



**Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Children's Services Directorate**

Agenda

BARNSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Date: Tuesday 17th March 2026
Time: 14.00 to 16.00
Location: Westgate Plaza One, Level 3 Board Room

Ref	Item	Papers	Officer
1	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies	Verbal	Chair
2	Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest To consider any declarations of interest from members of the Schools Forum.	Verbal	Chair
3	Minutes and action log of previous meeting of the Schools Forum To consider the minutes, action log and any matters arising from the Meeting of the Schools Forum, held on 22 nd January 2026	ENC A	Chair
4	Annual Review of the Local Guide to the Barnsley Schools Forum inc. Terms of Reference (TOR)	ENC B	Chair
5	High Needs Budget and Funding Arrangements (2026-27)	ENC C	Helen Perrin
6	Education Improvement Strategy for the Barnsley Schools Alliance	ENC D	Anna Turner
7	<u>SEND reforms white paper</u>	Verbal	Sarah Phipps
8	Any other urgent business To consider any additional business which in the view of the Chair of the Schools Forum cannot wait until the next meeting.	Verbal	All
9	Future Agenda items for the next meeting of the Schools Forum (16th July 2026): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Membership of the Barnsley Schools Forum • School Budget (2025/26) Year-end Outturn • Schools Budget (2026/27) Latest Position • Special Educational Needs Performance and Finance Report (Quarter 4: 2025/26) • Election of the Chair 		

SCHEDULE OF FUTURE MEETINGS:

Date	Time	Venue	Deadline for papers
16th July 2026	2:00 - 4:00PM	Westgate Boardroom	3rd July 2026
22nd October 2026	2:00 - 4:00PM	Westgate Boardroom	9th October 2026
17th December 2026	2:00 - 4:00PM	Westgate Boardroom	4th December 2026
21st January 2027	2:00 - 4:00PM	Westgate Boardroom	8th January 2027
18th March 2027	2:00 - 4:00PM	Westgate Boardroom	5th March 2027



Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Children's Services Directorate

BARNSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON THURSDAY
22nd January 2026**

Meeting Attendance

Name	Role	Present?
Primary School (LA)		
Simon Tabbner (ST)	Primary Headteacher	✓
Jackie Milliner (JM)	Primary Governor	✓

Primary Academy		
Joe Woffinden (JW)	Primary Headteacher	✓
Victoria Gorton (VG)	Primary Headteacher	
Katie Adamski (KA)	Primary Headteacher	✓
Michael Sanderson (CHAIR)	Primary Academy Governor	✓
Peter Bell (PB)	Primary Academy Governor	✓

Secondary School (LA)		
Paul Crook (PC)	Secondary Headteacher	✓
Visseh Pejhan Sykes (VPS)	Secondary Maintained Governor	✓

Secondary Academy		
Amir Arezoo (AA)	Associate Principal	✓
Victoria Harrison (VH)	HCAT CFO	✓
Nigel Leeder (NL)	Governor	✓

Special & Alternative Provision		
Josh Greaves (JG) (VICE CHAIR)	Special Schools Headteacher/Board Representative	✓
George Wild (GW)	Special Education Provision Governor	✓

Nursery Provision		
Simon Sykes (SS)	Teacher	✓

Early Years Provision		
Melanie Szoke (MS)	Childcare Quality & Sufficiency Manager	

Education for Young People aged 16-19 Years		
Tom Smith (TS)	Head of Service	Apologies

Councillors		
Cllr Deborah Pearson (DP)	Councillor (BMBC)	Apologies
Cllr Ken Richardson (KR)	Councillor (BMBC)	Apologies

Diocesan		
Nevine Towers (NT)	The Diocese of Sheffield Academies	✓

BMBC Officers		
Katharine Knowles (KK)	Strategic Finance Business Partner	✓
Helen Perrin (HP)	Principal Accountant	Apologies
Nina Sleight (NS)	Service Director	Apologies
Anna Turner (AT)	Head of Education and Partnerships	✓
Sue Day (SD)	Head of SEND	Apologies
Eleanor Cooper (EC)	Governor Services adviser	✓
Lauren firth (LF)	Project Officer	✓

1. Welcome and apologies

- The Chair extended a warm welcome to everyone at the meeting. Formal apologies were noted from Helen Perrin, Sue Day, Tom Smith, Nina Sleight, Ken Richardson and Cllr Deborah Pearson.

2. Declarations of interest

- Visseh Pejhan Sykes declared an interest as a Trustee for Wellspring Academy but confirmed is attending the meeting solely as the representative for Penistone Grammar School.
- Kat Knowles declared an interest as Chair of Governors of Silkstone Primary School.
- Nevine Towers declared interests in relation to three academies within DSAT: The Ellis Church of England School, All Saints Academy Darfield, and Elsecar Holy Trinity Church of England School.

3. Minutes and action log of the previous meeting of the Schools Forum

- The Chair explained that the draft minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on the 18th December had been updated to more fully record the voting details on the issue of the transfer, as the original version lacked details of this information. This change was made after feedback and further reflection. It was confirmed that, aside from the expanded voting record, the minutes remained as originally circulated.
- The minutes were agreed and approved as a correct record of the meeting. Actions were reviewed on the action log. No other matters arose during consideration of the minutes.

4. Schools Budget Out turn Report (Quarter 3: 2025/26)

- Kat Knowles presented the Schools Budget Outturn Report (Quarter 3: 2025/26) on behalf of Helen Perrin (BMBC Principal Accountant).
- The revised Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget (excluding academies) is £121.4 million, comprising £62.5 million delegated to schools and £58.9 million centrally retained/managed.

- The latest overall financial risk for 2025/26 is £19.5 million, reflecting the cumulative position plus the forecast 2025/26 central DSG deficit and the £2.75 million Safety Valve payment; the primary driver is growth in independent and other local authority specialist placements.
- Maintained school surplus balances have reduced compared with 2024/25 (from £3.014 million to a £1.043 million forecast for 2025/26).
- Several primary schools in the Penistone cluster are forecasting 2025/26 deficits, linked to falling pupil numbers and low deprivation funding under the NFF.
- The High Needs Block continues to experience significant cost pressures, including increased INMSS/Other LA placements, higher EHCP numbers and top-up costs, increased tuition/AP demand, and post-16 pressures. A 1% transfer (£1.7 million) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block is in place as a mitigation.
- The main risk remains growth in specialist placements, including tribunal-directed placements. The SEND deficits statutory override has been extended to 2027/28, with further guidance anticipated in a White Paper expected spring 2026.
- George Wild requested clarification regarding the £4.636 million over-commitment within the High Needs Block. It was confirmed this represents a known budget over-commitment in the 2025/26 plan.
- No further comments or questions were raised.

Resolved: The Schools Budget Outturn Report (Quarter 3: 2025/26) was received and noted by the Forum.

5. Schools Funding: Budget Allocations (2026/27)

- Kat Knowles presented the Schools Funding Budget Allocations for 2026/27.
- The total allocation to Barnsley for 2026/27 is £319.5 million, representing an increase of £18.4 million, split across the schools block, high needs block, early years, and central services.
- The schools block is up £9.0 million, mainly due to the rolling in of grants and national funding formula increases, despite a fall in pupil numbers for the first time.
- Early years funding increases by £7.3 million, the high needs block increases by £1.9 million, and central services by £0.132 million. Pupil premium rates will rise by 2.3%.
- Free school meals (FSM6) funding is set at £1,550 for primary and £1,100 for secondary pupils. Funding for looked-after children is £2,690.
- No major structural changes to the funding system for 2026/27; the local formula must continue to align more closely with the National Funding Formula.
- No comments or questions were raised following the presentation of the report.

Resolved: The Schools Funding: Budget Allocations (2026/27) report was received and noted by the Forum.

6. Schools Block Dedicated Budget (2026/27)

- Kat Knowles presented the Schools Block Dedicated Budget for 2026/27. She explained that a vote was required from the forum on the proposed budget, including the transfer to high needs and the de-delegation arrangements as part of the Schools Block Dedicated Budget paper.
- Kat Knowles highlighted a typographical error in the paper, which the Chair had noted; references to paragraphs 22 and 24 should have been to paragraphs 23 and 27, but confirmed the content remained unchanged.
- The local funding formula will move at least 10% closer to National Funding Formula (NFF) values, as per guidance. Minimum per pupil funding is set at £5,115 for primary and £6,640 for secondary schools. AWPU rates increase to £4,064 for primary and to £5,686 (KS3) and £6,410 (KS4) for secondary.
- A transfer of 1% (approximately £1.817 million) from the schools block to the high needs block is proposed, subject to DfE approval. This aligns with the DSG management approach and consultation outcomes.
- The actual transfer is being modelled at 0.8% to ensure no individual schools are adversely impacted, pending DfE's decision.
- The de-delegation for teaching staff cover (maternity, etc.) is £104,000. The education functions deduction for school improvement is £96,000. Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) is set at +0%, and growth funding top-slice remains £100,000.
- George Wild requested clarification on the teaching staff cover de-delegation (£104,000), specifically whether this money eventually returns to schools. Kat Knowles explained this covers costs such as maternity cover.
- Peter Bell clarified that only local authority maintained school representatives from their respective sector (primary or secondary) could vote on the Schools Block Dedicated Budget (2026/27) item, and if no agreement was reached, the matter would be referred to the DfE for adjudication.

Outcome of the Vote: Schools Block Dedicated Budget (2026/27)

- The Forum considered the proposals relating to the Schools Block Dedicated Budget for 2026/27, including the de-delegation funding items and the formula budget deduction for education functions.
- For the secondary maintained school representatives, unanimous approval (100% in favour, 0% against) was recorded for all de-delegation items: contingency, free school meals eligibility checks, and teaching staff cover. Secondary representatives also unanimously approved the proposed formula budget deduction for education functions.
- It was noted that the only primary maintained school representatives present for the relevant de-delegation votes were Jackie Milliner and Simon Tabbner. As their votes could not be confirmed during the meeting, it was agreed that these would be formally recorded retrospectively.

Action: Eleanor Cooper to contact Jackie Milliner and Simon Tabbner to confirm their votes on the de-delegation items and the education functions budget deduction, and to record their responses in writing.

Resolved: The Forum received the report and approved the proposed Schools Block Dedicated Budget for 2026/27, including the de-delegation funding and the formula budget deductions for education functions, as presented.

7. Early Years Block Dedicated Budget (2026/27)

- Kat Knowles presented the Early Years Block Dedicated Budget for 2026/27.
- Funding rates for 3- and 4-year-olds are £6.01 per hour (without termly adjustment) and rates for 2-year-olds is set at £8.40 per hour. There is an adjusted rate for 3- and 4-year-olds of £6.20 applied for 2026/27 to compensate for reduced funded hours under the new census method.
- The DfE is moving to a termly census basis for funding from 2026/27. Adjusted national rates have been introduced for one year to mitigate reductions from lower annual counts and to provide more accurate and responsive funding, protecting local authorities from volatility in pupil numbers.
- The pass-through requirement remains at 97% for all early years entitlements, with 3% retained for central functions.
- Risks identified include participation hours and the impact of census changes, with contingency funding built into the budget modelling to manage these.
- Following discussion noted the complexity of the new census arrangements and asked whether the termly census would help or create volatility. Kat Knowles advised it should improve accuracy and ensure providers are funded for children joining mid-term, with adjustments managed by the local authority.
- Assurance was provided that administrative burden will fall on the local authority, not on providers, and that the aim is to smooth out funding adjustments across the year.

Resolved: The Forum received and noted the Early Years Block Dedicated Budget report for information.

8. Central School Services Budget Block (2026/27)

- Kat Knowles presented the Central School Services Budget Block for 2026/27.
- The block allocation is £1.806 million, an increase of £132,429, mainly due to the rolling in of NIC and SBSG grants into the base allocation, offset slightly by a reduction in pupil numbers.
- Ongoing responsibilities covered include asset management, education welfare, statutory and regulatory duties, schools admissions, Schools Forum administration, and DfE copyright licences.
- Historic commitments for Barnsley Alliance (school improvement) and looked-after children remain at current levels (£395k and £200k respectively).
- The contingency budget will be finalised once the DfE copyright licence fee is confirmed, with £214k to be allocated following a review of spend within the CSSB.
- Josh Greaves asked if the Barnsley Alliance contribution and school improvement/brokerage funding are combined or separate; it was

clarified that they relate to different purposes and remain separate budget lines.

- It was clarified that these are for different purposes and are separate budget lines; the Alliance pot is mainly for CPD and targeted school intervention support.

Outcome of the Vote: Central School Services Budget Block (2026/27)

- The Forum unanimously approved the Central School Services Budget Block allocation for 2026/27.

Resolved: The Forum received and noted the Central School Services Budget Block (2026/27) report and approved the Central School Services Budget Block as set out in paragraph 16 of the report.

