

Minutes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Schools' Forum held via Teams on Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026.

### Chair/Vice-Chair

Martin Towers	Academy Secondary Governor
Suzanne Uprichard	PRU Representative & Maintained Primary School Governor

### Members Attendance

Rosie Browne	Academy Primary Headteacher
Dominic Lane	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Ed Petrie	Academy Primary Headteacher
David Warwick	DNCC Representative
Kate Nicholson	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Rebecca Jones	Maintained Primary Governor
Phil Lewin	Maintained Primary Headteacher
Dr Jude Mellor	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Beverley Coltman	PVI Early Years Provider
Pete Letherland	Academy Secondary Headteacher

### In Attendance

Alex Clarke	Maintained Primary Headteacher
Mike Hobbs	Finance Director St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT
Elaine Hart	Chief Financial and Operations Officer The Futures Trust
Salik Khan	LCC Education Finance Manager
Tim Browne	LCC Director for Education, SEND & Inclusion
Michelle White	LCC Head of Service SEND & Children with Disabilities
Rebecca Wakeley	LCC Senior Education Effectiveness Partner
Lisa Turland	LCC Education Effectiveness Team Manager
Renata Chantrill	LCC Head of Service Education Sufficiency
Beth Clements	LCC Head of Service Education & Inclusion
Nerinder Samaria	LCC Strategic Finance Manager
Sarah Davis	Chief Finance Officer Oak MAT
Callum Payne	LCC Clerk for Leicestershire Schools' Forum

### Apologies for absence

Dan Cleary	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Felicity Clarke	Academy Primary Headteacher
Carolyn Shoyer	Diocese of Leicester – Director
Adina Murataj	Maintained Primary Governor
Jo Beaumont	Maintained Primary Headteacher

1. **Apologies for absence/Substitutions.**

Apologies were received from Adina Murataj, Carolyn Shoyer, Dan Cleary and Felicity Clarke and Jo Beaumont. There was 1 substitution noted; Kate Nicholson attended in place of Dan Cleary

2. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th November 2025 (previously circulated) and matters arising.**

No amendments were requested and the minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> November were agreed as a correct record.

3. **School Forum in Operation**

Salik Khan advised that this item referred to the school forum constitution around the chair and vice chair roles. Salik noted this item was discussed at the same time last year. It was agreed that the motion could be carried over to the next meeting to enable School Forum members further time to consider the paper.

4. **De-Delegation - School Improvement**

Rebecca Wakeley presented the consultation response to the proposal for de-delegation of funding for school improvement functions for Local Authority (LA) maintained schools. The service is seeking approval to continue the £18 per pupil contribution for the fourth consecutive year.

LA maintained headteachers had been consulted on the proposed de-delegation. Of the 65 maintained schools impacted by de-delegation, 37 schools responded to a survey, with a majority of the responses endorsing the proposal.

Feedback highlighted high regard for the service, especially the work of the Education Effectiveness Partners (EEPs), however schools also raised concerns about financial pressures and operational barriers affecting staff availability to engage.

Maintained schools currently have their strongest profile yet of school standards, with nearly all schools rated good or better with one school remaining that is awaiting inspection.

School Forum members queried whether a deficit was planned for the year and it was confirmed that no deficit was expected. The £18 contribution was also queried, and it was noted that a full analysis had been undertaken, which had been reported to the collaborative committee of 11 maintained headteachers who scrutinise spending and impact.

It was noted that academisation could affect the sustainability of the service as fewer maintained schools could mean fewer contributors.

The service focuses on maintaining high standards to prevent costly future declines in education quality and the improvement model is designed to support long-term system sustainability

School Forum members noted the value of the service, particularly for very small primary schools, referencing improved flexibility in the service. Cost concerns for schools were noted.

The LA made the following recommendations:

- Continue the delegated contribution at £18 per pupil, retain any surplus, though historically the surplus has been minimal or carry forward any deficit to be recovered from the following financial year, although no deficit is currently anticipated.

