



HILLINGDON SCHOOLS FORUM MINUTES

Tuesday 8th July 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	Present	Sep 2028
John Buckingham	Glebe School	Present	Sep 2028
Jo Palmer	Hillside Infant & Junior Schools and Minet Junior School	Present	Sep 2028
Tony Eginton	Minet Infant & Nursery Schools and Hillside Junior School	Apologies Sent	Sep 2028
Phil Haigh	Cherry Lane Primary School & Meadow High School	Apologies Sent	Sep 2028
Maintained Secondary (1)			
Dan Cowling (VICE CHAIR)	Oak Wood School	Present	Sep 2026
Maintained Special (1)			
Pearl Greenwald	Hedgewood School	Present	Sep 2027
Academies (9)			
Harshindar Buttar	The Park Federation	Present	Sep 2027
John Garner	Ruislip High School	Present	Sep 2026
Nicola Edwards	William Byrd School	Present	Sep 2028
Liam McGillicuddy	Bishopshalt School	Present	Sep 2027
Ben Spinks (CHAIR)	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	Present	Sep 2029
(vacancy)			
Special Academies (1)			
Sudhi Pathak	Eden Academy Trust	Present	Sep 2026
Alternative Provision (1)			
Paul Chambers	The Skills Hub	Present	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	Apologies Sent	Sep 2028
Representative from the Diocese			
Nicola Dallibar	St Andrews	Present	July 2029

Other attendees (non-voting)

NAME	REPRESENTING	ATTENDANCE	TERM EXPIRES
Independent Non-Maintained Special School			
Debbie Gilder	Pield Heath School	Absent	
Shadow Representatives (Maintained Primary)			
Representative from the Diocese			
Nicky Bulpett	Ruislip Gardens	Present	Sep 2028
Louise Crook	Coteford Infant School	Present	Sep 2028
Graham Wells	Colham Manor Primary School	Present	Sep 2024
Maintained Special			
Jenny Rigby	Meadow High	Apologies Sent	Sep 2027
Officers			
Ndenko Asong	LA Strategic Finance Consultant	Present	
Michael Naughton	Head of Capital Programme Works Service	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	
Abi Preston	LA Director of Education & SEND	Present	
Philip Ryan	LA Portage and Families' Information Service - Service Manager	Present	

Item	
1.	Welcome, apologies & opening comments - BS welcomed everyone to the meeting. - Apologies were sent from Phil Haigh and Tony Eginton, these were accepted. - The Chair thanked SF members for nominating him and DC in the roles of Chair and VC of the Schools Forum.
2.	Minutes from previous meeting 25.03.2025 - Clarification to be sought as to whether Jonathan Jacobs from Global Academy is still in post and to remain a member. - Minutes of last SF meeting held on 25.03.25 were AGREED as a true and accurate account. - Actions are listed at the bottom of the agenda, all are complete, with finance items pertaining to future reports.
3a)	<u>Review Constitution for Schools forum & Membership Review</u> - Constitution has not been reviewed since 2013, therefore it is necessary to update constitution. AP has looked at DfE guidance and reviewed other LA's Schools Forum Constitutions to ensure Hillingdon's is in line with others. A draft was shared with BS/DC for their input. Intention for Forum to discuss the proposed changes, ready to adopt it for the new academic year. - AP outlined main changes, numbers of members in each sector to change to accurately reflect the numbers of children in each of these settings. Also remove specific number of governors as the membership is open to both Headteachers and Governors without stipulating numbers. There must be a minimum of one of each type of member (HT/ Gov) within schools members in overall terms. - The constitution would then be reviewed on an annual basis and re-adopted, ensuring that membership reflects correct representation from each sector. Membership numbers are not anticipated to change each year as it is based on one member per 2,500 children in any one setting. - Clear on composition of Schools Forum, how meetings are to be conducted along with clear details of appointment of Chair/Vice Chair and Subgroup Chairs. Voting matrix also attached to ensure clarity for existing and new members. - A Diocesan member is required for the board. Nicola Dallibar from St Andrew's has been nominated by the Diocese and is now a member. <u>Schools Forum Discussion regarding proposed changes:</u> - With the changes proposing a two-term limit to membership, are we not losing expertise and what impact this would have on current members terms of office. Is everything to be reset? - AP confirmed that though the new Constitution would take effect from September, and current terms of office would remain except where there needs to be a reduction in the number of members. - Some sectors e.g. PVLs where there are fewer representatives. - Concern that the forum would be losing longstanding members and the historic knowledge and experience. - AP noted that there are some very long serving members on the Forum for which the LA is very appreciative, though it is important to ensure we have a variety of members over time. For some sectors where representation is less, the incumbent could re-apply for the role. Also, often it is the same people who sit on multiple boards, trying to reduce the pressure on people. - Questions raised about whether terms of office are reset immediately in September and fresh elections take place for everyone? Members felt there were many questions which remained unanswered in regard to the implementation of the new constitution. - Currently inconsistent regarding numbers of governors – specifies numbers for some phases but not all, amended constitution will ensure same approach across all phases and not stipulate numbers of governors (just a minimum of one). - Concern raised that Governors will not have a voice. Strategy to encourage governors to take on an active role, not just through the Governors Exec Group, but to also use our governors network and primary CoGs. Process to be created to ensure membership is accessible for governors. Raising the profile of SF is essential to ensure governors are aware of the forum and something they want to be part of.

