

Attendance

Members of the Schools' Forum

Karen Preston (Chair)	Academies Sector Representative
Stephen Smith (Vice Chair)	Primary Sector Governor Representative
Daryl Asbury	Academies Sector Representative
Ian Browne	16 - 19 Education Representative
Louisa Craig	Academies Sector Representative
Ben Davis	Academies Sector Representative
Claire Foster	Nursery Sector Substitute
James Ludlow	Secondary Sector Headteacher Representative
Carroll McNally	Non-School Member Diocesan Schools Rep
Ian Moore	Academies Sector Representative
Zoe Rollinson	Primary Sector Headteacher Representative
Graham Tate	Academies Sector Representative
Lisa-Anne Westwood	Academies Sector Representative
Sarah Whittington	Special School Sector Head Teacher Rep
Phil Williams	Academies Sector Representative

Observers

Emma Bennett	Director of Children's and Adult Service
Bill Hague	Head of School Business and Support Services
Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

In Attendance

James Barlow	Finance Business Partner
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Terry Shaw	Finance Manager
David Kirby	Service Manager School Organisation and Support
Steven Larking	Lead Commissioner (Children and Families) & Commissioning Leadership Support (SEN)

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 Linda Campbell, Lucia Jayne Turner and Lisa Thompson.

3 **Declaration of Interest or Confidentiality**

Two members of Schools' Forum present declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 16 on the Growth Fund Update as they were on the Board of Governors for one of the named schools.

4 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 22 October 2020**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 22 October 2020 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 2020 - 2021**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services presented the Schools' Forum Membership 2020 – 2021 report and highlighted vacancies. The usual steps were being taken to fill those vacancies. It was noted that an alternative provision representative was sought to fill the Academies vacancy and that Lisa Thompson had been moved to become a Diocesan Schools representative awaiting final confirmation from the Diocese.

Resolved:

That the update on Schools' Forum Membership 2020 – 2021 be received.

7 **Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2020 - 2021**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services presented the School's Forum Forward Plan 2020 – 2021 for noting and gave an overview of 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 2020 – 2021 be noted.

8 **2021 - 2022 National Funding Formula Provisional Allocations and Authority Proforma Tool**

Terry Shaw, Finance Manager presented the 2021-2022 National Funding Formula Provisional Allocations and Authority Proforma Tool report and delivered a presentation to support.

The report supplied Schools' Forum Members with the indicative allocations and outlined the process for setting budgets funded by the DSG in 2021-2022.

It was recalled that, in July 2020, the Department for Education published the National Funding Formula Provisional Allocations for the Schools Block, the High Needs Block and the Central Schools and Services Block for the 2021-2022 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

The Early Years Block Provisional Allocation was expected to be published by the Department for Education in late November 2020, and a report will be provided to

Schools' Forum in February 2021 detailing the proposed budget for approval. A consultation would be conducted with schools and help was sought from members to communicate this.

A concern was raised around maintained nurseries and that they had been funded differently for the past four years. This had been a factor in causing financial pressure whilst a more permanent funding solution was awaited and the effects of COVID had exacerbated these pressures. Another member added that they held concerns that their setting may not be able to remain open if the situation worsened; the setting had 43 high needs places which was of further concern if it closed. It was agreed that action would be taken for Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services to raise this issue with the Department for Education (DfE) and provide feedback.

Resolved:

1. That Members of Schools' Forum note the indicative allocations and the process for setting budgets funded by the DSG in 2021-2022.
2. That Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services approach the DfE to raise funding concerns held by nursery schools within the City.

9 **2021- 2022 High Needs Place Commissioning**

Steven Larking, Lead Commissioner (Children and Families) & Commissioning Leadership Support (SEN) presented the 2021-2022 High Needs Place Commissioning report and highlighted salient points. The report provided Schools' Forum with a summary of the 2021-2022 High Needs Place Commissioning Process and outlined the number of high needs places commissioned at establishment level for the 2021-2022 academic year.

It was reported that the annual process was being reviewed and that a 3 – 5 year commissioning strategy was under development.

Resolved:

1. That Members of the Schools Forum note the 2020 Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Sufficiency Analysis
2. That Members of the Schools Forum note the 2021-2022 High Needs Place Commissioning Process
3. That Members of the Schools Forum note the number of high needs places commissioned at each establishment for the 2021-2022 academic year.

10 **Support for City Residential Independent Living Provision**

Steven Larking, Lead Commissioner (Children and Families) & Commissioning Leadership Support (SEN) presented the Support for City Residential Independent Living Provision and delivered a presentation prepared by Penn Hall School to support.

The presentation provided Schools' Forum with examples of the type of provision offered, the benefits that the service users enjoyed and the positive feedback received from families using the service.

It was reported that, due to ongoing funding pressures faced by the school the residential provision it provides for its pupils is no longer viable for the school to

maintain. It was acknowledged that the type of provision was still of enormous benefit to the City's children and young people and aligned with the Local Authority's aspirations of the to empower them to live an ordinary life.

It was recalled that a report highlighting the risks to the residential provision and the impact of its closure was presented to the Schools' Forum High Needs Sub-Group on 7 November 2019. The paper also outlined a number of recommendations on how to maintain and develop the establishment and its offer further to include providing access to other settings across the City and the provision of a Short Breaks model to further enhance the offer.

