



HILLINGDON SCHOOLS FORUM
Minutes
Wednesday 25 March 2026 @ 1pm
Ruislip Gardens Primary School
Stafford Rd, Ruislip HA4 6PD

Voting Members

ORGANISATION		ROLE	Attendance	TERM ENDS
Maintained Nursery (1)				
Shabana Aslam	McMillan Early Childhood Centre	Headteacher	Apologies	Sep 2026
Maintained Primary (6)				
Becky Broadhurst	Hayes Park School	Headteacher	Attended	Sep 2029
Vicky Jarvis	Field End Infant School	Headteacher	Attended	Sep 2029
Carly Rissen	Colham Manor	Headteacher	Attended	Sep 2028
Jo Palmer (deputising for John Buckingham)	Minet Junior School	Governor	Attended	
Tony Eginton	Minet Infant & Nursery Schools and Hillside Junior School	Governor	Apologies	Sep 2028
Phil Haigh	Cherry Lane Primary School & Meadow High School	Governor	Attended	Sep 2028
Maintained Secondary (1)				
Cathy Mosdell	Harlington School	Governor	Apologies	Sep 2029
Maintained Special (1)				
Pearl Greenwald	Hedgewood School	Headteacher	Attended	Sep 2027
Academy Primary (4)				
Harshindar Buttar	The Park Federation	Principal – Lake Farm Park Academy	Attended	Sep 2027
Nicola Edwards	William Byrd School	Headteacher	Attended	Sep 2028
Nicola Kelly*	Charville Academy	Headteacher	Attended	Sep 2029
Roseline Wilkinson*	Charville Academy	Governor	Attended	Sep 2029
Academy Secondary (8)				
John Garner	Ruislip High School	Governor	Attended	Sep 2026
Roger Leighton	Partnership Learning Trust	CEO	Apologies	Sep 2029
Liam McGillicuddy	Bishopshalt School	Headteacher	Attended	Sep 2027
Jaskamal Sidhu	Guru Nanak	Executive Principal	Apologies	March 2030
Ben Spinks (Chair)	Middlesex Learning Partnership	CEO	Attended	Sep 2028
Vacancy x 3				
Special Academies (1)				
Sudhi Pathak	Eden Academy Trust	COO	Apologies	Sep 2026
Alternative Provision (1)				
Craig Van-de-Velde	The Skills Hub	Interim Principal	Apologies	Sep 2027
Private, Voluntary & Independent Early Years Providers (2)				
Elaine Caffary	4 Street Nursery	Nursery Manager	Apologies	Sep 2028
Naazish Haq	Little Companions	Manager/Owner	Apologies	Sep 2027
14-19 Partnership (1)				
Vacancy				
Diocesan Representative (1)				
Nicola Dallibar*	St Andrews CofE Primary School	Headteacher	Attended	Sep 2029

Other attendees (non-voting)

NAME	REPRESENTING	ROLE
Nicky Bulpett	Ruislip Gardens	Headteacher
Danny Gallup	the Ecclesia federation,	Governor
Officers		
Gary Binstead	LA Head of Education & SEND Commissioning	
Helen Boundy	LA (Clerk)	

Pamela Hawtree	Lead Finance Business Partner	
Kamaljit Kaur	Lead Finance Business Partner	
Dominika Michalik	LA Assistant Director of SEND & Inclusion	
Cllr Susan O'Brien	Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	
Abi Preston	LA Director of Education & SEND	
Philip Ryan	LA Portage & Families Information Service Manager	

