

## DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

Town Hall, Committee Room 1

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025, 2:00 to 4:00pm

### AGENDA

Item No.	Item	Purpose of Item	Time	Decision required	Lead
1	Welcome, introductions and apologies Register/Declaration of business interests		2:00-2:05pm	No	Chair
2	Minutes of the meeting 11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025 and Matters Arising and Outstanding Actions Log	Approve minutes and note actions	2:05-2:15pm	Yes	Chair
3	Schools Forum Membership	Note vacancies	2:15-2:30pm	No	Chair
4	Budget Update Year End 2024/25	Note budget update	2:30-2:50pm	No	Emma Clennell
5	Permanent Exclusions Funding Reclaim	Note recommendation from high needs subgroup	2:50-3:15pm	Yes	Joanne Littler on behalf of high needs subgroup
6	High Needs subgroup Feedback including summaries of meeting's 13 <sup>th</sup> February and 3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2025	Consider activity of the sub-group and summary of minutes	3:15-3:30pm	No	Paula Ayto
7	EHCP Assessment Requests 2023/24	Consider data relating to EHCP requests 2023/24	3:30-3:40pm	No	Joanne Littler
8	Forward Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Funding Formula</li> <li>Core Schools Budget Historic Commitments</li> </ul>	Consider forward work plan activity	3:40-3:45pm	No	Chair
9	Next meeting and 2025/26 Academic Year Meeting dates  Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> October 2025 2-4pm TEAMS Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup> January 2026 2-4pm Town Hall Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup> March 2026 2-4pm TEAMS Tuesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2026 2-4pm Town Hall	Note meeting dates for 2025/26	3:45-3:50pm	No	Chair
10	Any other business		3:50pm		

Date of next meeting **Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2025 2-4pm TEAMS**

**DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM**

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**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**11 MARCH 2025**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair M Butler (Education Village Academy Trust); Vice-Chair P Ayto (Reid Street Primary); J Davidson (Red Hall Primary); P King (Federation of Mowden Schools); M Ramsay (St Johns CofE Academy); S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); J Blackham (Mount Pleasant Primary); K Reid (Polam Free School); D Lythgoe (St Aidan's Academy); M Kane (Carmel College); G Hart (Northern Arch Learning Partnership); T Abbott (Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust); J Skirving (St George's CofE Academy); C Moss (Pierremont Pre School); H Dummett (Federation of Darlington Nurseries); S Hudson (Rise Carr College).

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Cllr. N Wallis; J Littler (Head of SEND); E Clennell (Finance Manager); J Aconley-Foster (Finance Officer); E Marshall (Education Partnerships Officer - Clerk).

**APOLOGIES:** J Armitage (Rydal Academy Primary); T Fisher (Northern Arch Learning Partnership); S Gill (Haughton Academy); M Fryer (Hummersknott Academy); T Murphy (Assistant Director of Education & Inclusion); H Ellison (Education Partnerships Manager)

**Also in attendance (observers):**

Heather Celik (Branch Secretary Darlington NASUWT); John Hall, NASUWT National Executive Member

**1. Welcome, Introduction & Register/Declaration of business interests.**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and updated the meeting on apologies. Also present were John Hall, NASUWT National Executive Member who would be presenting item 6, and Heather Celik, Branch Secretary Darlington NASUWT.

Glen Hart from Northern Arch Learning Partnership was attending on behalf of 16-19 representatives.

Dean Lythgoe declared a business interest in the Schools Facility Time item 6.

**2. Minutes of Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and Matters Arising**

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record subject to item 9, AOB which should include the query raised regarding FSM auto-enrolment (EVER6). The Clerk confirmed that the Local Authority have appointed consultants to confirm eligibility through an arrangement with Durham County Council. The affected parents and schools will be informed in due time.

**Matters Arising**

With reference to the outstanding actions log relating to items not covered under the agenda or the forward work programme:

**January 2025**

Item 2 – **Vacancies** were noted.

Item 3 - **Local Authority Importer/Exporter Status** - DL raised a question relating to other Local Authorities' 'importer/exporter' status. EC confirmed based on the data received from 2024/25, Darlington and one other LA are net importers. The Assistant Director will share any further updates.

Item 5 – **Mainstream core budget grant** - The Chair had asked the Finance Manager to clarify what the mainstream core budget grant costs include. The Finance Manager clarified the purpose of the grant is to provide £1.1billion to support schools with their overall costs in the 2024/25 financial year in particular following confirmation of the 2024 teacher pay award. There was no other guidance relating to inflationary costs; see [Core schools budget grant \(CSBG\) 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/core-schools-budget-grant-csbgs-2024-to-2025)

**March 2024**

Item 1 High Needs Block – a paper on **EHCP assessment status** will be brought for information to the June 2025 meeting.

**3. Budget Update 2024/25**

The Finance Manager (EC) updated as per the paper previously circulated. EC confirmed that there had not been any further adjustments to the DSG allocation since the January 2025 meeting. Attention was drawn to Table 2 safety valve payments and paragraph 10 relating to high needs block particularly relating to resource base and PRU spend.

**Recommendations**

- Forum noted the current budget position and the current high needs block position and the fluidity of this area.

**4. Budget setting high needs block 2025/26**

The Finance Manager (EC) updated as per the paper previously circulated. As shown in Table 2, appendix 1 the high needs block has received a net increase. EC reviewed the budget line by line. EC focused on the high needs block subgroup discussions which requested growth projection analysis. This was shared with the Forum in appendix 2. The profile of growth was informed by pupil leavers, transitions and known starters. The pressure within the block was noted however the budget reflects that the additional places in Darlington special schools would remain at the current level of 75%. If the proportion of Darlington Borough Council pupils rises above the current levels, this would reduce the reliance on more costly independent provision. The Forum noted the ongoing and increasing pressures due to demand within the high needs budget and that the budget proposal is linked to the Safety Valve.

The following queries and observations were made:

SH, a member of the high needs subgroup, asked for an update on discussions at the group relating to funding of permanent exclusions. JL confirmed that to date Darlington Local Authority and Schools Forum have to date not implemented any redetermination of school and academy budgets when a child or young person is permanently excluded. It was agreed that a paper for discussion would be brought to a future Schools Forum meeting.

**Action: JL to prepare paper relating to redetermination of school budgets in line with operational guidance when permanent exclusions occur to the June 2025 meeting.**

GH queried whether a review of EHCP ranges would be possible. EC and JL confirmed that a model would need to be discussed at the high needs subgroup. However, the need to meet needs at an earlier stage through a graduated response was re-emphasised, as there is continued pressure given rises in EHCPs maintained by the LA, and growth in requests for assessment. As part of the graduated response the LA are keen to look more at mainstream specialist units and are reviewing outreach provision. The Chair confirmed that numbers of new starters from Darlington at special settings are very positive. KR highlighted that schools' costs are also continuing to grow; whilst supporting more pupils in mainstream. This was noted. Members agreed that as part of the SEND strategy there must be more specialist provision in the town. The review of outreach services was noted

#### **Recommendations**

- Forum agreed the high needs budget for 2025/26
- Forum noted the ongoing and increasing pressures due to demand within the high needs budget and that the budget proposal is linked to the Safety Valve.

#### **5. High Needs Subgroup Feedback**

The Chair of the high needs subgroup (PA) recommended to the Schools Forum the increasing transparency around budget setting and the assumptions behind them which have been explained by the Finance Manager effectively during the meetings. All aspects of high needs are being considered, both looking at individual pupil information and budgets overall. The subgroup will review the outcome of the outreach services at a future meeting. The subgroup will continue to investigate year on year trends. The next meeting of the subgroup will receive updates on EBSA and Permanent Exclusions. An example of positive action to date, is the review of the VPP budget and governance. The Schools Forum thanked the subgroup for its work.

#### **6. Union Facility Time**

John Hall, NASUWT National Executive Member talked through the history of union facility time funding and the current budget usage. The request was for the Schools Forum to consider a request to fund the Branch Secretary at 0.2 FTE. This request included on costs. John Hall asked the Forum to note a number of different arrangements in other authorities which include top slicing from the school budget share into a central facility time pot, others dedicate a certain number of hours a week.

