

The KIRKLEES SCHOOLS FORUM PUBLIC
(Schools Funding Consultative Group)
meeting held on Friday 1st December 2023 at
10:00am at Cathedral House, Huddersfield

Present:

Name:	Category of Membership:
	Nursery School Head (0)
Helen Pearson, Diana Wilson, Laura Willimott, Katie Pearson	Primary School Head (3)
Andrew Fell	High School Head (1)
	Special School Head (1)
	Special Academy Head (0)
Darren Christian (Chair), Dave Wadsworth	Academy Head (2)
Rebecca Smith	Pupil Referral Unit (1)
Hazel Danson, Vicky Morris	Non-school Member (2)
Matthew Pinder	School Governor (1)
David Baxter, Liz Kilner (Minute Clerk), Jo-Anne Sanders, Martin Wilby, John Bartlett, Fiona Denham	Officers in Support (5)
Cllr Elizabeth Reynolds	Observers (0)
	Others (0)

1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for absence
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The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and introductions were completed.

Apologies were received as follows.

- Jenny Shore – Maintained Primary
- Kath Duffy – Early Years PVI settings
- Andi Gilroy-Sinclair – LA Nursery School
- Ian Rimmer – Academy Head

2 Minutes of the Schools Forum Briefing held on 13th October 2023
Minutes of the Schools Forum Briefing meeting held on 13 October 2023

The Chair led the Group through the minutes page by page to ensure accuracy.

The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record of the last meeting.

3 Matters arising from the meeting held on 13th October 2023
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There were no matters arising not covered on the agenda.

4 **Kirklees Education & Learning Partnership Board (standing item)** **Kirklees Education and Learning Partnership Board (KELPB)**

The last KELPB meeting took place on 8 November 2023 and key areas were discussed, as follows.

- Councillor Reynolds updated the meeting with an overview of priorities.
- A programme plan for the priorities will be developed by Jo-Anne Sanders.
- There was an update from the Internal working group on fees and charges. There is a separate group looking at fees and charges for schools. This group is co-chaired by Jo-Anne Sanders. The difference in financial years for maintained schools and academies was considered. This does cause duplication of processes and inefficiency. Alignment of financial years should be explored.
- A top slice for maintained schools central services should be considered and explored as a model.
- There was a discussion of the Early Years conference feedback.
- There was a discussion of Adult Learning and feedback on good outcomes.
- Exclusions were discussed. There have been a high number in the first half term of this academic year. The costs of spot purchase of day 6 provision are very high.

Q. Exclusion day 6 provision is very expensive?

A. We do need to do practice learning. We want to provide schools with better provision to help schools to have a positive impact on the current cohort of children and their needs.

Q. We do need more provision in schools?

A. The LA and schools do need to work together and ensure we have the right provision for children's needs. We are still waiting the decision on the AP free school in the LA.

Q. How many places do we expect the AP free school to provide if approved?

A. Circa 110 to 120 across all key stages.

Q. Do we need more training for SENCOs and Head Teachers on how to deal with high needs children?

A. We expect this to be an outcome from the Task and Finish group.

Q. When do we expect the AP free school decision?

A. This is dependent on ministers, we do have some indication that the decision could be made in 4 to 6 weeks.

The Chair thanked everyone for their feedback.

5 **Central Schools and Services Block (CSSB) proposed Allocations 2024/2025** **Central Schools and Services Block (CSSB) proposed Allocations 2024/2025**

The Central Schools and Services Block (CSSB) Allocation 2024/2025 document had been circulated before the meeting.

David Baxter updated the meeting.

- The paper refreshes the current position for the 2024 / 25 financial year.
- This is the usual update that will be built into a Cabinet paper after approval by Schools Forum.
- There is inflation of 5% build into allocations as appropriate.
- The total limit for the allocation in £2.6m.

Q. What is the historic DSG Pension Contribution?

A. This is an historic Kirklees commitment related to the costs of early retirement in the past.

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Q. The year-on-year change is lower than £80k?

A. Yes, the increase is £45k.

Q. Why is the overall increase not 5%?

A. The 5% increase is only applicable to some elements of the allocation.

RESOLVED: That the proposed allocations of the CSSB for 2024/2025 be approved.

6 **Proposed Schools Block De-delegations for 2024/2025** **Proposed Schools Block De-delegations for 2024/2025 - revised paper to be considered for approval**

David Baxter updated the meeting.

