



SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING MINUTES

HELD ON 13th October 2021

8.30am

Microsoft Teams meeting

Position	Attendee	10 December 2020	14 January 2021	10 February 2021	16 June 2021	13 October 2021
Chairing the meeting						
Chair	Michelle Smith	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vice Chair	Rob Andrew	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
18 School Members						
Appointed Members						
8 Maintained School reps:						
Maintained Secondary Head	Peter Tite	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintained Primary Head	Rob Andrew	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintained Primary Head	Susan Aldred	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintained Primary Head	Michelle Smith	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintained Primary Head	Carolyn Morris	A	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintained Primary Head	Vicky Brown	✓	✓	A	✓	✓
Maintained Special Head	Rick Robinson	✓		✓	✓	✓
Maintained Infant School Head	Gillian Crompton	✓	A	✓	✓	✓
Maintained PRU Head	Vicki Michael	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2 Free School reps:						
Free School Head	Claire Gammon	A	A	A	A	
Alt' Provision Free School Head	Gary Holding	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4 Academy reps:						
Secondary Academy Head	Dean Logan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Secondary Academy Head	Diane Atkinson	✓	A	✓	A	
Primary Academy Head	Donna Simpson	✓	A	A		✓
Special Academy Head	Jen Ashworth			✓	✓	
4 Governors:						
Secondary Governor	Gillian Yates	✓	✓			
Primary Governor	Brian Peacock / Vacant					
Primary Governor	Pauline Lovick	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Primary Governor	Helen Holden	✓	✓	✓	A	✓
4 Non-school members:						
Teacher Unions	Simon Jones	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Non-Teaching Unions	Paul Crewe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Post 16 FE College	Fazal Dad / Elissa Best	✓✓	✓ / A	✓ / A	A/✓	✓
Early Years Provider	Tracy Ellett					
Schools Forum Members present		16	15	17	18	18
<i>Quorate 40% of filled posts</i>		<i>8</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>8</i>
In Attendance						
LA Officers	Kirsty Thompson					✓
LA Officers	Kirsten Reid	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LA Officers	Jayne Ivory / Carol Grimshaw / Alison Ashworth- Taylor		✓			
LA Officers	Jo Siddle	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LA Officers	Dean Langton					✓
LA Officers	Simon Ross	✓	✓			
LA Officers	Safiyya Mulla	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Council Members	CLlr Julie Gunn					✓
LA Officers	Corrine McMillan					
Total		5	6	4	3	4

1. Welcome and introductions

Michelle Smith (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Kirsty Thompson who has recently replaced Jenny Hackett in the post of Finance Manager for Schools and Education.

Kirsty Thompson introduced herself. KT is still getting used to the data so she will try and answer as much as she possibly can and any questions she can't answer she will get back to the Schools Forum.

Dean Langton introduced himself as the new Director of Finance for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

Cllr Julie Gunn introduced herself. She hasn't been able to attend Schools Forum meetings due to work commitments. Julie is the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education. Julie wanted to say thank you for all the amazing work done in the last 19 months and it is appreciated.

Apologies were received from Jen Ashworth

2. Minutes from the previous meeting

It was agreed that the minutes from 16th June 2021 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

KT explained that there are vacancies for governor reps. KT has got governor training coming up in November so she will ask at the training if anyone wants to be a governor rep for the Schools Forum. PL mentioned that in the previous minutes it was mentioned a governor rep for each school and asked if it was for each phase or group of schools. KT clarified that it would be a governor rep for each phase or group.

PL mentioned that item 6 on previous minutes it says that PL hadn't reported from six SIG schools it should say PL hadn't reported balances from 2 SIG groups.

4. Membership for 2021/22 academic year

a) New members – KT will raise at governor training for governor reps. KR mentioned that she was unable to contact Tracy Ellet from St Mary's so it is not clear on her position as her email bounced back. Chair advised to try again if not we will try to see if we can get another representation. PC mentioned about St Mary's closing down. KR will contact PC after the meeting.

b) Appointment of Chair – it was agreed at the last meeting that Michelle Smith agreed to be Chair and Rob Andrew agreed to be Vice Chair.

5. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Monitoring Report 2021/22

Schools Forum members were asked to note and comment on this report. KT shared her screen.

There has been an increase in EHCP plans and demand in SEN settings of an overspend of £334k. A contingency was set at the beginning of the year and by the end of the year it will

be spent, therefore at this moment in time we do not anticipate an overspend on the DSG at 31st March 2022.

