

Meeting title:	Schools Forum Meeting	
Date/time	05 November 2025, 17.30-19.00	
Members:	<p>School Members</p> <p>Kevin Reynolds (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Robin Warren (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Sian Davies (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Ian Quest (Maintained Pri Governor rep) Sam Billington (Maintained Pri Governor rep) Chris Howard (Maintained Pri Governor rep) Andy English (Maintained Sec Headteacher rep) Farzana Chowdhury (Nursery School Headteacher rep)</p> <p><i>Attendance record</i></p>	<p>Academy Members</p> <p>Monique Pink (Parent Governor) Marya Afreedi Vacant Vacant Vacant Vacant Vacant</p> <p>Alternative Provision</p> <p>Jo Byrne (PRU rep, Headteacher)</p> <p>Special School Members</p> <p>Jo Clare (Special School rep) Kevin McDonnell (Special School Headteacher rep)</p> <p>Non School Members</p> <p>David Davies (Staff rep)</p> <p>Early Years Representative</p> <p>Jenna Clark</p>
Additional attendees:	<p>Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Cabinet member for Education, Young People & Children Social Care Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet member for Families, Early Years & Play Cllr Anya Sizer (SEND Champion for Hackney) Jacquie Burke (Group Director, Children & Education) Jason Marantz (DoE & Inclusion, Hackney Education) Kathryn Lloyd (Interim Head of Education Operations, Hackney Education) Anton Francic (Interim AD School Standards & Improvement) Donna Thomas (AD Early years, Early Help and Well-being) Sajeed Patni (Interim Director of Finance (C&Ed), Hackney Council) Terry Bryan (AD School Estate Strategy) Ann Yiadom (Clerk to the Forum) Chris Scott (Group Accountant) Suhal Kadir (Finance Manager - Schools)</p>	
Apologies:	<p>Kevin McDonnell (Special School Headteacher rep); Kathryn Lloyd (Interim Head of Education Operations, Hackney Education)</p>	
Members Absent:	None	

Executive Summary

New and reappointed forum members were welcomed, including Ian Quest, Marya Afreedi, Sian Davis, Andy English, and Robin Warren. While Andy English was also reappointed as Chair to the Schools Forum.

The forum discussed progress on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) funding review, with members highlighting the issue of budget pressure and imbalance across schools and LA Officers confirming a review of funding

in Additional Resource Provisions (ARPs) and special schools is underway.

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) outturn for 2024-2025 was presented and a small unspent amount of approximately £2.6 million was noted, and the net deficit position as just under £16.5 million was detailed, while it was also clarified that Early Years grant recalculations do not result in in-year cuts to settings.

The forum agreed on the updated Growth Policy for the current year, focusing on redistributing funding to schools accommodating displaced pupils from reorganisations and closures, and approved the Annual School Funding Formula proposal for 2026-2027, which replicates the National Funding Formula (NFF).

The forum was updated on the license deficit position, noting that tighter License Deficit Agreements (LDAs) are being prepared, and members suggested more proactive and collaborative measures, such as sharing cost-saving knowledge, to prevent schools from entering deficit.

Members also agreed to the request to review the terms of reference for the Hackney Schools Redundancy Panel, which the Director of Education and Inclusion will conduct alongside panel members which includes a Schools Forum representative.

Action Summary:

1	Agenda item no.3.1: Previous Minutes	Attendance list to be amended accordingly (Chris Howard was not present at the last meeting)
2	Agenda item no.3.2: Action Log	SEND Sufficiency plan to be shared with forum members including timeline for next steps - TB / JM
3	Agenda item no.3.3: Licenced Deficit Agreement	Explore suggestions made of documenting and sharing pricing data with schools - JM
4	Agenda item no.6: Annual Report School Funding Formula	Clerk to schedule two dates in the calendar for future forum meeting to allow flexibility in case of NFF delays
5	Agenda item no.6: Annual Report School Funding Formula	Chris Scott to provide a brief paper on the functioning of de-delegated items that are not regularly reported, and to review items that other boroughs de-delegate that Hackney currently does not.

Meeting Minutes

1.	Welcome and introduction New and reappointed forum members were welcomed, including Ian Quest, Marya Afreedi, Sian Davis, Andy English, and Robin Warren.
2.	Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Monique Pink, Academy Governor representative, rescinded her nomination to stand for the role of Chair. As no further nominations were received, and with panel members endorsement, Andy English was appointed as Chair to the Schools Forum

