 **Minutes *(Draft)***

**Schools Forum**

Notes of meeting on 13th January 2022

**Members:**

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| Frieda Perry (FP)  | Chair - Primary School rep (Hatfeild) |
| Carla Chandler (CC)  | Special School rep (Melrose)  |
| Fiona Duffy (FD)  | Primary School rep (Dundonald) |
| Steve Donegan (SD) | Primary School rep (Malmesbury) |
| Fr Simon Peat (FSP) | Primary Governor rep (St Mary’s) |
| Julia Waters (JW) | Secondary School rep (Ursuline) |
| Kirsten Heard (KH) | Secondary School rep (Raynes Park High School) |
| Hamish Dowlen (HD) | Secondary School Gov rep (Raynes Park High School) |
| Phyllis Sternberg (PS)  | Academies rep (Beecholme) |
| Lee Mallin (LM) | Academies Governor rep (Harris Morden) |

**In Attendance:**

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| Nick Wilson (NW) | LBM CSF - Interim Assistant Director (Safety Valve Programme) |
| Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (EF) | LBM CSF - Assistant Director for Education and Early Help |
| Patricia Harvey (PH) | LBM CSF – Finance |
| Andrew Good (AG)  | LBM CSF – Finance |
| Colette Levingston (CL) | LBM CSF – Finance |
| Allison Jones (AJ) | LBM CSF – Early Years, Family Wellbeing and Early Help |
| Robyn Northcott (RN) | LBM CSF – Note Taker  |

**Apologies:**

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| Carole Cook (CC) | 14-19 rep (TRP Ltd)  |
| Paul Lufkin (PL)  | Primary School rep (Wimbledon Park) |

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| **Item 1** | **Welcome and introduction** |
|  | FP welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.  |
| **Item 2** | **Minutes of previous meeting** |
|  | Minutes of the meeting on 3rd November 2021 were agreed for accuracy.  |
| **Item 3** | **(a) Merton’s DSG Funding Allocation 2022/23 and Schools Funding Formula****(b) Schools’ Consultation Responses****(c) Early Years Consultation Responses** |
|  | PH shared the document “Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding including Schools Funding Formula 2022/2023” and explained that Schools Forum members will be required to note recommendations and approve a number of decisions. **Dedicated Schools Grant allocation**Table 1 details allocations published on 16th December 2021. PH noted that this has been presented line by line due to the deduction of TPG/TPECG and NNDR and indicates % changes for each line since last year. EF noted that the 8% increase on the High Needs Block was expected. FSP asked if the High Needs Block figure includes the additional £500k referenced at the last Schools Forum meeting. PH confirmed that the figure in the table is as per the allocations published on the gov.uk website. [Dedicated schools grant (DSG): 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2022-to-2023) JW queried if the 0.5% transfer includes money off the Teachers Pay and Pensions Grant (TPG). PH said that the TPG is allocated and ring-fenced. This could not be reduced.

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| **Recommendation (a)**School Forum notes the DSG allocation for 2022/23 published 16 December 2021 and notes the publication will be subject to change(s) during the financial year.Schools Forum members note this decision.  |

**Schools Block**Table 2 details the Schools Block based on the published allocation in the link above. PH noted that there are usually 4 or 5 updates during the year - this may be due to recoupment, changes in high needs places as well as the schools copyright licenses, and national and non-domestic rates recoupment. The Local Authority is allowed to transfer £698k to the High Needs Block. The additional £500k cash transfer is subject to Secretary of State (SOS) approval - PH has been advised to include this amount in the Schools Block although it has not yet been improved and reported to the next meeting, whether approved or not by the SOS.**Falling rolls (growth fund)**There is a drop in census and this is a national issue. As a result, there is a proposal to re-designate some of the growth funding and allocate to schools with falling rolls outside of the formula. The proposed £300k is to delegate funding in support, even though we have delegated as much money into the formula for schools. PH noted that funding will be pro-rata from April 2022 to August 2022. For academies, this would be from September 2022 to March 2023 (academic year).FSP queried the academy recoupment figure in Table 1. PH responded that when the Schools Formula is calculated on the Schools Block, this is growth that is allocated. Academy recoupment is calculated by the LA for individual schools budgets as with maintained schools. The ESFA deduct the amount directly from the DSG as they pay this directly to academies. The LA will not pay money to academies for school budget shares. Academies are funded for academic year so this is pro-rata to academies within their General Annual Grant (GAG) Statement.FP noted that some schools may have dropped from a 2-form entry to 1-form, or 3-form to 2-form. She asked if it has been considered that it is a greater impact for schools who have not dropped by a form if all classes are running at 25 pupils. EF noted there is one school in the list which approached the schools adjudicator to reduce by one form of entry. None of the other schools on the list have reduced their forms of entry. JW asked what the criteria is for differentiating the amounts for different schools. PH said that there is a comparison from Autumn census for the last 2 years for numbers on roll. JW queried if this is likely to continue for a number of years. PH confirmed that the Local Authority are working with schools to look at the census data year on year and looking at this strategically. EF noted that proposals have not been considered for 2023/24 onwards. EF also noted the need to look at the Place Planning Strategy and suggested that this is brought to Schools Forum when we have indicative figures for September. JW asked for clarification if this is a one-off payment. PH confirmed that this is a one-off payment and would have to be approved each year.

