



## Schools Forum

**Wednesday, 21 January 2026 4.00 p.m.  
The Board Room - Municipal Building,  
Widnes**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Isabelle Moorhouse'.

**Interim Chief Executive**

*Please contact Isabelle Moorhouse on 01515113979 or  
[isabelle.moorhouse@halton.gov.uk](mailto:isabelle.moorhouse@halton.gov.uk) for further information.*

*The next meeting of the Committee is on Wednesday, 25 February 2026*

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH  
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Part I**

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*In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.*

## SCHOOLS FORUM

*At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 11 June 2025 at The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes*

**Present:**

*N. Hunt, (Chair) Pupil Referral Unit Representative  
 J. Wilson, Secondary Governor Representative  
 B. Holmes, Education, Inclusion and Provision, HBC  
 N. Shafiq, Financial Management, HBC  
 J. Jardine, All Through School Representative  
 K. Evans, Secondary Academy with a 6th Form Representative  
 J. O'Connor, PVI Representative  
 J. Coughlan, Primary School Representative (Infants)  
 C. Liku, Community Nursery Schools Representative  
 J. Robertson, Small Primary School Representative  
 J. Thompson, Community Special Schools Representative  
 B. Barton, 16-19 Provision Representative  
 R. Houghton, Primary Governor Representative  
 S. Ainsworth, Special Academy Schools Representative  
 M. Stapleton-Chambers, Education, Inclusion and Provision, HBC  
 K. Butler, Democratic Services, HBC*

*Also in attendance: 2 members of the public*

**ITEM DEALT WITH  
UNDER DUTIES  
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

**SCF1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Action*

Apologies were received from:

- Karl Landrum – Primary School with a Nursery representative;
- Michelle Slingsby - Primary Academy representative; and
- Mark Tudor - Secondary Academy representative.

**SCF2 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

**SCF3 HALTON SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS UPDATE**

The Forum was presented with the latest version of the Halton Scheme for Financing Schools (SFFS),

applicable to maintained schools only, as updated for 2025.

It was noted that there were no directed revisions issued by the DfE since Schools' Forum last approved the Scheme for Financing Schools.

The updates described in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 were noted.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

- 1) note any updates approved; and
- 2) agree to the latest version being made available, as statutorily required, to all maintained schools and on a website accessible for public inspections.

#### SCF4 SCHOOL BALANCES 2024-25

The Schools Forum considered a report from the Operational Director of Finance, which gave the level of Revenue and Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) funding brought forward from 2024-25 by Halton's maintained schools.

It was noted that whilst balances were still required to be reported to the Schools Forum, no excess surplus balance limits were currently in place. Schools Forum however, retained the right to require schools to provide further information as to how their balance would be spent, should they so decide.

Appendix A showed the revenue balance for each maintained school, along with their 2023-24 balance for comparison. Overall, Halton's net surplus school budget balance position for maintained schools at the end of 2024-25 was £6,192,994. The report summarised comparisons with the previous year's balances.

It was noted that out of 44 Maintained schools, 36 schools carried over a surplus balance and 8 with a Deficit position at the end of 2024-25. Of the 36 with a surplus balance, 25 (55% of all Maintained schools) had accumulated surplus balances above the original maximum thresholds and these were highlighted at Appendix A.

Appendix B showed the Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) balances for each maintained school, along with their 2024-25 balance for comparison. This had decreased by £50,975 to £240,097 at the end of 2024-25. This was

mainly due to the utilisation of additional capital funding to support schools with energy efficiency initiatives and developments.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

SCF5 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT OUTTURN 2024/25

The Forum was presented with the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) final outturn for 2024-25.

The DSG allocation for 2024-25 was £154,222,741 and was broken down as follows:

Schools Block	-	£ 111,188,230
CSSB	-	£ 751,280
Early Years Block	-	£ 15,204,021
High Needs Block	-	£ 27,097,210

There was no block transfer in current years against the High Needs Block which meant the balance of £111,188,230 was fully devolved to mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies through the local funding formula.

The total Academy Recoupment from the Schools Block in 2024-25 was £58,637,374; this was provided directly via the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) General Annual Grant (GAG) process. The balance of £52,550,856 was provided directly to Maintained schools via their Individual School Budget (ISB).

The High Needs Block had been revised for 2024-25 to £23,774,073 subject to recoupment of £3,305,167 for direct funding of high needs places. It was noted that in year spending was substantial due to ongoing pressures and increasing numbers of pupils with Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP). The notable areas of overspend included:

- Independent and Non-Maintained Special (INMS) out-borough placements;
- Post-16 SEND placements; and
- EHCP top-up funding in Maintained and Academy provision.

The final Early Years block allocation for 2024-25 was £15,204,021.

The final outturn position was summarized as follows:

DSG overspend	£9,120,418
Carry forward deficit balance	£5,348,546
Total DSG deficit carry over	£14,648,964

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

#### SCF6 DELIVERING BETTER VALUE DFE GRANT

The Forum considered a report from the Director of Education, Inclusion and Provision, which provided an update on the progress and impact of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) workstreams to reduce the overspend against the High Need Block.

In March 2024, Halton received £1M of grant funding, primarily to build resilience across all educational systems to support and include learners with Social Emotional Mental Health Needs. It was anticipated that the impact of delivering the DBV work would reduce the needs of EHCP's and if successful, have a positive impact on both spend again the High Needs Block and the SEND transport spend. The total spent to date was £501,154.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

#### SCF7 SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SERVICE UPDATE

The Forum considered a report from the Director of Education, Inclusion and Provision, which provided an update on the current position of the Speech and Language service by Communicate – SLT CIC, the commissioned service for Halton Council and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside.

