

Minutes

Name of meeting	SCHOOLS' FORUM
Date and time	Thursday, 17 July 2025
Venue	Webinar – Virtual Meeting
Present	<p>Beverley Gilbert – Brading CE Primary (Chair) Duncan Mills – The Bay CE School (Vice-Chair) Carl Wake – St Helens Primary Emma Meek – Gurnard Primary School Andrew Montrose – Christ the King College Rachel Richards – Cowes Enterprise College Alex Moffatt – Northwood Primary Academy Steff Gleeson – St Georges School Andrew Hatherley – The Lionheart School</p>
Officers	<p>Naomi Carter – Service Director, Education, Inclusion and Access Irina Rowan - Senior Finance Business Partner Debra Evans – Senior Accountant Rosie Lister – Virtual School Head Mark McCurrie – RK Solutions (DfE Advisor) Diane Hiscock – Clerk</p> <p>Cllr Paul Brading – Chair, Children’s Services, Education and Skills Committee Cllr Chris Jarman – Policy, Finance and Resources Committee</p>
Apologies	<p>Jayne Hill – Niton Pre-School & Brighstone Pre-School Samantha Rooney – Isle of Wight College</p>

1.	<p><u>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</u></p> <p>All members and observers were welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made. AM and EM were welcomed as new members. MMcC was welcomed as DfE Advisor, supporting oversight of SEND provision and use of the High Needs budget.</p>
2.	<p><u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>No received.</p>
3.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></p> <p>AM and EM expressed an interest at Item 12.</p>
4.	<p><u>SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP</u></p> <p>There are still vacancies for an Academy representative, Early Years PVI representative and a Catholic representative, despite ongoing efforts to fill these places.</p>

	Action - Information on SF structure to be discussed at SF meeting on 13 November 2025, to get a view. The LA will review the structure in January 2026 based on pupil numbers from the October Census.
5.	<p><u>MINUTES</u></p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2025 and 31 March 2025 be confirmed.</p>
6.	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING</u></p> <p>The list of actions was shared with updates for each item and is attached at Appendix A.</p> <p>6.1 Information on take up of the EY Working Families Entitlement, as follows –</p> <p><i>In the Data Collection survey (December 2024) Early Years providers were asked to provide initial figures for the take up and impact of the new funded entitlements (Working Parent Entitlements), here are the key headlines:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 855 children were in receipt of the Working Parent entitlement. • This included 31 children aged 9 to 12 months, 337 children aged 1-year-old, and 487 children aged 2-years-old. • On average 61% of parents went on to book additional hours of childcare beyond the 15 funded hours. A key indicator for the likely take up of the final phase (30 hours) of the roll out in September 2025. <p><i>We anticipated that children aged two and under who were previously non funded would transition directly into the first and second phases of the new WPE. This is exactly what occurred, aligning with the Department for Education's projection of no increase in demand for places in April 2024, followed by a modest 2% rise in September 2024.</i></p> <p><i>Updated figures on the WPE take up are expected to be available in late July following the completion of the Early Years Summer Data Collection survey.</i></p>
7.	<u>PUPIL PREMIUM FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN – ANNUAL UPDATE 2024 – 25</u>
7.1	RL gave an overview of the team who have a statutory duty to work with schools to improve outcomes for children in care. Extended duties include provision of advice and guidance on best practice to support children who were previously in care (i.e. moved on to adoption, Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Child Arrangement Order (CAO)).
7.2	The team has a service level agreement with the EY Advisory Team to bring in expertise for children from 0 – 2yrs old. Support is provided for children either when they reach the age of 2 or when they access an EY setting (whichever is earlier).
7.3	The anticipated Children's Wellbeing Bill is likely to include changes in legislation, so that the Virtual School role is extended to become statutory for children who have had a social worker in the last 6 years, were previously looked after, or are in kinship care.
7.4	<p><u>PRIORITIES</u></p> <p>The aim is to improve access to appropriate education for children in care and providing support across all stakeholders. There is a focus on supporting attendance – overall attendance is at 92.4% - impacted by movement of children and a lack of foster carers on the Island.</p>
7.5	Improving outcomes for children is a priority – shown in the table on page 6 of the report and evidenced in Personal Education Plans (PEPs).
7.6	The team continues to support children to aspire to become the best version of themselves. This work includes the aim to reduce the number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

