



North Tyneside Council

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North Tyneside, NE27 0BY
Tel: 0345 2000 101

DRAFT Minutes

Meeting Schools Forum **Date** 09 July 2025

Location Via Microsoft Teams

✓ Present
D Deputy
A Apologies
O Absent

Present

Name	Organisation	Representing	09.07.2025
Angi Gibson	Hadrian Park Primary School	Academy	D (Jade Martin)
Anthony Gollings	St Thomas More	RC Diocese	A
Claire McLeod	Trade Unions	Trade Unions	D (Candy Mellor)
Claire Withers	Fordley Primary School	Primary	O
Colette Bland	St Mary's RC Primary School (NS)	Academy	A
Colleen Ward	Coquet Park First School	First (*)	✓
Daniel Jamieson	Burnside Community College	Secondary	✓
David Watson	St Thomas More	Academy (*)	✓
Diane Turner	Tyne Coast	16-19 Provider	O
Finn Wilcock	Southridge First School	First	✓
Gavin Storey	Cullercoats Primary School	Primary (*)	✓
Gillian Tawes	Shiremoor Primary School	Governor - Primary	A
Jane Lowe	Monkseaton Middle School	Governor - Secondary	✓
Joanne Thompson	Holystone Out of School	Early Years PVI	✓
Jonathan Heath	John Spence High School	Academy	✓
John Croft	Sir James Knott	Nursery	✓
John Newport	Marden Bridge Middle School	Middle (*)	✓
John Ord	Greenfields Primary School	Governor - Primary (*)	✓
Justina Terretta	Beaconhill Special School	Special	✓
Karen Croskery	North Tyneside Student Support Service	Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	A
Kelly Holbrook	Longbenton High School	Secondary (*)	✓
Laura Baggett	Monkhouse Primary School	Primary (*)	✓
Lesley Griffin	Wellfield Middle School	Governor - Secondary	A
Louise Bradford	C of E Diocese	C of E Diocese	✓
Matt Snape	Marden High School	Secondary (*)	✓
Philip Sanderson	Kings Priory	Academy (*)	✓
Stephen Baines	Holystone Primary	Primary (*)	✓
Steve Wilson	Whitley Bay High School	High (*)	✓
Tim Jones	Spring Gardens	Primary	A
Wayne Myers	Richardson Dees Primary	Primary	✓

In Attendance:			
Julie Firth	Director of Children's Services	NTC	A
Jon Ritchie	Director of Resources	NTC	A
Andrew Brown	Principle Accountant, Finance	NTC	✓
Christina Ponting	Senior Manager – Schools HR	NTC	✓
David Mason	Head of Finance – Deputy S151 Officer	NTC	✓
Diane Thompson	Senior Accountant – Schools Finance	NTC	✓
Jane Cross	Senior Business Partner, Finance	NTC	✓
Ian Wilkinson	Strategic Lead, Education and Inclusion Review	NTC	✓
Lisa Ramshaw	Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion	NTC	✓
Mark Mirfin	Assistant Director, Commissioning, Partnerships and Transformation	NTC	✓
April Gibbs-Thorn	Statutory Services Officer – Schools Forum	NTC	✓

(* indicates current member of Finance Sub Group)

Minutes of Meeting

Ref	Item	
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and issued a reminder that the meeting is live streamed to the public on the Authority's YouTube Channel. A reminder of roles and responsibilities for Forum Members was provided. See table above for apologies. 	
2.	Attendance Register / Membership	Christina Ponting
	<p>Attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See table above. <p>Membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christina Ponting noted there are no current attendance membership issues. CP highlighted the two terms coming to an end at the end of the academic year. The Chair voiced his personal thanks and extended thanks on behalf of Forum, to Stephen Baines and Joanne Thompson for their input and support for several years. 	
3.	Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. <p>Matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools Business Services (SBS) Migration (AB) 	