<p>3.</p>	<p>3.1. Minutes of the last meeting held 07 May 2025 - Schools Forum Minutes - 02.07.2025</p> <p>Chris Howard was not present at the last meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action: Attendance list to be amended accordingly <p>3.2. Action log - Schools Forum Action Log</p> <p>An outstanding action regarding addressing the issue of funding not following students with SEND when they transfer schools was discussed which Terry Bryan was asked to report back on.</p> <p>Terry clarified that funding does follow the student when they change schools. The issue centers on expediting the process of amending the EHC plan to name the new school, which enables the funding to be allocated.</p> <p>Member comment: The minutes reflect the discussion that was held, which highlight that the issue was around the range of need in different schools with some schools having a higher proportion of pupils with additional need which puts pressure on their budget. Although they are inclusive, it presents a challenge of managing their budget. Thus it needs to be clarified how the funding model is going to address the school to school imbalance.</p> <p>Terry noted that a review is being conducted on SEND funding and provision, specifically concerning ARPs and special schools adding that the SEND sufficiency piece of work is complete and will be shared with members. Jason Marantz confirmed that options and sufficiency would be reviewed in the spring, and a timeline for next steps would be provided at the next meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action: SEND Sufficiency plan to be shared with forum members including timeline for next steps <p>3.3 Matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed Deficit Agreement update - LDA update Nov 25 SF <p>Suhail Kadir provided an update on the license deficit position across all schools, outlining that school boards are being contacted regarding their deficit balances and preparing License Deficit Agreements (LDA) for next year's budget setting. The out-term position for 2024-25 revenue shows approximately 11 schools under review, and work is underway to manage deficit recovery, although they are awaiting the outcome of the special schools funding review before finalizing the approach for those schools.</p> <p>A large percentage of the current £4.7 million deficit is due to two special schools, and while the position in mainstream schools has improved, tighter, more intrusive deficit agreements are necessary to prevent further significant reductions in reserves.</p> <p>Member comment: There is a concern about linking school improvement to deficit reduction. Also what is the strategy for leveraging successful cost-saving knowledge from federations, such as the Leap Federation, where they achieved significant savings on temporary staffing.</p> <p>Jason responded that the borough is promoting partnerships to support sustainability and that, for schools with financial challenges, processes exist under the "good to great policy" to address these, including through school improvement efforts. Federation is recognised as a potential option to support schools in financial distress.</p> <p>Member comment: The current budget situation will remain challenging, it is important to be more proactive and collaborative to prevent schools from entering deficit positions.</p> <p>Member comment: Much of the cost-saving knowledge, such as appropriate temporary cover rates, is currently tacit knowledge within the sector and could be documented and shared centrally to benefit other schools, possibly through a survey.</p> <p>Jason agreed to take away the suggestion of documenting and sharing pricing data, noting that some economies of scale may be specific to existing federations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action: Explore suggestions made of documenting and sharing pricing data with schools
-----------	--

4.	<p>DSG Outturn 2024/25 & 25/26 Update - DSG Position Update 2024-25</p> <p>Chris Scott presented a report on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) outturn for the 2024-2025 financial year, noting a small overall unspent amount of approximately £2.6 million, which helps mitigate the accumulated deficit. Chris detailed that the overall net deficit position is just under £16.5 million. Chris also highlighted that the DSG grant allocations have seen a small reduction to date in the current financial year due to recalculations like early years entitlements.</p> <p>In response to the Chair querying the impact of reductions in previous years, Chris explained that in December, when the grant is first published, the DSG assumes that the Early Years provision will continue at the same volume as the previous year, and the budget is set accordingly. However, the grant is updated at the end of each term. If the volume comes in lower, although the grant is reduced, the LA would have paid the providers, and an adjustment is then made to net each other off. It is a small percentage of the overall grant, which doesn't create a great deal of financial pressure, and a small amount of the grant is set aside at the start of the year to deal with this as the year progresses.</p> <p>Member comment: given the formula and funding work, can the forum look further ahead and be proactive about what may happen in future years.</p> <p>Chris notes that the Central School Services Block generally doesn't move, and the Schools Block usually only moves due to an academy conversion, which is a top-down adjustment with no pressure on the council. Movements in the High Needs Block have more impact, such as an increase in places in Further Education colleges, which would increase the deduction from that block. Moving from year to year, the primary issue discussed frequently is falling pupil numbers, which is likely to diminish the School Block. Chris highlights that a lot of work is being done with schools that are heavily impacted or likely to have a deficit in the imminent future.</p>
5.	<p>Growth Funding Redistribution Update- Growth Fund Redistribution</p> <p>Terry explains that the growth funding discussed is distinct from basic need; it supports arrangements around school reorganisation following the closure of four primary schools.</p> <p>The funding followed displaced pupils from two mergers Harrington Hill and Old Hill schools, and Thomas Abney. The situation with St. Mary's involved opening an additional class and distributing funding because the majority of displaced pupils continued education there.</p> <p>Member comment: how are decisions made about which schools are asked to create additional places; is there a clear published process or set of criterias identifying basic need areas; are academies consulted equally and early when capacity is being planned for?</p> <p>Terry reiterated that the current growth fund is not about increasing places due to basic need but about ensuring pupils displaced by school closures can continue at a nearby provision.</p> <p>Terry further explained the rationale for St. Mary's was to ensure displaced pupils could continue education together, preferably in line with their religious beliefs, leading to the consultation with the Diocese and federation to add a class.</p> <p>For other displaced students from St. Mary's and St. Dominic's, funding has been allocated per pupil to the school they went to. Terry clarified the circumstances derived from the school closures, necessitating the expansion of nearby schools to accommodate displaced children</p> <p>The Chair queried what happens if a child moves on to another school and how is double funding avoided?</p> <p>Terry explained that there isn't double funding; they are transferring the remaining budget share for that year to the school the child goes to, which is a one-off amount, and future years will be funded according to the October census.</p> <p>Chris further clarified that an additional section has been added to the current year growth policy setting out how children will be counted: those on the census of the closed schools in October 2024 will be searched for on the October 2025 census, and that school will be funded.</p> <p>Chris noted a cut-off point is necessary, and the October 2025 census is proposed as the definitive destination. The second report lists the children and the £7/12 budget share they received. Other schools that took in</p>

