

<b>Meeting title</b>	<b>SCHOOLS FORUM</b>
<b>Date</b>	Tuesday 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2022 – via Teams
<b>Forum Members Present</b>	Jo Marsh (Chair), Jo Stoaling, Kevin Burnett, Louise Malik, Steven Mackay, Cllr Dine Romero, Dawn Sage, Lauren Whittaker on behalf of Claire Crowther, Louise Malik
<b>Forum Members Not Present</b>	Alan Williams & Claire Crowther
<b>Observers</b>	
<b>Officers Present</b>	Christopher Wilford, Richard Morgan, Rosemary Collard, Mary Kearney-Knowles, Mandy Bishop, Jo Stone (notes)
<b>Officers Not Present</b>	
<b>Distribution</b>	As above plus Theresa Gale: Education Director, Diocese of Bath & Wells Cllr. Richard Samuel: Cabinet Member Resources Cllr. Kevin Guy: Leader of the Council Cllr. Vic Pritchard: Chair of PDS Panel Mandy Bishop, Wendy Jefferies, Andy Rothery, Jeff Wring, Paul Hiscott, Olwyn Donnelly
<b>Next meeting</b>	Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> September 2022 2-4pm

<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies Received</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
	JM welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted as above. JM confirmed that the meeting was quorate.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	No declarations were made.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes of the last meeting (17/05/2022)</b>	
	<p>The minutes 17/05 were agreed for accuracy.</p> <p>RM: Confirmed that Louise Malik is the representative from the Lighthouse Schools Partnership</p> <p>RM: Query regarding the increase in resources made to schools has been completed</p> <p>RM: Letter to Minister not yet completed, asked if anyone has specific items of concerns in terms of finances due to the cost-of-living crisis for the trust schools and in terms of recruitment &amp; retention. Cllr Romeo to co-sign the letter.</p> <p>RM: Salary sacrifice scheme AW to obtain further information, JS will circulate to the group.</p>	<b>JS</b>

	<p>CW: Teaching Assistant recruitment as an agenda item on the Schools Standard Board, this meeting has now been rescheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> July</p> <p>KB: Enquired if the letter from Cllr Romeo to the DfE about funding has been sent? DR: Will check if a response has been received.</p> <p>KB: Asked if the guidance for Ukrainian pupils has been received. RM: Have been informed of the resources we will receive per child, no guidance on how to utilise the resource. LM: Have been chasing the responses, have been told its due within the next week</p>	<b>DR</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>DSG Deficit Management Plan</b>	
	<p>RM: Outlined the DSG deficit Safety Valve Plan document, we are one of 35 authorities invited to be involved in the Safety Valve programme, need to complete a complex spreadsheet which logs our spending patterns and projects forward the next 5 years in terms of finance and the number of EHCPs to enable a balanced budget within the 5-year period.</p> <p>The total net balanced position in 2026/27 shows £285k surplus, we are likely to have a cumulative deficit of £27M, a further discussion with MKK &amp; Section 151 officer and the DFE will take place in July to formulate an acceptable strategic plan for the DFE enabling them to support our cumulative deficit.</p> <p>Developed a strategy to achieve a balanced position by 26/27 with 6 strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent review</li> <li>• Increase local resource base by 50 pupils</li> <li>• Increase capacity of our existing schools by 25 pupils</li> <li>• Bid for a special fee school under the DFE programme</li> <li>• Increase local provision allowing reduction in pupil numbers at independent special schools by 20 pupils</li> <li>• Try and reduce growth in EHCP numbers by a support and review programme hoping this will reduce numbers by 10% within 5-years.</li> </ul> <p>Looking to understand why a large proportion of our EHCPs has increased when other authorities have had no increases. This will be a continuing item on each Schools Forum agenda.</p> <p>CW: This is a draft plan at present, an opportunity to have an open and transparent discussion with the DFE on strategies that can be implemented to mitigate growth and reduce costs. The area of interest for the DFE is how we bring the growth in EHCPs back in-line with the national average.</p> <p>SM: Asked the cost of an average EHCP. RM: Currently approx. £120K SM: Whether this can happen will be determined by whether the children can be accommodated elsewhere in the Local Authority. RM: As it's a 5-</p>	<b>RM</b>

year programme the pupils at independent schools will be dropping off and hopefully we won't be in future be placing at independent schools so reducing the overall number.

SM: If students are in local resource bases the funding comes in addition to the high needs grants. RM: It still forms part of the high needs block funding, the individual place element from the SFA is deducted from the high needs block funding.

LM: Funding received through top up funding are you planning to review this? If so, how is that linked in with the green paper? RC: The green paper is proposing we have a national banding system so not proposing to review.

LM: Regarding the resource bases for special provision and the special free school is there particular category of needs that we are planning to address through that? RC: Started the process around the resource bases, have visited all the CO's and the maintained heads for vision statements. Will pull together a meeting to decide which options are viable. In relation to the bid for the new special school we are looking at a generic special school looking at children with PLMD, SLD and ASD

DR: If we are no longer providing the EHPC what happens if a parent obtains a private one and brings that to the school? Are the best needs of children being served by these proposals? Do all authorities have similar numbers of children with complex needs?

RC: Can't have a private EHPC, only a private report that will feed into an EHPC, regarding the best needs of the child this is a balance we have to make sure we are only giving the EHPC to those at the higher level of need, if we have good SEND support they might not get to that level.

KB: Regarding the summary of the end of year positions couldn't see a surplus number, top line of planned DFE position of surplus/deficit £27M in 26/27 how does that relate to your total net of £260K in surplus

RM: This is showing the in-year position overall of £260k surplus in 26/27. Achieved by reducing the high needs block, the overspend that currently stands at £5.6M is the overspend in the high needs block, the assumptions that savings can be made in independent special schools and by increasing local provision, this will reduce the overspend in 26/27 to achieve a surplus. It won't cover the £27M cumulative surplus that is what we are looking for the DFE to provide.

KB: Is there anything in point 6 about mainstream schools getting earlier support that we need from the spend to save programme. RM: We have built into the spend pattern of £300K per year to enhance support packages for schools.

CW: A piece of work that RC has been commissioned is around reviewing our thresholds to ensure the right decisions are being made

	<p>around requests for plans. The support around SEND is in the interest of the Local Authority to work well but isn't a statutory responsibility.</p> <p>JM: Will the special schools cater for all ages? RC: Yes, to 19  JM: In respect of the EHPC in the green paper we focus on the "E" not the "H" wonder how broad this plan is as there is a growing demand and a shrinking resource, if we are investing earlier are we involving early years?  RC: Work closely with the SEN Early Years manager who in turn works very closely with health looking a need of babies and young children, he supply's the data that we need to plan.</p> <p>CW: Our heath colleagues are equally stretched managing the number of heath care plan requests for assessment. The health element financially in educational health care plans are a bit of an unknown, needs to be more accountable, hoping this will be addressed through the green paper.</p> <p>MKK: Just to add a few points to what has been said, under the Health &amp; Care Act SEND has not become a statutory responsibility for health, as part of the integrated care system development we are working very hard to ensure the needs of our children &amp; young people are high on the agenda.</p>	
<b>5.</b>	<b>National Funding Formula Consultation</b>	
	<p>RM: DFE has issued a consultation paper for the next steps on the direct formula. Effects mainstream schools only.</p> <p>Within the paper we have listed the questions the DFE have asked and the LA draft response. Need to know if you want to amend the response from the Forum, submit as a separate response to the DFE or a joint one with the LA</p> <p>Main topic areas:</p> <p><u>Transfers</u> that exist between the high needs block and the schools block, DFE are proposing the transfer would still be allowable if the Schools Forum agreed, but would be a direct deduction from individual schools budgets, the direct formula would be allocated to the individual school, if the Schools Forum agrees to ½ % that would be a reduction from the individual schools budget and transferred back to the Local Authority to support high needs block activity. The Local Authority would need to specify what that resource would be used for.</p> <p>KB: Within Q2 can we ensure clear uplift with evidence of funding  RM: DFE plan as part of the SEND review is to specify what the indicative SEND budget is for each school to ensure better transparency, if won't specify increases to the SEND budget.</p> <p><u>Growth Funding</u>: discussed at last Schools Forum, agreed to keep our processes in place for as long as possible, DFE are planning to amend</p>	

the methodology as part of the direct formula in 24/25; looking at how resources are allocated to the Local Authority; how the Local Authority operates a growth and the falling roll funding mechanism, how its allocated to individual schools, is it restricted to good/outstanding schools?

Only interested in growth funding, DFE are amending the data to bring it up to date for the growth funding to be allocated to Local Authorities, they are looking to implement a local regime. The Local Authority response is that they would prefer a national regime, so that trusts that cross boarders will have the same mechanism. In terms of a falling roll element we believe what they are suggesting is right but don't have plans to introduce a falling roll mechanism.

LM: As the consultation document is taking falling roles into consideration in the way they fund LA's through the DFE we ought to have a falling rolls process in order to allocate any future funding.

