

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 29th January 2024 At County Hall, Matlock at 4.45pm

Present

Members	School / Organisation
Alan Thomas	Northfield Junior School
Peter Johnston	The Village Federation
Julian Scholefield	Esteem MAT
Chris Greenhough	Swanwick School & Sports College
Emma Haywood	Alfreton Nursery School
Michelle Jenkins	Etwall Primary School
Karen Hayes	Esteem MAT
Keith Hirst	Brookfield Community School
George Wolfe	Curbar Primary School
Simon Redfern	St Ralph Sherwin CMAT
Deborah Turner	NEU
Peter Crowe	ASCL

Substitutes	School / Organisation
Cilla Hollman	Hadfield Infants School
Liz Seymour	Church of England Diocese - Derby

Observers	School / Organisation
Cllr Ruth George	DCC

DCC Officers/others	School / Organisation
Carol Cammiss	Executive Director, Childrens 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
Phil Burrows	CS & T Finance
Ruth Lane	CS & T Finance

Peter Johnston chaired the meeting.

24/01 - Apologies for Absence

DCC Officers/others	School / Organisation
Jennifer Murphy	Hunloke Park Primary
Margaret Mason	Children 1st
Donna Hain	Redhill Academy Trust
Cllr Alex Dale	DCC
Canon Carolyn Lewis	Church of England Diocese-Derby
Cllr Julie Patten	DCC
Dan Careless	Director Schools and Learning

Donna Hain has resigned as a Academy mainstream representative of the Schools Forum.

24/02 - Minutes of The Schools Forum 11th December 2023

The following points were raised;

Keith Hirst's name had been spelt incorrectly on page 4.

Saranjit Shetra pointed out that Helen Wallace was listed as Strategic Lead Childrens Services and is in fact Strategic Lead (ISS)

Deborah Turner pointed out she was listed as being present and given her apologies and she confirmed she was present.

Cilla Holman asked for clarification of a point on page 5 regarding Falling Rolls Fund. Eddie Grant confirmed that until 2024-25 Derbyshire have never qualified for a Falling Rolls Fund, but when they do it is a decision for the Schools Forum as to how it is used.

Peter Johnston confirmed that three action points listed in the minutes would all be covered in later items on the agenda.

No other matters arising were raised.

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

The meeting was quorate.

24/03 – Update from Strategic Lead for Schools and Learning

Dan Careless, the Strategic Lead for Schools and Learning was unable to attend the meeting. Carol Cammiss said that a SEND restructure is progressing.

Peter Johnston said there had been a Schools Forum pre meeting which Dan Careless did attend at which they discussed the need to connect SEND finance and practical plans.

24/04 – Forum self-evaluation

Peter Johnston presented the responses to the forum self evaluation, which are included in Appendix 1.

A few questions did not receive a majority of positive responses which are as follows:

- Is there a dedicated website link for schools forum, is it current and regularly updated? – Reply yes, [Derbyshire Schools Forum - Derbyshire County Council](#)

- Are the agenda and papers publicly available on the authority's website at least 6 working days in advance of the meeting? – Papers and minutes are generally added after the meeting, agenda and papers will be added in advance in the future.
- If papers are tabled at the meeting, are they published on the website promptly after the meeting – Yes they are, but it seems most members were not aware of the website based on the answers above.
- Is there an induction pack or training programme available for new members? There isn't an induction pack at present and this will be addressed along with general training.
- Is there a system in place for a decision if votes are tied. Yes, the constitution states the Forum chair has the casting vote.

General comments included requests for training and that DCC representative be added to name plates.

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Forum agenda and papers to be added to website in advance of meetings	EG	Future meetings
Induction pack to be produced	PJ and LA team	19 June 2024 meeting
Name cards to amended with DCC Representative where appropriate	RL	19 June 2024 meeting
Include a training session on a future agenda	EG/PJ	A future meeting

24/05 – Update following DSG funding settlement 2024-25

Eddie Grant presented an update for Schools Forum on the funding settlement for 2024-25 and the implications for Derbyshire's primary and secondary sector formula, Pupil Growth Fund (PGF) and Central School Services Block (CSSB) allocations. Eddie confirmed that income was broadly in line with expectations, the HNB had increased by 5% and the EYB had increased by 67.5% which was due to increased entitlements for younger children.

