



**Meeting held on Monday 30 September 2025 at 8.00am
via TEAMS**

MINUTES

	Attendees Nina Siddle (NS) (Chair), Alex Allenby (AA), Jane Aukett (JA), Sarah Bate (SB), Liz Brummer (LB), Cllr Margaret Cracknell (CMC), Steve Kernan (SK), Karen Linton (KL), Richard Gargon (RG), Wendy Jackson (WJ), Emily Powell (EP), Rachel Revell (RR), Tracey Richman (TR), Jenni Steel (JS), Corrinne Wilson (CW),
79/25	Apologies Apologies for absence had been received from Jo Indian and Carianne Robson.
80/25	Chair's Welcome The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked SK for chairing the previous meeting in her absence.
81/25	Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 10 March 2025/Matters Arising from the Minutes The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 June 2025 were agreed as a true record. All matters arising were covered on the agenda.
82/25	Finance updates presentation - LB Finance updates presentation - LB A copy of the finance update was displayed on screen. (i) <u>General updates</u> - LB advised that a 4% teachers' pay award had been agreed from 1 September 2025 and some grant funding was available. - NFF formulas would remain the same and certain grants would be rolled into the NFF. - National uplifts to per pupil funding were expected and would be confirmed in the autumn 2025 term. - There would be no major structural changes and nothing significantly different was expected. (ii) <u>DSG Outturn comparison with other local authorities</u> NEL was in deficit of £12m at the end of March 2025 and the table showed comparison with other local authorities. NEL's position was no significantly different from other authorities. LCC had a good surplus but this had reduced

(iii) (iv)	towards the end of this financial year. NEL needed to try and mitigate and maintain its deficit. There was support from the DfE although DBV could not be used to reduce the deficit. The latest 2025/26 forecast indicated an in-year increase of £11m by the end of March 2026 owing to the pressure on high needs and this was not different from other authorities. <u>IMSS Analysis</u> The figures indicated the spend over the last 3 years for each sector and the direction of travel. Primary had remained level over 3 years and there was a steady line of increase over the others. The category of need analysis was also shown for information with SEMH the highest need. LB suggested that this should be a regular agenda item and she would provide an update year on year on this information. Action: Clerk <u>Next steps</u> The NFF allocation was expected in the autumn term and the Schools Forum Working Party would work through this putting options together (delegation of responsibility as agreed by Schools Forum last year). This had proved successful and in January 2026, figures would be brought back to Schools Forum for final endorsement, with submission on the APT towards the end of January. The High Needs Working Party would review figures for the high needs block for 2026/2 but the LA would make the decision on how that expenditure was forecast and budgeted for. The final decision would sit with JS on this budget. NS stated it would be necessary to arrange dates for the School Funding and High Needs Working Group before the next Schools' Forum meeting. JS introduced Rachel Revell, the new Deputy Director for SEND. JS stated that the Working Group would discuss the different challenges and suggested the membership should be similar to previously. Meetings would be co-ordinated with LB but if any member wished to join, they were requested to contact JS. Action: Members
83/25	Attainment Outcomes Headlines for 2024-25: EYFSP; Phonics; Key Stage 2 - WJ WJ advised that the data was provisional but did not anticipate significant changes. EYFS: Historically, NEL performed well and achieved 67% GLD compared to 68% national. It was rated as sixth best performing county in the region increasing by one place. 21 schools achieved GLD scores below the national average. Children eligible for FSM achieved 53.9% GLD, compared to the regional average of 51.4% and the national average of 49.7%. This was a significant measure for the LA. However, there was a significant attainment gap with 71% of non-FSM children achieving a GLD compared to 53.9% of FSM eligible children. This represented a very similar picture across the region and nationally.

	NEL had fallen slightly below the national average for children with SEND achieving 19% GLD compared to the national average of 20.6% In terms of the gender gap, 59.9% of boys achieved GLD compared to 73.6% of girls and represented a slight increase in the gender attainment gap from the 2023/24 academic year. This was against both regional and national data which showed a small decline in the gender gap. EYFS data was not moderated by the LA as the Government removed the powers of moderation. Phonics: The 81% pass rate had been achieved compared to 80% national and the children had performed well as 17 schools had performed below the national average. For the second consecutive year, 70.1% of children eligible for FSM achieved the pass mark. This exceeded both the national average of 66.6% and the regional average of 68.6%. For the third consecutive year, outcomes for children with SEND have fallen below both the national and regional averages. This year, 41.1% of pupils with SEND achieved the pass mark compared to 43.5% nationally and 44.6% regionally. Although lower, it was not far behind national. The gender gap in Phonics had narrowed with 77.3% of boys achieving the pass mark compared to 84% of girls which was pleasing. KS2: NEL has retained its position as the top-performing county in the region for combined outcomes at the expected standard at 64% for Reading, Writing and Mathematics. This represents a 1% increase compared to the previous year's results and exceeded both the regional average of 61% and the national average of 62%. NEL was the top performing county for GLD in Writing at 76% and Maths 77%. KS2 did really well in Writing and was robustly moderated by the LA. WJ expressed her thanks to the KS2 moderators and to the Headteachers for releasing them. NEL was second in the region for Reading at 75%. NEL was the top-performing county in the region for GDS in Writing at 16% and was second for GDS in Maths at 26%. In reading, GDS was 29%, placing the county fourth in the region, marginally below the regional average of 30% and the national average of 33%. 16 schools achieved below national for RWM, with four of these schools achieving significantly below with outcomes of 41% or below. Reading outcomes are currently in line with the national average at 75%. However, 17 schools within the borough performed below national. 12 schools achieved below national of 72% in Writing. 16 schools achieved below national of 74% in Maths. The attainment gap between children eligible for FSM and those not eligible significantly reduced in NEL in 2024/25. 61.6% of FSM children achieved the expected standard in RWM compared to 70.5% of non-FSM children. This represented a 10% reduction in the attainment gap for this cohort which was a significant achievement across Primary Schools.
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	For the third consecutive year, children with SEND achieved lower than national and regional averages for the expected standard in RWM. 19.2% of children with SEND met the expected standard in RWM compared to 23.8% nationally and 23% regionally. Considerable work had taken place to reduce this. Additionally, the attainment gap between SEND and non-SEND children widened further during this academic year. The gender gap in achieving the expected standard for RWM narrowed in 2024/25. 61.6% of boys achieved the standard, compared to 66.9% of girls. Both figures were above the regional and national averages for 2024/25. WJ stated that overall, it was a good news story for EY and KS2 and expressed her thanks to everyone. NS responded that it was very positive updates and a comprehensive report.
84/25	New Government Strategy JS/WJ • Giving every child the best start in life • New Local Authority target for EYFSP • Good Level of Development (GLD) JS stated that the GLD target had been set at 75% across the country and there had been very limited time to meet with stakeholders to discuss this further. A meeting had taken place with the LA around the broader impact. A representation had been made to the DfE in relation to the parameters around the 75%. There was a significant gap around the contextual data which did not take into account children with SEND, FSM and the birth rate where children were born with complex needs. This was a huge disparity for the LA. Some of the significant challenges were acknowledged around managing support for parents and families to reach GLD. Some children did not attend Nursery and were not school-ready and this represented significant concerns for the LA. The LA needed to support and challenge settings which was difficult in private settings. Equally, the local unions had no awareness of this GLD target being set. WJ stated that the LA had no statutory powers attached to the target which represented a challenge as it did not have any powers to moderate the information. The LA would support any setting but had limited resources. The LA was awaiting further information from the DfE following national challenge around this target in terms of statutory powers to moderate. The LA did have an SLA for statutory assessment and Laura Smith, Statutory Assessment Officer, was an EY specialist and would support any school who wished for their data to be verified for EYFS. JS reiterated that the LA were challenging the DfE and were awaiting feedback from those representations. WJ explained that the EYFS profile outcomes, not previously considered by Ofsted, were now going to be part of the outcomes measure.
85/25	SEND Reforms – verbal update - RR RR stated that the report on SEND had not yet been issued but she wished to highlight the main points from the Select Committee's report and would circulate an article which summarised the findings and key recommendations.

