Lancashire County Council - Lancashire Schools Forum
Friday, 3 July 2026, 10.00 am in the Savoy Suite, The Exchange, County Hall, Preston

Present

Primary School Governors
Stephen Booth *(LSF Vice-chair)*
Gerard Collins
Micheal Nolan
Tim Young

Primary School Headteachers
Daniel Ballard *(LSF chair)*
Sarah Barton
Neil Gurman
Sarah Robson
Anna Yates

Secondary School Governors
Janice Astley
Brian Rollo

Secondary School Governors
Oliver Handley

Academy Representatives
James Keulemans
John Davey

Special School Governor
Mandy Howarth

Special School Headteacher
Claire Thompson *(HNB chair)*

Nursery School Governor
Thelma Cullen

Nursery School Headteacher
Jan Holmes

PVI Members
Sharon Fenton
Philippa Perks *(EY chair)*

Voting Members
CC Joanne Ash

Voting Substitutions
Beverley Harrison
Rafeal Schiel
Chris Anderdson

Observers - Non-Voting Representatives
Alison Daly
Kate Walker
Nicola Whyte
Paula Evans
CC Matthew Salter
CC Martyn Sutton

Member of the Public
Will Ames

Officers in Attendance
Matthew Dexter
Toni Rafferty
Gaby Gauthier
Aby Hardy
Steven Goodwin

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from the following members:
Sharon Bennett, Abigale Bowe, Ivan Catlow, Nicola Chester, George Krawiec, Bill Mann, Deanne Marsh, Sarah McGladrigan, Sapphire Murray, Millie Parkinson, Carl

Roscoe, Kirsty Sutton, John Tarbox, Sam Ud-din, Kate Walker, Robert Waring, Ian Watkinson, Nicola Whyte (LGA),

2. Substitute Members

Beverley Harrison attended as a substitute member for Sharon Bennett, Rafeal Schiel attended as a substitute member for Sarah McGladrigan, Chris Anderdson attended as a substitute member for Ian Watkinson.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 20 March 2026, were agreed as the correct record.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2026 that are not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

5. Forum Membership

This report provided information on Forum membership issues that have arisen since the last Forum meeting.

A number of members have indicated that they will not be continuing on the Forum in 2026/27, and this meeting will be their last.

Members leaving the Forum as part of this annual membership review include:

Sarah Robson	Primary Headteacher
Deanne Marsh	Primary Headteacher
Lousie Parrish	Special Academy Headteacher
CC Ian Duxbury	Council Member Observer
CC Marion Atkinson	Ref - Children, Families and Skills Scrutiny Committee
Bill Mann	Church of England - Diocesan/Church Authorities

Since the last Schools Forum meeting a number of representatives have been elected due to mid-year changes.

Nicola Chester	Special Academy Headteacher
CC Joanne Ash	Ref - Children, Families and Skills Scrutiny Committee
CC Martyn Sutton	Council Member Observer

Schools Forum Chair and Vice Chair for the 2026/27 Academic Year

As part of the annual membership review, Schools forum annually review the forum chairs. Daniel Ballard and Stephen Booth have confirmed that they will continue as Schools Forum Chair and Vice Chair from September 2026.

Working Group Chairs

High Needs Block Working Group Chair - Claire Thompson has expressed wishes to step down as the chair from September 2026 and nominations are sought. Members interested in the position should contact the Schools Forum Clerk.

Schools Block Working Group Chair – Oliver Handley has agreed to continue to chair this working group.

Early Years Block Working Group Chair – Phillipa Perks has agreed to continue to chair this working group.

The Schools forum would like to express their thanks to the Forum chairs for their time and dedication to the forum operations.

The Schools Forum:

a) **Noted the information**
b) **Forum express thanks to colleagues who are leaving for their contributions and wish them well for the future.**
c) **Forum welcomed Nicola Chester, CC Joanne Ash and CC Martyn Sutton to their first Forum meeting.**

6. SEND Reform Plan

In February 2026, due to the increasing Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits forecasted nationally, the government announced the High Needs Stability Grant, which subject to the approval of the Council's SEND reform plan from the Department for Education (DfE), will cover 90% of the DSG deficit at March 2026.

