024.</p> <p>Members of the Forum observed that 29 of the Borough's 48 maintained schools reported an in-year deficit last year and any reduction in funding could create a risk of more schools falling into a deficit position.</p> | |
| | <p>(b) BULGE PLACES</p> <p>The Forum NOTED an information report on bulge places for 2025/26, which provided advance notice that a further 30 secondary bulge places were likely to be required from September 2025 in the south of the Borough to ensure there were sufficient surplus places to allow for local mobility, in year movement and to provide parents with an element of choice. It was best practice to have 5-10% capacity and Hillingdon was currently below this. The additional 30 places would raise capacity above 5%. Headteachers had been asked at HASH to express interest if they were able to meet additional capacity, and a report requesting approval for specific school(s) to access Growth Contingency Funding would be presented to the Forum in March 2025.</p> <p>Members of the Forum commented that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was HASH's view was that there should not be bulge classes in the south of the Borough if other schools had space. The LA advised that mobility was particularly high in the south of the Borough and the LA had to ensure there was sufficient capacity in areas pupils could reasonably travel to. The LA did not wish to risk having insufficient spaces if numbers fluctuated in-year. • There was at least 5% shrinkage primary to secondary each year and members asked what the pupil number predictions were based on. Officers advised that secondary preferences submitted had indicated 162 vacancies, which would be below the target level of 5-10% vacancies. The GLA also provided predictions which were usually accurate. • More accurate figures would be available at national offer day in March. The Forum AGREED that Growth Contingency Funding would be provided for in the budget (see minute 5b) and a decision on specific school bulge class allocations would be made at the next meeting when further information was known. | NM |
| 8. | <p>STAFFING UPDATE</p> <p>AP reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luisa Hansen had been appointed Head of Finance. • Sanjaya Gunatilake would be supporting on the DSG. • Ndenko Asong would be returning to LA Finance. • Andrew Good would be leaving. • All posts were interim. | |
| 9. | <p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>None.</p> | |
| 10. | <p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>Tuesday 25 March 2025 at 1pm via Teams.</p> | |

The meeting closed at 3.45pm

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|  | <p style="text-align: center;">London Borough of Hillingdon Schools Forum Tuesday 25 March 2025</p> |
| Title | Bulge Places – 2025 / 26 |
| Agenda Item | 4a |
| Report by | Nav Minhas |
| Appendices | N/A |
| Recommendation(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Information |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decision |
| | |

Bulge Places – 2025 / 26

Schools Forum are requested to approve access to the Growth Contingency Fund for 30 bulge class places from September 2025, to ensure we are able to support children across the Borough to access their education in a local school, without the need for additional travel. A paper was presented to Schools Forum on 28th January 2025 to note the forecast of 30 additional places required in the secondary phase for the 2025/26 academic year for information.

As a result of the request to secondary schools for additional places, two schools in the south of the borough have agreed to provide these; Guru Nanak Sikh Academy (20 places) and Uxbridge High School (10 places). This paper is a request to Schools Forum to access the Growth Contingency Fund for an additional payment to both schools in line with the agreed policy.

Councils are expected to have available capacity in the region of 5% to 8% as best practice for in year pupil movements, and to provide enough capacity to enable children to access a relatively local school. As you will see from the figures below, we are significantly below this level, even before we include the additional 30 places.

Current Context:

Below is a summary of the number of secondary places required for the 2025/26 academic year, including details from the recent national offer day in early March.

- We have 3722 total PAN across the borough; however 60 places are reserved for children attending Guru Nanak Sikh Academy in year 6 (as they are an all through school, and pupils do not need to apply for a place if they are already attending) leaving 3662 places available
- We received 3626 home applications by closing date (31/10/2024), which are applications from Hillingdon residents, although some applications are for places in schools in other Boroughs.

- All 3626 home applications received an offer on National Offer Day (NOD), 3405 children received an offer for a Hillingdon School. (Hillingdon residents and Out of Borough residents). This included 211 children who did not receive an offer for any school preference and were allocated an alternative school.
- In addition, 141 places in Hillingdon schools were offered to children with Educational Health Care Plans as these children do not need to make a separate application for a place but are included in the overall demand for the 3662 available places.
- This left 116 vacancies across the following 4 secondary schools
 - Haydon School, - 72 places
 - Harefield School, - 24 places
 - Hewens Academy - 6 places
 - Park Academy West London - 14 places
- At this point, there is only 3.17% capacity across all Hillingdon schools, in the schools outlined above.
- With the 30 additional places, it would increase capacity to 146, but most importantly it would provide some additional capacity in the South of the Borough, which would increase the available capacity to 3.99% (still below the recommended 5% - 8% availability)

These figures are summarised in the table below for reference.

| Description | Amount | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| PAN | 3662 | |
| | | |
| National offer day Offers | 3405 | 92.98% |
| EHCP offers | 141 | 3.85% |
| Total offers | 3546 | 96.83% |
| Capacity remaining | 116 | 3.17% |
| | | |
| Additional places requested | 30 | |
| Revised capacity remaining | 146 | 3.99% |

Update since National Offer Day

- Since National Offer Day (3rd March 2025), we have received 184 late applications from our residents so far. Although some of these will be changes to existing applications, the majority are new applications from children that did not apply on time or have moved into the borough since the closing date.
- As of 11/03/2025, we have also received 180 declines of offers made on NOD. The majority of these are from parents that are declining as they want one of their higher preference schools (150), but we are still working through these applications.

