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To: The Chair and Members
of the Devon Education
Forum

County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 4QD

Date: 14 January 2025

Contact: Fiona Rutley 01392 382305

DEVON EDUCATION FORUM

Wednesday, 22nd January, 2025

A meeting of the Devon Education Forum is to be held on the above date at 10.00 am at Committee Suite - County Hall to consider the following matters.

Donna Manson
Chief Executive

A G E N D A

PART I - OPEN COMMITTEE

1 Apologies for absence

2 Declarations of Interest

To receive any declarations of interest, over and above any general interest arising from being a teacher or governor of a school.

3 Minutes (Pages 1 - 10)

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2024, attached.

4 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

Items which in the opinion of the Chair should be considered at the meeting as matters of urgency.

5 Matters Arising from the Last Meeting and Report back on Issues Raised with Cabinet/f40

To consider any matters arising from the last meeting where not otherwise covered on this agenda and to report on items considered at the Cabinet.

6 Membership

SPECIFIC AGENDA ITEMS

7 Inclusion and Learning Update (Pages 11 - 32)
(10.10am)

Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Futures (DEF/25/01), attached.

8 Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Transformation Programme Update (Pages 33 - 36)
(10.30am)

Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Futures (DEF/25/02), attached.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

9 Finance
(10.50am)

a Schools Finance Group (SFG) Minutes (Pages 37 - 44)

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2025, attached.

Also available at

[Schools Finance Group \(SFG\) – Education and Families \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/schools-finance-group-sfg-education-and-families)

b Finance Update (Pages 45 - 56)

Joint Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Futures and Director of Finance and Public Value (DEF/25/03) attached.

c 2025-26 Schools Funding Arrangements Consultation Responses (Pages 57 - 68)

Joint Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Futures and Director of Finance and Public Value (DEF/25/04), attached.

- d Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2025-26: Budget Planning (Pages 69 - 74)
Joint Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Futures and
Director of Finance and Public Value (DEF/25/05), attached.

10 Trade Union Facilities/Support - Agenda Item from TCC

(12)

Officers to give a verbal update in response to this item raised by DEF's Teachers Consultative Committee representative.

STANDARD AGENDA ITEMS

ITEMS FOR DEBATE AND INFORMATION

11 Standing (and other) Groups (Pages 75 - 80)

(12.15pm)

To review action and receive minutes for the Forum from its standing groups (excepting Schools Finance Group as set out above) and to receive summary/minutes from other groups:-

(a) Standing Groups

(i) School Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024, attached.

Also available at

[School Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group \(SOCA\) – Education and Families \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)

(b) Other Groups

-

12 Correspondence

13 Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings at 10am. Please check venue/arrangements

<https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>

Wednesday 19 March 2025

Wednesday 18 June 2025

Wednesday 19 Nov 2025

Wednesday 21 Jan 2026

Wednesday 18 March 2026.

(12.20pm) CLOSE

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Induction Loop available



DEVON EDUCATION FORUM

20 November 2024

Present:-

Schools Members

Primary Headteachers

Mr N Alford	Shebbear Primary
Mr C Tribble	Honiton Primary
Mr P Walker	First Federation Trust (Academy)
Mr I Thomas	TEAM Multi Academy Trust (Substitute)

Primary Governors

Dr N Frost	Crediton, Hayward's
Mrs N Gleu	Newton Abbot, Decoy

Secondary Headteachers

Mr J Buchanan	Tavistock Dartmoor MAT (Academy)
Ms J Fossey	West Exe School, Ted Wragg MAT (Academy)
Mr G Hill	Pilton CC, Ventrus MAT (Academy)

Secondary Governors

Mrs J Larcombe	Blackdown Education Partnership
Mr A Hines	Education SW Trust (Academy)
Mr A Walmsley	The Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust (Academy)

Nursery School

Mrs S Baker	Westexe
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Special Headteacher

Ms S Pickering	Mill Water School
Ms N Burroughs	Learn to Live Federation, Substitute (observing)

Special Governor

Mrs F Butler	Marland School (Chair)
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Alternative Provision

Mr R Gasson	WAVE Multi Academy Trust
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DEVON EDUCATION FORUM

20/11/24

Non-Schools Members

Ms M White

PETROC, 16-19

Mrs B Alderson

Teachers Consultative Committee (TCC)

Ms G Rolstone

Early Years, Private & Voluntary Independent

Observer

Councillor A Leadbetter

Cabinet Member – Children’s Services and Skills

Councillor L Samuel

Cabinet Member – SEND Improvement Services

Apologies

Ms K Brimacombe

Whitchurch Primary, First Fed’n (Academy)

Ms H Brown

RC Diocesan Schools, Plymouth (Faith)

Mr B Blythe

PETROC, 16-19

Ms S Crook

Tiverton High, Federation of Tiverton Schools

141 Election of Chair

DECISION:

That Mrs Faith Butler be elected Chair (for a 2 year term - until the autumn term meeting 2026).

142 Election of Vice-Chair

DECISION:

That Mr Alex Walmsley be elected Vice-Chair (for a 2 year term - until the autumn term meeting 2026).

143 Minutes

DECISION:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2024 be signed as a correct record.

144 Matters Arising from the Last Meeting and Report back on Issues Raised with Cabinet/f40

DISCUSSION:

(a) Arising on Minute 135(b), Devon's Approach to Pupil Premium

Members expressed disappointment that an outstanding action as raised at DEF meetings had not yet received detailed consideration to enable Pupil Premium money to be automatically paid to schools, potentially achieving significantly more funding. Whilst noting that a number of LAs had found a solution, it was recognised that this was an easier process for single tier LAs, than for two tier LAs such as Devon.

Officers advised that they were continuing to explore the pooling of housing benefit and income data from across Devon's eight District Councils and explore whether f40 or other two tier LAs had been successful and undertook to bring a full update report back to DEF.

DECISION: that a full update report on Devon's Approach to Pupil Premium be brought to the next meeting.

ACTION: Deputy Director and Head of Education (Jack Newton)

(b) Cabinet Member Reports

The Cabinet Member - SEND Improvement had circulated to Members, f40's written evidence to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry [Support for children and young people with special educational needs - Committees - UK Parliament](#), being held on 18 November 2024. The inquiry followed the publication of the National Audit Office report on SEND. F40 submission supported its concerns around the SEND crisis across the country, looking at the unfairness of funding, insufficient funding, EHCPs, the statutory override, independent provision, accountability, tribunals, attendance, free school meals and investment, together with the disparity of High Needs funding. This was available on the f40 [website](#).

The Cabinet Member - Children, Schools & Skills added that he would welcome any comments Members may have on education and SEND that may inform discussions with the new government.

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Membership

DISCUSSION:

The Chair welcomed new Members and the following changes were noted following Schools (maintained) and Academies elections:-

Headteachers:

Mr Nick Alford - Primary maintained, Schools member

Ms Anne Billington - Primary maintained, Schools member (Substitute)

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Mr James Buchanan - Secondary, Academies member

Mr Ian Thomas - Primary, Academies member (Substitute)

Ms Nikki Burroughs - Special maintained, Schools member (Substitute)

Governor:

Dr Nicola Frost - Primary maintained, Schools member.

DECISION: that the Forum convey its appreciation to Mr Keith Bennett, Headteacher who had recently stood down after representing special schools on the Forum and its sub groups over a number of years.

ACTION:

County Solicitor (Fiona Rutley)

146 Deputy Director and Head of Education Update

DISCUSSION:

The Forum considered the Report of the Children & Young People's Futures (DEF/24/14) based on published data to 25 October 2024 including attainment, Looked After Children outcomes, attendance, absenteeism and exclusion. Whilst the data showed some improvement, this was slow and remained so in closing the gap for Devon's SEND, Looked After Children and vulnerable children.

The SEND Improvement Assistant Director also reported on very recent senior leadership changes to the Children & Young People's Futures Directorate, with an increased focus on wider SEND issues and inclusion.

Discussion included:-

-disappointment that key Officers were not in attendance at today's Forum, a statutory body;

-concern that there should be no delay in education strategy work and key priorities, with the need for clarity, communication and stability in the transition of the service due to the further senior leadership changes;

-concern that Devon's collective underperformance in attainment and achievement was continuing to impact Devon pupils.

DECISION:

(a) that a full report be brought to the next meeting on the Education Strategy; and

(b) that further details be sent to all Forum members regarding directorate personnel/structure changes.

ACTION:

Deputy Director and Head of Education (Jack Newton)

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Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Transformation Programme Update

DISCUSSION:

The Forum considered the Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Futures (DEF/24/15), updating on all seven strands of the SEND Transformation Programme. This followed the new approach agreed by the local area partnership in September 2023, delivering improvements through the SEND Transformation Programme bringing together post Ofsted/CQC improvement work and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit management actions (the Safety Valve).

The Assistant Director for SEND Improvement reported that there was a focus on accelerating progress, whilst to date there had been steady improvement and with some positive successes within the work streams. The EHCP backlog remained a challenge processing around 165 cases per month, whilst considering improvements to the wider statutory duty process involving health and other LAs, as well improved finance systems tracking individual SEND students.

Discussion included:-

-use of risk registers to support the SEND Transformation Programme and DfE Safety Valve requirements;

-noting that discussions with the DfE had been productive in recognising the acute High Needs pressures in Devon and across the country with the complexity of SEND pupil cohorts. However Devon needed to do more to meet its performance targets and improve outcomes for SEND students;

-noting the concern of the Early Years representatives that there had been no consultation or agreement with them regarding £1.3m budget reduction from Early Years for Safety Valve savings, together with the fact that this was a requirement of the Safety Valve and was not money that was lost.

-the Forum wished to continue to receive a detailed SEND Transformation Programme Update report at each meeting to give a comprehensive overview and enable sharing of information with a wider audience.

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DECISION:

(a) that the progress of the SEND Transformation Programme be noted; and

(b) that the Forum continue to receive a general progress update on the SEND Transformation Programme as a standing agenda item, given its key role in the High Needs Block deficit and its high priority of both the Forum and the County Council.

ACTION:

SEND Improvement Director (Kellie Knott).

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Finance

a **Schools Finance Group (SFG) Minutes**

DISCUSSION:

Minutes of the SFG were considered as part of the overall Finance Update.

Item 4 – Financial Management of the Dedicated Schools Grant and Top Up arrangements

SFG requested DEF to re-endorse the principle around top up funding and section 19.

DECISION:

(a) DEF are asked to re-endorse: the principle that Top Up funding for students with EHCPs needs to follow students who are either permanently excluded or on Alternative Education Packages through Section 19. Affected schools will be approached to retrieve overpayments made in error; and

(b) that the remaining minutes of the SFG meetings held on 8 July, 9 September and 11 November 2024 be received.

b **Finance Update**

DISCUSSION:

The Forum considered the joint Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Futures and Director of Finance and Public Value (DEF/24/14), which included:-

- the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget monitoring month 6 (2024/35) including executive summary;
- DSG Schools funding
- DSG Central budgets;

- High Needs Block continued significant pressure;
- 0.25% (£1.3m) block transfer to the High Needs Block;
- Workstream savings;
- Mitigations in-year;
- DSG Deficit Management Plan;
- Data dashboards developed to support the SEND Transformation and Safety Valve Programmes; and
- Risks, requiring mitigations through the implementation of the SEND Transformation Programme with support from schools and other providers, to take action on the growing demand and reduce call on independent placements.

Further to the Report, the County Council had now received an initial indication from government regarding next year's funding, this would not show a real increase, being identified as spend and not new funding. Details were not expected until the end of December 2024.

Members' comments and concerns included:-

- concern that before any contributions from the DfE and Devon, the increase in the accumulated Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit was forecast to be £45.8 million, compared to the DfE Safety Valve planned position of £31.2 million. This was an increase of £14.6 million. Additionally SEND Mainstream (3.9 of the Report) reported £2.4million overspend , within the forecast there was £3.8million Safety Valve savings but currently £2.2 million would not be achieved this financial year. This was a significant challenge and Members sought reassurance that significant movements/slippages did not reduce the DfE's confidence in Devon to meet Safety Valve targets;

- concern that the High Needs deficit had consistently got worse over years, with monitoring and actions not ending risks;

- realistic forecasting of projected spend on EHCP processing was required, with improved multi agency communications to reduce waiting lists and backlogs;

- the proposed shift of 0.5% out of Schools budgets to High Needs was likely to impact the same group of pupils, with a less targeted resource in school settings;

- the Early Years representatives reiterated their concern that the Report stated (paragraph 2.4) that £1.3m movement had been agreed from Early Years to the High Needs Block, but there had been no consultation or agreement with them or the Forum (irrespective of noting this was a requirement of the Safety Valve).

In response to Members' issues raised, Officers further advised:-

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DEVON EDUCATION FORUM

20/11/24

-on the County Council's regular discussions with the DfE who recognised the reasons for the current actual and forecasted positions, including factors beyond Devon's control and details awaited from the DfE and the changing nature of the Safety Valve;

-Further Education capital support have provided an additional 350 SEND places, bring some mainstream benefits;

-daily leadership meetings to review High Needs placements;

-peer challenge and practice of other LAs across the entire sector;

-implications of the DfE requirement for the EHCP processing backlog to be cleared sooner;

-that the treatment of the Early Years underspend identified and the Statutory Override regulations made by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government required that an in-year deficit on DSG must be calculated using all blocks. It was not permissible for an LA to retain a surplus on some blocks if there was an overall deficit. This rule was not optional, the Schools Forum did not need to consult and played no part in the decision.

-modelling indicated this was not an exponential curve. Nationally SEND pupils presented with more complex needs and had resulted in an increased number of plus packages in recent years;

-a two week consultation with schools on funding next year was commencing 25 November 2024, prior to consideration at the January 2025 Forum meeting. This had been delayed due to delayed government funding announcement;

-Section 19 working with others to support learners, would be discussed with the Alternative Provision representative;

-charging for outreach work would be discussed with the Special Schools (maintained) Headteacher representative.

DECISION:

That with the caveat that whilst recognising members' concerns set out above and the ongoing serious High Needs funding situation:-

(a) that the month 6 DSG monitoring position be noted, and

(b) the current Safety Valve / DSG deficit position be noted.

(Vote: Schools, Academies and PVI Members)

ACTION:

-Deputy Director and Head of Education (Simon Niles) - Section 19 discussion with Alternative Provision representative; and

-Director of Finance and Public Value (Adrian Fox) – outreach charging discussion with Special Schools (maintained) Headteacher representative.

149 Standing (and other) Groups

The Forum received the following from its standing and other groups (excepting Schools' Finance Group (SFG) minutes, (considered under Finance minute above):-

Standing Groups

- School Organisation, Capital and Admissions (SOCA)

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2024.

Also available at

[School Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group \(SOCA\) – Education and Families \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)

150 Correspondence

-

151 Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings at 10am. Please check venue/arrangements

<https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>

Wednesday 22 Jan 2025

Wednesday 19 March 2025

Wednesday 18 June 2025

Wednesday 19 Nov 2025

Wednesday 21 Jan 2026

Wednesday 18 March 2026.

NOTES:

1. Minutes should always be read in association with any Reports for a complete record.
2. If the meeting has been webcast, it will be available to view on the [webcasting site](#) for up to 12 months from the date of the meeting

* **DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.00 noon.

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DEF/25/01

Devon Education Forum

22nd January 2025

Inclusion & Learning update to DEF

Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Futures

Recommendation:

That the forum:

- a) Note the direction of travel indicated within the draft strategy.
- b) Note that the inclusion and learning service redesign has commenced.
- c) Support the implementation plan for FSM auto enrolment.
- d) Agree that the above 3 items are added to the agenda for future DEF meetings.

1. Background:

1.1 This report provides an update on the activities and progress of the Inclusion and Learning Team from November 2024 to January 2025. Key developments include the initiation of the team redesign and the proposed Inclusion and Learning (Education) Strategy for Devon.

2. Inclusion & Learning Strategy

2.1 The Authority is due to consult on and launch an Inclusion and Learning Strategy that builds on the SEND Strategy and identifies strategic priorities, an implementation framework and effective monitoring procedures:

Proposed Strategic Priorities

A. Building Inclusive Learning Communities

- **Principled School Improvement:** Facilitate a locality based [School Improvement model](#) that is inclusive, sustainable and student centred.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** Develop a shared vision of inclusion across all schools and education providers in Devon, underpinned by the principles of Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision.
- **Cultural Change:** Foster a culture of shared responsibility for inclusion, where diversity is seen as an asset that enriches learning for all.
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning:** Facilitate collaboration among schools to share best practices in inclusive teaching and leadership.

B. Strengthening High-Quality Universal Provision

- **Inclusive Classroom Practices:** Ensure all educators are trained to deliver high-quality, inclusive teaching that supports a range of learning needs.

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- **Professional Development:** Provide ongoing training and resources to support schools in implementing inclusive strategies.
- **Collaborative approaches to improving Mental Health:** Brokering multi agency partnerships to address Mental Health challenges and create local solutions.

C. Promoting Belonging and Engagement

- **Trauma-Informed Training:** Deliver training on trauma-informed approaches to help staff create emotionally safe environments where all learners feel valued and supported.
- **Attendance as a Priority:** Use insights from the **Education Endowment Foundation's Supporting Attendance** to address barriers to attendance through early intervention, relationship-building, and family engagement.
- **Student Voice:** Empower students to co-create their learning environments, ensuring they feel heard and included in decisions that impact their education.

D. Fostering Partnerships with Families and Communities

- **Family Engagement:** Strengthen relationships with families by providing clear communication, accessible resources, and opportunities for co-production of policies and practices.
- **Community Collaboration:** Work with community organisations to provide wraparound support, promoting a sense of belonging for learners within and beyond school.

E. Embedding Accountability and Continuous Improvement

- **Inclusion Audits:** Regularly assess the inclusiveness of school environments, policies, and practices to identify strengths and areas for growth.
- **Outcome Monitoring:** Track attendance, achievement, and well-being metrics to evaluate the impact of inclusive practices, ensuring alignment with principles of Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision.
- **Transparent Reporting:** Share progress publicly to build trust and demonstrate commitment to inclusion.

2.2 Whilst the draft strategy is subject to change, as a result of consultation, we intend to publish the strategy during the Spring Term. Partners have indicated that the absence of a coherent strategy for Education in Devon has inhibited collaboration, partnership and progress in ensuring that all of Devon's young people are able to thrive in our Education settings.

