

# Minutes (*Draft*)

## Schools Forum

Notes of meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022

### Members:

Paul Lufkin (PL)	Primary School rep (Wimbledon Park) - Chair
Carla Chandler (CC)	PRU School rep (Melrose)
Emma Greer (EG)	Primary School rep (Pelham)
Fr Simon Peat (FSP)	Primary Governor rep (St Mary's)
Julia Waters (JW)	Secondary School rep (Ursuline)
Kirsten Taylor (KT)	Secondary School rep (Raynes Park High School)
Martin Roughley (MR)	Primary School rep (Cranmer)
Phyllis Sternberg (PS)	Academies rep (Beecholme)
Rachel Shephard-Walwyn (RSW)	PVI rep (Montessori Children's House)
Steve Donegan (SD)	Primary School rep (Malmesbury)

### In Attendance:

Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (EF)	LBM CSF - Assistant Director for Education and Early Help
Patricia Harvey (PH)	LBM CSF – Finance
Allison Jones	LBM CSF - Early Years
Andrew Good (AG)	LBM CSF – Finance
Colette Levingston (CL)	LBM CSF – Finance
Jayne Ward (JW)	LBM CSF – Finance
Robyn Northcott (RN)	LBM CSF – Note Taker
Steve Barnard (SB)	Observer, ESFA

### Apologies:

Hamish Dowlen (HD)	Secondary School Gov rep (Raynes Park High School)
Richard Ellis (RE)	LBM - CSF Assistant Director for Strategy, Commissioning and Transformation

<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome and apologies</b>
	PL welcomed everyone in-person and attending online.
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes of previous meeting</b>
	The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed for accuracy.
<b>3</b>	<b>Consultation for 2023/24 Schools and Early Years Funding Formulae</b>
	The consultation document circulated is in draft, and is being shared with Schools Forum members to review for accuracy prior to the consultation being circulated to schools, PVIs and childminders later this week.

Schools will be asked which funding formula option they would prefer to be used for 2023/24 funding allocation. Option A is a replica of the NFF. Option B is a Local Formula with additional funding through AWPU factors. The Local Authority preference is Option A and the reasons for this are outlined in the consultation document.

There is a guaranteed increase in funding of 1.9% per pupil.

Census data within the APT are the same and these cannot be changed

The optional split site factor is being explored with the DfE and PH will update the document in relation to this. It was noted that there are split sites for one primary school and two special schools, with Melbury College having 9 separate sites across the borough. PH will have a separate conversation with CC about this.

PH noted that the minimum funding guarantee is capped at 0.5% and cannot be set any higher than this.

The Early Years census data was lower than normal and this is thought to be the impact of Covid. In 2022/23 funding reverted to the Spring census count. The Local Authority is working with providers to ensure there is sufficiency.

PH noted that the Schools Block figures are indicative and used for modelling. Any changes from the October census figures will impact on the final DSG allocation for the Schools Block.

PL queried why the amounts for Option A and B are different, and that Option A appears to indicate that schools will receive from funding than Option B. PH and AG explained that the total amount of funding received would be the same for both options, however if any adjustments are made to the National Funding Formula, this will affect the other allocations. PH will update models to reflect same funding with minor variation in factors and report school sector funding ratio's within the paper.

**Action:**

**PH to remove second bullet point under 2.1.7.**

De-delegation is for LA maintained schools only, not academies. De-delegated items are included line by line in the consultation.

PH noted the breakdown of the contingencies de-delegation item, to include Attain, tree maintenance and Schools in Challenging Circumstances.

**Action:**

**PH to update paper**

EF noted that the Schools in Challenging Circumstances budget is used for schools at risk of being judged less than good by Ofsted, and also for schools experiencing a deficit budget situation as a result of falling rolls.

JW queried what the impact will be if the Local Authority are successful in their bid for schools to become a pilot multi-academy trust (MAT). EF noted that if the bid was successful, a maximum of 10 schools would be involved and this would not affect the next financial year. PH explained that if a group of schools did form a multi-academy trust in the next financial year, that this could create an overspend on the Schools Block. There is an option for academies and free schools to buy back delegation from the LA and EF noted the need to consider this in the longer-term.

JW queried what proportion of supply staff cost to cover public duties is used to cover jury service.

**Action:**

**PH to provide a breakdown of this.**

EF noted that Merton asked for Local Authority School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant not to be removed as part of the DfE consultation but the decision has been made for this to cease. This is the reason for the increase in the School Improvement amount. JW queried what the Local Authority would put in place to enable schools to input to the school improvement strategy on the basis that it is proposed that de-delegation will fund a greater proportion of this activity. EF said that this could be looked at in the summer term when the School Improvement Strategy is being refreshed, in the context of the LA's statutory duties to secure high standards.

School attendance is a new de-delegation being requested. New government attendance guidance has clarified the roles of the Local Authority and schools with regards to attendance. There is an extension to the role of the Education Welfare Service and by de-delegating, this will ensure this service can continue.

The growth and falling rolls fund is proposed at £300k. If this amount is not used for growth, the funding will be re-distributed at year end to schools with falling rolls.

PL queried if ARP expansion is covered by this growth fund or by the High Needs Block. PH confirmed that the growth and falling rolls fund is for additional classes and a change in PAN. Growth within ARPs and special schools is funded from the High Needs Block.

Transfer between blocks are not permanent and have to be included in the consultation each year.

It is intended for the consultation document to be circulated by the end of this week, with a deadline of 9<sup>th</sup> December. Subject to ESFA approval, school budgets will be distributed by 28<sup>th</sup> February.

Early Years

EF identified that a possible application to disapply the 95% pass through rate is currently being discussed. Should this be decided upon there will be a question about this in the consultation.

High Needs Block

- Funding floor has been set at 5%. This is being capped at no more than 7%.
- PH noted that for subsequent financial years, there will be a maximum 3% increase on the High Needs Block which is an additional pressure.
- EHCP numbers are continuing to grow based on the SEN2 return in January.

Merton sets its own allocation with regard to recognition of schools holding a high number of children with EHCPs. Previously allocation was 1.5% and this has been increased as a result of the Safety Valve Programme. As part of the move towards the National Funding Formula, there is not scope to continue with this allocation. It is proposed to reduce this fund for 2023/24 to £350,000, and this is included in the consultation. EF noted that this allocation also looked at the prior attainment factor of pupils with an EHCP.

For 5.2.3, PH noted that CC had flagged that secondary schools will pay £10,800 per pupil, not £10,200 as outlined in the draft, and PH will make this amendment to the final consultation document.

Action:

PH to update

There is a cumulative deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant of £27 million. The Local Authority are looking to commission more places in ARPs and open a new special free school as part of the Safety Valve programme.

<b>4</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>
	<p>EF provided an update from the Schools Forum DSG sub-group which met earlier this week.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quarter 2 Safety Valve return has been accepted by the DfE. This includes data as well as activity reporting.</li> <li>• In terms of management of EHCP numbers, there were only 30 more EHCPs in September 2022 as the previous year. A number of EHCPs for older children have been ceased where appropriate.</li> <li>• The deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant is £3m less than this time last year, although it is unlikely that the target will be achieved this financial year. EF noted that there is a lag between activity and impact on finances.</li> <li>• The next reporting period is December and the DSG sub-group will continue to receive detailed updates.</li> </ul> <p>PL asked Schools Forum members to prioritise attendance in person for the next meeting when final decisions will be made on the consultation.</p>
	<b>Date of next meeting: Thursday 19th January, 4pm, Malmesbury Primary School</b>