

Contact Officer: Schools Forum Team

The KIRKLEES SCHOOLS FORUM PUBLIC
(Schools Funding Consultative Group)
meeting held on Friday 16 January 2026
Cathedral House, Huddersfield at 8.30am

Present:

Name:	Category of Membership:
	Nursery School Head
Katie Pearson, Jenny Shore	Primary School Head
Andrew Fell	High School Head
Todd Cheetham	Special School Head
Paul Brook	Special Academy Head
Darren Christian (Chair), Dave Wadsworth, Natasha Carman, Laura Willimott	Academy Head
Rebecca Smith	Alternative Provision
	Non-school Member
Mathew Pinder	School Governor
Liz Kilner (Minute Clerk), Emma Brayford, Martin Wilby, John Bartlett, Jo-Anne Sanders	Officers in Support
Cllr Jane Rylah	Observers
	Others

1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for absence

Apologies were received as follows.

- Hazel Danson – Non-School Member
- Vicky Morris – Non-School Member
- Ian Rimmer – Academy Head
- Andi Gilroy-Sinclair - Nursery School
- Tom Brailsford – Executive Director – Children & Families

2 Minutes of the Schools Forum Briefing held on 10 October 2025

The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting held on 10 October 2025.

3 Matters arising from the meeting held on 10 October 2025

There were no matters arising for discussion.

4 Kirklees Education & Learning Partnership Board (standing item)

Jo-Anne Sanders and Cllr Jane Rylah updated the meeting on discussions from the 17 December 2025 KELPB.

The following discussions took place at the meeting.

- Best Start to Life government initiative update.
- Permanent Exclusions update from Emma Brayford.
- Update on SEND and the white paper.
- Discussion and analysis on Cluster groups.
- DfE Document – National Conversation SEND reform. The government is keen to get the views from stakeholders.

5 High Needs Block (standing item)

Jo Anne Sanders and John Bartlett updated the meeting.

- The latest Safety Valve return has been submitted. We do have a new Safety Valve Financial Advisor in place. The latest return does show an overspend both in year and cumulative. We have not yet received any feedback on the submission.
- It was noted that there is a lot of financial pressure on the system currently. A paper will be presented to Schools Forum on 6 February 2026 to explain financial pressures and actions being taken by Kirklees.
- The Joseph Norton school rebuild is progressing and a Cabinet decision will be taken on Woodley School and College rebuild.
- A Cabinet Report will be made on 10 February 2026 in relation to the AP Free School opportunity and options. The cabinet report will be published on 2 February 2026. An update on the AP Free School and next steps will be presented at the next Schools Forum Briefing meeting on 6 February 2026.

6 Central School Services Block 2026/27

The Central Schools and Services Block (CSSB) Allocations 2026/2027 report was circulated before the meeting.

John Bartlett updated the meeting and summarised the report.

- The Central Schools and Service Block (CSSB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) continues to provide funding for local authorities to carry out central functions on behalf of maintained schools and academies, comprising 2 distinct elements of ongoing responsibilities and historic commitments.
- The CSSB allocations for the 2026/2027 are £3.675m compared to the original 2025/2026 allocations of £2.879m.
- The census data from October 2025 has been incorporated into the final CSSB block allocation.
- The DfE has protected any local authority from having a reduction that takes their total historic commitments funding below the total value of their ongoing prudential borrowing and termination of employment costs, in recognition of the time required for such costs to unwind. Kirklees Council has already

Kirklees Schools Forum - 16 January 2026

submitted evidence to support a bid for additional resources to meet estimated costs for 2026/2027.

- The proposed CSSB Allocations for 2026/2027 compared against the agreed allocations for 2025/2026 were summarised by budget heading. CSSB allocations include Centrally Employed Staff NICS (National Insurance Contributions) of £560K and Centrally Employed Staff SBSG (School Budget Support Grant) of £414k. These budgets were received as a separate grant in 25/26 but are rolled into CSSB for 26/27. These items explain the increase in the CSSB allocations for 2026/ 2027 compared to 2025/2026.
- It is proposed that allocations are increased by 3.5%, reflecting the anticipated impact of the Local Authority pay award (to be implemented from 1st April 2026), from the 2025/2026 agreed contributions.

Q. How can there be a reduction when we have applied a 3.5% increase for the pay award?

A. The number of pupils has reduced by 895 which has resulted in an overall reduction.

Q. Is there any reduction in staff requirement given the reduction in the number of pupils?

A. The fall in the number of pupils is very small as a percentage of the total number so the staff impact is very little. The allocations are only a contribution to the total staff cost. We will continue to review going forwards and we do have monitoring in place to identify changes in the volume of work.

Q. Is the drop in the total allocation directly related to the reduction in pupil numbers?

A. Yes it is. This is not a real terms reduction.

RESOLVED: That the proposed allocations of the Central Schools and Services Block (CSSB) for 2026/2027 be approved.

7 Local school funding formula 2026/27 / Authority Proforma Tool (APT)

The Consultation on the proposed local schools funding formula / APT Schools Block allocations for 2026/27 was circulated before the meeting.

John Bartlett updated the meeting and summarised the report.

- The 2026/2027 gross Kirklees final allocation is £571m.
- Safety Valve - High Needs Block Transfer (Disapplication Request submitted) is £3.6 million or 0.87% of schools block budget which requires Secretary of State approval.
- APT Factor Value Limits 2026/27 were summarised.
- The 2026/27 DfE APT December 2025 National Funding Formula (NFF) Rates were summarised. It was noted that rates used are highlighted in pink in the table. Rates are being moved towards the National Funding Formula over time.
- Minimum Fund Guarantee (MFG) has been set at 0% within a permissible range of -0.5% and 0.0%.

Kirklees Schools Forum - 16 January 2026

- The Growth Fund has been provisionally set at £0.9 million.
- The following grants are now part of the NFF for 2026/27
 - Mainstream school elements of School Budget Support Grant (SBSG)
 - National Insurance Contribution (NICs) Grant.

Q. How was it decided which rates should be used for each area as not all areas are at the NFF rate?

A. All rates will move towards the NFF rate over time from the current rate, we are making year on year progress towards the NFF rates.

Q. Why are we not at NFF rates for all areas?

A. We don't have sufficient funding for this.

Q. The KS4 rates are closer to minimum than NFF rate, why is this?

A. This is due to underfunding. We do have to balance to the total Kirklees funding allocation. We do not have sufficient funding for all areas to be at the NFF rates.

Q. Is there anything we can do to increase KS4 funding to move it closer to the NFF rates?

A. If we make an increase to KS4 in the model we will have to decrease another area of funding to balance back to the total funding.

Q. Is there a rationale for the funding rates proposed related to deprivation indexes?

A. Historically yes.

Q. Why are Primary rates closer to the NFF rates than Secondary rates in the model?

A. This is linked to historical funding. There is a requirement to move 10% closer to NFF rates each year.

Q. Is the rationale for rates that primary schools have more vulnerable students than secondary schools due to needs and disadvantage?

A. Overall the model must balance back to the total allocated funding for Kirklees. We do have an obligation to move all rates to the NFF rates as soon as possible. We can change the model, but we must balance back to total allocated funding.

Q. Is the movement of 10% closer to NFF rates overall or for each individual area?

A. The requirement is to be between the minimum and maximum for each area, and if not to move 10% closer to the NFF rate each year.

Q. Have specific grants been rolled into the general fund?

A. Yes, this is an approach being taken by the government. The grants are not as easy to identify when rolled up into the general fund.

Q. Why are we not at NFF rates for all areas of allocation in Kirklees?

A. There is not sufficient funding in the total Kirklees allocation to do this. We will move towards NFF rates over time.

Q. Do we need to highlight the gap between total Kirklees allocations and the allocation which would be needed to have all areas at NFF rates?

A. Yes we can do the calculation of the gap in funding to Kirklees.

Q. Have other grants and funding streams been rolled into the NFF rates?

A. Yes they have.

It was noted that when NFF rates were introduced there were gaps between Kirklees rates and NFF rates. It is the aim to move to NFF funding rates over time for all areas. Kirklees is historically underfunded.

ACTION: John Bartlett to calculate the gap between Kirklees allocations and the total cost of NFF rates for all areas. This information will be emailed to Schools Forum members.

[post meeting – the funding NFF gap is calculated to be £4.82million in Kirklees for 2026/26]

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum confirm their support for the proposals set out for the Local Schools Funding Formula 2026/27.

8

Growth Fund 2026/27

The Growth Fund for 2026/27 report was circulated before the meeting.

Martin Wilby updated the meeting and summarised the report.