Eddie confirmed that due to the time lag between the DfE calculation of funding and confirmation of the October 2023 census data, we have a shortfall of £1.7m compared to the National Funding Formula multipliers. The LA has found £0.4m of this from Pupil Growth funding and the remainder has been found by paring back each multiplier by 0.18%. Minimum funding guarantee (MFG) remains at 0.5% as previously advised. The delegation rates have been updated.

Peter Johnston asked if this pare back has been advised to schools. Andy Walker replied that the information had only been received within the last 24 hours so schools in general have not been advised yet. To put this into context, a school with a £1 million budget will incur reduction of £1,800 compared with previous estimates.

No other comments were received from the floor.

24/06 – Schools Block Budgets 2023-24 – Pupil Growth & Falling Rolls Fund

Eddie Grant presented the paper to seek Schools Forum approval for plans in principle for use of the Pupil Growth Fund (PGF) and Falling Rolls (FRF) for 2024-25, now that the final settlement figures are known.

PGF and FRF are matters for the Schools Forum to decide.

Eddie confirmed that the proposed allocation for the free school reserve and the support for infant class sizes had both reduced slightly since the last report being £0.05m for the former and £0.05m for the latter.

Forum members discussed in detail the FRF of £0.14m and school's eligibility to receive funding. Five criteria were listed in the report, the first was mandated by the DfE, with the remainder being recommended by the LA.

Points raised include;

- Criteria 2 and 3 were very broad brush not taking into account the reasons why schools may refuse admissions or exclude pupils.
- Falling rolls can be due to local issues.
- Do we know the reasons why particular schools are eligible
- Exclusions won't be a big factor in primary schools.
- Decisions could be made by a panel, for instance, finance in conjunction with admissions and education improvement service.
- Alternative provision schools are finding problems in returning pupils to mainstream schools.
- We would need to approve which schools are eligible now before redundancies are agreed, a process which is currently underway.
- Peter Johnston wanted to emphasise that he doesn't know who the 13 schools are on this list are as he may have a conflict of interest if he did.

Phil Burrows confirmed that between October 2022 census and the October 2023 census, 13 Derbyshire schools were eligible at a rate of £667 per pupil. Eligibility is most likely to be due to falling birth rates. The schools are all primary with the largest school having 126 pupils on roll. The fund only applies to schools who will need to make redundancies and these posts would need to be refilled within the next three to five years.

The decision of the Forum was to split all the money available amongst eligible schools using the criteria of;

- 1) Whether the school will need to make redundancies to contain spending within its formula budget and these posts would need to be refilled within the next three to five years.
- 2) Distribution will be based on those schools that have a 20% or greater reduction in their number on roll between the previous October and the current October at a rate of £667 per pupil.

Approval for the amended values for free school reserve (R1) and infant class sizes (R3) & FRF (R9) were by consensus and therefore, this completes all the Officer recommendations R1- R9 as the others are unchanged from December

24/07 – Early Years Block 2024-25

Eddie Grant presented a paper to update the Schools Forum on the EYB announcements for 2024-25 and to seek approval to Central Early Years budgets for next year.

Eddie confirmed there was a significant increase in funding due to the additional 2 year old and nine months old provision commencing. The figures will be revised according to January 2024 and January 2025 census data. Teachers pay and pension grants have been rolled into funding. There is a passporting test which says 95% of funding should be passed to schools with a maximum of 5% held centrally and the DfE are looking to reduce the central figure to 3% in the future.

Section 2.2 sets out the proposed hourly rates and section 2.3 is the centrally held early years budgets and the LA is proposing to retain 3.31% which is down from the 3.63% held previously. Derbyshire's passporting rate is already approximately 97%.

There have been some comments raised about the two year old hourly rate for working parents which is to be set at £7.21 with the supplement of £0.32 for deprivation for any pupil that qualifies, due to the basic rate being less than the existing vulnerable 2 year old rate. If a pupil qualifies for EYPP they will qualify for the supplemented rate. Sarah Bryan confirmed that the 2 yr old rate is not actually a dip in funding and is generally an increase from what parents are currently playing.

A discussion then took place including questions regarding sufficiency of places within Derbyshire and it was confirmed the LA do sufficiency work anyway regardless of the new government offer and across the county we have enough places, although there may be shortages in specific localities. Some PVI contractors and schools are looking to increase their age range and therefore be able to accept younger children and the Local Authority is working to achieve sufficiency in all areas. Approximately 90% of the new offer is likely to be a transfer from fee paying children to DfE funded. The sufficiency assessments go to cabinet and are then published.

