

Schools Forum

Thursday 19 June 2025

Via MS Teams

Schools Forum online meeting

- In order to facilitate the smooth operation of the meeting:
- Please mute your microphones when not speaking
- Officers will briefly present their reports, using a PowerPoint presentation to get across the key aspects
- Use the 'Raise your hand' facility if you would like to raise a question or comment
- Alternatively use 'Chat' to advise the Chair that you would like to speak
- Turn off your video if bandwidth becomes an issue
- Please note that this meeting is being recorded and will be posted on YouTube





Paper A
Minutes and Matters Arising
20 March 2025
(Bill Dowell)

Minutes and matters arising - 20 March 2025

	Action	Name	Update
1.	Meeting minutes accuracy	SB	Ensure that the video recordings of the school forum meetings are publicly available on the YouTube channel and circulate the link to forum members.
		SB	Add a note at the bottom of the minutes referring to the availability of the full audio recording of the meeting on YouTube.
		SB	Circulate the minutes earlier than before the next meeting to allow members to review and flag any inaccuracies or points that need expansion.
2.	Terms of Office	SB	Circulate updated listing (<i>actioned 20 March 2025</i>)
3.	EHCP Funding	SW	Provide the % of the £15.9m spent on HN that is allocated to Post 16 placements

Minutes and matters arising - 20 March 2025

	Action	Name	Update
4.	Benchmarking and National Comparison of SEND Funding	CE	CE to bring paper to June 2025 Schools Forum
5.	Development of Primary AP fund and secondary fund:	JR/CE	Model the development of the Primary AP fund and continuation of the secondary fund in the multi-year forecast to confirm affordability
6.	Communication	WD/DS	Review drafted letter to send to Government regarding the ongoing funding of Shropshire Schools and Early Years once elections have taken place in May, to include new Members signatures
		SB	Share the presentation slides and SLT key contacts with Schools Forum members. <i>(actioned 20 March 2025)</i>

Paper B

Updated Dedicated Schools Grant 2025-26 & Benchmarking (Collins Elechi)

Summary of Provisional Dedicated Schools Grant 2025-26

	Provisional DSG (as at Dec 24) £m	Recoupment / Deductions for HN places (as at March 25) £m	Provisional DSG (as at March 25) £m	Recoupment / Early Years Adjustment / HN Import/Export Adjustment	Latest DSG
				(as at July 25) £m	(as at March 25) £m
Schools Block	224.161	169.840	54.321		54.321
Early Years Block (Provisional)	42.638	0	42.638		42.638
High Needs Block	46.113	8.029	38.084		38.084
Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)	2.358	0	2.568		2.568
Total DSG	315.269	177.868	137.611	0.000	137.611

