



## Wirral Schools Forum

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Tuesday, 21 November 2023</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>5.00 p.m.</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Assembly Hall - Birkenhead Town Hall</b>

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## AGENDA

1. **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**
2. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2023**  
(Pages 1 - 6)
3. **MATTERS ARISING**
4. **EDSENTIAL UPDATE (Pages 7 - 10)**
5. **DE-DELEGATED BUDGET FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT  
SUPPORT AND BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT UPDATE (Pages 11 - 14)**
6. **DE-DELEGATED BUDGETS - CONTINGENCY, SPECIAL STAFF,  
AND INSURANCE COSTS (Pages 15 - 18)**
7. **DE-DELEGATED BUDGETS - LIBRARY SERVICE (Pages 19 - 22)**
8. **NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA 2024-25 FUNDING UPDATE**  
(Pages 23 - 26)
9. **SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS UPDATE (Pages 27 - 28)**

10. **NEW BUDGET MONITORING SYSTEM FOR SCHOOLS (Pages 29 - 30)**
11. **HIGH NEEDS WORKING GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE**
12. **CLAWBACK CONSULTATION UPDATE (Pages 31 - 38)**
13. **WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP (Pages 39 - 42)**
14. **WORKPLAN (Pages 43 - 44)**
15. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

## WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 26 September 2023

**Present:** A Whiteley (Chair)

### Schools Group

E Ball	J McDonald
K Ball	J Merry
H Barker	S Ralph
L Jones	A Whiteley
K Kennedy	C Wynn Green
M Loftus	

### Non Schools Group

M Farrelly
J Proctor

### In Attendance

S Ashley	S Harper
J Backhouse	Cllr S Powell-Wilde
A Brown	S White
Cllr C Cooke	A Varughese

## 26 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from:

- Shaun Allen – Primary Governor.
- Geraldine Fraser – Academy rep.
- Mark Bellamy – Academy Rep.
- Nicky Prance – PVI Early Years Providers.
- Simon Davies - PVI Early Years Providers.
- Chris Mervyn - Primary Headteacher.
- Simon Goodwin - Secondary Headteacher.

## 27 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Nominations for the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Schools Forum for the academic year 2023-24 were invited.

Moved by Moira Loftus, seconded by Sue Ralph, Adrian Whiteley was nominated for the position of Chair. As no further nominations were received, Adrian Whiteley was elected Chair unopposed.

Moved by Adrian Whiteley, seconded by John McDonald, Moira Loftus was nominated for the position of Vice Chair. As no further nominations were received, Moira Loftus was elected Vice Chair unopposed.

**Resolved – That**

**Adrian Whiteley be appointed Chair of the Wirral Schools Forum for the academic year 2023-24.**

**Moira Loftus be appointed Vice-Chair of the Wirral Schools Forum for the academic year 2023-24.**

28 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 JUNE 2023**

It was noted that Cllr Sue Powell-Wilde was attendance at the meeting of meeting of the Schools Forum on 13 June 2023. With that amendment, it was:

**Resolved – That the minutes be approved as an accurate record.**

29 **MATTERS ARISING**

No matters were raised.

30 **EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

Sarah Harper, Early Years Operations Manager, presented a report providing an update on the Early Year Working Group. Outcomes of the recent Early Years Working Group meeting on 14 September 2023 were highlighted, including a request from the National Day Nursery Association rep to the Local Authority to review the discretionary business rate relief policy. An update on the take up of early years free funding entitlements was also set out, which remained slightly below pre-pandemic levels but were steadily improving. It was noted that a project group had been established to implement the government's expansion to early years entitlement funding. The Forum were also provided statistics relating to childcare sufficiency across the borough, notified of changes to the Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF), and provided figures relating to the Quality Training and Practice Improvement of Early years Providers, 97.16% of which were judged to be good or above.

Members of the Forum discussed the expansion of Early years entitlement funding and how increased capacity would be needed to meet the extended provision. The Assistant Director for Education clarified that work was being undertaken to assess the extra capacity needed to meet the changes through the project group and this would be reported at a future meeting of the Forum.

**Resolved – That the report be noted.**

31 **SCHOOL BALANCES CLAWBACK MECHANISM CONSULTATION**

James Backhouse, Assistant Director for Education, presented a report which recommended that the Schools Forum conducted a consultation in relation to the

clawback mechanism for Wirral Maintained Schools. It was outlined that schools balances position for Wirral maintained schools was historically high in comparison to pre-covid levels and that some schools on Wirral had significantly high revenue budgets. It was noted that many local authorities had a clawback mechanism in place to address excessive balances where they occurred, and that Department for Education (DFE) guidelines stated that it was good practice for primary schools to have a balance of 8%, and Secondary Schools 5%. The Assistant Director outlined that a consultation would run from Thursday 28th September until Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November, and an overview of the questions to be asked were set out. It was noted that a full report would be brought to the November meeting of the Forum containing outcomes of the consultation, pending approval.

In the discussion, Members discussed potential reasons behind schools holding high revenue reserves and the work the Local authority was doing to gather information in these instances. In addition, Forum Members sought clarity on how any clawback mechanism would operate in practice. Members also queried the implications of Schools transferring to academies and the transfer of balances in such instances. The Assistant Director of Education set out a briefing note explaining the transfer of balances from maintained schools moving to academies would be shared.

**Resolved (6:0) – That**

- 1. The Report be noted; and**
- 2. The Consultation process as outlined in the report be agreed.**

## **32 2023-24 NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA FOR SCHOOLS**

Asako Brown, