

Lancashire Schools Forum

eNewsletter

• Issue 110 • November 2020

Fair Exchange?

Welcome to Issue 110 of 'Fair Exchange?' a pre-Forum Edition of the eNewsletter of the Lancashire Schools' Forum.

FORUM UPDATE

Schools Budget for 2021/22

The Schools Forum working groups will be considering a number of issues during meetings in December 2020, including the matters relating to setting the Schools Budget for 2021/22.

Final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations for 2021/22 and final pupil data from the DfE are not expected until later in December, with final budget proposals being presented to the full Schools Forum meeting, scheduled for 12 January 2021 and the Lancashire County Council Cabinet meeting on 14 January 2021.

Once Lancashire plans are agreed, a submission will need to be sent to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) so that our Schools Block proposals can be compliance checked before Individual School Budgets (ISBs) are issued.

Schools will receive their ISBs in the final week of February 2021.

Colleagues will be aware from Fair Exchange 109, that following a consultation with schools earlier in the autumn term, the Forum have already taken some decisions that impact on the Schools Budget relating to de-delegations and the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)

A second consultation around the Schools Budget 2021/22 may be issued to seek views on any proposals to transfer Schools Block headroom to the Early Years Block, to help mitigate the cost pressures facing this sector. This will be dependent on whether there is any headroom available in the Schools Block, which can only be determined once some initial modelling has taken place.

The finalisation of this initial modelling has been pushed back slightly due to delays in the availability of the October 2020 census data. If this modelling identifies that there is some headroom available in 2021/22, a consultation will be issued to seek the views of schools around any proposals

The consultation will be published on the Schools Portal and the timescale for responses may be quite tight, so colleagues are asked to look out for this consultation documentation.

Other matters to be considered by the Working Groups in this round of meetings includes:

- Consideration of the Early Years Block funding for 2021/22;
- Discussions around the Early Years SEN Inclusion Fund;
- An update on the Strategies for SEN and Alternative Provision and the budget implications that may arise;
- Update on the possible growth fund allocations from April 2021 in light of the revised minimum pupil funding levels in 2021/22.

COVID-19 COSTS FOR SCHOOLS

The Forum is keenly aware of the financial pressures facing schools as a result of measures that are needed to ensure that schools can remain open and COVID secure. In Lancashire, where current infection rates are high, it is imperative that COVID guidance and safety protocols are implemented rigorously and self-isolation rules are actioned swiftly and comprehensively.

At a recent Schools Forum meeting, colleagues reported on significant increased premises and cleaning cost pressures related to keeping schools open and safe at the current time and, in some cases, providing support for free school meal (FSM) children. In addition, there are substantial extra costs associated with staff absence, both where staff are self-isolating themselves, but also when staff need to be absent to look after their own children who have been asked to isolate.

The Chair of the Schools Forum has therefore written to the Secretary of State for Education urging that additional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding is made available to Lancashire schools and beyond to enable schools to deliver on this essential priority in a COVID safe environment. The letter also asks that the DfE acknowledge the crucial role played by early years providers in allowing key workers with young children to attend work and contribute to the COVID effort, by recognising and supporting the additional costs faced by these settings.

Petition: Fully fund schools for Covid-19 costs and provide relief for loss of income

The UK Government and Parliament Petitions website includes a petition titled 'Fully fund schools for Covid-19 costs and provide relief for loss of income'. This asks that:

Without delay, for government:

- agree to reimburse schools' exceptional costs associated with Covid-19 measures
- reimburse schools' lost income from Covid-19 (eg. rental/lettings)
- guarantee reimbursements will be paid directly to schools for financial years 2020/21, 2021/22, as required

At 100,000 signatures, the petition will be considered for debate in Parliament. Further information is available from this link: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/555718>

Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

As mentioned in Fair Exchange 109, there is a statutory requirement on all maintained schools to complete the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) each year and to provide a copy of the completed return to the authority, by 31 March each year.

A formal core agenda item is included on the autumn term governors meetings and governing bodies must formally discuss the SFVS annually with the head teacher and senior staff and ensure that the standard is completed in full. The approved SFVS spreadsheet should be uploaded on the 'Forms' section of the Schools Portal. This can be accessed via the schools portal home page under Forms > Finance > Schools Financial Value Standard.

On 10 November 2020 and again on 23 November 2020, the DfE updated the SFVS template. The revised template, together with supporting notes for the checklist and the dashboard are available from the DfE website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-financial-value-standard-sfvs>

If you have not already done so, we urge you to commence the SFVS process to ensure your school can submit your approved return prior to the DfE statutory requirement deadline of 31 March 2021.

What's Happening Nationally

School Resource Management Tools

The DfE has recently updated a number of tools to support schools to maximise the use of resources and funding.

The full collection can be accessed [here](#); examples include [the financial efficiency metric](#) and [financial benchmarking](#) tools, which allow you to compare your schools with similar schools across the sector; the [Teacher Vacancy Service](#) and the [National Deals](#), including the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA), the Department's alternative to commercial insurance that is now available to local authority maintained schools for £18 per pupil. The [Schools Financial Value Standard](#) includes a data-driven dashboard in which a school can input its latest data to assess its use of resources.

The DfE has asked that these tools are promoted to schools and we encourage you to make full use of resources available.

What maintained schools must publish online

On 12 November 2020, the DfE updated their guidance to schools about what maintained schools must publish online, which includes new financial information requirements that have been mentioned in previous editions of Fair Exchange:

- how many school employees (if any) have a gross annual salary of £100,000 or more in increments of £10,000
- a link to the webpage which is dedicated to your school on the [schools financial benchmarking service](#)

The publishing requirements also includes Coronavirus (COVID-19) catch-up premium and schools are asked to publish details of:

- how it is intended that the grant will be spent
- how the effect of this expenditure on the educational attainment of those pupils at the school will be assessed

A link to the full guidance is available [here](#).

Who's Who? - Forum Membership



Primary School Governor Elections

3 nominations for the primary school governor vacancy on the Forum went forward in the election, in which all maintained primary school governing bodies are entitled to vote.

Information about the candidates was published on the Schools Portal on 2 November 2020 and voting closes on **30 November**.

If your governing body has not yet voted, please make sure cast a vote. Voting can be done [here](#)

Questions?

Remember, if you have any questions about the Schools Forum, please contact Paul Bonser, Forum Clerk, 01772 531815, or email schoolsforum@lancashire.gov.uk