7.7	<p><u>PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS GRANT (PP+)</u></p> <p>The LA currently retains £930 per year to quality assure provision under PEP arrangements. The team carries out assessment checks on how PP+ funding is used to meet the needs of children.</p>
7.8	<p>There has been a huge increase in requests for top-up funding to support schools in managing significant needs for some children. Having the right support in place to suit individual children could negate the need for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).</p>
7.9	<p>Having reviewed the PP+ Grant for 2025 – 26, consultation will take place on a proposal to move to a system whereby the grant is accessed by request. This will be trialled in Summer 2026 and will continue, if successful. This will enable funds to be directed to where it is most required, so that schools can meet exceptional need where necessary.</p>
7.10	<p>RL noted thanks to school colleagues for their ongoing work and commitment and was delighted with predicted results for children in care this year.</p>
7.11	<p><u>QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</u></p> <p>A question was raised around whether the proposal might create additional work for schools who already use the grant funding effectively.</p> <p>Designated teachers are already using the Asset system for managing PEPs, so there should not be extra work in relation to those children who need the support.</p> <p>Some schools are not sure how to make best use of PP+ Grant funding and ask for help to identify how to spend it. The proposal is to trial the change for a term following consultation – if not successful – may revert thereafter and the team are open to ideas and keen to listen to colleagues.</p> <p>It was felt that the proposals are a good idea and appreciation was noted for the extensive work of the Virtual School Team.</p>
7.12	<p>Members asked if increased control over distribution of the grant is expected to assist with improving outcomes between KS2 and KS4.</p> <p>Evidence will continue to be shown in results and the team is able to concentrate on specific need to improve outcomes.</p>
7.13	<p>Members were interested in how fluctuation in the cohort affects outcomes, as shown in the table on page 6 of the report.</p> <p>Attendance outcomes are just above National Average.</p> <p>Complexity is driven by needs within the cohort.</p> <p>2023 data is for 9 children – 2 were disapplied through SEN and 2 had stable Age Related Expectations (ARE).</p> <p>2024 is a different cohort of 11 children – 5 with significant SEN, 3 on the SEN register and 2 had suffered significant trauma.</p>
7.14	<p>It was noted that numbers had risen to 261 in March 2025, but decreased since then, as some children moved out of care. Excellent Virtual School training is available for schools.</p> <p>Further thanks to the team was expressed and it was noted that the Government Adviser had been impressed with the service.</p>
7.15	<p>A question was asked about support for migrant children.</p> <p>Numbers of unaccompanied migrant children, seeking asylum, had dropped but are increasing now. Those that are supported on the Island are thriving through a focus on building cultural capital and improving their language acquisition (where English is not their first language).</p> <p>Funding for refugees is received through social care – at present there are 21 unaccompanied young people being supported aged at Yr 10 or above. Accompanied children tend to remain with their families.</p>