It was noted that following a tender process in 2023, the children and young people's Speech and Language Therapy contract was awarded to Communicate – SLT CIC. The service was jointly commissioned with NHS Cheshire and Merseyside, with HBC holding the contract.

The report outlined the key areas of provision that were prioritised according to the clinical risk to children and young people and statutory responsibilities. It was recognised that challenges were being faced as the demand for speech and language services had exceeded capacity, largely due to four main reasons, these were described in the report.

The report contained some data which included

current EHCP activity and also a breakdown of activity and allocation, with the special schools work, due to start in June/July. In addition to this information, a request was made for some data on waiting times and data on pupils in the Pupil Referral Unit.

Director -  
Education,  
Inclusion and  
Provision

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

SCF8 ELECTION OF NEW CHAIR

Nigel Hunt informed the Forum that he was due to retire at the end of the school year and therefore had stepped down as Chair of the Forum. A replacement was canvassed for but unfortunately no volunteers agreed to take over the role.

Jim Wilson (Deputy Chair) agreed to act up on a temporary basis until an alternative Chair was identified.

Members of the Forum was asked to give further consideration to the request and email the Clerk with any nominations. The item would be added again to the next agenda for further consideration/agreement.

Director -  
Education,  
Inclusion and  
Provision

RESOLVED: That Jim Wilson (Deputy Chair) would act up as Interim Chair of the Schools Forum with effect from October 2025.

*Meeting ended at 5.15 p.m.*

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Schools Forum
<b>DATE:</b>	21 January 2026
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Operational Director - Finance
<b>PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	Children, Young People & Families
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	DSG and Schools' Funding for 2026/27
<b>WARDS:</b>	Borough-wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To report to the Schools Forum the Dedicated Schools Grant funding settlement for 2026/27, and the implications for individual Halton schools' budgets.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the report is noted.
- 2.2 That Schools Forum supports the continuation of the National Funding Formula (NFF) methods, principles and rules for mainstream primary and secondary school funding allocations and de-delegation for 2026/27.
- 2.3 That Schools Forums agrees the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to be applied to the Schools Block funding formula for 2026/27.
- 2.4 That Schools Forum agrees the use of 2026/27 headroom to create a small falling rolls contingency, established by an appropriate transfer from Schools Block to Central Schools Services Block, and using the methodology outlined in **section 3.4**.

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 3.1 Grant settlement

The gross Schools Grant allocation for 2026/27 was announced on 17<sup>th</sup> December as £178.850m, broken down as follows (current year equivalent figures shown in brackets, as context):

Schools Block	£122.425m	(£117.833m)
Central Schools Services Block	£ 0.768m	(£ 0.765m)
High Needs Block	£ 31.877m	(£ 29.267m)
Early Years Block	£ 23.781m	(£ 20.686m)

This is an overall increase of £10.299m, compared to the £168.551m allocated for 2025/26.

From the allocation for 2026/27, an estimated £4.970m will be recouped by the Department for Education from the High Needs Block. This is for academies and other educational establishments for the commissioned High Needs Place funding, reducing the High Needs Block allocation that we receive to £26.907m. Schools Block will be reduced by £358,973 to reflect the direct payments of Academies' National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR).

### 3.2 Schools Block

The gross Schools Block allocation for 2026/27 is £122,424,804, based on the October 2025 census data, which is an increase of £4.592m or 3.9% when compared to the final Schools Block allocation for 2025/26.

Those two amounts are not directly comparable, though, because in the same way that Core Schools Block Grant (CSBG) and pay/pensions were rolled into Schools Block in 2025/26, the following additional discrete funding streams have been absorbed in 2026/27:

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

In total, mainstreaming of these has added £133/pupil to NFF's basic primary value, £146/pupil to Key Stage 3, and £165/pupil to Key Stage 4. Also £124 to Primary FSM6 values, £132 Secondary FSM6 and £4,486 to lump sums. (FSM6 being the number of children qualifying for Free School Meals in any of the last 6 school years). In total this accounts for some £3.6m of the overall £4.6m increase, meaning that the true inflation/growth addition averages out at around 2.3% (accounting for pupil number changes)

As the 2026/27 NFF applies later to Academies, from September 2026, a separate allocation, representing April to August, will be made over.

The final NFF formula factor values are illustrated in **Appendix A**.

Inclusive of these grants, Halton's Primary Unit of Funding (PUF) is increasing from £5,959.30 to £6,274.26 for 2026/27 and the Secondary Unit of Funding (SUF) is increasing from £7,551.26 to £7,935.84. These units are calculated by applying the new NFF values to last year's (October 2024) data, and dividing the resulting sector totals by last year's primary and secondary NOR to get an average funding rate per pupil.

Relative to other 150 Local Authorities, Halton's School Block funding units are 24th highest funded for primary schools, and 45th highest for secondaries. In the primary sector, in the North West, only Manchester,

Westmorland & Furness, and Cumberland have a larger funding rate, though for secondaries we lag behind six of our geographical neighbours.

Name	PUF	SUF
<b>Blackburn with Darwen</b>	£5,951.83	£7,708.27
<b>Blackpool</b>	£5,982.04	£8,209.76
<b>Bolton</b>	£5,921.76	£7,724.38
<b>Bury</b>	£5,774.09	£7,618.11
<b>Cheshire East</b>	£5,563.97	£7,143.25
<b>Cheshire West and Chester</b>	£5,765.05	£7,326.95
<b>Cumberland</b>	£6,339.89	£7,433.98
<b>Halton</b>	£6,274.26	£7,935.84
<b>Knowsley</b>	£6,196.95	£8,439.47
<b>Lancashire</b>	£5,938.74	£7,439.81
<b>Liverpool</b>	£6,171.36	£8,060.38
<b>Manchester</b>	£6,404.42	£8,452.10
<b>Oldham</b>	£6,089.32	£7,902.81
<b>Rochdale</b>	£5,980.99	£7,973.80
<b>Salford</b>	£6,123.26	£8,087.47
<b>Sefton</b>	£5,738.17	£7,536.08
<b>St. Helens</b>	£5,901.49	£7,622.53
<b>Stockport</b>	£5,623.09	£7,320.48
<b>Tameside</b>	£6,097.62	£7,880.08
<b>Trafford</b>	£5,490.83	£7,195.96
<b>Warrington</b>	£5,693.40	£7,258.30
<b>Westmorland and Furness</b>	£6,348.61	£7,229.38
<b>Wigan</b>	£5,872.61	£7,497.79
<b>Wirral</b>	£5,887.59	£7,705.15