De-delegation Proposals 2024/2025 – Schools Block Funding was circulated before the meeting.

- It is proposed that the de-delegated rates for 2024/2025 are increased by a minimum of 11% with the exception of maternity/paternity contributions that is proposed to be increased by a minimum of 33%.
- Responses from the consultation process were summarised for the meeting. It was noted that the consultation has gone to 104 schools with a low response rate of 18%.
- Overall, the responses indicated acceptance of the proposals.
- The significant increase in maternity / paternity contributions was noted but responses were supportive of this increase.

Q. Why are costs for maternity / paternity the same for primary and secondary schools?

A. Historically these have been the same.

Q. Will there be a reply to all questions raised in response to the consultation?

A. Yes we will respond.

Q. How many schools received the consultation?

A. 104.

Q. Why was the response rate so low at 18%, we need to understand this?

A. We did do a follow up with School Business Managers to try to increase the response rate.

Q. When is the decision needed for the proposals from Schools Forum?

A. The decision is needed to feed into the Cabinet report for the meeting of 24 January 2024. To achieve this, we need a decision from Schools Forum today.

Q. The cabinet may have concerns about the low response rate to the consultation. The Cabinet does need confidence that it is making the rights decision. The comments from the consultation are very helpful for cabinet?

A. We have sent out the consultation and followed up with School Business Managers. We could do follow up phone calls in future years.

Q. Have changes been made as a result of consultation in previous years?

A. No.

Q. We can also take feedback from Heads meetings?

A. Yes, we can.

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Q. What would happen if Schools Forum did not approve the proposals to increase de delegation rates?

A. There would need to be cuts in services as there would not be sufficient funding in the central pot to provide the current level of services.

ACTION: A review is required to understand why the charges for maternity / paternity are the same for primary schools and secondary schools.

ACTION: Follow up phone calls should be built into the consultation process for future years.

RESOLVED: That the proposed revised allocations in de-delegated rates for the 2024/2025 financial year be approved.

7 Growth Fund Principles and Criteria **Growth Fund Principles and Criteria - revised paper to be considered for approval.**

(a) Growth Fund Principles and Criteria

Martin Wilby updated the meeting.

Growth Fund Proposals – Principles and Criteria December 2023 was circulated before the meeting.

- Proposals were summarised for the meeting.
 - Officers will continue to allocate growth funding within these constraints and within the approved budget.
 - Officers will provide School Forum with monitoring information at least bi-annually. Should the Growth Fund budget be at risk of overspend, Officers will bring an exceptions report to Schools Forum at the earliest opportunity.
 - Schools Forum will act as an appeal body should a school disagree with an officer decision.
 - Any underspend at the end of the year will be reported to Schools Forum alongside the overall DSG position and associated proposals.
 - The principals and criteria will remain in place into future financial years until agreed otherwise by Schools Forum
- The Growth Fund is from the main schools block (all schools).
- What to do with underspend will be a decision for Schools Forum. There will be visibility on overspends and underspends ongoing.
- The proposals will help with financial planning and will provide clarity.

Q. When will Schools Forum receive the next update on the Growth Fund?

A. We expect the next updated to be early in the new year and then again in May / June 2024.

ACTION: Updates on the Growth Fund to come to Schools Forum early in the new year 2024 and again in May / June 2024.

RESOLVED: That the Growth Fund Proposals – principles and criteria be approved.

8 High Needs Block (standing item) **High Needs Block**

(a) Safety Valve Monitoring Update

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Jo-Anne Sanders and John Barlett updated the meeting.

- The meeting with the DfE has been postponed by two weeks. This was a joint decision.
- Meetings have been held with DfE advisors.
- We do need to factor in adverse movements on forecasts.
- Adverse impacts are due to.
 - Impact of EHCP backlogs. Where plans are agreed we backdate payments to the compliance date.
 - SEND costs are £1m higher than expected. This is demand driven from children in Early Years.
 - Out of area costs have increased by £0.4m.
- Overall, the increase in the deficit is forecast to be £6.4m. This results in a total in year deficit forecast of £13m (when added to the previous forecast in year deficit of £6.6m).

