

SCHOOLS FORUM
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 January 2024

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| <u>In attendance</u> | |
| <u>Chair and Vice Chair</u> | |
| John Draper | Headteacher – Swaythling Primary |
| Harry Kutty | Headteacher – Cantell |
| <u>Primary Schools</u> | |
| Amanda Talbot-Jones | Headteacher – St Denys Primary |
| Mike Adams | Headteacher – Bitterne Manor Primary School |
| Peter Howard | Headteacher – Fairisle Junior |
| PK Macbride | Primary Governor – Bannister |
| <u>Secondary Schools</u> | |
| Jim Henderson | Headteacher Woodlands Community College |
| Roger Peplow | Governor St Georges |
| <u>Academy</u> | |
| Sean Preston | Hamwic Trust |
| <u>Special Schools</u> | |
| Andrew Evans | Headteacher – Great Oaks School |
| Debbie McKenzie | Headteacher – Compass School |
| <u>Nursery</u> | |
| Anna Wright | PVI for Early Years |
| <u>Non-Schools</u> | |
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| <u>Observers</u> | |
| Councillor A Winning | Cabinet Member for Children and Learning |
| <u>SCC Officers</u> | |
| Derek Wiles | Head of Education and Learning– Education |
| Steve Wade | Finance Business Partner |
| Clodagh Freeston | Service Manager - Education Strategy, Planning and Improvement |
| Darrin Hunter | Early Years Manager |
| Juno Hollyhock | SEND Project Manager |

Apologies

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| Joanna Lawton | Regional Director, Oasis Sholing Academy |
| Tammy Marks | Service Manager - Special Educational Needs and Disability |
| Rob Sanders | Diocese of Winchester |

17. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2023 be noted and approved as a correct record.

18. **STANDING ITEM: LA UPDATE ON DFE/ESFA FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Forum considered the briefing paper of the Finance Business Partner, giving an update on DFE/ESFA funding announcements and the 2024-2025 Schools Revenue Funding Arrangements and Dedicated Schools Grant.

The Forum noted that the deadline for submitting the final stage Authority Proforma Tool (APT) to the Department for Education (DFE) had been Monday 22nd January 2024 and therefore a draft submission had been made based on the recommendations in the briefing paper with a note that they would require approval of the Forum. A further submission was to be made reflecting any changes required by the Forum.

The Forum was advised that the increase in the schools block reflected £4 million from the increase in pupil numbers and £9 million from the uplift in funding after rolling in of the mainstream schools additional grant.

The Forum considered the proposed technical adjustment for three Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schools and noted it had increased by 10.4% to be distributed pro rata to the existing distribution of the current £738,900.

Previously the Forum had agreed in principle to support PFI schools and that every school would receive its national funding formula allocation and it was therefore noted that no further approval was required on the principle of this matter from the Forum because all schools continued to receive the full national funding formula allocation under this proposal.

Upon being put to the vote the Forum agreed to making the technical adjustment.

The Forum then considered the proposed adjustment for planned expansion and growth in the All Through School of £386,480 which accounted for a lag in funding for the months between September 2024 and March 2025.

Upon being put to the vote the Forum agreed to making the technical adjustment for the growing school.

The Forum then considered the proposal that the projected surplus be used to create a Growth Fund for unplanned growth in schools. The Forum was advised that in October 2023 there were 380 more pupils than in October 2022, of which 180 had planned places at the All Through School.

The Forum was advised that the mechanism for either returning any unused surplus or carrying it forward to the following year was subject to further consideration by the Forum at future meetings.

Upon being put to the vote the Forum agreed to allocating the surplus to an unplanned growth fund once each school had received the national funding formula.

The Forum then considered the proposed block transfer from the Schools Block to the Central School Services Block of £220,000 to compensate for reduced funding over several years in addition to the National Funding Formula.

It was noted that the Forum had previously agreed to a top slice but that in the interest of creating transparency during a period of re-structuring the Head of Education and Learning, with the consent of the Chair put forward for consideration three options for the future:

1. Transfer of £220,000 to the Education Service.
2. No transfer of the money until further detail had been provided about the structure of the Education Service.
3. Transfer of £220,000 to the Education Service to be ring fenced until the Forum had considered the structure and services of the Education Service and thereafter the money to be released in tranches upon receipt of satisfactory reports from the Council to the Forum or the money to be returned to schools if the Forum could not be satisfied.

Upon being put to the vote the Forum agreed to the third option.

19. **GROWTH FUNDING**

The Forum received a verbal report from the Service Manager – Education Strategy, Planning and Improvement about the planned next steps for utilisation of the growth fund and noted that census data for October 2023 had been finalised.

The Forum was advised that unplanned growth was being experienced in the secondary sector due to increased numbers of in year movements and it was proposed that there should be consultation work with schools to determine how best to spend the growth fund. That consultation would include the primary sector as all elements of the Growth Policy would require review.

The Forum agreed that a paper would be provided to the Forum at the meeting in March 2024 following consultation with schools in which options for further consideration would be provided.

20. **HIGH NEEDS BLOCK**

The Forum received a verbal report from the SEND Project Manager.

The Forum was advised that there was an in year surplus in the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block of £2.3 million, mainly due to the falling number of placements in the independent non maintained special schools.

There was a revised £7.8 million deficit in the end of year carry forward position.

There was a deadline of 26th January 2024 to return the detailed Dedicated Schools Grant deficit management plan to the DFE, which required s151 Officer and DCS Officer sign off.

Mitigated and unmitigated EHCP numbers would drive the financial forecasts through to 2029. Mitigations included the mainstream schools funding work driven by the Peter Grey report, the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme, the additional resourced provisions in mainstream schools and the potential expansion of special school places. However, the sequencing of the spend for the potential expansion of special school places was under discussion given the financial position of the Local Authority and need to reforecast as building costs and design standards had changed. Increases in EHCPs were forecast as 10% year on year unmitigated dropping to 7% mitigated.

Adjustments were made for the likely intake in mainstream and resourced provision and the ASC and SEMH primary needs forecasting had been increased to a higher proportion than previously, reflecting current trends.

DBV workstreams were all underway with the Autism in Schools programme and the neurodiversity training for parents and carers were moving into term two of delivery and the SEMH and inclusion audit support to schools in their infancy owing to challenges with recruitment. Significant activity was anticipated on both of these areas towards the end of the spring term.

The DFE had amended the DBV contracts to cover the requirement for approved carry forward in some cases if needed.

It was acknowledged that communication with schools had not kept pace with the speed at which some high level decisions had been required by the Council. The Forum noted that schools wished to be involved in order to support decision making and communication with affected families.

The Forum was advised that a grant of £1 million had been awarded by the DFE within the DBV process for two financial years and that the NHS contributed £300,000 towards EHCP delivery in the last financial year.

21. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND CLOSING REMARKS AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant

With the consent of the Chair, the Head of Education and Learning advised the Forum that from the start of the new financial year the Council would not continue to request that schools repay money to fund the School Improvement Service.

After a period of consultation it was noted that some schools wished to continue with their existing SIOs whilst others wished to develop their own projects. Therefore, from April 2024 all money from the grant would be paid to schools to be used as they each saw fit and invoices would be directed to the schools. The Council required notification of all SIO visits in order to discharge its legal duties. Schools were requested to honour SIO visits already arranged for the summer term.

Next meeting

The next meeting would be on Wednesday 20th March 2024 at 4pm.