Oldham Council

Spring Term 2026

Minutes

Meeting of the Oldham Schools Forum

Wednesday 21st January 2026
via Microsoft Teams
at 4.00pm

PRESENT:		
Liz Travis (Chair)	Holy Trinity CE Primary School (Headteacher)	Primary Maintained Representative
Stewart Ash (Vice Chair)	Pinnacle Trust (CFO)	Primary Academy Representative
Tracey Cavanagh	Holy Rosary RC Primary School (Headteacher)	Primary Maintained Representative
Kate Anais Hoggard	Channings	Early Years Representative- PVI
Paul McGrath	St Thomas CE Primary School, Werneth	Primary Academy Representative
Sharon Costello	Harmony Trust (CFO)	Primary Academy Representative
Karl Newall	Crompton House	Secondary Academy Representative
Nigel Woodworth	The New Bridge Group	Special Representative
Nigel Yeo	Trade Union Representative	Trade Union Representative

IN ATTENDANCE:	
Paul Tinsley	Director of Education, Skills & Early Years, Oldham Council
Katie Charlton	Assistant Director of SEND & Inclusion, Oldham Council
Lee Walsh	Director of Finance, Oldham Council
Andy Cooper	Senior Finance Manager, Oldham Council
Victoria Hayes	Senior Accountant, Oldham Council
Vicky Gibbons	Senior Accountant, Oldham Council

ABSENT:		
Gary Needle	St Joseph's Primary	Primary Maintained Representative
Gemma Cottingham	E-Act (Headteacher)	Secondary Academy Representative

Joe Brownridge	E-ACT (Director of Academies Finance)	Secondary Academy Representative
James Bell	The Cranmer Trust (CFO)	Secondary Academy Representative
Emmett Patel	Kingsland School (PRU) (Headteacher)	Special School Representative
Jeremy Sutcliffe	Kingfisher Special School (Governor)	Special School Representative

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 Welcome

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

1.2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Gary Needle.

1.3 Business, Pecuniary and 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: That the minutes of the meeting held on 03rd December 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair

2.2 Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

Q. Will the current and future deficits impact (or not) on the Councils Cash flow?

R. The increased spend and the move to a deficit position will ultimately have an impact on the Councils cash flow, this was not however readily apparent in the draft financial statements to 31 March 25, the cash position had benefited from slippage on the capital programme throughout the financial year and also the receipt of significant and unexpected grant funding allocations just before the year end

3. SCHOOLS FUNDING UPDATE 2026/27 & UPDATE ON DSG MANAGEMENT PLAN

3.1 The Schools Funding update 2026/27 & update on DSG Management Plan joint report, from the Director of Finance and the Director of Education, Early Years and Skills, had been shared in advance of the meeting.

3.2 The Senior Finance Manager provided an update on the funding allocations published highlighted by the DfE on 17th December 2025.

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

He advised that funding across all four blocks has increased by £27.375m (an increase of 7.14% compared to the previous year) but that it was important to note that this increase included around £13.6m of grants that had previously been allocated separately but were being rolled into the NFF in 2026/27 for the Early Years, Schools & High Needs Block.

3.3 Points to note re the Schools Block allocations:

- Pupil led funding of £281.287m. This includes a final primary unit of funding (PUF) of £6,089.32 per pupil and a final secondary unit of funding (SUF) of £7,902.81 per pupil.
- Premises funding of £5.904m which includes funding for PFI, split sites and Business Rates
- Growth & Falling Rolls funding of £1.172m
- 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. **Table 3 – SBSG & NIC rates rolled into formula 2026/27** details the amounts per pupil for each grant that have been rolled in.
- Almost all factor values have increased from 2025/26 to 2026/27. In addition to the grants rolled into the NFF; a further 2.11% increase has been applied to the basic entitlement; FSM6 values and the lump sum factors. A 2.11% increase had also been applied to the IDACI, Low Prior Attainment (LPA), English as an Additional Language (EAL), Mobility, Sparsity and Split Sites factors whilst a 1.66% increase had been applied to the FSM factor/
- Minimum Funding levels had been set at £5,115 per pupil for primary and £6,640 for secondary.
- Local Authority's funding formula must include a minimum funding guarantee of between 0% and -0.5%.

