

**Minutes of a meeting of the Leicestershire Schools' Forum held on Tuesday,
10 June 2025.**

Chair

Martin Towers

Academy Secondary Governor

Attended

Jenny Lawrence

LCC Finance Business Partner for Schools & High Needs

Jane Moore

LCC Director of Children and Family Services

Tim Browne

LCC Assistant Director for Education, SEND & Inclusion

Beth Clements

LCC Head of Service – Education & Inclusion

Rebecca Wakeley

LCC Senior Education Effectiveness Partner

Michelle White

LCC Head of Service – SEND & Children with Disabilities

Dr Jude Mellor

Academy Secondary Headteacher

Peter Leatherland

Academy Secondary Headteacher

Alison Ruff

Maintained Primary Headteacher

Rosie Browne

Academy Primary Headteacher

Observing

Nerinder Samaria

LCC Strategic Finance Manager

Heidi Webb

LCC Senior Finance Business Partner

Sarah Davis

Chief Finance Officer – Oak MAT

Rachel Simpson

LCC Clerk for Leicestershire Schools' Forum

Apologies for absence

Suzanne Uprichard

PRU Representative & Maintained Primary School Governor

Ed Petrie

Academy Primary Headteacher

Felicity Clarke

Academy Primary Headteacher

Val Moore

Academy Primary Governor

Dan Cleary

Academy Secondary Headteacher

Rebecca Jones

Maintained Primary Governor

Kelly Dryden

Academy Special School Headteacher

Carolyn Shoyer

Diocese of Leicester Director

David Warwick

Samantha Cooke

Phil Lewin

Adina Murataj

GMB Union

DNCC Representative

Maintained Primary Headteacher

Maintained Primary Governor

1. **Election of Chair/Vice Chair**

Jenny Lawrence asked whether there had been any nominations or offers put forward for the position of Chair and Vice chair. Martin Towers advised that he was happy to continue as Chair and Suzanne Uprichard has also confirmed that she is happy to continue as Vice Chair, but they were both happy to step down if someone else wanted to take on the role. Peter Leatherland and Alison Ruff confirmed that they are happy for both Martin and Suzanne to continue, and no further nominations have been put forward.

2. **Apologies for Absence/Substitutions**

Apologies received from Suzanne Uprichard, Carolyn Shoyer, Samantha Cooke, Dan Cleary, Ed Petrie, Kelly Dryden, Phil Lewin, Val Moore, David Warwick, Felicity Clarke, Adina Murataj and Rebecca Jones.

Lauren Chalton, Rosalind Hopkins, Robert Martin, Simon Grindrod, Lisa Craddock, Mark Mitchley, Julie McBrearty, Beverley Coltman, Jo Beaumont, Julian Kirby and Kath Kelly did not attend.

3. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 12/02/2025 (previously circulated) and Matters Arising.**

Alison Ruff advised that this will be her last meeting as she is finishing in school at the end of this term. She will pass information around to other Head Teachers to see if anyone is interested in joining in her place.

Jenny Lawrence noted that we are going to review the proportionality of membership and provide some clarity on how members will be elected. An update will be provided for September's meeting.

Martin Towers enquired whether the request to amend the previous minutes to reflect David Warwick's question had been actioned. Jenny advised that we would not normally amend minutes from a previous meeting, we just note the amendment in the minutes themselves, which had happened in this instance. Jenny also confirmed that the action to share agenda and minutes from Leicestershire Schools Forum meetings in the Headteachers Bulletin had happened.

No further amendments were requested and the minutes of the meeting held on 12th February 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

4. **2024/25 Schools Budget Outturn (report is attached)**

Nerinder Samaria presented a summary of the Schools Budget Outturn report, noting that the assumption was the paper had already been read.

- In summary, there was an overall £25m overspend versus the budget. £8.7m overspend was on the LA Block and £16.3m overspend was for the DSG blocks combined.
- The LA Block overspend relates to the pressures linked to demand and costs to social care, and budget pressures on SEND and Education Psychology services due to increased demand.
- The 24-25 Outturn position is due to go to the cabinet on the 17th of June for anyone wanting to understand the LA position in greater detail.
- With regards to the Schools Block, the underspend relates to uncommitted funding to support the opening and expanding of new schools and is going to be needed to meet the anticipated costs of new schools opening.
- The true underspend on the Early Years Block will be confirmed later in the summer when any funding adjustments have been confirmed. Part of the underspend is linked to the planned recovery of the deficit position and turnover on vacancies within the service.
- The High Needs Block overspend is £6m more than anticipated, largely due to increased place numbers.
- Maintained School balances cannot currently be formally confirmed due to timing, but indications suggest that overall, the balances will decrease by approximately £4m. Over the coming months, the LA will be looking to redefine the process, governance, and reporting and monitoring arrangements to support schools identifying themselves in financial difficulty.
- The DSG reserve continues to record deficit which is forecasted to grow significantly. The deficit is net £48m at the end of the financial year 24/25. The increase in High Needs deficit from 23/24 to where it stands in 24/25 is a huge financial concern and financial risk to the council.

There were no further questions from members on this report.

5. **2026/27 Schools Block Transfer (report is attached)**

Jenny Lawrence presented the paper with the intention of gaining the support from the LSF to approve the approach that the LA is taking.

