

ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM

Date and Time:- Friday 5 December 2025 at 8.30 a.m.

Venue:- Rockingham Professional Development Centre,
Roughwood Road, Rotherham. S61 4HY

The items which will be discussed are described on the agenda below and there are reports attached which give more details.

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Introductions

Welcome by the Chair and introductions by all Forum Members present.

2. Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies from any Forum Member who are unable to attend the meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

To invite Forum Members to declare any interests they may have on agenda items to be considered at this meeting, to confirm the nature of those interests and whether they intend to leave the meeting for the consideration of the item.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 11)

To receive and approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12th September, 2025.

5. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

To consider and report on any matters arising from the previous minutes.

6. Membership and Constitution of the Rotherham Schools Forum (Standing Item)

To consider any updates or amendments to the membership of the Schools Forum.

7. School Funding Formula Consultation 2026/27 - Part A (Pages 13 - 19)

Report from the Principal Finance Officer (CYPS).

Recommendation:

1. That the Schools Forum note the contents of the report.

8. School Funding Formula Consultation 2026/27 - Part B (Pages 21 - 59)

Report from the Head of Finance (CYPS).

Recommendations:

That Schools Forum:

1. Note the outcomes of the recent consultation with schools regarding the proposed transfer of funding to the High Needs Block.
2. Approve the Council's proposal to transfer 0.5% of the Schools Block funding in 2026/27 to the High Needs Block to help address ongoing cost pressures.

9. Falling Rolls Fund Policy (Pages 61 - 63)

Report from the Principal Finance Officer (CYPS).

Recommendations:

That Schools Forum:

1. Notes the DfE guidance on Falling Rolls.
2. Approves the adoption of the proposed Falling Rolls Policy for Rotherham.

10. Early Years and Wraparound Expansion Update (Pages 65 - 68)

Report from the Head of Service, Early Years and Childcare.

Recommendation:

1. That Schools Forum note and approve the content of the report.

11. Safeguarding in Schools (Pages 69 - 71)

Report from the Head of Service, Education and Education Safeguarding Lead

Recommendation:

1. That Schools Forum receive and note the content of the report.

12. Schools Forum Forward Plan (Pages 73 - 74)

To consider the attached Forward Plan of agenda items and receive any updates.

13. Any Other Business

To receive any other items of urgent business.

**The next meeting of the Rotherham Schools Forum will
be held on Friday 16 January 2026
commencing at 8.30 a.m.
in Rockingham Professional Development Centre.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Edwards', with a stylized, cursive script.

John Edwards,
Chief Executive.

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**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Present:-

Mark Windle – Badsley Primary (Primary Maintained) (in the Chair)
John Barnett – Thorogate Junior and Infant (Primary Maintained)
Carol Brookes – Wales High School (Academy)
Lynsey Hadfield - Executive Head, Arnold Nursery (Maintained)
Paul Higginbottom – Swinton Queen Primary (Academy)
David Horrigan – Maltby Learning Trust (Primary Academy)
Lee Morritt – Rotherham Aspire (PRU)
Sacha Schofield –Governor Representative (Special School Academy)
Steve Scott – Happy Kids (PVI Nursery)
Karen Smith - Nexus MAT (Special Academy)
Nevine Towers - Head of Business and Operations (Primary Academy)
Joel Wirth – Principal TRC and Deputy CEO Inspire Trust (Secondary Academy)

Joshua Amahwe – Head of Finance (CYPS)
Niall Devlin – Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion
Cary-Anne Sykes – Head of Service (SEND)
Sarah Whitby – Head of Service (Access to Education)

Observers:

Sarah Philips – Blackburn Primary School Governor
Colin Price – NEU Representative

Apologies were received from:-

Simon Currie – School Governor Representative (Primary Maintained)
Dr Sipra Deb – Wickesley Nursery (PVI Nursery)
Mehdi Najefi - School Governor Representative (Primary Maintained)
Mark Ryan – RNN Group

12. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to today's meeting and introductions were made.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

14. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on Friday 13th June 2025.

Resolved:

- That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2025 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

15. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Further to Minute No. 7 of the Schools Forum meeting held on 13 June 2025, the Head of Finance (CYPS) clarified the operational differences in insurance provisions in response to a query regarding notice periods.

16. MEMBERSHIP AND CONSTITUTION OF THE ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS FORUM (STANDING ITEM)

Consideration was given to the membership and constitution of the Schools' Forum and suggested changes were put forward for the Forum's approval.

Resolved:

- That the appointment of Joel Wirth as a Secondary Academy representative, replacing Chris Eccles, be agreed.
- That the appointment of Sarah Phillips as a Primary School Governor representative for a term of three years be agreed.
- That the renewal of Colin Price's term of office as a Trades Union representative for a further three-year period be agreed.
- That the appointment of Karen Houghton as a substitute attendee for Colin Price, Trades Union representative be agreed.
- That the removal of Sharon Stones as the substitute representative for Maintained Nursery Schools be noted.
- That formal thanks be recorded to the outgoing Schools Forum Members, Chris Eccles and Sharon Stones, in recognition of their valued service and contribution to the Schools Forum.

17. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT / SCHOOLS BUDGET UPDATE 2025/26

The Head of Finance (CYPS) presented a report on the latest monitoring position of the Local Authority maintained schools' budgets and centrally retained Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budgets for 2025/26, and commented on the following:

- The latest confirmed DSG funding allocation which had remained broadly unchanged from the position reported to Forum on 13 June

2025, with only a small reduction highlighted due to the academisation of a maintained primary school.

- The positive movement in both the Early Years and High Needs block funding allocations and the factors that had contributed to those adjustments.
- The latest forecasted position across all centrally retained DSG budgets.
- The centrally retained Schools Block, the Central Schools Services Block and the Early Years Block budgets which were all currently forecasting a balanced budget position.
- The forecasted deficit position for the High Needs Block budgets and the factors that were attributable to this.
- The anticipated deficit position in the DSG reserves in 2025/26 which differed from the balanced position assumed in the Safety Valve Agreement.
- The Government's extension of statutory deficit protections to March 2028, which would provide the Council with additional flexibility to carry forward the 2025/26 year end projected deficit.
- The ongoing work taking place with the DfE to develop a new 5-year financial plan and the increasingly challenging financial outlook.
- The latest forecasted position of the 24 local authority maintained delegated school budgets which indicated a reduction in surplus balances compared to the 2024/25 final outturn position.
- The latest position of those schools operating with licensed deficits which continued to be closely monitored.

Resolved:

- **That the Schools Forum notes the latest DSG funding for schools for the 2025/26 financial year.**
- **That the Schools Forum notes the forecast positions of Rotherham's maintained schools and the centrally retained DSG budgets for the year.**

18. SCHOOLS BUDGET PLANNING & FUNDING 2026-27

The Head of Finance (CYPS) presented a report outlining the schools budget planning and funding arrangements for the financial year 2026/27. The report focused on the Schools Funding Block, the funding formula for determining individual school budgets, and the proposed distribution of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding within the Schools Block.

Budgets for maintained schools in 2026/27 would consist of funding from Core school funding, Pupil Premium Grant and other grant funding. There were no significant changes expected to the funding framework for schools and core funding would continue to be allocated using the National Funding Formula (NFF).

Rotherham's local funding formula had been progressively aligned with the NFF. The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) continued to apply, with the Department for Education (DfE) expected to confirm recommended protection levels when the NFF allocations were published.

Reference was made to the Schools Budget Support Grant and National Insurance Contributions Grant, both of which would be rolled into the NFF from 2026/27. Those grants would no longer be issued separately and would therefore affect the core budgets that maintained schools would receive from April 2026.

Local authorities remained permitted to transfer funding between DSG blocks and Rotherham's proposals for a block transfer in 2026/27 would be included in the planned Autumn consultation with schools.

Attention was drawn to the expected timeline for the schools budget planning process which was outlined in Section 9 of the circulated report.

Resolved:

- **That the Schools Forum notes the proposed funding framework and structure of Rotherham's local funding formulae for 2026-27.**
- **That the Schools Forum notes the schools budget planning key dates for determining the schools block funding for 2026-27.**

19. EXCLUSION AND SUSPENSIONS ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a briefing presented by the Head of Service (Access to Education), which provided an overview of local data relating to permanent exclusions and suspensions for secondary and primary settings during the academic year 2024-25.

For all schools, permanent exclusions overall showed a 10.6% reduction for the academic year 2024/25 compared to the previous year's position. Higher numbers of permanent exclusions were observed during the Autumn term, prompting an increase in transitional support.

The highest number of permanent exclusions occurred in Key Stage 3, with a significant proportion involving pupils with SEND needs and those eligible for Free School Meals.

Suspensions increased across all school phases from 2020/21 and continued to rise slowly in 2024/25. This trend was not consistent across all schools, with a notable rise in primary suspensions.

Attention was drawn to several key actions and timelines outlined in Section 3 of the circulated report.

Forum members suggested that future reports included data which

tracked suspensions that led to permanent exclusions, alongside any linkages to reduced timetables.

A breakdown of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 suspensions would be shared in briefings for primary and secondary Head Teachers and further engagement with Primary Leaders would be offered to enhance support at primary level.

Resolved:

That Schools Forum note the content of the briefing.

20. PART TIME TIMETABLES ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a briefing paper presented by the Head of Service (Access to Education), which provided context and understanding of the use and prevalence of Part Time Timetables across Rotherham settings.

Data on the use of part-time timetables was collected from schools using Trade Rotherham with the vast majority of part-time timetables being put in place to support emotionally based school avoidance.

Reported data for 2024–25 highlighted that 45% of pupils on a part-time timetable were also supported by an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Inclusion events were due to be delivered throughout 2025/26 as one-hour monthly online briefings, focused on specific topics and designed to be accessible for a wide range of participants. Recordings of sessions would also be made available to support wider engagement.

Various comments were raised by Members of the Forum which reflected on what confidence the Local Authority had that schools were reporting the use of part time timetables, the consistency of application across settings and the need for local guidance for schools to be produced.

Resolved:

That Schools Forum note the content of the briefing.

21. EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLANS (EHCPs) ANNUAL UPDATE

Consideration was given to an annual update on Rotherham's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) profile, presented by the Head of Service (SEND).

The paper highlighted that the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) had followed a consistent upward trajectory over the past

two years, with 3,909 active plans now recorded in Rotherham . A large proportion of those plans related to communication and interaction needs and work was underway to strengthen the graduated approach within schools, supported by cross team collaboration.

The paper also referenced the significant Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs cohort, emphasising the importance of enhanced mental health provision, pastoral support, and trauma-informed approaches within schools. To address this, a fully comprehensive training offer was under development, with a clear timetable of free support to be made available to schools.

There was a pronounced concentration of EHCPs among the 13-15 year old age range, which was likely to correspond to the transition phase from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. An increasing number of requests were starting to emerge in Years 4 and 5 along with an increase in early years and post 16 referrals. Analysis was underway to understand the reasons behind those trends.

A SEND workforce plan was being developed to ensure adequate support for young people, with a focus on targeted engagement.

The number of requests progressing to assessment had increased annually, reflecting rising demand and a greater proportion meeting the statutory threshold. It was acknowledged that schools continued to face challenges when EHCPs were not issued, and efforts to strengthen the graduated response approach through engagement with schools and SENCOs remained ongoing.

Parental requests for EHCPs were increasing for a variety of reasons and support for parent understanding was being addressed through dialogue at parent/carers forums.

