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