

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 29th January 2025 At County Hall, Matlock at 4.45pm

Present

Members

- John Payne - Edale Primary School
- Cassie Hurt - Eureka Primary School
- Peter Johnston - The Village Federation
- Amy Musgrove representing Heather Watts (apologies) - New Mills Secondary School
- Julian Scholefield - Esteem MAT
- Donna Hain - Redhill Academy Trust
- Ann Donaghy - Archway Learning Trust
- Nicola Cook - Team Education
- Paul Scaife - Embark Trust
- Keith Hirst - Redhill Academy Trust
- Deborah Turner - NEU
- Peter Monk - ASCL

Substitutes

- Cilla Holman – Hadfield Infant School
- Andy Kelly – Embark Trust

Observers

- Cllr Ruth George - DCC
- Cllr Alex Dale - DCC
- Cllr Robert Flatley - DCC

DCC Officers/others

- Alison Noble – Temporary Executive Director/DCS
- Sarah Bryan - Senior Advisor, Children's Services
- Eddie Grant – DCC Senior Business Partner
- Phil Burrows – DCC – Finance CST
- Elena Beard - DCC – Finance CST
- Andy Walker – DCC Head of School Support Finance

Peter Johnston chaired the meeting.

25/01 – Welcome and Apologies for Absence

- Richard Bull - Dronfield Junior school
- Matt Stretton - Coton in the Elms Primary School
- Nadeem Shah - Park Schools Federation
- Michelle Jenkins - Etwall Primary School
- Heather Watts - New Mills Secondary School

- Chris Greenhough - Swanwick School and Sports College
- Karen Hayes - Esteem MAT
- Grant Worthington - Flying High Trust
- Gary Mizler - Learners Trust
- Adele France - Minerva Learning Trust
- Melanie Lawson - Embark Trust
- Canon Carolyn Lewis - Church of England Diocese - Derby
- Simon Redfern - Catholic Diocese Academy Trust
- Liz Seymour – Church of England Diocese – Derby
- Helen Wallace – Interim Director, Schools and Learning
- Ruth Lane – DCC – School Support Finance

25/02- Minutes of The Schools Forum 11th December 2024 and actions arising

The minutes were agreed for accuracy.

Action points from the last meeting on 11 December 2024:

Peter Johnston confirmed from School Forum guidance that Union reps could be voting members where appropriate. It was agreed that the constitution be redrafted in advance of the next meeting to include voting membership for union representation.

Phil Burrows confirmed that a permanent exclusion of a pupil would attract a clawback of pupil led schools block funding from the following Monday after the 6th day of the incident.

Action Point: Rachel Moore (Virtual School Head) to be included in future invites.

Responsibility: Eddie Grant

Timeline: next meeting

Action Point: Constitution to be redrafted with regard to voting membership for union representation.

Responsibility: LA Officers

Timeline: To be shared prior to the next meeting ready for ratification at the meeting.

25/03 DSG Funding Settlement & Schools Block 2025-26

Eddie Grant presented a paper to provide an update on the funding settlement for 2025-26 and the implications for Derbyshire's primary and secondary sector formulae.

Schools Block Funding:

- Applying the National Funding Formula (NFF) multipliers to Derbyshire's school data is estimated to cost £632.524 million, which is £4.081 million more than the total allocation.
- The shortfall is mainly due to increased deprivation, as indicated by Ever 6 and free school meals (FSM) eligibility, which rose by 4.5% despite a 1.1% decrease in the number of pupils on roll (NOR) from October 2023 to October 2024. Proposed allocations of £0.250m from Pupil Growth Fund

and a further £0.390m, including the first call on contingency, reduce the shortfall to £3,441m.

- A report will be presented to the Local Authority Cabinet on 20th February to seek approval for local mainstream formula multipliers, which include a 0.68% pro-rata reduction to stay within budget.
- Primary and Secondary school teachers' pay grant, teachers' pension grant and core schools budget grant were all included in the 2025-26 revised baselines figures.
- Appendix 2: small increases in some de-delegated and top-sliced service related to staffing costs increasing. No Insurance from April 2025 as this will be sourced from the Governments RPA service.

