Total Membership 25
The Forum is quorate if at least 40% (10) of the members are present

London Borough of Waltham Forest

SCHOOLS FORUM

Day/Date/Time	Venue
Wednesday 8 July 2026, 5.30 pm	VIA TEAMS
Contact:	
Clerk to Schools Forum	Dennese.White@walthamforest.gov.uk
Maintained Primary Headteacher Representatives (5)	
Claire Nairne	Handsworth Primary School
Nicola Wilson	George Tomlinson Primary School
Sian Boubalti	Gwyn Jones Primary School
Katie Jennings	Mission Grove Primary School
Zakia Khatun	Whitehall Primary School
Primary Academies and Primary Free Schools Representatives (4)	
Sean Egan	Lime Trust (Larkswood, Hornbeam)
Anne Powell	Griffin Trust (Riverley, Willow Brook, Lammas)
Maureen Okoye (Chair)	Arbor Trust (Davies Lane, Selwyn, Woodford Green, Acacia Nursery)
VACANT	Barclay Primary School
Maintained Primary Governor Representatives (1)	
Aktar Beg	Edinburgh Primary School
Nursery School Representative (1)	
Helen Currie	Forest Alliance Nursery Schools (Church Hill, Low Hall)
Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representatives (2)	
Rebecca Linden (Vice Chair)	Willowfield Secondary School
Jenny Smith	Frederick Bremer Secondary School
Secondary Academies and Secondary Free Schools Representatives (4)	
Rob Mammen	Chingford Trust (North Chingford and South Chingford)
Alexander Silk	Connaught School for Girls
Rob Pittard	Exceptional Education Trust (Norlington School and Sixth Form)
Tracey Penfold	Highams Park Trust
Maintained Secondary Governor Representative (1)	
Shona Ramsay	Leytonstone School
Maintained Special School Representative (1)	
Abedah Karim	Belmont Park School
Special School and Special Academies Representative (1)	
Jo Conduit	Learning in Harmony Multi Academy Trust
PRU (1)	
Joe Tousent	Hawkswood Group
Non School Members (4)	
Hannah McCarthy (Footsteps Day Nursery)	Early Years Providers
Abena Rodman-Tay (Waltham Forest	16-19 Providers

Total Membership 25
The Forum is quorate if at least 40% (10) of the members are present

College)	
Paul Phillips (NEU)	Trade Unions
Carolyn Laws (Holy Family)	Diocesan

AGENDA

Agenda Item	Report Name	Report Authors
1	Welcome all and Apologies.	Chair
2	Declarations of Interest	All
3	Minutes of meeting 11 February 2026	Chair
3a	Decision Sheet from 11 February 2026	For the record
4	Draft Outturn 2025-26 and Final Budget setting 2026-27	Pamela Stack
5	Government Updates	Pamela Stack
6	Scheme For Financing Schools & Associated Policies	Rachel Harrison
7	Alternative Provision and Next Steps	Mary Jarrett
8	SEND Reform Update	Mary Jarrett
	Date of Next Meetings: Wednesdays, 5:30pm	
	• 21 October 2026	

DRAFT MINUTES OF SCHOOL FORUM MEETING

Day/Date/Time	Venue
Wednesday 11 February 2026, 5.30 pm	VIA TEAMS
Contact:	
Clerk to Schools Forum	Dennese.White@walthamforest.gov.uk
Maintained Primary Headteacher Representatives (5)	
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Nicola Wilson	George Tomlinson Primary School
Katie Jennings	Mission Grove Primary School
Zakia Khatun	Whitehall Primary School
Primary Academies and Primary Free Schools Representatives (4)	
Sean Egan	Lime Trust (Larkswood, Hornbeam)
Anne Powell	Griffin Trust (Riverley, Willow Brook, Lammas)
Maureen Okoye (**Chair**)	Arbor Trust (Davies Lane, Selwyn, Woodford Green, Acacia Nursery)
Maintained Primary Governor Representatives (1)	
Aktar Beg	Edinburgh Primary School
Nursery School Representative (1)	
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Shona Ramsay	Leytonstone School
Maintained Special School Representative (1)	
Abedah Karim	Belmont Park School
Special School and Special Academies Representative (1)	
PRU (1)	
Joe Tousent	Hawkswood Group
Non School Members (4)	
Hannah McCarthy (Footsteps Day Nursery)	Early Years Providers
Abena Rodman-Tay (Waltham Forest College)	16-19 Providers

Officers	
Cllr Kizzy Gardiner	
Dennese White	Principal Accountant
Elisha Wilkinson	
Eve McLoughlin	
Jamel Mason	Senior Accountant
Jordan McDougall	Head of Finance Business Partner – Children & Education
Mary Jarrett	Corporate Director of Education
Pamela Stack	Finance Business Partner - Education
Vira Yurchenko	Finance Officer
Observers	
Julie Smith	Chingford CofE School
Julie Vazquez	Heathcote School
Michele Brown	Oppussum Schools
Sharon Parson (Unverified)	
Shermaine Lewis	Frederick Bremer School
Sohana Qureshi	Greenleaf Primary School
Sue – (Unverified)	

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1 Welcome:

1.2 Apologies: Carolyn Laws, Helen Currie, Jo Conduit, Sian Boubalti

2. Declaration of Interests

2.1 No Declaration of Interests highlighted.

3. Minutes of 11 February 2026 Schools Forum meeting

3.1 Minutes were agreed.

3.2 Matters Arising: Question 6.7 of the 10 December 2025 school forum minutes, request to provide a breakdown Education Service for maintain schools' delegation.

3.2a Question regarding the 10 December 2025 school forum meeting, what actions had we taken to start the process for Academies to contribute to Trade union facilities times.

3a. **Decision Sheet from 11 February 2026**

Noted for the record.

4 Early Years funding formula for the provision of free early education entitlement (FEEE) places for under 2s, 2, 3 and 4 year olds for 2026-27

4.1 This report sets out the following financial information in relation to the provision of free education for under 2s, 2, 3 & 4 year olds:

- Total funding available for allocation to providers in 2026-27 via the Early Years Funding Formula (EYFF);
- Final per pupil hourly rates for 2026-27
- Indicative budget shares for providers in 2026-27; and
- Proposed method for collecting pupil data and making payments to providers in 2026-27.

4.2 Schools Forum to note:

4.2.1 The Department for Education/ Education and Skills Funding Agency (DfE/ESFA) Control total for Early Years Funding for under 2s,2, 3 and 4 year olds 2026-27 as set out in **Appendix A**.

4.2.2 The Early Years Funding Formula (EYFF) per pupil rates for 2026-27 for under 2s, 2, 3 and 4 year olds as set out in **Appendix B** (with a comparison with previous years).

4.2.3 The breakdown of the Deprivation supplement paid in respect of 3&4 year olds for 2026-27 in **Appendix D.**

4.2.4 The indicative budget shares for 2, 3 & 4 year olds as set out in **Appendices E, F and G** that will form the basis of monthly allocations to all Early Years providers in 2026-27**.**

4.2.5 The SEND Inclusion Fund (SENIF) budget of £2,595,312 as set out in **Appendix A** and details of how the SENIF budget will be spent as set out in **Appendix H.**

4.2.6 The 2026 FEEE providers funding consultation and information set out in **Appendix H** and the consultation responses set out in point 9 of this report.

4.2.7 That final outturn expenditure figures for 2025-26 Early Years Block (EYB) funding are not available currently. Final DfE/ESFA Early Years Block 2025-26 allocations are also not available and are due to be published by the DfE/ESFA in July 2026.

4.2.8 Business rates for Maintained Nursery Schools in 2026-27, approx. £55k, will be funded from the Early Years block.

For 2027-28, the proposed funding approach will be brought back to Schools Forum in October/November 2026, when members will be asked to consider and agree a top slice from the Schools Block to meet the MNS business rates for that year.

4.2.9 The MNS Supplement will be distributed based on allocated PTEs, with in-year adjustments following each termly census return collected across the year (see 2.2 for guidance).

4.2.10 SENIF in reception will be funded from HNB in FY 2026-27 as per 2025-26 year.

4.3 School Forum noted the contents of the report.

4.4 Question

For agenda items 4.5 payment rates and Ageda item 4.6 government rates do they have the same meaning?

4.5 Response

Yes, they mean the same.

5 High Needs Indicative Allocations 2026-27

5.1 This report provides an overview of High Needs Block (HNB) for 2026-27 and sets out the indicative 2026027 allocations from the HNB for place-led and top-up funding.

5.2 School Forum to Note:

5.3 The gross HNB allocation to Waltham Forest for 2026-27 is £65.80 million, an increase of £3.43 million (5.5%) on the funding of £62.38 million in 2026-27.

5.4 The draft HNB budget for 2026-27 which sets out high-level expenditure of £75.93 million as shown in Appendix A. This includes the recoupment amount of £10.09m for academies and further education.

5.5 The indicative allocation of £20.65 million of top-up funding to Waltham Forest mainstream schools. This is an increase of £2.45 million to reflect growth in demand and complexity. This represents a 13.5% increase.

5.6 The indicative allocation to special schools of £13.90 million funding in Appendix B. The increase compared to 2025-26 is as a result of the new 40 place special satellite school commissioned from September 2026.

5.7 The indicative allocation to special resource provisions of £3.21 million in Appendix C. This increase is due to the new commissioned SRP places within our mainstream schools (20 new places from September 2026).

5.8 The indicative allocation to Alternative Provision including the PRUs of £2.82 million in Appendix D. This doesn't include the shortfall funding of £0.38 million for PRU places (after maintained & academy school contributions) that is met from the HNB.

6 Thank you

Thank you to Officials who have prepared and the reports.

See you all at the next School Forum meeting on the 8th of July 2026.

Schools Forum, 11 February 2026

Summary of Decisions

4 Early Years Block Indicative Allocations 2026-27

4.1 Schools Forum to note:

4.1.1 The Department for Education/ Education and Skills Funding Agency (DfE/ESFA) Control total for Early Years Funding for under 2s,2, 3 and 4 year olds 2026-27 as set out in **Appendix A**.

4.1.2 The Early Years Funding Formula (EYFF) per pupil rates for 2026-27 for under 2s, 2, 3 and 4 year olds as set out in **Appendix B** (with a comparison with previous years).

4.1.3 The breakdown of the Deprivation supplement paid in respect of 3&4 year olds for 2026-27 in **Appendix D.**

4.1.4 The indicative budget shares for 2, 3 & 4 year olds as set out in **Appendices E, F and G** that will form the basis of monthly allocations to all Early Years providers in 2026-27**.**

4.1.5 The SEND Inclusion Fund (SENIF) budget of £2,595,312 as set out in **Appendix A** and details of how the SENIF budget will be spent as set out in **Appendix H.**

4.1.6 The 2026 FEEE providers funding consultation and information set out in **Appendix H** and the consultation responses set out in point 9 of this report.

4.1.7 That final outturn expenditure figures for 2025-26 Early Years Block (EYB) funding are not available currently. Final DfE/ESFA Early Years Block 2025-26 allocations are also not available and are due to be published by the DfE/ESFA in July 2026.

4.1.8 Business rates for Maintained Nursery Schools in 2026-27, approx. £55k, will be funded from the Early Years block.

For 2027-28, the proposed funding approach will be brought back to Schools Forum in October/November 2026, when members will be asked to consider and agree a top slice from the Schools Block to meet the MNS business rates for that year.

4.1.9 The MNS Supplement will be distributed based on allocated PTEs, with in-year adjustments following each termly census return collected across the year (see 2.2 for guidance).

4.1.10 SENIF in reception will be funded from HNB in FY 2026-27 as per 2025-26 year.

5 High Needs Block Indicative Allocations 2026-27

5.1 School Forum to Note:

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5.3 The draft HNB budget for 2026-27 which sets out high-level expenditure of £75.93 million as shown in Appendix A. This includes the recoupment amount of £10.09m for academies and further education.

5.4 The indicative allocation of £20.65 million of top-up funding to Waltham Forest mainstream schools. This is an increase of £2.45 million to reflect growth in demand and complexity. This represents a 13.5% increase.

5.5 The indicative allocation to special schools of £13.90 million funding in Appendix B. The increase compared to 2025-26 is as a result of the new 40 place special satellite school commissioned from September 2026.

5.6 The indicative allocation to special resource provisions of £3.21 million in Appendix C. This increase is due to the new commissioned SRP places within our mainstream schools (20 new places from September 2026).

5.7 The indicative allocation to Alternative Provision including the PRUs of £2.82 million in Appendix D. This doesn’t include the shortfall funding of £0.38 million for PRU places (after maintained & academy school contributions) that is met from the HNB.

Waltham Forest

LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

Meeting / Date	**SCHOOLS FORUM** **July 2026**	Agenda Item	**4**
Report Title	**Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2025-26**		
Decision/ Discussion/ Information	For Information		
Report Author/ Contact details	Pamela Stack – Finance Business Partner - Education		

1. Summary

1.1 This report informs the School Forum on the 2025-26 draft final outturn position for the Dedicated School Grant (DSG).

2. Recommendations

2.1 To note the 2025-26 outturn position, including balances carried forward on the DSG.

2.2 To note the latest DSG funding allocations for 2026-27 and the latest forecast outturn position.

2.3 To note the School Balances at the end of 2025-26.

3. 2025/26 Draft Outturn Position

3.1 The DSG is a ring-fenced grant that must be used in support of the Schools Budget as defined in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2025. It cannot be used for any other purpose and is not available to support general council services.

3.2 The final 2025/26 DSG allocation was £234,850,883 after deductions for academies recoupment, national non-domestic rates and direct funding of High Needs Places by the DfE.

3.3 The DSG nets to nil in the general fund revenue account as any surpluses or deficits are carried forward on the balance sheet. The overall deficit has increased by £8.94m in year, taking the total closing deficit to £14.32m. However, surpluses in the early years, schools and central schools block masked the material deficit in the high needs block of £19.79m.

3.4 There are historic surplus balances on the school's and central services blocks. According to DFE guidance these are now used to offset the High Needs block deficit.

3.5 The Early Years block brought forward balance and in year surplus is also used offset the High Needs Block deficit.

3.6 The underspend of £1.97 million on the Early Years block is primarily driven by the calculation of allocations by the DfE which was based only on the 2025 January census and estimated demand for working family entitlements. This resulted in funding allocations that were higher than actual delivery. A small recovery is anticipated by the DfE which has been adjusted for in the final outturn position. Due to the DfE moving to updated allocations based on termly census counts, it is anticipated that future year's funding will more closely align with delivery costs.

3.7 The High Needs Block was set with a planned deficit of £5.76m, reflecting sustained demand-led pressures within the SEND system. The final outturn position of £10.91m overspend is driven in part by continued growth in Education, Health and Care Plans and associated placement costs, alongside increased use of alternative provision. The overspend reflects the one-off impact from a comprehensive reconciliation of historic payments to schools which has ensured the High Needs Block is on a robust and transparent footing and has aligned the outturn position more closely to actual cost pressures relating to 2026/27. While the reconciliation has increased the in-year deficit, it provides a clearer baseline and places the service in a more stable position going forward. Work remains ongoing through the SEND sufficiency and inclusion strategy to manage demand, reduce reliance on high-cost placements, and improve the medium-term financial trajectory.

3.8 In line with national pressures, the high needs block continues to experience pressures as demand and cost increases have far exceeded the additional funding received. Across our local schools, year on year growth in EHCPs was 6% (from 3,800 to 4,020), with costs also increasing due to complexity. Across independent schools and other provision, costs have increased by 24%, and this is mitigated by increased placements within Waltham Forest mainstream and special settings.

3.9 The DSG Statutory Override has been extended from March 2026 to March 2028. This allows the Local Authority to record the deficit as an Unusable Reserve and it does not need to be offset by other balances in the LA accounts. Following the announcement of the High Needs Stability Grant, Waltham Forest could receive up to £12.89m following the approval of the Local SEND Reform Plan which was submitted to the DfE in June 2026.

4. 2026/27 Forecast Outturn Report

4.1 The 2026/27 DSG allocation following academy recoupment is £364.239 million across all four funding blocks. The following table sets out the DSG Local Authority allocations by block for 2026/27, the forecast outturn and in year deficits.

DSG Block	2026/27 DSG Allocations	2026/27 DSG Allocations after deductions	2026/27 M2 Forecast Spend	In-year (Surplus) / Deficit
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Schools Block	259.37	133.38	133.38	0
CSSB	1.95	1.95	1.95	0
High Needs	65.80	55.70	66.82	11.12
Early Years	53.85	53.85	53.85	0
Total	380.97	244.88	256.00	11.12

4.2 The Schools Block and the Central Schools Services block (CSSB) are forecast with nil variance as expenditure is mainly formula driven or fixed with few risks.

4.3 The Early Years block is forecast net variance at this time as the outturn is dependent on actual in year delivery of Early Years provision / take up and adjustments made by the Department for Education (DfE) in year. Early indications from the January 2026 census is that the number of PTE's actually taking up a place was lower than the DfE's initial budget, therefore we are likely to have a balancing adjustment made in Summer 2026 to reflect this.

4.4 The High Needs Block forecast is a deficit of £11.12m for 2026/27 due to increase in demand, complexity and cost pressures linked to the increasing number of Education & Health Care Plans (EHCP's) and increasing complexity against a backdrop of a cash flat funding increase. Cost pressures occur throughout the block on top up payments in special and alternative provision, independent provision and post-16. The full year impact of the reconciliation undertaken in the Spring Term is approximately £0.89m.

4.5 In line with national pressures, the high needs block continues to experience pressures as demand and cost increases far exceed funding received for 2026/27. The following table reflects the overall deficit forecast for the end of the financial year, if Waltham Forest receives the full High Needs Stability Grant.

4.6 Since 2018 the DSG is reported as a single, ring-fenced block within local authority financial statements, rather than as separate funding streams. while movements within individual blocks are tracked for management and transparency purposes, local authorities are expected to manage the DSG holistically, and any overall deficit or surplus carried forward on the total DSG account. The DfE has provided guidance that overspends on the Schools Block or Central Services Schools Block are within the control of the Local Authority and should be taken to the General Fund, whilst any underspends on the other blocks should be placed into the DSG Adjustment Account and used to offset the High Needs Block deficit.

DSG Reserves	Opening Balance (1 April 2026)	In-Year Balance	High Needs Stability Grant	Block Transfers – Deficit Un-Ring Fencing	Closing Balance (31 March 2027)
Surplus / (Deficit)	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**
Schools	(1,041)	0	0	1,041	0
Central Schools	(62)	0	0	62	0
High Needs	19,786	11,119	(12,889)	(5,654)	12,551
Early Years	(4,362)	0	0	4,362	0
Total	**14,321**	**11,119**	**(12,889)**	**0**	**12,551**

5. SCHOOOL BALANCES

5.1 Maintained schools are required to submit regular financial monitoring reports to the Local Authority (LA), including a year-end financial return. Total school revenue balances as at 31 March 2026 were £1.36m, a decrease of £3.71m, as summarised in the following table.

School Phase	Maintained Schools	Cumulative Balances as at 31st March 2026		
		Revenue	Capital	Total
		(£)	(£)	(£)
Nursery	3	282,846	9,936	292,782
Primary	29	(447,994)	234,585	(213,408)
Secondary	7	1,732,155	152,105	1,884,260
Special and PRU	4	234,818	17,549	252,367
Allthrough	1	(444,640)	17,564	(427,076)
Total	**44**	**1,357,185**	**431,739**	**1,788,925**

5.2 A total of 19 Waltham Schools reported a deficit revenue balance at the end of the 2025/26 financial year. Deficit revenue balances represented a total value of £6.59m, an increase of £3.41m since 31st March 2025.

School Phase	Maintained Schools	Schools in deficit	%	2025/26 Revenue Deficit Balances (£)
Nursery	3	0	0	0
Primary	29	14	48%	(4,411,855)
Secondary	7	3	43%	(1,243,070)
Special and PRU	4	1	25%	(490,749)
Allthrough	1	1	100%	(444,640)
Total	**44**	**19**	**43%**	**(6,590,313)**

Description	Budget 2025-26 Draft Version 2	Final Outturn	Variance to Budget
INCOME			
Gross Allocation	62,375,857	62,417,857	42,000
Recoupment for Academy and Further Education	(9,704,000)	(9,947,335)	(243,335)
TOTAL HIGH NEEDS BLOCK INCOME	**52,671,857**	**52,470,522**	**(201,335)**
EXPENDITURE			
LBWF SCHOOLS			
Special Schools	13,100,000	14,707,254	1,607,254
Special Resource Provision	2,800,000	2,455,482	(344,518)
Mainstream Schools	18,200,000	22,862,107	4,662,107
Hawkswood & Burnside Top up funding	160,000	117,598	(42,402)
TOTAL LBWF SCHOOLS	**34,260,000**	**40,142,442**	**5,882,442**
OTHER SCHOOLS			
Independent and NM Special schools	5,792,700	4,768,885	(1,023,815)
Other LA Schools	3,567,538	3,405,128	(162,409)
Alternative Education	3,350,309	3,325,862	(24,448)
TOTAL OTHER SCHOOLS	**12,710,547**	**11,499,875**	**(1,210,672)**
ALTERNATIVE PROVISION			
AP College Provision	754,778	584,864	(169,914)
LA supprt staff cost	222,222	247,052	24,830
Family Resilience / ISOS	400,000	70,892	(329,108)
SEMH Support Provisions	168,750	405,000	236,250
SEMH Assesement places	125,000	311,560	186,560
NELFT invoice - Risk		242,679	242,679
TOTAL ALTERNATIVE PROVISION	**1,670,750**	**1,862,047**	**191,297**
PRU			
Place funding	860,000	1,040,833	180,833
PRU SEND Place funding	140,000	140,000	0
Additional Funding for PRU places(Claw backs and Top ups)	22,451	359,770	337,319
Start up funding		150,000	150,000
Additional SEND place funding at 14k/place	212,000	208,950	(3,050)
TOTAL PRU	**1,234,451**	**1,899,553**	**665,102**
POST 16 PROVISION			
Top up funding and Spot Purchases	4,518,684	4,068,333	(450,351)
TOTAL POST 16	**4,518,684**	**4,068,333**	**(450,351)**
OTHER HIGH NEEDS COSTS			
Special Schools ADF - Historic (23-24)	759,262	706,953	(52,309)
PRU ADF - Historic (23-24)	43,027	44,472	1,445
Historic HN Settings Pay & Pension Allocations 20-21	735,495	733,389	(2,106)
Home Hospital	315,000	274,814	(40,186)
SEND Success (Flourish) Excluding EY	675,000	713,335	38,335
EY Team SEND Support	83,000	84,748	1,748
EY Inclusion Work	108,000		(108,000)
S75 funding agreements (incl SLT & OT)	277,000	251,704	(25,296)
SEND Service	200,000	205,374	5,374
BACME		100,229	100,229
FAP	70,000	72,000	2,000
EY Top ups	770,000	724,770	(45,230)
			0
TOTAL OTHER COSTS	**4,035,784**	**3,911,787**	**(123,997)**
TOTAL HIGH NEEDS BLOCK EXPENDITURE	**58,430,216**	**63,384,037**	**4,953,821**

HNB overspend	**5,758,359**	**10,913,515**	**5,155,156**

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Meeting / Date:	SCHOOLS FORUM July 2026	Agenda Item	5
Report Title:	Government Update		
Action Required	For discussion		
Report Author/Contact details	Pamela Stack – Finance Business Partner Pamela.stack@walthamforest.gov.uk		

1. SUMMARY

1.1. To provide the Schools Forum with an update on Government announcements relating to the grants in 2026/27

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That the schools forum notes the latest updates on school grants for 2026/27

3. SCHOOL FUNDING UPDATES

3.1. **PE and Sport Grant** – the government announced this grant will end after the Academic Year 2025/26. Schools received the final payment in May 2026. The government has announced it will invest £1 billion in school sport over the next 3 year using Partnership Networks which are due to be set up by Spring 2027. There will be a one-off £100m PE Premium to support primary schools during the transition year.

3.2. **Free School Meals** – From the start of 2026/27 School Year all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit will be eligible for free school meals. There will be 2 categories – Targeted FSM based on the previous criteria and Expanded FSM which will apply to meals only, covering pupils who do not qualify for targeted FSM but who are in households in receipt of universal Credit.

Transitional protections in place since April 2018 due to the roll out of Universal Credit will be discontinued from September 2026. Going forward eligibility should be monitored by schools and LA on an ongoing basis, through annual checks. These checks should be completed ahead of the start of the 2026-27 Academic Year.

Free school meals: guidance for local authorities, local-authority-maintained schools, academies and free schools - GOV.UK

3.3. **Free School Meals Expansion Grant** – For the period Sept 26 - Mar 27 schools will receive a grant based on the absolute increase in FSM eligibility

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Waltham Forest

from the October 2025 to the October 2026 census. This will based on a pro-rata amount of the FSM factor received through the National Funding Formula, currently £505. The pro-rata amount will be £295. It is expected to be paid through the NFF in future years.

Free school meals expansion grant: 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK

3.4. **Universal Infant Free School Meals** – The free school meal rate is uplifted to £2.66 for the academic year 2026. Due to the expansion of eligibility for FSM, the provisional payment for 2026 will be adjusted downwards by 20% as it is expected to be picked up by the new FSM expansion grant. Final UIFSM payments will be reconciled in June 2027, for the period September 26 – March 27 to ensure that each school receives the correct amount overall.

Universal infant free school meals (UIFSM): 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK

3.5. **Universal Primary School Meals** – The GLA has announced that only 2 payments will be made for the 2026/27 Academic Year. The first payment will be made in September 26 based on January 26 census figures and a final balancing payment will be made in May 27 based on January 27 figures. The allocation for the entire academic year will be based on the January 27 figures and

3.6. **National Insurance Contributions Grant** –This has been rolled into the National Funding Formula for 2026-27 for Pre-16 Mainstream settings. Post-16 provision will be paid via a separate grant in September 2026 to cover the entire financial year

Post-16 National Insurance contributions grant methodology: April 2026 to March 2027 - GOV.UK

3.7. **School Budget Support Grant** –This has been rolled into the National Funding Formula for 2026-27 and will not be paid as a separate grant.

3.8. **Pupil Premium** – As part of the expanded eligibility for Free School Meals only those pupils eligible for Targeted FSM will receive deprivation Pupil Premium. Entitlement for Ever 6, Previously looked after children (PLAC), Looked after children (LAC) and Service Pupil Premium remains unchanged

Pupil premium: conditions of grant for the 2026 to 2027 financial year - GOV.UK

3.9. **Inclusive Mainstream Fund** – this grant will be paid to mainstream settings for the next 3 years to help equip schools improve the inclusivity of their universal practice. There will be a lump sum plus a basic per pupil rate and enhanced rate for pupils who are recorded as having low prior attainment. The DfE is currently considering whether this will be rolled into the NFF for future years.

Inclusive mainstream fund: 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK

3.10. **Inclusive Early Years Fund** – This will provide £47m of additional early years funding in 2026-27 to support the early years sector to become more inclusive to children with SEND. It will complement existing funding such as SENIF and DAF.

[Inclusive early years fund for 2026 to 2027: conditions of grant and operational guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK]

3.11. **Maximising Value for Pupils** – this is not a specific grant but a programme introduced by the DfE to tackle systemic issues and support schools across 4 key pillars: Commercial, Assets, Workforce Deployment and Developing Capabilities. This encompasses the Get Help Buying for Schools service which has frameworks for buying energy, supply staff, MIS, banking services, etc. Further support and information is being added.

Maximising value for pupils - GOV.UK

Get help buying for schools

LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

Meeting / Date	**SCHOOLS FORUM** **08 July 2026**	Agenda Item	**6**
Report Title	**2026/27 Scheme for Financing Schools**		
Decision/ Discussion/ Information	For Discussion and Approval		
Report Author/ Contact details	Rachel Harrison on behalf of Jordan McDougall, Assistant Director of Finance Children's rachel.harrison@walthamforest.gov.uk Jordan.mcdougall@walthamforest.gov.uk		
Appendices	Appendix A: Final 2026/27 Scheme for Financing Schools Appendix B: Updated Scheme for Financing Schools (tracked changes)		

1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report presents the updated *Scheme for Financing Schools* for Schools Forum consideration and approval, in line with the Department for Education (DfE) requirements for the 2026/27 financial year.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Schools Forum is asked to:

2.1.2 Approve the updated Scheme for Financing Schools, which is in line with 2026/27 DfE requirements as set out in **Appendix A**, and for information the last approved Scheme with tracked changes included at **Appendix B**. The Scheme and this decision applies only to Maintained Schools.

3. REASON

3.1 As per the Scheme for Financing Schools, proposed amendments to the Scheme are subject to consultation with Schools Forum.

3.2 Schools Forum should decide whether the proposed revisions are of such significance that they should be subject to a consultation with the governing body and Head Teacher at every maintained school.

3.3 Although the changes to the Scheme appear substantial, in practice they are to ensure that the Scheme aligns with current 2026/27 DfE Guidelines. There should be an annual review of the Scheme to ensure that terminology remains up to date, these changes do not require approval from Schools Forum but will always be shared for information to ensure best practice.

3.4 Unfortunately, the Scheme has not been updated since 2022, so has missed several updates. Due to the Scheme not having been updated for four years, there were government directed revisions required, and in a lot of cases the Scheme needed to be restructured, which has added to the volume of tracked changes. Explanations of what has been updated in the Scheme can be found later in this report.