8.	<u>FEEDBACK FROM SUB-GROUP</u>
8.1	The sub-group met on 8 July 2025 and discussed High Needs Block deficit and the plan for expansion of SEN places.
8.2	It was agreed that information on EHCPs and High Needs spending will be shared with headteachers in the Autumn term. Schools should have a better understanding of how increasing numbers of EHCPs impacts on the High Needs budget and be prepared to work with the LA, to seek solutions on how children can be better supported in mainstream schools.
8.3	It was agreed that AH would bring information on the student journey and impact of provision at the Lionheart School to the next sub-group meeting and give a presentation at the next Headteachers' Briefing.
8.4	MMcC advised that Schools Forum should be encouraged to 'own' the situation and seek solutions to address the issues for the area, including the following - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was agreed that there are varying levels of understanding around SEN provision in schools • It would be useful to engage in conversations with schools, around how they could be supported to manage provision more effectively in mainstream schools. • Look at how better provision in mainstream school could help to reduce the rising number of requests for EHCPs.
9.	<u>2024/25 SCHOOL BALANCES (MAINTAINED SCHOOLS)</u> PAPER D
9.1	DE reported on end of year school balances at 31 March 2025. Individual balances are listed in Appendix A, at the end of the report. All schools have their own bank accounts and all worked with officers to complete the closedown process on time.
9.2	<u>SCHOOLS 2024-25 OUTTURNS</u> The overall balance was a positive surplus of £2.992m, less than last year's balance, which was £3.306m but, better than had been expected. The number of schools ending the year in deficit increased from 9 to 11. Three schools managed to come out of deficit but, 5 schools went into a new deficit.
9.3	53% of schools had to manage in-year deficits, mostly due to reducing pupil numbers. However, 71% of schools improved their budget position from May 2024 budget submission, through careful financial management.
9.4	<u>SCHOOLS FINANCIAL VALUE STANDARD</u> All 38 maintained schools completed their SFVS on time, enabling the LA to submit the Financial Assurance Statement to DfE on 19 May 2025.
9.5	<u>BUDGET PLANS MAY 2025</u> All maintained schools also submitted their 3-year budget plans by 31 May 2025. Indications are that the number of schools in a deficit budget by the end of the financial year may increase to 13. Six schools had unlicensed deficits and one of these is expected to come out of deficit in 2025 - 26. Officers will continue working with other schools and 2 of these are receiving School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) support.
9.6	53% of maintained schools are expecting to move into deficit budgets in year 2 of their budget plan. These will be monitored and have agreed to take action to address issues. 64% are showing expected deficits in year 3 although changes will develop as further information on future funding is received.
9.7	Licensed deficits can only be entered into with approval of the Education Finance Team and must align with the criteria set out in para 16 of PAPER D

9.8	<p><u>SCHOOL CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT</u></p> <p>The 38 maintained schools are monitored and assessed through a rag-rating system to show the level of risk; 1 being the lowest financial risk through to 5 at highest risk. 68% of schools are low risk.</p>
9.9	<p>Interventions that may be used for schools at risk are listed in para 18 of the report. This year's annual review by the Director of Children's Services (DCS) has taken place and will be followed up with schools at high risk.</p>
9.10	<p>The LA continues to monitor school budgets through communication and networking, use of DfE systems and tools, oversight of redundancies and redeployment and working with other departments across the council.</p>
9.11	<p><u>ACADEMY DATA</u></p> <p>Academy financial years align with academic years (1 Sept – 31 August). Information is available on the DfE website and shown in the table in para 21 of the report.</p>
9.12	<p><u>QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</u></p> <p>Members noted the difficult budget situation for primary school budgets around proposed closures, pupil movement and reducing numbers.</p> <p>Pupil numbers have been decreasing for some time and are projected to continue on this trend. It is important for the LA, schools and the whole community to work together to seek solutions. Thoughts should be with the Cowes Primary community at this time.</p> <p>The LA and schools can only work within budget constraints. Some schools are looking at re-structure, reducing their Pupil Admissions Number (PAN) and/or mixed classes.</p> <p>Workshops have been arranged with headteachers and governors to develop an options paper which will be considered at the Children's Services, Education and Skills Committee On 2 October 2025. LA officers will have to follow the mandate given at that meeting.</p> <p>Governors can request closure or may seek to reduce the size of their school. A smaller school would impact on the group size and headteacher pay range. Staffing is the biggest cost in small schools.</p>
9.13	<p>It was clarified that schools had time to review their proposed budgets, after the decisions made by the Council not to close some of the named schools and subsequent decision by DfE not to close another school, before making their submission by 31 May 2025.</p> <p>All schools have tools and knowledge and are able to work with the Admissions Team to find solutions.</p> <p>If a school is named for closure, parents want to choose where their child is to attend. Pupil movement impacts school budgets, but guidance doesn't allow LAs to act on this. There is no extra money and funding follows the child retrospectively.</p> <p>Agreed that the system must be reviewed to be sustainable, in the long-term interests of all children. Pupil movement creates further pressure on all schools.</p>
9.14	<p>It was noted that some schools received pupils due to the proposed closures and are continuing to grow.</p> <p>It is hoped that the forthcoming paper will help to provide a sense of direction. The situation cannot be ignored. Decreasing pupil numbers that are currently affecting primary schools will move through the system and affect secondary schools in time. I would be helpful if all governors could understand the need to work with the LA to address surplus places to achieve sustainable educational provision.</p> <p>Officers are continuing to liaise across Human Resources, Finance and Estates departments to seek solutions and support the options paper.</p> <p>PB has written to MPs seeking support – no response received.</p> <p>NC gave an overview of LA officer recruitment and replacement activity that is taking place to support services for schools.</p>