9. Special Educational Needs Performance and Finance Report (Quarter 2: 2025/26)

- Anna Turner presented the Quarter 2 SEND Performance and Finance Report on behalf of Sue Day.
- The number of children supported with EHCPs was 3,236, with 145 new plans issued and 138 requests for assessment received; although Q2 saw only a net increase of 2 plans, this reflects the period in which many plans are ceased. Demand continues to rise, broadly aligning with national trends.
- 78% of plans were issued within 20 weeks, down from 88% in Quarter 1, but still above the latest national average of 46%.
- Efforts are ongoing to increase local specialist provision: 14 primary resourced provision places are now operational, work is underway to develop 20 additional secondary specialist places by Spring 2026, and proposals for up to 45 new primary specialist places from September 2026 have been submitted.
- There has been a 100% increase in parental requests for specialist settings compared to the previous year, and 53 new out-of-borough independent placements so far in 2025/26, driven by local sufficiency challenges and delays in the national Free School Programme.
- Attendance for SEND Support pupils is 94.2% (primary) and 87.5% (secondary); for pupils with EHCPs, 91.1% (primary) and 80.6% (secondary).
- Welfare Call has been implemented to improve oversight of attendance, especially for out-of-borough placements.
- The Safety Valve agreement provides £22.9 million over five years; however, the current forecast shows an in-year SEND deficit of £6.572 million, an increase of £1.6 million from Quarter 1 and £2.0 million above plan, largely due to increased independent placements and delays in creating local places.
- Josh Greaves raised a question on the average cost of independent placements; it was noted this cost varies significantly and full figures would be shared later.
- Josh Greaves also commended the documentation for the 45-place local provision project and declared an interest as Wellspring had expressed interest in phase one.

- A question was asked about the use of Welfare Call for absence reporting; Anna Turner confirmed that it supports both safeguarding and financial oversight for high-cost placements.

Resolved: The Forum received and noted the Special Educational Needs Performance and Finance Report (Quarter 2: 2025/26).

10. Provisional Education Outcomes in the Borough (2025)

- Anna Turner presented the provisional educational outcomes for 2025.
- Barnsley ranked 3rd nationally for Key Stage 1 Phonics outcomes in 2025, continuing its strong performance in early reading. This follows three consecutive years of being in the national top 10, supported by strong literacy CPD and sector-wide collaboration.
- Barnsley achieved second nationally for the Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check average score, with pupils achieving 50% full marks, significantly above national and regional averages.
- Key Stage 2 combined reading, writing and maths (RWM) outcomes were above the national average, with improvements particularly notable for SEND Support pupils, who saw strong gains across all subjects. However, KS2 EHCP pupil outcomes slightly declined in Maths, Writing and RWM.
- At Key Stage 4, outcomes improved across all key measures. Barnsley's Basics measure (grades 4–9 in English and Maths) was 63.4% and 44.5% for grades 5–9, with the gap to national outcomes continuing to narrow.
- Anna Turner highlighted strong results across several secondary schools and the continued upward trend in attainment across the borough.

Resolved: The Forum received and noted the Provisional Education Outcomes in the Borough (2025) report.

11. Position statement for EHE

- Anna Turner presented the current position and status of the EHE register in Barnsley.
- The local authority continues to go beyond statutory duties, supported by the Every Child in School Everyday plan, which aims for a 30% reduction in EHE over two academic years (15% per year). The four strategic priorities were confirmed as: reducing EHE numbers, improving attendance, reducing suspensions/exclusions and embedding inclusive SEND practice.
- Barnsley's EHE register stood at 822 children as of 24 October 2025, with a breakdown provided showing 70 EHCP, 44 SEN (non-EHCP), 708 non-SEN, 9 Children in Need, and 3 Children on Child Protection Plans.
- Additional funding has been secured through the Great Childhood Ambition initiative, enabling recruitment of three additional Education Welfare Service (EWS) staff (one manager and two EWOs) dedicated to EHE, with a focus on Years 9–11.
- Anna Turner noted the challenge posed by children on Child Protection Plans (CPP) being electively home educated, and referenced anticipated national legislative changes that may restrict this in future.

- The Education Welfare Service visits families at the point of notification to ensure that suitable education is in place, revisits within 10 days if plans are unclear, and issues School Attendance Orders when education is deemed unsuitable.
- Nigel Leeder asked about the authority’s ability to challenge parents of children on CPP and the issue of families “dipping in and out” of EHE. Anna Turner confirmed that each case is reviewed individually, and outlined mechanisms for early intelligence sharing between phases and services.
- Amir Arezoo highlighted the link between EHE and socioeconomic deprivation, and the need to monitor emerging trends. This was acknowledged, reinforcing the seriousness of the issue.
- Anna Turner provided reassurance that the EWS tracks, visits, and challenges cases as appropriate, including escalation through the Integrated Front Door where concerns arise.

Resolved: The Forum received and noted the Position Statement for Elective Home Education (EHE) report

12. Any other urgent business

No urgent business was raised.

13. Future Agenda Items

The Forum noted the following agenda items that are scheduled for discussion at the forthcoming meeting on 17 March 2026.

- SEND & AP sufficiency strategy and the new Mill Special School build
- Presentation of Proposals for In-Borough Provision Funding Reallocation
- Special Educational Needs Performance and Finance Report (Quarter 3: 2025/26)

Anna Turner requested that the newly co-produced Education Improvement Strategy for the Barnsley Schools Alliance be added to the list of future agenda items for information.

Action: Lauren Firth to add the newly co-produced Education Improvement Strategy for the Barnsley Schools Alliance to the forward plan.

14. Schedule of future meetings (2026)

The following meeting dates were noted:

- Tuesday 17th March 2026 – 2.00pm - Boardroom, Westgate Plaza
- Thursday 16th July 2026 - 2:00pm - Boardroom, Westgate Plaza
- Thursday 22nd October 2026 - 2:00pm - Boardroom, Westgate Plaza
- Thursday 17th December 2026 - 2:00pm - Boardroom, Westgate Plaza

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(Signed by the Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum)



BARNSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

ACTION LOG OF THE MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON 22nd January 2026

REF	DATE	ACTION	LEAD	UPDATE	STATUS
13	22.01.26	Eleanor Cooper to follow up with Jackie Milliner and Simon Tabbner regarding their votes and record this in writing.	EC	27.01.2026 – Vote received from Jackkie Milliner has been recorded in the meeting minuites. 10.02.2026 – Vote received from Simon Tabbner has been recorded in the meeting minuites.	Complete
14	22.01.26	Lauren Firth to add the newly co-produced Education Improvement Strategy for the Barnsley Schools Alliance to the forward plan.	LF	22.01.2026 – Added to forward plan	Complete

ONGOING ACTIONS

REF	DATE	ACTION	LEAD	UPDATE	STATUS
11	23.10.2025	<u>Special Educational Needs Performance and Finance Report (Quarter 1: 2025/26)</u> Sue Day to follow up on the potential use of existing school space for SEN provision as part of the capital estate review.	SD	Sue Day to give a verbal update to the Schools Forum on the process that is being followed for capital. UPDATE REQUIRED	Ongoing



Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Children's Services Directorate

12	18.12.2025	<p><u>Outcome of the Local Authority's consultation with schools on proposed changes to the Local Schools Funding Formula</u></p> <p>BMBC to consider the use of workshops or cluster meetings to improve future consultation engagement, with a review of effectiveness for next year.</p>	BMBC Colleagues	UPDATE REQUIRED	Ongoing
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COMPLETED ACTIONS (To be deleted after each meeting)

REF	DATE	ACTION	LEAD	UPDATE	STATUS
6	23.10.2025	<p><u>Schools Budget: Latest Forecast Position (Quarter 2: 2025/26)</u></p> <p>Kat Knowles/Helen Perrin to update the deficit commentary to reflect geographic and demographic factors, not just school size.</p>	KK/HP	Will be actioned when we complete the Q3 outturn report which will be presented at Schools Forum in January. 22.01.2026 – Paper shared and presented at the meeting.	Complete
8	23.10.2025	<p><u>Schools Budget: Latest Forecast Position (Quarter 2: 2025/26)</u></p> <p>Kat Knowles/Helen Perrin to correct any table header typos and ensure clarity in future reports.</p>	KK/HP	Will be actioned when we complete the Q3 outturn report which will be presented at Schools Forum in January. 22.01.2026 – Paper shared and presented at the meeting.	Complete

Local Guide to the Barnsley Schools Forum

March 2026

Foreword

Whether you are a school leader, school governor or teacher, we all have the best of intentions for children and young people learning in Barnsley.

Our ambition is for all children and young people to attend a school which has been graded by Ofsted to be of a 'Strong Standard' or better, to achieve their aspirations and realise their potential.

Schools continue to face challenges at every turn. In terms of children and young people's learning, the continuing impact of stretched finances and resources, coupled with increasing demands around special educational needs provision, have been significant and long-lasting. To restore lost learning, promote the wellbeing of everyone in the schools' sector and achieve the progress we all want for children and young people in the Borough, schools must have the necessary funding and resources to achieve this. This includes a commitment towards ensuring '*every child is in school every day*' and to significantly reduce unjustified suspensions and exclusions so that no individual or groups of disadvantaged pupils are left behind.

The '*Great Childhoods Ambition*', as part of Barnsley's 2025-2030 education strategy, is a commitment to improving the lives and futures of our children and young people. We want Barnsley to be a 'place of possibilities' for everyone. A place where all children and young people can benefit from the opportunities that great childhoods can bring. We will support them to have a great childhood and ensure they feel they belong, and can explore, dream, grow and connect.

As members of the Barnsley Schools Forum, we share a strong responsibility with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and the Barnsley Alliance for School Improvement, in ensuring we

make the most sustainable decisions and have a positive influence upon school funding.

The purpose of this Local Guide is to enable you as a member of the Barnsley Schools Forum to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to be able to support the Forum in this objective and to make a difference.

The Barnsley Schools Forum is an important partner in helping improve education outcomes in the Borough; promoting inclusion and life chances through a good and enriching education whilst at the same time making effective use of available resources and ensuring value for money, building human capital and shaping our future local communities.

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Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum

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Introduction

The Barnsley Schools Forum is a statutory body which is one of Barnsley Council's key partners in supporting the following:

- Improving the physical and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in the Borough.
- Improving education outcomes for children and young people in the Borough
- Enhancing the quality of practice and provision by helping improve teaching and learning standards
- Fostering inclusion through education and improving the life chances of vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Role and Responsibilities of the Barnsley Schools Forum

The Schools Forum (England) Regulations (2012) set out the role and responsibilities for schools forums. In Barnsley, the purpose of the Schools Forum is two-fold as follows:

Decision Making Role

1. To make the final decision on whether to transfer a percentage of funding (*usually 0.5%*) from the Schools Block to other blocks, notably the High Needs Block.
2. Deciding upon the criteria and allocation of funding for the following:
 - Significant pre-16 years pupil growth, including proposals to commission and procure new schools to meet demand
 - Funding for schools judged as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' which are experiencing falling pupil rolls and where a growth in pupil numbers is expected within 3 years
3. To decide expenditure on the following:
 - Early years block provision

- Enabling schools to meet the infant class size requirement(s)
- Payment of equal pay claims, including arrears
- Remission of boarding fees at both maintained schools and academies
- Places in independent schools for non-special educational needs pupils.
- Admissions to schools
- Contributions towards other responsibilities which local authorities hold for all schools
- Administrative support to the Forum

Consultative Role

To be consulted by the Local Authority on the following:

4. Changes to the schools funding formula (*in Barnsley, the Local Authority arranges to consult school governing bodies on the proposals*)
5. Where the Local Authority proposes to enter into a contract to be funded through the schools' budget, the Schools Forum provides a view (*in Barnsley, the Local Authority arranges to consult school governing bodies on the proposals*)
6. To be consulted by the Local Authority on the following financial matters:
 - Arrangements for the sufficiency of school placements concerning pupils with special educational needs, together with top-up funding.
 - Arrangements for alternative education provision in the Borough, including the commissioning of places, together with top-up funding.
 - Arrangements for early years provision, including the sufficiency of places and top-up funding.

- Arrangements for the allocation of central government grant-funding
7. Proposed exclusions from the Minimum Funding Guarantee.
8. Proposed de-delegation of mainstream, maintained school funding for the following purposes:
- Contingencies
 - Free school meals
 - School insurance, licenses and subscriptions
 - Staff costs
 - Support for minority ethnic pupils and under-achieving groups of pupils
 - Support for improving pupil behaviour
 - Supporting school improvement
 - Other responsibilities which the Local Authority may hold for maintained schools
9. To also be consulted on the following matters:
- Scheme of financial management changes.
 - Membership of and changes to the composition of the Schools Forum, together with length of office, appointment of the Chair of the Forum and voting procedures.