3.5 The Local Authority does not deem the changes to the Scheme warrants separate consultation with each school and has instead brought the revised Scheme directly to Schools Forum. It is of critical importance to all of us that we have an up-to-date compliant Scheme, but given the financial risk if Schools Forum don’t approve, we will have to seek approval from the Secretary of State.

3.6 In the event that a vote is necessary when deciding whether to agree to the changes to the Scheme, only members of Schools Forum representing maintained schools will be entitled to vote.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Local Authorities are required to maintain a Scheme for Financing Schools which sets out the financial relationship between the authority and maintained schools. The Scheme must comply with statutory guidance issued periodically by the DfE which may include directed changes and / or updated guidance.

4.3 The current update reflects the latest DfE guidance for 2026/27, and the Scheme has therefore been reviewed and revised to ensure full compliance.

5. SUMMARY OF CHANGES

5.1 Schools Forum will note that the document contains a significant number of tracked changes. While the volume of amendments may suggest substantial revision, in practice most changes are:

- Updates to terminology and language to standardise and align with current DfE guidance.

- Clarifications and restructuring of existing sections to improve readability and consistency and remove duplication.

- Technical adjustments to ensure compliance with statutory requirements, for example updated leasing treatment due to the introduction of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS16).

- Sections expanded where guidance is prescriptive.

5.2 These changes do not represent a fundamental shift in the principles of the Scheme, but rather an alignment with national guidance and best practice, and to bring the Scheme in-line with the latest DfE guidance, due to the last update of the Scheme taking place in 2022.

6. REFLECTING THE CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION

6.1 The review of the Scheme has also provided an opportunity to ensure it more accurately reflects the current financial context facing many schools.

In particular:

- There is increasing pressure on school budgets, with a growing number of schools operating in, or projecting, deficit positions

- The Scheme has been updated to strengthen clarity around expectations, monitoring, and support in relation to financial sustainability, such as more frequent monitoring for schools in deficit or at-risk schools.

- Relevant sections have been refined to better reflect the balance between school autonomy and the local authority's oversight responsibilities in managing financial risk.

- Introduction and reference to enhanced oversight approaches, such as the Stronger Schools Financial Programme. We are currently refreshing and renaming the current Schools Facing Financial Challenges (SFFC) Programme, and a revised policy document will be shared with all Maintained Schools and published on our website in September 2026. The fundamental principles of the programme will not change, but it is an opportunity for a rebrand and enhancement of the existing policy so that it better reflects the current financial position of our schools and the ethos we are striving for to ensure our schools are strong and sustainable now and into the future. It also considers feedback from schools in the current programme.

- Clearer expectations on budget planning, a reinforced requirement for 3-year budget/recovery plans, whereby deficits are normally cleared within a 3-year period.

- Expanded and clarified deficit management framework, with particular emphasis on the licensed deficit and recovery plan process, which ensures controls are aligned with best practice

6.2 These updates aim to ensure that the Scheme remains fit for purpose in the context of heightened financial pressures across the sector.

7. SCHOOL BALANCES

7.1 Total school revenue balances at the end of 2025/26 were £1.36m, representing a decrease of £3.71m from the previous year. This significant reduction confirms the increasingly challenging financial position, with many schools experiencing difficulties in maintaining balanced budgets. This position underscores the need to strengthen the policy framework for financial management and to transition to the Stronger Schools Financial Programme, recognising that schools are already operating in a position of financial strain, rather than simply being at risk of future challenge as previously characterised by the SFFC programme. The table below provides a summary of the remaining balances:

School Phase	Maintained Schools	Cumulative Balances as at 31st March 2026		
		Revenue (£)	Capital (£)	Total (£)
Nursery	3	282,846	9,936	292,782
Primary	29	(447,994)	234,585	(213,408)
Secondary	7	1,732,155	152,105	1,884,260
Special and PRU	4	234,818	17,549	252,367
Allthrough	1	(444,640)	17,564	(427,076)
Total	**44**	**1,357,185**	**431,739**	**1,788,925**

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The updated Scheme has been reviewed internally, and feedback received has been incorporated into the final version where appropriate.

8.2 We are now consulting with Schools Forum on the proposed amendments for 2026/27.

8.3 Revisions to the Scheme proposed by the Local Authority may only be implemented after Schools Forum, or (in the cases where the authority and the Schools Forum cannot agree) the Secretary of State has approved them.

8.4 It is also possible for the Secretary of State to make directed revisions to Schemes after consultation. Such revisions become part of the Scheme from the date of the direction and are therefore not subject to approval by Schools Forum.

8.5 Thereafter, an annual review of the Scheme will take place to ensure terminology remains up to date; these will also not require Schools Forum approval.

8.6 Once the Stronger Schools Financial Programme policy has been updated this will be communicated to all schools and added to our website, this will also include refreshed templates for when completing recovery plans.

London Borough of Waltham Forest

2026

SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

Strategic Director Resources
and
Strategic Director, Children's Services

London Borough of Waltham Forest Town Hall
Forest Road, Walthamstow,
London E17 4JF

Updated June 2026

Contents Page

SECTION 1: THE FUNDING FRAMEWORK

1.1 The Funding Framework

The London Borough of Waltham Forest is committed to a funding framework, agreed with its schools, which support improvement, strengthens outcomes for pupils and allows schools and the local authority to offer efficient and effective services. The funding framework which replaces local management of schools is set out in the legislative provisions in sections 45-53 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998. Further details are set out in the Department for Education's Statutory Guidance: Scheme for Financing Local Authority Maintained Schools, available at: Schemes for Financing Schools 2026-27

Under this legislation, Local Authorities determine the size of their school's budget and their non-school's education budget, although the local authority must allocate its entire Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to the schools' budget. The categories of expenditure which fall within the two budgets are prescribed under regulations made by the Secretary of State, but included within the two taken together, is all expenditure, direct and indirect, on an authority's-maintained schools except for capital and certain miscellaneous items.

. Local authorities may retain funding from the school's budget for purposes defined in regulations made by the Secretary of State under Section 45A of the Act (the centrally retained expenditure). The amounts to be retained centrally are decided by the local authority concerned, subject to any limits or conditions which may include gaining the approval of their school's forum or the Secretary of State in certain circumstances, in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State. The balance of the school's budget remaining after deduction of centrally retained funds is called the Individual Schools Budget (ISB). Expenditure items in the non-school's education budget must be retained centrally, although earmarked allocations may be made to schools.

Local Authorities must distribute the ISB amongst their maintained schools using a formula which accords with regulations made by the Secretary of State and enables the calculation of a budget share for each maintained school. The budget share is then delegated to the governing body of the school concerned, unless the school is a new school which has not yet received a delegated budget, or the right to a delegated budget has been suspended in accordance with s.51 of the Act. The financial controls within which delegation works are set out in a scheme made by the authority in accordance with s.48 of the Act and regulations made under that section. All proposals to revise the scheme must be approved by School's Forum, though the authority may apply to the Secretary of State for approval in the event of the forum rejecting a proposal or approving it subject to modifications that are not acceptable by the authority.

Subject to provisions of this scheme, governing bodies of schools may spend budget shares as they determine, for the purposes of their school. They may also spend budget shares on any additional purposes prescribed by the Secretary of State in regulations made under s.50 of the Act. Amounts spent by a governing body on providing community facilities or service under section 27 of the Education Act 2002 are treated as if they were amounts spent for the purposes of the school (section 50(3A) of the Act).

The Local Authority may suspend a school's right to a delegated budget if the provisions of this scheme (or rules applied under the scheme) have been substantially or persistently breached, or if the budget share has not been managed satisfactorily. A school's right to a delegated budget share may also be suspended for other reasons outlines under schedule 17 of the Act.

The local authority is obliged to publish each year a statement setting out details of its planned school's budget and other expenditure on Children's Services, showing the amounts to be centrally retained and the funding delegated to schools. After each financial year the authority must publish a statement showing outturn expenditure at both central level and for each school, and the balances held in respect of each school. This information can be found within the papers for School's Forum.

1.2 **The Role of the Scheme**

This scheme sets out the financial relationship between the London Borough of Waltham Forest and the maintained schools which it funds. It contains requirements relating to financial management and associated issues which are binding on both the Local Authority and on its maintained schools.

1.2.1 **Application of the Scheme**

This scheme applies to all community, nursery, special, voluntary, foundation (including trust), and pupil referral units maintained by the local authority. Annex 1 to this scheme constitutes a definitive list of all schools to which this scheme applies as at 01 April of each financial year.

1.3 Publication of the Scheme

A copy of this scheme will be published on the information for Schools hub Home | The Hub - Waltham Forest Education Hub. Any approved revisions to the scheme will be made to the internet version which will be the latest version and changes to the scheme will be notified to schools.

1.4 Revision of the Scheme

Proposed amendments to the scheme will be subject to consultation with Schools Forum. Schools Forum will decide whether the proposed revisions are of such significance that they should be subject to a consultation with the governing body and head teacher at every maintained school.

Revisions to the scheme proposed by the local authority may only be implemented after the Schools Forum, or (in cases where the authority and the School Forum cannot agree) the Secretary of State has approved them, In the event that a vote is necessary when deciding whether to agree changes to the scheme, only members of the Schools Forum representing maintained schools will be entitled to vote.

It is also possible for the Secretary of State to make directed revisions to schemes after consultation. Such revisions become part of the scheme from the date of the direction and are therefore not subject to approval by the

Schools Forum. There will be an annual review of the scheme to ensure that terminology remains up to date; these will also not require approval from Schools Forum but will be shared for information.

1.5 Delegation of Powers to the Head Teacher

The governing body of a school must consider to what extent it wishes to delegate the financial powers of the school to the Head Teacher and must record its decision (and any revisions) in the minutes of the governing body meeting, although the governing body remains ultimately accountable. The level and extent of any delegation must be reviewed at least annually. Similarly, powers may be delegated to a committee of the governing body (such as a finance committee), which may meet more frequently than the full governing body and therefore be in a position to respond more quickly to issues and matters that may arise in relation to finances.

The annual and revised budget plan must be approved by the full governing body; this responsibility cannot be delegated to a committee or individual and this should also be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

1.6 Maintenance of Schools

The local authority is responsible for maintaining the schools covered by the scheme, and this includes the duty of defraying all the expenses of maintaining them (expect in the case of a voluntary aided school where some of the expenses are, by statue, payable by the governing body). Part of the way an authority maintains schools is through the funding system put in place under section 45-53 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998.

SECTION 2: FINANCIAL CONTROLS

2.1 Application of Financial Controls to Schools

In managing their delegated budgets schools must abide by the Authority's requirements on financial controls and monitoring. Some of these are directly referred to in this scheme while others are included in the Council's Financial Regulations. If there is any inconsistency between this scheme and those other rules and regulations relating to the funding or financial management of schools, the terms of the scheme shall apply. Those requirements may contain particular regulations for schools operating their own bank accounts.

The governing body should ensure that the headteacher reports progress on financial performance on a regular basis (at least quarterly and schools that are in deficit on a monthly basis) to the full governing body or the finance committee. The headteacher is responsible to the governing body for financial control within the school. The headteacher should ensure that the financial controls are maintained in the absence of key staff and should ensure that provisions are in place for all staff to be adequately trained. The headteacher should be responsible for amending and updating local financial procedures in line with Audit, the Local Authority and statutory requirements. Any changes to the local financial procedures should be reported back to the governing body.

Schools must comply with Council financial regulations, standing orders and accounting instructions and guidelines, as issued to the school from time to time by the Council's Chief Financial Officer or their delegate, who is statutorily responsible for ensuring the probity and regularity of all financial activities and systems within the Authority.

2.2 Provision of Financial Information and Reports

Schools are required to provide the Local Authority with details of anticipated and actual income and expenditure in a form and time determined by the Local Authority (generally in line with Consistent Financial Reporting Framework), to ensure that the Local Authority's role in ensuring proper use of public funds is achieved. Requests for information may become more frequent if the Local Authority has given notice in writing that it is concerned about its financial management, the school is in or predicted to be in a deficit or the school is in its first year of operation.

All schools must submit quarterly budget monitoring reports as a minimum in a specified format no later than two weeks after the end of the quarter. The forecasted income and expenditure must be realistic, and schools must explain major variances between the submissions. (Including between quarter 3 and the outturn).

The submissions must also include the latest bank reconciliation carried out, including a copy of the bank statement which shows the closing balance that is being reconciled to.

With the level of School Balances becoming an increasing concern, particularly as a growing number of schools move into deficit positions, it is likely that more frequent monitoring and reporting requirements will be introduced for all schools. This will help ensure that schools currently holding surplus balances maintain their financial stability, while enabling earlier identification and support for schools at risk of entering deficit. Refreshed monitoring and closedown timetables will be issued to Schools in 2026/27.

2.3 Payment of Salaries; Payment of Bills

Schools have full responsibility for the payment of salaries and wages as well as for the payment of suppliers' invoices. In meeting these responsibilities, the school may undertake the necessary tasks itself or buy in such services from relevant providers. The school must ensure that that the individuals/organisations are suitably competent to carry out the tasks and that they are carried out in line with the Schools Finance Manual and relevant procurement rules.

2.4 Control of Assets

Each school is responsible and is required to maintain and regularly update a register/inventory of its assets. The governing body is required to maintain an inventory of all its moveable non-capital assets, such as furniture, plant, computer and other equipment for all items valued over £1,000. Schools are encouraged to keep a register of assets (via their own arrangements) worth less than £1,000 and register anything that is portable and attractive such as ipads/camera.

Schools are only permitted to dispose of assets where those assets are in the ownership of the governing body. Assets should only be disposed of where this has the approval of the governing body (unless the governing body has delegated authority to do so to a sub-committee) and this must be included within the minutes to the meeting.

2.5 Accounting Policies (including year-end procedures)

The Local Authority has adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) code of recommended practice. An integral part is that accounts are maintained on an accruals basis rather than a cash basis (this means the cost of supplies and services etc. are accounted for in the period during which they were consumed or received. Similarly receipts from fees, charges, rents etc. must be accounted for in the period to which they relate). Therefore, reports and accounts of schools must be submitted on a similar basis.

Schools must submit an outturn report of their financial position, in a specified format issued by the Local Authority no later than the deadline confirmed to schools by the Education Finance Team. The information requested will be consistent with DfE’s Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) requirements and other information required for consolidation into the Local Authority’s accounts.

Each year the Education Finance Team will issue guidance on the procedures and timescales to be followed at the end of the financial year for the closure of accounts.

2.6 Writing off Debts

Governing bodies are only authorised to write off debts up to £2,000. In the case of larger debts, the school must consult with the Education Finance Team or Director of Education for approval.

Any writing off of a debt must be formally recorded in the minutes of the governing body. The amount of any debt written off will be borne by the delegated budget of the school to which the income would have been due. All write-offs must be correctly recorded in the accounts, by reversal of the original income transaction. All documentation relating to the original debt, the recovery process and its write-off and approval of this should be retained by the school and submitted to the Authority at the end of the financial year.

2.7 Basis of Accounting

Reports and accounts that are submitted to the Local Authority must be prepared on an accruals basis, taking account of creditors and debtors.

2.8 Submission of Budget Plans

Each school is required to submit a final three-year budget plan, approved by the governing body (and recorded in the board minutes) to the Local Authority by 01 May each year. A five-year budget plan will be necessary when a school is in severe deficit or where the three-year budget plan does not seem sustainable, but this should be under exceptional circumstances only, as DfE guidelines state that deficits should be cleared within a maximum period of three years.

Any revisions to budget plans should be reported to the Local Authority as part of the monthly/quarterly monitoring cycle. The format of the budget plan is as prescribed in the annual budget planning guidance sent to all schools each year by the Local Authority's Education Finance Team.

2.9 School Resource Management

Schools must seek to achieve effective management of resources and value for money, to optimise the use of their resources and to invest in teaching and learning, taking into account the Local Authority's purchasing, tendering and contracting requirements.

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It is for Head Teachers and governors to determine at school level how to secure better value for money.

There are significant variations in efficiency between similar schools, and so it is important for schools to review their current expenditure, compare it to other schools, and think about how to make improvements.

2.10 Virement (Budget Adjustments)

A virement is the transfer of funds from one budget to another. It allows flexibility to move budgets to deal with changing circumstances throughout the course of the year. Schools may transfer (vire) funds freely between budget headings during the course of the financial year to reflect changes in spending plans and actual spending. Such virements should be duly authorised in line with the approval arrangements within any individual school. Such changes should be reported to the Local Authority if they are at a level of detail which affects the budget plan submitted to the Local Authority.

In order to promote efficient management of the school it is recommended that the governing body delegates authority for virements below a specified level to the Head Teacher, or other nominated officers. However, this is entirely a matter for each governing body to determine for itself. There are some restrictions around specific earmarked allocations, but schools will be notified on receipt of the sums.

2.11 Audit: General

Schools are required to co-operate fully with auditors appointed by the Local Authority, including Internal Audit, and the Local Authority's external audit arrangements as established under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. Schools must provide auditors with full, prompt and unrestricted access to any records, documents, systems, assets, and information reasonably required to undertake their work.

All maintained schools fall within the audit regime determined by the Local Authority and are subject to internal audit review on a risk-based basis. Schools must ensure that all relevant records and supporting information are made available to both internal and external auditors, including information held electronically. This supports the Local Authority's statutory requirement to maintain effective governance, risk management and control processes.

- Where audit reviews result in findings and recommendations, the Head Teacher must ensure that:
- Agreed actions are implemented within the specified timescales;
- Progress against the action plan is monitored, evidenced and documented;
- The governing body is informed of audit outcomes and maintained oversight of implementation

Schools must ensure that audit recommendations are addressed in a timely manner to mitigate identified risks, including those relating to fraud, bribery, and corruption (see Section 2.22).

Where significant control weaknesses are identified, including where an audit opinion provides limited or no assurance, schools may be required to attend the Local Authority's Audit and Governance Committee to provide assurance on the actions being taken to address identified risks and control failures. Internal Audit reports and summary fundings are reported to the Audit and Governance Committee as part of the council's governance framework.

2.12 Separate External Audits

Schools' governing bodies may spend funds from its budget share to obtain external audit certification of its accounts, separate from any Local Authority internal or external audit process if they so wish. However, there is no expectation or legal obligation for schools to do so. Where a school chooses to seek such an additional audit it does not remove the requirement that the school must also co-operate with the Local Authority's internal and external auditors.

2.13 Audit of Voluntary and Private Funds

Schools must provide an independent audit report and certificate in respect of any voluntary and private funds held and of the accounts of any trading organisation controlled by the school. These should be submitted within six months of the financial year end. The audit should be carried out by a suitable independent person, and the report and accounts should be presented to the governing body annually. The governing body will be required to register any relevant funds with the Charities Commission.

The independent audit report (provided by the suitable independent person) should specifically assure that no Dedicated Schools Grant Funds are being administered via voluntary or private funds. A school refusing to provide audit certificates to the Local Authority as required by the scheme is in breach of the scheme and the Local Authority can take action on that basis.

2.14 Register of Business Interests

It is important that people who are making decisions about spending public money are able to demonstrate that they do not benefit personally from those decisions and therefore the governing body must maintain a Business Interests Register. This should list for each member of the governing body, the head teacher and all staff involved in financial transactions (or financially related transactions): Any business interests they (or any immediate member of their family) have, details of other education establishments that they govern, and any relationship between school staff and members of the governing body.

The register must be reviewed and updated annually by all relevant staff and governors, and a nil return required where there is nothing to declare. The register must be available for inspection by governors, staff and parents as well as by the Local Authority and must be published on a publicly available website. The register of business interests should be formally referred to prior to the acceptance of quotations or the awarding of contracts. It should be noted in the minutes of the governing body that this procedure has been adopted at the start of each academic year.

2.15 Purchasing, Tendering and Contracting Requirements

Schools are required to abide by the Local Authority's financial regulations and Contract Procedure Rules in purchasing, tendering and contracting matters, including leasing. This includes a requirement to assess in advance, where relevant, the health and safety competence of contractors, taking account of the Local Authority's policies and procedures.

The financial regulations and Local Authority policies and procedures will not apply where they would require schools to:

- Do anything incompatible with any of the provisions of this Scheme for Financing Schools, or any statutory provision.
- Seek Local Authority Officer countersignature for any contracts for goods or services for a value below £60,000 in any one year;
- Select suppliers only from an approved list.
- Permit schools to seek fewer than three tenders or quotations in respect of any contract with a value exceeding £10,000 in any one year is disapplied for the purposes of this scheme.

Buying for schools on a range of compliantly procured deals is on [Buying for schools - GOV.UK]

2.16 Application of Contracts to Schools

Schools have a right to opt out of Local Authority arranged contracts except where they have voluntarily agreed to be bound to the terms and conditions of a particular contract(s).

Although Governing Boards are empowered to enter into contracts in their own right (Education Act 2002, Paragraph 3 of Schedule 1), and also may do so where they have a clear statutory obligation (e.g. contracts made by Voluntary Aided or Foundation Schools for the employment of staff), in most cases they do so on behalf of the Local Authority as maintainer of the School and the owner of the funds in the budget share. It is a particular government requirement that all Schools shall approve and abide by both Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules.

2.17 Central Funds and Earmarking

The Local Authority may from time to time make sums available to schools from central funds, in the form of allocations which are additional to and separate from the schools' budget shares. These might, for example, be sums for Special Educational Needs or other initiatives funded from the central expenditure of an Authority schools’ budget or other Authority budget.

Any such earmarked funding from centrally retained funds is to be spent only on the purposes for which it is given, or on other budget heads for which earmarked funding is given and is not to be vired into the schools budget share. In order that schools may demonstrate compliance with this requirement, schools should ensure that separate funds are entered onto their own financial management systems and that all expenditure charged to these allocations can be accounted for to demonstrate that the funds were only spent for the purpose for which they were allocated.

The Local Authority cannot make any deduction, in respect of interest costs incurred by the Local Authority, from payments to schools of devolved specific or special grant.

2.18 Spending for the Purposes of the School

In accordance with section 50(3) of the School Standards and Frameworks Act governing bodies are authorised to spend the budget share for the purposes of the school subject to the provisions contained in this scheme and any regulations issued by the Secretary of State. By virtue of section 50(3A) (which came into force on 01 April 2011), amounts spent by governing bodies on community facilities or services under section 27 of the Education Act 2002 will be treated as if spent for any purposes of the school.

Under Section 50(3) (b) the Secretary of State may prescribe additional purposes for which expenditure of the budget share may occur. This has been done in the School Budget Share (prescribed purposes) (England) Regulations 2002 (S1 2002/378), which have been amended by School Budget Shares (prescribed Purposes) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010 (SI 2010/19). These allow schools to spend their budgets on pupils who are on the roll of other maintained schools or academies**.**

Governing bodies are reminded that the prime purpose of the school and its consequent expenditure should be the provision of teaching and learning for the pupils and students attending the school.

2.19 Capital Spending from Budget Shares

Governing bodies are permitted to use their budget shares to meet the cost of capital expenditure on the school premises. This includes expenditure by the governing body of a voluntary aided school on work which is their responsibility under paragraph 3 of Schedule 3 of the SSAF Act 1998.

If the expected capital expenditure in any one year will exceed £15,000 the governing body must notify the Local Authority and take into account any advice from the Director of Education, as to the merits and implications of the proposed expenditure.

If the premises are owned by the Local Authority or the school has voluntary controlled status, then the governing body should seek the consent of the Local Authority to the proposed works, but such consent can be withheld only on health and safety grounds.

The reason for these provisions is to help meet responsibilities with the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012, the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, The Equality Act 2010, and the Building Regulations 2010.

2.20 Notice of Concern

The Authority may issue a notice of concern to the governing body of any school it maintains where, in the opinion of the Chief Finance Officer and Strategic Director of Children's Services or their nominated deputies, the school has failed to comply with any provisions of the scheme, or, where actions need to be taken to safeguard the financial position of the Local Authority or the school.

Such a notice will set out the reasons and evidence for it being made and may place on the governing body restrictions, limitations or prohibitions in relation to the management of funds delegated to it.

These may include (but are not limited to):

- Insisting that relevant staff undertake appropriate training to address any identified weaknesses in the financial management of the school;
- Insisting that appropriately trained/qualified staffs are appointed to undertake tasks relating to the financial management of the school. Such appointments maybe temporary or permanent. These appointments will be at the expense of the school.
- Insisting that an appropriately trained/qualified person chairs the Finance Committee of the governing body;
- Placing more stringent restrictions or conditions on the day-to-day financial management of a school that the scheme requires for all schools – such as the provision of monthly accounts, forecast statements and details of expenditure to the Local Authority;
- Insisting on regular financial monitoring meetings at the school attended by Local Authority officers
- Imposing restrictions or limitations on the manner in which a school manages extended school activity funded from within its delegated

budget share – for example by requiring a school to submit income projections and/or financial monitoring reports on such activities.

- Withdrawing a schools bank account facility, where it is deemed a school is unable to manage a bank account. (e.g. failure to carry out regular and accurate bank reconciliations)

The notice will clearly state what the requirements are and the way in which and the time by which such requirements must be complied with in order for the notice to be withdrawn. It will also state the actions that the Local Authority may take where the governing body does not comply with the notice.

The circumstances in which a notice may be issued could include:

- Schools in deficit, where the school has failed to take appropriate and timely action to address the deficit and to follow the requirements of a licenced deficit, and to keep the Local Authority informed on the progress in achieving the deficit recovery plan submitted;
- Schools having consistently high carry forward balances, with no relevant plans for using these;
- Schools failing to complete the SFVS as required or repeated issues with submissions of other reporting and information requirements;
- Schools with limited or nil assurance audit opinions who have failed to take appropriate and timely action regarding the issues identified in relation to financial management within the audit report issued.
- Schools not completing their financial returns on a timely and/or accurate basis.

The purpose of this provision is to enable the Local Authority to set out formally any concerns it has regarding the financial management of a school it maintains and requires a governing body to comply with any requirements it deems necessary. The principal criterion for issuing a notice, and determining the requirements included within it, must be to safeguard the financial position of the Local Authority or school.

It should not be used in place of withdrawal of financial delegation where that is the appropriate action to take; however, it may provide a way of making a governing body aware of the Local Authority's concerns short of withdrawing delegation and identifying the actions a governing body should take in order to improve their financial management to avoid withdrawal.

If a school is issued a notice of concern, they will be placed into the Local Authorities Stronger Schools Financial Programme and will need to provide monthly financial reporting and attend regularly meetings with the Local Authority in line with the Stronger Schools Financial Programme policy.

2.21 Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

All Local Authority maintained schools (including nursery schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) that have a delegated budget) must demonstrate compliance with the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) and complete the assessment form on an annual basis. It is for the schools to determine at which time of the year they wish to complete the form.

Governors must demonstrate compliance through the submission of the SFVS assessment form signed by the Chair of Governors. The form must include a summary of remedial actions with a clear timetable, ensuring that each action has a specified deadline and an agreed owner. Governors must monitor the progress of these actions to ensure that all actions are cleared within specified deadlines.

All maintained schools with a delegated budget must submit the form to the Local Authority before 31 March and annually thereafter. The financial transparency new burden's policy will publish the names of Local Authorities who fail to submit the returns on time.

2.22 Fraud

All maintained schools must establish and maintain effective systems of control to prevent, detect and respond to fraud, theft, bribery, corruption, and other financial irregularities. These controls must ensure that public funds and assets are safeguarded and used only for their intended purposes, in line with the school's delegated financial responsibilities.

The governing body and Head Teacher are responsible for ensuring that all staff and governors are aware of, understand, and comply with the school's policies and procedures related to fraud, theft, bribery, corruption, and financial irregularity. This includes:

- Communicating the controls in place to prevent and detect irregularity;
- Setting out the expected standards of conduct and ethical behaviour;
- Clearly outlining the potential disciplinary, civil, and criminal consequences of breaching these controls.

This information must be provided as part of induction for all new staff and governors and reinforced periodically through training and awareness activities.

All actual or suspected instances of fraud, theft, bribery, corruption or financial irregularity must be reported promptly in accordance with the school's whistleblowing procedures and to the Local Authority's Corporate Anti-Fraud Team. Schools must not undertake their own investigations without seeking advice from the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team, who will provide specialist guidance and, where appropriate, lead or support any investigation.

The Corporate Anti-Fraud Team can be contacted via:
Named Officer: Jamie Branch, Internal Audit & Anti-Fraud Manager
Email: jamie.branch@walthamforest.gov.uk
Fraud Reporting Inbox: fraud@walthamforest.gov.uk

For the purpose of this Scheme, the following definitions apply:

Fraud- is defined as any intentional act or omission designed to deceive, mislead, or abuse a position of trust for the purpose of gaining a financial or other benefit, or causing loss to another party. This includes, but is not limited to, false representation, failure to disclose information, and abuse of position.

Bribery- is defined as the offering, promising, giving, requesting, or accepting of a financial or other advantage with the intention of inducing or rewarding improper performance of a function or activity. This includes any attempt to influence decision-making dishonestly or improperly.

Corruption-is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. This includes bribery but may also involve other conduct such as conflicts of interest, improper gifts or hospitality, and misuse if authority for personal or third-party benefit.

SECTION 3: INSTALMENTS OF THE BUDGET SHARE; BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Local Authority has adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management. For the purposes of this section, budget share includes any place-led funding for special schools or pupil referral units.

3.1 Frequency of Instalments

The budget share will be made available to governing bodies monthly, by the 18th of each month or earlier if this is a non-banking day. The Local Authority will reimburse costs arising for late payments, so long as no act or omission by a school caused the delay.

