

Schools Forum

High Needs Funding Formula Working Group

Initiation Document

Working Group Name:	High Needs Funding Formula
Committee:	Schools Forum
Academic Year:	2024/25
Chair:	Max Vlahakis
Lead Officer:	Sharon Kelly (Director, Access and Inclusion)
In attendance	Tanya Collier (Strategic Finance Business Partner) Rob Thomas (Head of Access – Children’s Services) Rachael Beards (Head of Inclusion) Louise Meridith – Lead Accountant (Education) Neil Picken (Principal Democratic Services Officer)
Membership	Max Vlahakis (Primary), Cathy Draper (Primary), Sean Davis (Primary), Margaret Turley (Nursery) (Elyse Phillips (Special School) (x1 secondary vacancy).
Co-opted Members	Not specified

1. Context

- 1.1 High needs funding supports provision for pupils and students with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) who require additional resources to participate in education and learning, from their early years to age 25 in schools and colleges (excluding students aged 19 to 25 who do not have an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP) or students who are over the age of 25) and pre-16 pupils in AP who, because of exclusion, illness, or other reasons, cannot receive their education in mainstream schools.
- 1.2 The High Needs Funding Formula is the local process that is utilised to allocate the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding that the Council receives, to the providers of support to children with additional needs in the Borough of Walsall. This enables local authorities to meet their statutory duties under the [Children and Families Act 2014](#)
- 1.3 The Council is guided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency [High Needs Funding 2024 to 2025 operational guide](#). A further guide will be published following the publication of the national funding formula (NFF) for 2025 to 2026.
- 1.4 High needs funding is also provided directly to some schools and colleges by Education, Skills and Funding Agency and the respective conditions of grant and funding agreements apply.
- 1.5 The guide states that local authorities must ensure any changes to SEND provision and high needs funding arrangements are made in close consultation and co-production with

the schools and colleges which will be affected. The mechanism in Walsall is via Schools Forum and the establishment of a High Needs Funding Working Group.

- 1.6 The Guide also confirms that to fulfil local authorities' statutory duties to keep the services and provision for children and young people with SEND under review, as required by the [Children and Families Act 2014](#), local engagement should take place with all of those providing education to ensure good quality provision can be planned, developed and sustained in line with available resources. This includes early years settings and colleges, as well as parents of children and young people with SEND and young people themselves.

2. Objective(s)

- 2.1 To review current arrangements and recommend consultation on the proposed revised formula for 2025/26 including a review of other areas of SEND including Early Years High Needs Funding, Post 16 High Needs Funding and Additional Resource Provision / Pupil Referral Unit funding.

3. Scope

- 3.1 The working group will consider the following:
- The Dedicated Schools Grant with particular focus on the High Needs Funding Formula for 2025-26.

4. Equalities Implications

- 4.1 The Equality Act 2010 protects children, young people and adults against discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to housing, education, clubs, the provision of services (including healthcare) and work.
- 4.2 The public sector equality duty in Section 149 of the Equality Act requires public bodies, including local authorities and healthcare providers, to take active steps to eliminate discrimination and to do positive things to promote equality.
- 4.3 The Government published a full [equalities impact assessment](#) when the National Funding Formula was introduced in 2018-19 after significant consultation.

5. Who else will contribute?

- *Feedback from early years settings, including PVI, parents of children and young people with SEND and young people themselves.*
- *Data from IMPOWER (National Context)*

6. Timescale and Reporting Schedule

- 6.1. The following dates are based upon the need for the working group to be completed in the same municipal year:
- a. Terms of Reference to be approved by Working Group – **Friday 10th May, 2024**
 - b. Draft report/recommendations to be considered by Working Group – **Nov/Dec, 2024**
 - c. Final report/recommendations to be considered by Schools Forum – **Jan/Feb 2025**

6.2. A detailed timetable of meetings and activities can be found at Appendix A.

7. Risk Factors

7.1. The following table documents potential obstacles to the progress of the working group:

Risk	Likelihood	Mitigation
Representatives not forthcoming from Special and Secondary Schools	Medium	Invitations will be extended to these categories to join. They may wish to comment on draft recommendations and will have further opportunity to comment at Schools Forum.
Recommendations are not developed in time	Low	<p>Officers will ensure that sufficient resource is given to ensure that the working group can produce any recommendations by the given deadline.</p> <p>Meetings can be held in person/hybrid or remotely to avoid risk of not convening.</p> <p>A full timetable of meetings to be agreed at the first meeting.</p>
Changes in national context / political control	Low	Officer to keep national context under review and ensure that any changes are reported expediently. Additional meetings may be called if required.

Appendix A Timetable

Date at xxpm.	Activity
Friday 10 May, 2024 @10.00 a.m. at Walsall Council	Initial meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Dedicated Schools Grant. • Terms of Reference. • Schedule of dates
18 June, 2024	Update to Schools Forum
12 July 2024 at 10.00 a.m. Leighswood School, Broadmeadow, Aldridge, Walsall, WS9 8HZ	Information and evidence gathering by working group.
17 September 2024	Update to Schools Forum.
TBA Late Sept/ early October 2024	Working Group to draft conclusions and recommendations for consultation.
15 October 2024	Final report and recommendations to Schools Forum / seek agreement to consult.
October/November 2024	Consultation undertaken
17 December, 2024 or 21 Jan 2025	Present final report and recommendations to Schools Forum.