- The deadline for parents and carers to respond to their child's offers is Monday 17th March, and then the first late round of offers will be made on the 4th April. This will be for children that applied on time that are on waiting lists or that applied late and are receiving an offer for the first time.
- It is too early to understand the full impact of the changes since national offer day, but we will be keeping the available capacity under review

It would appear at this stage that we have received more applications than we forecast, although we are still working through the process of national offer day, late applications, and with parents accepting or declining offers, so we do not have a final position yet.

However, we had forecast a need for 3603 places across Hillingdon, but received 3546 applications, and a further 184 late applications, coming to a total of 3730. There have also been 180 declined offers, although it is not clear at this stage if places are still required for these children as outlined above.

We have reviewed a number of areas already to try and identify reasons for the apparent higher than expected demand, but we have been unable to see any patterns yet. Imports and exports are similar to previous years, and the number of children is similar to other years, so we need to see the final outcome of the application process before we can make any conclusions.

Financial Implications

Bulge class requests are normally presented to Schools Forum for approval each March for the following academic year starting in September. Schools will only receive the additional funding if the bulge places are filled as projected, at which point the Council finance team will make payment in that September for 7/12 and then a further 5/12 in the following April. Please see the table below for the payment dates.

| | | | Avg Sec AWPU | | Avg Sec AWPU | |
|------------------------------------|-------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| | | | £ | 5,731.00 | £ | 6,218.00 |
| | | | Financial Year | | | |
| | | | Academic Year | | Academic Year | |
| | | | 24-25 | 24-25 | 25-26 | 25-26 |
| Bulge Schools | AY | Pupil Numbers | 7/12ths Sep-Mar | 5/12th Apr-Aug | 7/12ths Sep-Mar | 5/12ths Apr-Aug |
| Secondary | | | | | | |
| Uxbridge High | 24-25 | 10 | £33,430.83 | £23,879.17 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Guru Nanak | 24-25 | 30 | £100,292.50 | £71,637.50 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Rosedale College | 24-25 | 20 | £66,861.67 | £47,758.33 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| | | | | | | |
| Guru Nanak | 25-26 | 20 | | £0.00 | £72,543.33 | £51,816.67 |
| Uxbridge High | 25-26 | 10 | | £0.00 | £36,271.67 | £25,908.33 |
| | | | | | | |
| Total | | | £200,585.00 | £143,275.00 | £108,815.00 | £77,725.00 |
| 24-25 Financial year Budget | | | £200,585.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Paid | | | Sep-24 | | | |
| 25-26 Financial year Budget | | | £0.00 | £143,275.00 | £108,815.00 | £0.00 |
| Paid | | | | Apr-25 | Sep-25 | |
| 26-27 Financial year Budget | | | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £77,725.00 |
| Paid | | | | | | Apr-26 |
| Agreed by Forum | | | Mar-24 | Mar-24 | Mar-25 | Mar-25 |

In March 2024, Schools Forum approved the use of 60 secondary places to be funded in the current academic year which were provided by 3 schools. As you can see from the table above, the initial funding of £200,585 was released in September 2024, with the balance of £143,275 due to be released in April 2025.


The financial impact of the request for 30 additional places for the 2025 / 26 academic year is outlined in the table above, which is an initial payment in September 2025 of £108,815, and a further payment in April 2026 of £77,725 to the two schools. This would secure the much needed capacity for the South of the Borough, as there is additional capacity in the North of the Borough if required, where a number of schools are expected to be below their PAN. However, it would not be reasonable to expect children to travel from the Southern areas of the Borough where there tends to be greater mobility, to access this capacity in the North as required.

Summary

In order to meet our sufficiency duties, we must ensure there are sufficient school places available locally for children to access their education. We also recognise how important it is to use as much capacity within our education estate to ensure the financial visibility of our schools. This is a fine balance, and we continue to work with schools and families to ensure we are to meet our statutory duties.

We are supporting our local schools by falling below the recommended level of surplus capacity that should be available to manage any pupil movement during the year, but do need to add additional capacity in the South of the Borough as outlined above.

This is forecast to be the final year we will be requesting additional capacity across our schools for some time, due to falling rolls in our Primary schools, which we will see transition to our secondary schools in the coming years. However, as outlined above we will continue to keep sufficiency under review, and we will provide further updates to Schools Forum as necessary. There is a possibility that additional capacity may be required if schools are not able to absorb any additional demand during the year above the request outlined.

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|  | <p style="text-align: center;">London Borough of Hillingdon Schools Forum 25th March 2025</p> |
| Title | High Needs Budget FY2025-26 |
| Agenda Item | 5b |
| Report by | Ndenko Asong, Strategic Finance Consultant nasong@hillingsdon.gov.uk |
| Appendices | n/a |
| Recommendation(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consultation <input type="checkbox"/> Decision |

1. Intro

- 1.1. This report provides the Schools Forum (SF) with an update proposal on the High Needs (HN) budget for FY2025-26.
- 1.2. The proposed budget has been set using the indicative income figures published in December 2024 by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for FY2025-26.
- 1.3. The Hillingdon High Needs budget increased by **7.3%** before any contributions from the Schools Block (SB). The contribution to the High Needs block will be **£1.497m** which represents a **0.5%** transfer from the schools block.

2. High Needs Budget

- 2.1. Hillingdon continues to face significant pressures on its High Needs budget in FY2024-25 and the Local Authority (LA) is currently liaising with the Department for Education (DfE) regarding the suspended Safety Valve programme.
- 2.2. The proposed budget has been set, in line with the strategic objectives of the SEND provision and safety valve objective of bringing the SEND expenditure under control. The LA has also made every effort to achieve an efficient allocation of the budget increase.
- 2.3. The table below shows the proposed budget allocation for FY2025-26.
- 2.4. The budget has an overall expected shortfall of **£13.746m** for FY2025-26 which is an approximate **50%** reduction in High Needs overspend over two years. This is based on the area making further savings such as placements being more cost efficient. It should be noted that several factors could impact the area being able to achieve this lower overspend, such as tribunal decisions.
- 2.5. The Independent sector continues to be a high-pressure area with a unit cost of approximately **£48k** which is about **70%** higher than the average cost of mainstream provision.

Table 1 - FY2025-26 HN Budget


| | FY2025-26 |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Place Funding | 17,775,000 |
| Placement Expenditure | |
| Mainstream | 40,751,900 |
| Independent | 14,180,100 |
| Post 16 | 6,364,100 |
| Alternative Provision | 4,523,100 |
| SEN Central Expenditure | 3,281,700 |
| Total | 86,875,900 |
| | |
| HN Block Allocation | 71,632,804 |
| SB Transfer | 1,497,132 |
| Total | 73,129,936 |
| | |
| Net HNB | - 13,745,964 |

3. Strategic Considerations

- 3.1.** To achieve the proposed budget for FY2025-26, the LA has had to contend with some difficult decisions in order to accommodate the constraints of the budget whilst remaining on track to achieve a balanced in-year budget position in line with the safety valve targets.
- 3.2.** SENDEX provision will be paused for 2025-26. The threshold exceptional funding will also be reviewed for affordability and schools will be advised accordingly as the year progresses.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1.** For the forum to note the high needs block allocation increase
- 4.2.** For forum to note schools block transfer of **£1.497m**.
- 4.3.** For the forum to note the budget set for FY2025-26 with an overspend of **£13.746m**.

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|---|---|
|  | London Borough of Hillingdon Schools Forum 25 th March 2025 |
| Title | DSG Monitoring |
| Agenda Item | 6a |
| Report by | Ndenko Asong, Strategic Finance Consultant nasong@hillington.gov.uk |
| Appendices | n/a |
| Recommendation(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation <input type="checkbox"/> Decision |


1. Intro

- 1.1. This report provides the Schools Forum (SF) with brief summary of the DSG forecast position at period 10 of the monitoring cycle.
- 1.2. The forecast is measured against the updated DSG allocations for FY2024-25 published in January 2025.

2. Budget Monitoring

- 2.1. At the end of period 10 (January 2025) the DSG forecast was a deficit of **£15.976m** with a cumulative balance of **£66.558m** at the end of the year. See table below.

| Description | Current Allocation* | Forecast as @M10 | Full Year Variance |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Schools Block | | | |
| → ISB | 106.114m | 104.895m | -1.219m |
| → SB Transfer | -2.098m | -2.098m | - |
| → Growth Fund | - | 1.219m | 1.219m |
| Total Schools Block | 104.016m | 104.016m | - |
| Central School Services Block | 2.463m | 2.491m | 0.027m |
| Early Years | 36.759m | 36.985m | 0.226m |
| High Needs (inc SB Transfer) | 57.155m | 72.877m | 15.722m |
| Total DSG Expenditure | 200.392m | 216.368m | 15.976m |
| DSG Income | -200.392m | -200.392m | -0.000m |
| Net DSG -Surplus/Deficit | - | 15.976m | 15.976m |
| B/Fwd DSG Balance | 50.582m | 50.582m | - |
| Closing DSG Balance | 50.582m | 66.558m | 15.796m |

| | |
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|  | <p style="text-align: center;">London Borough of Hillingdon Schools Forum 25th March 2025</p> |
| Title | SEND Place commissioning 2025 / 26 |
| Agenda Item | 6b. |
| Report by | Gary Binstead |
| Appendices | n/a |
| Recommendation(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation <input type="checkbox"/> Decision |

SEND Place Commissioning 2025 / 26

Schools Forum are requested to note the number of places that have been commissioned across education settings for academic year 2025 / 26. This process is conducted in the Autumn of each year, in line with the High Needs Funding Guidance, with an opportunity in January each year for settings and the Council to review and update the commissioned numbers if there are any discrepancies.

Current Context

There is high demand for specialist education places across the Borough (and the country), and work continues to expand the number of places available through the expansion of special school places, and specialist provision within our mainstream schools.

Most recently we have increased the amount of specialist provision places with mainstream schools, through 4 separate projects in the following schools:

- Charville Primary – 16 Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) places
- Ruislip Gardens Primary – 16 SRP places
- Ruislip Gardens Primary – 16 Assessment Base places
- Wood End Primary – 24 Designated Unit (DU) places
- Harlington Secondary – 16 DU places

We are working hard to reduce the number of Independent or Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) places and use the locally available provision in maintained schools and colleges to meet the demand for places. This has led to a reduction of INMSS places reducing from 419 in 2022-23 to 330 in December 2024. A reduction of 89 places or 21.2%.

Plans for additional places

Working with local schools and colleges across the Borough, the Council are increasing the number of places available and working to have additional capacity in place as soon as practical, with some places available for September 2025, and others for September 2026. Updates will be provided as new provision is agreed and available.

This includes:

- Additional SRP and DU places mainly for secondary age pupils, but we are also working with primary schools to look at the possibility of expansion where appropriate to meet the needs of children and young people

Available September 2025 & September 2026

- Additional Special school places where expansion is possible within existing schools

Available September 2025

- New 180 place special school approved by the DfE

Awaiting an update from the DfE - TBC

- Additional college places at Harrow, Richmond, and Uxbridge College (HRUC), including places at Barra Hall in Uxbridge, which was purchased by the college last year

Available September 2025

In line with the High Needs Guidance, places will be reviewed in the Autumn each year, at which time decisions will be made to vary any places for the following year as appropriate, dependant on demand and capacity.

