

Schools Forum

Minutes

Tuesday 3 October 2023

PRESENT

Voting members	Non-voting members
<p>Primary School Heads Elisabeth Stevenson (Lady Margaret School) Anne-Marie (Thames Federation) Dave Colins (Brackenbury School) Imogen Lavelle (The Good Shepherd) Joe Brown (Old Oak Primary)</p> <p>Academies and Free Schools Sally Brooks (Fulham Cross Academy and Fulham College) Daniel Upfield (Ark Swift Primary Academy) Gary Kynaston, Hammersmith Academy (Chair)</p> <p>Non-Schools Members Jane Gleasure (Little People, Early Years PVI)</p>	<p>Observers Alex Parker Aiden Smith Jacqueline Munroe</p>

Officers

Jacqui McShannon (Director of Children's Services)
Peter Haylock (Director of Education and SEND)
Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education)
Irolla Valerie (Principle Accountant)
Daryle Mathurin (Strategic Lead - Education, Assets and Operations)
Satwinder Saraon (Strategic Lead for Education, Early Years and Transformation)
Anjeli Chadha (Principal Accountant)
Caroline Baxter (Finance Manager)
Joe Gunning (Programme Lead, Children Commissioning)
Amrita White (Clerk)
Harriet Bour (Assistant Committee Coordinator)
External – Freddie Adu (Queens Mill School)

1. **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

The new school members introduced themselves and would formally participate at the next School Forum in November.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Michele Barrett, Randolph Beresford / Vanessa Nursery and Kathleen Williams.

3. **NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA UPDATE 2024/25**

Tony Burton (Head of Finance of Children's Services and Education) presented the report that provided an update on the important changes in the National Funding Formula for Early Years. Additional funding was confirmed from September 2023 and information on the extended childcare offer with phased changes from April 2024.

The Chair highlighted that there were pressures in many different funding areas defined within this report.

Jane Gleasure (Little People, Early Years PVI) outlined that there was lack of information available in relation to the early years funding from April 2024 which prohibited them to plan effectively. She asked for further clarification to be provided on how the funding formula would be applied across the different age groups. In response, Tony Burton explained that officers had not received the final guidance yet. It was anticipated that the Under 2 rate would be higher than the 3 & 4-year-old entitlement to reflect the higher ratio of staff to provide the service to this cohort. It was noted that all forums with the Department for Education (DfE) had been attended. However, the final funding guidance rates of funding from April 2024 was currently unknown and an update would be brought to a future Schools Forum meeting.

The Chair requested that subject to availability of information from The Education and Skills Funding Agency, a paper be produced in time for the December Schools Forum meeting that would update providers on the early years budget for 2024/25.

ACTION: Tony Burton/ Peter Haylock

The Chair had requested for a virtual workshop activity take place to brief the early years providers once the full guidance was available. Finance colleagues to work closely with Peter and Tony on facilitating this workshop.

ACTION: Tony Burton/ Satwinder Saraon

RESOLVED

The Schools Forum noted the report.

4. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK FUNDING 2024/25 - SPECIAL PROVISION

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Service and Education) provided an update and summary of the key points. The report updated the forum on the final High Needs Block allocation for the financial year 2024/25 and updated on changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant conditions prescribed by the Education and Standards Funding Agency in relation to the High Needs Block.

The Chair clarified the ongoing pressures faced by the special school sector. Highlighting that the support staff were paid via a different mechanism to the teachers.

RESOLVED

The Schools Forum noted the report.

5. SCHOOLS BLOCK MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS BUDGET 2024/25

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education) presented the report and provided an update on the key points. It was noted that this report provided a briefing on the decisions required for the 2024/25 budget setting process for the provisional Schools Block allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant, following the receipt of provisional funding allocations in Summer 2023 and the Authority Proforma Tool in August 2023. He outlined the three recommendations included within the report and the decisions required.

The Chair suggested when updating schools to break down the formula funding by factor for each school, so it is clearer how mainstream funding targets additional needs and SEN support and where additional funding is available for Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) via High Needs Top-up.

