

Surrey Schools Forum Draft Minutes of Meeting

Thursday 7 October 2021 1.00pm Virtual Meeting on TEAMS (due to COVID 19)

Approved by Chair

Present

Chair

Rhona Barnfield Howard of Effingham School (academy member)

Joint Vice Chairs

Kate Keane Ewell Grove Primary and Nursery Primary Head

Justin Price Freemantles School Special school head

Other school and academy members:

Katie Aldred Bagshot Infant Primary Head

Susan Chrysanthou Furzefield Primary Primary Head

Geoffrey Hackett Burpham Primary Primary governor

Steph Neale St Pauls Catholic Primary Primary governor

Fred Greaves Oakwood School Secondary governor

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

Matthew Armstrong-Harris (part) 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

Jack Mayhew Athena/GEP Academy member

Rob Mayo Rosebery School Academy member

Kerry Oakley Carrington School Academy member

David Euridge Reigate Valley/Wey Valley AP academy member

Neil Miller Bramley Oak Academy Special academy member

Non school members

Sue Lewis Private, voluntary & independent nursery providers

Christine Ricketts Post 16 provider

Matthew Rixson Guildford Diocese (Church of England)

Joe Dunne Arundel and Brighton Diocese (RC)

Folasadi Afolabi Unions: Education Joint Committee

Tracy Baker Unions: Education Joint Committee

Local Authority Officers

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

Jane Winterbone (JW) Assistant Director (Education)

Eamonn Gilbert (EG) Assistant Director (Commissioning)

Louise Lawson (LL) Deputy Strategic Finance Business Partner

Daniel Peattie (DP) Strategic Finance Business Partner

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

Carol Savedra (CS) Head of Commissioning-Special Educational Needs /Early Education/Corporate Parenting

1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

Apologies:

Donna Harwood-Duffy	Dorking Nursery	Maintained nursery head
Sarah Kober	Darley Dene	Academy representative
Clare McConnell	Bisley CE Primary	Primary Head
Paul Jackson	NW secondary PRU	PRU representative

New members: Karyn Hing, Sarah Kober (Primary academies), Rob Mayo, Jack Mayhew (secondary academies), Paul Jackson (maintained PRU), Folasadi Afolabi and Tracy Baker (union reps), Matthew Rixson (Guildford Diocese),

2 Declarations of interest (where not self evident)

Chair: CEO of multi academy trust which now includes special schools

Matthew Armstrong-Harris: Cullum centre (SEN centre) and trustee of Inclusive Education Trust of which David Euridge is CEO

Kate Keane: on boards of Schools Alliance for Excellence (SAFE) and Surrey Teaching Schools Network

Justin Price: on SAFE board and secondary governor

Geoffrey Hackett, Susan Chrysanthou: schools with SEN centres

Jack Mayhew: CEO of MAT with both primary and secondary schools

Lisa Kent-member of IEB for primary school

Matthew Rixson: SAFE advisor

Sue Lewis Owner of early years provider and close relative is Surrey specialist teacher

3 Minutes of previous meeting (8 July 2021) and matters arising Accuracy

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as accurate.

Matters arising

None

4 Outcome of consultation on schools, high needs and early years funding: decisions and recommendations to Cabinet

The Chair thanked colleagues for their work in the analysis of responses in a very short time. She noted that the links to the consultation had worked for some but not for others. LM acknowledged that some colleagues had had difficulty in accessing the link. Officers would see what could be learned from this year's experience. The final response rate had actually been higher than in the previous year.

The Chair reminded members that the Forum's role was to look at fair funding for all children in all schools whether primary, secondary or special and that they should consider all children, not just their specific sector, unless the decision was sector specific.

A summary of consultation responses had previously been shared with members. All percentages quoted are of the schools expressing a view on that question.

Questions in the consultation paper were taken in turn: for recommendation to Cabinet unless specifically stated otherwise:

Q8 Do you support the introduction of localised funding to support inclusion in mainstream settings, funded through transfer of funding (i.e., from schools' block to high needs block)?

This proposal had been supported in consultation by 48.92% of primary schools expressing a view, 63.16% of secondary schools and 53.6% overall.

The Chair noted that this proposal had been introduced only in July.

LM saw it as an opportunity but it was important to develop decision making and governance arrangements. The proposal was important in enabling a school led approach and collaboration, and it was consistent with the approach being developed over a number of years.

