



Schools Forum

Date: Tuesday, 13 January, 2026

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: Cheam High School, Chatsworth Road, Cheam, Sutton SM3 8PW

Enquiries: Matthew Stickley
londongovernanceltd@gmail.com

To all members of the School Forum:-

Member	Role
Academy Representation (A)	
Christian Hicks	Academy Secondary Headteacher
VACANCY	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Nathan Cole	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Ben Cloves	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Peter Naudi	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Phillip Hedger	Academy Primary Headteacher
Sharon Roberts	Academy Primary Headteacher
James Kearns	Academy Special School Headteacher
Aaron Tanner	Academy Primary Governor
Emma Bradshaw	Academy Pupil Referral Unit (shared)



Maintained School Representation (B)	
Jenny Sims	Chair; Maintained Primary School Governor
Robert Claxton	Maintained Primary School Headteacher
Emma Walford	Maintained Nursery School Headteacher
Debbie Gifford	Sutton Tuition and Reintegration Service (shared)

Other Representation (C)	
Vicki Bell	Early Years Provider
Jason Pemberton-Billing	14-19 Provider
Sue Smith	Sutton Teachers Committee
Andrew Theobald	Vice Chair; Archdiocese of Southwark; Maintained Secondary School Governor
VACANCY	Diocese of Southwark

Observers (D)	
Councillor Rob Beck	Vice Chair of the People Committee
Councillor Mike Dwyer	Opposition member of the People Committee



AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest which are made by members and officers of the Schools Forum which are not interests created by virtue of the role that member/officer holds.

Members

- Peter Naudi – Vice Chair of Limes Governing Body, Chair of Vulnerable Pupils Panel
- Sharon Roberts – Trustee of Cheam Academies Network Trust
- Jenny Sims – Non-Executive Director of Cognus LATC
- Andrew Theobald - Chair of Members of Cirrus Primary Academy Trust

Officers

- Kieran Holliday – Non-Executive Director of Cognus LATC

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

To agree the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 October 2025.

5. DRAFT DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) BUDGET 2026/27

6. SEND HOURLY RATES

7. EXCLUSIONS FUNDING

To follow

8. PAVING THE WAY BEHAVIOUR SPECIALIST FUNDING

9. EARLY YEARS ENTITLEMENTS FUNDING FORMULA CONSULTATION 2026-27

10. CAPITAL REPORT

PRESENT:

1. Jenny Sims (Chair)
2. Andrew Theobald (Vice Chair)
3. Christian Hicks
4. Debbie Gifford
5. Alison Day
6. Nathan Cole
7. James Kearns
8. Ben Cloves
9. Peter Naudi
10. Sharon Roberts
11. Robert Claxton
12. Emma Walford
13. Emma Bradshaw
14. Sue Smith

1: Welcome and Introductions

The Chair, Jenny Sims, welcomed those present.

2: Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Vicki Bell, Jamie Bean, and Councillor Mike Dwyer. Apologies for lateness were received from Sharon Roberts.

3: Declarations of Interest

The Forum noted the standing declarations as set out on the agenda.

There were no further declarations of interest.

4: Minutes of the previous meeting

The Forum noted updates on matters arising, including that an update on Pupil Premium funding would be brought to the Forum in the spring which would have regard for allocations and would include information on the work underway to contact independent schools regarding the 2025-26 grant allocations process.

RESOLVED: To agree the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 January 2025 as an accurate record, subject to noting that Alison Day had sent apologies for the meeting.

5: Revenue Report

The Director of Education, Integrated Support and Safer Communities introduced the report.

The Forum noted that officers were waiting for the National Funding Formula for schools and high needs from 2025, and that this was expected in mid-November 2025. The Forum noted the Non-Maintained Independent (NMI) schools overspend of £4.6m, but that this was an

improvement on the position from the last meeting of the Forum of approximately £228,000. The Forum discussed the forecasts on the NMI schools, which had been for a £16m deficit at the start of the year but had since been reduced to a forecasted deficit of £13m. Members commented that the actions taken to reduce NMI spend appeared to be working, and that commentary within the report to further outline this would be helpful. The Forum further discussed the wider impact which might include a reduced spend on home-to-school transport. The Forum noted that NMI provision accounted for 34% of expenditure within the High Needs Block but that NMI pupils accounted for 13% of pupils.

The Forum noted that the Cognus Education Centre was only a business case but, if agreed, would become a registered provision in the long term. The Forum further noted that the rate of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) approvals had slowed, that a pilot to avoid EHCP application duplications had been launched in September 2025, and that the majority of EHCP needs assessments were coming from the transition from primary to secondary.

In response to a question, officers agreed to review the wording within Section 7.1 - Income from lettings - which specified that 'Income from lettings of school premises are not payable into voluntary or private funds held by the school.' Officers reinforced that schools were able to generate income from lettings.

In discussion, it was agreed by the Forum to amend the recommendations such that recommendation 4 - to agree a block transfer of 0.5% - would be subject to a decision of members of the Forum outside of the meeting. The Forum agreed the Clerk would circulate a tool to allow for digital voting to members of the Forum following the meeting and that officers would confirm the results by a deadline to be agreed to allow for submission of the proposal to the government.

RESOLVED:

1. 2.1. To note the latest position on the DSG for 2025/26, as at September - Month 6 (Appendix A).
2. To approve the proposed changes to the Scheme for Financing School 2025/26 (Appendix B).
3. To note the procedure required to apply for a Schools Block Disapplication (Appendix C).
4. To agree that voting members of the Forum be able to cast their votes on the following proposition following the meeting, that the outcome of this vote would be shared with members of the Forum once the deadline for votes had been reached and votes counted, and that the outcome of the vote would inform officers' decisions on the submission to government:
 - a. *'to agree that a block transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2026-27 to support the costs of specialist provision recently commissioned in the borough.'*

Note: a clear majority of members voted 'FOR a block transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2026-27' and the results were shared with members of the Schools Forum on 9 November 2025.

6: Update on SEND Transformation

The Forum discussed the content of the update within the previous item and noted the update.

7: SEND Hourly Rates

The SEND Transformation Programme Manager introduced the report.

The Forum discussed the benchmarking exercise used in drafting the report, noting that schools often paid several pounds more per hour than the £15.56 hourly rate for TAs used within the calculator, and that any benchmarking should take account of rates paid within the borough. The Forum discussed the increases in staffing costs in recent years and that further such increases were to be expected in future financial years. Some members of the Forum discussed the perception of a steadily increasing burden on schools through 0.5% block transfers and increasing numbers of pupils receiving EHCPs.

RESOLVED:

1. To share views in relation to the recommendations outlined, notably for Cognus to adopt hourly rates as outlined in 2.2 when costing EHCPs for HLTAAs and for the purpose of provision mapping for any additional funding being sought by schools. This includes some new and some revised costings.
2. To note that a funding calculator be used and shared with schools to support greater standardisation of costing decisions.

8: Capital Report

The Head of Pupil Based Commissioning introduced the report.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the summary of developments against the primary, secondary and special expansion programmes.
2. To note the intention to establish a school organisation plan steering group, to report into the Schools Forum, to provide recommendations on managing falling rolls within Primary Schools.

Report Title	Draft Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget 2026/27
Meeting	Schools Forum
Date	13 January 2026
Chair	Jenny Sims
Report Author(s)	Selam Baire, Strategic Finance Business Partner, Sutton Council
Open/Exempt	Open

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides details of the draft Draft Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget 2026/27

2. Recommendations

Budget and Block Transfer

- 2.1. Approve the Draft Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget 2026/27 (Appx A).
- 2.2. Approve the proposed method of calculation to transfer the previously agreed 0.5% block transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block.

Central School Services Block (CSSB) - Historic Commitments

- 2.3. Approve the contribution to combined budgets Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) - £15k no change from 25/26 (Appx A).
- 2.4. Approve the Termination of Employment Costs and Prudential Borrowing Costs (Appx E).

Central School Services Block (CSSB) - Ongoing Functions

- 2.5. Approve the proposed funding for the Admissions Service - no change from 25/26 (Appx A).
- 2.6. Approve the costs of servicing of Schools Forum - no change from 25/26 (Appx A).
- 2.7. Approve funding for places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils - no change from 2025/26 (Appx A).
- 2.8. Approve the contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for all schools - (Central Provision) (Appx D).
- 2.9. Note the National Funding Formula (NFF) Schools Formula Funding Factors 2026/27 (Appx B).
- 2.10. Note the De-delegation Table for School Improvement 2026/27 (Appx C).

3. Background

3.1. This report provides details of the draft DSG budget for 2026/27.

4. DSG Budget Month 8 2025/26

4.1. The Month 8 2025/26 budget forecast position presented at the schools forum briefing on the 2nd of December 2025 shows an overall in-year deficit of £11.7m compared to a start of year forecast position of £13.7m. There is a nil variance against the School, Early Years and Central Services block compared to Month 6 and a £0.2m reduction in the High Needs Block forecast over the previous reporting period.

4.2. Refer to appendix A for detail and budget breakdown.

5. DSG Budget 2026/27

5.1. The total DSG allocation published in December 2025, is £344.5m. The following are deducted to arrive at the total of £158.266m that is included in the draft budget: -

	Schools Block £'000	CSSB £'000	High Needs £'000	Early Years £'000	Total £'000
Allocation	233,186	2,013	68,058	41,251	344,508
Academy Recoupment	(175,322)				(175,322)
NNDR to be paid centrally	(1,926)				(1,926)
High Needs deduction			(8,994)		(8,994)
	55,938	2,013	59,064	41,251	158,266
Total Transfer to HNB	(1,166)		1,166		
Draft Total	54,772	2,013	60,230	41,251	158,266

5.2. Attached in Appendix A is the DSG Draft Budget 2026/27, updated in accordance with discussions that took place at the previous Schools Forum meeting and based on confirmed DSG allocations made in December 2025.

5.3. The Draft Budget has been set using two different scenarios to highlight the pressures in the High Needs Block and to show that even just budgeting based on 2025/26 outturn, there is a forecast £8.0m in-year deficit. Taking into account estimated growth, the in-year deficit increases by a further £6.3m. The total forecast in-year deficit is £14.5m, including £0.2m overspend in the Central School Services Block (CSSB).

5.4. The 2025/26 forecast year end cumulative DSG deficit is £22.31m; with the additional expected growth in 2026/27, the year end position is forecast as £36.78m deficit.

5.5. The DSG will be set as a balanced budget, with a deficit forecast from April 2026. The budget lines that have been adjusted to balance the budget are highlighted within the High Needs Block budget.