Where a school has a particular cash flow problem at some time during the year, the profile of payments for advances may be adjusted subject to the approval of the Chief Finance Officer and Director of Education. In this instance, the school must contact the Education Finance Team with supporting cashflow statement, clearly demonstrating the requirements for accelerated instalments and outlining their repayment plans.

3.2 Proportion of Budget Share Payable at Each Instalment

The Local Authority will normally pay the budget share in equal monthly instalments.

The calculation is the annual amounts of (Budget Share + Pupil Premium Grant + 6th Form Funding + Growth Fund Payments - De-delegation-PRU Contributions-PFI Contributions.)/12.

It should be noted that some grants are subject to in-year variation by the DfE, and should this occur budget shares will be adjusted accordingly.

Payments for high needs students are paid each month according to the school days in the month, for which the pupils were on roll. High Needs payments are specific to individual pupils and therefore it is necessary to only pay for the days those pupils were at the school. Schools must review payment schedules for these students monthly and highlight any discrepancies to the Local Authority for prompt review and resolution.

Payments for early years pupils are also paid monthly. These are paid via termly census and calculated using the EYSFF for that particular term.

3.3 Interest Clawback

The Local Authority may deduct from the budget share instalments an amount equal to the estimated interest lost by the Local Authority in making available the budget share in advance. Advances could accrue interest charges at 1% above the rate of the Bank of England Base rate.

3.4 Interest on Late Budget Share Payments

The Authority will add interest to late payments of budget share instalments, where such late payment is the result of Authority error. The interest rate used will be the current Bank of England base rate.

3.5 Budget Shares for Closing Schools

Where DfE approval for discontinuation of a school has been secured, budget shares will be made available for that school in equal monthly instalments until closure unless the school can prove that money is needed in greater instalments so as not to be detrimental to the operation of the school.

3.6 Bank and Building Society Accounts

All schools are permitted to have an external bank account into which their budget share instalments are paid. Where schools have such accounts, they shall be allowed to retain all interest payable on the account unless they choose to have an account within a Local Authority contract, which makes other provision.

New bank account arrangements may only be made with effect from the beginning of each financial year. Notice of the intention to do so must be given to the Local Authority in writing at least six weeks in advance of the change taking place. Similarly, any school currently holding its own bank account must give the Local Authority notice in writing at least six weeks in advance of any change in banking arrangements.

A school's decision to change its banking arrangements should be formally minuted at a governing body or relevant committee meeting disclosing the governors' reasons for that decision. In making such a decision, governors should have regard to value for money.

3.7 Restrictions on Accounts

Schools wishing to open bank accounts outside the Local Authorities' contract must ensure the account is placed with a local branch of a bank, or building society holding the following Fitch IBCA ratings, or better; Long Term A or Short Term F1. The school can seek advice from the Local Authority as to which banks and building societies meet these criteria.

Schools are reminded that all cash within a school bank account remains the property of the Local Authority until it is spent.

Schools must not at any time have an overdrawn bank balance.

Schools that already hold bank accounts which do not meet these criteria will not be required to change their current banking arrangements. However, if the school chooses to change its banking arrangements, at that point in time it will be required to comply with the above criteria.

Where a school holds a local bank account the account mandate should provide that the Local Authority is the owner of the funds in the account; that the Local Authority is entitled to receive statements (including electronic statements and other reports from the bank) and that the Local Authority can take control of the account if the school's right to a delegated budget is suspended by the Local Authority.

3.8 Borrowing by Schools

Governing bodies may borrow money only with the written permission of the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State's general position is that schools will only be granted permission for borrowing in exceptional circumstances. Any request to the Secretary of State for such permission must have been subject to approval from Waltham Forest Council.

With the introduction of International Financial Reporting Standard 16 (IFRS16) for Local Authorities from 1 April 2024, the distinction between operating and finance leases at maintained schools has ended for accounting purposes. That is, under the Education Act 2002, all leases will be classed as borrowing and will require the Secretary of State for Education's consent.

However, the Secretary of State has agreed to provide blanket consent to a range of the most common leasing activities, as set out in the IFRS16 Maintained Schools Finance Lease Class Consent 2024. Governing bodies can choose to use any scheme that the Secretary of State has said is available to schools without specific approval.

Schools are permitted to lease any assets covered by the class consent, without further reference to the authority. However, before entering any permitted lease, schools should carefully consider whether leasing offers the best value for that asset compared to outright purchase. Schools should not see the change as an encouragement to lease. Specifically, schools should continue to be wary of any lease proposal which involves returning equipment early and adding the cost of the returned equipment to the cost of new equipment (so that the school is continuing to pay for equipment it no longer has).

Leases not included in this Order will still require the written consent of the Secretary of State, and it remains the general position that schools will only be granted permission for other types of borrowing in exceptional circumstances. From time to time, however, the Secretary of State may introduce limited schemes to meet broader policy objectives.

This does not apply to Trustees and Foundations, whose borrowing, as private bodies, makes no impact on Government accounts. These debts may not be serviced directly from the delegated budget, but schools are free to agree a charge for a service which the Trustees or Foundation are able to provide as a consequence of their own borrowing. Governing bodies do not act as agents of the Local Authority when repaying loans.

3.9 Leases

When a school is not purchasing an item outright it may be entering into a financing arrangement. Schools should also be aware that entering into certain agreements such as finance leases and hire purchase agreements constitute external borrowing (see section 3.8) and schools must be cautious and seek advice from the Local Authority when considering entering into long-term agreements to ensure they do not breach the borrowing restrictions.

SECTION 4: THE TREATMENT OF SURPLUS AND DEFICIT BALANCES ARISING IN RELATION TO BUDGET SHARES

4.1 The Right to Carry Forward Surplus Balances

Schools will carry forward from one financial year to the next any surplus/deficit in net expenditure relative to the school's budget share for the year plus/minus any balance brought forward from the previous year. A school's balance at 01 April of any financial year is equal to the balance as at 31 March in the previous financial year.

4.2 Interest on Surplus Balances

Schools which have local bank accounts will be able to retain interest earned on those accounts.

4.3 Obligation to Carry Forward Deficit Balances

Schools will carry forward deficit balances from one financial year to the next. A school's deficit balance at 1 April will be equal to that at 31 March, (i.e. that amount shown in the out-turn statement published under s251). Ay deficit carried forward will be the first call on the budget share for the following year. Where deficits at schools maintained by the Local Authority exist, a schedule of repayments may be agreed with the governing body.

4.4 Planning for a Deficit Budget

Schools are not permitted to plan for a deficit balance in normal circumstances. However, this may be permitted in exceptional circumstances with the prior agreement of the Local Authority. Schools should notify the Local Authority at the earliest opportunity if they are expecting their accounts to move into a deficit position. Before this agreement is given the school will be expected to work with the Local Authority to consider all available options in an attempt to set a balanced budget. In agreeing to this the Local Authority will require a plan from the school indicating how it intends to recover the deficit (see 4.8). The school will be considered at risk, and additional monthly reporting will be required in line with the Stronger Schools Financial Programme.

4.5 Charging of Interest on Deficit Balances

The Local Authority has the discretion to charge a school interest on any cash advanced to support a licensed deficit, with the likelihood increasing if the school has ignored advice from the Local Authority. If the Local Authority elects to do this the rate of charge will be 1% above the current Bank of England base rate.

4.6 Writing off Deficits

The Authority cannot write off the deficit balance of any school. This restriction is a statutory requirement set out in the Department for Education's Schemes for Financing Schools guidance (Section 6.7).

4.7 Balances of Closing and Amalgamating Schools

Where in the funding period, a school has been established or is subject to a prescribed alteration as a result of the closure of a school, the Local Authority may add an amount to the budget share of the new or enlarged school to reflect all or part of the unspent budget share, including any surplus carried over from previous funding periods, of the closing school for the funding period in which it closes.

4.8 Licensed Deficits

Schools should only apply for a Licensed Deficit in exceptional circumstances, where they cannot set a balanced budget without seriously impacting on the educational provision at the school.

School budget plans must be prepared with a view to breaking even or creating a surplus at the end of the financial year. The Licensed Deficit process allows schools to operate with a temporary, planned deficit where this is necessary to maintain stability, protect the quality of education, and implement a sustainable recovery plan agreed with the Local Authority.

The funding to allow such a deficit budget shall be provided from the collective surplus of school balances held by the Local Authority on behalf of schools.

Although it is open to the Local Authority, in circumstances where there is no such surplus, to make alternative arrangements if it can do so within the relevant Local Authority finance legislation.

Where schools have reason to anticipate setting a deficit budget, the Education Finance Team must be informed as soon as possible (prior to the budget deadline submission of 1st Friday in May as set out in scheme clause 2.8).

Deficits need to operate under licence. This requires the school to agree a deficit recovery plan with the Local Authority before the first formal budget is set in the financial year of the planned deficit.

A formal sign off of all arrangements will be required by the Education Oversight Board. When preparing a Deficit Recovery Plan the following checklist should be used:

- Review forecasting of pupil numbers.
- Restructure plans that have been discussed with HR, including any redundancy estimates.
- Accurate future year forecasts which will give the Council a realistic view of the financial position of the school over the next three to five years.
- The Deficit Recovery Plan and Risks should be completed in the appropriate tabs within the Budget template submission. In this template reasons for the deficit and actions to return to a balance position must be listed.
- The maximum length over which schools may repay the deficit (i.e. reach at least a zero balance) is three years which may be extended to five years in exceptional circumstances.

The Director of Education and Director of Financial Services or their nominated representative/s will meet at least termly with the Chair and Headteacher of each school with a licensed deficit to review progress against the agreed deficit recovery plan. Monthly accounts and forecasting will also need to be submitted to the Local Authority (see scheme clause 2.2).

The maximum deficits in total will normally be 5% of the schools' total formula funding for the year in which the deficits are applied for. Deficits will not be licensed for sums less than £10,000 – these must be contained by budget reductions.

In circumstances where a school requires a budget share advance due to experiencing cash flow problems (in order not to be overdrawn at their bank), this should be treated as a cash advance and not a loan. The Local Authority will discuss with the school the re-profiling of their school budget share and will be subject to wider conditions, including ongoing engagement with the Local Authority.

4.9 Loan Schemes

Loans will only be used to assist schools in spreading the cost over more than one year of large one-off individual items of a capital nature that have a benefit to the school lasting more than one financial or academic year. Loans will not be used as a means of funding a deficit that has arisen because a school's recurrent costs exceed its current income.

If loans are made to fund a deficit and a school subsequently converts to academy status, the Secretary of State will consider using the power under paragraph 13(4)(d) of Schedule 1 to the Academies Act 2010 to make a direction to the effect that such a loan does not transfer, either in full or part, to the new academy school.

SECTION 5: INCOME

Schools shall be able to retain income expect in certain circumstances.

5.1 Income from Lettings

Schools may retain income from lettings of the school premises which would otherwise accrue to the Local Authority, subject to alternative provisions arising from any joint use of private finance initiative (PFI) or public private partnerships (PPP) agreements. Schools can cross-subsidise lettings for community and voluntary use with income from other lettings, provided there is no net cost to the budget share and the governing body is satisfied that this will not interfere to a significant extent with the performance of any duties imposed on them by the Education Acts including the requirement to conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement~~.~~

Schools are required to have regard to directions issued by the Local Authority as to the use of school premises, as permitted under the School Standards Framework Act 1998 for various categories of Schools.

The income from lettings of school premises should not be payable into voluntary or private funds held by the school.

5.2 Income from Fees and Charges

Schools may retain income generated from fees and charges, except where a service is provided by the Local Authority from centrally retained funds. However, schools must have regard to any policy statements on charging produced by the Local Authority.

5.3 Income from Fundraising Activities

Income generated from fund-raising activities belongs to the school.
Where such activities have created a charge against the school budget, this charge must be reimbursed before the balance of income is credited to the unofficial fund.

5.4 Income from the Sale of Assets

Schools are allowed to retain the proceeds of sale of assets except in cases where the asset was purchased with non-delegated funds (in which case the Local Authority will decide whether the school should retain the proceeds) or the asset concerned is land or building forming part of the school premises and is owned by the Local Authority. Details on disposal of assets are documented within the Financial Regulations.

5.5 Administrative Procedures for the Collection of Income

Where schools are producing invoices for the recovery of monies due, they must have due regard to whether the income is subject to VAT. The Schools Finance Manual should be viewed in these circumstances.

5.6 Purposes for which Income may be Used

Income generated from the sale of assets purchased with delegated funds may only be spent for the purposes of the school.

SECTION 6: THE CHARGING OF SCHOOL BUDGET SHARES

6.1 General Provision

The Local Authority may charge the budget share of a school without the consent of the governing body only in circumstances expressly permitted by the Scheme. The Local Authority will consult schools as to the intention to charge and will notify schools when it has been made.

Actual costs will normally be charged to school budgets for the cost of salaries of school- based staff.
Local authorities may de-delegate funding for permitted services without the express permission of the governing body, provided this has been approved by the appropriate phase representatives of the Schools Forum.

6.2 Circumstances in which Charges may be made

Where retirement and/or redundancy costs have been incurred without the prior written agreement of the Local Authority to bear such costs (the amount chargeable being only the excess over any amount agreed by the Local Authority).

Other expenditure incurred to secure resignations where there is good reason to charge to the school.

Awards by courts and employment tribunals against the LA, or any out of court settlements, arising from action or inaction by the governing body contrary to the Local Authority's advice. Awards may sometimes be against the governing body directly and would fall to be met from the budget share. Where the local authority is joined with the governing body in the action and has expenditure as a result of the governing body not taking authority advice, the charging of the budget share with the authority expenditure protects the authority’s position. Local authorities should ensure in framing any such advice that they have taken proper account of the role of aided school governing bodies.

Expenditure by the Local Authority in carrying out health and safety work or capital expenditure for which the Local Authority is liable where funds have been delegated to the governing body for such work, but the governing body has failed to carry out the required work.

Expenditure by the Local Authority incurred in making good defects in building work funded by capital spending from budget shares, where the premises are owned by the Local Authority, or the school has voluntary controlled status.

Expenditure incurred by the Local Authority in insuring its own interests in a school where funding has been delegated but the school has failed to demonstrate that it has arranged cover at least as good as that which would be arranged by the Local Authority. The local authority itself needs to consider whether it has an insurable interest in any particular case.

Recovery of monies due from a school for services provided to the school, where a dispute over the monies due has been referred to a disputes procedure set out in a service level agreement, and the result is that monies are owed by the school to the Local Authority.

Recovery of penalties imposed on the Local Authority by, HM Revenue and Customs, Teachers' Pensions, the Environment Agency or other regulatory authorities as a result of a school negligence.

Correction of Local Authority errors in calculating charges to a budget share; for example, pension deductions. Before applying any such provision, the local authority should consider whether it is reasonable to do so. If the error dates back several years it may be questionable whether such charging is reasonable.

Additional transport costs incurred by the Local Authority arising from decisions by the governing body on the length of the school day, and failure to notify the Local Authority of non-pupil days resulting in unnecessary transport costs.

Legal costs which are incurred by the Local Authority because the governing body did not accept the advice of the authority. Costs of necessary health and safety training for staff employed by the Local Authority, where funding for training had been delegated but the necessary training not carried out.

Compensation paid to a lender where a school enters into a contract for borrowing beyond its legal powers, and the contract is of no effect.

Cost of work done in respect of teacher pension remittance and records for schools using non-local authority payroll contractors, the charge to be the minimum needed to meet the cost of the authority's compliance with its statutory obligations.

Costs incurred by the local authority in securing provision specified in an education, health and care (EHC) plan where the governing body of a school fails to secure such provision despite the delegation of funds in respect of low-cost high incidence SEN or specific funding for a pupil with high needs.

Costs incurred by the local authority due to submission by the school of incorrect data.

Recovery of amounts spent from specific grants on ineligible purposes.

Costs incurred by the Local Authority as a result of the governing body being in breach of the terms of a contract

Costs incurred by the Local Authority or another school as a result of a school withdrawing from a cluster arrangement, for example where this has funded staff providing services across the cluster.

Costs incurred by the local authority in administering admissions appeals, where the Local Authority is the admissions authority and the funding for admission appeals has been delegated to all schools as part of their formula allocation.

The cost of an undisputed invoice for energy where a school has entered into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education for the supply of energy and failed to pay such an invoice (Regulation 24 of the regulations).

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SECTION 7: TAXATION

7.1 Value Added Tax (VAT)

HM Revenue and Customs have agreed that VAT incurred by schools when spending any funding made available by the Local Authority is treated as being incurred by the Authority and qualifies for reclaim by the Local Authority.

The Authority has established procedures to enable schools to utilise the Authority's ability to reclaim VAT on expenditure relating to non-business activity. These are set out in separate guidance in the School Finance Manual.

However, VAT incurred on expenditure by the governors of a voluntary aided school when carrying out their statutory responsibilities to maintain the external fabric of their buildings is reclaimed directly from the DfE and not through the monthly return to the Authority.

Schools are expected to submit regular monthly VAT returns detailing the VAT paid and collected during that period. The Authority will reimburse legitimate VAT expenditure to schools during the following period upon receipt of the VAT reports.

Schools are responsible for the correct declaration of input and output VAT. If schools fail to comply with VAT regulations and advice from the Council then the schools budget share will be charged with any resultant costs including any irrecoverable VAT (for any school or council service affected by the school's action), penalties and associated interest charges.

7.2 CITS (Construction Industry Taxation Scheme)

Schools are required to abide by procedures issued by the Authority in connection with CITS. Where HM Revenue and Customs discover errors in the operation of the CITS system within maintained schools they will seek to recover the appropriate portion of the tax from Waltham Forest Council. Any amounts paid to HM Revenue and Customs in this way will be recovered from the school's budget share.

SECTION 8: THE PROVISION OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY (LA)

8.1 Provision of Services from Centrally Retained Budgets

The Local Authority will determine on what basis services from centrally retained funds will be provided to schools. This includes redundancy and premature redundancy contribution (PRC) payments. The Local Authority will not discriminate in its provision on the basis of categories of schools except in cases where this would be allowable under the school and early years finance regulations or the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) conditions of grant.

8.2 Provision of Services bought back from the Local Authority using Delegated Budgets

Services offered to schools for buy-back are included in an annual Service Level Agreement document. The length of agreements varies from service to service, but any initial agreement to buy services or facilities from the Local Authority must not exceed three years from the inception of the scheme or the date of the agreement, whichever is the later. Any subsequent agreements for the same services will be limited to a maximum contract period of five years.

When a service is provided for which expenditure is not retainable centrally by the Local Authority under the Regulations made under section 46 of the Act, it must be offered at prices which are intended to generate income which is no less than the cost of providing those services. The total cost of the service must be met by the total income, even if schools are charged differentially.

Schools should abide by the payment terms as specified on the invoice covering the charge for services and goods provided by the Local Authority or by the payment terms in the SLA agreement. In the event that a school accumulates arrears this matter will be referred to the School Debt Improvement Board.

8.3 Packaging

For those services for which the Local Authority has delegated funding and which the Local Authority is offering on a buyback basis, the Local Authority must not package services in a way which unreasonably restricts schools' freedom of choice among the services available. Schools will not have to receive one service as a condition of receiving another service that is available separately.

8.4 Service Level Agreements

Where services or facilities are provided under a service level agreement - whether free or on a buyback basis - the terms of any such agreement will be in line with the provisions under section 8.2.

The Local Authority may offer service level agreements at different prices depending upon the length of the agreement entered into. The Local Authority may also be able to provide services beyond those defined in any agreement. Schools wishing to use such services will need to contact the relevant Local Authority department to check availability and agree an appropriate charge.

8.5 Teacher’s Pensions

In order to ensure that the performance of the duty on the Authority to supply Teachers Pensions with information under the Teachers’ Pensions Regulations 2014, the following conditions are imposed on the Authority and governing bodies of all maintained schools covered by this Scheme in relation to their budget shares.

The conditions apply to all governing bodies of maintained schools who provide payroll services. A governing body of any maintained school, whether or not the employer of the teachers at such a school, which has entered into any arrangement or agreement with a person other than the Authority to provide payroll services, shall ensure that any such arrangement or agreement is varied to require that person to supply salary, service and pensions data to the Authority which the Authority requires to submit its monthly return of salary and service to Teachers' Pensions and to produce its audited contributions certificate.

The Local Authority will advise schools each year of the timing, format and specification of the information required. A governing body shall also ensure that any such arrangement or agreement is varied to require that Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) are passed to the Authority within the time limit specified in the AVC scheme. The governing body shall meet any consequential costs from the school’s budget share.

A governing body of any maintained school, which directly administers its payroll shall supply salary, service and pensions data to the Authority which the Authority requires to submit its annual return of salary and service to Teachers' Pensions and to produce its audited contributions certificate.

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SECTION 9: PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVE (PFI) / PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (PPP)

The Authority shall have the power to issue regulations from time to time relating to PFI/PPP projects. The Authority will consult with schools on the content of any such regulations and, if required, will seek Department for Education approval. Amongst other issues these may deal with the reaching of agreements with the governing bodies of schools as to the basis of charges relating to such schemes; and the treatment of monies withheld from contractors due to poor performance. No new PFI schemes are allowable by the DfE. Existing PFI schemes will have PFI factors and governing body contributions deducted from the budget share prior to the Local Authority transferring the budget share to schools.

SECTION 10: INSURANCE

10.1 Insurance Cover

The governing body shall notify the Local Authority promptly of all new risks, liabilities, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting risks or insurance indicating the amount of cover required.

The governing body shall immediately notify the Local Authority of any fire, loss, accident or other event which may give rise to a claim under the Local Authorities' insurance arrangements.

All schools who buy back insurance through the Council receive the same level of cover as referred to in The Council's insurance policy agreement, including voluntary aided schools. Thus, there is no requirement for voluntary aided schools to purchase additional premises related insurances.

If the governing body opts to arrange its own insurance, the governing body must demonstrate that cover is sufficient for the Local Authorities' insurable interests, under a policy arranged by the governing body, is at least as good as the relevant minimum cover arranged by the Local Authority. This must be demonstrated by providing relevant documentation to the Local Authority on an annual basis.

- The school can only leave the Council's insurance policy at the start of a financial year and must give at least 3 months prior notice in writing.
- Where the governing body opts to arrange its own insurance, the governing body must have regard to the resources available to the school when deciding on any amount of risk it wishes to carry without external cover.

Instead of taking out insurance, a school may join the Secretary of State's Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) for risks that are covered by the RPA.

Schools may do this individually when any insurance contract of which they are part expires. Alternatively, all primary and/or secondary maintained schools can join the RPA collectively by agreeing through the Schools Forum to de delegate funding. For any schools considering this arrangement, they must contact the Council's insurance team to ensure that areas that are not covered by the RPA (but need to be covered) can be met through additional insurance cover.

SECTION 11: MISCELLANEOUS

11.1 Right of Access to Information

The governing body must supply all financial and other information which might reasonably be required to enable the Local Authority to satisfy itself as to the school's management of its delegated budget share, or the use made of any central expenditure by the Local Authority (e.g. earmarked funds) on the school.

11.2 Liability of Governors

Because the governing body is a corporate body, governors of maintained schools will not incur personal liability in the exercise of their power to spend the delegated budget share provided they act in good faith (Section 50 (7) of the SSAF Act 1998).

11.3 Governors' Expenses

The Local Authority may delegate to the governing body of a school yet to receive a delegated budget, funds to meet governors' expenses. The amount of such expenses are at the discretion of the Local Authority.

Under section 50(5) of the act, only allowances in respect of purposes specified in regulations made under section 19 of the Education Act 2002 may be paid to governors from a school's delegated budget share. Schools are expressly forbidden from paying any other allowances to governors.

Schools are also barred from payment of expenses duplicating those paid by the Secretary of State to additional governors appointed by him to schools under special measures.

11.4 Responsibility for Legal Costs

Legal costs (not the costs of legal advice) incurred by the governing body, although the responsibility of the Local Authority as part of the cost of maintaining the school, unless they relate to the statutory responsibility of aided school governors for buildings, may be charged to the school's budget share unless the governing body acts in accordance with the advice of the Local Authority.

A school cannot expect to be reimbursed with the cost of legal action against the Authority itself.

The costs referred to are those of legal actions, including costs awarded against the Local Authority; not the cost of legal advice provided. Normally, general legal advice will be provided by the Local Authority's Legal Services division, in the unlikely event that the Local Authorities' Legal Services division considers there to be a conflict of interest between the Local Authority and the governing body, it may be necessary for the schools to seek legal advice from an alternative source.

11.5 Health and Safety

In expending the school's budget share the governing body must have due regard to duties placed on the Local Authority in relation to health and safety, and the Local Authority's policy on health and safety matters in the management of the budget share.

The budget share of a school may be charged by the Authority without the consent of the governing body if expenditure by the Authority in carrying out health and safety work or capital expenditure for which the Authority is liable where funds have been delegated to the governing body for such work, but the governing body has failed to carry out the required work (in line with Scheme clause 6.3).

11.6 Right of Attendance for the Chief Finance Officer

Governing Bodies are required to permit the Chief Finance Officer or any officer of the Local Authority nominated by The Chief Finance Officer, to attend meetings of the governing board at which any agenda items are relevant to the exercise of his/her responsibilities. Such attendance will normally be limited to items which relate to issues of probity or overall financial management. The Local Authority will give prior notice of such attendance unless it is impracticable to do so.

11.7 Special Educational Needs

The Local Authority requires schools to use their best endeavours in spending the school budget share, to secure the special educational needs of their pupils, and reserves the right to suspend delegation where a situation is serious enough to warrant it (this would not normally relate to an individual pupil).

11.8 Interest on Late Payments

Interest on late payments cannot affect the statutory requirements now introduced on this matter. Schools are required to ensure that payments are not delayed such that they attract interest under the provisions of the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998. Such interest, when claimed by a supplier, may be charged against a school's budget share (in line with Scheme clause 6.3).

11.9 Whistle Blowing

School governors and school staff who wish to complain about financial management or financial propriety at the school should refer to the Local Authority's policy on Whistleblowing | London Borough of Waltham Forest

11.10 Child Protection

Schools are reminded of the importance of releasing staff to attend child protection case conferences and other related events. The funding for school staff to attend child protection case conferences and other related events are included in the school's budget share.

11.11 Redundancy and Early Retirement Costs

Section 37 of the 2002 Education Act sets out how premature retirement and redundancy costs should normally be funded. In accordance with this regulation and effective from 01 April 2011, all premature retirement costs of staff in maintained schools will be charged to the school's delegated budget.

Redundancy costs are treated in accordance with the Local Authority's policy on redundancy (Annex 2).

SECTION 12: RESPONSIBILITY FOR REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

The Local Authority delegates all revenue funding for repairs and maintenance to schools. Only funding for schools' capital is retained by the Local Authority. Expenditure may be treated as capital only if it fits the definition used by the Local Authority for financial accounting purposes in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) code of practice on Local Authority Accounting. In particular, no item may be regarded as capital if its value is below £10,000, unless being charged to specific capital grants of value below the de minimus.

The Local Authority will always have limited capital funds that it has to prioritise according to condition, suitability and sufficiency needs. Smaller capital works below £25,000 in total are unlikely to be prioritised; schools should be looking to use their Devolved Formula Capital in the first instance.

In circumstances where urgent capital works have become necessary, the Local Authority will look to whether a school has Devolved Formula Capital or has excessive revenue balances (5%+ for secondary or 8%+ for other schools). If the urgent capital works have arisen because of a school failing to address routine health and safety repairs, the Local Authority reserves the right to invoke clause 6.3 of this Scheme.

For voluntary aided schools, the liability of the Authority for repairs and maintenance (albeit met by delegation of funds through the budget share) is the same as for other maintained schools, and no separate list of responsibilities is necessary for such schools. However, eligibility for capital grant from the Secretary of State for capital works at voluntary aided schools depends on the de minimis limit applied by DfE to categorise such work, not the de minimis limit used by the Local Authority.

SECTION 13: Community Facilities

13.1 Introduction

Under s27 (1) of the Education Act 2002, schools that chose to exercise the power to provide community facilities will be subject to a range of controls. Firstly, regulations made under s.28 (2), if made, can specify activities which may not be undertaken at all under the main enabling power. Secondly, the Secretary of State issues guidance to governing bodies about a range of issues connected with exercise of the power, and a school must have regard to that.

However, under s.28 (1), the main limitations and restrictions on the power will be: a) those contained in schools' own instruments of government, if any; and b) in the maintaining Local Authority's Scheme for Financing Schools made under section 48 of the school standards and Framework Act 1998. Paragraph 2 of Schedule 3 to the Education Act 2002 extends the coverage of schemes to the powers of governing bodies to provide community facilities.

Schools are therefore subject to prohibitions, restrictions and limitations in the scheme for financing schools. This section of the scheme does not extend to joint-use agreements, transfer of control agreements, or agreements between the Authority and schools to secure the provision of adult and community learning.

Schools may use their budget shares to fund community facilities. Mismanagement of community facilities funds can be grounds for suspension of the right to a delegated budget.

13.2 Consultation with the Local Authority – Financial Aspects

In every school and community there will be key groups who need to be consulted about activities. They should be involved in the planning process to ensure that extended school programmes are in demand, well organised and meet local needs.

Changes made by the Children and Families Act 2014 mean that schools no longer need to consult the authority when establishing community facilities under Section 27 of the Education Act 2002, nor do they have to have regard to advice given to them by their Authority. However, as public bodies, they are expected to act reasonably, and this includes consulting those affected by decisions that they make.

Whatever their level of involvement, all school staff should be kept informed and involved in any decisions that relate to the school premises, staff or pupils. Schools may still approach the Local Authority for a strategic view on potential programmes. The Local Authority is well placed to help in assessing the ability of schools to offer additional activities. The Authority will take into account the school's resources, financial management abilities and other considerations.

13.3 Funding agreements – Local Authority Powers

The provision of community facilities in schools may be dependent on the conclusion of a funding agreement between a governing body and a third party.

Any funding agreements with third parties should be submitted to the Local Authority for its comments prior to the governing body signing any such agreement so that the Authority can ensure that any agreement is not seriously prejudicial to the interests of the school or the Authority. The formal notice should include a statement of purpose and a business plan for the proposed use of the community facilities power. The Local Authority should be given six weeks to respond.

The Local Authority has no right of veto in such agreements. If the third party requires Local Authority consent to the agreement for it to proceed, such a requirement and the method by which Local Authority consent is to be signified is a matter for that third party and not the scheme. However, , if an agreement has been or is to be concluded against the wishes of the Local Authority, or has been concluded without informing the Local Authority, which in the view of the Local Authority is seriously prejudicial to the interests of the school or the Local Authority, that may constitute grounds for suspension of the right to a delegated budget.

13.4 Other Prohibitions, Restrictions and Limitations

Where the Local Authority believes it appropriate they may require that in a specific instance of use of the community facilities power by a governing body, the governing body concerned must make arrangements to protect the financial interests of the Local Authority by either carrying out the activity concerned through the vehicle of a limited company formed for the purpose, or by obtaining indemnity insurance for risks associated with the project in question, as specified by the Authority. Section 28 of the 2002 Education Act provides that the exercise of the community facilities power is subject to prohibitions, restrictions and limitations in the scheme for financing schools.

13.5 Supply of Financial Information

A school operating community activities must provide the Local Authority with a financial summary of the community facilities activity in a form determined by the Local Authority. This summary statement will request information relating to the income and expenditure for the school arising from the facilities in question for the previous six months and on an estimated basis, for the next six months.

Where the Local Authority has concern as to the school's management of the financial consequences of the exercise of the community facilities power, on giving due notice the Local Authority may require such financial statements to be supplied every three months.

Financial information relating to community facilities will be included in returns made by schools under the Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) Framework and these should be relied upon by Authorities as their main source of information for the financial aspects of community facilities. However, the CFR timetable is such that Authorities are likely to want supplementary information in order to ensure that schools are not at financial risk. (Schedule 15 of the

Act provides that mismanagement of funds spent or received for community facilities is a basis for suspension of the right to delegation of the budget share)

13.6 Audit

Schools' community activities financial accounts must be made available for inspection by internal and external audit. In concluding funding agreements with other persons pursuant to the exercise of the community facilities power, the governing body must ensure that such agreements contain adequate provision for access by the Local Authority to the records and other property of those persons held on the school premises, or held elsewhere insofar as they relate to the activity in question, in order for the Authority to satisfy itself as to the propriety of expenditure on the facilities in question.

13.7 Treatment of Income and Surpluses

The school can retain all net income derived from community facilities except where otherwise agreed with a funding provider, whether that be the Local Authority or some other person. Such retained net income can be carried over from one financial year to the next as a separate community facilities surplus.

Should the Local Authority close any community or community special school, any accumulated community facilities surplus of the school reverts to the Local Authority unless otherwise agreed in any formal partnership arrangement.

13.8 Health and Safety Matters

The requirements applying to the school under the Scheme for Financing Schools on Health and Safety apply in the exercise of the community facilities power.

The Governing Body is responsible for securing Disclosure and Barring Service clearance in respect of all staff involved in any community activities taking place during the school day. The cost of such clearance should be met by the community activities accounts or funding partner as part of an agreement with that partner.

13.9 Insurance

It is the responsibility of the governing body to make adequate arrangements for insurance against risks arising from the exercise of the community facilities power. Such insurance should not be funded from the school budget share.

When proposing to provide community facilities, as an integral part of its plans the governing body should undertake an assessment of the insurance implications and costs, seeking professional advice if necessary. In considering any arrangements for insurance, the governing body is required to consult with the Local Authority, to ensure that its insurance arrangements meet the Local Authority's minimum requirements regarding possible third-party claims, i.e. public liability, employer liability, etc.

The Local Authority reserves the right to undertake its own assessment of the insurance arrangements made by a school in respect of community facilities. In the event of the arrangements are judged inadequate, the Local Authority may make arrangements itself and charge the resultant cost to the school. Such costs cannot be charged to the school's budget share.

13.10 Taxation

The governing body should seek the advice from the Local Authority and the local VAT office on any issues relating to the possible imposition of Value Added Tax on expenditure and income in connection with community facilities, including the use of the Local Authority VAT reclaim facility.

Schools are reminded that if any member of staff employed by the school or Local Authority in connection with community facilities at the school is paid from funds held in the school's own bank account, the school is likely to be liable for payment of income tax and National Insurance, in line with HMRC rules.

Schools are required to follow the Local Authority's advice in relation to the Construction Industry Scheme (CITS) where this is relevant to the exercise of the community facilities power.

13.11 Banking

The school is required to make adequate arrangements for separation of funds to ensure that school budget and other Local Authority funds are accounted for separately from community facilities funds.

The Local Authority's general conditions relating to the operation of external bank accounts (e.g. signing of cheques, the titles of bank accounts, the contents of bank account mandates and similar matters) will apply, as set out elsewhere in this Scheme.

Schools are reminded that they may not borrow money without the written consent of the Secretary of State. This requirement does not extend to monies lent to schools by their maintaining Local Authority.

ANNEX 1

SCHOOLS COVERED BY THE SCHEME (April 2026)

School Type	School Sub-Type	School Name
Nursery	Community	Acacia Nursery School
Nursery	Community	Church Hill Nursery School
Nursery	Community	Low Hall Nursery School
Primary	Community	Ainslie Wood Primary
Primary	Community	Barn Croft Primary School
Primary	Community	Chapel End Infant School
Primary	Community	Chase Lane Primary School
Primary	Voluntary Controlled	Chingford C of E Primary School
Primary	Community	Coppermill Primary School
Primary	Community	Dawlish Primary School
Primary	Community	Downsell Primary
Primary	Community	Edinburgh Primary School
Primary	Community	George Tomlinson Primary School
Primary	Community	Greenleaf Primary School
Primary	Community	Gwyn Jones Primary School
Primary	Community	Handsworth Primary School
Primary	Community	Henry Maynard Primary School
Primary	Community	Jenny Hammond Primary School
Primary	Community	Mission Grove Primary School
Primary	Community	Newport Primary School
Primary	Community	Oakhill Primary School
Primary	Community	Parkside Primary School

Primary	Voluntary Aided	Our Lady and St Georges Primary School
Primary	Community	South Grove Primary School
Primary	Voluntary Aided	St Joseph's R C Infant School
Primary	Voluntary Aided	St Joseph's R C Junior School
Primary	Voluntary Aided	St Patrick R C Primary School
Primary	Voluntary Aided	St Mary's R C School
Primary	Community	Stoneydown Park Primary School
Primary	Community	Thorpe Hall Primary School
Primary	Community	Whitehall Primary School
Primary	Community	The Winns Primary School
Primary	Community	Hawkswood Primary
Secondary	Community	Frederick Bremer Secondary
Secondary	Community	Heathcote School & Science College
Secondary	Voluntary Aided	Holy Family College
Secondary	Community	Kelmscott Secondary School
Secondary	Community	Burnside Secondary School
Secondary	Community	Leytonstone Secondary School
Secondary	Community	Walthamstow Girls Secondary School
Secondary	Community	Willowfield School
All Through	Community	Buxton
Special	Community	Belmont Park
PRU	Community	Hawkswood Therapeutic

ANNEX 2

RESPONSIBILITY FOR REDUNDANCY, PREMATURE RETIREMENT COSTS AND SEVERANCE PAYMENTS IN MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

Guidance and Application Process for Financial Assistance

This document sets out the London Borough of Waltham Forest's (LBWF) policy on providing financial assistance towards the costs arising from redundancies, premature retirement costs and severance agreements in maintained schools.

The previous redundancy policy had not been reviewed since 2017 and has now been updated, in line with requirements set out in the Education Act 2002, which covers LBWF responsibilities in relation to financial assistance for redundancy costs. This does not replace HR policies and processes but outlines the circumstances in which LBWF will provide financial assistance for maintained schools.

1. Background

1.1. The Education Act 2002 outlines the Local Authorities' responsibility in providing financial support to schools where costs arise from redundancies in certain circumstances. This guidance sets out a clear process for schools and LBWF to follow and the circumstances in which financial support may be agreed.

1.2. This guidance is for schools seeking financial assistance towards the costs of redundancy and is intended to support existing HR policies which still need to be followed. It does not replace or supersede any of the processes set out in these policies.

2. Funding

2.1 Schools must fund all costs arising from premature retirement and severance agreements from their school budgets. LBWF will only fund or contribute funding towards redundancy costs where the school must make budget savings in order to set an overall balanced budget. LBWF will not provide support in certain situations which include:

- where the school offers more generous terms than LBWF's redundancy policy – the excess will be charged to the school
- where a school is otherwise acting outside LBWF's policy and procedures
- where the school has unplanned use of surplus balances
- where the school is making staffing reductions which LBWF does not believe are necessary to set a balanced budget or meet the conditions of a licensed deficit

- where the staffing reductions arise from a deficit caused by factors within a school's control
- where a school has refused to engage with LBWF's redeployment policy

2.2 Where a school has a surplus balance that is not earmarked for another agreed use, the school should fund the redundancy costs from these unallocated surplus funds. Full and specific details of any planned use of balances should be included in the business case. LBWF will assess value for money of any request by calculating the payback period of the investment (i.e. the cost of the redundancy vs the savings made). The expectation is that the payback period will not exceed two years. Where schools have insufficient balances, LBWF may fund or contribute funding towards these costs if the value for money calculation supports the business case.

2.3 LBWF's decision to provide funding will also consider the overall management of the school budget to ensure that any costs incurred by LBWF are fair and reasonable.

3. Decision Making Process

3.1. Schools considering reducing their staffing complement through redundancies, premature retirement or severance agreements should consult with their HR provider in the first instance.

3.2. With the support of their HR provider, the school is required to provide a written business case to the Education Finance Team when requesting financial assistance. All of the elements that must be included are outlined in the checklist at the end of this guidance. Failure to include all of the requested information may result in a decision on the funding of redundancy costs being rejected or delayed.

3.3. The School Redundancy Panel is responsible for the recommendation of the outcome decision to the Strategic Director of Resources (S151 officer) as to whether finance support will be offered (and at what level, either full or part contribution), following review and recommendation from Finance, Legal, and HR colleagues as appropriate. All agreed recommendations will be referred to the Strategic Director for final approval. If agreed, the funding support is then made in principle and will not be paid to the school until the redundancy process has been completed, and final costs can be evidenced to LBWF.

3.4. The School Redundancy Panel meets half termly and business cases will be considered initially prior to the start of the school's consultation and redundancy process. LBWF will respond to the outline business case in writing following the meeting setting out the provisional decision on funding or requesting additional information if required before a decision can be reached. If additional information is required, the decision timeline will start again from the point when all information is received. It is therefore essential that schools allow for this period within their proposed timelines (including decisions by their Governing Body) and submit all information required as outlined in the checklist.

3.5. If LBWF accepts in principle to fund the potential costs resulting from the business case, the school should then begin to formally work through the relevant procedures in conjunction with their HR provider and in accordance with relevant statutory requirements. LBWF will continue to monitor school balances and may decide that there are additional reporting requirements that need to be met. The school will be informed of this at the point of agreement.

3.6. If LBWF does not accept the business case put forward by the Governing Body, or requests modification which the Governing Body rejects, then the school will be able to discuss with the Education Finance Team the criteria that have been used to make the decision. The school can then choose to modify the business case and resubmit.

3.7. Where the LBWF decision is not to fund a business case, following either the original Governing Body request or any subsequent appeal, the school has the option to continue with their proposals and meet any funding requirement from their delegated budget, providing this does not put them into a deficit budget position.

3.8. Once the school has a record of the final Governing Body decision and a schedule of the costs of all the individuals affected, this should be sent to the School Redundancy Panel via the HR team. The Panel will consider the proposal in full and ensure that payments do not exceed those set out in the LBWF Reorganisation and Redundancy Policy. Any queries will be discussed with the school. If finally agreed, the business case and schedule of costs will be referred to the Strategic Director of Resources (S151 officer) for the final decision and authorization of payment.

3.9 Once the final decision has been made, the Education Finance Team will notify the school of the Panel outcome. If LBWF does not accept the business case put forward by the Governing Body, then the school will have a period of ten working days in which it may appeal the decision. The appeal will only be considered if the School Redundancy Panel

- has failed to consider any of the evidence initially submitted
- has made an error in interpretation of the criteria

The appeal should be submitted to the Education Finance Team for final decision by the Head of Finance, Education and Schools.

3.10. The school should make any payment through their payroll provider and then, if an LBWF contribution has been agreed, reclaim this based on the actual costs. LBWF will arrange for the payment of the agreed contribution (usually through the next available monthly cash advance) to the school.

4. Redundancy

4.1. The primary legislation for the issues addressed by this policy is set out in Section 37 of the Education Act 2002 which makes it clear that decision making responsibilities in securing the termination of employment contracts of teaching and support staff in schools through redundancy lie with the Governing Body.

4.2. Consequently, the LA role in consideration of any matter of possible staff redundancy would be only on making decisions about funding any such proposal, in accordance with relevant statutory requirements.

4.3. Section 37 of the Act makes it clear that the costs incurred in respect of securing the dismissal of staff through redundancies, shall not come from the schools delegated budget unless the LA has good reason for refusing to fund all or part of the costs. ‘Good reason’ is not defined but a good reason might be that the LA believes the proposed redundancy was unnecessary, or not necessary to bring the school back into a balanced financial position, efforts to secure redeployment were not adequately explored, where payments are too high or if the school holds a surplus revenue balance which could reasonably be used to fund the additional costs.

4.4. In considering any proposal which might require LBWF to fund or contribute towards redundancy payments, we will review the submitted business case and associated information. In addition, the following criteria will be applied to a school’s business case by LBWF in reaching a decision:

- Is the proposed reduction in staffing based on accurate assessment of the school’s current financial position?
- Is the proposed reduction in staffing based on a reasonable and accurate prediction of the school’s future financial position?
- Does the funding requested represent value for money when compared to the saving to be achieved?
- Has the school considered other alternatives for efficiencies and reduction of costs?

4.5. Having agreed in principle to fund the costs of any redundancy by accepting the business case put forward by a school, LBWF will then consider the schedule of proposed costs for redundancy for every individual affected. LBWF will only meet the costs of employee payments in line with the LBWF policy for redundancy payments, no financial support will be agreed for Payment in Lieu of Notice (PILON).

5. Severance and Premature Retirement

5.1. The primary legislation for the issues addressed by this policy is set out in Section 37 of the Education Act 2002 which outlines that decision making responsibilities in securing the resignation of teaching and support staff, through severance agreements and premature retirement, lies with the Governing Body.

5.2. Section 37 of the of the Education Act 2002 makes it clear that the costs incurred by a school in respect of securing the resignation of staff through severance agreements or through premature retirement, shall come from the school's delegated budget.

5.3 Support staff aged over 55 who are made redundant and are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) can access their pension without any actuarial reduction. Therefore, while LBWF may fund the redundancy cost, the pension strain cost arising from the early access to full pension will be charged to the school following the date of dismissal. The pension strain costs can be spread over a maximum of 3 years.

5.4 Teaching staff over 55 have no right to access their pension early if made redundant over aged 55.

Financial Assistance Request - Checklist	
Actions	
Consult HR with outline proposal	
Upload business case and attachments to Access Evo	
HR responds with statutory employment considerations and provides all relevant policies including this policy outlining the criteria and process for LBWF funding redundancies	
HR refers to the School Redundancy Panel. The School Redundancy Panel considers the business case referring to the criteria outlined in this policy and gives an initial opinion on whether the business case meets the criteria for funding.	
School considers their proposal in conjunction with LBWF redundancy funding policy and whether it wants to proceed with Governing Body approval and staff consultation	
Following Governor's ratification of the proposal, the consultation and redundancy process occurs.	
Following completion of the process, the business case and funding request is submitted to LBWF and HR team. The HR team will upload all documents to the School Redundancy Panel folders. The Panel will consider the proposal in full.	
The Education Finance Team will notify the school of the panel outcome decision.	
If the Panel agrees the business case meets the criteria, the business case will be referred to the Strategic Director of Resources (S151 officer) for the final decision.	

If LBWF does not accept the business case put forward by the Governing Body, then the school will have a period of ten working days in which it may appeal the decision.	
If agreed in principle:	
Notify LBWF of the date changes will take effect, within ten working days of the Governing Body decision.	
Submit a detailed schedule of costs to LBWF detailing the individuals affected along with final business case.	
Notify LBWF if the school recruits to replace the redundant posts within 12 months of the actual redundancy date, in which case the school agrees to reimburse LBWF.	
Items that must be included in the business case	
An explanation as to why the school need to reduce or change their staffing structure (financial support will only be provided where the school are required to make savings in order to balance their budget so this will need to be clear).	
Confirmation that any alternatives to dismissal of staff have been fully explored, including possible re-deployment to other schools and if discounted, the reasons made clear.	
A clear explanation of the changes to the staff structure and the financial impact of the changes.	
Details of any new roles created as part of the proposal.	
A summary of the potential impact of the changes on educational outcomes.	
Details of the agreed policies and procedures that will be followed to make any reduction to staffing, including proposed selection measures.	
Full and specific details of any planned use of balances.	
Items that must be attached	
Current staff structure and proposed staff structure, clearly showing the proposed changes (including the financial impact) and the number of staff at risk.	
Three year budget plan without the staff changes and a three year plan that includes the proposed staff changes, including detailed notes for all assumptions.	
A timeline showing sufficient advance warning of any possible redundancies, including the LA finance process for funding support and governing body decisions.	
Details of any fixed term contracts (a list of posts and dates of contracts). If nil, then this must be made clear in the business case.	
Estimated minimum and maximum, redundancy and pension strain costs.	

ANNEX 3

APPLICATION OF SCHEMES FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS TO THE COMMUNITY FACILITIES POWER

Schools who choose to exercise this power conferred by section 27(1) of the Education Act 2002 to provide community facilities will be subject to controls. Regulations made under section 28 (2) if made, can specify activities which may not be undertaken at all under the main enabling power.

Section 88 of the Children and Families Act 2014, has removed the requirements in section 28(4) and section 28(5) of the Education Act 2002 for maintained schools in England. Under section 28(4) a school was obliged to consult its authority and under section 28(5) a school must have regard to advice or guidance from the Secretary of State or their Local Authority when offering this type of provision.

Under section 28(1), the main limitations and restrictions on the power will be those contained in the maintaining authority’s scheme for financing schools made under section 48 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by paragraph 2 of Schedule 3 to the Education Act 2002.

This amendment extended the coverage of schemes to include the exercise of the powers of governing bodies to provide community facilities.

Schools are therefore subject to prohibitions, restrictions and limitations in the scheme for financing schools. This part of the scheme does not extend to joint-use agreements, transfer of control agreements, or agreements between the authority and schools to secure the provision of adult and community learning.

Meeting / Date	**July 2026**	Agenda Item 7	
Report Title	**Alternative Provision- Review and next steps**		
Decision/Discussion/ Information	For Information		
Report Author/ Contact Details	Mary Jarrett Corporate Director for Education Mary.jarrett@walthamforest.gov.uk		
Appendices	1. ISOS Alternative Provision review: Secondary 2. ISOS Alternative Provision review: Primary 3. Schedule of payments 4. Local Authority AP Sufficiency Review		

1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report sets out the initial findings of the review of Alternative Provision for Secondary School pupils; the timescales and remit of the Primary phase review of Alternative Provision

1.2 This report therefore sets outs costs and proposed commissioning arrangements for the next 3 years.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The school's forum to note the recommendations and actions from the Alternative Provision review (Primary and Secondary phases). appendices 1 and 2.

2.2. The school's forum to note that the financial commitment from both primary and secondary schools will remain fixed as per financial year 25/6 for the next 3 years. (Until end of March 2030). See Appendix 3 Schedule of payments.

2.3 That Schools Forum approve the scheduling of the Annual Review of Commissioned Alternative Provision arrangements as part of Schools Forum Forward plan in January 2027 and annually thereafter as per revised Commissioning arrangements.

3. RATIONALE

3.1 The Alternative Provision arrangements for 2025/6 were revised in May 2025 following a series of concerns raised by Heads. It was agreed that existing arrangements would honoured; on the understanding that the governance and finance arrangements would be subject to an independent review.

3.2 Following this decision 2 academy trusts ceased to contribute to the collective agreement but contributed to the Alternative Provision review

3.3 This Independent Review was undertaken by ISOS Partnership https://www.isospartnership.com/ and involved leaders from Primary and Secondary Schools across the Borough

3.4 In addition to the ISOS review the Local Authority undertook a review of Alternative Provision sufficiency and demand to ensure that the Local Authority has access to a range of provisions.

4. Secondary Review and Findings:

4.1 The Secondary phase Alternative Provision Review and Local Authority sufficiency review demonstrated that whilst there were sufficient range of alternative provision places in the Borough including:

- The Big Creative
- Hawkswood PRU (Primary/ Secondary/ Burnside and North Birkbeck Road)
- EAL Provision at Sir George Monoux College
- The Oaks
- St Raphaels

Access to placements were often lacking in timeliness (only immediately available after a young person had been subject to a Permanent Exclusion) and dependent on high levels of bureaucracy.

Schools and alternative provision providers often felt unable to match the requirements of young people to the provision offer.

There was a lack of preventative and outreach resource to support inclusion and therefore there was limited resource in Borough to support schools to reduce the number of permanent exclusions in Borough.

The offer needed to have a stronger vocational element, particularly for Key Stage 4 pupils who were unlikely to return to mainstream school.

4.2 Accordingly, the Alternative Provision Review has identified the following next steps for the Secondary phase implementation:

- **Establishment of a joint strategic commissioning board** to oversee Alternative Provision commissioning. The Board will meet 3 times per year to ensure that the commissioned provision continues to meet need. The Board will be jointly overseen by School Leaders and the Local Authority.

- **Development of 'Direct Access' alternative provision places for schools** who purchase support and which are available for planned interventions throughout the academic year. Schools have already been contacted in relation to this to facilitate planning for September.

Based on current contributions and contributors there will be a total of 45 intervention places available per term with an individual allocation of places proposed for each contributing secondary school according to their school census numbers and deprivation indices.

- **Development of Outreach provision from alternative provision:** The Local Authority and the Hawkswood group of providers are working together to trial a commissioned outreach support offer as part of the revised alternative provision offer at Secondary phase. The offer will be accessed via the Inclusion Panel (details below) and available to all schools who contribute to the collective funding arrangements and will support the Borough's move to early intervention and support for pupils who are at risk of exclusion.

- **Creation of a new Inclusion Panel chaired by the Assistant Director for Learning and Inclusion to start from September**. This panel will meet fortnightly and oversee Secondary placements in Alternative Provision for young people who cannot return to their placing school and offer a range of support, including outreach support to ensure the success of the placement and long-term reintegration into an alternative mainstream school wherever possible, including children who require day 6 (or day 3) provision. The panel will be supported by a rotating vice Chair who is a Secondary Head in Borough and who is part of the collective financial arrangements.

- **Fair Access Panel** will continue to meet monthly to discuss in-year admissions arrangements, as per the Admission Code and retaining its current chairing arrangements made up of a rotating Secondary Head chair and 3 Secondary Head decision-makers. As the Fair Access Panel oversees admissions arrangements in Borough it is expected at all Secondary Heads will remain on this rotation.

4.3 It is not anticipated that the findings and new arrangements will substantially alter the costs and funding for Alternative Provision arrangements at Secondary phase and therefore this report recommends maintaining the contributions at their current rate for the next 3 years (i.e. until March 2030).

5. Primary Phase Review

5.1 The Primary Alternative Provision review will continue for the remainder of the 25/6 academic year. The initial findings and timescales for completions can be found in appendix 2. It is not anticipated that the findings will substantially alter the costs and funding for Alternative Provision arrangements at Primary and therefore this report recommends maintaining the contributions at their current rate for the next 3 years (i.e. until March 2030).

5.2 It is anticipated that the proposed changes to inclusion arrangements in the Borough will be complemented by the ‘Experts at Hand’ offer included in the SEND White Paper

5.3 Any future proposed changes to commissioned arrangements for Alternative Provision will be bought to Schools Forum in January 2027 and annually thereafter to ensure ongoing governance and oversight.

6 Financial Implications:

6.1 As per Appendix 3 The School contributions remain costed at £77.52 per pupil (Secondary) and £12.67 per Primary with contributors benefitting from access to the direct access places and outreach support from the alternative provision providers in Borough. The total school’s contribution being £1,147,598.

6.2 The Local Authority contributions from the High Needs Block of the DSG remain £2.2m (Secondary) and £0.24m (Primary) to cover the costs of day 5 provision for permanently excluded pupils and to cover the Local Authority’s statutory duties in relation to offering a preventative resource to reduce Permanent Exclusions.

6.3. Should individual schools decide not to continue to contribute to the collective arrangements as set out in this paper; the Commissioning Board will proceed to review the current offer within the revised financial envelope and return to Schools Forum in January with the revised commissioned offer.

