

Thursday, 11 January 2024, 10.00 am in the Savoy Suite, The Exchange,
County Hall, Preston

Present:

Primary School Governors

Stephen Booth (LSF Vice-chair)
Gerard Collins
Lindy King
Michael Nolan
Robert Waring
Sam Ud-din
Tim Young

Primary School Headteachers

Daniel Ballard
Jenny Birkin
Neil Gurman
Deanne Marsh
Helen Shaw
Sarah Robson
Kirsty Sutton

Secondary School Governors

Janice Astley
Brian Rollo

Secondary School Headteachers

Ivan Catlow
Oliver Handley

Academy Governor

Kathleen Cooper

Academy Principal

Steve Campbell
James Keulemans

Special School Governor

Mandy Howarth

Special School Headteacher

Claire Thompson

Short Stay Headteacher

Abigale Bowe

Nursery School Governor

Thelma Cullen

Nursery School Headteacher

Jan Holmes

EARLY YEARS - PVI

Sharon Fenton
Philippa Perks

OTHER VOTING MEMBERS

Bill Mann
Julie Jones

Observers - Non-Voting Representatives

Liz Laverty
Alison Daly
Lorimer Russell-Hayes (LASGB)

Officers in Attendance

Matthew Dexter
Millie Dixon
Toni Rafferty
Caroline Morrison
Aby Hardy
Chris Warren

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Sarah Barton, Sharon Bennett, John Davey, Gill Donohoe, Rosie Fearn, CC Sue Hind, CC Stewart Jones, Chris McConnachie, Sarah McGladrigan, Michelle O'Neill, Sally Richardson and Anna Smith.

2. Substitute Members

No Substitute member were present at this meeting.



3. Forum Membership

Since the last meeting, there was one membership update. Dr Sharon Bennett, appointed Pupil Referral Unit Governor voting forum member.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the membership change.**
- b) **Welcomed Sharon Bennett to the Forum.**

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 17 October 2023, were agreed as a correct record.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising since the last meeting.

6. Consideration of the Schools Budget 2024 – 2025

A report was presented setting out information about the Schools Budget for 2024/25. This included information from the original report to the Forum and subsequent information from the Chairs' Working Group meeting held on 11 January. The overall DSG allocations were provided as set out in the table below and the report provided further details on how the funding blocks were calculated using the DfE's national funding formulae.

- a) **Schools Budget 2022/23**
- b) **Recommendations from the Forum Chair's Group Budget Meeting**
- c) **Formal Forum Decisions relating to the Schools Budget 2024/25**

The Forum consider the 3 Schools Budget sub items as a single report.

Forecast DSG Income for 2024/25

Forecast DSG Income	£m's
Schools Block	978.029
High Needs Block	202.146
Early Years Block	143.989
Central Schools Services Block	8.829
Gross Total forecast DSG Income	1,332.993
Total deduction for national schools non-domestic rates	- 1.275
Total deductions for direct high needs payments made by the ESFA	- 9.734
Net Total forecast DSG Income	1,321.984

It was noted that in aggregate terms, the 2024/25 Gross Dedicated Schools Grant income figure for is some £118.752m higher than that received in 2023/24. This increase in funding is due to:

- Lancashire's share of the increased High Needs Block of £440m Nationally which is 4.3% above the previous year c.£8m net for LCC schools.

- Increased Early Years Block funding due to the extended entitlements of 2-year-olds and under twos.
- An increase in the overall numbers of pupils in Lancashire in the primary and secondary sectors compared to 2023/24.

An initial estimated of the Schools Budget 2024/25 was also provided, as set out in the table below:

Forecast Dedicated Schools Grant Expenditure	£m's
Schools Block	979.184
High Needs Block	202.146
Early Years Block	143.989
Central Schools Services Block	8.829
Total deduction for national schools non-domestic rates	-1.275
Total deductions for direct high needs payments made by the Education & Skills Funding Agency	-9.734
Total forecast Dedicated Schools Grant Expenditure	1,323.139

The report forecasts a balanced Dedicated Schools Grant funding position in 2024/25, subject to the planned use of £1.154m of Schools Budget reserves to mitigate transitional pressures in the Schools Block budget.

It was also noted, due to constraints within the high needs block, the additional one year only funding allocated in 2023/24 (listed below) will cease from March 24 as agreed by schools forum:

- 2 x £300k for Central IEST teams (£600k).
- £400k for Y11/12 transition teams for AP schools.
- £150k Support for EYFS/Reception transition to be funded through the inclusion hub banker schools.
- £300k Support for Y6/7 transition to be to be funded through the inclusion hub banker schools.