Interestingly, when Halton is compared with what the Department for Education considers our 10 closest statistical neighbours for Children's Services (the majority, perhaps oddly, being in the North East), we are the second highest funded authority in the primary sector, within 0.2% of the highest, Middlesbrough. Albeit only 3.3% above the group average, as they are - as one might expect - closely clustered. For the secondary sector we are fourth, just 0.9% above average. See below for details.

Name	PUF	SUF
<b>Barnsley</b>	£5,858.92	£7,596.69
<b>County Durham</b>	£6,232.90	£7,690.21
<b>Darlington</b>	£5,778.50	£7,618.26
<b>Halton</b>	£6,274.26	£7,935.84
<b>Hartlepool</b>	£6,193.34	£7,936.42
<b>Knowsley</b>	£6,196.95	£8,439.47
<b>Middlesbrough</b>	£6,285.86	£8,285.63
<b>North East Lincolnshire</b>	£5,992.23	£7,820.94
<b>Redcar and Cleveland</b>	£6,048.71	£7,645.14

South Tyneside	£6,054.17	£7,771.73
Sunderland	£5,917.48	£7,783.69

The PUF and SUF values for 2026/27 are multiplied by the number of primary and secondary age pupils counted on the October 2025 census to give our final Schools Block allocation.

Please note that the PUFs and SUFs are used solely to calculate the overall amount of funding due to the LA, and do not represent any individual Schools Block funding formula factor.

Because of these increases for inflation and grant mainstreaming, the minimum per pupil funding protection baselines have been increased to £5,115 in the primary sector, and £6,640 in the secondary sector (up from £4,955 and £6,465, respectively).

Because a full annual amount of grant is included in the funding baseline, the DfE argues that a year-on-year funding increase is “baked-in”. Consequently, the allowable spread for Minimum Funding Guarantee for 2026/27 will be between -0.5% and 0.0% inclusive; the same as last year. The Authority recognises previous Schools Forum recommendations to maximise MFG, so we will again be proposing to adopt the upper boundary figure.

From 2023/24 Halton has fully mirrored the NFF funding factors and this will again be our starting position. However, as discussed below in **section 3.3**, the overall funding envelope must be considered.

### 3.3 Pupil Numbers & NFF Affordability

Pupil numbers in the primary and secondary sectors have, again, decreased overall; details as below (for information, this is a similar fall to last year in the primary school population, though last year secondary numbers decreased by significantly more):

	2026/27	2025/26	Variance
Primary	9,714	9,943	-229 (-238)
Secondary	7,527	7,546	-19 (-103)
Total	17,241	17,489	-248 (-341)

As explained in **section 3.2**, PUFs and SUFs are multiplied by these new NOR figures to derive the overall Schools Block for 2026/27; essentially flexing for new pupil numbers. However, because the actual formula consists of multiple data types, if significant numbers of other variables change quite differently to basic pupil numbers, there will be an effect on the overall affordability of implementing NFF. In other words, either a funding shortfall or funding headroom.

	26/27 Data	25/26 Data	%age change
NOR	17,243	17,489	-1.41%
NOR Primary	9,714	9,943	-2.30%
NOR Reception	1,289	1,302	-1.00%
NOR Secondary	7,529	7,546	-0.23%
NOR KS3	4,531	4,622	-1.97%
NOR KS4	2,998	2,924	2.53%
Primary FSM Units	3,518	3,679	-4.38%
Primary FSM6 Units	3,552	3,712	-4.31%
Secondary FSM Units	3,107	3,122	-0.48%
Secondary FSM6 Units	3,159	3,165	-0.19%
IDACI Primary Units Band G	2,832	2,908	-2.60%
IDACI Primary Units Band F	1,300	1,318	-1.36%
IDACI Primary Units Band E	1,110	1,108	0.23%
IDACI Primary Units Band D	1,287	1,339	-3.90%
IDACI Primary Units Band C	512	511	0.12%
IDACI Primary Units Band B	1,988	2,042	-2.67%
IDACI Primary Units Band A	686	718	-4.45%
IDACI Secondary Units Band G	2,447	2,405	1.76%
IDACI Secondary Units Band F	972	938	3.64%
IDACI Secondary Units Band E	795	864	-7.98%
IDACI Secondary Units Band D	990	983	0.73%
IDACI Secondary Units Band C	361	377	-4.24%
IDACI Secondary Units Band B	1,452	1,442	0.64%
IDACI Secondary Units Band A	511	536	-4.65%
EAL 3 Primary Units	374	372	0.40%
EAL 3 Secondary Units	66	80	-17.37%
Low prior attainment total Primary Units	3,646	3,604	1.16%
Low prior attainment total Secondary Units	1,617	1,661	-2.69%
Mobility Primary Units	81	69	17.54%
Mobility Secondary Units	15	11	32.49%

NB Please refer to **Appendix A** for an explanation of these formula factors.

