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## Introduction

Dear all,

I'm going to step over the latest challenging financial news as you will have heard it already or will see it set out by Louise later in this bulletin. It is what it is and we will need to act to minimise the harm. I know that we will do that courageously and in partnership.

Instead let me turn to some news about headships in our Trust. We are well into recruitment season and have already made some key appointments. The first of the season was Jon Nunes' successor at Backwell School where we appointed Will Penny, who is currently Deputy Head at Bournside in Cheltenham. After a year of reflection of the best way forward for Northleaze CE Primary School in Long Ashton, we advertised the Headship vacancy in February and made a strong appointment; I'll share the name as soon as news has broken in their current school.

Two more of our longstanding colleagues have also announced their departures; Nik Gardner at Winford will be leaving at Easter and the vacancy is currently live on eTeach. Andreyana Cowan from High Down, one of our founding headteachers, has given us long notice of her decision to depart at Christmas. That vacancy will be advertised imminently. Both Nik and Andreyana have put their hallmark on their schools and will be leaving cultures that reflect their values and aspirations. I know that colleagues across the Trust will join me in wishing them well as they prepare for their next chapters.

Working on Headteacher appointments is one of the privileges and responsibilities of Governors and Trustees. It is also one of those moments where our partnership between leaders like me and representatives from our communities is at its deepest. I would like to thank the Governors and Trustees who have already been involved and those who will be involved in further appointments this year. Your investment of time and wisdom really matters as we do our best to get these crucial decisions right for children, staff and school communities.

With best wishes,

*Gary Lewis, Chief Executive*

## Support for handling complaints

We have created a Stage 1 formal complaint acknowledgment and Stage 1 formal complaint response letter template for Headteachers. These have been created, in line with the Trust's Complaints Policy, and guidance from Browne Jacobson.

A PDF has also been created which pulls together all of the sources of advice and support you can access when dealing with a complaint.

All of these documents, along with a copy of the Trust-wide Complaints Policy, can be found [on Foldr](#):

**Foldr location:** *LSP Policies\Operational Policies\Complaints policies, guidance and templates*

As ever, if you ever need any further support or guidance please contact [the Central Team](#).

## Parent, Pupil and Staff Surveys 2025

As outlined at the Headteachers' Meeting on Wednesday 5 March, the window for Parent, Pupil and Staff Surveys this year is **Tuesday 22 April - Friday 9 May 2025**.

Headteachers will be sent one email, which will contain the full set of instructions and the links to all three surveys in the final week of Term 4 (next week), so you have everything you need to facilitate the surveys within the timeframe above.

Please keep an eye out for this email - if you have any questions [please get in touch](#).

*Eleanor Capel-Davies, Head of Administration*

## Reminder - Articles for The Beacon

The next LSP Newsletter for staff (The Beacon) will be published at the start of Term 5. As always, we would love to include any positive or interesting news stories from across the Trust, especially connected to any specific work or projects connected to supporting priority pupils.



If you have any news stories or photos from your school that you would like us to include, could you [please email them to me](#) by **Friday 25 April**.

*Leah Evans, Communications Officer*

## Primary Update - UWE Mobile Phone Research

As you are aware University of the West of England (UWE) are running some research into the use of mobile phones by children and young people, involving a number of LSP secondary schools.

Following interest from LSP primary school leaders we have spoken to the UWE team and they would be able to add LSP primary schools into the research project:

- £50 cost per primary school (for administration and analysis of results/data by UWE staff) - this will be paid out of the individual school budgets of those who sign up.
- Link to UWE survey and guidance for parents provided to each school, for circulation towards the end of Term 5
- UWE will analyse the data, and include it in their wider research

If you are interested, please complete [this short form](#) by 12noon on Thursday 3 April, so we can confirm your primary school will be taking part with UWE before the end of term.

UWE will provide the research links and guidance for parents in Term 5. You will need to circulate these to parents **after the LSP parent survey**, but may wish to mention another survey regarding mobile phone use in relevant communications if you are going to sign up.

Any questions please [email Gary Lewis](#).

## Secondment Opportunity: Churchill Academy & Sixth Form

### Assistant Headteacher (Sixth Form)

Churchill Academy & Sixth Form is seeking an inspiring and ambitious individual to join the senior leadership team covering the maternity leave of their Assistant Headteacher (Sixth Form).

