



South Tyneside Council

Schools Forum 17 June 2026

Schools Forum Minutes

18 March 2026

Present: Gemma Jeynes (Chair), Paul Atkinson, Ashley Borthwick, Michelle Collinson, Georgi McCarthy, Liz McHugh, Emily Minns, Amanda Moody and Rachel Scott.

Also in Attendance: Kevin Smith (Finance Business Partner), Steph Humble (Finance Business Partner), Alan Foster (Head of Finance), Leah Stafford (Democracy Support Officer).

There were no members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Joanne Weightman, Helen Smith, Paul Marsden, Brenda Machin.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 January 2026

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Agreed: That the minutes of meeting held on 21 January be confirmed as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. School Balances Review Update

Gemma Jaynes provided the Forum with a verbal update on the outcome of the School Balances Sub-Group meeting held on 28 January 2026.

Four schools had been invited to attend for discussions regarding surplus balances. It was reported that none of the schools were required to return funds in the current year.

A review of special schools was underway, which might lead to changes in funding. Two all-through special schools presented their cases and were able to demonstrate that their surplus balances were expected to reduce in the coming year due to the ongoing banding review.

One primary school had marginally exceeded the surplus threshold and outlined planned expenditure aimed at improving academic standards at the end of Key Stage 2. A comprehensive school had spent £0.6m, and it was noted that Kevin Smith (Finance Business Partner) would be meeting with the school to discuss falling rolls and the potential need for staffing reductions. This could lead to a further reduction in their surplus position or potentially contribute to a deficit.

Agreed: That report be noted.

5. 2025/26 De-delegations – Forecasted Year End Position

Stephanie Humble, Finance Business Partner, provided a report to the Forum that detailed the forecasted financial year-end position for de-delegated services and sought agreement from Schools Forum on the use of surplus funds.

Under the school funding regulations, Schools Forum approved five de-delegations for 2025/26. The funding for de-delegated services was allocated to individual schools through the formula, then funding was de-delegated from maintained primary and secondary schools.

Academies, PRUs, nurseries and special schools were not covered by de-delegations but could buy into these arrangements separately. De-delegations had to be approved each year by Schools Forum. The amount de-delegated could be increased or decreased each year.

A table was provided that listed the funding for each de-delegation, the level of expenditure and the forecasted remaining funds as at 31st March 2026.

It was the responsibility of Schools Forum to decide upon the course of action for any outstanding balances of de-delegated services, with the options typically being:

- Add the balance to the schools funding formula to be allocated at the next school funding formula round;
- Add the balance to the de-delegation for the same service in the next financial year;
- Add the balance to an alternative de-delegated service in the next financial year.

Schools Forum had historically chosen the option to add the balance to the de-delegation for the same service in the next financial year.

Agreed: Option 2 be chosen with unanimous agreement.

6. 2025/26 Growth Fund Distribution

Kevin Smith, Finance Business Partner, gave a report on the Sub-Group approvals on the 2025/26 Schools Growth Fund Contingency.

In March 2013 the Schools' Forum approved the creation of a School's Growth Fund Contingency. The purpose of the contingency being to provide in-year support to schools in meeting limits on infant class sizes, restrictions on pupil intake due to classroom size or schools with significant growth in pupil numbers from those used within the budget.

Schools Forum approved the criteria and application process for this fund in June 2013, and amendments in January 2014, and June 2018.

Schools Forum approved an allocation of £250,000 for the 2025/26 financial year, there were funds remaining from 2024/25 totalling £182,051 therefore the total growth fund available for allocation in 2025/26 is £432,051.

Schools' Forum subgroup met on the 5th of March 2026 to consider applications to the fund. The subgroup report was attached as appendix 1.

Five applications were received in 2025/26 totalling £87,422, all of which were from primary schools. All schools met the eligible criteria and have declared limited uncommitted balances from the prior year. (Although it was assumed that any additional funding would be required to meet additional staffing costs it was not a specific criterion for funding being granted).

Subgroup approved the applications leaving a balance of £344,629 to be carried forward into 2026/27.

7. Review of Forum Membership

Kevin Smith, Finance Business Partner, presented a report that provided an update on the annual review of Schools Forum membership and the actions that had been taken to encourage member attendance at meetings.

It was confirmed that Schools Forum currently had 23 members across a range of sectors.

The Officer outlined the breakdown of membership, which included representatives from community and voluntary-aided primary schools, community secondary schools, academy primary and secondary schools, special schools, nursery schools, a post-16 provider, an early years provider, trade unions, the diocesan board and the pupil referral unit. The total membership remained at 23.

He explained that the number of places allocated to each sector was reviewed annually, using the most recent pupil numbers and updated to reflect academy conversions. This year's review was based on the October 2025 census figures. It was reported that the review did not identify any changes required to the sector allocations for 2026/27, as pupil numbers had fallen slightly but academy conversions had not taken place during the year. The table in the report showed that all sector allocations remained unchanged.

It was advised that, when the revised sector places were considered alongside the current membership, there were vacancies in the following categories:

- one Community Secondary place
- one Special School place
- one Diocesan Board place

He asked the Forum to note the review of sector places for 2026/27 and requested agreement that the relevant sectors be approached to fill the identified vacancies.

It was agreed that the Officer would email for nominations for deputy positions on the Forum.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

9. Date and time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Forum is to be held on Wednesday 17th June 2026.