

Attendance

Members of the Schools' Forum

Barry Bond (Chair)	Special School Sector Governor Representative
Karen Preston (Vice Chair)	Academies Sector Representative
Daryl Asbury	Academies Sector Representative
Ian Browne	Vice Principal Student Success
Louisa Craig	Academies Sector Representative
Ben Davis	Academies Sector Representative
Trisha James	Primary Sector Governor Substitute
Susan Lacey	Nursery Sector Head Teacher Representative
Ian Moore	Academies Sector Representative
Jeremy Parkes	Academies Sector Representative
Bhaksho Raj	Academies Sector Representative
Zoe Rollinson	Primary Sector Head Teacher Representative
Stephen Smith	Primary Sector Governor Representative
Lisa Thompson	Headteacher - St. Andrew's CE Primary School
Sarah Whittington	Special School Sector Head Teacher Representative
Phil Williams	Academies Sector Representative

In attendance

James Barlow	Senior Accounting Officer
Emma Bennett	Director of Children's Services
Debra Boniface	Finance Manager
Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Bill Hague	Head of School Planning and Resources
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Tom Knott	School Organisation Manager
Amanda Newbold	Head of School Improvement

Item No. *Title*

1 **Welcome and Introductions**

2 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Schools Forum members Jon Dovey, James Ludlow, Graham Tate and Lucia Jane Turner.

3 **Declaration of Interest or Confidentiality**

There were no declarations of interest or confidentiality.

4 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 3 October 2019**

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting of 3 October 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 **Matters Arising**

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

6 **Schools' Forum Membership 2019 - 2020**

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services was welcomed by the Chair and provided Schools' Forum with a verbal update on the interim arrangements in terms of the vacancy for the Director of Education. It was noted that the Education and Skills area had been split and School Improvement, School Organisation and Special Educational Needs and Disability services would fall under the remit of the Director of Children's Services. It was stated that his was temporary at present and all areas were undergoing a review to form a more integrated children's services area.

Shelley Humphries, Democratic Services Officer presented the Schools' Forum Membership 2019 – 2020. It was noted that since the last meeting, Schools' Forum had welcomed a new Academies Representative. Vacancies still existed within the PRU area, however it was reported that steps were being taken to fill these.

Resolved:

That the current Schools' Forum Membership 2019 – 2020 be noted.

7 **Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2019 - 2020**

Bill Hague, Head of School Organisation presented the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2019 – 2020 for noting.

Schools' Forum members were invited to suggest any items they wished to receive at Schools' Forum. It was requested that any suggestions be sent to the clerk of Schools' Forum or Bill Hague, Head of School Organisation.

Resolved:

1. That the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2019 – 2020 be noted.
2. That any suggestions for items for discussion at Schools' Forum be sent to the clerk of Schools' Forum, Shelley Humphries, Democratic Services Officer or Bill Hague, Head of School Organisation.

8 **Growth Fund Update**

David Kirby, Service Manager of School Places and Transport presented the Growth Fund Update report. The report provided an update on the deployment of the 2018 – 2019 Financial Year Growth Fund payment and outlines estimated Growth Fund allocations in 2019 - 2020 Financial Year. Schools' Forum members were asked to reaffirm growth fund eligibility criteria in accordance with the relevant guidance from the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA).

In response to a query whether schools were of the length of the payment terms, assurances were offered that various possible scenarios had been explored and been accounted for. It was requested that any questions relating to a particular school be directed to the report author to provide a full answer outside of the Forum.

Resolved:

1. That the 2018 - 2019 Growth Fund allocations be noted.
2. That the estimated 2019 - 2020 Growth Fund allocations be noted.
3. That the potential 2020 - 2021 Growth Fund allocation be noted.

4. That the improvements made to communication of Growth Fund payments to schools, in response to feedback in Schools' Forum on 6 December 2018 be noted.
5. That the anticipated upturn in demand for both the Primary and Secondary estates and the need for future Growth Funds to support both phases be noted.