### 3.4 Current Position

Replicating NFF in its local funding formula, and applying the Area Cost Adjustment, the individual school budgets for mainstream activities (i.e. not including nursery or SEN elements) are illustrated in **Appendix B**. These budgets at this stage are indicative, and will depend upon a) confirmation of regulatory compliance by Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and b) Schools Forum's views on

Minimum Funding Guarantee, and the use of the modest headroom available of £91,791.

This is a comparatively small amount, which would not materially affect school budgets if it was distributed generally through one of the formula factors. Even so it could be problematic in increasing that formula factor's baseline beyond current NFF for future years, in which we might not actually have the headroom to deliver it.

Consequently we propose to recognise that individual schools with significantly falling rolls may be facing some temporary pressures, inasmuch as it is problematic to reduce expenditure to straightaway address reduced pupil numbers (establishments cannot be adjusted with immediate effect, for example).

We have developed a model to fully utilise this headroom, which functions on the following basis:

- a) If the reduction is between 5% and 7.5% of total NOR, fund an extra £143.87 per pupil
- b) If the reduction is over 7.5% and up to 10%, £287.74 per pupil
- c) If the reduction is over 10%, £431.61 per pupil

The consequence of this model in practice is illustrated in **Appendix C**.

To enable this to operate, we require Forum's agreement to transfer the headroom amount of £91,791 from out of the Schools Block into the Central Schools Services Block.

We also seek the approval of Schools Forum to apply a Minimum Funding Guarantee of 0%, the highest figure allowable to us under national financial regulations.

After the provisional Schools Block budgets have been shared with Schools Forum at this meeting, we will submit the formula to the ESFA for approval. Once this is received, we will notify all schools of their **confirmed** Schools Block budget for 2026/27, to be followed by budget allocations including early years and high needs elements by end-February 2026.

### 3.5 Implications for Halton schools

Under the proposed local funding formula, minimum per pupil funding level (MPPFL) protection totalling £79,653 will be required for two Halton primary schools. Last year it was £215,580 for three:

- Lunts Heath Primary £39,648 (1.8% of total SB budget)
- Farnworth CE Primary £40,005 (1.9% of total SB budget)

Both these primary schools required MPPFL protection in 2025/26 as well, although those requirements were much higher: £106,390 (5.1%) for Lunts Heath, and £107,356 (5.2%) for Farnworth CE. MPPFL differs from MFG in that it considers non-pupil related factors such as the lump sum, averaging these over pupil numbers, whereas MFG relates purely to factors driven by pupil characteristics. The likelihood of a school needing to be supported by MPPFL increases for larger primary schools, as those fixed school factors are averaged over greater NOR, reducing the calculated value. Lunts Heath & Farnworth CE also required comparable levels of protection to 2025/26 in 2024/25.

Total cost of implementing a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) rate of 0% to baseline will be just £48,008. Last year it was £377,265. Last year 29 Halton schools required this protection, with amounts ranging from £955 to £49,073. This year it is just four schools, although each of these benefits significantly:

The Brow Community Primary School	£13,510
Woodside Primary School	£12,223
The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School	£14,849
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School	£ 7,426

In an ideal scenario, the funding formula would in itself deliver sufficient funding to render either of these protections immaterial. The diminishing requirement for protection to kick in suggests perhaps that NFF is becoming more optimal and/or overall levels of school funding are not now quite so inadequate.

MFG and MPPFL protections apply to all mainstream schools and academies.

#### HOW IS THE FUNDING BROKEN DOWN?

The table below illustrates how the various formula elements account for full usage of the 2026/27 Schools Block allocation:

	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	TOTAL	%age of funding
<i>Basic Entitlement</i>	£39,626,903	£45,150,459	£84,777,362	69.30%
<i>Free School Meals &amp; FSM 6</i>	£6,097,462	£7,044,841	£13,142,303	10.74%
<i>IDACI</i>	£3,020,066	£3,212,674	£6,232,739	5.09%
<i>English as Additional Language</i>	£228,709	£108,163	£336,872	0.28%
<i>Low Prior Attainment</i>	£4,391,929	£2,961,383	£7,353,312	6.01%
<i>Mobility</i>	£79,842	£21,226	£101,068	0.08%
<i>Lump Sum</i>	£7,587,222	£1,149,579	£8,736,801	7.14%
<i>Rates</i>	£603,248	£437,673	£1,040,921	0.85%
<i>PFI</i>	£241,986	£241,986	£483,972	0.40%
<i>MPPFL</i>	£79,653	£0	£79,653	0.07%
<i>MFG</i>	£48,008	£0	£48,008	0.04%

TOTAL FORMULA FUNDING	£62,005,028	£60,327,984	£122,333,012	100.00%
HEADROOM (TBC)			£91,791	
TOTAL SCHOOLS BLOCK ALLOCATION			£122,424,804	

NB Whole school factors for The Grange School are split 50:50

### 3.6 De-delegation

Unit values for de-delegation for 2026/27 have been increased by 2.1% from previous year, to account for the inflationary effect of providing these services. We require maintained school representatives from the primary and secondary phases to decide on whether they wish to de-delegate these funds for 2026/27:

- Contingencies (£21.80/pupil – total £186,477)
- Free School Meals eligibility checking (£0.74/pupil – total £6,330)
- Staff costs supply cover (£2.79/pupil – total £23,866)

The total proposed de-delegation of £216,673 compares with £221,687 agreed for 2025/26. The small increase in rates does not quite cover the reduction driven by reducing Numbers on Roll, both generally and because of the loss from maintained numbers following the single Academy conversion.

### 3.7 Central Schools Services Block budgets for 2026/27

The CSSB allocation is £758,066 based on pupil numbers on the October 2025 census, plus £9,878 for the Historical funding giving a total of £767,944 (increased from £765,250). The Historic commitment funding has again been reduced by 20% (from £12,348), and as this is used to fund the Safeguarding post, the balance required to be met by schools & academies will also increase (as previously agreed).

