

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 February 2026 at 10.00 am

- Present: Geoff Cherrill (Maintained Special) – Chairman
Patrick Earnshaw (Academies – Secondary) – Vice-Chairman
Kate Carter, TEACH Academies Trust (Academies – Primary)
Sean Preston, Hamwic Multi-Academy Trust – Chief Financial Officer (Academies – Primary)
Esther Curry, Coastal Learning Partnership (Academies – Primary)
Heather Spring, Twynham Primary (Academies – Primary)
Chris Moody, CFO – Delta Education Trust (Academies – Primary)
Chris Jackson, Avonwood Primary (Academies – Primary)
Mark Avoth, Bourne Academy (Academies – Secondary)
Michelle Dyer, Avonbourne Academies – Principal (Academies – Secondary)
Sian Phillips, Poole High School (Academies – Secondary)
Matthew Woodville, Twynham School (Academies – Secondary)
Ben Doyle, Principal, St Peter's School (All-Through Academies)
Russell Arnold, The Quay School – Headteacher (Alternative Provision Academy)
Damon Parker, Woodleahouse Day Nursery (Day Nurseries Representative)
- 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
Steve Wade, Management Accountant

42. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Phil Midworth and Vicky Peters.

43. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

44. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2026 were approved as a correct record.

The Chair noted the post-meeting note included within the minutes, which set out the modelling work undertaken following the meeting in relation to the mainstream funding formula.

45. Early Years Single Funding Formula 2026/27

The Head of School Planning and Admissions 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 Schools Forum was advised that the report set out the outcome of the 2026–27 Early Years funding consultations and proposals for decision, to ensure the Council met its statutory requirements under the Schools Forum and Early Years financial regulations.

Members were informed that the Early Years Sub-Group, comprising representatives from a range of local provider types, had engaged constructively with the proposal and provided valuable input throughout its development. A key preference expressed by Members was for the local consultation to be timed to follow the Department for Education's announcement of national funding rates, while avoiding the Christmas period, to ensure that providers were able to consider the local approach with full sight of confirmed funding levels. The Department for Education confirmed the national funding formulae and hourly rates for local authorities for the 2026–27 financial year on 15 December 2025, alongside the expectation that local authorities would pass through a minimum of 97 per cent of this funding to providers.

For 2026–27, the Council had proposed to maintain stability in the Early Years Single Funding Formula by keeping the current structure unchanged. This included retaining the existing universal base rate and deprivation supplement, with no alterations to eligibility criteria or rates. Any additional funding received from the Department for Education would be fully passed on to providers through increases in the universal base hourly rates. The Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund also remained unchanged, with no amendments to existing rates or processes. In line with national regulations, the Council would retain the maximum 3 per cent of the Early Years Single Funding Formula to fund central services necessary to administer and support the delivery of the early years entitlements.

On 12 January 2026, the Early Years Single Funding Formula consultation paper and online link for responses had been emailed to 270 childcare providers registered for early education funding within Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. The deadline for responses was 25 January 2026, and 20 per cent of providers engaged with the consultation. Overall, providers were supportive of the proposal for the 2026–27 Early Years Single Funding Formula, and the consultation response was summarised at Appendix A.

A question was raised regarding the purpose of the 3 per cent retention, and it was clarified that this supported administrative functions, including

eligibility checking, marketing of entitlements and SEND inclusion processes.

There were no further questions.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. Schools Forum recommended the proposal for the 2026–27 Early Years Single Funding Formula to the BCP Corporate Director for Children’s Services.**
- 2. Schools Forum agreed the central retention of 3 per cent to support council costs associated with the delivery of the free early years entitlements.**

46. Central Retention and De-delegation Consultation

The Head of School Planning and Admissions 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 Schools Forum was advised that the report had provided proposals for maintained schools in relation to the central retention of services where the Local Authority retained a statutory duty to undertake activity to support maintained schools, including both mainstream and specialist settings. The report also set out proposals for the de-delegation of services applicable to maintained mainstream schools, where schools retained the statutory duties, but greater efficiency could be achieved through central delivery by the Local Authority.

Members were informed that consultation had been undertaken with maintained schools and that responses had shown overall support for the proposals.

During discussion, a question was raised regarding the human resources element of the central retention. It was clarified that this related to statutory responsibilities for terms and conditions of staff, rather than the provision of traded human resources or payroll services.

The Chair confirmed that voting on this item applied to maintained school members only.

RESOLVED that (maintained school members only):

- Schools Forum agreed collectively the retention rates per pupil and budgets for Local Authority duties supporting maintained schools, as set out in the report.**
- Schools Forum agreed the de-delegation of funding for school improvement duties for maintained secondary schools, as described in the report.**
- It was noted that no maintained primary representative was present and therefore the de-delegation for primary schools could not be agreed.**

47. Scheme for Financing Maintained Schools 2026/27

The Management Accountant presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Schools Forum was advised that the BCP Scheme had been updated to reflect the latest statutory guidance and proposed local financial arrangements. A short consultation had been undertaken with maintained schools.

Members were informed that consultation responses had not raised any objections or proposed amendments. One request had been received to amend the timing of budget share payments where the 28th fell on a weekend, and this had been incorporated into the Scheme.

It was also noted that the updates included minor amendments to reflect current practice, including the removal of references to outdated legislation and clarification of arrangements relating to procurement and insurance, including the Department for Education Risk Protection Arrangements. There were no further questions.

RESOLVED that (maintained school members only):

- **The Scheme for Financing Maintained Schools 2026/27 be agreed by maintained school representatives.**

48. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan was noted.

Members were advised that the next meeting would take place on 22 June 2026. The Chair also noted that feedback had been sought from Members on meeting formats, including hybrid arrangements, and that this would be reviewed outside of the meeting.

The Clerk to circulate the meeting link for the June meeting. **ACTION**

49. Dates of Future Meetings

The Forum noted the future meeting date as follows:

- 22 June 2026

50. Any Other Business

There was no further business on this occasion. The Chair thanked Members and officers for their contributions.

The meeting ended at 10.26 am

CHAIRMAN