As detailed in **Appendix A** at the end of the document, there have been several reductions in commissioned places, and other increases as necessary. These changes are summarised in tables 1 & 2 below, with a net increase of 292 places.

Table 1. Increased places

| Name | Phase | School Type | Number Commissioned 24 / 25 | Number Commissioned 25 / 26 | Difference 24 / 25 to 25 / 26 |
|---|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| The Willows School | Primary | Special | 60 | 80 | 20 |
| Harlington - Designated Unit | Secondary | Designated Unit | 15 | 16 | 1 |
| Moorcroft School | Secondary | Special | 141 | 149 | 8 |
| The PRIDE Academy | Secondary | Special | 110 | 117 | 7 |
| Pentland Field School | All Through | Special | 162 | 168 | 6 |
| HRUC (Harrow, Richmond & Uxbridge Colleges) | 16 plus | Further Education | 685 | 950 | 265 |
| | | | | | |
| Total | | | 1173 | 1480 | 307 |

As you can see from Table 1 above, the majority of the increase in commissioned places is in HRUC, where demand is continuing to grow, including the 70 additional

places available from the new provision of Barra Hall. This increasing demand will continue to be monitored, and the Autumn review of places will be used to inform future commissioning decisions.

Additional places have also been commissioned where schools have been able to offer more places within existing resources and space, including further places at The Willows, Moorcroft, The PRIDE, and Pentland Field schools.

Table 2. Reduced places

| Name | Phase | School Type | Number Commissioned 24 / 25 | Number Commissioned 25 / 26 | Difference 24 / 25 to 25 / 26 |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Coteford Infant School - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 3 | 0 | -3 |
| Coteford Junior School - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 7 | 4 | -3 |
| Harlington School - SRP | Secondary | Special Resource Provision | 6 | 4 | -2 |
| The Skills Hub | All Through | Alternative Provision | 113 | 106 | -7 |
| | | | | | |
| Total | | | 129 | 114 | -15 |

As you can see from Table 2 above, there has been a reduction in the number of places commissioned from several schools with an SRP, and our Alternative Provision school.

Schools with an SRP for Physical Disabilities continue to see a lack of demand, as children access mainstream school with appropriate support in line with parental preference, and the decision was taken to close the Coteford Infants SRP by Cabinet in December 2024. This decision will take effect at the end of this academic year, when the SRP will close, although pupils currently on roll at the SRP will continue to receive the same level of funding until they leave the school next year. This decision has not had any impact on the support for these children as they have always been included in mainstream lessons throughout their school week.

In addition, we continue to reduce the number of places at The Skills Hub to reflect falling demand, with a reduction of 7 places for the 2025/2026 academic year.


Summary

All commissioned places are kept under review, and any amendments are discussed with individual schools, and processed in line with the DfE high needs funding guidance. Projects to expand specialist provision will continue, with relevant capital investments as necessary to ensure any new provision is fit for purpose, and able to meet the needs of our children and young people.

We still await the decision from the DfE regarding our new special school, and any further updates will be shared as appropriate.

Appendix A – Summary table of commissioned places

| Name | Phase | School Type | Number Commissioned 24 / 25 | Number Commissioned 25 / 26 | Difference 24 / 25 to 25 / 26 |
|--|-------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ruislip Gardens - Assessment Centre | Early Years | Assessment Centre | 16 | 16 | 0 |
| Charville - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 16 | 16 | 0 |
| Cherry Lane Primary School - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 10 | 10 | 0 |
| Coteford Infant School - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 3 | 0 | -3 |
| Coteford Junior School - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 7 | 4 | -3 |
| Deanesfield Primary School - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| Glebe Primary School (Hillingdon) - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 11 | 11 | 0 |
| Grangewood School | Primary | Special | 131 | 131 | 0 |
| Hayes Park School - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 13 | 13 | 0 |
| Hedgewood School | Primary | Special | 190 | 190 | 0 |
| Lake Farm Park Academy - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 13 | 13 | 0 |
| Pinkwell Primary School - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 10 | 10 | 0 |
| Ruislip Gardens - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 16 | 16 | 0 |
| St Martin's Church of England Primary School - SRP | Primary | Special Resource Provision | 12 | 12 | 0 |
| The Willows School | Primary | Special | 60 | 80 | 20 |
| Wood End - Designated Unit | Primary | Designated Unit | 24 | 24 | 0 |
| Harlington - Designated Unit | Secondary | Designated Unit | 15 | 16 | 1 |
| Harlington School - SRP | Secondary | Special Resource Provision | 6 | 4 | -2 |
| Meadow High School | Secondary | Special | 280 | 280 | 0 |
| Moorcroft School | Secondary | Special | 141 | 149 | 8 |
| Northwood School - SRP | Secondary | Special Resource Provision | 10 | 10 | 0 |
| Oak Wood School - SRP | Secondary | Special Resource Provision | 12 | 12 | 0 |
| The PRIDE Academy | Secondary | Special | 110 | 117 | 7 |
| Vyners School - SRP | Secondary | Special Resource Provision | 18 | 18 | 0 |
| Pentland Field School | All Through | Special | 162 | 168 | 6 |
| The Skills Hub | All Through | Alternative Provision | 113 | 106 | -7 |
| HRUC (Harrow, Richmond & Uxbridge Colleges) | 16 plus | Further Education | 685 | 950 | 265 |
| Total | | | 2092 | 2384 | 292 |