This is an exciting secondment opportunity for a member of staff in an LSP school to gain experience working in a new context, whilst making a significant contribution to ongoing school improvement.

The job details are available to all LSP employees under "current vacancies" when logged into your LSP ESS account.

If you would like any further information, please contact [Chris Hildrew, Headteacher](#).

Please share with colleagues who you think may be interested. Deadline for applications is Monday 21st April 2025.

## SEND funding

Each of the Local Authorities (LAs) that we work with have deficits in their high needs budgets and are working with the DfE through the safety valve programme. All LAs are receiving some additional funding for their high needs block but in many cases this will just go towards the in year deficit that they are already anticipating. Please find attached some information on how this may impact top up funding for the coming financial year. We will keep you updated as more information becomes available:

### **B&NES**

B&NES are planning to increase top up funding band values w.e.f. 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025. They are applying a 2% increase to bands that apply in mainstream schools and in early years settings and a 5% increase in resource bases and special schools.

They are also increasing the funding to support mainstream schools with higher than average numbers of EHCP's. The High Needs Targeted Support (HNTS) scheme provides funding to schools where the number pupils with EHCP's is higher than the sector average.

The majority of the additional funding that they are receiving is being allocated towards supporting the growth in EHCPs

### **North Somerset**

North Somerset are currently reviewing how funds are allocated to support children and young people with SEND. This review was initially due to be implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 but has been delayed until January 2026. A full consultation with schools will take place before any changes are implemented.

The Council are planning to remove the requirement to have an EHCP in order to attract top up funding.

### **Bristol**

The Bristol Schools Forum are meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> April and we will update you with any impacts of funding levels for 2025-26 after the meeting.



## Budget Planning 2025-26 - Updates

Although we are still waiting for 16-19 Funding Statements for our secondary schools, we have now shared GAG Statements with all our schools and IMP updated for 2025-26 GAG funding and future year estimates yesterday (Tuesday 25 March).

You will see below that we have now had indicative data to enable us to update our estimates of the National Insurance Contribution Grant for Pre-16. Actual allocations will be published in May 2025. Unfortunately, we are once again waiting for more information from the DfE on Post 16 NICs Grant allocations.

In line with the budget planning timetable, the Central Finance Team will be undertaking quality assurance checks of draft budgets and deployment models for schools between Tuesday 22 April and Friday 6 June. As part of these reviews, we will be offering written feedback and, for those schools projecting an in-year deficit for 2026-27, help highlighting any areas of potential savings or areas for further investigation.

As this will be a very busy time for both schools and the Central Finance Team, please could schools with SBMs review their diaries and suggest a date for a budget quality assurance feedback by emailing [financesupport@lsp.org.uk](mailto:financesupport@lsp.org.uk). Although the review will be carried out remotely, it would be helpful to have a feedback session booked in as a Teams meeting. For those schools with a Centralised Service SLA, your Finance Business Partner will undertake a peer review with a colleague during this period and no action is required from schools to instigate this check.

If you are aware that your school will have to undertake change management to set a balanced 2026-27 budget, it may be helpful to meet early in Term 5 to give you more opportunity for modelling alternative staffing structures or identify other savings that can be made

### Learning Partners

Additionally, it is worth summarising the Trust's position on the introduction of the Learning Partner model for primary schools that has been communicated with Headteachers. Please be aware that this is not a cost savings exercise but based on research looking at the use of educational support staff and how their deployment can have the most positive impact on pupil progress (certainly for the majority of pupils). The Trust has been moving towards the Learning Partner model over the past two years with the aim that all primary schools would introduce this model by the beginning of September 2026. The last cohort of training for Headteachers is taking place in Autumn 2025 and the expectation is that the majority of schools who have not yet implemented this model will undertake change management during 2025-26 to be in a position to start the 2026-27 academic year with this model of educational support in place. This means that schools should be considering this model as part of their 3-year budget plans and will need to model and cost this alternative structure as part of any other modelling between 22 April–6 June 2025.

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## Budget Planning 2025-26 - Updates

*Continued...*

However, it is recognised that there may be reasons why not all schools will be ready to implement these Learning Partner changes for September 2026, including pressures on the Central Team to ensure all schools get the support they need for such a change. For example, our Bristol schools have not yet been involved in this work. It is therefore accepted that some schools may need to delay the introduction of the Learning Partners model by a year until September 2027 and will be looking at modelling alternative educational support structures for 2027-28 in the summer term of 2025-26. It is worth pointing out that if schools are considering change management to include educational support staff to reduce any in-year deficit for 2026-27, it is important to look at the Learning Partner model to avoid change management for the same staff group in consecutive years.