additional children who did not come from the closed schools will not receive this redistribution funding, but will receive funding under normal circumstances.

The Chair further queried what mechanisms are in place for students who joined in-year but arrive after the census, where the funding does not follow them, and the cost this incurs

If a child moved in February before the original school closed, the budget belonged to the original school for as long as it was open. The funding for children who moved early will not start until shortly after they actually started, which is in keeping with what is normally seen. The remaining 7/12 transfers to the school where the pupil is on roll in the October census.

Terry clarified that growth funding has four primary purposes: to support growth in key stage 3-6 numbers (not the case here), to meet infant class size regulations, to meet the revenue cost of new schools, or to meet the revenue cost of removing/repurposing places (what they are discussing).

Terry commended St. Matthias school for their exceptional work with the local authority following the closure of St. Mary's, particularly their willingness to open an additional class and take pupils with high levels of need.

Terry further stated it is right that St. Matthias received a reasonable level of funding under this new approach, which would not have happened under previous arrangements.

Decision: The updated policy document, which includes the additional section related to the closed schools, was agreed upon by the eligible school-based members.

6. Annual Report School Funding Formula - [School Budget 2026-27](#)

Chris Scott presented the proposal for the 2026-2027 local funding formula, noting the delay in the National Funding Formula (NFF) publication, which is expected after the budget. The forum was informed that the structure of the NFF is expected to remain the same. Chris highlighted that the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) is the primary driver of the formula in Hackney, severely limiting local decision-making power to just 0.7% of the total budget.

The proposed local funding formula is to exactly replicate the NFF, with an inflated Other Resource Provision (ORP) to the greatest extent possible. Following discussion, members agreed that if the NFF announcement reveals anything substantively different from expectations, an additional meeting would be required to revisit the local formula.

The forum agreed to set two dates in the calendar for future forum meetings to allow flexibility in case of NFF delays.

- Action: Clerk to schedule two dates in the calendar for future forum meeting to allow flexibility in case of NFF delays**

The proposal for de-delegated items for the next year was presented as the same as the current year, with no expected significant amounts of new funding to schools.

Members questioned the uptake and impact of certain de-delegated items, like HCSS software and Fisher Family Trust (FFT). Chris clarified that the FFT subscription was already stopped due to low uptake. Chris agreed to bring a brief paper on the functioning of delegated items that are not regularly reported, and to review items that other boroughs delegate that Hackney currently does not.

- Action: Chris Scott to provide a brief paper on the functioning of de-delegated items that are not regularly reported, and to review items that other boroughs de-delegate that Hackney currently does not.**

Decision: Primary school representatives voted to agree to the recommended de-delegated items. Andy English, representing secondary schools, voted to replicate this decision.

Growth Policy for 2026-27 - [Growth Policy 2025-26](#); [Growth Policy 2026-27](#)

	<p>The Growth Policy for 2026-27 is the same as the current year's policy but without the section addressing the closed schools. The policy outlines that the budget will be up to but not more than the specific growth amount allocated in the DSG. Chris reiterated that the growth fund is for situations where there is insufficient school capacity in a locality, not for funding discretionary increases in popular schools.</p> <p><i>Decision: Members voted in favor of adopting the proposed growth policy for 2026-2027</i></p>
7.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Consultation Letter 2026/27 <p>Mentioned for the purpose of noting; most forum members would have already seen the consultation letter, referred to the previous agenda item.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ofsted inspection <p>Members were informed that the LA is currently undergoing a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Local Area Ofsted inspection and are in week one of the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Redundancy Panel <p>Jason Marantz requested permission to review the terms of reference (ToR) for the Hackney Schools Redundancy Panel. The existing ToR is from 2022 and contains outdated criteria, such as linking redundancy requests only to falling rolls. Forum members agreed that the current panel, with School Forum representative's support, should undertake this review and bring suggested changes to the February meeting for approval.</p>

Dates for 2025/26

- Wed 4 Feb 2026
- Wed 6 May 2026
- Wed 1 July 2026