Representation and Membership of the Barnsley Schools Forum

Whilst the School Forum (England) Regulations provide a framework for appointing members to fulfil its role and responsibilities, they afford local areas with discretion over appointments in support of local education priorities and practice.

In considering appointments to the Barnsley Schools Forum, the following factors are noted:

1. Size – there is no maximum limit to membership. However, the Schools Forum (England) Regulations do state that two-thirds of the membership of the Schools Forum should be composed of representatives from schools and academies.

The balance of membership between schools and academies should be reflective of the number of pupils in each category within the primary and secondary phase. Therefore, one of the tasks of the Schools Forum is to regularly review the distribution of pupils in each category to ensure its governance arrangements are proportionate to the number of maintained schools and academies and reflect the nature of the local education landscape.

In dividing members of the ‘Schools’ Group’ within the Barnsley Schools Forum both maintained primary and secondary schools and their academy counterparts should be represented in accordance with the following:

- A head teacher or head teacher’s representative
- A school governor or member of an independent executive board

In addition, a designated head teacher (or head teacher’s representative) and school governor should represent other types of school, including free schools, faith schools and studio schools. Whilst no such schools currently exist in the Borough, the Schools Forum will initiate action to ensure they are invited to be represented on the body in order to ensure discussions are balanced and the decisions taken by the Schools Forum support broader local education policy.

Membership of the Schools Forum should also consist of representation from a Non-Schools Group, including the following:

- Early years provision who will also represent the private, voluntary and independent sector.
- Alternative education provision.
- Special education provision.
- Commissioners and providers of education for young people aged 16-19.
- Local Dioceses of the Catholic Church and Church of England, together with representatives of the teaching profession.
- Parents and carers groups, youth forums, together with groups representing vulnerable groups of children including those in care and children and young people with special educational needs.

The Non-Schools Group should comprise no more than a third of the total membership of the Schools Forum.

In all cases, members of the Schools Forum should possess or be able to develop the understanding required to be able to support the role and responsibilities indicated earlier within this document.

Councillors who are members of the 'Executive' of a local authority such as a Cabinet Spokesperson, together with the Director of Children's Services and local authority officers who have a management role or advise in relation to school funding are specifically excluded from becoming active members of the Schools Forum. However, non-executive councillors (including Cabinet Support Members) and local authority employees such as head teachers and teachers are eligible to become a member of the Schools Forum, although it is not a specific requirement. In addition, a Cabinet Spokesperson for Children's Services can participate as an observer at meetings of the Schools Forum, subject to its constitution and terms of reference.

2. Election of Members – In larger cities, for example, the Regulations seek to promote the election of representatives to any vacancies within any of the 'sub-groups' of the Schools Group. Scope exists to adopt a local method or model scheme of appointment for members of the

Barnsley Schools Forum and, in January 2019, all schools and academy or multi-academy trusts were invited to nominate a representative to serve on the Forum.

3. Election of the Chair – The Schools Forum must ensure arrangements are in place to periodically elect a Chair who will represent the Forum in other arenas and lead its work for a period at the local area's discretion.

Current Membership of the Barnsley Schools Forum

Based upon the foregoing information, the current membership of Barnsley's Schools Forum during the period 2025-2028 is as follows:

Schools Group

Maintained Primary School Head Teacher Representatives x 3:

Simon Tabbner, 2 x vacancies

Maintained Primary School Governor Representatives x3:

Jackie Milliner, Claire Throssell, 1 x vacancy

Primary Academy Head Teacher Representatives x 6:

Victoria Gorton, Joe Woffinden, Katie Adamski, 3 x vacancies

Primary Academy Governor Representatives x 6:

Michael Sanderson (Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum), 5 x vacancies

Maintained Secondary School Head Teacher Representatives x 1:

Paul Crook

Maintained Secondary School Governor Representatives x 1:

Visseh Pejhan-Sykes

Secondary Academy Head Teacher Representatives x 3:

Victoria Harrison, Amir Arezoo, 1 x vacancy

Secondary Academy Governor and MAT Board Representatives x 3:

Nigel Leeder, Victoria Harrison, 1 x vacancy

Nursery Schools Representative x 1:

Simon Sykes

Free School, Faith School and Studio School Representatives x 1:

1 x Vacancy

Non-Schools Group

Special Schools Head Teacher or Board Representative x 1:

George Wild (Springwell Learning Community and Greenacre Special School)

Alternative Provision (including Pupil Referral Unit) Representative x 1:

Josh Greaves (Vice-Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum)

Early Years Provision x 1:

Melanie Szoke

Education for Young People aged 16-19 Years x 1

Tom Smith

Local Authority Elected Members x 2

Councillor Deborah Pearson and Councillor Ken Richardson

Diocesan Representatives x 2:

Nevine Towers

1 x Vacancy

Teaching Profession Representatives:

1 x Vacancy

There are currently no representatives from parents/carers and young people's bodies within the Schools Forum. In addition, the Secretary of State for Education can appoint an observer, such as a representative of the Education and Skills Funding Agency to attend and speak at meetings of the Schools Forum.



Constitution of the Barnsley Schools Forum (2025/26)

1. Membership

Schools Group Membership

- a) Membership of the Schools Group within the Forum may comprise of the following representatives during this period:

Primary Maintained Schools

Up to 3 head teacher representatives
Up to 3 governor representatives

Primary Academies

Up to 6 head teacher representatives
Up to 6 governor representatives

Secondary Maintained Schools

1 head teacher representative
1 governor representative

Secondary Academies

Up to 3 head teacher representatives
Up to 3 governor representatives

Nursery Schools

1 representative

- b) Membership of the Schools Group will be periodically reviewed to ensure where the need arises that Free Schools, Faith Schools and Studio Schools are represented in the Barnsley Schools Forum

Non-Schools Group Membership

- c) Membership of the Non-Schools Group within the Forum will be comprised of the following representatives:

Local Authority Elected Member Representatives

Early Years Provision (including private, voluntary and independent provision)

1 representative

Education for Young People aged 16-19

1 representative

Diocesan Representative

2 representatives

Teaching Profession Representative

1 representative

- d) Membership of the Non-Schools Group will be periodically reviewed to afford an opportunity for other groups to be represented, subject to the limitation on size of the Non-Schools Group.

2. Appointments to the Schools Forum

- e) Upon appointment, members of both the Schools Group and Non-Schools Group will serve the Barnsley Schools Forum for a period of 3 years. The Local Authority will notify both schools and multi-academy trust board at the appropriate time and invite them to nominate representatives to the Forum

A member may resign from membership of the Forum at any time and is required to leave if he/she ceases to be eligible. Any member of the Schools Forum who fails to attend at least 3 meetings without reason will forfeit their right to vote upon any matters requiring the Forum's decision and when this is put to a vote.

2. Election of Chairperson/Vice Chairperson

The Chairperson/Vice Chairperson shall be elected at the first meeting of the Schools Forum and serve for a period of no longer than two years. If the election is contested it will be held by secret ballot. Any nominee standing for election shall withdraw and not vote.

3. Meeting Arrangements for the Schools Forum

- a) A minimum of 4 meetings shall be held each academic year. Further meetings may be called at the discretion of the Forum.
- b) The quorum for meetings of the Forum shall be two-fifths of the current membership or 9 members present.
- c) The Forum may establish a sub-committee or task group for a specific or time-limited purpose. Any recommendations emerging through the work of a sub-committee or task and finish group should obtain the formal approval of the Forum as a whole before they are submitted to the Local Authority.
- d) Sub-committees or task and finish groups will be required to report to a full (quorate) meeting of the Forum for the approval of findings before such findings are published or formally passed to the Local Authority.
- e) Meetings of the Forum shall be held in public except where the Chair of the Forum feels that the nature of business to be transacted determines otherwise. The Schools Forum (Amendment) (Regulations) (2020) allow for meetings to be held virtually until all social restrictions relating to the Covid-19 Pandemic are lifted. The Schools Forum Regulations currently permit hybrid meetings to take place.
- f) Members of the Forum shall be required to make declarations of interest when relevant.
- g) All meetings of the Forum shall be conducted in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council.
- h) Each member of the Forum or their substitute shall have 1 vote on any matter submitted for its attention. However, only Schools Group Members may vote on schools funding matters and any vote relating

to the de-delegation of schools funding is exclusively confined to members of the Forum representing Local Authority maintained schools. The Chair of the Forum shall have a second and casting vote should it be necessary.

- i) Any member of the Forum may raise items to be included on the agenda for a meeting by notifying the Secretary of the Forum, preferably at least 14 working days before the meeting.
- j) Extra-ordinary meetings of the Schools Forum may be called at the request of the Chair supported by one or more members of the Forum

4. Administration

- a) The Local Authority's Service Director (Education, Early Start and Prevention) shall be appointed Secretary to the Barnsley Schools Forum and shall support the work of the Forum and prepare reports for its consideration.
- b) All meetings of the Forum will be convened by the Secretary in compliance with any direction in the matter given by the Forum in a previous meeting or given by the Chair. Notice of a meeting, together with a copy of the agenda and accompanying documents will normally be sent out at least 5 working days before the date of the meeting itself.
- c) The Service Director (Education, Early Start and Prevention) will publish an annual report on the work undertaken by the Schools Forum together with the action taken by the Local Authority in response to the Forum's recommendations. The annual report will be circulated to all school governing bodies in the Borough.
- d) The minutes of all meetings of the Schools Forum shall be circulated to all school governing bodies within one month of the Forum meeting taking place.

5. Members Expenses (Regulation 12)

- a) The Local Authority shall pay all reasonable expenses which have been incurred by members of the Forum in respect of its work.

(Reviewed in July 2023)



Terms of Reference of the Barnsley Schools Forum

(For clarification on the decision-making and consultative role of the Barnsley Schools Forum, please see pages 5-7 of the Local Guide)

1.0 Consultation on school funding formula

1.1 The Local Authority shall consult the Schools Forum on the following: -

- Any proposed changes in relation to the factors and criteria that have been considered or the methods, principles and rules that have been adopted, in the schools funding formula made in accordance with the relevant regulations.
- The financial effect of any such change upon schools and settings.

1.2 Any consultation under Paragraph 1.1 above shall take place to enable the Forum's observations to be incorporated in the determination of the Local Authority's proposed formula and in the initial determination of school budgets before the beginning of the new financial year.

2.0 Consultation on contracts

2.1 The Local Authority shall at least one month prior to the issue of invitations to tender consult the Schools Forum on the terms of any proposed contract for supplies or services being a contract paid or to be paid out of the Local Authority's schools' budget where either

- The estimated value of the proposed public services contract is not less than the specific threshold which applies to the relevant authority in pursuance of Regulation 7(1) of the Public Services Contracts Regulations 1993; or
- The estimated value of the proposed public supply contract is not less than the specific threshold which applies to the relevant

authority in pursuance of Regulation 7(2) of the Public Supply Contracts Regulations 1995.

3.0 Consultation on financial and other school support issues

3.1 The Local Authority shall consult the Schools Forum annually in respect of its duties relating to schools' budgets, in connection with the following:

- The arrangements to be made for the education of pupils with special educational needs
- Arrangements for the use of pupil in alternative education provision and the education of children not attending school
- Arrangements for early years education
- Arrangements for schools' insurance
- Prospective revisions to the Local Authority's scheme for the financing of schools
- Administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to schools via the Local Authority
- Arrangements for free school meals
- Arrangements for brokering services for schools
- Arrangements for strategic support to schools provided by the Barnsley Alliance for Schools.

3.2 The Local Authority will consult the Schools Forum on such other matters concerning the funding of schools as considered necessary.

(Reviewed in July 2023)

Induction of New Members

When new members join the Barnsley Schools Forum, the following information and resources will be provided:

- Constitution and Terms of Reference
- A list of members of the Schools Forum, including contact details and term of office
- The Local Guide to the Barnsley Schools Forum and latest available annual report of the Forum.
- The address and link to the Barnsley Schools Forum Web page, including the schedule and location of meeting dates.
- Where there has been a substantial turnover in Schools Forum members in any one year, a half-day induction for new members will be held. This will include an introduction to the role of the Schools Forum and its responsibilities, together with national and local schools funding arrangements
- Further training sessions may be held to inform members of any significant changes in school funding policy or in the role and responsibilities of schools' forums in England.

Conduct of Meetings

Participation of Local Authority Officers

The following officers from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council have authority to speak at meetings of the Schools Forum:

- The Executive Director (Children's Services) (*Statutory Director of Children's Services*)
- The Service Director (Finance) (*Strategic Finance Manager*)
- Secretary to the Barnsley Schools Forum

- Any officer invited on behalf of the Schools Forum to provide financial or technical advice.
- Any officer invited on behalf of the Schools Forum to present a report. Such officers are limited to speaking only upon the report which they are presenting.

