

## **Appendix 4 – Schools Budget**

### **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

#### **SCHOOLS FORUM – 14<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION**

#### **SCHOOLS BUDGET 2025-26**

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### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the Schools Budget for 2025-26 so that Schools Forum can give their views on the proposals. The report describes the financial changes to be considered by Schools Forum and Policy and Resources Committee. The proposed budget totals £424.45m for Early Years, Maintained Schools, Academies, Colleges, and Providers for the financial year 2025-26

### **2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

2.1 The Schools Funding Allocations were issued by the Department for Education (DfE) on 18th December 2024. The format of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is unchanged with Local Authority allocations determined by the National Funding Formula (NFF) for Schools, High Needs and Early Years (EY). The main features include:

- School funding increased with every secondary school allocated at least £6,465 per pupil and every primary school allocated at least £4,955 per pupil.
- Local authorities will continue to set a Minimum Funding Guarantee in their local formulae, which for 2025-26 is between minus 0.5% and +0.0% per pupil
- Rolling the 2024 to 2025 teachers' pay additional grant (TPAG), the teachers' pensions employer contribution grant (TPECG) 2024, and the core schools budget grant (CSBG) into the NFF.
- The Schools Block continues to be ring-fenced with limited flexibility to transfer up to 0.5% of the schools' block to High Needs with Schools Forum approval.
- The High Needs funding floor is set at 7% so each local authority will see an increase of at least 7% per head of their 2 to 18 population and the gains limit is set at 10%.
- EY hourly rates paid to local authorities will increase by £0.57 for under 2-year olds', £0.40 for 2-year old's and £0.27 for 3 & 4-year-old.
- The EY Budget Grant is rolled into the 2025-26 hourly rates paid to local authorities.

- The EY Extended Entitlements for eligible working parents of 2-year-olds and eligible working parents of children from 9 months up to 2 years old will be extended from 15 hours to 30 hours from September 2025.
- Central schools services block (CSSB) total funding for ongoing responsibilities is £342 million in 2025 -26 nationally. This funds all local authorities for the functions they have a statutory duty to deliver for all pupils in maintained schools, while funding for historic commitments within this block will decrease by a further 20% for those local authorities in receipt of this funding.

2.2 Other factors that have influenced the 2025-26 budget include:

- Existing and on-going demand on services.
- The High Needs strategy.

### 3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The budget for 2025-26 is compiled from the base budget for 2024-25, approved by Council on 26th February 2024 and updated with the issues identified in this report. The total 2025-26 projected budget (DSG and council funded) is £424.45m. A detailed analysis of the 2025-26 budget changes is shown in Appendix 1 in addition to a comparison of the 2024-25 and 2025-26 budgets.

Table 1: Budget for 2025-26

	<b>2025-26 Budget £m</b>
<b>Funding</b>	406.399
<b>Expenditure by funding block:</b>	
Schools	281.286
Central Schools Service	4.630
High Needs	88.134
Early Years	50.398
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>424.448</b>
<b>Contribution -to/from reserves</b>	<b>18.049</b>

3.2 The contribution to/from reserves reflects the difference between the funding available and planned expenditure. 2025-26 results in a shortfall in funding. This is due to high needs activities where demand and complexity continue to rise. Please note that the balance of the falling rolls and growth fund from 2024-25 £0.130m is also included in the reserve balance.

## 4.0 FUNDING

The funding £406.399m consists of the schools budget of £403.809m funded by the DSG and the PFI affordability gap of £2.59m funded from Council resources.

### 4.1 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

4.1.1 DSG is made up of 4 block allocations with restrictions on moving funding between the blocks. The allocation for 2025-26 indicates a £39.072m increase which is an overall increase of 10.71% The budgets presented have not transferred any funding between block allocations.

4.1.2 The table below compares the gross block funding for 2024-25 and 2025-26 and thus includes both maintained schools and academy school activity.

Table 2: Comparison of the gross block funding

DSG Block	2024-25 Gross Funding £m	2025-26 Gross Funding £m	Increase/-Reduction	
			£m	%
Schools	262.497	281.156	18.659	7.11%
Central School Services	2.045	2.040	-0.005	-0.27%
High Needs	63.816	70.215	6.399	10.03%
Early Years	36.379	50.398	14.019	38.54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>364.737</b>	<b>403.809</b>	<b>39.072</b>	<b>10.71%</b>

Please note that 2024-25 Schools block funding figure in the table above does not include the TPAG, TPECG and CSGB elements. From 2025-26, the funding previously distributed through these grants will be allocated through the schools block NFF, i.e. included in the 2025-26 Schools block funding allocation. An increase in schools block allocation excluding growth fund and premises factors for 2025-26 is 2.29% when it is compared with the 2024-25 funding with the full year equivalent of the grant elements.

