



Coventry City Council

Schools Forum

27 November 2025

coventry.gov.uk



Election of Chair & Vice Chair



Coventry City Council

coventry.gov.uk



Membership - Report



Coventry City Council

coventry.gov.uk

Membership Review

- Review of Schools Forum membership carried out
 - Refer to report
 - Pupil numbers: May 2025 census used
- No structural changes are required
- Report stated one vacancy
 - Mainstream academy
- Since the report we have one further vacancy
 - Mainstream maintained



Membership Review

Represented sector	Current Membership	Updated Membership	Structural Changes	Vacancies at Sept-25
Primary Schools	6	6	0	1
Secondary Schools	0	0	0	0
Mainstream Academies	12	12	0	1
Special Schools	2	2	0	0
Special Academies	1	1	0	0
Maintained Nursery School	1	1	0	0
Pupil Refferal Unit (PRU)	1	1	0	0
Non School Group	5	5	0	0
Total	28	28	0	2



Coventry City Council

National Update

coventry.gov.uk

Government Budget Announcement

- Yesterday the Chancellor announced the Autumn 2025 budget.
 - Below are the main areas of interest for education
- Extension of the Dedicated Schools Grant Statutory Override
 - The government will set out substantial plans for reform of SEND provision early in the new year to deliver a sustainable system.
 - The 2025 Spending Review provided investment for SEND reform.
 - Future funding implications will be managed within the overall government DEL envelope, such that the government would not expect local authorities to need to fund future special educational needs costs from general funds, once the Statutory Override ends at the end of 2027-28.
 - The government will set out further details on its plans to support local authorities with historic and accruing deficits and conditions for accessing such support through the upcoming Local Government Finance Settlement.

Government Budget Announcement

- Two-child benefit cap scrapped
- £5m for secondary library books
 - Equates to £1,400 per school
- £18m for playgrounds
 - Will support 200 playgrounds across England
 - No detail on where they will be & whether they are withing school settings or not
- No extra school revenue funding outside of the National Funding Formula announcement which we will go through today

National Funding Formula

- On 19th November the DfE circulated indicative schools National Funding Formula (NFF) values alongside policy documents for Schools Block and Central School Services Block
 - Nothing for High Needs Block or Early Years Block
- The DfE have also published indicative school level allocations
 - These are calculated using October 2024 census data/pupil numbers & 2026/27 NFF factor values

National Funding Formula

- From April 2026 the following grants will be rolled into the Schools NFF:
 - Schools Budget Support Grant (SBSG) – 2025/26 pay awards
 - National Insurance Contributions (NICs) Grant – April 2025 Employer National Insurance contribution increase
- The SBSG will be uplifted to provide funding for the full year effect of September 2025 pay awards
- This means that the amounts for these grants are either not new money, or they are new money, but schools also have the full year effect of associated costs

National Funding Formula

- From September 2026, Free School Meals (FSM) will be extended to all children in households receiving Universal Credit (UC).
- For 2026/27 the government will not make any changes to the schools NFF FSM allocations through the DSG. Instead, the additional funding for the FSM expansion will be provided through a separate grant. Further details will be published separately in due course.
- Extension of entitlement only applies to meals, not other FSM linked funding e.g. (Pupil Premium).

National Funding Formula

- Notional SEN Budget guidance has been updated by DFE. Considering the late NFF publication we are not intending to review our current approach ahead of 2026/27.
- We will review the updated guidance and liaise / consult with Schools Forum if needed ahead of 2027/28. This crosses over with wider High Needs / SEND Strategy workstreams.

Indicative NFF Factor Values

- Once the SBSG & NICs values have been factored in, the true NFF inflationary increase is 2.1% (0.5% in 2025/26)
- No inflation has been applied to protection mechanisms within the NFF
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee must be set between -0.5% & 0% (this is the same as 2025/26 and means for those schools on the MFG at best funding must stay the same as 2025/26 including SBSG & NICs on a per pupil level)
- The Minimum Per Pupil Funding has increased to take account of the rolled in grants but no inflation has been applied. This means schools are guaranteed to receive
 - £5,115 per primary pupil (£4,955 in 2025/26)
 - £6,640 per secondary pupil (£6,465 in 2025/26)
- Maintained schools had been budgeting for a 0.5% increase in funding (in line with 2025/26)

Central School Services Block (CSSB)

- Funding for LA's to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils in maintained schools and academies. Breaks down into two parts:
 - Ongoing Commitments: NFF driven (£ per pupil)
 - Historic Commitments: Historic allocation
- SBSG & NICs grant for centrally employed teachers is being rolled into the formula for 2026/27. This is additional to supplementary grants from prior years that have already been rolled in.