Tony Burton mentioned that for the 2024/25 budget it is a requirement for Local Authorities to set out and explain Notional SEN funding within the School Block. Further information and consultation on Notional SEN will follow later in the Autumn Term. As the Notional SEN is not an additional cash allocation it does not impact the modelling for indicative budget shares for mainstream schools in 2024/25.

ACTION: Tony Burton

The Chair said that it would be useful to contextualise the High Needs Block (HNB) financial position with the safety valve agreement. In response Tony Burton explained that the safety valve monitoring update for Q2 would be considered alongside the Schools Block to High Needs Block transfer proposal agenda item at the November Schools Forum meeting.

ACTION: Tony Burton

The Chair congratulated Tony Burton and the finance team for their work on maintaining this effectively.

RESOLVED:

The schools Forum approved the following recommendations:

1. Model 1 is recommended prior to consultation with schools with the following key features:
Sets the Minimum Funding Guarantee funding increase on pupil led factors for 2024/25 at 0.5%.
 - Mirrors the National Funding Formula factor rates during the transition to the hard national formula and allows for 0.94% uplift on inner London NFF rates
 - Continuation of Schools Block to High Needs Block Transfer at 1% (equivalent to £1.188m on the provisional allocation 2024/25)
Zero Falling Rolls Fund be available from the 2024/25 budget.
2. It is recommended that Schools Forum agree for the LA to consult schools on the basis of the above provisions contained within Model 1 – see consultation document in Appendix 5.
3. It is recommended that the total deductions for maintained schools de-delegated and statutory education functions increases by 4.4% which is commensurate with the increase in core Schools Block funding year on year to 2024/25.
 - This includes the increase associated with the increase in MSAG mainstreamed into the block from 2024/25.
 - Remaining inflationary pressures in statutory services will be offset by a corresponding reduction in the contingency budget for maintained primary schools in financial difficulty as per section 4 of this report.

6. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT MONITORING QUARTER 2 2023/24

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education) presented the report and provided an update on the key points. The report updated the forum on the 2023/24 Q2 budget monitoring position to the allocation received in July 2023 from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

The Chair emphasised that this was an informative paper, and the key points were summarised well.

In response to a question Tony Burton clarified that the Council had safety valve funding profiled up to the 2024/25 financial year. The HNB funding

growth would be monitored closely by officers in line with the dedicated schools grant reporting as well as the safety valve reporting.

The Chair requested that an overall position in relation to the HNB and details of the safety valve agreement be provided to schools during the Autumn term.

ACTION: Tony Burton

RESOLVED

The Schools Forum noted the report.

7. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE (FOR INFORMATION)

An update on the Draft Work Programme was provided.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Freddie Adu (Queensmill School) highlighted a funding concern regarding Queensmill School. Freddie Adu outlined that there was a disproportionate effect on special schools. He felt that Queensmill was in a unique position as it was not a maintained school, and their current financial position was extremely concerning.

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The Chair and members recognised the challenges faced regarding underfunding.

The Chair recommended that Freddie Adu raise these issues at the special schools meeting and work closely with Peter Haylock, Daryle Mathurin and Tony Burton, on the current state of Queensmill School.

**ACTION: Freddie Adu, Tony Burton, Peter Haylock,
and Daryle Mathurin**

Peter Haylock (Director of Education and SEND) responded to the concerns raised by Freddie. He sympathised with the challenges presented.

It was noted that all funding increases were allocated equally across schools. Item 5 in the agenda pack detailed the additional funding provided to Hammersmith and Fulham Special Schools through the provisions of the National Funding Formula and High Needs Operational Guidance. This covers additional pay grants and supplementary funding provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency in recent years.

Additionally, Peter Haylock noted the additional discretionary top-up funding agreed by Hammersmith and Fulham from 2023/24 for Queensmill School.

Officers would continue to have conversations with the ESFA regarding this matter and feedback to Freddie Adu.

The Chair also noted that this was a challenge faced by all schools in terms of funding and that it was the role of all schools to deal with the funding challenges within the high needs block as a group.

RESOLVED

The Schools Forum noted the report.

Meeting started: 2:00pm
Meeting ended: 3:45pm

Chair

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