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p style="text-align: center;">London Borough of Hillingdon Schools Forum 25th March 2025</p> |
| Title | Early Years Funding Formula Consultation Outcome 2025/26 |
| Agenda Item | 6c |
| Report by | Phillip Ryan & Sanjaya Gunatilake |
| Appendices | |
| Recommendation(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation <input type="checkbox"/> Decision |

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update the Schools Forum on the outcome of the Early Year Funding Formula consultation for financial year 2025-26 and the proposed allocation of the centrally retained fund

2. Background and overview:

- 2.1. At the Schools Forum meeting on 28th January 2025, the Local Authority informed members of its intention to consult childcare settings and schools on the following proposed changes to the 2025-26 Early Years Funding Formula:

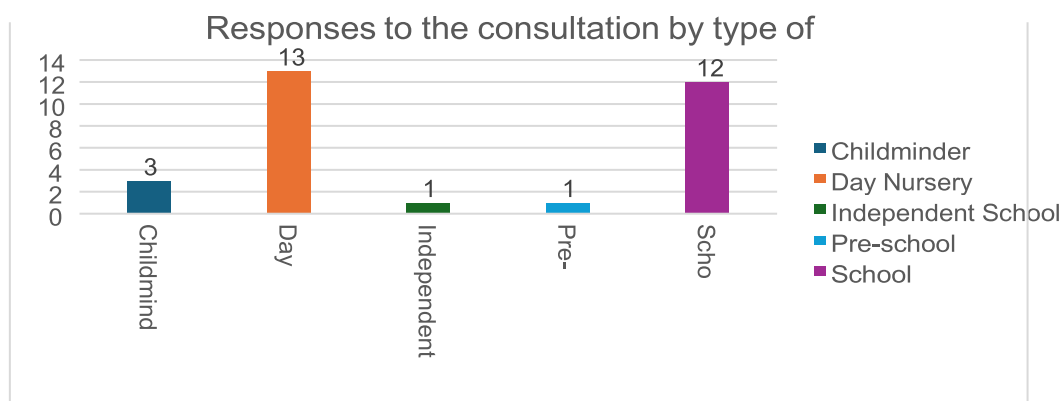
- (a) The removal or phased-out reduction of the Additional Needs Supplement.
- (b) The introduction of a supplement for two-year-old children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- 2.2. The consultation took place between 4th and 14th February 2025. The outcome of the consultation was subsequently shared with the Schools Forum's Early Years Sub-group.

- 2.3. Early Years funding rates for 2025-26 based on the consultation outcome were published and communicated to childcare settings and schools on 28th February 2025.

3. Responses to the consultation

- 3.1. Thirty settings responded to the consultation. The breakdown of responses by type of setting is presented in the chart below:



4. Funding for three- and four-year-olds

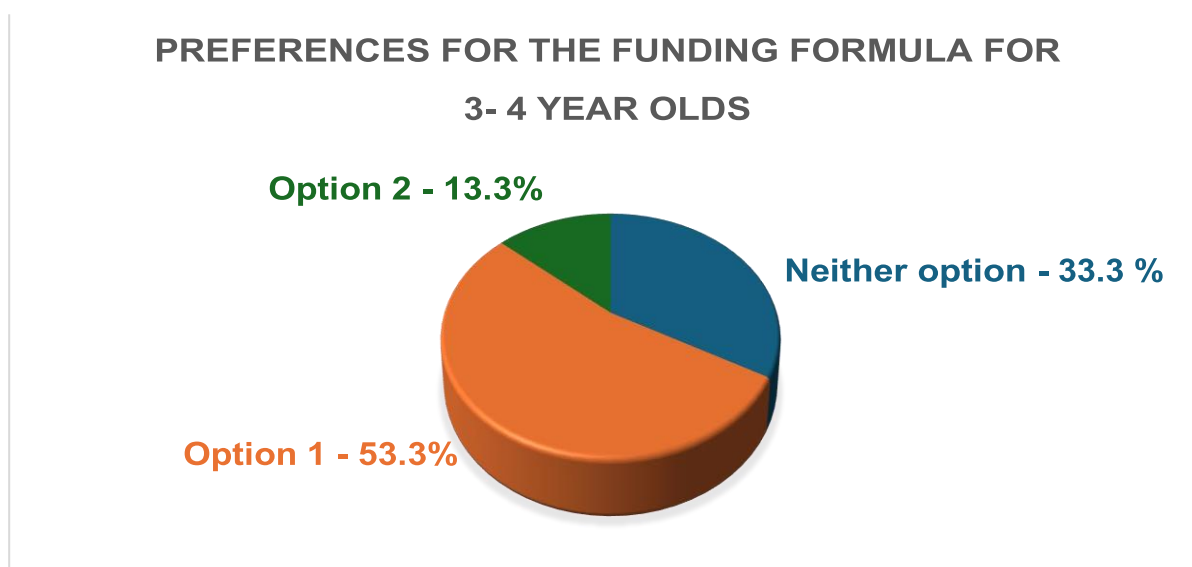
4.1. For three and four-year-olds, the proposal is to reduce the Additional Needs (SEN) supplement, as it is based on historical data, rather than children currently being cared for by settings. It also provides funding for children whether they have SEN or not. The proposal is that any funding withdrawn from this supplement is redirected to Early Years Inclusion Funding, so that it supports children with SEN in a more targeted way.

4.2. Two options were consulted on:

Option 1 - reducing the Additional Needs supplement by 25% and the funding from this will be available to settings through the Early Years Inclusion Funding budget instead

Option 2 - the Additional Needs supplement will be removed from the calculation for hourly rates for funded two-year-olds. Instead, this funding will be reallocated to increase the hourly rate for disadvantaged two-year-olds by £1.50 per hour.

