

Schools Forum

Date: Thursday 7 May 2026

Time: 4.30pm

Location: Teams

Chair: Pippa Osborne

Members of the Committee

Pippa Osborne (Chair)

Julia Anwar

Dave Farr

Nicky Edwards

Paul Evry

Dave Farr

Kim Garland

Florence Hiatt

David Jenkins

Nicola Jones

Jonathan Keohane

Ruth Laing

Louise Leader

Tania Craig (Deputy Chair)

Ross Newman

Elly Owen

Will Roberts

Fr. Malcolm Strange

Andy Watson

Susie Weaver

David Williams

Sue Wright

Appropriate Officers attending:

Mustafa Salih

Hilary Smith

Caroline Warren

Michelle Palmer

Deb Luter

Councillors attending:

Ian Boulton

Chris Sivers, Executive Director for the Department for People, Badminton Road Offices, Yate,
South Gloucestershire, BS37 5AF

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AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Pippa Osborne)
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Pippa Osborne)
4. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT (Pippa Osborne)
5. MINUTES FROM 12th MARCH MEETING (Pippa Osborne)
6. SEND REFORM FINANCE UPDATE (Verbal) (Mustafa Salih)
7. HIGH NEEDS WORKING GROUP UPDATE (HNWG) (Susie Weaver)
8. MAINSTREAM PLACE NUMBERS AND PRESSURES (Presentation) (Mike Wheeler)
9. GROWTH FUNDING & FALLING ROLLS POLICY UPDATE – (Report) (Caroline Warren)
10. TRADE UNION FACILITIES TIME POOLED FUND 25-26 OUTTURN AND 26-27 BUDGET (Report) (Claire Paines)
11. SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN
12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:
 - Future Chair of the Forum (Pippa Osborne)

South Gloucestershire Schools Forum

Minutes of Meeting held on 12th March 2026

Location: Teams

Chair: Pippa Osborne

Forum Members

Pippa Osborne (Chair)	Headteacher Christ Church Junior School
Tania Craig (Deputy Chair)	Executive Head Teacher, New Horizons Learning Centre
Julia Anwar	Chief Operating Officer, Olympus Academy Trust
Nicky Edwards	Early Years representative
Paul Evry	Chief Finance Officer, Mosaic Partnership
Kim Garland	Headteacher, Brimsham Green Secondary School
David Jenkins	Governor, Crossways Schools
Jonathan Keohane	Headteacher Callicroft Primary School/Olympus School
Louise Leader	Headteacher, Pathways Learning Centre
Ross Newman	CEO of the Leaf Trust representing Academies
Elly Owen	District and Branch Secretary – South Gloucestershire NEU
Madeleine Roberts	Director of Finance, Enable Trust
Will Roberts	Chief Executive, CSET
David Williams	Diocese of Gloucester

Executive Councillors:

Ian Boulton, Cabinet Member - Schools, Skills, Employment and Business

Officers:

Mustafa Salih, Service Director Resources and Business
 Caroline Warren, Finance Business Partner
 Deb Luter, Senior Accountant - People (Children)
 Claire Paines, Schools Finance Officer

Guests: Andrew Cummings, Mark Pullin, James Alden, Dan Walton

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Chris Sivers, Dave Farr, Andy Watson, Susie Weaver, Sue Wright, Ruth Laing, Fr. Malcolm Strange

1. Declarations of Interest – None

2. Any Other Items the Chair decides are urgent – Free School Meal Voucher Update

3. Minutes of last meeting – 15th January 2026

Minutes of the meeting were approved as an accurate record.

4. The Schools Forum met online, chaired by **Pippa Osborne**. The meeting opened with introductions, noting that **Dan Walton** would likely become the AP representative as he transitions into the Headteacher role at Pathways Learning Centre. Thanks were given to **Louise Leader** for her longstanding contribution to the Forum.

5. Guest Introductions & Main Urgent Item: Free School Meal Voucher Update

Guests **Andrew Cummings**, **Mark Pullin**, and **James Alden** introduced themselves.

Mark and James presented a detailed update on the shift from the **Household Support Fund**—which ends this month—to the new **Crisis and Resilience Fund**, effective 1 April 2026.

Key points:

- The Household Support Fund has historically supported families in financial difficulty, including free school meal vouchers during school holidays.
- The new Crisis and Resilience Fund moves away from crisis payments and blanket voucher schemes toward **sustainable, needs-assessed support**.
- While vouchers will continue **until the end of summer 2026**, they **cannot continue under the new funding model**.
- Schools will **not** be expected to fund vouchers themselves.
- The Council will develop communication for families and requested school involvement in a working group to shape responsive support models.
- Several Forum members expressed concerns, including impacts on early years families and those affected by changes to Universal Credit.

Action: James to contact Pippa to arrange attending one of the upcoming Primary Heads Executive Group meetings, in order to answer any questions from the representatives of all schools.

6. SEND Reforms – Funding and Strategic Planning

Mustafa Salih presented an overview of the national SEND reforms and the financial implications:

- A new **High Needs Stability Grant** is expected to cover approximately **90% of local authorities' cumulative SEND deficits** by March 2026, subject to government approval of SEND reform plans.

- Based on our forecast position at the moment, and they are not definitive figures, we would anticipate a grant of around **£50 million** and based on that forecast that would leave us with a £7 million deficit though deficits will continue to rise due to demand pressures
- Funding details for 2027–2029 are still unknown.
- Additional new funding streams include:
 - An **Inclusive Mainstream Fund**
 - A **SEND workforce training programme**
 - **Capital investment** for SEND provision
- Several ambiguities remain around implementation, funding timelines, and the national funding formula.
- There is no confirmed change to the £10,000 base funding for special schools at this stage. As they have not directly addressed this in the current proposals, it would be appropriate to highlight this gap in our consultation response.

Hilary Smith then outlined the work to produce the required **SEND Reform Plan**, due to the DfE by **19 June 2026**, with a draft due one month earlier.

The plan must be co-produced across schools, early years, colleges, social care, and health.

Multiple working groups and clusters are being used to assess progress across seven key themes. Significant time pressure was noted, and further engagement with early years and other sectors will be initiated.

Pippa Osborne – Suggested to have SEND Reform as a Standing Item for the foreseeable to keep the Forum updated in terms of the financial elements because this is obviously unfolding.

Action:

- (1) **Mustafa to feed back in the consultation on the base funding rate for special schools.**
- (2) **To set up a meeting between Will Roberts, Mustafa and Hilary regarding SGC’s approach to Capital Projects.**
- (3) **SEND Reform as a Standing Item for future meetings.**

7. DSG Budget Monitoring (Quarter 3)

Caroline Warren presented the Q3 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) report:

- The **cumulative DSG deficit** stands at **£57.8 million**, a slight improvement.
- Schools Block shows a small underspend, though new surplus-place/falling-rolls applications have since increased financial pressure.
- Early Years is forecasting a break-even position.

- High Needs continues to drive the overspend, with increased costs in EHCP support, independent placements, and post-16 provision.
- The Forum also received a summary of what was shared with Cabinet regarding the SEND deficit landscape and central government changes.

8. Growth Funding & Falling Rolls Update

Caroline provided further details:

- **£1.5m** was allocated this year across 20 schools for growth, falling rolls, and surplus places.
- Exceptional cases were reviewed by officers and approved by the Chair and Vice Chair.
- Due to shifts in demand and financial pressure, **revised policies** will be brought to the next meeting.

8. Forward Plan & Meeting Format

Upcoming meeting items include:

- Safety Valve update
- High Needs Working Group report
- Mainstream Place Pressures
- Revised growth/falling rolls policies
- Trade Union Facilities Time Pooled Fund - 25/26 Outturn and 26/27 Budget.
- SEND Reforms - Standing Item

Members discussed meeting formats going forward: the majority favoured a **50/50 split between online and in-person meetings**.

The May meeting will remain online; July will be held in person, hosted by **CSET**.

Chair Succession

Pippa announced she will leave her headship at the end of the school year and therefore step down as Forum Chair. Members were invited to consider taking on the role from July.

The meeting ended with thanks to all attendees.

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM

07th May 2026

SEND REFORM FINANCE UPDATE

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM

12th March 2026

HIGH NEEDS WORKING GROUP (VERBAL UPDATE)

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM

07TH May 2026

MAINSTREAM PLACE NUMBERS AND PRESSURES (Presentation)

South Gloucestershire Council

SCHOOLS FORUM

07th May 2026

Growth, Surplus Places & Falling Rolls 2026–27

Purpose of Report

1. To seek the Forum's approval for the revised policies, the proposed falling rolls fund value of £250k, and the full alignment of Age-Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) rates across the Schools Block.
2. In addition, the report provides an update on the current financial position of the Growth and Falling Rolls allocations, highlighting a projected in-year overspend of £400k–£500k, and sets out a proposal for managing any final overspend through adjustments to Schools Block allocations within the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) in 2027–28.
3. This report sets out proposed revisions to the Growth & Surplus Places Policy and the Falling Rolls Policy for the 2026–27 financial year. The revisions reflect ongoing pressures within the Schools Block arising from pupil number volatility, falling rolls in some sectors, and the need to ensure that available resources are targeted effectively and sustainably.

Background

4. The Department for Education (DfE) Growth & Falling Rolls guidance (2026–27) requires LAs to set clear, objective criteria for growth and falling rolls funds, and for Schools Forum to agree the size of these funds and the criteria for allocation. Growth funds can cover basic-need expansions, infant class size compliance, new schools, and revenue costs of removing/repurposing surplus places; falling rolls support is permitted only where SCAP shows places are needed in the short-medium term (except where funding is specifically to remove/repurpose surplus places as revenue).

AWPU Rates & Funding Periods

5. Previously the DfE minimum rate had been applied to surplus places, whereas growth & falling rolls were funded at the relevant Key stage AWPU rate. We propose to align all rates to match the AWPU rate for each Key stage for 2026-27.
 - Primary - £4,051
 - Secondary Key Stage 3 - £5,662
 - Secondary Key Stage 4 - £6,382

Summary of Policies

6. Growth Summary (Including Surplus Places) *(see Appendix 1 for the full policy criteria)*

- Growth funding supports New Schools, LA agreed bulge classes, permanent PAN increase to meet basic needs, exceptional in-year expansions and KS1 class size compliance. Funding for growth uses requested increase for Sep-Mar x AWPU both maintained & academies. Apr-Aug full requested increase and Apr-Aug KS1 class size compliance where applicable year on year without re-basing if pupil numbers are lower than starting year.

- Surplus Places

Funding supports revenue-only Surplus Places when PAN reduction is agreed with LA. Funding for surplus uses PAN minus census (Oct25 funds FY 26/27) Apr-Aug & Sep-Mar x AWPU both maintained & academies.

7. Falling Rolls Summary *(See Appendix 2 for the full policy criteria)*

Falling Rolls supports temporary reductions in pupil numbers where SCAP shows places are required within the next 2–3 years (mandatory); and cases where the LA refuses a PAN reduction in order to retain capacity evidenced by SCAP. Funding is based on the difference between the previous and current October census (not up to PAN), multiplied by the relevant AWPU (Primary/KS3/KS4). The policy retains criteria for an Exceptional Requests clause with a small panel (LA officers and Forum reps).

Growth Funding Settlement and Provisional Commitments

8. The growth funding allocation for 2026-27 is £671,665 which is included within the Schools Block Funding allocation. This is a reduction of £317,649 from the 2025-26 allocation.
9. The table below shows the data used to calculate the growth funding allocation for South Gloucestershire.

LA Name [A]	LA Code [B]	Eligible primary growth [C]	Eligible secondary growth [D]	ACA (pupil weighted for fringe LAs) [E]	Allocation for primary growth [F] = [C] * £1,570 * [E]	Allocation for secondary growth [G] = [D] * £2,350 * [E]	Number of new schools [H]	Allocation for new schools [I] = [E] * [H] * £77,225	Total growth allocation [J] = [F] + [G] + [I]	Number of middle super output areas eligible for primary falling rolls [K]	Number of middle super output areas eligible for secondary falling rolls [L]	Allocation for primary falling rolls [M] = [K] x £141,890 x	Allocation for secondary falling rolls [N] = [L] x £141,890 x	Total falling rolls allocation [O] = [M] + [N]	Total growth and falling rolls allocation [P] = [J] + [O]
South Gloucestershire	803	137.0	190.0	1.015228	£218,365	£453,299	0	£0	£671,665	0	0	£0	£0	£0	£671,665

10. Whilst the Department of Education (DfE) has introduced a Falling Rolls budget within the Growth Funding Allocation, South Gloucestershire Council did not qualify for any falling rolls funding based on the criteria.

11. In 2025-26 we recommended a top slice from the growth fund to provide a falling rolls budget to enable financial support to schools. We seek approval to continue this in 2026-27 and increase the top slice to £250k.

12. Below is a provisional list of schools / areas identified as likely to be eligible for growth, surplus places or falling rolls funding in 2026-27 financial year.

School	Change / Reason for Growth	New School Opening Date / Date of PAN Increase- Decrease	No of additional places Sep 25	Apr 26 - Aug 26 funding £	No of additional places Sep 26	Sep 26 - Mar 27 Indicative funding £
Abbeywood Secondary	Breach Sep 25 & Sep 26	01/09/2025	60	135,172	30	99,077
Frenchay	Rolling 210	01/09/2022	13	20,780	-	-
Mangotsfield Secondary	Sep 25 breach	01/09/2025	30	67,586		-
Manorbrook Primary	Sep 26 Breach	01/09/2026	17	27,174	30	70,898
Stoke Lodge	Breach of Yr 5 & Yr6	01/09/2025	36	49,500	36	VPN
Lyde Green Secondary	New School Opening	01/09/2026	Pre/Post opening	106,750	180	VPN
Lyde Green Primary expansion	Split Site opening	01/09/2026	0	-	30	70,898

Yate area	Shortfall of 2FE Primary for Sep 26	01/09/2026	0	-	30	70,898
Barrs Court	Surplus	01/09/2025	3	4,795	3	7,090
Kings Oak	Surplus	01/09/2025	29	46,355	29	68,534
Our Lady Of Lourdes	Surplus	01/09/2025	12	19,181	12	28,359
St Annes	Surplus	01/09/2025	26	41,560	26	61,445
St Stephens Infants	Surplus	01/09/2025	20	31,969	-	-
The Tynings	Surplus	01/09/2025	32	51,150	-	-
Barley Close	Falling Rolls	01/09/2025	25	39,961	30	70,898
St Chad's	Falling Rolls	01/09/2025	13	20,780	-	-
Little Stoke	Falling Rolls	01/09/2025	16	25,575	16	37,812
Frampton Cotterell	Falling Rolls	01/09/2025	12	19,181	-	-
Crossways Infants	Falling Rolls	01/09/2026	0		11	25,996
Total				707,469		611,905

Overspend & Recovery Plan

13. Based on the updated policies the Local Authority is forecasting an overspend of approx. £400k in 2026–27 (see table below), although this is based on current approved applications and does not account for any new applications during 2026-27 for surplus places or falling rolls funding.
14. It is proposed that the Local Authority recovers this overspend by top slicing the Schools Block funding allocations via the APT in 2027–28.

Table showing summary of funding available and forecast spend 2026-27

Summary of Growth Funding 2026-2027	Provisional £
Growth Funding (including Surplus Places (£671,665 less £250,000))	421,665
Falling Rolls Funding	250,000
Recoupment Adjustment Academy Growth	252,284
Total Funding Available	923,949

Forecast Spend 2026-2027 Financial Year	1,319,374
Surplus (-) / Deficit (+)	395,425

Recommendations

- Approve the Growth & Surplus Places Policy for 2026–27 as detailed in appendix 1
- Approve the Falling Rolls Policy and top slice of £250k to fund for 2026–27 as detailed in appendix 2
- Note and Endorse the Application of AWPU Rates from Apr 2026
- Note the estimated forecast overspend of £400k in 2026–27 and approve the Proposed Recovery Plan for 2027–28.
- Note the Worked Examples Provided in the Policies

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Appendix 1

South Gloucestershire Council

Growth & Surplus Places Funding Policy 2026–27

1. Purpose

To set out the criteria, funding rules and processes for allocating Growth and Surplus Places support for 2026–27 from the Schools Block, in alignment with DfE guidance. This policy applies to maintained schools and academies

2. Scope

This policy covers: (i) LA-agreed additional classes/bulges; (ii) permanent PAN increases to meet basic need; (iii) LA-requested/advised in-year expansions (exceptional circumstances); (iv) Surplus Places support where the LA has agreed a PAN reduction and the school is removing/repurposing surplus capacity or the LA has refused the reduction as places will be required in the future and (v) New Schools

3. Effective Date

1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027.

4. Eligibility

Agreed Temporary bulge class or additional class to meet basic need (including KS1 compliance).

Permanent increase to PAN (roll-through) where required by demand.

Exceptional in-year expansion (e.g., unplanned closure of a local school) by LA agreement.

Surplus Places when an LA-approved PAN reduction is implemented and capacity is removed/repurposed or the LA has refused as places are required in future

New schools opening

5. Exclusions

- General popularity growth (managed through lagged funding).
- General financial difficulty/deficit support (other routes apply).
- Capital costs (this policy funds revenue only for Surplus Places).

6. Funding Methodology

AWPU Basis: allocations are calculated using SGC AWPU.

For legacy 2025/26 approvals, April–August top-ups use 2025/26 AWPU (Primary £3,836; KS3 £5,407; KS4 £6,096).

For new September 2026 activity, use 2026/27 AWPU (Primary £4,051; KS3 £5,662; KS4 £6,382).

Maintained vs Academy: maintained schools are funded for the unfunded period Sept–Mar (7/12) subject to the KS1 bulge operating rule; academies are funded for a full academic year (12/12) Sept–Mar Apr–Aug due to lagged funding.

7. Temporary and Permanent Increases to meet Basic Need

Where schools either increase their Published Admission Number (PAN) or provide an extra class in agreement with the Local Authority (LA) and these are not captured in the October census until the following year or included in the estimated pupil numbers in the Authority Proforma Tool (AP Tool), funding will be allocated from the central growth fund.

PAN increases can be based on either one form of entry, or a part-time form of entry where there is a longer-term plan to increase the schools PAN up to one form of entry.

Increases can be based on a temporary or permanent change in the pupil admission numbers agreed with the LA.

Where a temporary change is agreed (i.e. a temporary bulge class is required for one year) growth funding will be calculated as follows:-

For academies growth funding will be calculated for the academic year and the school will receive 7/12ths by the end of November and 5/12ths in April.

For maintained schools growth funding will be calculated and paid for September to March only as the increase will be captured in the census numbers and Schools Budget Share from April unless the KS1 bulge operating rule applies

Where a permanent change is agreed (i.e. the schools PAN is increasing permanently, on a roll through basis) and this is not captured in the October census until the following year or included in the estimated pupil numbers in the AP Tool funding, schools will receive growth funding for the agreed roll through period (usually 7 years for Primary and 5 years for Secondary)

The growth funding allocation will be based on the Basic Entitlement rates for the current year multiplied by the agreed pupil number increase and pro-rata based on the agreed date of change.

For example, where a school has agreed with the LA to increase by 30 pupils (a one form of entry) in September the growth funding calculation would be based on 30 pupils multiplied by the Basic Entitlement for the proportion of the financial year the class runs September to March.

However, if a school has a PAN of 20 and agrees an increase to 30 to create one form of entry in September, the allocation of growth funding will be based on 10 pupils multiplied by the Basic Entitlement for the portion of the financial year the class runs 7/12ths September to March.

8. KS1 Bulge Funding – Operating Rule

Where a KS1 bulge is agreed (Reception to Year 2), SGC will fund the full agreed bulge from September to March.

Following the first October census, the initial shortfall between the agreed bulge number and the census pupil count will be established. This shortfall will set the maximum funded differential for the remainder of the KS1 phase.

In subsequent years:

Where pupil numbers reduce, funding will not increase above the initially established differential.

Where pupil numbers increase, funding will be reduced to reflect the new, lower shortfall.

Funding will therefore be the lower of:

the initially established differential, or

the current shortfall between the agreed bulge number and the census count.

9. Exceptional Circumstances

Exceptional circumstances may arise where the Local Authority approves an increase above a school's published admission number (PAN), including increases agreed mid-academic year.

Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to, significant and unforeseen changes in local provision (for example, the unplanned closure of a nearby independent school).

Where an increase is agreed under exceptional circumstances:

Growth funding will be calculated pro-rata; and

Funding will apply only for the portion of the financial year during which the additional class or places are operational.

Any funding agreed under this provision is time-limited and does not constitute a permanent uplift to PAN unless otherwise approved through the normal statutory or Schools Forum processes.

10. Surplus Places

Where a school has surplus places and will be reducing PAN in agreement with the Local Authority or have requested and the LA has refused due to a future need for those places, surplus places growth funding will be allocated to support the school transition to the reduced PAN.

The funding will provide support for KS1 classes where overall pupil numbers exceed a multiple of 30, by a minimum of 10 pupils.

Funding will be allocated using the minimum value as set by the ESFA.

For example, a school with a form entry of 60 is planning to reduce to 30 due to population changes. In September 2026 the number of pupils on roll in reception year is 38 (as per the Autumn Census return). Therefore, funding for 22 unfilled places x by the minimum value as set by the ESFA will be allocated to the school.