DR: Asked if the rising cost of living has been taken into account

RM: This has been defined as the area cost adjustment, B&NES has a small adjustment of approx. 4% which will be built into the national funding formula.

Split Sites In our authority we have 3 or 4 schools with split sites, i.e., two building split by a main road or a significant distance, they receive an additional allocation to deal with the costs of running two different buildings. DFE are planning to create a formula adjustment to individual school sites to recognise the split via a road and the distance between schools is taken into account (more than 500m). This will be linked to the lump sum element a school gets a maximum of 70% of the lump sum element.

The new formula is slightly beneficial i.e. Hayesfield School currently receives £64K will now get £70K. DFE are proposing where schools have detached playing fields this won't be defined as a split site this will effect 4/5 primary schools in our area. In our response we suggest this isn't implemented as it will incur additional costs if the playing field is not on a safe walking route. Our suggested response is that although the split site methodology is reasonable it should recognise the issue with detached playing fields.

LM: Concerns regarding the 500m criteria distance between schools think there should be a sliding scale. Calculating as a percentage for the lump sum is inadequate it just reflects the current status quo.

KB: The formula doesn't seem to take into account one way travel restrictions. RM: If you can walk between the two sites then one way travel restrictions wouldn't come into play.

Exceptional circumstances: primarily this relates to the premises factors, under the current regime we have an exceptional circumstances situation where some schools don't have facilities that are on-site, we pay an allocation to these schools to be able for example to rent a village hall for large scale activities. The DFE are suggesting that these rental payments should not form part of the school funding allocation methodology unless more than 2% of the school's budget. Have responded that we are not happy with this methodology in terms of restricting the additional resources that can be paid to an individual school.

LM: Strongly agree with you on this point, one of our North Somerset schools with 70 pupils pays £70K in rent this is a significant proportion of their budget. KB: If you need something for curriculum delivery it needs to be funded

Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) under the current mechanism there is a minimum funding guarantee and a minimum per pupil funding element, the DFE are looking at simplifying the process by bringing them together into one minimum funding guarantee arrangement. We are not aware of any schools that have attracted both elements. They will be looking to use the baselines of the general annual grant rather the formula allocation mechanism that currently exists, this could benefit academy schools. Might have a slight impact in terms of protecting some schools at a higher rate than others.

Delivering information to schools, this asks whether or not a calculator should be available, and the timing in which they will allocate resources to schools and request data from Local Authorities. Suggest that schools are provided with a calculator so that they can be provided updates as quickly as possible. De-delegation is not an issue for this authority. Suggestion is that the DFE has one single data collection exercise.

Need agreement on whether we can or can not take the Local Authority response as a School Forum response and do a joint consultation response.

JM: Questioned whether this will go out to all schools or are we required to do the response for all schools? RM: Individual schools can submit their own response, trusts can make their own responses, the question is whether the forum wants to make a response

KB: Happy to do a joint response providing it's reiterates about the split sites and the rental issues that could affect curriculum delivery, regarding data collection important that the information requested is in term time.

LM: Happy to support a joint response from the Local Authority and the

	<p>Schools Forum, could you request an assessment of the costs of split sites.</p> <p>RM: Suggested that this is taken back by the members schools/trusts so they can make individual responses. Have sent the consultation out to the maintained schools</p> <p>JM: In terms of any schools not represented at this forum is it for the members to be sending it out. RM: Yes.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Disapplication request re specific pupil</b>	
	<p>RC: A disapplication spreadsheet needs to be completed for the DFE as Fosseyway School has one student who is over the age of 19 wishing to access Project Search this year, therefore, needs to stay roll, there are no associated costs, need agreement from the Schools Forum</p> <p>JS: Does this set a precedent?</p> <p>RC: This is specific around Project Search for one child as due to Covid they couldn't access the project, it's a one-off.</p> <p>The Schools Forum agreed to support this application 7 in favour 0 against</p>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Meeting Dates 22-23</b>	
	<p>RM: Paper sets out proposed meeting dates 22/23. Video conferencing working well for these meetings.</p> <p>It was agreed that some face-to-face meetings would be beneficial in the future, but it needs to be agenda lead i.e., SEND Review &amp; National Framework, need a flexible approach.</p> <p>JM: Some representative missing from our membership.</p> <p>RM: Agreed to chase a few of the identified trusts regarding membership to this group</p> <p>Proposed future meeting dates agreed, JM agreed to continue as Chair of the Schools Forum</p>	<b>RM</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>A.O.B.</b>	
	None raised	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Date of next meeting</b>	
	Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> September 2022	