HILLINGDON SCHOOLS FORUM
MINUTES – Meeting held on Tuesday 25 March 2025 at 1pm via TEAMS

Voting Members

NAME	ORGANISATION	ATTENDANCE	TERM ENDS
Maintained Nursery (1)			
Shabana Aslam	McMillan Early Childhood Centre	Present	Sep 2026
Maintained Primary (8)			
Kate Needs	Lady Banks	Present	Sep 2027
Kris O'Sullivan	Deanesfield Primary	Present	Sep 2028
Mel Penney	Glebe Primary School	Present	Sep 2027
Carly Rissen	Colham Manor	Absent	Sep 2028
John Buckingham	Glebe School	Present	Sep 2028
Jo Palmer	Hillside Infant & Junior Schools and Minet Junior School	Present	Sep 2028
Tony Eginton (CHAIR)	Minet Infant & Nursery Schools and Hillside Junior School	Present	Sep 2028
Phil Haigh (VICE CHAIR)	Cherry Lane Primary School & Meadow High School	Present	Sep 2028
Maintained Secondary (1)			
Dan Cowling	Oak Wood School	Present	Sep 2026
Maintained Special (1)			
Pearl Greenwald & Bryony Smith (co-headteachers)	Hedgewood School	Present	Sep 2027
Academies (9)			
Harshindar Buttar	The Park Federation	Absent	Sep 2027
John Garner	Ruislip High School	Present	Sep 2026
Nicola Edwards	William Byrd School	Present	Sep 2028
Liam McGillicuddy	Bishopshalt School	Apologies	Sep 2027
Ben Spinks	Middlesex Learning Partnership	Present	Sep 2028
Nicola Kelly	Charville Academy	Present	Sep 2029
Roseline Wilkinson	Charville Academy	Present	Sep 2029
Roger Leighton	Partnership Learning Trust	Absent	Sep 2029
(vacancy)			
Special Academies (1)			
Sudhi Pathak	Eden Academy Trust	Present	Sep 2026
Alternative Provision (1)			
Paul Chambers	The Skills Hub	Absent	Sep 2027
Private, Voluntary & Independent Early Years Providers (2)			
Elaine Caffary	4 Street Nursery	Present	Sep 2028
Naazish Haq	Little Companions	Present	Sep 2027
14-19 Partnership (1)			
Jonathan Jacob	Global Academy	Absent	Sep 2028

Other attendees (non-voting)

NAME	REPRESENTING	ATTENDANCE	TERM EXPIRES
Independent Non-Maintained Special School			
Debbie Gilder	Pield Heath School	Apologies	
Shadow Representatives (Maintained Primary)			
Nicky Bulpett	Ruislip Gardens	Present	Sep 2028
Louise Crook	Coteford Infant School	Present	Sep 2028
Graham Wells	Colham Manor Primary School	Apologies	Sep 2024
Maintained Special			
Jenny Rigby	Meadow High	Apologies	Sep 2027
Officers			
Ndenko Asong	LA Strategic Finance Consultant	Present	
Gary Binstead	LA Head of Education & SEND Commissioning	Present	
Helen Boundy	LA (Clerk)	Present	
Sanjaya **Gunatilake**	LA Finance Business Partner DSG	Present	
Luisa Hansen	LA Head of Children's Finance	Present	
Dominika Michalik	LA Assistant Director of SEND & Inclusion	Present	
Nav Minhas	LA School Place Planning Manager	Present	
Abi Preston	LA Director of Education & SEND	Present	
Philip Ryan	LA Portage and Families' Information Service - Service Manager	Present	
Observers			
Carolyn Morrissey	Field End Primary School	Present	

Item	

1	**Welcome, apologies & opening comments** • TE welcomed everyone to the meeting attendance is recorded in the list above • Kate Boulter has stepped down as Clerk, Helen Boundy will take over as clerk moving forwards. New email address for the Forum has been created and updated on the website. Any queries/questions should use this central email: schoolsforum@hillingdon.gov.uk
2	**Notification of Any Other Urgent Business -** None
3	**Minutes** • Minutes of last SF meeting held on 28 January 2025 were **AGREED** as a true and accurate account. • The Chair noted that it was useful to have a single PDF document on the website which contains the agenda, papers and previous meetings minutes
4	**Items for Decision – Bulge Places** - GB outlined the current capacity situation, stating that there are 116 secondary places projected, giving a capacity of 3.17% across the borough. This is below the advised 5-8% additional capacity needed to allow for movement across the borough. - The request for 30 additional secondary places would increase the capacity to just under 4%. - Financial costs for the additional 30 places would be £108K in September and £77K next April. - There was concern that schools were being paid twice once through the growth fund and from the DSG. NA clarified that this was not the case - the £108K was to come from the Growth fund. The April to August payment will be part of the school's core funding, but the paper evidences the total cost of the bulge places for clarity. - DC highlighted that there are existing places in schools in the south of the borough and felt these should be filled first ahead of paying schools to create bulge classes. His school has taken additional children since census day, for which no funding will be received. - There is no expectation that this request will be made next year as current projections suggest further bulge places will not be required. However, capacity is low this year at 3.17%, which is below the expected 5-8% capacity the borough should have. - AP reiterated the need for this is to increase overall capacity in the number of places available. - The Chair summarised the discussion, emphasising that the guidance states the LA is responsible for financing the cost of extra classes rather than individual places. - SF were asked to vote to approve the Growth Fund of £108,815 - **Vote Outcome:** A vote was taken on the proposal to create bulge classes, with a Growth Fund commitment of £108,815. The forum voted against the additional funding for the bulge places. The proposal was **NOT AGREED.**
5 a)	**Items for Consultation** **Chair & Vice Chair Nominations** - TE and PH's term of office expires in May 2025. - AP outlined the process by which anyone who wishes to nominate themselves or someone else for either role should send an email with

	some further information about themselves to: schoolsforum@hillingdon.gov.uk – the closing date is **22 April 2025**. - If more than one member is nominated for either role, we will send out a survey to members with the nominations in order to vote before the next meeting in July.
b)	**2025-26 HN Budget** *Paper for consultation was shared with the group.* - NA provided an overview of the high needs budget for 2025-26, highlighting a planned overspend of £13.7 million, a 50% reduction compared to two years ago, indicating progress in managing high needs spending. - There are ongoing efforts to reduce high-cost independent placements and strategic decisions around spending. - Impact of Schools Block transfer - NA noted that the resources available for high needs have been slightly less than anticipated due to the schools block transfer. This has necessitated some tough decisions, such as pausing certain expenditures e.g. SENDEX. - The disapplication request for the schools block transfer was £1.94m which is less than was projected in previous forecasts. - PH asked if we could breakdown the indicated funding for Mainstream – which currently included top up funding for special schools (£40m) - The Chair requested if this could be expressed separately going forward and with a comparative for each of these brackets showing how it has changed over time. **Action: NA to show, in future reports, figures for top-up funding for special schools separately from the mainstream figure along with, where possible, comparative figures over time.** - The Chair requested a breakdown of the SEN central expenditure for future budgets - AP noted caution with this paper as it is difficult to predict high needs spend due to demand/tribunals etc. The figure is the number that we hope to get to as a result of further savings. **Action: NA to provide a breakdown of the SEN Central expenditure**.
6 a)	**Items for Information** **2024-25 DSG Monitoring** - NA presented a brief paper outlining the forecast of DSG balance of £66.6 million at the end of the year. This is based on month 10 and could vary slight by the end of the year. - NA noted the significant overspend in the high needs block and the marginal overspend in central services. Continued efforts are being made to manage and reduce the overspend. - The Chair noted it is a 25% overspend in the High Needs Block.
b)	**2025-26 SEND Commissioned Places** - GB discussed the agreed SEND commissioned places for 2025-26. There is an increase in SRP and DU places from September in primary, the LA are working with secondary schools to develop more SRPs and DUs to increase capacity in future years. - There is a significant reduction in independent places. In 2022/23, there were over 400 places, this is now 330 (21% reduction).