4.1.3 The allocations for the Schools and Central Schools Services funding blocks allocated based on the pupil numbers. Pupil numbers are those recorded in the October census, and have changed as follows:

Table 3: Changes in pupil numbers

Pupil numbers	Primary schools	Secondary schools	All-through schools	Total
October 2023 census	24,258	18,343	1,066	43,667
October 2024 census	23,825	18,304	1,061	43,190
<b>Increase/-decrease</b>	<b>-433</b>	<b>-39</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>-477</b>

4.1.4 Early Years funding is based on the DfE estimated hours for eligible working parents of children from 9 months up to 2 years old and eligible working parents

of 2-year-olds, and Spring 24 term headcounts for the other entitlements, therefore is indicative at this time.

4.1.5 An additional £1 billion investment to support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is being allocated to local authorities nationally. TPAG, TPECG and CSBG will be paid as a single CSBG for special schools and alternative provisions in 2025-26 rather than being rolled into the NFF.

4.1.6 Whilst the provisional funding allocations for 2025-26 identify increased funding for Wirral overall, there are still challenges to overcome and these will be outlined in the relevant sections of this report.

## 4.2 Other Grant Funding

4.2.1 In addition to DSG, the following grants represent additional funding sources for schools and are not included in the budget.

4.2.2 Pupil Premium provides funding targeted towards deprivation. It has been confirmed that Pupil Premium will continue in 2025-26 financial year, however the details and the rates for 2025-26 have not been announced yet.

4.2.3 The Schools Budget includes funding for High Needs students in 6th Forms. All other post 16 funding is through the National Funding Formula for 6<sup>th</sup> Forms and thus is not included in the budget.

## 5.0 SCHOOLS BLOCK BUDGET ALLOCATIONS 2025-26: £281.286m

5.1 This budget reflects the delegated budgets allocated to both maintained and academy mainstream primary and secondary schools. The budget includes the balance of 2024-25 Falling Roll and Growth fund planned to be brought forward to 2025-26 as agreed at the October 24 Schools Forum meeting.

### 5.2 School Block Budget Change: £18.772m increase

There is a net decrease in school rolls, which results in an overall budget decrease of £2.721m. There are 477 less pupils on the roll in October 2024 compared to October 2023. The impact of changes in both the monetary value and pupil numbers applied to each of the funding formula factors has generated an increase in funding of £21.154m. There is £0.227m increase of the national non-domestic rates (NDR) in 2025-26. The split between Primary and secondary budgets is provisional pending the schools forum decisions.

### 5.3 Academies

Currently there are 15 secondary academies, 29 primary academies and 1 all-through academy schools with further schools having started the process to be academised. Academies are independent from the local authority and are funded directly from the ESFA, however Regulations require Wirral to continue to calculate their budgets which are then deducted from Wirral's DSG.

### 5.4 Shortfall in 2025-26 Schools Block funding

- 5.4.1 The schools block funding for 2025-26 is calculated with the Primary Unit of Funding (PUF) and Secondary Unit of Funding (SUF) multiplied by the number of pupils in the October 2024 census. PUF and SUF were determined by applying the 2025-26 NFF to the 2024-25 data (October 23 census).

In November 2019, the Schools Forum supported this block being redistributed to mainstream schools using the formula factor rates used in the NFF, however, if the 2025-26 NFF rates for each NFF factors are applied for individual schools allocations, there will be a shortfall of £0.884m in DSG Schools block funding. The comparison of two figures is as per the table below. Please note that premises factor includes PFI allocations which are provisional and subject to change.

Table 4: Breakdown of shortfall in the Schools block

	<b>DSG Allocation £m</b>	<b>Individual schools allocation £m</b>	<b>Difference £m</b>
<b>Primary Schools Funding</b>	134.815	135.296	0.481
<b>Secondary Schools Funding</b>	139.180	139.878	0.698
<b>Premises factor</b>	6.761	6.866	0.105
<b>Growth Funding</b>	0.400		-0.400
<b>Total Schools block</b>	<b>281.156</b>	<b>282.040</b>	<b>0.884</b>

- 5.4.2 The shortfall is due to the change in the pupil characteristics. The pupil number on roll (NOR) of Free School Meals (FMS) and Free school meals at any time in the last six years (FSM6) at the Secondary schools, and EAL at the Secondary and Primary have been significantly increased from 2024-25 to 2025-26. Each factor's NOR for two years are as table below.