Procedures

Quorum – Meetings of the Barnsley Schools Forum will only be quorate if 40% of the membership (both Schools Group and Non-Schools Group but excluding supporting officers) are present. Meetings may still proceed if they are inquorate in order to respond to matters including local authority consultations and to provide an informal view on a specific matter. However, the Schools Forum cannot make decisions requested by it under the Schools Forum (England) Regulations (2012)

Voting – Aside from the election of a Chair and Vice-Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum, arrangements for voting at meetings are as follows:

- Voting on matters relating to the schools funding formula is restricted to members of the Schools Group within the Forum.
- Voting on matters concerning the de-delegation of schools funding back to the Local Authority is confined to those members of the Schools Group representing Local Authority maintained primary and secondary schools.
- Voting upon the Local Authority's retention of funding for statutory duties relating to maintained schools is also confined to those members of the Schools Group representing maintained primary and secondary schools.

Any decisions of the Schools Forum requiring a vote should be made via a simple majority. These decisions should include the recommendations of a temporary sub-committee or Task and Finish Group of the Forum.

Substitute Members – The Barnsley Schools Forum permits members of both the Schools and Non-Schools Group to designate substitutes from their organisation to attend on their behalf if they themselves

cannot attend a specific meeting. Substitute members have the same voting rights as permanent members of the Forum.

Vacancies – In the event of a representative giving notice that they will be stepping down, arrangements will take place to find a successor. In the meantime, any vacancies within the Barnsley Schools Forum should not invalidate its proceedings or decision-making capability.

Access for the Public – Due to the importance of its decisions concerning the use and expenditure of public money, the Barnsley Schools Forum is as accountable to local communities as the Local Authority. Therefore, arrangements should be included to enable the public and press to attend meetings of the Forum. The schedule of dates for meetings of the Forum during the School Year, together with the agenda and the minutes of previous meetings and the location of meetings should be published on the Barnsley Schools Forum Web page. This can be accessed via the link below:

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/children-families-and-education/schools-and-learning/schools-forum/>

If a member of the public would like to submit a question to the Forum, they should do so by sending the question to the Secretary of the Forum. The member of the public submitting the question can attend the next meeting of the Forum and if this is not possible a written response to the question will be sent.

Urgent Business – In instances where the Local Authority wishes to consult the Barnsley Schools Forum on an urgent issue during a period between its formal meetings it can do so by e-mail. Where this occurs the Chair of the Forum cannot take a decision on its behalf unless the Forum has expressly declared that the Chair can do so.

Where an urgent matter emerges which, with the Chair's agreement can be addressed at a formal meeting this can take place as part of the 'Urgent Matters' item on the agenda for the meeting.

Agendas and Reports – In order to ensure that the work of the Barnsley Schools Forum is open, transparent and has clarity of communication, all documentation will be consistent, concise and informative. The recommendations of all reports will be outlined at the beginning of each report and at the same time each report to the Schools Forum will indicate whether it is for decision or for information. A

copy of the template for reports to the Schools Forum is appended to the Local Guide.

Effectiveness of Meetings – The Secretary to the Barnsley Schools Forum supports the Chair in ensuring its work adds value in supporting schools towards improving education outcomes in the Borough. As part of this, the Secretary’s role will be to:

- Maintain timely information on the membership and meeting dates of the Forum on its Web page.
- Support the quality of communication and decision-making through using colour-coded name plates at meetings
- Ensure outcomes arising from meetings of the Forum and any of its proposed sub-committees or ‘task and finish groups’ are recorded and published on its Web page as part of promoting the public’s interest in its work.

Additional Information for Members

Further information on the role and responsibilities of School Forums can be viewed through the links shown below:

1. Schools Forum (England) Regulations (2012)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/2261/contents>

2. Education and Skills Funding Agency: Schools Forums Operational and Good Practice Guide (March 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-forums-operational-and-good-practice-guide-2015>

Feedback

We hope you will find the Local Guide to the Barnsley Schools Forum useful. In addition, we would welcome your comments on how to improve this document

Appendix



Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Barnsley Schools Forum

Agenda Item:
Document Reference:

Title of the Report

1.0 Purpose of the Report

2.0 Recommendation(s)

3.0 Introduction

4.0 Issues to Consider

5.0 Next Steps

6.0 Appendices

Author:

Designation:



Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
People Directorate

Schools Forum

Agenda Item: 5
Document: C

Title: High Needs Budget and Funding Arrangements 2026/27

Date: 17th March 2026

Author: Helen Perrin (BMBC Finance)

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Forum of the funding arrangements of the high needs funding block and the approach to determining the 2026/27 budget.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Schools Forum:

For Information only

- **Note the high needs funding settlement (including the outcome of the disapplication request) for 2026/27.**
- **Note the proposed funding requirements for 2026/27, particularly in relation to the number of commissioned specialist places and the payment of top up funding to mainstream, special schools /academies, and other providers and settings.**

2026/27 High Needs Funding & framework

3. The high needs funding system supports provision for pupils and students with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), from early years to age 25. The high needs funding block provides local authorities with resources for place and top-up funding for institutions, and for high needs services delivered directly by the local authority or under a separate agreement with providers.
4. The table below outline the level of high needs funding available for 2026/27 compared to the current year:

<u>RESOURCES</u>	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	Change £'000
Baseline HN DSG funding	46,035	47,954	1,919
Adjust for DfE funded places	-7,842	-8,132	-290
Funding transfer from schools	1,735	1,817	82
TOTAL FUNDING	39,928	41,639	1,711

5. The confirmed high needs block funding for 2026/27 is **£47.9M** (before adjustment for DfE funded places in academies). This represents an increase of £1.9M compared to the 2025/26 position. The £1.9M funding increase is due to increased funding through the high needs National Funding Formula (£0.2M); and roll in of Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG) for Independent Special Schools (ISS), independent learning provider (ILP), special post 16 institutions (SPI) and Specialist Resource Provision (SURP) HN providers (£1.7M).
6. The high needs funding allocation for Barnsley will be adjusted for high needs places funded directly by the DfE in academies, non-maintained special schools and post-16 places. DfE will confirm the adjustment (recoupment) in summer 2026 which for now, is based on the published provisional amount of **£8.1M**.
7. The Government has approved the Council's disapplication request (submitted November 2025) for the transfer of 1% funding (**£1.8M**) from the schools block to the high needs block. Since then, the Council received the schools' settlement for 2026/27. Having reviewed the potential impact of a full 1% transfer following release of the schools' settlement, it was decided that a reduced transfer of nearer 0.8% (in line with 2025/26) was more appropriate. This is to ensure there is no detriment to individual school budgets in 2026/27.

High needs dedicated schools grant (DSG) funding framework

8. The Government published the revised 2026/27 high needs operational guidance on 17th December 2025 with an update on 11th February 2026. The following sets out the key highlights of the funding system for 2026/27: Overall, the underpinning operational processes and principles remain largely unchanged from the current year:
 - In 2026/27 DfE are temporarily suspending the high needs national funding formula (NFF). Instead, LA's allocations will be based on their 2025/26 allocations with some adjustments. Following wider reforms to the SEND system the DfE will review the methodology for allocating high needs funding so that it supports the SEND reforms.
 - The suspension of the high needs NFF means that the DSG high needs block allocations will not include an update to the basic entitlement pupil numbers in special schools.

- Special schools and special educational needs (SEN) /resource provision (RP) units must receive a consolidated amount to cover the roll in of the CSBG, NI and legacy funding.
- Special Schools' minimum funding guarantee (MFG) for 2026/27 must be at least 0% when compared with special schools 2025/2026 funding baselines, with local authorities encouraged to consider and respond appropriately to special schools cost pressures in 2026/27.
- Local authorities can transfer up to 0.5% of their schools' block funding to the high needs block, with the approval of their Schools Forum. A disapplication request will be required for any transfer greater than 0.5%.

Context for setting the 2026/27 high needs budget

9. The context for budget planning for 2026/27 is one of increasing demand, financial pressures, and a recurrent budget deficit. A recurrent deficit of £8.3M is currently anticipated for 2025/26.
10. The increasing number of pupils with education, health and care plans (EHCP) requiring specialist support and placements in independent & non-maintained special schools (INMSS) continue to exert pressures on the high needs budget. This is in addition to a challenging economic landscape with cost of living pressures, a period of high inflation and energy cost crisis.
11. The DSG grant conditions require any local authority with an overall deficit on its DSG account to present a plan to the DfE for managing their future DSG spend (DSG management plan). These plans have increasingly been used by the DfE in informal discussions with local authorities regarding their high needs budgets and actions to address significant budget deficits.

Safety Valve Programme / DSG management plan

12. The Council is currently part of the Safety Valve Programme (the Programme), through an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education. The Programme required the Council to set out (via a DSG management plan) how it would manage the deficit in the high needs block and reach an in-year balance. Under the agreement, the DfE committed to paying the council £22.9M over five years to 2026/27.
13. The Safety Valve Programme will now close with effect from 1st April 2026, with Safety Valve Agreements being replaced by a wider approach to DSG deficits under the local areas SEND reform plans.
14. This will be in the form of a High Needs Stability Grant which will be paid subject to LA's submitting and securing the DfE's approval of, a local SEND reform plan. For all LA's in the Safety Valve Programme, the new High Needs

Stability Grant will provide the equivalent financial support as would have been, had the Programme continued.

15. The High Needs Stability Grant will fund 90% of the closing accumulative 2025-2026 DSG Deficit balance. The following specific calculation will be applied:

High Needs Stability Grant

$$= (0.9 * (25 - 26 \text{ Deficit} + \text{Safety Valve Payments} + \text{Local Contributions})) - \text{Safety Valve Payments}$$

16. No information has yet been released on how in year deficits incurred in 2026/27 and onwards will be funded.
17. The SEND Deficits statutory override which was due to end on 31st March 2025 has been extended by the Government until 2027/28. This was announced alongside the Government's plan to reform the current SEND system. The Government published the Schools White Paper on 23rd February 2026, alongside the SEND consultation: Putting Children and Young People First.

High Needs Budget Requirements 2026/27

18. The following table shows the proposed 2026/27 high needs budget and the number of planned EHCP numbers and SEND places for the year. The total funding requirement is £53.2M – this is more than the available resources of £42.0M (includes some forecast DfE funding adjustments) resulting in a planned projected deficit of **£11.2M**.
19. The current DSG management plan and latest Q3 forecast position have informed the basis for setting the high needs budgets for 2026/27, with the proposed budget for 2026/27 reflecting the cost reduction measures set out in the DSG management plan, including the planned reduction in the number / cost of INMSS placements. The table below details the 2026/27 High Needs budget:

High Needs funding Elements	2026/27 EHCP (Number of Pupils)	2026/27 Budget (£,000)
<u>Resources</u>		
DfE HN funding (after recoupment)		-39,186
School Block funding transfer		-1,817
Forecast DfE funding adjustment		-1,044
Total HN funding		-42,047
<u>Funding Commitments:</u>		
Pre 16 Mainstream schools	1,172	5,313
Specialist Resource Provision	223	3,278
Local Special Schools	425	7,960
Alternative Provision – PRU	64	988
Additional AP Provision (Day 6)	74	394
Tuition	115	479
14-16 Direct Entry (Barnsley College)	10	98
Unallocated new SEND places	180	3,278
Other LAs - special schools / academies	315	5,478
Independent / Non maintained settings	225	18,929
Post 16 – FE / Colleges / ISPs	563	4,568
SEN Support Services /Others	-	2,456
	3,366	53,219
(Surplus) / deficit		11,172

20. The following sections explain the key commitments and the underlying assumptions.

Pre 16 mainstream schools

21. High needs top up funding represents additional funding over and above schools' core funding, to meet the additional education needs of pupils with EHCPs. The funding requirement for 2026/27 has been forecast based on the number of pupils with EHCPs on roll in schools based on the October 2025 census count and the existing top up funding amount assigned to each pupil. This will be updated in April based on the January 2026 census count.
22. There has been an increase in EHCP numbers in Barnsley's mainstream schools compared to 2025/26 (and reflects increase in pupils with EHCP nationally). There has been an increase in the average top up funding amount from £4,172 to £4,213. Work is ongoing with mainstream schools on how resources (including core budgets) could be used cost effectively to meet needs of SEND pupils, whilst ensuring that high needs top up funding is targeted at additional education support.