Jack Mayhew recalled discussions with the Chair and LM over how to make schools more inclusive for SEND children and their families. The proposal offered a chance to become collaborative leaders, which the community deserved. The proposal was to support new ways of working and new ways of inclusion, for headteachers to work collaboratively. Headteachers would decide how the resources were spent. There were more children entering mainstream schools with complex needs, requiring greater resources than were available, and there was an inequitable distribution of pupils with SEN across schools.

Local leaders would be empowered to decide how best to meet SEN needs within their areas, perhaps on a quadrant or borough basis. Sometimes schools were not meeting children's SEN needs in the way they should, and resources should be allocated by those in schools who knew best how to use them.

The Chair noted that this was a very different proposal to previous block transfer requests, i.e., a school led approach rather than just reducing an existing deficit.

One colleague saw the request as a "leap of faith" and recalled that when additional funding was allocated some years ago to groups of schools for school confederations it took several years for the funding to be used to fund schools. She feared that the funding could lie unspent while schools needed it and that there could be inequity of access to funds. She saw the proposed amount as similar to the transfers requested in the last four years.

LM confirmed that the proposed amount was similar to that previously proposed, as it was the maximum 0.5% of Schools Block which the Forum was permitted to approve for transfer.

LM suggested that a proposed framework for governance could be presented to the Forum at its December meeting.

The proposal required funds to be moved into the high needs block because the funding regulations did not permit it to be spent within the Schools Block in the way proposed. The proposal had not started as an LA proposal but the LA saw substantial benefits in it for children if it could be got right.

LM noted that there were already groups of schools working together in Surrey and it might be possible to build on existing groupings where these were effective. There was no fixed model of how schools should be brought together.

Members emphasised that it was important to make decisions early and to get the funding into schools quickly

Some members suggested that while working together was right some previous attempts at local solutions had not worked. They could not support the proposals without knowing the governance arrangements. Unlike confederation funding, this proposal was not for use of new money but of core funding. Primary heads' consultation responses had indicated that they were not prepared to support the proposal without knowing the governance structure, who would benefit and what it would achieve and evidence of impact. There was a need to decide what to focus on.

Jack Mayhew accepted that to some extent the proposal was a "leap of faith" and that it may be necessary to agree governance first. But schools collectively needed to do more to include children with SEN and to give them the best start. Schools had to focus wider than their own schools and recognise that they were collectively responsible for all the children with SEN in Surrey. A method was needed of releasing the funding equitably and effectively.

Another colleague supported the proposal from his experience working with SALP but recognised that time might be needed to set up and get started.

The proposal might need 2-3 years to develop.

LM suggested that the proposal was an opportunity for a more flexible approach. The proposed sum was quite large and would support more creative and innovative solutions. There was a need to do something bold and different, and to learn from experience elsewhere eg in Early Years.

Members sought more detail as to how the proposed funding would be used and expressed concern at being asked to consider a 2–3-year funding allocation for a proposal which might not work. LM agreed that systemic change would take more than a year.

Some members argued that opposing the proposal didn't mean opposing the principle, and that the funding was in the right place to make a difference if it was in the school budget. If the funding was distributed as proposed it would need to be shown to be more effective than leaving it in school budgets.

Members also expressed concern that the smallest schools might be unable to get involved because of teachers' teaching commitment and asked how those schools' views would be heard. LM agreed that there was a need to consider the range of schools, including small schools.

The Chair recalled that the high needs block overspend had been a constant problem and if it had been easy to resolve that would have been done some time ago. Simply seeking to contain costs would not work. A solution required a new approach and the proposal offered an opportunity of finding different ways to meet needs and for new and creative approaches. She accepted that it had

been developed quite quickly because of time constraints. She suggested that the Forum should be involved in developing governance models.

The Forum voted 11-7 in favour of the proposal.

Q9 Do you support a contribution of £3.6m (0.5% of estimated NFF schools block) in 2022/23 to the high needs block specifically to fund school led inclusion initiatives?

This had been supported in consultation by 44.53% of responding primary schools, 57.89% of responding secondary schools and 50% overall.

The Forum voted 9-8 (with three abstentions) to approve the proposed transfer of £3.6m to high needs block for the purpose proposed.

The Chair saw this as an indicative vote and suggested that the Forum should return to the issue in December and that volunteers from the Forum should work with LM and LA colleagues on governance arrangements. The LA had statutory responsibility for SEN provision and thus colleagues developing the schools led arrangements should work with LA officers. She suggested that the group might involve the Chair and Vice Chairs plus 3-4 other members. Members could volunteer now or afterwards. The group should be quite small but should include all phases.

Justin Price emphasised that special schools would not benefit from the proposed transferred sum and this was not a way of securing more funding for special schools.