The Council's SEND reform plan was submitted on 19 June 2026 which sets out a clear pathway towards an inclusive system that meets the needs of children and young people and supports the wider vision for SEND reform.

Within the Council's SEND reform plan, a revised DSG forecast set out the 2026/27 and 2027/28 financial projections based on updated EHCP forecasts and the HNB mitigations.

Due to the increasing demand, the Council's SEND reform plan shows the DSG deficit is forecast to grow to £423.42m by March 2028. Assuming the Council's SEND reform plan is approved by the DfE and the Council receives the 90% High Needs Stability Grant, the total DSG deficit is forecast to reduce to £160.91m by March 2027, and £187.16m by March 2028.

The Schools Forum:
Noted the information

Discussed:

- **EHCP numbers continue to rise and remain in line with planning assumptions.**
- **Members requested updates on the effectiveness of SEND Reform Plan mitigations and associated savings. Officers advised that some progress should be reportable by October, subject to DfE approval of the plan.**
- **The Forum requested monitoring reports to support oversight and accountability.**

- **Tribunal costs are expected to continue increasing due to demand and the current legal framework.**
- **Members discussed whether additional staffing and early intervention will reduce tribunal activity and improve outcomes.**
- **Schools reported increasing consultation and tribunal pressures compared with the previous year.**
- **Officers advised that additional SEND staffing is intended to reduce backlogs and improve engagement with schools and families.**
- **Members highlighted the importance of building confidence among parents and schools.**
- **The SEND Reform Plan summary was requested from the service for the next meeting.**
- **Officers confirmed that improvement work is continuing while DfE approval is being sought.**

7. SFVS Audit Findings
This repot outlined a recent SFVS audit review of a small number of schools. The report summarised the finding of the review.

It was noted that the schools' SFVS self-assessment submissions are generally supported by evidence of compliance and are largely consistent with expected standards. All schools tested bought into the council's Financial Services Service Level Agreement (SLA) to some degree.

The Schools Forum:
Noted the report.

Discussed:
- **Members asked how schools with compliance concerns would be followed up and held accountable.**
- **Officers confirmed that issues identified through audit work would be addressed through the School Improvement Group (SIG).**
- **It was noted that governing bodies remain responsible for financial oversight, regardless of SLA arrangements.**
- **Officers advised that discussions would take place with any schools found to be non-compliant.**
- **Members noted that the local authority can only act within its statutory powers, with accountability resting with schools' governing bodies.**

8. Recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group
To consider the recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group from 11 June 2026.

8.1 Schools Budget Outturn 2025/26
This report provided the Working Groups with details of the 2025/26 Schools Budget final financial outturn position, in relation to each funding block.
Further details were provided in connection with each funding block and members concentrated on the High Needs Block position. It was noted that the outturn position for the 2025/26 High Needs Block (HNB) revealed a **£80.91m overspend**. A copy of the full report presented to the working group is provided in the papers.

The working group:
Noted the report.

Discussed:

- SEND reform plan has been submitted to DfE for review.
- Since the publication of the working group papers, there has been a change to the outturn position which will be shared at Schools Forum (Item 6).
- The deficit is forecasted to continue rising with the 90% support grant.
- Post-support sustainability concerns due to the borrowing costs.
- INMSS placements main cost driver; pressures and demand increasing.
- Insufficient local capacity: EHCPs/tribunals drive demand.
- Mitigations insufficient in short term.
- INMSS analysis requested.
- SEND deficit remains a LGR risk.

8.2 Schools Balances 2025/26

This report set out the year end position of schools' delegated budgets at 31 March 2026. The overall school balances have decreased from £66.925m to £57.73m. Please note however that £2.923m of the overall reduction relates to 17 academy conversions during 2025/26. A copy of the full report presented to the working group is provided in the papers.

The working group:
Noted the report.

Discussed:

- Members queried if the number of schools ended the year in clawback is linked to mid-year change to clawback in July 2025. It was noted that this is difficult to assume and schools are responsible for monitoring balances.
- Headteachers and governors are responsible to manage finances and stay informed of key budget changes.
- Clawback aims to ensure funding is spent on current pupils.
- Concerns raised by some schools regarding clawback implementation.
- Clawback widely viewed as fair, supports redistribution of funds.
- No appeal route, policy to be fully implemented.
  Request for schools to present views at Forum, it was noted that there is no appeals process as per the policy.
- Transparency and consistency emphasised in approach.
- Suggestion for additional finance training for Headteachers/governors.
- Recognition of variation in schools' financial positions, including deficits.