9.15	<p>Members recognised funding pressure in special schools, but felt that funding for supporting children in mainstream schools should be considered.</p> <p>The LA doesn't currently claw back surplus budgets. Significantly more complex SEN cases are coming through, resulting on High Needs budget pressure.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>That the school balances position for the Isle of Wight local authority maintained schools be noted.</p> <p>RR and AH Left the meeting</p>
10.	<u>BUDGET MONITORING AND FUNDING</u> Paper E
10.1	IR reported on the 2024 – 25 outturn, overall deficit and budget forecast. Initial budget monitoring information for 2025 – 26 was included.
10.2	<p><u>2024/25 BUDGET – FINAL OUTTURN</u></p> <p>An overall deficit of £5.370m was reported, which includes £970,000 Safety Valve Funding received. The table in para 3 of the report gives a breakdown by each funding block and shows most pressure in the High Needs Block. The table in Appendix A shows the variances in each budget area.</p>
10.3	<p><u>EARLY YEARS</u></p> <p>A small overspend of £47,000 reported. This was due to LA allocation being based on census data, which was less than actual hours claimed by providers. The extension of working parents' entitlement to under 2's and 2 year-olds led to an increase in funded part-time equivalents (PTE) of 31.7%. Final outturn will be confirmed in July and the table at para 7 shows provisional data.</p>
10.4	<p><u>SCHOOLS BLOCK</u></p> <p>The majority of this block is passported to schools and there were no variances.</p> <p>Christ the King College and The Bay CE Secondary School received funding through the Growth Fund in 2024 – 25, due to a requirement for additional places. The Growth Fund was underspent by £43,000 overall.</p> <p>Surplus TUC funding of £9,305 (due to vacancies) was re-distributed to schools.</p> <p>AM left the meeting</p>
10.5	<p><u>HIGH NEEDS BLOCK</u></p> <p>This block is the main contributor to the overall deficit, with an overspend of £5.399m (24.1%). Pressure is due to rising numbers of EHCPs and increasing complex needs. Nationally, EHCPs rose by 10.8% between January 24 and January 25. 6.8% of IOW children have an EHCP, compared with 5.3% nationally.</p>
10.6	<p>Strategies that have been put in place to expand SEN provision are as follows –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satellite provision for St Georges School • Increased places at Medina House • Increased places at Greenmount Resourced Provision
10.7	Following consultation, further approval was given for 12 additional places at The Bay Resourced Provision. The expansion plan is shown at para 14 in Paper E
10.8	<p>A budget gap of £1.7m was identified at budget-setting, including the £970,000 Safety Valve funding. Further variances and pressures include those listed in para 17 in the report -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1.1m pressure for children Educated Other Than at School or College (EOTAS), average cost £34,000 per package • £1.1m for increasing Independent and Non-Maintained School (INMSS) placements – 78 on-Island and 21 off-Island

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) £710,000 pressure – 124 pupils funded in Spring term • Post-16 Top Up funding - £441,000 overspend due to 11% increase in learners requiring support • £501,000 overspend for increased places and more complex needs at St Georges and Medina House Special Schools • Top-up funding for mainstream EHCPs – 1% decrease but increased complex needs • Resourced Provision top-up funding – increased demand for places leading to a £107,000 overspend • Expansion of SEN provision contributed to a £65,000 underspend in Discretionary Spend for additional support in mainstream schools for children who may otherwise need more expensive independent placements. • Primary Behaviour Service was underspent by £107,000 due to a vacancy and reduced property costs • Central Team - £198,000 underspend due to vacancies and grant funding for centrally employed teachers • £41,000 underspend in supporting education out of school due to 11 of 16 permanently excluded young people being placed at the Lionheart School.
10.9	<p>Thanks was given by members to schools who continue to manage provision for children with EHCPs in mainstream schools, who are not allocated special provision places, without additional funding</p> <p>The LA has moved rapidly to put plans in place to improve provision, but these evidently lead to overspend in some areas, partially offset by underspending in other areas. Work continues on developing ordinarily available provision and looking into reasons for increasing requests for EHCPs.</p>
10.10	<p>Expansion of special places has helped to support children who may have been inappropriately placed to meet their needs, or EOTAS. In reality, this investment provides overall savings, although it is difficult to define with precision.</p> <p>JK left the meeting</p>
10.11	<p><u>CENTRAL SERVICES BLOCK</u></p> <p>No variances shown, other than minor underspend in copyright licenses and non-SEN independent placements.</p>
10.12	<p><u>OTHER GRANTS</u></p> <p>These are passported directly to schools as shown in paras 19 and 20 in Paper E</p>
10.13	<p><u>DSG DEFICIT & FUTURE YEARS FORECAST</u></p> <p>The in year DSG deficit of £5.370m, with the brought forward deficit of £6.6m led to a cumulative deficit of £11.963m deficit, after receipt of Safety Valve funding. The purpose of the Safety Valve Programme was for the LA to achieve a positive balance by 2026 – 27. However, a £4.3m shortfall is still predicted by the end of the programme. A 5-year forecast (April 2025) is shown in the table at para 22 of the report.</p>
10.14	<p>The deadline for the next update submission to DfE was yesterday; the Safety Valve Plan is required to be re-aligned to the SEND Strategy and further info on these will be shared with SF in the Autumn.</p>
10.15	<p>Regulations require the LA to carry forward DSG deficit to the next year. The statutory override has been extended to until March 2028, whilst government reform of SEND takes place.</p>
11.	<p><u>2025/26 BUDGET – OVERALL FORECAST POSITION</u></p> <p>The forecast position at 31 May 2025 predicts a £4.324m deficit, although this will be subject to much development and change. The prediction includes expected Safety Valve funding of £1.5m, the first instalment of which, has been confirmed.</p>

11.1	<p><u>EARLY YEARS BLOCK</u></p> <p>A £3,000 underspend is shown so far. Confirmation of funding will be received later in July. Additional termly censuses will affect funding for under 2's and 2 year-olds.</p>
11.2	<p><u>SCHOOLS BLOCK</u></p> <p>The majority is passported to schools.</p> <p>The Growth Fund of £193,000 is expected to be fully spent. £176,000 will be used for additional places requested by the LA at Christ the King College and the Bay CE Secondary School.</p>
11.3	<p><u>HIGH NEEDS BLOCK</u></p> <p>A £4.329m overspend is forecast, including expected Safety Valve funding of £1.5m. Pressure is mainly due to increasing numbers of EHCPs and rising unit costs. A budget gap of £4.064m was identified at budget-setting, with further pressure expected through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing demand for places at the Lionheart School • increasing cost of EOTAS packages • increase in costs in INMSS placements
11.4	<p><u>CENTRAL SERVICES BLOCK</u></p> <p>No pressure currently indicated.</p>
11.5	<p><u>OTHER GRANTS</u></p> <p>Passported to schools and no pressure currently indicated.</p>
11.6	<p><u>CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS</u></p> <p>The following allocations for capital projects were received</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools Condition Allocation - £1,552,055 • Devolved Formula Capital - £439,333 • High Needs Provision Capital Allocation - £1,056,772
11.7	<p><u>2025/26 AND BEYOND - SCHOOL FUNDING</u></p> <p>2026 – 27 Operational Guidance is expected to be published late again this year, in the Autumn term. It has been confirmed that there will be no changes to the structure of the National Funding Formula (NFF), which the IOW currently mirrors.</p> <p>Consultation on the funding formula will take place in the Autumn term, as in previous years. SF decision on transfer to the High Needs Block will be required in November.</p>
11.8	<p><u>QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</u></p> <p>A question was raised on level of take up of childcare places for under –2's and 2 year-olds.</p> <p>It was confirmed that there are sufficient places to meet need.</p>
11.9	<p>Members asked about the Capital Programme.</p> <p>The plan is agreed in September and procurement is from the following January onwards. Extensive work is underway, including expansion of SEN places.</p> <p>Action – More detail to be included in papers at the SF meeting on 13 November 2025.</p>
11.10	<p>It was suggested that the LA should look to Government SEND Reform to address accumulated deficits nationally.</p> <p>Officers are working with DfE advisors, including MMCC, in hope of reducing EHCPs to 5%. Additional resources have been made available to schools, including the Primary Behaviour Service portal, training and helpline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Principal Educational Psychologist appointment should be made soon. • Appointment of an SEN Officer is imminent.