A discussion then took place:

A question was raised as to what the average increase was from the NFF for schools for 2025-26. Eddie Grant suggested as an estimate it was around 0.3% after taking into consideration the pareback of multipliers. Schools, however, are looking at funding potential 2.8% pay awards from their own funds.

Cllr Dale asked if there were any grants confirmed for schools for the increase in National Insurance from April 2025. Phil Burrows confirmed that a grant is assumed but at a local level there is no guarantee that it will be fully funded, and no actual details of the funding are currently known.

Cllr Dale told the forum that other F40 colleagues are in a comparable situation relating to pareback of funding.

Phil Burrows confirmed that Derbyshire have had to pareback for at least the last three years, with the 2025-26 pareback being the highest.

- Schools Forum approved that Cabinet accept responsibility for costs funded from de-delegated and top-sliced resources for services, detailed in appendix 2, and that,
- Mainstream schools are notified of their provisional allocations, pending Cabinet and ESFA approval.

25/04 Pupil Growth Funding & Falling Rolls Fund 2025-26

Eddie Grant presented a paper to seek the Schools Forum approval for plans in principle for use of the Pupil Growth Fund (PGF) and Falling Rolls Fund (FRF) for 2025-26, now that the final settlement figures are known.

Pupil Growth Fund (PGF):

- The PGF, part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), funds in-year pupil growth, new free schools, and Key Stage 1 class sizes. Its distribution is managed by the Schools Forum.

Settlement for 2025-26:

- The funding calculation compares pupil number increases from October 2024 to October 2023 at the Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) level.

- Each additional primary pupil attracts £1,570, and each secondary pupil attracts £2,350. Local authorities receive £77,225 for each new institution registered for the first time on the October 2024 census. Derbyshire has no qualifying academies in 2025-26.
- Derbyshire's funding for 2025-26 is £1.181 million, down from £2.151 million in 2024-25, due to fewer eligible pupils (306 primary and 299 secondary) compared to the previous year (397 primary and 662 secondary).

Proposed Allocations for 2025-26:

1. **In-Year Support for Free Schools:** £0.350 million for increased pupil rolls in four new free schools.
2. **Free School Reserve:** £0.100 million for pre and post-opening support costs.
3. **In-Year Pupil Increase:** £0.100 million to help schools with significant in-year pupil number increases.
4. **Support for Infant Class Sizes:** £0.300 million to meet Key Stage 1 class size requirements, with schools expected to self-fund £600 per month of any claim.
5. **Pupil Growth Fund Contingency:** The remaining balance to offset any overspends in pupil growth and infant class size funds.

Growth Fund Usage:

- **Permitted Uses:**
 - Support growth in pre-16 pupil numbers to meet basic needs.
 - Support additional classes needed to meet infant class size regulations.
 - Cover costs of new schools.
- **Prohibited Uses:**
 - Support schools in financial difficulty (should be funded from a de-delegated contingency).
 - Support general growth due to popularity (managed through lagged funding).

2025-26 Demographics and Funding Impact:

- The Schools Block settlement for 2025-26 shows a shortfall of £4.081 million due to increased free school meals (FSM) eligibility.
- The Schools Forum discussed paring back all National Funding Formula (NFF) multipliers to make Derbyshire's formula allocations affordable.
- The Forum can contribute from the PGF to support mainstream budgets, but this reduces the residual contingency.
- A fixed contribution of £0.250 million from the PGF would reduce the Schools Block shortfall and the pare-back of multipliers.
- After this contribution, the residual shortfall would be £3.441 million, necessitating a 0.68% reduction on all multipliers.

The Forum determines the basis for allocating the PGF for 2025-26.

Falling Rolls Fund:

- Derbyshire operated a fund in 2024-25 for the first time for schools who's NOR dropped by at least 20% between last October census and the previous year's October census and that school capacity data showed that school places would be required in the subsequent 3-5 years.
- The Authority will not receive any FRF in 2025-26 despite 68% of MSOA's in the primary sector and 64% in the secondary sector seeing a reduction in pupil numbers from October 23 to October 24.
- The distribution of the FRF is a matter for the Schools Forum rather than the County Council.