Item	
1.	<p>Welcome, apologies & opening comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BS welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked NB for hosting. Apologies for absence have been received from Graham Cunningham, Shabana Aslam, John Buckingham (though Jo Palmer is deputising for him on this occasion) Tony Eginton, Cathy Mosdell, Sudhi Pathak, Roger Leighton, Laurie Cornwall, Elaine Caffary and Naazish Haq. It was acknowledged that meeting face to face can be more challenging and can impact upon being able to attend, although it can also improve the quality of discussion.
2.	<p>Minutes and actions from previous meeting 15.01.26 & 06.02.26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most actions from previous meetings have been completed, with some items are on this agenda for discussion. Details of actions are on a table at the bottom of this agenda. Agreed that written updates on status of actions will be shared with members. Minutes from the SF held on 15.01.26 and 06.02.26 were AGREED as a true and accurate record of the meetings. <p>Action: Written updates on status of meeting actions will be shared with members</p>
3.	<p>Membership Update & Proposal of Jaskamal Sidhu Executive Principal, Guru Nanak as Academy sector member</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jaskamal Sidhu has agreed to join Forum, and this was approved by members. AP reminded Academy colleagues to promote Forum membership within their schools, it does not need to be a HT. There are currently 3 vacancies in this sector. <p>Action: Academy members to promote SF to colleagues to fill the 3 vacancies Action: Members were asked to suggest any candidates for the 14-19 partnership vacancy</p>
3a	<p>High Needs Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The final allocation for Hillingdon's High Needs Budget for 2026/27 is £77.130m prior to recoupment. This figure incorporates the 2025/26 National Insurance Contributions (NICs) Grant and Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG), both of which have been consolidated into the High Needs Budget for 2026/27. In comparison, the 2025/26 allocation was £72.832m, reflecting a headline increase of £4.297m (5.9%) before recoupment. The combined annualised value of the two grants is estimated at £3.219m, the underlying increase in funding is approximately 1.48%. As Schools Forum did not vote in favour of the proposed 1% Schools Block transfer, the disapplication request to the DfE was rejected so 0.5% was transferred equating to £1.539m This is the smallest uplift ever seen and budget modelling is based on 3%. However, there is also the recent government announcement to cover 90% of historic SEND deficits accrued up to the end of 2025-26. This grant will be paid in the autumn term and is expected to be the first phase of transition to a reformed SEND system, which might explain why the uplift was so small and other funding may be on its way. SEND reform plan is to be submitted by mid-June with a draft shared in mid-May. This is to be co-produced by the LA and Integrated Care Board (ICB). A tight timescale and the LA may be in touch with schools to provide information for this plan in order to make it a shared plan wherever possible, given the tight timescales. Cumulative deficit is circa £75m, expected £67.5m to paid off by the grant. AP confirmed that the feedback will be given from the draft that is submitted in May for amendments to be made for the final submission in June. Noted that some areas of the SEND reform plan are open to interpretation and some aspects of the guidance has not yet been made available.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every area now has a SEN advisor and Finance advisor who will feedback. • Currently seeing unprecedented demand for EHCNAs across the borough. • Experts at hand – LA would like to hear from schools as to what they would like in that team and how best can schools be supported. • The reform plan has to outline what the partnership are doing, and how activities are being aligned to prepare for the reforms. Need to know what do schools need in order to support more complex cases in the mainstream. • AP outlined that a significant training programme is being planned by the DfE, useful to have specialists for specific needs however there is still no clear information about what this training will look like yet. • Funding will be given to LAs but also directly to MATs. • Within the local area developing a clear understanding of what support can be offered to other schools or Trusts. Developing a system that provides support for others. <p>Action: AP to share a survey with schools to gather information about level of provision/support for the SEND reform plan</p>
4a	<p>2025/2026 DSG Budget Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As of Month 9, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is forecasting an in-year deficit of £9.6m, a more positive position with £2.9m less than the £12.5m budgeted use of reserves, with a £1.0m favourable movement from Month 7. The £9.6m overspend and the £1.0m favourable movement relate to High Needs expenditure and the service's ongoing work to reduce reliance on costly independent placements through increased local provision and early intervention. It was noted that, with demand increasing, the year-end figure could vary slightly. • In year shortfall is driven entirely by continued and increasing demand and cost of high need placements. This is a common trend amongst all LAs. • Since 24/25, the action as part of the revised High Needs Safety Valve Plan to actively reduce unit costs by concentrating SEN support in-borough within our maintained schools and reduce dependence on high cost independent and out-of-borough placements. • The LA recognises that the proposed SEND reforms will take time to embed, the Government indicated that further, proportionate support will be available for deficits arising in 2026/27 and 2027/28, though this will not be unlimited.
4b	<p>2026/2027 SEND Commissioned Places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is still high demand for specialist education places across the Borough (and the country), and work continues to expand the number of places available through the expansion of special school places, and specialist provision within our mainstream schools. • Increased the amount of specialist provision places with mainstream schools, through projects in the following schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Charville Primary – 10 additional Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) places - Meadow special school – 29 additional places through extension - Pinn River special school) - Grand Union Village special school) - 76 additional places (both schools) • Since 22/23 there has been a 35% reduction in INMSS places being used. • Additional provision, in local schools / colleges some of which will open in September 2026 with a phased occupancy include a secondary SRP (autism) at Bishop Ramsey, satellite provision at Meadow, HRUC based at Barra Hall. Discussions are ongoing with other secondary schools for additional SRP and DU places from September 2027. • Following the recent publication of the White Paper, awaiting further information and trying to understand the practicalities of each school having their specialist space. <p>LM queried what support is the LA putting in place for the Skills Hub? AP clarified that though it is an academy the LA is working closely with them and implementing a monitoring programme and working closely with the DfE. Some support is also being offered, the LA's main consideration is to ensure that the children are safe. As the only alternative provision in the borough the LA is still using this, including an SLA package where some children are not attending onsite but are being supported by them. Previously the LA over commissioned places, these are being reduced but need to ensure that The Skills Hub is financially viable. Clarified that their financial situation has not led to their current issues.</p>