Members considered the information provided and discussed the proposals for each funding block and made a number of observations and comments, including around commissioned place numbers, pressures on the early years sector, and policies being implemented to reduce the 'out-county' expenditure

The Forum:

- Noted the report, including the 2024/25 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations and the budget proposals for each of the 4 funding blocks.**
- Noted the information from the Forum Chairs' Group meeting on 11 January 2024.**
- Voted on the 2024/25 Schools Budget Proposals, as follows:**

Unanimously supported the Schools Block proposals, as follows:

- Confirm that the DfE's NFF methodology should continue to be used as the Lancashire formula for 2024/25
- Confirm the 2024/25 MFG set at +0.5%
- The use of the circa £2.2m of the Growth Fund allocation to ensure that the NFF, MPF and MFG can be applied in full in 2024/25
- The use of the Minimum Pupil Funding (MPF) rates contained in the NFF for any new Growth Fund allocations from April 2024
 - Primary £4,610 per pupil
 - Secondary £5,995 per pupil
- The use of £1.154m in Schools Budget reserves to mitigate pressures in the Schools Block budget.

Unanimously supported the High Needs Block proposals, as follows:

- The increased HNB allocation being utilised to cover the forecast growth in High Needs expenditure from April 2024
- The increase in HNB expenditure to broadly match uplifts in the mainstream sector, including:
 - Increasing the Weighted Pupil Numbers (WPN) rate by 2% to £5,440
 - Special School and PRU School Specific factors uplifted by 2% to match Schools Block MFG
 - Rate for Excluded Pupils, Medical and Other pupils uplift to match increased WPN
 - in the secondary PRU formula, 1 WPN
 - in the primary PRU formula, 2/3 of 1 WPN

Unanimously supported the Early Years Block proposals, as follows:

- The passporting of other DfE EY funding increases to providers:
 - + £0.33 per hour 3 and 4 year olds providing £5.41 per hour from April 2024
 - + £0.63 per hour for the maintained nursery schools supplementary funding providing £5.18 per hour from April 2024
 - Maintaining the 2 year old base rate of £7.10 per hour from April 2024, with an additional deprivation supplement (extended to working families)
 - Under 2-year-old entitlement the base rate will be set at £9.51, plus a deprivation supplement based on a similar mechanism that currently exists within the 3- and 4-year-old formula.
 - + £0.02 per hour for Early Years Pupil Premium providing £0.60 per hour from April 2024, equivalent to up to £387 per eligible child per year
 - + £51 per eligible child the disability access fund (DAF) providing £910 per eligible child per year from April 2024
- The continuation of Deprivation Supplements on the existing methodology for 2024/25;
- The continuation of the SEN Inclusion Fund at £2.65m for 2024/25.

Unanimously supported the Central School Services Block and High Needs Central Service proposals, as follows:

- Continued support for MASH and Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service (HNB);
- The proposals for the Central School Services Block in 2024/25, including uplifts for cost and demand led pressures.

Unanimously supported the Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve underwriting the uncertainties around the 2024/25 DSG Schools Budget subject to the planned use of £1.154m of Schools Budget reserves to mitigate transitional pressures in the Schools Block budget

d) Unanimously approved the budget lines requiring Forum agreement, as set out below

Function	LA proposals 2024/25	Proposed Expenditure: 2024/25 £m
Consultation on Formula Changes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No local formula factor changes are proposed for 2024/25 in any funding block, beyond incorporating the DfE National Funding Formula (NFF) alterations into the local Schools Block formula 	The Forum have previously agreed to use the DfE's NFF as the Lancashire funding formula for the Schools Block budget, and NFF updates for 2024/25 introduced by the DfE are incorporated in the Schools Budget proposals for 2024/25, including revised split site funding.	
De-delegation for mainstream schools	LA proposals for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools Requiring additional Support • Museum service (primary only); • Staff Costs Public duties/Suspensions; • Primary Inclusion Hubs (primary only); • Childrens Champions Approved by the Schools Forum on 17 October 2023	2.764
Contracts (where the LA is entering a contract to be funded from the schools budget)	No Proposals at this time	