Strong performance was reflected in initial assessments and phase transfers whilst areas for improvement were highlighted in annual review scheduling and timely completion of amended plans.

Forum Members raised concerns about the tensions created within the system when decisions were taken to not proceed with a referral. It was recognised that current feedback mechanisms were lacking, and while the team were exploring ways to improve this, time constraints remained a challenge.

Forum members also expressed concern about the level of awareness of existing protocols. Reference was made to the SEND Code of Practice and the importance of clearly setting out expectations with a piece of work planned to share this more widely.

It was noted that work had begun with the Parent Carer Forum to support parental understanding of the assessment process. To improve parental

access to information about specialist settings, the development of prospectuses and video profiles was also suggested.

Resolved:

That Schools Forum note the content of the briefing.

22. SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN

The current version of the Forward Plan was reviewed by the Forum. Members were invited to suggest any relevant issues they felt should form the basis of a future report.

Resolved:

- **That the Forward Plan be noted.**
- **That any additions to the Forward Plan be submitted to the Secretary of the Forum for consideration and inclusion.**

23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other urgent business items raised.

The Chair of the Forum concluded business and thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

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BRIEFING PAPER FOR SCHOOLS FORUM

1.	Date of meeting:	5th December 2025
2.	Title:	School Funding Formula 2026/27 - Consultation outcome
3.	Directorate:	Finance and Customer Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Schools Forum of the outcomes from Part A of the Schools Funding Formula consultation for 2026–27. It sets out the proposed changes to the funding formula, which will be used to determine individual school budgets. The finalised funding formula must be submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) by late January 2026.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 **That members of the Schools Forum note the contents of this report.**

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In line with DfE operational guidance, local authorities are required to consult with schools on proposed changes to the local funding formula, including the methods, principles, and rules to be applied. Final decisions on the local formula remain the responsibility of the local authority.
- 3.2 Unlike previous years, the Local Authority has been unable to provide detailed proposals for the Rotherham mainstream funding formula. This is due to delays in publishing the National Funding Formula (NFF) allocations and schools funding details following the spending reviews early in the year.
- 3.3 To assist local authorities with budget planning, the DfE published a summary policy note in August 2025. This note outlined the structure of the schools NFF for 2026–27, including the funding factors and values to be applied.
- 3.4 The structure of the Schools' NFF will remain largely unchanged in 2026-27. However, the DfE has confirmed that the schools budget support grant (SBSG) and the National Insurance Contributions (NIC) grant will be rolled into the NFF for 2026-2027 using a similar approach to previous grants.

4. CONSULTATION OUTCOME

- 4.1 A consultation exercise was carried out in November 2025 to gather views on proposed changes to Rotherham's local formula and on the proposal to transfer funding from the schools' block to the high needs block. (This is covered in the Schools Funding Formula Consultation Paper 2026–27 – Part B).

4.2 The following steps were undertaken as part of the consultation with schools;

- The consultation document was issued via email on 11 November 2025 to all mainstream schools and academies.
- The consultation closed on Friday, 21 November 2025
- Responses have been analysed and are presented in this report.

4.3 A total of 49 academy schools from 8 separate trusts and 6 maintained schools responded to the consultation. This consisted of 43 primary, 11 secondary and 1 all through school. Responses from Multi Academy Trusts (MAT) have been disaggregated to reflect the number of schools within the Trust (e.g A MAT with 6 schools is counted as 6 responses). See summary position in the table below:

	Maintained Schools	Academies	Total
Primary	6	37	43
Secondary	-	11	11
All-Through	-	1	1
Total school responses	6	49	55
Total nos. of schools	16	97	113
Response Rate (%)	38%	51%	49%

4.4 The following summarises schools' responses to the proposed changes to Rotherham's local funding formula as detailed in the consultation paper as well as the Council's proposed intention for 2026/27.

Formula Funding Factors

4.5 The consultation detailed the various funding factors and values currently included in Rotherham's local funding formula, comprised of the Basic Entitlement, Additional Needs (e.g. deprivation, mobility, low attainment, and English as an Additional Language), and the Schools-led Factors (e.g. lump sum, premises, etc).

4.6 Rotherham's existing local funding formula already closely mirrors the NFF and will continue to allow factor values for 2026/27 to be set within a range of +/- 2.5% of the NFF values.

Question 1: Do you support the continued inclusion of the above funding factors in Rotherham's 2026/27 schools funding formula and the intention to mirror, or align as closely as possible, to the National Funding Formula (NFF) values?

4.7 The following summarises the outcome of schools' responses to the above proposal:

Consultation outcome	Yes	No	Total
Primary	43	-	43
Secondary	11	-	11
All-Through	1	-	1
Total responses	55	0	55
Response Rate (%)	100%	0%	100%

- 4.8 All 55 schools (100%) that responded to the consultation were supportive of the proposal to continue to reflect all existing funding factors in the local funding formula for 2026/27 and the intention to mirror or align as closely as possible to the NFF.

RMBC's Response:

- 4.9 The following outline the Council's proposed position for 2026/27, in light of the responses from schools.

- **Basic Entitlement:** - Rotherham proposes, as a minimum, to maintain funding within the permissible range, aligning as closely as possible to the National Funding Formula (NFF). Where the funding allocation allows, the aim will be to move fully to NFF rates.
- **Deprivation:** - Consistent with previous years, Rotherham proposes to continue allocating funding for deprivation through its local formula at levels broadly aligned with the NFF. In particular, for the Primary and Secondary FSM6 factors—where current values differ from the NFF—it is proposed to increase these factor values to bring them much closer to NFF levels.
- **Other Additional Needs** (Mobility; Low Attainment; EAL): - Rotherham is currently aligned with the NFF across these funding factors, and the proposal is to maintain this alignment for 2026/27.
- **Lump Sum:** - This factor provides a standard allocation to all schools, regardless of size or pupil numbers. In 2025/26, Rotherham's local formula 'mirrored' the National Funding Formula (NFF), i.e. it is within +/- 2.5% of the NFF. The proposal is to maintain this approach for 2026/27.
- **Premises factors** (business rates and PFI): - these factors allocate funding to schools to cover actual cost incurred in the year or to cover additional unavoidable PFI contract cost. An inflationary uplift would be applied to the PFI factor consistent with the NFF.
- **Split Site:** - for 2026/27 it is proposed to include a split site factor in Rotherham's local funding formula. This would provide funding to schools that operate from a number of sites separate from the main site.
- **Sparsity:** - this factor is mandatory and would remain in Rotherham's local funding formula for 2026/27 even though there are no qualifying schools eligible under this factor.

Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)

- 4.10 The MFG is a national requirement to protect schools from significant reductions in per-pupil funding between years. It is set by local authorities within a range determined by the government. At the time of consultation, the MFG arrangements for 2026/27 had not been published, it was assumed that the allowable range would remain similar to 2025/26 at minus 0.5% to 0% per pupil compared to the previous year's funding.
- 4.11 For 2025/26, Rotherham applied an MFG of 0.0% (maximum protection allowable). Consistent with the principle of keeping Rotherham's local funding formula as close to the NFF as possible, it is proposed to continue with the approach in 2025/26 and implement an MFG of 0.0% for 2026/27

Question 2: Do you support the proposal to set the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) within the local funding formula at 0% for 2026-27 (in line with the maximum protection allowed by DfE)?

- 4.12 The following summarises the outcome of schools' responses to the above proposal:

Consultation outcome	Yes	No	Total
Primary	43	-	43
Secondary	11	-	11
All-Through	1	-	1
Total responses	55	0	55
Response Rate (%)	100%	0%	100%

- 4.13 All 55 schools (100%) that responded to the consultation were supportive of the proposal to set the MFG at 0% for 2026/27 in line with the maximum protection allowed by DfE.

RMBC's Response:

- 4.14 On 19 November 2025, the DfE published a policy note confirming that local authorities have the freedom to set the MFG in their local formula between minus 0.5% and 0% per pupil. Consistent with last year, Rotherham proposes to set the MFG in the funding formula at 0% for 2026/27 – which is the maximum protection allowed by DfE.

Capping & Scaling

- 4.15 Local Authorities are allowed through their local funding formulae to cap overall gains for individual schools as well as scale back funding gains of schools to ensure that local formulae are affordable.

- 4.16 Capping and scaling must be applied, through the funding formula, on the same basis to all schools. It ensures that funding amounts are distributed more evenly across all schools and do not create an imbalance in the system. It also ensures that the amounts allocated through the funding factors are affordable and within the overall funding envelope for the schools block.

Question 3: Do you support the continued use of capping and scaling in Rotherham's 2026/27 schools funding formula to ensure fairness in resource distribution and overall affordability of the funding formula?

- 4.17 The following summarises the outcome of schools' responses to the above proposal:

Consultation outcome	Yes	No	Total
Primary	34	9	43
Secondary	11	-	11
All-Through	1	-	1
Total responses	46	9	55
Response Rate (%)	84%	16%	100%

- 4.18 Of the 55 schools that responded to the consultation, 46 schools (84%) are supportive of the continued use of capping and scaling within the funding formula, whilst 9 schools (16%) are against the proposal. No additional comments were provided by schools in the response that explains the reasoning behind why some schools are opposed to this proposal.

RMBC's Response:

- 4.19 It is the intention of the Council to use capping and scaling within the 2026/27 schools funding formula to ensure both fairness in resource distribution and overall affordability. However, this would be dependent *on the overall DSG settlement which will be announced later in December 2025*. It is important to note that any adjustments made through the use of capping and scaling will not result in any school receiving less than the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) or the Minimum Per Pupil Level (MPPL) set by the Department for Education (DfE)

Pupil Growth

- 4.20 The Council operates a Growth Fund, which provides funding and support to schools that have agreed to create additional places—such as adding bulge classes or increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN)—to meet basic need in the area. The Pupil Growth Policy, agreed by the Schools Forum, sets out the funding criteria and calculation method.
- 4.21 It is proposed to continue with a Growth Fund by deducting an agreed amount (£100,000) from the Schools Block funding based on projected additional places and commitments agreed with specific schools.

Question 4: Do you support the proposal to deduct £100,000 from the 2026/27 Schools Block to establish a Growth Fund, which will be used to support schools providing additional places to meet basic need? This represents a £50,000 reduction compared to 2025/26.

- 4.22 The following summarises the outcome of schools' responses to the above proposal:

Consultation outcome	Yes	No	Total
Primary	34	9	43
Secondary	11	-	11
All-Through	1	-	1
Total responses	46	9	55
Response Rate (%)	84%	16%	100%

- 4.23 Of the 55 schools that responded to the consultation, 46 schools (84%) are supportive of the proposal to continue to operate a Pupil Growth Fund and for £100,000 to be deducted from the school block funding. It should be noted that 9 schools (16%) are against the proposal.

RMBC's Response:

- 4.24 The Growth Fund provides revenue funding to schools and academies to cover the additional costs associated with increased class sizes and the creation of additional school places to meet rising demand. The DfE includes growth funding within the schools block allocation for this purpose.
- 4.25 In line with this, the Council intends to continue operating a Growth Fund in accordance with the policy previously agreed by the Schools Forum. It is proposed that £100,000 be deducted from the schools block funding and managed outside the local funding formula. Allocations made to schools under this policy will be reported to the Schools Forum. Any underspend will be retained within the DSG reserve and made available for use in the following financial year.

Falling Pupil Rolls Fund

- 4.26 Local authorities have discretion over whether to operate a falling rolls fund. This fund will be used to support specific schools that meet the eligibility criteria of the LA's policy for Falling Rolls to provide time limited funding to ensure that schools with temporary surplus capacity can continue to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum whilst maintaining financial viability.