Table 5: Changes in NOR

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Oct 23 NOR</b>	<b>Oct 24 NOR</b>	<b>Difference in NOR</b>
<b>FSM</b>	13,131	13,571	440
<b>FSM6</b>	13,490	13,813	323
<b>Income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI)</b>	22,730	22,605	-124
<b>EAL</b>	1,355	1,582	226
<b>Mobility</b>	178	209	31
<b>Low prior attainment</b>	11,984	11,979	-5

The PUF and SUF were determined using the October 23 census as above, however the funding for individual schools for 2025-26 should be distributed using the Oct 24 census and there is a gap in funding.

- 5.4.3 To balance the schools block budget, it is proposed that the following methodologies to be applied. Please note the individual schools funding will still be within the minimum per pupil funding levels (MPPFL £6,465 for secondary

and £4,955 for primary) and the minimum funding guarantee calculation will be applied to the revised funding.

- Reduce the factor values – 0.1% for the basic entitlement and up to 1% for the other factors
- Apply the brought forward 2024-25 falling rolls and growth fund (£0.130m)
- A block transfer from the Central School Service Block – a small part of the contingency fund to balance (up to £0.078m available)

Table 6: Impact on proposal (provisional)

	Reductions/ -Increase £m
Reduce Factor Values	
basic entitlement (0.1%)	0.199
other factors (0.9%)	0.648
24-25 Falling Rolls and Growth Fund	0.131
Transfer from CSSB	0.058
Increase in MPPFL and MFG	-0.152
<b>Total (provisional)</b>	<b>0.884</b>

## 5.5 Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)

For 2025-26 LAs can apply MFG of between minus 0.5% and +0.0% per pupil to protect schools from large formula changes. Despite the outcome of the consultation with all primary and secondary schools in October 24, where the majority of the response supported the higher MFG rate, it is proposed to apply the minus 0.5% MFG for 2025-26 due to the shortfall of funding as described in the previous paragraph.

## 5.6 Notional SEN Budget

5.6.1 The notional SEN budget is not a budget that is separate from a school's overall budget. It is an identified amount within a maintained school's delegated budget share or an academy's general annual grant (GAG). It is intended as a guide for a school's spending decisions and is neither a target nor a constraint on a school's duty to use its 'best endeavours' to secure special provision for its pupils with SEN.

5.6.2 The DfE has updated the operational guidance for the notional SEN budget for 2025-26 and it states that LAs require to set the total notional SEN budget as

- £6,000 per pupil allocation to pupils with an EHCP, and
- Minimum of £1,800 per other SEN pupil.

5.6.3 As Wirral's original methodology to calculate Notional SEN budget was to attribute 100% of the funding received for low prior attainment (LPA) factor,

however, this does not qualify the requirement of the DfE, and it means that the methodology requires changing.

- 5.6.4 Aiming to change the methodology, as agreed at October 24 Schools Forum meeting, a consultation with all primary and secondary schools was conducted in October 24, seeking views on the following:

Three options for the level of notional SEN budget were as follows:

- Option 1: as minimum requirement set by the DfE
- Option 2: use the benchmarking % (average of local authorities)
- Option 3: as the DfE recommendations

Three options for Methodology and National Funding Formula (NFF) factor(s) to be used for setting notional SEN budget are as follows

- Option 1: the low prior attainment factor plus the basic entitlement
- Option 2: the low prior attainment factor, the basic entitlement and deprivation funding factors (Free School Meals and IDACI) – as per the DfE Operational Guidance
- Option 3: above option plus other NFF factors

- 5.6.5 There were 24 responses and option 2 was favoured for both questions with 15 responses supporting the option 2 for the level and 17 responses supporting the option 2 for the methodology.

- 5.6.6 Applying the consultation outcome, it is proposed that the notional SEN budget will be set using average local authorities' data (11.3% of the total schools block formula allocation) and the LPA factor, the basic entitlement and deprivation funding factors (FMS and IDACI).

