



CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM
Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting
held on Thursday 7 May 2026
at 8.00am at York College

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), Georgia Bracchi, (Academy Representative Substitute, deputising for Sam Williams), Ken Merry (16-19 Representative)

*The meeting was quorate with **8 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) Victoria Coyle (Head of Integrated SEND, CYC) and Helen Marshall Groot (Head of Governor Services, CYC, Coordinator and Clerk)

1. **Welcome**

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from; Helen Winn (Academy Representative), Gail Brown (Academy Representative), Sarah Lomas (Maintained Nursery Representative Substitute deputising for Claire Rigden), Martyn Kelly (Corporate Director Children and Education CYC).

Substitutes for members unable to attend were welcomed.

3. **Minutes of the School Forum Meeting 22 January 2026**

Previously distributed.

The minutes of the meeting held 22 January 2026 were agreed to be a true and accurate record and were duly noted as approved.

4. **Matters arising not on the agenda**

There were no matters arising.

5. **York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB) workstreams update 2025-26**

Andrew Daly (Academy Representative) Chair of YSAB provided a verbal update. The Board had held an additional meeting to specifically discuss SEND with Victoria Coyle (Head of Integrated SEND, CYC), understanding the pace that the Local Authority (LA) were needing to make decisions. A further meeting would take place in July to agree the workstreams for the next year.

Providing an update on all workstreams from the past 18 months it was noted that the place planning workstream had been completed with a successful outcome, though further conversations relating to post-16 would now be required. Maxine Squire explained that every LA had been requested to set up a Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) strategy taskforce which would need to be brought into any post-16 discussions.

The work with Travellers Trust had culminated with a successful conference. Matt Smith (Huntington Headteacher) had provided YSAB with feedback on the poverty proofing work which had successfully been piloted in seven York schools this year. Further discussions would be required on how to continue this work efficiently for York. With regards fair access admissions York had achieved a Sutton Trust Gold award which would be shared via a press release highlighting the impact of the shared partnership working on this area. It was noted that the Sutton Trust reviewed admission practices annually so a focus must remain on maintaining the progress made. The workstream on SEND had agreed mainstream banding with special school banding in review.

Mr Daly concluded that there had been a significant positive impact from the YSAB workstreams which reflected the change in approach to focus on working groups and getting valuable contributions from across the city.

6. **SEND Reforms**

Maxine Squire introduced Victoria Coyle (Head of Integrated SEND, CYC) and a verbal update on the York Local Area Reform Plan was provided.

The final plan was required by mid-June 2026 to set out the building blocks for transformational change. The DfE would be looking closely at implementation, performance and how the funding was being spent. £1.3m would be received to transform SEND provision through the Experts at Hand model, working at system level to expand access to a wide range of support in mainstream schools.

It was noted that this was complex reform which was part of the national change for children and families with the first stage aimed at building the infrastructure, for example neighbourhood and family hubs, inclusion bases/Experts at Hand, Families First/Early Help to affect change at universal level which became ultimately preventative.

The plan would reflect an ambitious agenda for young people aged 0-25 focusing on a universal offer for the majority of children with additional needs. There would be a focus on front loading support for 0-5 years through Best Start in Life, with a SEND professional in every Best Start in Life hub, early identification and early intervention from Experts at Hand to make an impact. For 16-25 the focus would be on independence, employability skills and supporting into adult life.

Through the focus of the plan and regular quarterly monitoring there was an expectation that as access mainstream curriculum increased, spending on independent schools would decrease and there would be reduced place pressures on special schools.

After 2030 those children with an EHCP from early life would be reassessed whether the plan was required, or a move to individual support plans. Plans would all be digitised and a disagreement resolution process would need to be in place as accountability for those plans would move to schools.

A forum member commented that the plan was admirable however with the scale it would be difficult to piece it together in terms of the whole system. In year one, as an example, what clarity was there on what leaders in maintained schools and multi academy trusts were expected to be doing. Maxine Squire responded that the first year would be focused on putting the framework in place, including recruiting Experts at Hand against the local sufficiency need.

A forum member asked when the funding was being released. Richard Hartle explained that the conditions of grant had not yet been received, and it was not clear if it would be allocated by school year or financial year.

A discussion followed relating to the importance of providing the right support for all schools. Leaders wanted to make the right decisions for their pupils however, if money was to be pooled then Headteachers needed to understand how best to do that. Maxine Squire explained that the funding was intended address training needs and strengthening inclusion practice in all classrooms.

