

# Minutes

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| Name of meeting | <b>SCHOOLS' FORUM</b>   |
| Date and time   | <b>Thursday, 16 January 2025</b>  |
| Venue           | <b>Webinar – Virtual Meeting</b>  |
| Present         | <p>Beverley Gilbert – Brading CE Primary (Chair)<br/> Duncan Mills – The Bay CE School (Vice-Chair)<br/> Simon Richards – Haylands Primary<br/> Carl Wake – St Helens Primary<br/> Andrew Montrose – Christ the King College<br/> Rachel Richards – Cowes Enterprise College<br/> Mandy Airey – Northwood Primary Academy<br/> Steff Gleeson – St Georges School<br/> Andrew Hatherley – Island Learning Centre<br/> Samantha Rooney – Isle of Wight College<br/> Jayne Hill – Niton Pre-School &amp; Brighstone Pre-School<br/> Sue Bowen – CE Diocese</p> |
| Officers        | <p>Naomi Carter – Service Director, Education, Inclusion and Access<br/> Irina Rowan - Senior Finance Business Partner<br/> Debra Evans – Senior Accountant<br/> Jade Kennett – Service Manager, Strategic Development (attended part of the meeting)<br/> Theresa Wall – Acting Service Manager – Education (attended part of the meeting)<br/> Diane Hiscock – Clerk</p>  |
| Apologies       | Joe Norton-Jones – Bembridge CE Primary   |

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| 1.        | <p><u><b>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</b></u><br/> All members and observers were welcomed to the meeting</p>  |
| 2.        | <p><u><b>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</b></u><br/> None received</p>  |
| 3.        | <p><u><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></u><br/> None declared</p>  |
| 4.<br>4.1 | <p><u><b>SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP</b></u><br/> The vacancy for an Academy Representative was not able to be filled. Academy proprietors have been contacted to request a further nomination for this post.<br/> <b>Action – update on vacancy and constitution to be discussed at next meeting on 20 March 2025</b></p> |

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| 5. | <p><u>MINUTES</u></p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>That the minutes of the meeting held on <a href="#">12 December 2024</a> be confirmed.</p>   |
| 6. | <p><u>MATTERS ARISING</u></p> <p>6.1 The following question had been raised at the last meeting (item 15.4) and the response is noted below –</p> <p>Question – The table at 53 (d) of the <a href="#">2025/26 SCHOOL FUNDING paper</a> submitted to schools forum proposes a 2% increase in the CSSB contribution towards Admissions Services costs. What impact is anticipated if there is a reduction in the balance of funding available for this service, not only due to the proposed closure of schools, but also the possibility that schools will choose not to delegate their Admissions Authority activities to the Local Authority in the future?</p> <p>Response - The Admissions Service is funded from the ring-fenced central school services block (CSSB) of the DSG. CSSB provides funding to local authorities to carry out central statutory functions on behalf of maintained schools and academies. The functions included in CSSB that are funded with agreement of Schools forum are set out in <a href="#">Schools operational guide: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK</a> section 52.1 and include admissions service to operate the system of admissions and appeals. The Admissions Service is not de-delegated and as per operational guidance the budget is locally approved by the Schools Forum every year against the backdrop of needing to balance to the CSSB allocation. The Local Authority will continue to have statutory admissions duties to schools and academies regardless of school closures or schools' own admissions arrangements and local authority will continue to seek Schools Forum approval for this budget as per the current guidance. Presently the cost of Admissions service charged to the CSSB is not fully covered by the budget and the additional cost is met by the Local Authority.</p> <p>6.2 The wider CSSB allocation is largely driven by the pupil numbers at October census. Due to reducing pupil numbers in mainstream schools CSSB funding is likely to reduce in the future, which may result in the pressure to the Local Authority if other elements of the central block budget cannot be balanced to the allocation. In the past reduction in CSSB allocation was managed by reducing the Statutory function budget within CSSB.</p> <p>6.3 (Item 16.6) – Whilst the Primary Behaviour Service in-reach provision has been paused, the outreach provision has been enhanced. Direct support is provided in schools and this is proving to have a better impact at the present time. Further information is included in presentation circulated with these minutes and noted at item (Item 19.4) School Place Planning update is noted at item 13.</p> |
| 7. | <p><u>TRADE UNION FACILITIES TIME RETURN</u> <a href="#">Paper B</a></p> <p>Members acknowledged the time that Trade Union Representatives give to supporting their members. It was confirmed that this is an exceptionally busy time, as the School Place Planning proposals move forward and anxiety levels rise amongst staff.</p> <p><b>Action – Request Judy Mason attend the next meeting</b></p>  |
| 8. | <p><u>2025/26 SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA</u> <a href="#">Paper C</a></p> <p>8.1 Members were given updated information on the School Funding Formula for 2025/26, following confirmation of the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) allocation and outcome of the October 2024 School Census. Discussion on the formula has continued through previous SF meetings and Headteacher Forum meetings.</p> <p>8.2 <u>SCHOOLS BLOCK</u></p> <p>The final allocation is shown in the table at para 2 in <a href="#">Paper C</a> and compared against figures that were previously indicated, based on the information available at the time. The difference is a reduction from £96 million to £93.9 million overall, due to a decrease</p>   |