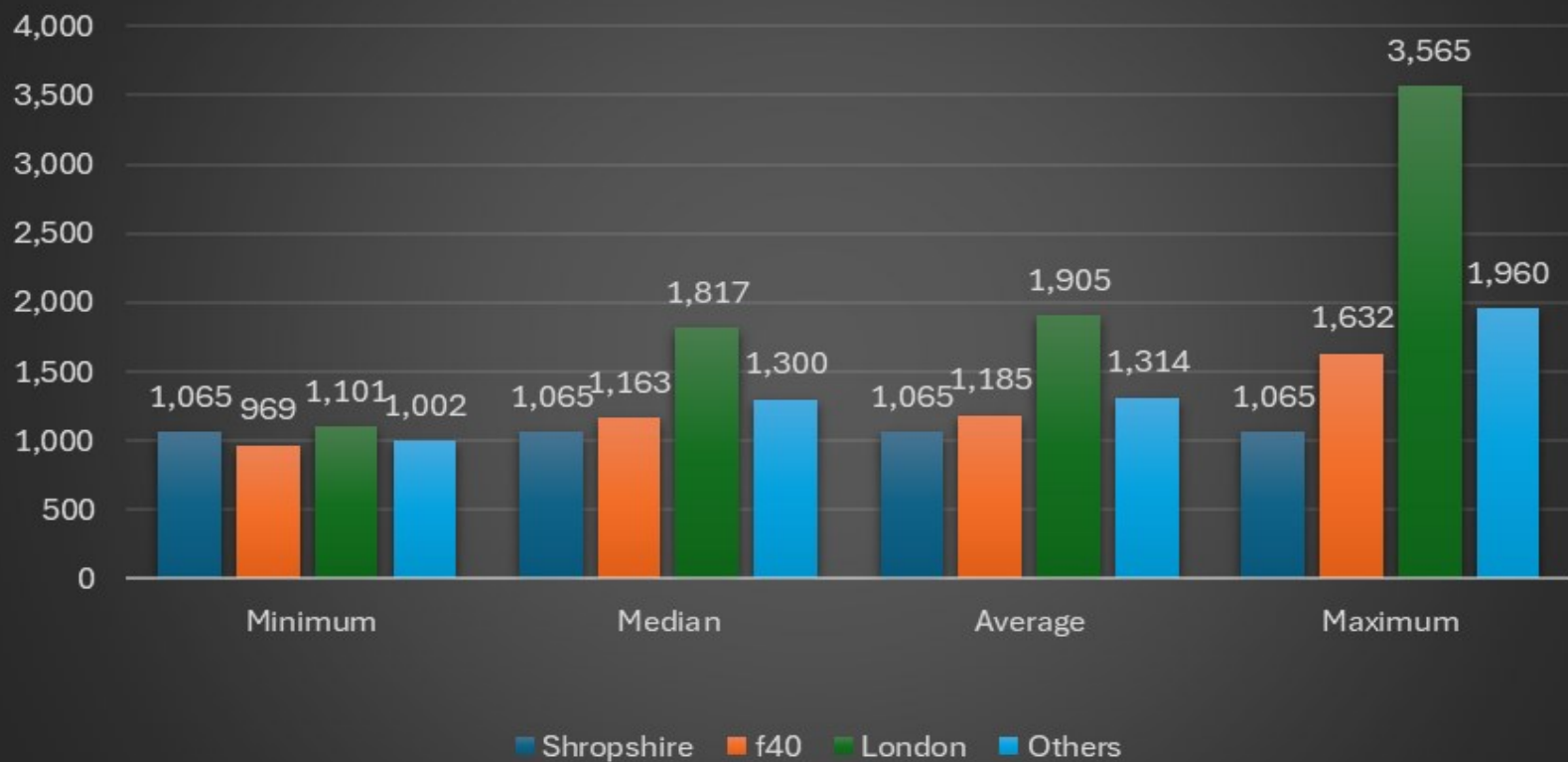
DSG Update and other Grants

- No Change in Schools Block Funding
- Change in CSSB by £0.210m due to increase in Historic Commitments
- No Change in Early Years Funding
- No Change in overall HNB allocation but £0.245m HNB deductions increase
- Potential £0.936m import/export adjustment to be confirmed in September
- National Insurance Contributions (NICs) grant not part of DSG
- 2025 pay award not part of DSG but due in Oct 2025