2.3 The strategy will be structured around 3 key analytical questions that will shape monitoring procedures:

- a) **Are children safe? Do they feel safe?**
- b) **Are children attending? Are the places of education fit for purpose?**
- c) **Are children achieving? Are we providing the opportunities and support they need to achieve?**

3. Inclusion & Learning Service Redesign

3.1 The redesign of the Inclusion and Learning Team commenced on January 6th, 2025. Phase one focuses on establishing the leadership team and a locality model supported by a central team, which will drive the strategic direction and operational effectiveness of our inclusion and learning initiatives. This restructuring aims to enhance leadership and oversight, ensuring robust financial and practice decision-making.

4. FSM Auto – Enrolment Implementation plan

4.1 [Implementation](#) of FSM auto-enrolment has frequently been discussed at DEF. We have created a plan to ensure all eligible children in Devon receive their entitlement to Free School Meals (FSM) through an auto-enrolment system, inspired by successful implementations in North Yorkshire and other regions.

4.2 Officers have utilised Department for Education resource to identify best practice examples nationally. The implementation plan has clear time-scales and updates on the scheme will be provided to Forum.

Julian Wooster
Director of Children & Young People's Futures

For further information please ask for:

Jack Newton

Interim Deputy Director, Head of Inclusion and Learning

Jack.newton@devon.gov.uk

Devon Education Forum

Report of the DCC Education and Learning Service

January 2025

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Key Performance Indicators for attendance, exclusions, EHE and CME

Attendance

		2021/22 whole year*	2022/23 whole year*	2023/24 * Local Data	2024/25 * Local Data to 03/01/2025	YoY Trend
Total (primary, secondary, all-through)	% Attendance	91.80%	92.30%	92.80%	93.10%	↑
	% Authorised Absence	6.50%	5.60%	5.30%	5.10%	↓
	% Unauthorised Absence	1.70%	2.10%	1.90%	1.80%	↓
	% Persistent Absence	24.10%	21.10%	18.10%	17.90%	↓
Primary	% Attendance	93.50%	94.40%	94.60%	95.00%	↑
	% Authorised Absence	5.50%	4.50%	4.30%	4.00%	↓
	% Unauthorised Absence	1.00%	1.10%	1.10%	0.90%	↓
	% Persistent Absence	16.60%	13.60%	12.50%	12.80%	↑
Secondary/All through	% Attendance	89.40%	89.50%	89.90%	90.80%	↑
	% Authorised Absence	7.90%	6.90%	6.80%	6.30%	↓
	% Unauthorised Absence	2.70%	3.60%	3.30%	2.80%	↓
	% Persistent Absence	33.10%	29.90%	27.40%	24.00%	↓
Special (state funded)	% Attendance	88.20%	88.40%	88.60%	88.90%	↑
	% Authorised Absence	9.60%	9.20%	8.50%	8.50%	●
	% Unauthorised Absence	2.20%	2.40%	2.90%	2.60%	↓
	% Persistent Absence	38.80%	36.10%	35.50%	33.90%	↓

SEN Support (K)	% Attendance	89.10%	88.70%	89.70%	89.40%	↓
	% Authorised Absence	8.00%	7.50%	7.10%	7.40%	↑
	% Unauthorised Absence	2.90%	3.80%	3.20%	3.20%	↑
	% Persistent Absence	33.80%	32.60%	28.50%	28.10%	↓
SEN EHCP (E)	% Attendance	87.20%	87.00%	84.00%	85.40%	↑
	% Authorised Absence	10.00%	9.40%	11.20%	10.40%	↓
	% Unauthorised Absence	2.80%	3.60%	4.80%	4.00%	↓
	% Persistent Absence	38.60%	36.40%	40.10%	36.20%	↓
FSM	% Attendance	87.60%	87.30%	88.00%	88.30%	↑
	% Authorised Absence	8.60%	8.00%	7.80%	7.80%	↑
	% Unauthorised Absence	3.80%	4.70%	4.20%	3.90%	↓
	% Persistent Absence	42.50%	40.40%	35.90%	33.60%	↓
CiN ^	% Attendance	80.20%	79.70%	79.40%	77.20%	↓
	% Authorised Absence	11.40%	11.10%	12.20%	13.90%	↑
	% Unauthorised Absence	8.40%	9.20%	8.40%	8.90%	↑
	% Persistent Absence	56.20%	53.00%	53.10%	54.60%	↑
CP ^	% Attendance	82.10%	76.30%	78.30%	78.80%	↑
	% Authorised Absence	10.70%	11.40%	10.40%	12.30%	↑
	% Unauthorised Absence	7.20%	12.30%	11.30%	8.90%	↓
	% Persistent Absence	52.50%	62.40%	59.50%	51.20%	↓

LAC ^	% Attendance	90.30%	90.10%	85.80%	87.80%	↑
	% Authorised Absence	6.90%	6.20%	8.60%	8.70%	↑
	% Unauthorised Absence	2.80%	3.70%	5.60%	3.50%	↓
	% Persistent Absence	25.20%	23.60%	37.40%	28.10%	↓
Male	% Attendance	91.90%	92.40%	92.90%	93.20%	↑
	% Authorised Absence	6.50%	5.50%	5.30%	5.10%	↓
	% Unauthorised Absence	1.60%	2.10%	1.90%	1.70%	↓
	% Persistent Absence	23.30%	20.40%	18.10%	17.70%	↓
Female	% Attendance	91.60%	92.20%	92.70%	93.10%	↑
	% Authorised Absence	6.60%	5.60%	5.30%	5.10%	↓
	% Unauthorised Absence	1.80%	2.20%	2.00%	1.80%	↓
	% Persistent Absence	24.90%	21.80%	18.40%	18.10%	↓

[Data Source - DfE Absence Statistics](#) , [DfE CLA, CIN, CPP Outcomes Statistics](#)

*Local Data as of 18/12/2024

Attendance: Overall Trends

- **Attendance** has gradually improved from 91.8% in 2021/22 to 93.3% in 2024/25.
- **Authorised Absence** has decreased from 6.5% to 5.0%.
- **Unauthorised Absence** has remained stable 1.7% to 1.7%.
- **Persistent Absence** has significantly decreased from 24.1% to 17.4%.

Primary Schools

- **Attendance** increased from 93.5% to 95.2%.
- **Authorised Absence** decreased from 5.5% to 3.9%.
- **Unauthorised Absence** remained stable around 1.0% to 0.9%.
- **Persistent Absence** decreased from 16.6% to 12.6%.

Secondary/All-through Schools

- **Attendance** improved from 89.4% to 91.0%.
- **Authorised Absence** decreased from 7.9% to 6.2%.
- **Unauthorised Absence** decreased from 2.7% to 2.8%.
- **Persistent Absence** decreased from 33.1% to 23.1%.

Special (State Funded) Schools

- **Attendance** increased from 88.2% to 89.1%.
- **Authorised Absence** decreased from 9.6% to 8.4%.
- **Unauthorised Absence** increased slightly from 2.2% to 2.6%.
- **Persistent Absence** decreased from 38.8% to 33.5%.

Specific Groups

- **SEN Support (K)**: Attendance improved slightly, authorised absence decreased, and persistent absence decreased.
- **SEN EHCP (E)**: Attendance fluctuated, authorised absence increased, and persistent absence decreased.
- **FSM (Free School Meals)**: Attendance improved, authorised and unauthorised absences decreased, and persistent absence decreased.
- **CiN (Children in Need)**: Attendance decreased, authorised absence increased, and persistent absence decreased.
- **CP (Child Protection)**: Attendance fluctuated, authorised absence increased, and persistent absence decreased.
- **LAC (Looked After Children)**: Attendance fluctuated, authorised absence increased, and persistent absence decreased.



Exclusions & Suspensions

Exclusions Overview *(previously shared November 2024)*

- During 2023/24, 186 permanent exclusions were issued to pupils attending Devon state funded schools.
- Of these 186, 20 pupils were reinstated by the school and 14 exclusions were withdrawn. This resulted in 152 permanent exclusions upheld in 2023/24. 4 of these were against pupils in alternative provision which are excluded from the benchmarking table on the right.
- Permanent exclusions fell by 13% in the last year (22 fewer children excluded). Local information indicates that the percentage of the pupil population permanently excluded also fell.
- Primary exclusions rose by 58% and secondary exclusions fell by 20%.

Current Position

Permanent Exclusions and Suspensions Year on Year (Equivalent Week): 18/12/24

Academic Year	Number of Permanent Exclusions	Number of Suspensions
2024/25	68	5322
2023/24	71	7393
2022/23	71	5799

Figures don't include PEX or Suspensions from non-Devon schools.

2023/24 Figures to Date (Number of permanent exclusions and suspensions): as at 18/12/24

Key Stage	Number of Permanent Exclusions	Number of Suspensions
EYFSP	0	13
KS1	1	79
KS2	6	394
KS3	37	2737
KS4	24	2098
KS5	0	1
Total	68	5322

- Highest Number of Permanent Exclusions: Key Stage 3 (37 exclusions)
- Highest Number of Suspensions: Key Stage 3 (2737 suspensions)
- Lowest Number of Permanent Exclusions: EYFSP and KS5 (0 exclusions each)
- Lowest Number of Suspensions: KS5 (1 suspension)

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 have the highest numbers of both permanent exclusions and suspensions

Permanent Exclusions* state funded schools (figures exclude KS5)

	2021/22		2022/23		2023/24 *		2024/25*	
	Number	% of cohort	Number	% of cohort	Number	% of cohort	Number	% of cohort
Total	116	0.12%	178	0.18%	156	0.17%	68	0.07%
Primary Age	12	0.02%	20	0.03%	33	0.06%	7	0.01%
Secondary Age	104	0.28%	158	0.42%	123	0.33%	61	0.16%
SEN (E+ K)	93	0.50%	125	0.65%	137	0.68%	48	0.22%
SEN Support (K)	78	0.56%	99	0.68%	95	0.64%	42	0.26%
SEN (E)	15	0.32%	26	0.53%	42	0.78%	6	0.10%
LAC**	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Male	73	0.15%	124	0.25%	115	0.24%	40	0.08%
Female	43	0.09%	54	0.11%	41	0.09%	28	0.06%

* Data Source (Devon County Council Local Data supplied from Devon Schools), pupil popn taken from Spring 24 school census data – 2024/25 taken from Local data to 18/12/2024

** Students who are in care to Devon County Council

Reasons for Exclusions

Reason	22/23	23/24	24/25
Abuse against sexual orientation	1	0	0
Abuse relating to disability	0	0	0
Bullying	4	1	0
Damage	4	1	1
Drug and alcohol related	11	6	4
Inappropriate use of social media	0	1	0
Persistent disruptive behaviour	97	90	36
Physical assault on adult	20	19	8
Physical assault on pupil	29	20	7
Racist abuse	0	0	0
Sexual misconduct	0	2	2
Theft	0	0	0
Transgression of public health	3	0	1
Use/threat of use of offensive/prohibited weapon	3	5	5
Verbal abuse/threats-adult	9	9	4
Verbal abuse/threats-pupil	5	2	0

The mains reasons for Permanent exclusions in Devon are

1. Persistent disruptive behaviour: 54.39%
2. Physical assault on pupil: 13.66%
3. Physical assault on adult: 11.46%
4. Verbal abuse/threats-adult: 5.37%
5. Drug and alcohol related: 5.12%

Suspensions Overview (previously shared November 2024)

- During the 2023/24 academic year 19,067 suspensions were issued to pupils attending Devon primary, secondary and special schools. This is an increase of 18% on the previous year (2,920 suspensions). In addition to this, 366 suspensions were issued to pupils attending alternative provision (not included in table on the right).
- Latest published data for 2022/23 academic year indicates that Devon’s suspension rates are higher than that seen nationally.
- Local information indicates that primary suspensions rose by 31% and secondary suspensions rose by 17%.

Suspensions (number of pupils with one or more suspension) state funded schools, figures exclude KS5

	2021/22		2022/23		2023/24 *		2024/25 *	
	Number	% of cohort	Number	% of cohort	Number	% of cohort	Number	% of cohort
Total	3263	3.36%	4415	4.52%	4891	5.26%	2241	2.24%
Primary Age	420	0.70%	559	0.94%	724	1.34%	266	0.47%
Secondary Age	2843	7.60%	3856	10.16%	4167	11.06%	1975	5.02%
SEN (E+ K)	1696	9.09%	2329	12.02%	2703	13.43%	1319	5.98%
SEN Support (K)	1216	8.74%	1765	12.20%	2088	14.14%	1005	6.15%
SEN (E)	480	10.11%	564	11.48%	667	12.46%	329	5.75%
LAC**	79	8.74%	83	9.18%	106	12.14%	19	2.18%
Male	2140	4.30%	2825	5.65%	3115	6.52%	1414	2.96%
Female	1123	2.37%	1590	3.34%	1776	3.93%	827	1.82%

* Data Source (Devon County Council Local Data supplied from Devon Schools), pupil popn taken from Spring 24 school census data, 2024/25 Local Data to 18/12/2024

** As of May 2024, there are 873 children in care of which 570 (65%) are placed in Devon

Reasons for Suspensions

Reason	22/23	23/24	24/25
Abuse against sexual orientation	57	81	21
Abuse relating to disability	2	6	2
Bullying	117	129	43
Damage	285	290	78
Drug and alcohol related	554	504	140
Inappropriate use of social media	110	127	42
Persistent disruptive behaviour	10,015	11,992	3,531
Physical assault on adult	654	829	265
Physical assault on pupil	1,687	1,936	494
Racist abuse	177	212	77
Sexual misconduct	66	105	31
Theft	39	55	17
Transgression of public health	10	44	8
Use/threat of use of offensive/prohibited weapon	169	157	60
Verbal abuse/threats-adult	2,416	2,589	738
Verbal abuse/threats-pupil	453	473	126

The mains reasons for Suspensions in Devon are

1. Persistent disruptive behaviour: 60.79%
2. Verbal abuse/threats-adult: 13.67%
3. Physical assault on pupil: 9.80%
4. Physical assault on adult: 4.16%
5. Drug and alcohol related: 2.85%



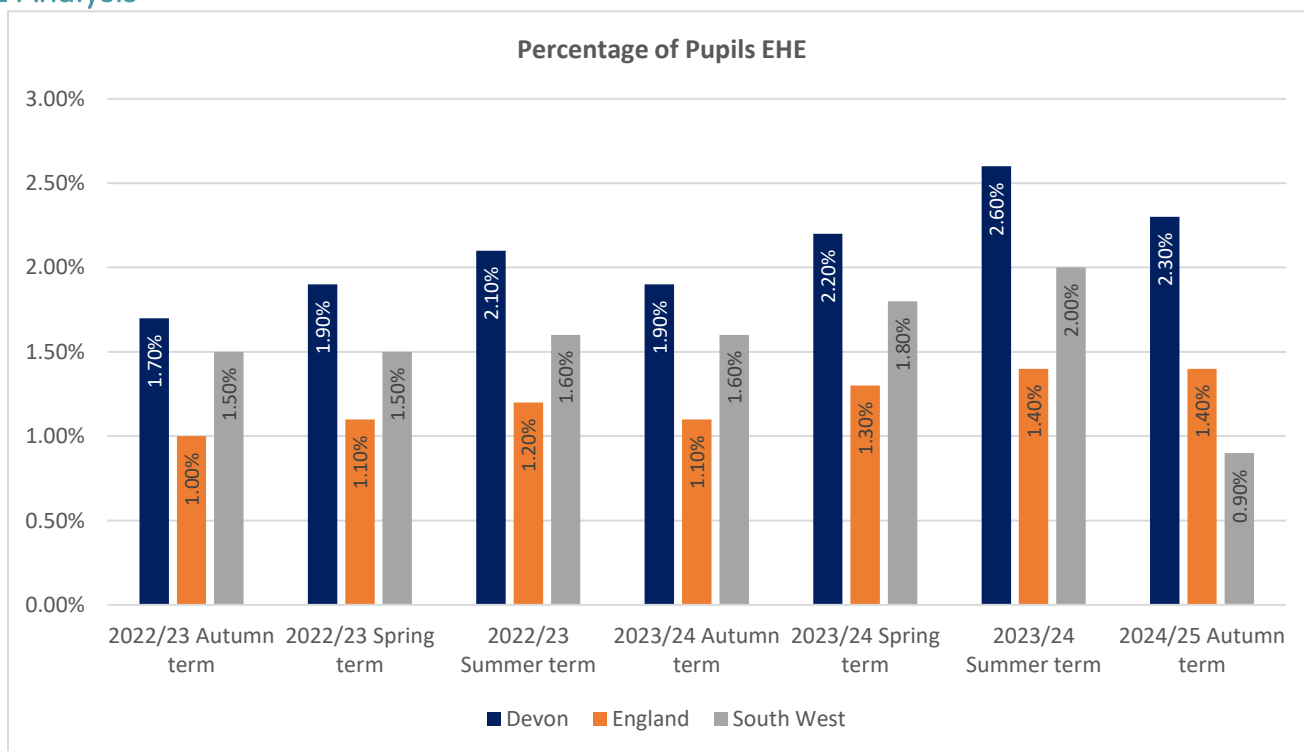
Elective Home Education (EHE)

Data as at Census Day 3rd October 2024

Number of children electively home educated on census snapshot days (not cumulative numbers to date)

	Autumn Census 2022/23	Spring Census 2022/23	Summer Census 2022/23	Autumn Census 2023/24	Spring Census 2023/24	Summer Census 2023/24	Autumn Census 2024/25
Total	1714	1911	2173	1988	2310	2642	2541
Primary	616	664	736	610	709	814	723
Secondary	1098	1247	1437	1378	1601	1828	1818
SEN (E+ K Combined)	571	656	778	680	810	979	903
SEN Support (K)	443	508	606	516	622	763	702
SEN (E)	128	148	172	164	188	216	201
CIN	12	7	17	14	9	13	3
CP	6	11	11	3	2	3	2
LAC	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Male	823	914	1050	951	1108	1264	1243
Female	891	997	1123	1037	1202	1378	1297

EHE Analysis



- **Higher Rates in Devon:** Devon consistently has higher EHE rates compared to the national average and the South West region.
- **Recent Decrease in the South West:** The South West saw a significant drop in the 2024/25 autumn term, unlike Devon, which maintained relatively high rates.
- **Steady Increase in England:** The national rates show a steady increase, while Devon's rates are higher and more variable.

