



# Minutes

Name of meeting	<b>SCHOOLS' FORUM</b>
Date and time	<b>Thursday, 12 December 2024</b>
Venue	<b>Webinar – Virtual Meeting</b>
Present	Beverley Gilbert – Brading CE Primary (Chair) Rachel Richards – Cowes Enterprise College Duncan Mills – The Bay CE School Simon Richards – Haylands Primary Carl Wake – St Helens Primary Joe Norton-Jones – Bembridge CE Primary Andrew Hatherley – Island Learning Centre Jayne Hill – Niton Pre-School & Brighstone Pre-School Sue Bowen – CE Diocese
Officers	Naomi Carter – Service Director, Education, Inclusion and Access Irina Rowan - Senior Finance Business Partner Debra Evans – Senior Accountant Diane Hiscock – Clerk
Apologies	Mandy Airey – Northwood Primary Academy

1.	<u>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</u> New members were welcomed - JNJ (Primary Governor Representative) and AH (Pupil Referral Unit Representative) (AH joined the meeting later). Introductions were made.
2.	<u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u> None Received.
3.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u> DM made a declaration at item 11.2 on growth funding for secondary schools.
4.	<u>SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP</u>
4.1	Information is still awaited from HISP Multi-Academy Trust, on appointment of Mike Hayward to the Local Governing Board for Carisbrooke College. Hopefully, this will be finalised for the next meeting and MH will be invited to re-join Schools Forum.
4.2	Current membership has been checked against pupil numbers from the October 2024 Census. To retain representative membership that is broadly in proportion to the number of pupils in schools and academies, it may be necessary to remove one primary representative post. This is due to the continuing reduction in pupil numbers. <b>Action</b> – To be revisited at the next meeting on 16 January 2025
5.	<u>ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR</u> A nomination had been received for BG to be re-elected as chair. BG was duly elected.

	A nomination had been received for DM to be elected as vice-chair. DM was duly elected.
6.	<p><u>MINUTES</u></p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>That the minutes of the meeting held on <a href="#">11<sup>th</sup> July 2024</a> be confirmed.</p>
7.	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING</u></p> <p>A further meeting of the sub-group took place on 4<sup>th</sup> October and work is continuing on an annual plan of work linked into the <a href="#">Schools Forum Powers and Responsibilities</a>.</p> <p>A note of thanks was given to all involved for work in preparation for the delayed receipt of DSG information and supporting Schools Forum.</p>
8.	<p><u>2025/26 SCHOOL FUNDING</u> <a href="#">Paper C</a></p> <p>8.1 Information on school funding for 2025/26 was included in the report. Operational guidance was received later this year, with provisional funding allocation information arriving late in November. This only allowed one week for preparation and reporting to Schools Forum.</p> <p>8.2 2025/26 is the 8<sup>th</sup> year since introduction of the National Funding Formula (NFF), which is mirrored by the IW Local Funding Formula (LFF), in accordance with DfE guidance.</p> <p>8.3 Schools were consulted on the principles of the Funding Formula prior to the release of funding allocation information, to ensure required deadlines were met for political ratification and submissions to DfE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NFF values (subject to confirmation) are expected to increase by around 0.5%.</li> <li>• A formula for growth fund and falling rolls is still required, although it was noted that criteria must be met to be eligible for this funding.</li> <li>• LAs are still able to transfer up to 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, with Schools Forum approval.</li> <li>• A change for 2025 allows LAs to set the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to between -0.5% and 0.0%. It is proposed to set this at the highest level of 0.0%.</li> </ul> <p>8.4 <a href="#">Question – Members asked how the MFG may affect individual schools.</a></p> <p>The guarantee provides protection for some schools where there are considerable changes in pupil characteristics or where they have been affected by historic changes to the Funding Formula. An explanation is included in paras 25 – 27 of <a href="#">Paper C</a>.</p> <p>8.5 <u>DIRECT NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA</u></p> <p>As DfE moves towards a direct NFF where funding is allocated to schools based on a single formula. The IW continues to mirror NFF and to follow requirements for growth fund and falling rolls.</p> <p>8.6 Members were reminded that the School Capacity Survey (SCAP) is used to identify whether schools would be eligible for falling rolls funding.</p> <p>8.7 <a href="#">Question – Members asked if any residue in the Growth Fund can be carried forward.</a></p> <p>Any underspend in this area would have to be used to offset the overall DSG deficit.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>That the proposal to determine the 2025/26 Isle of Wight School funding formula using the national funding formula values listed in Appendix A be supported.</p> <p>6 votes for 0 votes against (7 members present and eligible to vote).</p>

