

THE KIRKLEES SCHOOLS FORUM

meeting held on Friday 5th March 2021

10:30am on Microsoft Teams

Present:

	Nursery School Heads (1)
Helen Pearson, Jenny Shore, Martin Vayro, Diana Wilson	Primary School Heads (5)
	High School Heads (1)
	Special School Heads (1)
Laura Flynn	Special Academy Heads (1)
Darren Christian (Chair), Catherine Jubbs,	Academy Heads (4)
Rebecca Smith	Pupil Referral Units (1)
	Kirklees Governors (1)
Paula Wescott (NASUWT)	Non-school members (5)
David Gearing (Financial Delegation Manager); [Minute Clerk]	Officers in Support
Natalie McSheffrey – Head of Education Relationships & Business	
	Observers

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Louise Brown (Primary School Heads), Karen Colligan (High School Heads), Hazel Danson (NEU), Michelle Lee (Academy Heads), Cllr Carole Pattison (Portfolio Holder, Learning, Aspiration & Communities) and David Wadsworth (Academy Heads).

2. Minutes of the Schools Forum Public meeting held on 27th November 2020

The minutes were agreed to be a true record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising from the Schools Forum Public meeting 27th November 2020

3.1 School trade union facilities time arrangements (minute 3.4 of 27th November)

An agenda item will be scheduled in the Summer term to pick up outstanding issues.

3.2 Review of local specialist places (minute 3.6 of 27th November)

It is understood that Jane Friswell's report on specialist place sufficiency has now been submitted. A briefing will be provided to Forum.

3.3 Annual Cabinet report on School Funding (minute 9 of 27th November)

The 2021-22 funding report was agreed at the 19th January Cabinet meeting.

4. Council-arranged insurance for schools and the DfE Risk Protection Arrangement

This item had to be deferred to the Schools Forum Briefing meeting set for 26th March 2021, due to the Council's Risk & Insurance Manager having to participate in an important Court application affecting the Council that unfortunately coincides with this meeting.

5. Kirklees Education & Learning Partnership Board

Natalie McSheffrey fed back about the Board meeting that had taken place on 24th February 2021.

An update was provided to the Board about the High Needs 10-point plan and progress being made. A refresh of the plan will be shared and brought back to the next KELPB meeting. The commission of Impower Consultancy to work with the LA and schools on SEND improvement was discussed.

A presentation on the Mental Health Trailblazer Project had been delivered by Jayne Whitton (Principal Educational Psychologist) and Stewart Horn (Head of Joint Commissioning, Children & Families Service). The project is garnering positive reviews from schools. The Board also looked at the Alex Timpson Attachment and Trauma Awareness in Schools programme which is delivering positive outcomes and considered the opportunities for that to continue.

Val Flintoff [Learning Partner (System Leadership)] briefed the Board about the work programme dealing with Relationships, Sex and Health Education. The meeting also considered the government's 'roadmap' out of lockdown restrictions, in particular the return to school opening on 8th March. An update on the digital learning strategy was also given including an update on the impact of devices provided to schools – around 6,500 laptops have been delivered across all schools.

6. High Needs Budget

Picking up on the minutes of the last meeting it was confirmed that Kelsey Clark-Davies has now started in Kirklees as the new Head of Service for Education Safeguarding & Inclusion.

It was reported that the Cabinet report which proposes revised mainstream high needs top-up funding arrangements from April 2021 is on course to be formally considered by the Council's Cabinet on 16th March. The report has been considered by both the Children's Service Leadership Team and the Council's Executive Team and both meetings provided useful suggestions as to how to refine the report.