4c	<p>Policy on Supporting Schools in Financial Difficulty –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy has been updated with a clearer framework, • More transparent outlining how the local authority supports, monitors, and intervenes in maintained schools experiencing financial pressure. • It introduces a structured financial-risk framework, a consistent approach to deficit recovery planning, and clearer expectations around reporting and engagement with both Finance and Education Improvement teams. <p>PH clarified that full collaboration and support with schools is intended to ensure finances are managed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broader support will be offered to all schools, looking at impact of falling rolls. Sessions on strategic planning to be delivered. • Using the school organisation plan to inform 3 yrs budget plans and manage staffing structures. <p>Training sessions will be online and advertised to all schools. They will provide an overview of strategic planning and then separate targeted training will take place for specific schools. They are not mandatory, but schools will be strongly encouraged to attend. Acknowledge that different schools have differing financial positions/forecasts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially schools could be grouped in geographical clusters (Wards) and a wider discussion regarding SEND inclusion could be included. <p>Members felt it would be useful to have clear information from the LA about which schools are reducing PAN as this has an impact on neighbouring schools in terms of strategic planning and future forecasting. Schools can increase PAN instantly but takes two years to reduce it.</p> <p>AP confirmed that at present the LA engages with schools on a case-by-case basis regarding PAN reduction. The decision for PAN reduction is made by LA/ Cabinet members. Forum members queried whether they could be informed on a Ward/area basis to PAN reductions to assist local schools in making strategic decisions about PAN.</p> <p>BS made the point that this can be a collective endeavour across maintained and academy schools. For example, he is trustee of a MAT which is working with the LA and maintained schools in Islington to close a Trust school as part of a strategic, borough-wide approach to place planning. Forum members indicated that they would value the development of a co-ordinated approach for Hillingdon.</p>
4d	<p>MFG Disapplication 2026-27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines the 2026–27 impact of the new framework on special school funding and to request that Schools Forum note the local authority has submitted a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) disapplication for the 2026–27 financial year. • Schools Forum is asked to note the local authority’s Minimum Funding Guarantee disapplication request sent to the DfE for three special schools for the 2026–27 financial year. • The paper shared sets out the financial context, the modelling outcomes, and the planned transition arrangements for 2026–27 • The 2026–27 dataset confirms continued shifts in the profile of need across the system. Some schools now have higher proportions of complex pupils, while others have a changing cohort with more moderate needs. • Summary of top up funding for all special schools was shared. • Three schools experience funding reductions under the new model: Meadow, Hedgewood and The Willows • Disapplication of the MFG is necessary to meet the expectations of the Safety Valve Agreement and to ensure the revised banding framework can be implemented as intended. Retaining the MFG would undermine the integrity of the new system and perpetuate historic funding inequities. • The national 0% MFG prevents any special school from receiving lower per pupil top-up funding than the previous year. While this is a stabilising measure for some settings, it prevents the local authority from applying the revised banding model and allows schools