	<p>Previously, Andrew Brown advised that a full paper would be presented at the Schools Forum meeting on 09 July 2025. AB confirmed this update was included within today's Finance Update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic discount on combined Health & Safety and Human Resources SLA. Previously, Christina Ponting informed Forum that a request had been made to HR for a separate meeting to be facilitated between HR and Schools. Confirmation of the separate meeting going ahead was requested by the Chair for the Schools Forum July meeting. CP noted she had received confirmation that a separate meeting had taken place. • The Chair noted both outstanding actions as complete. 	
4.	Declarations of Interest	
	None.	
5a.	Schools Finance Update Jane Cross/Andrew Brown	
	<p>Andrew talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly, Andrew Brown thanked all schools, Headteachers and School Business Managers for their hard work and working closely with the Schools Finance team to stabilise the position. <p>2024/25 Schools Outturn Balances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2023/24 Budget, £8.156m Deficit compared to ○ 2024/25 Budget, £9.707m Deficit ○ 2023/24 Outturn, £2.930m Deficit compared to ○ 2024/25 Outturn, £4.337m Deficit • Andrew noted 2024/2025 Budget Monitoring period 2 showed a direction of improvement from the initial deficit set as £9.707m. • Finn Willcock queried what actions had been taken to facilitate the improvement. Andrew noted this topic would be covered in more detail during the Budget Setting item in report, with regard to the good work being done. <p>2024/25 School Deficits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 20 schools ended 2024/25 in deficit - £14.220m. ○ 37 schools ended 2024/25 in surplus - (£9.883m). • Two schools academised during 2024/225 with the deficit balance coming to the Local Authority. • Andrew noted that schools ending in surplus at 2024/2025 did use some of that surplus and this is reflected in the reduced figure. <p>2024/25 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)</p> <p>Jane Cross talked through the slide on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <p>Schools Block</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £0.397m surplus 2023/2024 to £0.548m surplus 2024/2025. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High Needs Block . ○ £9.784m deficit 2023/2024 to £11.502m deficit 2024/2025. ○ Early Years Block. ○ £1.046 surplus 2023/2024 to £2.469m surplus 2024/2025. 	

- Jane noted that the DSG is a ring-fenced account. This had previously been due to end at the end of March 2026. The government have announced that this has now been further extended to the end of 2027/2028.

2024/2025 High Needs Block

Jane Cross talked through the slide on screen. Main points to follow:

- £9.784m 2023/24 deficit
- £11.502m 2024/25 deficit.
- 2024/25 was the second year of the DSG Management Plan.
- Figures include £11.7m Safety Valve funding with £7.8m funding still to be received.
- Jane highlighted the increased pressures from additional places and complexities in special schools, out of borough placements and top-up payments.
- On-track to reach an in-year balance by 2027/28.
- Jane noted any balances are carried forward to next financial year and highlighted that it is on-track to reach an in-year balance by 2027/2028.

2025/26 Schools Budget

Andrew Brown talked through the slide on screen.

- 2024/25 Budget Deficit of £9.707m. The budget deficit increased to £5.211m.
- This resulted in a £14.918m deficit 2025/2026.
- Andrew referred to the previous question from Finn Willcock and reiterated that the improved outturn does not take into approximately £5m of commitments which cannot be included on the outturn.
- Andrew highlighted that the Finance team are unclear what will be the end result, but work will be focused on improvement and achieving accurate management information.
- The Chair commented that part of the improvement in 2024/2025 was also due to a government addition of funding on the change of government. It was also noted that with pay settlements and the partial funding of those it is not surprising that there is an increase in deficit.
- In addition, it was noted that there is no back up position of a similar increase from Government to date.

2025/26 Deficit Schools

Andrew talked through the slide on screen and gave further detail on the school's budget deficit of £14.918m.

- £19.564m 26 schools submitted a deficit budget in 2025/26 – £19.564m.
- 31 schools with an expected cumulative surplus in 2025/26 – (£4.646m).
- This resulted in a total budget deficit of £14.918m.
- Andrew noted that 21 deficit clinics have already been scheduled. At the time of the meeting 7 clinics had already taken place.
- 11 more expected to take place before the summer holidays.

- The Director of Resources, had attended some clinics.
- Clinics were minutes and actions taken/ noted and shared with colleagues as appropriate and schools in a timely manner.
- Andrew highlighted the emphasis on budget monitoring and the work involved to resolve the deficit position. Andrew stressed the great effort made from schools with regards to preparatory work and asked that his thanks and those of the finance team were passed on to colleagues.

National Funding Formula (NFF) Consultation for 2026/27

Andrew informed Forum as follows:

- Indicative funding allocation is expected towards the end of July.
- Operational guidance will include options for capping and Minimum Funding Guarantee.
- Modelling will be presented to Schools Forum in September ahead of the formal consultation with all schools during October/November 2025.
- There will be a report back to Schools Forum in November and the budget will be set by Cabinet in January 2026.

Recommendations

Schools Forum was asked to:

- Acknowledge the provisional 2024/25 outturn position on all DSG balances.

ACKNOWLEDGED

- Acknowledge the school budget plans overall summary position.

ACKNOWLEDGED

- Acknowledge the pressure on schools, the High Needs block and the Authority's progress in the DfE's Safety Valve Intervention Programme.

ACKNOWLEDGED

- Note the plan for funding consultation for 2026/27.

NOTED

Schools Business Services (SBS) Migration

Andrew Brown talked through the slide on screen. Main points to note as follows:

- Andrew informed Forum that the Authority has Weekly meetings with SBS officers.
- A discussion with the Managing Director on 23 April discussed teething problems with frustrations fully outlined and made clear.
- SBS fully acknowledge the difficulties and committed to full functionality in a formal statement.
- Andrew noted that SBS have offered to come to Schools Forum however this was not felt to be the best forum for discussions
- Andrew discussed offers made by SBS.
 - 1 year contract renewal – 10% discount on future contract renewal.
 - 3 year contract commitment – 50% discount.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew noted for information that with £840.00 cost, this would only save Schools £84.00. The offer from SBS was noted but not accepted. • Andrew noted the question must be is the functionality improved. He suggested that functionality has improved but is not resolved. • Andrew recommended that considering the strides in direction a 3 year commitment would give a more substantial saving and security. • The Chair questioned when the decision would need to be made. Andrew noted he had no definitive answer to when the decision would need to be made. • Andrew committed to sending an email to schools for consultation and gathering feedback before the summer holidays outlining four options; 1 year commitment, 3 year commitment, explore further options, or cannot decide at the moment. • The Chair asked Forum if it was felt that a response before the summer holiday break would be achievable. Forum agreed. <p>Recommendations</p> <p>Schools Forum was asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the SBS update. <p>ACKNOWLEDGED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the request for feedback on the preferred option. <p>NOTED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair asked Finn Willcock to expand on a question he had listed on the chat function. Finn noted that perhaps the time for the question had passed and suggested that the amount of time spent on the SBS update would have been better served as time to be spend on Budget deficit figures. Christina Ponting thanked Finn for the comment and noted that he would be welcome to contact the team directly for further information or discuss issues. 	
5b.	<p>Falling Rolls and Growth</p> <p>Jane Cross/Andrew Brown</p>	
	<p>Jane Cross talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <p>2025/26 Falling Rolls Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In November last year, Forum voted to reduce the amount of money to be put into both falling rolls and growth funding. • This reduced the amount available to £0.150m, being made up of £0.100, in year funding and £0.050m from the previous years' underspend. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Funding available £0.150m. ○ 16 schools eligible £0.563m. ○ Funding gap in-year of £0.413m. • Jane advised Forum that a School Forum Finance group meeting is scheduled for week commencing 14th July and the 	

	<p>group will consider the options and update Forum with recommendations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane noted that previously a decision had been made to transfer surplus into Schools in Financial Difficulty and that the transfer has not been carried out over the past couple of years. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Option 1 Carry forward deficit balance of £0.413m and fund from future years schools block funding. ◦ Option 2 Fund the gap in 2025/2026 falling rolls from the 0.415m previous surplus not yet allocated. <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair asked for questions/comments or further options for Schools Forum Finance group to consider before moving on to Growth Funding. • Stephen Baines asked where the £0.415m deficit was currently situated. Jane replied that the deficit is within the Schools Block surplus. It is accounted for within year end and she confirmed this would not cost maintained schools in any way. • Gavin Storey asked for clarity of falling rolls and was this directly linked to falling birth rates. Gavin also asked what further information could be provided to the Subgroup as regards the falling birth rate. In response, Jane highlighted the information regarding the declining birth rate within the Finance report. Jane also noted the wider strategic education review which will provide updates and clarify the impact on schools. Jane outlined that the Subgroup will be asked to review the Falling Rolls policy. • Philip Sanderson queried if academies are also entitled to a falling rolls refund and in addition if they are entitled to the refund why has this not been carried out. Jane replied that academies do not apply for Schools in Difficulty funding, however they are entitled to both Growth Funding and Falling Rolls. Jane confirmed that the refunds for academies had not been carried out and stressed that this had not been a purposeful decision. The complexity of the refund and officer time was noted and Jane confirmed that the eligible refunds could still be done. • Phillip made a plea for a reasonable response to refunds owing to academies and requested that those refunds are repaid without further delay. Jane confirmed that following a decision to transfer funds into the Schools in Financial Difficulty, the academies refunds could be made. <p>ACTION: Jane informed Forum that the recommendations from Finance Sub-Group would be presented to Forum in the next meeting.</p>	<p>JC</p>
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2025/2026 Growth – Standard