- Currently there is no clear picture on what the DfE are intending for 2026/27 school funding so the proviso within the report is that the funding will remain the same as 2025/26.
- There may be an early indication from the spending review but no sufficient detail. We are looking to revisit the process that was followed for the 25/26 budget transfer calculation, going through formula factors to see if we can get a better spread of impact across all schools.
- Many schools were affected, and a large number weren't. Within the formula there are 2 prohibiting factors which we can't do anything about. We still have a minimum funding guarantee in place and an increase in pupils funding packages for SEND remains significantly higher than changes in pupil numbers.
- We know that the High Needs formula isn't responsive to changes in demand, it's constructed by the DfE and we have no way of changing the funding coming through. We are currently looking at scenarios and will report in Sept Leicestershire Schools Forum with what we think is the most efficient and equitable way of distributing the impact of the settlement.
- A deeper level of analysis is raising some interesting questions that are being further investigated as we are currently data rich and conclusion poor.

Dr Jude Mellor questioned how the LA are spending the money and when will schools see action from how the money is being invested as there has been no evidence of impact on how we are spending the money already lost to the de-delegation system. Peter Leatherland agreed with Dr Mellor's concern that we're asking for more money to be taken out when schools haven't yet seen where the existing money has gone. Jenny Lawrence reiterated that the LA haven't taken money away from schools but limited the amount of money schools have to gain. Every school saw an increase in pupil funding for 25/26 even with the transfer. Jenny also made the point that there needs to be capping with the transfer because the DfE do not give enough money to deliver the school funding formula. The LA were clear throughout last year's consultation that the investment fund would not become active until the start of the academic year.

Dr Mellor noted that looking at this going forwards, schools need to balance how students will manage without the resources and provisions such as TAs. They are looking to explore SEN provisions based in schools but having to do so with less resources. She also made the point that Leicestershire is appallingly funded at a regional level and wondered at what point is it going to be acknowledged nationally that the LA cannot do more unless Leicestershire is properly funded. Dr Mellor queried that whilst she is aware the LA are asking this question on behalf of our schools, how can this be more heard?.

Jane Moore acknowledged and agreed that the LA are coming back with a further request of transfer before they are able to evidence the impact of the previous transfer. Jane advised that the LA want to be up front and that it's a matter of timing and having to go through certain processes. The schools block transfer made last year was about investing money back into the system and the LA have been working hard to get that right. The proposal to make another block transfer is because of the challenges within the High Needs block and Jane agreed the resource issue is a challenge for all schools. Jane further advised that conversations are happening at a national government level around how Leicestershire is funded. With the way the formula is set up, there is a significant disparity to some of our surrounding LAs and we're advocating strongly that we need money into schools to support national SEND reform.

Jenny Lawrence commented that one of the questions that has arisen from the LA looking at the way we are modelling is about equity and funding across the system, so there is a focus on looking at answering this.

Martin Towers noted that there is no decision required on this agenda point.

6. **SEND Investment Fund (PowerPoint is attached)**

Renata Chantrill, Head of Service for Education Quality & Performance presented the SEN Investment Fund update. She referenced that everyone has had the PowerPoint slides so it was agreed that rather than go through them again in this meeting, the forum would have a more general conversation.

The fund has been pulled together based on the previous year's School Block transfer, and for 25/26 we have approximated £2.8m to spend. The SEN Investment Fund Working Group meet regularly and are trying to make sure that the proposals developed on the back of the investment fund are the most impactful way of

spending the fund. There has been engagement with school representatives and a questionnaire via the Headteachers Briefing to get engagement from the wider community on what good SEMH practice looks like and what gaps there are.

School reps are particularly keen on coaching and training for whole school staff, also an in-school AP and Outreach. These offers are currently being worked on in detail. A working group meeting is being held on 16/06/2025 and the intention is that the final proposals will be agreed, and further work will then be done to finalise costings and impact measures. The overall package of the offers will be to support Children and Young People in mainstream schools and access to the offers will be communicated to schools once finalised. More detail will be brought back to Leicestershire Schools Forum in September's meeting.

Dr Jude Mellor reflected that there is work going on around change in leadership of SEIPS, Leicestershire Schools Forum work that has been to the table before that was toward DSP development in a series of schools around SEND provision, and the current work on SEND capacity with schools. She questioned whether the LA are able to reassure her that all these concepts are connected?

Renata advised that the working party group the LA have set up has members who are helping to shape the proposals and make sure we have continuity across the existing offers, making sure that there is no duplication and the offers are new. The LA are also looking to work collaboratively more widely across the education management team to make sure there is continuity and that each proposal is connected to work already going on.

Beth Clements advised that in terms of SEIPs looking at the remodelling of the current offer, they are making sure it compliments any existing work and doesn't duplicate.

Jane Moore agreed that it's an important point and reiterated that all of the current work is joined up, and Tim Browne is leading this as a single strategy across the whole of education.

Tim Browne has recently joined LCC as the Assistant Director of Education, SEND and Inclusion. Tim comment that his observation is that whilst there's been a lot of great work both historically and continually, lots of this work has been happening in isolation, but not by design. A clear decision has been made to bring everything together in one coherent plan, and he is looking at what the long-term approach is going to be. Olivia Dale has just been appointed as the new Head of Education Strategy and Transformation, and she will be working with school leaders in Autumn around the 10 year strategy, which is focusing on the sense of belonging. Further information about this will be made available from the start of the next academic year.

There were no further questions.

7. **Any other business.**

Dr Jude Mellor requested meeting dates for the next academic year are circulated as soon as possible to that they can be put in the diary. It was noted that attendance for today's meeting was lower than normal. Rachel Simpson advised that she would circulate the dates as soon as they were confirmed.

8. **Date of next meeting.**

The next meeting is due to take place on Tuesday 9th September

9. **Actions**

1. Schools Forum clerk to circulate meeting dates for the next academic year.