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Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

HEADS FUNDING GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2026

HFG Members Present: Catherine Bernie, Nicolle Browning, Jacquie Davies, Michelle Harrison, Keith Harvey, David Maycock, David Ramsden, Chloe Summerville and Paul Vanwalwyk

Also Present: Emma Ferrey (Service Lead - SEND), Kirstie Hanson (Head of Early Years), Mollie McQuade (Finance Business Partner for Education DSG), James Stuart (Principal Advisor School Effectiveness), Hine Thompson (Senior Finance Business Partner) and Jessica Bailiss (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: David Fitter, Jo MacArthur, Ashley Milum, Chris Prosser, Edwin Towill and Charlotte Wilson

PART I

1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

2 Actions Arising from Previous Meetings

The HFG noted that both actions from the previous meeting had been completed. In relation to Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) timeliness, it was noted that a subgroup had been established to focus on statutory timescales and that the HFG would continue to receive updates on its progress.

3 Schools Funding Formula Consultation 2027/28 (Mollie McQuade)

Mollie McQuade introduced the report which set out the proposed approach to the 2027/28 Schools Funding Formula and sought approval to consult with schools on those areas of funding that remained subject to local decision making. It was noted that the consultation would run from 14th October to 6th November 2026.

The HFG noted that Department for Education guidance had not yet been published. Although no significant changes were expected, the HFG would be updated once the guidance was issued.

The HFG discussed the recommendation for a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block (HNB). It was noted that the transfer was proposed due to the significant projected overspend within the HNB. Members emphasised the importance of providing further information within the consultation documentation to explain the rationale for the proposed transfer. Officers agreed to undertake further work to strengthen the supporting information included within the report and consultation document.

Members sought clarification on the benefits that a funding transfer to the HNB would provide to mainstream schools, including support delivered through specialist outreach services. Officers agreed to consider including further information on these benefits within the consultation documentation.

RESOLVED that the report and consultation documentation would be updated to include further information on the proposed funding transfer prior to the Schools' Forum meeting on 12 October.

4 Draft De-delegations 2027/28 (Mollie McQuade)

Mollie McQuade introduced the report, which set out the proposed de-delegation arrangements for 2027/28. The HFG noted that the report would be updated once guidance was issued by the Department for Education.

The HFG noted that the proposed de-delegations remained largely unchanged from previous years. However, the Promoting Inclusive Practice Service would cease to operate as a de-delegated service following the realignment of its functions within the exclusion and reintegration team.

The HFG noted that health and safety was not included within the de-delegation proposals because it was currently under review with consideration being given to whether it would operate as a buyback service rather than a de-delegated service. The HFG noted that existing arrangements would remain unchanged during the current financial year.

RESOLVED that the HFG noted the report which would go to the Schools' Forum on 12th October for consideration and decision.

5 Early Years Budget 2026/27 - In Year Position (Mollie McQuade/Kirstie Hanson)

Mollie McQuade introduced the report, which outlined the Early Years budget position for 2026/27 based on the Quarter One forecast. The HFG noted a forecast surplus of £0.7m within the Early Years Block, which reduced to a surplus of £0.1m following the Dedicated Schools Grant year-end adjustment.

RESOLVED that the HFG noted the report**.**

6 Deficit Schools (Mollie McQuade)

Mollie McQuade introduced the report, which outlined the position of schools in deficit for 2026/27. The HFG noted that 17 schools were currently in deficit, with a combined deficit of £1.7m.

The HFG discussed the support available to deficit schools. It was noted that work was underway to develop a more joined-up approach through the emerging school effectiveness strategy. Members welcomed the proposed approach and emphasised the importance of clear communication with schools.

RESOLVED that the HFG noted the report**.**

7 Any Other Business

There was no other business raised.

8 Date of the next Heads Funding Group meeting

The next meeting of the HFG would take place at 3.30pm on Wednesday 11th November 2026 (via Teams).

(The meeting commenced at 3.30 pm and closed at 3.55 pm)