This document was classified as: OFFICIAL

The Schools Forum were reminded that the budget for union facility time in Darlington is currently used to fund staffing backfill costs for teachers who are away from the classroom for various union members. This principle has ensured that facility time funding remains in budget and has allowed schools to claim the relevant 'capped' backfill costs where the class has been covered.

Discussions amongst members included making the following points:

- Concern was expressed that requesting the budget being used for one union representative when other unions are represented in Darlington sets a precedent.
- Working with MAT's, union officials co-ordinate and report to branch representatives at a local level and formal arrangements are in place for other unions.
- Schools also pay union subscriptions separately. Members were unaware of how these funds are used by unions and suggested that this funding be accessed by the Union for union facility time.

Given the concerns raised, and particularly that the proposal is from one Union, Schools Forum agreed not to support the proposal and to continue to operate with the existing model.

The Chair thanked the NASUWT members for their representation.

## **7. Forward Planning**

The below items were noted as forward items. The Chair requested that members let the Chair and/or Clerk have other items.

- EHCP Assessment Requests (June 2025 – Head of SEND)
- Funding of Permanent Exclusions (June 2025 – Head of SEND)
- Schools Funding Formula Options Further Consultation (Date - Finance Manager)
- Core Schools Budget Historical Commitments (Date – Finance Manager)
- Central Schools Block Allocation – (Date – Finance Manager)

**To note:** At the January 2025 meeting the Finance Manager explained the central schools block allocation for historical commitments and drew attention to appendix 3 outlining the impact of the 20% reduction per year. The historical commitments at risk were noted and the Assistant Director confirmed that the Local Authority will prepare projections for discussion at a future meeting this year.

**Action:** The above papers should be brought to future meetings in 2025.

## **8. 2025/26 Academic Year Meeting dates**

- Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2025 2-4pm TEAMS
- Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026 2-4pm Town Hall
- Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026 2-4pm TEAMS
- Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2026 2-4pm Town Hall

## **9. Time/Location of next meeting:**

Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025 – 2pm                      Town Hall

## **DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM**

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025

**ITEM NO 3**

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### **SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP**

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#### **Purpose of Report**

This report summarises the changes to the Schools Forum and high needs subgroup membership since the last meeting.

#### **Forum Decision Required**

The Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the report
- b) Note Schools Forum and high needs subgroup vacancies for 2025-2026

#### **Background**

This report provides information on Schools Forum membership changes that have arisen since the last Forum meeting. The membership log, Schools Forum terms of reference and election procedures are attached as Appendices.

#### **Vacancies**

1. The following are ongoing vacancies for representation on the Schools Forum:
  - Non School Members (x2) – PVI Early Years member and substitute representative
  - Non School Members – Diocesan substitute representative
  - Governor Member – Secondary substitute representative
2. Due to notice of leaving employment and retirement, there are four vacancies for September 2025:
  - School Members (x2) – Academy Primary
  - School Members (x2) – Academy Secondary

Requests for nominations for the above Academy vacancies in 2025-2026 will be sent following the meeting with a deadline of Friday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2025. These will be considered by the respective partnership groups, prior to the next Schools Forum, as per the election procedures.

**High Needs Subgroup 2025-2026**

The current membership of the group includes one Schools Forum member who has given notice. This member also needs replacement. As per the terms of reference the Local Authority will request schools for nominations.

**Recommendations**

- That the Schools Forum note report and the current vacancies and nomination procedures.

**Eleanor Marshall**  
**Clerk to Schools Forum**

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM  
3rd<sup>th</sup> June 2025

ITEM NO 4

BUDGET UPDATE 2024/25

Purpose of Report

1. To update Forum regarding the 2024/25-year end budget position and reserve balances to carry forward into 2025/26. The report is for information and therefore no decisions are required.

Background

2. Schools Forum was notified at the January 2025 meeting of a Dedicated Schools Grant budget (DSG) allocation of £119,006,003 and a budget was agreed accordingly. Adjustments to the funding were noted at the January Forum, bringing the overall allocation to £119,759,629.
3. There has been a further adjustment to the Early Year Block of £658,911, which has increased the final DSG allocation to £120,418,540.
4. The table below shows the adjusted DSG Funding prior to recoupment by the Department.

Summary of Revised DSG Funding Allocation

DSG Block Allocation	Funding Confirmed at the January 2024 Forum	Adjustments to the DSG reported to the October Forum	Adjustments reported to the January 2025 Forum	DSG Adjustments March 2025	Revised DSG Allocation
	£	£	£	£	£
Schools Block	85,642,394	0	0	0	85,642,394
Central Schools Block	893,007	0	7,363	0	900,370
High Needs Block	20,834,831	201,000	0	0	21,035,831
Early Years Block	11,635,771	636,829	(91,566)	658,911	12,839,945
Total DSG Allocation	119,006,003	837,829	(84,203)	658,911	120,418,540

Reserves

5. Schools Forum was notified at the January 2025 Forum meeting of the year-end budget position for 2023/24 with a deficit across all the blocks of £5,002,408 to carry into 2024/25. The reserve figures remain in line with those reported to the January forum meeting.



6. To date we have received payments for the Safety Valve programme of £3,826,200 to be held towards the repayment of the High Needs Block deficit.

### **Year End Budget Position – Appendix 1**

#### Schools Block

7. The School's block has underspent by £25,047 at the end of the financial year; this is unallocated funding agreed at the January Forum to move into reserve.

#### Central Schools Block

8. The in-year central schools block has underspent by £54,717; this is a further reduction from the March report of £4,608, mainly due to slippage in both the expected licenses costs of £2,000 and union facilities time of £2,417.

#### High Needs Block

9. The High Needs block has an overspend of £49,527 against the in-year DSG allocation which is a reduction in expenditure of £100,422 from the March report. The material movements are reported below:
  - a. The PRU has underspent by £83,839; this is a further underspend from the March report of £37,569 and is due to lower than anticipated numbers above the commissioned levels.
  - b. In borough and out of borough mainstream school top-ups have overspent by £325,937, which is an increase from the March report of £12,692. Profiled assuming levels of ranges, numbers have reduced but spend increased. The prorated numbers have reduced by 10.
  - c. In and out of borough special schools have overspent by £192,922, this is a reduction from the March report of £15,938.
  - d. Vulnerable pupil panel including 6<sup>th</sup> day provision is overspent by £35,296, this is a reduction in expected expenditure of £42,412.
  - e. Pre and post 16 independent provision have underspent by £636,288 and seen a further reduction from the March report of £41,836 for a backdated movement of 1 pupil.
  - f. Alternative Provision and direct payments have overspent by £161,996, with increased costs from the March report of £76,108, this is for an additional three bespoke placements.
  - g. The PFI has overspent by £86,767 but it is lower than expected due to service credit deductions of £57,676.

#### Early Years

10. Across all the nursery entitlements there is an underspend of £531,152, this is after the receipt of the adjustment to the DSG of £658,911 for 2-year-old and under 2-year-old entitlements. There are underspends across all entitlements with 3- & 4-year-old provision underspending by £242,538, 2-year entitlements by £117,160 and under 2's by £171,455.
11. Final reconciliation of the nursery entitlements will be made by the Department in June/July of 2025 following the census and the DSG will be adjusted accordingly. Following the underspend position, it is expected that there will be a significant clawback once the reconciliation has been carried out.
12. The Disability Access Fund is under spent by £21,840.
13. The SEN inclusion fund is underspent by £44,065, this had been reported to budget previously because we have recently implemented a change to the funding arrangements, and we needed the system to run for the Spring term prior to conclusions being drawn.

### **Overall**

14. The in-year budget for 2024/25 across all the DSG blocks was underspent by £627,294, which will be transferred to the unusable reserve. However, the Early Years block will be subject to clawback and the adjustment will be made in June/July time after the census information has been reconciled by the Department.

