



CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM
Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting
held on Wednesday 15th October 2025
at 8.00am at Leyes Building

Present:

Dave Hewitt (Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representative) Chair, Paul Laycock (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), Jemma Dunne (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), Andrew Daly (Academy Representative), Melissa Boyes (Academy Representative Substitute, deputising for Ian Yapp), James McGann (Academy Representative Substitute, deputising for Mark Hassack), Andrew Robinson (Academy Representative Substitute, deputising for Gail Brown), Adam Booker (Special School Representative)

*The meeting was quorate with **8 Representatives** present (quorum 40% of the total membership equating to 6 members).*

In attendance:

Martyn Kelly (Director Children's Services CYC), Maxine Squire (Assistant Director, Education, Skills and SEND, CYC), Richard Hartle (Principal Accountant, CYC) and Helen Marshall Groot (Head of Governor Services, CYC, Coordinator and Clerk)

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Dave Hewitt was formally confirmed as Chair of York Schools Forum for a term of one year.

James McGann was formally confirmed as Vice Chair of York Schools Forum for a term of one year.

2. Welcome / Apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Jonny Uttley (Academy Representative), Helen Winn (Academy Representative), Chris Nichols (PRU Representative), Ken Merry (16-19 representative), Tracey Roberts (PVI Early Years Representative) and Cllr Robert Webb (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education).

3. Membership Update and Constitution Review

Previously distributed.

Forum members noted the changes in membership.

4. Minutes of the School Forum Meeting 3 July 2025

Previously distributed.

The minutes of the meeting held 3 July 2025 were agreed to be a true and accurate record and were duly noted as approved.

5. Matters arising not on the agenda

There were no matters arising

6. Safety Valve Monitoring Report

Previously distributed.

Maxine Squire presented the Safety Valve (SV) monitoring report, which provided the context in which the request for the 0.5% top slice would be presented. The Local Authority (LA) was now in the final year of the SV agreement which had been triggered by significant deficit of the High Needs Block (HNB) in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The deficit had been deemed above the level that the Department for Education (DfE) considered safe to be operating.

The deficit on HNB had been accrued quickly due to a rapid increase of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and other contextual factors driving changes. York rapidly went into a position of significant overspend on the HNB, which was similar to a number of LAs nationally. It was noted that 35 other LAs were currently in SV agreements.

Maxine Squire reported that York had been successful in meeting the terms of SV agreement. A prudent approach had been taken, with the income from the SV funding invested into bringing down the cumulative deficit and overspending halted. The key was now to not return to a deficit position. Through the actions taken to balance the budget, no contributions had been asked from schools to date. While it was acknowledged that national change was required in funding, the LA had a responsibility to also be prudent in its own system. The disapplication would be requested for the next three years to solve systemic issues and to build more resilient in city provision.

Maxine Squire continued, explaining that in 2019 City of York Council (CYC) commissioned IMPOWER for a review, who at the time had placed the LA in the top 10 LA nationally for management of SEND, however the subsequent Ofsted inspection had disagreed with this assessment. The commencement of the global pandemic in 2020, which resulted in numerous lockdowns, and priority given to the areas Ofsted had identified needed to be addressed had impacted the LA's ability to fully embrace the recommendations made by IMPOWER. The recommendations were noted as; improving support for SEMH needs; strengthening SEN Support Plans; changing the conversation to embed strengths-based practice and, supported transitions to manage peaks in need around change points.

Maxine Squire explained that these recommendations were all areas that could be moved forward however, required systemic change. Through every consultation with parents and carers from 2019 onwards, enhanced resource provision (ERP) had repeatedly been highlighted as a preference. It would be important to look at how to get the most out of the city's ERP capability and add to it.

Looking at the section 19 requests there was a clear need for a change, particularly in secondary schools. Absence in secondary schools in York was currently the second highest in Yorkshire and the Humber, and there was a concerning cohort of severely absent pupils, noting that there were 606 pupils in the city with attendance below 20%. The innovative work of regional colleagues and the strength of adaptations being implemented in maintained primary settings were briefly overviewed.