This report was also presented at the Early Years and Schools Block working group, discussions were robust with the working groups having similar views.

8.3 Clawback 2026/27

The working group considered the clawback policy for balances at 31 March 2026. Lancashire's Scheme for Financing schools, section 4.2, includes a balance control mechanism, which is designed to control and clawback, where appropriate, schools' excessive surplus balances.

Based on the above information, the local authority has proposed the following options which the working group considered:

a) Apply the clawback policy in 2026/27, at 8% CFR income threshold to all schools

b) Apply the clawback policy in 2026/27, at 5% for Secondary and 8% for Primary, Special, PRU, Maintained Nursery schools of CFR income, which is recommended DfE criteria.

All options include the continuation of the minimum £75,000 balance threshold and clawback would continue to apply as per the below

- A clawback rate of 50% is to be applied to any balance above guideline in the first year a school exceeds the guideline (after adjusting for exemptions)
- A clawback rate of 100% is to be applied to any balance in excess of guideline where the guideline has been breached for two or more consecutive years (after adjusting for exemptions)

The working group:
Noted the policy.

Discussed:
- It was noted that there is a small number of schools challenging the policy. Officers are delivering a consistent message that the policy will be applied in full at balances at 31st March 2026.
- Debate on recommending changes to clawback approach to WG
- Falling pupil numbers and below PAN intakes raised by primary heads. Place planning to be considered at SBWG (incl. clawback implications)
- Need to improve clarity and communication on annual processes

The working group voted:
- 8% for all: majority 8 votes
- 5% Secondary / 8% Others: 1 vote

As a result, the Working group recommendation is for the 8%of CFR income to remain the threshold.

The Early Years Block and School Block Working Group also considered this item and unanimously recommended the clawback level to remain at 8% of CFR income.

The Schools Forum unanimously voted for the Clawback to remain at 8% for all phases at 31 March 2027. Schools will be notified of this via letter on the schools portal.

8.4 High Needs Mitigations 2026/27

An update was provided on SEND inclusion developments, with recruitment continuing to ensure teams are in place for September, including Inclusion Officers and support for mainstream inclusion and specialist bases.

It was confirmed that there will be no changes to existing EHCP arrangements until annual reviews are completed, while enhanced support continues for pupils with hearing and visual impairments through an expanded and largely fully qualified team. Work is ongoing with PRUs to review and refine outreach offers, ensuring support is targeted effectively and informed by shared data.

The Inclusion Hub transferred to the High Needs Block in April and is currently reporting on its first two months of activity, with a more robust update expected in October.

The working group:
Noted the report.

Discussed:

- Late papers issued - request for earlier circulation to allow proper review
- Mitigations are progressing, staffing to support the mitigation will be largely in place by September; PRU Outreach support is ongoing
- Exclusions remain high, with increasing need and inconsistent practice/reporting
- Inclusion Hubs – reports forthcoming; awareness and impact need strengthening
- Improved communication and training planned via HT briefings and SEND reform
- Financial clarity needed in report; tracking of savings, impact, and outcomes required to inform members decision making for 2027/28 budget setting.
- £200k funding gap unresolved, linked to SEMH/Primary PRU provision
- Impact too early to measure, with concerns over long-term sustainability

This report was also considered and noted at the Schools Block Working Group.

8.5 High Needs Block Exceptional Funding

This report detailed the proposal on the plans to utilise the 1% Early Years Block transfer to the High Needs Block for 2026/27 and an additional exceptional funding request within the High Needs Block.

It has been proposed to use 1% of the funding to provide an exceptional funding pathway for children without an education health and care plan to support access to education and targeted support. This funding will be in addition to the Early Years Inclusion Funding for early years providers to support access for those with more complex needs.

An exceptional funding proposal to the HNB was presented to members to extend the EY's exceptional funding to reception and year one pupils. It is forecasted to cost c£240,000.

The working group:
Noted the policy.