No further comments were raised from the floor and the Forum approved the central early years budgets proposed as set out in section 2.3 of the report.

24/08 – High Needs Block (HNB) 2024-25

Eddie Grant firstly apologised for the late provision, earlier today, of this report of the HNB settlement for 2024-25, seeking the views of the Schools Forum on its proposed allocation.

He confirmed the Forum did not have a decision to make merely to give its views on the proposals.

As at the end of Q3, the HNB is forecast to be £11.4m over spent by the year end. This includes a 26% increase in EHCP's since the start of the financial year. As the DSG is already £4.775m in deficit as at the 1st of April 2023, the DSG deficit will increase. The DfE have confirmed that the legislation which keeps DSG balances separate from council reserves will end on the 31st of March 2026 and will not be extended. Local Authorities must take steps to ensure spending is kept within the grant available and that plans are in place to recover existing DSG deficits.

Chris Greenhough noted that in the top up budgets for 2024-25 for Derbyshire Special Schools were proposed at £19.2m and for independent/non maintained the figure was £22.5m. He added that there are 1,300 pupils in LA schools and asked how many were in independent schools as he expects their average cost to be higher. Eddie Grant replied he didn't have that information available but would provide it. Chris Greenhough pointed out that independent providers just set a fee structure and don't worry about the DSG. Phil Burrows confirmed there is a move towards providing extra special needs provision in Special Schools and this is part of the work Dan Careless is undertaking.

Peter Johnson asked for clarification of the contingency/savings figure of -£5.9m and it was confirmed these needed to be savings to stick within the £80.8m proposed for this area of the HNB budget.

Eddie Grant clarified that some GRIP's were being replaced with EHCP's, new GRIP's are no longer being approved and are being replaced by inclusion funding (IF) however, there are still some key stage GRIP's in place.

Peter Johnston asked how much of the 26% increase in EHCP's were pupils who moved from GRIP's to EHCP's as this was important for Schools Forum to understand. Julian Schofield added that Derby City are bringing back a form of GRIP into their funding model.

It was noted that from September 2024 there was an increase of 15 ERS places, 68 Special School places, and 150 PRU places. Karen Hayes confirmed that the increase in PRU places is due to the increase in exclusions in mainstream schools.

Eddie Grant confirmed that a transfer of up to 0.5% of SB funding to HNB was a possibility in future years and Deborah Turner mentioned that Schools Forum had agreed that in the past which hid the real HNB deficit.

Eddie Grant confirmed the proposed budgets outlined in the paper would go to cabinet members in March and that there was no inflation increase for top up funding in mainstream schools but an allowance of 1.4% increase approximately is included for special schools to match the schools block multiplier increases, meaning an approximate increase of 2.8% in total funding for Special Schools.

The Forum noted the report and had offered the views above.

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Confirm number of pupils in Independent/non-maintained provision	EG	June 2024 meeting

24/09 – Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring 2023-24 – Quarter 3

Eddie Grant presented the paper to provide the Schools Forum with the Q3 projected revenue budget out turn position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2023-24.

He confirmed that most of the figures in this report had been covered in other papers on the agenda and that the main figures were the DSG deficit brought forward from 2022-23 was £4.775 million including offset funding by other earmarked DSG reserves.

The most significant area of the anticipated 2023-24 deficit of £10.723 million was they overspend of £11.47 million pounds in the HNB.

Saranjit Shetra pointed out that within Section 2.2.4 the EYB £0.044m over spend quoted is actually an under spend.

Peter Johnston confirmed he would like to see some sort of training for members included on a future agenda and would like to add as a standing item to future agendas of the question 'what have we achieved tonight for the children'. He felt the vote on the FRF would support individual small schools which would be very helpful and Karen Hayes said the explanation of early years funding had helped her to understand this area greatly.

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Add standing item to the agenda – What have we achieved for the children	EG	June 2024 meeting

The next meeting will be held on 19th June 2024 at 4.45pm in Committee Room 1 at County Hall, Matlock.