Jane Cross talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:

- This was based on Sept 2025 admissions, compared to Oct 2024 census.
 - £0.151m funding available.
 - 9 eligible schools requiring £1.003m.
 - Therefore, a funding gap of 0.852m.
- Funding was reduced in 2026/2026 from £0.213m in 2024/2025 (£0.250m less £0.037m carried forward deficit).
- The National funding calculated amount was £0.751m.
- Jane noted that Forum Finance Sub-group will be asked to consider how to address the funding gap, with consideration to:
 - Growth policy review.
 - Evidence of additional costs to support structural class changes.
 - The wider impact of the Monkseaton High School (MHS) closure.
 - Schools remained within PAN.
- Jane highlighted that taking no action would result in a need to find £0.852m moving forward, as there are no carried forward surplus amounts.

2025/26 Extraordinary Growth Funding

- Funding available 0.465m.
- Jane highlighted the disapplication request approved by Forum and approved by the Secretary of State for current MHS pupils in Year 9.
- This disapplication request was to alleviate the standard lag in funding and includes all key elements of the funding formula not just basic entitlement.
- Final allocations to be verified using October 2025 census data.

Discussion

- The Chair noted for the clarity of Primary and First School colleagues, there is not a list of schools receiving funding under extraordinary growth.
- In simple terms, the Extraordinary Growth funding reflects those pupils who are moving from MHS Year 9 to non-normal destinations. As previously explained, this funding was approved as disapplied and ring fenced.
- No disapplication request was made to provide funding for Year 8 pupils who would have moved to Year 9 in MHS.
- The Chair noted the cross over between Growth fund standard and the Extraordinary Growth fund.
- Steve Wilson noted that there it had previously been promised that funding would follow those children moving.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools who had taken extra children at the request of the Local Authority seemed now to be having to bid for extra funding. Steve stressed that schools should not be penalised. • Kelly Holbrook noted the need to separate what is growth funding related to MHS pupils and what is not. She also stressed the need to use the October 2025 census data. • Jane confirmed that there would not be any danger of 'double counting' as the current MHS Year 9 pupils have been ringfenced and can only be considered within the extraordinary growth funding. Jane highlighted the complexities involved in tracking those pupils having not attended MHS. • Matt Snape voiced his support of the comments made by both Steve Wilson and Kelly Holbrook and went on to highlight another group of pupils who have seemingly been missed out; those families being impacted by the closure of MHS and who moved after October 2024 census date. Schools who have received those pupils many of them through extraordinary admissions. Matt asked if there was any funding available to support those pupils. • Jane stressed that schools are not required to bid for extraordinary funding. The usual criteria would be applied and approved by the Schools Forum Finance Sub-group. • Jane noted that the group being referred to would be picked up via the usual Growth funding methodology. • The Chair took the opportunity to note he had discussed with Christina Ponting in the Schools Forum pre-meet, and noted that next year at MHS, the funding will be based on the October 2024 census, resulting in funding for two-year groups with one year group only in school. • The Chair confirmed this has been noted and there is an acknowledgement by Christina to discuss this with senior officers to consider practical options and acknowledgement of the points raised by Forum regarding standard growth funding process. <p>ACTION: Christina Ponting and Senior Officers to consider practical options and bring these back to Forum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kelly Holbrook raised issue of the shortfall between eligible schools and what is in the pot and queried if the recommendation was that the money is found or is there no option. • The Chair confirmed that this issue will be considered by the Finance Sub-Group. At this point in time, the Authority are not making any decision on this and highlighted the need to 	
		CP