	• SEND must become an intrinsic part of the mainstream education system, rather than an addition to it. • Embed inclusivity in all education settings, from Early Years through to post-16, and identifying needs early in a child's education, will enable support to be provided in the mainstream. This will change the cycle in respect of EHCP plans and the long term expenditure. • The cross-party Committee had called on the Government to invest in both the education and health services' workforces, to ensure that the health service stepped up to its role in solving the SEND crisis, and to improve collaboration between the two sectors. • MPs recommended a review of the national funding formula for schools to take better account of factors that varied between local areas such as prevalence of need, deprivation and distances travelled by home-to-school transport. This was relevant to matters discussed earlier in the meeting. They also highlighted the need to expand the number of specialist school places in the state sector so that more children could be educated closer to home and spending on expensive independent school places could be reduced. • They also reflected on the significant increase in EHCPs numbers but were clear that it was inappropriate to remove them. There should be a focus on inclusivity in mainstream education which would bring this spend down. There should also be a clear definition of what inclusive mainstream education was and clarity around what settings needed to ensure they were providing in terms of their education and curriculum. • There was inconsistency around support across settings and within the recommendations was for a standardised national framework for SEND support. • There was an unsustainable demand for EHCPs but the SEND tribunal system should remain as a backstop for that accountability process. There had to be a cultural shift in provision which would see the demand reduce over time. • There were recommendations around the workforce for education to become inclusive; it required a whole-school approach and staff required training, resources and support to meet the diverse needs of pupils with SEND and also support their families. • A push to upskill professionals in local authorities and the health sector and address shortages of educational psychologists and health professionals such as speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. • In terms of pupil funding, there were issues around the NFF, whether this was fair in the different areas and the challenges faced. • There was a reflection around NHS services being too passive and a recommendation that SEND was a priority of focus as part of their ongoing restructure. • A recommendation to restore trust and confidence in the system as there were significant issues. • A recommendation for a dedicated ring fenced funding stream for Post 16 to recruit and train specialist staff required. • The select committee welcomed provisions in the Children and Schools Wellbeing Bill that gave local authorities a greater role in establishing new schools, oversight of admissions, and the placement of pupils. The recommendation was to expand those places and to ensure there was adequate provision and securing better value for money
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	RR offered to circulate a copy of the Select Committee's report. Action: RR NS reported that over the summer she had been invited to a meeting regarding the development of two new unitary authorities – Northern Lincolnshire and Southern Lincolnshire and, potentially, some of the smaller authorities merging and dropping into a bigger authority. It was part of the Government's agenda and a proposal was to be submitted by 28 November 2025 with a view to consultation in 2026 and a new authority being established from 2028. The Chairs of the various School Forums were requested to discuss what some of the benefits might be in respect of larger authorities. SEND and the high needs factor was the most prevalent topic in terms of the deficits which each authority was managing and looking at other opportunities in a larger geographical area. Any consolidation of local authorities could lead to duplication of roles. A consultation paper was to be prepared and various conversations were taking place across the LA. JS explained that the proposal for NEL was to remain as status quo as the context that the authority operated in was different. There were also concerns about possible changes in Central Government if a different party came into power. NS stated that if she was invited to further meetings, she would liaise with JS to ensure that she represented the views of Schools Forum.
86/25	Any other business There was no other business raised.
87/25	Date of next meeting The date of the next meeting was to be confirmed and would be a longer meeting of 90 minutes with members attending in person.