

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
Linda Campbell	Nursery Sector Governors Substitute
Louisa Craig	Academies Sector Representative
Ben Davis	Academies Sector Representative
Susan Lacey	Nursery Sector Head Teacher Representative
James Ludlow	Secondary Sector Headteacher Representative
Carroll McNally	Non-School Member Diocesan Schools Representative
Ian Moore	Academies Sector Representative
Bhaksho Raj	Academies Sector Representative
Graham Tate	Academies Sector Representative
Lisa Thompson	Diocesan Schools Representative
Lucia Jayne Turner	Nursery Sector Governor Representative
Samantha Walker	Primary Sector Headteacher Substitute
Lisa-Anne Westwood	Academies Sector Representative
Sarah Whittington	Special School Sector Head Teacher Representative
Phil Williams	Academies Sector Representative

Observer Status

Bill Hague	Head of School Business and Support Services
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

In Attendance

James Barlow	Senior Accounting Officer
Dr Robert Hart	Head of Service - Inclusion and Empowerment
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
Terry Shaw	Finance Manager

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Welcome and Introductions**
- 2 **Apologies**
Apologies were received from Gary Gentle and Zoe Rollinson.
- 3 **Declaration of Interest or Confidentiality**
There were no declarations of interest or confidentiality.

4 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 14 January 2021**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 14 January 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 provided an update on the Schools' Forum Membership 2020 – 2021 and outlined that Lisa Thompson had been approved as a Representative of the Church of England and Andrea Stephens would be joining the membership as a substitute for the Secondary Sector Representative after Easter.

Work was continuing on filling any vacancies and an update would be provided at the next meeting.

It was reported that James Ludlow would be stepping down from Schools' Forum and thank were extended for his hard work and contributions to Forum over the years.

Resolved:

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

7 **Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2021 - 2022**

Bill Hague, Head of School Business and Support Services presented the Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2021 – 2022 and highlighted future agenda items for the coming year.

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 update be received.

8 **Schools Block Funding 2021**

Terry Shaw, Finance Manager presented the Schools' Block Funding 2021 report and highlighted salient points. The report provided an update on the Schools' Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2021-2022, following Schools' Forum agreement to apply the local funding formula, in accordance with the guidance issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

It was noted that funding was mostly distributed directly to schools with the remainder moving into the growth fund. Allocations at individual school level were outlined and it was noted that the only difference between the figures shown at present and the projections received at the January meeting of Schools' Forum was an adjustment to the numbers on roll for one of the schools. It was noted that this adjustment resulted in a reduction to the amount available for growth funding from 2021- 2022 DSG.

Resolved:

That Members of the Schools' Forum note the individual schools' budget settlement for 2021-2022.

9 **High Needs Block Funding 2021**

Terry Shaw, Finance Manager presented the Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block 2021-2022 report and highlighted key points. The report provided an update on the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2021-2022 and sought approval to allocate the funding in accordance with the guidance issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

It was reported that place funding allocations had not changed and budgets were based on the known levels of commissioned places along with planned new capacity to meet demand.

It was noted that the review of the banding matrix had been a complex process with extensive consultation, however it was anticipated that the new top-up funding arrangements would be in place by the next financial year.

A query was raised around a discrepancy between A3 funding in two schools. It was confirmed that the allocations were based on provision rather than children in need and one of the schools in question was a smaller setting that was more expensive to run therefore more funding was required. Funding was also based on the individual needs of each child within a setting rather than whether the setting itself was a mainstream or special school. It was also confirmed that the rate paid was based on service level agreements rather than on banding.

At this point it was noted that Dr Robert Hart would be leaving Wolverhampton for a new Assistant Director role at another authority. His contributions to Schools' Forum were acknowledged and thanks extended for his hard work over the nine years spent at Wolverhampton.

Resolved:

1. That Members of Schools' Forum note the anticipated settlement for 2021-2022.
2. That Members of Schools' Forum approve the allocation of High Needs expenditure for 2021-2022.
3. That Members of Schools' Forum note the matrix bands for 2021-2022.
4. That Members of Schools' Forum approve a total per place contribution for maintained PRUs and Special Schools to support the delivery of local authority retained education functions previously funded by Education Services Grant.

10 **Early Years Block Funding 2021**

Terry Shaw, Finance Manager presented the Dedicated Schools Grant - Early Years Block 2021-2022 report and highlighted salient points. The report provided a summary of the Early Years funding block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, as illustrated in the Dedicated schools grant (DSG): 2021 to 2022 announcement made by the ESFA in December 2020.

A concern was raised in respect of the maintained Nursery School Supplementary grant which had reduced instead of remaining the same. It had been anticipated that the Council would retain the surplus from last year and carry this over.

It was acknowledged that the carry-forward had been outlined in a previous paper although COVID had caused delays in many areas. It was agreed that the matter would be addressed outside the meeting to identify where specific issues lay and how they were being resolved. It was acknowledged that it was important that permanent funding was established to ensure sustainability and that any changes to the formula be communicated in order to inform budget setting. Assurances were offered that a wider piece of work which included these measures was already underway and, although it had suffered some setback due to COVID, an update would be offered once available.

Resolved:

1. That members of Schools' Forum agree to the proposed use of the Early Years Block grant for 2021-2022.
2. That a fuller update on maintained nursery funding be provided outside the meeting.

11 **Central Services Block Funding 2021**

Terry Shaw, Finance Manager presented the Dedicated Schools Grant – Central School Services Block 2021-2022 and highlighted key points. The report provided an update on the Central Schools Services block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Services and sought approval for a list of items that the Local Authority manages centrally on the behalf of schools and academies.

It was highlighted that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Officer post had been extended and the officer who had been carrying out that role had been reappointed. It was acknowledged that this person had undertaken their duties well and many schools had reportedly found the service provided extremely useful.

It was noted that there had been a 20% reduction concerning historical commitments although services were still being delivered to as high a standard as possible.

Resolved:

That members of the Schools' Forum agree the individual lines of the proposed budget allocation of the Central Schools Services Block for 2021-2022.

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.

A working group had been established to drive forward the work around expanding the scope of Penn Hall Residential and discussions had been taking place with the two other schools to agree the management processes. Finance managers were working with headteachers on finance proposals and funds to be allocated.

In terms of the matrix review, the descriptors were nearly finalised and an education, health and care plan (EHCP) and moderation audit had taken place. The matrix had

been split into two phases and a current capacity review was required for the summer term to effectively forecast projections regarding pupil numbers. Work on the matrix would be pushed back to November to accommodate the review taking place and the 2022 funding allocations were reportedly back on track.

Thanks were extended to the members of the sub-group and their hard work.

Resolved:

That the High Needs Sub-Group Update be received.

13

Any Other Business

Thanks were extended to headteachers and staff for all their ongoing hard work over such a difficult period and it was requested that this be communicated via the Headteacher Bulletin.

Resolved:

That thanks on behalf of the Authority be communicated to all school headteachers and staff.

14

Dates for future meetings

The proposed Schools' Forum meeting dates for 2021 - 2022 were identified and it was noted that if there were any clashes with large events to please highlight this with the meeting clerk at the earliest opportunity.

Resolved:

That any major issues with the proposed Schools' Forum meeting dates for 2021 - 2022 be communicated to Democratic Services as soon as possible.