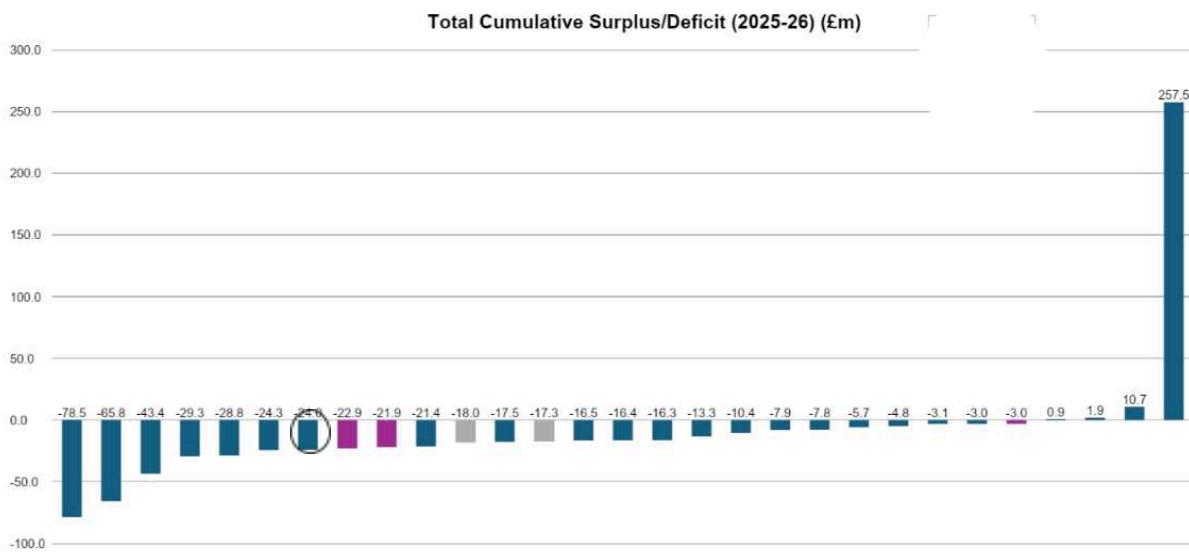
5.6. The national picture is well understood, with a variety of reports identifying the national picture on high needs spending - the most recent CCN report identifies the following national picture:

- £2.6bn in year deficit (25/26) rising to £4.4bn by 28/29
- £5bn cumulative deficit (25/26) rising to £18bn by 28/29
- £420m in lost annual revenue to local authorities (cost of servicing the debt)

5.7. Whilst London local authorities tend to have a lower accumulated deficit than other Local Authority types, Sutton's position is now comparatively worse than other London authorities both in terms of cumulative and in year deficit position. With very little reserves this puts Sutton in a very precarious position. London Council's surveys LAs and has very recently shared the outcomes of this with LAs in London. The following headlines from this report are set out below (based on data returned by 25 Local Authorities):

- 86% of LBs in deficit - outer london boroughs more in deficit than inner London authorities with deeper budget gaps
- £556m deficit across London 25/26 (average of £22m per authority)
- Projected to increase to £919m by 2027/28 (average of 37m per authority)

5.8. Whilst the national and regional picture is stark, Sutton's position is now comparatively worse than most other LAs (Sutton circled in the table below) with a larger in year deficit that is accelerating our cumulative deficit at a greater rate than other LAs.



5.9. There are some contextual factors to consider here. Firstly, Sutton went into deficit later than many Local Authorities so has not benefitted from any funding via the DBV or Safety Valve programmes. Nor has the Council used any general funding reserves to support its DSG deficit position (because it can't but many Council's have). This is not therefore not a

'like for like' comparison but notwithstanding these points Sutton will start to become more of an outlier to other London Boroughs over the next few years at the current rate of spending. There were some positive signs of progress against the DSG management plan this year with a reduction in projected spend of about £2m with corresponding savings in the SEND transport budget but a considerable amount of work remains to put the Local area back into a sustainable financial footing.

5.10. It is not yet clear how the Government intends to approach the issue of national deficits on the high needs block but it is unlikely that there will be a crude 'bail out', rather there will likely be some sort of National Safety Valve programme where local areas are tasked with bringing down spend based on conditions set by the DfE. The DfE has written to local authorities requesting that all Local Authorities, "in the new year, and following publication of the schools white paper, produce a Local SEND Reform Plan, setting out how the local area will move to a new special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system built on the 5 principles - early, local, fair, effective and shared..... the government will also set out further details on our support for local authorities with historic and accruing deficits and conditions for accessing such support through the upcoming Local Government Finance Settlement. Support provided to local authorities will be linked to assurance that they are taking steps to make that system a reality, in conjunction with government confirming the details of SEND reform".

5.11. It is not yet clear whether the current SEND and AP Strategy of which the DSG Management plan is a part, meets the DfE's expectations however meetings will take place in January to discuss this ahead of the publication of the White Paper. A further update on this will be shared at a future Forum meeting.

Schools Block 2026/27

6. National Funding Formula (NFF) Factors 2026/27 (Appendix B)

6.1. NFF funding factors have been uplifted by the 2026/27 Sutton Schools Block Area Cost Adjustment, which is 1.09991.

6.2. The NFF funding factors have been adjusted to take account of the following grants, which are now rolled into the core funding:

- Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG)
- National Insurance Contributions (NICs) Grant

6.3. The following NFF formula factors have been adjusted to take account of the grants:

- Basic Entitlement
- FSM6
- Lump Sum
- Minimum Per Pupil Funding (MPPF) Values
- Increasing the baseline for each school, which is used to calculate funding protections for schools funded through the funding floor

6.4. Funding through the mainstream schools National Funding Formula (NFF) is increasing. In addition to the rolled in grants, nationally a 2.11% increase has been applied to the basic entitlement; FSM6 values and the lump sum factors. A 2.11% increase has been applied to the IDACI, low prior attainment (LPA), English as an Additional Language (EAL), mobility, sparsity and split sites factors. A 1.66% uplift has also been applied to the FSM factor in the NFF.

7. Schools Delegated Budgets 2026/27

7.1. The NFF 2026/27 has set a minimum funding guarantee (MFG) for the Schools Block between -0.5% and 0%. The Local Authority is recommending that school budgets are calculated based on 0%.

7.2. Sutton implemented the NFF in full in 2019/20, but has in the last couple of years made a change to the NFF Basic Entitlement to facilitate block transfers to the High Needs Block and to ensure growth for bulge classes. The basic entitlement adjustment this year is set out in Appendix G, and the MFG values are in Appendix H.

7.3. At the previous meeting the Schools Forum agreed, in principle, to transfer 0.5% of the total Schools Block allocation to the High Needs Block. In order to transfer the sum of £1.165m (0.5% of £233.186m).

7.4. Percentage and per pupil adjustments to the Basic Entitlement Factor are: .

Table 1 - NFF Formula Factor Values and 26/27 Uplift

Factor	25-26 NFF including ACA	original % uplift from 25-26	26-27 NFF including ACA
Primary basic entitlement	£4,233.08	5.60%	£4,470.03
KS3 basic entitlement	£5,966.15	4.83%	£6,254.09
KS4 basic entitlement	£6,726.50	4.82%	£7,050.42

Table 2 - Basic Entitlement Values - 0.5% Tfr to HNB and 0% MFG

Factor	Uplift Amendment %	0.5% TFR to HNB 0% MFG	Change v NFF £
Primary basic entitlement	4.60%	£4,427.84	(42.19)
KS3 basic entitlement	3.84%	£6,195.05	(59.04)
KS4 basic entitlement	3.83%	£6,983.86	(66.56)

See Appendix G for the impact of the adjustments on individual school allocations (anonymously and on aggregate).

8. De-delegation (Appendix C)

8.1. De-delegation has been applied to the 2026/27 calculation, to cover statutory school improvement duties, following the removal of the School Improvement Grant. The total value is £46,607, based on a per pupil rate of £5.4, from all LA maintained primary and secondary schools, as at the point of submission.

High Needs Block 2026/27

9. Budget Allocation

9.1. The use of the high needs national funding formula (NFF) is being suspended for 2026 to 2027. The Department for Education will be reviewing the high needs funding system for future years. For the financial year 2026 to 2027 the high needs block of each local authority's DSG is calculated on the basis of their DSG high needs block allocations for 2025 to 2026.

9.2. Additional funding is also rolled in equivalent to the funding allocated to local authorities in 2025 to 2026 through the:

- Consolidated Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG), with the 2025 staff pay increase element of that grant annualised
- Funding equivalent to the National Insurance Contributions (NICs) Grant and Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG) paid in respect of special units and resourced provision.

9.3. For 2026/27, the high needs funding allocations to local authorities will be published as part of the DSG allocations tables, with no separate allocations tables for high needs unlike in previous years

9.4. The 2026/27 High Needs Block Minimum Funding Guarantee has been set at 0%, as per guidance.

10. Financial Implications

10.1. Since 2018/19 the schools block funding for each local authority has been set by calculating notional allocations for each school according to the National Funding Formula (NFF) and these have then been aggregated and used to calculate a total allocation for each local authority. Actual individual school budgets for 2026/27 will continue to be determined by local formulae in consultation with the Schools' Forum. Local formulae can be different from the notional allocations.

11. Influence on the Council's Corporate Core Values and Objectives

11.1. One of the core values is partnership working. Setting the budget for the Dedicated Schools Grant, and considering related issues, is an important part of the budget process that fully involves schools as partners and particularly recognises the important role of the Schools' Forum.

12. Appendices

Appendix Letter	Appendix Title
A	Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Draft Budget 2026/27
B	National Funding Formula (NFF) Schools Formula Funding Factors 2026/27
C	De-delegation Table 2026/27
D	Local Authority Contribution to Statutory Duties 2026/27
E	Historic Commitments 2026/27 estimate
F	Growth Fund Allocations 2026/27
G	Impact on Basic Entitlement Adjustment 0% Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) 2026/27
H	Minimum Funding Guarantee Values at 0%

