

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Schools Forum on 17 May 2023

Schools Forum meeting held remotely on Wednesday 8 March 2023

To view the archived recording of this meeting, please see here:
<https://bradford.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

Commenced 08:00
Concluded 09:45

RECORD OF MEETING ATTENDEES, APOLOGIES AND ABSENCES

Schools & Academies Members

IN ATTENDANCE

Member	Membership Group
Ian Morrel (Chair)	Maintained Secondary Schools – Headteacher
Ashley Reed (Vice Chair)	Academies Member
Wahid Zaman	Academies Member
Helen Williams	Academies Member
Brent Fitzpatrick OBE	Academies Member
Amanda Sloney	Academies Member
Mathew Atkinson	Academies Member
Victoria Birch	Academies Member
Melanie Saville	Academies Member
Sarah Murray	Academies Member
Richard Bottomley	Academies Member – Alternative Provision Academies
Bev George	Maintained Nursery Schools – Governor
Sian Hudson	Maintained Nursery Schools - Headteacher
Emma Hamer	Maintained Primary Schools – Governor
Graham Swinbourne	Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher
Kathryn Swales	Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher
Lyndsey Brown	Maintained Special Schools - Headteacher

APOLOGIES RECEIVED

Member	Membership Group
Heather Lacey	Academies Member
Michelle Farr	Academies Member – Special School Academies
Jonathan Nixon	Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher

NOT IN ATTENDANCE (WITHOUT APOLOGIES RECEIVED)

Member	Membership Group
Andrew Morley	Academies Member
Kirsty Ratcliffe	Pupil Referral Unit (maintained)

Michael Thorp	Academies Member
Nicky Kilvington	Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher

Non-Schools Members

IN ATTENDANCE

Member	Membership Group
Tom Bright	Teaching Unions
David Johnston	Officer Representing Vulnerable Children

APOLOGIES RECEIVED

Member	Membership Group

NOT IN ATTENDANCE (WITHOUT APOLOGIES RECEIVED)

Member	Membership Group
Junaid Karim	Council for Mosques (Bradford)

Substitute Members present at the meeting as a Member (not as an Observer)

Substitute Member	Membership Group

Substitute Members present at the meeting as an Observer (not as a Member)

Substitute Member	Membership Group
Alison Kay	Academies Member

Local Authority Officers present at the meeting

Officer	Position
Niall Devlin	Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion
Asad Shah	Committee Secretariat
Marium Haque	Strategic Director
Dawn Haigh	Principal Finance Officer (Schools)
Jonty Holden	Principal Finance Officer (Schools)
Emma Hamer	Strategic Manager, Intelligence and Sufficiency
Andrew Redding	Business Advisor (Schools)

40% of the School Forum's membership (filled membership positions) must be present for a meeting to be quorate. This meeting was quorate, with 70% of members present (19 out of 27 currently filled membership positions).

669. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Emma Hamer declared an interest in all agenda items. Ian Morrel declared an interest in agenda item 7.

670. MINUTES OF 11 JANUARY 2023 & MATTERS ARISING

The Business Advisor (Schools) reported on progress made on “Action” items from the 11 January meeting. He reported that:

- **Item 657 (Primary PAN numbers):** A quick response was emailed to members shortly after the meeting. We have now provided, within the reports pack to this meeting, a table, which provides further information on PAN reductions in primary schools and academies. The Strategic Manager, Intelligence and Sufficiency added that the 8 primary schools and academies, that have proposed to reduce their PANs from September 2024, have now completed their consultations and have confirmed that these PAN reductions will be actioned.
- **Item 658 (DSG Growth Fund Allocations):** The agreed allocations have been paid.
- **Item 659 (Early Years Consultation):** The consultation was completed. An email was sent to members at the beginning of February explaining this, as well as the outcomes. Confirmation is included in Document PT, presented under agenda item 8.
- **Item 664 (High Needs Block):** On 11 January, the Forum requested that the Authority presents to, and discusses with, the Forum a ‘mitigation plan’, which is to be developed in response to the deficit that is forecasted to grow within the High Needs Block over the next 3 years. The Authority is at the beginnings of this process. We are also conscious that this plan will be informed by announcements e.g. the next steps for the national SEND and AP system and funding reviews, whether changes in EHCP financial systems are directed for the 2024/25 financial year and the further development of the National Funding Formula. We anticipate presenting the beginnings of a plan to the Forum in May. This will certainly begin to highlight the areas of investment / reduction and other changes or developments that will have (are likely to have, and / or will be needed to have) the greatest financial impact going forward, for further consideration. It is also likely that, subject to the timing of the DfE’s publications and announcements, the Forum’s May agenda will present the National Funding Formula developments (and any further consultations that the DfE may open).
- **Item 665 (Final Decisions and Formal Recommendations 2023/24 DSG):** Further update on this is presented under agenda item 8. The Council on 23 February accepted the Forum’s recommendations on the 2023/24 DSG and formula funding arrangements, without amendment. Our Schools Block APT return for 2023/24 has also now been accepted by the ESFA, again without amendment.

Resolved –

- (1) That progress made on “Action” items and Matters Arising be noted.
- (2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2023 be signed as a correct record.

671. MATTERS RAISED BY SCHOOLS

No matters were raised and no resolutions were passed on this item.

672. STANDING ITEM - DSG GROWTH FUND ALLOCATIONS

No allocations were presented and no resolutions were passed on this item.

673. SCHOOLS BLOCK FALLING ROLLS FUND ALLOCATIONS 2022/23

The Principal Finance Officer (Schools) presented a report, Document PR, which provided an update for the Schools Forum on the application, in the 2022/23 financial year, of the Schools Block Falling Rolls Fund for mainstream primary phase maintained schools and mainstream primary phase academies. He explained that, as we have found in all previous years since the establishment of the Fund, there are again no primary schools or primary academies that qualify for funding. This is because the reduction in numbers in our primary phase is the result of longer-term demographic changes, rather than the result of short term 'blips', which the Falling Rolls Fund is in place to support. Within the presentation, the Business Advisor (Schools) reminded members that we expect the DfE, via the National Funding Formula reforms, to amend the operation of Growth and Falling Rolls Funding for 2024/25, and that this will be an area of review for us within the 2024/25 DSG and formula funding setting cycle.

Forum members made the following comments and asked the following questions:

- What dialogue is taking place with schools in the management of PAN reductions, as there are other factors that come into play, in addition to demographic trends, which may impact on the intakes of individual schools e.g. where an academy decides to increase its PAN. What can the Authority do if an academy decides to expand? The Strategic Manager, Intelligence and Sufficiency, responded to explain that the Authority approaches conversations with schools and academies within planning areas, and that these conversations are continual and are based on a robust forecasting model (our DfE place scorecard is very positive). Whilst there are other factors that come into play, demographic change is currently by far the most significant factor. It is very unlikely, in current circumstances, that any primary academy would propose a PAN expansion, and the Authority would express significant concerns (during the required consultation processes) in response to any such proposal.
- Could we reduce the Falling Rolls Fund trigger to lower than 90% occupancy to enable schools to access funding? The Business Advisor responded to explain that this would not alter the position, as, irrespective of the %, all schools and academies 'fail' the trigger that is set by the DfE, which requires the reduction in pupil numbers to be a short term 'blip' rather than a longer term trend.
- Does the Authority expect the same reduction trend in special schools,

including as a result of the SEND Green Paper (which places a focus on inclusion in mainstream)? The Strategic Manager responded that the Authority does not expect that the SEND Green Paper will alter Bradford's forecast, which is for the demand for specialist places to continue to increase.

In summarising the discussion, the Chair thanked members for their contributions and stressed that this is an important matter for the Forum to continue to monitor and to consider.

Resolved –

(1) The Schools Forum noted that, as set out in Document PR, and following the agreed established criteria, there are no allocations to be made from the Schools Block Falling Rolls Fund in 2022/23.

(2) The Forum noted that the sum of £500,000 is confirmed as unspent within the Schools Block and is carried forward into 2023/24 as a ring-fenced sum.

LEAD: Principal Finance Officer, Schools

674. SEND – 2021/22 EXCLUSIONS REPORT

The Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion, presented the 2021/22 Exclusions Report, Document PS. This report was presented as per the High Needs Block schedule of information that was agreed with the Schools Forum on 14 October 2020.

Forum members made the following comments and asked the following questions:

- The Chair asked the Assistant Director to explain further how the Authority monitors its support interventions and the impact of these (how does the Authority monitor the success and impact of its strategy for 'right support at the right time')? The Chair stressed the importance of early intervention, as well as the importance of having capacity and the strategy in place to manage and predict changes in demand levels, as well as changes in (and possible future year pressures on) school and High Needs Block funding levels. Are we best placed to meet need now and in the future, and are there needs that we are currently not meeting (or are at risk of not meeting)? The Assistant Director responded to explain the key aspects of the Authority approach (a sophisticated data monitoring and tracking system; recent re-design of the teaching support and behaviour support services; multi-disciplinary discussions; work with mental health services; behaviour support services that are still free at the point of access for schools and academies; allocated Education Psychologist time for the PRU / AP Academy; the successful management and movement of pupils with EHCPs that were previously placed in the PRUs; working with the Youth Justice Service; the impact of the Behaviour and Attendance Collaboratives in the secondary sector). The Assistant Director added there are children and young people that do have

unmet needs, such as language needs, but that the Authority has taken steps to address this (e.g. restructuring the teaching support services) to focus on early intervention with aim of seeking to de-escalate needs growth.

- Do we have a sufficient number of special school and alternative provision places that are available for children and young people with persistent disruptive behaviour support needs? The Assistant Director responded that the Authority continually reviews the number of places against the data and is looking for ways to increase the number of places available.
- The member representing maintained special schools offered her view that there is place here for the Forum to dig deeper into how we are meeting needs, with special schools under stress and needs becoming more complex, and about how special schools can further support mainstream schools and academies. The member offered to be involved in further conversations and added that special schools are currently actively developing mainstream inclusion support. The Chair thanked the member for this offer and for her input. He emphasised that the Forum's focus is on the DSG and on the use of funding, with it being helpful for the Forum to think about a 'cost-benefit' analysis as a way of monitoring and further considering whether we are getting the most impact out of the funding that we have. The Assistant Director added that the Forum has already been instrumental in strategic discussions around the use of funding in this context, referring to the inclusion investment plan that was presented to the Forum in July 2022 following discussions within the Forum's sub-group. A member stated that the development of wider support is now starting to come through to schools.

Resolved – That the information presented in Document PS be noted.

675. MATTERS CONCERNING THE DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented a report, Document PT, which provided an update on a number of matters relating to the Dedicated Schools Grant. The Advisor also took the opportunity to present the key messages from the DfE's improvement plan, which was published last week in response to the March 2022 SEND Green Paper publication.

In discussing the suggested letter to the Secretary of State, regarding the insufficiency of funding for the early years entitlement, a member suggested, and it was agreed, that this letter should also make comment about the very challenging financial position that is being faced by schools, especially in the light of projected pay awards.

It was also agreed that the letter include comment, in response to Bradford's bid for a new Free School Special Schools not being approved. The Strategic Manager, Intelligence and Sufficiency, explained to Forum members how, despite our application having scored very highly, our application has not been approved. She stated that this feels 'devastating' for the children and young people of Bradford. It appears that, as we are not currently in deficit within our High Needs Block, and although we have been approved for a free school previously (but then have not been successful in achieving a sponsor), our bid has been rejected. It was explained that there is no appeals process. The Strategic Director added that

this feels like Bradford is being penalised for good financial management and for the creative way in which additional specialist places have been created, behaviours which have not been present in other authorities. She explained that our elected members are angry, and are writing to ministers. The Strategic Manager provided the Forum with the re-assurance, that the Authority will continue to work creatively with schools to meet the needs of children and young people in Bradford. The Chair, as well as other Forum members, responded to share the Authority's strong disappointment. Referring to previous discussions that have been had in the Forum regarding the scale of growth in our spending on out of authority and independent school placements, a member commented that it feels exceptionally short-sited of ministers to reject Bradford's Free School bid at this time.

Resolved -

(1) The Schools Forum noted the information provided in Document PT.

(2) That the Chair, on behalf of the Schools Forum, writes to the Secretary of State on the issue of the Early Years Block funding settlement that Bradford has received for 2023/24. That this letter also asks for response on the financial challenges that are being faced by schools.

LEAD: *Business Advisor, Schools*

676. MATTERS CONCERNING SCHOOL AND ACADEMIES BUDGETS

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented Document PU, which provided an update on matters concerning school and academy budgets. This included an update on the position of the conversion of maintained schools to academy status and on the general forecasted position of school and academy budgets over the 2023-2026 3-year period.

Forum members did not ask any questions and did not make any comments.

Resolved - That the information presented in Document PU be noted.

677. SCHOOLS FORUM STANDING ITEMS

No matters were raised and no resolutions were passed on this item.

678. AOB / FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

No matters were raised and no resolutions were passed on this item.

679. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled is Wednesday 17 May. This meeting will be held remotely.

For planning purposes, the provisional schedule for Schools Forum meetings for the 2023/24 academic year has now been set, as follows:

- Wednesday 13 September 2023, 8am
- Wednesday 11 October 2023, 8am
- Wednesday 6 December 2023, 8am
- Wednesday 10 January 2024, 8am
- Wednesday 17 January 2024, 8am PROVISIONAL MEETING
- Wednesday 6 March 2024, 8am
- Wednesday 22 May 2024, 8am
- Wednesday 10 July 2024, 8am

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THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER