

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 30th January 2023
Committee Room 1, County Hall at 5pm

Present

Members

Name	School / Organisation /
George Wolfe	Curbar Primary
Alan Thomas	Northfield Junior School
Peter Johnston	The Village Federation
Michelle Jenkins	Etwall Primary
Chris Greenhough	Swanwick School & Sports College
Peter Hallsworth	South Normanton Nursery
Julian Scholefield	Esteem MAT
Karen Hayes	Esteem MAT
Keith Hirst	Brookfield Community School
Sarah Baker	TEAM Education Trust
Simon Redfern	St Ralph Sherwin CMAT
Margaret Mason	Children 1st
Peter Crowe	ASCL

Substitutes

Name	School / Organisation /
Cilla Holman	Hadfield Infants School
Liz Seymour	Church of England Diocese - Derby

Observers

Name	School / Organisation /
Cllr Ruth George	DCC

DCC Officers/others

Name	School / Organisation /
Saranjit Shetra	Assistant Director, Education & Improvement
Amanda Gordon	CS & T Finance (Early Years)
Dan Careless	Strategic Lead Schools & Learning
Phil Burrows	CS & T Finance
Shelley Kerslake	CS & T Finance
Andy Walker	CS & T Finance
Ruth Lane	CS & T Finance
Michael Crawford	CS & T Finance
Eddie Grant	CS & T Finance

Peter Johnston chaired the meeting.

23/01 Apologies for Absence

Name	School / Organisation /
Jennifer Murphy	Hunloke Park Primary
Nick Goforth	Belper Secondary School
Donna Wakefield	Redhill Academy Trust
Deborah Turner	NEU
Cllr Alex Dale	DCC
Ben Riggott	Parkside Community School
Carol Cammiss	Executive Director, Children's Services
Tom Osborn	St Anne's C of E Primary School

23/02 Minutes of The Schools Forum 15th December 2023

The minutes were agreed and the action point regarding land rents and regulations would be carried forward to the next meeting as there had been insufficient time to research the matter.

23/03 Briefing note; update following DSG funding settlement 2023-24

SK presented the paper to update the Schools Forum on the funding settlement for 2023-24 and the implications for Derbyshire's primary and secondary sector formulae, Pupil Growth Fund (PGF) and Central School Services Block (CSSB) allocations.

As anticipated, applying the National Funding Formula (NFF) multipliers to the DfE's published school formula data would cost more than the Schools Block total allocation, therefore, multipliers had to be pared back by 0.7%. The final multipliers and de-delegation rates will go for Cabinet for approval later in February.

The settlement also included a Maintained Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) worth around £19.411m, which is equivalent to a further 3.6% increase in schools' delegated resources. This will provide additional funding for the 5 to 16-year-old age range and will be available to maintained primary and secondary schools, academies and free schools. The ESFA intend that the grant will be subsumed into the DSG and mainstream NFF for 2024-25.

The Pupil Growth Fund (PGF) and Central School Services Block (CSSB) were previously approved by Forum.

No questions were raised from the floor.

23/04 Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2022-23 – Quarter 3

SK presented the paper to provide the Schools Forum with an update of the Revenue Budget position of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2022-23 up to the end of December 2022 (Quarter 3).

The total deficit on 31st March 2022 stood at £5.050m which is now estimated to increase to £6.520m by 31st March 2023, due largely to overspends in the High Needs Block. Element 3 top up funding.

There is a risk with a sensitivity of £0.200m - £1.500m that High Needs Block placements and Element 3 top-ups could increase before the end of the year.

No questions were raised from the floor.

23/05 Update from Dan Careless – Strategic Lead for Schools and Learning

Dan Careless presented a briefing on the work he and colleagues are doing in particular regarding SEND. The presentation was circulated after the meeting.

The following points were raised by Forum members;

Insufficient LA support is being offered to Early Years providers for both SEND and social support for families. Supporting children early would save a lot of social and community problems as children progress through primary and secondary schools. There is currently no platform to discuss these issues.

Problems in development in younger children have been compounded by Covid.

A number of previous SEND reviews have never resulted in actions for change.

Special schools are full, yet the LA keeps asking them to take more pupils. Demand is increasing. We need a better operating model now, not in 2/3 years.

Out of County/Independent provision is expensive.

Dan Careless addressed the points by saying the LA is trying to work on now and the future with 21 different workstreams, slim lining procedures, reducing unproductive meetings, liaising with partners in other LA's, Police and Health to address wider issues and gathering more data to assess current needs and enable him to project ahead.

Peter Johnson summarised and thanked Dan for the presentation saying there is no perfect solution without unlimited funds.