	- Queried why the two-term rule was being imposed, members have to be re-elected every 4 years currently. It was discussed that, if that is the case, the elections go via the LA to ensure a transparent process for all sectors where appropriate. - Transition plan for the new constitution needs to be clear, logistics for the changes to be agreed. - Adopting this for starting in September 2025 feels like a quick transition, with too many questions.. - Highlighted that the LA representation in the group should be by invitation only - DC noted that serving 8 years on a board is a long time, new voices and change is good for any board. Also, in the 5 years he has been part of Schools Forum, there have been 9 other new secondary HTs in Hillingdon and none of them has participated in the Forum. MP offered to step down as a voting member of the Maintained Primary group. - AP requested PG and BS confirm which one of them is to be the member as it is not a joint role. – PG confirmed that she would be the named member representing Maintained Special Schools. Response to issues raised - AP reiterated that this was not being rushed but there is a clear intention of starting the new academic year afresh with a new clear constitution and framework with a new way of working for the forum, having this aligned at the same time. AP to provide details of a transition arrangements to implement the new Constitution. - Not significant changes - tweak to numbers of members and amendment around terms of office. - Two term office in principle but with caveat that incumbent could re-nominate themselves for election if there are no other candidates. - Need to have a constitution that has a membership that reflects the numbers of children in the different sectors. This will result in the numbers in some voting groups changing. - Acknowledge unique characteristic of PVI settings, noting DfE guidelines identify that PVI and Post 16 members are nominated by LA - LA Officer attendance will be controlled, a clear mechanism that Forum will agree which relevant officers are to be routinely invited and other appropriate Officers depending on specific agenda items. - BS recognised the importance of SF members having the opportunity to contribute to the review of the constitution. At the same time, it is important for this not to become an agenda item that is continually returned to without resolution. We need to get it agreed in a timely manner so that SF can focus on the actual purpose and decision making of the Forum. Suggested that the wording around election process and terms of office is revisited, with a revised draft to be presented at the next meeting. - Schools Forum is a public meeting, and anyone is welcome to attend, members have voting rights but anyone is welcome to contribute. More information about SF and its work will be shared with stakeholders. Agreed Actions: Action: AP/BS/DC will reflect on views of the group and look to return a constitution that provides a balance between the historic memory with a mechanism to allow new voices and new members to join. Action: AP to add item regarding the regular attendance of LA Officers and who is invited to Forums. Action: Profile of Schools Forum to be raised with more communications being sent out by the LA. Action: New Constitution and transition arrangements will be brought to Schools Forum meeting on 9th September. A vote will be taken.
3b)	Review Terms of Reference for High Needs Sub Group - AP has created a ToR for the High Needs Sub group as these previously did not exist. It is a concise document that outlines the purpose of the group and its remit. Have reviewed other LA's ToR's as a baseline but it is specific to Hillingdon referencing DSG Safety Valve, for example. - Members noted their appreciation for this document, outlines clear expectations and very useful for any new members coming onto the board. Review Terms of Reference for Early Years Group - EC requested clarification to be given around the proposed number of members that will be on the new constitution – currently one maintained nursery and 2 PVI's.

