

Attendance

Karen Preston (Chair)	Academies Sector Representative
Susan Lacey (Vice Chair)	Nursery Sector Headteacher Representative
Kirsty Banks	Academies Sector Representative
Stephen Blower	Secondary Sector Representative
Lorraine Dawney	Special School Sector Substitute
Zoe Rollinson	Primary Sector Headteacher Representative
Stephen Smith	Primary Sector Governor Representative
Lisa Thompson	Non-School Member Diocesan Schools Representative
Samantha Walker	Primary Sector Headteacher Representative
Lindsay Watson	Pupil Referral Unit Sector Substitute
Phil Williams	Academies Sector Representative

Observer Status

Bill Hague	Head of School Business and Support
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In Attendance

James Barlow	Finance Business Partner
Mai Gibbons	Senior Commissioning Officer for SEND
Peter Green	Finance Manager
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Jameel Mullan	Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 **Welcome and Introductions**

2 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Schools' Forum members Louisa Craig, Sarah Horton, Bhaksho Raj, Ant Smith, Graham Tate, Lucia Jayne Turner, Denise Dalton and Trisha James.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Jacqui Coogan and Brenda Wile.

3 **Declaration of Interest or Confidentiality**

There were no declarations of interest or confidentiality.

4 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 30 November 2023**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 30 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

5 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

6 **Schools' Forum Membership and Attendance Update**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services provided a verbal update on Schools' Forum membership and attendance.

It was reported that significant progress had been made in filling all Academy sector vacancies and welcome was extended to all new members. Some interest had been expressed in the Special School Governor vacancy as the previous representative, Vivienne Bunce, had now stepped down.

A query was raised around the process should any member not attend for more than three consecutive meetings, it was clarified that the Constitution stated that the member would be asked to stand down and identify a replacement through their constituent group.

Resolved:

That the Schools' Forum Membership and Attendance Update be received.

7 **Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2023 -2024**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services presented the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2023 – 2024 and highlighted future agenda items.

Schools' Forum members were invited to suggest any items they wished to receive at future meetings by contacting either Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services or Shelley Humphries, Democratic Services Officer.

Resolved:

That the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2023 – 2024 be noted.

8 **2024-2025 National Funding Formula Provisional Allocations and Update on Budget Setting**

James Barlow, Finance Business Partner presented the 2024-2025 National Funding Formula Provisional Allocations and Update on Budget Setting report and highlighted salient points.

The report provided Schools' Forum Members with the indicative allocations and the process for setting budgets funded by the DSG in 2024-2025.

It was noted that there had been more pupils on roll than originally forecast due to unforeseen in-year migration into Wolverhampton schools, particularly into year four.

In response to a concern raised around the schools currently getting more and if they would be left vulnerable once the NFF was fully implemented, it was noted the minimum funding guarantee would help bolster this.

It was queried what kind of impact inflation may have on the high needs increase and it was noted that inflation may potentially affect schools' finances, although assurances were offered that all funding available would be passed through.

In terms of consultation, members were called upon to suggest how schools could be engaged other than the standard emails. It was suggested that Business Managers Forum or SIA drop-ins were potential ways as well as a specialised bulletin email.

Resolved:

That Schools' Forum members note the indicative allocations and the process for setting budgets funded by the DSG in 2024-2025.

9 **Commissioning of High Needs Places for September 2024**

Mai Gibbons, Senior Commissioning Officer for SEND presented the Commissioning of High Needs Places for September 2024 and highlighted key points. The report provided Schools' Forum with an update regarding the commissioning of high needs places which are being commissioned for the academic year 2024-2025.

It was acknowledged that there had been an unprecedented demand for high needs places and, as part of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy, resource bases had increased across the City to try and meet this. It was noted that this was a significant challenge although Wolverhampton was currently taking part in a pilot scheme with the Department for Education to improve projection methodology to support this.

The work undertaken by the Commissioning team was commended.

Resolved:

That Schools' Forum members note the update on Commissioning of High Needs Places for September 2024.

10 **Future Resourcing for Education Role Within Exploitation Hub**

Jameel Mullan, Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager presented the Future Resourcing for Education Role Within Exploitation Hub report and highlighted salient points. The report provided an update to Schools' Forum evidencing the impact of the role and requesting endorsement for the post being funded on a long-term basis via the Central Service Schools Block (CSSB) grant, provided it was affordable.

A concern was raised around sustainability which was acknowledged however when weighing up the financial cost against the detrimental impact of removing the support in the Hub for children and young people at risk of exploitation, it was felt the support was more important.

Assurances were offered that the funding was reviewed annually with grant funding direct from central government and it would continue as long as it was affordable.

Members of Schools' Forum endorsed the proposals.

Resolved:

That members of Schools' Forum endorse the proposal for a dedicated education post to be established within the Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub and for this to be funded on a long-term basis from the Central Service Schools Block at a cost of £45,120.

11 **High Needs Sub-Group Update**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services provided a verbal update on the High Needs Sub Group in the absence of a Chair and reported that currently, some of the work of the High Needs Sub-group involving matrix banding and EHCP reviews had been placed on hold pending announcements from Government. It was also noted that a review of the group's membership and Terms of Reference was currently in progress. It was agreed that the refreshed Terms of Reference would be presented at a future Schools' Forum meeting for approval.

Resolved:

That the refreshed Terms of Reference for the High Needs Sub-group would be presented at a future Schools' Forum meeting for approval.

12 **Early Years Funding Update**

James Barlow, Finance Business Partner presented the Early Years Funding Update report and highlighted key points.

The report provided an update to Schools' Forum on the Early Years Block of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) with a focus on Teachers' Pay and Pension Funding 2023 – 2024 and the Early Years Supplementary Grant for 2023 – 2024, and how much each setting would receive.

Following discussion around payment of the Early Years Teachers Pay and Pension Grant, it was noted that it made most sense to pay out in full using historical census data in the same way as settings received this grant in 2022-2023, as detailed in the report.

Resolved:

That the update on the Early Years Block of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) be noted.

13 **Early Years Sub-Group Update**

The Chair reported that the last main piece of work for the group had been the allocation of the overspend which was now drawing to a close after proposals having been agreed at the last Schools' Forum meeting. It was requested that steps to distribute Early Years Funding be escalated to ensure the funding reached early years settings before the end of the financial year.

It was noted that there would be forthcoming meetings in January and February where it was planned to work through the new funding opportunities presented by the early education entitlements due to be introduced in the new year.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank those who had been involved with the Early Years sub-group.

Resolved:

1. That the Early Years Sub-group Update be received.
2. That steps to distribute Early Years Funding be escalated to ensure the funding reached early years settings before the end of the financial year.

14 **Any Other Business**

The Chair highlighted a positive mention of Wolverhampton schools on a BBC programme due to be broadcast focussing on education. It was highlighted that Wolverhampton was well-placed in terms of efforts across the system to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people in education, with 90% of schools being classed as good or outstanding by Ofsted. This prompted thanks to all staff and colleagues working in education for their hard work.

A concern was raised by a Forum member around challenges posed by the Social Workers in Schools pilot scheme and it was noted that Brenda Wile, Deputy Director of Education was aware of similar challenges and that sessions had been set up in the new year to support schools to work through these challenges.

The Chair wished to record special recognition to long-standing member, Stephen Smith, who would be stepping down following this meeting after the academisation of the school he represented. Thanks were given for his many years of dedication as a member of Schools' Forum and as a school governor, and for all his work to support children and young people in the City.

15 **Dates of future meetings**

Dates for future meetings were confirmed as:

- 25 January 2024
- 29 February 2024

The Chair closed the meeting at 5:45 pm.