23/06 High Needs Block (HNB) budget proposals 2023-24

SK presented a paper to report the High Needs Block settlement for 2023-24 and seek the views of the Schools Forum and feedback on its allocation.

The planned changes outlined by Dan Careless which are expected to impact on HNB spending are not yet at the stage where they can be reflected in the 2023-24 budget and a greater impact of that work is anticipated in 2024-5 and beyond.

The settlement is increased by £11.255m from 2022-23, an increase of 11.4%. However, we are constrained by the existing HNB overspends. The number of EHCP's has increased by 10% over 2022 and further growth is anticipated.

The debate is, are we spending too much on SEND or is more funding required. The DfE have signalled that future increases in HNB will be much lower than 2022-23 and 2023-24 and made clear that the DSG override, the legislation which keeps DSG balances separate from Council reserves, will end on 31st March 2026 and will not be extended.

There is little change in the number of places being commissioned, however Top ups are forecast to exceed the budget in almost every area in 2022-23 and further increases are budgeted for 2023-24.

There is a High Needs additional grant, which is similar to the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) and requires a minimum increase of 3.4% to funding for special schools and support centres which will be allocated as a separate grant. In addition it is proposed to increase element 3 top ups for special schools and support centres by 2.3% to bring increases in line with the increase to basic entitlement for mainstream schools. Increases for ERS provision are proposed on the same basis.

The budget for Top ups in mainstream schools resulting from EHCPs and GRIPs assumes no increase in rates as the costs of meeting increased demand fully utilise the funding available and no contingency is available.

No inflationary increase is included for central services, therefore a real terms cut is proposed.

Final allocations of HNB are a matter for the LA.

Forum members expressed the following views and feedback;

Table 1 shows the increase in Independent/Non maintained Top ups and GRIPs has increased by 180% since 2019-20, whereas Specials has only increased by 49%.

Why have Early Years Top ups/GRIPS increased by so little.

Are children in other LA's who are overspending their HNB by far more than Derbyshire getting better support.

Parents are saying that their children with SEND cannot access Early Years education as providers cannot afford to take them due to lack of LA financial support.

The need for SEN support often only becomes evident after a child has started in Early Years settings.

What is the Special Free School funding?

Replies from LA representatives were;

The increase in Independent/Non maintained Top ups is critical and work to assess this is on-going. Lots of other work is on-going to improve the SEN data held as previously mentioned. We are working with Health to determine what expenditure is their responsibility and what is LAs for children with SEND.

There is another very small amount of £0.2m of support for Early Years SEN within the Early Years Block so the table isn't entirely the full picture.

Between 97/98% of 3 and 4 year olds access Early Years provision but can't comment on % with SEND.

The HNB allocation has only just been received so not been able to investigate the £6,000 allocated to Special Free School funding yet.

The views and feedback of the Forum were noted.

23/07 Early Years Block Funding Settlement 2023-24

SK presented a paper to update the Schools Forum on the Early Years Block announcements for 2023-24 and to seek approval to central early years budgets for next year.

The settlement shows an increase of £0.19 to £4.80 per hour from 2022-23.

The Authority proposes the following for 2023-24:

(i) A universal & extended hourly rate of £4.47, an increase of £0.17 (3.95%),

(ii) An enhanced hourly rate for nursery schools of £0.58, an increase of £0.02 (3.57%),

(iii) The existing deprivation multiplier to increase to £1.35 per hour per eligible child in line with the increase in Early Years Pupil Premium, which applies to the same cohort of children, i.e., an increase of 3.32% in 2023-24.

(iv) A nursery school lump sum of £95,500, an increase of £3,000 (3.24%). This would be in line with the increase for mainstream schools and academies.

(v) A supplement will be introduced for the former TPPG grant at an hourly rate of £0.35 for nursery schools and £0.24 for other school settings. This will be funded via universal and extended hours for these settings. PVI settings will be able to claim this supplement if they have a qualified teacher employed in a teaching role and are paying into the teachers' pension scheme. A contingency fund is proposed to contribute to the sector's additional costs

The Forum decides Early Years Central Budgets which must meet a passporting test of a maximum of 5% of funding retained for this purpose.

LA proposals are very similar to 2022-23 and are for 3.64% of funding to be retained for central services, a decrease of 0.08% from 2022-23 which was agreed by Forum members and no questions were raised.

The meeting closed at 6.50pm.

The next meeting will be held at County Hall, Matlock on 28 June 2023 at 4pm.

Summary of action points

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Provide a history of land rents and regulations	SK	June 2023 meeting