	Action: EC will review Early Years ToR and membership and email AP with comments. - AP noted that upon reviewing the HN and EY subgroup membership, it was difficult to understand what the membership makeup is. - EC clarified that there was a structure to the membership of these groups and previously there was a crossover with ESF funding, but this is no longer the case. - SA as the HT of the only LA maintained nursery asked about membership to the group as their funding works differently to nursery schools that are part of a primary school. Would be helpful to have the maintained sector as part of this. Action: Membership structure for both HN and EY to be reviewed, ensure that the groups adequately represent the different sectors. Action: Sub Groups to meet in September and review/approve their Terms of Reference and membership including identifying new Chairs for the next academic year. Will then bring this back to Forum meeting in October for approval. Action: HB to cancel HN Group scheduled for 17th July, circulate new dates for both HN and EY for September these meetings will focus on ToR's and appointing Chairs.
3c)	Training Review & Future Meeting Arrangements AP outlined that she would welcome any thoughts on what training is required. - Clear induction process for any new members - Meeting dates for next year will be shared, 2/5 meetings will be held in person 7th October and 24th March. - Meeting scheduled for 9th September, will be shorter meeting but will include agenda items around the Schools Block Transfer and general education duties. Wanted members to be aware of this early, have sufficient time for consultation and feedback ahead of voting on these items at the meeting in October. Action: AP to send out a survey regarding training and then arrange training accordingly. Action: HB to share meeting invites for next academic year.
4a)	Schools Balances at 31.03.25 (31.08.24 for Academies) Information papers – providing broader overview with context of other schools. - Provide context of all schools in the borough shows a direction of movement (particularly chart 1) Identify some trends, primary balances are dropping over the last 3 years with a 29% drop year on year, academies appear to be quite stable and maintained secondaries are struggling but are stabilising and significant amount of work is being done in this area. - As of March 2025, a further 5 schools have gone into deficit budget bringing the total number of schools in Hillingdon to 12. Schools Finance is actively working with these schools to support them in recovering this position. - Reiterated if any schools feel they need any additional support from the finance team – reach out. Response from Forum Members - LM felt this was a very rudimentary way of looking at figures, Bishopshalt have money that is tied up in loan repayments over the next 10 years, some caution needs to be paid than just looking at bank balances, as it's unrestricted but ring fenced. - BS also noted that the data is an interesting snapshot but limited without school context. Barnhill's figures, for example, have moved significantly as the 25 year PFI contract has come to a close. Also, some schools are carrying historical deficits (through no fault of those currently involved) these figures skew the overall numbers. - BS raised issue of falling roles and impact falling rolls will have on finances, has there been any projections done on these numbers? NA confirmed that a projection of falling rolls are monitored and place planning work closely with schools to ensure are supported if pupil numbers are dropping. A School Organisation Plan is updated annually by the LA and is a useful document for projections of numbers, helps schools plan accordingly. - The figures highlight the significant financial issues that will occur within 3 years if they continue at the current rate. As a Forum we should be actively communicating these figures more widely. Funding is not adequate for schools and the data cannot be ignored. - AP noted that this year's School Organisation Plan projections are being finalised and Hillingdon is fortunate that it is not closing any schools due to pupil numbers like other boroughs are doing but are monitoring pupil numbers very closely. - Several schools have completed some large building projects recently, which has used up significant amount of reserves - this looks like a negative trend on schools' balances but there is a context behind them.
4b)	2024-25 DSG Outturn Overall, a positive outcome, with a significant improvement from where we were. Currently we have a total deficit in High Needs of a £65.7m at the end of the financial year. The aspirational in-year deficit we were working towards was £16m but the final