	<p>to move to correct funding levels based on actual need for sustainable high needs expenditure. Because several schools would otherwise be held above their fair 2026–27 allocations, the MFG must be removed for a second year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2025–26, schools were protected from 66% of any funding reduction as part of a planned three-year transition to the new system. To support sustainability and manageability for schools, protection reduces from two thirds to one-third in 2026–27. <p>DM noted that banding has been useful, accurate profiling of needs enables appropriate planning. The LA has fully appreciated the all the support the special schools have given in this process.</p> <p>Has been a significant piece of work but is beneficial and descriptors are now much fairer and better reflection of the needs in Hillingdon. Clarity as to what the banding around a child means.</p> <p>Forum members asked about the Pride Academy, how does the forum ensure that processes and assurances are being managed from an LA’s perspective rather than waiting for an Ofsted.</p> <p>AP noted that as it is an Academy, LA has a different responsibility but do monitor what is happening and have a close working relation with the Trust. The LA is mindful of what’s happened at the Skills Hub, but they are separate.</p>
5a	<p>Scheme for Financing Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the Schools’ Forum in January the LA agreed to undertake a full review of the Scheme for Financing Schools and to establish a working group of headteachers from maintained schools to contribute to this process. Two working group meetings have taken place. Following these meetings, a revised scheme was created and has been reviewed by the group The Scheme now covers the period April 2026 – March 2027. Two new references to DfE statutory guidance have been added: a link to the DfE Schemes for Financing Local Authority Maintained Schools guidance; and a link to the DfE’s Schools Forum powers and responsibilities guidance, providing further context on the statutory decision-making framework. Pamela Hawtree noted that the guidance in the scheme is based on 25/26, when the new guidance is released by the DfE the scheme will be updated. Aware that a couple of other items are to be amended but in principle this is to be approved and shared. The final update scheme will be shared with SF at the July meeting. <p>Forum members who had been on the working party confirmed that the process had been constructive and that they were happy with the changes made.</p> <p>Proposal: Schools Forum members from maintained schools were invited to vote to approve to adopt in principle the Scheme for Financing Schools (acknowledging some amendments are to be made when new guidance from DfE is released). Following the Schools Forum meeting the DfE announced no changes to the guidance for 26/27.</p> <p>Decision: Schools Forum from maintained schools unanimously agreed to adopt the Scheme for Financing Schools.</p> <p>Action: No action required as the DfE have announced no changes to the guidance for 26/27.</p>
5b	<p>2026/2027 Early Years budget and hourly rates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following on from item at January meeting, PR outlined the outcome of the consultation on the early years funding formula and the indicative allocation of the Early Years Block for the financial year 2026/27. The majority of respondents to the consultation favoured not making changes to the formula for three- and four-year-olds for the financial year 2026-27. This reflected the views of the Early Years sub-group. It would not be appropriate to move further funding to the SENIF budget at this time, given the significant underspend in that budget in the current financial year. Though they have agreed to no changes, several comments emphasised that early year's funding is too low and real-term increases are required to meet operational costs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In regard to funding for 2-year-olds, the proposal for the funding formula was to increase the additional hourly rate of £2.38 paid for children who are eligible for the 'Early learning for two-year olds' entitlement (formerly known as the Disadvantaged two-year-olds entitlement'). The intention is to support access to early years provision for children from lower income households. The LA has notified childcare providers and schools of the hourly rates they will receive for early years entitlement funding in 26/27 <p>PR noted that there was a low response rate to the consultation which was disappointing especially from PVI's and childminders. A separate working party from within the early years subgroup to look at improving communications and engagement strategy.</p> <p>Action: Working party to be created by the early years subgroup to look at improving communications and engagement strategy with PVI's/Childminders</p> <p>Query was made in regard to funding for 2 year old LAC children – they appear to be a group of children who aren't entitled to funding? These are exactly the group of children who the sooner they can attend a provision the better their outcomes will be.</p> <p>Action: PR to follow up with Carly Rissen to clarify what happens regarding LAC children and the funding that 2yr old LAC's can access</p> <p>AP confirmed that the current under spend for SENIF is £400/£500K but assured Schools Forum that this money will not be clawed back.</p>
	Next meeting will be held on Tuesday 7 th July @ 1pm online

Schools Forum Agreed Actions 25.03.26

Item	Action	Responsibility
2	Written updates on status of meeting actions will be shared with members	AP/BS
3	Academy members to promote SF to colleagues to fill the 3 vacancies	Academy Members
3	Members were asked to suggest any candidates for the 14-19 partnership vacancy	All SF Members
3a	AP/DM to share a survey with schools to gather information about level of provision/support for the SEND reform plan	AP/DM
5b	Working party to be created by the early years subgroup to look at improving communications and engagement strategy with PVI's/Child Minders	Early Years Sub-Group
5b	PR to follow up with Carly Rissen to clarify what happens regarding LAC children and the funding that 2yr old LAC's can access.	PR