Central School Services Block (CSSB)

	2024/25	2025/26	Provisional 2026/27
	£000	£000	£000
Centrally Retained Services			
1.4.1 Contribution to combined budgets	158	25	TBC
1.4.2 School admissions	634	688	TBC
1.4.3 Servicing of schools forums	3	3	TBC
1.4.4 Termination of employment costs	323	323	TBC
1.4.5 Falling Rolls Fund	0	0	0
1.4.6 Capital expenditure from revenue (CERA)	0	0	0
1.4.7 Prudential borrowing costs	0	0	0
1.4.8 Fees to independent schools without SEN	0	0	0
1.4.9 Equal pay - back pay	182	182	TBC
*1.4.11 SEN transport	310	310	310
1.4.12 Exceptions agreed by Secretary of State	0	0	0
1.4.14 Other Items	510	976	TBC
1.5.1 Education welfare service	560	599	TBC
1.5.2 Asset management	155	151	TBC
1.5.3 Statutory/ Regulatory duties	326	290	TBC
Total	3,161	3,547	3,589
Historic Commitments	973	840	734
Ongoing Commitments	2,189	2,707	2,855

*SEN Transport is funded from High Needs, not CSSB. However, Schools Forum approval must be obtained annually due to treatment as a Historic Commitment

Historic Commitments:

- to reduce by a further 20% (£106k) in 2026/27

Ongoing Commitments

- uplift of £114k due to roll in of NICs
- uplift of £107k due to roll in of SBSG
- reduction of £73k as Coventry is on the funding floor meaning we get a 2.5% reduction in per pupil funding
- unprotected loss would have been ca. £300k
- allocation will be updated in Dec to reflect Oct 25 pupil numbers

Central School Services Block (CSSB)

	2025/26
1.4.14 Other Items	£000
Copyright Licenses	386
TPECG September 2019	57
TPECG April 2024	182
CSBG September 2024	351
Total	976

- 2026/27 budget plan to be developed and tabled for approval at Schools Forum meeting in January
- Within ongoing commitments, the main service areas supported are admissions, education welfare, asset management and statutory / regulatory duties. Considering previous reviews and funding reductions is a detailed review needed for any of these areas ahead of 2026/27?

2024/25 Early Years DSG

- The long-standing entitlements within the Early Years DSG (3 & 4 Year Olds) and 2 Year Olds of a deprived family were funded on the basis of 2 sets of census data in 2024/25.
 - 5/12ths of the allocation was based on January 2024
 - 7/12ths of the allocation was based on January 2025
- As the January 2025 census is not available until after the end of the financial year, any adjustments required are not reflected in the 2024/25 DSG allocation
 - Instead, a cash adjustment to DSG income in 2025/26 is made
- Due to a reduction in take up in January 2025, this cash adjustment was a reduction of £734k. This was expected and will be managed from DSG reserve.

What's next?

- Receive the NFF allocations for 2026/27
- Once received the budget setting process can begin for
 - Schools Block – calculating mainstream school budgets must be done by the January Schools Forum meeting
 - High Needs – Normally done by the March Schools Forum meeting
 - Early Years – historically done by the March Schools Forum meeting, however, it is now compulsory to communicate funding rates to providers by the end of February
- Central expenditure (CSSB) to be approved at the next meeting



Coventry City Council

Growth Fund

coventry.gov.uk

Growth Fund

- The Growth Fund consists of several strands
 - Increasing form of entry – KS1
 - Infant Class Size – KS1
 - Secondary Growth – Year 7, Year 8 & Year 9
 - Implicit Growth – pre-16
 - Bulge Classes
 - Secondary Capacity – Year 7 & Year 8
- Schools Forum needs to approve Growth Fund methodology and resource allocated at the January meeting

