SCHOOLS FORUM
Agenda

Date Wednesday 24 June 2026

Time 4.00 pm

Venue

Notes 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST- If a Member requires any advice on any item involving a possible declaration of interest which could affect his/her ability to speak and/or vote he/she is advised to contact Paul Entwistle or in advance of the meeting.

2. CONTACT OFFICER for this Agenda is Tel. 0161 770 5151 or email

Item No

1 Schools Forum - Wednesday 24th June 2026 4.00pm (Pages 3 - 18)

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Oldham Council

Agenda

SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday 24th June 2026 4.00pm
Teams Meeting

		Approx duration	Officer	Papers
1	**Welcome and Apologies – including introduction for new members**		Chair	
	Apologies/Declarations of Interest (please send to schoolsteam.finance@oldham.gov.uk)			-
2	**Minutes and Matters Arising**	5 mins	Chair	Attached
	Minutes of meeting held on 25th March 2026			
3	**Dedicated Schools Grant Final Out turn 2025/26 and Budget Update for 2026/27 & 2027/28**	25 mins	Vicky Gibbons	Attached
4	**SEND Reform Plan Template**	20 mins	Katie Charlton	Verbal / presentation
5	**School Balances**	15 mins	Vicky Gibbons	Attached
7	**Future dates of meetings -** Wednesday 11th Nov 2026 – 4pm Wednesday 20th Jan 2027 – 4pm Wednesday 24th March 2027 – 4pm	5 mins	Chair	Verbal
	Any other business – Must be notified to schoolsteam.finance@oldham.gov.uk 24 hours before the meeting			

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To Members of the Schools Forum

Finance Directorate
Schools Finance Team
Oldham Council Offices
Spindles Shopping Centre
George Street
Oldham
OL1 1HD

Tel: 0161 770 4925

Dear Colleague,

Re: SCHOOLS FORUM 24TH JUNE 2026

Please find attached the agenda and papers for the next meeting of the Schools Forum to be held at **4.00pm** on Wednesday 24th June 2026 via Microsoft Teams.

If you are unable to attend this meeting, please email your apologies to schoolsteam.finance@oldham.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

Andy Cooper

Senior Finance Manager

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Oldham Council

Spring Term 2026

Minutes

Meeting of the Oldham Schools Forum

Wednesday 25th March 2026
via Microsoft Teams
at 4.00pm

PRESENT:		
Liz Travis (Chair)	Holy Trinity CE Primary School	Primary Academy Representative
Stewart Ash (Vice Chair)	Pinnacle Trust (CFO)	Primary Academy Representative
Kate Anais Hoggard	Channings	Early Years Representative- PVI
Paul McGrath	St Thomas CE Primary School, Werneth	Primary Academy Representative
Nigel Woodworth	The New Bridge Group	Special Representative
Nigel Yeo	Trade Union Representative	Trade Union Representative
Emmett Patel	Kingsland School (PRU) (Headteacher)	PRU Representative
Joe Brownridge	E-ACT (Director of Academies Finance)	Secondary Academy Representative
Helen Woodward	St Martins	Primary Maintained Representative
Nicola Edwards	Beever	Primary Maintained Representative
Karl Newall	Crompton House	Secondary Academy Representative

IN ATTENDANCE:	
Paul Tinsley	Director of Education, Skills & Early Years, Oldham Council
Katie Charlton	Assistant Director of SEND & Inclusion, Oldham Council
Tony Shepherd	Assistant Director of Education & Early Years
Andy Cooper	Senior Finance Manager, Oldham Council
Jennifer Wright	Early Years Funding & Sufficiency Manager
Victoria Hayes	Senior Accountant, Oldham Council

ABSENT:		
Gary Needle	St Joseph's Primary	Primary Academy Representative
Gemma Cottingham	E-Act (Headteacher)	Secondary Academy Representative
Tracey Cavanagh	Holy Rosary RC Primary School (Headteacher)	Primary Academy Representative
James Bell	The Cranmer Trust (CFO)	Secondary Academy Representative
Sharon Costello	Harmony Trust (CFO)	Primary Academy Representative
Chris Gloster	Crompton House	Secondary Academy Representative
Jeremy Sutcliffe	Kingfisher Special School (Governor)	Special School Representative

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone present and opened the meeting at 4.00pm.

1.2 Apologies for absence
Apologies were received from Gary Needle, Tracey Cavanagh, Sharon Costello, Chris Gloster and Gemma Cottingham.

1.3 Business Pecuniary & Personal Interests
No declarations of interests were shared.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

2.1 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: i) That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2026 be approved as a correct record.

