



Derby City Council

**Schools Forum**  
**Tuesday 21 October 2025**  
**4.30pm – 6pm**  
**Microsoft Teams**

Present		
Mike Pride (Chair) (MP)		Maintained Special
David Blackwell (DB)		Primary Academy
Janet Bowlzer (JB)		Accountant, DCC
Sharon Buckby (SB)		Director for Learning, Inclusion and Skills, DCC
Aaron Denton (AD)		Post 16 rep, Derby College
Ian Dewes (ID)		Primary Academy
Cheryl Fearn (CF)		Union Representative
Jonathan Gallimore (JG)		Harwick Primary Academy
Janice Hadfield (JH)		Head of Finance, DCC
Sara Warren (SW)		School Operations Manager
Pete Cade (PC)		Chair Governors Derby
Ashley Guest (AG)		Maintained Primaries
David Boulter (DB)		Union rep (on behalf of Kieran Picken)
Apologies		
Charlotte Brett (CB)		PVI Representative
Karen Haynes (KH)		Esteem Multiagency-Trust
Kieran Picken		Union Rep
Phil Smith		Chellaston Academy
Notes		
Laura Marshall (LM)		
No.	Item	Actions
01/25	Minutes of the previous meeting	
	<p>SW has taken up the role of being part of the DfE Support Staff Reference Group that will provide feedback to the DfE and Government ministers from a Support Staff point of view on education policy, the potential impact of policies on schools, including any barriers to implementation. All attendees agreed there is no conflict between this new role and her position as a representative on the Schools Forum.</p> <p>The notes from the meeting held on 1 July 2025 were reviewed. Amendments and actions were discussed, and the minutes were approved as an accurate record.</p> <p>ID referred to the item on ELF funding, which had been marked as closed in the previous meeting notes. ID confirmed that this matter remains ongoing and is awaiting resolution. SB will follow up with ID outside the meeting.</p> <p>DB and MJ reported continued issues with the transition portal. DB and JG will liaise with CB to progress this matter - item will be carried forward to the next meeting.</p>	<p>SB/ID</p> <p>DB/JG/CB</p>



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02/25	<b>Quarter 2 Forecast</b>	
	<p>Report attached for information and discussion. JH provided an update.</p> <p>The report gives the accounting on the 2025/6 financial forecasting position to the end of the financial year March 2026.</p> <p>Page 1 – There are 3 main recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To note the quarter 2 financial position of the DSG showing an in year unmitigated deficit of £7.795m.</li> <li>• To note the implications for the 2025-26 DSG reserve in section 4.0 which is predicting a cumulative DSG deficit position of £23.984m.</li> <li>• To note the requirement of the Deficit Management Recovery Plan in section 5.0.</li> </ul> <p>Page 2 – The 2025/26 allocation for the DCG is £373.73 million and is made up of 4 blocks of funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools Block</li> <li>• Central School Services Block</li> <li>• High Needs Block</li> <li>• Early Years Block</li> </ul> <p>Page 3 - The schools block is reporting a small underspend of 100K due to a reduction in the forecast growth fund, this is due to the number on roll not materialising in the secondary phase as predicted in the budget.</p> <p>The central block is reporting a balanced position.</p> <p>Early Years is initially reporting a balance position with no change from the previous quarter for the 2025-26 financial year. The clawback for 2024-25 has been actioned by the Dfe and is included in the in-year forecast.</p> <p>For 3 &amp; 4-year-olds PTE's figures are consistent with previous years. For the existing 2-year-old funding which are known as flying start, reporting is showing a reduction in the number of take up across Derby, which could affect funding and result in a clawback of funds.</p> <p>Page 6 - Working parents of 2-year-olds remains consistent as predicted in the budget.</p> <p>Page 7 - The clawback for 2024/25 of 241K this was due to the increase/decrease in part time equivalent on the January 25 census this is lower than previously reported but as expected once the data was made available:</p>	

MP raised concerns about the low uptake of places for children under two years old and the potential impact this may have when those children reach school age.

SB acknowledged that reduced participation can affect the time required to achieve a GLD. Further investigation into the data is needed, and this should be considered within future modelling. This issue forms a key focus of the Early Years Strategy, particularly within the 0–7 curriculum. SB, David, and Neil are currently reviewing outcomes as part of this work, with an emphasis on supporting transitions and implementing catch-up interventions.

JG asked whether funding for under-twos is targeted to specific areas of the city or allocated universally. SB confirmed that funding is currently universal but recognised the need for more targeted work in certain areas. The Early Years stakeholder groups are exploring this further, and additional work within local clusters is planned.

JG highlighted ongoing issues affecting two-year-olds, noting that the number of PVI settings has declined since Covid. SB confirmed that there is currently a 25% non-take-up rate, which is having a knock-on effect on achieving a GLD.

SB emphasised the importance of encouraging children to remain within local provision, in line with national policy. Her current focus is on the independent, non-maintained sector. She noted the need to set more realistic targets, as overall numbers are decreasing. The aim is to redirect funding as demand reduces, which could help address the deficit. However, this remains a challenge, as numbers have not yet fallen as anticipated and are not forecast to do so in the immediate future.

MP asked whether the number of pupils transitioning during phase transfers has been factored into the projections for the next two quarters. SB confirmed that these figures have been included, although outcomes depend heavily on tribunal decisions, which remain a significant challenge. SB noted that the last three tribunal cases were successful; however, overall success rates are typically around 50%.

MP observed that many tribunal cases are linked to capital investment issues, such as delays in building readiness. SB confirmed that, during the last summer period, 12 young people aged 11–12 transitioned out of the independent sector.

PC asked how many pupils moved into primary, secondary mainstream, or special settings. SB confirmed that approximately 60% transitioned into special schools and 30% into mainstream provision. She noted that attendance remains a key issue within the independent sector and that current in-year progress measures are not sufficiently robust.

	<p>SW asked whether there is a timeline for repaying cost savings. JH confirmed that there is no specific repayment timeline; however, the local authority is working towards achieving a balanced budget. While full recovery is unlikely, the aim is to align financial performance with that of statistical neighbours.</p> <p>ID commented that the recent tribunal outcomes were positive but asked whether the revised banding arrangements would have an immediate impact on schools.</p> <p>SB explained that the local authority intends to provide reassurance to schools and alleviate any concerns. She acknowledged existing tensions within the system, particularly between SEND funding and deprivation factors. There are no immediate plans to reduce current funding; instead, any changes will apply only to new plans. The implementation will be phased and is expected to take time.</p> <p>Specialist Teaching Provision - There is a need to close the current loop in the process, after which the Opportunity Panel will review the available information. SB confirmed that there are new plans in place, alongside older plans that still need to be implemented</p>	
<b>03/25</b>	<b>Scheme for funding school's update</b>	
	<p>A report was attached to the agenda for information and discussion. JH provided an update, explaining that each local authority is required to maintain a Scheme for Funding Schools in accordance with the School Standards and Framework Act. The report outlined the proposed amendments, specifically those detailed in Sections 6.2 and 10.3.</p> <p>All attendees agreed to approve the proposed changes. JH to implement the amendments and upload the revised document to the DDC website</p>	<b>JH</b>
<b>04/25</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
	<p>JH noted that at the next meeting she will be presenting the De-delegation report, which will require formal approval from the Board. Attendance from members is therefore essential, as voting will be required</p>	<b>ALL</b>

**Date of next meeting**

11 December 2025

12 February 2026

7 July 2026