11. New Schools – Start-Up and Diseconomy Funding

New Primary Schools

New primary schools will receive £42,000 in pre-opening set-up costs.

In addition, new primary schools will receive £50,000 per academic year for each of the first four academic years to reflect diseconomies of scale and the establishment of staffing and organisational structures while pupil numbers build.

New Secondary Schools

New secondary schools will receive £63,000 in pre-opening set-up costs.

In addition, new secondary schools will receive £75,000 per academic year for each of the first four academic years to reflect diseconomies of scale and the establishment of staffing and organisational structures while pupil numbers build.

New All-Through Schools

Where a new primary school is established and attached to an existing secondary school to form an all-through school:

The primary phase will receive £42,000 in pre-opening set-up costs;

The primary phase will receive £50,000 per academic year for each of the first four academic years to reflect diseconomies of scale; and

In addition, the all-through school will receive:

- £50,000 per form of entry for the first academic year of the new primary phase, and
- £25,000 per form of entry for each of the subsequent three academic years,

in line with the Schools Forum agreement of September 2015.

12. Processes and Evidence

- Place Planning confirmation of need and agreed number of places.
- Finance calculation using the AWPU method and pro-rata rules.
- For academies: APT recoupment recorded for Apr–Aug where applicable.
- Formal letter of approval/variation setting out the funded differential and duration.

13. Monitoring, Reporting and Review

The LA will report commitments and balances to Schools Forum in-year and review the policy annually for compliance and affordability.

14. Appendix A – Worked Examples

Example A1: KS1 bulge to 60 – Sept–Mar fund 60 at 26/27 Primary AWPU £4,051. Oct 26 census 55 → fund +5 through KS1; Apr–Aug payment of original year then subsequent years difference per year until Aug of Yr 2. No annual re-base unless lower than original. Oct 27 now Yr1 56 → fund +4

Example A2: PAN +30 – Maintained: $30 \times 26/27 \text{ AWPU} \times 7/12$; Academy: $30 \times 26/27 \text{ AWPU} \times 12/12$ (recoupment).

Example A3: Surplus Places 60→30 – unfilled $22 \times 26/27 \text{ AWPU}$; revenue-only; backdate from point of approach once consultation concludes. Evidence required.

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the criteria and funding methodology for Falling Rolls support for 2026–27 and aligns with DfE guidance.

It is distinct from Growth Funding: surplus places and capacity removal are addressed exclusively in the Growth Policy.

2. Scope

This policy applies when:

There is a temporary fall in roll and SCAP confirms places will be required within 2–3 years (Mandatory requirement).

The Local Authority refuses a PAN reduction request because capacity is required and this is validated by SCAP data.

3. Definitions

SCAP – School Capacity Survey, used to forecast pupil place demand.

NOR – Number on Roll taken from the October census.

PAN – Published Admission Number.

AWPU – Age-Weighted Pupil Unit, the per-pupil funding rate.

4. Policy Statement

Falling Rolls funding provides short-term financial support for schools with temporary reductions in pupil numbers where future growth is expected and evidenced through SCAP.

Support is not available for:

General financial difficulty or deficit recovery

Surplus places / capacity removal (see Growth Policy)

Funding schools back to their PAN (only the census reduction is funded)

5. Eligibility Criteria

A school may be eligible for Falling Rolls funding where:

1. **SCAP confirms future need for the places within 2–3 years**
 This is a **mandatory requirement** for eligibility.
2. **There is a fall between the previous and current October census of 5% or 5 pupils**, depending on economies of scale and the size of the school.
3. **A PAN reduction request has been refused by the Local Authority** because projected future demand requires the capacity to be retained.
4. **Exceptional requests** may be considered where not all criteria are met, but the school demonstrates a clear strategic justification.

5.1 Explanation of the 5% vs 5 Pupils Rule

The requirement for a reduction of “5% or 5 pupils” is applied flexibly, depending on the school’s size and economies of scale. This ensures that Falling Rolls funding is only allocated where reductions have a genuine operational and financial impact, rather than reflecting normal fluctuations.

Small Schools (typically PAN ≤ 30)

- Small schools can experience significant diseconomies when losing even a handful of pupils.
- For these schools, the 5-pupil test is the appropriate measure.
- A reduction of 5 pupils may represent a material loss of income and staffing resource.

Large Schools (typically PAN ≥ 60–90)

- Larger schools generally experience minor fluctuations year-to-year.
- In these cases, the 5% threshold is more appropriate, as a small number of pupils does not create a material budget or staffing pressure.
- This prevents allocating Falling Rolls funding where the impact is negligible.

Medium-Sized Schools

- May meet either the 5 pupils or 5% threshold.
- The Local Authority will apply the measure that best reflects the school’s scale and operational context.

Important Note

Meeting the 5% or 5-pupil threshold does not in itself guarantee eligibility.