Finally, the Central Finance Team have organised another Teams drop-in session to answer any questions from SBMS on the guidance or budget process at **11.00am on Thursday 27 March**. Teams invites have been sent to SBMs already, but, once again, attendance is optional.

*Sue Warneford-Thomson, School Finance Support Manager*

## Pupil Premium

Pupil Premium rates are increasing from April 2025. See table below. IMP was updated on Tuesday 25 March alongside GAG funding adjustments.

### Funding rates for the 2025 to 2026 financial year

This table shows how the pupil premium grant is allocated to schools and local authorities in the 2025 to 2026 financial year, based on per pupil rates.

Funding criteria	Amount of funding for each primary-aged pupil per year	Amount of funding for each secondary-aged pupil per year	Funding is paid to
Pupils who are eligible for free school meals, or have been eligible in the past 6 years	£1,515	£1,075	School
Pupils previously looked after by a local authority or other state care	£2,630	£2,630	School
Children who are looked after by the local authority	£2,630	£2,630	Local authority

Service Pupil Premium is also increasing from £340 to £350 per eligible pupil.

## National Insurance Contribution (NICs) Grant

We have now received more detail about the mainstream portion of the funding for schools for the NICs Grant from April 2025 to August 2025 and for the 2025-26 financial year.

Although actual allocations will not be available until May 2025, the Central Finance Team have updated the estimation tool based on the shared methodology. Please note that this grant will be subsumed into GAG for 2026-27, but for budgeting purposes, we will leave this grant projecting across all years until more information becomes available. We have included a column on this revised tool of our original estimate of this grant, and the last column shows the variance.

If your school has a resource base, we are expecting the grant to be paid for each place available. Please update the spreadsheet with the number of places in each financial year on the spreadsheet tool.

You will see that primary schools are being paid slightly more than estimated, but the indicative allocations for Pre-16 for secondary schools is significantly less than we estimated. Please note that we had no information at all to base our estimates on.

Overall, we are now anticipating that our grant will be approximately £175k (14%) less in a full year than the cost of the NI increase, even before you take into account the increases in contracted services such as cleaning and catering. Other local Trusts are finding a similar outcome. We have shared this position with CST as our sector representative body.

The revised spreadsheet can be found in *Foldr - School Business Managers - Trust Wide - Information for 2024-25 Budgets - Estimate of NI grant - updated based on methodology 20.03.25*.

### 16-19 NICs Grant

For 16 to 19, the DfE will calculate each setting's share of the grant based on their total 16 to 19 programme funding in the department's academic year 2024 to 2025 allocations. We are waiting for more information to become available. It is not clear whether this funding will continue beyond March 2026 in current communications. Please note that we have not currently made any changes to the current estimate of funding for Post 16 in our spreadsheet tool, and that our estimates could be very different to any actual allocations.

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## National Insurance Contribution (NICs) Grant

*Continued...*

### NICs Grant - Early Years

There will also be some additional funding for Early Years settings paid via LAs. This will be paid in 2025-26 only. The DfE have published a rate per part-time equivalent (PTE) per age cohort for each local authority who will be required to pass-through this funding in full to eligible early years settings based on local PTE data (see table below). Local authorities will be expected to notify eligible early years providers in their area of their NICs rates ahead of the 2025 to 2026 financial year to help with budget planning.

LA name (alphabetical order within region)	3 to 4-year-old 2025 to 2026 NICs grant rate (£ / PTE)	2-year-old 2025 to 2026 NICs grant rate (£ / PTE)	Under 2s 2025 to 2026 NICs grant rate (£ / PTE)
Bath and North East Somerset	£59	£82	£108
Bristol City of	£59	£82	£108
North Somerset	£59	£82	£108



## Multi Factor Authentication - ESS, iTrent

With effect from Monday 31 March Neo People are adding additional security to access iTrent. To access the iTrent payroll system, whether as an administrator, manager via MSS (Manager Self-Service), or employee via ESS (Employee Self-Service), all staff will be required to use an authentication app on their phone or computer. Neo People recommend the Microsoft Authenticator app, which will be included in the Guidance notes below; however, any authenticator app may be used.