Discussed:
- Proposal linked to existing mitigations, not a new funding request
- Funding already being used for EY transitions (E1/E2 support)
- Proposal includes backdating to September and support for Rec/Y1 without EHCPs
- Overlap queried with existing mitigation funding
- Insufficient time to review due to late report circulation
- Must be agreed by Section 151 Officer before any decision
- Item to be deferred to next meeting agenda
- Request for EY budget update report (Jan 26 forum agreement vs final Feb 26 budget outcome)

These reports were also presented to the Early Years Block and Schools Block and Working Group. The groups noted these reports. It is recommended that the Exceptional HNB funding proposals is reviewed and referred to the next meetings.

8.6 2027/28 Schools Block Transfer to the High Needs Block

This report outlined the plans for the schools block transfer. At this stage it is expected that the Local Authority will need to continue to utilise the 0.50% Schools Block transfer to the HNB, and it is anticipated that this will be utilised to continue the HNB mitigation work as was agreed for the 2026/27 usage of the block transfer if allowable. Initial modelling was provided to members.

The working group:
Noted the update.

8.7 High Needs Indicative Commissioned Places Process

As part of the process agreed with the Schools Forum in 2020 and has continued through to 2026/27, an early notification was introduced as a guide to provide special schools with an indicative number of commissioned places that the LA are forecasting at each school for 2027/87 academic year. The purpose of this is provide schools with an opportunity to have discussions and make any representations as appropriate with the inclusion service to discuss their commissioned places, however the final decision on the number of commissioned places is determined by the local authority.

For PRUs, discussions will be held separately and will be led by the inclusion service, and as such the LA are proposing to not issue the usual indicative place letter.

The working group:
Noted the report and supported the proposed process.

Discussed:
- PRUs request early confirmation of commissioned places to support planning
- Commissioned and intervention places aligned to October census data
- Earlier notification improves budget and operational planning

- October census used as DfE funding baseline due to in-year volatility

Following the HNBWG it is now anticipated that indicative letters to special schools will be sent in September.

8.8 Policy for Additional Revenue Funding for New Special Schools

The local authority must meet its statutory obligations with regards to school place provision, and it is important that schools that are supporting the Local Authority in meeting this requirement. As the demand for special school places increases, the LA is reviewing options to increase provision.

As a result, a transparent and formulaic process has been established for allocating additional funds, that takes account of the creation of a new special school whilst minimising the effect on the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The working group:
Noted the revised policy and supported the implementation.

8.9 Scheme for Financing Schools in Lancashire 2026/27

This report provides an update on the Department for Education's (DfE) recent changes to the statutory guidance on schemes and seeks approval from the Schools Forum on the consequent amendments to the Scheme.

The working group:
Noted the update to the Scheme for Financing Schools in Lancashire and recommended the publication of the revised scheme.

This report was also presented at the Early Years and Schools Block working group, members of these groups recommended the revised scheme for publication.

8.10 Schools Forum Annual Report

Since 2005/06, the Forum has produced an Annual Report, which is circulated to all schools via the Schools Portal and made available on the Forum website.
A draft Forum Annual Report was shared to the working group for consideration.

The working group:
Noted the report.

This report was also presented at the Early Years and Schools Block working group, members of these groups recommended the revised scheme for publication.

The Schools Forum:
Noted the High Needs Block Working Group recommendations and ratified the recommendations.

9. Recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group
To consider the recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group from 22 June 2026.

9.1 School Budget Outturn 2025/26

This report set out the year end position of schools' delegated budgets at 31 March 2026. A copy of the full report presented to the working group is provided as an appendix to the High Needs Block summary report. This report was noted under Item 8. Further details were provided, and members concentrated on the Early Years Block.
The working group:
Noted the report

- The DfE Early Years spring adjustment creates an artificial underspend at year end that will be adjusted in the new financial year.

9.2 School Balances 2025/26

This report was noted under Item 8.

The working group:
Noted the report

Discussed:

- School balances have fallen, potentially due to the lower clawback threshold.
- Some schools have challenged clawback decisions, but the policy remains unchanged.
- Exemption requests show schools are engaging with the process.
- School Improvement Group (SIG) will begin challenging schools with high balances and may raise this through governor agendas.

9.3 Clawback 2026/27

This report was noted under Item 8.