	2022/23 Autumn term	2022/23 Spring term	2022/23 Summer term	2023/24 Autumn term	2023/24 Spring term	2023/24 Summer term	2024/25 Autumn term
England	1.00%	1.10%	1.20%	1.10%	1.30%	1.40%	1.40%
South West	1.50%	1.50%	1.60%	1.60%	1.80%	2.00%	0.90%
Devon	1.70%	1.90%	2.10%	1.90%	2.20%	2.60%	2.30%

Reasons for EHE

Reason for EHE	Number
Physical Health	26
Mental Health	515
Health Concerns Relating to COVID-19	50
Did Not Get School Preference	8
Permanent Exclusion	5
Risk of School Exclusion	18
Difficulty in Accessing a School Place	14
Philosophical or Preferential Reasons	439
Religious Reasons	1
Lifestyle Choice	121
Suggestion/Pressure from the School	1
Dissatisfaction with the School - General	250
Dissatisfaction with the School - SEND	72
Dissatisfaction with the School - Bullying	65
Parent/Guardian Did Not Give a Reason	2
Other	207
Unknown	747

- **Mental Health** is the most cited reason with 515 cases.
- **Unknown reasons** account for a significant number, 747 cases.
- **Philosophical or Preferential Reasons** and **Dissatisfaction with the School - General** are also prominent reasons.

A National comparison is unavailable for this data

Data source: Local Data, DfE: Publication : [Elective home education, Academic year 2023/24](#)



Children Missing Education (CME)

Number of children missing education on census snapshot days

(not cumulative numbers to date)

	Autumn Census 2022/23	Spring Census 2022/23	Summer Census 2022/23	Autumn Census 2023/24	Spring Census 2023/24	Summer Census 2023/24	Autumn Census 2024/25
Total	96	120	101	146	147	194	176
Primary	26	41	29	40	55	75	47
Secondary	70	79	72	106	92	119	129
SEN (E+ K Combined)	52	58	52	66	61	109	97
SEN Support (K)	24	28	29	41	36	57	49
SEN (E)	28	30	23	25	25	52	48
CIN	3	3	8	8	5	12	9
CP	5	9	6	4	1	9	6
LAC	5	10	4	7	5	2	7
Male	58	73	54	86	83	109	104
Female	38	47	47	60	64	85	72

Length of time CME (Published data)

	England	Devon
Less than 2 weeks	14%	20%
2 to 4 weeks	15%	29%
4 to 8 weeks	11%	9%
8 to 12 weeks	9%	low
12 to 26 weeks	16%	19%
26 to 52 weeks	11%	14%
Over 52 weeks	17%	low
Unknown	7%	0%

- **Short-Term Absences:** Devon has a higher percentage of children missing education for less than 2 weeks (20%) compared to the national average (14%). This suggests that short-term absences are more common in Devon.
- **Moderate Absences:** For absences lasting 2 to 4 weeks, Devon's rate is significantly higher (29%) than the national average (15%). This indicates a notable issue with children being out of education for moderate periods.
- **Longer Absences:** Devon has a lower percentage of children missing education for 4 to 8 weeks (9%) compared to the national average (11%). This suggests that fewer children in Devon are missing education for this duration.
- **Extended Absences:** The data shows that Devon has a higher percentage of children missing education for 12 to 26 weeks (19%) compared to the national average (16%). This indicates a concern with extended absences.

Data source: [Local Dara, Children missing education, Autumn term 2024/25](#)



Children receiving EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) packages (Statutory School Age)

Number of pupils	Total	EHCP	VSR	Male	Female	Primary age	Secondary age
As at 01/01/24	426	271	32	295	131	53	373
as at 14/05/24	497	149	13	303	194	69	428
as at 01/03/24	395	195	10	251	144	55	340

Number of pupils receiving EOTAS by year group

	NCY R	NCY 1	NCY 2	NCY 3	NCY 4	NCY 5	NCY 6	NCY 7	NCY 8	NCY 9	NCY 10	NCY 11
As at 01/01/24	0	2	6	9	13	12	11	27	44	74	96	132
as at 14/05/24	0	5	6	11	14	13	20	27	71	99	117	114
as at 01/03/24	0	5	3	8	14	6	19	17	56	78	97	92



Ofsted Overview *(previously shared November 2024)*

- 87.3% of Devon primary, secondary and special schools are judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding compared to 90.4% nationally.
- 88.3% of Devon primary schools have been judged as good or outstanding, which is also close to the national average (91.7%).
- Devon secondary schools are not performing as well as nationally with 78% judged good or outstanding compared to 84.2% nationally.
- 90.9% of Devon special schools are judged as good or outstanding, slightly better than the national average (90.2%).
- Whilst inspections were put on hold during the pandemic, the percentage of schools now judged as good or outstanding is higher than that seen pre pandemic (87.8% in Aug 2024 compared to 86.8% in August 2019).

Ofsted Current

Single headline Ofsted grades have been scrapped from September 2024.

An interim set of analysis will be provided until the 'Report Cards' are brought into effect from September 2025.

This report will be adapted in future iterations to reflect the new framework

Devon Schools and Pupils

- As at Jan 2025, 64% of schools¹ in Devon are Academies (including free schools) and 36% are LA maintained schools. In Oct 2023 58% of schools were Academies and 42% were LA maintained.
- Of the 238 academies/free schools, 215 (96%) are supported by 34 multi academy trusts.
- Of the 134 LA maintained schools, 62 (46%) are supported by 19 Federations.

¹nursery, primary, secondary, special and AP/PRU (excludes independents & FE)

number of schools in Devon	Oct-21	Oct-22	Oct 23	May 24	Jan 25
nur, pri, sec, spec & AP/PRU schools	372	372	372	372	372
maintained schools	177	164	157	148	134
<i>of which</i>					
Number of federations	27	24	22	21	19
Number of schools supported by federations	75	69	67	68	62
academies/free schools	195	208	215	224	238
<i>of which</i>					
Number of MATs *	30	29	29	26	34
Number of schools supported by MAT	184	197	206	215	226
Number of schools supported by SAT	11	11	9	9	12

data source: DfE Get Information About Schools (GIAS), Local Data



Attainment

In November we shared the outcomes for Phonics and KS2.

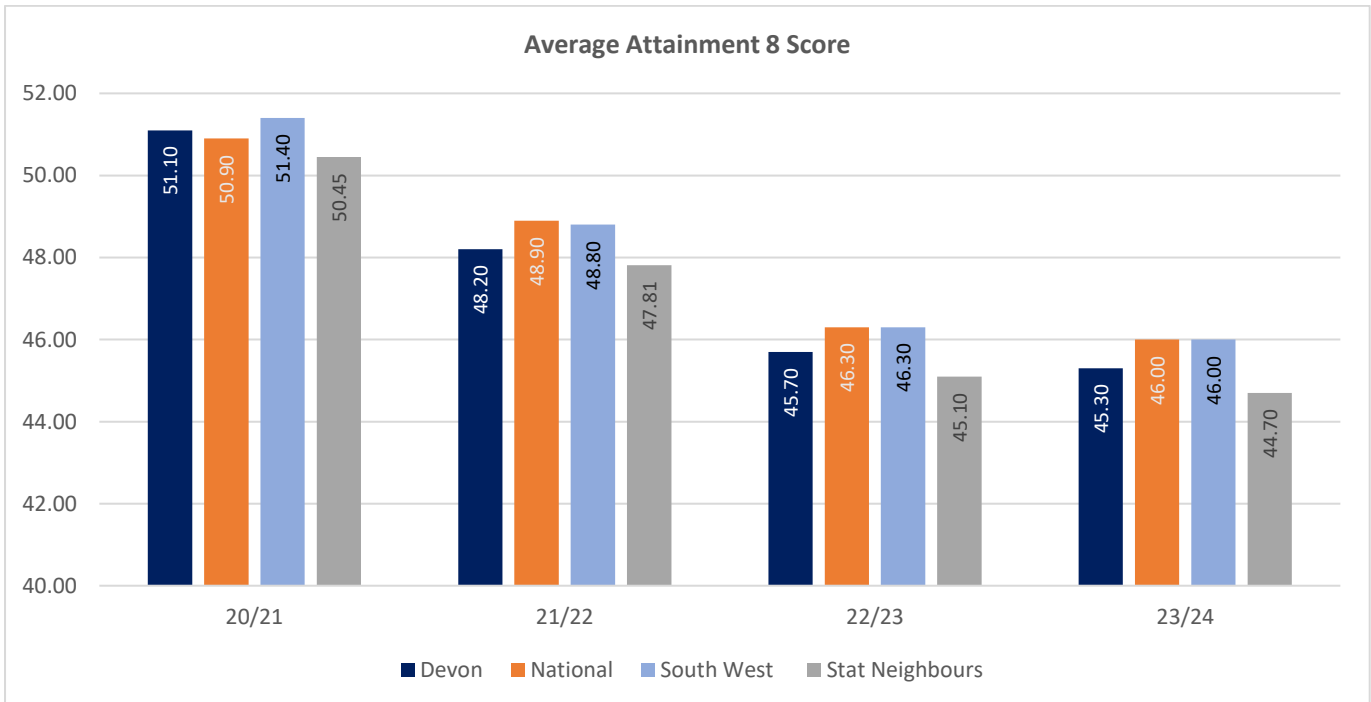
The Results for KS4 and KS5 have now been published following a delay from the DfE

Key Stage 4

This release reflects the GCSE grades awarded to pupils in August 2024.

It provides information on the awards of GCSEs and other qualifications of young people in academic year 2023 to 2024. This typically covers those starting the academic year aged 15

Average Attainment 8 Score



- In the academic year 23/24 Students in Devon achieved a lower Average Point score (45.3) than Nationally (46.0) across the South-West (46.0) but higher than Statistical Neighbours (44.7)
- In the academic Year 23/24 for the whole cohort there was a decrease in the average point score Locally (-0.4), Nationally (-0.3), Regionally (-0.3) and across statistical neighbours (-0.4)

Overall Trends:

All regions show a consistent decline in performance over the four years.

Devon: Started at 51.10 in 20/21 and decreased to 45.30 in 23/24.

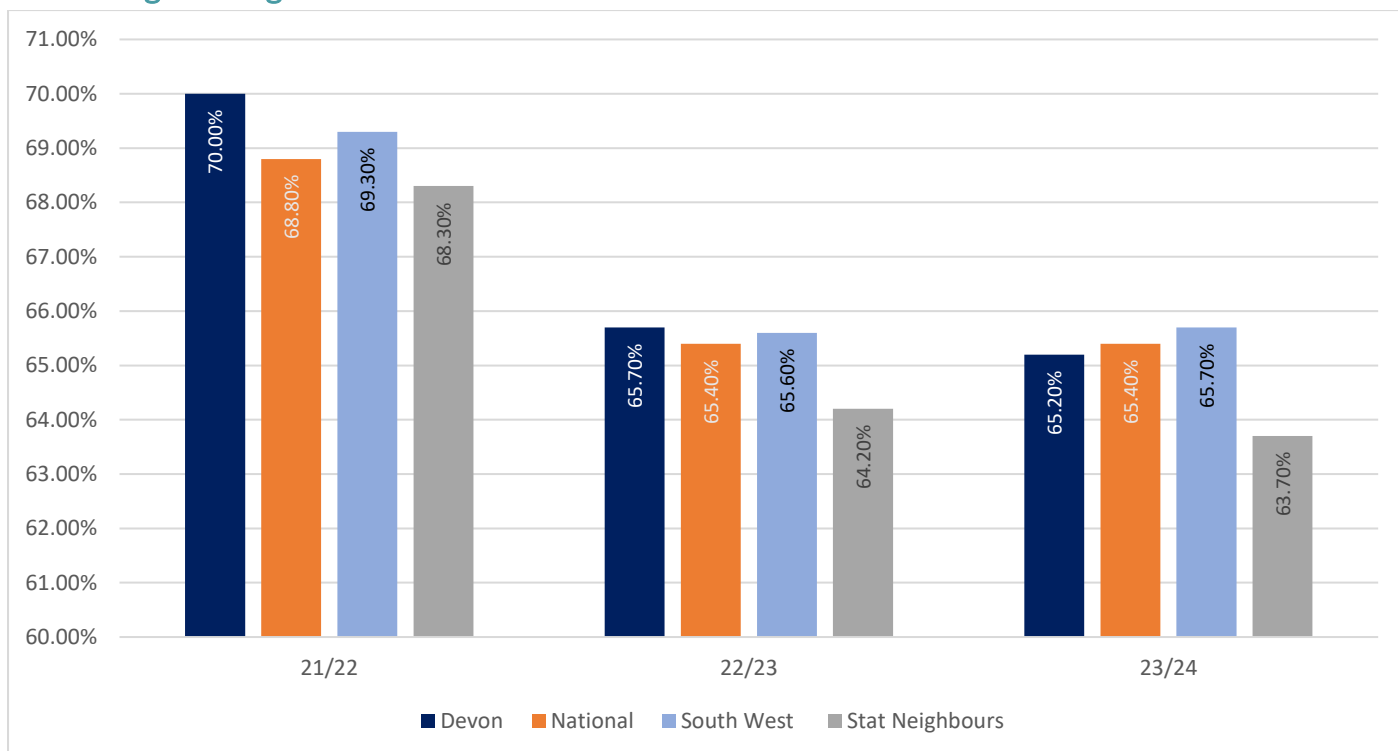
National: Began at 50.90 in 20/21 and dropped to 46.00 in 23/24.

South-West: Started at 51.40 in 20/21 and fell to 46.00 in 23/24.

Stat Neighbours: Began at 50.45 in 20/21 and decreased to 44.70 in 23/24.

Average Point Score	Devon	National	South West	Stat Neighbours
All	45.3	46.1	46	44.7
Boys	43.2	43.9	43.9	42.2
Girls	47.6	48.4	48.1	47
Disadvantaged	32	34.7	32.6	32.2
Non Disadvantaged	49	50.2	49.6	48
EHCP	15.2	14.2	14.3	14.2
SEN Support	31.1	33.1	33	31.7
No SEN	50.4	50	50.4	48.6
FSM	31.8	34.7	32.6	32.1
Non FSM	48.6	49.7	49.2	47.6

Achieving 9-4 English and Maths



- In the academic year 23/24 a lower percentage of Students in Devon (65.2%) achieved 9-4 grades in English and Maths than Nationally (65.4%) across the
- South-West (65.7%) but higher than Statistical Neighbours (63.7%)
- Compared to the previous year there was a decrease in the % achieving 9-4 English and Maths in Devon (-0.5%) and across statistical neighbours (-0.5%). In the South-West there was an increase (0.1%) and Nationally this remained the same

Overall Trends:

Devon: There has been a slight decline from 70.00% in 2021/22 to 65.20% in 2023/24.

National: The percentage remained stable at 65.40% in the last two years after a drop from 68.80% in 2021/22.

South-West: The percentage has been relatively stable, with a small increase to 65.70% in 2023/24.

Stat Neighbours: There has been a consistent decline from 68.30% in 2021/22 to 63.70% in 2023/24

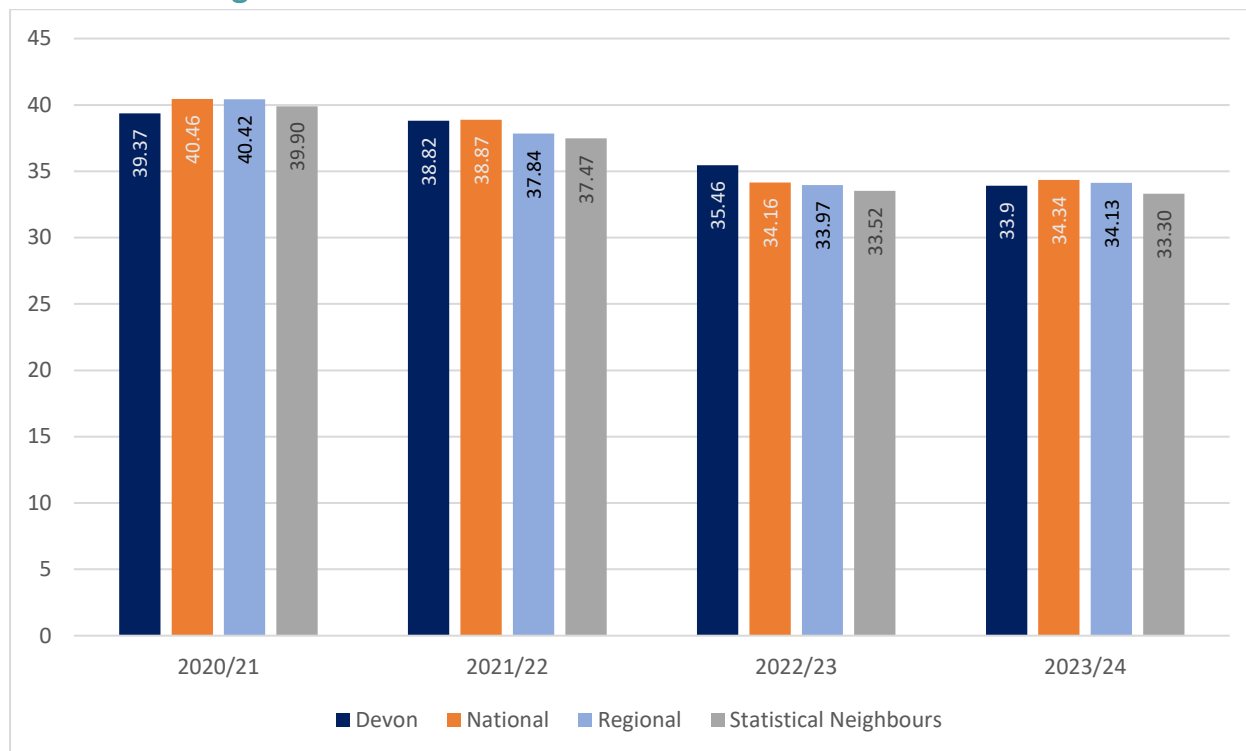
EBACC (English Baccalaureate) APS

EBACC APS	Devon	National	South West	Stat Neighbours
All	4.04	4.09	4.02	3.9
Boys	3.87	3.91	3.86	3.7
Girls	4.22	4.27	4.19	4.1
Disadvantaged	2.78	3	2.78	2.8
Non Disadvantaged	4.38	4.48	4.36	4.2
EHCP	1.24	1.14	1.16	1.2
SEN Support	2.62	2.79	2.76	2.7
No SEN	4.53	4.47	4.44	4.3
FSM	2.76	3	2.78	2.7
Non FSM	4.34	4.43	4.32	4.2

Key Stage 5

- **KS5 :** This statistical release focuses on the A level results of students at the end of 16-18 study in 2023/24 in schools and colleges in England. This provisional release includes student characteristic breakdowns such as disadvantage status, Special Educational Needs status and ethnicity.
- Comparisons are made to revised data for 2022/23, which was the first year the awarding of grades returned to pre-pandemic standards for GCSEs, AS and A levels and vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs).
- Due to quality issues in some of the vocational data this provisional release will not include data on outcomes for applied general and tech level qualifications. Complete data for all qualifications will be included in the scheduled update with revised data in February.