Financial issues relating to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding 	Proposals contained in the High Needs Block Working Group recommendations report to the Forum and the Forum budget papers	136.418
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> arrangements for use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school, in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding 	Proposals contained in the High Needs Block Working Group recommendations report to the Forum and the Forum budget papers	14.129
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> arrangements for early years provision 	Proposals contained in the Early Years Block Working Group report to the Forum and the Forum budget papers	143.989
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> administration arrangements for the allocation of central government grants 	No Proposals at this time beyond passporting DfE allocations to schools	
Minimum funding guarantee (MFG)	Consultation responses on MFG reported to Forum on 17 October 2023 and recommended that the level of MFG to be used in the Lancashire funding formula for 2024/25 be set at +0.5%. This is incorporated into the Forum budget papers	
General Duties for maintained schools Contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for maintained schools	No Proposals at this time	
Central spend on and the criteria for allocating funding from:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> funding for significant pre-16 pupil growth, 	Policy previously agreed by the Schools Forum. Proposal to	1.5000

including new schools set up to meet basic need, whether maintained or academy	increase the growth fund unit values in line with increased NFF Minimum Pupil Funding levels each year Final budget proposals are contained in the Schools Budget 2024/25 report	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> funding for good or outstanding schools with falling rolls where growth in pupil numbers is expected within three years 	No Proposals at this time	
Central spend on:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> early years block provision 	Final budget proposals are contained in the Schools Budget 2024/25 report	2.65
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> funding to enable all schools to meet the infant class size requirement 	No Proposals at this time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> back-pay for equal pay claims 	No Proposals at this time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> remission of boarding fees at maintained schools and academies 	No Proposals at this time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils 	No Proposals at this time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> admissions 	Final budget proposals are contained in the Schools Budget 2024/25 report	1.400
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> servicing of schools forum 	Final budget proposals are contained in the Schools Budget 2024/25 report	0.188
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for all schools 	No Proposals at this time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for maintained schools 	No Proposals at this time	

Central spend on:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> capital expenditure funded from revenue: projects must have been planned and decided on prior to April 2013 so no new projects can be charged 	No Proposals at this time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contribution to combined budgets: this is where the schools forum agreed prior to April 2013 a contribution from the schools budget to services which would otherwise be funded from other sources 	No Proposals at this time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> existing termination of employment costs (costs for specific individuals must have been approved prior to April 2013 so no new redundancy costs can be charged) 	No Proposals at this time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prudential borrowing costs – the commitment must have been approved prior to April 2013 	No Proposals at this time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEN transport where the schools forum agreed prior to April 2013 a contribution from the schools budget (this is now treated as part of the high needs block but still requires schools forum approval as a historic commitment) 	No Proposals at this time	
Central spend on:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> high needs block provision 	2024/25 funding level presented as part of the Schools Budget setting proposals	41.312
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> central licences negotiated by the Secretary of State 	2024/25 funding level presented as part of the Schools Budget setting proposals	1.203

Funding of brought forward deficits	No Proposals at this time	
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7. Recommendations from the Chairs Working Group

It was noted that the chairs group met on 31st October and 15th November to consider two clawback exemption requests for 2023/24. These requests were rejected by the Chairs group and it was noted that one school is challenging the LA. The Schools Forum chairs stated that no further 2022/23 requests would be considered.

Recommendations from the Chairs Working group from 9th January 2024 were presented to the forum within Item 6.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the information.**
- b) **Supported the Chairs decision to not consider any further 2022/23 clawback exemption requests**

8. Recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group from 7 December 2023

8.1 School Budget 2024/25

Following the Autumn statement on 22nd November 2023, no further funding was announced for the education sector. Therefore, the additional high needs funding allocated to support transitions and the creation of the IEST teams in 2023/24 will not be available for the 2024/25 financial year due to anticipated pressures within the funding blocks.

The Working Group.

- c) **Noted the information.**

8.2 Lancashire Schools Forum Operational Arrangements

The working group reviewed the proposed amendment in section 2.6 around conflicts of interest. The amendment requests members complete an annual form to declare any potential conflicts. In addition, if there is a possible conflict arising on an agenda, members will be required to inform the Schools Forum Clerk and the appropriate working group chair in advance.

If the proposed change is agreed by the three working groups, declaration forms will be sent to all members.

The Working Group:

- a) **Noted the amendment to the Operations Arrangement**
- b) **Supported the completion of annual declaration forms for forum members.**

8.3 Clawback Exemption Requests 2023/24

In July 2023, the Forum considered the School Balances and Clawback Policy for 2023/24 and agreed that clawback should be reintroduced on excessive revenue balances at March 2024.

The working group considered four requests. Members were provided with an overview and a financial breakdown of each project.