Overall, this is an increase of £2,694 from last year, in spite of the reduction in historic commitment funding and the pupil numbers being 248 fewer. This is because the unit of funding has increased by 2.1%, from £43.05 to £43.97.

### 3.8 High Needs Block

The majority of the High Needs Block allocation has in recent years been based on a formula calculation, using such information as population numbers, deprivation, attainment and health indicators, with a smaller element (26% of the total in 2025/26) being a fixed historical element. Because of the imminence of promised significant SEN reform, this approach has been set aside for 2026/27, with the allocation being based on last year's, modified for changes in numbers of pupils attending the various types of specialist provision.

The High Needs Block allocation has been confirmed as £31,876,871 before placement recoupment, but including a deduction of £0.180m for more Halton children being educated in other areas than other LAs' children being educated on Halton (net exports). This represents an increase from the final settlement for 2024-25 of £2,609,753 (+8.9%), though as with the Schools Block, this is inflated by in-year additional grants being baselined.

The recoupment for High Needs places will be £4.970m for 2026/27 (£3.806m in 2025/26), leaving £26,906,871 available to support Halton's Specialist provisions, Pupil Referral Unit, (PRU), Mainstream Resourced Units top-ups, Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) top-up funding, Out-of-borough high-cost Independent and Non-Maintained Specialist (INMS) providers, and the various specialist support services.

The individual High Needs Block budget allocations will be presented at the February meeting, as further work is required. Given the rate of increase of costs, we do not anticipate funding will be sufficient to fully fund 2026/27 commitments, let alone clear the cumulative deficit.

### 3.9 Early Years Block budgets for 2026/27

The Early Years Block grant allocation has been revealed as £23.781m, which is an increase of £3.095m compared to the revised 2025/26 figure. This is due to a combination of annualised increases in the hourly funding rates, and the full-year effect of the programme expansion (2s and under) which began in September 2025. A further change is that the DfE will now use termly census counts for all age groups to modify allocations over the course of the financial year, rather than a single annual change to reflect moving from one January census to the latest. The general effect of this is likely to reduce overall funding, so a commitment has been made to further increase 3 and 4 year-olds' hourly rates.

The hourly rate the Council is funded at for 3 & 4 year old provision, (as opposed to the hourly rate we pay providers), has increased from £5.97 per hour for 2025-26 to £6.48 per hour for 2026/27. The hourly rate the Council is funded at for 2 year old provision has increased from £8.52 per hour to £8.96 per hour; and also the hourly rate for the new under-2 year old provision is £12.18 per hour (up from £11.60).

The Early Years funding formula, and more particularly the settings' hourly funding rates (also, pass-through percentage, and detail of the central retentions) will, as normal, be brought to the February meeting.

### 3.10 Pupil Premium Grant

The Department for Education has set the funding rates below for 2026/27, reinstating the principle of annual increases, after 2025/26 values were frozen at 2024/25 rates:

Primary Free School Meal Ever 6 pupil	£1,550 (£1,480)
Secondary FSM6	£1,100 (£1,050)
Looked After Children	£2,690 (£2,570)
Post-LAC	£2,690 (£2,570)
Service Children Ever 6	£ 360 (£ 350)

The allocations to the LA and to individual schools will be announced by the Department for Education during the Spring term.

Looked After Children (LAC) Pupil Premium is managed and issued periodically by the local authority. All other forms of Premium will be passported directly to schools.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 We are required to set a local funding formula in line with the Schools Block operational guidance for 2026/27. Failure to do so will result in the DfE imposing a funding formula on us.

#### **5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

5.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

None.

5.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

None.

5.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

It is essential that schools and education support services receive sufficient funding to allow them to support all children and young people.

5.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need**

None.

5.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

None.

5.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

None.

**6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 We need to comply with the regulations, otherwise we would have a formula imposed on us. Not only would this affect allocations in 2026/27, it would modify the baseline for future year protections.

**7.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 **N/A**

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The Local Authority must discharge its statutory responsibilities in relation to all schools and settings.

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

## Appendix A

Schools Block Funding Formula**Funding formula values**

We are required to consult with Schools' Forum on the method, principles and rules adopted for the funding formula to be applied to mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies.

We have followed the National Funding Formula (NFF) method, principles and rules, and mirrored the NFF values for several years.

**The NFF 2026/27 on which to base Halton's individual local schools' funding formula is detailed below:**

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Primary NFF value 26/27</u>	<u>Secondary NFF value 26/27</u>
Basic per Pupil	A set level of funding according to age for each pupil.	£4,064	£5,686 KS3 £6,410 KS4
Deprivation - FSM	Funding for pupils who are currently eligible for FSM.	£505	£505
Deprivation – FSM Ever 6	Funding for pupils who have been eligible for FSM at some point in the previous 6 years.	£1,210	£1,725
Deprivation – IDACI	Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index. Funding is based on the deprivation level assigned to each pupil's home post code, banded A to G. However, funding is only allowed for bands A to F.	F £240 E £290 D £455 C £500 B £530 A £700	F £345 E £460 D £650 C £710 B £760 A £970
Low Prior Attainment (LPA)	Primary – where pupils have not achieved the expected level of development at EYFSP. Secondary – where pupils have not achieved the expected standard in KS2 at either reading, writing or maths.	£1,200	£1,825
English as an Additional Language (EAL)	Pupils identified with a first language other than English can be funded for up to the first three years of statutory schooling. We fund for the maximum period of three years.	£610	£1,630
Pupil Mobility	Provides funding for pupils who enter a school other than at the start of Autumn Term. A minimum threshold applies of 6% of pupil numbers. This is now a mandatory factor.	£985	£1,415
Sparsity	Funding for small schools located in areas where pupils would have to travel a set minimum distance to the next nearest school. This is now a mandatory factor.	Year Group size and distance tapers as per DfE	Year Group size and distance tapers as per DfE
Minimum Level of Per-pupil funding	A mandatory factor. <i>Combines all pupil-led factors and is not a stand-alone amount.</i>	£5,115	£6,640