KS5 A- level Average Point Score



- In the academic year 23/24 Students in Devon achieved a lower Average Point score (33.9) than Nationally (34.34) across the South-West (34.13) but higher than Statistical Neighbours (33.3)
- In the academic Year 23/24 for the whole cohort there was a decrease in the average point score Locally (-1.56) and Statistical Neighbours (-0.22). There was an increase for National (0.18) Regional (0.16)

Overall Trend

- **Devon:** There has been a consistent decline from 39.37 in 2020/21 to 33.9 in 2023/24.
- **National:** The scores have also declined from 40.46 in 2020/21 to 34.34 in 2023/24, with a slight increase in the last year.
- **Regional:** The scores have decreased from 40.42 in 2020/21 to 34.13 in 2023/24, with a slight increase in the last year.
- **Statistical Neighbours:** The scores have consistently declined from 39.90 in 2020/21 to 33.30 in 2023/24.

	National (All State funded Schools & Colleges)	Devon (All State funded Schools & Colleges)	South West (All State funded Schools & Colleges)	Statistical Neighbours (All State funded Schools & Colleges)
All	34.34	33.9	34.13	33.3
Boys	34.83	32.92	33.24	32.26
Girls	36.05	34.63	34.88	34.14
Disadvantaged	30.15	30.33	29.45	29.27
Non Disadvantaged	35	34.35	34.66	33.74
EHCP	32.02	32.02	32.48	32.3
SEN Support	32.77	33.38	32.55	31.49
No SEN	34.44	33.98	34.28	33.41
EAL	33.13	35.09	32.73	32.57
Non EAL	34.68	33.86	34.33	33.41
FSM	30.21	30.33	29.43	29.42
Non FSM	35.95	34.18	34.52	33.62

Overall: Devon (33.9) is slightly below the national average (34.34) and the South West average (34.13), but above the statistical neighbours' average (33.3).

Boys: Devon (32.92) is below the national average (34.83), the South West average (33.24), and the statistical neighbours' average (32.26).

Girls: Devon (34.63) is below the national average (36.05) and the South West average (34.88), but above the statistical neighbours' average (34.14).

Disadvantaged: Devon (30.33) is slightly above the national average (30.15), the South West average (29.45), and the statistical neighbours' average (29.27).

Non-Disadvantaged: Devon (34.35) is below the national average (35.0) and the South West average (34.66), but above the statistical neighbours' average (33.74).

EHCP: Devon (32.02) matches the national average (32.02), is slightly below the South West average (32.48), but above the statistical neighbours' average (32.3).

SEN Support: Devon (33.38) is above the national average (32.77), the South West average (32.55), and the statistical neighbours' average (31.49).

No SEN: Devon (33.98) is slightly below the national average (34.44) and the South West average (34.28), but above the statistical neighbours' average (33.41).

EAL (English as an Additional Language): Devon (35.09) is above the national average (33.13), the South West average (32.73), and the statistical neighbours' average (32.57).

Non EAL: Devon (33.86) is below the national average (34.68) and the South West average (34.33), but above the statistical neighbours' average (33.41).

FSM (Free School Meals): Devon (30.33) is slightly above the national average (30.21), the South West average (29.43), and the statistical neighbours' average (29.42).

Non FSM: Devon (34.18) is below the national average (35.95) and the South West average (34.52), but above the statistical neighbours' average (33.62).

DEF/25/02
Devon Education Forum
22 January 2025

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES (SEND) TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Futures

1.1 Recommendation

That the Committee be asked to:

(a) To Note the updates on SEND Transformation Programme set out within this report

1.2 Given the relatively short period between meetings for this update, additional activity over the November – January reporting window has been steady but relatively limited in scope.

1.3 Most notably, the Local Area formally launched its updated SEND Strategy in late November. Building on work undertaken originally in Rotherham in 2011, the strategy's focus on cultural change will be supported by the Four Cornerstones approach to co-production which will support the Local Area to deliver against 4 public commitments; we will think beyond barriers to support aspiration; we will improve how we communicate around SEND; we will develop new and better ways of working for children and young people; and we will build more inclusive communities. The focus will now be on embedding its principles and accelerating practice improvement into 2025.

1.4 More widely, activity also continued around a range of transformation projects activities across the wider area. This included the ongoing rollout of early help pilot activity in Northern Devon, a range of support work around systems and statutory process improvements to assist and improve the handling of plan development within the authority, and agreement of additional cross organisational working around autism and other health related priorities. A focus in January will be placed upon ensuring all relevant partners are further engaged in these work strands, building on feedback received in the run up to Christmas.

1.5 Following on from the challenges faced around the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in Month 6 however, financial pressures linked to heightened demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) have continued through to Month 8 /9 of the financial year. Whilst the pace of acceleration around expenditure outside of forecast has slowed somewhat, in part due to the management actions taken through our November update, the financial strain arising from the ongoing management of our backlog of Education, Health and Care Plans alongside challenges around sufficiency (leading to an increased usage of the independent sector) continues. This will see the

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authority exceed its deficit position for the High Needs Block by around £20m this financial year.

1.6 In response, considerable work has been ongoing over November and December to specifically address and reinforce the ability of the Authority to better manage process and financial demands. Recognising the need for immediate action, a daily panel of senior officers was established in late October to review all expenditure decisions coming through the service. To date, this has reviewed over £7 million of expenditure decisions, seeking to ensure best value. This has been accompanied by a new workstream considering whether any potential overpayments have been made to providers, a range of work around our current cost sharing arrangements with partners (health/education), and preparatory work around changing our approach to contracting and commissioning arrangements with providers in the new year.

1.7 Over and above immediate action to enhance financial controls, work has also been ongoing to further reinforce the existing SEND Transformation Programme. Additional staff resources from across the authority are currently being deployed into crucial areas including system improvements, commissioning, contracting and policy development, to ensure that operational controls and behaviours are reinforced across the SEND area. Work on a redesign of staffing within lead services is also currently underway, with a focus on enhancing leadership and oversight of financial and practice decision making. Work has also been accelerated around our engagement with schools and wider partners, seeking to improve shared provision approaches and reinforcing practice which will ultimately support reduced costs. This includes early discussions on additional resource hubs and other community and practice led solutions to manage down demand, and better meet the needs of young people across the mainstream and specialist school sector.

1.8 Demand for EHCPs across the county though remains a critical challenge for the authority. Despite significant management activity to review plans, the overall number of young people with an EHCP in Devon continues to grow. The current total number of EHCPs in November 2024 was 9,754, with the forecast projection (at current rate) due to be 9,833 at January 2025, 461 over that within the safety valve plan. The authority also continues to face an ongoing challenge around its backlog, with around 620 overdue plans still to address, and some pressure from Government to halve this number in the next financial year. This is despite the monthly number of plans assessed having doubled in year. There may be however some early evidence that the management action being put in place is now having an impact across the SEND service, with the average cost of an EHCP dropping during the month by £80 during November (to £16,965), the first such drop this financial year.

1.9 In light of the above, the Authority has continued and intensified its detailed discussions with the Department for Education over the November and December period, notably about how it wishes to manage the emerging national picture around Safety Valve deficits and performance. Devon, in line with many other authorities, will this year face a degree of financial creep against its original projections, with DfE currently considering how it wishes to address this in the face of wider pressures around SEND across the entire country. The Authority will report back on next steps as and when they are agreed, but has proposed (alongside a number of other

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Authorities) that some form of reprofiling of deals will be required this year if the long term trajectory towards a zero deficit is to be achieved by the early 2030's.

Julian Wooster
Interim Director of Children and Young People's Futures

Please ask for: Phill Adams phill.adams@devon.gov.uk

Schools Finance Group: Notes of meeting on Friday 10 January 2025

Key Points for DEF to Note:

Item 3 – Schools Revenue Funding Consultation 2025/26

- **Minimum Funding Guarantee:** SFG endorsed the proposals for schools funding for Schools Forum consideration (in line with the results of the consultation):
 - i. to set MFG to at 0%
 - ii. to bridge the funding gap in the following order:
 - a. Reduced AWPU by up the allowed maximum of 2.5%.
 - b. Reduced all other factors by up the allowed maximum of 2.5%.
- **Transfer of Funding from Schools Block to HNB:** SFG acknowledged the depth of feeling expressed during the consultation regarding the proposal to transfer 0.5% between blocks for 2025-26. While not endorsing the proposal, SFG recognises its role in securing the Safety Valve agreement and supporting efforts to manage high needs funding sustainably, ensuring the needs of children and young people are met earlier and in the right place.
- **Inclusion Levy:** SFG recommended a vote at Schools Forum to decide the next steps, based on the consultation responses, which indicate an overwhelming rejection of the proposal. Furthermore, SFG suggests initiating a collaborative process involving the Authority, Devon Schools, and key stakeholders to develop a clear and actionable framework for what inclusion should look like in Devon, addressing the ongoing issue of exclusion.
- **Delegation and De-delegation:** SFG endorsed the de-delegation of the services in line with the results of the consultation. N.B this will be for mainstream maintained schools' representatives of Schools Forum to vote on each service (unless there is unanimous agreement to vote on all services together), with Primary and Secondary voting separately.
- **Central Services :** SFG endorsed the funding of the central services (Emotional, Psychological & Social Wellbeing Services, and School Admissions) in line with the results of the consultation.
- **Phase Associations:** SFG proposed that given the inconclusive consultation response, further consideration of this issue should be invited at the 2026/27 funding consultation. This will provide an opportunity to consider the wider impact of funding being discontinued.
- **Exceptional Circumstances:** SFG endorsed the proposal to submit a disapplication request for exceptional circumstances relating to school premises costs for 2025-26.

Item 4 – Financial Planning 2025/26

- SFG endorsed the proposed EY provider funding rates.

ATTENDANCE

DCC

Mat Thorpe (**apologies**)

Deputy Director of Finance and Public Value

Adrian Fox (**part**)

Head Accountant (Education & Learning)

Jack Newton (Chair)

Head of Inclusion and Learning

Phill Adams

Deputy Director SEND

Heidi Watson-Jones

Safety Valve Project Officer

Devon Schools Leadership Services

Primary:

Jamie Stone

Denbury Primary

Paul Walker

First Federation Trust

Christopher Tribble

Honiton Primary

Secondary:

Graham Hill

Pilton Community College

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Schools Finance Group: Notes of meeting on Friday 10 January 2025

Tristan Muller-Forster
Rob Gammon

Tavistock College
The King's School

Alternative Provision:

Rob Gasson

Wave Multi Academy Trust

Special Schools

Sarah Pickering
Hannah Smart (part)

Mill Water School
ACE Tiverton

DAG

Faith Butler (apologies)
Alex Walmsley
Adrian Hines

Special School Governors
Secondary Governors
Primary Governors

Early Years Providers

Gemma Rolstone (part)

Puffins Childcare

Other DCC Officers

Karlien Bond
Katrina Harverson

Senior Accountant (Schools)
Principal Accountant – Education & Learning

SCHOOLS FINANCE GROUP

1. Minutes and matters arising from meeting on 11 November 2024

- Implementation plan for auto-enrolment for pupil premium to be considered at DEF.
- All other actions complete or closed.
- Minutes agreed as an accurate record.

2. DSG monitoring – month 8

- Current position noted; a year end overspend of £45.2m is currently forecast assuming management actions of £12m as identified in the Safety Valve, will be achieved.
- Noted pressures particularly around mainstream SEN plus packages, and an increase in the number of EHCPs being issued – currently 461 above the number stated in the Safety Valve submission.
- SFG noted the Safety Valve management plan savings achieved up to the autumn term, and those projected to be achieved to the financial year end.
- An update was provided of the SEND Transformation projects linked to the Safety Valve. Delays in achieving some of the Safety Valve sufficiency projects have been as a result of DfE delays in decision making around establishing new specialist provision.
- Noted that DfE expects any year end DSG surplus is allocated to the deficit bottom line.
- Key risks outlined around meeting DfE Safety Valve targets include continued growth of EHCPs and children with EHCPs being excluded, both incurring unexpected high costs.
- SFG shared concerns around the ongoing increase in DSG deficit. This is a nationally recognised picture, and Devon is liaising closely with the DfE. Further modelling of the trajectory of Safety Valve target projections is being prepared for the DfE to review.

Schools Finance Group: Notes of meeting on Friday 10 January 2025

- Particular challenges have been identified around speech and language, and SEN needs at primary age. DfE pressure on the LA to address the EHCP needs assessment backlog has significantly impacted on the cost profile.
- SFG reflected that continued realistic and honest financial profiling is key to reflecting a transparent position. It was acknowledged that good progress has been made within the SEND Transformation programme, and the financial position does not reflect this.
- Noted proposed Wave offer to develop a new approach to preventing exclusion and escalating SEN need will be explored further.
- Considered the national landscape around SEND policy and funding challenges, and the impact this may have on future local government reorganisation strategy.
- Accountability to ensure that practice improvement through consistent and inclusive behaviours will need involvement from a partnership of LA, DfE, Schools and Ofsted. Intelligence is being developed to provide more clarity across the county on inclusive practice in schools.

3. Schools Revenue Funding Consultation 2025-26

- SFG expressed disappointment that additional topics in the consultation, including the proposal of an inclusion levy, had not been included in discussions with the group while preparing for the consultation. It was agreed that, in the event of any disruption to future consultation timings, appropriate preparatory discussions will take place. Communications with Jack Newton subsequent to the launch of the consultation were helpful.
- SFG felt that it will be important to demonstrate that the views of school leaders have been heard through their responses, however, it was felt that consultation responses demonstrated a range of perception of school's inclusive practice.
- 58% of schools responded to the consultation, representing almost 52,400 pupils.
- SFG considered single responses submitted on behalf of a Trust or Federation. Agreed that an additional question will be added to future consultation to confirm that the response coming from a Trust has been discussed wider than an individual CEO / Headteacher **ACTION: AF & KB.**
- Considered the understanding of school leadership, CFOs and school bursars, around school funding mechanisms and how this can be improved across the board. SFG proposed that in future a pre-consultation event is held, hosted by school leaders, to explain the nuances and complexities of school funding. **ACTION: JN & AF**
- **Question 1 – Minimum Funding Guarantee set at 0%** The majority of schools agreed with this proposal.
- **Question 2 – Management of excess funding available** – DfE funding confirmation indicates that there will be no excess funding available to be allocated in 2025/26. Therefore, this was no longer needed within the discussion
- **Question 3 – Management of a funding gap**
- The majority of schools had agreed in principle that a funding gap would be addressed in the following order: i) reduce AWPU by up to the allowed maximum of 2.5% then ii) reduce all other factors by up to the allowed maximum of 2.5%.

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Schools Finance Group:

Notes of meeting on Friday 10 January 2025

- DfE funding confirmation indicates that there is a schools funding gap in 2025/26.
- **Question 4: Movements between Blocks** – 82% of schools did not agree to transfer 0.5% funding between schools' block and high needs block.
- Finance colleagues confirmed that there is no other legal mechanism within financial operational guidance to allow a transfer of funding from the schools' block to the high needs block, other than through this formal consultation process.
- It was felt that some responses indicated that previous support for investing, through a block transfer, in approaches to SEND improvement was diminished in the light of anticipated additional financial pressure on mainstream schools to support more learners with EHCPs in their setting.
- It will be important that the impact of DEF not supporting a transfer is made clear e.g. impact on Safety Valve agreement with the DfE. Noted that the DfE will note the Schools Forum decision, however the transfer is assumed in the Safety Valve projection and would result in a further £2.8m pressure.
- Schools retaining funding in their local budgets will indicate that increased inclusive practice can be implemented locally, and there will still be an expectation that £2.8m Safety Valve savings, associated with the funding transfer, will be generated.
- SFG requested that a clear outline of the impact of the outcome of the DEF vote is shared with DEF members to support them to make an informed decision on the block transfer **ACTION: KB**. This could include options on a different percentage, potential impact on Safety Valve support.
- Sufficient time must be given at DEF to a full and wide-ranging discussion on this issue.
- Consultation responses indicated that school leaders had not felt that previous investment of the block transfer had impacted on their school directly.
- **Question 5: Inclusion** - 97% of schools did not agree to a levy on exclusions of £21,000 per exclusion to create an incentive to develop more inclusive learning communities.
- SFG considered how inclusive practice in schools can be reviewed more widely and benchmarked objectively, through a wide-ranging data review of learners being permanently excluded, moving to EHE or with SEND.
- SFG noted the intention to encourage increased inclusive practice in schools, but that the LA messaging within the consultation proposal was unfortunate. Considered how this can be better managed going forwards, initiating a collaborative process involving the Authority, Devon Schools, and key stakeholders to develop a clear and actionable framework for what inclusion should look like in Devon, addressing the ongoing issue of exclusion.
- SFG recommended a vote at Schools Forum to decide the next steps, based on the consultation responses.
- **Delegation and De-delegation** – The majority of mainstream, maintained schools supported continued de-delegation of funding for all services funded through de-delegation. N.B. this is not an option for academies, special schools, nurseries or PRUs as services are offered on a buy-back basis to these schools.
- **Central Services** – The majority of schools supported the continuation of funding for Emotional, Psychological and Social Wellbeing Services and School Admissions.

Schools Finance Group: Notes of meeting on Friday 10 January 2025

- **Phase Associations** - 52% of schools voted for funding to remain in school budgets, for Phase Associations to no longer be centrally funded and to introduce a subscription model for schools and trusts.
- SFG acknowledged that schools representation to the LA is enabled through the funding and administration of phase associations.
- It would be helpful to help schools to more fully understand the unintended consequences, for schools and the LA, should phase associations no longer be funded in the current format.
- SFG proposed that, given the inconclusive consultation response, further consideration of this issue is invited at the 2026 consultation.
- This would provide an opportunity to consider the wider impact of funding being discontinued.
- **ACTION: JN, DSLS & DAG** to prepare an outline of the potential impact of ceasing funding to phase associations to brief DEF members.

- **Disapplication request – exceptional circumstances relating to school premises** – Devon has submitted a disapplication request to use exceptional circumstances to allocate funding to schools that incur exceptional premises costs.
- These schools have been receiving this funding for many years and rely on it to fund these exceptional costs. Schools who may qualify have already been contacted.

