# Croydon Schools Forum

**Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 21st September 2026**

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| **Members Present:** | Jolyon Roberts | Kate Lanning |
| | Gill Larocque | Maryssa Dako |
| | Theresa Staunton | Fiona Robinson |
| | Markie Hayden | Patrick Shields |
| | Mark Gyford | Karen Steele |
| | Julie Evans | Dan Bowden |
| | Dave Harvey | Tyrone Myton |
| | Debbie Ryle | |
| **Observers Present:** | Shelley Davies | Cllr Richard Chatterjee |
| | Vicky Owusu-Daaku | Cllr Brigitte Graham |
| | Abioye Asimolowo | |
| **Apologies**: | Keran Currie, Chris Andrew, Jenny Bartlett, Cllr Andy Stranack, Sue Lenihan | |
| **Elected Chair:** | Jolyon Roberts | |
| **Elected Vice Chair:** | Gill Larocque | |
| **Clerk:** | Mori Bates | |

| Item | Detail | Lead/ Action |
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| **1.** | **Welcome & Apologies** | JR |
| | Apologies received by MB from KC, CA, JB, CllrAS and SL | |
| **2.** | **Minutes & Actions – Meeting 15th June '26** | JR |
| | Minutes, actions, and matters arising from last meeting 15th June '26<br><br>Summary of comments made in reference to the previous minutes:<br><br>2.1 Continued Action Point: GL queried the figures for Croydon Pupil Referral Units (Line 9 of Appendix A), of which it was agreed a meeting would take place outside of Forum with SD and JB. **ACTION: IN PROGRESS**<br><br>2.2 Jan'26: Under 3.4: It was queried as to whether there has been a national difference in the DSG allocation between this year and last year – if these figures are available. AA agreed to investigate – **ACTION AA & JB – <u>COMPLETED</u> IN ITEM 4 – DSG Outturn**<br><br>2.3 Mar '26: Under 3.5: The expansion and bulge noted in tables 4A and 4B | JB & SD<br><br>AA & JB |

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| | in the paper are historical payments and part of honouring previous agreements. It was queried as to which schools are benefiting from the expansion and bulge budget and members asked that the beneficiaries be named. **ACTION: JB – <u>COMPLETED</u> IN ITEM 5 – Growth Paper** | JB |
| | 2.4 Under 3.1 of the minutes, the Chair agreed to arrange a self assessment survey to be circulated to the elected members of Schools Forum. **ACTION: JR** | JR |
| | 2.5 Under 6.1 SD and DP agreed to have a discussion to compile a 'checklist' that could be circulated to allow schools to be more prepared for audits, covering gaps where applicable. **ACTION: SD & DP – Audit Checklist.** | SD & DP |
| | 2.6 Edit to be completed. Upon completion, minutes are agreed to be a true record and ready to be published on the website. | |
| **3.** | **Membership** | **JR** |
| | 3.1 The membership of Schools Forum was reviewed following some resignations at the end of the previous academic year, with it being noted that MG and IA will be serving as academy representatives and PS as the maintained secondary school representative. | |
| **4.** | **Election of Chair and Vice Chair** | **SD** |
| | 4.1 A self nomination for the role of chair was received from JR and a nomination for JR by DH and KC prior to the meeting. DB seconded the nomination in the meeting<br><br>4.2 GL agreed to stand for vice chair, and TS seconded the nomination.<br><br>4.3 The forum voted on both and the result was unanimous. JR and GL were formally announced by SD as chair and vice chair respectively. | |
| **5.** | **DSG Outturn Report for 25/26** | **AA** |
| | 5.1 AA presented a paper on the DSG Outturn for 25/26, noting that the provisional 25/26 DSG deficit was £29.42m and the overall DSG deficit is currently around £57.59m.<br><br>5.2 Table 2 showed the 25/26 DSG Outturn position divided up by each block and whether each one was in surplus or deficit.<br><br>5.3 TS queried when the figures will be reviewed again, specifically in relation to the £4.8m from Early Years. AA explained that this will be looked at later this year, as the money was received in a different financial year to when it was announced, but assured that the money would be paid before the end of this financial year. Moving forwards, | |

Schools Forum agreed that there would need to be clear and concise information about where additional funding has come from and where it has been distributed to.

5.4 Under 5.11, it stated that there has been a continued increase in the number of EHCPs, rising to 6,000, of which does mirror the national trend. This has led to pressure on available resources and services, and although there has been an expansion of ELP and special school places, it has not been enough to keep up with the growing demand.

**Q1:** MD: What was the reasoning for the £812k deficit in the schools block – was it from an academy conversion that the funding did not go across for?
**A1:** AA: Saffron Valley academised in 2024 and the accountant at the time put the balance in 24/25, so it meant in 25/26, we would need to pay that balance.

**Q2:** MD: Where is the £812k deficit recorded?
**A2:** AA: The deficit is recorded within the Schools Block.
**C2:** MD: Based on the £1.2m moved from Schools block to High needs, we could have left the money in Schools Block and then there would have been no deficit in that block.

5.5 Members of Forum queried the High Needs Stability Grant, of which there was some discussion around EAH of which has two definitions – one being 'Experts At Hand' and the other being 'Early Access to Help'. SD confirmed that every LA submitted a Local Reform Plan of which would help to determine if we qualify for the grant. The Experts At Hand model has had to be recently developed and so is not yet in the public domain. The model has been designed to be similar to the Locality SEND project with existing localities able to offer more.