Growth Fund 2025/26

Growth Fund Strands	2024/25	2025/26	Variance £
	Requirement £	Requirement £	
Class Size	200,685	205,772	5,087
Increasing Form of Entry	-	-	-
In-year Admissions	249,353	-	(249,353)
Secondary Growth	326,601	299,309	(27,292)
Secondary Capacity	432,380	499,341	66,961
Bulge Classes	1,243,532	-	(1,243,532)
Bulge Classes 2nd Year	-	433,859	433,859
Total Cost	2,452,551	1,438,282	(1,014,269)

	2024/25	2025/26	Variance
	£	£	£
Growth Fund cost	2,452,551	1,438,282	(1,014,269)
DSG Growth Allocation	2,704,773	1,552,545	(1,152,228)
Funding (Gap)/Surplus	252,222	114,263	
2024/25 Carry Forward		252,222	
Carry forward to 26/27			366,485

Growth Fund 2026/27

- The LA is forecasting a significant reduction in its Growth Fund allocation in 2026/27.
- Based on early estimates and some assumptions, if the growth fund operates in 2026/27 in the same way as it did in 2025/26, there would be a funding deficit of ca £0.9m
- As such, we feel a sub-group meeting is required to discuss the detail of how the growth fund works and assess options for its operation in 2026/27



Coventry City Council

Fair Funding Consultation

coventry.gov.uk

Summary

- Launched 7th November, closed 21st November
- Contents of the consultation
 - Cost pressures
 - Funding Formula options
 - De-Delegation Options
 - Fair Funding Scheme of Delegation
- Results of the consultation go to Cabinet in January
- Looking to collect a Schools Forum response today



FFC – Cost Pressures

- Officers pay award of 3.2% from April 2025 (partially funded by SBSG) & forecasting a further 3% increase from April 2026
- Teachers pay award 4% from September 2025 (partially funded by SBSG) & forecasting a further 3% increase from September 2026
 - The Secretary of State for Education has requested a recommendation from the STRB by February 2026 on teachers pay awards for September 2026 and September 2027
- The Local Authority Employer Superannuation contribution rate for officers in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is forecast to reduce from April 2026
- General inflation 4.1%
- No funding information was known at time of circulation

Proposal 1 – Fair Funding Formula Options

- Despite moving towards the hard NFF, the LA retains some flexibility when setting the local funding formula
- However, since 2018/19 Coventry has taken the decision to mirror the NFF as closely as possible
 - Reduces volatility when the hard NFF is introduced
- Proposed Option: mirror the NFF protection levels as closely as possible (subject to affordability)
 - If the NFF cannot be delivered in full due to affordability issues, all schools per pupil funding gains would be reduced on an equivalent % basis until the affordability gap is breached
 - Should there still be an affordability gap after capping gains, we would then have to reduce allocations of those schools who have not gained via the NFF. This would not fall below the MFG level set by the DfE
- Do Schools Forum support this proposal?

Proposal 2- De-Delegation

- Maintained schools can opt to ‘pool’ resources for a number of services for the LA to manage on their behalf:

2025/26 De-delegated Amounts	
	Primary
Free school meal eligibility	12,619
Maternity	634,125
Trade Union facility	76,812
EMAS (new arrivals fund)	170,150
Total	893,706

- We will be seeking Schools Forum approval in relation to de-delegated services at the January meeting
- Do Schools Forum have any comments regarding delegation?

Proposal 3 – FFSD changes

- **Section 2.5.3 (Virement Limits)** has been updated to show that the limit whereby budget virements require Governing Body Approval must not exceed £13,000. This limit was previously £10,000 and has not been updated since 2019. The increase of £3,000 mirrors inflation levels since 2019.