	<p>unpick the figures relating to normal growth funding and the MHS Year 8 into Year 9 growth funding.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>Schools Forum was asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the indicative allocations of funding for based on raw data and the request for further information from individual schools and/or strategic planning. <p>NOTED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the options to be considered by Schools Forum Finance Sub-Group and the plans to return recommendations to Schools Forum. <p>NOTED</p>	
6.	<p>Safety Valve Update</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Mark Mirfin</p>	
	<p>Mark Mirfin talked through a presentation. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Authority's DSG Management Plan forecast a 2024/25 year-end pressure of £9.220m on the High Needs Block. As was noted in the Finance update, the Authority's outturn year end 2024/25 saw a pressure of £11.502m. The DfE has released the first payment of £0.0650m for 2025/26. Mark highlighted, set within the context of a £34.970m High Needs Block funding allocation, this represented a worsening pressure of £2.275m in 2024/25 against the original DSG Management Plan. Following DfE submission, response noted the following "Ministers want to ensure that authorities' plans for future management of the DSG and of the local SEND system represent the best available value for money under the current statutory arrangements. We will assess SV monitoring reports according to this". The Safety Valve programme will no longer be further extended, those with a Safety Valve agreement will continue. EHCPs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2501 Unmitigated. 2077 Mitigated. 2337 Actual. Maintained Special Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 877 Unmitigated. 737 Mitigated. 825 Actual. Independent Specialist Provision and Non-Maintained Special Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 127 Unmitigated. 81 Mitigated. 114 Actual. <p>Remodel of DSG Management Plan</p> <p>Mark talked through the diagram on screen and noted that the Authority has now commissioned Peopletoo to support the completion of a remodel of the DSG Management Plan, next steps as follows:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To present Draft DSG Management Plan to DfE. ○ To present DSG Management Plan at next Schools Forum. ○ The aim to achieve in-year balanced budget. <p>Risk</p> <p>Mark talked through the slide on screen and noted risks and how these are being addressed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2025/2026 0.5% transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block. ○ Disapplication submitted to DfE. ○ Increase in mediations and tribunals. 119 mediations started in 2024, compared to 164 in 2023. Tribunals in 2024 are in line with 2023, against a rise between 2022 and 2023. ○ Maintained Special School capacity with significant challenges for some of our special Schools. A High Needs Capital Group has been established to track capital spend. ○ Council would not achieve the mitigated 2024/25 year-end position. Mark noted that the Council had not achieved the mitigated 2024/25 year-end position, hence the remodel of the DSG management plan. <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark asked for any questions and noted he would be happy to return to the next Forum to provide more detail of the remodelled DSG management plan. No questions were raised. • The Chair thanked Mark for his presentation and outline of finances and noted that further briefings and updates should be directed to Headteachers Briefings and Forums from the Autumn term to ensure that all Headteachers are able to receive the detailed updates. 	
7	Proposed Meeting Arrangements	Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair invited Forum to consider proposed meetings arrangements for Schools Forum 2025/2026. • No alternative suggestions were raised. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wednesday 24th September 2025 ○ Wednesday 12th November 2025 ○ Wednesday 21st January 2026 ○ Wednesday 18th March 2026 ○ Wednesday 8th July 2026 <p>Recommendations</p> <p>Schools Forum was asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to continue with the virtual meetings. <p>Agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the proposed dates/times. <p>Agreed</p>	
8	2025/2026 CSSB	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christina highlighted that Forum is usually asked at this time of year to consider if it wished to receive information ahead of decision making in the new academic year relating to centrally retained and other de delegated funding. With reference to the slide on screen, Christina asked specifically if Forum wants any further information on any funding service areas. Forum confirmed that they did not wish any additional information from service teams on CSSB or de-delegated funding ahead of decision making in the new academic year/ autumn term. Kelly Holbrook requested a conversation with Christina Ponting privately. Christina confirmed this and noted that any further concerns or questions could be raised with her directly. 	
9	Responsibilities for Redundancy & Early Retirement Costs Update Christina Ponting	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historically, information has been shared at Forum as regards funding the Local Authority would provide to schools in a downsize situation. Christina noted during recent conversations with the Chair and Vice Chair concerning what is included in Schools Forum and what is not included it was felt that moving forward there was no need for this topic to be a stand-alone item at Schools Forum. Christina noted that the funding mechanism is referred to within the scheme for Financing Schools document, last updated January 2024 in conjunction with the Local Authority, and there have been no changes to funding since that time. Any proposed future changes to the document would be updated to Schools Forum as applicable via the scheme for Financing Schools. In terms of operational requirements, the process for financially maintained schools to make a request for funding would not change and that would continue to be directed through the Schools' HR team in the first instance. <p>Recommendation Schools Forum was asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree that responsibilities for redundancy and early retirement costs to be no longer considered as a stand-alone item at Schools Forum. <p>AGREED</p>	
9	Any Other Business	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christina noted to members that any schools' forum member could join the Finance sub-group. Stephen Baines had been a member but this would end as he retired at the end of August 2025, Christina noted that it would be beneficial to have another first/primary school representative on the group and also offered an open invitation should anyone would wish to come forward to be part of the subgroup. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair stressed a desire to balance membership by the encouragement of first and primary school colleagues to join the subgroup. • Interested members are to contact Christina or Jane Cross directly. 	
10.	Date and Time of Next Meeting	
	Wednesday 24 th September 2025 via Microsoft Teams.	