Reserves	BF into 2024/25	Reserve Adjustments	Balance of Reserve	Safety Valve Payments	Block Under (Overspends) 2024/25	Balance of Reserve after Safety Valve Payments to Carry Forward
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Schools Block	346,026	0	346,026	0	25,046	371,072
Central Schools Block	578,277	0	578,277	0	54,717	632,994
Central Schools Block - PFI	44,139	0	44,139	0	0	44,139
High Needs Block	-5,557,792	0	-5,557,792	3,826,200	0	-1,781,118
Early Years Block	-413,058	215,270	-197,788	0	597,058	399,270
<b>Total Reserve Balances</b>	<b>-5,002,408</b>	<b>215,270</b>	<b>-4,787,138</b>	<b>3,826,200</b>	<b>627,294</b>	<b>-333,643</b>

15. The DfE have confirmed that whilst the Local Authority are in an overall deficit position we don't have the flexibility to move funds between reserves. Therefore, the individual block reserve balances are for illustrative purposes only.
16. The full financial year (after recoupment) has seen the proportion of the High Needs block spent for placements in Mainstream schools increasing by 3% against 2023/24, rising to 28% of the block expenditure. Conversely, Independent provision expenditure as a proportion of the block has reduced by 3% to 20%. This will continue to be reported and monitored closely in 2025/26.

### Recommendations

17. That Forum notes the year end position.
18. That Forum notes the carry forward into the unusable reserves from 2024/25 to 2025/26 as detailed.

**Emma Clennell**  
Finance Manager, Resources and Governance Group

BUDGET MANAGEMENT 2024/25

AGENDA ITEM 4 - Appendix 1

Budget Area	Budget Reported to Forum January 2024	BF Reserve	Recoupment	Recoupment Adjustment	ESFA Import/Export Adjust & Early Years 2024/25	Early Years Adjustment 2024/25	Early Years Block Adjustment 2023/24	Early Years and Central Block Adjustments 2024/25	Revised Budget	Total Spend	Variance	Pro rata'd Head Count	March Report	Movement
SCHOOL BUDGETS														
School Budget Shares (Inc. notional)*	85,642,394		(79,872,816)	(2,009,771)					3,759,807	3,734,761	(25,046)		3,734,760	1
Pupil Growth Fund	0								0		0			
Total Schools	85,642,394	0	(79,872,816)	(2,009,771)	0	0	0		3,759,807	3,734,761	(25,046)		3,734,760	1
CENTRAL BUDGETS														
Voluntary/Trust Admissions	20,000								20,000	14,260	(5,740)		14,260	0
Local Safeguarding Board Contribution	10,000								10,000	10,000	0		10,000	0
Music Service Remissions	18,000								18,000	18,000	0		18,000	0
Union Cover	10,000								10,000	0	(10,000)		2,000	(2,000)
Licenses	101,057							7,363	108,420	106,003	(2,417)		108,420	(2,417)
Former funded ESG Retained Services	240,000								240,000	240,000	0		240,000	0
Education Department	189,306								189,306	189,306	0		189,306	0
Education Department - School Forum	30,000								30,000	30,000	0		30,000	0
School Placement & Asset Management	56,700								56,700	56,700	0		56,700	0
Unallocated funding	26,826								26,826	0	(26,826)		0	0
Early Career Teachers	10,000								10,000	1,103	(8,897)		1,294	(191)
School Admissions	134,388								134,388	134,388	0		134,388	0
Central Employed teachers TPG/TPEG	28,730								28,730	27,893	(837)		27,893	0
Virtual Headteacher	18,000								18,000	18,000	0		18,000	0
Total Central	893,007	0	0		0	0	0	7,363	900,370	845,653	(54,717)		850,261	(4,608)
HIGH NEEDS BUDGETS														
Place Funding - Beaumont Hill	3,154,167		(3,154,167)						0	0	0			
Place Funding - Heathfield	190,667		(190,667)						0	0	0			
Place Funding - Hurworth	84,000		(84,000)						0	0	0			
Place Funding - Mt Pleasant	131,500		(131,500)						0	0	0			
Place Funding - Northwood	35,833		(35,833)						0	0	0			
Primary - place change	(7,166)		7,166						0	0	0			
Place Funding - Marchbank	500,000		(500,000)						0	0	0			
Place Funding - Post 16	782,500		(782,500)	(20,000)					(20,000)	0	20,000		0	0
Place Funding Commissioned - Rise Carr														
College	400,000								400,000	400,000	0		400,000	0
Place Funding - above 40 places	130,000								130,000	80,049	(49,951)		108,108	(28,059)
Place Funding - Eldon House	190,000								190,000	190,000	0		190,000	0
Place Funding - Redhall	136,000								136,000	120,000	(16,000)		120,000	0
Top Up - Beaumont Hill - Pre 16	2,671,463								2,671,463	2,862,591	191,128	240	2,851,988	10,603
Additional Beaumont Hill	219,587								219,587	219,587	(0)		219,587	0
Additional Marchbank	42,500								42,500	42,500	0		42,500	0
Additional PRU	45,276								45,276	45,276	0		45,276	0
Additional Eldon	12,382								12,382	12,382	0		12,382	0
Top Up - Heathfield	67,333								67,333	10,500	(56,833)	1	13,500	(3,000)
Top Up - Hurworth	103,000								103,000	124,539	21,539	15	124,539	0
Top Up - Mt Pleasant	156,669								156,669	214,333	57,664	23	214,333	0
Top Up - Northwood									0	0	0	0	0	0
Top Up - Rise Carr	485,797								485,797	451,910	(33,887)	48	461,420	(9,510)
Top Up - Marchbank	285,000								285,000	369,103	84,103	22	363,333	5,770
Top Up - Eldon House	146,292								146,292	158,822	12,531	16	146,292	12,530
Top Up - Redhall Unit	135,958								135,958	114,205	(21,753)	13	114,205	0
TEPG/TPG Special Schools	241,175								241,175	241,175	0		241,175	0
TEPG/TPG PRU	27,192								27,192	26,400	(792)		26,400	0
Hospital Service	320,853								320,853	320,853	0	19	320,853	0
Hospital Service - 3.4%	0								0	10,909	10,909		10,909	0
Independent out of area placements Pre 16	3,288,540								3,288,540	3,165,190	(123,350)	46	3,200,891	(35,701)
Special Out of Area	383,004								383,004	312,388	(70,616)	21	329,699	(17,311)
Beaumont Hill Post 16	283,000								283,000	271,308	(11,692)	21	286,308	(15,000)
Colleges	472,087								472,087	586,472	114,385	115	625,774	(39,302)
Out of Area Post 16	321,596								321,596	288,863	(32,733)	29	251,889	36,974
Post 16 Independent	620,674								620,674	107,737	(512,938)	7	113,872	(6,135)
Travellers Service	100,000								100,000	100,000	0		100,000	0
Low Incidence Needs Service	259,733								259,733	259,733	0		259,733	(0)
Autism Outreach	82,500								82,500	82,500	0		82,500	0
Outreach - Mt Pleasant RBU	10,000								10,000	10,000	0		10,000	0
Outreach - Northwood RBU	10,000								10,000	10,000	0		10,000	0
Outreach - Beaumont Hill	58,000								58,000	52,000	(6,000)		52,000	0
Neurodevelopment	0								0	0	0		0	0
Vulnerable Pupil Panel - 6th Day Provision	100,000								100,000	111,556	11,556		140,046	(28,490)
Primary PEX Pilot	0								0	64,400	64,400	6	63,692	708
Vulnerable Pupil Panel	50,000								50,000	74,370	24,370		88,292	(13,922)
SCOS Post	25,553								25,553	29,125	3,572		27,705	1,420
SEN Team	130,602								130,602	127,823	(2,779)		127,823	0
Specialist Equipment	60,000								60,000	58,996	(1,004)		62,117	(3,121)
Early Years Top Ups	59,500								59,500	144,784	85,284	21	161,663	(16,879)
Primary Top Ups	1,477,667								1,477,667	1,643,614	165,947	243	1,654,374	(10,760)
Secondary Top Ups	961,475								961,475	1,077,875	116,400	172	1,048,268	29,607
Out of Area Mainstream	143,237								143,237	101,543	(41,694)	22	90,819	10,724
SEN Transport	525,000								525,000	525,000	0		525,000	0
School Forum Officer	52,537								52,537	52,537	0		52,537	0
Other SEN/Alternative Provision	439,633								439,633	595,538	155,905	18	520,178	75,360
SEN Direct Payment	5,000								5,000	11,091	6,091	2	10,342	749
PFI element charged to high needs	227,515								227,515	314,282	86,767		371,958	(57,676)
Unallocated					201,000				201,000	0	(201,000)			
Total High Needs	20,834,831	0	(4,871,501)	(20,000)	201,000	0	0	0	16,144,330	16,193,857	49,527	1,119	16,294,279	(100,422)
EARLY YEARS BUDGETS														
Nursery School Lump Sum	348,056					34,118			382,174	382,174	0		382,174	0
Early Years Team	133,754								133,754	133,754	0		133,754	0
SEN Inclusion (EY)	312,900								312,900	268,835	(44,065)		312,900	(44,065)
3/4 Nursery funding - PVI	3,578,144					201,379			3,779,523	3,650,174	(129,349)		3,631,412	18,762
3/4 Nursery funding - Schools	2,591,069					230,104			2,821,173	2,707,984	(113,189)		2,700,337	7,647
2 Year old funding	3,309,502					(69,219)			3,372,879	3,255,719	(117,160)		3,165,258	90,461
Under 2 Year old	1,285,906					240,447	132,596		1,961,102	1,789,647	(171,455)		1,761,150	28,497
Disability Access Fund (EY)	76,440						434,749		76,440	54,600	(21,840)		60,060	(5,460)
Total Early Years	11,635,771	0	0		0	636,829	0	567,345	12,839,945	12,242,887	(597,058)			
Total In Year	119,006,003	0	(84,744,317)	(2,029,771)	201,000	636,829	0	574,708	33,644,452	33,017,159	(627,294)			
Reserves														
Early Years - 3&4 Year Old		(417,003)					227,874		(189,129)	0	189,129			
Early Years - DAF		76,648							76,648	0	(76,648)			
Early Years - 2 Year Old		(73,111)					(28,914)		(102,025)	0	102,025			
Early Years - Lump Sum		408					16,310		16,718	0	(16,718)			
PFI		44,139							44,139	0	(44,139)			
High Needs		(5,557,792)							(5,557,792)	0	5,557,792			
Central School Block		578,277							578,277	0	(578,277)			
Schools Block		346,026							346,026	0	(346,026)			
Total Reserves	0	(5,002,408)	0		0	0	215,270	0	(4,787,138)	0	4,787,138			
GRAND TOTAL	119,006,003	(5,002,408)	(84,744,317)	(2,029,771)	201,000	636,829	215,270	574,708	28,857,314	33,017,159	4,159,844			
FUNDED BY														
In Year Allocations														
DSG Allocation 22/23 - Schools	85,642,394		(79,872,816)	(2,009,771)					3,759,807					
DSG Allocation 22/23 - Central	893,007							7,363	900,370					
DSG Allocation 22/23 - High Needs	20,834,831		(4,871,501)	(20,000)	201,000				16,144,330					
DSG Allocation 22/23 - Early Years	11,635,771					636,829		567,345	12,839,945					
Reserves									0					
Carry Forward - High Needs		(5,557,792)							(5,557,792)					
Carry Forward - Schools		346,026							346,026					
Carry Forward - Central		622,416							622,416					
Carry Forward - Early Years														

## DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025

ITEM NO 5

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### PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS FUNDING RECLAIM

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#### Purpose of Report

1. The Schools Forum asked the Local Authority to establish a high needs subgroup to undertake interrogation into various aspects of the high needs budget.
2. The group considered funding allocated to vulnerable pupils including permanent exclusions.
3. This paper reports back their findings and recommendations for consideration for funding reclaim from schools following permanent exclusion of pupils from September 2025.
4. As per the subgroup terms of reference, a decision of the School Forum is requested by voting to accept and adopt a report by the subgroup.

#### Background

5. The increase in permanent exclusions within Darlington has placed pressure on high needs block budgets, as excluded pupils move into Alternative Provision (AP) either through Rise Carr College (PRU) or through high-cost AP provision, funded in full, from high needs block.
6. Darlington Local Authority and School Forum have to date not implemented redetermination of maintained school and academy budgets when a child or young person is permanently excluded.
7. In the academic year 2023-2024 an amount of at least £104k could have been recouped from schools' budgets and used to support those excluded pupils.
8. The operational guidance (appendix 1 extract)<sup>1</sup> states that in relation to maintained schools LA's **must** deduct from the school's budget in-year the amount within the formula relating to the age and personal circumstances of that pupil, pro rata to the number of complete weeks remaining in the financial year from the 'relevant date'. This means the deduction should cover not just the basic entitlement but also the relevant amounts for pupil-led factors, such as FSM or EAL, where the pupil would attract funding through those criteria.
9. Deductions from an excluding school's budget should be used to support a school who, in year, admits a pupil who has been permanently excluded. In this way, schools would be supported to admit pupils promptly under Fair Access when they have been permanently excluded.
10. The guidance also states that most Academies have provisions in their funding agreement for Local Authority requests for adjustments to their budget, however older agreements may not and therefore any adjustments would have to be agreed between the Academy and the Local Authority.

#### Recommendations

11. The high needs subgroup recommends that School Forum reviews the requirements for redetermination of schools' budgets in line with operational guidance when permanent exclusions occur.
12. That School Forum consider a change with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025.

**Joanne Littler**  
**Head of SEND & Inclusion,**  
**People's Group/On behalf of the High Needs Subgroup**

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1. <sup>1</sup> (See sections 25-28 appendix 1 extract of <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-16-schools-funding-local-authority-guidance-for-2025-to-2026/schools-operational-guide-2025-to-2026#redetermination-of-budgets-where-pupils-have-been-excluded> )

**Schools Forum High Needs Monitoring Sub-Group**  
**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2025 12.30-2.30pm**  
**Town Hall, COR3**

## Summary of Meeting

### Attendees and Apologies:

Paula Ayto ( <b>Chair</b> )	Primary Academy Vice-Chair Schools Forum	Reid Street Primary School	Attended
Alex Nelson	Primary Academy	West Park Academy	Attended
Deb Hindson	Primary Academy	Heathfield Academy	Attended
Caroline Green	Special School	Beaumont Hill Academy & Marchbank Free School	Attended
Sally Hudson	Maintained	Rise Carr College (PRU)	Attended
Andy Gilpin	Non School/Post 16	Darlington College	Apologies
Rachel Somerville	Secondary Academy	Hurworth School	Attended
Su Gill	Secondary Academy	Haughton (EVAT)	Attended

### Local Authority:

Joanne Littler	Interim Head of Service for SEND & Inclusion	Attended
Emma Clennell	Finance Manager	Apologies
Helen Watson	Senior Strategic Commissioning Manager – Children/Young People and SEND	Attended
Eleanor Marshall	Education Partnerships Officer	Attended

Item No.	Item Discussion
1	<b>Welcome, introductions and apologies</b>  Register/Declaration of business interests – None  Any Other Business – None
2	<b>Minutes of meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025</b>  The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. The Chair highlighted outstanding actions from the actions log, updates included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>AV1 'robot' pilot 'AVA'</b> – SH confirmed further schools have expressed interested in AVA's and will visit schools shortly. The contract is to November 2025.</li> <li>• <b>EBSA pilot:</b> SH confirmed pupils are to receive transition support,</li> <li>• <b>6-day cover:</b> The pilot has successful outcomes. The LA will consider development of a SEMH outreach support service to be based on 3-tier support which this pilot should be part of. HW confirmed commissioning are discussing the NE model which operates on a</li> </ul>