Question 5: Do you agree that the Local Authority should continue to provide for a falling rolls fund of £50,000 to schools with surplus capacity from falling pupil numbers – to be deducted from the schools block funding?

- 4.27 The following summarises the outcome of schools' responses to the above proposal:

Consultation outcome	Yes	No	Total
Primary	34	9	43
Secondary	11	-	11
All-Through	1	-	1
Total responses	46	9	55
Response Rate (%)	84%	16%	100%

- 4.28 Of the 55 schools that responded to the consultation, 46 schools (84%) are supportive of the proposal to continue to operate a falling pupil roll fund of £50,000 to be deduct from the school block funding. It should be noted that 9 schools (16%) are against the proposal.

RMBC's Response:

- 4.19 Projections based on birth rates indicate that pupil numbers across the borough are expected to continue declining and are unlikely to recover until the end of the decade. It is essential that the Local Authority (LA) supports schools in managing any surplus capacity that may result from this trend. To achieve this, the LA will continue to operate a Falling Rolls Fund by deducting £50,000 from the schools block allocation. Funding allocations to schools will be made in accordance with the Falling Rolls Fund Policy previously agreed by the Schools Forum.

5. Name and contact details

Louise Keith
Principal Finance Officer (Schools Finance)
Tel: 01709 822042
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BRIEFING PAPER FOR SCHOOLS FORUM

1.	Date of meeting:	5 December 2025
2.	Title:	School Funding Formula 2026/27 Consultation outcome – Part B (School funding transfer to high needs)
3.	Directorate:	Finance and Customer Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Schools Forum of the responses received to Part B of the Schools Funding Formula consultation for 2025/26 and to seek approval for the proposed transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2025/26.
- 1.2 The confirmed schools funding formula must be submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) late January 2026.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 **That the Schools Forum note the outcomes of the recent consultation with schools regarding the proposed transfer of funding to the High Needs Block.**
- 2.2 **That the Schools Forum approve the Council's proposal to transfer 0.5% of the Schools Block funding in 2026/27 to the High Needs Block to help address ongoing cost pressures.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Within the Dedicated Schools Grant, the funding guidance permits Schools Forums to transfer up to 0.5% between funding blocks. This proposal seeks to transfer 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, equating to approximately £1.3 million, to partially mitigate financial pressures within the High Needs Block. This proposal applies only to the 2025/26 budget allocations and will not affect future years.
- 3.2 It should be noted that High Needs and SEND funding pressures are a national issue, with local authorities continuing to raise financial sustainability concerns with DfE.
- 3.3 A consultation exercise was undertaken in November 2025, seeking views on potential changes to Rotherham's local schools' funding formula and the proposed transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.

- 3.4 The Council was unable to model the impact on individual schools' budgets of the 0.5% block funding transfer as 2026/27 indicative National Funding Formula allocations and the Authority Proforma (modelling) Tool were not made available by the DfE (like in previous years) in sufficient time.

4. CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 4.1 The following steps were undertaken as part of the consultation with schools;
- The consultation document was issued via email on 11 November 2025 to all mainstream schools and academies.
 - The consultation closed on Friday, 21 November 2025
 - Responses have been analysed and are presented in this report.
- 4.2 A total of 62 academies and maintained schools responded to the consultation. This included 56 primary schools and 6 secondary schools. Responses from multi-academy trusts have been disaggregated to reflect the number of schools within each Trust (e.g., a MAT with six schools is counted as six responses).
- 4.3 The table below summarises the overall responses to the 2026/27 consultation on the funding formula changes and block funding transfer proposals. Further details are provided in Appendix A of this report.

	Maintained Schools	Academies	Total
Primary	6	37	43
Secondary	-	11	11
All-Through	-	1	1
Total school responses	6	49	55
Total nos. of schools	16	97	113
Response Rate (%)	38%	51%	49%

- 4.4 Almost half the number of schools and academies in Rotherham (49%) responded to this consultation, although it represents a reduction when compared to the response rate of 55% in the previous year consultation.

5. BLOCK FUNDING TRANSFER PROPOSAL

- 5.1 Rotherham continues to experience pressures on its High Needs budget which is a trend that is being experienced nationally, mainly due to the increasing EHCP numbers / exclusions / cost of out of authority SEN placements. In addition, the increasing number of pupils in mainstream schools with EHC plans requiring support, some with complex needs, continues to rise.

- 5.2 The Council has consulted on this block funding transfer proposal, which mirrors the approach taken in 2025/26. The funding transfer - estimated at £1.3m (subject to confirmation of schools block funding allocation) - would help mitigate in-year budget pressures within the High Needs Block. This measure is considered necessary because the DSG High Needs Block allocation remains insufficient to meet the financial challenges and commitments for 2026/27.

Question 6: Considering the demand and financial challenges facing the SEND system in Rotherham and to ensure continued support for the most vulnerable children & young people, do you support the LA's proposal to transfer 0.5% from the schools' block to the high needs block?

- 5.5 The following summarises the outcome of schools' responses to the above proposal:

Consultation outcome	Yes	No	Total
Primary	17	26	43
Secondary	11	-	11
All-Through	1	-	1
Total responses	29	26	55
Response Rate (%)	53%	47%	100%

- 5.6 Of the 55 schools that responded to the consultation, 29 schools (53%) are supportive of the block funding transfer proposal, whilst 26 schools (47%) are against the proposal. The percentage of schools supportive of the funding transfer proposal is higher when compared to last year's consultation (38%). This demonstrates a wider awareness and understanding of the demand and financial challenges facing the SEND system.
- 5.7 No additional comments were put forward by schools in their responses to explain the position taken or the context.

6. ROTHERHAM COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The following explains the rationale for the proposed transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, as outlined in the consultation document.

Why is a funding transfer needed?

Increasing Cost Pressures

- 6.2 The recurring annual deficit in the High Needs budget is primarily due to funding not keeping pace with the significant growth in SEND numbers in Rotherham. Continued placements in independent, non-maintained special schools remain a major cost driver. This is compounded by a challenging economic environment, including high cost-of-living and inflationary pressures.

Rising Demand

- 6.3 Rotherham is experiencing unprecedented growth in demand with significant pressure on SEND services. Requests for Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments continue to increase and have more than doubled since 2019 (from 471 to 959 in 2024). This is reflected in the number of pupils and learners with EHCPs, which has increased by 39% over three years (from 2,600 in 2022 to 3,623 in 2025). While the Council has created additional specialist provision and expanded the number of SEND places in several resource bases, demand challenges persist—particularly in meeting the complex needs of pupils locally.

Funding Pressures

- 6.4 High Needs and SEND funding pressures are a national issue. Local authorities across England are reporting significant deficits in their High Needs budgets, driven by rising demand for specialist provision and increasing complexity of needs. Despite additional funding through the DSG and targeted SEND reforms, many councils have highlighted that allocations remain insufficient to meet demand. The DfE acknowledges these challenges, and national lobbying continues for a sustainable funding solution to address the growing gap between need and available resources.

Financial sustainability

- 6.5 The cumulative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit is forecast to reach £3.7m in 2025/26. This figure includes the in-year deficit of £3.3m currently projected for the financial year. Looking ahead to 2026/27, an in-year deficit of £3.3m is currently anticipated, with cumulative deficit expected to rise to £7m by the end of March 2027. This projection assumes the current proposed 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block and anticipated increase in high needs funding allocation.
- 6.6 Critically, 2025/26 is the final year of Safety Valve support from the DfE and after this, there will be no additional government funding to offset deficits. Without the proposed transfer, the deficit would be significantly worse.

What are we doing to address the problems?

- 6.7 Rotherham's SEND Sufficiency Strategy, developed and implemented in 2020, sets out a clear and deliverable action plan to tackle these challenges. The strategy aims to create a more coherent, effective, and sustainable system for commissioning education placements for pupils with SEND.
- 6.8 Key actions and developments implemented under the strategy include:

- Investment in specialist provision using allocated DfE Special Provision Capital resources to fund additional places and expand existing provision where appropriate;
- Creation of additional places through the SEND Sufficiency Strategy to reduce reliance on high-cost independent sector placements, supported by robust annual review processes;
- Improved governance around placement decisions to ensure appropriate use of provision and prevent escalation of needs;
- Post 16 planning and commissioning of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) places;
- Collaboration with schools to maintain pupils in mainstream settings wherever possible

6.9 The increase in local specialist places has helped reduce the number of young people educated in Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS). However, in 2025, Rotherham continues to educate a lower proportion of children with an EHCP in mainstream schools (36.6%) compared to the national average (39.7%).

What is the impact on individual schools' budgets?

6.10 The proposed 0.5% transfer (£1.3m) represents a very small proportion of the overall Schools Block funding of £270m. This approach is specifically designed to minimise disruption to mainstream school budgets. To protect schools, the Council will apply a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) of 0% for 2026/27, ensuring that no school experiences a reduction in its per-pupil funding compared to 2025/26, even after the transfer. This means schools will maintain stability in their core funding allocations.

6.11 In addition, the Council intends to align Rotherham's local schools funding formula with the Government's National Funding Formula (NFF). This alignment ensures that schools receive funding consistent with national expectations, providing transparency and predictability in future allocations.

Name and contact details

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**Consultation on schools funding formula
changes for 2026/27**

Closing date for responses: Friday 21st November 2025

About this consultation

This consultation paper outlines the latest position from the Department for Education (DfE) and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) regarding school funding for 2026/27.

Ordinarily, the annual consultation takes place after the DfE releases provisional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations. This timing allows technical papers to be prepared, illustrating the potential impact of proposals under consultation and giving schools and academies an early indication of their funding for the following year to support future planning.

However, on 30 June, the DfE confirmed that, due to the timing of the 2025 Spending Review, the announcement of National Funding Formula (NFF) allocations for 2026/27 will be delayed and is not expected until later in the autumn.

In August 2025, the DfE published an updated summary policy document setting out the structure of the schools' NFF for 2026/27. However, allocations, operational guidance, and technical notes have yet to be issued to local authorities.

The policy note can be found at : [Schools national funding formula \(NFF\) summary policy document for 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK](#)

The policy note confirms that local authorities will remain responsible for maintaining local funding formulae for maintained schools and academies within their area for 2026/27. Funding allocations will continue to be determined by RMBC's local school formula.

As in previous years, the Local Authority (LA) must consult with all maintained schools and academies on any changes to the local schools funding formula and on how the Schools Block element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is distributed.

The detailed NFF allocations for schools and local authorities, along with all supporting documents for 2026/27, are expected to be published by the end of autumn 2025.

This consultation must follow the usual timeline to ensure decisions are made in time for the LA to meet the January 2026 submission deadline for the Authority Proforma Tool. This will allow schools to receive confirmation of their final budgets by 28 February 2026.

The consultation is based on the 2026/27 National Funding Formula (NFF), using the same factors as in 2025/26. It seeks the views of schools and academies on the following:

- Changes to the funding arrangements and the formula for allocating budgets to schools, i.e. funding factors and unit values and applicable minimum funding guarantee used in the formula, to align as closely to the NFF.
- The proposal to transfer funding (0.5%) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to help alleviate the financial pressures within the high needs funding block of the schools' system.

The views of schools and academies provided through this consultation will be fed back to the Rotherham Schools Forum on 5th December 2025.

Who is being consulted?

- Maintained schools / academies.
- Multi-academy trusts
- Schools forum reps

Issue date

The consultation was issued on 11th November 2025.

