

## Schools Forum

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### **MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2021 AT ONLINE MEETING VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS.**

#### **Present:**

Aileen Bates, Rod Bell, Andy Bridewell, Sam Churchill, Stella Fowler, John Hawkins, Cllr Ross Henning, Graham Nagel-Smith, Lisa Percy (Chair), John Proctor, Giles Pugh, Nigel Roper, Graham Shore (Vice Chair), Trudy Srawley, Ian Tucker, David Whewell, Catriona Williamson and Lynn Yendle

#### **Also Present:**

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager), Lisa Fryer (Education Officer – Independent Specialist Placements), Helean Hughes (Director – Education & Skills), Cate Mullen (Head of Inclusion & SEND), Lisa Pullin (Democratic Services Officer), Marie Taylor (Head of Finance – Children and Education), and Cllr Suzanne Wickham (Portfolio Holder for SEND)

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### **33 Apologies/Substitutions and Changes of Membership**

Apologies were received from Rebecca Carson (Primary Academy Representative), Michele Chilcott WASSH (Secondary Academy Representative), Jo Grenfell (Observer- Post 16 – Wiltshire College), Georgina Keily-Theobald (Maintained Special School representative), and Debbie Muir (Early Years representative)

Apologies were also received from Jane Davies (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND, Transition and Inclusion), Laura Mayes (Cabinet Member – Children, Education and Skills) and Lucy Townsend (Corporate Director – People/Director of Children's Services).

#### **Substitutions**

Lynn Yendle was substituting for Jon Hamp.

#### **Membership changes**

There were no changes to the membership of Schools Forum.

### **34 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Clerk had notified Schools Forum members earlier in the week that there was an error in the published agenda for the draft minutes of the last meeting of 7 October 2021. Minute number 24 (FACT Programme update) was repeated twice in the minutes with the same text appearing for minute number 25 (update from the High Needs Block Working Group). These had now been corrected on

the Council website and that version would be the minutes due to be approved at the meeting.

A maintained Primary representative highlighted an error in minute number 15 where it stated that Lisa Percy was the Vice Chair and it should read that Graham Shore was appointed at Vice Chair.

**Resolved:**

**That the Chair approve and sign the minutes of the meeting of Schools Forum held on 7 October 2021 subject to the changes being made as detailed above.**

35 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair made the following announcements:

Early Years representative

Debbie Muir was to be the new Early Years rep (replacing Mark Cawley) but due to work commitments she was now unable to take up this position. The Early Years Reference Group were seeking to appoint a new representative at their next meeting on 5 January 2022 and this was likely to be Lyssy Bolton, CEO of The Mead Academy Trust.

January meeting of Schools Forum

It had been previously agreed that the December and January meetings of Schools Forum would be held in person. Schools Forum members had agreed that due to the current number of Covid cases in Wiltshire that it would be better for this meeting to be held virtually. Those present were then asked for their views on the location of the January meeting.

The general consensus was that it would be sensible to plan for another virtual meeting due to the new Covid variant.

**Resolved:**

**That the next meeting of Schools Forum (20 January 2022) be held via Microsoft Teams.**

36 **Declaration of Interests**

There were no interests declared.

37 **Public Participation**

No questions or statements were received in advance of the meeting.

### 38 **Updates from Working Groups**

The Forum noted the update received by way of the minutes of the meeting of the School Funding and SEN working group held on 29 November 2021.

There were no questions arising.

The Forum noted the update received by way of the minutes of the meeting of the Early Years Reference Group meeting held on 17 November 2021.

John Proctor (Early Years representative) reported that under item 7 of the minutes (Schools Forum and Chair of Early Years Reference Group transition) that it stated that there was no early year's representation at the Schools Forum meeting on 7 October 2021 which was not the case. Debbie Muir had been unable to attend the meeting on 7 October 2021, but John Proctor had been present. The Clerk would notify the notetaker for that meeting to arrange for the minutes to be amended.

