

Bury Schools Forum
Tuesday 9 December 2025
Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Early Years

None in Attendance

Maintained Primary

Richard Ainsworth,
Simon Waddington

Governor (Plus Governors Forum)
Headteacher

Maintained Secondary

None in Attendance

Maintained Special

Katy Neild

Millwood

Academy Primary

Ruth Onyekaba
Martin Van Hecke
James Gabrieledes

Headteacher Gorsefield Primary
Headteacher St Thomas's CE Primary
Headteacher Sunny Bank Primary

Academy Secondary

None in Attendance

Special

Pupil Referral Unit

None in Attendance

Non-Schools Sector

Helena Thom

NEU

16 – 19 Education Representative

None in attendance

Children's Services Department

Ben Dunne
Philip Herd
Alison Vidler

Director of Education and Skills
CYP Finance Business Partner
Senior Schools Finance Officer (Schools & Systems
Finance)

Observer(s)

Katherine Ashworth

Millwood School

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Kelly Macadam	MAT CEO
Carina Vitti	Holy Cross College
Joanne Hurst	Millwood School
Claire Ferguson,	Oakplc - Observor
Karen Hopwood	NASUWT

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed:

That subject to a couple of typing errors, the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

3 MATTERS ARISING

Ben Dunne, Director of education and skills referred to the issue that had been raised regarding facilities time for union representatives and stated that it would be good to reach an agreement in relation to this as soon as possible.

He stated that he would arrange for a meeting with himself and Alison Vidler to meet with the teacher union representative concerned to discuss.

4 SCHOOLS ACADEMIES AND FUNDING 2026 - 27

Alison Vidler presented the Schools and Academies Funding Update 2025-26

1. Indicative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2025-26

It was explained that for the second year, information that is usually issued to Local Authorities in the Summer Term was received at the end of November.

This includes National Funding Formula information, along with Operational Guidance for 2026-27 in relation to the Schools Block and the Central Schools Services Block. Dedicated Schools Grant allocations, and school data are due to be issued during the last week of the Autumn Term. No information has been issued yet, in relation to the Early Years Block or the High Needs Block.

1a. Schools Block

It was reported that in 2025-26 schools received additional funding through separate National Insurance Contributions(NICs) grants and the Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG), in addition to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

The funding for these additional grants will be added to the baseline funding for 2026-27. Initial estimates indicate a per pupil increase of 5.5% (Primary pupils) and 6% (Secondary pupils) when compared with 2025-26. The additional increase in Secondary funding reflects the increase in deprivation captured on the October 2024 census. However, once the baseline is adjusted for the rolling-in of separate grants, the overall increase is around 2.1% on all factors.

The effect of the separate grants has been factored into the increase in the Minimum Per Pupil Funding Level, but no further percentage uplift has been applied for 2026-27.

The National Funding Formula uses data from the prior year's school census. For 2026-27 this means that DSG paid to Local Authorities will be based on October 2024 census data and this will not reflect the expansion in Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility. Schools will therefore receive funding for the costs of FSM expansion, starting from September 2026, through a separate grant.

Final school-level DSG allocations will be based on October 2025 pupil census data. Provisional census data demonstrates a further decline in pupil numbers in Bury Schools, which will have an impact on the overall funding and on individual schools.

The minimum funding guarantee (MFG) is a protection against changes in per pupil school budget share (SBS) funding between the 2025-26 and 2026-27. The amount of protection will vary according to the impact of local changes in the funding formula and the effect of these on individual per pupil rates.

In 2026-27, local authorities have the flexibility to set local MFG between minus 0.5% and 0% compared to the baseline. The baseline will include funding in respect of the additional grants.

1b. High Needs Block

High Needs funding allocations are subject to future announcements.

The Core Schools Budget Grants will be incorporated into DSG funding for Special Schools in 2026-27.

1c. Central Schools Services Block

The 2025-26 NIC grant for centrally employed school staff will be rolled into the 2026-27 CSSB. This will be added to each local authority's baseline Funding for historic commitments continues to be subject to a year-on-year reduction of 20%.