Total Pupil-led factors	Each LA is required to allocate at least 80% of the delegated Schools Block funding through the above pupil-led factors.		26/27 calculated at 91.54%
Lump Sum	An amount per school up to a maximum of £175,000. Can be different for primary and secondary schools	£152,700	£152,700
Split Sites	No schools in Halton are eligible for funding under this factor.	n/a	n/a
National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR)	LA Rates	As per the ESFA funding	
Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts	A factor to support schools that have unavoidable premises costs due to being a PFI school. In Halton we use a per pupil rate. RPIX increase of 3.6% as per DfE Guidance.	n/a	£476.06
Minimum Funding Guarantee	The MFG can be set between -0.5% and +0%.	0.0%	0.0%

*All unit values above are as per the national funding formula values, inflated (slightly) by Halton's Schools Block Area Cost Adjustment of 1.00378. They are rounded to the nearest £ for presentational purposes.*

## Appendix B: Indicative School Budgets 2026/27

LAESTAB	School Name	26-27 Post MFG Budget	De-delegation	Education functions for maintained schools	Post De-delegation and Education functions budget
<b>Total</b>		<b>£122,333,012</b>	<b>-£216,673</b>	<b>-£238,742</b>	<b>£121,877,597</b>
8762104	Moore Primary School	£1,123,092	-£5,370	-£5,917	£1,111,806
8762107	Victoria Road Primary School	£1,159,562	-£4,661	-£5,135	£1,149,766
8762281	Weston Primary School	£1,153,873	-£4,914	-£5,415	£1,143,544
8762283	Castle View Primary School	£1,150,949	-£4,154	-£4,577	£1,142,218
8762295	The Brow Community Primary School	£1,003,203	-£3,394	-£3,740	£996,068
8762297	Woodside Primary School	£871,473	-£2,710	-£2,986	£865,776
8762325	Pewthall School	£1,172,093	-£5,167	-£5,694	£1,161,232
8762376	Hillview Primary School	£1,009,510	-£4,306	-£4,745	£1,000,459
8762381	Murdishaw West Community Primary School	£1,079,817	-£3,496	-£3,852	£1,072,470
8762382	Beechwood Primary School	£914,413	-£3,800	-£4,187	£906,427
8762383	Gorsewood Primary School	£1,182,084	-£4,179	-£4,605	£1,173,299
8762387	Windmill Hill Primary School	£1,084,062	-£3,749	-£4,131	£1,076,183
8762415	Moorfield Primary School	£1,295,990	-£5,953	-£6,559	£1,283,478
8762425	Fairfield Primary School	£3,348,766	-£14,615	-£16,104	£3,318,046
8762428	Lunts Heath Primary School	£2,162,370	-£10,563	-£11,638	£2,140,169
8762700	Astmoor Primary School	£1,063,971	-£3,597	-£3,963	£1,056,411
8762723	Westfield Primary School	£798,656	-£2,736	-£3,014	£792,906
8762725	Brookvale Primary School	£1,352,307	-£5,091	-£5,610	£1,341,606
8762726	Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Catholic Primary School	£1,129,770	-£4,737	-£5,219	£1,119,814
8762727	Oakfield Community Primary School	£1,752,743	-£6,814	-£7,508	£1,738,422
8763050	Halebank CofE Primary School	£702,272	-£2,280	-£2,512	£697,480
8763176	Hale Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	£1,186,728	-£5,041	-£5,554	£1,176,134
8763177	Farnworth Church of England Controlled Primary School	£2,124,770	-£10,487	-£11,555	£2,102,728
8763179	All Saints Upton Church of England Vol Controlled Primary School	£1,278,878	-£4,686	-£5,163	£1,269,028
8763502	Runcorn All Saints CofE Primary School	£784,010	-£2,508	-£2,763	£778,740
8763509	St Edward's Catholic Primary School	£717,584	-£2,660	-£2,931	£711,994
8763510	St Clement's Catholic Primary School	£1,213,679	-£5,294	-£5,833	£1,202,552
8763511	The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School	£613,442	-£1,925	-£2,121	£609,396
8763614	St Bede's Catholic Junior School	£1,767,715	-£7,751	-£8,540	£1,751,424
8763615	St Bede's Catholic Infant School	£1,266,437	-£5,547	-£6,112	£1,254,777
8763632	Our Lady Mother of the Saviour Catholic Primary School	£1,237,986	-£4,585	-£5,052	£1,228,349
8763637	St Martin's Catholic Primary School and Preschool	£1,102,081	-£4,205	-£4,633	£1,093,243
8763648	St Basil's Catholic Primary School	£1,456,540	-£5,623	-£6,196	£1,444,721
8763649	St Gerard's Catholic Primary and Nursery School	£1,311,318	-£4,914	-£5,415	£1,300,989
8763650	St John Fisher Catholic Primary School	£1,249,212	-£5,167	-£5,694	£1,238,351
8763651	St Michaels Catholic Primary & Nursery School	£1,531,722	-£6,105	-£6,726	£1,518,891
8764625	Saints Peter and Paul Catholic High School	£10,735,729	-£33,892	-£37,344	£10,664,494
8762000	Bridgewater Park Primary School	£647,534	£0	£0	£647,534
8762001	Widnes Academy	£820,392	£0	£0	£820,392
8762002	St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy	£1,054,381	£0	£0	£1,054,381
8762003	Palace Fields Primary Academy	£855,693	£0	£0	£855,693
8762004	Ditton Primary School	£2,060,947	£0	£0	£2,060,947
8762005	Kingsway Primary Academy School	£1,469,179	£0	£0	£1,469,179
8762006	Weston Point Primary Academy	£633,197	£0	£0	£633,197
8762007	Hallwood Park Primary School and Nursery	£585,932	£0	£0	£585,932
8762109	Daresbury Primary School	£1,071,348	£0	£0	£1,071,348
8762712	Halton Lodge Nursery & Primary School	£1,290,995	£0	£0	£1,290,995
8763175	St Michael with St Thomas CE Primary School	£1,065,650	£0	£0	£1,065,650
8763506	St Mary's Church of England Primary School	£1,209,277	£0	£0	£1,209,277
8763640	St Berteline's CofE Primary School	£1,447,454	£0	£0	£1,447,454
8764001	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	£7,466,499	£0	£0	£7,466,499
8764005	Sandymoor Ormiston Academy	£4,799,519	£0	£0	£4,799,519
8764006	Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic & Church of England Academy	£3,045,876	£0	£0	£3,045,876
8764103	The Heath School	£9,073,270	£0	£0	£9,073,270
8764207	Wade Deacon High School	£12,143,752	£0	£0	£12,143,752
8766905	Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy	£5,948,339	£0	£0	£5,948,339
8764003	The Grange School	£9,554,971	£0	£0	£9,554,971

