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

Item 3 – Schools Funding Update 2026/27 & Update on DSG Management Plan

Schools Forum – 21st January 2026

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report provides an update on the recent funding announcements from the DfE for 2026/27.

2. Funding Allocations 2026/27

2.1 The Department for Education (DfE) published information and indicative allocations for 2026/27 for the Schools and Central Schools Services Block on Wednesday 19th November 2025. On 17th December 2025, they published actual final allocations for the Schools and Central Schools Services Block and indicative allocations for the Ealy Years and High Needs Block. These are presented in Table 1 below along with the final allocations for 2025/26 for comparative purposes.

Table 1 – DSG allocations for 2026/27 compared to 2025/26

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	Difference £000
Schools Block	273,553	287,191	13,638
Schools Block growth	1,224	1,172	-52
High Needs Block	66,942	71,991	5,049
Early Years Block	39,461	47,611	8,150
Early Years Block- adjustment re 2024/25	-627		627
Central School Services Block	2,559	2,522	-37
Total	**383,112**	**410,487**	**27,375**

2.2 Table 1 above shows that the DSG funding across all four blocks has increased by 27.375m an increase of 7.14% compared to the previous year. However, it is important to note that

grants previously held separately in 2025/26 have now been rolled into the NFF allocations for the Early Years, Schools & High Needs Block totaling around £13.600m (sections 3, 5 & 6 below provider further information re the grants rolled in for the relevant block).

3. Schools Block

3.1 A provisional notional Schools Block (including growth) of £288.363m.

The amount allocated is based on the National Funding Formula (NFF) which calculates "notional" budgets for each school in Oldham and uses the total of these budgets to calculate the Local Authority (LA) allocation. The School's Block is made up of the following funding for 2026/27.

(1) Pupil led funding- £281.287m

- a final primary unit of funding (PUF) of £6,089.32 and,
- a final secondary unit of funding (SUF) of £7,902.81

The units of funding are based on 2025/26 (October 2025) pupil numbers and characteristics and make up the vast majority of the Schools Block as illustrated in Table 2 below. This core school funding covers funding for all pupil and school led factors in the funding formula. The PUF and SUF are multiplied by the pupil numbers in reception to *year* 11 plus pupils aged 4 to 10 not assigned to a year group for primary and pupils in year groups 7 to 11, plus pupils aged 11 to 15, not assigned to a year group for secondary

(2) Premises funding- £5.904m

The figures included in the Schools Block allocation are the final for premise factors for 2026/27. This includes funding for PFI, split sites and Business Rates. Since 2022/23 the charges for National Non-domestic rates (NNDR) can be paid directly to the billing authority by the ESFA, removing schools from the payment process, however Oldham has chosen not to implement the process at this stage, therefore, there are no changes to the existing NNDR arrangements for 2026.

(3) Growth & Falling Rolls- £1.172m

In addition to the funding allocated through the schools NFF formula factors described above, the DfE also provide growth funding to local authorities and alongside this, where applicable funding on the basis of falling rolls. Oldham does not currently operate a falling rolls fund.

The growth fund is to support pupil growth relating to LA planned basic need for schools where it has already been agreed with the LA that there will be an increase in the planned admission numbers (PAN) by means of the provision of a school extension. Additional funding will be made available in relation to the number of additional pupils taken.

Table 2- Analysis of Schools Block

	Primary	Secondary	Total £000
Guaranteed unit of funding (£)	6,089.32	7,902.81	
October 2025 pupil numbers	23,223.5	17,699	
Pupil Led Sub Total (£000)	**141,415**	**139,872**	**281,287**
Premises factors funding			5,904
Schools Block Sub Total			**287,191**
Growth Allocation			1,172
TOTAL FUNDING			**288,363**

3.2 The main features in the schools NFF for 2026/ 27 are:

(a) Total provisional funding for mainstream schools through the schools NFF of £50.90 billion in 2026/27.

(b) The funding factors used in the 2026/27 national formulae remain the same.

(c) To help simplify the funding system, core funding for 2026/27 includes funding that was allocated separately in 2025/26 through the Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG) and National Insurance Contributions (NICs) grant. The amounts being rolled into the formula for 2026/27 are detailed in section 3.5 below.

(d) Almost all factor values have increased from 2025/26 to 2026/27. The basic entitlement values, pupils eligible for Free School Meals at any point in the past 6 years (FSM6) values, the lump sum and the minimum per pupil funding values have all increased to reflect the rolling in of the Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG) and the National Insurance Contribution (NICs) Grant from 2025/26, as highlighted in (c) above. On top of this, a further 2.11% increase has been applied to the basic entitlement; FSM6 values and the lump sum factors.

