

SCHOOLS FORUM

THURSDAY, 13TH JANUARY, 2022

Present: Geoff Cherrill (Winchelsea Special School) – **Chairman**
Patrick Earnshaw (Highliffe School) – **Vice-Chairman**

Russell Arnold, The Quay School
Mark Avoth, Bourne Academy
Kate Carter, TEACH Trust
Andy Connell, Ambitions Academy Trust
Lauren Dean, Kings Park Academy
Ben Doyle, St Peters School
Linda Duly, Cuddles Day Nursery
Phillip Gavin, Christchurch Learning Centre
Brigid Hincks, St Joseph's Primary School
Sue Johnson, Jack in the Box Nursery
Marie Lane, St Edwards RC CE VA School
Nadine Lapskas, LeAF Studio
Dr Dorian Lewis, Bournemouth School
Jacqueline Page, Bournemouth and Poole College
Jeremy Payne, St James CE Primary School
Sean Preston, Hamwic Multi-Academy Trust
Michael Reid, Ambitions Academy Trust
Dave Simpson, The Epiphany School
Arline Sperryn-Jones, Twynham Primary School

Also in Attendance: Councillor Nicola Greene

Officers in attendance: Jo Collis-Heavens, Group Accountant
Steve Ellis, Accountant - Education
Luana Girling, Policy and Governance Officer
Simon McKenzie, Interim Manager of SEND
Rina Mistry, Early Help Performance Manager
Terry Reynolds, Interim Education Consultant, Community Learning & Commissioning
Tanya Smith, Head of School Planning and Admissions
Nicola Webb, Assistant Chief Financial Officer

Observers: Paul Gray, Poole High School
Caroline Turner, The Bourne Academy

20 **Apologies for Absence**

From Forum Members

Apologies were received from Jaqueline Page and Jon Chapple (substituted by Arline Sperryn-Jones).

From Councillors/Officers

Apologies were received from Councillor Mike White and Sarah Rempel.

21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

22 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

The Chair reported that, although not on the agenda for the meeting, work on the Mainstream SEND Banding Consultation had begun and, following conclusion of the consultation with schools, was on track for implementation in September.

23 DSG Settlement and Draft Budget for 2022-23

The Assistant Chief Financial Officer presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. The detailed Draft Budget had been provided within a Supplementary Appendix and it was also explained that other papers on the agenda considered the impact of the Settlement and DSG budget in detail.

The Forum noted the key provisions of the DSG Settlement as received on 16 December 2021 namely,

- a. Initial allocations for the early years block based on the DfE estimate of take up of the free entitlements over the year, incorporating the £0.21 per hour increase in 2-year old funding and £0.17 per hour for those aged 3&4 of circa 4%.
- b. Final allocations for the school's block national funding formula (NFF) based on the October 2021 schools census. The increase in funding through the schools NFF for 2022-23 totals £8.8 million (3.9%). Higher funding values account for £5.4 million (2.4%), as reported in September, with additional pupils at census providing a further £3.4 million (1.5%). Funding for in-year pupil growth from September 2022, has increased by £0.4 million compared with last year.
- c. Provisional allocations for mainstream schools of a supplementary grant of £6.8 million (equivalent to 3% of mainstream funding) to cover specifically the new health and social care levy as well as general cost pressures.
- d. Allocations for the central school services block provide a reduction compared with last year of £80,000.
- e. Allocations for the high needs block have increased in total by £6.5 million (13.6%) in total compared with last year, due to higher NFF funding values (£3.8 million), more pupils attracting the basic entitlement (£0.8 million) and the autumn spending review allocating further funds (£1.9 million).

In terms of Supplementary funding, the figures were presented as good news with a 3% headline increase and the settlement overall was better than expected.

The Assistant Chief Financial Officer responded to questions relating to comparison between secondary and primary allocations and explained that whilst numbers of primary pupils were currently flat, secondary school pupil numbers were increasing significantly.

It was noted that the high needs deficit was projected to grow further in 2022-23 despite the significant increase in funding.

There was continuing frustration expressed around the High Needs Budget block and concerns were expressed about the perceived lack of action to reduce the gap between the forecast level and what was actually spent. In response, it was explained that this was a demand-led budget within the context of a dynamic environment.

The Chair shared the concerns being expressed and requested that, at the next meeting of the Forum, there should be a substantive agenda item about the High Needs Block where there would be the opportunity for a more in-depth discussion and explanation about how to address the upward budget trend. In the meantime, the Chair provided reassurance to the

Forum that this matter and the types of concerns being raised by the Forum members were being addressed as a matter of priority.

24 **School Funding Consultation and Budget Proposals 2022-23**

The Assistant Chief Financial Officer presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book and reminded the Forum that the Forum must be consulted on the local funding formula for mainstream schools and agree a range of central DSG budgets albeit that there was limited scope for making changes to the nationally allocated figure. The Forum was also referred to a revised appendix 2b circulated within the Supplementary appendix to the agenda.

The report set out the outcome of the 2022-23 school funding consultation and proposals for the DSG budget. It was explained that the schools block proposals include that the mainstream schools funding formula is to continue to adopt the National Funding Formula (NFF), the existing growth fund policy is maintained, and the balance of funding is transferred to support the high needs budget.

Also included were budget proposals for the central school services block and services to support maintained schools.

