

Derbyshire Schools Forum

Minutes

Date: 1 July 2026

Chair: Peter Johnston

Format: Meeting transcript used to prepare these minutes

Attendance

Kevin Smith (KS), Elena Beard (EB), Jenny Webster (JWe), Joe Wilson (JWi), Amy Blackwell (AB), Samantha Cardwell (SC), Alex Dale (AD), Sarah Bryan (SB), Rachel Moore (RM), Ruth Lane (RL) and Carol Archer (CA).

Representatives from maintained schools, academies, special schools, the local authority and dioceses also took part.

1. Previous minutes and action log

Previous minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed. No objections were raised.

Decision

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Outstanding actions

- The review of the funding difference between private, voluntary and independent settings and maintained settings remains on the agenda for future discussion.
- Recruitment to nursery representative vacancies is ongoing.
- Future monitoring reports will include more detailed budget information, including over and underspends.

Actions

- Continue recruitment of nursery representatives. (Forum members and Local Authority)
- Include enhanced financial monitoring information in future reports. (Finance Team)

2. Forum membership

The Forum discussed ongoing difficulties recruiting representatives to vacant nursery positions. Members were encouraged to identify suitable candidates through professional networks and local contacts.

Actions

- Identify and approach potential nursery representatives. (All Forum members)

3. Proposal for de-delegated funding: Education Data Hub Shield

This was the principal item of discussion.

Proposal overview

Officers presented a proposal for Education Data Hub Shield, comprising:

- Data Protection Officer services.
- Cyber security support.
- IT support services.
- Preventative cyber security measures.
- Support to meet increasing compliance requirements in schools.

The proposal was driven by:

- Significant growth in data breaches.
- Increasing cyber threats to schools.
- The need for consistent baseline protection across maintained schools.

Evidence presented

- Officers reported that data breaches in Derbyshire schools have increased significantly in recent years.
- Reportable breaches have risen.
- Cyber incidents are becoming increasingly sophisticated.
- Local authority teams are dealing with major incidents involving sensitive personal information.

Key concerns raised

Members supported improved cyber security but raised concerns about:

- Overall affordability.
- The financial impact on small schools.
- Transparency of cost calculations.
- The treatment of software licence costs.
- Potential duplication where schools already purchase similar services.
- Whether de-delegation represented best value.

Members said schools would need clear costs, detailed service descriptions, comparisons with existing expenditure and a better understanding of the financial implications before supporting de-delegation.

Consultation arrangements

Members favoured a separate consultation alongside the de-delegation consultation, rather than including the proposal within existing de-delegated services.

Decision

The Forum did not support progressing the proposal in its current form to a de-delegation consultation.

Members requested further development and clearer information before reconsideration.

Actions

- Review and refine the Education Data Hub Shield proposal. (Cyber Security and IT Services Team)
- Provide clearer information on costs, licences and school-level financial impacts. (Proposal authors)
- Consider gathering additional information on services currently purchased by schools. (Service leads)
- If progressed further, develop a separate consultation approach. (Finance Team and Schools Forum officers)

4. Trade Union Facility Time de-delegation update

KS provided an update on facility time funding.

- Initial concerns suggested significant overspending.
- Higher levels of academy buy-back have reduced the expected pressure.
- Current projections indicate only a relatively small overspend.
- Future de-delegation increases may therefore be lower than originally expected.

Decision

No decision was required. The update was noted.

5. Early Years Block and Early Years Inclusion Funding

SC presented revised proposals for Early Years Inclusion Funding.

Key points

- Further modelling has been undertaken following previous Forum feedback.
- Funding rates for schools and private, voluntary and independent settings have been reviewed.
- A revised four-band model has been developed.
- Funding differences between schools and private, voluntary and independent settings will be removed.

The revised model equalises funding rates, is intended to start in September and was described as affordable based on current modelling assumptions.

Risks discussed

- Future demand growth.
- The sustainability of funding.
- The impact of increased awareness and take-up.