	<p>non-referral basis where support is assigned to schools in locality areas. This has multi-agency infrastructure involvement. CG requested that Marchbank is involved in the development of a 3-tier support model. The group discussed the need to consider travel arrangements for attendance purposes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>VPP budget:</b> It was discussed that it is the group's responsibility to examine funding on a line-by-line basis.</li> <li>• <b>AWPU</b> reclaim model will be submitted to Education SMT prior to the Schools Forum in June. The group will discuss in more detail at this meeting.</li> <li>• <b>Independent Outreach Review:</b> It was noted that the consultant will be meeting with outreach service staff, and the PCF are collating the same information. The outcome report will be available by the end of May and will be discussed by the group.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: B/F work programme.</b></p> <p>It was confirmed that other actions in the outstanding actions log were included on the agenda.</p> <p><b>Summary of Minutes</b></p> <p>It was noted that the minutes summary from 13<sup>th</sup> February would be available on the website.</p>
4	<p><b>Schools Forum papers June 2025</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>AWPU proposal</b> This was agreed in principle, further discussions will consider contracts and agreements required between schools.</li> <li>- <b>2023/24 EHCP assessment data</b> The data was discussed in detail top up is through high needs EHCP in Darlington. JL is visiting other LA's regarding their graduated response models. The budget rise in Early Years is also reflected nationally. This led the group to discuss how this can be developed by an Early Years strategy The group also discussed the number of parental requests for AP and SENDIASS advice.</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Schools Forum update (high needs budget)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High Needs Budget:</b> increases not budgeted need to be discussed strategically, particularly unplanned uplift in fees from special schools.</li> </ul>
6	<p><b>B/F Work Programme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alternative Primary 'PRU' models (HW/JL)</li> <li>- Schools Forum requests: EHCP ranges</li> <li>- Resource Base Development</li> <li>- Outreach review feedback</li> <li>- High Needs Expenditure and Risk – Budget review</li> </ul>
7	<p><b>Outreach Review Feedback</b></p> <p>JL drew the group's attention to the reduction to NHS /ICB following government announcements. Work is required to deliver savings to September within the ICB.</p> <p>The Tees Valley new model of Speech and Language is for a therapist allocated to Primary and 3 notional secondary settings for direct support. There is a strong evidence base to this model.</p>

	<p>JL confirmed that Darlington Council (DBC) will need to fund on a jointly commissioned basis moving forward.</p> <p>Hurworth Resource Base – the LA will provide Hurworth with proposal following Outreach review outcome.</p> <p>JL confirmed that two secondary schools had expressed an interest in resource base delivery.</p>						
7	<p><b>Meeting Schedule/next meeting</b> All future meetings will be at the Town Hall.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <th>High Needs Subgroup</th><th>Schools Forum Meeting date</th></tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thu 8th May 1.30-3.30pm</li> </ul> </td><td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3rd June 2025</li> </ul> </td></tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thu 26th June 3-5pm</li> </ul> </td><td></td></tr> </table>	High Needs Subgroup	Schools Forum Meeting date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thu 8th May 1.30-3.30pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3rd June 2025</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thu 26th June 3-5pm</li> </ul>	
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8	<p><b>Any other business</b> None</p>						

**Schools Forum High Needs Monitoring Sub-Group**  
**Thursday 13 February 2025 2-4pm**  
**Town Hall, COR3**

**Summary of Meeting**

**Attendees and Apologies:**

Paula Ayto ( <b>Chair</b> )	Primary Academy Vice-Chair Schools Forum	Reid Street Primary School	Attended
Alex Nelson	Primary Academy	West Park Academy	Attended
Deb Hindson	Primary Academy	Heathfield Academy	Attended
Caroline Green	Special School	Beaumont Hill Academy & Marchbank Free School	Attended
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**Local Authority:**

Joanne Littler	Interim Head of Service for SEND & Inclusion	Attended
Emma Clennell	Finance Manager	Attended
Helen Watson	Senior Strategic Commissioning Manager – Children/Young People and SEND	Attended
Eleanor Marshall	Education Partnerships Officer	Attended
Michele-Louisa Conley	SEND Commissioning Manager	Attended

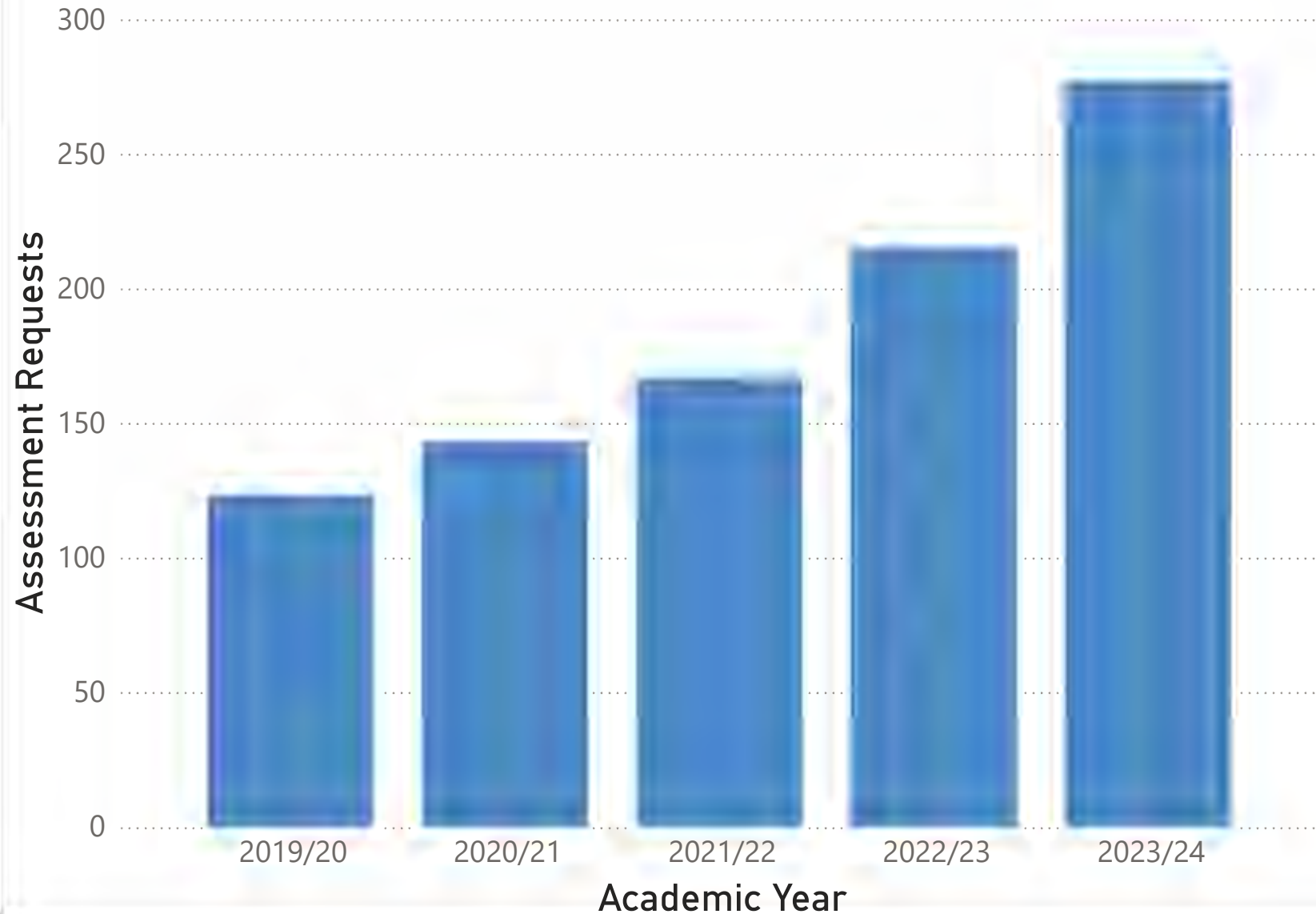
<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Item Discussion</b>
<b>1</b>	<p><b>Welcome, introductions and apologies</b></p> <p>Register/Declaration of business interests – None</p> <p>Any Other Business – None</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Minutes of meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025</b></p> <p>The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting. The Chair highlighted outstanding actions from the actions log, updates included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sensory SMART - OT update</b> – it was confirmed by the DCO that the referral form has not changed. Schools and families cannot refer for Sensory smart families. The DCO will confirm if it is possible to share information with schools.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: JL and HW to continue to liaise with DCO and at higher level.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>AV1 'robot' pilot 'AVA'</b> – The trial is ongoing..</li> </ul>