	position was lower at £14.8m (a 40% improvement from where we ended last year) Significant work done behind the scenes to reach these numbers and working closely with schools. - The deficit has been reduced as the service continues to improve outcomes for children whilst still reducing the deficit. The EHC team have worked with schools to avoid using high cost independent placements where alternative maintained settings can meet needs. The number of EHCPs have been reduced through the annual review process as young people have moved into employment or met outcomes. The LA has a much stronger grip on its spending without denying a young person provision. - DSG is currently ring fenced, separate from the Council's budget, referred to as the statutory override, which government has announced will stay in place for a further two years (if this was removed, as was planned, many LAs would have been made bankrupt). - Government is expecting LAs to bring their budgets in line with expenditure within two years – further reforms and White Paper are expected shortly. - A lot of the pressure is around the high needs and there is an overspend in the Central Services Block. - Papers that come to Forum this year will clearly show how funds are distributed around the Central services block allocation. Response from Forum - As with the first paper, some additional narrative around the figures would be useful. - Two figures that immediately stand out is a £849K underspend in the schools block and a £1m overspend in central services. - Significant concern raised that the £849K for the Growth Fund allocation could have been distributed to schools, was this just swallowed up in reducing the DSG deficit? Money should have been apportioned to schools more accurately. - As Schools Forum didn't agree a growth fund this year, there shouldn't be any underspend in 25/26. Were the initial projections wrong and it further illustrates the point that we need papers to be given to Forum that provide a context as well as the numbers. - Item raised about the Growth Fund not being required and concern that this funding will go into the High Needs deficit. Appreciate direction of travel but need greater information behind the numbers to have an informed discussion and decision making. - Central services block has a £1.1m overspend on a £2.5m budget (40% overspend) without the narrative, unclear as to what has caused this. - SG clarified that any underspend in the Schools Block is not set against the High Needs block. The forum has the option of re-allocating funds to schools in their next budget setting opportunity. It is not something that schools have lost. NA can provide a breakdown of the growth plans/payments for 2024-25. Action: NA to review schools block allocations, identify where the £849K is and track where it is to be distributed to ensure visibility and clarity. Action: All finance reports must contain greater narrative and details behind the numbers to ensure clarity and transparency for Forum members.
4c)	2025-26 Schools Maintenance Programme Michael Naughton went through slides for the School Conditions Programme. 31 Community Schools – Capital Funding. Not impact academies or voluntary aided schools. - Fund is for fabric, mechanical, electrical and associated areas of the school. - Outlined the eligible capital works in the project and what revenue expenditure is not qualified. - Condition of the estate survey undertaken – inform for future programmes of work.- accurate survey of measured survey. AP reminded members that all schools undertaking any building works must inform the LA and seek permission as the freeholder. Essentially maintained schools but also academies who have long term leases in place where the LA is the freeholder (previously maintained schools but does not apply to foundation schools). This relates to structural works – additional buildings/expansion not general maintenance.
4d)	Threshold Funding for Mainstream Schools - An information report for Schools Forum showing the funding allocations for non-statutory threshold funding for schools with high numbers of EHCPs. Last year the threshold for additional funding was 3.5% to support those with disproportionate amounts of pupils with EHCPs. (It is not applicable to special schools). - BS asked for confirmation as to whether the threshold of 3.5% might change

	- AP confirmed that the threshold is likely to increase, continue to monitor national trends as this funding is to provide additional funding to top up the difference where it's exceptional. - Reminded that this falls under non statutory funding – there is no obligation, but the LA feels is the right thing to do. If we were unable to do the schools block transfer, then all non-statutory funding would be paused.
	Next meeting will be held on Tuesday 9 th September (online).
6. Closing Comments – BS thanked everyone for their time and participation, wished them well for the summer and dates for meetings next year will be circulated.	

Actions from meeting 08.07.25

Item	Action	Lead
Review Constitution for Schools forum & Membership Review	AP/BS/DC will reflect on views of the group and look to return a constitution that provides a balance between the historic memory with a mechanism to allow new voices and new members to join.	AP/BS/DC
Review Constitution for Schools forum & Membership Review	AP to add item to the Constitution regarding the attendance of LA Officers and who is invited to Forums.	AP
Review Constitution for Schools forum & Membership Review	Profile of Schools Forum to be raised with more communications being sent out by the LA.	All
Review Constitution for Schools forum & Membership Review	New Constitution and a transition arrangements will be brought to Schools Forum meeting on 9 th September.	AP
Review Terms of Reference for High Needs & Early Years Sub Group	EC will review Early Years ToR and membership and email AP with comments.	EC
Review Terms of Reference for High Needs & Early Years Sub Group	Groups to meet in September and review/approve their Terms of Reference and membership including identifying new Chairs for the next academic year. Will then bring this back to Forum meeting in October for approval.	HN Group & EY Group
Review Terms of Reference for High Needs & Early Years Sub Group	HB to cancel HN Group scheduled for 17 th July circulate new dates for both HN and EY for September these meetings will focus on ToR's and appointing Chairs.	HB
Training Review & Future Meeting Arrangements	AP to send out a survey regarding training and then arrange training accordingly.	AP
Training Review & Future Meeting Arrangements	HB to share meeting invites for next academic year.	HB
2024-25 DSG Outturn	When reviewing schools block allocations, reports must identify where the £849K is and track where it is to be distributed to ensure visibility and clarity.	NA
2024-25 DSG Outturn	All finance reports must contain greater narrative and details behind the numbers to ensure clarity and transparency for Forum members.	NA/ LH