

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 11th December 2023
At County Hall, Matlock at 4.45pm

Present

Members	School / Organisation
Jennifer Murphy	Hunloke Park Primary
Peter Johnston	The Village Federation
Julian Scholefield	Esteem MAT
Chris Greenhough	Swanwick School & Sports College
Emma Haywood	Alfreton Nursery School
Karen Hayes	Esteem MAT
Keith Hirst	Brookfield Community School
Simon Redfern	St Ralph Sherwin CMAT
Liz Seymour	Church of England Diocese - Derby
Deborah Turner	NEU

Substitutes	School / Organisation
Cilla Hollman	Hadfield Infants School

Observers	School / Organisation
Cllr Alex Dale	DCC
Cllr Robert Flatley	DCC
Cllr Ruth George	DCC

DCC Officers/others	School / Organisation
Carol Cammiss	Executive Director, Childrens Services
Dan Careless	Strategic Lead for Schools and Learning
Helen Wallace	Strategic Lead Inclusion Support Services
Jenny Webster	Head of Development Children's Services
Saranjit Shetra	Assistant Director, Education & Improvement
Sarah Bryan	Senior School Advisor (Early Years)
Andy Walker	CS & T Finance
Eddie Grant	CS & T Finance
Elena Beard	CS & T Finance

Peter Johnston chaired the meeting.

23/21 - Apologies for Absence

Name	School / Organisation
Peter Crowe	ASCL
Nick Goforth	Belper Secondary School
Donna Hain	Redhill Academy Trust
Sarah Baker	TEAM Education Trust
Canon Carolyn Lewis	Church of England Diocese-Derby

Name	School / Organisation
Deborah Turner	NEU
Cllr Julie Patten	DCC
Michelle Jenkins	Etwall Primary
Alan Thomas	Northfield Junior School
George Wolfe	Curbar Primary
Ruth Lane	CS & T Finance
Phil Burrows	CS & T Finance
Shelley Kerlake	CS & T Finance
Alison Noble	Children's Services
Nicola Cook	TEAM Education Trust

Due to a change in working patterns and responsibilities, Shelley Kerlake will no longer be a DCC representative at the Schools Forum. Eddie Grant will now cover this role. Peter Johnston thanked Shelley for all her work and support on behalf of the Schools Forum.

Nick Gorforth has resigned from been a Secondary School Headteacher representative of the Schools Forum.

23/22 - Minutes of The Schools Forum 18th October 2023

The minutes were agreed and the action point below will be deferred to the next meeting.

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Review Schools Forum self-evaluation Form	EG / EB	29 th January 2024 meeting (self-evaluation form to be emailed to representatives and findings reported at the next meeting)

No other matters arising were raised.

Eddie Grant advised the Forum that items 5 and 6 were the only items that requires members to vote, and the other items are for information only.

The meeting was quorate.

23/23 – Update from Strategic Lead for Schools and Learning

Dan Careless provided a verbal update on the High Needs Block (HNB) Management Plan. The PowerPoint presentation slides are attached for information.

The LA currently has a small overspend in the HNB and has significant challenges around managing the HNB over the next five years. Some work has been in process since March 2023, but further work and funding will be required for a high level management plan to be developed for approval in March / April 2024.

Dan Careless highlighted during the presentation;

HNB Elements 1, 2, and 3 funding,
Some LA's have received Safety Valve funding up to £56m,
Develop partnerships with schools,
How the GRIPS backlog has been removed,
Estimate of 93 EH&CP have been averted due to short term Inclusion Funding,
IDOX – a new application process showing current state of EH&CP,
Consistent application process and panel decisions,
Enhanced Resource and Alternative Provision development,
Special Schools hub and development,
Cluster schools' development,
Reduction of permanent exclusions of which there was 264 in Derbyshire last year,
Consider changes to current bandings and profiles.

Within the presentation Jenny Webster stated that in conjunction with the DfE the LA would clarify capacity levels for SEN provision within the current settings.

Helen Wallace stated that supporting schools to allow SENCOs to do that role and develop is a priority but would need additional funding.

During the presentation there were numerous comments /questions including;

Karen Hayes questioned how the number of exclusions would be reduced. Dan Careless and Helen Wallace stated the number had to reduce.