The school must also satisfy the mandatory SCAP requirement confirming future need within 2–3 years, along with the other eligibility criteria listed above.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Local Authority

Assess eligibility

Apply the funding methodology

Convene the Exceptional Panel where required

Report commitments and headroom to Schools Forum

Schools

Submit application forms with required evidence

Supply accurate historical and forecast pupil data

Maintain compliance with conditions set in award letters

Schools Forum

Provide governance oversight

Receive reports on allocations

Agree exceptions were recommended by the Panel

7. Funding Methodology

Funding is calculated as:

$(\text{Previous October NOR} - \text{Current October NOR}) \times \text{AWPU}$

AWPU Rates 2026–27

Primary: £4,051

KS3: £5,662

KS4: £6,382

Legacy 2025–26 cases (April–August period only) use prior AWPU values:

Primary: £3,836

KS3: £5,407

KS4: £6,096

Academy vs Maintained Funding Periods

Maintained schools: funded 12/12

Academies: funded 12/12

Funding does not restore a school to its PAN — only the reduction from previous year is payable

8. Evidence Requirements and Application Process

Schools must submit:

A completed application form

Pupil number history and forecast

Confirmation of SCAP-based future need

Finance calculation showing NOR change, phase, AWPU rate and funding period

The LA will issue an Award Letter confirming:

Funding period

Any cap applied

Any exceptional approval (if relevant)

9. Monitoring, Reporting and Governance

The Local Authority will report funding commitments and headroom to Schools Forum during the year. ‘Apr-Aug allocations’ September Forum ‘Sep-Mar allocations’ May Forum Any overspend contributes to the DSG balance and must be addressed through DSG recovery planning.

10. Exceptional Requests – Governance Statement

In exceptional circumstances, where a school does not meet all eligibility criteria but presents compelling evidence (e.g., unique local circumstances, timing issues with SCAP updates, or demonstrable short-term diseconomies), the Local Authority will convene a Panel of LA officers and Schools Forum representatives.

The Panel may recommend:

A time-limited allocation

A variation to the notional cap

A tapered award

All decisions are reported to Schools Forum for transparency and affordability.

11. Review and Amendments

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner where:

DfE requirements change

Local demand projections shift substantially

Schools Forum requests revision

12. References

DfE Growth & Falling Rolls Guidance 2026–27

SCAP Forecasting Methodology

SGC Growth Policy (for capacity removal and surplus places)

Appendix A – Worked Examples

School A – PAN Reduction Request Refused (Eligible Case)

Scenario:

School A requested a PAN reduction for 2026, but the Local Authority refused because SCAP projections confirm the places will be required by 2028 (future need within 2–3 years).

The October census shows a fall of 10 pupils between 2025 and 2026.

Data:

- Previous October NOR: 200
- Current October NOR: 190
- Change: –10 pupils (meets eligibility threshold)
- AWPU (Primary): £4,051

Funding Calculation:

$(200 - 190) \times £4,051$

$\rightarrow 10 \times £4,051 = £40,510$

Outcome:

School A is eligible due to:

- Mandatory SCAP future-need requirement met
- PAN reduction refused because capacity must be retained

Funding awarded: £40,510

School B – Standard Falling Rolls Case (Eligible)

Scenario:

School B has a temporary dip in roll confirmed by SCAP as short-term, with growth expected in 2–3 years.

There is no PAN reduction request.

Data:

- Previous October NOR: 170
- Current October NOR: 159
- Change: –11 pupils (meets 5-pupil threshold)
- AWPU (Primary): £4,051

Funding Calculation:

$(170 - 159) \times £4,051$

$\rightarrow 11 \times £4,051 = £44,561$

Outcome:

School B is eligible because:

- Temporary reduction with SCAP-evidenced future need
- Meets 5%/5 pupil threshold
- No exclusions apply (not general financial difficulty or surplus places)

Funding awarded: £44,561

School C – Fall Less Than 5% (Not Eligible)

Scenario:

School C experiences a small fall in NOR, but it is below 5% and does not trigger the 5% or 5-pupil requirement.

SCAP also does not confirm future need.

Data:

- Previous October NOR: 210
- Current October NOR: 202
- Change: –8 pupils
- Percentage fall: 3.8% → below 5% threshold (numerical criterion not met)
- October 2027 forecast: 211 (natural recovery)
- SCAP: No projected need → mandatory requirement not met

Outcome:

School C is not eligible because:

- Fall does not meet 5% or 5-pupil rule
- Mandatory SCAP future-need requirement not met
- Natural recovery indicates fluctuation, not a temporary diseconomy

Funding awarded: £0

School D – Meets 5 Pupils Test but No SCAP Future Need (Not Eligible)

Scenario:

School D loses 6 pupils between October 2025 and 2026 (meeting the 5-pupil rule), but SCAP shows no future need and numbers recover the following year.

Policy requires both:

- 5% or 5 pupil fall and
- SCAP-confirmed future demand within 2–3 years (mandatory)

Data:

- Previous October NOR: 120
- Current October NOR: 114
- Change: –6 pupils (meets 5-pupil threshold)
- Percentage fall: 5%
- Forecast NOR 2027: 118 (recovery)
- SCAP: No evidence of demand in future 2–3 years

Outcome:

School D is not eligible because:

- Mandatory SCAP requirement is not satisfied
- Recovery indicates the fall is temporary fluctuation
- Policy does not fund natural volatility or general financial pressure

Funding awarded: £0

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM

07th May 2026

South Gloucestershire Schools Trade Union Facilities Time Pooled Fund Scheme

What is the Scheme?

The union facilities time funding was delegated to individual schools from April 2013. However, most schools and some academies have chosen to buy back into the local facilities time scheme, and this enables us to sustain a structured local framework for consultation and union engagement.