Pre 16 Mainstream	2025/26	2026/27	Change
No. of EHCP pupils	1,055	1,172	+117
Proposed budget	£4.6M	£5.3M	+£0.7M

Specialist Resource Provision

23. The approach to funding specialist resource provisions (SRP) in 2026/27 will remain mainly unchanged from the preceding year (2025/26). Pre-16 places at specialist resource provision are funded at £6,000 per place plus top up funding to cover additional education support (£7,967 standard and a range of £15,934 to £17,868 for complex). All top up rates have been increased by 2.1% in 2026/27 in line with the increase applied by DfE to school funding factors within the 2026/27 schools national funding formula (NFF). The schools and academies will also continue to receive the £4,000 place funding, per pupil through their school block funding which includes core resources towards meeting the needs of EHCP pupils.
24. There are 11 resource/SEN complex provision in mainstream schools / academies with 223 planned places from September 2026 funded from the high needs budget. The table below details the number of planned specialist places for 2026/27 and forecast funding requirement:

SRP planned places:	2025/26	2026/27	Change
Planned places	203	223	+20

	£'000	£000	
Place funding	630	721	+91
Top up funding*	2,095	2,436	+341
Other funding (CSBG & NI grant) £539 per pupil	-	120	+120
Proposed budget	2,725	3,278	552

* Includes other funding adjustments e.g. for SALT provision

25. The above proposed budget includes the continuation of NI and SBSG funding at £539 per pupil multiplied by place numbers, for all Special (SEN) units and/or Resource Provision, as per the high needs operational guidance.
26. There is a net increase of 20 SRP places for the year compared to the funded position in 2025/26. This is due to ten additional places that were established in Penistone Grammar Heartspace (4) and Worsbrough Common Primary (6) plus a new ten place provision at Hoylandswaine Primary.

Local Special Schools

27. The funding arrangement for local special academies in Barnsley (Greenacre and Springwell) for 2026/27 remains unchanged from the current year. Special academies receive their place funding allocations (£10,000) directly from the DfE, with top up funding provided by the Council for each BMBC pupil on roll and adjusted based on census numbers during the year.
28. The total planned places for 2026/27 is 474, of which 48 places are filled by non-BMBC pupils. There is an 2.1% inflationary uplift (based on a 1.2% uplift being applied to both place and top up funding) provided for 26/27. The funding uplift has been determined based on the DfE Operational Guidance that requires Councils to ensure the following:
- A minimum funding guarantee (MFG) of 0% compared to 2025 to 2026 funding levels.
 - Consider and respond appropriately to special schools cost pressures.
29. It should be noted that the base funding for Greenacre Special Academy includes a supplementary funding (£0.2M) to support the provision for pupils with additional complex needs (the funding is not aligned or targeted at individual or specific number of pupils).
30. The table below details the number of planned specialist places for 2026/27 and forecast funding requirement based on the number of places filled by BMBC pupils:

Special school places	2025/26	2026/27	Change
Planned places	474	474	-

	£'000	£'000	
Place funding	-	-	-
Top up funding (425 places 26-27)	6,365	6,001	-364
Other funding*	295	1,958	1,663
Proposed budget	6,660	7,959	1,299

* teachers' pay and pension, SBSG & NI funding

31. The above proposed budget includes the continuation of legacy historic teachers' pay and pension (£660 per pupil) plus, National Insurance and SBSG funding (£3,048 per pupil), in line with the high needs Operational Guidance.

Alternative Provision - PRU

32. Alternative Provision consists of the Springwell Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) – delivered by Wellspring Academy Trust, as the commissioned services

transferred back to the council from September 2022. The place funding (£10,000) is provided directly by the DfE, whilst top up funding is provided by the local authority. The following table details the number of planned PRU places for 2026/27 and forecast funding requirement:

Special school places	2025/26	2026/27	Change
Annual planned places.	64	64	-

	£'000	£'000	
Place funding	-	-	-
Top up funding	735	751	16
Other funding	42	237	195
Proposed budget	777	988	211

33. The funding for the PRU includes a 2.1% inflationary uplift which covers the 2026/27 MFG and ensures cost pressures in PRU's have been considered (similar to special academies).
34. The proposed budget includes the continuation of legacy historic teachers' pay and pension (£660 per pupil) plus, National Insurance and SBSG funding (£3,048 per pupil), in line with the high needs operational guidance.

Alternative Provision - 14 to 16 Direct Entry (Barnsley College)

35. In addition to the PRU, a Pre 16 Direct Entry provision is currently delivered by Barnsley College and funded from the high needs budget. Direct Entry provision is aimed at supporting young people aged 14 – 16 who are not benefitting from a mainstream school and are at risk of permanent exclusion. The funding requirement of **£0.098M** (covers element 2 and 3 funding) for 5 months in 2026/27 to provide support to 10 places / pupils. This provision will end August 2026.

New planned specialist places

36. In response to the financial challenges within the high needs budget, a key objective of the SEND strategy and DSG management plan is the development of local specialist provision to meet needs locally in lieu of expensive independent schools placements. The following developments are being progressed by commissioners aimed at establishing additional specialist places from September 2026:
 - 40 places – The Mill (Special School)
 - 80 places tbc Specialist (Primary/Secondary/Post 16)
 - 20 places tbc Secondary Specialist
 - 20 places tbc RP Primary
 - 20 places tbc RP Secondary

37. It is envisaged that the above would provide 180 new places from September 2026 and provide the flexibility to help stem placements in high cost INMSS. A funding requirement of **£3.3M** (comprised of place and top up funding) has been incorporated in the proposed 2026/27 high needs budget to fund the above commitments.

Other Local Authority special schools

38. These comprise high needs pupils and learners placed in special schools and academies in other local authorities' areas, for which the council is responsible for paying the top up funding. The funding requirement for 2026/27 (**£5.5M**) is based on the full year cost of current number of Barnsley pupils / learners (315) for the academic year and incorporates a 2.1% uplift.

Independent & non-maintained special schools (INMSS)

39. SEND pupils with challenging and complex needs that cannot be met locally are placed in independent and non-maintained special schools (INMSS). Independent schools are funded entirely (place and top up funding) by local authorities for all learners placed, whilst non-maintained special schools receive place funding from the DfE (£10,000 per place), with local authorities expected to provide top up funding from its high needs block.
40. The financial challenges in the high needs block are mainly due to the increasing number of young people placed in such specialist settings. It is envisaged that placements in independent settings would continue in 2026/27, although it is assumed that anticipated leavers and the commissioning of new places locally would stem anticipated growth during the year. The budget for 2026/27 incorporates a 3% uplift in line with the White Rose Framework, with all uplift requests from providers going through a robust uplift process and review panel before being agreed. The budget reflects the forecast return and re-provision of a number of Y11, and pre 16 pupils locally in Barnsley (in line with our strategy for pupils to be educated closer to home).

INMSS	2025/26 forecast outturn (Q3)	2026/27 budget	Change
Forecast learner numbers	245	225	-20
Proposed budget (£'000)	18,656	18,929	+273

Post 16 Provision

41. Post 16 provision covers a range of providers including FE / sixth form colleges, specialist independent training providers, charity & independent training providers. Post 16 providers receive place funding directly from the Government (via an adjustment to local authorities DSG funding), whilst top up funding is provided by local authorities for each learner.
42. The funding requirement for 2026/27 has been determined based on current learner numbers (on study programmes) and full year cost and anticipated changes from September 2026, including current Y11 transitioning pupils from independent / non-maintained settings (see para 37 above). The table below shows expected learner numbers and funding for 2026/27:

Post 16	2025/26 forecast outturn (Q3)	2026/27 Budget	Change
Annual learner numbers	511	563	+52
Proposed budget (£'000)	3,704	4,512	+808

SEN support services & other funding

43. This mainly relates to the SEN support services managed by the authority and funded through the high needs budget. These services mainly provide support and guidance to schools / academies and include the hearing, visual impairment teams; communication & interaction; learning & cognition teams and the SEMH specialist teaching team within the SEND Improvement service. The continuation of investment in these services has been factored into the 2026/27 high needs budget to ensure all children receive the right support to enable them to access a full time education offer locally in Barnsley.
44. In addition, there are several funding contributions from the high needs budget to council funded services or functions relating to SEN pupils and includes the following:
- Home to school transport relating to Greenacre satellite provision
 - Virtual head of schools – Looked After Children and vulnerable pupils
 - Speech & Language Therapy provision (SWYPFT contract)
 - Management of exclusions / EHE advisor
 - Early years / children centres
 - EOTAS service and Tuition
45. The proposed budgets / funding contributions from the high needs budget for 2026/27 for the above services are **£2.5M**.

Addressing the accumulated DSG deficit and managing the financial risks

46. The overall potential financial risk to the system in 2026/27 (excluding the Stability Grant) is **£30.7M** comprised of the **£19.5M** forecast accumulated deficit brought forward from 2025/26 (subject to confirmation following the accounts closure process) plus the above planned deficit for 2026/27 of **£11.2M**.
47. This financial risk will reduce to **£14.9M** in 2026/27 assuming the Council receives **£15.9M** Stability Grant (based on the forecast 25/26 closing accumulative position).
48. The DSG management plan will continue to be the mechanism for managing the demand challenges and cost pressures in the high needs block. The DSG management plan details the actions and/or measures to be implemented in 2026/27, with further work currently being undertaken to produce an updated Sufficiency Strategy and DSG Management plan for the next 3 to 5 years. These plans will evolve and flex as the SEND Reforms white paper; which aims to address systemic pressures, including stretched high needs budgets is embedded.
49. The Council continues to work collaboratively with partner organisations (education and health) to create places locally and increase inclusion within mainstream settings through a programme of support.
50. We continue to closely monitor performance against plans, through established governance processes (including Local Area Partnership, SEND Sufficiency and AP Oversight Group) and regular dialogue with DfE.
51. The table below summarises the £1.8M efficiency measures incorporated and assumed within the planned high needs budget for 2026/27:

Action Plan – High Level summary of proposed Actions	2026/27 £,000
Reducing reliance and placements in independent non maintained schools by increasing (and commissioning new) local specialist places	-1,403
Efficiencies arising from the improvement in outcomes and SEN support to enable more effective inclusion in schools / across the system	-350
	-1,753

52. The following risks continue to exert pressure on the delivery of the DSG management plan:
- Increasing inflation uplifts and provider fee rates.

- Increase in EHCP numbers and pupils in mainstream and special schools (requiring specialist support).
 - Increase in EHCP numbers over and above the forecast numbers, with no sign of slowing down/reducing.
 - Increase in requests for specialist placements
 - Increased number of EHCP placements directed following tribunal appeals.
 - Increasing number of requests for additional funding from schools and settings.
53. These risks and the associated mitigation actions will continue to be closely monitored throughout the year and reported through the usual governance processes (which includes, Schools Forum, SEND/AP Sufficiency Oversight and Local Area Partnership Board).



Schools Forum

Agenda Item: 6 Document: D

1.0 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 The report presents the **Barnsley Schools' Alliance Education Improvement Strategy for 2025-2028**, outlining the collaborative efforts to enhance educational outcomes for children and young people in Barnsley. It emphasises shared commitment among schools, academies, partners, and stakeholders to provide high-quality education and support vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, while aligning with broader borough-wide ambitions such as the Great Childhoods Ambition and Barnsley 2030 goals.
- 1.2 The Barnsley Schools' Alliance Education Improvement Strategy for 2025-2028 is a light refresh as the majority of of the core principles and priorities still remain a priority for Barnsley. The strategy has been developed in consultaiton with headteacher representatives.

2.0 Core Overarching Principles of the Strategy

- 2.1 The strategy is guided by four main overarching principles aimed at improving education quality and inclusivity across Barnsley namely:
1. Educational Opportunities
 2. Inclusive Provision
 3. School-Led Improvement
 4. Improve Health and Wellbeing

3.0 Strategic Priorities and Key Focus Areas

The strategy is underpinned by specific priorities within the "Every Child in School Every Day" co-produced plan, which is supported by sub-groups of the Alliance and collaborative working efforts by the sector:

- **Attendance:** Aspirations for all settings attendance rates to meet or exceed national averages.
- **Electively Home Educated (EHE):** Commitment to reduce the number of children registered as EHE by 30% and decrease the rate of children leaving school that become EHE.

- **Suspensions and Exclusions:** The target is an incremental reduction of suspensions and exclusions by 20% to 40% in year 2.
- **SEND and Inclusion:** Ensure learning environments where every child feels safe, valued, and supported to achieve their potential, with a focus on belonging and full participation regardless of background or ability.

4.0 Educational Academic Attainment Primary Priorities

In terms of our educational priorities at Primary Phase we have retained the same Improvement priorities for this next academic year as we continue to embed and drive excellence:

Priority 1 SEND support outcomes from Early Years through Year 6

Priority 2 Raise attainment in Mathematics at higher standards

Priority 3 Enhance oracy curriculum to impact writing attainment

Priority 4 Improve reading progress from phonics to comprehension

Priority 5 Increase the percentage of boys achieving a good level of development in early years.

5.0 The Education Improvement Strategy and supporting associated plans

Through the Barnsley Schools' Alliance Educational Improvement Strategy and associated plans, such as our co-produced "Every Child in School Every Day" Plan and mechanisms such as our Early intervention (Green) Panel; all these strategies and approaches help to focus us upon driving Improvement across our key priorities and support in us improving pupil outcomes. We will work together to share best practice, develop innovative solutions and support each other to ensure that children and young people thrive and achieve in their educational journey.