(e) A 2.11% increase has also been applied to the IDACI, Low Prior Attainment (LPA), English as an Additional Language (EAL), Mobility, Sparsity and Split Sites factors.

(f) A 1.66% uplift has been applied to the Free School Meals (FSM) factor in the NFF, in line with inflation forecasts.

(g) All primary schools will attract at least £5,115 per pupil, and all secondary schools at least £6,640 per pupil – the minimum per pupil funding levels incorporate the rolled in SBSG and NICs Grant funding, but no further percentage uplift has been applied for 2026/27.

(h) Premises funding for exceptional circumstances and business rates will continue to be given at the local authority level, based on the amounts reported by local authorities in their 2025/26 local funding formulae.

(i) The local authority funding formulae must include a minimum funding guarantee (MFG) that works in a similar way to the funding floor. In 2026/27, the MFG can be set between 0 % and -0.5%.

3.3 The national funding formula is currently only used to calculate the Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Block to be allocated to each Local Authority. Individual school budget shares and Academy General Annual Grant (GAG) allocations are calculated using the Local Authority funding formula. It is the Local Authority who proposes any amendments to the funding and is responsible for making the final decisions on the formula.

3.4 The overall Schools' Block funding provided to Local Authorities is ring-fenced. It is proposed that the local funding formula model for 2026/27 will not change from the model applied in 2025/26. To maintain affordability, the only exception being a slight negative

adjustment to the Area Cost Adjustment (ACA) to 0.997 in 2026/27 compared to 1.001 in 2025/26. The funding model is based around funding being fair to all schools and targets funding to schools.

Grants

3.5 As previously mentioned, the mainstream school's elements of the Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG) and the National Insurance Contribution (NICs) grants are being rolled into the schools NFF for 2026/27.

3.6 The approach to rolling in these grants is very similar to how previous grants were rolled into the 2025/26 NFF. The DfE have rolled in the grants in three ways, to reflect the three different ways in which schools attract funding through the NFF:

- Increasing the basic entitlement, FSM6 and the lump sum factor values for schools funded through the main formula factors (before protections);
- Increasing the minimum per pupil funding levels; and
- Increasing the baseline for each school, which is used to calculate funding protections for schools funded through the funding floor.

3.7 Table 3 below shows the amounts that have been added to the core factor values in respect of the grants.

Table 3 – SBSG & NIC rates rolled into formula 2026/27

Factor	SBSG (annualised)	NICs Grant	Total
Primary Basic Per Pupil	£55	£78	£133
KS3 Basic Per Pupil	£78	£68	£146
KS4 Basic Per Pupil	£88	£77	£165
Primary FSM Ever 6	£49	£75	£124
Secondary FSM Ever 6	£72	£60	£132
Lump Sum	£2,086	£2,400	£4,486

4. Central School Services Block

4.1 Table 4 below summarises the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) allocation between the two main components, the 2026/27 allocation of £2.522 is in net terms £0.037m less than the amount received in the previous year.

Table 4- CSSB Allocation

Central School Services Block Grant (CSSB)	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	Difference £000
Funding for On-going Commitments	1,880	1,979	99
Funding for Historical Commitments	679	543	-136
Total	**2,559**	**2,522**	**-37**

4.2 The main features in the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) funding for 2026 to 2027 are:

(a) The total budget for ongoing responsibilities in 2026-27 is £379m. This includes the following funding streams given out separately in 2025-26, which have now been rolled in to the CSSB NFF:

- £22 million for centrally employed staff through the NICs grant;
- £17 million for centrally employed staff through the SBSG.

(b) The CSSB NFF continues to allocate funding to LAs for ongoing responsibilities using a pupil led formula. The formula uses two main factors:

- a basic per-pupil factor, through which LAs receive the majority of funding; and
- a deprivation per-pupil factor

(c) In 2026-27, for LAs that receive it, their historic commitments funding will be reduced by 20% compared to their 2025-26 baseline.