There were no questions arising.

#### **Resolved:**

**That Schools Forum note the minutes of the joint meeting of the School Funding and SEN working group held on 29 November 2021 and the Early Years Reference group meeting on 17 November 2021.**

### 39 **Dedicated Schools Budget - Budget Monitoring 2021/22**

Marie Taylor (Head of Finance – Children and Education) referred to the budget monitoring report as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 that was circulated with the Agenda and highlighted the following:

- An overspend of £8.271 million was currently projected against the overall school's budget;
- For early years budgets there was a favourable variance underspend of £1.264 million. The DfE would make a post year adjustment and remove this favourable variance;
- The Council has continued to use COMF funding to support settings with a range of schemes. In addition, a new allocation was available for flexible pastoral support for 2021-22 of £0.4 million for early years;
- The forecast underspend on schools block largely relates to the school's growth fund which currently shows an underspend and is helping to offset the overall pressure on the DSG;
- For high needs budgets there was a forecast overspend of almost £11 million. The needs of some learners changed during periods when schools were closed to most pupils. Inevitably post pandemic EHCNAs

and re-bandings were being requested which was putting additional activity into the system. In response to this temporary support fund payments (TSF) have been introduced to support learners whose needs are taking longer than 20 weeks to be assessed;

- The major driver of the increased cost is volume. It is important to note that the number of EHCPs being created had increased following the pandemic and requests for additional support for children with existing EHCPs continued which leads to an increase in overall unit cost. The forecast increase in EHCP's was 192 (4.7%);
- The DSG reserve brought forward figure was £19.474 million. The current forecast overspend of £8.082 million would take the reserve into an overall deficit position of £27.555 million; and
- A further informal meeting with the DfE was planned to discuss the DSG management plan and the progress against the recovery plans and a summary of that meeting would be shared with Schools Forum at the next available meeting.

**Resolved:**

**That Schools Forum note the budget monitoring position at the end of October 2021 and the current balance on the DSG reserve.**

40 **National Funding Formulae for Schools and High Needs - 2022-23**

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager) referred to the report which sought 'in principle' decisions from Schools Forum with regards to the Wiltshire funding formula for the 2022-23 year and highlighted the following:

- Prior to the funding settlement being announced in mid December, a number of 'in principle' decisions were sought to help with the school budget preparations. The 2022-23 year would be year 3 of the Governments pledge to boost schools funding, with an increase of £2.3 billion into the overall Schools block compared to the 2021-22 year;
- The Schools block DSG had been awarded an increase of 3.2% compared to the 2021-22 year. It would be another 'soft' year with Schools Forum still retaining its role in determining the school funding allocation methodology. The DfE had confirmed their intention to move to a 'hard' NFF but had not confirmed the timeline as yet;
- The DfE had announced the indicative DSG block allocations based on the October 2020 census and there was uplift of funding across the blocks (except for the early years block which allocations had yet to be announced);
- The key changes for the 2022-23 budget were as follows:

- a. Overall, the DfE's School funding budget is set to increase by 3.2%
  - b. Core pupil-led funding factors and the lump sum to increase by 3%
  - c. The 'Minimum per pupil funding level' to increase by 2%
  - d. The Free School Meals factor (for the costs of providing a meal for eligible pupils) to increase by 2%
  - e. Every school to receive at least 2% more funding per pupil, (setting the MFG at +2%)
  - f. Changes to Sparsity calculations and funding allocations
  - g. Using the previous October census for calculating Deprivation FSM6 funding rather than the previous January census (reducing the lag)
- The only mandatory factor for 2022-23 would be the application of the minimum per pupil funding levels, being £4,265 and £5,525 in Primary and Secondary respectively;
  - The final formula would be presented at Schools Forum in January 2022 when the final allocations have been confirmed and subsequently to the full Council for political ratification and approval in February 2022. Wiltshire would be fully funded on the basis of the NFF values and therefore would be in a position to fund schools fully using NFF values;
  - The key funding decisions to be taken by Schools Forum for the 2022-23 year would include:
    - a. To apply all NFF factors in full
    - b. To apply the NFF sparsity values and methodology
    - c. To set the Minimum Funding Guarantee at +2.00% (in line with NFF)
    - d. To agree the de-delegation arrangements for maintained schools
    - e. To transfer 0.5% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block
  - Following a consultation regarding Sparsity funding, in support of small and rural schools, the DfE had increased the level of support through the sparsity factor. In 2021-22, 28 primary and 2 secondary schools had been eligible for sparsity funding and for 2022-23 under the new methodology this would rise to 50 primary and 3 secondary schools – a total of £1.7 million which was quite a significant increase which equated to less than 1% of the school's block funding; and
  - Initial modelling of the Schools Block demonstrates that the NFF is affordable, based upon the October 2020 census and therefore the full NFF could be implemented.

The Salisbury Diocesan representative commented that the sparsity funding should be fully utilised for Wiltshire's small rural schools and the new methodology would mean that 1 in 4 schools will get a boost of funding that would benefit the children and staff in those schools.

**Resolved:**

**That Schools Forum agree the following ‘in principle’ decisions for the formula factors to enable school budgets to be prepared ready for the 20 January 2022 meeting.**

**a. To apply all NFF factors in full**

**b. To apply the NFF sparsity values and methodology**

**c. To set the Minimum Funding Guarantee at +2.00% (in line with NFF).**

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### **Dedicated Schools Grant Consultations 2022-23**

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager) referred to the report which sought to update Schools Forum with the results of the recent Autumn consultations relating to de-delegation of central services and transfer of funds from Schools Block to High Needs Block and highlighted the following:

- Under the “soft formula”, funding should be fully delegated to schools, however certain central services can be ‘de-delegated’ for maintained schools only, with approval of the respective maintained Schools Forum representatives;
- All maintained schools were consulted and 25 responses were received – 22 from primary schools and 3 from secondary schools. The response level was slightly down from last year. The results received were significantly in favour of retaining the de-delegated services in both the Primary and Secondary schools which would the inform eligible Schools Forum representatives when voting on the school budgets for 2022-23;
- The funding regulations do allow for a transfer of funding between the Schools Block and other blocks within the DSG. In the last three financial years, Schools Forum had agreed to the following transfers;
  - 2019-20 - £2.2m which equated to 0.8% of Schools Block funding
  - 2020-21 - £2.065m which equated to 0.7% of Schools Block, which was subsequently reduced to 0.5% by the Secretary of State;
  - 2021-22 - £1.517m which equated to 0.5% of Schools Block funding
- It had been agreed at previous Schools Forum meetings that a request to transfer greater than 0.5% would not be applied for, due to previous decisions of the Secretary of State, unless the results of the consultation supported a greater transfer; and
- A three week consultation was carried out via Rightchoice and was open to all schools. A total of 19 responses were received – 7 from secondary schools and 12 from primary schools. All those that responded supported a transfer of funds from the Schools block to the High Needs block. Only 3 respondents supported a ‘hybrid’ option of a block transfer and a reduction in Top-Up values. The majority of respondents supported a transfer of 0.5% (£1.58 million).

**Resolved that Schools Forum:**

- 1. Note the local consultation responses in relation to the schools delegated budget for 2022-23 financial year.**
- 2. Agree the following ‘in principle’ decisions in accordance with the consultation responses as detailed below;**

**De-delegation of central services for Maintained schools**

- **FSM – primary and secondary**
- **Licences – primary and secondary**
- **Trade Union – primary and secondary**
- **Maternity – primary and secondary**
- **Ethnic Minority Support – primary only**
- **Traveller Education – primary only**
- **Behaviour Support – primary only**