The meeting closed at 6.15pm

Summary of action points

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Confirm number of pupils in Independent/non-maintained provision	EG	June 2024 meeting
Add standing item to the agenda – What have we achieved for the children	EG	June 2024 meeting

Appendix 1

1. Please state your role

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Local Authority	6
Member of forum	15



2. Are meeting dates set in well advance and details (including time and venue) published in an accessible manner to enable interested parties to plan their attendance?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes	20
No	1
Don't know	1



3. Are meetings timed to coincide with key dates? (for example, reporting of funding formula)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes	15
No	0
Don't know	7



4. Are meetings held in an accessible venue to enable observers to attend easily?

[More Details](#)


[Insights](#)




Yes	18
No	2
Don't know	2



5. Is there a dedicated website link for schools forum, is it current and regularly updated?

[More Details](#)




 Insights

 Yes	8
 No	0
 Don't know	14



6. Are the agenda and papers publicly available on the authority's website at least 6 working days in advance of the meeting?




[More Details](#)

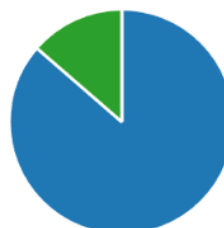
 Yes	4
 No	7
 Don't know	11



7. Are the papers published as a single document, so that users can download easily?

[More Details](#)



 Yes	19
 No	0
 Don't know	3



8. If papers are tabled at the meeting, are they published on the website promptly after the meeting?

[More Details](#)


 Insights

 Yes	6
 No	0
 Don't know	16



9. Are draft minutes published a reasonable time (for example, within 2 to 3 weeks) after the meeting, rather than waiting until the following meeting?

[More Details](#)


 Insights

● Yes	21
● No	0
● Don't know	1



10. Are the minutes clear and unambiguous, with sufficient detail to illustrate the discussions, without reporting verbatim every point made?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

● Yes	21
● No	0
● Don't know	1



11. Is the constitution clear and appropriate?

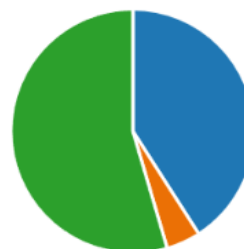
Including for example:

- a clear process for ensuring proportional representation
- the process for electing members and their tenure
- the timescale for review is clearly set out
- the process for dealing with repetitive non attenders

[More Details](#)


 Insights




● Yes	9
● No	1
● Don't know	12



12. Is there an induction pack or training programme available for new members?

[More Details](#)


 Insights



 Yes	1
 No	3
 Don't know	18



13. Is the election process clear and transparent? Representatives are elected only by the group they are representing, whether phase-specific for maintained schools, or by the proprietors of academies for academy members.

[More Details](#)

 Insights

 Yes	12
 No	1
 Don't know	9



14. Do the papers contain clear recommendations and indicate in a consistent manner whether the item is for information, consultation or decision?

[More Details](#)




 Insights

 Yes	21
 No	0
 Don't know	1



15. Is it clear to observers who attendees at the forum are representing? (for example, by use of name plates, indicating sector)

[More Details](#)

 Yes	18
 No	3
 Don't know	1



16. Does the chair manage the meeting well, ensuring that all are able to contribute to the agenda items, that no bias towards any sector is evident and that no single person or organisation is able to dominate the discussion?

[More Details](#) [Insights](#)

Yes	21
No	0
Don't know	1



17. Is there inclusive participation in discussions for all phases and types of members?

[More Details](#) [Insights](#)

Yes	21
No	0
Don't know	1



18. Do members actively canvass views and objectively represent their whole peer group at the forum and provide feedback after meetings?

[More Details](#)

Yes	7
No	3
Don't know	12



19. Where votes are required, is it clear who is eligible to vote for different items?

[More Details](#)


 Insights

● Yes	16
● No	2
● Don't know	4



20. Where votes are required, are the arrangements for recording the votes clear and unambiguous?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

● Yes	18
● No	0
● Don't know	4



21. Is there a system in place for a decision if votes are tied?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

● Yes	2
● No	0
● Don't know	20



22. Is the operational & good practice guide used to regularly review the forum's adherence to good practice?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

● Yes	1
● No	3
● Don't know	18



23. Any comments (please state the question number if your comment relates to a specific question)

[More Details](#)

4

Responses

Latest Responses

Comments:

- 4. If there was the facility to join remotely then this would be beneficial. 5. I am unaware of a website and have not been made aware of one. 12. If there is an induction pack then as a new member that would have been good to receive.
- Attendees name plates do not always include the sector they are representing. Not really sure if members canvass their peer group. It's certainly not obvious if they do.
- I have received no training and as a substitute member I am never aware whether I am entitled to a voice or a vote because I don't know who the other representatives in my category are.