9.	<u>INDICATIVE DSG ALLOCATIONS</u>
9.1	As noted, indicative DSG allocations were delayed until the end of November. The provisional figures shown in the table in para 12 are likely to be impacted by the outcome of the October 2024 Census and reduction in pupil numbers.
9.2	The High Needs Block is expected to increase from £22.23m in 2024/25 to £23.65m for 2025/26 but will be subject to the same impact.
9.3	The Early Years (EY) Block allocation will be confirmed later in December.
9.4	<u>LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA PROPOSALS</u> The IW will continue to follow NFF values with area cost adjustment, when determining the school funding formula. This will lead to an increase of around 0.5% in formula factors, with slightly more for deprivation factors noted in para 17 of <a href="#">Paper C</a> .
9.5	The outcome of the October 2024 Census will impact final allocations.
9.6	Schools were consulted on Funding Formula proposals and the results are shown in Appendix B of <a href="#">Paper C</a> .
9.7	<u>EXCEPTIONAL PREMISES FACTORS – DISAPPLICATION REQUEST</u> Medina College has an ongoing dual use arrangement with adjacent leisure centre and theatre, as the school has no sports or assembly facilities. This arrangement costs £138,000 per annum. LAs are now required to apply annually for the funding formula to be disapplied in such cases, where the cost is in excess of 1% of the school’s budget and impacts less than 5% of schools. <a href="#">Members discussed any possible impact of the DfE refusing the request.</a>
9.8	Either way, there would be no impact, or benefit to other schools. If DfE agree, the school will receive funding for the arrangement. If not, IWC DSF allocation will reduce.
9.9	It was confirmed that there is a Service Level Agreement in place and DfE keeps close scrutiny.
9.10	<u>RESOLVED</u> That the exceptional premises factor application for Medina College dual use arrangement within 2025/26 funding formula be endorsed by School and Academy Representatives 6 votes for 0 votes against (6 present and eligible to vote)
10.	<u>MINIMUM FUNDING GUARANTEE (MFG)</u>
10.1	LAs continue to have some discretion to set a level of protection for schools who may have a reduction in funding due to historic arrangements or changes to funding for additional needs. In 2024/25 the level was set at +0.5% (£23,411 allocated across 5 schools).
10.2	For 2025/26 the level must be set between -0.5% and +0.0%. Using 2024/25 as a basis, an estimated 2 schools would require protection at 0.0% or 1 school, if the level was set at 0.5%. It is proposed to set the MFG at the highest level of 0.0%. <u>RESOLVED</u> That the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) to be set at the highest level of protection (+0.0% in 2025/26), agreed by School and Academy Representatives 6 votes for 0 votes against (6 present and eligible to vote)
11.	<u>GROWTH FUND</u>
11.1	The final allocation for the Growth Fund element of the DSG will not be known until after the outcome of the October 2024 Census. £206,000 was ring-fenced from the 2024/25 budget. £163,000 was allocated to 2 secondary schools.
11.2	

<p>11.3</p> <p>11.4</p> <p>11.5</p> <p>11.6</p> <p>11.7</p>	<p>In accordance with changes to guidance and forward school place planning expectation that 2 additional classes will be required, it is proposed to set a Growth Fund of £192,000 for 2025/26. Any small residual amount would be used in supporting a balanced budget and cannot be used for any other purpose.</p> <p>DM noted a conflict of interest in this item, as his school may be in receipt of growth funding.</p> <p>Comments - Members felt that there could be a range of support needed through School Place Planning that could affect requirements on the Growth Fund, as all schools will be affected by School Place Planning.</p> <p>It was noted that pupil movement and forecast numbers are not clear at this stage. Cabinet decision on the School Place Planning recommendations will direct next steps in the process.</p> <p>It is necessary to finalise the LFF by 30 December 2024, ready for political ratification and submission to DfE in January 2025.</p> <p>DfE continuously checks for evidence where Growth Fund is required.</p> <p><b><u>RESOLVED</u></b></p> <p>That the Growth Fund budget of £192,577 to fund up to two additional classes for financial year 2025/26. Subject to any minor balancing adjustment to the final allocation be agreed by School and Academy Representatives 5 votes for 0 votes against (6 present and eligible to vote).</p>
<p>12.</p> <p>12.1</p> <p>12.2</p> <p>12.3</p> <p>12.4</p>	<p><b><u>FALLING ROLLS</u></b></p> <p>Any Falling Rolls funding would be subject to the outcome of the October 2024 Census and confirmed when final allocations are received in December. It is proposed not to operate a Falling Rolls fund for 2025/26. Funding would be used against any risk of changes in pupil characteristics and align with NFF.</p> <p>Members were given an explanation on how this funding is allocated. The School Capacity Survey (SCAP) does not show that there will be any IW school eligible for this funding in 2025/26.</p> <p>Comments - It was acknowledged that these are difficult times and all schools will be in need of support especially those affected by place planning.</p> <p><b>Action – Agreed to arrange an additional Schools Forum meeting for further discussion as more information becomes available (after January 2025).</b></p> <p><b><u>RESOLVED</u></b></p> <p>That the principle of not operating a Falling Rolls fund in 2025/26 financial year and use the allocation to manage the risk of pupil characteristics changes whilst meeting the NFF be agreed by School and Academy Representatives (5 for 0 against) (6 present and eligible to vote).</p>
<p>13.</p> <p>13.1</p> <p>13.2</p>	<p><b><u>DE-DELEGATED SERVICES</u></b></p> <p>Maintained schools can continue to de-delegate funding for certain services. Special schools and academies can choose to buy into these services, as well. An overview of the three main areas of de-delegation was given.</p> <p>Para 44 in <a href="#">Paper C</a> shows how funding is distributed between Trade Unions for use of facilities time to support members. A proposed 2% increase for inflation would result in a £4.40 per pupil charge. Final budget for Trade Unions Facilities Time will be confirmed following outcome of the October 2024 Pupil Census an quarterly returns submitted to the LA on time spent on a range of duties.</p> <p>JH joined the meeting.</p>

<p>13.3</p>	<p>93% of respondents to the consultation with schools agreed to continuing with de-delegation arrangements.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>THAT member representatives of primary maintained schools agreed to continue to de-delegate funding for licenses, trade union facilities time and free school meals checking. (5 votes for 0 votes against) 5 present and eligible to vote.</p> <p>No secondary representative was present at the meeting</p> <p><b>Action – Clerk to follow up and seek a decision by e-mail.</b></p> <p><i>Post meeting note – Secondary representation agreed to continue with de-delegation arrangements.</i></p>
<p>13.4</p>	<p>AH joined the meeting.</p>
<p>14.</p>	<p><b>EDUCATION FUNCTIONS FOR MAINTAINED SCHOOLS</b></p>
<p>14.1</p>	<p>A 2% inflationary increase is also proposed for contributions towards LA statutory duties for maintained schools. This would raise current payments to £78.54 per pupil.</p>
	<p><b>RESOLVED</b></p>
	<p>THAT a contribution from maintained schools of £78.54 per pupil, to meet the cost of statutory services provided by the council for maintained schools be agreed by maintained school representatives. 5 votes for, 0 votes against (5 present and eligible to vote).</p>
<p>15.</p>	<p><b>CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK (CSSB)</b></p>
<p>15.1</p>	<p>The CSSB is allocated for LA statutory functions carried out on behalf of schools and academies, in relation to historic commitments and ongoing responsibilities. These are listed in para 53 in <a href="#">Paper C</a> and members were given a brief overview.</p>
<p>15.2</p>	<p>A small contribution towards cost of transporting SEND children is outlined in para 60. This is a bespoke historic arrangement that DfE currently allows to continue. Whilst the overall cost continues to increase, the contribution has remained the same.</p>
<p>15.3</p>	<p><i>Questions – A question was raised around pressure on the admissions service, if schools close, move to academy status or choose not to use the service. Would this impact on the cost to other schools?</i></p>
<p>15.4</p>	<p><b>Action – Further information will be made available for the next SF meeting on 16 January 2025.</b></p>
	<p><b>RESOLVED</b></p>
	<p>THAT the proposed central school services block budgets and historic commitments for 2025/26 detailed in paragraph 53 (items a-i) be approve. 7 votes for 0 votes against (9 members present and eligible to vote).</p>
<p>16.</p>	<p><b>HIGH NEEDS BLOCK</b></p>
<p>16.1</p>	<p>DfE announced additional High Needs funding of £1bn for 2025/26. LAs will receive an increase of at least 7% per pupil funding.</p>
<p>16.2</p>	<p>High Needs allocation is indicated to be £23.6m but, will be subject to the outcome of the October 2024 Census and further adjustment in July 2025. The actual increase is likely to be in the region of 6.3% due to reducing pupil numbers overall.</p>
<p>16.3</p>	<p>As noted in para 8.3 LAs continue to be able to move up to 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. There is an expectation in the Safety Valve Agreement that the transfer will continue and is estimated to be around £480,000.</p>

16.4	<p>This proposal was supported in the consultation with schools and requires the support of Schools Forum. Due to the requirement for a decision to be submitted to DfE prior to this meeting, an electronic vote had been taken by e-mail with 7 votes for and 1 vote against.</p> <p><b><u>RESOLVED</u></b></p> <p>THAT the previously agreed high needs transfer of 0.5% of the schools block for the 2025/26 financial year be ratified.</p>
16.5	<p>It was confirmed that further information on the Primary Behaviour Service (PBS) and the SEND, which are included in the Safety Valve Agreement, will be available for the next Headteacher Forum meeting in January 2025.</p>
16.6	<p><b>Action – Updated information on PBS and SEND to be included on the agenda for the next SF meeting on 16 January 2025</b></p>
17.	<p><b><u>BALANCING OF THE FORMULA – CAPPING AND SCALING</u></b></p>
17.1	<p>In 2024/25 this mechanism was introduced to achieve a balanced budget. Capping the level of any increase that a school may receive and scaling back the increase above that level, would help to address any shortfall in the budget. It is proposed to use capping and scaling again, for 2025/26, if necessary.</p>
17.2	<p>In the consultation with schools, 80% of respondents agreed and 20% were against the proposal.</p> <p><b><u>RESOLVED</u></b></p> <p>THAT the principle of using capping and scaling to balance the formula be endorsed. (8 votes for 0 against) 9 members present and eligible to vote.</p>
18.	<p><b><u>LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA CONSULTATION</u></b></p> <p>Information on the outcome of the consultation with schools, was given and is included in Appendix B of <a href="#">Paper C</a>. 29 schools responded (66% of schools) and the majority supported all proposals.</p>
19.	<p><b><u>POTENTIAL SCHOOL CLOSURES AND FUNDING OF DISPLACED PUPILS</u></b></p>
19.1	<p>It was confirmed that if a maintained school closes, the remaining budget should be transferred to the Growth Fund to support schools who receive pupils from the school.</p>
19.2	<p><a href="#">Question – Clarification was sought on whether funding follows the child, if the move is made through parental choice.</a></p> <p>This was confirmed.</p>
19.3	<p><a href="#">Members asked if there is any information available on moves that have already taken place, pending the IWC decision on School Place Planning proposals and the effects across the island especially to budgets</a></p>
19.4	<p><b>Action – Jade Kennet to be invited to the next SF meeting on 16 January 2025, to provide further information, following the decision made by councillors.</b></p>
20.	<p><b><u>PROTECTION TO SCHOOLS FOR FALLING PUPIL NUMBERS</u></b></p>
20.1	<p>Confirmation was given that protection for schools with falling numbers could only be given where the SCAP shows that more places will be needed within the next 2 – 5 years. This is not currently the case for schools on the Island, as pupil numbers are forecast to continue decreasing.</p>
20.2	<p>It was agreed that consideration should be given to additional costs that may be incurred through a decision to close schools, including transporting pupils to other schools and change of uniform.</p>
20.3	<p>LA officers will continue to work closely with schools and support them with managing finances.</p>

20.4	It was also confirmed that the voluntary redundancy process is still at an informal stage.
21.	<p><b><u>NEXT STEPS</u></b></p> <p>Proposed Funding Formula values are outlined in Appendix A of <a href="#">Paper C</a>. Final budget-setting and political ratification will take place in January 2025 and schools will receive information on their budget shares by the end of February 2025.</p>

The meeting closed at 10.16am

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – All meetings will be virtual through Teams.

**Thursday, 16 January 2025 - 8.30am**

**DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS** All at 8.30am

**20 March 2025**

**17 July 2025**

**13 November 2025**

**15 January 2026**