

# Minutes (*Draft*)

## Schools Forum

Notes of meeting on **21 September 2023**

### Members:

Paul Lufkin (PL)	Primary School rep (Wimbledon Park) - <b>Chair</b>
Fr Simon Peat (FSP)	Primary School Governor rep (St Mary's)
Kirsten Taylor (KT)	Secondary School rep (Raynes Park High School)
Martin Roughley (MR)	Primary School rep (Cranmer)
Emma Greer (EG)	Primary School rep (Pelham)
Rachel Shephard-Walwyn (RSW)	PVI rep (Montessori Children's House)
Steve Donegan (SD)	Primary School rep (Malmesbury)
Adrian Laing (AL)	Secondary School rep (Wimbledon College)
Kirsten Taylor (KT)	Secondary School rep (Raynes Park High School)
Chris Roberts (CR)	Secondary School Governor rep (Ricards Lodge)
Alun Evans (AE)	Academies rep (Benedict Primary)
Jacqueline Hyland (JH)	16-19 rep (Rutlish)

### In Attendance:

Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (EF)	LBM CLLF – AD for Education and Early Help
Tom Proctor (TP)	LBM CLLF – AD (Interim) Strategy, Commissioning &
Andrew Good (AG)	LBM CLLF – Finance
Patricia Harvey (PH)	LBM CLLF – Finance
Patricia Kearney (PK)	LBM CLLF – Note taker
Laura Bynes (LB)	LBM CLLF - Strategic Lead for Early Years
Collette Levingston (CL)	LBM CLLF – Finance
Jayne Ward (JW)	LBM CLLF – Finance

### Observer:

Patrick Grant	DfE – Local Authority Funding Policy Team
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### Apologies:

Carla Chandler (CC)	PRU School rep (Melrose)
David Erridge (DE)	PRU Governor rep (Perseid School)
Lee Mallin (LM)	Secondary School rep (Harris Academy)
Allison Jones (AJ)	LBM CLLF – Head of Early Years

1.	Welcome and introductions – Paul Lufkin
	PL welcomed everyone and in particular new members and explained the purpose of this meeting, which is to confirm we have the membership and constitution set up and have the correct representatives and provide a refresh on roles and responsibilities and what we are doing as a Schools' Forum.

<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes from previous meeting – Paul Lufkin</b>
	<p>Actions from last minutes were reviewed and updates on the actions are noted below.</p> <p>PH to make the separations on the block transfers going forward and in January 2024</p> <p>PH confirmed the Early Years adjustments in July was a claw back on the early years grant of £359,550. This was slightly more than expected with regard to the 3 and 4 year old. It is census driven and needs to be absorbed within the current financial year. This will continue to affect us as the birth rate continues to fall.</p> <p>PH noted that on the Central Schools Support Block £412,000 is earmarked for statutory and regulatory duties. This is calculated on a per pupil basis at £16.95 per pupil.</p> <p>The statutory responsibilities Local Authorities have to provide, covered by this block are: School Improvement, Education Welfare, Central Services, Asset Management, Premature Redundancy and Retirement costs, therapies and other related services, monitoring of the national curriculum and assessment and moderation and statutory and regulatory duties.</p> <p>EF: DSG subgroup to analyse the growth in EHCPs in the 11-15 age group – this action will be carried forward to the next sub group meeting.</p> <p>AG: will be circulating revised scheme of delegation for discussion at the next meeting.</p> <p>The minutes were agreed as read, signed and reviewed for actions.</p>
<b>3</b>	<b>Confirmation of membership / constitution - Paul Lufkin</b>
	<p>The members all introduced themselves and confirmed membership and the position they represent.</p> <p>Chris Roberts has joined this meeting to evaluate if he can commit to join the Schools' Forum as Secondary Governor Representative.</p>
<b>4</b>	<b>Outline of year's work – Paul Lufkin</b>
	<p>PL shared outline of the 5 meetings planned for the year, which will be blend of online in person.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Training: key roles and responsibilities – Pat Harvey / Andrew Good</b>
	<p>PH shared a presentation as way of an induction for new members and a refresh for current members. The presentation covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction (and refresh) of School Forum meetings</li> <li>Schools' Forum Role, Powers and Operation</li> <li>School Funding System</li> </ul> <p>Schools' Forum was established by the Education Act 2002 and is a public meeting. The Government wanted effective partnership through the country and to ensure that schools in the area have a voice in range of matters directly relevant to schools funding.</p>

	<p>The group discussed the presentation which will be shared with the group for future reference. Actions and points raised to note are detailed below.</p> <p>The national funding formula refers to broadly the way the money for each school is calculated centrally, but there are certain elements which are still under Schools' Forum consideration.</p> <p>De-delegation is the collective agreement by schools to pool together to buy a service e.g. tree pruning and tree maintenance. Effectively what schools choose to do is pass money back up for schools to buy those services on behalf of schools.</p> <p>Working groups: The DSG Sub Group is the High Needs sub working group, the membership of this group is Paul Lufkin, Adrian Laing, Carla Chandler and Kirsten Taylor.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> <b>PK to update age range on website 16-19</b></p> <p>School Funding System 2023/24 Funding for schools and academies comes via ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) DSG made up of four funding blocks, all calculated on national formulae:  Schools Block (£113m)  Early Years Block (£16m)  High Needs Block (£49m)  Central Schools Service Block (£1m)  Total £179m Merton receives  DSG allocation £216m (recoupment £37m)</p> <p>Dedicated Schools Grant 2023/24 - this changes throughout the year due to being census driven.</p> <p>PH talked the group through the different blocks in detail and the group discussed the different funding formulas.</p> <p>PH talked the group through headlines from the 2023/24 funding formulae and key strategic issues across the 4 blocks and schools in general.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> <b>PH to revise / update the Early Years pie chart</b></p> <p><b>Action:</b> <b>EF/PK to arrange meeting with SD (Malmesbury), AG, PH and EF to discuss sharing a presentation with Headteachers to help with the consultation response.</b></p>
<b>6.</b>	<b>DSG Safety Valve update / feedback from subgroup – Elizabeth Fitzpatrick</b>
	<p>EF – gave an update from the DSG Sub Group which met a couple of weeks ago where we welcomed new members and had a refresh of the purpose of the sub group, this being the oversight and monitoring of the overspend associated with High Needs Block, most specifically to do with SEND. Two of the key pressures is our over reliance on non maintained independent special schools, and the number of EHCPs, where Merton is an outlier in comparison with other LAS.</p>

	<p>EF presented to the sub group a presentation shared with the DfE which was the outturn at the end of 2022/23., the end of year safety valve report. The group talked around the detail and the number of EHCPs and how generally the deficit is going in the right direction.</p> <p>Our number of plans have increased but the proportion by which it has increased is significantly below the England average of 9.2%. This national figure demonstrates the challenges faced nationally and a system which is under significant pressure. The current forecast for the DSG deficit is that we are on plan. The sub group is doing ensures there is good oversight of how this overspend is being addressed robustly. We expect the in year deficit to have been eliminated by the end of 2026/27. The feedback from the DfE was that they were happy with our progress and actions. At the DfE meeting we had a finance and a practice lead from the DSG attending the meeting.</p> <p>We have identified two costs pressures, one is the fact that a part of our plan is seeking financial support from Health colleagues who are currently under great pressure themselves and their contributions are therefore not guaranteed. We have had to RAG that activity as red.</p> <p>The second pressure is the fact that our non maintained independent special schools are asking for very high fee uplifts, many of which we are unprepared to pay.</p> <p>KT – shared at School level they are getting an increase in number of consults for EHCPs for children coming into Year 7 which is concerning.</p>
7.	<b>General updates (inc. headlines from 24/25 national funding formula) – Pat Harvey</b>
	<p>To note the group briefly discussed the Key Changes Paper with regards to setting the formula which the group will go through in more detail as part of the consultation and the January meeting.</p> <p>To note the bullet points under paragraph 2 need to be shifted to the left for clarity.</p> <p><b>Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG) – Laura Bynes</b></p> <p>For noting and oversight by Schools’ Forum.</p> <p>LB talked the group through the Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG) The Chancellor announced in the spring statement additional funding to increase the hourly rate paid to childcare providers in 23/24 for the existing free childcare entitlements – this includes place funding for 2,3 &amp; 4 year olds, EYPP and DAF annual lump sum.</p> <p>Proposals in terms of distributing the EYSG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recommended Merton retains some funding for a contingency budget to accommodate the fluctuation in take up and due to falling roles</li> <li>• Contingency budget to be made of 15% of the EYSG allocation for 2 Year old entitlement only</li> </ul> <p>Rationale for the contingency fund</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merton has experienced a 19-25% decrease in the number of children taking up their entitlement between the autumn and spring terms for the past two years,, demonstrating the financial risk.</li> <li>• Council can manage the budget more effectively and reduces the risk of overspend.</li> </ul> <p>We have just had a national consultation regarding funding for 24/25 with the new reforms whereby there will be free childcare for working families of 9 months old till they reach school age and additional funding formulas for the under 3.</p> <p>The LA is not required to consult on the 23/24 allocation with schools.</p>
<b>8.</b>	<b>AOB – Paul Lufkin</b>
	<p>Funding for trade union facilities time</p> <p>To note</p> <p>EF the Unions wrote to us collectively as a LA to ask that the funding is de delegated when it is discussed in the January meeting.</p>