Appendix A - Draft DSG Budget 2026-27 V1

Description	25/26 Latest Budget £	25/26 Forecast £	25/26 Forecast Variance £	26/27 DSG Allocation £	26/27 High Needs Block No Growth Draft Budget Based on 25/26 Forecast Outturn £	26/27 High Needs Block No Growth Variance £	26/27 High Needs Block Growth Draft Budget £	26/27 High Needs Block Growth Variance £	26/27 High Needs Block Adjusted Draft Balanced Budget £	Commentary
Schools Block										
Primary Maintained Funding	39,467,324	39,467,324	0		38,337,244		38,337,244		38,337,244	Core funding for maintained primary schools (NFF)
Secondary Maintained Funding	15,392,100	15,392,100	0		16,108,880		16,108,880		16,108,880	Core funding for maintained secondary schools (NFF)
De-delegation	(48,524)	(48,524)	0		(46,607)		(46,607)		(46,607)	Funding for Schools Improvement/Monitoring
Secondary Growth	868,500	476,100	(392,400)		322,686		322,686		322,686	Growth funding relating to secondary schools and unplaced year 11
Total - Schools Block	55,679,400	55,287,000	(392,400)	54,722,203	54,722,203	0	54,722,203	0	54,722,203	DSG Allocation £55.94m less £1.17m to HNB
Central School Services Block										
Historic Commitments										
Contribution to combined budgets	15,000	15,000	0		15,000		15,000		15,000	Funding to social care - LSCP
Early Retirement Costs (pensions)	410,300	497,735	87,435		519,500		519,500		519,500	Costs of school staff that retired early (historical)
Depreciation of non current assets	218,200	218,200	0		218,200		218,200		218,200	Borrowing re: Opportunity Bases in 2012
Ongoing Functions										
Admissions Services	393,800	393,800	0		393,800		393,800		393,800	Costs of the schools admission service (Cognus)
Schools Forum Costs	16,000	16,000	0		16,000		16,000		16,000	Costs of Schools Forum including meetings, staffing support etc...
Independent School Fees (non SEN)	150,000	150,000	0		150,000		150,000		150,000	Contributions to fees for LAC pupils attending independent schools
Copyright Licenses	272,000	272,000	0		272,000		272,000		272,000	Fees set by Copyright Licensing Authority for all schools (paid centrally)
DSG Contribution to LBS Central Provision	619,200	632,100	12,900		619,200		619,200		619,200	Contribution from the DSG to support central provision in the LA
Total - CSSB	2,094,500	2,194,835	100,335	2,013,549	2,203,700	190,151	2,203,700	190,151	2,203,700	Requested reinstatement of 20% deduction to cover historic commitments - if approved, additional £101,800
High Needs										
Early Years - Place	191,000	191,000	0		191,000		191,000	0	191,000	Lump sum paid to Thomas Wall for Dragonflies base
Early Years - Top Up	275,000	275,000	0		275,000		275,481	481	275,481	Top up for individual pupils in EY settings
Portage Service	252,800	257,823	5,023		257,823		265,558	7,735	265,558	Playwise Service (a CIC) who provide portage (home-visiting educational services) for pre-school children with SEND and their families.
Autism Parenting Support Officer	37,500	37,500	0		37,500		37,500	0	37,500	
Primary mainstream	4,211,100	5,027,440	816,340		5,027,440		5,577,600	550,160	4,019,118	Top up for individual pupils (legacy) and additional support contracts
Primary Bases Maintained - Place	596,000	596,000	0		596,000		596,000	0	596,000	Place funding for maintained opportunity bases
Primary Base - All Schools	3,351,300	5,403,306	2,052,006		5,403,306		5,780,811	377,505	4,165,548	Additional Place and top up funding for maintained and academy opportunity bases
Primary - OLA	555,400	748,208	192,808		748,208		932,624	184,416	672,032	Top-up funding for Sutton pupils in OLA schools
Secondary Mainstream	1,662,800	2,200,402	537,602		2,200,402		2,567,936	367,534	1,850,408	Top up for individual pupils (legacy) and additional support contracts
Secondary Bases - Place and Top Up	1,179,000	1,112,652	(66,348)		1,112,652		1,269,329	156,677	1,269,329	Additional Place and top up funding for maintained and academy opportunity bases
Secondary - OLA	343,200	353,680	10,480		353,680		474,971	121,291	474,971	Top-up funding for Sutton pupils in OLA schools
Special Schools - Maintained - (Sherwood) Place	2,101,700	2,101,700	0		2,101,700		2,341,700	240,000	2,341,700	Place and pay and pension grant funding

Appendix A - Draft DSG Budget 2026-27 V1

Description	25/26 Latest Budget £	25/26 Forecast £	25/26 Forecast Variance £	26/27 DSG Allocation £	26/27 High Needs Block No Growth Draft Budget Based on 25/26 Forecast Outturn £	26/27 High Needs Block No Growth Variance £	26/27 High Needs Block Growth Draft Budget £	26/27 High Needs Block Growth Variance £	26/27 High Needs Block Adjusted Draft Balanced Budget £	Commentary
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Special Schools - Maintained - (Sherwood) Top Up	5,886,500	6,252,987	366,487		6,252,987		7,463,960	1,210,973	7,463,960	Top up and top up individual funding
Special Schools - Academies - Pension	398,300	398,300	0		398,300		398,300	0	398,300	Pay and pension grant funding
Special Schools - Academies	5,764,100	7,831,071	2,066,971		7,831,071		7,922,975	91,904	5,709,153	Top up, top up individual and place extra funding
Special Schools - OLA	2,551,100	3,352,400	801,300		3,352,400		3,665,623	313,223	2,641,382	Top-up funding for Sutton pupils in OLA schools
Non maintained Independent Provision	8,716,200	13,339,201	4,623,001		13,339,201		14,765,703	1,426,502	10,639,899	Non maintained or independent fees - including specialist and AP provision and tuition
Independent Tutoring Fees	1,714,100	1,570,000	(144,100)		1,570,000		1,485,077	(84,923)	1,485,077	Fees paid for Independent Tutoring Services
Alternative Provision - (Limes) Place	1,898,100	1,898,112	12		1,898,112		2,100,000	201,888	2,100,000	Place, top up, year 11 and pay and pension grant funding
Alternative Provision - (Limes) Individual	854,000	854,000	0		854,000		927,555	73,555	927,555	Top up individual and place extra funding
Alternative Provision - (STARS) Place	1,283,800	1,283,800	0		1,283,800		1,283,800	0	1,283,800	Place, top up and pay and pension grant funding
Alternative Provision - (STARS) Individual	92,600	92,600	0		92,600		126,872	34,272	126,872	Top up individual funding
Hospital Provision - (STARS)	281,500	281,500	0		281,500		281,500	0	281,500	Lump sum paid to STARS for children educated in hospital
Targeted Youth Service	110,000	110,000	0		110,000		110,000	0	110,000	Contribution to Targeted Youth Services to support preventative work
Mainstream College	1,479,200	1,656,292	177,092		1,656,292		1,727,059	70,767	1,244,488	Placement costs related to mainstream college placements for pupils with an EHCP
Specialist College	2,723,000	2,838,947	115,947		2,838,947		3,400,994	562,047	2,450,695	Placement costs related to specialist college placements for pupils with an EHCP
Therapies (Cognus)	4,224,500	4,624,500	400,000		4,624,500		4,763,235	138,735	3,432,301	Therapies provided to individual pupils (mainstream/base/special schools) by Cognus - 3% uplift
Therapies (Non-Cognus)	268,500	319,586	51,086		319,586		301,600	(17,986)	301,600	Therapies provided to individual pupils (mainstream/base/special schools) by other suppliers
SEN Travel Assistance	640,000	640,000	0		640,000		640,000	0	640,000	Contribution to SEN transport including travel training
Graduated Response Funding (Clusters)	429,800	448,300	18,500		448,300		512,710	64,410	512,710	SSAP Funding, SENCO Cluster Lead Salaries, provision of mapping software
Other Expenses	85,000	86,569	1,569		86,569		90,800	4,231	90,800	e.g. costs of equipment, interpreting costs etc...
Cognus Ltd - High Needs Services	2,066,600	2,066,600	0		2,066,600		2,230,866	164,266	2,230,866	Commissioning Agreement - HN consultancy services
Total - High Needs Block	56,223,700	68,249,476	12,025,776	60,229,603	68,249,476	8,019,873	74,509,139	6,259,663	60,229,603	DSG Allocation £59.1m plus £1.16m from SB (0)
Early Years Block										
Early Years - 3 & 4 Year olds	16,471,200	16,471,200	0		41,250,900		41,250,900		41,250,900	Core funding to schools, PVI, nurseries to deliver 3 & 4 yr old free entitlement (EY NFF)
Early Years - 2 Year olds	9,009,800	9,009,800	0		0		0		0	Core funding to schools, PVI, nurseries to deliver 2 yr old free entitlement (EY NFF)
Early Years - Under 2 year olds	10,124,600	10,124,600	0		0		0		0	Core funding to schools, PVI, nurseries to deliver 9mth to 2 yr old free entitlement (EY NFF)
Early Years - Central Expenses	711,000	711,000	0		0		0		0	Central provision - EYFE Manager and Predicable Needs funding
Cognus Ltd - Early Years Foundation	604,500	604,500	0		0		0		0	Central provision transferred to Cognus to provide EY advisory services

Appendix A - Draft DSG Budget 2026-27 V1

APPENDIX B

NFF 2026/27 - SCHOOLS FORMULA FUNDING FACTORS

[NFF Technical Note 2026-27](#)

NFF values include uplift due to incorporation of 2025/26 grants:

The National insurance contributions (NICs) grant and Schools Budget support grant (SBSG) funded in 2025-26 have been rolled into the baseline core funding

Basic Entitlement , FSM6, Lump Sum and the minimum per pupil funding values have increased to reflect the rolling in of these grants Sutton per pupil uplift, taking into account the above, is 2.39%.

		Unit Funding including Sutton ACA* (1.10036) 2025/26 £	Unit Funding including Sutton ACA* (1.09991) 2026/27 £	Increase incl. Sutton ACA 26/27 v 25/26 £	Increase incl. Sutton ACA 26/27 v 25/26 %
Area Cost Adjustment		1.10036	1.09991		
PUPIL LED					
BASIC ENTITLEMENT	Primary	4,233	4,470	237	5.6%
Per pupil funding	Secondary KS3	5,966	6,254	288	4.8%
	Secondary KS4	6,727	7,050	324	4.8%
DEPRIVATION FUNDING					
Number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals	Primary	545	555	11	2.0%
	Secondary	545	555	11	2.0%
Number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals 6	Primary	1,166	1,331	165	14.1%
Number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals 6	Secondary	1,711	1,897	186	10.9%
	Primary A	754	770	16	2.1%
	Primary F	259	264	5	2.1%
Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) Bands A to F (A = Highest, F = lowest)	Secondary A	1,045	1,067	22	2.1%
	Secondary F	374	379	5	1.4%
LOW PRIOR ATTAINMENT (LPA)					
Uses Early Years Foundation Profile (EYFSP) and Key Stage 2 (KS2) attainment data	Primary	1,293	1,320	27	2.1%
	Secondary	1,964	2,007	43	2.2%
ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE					
Number of pupils that have entered state education in England during the last 3 years, whose first language is not English	Primary	655	671	16	2.5%
	Secondary	1,755	1,793	38	2.2%
MOBILITY					
A pupil who in the last 3 years indicates an entry date which is not typical	Primary	1,062	1,083	22	2.0%
	Secondary	1,524	1,556	32	2.1%
SCHOOL LED, INCLUDING LOCAL PREMISES FACTORS					
LUMP SUM					
A lump sum for each school		159,662	167,956	8,294	5.2%
RATES					
Schools National Non-Domestic Rates			Various		
SPLIT SITE					
Schools based on more than one site - lump sum		59,419	60,605	1,186	2.0%
Additional distance funding - sliding scale to maximum		29,710	30,358	648	2.2%
Minimum Per Pupil Funding Levels					
Primary		4,955	5,115	160	3.2%
KS3		6,221	6,388	167	2.7%
KS4		6,831	7,018	187	2.7%

Appendix C - De-delegaton 2026/27 for School Improvement

School Name	Status	NOR October 24 (APT)	25/26 £	NOR October 25 (APT)	26/27 £	Increase £
Per Pupil Rate			5.26		5.40	
All Saints Benhilton CofE Primary School	VA	423	2,225	424	2,293	68
Beddington Infants' School	Foundation	237	1,246	232	1,255	8
Culvers House Primary School	Foundation	391	2,056	384	2,077	20
Devonshire Primary School	Community	657	3,455	652	3,526	71
Dorchester Primary School	Foundation	466	2,451	431	2,331	(120)
Foresters Primary School	Foundation	226	1,189	238	1,287	99
Hackbridge Primary School	Community	753	3,960	747	4,040	80
High View Primary School	Foundation	415	2,183	416	2,250	67
Holy Trinity CofE Junior School	VA	344	1,809	330	1,785	(25)
Muschamp Primary School and Language Opportunity Base	Foundation	583	3,066	547	2,958	(108)
Nonsuch Primary School	Foundation	183	962	177	957	(5)
Robin Hood Infants' School	Community	260	1,367	237	1,282	(86)
Robin Hood Junior School	Community	359	1,888	353	1,909	21
St Cecilia's Catholic Primary School	Academy conversion	430	2,261	0	0	(2,261)
St Dunstan's Cheam CofE Primary School	VA	384	2,020	352	1,904	(116)
St Elphege's RC Infants' School	Academy conversion	261	1,373	0	0	(1,373)
St Elphege's RC Junior School	Academy conversion	381	2,004	0	0	(2,004)
St Mary's RC Infants School	VA	256	1,346	254	1,374	27
St Mary's RC Junior School	VA	364	1,914	361	1,952	38
Stanley Park Junior School	VA	366	1,925	372	2,012	87
St Philomena's Catholic High School for Girls	Foundation	1,206	6,343	1,210	6,544	201
The John Fisher School	VA	916	4,817	901	4,873	55
		9,861	51,861	8,618	46,607	(5,254)
		2.4% uplift	1,037			
		26/27	46,607			5.4081 per pupil