4.3 Section 4.2 provided details of the Central School Services funding allocation. Schools Forum is required each year to confirm the amounts on each line for activities funded within this block, as shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5 – CSSB Proposed 2026/27 allocation

	2025/26	2026/27	Narrative
	£0	£0	
Schools Forum	13	13	Hosting, servicing and administration of the Schools Forum
Access Admissions	702	702	Cost of admissions and appeals
Premature retirements	679	543	Retirement costs. These costs will reduce over time. It covers approximately 380 people
Teachers' Pension Grant	50	50	Previously stand-alone grant 2025/26
Core Schools Budget Grant	97	96	Previously stand-alone grant 2025/26
National Insurance Contributions Grant		39	Previously stand-alone grant 2025/26
Schools Budget Support Grant		37	Previously stand-alone grant 2025/26
Ongoing duties (previously ESG)	720	717	In addition, the retained duties rate (£15 per pupil in 2017/18) was paid to Local Authorities, to fund the duties that they delivered for all pupils. The retained duties element of the Education Services Grant (ESG) was transferred to the CSSB and requires Schools Forum to confirm the contribution that the Local Authority holds for all schools.
Sub Total	**2,261**	**2,197**	
National Copyright School Leases	298	325	Relates to the purchase by the DfE of a single national licence managed by DfE for all state funded schools in England. Charges for 2026/27 haven't been published as yet so this amount is an estimate.
Total	**2,559**	**2,522**	

5 High Needs Block

5.1 In 2026 to 2027 the DfE are temporarily suspending the high needs national funding formula (HNFF), which in previous years has been used to calculate local authorities' high needs allocations. Instead, local authorities' allocations will be based on their 2025/ 26 allocations, with some additional funding equivalent to the funding allocated to local authorities in 2025/26 through the following:

- The consolidated Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG), with the 2025 staff pay increase element of that grant annualised (whereas in 2025-26 this funding was to support settings with the part-year costs of the teachers' pay award), and
- Additional funding equivalent to the funding allocated to mainstream schools for the elements of the 2025 to 2026 National Insurance Contributions (NICs) Grant and Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG) paid in respect of special units and resourced provision. The SBSG element is annualised as above, for the same reasons.

5.2 Accordingly, the provisional allocation for 2026/27 is £71.991m, £5.049m higher than the final 2025/26 allocation (due to the roll in of the grants).

5.3 The suspension of the high needs HNFF means that the DSG high needs block allocations will include neither an update to the basic entitlement pupil numbers in special schools, nor a special free school adjustment. The DfE are, however, retaining the import/export adjustment which reflects changes in the balance of pupils and students educated within and outside the local authority's area, and consequent costs. This will have a detrimental effect on the forecast position of the High Needs Block within the DSG Management Plan.

5.4 While the Statutory Override is in place many local authorities will continue to accrue deficits on their high needs spending. The government will provide further detail on the plans to support local authorities with historic and accruing deficits and conditions for accessing such support later in the Local Government Finance Settlement process.

5.5 The DfE intends publish the Schools White Paper in the early part of 2026, this will confirm plans for the reform of the SEND system which will also include the review of the methodology for allocating high needs funding.

6 Early Years Block

6.1 The distribution of the national envelope of funding ear-marked for three and four years old children moved to a national funding formula basis from April 2017, this was refreshed/updated as part of the national funding formula arrangements for 2024/25 to include the extended free entitlements (i.e. two years old offer to working families and new under two's offer from September 2024, expanded to full 30 hours entitlement from September 2025).

6.2 The Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) uses a single national base rate plus three supplements (free school meals, English as an additional language and disability living allowance) with the combined total for each LA adjusted by the area cost adjustment (ACA). The EYNFF model for the two years old offer also includes use of the additional income deprivation affecting child index (IDACI) proxy indicator.

6.3 The EYNFF model provides Oldham with an "indicative" total funding envelope of £47.611m, inclusive of additional grant funding for early years pupil premium (EYPP) and disability access fund (DAF).

6.4 The finance regulations require all local authorities to provide funding to all Early Years settings via one single base rate and all local authorities are required to pass through

funding direct to providers a minimum of 97% (reduced from 96% in 2025/26) via the local funding formula model arrangements.

6.5 The extended regulations to account for the new funding entitlements, specifically relating to the two years old offer require that the funding level assigned to the disadvantaged cohort must be at least equivalent to the funding level assigned to the working parents cohort.

6.6 The early years element of additional funding to support the teachers/NJC pay award costs and the increased national insurance contributions was combined together and paid as a separate grant (EYNTPG) in 2025/26. This has now been streamlined into the EYNFF model from April 2026.

6.7 In addition to the base rate, a deprivation formula factor supplement will continue to be allocated at £0.20 per hour across all EY funding streams.

