

The KIRKLEES SCHOOLS FORUM PUBLIC
(Schools Funding Consultative Group)
meeting held on **Friday 11 October 2024 at 10:00am** at
Cathedral House,
Huddersfield HD1 3LG

Present:

Name:

Diana Wilson, Jenny Shore, Katie
Pearson, Helen Pearson
Andrew Fell

Darren Christian (Chair), Laura Willimott,
Dave Wadsworth, Paul Brook
Rebecca Smith
Vicky Morris, Hazel Danson
Mathew Pinder
Liz Kilner (Minute Clerk), Martin Wilby,
David Baxter

Category of Membership:

Maintained Nursery School Head
Maintained Primary School Head

Maintained High School Head
Maintained Special School Head
Special Academy Head
Academy Head

Alternative Provision
Non-school Member
School Governor
Officers in Support

Observers
Others

1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and introductions were completed.

Apologies were received as follows.

- Cllr Amanda Pinnock – Cabinet Member for Education & Communities
- Andi Gilroy-Sinclair – Local Authority Nursery School
- Rik Robinson – Maintained Special School
- Ian Rimmer – Secondary Academy
- Kath Duffy – Early Years PVI Settings
- Tom Brailsford – Strategic Director, Children & Families
- Debbie Kelly – Academy Head
- Jo- Anne Sanders - LA
- John Bartlett - LA
- Emma Brayford - LA

2 Minutes of the Schools Forum Briefing held on 1st March 2024

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

3 Matters arising from the meeting held on 1st March 2024

(a) Action: The Chair to discuss the appropriateness of a letter to the DfE from School Forum raising concerns with Safety Valve communication (Minute 5(a) refers)

Soon after the meeting there was a communication from the DfE which negated the need for this action.

4 Kirklees Education & Learning Partnership Board (standing item)

Martin Wilby updated the meeting on the discussions at the KELPB meeting held on 25 September 2024.

- There was a discussion on 'Our Kirklees Futures' including a conference update. There is a proposal for a combined committee meeting to review Our Kirklees Futures priorities and actions.
- An update on Apprenticeships took place and a request was made for more representation from the schools system. Opportunities to use the Apprenticeship Levy in creative ways were discussed.
- There was a presentation from C&K Careers – Post 16. This was very informative.
- An overview was given of unvalidated data for all key stages and GCSE results. This information is very useful and it was requested that the data be shared more widely.
- Jo Anne Sanders gave an update on the outcome of the Ofsted Social Care inspection for the LA.

It was noted that Kirklees numbers of Unknown destination and NEET children at post 16 are very low compared other nearby LA's. Data tracking is impressive.

There was concern noted about the falling number of SEN children in the unvalidated outcomes data presented at KELPB.

5 High Needs Block (standing item)

The High Needs places update report was circulated at the meeting.

The report was considered in detail and questions were noted. This is the first draft of the report and there will be further refinement which will include resolution of questions and comments raised.

(a) Safety Valve Update

John Bartlett and Jo-Anne Sanders updated the meeting.

- Quarter 2 return has been submitted and we are awaiting feedback.
- We do expect the Quarter 2 payment to be released.
- We are slightly off track in the Quarter 2 return. Plans are in place to recover the adverse variance.
- Some of the adverse variance is due to more young people being placed in Independent Provision and the significant increase in cost of Independent Provision of up to 25% per place.

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- Cluster working will start soon and we hope that this will deliver improvements in provision.
- It was noted that keeping children in mainstream schooling is a community challenge.

Q. How much additional capacity will be created with the new school buildings at Woodley and Joseph Norton?

A. There will be an increase at Joseph Norton planned for September 2026 from 63 to 132 places. The Capacity at Woodley will increase to 194 with 180 places at Woodley new build and an additional 14 places in a satellite provision. An additional temporary satellite site for Woodley has been established to bring forward the availability of more places ahead of the new build.

6 DSG Outturn 2023/24

The 2023/2024 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Outturn report was circulated before the meeting.

David Baxter summarised the report for the meeting.

- The Overall Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 31st March 2024 was summarised.
- This position has been reported in Kirklees Central Accounts.
- There High Needs Block at £44.1m shows an increase of £15.1m on the previous year.
- The balance for all maintained schools as at 31st March 2024 totalled £11.2 million (£11.7 million 2022/2023). This includes the in-year academisation of six schools and represents an overall reduction of £0.5 million in balances.

Q. Is the significant increase in the High Needs Block the reason for the Safety Valve?

A. Yes.

Q. Can we ensure that the High Needs Block £44m does not increase further in future years?

A. We do have a focus on controlling spending in the LA through the new Cluster approach and reducing the number of children going to independent schools.

Q. Is the 1% transfer from the School Block to the High Needs Block a maximum?

A. In theory, the transfer could increase above 1%.

Q. What is the comparable figure to the £44.1m for 2024/25?

A. The High Needs Block is expected to continue to increase until 2026/27 in our current model. After 2026/27 the High Needs Block starts to reduce year on year.

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The key points of the report were noted by Schools Forum.

- The overall deficit outturn of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2023/2024 of £43.7 million was noted.
- The total net surplus balance on individual maintained school accounts of £11.2 million was noted.
- The outturn position for the centrally managed schools services was noted.

7 **Contingency review 2023/24**

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) De-Delegated Contingency 2023/2024 report was circulated before the meeting.

David Baxter summarised the report for the meeting and provided detail on the 2023/24 contingency spend of £788k.

Q. What issues are schools in difficulties having?

A. Issues include falling pupil numbers and high school management costs.

Q. What actions are taken by schools with a deficit position?

A. Schools focus on the budget process and changes to costs including staff restructuring.

Q. Do schools fully understand their deficit positions?

A. Yes they do.

8 **Update on the national funding position 2025/26**

David Baxter provided a verbal update for the meeting.

- The ESFA have updated that the LA Planning Tool 2025/26 will be delayed and is now not expected until after the Budget on 31 October 2024.
- This does create issues for the LA schools planning and decision making processes.
- In summary, we currently do not know the funding levels for the LA.
- Our overall LA budget deadlines will remain unchanged but delay in receiving the LA Planning Tool from the ESFA will put time pressure on the process.
- However there has been an announcement that School teachers are to receive a funded pay award of 5.5%, which will be fully funded by the government

It was noted that the process whereby the annual teachers pay award is not agreed before school budgets are agreed is a failure in the national process and this issue should be fed back to the DfE by the LA and Unions. Pay awards should be agreed for teachers before school budgets are finalised.

9 Any other business

Schools Premises disapplication

The Schools Premises Disapplication Request 2025/2026 was circulated before the meeting.

David Baxter updated the meeting and summarised the key areas below.

- Five schools incur additional premises costs (rents), due to individual and unique circumstances that the individual schools operate within.
- The total amount to be funded in 2025/2026 through the application of the 'exceptional circumstances' disapplication request is £132,239.
- Schools Forum members are requested to review the application of the exceptional circumstances factor (disapplication request) for the 2025/2026 financial year and indicate their support for the Local Authority's proposal.

Q. How will the disapplication request be funded?

A. This will be funded from the Schools Block.

Q. Do any of the five schools have excess balances and could they fund the cost without the disapplication request?

A. Only one of the schools could cover the cost.

Q. How long do we expect this support to be required?

A. It may be until the government provide funding to the LA to invest in schools. There is currently no capital funding for the LA to fund modular building replacement including those approaching end of life. To note however that Gomersal St Marys is part of the DfE school rebuild programme, so at some point that modular rental will no longer be required.

Q. Are the modular buildings still a requirement with the falling birth rate?

A. We do review the requirement for modular buildings and the birth rate is taken into account.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum confirm support for the exceptional circumstances disapplication request of £132,239

10 Confirm minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed above.

11 Next meeting details

- Friday, 29th November 2024, 10.00am – 11.00am – The meeting will be held at Cathedral House, St Thomas Road, Huddersfield. HD1 3LG

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The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting