



CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM
Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting
held on Thursday 22 January 2026
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), Sarah Lomas (Maintained Nursery Representative Substitute deputising for Claire Rigden), Andrew Daly (Academy Representative), Melissa Boyes (Academy Representative Substitute, deputising for Ian Yapp), Mark Hassack (Academy Representative), Gail Brown (Academy Representative), Georgia Bracchi, (Academy Representative Substitute, deputising for Sam Williams), Adam Booker (Special School Representative).

*The meeting was quorate with **10 Representatives** present (quorum 40% of the total membership equating to 6 members).*

In attendance:

Cllr Robert Webb (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education), 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. **Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from; Jonny Uttley (Academy Representative), Helen Winn (Academy Representative), Ken Merry (16-19 representative), Chris Nichols (PRU Representative), Martyn Kelly (Corporate Director Children and Education CYC). Substitutes for members unable to attend were welcomed.

3. **Minutes of the School Forum Meeting 15 October 2025**

Previously distributed.

The minutes of the meeting held 15 October 2025 were agreed to be a true and accurate record and were duly noted as approved.



4 Matters arising

4.1 Update on disapplication request

Previously distributed.

The Chair provided a brief recap of the decisions taken at the previous meeting, explaining that, as agreed, review of the request had been conducted by himself, Andrew Daly and James McGann prior to submission. Richard Hartle explained that to the current date, CYC had not received a response from the Secretary of State regarding the submission requesting the disapplication from the Minimum Per Pupil Level (MPPL). The statutory submission of funding from local authorities (LA) was noted as the end of 22 January. Maxine Squire explained that the delay may be related to the publication of the anticipated schools white paper as the scale of SEN reform recommended in the paper was unknown.

Maxine Squire explained that the forum's decision to agree to support the disapplication request with an equitable split across all York schools had been made prior to the schools settlement being announced. The settlement subsequently issued provided no incremental progression on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Richard Hartle clarified that there had been an uplift of 2.11% for grants previously outside the formula allocation (for example the teachers pay award) but there was no cost of living / inflationary increase. It was noted that the majority of York schools would get a financial benefit from non-teacher pension costs as those would not be as significant as in previous years.

Maxine Squire explained that the forum's agreement to support the 0.5% top slice in 2026/27 could not be reversed, however highlighted that the request must be made to Schools Forum annually, therefore support could be declined in October 2026 for 2027/28. CYC were now at the end of the Safety Valve (SV) agreement (final monitoring report on agenda item 7), and the DfE had confirmed final payment would be made at the end of January 2026. This concluded the additional support available through SV. It was noted that the DfE had announced that it would take over deficits on the High Needs Block (HNB) from 2028, however LAs would be expected not to increase the existing deficit in the meantime. The progress made through SV had been beneficial to the system as a whole and had allowed consideration of investments to support the national government view of more inclusive mainstream education.

Maxine Squire continued explaining that sufficient specialist provision was required to allow inclusive mainstream to function well, and additional specialist Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) provision had been created in the secondary phase through Inspire to support the capacity at Danesgate. Following a meeting with Dave Hewitt, Andrew Daly and James McGann, it had been agreed that funding would be utilised to commission an additional 18 places at Inspire, on top of the existing 24 places.

A forum member queried whether 18 places had been calculated as enough to make a meaningful difference. Andrew Daly explained that following a meeting with Victoria Coyle (Head of Integrated SEND, CYC), the expectation was that schools would have their own in-house provision for Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and a range

of SEMH needs, however there would be a small number of children that would require support beyond what mainstream schools could reasonably provide. The commissioning of 18 places, which was two places per York secondary school, would help to ease that pressure.

Cllr Robert Webb (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education) asked if the places would be fixed at two per school, or 18 places across city. Andrew Daly explained that there would be two places per school, as provision could not be used up by one school to the detriment of another.

Cllr Webb asked if there was the physical room at Inspire for 42 young people to access the provision. Mark Hassack explained that a feasibility study into additional classrooms had been commissioned to see if extending the space was possible, adding however that the main issue would be relating to the outside space.

A discussion followed relating to the importance of establishing the right entry requirements and thresholds for the young people accessing the support, ensuring that schools were using the same criteria. It was noted that further clarity would come through the expected publication of national standards for in-school resource provision. This also linked to the work on reviewing the special school banding and establishing the right graduated response for support in the city.

Maxine Squire explained that primary phase was also now seeing more SEMH need, and while effective adaptations were seen in primary settings, more support was still required. A transformative piece mapping children social care and health in the neighbourhood clusters and aligning resource would allow interventions to help further young people be supported through the team around the cluster approach. The importance of getting the best start was noted and briefly discussed. Gail Brown explained that a powerful piece of cross sector work including investment and co-ordination in early years, which would benefit both primary and ultimately secondary was coming, however it was noted that this would not deal with the additional complexities in the here and now.

Maxine Squire explained that provision, including non-education provision, out of York had been investigated and visited. It was important to consider that it was not only schools that play an important part in supporting people from disadvantaged backgrounds to engage better with community and education. CATCH in Leeds, supported by Carr Manor was highlighted as an example of a community charity with an education link leading inclusive practice in the region. A delegation from schools forum, YSAB, York Mind and the Island would be undertaking a joint visit to CATCH. Funding from the disapplication would be used to pump prime a similar provision, alongside funding contributions from other partners would be explored. The opportunities available were discussed.

The Chair highlighted that a number of concerns regarding the disapplication had been raised outside of the meeting structure and members were invited to, in the context of the paper and discussion, raise any further concerns.

5. Schools Budget and Dedicated Schools Grant for 2026/27 – including central services block

Richard Hartle presented the paper reviewing the DSG and the four sub blocks; schools, HNB, early years and central school services. It was noted that there had been a positive cash movement +0.9% in the schools block, however there were lower pupil numbers. Continued expansion in early years block which equated to 5.8% /£4m increase. Allocation for HNB has been suspended for 2026-27. Frozen allocation for the ongoing element of the central services was a net reduction of 4.3% for the on-going responsibilities that the LA continued to have for all schools, and 20% reduction in the allocation for historic commitments which reflected the pattern of the previous six years.

The funding factors used in the 2026/27 National Funding Formula (NFF) remained the same, however the factor values would increase by 2.11% as an annual inflationary increase. Free School Meals (FSM) allocation had increased by 1.66% as it was designed to fund actual cost of FSM and reflected treasury expectation of inflationary increase, however it was noted that catering companies were suggesting an above inflation increase in prices. PFi factor was 3.88% however the calculation was ongoing to establish the impact on York due to the inherent complexities in the calculations.

Richard Hartle explained the transfer of 0.5% was noted as £31.60 off the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) per pupil in the current calculation, modelling on the previous option 2 basis which provided a more even split of impact across all schools.

The data as shared in Annexe 4 was overviewed. Richard Hartle explained that this include a movement in pupil numbers for 2026-27 which was an overall 1.8% reduction. Baseline figures had been provided for 2026-27 before the 0.5% HNB transfer, under option 1 (no reduction on MPPL) and option 2. A brief discussion followed regarding the different between the two options as presented. It was noted that DfE approval would not be required to move forward with option 1. As previously highlighted, option 2 had been submitted for approval however no response had been received.

A forum member asked what scaling had been used. Richard Hartle explained that the model with the adjusted MPPL was scaled at 32.6% and 33.72% without the MPPL adjustment.

It was noted that the figures presented had less of difference between option 1 and 2.

A forum member asked about the falling roll grant for primary schools. Richard Hartle explained that a further discussion about the longevity of the grant would be required at a future Schools Forum meeting. It was noted that YSAB had completed a piece of work looking at pupil numbers across all schools. Maxine Squire added that the pupil number reductions and the financial impact would need to be revisited and mapped out.

Richard Hartle asked for confirmation from forum members that option 2, if approved by DfE, was still the preferred approach of applying the 0.5% transfer.

Forum members were in agreement to continue as previously voted.

A forum member asked whether the funding and feasibility studies would be complete ready for commencement of plans in September 2026. Mark Hassack responded that with regards the places at Inspire, there would not be an additional 18 places immediately in September but these would become available through the 2026/27 academic year.