Recommendations to DEF:

- **Minimum Funding Guarantee:** SFG endorsed the proposals for schools funding for Schools Forum consideration (in line with the results of the consultation):
 - iii. to set MFG to at 0%
 - iv. to bridge the funding gap in the following order:
 - a. Reduced AWPU by up the allowed maximum of 2.5%.
 - b. Reduced all other factors by up the allowed maximum of 2.5%.
- **Transfer of Funding from Schools Block to HNB:** SFG acknowledged the depth of feeling expressed during the consultation regarding the proposal to transfer 0.5% between blocks for 2025-26. While not endorsing the proposal, SFG recognises its role in securing the Safety Valve agreement and supporting efforts to manage high needs funding sustainably, ensuring the needs of children and young people are met earlier and in the right place.
- **Inclusion Levy:** SFG recommended a vote at Schools Forum to decide the next steps, based on the consultation responses, which indicate an overwhelming rejection of the proposal. Furthermore, SFG suggests initiating a collaborative process involving the Authority, Devon Schools, and key stakeholders to develop a clear and actionable framework for what inclusion should look like in Devon, addressing the ongoing issue of exclusion.
- **Delegation and De-delegation:** SFG endorsed the de-delegation of the services in line with the results of the consultation. N.B this will be for mainstream maintained schools' representatives of Schools Forum to vote on each service (unless there is unanimous agreement to vote on all services together), with Primary and Secondary voting separately.

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Schools Finance Group:

Notes of meeting on Friday 10 January 2025

- **Central Services** : SFG endorsed the funding of the central services (Emotional, Psychological & Social Wellbeing Services, and School Admissions) in line with the results of the consultation.
- **Phase Associations:** SFG proposed that given the inconclusive consultation response, further consideration of this issue should be invited at the 2026/27 funding consultation. This will provide an opportunity to consider the wider impact of funding being discontinued.
- **Exceptional Circumstances:** SFG endorsed the proposal to submit a disapplication request for exceptional circumstances relating to school premises costs for 2025-26.

ACTIONS:

- **AF / KB** - additional question to be added to future consultations to confirm that the wider group of schools has been consulted where a single response is prepared on behalf of a trust or federation.
- **JN & AF** to plan a pre-consultation event, to be held in autumn 2025 and hosted by school leaders, to clearly explain the nuances and complexities of school funding.
- **KB** to prepare a clear outline of the impact of the outcome of the DEF vote on a block funding transfer. This will be shared with DEF members to support them to make an informed decision.
JN, DSLS & DAG to prepare an outline of the potential impact of ceasing funding to phase associations to be shared with DEF members.

4. Financial Planning 2025-26

- SFG noted the changes to the DSG funding from 2025/26, including indicative settlements for the funding blocks and areas of grant funding being rolled into the base budget from the next financial year.
- Draft schools funding modelling calculator will be published shortly to provide an indicative position for schools, but it was reiterated that a final position would not be available before 28 February when final allocations are confirmed by the DfE.
- SFG noted that a funding gap still remains, with Devon approximately £23m adrift to meet the national funding formula.
- Noted that the Teachers Pay Award Grant and Teacher's Pension Employer Contribution Grant is linked to PAN, but where High needs provision (special schools and PRUs) are operating over PAN this will result in a further funding shortfall across the sector as additional funding will not be triggered.
- Noted that place planning decisions for the specialist sector takes place in the preceding February.
- **ACTION: JN** to respond to SFG around issues pertaining to PAN and the funding formula in the high needs sector (special schools and PRUs)
- Noted LA will now be able to establish new special schools. Careful consideration was urged around the future consideration of practical implementation of new specialist provision, particularly strategy around allocation of places in new schools.

Early Years funding

- SFG acknowledged efforts that had been made to pass on additional funding to Early Years providers.
- There seems to be disparity between the consultation process for transferring Schools Block funding to HNB and Early Years block funding to HNB.

Schools Finance Group: Notes of meeting on Friday 10 January 2025

- SFG reflected that Early Years capital funding had been made available which prompted schools to discuss sufficiency need with the LA Early Years team.
- It was noted that in a number of cases it was identified that there was no locally identified EY sufficiency need, however it was felt that more constructive discussions with schools putting forward proposals would increase understanding of the impact of new development on the established provision in locality areas.
- SFG were keen that the LA and Schools are able to take advantage of any areas of funding available to Devon.
- A shift towards a more strategic locality based way of working is being developed through the LA Inclusion and Learning redesign.
- SFG endorsed the proposed EY provider funding rates.

ACTIONS:

- **JN** to respond to SFG around issues pertaining to PAN and funding formula in the high needs sector (special schools and AP)

5. AOB / Items for DEF

Access Budgeting Software issue

- JN had previously undertaken to communicate a position statement to schools.
- The situation has proved incredibly complex with legal implications which will require clarification prior to a response being shared with schools.
- It was noted that a number of schools have been unhappy with the way that the issue has been managed, with ongoing concerns around the financial impact on individual schools.
- It has become clear that DCC financial consultants need to fully understand the IT systems commissioned and being trusted to manage school finances.
- **ACTION: HWJ for agenda items for next SFG meeting,**
- move to new IT systems and the impact on maintained schools is fully considered.
- Growth Fund policy & exceptional growth.

Future meeting dates:

- **Wednesday 5 March 2025** (09.15 – 12.30 – Teams)
- **Wednesday 4 June 2025** (09.15 – 12.30 – Teams)
- **Wednesday 9 July 2025** (09.15 – 12.30 - Face to face at County Hall)
- **Wednesday 10 September** (all day – face to face at County Hall)
- **Wednesday 5 November** (09.15 – 12.30 – Face to face at County Hall)
- **Friday 9 January 2026** (09.15 – 12.30 – Teams)
- **Wednesday 4 March 2026** (09.15 – 12.30 – Teams)

FINANCE UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & PUBLIC VALUE AND INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUTURES

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Schools Forum:

- a) Note month 8 DSG monitoring position as set out in this report.
 - b) Note current Safety Valve / DSG management plan position as set out in the report.
- All to Note**

Budget Monitoring Report – Month 8 (2024/25) – Dedicated Schools Grant

Executive Summary

- Before any contributions from the DfE and Devon, the increase in the accumulated Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit is forecast to be £51.6 million compared to the DfE Safety Valve planned position of £31.2 million. An increase of £20.4 million.
- Dedicated Schools Grant is forecasting an overspend of £45.2 million and assumes management plan actions of £12.0 million identified in the Safety Valve Intervention management plan will be achieved in this financial year. A further £3.3 million of the management actions have been identified as being at risk of delivery.
- A meeting has been set up for mid January to review the financial recovery plan produced earlier in the financial year to review areas of savings identified and to see if there are further areas that can be explored to support the pull back on the in year overspend. Full year effect of any savings will be realised in 2025/26 financial year.
- The current number of fixed term exclusions recorded for children with an EHCP is at 11.4% for November 2024, which is a reduction from 1.6% in 2023.
- In November 2024, 14.4% of children with an EHCP have been absent from School.
- The number of EHCPs being issued are increasing over and above the Safety Valve submission, one of the reasons for this is due to DfE targets to issue within a timely manner; these targets will have a financial impact on current forecasts. The total number of EHCPs as at November 2024 is 9,754. The projection to January 2025, at this rate, will be 9,833 and therefore 461 plans above that stated within our Safety Valve submission.
- The increasing DSG deficit could have a considerable impact on future education budgets within the DSG as well as impacting on the financial sustainability for Devon County Council.

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1. DSG Schools Funding

- 1.1. In July the revised DSG settlement allocation stands at £313 million (after recoupment for academies and direct funded places) based upon pupil numbers as at the October 2023 Schools census and January 2024 Early Years census.
- 1.2. The working budget includes other school grants of £44.5 million.
- 1.3. The DSG and Schools Funding includes £6.3 million Safety Valve funding expected to be received this year from the DfE.

Table 1: Summary of Month 8 forecast position and significant variations

Budget projections as at Month 8	Revised Budget for year £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000	Outturn Variance £'000	Carry Forward Requested £'000	Transfer to/(from) deficit reserve £'000	Forecast Adjusted variance £'000	Change from prior BMG Reporting Period £'000	Analysis of Savings Plans	
								Budgeted Savings Plans £'000	Forecast Delivery Savings Plans £'000
Schools delegated budgets	168,968	168,968	(0)			(0)	(0)	0	(0)
Academy Grants	19,137	19,137	0			0	0	0	0
DSG and School Funding	(357,866)	(364,196)	(6,330)		6,330	0	0	0	0
Total DSG Funding	(169,761)	(176,091)	(6,330)	0	6,330	(0)	(0)	0	(0)
De-delegated budgets	4,889	4,889	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Central School Services Block	4,262	4,233	(29)		29	0	0	0	0
Early Years & Childcare Services	67,228	67,228	0		0	0	0	0	0
Total DSG central budgets	76,379	76,350	(29)	0	29	0	0	0	0
High Needs Budget	146,521	166,971	20,450		(20,450)	0	0	(15,345)	(12,011)
DSG High Needs 24/25 deficit budget prep	(31,166)	0	31,166		(31,166)	0	0	0	0
Total High Needs budget	115,355	166,971	51,616	0	(51,616)	0	0	(15,345)	(12,011)
Total Dedicated Schools Grant	21,973	67,230	45,257	0	(45,257)	(0)	(0)	(15,345)	(12,011)
								Unachievable	3,334

2. DSG Central Budgets

De-delegated budget

- 2.1. The budget covers Copyrights and Licences, Contingencies and exceptional events funds, Education Services contracts, Maternity Fund and Trade Unions, they are all currently forecasting to spend to budget.

Central School Services Block

- 2.2. This budget area includes Termination of Employment Costs, Admissions, Schools Forum, Devon SLS (Phase associations), Insurances and Surplus Properties. £29,000 underspend relates to the Admissions Team £14,000 due to additional grant funding and reduction in contribution to HADMISS and £15,000 for Surplus Properties. Access for Disabled is forecasting a slight overspend in relation to inflationary increase to contract.

Early Years & Childcare Services

2.3. Currently forecasting to budget. From September 2024, 15 hours childcare support will be extended to eligible working parents of children from the age of 9 months to 3-year-olds. We have received additional settlement but still awaiting new settlement from the January 2025 data.

3. High Needs

3.1. The High Needs Block continues to remain under significant pressure and is forecasting an overspend of £51.6 million.

3.2. Table 2 sets out the high-level view within the High Needs Block.

Table 2: Summary of High Needs budgets and forecast position as at Month 8

	Budget £'000	Month 8 Forecast £'000	Variance £'000	Transfer to/(from) deficit reserve £'000	Deficit / (Surplus) Balance £'000	Movement Previous Mth £'000	Budgeted Safety Valve saving £'000	Forecast savings £'000
Alternative Provision	7,424	7,250	(174)	174	0	143	(259)	(259)
Children in Care and Exclusions	1,776	1,776	0	0	0	0		
Improved Outcomes Disadvantaged Children	1,827	1,766	(61)	61	0	(45)		
Inclusion	150	150	0	0	0	0		
Safeguarding Every Learner	390	388	(2)	2	0	1		
SEN Mainstream	26,851	33,582	6,731	(6,731)	0	476	(3,818)	(1,618)
FE Colleges	5,325	6,095	770	(770)	0	0		
SEN Services	2,393	2,372	(21)	21	0	(3)		
SEN 100 Project	250	238	(12)	12	0	(12)		
Maintained & Academy Special Schools	44,815	49,052	4,237	(4,237)	0	16	(289)	0
Hospital Education Services	776	776	0	0	0	0		
Recoupment	932	1,876	944	(944)	0	0		
Other Special School Fees	51,794	59,888	8,094	(8,094)	0	567	(10,980)	(10,135)
Support Centre Funding	1,818	1,762	(56)	56	0	35		
Total High Needs Funding	146,521	166,971	20,450	(20,450)	0	1,178	(15,346)	(12,012)
DSG High Needs 23/24 deficit budget prep	(31,166)	0	31,166	(31,166)	0	0		
Total High Needs budget	115,355	166,971	51,616	(51,616)	0	1,178	(15,346)	(12,012)

Alternative Provision

3.3. Alternative Provision (AP) is currently forecasting an underspend of £174,000. The main in year pressure continues to be seen within AP Other where the number of children being excluded or who are requiring support due to not being able to attend School is rising. Forecast assumes the budget will be back to budgeted levels of pupils being supported from December (159 actual pupils vs 100 budgeted). All current children requiring extension to provision or new pupils coming through Section 19 who are supported by the Alternative Provision Other budget are discussed and reviewed and provision agreed and signed off at the daily Senior Officer Approval Panel (SOAP).

3.4. The main AP WAVE contract is forecasting to underspend by £358,000 due to the projected numbers being lower than originally budgeted, although the provision is projected to fill up before the end of the financial year. This underspend is currently mitigating the pressure within the AP Special Commission placements at WAVE which is forecasting an overspend of £312,000.

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- 3.5. Diabetes funding is reporting to budget, however this assumes £222,000 of funding from Health to pay for the support being provided to schools.
- 3.6. £800,000 projected income is included within the forecast from AP Medical and EOTAS AWPU clawback and forms part of the mitigation of the AP other pressure.
- 3.7. Forecast includes £259,000 safety valve savings to be achieved through the AP commissioning and are expected to be achieved in this academic year.

SEN Mainstream

- 3.8. This covers personalised education packages and EHCPs as well as the central Service Level Agreements which support them.
- 3.9. Mainstream EHCPs (pre-16) are reporting an overspend of £2.4 million, within the forecast there is £3.8 million safety valve savings in relation to Inclusion, Early Help, Sufficiency and Financial Management, of which £2.2 million will not be achieved in this financial year.
- 3.10. Overall EHCP numbers are above the budgeted average of 3,296 at 3,595 (after management action), forecast includes growth for the remainder of the year and that Management Actions will not mitigate the original level of budgeted growth.
- 3.11. Children Educated Other than at School are reporting an overspend of £2.6 million for Tutoring Specialist provision as there are 271 pupils more than budgeted (of which 40 transferring from AP Other). However, the average cost of these pupils is £3,042 lower than budgeted. Personalised Budgets are forecasting an overspend of £333,000 from an additional 28 pupils than budgeted, yet similarly the average cost per pupil is lower than budgeted by £2,647. There are combined safety valve savings of £427,000 within both of these budgets for Financial Management and forecast assumes these savings will be achieved.
- 3.12. SEN Therapies are reporting an overspend of £103,000 due to increased demand for support for young people during the Summer and Autumn, forecast assumes the same level for the Spring term.
- 3.13. An interim commissioning process for packages of Alternative Education Provision (AEP) commenced in June 2024 ensuring that only those providers who are on the approved master provider list which has been put together by the children's commissioning team are being used. This is to ensure all our providers are compliant with DCC's basic checks and these are up to date and to standardise the working practices across Education teams.
- 3.14. Colleagues are in the process of recouping therapy costs from our Health partners estimated at around £1.2 million. This is not currently built into the forecast and forms part of the High Needs Block recovery plan mitigations.

Maintained and Academy Special Schools

- 3.15. Forecast to overspend in 2024/25 by £4.2 million. The average numbers on roll including Plus Packages and Exceeded places are forecast at 1,843 (vs 1,831 budgeted). Plus Packages are above budget by 17 and we are currently funding 3 guaranteed placements which is resulting in an overspend of £270,000. However, this has been offset by a reduction in top up of 8 places with a saving of £132,000.
- 3.16. Due to capacity limitations at The Promise, place funding has been reduced by 5 from September 2024 resulting in savings of £32,000, but this will impact demand in the area.
- 3.17. SEN outreach support recharges has an unbudgeted pressure £124,000 to support the Special School and SSA outreach support workstreams.

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- 3.18. Guaranteed residential funding of 20 places for Orchard Manor has resulted in a £134,000 pressure as the budget assumed places would be reducing in this financial year. A further £94,000 pressure relates to prior year adjustments for change in pupil placements
- 3.19. Since submission of the Safety Valve proposal an accounting error has been identified that was not found during our submission conversations. The error of around £3 million relates to an omission in the calculated costs for Special Schools recoupmnt. Discussions with our DfE finance adviser has confirmed that we will be able to manage this over future years and this will form part of the resubmission in February.
- 3.20. The budgeted included safety valve savings of £289,000 for Preparation for Adulthood in relation to curriculum review this saving will not be realised in this financial year and this area is currently being reviewed, however it will be mitigated against further savings within the overall Preparation for Adulthood (condition 2).

Other Special Schools Fees

- 3.21. The Other Special Schools budget includes Safety Valve Management Action of £10.9 million and the forecast assumes £10.1 million will be achieved in this financial year of which £8.7 million has been achieved to date.
- 3.22. Independent Special Schools are currently reporting an in year overspend of £8.1 million after the management actions of £10.1 million being achieved and £490,000 health funding which is still be agreed.
- 3.23. Forecast placement numbers until March 2025 are 1,261 compared to budgeted 1,112. This is 149 over the budgeted level and relates to Sole funded placements due to both the Summer term and September starters being higher than planned. For the remaining management action to be achieved the forecast assumes 42 placements will either cease or there will a reduction in growth. All placement decisions are being made at the daily SOAP panel.
- 3.24. 35.9% of the overall High Needs Block budget supports young people in Independent Specialist Settings which supports 12.7% of the total number of pupils with an EHCP (9,754 / 1,239).

FE Colleges

- 3.25. FE Colleges are forecasting an overspend of £769,000 due to being 18 pupils above budgeted level of 1,033 and the average cost being £533 higher than budgeted at £5,688.
- 3.26. SLT have provided approval for capital works to have new facilities from 2026/27 but it's hoped these will be available for 2025/26 academic year generating an additional 350 places. £250,000 of revenue support has been agreed for 2024/25 and 2025/26 to fast track availability for an additional 40 places at Petroc from September 2024 for and approximately 30 places at Exeter College from January 2025. Consideration is currently being made as to whether this cost can be converted to flexible use of capital receipts. This cost is currently included in the current FE forecast.

Savings by Conditions

- 3.27. Table 3 sets out a matrix of the savings by condition and budget area.

