



Minutes

Name of meeting	SCHOOLS' FORUM
Date and time	Thursday, 14 January 2021
Venue	Webinar – Virtual Meeting
Present	Beverley Gilbert – Brading CE Primary (Chair) Kevin McDermott – Christ the King College Mike Hayward – Isle of Wight Education Federation Duncan Mills – Cornerstone Federation Steve Fairclough – Brighstone CE Primary Gordon Kendall – Bembridge CE Primary Lisa Nicholson – Haylands Primary Caroline Sice – Lanesend Primary Academy Sarah Hussey – Northwood Primary Academy Fidelma Washington – Isle of Wight College Julie Stewart – Medina House School Jackie Boxx – Island Learning Centre Jayne Hill – Niton Pre-School and Brighstone Pre-School Sue Bowen – Church of England Diocese
Officers	Brian Pope – Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion Barry Downer - Senior Finance Business Partner Irina Rowan – Finance Business Partner Tracey Sanders – County Education Manager (Inclusion) Chris Jones – SEN Service Manager Cllr Paul Brading – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services Diane Hiscock – Clerk
Apologies	None Received

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The chair welcomed Steve Fairclough who was elected as Primary Governor Representative and members gave brief introductions. Kevin McDermott has taken over as Secondary Headteacher Representative and was welcomed on arrival later in the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest received.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Trade Union representatives noted concern for school staff who are working in schools during the pandemic. Officers were asked if the IW Council had made representations to government for school staff to be fast-tracked for vaccination against Covid19. It was confirmed that officers had made representation to the

DfE for school staff to be prioritised for the vaccine. Councillors have discussed at government level and the MP has spoken directly to the Secretary of State for Health.

4. MINUTES

4.1 RESOLVED :

That the minutes of the meeting held on [12 November 2020](#) be confirmed.

5. MATTERS ARISING

5.1 (Item 10.1) It was noted that the consultation on the School Funding Formula was well received, with responses from 43 of the 45 schools. A summary of responses with thanks for participation in the consultation and awareness sessions was sent to schools and circulated for this item as [Paper D](#).

K McD joined and was welcomed to the meeting.

6. 2021/22 SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA [Paper B](#)

6.1 Members were given an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (which was received on 17 December 2020), following on from discussion at the last Schools Forum meeting. Confirmation of previously announced additional funding was included.

6.2 Final funding at £78,884,278 was slightly less than anticipated, mostly due to a small decrease in pupil numbers. Growth Funding was also slightly less than estimated. It was confirmed however, that there would be no impact on proposals for allocation of funding to schools.

6.3 The values shown in appendix A show an increase in most factors and include –

- Minimum per pupil funding protection
- Teachers' pay and pension funding protection
- Increased sparsity funding – support for small schools (expected 4 schools for 2021/22 against 3 schools for 2020/21)
- Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) 0.5% (supporting 9 schools)
- Transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block 0.5% continued
- Overall balancing of the formula, using local growth fund £376,000

6.4 BD explained that responses to the consultation help to shape the School Funding Formula, but the final decision is subject to political ratification. Schools will receive their budget allocations in February.

6.5 Members asked how vouchers for school meals, issued during school closure due to the pandemic, are to be funded. Guidance has only just been issued, but on first view it seems that schools should use their catering provider where possible. If not, local vouchers may be available. Alternatively, vouchers issued through the national scheme may be funded centrally.

RESOLVED :

THAT the proposed Isle of Wight local school funding formula for 2021/22 be noted.

7. 2021/22 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) BUDGET [Paper C](#)

BD gave an overview of the funding allocations for each block within the DSG, showing an overall increase of £6.5m – mostly due to the rolling in of teachers' pay and pension grants, which were previously separate.

7.1 EARLY YEARS

Funding rates are slightly increased by 8 pence for 2 year olds and 6 pence for 3 – 4 year olds. Activity was lower than in previous years and a final adjustment is due in July, although the January census may not be used to determine this.

