

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 19th January 2023

Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Telford Town Centre.

Status: Agreed

Name	Establishment	Representing
Claire Whiting (CW) Chair	Redhill Primary Academy	Academies
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary School	Maintained Primaries – Newport Cluster
Yvonne Crilly (YC)	Woodside Primary School	Maintained Primaries – South Cluster
Robert Fox (RF)	Donnington Wood Junior School	Maintained Primaries – North Cluster
Rachel Cook (RC)	Newdale Primary School	Maintained Primaries - Central Cluster
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special School	Maintained Special Schools
Darren Lennon (DE)	Linden Centre PRU	Maintained PRUs
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Day Nurseries	Private, Voluntary and Independent Nurseries
Michael Scott (MS)	Newport Girls' High School	Academies
Joe Edgar (JE)	Abraham Darby Academy	Academies
Simon Wellman (SW)	Director Education & Skills	Representative of the Executive Director of Children's Services
Tim Davis (TD)	Group Accountant	Representative of the Director of Finance
Andy Wood (AW)	Senior Accountant - Schools	Representative of the Director of Finance

1. Apologies - AW.

1.1 Apologies were received from:

Lee Hadley – Abraham Darby Academy.

Mandy Dhaliwall – Coalbrookdale Primary School.

Shirley Reynolds – Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education.

Jo Britton – Executive Director of Children's Services

Tracey Smart – Finance Manager.

2. Minutes of the 17th November 2022 meeting and matters arising - GE

2.1 The minutes of the 17th November 2022 were accepted as a true and accurate record. A copy of the minutes can be found here:

[Minutes of 17th November 2022.](#)

- 2.2 Minute 3.3 CW asked if any progress had been made finding a governor member. SW advised that a request would be put on the Education Noticeboard.
- 2.3 Minute 8.1. CW asked if recordings of the Forum were required to be kept on the web. AW advised that nothing in the regulations stated that they had to be kept, only that members needed to be seen and heard at the meeting. The links have now been removed from the website.

3. Schools funding for the financial year 2023 – 2024 - TD

- 3.1 The Forum were provided with a paper which can be found here:

[School funding for the financial year 2023/24.](#)

- 3.2 CW stated that we have most of the information in this paper at previous meetings and this was just to update on the final allocations.
- 3.3 TD advised that the new grant “Mainstream Schools Additional Grant”, for FY2023/24 only, after which it will be subsumed into the DSG, will allocate £5.2M to T&W schools. An estimate of the allocations can be found at the link:

[Estimates of Mainstream Schools Additional Grant.](#)

- 3.4 CW asked how many schools qualified for the minimum funding guarantees. AW stated that twelve schools are on the minimum funding per pupil, total allocation just under £1M, and another six schools were on the minimum funding guarantee, total allocations of approximately £60K.
- 3.5 TD advised that there had been a significant increase in the allocations for High Needs (HN) in FY2023-2024 compared to the prior year. However, much of this will be absorbed by funding increases in provider costs (pay rises and general inflation). The 2022/23 increase in funding is likely to be all required for in-year spend and we are currently looking at a break-even DSG position by year end, i.e. using all of the brought forward balance of £0.3m.
- 3.6 The ESFA has intimated that these larger increases will not be the norm and we will soon return to increases of around 3% per annum, which will put significant pressure on high needs budgets. However, T&W are, with the help of settings, managing better than most authorities, two thirds of whom are in one of the DfE’s two recovery programs, for LAs with significant DSG deficits.
- 3.7 HD added that all the special schools are facing in-year deficits due to only receiving a one percent increase in funding in the current year whilst facing increased complexity in the pupils that are being admitted and inflationary pressures.

- 3.8 CW asked what provision is available for nursery pupils formerly attending the Bridge? SW advised that whilst support is provided for mainstream early years settings, this would be discussed at the next meeting of the Primary Heads' Forum.
- 3.9 TD advised that the settlement for the Early Years (EY) sector was very low with at three percent for three and four year old free entitlement and one percent for two year olds. When attending one of the DfE's briefings the presenters acknowledged that the settlement did not reflect inflationary pressures.
- 3.10 CW expressed her concern, especially for PVI's, as (although undesirable) schools could cross-subsidise nursery classes from the schools budgets, but PVI's did not have that option.
- 3.11 PH stated that income is going up by 1% but staffing cost are going up by 10% in some cases due to the minimum wage requirements. Some settings are now refusing to provide the free entitlement and just offering private provision, for which they charge a higher hourly rate.
- 3.12 CW asked if more funding could go to EY for HN? PH added that there are now more pupils with complex needs in the EY settings and they are struggling to cope. SW stated that the SEND team are looking at providing funding for individual early years pupils similar to that provided for school pupils.
- 3.13 TD stated that the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) which is funded on a per pupil basis has reduced again, the amount per pupil reducing despite inflationary pressures of over 10% this year and in addition, school licence fees that are deducted as a top slice by the ESFA have gone up by 13%. This continues to reduce the amount available for LAs to provide those statutory services for which this block is allocated.

4. De-delegation for Statutory School Quality Assurance Services – SW/TD.

- 4.1 The Forum were provided with a paper which can be found here:
[De-delegation for statutory schools quality assurance.](#)
- 4.2 CW stated that this had been discussed at the last couple of meetings and did not want to revisit the context.
- 4.3 SW thanked the working parties for their help with the new model for schools quality assurance (QA). Both RC & RF were involved with the working parties.
- 4.4 RC raised the following points from the working parties:
- That the agreement would be reviewed after twelve months; agreed, the Forum would need to vote again each year for the de-delegation.
 - Concerns over what would be "credible" staff. SW responded that this would depend on the agreement to de-delegate but has some ideas for suitable staff.

- That the group appreciated the LAs proposal to reduce the amount requested compared to the previous grant.
 - Is there agreement with the Severn Teaching School Alliance so that they can feed into QA? SW stated that the LA is happy for this to happen but it would also depend upon the Ofsted lead inspectors view when Ofsted inspected.
- 4.5 HD asked what are the requirements of “credible”. SW stated that we would need the incumbent to have experience of being a successful head teacher and ideally of being an Ofsted inspector.
- 4.6 CW then asked the Forum to move to a vote. All members eligible to vote approved the delegation.

5. 2023/2024 Growth Fund - TD.

- 5.1 The Forum were provided with a paper which can be found here:

[Growth funding financial year 2023-2024.](#)

- 5.2 TD reminded the Forum that historically all the growth funding received, as part of the DSG schools block, was used within the formulae, increasing pupil numbers in those schools that had increased their pupil admission number (PAN), or gone above their PAN, following requests by the LA.
- 5.3 For FY2023/24 we requested, and the Forum agreed, to introduce a growth fund to provide start-up costs for new schools, as this was a requirement of the ESFA. We have now also agreed with Thomas Telford School for them to increase their PAN for T&W pupils by 26. We will therefore need to fund this via the growth fund as Thomas Telford do not fall within the normal funding system, being a City Technology College (CTC) with a different funding agreement to academies with the ESFA.
- 5.4 It is proposed that we calculate the funding due to Thomas Telford School using the same methodology as that used within the formula but fund it directly from the growth fund. It is requested that the Forum agree to this methodology.
- 5.5 CW asked members to vote on the proposal. All were in favour.

6. AOB - CW.

- 6.1 There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.10.

7. **Next Meetings**

The dates of the forthcoming meetings for the academic year 2022/2023, are as follows:

- Thursday 9th March 2023 at 9.30 am
- Thursday 18th May 2023 at 9.30 am

[Planned Forum Meetings](#)