

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting title: Nottinghamshire Early Years and Schools Forum
Date and time: 12th June 2025, 2pm to 4pm
Location: Microsoft Teams – Online

Membership

'A' denotes absence

	Steve Border	Maintained Primary Head Teacher
	Kirsty Lowde	Maintained Secondary Head Teacher
	Anne Hall	Academy Representative
	Neil Holmes	Academy Representative
	James Macdonald	Academy Representative - (Chair)
	Neil Robinson	Academy Representative
A	Daniel Moore	Academy Representative
A	Ella Tuxford	Academy Representative
	Katie Thackery	Academy Representative
A	Matt Rooney	Maintained Special School Head Teacher
	Jamie Hutchinson	Academy Special School Head Teacher
	Colin Barnard	Governor Maintained School Representative
A	Andy Palmer	Governor Maintained School Representative
	Laura Gapski	PVI - Early Years Group Member
	Karen Richards	PVI - Early Years Group Member
A	Nigel Frith	Church of England Diocese Representative
A	Louise Knott	14-19 Partnership Representative
	Joe Jefferies	Trade Union Representative - NASUWT
A	Jo Myers	Trade Union Representative - UNISON

In attendance:

Steve Hawkins	Senior Finance Business Partner, Children and Families
Karen Hughman	Group Manager, Education Access, Standards and Safeguarding
Claire Sampson	Head of Integrated Children's Disability Services
Mandy Stratford	Early Years Strategic Manager
Sarju Sheta	Finance Business Partner, Children and Families Finance
Jason Gooch	Finance Business Partner, Children and Families Finance
Marian Cullen	High Needs Consultant
Elizabeth Broadhurst	High Needs Consultant

1.	<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> James Macdonald welcomed all members. Marian Cullen and Elizabeth Broadhurst (High Needs Consultants) were introduced; formal introduction under item 3C. Elizabeth confirmed the reviews initial scoping findings will be shared with officers by the end of the summer term, with a view to co-developing the action plan thereafter. 	
	<p>Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apologies were received from Louise Knott, Nigel Frith, Peter McConnochie, Gareth Moss, Rachel Livesey and Toni Gardner. Apologies accepted. 	
2.	<p>Minutes of previous meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correction noted by Neil Robinson: A date in the minutes was incorrect. Item 2 should read 12th December not 27th February. Typing error noted by Anne Hall on item 3D: 'part time equipment' should read 'part time equivalent'. Forum Membership: Action to be picked up in September Permanent Exclusions & Funding Recoupment: Sarju Sheta provided figures for 2024-25, Secondary retained: £3,222,218; recouped: £572,076 Primary retained: £69,257; recouped: £49,568 Monetary columns for item 3b have been corrected. Special school representatives of the forum and LA officers met as a group to consider a small uplift to the top up funding for special schools and academies- Steven Hawkins confirmed a 0.83% uplift for the 10 lowest-funded special schools, costing approx. £170,000. Revised recommendation presented to cabinet member for Education and SEND, which was approved Minutes approved as accurate after above amendments actioned. 	<p>ACTION</p> <p>TG</p>
3.	<p>3a Final Accounts 2024-25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarju Sheta and Jason Gooch presented the paper. 2024-25 DSG allocation: £874.150m Forecast spend: £891.642m (Primary overspend is on High Needs of £18.1 million) Major overspends: Independent specialist provision Post-16 provision EOTAS (Education Otherwise Than at School) Special school capacity – increases in placements or extra support required within school, a cost effective decision to expand. Early Years Block £132,000 underspend - due to lower-than-expected uptake, appendix B shows uptake figures. 	

