

Meeting of the Schools Forum
Held on Thursday 11th December 2025 at 11.00am
via MS Teams Digital Platform

Minutes

NAME	Organisation - School Members	Attended
Rachel Lewis	Hindley Sure Start Nursery	Yes
Louise Curran	Rowan Tree Primary	Apologies
Anne Isherwood	Three Towers Alternative Provision Academy	Yes
Tracy Mingaud-Cunningham	Primary Governor	Apologies
Adrian Hardy	Secondary Governor	Yes
Gary Hayes	Orrell St James Primary	Yes
Ian McDermott	Atherton Sacred Heart	Apologies
Julie Hassan	St Oswald's Catholic Primary	Yes
Matthew Boyle	Leigh St Thomas CE Primary School	Yes
Lisa Hobden	St Patrick's Catholic Primary School	Yes
Jude Norman	Outwood Academy	No
Andy McGlown	St. Peters RC High School	Yes
Martin Wood	The Deanery High School	No
Paul Davies	Fred Longworth High School	No
	Organisation - Non School Members	
Sue Morris	Care Love Learn Childcare Limited	No
Simon Lett	Winstanley College	Yes
Max Atkins	Wigan NEU	No
Need nominated member	Diocesan Representative	
	Organisation- Nominated observers	
Cllr Dane Anderton	Cabinet Member	Yes
Chris Nestor	NEU	Yes
Mike Wilkinson	Wigan NASUWT	Yes
Mark Clayton	GMB	Apologies
	Organisation - In Attendance	
Mark Rotheram (KR)	Wigan Council Finance – Strategic Finance Manager	Yes
Kirsten Reid (KR)	Wigan Council Finance – Group Finance Manager (Schools)	Yes
Cath Pealing (CP)	Assistant Service Director, Education	Yes
Jo Sullivan	Clerk to the Forum, Wigan Council Governor Services	Yes

Quorum: 40% (8 of the 18 current School/Non-School Members)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Mark Clayton, and Louise Curran.

The Chair informed the Board that this would be Julie Hassan's last School Forum meeting as she would be retiring at the end of this term. The Chair thanked Julie for her time as a Forum Member and Members wished Julie best wishes in her retirement.

Note for the minutes – Tracy Mingaud-Cunningham, Ian McDermott submitted apologies after the meeting, to be considered at next meeting.

2. **Agreement of Any Other Urgent Business to Be Added to the Agenda**

No other business was raised.

3. **Previous Minutes**

Members **confirmed** that the minutes from the Forum meeting held on **16th October 2025** were a correct record.

Item 7, Forum Membership – Members were encouraged to speak to Headteachers in their consortia to request representation to fill the vacancy that would be left by Julie Hassan, who was retiring at the end of this term. The Clerk confirmed that she had already contacted academies.

Q. Which area of the borough does Julie Hassan currently represent?

A. Ashton.

ACTION – Julie Hassan to contact Ashton schools.

4. **Schools Block Funding Formula 2026/27**

Members had received a summary of the published information in respect of the funding formula for 2026/27 in advance of the meeting.

MR highlighted:

- As in previous years the Local Authority is responsible for determining the local schools funding formula model to be used to distribute final delegated budget allocations to individual schools (referred to by the DfE as the National Funding Formula "soft" approach). At the meeting of the Wigan Council Cabinet on the 20/01/2022 Cabinet approved the delegation of future decisions to approve the School Funding Formula model to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Families. Wigan Council continued to apply NFF which will be used to allocate funding for 2026-27 funding.
- The published provisional NFF schools block funding (excluding funding through the growth and falling rolls factor) for 2026-27 is £299,873,695. It includes the funding for rates of £1,836,888. This leaves £298,036,807 to be passed onto schools.
- The school's block is ring-fenced, but the Local Authority is permitted to transfer up to 0.5% of the school's block funding allocated to other blocks (i.e. high needs) with the agreement of their Schools Forum. This position is reviewed every year

and the agreed position for 2025/26 was to transfer £750,000 from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.

