

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 September 2025 at 10.00 am

Present: Geoff Cherrill (Maintained Special) – Chairman
Patrick Earnshaw (Academies - Secondary) – Vice-Chairman
Kate Carter, TEACH Academies Trust, Academies – Primary
Chris Jackson, Avonwood Primary, Academies - Primary
Chris Moody, CFO - Delta Education Trust, Academies – Primary
Heather Spring, Twynham Primary, Academies – Primary
Sean Preston, Hamwic Multi-Academy Trust - Chief Financial Officer,
Academies - Primary
Mark Avoth, Bourne Academy, Academies - Secondary
Michelle Dyer, Avonbourne Academies, Academies – Secondary
Sian Phillips, Poole High School, Academies - Secondary
Ben Doyle, Principal, St Peter's School, All Through Academies
Russell Arnold, The Quay School - Headteacher, Alternative
Provision Academy
Chris Barnett, Deputy Head - St Edward's School, Maintained
Secondary
Phillip Gavin, Christchurch Learning Centre - Headteacher,
Mainstream PRU
Vicky Peters, Priory View Preschool, Early Years

Also in attendance: Cllr R Burton, Portfolio Holder for Children's and Young People
Cllr Carr-Brown, Chair, Children's Services O&S Committee

Officers in attendance: Cathi Hadley, Corporate Director Children's Services
Lisa Linscott, Director of Education and Skills
Tanya Smith, Head of School Planning and Admissions
Nicola Webb, Assistant Chief Finance Officer

11. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Linda Duly.

12. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

13. Election of Chair

Geoff Cherril was elected Chair of the Forum until September 2026.

14. Election of Vice-Chair

Patrick Earnshaw was elected Vice-Chair of the Forum until September 2026.

15. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 June were approved as a correct record.

16. School Forum Membership/ Reconstitution/ Terms of Reference

The Assistant Chief Finance Officer presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Forum was advised that a review of the Schools Forum membership and Terms of Reference was required to ensure continued compliance with statutory guidance and to maintain effective representation across all education sectors. It was confirmed that the current membership structure remains compliant with national requirements. However, a review is underway to ensure that all sectors, including Early Years, are appropriately represented.

Head of Inclusion, Places and Capital agreed to lead on Early Years representation through the Early Years Subgroup, and the Chair undertook to liaise with primary and secondary representatives to confirm ongoing membership and identify any vacancies. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect any changes in membership or statutory guidance.

RESOLVED that:

- **The Forum noted the report and supported the proposed actions to review and update the membership and Terms of Reference.**
- **The Clerk and the Head of Inclusion, Places and Capital would support the Chair in progressing the reconstitution process.**

17. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) - Budget Monitoring and High Needs Update at Quarter One 2025-26

The Assistant Chief Finance Officer presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Forum was advised that the quarter one budget monitoring for the DSG, reported to the council's Cabinet on 1 October, showed a projected increase in the high needs funding gap for 2025–26 of £11.6m from the budgeted gap of £57.5m. This resulted in a total forecast funding gap of £69.1m. This reflected higher than expected growth in demand in the later months of the last financial year, with this higher demand continuing in 2025–26, primarily due to the numbers of education, health and care plans (EHCPs) and increasing costs of provision.

Other DSG budgets for 2025–26 were forecast to be balanced.

The cumulative deficit on 31 March 2026 was projected to be £180.5m.

It was noted that the statutory override has been extended to March 2028, allowing the deficit to be carried forward without impacting the Council's general fund. Members were informed that national reform of the high needs system is anticipated, although no formal announcements have yet been made.

During the discussion, Members raised concerns about the sustainability of the current funding model and the increasing demand on high needs provision. A member requested that pupil cohort data be included in future discussions to support more informed decision-making. **ACTION**

RESOVLED that the report be noted.

18. Funding Update

The Director for Education and Skills gave a verbal update on the development of a revised funding model to support children with additional needs in mainstream schools.

The Forum was advised that work was ongoing to develop a new Resource Allocation System, which had been trialled with both mainstream and special schools. Feedback from the trials had been positive, and further refinement of the model was underway. The new approach aims to provide a more consistent and transparent method for allocating funding to support children with SEND.

In addition, a guidance document covering mainstream, special, and exceptional cohort funding was in development. Members were informed that the final version of this guidance would be brought to a future meeting of the Forum for consideration.

RESOLVED that the Forum noted the verbal update on the development of the revised funding model.

19. Pre EHCP Funding - discussion

The Director for Education and Skills gave a verbal update on the development of a targeted funding model to support children and young people with additional needs prior to the implementation of an EHCP.

The Forum was advised that the proposed model aimed to provide earlier intervention and support for children in mainstream settings, with the intention of reducing the number of EHCP requests and enabling schools to meet needs more effectively at an earlier stage. The model would include three key elements: funding for individual children, cohort-based interventions, and support for innovative, collaborative approaches across school clusters.

Members welcomed the proposal and acknowledged the importance of early support in improving outcomes and reducing long-term demand. Members raised queries regarding the criteria for accessing funding, how impact would be measured, and the need for clarity around financial implications. It was suggested that the proposal return to the Forum in either November 2025 or January 2026, depending on progress.

RESOLVED that:

- **The Forum supported the continued development of the targeted funding model for pre-EHCP support.**
- **A detailed proposal, including financial implications and implementation options, would be brought to a future meeting of the Schools Forum for consideration.**

20. Any Other Business

There was no further business on this occasion.

21. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan was noted.

22. Dates of Future Meetings

Dates for future meetings were noted as follows:

- 21 September 2026
- 16 November 2026
- 11 January 2027
- 21 June 2027

The meeting ended at 10.45 am

CHAIRMAN