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Table 3: Savings Matrix 2024/25

Conditions	SRO	SEN Mainstream £'000	Maintained & Academy Special Schools £'000	Other Special Schools £'000	Alternative Provision £'000	Total Targeted Savings 2024/25 £'000	Forecast Non-deliverable / (over-achieve) £'000	
Condition 1	Improving Early Intervention	TBC	(728)	0	(1,300)	0	(2,028)	783
Condition 2	Develop shared Pathways in Adulthood	Phill Adams	0	0	(3,671)	0	(3,671)	(23)
Condition 3	Appropriate Local Provision	Simon Niles	0	0	(4,112)	(259)	(4,371)	375
Condition 4	Financial Management & Placement Value	Damien Jones	(890)	0	(1,052)	0	(1,942)	2,200
Condition 5	Improve Inclusive Capacity	TBC	0	0	0	0	0	0
Condition 6	Multi-agency Pathways	Hannah Pugliese	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Management Plan Savings			(1,618)	0	(10,135)	(259)	(12,012)	3,335

4. 0.25% Block transfer to High Needs Block (Early Help and Emotionally Based School Avoidance)

- 4.1. £1.3 million was agreed by schools as a block transfer to the High Needs Block for Early Help and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).
- 4.2. There is no further update since reporting at SFG 11th November for month 6, a progress report will be provided for month 10 based on outcomes delivered for the Autumn term.

5. Workstream Savings

Table 4: Profiled condition savings / Cost reductions

Safety Valve Intervention Programme	Summer	Summer	Autumn	Autumn	Spring	Spring	24/25	24/25	24/25	Rag Rating	
	planned	Term Actuals	Term Planned	Term Actuals	Term Planned	Term Actuals	Targeted Savings	Forecast Deliverable amount	Forecast Non-Deliverable amount		
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000		
Improving Early Intervention	(1,222)	(799)	(1,476)	(136)	(112)		(2,810)	(2,028)	783	(935)	Amber
Developed shared pathways in Adulthood	(268)	(356)	(3,380)	(3,315)			(3,648)	(3,671)	(23)	(3,671)	Green
Appropriate Local Provision	(1,969)		(2,777)	(1,784)	0		(4,746)	(4,371)	375	(1,784)	Red
Improve process and use of data to make informed decisions	(650)	(110)	(2,842)	(499)	(650)		(4,142)	(1,942)	2,200	(609)	Amber
Multi-agency Pathways											Red
Total Management Plan Savings	(4,109)	(1,265)	(10,475)	(5,734)	(762)	0	(15,346)	(12,012)	3,335	(6,999)	

- 5.1. Pupil data has been provided by workstream leads to evidence those who have been supported either during the summer term or taken up a placement within the expanded Maintained and Academy special school places, this has achieved to date, £7.0 million of savings to date.
- 5.2. The Management Action of £15.3 million reflects the budgeted savings expected to be delivered in 2024/25 Safety Valve submission. As at month 8 £3.3 million is being recorded as not being achieved for special school outreach, Support Centre expansion and Plus Packages review.
- 5.3. A request was made early in the Autumn term for additional resource to support the programme, there has been a good response from Directorates within the local authority to support the SEND Transformation Programme, majority of the roles which we were looking to fill have now had a resource identified which will help support the deliverability of the programme including the Safety Valve savings. Appendix A details the individual workstreams packages and savings being reported under each safety valve condition.

Condition 1 & 5: Improving Early Intervention (Inclusion & Early Help)

- 5.4. Strand has moved to an amber RAG rating due to the number of milestones that have slipped. The biggest risk to the project remains the Special Schools Outreach offer, which was due to be in place by September 2024. However, conversations have been held with Special Partnership Trust and Education South West to start doing some focused outreach work from January. In addition, the Attendance and Emotionally Based School Avoidance online resource was signed off by the Programme Board in December ahead of publication.

Condition 2: Develop shared Pathways in Adulthood (Preparation for Adulthood)

- 5.5. The strand remains at green/amber with delivery appearing probable, though a small number of risks have been identified. The biggest risk to the project is work to review and development of the 14,16 and 18 review processes due to the capacity of the SEN Statutory team. On a positive note, however, the Transitions guide has now moved into live testing with young people and their families, and a new protocol developed between Children's and Adult's services to assist professionals with young people in transition was signed off by the Programme Board in December.

Condition 3: Appropriate Local Provision (Sufficiency)

- 5.6. Strand remains amber/red due to the continued risks in Department for Education (DfE) special school build projects, though mitigations reduce impact on new places in part. We hope to have movement on the Ivybridge project early in the new year. However, the DfE are currently unable to confirm the position or a timeline for a decision on the self-delivery business case for the Cranbrook project.

Condition 4: Improve process and use of data to make informed decisions

- 5.7. The strand has moved to amber as it goes through a period of refocus. A new priority work package to develop Capita One to enable us to better manage data relating to a child and their provision and support better decision-making has now been started

Condition 6: Improve Inclusive Capacity (Multi Agency Pathways)

- 5.8. Lots of work underway across the strand. However, the strand remains at amber/red due to the increasing waiting list backlog. Waiting lists and numbers continue to rise but an approach to reducing the waiting lists has now been agreed and plans are being developed. Over the past month, the Neurodiversity strategy is complete and awaiting sign off and a new online all-age Neurodiversity Hub launched.

6. Mitigations in-year

- 6.1. To manage the projected in-year overspend £1.3 million has been identified to mitigate this:
- Health contribution for therapies - £1.2 million– young people with EHCP's receiving SALT, mentoring and tutoring support through there EHCP.
 - Health contribution for Tribunal cases - £60,000 – based on recent tribunal order for one child. Work being supported to go through IPOC process. Further work is needed to review other recent cases,
 - Pupil Centric- £80,000 – removal of top up from School as soon as pupil in AP.
- 6.2. To ensure the remaining projected overspend is brought into balance colleagues across the organisation are supporting the SEND Statutory team to improve management of independent placements and governance around spend and contract management.

7. DSG Deficit Management Plan

- 7.1. The DSG Adjustment Account, which shows the cumulative DSG Deficit as per government guidance, is projected to be £130.6 million by the end of 2024/25 after all DCC contributions have been considered, but prior to further mitigating work. This assumes that Health will pay £1.2 million of estimated Health contributions before the end of the financial year.

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	£'000	£'000
DSG Adjustment Account		164,580
DSG High Needs 24/25 deficit budget prep	31,166	
DSG High Needs 24/25 in year pressure	20,450	
		51,616
In-year mitigation	(1,340)	
Other DSG block surpluses	(29)	
		(1,369)
Department of Education contribution to clear deficit 23/24	(38,000)	
Department of Education contribution to clear deficit 24/25	(6,330)	
		(44,330)
Local Authority contribution to clear deficit 23/24	(11,161)	
Local Authority contribution to clear deficit 24/25	(28,700)	
		(39,861)
Total DSG Deficit Reserve		130,636

8. Data Dashboards

8.1. Data dashboards have been developed to support the SEND Transformation and Safety Valve Programmes. Data included will show the number of EHCP requests received to date and projected to for the remainder of the year compared to previous years as well as the current number of active EHCPs and how this compares to where Devon are projecting to be in January 2025 (as per the Safety Valve Submission). Average costs for the different provision type are also being calculated and showing how this compares to the previous month.

Table 5: Number of EHCP requests over the last 5 years

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
Devon Number of EHCNA requests	1512	1745	2013	2146	2356
National Number of EHCNA requests	75951	93302	114482	138242	153815
Requests for EHCNA as % 0-24 population **	0.68%	0.79%	0.91%	0.97%	1.06%
National Requests for EHCNA as % 0-24 population **	0.37%	0.46%	0.56%	0.68%	0.75%

**projected figures based on average number of monthly requests in 2024 to date*

Table 6: EHCPs as % of 0-25 population

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
Devon Number of EHCPs	6474	7295	7926	8400	9833
National Number of EHCPs				517049	575963
EHCPs as % 0-25 population**	3.07%	3.46%	3.76%	4.26%	4.44%
National EHCPs as % 0-25 population**				2.53%	2.82%

**projected figures based on average increase in total EHCPs in 2024 to date*

Table 7: Number of Active EHCPs comparison 2023 to 2024

	Jan 25 SV target	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
2023		8400	8456	8492	8519	8582	8647	8707	8718	8742	8813	8874
2024	9372	8887	8989	9033	9049	9155	9298	9382	9436	9506	9664	9754

Table 8: Average costs by provision type

AVERAGE COSTS						
	FTE	2024/25 (Oct 24)	FTE	2024/25 (Nov 24)	FTE Trend 24/25 monthly movement	£ Trend 24/25 monthly movement
Average cost of an EHCP	9664	£17,163	9754	£17,118	●	●
Average mainstream placement cost < 16	3570	£6,020	3595	£6,086	●	●
Average cost of an independent < 16	890	£54,286	904	£54,257	●	●
Average mainstream placement cost > 16	42	£10,196	44	£9,865	●	●
Average cost of an independent > 16	339	£43,852	335	£44,080	●	●
Average cost of maintained / academy special school - in county	1843	£27,752	1843	£27,780	●	●
Average cost of maintained / academy special school - out county	131	£25,213	131	£25,213	●	●
Average cost Resource Base place	101	£22,562	102	£22,682	●	●
Average cost of FE colleges	1122	£9,335	1122	£9,335	●	●
Average placement cost - alternative provision (contract)	135	£23,034	135	£23,097	●	●
Average placement cost - alternative provision (contract - Special Commission)	18	£29,583	20	£27,464	●	●
Average placement cost - alternative provision (Medical)	125	£17,948	126	£17,892	●	●
Average placement cost - alternative provision (other)	199	£15,173	202	£16,097	●	●
Average placement cost - alternative provision (Tutoring)	321	£11,484	447	£11,513	●	●
% of spend in: the independent, non-maintained special school and independent college sector		35.20%		35.20%		●

9. Capital Investment

- 9.1. Since the strategic review of SEND provision in 2018, DCC has increased the special school estate by 74% (circa 640 places) with further plans for a minimum of 150 places, an overall increase of 790 places (90%). From 2022, there are 450 new places planned and or delivered, 150 of which have been secured from the DfE Free School programme with central delivery, all are targeted at increasing provision for learners whose primary needs are ASD and SEMH, as identified through the sufficiency work. The whole programme will see 5 new schools delivered, all in areas which were under-served in respect of SEND provision (Newton Abbot, Ivybridge, Okehampton, Tiverton and Cranbrook New Town). Over time this provision will reduce the impact on school transport revenue funding which has seen budgetary challenges aligned to the pressures on the HNB.
- 9.2. The remaining HNB Capital is earmarked to support the development of resource base provision on mainstream school sites. This targeted programme will deliver circa 200 places and mitigate an identified shortfall of resource base places when compared to our statistical neighbours and national averages.
- 9.3. Joint project working is currently ongoing with Petroc College in North Devon and Exeter College around the provision of additional Post 16 provision for the county, with a focus on the delivery of an additional 350 places within our mainstream FE environment by 2025. DfE capital funding is still to be agreed to support this.

10. Risks

- 10.1. DfE targets to issue within a timely manner will have a financial impact on current forecasts as the number of EHCPs being issued are increasing and over above the safety valve submission plans.
- 10.2. Continued growth of EHCPs and children being excluded with EHCPs causing unexpected high cost with no facility to reduce external demand will make it difficult to contain costs within the allocated budget
- 10.3. Education Services incurring costs which relate to Health and Social Care

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- 10.4. Staff recruitment and retention both operational and project resources is a continued problem for Education Services which will impact on the deliverability of the plans.
- 10.5. Staff structures under review and other service delivery changes ahead could impact the current forecasts
- 10.6. Rising demand being seen in Section 19 requests for those children not attending school which is creating additional pressure to the High Needs Block
- 10.7. The SEN Placement continue to cause increase in the demand on the High Needs Block. Support from all stakeholders to take action to mitigate the growing demand and reduce the call on independent placements is necessary.
- 10.8. Stakeholders across the local area not fully understanding their role in working in partnership to improve SEND provision for children in Devon and support the deliverability of plans.
- 10.9. Unexpected demand as new high-cost children and young people move into the area.
- 10.10. Delayed announcement of High Needs Block Safety valve capital impacting on the delivery proposals to create additional capacity in mainstream FE sector.
- 10.11. Service continues to be unable to contain costs within the allocated budget.
- 10.12. Mitigation of the above risks can be achieved through the implementation of the SEND Transformation Programme support from schools and other providers to take action on the growing demand and reduce the call on independent placements.

11. Recommendation

It is recommended that Schools Forum:

- a) Note month 8 DSG monitoring position as set out in this report.
- b) Note current Safety Valve / DSG management plan position as set out in the report.

All to Note

ANGIE SINCLAIR
Director of Finance & Public Value

JULIAN WOOSTER
Interim Director of Children and Young People's Futures

Please ask for: Adrian Fox Adrian.fox@devon.gov.uk

Education & Learning - Education & Health Care Plan (EHCP) Cost & Volume Analysis

High Needs EHCP Analysis	Actual No of Pupils				No of FYE Pupils				Budget 24/25	Forecast outturn	Variation		Budgeted Unit cost	Forecast Unit cost	Variation	Month 8		
	Budgeted 24/25	Month 8	Variation	%	Budgeted 24/25	Month 8	Variation	%	£'000	£'000	£'000	%	£	£	£	Price Var £'000	Vol Var £'000	Total Var £'000
Top ups	150	144	(6)	(4.2%)	150	136	(14)	(10.3%)	2,003	1,768	(235)	(11.7%)	13,353	13,000	(353)	(48)	(187)	(235)
Medical Planned Places	90	90	0	0.0%	90	90	0	0.0%	1,620	1,620	0	0.0%	18,000	18,000	0	0	0	0
Medical Planned Additional	39	45	6	13.3%	39	36	(3)	(8.3%)	762	634	(128)	(16.8%)	19,538	17,611	(1,927)	(69)	(59)	(128)
AP WAVE Special Commission	13	20	7	35.0%	13	20	7	35.0%	312	549	237	76.0%	25,000	27,450	2,450	49	175	224
AP Other [Non-WAVE]	95	105	10	9.5%	131	202	71	35.0%	466	3,251	2,785	597.6%	9,221	16,094	6,873	1,388	652	2,041
Alternative Provision	387	404	17	4.2%	423	484	61	12.6%	5,163	7,822	2,659	51.5%	85,112	92,155	7,043	1,320	582	1,902
Personalised Packages	72	74	2	2.7%	72	100	28	28.0%	1,537	1,870	333	21.7%	21,347	18,700	(2,647)	(265)	598	333
Home Tutoring	177	271	94	34.7%	177	448	271	60.5%	2,574	5,152	2,578	100.2%	14,542	11,500	(3,042)	(1,363)	3,941	2,578
Educated Other than at School	249	345	96	27.8%	249	548	299	54.6%	4,111	7,022	2,911	70.8%	35,890	30,200	(5,690)	(1,628)	4,539	2,911
Mainstream Provision (pre 16)	2,079	2,238	159	7.1%	2,245	2,346	101	4.3%	7,866	8,252	386	4.9%	3,504	3,517	14	32	354	386
Mainstream Provision (pre 16) Plus Packages	1,085	1,263	178	14.1%	1,051	1,249	198	15.9%	11,712	13,626	1,914	16.3%	11,144	10,910	(234)	(292)	2,206	1,914
Mainstream	3,164	3,501	337	9.6%	3,296	3,595	299	8.3%	19,578	21,878	2,300	11.7%	14,647	14,427	(220)	(260)	2,560	2,300
Further Education	1,033	1,128	95	8.4%	1,033	1,051	18	1.7%	5,325	6,094	769	14.4%	5,155	5,687	532	559	93	652
Top Ups	1,812	1,793	(19)	(1.1%)	1,788	1,780	(8)	(0.5%)	24,633	24,501	(132)	(0.5%)	13,775	13,763	(12)	(21)	(111)	(132)
Guaranteed Places	0	5	5	100.0%	0	3	3	100.0%	0	59	59		18,084	18,084	0	0	59	59
Plus Packages	43	58	15.50	26.7%	43	60	17.00	28.6%	589	801	212	35.9%	13,859	13,454	(404)	(24)	236	212
Maintained & Academy Special Schools	1,855	1,856	1	0.1%	1,831	1,843	12	0.7%	25,222	25,361	139	0.5%	45,718	45,302	(416)	(45)	183	138
Sole Funded	1,037	1,225	188	15.3%	1,092	1,246	153	12.3%	50,166	58,793	8,627	17.2%	50,111	51,071	960	1,196	7,690	8,886
Joint Funded	15	7	(8)	(114.3%)	15	9	(6)	(68.5%)	1,184	506	(678)	(57.3%)	97,603	99,399	1,796	16	(595)	(579)
Adults	5	7	2	28.6%	5	6	1	21.3%	444	584	140	31.5%	90,244	82,108	(8,136)	(51)	120	69
Independent Special Schools	1,057	1,239	182	14.7%	1,112	1,261	149	11.8%	51,794	59,883	8,089	(5.9%)	237,958	232,578	(5,380)	1,161	7,214	8,375
Resource Bases (Topup)	126	94	(32)	(34.0%)	122	102	(20)	(19.9%)	1,089	933	(156)	(14.3%)	8,902	9,147	245	25	(181)	(156)
Reported Forecast Outturn 2024/25	7,745	8,473	728	8.6%	7,944	8,782	838	9.5%	111,193	128,060	16,867	15.2%				1,107	15,171	16,279

22 January 2025

2025-26 SCHOOLS FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Report of the Director of Finance & Public Value and Interim Director of Children and Young Peoples Futures

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Schools Forum:

- a) Specifically approve the proposals for schools funding (in line with the results of the consultation):
 - i. to set the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to at 0%
 - ii. to bridge any funding gap in the following order:
 - a. Reduced AWPU by up the allowed maximum of 2.5%.
 - b. Reduced all other factors by up the allowed maximum of 2.5%.

All to Vote

- b) Specifically approve the proposal to transfer 0.5% between blocks for 2025-26, to secure the Safety Valve agreement and implement plans to manage the high needs funding sustainably and meet the needs of children and young people earlier and in the right place.

All to Vote

- c) Vote on the Inclusion proposal based on the consultation responses. That Schools Forum note that the partnership, including the Authority and Devon Schools, now has to decide how we address the levels of exclusion in Devon going forward.

All to Vote

- d) Specifically approve the de-delegation of the services listed in Section 6.1 in line with the results of the consultation. The mainstream maintained schools' representatives of Schools Forum will be required to vote on each service (unless there is unanimous agreement to vote on all services together), with Primary and Secondary voting separately.

Vote: Maintained primary representatives.

Vote: Maintained secondary representatives.