Cllr Webb asked what capital would be used to extend the provision at Inspire. Maxine Squire responded that it would be funded from SEND capital.

Per the paper recommendations forum members noted;

- *the mainstream school funding formula factors and values for 2026/27, as set out at Annex 1.*
- *that capping will again be required to maintain pupil growth fund expenditure within the cash limited budget, as described at paragraph 14.*
- *the LA's proposed Early Years funding rates for 2026/27 as set out at paragraph 22.*
- *the impact of the 20% reduction in funding for historic commitments within the central school services block as per paragraph 34.*

Forum members confirmed their continued agreement to maintaining the contribution to LA centrally retained budgets at the level of the on-going central services grant, as per paragraph 35.

Gail Brown left the meeting at 09:01

6. **Special School SEN Banding Revisions**

Previously distributed.

Maxine Squire presented the paper updating the forum on the second stage of SEN top up funding review for state funded special schools. The top up funding was noted as an addition to the flat commissioned place funding and figures had been provided in the paper. The current range of top ups was complex and not comparable to any other band used in York, therefore the aim was to align the two state funded special schools to mirror what was in mainstream across three bands. The intention was that the banding should not disadvantage the schools, but would avoid the retention of large revenue balances, making the overall operating budget more predictable over time. It was highlighted that special school funding was difficult to manage as there was a continuous variation of need in the schools and complex factors which at times included factoring in end of life. Maxine Squire explained that the ongoing work included colleagues and finance directors in the MATs that run the special school provisions.

Finals proposal would be brought to the next Schools Forum meeting with an intention to introduce from September 2026, and children at points of transition would move to new banding.

A forum member highlighted that it would be important to remove uncertainty about what happened to current EHCPs after the re-banding. Maxine Squire explained that the SEND team would consider how this would be applied through annual reviews.

Cllr Webb asked if the decision-making process relating to one off resource allocation was robust. Maxine Squire explained that a multi-agency panel, including colleagues from health and children's social care, considered requests and would consider if there were alternatives to what being requested, taking information from the SEND caseworker where appropriate.

A discussion relating to joint commissioning followed, highlighting that the EHCP included health and care, not just education, and discussion must be across all agencies. The review was a moment to get funding right in York for the next 10 years. Maxine Squire noted that through national reforms it was expected that specialist settings would support the most complex needs. It was agreed that a SEND focused item on a future forum agenda would be beneficial to provide a whole picture of York.

Next steps and recommendations from the paper were noted;

The local authority will continue to meet with representatives from the specialist settings to complete the work outlined in the report. The revised band descriptors will be shared with School Forum as part of the local authority's consultation process with the forum.

7. **Final Safety Valve Monitoring Report**

Previously distributed.

Maxine Squire presented the Safety Valve monitoring report. As highlighted earlier in the meeting, the report brought forum members up to date with the final submission to the DfE and the final position SV funding.

The LA must ensure that it continued to take mitigating action to prevent the deficit growing to the previous level. Richard Hartle explained that on the current forecast, taking a small surplus from 2025-26, the position for 2026-27 would be £1.8m in year deficit resulting in a cumulative deficit on HNB by the year end.

Maxine Squire explained that some announcements of the content of the schools white paper were being released including the suggestion that there may be more capital and an investment in CPD. The delay in the publication of the schools white paper and some resulting consequences were briefly discussed. There was agreement that change was required.

Maxine Squire extended thanks to those involved in contributing to the successful delivery of SV.

8. **Schools Forum forward plan**

Items for 30 April 2026 meeting;

- School improvement commissioning

- SEND banding review
- Infant class size funding – introductory paper
- SEND reforms (Victoria Coyle, Head of Integrated SEND CYC, to be invited)
- Health neighbourhood plans (Maxine Squire to health commissioner/s)
- Update on YSAB work with Sutton Trust regarding fair access admissions
- Take stock on all elements – agenda item

9. **Any other agreed business**

There were no items for AOB.

Date and time of meetings for the current academic year:

Thursday 30 April 2026

Thursday 2 July 2026

Meeting closed 9:27am