Decision

The Forum welcomed the revised approach and noted that the funding gap between schools and private, voluntary and independent settings would be closed.

Actions

- Implement the revised banding model from September. (Early Years Team)
- Monitor demand and financial sustainability during implementation. (Finance Team and Early Years Team)

6. Special educational needs and disabilities reform plan update

JWi provided a verbal update was on the submission of Derbyshire's special educational needs and disabilities reform plan.

Key points

- The plan was submitted to Government before the required deadline.
- The plan focuses on earlier intervention and increased support within mainstream schools.
- Approval could provide funding towards the historic High Needs deficit.
- A Government decision is expected in autumn.

Discussion

- Implications of local government reorganisation.
- Future governance arrangements.

- Impact on deficit recovery.
- Relationship with future special educational needs and disabilities reforms and White Paper proposals.

Actions

- Bring the full special educational needs and disabilities reform plan to the Forum in October. (SEND Leadership Team)
- Consider establishing additional working groups if required. (SEND Team)

7. Special educational needs and disabilities sufficiency strategy

JWe presented the draft special educational needs and disabilities sufficiency strategy.

Key themes

The strategy aims to:

- Increase local specialist provision.
- Expand resource bases.
- Reduce reliance on independent placements.
- Improve local access for children and young people.

Discussion

- Recruitment challenges.
- Specialist staffing requirements.
- Satellite and hub-and-spoke provision models.
- Capacity planning.
- Mainstream school participation.

Actions

- Complete geographical analysis of special educational needs and disabilities, and future provision requirements. (SEND Team)
- Engage schools about potential resource base development. (SEND Team)
- Progress discussions on satellite provision models. (SEND Team and interested schools)

8. Dedicated Schools Grant outturn report

The Forum received an update from KS on Dedicated Schools Grant finances.

Key points

- The overall Dedicated Schools Grant position showed a substantial deficit, driven primarily by High Needs expenditure.
- Growth in education, health and care plans and independent sector placements continues to create financial pressure.
- The Forum discussed the implications of Government deficit management arrangements and future statutory override arrangements.

Discussion points

- Long-term sustainability.
- Independent sector costs.
- Capacity constraints.
- The impact of future special educational needs and disabilities reforms.

Decision

The report was noted.

9. High Needs funding benchmarking review

An update was provided on reviews of:

- High Needs bandings.
- Enhanced Resource Schools.
- College funding models.

The work aims to improve consistency, transparency and financial sustainability.

Actions

- Complete benchmarking with other authorities. (Finance and SEND Teams)
- Develop revised funding approaches for future consideration. (Finance and SEND Teams)

10. Meeting dates

Proposed meeting dates for 2026 to 2027 were discussed. Issues around timing and school holidays were considered.

Suggested meeting months were October, December, January and June or July.

Actions

- Circulate confirmed Schools Forum dates for 2026 to 2027. (Elena Beard and Forum Administration)

Key decisions summary

- The previous minutes were approved.
- The Education Data Hub Shield proposal was not progressed to consultation in its current form.
- A separate consultation was favoured if the proposal is revisited.
- The revised Early Years Inclusion Funding model was supported and the funding difference was removed.
- The Forum noted the special educational needs and disabilities reform, Dedicated Schools Grant and sufficiency updates.

Consolidated action log

1. Recruit nursery representatives. (Forum members and Local Authority)
2. Enhance financial monitoring reports.(Finance Team)
3. Refine the Education Data Hub Shield proposal and costs. (Cyber Security and IT Team)
4. Develop a separate consultation approach if the proposal returns. (Finance Team)
5. Implement Early Years banding changes. (Early Years Team)
6. Bring the full special educational needs and disabilities reform plan to the October Forum. (SEND Team)
7. Progress special educational needs and disabilities sufficiency and resource base planning. (SEND Team)
8. Complete the High Needs benchmarking review. (Finance and SEND Teams)
9. Circulate Schools Forum meeting dates for 2026 to 2027. (Elena Beard and Administration)