



Surrey Schools Forum Minutes of Meeting

Friday 14 January 2022 1.00pm Virtual Meeting on TEAMS

Final version approved by members at meeting on 11 May 2022

Present

Chair

Rhona Barnfield Howard of Effingham School Academy member

Joint Vice Chairs

Kate Keane Ewell Grove Primary Primary Head

Justin Price Freemantles School Special school head

Other school and academy members:

Donna Harwood-Duffy Dorking Nursery Maintained nursery head

Clare McConnell Bisley CE Primary Primary Head

Zoe Johnson-Walker The Winston Churchill School Secondary Head

Geoffrey Hackett Burpham Primary Primary governor

Steph Neale St Pauls Catholic Primary Primary governor

Lisa Kent Manor Mead and Walton Leigh Schools (special governor)

Matthew Armstrong-Harris Rodborough Academy member

Sir Andrew Carter South Farnham Primary Academy member

Elaine Cooper SWAN academy trust Academy member

Jo Hastings Ottershaw Infant and Junior Academy member

Karyn Hing Westfield School Academy member

Paul Kinder Warlingham School Academy member

Sarah Kober Darley Dene Academy representative

Jack Mayhew Learning Partners AcadTrust Academy member

Kerry Oakley Carrington School Academy member

Susan Wardlow Reigate School Academy member

David Euridge Reigate Valley/Wey Valley AP academy member

Neil Miller Bramley Oak Academy Special academy member

Non school members

Sarah Porter Private, voluntary and independent nurseries

Matthew Rixson Guildford Diocese (Church of England)

Folasade Afolabi Unions: Education Joint Committee

Tracy Baker Unions: Education Joint Committee

Benedicte Symcox Family Voice Surrey

Local Authority Officers

Liz Mills (LM) Director–Education, Lifelong Learning & Culture

Eamonn Gilbert (EG) Assistant Director (Commissioning)

Daniel Peattie Strategic Finance Business Partner

Louise Lawson (LL) Deputy Strategic Finance Business Partner

David Green (DG) Senior Finance Business Partner (Schools Funding)

1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

Apologies:

Paul Jackson NW secondary PRU PRU representative

Christine Ricketts
Joe Dunne

Post 16 provider
Arundel and Brighton Diocese (RC)

New members: Sarah Porter, Susan Wardlow

2 Declarations of interest (where not self-evident)

The Chair thanked those who had already submitted declarations of interest and encouraged those who had not already submitted theirs to do so.

The Chair declared an interest in item 7 as CEO of an academy trust which included special schools.

3 Minutes of previous meeting on 7 December 2021

Delete reference to Zoe Johnson-Walker and SAFE, she did not do work for SAFE.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4 Update on DfE consultations

DG reported that, on 11 January, the DfE had published the outcome of the consultation on the future of the school improvement monitoring and brokering grant. Proposals to remove the grant are being implemented in full. The DfE proposes to update guidance on schools causing concern.

The increase of £6.50/pupil in central services levy agreed by Schools Forum at the December meeting will now be implemented, as will the change of additional school improvement funding from de-delegation to central services levy. The Chair noted that the issue of funding statutory school improvement work would be discussed again by Schools Forum in good time for the 2023/24 funding consultation.

5 Final Dedicated Schools Grant settlement for 2022/23 including recommendations for mainstream school funding rates for 2022/23 and final high needs block

NFF schools block

DG reminded the Forum that adjustments were needed to the proposed mainstream funding formula, so that it matched the final DSG allocations, now that the final DSG allocations and schools funding data were known. Increases in incidence of deprivation had meant that a ceiling on per pupil funding gains would be required, in order to deliver NFF formula funding rates. The Forum had previously agreed that a ceiling should be used, rather than reducing formula funding rates below NFF rates. The ceiling was proposed at 3.92% (subject to final checking of data).

Overall NFF DSG had increased since the July announcement by £5.5m for increased pupil numbers and £0.2m for pupil growth. The increase in NFF DSG was 2.57% per pupil but in addition mainstream schools would receive a schools supplementary grant of roughly 3% per pupil, distributed by a separate DfE funding formula. This meant an overall (average) increase of 5.6% per pupil, and an estimated increase of 6.9% per pupil for those schools subject to ceiling deductions.

Schools supplementary grant largely distributed the additional funding announced by DfE in the October 2021 spending review and therefore was over and above the level of funding anticipated in Surrey's autumn consultation. It was intended to cover additional pressures, including the health and social care levy.