○ Yes: 3            No: 1            Abstained: 0

## 5. **2026-27 School Budget**

Salik Khan presented the 2026/27 Schools Budget report, outlining the Dedicated Schools Grant settlement, its distribution across funding blocks and key recommendations requiring Schools Forum approval.

The Dedicated Schools Grant structure remains unchanged for 2026/27 and it was confirmed that the funding allocation for this year comprised of £583.9m for the school's block, £4.81m for the central school's services block, an estimated £124.1m for the high needs block and an estimated £128.6m for early years.

The DfE issued the 2026/27 schools block funding settlement on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2025 which due to the reduction in pupil numbers has resulted in a £4.6m reduction.

It was noted that there is going to be an expansion for the free school meal entitlement which will be funded through a separate grant, and once we receive the settlement, there will be a budget affordability gap of £1.9m requiring the minimum spending guarantee to be set at 0% to ensure that no school received less than in 2025/26.

Schools Forum were advised that to balance the affordability gap, any gains above 2.77% were capped and that gains were scaled at 50% to recover excess. 151 schools were affected by capping with 124 primary schools and 27 secondary schools. Salik advised that he will seek information from other relevant teams to help analyse on the likely increase in eligible pupils.

### **Action: Salik Khan to obtain analysis on the potential impact of the expansion for the free schools meals entitlement**

Schools Forum were informed that the cumulative DSG deficit was £64.4m at end of 2024/25 and is projected to reach £111.9m in 2025/26 and if the trends continue, the deficit could rise to £460m by 2030. The CSSB allocation remained at £4.8m, including rolled-in elements formerly funded through SBSG and NSC grants. Historic commitments continue to reduce by 20% per year, with DfE expecting minimal continuation by 2030.

The early years block allocation is £128.6m based on hourly rates of £6.20 for 3–4-year-olds, £7.90 for 2-year-olds and £10.67 for under-tuos, and local authorities must pass through 97% of the settlement to providers.

Appendix D outlines updated 2026/27 funding rates applied to withdrawn funding when a pupil is permanently excluded. This includes pupil-led factors such as FSM, mobility, prior attainment and associated top-up funding.

It was reported that without the TSIL programme, demand and placement costs would have been significantly higher, and the programme has shifted more EHCP pupils into mainstream settings, reducing reliance on high-cost independent placements and supporting operations and process change.

It was confirmed that around 80% of independent placements exceed £60,000 annually and 95% of placements are due to sufficiency gaps rather than needs that cannot be met locally.

Schools Forum were made aware that the COVID-era early years deficit has now been fully repaid and that provider base rates for 2026/27 for 3–4-year-olds are expected to be £5.70, a 5.95% increase on 2025/26.

It was confirmed that the authority is actively lobbying for fairer early years funding and the early years remain a priority within the white Paper. Additional inclusion funding may become available pending national guidance.

The LA made the following recommendations:

- That Schools Forum approves the retention of the budget to fund future school growth
  - Yes: 8 No: 0 Abstained: 3
- That Schools Forum approve the retention of budgets to meet the prescribed statutory duties of the local authority and to meet historic costs (Paragraph 17, Items 3 & 4)
  - Yes: 9 No: 0 Abstained: 2
- That Schools Forum approve the centrally retained early years funding (Paragraph 17, Item 5)
  - Yes: 10 No: 0 Abstained: 1

Schools Forum approve the action to be taken in respect of schools where the Special Educational Needs (SEN) notional budget is insufficient to meet the aggregated value of High Needs Funding Element 2 (Paragraphs 72 - 74)

- Yes: 8 No: 0 Abstained: 3

6. **Any other business.**

There were no items raised under any other business.

7. **Date of next meeting.**

The next meeting is due to take place on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2026.

8. **Actions**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
Obtain analysis on the potential impact of the expansion for the free school meals entitlement	Salik Khan