The Forum agreed the following recommendations;

R1 – To fund the cost of the Free Schools in year increases at a cost of £0.350m.

R2 – *That the Schools Forum consider and determine the basis for supporting maintained and academy schools' Key Stage 1 class costs from April 2025.*

R3 – A Key Stage 1 budget of £0.300m for 2025-26.

R4 – In in-year pupil increases budget of £0.100m for 2025-26;

R5 – The eligibility arrangements for 2025-26 for the above.

R6 – Noted the forecast funding requirement in respect of Free Schools and agreed to contribute £0.100m to the Free Schools Reserve for 2025-26.

R7 – Noted the residual pupil growth balance and the potential for it to contribute towards the overall DSG deficit.

R8 - Noted the potential alternative use of the Pupil Growth Fund and agreed to contribute £0.250m towards closing the residual Schools Block shortfall from the residual contingency budget.

R9 – No Falling Rolls fund will be operated in 2025-26.

25/05 Early Years Block 2025-26

Eddie Grant presented a paper:

To update the Schools Forum on the Early Years Block announcements for 2025-26 and to seek approval to central early years budgets for next year. To update the Schools Forum on the further expansion of entitlements from September 2025.

Early Years Settlement for 2025-26:

- **Total Early Years Block:** £110.234 million, based on January 2024 census data except extended entitlements for working parents of 2-year-olds and under 2's which are partly based on January 2024 and a DfE estimate.

Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF)

This is the basis for funding nursery schools, nursery units attached to mainstream schools and private, voluntary and independent early years provision.

LA proposals for 2025-26

- **Universal & Extended Hourly Rate:** £5.22 (£0.24 or 4.4% increase).

- **Enhanced Hourly Rate for Nursery Schools:** £0.73 (£0.11 or 17.7% increase) and a lump sum of £120,000 (£10,500 or 9.6% increase).
- **Deprivation Multiplier:** current £1.35 per hour for eligible 3 & 4-year-olds remains.
- **TPPG & CSBG supplement:** remains at £0.50 for nursery schools and other school settings to replace the specific grants previously allocated to these settings. This will be funded via universal and extended hours.
- **2-Year-Old Hourly Rate:** £7.42 (2.9% increase) with a £0.33 supplement for assessment-based pupils and those qualifying for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP).
- **Under 2-Year-Old Hourly Rate:** £10.14 (3% increase) with a £0.33 supplement for deprivation.
- **SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF) Supplement:** £720,000 from the Early Years Block.

Central Early Years Budgets for 2025-26:

A matter for the Schools Forum as laid out in Table 3.

Passporting Test:

- The proposals meet the DfE's requirement to delegate at least 96% of funding to providers, with a maximum of 4% held centrally.

A discussion then took place:

Eddie Grant confirmed that 97% would be passported to EY providers in 2025-26.

Sarah Bryan stated that she had received positive feedback from providers regarding the 97%. The remaining 3% covers statutory functions including sufficiency, Information for families, Education Improvement and part of the SEN service. Sarah also commented that private providers are wanting clarification as to whether they will receive a grant for the increase in National Insurance from April 2025, but they do understand that this is a Government decision.

Schools Forum

- Noted the national early years funding rates for 2025-26;
- Noted the changes in the supplement funding arrangements and funding rates for 2025-26
- Considered and approved the central early years budgets proposed by the Authority set out in section 2.3.

Action point: To provide an up to date list of Childrens Services Leadership Team with contact details and roles and responsibilities.

Responsibility: Alison Noble

Timeline: As soon as possible

25/06 High Needs Block 2025-26

Eddie Grant presented a paper to report the High Needs Block settlement for 2025-26 and seek the views of the Schools Forum on its allocation.

High Needs Block Settlement for 2025-26:

- Derbyshire's allocation will increase by £10.822 million (9.3%) from the 2024-25 figure.

Key Points:

- **Current Spending:** Latest forecast overspend of £31.263 million for 2024-25.
- **Growth in EHCPs:** Increase from 6,806 to 7,572 (11%) as of January 2025 compared with the start of the financial year, with further growth expected during 2025.