	- Additional places are becoming available: The new special free school (waiting to hear from DfE) along with additional places for SRPs and 265 additional places at HRUC with the expansion to Barra Hall. - Overall increase of 292 additional places being commissioned.
c)	**2025-26 EY Budget and Hourly funding** - SG gave an overview on Early years funding formula. The consultation ran from 4th-14th February 2025. - PR shared the outcome of the consultation. - 3-4 yr olds overwhelming majority of respondents were in favour of at least one of the two options, with the most support being for the reduction by 25% of additional needs supplement to be moved to the Early Years Inclusion Funding budget - 2 yrs olds - to remove the additional needs supplement and focus on disadvantaged 2 year olds. Having noticed a drop in number of disadvantaged, the proposal is to try and incentivise settings. With the EYIF budget increasing, it will support those with SEN. - Paper gives qualitative feedback. The proposals give more stable funding. - KO provided feedback regarding the consultation noting very low response rate from primary schools. In her case, the email informing schools went into the junk box and was not shared on the weekly briefing. - PH noted the 3 & 4 yr funding information was very detailed and the result of consultation was what we anticipated. 2yr funding changes raised more concerns. PR confirmed they hadn't modelled to the same level of detail, as the proposal was to remove a supplement that few settings received, as felt it would have little impact. PR has since had conversations with individual settings, some of which have ended up with lower hourly rate, though often this has not been related to the removal of the supplement. Their data has changed and, in some cases, they would have received a lower hourly rate anyway. - EC noted consultation coincided with other issues including the ESF review, which has had an impact. The pressures and margins are very slight so any variance will have an impact. Optimistic that the working group that is reviewing Early Years Inclusion Funding will make a difference and be effective and that next year we'll be in a more informed position.
d)	**MFG Disapplication - AP shared a PowerPoint with the group which will be circulated after the meeting.** - Existing banding system is from 2014. The review was carried out for a variety of reasons including as a condition with the safety valve agreement. The main objective in reviewing the banding was to have a fair, transparent and effective funding system. - Outlined clear descriptors to ensure consistent and common language. - Intention would be for a child to stay on the same banding if moving between settings as their needs would have been identified and shouldn't change. - Benchmarking exercise has showed that we were higher than other boroughs despite not having changed for 10 years. - New system is not as subjective and will be more transparent. However, 3 schools will lose a significant amount of funding as a result of the change and we are working with them to support them through the transition period. One school will see an increase in their funding.

	- Ordinarily the DfE expects to see that, year on year, per pupil funding remains at least the same as the year before. In order to reduce this, an application for an MFG disapplication for the 3 schools was submitted. This has been approved by the DfE and only relates to the high needs top up funding. - Schools impacted will only feel 34% of the full reduction in funding in the first year (25/26) as the LA is supporting the schools to ensure the total drop in funding is gradual and will fund these schools the difference in this first year. - The Chair asked how much will be saved overall from this. AP stated that, based on the current moderation of needs, this would lead to approx. £1m though reiterated this isn't about savings – it is to ensure appropriate funding is in place to meet needs and having a framework around it. With more complex children coming into the system, higher funding will go to schools supporting those children. - SG reiterated that any use of the word savings must be used very carefully. Figures are based on a cohort in a particular point in time and the funding for that school will also change as the profile of the children changes. **Action: AP to share Special School Banding Framework & Implementation PowerPoint** **Action: Special School budgets will be shared by 27/03/25**
7	**AOB / Closing remarks** Next meeting will be held on Tuesday 8th July, agenda and supporting papers will be shared ahead of the meeting. AP – Clarified that an updated version of the MFG disapplication paper will be circulated. This has minor tweaks to provide some additional context for one school mentioned but does not change the content. AP also wanted to thank Kate Boulter, on behalf of LBH and the Schools Forum, for the years in her role as Clerk and for the work and support that she has given. It has been greatly appreciated.