For the short term interventions, a budget of £386k that was set from the High Needs this year, no payments have been made yet but there are payments due of £45k in October. It is expected that it will be fully spent and it will be reassessed going forward. However as it is ring fenced for that area, as agreed at previous Schools Forum meetings any unspent budget would be added to the next financial year.

Maternity reimbursement claims for the summer amounted to £150k and the budget was increased for this year, hopefully the expenditure will be in line at the end of March.

In the budget monitoring report, the Schools Block shows the current budget and the full year forecast, at the moment everything is in line with what has been set as a budget so it is forecasted that it will break even.

The High Needs block is where the overspends are coming; the special schools top up funding for academies is higher as place numbers were increased. A lot of the overspends are in the mainstream top up funding; the children with EHCPs within the mainstream or academy settings are keeping the children within the school instead of putting them in a special school and providing them with the support in a mainstream setting. This totals up to £334k overspend in the high needs contingency. Overall, the DSG is forecasting break even and this will be monitored going forward.

On the Early Years block, it is forecasting break even at the moment. The adjustments for early years will come later on in the year. The early years' census data was submitted in the summer term so the final allocation information won't be until November. KT will update at next Schools Forum meeting.

6. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2022/23

KT explained that in this section it is to make the Schools Forum aware of early announcements made about the DSG allocations for next year and to make the Schools Forum aware of consultations with schools that is expected to commence on 28th October 2021.

We are in year three of a promised three-year £14.4 billion funding settlement from the government and this year it was announced that £7.1 billion of additional funding will be invested in schools across this financial year.

Last year, we opted to align our local formula to the national funding formula. The mandatory per pupil levels have increased; a change needs to be made to the report as the comparative figures for the previous year do not include the teachers' pay and pension grant. Primary schools have had an increase of £85 per pupil increase and an increase of £110 per pupil for secondary schools. Local authorities must set a minimum funding guarantee between 0.5% and 2% per pupil and the teachers' pay pension grant has now been fully rolled into the national funding formula. The local authority are still able to continue to transfer 0.5% to the schools block.

There's been a change to Sparsity funding, it is now based on road distance instead of a straight line distance for pupils home which could attract more money and the distance taper has been introduced as in addition to existing year group size taper.

There has been an increase in the High Needs block. We will see an increase of at least 9.6% in the High Needs block funding for next year. It will equate to £2.1 million based on previous allocation.

The central services block are going to be reduced for the third year in a row. A 20% reduction will be applied to the historical commitments. KT will update in the December meeting.

As a local authority, we are required to console of any change in the level of the minimum funding guarantee in the prior year. Last year we applied 2% and this year 2% will be applied again.

It was approved by the Schools Forum last year on the transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs block. KT will be asking schools their views and hoping to feedback in the December meeting with the results of the consultation for Schools Forum members to approve the final school block budgets.

7. Central School Services Block: Historical Commitments 2022/23

Schools Forum members are asked to note and comment on this report.

The central services block is made up of two elements, residual funding historical commitments and retained duties element which funds the responsibilities that the local authority hold for pupils, whether they are in maintained or academy schools. It was previously funded through the ESG (Educational Services Grant).

The historical commitments are services that have been in the past provided by the local authority by top slicing the schools block. The top slicing was no longer permitted and it was transferred into historical commitments. The DfE have started to unwind the funding for these commitments by a reduction of 20% each year. In the table in 4.1, it shows the allocation of funding based on a 20% rolling basis reduction. The Music Service contribution is reduced. School Improvement Groups, Broadband Connectivity and Capital Expenditure from Revenue will be reduced too.

The contribution to Music Service, there is still a reserve that exists that would cover the shortfall in 21/22 and 22/23 however this will be reviewed next year as reserves will have been used up by the end of 22/23.

The School Improvement Group (SIG) funding will be approved on the receipt of the SIG development plans with the budget of £224k. Primary school will receive a reduction of £4,000 and secondary schools will receive £2,000 reduction. The local authority will increase allocation to the two maintained high schools if need be, through the schools brokering and monitoring grant and for options for 22/23, KT will bring to the December meeting.

For Broadband connectivity, there has been a price increase and the underspends from previous years will be able to cover the shortfall in 21/22 and 22/23. This will be reviewed again in 23/24 if the reductions continue at the same rate.

The Capital Expenditure will reduce in 22/23.

JS explained that for broadband connectivity she has raised with this with the transformation team and JS thinks we should begin the process and we probably need some of the primary representatives possibly have a working group with Laura Hodgkinson on this because we may be able to develop a SLA for the same service and this process needs to start now rather than next academic year. JS is happy to facilitate the meeting with Laura. MS agreed that this was a really good idea. Carolyn Morris and Rob Andrew volunteered to work with the transformation team.