- As part of the 2025 Budget, it was announced that the Government would not expect local authorities to need to fund future special educational needs costs from their general funds once the statutory override ends at the 31/03/2028. As such local authorities will not build up further deficits from 2028/29 onwards. Further details on the support for local authorities with historic and accruing deficits up to the 31/02/2028, and conditions for accessing such support, will be set out in the upcoming Local Government Finance settlement.
- The latest projection for Wigan's overall DSG deficit is as follows:
 - 31/03/2026 £24.192m deficit
 - 31/03/2027 £37.556m deficit
 - 31/03/2028 £52.335m deficit

Schools' forum members are requested to:

- a) Consider and agree the formula factors, rates and principles as set out in section 4 to be used for school's block allocations in 2026-27.
- b) Note that growth funding allocations will only be available in January 2026.
- c) Confirm agreement of the principles to be applied for the 2026-27 financial year.
- d) Consider the approval of (in the context of the necessary transfer from the school's block to high needs block (HNB)):
 - Model 1 – transfer of £1.499M from school's block (0.5%)
 - Model 2 – transfer of £0.75M from school's block

Q. Appendix 2, the number of schools uplifted to minimum pupil rate looked inaccurate?

A. The Finance Team would check the figures and re-circulate. (An updated version of Appendix 2 was circulated to all members on the 15/12/2025)

Q. We cannot see where the Minimum Finding Grant (MFG) is protecting anybody. Should this figure be zero?

A. The Finance Team would check the figures, but this is what the modelling is showing based on 0% MFG applied on the currently available data. (The updated version confirmed no schools requiring an MFG adjustment based on the modelling at the time).

Member comment – all figures were based on last year's data; the new audit change could result in some variations.

MR – ultimately this would be dictated by pupil numbers. All guarantees were on a per pupil basis.

Q. We accept that we need to consider the 0.5% transfer, the question was when the override finishes in 2028, and the deficit would not go onto Local Authority books, had this not changed thinking slightly?

A. Whilst this was welcome news in terms of the position from 01/04/2028 onwards there is still the likelihood that the Council's overall DSG position will be in a deficit of £52m by the 31/03/28. It is still not clear what level of responsibility Wigan Council will have for this debt. Our DSG Deficit plans will be reviewed by the DfE, and we would be challenged on decisions made to manage this deficit.

Member comment – the increase was not painless at school level. We were being asked and trying our very best to be as inclusive as possible without needing to rely on the HNB. Whilst the 2 amounts did not seem a lot, in secondary schools we were talking about the cost of a teaching assistant. This would impact on whether we could maintain

pupil places or not. We were heading for a significant number of schools moving into a deficit budget.

CP – this was the current climate, and we had looked at the figures and appreciated that it may be around £15k for secondary schools. We were also trying to balance inclusion.

MR – The Local Authority can apply to the Secretary of State for permission to transfer 0.5% from the school's block to another block if they do not secure the consent of the Schools Forum or if they wish to transfer more than 0.5% of the school's block funding.

Q. If Forum did not agree and the Local Authority wrote to the Secretary of State; would you be asking for more than £1.499m?

A. No.

Q. What was the permanent exclusion contribution on top of the 0.5%?

A. £4k. Some Headteachers had been questioning the permanent exclusion contributions. We had tried to make it fairer and more balanced, noting that primary was rarely excluding pupils. It would be interesting to see what feedback schools had had.

Member comment – we do not think that School's Forum can approve the permanent exclusion contribution on behalf of schools. The Local Authority and Finance Team agreed. A survey had been sent to schools to gauge opinions on the contribution, but not all returns had been received yet.

CP – we had agreed the permanent exclusion contribution for this academic year, and unless we had a 100% buy-in it would become even more unfair.

Member comment – technically the permanent exclusion contribution would have to be dealt with a different way.