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|      | in pupil numbers, particularly in the primary sector (outlined in para 3). The final allocation for the Growth Fund is £241,383.  |
| 8.3  | <p><u>QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</u></p> <p>A question was raised over the difference between the Growth Fund allocation reported above and the and item 26 in <a href="#">Paper D</a> which shows the Growth Fund at £192,577.</p> <p>It was confirmed that Paper D shows the budget agreed for allocation to the Growth Fund to support schools who meet the criteria for this funding. The surplus in this area has been allocated to schools within the DSG.</p> <p>Members asked for a breakdown of the reduction in pupil numbers, in relation to primary and secondary sectors.</p>  |
| 8.4  | It was confirmed that between the 2023 October Census and the census held in October 2024, there was a reduction of 286 pupils in primary schools and 110 in secondary schools.   |
| 8.5  | As the majority of funding is passed on to schools through the funding formula, there is no change to the allocations discussed at the previous SF meeting.   |
| 8.6  | DfE uses pupil characteristics from the October 2024 Census to derive units of funding per pupil for primary and for secondary schools. This is multiplied by the actual pupil numbers to establish the final DSG allocation. Para 6 in <a href="#">Paper D</a> highlights the areas that impact on affordability of the funding formula.   |
| 8.7  | <p><u>FINAL LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA</u></p> <p>As previously reported, IW continues to mirror the National Funding Formula to minimise the impact of the expected requirement to move to the Hard Funding Formula. Actual values for each funding area are shown in Appendix A of <a href="#">Paper C</a> and remain as previously discussed.</p>   |
| 8.8  | IW Council Cabinet will make a final decision on the funding formula on 9 January 2025. Key elements that have contributed to producing the formula are listed in para 8 of <a href="#">Paper C</a> .   |
| 8.9  | <p><u>QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</u></p> <p>The level of protection and changes to the split sites factor noted in para 8 d) was queried.</p> <p>It was confirmed that no IW schools are eligible and there will be no local impact.</p>  |
| 8.10 | <p><u>RECONCILIATION OF THE FINAL (DECEMBER 2024) SCHOOLS BLOCK</u></p> <p>The table at Para 9 of <a href="#">Paper C</a> shows how the Schools Block will be distributed. A gap of £619,561 is managed through scaling back budgetary gains above the MFG 0.0%. Actual impact on individual schools is shown in Appendix B of <a href="#">Paper C</a></p> <p>Schools will receive an average per-pupil increase in funding of 0.83%. Differences across the primary and secondary sector are due to changes in pupil characteristics.</p>  |
| 8.11 | <p><u>QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</u></p> <p>Members asked about the impact of scaling back budget gains.</p> <p>MFG was agreed at 0.0%, so all schools must receive at least 0% gain and only per-pupil funding above this level is scaled back. Protection is provided for schools who would otherwise see a reduction in per-pupil funding.</p> <p>Members questioned why some schools will receive a larger cash increase than others in comparison to pupil numbers.</p> <p>This is due to the differences in pupil characteristics across schools (i.e. some schools may be in an area of more deprivation, or have lower previous attainment)</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>That the Isle of Wight local school funding formula for 2025/26 be noted.</p> |