## **6.0 Central School Services Block (CSSB) £4.630m**

- 6.1 This block provides funding for LAs to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils in state-funded maintained schools and academies in England. Funding previously allocated to LAs for the Education Services Grant (ESG) retained duties is included within this block, together with funding for historic commitments.
- 6.2 Funding allocated to Local Authorities for historic commitments, which for Wirral are the contribution to combined budgets and schools retirement costs (school closure), has been reduced by 20% in line with the DfE's expectation that these costs will unwind over time.

The funding for ongoing responsibilities includes:

- School Licenses
- Admissions

- Schools Forum
- Former ESG retained duties
- Capital Expenditure from Revenue (PFI costs)

### 6.3 CSSB budget change – £0.005m reduction

The table below identifies the change to the CSSB funding for 2025-26 analysed across the on-going and historic elements.

Table 7: CSSB analysis

	<b>On-going responsibilities £m</b>	<b>Historic Commitments £m</b>	<b>Total £m</b>
2024-25 Final Allocation	1.739	0.306	2.045
2025-26 Allocation	1.795	0.245	2.040
Increase/(Reduction)	0.056	(0.061)	(0.005)
Increase/(Reduction)	3.21%	(20.00%)	(0.27%)

The centrally held budgets for 2025-26 funded by the CSSB of the DSG have decreased by £0.005m. The services delivered by these budgets are explained below along with the reasons for any changes to the budget for 2025-26.

- School Admissions - this budget is required to meet the costs of supporting and administering the authority's school admissions process including the 11 plus. A small increase of £0.020m has been applied to this budget to reflect forecasted staff costs.
- School redundancy costs - this budget covers the continuing cost of premature retirement of teachers and staff that have arisen from closing schools. No further closures are expected for 2025-26 thus costs to be incurred reflect historic commitments and are expected to be reduced by £0.002m.
- Licences and Subscriptions - the DfE purchases a single national licence for all state funded schools. The 2025-26 budget has increased by 8% to £0.362m anticipating the cost increase, this is subject to change when the 2025-26 costs are announced by the DfE.
- Schools Forum - this budget was removed in 2024-25 however it is proposed to reinstate to fund for hiring room for the Schools Forum meetings in 2025-26.



- Contingency – this reflects the ‘headroom’ of £0.078m within the Central School Services Block for 2025-26.
- Contributions to combined budgets – School Funding Regulations continue to allow contributions to support services that would otherwise fall outside the Schools Budget. These budgets combine with other council resources for the educational benefit of children. There must be no new commitments or increases in expenditure from that agreed in 2012-13, and DfE expect that these costs will unwind over time. For this reason, funding from DfE has been reduced by 20% for 2025-26.

Table 8: Contributions to combined budget.

		<b>24-25</b>	<b>25-26</b>	<b>Reduction</b>	
		<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>%</b>
School Improvement	Continued support for School Improvement Staff with permanent contracts	0.161	0.129	-0.032	-20%
LSCB	Contribution towards governance process for child protection	0.015	0.012	-0.003	-20%
School Intervention	Consultant Headteacher role supporting Primary & Secondary education	0.067	0.053	-0.014	-20%
PFI (Support)	Contribution towards the asset management costs to support PFI schools	0.030	0.024	-0.006	-20%
PFI (CLC)	Contribution towards the building costs for closed City Learning Centres	0.034	0.027	-0.007	-20%
Looked after Children Education Services	The service reviews the educational progress of Looked After Children, provides training to staff and some direct support to pupils	0.069	0.055	-0.014	-20%
Business Rates	Funding for continuing costs for VA Schools	0.052	0.042	-0.010	-20%
Governors Forum	Contribution towards the cost of maintaining the Forum	0.001	0.001	-0.000	-20%
<b>Total</b>		<b>0.429</b>	<b>0.343</b>	<b>-0.086</b>	<b>-20%</b>

## 7.0 De-delegated budgets

As in previous years the budgets held for Contingency, Special Staff (maternity, paternity, and trade union duties), the School Library Service, Insurance (Governors Aided), and Behaviour Support can be delegated to schools, and a decision will be required for any de-delegation from existing school budgets for these services. A decision will also be required for de-delegation of costs associated with the former General Duties of the ESG and School Improvement.

