



Dorset Schools' Forum

Date of Meeting:	25th September 2026
Report Title:	CAPITAL FUNDING FOR MAINTAINED SCHOOLS – PROJECTS SUPPORTED IN 2025-26
Executive Director:	Paul Dempsey, Executive Director – Children's Services
Corporate Director:	Jen Furnell, Corporate Director for Education and Learning
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Presenting Officer:	Paul Scothern
Report Status:	Public
Reason for Submission to Schools' Forum:	For ~~APPROVAL~~/ INFORMATION /CONSULTATION* Under Forum power/responsibility: <u>4a</u>
Recommendation(s):	That the Forum note the level of expenditure invested in schools in 2025/26 and the continued level of investment in the school estate by the LA.
Reason for Recommendation(s):	N/A
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.

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 From 2016 the priority for capital funding in schools was focused on meeting the 'Basic Need' requirements across the Council area due to the limited amount of funding available and a demand for new places at the time. This decision was also taken in the context of the provision of Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) funding which was directly available to schools to help them plan their own priorities for capital funding to meet suitability and improvement projects. However, it should be noted that since then the level of DFC funding has reduced dramatically, which has meant schools have not been able to bring forward larger projects themselves as expected when the focus of the programme changed. We are also now experiencing a reduction in the need for places, certainly in the primary phase, so whilst there are a few 'Basic Need' projects being pursued where provision of places is under pressure, the focus of the programme is now shifting to support alternative use of spaces and addressing suitability issues.
- 1.2 Capital funding to meet 'Basic Need' continues to be held in the Modernising School Programme (MSP) budget (previously known as the SOCA budget). The Executive Director for Children's Services is able to exercise their delegated authority, in consultation with others, to allocate funding from this budget up to £500,000, and that authority continues to be exercised as and when necessary. Projects over that value, which are not already in the Programme, now require Cabinet approval in line with the Council's Constitution.
- 1.3 The School Condition Allocation (SCA) capital maintenance grant the LA receives from the DfE to maintain school accommodation is used to support the MSP budget, together with any Basic Need funding which is allocated to Dorset.
- 1.4 The other sources of capital funding available to support Community, Foundation and VC schools are the Schools Access Initiative (SAI) budget and an element of the Minor Capital Works (MCW) budget. These were both LA funded budgets with an identified funding allocation given to support SAI works in schools through to 2026/27 and the MCW budget until 27/28. New capital bids will be submitted at the appropriate time to continue those budget allocations beyond the current allocated periods.
- 1.5 Projects to be considered under the SAI programme relate to the provision of physical adaptations to the supported school premises for pupils with a disability and are usually supported by a report from a Health or HVSS professional.
- 1.6 The strategic maintenance programme, which mainly covers maintenance items over £15,000 is managed by the Property Maintenance Team in Assets and Property. It is prioritised utilising condition data held on each school and planned in consultation with the individual schools as projects reach the programme. As the SCA Capital maintenance funding from the DfE continues to be directed to the MSP budget, the Strategic R&M budget utilises funding from the LA. Appendix A shows which schools were included in the Strategic maintenance programme for 2025/26. Unfortunately, expenditure is below the funding level received from the DfE due to a number of factors

including capacity in the team who manage the programme and changes in the LA's contractor framework arrangements.

- 1.7 SCA capital funding for VA schools is managed by their respective Diocese, and for MAT's and Academies SCA funding is either given as a direct allocation, dependant on the size of the MAT, or it should be bid for through the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) administered directly by the DfE.
- 1.8 Dorset Council has also committed to invest £40m in SEND provision, which is now also supplemented by the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation (HNPCA) funding Local Authorities receive from the DfE. This funding has and continues to be used to expand capacity at Special Schools and well as the provision of the Inclusion Hubs in mainstream schools. We are currently looking at the provision of a further 6 Inclusion hubs as indicated on Appendix D, with a further 12 to follow.
- 1.9 Since 2021/22 the council has received over £34m of HNPCA funding, including a specific allocation of £10.4m for a number of specifically named projects which formed a separate funding bid to the DfE in 2024/25. As indicated previously this funding has been added to the capital funding allocated by the LA to support the SEND Capital programme. SEND projects completed, in development or paused are shown at Appendix D.
- 1.10 The table below shows the level of capital expenditure or commitments in LA maintained schools for 25/26, excluding MSP and SEND capital funded projects.

Programme	2025/26
Strategic Maintenance	£466,219
SAI	£98,600
MCW	£66,500
Total	£631,319

- 1.11 The DfE capital allocations received by the LA for 25/26 were as follows -

Budget	Allocation
Basic Need	£1,311,087
School Condition Allocation	£2,735,438
High Needs Provision Capital Allocation	£5,023,392
Total	£9,069,917

- 1.12 The specific projects in question are detailed on the attached appendices. Appendix A is a list of projects undertaken at schools as strategic maintenance in 2025/26, Appendix B shows SAI projects undertaken or committed to in 2025/26, Appendix C shows the current MSP funded (Basic Need) projects and those which have been completed in the recent past and Appendix D shows those projects currently in the SEND programme.
- 1.13 All these programmes demonstrate a continued commitment to invest in school premises by the LA.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 As more schools convert to Academy Status the levels of capital and revenue funding available to the LA through both DfE grant funding and the LA's own resources are likely to decrease.

3. Well-being and Health implications

- 3.1 There are no specific health and wellbeing implications of this report.

4. Climate Implications

- 4.1 There are no climate related implications of this report. However, it should be noted that when undertaking any property related work climate change implications are always considered.

5. Other implications

Not applicable

6. Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision the level of risk has been identified as:
Current Risk: Low
Residual Risk: Low

7. Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

- 7.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

8. Appendices

Appendix A: School Strategic Maintenance spend – 25/26

Appendix B: Schools Access Initiative and Minor Capital works commitments– 25/26

Appendix C: Basic Need (MSP) commitments (as at 1st September 2026)

Appendix D: SEND capital programme (Mainstream) (Special & AP Provision)

9. Background Papers

None

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.