- 7.2 Funding for the central Early Years Team is agreed at Schools Forum level. It is proposed that the 2020/21 level be maintained, following considerable re-structuring and re-base work that was undertaken. The Local Authority (LA) continues to comply with the requirement to pass through at least 95% of funding received to providers.
- 7.3 Early years providers will be consulted on proposals (explained in [Paper C](#) paras 10 – 13) for the local early years funding formula, which will be operational from April 2021, as follows -
- 2 year olds – 6p increase
- 3 – 4 year olds – 2 options
- Adding the additional funding to the base rate
 - Adding the additional funding to the base rate and removing the flexibility factor
- 7.4 **SCHOOLS BLOCK**
- As noted in paras 6.1 – 6.5 there are no changes to proposals for the School Funding Formula.
- 7.5 Funding for de-delegated services remain much the same as for 2020/21.
- 7.6 Trade union facilities time is to continue at £3.83 per pupil, with a slight overall decrease due to lower pupil numbers. Trade union representatives requested the re-distribution of funding for VOICE, as there is currently no representative to provide support. BD asked Forum members for a view.
- Action – Agreed proposal to re-distribute funding allocated to VOICE**
- 7.7 **HIGH NEEDS BLOCK**
- An additional £1.705m funding was confirmed (slightly higher than estimated), mostly due to additional places in special schools and the roll in of teachers' pay and pensions grant.
- 7.8 As discussed in the last Schools Forum meeting (Items 9.3 – 9.6 [Paper A](#)), a £1.8m budget deficit remains, which will be slightly reduced to £1.4m with the agreed transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block. The table at para 21 [Paper C](#) shows a 3-year forecast, which the LA will continue to work on and discuss with DfE. This is a national issue, of which DfE is aware and working with LAs.
- 7.9 Members asked why the budget for Independent and Non-Maintained Schools (INMSS) has increased. This is due to the cost of individual placements for young people with more complex needs, which can be as much as £250,000 per place. It was noted that this is a snapshot of the budgetary position and officers must deal with the current situation. Work is ongoing to reduce off-island places and make savings through joint procurement, including where a place may have been allocated through a tribunal decision.
- SB left the meeting.
- 7.10 The Covid situation has made it hard to engage fully with schools at present, but a further report will be brought to Schools Forum in July 2021.
- 7.11 The IOW cumulative deficit is not as large as that of some LAs. Conversation with DfE has confirmed that the IOW is using all strategies available to address high needs budgetary issues. DfE are in discussion with LAs with the greatest deficits and will work their way down. The 2014 reform of SEN provision resulted in an overall increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), but no additional funding. The [McArdle Review](#) into support for children with SEN was delayed, but recommendations may be expected during summer 2021.

7.12 CENTRAL BLOCK

This is the smallest block and the funding allocation was agreed at the Schools Forum meeting in November 2020 (see item 10.13 and resolution [Paper A](#)). Centrally employed teachers' pay and pension grant has been rolled into this budget, as for the Schools Block. The budget is balanced through adjustment of the LA statutory functions.

7.13 OVERALL SCHOOLS BUDGET

The only difference shown in the overall budget is the 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block at £379,000.

7.14 The budget includes a recoupment of £22m, payable to academies – resulting in a net budget of 81.55m.

7.15 Members asked if there is any further supportive action that Schools Forum could take in relation to the deficit budget. Requirements laid out in EHCPs must be met and may not be achieved through further cuts or options for savings. It is hoped that the McArde Review will bring recommendations for further funding and/or changes to policy.

7.16 It was confirmed that Medina House Outreach will continue as a buy-back service for 2021/22. Information will shortly be sent out to schools. Virtual support is also continuing to be available to all Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) who need help, in all schools.