Q. Would you still be asking for the £4k PEX contribution if an Independent Review Panel needed to be set up?

A. The expectation was that the £4k would be paid should the pupil not be reinstated, following the guidance.

For clarity, MR confirmed that School's Forum had approved a £750k HNB contribution for the financial year 2025-26. At Schools Forum in June 2025, we asked for a continuation of the permanent exclusion for the academic year 2025-26. We were now asking for a contribution from the school's block to the HNB for 2026-27.

Member – this contribution was put into place to better the system. We accept that the education landscape had changed significantly but by some schools refusing to pay the contribution this shows a breach in the wall of doing what's best for Wigan pupils.

CP – we would not be asking for the £1.499m if we were confident the £4k would be paid by all schools.

Cllr Anderton stated that he was supporting the 0.5%, as he was aware of all other pressures in the system.

Members **approved** model 1, a 0.5% (£1.499m) transfer from the school's block to the HNB but also **agreed** that from September 2026, there would be no contribution of the £4k permanent exclusion through this process.

Anne Isherwood and Simon Lett abstained from the vote as they had a potential conflict of interest through their settings.

CP thanked all Members for the last 10 years for having a system that works and for liaising with colleagues.

5. **De-Delegation 2026/27**

Members had received information on proposals for de-delegation values for the financial year 2026/27 in advance of the meeting.

KR highlighted:

- De-delegation applied to maintained only, we can offer at a buy back to academies.
- In view of the continuing cost pressures and potential impact on the services, the Local Authority would like to seek approval for an increase to the value of most of the de-delegations in line with the 2.87% proposed increase in Wigan's schools block allocation funding for 2026/27. This is in line with the uplift method previously agreed at Schools Forum. Once the block was remodelled, overall variation will be adjusted.
- Pupil numbers were used to calculate the de-delegations and education functions will be updated when the allocations are finalised in December 2025.
- The total Increase for these de-delegations is £75,210.

MR commented that in the light of the decision on the previous item we will reduce down the uplift % to reflect the reduced funding available to the schools block.

Q. Asset management sat within the education function budget, was there funding for schools in there and if so, which schools were able to access it?

A. This was for emergency works for example if your school had roof leak, it could be funded by the Local Authority. It was mainly for statutory functions were in budget. This may apply to voluntary aided schools.

Mainstream School's Forum members of maintained schools **approved** the proposed changes to the de-delegation services for 2026/27.

6. **Scheme of Financial Administration and Wigan Scheme for Financing Schools (SOFA)**

Members had received the updated SOFA and Scheme for Financing Schools in advance of the meeting. The documents had been revised for the change of finance system, procurement rules and formatting.

School's Forum Members **approved** the changes to the Scheme of Financial Administration and the Scheme for Financing Schools.

7. **For information**

F40 briefing papers (securing fairer funding across schools) had been with Members in advance of the meeting for information. In terms of some tables in the reports, Wigan Council had been ranked 49 out of 151 authorities for the HNB and 62/151 for overall funding. We were just below average for both. Financial challenges were relative to other authorities.

8. Any Other Urgent Business

The Chair stated that we need to encourage secondary heads to attend Forum meetings. Andy McGlown would speak to WASCL.

CP – please in the interim let your colleagues know some of decisions that had been made today. The minutes of this meeting would be shared once available.

9. Future Meeting Dates

Members **noted** future meeting dates this academic year:

- Spring 1 – Thursday 15th January 2026 at 11am
- Spring 2 – Thursday 26th March 2026 at 11am
- Summer 1 – Thursday 14th May 2026 at 11am
- Summer 2 – Thursday 25th June 2026 at 11am

The meeting closed at 12:05pm.

Background documents (available for public inspection):

Appendices to the circulated briefing reports disclose important facts on which the reports are based and were relied upon in preparing the reports. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact the Forum Clerk
j.sullivan@wigan.gov.uk