Schools' Block Subgroup

10/11/2026 via Microsoft Teams

In attendance

Tyrone Myton (TM) Chair	Principal, Shirley Performing Arts College
Shelley Davies (SD)	Director of Education
Abioye Asimolowo (AA)	Finance Manager
Chris Andrew (CA)	Headteacher - St James the Great Primary School
Patrick Shield (PS)	Headteacher - St Mary's Catholic High School
Andy Moore (AM)	Principal Accountant
Dan Bowden (DB)	Headteacher - Greenvale Primary School

Agenda

No.	Item	Lead
1	**Apologies and Welcome / Introductions**	**TM**
	TM welcomed the group and noted that the session had been deferred from the preceding day to ensure all working group members had a sufficient window to fully cross-examine and evaluate the financial papers prior to formal analysis. **Apologies received**: Markie Hayden (MH), Clare Cranham (CC), Jenny Bartlett (JB).	
2	**Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Forecast Outturn & Reformatting Framework**	**AA**
	AA presented the update based on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Forecast Outturn for the 2026/27 financial cycle, confirming regular compliance tracking reporting streams for the Schools Forum. **Key Fiscal Projections:** Estimated in-year DSG overspend: Approx. £45 million, primarily isolated within the High Needs Block budget. Historical baseline deficit: £57 million brought forward from the close of the 2025/26 ledger cycle. Combined overall deficit risk footprint tracking at nearly £102 million in aggregate variance fields. **Ledger Restructuring Debate:** TM opened a structural review on Table 3 ('Overall DSG Reserve Position') and Appendix A. Highlighting that matching a six-month statement from September 2026 (showing actual spent cash of £84 million drawn from the ledger) directly against a total full-year forecast line (£138 million) creates an analytical imbalance that impedes long-term visibility. Specifically, as follows: - Data Filtering – remove the historical 2025/26 outturn cash columns to eliminate background ledger data. - Visual Alignment - Shift the current baseline funding allocation line (£93 million) to sit cleanly beneath the full-year forecast row (£138 million), clearly highlighting the exact £45 million deficit gap.	

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	- Trend Tracking - Insert a dedicated year-on-year percentage growth tracking column (e.g., demonstrating that Special Schools are spending 14% more than the prior cycle) to instantly highlight expanding cost streams. AA agreed with the format changes, noting that while standard column parameters exist to maintain consistent baseline cycle comparison fields, separating unique High Needs operational spikes from general DSG reserve accounts protects tracking sessions from getting diluted.	
3	**DfE Safety Valve Status & School Inclusion Deficits**	**SD**
	SD delivered a status update regarding ongoing national government intervention frameworks. The Department for Education (DfE) has formally approved Croydon's Local Area SEND Reform Plan. This acceptance officially triggers the DfE Safety Valve mechanism, where central government will step in to clear 90% of the accumulated historical educational deficit. **Performance Conditionality:** SD emphasised that this funding is explicitly not a blank cheque, the debt relief releases are performance-conditional and tied to meeting rigid local tracking benchmarks. **LGA Peer Review & Inclusion Crisis Context:** SD highlighted an acute systemic issue raised by an independent peer review, which concluded that mainstream schools across the London Borough of Croydon are fundamentally not inclusive enough. Mainstream facilities are regularly refusing to manage or retain high-needs pupils while their Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) are undergoing active processing. This running counter to national inclusion targets creates massive downstream financial penalties for the local authority. When mainstream placements fail, the council is backed into a legal corner and forced to clear emergency funds for expensive independent placements, legal appeals, and private home-tuition setups. **Mitigations Framework:** The local authority is responding through the Local SEND Reform Plan. The core strategy focuses on establishing Enhanced Learning Provisions (ELPs) within mainstream environments to build classroom capacity and lessen reliance on independent specialist schools. Work is also ongoing to establish specialized special school annexes inside mainstream frameworks. SD concluded by imploring schools to work more collaboratively with the Local Authority and it's wider financial system; stabilsing the High Needs budget requires a shared, borough-wide standard of inclusion. **Offer for a Separate Meeting**: SD emphasised that stabilising the High Needs budget requires shared responsibility across all mainstream schools, trusts, health, and care partners. Recognising that subgroup members are already engaged, SD explicitly offered to sit down with the group in a separate, dedicated meeting to examine the systemic challenges and inclusion data in greater detail.	
4	**Next Steps & Spreadsheet Data Redaction**	**ALL**
	Panel representatives requested access to the live master tracking spreadsheet monitoring placement updates. SD stated unable to distribute an unredacted tracking file, explaining that early-stage school-specific placement discussions are active. Releasing named metrics prematurely would violate legal confidentiality fields and expose the council to severe criticism if specific packages collapsed before completion. SD committed to compiling a fully anonymised version of the spreadsheet metrics and bringing it directly to the upcoming scheduled session on Monday for closed-panel analysis.	

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AGREED ACTIONS:

Action Item	Owner	Target Date
Reformat Table 3 Ledger sheets (strip 2025/26 outturn columns, realign allocation lines, and insert year-on-year percentage growth metrics)	Abioye Asimolowo	November 2026
Extract, redact, and anonymise live master placement negotiation spreadsheet parameters to preserve confidentiality and deliver the newly compiled anonymised placement ledger sheet directly to the Monday meeting for closed-panel review	Shelley Davies	November 2026
Continue structural financial modelling on expanding mainstream top-up allocations and Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) funding packages	Finance Team / AA	Next budget cycle
Schedule Dedicated Inclusion Session: Arrange a separate round-table meeting with subgroup members to review High Needs pressures, inclusion challenges, and shared system responsibilities in detail.	Shelley Davies	TBC

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