

Schools Forum
School Funding and SEN Working Group
MS TEAMS MEETING

8 January 2024

Minutes

Present: Marie Taylor (Chair), (Finance, local authority ((LA)), Liz Williams (Finance, LA), Grant Davis (Finance, LA), Lisa Percy (Chair of SF / Hardenhuish), John Hawkins (Teacher / Governor rep), Catriona Williamson (Mere) Graham Nagel-Smith (Morgan’s Vale & Woodfalls), Graham Shore (Deputy Chair SF / Holy Trinity), Georgina Keily-Theobald (Downland) Rebecca Carson (Woodford Valley), Ben Stevens (HNB Recovery, LA)

Apologies: Simon Thomas (LA), John Read (Lyneham)

Andy Bridewell (Ludgershall Castle) is now represented by CW at the working group.

1.	Welcome and Apologies	
2.	Minutes of last meeting – 27 November 2023 There were no outstanding actions.	
3.	Matters Arising There were no matters arising.	
4.	<p>Dedicated Schools Grant Funding Settlement Update Report 2024/25 (GD) GD shared his report with the group, highlights:</p> <p>Schools Block</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uplift in Schools Block nationally of £1.8bn - Uplift in High Needs Block nationally of £440m - Teachers Pay Additional Grant (TPAG) continuing for 2024-25, nationally £900m - Teachers Employers Pension Contributions increase of 5% from 1st April 2024, additional funding will be made available - Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) rolled into core funding for 2024-25 - Uplift in core school funding factors of 1.4% - 2024-25 is another ‘soft’ year with Schools Forum having discretion over funding decisions – a ‘hard’ formula is due from 2027-28 - Overall pupil numbers in Wiltshire have dropped by 274 pupils, with Primary numbers falling by 636 but growth in Secondary numbers by 362 - Total Schools Block of £364.468m includes Growth and Falling Rolls funding of £1.810m - Applying the National Funding Formula factors for all schools is fully affordable - A transfer of £2m between the Schools Block to the High Needs Block is affordable - Setting a Growth Fund of £0.734m is affordable <p>High Needs Block</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The NFF for funding High Needs in LA’s is unchanged and retains the same pupil, historic and proxy factors - Total High Needs Block funding of £73.465m <p>Early Years Block</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased funding to reflect the growth in provision for 2 year olds and the under-2’s 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extension of Pupil Premium, Disability Access Funding for 2 year olds and under-2's - Uplift in funding rates for all Early Years children - Growth in Early years Block of approximately £20m compared to 2023-24 <p>Central Services Block</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small increase in overall Block funding of £0.043m - Continued reduction of 20% for Historic Commitments - Overall Block funding of £2.644m <p>A Block Transfer of £2m (0.55% of Schools Block) is affordable and a Disapplication request has been submitted to the Secretary of State.</p> <p>LP – noted, what a fortunate position we were in compared to other LA's who did not align to the NFF as early as we did - who were now struggling to afford the NFF LW added this was important as we progress with the Safety Valve plan as the proposed block transfers may impact on affordability of the NFF factors</p>	
5.	<p>Schools Block Update 2024/25 (GD)</p> <p>GD shared his report with the group – highlights: NFF fully affordable – all NFF factors applied MFG set at 0.5%, as agreed with Schools Forum members in December 2023 HNB transfer at £2m (0.55%) Growth Fund £0.734m which will be sufficient to meet needs in 2024-25 Sparsity – mirrors the NFF with 64 eligible schools in Wiltshire Split site – mirrors the NFF – 5 schools receive maximum funding and one school will receive a slightly reduced level of funding due to not meeting the full distance threshold and will receive a tapered reduction MPPFL – the number of schools in receipt of MPPFL is reducing as you would expect with the NFF being in place for a number of years</p> <p>LW – the deadline for the disapplication to transfer more than 0.5% of Schools Block is 12 January 2024 so we will need to apply before the SF meeting on 18 January 2024, but will need a specific vote, count votes and minute – GD to update his report to include that decision (also to be included in the Decision Matrix)</p>	GD
6.	<p>High Needs Block Update 2024/25 (LW)</p> <p>LW shared her report with the group – highlights:</p> <p>DfE increase of 3.% - £2.6m – DfE have advised SV councils to assume a 3% per annum increase in funding for future years £5m of investment and savings in year 1 of the SV plan including 4% on top ups which, would more than cover the DfE's 0.5% Special School MFG requirements Forecast in budget monitoring takes us to a £56m deficit reserve balance so imperative that SV actions</p> <p>LP – good to design comms around 4% uplift linked to expectations around OAPL LW – confirmed comms would be going out once SF had ratified budgets and that would be a good opportunity to link these GKT – to confirm the 4% uplift was just for top ups not place funding? Equivalent to approximately 2.3% - LW confirmed this was the case, but higher than the DfE minimum.</p>	
7.	<p>Early Years Block Update 2024/25 (MT)</p> <p>MT took the group through her report Unfortunately, the EY reference group are not meeting until later today so their views could not be shared with the SFWG. The increased age group entitlements mean there are more options – some were discounted on the grounds of affordability – four were</p>	

	<p>considered and modelled for the 95% pass through for consultation. MT was recommending maximising the 3&4 year old grant to £5.21, passporting in full the disadvantaged 2 year olds and reducing the Under 2 years to £ and 2 years to £ This ensures sufficient central resources are available to fund the increases in central costs including additional staff required and increasing the SENIF to reflect current demand plus a sum of £0.2m earmarked to support inclusion in EY which will be part of the recovery actions.</p> <p>MT to confirm the EYRG consultation feedback in the report</p> <p>NOTE: THE EYRG were supportive of the LA recommendation – Option 13</p>	MT
8.	<p>CSS Block Update 2024/25 (MT)</p> <p>MT took the group through her report.</p> <p>Whilst the historical block is being reduced by the DfE at 20% pa – this has so far not impacted services – however this will need to be considered in 2025/26</p> <p>KD commented that the CiC budget has underspend for the last few years and so that budget should be considered for reduction.</p>	
9.	<p>Budget Monitoring Report to 30 November 2023 (MT)</p> <p>MT took the group through her report.</p> <p>The forecast position leads to a DSG deficit of £56.247m and despite a forecast underspend of £1m in EY the overall pressure above DfE grant and block transfers is £21.034m – high needs driven</p> <p>Forecast EHCPS are forecast to be 15% increase for 23/24 FY</p> <p>LP it would be useful for the SFWG (and SV/HN working parties) to have sight of an age analysis as we have had in the past which might also help us to forecast future years spend.</p> <p>MT confirmed that we routinely produced spend per type of primary disability and age group and LW had been working on many data sets. LW confirmed she would be able to provide this</p>	LW
9.	<p>AOB</p> <p>There was not any - any other business</p>	
10	<p><i>Date and Time of next Meeting</i></p> <p>The next Schools Forum meeting after our January meeting will be 14th March however, <u>this will be cancelled if there is insufficient business to discuss.</u></p> <p>The date of the next meeting of this group is 26th February 2024 at 8.30am. This is planned as a virtual teams meeting.</p>	