

Dorset Schools' Forum

Date of Meeting:	27th March 2026
Report Title:	Update On Mainstream Schools' Funding Formula For 2026-27 In the Schools' Block
Executive Director:	Paul Dempsey, Executive Director for People - Children
Corporate Director:	Jen Furnell, Director for Education and Learning
Presenting Officer:	Ross Bowell, Head of Service – Health, Education and SEND Commissioning Vanessa Eddey, Team Manager – Schools Finance & Support
Report Status:	Public
Reason for Submission to Schools' Forum:	For CONSULTATION Under Forum power/responsibility: 1.Consultation on formula changes including redistributions of school and early years funding
Recommendation(s):	That the Schools' Forum notes the update on the Schools' Block allocation for 2026-27
Reason for Recommendation(s):	To ensure that Schools' Forum is updated on the latest funding position for 2026-27
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	Schools' Forum members are reminded of their responsibility to make a declaration of interest in any agenda item in which they have an interest, to the Chair or the Clerk, preferably in advance of the meeting.

1. Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the mainstream schools' funding formula for 2026-27 in the Schools' Block.

2. Financial implication

2.1 BLOCK TRANSFER UPDATE: The January report to Forum advised: "To support the safety valve program, a transfer of 0.5% of the Schools' Block to the HNB has been requested through a disapplication request, equating to £1,348,041... Following the November 2025 Schools' Forum discussions, careful consideration was given to submitting the disapplication request. The concerns expressed by Schools' Forum members that schools are being asked to contribute whilst contributions by the DfE and Dorset Council are paused are understandable. Whilst school leaders' views are fully understood and respected, Dorset Council is not in a position to not request the block transfer, considering the size and risk of the HNB deficit.

Dorset Council was notified on 9th February of the closure of the Safety Valve Programme and the introduction of the High Needs Stability Grant. This was after the council was informed on 5th February of a ministerial decision to approve of the 2026-27 block transfer.

It is important to recognise that the block transfer request was based on an intention to re-establish the three-way partnership between schools, the local authority and the Department for Education to address Dorset's high needs deficit, and the High Needs Stability Grant proposition does this on a national scale by providing up to 90% contribution to the deficit as of 31st March 2026 from central government once a local authority has developed and submitted to the Department for Education a Local SEND reform plan which is then approved as meeting the required criteria.

The council fully recognises the challenges for mainstream schools and trusts in delivering balanced budgets while providing high-quality, inclusive education. In support of this, the council has provided a large increase in high needs block funding to mainstream schools from less £5m per year in 2022-23 to a forecast of £20m+ per year in 2026-27 while the total contribution from the Schools' Block to the HNB over that period is £3.03m.

2.2 FINAL SCHOOLS BLOCK VALUES: Officers used the Forum's preferred option of reducing basic entitlement only, rather than reducing both basic entitlement and the minimum funding guarantee, to prepare the Authority Proforma Tool (APT). The submission has been approved as compliant by DfE.

The 2026-27 Schools Block funding rates for Dorset are shown below with the 2025-26 rates for comparison, noting that the 2025-26 Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG) and National Insurance Contribution (NICs) Grants have been rolled in to the Schools Block in 2026-27.

	2025-26	2026-27	Diff	% Diff
Basic Entitlement				
Primary	£3,847	£4,033	£186	4.84%
KS3	£5,422	£5,643	£221	4.07%
KS4	£6,113	£6,361	£248	4.06%
Minimum per pupil funding				
Primary	£4,955	£5,115	£160	3.23%
Secondary	£6,465	£6,640	£175	2.71%
Deprivation				
Primary FSM	£495	£505	£10	2.02%
Secondary FSM	£495	£505	£10	2.02%
Primary FSM6	£1,060	£1,210	£150	14.15%
Secondary FSM6	£1,555	£1,725	£170	10.93%
Primary IDACI A	£685	£700	£15	2.19%
Primary IDACI B	£520	£530	£10	1.92%
Primary IDACI C	£490	£500	£10	2.04%
Primary IDACI D	£445	£455	£10	2.25%
Primary IDACI E	£285	£290	£5	1.75%
Primary IDACI F	£235	£240	£5	2.13%
Secondary IDACI A	£950	£970	£20	2.11%
Secondary IDACI B	£745	£760	£15	2.01%
Secondary IDACI C	£695	£710	£15	2.16%
Secondary IDACI D	£635	£650	£15	2.36%
Secondary IDACI E	£450	£460	£10	2.22%
Secondary IDACI F	£340	£345	£5	1.47%
Low Prior Attainment				
Primary LPA	£1,175	£1,200	£25	2.13%
Secondary LPA	£1,785	£1,825	£40	2.24%
English as an Additional Language				
Primary EAL	£595	£610	£15	2.52%
Secondary EAL	£1,595	£1,630	£35	2.19%
Mobility				
Primary Mobility	£965	£985	£20	2.07%
Secondary Mobility	£1,385	£1,415	£30	2.17%
School-Led Funding				
Lump Sum	£145,100	£152,700	£7,600	5.24%
Sparsity				
Primary Sparsity	£57,400	£58,600	£1,200	2.09%
Secondary Sparsity	£83,400	£85,200	£1,800	2.16%
Premises				
Split Site	£81,000	£82,700	£1,700	2.10%

3. Well-being and Health implications

Not applicable

4. Climate Implications

Not applicable

5. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

6. Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Not applicable

7. Appendices

Not applicable

8. Background Papers

Dedicated Schools Grant: [Dedicated schools grant \(DSG\): 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK](#)

Schools Operational Guidance: [Schools operational guide: 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK](#)

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.