9 **Consultation on Schools' Funding Formula 2020 - 2021**

Debra Boniface, Finance Manager presented the Consultation on Schools' Funding Formula 2020 – 2021 report. The report outlined that, in October 2019, the Department for Education published indicative funding levels for 2020-2021 Dedicated Schools Grant (Schools Block) (DSG).

The report outlined the options available for application of the National Funding Formula (NFF) to Wolverhampton schools in 2020-2021.

Also provided for consideration within the report was an illustration of the various options available and the outcomes predicted for each scenario.

It was noted that engagement in the consultation had been low despite extra efforts to publicise and inform schools of the possible outcomes. It was thought that if headteachers of schools did not believe their school to be affected, they did not participate. It was clarified that the NFF may affect most schools.

Members of Schools' Forum were asked to register a vote representing their school's cohort to:

- a. To agree or disagree with the implementation of the NFF Factor rates.
- b. To agree or disagree with the introduction of a mobility factor
- c. To choose a preferred approach to the methodology - option A or option B as outlined at paragraph 2.6 of the report.

It was clarified that only maintained primary and secondary school and academy representatives could register a vote and that members were registering their vote for the sector they represented and not their individual school.

12 votes were registered to agree with the implementation of the NFF factor rates. 0 votes were registered against and the vote was carried to agree the implementation of the NFF factor rates.

12 votes were registered to agree with the with the introduction of a mobility factor. 0 votes were registered against and the vote was carried to agree the introduction of a mobility factor.

9 votes were registered to approve the Option B methodology. 3 votes were registered to approve the Option A methodology. The vote was carried in favour of Option B and Schools' Forum agreed to:

9 votes were registered to approve the Option B methodology. 3 votes were registered to approve the Option A methodology. The vote was carried in favour of Option B and Schools' Forum agreed to:

Apply the maximum possible **MFG** rate, by reducing the Cap rate. By applying the maximum possible MFG (1.84%), a lower Cap rate is required. It had been outlined in the report that with this option, all schools will gain the maximum level of increased funding through the MFG calculation, with those gaining the most, having their gains capped. Using this methodology, 19 schools would not receive their full NFF allocation.

Resolved:

1. That the outcomes of the consultation be noted.
2. That the implications of the impact of the various options for all schools in Wolverhampton be noted.
3. That members of Schools' Forum agree:
 - a. the implementation of the NFF Factor rates.
 - b. the introduction of a mobility factor
 - c. to apply the maximum possible **MFG** rate, by reducing the Cap rate.
4. That the funding formula for 2020-2021 be agreed.

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2020 - 2021 High Needs Place Commissioning

Tom Knott, SEND Commissioning Officer presented the 2020-2021 High Needs Place Commissioning report and highlighted salient points. The report summarised the 2020-2021 High Needs Place Commissioning Process and outlined the number of high needs places commissioned at establishment level for the 2020-2021 academic year.

It was outlined that High Needs funding was provided to local authorities through the high needs block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG). Local authorities must spend that funding in line with the associated conditions of grant, and School and Early Finance Regulations as set out by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

It was also noted that commissioning decisions had been driven primarily by historic numbers on roll within each setting.

To offer transparency to schools, the report provided a detailed timeline of the High Needs Place Commissioning process followed by the Authority and a breakdown of commissioned high need places and providers for 2020 – 2021 for each school to note.

Resolved:

1. That the 2019 Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Sufficiency Analysis be noted.
2. That the 2020-2021 High Needs Place Commissioning Process be noted.
3. That the number of high needs places commissioned at each establishment for the 2020-2021 academic year be noted.

11

Early Years Funding

Debra Boniface, Finance Manager presented the Early Years Funding item which included a tabled report outlining feedback from the 2020 - 2021 consultation on the early years funding formula.

The report also clarified the options available for application of the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) to Wolverhampton providers in 2020 – 2021 and the potential impact of those options.