- 3. Agree a block transfer between Schools Block and the High Needs Block, subject to affordability when school funding for 2022-23 has been confirmed as detailed below:**

- **Transfer of 0.5% of Schools Block to the High Needs Block, the maximum allowable without Secretary of State approval which equates to approximately £1.58m.**

**42 Update from High Needs Working Group**

Helean Hughes (Director of Education and Skills) gave an update on behalf of the High Needs Block Working Group and highlighted the following:

- The Temporary Support Funding had been discussed. There was currently an issue in meeting the statutory 20 week requirement for EHCPs. Due to national an increased demand for assessments and recruitment issues, Education Psychologist resource was in short supply which was causing delays and whilst they were trying to recruit additional EP resource there was an immediate issue for the meeting the 20 week deadline. The use of £4k per pupil was agreed to be used for supporting the pupil whilst awaiting the outcome of the EHCP application; and
- The test site for the Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) had been shared which set out what was available for learners with SEND, for parents. Schools and all parties. Officers were dedicated to being able to launch this in the new year.

Cate Mullen (Head of SEND and Inclusion) reported that the DfE SEND review would be set up by Will Quince (Children’s Minister) and was due to be issued in the first quarter of 2022. They were hoping to see adaptations to be made to

the SEND Code of Practice so that the law that sits behind sets out the intentions of the DfE in terms of the inspection framework for Ofsted and CQC local area inspections.

Lisa Fryer (Education Officer – Independent Specialist Placements) presented an update on the Independent Special School wave 1 review and highlighted the following:

- There were 68 cases where savings had been made and the vast majority of those were in specialist ISS. There had been 54 step downs and/or 'bring backs' which had made savings to stepping down to a lesser option whilst fully meeting their needs in a different way or moving into mainstream education. So of the significant bring backs where from young people coming back into the county having been in 'out of county placements' for quite a long time;
- Some of the key things learned in the last 12 months were that ISS are not always more able to meet complex SEN learners needs. It was identified that it was possible to step down and bring back from ISS placements but this was often very labour intensive with colleagues working many hours on these;
- In 2020 there was an open book and a review of all those in the ISS sector was carried out. 68 young people were identified as the focus target group to step down and bring back and Officers would continue to look at cases to see if savings could be made;
- Something else that had been highlighted was that because of some unsatisfactory Ofsted judgements some of the groups who run ISS are starting to be more cautious about who they will take in their placements which impacts on our placement offers being withdrawn at short notice in some cases;
- Case studies of step down and bring backs were shared which showed how valuable that work was;
- The slide entitled 'Achieving better outcomes for learners with SEND' showed the sorts of savings that had been made with some day placements stepping down from something high end to something still supportive for that young person. The High Needs working group target savings of £500k had been achieved for 2020-21 and was on target to achieve for 2021-22; and
- The wave 2 takeaways were that the learner voice had been integral to step downs/bring back and would remain key as was keeping the young people close to their families and communities. The quality assurance monitoring of settings would continue to be increasingly focused on.

The Chair thanked Lisa Fryer for her presentation and confirmed that the slides would be attached as **Appendix 1** to the minutes.



The Wiltshire Parent Carer Council representative agreed that the amount of money spent on a placement didn't always mean it was of high quality although this was a perception from parents/carers. She reported that the Parent Carer Council had received a high number of calls relating to children and young people who were on long term part-time education timetables and that there were a lot of mental health issues because of this and the levels of school avoidance were high.

The Early Years representative commented that the considerable savings made in this work were impressive and he acknowledged how complex and time consuming the cases were but asked about the costs of the work to make those savings in relation to the staffing time etc spent on that work. Lisa Fryer confirmed that she had been seconded to move into this role and her post had had to be backfilled and whilst there had been some challenges, there hadn't been any additional resource brought in to carry out the work and that it was sitting within the existing team. They felt that it was proportionate between the amount of work going in and the savings being achieved and that the focus was on the best outcomes for the young people and that made it a worthwhile exercise.

