

Schools Forum

19th June 2025

Minutes of the Meeting:

Attendees:

- Stewart Biddles
- Hannah Baker
- Jayne Jones
- Alex Newton
- Jake Grinsill
- Sally Banfield
- Debbie Horn
- Steve Margetts
- Louise Willmott
- Tim Stephens
- Stephen Hulme
- * Tamsin Summers

1. Apologies and Changes to Membership

- Clive Starr(resigned)
- Stuart Bellworthy
- Sarah Tomkinson
- Rob Parr
- Laurence Frewin

Stewart Biddles Chaired the Schools Forum meeting in the absence of Sarah Tomkinson.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Minutes and Actions agreed and ratified.

Point 8 re number of Tribunals decreasing – Hannah to bring information to the next meeting. Sally questioned the accuracy of the reported leveling off in tribunals. Hannah clarified that while overall tribunals have decreased, specific settings like Coombe Pafford and Mayfield school are still seeing higher numbers from both Torbay and Devon LA.

Louise to send Schools Forum guidance with the minutes to members.

Members do not agree with the decision on Early Years funding and would like to escalate this to understand what methods of appeal exist. Members to discuss the powers held by Forum at the next meeting.

Jayne raised concerns about the timeliness of communication regarding the SLCN pilot. Hannah explained the support available and the need for better communication.

Rebranding the Locality Pilot – Hannah addressed that it was something that will be considered as part of the locality pilot evaluations.

3. Schools Forum Checklist

Louise to send the checklist out to all members to return in word format. Sent

4. Financial Reports

Rob Parr's figures will be rolled over to the next meeting.

5. Safety Valve Update:

- Jake enquired about the strategic approach from the SEND department in supporting PVI (Private, Voluntary, and Independent) settings with RSA (Request for Statutory Assessment) and EHC (Education, Health, and Care) plan applications. He expressed concerns about the lack of familiarity with the process in some nurseries, leading to challenges in supporting children with complex needs transitioning to primary school. ¹
- Hannah explained that there is an early years panel and a Section 23 notice panel that regularly discuss children with significant needs. The SEND team is part of this panel, and they work closely with Early Years to ensure that children who may need an EHC plan are identified early. She acknowledged that there have been a few instances where the process was not followed correctly, often due to cross-border issues or misunderstandings about the timeline. Hannah offered to look into specific cases if provided with details and emphasized the importance of communication and training for nursery staff.

Actions:

Locality Pilot Communication to Early Years Providers:

- **Hannah** to liaise with Head of Early Years to continue the communication regarding the SLCN pilot and support available.

Safety Valve Update:

- **Hannah** to provide tribunal numbers on paper for the next meeting.

Forum Powers and Membership:

Louise to send the DfE Schools Forum guidance to all members.

Stewart / Sarah to write to members to express the importance of full and regular attendance and contribution.