**Appendix C: Proposed Falling Rolls support model**

NORreduction %	Funding per pupil
5%-7.5%	£143.87
7.5%-10%	£287.74
10%+	£431.61

LAESTAB	School Name	26/27 NOR	25/26 NOR	NORchange	NORchange %	Support
8762104	Moore Primary School	212	211	1	0.47%	£0
8762107	Victoria Road Primary School	184	199	-15	-7.54%	£4,316
8762281	Weston Primary School	194	198	-4	-2.02%	£0
8762283	Castle View Primary School	164	170	-6	-3.53%	£0
8762295	The Brow Community Primary School	134	150	-16	-10.67%	£6,906
8762297	Woodside Primary School	107	104	3	2.88%	£0
8762325	Pewthall School	204	208	-4	-1.92%	£0
8762376	Hillview Primary School	170	176	-6	-3.41%	£0
8762381	Murdishaw West Community Primary School	138	134	4	2.99%	£0
8762382	Beechwood Primary School	150	152	-2	-1.32%	£0
8762383	Gorsewood Primary School	165	174	-9	-5.17%	£1,295
8762387	Windmill Hill Primary School	148	145	3	2.07%	£0
8762415	Moorfield Primary School	235	242	-7	-2.89%	£0
8762425	Fairfield Primary School	577	590	-13	-2.20%	£0
8762428	Lunts Heath Primary School	417	417	0	0.00%	£0
8762700	Astmoor Primary School	142	139	3	2.16%	£0
8762723	Westfield Primary School	108	110	-2	-1.82%	£0
8762725	Brookvale Primary School	201	214	-13	-6.07%	£1,870
8762726	Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Catholic Primary School	187	191	-4	-2.09%	£0
8762727	Oakfield Community Primary School	269	286	-17	-5.94%	£2,446
8763050	Halebank CofE Primary School	90	91	-1	-1.10%	£0
	Hale Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School					
8763176		199	199	0	0.00%	£0
8763177	Farnworth Church of England Controlled Primary School	414	417	-3	-0.72%	£0
	All Saints Upton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School					
8763179		185	192	-7	-3.65%	£0
8763502	Runcorn All Saints CofE Primary School	99	100	-1	-1.00%	£0
8763509	St Edward's Catholic Primary School	105	117	-12	-10.26%	£5,179
8763510	St Clement's Catholic Primary School	209	196	13	6.63%	£0
8763511	The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School	76	96	-20	-20.83%	£8,632
8763614	St Bede's Catholic Junior School	306	307	-1	-0.33%	£0
8763615	St Bede's Catholic Infant School	219	223	-4	-1.79%	£0
8763632	Our Lady Mother of the Saviour Catholic Primary School	181	192	-11	-5.73%	£1,583
8763637	St Martin's Catholic Primary School and Preschool	166	185	-19	-10.27%	£8,201
8763648	St Basil's Catholic Primary School	222	224	-2	-0.89%	£0
8763649	St Gerard's Catholic Primary and Nursery School	194	203	-9	-4.43%	£0
8763650	St John Fisher Catholic Primary School	204	201	3	1.49%	£0
8763651	St Michaels Catholic Primary & Nursery School	241	227	14	6.17%	£0
8764625	Saints Peter and Paul Catholic High School	1,338	1,296	42	3.24%	£0
8762000	Bridgewater Park Primary School	80	91	-11	-12.09%	£4,748
8762001	Widnes Academy	115	127	-12	-9.45%	£3,453
	St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy					
8762002		152	127	25	19.69%	£0
8762003	Palace Fields Primary Academy	120	122	-2	-1.64%	£0
8762004	Ditton Primary School	327	367	-40	-10.90%	£17,264
8762005	Kingsway Primary Academy School	201	204	-3	-1.47%	£0
8762006	Weston Point Primary Academy	83	84	-1	-1.19%	£0
8762007	Hallwood Park Primary School and Nursery	65	70	-5	-7.14%	£719
8762109	Daresbury Primary School	197	204	-7	-3.43%	£0
8762712	Halton Lodge Nursery & Primary School	179	194	-15	-7.73%	£4,316
8763175	St Michael with St Thomas CE Primary School	168	177	-9	-5.08%	£1,295
8763506	St Mary's Church of England Primary School	187	187	0	0.00%	£0
8763640	St Berteline's CofE Primary School	257	263	-6	-2.28%	£0
8764001	Ormiston Chadwick Academy	889	926	-37	-4.00%	£0
8764005	Sandymoor Ormiston Academy	635	604	31	5.13%	£0
	Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic and Church of England Academy					
8764006		336	362	-26	-7.18%	£3,741
8764103	The Heath School	1,184	1,184	0	0.00%	£0
8764207	Wade Deacon High School	1,664	1,634	30	1.84%	£0
8766905	Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy	675	730	-55	-7.53%	£15,826
8764003	The Grange School	1,175	1,156	19	1.64%	£0
		17,243	17,489	-246		£91,789