The scheme provides a pooled arrangement amongst all participating schools and academy trusts for cost effectively funding the release of those staff elected by union members to undertake accredited Trade Union roles in those South Gloucestershire schools who buy back into the scheme. This scheme ensures school staff (teaching and non-teaching) have access to confidential advice and support on employment issues from highly trained local Union representatives, who really understand not only national educational issues but also local issues in South Gloucestershire schools. Schools will have peace of mind over their statutory requirements and will not have to worry about providing their own trade union representative, who is trained and available within their own school. The Pooling scheme is administered by the Council's Finance team in terms of the funding arrangements only; liaison and direct discussion with trade unions on other matters remains a function of individual schools.

Use of Facilities Time Funding

Facilities time is intended for the reimbursement of cover for locally elected representatives to carry out their duties (or their nominated substitutes) for the following:

- Attendance and related participation in South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) Human Resources / Trade Union (HR/TU) meetings on matters of general relevance to school employees or particular groups of employees.
- For subscribing schools - representing members in school level meetings affecting employment, e.g. staff reductions or restructuring, school reorganisation and academy conversion.
- Supporting individual members in meetings or hearings on school determined matters, e.g. disciplinary, capability, absence management, flexible working requests.
- General communication and engagement with members on employment related matters.
- Attendance at necessary union training and briefing events to support local representatives.

Facilities time may also be requested for other general union meetings and activities but not necessarily on a paid basis. There is no right to facilities time on a paid or unpaid basis for involvement in industrial action or in other political activities supported by the union.

Additional reference may be made to ACAS guidance on the right to have time off for trade union representatives. [Acas Code of Practice on time off for trade union duties and activities | Acas](#)

Please note that the facilities scheme does not apply to school level representatives and any arrangements for such representation must be considered at individual school level. Should a union wish to call upon a school representative to undertake activities on behalf of the union (e.g. substitute at SGC meetings) any cover costs must be funded within that union's notified allocation.

Why do Schools need it?

There is a legal obligation on schools and academy trusts as employers to ensure they have arrangements in place to negotiate and consult with accredited Trade Union representatives & to afford their employees Trade Union representation, in compliance with legislation. Such arrangements include paid time off (often called 'facilities time') for accredited trade union representatives to undertake these duties. This service provides confidence to participating schools/trusts that they are fulfilling their legal obligations and ensuring their staff have access to employee representation from local union representatives from across the Local Authority. The support from Union representatives, available through this scheme, also has the aim of ensuring that sensitive issues are dealt with early, at the lowest possible level rather than escalating into situations involving formal procedures which can be extremely costly in both senior leadership time and money.

What if schools don't buy in?

If schools in South Gloucestershire don't continue to collaborate in this way by buying into the Trade Union Facilities pooled arrangements, they will each need to utilise their own trained reps and the ability for everyone to 'pool' this resource could be lost as the scheme would no longer be viable. The scheme helps avoid the risk of operational disruption, as dedicated time for representatives is pre-planned as is the cost of schools/trusts having to release their own staff for specific training to fulfil this role and other functions linked to trade union facilities time. By not having access to this local experienced resource there is an increased risk of lengthy processes that could impact on the running of schools and all staff involved.

There are also increased risks around the following:

- Staff working in schools not having timely access to a local union rep resulting in delays in case management and resolution.
- Lack of local mediation/discussion with county reps who know the area.

- Escalation of grievances and cases (including sickness absence management) which might otherwise be avoided.
- Schools having to provide time off for training for elected trade union representatives.
- Schools unable to find staff who want to take on the trade union representative role.

What other options do schools have?

Only a small number of South Gloucestershire schools have trade union representatives within their staff, who have the required expertise. Union members in schools could elect their own in-house representatives but this would result in additional cost to schools in training more representatives across the teaching and support staff sectors and risk to the school should those trained members choose to leave their employment. Regional Officers may get deployed to provide some assistance, but there is likely to be delays and inflexibility around deployment and a lack of local knowledge and understanding.

What if a school wants to buy in later in the year when they need support?

There is no opt in or out option part way through the financial year. In order to ensure this pooled scheme is viable, schools need to commit at the beginning of the financial year. Schools can choose to opt in or out at the start of each financial year by completing a variation form.

So, what do schools get in return for joining the pool?

The following table helps to show how the time of Union representatives is generally spent: School leaders and governors are likely to only see a glimpse of the activity and support provided by Unions and what actually takes place in terms of casework. This table is illustrative only.

Activity
Admin: including general administration to members, workplace representatives, cross team, Branch and leading a support team of workplace representatives within schools.
Collective/Mtgs: including attending TUPEs and redundancy consultations, school negotiations, JCNC, Cross Border, Branch, Regional, Mentoring, typing Minutes, Notes & Actions arising.
Schools/Casework: including attending school grievances, disciplinaries and on occasion investigation meetings, pre and post preparation for cases, supporting individual and collective members throughout via email and telephone calls. To also give support to queries from members on any number of issues and concerns.

A great deal of time is spent by local reps dealing with employees' concerns and grievances 'behind the scenes' in a way which prevents things ever escalating into confrontation and formal procedures. Local union reps help members work through conflict and change to the benefit of the members themselves and of school leaders.

Research from the University of Hertfordshire shows that involving trade union representatives effectively can help maintain staff morale and reduce the number of issues that escalate. It estimated that for every £1 spent on facility time, between £3 and £9 of benefits are accrued to the employer.

Is the fund used to fund trade unions directly?

The answer is no; there is no direct relationship between the fund and the administration of it with Trade Unions. The fund is created by contributions from schools and is paid out directly to schools to cover school costs. Trade Union Facilities Time fees from schools are pooled into a central pot to fund the schools with recognised TU representatives so that they can put in place cover arrangements allowing the release of those representatives. Unions work collaboratively with schools and the LA to enable a smooth and seamless service.