5.1 The Education Improvement Strategy supports Barnsley 2030 strategy, which aims to improve educational outcomes and attainment, enabling more young people to pursue higher-level skills. Key targets include ensuring:

- Every young person attends a 'good or outstanding' early years setting or school. Exceeding national averages in expected standards at Key Stage 2 (Reading, Writing, Maths).
- Increasing GCSE pass rates (grades 9-5) in English and Maths beyond national averages.
- Year-on-year reduction in fixed-term exclusions to significantly below baseline levels by 2030

6.0 Summary and Conclusion

6.1 The Education improvement strategy outcomes include improved and sustained student attainment and progress, leading to greater success for vulnerable groups, enhanced quality of education through better teaching and leadership, and a more accountable, engaged, and inclusive learning environment for all. The ultimate measure of success is the positive and lasting impact on students' skills, understanding, and overall well-being, preparing them for future endeavors in a complex world.

7.0 Recommendation

7.1 The following are the main recommendations:

That Schools' Forum members endorse the strategy and expectations around the core principles and delivery of the key priorities areas.

8.0 Appendices and Background Documents

8.1 Appendix A Barnsley Schools' Alliance Educational Improvement Strategy



Barnsley Schools' Alliance

EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

2025 - 2028



BARNLSLEY SCHOOLS' ALLIANCE

STRONGER TOGETHER TO IMPROVE EDUCATION

Support • Challenge • Inspire

SUPPORT

To collaborate and network to drive excellence

CHALLENGE

To provoke educational enquiry to deliver excellence

INSPIRE

Raising standards and expectations through excellence

www.barnsley.gov.uk

Welcome

"We are delighted to introduce our Education Improvement Strategy for 2025 - 2028. This strategy represents a shared commitment to excellence and collaboration amongst our schools, academies, partners, and stakeholders. We continue to work together to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for all young people in Barnsley, empowering them to succeed and thrive in an ever-changing world.

Through this strategy and associated plans ('Every Child in School Every Day') we will focus on driving improvement across key priorities including attendance, SEND, reducing exclusions and improving pupil outcomes. This ambition will be supported by 'The Great Childhoods Ambition'; a commitment by Barnsley to broaden the experiences young people can take part in, and which includes free bus travel across Barnsley for under 18s. Barnsley has also invested in the development of a Youth Zone called 'Base 71'. We will work together to share best practice, develop innovative solutions and support each Schools across Barnsley maintain a sharp focus on early reading. For the third consecutive year, outcomes in the Y1 phonics screening check place Barnsley among the top three local authorities nationally. Disadvantaged pupils in particular, achieve well above average, highlighting the effectiveness of targeted support. There has been further progress in helping pupils master their times tables by the end of Year 4. Barnsley now leads the country for the proportion of pupils achieving full marks on the Multiplication Table Check and ranks second nationally for average pupil score. This achievement reflects the borough's collective efforts to raise standards since the test was introduced in 2022.

By the end of Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is now above the national average. Pupils continue to do better at the expected standard than at the higher standard and greater depth this is our next area of focus which we will drive through our CPD focus.

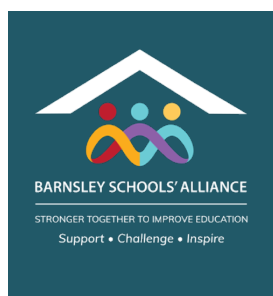
At Key Stage 4 outcomes show marked improvements across all key measures in 2025, resulting in a much-improved picture when comparing performance against national, regional, and statistical neighbours. At Key Stage 5, pupils perform in-line with those across the Yorkshire and Humber region. Barnsley performs substantially better than comparator groups when considering the percentage of pupils achieving at least two A-levels. In 2025, male and SEND pupils performed especially well.

We would like to thank everyone in developing this strategy, including school and MAT leaders, teachers, partners and stakeholders. Your dedication, expertise, and passion for education in Barnsley have been invaluable in shaping our vision and priorities.

We are confident that our collective efforts will make a real difference in the lives of children and young people. We look forward to working with all of you to achieve our priorities and to make Barnsley a place where all young people can flourish."

Carly Speechley - Executive Director - Children's Services

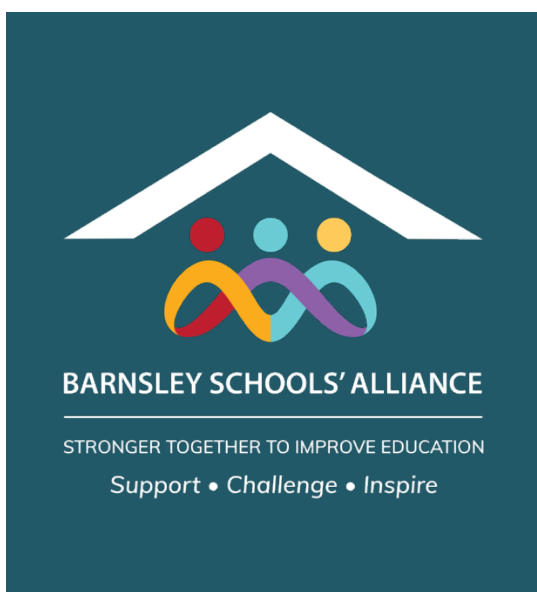
Cllr Ashley Peace - Cabinet Spokesperson - Children's Services





"The Barnsley Schools' Alliance continues to enhance its impact through collaborative efforts amongst schools and academies, benefiting children and young people across Barnsley. Together, we have established key priorities for 2025 - 2028. As Independent Chair, I am committed to advancing the Alliance's progress over the next three years. We will unite leading professionals to drive innovation in artificial intelligence, focusing on developing tools and processes that improve curriculum quality and efficiency. Our approach will emphasise the safe and ethical use of AI, sharing best practices to positively influence staff workload, wellbeing, and student learning outcomes."

Andy Lancashire - Independent Chair Barnsley Schools' Alliance



Our Four Core Principles

These principles are supported by keyways of working

PRINCIPLE 1: EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

To champion world class education opportunities for all children, young people and families. Ensuring we meet the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of children and young people.

- To ensure that all educational settings deliver a quality of education that enhances the life chances of all Barnsley children and young people
- To improve outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of children and young people, including a focus on those pupils who have special educational needs, looked after children and young people and pupils in receipt of free school meals as well as those for whom their school received pupil premium funding

PRINCIPLE 2: INCLUSIVE PROVISION

To secure high-quality inclusive provision, widen local opportunities and promote equality.

- To promote a culture of excellence through aspirational social expectations, including good attendance, punctuality, personal behavior and learning standards
- To promote equality and inclusion to equip our young people to become productive citizens ready to make a positive contribution locally and in the wider world

PRINCIPLE 3: SCHOOL-LED IMPROVEMENT

To continue to strengthen Barnsley's system-wide school-led improvement, working closely with key partners.

- To build leadership capacity which empowers leaders at all levels to develop a sustainable model of continuous improvement across all Barnsley schools
- To ensure that all settings offer a curriculum that is dynamic, engaging and aspirational so that it caters for the breadth of interest and talents across the locality
- To deliver the highest quality of teaching and learning to drive curriculum delivery and embed the necessary skills and knowledge in all subjects
- To achieve the highest possible attainment outcomes; through rapid rates of progress from all starting points. To provide teachers with regular, relevant and high-quality access to Continuous Professional Development at all levels

PRINCIPLE 4: IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

To promote, safeguard and improve our children and young people's mental and physical health and wellbeing. Recognising that this ultimately underpins the ability for us to achieve all other priorities.

- To enable all services to be collaborative and effective in supporting children and young people to feel safe and secure in our Borough whilst promoting physically and mentally healthy lifestyles to all

Barnsley Schools' Alliance Priorities for Learning

1. To ensure that all educational settings deliver a quality of education that enhances the life chances of all children and young people across the borough by:

- Monitoring the quality of education and school performance
- Brokering support for schools and academies to help them develop and improve
- Ensuring effective leadership and governance works in a comprehensive, system-wide way to develop current and future leaders
- Promoting a cohesive education system that will minimise the risk of fragmentation in a multi-provider context
- Holding schools and academies to account for their outcomes and challenging school/academy leaders and governors where outcomes are not meeting expectations
- Initiating specific projects and case studies to support school improvement leading to positive outcomes for children and young people

2. To build leadership capacity which empowers leaders at all levels to develop a sustainable model of continuous improvement across all Barnsley schools by:

- Ensuring all schools and academies are receiving appropriate support and challenge in proportion to their success and effectiveness
- Ensuring that effective leadership and governance is embedded system-wide in order to develop current and future leaders
- Researching, promoting, supporting and sourcing best practice to inspire and motivate innovation and excellence
- Providing high quality continual professional development where required

3. To ensure that all settings offer a curriculum that is current, relevant, dynamic, engaging and aspirational so that it caters for the breadth of interests and talents across the locality by:

- Determining the priorities for education and improvement across the Barnsley education sector
- Supporting and challenging schools and academies to promote high aspiration for all our pupils, which provides access to opportunities to enhance ambition and help pupils realise their full potential
- Working to promote a cohesive education system that will minimise the risk of fragmentation in a multi-provider context
- Early identification of needs and implementation of support and intervention at the earliest opportunity to enable sustained access to quality learning opportunities





4. To deliver the highest quality of teaching and learning to drive curriculum delivery and embed the necessary skills and knowledge in all subjects by:

- Holding schools and academies to account for their outcomes and challenge school academy leaders and governors where these are not meeting expectations
- Supporting schools and academies to help them develop and improve
- Collaborating with subject leaders to ensure the correct curriculum is driven and that subject leads have the necessary skills and knowledge in all subjects
- Providing high quality continual professional development

5. To achieve the highest possible attainment outcomes; through rapid rates of progress from all starting points by:

- Determining the priorities for education and improvement across the Barnsley education sector
- Working continuously with senior leadership teams to ensure accurate delivery of education
- Where school improvement is deemed to not be achieving, then the Alliance will initiate the local authority escalation process
- Knowing and understanding ourselves, what the issues are and what needs to be done about them

Our 4 Fundamental Priorities which sit within our “Every Child in School Every Day” Co-Produced Plan

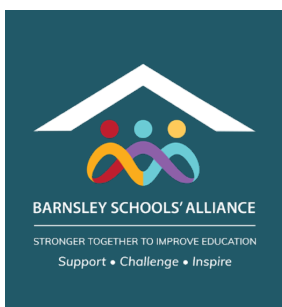
<p>PRIORITY 1:</p>  <p>Electively Home Educated Commitment to reduce overall rate currently on the register by 30% and to reduce the overall number of children leaving school to become EHE.</p>	<p>PRIORITY 2:</p>  <p>Attendance Full time attendance to be in line or above the national picture.</p>
<p>PRIORITY 3:</p>  <p>Suspensions and Exclusions An incremental reduction from 20% to 40%.</p>	<p>PRIORITY 4:</p>  <p>SEND and Inclusion Our settings create learning environments whereby every child and young person feels safe, valued and supported so that they achieve their full potential and feel like they have a sense of belonging in their school community.</p>

Our CPD Sub-group is leading and embedding the following 5 educational attainment drivers at primary phase across the borough through robust CPD

- PRIORITY 1:**
Continue to raise attainment for pupils working with SEND SUPPORT by the end of KS2.
- PRIORITY 2:**
Continue to raise GLD by the end of EYFS, especially for boys and pupils without additional barriers. Schools should also look to close the attainment in both in Understanding the World (UTW) and Expressive Arts and Design (EAD).
- PRIORITY 3:**
Raise attainment in reading, especially at the higher standard.
- PRIORITY 4:**
Continue to embed an effective oracy curriculum which improves pupils' attainment in writing, especially at greater depth.
- PRIORITY 5:**
Continue to raise attainment at the higher standard in mathematics by the end of KS2.

How Barnsley Schools' Alliance Works

- Barnsley Schools' Alliance is a strategic partnership between early years settings, schools, academies, colleges and the local authority. Its purpose is to raise the quality of education and improve outcomes for children and young people across Barnsley
- The Alliance is the custodian of effective education within Barnsley
- The Alliance recognises the needs of children and young people as a whole and so works with education providers, families, and the community to identify and meet need holistically (see SEND, Early Help and Neglect Strategies)
- The Alliance represents a sector-led model that works in partnership with the Local Authority
- Sector-led improvement means that all schools take a collective responsibility for the outcomes of Barnsley children, and all partners have a mandate to mutually support and challenge each other



STRONGER TOGETHER TO IMPROVE EDUCATION

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

How our priorities will be driven and aligned through each relevant sub-group

BARNSELY SCHOOLS' ALLIANCE STRATEGIC (BSA) BOARD

The BSA and its Board is the strategic partnership body composed of the Local Authority and its education partners. It will be accountable to the borough, Children and Young People's Trust Executive Group for progressing and achieving one of the strategic objectives of the Barnsley Children and Young People's Plan. This is to develop a strategy for improving the education, achievement and employability of all children and young people in the borough through driving inclusion, promoting social mobility and ultimately enhancing social capital in the borough.