Appendix D - DSG Contribution to LA Responsibilities 2026-27: 20260113

	2025/26	2026/27	Change	Comments
	£	£	£	
Education welfare service				
School Attendance	107,900	107,900	-	
Asset management				
Capital Planning (60%)	76,000	76,000	-	
Statutory/ Regulatory duties				
Training and Goverance	31,000	31,000	-	
Director of People's - 48% Childrens, 38% education	62,500	62,500	-	
Academies costs	21,900	21,900	-	
ICT costs re:schools	2,500	2,500	-	
Servelec contract (Cognus)	156,692	156,692	-	
Acting Strategic Lead for Education (50%)	77,000	77,000	-	
Education Development Lead (50%)	36,200	36,200	-	
SACRE	8,300	8,300	-	
Finance (50%)	39,200	39,200	-	
Total	619,192	619,192	-	

Appendix E - Draft DSG Budget 2026/27 - Historic Commitments - 20260113

Prudential Borrowing Costs - Summary of charges to DSG 2021/22 TO 2027/28

	2022/23 Budget £	2023/24 Budget £	2024/25 Budget £	2025/26 Budget £	2026/27 Budget £	2027/28 Budget £
Prudential Borrowing						
Greenwrythe Opp Base	96,238	96,238	96,238	96,238	96,238	96,238
Glenthorne ASD Unit	32,605	32,605	32,605	32,605	32,605	32,605
Stanley Park ASD unit	89,335	89,335	89,335	89,335	89,335	89,335
	218,178	218,178	218,178	218,178	218,178	218,178

Termination of Employment Costs 2025-26 forecast

Account(T)	Latest Budget	Actuals Mar-Nov	Forecast Dec-Feb	Forecast Total	2026/27 Budget
Annual Compensation Payments - Early Retirements Primary	288,900	183,259	72,506	255,765	288,900
Annual Compensation Payments - Early Retirements Secondary	223,500	144,523	56,195	200,718	223,500
Annual Compensation Payments - Early Retirements Special	7,100	4,884	1,826	6,710	7,100
	519,500	332,666	130,527	463,193	519,500
Average monthly payments - CSSB Primary				21,314	
Average monthly payments - CSSB Secondary				16,727	
Average monthly payments - CSSB Special				559	

Appendix F - Growth Funding FY 2026/27: 20260113

School	NOR AY25/26	Apr 26 - Aug 26 £	NOR AY25/26	Sep 26 - Mar 27 £	Year 11 Placements £	Total £
Carshalton Boys Sports College	30	37,019	30	51,806		
Carshalton High School for Girls			30	51,806		
Cheam High School			10	17,269		
Oaks Park High School	60	73,102	30	51,806		
					150,000	
Limes Year 11 Placements						
	90	110,121	100	172,687	150,000	432,808

Appendix G - Impact of Basic Entitlement Adjustment - 0% MFG - 2026/27: 20260113

Phase	NFF Basic Entitlement & 0% MFG £	Adjustment - 0.5% Tfr to HNB & 0% MFG £	Final Allocation £	Percentage reduction on NFF@BE
Primary	2,580,327	(11,910)	2,568,417	-0.46%
Primary	2,416,886	(11,825)	2,405,061	-0.49%
Primary	2,201,420	(11,433)	2,189,987	-0.52%
Primary	5,769,500	(28,456)	5,741,044	-0.49%
Primary	2,376,353	(11,460)	2,364,893	-0.48%
Primary	3,437,633	(18,314)	3,419,319	-0.53%
Primary	1,468,113	(6,517)	1,461,596	-0.44%
Primary	1,908,004	(8,764)	1,899,240	-0.46%
Primary	2,314,178	(11,208)	2,302,970	-0.48%
Primary	1,988,347	(9,860)	1,978,487	-0.50%
Primary	2,717,713	(14,269)	2,703,444	-0.53%
Primary	2,361,069	(12,247)	2,348,822	-0.52%
Primary	4,640,066	(24,438)	4,615,628	-0.53%
Primary	2,377,509	(10,786)	2,366,723	-0.45%
Primary	3,808,254	(18,314)	3,789,940	-0.48%
Primary	2,485,399	(12,107)	2,473,292	-0.49%
Primary	1,635,416	(6,686)	1,628,730	-0.41%
Primary	1,819,887	(7,163)	1,812,724	-0.39%
Primary	4,396,535	(20,983)	4,375,552	-0.48%
Primary	2,084,923	(10,084)	2,074,839	-0.48%
Primary	2,340,012	(5,211)	2,334,801	-0.22%
Primary	1,996,102	(9,270)	1,986,832	-0.46%
Primary	3,751,440	(18,259)	3,733,181	-0.49%
Primary	3,360,774	(15,365)	3,345,409	-0.46%
Primary	1,037,196	0	1,037,196	0.00%
Primary	1,487,973	(6,658)	1,481,315	-0.45%
Primary	2,110,857	(9,916)	2,100,941	-0.47%
Primary	2,294,112	(10,112)	2,284,000	-0.44%
Primary	2,420,706	(12,248)	2,408,458	-0.51%
Primary	1,982,693	(9,887)	1,972,806	-0.50%
Primary	1,685,967	(7,500)	1,678,467	-0.44%
Primary	2,200,039	(10,646)	2,189,393	-0.48%
Primary	1,481,582	(7,135)	1,474,447	-0.48%
Primary	1,996,594	(10,141)	1,986,453	-0.51%
Primary	1,502,907	(7,304)	1,495,603	-0.49%
Primary	2,036,392	(10,449)	2,025,943	-0.51%
Primary	2,367,923	(9,859)	2,358,064	-0.42%
Primary	1,530,711	0	1,530,711	0.00%
Primary	1,089,600	(3,905)	1,085,695	-0.36%
Primary	3,650,287	(17,725)	3,632,562	-0.49%
Primary	3,542,413	(17,107)	3,525,306	-0.48%
	100,653,812	(465,521)	100,188,291	-0.46%
Secondary	10,342,093	(51,745)	10,290,348	-0.50%
Secondary	9,958,664	(51,284)	9,907,380	-0.51%
Secondary	12,291,242	(67,766)	12,223,476	-0.55%
Secondary	10,343,374	(57,547)	10,285,827	-0.56%
Secondary	12,709,041	(64,964)	12,644,077	-0.51%
Secondary	8,106,677	(43,405)	8,063,272	-0.54%
Secondary	7,380,639	(43,099)	7,337,540	-0.58%
Secondary	10,558,845	(54,038)	10,504,807	-0.51%
Secondary	7,920,040	(39,006)	7,881,034	-0.49%
Secondary	9,220,466	(49,903)	9,170,563	-0.54%
Secondary	4,878,614	(28,776)	4,849,838	-0.59%
Secondary	6,909,121	(37,245)	6,871,876	-0.54%
Secondary	5,353,794	(30,975)	5,322,819	-0.58%
Secondary	7,585,799	(43,237)	7,542,562	-0.57%
Secondary	6,677,558	(39,358)	6,638,200	-0.59%
	130,235,967	(702,348)	129,533,619	-0.54%
Total Allocated	230,889,779	(1,167,869)	229,721,910	-0.51%
Total Allocations	230,889,779	(1,167,869)	229,721,910	
0.5% Transfer to HNB	0	1,165,931	1,165,931	
Growth Fund (Schools Block)	324,060	1,936	325,998	
De-delegation	46,607	0	46,607	
NNDR	1,925,694	0	1,925,694	
Total SB Allocation	233,186,140	(2)	233,186,140	

-0.50%

Appendix H - MFG Values at 0% 2026/27: 20260113

Phase	NFF Basic Entitlement, Growth, De- legation & 0% MFG £	Adjustment - 0.5% Tfr to HNB £
Primary	6,475	0
Primary	18,064	13,092
Primary	15,842	8,539
Primary Total	40,381	21,631
Grand Total		40,381
		21,631
Primary	3	2
Secondary	0	0

Report Title	SEND Hourly Rates
Meeting	Schools Forum
Date	13 January 2026
Chair	Jenny Sims
Report Author(s)	Jo Suchy, SEND Transformation Programme Manager / Senior Kieran Holliday, Director Education, Integrated Support and Safer Communities
Open/Exempt	Open

1. Background

- 1.1. A report was presented at the October Schools Forum meeting to discuss proposed changes being made to the SEND hourly rates system in Sutton, namely introducing a rate for Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) and teachers and a funding calculator to be used to support accurate costings by the SEND Team and other Cognus services. This piece of work was precipitated by a need for consistency and to ensure all schools understand the basis upon which the hourly rates apply.
- 1.2. These proposals were supported by Schools Forum, but as part of that discussion, Schools Forum discussed the value of the current rate that is paid for Teaching Assistants in schools and questioned why the rate was lower than the actual costs to schools. The Forum requested that this issue be looked at in terms of the options available and for this to be considered at the next Schools Forum meeting.
- 1.3. Following on from the October meeting a small working group including representatives from primary and secondary schools and Cognus and LBS staff was convened to consider the issues and potential ways forward. This included the viability of increasing the rate paid for TAs in Sutton, whether the local area should consider a new banding model, and other ideas of proposals that the group considered might support mainstream schools.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Schools Forum are asked to note the 2.4% uplift in hourly rates for TAs proposed in the 2026/27 budget.

2.2. The recommendations of the working group set out in the report and in relation to (i) revisions to the current funding model / banding Models (for further exploration), (ii) Potential changes to SEND processes to improve the current system.

3. Hourly rates for Teaching Assistants

- 3.1. The London Borough of Sutton currently operates a standard hourly rate for Teaching Assistants (TAs) supporting pupils which is £15.56 per hour. Therefore, the highest top-up for a mainstream EHCP in Sutton is £19,722.30, plus direct Therapies time (funded outside of the EHCP) (with some children funded at exceptional levels where greater than a 1:1 ratio is required). Funding is provided in line with Section F of a child's EHCP, regarding the provision outlined and adhering to the ratio of support identified. For example, a child who requires support at a 1:3 level for core subjects would have the £15.56 applied on a pro-rata basis for those hours (15 for a primary aged child), whereas a child who is able to work in a larger group would have this applied at that rate i.e., on a pro-rata basis of 1:6 for the 15 hours.
- 3.2. As shared with the Forum previously, informal benchmarking indicates that the rate that Sutton pays of £15.56 rate is considerably more generous than neighbouring boroughs who offer average rates of £13.34 (Croydon), £14.47 (Merton) and £12.31 (Surrey). Further work has been done to review these models, which are all based on a banded system which additionally offers an 'exceptional' band for pupils with the most complex needs within mainstream schools. For instance, in Croydon this is provided for children who are identified to meet the threshold to be placed in an Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) but who are not. The level of funding for children in these local authorities is more broadly based on both the contents of Section B and F and does not correspond so closely to hours of adult support. Put another way, banding models are less specific about the provision that will be provided in the EHCP because the funding is based on a description of need (section B) not a description of provision (section F).
- 3.3. Schools Forum noted that Sutton is more generous than other local areas in the rates that are paid but considered that benchmarking against other Local Authorities who are also paying less than the actual cost of provision would be the wrong way to benchmark. In response to this, the LA has reviewed what the financial impact of increasing the hourly rate to £17.74 would be (the rate cited in the meeting as the lower end of a TA hourly cost) if it was applied to all of the mainstream EHCPs in Sutton. Like for like the total spend on mainstream EHCPs would increase from £6.79 million to £8.21 million, and subject to further increase as the cost of mainstream EHCPs continues to grow.
- 3.4. Further benchmarking information was considered by the working group using the DfE high-needs benchmarking tool and which indicates that the total amount of top-up funding provided Sutton funds more generously to primary settings than the averages paid by Outer London authorities and when compared to our statistical neighbours (see Figure 1 below). For secondary settings Sutton is comparable to our statistical neighbours but lower than the

Outer London average. The significant reduction across these phases is likely to reflect the high number of base places we maintain in the primary sector which then reduces for secondary. Top-up funding for special schools in Sutton is above average, so is the top up per head paid to PRUs and AP settings, perhaps reflecting the relatively high number of pupils with EHCPs who attend these settings in Sutton. Given that this data is from the financial year 22/23 (the most updated available via the benchmarking tool) it should be treated with caution and as a 'sense check' only.

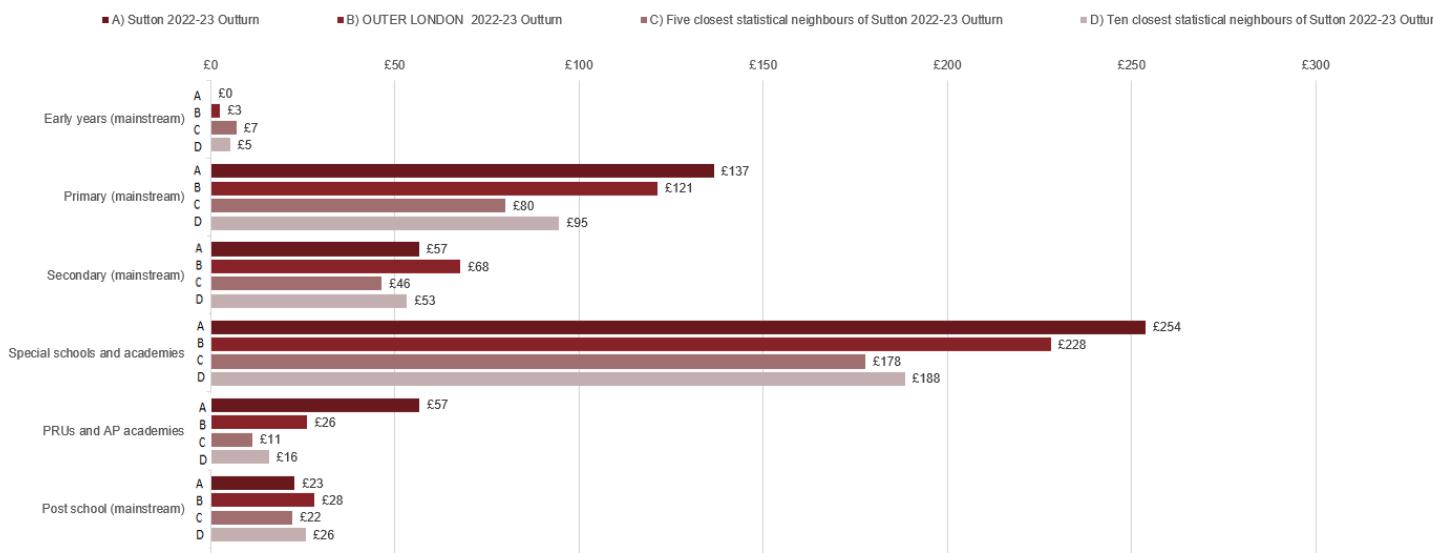


Figure 1. High needs amount per head of 2 to 18 population: top up funding split by phase and type of institution

- 3.5. Given the incredibly difficult financial position on the DSG (see revenue report), the LA cannot support such a significant increase in hourly rates based on the current funding model and this is not proposed for the 26/27 budget.
- 3.6. Instead, it is proposed that hourly rates are uplifted in line with the uplifts provided in other parts of the budget (2.4%) and that an alternative approach is sought that is more financially sustainable.

4. Banding models

- 4.1. The working group had a number of discussions about the idea of introducing a banding model in Sutton and the relative benefits and disbenefits of such an approach. As noted above Sutton allocates funding on the basis of the number of adult hours required to resource the provision set out within Section F of a pupil's EHCP. This is a different approach to many other local authorities who instead use a banding system to allocate funding to EHCPs. There are different banding models used nationally with some

determining the cost associated with an EHCP primarily based on the level of need detailed in Section B, and some primarily based on the provision requirements detailed in Section F.

4.2. Although funding is provided based on a band and total sum of money, these will equate to some extent into the equivalent of hourly top-ups, for example 10 to 14.5 hours, 15 to 19.5 hours per week, etc, with the costings being the mid-point of each range. However, even though this is how the costs are calculated there tends to be a focus on the needs of the child rather than the exact provision to be delivered enabling schools to use the funding they receive much more flexibly across all of their learners with SEND. In Surrey, funding provided for children through their EHCPs can be used more flexibly still with the Local Authority indicating that it can be used to resource staff training needs.

4.3. A Research Report written by the DfE in June 2022¹ looked into 10 local authorities that were seen to be managing their high needs budgets more effectively, with the intention of identifying positive practice that could be transferred to other areas and had the following to say about banding models. ‘These were seen initially to have supported greater consistency in LA decision-making about funding levels. However, they did not appear to be critical in supporting a more managed approach to high needs funding. Indeed, some of those interviewed felt that they might contribute to further inflation of costs’.

4.4. To understand what the financial impact of introducing a banding model might look like in Sutton, a high level exercise was undertaken to apply a simple banding model to mainstream EHCPs in Sutton to compare what a possible outcome *might be*. The table below indicates that the introduction of a banding model would not necessarily reduce spend significantly (this particular exercise indicated that it might cost around £130k more per annum than the current system based on the table below.

	BAND NAME	EYFS	KS1	KS2	KS3	KS4	AS	A2
	NCY	REC	1 TO 2	3 TO 6	7 TO 9	10 TO 11	12	13-14
10 TO 14.5	BAND 1	1	2	9	19	13	0	2
15 TO 19.5	BAND 2	7	13	51	50	32	3	3
20 TO 24.5	BAND 3	10	11	58	36	16	6	4
25 TO 32	BAND 4	14	53	116	59	28	4	3
32.5	BAND 5	11	56	44	14	10	0	0
EXCEPTIONAL / SHORT TERM NEED	EF A							
2 TO 1	EF B	0	4	2	2	2	0	0
		43	139	280	180	101	13	12

¹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62b1efead3bf7f0af5de3963/DFE_HN_Budget_case_study_report.pdf

4.5. In discussion with the working group the view was that introducing a banding model may not be the best option to consider at this time. Introducing such a change would be very significant, would require a significant amount of officer time to both consider the necessary financial modelling, resources, transition arrangements but also the consultation that would need to take place before such a change could be introduced.

4.6. Given that proposals for a national banding system and national standards have long been trailed ahead of the DfE White Paper (publication of which has been delayed but expected later in January), there was no recommendation from the working group at this stage to embark upon a significant change exercise until the implications of the white paper are better understood.

4.7. The working group suggested that a model in Sutton which included the following would be preferable:

- More flexibility for SENCOs to deploy support staff across all pupils with SEND
- Less adherence to 'hours of support' for a child which makes it challenging to reduce support as pupils no longer require this
- A move towards advice in plans being less specific, whilst still being clear about support levels, with the current information feeling overly prescriptive
- The inclusion of an exceptional and short-term band. This could be allocated for pupils where there is an escalation in needs e.g., related to SEMH needs, or which could be allocated when an EHCP is initiated for pupils who need additional transitional support but have a lower level of underlying need e.g., pupils with emotionally based school avoidance who may be out of school when a Plan is issued, or which could be provided for children who are identified as being more appropriate for a specialist setting but where this is not available and is not the preference of parents/carers
- A more robust annual review process in which it is easier to implement a change of costing to reflect changing provision requirements of children as they grow older and require less direct adult support

5. Potential changes to SEND processes to improve the current system

5.1. The working group considered a number of actions that the local area could consider moving forward to ensure that the SEND processes in Sutton related to the issuing and reviewing of provision are as robust as possible and meet the needs of children and schools most effectively.

5.2. Annual review processes: The annual review of an EHCP is part of the statutory process and schools are generally very adept at making changes to Section B of EHCPs through use of their own assessment and review processes. It is less common however to see suggested changes to Section F being made even when the provision listed is quite outdated and no longer being implemented by the school.

5.3. To test this, members of the working group conducted some 'dip sampling' activity - 15 EHCPs - in which two reviewers independently analysed Section F of EHCPs and, using the top-up calculator, identified the costing for each EHCP. These costings were compared and showed a high level of consistency with one another and were then compared against the current top-up value assigned to the EHCP. For the second point of comparison in the sampling taken there was much more variability, with the majority of EHCPs claiming more funding than the provision detailed in Section F seemed to require. In some instances, costing the EHCPs was challenging because the detail and specificity of provision was limited, in other instances provision had been removed, seemingly because it was no longer required, but no subsequent reduction in the costs had been applied. From the 15 EHCPs contained within the dip sample there was a differential of nearly £95,000 per year indicating a significant discrepancy. Whilst some of these involved costs which should potentially be made through Health contributions the majority seemed to be Education costs.

5.4. Although the sample was small, this feels like a significant area of enquiry for the SEND Transformation team to consider. This has been included as part of the work programme for the SEND transformation this year and officers and a wider exercise will be undertaken to expand the sample but also to consider any process improvements that will improve how changes through an annual review are captured and adjustments made accordingly.

5.5. The working group suggested the following next steps:

- Use the funding calculator so that EHC Coordinator can apply to amended EHCPs when returned through the annual review process and use this to suggest funding changes
- Roll out the funding calculator to schools so that they can use this to supplement their returns. Additionally, increase the expectation that an updated provision map is returned with annual review paperwork
- Create a checklist, in collaboration with Lead SENCOs, to be used at the Year 5 transition annual review, to support in the updating of EHCPs so that they are 'secondary ready'. This can be supported by EHC Coordinators and guidance they have already been given around provision changes that may be expected at this transition point
- Consider how to implement a system in which there is an expected, but not mandated, reduction in support at the point of each key stage change/over time, to reflect the lower levels of direct support a pupil requires

5.6. Exceptional funding: Sutton makes use of exceptional funding for children in mainstream with EHCPs only when there is a requirement for higher than full-time 1:1 support, with some learners being provided with a 2:1 ratio of support. Currently this means that around £340,000 is being spent on these exceptional support packages. This includes ten children in mainstream, four of whom are receiving over £30k. There are additionally three learners in a primary Base receiving this exceptional funding. This higher ratio of support is not subject to a review process as such, and similarly to other EHCPs the level of support

issued tends to remain the same. In other areas exceptional funding tends to be offered at a lower level, for a time limited period and for a wider range of needs and pupils.