3. SCHOOLS FORUM CONSTITUTION

3.1 The Senior Finance Manager provided an update on the Schools Forum Constitution including membership for 2026/27. It was noted that there have been no legislative changes over the last year requiring a change to the Forum's current practice. However, the membership has been reviewed to ensure that the balance between maintained primary / secondary schools and primary / secondary academies are broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category to ensure debate within the Schools' Forum is balanced and representative

RESOLVED: i) The Forum approved the 2026/27 Schools Forum Constitution

4. EARLY YEARS FUNDING 2026/27

4.1 Jennifer Wright, Early Years Funding & Sufficiency Manager, provided forum with an update following the Early Years Funding consultation for 2026/27 and the new proposed rates.

4.2 It was noted that two options being were consulted on by way of online survey. There were 62 responses received from 251 providers (25% response rate). Option 2 was the preferred option; resulting in a slightly lower SENIF pot but a slightly higher hourly rate for disadvantaged 2 year olds.

4.3 Accordingly the agreed funding rates for 2026/27 were as follows:

- 3 & 4-year-olds: £5.83 + £0.20 supplement (Max £6.03), SENIF £100,000
- 2-year-olds (disadvantaged): £8.59, SENIF £30,000
- 2-year-olds (working families): £8.55, SENIF £100,000
- Under 2s: £11.65, SENIF £100,000
- EYPP: £1.15 per hour (first 15 hours).
- DAF: £975 per year.

RESOLVED: i) That Schools Forum note the outcome of the Provider Early Years Funding consultation 2026/27

5. SEND REFORMS – SUMMARY OF THE WHITE PAPER

5.1 Tony Shepherd, Assistant Director for Education & Early Years, delivered a presentation to Forum to provide an update on the SEND reforms following the publication of the White paper in February 2026.

5.2 The key points to note were:

- Government proposes significant reforms to the education and SEND systems in England.
- Consultation on reforms to the SEND system published alongside and sets out a broader set of reforms.
- Local partnership and shared accountability for children's outcomes binding local government, schools and trusts, Integrated Care Boards, police, and stakeholders around the aim of delivering shared outcomes.
- Early Years emphasised through National roll-out of Best Start Family Hubs programme.
- Encouragement for school collaboration, including by joining trusts established by Local Authorities.
- Detail still required, particularly on finance for Councils.
- Needs of more children and young people with SEND to be met within mainstream settings and without the need for a statutory plan.
- Reforms to SEND system, phased over time, whilst ensuring that need continues to be met within the existing statutory framework.
- Getting it right early can have long-lasting impacts, hence National roll out of Best Start Family Hubs with a specific role for supporting families with SEND.
- Investment of £1.8 billion over three years to fund the 'Experts at Hand' specialist support programme but lack of detail on funding allocated to councils and ICBs.

- Change to the law on independent special schools should ensure that children get suitable high-quality placements and that councils pay a reasonable price for them.
- Councils can establish school trusts but no detail on how the intention of "moving to all schools joining or forming high-quality school trusts" is to be achieved. Other models of collaboration likely to be permitted.
- Reforms must be financially sustainable. Historic Dedicated Schools Grant deficit write off provides Councils with breathing space they must manage a residual debt of around £500 million while the OBR has forecast that new deficits of £8.7 billion will then accrue over 2026-27 and 2027-28.
- Councils will also need additional funding to meet the growing need for home-to-school transport for children and young people with SEND.

6. SEND BANDING SYSTEM

6.1 Katie Charlton, Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusion, delivered a presentation to Forum to provide an update on Oldham's High Needs Banding system which had been developed to ensure a consistent, transparent and needs-led approach to High Needs funding across all education settings.

6.2 The key points to note were:

- Funding allocations are based on individual needs as identified in EHCPs.
- Resources should be sufficient to deliver specified provision.
- Supports the graduated approach and inclusion framework.
- Processes are clear, straightforward and transparent.
- Implementation Progress - developed during 2024/25 and shared from April 2025. All new EHCPs since January 2025 use the new banding model. Full implementation in 2026/27.Special Schools transition began in 2025/26 with no reduction in funding
- No pupil will move to a lower funding level.
- Focus on fairness, transparency and consistency.
- Alignment work ongoing following detailed review in Autumn 2025.
- Future Development
    - Develop consistent funding for ARPs and SEND units.
    - Align with national SEND reforms.
    - Consider funding models, phase differences, and equity across settings.
    - Develop Service Level Agreement covering funding, provision, staffing and outcomes.
- Next Steps
    - Update report to be provided Autumn 2026.
    - Continued engagement with schools.
    - Further development of ARP/SEND funding and SLA.