CEO SUB-GROUP

The Academy CEO Sub-Group meeting fosters a culture of collaboration and partnership working to share best practice and expertise. The network's premise is to improve the education system across Barnsley by collectively focusing on and co-constructing key strategic priorities such as the 'Every Child in Every School Every Day Plan' that will drive positive change and raise standards for all. The network encourages accountability and transparency through open discussion, constructive feedback and collective decision making to maintain trust and credibility across the system in Barnsley.

CEO WORKING PARTY SUB-GROUP

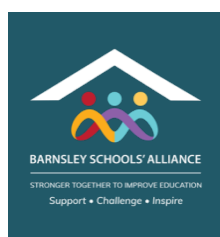
The CEO Working Party Sub-Group developed a 'Barnsley Pledge', which is a shared agreement and commitment between Barnsley Local Authority, Barnsley Schools and Multi Academy Trusts serving in our Locality. The 'signed Barnsley Pledge' is a form of words in which all partners and stakeholders can coalesce to improve outcomes for young people, particularly those with vulnerabilities. The working party has been instrumental in driving the work of the co-produced "Every Child in School Every Day Plan" (ECISE) and surrounding activity. This group routinely meet and monitor the progress, impact and activity against the 4 Key Priorities of the ECISE plan.

LEADERSHIP CAPACITY SUB-GROUP

The Leadership Capacity Group focuses on building leadership capacity which empowers leaders at all levels to develop a sustainable model of continuous improvement across all Barnsley Schools. A group of key stakeholders focused on driving activities to ensure that school leaders including governors can continue to lead their schools effectively. The group's work is underpinned by effective communication with school leaders and collaboration with external partners. The group works with the teaching school hubs to develop, monitor and challenge the engagement of school leaders with the professional development opportunities available so this has maximum impact.

CLUSTER LEADS

The Cluster Leads are responsible for representing the voice of the schools within their cluster. They act as a conduit for information flow between the Barnsley Schools' Alliance and school leaders. The Secondary Heads meeting is routinely attended by all 11 secondary leaders.



QUALITY OF EDUCATION SUB-GROUP

The Quality of Education Group is responsible for determining and overseeing the annual quality assurance process. It monitors school performance over time, acknowledging success and challenging underperformance. Additionally, the group also oversees the brokering and commissioning arrangements for schools to ensure leaders have the capacity to improve at the required pace. This includes monitoring the impact of any external support and determining when escalation processes need to be implemented to prevent further decline. Finally, the group considers the impact of the core offer for continuing professional development on educational outcomes for schools across the borough.

CPD WORKING SUB-GROUP

The CPD group is responsible for co-constructing, monitoring and evaluating the impact of the Barnsley School's Alliance professional development programme. This ensures that the workforce can access high- quality CPD, enabling them to hone the skills they need to fulfil their roles effectively.

ALLIANCE EXECUTIVE SUB-GROUP

The Alliance Executive sub-group maintains financial oversight of the Barnsley Schools' Alliance budget and approves the major funding of projects proposed by the working groups. It maintains strategic oversight of the working groups and monitors impact of their work. The Executive group oversees the progress of Schools Causing Concern moving through the escalation policy it also determines important agenda items and the structure of the Barnsley Schools' Alliance Strategic Board.

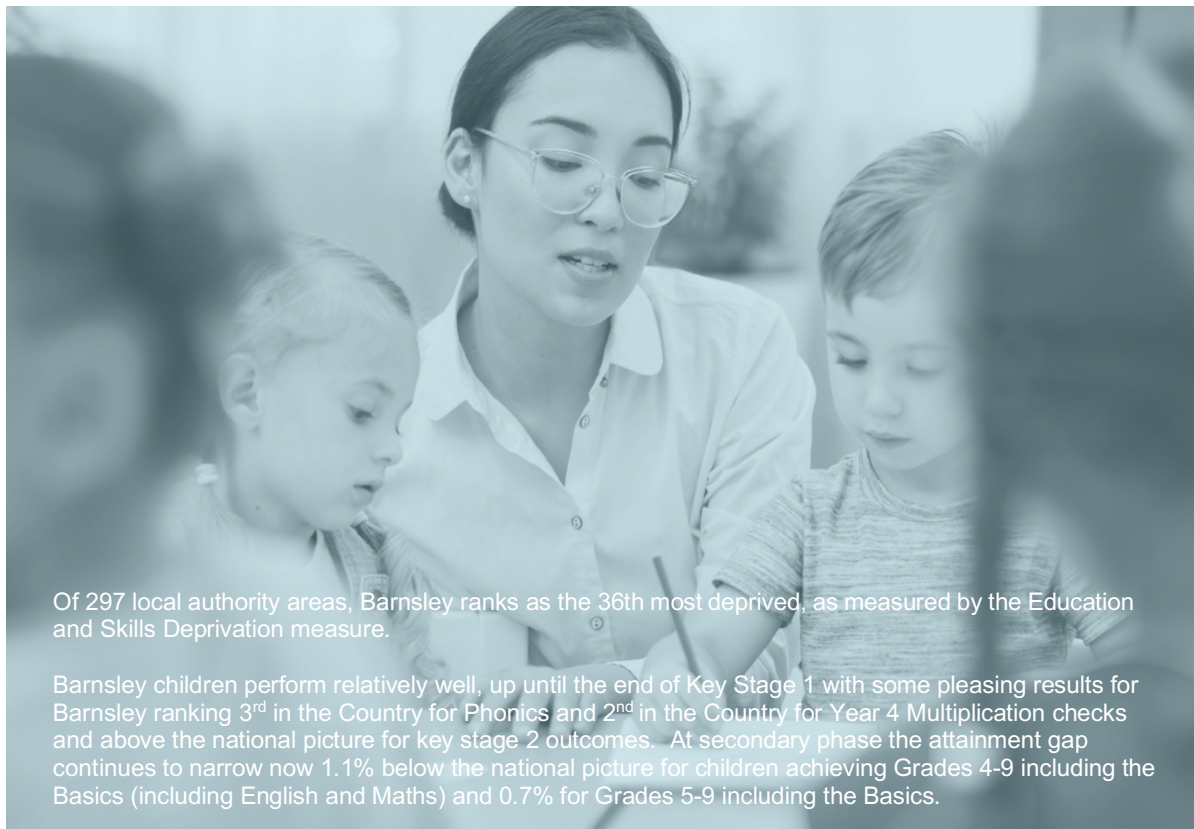
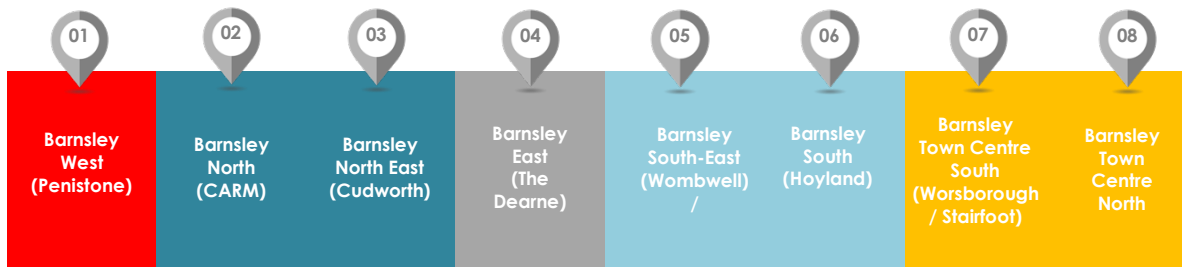
The Learning Provision in Barnsley Includes:

SETTING:	MAINTAINED SCHOOLS:	ACADEMIES:	FREE SCHOOLS:	TOTAL:
Primary	26	51	0	77
Secondary	1	9	1	11
Special	0	4	0	4
Student Referral Unit	0	1	0	1
Total	27	65	1	93

There are 92 state-funded schools in Barnsley. Holy Trinity is an all-through 3-16 academy but is counted here as two settings, one Primary and one Secondary. The new free school opened in September 2021.

There are 17 Multi-Academy Trusts currently working in Barnsley. In addition to Primary and Secondary schools, there are two main providers of Post 16 / Key Stage 5 provision, Barnsley College and Penistone Grammar School.

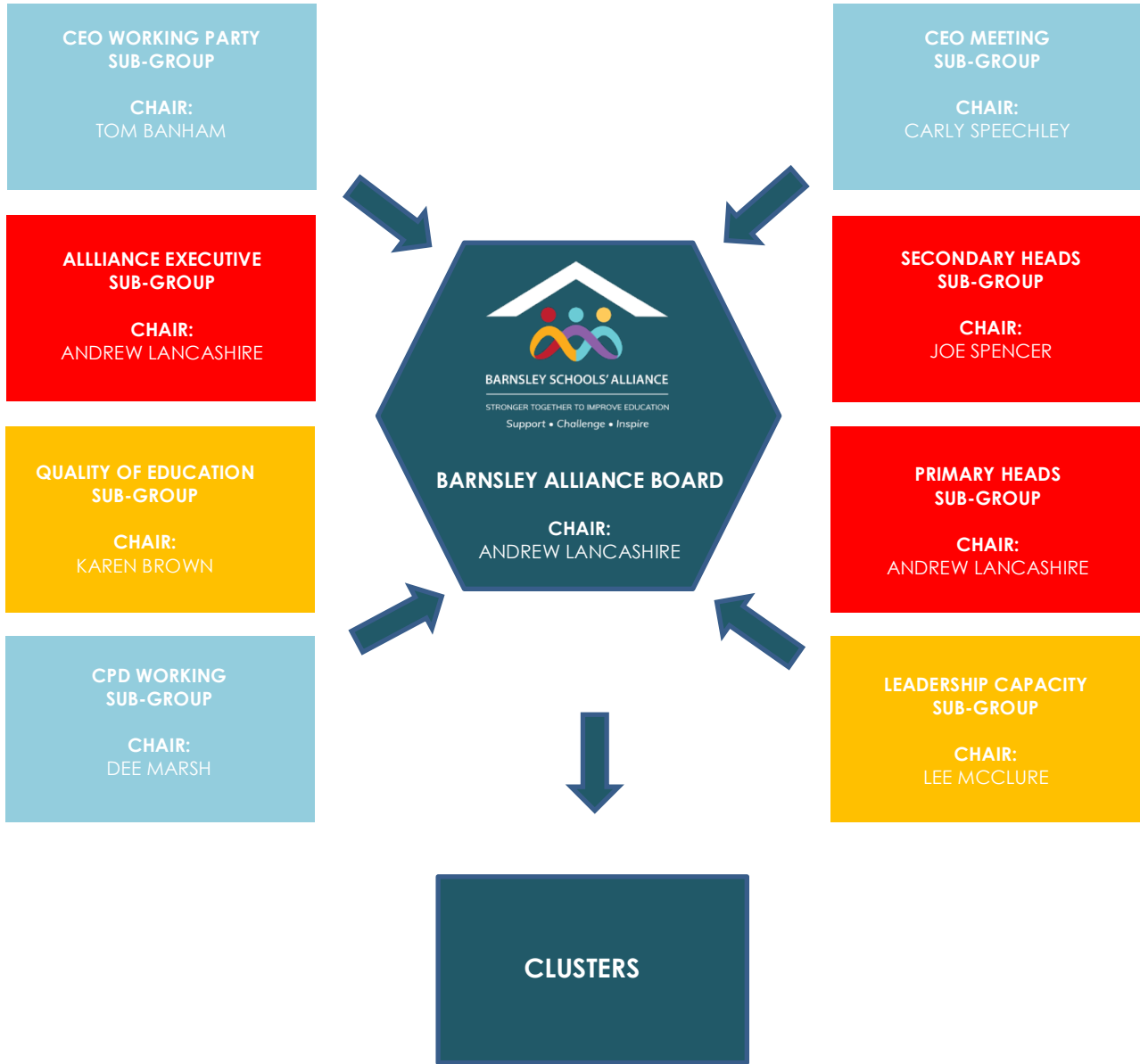
Barnsley School Clusters



Of 297 local authority areas, Barnsley ranks as the 36th most deprived, as measured by the Education and Skills Deprivation measure.

Barnsley children perform relatively well, up until the end of Key Stage 1 with some pleasing results for Barnsley ranking 3rd in the Country for Phonics and 2nd in the Country for Year 4 Multiplication checks and above the national picture for key stage 2 outcomes. At secondary phase the attainment gap continues to narrow now 1.1% below the national picture for children achieving Grades 4-9 including the Basics (including English and Maths) and 0.7% for Grades 5-9 including the Basics.

Barnsley Schools' Alliance Governance and Structure 2025/2026



PENISTONE
CLUSTER LEAD:
DALE JORDAN

NORTH
CLUSTER LEAD:
LISA TABBNER

NORTH-EAST
CLUSTER LEAD:
DAN WOOD

SOUTH
CLUSTER LEAD:
VICKY HARRISON

THE DEARNE
CLUSTER LEAD:
TOM BOWER

SOUTH EAST
CLUSTER LEAD:
CHLOE LAWSON

TOWN CENTRE NORTH
CLUSTER LEAD:
DAWN BRADSHAW

TOWN CENTRE SOUTH
CLUSTER LEAD:
KATIE PIERCE

Barnsley Schools' Alliance strategic key priorities will help drive the local authority's corporate and directorate Key Performance Indicators for 2025-28:

Key Performance Indicator Position 2025

Corporate:	Target:
Take up of 2 year old childcare/education offer	77.0%
Primary School Attendance	95.0%
Secondary School Attendance	91.10%
Proportion of educational settings judged good or outstanding by Ofsted	94.0%
Early Years and Childcare settings rated good or outstanding by Ofsted	98.0
Percentage of children on SEN Support in schools	13.0%
The number of suspensions in all schools	1750
The Number of Exclusions in all schools	97
Young people aged 10 - 17 years entering the Youth Justice System for the first time	30

Comparators with Local & National Picture 2025

Metric:	Barnsley:	Yorkshire and Humber:	National:	Statistical Neighbours
Good Level of Development (GLD)	67.9%	66.2%	68.3%	66.1%
Phonics - Expected Standard	85.0%	80.0%	80.0%	78.4%
MTC - % Achieving Full Marks	50.0%	37.0%	37.0%	40.8%
Key Stage 2 - Expected Standard RWM	64.7%	60.3%	61.2%	61.5%
KS4 - Attainment 8	43.8	44.3	45.9	44.0
KS4 - Grade 9-4 inc. English & Math	63.4%	62.7%	64.5%	62.3%
KS4 - Grade 9-5 inc. English & Math	44.5%	43.3%	45.2%	42.2%
KS5 - A-Level APS	33.92	34.52	33.39	35.94
KS5 - Achieving at least 2 A-Levels	95.9%	81.9%	85.2%	79.0%
Primary School Attendance 24/25	94.9%	94.7%	94.8%	*
Secondary School Attendance 24/25	90.2%	90.7%	91.4%	*

*NB this data is not comparable



In Barnsley, we want all children, young people and families to benefit from the opportunities that a great childhood brings. A range of experiences and learning opportunities can help to give children and young people the best start in life and adulthood.

In Barnsley we want all children, young people and families to benefit from the opportunities that a great childhood brings. A range of experiences and learning opportunities can help to give children and young people the best start in life and adulthood.

The Great Childhoods Ambition is our commitment to improving the lives and futures of our children and young people. We will support them to have a great childhood and ensure they feel they **belong**, and can **explore, dream, grow** and **connect**.

As a borough-wide, collaborative programme, we would like everyone to get on board and help us grow the opportunities for children and young people. If you're an employer and would like to find out how you can support the Great Childhoods Ambition, email us at gca@barnsley.gov.uk



What We Are Doing

As part of our Great Childhoods Ambition, we will:

- Work with [family hubs](#) to support parents to give their children the best start in life
- Work with schools and academies to provide a caring and safe space for all pupils to learn and grow, giving them a sense of belonging and the strength and skills to make anything possible
- Develop stronger partnerships between our schools / academies and communities, creating a network of support so no child falls through the gaps
- Provide activities, opportunities and experiences of interest to children and young people
- Support children and young people to access and explore what is on offer, building confidence and boosting their self esteem
- Work with careers leaders, higher education partners and businesses to inspire and encourage young people to dream big, showing them possibilities in the voluntary, public and private sectors
- Grow young people's digital skills to help them prepare for a digital future

Barnsley 2030

The Education Improvement Strategy will support the Barnsley 2030 Strategy – Learning Barnsley meet their ambition by working towards helping children and young people to achieve their full potential with improved educational outcomes, achievement and attainment, which in turn will enable completing higher-level skills studies than ever before.

Barnsley 2030 sets out challenging targets which will continue to improve social, economic and community life in Barnsley by 2030.

Barnsley Schools' Alliance through its collaborative approach will help deliver the following targets:

1. Every young person attends a 'good or outstanding' early years setting or school in Barnsley.
2. The percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths at the end of KS2, exceeds the National Average.
3. The percentage of pupils achieving passes at grades 9-5 in GCSE English and Maths exceeds the National Average.
4. The number of fixed term exclusions will reduce year-on-year and be significantly lower than our baseline by 2030.

Barnsley Schools' Alliance – Plan on a Page

STRONGER TOGETHER TO IMPROVE EDUCATION SUPPORT CHALLENGE AND INSPIRE

OUR FOUR CORE PRINCIPLES

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

TO CHAMPION WORLD CLASS EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES. ENSURING WE MEET THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

INCLUSIVE PROVISION

TO SECURE HIGH QUALITY INCLUSIVE PROVISION, WIDEN LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES AND PROMOTE EQUALITY

SCHOOL-LED IMPROVEMENT

TO CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN BARNSLEY'S SYSTEM WIDE SCHOOL-LED IMPROVEMENT, WORKING CLOSELY WITH KEY PARTNERS

IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

TO PROMOTE, SAFEGUARD AND IMPROVE OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING, RECOGNISING THAT THIS ULTIMATELY UNDERPINS THE ABILITY FOR US TO ACHIEVE ALL OTHER PRIORITIES



BARNSLEY SCHOOLS' ALLIANCE PRIORITIES FOR LEARNING

TO ENSURE THAT ALL EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS DELIVER A QUALITY OF EDUCATION THAT ENHANCES THE LIFE CHANCES OF ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS THE BOROUGH

TO BUILD LEADERSHIP CAPACITY WHICH EMPOWERS LEADERS AT ALL LEVELS TO DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE MODEL OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ACROSS ALL BARNSLEY SCHOOLS

TO ENSURE THAT ALL SETTINGS OFFER A CURRICULUM THAT IS CURRENT, RELEVANT, DYNAMIC, ENGAGING AND ASPIRATIONAL SO THAT IT CATERS FOR THE BREADTH OF INTERESTS AND TALENTS ACROSS THE LOCALITY

TO DELIVER THE HIGHEST QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING TO DRIVE CURRICULUM DELIVERY AND EMBED THE NECESSARY SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE IN ALL SUBJECTS

TO ACHIEVE THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE ATTAINMENTS OUTCOMES; THROUGH RAPID RATES OF PROGRESS FROM ALL STARTING POINTS



"EVERY CHILD IN SCHOOL EVERY DAY" CO PRODUCED PLAN

PRIORITY 1:

ELECTIVELY HOME EDUCATED

COMMITMENT TO REDUCE OVERALL RATE CURRENTLY ON THE REGISTER BY 30% AND TO REDUCE THE OVERALL NUMBER OF CHILDREN LEAVING SCHOOL TO BECOME EHE

PRIORITY 2:

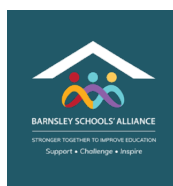
ATTENDANCE FULL TIME
ATTENDANCE TO BE IN LINE OR ABOVE THE NATIONAL PICTURE

PRIORITY 3:

SUSPENSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS
AN INCREMENTAL REDUCTION FROM 20% TO 40%

PRIORITY 4:

SEND AND INCLUSION
OUR SETTINGS CREATE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS WHEREBY EVERY CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON FEELS SAFE, VALUED AND SUPPORTED SO THAT THEY ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND FEEL LIKE THEY HAVE A SENSE OF BELONGING IN THEIR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.





Barnsley School Forum Update on SEND Reforms and White Paper

17 March 2026



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National Context and Rationale for Reform

The Government's SEND Reform Programme (2026 consultation) and Schools White Paper *Every Child Achieving and Thriving* outline major system change to address:

- Rising EHCP demand and high-needs budget pressures
- Inconsistent mainstream SEND provision and variation between areas. Long waits for health services and escalation of needs
- Adversarial processes facing families
- Poorer post-16 outcomes and variable inclusion.

[SEND reform: putting children and young people first - GOV.UK](#)

[Every child achieving and thriving - GOV.UK](#)



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Core Elements of the SEND Reform Plan

A single, inclusive education system: a shift away from a fragmented mainstream vs SEND system towards one where most children receive early support in mainstream settings

Early intervention and reduced reliance on EHCPs: National expectations to strengthen mainstream support through consistent graduated approaches, reducing dependency on statutory plans

New structure of support:

- **Universal Offer** in every setting — trained staff, reasonable adjustments, early identification tools, inclusion standards
- **Targeted / Targeted Plus support** — access to SLT, EP, small-group intervention without needing an EHCP
- **Specialist Provision Packages** linked to national EHCP thresholds

National Inclusion Standards: Mandatory standards for what families should expect from all schools; linked to a revised SEND Code of Practice

Digital Individual Support Plans (ISPs): Portable, co-produced plans for children receiving Targeted/Specialist support — reducing EHCP over-use.



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Progress to Date

National Reform Priority	Progress to Date
Stronger mainstream inclusion	Local SEND Strategy emphasises early identification, SEN support improvement & inclusion culture
National Inclusion Standards	Barnsley's oversight framework (SEND Oversight Board, performance monitoring) already sets consistent expectations
Reduced EHCP reliance	Work to improve SEN Support and Targeted provision through Schools Alliance & specialist units
Increased specialist capacity	£9.4m investment for 200 new local places; expansion of specialist units
Co-production	Strong parent/carer engagement mechanisms, surveys, workshops
Data & accountability	Termly performance reporting; EHCP and SEN Support data analysis

Funding Implications

The reform plan includes over £7bn of investment nationally, including:

- £1.6bn Inclusive Mainstream Fund to strengthen provision.
- £1.8bn "Experts at Hand" multi-agency workforce.
- £3.7bn capital funding for inclusion bases/specialist places.
- £200m workforce development.
- £700m+ Best Start Family Hubs.



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Future Considerations

High Needs Block Pressures and Forecasting

- Rising demand for EHCPs has been a major driver of high-needs overspends nationally.
- New national thresholds and Specialist Provision Packages may moderate growth

Reforms expect

- Reduced growth in EHCP numbers (stabilisation projected 2035)
- Enhanced mainstream capacity → potentially slower increases in specialist placements
- Capital funding targeted at local inclusion bases and accessibility

Mainstream Sufficiency and Inclusion: national shift toward mainstream inclusion means consideration of:

- Investment in mainstream SEND capacity
- Deployment of the Inclusive Mainstream Fund (once local allocations clarified)
- Sufficiency of inclusion bases and targeted provision within Barnsley schools



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Future Considerations

Multi-agency support expectations: the “**Experts at Hand**” model brings professionals (EPs, therapists) into mainstream settings earlier, reducing escalation. Need for local monitoring of local workforce sufficiency, co-funding models and service commissioning arrangements.

Accountability and Transparency Requirements: With mandatory annual Inclusion Strategies, Schools Forum will likely scrutinise school-level SEND spending, consistency of provision and compliance with new national standards

The consultation proposes:

- A **statutory duty to publish an annual Inclusion Strategy**, replacing SEN Information Reports.
- Requirements to detail how SEND support is delivered at Universal/Targeted level and how resources (staffing, funding, interventions) are deployed



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Future Considerations

Oversight of Inclusion Funding and Investment

Tracking of:

- Use of new capital funding
- Deployment of inclusion resources
- School-level reporting via future Inclusion Strategies (replacing SEN Info Reports)

Workforce Development

National reforms emphasise training for all staff 0–25; Forum may need to support local planning.

Long-term Transition Planning (2029–2035)

Overseeing budget alignment with national phased implementation



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High Needs Stabilisation Grant

- Designed to stabilise HN finances and support LAs during early implementation of SEND reforms – specifically to reduce reliance of out of borough placements, increase local sufficiency, strengthen mainstream inclusion – bridging between existing system and future reformed SEND system
- Provides up to 90% of cumulative HN deficit as of **31 March 2026**
- Grant conditional on development of Local SEND Reform Plan aligned to national reform expectations, approval by DfE, plan demonstrates actionable steps aligned with reforms



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Timescales

Phase 1: Consultation and Legislation

18 May 2026 Consultation closes

19 June 2026 Submission of local SEND Reform Plan

Phase 2: Phased System Changes

2026/28 Phased implementation and payment of HN Stabilisation grant (after plan approval)

Phase 3: Transition Period

2029 Assessments for new system begin

2030 No change to existing EHCP provision before this point

2035 Expected stabilisation of EHCP numbers

Need to consider this timeline in the shaping of Barnsley's long term DSG planning, sufficiency strategy for specialist places and mainstream capacity planning



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