5.7. The working group recommended that the LA should implement a new exceptional funding process which can be used in a time limited way and might include the following structure:

- o Granted at the time of issue e.g., for EHCPs for pupils who are not attending school who have low cognitive needs but high emotional needs and will require enhanced support to reintegrate
- o Granted at the point of issue for younger children with complex needs for a longer period of time, subject to review but expected reduction as they move towards Key Stage 2
- o Granted at the point of annual review for pupils whose needs have rapidly escalated but where there is a lower level of underlying need (following necessary discussions before invoking the AR so the correct evidence is shared as part of the process).

5.8. Furthermore the working group recommended that the LA review all current EHCPs where exceptional funding arrangements are in place and to review if this support was agreed transitionally, and if ongoing whether there remains evidence in place that the funding is still needed.

5.9. **Availability of lower-level capital funding:** The use of capital funds by schools has been well received over the last couple of years through the Special Provision Capital Fund, with many using this to enhance their environments and create new inclusive spaces within schools - the LA have invested over £6m in improving mainstream school environments to support inclusion over the last 5 years. However, capital funds could also be used for smaller projects involving the provision of equipment, technology, software licences etc. Most recently it is being used to support the pilot and subsequent roll out of the Verbo screening and therapies support tool. The working group considered that there is an opportunity to further expand the use of small amounts of capital funding to support schools in acquiring equipment to promote the use of assistive technology in the classroom as well as to update and improve their environment for pupils.

5.10. With respect to this, the working group suggested the following next steps:

- The LA provides SSAP with a capital funding budget to be allocated during meetings to settings either who have explicitly requested this, or where the professional group feel that the support a child needs would be most appropriately met through a capital contribution.
- This to tie in with work being completed by several schools, and led by Lead SENCOs, to evaluate the use of assistive technology in the classroom to improve pupil attainment and independence, looking to

- To take a proposal to the AMP steering group to seek agreement to this and to update the SSAP terms of reference and processes at that point, publicising the new offer to schools to raise awareness.

Report Title	Paving the Way Behaviour Specialist Funding
Meeting	Schools Forum
Meeting Date	13 January 2026
Chair	Jenny Sims
Report Author(s)	Helen Taylor, Head of Inclusion - Cognus
Open/Exempt	Open

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to request that the LA increase funding to the Paving the Way (PtW) team in order to increase capacity by 1FTE on a permanent basis.

An additional Behaviour Specialist role within the Paving the Way (PtW) team has contributed to reductions in exclusions and improved outcomes for children and families. However, the current funding model - linked to exclusion rates - creates a sustainability risk.

The Inclusion Service is therefore seeking £47,745 to sustain the additional capacity within Paving the Way.

Introduction

Paving the Way is an early intervention service which supports children aged 5-11 years with a range of needs, including social communication, attention and concentration differences, and anxiety. These barriers cause difficulties in engagement in learning and social interaction, and place pupils at a higher risk of suspension and permanent exclusion.

PtW provides holistic support, which includes a range of assessments to identify root causes to behaviour differences, a menu of support which includes one-to-one sessions with the child, at-home support through advice given to families, group work and the provision of strategies to support the child in all settings.

The team also forms part of the Cognus Autism diagnostic pathway, preparing case reports for Clinical Psychology. The role of the Behaviour Specialist is key in ensuring the right young people are referred to the clinical psychology for assessments and in supporting families whilst waiting.

The service continues to be well respected across the local area with professionals and families alike, for their professionalism, approach and outcomes as demonstrated in the overwhelmingly positive feedback received in Appendix A.

The Years 4-7 Project

The service was previously made up of 3.8 FTE with 0.2 FTE administration support. 1FTE supports circa 80 pupils annually.

Recognising the need to build capacity and identify and support the needs of children and families at key transition points, PtW capacity was increased by 1 FTE. This was agreed as a one-year pilot in the first instance, with a focus on supporting pupils from years 4-6 into year 7. These are pupils who have been identified as at risk of exclusion. Supporting transition and reducing exclusions have both been identified as local area priorities.

The additional Behaviour Specialist role was introduced within the Years 4–7 Project in November 2024, funded by statutory financial adjustments that schools must make if they permanently exclude pupils.

In September 2022, 'Warriors' groups were launched to provide Sutton pupils with targeted support from Behaviour Specialists. These sessions address key challenges such as building friendships, improving self-esteem, enhancing attention and concentration, and developing communication skills. Each group is carefully tailored to meet the individual needs of the children participating.

The group enables staff to gain a valuable insight into the children's behaviour and potential neurodivergence, which are formulated into detailed observation reports and suggested strategies.

At the scheduled review with the Schools Forum, the pilot had been operational for only seven months due to the time required for recruitment and training. While initial data was encouraging (see Appendix B), it was too early to determine the long-term impact of the targeted support. Given the service's strong track record and excellent reputation among primary schools and partners, including CAMHS, it was agreed to extend the project from April 2025 to March 2026 to allow for a full evaluation and evidence of the adapted model.

Three concurrent projects that are funded by the statutory aspects of exclusion readjustments, Cognus Inclusion, Cognus PtW and the EHIYS Schools Team, have all successfully contributed to the reduced exclusions over the past three years, which in turn lowered the deductions that financed the role. While this demonstrates a strong impact, it creates a sustainability challenge for continuing the position under the current funding structure, and the Behaviour Specialist contract is due to be terminated in March 2026.

The role of the Behaviour Specialist:

- Holds a rolling caseload of 20 CYP; supporting circa 80 pupils annually
- Sits on the case panel to triage referrals
- Undertakes full child development history assessments
- Develops and delivers one-to-one interventions

- Leads 'Warrior Group' interventions
- Facilitates family workshops
- Provides direct support to school staff and parents, offering strategies and signposting
- Produces high-quality reports that include supporting evidence to access the Autism Assessment pathway or referrals to CAMHS as appropriate
- Collaborates with multi-agency professionals, attending reviews and meetings as needed.
- Monitors and reviews service delivery to ensure sustainable progress
- Attends Primary Vulnerable Pupils Panel, to feed into discussions on pupils at risk of exclusion
- Liaises with primary SENCos around risk of suspension and exclusions
- Conducts follow-up observations and interventions with Year 7s to ensure sustainability of impact.

The team collectively holds a great deal of expertise, including a qualified teacher, clinical nurse specialist, SENCo and behaviour specialists with expertise in neurodiversity. This breadth of skill ensures that both one-to-one and group interventions are aligned with children's individual developmental needs, SEN profiles and social differences. Their advisory work is consistently practical, classroom-ready, and aligned with curriculum, inclusion, and SEND expectations.

Data Review and Impact

The addition of a Behaviour Support Specialist has had a clear positive impact across the PtW service. Despite receiving an average of 20-25 new support requests per month, they have significantly reduced the waiting list - from 79 children and young people awaiting support in February 2023, to 41 as of 23rd November 2025, a 48% decrease. As a result, waiting times have fallen from six months in June 2023 to four months by November 2025, meaning children, families and schools are able to access support needed at an earlier stage.

Academic Year	Active	Closed	Waiting List	Rejected
<i>2025/2026 Current YTD (Nov 25)</i>	74	25	49	13
2024/2025	64	211	87	59
2023/2024	81	213	112	63
2022/2023	81	79	78	34
2021/2022		126		42
2020/2021		126		9

2019/2020		62		4
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Data as of November 2025

In addition to noticeable improvements in children's emotional regulation and engagement, the Warriors groups have accelerated the process of gathering evidence for neurodevelopmental referrals. Of the 159 children who have participated, 103 or 65%, have so far been referred for further assessment through CAMHS or Cognus Clinical Psychology. PtW's ability to provide evidence-based referrals to Clinical Psychology is a significant advantage for a service facing exceptionally high demand.

'It is well documented that the waiting times for assessments for young people locally and nationally are considerably long. The consequence of this can also include deterioration of mental health. The PtW team helps reduce this possibility and wait times for young people within Sutton by referring directly to the Clinical Psychology service rather than referring to CAHMS, who would in turn refer to Clinical Psychology. With the team's expertise and experience, the information provided helps expedite the assessments and care of the young people within Sutton'

(Dr Anneline Flood, Nov 2025)

The primary goal of the Years 4–7 Project was to reduce exclusions. Among the pupils identified as being at high risk of exclusion and supported through the project, none have been excluded or received suspensions.

The increase in team capacity has enabled PtW to support more settings and reach a larger number of young people. This expansion has created opportunities to engage with two schools that had not previously worked with the service, attend Primary Vulnerable Pupils Panel meetings each month to provide feedback on pupils and offer specialist behaviour advice, and give five additional families the chance to participate in each round of workshops.

Proposal for Funding

The Inclusion Service is requesting £47,745 to continue to fund the role of Behaviour Specialist on an ongoing basis. This figure would require adjustment year on year to reflect cost-of-living increases.

The cost to education services of exclusions goes beyond pupil funding allocations; local authorities must fund places in pupil referral units (PRUs), which typically cost £18,000–£25,000 per pupil per year, compared to the £47,745 annual cost of retaining the Behaviour Specialist role. This contrast demonstrates that preventative intervention is significantly more cost-effective than funding alternative provision and

supports Sutton's focus to ensure children's needs are met at an earlier stage through early intervention and SEND support.

Beyond these immediate costs, research by the IPPR estimates that each permanently excluded pupil costs the public purse an additional £370,000 over their lifetime through healthcare, benefits, and criminal justice involvement. Excluded pupils are nine times more likely to be NEET, and GCSE and lifetime earnings are significantly impacted. By funding this role, the local authority avoids these escalating costs while improving outcomes for pupils and families.

Early intervention work is vital when working with neurodivergent pupils, as autistic pupils are twice as likely to be excluded compared to peers without SEND [1], whilst those with ADHD are 100 times more likely [2]. Permanent and fixed-term exclusions have risen by almost 60% in five years, whilst total exclusions have risen by only 4% [3]. A recent study found that 25% of autistic adolescents have been temporarily or permanently excluded at least once, and 39% of children with ADHD [2].

Strategic Justification

If the Behaviour Specialist role is ceased, impacts will include:

- Increased waiting lists and response times for children and families experiencing behavioural differences with suspected SEN
- Preventive support will decrease, leading to higher long-term service costs
- Reduced support for schools, particularly in the key years 4-7
- Reducing support for the diagnostic pathway, removing important evidence needed by Clinical Psychology
- Incidents, exclusions, and complex case escalations are likely to increase

Delays in supporting neurodivergent pupils, and those with behavioural differences and at risk of exclusion, not only put pressure on existing provision but risk diminished outcomes for pupils.

The Ambitious for Sutton Corporate Plan, London Inclusion Charter, 0-25 SEND, Children and 0-25 Young People Placement Commissioning Strategy and Alternative Provision Strategy all focus on the reduction of disproportionate exclusions of children with SEN, with successful transition recognised as a key component.