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| 9.  | <p><u>2025/26 SCHOOLS BUDGET</u> <a href="#">Paper D</a></p>  |
| 9.1 | <p>A typo had been corrected in the table at para 23 to show the correct funding rate for under-2s and the paper was re-circulated.</p> <p><b>Action – An explanation of any changes made to papers will be included in the e-mail, if papers need to be re-circulated in future.</b></p>   |
| 9.2 | <p>The report gives an overview of allocations to funding blocks within the DSG, based on decisions made at the schools forum meeting held on <a href="#">12 December 2024</a></p>  |
| 9.3 | <p>The overall DSG will be increased by £10m, of which –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£4m is mainly due to additional funding for the early years (EY) entitlements for working parents.</li> <li>Funding for additional grants (Schools Budget, Teachers' Pension Contribution and Teacher's Pay) is now rolled into the DSG (approximately £6.4m).</li> <li>High Needs Funding is increased by around 7.6% per pupil.</li> </ul> <p>Actual funding received will be impacted by the reduction in pupil numbers and changes to pupil characteristics.</p>  |
| 9.4 | <p><u>EARLY YEARS</u></p>   |
| 9.5 | <p>LA funding rates are increased by –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18p for under 2 year-olds</li> <li>16p for 2 year-olds</li> <li>22p for 3-4 year-olds</li> </ul> <p>From September 2025, children from 9 months-old will be entitled to 30 hours per week childcare.</p>  |
| 9.6 | <p>An increase of £4.087m funding was received for the EY Block. 96% of funding is passported to providers and the remaining 4% is used toward Central EY Services, for admin support and to manage the distribution of funding to providers.</p>   |
| 9.7 | <p>£469,000 of the 4% (i.e. 3.2%) includes inflation, and additional staffing requirements. £36,000 of which, will allow for the Funding Officer to increase to full-time and for an additional 0.5 officer to be appointed. This is linked to managing the distribution of funding in relation to the extended childcare entitlement and dealing with the rising range of enquiries received from providers and parents.</p> <p>The remaining £6,000 is employee-related, expected to cover the pay award of 2.3%.</p> <p>The proposed structure of the EY Central Team is shown in the table at para 16 in <a href="#">Paper D</a>.</p> |
| 9.8 | <p><u>QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</u></p> <p><a href="#">Members would be interested to know how many more children are accessing additional childcare through the additional entitlement for working parents.</a></p> <p><b>Action – Further information will be available at the next SF meeting, on 20 March 2025</b></p> <p>It was noted that the Funding Officer is currently working at 0.68 f/t.</p> <p>It was also confirmed that the Service Manager for Early Years, has continued in this post whilst covering as Acting Service Manager – Education temporarily.</p>   |
| 9.9 | <p>The EY team is consulting with providers on 2025/26 funding rates and will provide final funding information by 28 February 2025. LAs are required to fund providers on actual activity, so a minor contingency fund of £92,000 has been planned, to cover provision for eligible children who may not have been captured on the EY Census.</p>  |

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| 9.10 | Funding for 3-4 year-olds includes mandatory deprivation and quality factors. The proposed funding rate is shown in the table at para 20 in <a href="#">Paper D</a> with an increase of 21p per hour to the base rate and 1p to the quality factor.   |
| 9.11 | Funding for 2 year-olds has the previous deprivation factor rolled into the base rate, The change meets the requirement to fund families requiring additional support at least the same as the entitlement for working parents.   |
| 9.12 | The increased rate for under-2's is received by LAs at 18p per hour and providers will receive a proposed increase of 19p per hour.<br><br>Final funding rates will be confirmed at the next SF meeting on 20 March 2025.   |
| 9.13 | <a href="#">QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</a><br><br>Members were informed that there are far more children coming into the system now, due to the new entitlement. The new post proposed for the EY Central Team will be fixed-term, to support the additional work required. It is important to consider the wider perspective to understand the amount of work involved.<br><br><a href="#">An EY provider example was given whereby, of the 100 children on roll, only 4 are not funded.</a>   |
| 9.14 | <i>TW (Service Manager – Early Years) joined the meeting</i> and stated that the increasing number of children taking up the funded places has been surprising. Eligibility has extended to under-2's and the hours will be further increased from September, so that children from 9 months-old will be entitled to 30 hours per week of funded childcare.<br><br><a href="#">It was also confirmed that funded part time equivalents has increased by 48% compared to before the entitlement for working parents was rolled out.</a><br><br><a href="#">There are 2 EY Reps on Schools Forum but, only 1 has attended in the last 3 years</a><br><br><b>Action – Clerk will follow up</b><br><br><i>TW left the meeting</i> |
| 10.  | <b><u>SCHOOLS BLOCK</u></b>   |
| 10.1 | Information on the Schools Block is outlined in detail in <a href="#">Paper C</a> and includes agreements previously made regarding the Growth Fund and De-delegated services.  |
| 10.2 | <b><u>EDUCATION FUNCTIONS</u></b><br><br>A 2% increase to the charge for statutory LA duties in relation to maintained schools was agreed at the last meeting held on <a href="#">12 December 2024</a> . A presentation outlining statutory LA responsibilities was given at the recent HT Forum and was shared with SF at the end of this meeting.<br><br><b>Action – Slides to be circulated with these minutes</b>   |
| 11.3 | <b><u>HIGH NEEDS BLOCK</u></b><br><br>A 1.5% increase in high needs funding was confirmed. The IW has historically been better funded than other LAs and has therefore, seen a lower increase. Despite this increase and funding of £1.52m to be received through the Safety Valve Agreement, there is still a £4.1m shortfall.   |
| 11.4 | Work on the Safety Valve strategies is ongoing and included in planning the high needs budget for 2025/26.  |
| 11.5 | SF members approved a transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. The impact of this is shown in the table at para 32 of <a href="#">Paper D</a> . The gap between the proposed budget and forecast spend continues to be anticipated in the region of £4m.  |
|      | <b><u>CENTRAL BLOCK</u></b>   |