1d. Early Years Block

Early Years funding allocations are subject to future announcements.

2 Formula Unit Values

Schools' Forum is required to recommend the formula unit values to be applied to all Mainstream Schools & Academies funding allocations on an annual basis.

The formula unit values applied to Bury Schools and Academies funding formula already directly mirror the DfE National Funding Formula (NFF) unit values.

The NFF Unit Values applicable to 2026-27 are set out in the report.

Decision:

Bury's Schools' Forum recommends all the unit values specified in the table provided, to be applied in compliance with the National Funding Formula (NFF) to Bury's Mainstream schools and academies funding formula for 2026-27.

Schools' Forum is required to recommend the De delegated items each year. The table set out in the report proposes the level of de-delegation to be recommended for 2026-27.

Decision:

Schools' Forum (maintained school representatives) recommends the de-delegated values for 2026-27, summarised as follows:

- Schools of Concern @ £7.09 per pupil
- Free School Meals Eligibility Checking @ £5.90 per FSM6
- Trade Union Facilities Time @ £4.87 per pupil
- School Improvement Brokerage and Monitoring Grant @ £16.87 per-pupil.

4. Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)

The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) is a protection within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) that ensures a school's per-pupil funding does not decrease by more than a set percentage from one academic year to the next. For the 2026-2027 financial year, the allowed MFG range is between -0.5% and 0.0% for mainstream schools, meaning local authorities could choose to guarantee no decrease (0%) or allow a small one (-0.5%) to make the local formula work. This safeguard is a local authority decision based on guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). In 2025-26, Bury set the MFG at +0.0%. 18 schools benefitted from MFG protection. For comparison, the impact of a possible change to the MFG is shown in the table in the report, using the 2025-26 values.

Decision:

Schools' Forum recommends that the MFG protection is set at -0.5% in line with DfE guidance.

5. Headroom

After all formula factors have been updated as per the above recommendations and in accordance with the National Funding Formula unit values, there should be a balance of DSG Schools Block that remains unallocated. This balance is required to cover any outstanding updates to budget determinations as follows:

- October 2025 census variations – Pupil numbers will be adjusted for in the final Schools Block determination, however any increases in funding required due to variances in pupil cohort characteristics need to be covered from any available headroom monies, for example if increased deprivation funding is required once all up-to-date pupils have been mapped into the respective factors.
- Growth – where schools meet the criteria agreed by Schools Forum in 2023 for Local Authority approved bulge classes.
- Falling Rolls Fund – funding may be set aside from the Schools Block to create a small fund to support good schools with falling rolls, where local planning data shows that the surplus places will be needed within the next three financial years. This is unlikely to be needed.
- Minimum per pupil funding Level (MFL) and Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) protections – once all final data has been input there may be increased protections required on individual school budgets to ensure their actual budget allocations comply with the MFL and MFG funding per-pupil levels and protections.

If, when all items above have been updated to reflect the actual individual schools budget determinations, and any amounts to support growth and falling rolls have been allocated, there remains a balance of unallocated Schools Block funding, the Local Authority will factor a transfer of this balance by way of supporting the deficit recovery to the High Needs Block.

Schools' Forum may recommend up to 0.5% transfer of Schools' Block without any disapplication process being required to be approved by the Secretary of State for Education.

A 0.5% transfer to the High Needs Block has been factored into future years as part of DSG Safety Valve Management Plan submitted to the DfE.

If there is insufficient Headroom once all other updates have been completed, then Schools Forum may need to consider how to balance the overall Schools Block by reviewing all formula factors.

Decision:

Schools' Forum recommends the use of Headroom to address all outstanding items outlined above and a transfer of any balance, up to a maximum of 0.5%, of unallocated Schools Block Headroom to the High Needs Block, the amount to be confirmed at the meeting of Schools' Forum in January 2026.

Note: The meeting started at 4pm and ended at 4.50pm