The current role has proven impact and cost-effectiveness. Retaining this position will ensure sustained improvements in children's outcomes, school inclusion, team capacity, and family support, while reducing demand on higher-cost services.

1. [Investigation of the causes and implications of exclusion for autistic children and young people](#)
2. O'Regan, F. (2009) Persistent disruptive behaviour and exclusion. *ADHD in Practice*, 1(1): 8–11
3. [Exclusions | Ambitious about Autism](#)
4. Totskia, V. and Gray, K.M. (2025) Exclusion and Truancy of Autistic Adolescents in a UK Population Representative Sample

Appendix A: Feedback

Family/Carer Feedback:

"Because of my daughter's relatively recent diagnosis I know very few parents with SEN children. I also work, so tonight's meeting was one of the very few occasions where I could meet parents with similar struggles. Thank you for providing me with that opportunity. It was empowering to know I am not alone in my struggles."

"If every parent could learn about the challenges each family or child encounters or may encounter, it would heighten parental awareness. Parents would then have solutions at hand when facing difficulties, or be better equipped to make sound judgments and take effective measures against future issues – ultimately benefiting numerous families."

"I Thought [Behaviour Specialist] was absolutely amazing, she was so attentive and understanding".

"We feel we have been listened to and fully supported throughout".

"[Behaviour Specialist] was very warm, kind and insightful".

"[Behaviour Specialist] and her team are professional, friendly and approachable. I felt supported and heard throughout my experience and cannot thank the team enough."

"[Behaviour Specialist] has been amazing throughout."

"I feel all our questions and worries have been listen to and answered."

"[Behaviour Specialist] has made my daughter feel extremely comfortable and was gentle and kind with her".

"[Behaviour Specialist] was approachable, professional and easy to talk to for both my daughter and us as parents. She put us at ease, and it really felt like she wanted to understand the full picture of our child. Thank you."

"[Behaviour Specialist] has been amazing, kind, informative, first class service and all done in such a kid and caring manor, really appreciated her support and I'm hoping she can help with my twins who are soon to start at [school]."

[Behaviour Specialist] was our case worker for this stage of the assessment process. Having the continuity of [BS], who previously carried out our other son's initial assessment, was so helpful. She was very kind, easy to talk to and understood what we have been experiencing. Her advice and support was much appreciated. Thank you!"

[Behaviour Specialist] has been excellent throughout the consultation with us. She has been efficient and helpful offering advice and information where necessary. She has been professional and really great throughout the process".

Feedback from schools:

"As always, the service provided by the Paving the Way team has been truly outstanding—consistently deserving of five stars. If I were responsible for line managing [her] and her team, I would not hesitate to recommend them all for a significant pay rise. Their unwavering commitment, deep and contextual knowledge, and exceptional professionalism set them apart from other services."

"The team's responsiveness and timeliness, under [Behaviour Specialist]'s leadership, ensure that support is provided exactly when it is needed, making a real difference for the children and families involved. What stands out most is their genuine dedication to putting the best interests of each child and their family at the heart of every case. Their approach, in particular [BS] in this instance, is both compassionate and thoughtful, reflecting a clear passion for the work they undertake and complete diligently."

"In every interaction, [Behaviour Specialist] demonstrated a remarkable ability to balance expert guidance with empathy, ensuring that families feel supported and fully understood throughout the process. It is a pleasure to work alongside such a skilled, like-minded and value-driven team."

"Such a wonderful service. I am new to the role of SENDCO and think this service is invaluable to worried parents."

"The child was invited to attend Paving the Way Warriors in order to observe and collect more evidence. Not only was this extremely beneficial for supporting the child, but it really helped with spotting signs that may not be seen in girls in a busy school environment".

Feedback from CYP involved in the Years 4-7 Project:

- I have found that I have got better at communicating and talking and getting ready for high school
- Because I'm less worried about going to high school, I enjoyed getting to know more people

- I am paying more attention.
- I enjoyed coming in and talking, and having fun
- it helped more with high school than primary, the games and the t-shirt
- It helped a tiny bit, i enjoyed the t-shirt designing i didn't find anything tricky
- better prepared for secondary, its fun
- I know what to expect and talk
- because I'm less worried about going to high school
- better prepared for secondary
- I know what to expect
- They helped with my emotions and the transition to High School
- They helped me with being more organised.
- getting ready for high school and
- It made me feel more confident
- I can now ignore things more often
- [it gave me] ideas on high school

Appendix B: Data and case studies

Years 4-7 Project - Data from Initial Stage

- 35 children in years 4-6 were supported between April 2024 and October 2024, a 30% increase on the previous year.
- Using data collated through Outcomes Star, 92% of pupils make progress as a result of the intervention. Post transition, 53% of pupils have made progress in the area of school and learning, 47% have made progress in managing routine, connected to this 36% of children have made progress with attention and organisation. These are all skills that support a successful transition and the ability to cope with the expectations and requirements of secondary school and readiness to learn. 53% of children have improved self-esteem and are connected to this ability to make and maintain friendships, which are critical in supporting children to feel a sense of belonging. 31% of children have made progress in how they behave.
- Warriors Group: 12 pupils attended, with 3 referred for neurodevelopmental assessments.
- Year 6 Transition: 10 pupils transitioned to Year 7, with 8 transitioning positively and attending well.
- Transition Support: A coffee morning for Year 6 parents had 60% attendance, helping parents feel more confident and reducing their anxiety.

Year 4-7 Project - 2025 (mid-year) Data Review

- Data shows that throughout the academic year of September 2023 to July 2024, 10 Year 6 pupils were supported by Paving the Way. With the implementation of the Year 4-7 project, the number of Year 6 pupils who have been supported from September 2024 to July 2025 has risen to 51 – a significant increase.

- Looking at the data at the mid-year point (25/26), so far, 32 children in years 4-6 have been supported in the Summer Term; this goes beyond the 35 children that were supported at this point of the project last year
- Of the 32 Year 4-6 children supported between April 2025 and October 2025, service outcomes demonstrate that 94% of pupils make progress as a result of the intervention. Post support, 56% of pupils have made progress in the area of school and learning, 47% have made progress in managing routine; connected to this, 39% of children have made progress with attention and organisation. These are all skills that support a successful transition and the ability to cope with the expectations and requirements of secondary school and readiness to learn. 59% of children have improved self-esteem and connected to this the ability to make and maintain friendships (which is critical in supporting children to feel a sense of belonging). 42% of children have made progress in how they behave.
- Family holiday workshops on 'Managing anxiety through play', 'Back to school', 'Managing emotions', 'Summer Fun' have been held since April 2025. Of the 60 families attending, 60% were Years 4-6

Year 6 pupils transitioning to High School

- 18 pupils attended the Warriors group. For each, families and schools were provided with strategies and/or signposting to sustain support.
- 11 children were referred onto and accepted for neurodevelopmental assessments.
- 12 of the children attended a specific Transition Warriors group, supporting highlighted Year 6 pupils. The support of this group covered: understanding timetables/ organisation, internet safety, managing emotions, and making new friends. PtW collaborated with a High School Pastoral lead and Internet Safety specialist, co-delivering a session each.
- A transition-focused parent support coffee evening for Year 6 families was held in June 2025 to ensure successful transitions to secondary school. A further aim was for the school/parents to better understand pupil's individual needs; provide guidance; build relationships and share key information to support families during the process.

30 parents attended and reported feeling more confident in their ability to prepare their children for high school, having a better understanding of the social and emotional shifts their child may face and being more confident at strategies they could use to support them. They also reported reduced anxiety as a result of meeting other parents in an informal setting as it provided an

opportunity for shared experiences and support. Resources/info packs were shared with parents through email and in person on the day.

Exclusion data:

- September 23 – July 24, of the 10 children supported, 0 have had a suspension
- September 24 – July 25, of the 51 children supported, 0 have had a suspension

Outcomes

- Year 7 Parents were contacted in October 2025 to follow up on PtW pupils' transition, [Y7 transition - parent feedback \(2025\)](#)
- Year 7 SENCos were contacted in October 2025 to follow up on PtW pupils' transition [Y7 transition - school feedback \(2025\)](#)
- Any pupils highlighted in the above surveys as not managing the transition are offered a class observation, pupil voice session and further strategies
- The service is able to use the following tools to support their assessments and pupil outcomes
 - Outcome Star (assessment tool to provide pupils distance travelled)
 - CAMHS screeners (support requests for further neurodevelopmental assessment)
 - Studybugs (access attendance and exclusion data)

TW Year 4-7 Project Case Study 1 – Year 6 Pupil (July 2025)

- Objective:
To extend the PTW model to support pupils in Years 4–6 and Year 7, improving understanding of children at risk of suspension and ensuring successful transitions to secondary school.
- Referral Summary:
A Year 6 pupil was referred due to persistent challenges with attention, concentration, emotional regulation, and physical/verbal incidents in school. Despite support from multiple interventions, concerns escalated during the spring term, resulting in four fixed-term exclusions and significant dysregulation in both classroom and playground environments.
- Assessment & Interventions:
 - Multi-agency assessment involving school staff, clinical mental health specialist, and parent

- Assessment tools: Class observation, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), and parent-school consultation
- Key interventions:
 - 1:1 emotional support sessions
 - Access to external behaviour support services
 - PTW Transition Warriors Group (6 sessions)
 - 1:1 clinical input focusing on reflection and regulation strategies
 - Mid-term transfer to a new primary school
 - Part-time timetable implemented to support emotional regulation and engagement
- Key Outcomes:
 - Reduced Suspensions: From four fixed-term exclusions before intervention to one during the intervention period
 - Improved Emotional Insight: The pupil developed the ability to reflect on and discuss emotional responses more constructively
 - Increased Engagement: Demonstrated improved peer interactions and emotional vulnerability in the new school environment
 - Boosted Self-Esteem: Participation in group work increased confidence and use of positive coping strategies
 - Positive Home Impact: Parent reported increased happiness and openness at home
- Exit Strategies (July 2025):
 - Pupil to attend summer school to aid transition to secondary education
 - Named adult identified at secondary school to provide relational and emotional support
 - Ongoing monitoring via the Secondary Vulnerable Pupil's Panel
 - Continued observation of attention, emotional regulation, and peer relationships
- Conclusion:

This case highlights the value of early, coordinated multi-agency intervention. The pupil made clear progress in emotional regulation, behaviour reflection, and peer relationships. The PTW model was instrumental in supporting a smoother transition to secondary school for a high-risk pupil.

PTW Year 4-7 Project Case Study 2 – Year 6 Pupil (July 2025)

Objective: Extending the PTW Model to Support Years 4–6 and Year 7

Focus: Reducing risk of suspension and supporting successful transition to secondary school

Background: A is an articulate and academically able pupil with a diagnosis of dyslexia. Despite strong attainment, she experiences significant challenges around emotional regulation, anxiety, and social communication. These difficulties often present as morning distress, heightened emotions, and friendship conflicts. A demonstrates sensory sensitivities and benefits from predictable routines and trusted adult relationships.

Without targeted support, A's anxiety and dysregulation placed her at risk of school avoidance and emotional crisis, particularly as she approached transition to secondary school.

Intervention: A participated in the PTW Transition Warriors programme, designed to build resilience, emotional literacy, and social confidence in pupils preparing for secondary school.