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| 11.6 | <p>A reduction of £18,000 in the final allocation was due to the decrease in pupil numbers. Planned central expenditure is shown in the table at para 34 of <a href="#">Paper D</a>, although the final cost of DfE copyright licenses may incur a minor change.</p> <p><b><u>OVERALL SCHOOLS BUDGET</u></b></p>   |
| 11.7 | <p>An overall allocation of £133m was received and subject to a recoupment of £38m for academies and post-16 high needs. Net funding is therefore, £95m and distribution between blocks is shown in the table at para 35 of <a href="#">Paper D</a>.</p> <p><b><u>RESOLVED</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Early Years Central Team budget of £468,000 for 2025/26 be approved. (8 votes for 0 votes against)</li> <li>2. That the proposed early years funding rates be endorsed (5 votes for 0 votes against).</li> <li>3. That the proposed DSG budget allocations for 2025/26 set out in appendix A be noted.</li> </ol>  |
| 12.  | <p><b><u>DRAFT EDUCATION STRATEGY</u></b></p>  |
| 12.1 | <p>NC gave a presentation on the proposed Education Strategy 2024 – 20230 which is currently being developed. Consultation on the strategy is taking place with all stakeholders and public views are being taken into account. The final version will go to IW Council Cabinet for approval.</p> <p>There are 5 priorities, as follows –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High aspirations</b> from all and of all.</li> <li>• <b>Enriching curricular</b> experiences with meaningful pathways into adulthood.</li> <li>• <b>High quality special educational needs and disability provision</b> on Island for children and young people.</li> <li>• A <b>well-trained workforce</b>, with a range of continued professional development and clear career routes.</li> <li>• A <b>sustainable</b> education infrastructure</li> </ul> |
| 12.2 | <p>The plan for transforming SEND provision is linked to the Safety Valve agreement actions and will be brought to the board for approval next week. There are 6 segments that feed into developing the proposal for a strong and sustainable system to improve outcomes and achievement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and Young People</li> <li>• Ordinarily Available Provision</li> <li>• Services for schools</li> <li>• Specialist places</li> <li>• Oversight of statutory process</li> <li>• Strategic Leadership and Governance of the System</li> </ul>  |
| 12.3 | <p>Members were shown photos of the development of provisions at The Island Learning Centre – vocational pathways, St George’s Special School - Studio Site and Medina House Special School – The Cottage.</p>   |
| 12.4 | <p>A range of resources have been developed, including ‘easy read’ guides for parents (circulated with these minutes). A new Educational Psychology service is being set up, with locums contracted to carry out statutory work in the meantime. School Improvement Lead Officers have been appointed and a new School Improvement Team are currently being recruited.</p>   |
| 12.5 | <p>A comprehensive offer of free support is available, which schools are being encouraged to access. The aim is to pull all resources together, to be easily accessible through one clear ‘front door’. These include an SEN support toolkit, an online support tool, a support</p>  |



