

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 16th May 2025

Microsoft Teams Meeting.

Status: **Draft**

Name	Establishment	Representing
Claire Whiting (CW) Chair	Redhill Primary Academy	Academies
Sarah Roberts (SR)	High Ercall Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Wellington Cluster
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Newport Cluster
Darren Lennon (DL)	Linden Centre PRU	Maintained PRUs
Joe Edgar (JE)	Haberdashers' Abraham Darby Academy	Academies
Adam Jones (AJ)	Newport Girls High School	Academies
Nicola Davis (ND)	The Bridge Special School	Maintained Special Schools
Alison Ashley (AA)	Learning Community Trust	PRU Academies
James Youngman (JY)	Learning Community Trust	Special Academies
Tim Davis (TD)	Finance Manager	Representative of the Director of Finance
Andy Wood (AW)	Senior Accountant - Schools	Representative of the Director of Finance

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 There were no apologies given for this meeting.

- Penny Hustwick - ABC Day Nurseries - PVIs.
- Rachel Cook – Newdale Primary School – Central Cluster.
- Robert Fox – Donnington Wood Junior School – North Cluster
- Simon Wellman – Director of Education & Skills

2. Minutes of the 16th January 2025 meeting and matters arising - CW.

2.1 The minutes of the 16th January 2025 were accepted as a true and accurate record. Copies of the minutes can be found here:

[Minutes of 16th January 2025.](#)

2.2 There were no matters arising that would not be covered at this meeting.

3. Membership Structure of the School Forum - TD

3.1 The Forum was provided with a paper which can be found here:

[Schools Forum structure academic year 2025/2026 onwards.](#)
[Annex A to Schools Forum structure academic year 2025/2026 onwards](#)

3.2 TD advised that following multiple academy conversions we need to review the membership of the Forum.

3.3 AW explained that the School Forum Regulations require that the main school member groupings, Maintained Primary, Maintained Secondary and Academies, must be represented proportionally to the pupils at those establishments. To that end we have produced two possible structures for Forum membership which have been circulated to members for their consideration.

3.4 The first modelled structure keeps all the current maintained schools' members, which total ten. Given the relative numbers of pupils in maintained and academy schools the Forum would require twelve academy members. Total Forum membership under this model would be a minimum of 24. This would require an additional seven academy members compared to the current membership.

3.5 The second modelled structure reduces the number of maintained schools' membership by two primary cluster representatives and therefore also reduces the number of academy members needed to nine. Historically we have always had a maintained primary representative for each cluster but under this model the primary sector would need to be represented in two clusters by academy representatives. This model would require an additional four academy representatives to be found: ideally two from primary and two from secondary phase.

3.6 CW said that the first model was too big, and we would struggle to recruit the members required.

3.7 CC supported the representation of clusters and DL agreed that clusters need to have a voice.

3.8 CL asked if we could apportion the primary cluster membership now and the group agreed that the three memberships available should be allocated to the Wellington, Central and Newport clusters and that the members currently in post would approach their clusters to reappoint them.

3.9 TD agreed that the LA would approach academy trust proprietors to appoint two primary representatives, for North and South clusters, and two secondary academy representatives.

4. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Outturn 2024-2025. - TD.

- 4.1 The paper presented to support this agenda item can be found at the link below.

[Dedicated Schools Grant \(DSG\) Outturn 2024 – 2025.](#)

LA Position.

- 4.2 TD advised that the FY24/25 DSG outturn position was a deficit of £2.839m which was better than was predicted throughout the year. The cumulative DSG position now stands at a deficit of £4.662m having brought forwards a deficit of £1.823m from the previous year.
- 4.3 The deficit was driven by increases in demand and inflationary pressures whilst the increase in income from the DfE was less than previous years.
- 4.4 The increase in income for FY25/26 is £3m which whilst higher than then 2024/25 increase, is unlikely to be sufficient to cover 2025/26 expenditure, in the context that this would only just cover the existing level of 2024/25 costs. Therefore, there is a high probability of increasing the cumulative deficit balance at the end of the FY25/26.
- 4.5 TD reminded the group that the T&W position is reflected in the national DSG deficit position and the DfE has yet to advise on how they intend to resolve this situation. The regulations which have ring-fenced the DSG deficit currently end on 31 March 2026.
- 4.6 AA spoke on the year-on-year growth within the special schools and that this cannot continue due to accommodation restrictions and the high cost of placements within special schools.
- 4.7 TD advised that demand for EHCPs and specialist placements continues to increase, but the LA has developed a cost improvement plan to mitigate cost pressures.

LA maintained schools' position.

- 4.8 TD advised that for LA maintained schools, net of converting schools, revenue balances reduced by around £0.4m or 5% in the FY24/25. Capital balances also reduced by £74k or 7%.
- 4.9 TD advised that there is a large disparity between balances held by different schools.

5. Scheme for Financing Schools AY2025-2026 - TD.

- 5.1 The Scheme for Financing is a DfE driven document which sets out the financial relationship between maintained schools and the LA. The LA must consult the School Forum when there are any changes to the Scheme, despite most changes being directed by the DfE.
- 5.2 The changes this year are an additional item to enable a school's budget share to be charged: the cost of an undisputed invoice for energy where a school has entered into an agreement with the Secretary of State for the supply of energy and failed to pay such an invoice.

5.3 The only other changes were the removal of those schools that converted to academy status.

6. AOB - CW.

6.1 CW asked members to take note of the dates for future meeting and ensure that when planning meetings that there were no clashes.

7. Next Meetings

The dates of the forthcoming meetings for the academic year 2025/26, are as follows:

[Planned Forum Meetings](#)

- Thursday 18th September 2025
- Thursday 13th November 2025
- Thursday 15th January 2026
- Thursday 19th March 2026
- Thursday 14th May 2026