RESOLVED: i) That Forum noted content of the presentation and supported continued implementation

7. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Wednesday 11th Nov 2026 – 4pm
Wednesday 20th Jan 2027 – 4pm
Wednesday 24th March 2027 – 4pm

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no urgent items to consider

The Chair thanked colleagues for preparing and presenting the papers.

There being no further business, attendees were thanked for their attendance, and the meeting was declared closed at 5pm

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Joint Report:
Director of Finance
Director of Education, Early Years and Skills

Item 3 – Dedicated Schools Grant Final Out turn 2025/26 and Budget Update for 2026/27 & 2027/28

Schools Forum – 24th June 2026

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report provides an update on the following:

- The provisional 2025/26 outturn for the Dedicated Schools Grant
- An update to the Dedicated Schools Grant budget for 2026/27 & 2027/28

2. Outturn 2025/26 updated Forecast 2026/27 & 2027/28

2.1 Table 1 below details the 2025/26 outturn and an updated forecast for 2026/27 and 2027/28. Table 2 provides a summary of the movements compared to the position reported to the meeting in January 2026.

Table 1 – DSG Update 2025/26 to 2027/28

DSG Summary 2025/26 to 2027/28	2025/26 Out turn £000	2026/27 Forecast £000	2027/28 Forecast £000
Schools Block (excludes central services)	274,777	288,363	288,363
Central Schools Services Block	2,559	2,522	2,522
Early Years Block	18,700	19,501	19,501
High Needs Block – pre/post 16	66,942	71,991	71,991
Under Two & Two Year Olds' Funding	22,185	26,720	26,720
Early Years Pupil Premium	1,034	1,136	1,136
Early Years Disability Access Fund	218	254	254
Total Grant	**386,415**	**410,487**	**410,487**
Budget Requirement			
Individual Schools Budgets	276,157	288,510	288,363
Early Year Funding Delegated to Schools - Three and Four Year old	8,383	8,701	8,700
High Needs Funding for Schools (including Post 16)	56,751	68,852	72,429
Total Delegated to Schools	**341,291**	**366,063**	**369,492**
Central Schools Services	2,551	2,522	2,522
Central Early Years Services	1,609	2,246	2,246
Central High Needs Services	17,227	23,345	24,125
Three and Four Year old PVI's	9,355	9,586	9,587
Under Two & Two Year Old Funding	21,409	25,688	25,688
Total Retained Centrally	**52,151**	**63,387**	**64,168**
Early Years Pupil Premium	1,033	1,136	1,136
Early Years Disability Access Fund	218	254	254
Budget Requirement	**394,693**	**430,840**	**435,050**
(Deficit)/Surplus	**-8,278**	**-20,353**	**-24,563**
Balance brought Forward	1,182	-6,949	-27,302
Provisional (Deficit)/Surplus	**-7,096**	**-27,302**	**-51,865**
Growth underspend recommitted for 26/27	147		
Balance Carried Forward	**-6,949**	**-27,302**	**-51,865**
Reported to Schools Forum at March 25	-9,753	-32,919	N/A

2.2 The actual in-year deficit for 2025/26 was £8.278m, which when added to the surplus of £1.182m brought forward from 2024/25 and with a positive adjustment of £0.147m for Growth underspend committed in the following year produces a cumulative (provisional) deficit of £6.949m as at 31 March 2026, this position is subject to external audit and Department for Education approval.

2.3 This represents a favourable movement of £2.804m compared to the projected outturn deficit of £9.753m that was reported at the January 2026 Schools Forum meeting. Table 2 below provides further detail in relation to the movements when compared to the position reported at the meeting in January 2026. Favourable movements within Early Years (£0.452m) and

within the High Needs Block (£2.196m) and the growth underspend carried forward (£0.147m) are the main drivers in the reduction in the deficit balance.

Table 2- Analysis of Movements since January 26 Schools Forum

DSG Management Plan- Variances	2025/26	2026/27
	£000	£000
Balance brought forward	1,182	-9,753
Change in surplus / (deficit) from previous year	-10,935	-23,166
As reported in January 2026	**-9,753**	**-32,919**
Additional funding:		
Schools Block		
Central School Services Block (CSSB)		
Early Years Block	3,304	0
High Needs Block		
Movement in Funding	**3,304**	**0**
Additional adjustment to budget requirement:		
Schools Block-Growth Underspend carried forward	147	-147
Early Years (offset by additional income & balance brought forward	-2,852	0
High Needs Block- Special schools / ECHP's /Resourced	686	1,043
High Needs Block - Contingency	780	
High Needs Block- Post 16	260	90
High Needs Block- Central	470	1,827
CSSB	9	
Movement in Expenditure	**-500**	**2,813**
Movement in Opening Balance		**2,804**
Movement compared to previous position	**2,804**	**2,813**
Revised Surplus	**-6,949**	**-27,302**

2.4 The January 2026 Schools Forum was advised that there would be an estimated in-year deficit for 2026/27 of £23.166m and that this in turn would produce a closing cumulative deficit of £32.919m when added to the forecast deficit brought forward of £9.753m.