Responding to the consultation

To help us analyse the responses please complete the attached template and email it to the following address: louise.keith@rotherham.gov.uk

Deadline

The consultation closes on Friday 21st November 2025.

Enquiries

If you have any questions about this consultation, please contact Louise Keith.

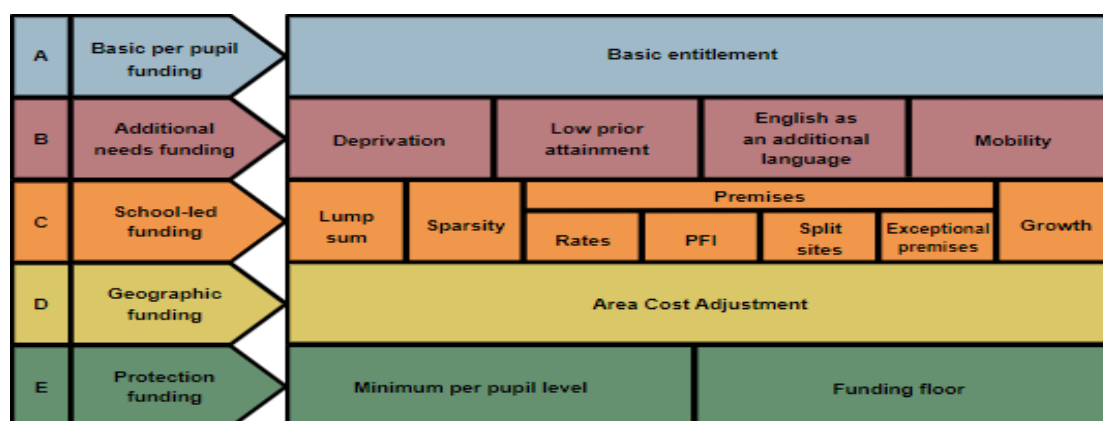
Email: louise.keith@rotherham.gov.uk

Telephone: (01709) 822786

Consultation Part A

Features of the 2026-27 National Funding Formula

There will be no substantial changes to the NFF for 2026-27. The 2026-27 schools NFF will use the same factors as the 2025-26 NFF. These are shown below:



The DfE has confirmed that the schools budget support grant (SBSG) and the National Insurance Contributions (NIC) grant will be rolled into the NFF for 2026-2027 using a similar approach to previous grants. Table 1 below shows the amounts that will be added into the core factor values in 2026-27 in respect to the grants. For the SBSG, this represents the full-year equivalent amount.

Table 1: Factor value uplifts from the rolling in of grants

Factor	NICs	SBSG	Total
Primary basic per-pupil	£78	£55	£133
Key stage 3 basic per-pupil	£68	£78	£146
Key stage 4 basic per-pupil	£77	£88	£165
Primary FSM6 per-pupil	£75	£49	£124
Secondary FSM6 per-pupil	£60	£72	£132
Lump sum	£2,400	£2,086	£4,486

Grant for Extension of Free School Meals (FSM)

In June 2025, the government announced that, from September 2026, free school meals (FSM) will be extended to all children in households receiving Universal Credit.

For 2026/27, no changes are proposed to the schools' National Funding Formula (NFF) to account for this expansion. Instead, the additional funding required will be provided through a separate grant. The Department for Education (DfE) has confirmed that details of how this grant will be calculated will be published in due course.

There may also be a small uplift to the core factors within the NFF, beyond the rolling in of previous years' grant funding, to reflect anticipated pay and inflation pressures in 2026/27. At this stage, the Local Authority (LA) has no indication of the level of any additional increase.

Methodology for the calculation of school budgets in Rotherham

The calculation of school level budgets is undertaken using the DfE's National Funding Formula (NFF). The NFF uses set factors and funding rates prescribed by the DfE and are updated on an annual basis.

Whilst we are required as an LA to use the DfE's NFF to calculate budgets, there does remain limited local discretion in several areas:

- **Funding rates** – Local Authorities are currently considered compliant if they set funding rates for each factor plus or minus 2.5% from the published rates. As the DfE look to move all authorities closer to the NFF this flexibility may reduce in future years.
- **Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)** – The MFG is used to protect the amount of funding schools receive per pupil compared to the previous year. The range is set by the DfE and is determined by the overall uplift in schools funding nationally.
- **Capping and Scaling of budgets** – These mechanisms are used to balance the overall cost of school budgets to the available grant. The cap on per pupil increases is also referred to as the 'gains ceiling'.
- **Block transfers** – Local Authorities have limited ability to move funding between Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) blocks with the appropriate schools forum approval.

Since the introduction of the NFF in 2018-19, Rotherham has been striving to align its local factors to the NFF. This consultation is currently seeking views on the proposed 2026/27 schools funding formula including changes to the capping used to balance the overall school budget and indicative block transfers.

Rotherham's existing local funding formula already closely mirrors the NFF and will continue to allow factor values for 2026/27 to be set within a range of +/- 2.5% of the NFF values.

2026/27 Rotherham's local funding formula proposed changes

As in previous years, local factor values within +/-2.5% of the corresponding National Funding Formula (NFF) values will be considered as 'mirroring' the NFF. This means that local authorities can set their 2026/27 factor values anywhere within +/-2.5% of the 2026/27 NFF values. In addition, no local authority will be required to move its factor values closer than +/- 2.5% of the NFF as a result of the 10% tightening requirement.

Basic Entitlement (AWPU)

All local authority formulae must include a basic amount that every pupil attracts to their school. This funding is allocated through an Age-Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) factor, with separate unit values for primary, Key Stage 3 (KS3), and Key Stage 4 (KS4). While AWPU rates are set by the NFF, local authorities can determine their own rates within the permitted range to move closer to the NFF.

In 2025/26, Rotherham's AWPU values mirrored the NFF i.e. it is within +/- 2.5% of the NFF. For 2026/27, Rotherham proposes to remain within the permissible range i.e. as close to the NFF as the funding allocation allows.

	2025/26 NFF	2025/26 RMBC	Variance	2026/27 NFF	2026/27 RMBC
Primary	£3,847	£3,827	-0.52%	tbc	tbc
Secondary KS3	£5,422	£5,395	-0.50%	tbc	tbc
Secondary KS4	£6,113	£6,077	-0.59%	tbc	tbc

Additional Needs

In 2026/27, the Government will continue its policy of supporting schools with pupils who have additional needs, ensuring they receive sufficient funding to address low attainment.

- **Deprivation Factor**

Rotherham's local schools funding formula currently allocates deprivation funding through two measures:

- Free School Meals (FSM) – EVER6
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), based on the 2019 updated data.

For 2026/27, it is proposed to increase the Primary and Secondary FSM6 factor value closer to the National Funding Formula (NFF). These are the only factors where Rotherham is further adrift of NFF, even though it is still within the permissible +/- 2.5% range of the NFF.

	2025/26 NFF	2025/26 RMBC	Variance	2026/27 NFF	2026/27 RMBC
Primary FSM	£495	£495	0%	tbc	tbc
Secondary FSM	£495	£495	0%	tbc	tbc
Primary FSM6	£1,060	£1,034	-2.4%	tbc	tbc
Secondary FSM6	£1,555	£1,516	-2.5%	tbc	tbc
Primary IDACI (A-E)	£443	£441	-0.4%	tbc	tbc
Secondary IDACI (A_E)	£636	£633	-0.5%	tbc	tbc

• Mobility Factor

This factor provides additional funding to schools where a significant proportion of pupils join part way through the academic year. To qualify, the proportion must exceed the 6% threshold. In 2025/26, Rotherham's values were fully aligned with the National Funding Formula (NFF), and the proposal is to maintain this alignment for 2026/27.

	2025/26 NFF	2025/26 RMBC	Variance	2026/27 NFF	2026/27 RMBC
Primary Mobility	£965	£965	0%	tbc	tbc
Secondary Mobility	£1,385	£1,385	0%	tbc	tbc

• Low Prior Attainment Factor

Low Prior Attainment allocates funding to schools based on the following:

1. proportion of primary pupils identifying as not achieving the expected level of development in early years foundation stage profile.
2. and secondary pupils not reaching the expected standard in KS2 at reading, writing or maths.

In 2025/26, Rotherham's local formula was fully aligned with the National Funding Formula (NFF), and the proposal is to maintain this alignment for 2026/27.

	2025/26 NFF	2025/26 RMBC	Variance	2026/27 NFF	2026/27 RMBC
Primary Mobility	£965	£965	0%	tbc	tbc
Secondary Mobility	£1,385	£1,385	0%	tbc	tbc

- **English as an Additional Language Factor (EAL)**

This factor allocates funding to schools for pupils whose first language is not English, for up to three years after they enter the statutory school system. Separate unit values apply for the primary and secondary phases. In 2025/26, Rotherham's local formula was fully aligned with the National Funding Formula (NFF), and the proposal is to maintain this alignment for 2026/27.

	2025/26 NFF	2025/26 RMBC	Variance	2026/27 NFF	2026/27 RMBC
Primary EAL	£595	£595	0%	tbc	tbc
Secondary EAL	£1,595	£1,595	0%	tbc	tbc

School-led funding factors

These factors include the lump sum, premises-related elements (such as rates, split sites, and PFI), and growth. The following outlines the proposed approach for 2026/27:

- **Lump Sum**

This factor provides a standard allocation to all schools, regardless of size or pupil numbers. In 2025/26, Rotherham's local formula 'mirrored' the National Funding Formula (NFF), i.e. it is within +/- 2.5% of the NFF. The proposal is to maintain this approach for 2026/27.

	2025/26 NFF	2025/26 RMBC	Variance	2026/27 NFF	2026/27 RMBC
Primary Lump Sum	£145,100	£141,473	-2.5%	tbc	tbc
Secondary Lump Sum	£145,100	£141,473	-2.5%	tbc	tbc

- **Premises factors**

These comprised the following: **business rates** and **PFI factor**. In the main these factors allocate funding to schools to cover actual cost incurred in the year (e.g. business rates) or to cover additional unavoidable contract cost (e.g. PFI contract). An inflationary uplift would be applied to the PFI factor consistent with the NFF.

- **Split Site factor**

This factor provides funding and support to schools that operate from a number of sites separate from the main site of the school. Funding provided is comprised of a standard lump sum for eligible schools plus a top up amount based on the separate sites distance from the main site.

The basic eligibility criteria for split sites funding requires additional sites to:

- be part of the main school, that is, to share the same unique reference number (URN) with the school's main site.
- be separated from the school's main site by a public road or railway.
- have a building on them which is maintained by the school, and which is primarily used for the education of 5 to 16- year-old pupils in mainstream education. This excludes playing fields, 'ancillary buildings and buildings leased out full time by the school to another entity.

In 2026-27 split site funding will be included in Rotherham's local funding formula when allocations are announced in December.

- **Sparsity**

The sparsity factor is a compulsory factor in the NFF and provides specific funding to small schools in sparsely populated areas, e.g. local rural schools. Rotherham does not have any qualifying schools eligible for the funding.

Question 1: Do you support the continued inclusion of the above funding factors in Rotherham's 2026/27 schools funding formula and the intention to mirror, or align as closely as possible, to the National Funding Formula (NFF) values?

Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)

The MFG is designed to protect schools from significant reductions in per-pupil funding between years. It is set by local authorities within a range determined by the government. The Department for Education (DfE) will announce the MFG arrangements for 2026/27 in the autumn, alongside other school funding details. At this stage, it is assumed that the allowable range will remain similar to 2025/26, at - 0.5% to 0.0% per pupil compared to the previous year's funding.