<p>Overspend on SEND Inclusion Fund due to increase in demand through the expansion of entitlements. For 2025-26 an additional £0.185m will be retained from the Early Years Block, plus a further £0.200m contribution from the High Needs Block to generate a SEN Inclusion Fund allocation that is sufficient to meet anticipated uptake. Current overspend offset in part by Disability Access Fund underspend</p> <p>Census numbers still unconfirmed – final allocation for the Early Years Block to be confirmed by the Department of Education (DfE) in Summer 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion led by: Neil Robinson and Steven Hawkins <p>Key Concerns: -</p> <p>Non-ISB reserve expected to go into deficit in 2026, what is the consequence?</p> <p>Up until March 2026 Local Authorities (LA) are able to use a statutory override arrangement which ring fences the Non ISB reserve and keeps it out of local authorities main revenue accounts. Officers are awaiting DfE guidance regarding the anticipated end of the statutory override and will update forum at next meeting if guidance has been received</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option was still available in 2025-26 to move 0.5% from Schools Block to High Needs Block, above 0.5% movement would have required SoS approval. LA have not yet received 2026-27 guidance, but officers are assuming this mechanism will continue. <p>RECOMMENDATION/S</p> <p>That the Forum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the content of the report; - report noted. 2. Note the carry forward of underspend of de-delegated trade union facilities, noted in paragraph 3, into 2025/26 - noted 	<p>SH</p>
<p>3b Pupil Growth Fund 2025-26</p> <p>Karen Hughman presented the paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation for 2025-26 £2.02m (significantly less than 2024-25) • No changes in terms of the operational guidance growth funding money is used to support growth in pre 16 pupil numbers to meet basic need and to support additional classes needed to meet the infant class size regulation. • Still manage a bulge of secondary school age children. Commitment costing £1.2m. • Request to review methodology for future allocations to schools – this was agreed. James Macdonald compared to other LA’s Nottinghamshire seems to be very generous, when this comes back to Forum comparative figures would be helpful. • Concerns raised by Kirsty Lowde about funding gaps when additional places are not filled when pupils move to year 8, year 9 etc. Concern also to be looked at during the review of future allocations to schools. <p>RECOMMENDATION/S</p>	<p>KH</p>

	<p>That the Forum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Notes the content of the report; - report noted. Continues to monitor the use of this fund throughout 2025-26 – Agreement to continue monitoring this fund 	
	<p>3c High Needs Working Group – verbal update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marian Cullen and Elizabeth Broadhurst introduced themselves and gave a brief outline of their experience. Elizabeth Broadhurst confirmed that the focus of the review is on: Understanding cost drivers in High Needs Block (HNB) spending. Identifying areas of duplication, inefficiency or systemic pressure. Proposing solutions to reduce reliance on high-cost placements and create sustainable in-county pathways. The review will include triangulated findings and draw on conversations with education, finance, commissioning and SEND teams across the local authority and schools sector. Looking at ways to benchmark expenditure against other LAs. Looking at all children, young people with education, health and care plans to see what they're receiving in terms of placement and provision. A draft action plan will be shared for Forum discussion early in the autumn term. 	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steve Border raised serious concerns on behalf of over 30 Rushcliffe primary headteachers. Schools are having to cut staff and are forecasting budget deficits for 2025/26. There is a perception of a looming educational financial crisis, particularly affecting maintained primary schools without academy trust backing. The DfE's guidance to make 1% "productivity efficiencies" was described as demoralising and unrealistic, given years of compounded cost pressures. Requested clarification on whether any additional funding or national support was expected. Forum Chair Response (James Macdonald) acknowledged the validity and urgency of the concerns, agreeing that many schools are in a precarious financial position. Clarified that Forum has no direct control over national funding levels, and the LA receives an allocation with a set criteria on how to allocate to schools and acadmies, but stands ready to support sector-led advocacy. Encouraged school leaders to engage with local MPs and offered support from Forum representatives, Peter McConnochie (Service Director) Karen Hughman (Group Manager, Education Access) reiterated the offer for joint representation in meetings with MPs to help make the case for increased school funding. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next Meeting scheduled for 18 September 2025 needs to be rescheduled, new date to be confirmed. • Forum composition voting method discussion to be picked up at the September meeting 	<p>TG</p> <p>TG</p>															
5.	<p>Confidentiality / Chair’s Closing Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No confidential items. • Thanks to all members for their contributions and support. Wished everyone a restful summer 																
6.	<p>Date and time of next meeting.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="146 667 1334 862"> <tr> <td>Wednesday 17 September 2025</td> <td>2-4pm</td> <td>In person – Location TBC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thursday 13 November 2025</td> <td>2-4pm</td> <td>In person – Location TBC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thursday 11 December 2025</td> <td>2-4pm</td> <td>TBC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thursday 5 March 2026</td> <td>2-4pm</td> <td>Microsoft Teams</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thursday 11 June 2026</td> <td>2-4pm</td> <td>Microsoft Teams</td> </tr> </table>	Wednesday 17 September 2025	2-4pm	In person – Location TBC	Thursday 13 November 2025	2-4pm	In person – Location TBC	Thursday 11 December 2025	2-4pm	TBC	Thursday 5 March 2026	2-4pm	Microsoft Teams	Thursday 11 June 2026	2-4pm	Microsoft Teams	
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