The Education & Skills Funding Agency has recently launched a consultation about the future operation of the High Needs National Funding Formula. The main thrust of the consultation is to examine how the historic spending element of the High Needs NFF could be changed in future. Presently, the historic funding element references what each local authority planned to spend on high needs costs in financial year 2017-18. At that stage in proceedings high needs spending pressures had just begun to surface. The consultation looks at the potential for replacing the planned high needs spending figure in 2017-18 with what local authorities actually spent that year. This would increase Kirklees' historic spending factor allocation by around £2m. The consultation also looks at the proportion of the total High Needs budget that the historic spend element accounts for. Originally it was 50% of the total but, thanks to enhancements to the national high needs budget over time, the historic spend element now amounts to just 34% of the total allocated. The consultation paper gives an example of increasing the proportion to 40% - this could add another £3.5m to Kirklees High Needs allocation were it to happen.

The ESFA has recently requested information about historic expenditure on Resourced Provisions as that wasn't overtly part of the budget information collected through national

data returns. Whether that will have a further beneficial effect on Kirklees' historic expenditure factor remains to be seen.

7. Ongoing (financial) implications for schools arising from the Covid-19 health emergency

The Education & Skills Funding Agency has provided some support to schools since the first lockdown in March 2020 to address additional Covid-related expenditure. However, that support was limited to the Summer term of 2020 and only against headings specified by the Department. It now appears very unlikely that further financial support will be provided via the ESFA. Conversations are taking place between Council officers exploring the possibility of providing some direct financial support to those schools most adversely affected by higher levels of unreimbursed Covid spending and/or lost parental income. Officers will be looking to identify potential underspends within the Schools DSG and direct grant funding received by the Council to provide the necessary financial support. It is appreciated that there is a need to confirm arrangements to schools as soon as possible now that they have begun to pull together budget plans for the new financial year.

The question is how should the financial impacts of Covid be identified? Back in November of 2020, all schools and academies in Kirklees were written to asking them to provide details of Covid-related expenditure and related lost parental income. Over 80% of schools were able to supply the requested details. Realistically there just isn't the time or work capacity to bring that information up to date so how do we effectively target any funding support to the schools where it is most needed? It was suggested that some form of bidding process could be opened up for schools to make a claim backed up by evidence to be provided by the school. The effect of the latest lockdown period from the start of January 2021 was mentioned – one head teacher said that his school's budget was heading for problems until the latest lockdown period which had curtailed the school's accumulation of Covid spending. This may well sort difficulties for some schools but the November exercise had pointed to a number of schools experiencing "budget-busting" financial pressure.

8. Details of the 2021-22 DSG settlement and the shape of school funding for 2021-22

The Central Schools Services Block 2021-22

The table below shows the final position for the CSSB in 2021-22 and replaces the estimated picture showing in the Forum minutes of 27th November 2020.

Budget	2020-21	2021-22
Servicing of Schools Forum	£31,000	£31,000
Historic DSG pension commitments	£170,400	£170,400
Schools Admissions	£401,900	£401,900
School Organisation & Planning	£139,600	£139,600
School Reorganisation	£292,000	£292,000
National Copyright Licence charge	£331,100	£330,900
Statutory and regulatory duties for all children	£886,200	£874,100
Former Teachers Pay and Pension Grant in respect of centrally-employed Teachers		£36,300
Total	£2,252,200	£2,274,500

The Dedicated Schools Grant settlement figures for 2021-22 were released a couple of weeks after the November Schools Forum meeting. For the record the summary figures below show the 2021-22 funding blocks compared to their 2020-21 equivalents.

DSG Element	Fin Year 2020-21	Fin Year 2021-22	Difference
Schools Block	£302.18m	£324.48m	+\$22.3m
Growth Funding addition	£1.59m	£1.65m	+\$0.06m
Central Schools Services Block	£2.25m	£2.27m	+\$0.02m
High Needs Block	£43.17m	£48.82m	+5.65m
Early Years Block (interim)	£28.64m	£29.30m	+\$0.66m
Overall DSG total	£377.84m	£406.54m	+\$28.70m

The Schools Block increase includes £13.58m of former Teachers Pay Grant and Teachers Pension Employer Contribution Grant funds moved into the Dedicated Schools Grant. The underlying increase in funding for schools is £8.72m which represents a 2.88% increase on the previous year.

The Growth addition supports the operation of a Pupil Growth Fund and is also being used to allocate further funds to secondary schools and academies which agree to admit additional pupils at the request of the local authority to address higher levels of demand for school places as the local birth bulge works through into the secondary years.

The High Needs Block increase should be viewed in the context of significant pressures in the High Needs account. An overspend in excess of £20m will have been accumulated by the close of the current financial year. The increase in High Needs funding will be helpful in slowing down the rate of accumulation of the deficit.

The Early Years Funding Block figure released in December is always an interim one and is revised in the New Year once January census data is available. Although the interim figure for 2021-22 shows a £0.66m increase compared to the equivalent release a year ago the confirmed 2021-22 figure could be quite different given the potential for the pandemic to have affected the numbers of children registering for early years provision.

The 2021-22 funding distribution to mainstream schools

Amongst the agenda papers today was a comparison of the schools funding allocation in 2021-22 with the equivalent figures in 2020-21.

The largest single difference between the two years lies within the Basic Entitlement (Age-Weighted Pupil Unit) funding factor – an additional £19.69m has been allocated in 2021-22 and that against a background of 197 fewer pupils in the new year. This accounts for a large proportion of the overall £22.3m funding increase. It should be remembered that the 2021-22 AWPU rates include the transfer in of former Teachers Pay and Pension Grant funds - £180 has been included in the Primary AWPU and £265 in both Secondary AWPUs in 2021-22.

£2.46m more has been allocated in 2021-22 across the deprivation-related factors, free school meals and IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index), reflecting rising rates of socio-economic disadvantage.

The minimum per pupil funding levels that have to be satisfied have seen an increase in the number of schools (30 to 45) receiving top-up funding to meet those levels in 2021-22 at an increased cost of £1.73m in comparison to 2020-21.

A number of funding factors have exhibited reductions in the amount of allocated funds in 2021-22 – approaching £1m less has been allocated across the English as an additional language, pupil mobility, business rates, premises rents and lump sum factors.

The 2021-22 funding allocation represents another significant step towards the National Funding Formula (NFF) in Kirklees. The 2020-21 distribution contained £10.6m of cash protection funding on top of the pure NFF factor value distribution. In 2021-22 the level of cash protection has fallen to £6.86m, which now sits wholly within the minimum funding guarantee factor, largely as a result of uplifts to the NFF factor values in 2021-22.

It was asked when the National Funding Formula will be fully imposed upon local authorities. The latest information indicates that schools will be directly funded by the NFF with effect from funding year 2022-23. However, the government has announced target dates for the change several times before without the change ever being made. The changeover to direct funding may raise fears amongst those schools in receipt of cash protection support through the minimum funding guarantee mechanism that that could disappear. That is unlikely to happen given how established the MFG is within schools funding arrangements and it may well assume even more significance in future for those schools within local authorities which are not as far along the path to adoption of the NFF structures.

9. Any other business

ESFA consultation launched on changes to the Sparsity funding factor

The ESFA has recently launched a consultation which looks at making changes to the Sparsity factor within the National Funding Formula. The factor is all about providing some financial support to (small) schools which serve isolated rural communities. The factor looks at the distance “as the crow flies” between a school and the nearest available alternative school. If that distance exceeds three miles then the sparsity factor can allocate funding with a view to helping the school continue to be viable, thereby protecting rural communities and preventing parents and children from having a longer distance to travel to another school. Although Kirklees has many rural areas within its borders, the distances between schools serving those rural communities all fall within the current three mile limit so no Kirklees school currently triggers sparsity support.

The consultation proposes to replace the “as the crow flies” distance with the actual mileage travelled by road between schools. This may bring some Kirklees schools within the sparsity definition but isn’t expected to produce a significant financial benefit.

The ESFA has recently been making reference to the wider issue of funding small schools in general. There is nothing concrete to report as yet. It might be useful, within the response to the sparsity consultation, to mention concerns about the ongoing viability of small schools in general and argue that there should be a more general small schools protection factor introduced to the National Funding Formula.

10. Date and time of next meeting

Friday 25th June 2021

10:00am start

Microsoft Teams