PT asked that in terms of the issue under school improvement grant funding, he has had a discussion with Allison and it's the secondary sector where there is only two maintained schools and the two maintained schools should have the additional funding plus a number of the single academies who tend to work on this collaboration together. The larger MATs tend not to join in with this work. JS responded that thing can be done out of the brokering grant which we are allowed to do and we will continue to do that, if need be. If not all of the high school academies want to participate in the school improvement plans then to let JS know as that is additional money in the pot that can be used elsewhere. PT agreed with this. MS wanted to say thank you for the piece of work around that, it is really positive that we are able to continue to work collaboratively together, it's nice to be able to have some funding to be able to do that. JS explained we have got the school brokering grant that may change in April 2022 but we have been very careful with the brokering grant that is only for maintained schools. JS, KT and Alison have already started discussions so hopefully have further information in December.

8. Schools Block De-Delegated Funding 2022/23

To update the Schools Forum on the funds that can be de-delegated in 22/23. Also to consider the services with a vote to be taken at the next meeting in December. To enable the Schools Forum to consider retention of funding for educational functions with a final vote in December. And also to ask Schools Forum to consider if they got any issues around de-delegation which will need to be in the school consultation due to a change.

There's lots of history within the report about de-delegated services and nothing has changed from previous years.

We have voted to de-delegate free school meal eligibility checks, maternity pay for both teaching and non-teaching staff and trade union facilities time along with paying for the educational functions.

The local authority made a clear statement of how the funding is taken out the formula and this is for maintained schools only that the delegation covers; it doesn't cover academies. There is a proposal to increase the amount in 22/23. A proposal of 1.75% increase or a proposal of 3% increase. The reasons for these percentage increases because most of these costs are related to staff costs, it will be best to use staff pay increases as a proxy for developing an increase in the de-delegated amounts. It doesn't increase a lot per pupil but these numbers are based on October 2021 census and numbers will probably be slightly less in October 2022. To use 1.75% from this years' potential local government pay increases as a proxy for next year, but also there's the planned increase for National Insurance in April at 1.25%. Also to move 0.5% from the Schools block to High Needs block and at the end of this month if Schools Forum agree and following the close of the consultation. KT will feedback to the Schools Forum in December as we still have to seek approval that we still carry on de-delegating.

There may possibly be a change in how the Department for Education are going to allocate the school improvement monitoring and brokering grant. They are planning to consult in October/November to allow local authority to fund their school improvement functions via a de-delegation, at the next meeting it may be discussed with the removal of the School improvement Monitoring brokering Grant. The decisions have to be made for next year but there hasn't been a consultation out yet. KT will get more clarification about it and will update the Schools Forum. JS explained that the consultation has taken place. JS has also been involved in the discussions around the school brokering grant. JS is disappointed that there's a thought to remove the school improvement monitoring and brokering grant because we haven't used the school brokering grant just for local authority maintained schools. For the schools requiring additional support, we allow all schools and academies to be part of that process; some academies decline but we have had academies in that process where we've used the schools brokering grant to commission school to school support and system

leaders. A decision will be made for April 2022, the brokering grant is only for local authority maintained schools.

MS asked for clarification on the rates for academies, do they not buy in or have we already discussed previously about them contributing. KT explained that academies wouldn't be contributing to the educational functions because it's internally. KT is unsure whether or not they contribute to the free school meals as it's an eligibility check KT will find out and feedback to the Schools Forum. We can only de-delegate from maintained schools; we can't take the money out of the academies budget. PL mentioned that the academies definitely contribute to the trade union. JS explained that not all academies contribute to the trade union that's done through agreements with unions and then brokered so that the money is bought in. JS suggested to look at a service level agreement that's agreed towards that as opposed to de-delegation as this is something negotiated with the unions.

9. School Consultation

The consultation gives the national funding formula to let people know the unit values that have been given out. The de-delegated funds is mentioned and what basis we've used the reason. If academies are only paying to the trade union costs then KT will look at separating that element out so that academies can vote on that part of it, and then the maintained schools can vote on the other element. JS mentioned that academies can't vote on behalf of everybody else as there was a historical issue with the academies money coming into the union facility time because we weren't charging. KR will get back to the Schools Forum.

Members agreed for the consultation to go ahead on 28th October. If the schools have any queries or questions they can contact Kirsty and the closing date is on 12th November. JS asked how the responses will be collated. KT will have a look at collating the responses by Teams.

10. Any Other Business

KR asked members to decline the meeting requests which Jenny had sent for the Schools Forum meetings and KR will send out new meeting requests.

11. Dates for future meetings

8th December 2021

12th January 2022

9th February 2022