- e) Specifically approve the funding of the following central services (in line with the consultation):
 - i. Emotional, Psychological & Social Wellbeing Services
 - ii. School Admissions

All to Vote

- f) That Schools Forum consider the SFG proposal in Section 8.3 and vote on how to fund the Phase Associations for 2025-26.

All to Vote

- g) Specifically approve the proposal to submit a disapplication request for exceptional circumstances relating to school premises for 2025-26.

All to Vote

1. Consultation 2025-26.

- 1.1. The consultation documents for [Schools Funding Arrangements 2025-26](#) were published on the Devon County website and 3 online drop-in sessions were held. All schools were invited to respond to the proposals contained within the document by 10th December 2024.
- 1.2. This report should be read in conjunction with the [consultation documents](#).
- 1.3. The outcomes strive to deliver the fairest distribution of funding for the majority of schools whilst keeping within both the funding envelope and adhering to the NFF guidance.

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2. Responses.

- 2.1. 202 out of 351 individual schools (58% of all schools submitted responses to the consultation and these represent almost 52,400 pupils. This is a significant increase from the 33% of schools who submitted responses in the previous year.

Participants - Individual school responses	Academy Primary	Academy Secondary	Total Academy	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained	Total Schools
Number of schools	116	20	136	64	2	66	202
Number of schools %	57%	10%	67%	32%	1%	33%	100%
NOR	18,361	19,189	37,550	12,379	2,461	14,840	52,390
NOR %	35%	37%	72%	23%	5%	28%	100%

3. Schools Funding Questions.

- 3.1. A majority of schools agreed with the first three questions.

3.2. Question 1 - Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)

Do you agree with Devon's decision to set the MFG at 0% for 2025-26?

	Academy Primary	Academy Secondary	Total Academy	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained	Total Schools
Individual Schools:							
Agree	73	19	92	60	2	62	154
Disagree	0	0	0	2	0	2	2
Neither agree nor disagree	43	1	44	2	0	2	46
Total	116	20	136	64	2	66	202
Individual Schools %:							
Agree	36%	9%	45%	30%	1%	31%	76%
Disagree	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Neither agree nor disagree	22%	0%	22%	1%	0%	1%	23%
Total	58%	9%	67%	32%	1%	33%	100%

3.3. Question 2 - Excess funding available

Do you agree in principle with Devon's decision to distribute any unallocated funding in the following order?

- i. Go towards the amount being transferred to the high needs block up to a maximum of 0.5% **Provided Question 4 is agreed.**
- ii. Increase AEN factors by up to the allowed maximum of 2.5%.
- iii. Increase all other factors up to the allowed maximum of 2.5%.
- iv. Increase the MFG up to a maximum of 0.5% per 2025-26 guidance.

	Academy Primary	Academy Secondary	Total Academy	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained	Total Schools
Individual Schools:							
Agree	45	4	49	45	2	47	96
Disagree	63	14	77	16	0	16	93
Neither agree nor disagree	8	2	10	3	0	3	13
Total	116	20	136	64	2	66	202
Individual Schools %:							
Agree	23%	2%	25%	22%	1%	23%	48%
Disagree	31%	7%	38%	8%	0%	8%	46%
Neither agree nor disagree	4%	1%	5%	1%	0%	1%	6%
Total	58%	10%	68%	31%	1%	32%	100%

3.4. Funding confirmation has been received from the DfE since the consultation was held and Devon Schools do not have excess funding available to be allocated in 2025-26. As such we no longer require Schools Forum to vote on Question 2.

3.5. Question 3 - A funding gap

Do you agree in principle with Devon’s decision to bridge any funding gap in the following order?

- i. Reduced AWPU by up the allowed maximum of 2.5%.
- ii. Reduced all other factors by up the allowed maximum of 2.5%.

	Academy Primary	Academy Secondary	Total Academy	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained	Total Schools
Individual Schools:							
Agree	50	7	57	35	1	36	93
Disagree	34	12	46	15	1	16	62
Neither agree nor disagree	32	1	33	14	0	14	47
Total	116	20	136	64	2	66	202
Individual Schools %:							
Agree	26%	3%	29%	17%	0%	17%	46%
Disagree	18%	6%	24%	7%	0%	7%	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	16%	0%	16%	7%	0%	7%	23%
Total	60%	9%	69%	31%	0%	31%	100%

3.6. Funding confirmation has been received from the DfE since the consultation was held and as expected, Devon Schools have a funding gap in 2025-26.

4. Movement between Blocks.

4.1. A majority of 82% disagreed with question 4.

4.2. Question 4 - Movements into Another Block

Do you agree to a 0.5% transfer between Schools Block and High Needs Block in 2025-26 to protect the commitment made to the DfE as part of the Safety Valve agreement?

	Academy Primary	Academy Secondary	Total Academy	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained	Total Schools
Individual Schools:							
Agree	0	0	0	25	0	25	25
Disagree	108	19	127	35	2	37	164
Neither agree nor disagree	8	1	9	4	0	4	13
Total	116	20	136	64	2	66	202
Individual Schools %:							
Agree	0%	0%	0%	12%	0%	12%	12%
Disagree	55%	9%	64%	17%	1%	18%	82%
Neither agree nor disagree	4%	0%	4%	2%	0%	2%	6%
Total	59%	9%	68%	31%	1%	32%	100%

4.3. The proposal supports the vision and commitments articulated in the [Local Area SEND Strategy](#) so children and young people have the opportunity to thrive with access to the right support in the right place at the right time. Devon is looking to invest further in a support offer for schools that generates the equivalent system savings rather than applying the block transfer directly to the Schools Forum. The 0.5% block transfer will specifically be allocated to delivering the Local Area’s strategic commitment to ‘build inclusive communities’ and safety valve condition to ‘focus on improving early intervention through strengthened universal and targeted support’. This includes investment in a collection of functions to have the greatest impact.

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- 4.4. The proposal to transfer 0.5% takes into account the dependencies of the [Devon safety valve agreement](#). Part of the on-going transformation and change programme necessitates fresh approaches to all elements of our financial management and control including those that impact schools. Our broader ambitions relating to collaboration, inclusive learning communities, practice development and increased accountability of our partner agencies with and within our education settings means that we are resetting our relationships. This new relationship will be supported with Devon's Inclusion and Learning Strategy that will be published in the Spring term.
- 4.5. Should the decision remain to reject a transfer the Council will pursue the request with the DfE via a disapplication to obtain a transfer up to 0.5%, based on safety valve intervention programme and our strategy to sustainably manage our high needs funding into the future. – Against.
- 4.6. Schools Finance Group (SFG) acknowledged the depth of feeling expressed during the consultation regarding the proposal to transfer 0.5% between blocks for 2025-26. While not endorsing the proposal, SFG recognises its role in securing the Safety Valve agreement and supporting efforts to manage high needs funding sustainably, ensuring the needs of children and young people are met earlier and in the right place.
- 4.7. SFG requested that a clear outline of the impact of the outcome of the Schools Forum vote is shared with Schools Forum members to support them to make an informed decision on the block transfer:
- Number of Schools Impacted.
 - 101 out of 351 schools will see no impact on their budgets of a 0.5% transfer between Schools Block and High Needs Block.
 - Impact on the safety valve.
 - The 0.5% transfer is part of Devon's safety valve intervention programme and while there is a risk that Schools Forum not voting for the transfer puts the safety valve at risk, we are unable to quantify the extent of that risk.
 - Transferring less than 0.5%
 - Schools Forum could agree to transfer less than the 0.5%. The Council will still pursue a disapplication request of 0.5% as this is what is currently specified in Devon's safety valve agreement.
 - Impact on High Needs budgets
 - If the 0.5% is not transferred that leaves a shortfall in the High Needs Block/Safety Valve. Budgets will need to be reworked and there is a risk that some of these High Needs budget reductions could fall on areas where schools currently receive funding/benefits from.

5. Inclusion

5.1. A majority of 97% disagreed with question 5.

5.2. Question 5 - Inclusion

Do you agree to a levy on exclusions of £21,000 per exclusion to create an incentive to develop inclusive learning communities?

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	Academy Primary	Academy Secondary	Total Academy	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained	Total Schools
Individual Schools:							
Agree	0	0	0	5	0	5	5
Disagree	116	20	136	56	2	58	194
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0	0	3	0	3	3
Total	116	20	136	64	2	66	202
Individual Schools %:							
Agree	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	2%	2%
Disagree	58%	10%	68%	28%	1%	29%	97%
Neither agree nor disagree	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Total	58%	10%	68%	31%	1%	32%	100%

5.3. The consultation responses show an overwhelming rejection of the proposal. The partnership, including the Authority and Devon's Schools, now has to decide how we address the levels of exclusion in Devon going forward.

5.4. SFG recommended a vote at Schools Forum to decide the next steps, based on the consultation responses, which indicate an overwhelming rejection of the proposal. Furthermore, SFG suggests initiating a collaborative process involving the Authority, Devon Schools, and key stakeholders to develop a clear and actionable framework for what inclusion should look like in Devon, addressing the ongoing issue of exclusion.

6. Delegation and De-delegation.

6.1. A majority of maintained primary schools and a majority of maintained secondary schools opted to keeping all the services funded through de-delegation. See [Appendix A](#) for details:

- Social Emotional & Mental Health Support Team
- Ethnically Diverse Education Achievement Service: EAL
- Ethnically Diverse Education Achievement Service: GRT
- Copyrights, Licences and Subscriptions
- Trade Union Facilitation
- Jury Service and Magistrate Support
- Maternity Service
- Schools Contingency & Exceptional Events
- School Effectiveness

6.2. De-delegation applies to mainstream, maintained schools only and is not an option for academies, special schools, nurseries or PRUs, but where de-delegation has been agreed for maintained primary and secondary schools, it is the Department's presumption that the Local Authority will offer the service on a buy-back basis to those schools and academies in their area which are not covered by the de-delegation.

7. Central Services - Emotional, Psychological & Social Wellbeing Services and School Admissions.

7.1. A majority of schools voted to keeping funding the following central services (see [Appendix B](#) for details):

- Emotional, Psychological & Social Wellbeing Services
- Schools Admissions

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8. Central Services - Phase Associations

8.1. A narrow majority of schools voted for funding to remain in school budgets, for Phase Associations to no longer centrally funded and to instead be reliant upon a subscription model invoicing individual schools and trusts directly.

	Academy Primary	Academy Secondary	Total Academy	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained	Total Schools
Individual Schools:							
Maintain Phase Association funding for 2025-26	33	4	37	25	1	26	63
As Option 1, but for a 3-year term	8	6	14	20	0	20	34
Monies remain in schools budgets	75	10	85	19	1	20	105
Total	116	20	136	64	2	66	202
Individual Schools %:							
Maintain Phase Association funding for 2025-26	17%	2%	19%	12%	0%	12%	31%
As Option 1, but for a 3-year term	4%	3%	7%	10%	0%	10%	17%
Monies remain in schools budgets	38%	5%	43%	9%	0%	9%	52%
Total	59%	10%	69%	31%	0%	31%	100%

8.2. Top slice funding of £270,000 is currently allocated to the Phase Associations and ultimately to Devon Schools Leadership Services (DSL) CIO.

8.3. SFG discussed, to help schools more fully understand the unintended consequences, for schools and the LA, should phase associations no longer be funded in the current format. SFG proposed that, given the inconclusive consultation response, no change is made in 2025-26, and further consideration of this issue be invited during the 2026 consultation. This would provide an opportunity to consider the wider impact of the Phase Associations no longer being centrally funded.

9. Disapplication request - exceptional circumstances relating to school premises.

- 9.1. Schools Forum is expected to vote on disapplication requests relating to exceptional circumstances.
- 9.2. As in previous years Devon has submitted a disapplication application request to use exceptional circumstances relating to school premises to allocate funding through the NFF to schools that incur exceptional costs relating to dual use sports facilities, rent and other exceptional premises cost as per the [guidance](#).
- 9.3. These schools have been receiving this funding for many years and rely on it to fund their exceptional costs. We have been in contact with those schools who may qualify directly.

10. Recommendations

It is recommended that Schools Forum:

- a) Specifically approve the proposals for schools funding for Schools Forum consideration (in line with the results of the consultation):
 - i. to set the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to at 0%
 - ii. to bridge the funding gap in the following order:
 - a. Reduced AWPU by up the allowed maximum of 2.5%.
 - b. Reduced all other factors by up the allowed maximum of 2.5%.

All to Vote

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- b) Specifically approve the proposal to transfer 0.5% between blocks for 2025-26, to secure the Safety Valve agreement and implement plans to manage the high needs funding sustainably and meet the needs of children and young people earlier and in the right place.

All to Vote

- c) Vote on the Inclusion proposal based on the consultation responses. That Schools Forum note that the partnership, including the Authority and Devon Schools, now has to decide how we address the levels of exclusion in Devon going forward.

All to Vote

- d) Specifically approve the de-delegation of the services listed in Section 6.1 in line with the results of the consultation. The mainstream maintained schools' representatives of Schools Forum will be required to vote on each service (unless there is unanimous agreement to vote on all services together), with Primary and Secondary voting separately.

Vote: Maintained primary representatives

Vote: Maintained secondary representatives

- e) Specifically approve the funding of the central services (in line with the consultation):

- i. Emotional, Psychological & Social Wellbeing Services
- ii. School Admissions

All to Vote

- f) Consider the SFG proposal in Section 8.3 and vote on how to fund the Phase Associations for 2025-26.

All to Vote

- g) Specifically approve the proposal to submit a disapplication request for exceptional circumstances relating to school premises for 2025-26.

All to Vote

Angie Sinclair
Director of Finance & Public Value

Julian Wooster
Interim Director of Children's and Young People's Futures

Please ask for: Adrian Fox
Adrian.fox@devon.gov.uk

22 January 2025

Appendix A

1. Delegation and De-delegation

1.1. Social Emotional & Mental Health Support Team (Behaviour Support) (Maintained schools only):

	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained
Individual Schools:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	46	1	47
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	18	1	19
Total	64	2	66
Individual Schools %:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	69%	2%	71%
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	27%	2%	29%
Total	96%	4%	100%

1.2. Ethnically Diverse Education Achievement Service (formerly EMTAS): EAL (Maintained schools only):

	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained
Individual Schools:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	49	1	50
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	15	1	16
Total	64	2	66
Individual Schools %:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	74%	2%	76%
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	22%	2%	24%
Total	96%	4%	100%

1.3. 3. Ethnically Diverse Education Achievement Service (formerly EMTAS): GRTS (Maintained schools only):

	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained
Individual Schools:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	47	1	48
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	17	1	18
Total	64	2	66
Individual Schools %:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	71%	2%	73%
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	25%	2%	27%
Total	96%	4%	100%

1.4. Copyrights, Licences and Subscriptions:

	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained
Individual Schools:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	61	2	63
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	3	0	3
Total	64	2	66
Individual Schools %:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	92%	3%	95%
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	5%	0%	5%
Total	97%	3%	100%

1.5. Trade Union Facilitation (Maintained schools only):

	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained
Individual Schools:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	60	2	62
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	4	0	4
Total	64	2	66
Individual Schools %:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	91%	3%	94%
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	6%	0%	6%
Total	97%	3%	100%

1.6. Jury Service and Magistrate Support (Maintained schools only):

	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained
Individual Schools:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	59	2	61
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	5	0	5
Total	64	2	66
Individual Schools %:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	89%	3%	92%
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	8%	0%	8%
Total	97%	3%	100%

1.7. Maternity Service (Maintained schools only):

	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained
Individual Schools:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	64	2	66
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	0	0	0
Total	64	2	66
Individual Schools %:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	97%	3%	100%
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	0%	0%	0%
Total	97%	3%	100%

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1.8. Contingency (Schools Support Panel) & Exceptional Events (Maintained Schools Only):

	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained
Individual Schools:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	61	1	62
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	3	1	4
Total	64	2	66
Individual Schools %:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	92%	2%	94%
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	4%	2%	6%
Total	96%	4%	100%

1.9. School Effectiveness

	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained
Individual Schools:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	60	2	62
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	4	0	4
Total	64	2	66
Individual Schools %:			
Option 1 - De-delegate	91%	3%	94%
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	6%	0%	6%
Total	97%	3%	100%

2. Central Services

2.1. Emotional, Psychological & Social Wellbeing Services

	Academy Primary	Academy Secondary	Total Academy	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained	Total Schools
Individual Schools:							
Option 1 - De-delegate	53	10	63	56	2	58	121
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	63	10	73	8	0	8	81
Total	116	20	136	64	2	66	202
Individual Schools %:							
Option 1 - De-delegate	26%	5%	31%	28%	1%	29%	60%
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	31%	5%	36%	4%	0%	4%	40%
Total	57%	10%	67%	32%	1%	33%	100%

2.2. Phase Association

	Academy Primary	Academy Secondary	Total Academy	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained	Total Schools
Individual Schools:							
Option 1 - Maintain Phase Association funding for 2025-26	33	4	37	25	1	26	63
Option 2 - As Option 1, but for a 3-year term (2025-26 to 2027-28)	8	6	14	20	0	20	34
Option 3 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	75	10	85	19	1	20	105
Total	116	20	136	64	2	66	202
Individual Schools %:							
Option 1 - Maintain Phase Association funding for 2025-26	17%	2%	19%	12%	0%	12%	31%
Option 2 - As Option 1, but for a 3-year term (2025-26 to 2027-28)	4%	3%	7%	10%	0%	10%	17%
Option 3 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	38%	5%	43%	9%	0%	9%	52%
Total	59%	10%	69%	31%	0%	31%	100%

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2.3. Schools Admissions

	Academy Primary	Academy Secondary	Total Academy	Maintained Primary	Maintained Secondary	Total maintained	Total Schools
Individual Schools:							
Option 1 - De-delegate	65	15	80	63	2	65	145
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	51	5	56	1	0	1	57
Total	116	20	136	64	2	66	202
Individual Schools %:							
Option 1 - De-delegate	32%	8%	40%	31%	1%	32%	72%
Option 2 - Monies remain in schools' budgets	25%	3%	28%	0%	0%	0%	28%
Total	57%	11%	68%	31%	1%	32%	100%

Dedicated Schools Grant 2025/26: Budget planning

Report of the Director of Finance & Public Value and Interim Director of Children and Young Peoples Futures

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Schools Forum:

- a) Specifically approve the Early Years funding rates proposed and shared with providers.
All to Vote

- b) To note the changes to Dedicated Schools Grant funding for 2025/26.
All to Note

For information

This report will cover

1. DSG Settlement 2025/26
2. Schools Block
3. Central School Services Block
4. High Needs Block
5. Early Years Block
6. Other Schools Grants
7. DSG Deficit & Management Plan

1. DSG Settlement 2025/26

- 1.1. On the 18 December 2024 the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) announced the Dedicated Schools Grant allocations for 2025/26
- 1.2. Note that the final allocations will be adjusted through the year for recoupment academies and the updated Early Years census. Individual maintained school budget allocations will be confirmed by 28th February 2025 following ratification by the ESFA; Academies will receive their notifications directly from the ESFA.