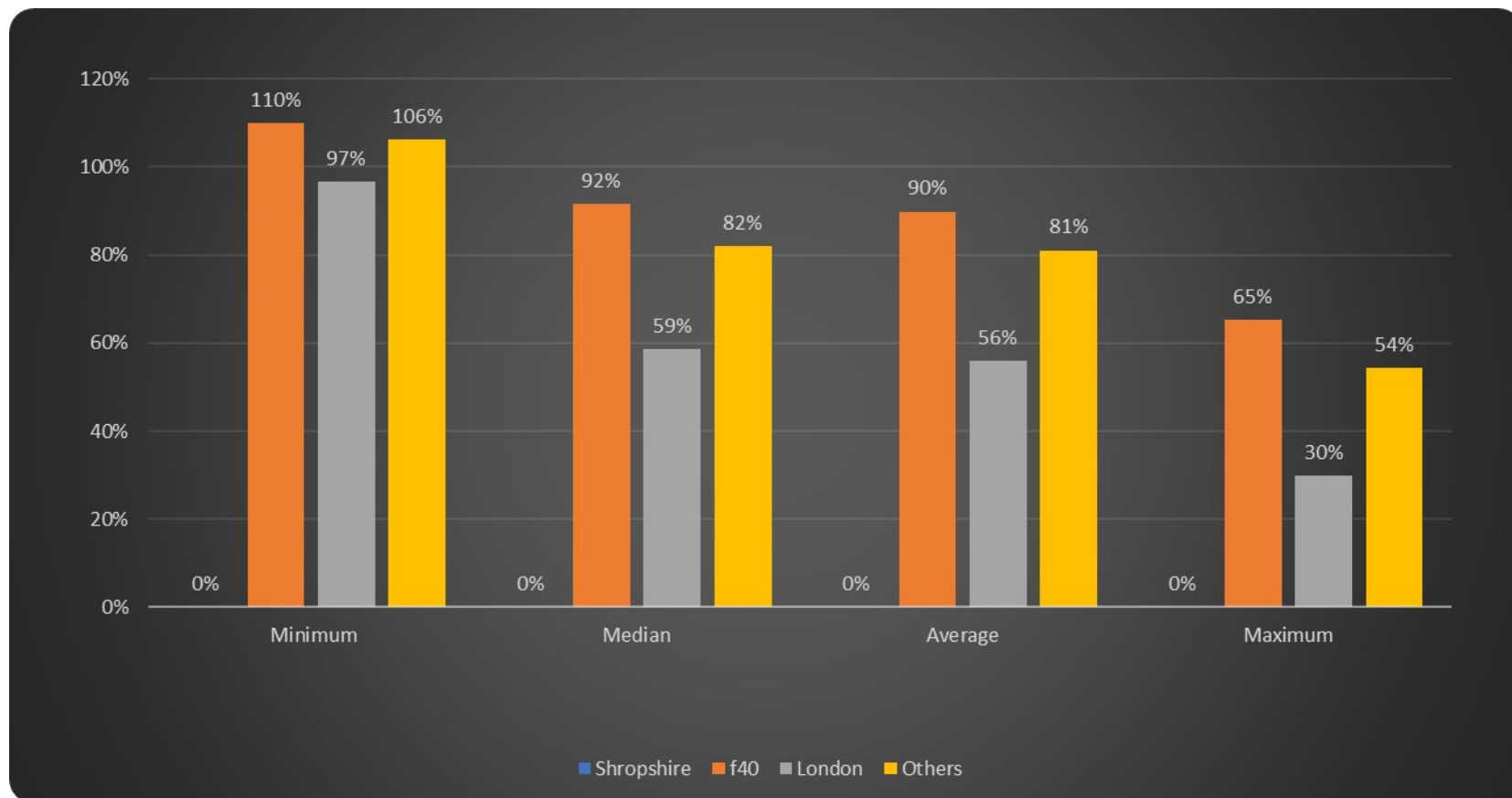
Benchmarking SEND per pupil Funding 2025-26

- Findings from f40, campaign group on securing fairer funding:
- SEND highest per pupil funding £3,565, a London Borough
- National Lowest per pupil funding £968 – f40 member group
- Shropshire funding is £1065 this is £2500 or 70% less than highest amount per pupil funding.
- Shropshire is the 15th lowest Local Authority
- Shropshire funding is 65% of f40 & 54% of Other LA's maximum per pupil
- Below is a graphic representation of f40 findings

Per Pupil funding Shropshire Compared



% of Shropshire Per Pupil Funding





Update on Schools Balances as at March 2025

(Stephen Waters)

School Balances as at March 2025

- Shropshire maintained schools' surplus balances at the end of each financial year are carried forward and earmarked specifically for each individual school's use. Multi academy trusts will have their own arrangements for the treatment of individual academy balances.
- Deficit balances of Shropshire maintained schools are also carried forward and set against the individual school's budget for the following year. Any maintained school planning a deficit budget is required to agree a licensed deficit arrangement with the local authority stipulating how and when the school will move out of a deficit position. Academies in a similar position will make arrangements with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

School Balances as at March 2025

- The overall level of school balances held by maintained schools in Shropshire has decreased over the last financial year by £1.381m to a total balance of £4.701m. Some of this decrease is driven by having less maintained schools through academy conversions.

