



# Minutes

## Meeting of Schools Forum

**Wednesday 17 January 2024**  
via Microsoft Teams  
at 4.00pm

<b>Present:</b>	Liz Travis	Holy Trinity CE Primary (In the Chair)
	Nigel Yeo	Trade Union Representative
	Stuart Ash	Oldham Sixth Form College
	Rob Higgins	The Cranmer Trust
	Anthony Leighton	The Cranmer Trust
<b>Also Present:</b>	Matthew Bulmer	Director of Education, Early Years and Skills
	Lee Walsh	Assistant Director of Finance
	Amber Burton	Assistant Director SEND and Inclusion
	Vicky Gibbons	Senior Accountant
	Andy Cooper	Senior Finance Manager
	Victoria Hayes	Finance Manager
	Jean Coombs	Clerk

<b>1</b>	<b>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</b>
1.1	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
1.2	Apologies for absence were received from Iain Windeatt.
1.3	Members were requested to declare any business, pecuniary and personal interests. No declarations were made.
<b>2</b>	<b>MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</b>

	<b>RESOLVED:</b> that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
	<b>MATTERS ARISING:</b> The content and format of reports for future meetings will be reviewed at the March 2024 meeting. The Forum will appoint a Vice Chair at the next meeting.
<b>3</b>	<b>DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT</b>
	Andy Cooper gave an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations and the deployment of the grant for 2024/25.  Main points referred to:
3.1	The allocation of the DSG was confirmed on 19 December 2023 and there was an increase of £27.791m to £349.747m.
3.2	The Schools Block increased by £14.678m from £239.288m to £253.966m.
3.3	It is the seventh year that the National Funding Formula (NFF) was introduced and it is proposed that the same formula as last year is used. A consultation had been carried out. This would mean that the funding would be at the NFF level with an Area Cost Adjustment of 1.005 rather than the 1.003. This is higher than last year and close to the NFF.  A member asked what the implications of the NFF adjustment was to schools, whether they would be better or worse off as a result. The response was that it had been adjusted down so that they would be down, but only marginally. The funding is based on the data set for 2023/24 which will not be finally adjusted until next year. The estimated effect on a Primary school would be about £3,000 and about £12,000 to £13,000 for a Secondary school.
3.4	The High Needs Block is £61.474m, an increase of £2.328m, but there are still some adjustments to be made (Imports/ Exports/ Special Free School Funding).
3.5	The Early Years Block has increased to £30.609m, up by £10.852m, due to additional funding for 2-year-olds from April 2024 and for under 2-year-olds from September 2024. There will be a consultation on the rates to be paid to providers. This will be on the agenda for the March 2024 meeting.
3.6	The Central School Services Budget shows a reduction of 20% year on year in the amount available for historic commitments. However, an application was made to have this reinstated to £849,000, which was successful for 2023/24 and this will be applied for again for 2024/25, as it can be shown that these amounts are being paid out.
3.7	The DSG Management Plan has been presented in a different format, with less detail than previously and with a focus on the main points to note.
3.8	For the first year, since 2016/17, a surplus has been brought forward of £0.899m. There is an in-year surplus of £2.117m, and with the anticipated Growth Fund underspend of £0.545m, at the end of 2023/24 this should see a carry forward of £3.561m. The forecast in-year surplus for 2024/25 is £826,000, and this will result in a carry-forward in 2024/25 of £4.387m. A further estimated in-year surplus in 2025/26 of £476,000 will result in a carry forward at 31 March 2026 of £4.863m.

	A member asked why the in-year surpluses reduced. The response was that the figures are not definite at this stage and the data is based on prudent estimates.
3.9	A table showing the variances and movements in the DSG was presented to members. Members were asked to note that there is an increase in the funds in the Schools Block and an increased expenditure in that block. In the High Needs Block the main increases are in the Special Schools (£4.832m) and in the cost of EHCPs (£0.965m).
3.10	The Central School Services Block includes £13,000 for administration of the Schools' Forum, £702,000 for access and admissions, £679,000 for premature retirements (which may increase back to £849,000), and a provisional £272,000 for National Copyrights and school leases. In the past, £868,000 had been covered by the Education Services Grant.
3.11	The De-delegated Funding for maintained schools was proposed to include £443,000 for School Improvement, £128,000 for contingences, £292,000 for insurance and £62,000 for teacher union duties from Primary; and from Secondary £18.37 for insurance and £3.87 for teacher union duties, both on a per pupil basis for Secondary schools.
3.12	The current estimated amount needed for Growth Funding for 2024/25 is £1.29m, with £545,000 funded from the previous year's underspend.
	<p><b>RESOLVED:</b> that Schools Forum (a) note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2024/25; and</li> <li>(ii) the current 2023/24 projected DSG surplus of £3.561m.</li> </ul> <p>and (b) approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(iii) the deployment of Dedicated Schools Grant;</li> <li>(iv) the allocation for each service area, totalling £1.666m of funding from the Central Schools Services Block above;</li> <li>(v) the retention of £0.686m retained duties funding in the Central Schools Block;</li> <li>(vi) the provisional Growth Funding for 2024/25 of £1.290m; and</li> <li>(vii) the maintained Primary de-delegated funding of £0.925m.</li> </ul>
	The maintained Secondary sector was not represented at the meeting and so Vicky Gibbons agreed to contact them to gain approval of the Secondary De-delegated funding.
4	<b>SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS – DfE DIRECTED REVISIONS AND LA REVISIONS</b>

	Andy Cooper presented a summary of the revisions to the Scheme for Financing Schools. These changes are of a minor nature.
	<b>RESOLVED:</b> that Schools Forum note the revisions to the Scheme for Financing Schools.
5	<b>FORWARD PLAN 2024/25</b>
	<p>The proposed meeting dates are set out below:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">18th March 2024</p> <p>The main agenda items for these meetings will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2023/24 – 2025/26 DSG Management Plan Update;</li> <li>• Early Years Funding 2024 – 2025;</li> <li>• Schools Forum Roles and Responsibilities; and</li> <li>• Element 3 SEND Funding.</li> </ul>
	<b>RESOLVED:</b> that the information be received and noted.
	(There being no further business, members were thanked for their attendance and the meeting was declared closed at 16.35pm).
	<p>Signed: _____</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Chair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Date: _____</p>
	S04/jc/governorminutes/Springterm2024