Key supports included:

- Nurture Breakfast and daily emotional check-ins to reduce morning anxiety.
- ELSA sessions focused on self-esteem and coping strategies.
- Social skills group and use of sensory tools for regulation.
- Parent and SENCo collaboration with the receiving secondary school.
- Referral to Cognus Autism Pathway for further assessment.

Outcomes:

- Improved emotional regulation: A arrives calmer and more settled, using breathing and grounding techniques learned in PTW sessions.
- Enhanced social understanding: She demonstrates greater awareness of peer relationships and uses adult mediation when needed.
- Increased confidence and engagement: Actively participates in learning, particularly when using assistive technology.
- Successful transition planning: Engaged positively with PTW transition activities and is more open to change.
- No exclusions recorded before or during intervention.

Impact: A's progress evidences the preventative impact of the PTW model in reducing anxiety-related behaviours and supporting positive emotional development before secondary transition. Early, structured intervention led to improved regulation, engagement, and school belonging, ensuring a smooth and supported transition pathway.

Report Title	Early Years Entitlements Funding Formula Consultation 2026-27
Meeting	Schools Forum
Meeting Date	13 January 2026
Chair	Jenny Sims
Report Author(s)	Laura Devereux, Head of Early Intervention Service
Open/Exempt	Open

1. Summary

- 1.1. On 15th December 2025, the DfE announced the local authority level hourly funding rates for the financial year 26/27. Sutton will receive an uplift of 2.3% for 3 and 4 year old rates and 0.4 % for 2 year old rates. The rate for under 2's has remained the same as 25-26. The DfE have also confirmed that Local Authorities must increase the total amount of funding that is passed through to providers from 96% in 25-26 to 97% in 26-27, reducing the centrally retained funding to 3% in 26-27.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To consult with providers that no changes will be made to the funding formula for 2026/27 given that a national consultation is taking place later in the year

3. Allocation and Funding Rates

National Funding Rates

- 3.1. The funding rates allocated to Local Authorities, before any local funding formula is applied and including the 3% that Local Authorities are allowed to retain, are as follows:

	26/27 hourly rate	25/26 hourly rate	Change
Under 2's	£13.94	£13.94	£0.00 (0%)
2 year olds	£10.29	£10.25	£0.04 (+0.4%)
3 & 4 year olds	£7.22	£7.06	£0.16 (+2.3%)
Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)	£1.15	£1.00	£0.15 (+15%)
MNS rate	£6.33	£6.10	£0.23 (+3.77%)
Disability Access fund (DAF)	£975 (Annually)	£938 (annually)	£37 (+3.94%)

Local Funding Rates

3.2. By applying the pass through rates to the *current* funding formula as detailed above, the local area early years rates for 26/27 would be:

	26-27 funding rates	25-26 funding rates	Difference
Under 2's base rate	£13.19	£13.06	£0.13 (+1%)
2 year old base rate	£9.61	£9.73	£0.12 (+1.25%)
3 & 4 base rate	£6.67	£6.55	£0.12 (+1.83%)
Quality Supplement (3&4 only)	£0.27	£0.27	£0.00 (0%)
Deprivation supplement	£0.21	£0.21	£0.00 (0%)
Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)	£1.15	£1.00	£0.15 (+15%)
MNS rate (applied to the first 15 hours)	£6.33	£6.10	£0.23 (+3.77%)
Disability Access fund (DAF)	£975 (Annually)	£938 (annually)	£37 (+3.94%)

3.3. The Local Authority could consider making changes to the local funding formula set out above, however, following the expansion of the Early Years Entitlement Funding in 2025-26, the Department for Education have stated that they will be carrying out a national consultation on the Early Years Entitlement Funding in Summer 2026.

3.4. On this basis, the LA is not proposing to make any changes to the funding formula to early years providers in anticipation that national changes may come into force in 2027-28.

3.5. Instead it will make the mandatory changes to the funding formula values that delivers an increase in the pass through rate to 97%.

3.6. The effect of this will see a decrease in the funding that the LA will retain centrally in 2026/27 due to the 1% increase in the pass through and the 0% increase in the local authority funding rate for under 2's. As such there will be a reduction in the central funding the LA retains for 26-27 of 10.54% compared to 25-26.

Central Funding 26-27	Central Funding 25-26	Difference
£1,197,991.22	£1,324,251.65	-£126,260.43 (-10.54%)

We will be able to absorb this decrease in the central funding because of capacity within the budget and don't expect this to impact service delivery although may restrict expansion of support services. The new budget will be presented at the February Schools forum.

- 3.7. The council will continue to monitor the uptake of funded places and increase support to the sector to increase funded places, ensuring we continue to meet the statutory duty to provide adequate numbers of childcare places.
- 3.8. We will share a questionnaire with providers to express their preferred proposal And collate the findings and share financial modelling to be considered at the next schools forum in February before final rates are published to providers.

4. Influence on the Council's Corporate Core Values and Objective

- 4.1 One of the core values is partnership working. Setting the budget for the Dedicated Schools Grant, and considering related issues, is an important part of the budget process that fully involves schools and Early Years Settings as partners and particularly recognises the important role of the Schools' Forum.

Report Title	Capital Report
Meeting	Schools Forum
Meeting Date	13 January 2026
Chair	Jenny Sims
Report Author(s)	Jack Cutler, Head of Pupil Based Commissioning
Open/Exempt	Open

1. Summary

1.1. This report provides an update on capital funding and further information on pupil place planning and any capital implications arising.

2. Recommendations

2.1. To note the summary of developments against the primary, secondary and special expansion programmes.

2.2. To note the intention to establish a school organisation plan steering group, to report into the Schools Forum, to provide recommendations on managing falling rolls within Primary Schools.

3. Background and Key Information

Basic Need Capital

3.1. The overall expansion programme costs (below) have been adjusted to reflect the latest position but remain similar to those last reported to Schools Forum in January.

	Previous estimate (Oct '25) £m	Current estimate (Dec '25) £m
Primary expansions	81.1	81.1
Secondary expansions	100.2	100.6
SEN expansions	22.0	25.1

Capital Maintenance Programme: 2025/26 programme

An application process commenced in October 2024, with the AMP steering group meeting in January to confirm allocations. The agreed programme value was £1,010,000. The final DfE allocation to Sutton was £1,186,060. Considering the negative balance brought forwards from 24/25, the contingency for emergency winter works was -£2,797. The current value of agreed emergency works is £44.4k, resulting in a current carry forward shortfall to the 26/27 programme of £43k. The shortfall carried forward into 26/27 will reduce the variable capital in 26/27 accordingly.

Capital Maintenance Programme: 2026/27 programme

The application process opened 13 October 2025, where LA maintained schools were invited to submit applications for capital investment covering school conditions works. The value of grant funding is estimated at £1.2m, with a current estimated balance of -£43k brought forward from 25/26, resulting in an available budget of approximately £1.161m. Applications received total £1.9m in value and so projects will need to be prioritised accordingly. Some projects will require match funding, or require rephasing into the 27/28 or later capital maintenance programmes. The Asset Management Plan Steering Group will consider and agree the 26/27 programme when it convenes at the end of January 2026.

Place Planning - Secondary Programme

3.2. September 2025 pupil offers were higher than the September 2024 offers as expected. 3523 offers were made on national offer day, against 3441 offers in September 2024 (an increase of 82 places). Although there are falling rolls in the primary sector, demand for secondary school places are not forecast to reduce back to levels that can be accommodated within current school PANs until 2028/29.

3.3. For September 2025 the following bulge classes were agreed

- Carshalton Boys - 30 places
- Oaks Park High School - 50 places

Total - 80 places

3.4. For September 2026 the following additional bulge class places are available:

- Carshalton Boys - 30 places
- Carshalton Girls - 30 places
- Cheam High - 20 places
- Oaks Park High School - 50 places
- Overton Grange - 30 places

Total: 160 places

Based on the latest application data, not all of these places will now be required; following the latest School Capacity Survey analysis, discussions will take place with Headteachers in January to finalise where additional places will need to be provided. Given the level of surplus capacity sitting within a secondary school in September 2025, it is likely that only 110 of the additional places available will be required. The capital investment has already been made across these schools should the additional places be needed, as agreed in December 2022 as part of the additional places agreements.

Place Planning - Primary Programme

- 3.5. Officers continue to discuss with schools options for permanent reductions in primary places, and school organisation changes, with consideration based on a variety of different factors including where pupils live, where birth rates have fallen most significantly, parental preferences and the location of delivered and planned housing developments.
- 3.6. Regarding Reception admissions for September 2025, offers were lower than in the previous year, and corresponding September 2025 pupil numbers were also lower. The Local Authority will continue to work with schools to manage the increasing surplus places resulting from these falling numbers. A workshop was held on 24 September with primary schools, with a recommendation to establish a school organisation plan steering group, reporting into the Sutton Schools Forum. This steering group will meet later in January to agree terms of reference and consider options for school organisation changes.
- 3.7. No bulge classes were needed for September 2025, or for the foreseeable future. A school organisation plan, with a focus on managing falling rolls, is currently being developed that will establish clear priorities in Sutton for how falling rolls across the local area could be managed.

Place Planning - SEND Programme

- 3.8. Notwithstanding the actions the council has taken to create additional specialist capacity in the borough, as stated above, the demand for specialist places continues to grow and most of the state funded specialist provision in the borough is now largely full. As a result, the council has commissioned the following additional places for September 2026:
 - 10 Places - Carew Academy
 - 16 Places - Avenue Primary school ASD resource provision
 - 24 Places -Sherwood Park School
 - 6 places - Oakfield Resource Provision (Woodfield School)
- 3.9. Capital funding has been agreed with schools to support these additional places; Expenditure against these projects will be reported against the SEND expansion programme.
- 3.10. In addition to these places, an additional 42 post-16 and post-19 provision places have been secured at Orchard Hill College, at the Life Centre site. The provision opened November 2025.

- 3.11. The Local area has now received £18.2m between 2018/19 to 2025/26 through Special Provision Capital Funding (SPCF) allocations. The vast majority of this has been distributed to schools and other education settings through an application process overseen through a steering group of school headteachers and local area SEND representatives and officers. Almost all of this funding has now been allocated to projects across schools, and other education providers, across the mainstream and specialist sectors. Any further funding allocated through round 10 will be allocated from more general Basic Need funding, which can also be used to support sufficiency projects across SEND provision.
- 3.12. The SPCF round 10 application window is currently open for schools and early years settings to bid for funding through. The AMP steering group will convene late January 2026 to consider these applications.

Place Planning - Free School Programme

- 3.13. There remains one ongoing free school proposal in the borough - Sutton Free School 2 - which has now been named the Angel Hill Special Academy. This project is led by the Department for Education (DfE) to deliver a new 96 place Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) special school on the proposed site of the disused all weather pitch at the Rosehill site - to be run by the Greenshaw Learning Trust (GLT). Planning consent for this school was granted on 7 February 2024. The opening date of the new building is now confirmed for September 2027, with construction due to commence imminently.
- 3.14. Sherwood Park school opened a new provision at the Carew Manor site for 25 places in September 2025. This provision will open a further 24 places in September 2026, and a further 12 places each year until all year groups are in place at the school, up to year 13.

4. Implications

- 4.1. The Council's capital budgets have been updated to reflect committed expenditure.

5. Appendices

Appendix Letter	Appendix Title
N/A	N/A