

High Needs Funding Subgroup – Terms of Reference

October 2025

Purpose

To provide strategic oversight, scrutiny, and recommendations to the Schools Forum regarding the allocation and use of the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), ensuring alignment with Stockton-on-Tees' SEND and AP Strategy and improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Objectives

- Monitor expenditure and demand trends within the High Needs Block.
- Advise on financial priorities and make recommendations for funding allocations.
- Oversee reviews of funding mechanisms, including banding models.
- Promote transparency, equity, and strategic alignment in funding decisions.
- Support early intervention and inclusive practices across education settings.
- Align funding decisions with local SEND strategic objectives and demographic data.

Responsibilities

- Review spend reports, earmarked projects, and emerging pressures.
- Scrutinise trends and ensure equitable distribution of resources.
- Recommend changes to banding formula and matrix, place numbers, and commissioning arrangements.
- Act as a consultative body for SEND and Inclusion strategies.
- Report findings and recommendations to the Schools Forum.

Membership

Membership should reflect a broad range of stakeholders and expertise to include:

School Representatives

- 2 Primary School Headteachers (including one from a school with a resource base or high EHCP population)
- 1 Secondary School Headteacher
- 1 Special School Representatives
- 1 Early Years Representative
- 1 Post-16 Education Representative
- 1 Resourced Provision / SEND Unit Representative

Local Authority Officers

- Strategic Lead – SEND
- Finance Manager

Chairing Arrangements

The Chair should be elected from among the school representatives, ideally a Headteacher with experience in SEND and strategic planning.

A Vice-Chair may also be elected to support continuity and leadership.

The Chair will be responsible for reporting subgroup recommendations to the Schools Forum.

Meetings

Frequency of meetings is once per term, totalling three meetings a year

At least 50% of members should attend to have quorum at the meeting

Meetings will be face to face

Agendas and papers circulated two weeks in advance; minutes reviewed at full Schools Forum meetings.

Governance

The focuses of the subgroup will be directed from Schools Forum and its purpose will be to consider specific subjects relating to SEND, AP & High Needs Funding spend and provide an overview and information in respect of this back to Schools Forum

Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually or in response to significant policy/funding changes.

The subgroup will operate in line with Schools Forum powers and DfE guidance.