7.17 It was felt that a greater deficit in order to meet the needs of children may be necessary. However, a strategy to ensure a wider understanding of the provision of EHCP support towards outcomes would be more appropriate. For example, supporting young people with SEN into work through assisted internships. Further DfE guidance is imminent. It is hoped that the outcome of the McArde Review will bring more information and recommendations toward solutions.

Action – Add High Needs Update to agenda for 15 July 2021

RESOLVED :

THAT the Early Years Central Team budget of £273,000 be approved (Unanimous).

THAT the proposed options for the early years funding rates, ahead of consultation with providers be endorsed (Unanimous).

THAT the proposed budget allocations for 2021/22 set out in appendix A be noted.

8. HIGH NEEDS STRATEGY BANDING CONSULTATION OUTCOME [Paper E](#)

The LA holds the top up funding for EHCPs from the High Needs budget on behalf of schools. A consultation was held on proposals to move to a banding system for allocation of funding.

8.1 Parent view is that they still wish EHCP to refer to adult support as this is the only way they feel they can hold schools to account. The proposed banding system will enable schools to focus further on the resources to meet the EHCP outcomes

8.2 The current IOW system is not in line with other LAs and has led to confusion around hours of learning support assistance equating to 1-1 support. Proposals to move to a banding system have been discussed at Schools Forum meetings over approximately 2 years and there has been broad agreement for work to be undertaken on developing a proposal. Schools and parent voice have been working with the local authority to develop a proposal. The East Sussex banding model was identified as good practice. Ongoing research by a team of professionals found the model to be a good match to Hampshire and IOW needs.

- 8.3 Stress-testing on the feasibility of banding against current EHCPs was carried out in 10% of IOW schools and supported by all that took part in the consultation. Some concern around funding levels for bands has been raised. However, the budget has increased from £1.38m to £1.72m.
- 8.4 The consultation was carried out between October and December 2020 and information provided through a range of platforms, including informal meetings. 6 schools responded and 5 of these supported the proposals (83%). 85 parents responded and most expressed a view that they preferred the existing system (8% of parents of children with EHCPs).
- 8.5 Concerns raised included
- sufficiency of funding allocations to bands and possible impact on school budgets. If agreed, the framework would be applied to new EHCPs issued after 1 April 2021. Existing EHCPs would be reviewed against the system and moved to banding in Yrs 1, 5 and 8 (all EHCPs are reviewed annually).
 - removal of 1-1 support – parents have told Ofsted that they can hold the headteacher to account through this mechanism.
 - parents believe number of hours is measurable (although there is no correlation with outcomes and progress).
 - how the framework would be implemented in individual schools.
- 8.6 [Paper E](#) paras 33 – 27 include responses to the consultation and concerns raised.
- 8.7 At this stage, Schools Forum members are asked to note the outcomes of the consultation. Proposals will go to the Children’s Services Department Management Team (CSDMT) for consideration and their recommendation will be passed to the Lead Member for Children’s Services and Education for decision (due 24 February 2020)
- 8.8 Arrangements for decision-making regarding EHCPs will be decided if the framework is agreed, although some forward thinking would be prudent. It was agreed that the mindset needs to change from ‘who’ (provides) to ‘what’ (provision) to achieve acceptance of the system. Special schools already work to a banding system and Initial conversations with parents at Medina House clarify that provision is outcome-focussed.
- 8.9 Costing of elements of the provision that may be available have not yet been shared outside the stress testing, but can be further discussed once a decision is made.
- 8.10 It was noted that the stress-testing exercise was very in-depth.
- 8.11 Thanks was noted to BP, TS and CJ for the considerable time and effort given to development of the proposed framework.

RESOLVED :

THAT the outcome of the banding consultation and parental engagement sessions and supports the recommendation that CSDMT consider the implementation of a new funding framework be noted

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 25 March 2021 – virtual meeting, from 8.30am

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS All at 8.30am

15 July 2021

11 November 2021

20 January 2022 *(This date could be subject to change, depending on the date for submission of funding formula to DfE)*

24 March 2022