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| **Decision (b) -** Schools Forum approval is required for the new re-designated Falling Rolls fund £300k (utilising previously known Growth Fund) and proposed draft allocations to schools.Subject to data validation from academies in support of this proposed funding to schoolsFor - 9Against - 0 NB. Schools Forum members agreed to this decision for 2022/23 only.   |

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| **Decision (c) -** Following the consultation with schools, Schools Forum agreed the transfer from the **estimated** schools block to the high needs block of c£656k at the meeting on the 3rd November 2021. Final transfer is £698k (0.5%) allowable transfer. For - 9Against - 0  |

FP noted that there is broad agreement of this from schools in the consultation responses.

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| **Decision (d) -**Following the consultation with schools, Schools Forum agreed the transfer from the estimated schools block to the high needs block of an additional £500k at the meeting of the 3rd November 2021, however this is subject to the Secretary of State (SOS) approval.For - 10Against - 0NB. Schools Forum members agreed to this decision for 2022/23 only. |

PH noted that this is subject to a disapplication request and the response has not been received yet from the Secretary of State and outcome of decision to be reported to next meetingFP shared comments in the consultation response with Schools Forum members. PH noted that, for transparency, of those responses from schools in the consultation, they are weighted according to numbers on roll. LM noted that the 3 Harris Academy responses do not appear to be included in the table and that they voted in favour of this. **Action**: PH to revise 5.2 for transparency and all other consultation responses will be checked if they include Harris Academy responses.FSP queried- if the additional £500k cash amount is enough to impact on the cumulative deficit of £37m. He is concerned that losing £500k from the Schools Block may impact on schools ability to support children not yet on an EHCP. PH noted that the minimal amount is being transferred in order to have less of an impact on school budgets.  NW explained that there is a number of streams of funding being explored to contribute to balancing the budget in 2026/2027 including funding from the Local Authority, Health and schools. NW noted that although there is no prescription in the Safety Valve to do this, there are expectations and the DfE did ask if Schools Forum had been consulted on this. FSP asked if academies will be affected by this. PH confirmed that this is put through the formula and will impact on the whole family of schools including academies. The APT has to be submitted to the ESFA whereby PH has been advised 109 validation and compliance checks are carried out.

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| **Decision (e)**Both Primary and Secondary schools de-delegated budgets have been set based on the categories discussed by the relevant phase representatives at Schools Forum on the 3rd November 2021. Each phase and line by line de-delegated budget has to be agreed by School Forum maintained schools, not academies for 2022/23. The decisions are outlined in the table below.

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| **Service** | **SF member responses primary** | **SF member responses secondary** |
| Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) *recharged via DfE* | **4** | **3** |
| Schools catering equipment insurance | **4** | **Not applicable** |
| Support and Challenge Programme | **4** | **3** |
| Attain | **4** | **3** |
| Parenting cover and public duties | **4** | **3** |
| Ethnic minorities and bilingual learners  | **4** | **3** |
| Tree insurance / maintenance | **4** | **3** |
| Behaviour Support | **4** | **3** |
| School Improvement  | **4** | **3** |

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FP noted the service “Support for ethnic minority groups and bilingual learners” and queried if there is less support for primary schools. EF confirmed that Schools Forum have had a report about what this service constitutes. EF explained that Alison Cramp is in this post and her remit is to support schools around children from black and minority ethnic background, EAL, Pupil Premium, school analysis of homophobic, racist incidents etc. EF noted that more work may need to be done with primary schools. FD shared that her cluster discussed the impact of the learning and standards on those children. FD asked EF if there has been an impact on rising standards. EF will take back to the Primary team to ask them to create a paper or to attend a cluster meeting to discuss. JW queried which secondary school said no to all of the de-delegated items and queried if this should be clarified in case this was a mistake. **Action**: PH will clarify the responses to the consultation and schools’. JW noted that she has raised concerns a number of times about the quality of the tree maintenance service.AG flagged that his understanding is that primary schools are charged for tree maintenance as part of de-delegation.