Helean Hughes reported that the team would now be moving into business as usual work and that a model PFA pathway for adulthood would be the next challenge to ensure that it was fully addressing the SEND and Inclusion Strategy.

#### **Resolved: That Schools Forum**

- 1. Note the minutes of the High Needs Block Working Group meeting held on 9 November 2021.**
- 2. Note the update on behalf of the High Needs Block Working Group.**
- 3. Note the update on the Independent Special School Review.**

#### ***Appendix 1 to Minutes attached - Slides for Update on Special School Review***

#### **43 Dedicated Schools Budget - Early Years, Central School Services and High Needs Block Update 2022-23**

Marie Taylor (Head of Finance – Children and Education) referred to the report which sought to update Schools Forum on issues related to the early years, central school services and high needs blocks for 2022-23 and the decisions that will need to be made as part of the budget setting process for the 2022-23 financial year and highlighted the following:

- Early years - In line with previous years, limited information for Wiltshire was available as yet in relation to early years funding. In the 2021 Spending Review the Chancellor announced national funding increases

of £160m, £180m and £170m for the next three years. It had also been announced that

- i) A 30% increase in the Disability Access Fund which was up £185 to £800 per annum per eligible child.
  - ii) An increase of £40 to £342 for the early years Pupil Premium
  - iii) A 2 year old funding increase of £0.21p per hour so rates would rise to £5.69 per hour subject to discussions at the next meeting of the Early Years reference group in January
  - iv) The 3 and 4 year old funding increase was yet to be confirmed but it was anticipated to be in the region of £0.16p so perhaps rising to £4.41 per hour.
- Settings had been advised not to make any planning decisions until the allocations for Wiltshire had been received later in December;
  - The provisional allocations for the high needs block were an uplift of 8.39% and 6.07% for the central block;
  - The DfE have been reducing historic commitments. Wiltshire has been allocated £0.294m for historic commitments based on those commitments agreed as eligible in 2021-22 reduced by 20% of £0.073m;
  - The central schools services block allocates funding to the LA to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils of maintained schools and academies. Schools Forum approval was required on a line by line basis for the group of services which are funded from the central schools' block. An assumed level of inflation had been applied to the central copyright licences in section A;
  - For Section B it was proposed to apply salary inflation of 2% to reflect the 2% pay award for staff which was expected next year;
  - For Section C historic commitments it was proposed to follow factors for 2022-23. It was proposed to keep the funding for CiC Personal Education Plans at the same level, apply a level of inflation to the Child Protection in Schools Advisers and reduce the amount committed to prudential borrowing;
  - There would be a report later in the meeting relating to the DfE consultation around the removal of the School Improvement Grant amount and the School Funding working group had held an extraordinary meeting in September to formulate a response on behalf of School Forum. Assuming the proposed budget is accepted by Schools Forum, an amount of £0.219m unallocated CSSB was estimated as available and could be used as in previous years, to transfer to fund high needs pressures or, in light of the proposed reduction and removal of the school improvement brokerage and monitoring grant, an increased allocation

could be used by the local authority to support any school requiring support;

- High needs would hopefully see an 8% increase; however the high needs formula was updated to our detriment due to the lower numbers of learners with statements in 2017-18 than in more recent years. Whilst the additional funding of an additional £4.825 announcement in July is most welcome it does not fully address the magnitude of the cumulative pressures from previous financial years nor does it fully address the anticipated pressure for the 2021-22 financial year for Wiltshire;
- The SEN review was now promised in the first quarter of 2022. It was hoped that a national resolution could be found to ensure funding levels better reflect local demands;
- An early assessment of the pressures on the high needs block for 2022-23 was shared and highlighted that it was not possible to fully fund the pressures from within the high needs block. The high needs block allocation for 2021-22 was £62.354 million with a transfer from the central block surplus of £0.219 million and a potential transfer from school's block of 0.5% of £1.580 million plus a transfer of the excess growth fund which would still see a funding shortfall; and
- The DfE management plan and an update from the second informal meeting would be discussed at the January Forum meeting.