DSG Deficit: Expected to rise from £16.945 million to £47.118 million by the end of 2024-25. The current DSG override, the legislation which keeps DSG balances separate from Council reserves, is due to end on 31st March 2026. DSG finance regulations state that any deficit should be recovered from future years DSG allocations.

Proposed Allocations for 2025-26:

- **Places:** planned cost of £21.315 million, a 15.1% increase from 2024-25.
- **Top-Ups:** Various sectors including primary, secondary, special, and independent/non-maintained schools, with a total proposed budget of £112.135 million (no increase on latest 2024-25 spend).
- **Services:** No inflationary increases planned; restructures to create the Engagement Service and Inclusion Support Advisory Service have been met within existing resources.

Summary:

- The proposed allocations exceed the 2025-26 High Needs Block grant, resulting in an in-year deficit of £22.436 million.
- The cumulative DSG deficit is projected to reach £69.554 million by the end of 2025-26.

A discussion then took place:

A question was asked why, in Table 1 the Independent / Non maintained spend for 2024-25 had risen over the budget significantly. Alison Noble replied that once a pupil is within these providers they stay there, plus there has been an increase in EH&CP's in LA schools that leads to more pupils moving into the Independent sector as the LA do not currently have the sufficiency at present to accommodate. Julian Schofield commented that more inclusion in LA mainstream schools may help to stop pupils moving to the Independent sector. Also, that Derby City were putting onto practice pupils moving back to LA from Independent providers and it may be worthwhile liaising with them. Alison Noble confirmed that Derbyshire's High Needs deficit is "mid table" compared to other LA's. The quick rise in the deficit is partly due to the growth in demand for EH&CP's.

Chris Greenhough sent his apologies for the meeting but also asked this question: Can the contracts of temporary Send officers be extended as permanent roles are awarded in order to increase capacity and address the issues set out in the recent Send inspection?

Alison Noble replied that stability in staffing is being looked at going forward after utilising contractors / agency colleagues and recognised the wider point that additional capacity in the system would be welcomed if viable. There is now an independent Chair of an assurance board established and an impact plan agreed with the DFE who will rigorously monitor progress against the key priority improvement areas. We will be inspected again in 18 months.

Action point: Reply to Chris Greenhough regarding the question he raised.

Responsibility: Peter Johnston

Timeline: As soon as possible

25/07 Central School Services Block 2025-26

Eddie Grant presented a paper to seek Schools Forum approval to the 2025-26 Central School Services Block budgets.

Central School Services Block (CSSB):

- Introduced in 2018-19 to fund local authorities for statutory duties for both maintained schools and academies.
- Components:
 - Ongoing responsibilities (e.g., Admissions, Schools Forum, Copyright Licenses) plus those previously funded from the ESG.
 - Historic commitments (e.g., Early Help offer).

CSSB Allocation for 2025-26:

- **Ongoing Responsibilities Total:** £4,275,469.
- **Historic Commitments Total:** £455,345.
- **Total CSSB Funding:** £4,730,814 compared with £4,460,857 in 2024-25.

Proposed CSSB Spend for 2025-26:

- **Admissions Service:** £0.646 million.
- **Schools Forum:** £0.047 million.
- **Former ESG Retained Duties:** £2.027 million.
- **Pensions for Centrally Funded Teachers:** £0.159 million.
- **Former TPECG & CSBG Grants:** £0.401 million.
- **Copyright Licenses:** £0.884 million.
- **Historic Commitments:** £0.455 million.
- **Balance towards DSG Deficit:** £0.111 million.
- Schools Forum considered the report and agreed to the 2025-26 CSSB budgets as requested by the Authority.

25/08 What have we achieved at this meeting for the children in Derbyshire?

The Early Years increased settlement was welcomed.

Investment in pupils.

Hearing the conversation about how progress is been made for children in the High Needs system.

The meeting closed at 6.15pm.

Summary of action points:

Action Point: Rachel Moore (Virtual School Head) to be included in future invites.

Responsibility: Eddie Grant

Timeline: next meeting

Action Point: Constitution to be redrafted with regard to voting membership for union representation.

Responsibility: LA Officers

Timeline: To be shared prior to the next meeting ready for ratification at the meeting.

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