The issue would be added to the agenda for the forthcoming high needs block working group meeting. **Action: Chair and Clerk**

Q10 Do you agree that, if funding is transferred as above, it should be allocated to schools across the academic year 2022/23?

In effect this meant agreeing that any underspend at 31 March 2023 would be carried forward at LA level for the same purpose.

Supported in consultation by 77.12% of responding primary schools, 80.56% of responding secondary schools and 78.6% overall.

One member noted that this outcome still meant that a minority of all schools had supported the proposal.

Another asked whether the vote would stand if governance arrangements could not be established.

The Chair suggested that initiatives were most likely to start in September 2022 and thus the funding needed to be stretched over a third term.

LM advised that the issue could be discussed again at the December meeting. Arrangements for carry forward would need to be considered and would need to be included in reports to DFE and Cabinet. Some protection would need to be provided to build trust and confidence that the funding was being used for its intended purpose.

The Forum voted 17-1 in favour of the proposal to allocate the funds across the year 2022/23.

Q12 If there is a transfer of funds to high needs block do you support a Minimum Funding Guarantee of 1.6% (for mainstream schools)?

Supported in consultation by 60.2% of responding primary schools, 54.6% of secondary and 58.6% overall.

DG noted that a higher minimum funding guarantee meant a smaller increase in the formula funding rates.

School, academy and early years representatives supported the proposed 1.6% minimum funding guarantee by 18-1.

Q13 If there is a transfer of funds to high needs block, do you agree that a ceiling on gains in funding per pupil should be considered if, and only if it is necessary in order to deliver the above funding rates and MFG levels?

DG explained that a ceiling (or limit on the average increase in per pupil funding) might be necessary in order to deliver the proposed funding rates if there was an increase in deprivation or low prior attainment indicators between October 2020 and October 2021.

Supported in consultation by 88.7% of responding primary schools, 81.8% of secondary. 87.7% overall.

The Forum supported the proposed use of a ceiling.

Q14 If there is no transfer of funds from schools' block to high needs block do you support a minimum funding guarantee of 2% for mainstream schools (the highest permissible)

Supported in consultation by 90% of responding primary schools, 77.8% of responding secondary schools and 85.8% overall.

The Forum supported the proposed minimum funding guarantee by a clear majority. (It is relevant only if the proposed transfer to high needs block is not implemented).

Q15 If there is no transfer of funds to high needs block do you agree that a ceiling on gains in funding per pupil should be considered if, and only if it is necessary in order to deliver NFF funding rates and the 2% MFG?

Supported in consultation by 89.1% of responding primary schools, 97.1% of secondary and 91.1% overall

The Forum supported the proposal by a clear majority.

Q17 If you do not agree that a ceiling on gains should be used, if it would be necessary to deliver the funding rates proposed above, please indicate how you would prefer cost increases to be managed

This was not discussed, as there was majority support for use of a ceiling on gains, if required (see above)

Q19 Do you support an increase in the lump sum factor in 2022/23?

Supported in consultation by 79.9% of responding primary schools, 75.0% of secondary and 79.2% overall

The Chair noted that the proposed increase ran counter to the NFF and that there would need to be transitional arrangements to bring the lump sum into line with the NFF. One member asked that the future of the lump sum should be noted in the small school strategy. LM agreed

The Forum supported the proposed increase in lump sum by a clear majority.

Q21 Do you support implementing the revised NFF sparsity factor?

Supported in consultation by 80.9% of responding primary schools, 89.7% of secondary schools, 83.8% overall.

DG noted that the proposed increase in sparsity factors and other changes were in line with the NFF and would mean a small increase in the number of schools receiving that funding.

The Forum supported the proposed change by a clear majority.

Q23 Do you agree that the level 1 and level 2 notional SEN funding rates should be increased in line with the general level of increase in formula funding rates?

Supported in consultation by 78.7% of responding primary schools, 80.0% of secondary schools, 79.5% overall

The Forum supported the proposed changes by a clear majority

Q25 Do you agree that in 2022/23 we should continue to provide formula funding for looked after children at the current rate?

Supported in consultation by 100% of responding primary and secondary schools.

This was included in the consultation because it was not part of the NFF

The Forum supported the proposed retention of funding for looked after children by a clear majority

Q27 Do you agree that the former combined services funding (for confederations and school improvement) within the formula, should be reduced by a further 20%, to reflect the funding reduction made by the DfE (i.e., in this funding stream)?

Proposal supported in consultation by 81.7% of primary, 93.7% of secondary and 85% overall

DG explained that this was funding included in schools' formula allocations which was outside the NFF and which DfE was phasing out.

