

SCHOOLS FORUM
VIRTUAL MEETING
HELD ON 15th NOVEMBER 2022

PRESENT:

Primary Maintained School Headteacher: Mrs A Swift, Mrs C Taylor, Mr E Squire and Mrs B Atkinson

Primary Academy Representative: Mrs S Richardson

Secondary Academy Headteachers: Mr S White, Mrs M Wilkinson and Mrs L Spellman

Secondary Maintained School Headteacher: Mr R Henderson

Pupil Referral Unit Representative: Mrs R Campbell

Special School Representative: Mrs C Thomas

LA Representative: Councillor C Clark

Observers: Councillor L Evans
Mrs H Dalby

OFFICIALS: Mr A Bryson – Chief Accountant
Mr M Gray – Director of Children's Services
Mr G Waller – Senior Accountant
Miss K Gallagher - Secretary to the Forum

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs K Bailey and Mrs J Mills.

2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Members were invited to declare any personal or business interests they may have in any item included on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

3. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 11th OCTOBER 2022**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th October 2022 be approved.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

5. **DELEGATION/DE-DELEGATION 2023/24**

A report had been shared outlined the delegation/de-delegation for 2023-24. The following pertinent points were outlined.

- Funding for de-delegated services must be allocated through the formula but can be passed back, or de-delegated for maintained primary and secondary schools with school forum approval.
- The authority is proposing the option of de-delegation (i.e., central management)

for all of the areas covered in this report for 2023/24.

- An equivalent paper was presented and discussed at the last Forum on 11th October, so members were aware of voting at today's meeting. Also, in the event of any of the proposals being rejected this would allow time to plan for the transfer of budgets and responsibilities.

It had been recommended that all eligible Schools Forum members representing maintained schools vote separately according to their sector regarding the proposals which were outlined within the report.

Mrs A Swift reported that she had contacted all maintained Headteachers within the borough via email on 17th October 2022. From the responses received, there had been a unanimous vote for the maintained primary schools to de-delegate funds as outlined within the report for 2023/24.

Mr R Henderson agreed that he would also agree to de-delegate the funds as outlined within the report.

RESOLVED that

- a) the primary maintained Headteachers agree to de-delegate funds as outlined within the report for 2023/24
- b) the secondary maintained school Headteacher agrees to de-delegate the funds for 2023/24 as outlined within the report.

6. HIGH NEEDS UPDATE REPORT

A copy of the High Needs Funding Report report for and supporting appendices had been circulated prior to the meeting to review. The purpose of the report was to provide Schools Forum Members with an update on the financial position for High Needs factoring in any recent funding announcements.

It had been reported that there remained rising expenses which were primarily due to placements. A copy of the budget forecast and medium-term plan for the DSG funding had been circulated as an appendix.

It had been questioned whether there was any indication of what would be bid for in the new funding scheme. Mr Bryson reported that there had been no further information at present, and this would form part of the application process. Mr M Gray added that as this was still in progress the Local Authority were working within the guidance and would potentially reviewing the use of specialist teachers within certain areas. It was reported that this would be initially piloted prior to being rolled out. However, it had been noted that it was uncertain whether the additional funds would be needed/required to reduce the deficit.

RESOLVED that the High Needs Funding Report for Schools Forum be received and noted.

7. SCHOOLS FUNDING CONSULTATION 2023/24

The Schools Funding Consultation Report 2023/34 had been circulated prior to the meeting for Schools Forum members to review. Mr A Bryson provided a precis of the report with the following salient items being addressed.

- Dedicated School Grant (DSG) to Local Authorities is allocated in blocks. There are blocks of funding for Early Years, Schools, High Needs and Central School Services. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) uses the

national funding formula to calculate the blocks within the DSG that are allocated to local authorities. Local authorities currently have some flexibility in how this funding is allocated to schools, within the framework and constraints set out by the ESFA.