The consultation with schools was reported to have been undertaken over three weeks, closing on 17 December 2021. A copy of the consultation and a link to the online survey had been sent out to all schools by e-mail. A virtual consultation meeting held on 9 December, aided by a presentation, was well-attended by schools

That Forum was advised that, following final checking by the DfE and approval at the BCP Council meeting on 22 February, the final school budget figures would be distributed to schools by the end of February.

Each element of the budget proposals were set out and described within the report. In terms of the transfer to high needs it was established that this funding should be used to increase SEND funding for mainstream provision as part of the banding review underway and not be set against the high needs deficit. Allocation of this funding to be considered at a future meeting when the band funding review had concluded.

RESOLVED

School Members:

- 1. Recommend to Council that the schools NFF continues to be adopted as the local mainstream school formula.**

(Voting : Unanimous)

- 2. Agree the existing growth fund policy is to continue for 2022-23 with the resulting budget requirement of £0.531 million as set out in paragraph 29.**

(Voting : Unanimous)

All Members:

- 3. Agree surplus school block funding estimated at £0.751 million (0.3%) can be transferred to support the high needs budget as set out in paragraph 32.**

(Voting : Carried – One member voted against)

It was agreed that the Schools Forum discuss at a future meeting the wider issues around how this part of the budget is utilised.

4. Agree the central school services block budgets as set out in table 5 of paragraphs 36.

(Voting : Unanimous)

Maintained School members only:

5. Agree collectively the retention rates per pupil and budgets for LA duties supporting maintained schools as set out in paragraphs 43 and 44.

(Voting : For 2; Against 1.

It was noted that the representative of Christchurch PRU was not present at the meeting and the Chair undertook to clarify the view of the school on this proposal.

6. Agree separately for primary, secondary, special/PRU the de-delegation of funding for school improvement duties as set out in paragraph 49.

(Voting: Unanimous)

25 Early Years Funding Consultation

The Head of School Places, Funding and Admissions presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

It was explained that the Local Authority was required to consult the Schools Forum on the Local Funding Formulae for early years and the report set out the proposed options for the early years single funding formula (EYSFF) for the financial year 2022/23.

A summary of responses to the consultation undertaken with the sector was also presented and the full outcomes and analysis of the consultation was circulated within the Supplementary appendix to the agenda.

To ensure the council meets its statutory requirements set out in the Schools Forum regulations and School and Early Years Financial Regulations any Central budgets for early years are also to be agreed.

The options proposed were set out for the Forum and the views from 94 received responses, which constituted a return rate of 33%, were summarised.

In response to questions, it was noted that the format of the consultation had been steered by sector representatives at the subgroup who had requested that alternatives to the Council's preferred option be presented. This was to facilitate wider debate on the range of options rather than seeking responses to the preferred BCP Council option only. There was also concern expressed that the timing of the consultation during the run up to Christmas had contributed to a low level of return.

Once again, the funding of high needs was a key issue for the Forum. There was also support for more investment in early years provision in recognition of its part in providing children with the foundation for moving on into the Primary School settings. There was also Forum support to consider allocating funding to the early years budget from the schools block transfer already agreed when options came forward.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Schools Forum does not support proposals to implement option 1 from the consultation for the EYSFF as set out in table 1 of paragraph 17.**

(Voting : For 12; Against 0; Abstain 3)

- 2. That the Schools Forum agrees that the central budgets supporting the early years free entitlements at £185,000, the same level as 2021/22.**

(Voting : For 12; Against 1; Abstain 3)

26 Looked-After Children Pupil Premium Arrangements 2022-23

The Policy and Governance Officer, Children and Young People and Learning presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

It was explained that the Pupil Premium Plus grant was provided by the Department for Education with clear terms and conditions but carried an element of local discretion.

As the Schools Forum membership was from all phases of education and other associated stakeholders, the views of the Forum were welcomed to support the thinking and rationale of the local discretion. The Forum was advised that this feedback would guide the Virtual School to produce a policy that could meet the needs of all Looked-after Children both in and out of education. The objective was to enable the Pupil Premium Plus policy to be finalised and published in early March 2022.

A copy of the first draft of the policy had been circulated with the agenda and the Forum was requested to feed back any views and comments to the Virtual School Leadership team via the Policy and Governance Officer in the first instance.

The report also advised Schools Forum members of the proposed arrangements for both the central retention and allocation to educational establishments of the Pupil Premium Plus Grant.

It was also noted that staff from the BCP Council Virtual School team were available to talk to individual schools about the proposals.

27 Schools Forum Forward Plan Refresh

A copy of the Forward Plan had been circulated to each Member and appears as Appendix 'E' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. The report set out the work programme for the Schools' Forum until the end of the 2022/23 Academic Year and any suggestions for additional items were invited through the Chair or through the Democratic Services team in the first instance.

28 Dates of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Schools Forum was on 24 June 2022.

29 Any Other Business

Numbers of students with ECHPs.

It was agreed that the statistics for the number of students with ECHPs in place should be circulated, for information, to Forum members before the next meeting in June.

Thursday, 13th January, 2022

Speech and Language Services

It was noted that a consultation report on the approach to provision of speech and language services for mainstream schools would be circulated to members of the Schools Forum.

Duration of the meeting: 9:01am – 11:30am

**Chairman at the meeting on
Thursday, 13 January 2022**