[Click here to view Guidance notes.](#)

Please share this update with staff.

# GOVERNANCE UPDATES

## Reminder - Clerks' Network

A reminder that the next Clerks' Network takes place on Thursday 27 March from 1.00pm.

[Chris Hills Governance Professional](#) has already circulate the Teams link to Clerks.





## Upcoming Lighthouse Learning Sessions and CPD Networks

Please email [Lighthouse Learning](#) if you have any questions about the below events.

Agendas, Teams links (if required) and other resources will be emailed one week in advance of each network. The full programme of Lighthouse Learning CPD on offer for 2024-25 can be found on the [LSP website](#).

DATE	EVENT	AUDIENCE
Wednesday 26 March 10.00-11.00am	<b>Chairs' Forum</b> Online via MS Teams. Link has been circulated by Chris Hills.	Chairs
Wednesday 26 March 12.30-3.30pm	<b>Updated EEF Implementation Guidance</b> In person @ Nailsea Baptist Church	Headteachers
Wednesday 26 March 3.30-4.30pm	<b>Secondary Raising Standards Network</b> Online via MS Teams	Secondary Standards Leads
Thursday 3 April 3.45 - 4.15pm	<b>Term 5 Writing Units Briefing</b> <a href="#">Click here to sign up.</a>	Primary Heads & English Leads
Tuesday 29 April 1.00–3.00pm	<b>LSP Church Schools Network</b> Flax Bourton Primary School	Church School Leaders & RE Leaders

## LSP Church School Network

The next Church School Network will be held at Flax Bourton Primary School on **Tuesday 29 April, 1.00pm - 3.00pm**. Laura Harris from Diocese of Bristol, will be at the network to provide some training on RE curriculum development, as well as providing us with some updates.

Parking is available at the front of the school.

The session is for School leaders and RE leaders. We look forward to seeing everyone there.

*Debbie Coker, Director of Inclusion*

## LSP Writing Units Term 5 Briefing

We are looking forward to our Term 5 Writing Units briefing on **Thursday 3 April 3.45 - 4.15pm**. To attend, staff will need to register at the link below before the event:

[Click here to register your place.](#)

We will be sharing planning for FS, Y3, Y5 and Y6.

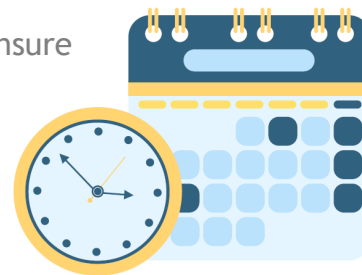
We have also updated and finalised the overall plan for writing units (see link below). Units highlighted in yellow are those we will be writing this year and those in white are the ones we will be writing next year. You will see there have been some changes/updates and we have also included the written outcomes for each unit. We hope this is helpful for your planning.

[LSP Writing Units Overview.docx](#)



# KEY DATES, DEADLINES & REMINDERS

These reminders do not replace the LSP Annual Planner so please ensure you are checking this regularly (link on next page).



## Key Dates

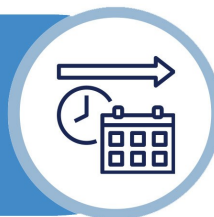
DATE	INFORMATION	FAO
Wednesday 26 March	Primary Heads' Meeting @ Nailsea Baptist Church <a href="#">Click here to view the agenda.</a>	
End of Term 4	Ensure mid-point review 1 is completed for both teachers and school leaders are completed as per Performance Development Policy.	Heads & Leaders
Tuesday 22 April	Deadline to have set initial draft 2025-26 3-year budget.	SBMs & Heads



Please note the following links will only work for those who already have access to the relevant site or folder. If you feel you need to be given permission to access something please [let us know](#).

## Annual Planner 2024/25

Click to view the Annual Planner  
(Via Sharepoint)



## Bulletin Index

Click to access an index of  
previous bulletin articles

## Previous Bulletins

Click to access previous editions of the  
LSP Weekly News Bulletin



## The Beacon

Click to read the latest edition of the  
LSP Newsletter: The Beacon



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Don't forget, you can submit your school news stories to  
be shared in our newsletters and on our social media.

Email your stories to: [newsletter@lsp.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@lsp.org.uk)