	<p><b>Action: SH and JL update on continuing deployment and impact of AVA pilot.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EBSA pilot:</b> in SH absence, the Chair updated the group. The pilot ran during transition 24/25. The individual impact was very good and will be offered again this year to other schools following offer day when pupil destinations are known.</li> <li>• <b>6 day cover:</b> SH to update. DH confirmed that Heathfield have been offered further support for off site education.</li> <li>• <b>VPP budget:</b> drilled down data was requested by the Schools Forum and this is currently in progress for further clarity being available at the meeting in March.</li> <li>• <b>BHA:</b> The group discussed place expectations and the agreement for placements going forward (MOA).</li> <li>• <b>Hurworth Resource Base:</b> RS confirmed that Hurworth are awaiting further feedback from their proposal.</li> <li>• <b>Peer Review:</b> HW/JL confirmed that the LA has received funding for an external peer review of outreach services. It was noted that the consultant working with Gateshead has been appointed. The autumn term services report (as below) would be used as a baseline.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: JL to feedback on peer review as this progresses.</b></p> <p>It was confirmed that other actions in the outstanding actions log were included on the agenda.</p> <p><b>Summary of Minutes</b></p> <p>It was noted that the minutes summary from 16<sup>th</sup> January is now available on the website.</p>
3	<p><b>Resource Base and Outreach Services – Autumn Term Report</b></p> <p>Michele-Louisa Conley was welcomed to the meeting to present the summary of Autumn term monitoring.</p> <p>Some specific comments made were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where there are variations of contracts these would be presented to the high needs group.</li> <li>- Following the first term baseline, ongoing review will consider gaps/needs.</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Resource Base Update</b></p> <p><b>Heathfield base</b> – dual registered approach is attractive for parents and interventions proving successful. All staffing is now in place and CPD package has been provided by the LA.</p> <p><b>Hurworth</b> – JL confirmed that following initial scoping the LA needs additional clarifications and will continue to work with Hurworth. The aim is to reduce reliance on special school placements.</p>
6	<p><b>High Needs Budget 25/26</b></p> <p>It was noted that the current projection was a shortfall in the high needs budget for 25/26.</p> <p>The indicative pupil numbers for 2025/26 were discussed with a view to discuss the growth levels and pressures within the block. A document was prepared and circulated.</p>

	<p><b>Action:</b> The sub-group requested that EC do some further analysis for growth projections prior to submission to School Forum.</p> <p>The group noted that schools are also investigating capital works as risk as there could be capital funding available for schools to invest in supporting more pupils in mainstream. EC agreed to discuss with Paul Richardson and report back on current position of capital programme funding.</p> <p><b>Action: EC discuss capital programme with PR.</b></p> <p>EC confirmed that due to the hold on development of free schools, the safety valve plan would need to be updated.</p>						
7	<p><b>Meeting Schedule/next meeting</b> All future meetings will be at the Town Hall.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>High Needs Subgroup</th><th>Schools Forum Meeting date</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>• Thu 3rd April 12.30-2.30pm</td><td rowspan="3">• 3rd June 2025</td></tr> <tr> <td>• Thu 8th May 1.30-3.30pm</td></tr> <tr> <td>• Thu 26th June 3-5pm</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	High Needs Subgroup	Schools Forum Meeting date	• Thu 3rd April 12.30-2.30pm	• 3rd June 2025	• Thu 8th May 1.30-3.30pm	• Thu 26th June 3-5pm
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# Total Assessment Requests

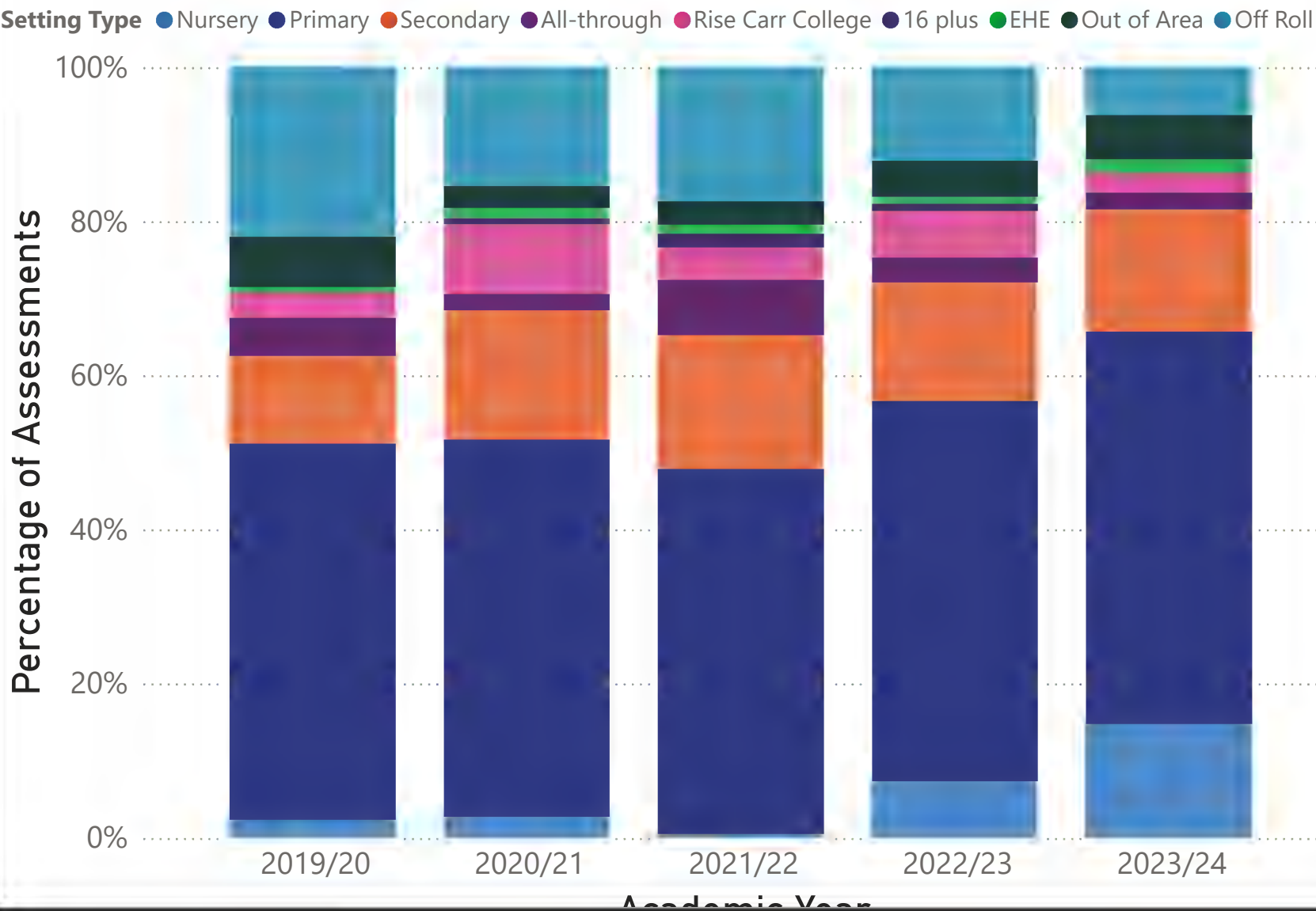


Requests for an EHCP have increased since 2019/20 from 123 to 277, a 125% increase.

The rate of this increase has changed over the period, with a ~16% increase year-on-year from 2019/20 to 2021/22, but a much higher ~29% increase from 2021/22 to 2023/24.

If numbers continue to grow at a comparable rate (~20%), we can expect to see 350 requests per year by 2025/26.

# Assessment Requests by Setting



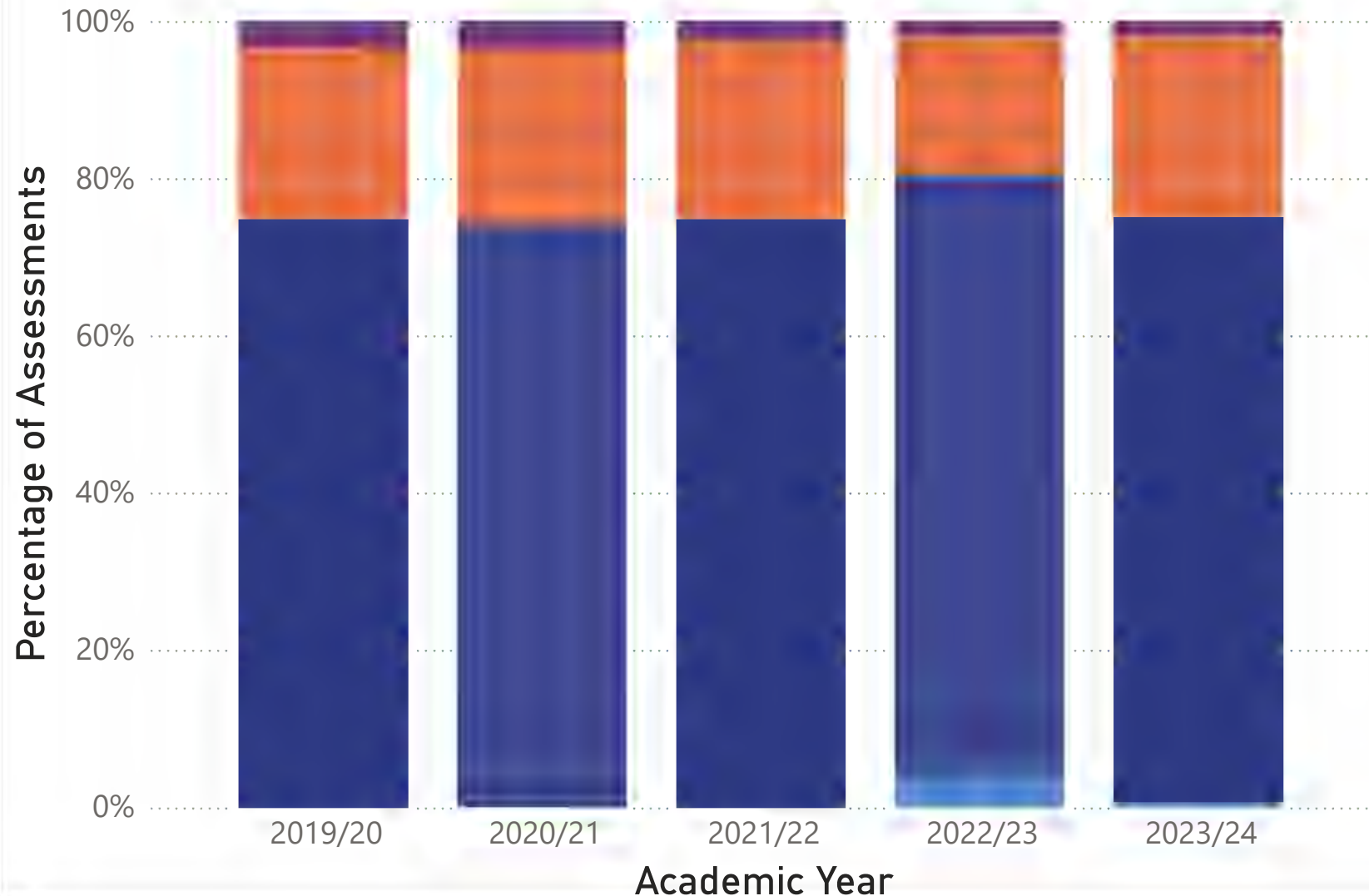
The proportion of assessment requests coming from children enrolled in nursery has increased from 2021/22 to 2023/24, up to 15% of all requests.

Conversely, the number of children who are off-roll has decreased from 20% to 6% in the five-year period.

The amount of requests coming from primary and secondary settings has remained fairly stable over the period, accounting for most requests.

# Assessment Requests by Requestor

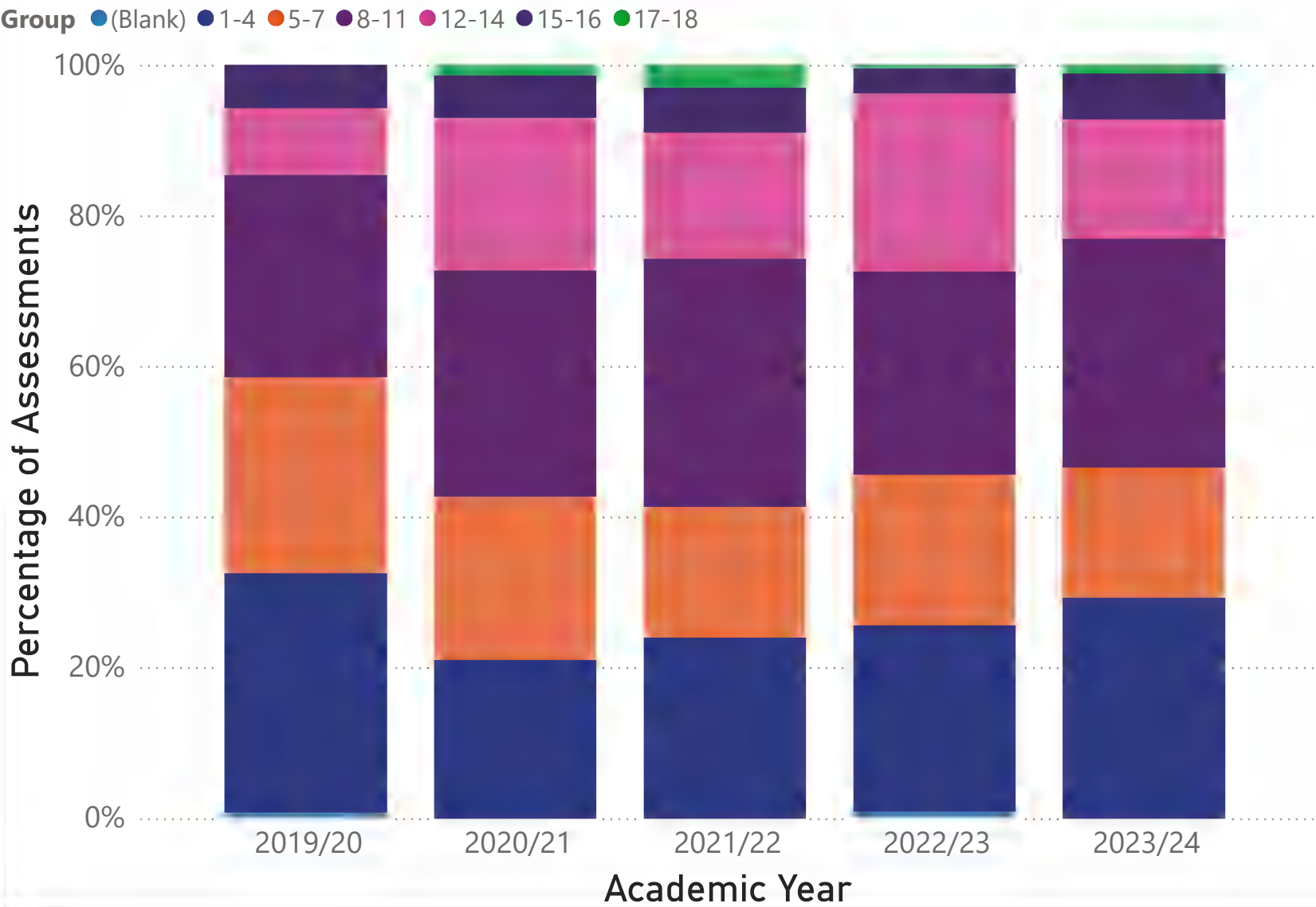
Name (Blank) School Parent Professional



The amount of assessments coming from each type of requestor has remained stable over the five-year period, apart from 2022/23 in which recording problems left a small number without an assigned requestor.

Most requests come from school, making up around 75% of all requests, followed by parents who make up around 22%. The final 3% is made up of requests by other professionals.

# Assessment Requests by Age Group



After dropping greatly from 2019/20 to 2020/21, the number of pre-school children requesting assessments has increased steadily to 30%.

