



Minutes

Name of meeting	SCHOOLS' FORUM
Date and time	Thursday, 18 January 2024
Venue	Webinar – Virtual Meeting
Present	Beverley Gilbert – Brading CE Primary (Chair) Samantha Rooney – Isle of Wight College Andrew Montrose – Christ the King College Steve Fairclough – Brighstone CE Primary Simon Richards – Haylands Primary Carl Wake – St Helens Primary Mandy Airey – Northwood Primary Academy Jayne Hill – Niton Pre-School & Brighstone Pre-School Sue Bowen – CE Diocese
Officers	Natalie Smith – Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion Irina Rowan - Senior Finance Business Partner Debra Evans – Senior Accountant Judy Mason - Strategic Manager of Human Resources and Employment Lawyer Theresa Wall – Senior Early Years Advisory Teacher Diane Hiscock – Clerk
Apologies	Cllr Jonathan Bacon – Lead Cllr for Children’s Services and Education Ashley Jefferies – Head of Access and Resources Information Transport & Admissions Rachel Richards – Cowes Enterprise College (Academy) Mike Hayward – IW Education Federation

1.	<p><u>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</u></p> <p>All attendees were welcomed to the meeting and introductions made. It was noted that Jane Wilford, Headteacher at Wootton Primary School has been elected to replace Vikki Reader as a Primary School Representative.</p> <p>Action – Clerk to follow up with JW</p>
2.	<p><u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>It was noted that a letter regarding distribution of TU Facilities Time Funding had been received and is covered in item 6.</p>
3.	<p><u>MINUTES</u></p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2023 be confirmed.</p>

4.	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING</u></p> <p>It was agreed at the last meeting that 2 sub-groups be set up to monitor the financial position and to monitor progress against the Safety Valve agreement. The finance sub-group met on 15 January and notes from the meeting will be circulated with these minutes. A meeting has been arranged to discuss the Safety Valve programme on 9 February.</p> <p>Noted that the Virtual School (Pupil Premium Plus) Report will be received at the meeting on 21 March 2024.</p>
5.	<p><u>2024/25 SCHOOL BUDGET (FINAL BUDGET ALLOCATIONS) Paper E</u></p> <p>It was agreed to take paras 1 – 19 of paper E and recommendations regarding Early Years (EY) funding initially, to enable officers to leave and attend other meetings.</p> <p>IR gave a brief overview of the total DSG allocation, which amounts to £123,044,000. This is an increase of £8,913,000 on 2023/24 funding.</p>
5.1	<p><u>EARLY YEARS BLOCK</u></p> <p>The EY allocation of £10,920,000 includes additional funding related to the new entitlement for childcare for 2 year-olds from April 2024 and for under-2s from September 2024.</p> <p>5.3 Additional funding for the new entitlement noted in para 5.1 is £4,300,000. The increase in rate for existing entitlement is 25p per hour for 2 year-olds and 28p per hour for 3 and 4 year-olds.</p> <p>5.4 Schools Forum members are required to agree the level of funding to retain for central EY services. For 2024/25, this is proposed at £426,500, which equates to 4%. 96% of funding will be passported to providers (1% higher than the DfE requirement for LAs to pass 95% of funding received directly to providers).</p> <p>5.5 The EY Advisory Team supports 79 providers through visits, briefings, training and a range of support to maintain quality and sufficiency. The additional £99,000 funding will provide for appointment of an SEN Teacher, increased annual hours for an EY Business Officer (0.6 FTE to full time), expected pay awards and minor inflation increase.</p> <p>5.6 EY providers are taking part in a consultation on funding rates, which will be finalised and applicable from April 2024 and reported at the next Schools Forum meeting on 21 March 2024.</p> <p>5.6 A simplified formula is proposed for 3 – 4 year-olds, which would result in an overall increase of to the hourly rate for providers. A single rate is proposed for 2 year-olds which includes deprivation factor for disadvantaged children entitlement only, to ensure disadvantaged entitlement is funded at the same level as working parent entitlement, as a minimum. It is proposed that Under-2s are funded on the same principles as 2 year old working parents entitlement</p> <p>5.7</p> <p>5.8 CW left the meeting.</p> <p><u>QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</u></p> <p>Members asked if a business case had been made for the appointment of a new EY SEN Teacher.</p> <p>The proposal is for the new teacher to take the lead on supporting SEN, following a huge increase in young children with SEN. EY providers are struggling to meet the needs of a wide range of more complex needs. Children are often not ready for school, partly due to the impact of Covid. Under the new arrangements, more babies will be coming in with additional needs.</p>

	<p>The impact of the post is expected to be additional support for providers to enable more children to transition into Yr R and a longer term reduction in the need for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).</p> <p>Will the pay award be fully funded through the formula?</p> <p>The increase shown is based on an estimated inflationary increase. Funding is influenced by the annual census and managed within the budget by the EY Team. Any possible deficit would be taken into consideration in the final budget-setting report.</p> <p>Is the EY service subject to the Safety Valve Agreement?</p> <p>EY provision is not statutory until Yr R, so does not fall under the Safety Valve Agreement.</p> <p>Questions in the consultation had caused some confusion for providers.</p> <p>Discussion clarified that the questions are to seek the views of providers on the proposals made, which will impact them in different ways.</p> <p>Noted that providers need to plug any gap between the cost of provision and funding. Providers cannot charge a higher rate to meet the cost of provision. They are only able to make an additional consumable/sustainable charge which, although better, is not enough.</p> <p>This is a national issue affecting providers across the country. On the IOW provision is relatively static, with few closures or new openers.</p> <p>There is no longer a nursery at Medina House, which means more young children will need support through the new SEN Teacher.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>1. That the Early Years Central Team budget of £426,500 for 2024/25 be approved.</p> <p>5.9 2. That the proposed early years funding rates be endorsed.</p> <p>It was confirmed that budget info is received from DfE in December, so that EY funding rates cannot be determined/reported before the January meeting.</p> <p>Action – Report on structure of the EY Central Team and a detailed EY budget report to be included on the agenda for the next meeting – 21 March 2024</p> <p>TW Left the meeting.</p>
6.	<p><u>TRADE UNION FACILITIES TIME</u></p> <p>A letter had been received from the National Education Union (NEU) highlighting that NASUWT and Voice have no IOW representative and proposing that unallocated funding in this case should be re-distributed amongst the other unions.</p> <p>6.1 It was confirmed that there is no opinion on this matter from the legal/HR perspective.</p> <p>6.2 The NEU Representative confirmed that facilities payment provides for 1 ¼ days cover only and, in this case, resulted in work ongoing through the school holiday. He requested that a decision is made expeditiously.</p> <p>6.3 Members discussed how funding is reliant on submission of activity returns. Previously unallocated funding is absorbed back into the DSG to reduce the overall DSG deficit. Members felt that further discussion in the finance sub-group and with the HT forum would be needed, before a decision can be made.</p> <p>6.4 Decisions for 2024/25 were made at the meeting on 17 November 2023</p>

	<p>Action – To be discussed in the next finance sub-group meeting and at HT Forum with further information brought back to the next Schools Forum meeting.</p> <p>JM left the meeting.</p>
7.	<p><u>2024/25 SCHOOL BUDGET (FINAL BUDGET ALLOCATIONS)</u> Paper E /cont...</p> <p>School Funding Formula and allocations are covered in Paper D and item 8.</p>
7.1	<p><u>SCHOOLS BLOCK</u></p> <p>The IOW continues to follow the National Funding Formula (NFF) values, which result in an increase of per-pupil funding.</p>
7.2	<p>The final Growth Fund was set at £206,187 for 2024/25.</p>
7.3	<p>A breakdown of funding for de-delegated services agreed in November is confirmed in the table at para 22.</p>
7.4	<p>The £77 charge for Education Functions, also agreed in November, is confirmed at para 24.</p>
7.5	<p><u>HIGH NEEDS BLOCK</u></p> <p>This block includes additional funding for implementation of the Safety Valve Programme. However, a gap of £2,705,487 remains, which is £1,500,000 off target against the programme and is flagged under High Needs Contingency in Appendix A. Work on new strategies and initiatives is aimed at closing the gap.</p>
7.6	<p>SF members agreed to transfer 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block and this amounts to £445,898 for 2024/25 and will go towards meeting the requirements of the Safety Valve Programme.</p>
7.7	<p><u>QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</u></p> <p>Members asked about consequences if the requirements of the Safety Valve Programme are not ultimately achieved.</p> <p>The IOW and other LAs are subject to intense scrutiny through submission of information and regular meetings. DfE are committed to significant funding for the Safety Valve Programme which could be reduced if requirements are not met.</p> <p>The programme includes funding the building of a new special school, which was delayed by DfE. This has affected other workstreams and contributes to the current position. More will be known as we approach the budget year-end.</p>
7.8	<p><u>CENTRAL BLOCK</u></p> <p>The final allocation is reduced by £11,000 – also due to a decrease in pupil numbers and is £609,000.</p>
7.9	<p><u>OVERALL SCHOOLS BUDGET</u></p> <p>£26,760 is withheld from the overall allocation of £123,044 and paid directly to academies and post-16 providers, resulting in a budget of £96,284,000 to be managed by LA.</p>
7.10	<p><u>FUTURE FUNDING</u></p> <p>The future of school funding is uncertain and subject to further announcements in the summer term, when the cycle will begin again and will continue to be reported to Schools Forum.</p>
7.11	<p>One-off additional DSG funding of £517,146 for 2023/24 will be allocated to support schools in financial need on a case-by-case basis, taking account of severity of need.</p>
7.12	

	<p><u>QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</u></p> <p>It was noted that a number of schools are expecting in-year deficits over the next year which is expected increase due to insufficient funding. This was discussed at recent heads Forum meeting</p> <p>Where schools cause concern, the LA may have to take over and manage a school budget. Financial management must be transparent and fair.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>3. That the proposed DSG budget allocations for 2024/25 set out in Appendix A be noted.</p>
<p>8.</p> <p>8.1</p> <p>8.2</p> <p>8.3</p> <p>8.4</p> <p>8.5</p> <p>8.6</p> <p>8.7</p> <p>8.8</p>	<p><u>2024/25 SCHOOL FUNDING (FINAL VALUES) Paper D</u></p> <p>This report provides an update on the Funding Formula, following receipt of DfE allocations and confirmation of the Autumn Census 2023.</p> <p><u>SCHOOLS BLOCK ALLOCATION 2024/25</u></p> <p>The final allocation is lower than was anticipated, due to the decrease in pupil numbers between Oct 2022 and Oct 2023 (191). There has been no notable movement in pupil characteristics, other than minor changes to English as an Additional Language (EAL), mobility and low prior attainment. Funding has not made a significant impact on affordability of the formula due to lagged funding.</p> <p><u>LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA</u></p> <p>The IOW continues to use NFF values to maintain stability when NFF is implemented. This has resulted in an increase of around 1.5% per pupil funding. The increase is slightly higher for Free School Meals (FSM), Ever 6 FSM (children who have been eligible for FSM in the past 6 years) and for mobility and EAL in primary schools.</p> <p>Schools Forum agreed to transfer 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block at the last meeting.</p> <p>Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) protection was not needed in 2023/24. MFG is set at +0.5% to ensure that all schools receive a minimum increase of 0.5%. For 2024/25 5 schools require this protection at a total cost of £23,411.</p> <p><u>RECONCILIATION OF THE FINAL (DECEMBER 2023) SCHOOLS BLOCK</u></p> <p>A gap of £154,000 was identified when balancing the formula. The capping and scaling mechanism, which was endorsed at the meeting on 17 November 2023 will be used. The impact for schools is outlined in paras 9 – 10 and shown in Appendix B.</p> <p>The final allocation resulted in an average per pupil increase of 2.33%. A slightly higher increase (2.47%) in primary schools, is due to FSM and low prior attainment.</p> <p><u>NEXT STEPS</u></p> <p>The Funding Formula will be submitted to DfE on 22 Jan 2024 and budget allocations should be communicated to schools week commencing 29 Jan 2024.</p> <p><u>QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS</u></p> <p>It was noted that many schools are to receive a reduced budget, which highlights the issue regarding school places.</p> <p>Members asked for the ‘cash change’ reported in Appendix B could also be shown as a percentage.</p> <p>Action – to be included in papers for the next meeting</p>

Members were reminded that the funding represents an increase per pupil and decreased funding is due to the reduction in pupil numbers.

The cost of running a school cannot be reduced when pupil numbers are falling.

RESOLVED

That the Isle of Wight local school funding formula for 2024/25 be noted.

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

Thursday, 21 March 2024 - 8.30am

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS All at 8.30am

11 July 2024

14 November 2024

16 January 2025

20 March 2025