2.5 Based on updated projections there is a reduction of £2.813m in the planned 2026/27 expenditure, the forecast in-year deficit therefore reduces correspondingly from £23.166m to £20.353m. As evidenced in Table 2, there is reduced pressure of £2.960m within the High Needs relating to Resourced Provision, Post 16, Special Schools and Central services (including Out of Borough), offset by the Schools Block Growth Funding of £0.147m being carried forward from 2025/26 and which is fully committed in 2026/27

2.6 This when added to the reduction in the cumulative deficit at the end of 2025/26 (£2.804m) produces a revised forecast, cumulative deficit of £27.302m. at the end of 2026/27.

2.7 In line with the requirements of the SEND Reform Plan, the forecast has been extended for a further financial year to 2027/28. It is estimated that the in-year deficit for the year will be £24.563m, resulting in forecast deficit of £51.865m. Clearly none of the above takes into account the impact of the High Needs Stability Grant which is scheduled to

apply for 2026/27 through to the cessation of the Statutory Override at the end of 2027/28 (further details in Section 3)

2.8 Table 3 summarises the movement by the 4 funding blocks that comprise the DSG. It shows the in-year surplus or deficit for each of the four blocks for 2025/26 to 2027/28 illustrating that the total cumulative impact on the DSG, arriving at a forecast deficit of £51.865m at the end of 2027/28 is driven by pressures within the High Needs Block.

Table 3 - DSG Summary by Funding Block

	BLOCKS				
	Early Years £000	Schools £000	High Needs £000	CSSB £000	Total £000
Balance brought forward from 2024/25	**322**	**1,380**	**-500**	**-20**	**1,182**
2025/26					
Income	42,137	274,777	66,942	2,559	**386,415**
Expenditure	42,007	276,010	73,978	2,551	**394,546**
In Year Balance (-) is deficit	**130**	**-1,233**	**-7,036**	**8**	**-8,131**
Balance Carried forward to 2026/27	**452**	**147**	**-7,536**	**-12**	**-6,949**
2026/27					
Income	47,611	288,363	71,991	2,522	**410,487**
Expenditure	47,611	288,510	92,197	2,522	**430,840**
In Year Balance (-) is deficit	**0**	**-147**	**-20,206**	**0**	**-20,353**
Move Balance b/fd to High Needs Block	**-452**		**440**	**12**	**0**
Balance Carried forward to 2027/28	**0**	**0**	**-27,302**	**0**	**-27,302**
2027/28					
Income	47,611	288,363	71,991	2,522	**410,487**
Expenditure	47,611	288,363	96,554	2,522	**435,050**
In Year Balance (-) is deficit	**0**	**0**	**-24,563**	**0**	**-24,563**
Balance Carried forward to 2028/29	**0**	**0**	**-51,865**	**0**	**-51,865**

3. DSG SUSTAINABILITY GRANT

3.1 In February 2026, Government announced additional funding through the new High Needs Stability grant aimed at helping local authorities manage high needs deficits and help them move towards financial sustainability.

3.2 Under this new approach, local authorities will have 90% of their High Needs deficit (accrued to 2025/26) written off. This grant will be allocated in Autumn 2026, but only once the LA has a series of compliant financial returns and also developed an approved local SEND reform plan, demonstrating how they will address SEND spending sustainably in the future.

3.3 This is a clear signal from government: financial relief is available, but it is not limitless. Stability must come from system change, not from short-term fixes, with plans to address how the remaining 10% of deficits will be met, and how ongoing spend will move to a more sustainable position.

3.4 In addition, to assist with delivery of the reforms the DfE is providing additional funding via the Experts at Hand & Local Authority SEND Transformation Fund enable local authorities, working in partnership with local system partners, to provide an offer of advice and direct support for early years (EY) education settings, mainstream schools and further education (FE) colleges. The funding is for investment in services that individual establishments cannot commission alone, such as specialist health and education support, to improve the quality of inclusive education for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Local funding of £2.398m has been confirmed for 2026/27 with further indicative national funding totals of £750m and £850m for 2027/28 and 2028/29 respectively.

4. Actions/ Recommendations

4.1 Schools Forum is requested to note:

1) The draft 2025/26 outturn for the Dedicated Schools Grant
2) The current DSG budget for 2026/27 and 2027/28 and the consolidated forecast position as at 31 March 2028

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