Bury Schools Forum
Thursday 21 October 2025
Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Early Years
None in Attendance

Maintained Primary

Richard Ainsworth,	Governor (Plus Governors Forum) (S)
Rachel O'Neil	Headteacher - Hoyle Nursery School

Maintained Secondary
None in Attendance

Maintained Special
None in attendance

Academy Primary

Ruth Onyekaba	Gorsefield Primary
Kelly Macadam	

Academy Secondary
None in Attendance

Special

Katy Neild	Millwood Primary

Pupil Referral Unit
None in Attendance

Non-Schools Sector

Helena Thom	NEU
Karen Hopwood	NASUWT
Ben Connor	

16 – 19 Education Representative

Carina Vitti	Holy Cross College

Children's Services Department

Ben Dunne	Director of Education and Skills
Philip Herd	Finance
Alison Vidler	Senior Schools Finance Officer (Schools & Systems Finance)
Wendy Young	Head of Service SEND & Inclusion

Observer(s)
None in attendance

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

James Gabrielides	Head Teacher – Unsworth Primary
Joanne Hurst	Headteacher – Millwood School
Martin Van Hecke	The Sycamore CE Trust – St Thomas's C E Primary
Simon Waddington,	Headteacher – Hollins Grundy Primary

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

3 SEND GRADUATED APPROACH

Wendy Young Head of Service, Send and Inclusion gave a presentation setting out Bury's Graduated Approach and Communities of Practice.

Bury SEND Partnership: Our Journey of Improvement

- Local Area SEND Inspection (2024): Significant concerns raised about outcomes and experiences for children with SEND
- Priority Impact Plan (PIP): Targeted multi-agency response to Ofsted's findings
- Leadership & Governance: SEND Improvement and Assurance Board (SIAB), chaired independently, with representation from schools and system leaders.
- Ongoing Monitoring & Engagement: Progress tracked through six-monthly stocktakes and deep dives (DfE & NHS England), with an 18-month inspection and a local engagement session held on 20 October 2025.
- Preparing for the Education White Paper: will bring new expectations and new opportunities. We will respond with a networked, collaborative approach and that addresses Bury's strategic priorities and local challenges.

It was explained that the goal is to deliver on the things that matter to children and young people. Our goal is to work as a partnership so that children and families can take control of their lives, access the support that they need, and reach their potential.

The outcomes we are trying to deliver are the ones that our Children and Young People want:

- I am safe
- The people that care for me are respected and supported
- I feel healthy and well
- I have fun
- I have the freedom to choose my next steps and I am as independent as possible
- I have my say and feel heard
- I feel included at home, school and in the community

We promise that we will ensure children and young people are informed and understand the service that they are being offered and how it will help them.
We recognise that good relationships with children and young people are key to all who work with them and we promise that professionals will endeavour to build a strong, transparent and honest relationship with the young person they are working with.
We promise that staff who engage with children and young people will have the appropriate engagement skills and training"

Our priority focus is delivering improvements to our SEND services and support through our work:

- Co-production of improvements to service and support, and better communication with children and parents
- Ensuring the right support for children is available at the right time
- Ensuring effective transport to ensure children can access education
- Supporting our parents and carers
- Supporting children and young people to have fun

Our most important partners are our children and young people, and parents and carers. We are working with them through Youth Cabinet, Changemakers, Bury2Gether, Co-production events, and school visits.

The organisations working together to deliver these improvements are Bury Council, NHS, Primary and Secondary schools, Early Years settings and Post-16 settings

- Re-launch of the Local Area SEND Networks, empowering schools as strategic partners in SEND delivery and enhancing collaboration and shared accountability.
- Development of Bury's Ordinary Available Inclusive Provision (OAIP), modelled on Greater Manchester (GM) inclusive framework, promoting, high-quality provision for all learners.
- Revised Graduated Approach , supported by a toolkit from Early Years to Post 16, through an embedded universal, targeted support offer across local area SEND Services, to guide practitioners through assess–plan–do–review cycles with clarity and confidence.
- Community-centered educational psychology model to foster meaningful collaboration between schools and families, breaking down silos, through co-produced services and shared problem-solving.
- Faster Access to Support, streamlined pathways for early identification and intervention, reducing delays and improving outcomes for children and young people
- Fostering effective joined-up working, responsive to the unique needs and challenges of each community

The presentation set out the 8 areas of OAIP

Partnerships
Ethos & Culture
Physical & Sensory Environment
Assessment
Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Communication
Resources
Staff and Training

Notice, Check & Try outlining what we do at the early stages
<u>Notice,</u>
What subtle clues is this child giving us?
Look for patterns and possibilities, not problems
Emotionally, socially, academically, or physically
<u>Check</u>
Have we heard from everyone who knows this child?
Child, family, staff who know them well
Avoid assumptions or bias
<u>Try</u>

What practical changes can we introduce now?
Adjusting environment, routines, resources
Small changes can make a big difference

The key activities were set out from the initial meeting to the strategic support and all of the steps in between.