#### **Resolved: That Schools Forum**

- 1. Note the early years information in the report and that the budget for early years will be considered in full at the January 2022 meeting.**
- 2. Note the central services information in the report and the required decisions in relation to the central school's block budget for 2022-23 and agree the decisions in principle in advance of setting the Schools budget in January 2022.**
  - i) Section A – consult only**
  - ii) Section B – approve on a line-by-line basis (*including a potential transfer to the high needs block or, pending the local consultation additional DSG funding to support school improvement.*)**
  - iii) Section C – approve on a line-by-line basis**
- 3. Note that any updates around the DfE consultation to remove the school improvement monitoring and brokering grant will be brought to the January 2022 meeting for update and decision.**

4. **Note the pressures on the high needs block for 2022-23 and the potential options to reduce the shortfall against high needs budgets including agreeing a transfer from Schools Block to balance the high needs pressures. This will be considered in full at the January 2022 meeting alongside the recovery plan. That Schools Forum note the report and consider the questions raised in the report.**

#### 44 **Allocation of Funding for Growth Fund 2022-23**

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager) referred to the report which sought agreement on the methodology for allocating funding for pupil growth from the school's block growth fund in 2022-23 and highlighted the following:

- Growth allocations for 2022-23 would be based on pupil data from the October 2021 census and the October 2020 census. Funding is allocated to local authorities based on the actual growth in pupil numbers they experienced over the previous year;
- In Wiltshire, growth is measured by separating the county into 62 middle layer super output areas (MSOA) with an average of 4 schools in each MSOA area. The growth factor allocates £1,485 for each primary 'growth' pupil, £2,200 for each secondary 'growth' pupil and £70,800 for each brand new school that opened in the previous year. No new schools were planned;
- Schools Forum will be asked to agree the size of the growth fund budget and with regard to allocating funding from the growth fund there were a number of requirements as detailed below:
  - a. can be used only for the purposes of supporting growth in pre-16 pupil numbers to meet basic need
  - b. to support additional classes needed to meet the infant class size regulations
  - c. to meet the costs of new schools
  - d. the fund must be used consistently for the benefit of both maintained schools and academies
  - e. any funds remaining at the end of the financial year will form part of the overall DSG surplus or deficit balance.
  - f. local authorities will be required to produce criteria on which any growth funding is to be allocated. These should provide a transparent and consistent basis (with differences permitted between phases) for the allocation of all growth funding. The criteria should both set out the circumstances in which a payment could be made and provide a basis for calculating the sum to be paid

- g. local authorities will need to propose the criteria and size for the growth fund to Schools Forum and gain its agreement on both the criteria and size of the fund before growth funding is allocated.
- Local authorities may set aside schools block funding to create a small fund to support good schools whose numbers have fallen but are expected to rise again within 3 years. Wiltshire Schools Forum had always resisted the establishing of a Falling Rolls fund – there had been no pressure from schools or other groups to establish such a fund and because of the previous financial pressures on schools block it has not been considered appropriate. Over 50 other local authorities did not have a Falling Rolls fund.

There were no comments from Schools Forum Members on the establishment of a Falling Rolls fund and the Chair reported that this could be considered at the January meeting once the budget and allocations had been confirmed.