Indicative cost to Primary schools based on historic buy in @ £12.67 per pupil on roll

School Name	NOR October 2025	April - Aug 2026	Sept 26- Mar 27
Chase Lane Primary School	625	£3,299	£4,619
Whitehall Primary School	411	£2,170	£3,038
Downsell Primary School	356	£1,879	£2,631
Newport School	790	£4,171	£5,839
Edinburgh Primary School	162	£855	£1,197
Greenleaf Primary School	413	£2,180	£3,052
Handsworth Primary School	419	£2,212	£3,097
Thorpe Hall Primary School	333	£1,758	£2,461
The Winns Primary School	616	£3,252	£4,553
Oakhill Primary School	205	£1,082	£1,515
Henry Maynard Primary School	714	£3,769	£5,277
South Grove Primary School	430	£2,270	£3,178
Dawlish Primary School	168	£887	£1,242
Gwyn Jones Primary School	393	£2,075	£2,905
George Tomlinson Primary School	515	£2,719	£3,806
Mission Grove Primary School	687	£3,627	£5,078
Coppermill Primary School	183	£966	£1,353
Stoneydown Park School	604	£3,189	£4,464
Parkside Primary School	616	£3,252	£4,553
The Jenny Hammond Primary School	391	£2,064	£2,890
Ainslie Wood Primary School	406	£2,143	£3,001
Barn Croft Primary School	170	£897	£1,256
Chingford CofE Primary School	404	£2,133	£2,986
St Joseph's Catholic Junior School	115	£607	£850
St Joseph's Catholic Infant School	79	£417	£584
Our Lady and St George's Catholic Primary School	267	£1,410	£1,973
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School	301	£1,589	£2,225
Buxton Primary	348	£1,837	£2,572
Lime Academy Larkswood	489	£2,582	£3,614
Yardley Primary School	506	£2,671	£3,740
Davies Lane Primary School	813	£4,292	£6,009
Hillyfield Primary Academy	1057	£5,580	£7,812
Sybourn Primary School	448	£2,365	£3,311
Thomas Gamuel Primary School	298	£1,573	£2,202
Walthamstow Primary Academy	186	£982	£1,375
Roger Ascham Primary School	369	£1,948	£2,727
Longshaw Primary Academy	203	£1,072	£1,500

Indicative cost to Secondary schools based on historic buy in @ £77.52 per pupil on roll

School Name	NOR October 2025	April - Aug 2026	Sept 26- Mar 27
Frederick Bremer School	894	£28,876	£40,427
Heathcote School & Science College	905	£29,232	£40,924
Willowfield School	1,026	£33,140	£46,396
Leytonstone School	1,030	£33,269	£46,577
Walthamstow School for Girls	898	£29,005	£40,608
Kelmscott School	1,142	£36,887	£51,641
Holy Family Catholic School	909	£29,361	£41,105
Buxton Secondary	686	£22,158	£31,021
South Chingford Foundation School	550	£17,765	£24,871
Connaught School for Girls	553	£17,862	£25,007
Lammas School and Sixth Form	459	£14,826	£20,756
Chingford Foundation School	1,087	£35,110	£49,154
Walthamstow Academy	879	£28,392	£39,748
George Mitchell School	579	£18,702	£26,182
SECONDARY TOTAL	11,597	£ 374,583	£ 524,416

Salisbury Manor Primary School	**242**	**£1,278**	**£1,789**	
Woodford Green Primary School	**201**	**£1,061**	**£1,486**	
Whittingham Primary Academy	**337**	**£1,779**	**£2,491**	
Mayville Primary School	**255**	**£1,346**	**£1,885**	
St Saviour's Church of England Primary School	**354**	**£1,869**	**£2,616**	
St Mary's CofE Primary School	**597**	**£3,152**	**£4,412**	
Barclay Primary School	**1167**	**£6,161**	**£8,625**	
Selwyn Primary School	**614**	**£3,241**	**£4,538**	
George Mitchell School	**364**	**£1,922**	**£2,690**	
PRIMARY TOTAL	**19,621**	**£103,583**	**£145,016**	**£248,598**

Review of AP arrangements in Waltham Forest

Primary phase

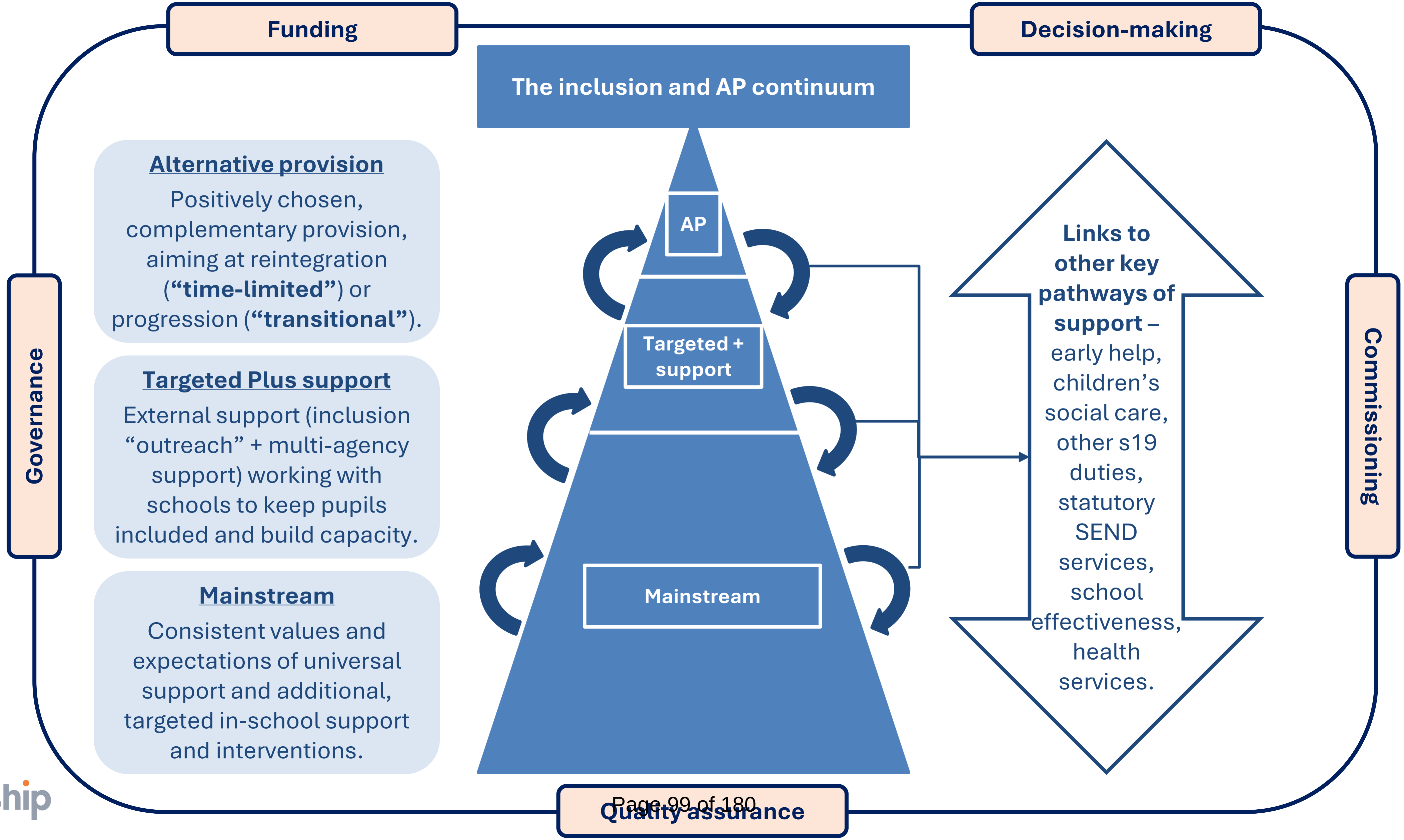
Working Group: Meeting 4
Tuesday 30 June 2026 (in-person meeting)

www.isospartnership.com

About the project: Aim and scope

Aim	**To carry out an independent review of AP arrangements in Waltham Forest and co-construct a new, long-term, whole-system strategy and approach to supporting inclusion and ensuring the effective use of AP.**
Scope	✓ **Separate strands focusing on on arrangements in the primary and secondary phases,** with a focus on how to bring both together (especially considering Y6-Y7 transition). ✓ **Focus on AP for pupils who have been excluded / to prevent exclusion**, not on other "section 19" reasons for AP (e.g., illness or otherwise) or the statutory SEND system – but recognise links. ✓ **Whole-system** – not just AP, but the continuum of support, key systems and processes.

A whole-system approach: What we aim to cover



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The timeline for the Working Group

Working Group

- **Mtg 1** – 20 May (in person)
- **Mtg 2** – **3 June (online)**
- **Mtg 3** – **8 June (online)**
- **Mtg 4** – **30 June (in person)**
- **Roundtable** – 16 July (in person)
- **Set of proposals**

Parallel discussions

- ✓ Primary Heads
- ✓ AP providers
- ✓ Wider discussions as required re: finance, SEND, commissioning, mental health, children's social care and early help

Project governance

- ✓ Education Strategic Board
- ✓ Schools Forum

The two themes this Working Group has focused on

The continuum of support and provision | **Key systems and processes**

Key question: Have we got the right offer and continuum of support?

- Developing consistent borough-wide expectations of (and support for) strong inclusive mainstream practice.
- Developing a formal outreach and multi-agency offer to provide preventative support, options at panel, and support for reintegration.
- Develop a more flexible AP offer in both KS1 and KS2 (with stronger links to SEND services and decision-makers).

Key question: How should the offer of support be commissioned, funded, and accessed?

- Refresh decision-making process as an "inclusion and AP panel", with broader multi-agency offer and menu of support on offer.
- Retain AP funding model and but strengthen links to oversight of quality, commissioning – e.g., Joint AP Commissioning Board.
- Strengthen planning of and support for the transition between primary and secondary school for children who have experienced AP

Principles to guide a future system

'Our approach to fostering inclusion, ensuring the effective use of AP and inclusion support, and preventing exclusion in the primary phase in Waltham Forest should be …'

1. **Responsive** – the offer of support should reflect the needs of primary pupils in the Borough. It should be dynamic (adapting to changing needs) and flexible (recognising not all pupils need the same support).
2. **Localised** – support should be focused in schools, to promote belonging for children, to build capacity for inclusive practice and targeted support. Access to support and AP should be geographically equitable.
3. **Holistic** – practitioners should be professionally curious to identify and understand underlying needs, and see the bigger picture for children, including support for families and working with parents as part of the solution.
4. **Transparent** – decisions about support and AP should be child-centred, evidence-based, and communicated clearly. Pupils should be able to look back and understand why decisions were taken in their interests.
5. **Reintegrative** – AP should be for time-limited interventions with the aim of reintegration to mainstream education. (There should be links with other pathways where pupils need long-term specialist provision.)
6. **Collectively responsible** – schools and services should be collectively responsible for joining up support and securing good outcomes for children and families, and challenging inequalities of access and outcomes.

Agenda: What we plan to cover

1. The continuum of support

What we have covered so far and how our emerging proposals fit together

2. Key systems and processes

Decision-making (panel) | Funding | Transitions

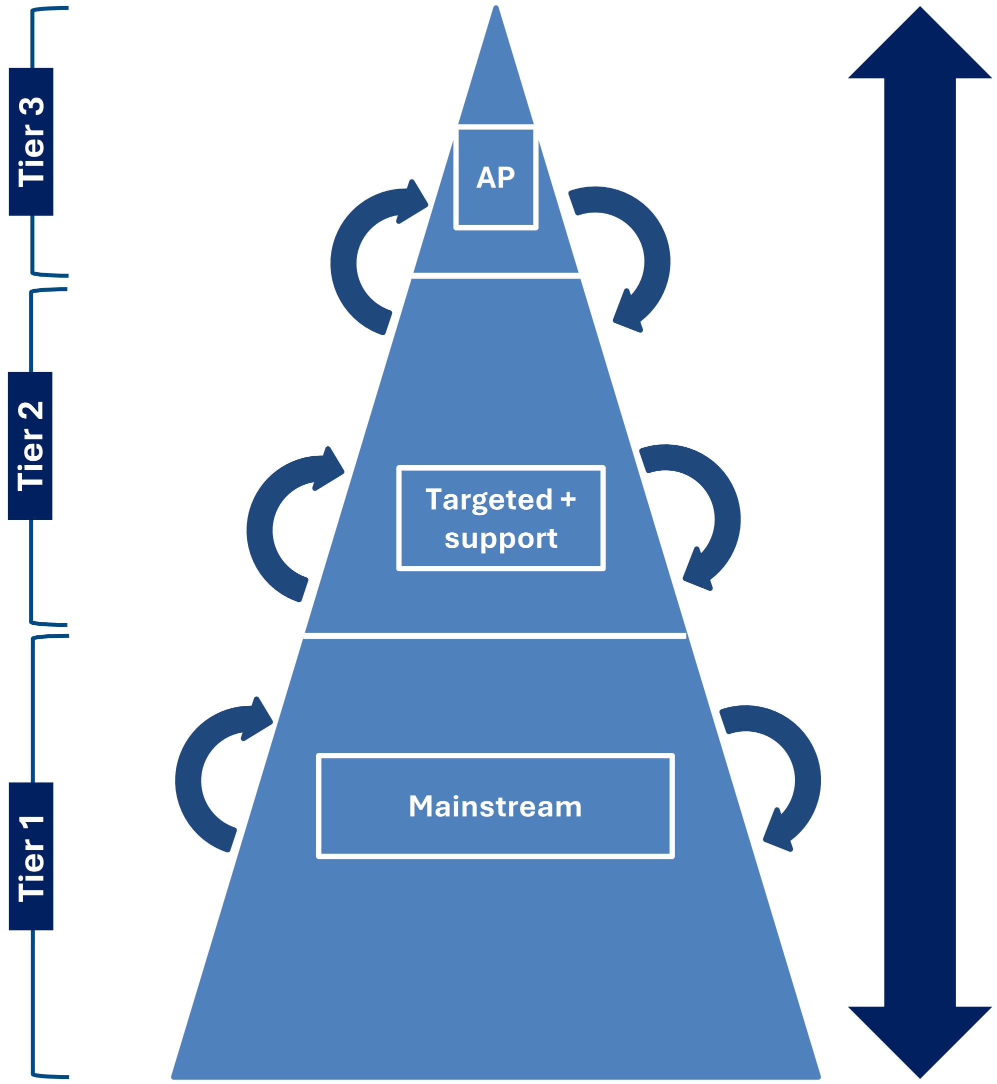
3. Returning to our discussion about the future AP offer

AP – purpose and who it is for | Targeted support | Mainstream inclusive practice

4. Next steps

Roundtable (16 July) | Planning for implementation

How our proposals could fit together as continuum



Primary AP & Inclusion Panel to consider requests for more bespoke support, including access to and reintegration from **AP.**

Inclusion Solutions Forum – multi-agency forum to bring cases for advice and actions from schools and services.

Local Inclusion Outreach – duty line to call for rapid response, flexible in-school support alongside school staff. (Also support reintegration of pupils placed in AP.)

Team-around-the-school / cluster approach – regular access to Experts at Hand. (SALT, EP, CAMHS, nurture, nurses – regular access for class teachers. "Speed dating" / surgery.)

Whole-school inclusive practices and in-school targeted interventions – inclusion strategies. Pro-active support from local services to build inclusive capacity.

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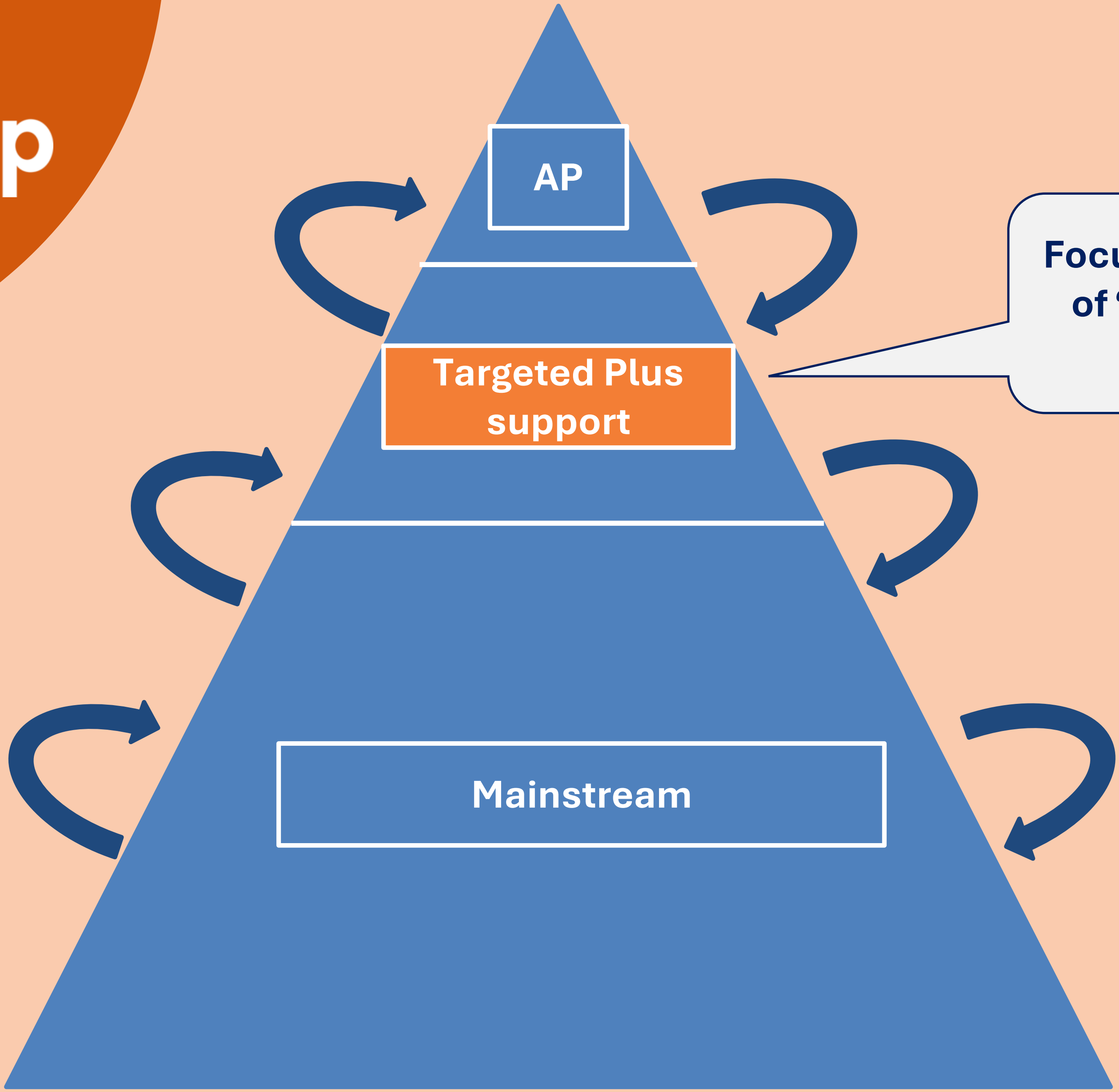

Focusing on the offer of "Targeted Plus" support ...

Targeted+ support: An "inclusions solutions forum"

How we envisaged this working. (Note that the plan would be to combine this with the existing BACME SEMH Forum, creating a single forum for early discussions of cases.)

Our proposals

Aim / purpose	A forum where schools can bring cases for **advice**, **information-sharing**, and **actions** to provide access to early, preventative support from a range of services and other schools.
Offer of support	▪ **Information** (holistic picture) and advice ▪ **Access** to support (in-school) ▪ **Follow-up action** to deploy support and join-up of multi-agency services
Members	▪ **Members**: School leaders | Inclusion support services | BACME | Early help (Family Hubs) and children's services | Virtual School | SEND | CAMHS | DCO | Police ▪ **Chair**: Consistent chair or group of chairs (if forum is localised)
Process	▪ **1-2 pager**: pen portrait of the child; list of services involved (which, when); advice / support sought. ▪ **Detailed record-keeping** – show child-centred discussion and actions. (Needs consistent coordinator / clerk.)
Frequency	**Fortnightly** to begin with.

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Targeted+ support: An LA Inclusion Outreach offer

First port-of-call

- **A "duty line"** – an accessible, single point-of-contact for advice and requests for support about inclusion.
- **Service standards** – all requests receive a response within specified amount of time.

Rapid response

- **Can provide immediate advice** – over the phone.
- **Rapid response** – outreach practitioner dispatched to work with school staff. Flexible offer – depending on needs of the case. Share skills, capacity.
- **Link with Experts at Hand** – can coordinate wider team of practitioners.

Represented on Forum and Panel

- **Forum / Panel = for exceptional cases requiring further multi-agency coordination and/or bespoke support.**
- **Inclusion Outreach represented on Forum and Panel** – contribute knowledge to discussions; involved in follow-up outreach action; can support children placed in AP and their reintegration to school.

Moving on to Part 2

1. The continuum of support

What we have covered so far and how our emerging proposals fit together

2. Key systems and processes

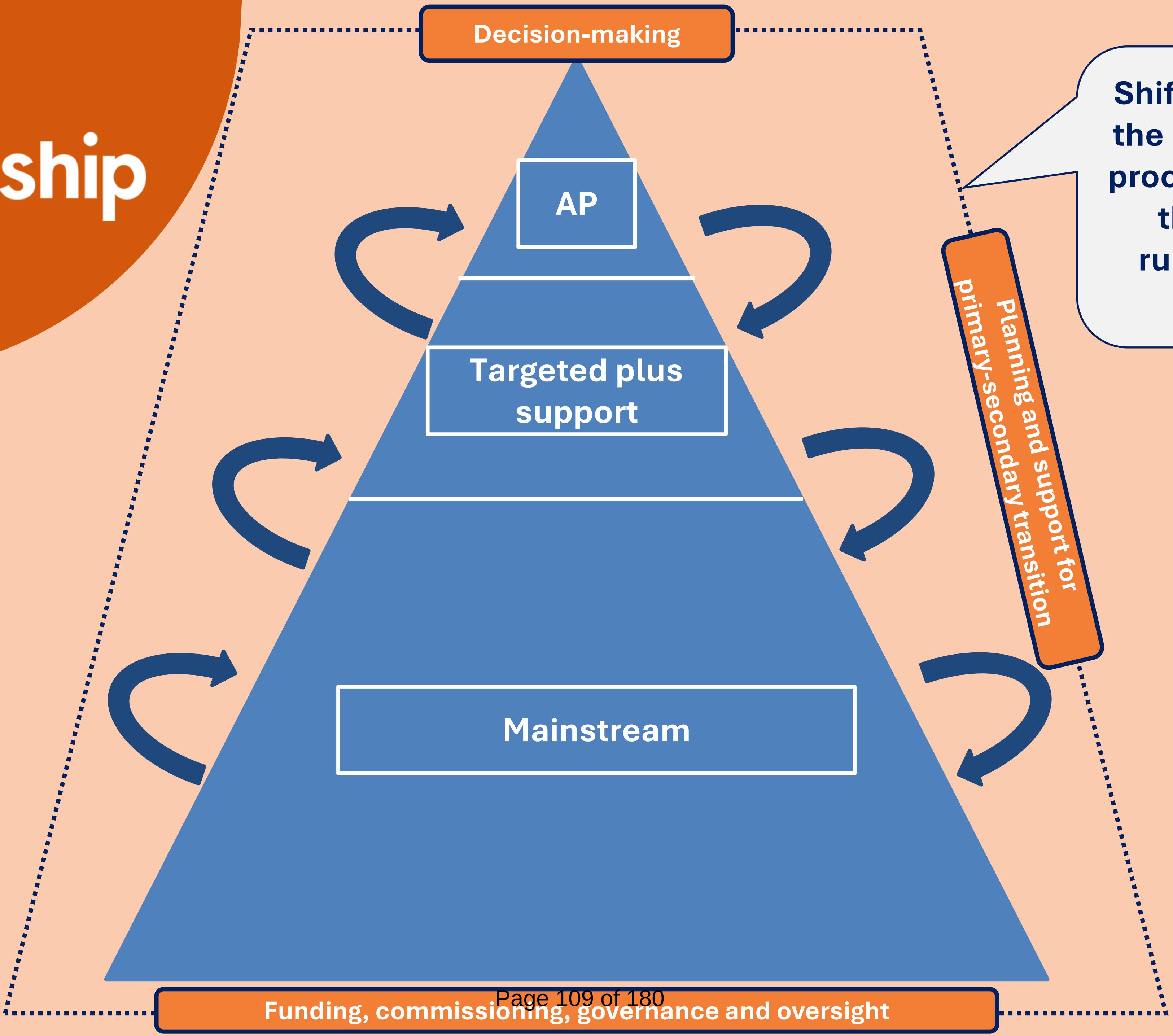
Decision-making (panel) | Funding | Transitions

3. Returning to our discussion about the future AP offer

AP – purpose and who it is for | Targeted support | Mainstream inclusive practice

4. Next steps

Roundtable (16 July) | Planning for implementation


Decision-making
AP
Targeted plus support
Mainstream
Planning and support for primary-secondary transition
Shifting our focus to the key systems and processes that guide the day-to-day running of the AP system ...
Funding, commissioning, governance and oversight

Decision-making and access to AP: To discuss

Our findings suggested that there were strengths to build on, but also questions to consider …

Strengths included –

- Child-focused
- Right range of people and advice (including AP)
- Consistent chair and decision-makers
- Schools present to discuss their request
- Solutions-focused and practical

Questions to consider –

- Will our proposals re: strengthening the continuum mean FAP / panel has **a broader menu of support** to deploy? Is anything else needed?
- Do we need to **revisit the purpose and role of the panel**, distinguishing decisions about access to AP (governed by AP legislation) from discussions under FAP (admissions legislation and code)?

Are there any other aspects of AP decision-making that should be revisited and strengthened –

- Membership of FAP / panel – including representation from and the role of wider services (e.g., SEND, CAMHS)?
- Chairing and formal decision-makers – to ensure a sustainable, long-term model?

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Funding, commissioning, governance, oversight: To discuss

Based on feedback from Phase 1, there is a desire to retain key features of the current model …

- ✓ **Schools and LA contribute financial to a share local area "AP fund"**
- ✓ **AP fund held by the LA on the system's collective behalf, and used to commission AP**
- ✓ **Decisions about access to AP are taken at FAP / panel** (albeit there needs to be a broader, more multi-faceted menu of support available at panel)

Would there be value in considering …

Establishing a formal (potentially cross-phase*) "Joint AP Commissioning Board"?

- ✓ **Board members to include LA and school leaders**
- ✓ **The Board would have a formal remit in deciding collectively on the use of the local area's "AP fund", including determining the proportions of that resource to be used for –**
  - a. preventative or in-school support;
  - b. centrally commissioned places in AP; and/or
  - c. flexible funding for places or pathways in independent providers.
- ✓ **Oversight of the quality of local services and provision**

**The idea of creating a Joint AP Commissioning Board is something that the Secondary Working Group have proposed.*

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Support for primary-secondary transition: To discuss

The issue …

- Children supported to remain in mainstream schools through a combination of school practice and targeted interventions, engagement of external “targeted plus”, and (in some instances) placements in AP.
- These children and their families are known to the system – known to schools, known to services, and (if they have been referred) known through FAP discussions.
- These children may experience a difficult transition to secondary school, and are often among those at risk of exclusion / placements in AP from Year 7 onwards.

Questions to discuss

- How should pupils who have been referred to primary FAP / experienced AP in the primary phase be tracked so that enhanced transition support can be put in place and outcomes at secondary school monitored?
- What is needed to ensure that information about children who have been referred to FAP / experienced AP in the primary phase is shared and used to inform strategic planning of support for transition to secondary school –
  - (a) at a strategic level; and
  - (b) at school level (i.e., between the child’s primary and secondary school)?

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Moving on to Part 3 …

1. The continuum of support

What we have covered so far and how our emerging proposals fit together

2. Key systems and processes

Decision-making (panel) | Funding | Transitions

3. Returning to our discussion about the future AP offer

AP – purpose and who it is for | Targeted support | Mainstream inclusive practice

4. Next steps

Roundtable (16 July) | Planning for implementation

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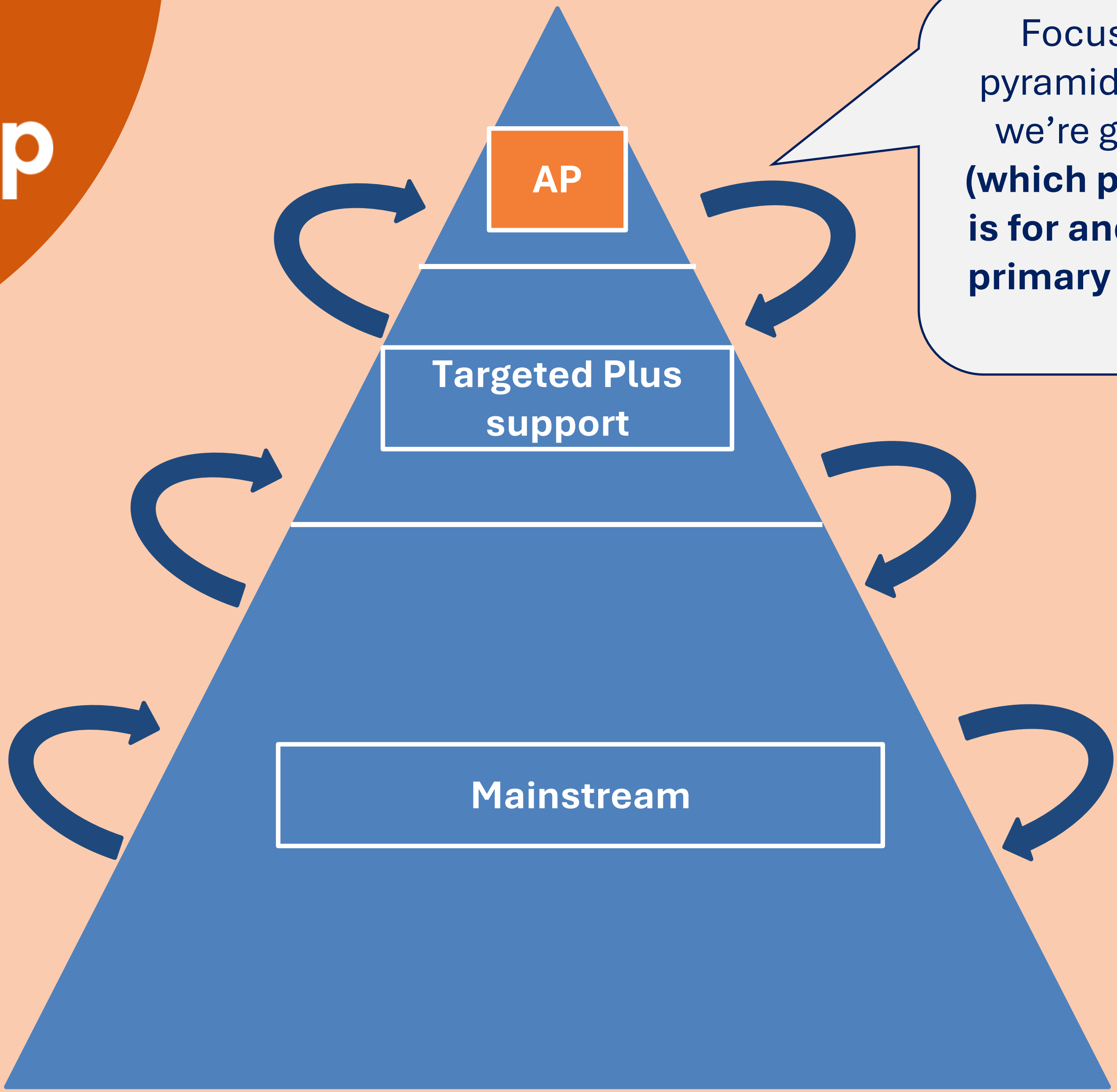

Focusing on the tip of the pyramid, on the AP offer itself, we're going to consider **who (which pupils, what needs) AP is for and what the purpose of primary AP in Waltham Forest should be.**

AP: Our steers on shaping a future offer

Our definition of AP

A time-limited intervention for pupils who can be reintegrated into and thrive in mainstream education, but need support to be able to do so. (AP should not be used as a long-term alternative placement to mainstream education – where pupils cannot return to mainstream education, a statutory assessment should be considered.)

Age-appropriate support

Our starting point is that support for pupils in KS1 and KS2 should look different.

- In **KS1**, support should be focused on the child in their school, with a focus on holistic assessment and nurture – moving the child to an AP should be considered in the most exceptional circumstances.
- In **KS2**, placements in AP should be considered, as part of a broader range of support (including in-school support), depending on the needs and best interests of the child.

A blueprint of a future AP offer

Our future primary AP offer in the Borough should be –

1. Flexible – in terms of the support offered and the duration of the placement.
2. Therapeutic – a strong emphasis on access to therapy and therapeutic support.
3. Relational – (re-)building trust and relationships between child, family and school.
4. Aligned – maintaining the child's connection to mainstream schools and learning.
5. Geographically accessible – equitable access for schools and families in all parts of the Borough.

Who is AP for and what should a future offer look like?

We identified two broad groups of pupils who might need support from AP. We want to capture what a high-quality offer of AP that meets the needs of these groups should look like in the future?

