

<b>Meeting</b>	Schools Forum
<b>Date</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2025
<b>Time</b>	2pm to 4pm
<b>Venue</b>	Teams

#### Attendees

<b>Chair</b>	Jo Marsh
<b>Core Group</b>	Becky Biddlecombe (notes) Ray Egbufoama, Richard Morgan, Kevin Burnett, Jo Stoaling, Paul May (Cllr), Julie-Anne Kellaway, Laura Donnelly, Roz Lambert, Philip Frankland, Christopher Wilford, Olwyn Donnelly, Simon Parker, George Samios, Antonia White, Fiona Skinner
<b>Apologies received</b>	Apologies received: Mandy Bishop Jo Marsh Alun Williams Louise Malik Hayley Trotman Paul May Chris Thomas-Unsworth

1.	Welcome and Apologies	ACTION
	JS welcomed everyone to the meeting. Addressing apologies.	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
	Members were reminded to complete the declaration of interest forms once per year and to declare anything pertaining to the papers being presented.  No declarations of interest were raised.	
3.	Minutes of the last meeting	
	Members reviewed the minutes of the last meeting; minutes were approved as an accurate representation.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KB inquired about the follow-up on early years team support. Philip provided an update, stating that all providers had signed the agreement, feedback was passed to the Department for Education, and they were in a quiet period with the rollout of 30 hours. He also mentioned ongoing work to ensure providers itemise their bills correctly and make costs clear on their websites.</li> </ul>	
4.	Letter to DFE	

	Letter has been submitted to the Secretary of State. We've still not had a response, but it does tend to take to be fair from the DfE. They do tend to take quite a long time over these sorts of responses.	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Structure and Dates of Future Meetings</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jo Stooling with chair future meetings.</li> <li>• George Samios will take the position of vice chair.</li> <li>• Dates to be sent to members.</li> </ul> <p>Future meeting dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025</li> <li>• 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026</li> <li>• 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026</li> <li>• 7<sup>th</sup> July 2026</li> </ul>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>DSG Safety Valve</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CW and AW provided an update on the Safety Valve Programme, highlighting the DfE's request for further assurance in three areas. They also discussed the challenges related to the Culver Hay site and the potential impact on the programme.</li> <li>• AW summarised the DfE's feedback, which requested further assurance in three areas: key leading indicators, risk mitigation in the capital programme (specifically Culver Hay), and confidence in deficit management plan assumptions. The deadline for providing this assurance was 16th July.</li> <li>• CW noted that outside of the three areas needing clarification, the DfE was positive about the local area's efforts to improve early support, statutory services, and capital plans. However, there were concerns about the future of SEND legislation and the delayed progress on the Culver Hay site.</li> <li>• CW expressed concerns about the delayed progress on the Culver Hay site, which was critical to the Safety Valve Programme. He mentioned the need for a Plan B and Plan C if the new schools on the site did not materialise, but specific details were not shared at this time.</li> <li>• Highlighted the uncertainty around the future of SEND legislation and the potential impact on the programme. He mentioned the government's desire to have more children with SEND in mainstream schools but noted the lack of clear policy direction.</li> </ul>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>DFE Grants to schools in 2025-26</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RM presented information on the DfE grants to schools for 2025-2026, explaining the allocation methodology and the impact on school budgets. He also discussed the new grants for National Insurance contributions and pay awards.</li> <li>• RM explained the allocation methodology for DfE grants to schools for 2025-2026, noting that the number of grants had grown significantly to meet increasing costs. He highlighted the split of resources and the transition of some grants into general school funding.</li> <li>• Discussed the new grants for National Insurance contributions</li> </ul>	

	<p>and pay awards, explaining the methodology for allocating these grants to individual schools. He noted that the pay award grant was 1% lower than the anticipated average inflation, requiring schools to contribute from their existing resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RM highlighted the impact of the new grants on school budgets, noting that the methodology followed the trend of allocating resources through the age-weighted pupil unit, lump sums, and deprivation factors. He mentioned that these grants would become part of the mainstream funding allocation in the following financial year.</li> </ul>	
<b>8.</b>	<b>Maintained School balances</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RM reported on the revenue balances of maintained schools, noting an increase in balances for both primary and secondary schools. He also mentioned that the balances for two Catholic primary schools would be transferred to their new Academy Trust.</li> <li>• JS inquired about the balance of services provided by the local authority to maintained schools. RM explained that there were still some specific areas where the local authority provided support, such as school improvement, but most services were now commissioned externally.</li> <li>• GS shared the financial challenges faced by maintained schools, noting that their surplus was being used to cover a significant deficit for the current year. He also mentioned the need to carry forward some funds for future classroom expansion.</li> </ul>	
<b>9.</b>	<b>A.O.B</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	