

Minutes

Name of meeting	SCHOOLS' FORUM
Date and time	Monday, 31 March 2025
Venue	Webinar – Virtual Meeting
Present	Beverley Gilbert – Brading CE Primary (Chair) Duncan Mills – The Bay CE School (Vice-Chair) Andrew Montrose – Christ the King College Carl Wake – St Helens Primary Steff Gleeson – St Georges School Rachel Richards – Cowes Enterprise College Mandy Airey – Northwood Primary Academy
Officers	Naomi Carter – Service Director, Education, Inclusion and Access Irina Rowan - Senior Finance Business Partner Debra Evans – Senior Accountant Diane Hiscock – Clerk

Apologies

1.	<u>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</u> All members were welcomed to the meeting.
2.	<u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u> None received.
3.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u> None declared.
4.	<u>SCHOOL FUNDING POLICIES</u>
4.1	The purpose of this meeting was to revisit the School Funding Policies and principles for distribution of the Growth Fund, where schools have been requested to provide an additional class to receive pupils from a closing school (or schools). The meeting followed discussion held at the SF meeting held on 20 March 2025 and the subsequent cabinet decision that, of the proposed 5 schools, Arreton CE Primary and Cowes Primary should be closed.
4.2	School Funding Policies cover Growth Fund and Falling Rolls, Contingency, SEN Additional Funding and Over Occupancy Funding. These are updated annually with basic housekeeping and any mandatory changes. <u>RESOLVED</u> That minor housekeeping changes to the policy pack be noted.
4.3	It is proposed that the Growth Fund would support schools who receive pupils from schools that are closed on 31 August 2025 and who were on the closing school roll at October 2024 census. The proposal is to distribute available funding to the receiving

	schools in full. The current estimated number of displaced children currently in Year R–Year 5 from those schools is 172, although this is likely to fluctuate between now and the October 2025 Census. Year 6 pupils will move to secondary schools.
4.4	Members were asked to agree the principles for funding displaced pupils, which would be added to the policy, in the event of any school closure on 31 August 2025.
4.5	The following points were discussed –
4.6	Currently there is no additional information in the policy regarding closing schools.
4.7	The decision to close Arreton CE Primary is being referred to the Schools Adjudicator by the CE Diocese.
4.8	The Cowes Primary closure is continuing.
4.9	It was mentioned that mixed messages are circulating, causing some confusion. Unions are offering 1-1 meetings with staff.
4.10	According to DfE requirements, growth funding is used where the LA has asked a school to put in place additional class/es.
4.11	It is not clear how many schools will be affected overall, as the estimated number of displaced pupils can change up to the October Census.
4.12	The LA can set a local policy. The proposed Growth Fund Principles can only be added to the policy in the event of school/s closing. The proposal is to ensure residual funding from closing schools can be re-distributed to receiving schools.
4.13	Members were concerned that the proposal should be fair to support all schools who are affected.
4.14	Pupil movement has been continuing since the first announcement of proposals for school closures.
4.15	To mitigate funding issues – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> governing boards have been asked not to exceed the Pupil Admission Number (PAN) for their school. the admissions team is working with schools to agree where pupils may be accepted. Cllr Jarman joined the meeting.
4.16	There is no mechanism for supporting schools who have lost pupils through being named for closure. Financial pressure on schools who were originally named will continue, funding follows pupils and surplus places will continue to rise and currently this is not being supported.
4.17	A weekly snapshot of movement shows insufficient changes to mitigate the affect on school budgets through the attendance code of practice.
4.18	The Schools Operational Guidance 2025 - 26 (para 19) expects LAs to present any pupil variations to their schools forum, to illustrate the impact to overall funding, and on specific school budgets. However, it was confirmed that the full picture will not be clear until the October Census 2025. This is when all school budgets and variations can be looked at in more detail in Autumn term 25.
4.19	It was originally expected that 41 pupils would be offered a place at Barton Primary School and 97 pupils would be offered a place at Gurnard Primary School. 34 pupils have already been moved through parental choice. Work is ongoing with the community to resolve issues raised.
4.20	Schools are able to cap operational numbers in specific years. The percentage of pupils moving is concerning but, should be manageable if places offered are within operational numbers.

4.21	Members were resolved that the policy should be fair to all schools and according to the policy growth funding should only be used to support displaced pupils where the LA has requested additional class/es.
4.22	Any underspend in the Growth Fund must be used to offset the overall deficit, in accordance with DfE policy. SF had welcomed the policy and agreed to support schools through the Growth Fund at the meeting in December 2024.
4.23	It may be possible to re-work the proposal using the outcome of the Spring Census, which has only just been received.
4.24	As Year 6 pupils will move to secondary school, Christ the King College were asked to accept 25 additional places and The Bay CE School were asked to accept 30 additional places. Funding for secondary schools will be 7/12 of Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU). This has been agreed with Headteachers and a pragmatic approach has been taken to managing additional staffing requirements and budgets.
4.25	Any change to this arrangement would result in a change to policy and potentially, less funding for schools.
4.26	It would be challenging to align primary and secondary growth fund issues, particularly with the current school place planning situation.
4.27	In comparison, Cowes Enterprise College (academy) would have to manage any fluctuation in pupils without additional funding.
4.28	No school would receive additional funding, unless the school closure/s go ahead.
4.29	Members agreed that a clear and fair policy should be in place, to support all schools moving forward. Growth funding cannot be carried forward but can support the deficit.
4.30	Any deficit in the budget of a closing school would be referred back to the LA. Other school budgets are not affected.
	Action – Officers to work with Chair and Vice Chair to reconsider workings and bring a further proposal with updated information to the Schools Forum Sub-Group meeting on 8 July 2025
	Jade Kennet to be asked to attend next SF meeting on 17 July 2025.

The meeting closed at 9.30am

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

Thursday 17 July 2025 - 8.30am

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS All at 8.30am

13 November 2025

15 January 2026