



# **SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING MINUTES**

**HELD ON 23<sup>RD</sup> February 2022**

**8.30am**

**Microsoft Teams meeting**

Position	Attendee	10 February 2021	16 June 2021	13 October 2021	8 <sup>th</sup> December 2021	12 <sup>th</sup> January 2022	23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2022
<b>Chairing the meeting</b>							✓
							✓
<b>18 School Members</b>	<b>Appointed Members</b>						
<b>8 Maintained School reps:</b>							
Maintained Secondary Head	Peter Tite	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintained Primary Head	Rob Andrew	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintained Primary Head	Susan Aldred	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintained Primary Head	Michelle Smith	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Maintained Primary Head	Carolyn Morris	✓	✓	✓		✓	A
Maintained Primary Head	Vicky Brown	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintained Special Head	David Terry					✓	✓
Maintained Infant School Head	Gillian Crompton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maintained PRU Head	Vicki Michael	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>2 Free School reps:</b>							
Free School Head	Claire Gammon	A	A		✓	✓	✓
Alt' Provision Free School Head	Gary Holding	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>4 Academy reps:</b>							
Secondary Academy Head	Dean Logan	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	
Secondary Academy Head	Diane Atkinson	✓	A				
Primary Academy Head	Donna Simpson	A		✓	✓	✓	✓
Special Academy Head	Jen Ashworth	✓	✓			✓	
<b>4 Governors:</b>							
Secondary Governor	Gillian Yates				✓	✓	✓
Primary Governor	Shanaz Hussain						✓
Primary Governor	Pauline Lovick	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Primary Governor	Helen Holden	✓	A	✓		✓	✓
<b>4 Non-school members:</b>							
Teacher Unions	Simon Jones	✓	✓		✓		A
Non-Teaching Unions	Paul Crewe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Post 16 FE College	Fazal Dad / Elissa Best	✓/A	A/✓	✓	/A	A/✓	✓/A
Early Years Provider	Tracy Ellett						
<b>Schools Forum Members present</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Quorate 40% of filled posts</i>		<i>8</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>
<b>In Attendance</b>							
LA Officers	Kirsty Thompson			✓	✓	✓	✓
LA Officers	Kirsten Reid	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓
LA Officers	Jayne Ivory / Carol Grimshaw / Alison Ashworth- Taylor						AAT ✓
LA Officers	Jo Siddle	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
LA Officers	Simon Ross						
LA Officers	Safiyya Mulla/Yvonne Williams	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	A/✓
LA Officers	Dean Langton			✓	✓	✓	✓
Council Members	Cllr Julie Gunn			✓	A	✓	A
LA Officers	Corrine McMillan						
<b>Total</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

## **1. Welcome and introductions**

Rob Andrew (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Simon Jones, Caroline Morris, Jo Siddle, Elissa Best and Councillor Julie Gunn.

## **2. Minutes from the previous meeting**

It was agreed that the minutes from 12 January 2022 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

## **3. Matters arising**

FD - Figures need to be consistently presented. KT will update.  
GC new meeting next week?

## **4. Membership for 2021/22 academic year**

Full contingent thank you to GC.

## **5. DSG Budget Monitoring for 2022/2023**

KT shared her report onscreen on the budget position of the 2021/22 Dedicated Schools Grant as at 31 January 2022.

During this year there has been an increase in demand which is reflected in the forecast overspend of £1.04m however a contingency set for this should show a forecast break even position across DSG. There has been increased demand in Special Educational Needs (SEN) across the country with costs rising, this has affected an increase in High Needs for next year which is being planned for accordingly. It was decided during the last meeting that any unspent budget for the emergency SEN pot will roll forward into the following year along with a further allocation in 2022/23 to continue to support SEN. Maternity reimbursement claims are well within budget and expected to be fully spent this year.

Schools block is what has been allocated at the beginning of the year fully forecasting what will be spent. The individual grant allocations for each block are increasing for next year. The High Needs block is where the spending is likely to increase during the year, due to the additional EHCP granted during a year to support our childrens needs. Mainstream top up funding is where there is currently a larger overspend, this is expected as it is a volatile budget and can fluctuate, this is due to our schools being more inclusive for the children within the borough and supporting them through mainstream provision rather than a special school setting.

For 2021/22 we set aside a High Needs contingency to offset overspend in areas of top up. We also have savings on a contract change and delays in recruitment within the High Needs Block.

This is a good DSG report for the Local Authority as neighbouring Authorities are overspending.

FD – queried the current budget and the year end forecast budget is an identical match.

KT – The forecast for year end for the schools block is an exact match as this is the amount that is devolved to the schools through the school budget share allocation to schools at the beginning of the year were fixed and there is no change in that. There are fluctuations in High Needs, as this is the more volatile area of spend.

RA – is that a projected budget element of maternity?

KT- any underspend will be put in as a reserve going forward.

## **6. High Needs Funding 2022/23**

KT shared her report onscreen.