Following reports to Schools Forum on 11th October 2022 a consultation exercise was undertaken on proposals for next year's funding arrangements.

- This paper sets out the results of the recent local consultation with maintained schools and academies which covered preferences for the schools funding formula and a 0.5% transfer from the Schools to High Needs block for 2023/24. The school's forum should consider the views of the schools responding before making their decision.

The following questioned had been outlined within the consultation.

- Question 1 - Do you agree, funding permitting, to increase the formula factors in line with the NFF? This would be an increase of 2.4% to the formula's core factors (plus lump sum), except for the PFI factor increasing in line with the RPIX measure of inflation to reflect the use of RPIX in PFI contracts.
- Question 2 - The Council seeks your views on whether you agree with the proposal to set the MFG at the maximum of plus 0.5%, assuming the level of funding permits this?
- Question 3 - Do you agree to adjust the Basic Entitlement AWPU if funding allocated to the LA is greater than that needed to fulfil the National Funding Formula?
- Question 4 - Do you support the transfer of 0.5% (estimated at £800k) from the Schools Block to High Needs Block in 2023/24?

The responses had been outlined within the report for Schools Forum members information. It had been highlighted that of the 78 schools consulted, there had been a response from 35 (which was a 44% response rate). This had been an increase of 4 from the previous year. A detailed breakdown of responses was outlined as below.

LA Primary	10
LA Secondary	1
Primary Academy	17
Secondary Academy	3
AP / Special Academy	4
TOTAL	35

It had been reported that all Schools Forum members were eligible to vote on the proposals. Mr A Bryson highlighted that the local authority was required to consult with Schools Forum on the funding formula, however the local authority retained the final decision on how the formula would be used. It had been recommended that Schools Forum support the proposals for 2023/24 (Questions 1-3 above). For Question 4 Schools Forum were asked to consider and vote on the proposal.

from Mrs Spellman explained that given the detailed high needs paper and engagement the local authority to seek best value to reduce the deficit she would be in support to continue the funding during the current piece of work.

The Chair agreed and explained that it would be beneficial to share the journey of the high need's expenditure and programme of work with the wider school community. It

had been noted that this was a frequent area of discussion within Secondary Head and Principals Group meetings, whereas this was not mirrored for Primary Headteachers. Mr M Gray agreed that this was an area that needed to be addressed to ensure clarity and providing further information on future works. It was agreed that this would be an action point for the local authority. It had been requested that further clarity regarding funding arrangements for Enhanced Mainstream Provision also.

Mrs C Thomas asked if further information could be presented to Schools forum regarding the increases to the special sector as not all grants for special schools would be placed within the National Funding Formula. It had been noted that a detailed breakdown was provided for mainstream schools, however, the same level of clarity was not always available for the special schools' sector. Mr A Bryson explained that in previous years, the local authority tried to mirror mainstream to maintained schools, this would be anticipated to be the same for the forthcoming year, subject to affordability. The Chair requested that this information be brought to the next meeting.

A copy of the cabinet report providing further context to schools funding had been included as an appendix.

The Chair took each question in turn and requested members of Schools Forum to Vote.

RESOLVED that

- a) all Schools Forum Members approve, funding permitting, to increase the formula factors in line with the National Funding Formula (Question 1).
- b) all Schools Forum Members approve the proposal to set the MFG at the maximum of plus 0.5%, assuming the level of funding permits this (Question 2).
- c) all Schools Forum Members approve to adjust the Basic Entitlement AWPU if funding allocated to the LA was greater than that needed to fulfil the National Funding Formula (Question 3).
- d) Schools Forum Members approve by majority vote, to support the transfer of 0.5% (estimated at £800k) from the Schools Block to High Needs Block in 2023/24 (Question 4).

8. MEETING DATES AND PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

This item had been addressed outside of the meeting.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no further items of business.

10. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting would hold on 17th January 2022 at 1.30pm.