	Characteristics of the group	In future, what would a high-quality AP offer for this group be?
1 Pupils who require AP due to severe / ongoing dysregulation in school	▪ **Dysregulation** – can access mainstream learning, but not in a position to do so ▪ **Extreme behaviour** requiring significant additional adult capacity to manage ▪ **Gradual build up** or **abrupt change** in circumstances (crisis point) ▪ **School exhausted strategies** – no impact	▪ Aligned to **mainstream learning** ▪ **Core** subjects ▪ Additional **engagement / therapeutic** activities ▪ Access to **therapy** ▪ **Reintegration** support
2 Pupils who require AP due to non-engagement with school	▪ Children **not engaging with / attending school at all** – e.g., EBSNA. ▪ **Gradual build up** or **abrupt change** in circumstances (crisis point) – full picture and/or causes may **not be known** ▪ **School exhausted strategies** – no impact	▪ **Nurture**-based ▪ **Therapeutic** support ▪ Access to **therapy** ▪ Reintroduction of **core subject** teaching ▪ **Reintegration** support ▪ Additional **mental health assessments**

Lastly, turning to next steps …

1. The continuum of support

What we have covered so far and how our emerging proposals fit together

2. Key systems and processes

Decision-making (panel) | Funding | Transitions

3. Returning to our discussion about the future AP offer

AP – purpose and who it is for | Targeted support | Mainstream inclusive practice

4. Next steps

Roundtable (16 July) | Planning for implementation

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Thank you

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Review of AP arrangements in Waltham Forest

Secondary phase

Report: Findings and recommendations

April 2026

www.isospartnership.com

Executive summary

Headline findings

Why this review has been undertaken

- ❑ To build on the existing strengths of the AP system while addressing key challenges, to enable needs to be met earlier and more flexibly.
- ❑ There is the desire for a new, principled, long-term, whole-system approach to AP in Waltham Forest – not tinkering / "sticking plasters".

<u>Findings</u>: The continuum of support and AP

- ❑ Inconsistent identification of need + support in <u>mainstream</u> schools.
- ❑ No joined-up offer of <u>targeted support</u> for inclusion + reintegration.
- ❑ The current offer of AP lacks <u>clarity</u> and <u>breadth</u>. Two main gaps – (a) KS3 <u>turnaround</u> provision; (b) <u>vocational</u> KS4 pathways.

<u>Findings</u>: Systems re: use & effectiveness of AP

- ❑ Strengths of current <u>funding</u> model (collective endeavour), but need to ensure system seen as fair, responsive, enables quality support.
- ❑ <u>Commissioning</u> has resulted in a narrow offer that does not meet the needs of all young people and does not provide long-term certainty to plan.
- ❑ Current AP <u>decision-making</u> has strengths that should be retained, but also challenges – volume; consistency; triage; fairness; paperwork; tracking outcomes; "pin-ball" cases).

Our proposals

The continuum of support and provision

Key systems and processes

<u>Key question</u>: Have we got the right offer of support?

We propose the introduction of a new **tiered continuum of support** (mainstream, targeted, AP), with consistent expectations of identification and practice at each, and clear pathways and routes to support for pupils.

- Adopt and implement a consistent set of expectations of **<u>mainstream practice</u>** to identify pupil needs and put in place support before AP.
- Develop a clear offer of **<u>targeted support</u>** for pupils and schools that offer early intervention, build inclusive capacity, and support reintegration.
- Develop and implement a strategic blueprint for **<u>AP</u>** in Waltham Forest to reshape the current offer so that it responds to the local area's needs.

<u>Key question</u>: How should the offer of support be commissioned, funded, and accessed?

We propose strengthening existing systems to ensure consistent **decision-making** about access to AP, **sustainable funding**, and effective **joint commissioning**.

- Establish a new "**<u>Joint AP Commissiong Board</u>**", with school, LA and multi-agency membership; responsible for shaping the local AP continuum.
- Develop the existing **<u>AP funding model</u>**, to ensure there is greater fairness and equity in schools' contributions and their access to AP.
- Distinguish access to AP and fair access. Create a new terms of reference for **<u>decision-making</u>** re: access to and reintegration from AP.

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Introduction

About the project: Aim and scope

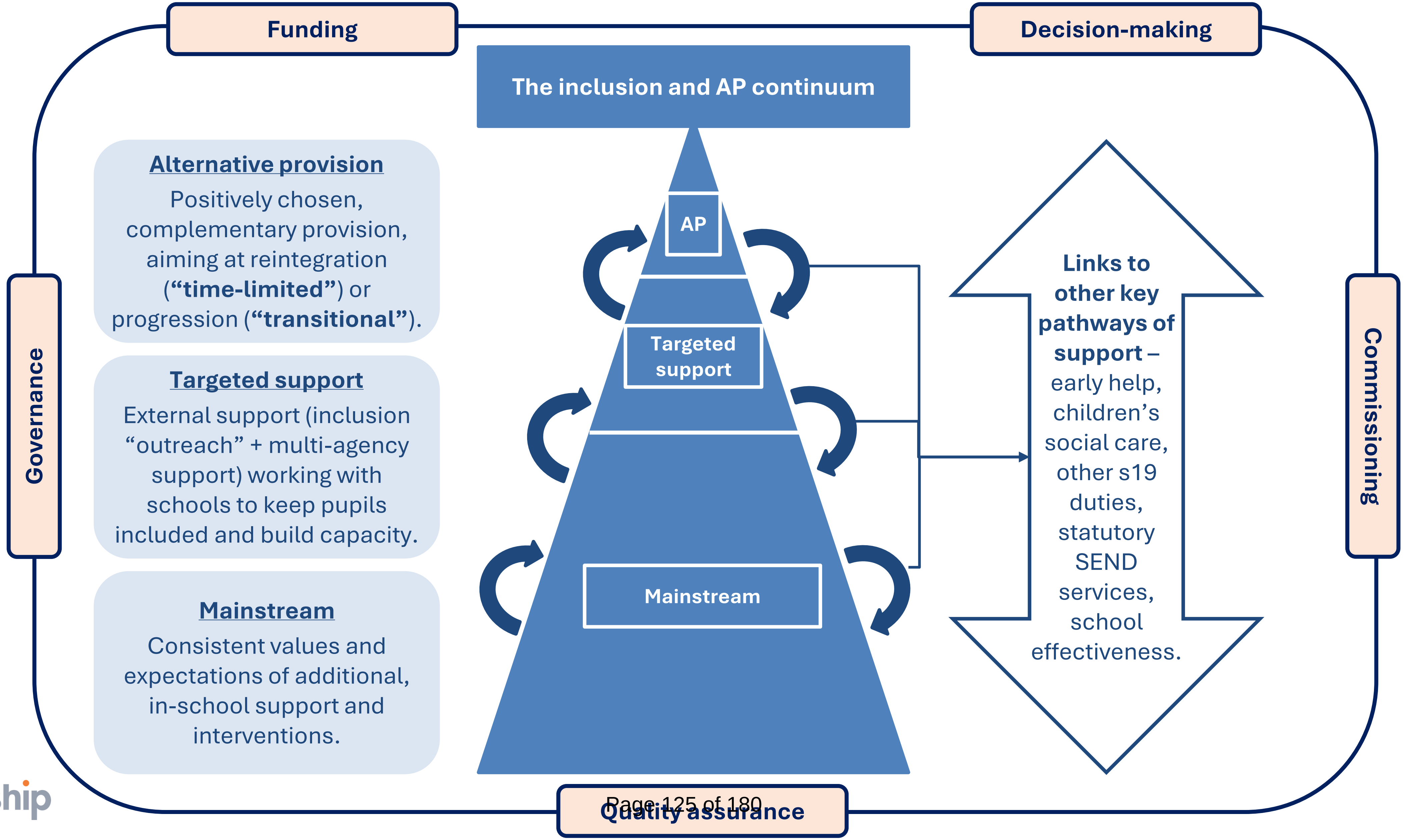
Aim

To carry out an independent review of AP arrangements in Waltham Forest and co-construct a new, long-term, whole-system strategy and approach to supporting inclusion and ensuring the effective use of AP.

Scope

- ✓ **Separate strands focusing on on arrangements in the primary and secondary phases,** with a focus on how to bring both together (especially Y6-Y7 transition).
- ✓ **Focus on AP for pupils who have been excluded / to prevent exclusion**, not on other "section 19" reasons for AP (e.g., illness or otherwise) or the statutory SEND system – but recognise links between the AP system and these areas of support.
- ✓ **Whole-system** – not just AP. Instead, this review has focused on two main themes (illustrated on the next page) –
  1. the broader **continuum** of mainstream school and targeted support, as well as AP itself; and
  2. key **systems and processes** – commissioning (including governance and oversight of quality), funding, and decision-making.

Scope: What this review has focused on



Why this review has been undertaken now

There is the need for a new strategy for AP in Waltham Forest. While there are strengths to the current AP system, there are also challenges in terms of accessing support for pupils when it is needed (which in turn is linked to challenges in the local SEND system), a lack of clarity about the pathways of support concerns that the offer does not match local needs. There is a keenness to develop a new approach.

'It would be interesting to open up a conversation about radical change. If the outcome of this review is a minor change to paperwork and processes, it is not going to be worthwhile.' – **Headteacher**

There is not clarity about the role (and wider system) of AP in Waltham Forest – there is confusion about the AP pathway / offer for different parts of the LA's section 19 duties (exclusion vs illness / otherwise), and the inter-relation with the SEND system (role of providers; access for pupils with EHCPs; pupils with unidentified needs placed in AP; getting support for pupils with SEND).

'There is a lack of consistency, clarity and fairness around AP in its entirety.' – **Headteacher**

New leadership and partnership governance offer an opportunity to reset existing arrangements and develop a new shared strategy – new leadership responsibilities for AP within the LA, the new Education Strategic Board offer an opportunity address the lack of clarity of roles and effective oversight and coordination of the AP system in Waltham Forest.

'There has been a disconnect in Waltham Forest over AP.' – **Headteacher**

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It was put to us that the pressure on schools and on the AP system is a result of insufficient support and specialist provision for pupils with SEND. We have found evidence of the lack of targeted inclusion and multi-agency support (pp.13-14). In terms of specialist provision, published data suggests that Waltham Forest's use of special schools is broadly in line with London and national averages. Waltham Forest is an outlier, however, in the % of pupils with EHCPs (4.6% of secondary pupils, compared to 3.1% national average), and of placing a higher % of CYP with EHCPs in mainstream schools (56.7% vs 43.6% nationally) and a lower % of CYP in special (23% vs 30.4% nationally.)

Our approach has involved three main phases

Phase 1: Building the evidence base

(Autumn term 2025)

Phase 2: Co-producing options and solutions

(Spring term 2026)

Phase 3: Preparing for implementation

(Summer term 2026)

In Phase 1, we built the evidence base for this review (set out in Part 1 of this pack) through –

- ✓ 1:1 interviews offered to all Headteachers and AP providers;
- ✓ discussions with LA officers;
- ✓ interviews with parents and young people in AP; and
- ✓ triangulation with publicly available and internal data.

In Phase 2, we have focused on developing proposals that build on the strengths and address challenges identified in Phase 1 –

- ✓ a series of meetings with a Headteacher and LA "working group";
- ✓ parallel discussions to share emerging ideas with Secondary Heads, AP providers, and LA officers.

Phase 3 plans are set out in the final section of this pack, including –

- ✓ sharing and testing proposals with system leaders;
- ✓ agreeing practical details of new system (e.g., through "task-and-finish" projects); and
- ✓ developing implementation plans for AY26/27 and AY27/28.

The structure of this report

1. Key findings

A summary of the evidence and feedback gathered during Phase 1 of this project

1a. The continuum of support | 1b. Systems and processes

2. Proposals

Proposals developed co-productively in Phase 2 that build on strengths and address challenges identified in Phase 1

3. Next steps

How we plan to finalise our proposals and plan for their introduction from Sept 2026

Part 1: Findings

1a: The continuum of support and AP

Continuum

Mainstream | Targeted | AP

Inconsistent approaches to identification of need and support for pupils in schools

The confusion about the role of AP is compounded by inconsistent approaches to the identification of pupils' needs. School leaders and other practitioners highlighted the inconsistency in identification of underlying needs, and the engagement with external services. Many schools highlighted shortcomings in the wider SEND system (including lack of therapeutic and mental health support) in contributing to under-identification of needs and a lack of capacity to provide in-school support. The sense of not being listened to – and underlying needs not being identified – was a strong theme in feedback from some parents and pupils (particularly pupils placed in Burnside / North Birkbeck). Pupils placed in Hawkswood were more positive about the support in mainstream school.

'We get kids [at FAP] treated as having behaviour issues, but they clearly have significant needs and nothing is done … I'm gobsmacked by how little is done to identify their needs. – **Headteacher**

'There's not enough understanding of underlying needs, and consequently not enough support, in schools.' – **Parent**

'In my old school … they didn't talk to you before punishing you.' – **Y9 pupil**

Colleagues also highlighted the inconsistency in inclusive practice and support that is put in place before seeking AP. School, LA leaders, parents and young people perceived significant differences in the support that schools put in place before seeking AP. There is the need for consistent expectations that can act as a guide for practice and a reference point when decisions are made about referrals to FAP, but are also reinforced and supported through engagements with targeted support services. The current approach to FAP sets expectations in the paperwork but these are not consistently understood and followed through by schools. The lack of a targeted support offer compounds the inconsistency of pre-AP support in schools.

'Schools should be doing more before seeking external AP.' – **Headteacher**

'There is a lack of consistency, clarity and fairness around AP in its entirety.' – **Headteacher**

Continuum

Mainstream | **Targeted** | AP

There is a lack of a strong, joined-up offer of targeted support for inclusion

There is a very limited offer of targeted support for inclusion and early intervention – the tier of support between schools' own practices and AP is largely missing. The offer of support from BACME (SEMH forum and outreach) has limited capacity. There is a liaison role for pupils placed in AP, but the level of need exceeds current capacity. The lack of targeted inclusion support means opportunities to reinforce consistent expectations of mainstream inclusion and build inclusive capacity are missed. The lack of preventative targeted support, when school leaders need additional help, means that the only option is to refer to FAP. When a case comes to FAP, the lack of a defined targeted inclusion support offer (and wider multi-agency support) means all that can be offered is a placement in AP – there are no alternatives where support could be provided to keep a pupil in school. It also means that few pupils discussed at FAP are known to BACME / inclusion support services, limiting holistic discussion.

'There is nothing between school and FAP / AP.' – **Headteacher**

'We do need a large scope of interventions … While there are people in the LA doing good work, it is not holistic.' – **Headteacher**

By the same token, engagement with external services and advice is inconsistent. School and LA leaders described examples of pupils being brought to FAP without any evidence of wider inclusion support services having been involved, or where there was not evidence external advice where sought had been put into practice.

Furthermore, there is a lack of joined-up multi-agency support for pupils and schools. Several school leaders described having to take a variety of actions to cover the shortfall between pupil needs and local service capacity. School leaders also spoke about recent changes to mental health support and the consequent lack of dedicated mental health practitioners who can work with pupils in schools – this theme was also highlighted by parents. (CAMHS are listed as attendees at FAP, but attendance is not consistent.) School leaders also highlighted the lack of joint work in schools with social workers and SEND services – both in terms of targeted support and at FAP.

There is a lack of consistent decision-making around, and support for, reintegration

Most of the young people to whom we spoke wanted to return to mainstream school. Pupils were concerned, however, that there would be a gradual process of reintegration and support, in case returning to school proved challenging and to ensure that they were not left without a school place and missing out on their education.

‘I really want to go back to mainstream school … I don’t want to get stuck here. I want to get my GCSEs.’ – **KS4 pupil**

‘[What’s the point of AP?] Get in, get out, get better, get back to mainstream. That’s how it *should* work. How it *actually* works is that you’re seen as naughty, not going back, you get stuck here.’ – **KS4 pupil**

Data show that there are examples of successful reintegration of pupils placed in AP – of the 197 pupils whose cases were brought to FAP in 2024/25, 24 cases were for reintegration. That said, the success of reintegration and whether pupils who return *remain* in mainstream school is not tracked. Furthermore, the data indicate that a proportion of pupils had more than one referral to FAP for an AP placement in the academic year.

School and AP leaders expressed concern at the lack of a reintegration framework – something that could be used to make evidence-based decisions about a pupil’s readiness to reintegrate. The lack of such a framework means decisions about reintegration lack transparency to pupils and parents, and may depend more on evidence *before* a pupil was placed in AP rather than progress made *in* AP. This is compounded by the fact that AP providers do not have a formal role in panel decision-making – notwithstanding the involvement of BACME’s pupil liaison officer. As a result, AP, LA and some school leaders considered that, at times, the threshold for pupils to return from AP was set too high. Some highlighted the lack of support to enable a young person to be successfully reintegrated in a way that was consistent with a school’s support for its wider pupil cohort.

‘… young people are being put back into mainstream before they are ready.’ – **Headteacher**

‘The threshold to prove that a pupil has learned their lesson and is not violent is almost impossibly high.’ – **LA officer**

Continuum

Mainstream | Targeted | **AP**

Colleagues suggested that the current AP offer lacks …

Clarity – the current offer is the product of evolution rather than reflected a strategic blueprint. As a result, there is a lack of coordination, coherence (in terms of the roles of providers and geographical accessibility), and consistent understanding of the roles of AP providers (notwithstanding providers setting out the updated offers on paper). There is a view that categorising providers' roles in terms of "internalised" and "externalised" behaviour is unhelpful (and could reinforce gender and ethnic inequities). Some of the current inequities of the system relate to historic expectations that the needs young people with "externalised" behaviours could not be met in certain AP provisions. School leaders see the need for a shared agreement about the features of outstanding AP (curriculum, pastoral care, ethos, wider engagement, therapeutic support).

'It's never said anywhere. You just get to know it from working in Waltham Forest.' – **Deputy Headteacher**

'It feels very hidden. There is not clarity about all provisions, how they can be accessed …' – **Headteacher**

Breadth – the current commissioning model limits the scope to develop and utilise a wider menu of AP where pupils can "find their niche". Big Creative is the sole example of this and is viewed positively, but will not be suited to every pupil. There is no proactive shaping of the local AP offer (e.g., a local menu of QA'd AP). As a result, LA and school leaders considered that the current offer did not always match the needs of pupils –

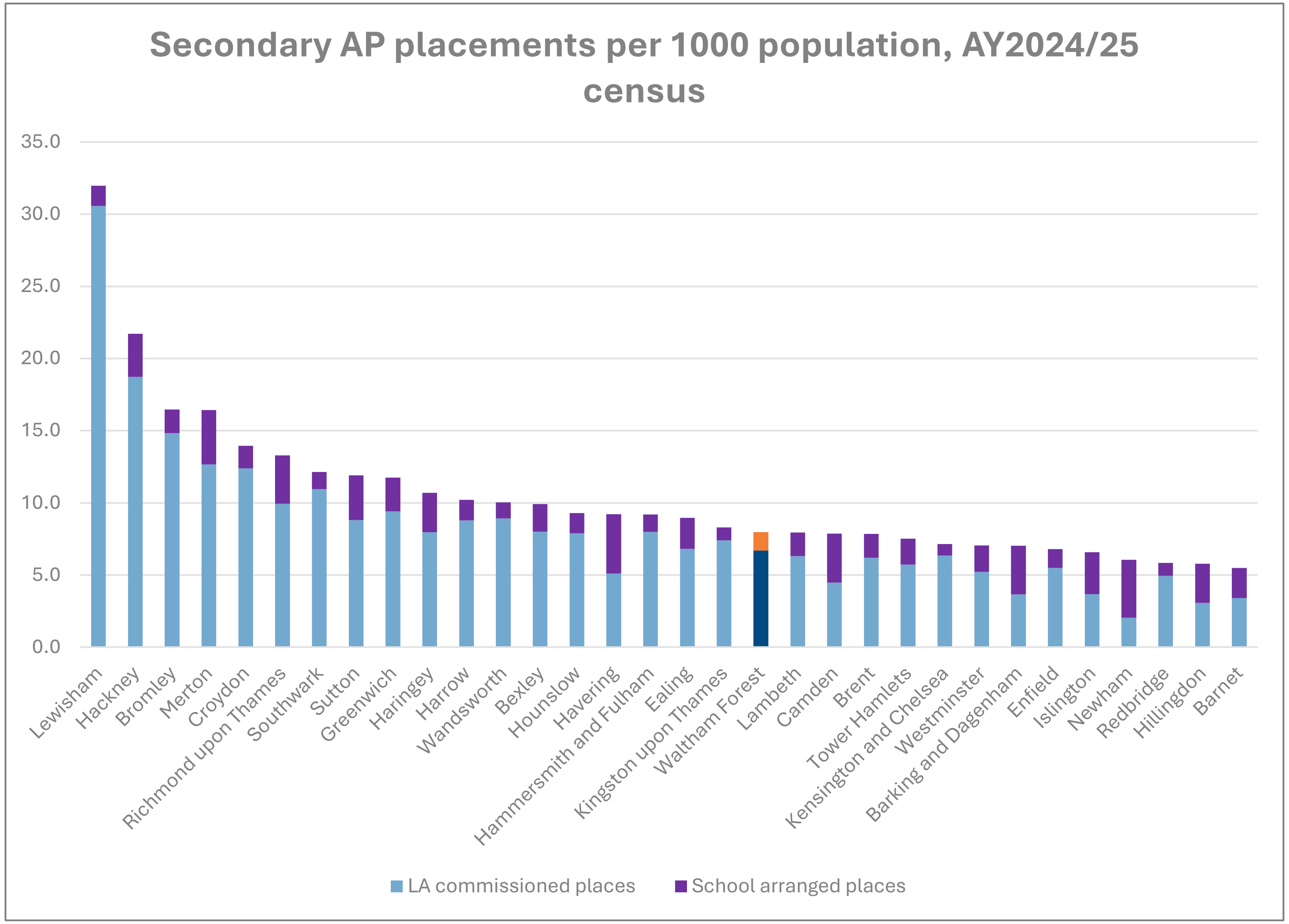
- e.g., a lack of flexibility in the 20-week offer in some providers (particularly where this disrupted KS4 courses);
- e.g., a lack of alternatives for pupils whose needs fell between therapeutic and Day 6 provision, leading to inappropriate placements that could pupils' separation from mainstream education.

'It is either a classic "PRU" or a "therapeutic" provision but nothing else. It is too binary.' – **Headteacher**

'That is not a system that is working for the child, or for us as a school.' – **Headteacher**

'We are constantly failing these children.' – **LA officer**

Numbers of AP places commissioned in Waltham Forest per 1,000 pupils is around average for London (2024/25 census data)



Publicly available benchmarking data from the 2025 school census (*Schools, pupils and their characteristics*) show that **Waltham Forest** commissioned around the average number of places per 1,000 pupils for London, once the two outliers (Lewisham and Hackney) are discounted.

Despite changes to the providers commissioned (e.g., de-commissioning AP places at Belmont Park, creating new provision at North Birkbeck Road), internal LA data show that **the total number of secondary places commissioned by the LA have remained broadly consistent in recent years.**

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Young people's and parents' views

Largely positive about their experience in AP, particularly the relationships they had built with teachers and staff – 'patient … understand your vulnerabilities … respectful … more time for you … teach us discipline but not mean'. Many commented on smaller environments, less pressure and more opportunities to learn. Aware of the reputation of AP (particularly for excluded pupils), but thought this was unfair.

'The most important thing that my kids got out of [AP] was that they had teachers who were kind, who got them, who cared.' – **Parent**

Pupils placed due to risk of / permanent exclusion emphasised that their desire to return to mainstream school. Many spoke about how they had reflected on past incidents and learned from their experience in AP, and wanted to return to school. Some pupils also recognised the limitations of AP (missing out on education, a narrower curriculum, fewer qualifications) and the contextual risks of being placed in AP – 'it's hard not to be influenced by it.'

'I'm ready to go back to mainstream. … Here, I've learned a lot. It has been a significant change for me. … Some people think PRUs are just storage for bad kids.' – **KS3 pupil**

Pupils placed in therapeutic provision saw the purpose of the AP differently – they saw the AP in which they had been placed as providing a much-needed alternative form of education for young people who had experienced difficulties in mainstream school, who needed a reset to get back on their feet. Some saw the importance of returning to mainstream education and progression to college, others were anxious that they would struggle on return to school. The parents to whom we spoke were positive about the impact of AP on their child's wellbeing, attendance, and social skills, as well as academic learning. Parents raised concerns about the inflexibility of 20-week placements in Hawkswood and the lack of join-up between AP and SEND services, where this disrupted KS4 studies.

Continuum

Mainstream | Targeted | AP

Two main gaps in the current offer were highlighted

Gap 1: Turnaround provision – a placement (distinct from a traditional PRU) that could be sought for serious incidents with a focus on reintegration to mainstream school. Some considered that turnaround provision should be focused on KS3 pupils. (North Birkbeck road was created with the intention of providing more turnaround capacity. Since it opened at the start of this academic year, few colleagues were able to comment on it and whether it would address this gap sufficiently.)

'There is not enough provision with the intent to turn children around. We just put people through doors for a short amount of time – it is just respite, and it just creates recidivism.' – **Assistant Headteacher**

Gap 2: Alternative / vocational curricula pathways in KS4 – school leaders described the lack of alternative / vocational pathways for KS4 pupils who they had supported through KS3 but who were not well served by the academic demands in KS4. They considered that this offer was narrower than it had been in the past and than it was in other local areas.

'We have young people at 14 who struggle to access curriculum … traditionally they would have gone down more applied route. There is nothing, now, for a more vocational curriculum … they end up becoming behaviour issues, because we cannot get them to fit into academic pressures of GCSE curriculum.' – **Headteacher**

'The AP offer "as was" was extensive … we have to get back to this. We need a moral alternative for children who are not going to succeed in KS4.' – **Headteacher**

Part 1: Findings

1b: Key systems and processes

Funding

The current AP funding arrangements in Waltham Forest

At present, secondary AP in Waltham Forest is jointly funded –

- The LA contributes just under £2.2m from the high needs block;
- Schools make a contribution of £77 per pupil, which last year created a combined £898,999;
- This creates a combined AP funding pot of £3.06m, which funds the provision listed below. (Further AP – e.g., the EAL provision at Sir George Monoux College – is funded separately, not from the "combined AP pot".)

Provider	Number of places (AY25/26)
Hawkswood Secondary	20
Burnside	46
North Birkbeck Road	30
Big Creative	12
Heathcote (The Oak)	15
Holy Family (St Raphael's)	12
Total	**135**

There has been a suggestion, during this review, that school financial contributions are, in effect, paying for provision to fulfil the LA's statutory responsibilities for permanently excluded pupils. This does not appear to be the case. Over the past 3 years, the cost of providing AP for excluded pupils has been between £900k and £1.375m. In other words, the high needs block is funding a broader offer than simply covering LA statutory responsibilities. That said, we recognise the point that there has not been sufficient clarity about what schools' financial contributions are paying for, and how this relates to LA statutory responsibilities.

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Funding

The current AP funding arrangements have strengths, but challenges must be addressed

School leaders recognise the strengths of the current AP funding model. They value the spirit of collective responsibility (funding AP as a collective resource), collective decision-making (having a seat at the table), and joint school-LA funding. The also considered that model reduced potential perverse financial incentives to exclude pupils.

Two broad concerns were raised about current funding arrangements (or, more accurately, about the link between school contributions to the funding of AP and access to AP places).

1. Some school leaders want to see a more direct connection between what schools pay in and the places to which they get access. (Even among those who support the current arrangements, there is a concern that it 'feels like a lottery', and there are not always the places in the provisions that they want.)
2. Some school leaders consider that there are not sufficient safeguards in place to ensure access to AP is equitable, resulting in some schools in effect disproportionately subsidising the use of AP of other schools (notwithstanding the different levels of needs in some schools).