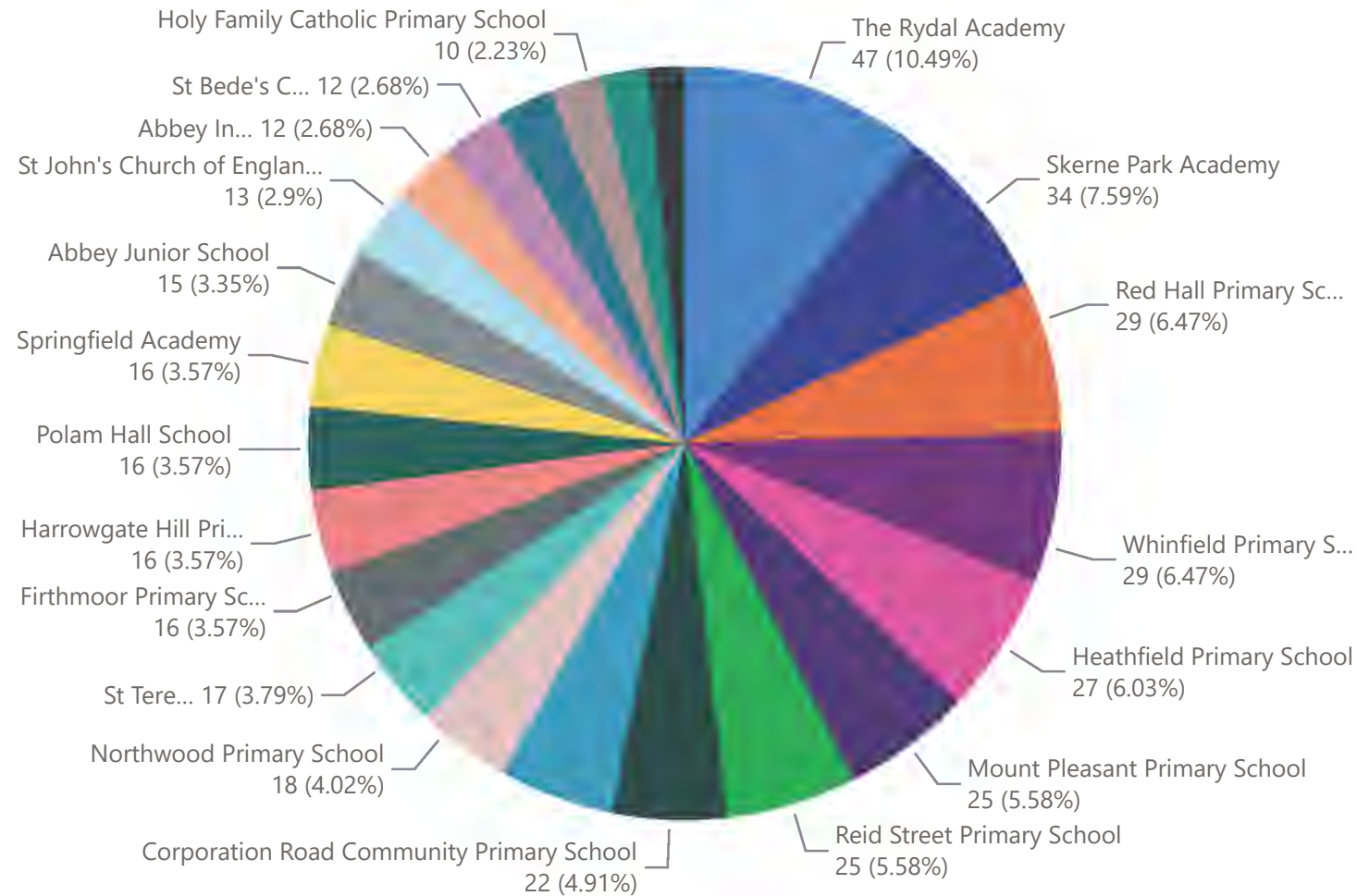
Most categories have remained relatively steady in the five-year period, with KS2 showing the largest proportion of requests.



# Settings for Primary Age Requests

## Setting

- The Rydal Academy
- Skerne Park Academy
- Red Hall Primary School
- Whinfield Primary School
- Heathfield Primary School
- Mount Pleasant Primary School
- Reid Street Primary School
- Corporation Road Community Primary School
- West Park Academy
- Northwood Primary School
- St Teresa's Catholic Primary School
- Firthmoor Primary School
- Harrowgate Hill Primary School
- Polam Hall School
- Springfield Academy
- Abbey Junior School
- St John's Church of England Academy
- Abbey Infants' School
- St Bede's Catholic Primary School
- Gurney Pease Academy
- Holy Family Catholic Primary School

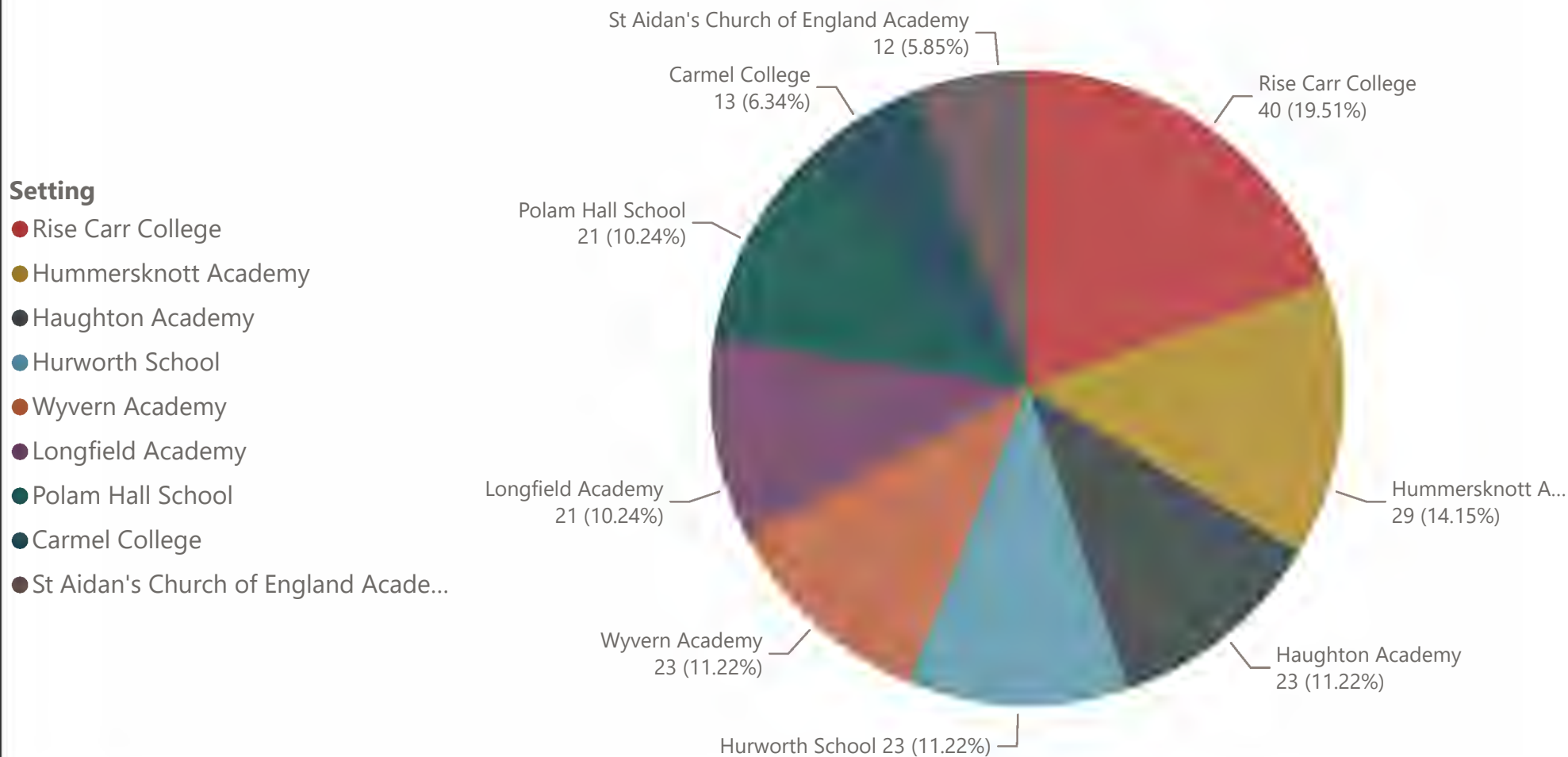


The highest number of primary requests come from Rydal and Skerne Park, making up 18% together.

They are followed by Red Hall, making up another 13%.

50% of requests come from 7 schools out of 27, and the next 25% come from 6 schools.

# Settings for Secondary Age Requests



The highest proportion of requests come from Rise Carr, the local authority's specialist provision.

Hummersknott is the second highest, while most of the other settings have similar numbers of requests apart from Carmel and St Aiden's.