



**Schools Forum**  
**Thursday 11 December 2025**  
**16:30 – 18:00**  
**Microsoft Teams**

<b>Present</b>		
Mike Pride (Chair)	Maintained Special	
David Blackwell	Primary Academy	
David Boulter	NEU	
Charlotte Brett	PVI Representative	
Sharon Buckby	Director for Learning, Inclusion and Skills, DCC	
Pete Cades	Governor Representative	
Ian Dewes	Primary Academy	
Ann Donaghy	Secondary Academy	
Cheryl Fearn	Union Representative	
Jonathan Gallimore	Primary Academy	
Jemma Gaunt	Principal Accountant, DCC	
Ashley Guest	Maintained Primary	
Janice Hadfield	Head of Finance, DCC	
Helen Lawrenson	Observer	
Sara Warren	Business Operations Manager	
Neil Wilkinson	Maintained Secondary	
<b>Apologies</b>		
Aaron Denton		
Cllr Paul Hezelgrave		
No.	Item	Actions
	<p><b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b></p> <p>The Early Years membership has been actioned and is now included in the strategy group.</p> <p>The minutes were noted as a true reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>MP informed the group Phil Smith who was the Vice Chair of School Forum has now stepped down, and all members were asked before this meeting if they would like to be considered to step up.</p> <p>Neil Wilkinson was happy to take on this role and there were no objections from the group, therefore it was confirmed Neil will take up the School Forum Vice Chair position. The Chair thanked Neil on behalf of the group.</p>	



01/25	<p><b>Quarter 3 monitoring</b></p> <p>JH started her presentation (attached) which covered the four papers in the agenda starting with Qtr 3 monitoring 25 – 26, highlighting:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No change in DSG allocations staying at £373.730m, split show on page 2 of the report.</li> <li>• Qtr 3 forecast in-year deficit of £7.8m, overspend in Early Years block of £235k offset with reduced pressures in high needs block and adjustments around admissions</li> <li>• Cumulative DSG deficit position of £23k which does impact on the general fund as the cost of the deficit has to be funded at around an estimated £2m a year which has to be picked up by the Council.</li> <li>• Autumn statement – The LA financial statement is due next week, but this could be received as late as just before the Christmas break, and therefore next year's school budget cannot be worked on until this arrives.</li> <li>• P4 of the report shows the breakdown of the national budget</li> <li>• Central funds block is the LA's responsibility eg admissions, copyright licences, school attendance which reduces year on year.</li> <li>• 3.7 Early Years, this shows the number of weeks paid and the number of weeks funded, based on 14 weeks, this has already been established for 15 weeks for autumn term, resulting in a one off pressure of £0.235m.</li> <li>• Pg 5/6, 3 and 4 year old take up as the budget set, there was a dip which this was last reported, flying start 2 year old funding has increased in the autumn term and for working parents with 2 year olds and under 2 year old part time equivalents the entitlement has increased up to 30 hours in Sept.</li> <li>• Deficit Management Plan – Janice referred to the graph on the presentation, Year end position identified by blue line, grey line if no mitigations, and orange line is the potential forecast and the decline on deficit based on mitigations in place. The graph is split into three sections, sufficiency, financial management of plans which is linked to the banding matrix and focusing on children in the city to make sure they have the right support in the right place.</li> <li>• SB commented the forecast for savings/ cost avoidance some of which will be dependent on the white paper to be released in the New Year. EHCP's that came through after the pandemic there has been a 36% increase over the last 3 years. Part of the cost avoidance would be to reduce the historical plans where neds could have been met through SEN support, or where outcomes have now been achieved due to the intensive support provided. In terms of banding the new matrix was applied from September, as discussed previously with the Forum, it is too early to know if there has been a reduction in the average amount allocated but will be able to assess this and report on this to the School Forum in February 2026.</li> </ul>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AG asked as the maintained school instruction of the new banding matrix will be that some children have funding, some need high needs funding, because specialist placements have been found which increases pressure from mainstream, is there any contingency funding? SB confirmed there is a chart which looks at need which has been applied and is working well. Allocation is made on the assessment and the progress is measured. If the school disagrees they need to contact Louise Bartos so that the team can review this with the school. There are some areas that require further review to ensure fairness and transparency.</li> <li>ID commented that on Page 12 there is some anxiety about the matrix, there are some children who are met differently within mainstream schools. Sharon commented that the matrix will be applied to historical plans following annual reviews and there will be meetings with schools to discuss, will look at school and individual children, but this hasn't been done yet and will not be applied until April 2026.</li> <li>SB will provide a summary of the amount of challenge of schools of matrix so far and bring it to School Forum in February.</li> </ul>	SB
02/25	<p><b>School Budget Options</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JH explained that this paper was to talk through School Forums various options but the allocations will not be available until next week at the earliest. The deadline to complete the budgets for LA is 22 January 2026 and these will be published on 28 February 2026.</li> <li>Derby has historically used Capping and Scaling which has been the preferred method so the school block budget can be balanced.</li> <li>SW asked if this method would be the same cap for all schools and JH confirmed that it would be.</li> <li>Other options would be through the minimum funding guarantee as explained on the slide with a couple of examples.</li> <li>The other option would be by Factor Abatement, there is an attached appendix which has a table listing all factors that make the school funding.</li> <li>If the criteria of pupils across the city changes move money around to afford all school funding. There is an option of reducing the factors and the table in appendix gives the example of amount and has applied half of percent reduction to every factor that funds the schools, reduce to a million pounds. It's worth noting Derby does pay above the minimum funding levels. On average 16% above the levels, varies on makeup of pupils in</li> </ul>	