For 2025/26, Rotherham applied an MFG of 0.0% (maximum protection allowable). This approach replicated the funding floor within the National Funding Formula (NFF) and safeguarded schools against losses during a period of tight budgets. In 2025/26, 37 out of 112 schools (33%) received MFG protection, costing a total of £391k, with individual school protections ranging from £162 to £83,808.

Consistent with our policy of keeping Rotherham's local funding formula as close to the NFF as possible, it is proposed to continue with the approach in 2025/26 and implement an MFG of 0.0% for 2026/27.

Question 2: Do you support the proposal to set the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) within the local funding formula at 0% for 2026-27 (in line with the maximum protection allowed by DfE)?

Capping & Scaling

Local Authorities are allowed through their local funding formulae to cap overall gains for individual schools as well as scale back funding gains of schools to ensure that local formulae are affordable. Capping and scaling must be applied, through the funding formula, on the same basis to all schools. It ensures that funding amounts are distributed more evenly across all schools and do not create an imbalance in the system. It also ensures affordability and fairness across all schools.

- Capping - this limits the maximum percentage increase in funding that a school can receive compared to the previous year. For example, if gains are capped at 1.03%, no school's funding can rise by more than 1.03%, even if the formula suggests a higher increase.
- "Scaling" - this reduces all gains proportionally to make the overall funding fit within the available budget. For instance, if scaling is set at 85%, schools only receive 85% of the increase they would otherwise get under the formula.

In 2025/26, the cost of implementing the National Funding Formula (NFF) exceeded Rotherham's allocated Schools Block funding. To remain within the available budget, it was necessary to cap gains at 1.03% and apply a scaling factor of 85%. This resulted in a total of £337k being redistributed across schools within the funding formula to ensure affordability.

Rotherham intends to use capping and scaling within the 2026/27 schools funding formula to ensure both fairness in resource distribution and overall affordability. Importantly, any adjustments will not result in any school receiving less than the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) or the Minimum Per Pupil Level (MPPL) set by the Department for Education (DfE).

Question 3: Do you support the continued use of capping and scaling in Rotherham's 2026/27 schools funding formula to ensure fairness in resource distribution and overall affordability of the funding formula?

Pupil Growth

Since 2024/25, local authorities have been required to provide growth funding where a school agrees with the authority to create additional places—such as adding bulge classes or increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN)—to meet basic need in the area.

A growth policy, agreed by the Schools Forum, sets out the funding criteria and calculation method. It is proposed that the Growth Fund continues to be established by deducting an agreed amount from the Schools Block funding. The amount to be deducted is based on projected additional places and commitments agreed with specific schools. The growth fund is managed outside the local funding formula by the local authority, with regular reporting to the Schools Forum. Any under- or overspend on the Growth Fund will form part of the overall Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) balance available for use by schools.

For 2026/27, it is proposed that £100k be deducted from the Schools Block to support schools providing additional places. This represents a £50k reduction compared to 2025/26.

Question 4: Do you support the proposal to deduct £100,000 from the 2026/27 Schools Block to establish a Growth Fund, which will be used to support schools providing additional places to meet basic need? This represents a £50,000 reduction compared to 2025/26.

Falling Rolls Fund

Funding will be allocated to local authorities in 2026/27 on the basis of falling rolls as well as growth and will be distributed based on the reduction in pupil numbers that local authorities experience each year.

Local authorities will continue to have discretion over whether to operate a falling rolls fund. It is proposed that the Falling Rolls amount to be deducted from the 2026/27 allocation be set at £50,000.

This funding will be used to support specific schools that meet the eligibility criteria of the LA's policy for Falling Rolls to provide time limited funding to ensure that schools with temporary surplus capacity can continue to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum whilst maintaining financial viability.

Question 5: Do you agree that the Local Authority should continue to provide for a falling rolls fund of £50k? It is proposed the fund will be provided from the DSG allocation.

Consultation Part B

Introduction

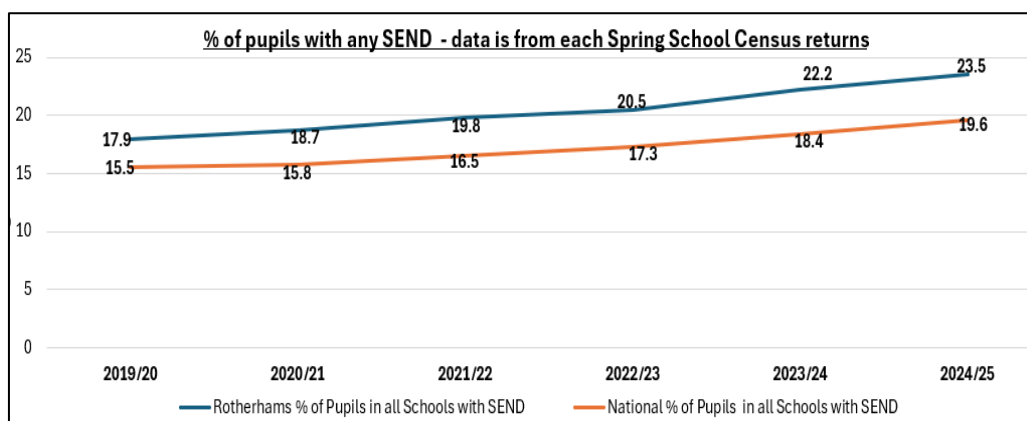
Like many other local authorities, Rotherham faces significant challenges in managing its SEND and High Needs budget. These challenges include rising demand for services, inflationary cost pressures, and an increasing accumulated budget deficit. By 31 March 2026, the cumulative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit is forecast to reach £3.7 million, after accounting for £2.0 million of Safety Valve funding from the Department for Education (DfE). This figure includes the in-year deficit of £3.3 million currently projected (as of September 2025) for the 2025/26 financial year.

Looking ahead to 2026/27, an in-year deficit of £3.3 million is currently anticipated. This projection assumes an increase in the High Needs funding allocation and includes the proposed 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block. The Council intends to consult on this block funding transfer proposal, which mirrors the approach taken in 2025/26. The funding transfer - estimated at £1.3 million (subject to confirmation of schools block funding allocation) - would help mitigate in-year budget pressures within the High Needs Block. This measure is considered necessary because the DSG High Needs Block allocation remains insufficient to meet the financial challenges and commitments for 2026/27.

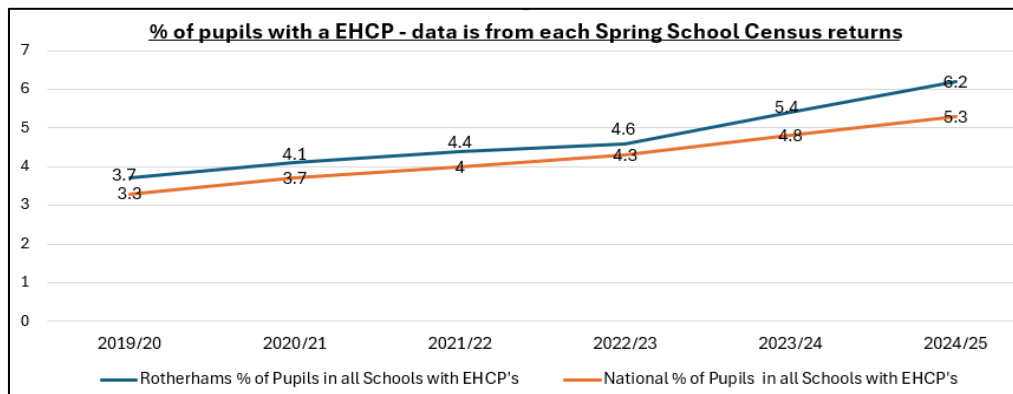
Demand challenges

Number of pupils with EHCPs

As of January 2025 (Rotherham School Census), there are 45,531 children and young people attending schools in Rotherham. Of these, 23.5% of statutory school-aged pupils either have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or are receiving SEND support. This is significantly higher than the national average of 19.6% across all local authorities in England. Furthermore, the growth in the proportion of pupils with an EHCP or receiving SEND support in Rotherham since 2020/21 has exceeded the national rate of increase – i.e. the gap to the national average has widened in that period.



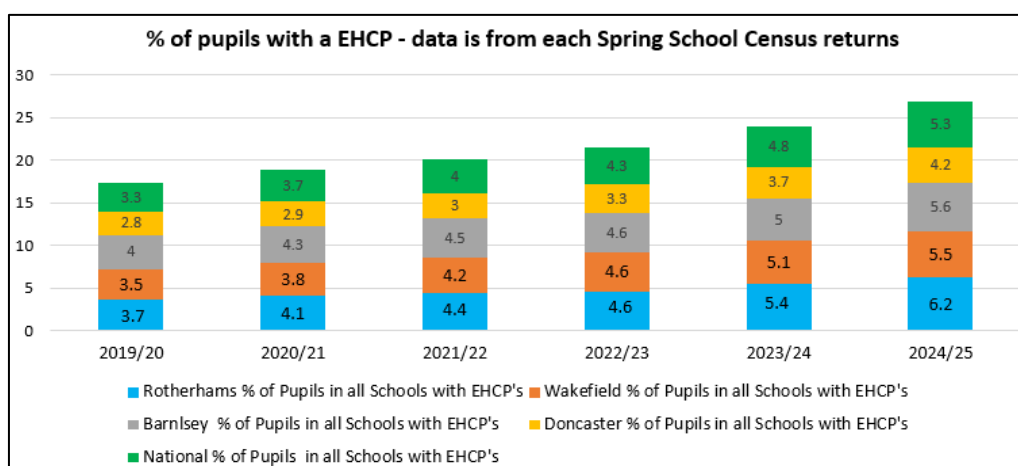
As of the SEN2 census date in January 2025, Rotherham had 3,623 active Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in place for children and young people aged 0–25. This represents an increase of 313 (equates to 9.5%, slightly below the national average of 11%) compared to January 2024. The number of active EHCPs account for 6.2% of Rotherham’s statutory school-aged population, which is higher than the national average of 5.3% (see chart below).



Over the past three years, Rotherham has experienced a 39% increase in the number of EHCPs. According to the SEN2 return:

- In 2022, there were 2,600 children and young people aged 0–25 with active EHCPs.
- By 2025 return, this number had risen to 3,623, an increase of 1,023 plans.

When compared with statistical neighbours, Rotherham ranks 3rd out of 11 local authorities for the highest number of active EHCPs. The graph below illustrates the trend in EHCP prevalence from the Spring School Census, showing Rotherham’s position relative to national figures and neighbouring authorities.