5.6 Feedback will be given around the reform plan and EAH model in October to help illustrate the targets for both. Work will continue to be done so that we can continue to support pupils, meet the needs and save money

**Q4:** DH: 5.9 states: *'In one instance, an academy special school took no pupils into year 7'* is the academy referenced a Croydon school?
**A4:** SD: The paper should read, 'in one instance an academy special school took no *<u>further</u>* pupils into year 7'.
**C4:** Paper will be edited as requested

5.7 Appendix A of the paper gave an overview of the March '26 forecast and the 25/26 provisional outturn, along with the differences between those figures. SD added there is also a table containing all the requests to assess for an EHCP and in what year group each of those pupils sits in.

**Q5:** MH: Do we charge more for out of borough places?
**A5:** SD: We are not supposed to charge differently;
**C5:** AA: If it is a special school, we pay based on commissioned places. In some situations, there is additional support required. For out of borough children, we do not charge a separate rate.

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| | 5.8 TM stated that it is important to control what we are able to. The number of pupils may be falling, but there is the issue of staffing costs and the rise of children with additional needs. TM queried whether building an additional annexe of ELP can address the main issues at hand.<br><br>5.9 The recommendations in the paper were noted by members of the Schools Forum. | |
| **6.** | **DSG Growth Fund Budget 26/27** | **AA** |
| | 6.1 AA reported on the DSG Growth Fund Budget or 26/27, reporting that at the March '26 Schools Forum meeting, the Growth Fund Budget was agreed upon.<br><br>6.2 It is important to consider what future years of the growth fund will look like, emphasised by the details shown in Table 3 as the amount has gone from an allocated £2,378,000 in 22/23 to £790,178 in 25/26. There is a need to note the potential matters arising as outlined under section 5.3 [A] to [C].<br><br>6.3 The Chair summarised a discussion that took place at the pre meet. Historically, the Growth Fund allowed us to fund/assist areas of growth and areas where support is needed, as shown in Table 4, such as KS4 Pupils in Alternative Provisions or new arrival in Year 11.<br><br>6.4 The Chair added that there is likely to be another reduction to growth fund in future years. Therefore, it was discussed how we may be able to fund specific areas of education that we had traditionally funded from the growth fund pot.<br><br>6.5 Due to the knock-on effects of falling funding, many members of the forum expressed a need to find a way of funding the AP Specialist Task Force in the future. GL emphasised that there is no more *DfE* AP Specialist Task Force and it was a one off payment so it can no longer be used within this budget. There is now the SVC Task Force, operating out of Saffron Valley.<br><br>**Q6:** MD: Is Croydon Town School the annexe based at Oasis Arena?<br>**A6:** SD: There are a number of Croydon Town School sites such as that at Oasis, Croydon College and John Ruskin.<br><br>6.6 The recommendations were noted from [A] to [D] (noting that these projects are secondary school projects.)<br><br>6.7 Further discussion took place relating to recommendation E, deciding that a meeting of all secondary school headteachers needs to take place in order for all those key players to assist in creating a system that works for all affected pupils. There is a possibility for a period of consultation to take place alongside a meeting.<br><br>6.8 It was noted that further information with a clear rationale is required to come up with a fully fledged process. | |

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| | 6.9 AA asked for a 'steer' on whether a consultation would be needed as part of the formula process for funding from April 2027 and the Chair confirmed that this would probably be necessary. If secondary schools valued the projects presently paid for from growth fund these could be funded from:<br>a) A disapplication request, from secondary schools only, to fund the projects or …<br>b) The moving of these projects onto an invoicing model where places were paid for by individual schools<br><br>6.10 Heads of secondary should be consulted about options a) or b) but ultimately it was up to the LA to propose a disapplication request to Forum if it felt this was the best way forward | |
| **7.** | **Central Schools Services Block Budget 26/27** | **AA** |
| | 7.1 AA presented a paper on how the CSSB has been spent and a potential proposal for its future spend.<br><br>7.2 Table 1 provided members of Forum with a breakdown of the CSSB allocation and budget with a comparison to 25/26. As outlined in the paper, 2.5 to 2.8 noted important elements relating to set lines of the table. For example, lines 4-9 of the table are on-going costs and so it was proposed to leave these as they currently stand.<br><br>7.3 Under 3.1, it looked at the end of the Safety Valve programme and the implications this will have on the allocation of the CSSB and the overall budget of it.<br><br>7.4 Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 were all noted by members of Schools Forum. | |
| **8.** | **Thoughts on School Funding 27/28** | **AA** |
| | 8.1 Paper was not found in the pack and has therefore been deferred to the next meeting, which will be in October. | |
| **9.** | **Distribution of Budgets for All Mainstream Schools** | **AA** |
| | 9.1 AA provided a spreadsheet for the distribution of budgets across all mainstream schools in the LA, as all the information provided in this spreadsheet is now in the public domain. | |
| **10.** | **Working Group Updates** | **TS/TM/ FR** |
| | 10.1 Updates were received from the working groups as followed: | |

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| | **a) Early Years –** No meeting took place.<br><br>**b) Schools Block** – No meeting took place<br><br>**High Needs** – Working group met, but there was a lack of attendance from officer and members. FR requested feedback on the therapies and that PP attend the next working group if possible for additional SEND related information | |
| **11.** | **AOB** | **ALL** |
| | After having been a part of Schools Forum since 2008, the meeting was TS' last. Thanks and appreciation was voiced by the Chair, Forum members and the LA for TS' continued support, presence and extensive knowledge both current and historically. | |

Meeting Adjourned: 11:30am
Date of next meeting: Monday 19th October '26
(Date to be revised due to Half Term dates of members
TBC: F10, Croydon Town Hall