

Schools Forum

Minutes

Tuesday 16 January 2024

PRESENT

Voting members	Non-voting members
<p>Primary School Heads Anne-Marie (Thames Federation) Dave Colins (Brackenbury School) Karen Cunningham (St John XXIII Catholic Primary) Kathleen Williams (Holy Cross Primary) Michele Barrett (Randolph Beresford / Vanessa Nursery)</p> <p>Academies and Free Schools Gary Kynaston, Hammersmith Academy (Chair)</p> <p>Non-Schools Members Jane Gleasure (Little People, Early Years PVI)</p>	<p>Observers Alex Parker</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)
Ozioma Onwochei (Principal Accountant)
Anjeli Chadha (Principal Accountant)
Caroline Baxter (Finance Manager)
Tina Ayree (Director of Finance, Fulham Cross Academy)
Amrita White (Committee Coordinator)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Sally Brooks (Fulham Cross Academy and Fulham College)

Peter Haylock (Director of Education and SEND) noted that the Team needed to explore the Governor vacancies and begin the appointment process in due course.

Action: Tony Burton/Peter Haylock

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

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

3. SCHOOLS BLOCK MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS BUDGET 2024/25

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 2024/25 following the receipt of final funding allocations and the authority proforma tool in December 2023. He highlighted that the overall funding allocation had decreased by 0.28% year on year for Hammersmith and Fulham mainstream schools in 2024/25 versus 2023/24. This was primarily due to a fall in pupil numbers from October 2022 to October 2023 of 274.5 pupils or 1.7%. However, funding per pupil has increased year on year. The agreed principles modelled sets the minimum funding guarantee at 0.5% and mirrors the National Funding Formula (NFF) factor rates allowing for a percentage uplift of 2.11% on the inner London NFF rates.

Tony Burton also outlined the proposed central services schools block funding allocations for 2024/25. It was noted that for historic commitments there had been a further reduction to this element of funding for all local authorities receiving it. For Hammersmith and Fulham, this equated to a reduction in grant of £0.29m in 2024/25 versus 2023/24 (a circa £2.187m reduction since 2019/20).

With regards to the falling rolls funding, the Chair enquired whether this included the funding for 2023/24. In response Tony Burton explained that the process for the 2023/24 fund still needed to be concluded. A follow up exercise would take place and proposals would be brought to the March Schools Forum for the outstanding £200k to be distributed fairly across all schools.

Action: Tony Burton

The Chair requested that further clarity be provided at next Schools Forum around what had been regularised as a result of the decoupling from the tri-borough services. Including any anomalies that still existed that could be reported back through the Schools Forum regarding funding.

Action: Tony Burton

The Chair asked when the budget allocations for 2025/26 would be available. Tony Burton noted that the Education colleagues would expect to receive the provisional funding allocations around July 2024.

The Chair enquired how well were the workshops attended. In response Tony Burton explained that the workshops were being fairly well attended. These took place in Autumn 2023 and representatives across 20 schools were

present. The Chair requested that a survey to circulated to ascertain how well they were received.

Action: Tony Burton

RESOLVED

1. that the January 2024 APT for the recommended model is submitted to the ESFA for the 2024 to 2025 schools budget share. This is with the revised uplifted NFF rates detailed in paragraph 4 and in appendix 1 and an MFG value of 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 the Schools Forum agreed to the proposal to transfer 0.5% of the total Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2024 to 2025 pending the outcome of the disapplication request to transfer 1% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. This equates to £0.588m. Should the DfE provide a positive response to the disapplication request, the 1% transfer is recommended to be approved at £1.177m.
3. That the Schools Forum were asked to note a proposed correction for baseline funding error for one maintained primary school. A disapplication request has been submitted to the Department of Education to modify the Page 13 Minimum Funding Guarantee allocation for this school. This results in £0.149m of funding being allocated across all schools in the recommended model.
4. That maintained school representatives at Schools Forum agreed to the proposed 2024 to 2025 de-delegation budget of £0.622m.
5. That maintained school representatives at Schools Forum agreed to the proposed 2024 to 2025 Education Functions budget of £0.307m.
6. That Schools Forum agreed to the Central Services School Block budget allocations proposed for 2024/25.

4. EARLY YEARS FUNDING 2024/25

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education) presented the report that updated the Forum on the initial allocation of early years block funding for 2024/25 including the extended entitlements for working parents of two-year-old children and children from age 9 months. The report covered an update on the national funding formula for early years and funding rates and draft budget for April 2024 to March 2025. He outlined all the offers and the corresponding budgets required for approval based on the 2024/25 hourly rates issued by the Department for Education (DfE) and the activity data from the January 2023 census and DfE estimates for the new offers.

Michele Barrett (Randolph Beresford / Vanessa Nursery) enquired whether the formula for deprivation rates had to be determined using the IDACI model or whether this could be based on other factors i.e. income. Satwinder Saraon (Strategic Lead for Education), Early Years and Transformation) noted that other mechanisms had previously been explored, however the IDACI formula

currently seemed to be the best approach for measuring deprivation in local areas.

The Chair discussed the challenges faced by providers and requested that Officers work closely with the PVI sector to arrange some additional workshops.

With regards to planning, Jane Gleasure (Little People, Early Years), enquired when they were able to share the funding rates with the providers and parents. Satwinder Saraon noted that Comms would be sent to parents via the DfE pamphlet. Officers would need to follow the Governance process to finalise the proposed funding rates once the consultation process was complete in march 2024.

Peter Haylock (Director of Education and SEND) suggested to use the proposed funding rates, included on page 24 of the agenda pack for planning purposes as Education colleagues were not expecting a significant change to funding.

The Chair asked when the consultation was expected to complete. In response Tony Burton noted that a short consultation would take place in the next few weeks. The Council's timeline was to complete the process by early March, followed by the DfE's deadline at the end of March.

The Chair requested that following the consultation providers be informed that there were no recommended changes to the rates, providing additional reassurances.

RESOLVED

That the Schools Forum noted draft 2024/25 Early Year budget across all entitlements for consultation, including the revised base rates, deprivation and local formula for 2-year-old and Under 2 year old offers.

Meeting started: 2:10pm
Meeting ended: 3:05pm

Chair

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