Due to the cancellation of the two most recent foundation stage profile assessments, there were now no pupils in infant schools with foundation stage profile data. The DfE had now clarified that LAs could use either county average year 3 incidence or the most recent historic individual school level data to fund these schools for low prior attainment in 2022/23. A supplementary paper to Forum members had considered this issue and the Forum was asked for a view on which option it would support. For many infant schools, their historic data differed considerably from county year 3 average, and for the majority of such schools it had been consistently above or below that average in the last three years. DG thought it unlikely that many schools would have budgeted on the county average or even known it.

The Chair commented that the use of historic data was likely to reduce turbulence at school level.

The Forum supported the use of historic school level low prior attainment data for infant schools, rather than county average.

DG noted that an underspend of £560,000 was projected on growth fund and proposed to use that to replace the £556,000 of historic commitments DSG funding currently delegated to schools. Schools would still see delegated funding £0.5m above NFF allocations.

The Forum had no comments to make on the proposed use of surplus growth funding.

Schools supplementary grant would also apply to maintained nursery schools and nursery classes but at a lower rate.

A Vice Chair noted that special schools did not receive the schools supplementary grant but that there had been an extra 4% increase in high needs block funding, from which LAs were expected to provide for the cost of the health and social care levy for special schools. DG noted that the approach to the schools supplementary grant was consistent with there being a national school level funding formula for mainstream schools but not for special schools.

LM recalled that the outcome of the national SEND review was still expected before Easter. She would welcome a national school level funding formula for special schools.

Central schools services block

The final allocation had been in line with that projected at the December meeting.

High needs block

The final allocation had been £8.9m higher than the July allocation, of which £1.7m was due to increased pupil numbers and £7.2m represented the additional 4% increase mentioned above.

Early Years Block

This had not changed since first announced in November.

6 Approval of growing schools budgets for 2022/23

DG sought approval for the proposed growing schools budget, now that the DfE allocation was known. The proposed criteria were unchanged from the last meeting.

DG reminded the Forum that the DfE growth allocation funded growth in two ways:

- Schools extending age range (eg infant to primary) were funded for pupil growth by use of average pupil numbers in the main funding formula;
- Other expanding schools were funded by the growth fund.

An underspend of £560,000 was projected for the growth fund and it was proposed to distribute that through the NFF formula in lieu of the CSSB funding previously allocated in that way (see above).

The estimated total requirement for the growth fund budget in 2022/23 was £3.780m compared to available funding of £4.341m. The main changes were a reduction in bulge class and vacancy costs for primary schools and an increase in growth in secondary schools, as the peak years for growth moved from primary into secondary.

The Forum approved the proposed growing schools budget.

7 Special schools inflation funding process for 2022/23

Eamonn Gilbert reminded the Forum that the mainstream formula gave little scope for local discretion on inflation funding, but there was no equivalent mechanism for special schools and thus a local discussion was needed annually. Despite recent increases in government funding, the high needs block remained under pressure and significant amounts of council funding were still needed to support it.

EG had had discussions on inflation with special school headteachers and proposed to reconvene the headteacher working group (which had developed the banding review) to develop some financial models to understand what the inflation pressures were. The increase offered would be more than 1% but he couldn't commit to a specific figure. He hoped this work would allow future proposals on inflation to be developed from a greater mutual understanding of pressures both on schools and on the LA. There had been negotiations on inflation in previous years but he hoped that a model would improve the outcome. It had already been agreed that the working group would continue, in order to discuss other issues.

A Vice Chair recognised that discussions on inflation were being held earlier this year, but argued that special schools found it difficult to secure any increase in funding to cover cost pressures, at a time when mainstream schools were

seeing significant increases. It didn't seem fair that special schools were being offered a 1% increase when mainstream schools were receiving 3% from the new grant alone. He also sought a longer term agreement.

EG hoped to establish a longer term methodology and a better understanding of the cost pressures, but noted that government funding levels were only agreed a year at a time. He anticipated an agreement on 2022/23 by the end of March 2022.

The Chair supported the use of the working group of Special Schools' Council to explore the issue, but noted that Schools Forum did not meet again until 11 May. She asked to be kept informed of progress on behalf of the Forum.

A Vice Chair suggested that any inflation agreement may need to be reopened if the teachers' pay increase was higher than modelled. The Chair noted that the teachers' pay increase was not generally known until September and that all schools would have to budget for that uncertainty. JP saw that as a greater issue for special schools because the funding increases were likely to be lower.

8 Schools Forum business

Items for next meeting-to include 2021/22 outturn and issues for 2023/24 funding consultation (not 2022/23 as shown on agenda).

A decision on whether to hold an in-person meeting, rather than virtual, would be taken nearer the time.

9 Any other business

None

Meeting ended 1.50pm

Date of next meeting **Wednesday 11 May 2022** 1pm, now confirmed as being on Teams