Request A

A Lancashire Secondary School requested an exemption request for £794,916 at March 2024. The Schools forum granted an exemption at March 2023, the works planned in the 2024/25 have rolled into the new financial year and costs have increased. The project is to repair the buildings roof and a modular build to create additional classrooms.

Request B

A Lancashire Secondary School requested a full exemption at March 2024 due to expansion building work across the school including improvements to access of the PE facilities, expansion of the canteen and the renovation of pupil toilet facilities for increased pupil numbers. There was also a number of general renovating projects across the school.

Request C

A Lancashire Secondary School requested a full exemption at March 2024. A letter providing an overview of the project from the school is provided below.

This school is included in the next phase of the 'Schools Rebuilding Programme.' This essentially means that a significant element of the school will be refurbished or rebuilt and, at the time of the meeting, it was confirmed how extensive this work will be. However, the site requires significant investment. A significant amount of school funds are required to comply with statutory and health and safety requirements, and this work is ongoing.

Request D

A Lancashire primary school requested a full clawback exemption at March 2024. This school has been allocated a Direct Payments of Education Contribution for the Permanent increase in School Places (DPEC) totalling £207,194.76 from a developer due to the Schools Provision and Sufficiency Team identifying a need for school places in the area. In September 2025, there is a requirement for 15 additional places for the September 2022 cohort when the cohort reaches Key Stage 2.

Following the distribution of the working group papers it was noted that DPEC cannot legally be clawbacked due to the agreement with the authority and developers.

Propose a portal posting following SBWG to note the deadline for requests has passed and Schools Forum Working Groups have now considered the cases will be presented to the Schools Forum on 11th Jan for ratification. This can serve as a general reminder.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the report.
- b) Supported Clawback Exemption Request A, B, C, D.
- c) Supported the reminder following the Schools Forum meeting on the 11 January 2024.
- d) Suggested to amend the policy for 2024/25 to include Direct Payments of Education Contribution (DPEC) within the exemptions.

8.4 School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme

Each year, reports are presented to the Forum about the arrangements for the School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme. This report set out proposals for the 2024/25 Scheme changes for consideration.

Due to an increase of queries and concerns raised by schools around Teacher Maternity claims, it is proposed to reimburse claims at a pro rata flat rate. If agreed, it was also proposed to back date 2023/24 teacher maternity claims to the new flat rate from April 2023.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;
- b) Recommended a 6.5% increase on the scheme charges and reimbursement rates
- c) Supported the introduction of a flat rate for teacher's maternity reimbursement and recommended this be back dated to maternity claims from the 1st April 2023.
- d) Supported the amendment to the Service Level Agreement for acting allowance reimbursements.

The Forum ratified the working Group's recommendations.

9. Recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group from 30 November 2023

9.3 High Needs Block Commissioned Places 2024/25

This report provided an update about the proposed HNB places to be commissioned for 2024/25, including those place numbers submitted on the DfE on the annual place change notification submission. All the changes to commissioned places relate to the 2024/25 academic year. A copy of the latest commissioned places for 2024/25 are provided with the report.

The Working Group:

a) *Noted the report;*

9.4 SEN Data

During the recent LSSHTA meeting, members raised concerns around inaccuracies and the timing of the SEN data collection in October 2023. As a result, a letter was sent to the Schools Forum.

To summarise, 80% of special schools shared information to LSSHTA regarding the October 2023 delegation data collection. 100% of those schools had received delegation with inaccurate information. For example, pupils missing, pupils who were not on roll at the school and year 11 leavers on the data.

Sally Richardson, Head of Inclusion Service, attended the meeting and is looking at ways to improve the quality of the data going forward.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the information.
- b) Raised concerns around the validity of the SEN data and the impact this may have on funding.
- c) Encouraged the Inclusion Team to address these issues and members offered support.

9.5 High Needs Block Monitoring 2023-2024

Due to the cost and demand led pressures on the High Needs Block budget, arrangements were introduced from 2018/19 to provide the Forum with termly budget HNB monitoring.

Period 1 to 7 2023/24 data is now available, and the monitoring and analysis was presented to the working group.

The High Needs Block budget is currently forecasting a circa £5m overspend at 31 March 2024.

The monitoring is an estimate of the full year forecast, based on expenditure that has occurred in the period between April – October 2023.

There remains significant ongoing financial pressure facing this block as the demand and costs continue to rise.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report.
- b) Raised concerns around the forecasted balance at March 2024 and encouraged the Inclusion service to develop short and long term plans to reduce the strain on the block.

9.6 Emotional Health and Wellbeing Commission Updates

Funding announcements for 2021/22 confirmed that the historic commitments element of the Central School Services Block (CSSB) will decrease from 2021 and reduce to zero.

Initial modelling of the impact of this reduction in Lancashire suggests that we may be able to protect the existing levels of DSG 'combined budget' contributions for 2024/25, as follows:

- Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service - £200k
- MASH - £150k

This will be subject to Schools Forum approval.

To aid Forum consideration of these allocations, a report is provided from the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service providing a 2022-2023 update. This report is attached in the papers at Appendix B.

Members will recall that information about the use of DSG funding for Multi Agency Support Hub was presented at the High Needs Block 3rd October 2023 and funding was ratified by the Schools Forum in October 2023.

Due to the timing of the working group, this report was not available, therefore the Schools Forum is asked to;

- a) **Note the report.**
- b) **Express any views.**

The Forum ratified the working Group's recommendations and noted the report in item 9.6.

10. Recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group from 28 November 2023.

10.3 Family Hubs

Ellie Waide-Mayfield attended the Working Group to provide an overview of the Family Hubs network. Family hubs provide access to services, create connections to build relationships. Joined up support, bringing services together, build upon children's centres and building wider networks.

The Working Group.

- a) **Noted the information.**
- b) **Thanked Ellie for attending.**

10.4 Early Years Block Forecast 2024/25

Forecasted hourly rates were shared with the working group to provide an indicative hourly rate whilst the authority is awaiting the Early Years Block Budget information.

Members raised that settings should be made aware of the indicative hourly rates to allow settings to budget. Officers suggested to wait until the LA received notification to communicate anticipated rates to the sector.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the information.
- b) Agreed send communication of anticipated rates when the LA had received the Early Years Block budget from the ESFA.

Since the Working Group, the Authority has received the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2024/25. The Early Years Block allocations and funding rates will be covered in Item 6.

10.5 Early Years SEN Inclusion Group

Following concerns raised by members around SEN in the Early Years Sector at the Schools Forum on 17 October 2023, Sally Ricardson agreed to meet with the Early Years SEN Inclusion Group. The group met on the 1 and 22 November 2023.

Key Discussions from these meetings were presented at the working group meeting. At the Early Years Block meeting on 10 October 2023, members raised concerns around the extension to the Inclusion Fund to include two years old from September 2023, as part of a pilot scheme. It was noted that this was not agreed by the Schools Forum and Finance colleagues were not aware of the change. Settings were notified of the extended entitlement at the beginning of the Autumn Term. Members were concerned around the strain on the Inclusion Fund, which was noted to be fully utilised and over spent in 2023/24 to date.

It was also noted that Early Years settings should contact the appropriate area manager in the inclusion team if they are experiencing any issues receiving the Inclusion Fund funding.

The Working group also welcomed Lizz Tattle, interim Specialist Teaching Senior Manager who will be attending working group meetings.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the minutes from the meetings.
- b) Welcomed a meeting with the Inclusion Team to discuss Inclusion related issues within the sector. Lizz Tattle agreed to arrange meetings going forward with the sector.

The Forum ratified the working Group's recommendations.

11. Forum Correspondence

The forum received one item of correspondence which is considered under item 9.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Clawback Policy 2023/24

The LA is proposing an in year amendment to the policy. It currently states exceptions must be submitted to the Schools forum in Autumn Term, suggest to add the 31st October for submissions and 31st December for the end of the term for clarity.

12.2 Schools Forum Membership Review

To note that the annual membership review will begin shortly in line with the Lancashire's Schools Forum Operational Arrangements

12.3 SEN data cleanse

In response to the errors within the SEN database raised by Special Schools at the High Needs Block Working Group, Aby Hardy provided an update to Forum. The LA has assigned a team of Business Support Officers to cleanse the data. It was reported that half of the records are cleansed. The team is also training colleagues to ensure new entries are correct. The High Needs Block chair will feedback this back at the next LSSHTA meeting.

The Forum:

- a) Supported the Clawback Policy mid year amendment.**
- b) Welcomed the annual membership review.**
- c) Noted the update with the SEN data.**

1. Date of Future Meetings

To note that the next scheduled Forum meeting will be held at 10.00 am on Thursday 21 March 2024. Arrangements for the meeting will be confirmed in due course.

A copy of the forum schedule for the 2023/24 academic year can be found [here](#).