## 8.0 High Needs Block £88.134m

8.1 This budget covers a range of related activities. The allocation of funding to each activity is based on the “place plus” funding system introduced by the DfE in April 2013 and includes:

- Special schools (pre- and post-16), and non-maintained special schools, both of which receive a base level funding of £10,000 per place.
- Resourced Provision (bases) which receive £6,000 per place.
- Place funding in Wirral’s FE provision at Wirral Met College and Birkenhead 6th Form College of £6,000 per place.
- Additional funding over and above that provided for places in the form of “top ups” is provided on a per pupil basis. The top up, or “plus” element of funding, takes account of the agreed assessed needs of pupils and is paid by the “commissioner” responsible; this may be Wirral Children’s Services, a school, or another Local Authority. Wirral’s top up system uses 5 bands to allocate funding across special schools, resourced bases, and alternative provision. Non-maintained Special Schools also receive a top up.
- The costs of Top Ups for all education and training for post 16 specialist provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities (LLDD) in colleges and private providers.
- The Hospital Schools budget.
- The cost of placements in Independent Special Schools.
- The costs of Education, Health and Care Plans and Independent Pupil Funding Arrangements.

## 8.2 High Needs Block budget changes – Total £13.341m increase

8.2.1 High Needs Places £2.498m increase.

Places in specialist provision within Local Authority areas continue to be determined by each LA in consultation with schools and providers. There is flexibility to adjust this so that places broadly reflect take-up by pupils and this has resulted in a net increase of 169 places across special school, resourced provision and 6<sup>th</sup> Form/FE provision.

Although a growth in demand was included in the special schools’ budget in 2024-25 as additional unallocated places, the demand for the academic year 2024-25 has exceeded the growth budget. The 2025-26 budget includes 43 additional places from April 25 and further 80 places planned to be allocated from September 25.

The places in the resourced provisions and the nurture provisions at the maintained schools have been increased by 77 from the academic year 2024-25 and further 8 places to be increased from the spring 25 term. The 2025-26 budget includes additional 80 places from the next academic year as growth.

8.2.2 Hospital School £0.187m increase.

The increase reflects the change in the Hospital School element of the high needs block.

#### 8.2.3 Additional Resource £3.229m increase.

The budget for Units of Resource has been increased by £3.145m to reflect the on-going increase in applications for assessment and the costs.

The other budgets in this area including the personal budget, Education otherwise than at School (EOTAS) and inclusive practice, are adjusted based on the demand in 2024-25.

#### 8.2.4 Top-Ups £4.663m increase.

The established banding system will be used to allocate element 3 top up funding to each specialist provision. This budget has been increased by £3.856m in line with the increase in places across special schools, resourced provision and 6th Form/FE provision as identified in the paragraph 8.1.1. An additional £2m has been set aside for a review of the top up band rates in 2025-26. The budget for the alternative provisions for the exclusions has been uplifted based on the contracts from the academic year 2024-25 by 0.827m.

#### 8.2.5 Independent Special Schools £2.667m increase.

The increase in the 2025-26 budget reflects the additional demand in places and inflation on the costs which were identified in 2024-25.

#### 8.2.6 Support for SEN £0.100m increase.

The budget has been increased to reflect forecast staff costs with anticipated pay award in 2025-26.

### 8.3 **Split Site funding for Special Schools**

#### 8.3.1 The DfE has made it compulsory for the LA to allocate split site funding to mainstream schools and academies which are operating with additional site(s) through the NFF funding from 2024-25.

As there are additional costs associated with running a second site which needed to be accounted for, regardless of distance, the NFF for the split site consists of 2 parts:

- basic eligibility funding: a lump sum for each additional eligible site
- distance funding: additional funding on top of the basic eligibility for schools whose eligible sites are separated by more than 100 meters from the main site

The basic eligibility criteria for split sites funding requires additional sites to:

- be part of the main school, that is, to share the same unique reference number (URN) with the school's main site.

- be separated from the school's main site by a public road or railway.
- have a building on them which is maintained by the school, and which is primarily used for the education of 5 to 16- year-old pupils in mainstream education. This excludes playing fields, ancillary buildings and buildings leased out full time by the school to another entity

8.3.2 When the third criteria above is widened to special education, 3 schools are eligible for both of the basic eligibility funding and distance funding.

- Observatory school
- Foxfield school
- Ellary Park

It is proposed that the same funding formula is applied to special schools and split site funding is allocated to the 3 above mentioned schools, and funded from the additional budget within the SEN top up budget line.