'I'm not prepared to pay for other schools to get access to AP … If I was guaranteed what I was getting, I would pay it.' – **Headteacher**

'It's fine if everyone pays in, but schools must get their fair share.' – **Headteacher**

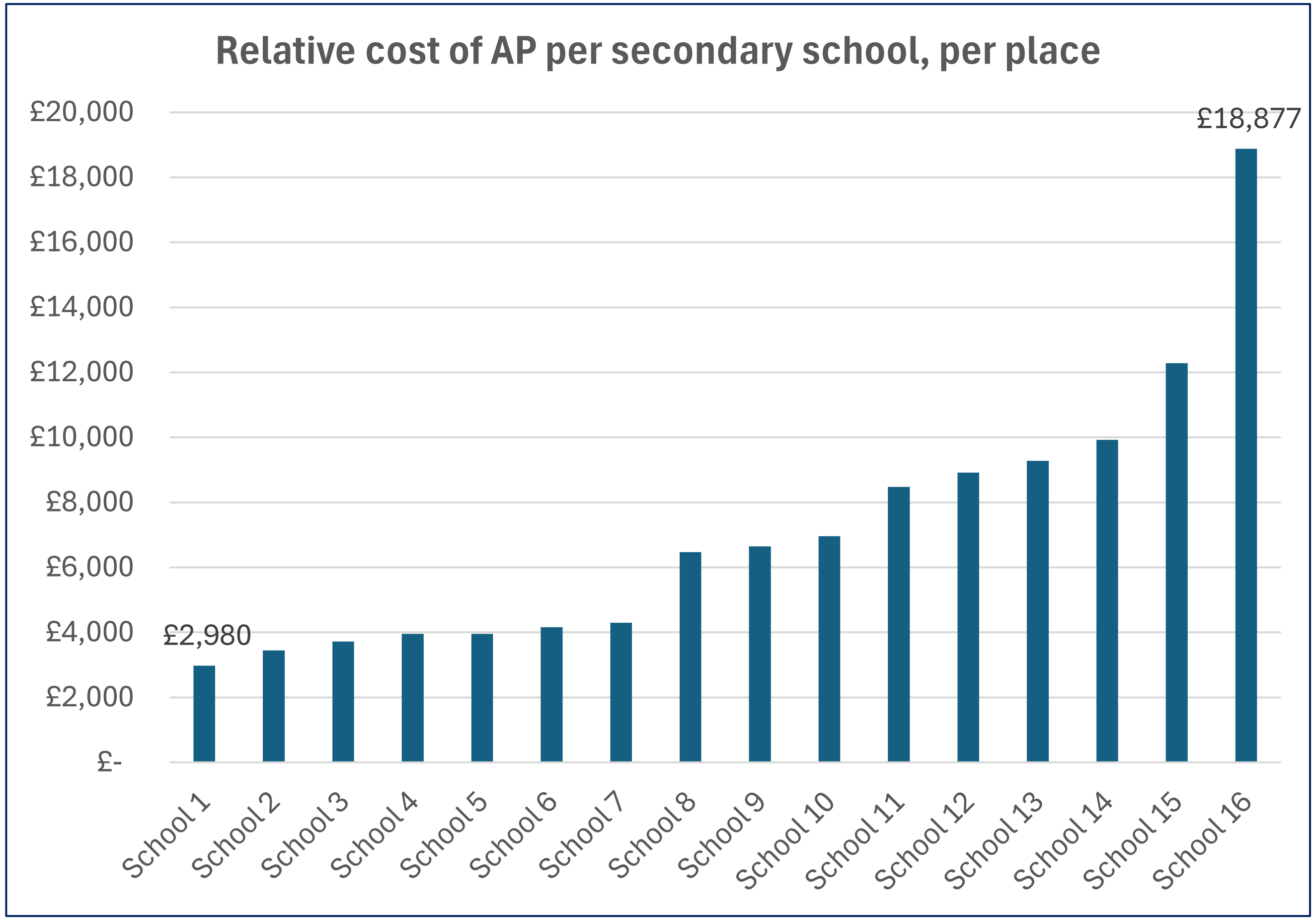
'The main thing that matters is, if I bring a child, is there a place for them somewhere?' **– Headteacher**

Without a new funding model being agreed, the current approach will fragment and risk a loss of provision.

'At the start, it felt like schools were all in it together. We felt morally committed … Recently, there have been a few splinters and political factions. When schools start opting out, it falls apart quickly.' – **Headteacher**

'We cannot plan for three years into the future if we don't know if schools will pay in or not.' – **AP leader**

Data from the last full academic year (AY24/25) on referrals to AP, permanent exclusion and school financial contributions confirm that the cost per pupil placed per secondary school varies considerably



- Schools that are both excluding fewer pupils and making fewer referrals to preventative AP are effectively making a much higher financial contribution to each place they use than other schools in the Borough. The range is from c.£3,000 to c.£19,000 per place used.
- The majority of requests for AP were accepted (87%) in AY24/25. The lowest was 70%, while 8 schools had 100% of requests accepted. The issue is not that FAP is saying "no" to requests. Instead, the number of cases brought to FAP varies considerably – 12 schools made fewer than 10 referrals last year, while 3 schools made between 18 and 26.

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Commissioning

The current approach to commissioning has resulted in a relatively narrow menu of AP

Most funding for AP from the LA and schools is combined to create a central "AP commissioning fund", which is used to fund core commissioning provision (including places in Burnside, North Birkbeck, Hawkswood and Big Creative). School, AP and LA leaders considered that this was one reason that there was not a broader menu of independent AP where young people could find their "niche". It had resulted in a mismatch between the needs of pupils and the offer of AP (notwithstanding the efforts of AP providers to reshape their offer), and at the same the fact the commission has been renewed on a year-to-year basis has not given providers stable funding from which to plan (we heard examples from providers and parents of how the uncertainty around funding has resulted in providers losing staff and compromising quality).

While individual schools pay into the "AP commissioning fund", schools would value greater strategic influence in the long-term shaping of what is commissioned. Part of the dissatisfaction with current funding arrangement stems from the fact that school leaders pay towards the cost of AP but are not guaranteed access to the provision they need (along with a sense of unfairness that some schools are making disproportionate use of this collective resource and others are, in effect, subsidising this). During this review, there was a desire to explore a joint school-LA approach to commissioning AP, giving schools greater flexibility about what they get in return for their financial contributions, and creating a more stable commissioning cycle to give AP providers greater stability of funding.

Decision-making around access to AP

There are strengths in the current AP decision-making arrangements

School and LA leaders highlighted the following strengths, which they considered should be maintained and built upon.

- ✓ School leaders are committed and engaged in the process.
- ✓ Recent changes in chairing arrangements have coincided with a decrease in ~~PX and~~ FAP referrals. At the same time there has also been a decrease in PX.
- ✓ It does ensure some children are placed in or reintegrated into mainstream schools.
- ✓ The triage of requests in viewed positively (by some).

‘FAP is good in theory. In practice, there is a lack of training for new Heads and not enough understanding of the model … The basic model is good, but it needs tightening up and better training.’ – **Headteacher**

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Decision-making around access to AP

There are, however, challenges to how decision-making regarding AP functions …

1. Confusion about purpose – the panel is called "fair access" (which is part of admissions law), but the bulk of the work is actually an AP allocations process (which is part of exclusions and AP law). There is a blurring of these two (linked) but distinct processes – most children considered at the "fair access panel" do not fall under the list of children covered by the "fair access protocol". There is the need to create an updated terms of reference for decision-making in relation to access to AP placements, and how this links to the local authority's fair access protocol. (This should also look at how incidents that arise between meetings can be dealt with, without needing to go back to panel.)

2. High volume of cases – efficient process that differentiates time according to the needs of the case, but is nonetheless required to oversee and make decisions on a large case-load (e.g., last year, there were 4 meetings with over 25 cases on the caseload).

3. Consistency – perception that similar requests receive different responses, depending on who is chairing. This may point to training needs for chairs and panel members.

'I know when things are not going to be challenged or are going to be rubber-stamped, depending on which HT is chairing it.' – **LA officer**

4. Triage and the role of AP providers – the triage process is largely valued, advice from triage is brought into the main panel discussion (the chair attends triage, and paperwork includes triage recommendations). Nevertheless, while AP providers sometimes join panel discussions, there is not a formal expectation that core commissioned AP providers (e.g., Hawkswood, Burnside, North Birkbeck) should attend panel discussions and advise decision-making – there are instances where this would help – e.g., advising on the suitability or risk of placing a pupil in one provider over another, or advising on a pupil's readiness to reintegrate. We would suggest that core commissioned AP providers should be represented in panel discussions about AP placements and reintegration in order to provide advice.

Decision-making around access to AP

There are, however, challenges to how decision-making regarding AP functions ... (cont.)

5. <u>Fairness</u> – lack of fairness to young people and families (lack of transparency; differences on families' capacity to advocate for themselves). Parents who had argued for a specific AP solution for their child considered that their child would not have got that support they needed had they not fought for it, and not all families were in a position to advocate for their children in the same way. Lack of fairness in access to AP for schools (linked to the debate about funding).

6. <u>Paperwork</u> – forms are long, wordy, repetitive ... and yet can say little about underlying needs.

'The paperwork is really cumbersome.' – **Headteacher**

7. <u>Everything at the level of AP placement</u>. There is not a range of support available at panel discussions, including support for children to remain in school. Little scope for brokering pragmatic solutions and giving pupils a "second chance" – some school leaders felt that this put them in a position where situations escalated to the point where exclusion was the only option. No link with formal protocol on managed moves. No multi-agency offer of support – services that are named in the terms of reference as being required to attend do not always do so, and do not have an offer of support to bring.

'The process in and of itself is not bad. But the provision (what it gets you) is questionable.' – **Headteacher**

Decision-making around access to AP

Children who "bounce" between mainstream and panel / AP multiple times

There was a widespread concern that there were pupils who were "bouncing" around the system, without these cases being tracked and the needs in question escalated. FAP data suggest that 37 (or 1 in 5) of the 197 secondary pupils referred to FAP were referred more than once. This was a strong theme in our interviews with school leaders.

'Children are passed around from pillar to post under guise of "fresh start".' – **Headteacher**

'There are children who bounced around the system – managed move, back to FAP, into AP, back to FAP. Children constantly going around the merry-go-round.' – **Headteacher**

'Children who get excluded, have a managed move to another mainstream school (for one-off incidents that are often not one-off), go to another mainstream school, fail there, go into the PRU, go back to mainstream, fail again. These are the children we do a disservice to – the ones bouncing between mainstream and the PRU. Clearly something is not working for them.' – **Headteacher**

'Some children are coming back again and again – the system isn't working.' – **Headteacher**

The issue here relates both to the panel terms of reference and the lack of join-up between the decision-making process around AP and wider local services. There is no formal route in the terms of reference to escalate cases where pupils are "bouncing" between mainstream and AP placements, and limited involvement from other LA services (beyond BACME), meaning that all the panel can do is say "yes" or "no" to AP placements – there is no route to take a broader view of a child's needs and recommend an alternative course of action. This limits the options available to those pupils. (It also potentially means that the LA might miss points where it needs to consider its broader section 19 duties, specifically whether the child in question is accessing suitable education.) There is also a lack of LA follow-on support for young people who have been permanently excluded.

What do we know about cohort coming to FAP and into AP?

Trends

Data on PXs (secondary) and FAP referrals (secondary) show a spike in recent years –

- PXs rose in AY22/23 and AY23/24, before reducing (to AY22/23 levels) in AY24/25.
- FAP referrals rose in AY21/22 and AY22/23, but dropped in AY23/24 and AY24/25.

Pupil characteristics

Summary of key points from data shown on next page

- ❑ Gender – boys disproportionately represented among FAP cases and PXs.
- ❑ Ethnicity – Black pupils and those from mixed backgrounds make up a higher proportion of pupils brought to FAP / PX than their % of pupil population.
- ❑ Deprivation – pupils coming to FAP (45%) more likely to be eligible for FSM than Borough average (32%).
- ❑ SEN status – pupils with SEN disproportionately represented, especially SENK (64% of FAP cases, 27% of PXs, 12.2% of all pupils). EHCPs (5.6% of FAP cases) more in line with % of secondary pupils (4.6%), but internal data shows a spike last year (20% of PXs).
- ❑ Year-group – highest numbers of PXs + FAP referrals were for pupils in Y9 and Y10.

Known to services

- ❑ High number of pupils (197) known to CSC (102), Early Help (83) and CAMHS (118).
- ❑ Low number known to BACME (11 BACME PTTT, 18 BACME SEMH) and SEND (27).

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Sources: Internal LA data – FAP report, academic year 2024/25; national data – *Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England* (2025); *Schools, pupils and their characteristics* (2025); and *SEN in England* (2025)

Data on the characteristics of pupils accessing AP

Pupil characteristic	**FAP cohort** (internal data for AY24/25)	**Excluded pupils** (national data for AY23/24)	**All WF secondary pupils** (national data for AY24/25)
Gender	All FAP: 62% male (PX pupils: 76% male)	78% male	51% male, 49% female
Ethnicity	Black 25% Asian 17% White 38% Mixed 16%	Black 29% Asian 24% White 31%	18.3% Black 26.6% Asian 37.1% White 12.2% Mixed
Deprivation (FSM)	All FAP: 45% PX pupils: 41%	58%	32% (NA 27.5%, London 31.8%)
SEN status	EHCP: 5.6% (PX: 20%) SENK: 64% (PX: 33%)	EHCP: 7.2% SENK: 27%	EHCP: 4.6% (NA 3.1%) SENK: 12.2% (NA 13.4%)

Sources: Internal LA data – FAP report, academic year 2024/25; national data – *Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England* (2025); *Schools, pupils and their characteristics* (2025); and *SEN in England* (2025)

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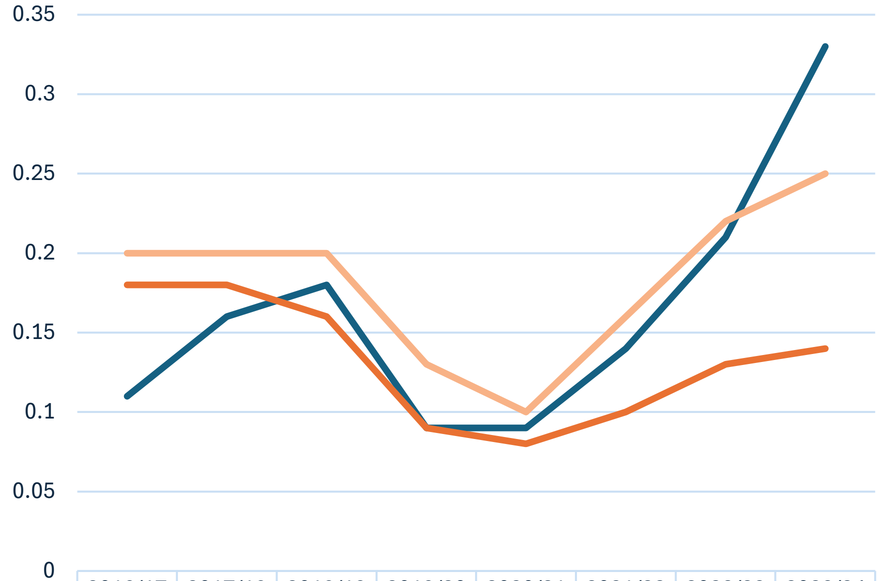
Rates of exclusion in Waltham Forest have historically been lower than average. They rose sharply post-pandemic, but internal data show the numbers reduced last academic year (AY24/25).

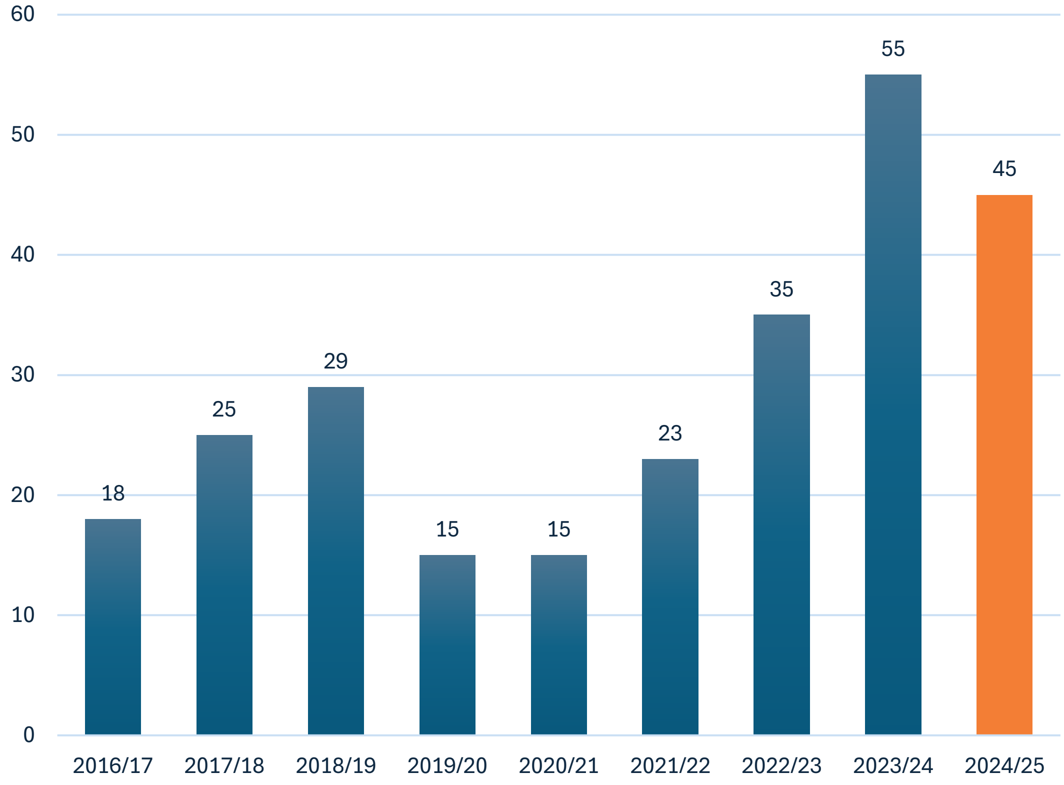
Rates of secondary permanent exclusion (AY16/17 to AY23/24)



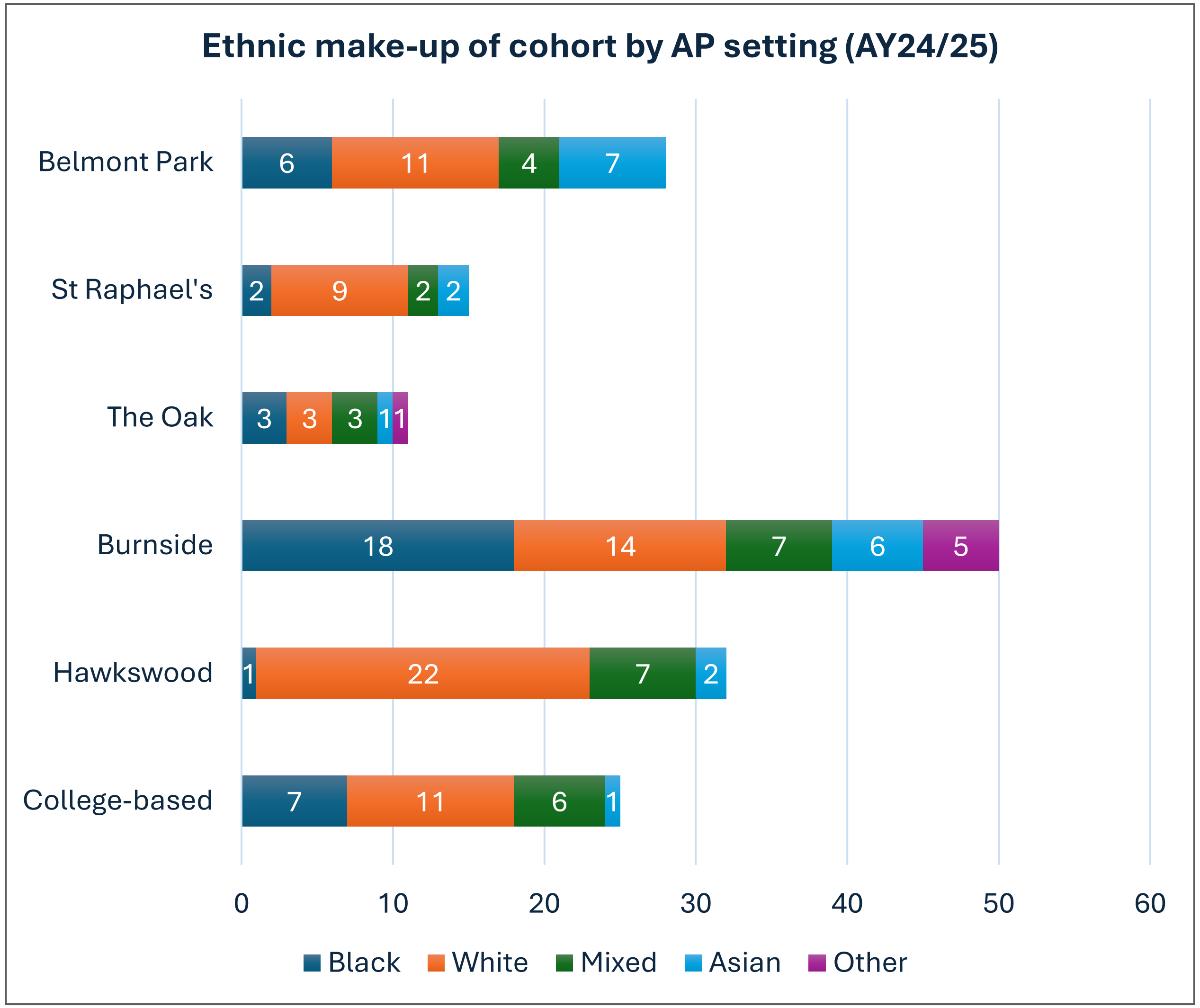
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Waltham Forest	0.11	0.16	0.18	0.09	0.09	0.14	0.21	0.33
London	0.18	0.18	0.16	0.09	0.08	0.1	0.13	0.14
England	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.13	0.1	0.16	0.22	0.25

Waltham Forest London England

Secondary PXs in Waltham Forest (AY16/17 to AY24/25)



Monitoring data from last academic year (24/25) confirms the uneven gender and ethnic profile between different AP settings



Ethnicity

- Among all pupils placed in AP, almost half of Black pupils (49%) were placed in Burnside, compared to 3% who were placed in Hawkswood.

Gender

- In 2024/25, 65% of pupils in Hawkswood secondary provision were female compared with 14% in Burnside and 35% in AP as a whole.

Overall

- Boys and pupils from Black and Asian backgrounds were more likely to be placed in Burnside; girls and pupils from White backgrounds were more likely to be placed in Hawkswood.

Part 2: Proposals

Our proposals: Introduction

The aim of this review has been to make a set of proposals for whole system of AP arrangements in Waltham Forest (secondary phase) – not to review AP in isolation, but to consider AP as part of a continuum of support and to consider the systems and processes that the continuum is used effectively.

The proposals set out in this section are intended to fit together as part of a whole-system approach to AP – the graphic on the next page summarises the six main recommendations and how they are intended to fit together and reinforce one another.

Like our findings, our proposals are divided into two themes –

- Theme 1 concerns the continuum of support, focusing on the question: ***"Have we got the right offer?"***
- Theme 2 concerns systems and processes, focusing on the question: ***"How should the offer of support be commissioned, funded, and accessed?"***

The proposals have been developed through discussion with the Working Group, and broader discussions involving school, AP and LA leaders. The process has been iterative and consultative, rather than a formal decision-making process. As such, the proposals put forward are just that – recommendations to be considered through further discussion during the summer term and through the formal governance process, as set out in Part 3.

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Our proposals: How they are intended to fit together

The continuum of support and provision | **Key systems and processes**

Key question: Have we got the right offer of support?

We propose the introduction of a new **tiered continuum of support** (mainstream, targeted, AP), with consistent expectations of identification and practice at each, and clear pathways and routes to support for pupils.

- Adopt and implement a consistent set of expectations of **mainstream practice** to identify pupil needs and put in place support before AP.
- Develop a clear offer of **targeted support** for pupils and schools that offer early intervention, build inclusive capacity, and support reintegration.
- Develop and implement a strategic blueprint for **AP** in Waltham Forest to reshape the current offer so that it responds to the local area's needs.

Key question: How should the offer of support be commissioned, funded, and accessed?

We propose strengthening existing systems to ensure consistent **decision-making** about access to AP, **sustainable funding**, and effective **joint commissioning**.

- Establish a new "**Joint AP Commissiong Board**", with school, LA and multi-agency membership; responsible for shaping the local AP continuum.
- Develop the existing **AP funding model**, to ensure there is greater fairness and equity in schools' contributions and their access to AP.
- Distinguish access to AP and fair access. Create a new terms of reference for **decision-making** re: access to and reintegration from AP.

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Part 2: Recommendations

2a: The continuum of support and AP

A new tiered approach

Mainstream | Targeted | AP

Issue (recap)

A lack of consistent expectations and practice regarding identification of pupil needs and support and intervention in mainstream settings. As a result, different levels of need at which schools bring requests to AP, leading to a sense of unfairness (i.e., that some schools are subsidising access to AP for other schools).

Recommendation

Adopt a consistent set of expectations of what schools should put in place (as part of expectations of quality-first teaching, inclusion support, and ordinarily available provision) **to identify pupil needs and put in place appropriately chosen, evidence-based interventions before making requests for access to collective AP.** This should go hand in hand with increasing schools' capacity for early in-school support.

Explanation

Consistent expectations of mainstream inclusive practice is at the foundation of any system of additional support – without it, access to support will be inconsistent, and risk being ineffective and perceived as unfair. (This is not to say that practice in every school should look identical. There should, however, be a set of expectations broad enough to recognise schools' distinct contexts and the needs of their cohorts, but reflective of principles of practice that are common across schools.)

It is beyond the scope of this review to define expectations of inclusive practice. **What this review has done is capture what school leaders would expect to see evidence of from a peer seeking a placement in AP.** The list on the next page is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive, but to act as a guide when panel decisions about access to AP are being made. It could build on the existing expectations in the current FAP terms of reference, and an updated version be built into the updated panel terms of reference. It could also be used by governors when reviewing exclusions.

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Mainstream support

Before seeking support at FAP, leaders would expect to see evidence that a school had sought to …

Identify / understand needs and barriers to learning	**Which could include exploration of potential …** ▪ Learning needs ▪ Adverse childhood experiences, trauma, mental health needs (and wider family needs) ▪ Underlying additional needs (e.g., communication and interaction needs)
Put in place well-chosen **support** to overcome barriers	**Which could include …** ▪ In-class support ▪ Additional individual or group interventions ▪ Adaptations to the curriculum ▪ Adaptations to the school day ▪ Pastoral support ▪ Pupil voice ▪ Engagement with family
Seek to **engage** relevant external support services	**Which could include …** ▪ Inclusion outreach ▪ Young people advocates / keyworkers ▪ Educational psychologists ▪ Mental health support ▪ Family support / early help ▪ Speech and language support

NB The points above are not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive – they provide examples of the sorts of evidence that schools seeking support may provide to show how they have sought to identify needs, support students and engage services, and that should be considered by FAP members / those triaging requests to ensure informed and consistent decision-making.

Plus, set out a clear, evidence-based **rationale** for …	▪ What support is being sought (additional targeted support, AP) ▪ Why this is needed (and why it is in the young person's best interest) ▪ What the expected duration, outcomes and destination are for the young person

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A new tiered approach

Mainstream | **Targeted** | AP

Issue (recap)

This review has identified a lack of support between mainstream schools' own practice and AP. The lack of preventative support means there is no port-of-call for schools seeking support to keep mainstream children in mainstream education, and no opportunity to reinforce expectations of inclusive practice, ensure consistency, avoid escalation of needs. There is similarly no capacity to support reintegration from AP. This is compounded by a lack of support from SEND, EP, CAMHS services etc.

Recommendation

- **Develop a targeted offer of support within the AP pathway to build schools' capacity, provide preventative and reintegrative support to pupils and schools.**
- **Align wider multi-agency services with the AP pathway and AP decision-making** – especially SEND, early help / children's services, mental health, SALT.

Explanation

The current offer of targeted inclusion support from LA services is being redesigned, ready for launch from September 2026. (Work is underway to develop an "Experts at Hand" offer. **The proposals from the Working Group are offered as "design principles" and functions that should be included as part of the redesign of LA support services.** These functions could be fulfilled in different ways – LA services, outreach, multi-agency teams. The key is that these functions are fulfilled within the continuum of AP support.

In that spirit, the Working Group identified the need for an offer of targeted support that could support <u>pupils</u> (as a consistent presence for those who go into AP), **<u>schools</u>** (to support identification of underlying needs, and work alongside schools to provide early support and help with post-AP reintegration) **and <u>families</u>** (to build relationships). The Working Group's proposals for targeted support are set out on the next two pages.

Targeted support: What the system needs

There were three broad forms of targeted support that the Working Group said were needed as part of a future AP system in Waltham Forest …

Support for young people

A **trusted adult** who –

- can provide a **consistent presence** in a young person's life;
- **knows the young person**, their aspirations, and can **advocate** on their behalf.

Support for schools

- Practitioners with expertise who can **work in and with schools** to model strategies, co-deliver, observe, and build capacity that supports **inclusion** and **post-AP reintegration**.
- A **multi-agency team** that can support the young person / family / school to **identify** and **address** underlying needs and **align** support.

Support for families

Additional facets of the role of the **multi-agency team** described above could be to –

- build / mediate **relationships** between school and family; and
- identify **wider family needs** and draw in support to meet them.

Targeted support: What the system needs

There was broad recognition of the need to build capacity for "upstream", early support. In this context, the Working Group considered that what is needed in terms of targeted support is …

- ✓ **For there to be capacity for a 'fluid conduit between AP, schools and home'.** A named person who can liaise with schools, parents and young people on a regular basis.
- ✓ **Ideally, there should be capacity to engage this service / support early (before the point at which a referral to panel is made)** – not necessarily on a referral basis, but through regular meetings with each school with scope to discuss specific pupils that may benefit from this additional support.
- ✓ **In addition, this service / support should provide continuity for young people who are referred to panel and spend time in AP** – it should act as a "bridge" between families, schools and AP.
- ✓ **Ultimately, the role of this service / support is one that can (a) engage young people, (b) build relationships with families and help them to support a young person's education, (c) support with attendance and engagement, (d) help with careers advice, (e) provide outreach support to schools and help to deliver interventions.**

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A new tiered approach

Mainstream | Targeted | **AP**

Issue (recap)

Despite strengths of individual provision, the current AP offer overall lacks clarity and breadth. There are key gaps where the current AP offer does not reflect some of the needs of pupils, schools and the Borough as a whole. The offer needs greater clarity and differentiation regarding pupil needs and stages of education (KS3 vs KS4).

Recommendation

- **Develop a strategic blueprint for the secondary AP offer in Waltham Forest**, based on an understanding of pupil needs, differentiated by age / stage of education, equity of access for communities and different geographical locales within the Borough.
- **Start the process of reshaping the existing AP offer**, retaining what is valued, but starting to add to or repurpose aspects to reflect local needs.