**REPORT TO:** Schools' Forum

**DATE:** 21 January 2026

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Operational Director – Finance

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Young People & Families

**SUBJECT:** DSG Forecast Outturn for 2025/26

**WARD(S)** Borough wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To report the Dedicated Schools Grant forecast outturn for 2025/26.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 3.1 Grant settlement

The finalised Dedicated Schools Grant allocation for 2025/26 is £168,645,754, following Department for Education's revisions to the Early Years and High Needs blocks:

Schools Block	£117,833,053
CSSB	£ 765,250
Early Years Block	£ 20,287,728
High Needs Block	£ 29,759,723

Of this, £62,843,886 is recouped from the Schools Block for direct funding of mainstream Academies, and an estimated £4,506,670 recouped from the High Needs Block for academies and further education. These figures are based on the latest (November) DSG settlement update provided by the DfE.

### 3.2 Schools Block

Following agreement with Schools Forum, an amount of £117,752,106 in relation to the Schools Block was devolved to mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies through the local funding formula.

We are mirroring the National Funding Formula (NFF) factors and criteria, as well as the NFF cash values for all formula components.

### 3.3 Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)

The revised CSSB of £846,197 is currently forecast to budget in respect to the central services supported by this block.

### 3.4 Early Years Block

The revised Early Years Block of £20,287,728 (amended during the Summer in respect of the January 2025 EY census) is currently forecast to budget, but is subject to future variation based on termly headcount data.

### 3.5 High Needs Block

The High Needs block allocation of £29,759,723 is reduced by recoupment of £4,506,670 (see details below) and the balance of £25,253,053 is insufficient to meet the total estimated expenditure required for 2025/26 of £38,001,314. We estimate a shortfall of £12,748,261.

<b>Place Deductions</b>	<b>Current Nos.</b>	<b>Recoupment</b>
Academy Resourced Provisions: Pre-16 (filled)	76.92	-£468,500
Academy Resourced Provisions: Pre-16 (vacant)	6.42	-£52,501
Special Academies: Pre-16	193.92	-£1,939,167
Special Academies: Post-16	27.33	-£273,334
Special free schools: Pre-16	57.33	-£573,334
Special free schools: Pre-16 AP		-£5,834
FE/ILP	199.00	-£1,194,000
		<b>-£4,506,670</b>

The projected £12.75m in-year deficit within the High Needs Block is broken down as overleaf (includes the effect of the recoupment):

	CURRENT GROSS BUDGET	CURRENT GROSS FORECAST	VARIANCE
High Needs place funding- Mainstream Units	£1,431,940	£2,047,001	-£615,061
High Needs place funding- Special	£4,945,835	£7,365,085	-£2,419,250
High Needs place funding- PRU	£995,833	£1,089,000	-£93,167
Top-up funding- maintained mainstream schools	£2,728,439	£4,512,368	-£1,783,929
Top-up funding- maintained special schools	£2,150,842	£2,845,091	-£694,249
Top-up funding- maintained PRU	£1,743,236	£1,739,387	£3,849
Top-up funding- academies, free schools & colleges	£2,028,918	£3,382,810	-£1,353,892
Top-up funding- Special academies	£989,608	£3,335,875	-£2,346,267
Top-up & other funding- non-maintained and independent providers	£7,272,179	£11,086,503	-£3,814,324
Top-up & other funding- Post-16 FE	£2,796,102	£2,167,449	£628,653
SEN support services	£2,280,293	£2,233,815	£46,478
Special free school	£330,606	£579,168	-£248,562
Exclusions		£58,540	-£58,540
Support for inclusion	£45,492	£45,492	£0
Therapies and other health-related services	£20,400	£20,400	£0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£29,759,723</b>	<b>£42,507,984</b>	<b>-£12,748,261</b>

The projected overspend is in the main due to significant expansions in numbers and specifications of resource bases, increasing numbers and costs of high-cost specialist placements in or out of Borough, and increases in numbers and value of EHCP (Education & Health Care Plan) assessments.

We began the financial year anticipating a shortfall of £9.4m, so the first 8 months of 2025/26 have seen that increase by a net £3.35m (£3.84m of spend, less £0.49m increase in Block funding)

### 3.6 DSG Balances

Taking into account the deficit brought forward from 2024/25 of £5,348,546, and anticipating the ongoing pressures specifically faced by the High Needs Block forecasting an in-year deficit of £12,748,261, the cumulative forecast DSG deficit by the end of 2025/26 (31<sup>st</sup> March 2026) is £18,096,807.

The accumulating deficit has resulted in Halton being included in tranche 3 of the DfE intervention 'Delivering Better Value (DBV) in High Needs where work has taken place to develop a realistic and robust recovery plan for the approval of the DfE.

## 4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None

## 5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Further savings and reducing overspends are essential to getting back to a balanced DSG position.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

None

### **6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

None.

### **6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

It is essential that schools and education support services receive sufficient funding to allow them to support all children and young people.

### **6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need**

The High Needs budgets – those under greatest pressure – are key to improving outcomes for those greatest in need.

### **6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future**

None.

### **6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

None.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

### **7.1 Continued overspending against DSG will impede plans to change and improve services and provision.**

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

### **8.1 The Local Authority must discharge its statutory responsibilities in relation to all schools and settings.**

## **9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

None