Proposal 3 – FFSD changes

- **Section 2.10.3 (Procurement Directives)** has been updated to show the relevant regulations have been updated. This section in the previous Fair Funding Scheme of delegation read as follows:
 - *European Procurement Directives 2014 and Public Contract Regulations 2015 require the City Council to operate a tendering process and appoint suppliers for those goods and services where the total value of the business places by the City Council exceeds a given amounts. All parts of the City Council are obliged to use those suppliers, or comply independently with European Procurement Directives and Public Procurement Legislation. Failure to do so can jeopardise the City Council's eligibility for grant funding, incur challenges through court injunctions potentially leading to contracts being revoked with substantial fines and damages.*

Proposal 3 – FFSD changes

- The proposed way forward is for this section to now read as follows:
 - *The Procurement Act 2023 and associated Procurement Regulations 2024 require the City Council to operate a tendering process and appoint suppliers for those goods, services and works where the total value of the business placed by the City Council exceeds public sector thresholds. Additionally, the Council is required to adhere to the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 with regards to the procurement of healthcare related services. All parts of the City Council are obliged to adhere to public sector legislation and the Council's internal Contract Procedure Rules, embedded within its Constitution. Failure to do so can jeopardise the City Council's eligibility for grant funding, incur challenges through court injunctions potentially leading to contracts being revoked with substantial fines and damages.*

Proposal 3 – FFSD changes

- **Section 2.10.10 (Governing Body's Own Purchasing Arrangements)** has been updated to show how 5 written quotations must be sought (up from 3 written quotations received) and thresholds where procedures in the Procurement Act 2023 or Health Care Services Regulations 2023 must be followed has increased from £181,302 for goods & services and £4,551,413 for works to £214,904 & £5,372,609 respectively.

Proposal 3 – FFSD changes

- **Section 2.14.7 (Capital Spending from Budget Shares)** has been updated to show that where planning permission is not required for proposed works on premises owned by the City Council (including Voluntary Controlled Schools), the LA will require at least 4 week's notice prior to commencement.
- **Section 4.9.6 (The Deficit Recovery Plan)** has been updated to include an extra example of when suspension of governing body financial delegation powers could be considered. *This example is information is not provided within timescales set by the City Council.*
- **Section 6.2.8 (Circumstances in which charges may be made to the school budget share)** has been updated to remove the Board of Inland Revenue & include the Environment Agency as examples of bodies whereby penalties imposed can be recovered by charging the school budget share

Proposal 3 – FFSD changes

- Section 6.2.9 (Circumstances in which charges may be made to the school budget share) has been updated to include the example of pension deductions as an error in calculating charges that can be corrected by charging the school budget share
- Previous years Section 6.2.20 (Circumstances in which charges may be made to the school budget share) has been removed as it is no longer included in the DfE guidance. Below is the section that has been removed:
 - *Costs of successful claims made against the City Council under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, where liability for that claim has arisen due to a school's failure to process invoices within the given credit period.*

Proposal 3 – FFSD changes

- **Section 6.2.20 & 6.2.21 (Circumstances in which charges may be made to the school budget share)** have been added due to updated DfE guidance. These sections read as follows:
 - *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 the supply of energy and failed to pay such an invoice (Regulation 23 of the regulations).*

Proposal 3 – FFSD changes

- **Section 13.2 (Community Facilities – Consultation with the LA – Financial Aspects)** has been updated to show that schools no longer have to consult with the City Council when establishing community facilities. Previously, this section read as follows:
 - *School governing bodies are required to consult the City Council before exercising their community facilities power, and have regard to advice given to them.*
 - *Before exercising community facilities power a business and financial plan approved by the full Governing Body should be submitted at least 12 weeks before the facility is due to begin. This plan should detail:*
 - *the nature of the community facility;*
 - *the funding arrangements;*
 - *a detailed costing of the project including income projections;*
 - *an explanation of how the project will comply with relevant Health and Safety and Child Protection legislation.*
 - *The City Council will provide advice to the school governing body within 6 weeks of being consulted on the proposal. The school governing body are required to inform the City Council of the action taken following receipt of this advice before the commencement of the project.*

Proposal 3 – FFSD changes

- The proposed way forward is for this section to read as follows:
 - *Schools no longer need to consult the City Council 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 the City Council*
 - *However, as public bodies, schools are expected to act reasonably, and this includes consulting those affected by decisions that they make.*