

# Schools Forum

## Minutes

Tuesday 12 November 2024

### PRESENT

Voting members	Non-voting members
<p><b>School Members</b> Anne-Marie (Thames Federation) Imogen Lavelle (The Good Shepherd) Dave Colins (Brackenbury School)</p> <p><b>Academies and Free Schools</b> Gary Kynaston, Hammersmith Academy (Chair) Daniel Cundy (Senior Principal, AP Academies) Ziah Raphael (Principal, Ormiston Bridge Academy)</p> <p><b>Non-Schools Members</b> Jane Gleasure (Little People, Early Years)</p>	<p><b>Observers</b> Aiden Smith (Governor, Jack Tizard School)</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)  
Tiffany Yip (Assistant Committee Coordinator)  
Tina Aryee (Fulham Cross)  
Daryle Mathurin (Head of Assets and Resources - Education and SEND)  
Ozioma Onwochei (Principal Accountant)

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Katie Beardsworth and Alex Parker.

#### 2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

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

#### 3. SCHOOLS BLOCK TO HIGH NEEDS BLOCK TRANSFER DISAPPLICATION REQUEST

Peter Haylock (Director of Education and SEND) introduced the disapplication request and outlined the five key drivers that had led to the request:

- To address budget pressure from cost inflation since the Safety Valve agreement
- Lower than originally forecast High Needs Block funding increases now assumed than originally modelled per Department for Education advice
- Special minimum funding guarantee at 3% and Special Provision Supplementary Grant from 2023/24 Financial Year
- Maintains the continued investment of High Needs into H&F mainstream provision
- Local area placement sufficiency

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education) added that high needs funding had become increasingly restrained over the last few years and inflation had been higher than 3%. It was noted that a 6% funding increase was to be expected from the 2025/26 funding, reverting to 3% increases from 2026/27 onwards.

Peter Haylock added that there was a number of schools wishing to join the high needs reference group the group would start meeting in January.

Dave Collins (Brackenbury School) was concerned with the funding challenges faced by schools in the borough with Hammersmith & Fulham receiving substantially lower funding than other local authorities. The Chair noted that this was the last year of the Safety Valve and this transfer was the last notional part of it, adding that there would be information about going forward in the June/July meetings.

Dave Collins further enquired whether the proposed move was sustainable and working. Peter Haylock noted that the High Needs Block would be in greater jeopardy if the move was not made. The additional half per cent to the High Needs Block could be used in schools where the national special education needs budget was not sufficient. Tony Burton explained that the upcoming Safety Valve funding of 1 million would reduce the retained deficit on Dedicated Schools Grant from 2 million to 1 million. It was noted that while a medium to long-term view of government funding would not come until the new year, work was being done to eliminate structural deficit and the Safety Valve funding was used to repay historic deficit. Daryle Mathurin (Head of Assets and Resources - Education and SEND) added that the disapplication also included systemic transformations that would help Hammersmith & Fulham achieve a balanced budget. The Chair noted that this would be the last major part of the Safety Valve and conversations about sustainability would continue.

#### **RESOLVED**

The Schools Forum approved the Schools Block to High Needs Block Transfer Disapplication Request.

#### **4. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 10 December 2024
- 21 January 2025

## 5. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education) gave an overview of the Schools and Early Years Budget 2025/26 timeline as follows:

- **Late November/Early December (date TBC)**
  - Provisional Funding Allocations 2025/26 for Dedicated Schools Grant
  - Operational Guidance and National Funding Formula (NFF)
- **Late November/ Early December**
  - Consultation on principles with school
- **December Schools Forum**
  - Update on NFF (if available)
  - Feedback on consultation with schools budget setting principles
- **Late December**
  - Modelling Tool and final allocations released by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) linked to October 2024 census
- **Christmas and New Year Period**
  - Modelling of funding according to the NFF
- **January workshop for Mainstream Schools**
  - To set out the NFF and modelling per school
- **January Schools Forum**
  - Propose moving 14 January Schools Forum to 21 January to allow more time for budget preparation and communication

The Chair enquired if additional funding for schools could be expected. Tony Burton replied that the School Block was unlikely to benefit from the increased funding. The Early Years Block increase was expected to be around 1% while the High Needs Block could possibly see a 6% increase. There would be increase in real terms, but it would not be enough to cover inflation. Peter Haylock (Director of Education and SEND) reassured that the team was working with schools where budgets were a key concern.

The Chair asked whether conversations were being conducted with schools that were facing difficulties without triggering the school resource management advisers (SRMA) process. Tony Burton responded that they were working with schools on deficit avoidance and deficit recovery and SRMA was used as a supportive option. The team was undergoing expansion and would work with the ESFA on a range of support programmes.

The Chair requested the timeline for the Spring and Autumn Terms and workshops in the Summer Term to be communicated at the next meeting.

**Action: Tony Burton/Peter Haylock**

Meeting started: 2.00 pm  
Meeting ended: 2.46 pm

Chair .....

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