In response to comments about the time pressures involved, Maxine Squire explained that it was important to be sensible for proposals in years one to three. The reforms were brand new therefore initial steps needed to be taken that were sensibly phased and realistic. There was a lot of good practice in the system and there would be an agreement on key principles that would be expected in every school level Inclusion Plan. The Experts at Hand would work best across groups of schools so it would be necessary to identify the most significant needs across an area, and it was expected that would be different per area.

Cllr Robert Webb (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education) commented that the reforms were mission driven to make necessary changes in SEND support and provide a timeframe around it. York was in a good place to commence the plan as strong partnerships were already in place.

A forum member commented that the training of new teachers had not been discussed and asked if consideration was included in the plan on getting it right at the training provider level. Maxine Squire responded that the national reforms did not include much detail on training teachers and it was noted that the £200m committed to training was relatively small in relation to the size of the workforce. The Teaching School Hub network however had a national reputation around adaptive teaching and had trialled the SEND Champion work.

A forum member commented that it would be useful to identify where inclusion was working well and point to good practice to support other schools. A discussion followed relating to existing elements of good practice in York that if applied consistently in a framework would support in qualifying what inclusion looks like in a classroom in York. It was noted that DfE guidance on inclusion had not been received however the pace at which the LA were required to move would mean that the plan would be submitted before the guidance was released.

Cllr Robert Webb asked how a core York offer would be achieved. Maxine Squire explained that schools would be brought together regularly to discuss what a core offer looked like. The next few months would be focused on getting everything aligned to get a plan accepted for September 2026, with the next window to re-submit the plan in spring 2027. Some elements of funding had been confirmed; Experts at Hand, Inclusion funding for schools and SEND capital and these would be used to support a change in infrastructure that laid the foundations for change to happen.

Forum members agreed that receiving clarity on the conditions of the funding would be important.

7. **SEND Capital Plan** Previously distributed.

Maxine Squire presented the report outlining the allocation of £1.7m of SEND capital received in financial year 2025-26 and the further allocation for 2026-27 of £2.3m. To access the 2025-26 capital schools had submitted expressions of interest, however with more certainty now that the funding would continue it was important to put a strategic structure in place to maximise the benefit of the funds. As condition of the grant the funds must be invested in the improvement of inclusion in mainstream schools. This should be adaptations that were sustainable over time based on the predictable needs in York over the longer term.

A forum member asked whether the 'inclusion bases' were different to the enhanced resource provision (ERP) that the secondary schools had developed. Maxine Squire responded that the LA was receiving guidance about what a specialist inclusion base was expected to be, however it would be a school owned provision as opposed to ERP that had commissioned places.

Cllr Robert Webb asked if there had been a review of the provision currently in the city. Maxine Squire explained that the provision was currently being mapped, identifying where schools had developed their own inclusion bases without LA involvement. The next question to answer would be around what good provision looked taking advice from the specialist teaching team and awaiting guidance from the DfE. A forum member highlighted that the survey circulated was asking only if schools had inclusion rooms/spaces, not whether they were being used effectively. Maxine Squire explained that the review would take time and agreed that it would be important to understand what a good model of an inclusion base looked like, and then agree how to share the model and resources.

Co-production would be necessary through collecting parent and carer voice as their general concerns were around children being socially isolated and feeling different. The inclusion bases should not be about segregation or adapting the day at mainstream to the point that the child does not feel part of the school community.

A discussion followed relating to achieving the right balance between classroom inclusion and regular incidents of violence or dysregulation in classrooms that left pupils feeling unsafe in their schools. It would be important to understand who could be effectively supported by a mainstream inclusion base. Victoria Coyle explained that the plan would require convening best practice. If dysregulation was happening in classrooms, what kind of expert at hand would be needed to be put in place to understand what was happening and support it effectively. It was accepted that the scale of the plan and reform was significant, but the first stage must be forensic to identify the nature of the most common problems that required solving and designing solutions to achieve that.

A forum member asked how the SEND capital plan would be fed into the current review of inclusion space. Maxine Squire explained that the review would identify the gaps within neighbourhoods and capital could be used to start to resolve that. Forum members were invited to feedback further outside the meeting.

8. **SEND Banding Review (Special Schools)**

Previously distributed.