## **9.0 Early Years Block £50.398**

9.1 This Block funds the costs of EY Education for 9 months to 4-year-old children in schools, nurseries, and private voluntary and independent providers. Most of this funding is directed through the EY National Funding Formula (EYNFF). This is allocated to local authorities based on an hourly rate which, for 2025-26, has increased by £0.57 for under 2s, £0.40 for 2-year old's and £0.27 for 3- and 4-year-olds for Wirral.

The funds in 2025-26 includes the final stage of rolling out of the EY Extended Entitlements announced In July 2023. From September 2025, hours for eligible working parents of children aged 9 months to 3years-old will be extended from 15 hours to 30 hours.

The EY Budget Grant is rolled into the 2025-26 hourly funding rate and rates

For 2025-26 the pass-through rate, which is the minimum amount of funding LAs pass through to providers, is being increased from 95% to 96%. The central held Early Years support costs will be funded within the remaining 4% of the Early Years block funding.

This Block also includes allocations for Maintained Nursery Schools (MNS) to enable local authorities to protect the level of funding to MNS prior to the introduction of the EYNFF, Disability Access Fund (DAF) and Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP).

The national funding rate for EYPP and DAF will increase in 2025-26 by £0.32 and £28.00 respectively.

## **9.2 Early Years Budget Change - £14.019m increase.**

9.2.1 The EY budget is based on the DfE estimated hours for under 2s and eligible working parents of 2-year-olds, and January 23 census for the other entitlements

in line with the funding allocation as the table below, together with the comparison with January 2023 census numbers.

Table 9: Early Years pupil numbers

<b>Pupil numbers</b>	<b>Jan-23</b>	<b>Jan-24</b>	<b>DfE estimate</b>
Under 2s (PTE)			1.683
2-year old's Disadvantaged (PTE)	891	914	
2-year old's Working parents (PTE)			1.544
3&4-year-old's Universal (PTE)	4,339	4,192	
3&4-year-old's Extended (PTE)	2,271	2,213	

EY funding is indicative at this time and the DSG allocation will be revised by census information for January 2025 and January 2026.

- 9.2.2 The breakdown of £14.019m increase for the EY block from the previous year is as per the table below:

Table 10: EY budget increase 2025-26

Extended Entitlement from 2025-26 £m	Funding rate increase in 2025-26 £m	Demand change in 2025-26 £m	EY Budget Grant element in 2025-26 £m	Total £m
12.004	1.699	-0.062	0.378	14.019

- 9.2.3 The expenditure budget relates mainly to the payments to providers, and this will aim to maximise the pass-through of funding to providers whilst ensuring that the service can respond to need and uncertainty

## 10.0 USE OF RESERVES

As reported in a separate report at this Forum meeting, the DSG reserve is expected to end 2024-25 with a cumulative deficit of £28.884m. The impact on the DSG reserve of the budget setting process reflects a worsening position for 2025-26 with a cumulative deficit of £46.933m.

## 11.0 BUDGET TIMETABLE

The Schools Budget and advice from Forum will be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee at its budget meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2025 and will be approved by full Council as part of Budget Council on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

## 12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 That the views of the Schools Forum are sought on the Schools Budget for 2025-26.
- 12.2 That the Schools Forum approves the proposal for the methodologies to balance the schools block budget as set out in paragraph 5.4.3
- 12.3 That the Schools Forum approves the MFG level for the 2025-26 as the minus 0.5% as paragraph 5.5
- 12.4 That the Schools Forum approves the level and methodology to set the Notional SEN budget for 2025-26 as set out in paragraph 5.6.6
- 12.5 That in accordance with DfE guidelines the Schools Forum approves the reduced Contributions to Combined Budgets of £0.343m in 2025-26 (paragraph 6.3) for:
- School Improvement
  - Local Safeguarding Children's Board
  - School Intervention
  - PFI Support
  - PFI CLC
  - Looked after Children Education Services
  - Business Rates, and
  - Governors Forum
- 12.6 That the Schools Forum approves the split site funding for the special schools from 2025-26 as paragraph 8.3.2.
- 12.7 That the Schools Budget and views of the Schools Forum are referred to the budget meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

**Elizabeth Hartley**  
**Director for Children, Families and Education**

## Appendix 1 - Schools Budget changes 2025-26

	£m	£m	£m
2024-25 Schools adjusted base budget			229.526
Add back Academy recoupment			148.795
<b>2024-25 Gross Schools Budget</b>			<b>378.322</b>