It was noted that, since the introduction of the formula, the hourly rates for two-year olds had remained the same. It was clarified that the hourly rates were to be adjusted and that a review of disbursement had been necessary.

Based on the hours funded in 2019 – 2020, it was suggested:

- To introduce a 1p per hour increase to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Inclusion fund (equating to a total of £29,700.)
- To introduce a 2p per hour top-slice to support central functions (equating to a total of £59,400.)

It was clarified that Schools' Forum were asked to consider the implications of the impact of the various options for all early years providers in Wolverhampton. Members were then asked to register a vote representing their school's cohort.

12 votes were registered to agree with the 1p per hour increase to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Inclusion fund and no votes were registered against. The vote was carried to agree the 1p per hour increase to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Inclusion fund.

8 votes were registered to agree with the introduction of a 2p per hour top-slice to support central functions. 2 votes were registered to disagree and there was 1 vote of abstention. The vote was carried to agree with the introduction of a 2p per hour top-slice to support central functions.

Resolved:

1. That the outcomes of the Early Years consultation be noted.
2. That the implications of the impact of the various options for all early years providers in Wolverhampton be noted.
3. That the 1p per hour increase to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Inclusion fund be agreed.
4. That the introduction of a 2p per hour top-slice to support central functions be agreed.

12 **High Needs Sub-Group Update and Support for City Residential Independent Living Provision**

Sarah Whittington, Chair of the High Needs Sub-Group presented the High Needs Sub-Group Update report and highlighted salient points. The report provided a summary of a range of papers which had been presented at the last meeting of the High Needs Sub-Group on 7 November 2019.

Included at Appendix 1 was a set of Terms of Reference and Work Programme which had been established for the High Needs Sub-Group and which Schools' Forum agreed to approve.

Sarah Whittington, Chair of the High Needs Sub-Group also presented the Support for City Residential Independent Living Provision report and highlighted salient

points. The report provided a background on the Penn Hall School and the residential independent living and respite service it provided for its pupils.

It was outlined that, due to ongoing funding pressures faced by the school, the residential provision was no longer financially viable for the school to fully subsidise and maintain. It was considered that the provision was valuable to pupils to support them in living more independent lives.

It was outlined that Schools' Forum would be provided with regular updates and consulted periodically as required. It was agreed that Schools' Forum would support the use of the High Needs Block to fund Penn Hall Residential for an interim period until April 2021 or until new arrangements were put in place.

Resolved:

1. That the feedback from the High Needs Sub-Group
2. That the Terms of Reference and Work Programme for the High Needs Sub-Group be approved.
3. That Schools' Forum agreed to support the use of the High Needs Block to fund Penn Hall Residential for an interim period until April 2021 or earlier if new arrangements are in place.
4. That the work required to establish an independent living skills residential provision for eligible children and young people from settings across Wolverhampton be noted.

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Any Other Business

The Chair reported that Debra Boniface, Finance Manager would be leaving for a new position at Keele University and took the opportunity to wish her well and offer thanks on behalf of Schools' Forum for her hard work. It was noted that positive feedback had been received from headteachers on the high quality of finance information provided over the years.

A query was raised in respect of falling roll numbers. It was suggested that this be discussed as part of the growth fund as well as how to help schools with falling rolls as there were concerns around maintaining standards. It was clarified that provision was in place to enable a falling fund, however guidance would be sought from the National Funding Formula (NFF) and a piece of work would be undertaken to investigate this across the City. If the NFF continued to accelerate, the possibility of incorporating a falling roll factor could be explored.

Resolved:

1. That support continued to be offered to schools in respect of falling roll numbers and funding.
2. That a piece of work be undertaken with the National Funding Formula and falling roll numbers.

The Chair wished all a Merry Christmas and closed the meeting at 17:22.

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Dates for future meetings

The next meeting of Schools' Forum was scheduled for Monday, 20 January 2020.