2. Schools Block

- 2.1. The Schools Block settlement for 2025/26 is £560.1 million, which includes £2.1 million for Growth Fund and the rolling in of the £37.8 million for the 2024 to 2025 teachers' pay additional grant (TPAG), the teachers' pensions employer contribution grant (TPECG), and the core schools budget grant (CSBG) into the schools baselines.
- 2.2. The National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) at present will continue to be paid by Schools rather than direct arrangement with the DfE as a couple of the Districts do not want to put procedures in place for April 2025. Guidance states that in 2 tier local authorities all billing authorities need to agree to implement the changes. If mutual consent is not reached it will not be possible for any billing authority to adopt the revised payment process.
- 2.3. The NNDR funding we receive is equivalent to the previous year's actual NNDR payments (along with adjustments relating to the year before that). Because the funding is lagged, any increases in NNDR costs compared to the previous year has to be managed within the overall allocation and less funding is available to distribute to individual schools.

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- 2.4. Due to the delay in receiving information around funding arrangement for 2025/26 the following consultation results have been assumed as being agreed by Schools Forum.
- that schools would see funding per the National Funding Formula (NFF) levels for 2025/26 Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) for 2025/26 is set at 0%
 - that if the funding received in the final settlement was lower than expected that we would
 - i. Reduce Basic Entitlement (AWPU) by up to the allowed maximum of 2.5%.
 - ii. Reduce all other factors by up to the allowed maximum of 2.5%
- 2.5. However, the funding settlement received is £1.3 million below a fully funded model of the NFF and to ensure that the block remains within its funding envelop the following actions need to take place.
- 2.6. The Basic Entitlement (AWPU) factor has been reduced by 0.43%. This ensures that the authority remains mirroring the NFF.

3. Central School Services Block

- 3.1. The Central Schools Service Block recognises the Ongoing Responsibilities of Education Services Grant (ESG), Admissions, Copyrights and Schools Forum along with Historic Commitments for Termination of Employment Costs.
- 3.2. In 2025/26 the DfE have reduced the Historic Commitments by 20%, however as with the previous two years Devon has applied for a disapplication to remove this reduction to ensure that the Termination of Employment costs remain funded for the coming year of £873,000. This will be confirmed in the March DSG.

4. High Needs Block

- 4.1. The High Needs Block settlement is £125.5 million for 2025/26. High needs though continues to be under considerable budgetary pressure even after receiving this additional funding.
- 4.2. The budget required to meet current HNB demand and agreed future growth with the service is £172.7 million after management actions of £20.7 million.
- 4.3. The 3 main areas of funding within the block after management actions are:
- Independent Special Schools (£54.9 million)
 - Maintained & Academy Special Schools (£51.4 million)
 - SEN Mainstream (including FE) (£45.24 million)
- 4.4. A separate grant, which will include TPAG, TPECG and CSBG, will be given for Special Schools and AP based on 2024/25 academic year place numbers. This will be released in May 2025.
- 4.5. **Independent special schools.**
The budget has been set on 1,032 sole funded placements at an average cost of £52,442 (including 3% inflationary uplift) allowing for in year movement and built into this as part of the overall management plan are actions of £16.8 million.
- 4.6. **Maintained & Academy Special Schools.**
Part of the management plan is to invest in our maintained special schools to increase our own capacity to meet growing demand for placements in this type of provision. Overall, the budgeted places have increased from 1,787 to 1,819 in 2025/26, with an average cost of £24,903 (including inflationary increase).

4.7. SEN Mainstream (including FE)

Pre-16 Mainstream has seen a change in the number of EHCPs from 3,703 to 3,862 for 2025/26. Of this 2,377 are banded and 1,485 are Plus Packages resulting in an additional cost of £9.3 million overall. Whilst, FE Mainstream has seen an increase in the number of EHCPs from 1,033 to 1,269 for 2025/26 resulting in a £3.6 million increase. These have been offset by management actions of £3.5 million.

5. Early Years Block

5.1. The Early Years Block allocation is £103.6 million for 2025/26. This is an additional £35.2 million due to:

- the expansion of the early years working entitlements for children aged from 9 months up to (and including) 2 year olds to assist working parents with their childcare costs.
- the working entitlement increase to up to 30 hours from September 2024
- and an increase in the hourly funding rates, Early Years Pupil Premium and Disability Access Funding.

5.2. From April 2025 the Authority will be funded at £5.71 per hour for 3- and 4-year olds (national average £6.14) and £7.68 for 2-year-olds (national average £8.65). For the new funding for 9 months to 2-year-olds (under 2's) the authority will receive an hourly rate of £10.39 (national average £11.54)

5.3. The funding pass-through requirement has been increased from 95% to 96% for 2025/26. Devon will be pass-through 97%.

5.4. Devon proposes that the full DfE increase is passed onto providers with an additional uplift to each age range to give the following hourly rates from April 2025:

	Devon Funding Rate 2024/25	Devon Funding Rate 2025/26	Increase
3- & 4-year-olds (per hour)	£5.22	£5.50	28p
2-year-olds (per hour)	£7.10	£7.42	32p
Under 2's (per hour)	£9.60	£9.92	32p
Early Years Pupil Premium (per hour)	68p	£1.00	32p
Disability Access Funding (per year)	£910 per year	£938 per year	£28

5.5. The provider hourly rates for 2024/25 include Universal Supplements of 4p for Deprivation and 6p for SEND and so that providers can respond to low-level and emerging need.

5.6. Within the hourly rate increases for 2025/26, 4p will be added to the Universal SEND supplement and the balance of the increase onto the base rate for each age range.

5.7. Forecasting at a 97.5% take-up of 3 & 4 year old funding means that the additional uplift can be funded from with the Early Years allocation.

5.8. The full rate of Early Years Pupil Premium and Disability Access Funding must be passed onto providers in full.

6. Other Schools Grants

6.1. Teacher's Pay Award Grant and Teacher's Pension Employer Contribution Grant

In 2025/26 the £19.5 million Teacher's Pay Award Grant (TPAG) and Teacher's Pension Employer Contribution Grant (TPECG) funding for Devon schools has been rolled into the baseline.

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6.2. Core Schools Budget Grant

£18.3 million, representing the full year effect of the Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG) funding for Devon schools, has been rolled into the baseline in 2025/26,

6.3. Pupil Premium

For 2025/26 the budget is £30.4 million and is based on the latest available data available at the 2024/25 funding rates.

6.4. Other Grants

Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM), PE & Sports Premium and Teachers Pay and Pensions Grants are based on the latest available data for 2024/25 and we will be notified of further details by the ESFA in the new year.

7. DSG Deficit & Management Plan

- 7.1. Increasing demand and expenditure within SEND will be mitigated by the SEND Transformation Programme Deficit Management Plan, which has been developed with support from the Department for Education. These pressures will be managed across four key strategic areas, Inclusion and early help; Preparation for Adulthood; Sufficiency; and Financial Management and placement value. The overarching aim is to ensure that the children and young people of Devon are supported according to their level of need within the funding envelope available.
- 7.2. The Authority joined the DfE's Safety Valve Intervention Programme in March 2024 and has seen investment from the DfE agreed totalling £95 million between 2024-2032.
- 7.3. As part of budget preparation, we are projecting to see the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit increase by a further £14.7 million. This is based on the Safety Valve submission in March 2024. The main reasons are the increasing volume of requests still being seen from schools and the continued demand being put on the service for SEN placements.
- 7.4. Within the budget for 2025/26 are management actions totalling £20.7 million.
- 7.5. The Authority is very concerned over the ability to reduce this pressure and bring this back to a balance budget over the coming years. This could have a considerable impact on future education budgets within the DSG as well as impacting on the financial stability for Devon County Council.
- 7.6. The additional demands or requirements by the DfE to clear the EHCP backlog within SEND and has meant it has been difficult to contain the costs within the funding being received from Government. The Discussions with the DfE advisors have led the Authority to submit a revised submission in February 2025 to recognise the changing pressures to SEND and the Safety Valve.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Schools Forum:

- a) Specifically approve the Early Years funding rates proposed and shared with providers.
All to Vote
- b) To note the changes to Dedicated Schools Grant funding for 2025/26.
All to Note

ANGIE SINCLAIR
Director of Finance & Public Value

JULIAN WOOSTER
Interim Director of Children and Young People's Futures

Please ask for: Adrian Fox Adrian.fox@devon.gov.uk

Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 3 December 2024

Key Items for DEF to note:

Item 2: Children Missing Education Policy

- **SOCA recommended** the Children Missing Education policy for DEF endorsement

Item 3: Elective Home Education Policy

- **SOCA recommended** the Elective Home Education policy for DEF endorsement

Item 4: Fair Access Panel

- Further headteacher representatives are requested to come forward to sit on Fair Access Panel.

Item 7: School Organisation Update

- At the November meeting, Devon Education Forum had raised a query around falling demographics in primary schools. It was confirmed that the strategic planning team had previously offered visits to discuss emerging data with local learning communities to inform their planning. SOCA was keen that schools in particular in rural areas, are kept up to date with new areas of development. A review and update of the local area data to be requested.

Item 8: School Capital Maintenance Programme

- Surveys have been circulated to all schools re. solar panels, and to maintained schools re. school condition survey. Schools encouraged to respond to the surveys to inform work programme within Built Environments Team, to improve accuracy of locally held data on the condition of Devon's schools, and reducing the number of reactive and ad-hoc work not planned into the programme.

Attendance

DCC

Katherine Crompton (Chair)

Capital Programme Manager, Built Environments

Shona Meek

Senior School Organisation Officer

Andrew Brent

Senior Policy Officer

Fran Butler (**apologies**)

Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency Lead

Heidi Watson-Jones (notes)

Service Support Officer (E&L)

Devon Schools Leadership Services

Primary

Penny Hammett

FORT Federation

David Perkins

Littletown Academy

Secondary

Representative TBC

Special School Heads

Stuart Allman (**apologies**)

Pathfield School

DAG

Ian Rogers

Diocesan Representatives

Kirsty Wright

Diocese of Plymouth

Christina Mabin - **part**

Exeter Anglican Diocese (Admissions)

Richard Power - **part**

Exeter Anglican Diocese (Capital)

Agenda Item 11

Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 3 December 2024

Union Representative

Caroline Harding

Joint Secretary, NASUWT

In Attendance

Nick Cook - *part*

South West Norse

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 24 September 2024

Outstanding actions:

- Flexi-schooling guidance to be provided to schools **ACTION: AB**
- In year admissions – schools had requested a prompt when admissions come onto the Portal. All schools should receive AnyComms notifications twice weekly highlighting if a new application is on the Portal. **ACTION:** to be reviewed at next meeting.
- Noted that some children with EHCPs moving into the area have been managed through the admissions team rather than the SEND Statutory Team. Noted that the common application form asks if a child has an EHCP, however if this is not disclosed it could hinder the school meeting the child's SEN needs.
- All other actions complete. Minutes agreed as an accurate record.

ACTION:

- Flexi-schooling guidance to be provided to schools **ACTION: AB**
- **ACTION: AB** Anycomms notifications re. in-year admissions on portal to be reviewed at next meeting.

2. Admissions: Children Missing Education Policy

- SOCA requested to recommend the new CME policy to be endorsed at Devon Education Forum.

ACTION:

- **SOCA recommended the Children Missing Education policy for DEF endorsement**

3. Admissions: Elective Home Education Policy

- SOCA requested to recommend the new EHE policy to be endorsed at Devon Education Forum.
- Noted the important role that schools have in implementing this policy, helping parents to make an informed decision and potentially avoiding children becoming CME where circumstances are not appropriate.
- Noted that a written notification from a parent of their intention to home educate should be a formal notification to take the child off the school roll, and the local authority EHE team would step in to coordinate formal arrangements.
- **ACTION: AB and PH** to discuss a specific case.
- Noted there is ongoing tension between the flexi-schooling and EHE. The school clearly remains responsible for the child's attainment and safeguarding where they remain on roll in a flexi-schooling arrangement.
-

ACTION:

- **ACTION: AB and PH** to discuss a specific case.
- **SOCA recommended the Elective Home Education policy for DEF endorsement**

Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 3 December 2024

4. Admissions: Fair Access Panel

- SOCA considered the data from the 20 Tier 2 Fair Access Panel considerations.
- Fair Access Tier 1 data to be brought to a future SOCA meeting.
- Headteachers and a Trust representative attend the panel fortnightly. Further representation would be welcomed from across the county, particularly North or West Devon to help avoid conflicts of interest.
- Noted that a school or AP place must still be allocated even where a school response to the admissions team is not received. Schools reminded that if a School Information Sheet is shared with a school that it must be returned.

ACTION:

- **DSLS** asked to encourage further headteacher representatives to come forward from N and W Devon to sit on Fair Access Panel.
- **DSLS** to remind schools that if a School Information Sheet is shared with a school regarding an in-year admission, that it must be returned to the admissions team.

5. Early Years Update

- School based nursery capital grant – if interested in applying, schools should contact the school place planning team where provision can be reviewed alongside emerging development and demographic information.
- Mindful that regulations for church land and buildings must be considered by the Diocese where church schools heads and Trusts are considering developments.
- Deadline for capital applications is noon on 19th December. Schools should have completed a 3-4 week consultation prior to submission, or contact the DfE if this has not been possible.
- Understand that further rounds will be made available – schools are encouraged to submit an expression of interest by 12th December for future round.
- Report noted – any queries to be forwarded directly to fran.butler@devon.gov.uk

6. SW Norse Update

- DMP and VA Promise scheme numbers remain stable
- Service Term Contractor performance was reviewed.
- Some individual feedback has been provided where there have been specific concerns, with recommendations around improved communications with schools, resourcing of the contracts and pricing strategies in quotations.
- Noted anomalies around recording of lift servicing. It is apparent that the servicing has been completed, but administration is not updating activity on C2. This will be followed up formally.
- Contract management is challenging, however with support from Procurement colleagues it is hopeful that the situation will improve. A dedicated contract engineer, Danny O'Driscoll, has been appointed to oversee this.
- It would be helpful if schools to provide feedback to the Built Environments Team where there are concerns around servicing, quotations and on-site activity. This information will help to inform performance conversations with contractors.
- Schools were asked to provide updates on C2 if works have been undertaken

Agenda Item 11

Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 3 December 2024

ACTION:

- **DSLS** to ask schools to provide feedback to Katherine.Crompton@devon.gov.uk Built Environments Team where there are concerns around arranging servicing visits, reasonable quotations and on-site / follow up activity.

7. School Organisation Update

- Noted arrangements for ensuring Ofsted registration for 0-2 year old provision where a school age range is extended to include 9-month old children in nursery classes.
- The DfE has been asked for further information around the lifting of a statutory process for lowering the age range.
- Devon Education Forum had raised a query around falling demographics in primary schools. Shona confirmed that the strategic planning team had previously offered visits to local learning communities. Mindful that emerging local plan arrangements and development may require updates since the data was compiled 18 months ago.
- SOCA was keen that schools are kept up to date with new areas of development, particularly in rural areas. There were concerns that messaging from East Devon District Council around available places in schools do not seem to align with current numbers in schools.
- Review and update of the local area data to be considered.
- Castlebridge Special School to open in Tavistock prior to permanent site opening in Ivybridge in Sept 2026, when the Tavistock Hub will remain as a satellite provision.
- 0-11 age range to be consulted on at Shaldon primary.
- Update on Honiton CC sixth form and Clyst Vale CC sixth form closures consultations were noted.
- Noted situation at Boasley Cross age range amendment through a Deed of Variation.
- Noted that Deeds of Variation for Chagford and St James' Primaries in Dartmoor MAT had been implemented in error by DfE with no consultation. Retrospective significant change Business Plans requested by Regions Group.
- SOCA noted organisation updates on other schools and MATs within the report.
- Children's Scrutiny Committee review of LA function to consult and engage around school relocations and closures. Governance Review to consider how elected members may have oversight of the process in future. Mindful of concerns that statutory timelines could be missed if Children's Scrutiny are involved in proposals, particularly where Cabinet remains the decision making body.
- Updated overview of new schools across the county was provided.
- Noted planned withdrawal of DfE Academisation support grant from 1 Jan 2025.
- Noted updates on current academy conversions, which has seen a considerable slow-down

ACTION:

- **SM** to request review and update of Local Learning Community area data.

8. Capital Programme Update

- Update on capital maintenance scheme and reactive works to be circulated

Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions Group: Notes of meeting on Tuesday 3 December 2024

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional £2.1bn announced for school maintenance nationally. However, forecasting next year's allocation based on current funding methodology• Still awaiting an update on School Condition Surveys from DfE.• Updates were provided on current capital schemes including Castlebridge (Tavistock) and Cranbrook Cobdens. Some feasibility on s.106 underway.• Surveys have been circulated to all schools re. solar panels, and to maintained schools re. school condition survey. Schools encouraged to respond to the surveys to inform work programme within Built Environments Team, to improve accuracy of locally held data on the condition of Devon's schools, and reducing the number of reactive and ad-hoc work not planned into the programme. Deadline extended for response.• Procurement regulations to be introduced in February 2025. ESFA e-learning available to support schools with procurement strategies. Quality, as well as cost, will take a more prominent role within the new Act.•
ACTION: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DSLS to remind schools to respond to the surveys to inform work programme within Built Environments Team. Deadline extended for response.

9. AOB

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions consultation ongoing into the new year (10 January). Determination must then take place within statutory timelines and the Diocese informed where appropriate.• Schools were reminded to review the admissions policy, proposed PANs and proposed changes to schools in the local area. It is the local admission authority responsibility to ensure that their own arrangements are on the school website.
ACTION: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DSLS to remind schools to review Schools were reminded to review the admissions policy, proposed PANs and proposed changes.

Future meeting dates (All 09.30 – 11.30 via Teams):

- **Tuesday 4 March 2025**
- **Tuesday 20 May 2025**
- **Tuesday 23 September 2025**
- **Tuesday 2 December 2025**
- **Tuesday 3 March 2026**