In response to a comment regarding a culture of Headteachers excluding pupils in Derbyshire, Peter Johnston commented that he didn't know of any Headteachers where it is a culture to exclude pupils. Even under particularly challenging circumstances it is only a last resort to exclude.

Kevin Hirst stated that if there was an improvement in Alternative Provision who deliver an adequate curriculum, then this would reduce the number of permanent exclusions. From experience Derbyshire was lacking in this area compared to Nottinghamshire.

Saranjit Shetra commented that there isn't a culture of exclusions in Derbyshire. Schools, and Headteachers against the odds are doing great work with challenging issues.

Simon Reed questioned how Notional SEN Funding was calculated, K code funding, and that he had spoken to schools who were struggling to find the first £6,000 for EH&CP funding streams.

Peter Johnson thanked Dan Careless for the presentation and the HNB update. Dan Careless will keep the Schools Forum updated on the management plan.

23/24 – High Needs Block – first view / planning 2024-25

Eddie Grant presented the paper to inform the Schools Forum of the provisional indicative High Needs Block (HNB) settlement for 2024-25 and the potential spend for next year.

The 2023-24 projected HNB budget is estimated to be £7.655m overspent. The estimated indicative 2024-25 HNB budget allocation is £128.694m, including changes for top ups, numbers, and inflation. These figures would give an estimated shortfall in funding for 2024-25 of around £12.3m.

The previous agenda items including potential changes to the HNB funding and expenditure is not included in these projections.

Karen Hayes asked if the cost of out of county provision and independent and non-maintained special schools could be shown separately in the reports in future, to which Eddie Grant confirmed this would be done.

23/25 – Pupil Growth Fund 2024-25 + Falling Rolls

Eddie Grant presented the paper to seek the Schools Forum approval for plans in principle for use of the Pupil Growth Fund (PGF) and Falling Rolls (FRF) for 2024-25, pending final settlement figures due later this month.

He explained that Derbyshire have never had a Falling Rolls Fund, but it was the Schools Forum decision on how to spend this.

Proposed Pupil Growth allocations for 2024-25 totalled £2.330m.

It was agreed by the School Forum on the planned LA use of this allocation.

Proposed Falling Rolls Fund allocation for 2024-25 is £140,000. The Schools Forum is to decide on whether to operate a Falling Rolls Fund, or add the small amount anticipated to the residual contingency budget.

Peter Johnston requested if this decision could be deferred until more information regarding how many schools could trigger this claim, and what the criteria may be. Other representatives also agreed with this approach. Eddie Grant confirmed this would be acceptable and he would provide further details at the next meeting.

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Falling Rolls Fund 2024-25 criteria / schools involved	EG	29 th January 2024

23/26 – Central School Services Block 2024-25

Eddie Grant presented the paper to seek Schools Forum approval to the 2024-25 Central School Services Block budgets.

The 2024-25 allocation is estimated to total £4.4m which is similar to 2023-24 levels. The proposed spend in 2024-25 is £4,141m, leaving a surplus of £0.304m which will go towards the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit. The proposed spend includes a reduction of 20% each year relating to the early Help Offer.

The were no comments from the floor.

The Schools Forum agreed to the 2024-25 Central School Services Block budgets requested by the LA.

23/27 – Early Years update – verbal

Eddie Grant explained that Phil Burrows had been preparing this update but had sent his apologies due to unforeseen circumstances.

Eddie Grant and Sarah Bryan explained major changes were forthcoming in the entitlement / provision of Early Years with changes been phased in from April and September 2024. The Government have recently announced funding rates for the LA, of which at least 95% must be passported to providers. Currently, the LA passport nearer 97% and it is hoped this level will continue next year.

The LA will inform providers of estimated rates as soon as possible which will be presented at the next Schools Forum meeting, then to be agreed by Cabinet.

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Provide updated estimated rates for Early Years providers	EG / SB	29 th January 2024 meeting

The meeting closed at 6.40pm

Summary of action points

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Review Schools Forum self-evaluation Form	EG / EB	29 th January 2024 meeting (self-evaluation form to be emailed to representatives and findings reported at the next meeting)
Falling Rolls Fund 2024-25 criteria / schools involved	EG	29 th January 2024
Provide updated estimated rates for Early Years providers	EG / SB	29 th January 2024 meeting