

Schools Forum

Minutes

Tuesday 17 January 2023

PRESENT

Voting members	Non-voting members
<p>Schools Members Claire Fletcher (St Paul's CE Primary) Sam Naismith (Flora Gardens Primary) Kathleen Williams (Holy Cross Primary) Joe Brown (Old Oak Primary) Alan Campbell (Cambridge Special School)</p> <p>Academies Members Gary Kynaston (Hammersmith Academy) Sally Brooks (Fulhamn Cross Academy / Fulham College) Daniel Upfield (Ark Swift Primary Academy)</p>	<p>Union Representatives David Anderson (H&F NEU)</p> <p>Observers Alex Parker (Lady Margaret) Aiden Smith (Jack Tizard) Jacqueline Munroe</p>

Officers

Jacqui McShannon (Strategic Director of Children's Services)
Peter Haylock (Director of Education and SEND)
Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education)
Valerie Irolla (Principal Accountant)
Daryle Mathurin (Strategic Lead - Education, Assets and Operations)
Phil Tomsett (Head of Early Years)
David Abbott (Head of Governance)

Officer Observers

Urmilla Dattani (Accountant, Schools and Education)
Ozioma Onwochei (Principal Accountant)
Adele Patriciello (Senior Finance Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Wendy Aldridge and Karen Cunningham.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 November 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

3. 2023-24 SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education) presented the item that covered the final Schools Block allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2023/24, following the receipt of final funding allocations and the Authority Proforma Tool in December 2022. He highlighted that core funding from the Department for Education (DfE) was due to increase by 1.9% nationally in 2023/24 and further funding had been announced in the Autumn Budget Statement. This additional funding would come as a separate Mainstream Schools Additional Grant in 2023-24.

Claire Fletcher noted the deadline for falling rolls funding applications was approaching and asked when schools would be invited to make submissions. Tony Burton said officers were intending to write to 10 schools this side of half term and a decision would be made towards the end of this term.

Alex Parker asked if the £200k set aside each year for falling rolls was capped or proscribed. Tony Burton said the money wasn't capped or proscribed. The intention was to provide short term transitional support for schools with falling rolls, rather than replacement funding.

Kathleen Williams asked if the process for the contingency for schools in financial difficulty within the de-delegated budgets in Table 3 would be dealt with in the same way as the £200k falling rolls fund. Tony Burton said the de-delegation related to mainstream primary schools only. The Schools Block Falling rolls was for all mainstream schools reception to year 11.

Claire Fletcher said it was important that there was similar transparency and accountability for the schools in financial difficulty support. She also felt it was important that decision makers knew the previous support schools had received.

Kathleen Williams said it would be helpful to see how support money was used in previous years. The Chair agreed there should be transparency and accountability and asked for a 5-year view.

ACTION: Tony Burton

The Chair asked how schools could access support funding and the timeline for applications. Tony Burton said the schools finance team were notified of schools in financial difficulty and would make recommendations to Schools Forum for support from the contingency fund. That had been communicated to maintained schools before Christmas. Peter Haylock said officers were working with two schools about support related to redundancy costs and deficit budgets. The Chair asked officers to ensure this was communicated formally to schools and to Chairs of Governors.

Kathleen Williams asked about the definition of financial hardship and said it should be consistent between schools and consider previous actions taken.

Tony Burton discussed the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant and noted that while officers had published indicative figures, the final amount would be paid by the Education and Skills Funding Agency from their own calculation based on the latest Free School Meals figures.

The Chair discussed the falling rolls group membership, noting it shouldn't include schools that were requesting money. He suggested members declare any conflicts of interest.

Tony Burton proposed a 3% trigger point for qualification for falling rolls support funding. Members unanimously agreed the proposal.

RESOLVED

1. That the January 2023 APT for the recommended model be submitted to the ESFA for the 2023 to 2024 school budget share. This is with the revised NFF rates in appendix 1 and an MFG value of positive 0.5% per pupil. There are two versions of this model to be agreed pending the DfE decision on the 1% disapplication of grant regulations request.
2. That Schools Forum agreed to the proposal to transfer 0.5% of the total Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2023 to 2024 pending the outcome of the disapplication request to transfer 1% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. This equates to £0.577m. Should the DfE provide a positive response to the disapplication request, the 1% transfer has been approved at £1.154m.
3. That Schools Forum agreed a proposal to top slice the 2023 to 2024 Schools Block to the value of £0.200m for the Falling Rolls protection fund in 2023 to 2024.
4. That maintained school representatives at Schools Forum agreed to the proposed de-delegated budgets proposed for 2023 to 2024 in Table 3 totalling £0.691m.
5. That maintained school representatives at Schools Forum agreed to the proposed Education Functions budgets proposed for 2023 to 2024 in Table 4 totalling £0.262m.
6. That Schools Forum agreed to the Central Services Schools Block budget allocations proposed for 2023/24 financial year as detailed in Table 5.

4. EARLY YEARS BUDGET 2023-24

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children’s Services and Education) presented the update on the initial allocation of Early Years Block funding for 2023/24 based on January 2022 census numbers.

Phil Tomsett (Head of Early Years) said the Council had commissioned a childcare sufficiency assessment to understand the childcare sector in the borough and ensure it was sustainable going forward. The report had found the sector was able to offer sufficient places in all but 2 wards, due to a surge in new housing in those areas. The main concern in the sector was around rising costs (i.e. energy costs, staffing costs, accommodation costs).

Members thanked officers for the clarity in the budget papers.

RESOLVED

1. Schools Forum noted draft 2023/24 Early Year budget for consultation including an increase to the base to £6.59 (1% like for like increase in funding) and proposed hourly rates for deprivation detailed in Appendix 1 subject to consultation.

Meeting started: 2.00 pm
Meeting ended: 3.22 pm

Chair

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