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| **Decision (f)**Schools Forum approval is required for a contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for maintained schools.For - 10Against - 0 |

PH shared the following points in relation to the appendices to the report:**Appendix 1 ISB allocations**There is a summary for each school which includes number on roll, Free School Meals, IDACI and EAL. There is minimum funding guarantee which ensures that schools do not drop below 2%, minimum funding or protection within the formula. This is based on data collated by the DfE as per school Autumn census return. **Appendix 2 - comparable funding allocations 2021/22 - 2022/23**PH will confirm budget allocations at the next meeting and confirm the outcome of the request for the £500k cash transfer which is awaiting Secretary of State approval, but schools allocations 2022/23 reported include both with 500k and without 500k.**Appendix 3 - NFF rates**PH noted that the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) for 2022/23 is 2%, for 2021/22 it was 1.91%.The DfE published a schools supplementary grant funding outside of the DSG. £4m outside of the Schools Block. £1.8m within High Needs. The guidance provided is reported within the report and is as much information as we know at this time and individual school allocations will be published in Spring 22. PH noted that the publication of indicative rates is useful for schools with falling budgets or for those undertaking strategic budget planning.

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| **Decision (g)**School Forum to approve the APT 2022/23 in accordance with the Consultation exercise held in November 2021 of school budgets 2022/23 and to note is subject to ESFA data validation and checking and may be subject to minor change(s). Final approved APT and any changes will be reported to School Forum in March.For - 10Against - 0  |

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| **Decision (h)**Schools Forum approval is required for School admissions, Servicing of School Forums, Prudential borrowing and Statutory and Regulatory duties that LAs hold for all schools (including academies & free schools).For - 10Against - 0 |

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| **Decision (i)**Schools Forum is required to comment on the budget setting of the early years formula for 2, 3 and 4 year olds, SEN inclusion fund, Disability Access Fund (DAF) and approve the retainer of 5% towards central support costs.For - 10Against - 0  |

PH drew attention to the Early Years Funding Rates table and recent published allocations within the report. <https://skillsfunding.service.gov.uk/view-latest-funding/national-funding-allocations/DSG/2022-to-2023> AJ noted that there has been more of a growth in budgets overall due to the increase in the minimum wage which would reflect some of the additional costs. PH noted that adaptations have been made to the Census due to the pandemic, and termly counts have to be submitted to ensure early years funding allocations to the local authority are in alignment.**High Needs Block**There has been an increase in funding which is welcomed of 11%.Indicative budgets have been set but there is further work to be done. This is to meet growth in special schools and ARPs with commissioned places.Recoupment for academies on places commissioned from the local authority is directly paid by ESFA. PH noted the ongoing work around the DSG Safety Valve and that other ways to reduce costs are being explored, as with all Local Authorities nationally.PH asked Schools Forum members to note the recommendations below. No further comments were made by members on the recommendations.

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| **Recommendation (j)**School Forum to comment and note the budget setting of the High Needs block for 2022/23. |

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| **Recommendation (k)**School Forum notes the Safety Valve and DSG Management Tool ongoing work. |

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| **Item 4** | **Merton’s DSG Recovery Plan** |
|  | NW confirmed that Merton’s Safety Valve negotiations with the DfE concluded on 9th December. The negotiation team from the DfE are recommending Merton’s inclusion in the Safety Valve programme and this is now awaiting Secretary of State approval. NW explained that the historical deficit would be addressed, with a series of actions to bring the budget back into balance in 5 years. If Schools Forum input is required as part of the Safety Valve work, NW will liaise with FP. FP asked if the Schools Forum could be advised of the outcome of the Safety Valve negotiation as a priority due to their input into this.   |
| **Item 5** | **Any Other Business** |
|  | None.  |

Date of next meeting: 22nd March 2022, 4pm