	<p>school, up to 30% known for high paying minimum funding levels compared to other authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JG asked what the key factors for schools are increasing or decreasing characteristics, children's triggers, as these differ from one year to the next. The smaller the school the bigger impact on budget.</li> </ul>	
03/25	<p><b>School Budget De-delegation 26/27</b></p> <p>JH explained that this only affects maintained schools and there is a voting element to these:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial difficulty, primary and secondary, 10 schools in jeopardy – 3 votes – unanimous</li> <li>• Insurance – primary and secondary – 3 votes – unanimous. Ashley asked if behaviour support services pay into this, they can't access this. Sharon will take this up with Paula Nightingale</li> <li>• Central Staff Cover. Neil informed School Forum that more and more new parents are taking shared paternity leave and it doesn't sit in the same way as normal employment. Teachers can take shared leave in school holidays which is an issue as you have to pay but teacher do not directly work. Janice will review and look into this and will come back to Schools Forum and suggest some revisions to the scheme.</li> <li>• Primary pupil support grant, primary vote only – 2 votes - unanimous</li> <li>• In Year Fair Access – query around value of money. Sharon unaware that there were not clear terms of reference deciding who receives what when, if this is not clear to all primaries this needs to be made clearer, it is however clear for secondaries. Votes have been suspended until there is clarity around funding. Sharon to look into this and will come back to School Forum at the end of January 2026.</li> <li>• New Communities support team – primary and secondary – 3 votes - unanimous</li> </ul>	<p><b>SB/PN</b></p> <p><b>JH</b></p> <p><b>SB</b></p>
04/25	<p><b>School Block Transfer 26/27</b></p> <p>The LA continue reducing the Central Block funding which to date is £3m, and annual borrowing costs of high needs deficit of £2m.</p> <p>0.5% of School Block funding can be transferred to High Needs Block with approval from School Forum. If the Schools Forum does not approve a transfer approval can be sought from the Secretary of State.</p> <p>School Forum took the vote and agreed to the transfer.</p> <p>Votes – 5 – majority vote from the schools</p>	

<b>05/25</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>  JG commented that the types of children with particular needs don't transfer into secondary. Sharon commented that there was no evidence as yet but will keep a watching brief.  The Presentation slides are to be shared with the minutes.	<b>SL</b>
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**Date of next meeting** - Thursday 12 February 2026 – 4.30pm - Teams