The Forum supported the proposed reduction by a clear majority.

Q29 Do you support the proposed basis of returning part of the surplus school specific contingency funds in 2022/23 to those primary schools which were maintained for all or part of 2020/21, on the basis described above?

Proposal supported in consultation by 90% of primary, 100% of secondary and 91.4% overall

The Forum supported the proposal by a clear majority

Q31 De-delegation

All individual proposals were supported in consultation by at least 80% of primary and (for the proposals relevant to secondary) of secondary, except

union facilities time which was supported by 91.6% of primary but by only 71% of secondary)

DG reminded the Forum that de-delegation could apply only to maintained and primary schools, and thus only representatives of maintained primary and secondary schools could vote. A separate choice could be made for each sector.

Kate Keane drew attention to doubts over the future of de-delegation under a hard national funding formula, the recent DfE consultation on implementation of a hard formula, and apparent doubts over whether the de-delegated services could survive if fully traded. Most maintained schools had supported de-delegation and therefore why would there be insufficient demand for a traded service? She drew attention to the proposed effect on the workforce.

LM thought a hard NFF would take at least two years to implement, She had asked one of the new assistant directors to lead on developing a new delivery model, working with schools.

LM recognised that this work needed to be a priority, though she noted that under de-delegation, staff were used to the uncertainty of annual decisions.

Representatives of maintained primary schools agreed, by a clear majority, to de-delegation of funding for:

- * behaviour support
- * Capita SIMS licences
- * teacher association and trade union facilities time
- * other special staff costs
- * free school meals eligibility checking
- * primary school specific contingency
- * additional school improvement services
- * services for travellers.

The representative of maintained secondary schools present agreed to de-delegation of funding for:

- * Capita SIMS licences
- * teacher association and trade union facilities time
- * other special staff costs
- * free school meals eligibility checking.

Q33 Do you agree that Surrey Special Schools should make the decision, by broad consensus, to adopt (or not) the proposed new banding and implementation arrangements?

There had been clear support for this proposal in the consultation.

However, the Chair noted that the banding review would continue and phase 2 would cover mainstream schools and SEN centres and understood that a common mechanism was likely for those too. Therefore, the outcome of the special school review had potential implications for mainstream funding.

LM proposed to hold an additional Schools Forum meeting to discuss the special schools banding review and its implications for phase 2 (mainstream) and to ratify any decisions on phase 1. It was agreed that that meeting should be on Monday 1 November.

Q35-41 Early Years proposals

A summary of consultation results was shared, including both state and PVI providers. Carol Savedra noted that there had been general support for all proposals from those responding, but a low response from PVI providers to some questions which affected maintained providers only.

Q 35. Do you agree that 100% of the DfE funding for 2-year-olds should continue to be passed on to providers through the hourly rate?

This was supported by 96.6% of those expressing a view,

The Forum supported the proposal

Q 36. Do you agree that 50% of any increase in the DfE hourly funding rate for 3–4-year-olds should be used to increase the hourly rate to providers and the other 50% used to increase the value of the Early Intervention Fund?

Supported by 54.9% of those responding

CS suggested that those opposing the increase in EIF had not disagreed with EIF as such but had wanted a higher basic rate. She suggested that the increase in base funding would only be £45 per child per year if distributed through the hourly rate and therefore the funding would have more impact if distributed through EIF.

One member asked whether there had been underspends on centrally retained early years budgets which could be used to support EIF, allowing a larger increase in basic hourly rate. CS advised that no underspend on centrally retained funds was expected in 2021/22.

Another member expressed concern that the proposal for a smaller increase in hourly rate (than the DfE increase) might suggest to DfE that staffing ratios for 3–4-year-olds could be reduced. CS argued that EIF supported an increase in staffing ratios.

The Forum supported the proposal to split any funding growth for 3–4-year-olds equally between hourly rate and EIF

Q37 Do you support the continued retention of 5% of funding for 3–4-year-olds for 2022/23?

This proposal had been supported by 74.2% of respondents expressing a view in the consultation

CS suggested that the early years budget of £74m could not be managed without some support for administration and quality. The 5% also included the early intervention fund for two-year-olds and the Early Talk Boost budget and the THRIVE approach.

The Forum agreed the proposed central retention by a clear majority.

Q 38. Do you support the continued provision of an Inclusion Fund- Early Intervention Funding- for 2-year-olds, funded from the 5% centrally retained funds for three- and four-year-olds?