4.3. The responses to the consultation were:



4.4. There was a clear majority of over 66% in favour of reallocating at least some of the funding from the Additional Needs supplement to the Early Years Inclusion Funding budget. With most respondents preferring option 1, this is the option that will be adopted.

Comments:

Option 1 was preferred by many respondents, as it is seen as more stable and less disruptive.

Common themes and concerns from the feedback

- (a) Support for children with SEN:** many respondents emphasised the need for consistent and predictable funding for children with additional needs. There were concerns that the proposed changes could reduce support for these children.

Local Authority response: reallocating funding from the Additional Needs supplement to the Early Years Inclusion Funding budget should mean that funding for children with SEN is more predictable and more responsive to the needs of children for whom settings provide places. The supplement refers to historical data for children with SEN, and so it does not reflect the children with SEN that the settings are offering places for currently. The supplement can also lead to big variations in a setting's hourly rate, from one financial year to the next.

Early Years Inclusion Funding is more flexible, as it is funding that settings can apply for, whenever they take on a child with SEN or when it is clear that a child they already care for has additional needs.

- (b) Administrative Burden:** The shift to a grant-based system for the Early Years Inclusion Funding (EYIF) was seen as potentially increasing administrative delays and complexity.

Local Authority response: to be useful, Early Years Inclusion Funding needs to be something that settings can apply as need arises and receive timely support, for eligible children. There have already been revisions to the funding application process to do this e.g. enabling applications to be made each month, rather than once a term. The delivery of the scheme is reviewed on an ongoing basis, to make sure it works effectively.

- (c) Financial Stability:** Respondents highlighted the importance of stable and predictable funding to manage rising operational costs, including wages and utilities.

Local Authority response: With such a significant proportion of settings' income now coming from the early years entitlement funding scheme, it is very important that this funding is stable and predictable for settings. However, the

Additional Needs supplement makes this less likely. Using the supplement as part of the calculation for each setting's hourly rate, means that settings' hourly rate can fluctuate a lot from one year to the next, either increasing or decreasing by a large amount. Therefore, the supplement does not support the ambition of providing settings with more certainty for their hourly rates. This is another reason why the long-term ambition is to remove the Additional Needs supplement completely and allocate the funding instead to a more predictable method.

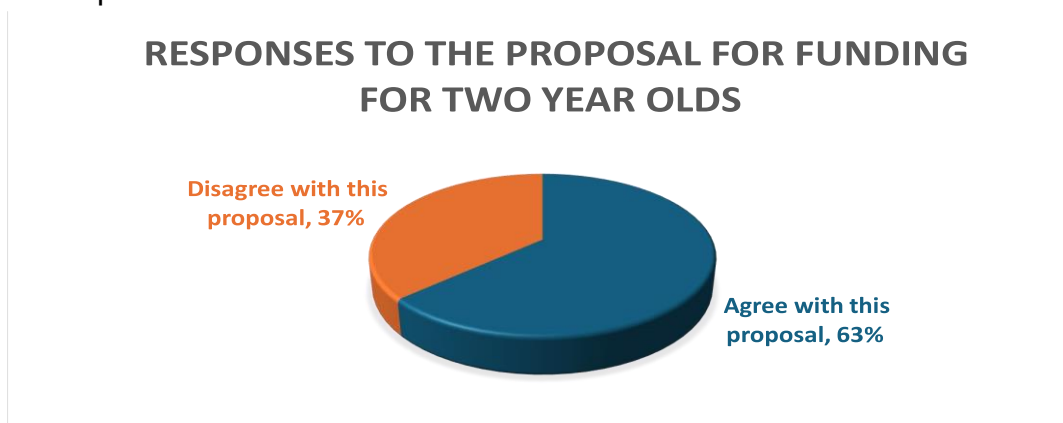
5. Funding for two-year-olds

5.1. Prior to April 2024, two-year-olds were only eligible for funded childcare if they qualified under the disadvantaged criteria. Since April 2024, the eligibility criteria has broadened to allow eligible children from working parents to receive up to 15 hours a week of term time funded childcare (or fewer hours per week, if accessed all year round).

5.2. The expansion of funded childcare to more two-year-olds has been beneficial for the two-year-olds who can now access funded childcare for the first time. However, there has been a decrease in the proportion of disadvantaged two-year-olds who have been receiving funded childcare. With the further increase of funded hours from 15 to 30 per week for working families, from September 2025, there is a concern that the decline in the number of disadvantaged two-year-olds receiving funded childcare may continue.

5.3. Therefore, the consultation proposed that the Additional Needs supplement for two year-olds would be removed and the funding reallocated to increase the hourly rate for funded disadvantaged two year olds by £1.50 an hour.

5.4. The responses to the consultation were:





5.5. There was a clear majority in favour of reallocating funding from the Additional Needs supplement increase the hourly rate for funded disadvantaged two-year-olds by £1.50 per hour. With most respondents preferring this option, it will be adopted.

5.6. Common themes and concerns from the feedback:

- (a) **Some respondents welcomed any additional funding.**
- (b) **Concerns were raised about the impact on children with special educational needs (SEN) who may not fall within the disadvantaged category. Ensuring that disadvantaged two-year-olds continue to access high-quality early education was a priority, but not at the expense of children with additional needs.**

Local authority response: in the light of this feedback, the proposal to remove the Additional Needs supplement for disadvantaged two-year-olds is going ahead, but funding for two-year-olds with SEN will be available through Early Years Inclusion Funding.

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p style="text-align: center;">London Borough of Hillingdon Schools Forum 25th March 2025</p> |
| Title | Hillingdon Council MFG Disapplication for Special Schools 2025-26 |
| Agenda Item | 6d. |
| Report by | Abi Preston, Director of Education and SEND |
| Appendices | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engagement timeline with special schools for banding review (end of paper) 2. Hillingdon Initial Report - Banding Review Phase 1 Desktop Analysis Final Nov 23  Hillingdon Initial Report - Banding Re 3. Schools Forum Update Report SEND Funding Review November 24 (p35 of papers) |
| Recommendation(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation <input type="checkbox"/> Decision |

1. Purpose:

As part of the conditions of the Safety Valve Agreement, the local authority was required to review its banded funding arrangements. This was a key project stream detailed in the [original safety valve agreement](#) on point 3.8 which states: *Conduct a review of banding arrangements.*

This report sets out the process followed to review the banding levels with special schools and the corresponding disapplication request to the DfE to support its implementation. The request seeks to remove the 0% minimum funding guarantee (MFG) for 3 special schools in the London Borough of Hillingdon for the 2025-26 financial year.

2. Background

In 2023, Hillingdon was placed under Enhanced Monitoring Support by the Department for Education (DfE), which prioritised a review of the banding system. Since then, Hillingdon has worked in partnership with local schools to develop a new banding framework for mainstream and special schools.

The previous banding model, which was 10 years old, did not effectively differentiate between mainstream and special schools and did not have a sufficient framework to support a fair and transparent system. Schools had been raising issues with it for some time.

To ensure fairness and transparency, Hillingdon commissioned a specialist SEND consultant to lead the review. The goals were to provide appropriate support, share best practices, improve parent/carers confidence, and use resources efficiently. The new mainstream top-up banding

framework is being applied to all EHCPs over the next two years, and the special school framework has been developed over the last year with special schools and is being finalised with them.

This framework is crucial to ensuring a fair and transparent approach as well as for the safety valve programme. The new mainstream funding framework began a phased implementation in September 2024. Its implementation continues to be reviewed by a working group of schools and officers to support any amendments required at point of review. The same approach is planned to be taken with special schools. Not implementing the special school framework could pose significant challenges.

Benchmarking of special school top-up rates was carried out although it was recognised that different Local Authority areas have different ranges and types of special school provision and so there are not direct comparisons. The group reviewed models from other Local Authorities in order to establish a Hillingdon model. It was found that Hillingdon's funding levels were historically high compared to other Local Authorities. One of the comparisons below is an inner London Authority with inner London salary costs.

See table 1 below:

Table 1: Top-up Benchmarking

| School Name | SEND Need | Phase | Avg. Hillingdon 2024-25 Top-up rate | Avg. Hillingdon 2025-26 Top-up rate | Avg Ealing Top up rate (Note 1) | Hounslow (Similar School) | Harrow (Similar Schools) |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | | | | | | | |
| Grangewood School | SLD/PMLD | Primary | 32,989 | 33,172 | 29,024 | 19,657 | 20,748 |
| Hedgewood School | Complex Learning Needs/ASD | Primary | 25,457 | 23,059 | 23,699 | 19,657 | |
| Meadow School | MLD/Complex Learning Needs | Secondary | 18,832 | 15,686 | 16,044 | 16,314 | 14,931 |
| Moorcroft School | SLD/PMLD | Secondary | 30,715 | 33,927 | 33,544 | 23,032 | |
| Pentland Field School | Complex Learning Needs/ASD | All-through | 22,151 | 19,256 | 19,492 | | |
| The PRIDE School | SEMH | Secondary | 25,293 | 25,632 | 25,632 | | |
| The Willows School | SEMH | Primary | 14,218 | 14,218 | 16,500 | 19,657 | |

Note 1: Hillingdon's new top-up bands closely mirror the funding bands used in Ealing. However, due to differences in pupil profiles, comparing individual schools directly is not a valid benchmarking method. Instead, the calculation simulates the average funding each school would receive if the school were to be funding using the Ealing top up rates, thus arriving at a comparable top-up rate.

Hillingdon's banding review used Ealing's descriptors as a model due to similarities in their pupil cohorts. Both boroughs fund their special schools to commission their own therapies, making the comparison more direct. Despite Ealing's top-up rates being broadly lower, Hillingdon's new framework reflects its current SEND needs, school contexts and costs.

Local special school leaders helped create the new framework, ensuring it accurately represents the range of needs. The descriptors have been well received and support consistent decision-making.

The review led to reduced average per pupil funding for three out of seven special schools, while one school saw an increase due to more complex needs, and the others remained broadly unchanged.

3. Recommendations:

The 0% MFG creates an artificial floor that prevents us from making necessary changes to implement the new system, which was a clear expectation from the DfE when the Safety Valve agreement was made, and the new framework better reflects the costs of provision as benchmarked with other Local Authorities.

Table 2 below lists the schools that Hillingdon is requesting the removal of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) for the financial year 2025-26.

Table 2: MFG Disapplication Request

| School Name | Date of inspection | Latest OFSTED Outcome | Funding Reduction | Disapply MFG |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Hedgewood School | Feb. 2022 | Good | -6.7% | Yes |
| Meadow School | Nov. 2023* | Good | -11.0% | Yes |
| Pentland Field School | Sep. 2023 | Good | -9.2% | Yes |
| Grangewood School | Feb. 2020 | Good | 0.4% | No |
| Moorcroft School | Oct. 2024 | Outstanding | 7.8% | No |
| The PRIDE School | New School | Awaiting inspection | 0.8% | No |
| The Willows School | Oct. 2024 | Outstanding | 0.0% | No |

* reinspected February 2025

The LA is currently discussing with individual schools and Trusts the transition to the new funding model. The aim is to work together to manage the impact on schools by considering each school's context, including cumulative reserves. Funding changes are based on the latest pupil data and may be subject to slight changes following further conversations with schools.

Ongoing meetings between the LA and each special school are focusing on schools with decreased funding. These schools are reviewing their expenditure in all elements of their budget to establish where they can decrease expenditure and / or increase income, including looking at organisational structures and invest to save actions. Continued focus remains on ensuring they meet children's needs cost-effectively. Transition plans are being developed with schools to protect them from significant funding drops and support their adjustment to the new system over three years.

The LA proposes to mitigate the impact of funding decreases by 66% in the first year (2025-26), meaning schools will only experience 34% of the full effect. Schools with increased funding will be capped to support this transition.

Funding decreases are expected to change in future years as the complexity of needs in special schools increases, while less complex needs are met in mainstream settings. The banding review has created descriptors and funding to support mainstream schools, freeing up special school places for more complex needs.

Historically, schools like Hedgewood, Pentland Field and Meadow have supported children with lower needs. This has been changing over the last few years and all of the schools have been flexible in adapting their curriculum and environment to support increased numbers of pupils with greater levels of needs. The new approach to allocating needs descriptors linked to levels of funding will support schools to continue to meet increasing numbers of more complex needs, attracting higher funding. The MFG disapplication is expected to be needed for 2-3 years during this transition.

Guidance to support admissions is being developed with the schools to clarify the range of needs met by special schools. This will support clarity on a graduated approach to provision and meeting needs.

The new funding system aims for sustainability, with budgets based on pupil profiles, providing consistent income and avoiding individual resource decisions. Annual adjustments outlined in the implementation framework will ensure appropriate funding is in place to reflect the range of needs.

High needs resources will focus on a graduated approach to meeting SEND needs locally. Savings from the new system overall will be reinvested to support wider SEND needs, supporting improved outcomes and consistent funding.

Special school reserves:

Hillingdon's special schools are in a financially healthy position. The figures below reflect the end of financial year position in 2024. For maintained schools the financial year ends on 31st March, and for academies 31st August as set out below.

| | | | Year Ending |
|-------------------|------------|----------------------|------------------|
| | Phase | Trust | 31/8/2024 |
| Academies | | | |
| Grangewood | Primary | Eden | 592,000 |
| Moorcroft | Secondary | Eden | 296,000 |
| Pentland Field | All-though | Eden | 1,527,000 |
| The PRIDE | Secondary | Orchard Hill College | 662,000 |
| The Willows | Primary | The Willows | 469,000 |
| Maintained | | | 31/3/2024 |
| Hedgewood | Primary | | 2,202,796 |
| Meadow | Secondary | | 1,473,463 |
| Total | | | 7,222,259 |

Schools impacted by the MFG (in green) have the highest surplus positions. There are historical factors that have impacted on this for all special schools, including the impact of the Local Authority correcting payments owed from previous years.

Appendix 1: Engagement with special schools for banding Review

Eden Trust and Hedgewood were involved in the mainstream banding review project.

All cross-school moderation sessions supported amendments to the descriptors themselves and changes to the pupil allocations to reflect discussions on pupils' needs to support consistency.

| | |
|----------|---|
| 18/4/24 | Project initiation meeting. Notes attached. Shared examples from other LAs and agreed approach |
| 8/5/24 | Special School meeting. Notes attached Review documents and determine actions |
| 19/6/24 | Special School meeting Review draft updated descriptor document and implementation framework and make agreed further amendments. |
| 10/7/24 | Banding workshop with all schools to test descriptors against pupils |
| 2/10/24 | Meeting with The Pride to discuss SEMH descriptors and agree amendments |
| 3/10/24 | Joint moderation at Sunshine House site with school and SEN Service |
| 9/10/24 | Joint moderation at Pentland Field with school and SEN Service and other special school. Joint moderation at Meadow with school and SEN Service and other special school |
| 16/10/24 | Joint moderation at Hedgewood with school and SEN Service and other special school |
| 17/10/24 | Joint moderation at Moorcroft with school and SEN Service and other special school |
| 23/10/24 | Joint moderation at Grangewood with school and SEN Service and other special school |
| 6/11/24 | Joint moderation at The Pride with school and SEN Service and other special school |
| 27/11/4 | Eden Trust schools, Hedgewood and Meadow cross school moderation session with SEN Services |
| 5/12/24 | Cross school moderation session |
| 18/12/24 | Cross school moderation of Pride Pupils |
| 15/1/25 | Moderation at Moorcroft |
| 22/1/25 | Moderation at Meadow Moderation Grangewood and Moorcoft |
| 24/1/25 | Moderation of Pentland Field high level need pupils |
| 6/2/25 | Special school meeting re funding modelling. Presentation attached. |
| 12/2/25 | Meeting Hedgewood to discuss impact and agree way forward |
| 13/2/25 | Meeting with Eden Trust to discuss impact and agree way forward |
| 20/2/25 | Initial moderation of Meadow changes (consultant) |
| 27/2/25 | Meeting with Meadow to discuss amended descriptor allocation and moderate and agree way forward |
| 5/3/25 | Follow up meeting Hedgewood |
| 6/3/25 | Follow up meeting Eden Trust |
| 19/3/25 | Moderation session The Willows |
| | |
| | |