3.4 Points to note re the Central School Services Block (CSSB) allocations:

- Total budget for ongoing responsibilities in 2026-27 is £379m. This includes £22 million for centrally employed staff through the previously separate NICs grant and £17 million for centrally employed staff through the previously separate SBSG
- The CSSB continues to allocate funding to LAs for ongoing responsibilities using a pupil led formula
- In 2026-27, for LAs that receive it, their historic commitments funding will be reduced by 20% compared to their 2025-26 baseline
- **Table 5 – CSSB Proposed 2026/27 allocation.** The Senior Finance Manager provided details of the and amounts for each line within the CSSG for Schools Forum approval

3.5 Points to note re the indicative High Needs Block allocations:

- The DfE are temporarily suspending the High Needs National Funding Formula in 2026/27. Instead, LA's allocations will be based on 2025/26 allocations with additional funding for grants previously allocated separately:
  - the consolidated Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG).

- 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.

- After the roll in of these grants the provisional allocation for Oldham for 2026/27 is £71.991m
- While the Statutory Override is in place many local authorities will continue to accrue deficits on their high needs spending.
- The DfE intends to publish the White paper later in Spring which will confirm the reforms of the SEND system.

3.6 Points to note re the indicative Early Years Block allocations:

- The EYNFF model provides Oldham with indicative Early Years Block funding of £47.611m
- Finance regulations require all local authorities to provide funding to all Early Years settings via one single base rate and LA's are required to pass through funding direct to providers a minimum of 97% (reduced from 96% in 2025/26).
- The grant for pay award costs and national insurance contributions previously allocated separately in 2025/26 have been rolled into the Early Years NFF model for 2026/27.

3.7 **Table 6 - DSG Management Plan**. The Senior Finance manager provides Schools Forum with an update on the DSG Management Plan which was now projecting a forecasted deficit of £9.753m at 31st March 2026 and £32.919m at March 2027. In isolation the decision to 'cash limit' the 2026/27 high needs funding has contributed circa £4.400m to the increased pressure for 2026/27.

Detailed work is ongoing to assess the impact of current spend across all of the High Needs Block areas for 2025/26

3.8 **Table 7 – Pupil Premium Grant**. The Senior Finance manager informed Forum of the DfE updated per pupil rates for 2026/27 for those pupils that attract Pupil Premium funding.

3.9 **Table 8 – De-delegated Funding**. The Senior Finance manager provided details of the services for Oldham which it is proposed will be de delegated in 2026/27 (maintained schools only) for Forum approval.

QUESTIONS :

Q: Other than directed revisions from the DfE and the move to the new banding systems, special schools have not seen any further increases in their top up funding although mainstream schools have seen inflationary increases. Are there any proposals to address this in 2026/27?
A: Finance colleagues confirmed that discussions had already taken place internally re High Needs top up rates for 2026/27 and that the proposal would be to increase these by 2.11% in line with mainstream for 2026/27. This will be on top of the additional funding being rolled in for those grants previously paid separately ('legacy funding') and the uplift will be applied to all rates on the banding matrix special schools, resourced units in mainstream settings and funding for pupils with ECHP's in mainstream settings).

Q. Does the LA have any more information re the proposed reduction to employer pension contribution rates being proposed from GMPF particularly around MAT's & pooling?

A: The LA doesn't currently have the full details re the proposed reduction though are expecting further information imminently. It is expected that GMPF will also contact academy trusts directly to discuss arrangements going forward.

Q: Can more clarity be given regarding the Growth budget allocation included within the DSG? Can this be allocated where schools have seen an increase in pupil numbers from one census to another? Do Oldham operate a falling rolls fund?
A: The growth fund is in place to support growth in pre 16 pupil numbers to meet basic need as agreed with the LA. It can't be used for growth due to the popularity of places or where settings have admitted above the PAN at their own choice, both of these will be picked up through lagged funding. LA's have discretion over whether to operate a falling rolls fund and Oldham don't currently operate a falling rolls fund but this could be pursued further should colleagues request.

RESOLVED:

i) that the Forum noted the contents of the report

ii) that the Forum approve no change to the local funding model for the Schools Block for 2026/27 incorporating the ACA of 0.997. **Approved**

iii) that the forum approve the allocation for each service area, totalling £2.522m of funding from the Central Schools Services Block. **Approved**

iv) that 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. **Approved**

4: DATE OF NEXT MEETING : Wednesday 25th March 2026

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Following the recent resignation of Ian Windeatt (Trade Union representative) Schools Forum acknowledged the many invaluable years of support, dedication and professionalism given by Ian in his term in office and thank him accordingly for that. Ian's replacement on Schools Forum going forward will be Nigel Yeo

It was noted there were no other urgent items to consider.

The Chair thanked the Senior Finance Manager and 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 4.40pm).

SIGNED as approved:

DATE: