



Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Children's Services Directorate

BARNSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON THURSDAY
18th December 2025**

Meeting Attendance

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

Councillors		
Cllr Deborah Pearson (DP)	Councillor (BMBC)	✓
Cllr Ken Richardson (KR)	Councillor (BMBC)	
Cllr Janine Moyes (JM)	Councillor (BMBC)	

Primary Schools (LA)		
Simon Tabbner (ST)	Primary Headteacher	✓
Jackie Milliner (JM)	Primary Governor	

Primary Academy Officers		
Joe Woffinden (JW)	Primary Headteacher	✓
Katie Adamski (KA)	Principal	✓
Victoria Gorton (VG)	Primary Headteacher	

Primary Academy Governors		
Michael Sanderson (CHAIR)	Primary Academy Governor	✓
Peter Bell (PB)	School Governor	✓

Nursery Provision		
Simon Sykes (SS)	Teacher	✓

Early Years Provision		
Melanie Szoke (MS)	Childcare Quality & Sufficiency Manager	Apologies
Paul Crook (PC)	Secondary Headteacher	✓
Visseh Pejhan Sykes (VPS)	Secondary Maintained Governor	✓
Victoria Harrison (VH)	HCAT CFO	
Nigel Leeder (NL)	Governor	✓
Amir Arezoo (AA)	Associate Principal	Apologies
Tom Smith (TS)	Head of Service	✓
Josh Greaves (JG) (VICE CHAIR)	Special Schools Headteacher /Board Representative	✓
George Wild (GW)	Springwell Learning Community & Greenacre Special school	✓

1. Welcome and apologies

The chair extended a warm welcome to everyone at the meeting. Formal apologies were noted from Katharine Knowles, Melanie Szoke, Nina Sleight and Amir Arezoo.

2. Declarations of interest

Visseh Pejhan Sykes declared an interest as a newly appointed Trustee for Wellspring Academy but will only be representing Penistone Grammar school at this meeting.

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

The minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on the 23rd October 2025 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 Funding Settlement and Arrangements for 2026/27

- Helen Perrin provided an update noting that while this report was first presented in October, new information was released in November 2025 regarding school funding arrangements for 2026/27.
- The update confirmed detailed aspects of the funding settlement, including provisional schools block and central schools services allocations based on current pupil numbers, showing an overall increase of £10.5m (including £10.3m in the schools block and £0.15m in the central block).
- The Schools Budget Support Grant and National Insurance Contributions Grant have been rolled into the official allocation.

- Minimum per pupil funding levels are set at £5,115 for primary and £6,640 for secondary, with a minimum funding guarantee (MFG) range of 0.0% (cash flat protection).
- The historic commitments element of the central schools services block will reduce by 20%, equating to £46k for Barnsley.
- Helen Perrin emphasised that this update ensures all members have the latest information available for the Schools Forum.

Resolved:

- The Forum received and noted the update on the Schools Funding Settlement and Arrangements for 2026/27.

5. Outcome of the Local Authority's consultation with schools on proposed changes to the Local Schools Funding Formula

- Helen Perrin reported that 48 schools (55% of all schools, up from 22% last year) responded to the consultation, with the increase mainly due to more primary schools participating.
- The majority (92%) supported the phased approach to aligning the Free School Meals (FSM) unit value to the National Funding Formula (NFF), though some noted the lack of financial data as a limitation.
- All respondents (100%) agreed on the need to mirror and align funding values as closely as possible to the NFF, which helps schools plan for future years.
- Most respondents (98%) supported continuing to set the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) in line with previous years, and the majority (81%) agreed with applying scaling (rather than capping) if required to meet MFG requirements.
- Helen Perrin confirmed the intention to implement the formula as in previous years, moving factors, especially the FSM factor, as close as possible to NFF values, and to apply scaling only to meet the MFG requirement.
- Paul Crook asked when schools would receive indicative figures and how closely the formula would align with the NFF. Helen responded that floor budgets would be sent by the end of February, with submission to DfE in January and updates at the next meeting. Paul Crook expressed a preference for earlier figures but understood the timescales.
- Anna Turner raised concerns about consultation response rates and discussed ways to improve engagement. It was suggested including governors and considering workshops or using existing cluster meetings. Simon suggested joining cluster meetings to reach more people.
- It was proposed to review the most effective and resource-efficient way to deliver future consultations, possibly starting with clusters and then evaluating for the following year.

Actions:

- BMBC to consider the use of workshops or cluster meetings to improve future consultation engagement, with a review of effectiveness for next year.

Resolved:

- The Forum received and noted the outcome of the consultation and agreed to proceed with the proposed approach to the Local Schools Funding Formula, with actions to improve future engagement.

6. Proposal to Transfer Funding from the Schools Block to High Needs Block

- Helen Perrin outlined the ongoing financial challenges in the High Needs Block, including rising demand, cost pressures, and a projected cumulative deficit of £21.7 million by 2026/27, despite savings measures and additional government support.
- The proposal is to transfer 1% of the Schools Block funding to the High Needs Block in 2026/27, continuing the approach from previous years to address the deficit and support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- 67% of consultation respondents agreed with the transfer, with most opposition coming from secondary schools. Concerns raised included the financial impact on schools and the need for increased central government funding for high needs.
- Helen Perrin explained that the transfer is primarily used to support Barnsley children placed out of borough due to insufficient local provision, with the aim of increasing local capacity and inclusion in the future.
- Members expressed discomfort at being asked to approve a significant transfer without detailed modelling of the impact on individual schools, noting that the DfE had not provided the usual tools or data.
- There was discussion about the process feeling predetermined due to DfE safety valve agreements, and some questioned whether not approving the transfer would have any effect.
- Sue Day emphasised that the transfer supports Barnsley children and that increasing local provision would reduce reliance on costly out-of-borough placements.

Question:

“Do you support the phased approach to aligning the Free School Meals (FSM) unit value to the National Funding Formula (NFF)?”

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Response	Total	Percentage
Agree	5	55.5%
Disagree	4	44.5%
Not sure	0	0%
Not answered	0	0%
	9	100%

The proposal was approved by a majority vote. 5 voted in favour and 4 voted against the proposal from school based members.

Resolved:

- The Forum approved the Council’s proposal to transfer 1% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2026/27.

7. Any other urgent business

No urgent business was raised.

8. Schedule of future meetings (2026)

The following meeting dates were noted:

- Thursday 22nd January 2026 - 2.00pm - Reception Room, Town Hall
- 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)