The working group:
Noted the report

Discussed:

- Most authorities use 5% and 8% thresholds but retaining 8% for now will provide another year of data and give secondary schools more time to prepare.
- Thresholds can be reviewed next year, with the expectation that budgets should be used to benefit current pupils.

9.4 Early Years Budget 2026/27

Verbal update from Aby Hardy to explain the budget setting process for 2026/27 as requested by members.

The working group:
Noted the report

Discussed:

- Members requested baseline accountability data from the Quality Assurance and Sufficiency teams to assess value for money, impact on the sector, training quality, workload and engagement.
- A request was made for regular budget updates to the Working Group.
- It was stated at the EYWG that a report explaining the 2026/27 process would be circulated.

9.5 Early Years Budget Exceptional Funding 2026/27

This report details on the proposed plans to utilise the 1% Early Years Block transfer to the High Needs Block for 2026/27.

For 2026/27, Schools Forum agreed a 0.75% Early Years Block retention, with the Council transferring an additional 1% (£2.25m) to the High Needs Block, bringing total retention to 1.75% (approximately £3.95m). Part of this funding will support a new exceptional funding pathway for children without an EHCP who require targeted support. The local authority proposes enhancing Early Years Inclusion Funding through a tiered funding model, with allocations determined by Specialist Teachers and reviewed over a three-term period. New needs-led tier descriptors and funding bands are being developed, with up to three additional funding tiers expected above the current Inclusion Funding level. Based on current demand and projected need, around 30% of children receiving Inclusion Funding may benefit from the new exceptional funding, with estimated costs of £1.03m, while existing Inclusion Funding is expected to remain unchanged for 2026/27.

The working group:
Noted the report
Discussed:

- It was noted that this will be in place from September 2026 and payments will be backdated to 1st April 2026 where applicable.
- Due to the backdating of the funding, members were made aware that there may be a slight processing delay due to the anticipated backlog of payments.

9.6 Inclusive Early Years Fund Grant for 2026/2027

This report outlined the LA's methodology for the Inclusive Early Years Fund Grant. In February 2026, the Department for Education (DfE) announced the Inclusive Mainstream Fund, with a total value of over £500 million per year. As part of this programme, the Inclusive Early Years Fund (IEYF) will provide £47 million of additional funding nationally in 2026/27 to support early years settings to become more inclusive for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The working group:
Noted the report

Discussed:

- The funding appears disproportionate compared with primary and secondary sectors, with indicative figures suggesting a small number of settings will receive the funding. These concerns were noted by officers who confirmed the DfE guidance has been followed.

9.7 Early Years Budget 2027/28

A verbal update was provided around the plans for the Early Years Budget for 2027/28. The LA is currently reviewing plans for the budget and will look to consult the sector when possible.

The working group:
Noted the verbal update.

Discussed:

- Members raised concerns were raised around the process of the 2026/27 EY budget and would urge the LA to formalise a transparent consultation.
- Officers plan to meet with members of the sector to consider the budget.
- It was reiterated to the EYWG by officers that it is the principle of applying the central retention and not the finalised rates that the consultation is based on.

9.8 Inclusion Fund and Early Years Educational Health Care Plans Payment Process

The processing of EY's EHCP and IF payments will move into the Schools Finance Team from September 2026. There may be a small downtime over summer for the eform, but disruption is expected to be minimal. This is to bring payments in line with other DSG payments for processing and monitoring purposes.

The working group:
Noted the report

Discussed:

- A backlog remains due to the current manual process, with recent payments covering two terms as a lump sum.
- The new process should improve payment timeliness, but funding will depend on service data.
- There are concerns about cashflow and potential funding shortfalls for private providers, and the full impact of the new arrangements is not yet known.

9.9 Any Other Business

There was one item of any other business.

Temporary Family Hubs Grant
Sapphire Murray raised the temporary Family Hubs grant which the LA is proposing to utilise this to expand the Portage offer to school-age children outside the Family Hubs programme.

- The proposal aims to increase support for children not attending settings, while maintaining the current offer.
- The impact of the expanded service will be monitored to inform future funding decisions.

The working group:
Noted the update

The Schools Forum:
Noted the Early Years Block Working Group recommendations and ratified the recommendations.