Martin Kelly explained that the majority of young people in York achieved exceptional outcomes however it was important to focus on what sat underneath those statistics and look at how to support every child. The city could not continue to do more of the same and expect a different outcome.

Maxine Squire highlighted from previous discussions, that the purpose of the disapplication would not be to prop up the deficit, but to reinvest in the city for impactful change. The post safety valve plan included creating revenue to make the changes and provide parents and carers with more confidence in the system.

Forum members noted that following the previous Schools Forum meeting, a working group had met and held productive discussions on the use of the money generated from the disapplication.

A forum member added that while there was clearly work to do on closing the disadvantaged gap it was not as linear as comparing primary to secondary schools. A discussion followed relating to the different contexts across the neighbourhoods in the city, and there were schools performing well in areas of disadvantage. Maxine Squire explained that a forensic look at what was happening in neighbourhoods and the stories sitting behind the schools would be necessary, as there were examples of schools that were artificially engineering their intake.

In response to a question Maxine Squire explained that this was through a number of methods, including using PAN and having conversations with certain families when places were allocated. These were for both SEND and non SEND pupils. In response to further queries on whether this was due to resource to support need, Maxine Squire explained that there were a number of drivers. It was noted that resources in all schools were stretched.

Martin Kelly explained that the reality was that the system was failing a substantial amount of children and a system wide response was required. Further robust discussion followed relating to the assertions made regarding secondary schools with several forum members in disagreement that secondary schools were not effective in the city. The position had been laid out strongly, framed on the basis that there was an opportunity to make meaningful changes.

The Chair noted that there was a wider discussion to be held regarding the concerns raised and it was appropriate that these be picked up through YSAB.

Martin Kelly left the meeting at 8:45am

7 Schools Block top slice for High Needs

Previously distributed.

Richard Hartle presented the paper which briefly explained the current position, consultation questions, the decisions required by Schools Forum and what happened next depending on those decisions.

7.1 Receive Outcome of Consultation

Previously distributed.

Richard Hartle explained that the consultation had run from July to the end of September 2025. There had been two completed responses, however it was noted that Headteachers in multi academy trusts had indicated that their CEOs would be responding on their behalf via the forum. The comments from the formal responses were noted and there were no questions.

7.2 Formal approval of 0.5% top slice from Schools Block 2026-27

Forum members referred to the recommendations in the item 7 paper 'HNB Transfer'.

- To agree to the local authority's request for a 0.5% transfer from the schools block to the high needs block for 2026/27,
- Regardless of the decision at a. (as the local authority may still decide to pursue a transfer if the Schools Forum votes against), consider whether the 0.5% transfer should be made under option 1 or option 2 as set out in Annex 2,
- Comment on the local authority's proposed use of the transferred funds to support the development of locality inclusion clusters as described at Annex 3.

It was agreed that recommendations B. and C. be addressed first as decisions on these items may impact the vote on A.

The Chair explained that as previously highlighted, a small group of colleagues had met to hold initial discussions about how the funds might be used. This was broadly agreed to be focused two fold, firstly to reduce number of children leaving the city for specialist provision and secondly to reduce pressure on SEMH provision.

Resolved: Forum members were agreed that when voting on recommendation A, that this was on the basis that the money would be reinvested and used proactively, broadly for the purposes previously discussed rather than paying off the debt.

With regards recommendation B. forum members noted that the LA's preference was Option 2, which was more equitable. Richard Hartle highlighted that both options would need to be presented to the Secretary of State.

A forum member asked, given the encouragement to move to the National Funding

Formula, whether the disapplication would be accepted. Maxine Squire responded that it was very likely to be accepted as York were a Safety Valve authority.

Resolved: Forum members unanimously agreed that regardless of the decision at A. the 0.5% transfer should be made under option 2.

The Chair asked forum members to vote on recommendation A.

Resolved: Forum members voted, by majority, to agree to the local authority's request for a 0.5% transfer from the schools block to the high needs block for 2026/27

Votes were recorded as;

For: 3 Maintained School representatives, 3 Academy representatives, 1 Special School representative.

Against: 1 Academy representative

7.3 Next steps

DfE disapplication request template had been previously distributed.

Richard Hartle explained that following the Forum's approval, the disapplication request would now be sent to the Secretary of State by 17 November, requesting to use option 2 rather than the default position of option 1. Forum members requested that it be clear with the application that Schools Forum have supported on the basis of option 2.

Maxine Squire explained that a return on SEN capital had been requested by the DfE. There would be an allocation of capital to increase SEMH places at Huntington ERP and Joseph Rowntree. A grant agreement had been put in place with Inspire to grow up to 40 places from 20. The forum would need to see how the allocation of places benefited the system as a whole for future disapplication requests.

Maxine Squire continued that there would be a focus on neighbourhood working, bringing in different partners including colleagues in health. A focus would be needed on Early Years Foundation Stage to address the whole journey and give every child the best start in life. A small amount of capital would be used to support adaptations in individual schools to develop appropriate places. It was noted that the biggest issue when growing provision was revenue to appoint staff and therefore some of the money would be used to support staffing the provision.

Forum members requested, along the principles of the fairer funding agenda, that it be clear in the application that as a consequence the SB would lose £600k of funding which schools could not afford. No York school was in position to be able to offer this, however the forum accepted that it was only way to enact any change of the system until there was a change in national funding. It was noted that the schools white paper was still expected in autumn 2025, which may indicate future changes to funding and the HNB.

It was agreed that the working group meet for half a day to map out all the elements discussed to make sure plans were ready for implementation September 2026. In response to a question it was noted that there was representation across the school system in that working group however SEN expertise needed to be brought in.

Action: Andrew Day to coordinate and email options of dates for the meeting.

The timeline from the paper was noted.

In response to a question Richard Hartle explained that any additional information could be submitted with the application.

Action: Richard Hartle to draft submission and share with Chair and Vice Chair to add the views of the forum, and Andrew Daly for the view from YSAB.

8 LMS Scheme Review

Previously distributed.

Richard Hartle presented the paper, highlighting the two main changes. One change in Section 8 was a directed change from the DfE. The other, in Section 6, related to schools requesting a deficit budget. The proposed amendment was that the significant decision to submit a deficit budget should have full oversight from the full governing rather than delegation to a committee.

Resolved: Forum members approved the LMS Scheme.

Richard Hartle explained that due to the minimal changes the LA was not proposing full consultation.

Resolved: Forum members agreed not to conduct a full consultation on the changes.

The Chair requested an update on the planned timeline to review the application of interest. Richard Hartle responded that it would be will looked in 2026 in a full review of the bank account for schools scheme.

9 YSAB workstreams 2025-26

Andrew Daly provided a brief update on the work being conducted in the city through YSAB including; work around poverty proofing schools, ongoing work with the travellers trusts to better support children from travelling background, fair admissions, SEN banding, graduated response and place planning.

As a city there was a good understanding of the issues and through the YSAB working groups these were being addressed with representation of all schools across city in a collective manner.

10 Schools Budget and Dedicated Schools Grant for 2026-27

National funding formula summary policy document 26-27 had been previously distributed.

Richard Hartle explained that policy document confirmed that there would be no change in funding factors, however the information on the DSG had not been released and was expected before the end of the autumn term.

11 Maintained Schools Start Budgets 2025-26

Richard Hartle explained that the summary of maintained schools start budgets would typically be brought to the schools forum autumn meeting, however five schools been asked to revisit plans and come up with revised budgets as they did not have an effective plan to come out of deficit in reasonable time.

The start budgets would be distributed separately when agreed and brought to the January meeting for information.

12 Schools Forum forward plan

Items for January meeting;

- Response from Secretary of State regarding the disapplication request
- DSG 2026-27 and subsequent impact on budgets of the 0.5%
- Special School SEN banding revisions
- Safety Valve final monitoring report
- Post safety Valve plan for use of disapplication funds

13 Any other agreed business

There were no items for AOB.

14 Date and time of meetings for the current academic year:

Thursday 22nd January 2026

Thursday 30th April 2026

Thursday 2nd July 2026

Members agreed the start time to revert to 8am.

Meeting closed 9:24am