#### **Resolved that Schools Forum**

- 1. Approve the criteria for allocating pupil Growth Fund in 2022-23.**
- 2. Agree that the budget for the Growth Fund be set at its meeting in January 2022, when the full DSG has been confirmed for the 2022-23 year.**
- 3. Continue to give consideration to the establishing of a Falling Rolls Fund and any criteria befitting such a fund.**

#### **45 Consultation on the Future Funding of School Improvement Services**

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager) referred to the report which was circulated as Agenda Supplement 1 which sought to provide an update on the DfE's consultation 'Reforming how local authority school improvement functions are funded' and provided the results of a local consultation regarding the future funding of School Improvement Services for maintained schools. Grant highlighted the following:

- The consultation from the DfE was launched in late October 2021 with a closing date for responses of 26 November 2021. Colleagues from the Schools and SEN Working Group met to discuss a response to the consultation which was shared with schools in November 2021. All schools, governors and other stakeholders were encouraged to respond;
- The 2 key questions of the consultation were to
  - a) Remove the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant (SIMB) which is currently allocated to local authorities to support school improvement activities

- b) Make provisions within the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations for the financial year 2022-23 to allow local authorities to fund all of their school improvement activity via de-delegation from schools' budget shares
- The grant was introduced in 2017 to help local authorities fund school improvement activities and the proposal would be to reduce this grant by 50% for maintained schools for 2022-23 and then remove the grant for 2023-24;
  - There were 28 responses from the schools to the consultation – 25 primary, 2 secondary and 1 special. There were a number of options of which the responses were asked to rank their preference. The preference for 27/28 of the respondents was for the status quo to be retained with the DfE continuing to fully fund School Improvement through the SIMB; and
  - The second preference was to move to a de-delegation model with maintained schools having to de-delegate part of their budget to fund School Improvement services.

Catriona Williamson (maintained primary representative) stated that they currently bought in School Improvement services as they believed they were of higher quality and felt it would be hard for her to make a decision on behalf of all other maintained schools today and would have to justify to her Governors why there could be money taken out of their budget to fund School Improvement services that they did not wish to take up.

John Hawkins (Teaching representative) wished to report that from his Governor perspective of his School their School Improvement Adviser was outstanding and they were very pleased with their service.

Andy Bridewell (maintained primary representative) reported that he felt torn about this decision and would like the opportunity to share more information with their other maintained primary representatives and seek their views before being asked to make a decision.

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager) reported that decision could be taken at the 20 January meeting of Schools Forum to allow time for more discussion with maintained schools.

The Chair asked for other maintained school representatives for their views:

Sam Churchill (maintained primary representative) agreed that she would prefer to not make the decision today on behalf of other maintained schools.

Nigel Roper (maintained secondary representative) reported that he shared the views of colleagues and whilst there were only 4 secondary maintained schools, they were happy with the School Improvement services they were currently

receiving and felt it would be best to defer the decision as there was no urgency for the decision to be made today.

Catriona Williamson (maintained primary representative) agreed with colleagues that she was not ready to make a decision today.

David Whewell reminded that the views of Governors of maintained schools views should also be sought.

Aileen Bates (maintained special school governor representative) reported that as the only maintained special school representative present she would also wish to consult with colleagues and defer the decision to the next meeting.

Marie Taylor (Head of Finance – Children and Education) offered to provide additional information from colleagues in School Improvement to explain about the grant to better inform the planned discussions with colleagues – this was welcomed by the maintained representatives.

#### **Resolved:**

**That Schools Forum note the local consultation responses in relation to the school improvement services for the 2022-23 financial year and postpone decision making until the January 2022 meeting.**

#### 46 **Covid Updates**

Grant Davis (Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager) gave a verbal update on Covid funding/costs for schools and early years settings and highlighted the following:

- The good news was that the Recovery Premium was set to continue for a further two academic years after 2021-22. The allocations for 2022-23 and 2023-24 were to be £145 per primary mainstream pupil and an amount to be confirmed for secondary mainstream pupils and £290 per special school pupil. The secondary school rate would be shared as soon as received;
- A Workforce Fund had opened for absenteeism for staff related to absences from Covid. The detail would be added to Rightchoice but the claim process was in the still being established;

Marie Taylor reminded Schools Forum of the additional £400k of flexible pastoral support for early years settings mentioned earlier in the meeting.