It was agreed;

1. That Wendy be thanked for the presentation.

2. That the presentation be shared with all Members of the Schools Forum

4 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK (HNB) OUTTURN 24-25 AND 25-26 PROJECTIONS

Phil Herd presented a report informing Schools Forum of the HNB 24-25 Outturn Position and the 25-26 HNB Projections.

The in-year deficit in 2024-25 was £1,594,769 and after underspend from other DSG Blocks was £581,807. (Appendix 1)

The brought forward deficit was £18,459,281 meaning the deficit at 31st March 2025 was £19,041,088.

A deficit of £19m is significant but many LA's who are not in Project Safety valve have far greater deficits.

An in-year deficit of £581,807 is minor compared to other LA's and previous years in Bury.

The deficits across all LA's are huge and growing at an unsustainable level. There is a white paper due to be published which will outline the Governments SEN reform plans. The implications of these plans will be the subject of a future report to Forum.

There are pressures in this year's projections: -

Independent special schools £934k. This is due to a lack of internal SEN provision.

The number of pupils requiring Alternative Provision is increasing. There is an AP strategy being produced and efforts are continually being made to re-integrate pupils back into mainstream settings. £753k

There are some underspends that help mitigate the above
The take up of RP places is continually lower than what is planned. (£400k)

The number of EHCP's projected in Bury schools is lower than what was projected in January. (£533k)

Overall Position Forecast March 2026
The forecast position for March 2026 is a deficit of £22.256m compared to a of £22.268m in January.

Project Safety Valve (PSV)
Bury is part of the PSV programme and is required to submit financial monitoring reports to the DFE on a quarterly basis. These figures project many years into the future.

The projections indicate a deficit of £34.6m by March 3032 and thereafter a reduction. These forecasts will be overridden by the implications of the pending SEN reform white paper.

It was agreed:

That the contents of the report be noted.

5 SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

It was reported that there were a number of vacancies on the Schools Forum and it was requested that Teachers and Officers present promote the work of the Forum to colleagues who may be able to fill the vacant positions.

It was agreed:

That the vacant positions be promoted and any one interested be advised to contact Andrea Tomlinson.

6 FACILITIES TIME FOR UNION DUTIES

At the last meeting of the schools' Forum the following decisions had been made in relation to facilities time for union duties:-

1. To continue de-delegation for maintained schools & buy back by Maintaining the current arrangement where maintained schools de-delegate a portion of their budget to the local authority to fund a central pool for facilities time and academies pay via buy-back.

2. To defer any further decisions to the next meeting of the Schools' Forum when more representatives are in attendance.

Most union representatives are released from school for only part of their working week, and are therefore able to continue to undertake any management responsibilities beyond their role of classroom teacher. Where a union representative is out of school for the full period of their contract, the school is funding the cost of additional responsibilities, as they only receive backfill costs up to UPS3.

The costs were set out as:-
Costs are at 2025-26 (Apr-Mar) pay rates & pupil numbers for schools contributing to the central fund (26,862). For information, the 2025-26 cost is £4.59 per pupil.

If Forum support full cost reimbursement for the rep who, due to the exceptional circumstances where they are not in school at all, and therefore cannot undertake the additional responsibilities related to the TLR, the additional cost (at 2025-26 rates) would be:

Avg Primary 210 Pupil - £29
Avg Secondary – 1000 pupils £140

If Forum support full cost reimbursement for all teacher union reps – costs are approximate based on last known salary ranges of the staff and the difference from current reimbursement level:

Avg Primary 210 Pupil- £299
Avg Secondary – 1000 pupils £1442

It was suggested that the Unions discuss the position at a separate meeting with the Director of Education and Skills.

Note: The meeting started at 4pm and ended at 5.20pm