Maxine Squire presented the update explaining that the next three years up to 2029 were important as central government were agreeing to mitigate overspend under the current system, however would not remove deficits if LAs were not managing funds in a sensible way. As an interim measure the intention was to simplify the current specialist banding system to a less complicated and more transparent way of funding based on a place cost of £25k per pupil. A small complex number of children where needs could not be met safely in a small special school would sit in an exceptional band with personalised packages. An example of an individual provision from Applefields was provided for context.

It was noted and discussed that there were currently pupils in special schools that could manage in mainstream if a strong inclusion offer to support them was in place,

however this would be a change in expectations for parents/carers. It would also be a change for staff in special schools who would need further professional development as the cohorts in special schools would change significantly.

The proposal was to move to a single band for the majority of pupils in special schools, with the understanding that there would be a small number that would require a different type of assessment and support.

As a consultative body, Schools Forum were asked if it supported the proposal of the new Special school SEND banding.

All members were in agreement to support the proposal.

9. **Infant Class Size funding – Introductory paper**

Previously distributed.

Richard Hartle presented the paper and the reason for the review. Prior to the national funding formula, a factor had been included in the York local formula to support the maintenance of infant class sizes at no higher than 30 pupils. The pupil growth funding, which supported rapid school expansion, had also been to support infant class size funding (ICSF) for primary schools however this funding had reduced significantly over recent years from over £1m down to just under £400k. The DfE had also put in place a minimum level of per pupil funding for any school accessing the pupil growth fund. The ICSF was therefore no longer sustainable through the through the pupil growth fund past the 2026-27 academic year.

Options had been presented to consider;

- a) Continue with the current arrangements utilising the pupil growth fund allocated by the DfE but accept a high level of uncertainty, and that ICSF may be significantly capped (or potentially unavailable) to ensure that the minimum requirements for basic need growth funding are met.*
- b) Cease ICSF and leave primary schools and academies to manage infant class size regulations from within their normal delegated budgets.*
- c) Use the flexibility given to the LA by the DfE to reduce the primary AWPU within the SNFF to create a separate fund to allow ICSF to continue under the current formula.*
- d) As option c) but also consider a change to the formula or criteria for allocating ICSF to limit the number of schools and academies that may trigger an allocation to only those with the greatest need.*

Richard Hartle explained that the intention of the introductory paper was to seek guidance from Schools Forum on which options they would like to be modelled for further consideration in November.

Forum members discussed their concern over options c) and d) which would cause further strain on current deficits in schools. Option b) would remove any additional funding to support infant class sizes, leaving option a) as the only viable proposal which

would mean schools would budget conservatively based on not receiving ICSF however it may then be received as unexpected funds.

It was noted that under option b) that the pupil growth funding would be allocated for basic need growth, ie those schools seeing rapid expansion needing supported because of lag in funding.

Ken Merry left the meeting 9.17

A forum member asked whether there was scope for any other calculation. Richard Hartle explained that options may be explored to reallocate a less generous amount. It was suggested that the approach of other LAs could be investigated.

Forum members commented that it would be helpful to see across the primaries in York where the need would be. Richard Hartle commented that the demand on budget was unknown until the census in December. Through pursuing option a) there was a significant level of uncertainty.

A forum member asked whether there were schools that were significantly relying on ICSF funding. Richard Hartle explained that there were some schools that have historically received it and expect it as part of their annual funding.

It was agreed that the impact would need to be mapped before any decisions could be made, looking at options both around the current arrangements and on an exceptional basis.

10. Schools Forum forward plan

July meeting;

- School Improvement commissioning
- Health neighbourhood plans
- DSG Outturn
- Infant class size update
- BAFS update
- Disapplication update / review
- SEND reform update

11. Any other agreed business

There were no items for AOB.

12. Date and time of meetings for the current academic year:

Thursday 2nd July 2026 8am

Academy members left the meeting at 9:20am

13. **Bank Account for Schools Scheme Review**

Previously distributed.

Richard Hartle explained that after previous discussions it was now appropriate to review the current scheme to ensure it was fit for purpose, which was last reviewed ten years previously. Schools had raised issues around interest payments however it was noted that this had been less impactful when interest rates were low.

The paper had laid out a proposed timetable for review and Richard Hartle suggested meeting with representatives from secondary and primary schools, preferably business managers, before the summer to identify concerns or current issues from schools perspective. The intention would then be to formalise and bring recommendations to Schools Forum in November.

Contact details for the School Business Managers for St Oswalds and Joseph Rowntree to be passed to Richard Hartle. Jemma Dunne to approach primary maintained Headteachers to see if other SBMs would be interested in joining the discussions.

Meeting closed 9:28am