Explanation

The Working Group proposed that the offer of secondary AP for the Borough should have six key characteristics – these are set out on the following page, and include the AP offer being flexible and multi-tiered, provision that offers therapeutic support consistently across all provisions (and moves away from the language of "internalised" and "externalised" behaviour"), an offer that is differentiated by age / stage, and one to which school in all parts of the Borough have equitable access.

The Working Group also found it helpful to think about the offer of AP for pupils with four broad profiles of need – the table on p.42 sets out the characteristics of effective AP for each group, what is currently in place in Waltham Forest, and what else might be needed (which links to our proposal for a Joint AP Commissioning Board). As part of this, there may also be the need to develop a framework of quality-assured local AP and proactively shape a wider range of independent AP to complement "core" provision.

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AP: Towards a "strategic blueprint"

The Working Group proposed developing a strategically planned offer of secondary AP in the Borough that has the following characteristics –

1. **A flexible, multi-tiered offer** – providing outreach (and reintegration), a range of time-limited placements (e.g., 6-week, 12-week, 20-week), and longer term "progression" placements. (Cf. National reforms)
2. **An offer in which therapeutic support and access to wider therapy services and experts is integrated with AP provision**. (Cf. National reforms recommending AP Specialist Taskforce, Experts at Hand.)
3. **An offer that is equitable to young people on the basis of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, SEN status and other characteristics**. Move away from "internalised" and "externalised" behaviour labels.
4. **An offer that is differentiated by age and stage** – recognising the focus of support in KS3, Y10 and Y11 will need to be different.
5. **An offer with distinct pathways for different profiles of need** – (a) turnaround offer (KS3, Y10); (b) alternative vocational pathways (KS4); (c) EBSNA / MH (most complex); (d) risk of exploitation, gangs.
6. **An offer that geographically equitable** – there should be access to each pathways in the north, middle and south of the borough.

AP: Towards a strategic blueprint (continued)

	What does excellent AP look like?	What do we have now?	What more might we need?
Turnaround offer (KS3, some Y10)	• Short-term expert input (e.g. knives, drugs) • Managed move with outreach • Minimise lost learning, maintain core subjects • Different approach for incidents of sexual nature	• Direct FAP placement in **schools** • School **managed moves** • **North Birkbeck** 6-week turnaround	• **Avoid AP / PX** – managed moves, expert input (knives, drubs, sexual incidents). • **Turnaround** – broader range of time-limited KS3 and Y10 placements.
Alternative vocational pathways (KS4 – Y11, some Y10)	• Clear matrix of options depending on the underlying need (lack of core skills; SEMH; neurodiversity; focus of attention) • Stronger vocational pathways and options • More practical learning environments	• **Big Creative** provides this, but only for one sector • **North Birkbeck** have 20-week KS4 placements, facilities • Limited **college** provision	• Expanded range of **vocational pathways** (full-time and blended) across different disciplines (to investigate further). Involve FECs. • Develop **"bases"** to coordinate.
Most complex EBSNA / MH	• Stable provision that builds confidence • Access to therapeutic support, therapists • Trusted relationships with key adults • English, maths, core subjects • Access to wider qualifications, enrichment	• **Hawkswood Secondary** = core offer for this group. So too the **satellites** (St Raph's, The Oak). • Equitable access? (Gender, ethnicity, geography)	• Clarify role of **existing providers** – ensure understood, access equitable. • Increase **therapeutic interventions**. • Consider need for **base** for this support in middle / south of WF.
Risk of exploitation, gangs	• Strong mentoring, trusted adult relationship • Access to alternative activities – opportunities to succeed • Access to therapeutic support / therapy • Core English and maths • Manage contextual risks	• **Burnside** is the main provider … but some concern about mix of YP / contextual safeguarding risks. • **North Birkbeck** commissioned for some Day 6 places.	• Wider range of **alternative options** that enable YP to experience success and belong – e.g., boxing, other sports etc. • Access to **therapeutic support**. • Outstanding **English & maths** teaching.

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Part 2: Recommendations

2b: Key systems and processes

How is the system of AP support to be <u>commissioned</u>?

Issue (recap)

The existing approach to commissioning AP has led to a somewhat narrow and inflexible offer of AP, which does not meet the emerging needs of all young people.

The current commissioning approach is not perceived as equitable by all schools and does not always reflect what schools and young people need.

Recommendation

To establish a Joint AP Commissioning Board, with school, LA and partner agency leaders as its members, with the remit of shaping the overall offer of AP support and provision in the secondary phase.

Explanation

The precise format and make-up of the Joint AP Commissioning Board is yet to be determined, but the Working Group agreed it should have the following features.

- **Membership** – a small board, formally part of the Borough's education partnership and governance structure (linked to the Education Strategic Board and Schools Forum). Members would be drawn from school, LA and agency (e.g. health) leaders.
- **Remit** – remit to determine how the "secondary AP fund" (schools' and the LA's financial contributions to AP) is to be used – the balance between "core" AP places, preventative or in-school support, flexible use of independent AP. The remit could also include proactively shaping independent AP and developing a framework of quality-assured AP. Integrated commissioning of targeted support from health services.
- **Commissioning process** – the Board would be responsible for a multi-year rolling cycle of identifying "commissioning asks" and agreeing what will be commissioned. This cycle would balance responsiveness to schools with stability for AP providers.)
- **Oversight of the use of AP and quality of provision** – tracking data on use, outcomes.

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How is the system of AP support to be funded?

Issue (recap)

The current approach has strengths that should be retained but also challenges that need to be addressed – notably, (a) the equity of school financial contributions and access to support, (b) lack of flexibility in the current AP offer, and (c) year-to-year instability of funding creating challenges for providers.

Recommendation

To implement an improved version ("2.0") of the current funding model – one that retains features that are valued (collective responsibility and decision-making around AP as a collective resource) but has clearer links between school financial contributions and access to support, as part of a fair, responsive and holistic system of support.

Explanation

- The Working Group wanted to develop sustainable AP funding arrangements and thus **developed a set of principles (p.47).** These were used to evaluate different AP funding models, including a "centralised" funding model (where LA funds AP to fulfil its statutory responsibilities) and a "devolved" funding model. The Working Group determined (p.48) that neither was preferable to strengthening the current approach. Within this approach, the LA's high needs block contributions would cover its statutory responsibilities for excluded pupils, but would extend beyond this.
- **As such, the Working Group have proposed an improved version 2.0 of the current funding model** – one that retains key features, but (alongside changes to commissioning and decision-making) seeks to address challenges relating to the link between school financial contributions and access to support. As explained (p.49), we propose introducing a distinction between "school-accessed" AP places (for early intervention for needs that can be planned for, where pupils will return to mainstream school) and "system" AP places (where children need a change of placement).

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Principles to shape the AP funding model

Below are a set of core principles relating specifically to AP funding that agreed by the Working Group. These were used to evaluate different funding models.

1. Retains a sense of shared responsibility of both the LA and schools – retain LA and school financial contributions to AP, which is a key strength of the current arrangements in Waltham Forest.

2. Ensures schools can access support when they need – access based on need, reflecting both the LA's and schools' individual financial contributions to the costs of local AP.

3. Delivers an offer that is of high quality and is responsive to the needs of the local area, pupils and schools.

4. Avoids creating new perverse incentives – future funding arrangements must not inadvertently make it cheaper to exclude a pupil that to seek early support for them.

5. Provides value for money – for any public funding being used to provide local AP.

6. Provides sufficient stability and predictability of funding for AP providers needed by the local area, which enables them to operate and deliver high-quality support. Avoid short-term funding changes that undermine quality.

The Working Group considered 3 broad options …

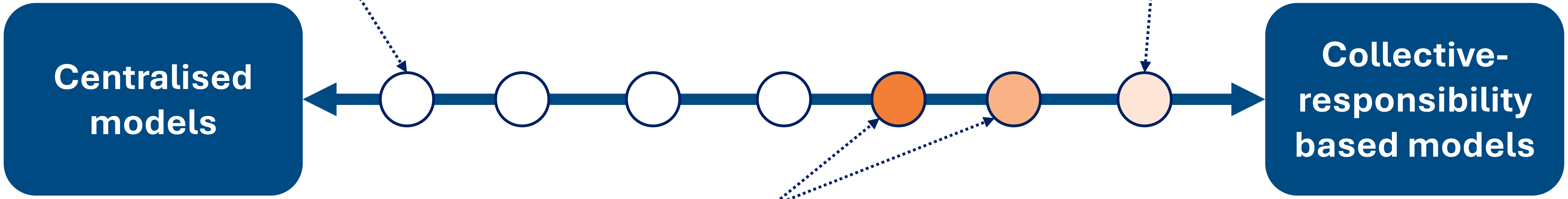
There were two models that we discounted …

Centralised model (discounted)

Would undermine shared responsibility (principle #1), create perverse incentives to exclude (#4), would not make access fairer (#2). Would improve stability for APs (#6), but at risk AP becomes less responsive (#3).

Devolved funding to schools (discounted)

While, in principle, devolved models have benefits linked to our principles, we considered that this was not suited to Waltham Forest's geography, it would split up shared responsibility (#1) and provision (#6), and would be too complicated to implement in the short-term. Could achieve features (locality working) without devolving funding.



Strengthen the current model + joint commissioning (preferred)

Build on strengths –

- ✓ Collective decision-making (#1)
- ✓ School and LA financial contributions to "AP fund" (#1)
- ✓ Avoids perverse financial incentives to exclude (#3)

Address key challenges –

- Link between school contributions and access
- Lack of flexibility in centrally-commissioned offer
- Year-to-year instability for APs

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Achieving greater fairness in school £ contributions and access to AP

The Working Group proposed creating a distinction between places in AP that schools would have direct access to and places in AP that would be more of a collective insurance scheme for more complex needs (which would be decided collectively).

School / intervention places

- For **commonly occurring needs** that can be planned for.
- Places for purpose of **early intervention**, where pupil will **return to their mainstream school**. (Dual roll.)
- **Decision to place taken by school with AP provider** (i.e., not by panel) – speedier access, fewer cases escalated to panel.
- **Scope for schools to flex the AP places they want** – based on needs of their cohort, anticipated level of demand.
- **Scope for schools to earn "credits"** – by reintegrating pupils from AP, allowing other schools to use their places. (This, plus outreach, should avoid risk of under-utilisation.)

Illustration: School has Y8 pupil who would benefit from 6-week intervention place in AP. School contacts AP provider, shares information about pupil. Placement, start-date (half-termly entry), induction agreed. School works with AP provider during placement and plans reintegration.

System / change-of-placement places

- For more **complex needs** (where there is evidence of identification, support, and engagement of external services).
- **Where a pupil is unlikely to return to their mainstream school in the short term** – e.g., risk of PX, positively chosen alternative pathway in KS4.
- **Decision to place taken collectively by panel** – collective custodianship of the Borough's AP resource.

Illustration: School has a pupil who has been supported in KS3 but increasingly struggling in KS4 and would benefit from an alternative curriculum pathway. School makes referral to panel. Panel decides collectively about use of system places based on pupil needs.

There are currently 135 commissioned secondary AP places in Waltham Forest in the direct scope of this review. **Under our proposals, these would be allocated to individual schools based on size and deprivation. On average, schools would be allocated 7-8 AP places.** Some of these would be (a) school / intervention places (e.g. 5), and some would be (b) notionally allocated as system / change-of-placement places (e.g. 3) – the latter would guide panel discussions to ensure access to AP is equitable and sustainable.

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NB There is a risk in this model that "school" places are used for lower levels of need, and that demand for "system" places exceeds available capacity. We suggest this risk is mitigated by: (a) agreeing entry criteria with AP providers so use of AP is consistent; (b) greater support for reintegration; and (c) having a mechanism in place whereby disproportionate demand for "system" places will lead to "school" places being repurposed as "system" places to ensure the system remains balanced and sustainable.

What is the offer for schools that do / not buy in?

What you get if you buy into the Waltham Forest (secondary) AP system

Access to AP

- **Guaranteed number of "intervention / turnaround" places –** school manage access directly (no panel process).
- **Flexibility** re: where those places are (location, specialism). (Links to AP Joint Commissioning Board.)
- **Enhanced offer –** schools put in £ for X places, but HNB funding significantly increases schools' buying power.

A wider system of support and a seat at the table when decisions are made

- **Access to swift advice –** advice line / named point of contact.
- Access to **outreach support**.
- **Participation in collective decision-making re: access to AP –** peer support; services / support around the table. Fair system – so one school's use does not disproportionately affect access to support for others.

What you get if you do opt out

Access to AP

- **Day 6 provision only –** and with limits and challenge / escalation routes in place to avoid disproportionate use.

i.e. No part in collective decision-making re: AP access, no scope to use state-funded provision or wider support. (Still bound by fair access protocol for in-year fair access admissions, but no formal part of AP decision-making.)

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Since the high needs block is currently funding provision beyond fulfilling the LA's statutory responsibilities (p.20), those buying into the system will have access to a broader range of support than they would be in a position to purchase using just their own delegated resources. For schools that do not buy into the system, the offer of AP from the Waltham Forest system will solely be that required to fulfil the LA's statutory responsibilities (i.e. day 6 provision only).

How is access to AP to be decided?

Issue (recap)

There are strengths to the current decision-making process (collective decision-making, professional development for school leaders) **but also challenges to be addressed** – not least the blurring of the lines between fair access and access to AP.

Recommendation

Establish clear decision-making processes re: access to and reintegration from AP. Revisit and create new terms of reference for a new AP / inclusion panel – essentially, a panel to determine the use of collectively commissioned places in AP – distinct from (but linked to) the fair access protocol.

Explanation

The Working Group considered that this should entail –

- **New terms of reference** – with clarity on scope (all AP, including EBSNA / mental ill health), clear criteria and processes for how decisions should be reached and cases (including those raised outside panel meetings) should be resolved.
- **Membership** – to clarify who has decision-making status, and which other services / settings should be represented to offer advice. The latter should include (a) AP providers, and (b) wider services (SEND, children's services, children's health) to offer support and escalate cases that require a multi-agency response.
- **Chairing** – there should be a permanent chair for the panel across an academic year – either fully independent, or a permanent chair from the local area (akin to primary).
- **Reformed paperwork** – to simplify requirements; aligned with expectations.
- **Tracking** – stronger tracking of cases, especially pupils referred to panel multiple times, to align with escalation routes where a pupil's needs and education pathway should be considered by LA decision-makers.

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Part 3: Next steps

Plans for the summer term (Phase 3)

Governance process

To test, refine and agree the recommendations from this review

- **Education Strategic Board** (26/3) – initial overview of findings and recommendations
- **AP roundtable** (14/4) – test and refine proposals
- **Secondary Heads** (6/5) – test and refine proposals
- **Education Strategic Board** (7/7) – agree recommendations, implementation timetable
- **Schools Forum** (8/7) – agree funding model

Implementation planning

Further planning to flesh out details of proposals and plans for implementation

(“Task-and-finish” activities – to be undertaken through further meetings of the Working Group, or smaller sub-group of members.)

- **Develop draft terms of reference for new “AP and inclusion panel”.**
- **Develop terms of reference for the Joint AP Commissioning Board.**
- **Communications about plans for AY26/27.**

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Potential sequencing of implementation

Year 1
(From Sept 2026)

- Develop new expectations of **mainstream inclusion**, as part of "AP and inclusion panel" terms of reference.
- New **targeted inclusion support** offer.
- **School £ contributions to "AP fund"** remain at current levels.
- Introduce new notional allocations of **"school"** + **"system"** AP places – clarity about what schools are entitled to in return for their financial contributions.
- Establish new **Joint AP Commissioning Board.** Work with existing – and explore opportunities with prospective – AP providers to refine **AP offer** to match priorities and address gaps.

Year 2-3
(From Sept 2027)

- Updated **AP offer** launched – new pathways / bases – linked to strategic blueprint.
- Full implementation of **"school" + "system" AP places.**
- New **multi-year rolling cycle** of joint AP commissioning begins.

Year 4
(From Sept 2029)

- **Joint AP Commissioning Board** to review existing offer, renew school and LA "asks".
- NB Links to national reforms re: inclusion, SEND and AP taking effect.

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Thank you

Annex: The membership of the Secondary AP Working Group

School leaders	❑ **Jackie Bowers-Broadbent** – Buxton School ❑ **Gary Haines** – Chingford Foundation School ❑ **Nigel Armsby** – Highams Park School ❑ **Sam Jones** – Kelmscott School ❑ **Rebecca Linden** – Willowfield School
LA leaders	❑ **Mary Jarrett** – Corporate Director of Education ❑ **Clare Potter** – Assistant Director for SEND ❑ **Jordan McDougall** – Head of Finance (Children's)
Facilitators	❑ **Natalie Parish** – Isos Partnership ❑ **Ben Bryant** – Isos Partnership

HIGH NEEDS APPENDIX D

Indicative Alternative Provision and Pupil Referral Units funding 2026-27

Description	Places	Place Funding (Apr-26 to Aug-26)	Place Funding (Sep-26 to Mar-27)	Total Place Funding	Indicative Top-up Funding - LBWF Only
		Funding			
Maintained Alternative Provision					
Hawkswood - Primary SEND	8	£33,333	£46,667	£80,000	£79,000
Hawkswood - Secondary SEND	6	£25,000	£35,000	£60,000	£61,000
Additional SEND Funding		£88,189	£123,464	£212,000	
Hawkswood - Primary PRU	20	£83,333	£116,667	£200,000	
Hawkswood - Secondary PRU	20	£83,333	£116,667	£200,000	
Burnside Secondary PRU	46	£191,667	£268,333	£460,000	£20,000
	100	**£504,855**	**£706,797**	**£1,212,000**	£160,000
Assessment Places					
North Birkbeck Road	30	£125,000	£175,000	£300,000	
	30	**£125,000**	**£175,000**	**£300,000**	
College placements					
College of Haringey & North East London (COHNEL)	16	£56,250	£78,750	£135,000	
Big Creative Education	12	£61,415	£85,981	£147,000	
George Monox	50	£150,000	£210,000	£360,000	
AP Place commissioning -Spot				£99,000	
	78	**£267,665**	**£374,731**	**£741,000**	
Other Commissioned Places					
Heathcote School	15	£93,750	£131,250	£225,000	
Holy Family	12	£75,000	£105,000	£180,000	
	27	**£168,750**	**£236,250**	**£405,000**	
TOTAL	**235**	**£1,066,270**	**£1,492,778**	**£2,658,000**	**£160,000**

HIGH NEEDS APPENDIX D

Indicative Alternative Provision and Pupil Referral Units funding 2026-27

Description	Places	Funding						
		Place Funding (Apr-26 to Aug-26)	Place Funding (Sep-26 to Mar-27)	Total Place Funding	Top Up Funding	Less Schools Contributions (based on 25/26 Figures)	Net Top Up Funding Cost to the LA	Indicative Top-up Funding - LBWF Only
Maintained Alternative Provision								
Hawkswood - Primary SEND	8	£33,333	£46,667	£80,000				£79,000
Hawkswood - Secondary SEND	6	£25,000	£35,000	£60,000				£61,000
Additional SEND Funding		£88,189	£123,464	£212,000			£0	
Hawkswood - Primary PRU	20	£83,333	£116,667	£200,000	£298,500	-248,598	£49,902	
Hawkswood - Secondary PRU	20	£83,333	£116,667	£200,000	£298,500	-272,424	£26,076	
Burnside Secondary PRU	46	£191,667	£268,333	£460,000	£686,550	-626,575	£59,975	£20,000
	100	**£504,855**	**£706,797**	**£1,212,000**	**£1,283,550**	**-£1,147,597**	**£135,953**	**£160,000**
Assessment Places								
North Birkbeck Road	30	£125,000	£175,000	£300,000	£447,750	£0	£447,750	
	30	**£125,000**	**£175,000**	**£300,000**	**£447,750**	**£0**	**£447,750**	**£0**
College placements								
College of Haringey & North East London (COHNEL)	16	£56,250	£78,750	£135,000				
Big Creative Education	12	£61,415	£85,981	£147,000				
George Monox	50	£150,000	£210,000	£360,000				
AP Place commissioning -Spot				£99,000				
	78	**£267,665**	**£374,731**	**£741,000**	**£0**	**£0**	**£0**	**£0**
Other Commissioned Places								
Heathcote School	15	£93,750	£131,250	£225,000	£0			
Holy Family	12	£75,000	£105,000	£180,000	£0			
	27	**£168,750**	**£236,250**	**£405,000**				
TOTAL	**235**	**£1,066,270**	**£1,492,778**	**£2,658,000**	**£1,731,300**	**-£1,147,597**	**£583,703**	**£160,000**

LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

Meeting / Date	**SCHOOLS FORUM**	Agenda Item	**8**
Report Title	**SEND Reform Plan**		
Decision/ Discussion/ Information	For Information		
Report Author/ Contact details	Mary Jarrett: Corporate Director for Education. Mary.jarrett@walthamforest.gov.uk		
Appendices			

1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides an update on the SEND Reform Plan submission to Department for Education, a summary of the local area plan and response and an outline of next steps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Schools Forum notes the submission of the SEND Reform plan
2. That a detailed breakdown of SEND Reform plan spend and Experts at Hand model and implications for HNB is scheduled for Schools Forum October 2026

1. REASON

1.1 The reasons for this recommendation are as follows:

- Along with all local areas, Waltham Forest was required by Department for Education to provide a SEND Reform Plan that outlines how we will deliver the SEND Reforms within the proposed allocated budget in order to meet all of the requirements.
- This was requested within a tight time frame and required co-production and co-design with colleagues from Health and is a plan on behalf of the local area, not just the local authority, although the local authority is in the lead.
- The plan has been signed off by the Director of Children's Services and Chief Executive and the Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board.

- Schools Forum is asked to note the joint approach agreed and to identify any further areas for future discussion.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The SEND Reform plan sets out how partners in Waltham Forest will, through the SEND Reforms and building on our co-produced SEND Strategy, deliver an inclusive, sustainable 0-25 system where children and young people with SEND thrive within local communities.

2.2 It notes that Waltham Forest has strengths: Many children and young people with SEND achieve well in inclusive settings, 56.7% of pupils with an EHCP attend mainstream schools, and attendance for pupils with SEND is better than national averages. Early years outcomes are strong, with 75.4% of children achieving a good level of development, above London and national comparators.

2.3 It highlights the challenges Waltham Forest faces: our current universal and targeted offer is under-developed and piecemeal. Demand for statutory support has risen sharply, with EHCPs increasing from 2,584 in 2022 to 3,703 in 2025, (41.8% rise) with proportions of school-aged children with EHC plans consequently rising from 4.9% to 6.5% (national average for 2025 was 5.3%). Consequently, LBWF has a lower number of children with SEN supported at SEN support, with 2025 data showing 12.5% of children with SEND at SEN support 1.5% lower than national average (14%) Timeliness in statutory processes remains 12% within 20 weeks, and rising complexity of need has increased pressure on specialist placements, sufficiency and spend. Our post-16 services need development; we have no developed and co-ordinated PfA pathway; our young people told us that finding a route to meaningful employment is especially important and Supported Internships are a gap in our provision offer.

2.4 In order to address this, the plan identifies the actions we will take, and highlights five priority goals:

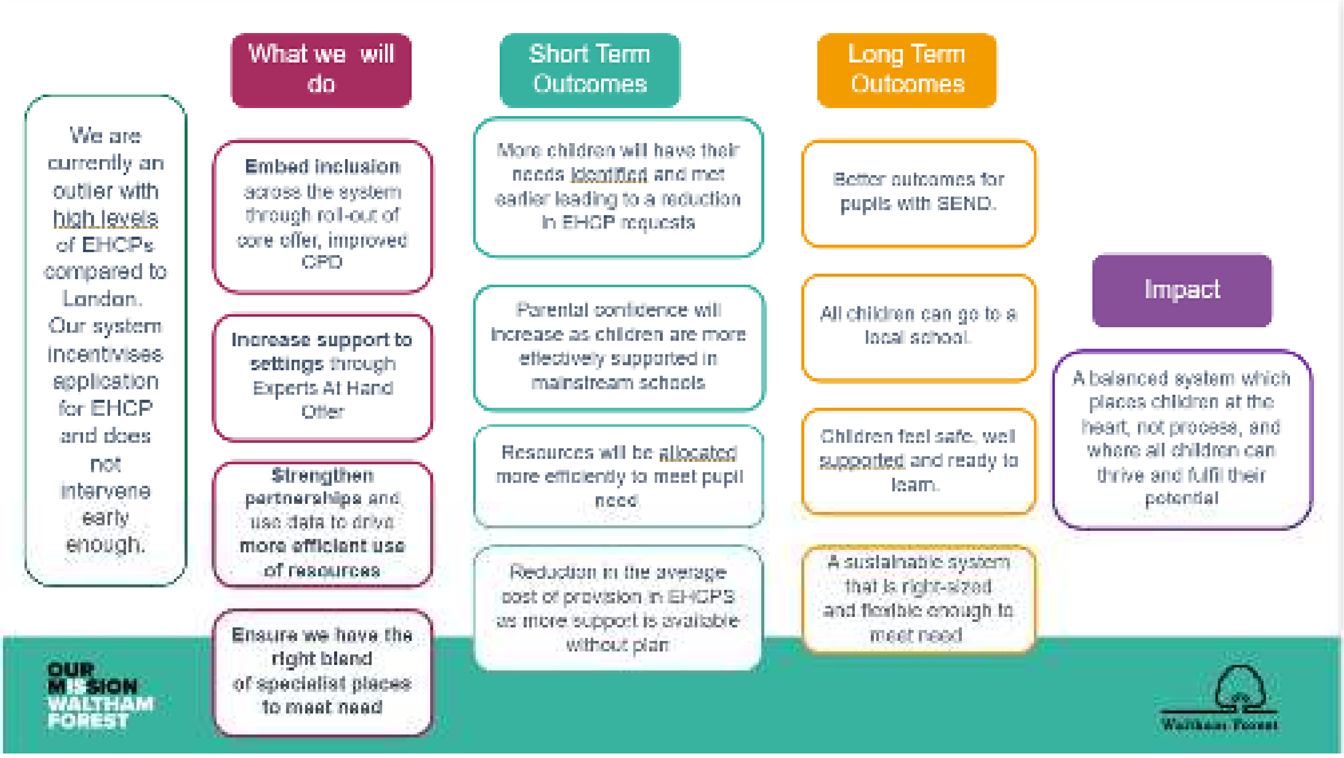
- Improving attainment for pupils with EHCPs and on SEND Support
- Reducing permanent exclusions and improving attendance for pupils with SEND
- Measuring and improving parental confidence
- Improving statutory timeliness for EHCP processes
- Improved management of finances through: Increasing local specialist provision and reducing demand for NMISS

2.5 The plan also outlines our plans to reduce the projected annual growth in EHCPs from 11.3% to 9.8% from 2027/28 increasing the number of children supported at SEND support from 12.5% to 14%. This will be achieved through delivery of the Experts at Hand resources and strengthening our existing advisory teaching offer in Borough, which will provide mainstream schools and settings with access to specialist expertise and embedded core standards, enabling more children to receive targeted support without statutory funding.

2.6 Plans for how we will deliver this between now and 2028 are outlined, including how we will allocate the proposed budget.

2.7 The slide pack at Annex A gives more details on the proposals included

2.8 In summary, our proposals hinge on the fact that rebalancing the system towards earlier intervention and support should, in time, reduce growth in demand for EHCPs. Our theory of change is shown below for illustration.



5. FOR SCHOOLS FORUM TO NOTE

5.1 The SEND Reform Plan is now being assessed by DfE and we will hear back in mid-September if our proposals have been accepted or not, at which point, funds will be allocated to authorities whose plans have been accepted.

5.2 Feedback so far from our DfE Advisor has been positive but we await formal approval and allocation of funds.

5.3 In the meantime, we have initiated work to set up the programme to deliver these reforms, which are far-reaching and have implications for the way we organise and deliver and for colleagues in all schools and settings.

5.4 The proposed allocation of funds for 2026/27 is outlined below and is in accordance with DfE guidance issued related to how funds must be disbursed.

5.5 It is proposed that more detailed plans from programme delivery including the Experts at Hand model are brought to Schools Forum in the autumn term for information and discussion. As indicated in the grant allocation for 2026/27, this is what the bulk of funds will be allocated to. Plans are currently being co-designed to ensure effective set up and use of funds to ensure maximum impact.

5.6 Schools Forum should also note that the Reform plan delivery will be further supported by recruitment to additional capacity in the Education Finance Team to monitor and evaluate spend and to support with the detailed financial modelling for each workstream, funded from the funds allocated.

5.7 Also for future discussion, Schools Forum should note that the SEND Reform Plan requests information about any planned **Block Transfers** from Schools Block to High Needs Block. The plan notes that Waltham Forest has no Block Transfer in place but also comments that: ‘Modelling will be undertaken to evaluate creation of an Inclusion fund to support inclusion delivery in schools. This will be modelled by the Education Finance team and discussed at Schools Forum in Autumn 2026.'

6. NEXT STEPS

6.1 Once DfE have responded to the SEND Reform Plan submission, it is proposed that a more detailed outline is provided to Schools Forum in the autumn term including an outline of how the Experts At Hand funding will be allocated and proposals for a Block Transfer in 2027/28

6.2 The DfE has announced the Inclusion Mainstream Fund which will provide £400m of funding per year for the next 3 years support schools to move towards practices that are inclusive by design, providing early support directly to children without the need for diagnosis or statutory process. Maintained schools in Waltham Forest will receive £914,930 in 2026/27to help equip schools to improve the inclusivity of their universal practice, providing them with more resource to meaningfully embed inclusion and remove commonly occurring and predictable barriers to learning.