	March 2024 Number of Schools	Balance March 2024	March 2025 Number of Schools	Balance March 2025	Variance
		£		£	£
<i>Primary Schools</i>					
In Deficit	7	- 183,843	8	- 157,112	26,731
In Surplus	74	6,274,404	63	4,971,236	- 1,303,168
Net Total	81	6,090,561	71	4,814,124	- 1,276,437
<i>Secondary Schools</i>					
In Deficit	1	- 402,226	1	- 380,640	21,586
In Surplus	-		-	-	-
Net Total	1	- 402,226	1	- 380,640	21,586
<i>Special Schools</i>					
In Deficit					
In Surplus	1	393,573	1	267,670	- 125,903
Net Total	1	393,573	1	267,670	- 125,903
<i>All Schools</i>					
In Deficit	8	- 586,069	9	- 537,752	48,317
In Surplus	75	6,667,977	64	5,238,906	- 1,429,071
Net Total	83	6,081,908	73	4,701,154	- 1,380,754

School Balances as at March 2025

- During the financial year 2024-25 there were 16 academy conversions leaving the total number of Shropshire maintained schools at 63 as at March 2025. 10 of these school's balances are included in the summary table as their conversion date was February 2025, and their final school balance is not paid across until the 2025-26 financial year.
- Overall deficit balances have decreased by £0.048m. Deficit balances have decreased in the primary sector by £0.027m and the deficit balance on our remaining Secondary school has decreased by £0.022m.
- Financial monitoring meetings will be held between the local authority and the schools with year end deficit balances where appropriate. As and when necessary, headteachers, school business managers and chairs of governors/chairs of finance will be called in to meetings with the Education Improvement Service to discuss the budget position at the school.
- Maintained schools are now submitting three-year budget plans which are being discussed with the local authority and appropriate action taken if necessary

Update on Growth Fund Allocations 2024-25 and 2025-26

(Andy Nicholls / Stephen Waters)

Growth Fund Allocations 2024-25 and 2025-26

Year	Budget	Expenditure	Comments
24 / 25	£350	£259K	Underspend of £91K
25/26	£300k	£142K	School expansion – additional classes / new school support
26 / 27	£300k		Bulge year 7 coming through – additional support needed.



Paper C

Early Years Block Allocation 2025-26 (Andy Nicholls)

Early Years Block Allocation 2025-26

Entitlement	Allocation 25 / 26
3 & 4 Year olds	£18 415 679
2 Year olds	£10 811 771
9 month old +	£12 931 281
Total block	£42 158 731

Hourly Rates

Entitlement	Hourly Rate 25 /25 (excluding grant)
3 & 4 year olds	£5.42
2 year olds	£7.15
9 month old+	£9.25

Centrally administered costs

Area	Total retained
SEND	£1 250 000
Disadvantaged	£300 000
Sustainability	£300 000
Central costs (wages, training etc)	£1 050 000 (2.49% - Threshold 4%)
Total	£2 900 000



Paper D

Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26 (Stephen Waters)

Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26

- The 2024-25 outturn position for the DSG is a £15.097m in-year deficit.
- This deficit needs to be added to the £2.542m DSG deficit carried forward from 2023-24 resulting in a cumulative DSG deficit of £17.639m

	£ m'
DSG Deficit carried forward from 2023-24	2.542
Outturn 2024-25	5.097 ¹
DSG deficit to be carried forward into 2025-26	17.639

Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26

- 2024-25 Outturn by Block:**

	2024-24 DSG Allocation £ m'	2024-25 Expenditure £ m'	2024-25 Variance £ m'
Early Years Block	31.339	31.098	-0.240
Centrally controlled or retained High Needs Block	31.776	47.240	15.464
Central Schools Services Block	2.433	2.374	-0.059
De-Delegated Items from Schools Block	0.507	0.529	0.022
School Growth Fund from Schools Block	0.350	0.259	0.091
Total	66.405	81.501	15.097

Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26

- **Early Years Block**
- In 2024/25, the DfE introduced two new expanded childcare entitlements
- From April 2024, they introduced the expanded annual free entitlement of 570 hours of early years education and childcare for 2 year olds from 'working families' from the start of the term after their second birthday.
- From September 2024, the expanded annual FE of 570 hours of early years education and childcare for 9 month olds from 'working families' from the start of the term after they turn 9 months old
- For the new entitlements, the indicative allocations are updated following new termly headcounts with the final allocation published in July 2025 using the January 2025 census headcounts.
- On 31st March 2025, the provisional Early Years Block DSG allocation was updated based on the number of part time equivalents (PTEs) taking up the new entitlements as recorded on the latest termly headcount.

Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26

- **Early Years Block**

- This resulted in a £1.849m increase in the overall Early Years Block DSG allocation from £29.490m (as published in January) to £31.339m.
- The outturn position, for the Early Years Block reflecting expenditure of £31.098m, is a £0.240m underspend against a provisional budget of £31.339m.
- This is a large movement to the Early Years DSG forecast position presented at March's Schools Forum as the forecast expenditure at that time was showing a large forecast overspend of £1.363m against January's previous allocation level of £29.490m.
- There was an underspend of £0.677m relating to the Under 2's entitlements, where the allocation is £5.578m based on 993.43 PTEs and an hourly rate of £9.85, however the sum total of payments paid out to providers equalled £4.900m indicating less take up compared to the allocation
- There was an underspend of £0.167m relating to the 2 year old funding
- It is important to note that this position on the Early Years budget is provisional and once the Early Years Block DSG final allocation is published in July, we will report back to Schools Forum with the overall in-year surplus or deficit for the 2024-25 financial year.

Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26

High Needs Block DSG

- The outturn position for the High Needs Block is an in-year deficit of £15.464m against a centrally controlled High Needs Budget of £31.776m. This budget excludes the place funding element of the High Needs Block totalling £10.574m.
- Shropshire's 2024-25 High Needs Block DSG of £42.350m has increased by £2.194m compared to the £40.156m allocation in 2023-24. This 5.5% increase is a smaller percentage increase than the previous year's increase
- For the second consecutive financial year there was no transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.
- Also, important to note that according to an F40 report, Shropshire Council is the 15th worst funded Local Authority for High Needs Block DSG on a per pupil basis out of 151 Local Authorities

Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26

High Needs Block – Top-Up Funding to Mainstream Schools

- Overspend of £3.318m relates to the top-up funding paid to mainstream schools (including SEND Hubs).
- Large increase in top-up funding to mainstream schools reflecting increasing requests for EHC Needs Assessment and issuing of EHC plans.

	2022-23 Outturn (£)	2023-24 Outturn (£)	2024-25 Outturn (£)
Primary Mainstream	3,096,667	3,826,004	6,762,292
Secondary Mainstream	1,936,949	2,122,070	3,051,664
Mainstream Top-Up Funding	5,033,616	5,948,074	9,813,956
Primary Mainstream % Increase		24%	77%
Secondary Mainstream % Increase		10%	44%
Mainstream % Increase		18%	65%

Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26

High Needs Block – Top-Up Funding to Special Schools

- Overspend of £3.748m relates to the top-up funding paid to Special schools (including PRU).
- Total expenditure on top-up funding to special schools has increased significantly in 2024-25, due by changes to top-up funding levels payable to 2 Shropshire special schools
- With Severndale Specialist School, an annual review process was undertaken to review each pupil's needs and therefore the appropriate banding level. The banding levels were increased and pupils allocated to appropriate banding levels and the resulting changes backdated to the start of the 2023-24 academic year. As a result, a one-off payment of £2.274m was made to the school which accounts for much of the budget pressure on this budget line
- A similar exercise was undertaken at Woodlands School resulting in a one-off payment of £0.458m
- Planned increase in numbers at Keystone Special School, where up to 120 pupils are now able to be placed from September 2024.

	2022-23 Outturn (£)	2023-24 Outturn (£)	2024-25 Outturn (£)
Special Schools	5,588,486	6,347,464	9,799,307
Special % Increase		14%	54%

Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26

High Needs Block – Non-Maintained and Independent Providers

- Expenditure for 2024-25 totaled £18.259m, resulting in a overspend of £5.956m.
- Total expenditure on top-up funding to special schools has increased significantly in 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 mirroring the national picture.

	2022-23 Outturn (£)	2023-24 Outturn (£)	2024-25 Outturn (£)
Independent Providers	8.466	13.892	18.259
% increase		64%	31%

- Independent Special Schools**
- Increase in demand shown by increase in numbers
- Increase in average termly cost per placement (both due to price inflation pressures and additional staffing support – increasing complexity). Typical placement cost at our most frequently used provider is £60,000 to £72,000 per annum which is over double the cost of a Shropshire Special School
- More frequent use of independent alternative providers, particularly in relation to children who are post 16. It is estimated that £6.6m of the £18.259m relates to post 16 young people (36%).

Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26

High Needs Block – SEN Support Services

- There is an overspend of £2.844m against the SEN Support Service budget of £2.121m. Similarly to 2022-23 and 2023-24, the overspend in 2024-25 relates to staffing where additional staff have been employed, sometimes as agency workers to support the wider increase in demand. Some of these employees are working with the Educational Psychology Service to address increasing demand. There is also an increase in the use of external Speech and Language Therapists.
- This £2.844m also includes £0.500m of expenditure relating to the Council's Inclusion Development Fund. This fund was allocated to Shropshire secondary schools with the objective of supporting the development of school based alternative provision and reducing the number of permanent exclusions and suspensions.

Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2025-26

Overall Position

- The Council's DSG financial position of a cumulative deficit of £17.639m as at the end of the 2024-25 financial year reflects a continuing pressure on the total High Needs budget as expenditure continues to increase sharply year on year. This increase has been particularly pronounced over the last 2 financial years; 2023-24 and 2024-25, reflecting the continued increased demand for EHC Needs Assessments and the subsequent issuing of EHC plans.
- As it stands, there is a DSG Deficit statutory override in place until March 2026. This means that any deficit associated with the DSG is kept off the councils' balance sheet due to the statutory override set out in The Local Authorities Capital Finance and Accounting (England) Regulations.
- Nationally, there is concern that no announcement has been forthcoming on whether this override will be extended. If the override is not extended, the High Needs deficit will have an impact on the council's overall financial position and this risk will need to be addressed through the council's medium term financial strategy.
- Council Officers are meeting with representatives of the DfE on 7th July to focus on addressing the DSG deficit. This meeting will focus on the current position and officers will seek an update on what support the DfE can provide to support the establishment of a sustainable DSG position. Following this meeting, officers will report back to Schools Forum with any developments and updates in this area.



Presentation

Impact of the AP/Inclusion Development Fund

John Rowe

Impact of the AP/Inclusion Development Fund 2024-25

Secondary schools were provided with a total of £600,000 in 2024/25 (this included £94,000 of reallocated funding from PExs in 23/24)

In 2023/24, there were a total of **65** permanent exclusions in schools across the year with 60 Permanent Exclusions by June 2024.

So far in 2024/25 there have been **34** permanent exclusions.

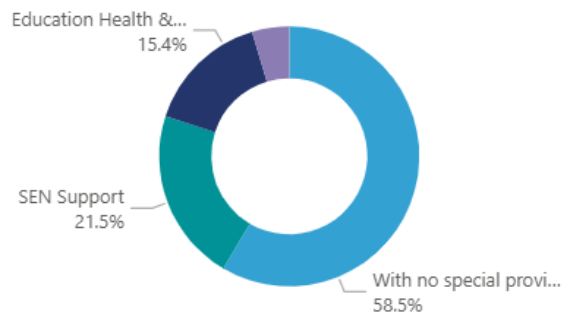
This is a **reduction of 43%** in the same period from September to June 2024 (60 permanent exclusions).



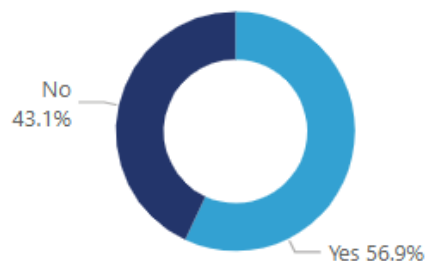
Profile of PEx

Permanent Exclusions (2023-24)