Supported by 76.7% of those expressing a view

CS suggested that this was a small sum for a very needy group

The Forum generally supported the proposal

Q 39. Do you support the proposed increase to the funding rate for free school meals provision for entitled pupils in state-maintained nursery schools and classes?

89.6% of respondents expressing a view had supported the proposal but there had been few responses from the PVI sector

The Forum generally supported the proposal

Q 40. Do you agree that the maintained nursery school transitional grant funding from the DfE should continue to be distributed in the same way as in previous years (As described in section E4 of the consultation paper)?

84.5% of those expressing a view had supported the proposal

This was used to fund business rates, a small split site allocation for Guildford Nursery and an equal lump sum for all four maintained nursery schools

One respondent had commented that all providers in all categories should benefit

The Forum generally supported the proposal

Q 41. Do you agree that, if the DfE withdraws the maintained nursery school transitional grant, local transitional funding should be considered for maintained nursery schools, so that in 2022/23 they still receive a proportion of the funding which they would have received from the transitional grant, had it continued?

The DfE “reviews” the continuation of the maintained nursery school transitional grant every year.

86.2% of those expressing a view had supported it

The Forum generally supported the proposal

5 Update on DfE hard National Funding Formula consultation

DG noted that the DfE had published a consultation on moving to a hard national funding formula for mainstream schools on 8 July and that the consultation had closed on 30 September. A draft of the LA response had previously been shared with Forum members.

The Forum had no comments on the paper.

6 Technical issues for “disapplication” requests to DfE: varying pupil numbers

DG asked the Schools Forum to support an application to the DfE to use average pupil numbers to fund 15 schools where pupil numbers would fall in September 2022 due to losses of bulge classes or reduction in PAN. The DfE expected to know Schools Forum’s view. All individual schools had been asked to comment and their comments would be shared with DfE. So far ten had agreed or had no comments, one had agreed subject to conditions unrelated to

the issue, one had objected and four had yet to respond. The LA proposed to apply for all 15 variations but to share schools' views with the DfE.

The Forum supported the proposed variations.

7 High needs update

High needs place numbers to be funded for academic year 2022/23

This was an annual process by which the number of funded high needs places for some providers was agreed with the ESFA and the deadline for the academic year 2022/23 was 12 November. Individual providers would be contacted with proposed place numbers and offered the opportunity for discussions. Proposals would generally start with actual pupil numbers. Discussions were likely to centre on schools subject to significant growth and schools where funded places were much higher than the number on roll.

The ESFA has a process where agreement cannot be reached.

One member drew attention to concerns among schools with underoccupied SEN centres, which feared that the centres would be unviable if the number of places was reduced. Schools might think of closing centres, at a time when increased SEN centre provision was needed. EG suggested that discussions would focus on viability rather than on short term pupil numbers. There needed to be some link between take up and place funding. The process was originally designed to give some funding certainty. He did not anticipate much change for 2022/23

The Chair saw a particular issue with centres for visually impaired and hearing-impaired pupils, because of the need for specialist staff and accommodation. These centres needed certainty in order to retain specialist staff.

The Forum generally supported the proposals

LM proposed that items 7b (special schools banding review), 7c (mainstream schools SEN review) and 7d (alternative provision) should be deferred until the additional meeting on 1 November

8 Schools Forum business

a) Election of new Chair and Vice Chairs

The Chair and Vice Chair were elected for a year, renewable any number of times. Nominations to DG by 19 November please. The Chair and Vice Chairs were all willing to stand again. Kate Keane commented that a continuing balance between sectors was desirable.

There would be an election at the start of the December meeting if necessary.

b) Date of next meeting

1 November 2021 (1pm start) additional meeting to discuss high needs issues
7 December 2021, to include centrally managed schools block and central services levy deductions

c) Changes to number of maintained school and academy representatives

The number of maintained primary headteacher representatives had been reduced from 5 to 4, and an additional position created for an alternative provision academy representative. This improved the proportionality of representation between maintained and academy primary and secondary schools. An alternative provision academy representative was mandatory where an LA had alternative provision academies.

d) Dates of meetings for 2022

Dates of meetings for 2022 are

- 14 January 2022
- 11 May 2022
- 28 June 2022
- 6 October 2022
- 8 December 2022

All 1pm start

e) Register of interests

It was for the Forum to decide whether a standing register should be maintained and whether it should be published.

Members asked for more clarity over what should be included.

Professional bodies covered the individual and, where applicable their academy trust.

DG to recirculate form and members to complete it before 1 November meeting.

Action for DG

9 Other business

None

Meeting ended 3.30pm

Date of next meeting Monday 1 November 1pm, virtual meeting on TEAMS