The amount of funding allocated is calculated by a combined number of factors including more children imported from other Authorities. Allocated direct funding is taken from us to pay out to academy providers. Supplementary funding has been given as a one off grant for 2022/23 – KT will investigate as to whether this will be included in the baseline for High Needs 2023/24 along with schools through the APT. Schools will be notified of their final allocations in spring 2022. As Schools are receiving this funding through criteria provided by the DfE, It is only fair for both special schools and hospital education to receive additional funding.

We have included a provision for an additional 36 special places, these have not been allocated out to individual provisions yet. Work will be done through discussions with the LA and the special schools to discuss if they have any capacity and allocate places accordingly, hopefully they will be able to meet demand in our borough.

As we did not transfer 0.50% from the Schools Block into the High Needs Block in 2022/23, we have used the increase in High Needs funding to allocate funds to the emergency SEN pot instead. We will be reviewing this for 2023/24 depending on the % increase of High Needs next year.

AAT will update on a regular basis on Head Teachers bulletin posts created. The LA are focusing on a new pupil place planning system, which is strong and will be able to predict Primary School information using safe formula working with SEN Team Leaders and Pre-School Health. Their next meeting is the 25<sup>th</sup> potentially register as SEN and should be able to predict who is likely to need a special school place. Working closely with health and will have a much greater indicator to allow KT to predict with as much accuracy as possible.

MB - will PRU grants remain the same?

AAT is exploring that today in discussions with the Head and will feed back.

VM – we have to review charges on an annual basis to make sure everything is equitable.

FD - queried 43 places but on summary table post 16 has a different figure.

KT - this is in the table above and is our element after deduction and those post 16 places are deducted from our funding and paid directly over to the provider.

## **7. Early Years Funding for 2022/23**

KT – there is a variation, other income included in Early Years will be approx. £1m less next year due to a reduction in the uptake of places in nursery for various reasons - parents may be out of work, COVID etc

Hourly rates have been included this year and it is proposed for 2 and 3 year olds an increase per hour per child for those hours. This is good news for settings who will all be receiving that rate. There is still a significant drop in Early Years settings.

AAT – saturated with places, low numbers are impacting on maintained PVI providers across the board and is also impacting on school nursery classes. 44% capacity in all pre-school provision.

KT – providers are only paid on uptake of places and will be notified next week of budgets. We need to keep a good eye on numbers throughout the year.

FD – I appreciate numbers are down and lots of places available, will these numbers rise now we are coming out of Covid restrictions?

AAT – there is an extremely low birth rate at the moment which will hit high schools in 3 or 4 years. Generally people are back at work so children are taking up the places. Population growth in some areas.

FD – blessed we have all these nurseries but some will not be financially viable to run which we need to be mindful of.

AAT – the low birth rate is reflected across the NW. Some of the businesses have real viability issues. There is a vulnerability around nursery classes in schools. Schools who have nursery classes planning incredibly tight. Hope pupil place planning will help.

RA - is there a marketing element that can be supported in schools?

AAT – looking for what parents need to support their working patterns. Spoke to 1 head teacher this week who can help. We will always help with marketing when asked.

GC - our maintained nurseries need to think wider and suit working trends. Numbers do balance financially. My massive marketing ploy is teacher led and I think that children should be taken from the day of their birthday.

RA - not every head teacher is as business model savvy as you describe. It is difficult times for nurseries.

## **8. Central School Services Funding 2022/2023**

PL – queried registering with different providers for broadband in schools and what are the dangers of going with a private broadband?

KT – there is a historical commitment to pay out of the school budget, there must be internal security from our IT. Will enquire about this and feed back.

HH – the service provided to schools is not as good as an external provider could give and security has been extremely poor. There is no reason why payroll service should be tied in apart from historical. This is leaving schools vulnerable.

AAT - will get the answers and will bring it back to the Forum. Jo Siddle has been doing direct intervention with the situation working with all senior managers.

KT – Schools Forum approval needed for centrally retained ongoing responsibilities from the LA.

Proposal put forward. 21 voted in favour.

## **9. Any Other Business**

- Claw Back

KT – Having discussed with Alison and Jo as authority are going to propose Schools Forum review commitment and explain why sitting on a higher reserve. Maintained reps in June 2022 forum will be asked to review at the end of the June meeting and get back to schools. Do not want people to sit on high level reserves and request a statement of commitment form to be completed for a valid reason.

GC – we have a capital expenditure coming up, so I'm unsure whether to spend that money or not before April.

HH – It takes quite a long time to review spending and nobody was ever told no, it is felt claw back figures are the fairest way. At the moment with Covid and new builds a statement of commitment is a good thing for this year.

PL - agreed it is fair.

SA – we see a drop in school numbers, will that be allowable on this commitment?

RA – it is a process rather than hard fast rules at this stage.

KT – not decided criteria yet, there will be an internal meeting and it will be shared at year end to say what criteria we are looking at. Should scrutinise more as a Forum. This does not affect as many schools as historically but we need to make sure the process is right for the schools. Plan to get budgets out next week then look at claw back and will feed back within the next few weeks.

SA - 12% including pupil premium

KT - 12% based on historical measures, going forward based on next years, should be on current funding.

## **10. Dates for future meetings – to be discussed**

Majority decision that meetings will revert to being held on Thursdays.

RA thank you to KT and everyone for attending.

Meeting finished at 9.41am