### Budget changes:

#### **Individual Schools Budget**

##### Primary & Secondary:

Net decrease in pupils on roll	-2.721		
Funding Formula elements	21.154	18.772	
Rates	0.227		
Growth and Falling Rolls Fund	0.113		

##### High Needs:

Special Schools places	1.394		
SEN Base places	1.026	2.498	
FE/6th Form places	0.078		

Hospital School	0.187	0.187	21.457
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#### **Early Years**

Early years demand		-0.062	
Early years rate change		1.699	
Extended entitlement		12.004	
Early Years Budget Grant element		0.378	14.019

<b>Central School Costs</b>		
Admissions	0.020	
School Redundancy Costs	-0.002	
Licences & subscriptions	0.032	
Schools Forum	0.000	
Contingency	0.031	
Combined budgets reduced contribution	-0.086	-0.005

#### High Needs Pupils

<b>Additional Resources:</b>		
Units of resource	3.154	
Personal Budgets	0.300	3.229
Remove of SENDIF HN Block allocation	-0.225	
<b>Top-ups:</b>		
Top-ups	3.856	
Change in Additional funding	0.008	4.663
Exclusion/AP	0.827	
Nursing Support adjustment	-0.027	
Independent provision		2.667
Contingency		-0.003
Support for SEN uplift		0.100
		<u>10.656</u>

**Total Budget changes** **46.127**

<b>2025-26 Gross Schools Budget</b>	<b>424,449</b>
2025-26 Dedicated Schools Grant	403,809
2025-26 Call on reserve	18,049
<b>2025-26 Net Schools Budget</b>	<u><b>2,590</b></u>

## Appendix 2 - Schools Budget 2025-26

	2024-25 Budget £	2024-25 Forecast (Jan 25) £	2025-26 Budget £
<b>Individual Schools Budget</b>			
Primary	88,700,759	88,700,759	136,951,311
Secondary	25,404,554	25,404,554	144,204,707
Special	16,909,452	16,961,180	18,429,782
Wirral Hospitals School	1,867,228	1,867,228	2,059,744
SEN Bases	1,562,833	1,831,833	3,412,667
Sixth Form/Further Education	169,000	169,000	1,779,000
Growth and Falling Rolls Fund	186,334	55,865	130,469
<b>Individual Schools Budget Total</b>	<b>134,800,160</b>	<b>134,990,419</b>	<b>306,967,680</b>
<b>Central School Costs</b>			
<b>Early Years</b>	<b>35,928,617</b>	<b>35,928,617</b>	<b>49,947,847</b>
Admissions	420,731	402,825	440,453
School Redundancy Costs	72,000	89,953	70,000
Licenses and subscriptions	329,620	329,620	361,535
Schools Forum	0	500	0
Contingency	46,918	0	77,588
Contribution to combined budgets	428,708	428,708	342,965
PFI Affordability Gap	2,589,553	2,589,553	2,589,553
Retained duties Central (ex-ESG)	747,700	747,700	747,700



<b>High Needs Pupils</b>			
Additional resources	14,680,084	17,570,594	17,909,579
SEN top-ups	21,523,882	22,249,276	26,187,218
High Needs contingency	687,205	764,259	683,768
Independent Special Schools	12,525,645	13,686,168	15,222,205
Home Tuition	364,166	364,586	364,166
Support for SEN	2,377,816	2,336,789	2,477,816
Special School Transport	58,200	58,200	58,200
<b>Non-delegated school costs Total</b>	<b>58,797,589</b>	<b>63,509,780</b>	<b>67,532,746</b>
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>229,526,366</b>	<b>234,428,816</b>	<b>424,448,273</b>
<b>Funding</b>			
Dedicated School Grant	-216,020,252	-215,944,097	-403,809,274
Contribution to/-from DSG Reserve	-10,916,561	-15,895,166	-18,049,446
<b>Funding Total</b>	<b>-226,936,813</b>	<b>-231,839,263</b>	<b>-421,858,720</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,589,553</b>	<b>2,589,553</b>	<b>2,589,553</b>
Surplus/-deficit b/fwd	-12,988,739	-12,988,739	-28,883,905
In year surplus/-deficit	-10,916,561	-15,895,166	-18,049,446
Surplus/-deficit cfwd	-23,905,299	-28,883,905	-46,933,351