- A Dedicated School Grant Central Budget Retention [for mainstream maintained schools and academies] has been agreed by Schools Forum for Growth funding for several years.
- **Future pupil growth** (currently used for secondary school bulge places in the North of Kirklees) final cost is likely to be £172K leaving an underspend of £428K for 2025/2026. The Future pupil growth budget proposed for 2026/2027 is £300k, a saving of £300k vs the 2025/2026 budget of £600k.
- **Pupil Growth Fund** is mainly used in KS1, primary phase. KS1 class size rules continue to apply. With falling numbers, budgets in the primary phase continue to be under significant pressure meaning this support is vital. 2025/26 commitments, using the agreed criteria, are over budget at £649K (compared to £544K 2024/25), reducing the total expected 2025/26 Growth Fund underspend to be £379K. £600K is considered to remain a realistic budget in 2026/2027.
- With a degree of risk, it should be possible to set a Growth Fund for 2026/27 at £0.90M, a saving of £0.30M from 2025/26.

Q. Where will the 2025/2026 underspend of £379k go?

A. The underspend will contribute to the overall DSG deficit.

Q. Will the reduction in growth funding for 2026/2027 impact the funding formula numbers reviewed?

A. The reduction is reflected in the Local school funding formula proposals for 2026/2027.

Q. Is there a risk that we will go over the 72 bulge places assumed?

A. There is no guarantee, but we are trying to balance risk in the proposals. This is a best estimate based on the evidence that we have.

RESOLVED: That the growth fund for 2026/2027 be agreed at £0.9m as proposed.

9

De-delegation 2026/27

The De-Delegation Proposals 2026/2027 – Schools Block Funding was circulated before the meeting.

John Bartlett updated the meeting.

- The Schools Operational Guide for 2026/2027 requires the specific primary and secondary phase of maintained schools members of Schools Forum to agree the De-delegated services for the upcoming financial year.
- De-delegated services are for maintained schools only. Funding for de-delegated services must be allocated through the formula but can be passed back, or de-delegated, for maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools with Schools Forum approval.
- De-delegation does not apply to special schools, nursery schools, or Alternative Provisions. Where de-delegation has been agreed for maintained primary and secondary schools, the DfE's presumption is that the Local Authority will offer the service on a buyback basis to those schools and academies in their area which are not covered by the de-delegation.
- The cost-of-living pressures continues to impact on all aspects of service delivery within both schools and the services supporting schools.
- The current approved de-delegated services and charge rates in operation for the 2025/2026 financial year were summarised.
- The De-delegation rates are reviewed and are submitted on the final Authority Pro-Forma Tool (overall allocation of 2026/2027 school finances) in January 2026.
- The De-delegations represent probable future costs of service provision for 2026/2027 and needs to consider the impact of both inflationary pressures and academisation which reduces the number of schools contributing to the de-delegated services.

Proposed De-Delegation Rates for 2026/2027

- Three key components underpin the proposed de-delegated rates for 2026/2027. Firstly, using the October 2025 pupil census data (latest published version), the number of maintained pupils in 2026/2027 is anticipated to reduce by an average of 2,700 pupils mainly due to proposed academisations. Secondly the impact of Local Authority pay award from April 2025 and thirdly, the anticipated level of central financial and operational support for maintained schools that will be required in 2026/2027.

Kirklees Schools Forum - 16 January 2026

- The growing need for exceptional financial support across an increasing number of maintained schools is placing considerable strain on the contingency budget. At the same time reduced economies of scale are putting further pressure on de-delegated budgets limiting both financial flexibility and efficiency.
- Taking the above factors into account and to enable the most sustainable position, it is proposed that the de-delegated rates for 2026/2027 are increased by 5.5% in the main, except for base contingency (50%), maternity/paternity cover (20%) and trade union cover (10%).
- Proposed pupil charges were summarised.
- There has been pre-engagement with maintained school representatives on 12 Dec 2025 and 9 January 2026 which have helped shape the proposals.

The support of the maintained schools representatives for the proposals was noted.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum maintained schools representatives approve the proposed De-delegated rates for 2026/2027.

10 Any other business

There were no items of Any Other Business for discussion.

11 Confirm minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed above.

12 Next Public Meeting Dates and time of next meeting

- 1 May 2026 – Public meeting - Cathedral House, Huddersfield

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.06am.