Demand for EHCP Assessments

The volume of requests for Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments in Rotherham continues to grow at a significant pace, placing increasing demand on local

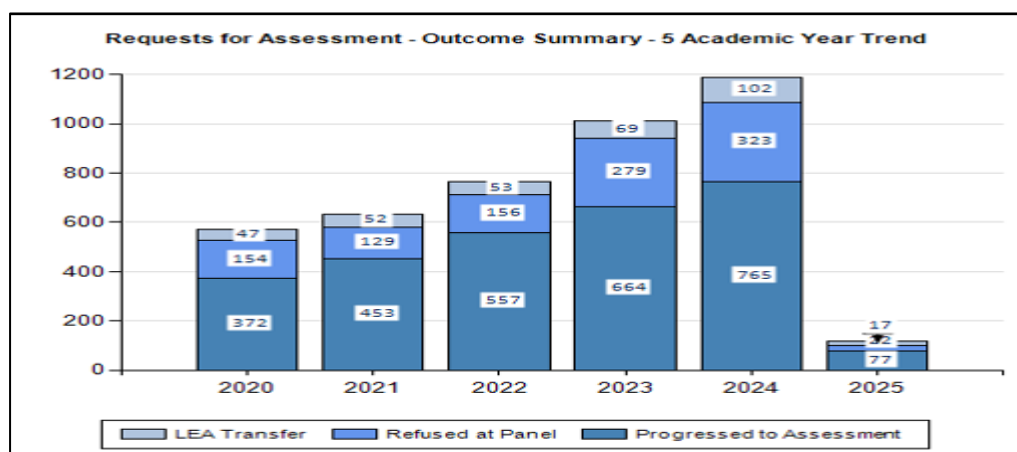
services:

- In the calendar year 2024, a total of 959 requests were received — more than double the 471 requests recorded in 2019.
- During the 2024/25 academic year, the EHCP team received 1,190 requests, an increase of 424 compared to the previous academic year.

This upward trend clearly demonstrates the sustained and growing need for statutory support among children and young people with SEND in Rotherham. It also reflects the increasing pressure on local assessment services to meet this rising demand. In terms of request origin from academic year 2024/25:

- 52% of new EHCP assessment requests came from schools.
- 34% were submitted by parents, carers, or family members.

These proportions have remained relatively consistent since 2019. The chart below presents a five-year overview of EHCP request trends, including the outcomes of those requests, offering valuable insight into the scale and progression of need.



Addressing the demand challenges

Although the Council is creating additional specialist provision and has increased the number of SEND places across resource provision and special schools, demand challenges continue to exist in meeting the complex needs of certain pupils locally in Rotherham.

The modelled forecast data suggests that there is an ongoing and increasing demand for support for children and young people with SEND and for those with EHCPs. If unmitigated, the cumulative DSG deficit would continue to rise.

In response to the challenges set out above, the Rotherham SEND Sufficiency Strategy was developed and has been implemented since 2020. The existing Strategy sets out a clear and deliverable action plan to tackle these challenges and establish a more

coherent, effective and sustainable system for commissioning education placements for SEND pupils.

Among the key objectives of the Strategy is to reset the balance between local provision and placements outside of Rotherham, improving parental choice and the quality of the pupil's experience. The following highlight key developments or progress to date:

- Use of allocated DfE special provision capital resources to fund additional specialist places and expand existing provision where appropriate.
- Review of all specialist resource provision (range and number of places) to ensure they are meeting needs and current demand.
- Additional places created through the SEND sufficiency strategy in order to minimise the number of children placed in high-cost independent Sector Placements (through the annual review process).
- Ensure appropriate use of provision and avoid escalation of children and young people's needs by improving the governance around placement decisions.
- Post 16 planning and commissioning of SEMH places.
- Continue working with schools to maintain pupils in mainstream settings wherever possible.

SEND Sufficiency phase 4 has seen increases in resource provision places being provided in 7 schools, with this achieving the additional 100 places as set out within the Safety Valve Agreement. The small grant accessibility programme has been implemented across both mainstream and special schools to support inclusion for identified cohorts of SEND pupils. In total the Accessibility Capital Funding programme has provided £3 million of capital funding to create new or improve provision for SEND learners.

The table below shows the number of EHCP pupils across different placement types from April 24 through to March 25.

No of Children and young people with EHCP's (0-25yrs) attending the following Provision types:										
High Needs / Safety Valve Monitoring Categories	No and % of CYP with EHCP as at 1st April 24		No and % of CYP with EHCP as at 1st July 24		No of CYP with EHCP as at 1st Oct 24		No of CYP with EHCP as at Census Day - 16th Jan 25		No of CYP with EHCP as at 1st March 25	
Special Schools (in borough only)	1,061	31.5%	1,067	30.8%	1,107	31.7%	1142	31.5%	1140	31.0%
Resource Provision	101	3.0%	108	3.1%	126	3.6%	134	3.7%	147	4.0%
Mainstream Schools (in borough only)	1,167	34.6%	1,271	36.7%	1,258	36.0%	1312	36.2%	1361	37.0%
Alternative Provision	74	2.2%	76	2.2%	62	1.8%	77	2.1%	81	2.2%
Independent Non Maintained Special Schools	132	3.9%	136	3.9%	133	3.8%	124	3.4%	123	3.3%
Independent Specialist Provision	172	5.1%	164	4.7%	170	4.9%	178	4.9%	175	4.8%
Post 16 / FE Colleges	443	13.1%	436	12.6%	520	14.9%	496	13.7%	485	13.2%
Other OOA Schools (OOA Mainstream and Special Schs)	72	2.1%	73	2.1%	64	1.8%	75	2.1%	78	2.1%
Other provisions for CYP with EHCP's	151	4.5%	130	3.8%	55	1.6%	85	2.3%	90	2.4%
TOTALS	3,373		3,461		3,495		3,623		3,680	

School Types	% CYP in Rotherham as at SEN2 25	% CYP Nationally as at SEN2 25	Gap to National	% CYP in Rotherham as at SEN2 24	% CYP Nationally as at SEN2 24	Gap to National	% CYP in Rotherham as at SEN2 23	% CYP Nationally as at SEN2 23	Gap to National	% CYP in Rotherham as at SEN2 22	% CYP Nationally as at SEN2 22	Gap to National
*Special Schools	32.8%	25.0%	7.8%	32.8%	26.9%	5.9%	34.8%	28.2%	6.6%	32.8%	29.6%	-0.8%
*Resource Provision / SEN units	4.0%	3.8%	0.2%	2.9%	3.9%	-1.0%	1.2%	3.9%	-2.7%	3.2%	4.5%	-1.3%
Mainstream Schools	36.6%	39.7%	-3.1%	34.1%	39.2%	-5.1%	32.1%	37.4%	-5.3%	28.8%	36.0%	-7.2%
*Independent Non Maintained Special Schools	3.3%	5.3%	-2.0%	3.7%	5.2%	-1.5%	3.5%	5.0%	-1.5%	3.8%	5.2%	-1.4%
*Independent Specialist Provision	4.9%	1.5%	3.4%	3.4%	1.5%	1.8%	3.6%	1.6%	2.0%	4.3%	1.7%	2.6%
Post 16 / FE Colleges	13.7%	12.3%	1.4%	14.2%	11.7%	2.5%	13.5%	12.3%	1.2%	14.7%	14.8%	-0.1%
* All Specialist Provisions	45.0%	35.7%	9.3%	42.8%	37.5%	5.3%	43.2%	38.7%	4.5%	44.2%	41.0%	3.2%

The table above provides a national comparison. This shows that the increase in places locally has reduced the amount of young people educated in independent non-maintained special schools (INMSS). In 2025, Rotherham educate less children with an EHCP in mainstream schools (36.6%) compared to the national average (39.7%).

The data sets above have formed part of stakeholder consultation in preparation for a new SEND Sufficiency Strategy for Rotherham which will be implemented from April 2026 following the end of Safety Valve.

Financial sustainability challenges

Since 2021, the Council has been part of a Safety Valve agreement with the Department for Education (DfE). Through this programme, the DfE is providing £20.5 million over five years to help manage high needs funding pressures. This funding is conditional on the Council continuing to meet the requirements of the agreement.

Importantly, 2025/26 is the final year of the Safety Valve programme. After this point, financial support from the DfE will end, meaning the Council will need to manage high needs costs within its overall DSG resources and ensure long-term financial sustainability without additional government funding.

Rotherham's high needs funding allocation for 2026/27 has not yet been confirmed, but current forecasts suggest it will be around £50.0 million (net of recoupment) - an increase of around 3% compared to 2025/26. However, despite this projected increase, demand and cost pressures within the SEND system mean a financial deficit is still expected in 2026/27.

These pressures are driven by rising numbers of children and young people with EHCPs, increasing complexity of needs, and higher placement costs, particularly for specialist provision. To manage these challenges, the Council is taking steps such as expanding local specialist provision to reduce reliance on costly out-of-area placements, strengthening early intervention and inclusion support in mainstream schools, and implementing efficiency measures to ensure resources are used effectively.

The table below shows the anticipated high needs budget position for 2026/27, which reflects the impact of the planned actions (see above) to mitigate the rising cost pressures:

High Needs Budget	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
High Needs Expenditure	52.7	54.7
High Needs Funding (net of recoupment)	-48.1	-50.0
Schools Block funding transfer (0.5%)	-1.3	-1.3
Forecast In Year Deficit	3.3	3.3
Carry forward cumulative deficit	2.4	3.7
Safety Valve funding (from DfE)	-2.0	-
Cumulative DSG Reserve Deficit c/f	3.7	7.0

The forecast shows that a funding transfer from the Schools Block is required to help offset increasing cost pressures and the projected deficit for 2026/27. A 0.5% funding transfer (£1.3m) would reduce the 2026/27 in-year forecast deficit to £3.3m and the year end DSG reserve deficit to £7.0m.

The transfer helps manage rising demand and costs in the High Needs Block, which cannot be fully met by the current allocation. Without this adjustment, the deficit would be significantly higher, putting additional strain on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Assessment of impact on individual schools

The 0.5% (£1.3m) transfer represents a small proportion of the overall Schools Block funding (£270m) and is designed to minimise disruption to mainstream school budgets. By applying a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) of 0% for 2026/27, the Council will ensure that no school experiences a reduction in its per-pupil funding compared to its 2025/26 level, even after the Schools Block funding transfer.

The MFG is a statutory requirement, designed to protect schools from significant year-on-year decreases caused by funding formula changes or other adjustments. Setting the MFG at 0% guarantees stability, ensuring schools maintain at least their current per-pupil funding level and are safeguarded against adverse impacts from funding formula changes or the transfer.

Question 6: Considering the demand and financial challenges facing the SEND system in Rotherham and to ensure continued support for the most vulnerable children & young people, do you support the LA's proposal to transfer 0.5% from the schools' block to the high needs block?

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REPORT FOR SCHOOLS FORUM

1.	Date of meeting:	5th December 2025
2.	Title:	Falling Rolls Fund Policy
3.	Directorate:	Finance and Customer Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on Falling Rolls and proposes a local policy for Rotherham. The aim is to support schools experiencing temporary reductions in pupil numbers and associated funding challenges.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the schools forum:**

- **Note the DfE guidance on Falling Rolls.**
- **Approve the adoption of the proposed Falling Rolls Policy for Rotherham.**

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION & CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Falling Rolls Policy has been developed in response to a decline in birth rates in Rotherham, which has led to surplus places in primary schools. This trend is expected to continue for several years. The policy aims to help schools remain viable until pupil numbers recover later in future years.
- 3.2 Local authorities have discretion to operate a Falling Rolls Fund, which can be used to support schools where demand for places is forecast to recover and places required within 3 to 5 years, based on School Capacity (SCAP) data.

4. DfE GUIDANCE

- 4.1 The following are key points to note from DfE guidance:

- The DfE have removed the mandatory restriction, that schools were only eligible for falling rolls funding if they were judged 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.
- Local authorities have flexibility to set additional eligibility criteria and funding rates.
- Schools Forum must agree the value of the fund and allocation criteria. The LA should regularly update the Schools Forum on the use of the fund.

- 4.2 Further DfE guidance on falling rolls can be accessed under section 31 of the [Schools operational guide: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)
- 4.3 The Falling Rolls Fund forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) within the Schools Block. Annual value of the Fund should be agreed as part of setting the Schools Block budget for the coming year (as part of the schools budget planning cycle).

5. PROPOSED ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- 5.1 Criteria for allocating falling rolls funding should contain clear objective trigger points for qualification, and a clear formula for calculating allocations.
- 5.2 The proposed eligibility criteria and operating methodology for the Rotherham Falling Rolls Fund is as follows:
- **Minimum Reduction Threshold:** Schools must show a reduction of at least 10% in pupil numbers between two consecutive October census dates.
 - **Demographic Justification:** The reduction must be due to demographic or structural changes, supported by SCAP projections showing recovery within 3 to 5 years.
 - **Surplus Capacity:** The school must have surplus capacity that exceeds a minimum number of pupils or a percentage of its Published Admission Number (PAN) e.g. minimum 15% of PAN.
 - **Exclusions:** The reduction cannot result from bulge classes or planned PAN reductions agreed with the local authority.
 - **Curriculum Impact:** Funding must address risks to curriculum delivery caused by reduced funding.
- 5.3 The proposed Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Falling Rolls Policy in full is included as an appendix for approval by the Schools Forum.

6. NAMES & CONTACT DETAILS

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BRIEFING	TO:	Schools Forum
	DATE:	5 th December 2025
	LEAD OFFICER:	Aileen Chambers Head of Service Early Years and Childcare
	TITLE:	Early Years and Wraparound Expansion Update
1. Background		
1.1	This purpose of this briefing is to provide an update on the range of developments that have taken place over the last 12 months in relation to: The DfE Early Years Expansion; The DfE Wraparound Childcare Programme and the Schools Based Nurseries Programme.	
1.2	<p>Early Years Expansion: In the Spring Budget 2023 the Chancellor announced an expansion to the early years entitlements – 30 hours childcare for every child over the age of 9 months with working parents by September 2025.</p> <p>The DfE provided a small amount of capital funding to support expansion (£538k).</p> <p>It was projected that an additional 1031 places would need to be created in Rotherham to meet the projected demand.</p> <p>To date 963 new early years places have been created through expansion of existing day nurseries as well as creation of new provision.</p> <p>The Supply and Demand Projections at Appendix 1 detail the position at September 2025. There are a number of areas where it is projected that additional places will be needed for 2-year-olds and under 2's. An update of the sufficiency position in the Autumn Term is currently in progress to establish areas in need of further places for the Spring and Summer Term 2026.</p> <p>Childcare Recruitment:</p> <p>Nationally as well as locally, recruiting qualified early years staff to support the expansion has been a challenge. An early years' recruitment campaign and promotion of childminding as a career was undertaken to support with the challenge of finding qualified staff to support expansion.</p> <p>The Early Years Job Shop is a dedicated employment support initiative aimed at connecting individuals with opportunities in the childcare sector across Rotherham. Through targeted outreach, personalised guidance, and strategic partnerships, the service plays a pivotal role in addressing workforce needs while empowering individuals to pursue meaningful careers in early years education.</p> <p>The Job Shop links closely with a range of partners to maximise impact and reach. These include Family Help (formerly Early Help), the Job Centre (via drop-in sessions), Employment Solutions, South Yorkshire Careers, school careers services, the Virtual School, colleges, training providers, and apprenticeship providers. This collaborative approach ensures a comprehensive support network for job seekers and students alike.</p>	

The Early Years Job Shop also works collaboratively with students, job seekers, training providers, and childcare settings to:

- Promote employment and training opportunities within the early years sector.
- Support individuals in navigating pathways into work or further education.
- Strengthen the local childcare workforce through sustained recruitment efforts.

1.3 School Based Nurseries Programme

In September 2024 the Government announced plans to deliver 3,000 nurseries by upgrading spare classrooms in primary schools.

Four schools in Rotherham submitted successful funding bids

School Name	No. of Places (15 hour)	Age Range
Todwick Primary	80	3 year olds
Greasbrough Primary	32	2 year olds
Rockingham Primary	60	2 year olds
Thorpe Hesley Primary	54	2 year olds

In addition, the following schools have created new Foundation 1 classes:

Aston All Saints Primary (50) Commence Sept 25

Sitwell Infant School (52) Commence Sept 25

Phase 2 of the School Based Nurseries Programme was announced in September 2025. The deadline for applications is 11th December 2025. There is no demand for additional 3 / 4-year-olds places in the borough but applications for 2 year old and under 2's places are encouraged in a number of areas.

1.4 Wraparound Childcare Programme: The ambition is for all parents of primary school children who need it, to be able to access childcare in their local area from 8am-6pm by September 2026. A budget of £2.3m was allocated to Rotherham in April 2024 to create over 1000 wraparound childcare places.

Engagement of schools in this opportunity in Rotherham has been excellent. The Wraparound and Early Years Expansion Co-ordinator has liaised with strategic leaders in Academy Trusts to help raise awareness and support with implementation as well as individual Head Teachers.

A total of **76** schools now have a full 10-hour delivery offer. **59** out of **96** mainstream schools have been supported with Wraparound funding with 1575 new places created. In summary, the offer available in Rotherham is:

- 76 schools out of 96 schools have a 10-hour wraparound delivery offer
- All schools have a Breakfast Club – the latest start time being 8.05 am
- 2 Early Adopters Breakfast Clubs
- 18 schools have an after-school activity offer, ranging from finish times of 4.10 pm – 5.00 pm

The majority of the funding has now been allocated, however we are still actively supporting schools with applications to create wraparound places and for funding to expand their current offer further.

	Activity is underway to monitor take-up of the new places and work will continue to support schools to ensure ongoing sustainability of places.
1.5	<p>Breakfast Clubs Early Adopter Programme</p> <p>On the 27th November 2024 the DFE announced the roll out of the application process for the breakfast clubs early adopter programme in up to 750 early adopter schools from April 2025 as part of a test and learn phase in advance of national roll out.</p> <p>Early adopters will offer all primary-aged children on roll at their school, no matter their circumstances, access to a free, universal breakfast club lasting at least 30 minutes that involves food, providing children with a supportive start to the day and helping families to have more choice about work. Parents and carers can choose to take up the offer although we encourage schools to promote the offer and drive take up, particularly within disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>Two schools in Rotherham are taking part in this programme – Coleridge Primary and East Dene Primary.</p> <p>Rotherham is one of 20 local authorities to be selected for the Early Adopter's Test and Learn group. The purpose of this group is to gather views in more detail to support the national rollout, including the role of the local authority moving forwards.</p> <p>Additional funding has been confirmed by the government with a further £80 million being invested into the free breakfast clubs programme. This will fund an additional 2,000 schools (on top of existing early adopter schools) between April 2026 and March 2027 and will benefit around 500,000 more children.</p>
4. Recommendations	
4.1	Note and approve the content of the report

Appendix 1

This is a dynamic document and will be updated regularly. For the most current version, please contact the Early Years and Childcare Service

Supply and Demand Projections 2025/26 (PTE*)

Table shows current and projected under or over supply in PTE by sufficiency area

* PTE is Part Time Equivalent (15 hour per week, term time only)

** Future demand over estimated at 80% to assess maximum demand potential

Funding age/type	% of eligible cohort used for demand projections
3 & 4 Year Olds (Funded/Universal)	100%
3 & 4 Year Olds (Extended/Working)	80%
2 Year Olds (Funded/Additional Support)	100%
2 Year Olds (Expanded/Working)	80%
Under 2 Year olds (Expanded/Working) Current	25% (Under 1's) and 60% (1 year olds)
Under 2 Year olds (Expanded/Working) Future	80%

Early Help Area	Sufficiency Sub Area	Current Projections				Future Projections		Schools in area	Providers in area
		3 & 4 Year Olds 100% take up universal and 80% take up extended	2 Year Olds (Additional Support and Working 25%) 100% take up	2 Year Olds (Additional Support 15h and Working 25%) 80% take up	Under 2's (Working 80%) 80% and 60% take up	Under 2's (Working 80%) 80% take up**	Under/Over Supply Future Projections (PTE*)		
Arnold	Herringthorpe/East Dene/Clifton	17	18	-2	-6	-37	-37	Arnold Nursery School and Children's Centre, Badley Primary School, Herringthorpe Infant School, St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Herringthorpe Junior School	Dream Catchers Nursery, Lime Tree Nursery (Herringthorpe), 2 Childrensiders
	Aughton / Aston	85	14	-8	-4	-61	-61	Aughton Early Years Centre, Aston Fenice Junior and Infant School, Aston All Saints CofE (A) Primary School, Springwood Junior Academy, Aston Hall Junior and Infant School, Aston Lodge Primary School, Aughton Junior Academy, Swallownest Primary School	The Nursery, Swallownest Pre-School, 10 Childrensiders
Aughton	Brinsworth	15	15	-8	-22	-57	-57	Brinsworth Whitehall Primary School, Brinsworth Manor Junior School, Brinsworth Howarth Primary School, Brinsworth Manor Infant School	Just for Kids, 8 Childrensiders
	Catcliffe / Treeton	28	87	28	-1	-82	-82	Catcliffe Primary School, Treeton Church of England Primary School, Waverley Junior Academy	Dream Catchers Day Nursery (Treeton), Railway Children Day Care Nursery, The Meadows Community Pre-School, Little Ollies Day Nursery, Dream Catchers (Treeton), 4 Childrensiders
Central	Whiston	5	-11	-21	-10	-31	-31	Whiston Junior and Infant School, Whiston Worrygoose Junior and Infant School	Whiston Pre-School, 5 Childrensiders
	Marbrough / Bradgate / Blackburn / Dropping Well / Meadowbank / Richmond Park	92	79	40	1	-52	-52	Blackburn Primary School, Kimberworth Community Primary School, Thornhill Primary School, Meadow View Primary School, Fenham Primary School	Little Plants Nursery Rotherham, Fenwood Day Nursery (Blackburn), 3 Childrensiders
Central	Greasbrough / Rockingham / Wingfield	28	78	51	-35	-67	-67	Greasbrough Primary School, Rockingham Junior and Infant School	Tiny Tots Greasbrough, 2 Childrensiders
	Kimberworth / Kimberworth Park	10	-17	-43	-27	-60	-60	St Bede's Catholic Primary School, Roughwood Primary School, Redscope Primary School	Kids World Kimberworth, 1 Childrensiders
Calderidge	Thorp Hesley	7	17	-5	-34	-54	-54	Wentworth CofE Junior and Infant School, Thorpe Hesley Primary School	7 Childrensiders
	East Dene/Clifton	22	15	-8	-10	-37	-37	East Dene Primary	The Fun Hub Nursery, Clifton Playgroup, Happy Kids East Dene, 2 Childrensiders
Calderidge	Eastwood / Town Centre	-76	29	5	-30	-55	-55	Calderidge Primary, Eastwood Village Primary School, St Ann's Primary School	Lime Tree Nursery (Eastwood), Our Ut Madinah Nursery, 3 Childrensiders
	Broom / Moorgate	81	48	17	10	-42	-42	Broom Valley Community School, Shewell Infant School, Shewell Junior School	Bury Bees Day Nursery at Rotherham, Moorgate Daycare Nursery, Grange Kindergarten/Rising 5's, 2 Childrensiders
Dinnington	Canlow	-96	-12	-22	-14	-25	-25	Canlow Woods Primary School	
	Anston	83	48	50	34	10	10	Anston Greenlands Primary School, Anston Brook Primary School, Anston Hillcrest Primary School	Lime Tree Day Nursery (The Hall), 12 Childrensiders
Dinnington	Dinnington / Loughton	117	10	-14	12	-44	-44	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Dinnington Community Primary School, Anston Park Infant School, Loughton All Saints' CofE Primary School, Loughton Junior and Infant School, Anston Park Junior School	Bright Skies Day Nursery, Kiddiwinks Day Nursery, Rainbow Friends Childcare Ltd - City Limits Zone, Anston Stones Early Years, Dinnington Pre-School, 7 Childrensiders
	Woodwards	23	-5	-7	-3	-7	-7	Woodwards Primary School	1 Childrensiders
Dinnington	Harthill / Kiveton / Wales / Todwick	25	19	-3	15	-30	-30	Wales Primary School, Todwick Primary School, Kiveton Park Infant School, Harthill Primary School, Kiveton Park Meadows Junior School	Kiveton & Wales Nursery, Little Explorers Nursery, Todwick Early Years Ltd, Wales Woodland Nursery, Harthill Pre-School, 4 Childrensiders
	Thurcroft	25	1	-12	-8	-35	-35	Thurcroft Junior Academy, Thurcroft Infant School	Happy Kids Thurcroft
Maltby	Bramley / Wickersley	81	34	12	10	-85	-85	Bramley Sunnyside Infant School, Wickensley Northfield Primary School, St Alban's CofE (Aided) Primary School, Bramley Grange Primary School, Listerdale Junior Academy, Ransdenwell Primary School, Ravenfield Primary Academy, Bramley Sunnyside Junior School	Granby Nurseries LTD (Wickensley), Hopscotch, Nurtured @ Northfield, Wickensley Nursery Ltd, Wonder Years Inspirational Day Care Centre, 22 Childrensiders
	Maltby	63	53	15	24	-30	-30	St Mary's Catholic Primary School (Maltby), Maltby Redwood Academy, Maltby Manor Academy, Maltby Lily Hall Academy, Crags Community School	All Children Great and Small Maltby, Lime Tree Early Years Centre, Once Upon A Time Nursery, Lina Pre-school, 9 Childrensiders
Rawmarsh	Rawmarsh	76	18	-12	-45	-117	-117	Rawmarsh Nursery School and Children's Centre, Rawmarsh Rosehill Junior School, Rawmarsh Ryecroft Infant School, Rawmarsh Thorngate Junior and Infant School, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Rawmarsh Ashwood Primary School, Marlowood Primary School	Dream Catchers Nursery (Parkgate), Fenwood House Day Nursery Rawmarsh, Granby Nurseries Ltd (Parkgate), Victoria Park Hall Day Nursery, 5 Childrensiders
Swinton	Swinton / Kilmhurst	124	-45	-69	36	-31	-31	Swinton Queen Primary School, Swinton Fitzwilliam Primary School, Kilmhurst Primary School, Rawmarsh Sandhill Primary School, Kilmhurst St Thomas' CofE Primary Academy, Brookfield Junior Academy	All Children Great And Small, Fenwood House Day Nursery Swinton, Piccadilly Pre-school, 4 Childrensiders
	Wath	111	92	88	61	17	17	Our Lady and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wath Victoria Primary School, Wath Church of England Primary School, Wath Central Primary School	Deanne Valley Day Nursery, Fenwood House Day Nursery Wath Upon Dearne, Tiny Tots Day Nursery, 6 Childrensiders
Thybergh	Brampton/West Merton South / West	14	-7	-29	12	-17	-17	Brampton Kils CofE Primary School, Brampton Cortonwood Infant School, Highfield Farm Primary School	West Merton Early Years, The Lime Trees @ Cortonwood, 2 Childrensiders
	Thybergh / Dalton	116	31	3	6	-30	-30	St Gerard's Catholic Primary School, Thybergh Primary School, Trinity Croft CofE Primary Academy, Thybergh Fullerton Church of England Primary Academy, High Greave Junior School, High Greave Infant School, Foljambe Primary School	Happy Kids Dalton, Lime Tree Day Nursery (Thybergh), Happy Kids Thybergh, 2 Childrensiders
Borough Total		1177	609	49	-28	-1070	-1070	Provides 2 year old places. Schools without P1	

BRIEFING	TO:	Rotherham Schools Forum
	DATE:	5.12.2025
	LEAD OFFICER:	Pam Ward – Head of Service Education Lindsay Wootton Ashforth – Education Safeguarding Lead
	TITLE:	Safeguarding in Schools
1. Background		
1.1	An Education Safeguarding Lead (ESL) was appointed in January 2023. This post is jointly funded through a one third contribution from Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) with the remaining funded through the Designated Schools Grant (DSG).	
2. Key Roles and responsibilities		
2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide strategic and operational leadership, support and challenge for school leaders to sustain high quality, robust safeguarding systems and procedures• Provide specialist up to date safeguarding advice and consultancy• Lead safeguarding audits in Local Authority Maintained schools and where necessary (school of concern)• Assist schools with Ofsted preparation or school improvement planning• Lead and coordinate the delivery of termly Education Safeguarding Forum meetings• Analyse Section 175 School Assurance Safeguarding Self-Assessment. Lead multi-agency partners in quality assuring safeguarding across the borough• Develop and facilitate bespoke safeguarding training for Designated Safeguarding Leads and School Governors• Actively participating in the RSCP Learning & Improvement delivery groups and RSCP quarterly audit activity• Ensure there is an up-to-date programme of learning & development events including the appropriate commissioning of services which cannot be delivered in-house and support schools in responding to emerging themes and trends• Support schools in the participation of Rapid Reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, and other quality assurance activity• Represent education on the Channel Panel, Child Death Overview Panel, Serious Violence Group – silver, Elective Home Education Strategic Group, Kinship Care Strategic Working Group• Respond to and support schools with with safeguarding complaints including Ofsted safeguarding qualifying complaints• Support onsite support for schools during Ofsted inspections• Support schools who receive an inadequate safeguarding judgment to achieve an ‘effective’ safeguarding outcome	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write the LA Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and whole school training materials and provide statutory guidance and information linked to emerging or priority safeguarding issues within schools • Ensure that all up to date national, regional and local guidance and safeguarding legislation is shared, understood and implemented by schools
3. Key Actions and Timelines	
3.1	<p>Education Safeguarding Forum: <i>Distributed leadership model</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus: national, regional, local safeguarding <i>emerging themes, threats and trends</i> • Held termly, free, universal offer to all schools, colleges • Separate PVI (Private, Voluntary and Independent) Early Years Forum held • All Multi Academy Trusts/LAM represented • Attendance of key multi-agency partners: RSCP, CSC - MASH, South Yorkshire Police, Evolve, Counter Terrorism Police Officers (Prevent), Trading Standards, Public Health • Consultation with schools – <i>‘the here and now’</i> • Over 95% of schools attend, in person.
3.2	<p>Themes explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Keeping Children Safe in Education (annual) • Families First – workforce transformation • Child exploitation (sexual/criminal) – <i>Evolve</i> • Multi-agency pathway for Vapes in Schools including illicit substances (THC) • Contextual safeguarding – <i>Children’s Social Care ‘Harm outside the Home’ launch June 2025</i> • Professional Curiosity • Sexual Health support services for young people - (inc. consultation with schools) <i>MESMAC</i> • Private Fostering/ Kinship care (<i>producing effective legal documents for court</i>) • Online risk- <i>Safer Rotherham Partnership</i> • South Yorkshire Police: new and emerging illegal online platforms – Com Network (Criminal Online Networks) • Partnership Intelligence Reporting – ‘schools’ best practice’ South Yorkshire Police • Ofsted safeguarding complaints and revised Local Authority protocol • Neglect – <i>Principle Social Worker</i> • Elective Home Education (<i>Access to Education Team</i>) • Children Missing from Education • Spiritual and Ritual Abuse (SARA) • LADO – allegations against staff management (<i>LADO Team support</i>) • Gender Questioning children and young people • Hate Crime – <i>South Yorkshire Police Hate Crime Officer</i> • SYP – knife crime and the management of bladed articles – <i>Violence Reduction Unit, SY Police GRIP Team</i> • SYP Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking – <i>SY Police Specialist Officer</i> • Cyber Prevention – <i>SY Police Cyber Crime Prevention Officer</i> • Prevent national updates: Counter Terrorism Local Profile, Extreme Right Wing, Incel ideology, Toxic influencers - <i>SY Police Counter Terrorism Police Team</i> • SYP Prevent Counter Terrorism Officers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevent referral to Channel (good practice case study) - Emerging themes and trends (the here and now) <i>ERW</i> e.g. ‘spotting the signs’ - Referral process to Channel: support for Headteachers - Signposting to support: Counter Terrorism Officers (Local, Regional) - Sheffield Prevent Education Officer – <i>in school training offer</i> - Commissioned bespoke support: <i>school management of ‘Threat and Risk Sept</i>

	<p>2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevent Governor training - Curriculum resources: <i>Educate Against Hate</i> – DfE materials • Responding to emerging need and threats in school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ‘Vapes in Schools’ – multi agency pathway for schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe Search, Screen and Confiscate – SY Police - Testing for THC – SY Police, Trading Standards - Confiscation from site - Trading Standards - Local Drug Information System (LDIS) - Public Health - 0-19 School Nurse support for vaping cessation - <i>Pilot project December 2025 – Introducing a Vape-Free Approach, a harm reduction approach</i> • Manvers 2024 – Home Office Small Steps delivery to all Secondary aged pupils in the borough (comprehensive engagement 14/16 Secondary schools) • Prevent November 2025 – specialist training for SEND/DSLs re: neurodiversity and online radicalisation susceptibility • Groundswell – Home Office approved face to face, Year 11 SEND/neurodiverse student workshops re: risks on line radicalisation and threshold of criminality • Development and pilot of Neglect screening tool for education professionals: RESHAPED tool. Launch during Safeguarding Awareness Week 2025, Neglect Conference. • Development of Child Sexual Abuse Pathway (Summer 2026)
4. Recommendations	
4.1	That the report be received and the content noted.

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Rotherham Schools Forum Forward Plan 2025/2026

Date of Meeting	Agenda & Reports Publication Date	Issues for Consideration	Lead Officer(s)
Friday 5th December 2025	Thursday 27 th November 2025	(a) School Funding Formula – Part A (b) School Funding Formula – Part B (c) Falling Rolls Policy (d) Early Years Annual Update (e) Education Safeguarding Annual Progress Report	Louise Keith Joshua Amahwe/ Louise Keith Aileen Chambers Pam Ward / Lindsay Wootton-Ashforth
Friday 16th January 2026	Thursday 8 th January 2026	(a) Dedicated Schools Grant / Schools Budget Update 2025/26 (b) Schools Funding Settlement (2026/27) (c) Schools Block Dedicated Budget (2026/27) (d) Early Years Block Dedicated Budget (2026/27) (e) Central School Services Budget Block (2026/27) (f) SEND Sufficiency Strategy Mid Year Update	Joshua Amahwe/ Louise Keith Joshua Amahwe/ Louise Keith Joshua Amahwe/ Louise Keith Joshua Amahwe/ Louise Keith Mark Cummins

		<i>(items' c, and e may require a vote and the meeting must be quorate)</i>	
Friday 27th March 2026	Thursday 19 th March 2026	(a) Dedicated School Grant (DSG) and Schools Budgets 2025-26 Outturn (b) High Needs Budget Block (2026/27)	Joshua Amahwe/ Louise Keith Joshua Amahwe/ Aileen Chambers