Discussed:

- **Members discussed improving the Early Years budget consultation process and avoiding issues experienced last year.**
- **Officers advised that discussions with the new Section 151 Officer are taking place, with a sector meeting planned before the end of term or early September.**
- **Members stressed the need for clear information and sufficient consultation time.**
- **It was noted that the appointment of the new Section 151 Officer has delayed discussions.**
- **Officers confirmed that a clearer timeline and proposals should be available for a future Forum meeting.**

10. Recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group
To consider the recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group from 23 June 2026.

10.1 Pupil Planning Presentation

A report on the emerging pattern of school place planning pressures across Lancashire, including areas where there are areas where surplus capacity is increasing.

The working group:
Noted the report

Discussed:

- Concerns were noted regarding increasing surplus places across Lancashire, driven by falling birth rates and changing demographics.
- The impact of falling rolls on school finances and future place planning was discussed, particularly in areas with significant surplus capacity such as South Ribble.
- It was confirmed that the data includes academies, reflects current capacity assessments and planning assumptions, and indicates that surplus capacity is expected to continue growing.
- Opportunities to repurpose surplus accommodation for community services and SEND provision were discussed, with school closures not currently being considered.
- Further updates on place planning, future forecasts and learning from other local authorities were requested.
- Thanks were extended to Aby and the Place Planning Team for the update.

10.2 School Budget Outturn 2025/26

This report was noted under Item 8.

This report set out the year end position of schools' delegated budgets at 31 March 2026. A copy of the full report presented to the working group is provided as an appendix to the High Needs Block summary report.

The working group:
Noted the report

Discussed:
- A revised forecast will be presented to Schools Forum, with an update on the SEND Reform Plan from the DfE expected in the autumn.
- The 90% threshold is based on the 2025/26 outturn and DSG deficit position, with Early Years adjustments reducing the deficit but being reflected in 2026/27.

10.3 School Balances 2025/26

This report was noted under Item 8.

The working group:
Noted the report

Discussed:
- School balances remain around £40m and are, on average, approximately £30,000 above historic levels. Reducing balances towards historic levels was supported as a positive objective.
- It was noted that school balances will be published following the meeting, with further consideration to be given to reporting on excessive balances and the impact of interest earned.
- Schools holding high balances will be supported through discussions, similar to schools in deficit, with responsibility for financial management remaining with headteachers and governing bodies.

10.4 Clawback 2026/27

This report was noted under Item 8.

The working group:
Noted the report

Discussed:
- A discussion took place on the balance between allowing schools to retain reserves for future planning and ensuring funding is used to benefit current pupils. It was noted that Lancashire's clawback policy is more generous than the DfE recommendation.
- Concerns were raised about the impact of clawback on some schools, particularly where balances are held for legitimate future purposes, while

recognising the need for appropriate financial oversight and governance. Officers noted there was an exemption request process to mitigate this concern.
- The importance of prudent financial management, regular budget monitoring and engagement with available support was emphasised, with schools remaining responsible for managing their financial positions.
- It was noted that there is no formal right of appeal against clawback decisions, with accountability resting with headteachers and governing bodies. It was noted that audit findings relating to financial monitoring will be reported to a future meeting.
- It was agreed that, following the recent reduction in clawback thresholds, a further 12 months should be allowed for school balances to stabilise and for schools to assess and respond to the changes for 2026/27.

Recommendation to Schools Forum is to remain at 8%.

The Schools Forum Discussed:
- **The Forum noted that the clawback policy for 2026/27 has been agreed and does not include an appeals process through Forum Chairs.**
- **Members were reminded that Chairs have no role in considering appeals and their contact details should not be used for this purpose.**
- **It was agreed that communications to schools should make this position clearer.**
- **Officers confirmed that a letter is issued to schools annually as usual process and will be reviewed to strengthen messaging around the policy and appeals process.**
- **Members agreed to reinforce this message within their respective sectors.**

10.5 High Needs Block Mitigations 2026/27

This report was noted under Item 8.

The working group:
Noted the report

Discussed:
- Members thanked officers for the level of detail provided and suggested that future reports include trend analysis, impact tracking and comparisons between districts where appropriate.
- It was requested that future updates include tracking of savings and mitigations to demonstrate the overall impact of de-delegated funding and related initiatives

10.6 High Needs Block Exceptional Funding Proposal

This report was noted under Item 8.

The working group:
Noted the report

10.7 School Block Funding and De-delegation Proposals 2027/28

In 2026/27 the regulatory framework continued to allow local authorities to be able to transfer up to 0.5% of their Schools Block allocation to other blocks of the Dedicated Schools Grant with Schools Forum approval as noted under Item 8.

At this point, it is anticipated that the school funding framework will continue to allow service de-delegations in 2027/28. Funding for de-delegated services must be allocated through the schools block formula but can be de-delegated for maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools. De-delegations must be approved on an annual basis by the Forum and be subject to consultation with maintained primary and secondary schools.

In accordance with normal practice, it is envisaged that a de-delegation consultation will be issued to maintained primary and secondary schools in early September 2026, with responses being reported to the meeting on 15 October 2026, at which time the Forum will be asked to make formal decisions, by phase, on each de-delegation proposal.

In 2026/27, the Forum formally approved three service de-delegations, relating to:

- Staff costs – Public Duties/Suspensions
- Heritage Learning Service – (Primary Schools Only)
- Schools Requiring Additional Support

For 2027/28 the following proposals have been received from the relevant services, with a change to the Schools Requiring additional Support (SRaS). For 2027/28, it is proposed that no de-delegation charge will be applied to the SRaS offer. Support will continue to be provided to recognise the reserves held, which are c£6.3m. It should be noted however that reserves are forecast to reduce in future years, meaning that the de-delegation charge may need to be reintroduced in future years as appropriate.

The working group:
Noted the report

Discussed:

- It was noted that, subject to any future DfE announcements, the current intention is to continue with the Schools Block transfer and associated mitigation measures.
- It was queried whether the Schools Block transfer could move some schools into an in-year deficit position; further information on the number of schools affected can be provided if required.

10.8 Schools Requiring Additional Support Offer 2027/28

Officers have reviewed the current handbook and, for 2027/28, no big changes are proposed to the Strategic Support Partnership arrangements. This report instead sets out the funding position for the team and confirms that the existing arrangements will continue for the year but that there will be no de-delegation ask to schools for this work due to the reserves held in the SRAS fund.

The working group:
Noted the report

10.9 Exceptional Circumstances Rents Disapplication 2027/28

The exceptional circumstances factor relates to premises costs and is only applicable where the value of the factor is more than 1% of a school's budget and applies to fewer than 5% of the schools in the local authority's area.

This factor has been utilised by Lancashire for several years and in 2026/27 supported 4 schools for a 'rents' payment where the schools needed to rent premises to deliver the curriculum. Guidance states that where agreement was received from the DfE in 2026/27 a further disapplication request would be needed to be submitted in future years. The 4 schools involved will continue to rent premises in 2027/28 and initial modelling indicates that the criteria for the value of the factor to be more than 1% of a school's budget and applicable to fewer than 5% of the schools in the area are still met. The LA have recently been made aware of an additional primary school that meets the criteria, therefore this years submission will include 5 schools.

The working group:
Noted the report

The School Forum unanimously voted to Support the Exceptional Circumstances Rents Disapplication for 2027/28.

10.10 Policy for Additional Revenue Funding for New Schools

A verbal update was provided on the Policy for Additional Revenue Funding for New Special Schools and the corresponding policy for mainstream schools. The approved special school policy includes provision for pre-opening costs of £80,000. It was therefore proposed that the mainstream school policy be aligned by increasing the pre-opening cost allocation from £65,000 to £80,000.

The working group:
Noted the report and supported the policy update.

11. Any Other Business

- Correspondence relating to clawback was noted, and it was agreed that responses would be prepared in line with the approved policy, with the SB Chair and Forum Chair liaising on the approach.

The Schools Forum:
Supported the approach and thanked the chairs.

- It was noted that Matt Dexter, Principal Account, Schools Finance is leaving LCC Early September 2026 and this is likely to be Matt's last forum meeting.

The Schools Forum:

Forum thanked Matt for his support on the forum and wish him well in his new post.

11 Date of Future Meetings

To note that the next scheduled Forum meeting will be held at 10.00 am on Thursday 15 October 2026. Arrangements for the meeting will be confirmed in due course.