11.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The newly formed School Improvement Team are working with schools to improve provision in class. • There has been a historic lack of investment in SEND nationally. • Use of pre-payment cards has been paused. <p>Funding formula information should be shared with headteachers as soon as possible in the Autumn term.</p> <p>It is a tight timeline for consultation – DfE have not confirmed when they will release information.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the 2024/25 schools' budget outturn position and future years forecast be noted. 2. That the May 2025 forecast 2025/26 position be noted.
12.	<p>SCHOOL FUNDING POLICIES Paper F</p> <p>12.1 The policy pack reflects mandatory updates and minor housekeeping changes. AH re-joined the meeting, so that the group was quorate and able to vote on the Growth Fund.</p> <p>12.2 LAs are able to set local criteria for the Growth Fund, including provision for additional classes requested by the LA to meet basic need. As a minimum, the LA is required to fund eligible pupils, as follows -</p> <p>primary growth factor value (£1,570) × number of pupils × ACA (area cost adjustment) 1.01479</p> <p>12.3 Cowes Primary School is due to close on 31 August 2025. It is proposed to transfer the remaining 7/12 of the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) into the Growth Fund, for re-distribution to schools who will have admitted pupils, who were included in Yr R – Yr 5 in the October 2024 Census for the school.</p> <p>12.4 Scenario 1 in Paper F outlines indicative allocation if this proposal is agreed.</p> <p>12.5 If the proposal is not agreed, Scenario 2, would be no amendment to the policy and only Gurnard Primary School would be eligible to receive Growth Funding. This would result in a Growth Fund underspend of £156,000.</p> <p>12.6 It was noted that the final decisions on closing schools were not known in time to enable information to be included in the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) that determines school's budget shares.</p> <p>12.7 PB left the meeting</p> <p>12.8 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</p> <p>Members asked about the impact on Academies who receive pupils from Cowes Primary.</p> <p>Academies would request funding and recoupment would take place the following year through submission of the APT.</p> <p>12.9 Members wished to ensure equal treatment across schools who received pupils due to Cowes being at risk of closure and thereafter, once the school has closed.</p> <p>It was noted that, although Arreton and other schools were at risk, schools who received pupils will not benefit from Growth Funding.</p> <p>12.10 A question was raised over compliance. Scenario 1 provides for forthcoming closure of Cowes Primary School and movement of children prior to this, due to the school being at risk. DfE Operational Guidance – Section 46 states</p> <p>When a school or academy has closed and the displaced pupils have been admitted to other establishments, it is the local authority's responsibility to fund these pupils using the growth fund.</p> <p>Pupils will not be displaced until 1 Sept 2025.</p>