It was suggested that the increased accessibility would be extended to three schools initially with a panel process determining and allocating provision. A service specification would be developed which would include the referrals and admissions process. It was noted there may be adaptations required to the building to increase access for all needs and improve the offer for the short breaks model, therefore changes to funding would be required.

It was reported that a Penn Hall Residential Working Group had been established to drive the project forward and develop a sustainable service model for provision.

It was noted that the costs of the residential provision to the school would amount to a total cost to deliver per year of £173,358 and it was proposed that this was taken from the High Needs Block. Additional funding could be sourced from facility hire, short breaks, parental contributions or fundraising and wraparound care provision to offset the High Needs Block commitment, and the school will report annually on how much can be returned.

Resolved:

1. That members of Schools' Forum agree to commit to the use of £173,358 of the High Needs Block to fund an increased access Penn Hall Residential facility on an ongoing annual basis (noting the approach to offset some of this financial commitment and the reporting and approval process to do so).
2. That Schools' Forum agree to an additional review of demand for City-wide residential provision and instruct Special Educational Need commissioners to begin exploring options for opening a new facility to meet this demand.
3. That members of Schools' Forum note the new operating model for an independent living skills residential provision for eligible children and young people from three settings across Wolverhampton.
4. That members of Schools' Forum note that a further paper on Capital implications will be presented in early 2021.

11

Trade Union Facilities Time Update

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services provided a brief verbal update on the progress of reviewing Trade Union Facilities Time Allocations. It was noted that officers had been engaged in ongoing conversations with Trade Unions and that an update paper would be provided to Schools' Forum in February 2021.

Resolved:

That a further update report on Facilities Time be provided at the Schools' Forum meeting scheduled for 25 February 2021.

12 **High Needs Sub-Group Update**

In her capacity as Chair of the High Needs Sub-Group, Sarah Whittington provided a verbal update on work undertaken by the group since the last meeting.

It was reported that the matrix review is still in process. The descriptors had been finalised and were being used for a random sampling process of 100 EHCPs across the City. Feedback from this was to inform any amendments that may be required and outcomes will be shared. The sharing of draft weighting principles was set to take place in the Spring term and modelling would commence subject to approval from Schools Forum in February 2021 and the updated descriptors were to go out for consultation.

It was reported that, from April 2021 the process will include consultation on weighting principles and transitional protection. It was anticipated that implementation with transitional protection will commence in April 2022

Thanks were extended to Sarah Whittington and the work of the High Needs Sub-group was commended.

Resolved:

That the High Needs Sub-Group Update be received.

13 **Other Urgent Business**

It was proposed that a piece of work be initiated to develop an understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on settings across the City and school-based Forum members were asked to provide feedback to help get a clearer picture.

The proposal was welcomed and it was agreed that there had been an impact felt in many areas, such as staffing and supply teacher provision as well as issues around the cost of PPE. Concerns were raised that schools may feel pressured by consultations and surveys at this time and perhaps a Schools' Forum commissioned survey could commence in the Spring. It was agreed that this course of action would be explored and an update would be provided in due course.

Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills wished to record his sincere thanks for all the dedicated work of schools, staff, heads, teachers and Governors over such a difficult period and requested that this be communicated to all concerned.

Resolved:

That a survey to gather data concerning the impact of COVID-19 on educational settings be commissioned in Spring 2021.

14 **Dates for future meetings**

- 14 January 2021
- 25 February 2021

15 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling

within paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

16

Growth Fund Update

Dave Kirby, Service Manager School Organisation and Support presented the Growth Fund Update and highlighted salient points. A presentation was delivered which provided charts to illustrate pupil growth. It was thought that the growth in pupil numbers was attributed to rising birth rates in the area, popularity of Wolverhampton schools and regeneration in the area attracting more people creating increased demand for school places.

This report provided an update on the deployment of the 2019 – 2020 Financial Year Growth Fund payment and outlines estimated Growth Fund allocations in 2020 - 2021 Financial Year. The report also provided full breakdowns of previous and estimated Growth Fund Allocations based on numbers on roll.

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).

It was also noted that, due to a shift in pupil numbers, overpayment of funding had been made totalling £133,404.25 across three settings; section 4.4 of the report recommended that due to the time that had elapsed and budget implications for the schools concerned that this funding was not recovered.

Resolved:

1. That Members of Schools' Forum note the 2019 - 2020 Growth Fund allocations.
2. That Members of Schools' Forum note the estimated 2020 - 2021 Growth Fund allocations.
3. That Members of Schools' Forum note the potential 2021 - 2022 Growth Fund allocation.
4. That Members of Schools' Forum note the anticipated demand for both the Primary and Secondary estates and the need for future Growth Funds to support both phases
5. That Members of Schools' Forum approve the recommendation outlined in Section 4.0 of the report (Review of Growth Fund payments 2019).

At this point Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services enthusiastically echoed Councillor Dr Hardacre's earlier thanks for hard work and tremendous effort over such a difficult time and wished all schools, staff, heads, teachers and Governors a Merry Christmas on behalf of the Local Authority.

The Chair wished all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and closed the meeting at 17:10.