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|      | phone line (currently showing a low uptake), E-learning modules for staff (although none have completed module 1, as yet).   |
| 12.6 | Other ongoing work includes the School Speech & Language Support Team, Newsletters with links to a range of resources and the Primary Behaviour Service, where outreach support is currently being offered in schools.   |
| 12.7 | <p><u><a href="#">QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</a></u></p> <p><a href="#">Members appreciated that there is so much support available.</a></p> <p>These resources have been developed through the Safety Valve agreement and were identified by HTs as being needed. Learning modules were initially being accessed well but, there is less engagement now. The phoneline is provided through Hampshire and their schools make more use of it. HTs have been asked to encourage staff to access the resources, which are free to schools.</p> <p><a href="#">Members asked what may be done to encourage/increase use of resources.</a></p> <p>Schools receive ongoing information about resources that is included in -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SENCo Network meetings,</li> <li>• termly Education Matters Newsletter,</li> <li>• e-mail signature sign offs,</li> <li>• a social media campaign</li> </ul> |
| 12.8 | <p>The newly appointed Service Manager: Education is Beth Dyer (HT at Nine Acres Primary School) and the Senior School Improvement Manager is Samantha Sillito (HT at Queensgate Primary School). Further appointments for Maths and English Advisors will be published later this week.</p> <p><i>SB left the meeting</i></p> <p><i>JK joined the meeting</i></p>   |
| 13.  | <u><b>SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING UPDATE</b></u>   |
| 13.1 | JK gave an update on the process. On 12 December 2024, IW Council Cabinet approved the proposals to move to the 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage of statutory consultation and issue statutory notices to <a href="#">consider the proposed closure</a> of schools. The consultation was launched on 3 January 2025 and will run until 3 February 2025. Notices of proposed closure were issued to the 5 schools.   |
| 13.2 | The proposal to develop a resourced provision (12 places) at the Bay CE School was also approved at the Cabinet meeting.   |
| 13.3 | All stakeholders and members of the public are encouraged to respond to the consultation, as it is important for officers and councillors to understand the range of views across the Island.  |
| 13.4 | Work is currently ongoing to communicate and engage with parents and respond to specific enquiries. This is a different approach to previous consultations and is taken wider than the statutory requirements, to provide a more involved process and seek to resolve some concerns.   |
| 13.5 | Following the consultation, a further report will be considered at a Cabinet meeting on 6 March 2025. Papers for this meeting will be published on the IWC website from 25 February 2025.  |
| 13.6 | Officers appreciate that there is uncertainty around transition and are determined that the child will be at the heart of the process. They are working on what transition may look like and how to support children and families, if the proposals proceed after 6 March. <a href="#">A new appointment may be made to a role for oversight of Transition, subject to the outcome of the Cabinet meeting.</a>   |
| 13.7 | Key areas for consideration include the impact on EY provision and logistics of children transferring from one school to another. Children's Services Staff are regularly updated  |

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| 13.8 | <p>and an Education, Inclusion and Access (EIA) development day held last week, encouraged staff to contribute into planning for the process of transition, <a href="#">should this be required</a>.</p> <p>An extra-ordinary meeting of the Full Council will be held on 29 January 2025, to consider the <a href="#">the proposed closures</a>.</p>   |
| 13.9 | <p><a href="#">QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</a></p> <p>A brief question was raised by an observer – Clarity was sought around any retrospective funding for schools, as some parents are already moving their children from schools proposed for closure, post the October Census. School budgets will not reflect these changes.</p> <p>It was confirmed that this was discussed at the SF meeting held on <a href="#">12 December 2024</a>. The residual budget share from closing schools would transfer into the Growth Fund. Displaced pupils would be funded through the budget share available. The policy is currently being updated and will be brought to SF.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that, whilst parents have the right to move their children, some control measures have to be in place, so that parents are fully aware of the situation and can make an informed choice on whether they wish to continue.</p> <p><a href="#">Members asked if operating numbers are used to manage movement in secondary schools.</a></p> <p>This was confirmed, although parents still have the right to appeal.</p> <p>HTs are being reminded to operate within their Pupil Admissions Number (PAN) when applications are received. Many appeals are currently being processed.</p> <p>The sub-group will continue to monitor - it may be necessary to tailor spending to support pressure points.</p> |
|      | <p><a href="#">LOCAL AUTHORITY STATUTORY FUNCTIONS</a></p> <p>Members received a brief overview of the statutory function held by LAs in relation to maintained schools and academies. LAs are responsible for the safeguarding of all children and for tackling underperformance in schools.</p> <p>Responsibilities differ between maintained schools, voluntary controlled schools, voluntary aided schools and academies, although there is an overlap in some cases, as shown in the slides.</p> <p><b>Action – Copy of the LA Statutory Responsibilities slides to be circulated with these minutes.</b></p>  |

The meeting closed at 10.25am

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – All meetings will be virtual through Teams.

**Thursday, 20 March 2025 - 8.30am**

[DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS](#) All at 8.30am

**20 March 2025**

**17 July 2025**

**13 November 2025**

**15 January 2026**