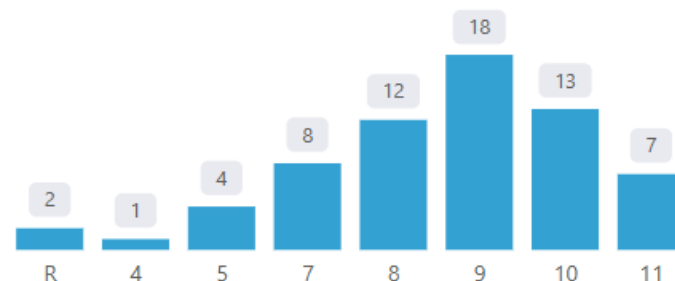
SEND Status



FSM

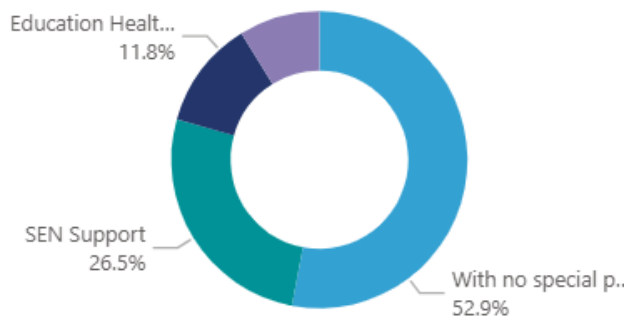


Year Group

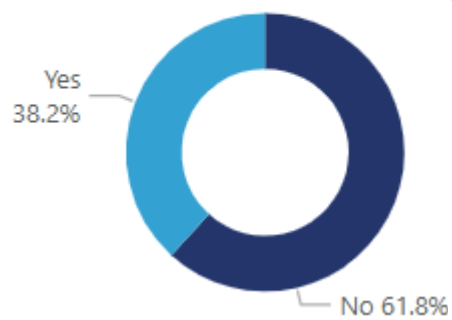


Permanent Exclusions (2024-25)

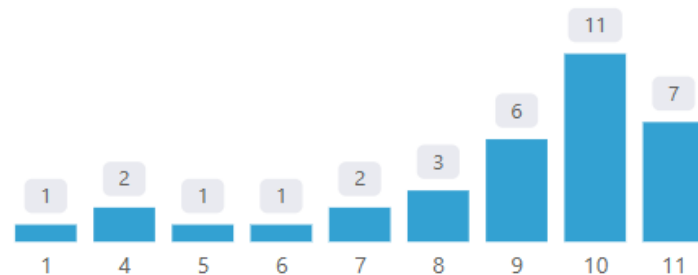
SEND Status



FSM



Year Group



Primary AP Development Fund

Objectives:

- To reduce the number of permanent exclusions and suspensions in Shropshire Primary Schools. (507 lost days due to suspensions in 2024-25)
- To reduce the number of pupils in receipt of reduced timetables (RTTs) in school
- To improve attendance
- To create inclusive learning environments that support the diverse needs of all students.
- To build capacity and expertise in schools.
- To promote collaboration and sharing of best practice among schools, trusts, and federations.

Primary AP Development Fund

Principles:

1. **Invitation for Bids:** Individual schools, trusts, federations and networks of schools are invited to submit proposals for funding. Each proposal should outline the planned initiatives to promote inclusion and reduce exclusions.
2. **In house solutions:** Projects should be focused on the development of in-school alternative provision. This focuses on providing early intervention and targeted support for pupils. Schools could use this resource to provide a shared resource for other schools.
3. **Funding Allocation:** Funds allocated from the change programme supplemented by High Needs Block..
4. **Business Case Requirement:** Schools must provide a business case to cover revenue costs associated with their proposed initiatives. This may include additional funding from the High Needs Capital Allocation to create inclusive spaces that support students with additional needs.
5. **Provision Duration:** The funding will be provided for a period of two years. This will provide sufficient time to enable the project to be developed and evaluated.
6. **Quality Assurance:** The proposals will be assessed, monitored and evaluated by Education Quality Advisers (EQAs) to ensure effectiveness and adherence to best practices.
7. **Good Practice:** Schools are encouraged to draw on good practices from other successful schools, such as Invictus and Perryfields, and implement evidence-based solutions. Where this is built into approached to develop inclusive practice more broadly, (e.g. through the Inclusive Practice Mark) this will be judged favourably.

Communications (Bill Dowell)

f40 opinion piece

<https://www.politicshome.com/members/article/now-time-grasp-nettle-around-send-reform-fairer-education-funding>

Schools Week

[SEND: Urgently set out plan for 'cliff-edge', MPs tell DfE](#)