	<p>Officers had met with DfE and taken advice. The proposal was shared with the DfE and made on their recommendation.</p>
12.11	<p>Members discussed the main purpose of the APT, to enable DfE audit and assure transparency. Submission was made in January 25 and final decision on closures had not been made. The next APT submission will provide updated information on where children are placed.</p>
12.12	<p>Section 30 of the Operational Guidance states -</p> <p><i>The growth fund must not be used to support:</i></p> <p><i>.....general growth in individual schools (due to popularity) where there is no overall pupil number growth in the local area. This is managed through lagged funding. This includes cases where academies have admitted above pupil admission numbers (PAN) by their own choice.</i></p> <p>CJ left the meeting</p> <p>It was felt that this is not necessarily applicable to the Cowes area, as there are still surplus places and vacancies at schools other than Gurnard. Any agreement to provide additional places at Gurnard would be beyond 'basic need' (sufficient places to meet the needs of children in the area). Proposed expansion would be contrary to the School Place Planning requirement to reduce surplus places.</p>
12.13	<p>It is within the guidance for the LA to ask a school to provide additional classes. Additional classes may be needed in some years, if not all.</p> <p>Officers agreed that the school would be within its rights to try and fill additional classes that may be put in place.</p>
12.14	<p>Other school closures on the Island were not managed in the same way, although it was acknowledged that each case was different. SPP has caused a big shift in the system. Since schools were named for closure, many children have moved to a preferred school, which seems unethical in the current situation.</p>
12.15	<p>Members discussed that Gurnard Primary School is promoting planned expansion of the school and this is upsetting for other schools who are struggling to fill places and manage reduced budgets due to decreasing pupil numbers. Officers were unaware and agreed to address this with the school.</p> <p>School budgets are public funding and their use should be in accordance with policy. Scenario 1 had been agreed through discussion at the Sub-group meeting. This is a one-off amendment and the policy is reviewed annually, to take account of ongoing changes and DfE recommendations.</p>
12.16	<p>Members proposed that only pupils who are on role at Cowes Primary School on the date of closure be funded as displaced pupils. Receiving schools would receive funding on a per-pupil basis. Therefore, no amendment to the Growth Fund Policy is necessary as per the Operational Guidance.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the existing criteria for growth and falling rolls for 2025/26 detailed in Appendix be reviewed in the Autumn term 2025. 2. That The Operational Guidance for 2025 – 26 states 'If a maintained school closes, the local authority should transfer the remaining budget to their growth fund and support the schools admitting the displaced pupils.' SF agreed that this guidance should be followed after the school has closed, so that the funding – specifically 7/12th of Cowes Primary school budget share for 2025/26 - be distributed, relating to those pupils who are registered at Cowes Primary School on 31 August 2025. (6 votes for, 1 abstained) 3. That the minor housekeeping updates to the policy pack in Appendix A which will apply from 1 April 2025 be noted.

4. That the minor update to the Isle of Wight Scheme for Financing Schools applicable from 1 April 2025 be noted.

The meeting closed at 11.45am

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – All meetings will be virtual through Teams.

Monday 13 November 2025 - 8.30am

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS All at 8.30am

15 January 2026

19 March 2026

Action Sheet from meeting 20 and 31 March 2025

Appendix A

	Action	By Whom	By When	Notes
1.	SF Structure to be discussed at HT and SF Autumn meetings to seek a view	All	13 Nov 2025	
2.	Request Judy Mason to provide an overview of TU Funding Distribution	Clerk/JM	17 July 2025	JM on leave move to 13 Nov
3.	Request update from Therea Wall on take-up of childcare provision since introduction to working parents' entitlement	Clerk/TW	17 July 2025	e-mail from Laurence Keynes
4.	Note – accuracy in predictions of pressure on Growth Fund is needed, so SF can support all schools in current climate	Clerk IR	ASAP 17 July 2025	Discussed at sub-group
5.	TU Funding underspend to be discussed with HTs	Chair Clerk	HT Forum 19 Jun 2025 17 July 2025	In papers
6.	Clarify gross overspend prior to mitigation (i.e. before SV funding)	IR	17 July 2025	In papers
7.	Provide breakdown of where demand/pressure in ECHP growth is directed (i.e. SEN places or Higher Banding)	NC	17 July 2025	Discussed at sub-group
8.	Amend date in Paper B, Table at para 11 column 3	DE	ASAP	Completed
9.	Note thanks to all colleagues for supporting children with SEND without additional funding	Clerk add to minutes Chair feedback at HT Forum	ASAP 19 Jun 2025	Completed
10.	NC to discuss funding for St George's School to ensure pupil needs are met	NC	ASAP	Ongoing
11.	Impact of reduction of Discretionary Top-Up Funding on school budgets to be included in SF papers.	Sub Group IR	17 July 2025	In papers
12.	Report on impact of PBS provision - including data and survey	Sub Group NC	17 July 2025	Discussed at sub-group
13.	Provide 3-year DSG budget plan	IR	17 July 2025	In papers
14.	Information on Capital Funding to be included in papers for next SF meeting	NC/IR	17 July 2025	In papers
15.	Approve School Funding Policies Ask JD to attend NF meeting on 17 July 2025 (see mins 31 Mar 25)	All	31 Mar 2025	Housekeeping changes noted. Growth fund still under discussion.