Grant Davis reported hot off the press news that an additional £1.6 billion of funding for 2022-23 had been announced. There was an employer's National Insurance increase of 1.25% (as part of the Health and Social Care Levy) as detailed below:

- Funding would offset additional National Insurance costs

- Funding would help towards teacher starting salary increases
- Funding would help towards the hike in energy costs

The distribution method was to be confirmed. It was likely to be a separate grant in 2022-23 and baselined in 2023-24 through the National Funding Formula.

Details would be shared with Schools via Rightchoice.

**Resolved:**

**That Schools Forum note the verbal updates on funding provided at the meeting.**

47 **Confirmation of Dates for Future Meetings**

The Forum noted that the future meetings would be held on:

20 January 2022 (now likely to be a virtual meeting at the request of Schools Forum members)  
17 March 2022 (if required)  
9 June 2022  
6 October 2022  
8 December 2022.

48 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 1.30pm - 4.06pm)

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# High Needs Block Recovery Work

## Independent Special Schools Update

# Wave 1: What did we learn?

ISS are not always more able to meet complex SEN learners needs...multiple 'failing' placements on an ongoing basis

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Staff skill levels/expertise in ISS is typically = to or no better than in our MSS or mainstream...teaching and support staff shortages are acute in ISS

Quality of provision in ISS is variable. High staff turnover (including Leadership Teams). Red flag OFSTED/QCC Reports/ soft intel a concern in 7 settings currently

It is possible to 'Step-Down' & 'Bring Back' from ISS...but this is often very labour intensive

68  
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Our learners in ISS are typically taught in small class groups, staff ratios are high and there is usually access to Therapy Teams and/or onsite AP/rural environment

Considerable case by case savings can be made but net overall improvement is only possible if there is capacity further down the SEN System

**Market Forces = £££...ISS market illusion of 'can do'...but there is increasing caution from some companies/resultant closures, driven by increased OFSTED/QCC scrutiny**

# Achieving better outcomes for learners with SEND...

Case Study 'J'  
 Step Down: ISS Day  
 Special SEMH to  
 Mainstream College  
**HNB Saving = £68085**

Case Study 'L'  
 Step Down: ISS Day  
 Special SEMH to  
 Mainstream College  
**HNB Saving = £33769**

Case Study 'M'  
 Step Down: ISS Day  
 Special SEMH to  
 Downland School **HNB**  
**Saving = £63433**

Case Study 'T'  
 Step Down: ISS 38  
 weekly boarding SEMH  
 to ISS Day SEMH **HNB**  
**Saving = £72713**

Student 'N'  
 Step Down: ISS Day  
 ASC to TIPS package  
**HNB Saving = £47851**

Case Study 'M'  
 Step Down: ISS Day  
 ASC to Mainstream  
 College **HNB Saving =**  
**£ 57821**

Savings on this slide =  
 £343,672

Savings on previous slide = £184,230

And there are 45 more to calculate...

HNB Target Savings  
 2020-21: £500,000

HNB Target Savings  
 2021-22: £500,000

HNB Target Savings  
 2022-23  
 £1m

## SEND System of Excellence & Linked Wave 2 ISS Priorities:

### Developing Holistic Plans with C/YP:

Learner Voice has been integral to 'Step Downs'/'Bring Backs' and will remain key

### Inclusion & Removing Exclusion in Education:

Assessing individual needs carefully prior to placement, at Phase Transfers and Crisis points will continue

### Inclusion & Wellbeing In The Community:

Focus on educating learners as close to their families/communities

### Improving Range & Quality of Provision:

Ongoing - Higher Needs SEMH Secondary Provision at Strategic SEND Dec 21 for consideration

### Progress & Attainment:

QA Monitoring of settings is increasingly focussed on individual data: attendance, progress over time and accreditation outcomes

### Well Planned Transitions:

Whilst all ISS cases are prioritised for Annual Review attendance, APT lens is supporting learners/families with transition