7. DSG Management Plan

7.1 The DSG management Plan has been updated to take account of the funding announcements outlined in previous sections of this report, the most pertinent of which is the suspension of any changes to High Needs funding in 2026/27 from 2025/26 (other than the roll in of grants as detailed in section 5). In isolation the decision to 'cash limit' the 2026/27 high needs funding has contributed circa £4.400m to the pressure for 2026/27. Provision is also made in relation to the funding requirement from the High Needs Block towards the cost of Children Looked After.

7.2 Table 6 below summarises the current DSG Management Plan, the position for 2025/26 is unchanged and still shows an in-year projected deficit of £10.935m for 2025/26 which reverses the 2024/25 opening cumulative surplus of £1.182m to give a projected outturn deficit for 2025/26 of £9.753m.

7.3 The adverse position (as a result of the changes outlined in 7.1 above) is now forecast to increase with an in year 2026/27 forecast deficit of £23.166m; leading to an overall deficit balance of £32.919m being carried forward into 2027/28.

7.4 Detailed work is ongoing to assess the impact of current spend across all of the High Needs Block areas for 2025/26. In preparation for the year end Schools Forum will be provided with a further, more detailed updated position of the DSG forecast for 2025/26 and 2026/27 at the next meeting in March.

Table 6 DSG Management Plan

DSG Management Plan	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
Opening Balance	**1,182**	**-9,753**
Income		
Schools Block	274,777	288,363
Central School Services Block (CSSB)	2,559	2,522
Early Years Block	38,834	47,611
High Needs Block	66,942	71,991
Total Income	**383,112**	**410,487**
Expenditure		
Schools Block	276,157	288,363
Central School Services Block (CSSB)	2,559	2,522
Early Years Block	39,156	47,611
High Needs Block	76,175	95,157
Total Expenditure	**394,047**	**433,653**
In Year Deficit	**-10,935**	**-23,166**
Balance Carried Forward	**-9,753**	**-32,919**

8. Pupil Premium Grant

8.1 The Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) provides funding to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in state-funded schools in England. For 2026/ 27 this will continue to be paid as a separate grant. The rates for 2026/27 were released alongside the DSG announcements on 17th December 2025. The rates for 2026/27 are shown in table 7 below.

Table 7 - Pupil Premium Grant Rates

PPG 2026/27	£ per pupil
Primary (FSM Ever6)	1,550
Secondary (FSM Ever6)	1,100
Service Children (Armed Forces)	360
Looked after Children, Adopted Children and Children with Guardians	2,690

9. De-delegated Funding

9.1 The funding reforms introduced from April 2013 outlined the requirement for, in the first instance, as much as possible of Central Services and the corresponding funding to be delegated to schools and academies, so that local decision making is made by schools and academies directly. This change required Local Authorities to delegate funding relating to a number of centrally retained budgets to schools via the Local Funding Formula.

9.2 The table below provides details of the services for Oldham which it is proposed will be de delegated in 2026/27.

Table 8- De-delegated Funding

De-delegation-2026/27	Primary per pupil amount £	Total Budget for Primary £000
School improvement (including previous Monitoring & Brokering Grant) and Under Performing Schools	29.53	331
Contingencies	8.55	96
Teacher Union Duties	4.1	46
TOTAL		**473**

9.3 Locally maintained schools have the option of de-delegating the funding back to the LA to provide better value for money or to pool risk. The Schools Forum representatives of each sector are the decision-making body in such matters, following discussion with their wider stakeholder colleagues. The decision-making process is subject to an annual review, for 2026/27 there is no proposed de-delegation to maintained secondary schools, therefore only the Primary Forum representatives from maintained schools are requested to confirm the decision for each of the de-delegated services for 2026/27.

9.4 These budgets are reviewed regularly to ensure the amounts and the purpose is still relevant as more schools move to academy, trust and foundation school status. The proposed amounts to be de-delegated per pupil for 2026/27 for these services are the same as in the previous year.

9.5 Any unspent de-delegated funding remaining at the year-end can be carried forward to the following funding period, but its use would be subject to the regulations operating in the year.

Actions/ Recommendations

10.1 Schools Forum is requested to:

1) Note the contents of the report

2) Approve no change to the local funding model for the Schools Block for 2026/27 incorporating the ACA of 0.997.

3) Approve the allocation for each service area, totalling £2.522m of funding from the Central Schools Services Block above (section 4).

4) Representatives from the primary sector for maintained schools are requested to approve the de-delegation of funding for School Improvement and under performing schools, Teacher Union Duties and contingencies for 2026/27 for locally maintained schools as follows to the value of £0.473m