Q. Will this impact on the LA staying in the Safety Valve programme?

A. We do not know at this stage. We are trying to be honest and continue to work with DfE advisors.

Q. Is there any update on the decision on the AP free school?

A. There is still no news but we have assumed that this will be approved. The DfE advisor is being very supportive.

Q. Do we know why the AP Free School decision is being delayed?

A. It is a ministerial decision and due diligence has to take place.

Q. Will the addition of another year in the Safety Valve Programme impact on individual schools?

A. Potentially.

Q. How much in year contribution were we expecting from Safety Valve funding?

A. £4m. If we do not get this the total in year forecast deficit will increase to £17m.

(b) Mainstream top-up funding review

Jo-Anne Sanders updated the meeting.

- The Task and Finnish group have continued to meet.
- Cluster proposals are being considered. Proposals consider location and the sharing of expertise.
- The initial proposal has 18 clusters. The Task and Finnish group will feedback on the proposals for clusters.
- The Biggest cluster is Shelley Pyramid.
- The cluster proposals will be considered at the Task and Finnish group meeting next week.

Q. Who will lead each cluster?

A. We do have options. Clusters may be led by a nominated SENCO. Clusters may feed into area leads. Infrastructure will need to be put in place.

Q. Will there be £18m funding for the 18 clusters?

A. We do currently spend £18m and we need to understand how clusters could better use this funding. Support would be in place to wrap around the clusters.

Q. When do we expect the Cluster proposal to come to Schools Forum?

A. We will have another update at the next Schools Forum meeting.

Q. Will a September start work with the financial year?

A. We could make this work with adjustments. We do need time to put roles and infrastructure in place.

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ACTION: A high level plan for clusters to be shared at a Schools Forum meeting on in the new year (Feb / March 2024).

It was noted by the Chair that a lot of good work is going on.

(c) SEND – The Big Plan

The Big Plan was shown on screen for the meeting.

Jo-Anne Sanders updated the meeting.

- The SEND Strategy has now been refreshed to make it more accessible.
- There were a lot of stakeholders engaged in the process.
- The focus was Demand, Compliance and Sufficiency provision in the system.
- There is a road map for key deliverables.
- Wording has been simplified to be understandable.
- A glossary will be put together by the 'Our Voice' team.
- We will share The Big Plan with all stakeholders including schools and governors.

ACTION: The Big Plan to be circulated to all.

9

Any Other Business

Any Other Business

(a) Annual school funding cabinet report – overview and timeline

David Baxter updated the meeting.

- The Cabinet meeting is set for 24 January 2024.
- The report is being drafted currently and will include decisions made at Schools Forum including Block De Delegations 2024/25, Growth Fund, High Needs and Early Years.
- By the Schools Forum on 19 January 2024 the Cabinet Report will be live

(b) Staff Absence Insurance Scheme

David Baxter updated the meeting.

Staff Absence Insurance Scheme - Forecast 2023/2024 was circulated at the meeting.

- There is a forecast overspend on the Staff Absence Insurance Scheme of £371k.
- We need to consider options to balance the scheme as it must at least break even.
- One proposal would be to reduce reimbursement rates by 25% backdated to September 2023. Any over recovery would be reimbursed to schools.

Q. Is this scheme for maintained schools only?

A. Yes.

Q. There is a risk that reduction in reimbursements could have a disproportionate impact on smaller schools?

A. Noted.

Q. Could another option be an increase in the charge for the Staff Absence Insurance Scheme for all schools for the remainder of the financial year?

A. Yes this can be considered.

Q. Are HR backlogs contributing to this issue?

A. Yes they could be.

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ACTION: David Baxter to progress the proposal to increase charges to all schools for the Staff Absence Insurance Scheme for the remainder of the financial year.

ACTION: We need to review the viability of the Staff Absence Insurance Scheme for future years and agree and communicate mechanisms that can be used in the event of overspend or underspend. These mechanisms do need to be communicated clearly at the start of the financial year.

(c) Government Consultation on Smoking and Vaping

Cllr Elizabeth Reynolds updated the meeting.

A paper will be circulated to all with a link to the Government Consultation on Smoking and Vaping.

ACTION: All to respond to the Government Consultation if possible.

10 **Confirm Minutes** **Confirm Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed above.

11 **Next Meeting Date** **Dates and times of next meeting**

- Friday 1 March 2024, 10.00 to 11.00am, Chestnut Room, Cathedral House Reserve Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting closed at 10.40am.