Administration of the Scheme

The sums allocated to individual schools with TU reps, continue to reflect the level of union membership for each recognised union whilst also recognising that certain activities are not dependent on union size. The function of administering a pooled fund for these purposes is a delegated function, which means the Council is prohibited from allocating any funding for this from its own funds and therefore 7% of the pooled fund is used to cover the Council's costs of administering the fund.

Each year the Council will inform schools of their contributions to the pooled fund which are based on a formulaic basis in proportion to pupil numbers. The current position regarding schools that are buying into the scheme is attached as Appendix A.

Each year the Council will also inform the schools with recognised TU reps of their provisional allocations from the pooled fund as well as sharing this with the relevant TUs and confirming the details regarding the recognised reps with each TU and the relevant schools. Allocations are based on the number of members in each union and the number of hours each elected rep has committed to undertaking TU work. The latest position for allocations to schools with TU reps is shown as Appendix B. These allocations are based on current elected union reps, allocations and schools can change in line with union rep changes.

If union representatives seek to use more hours for such union engagement, it is important to note that this must come from the finite allocation per union, unless agreed locally by their employing school, as there are no additional funds available in the pooled fund for this. The monies remain that of the subscribing schools at all times.

1. Where the union rep is employed by an academy school then the school sends in an invoice for the claim for their union hours to schoolsfinance@southglos.gov.uk.
2. Where the union rep is employed by a SGC local maintained (LM) school, a claim form will be submitted to schoolsfinance@southglos.gov.uk. Reimbursement will be made from the scheme to the schools via Internal Journal Transfer.

As a pooled scheme, any significant underspends may be allocated back to participating schools at the end of the financial year.

Participating schools for 2026/27

All South Gloucestershire's maintained Primary, Special and Secondary schools have contributed to the facilities scheme (excluding Holy Family Primary, Christ Church Infants and Watermore Primary).

The following academies within the South Gloucestershire area are currently within the scheme. While their pricing schedules are effective from September, TU facilities is allocated between the period 1st April and 31st March and their sums have therefore been included in the calculations and allocations listed:

- ATHELSTAN TRUST - Chipping Sodbury School
- CSET - Cherry Garden, The Castle, Charfield, Downend, Lyde Green, Mangotsfield Secondary, Marlwood, Severn Beach, Tortworth
- ENABLE TRUST - Culverhill, New Siblands, Two Bridges, Pathways Learning Centre
- FUTURA LEARNING PARTNERSHIP - Sir Bernard Lovell, The Meadows
- GREENSHAW TRUST - Tyndale, Woodlands, Yate Academy
- MOSAIC– Barrs Court, Broadway Inf, The Ridge Juniors, Gillingstool, The Park, Parkwall, Raysfield, Redfield Edge, St Michael's (Winterbourne), St Stephen's Juniors
- OAT - Abbeywood, Bradley Stoke, Callicroft, Charborough Road, Filton Hill, Meadowbrook, Patchway, Stoke Lodge, Winterbourne Academy
- THE LEAF TRUST – Blackhorse, Bowsland, Cadbury Heath, Emersons Green, Hanham Abbots Juniors, Kings Forest, Mangotsfield, Samuel Whites, Stanbridge, St Barnabas, Staple Hill, Tynings, Wheatfield, Crossways
- CABOT LEARNING FEDERATION – Digitech
- SEVERN FEDERATION ACADEMY TRUST – Rangeworthy, Hawkesbury, Iron Acton

Local schools/Trusts not participating

- Cabot Learning Federation (except Digitech)
- Holy Family Primary, Christ Church Infants, Watermore Primary (SGC LMS)

The allocations for the 2026/27 financial year are:

School	Union	2026/27 allocation
N/A	ASCL - Association of School & College Leaders	0
St Stephens Infants	NAHT - National Association of Headteachers	£3,000
Winterbourne Academy	NASUWT - National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers	£31,000
Pathways Learning Centre	NEU - National Education Union	£38,000
LA	UNISON	£10,000

The per pupil buy in rate this year is £1.89.

Scheme outturn at the end of 2025-26

Total income (£1.89 per pupil)	£67,829.95
Balance brought forward from previous years	£34,483.67
Expenditure (inc admin fee)	£73,842.95
Total balance at year-end	£28,470.67
Contingency carried forward to 2026-27	£13,251.90
Remaining surplus refunded to schools	£15,218.77

SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN

May 2026	07th	Microsoft Teams	
		SEND Reforms Finance Update (report)	Mustafa Salih
		High Needs Working Group Update (HNWG) (verbal update)	Susie Weaver
		Mainstream Place Numbers & Pressures (presentation)	Mike Wheeler
		Growth Funding and Falling Rolls Policy (report)	Caroline Warren
		Trade Union Facilities Time Pooled Fund 25- 26 Outturn and 26-27 Budget (report)	Claire Paines
		AOB Future Chair of the Forum	Pippa Osborne

July 2026	02nd	Microsoft Teams	
		Schools in Financial Difficulty Update (Report) (Maintained Schools & Academies update)	Mustafa Salih
		Funding Update (including School's supplementary grant)	Mustafa Salih
		Outturn Report 2024-2025 verbal update outturn report)	Mustafa Salih
		Financial Regulations for Schools	Justine Poulton
		Scheme for Financing Schools – DfE Directed Changes	Caroline Warren
		High Needs Working Group Update	Susie Weaver

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Future Chair of the Forum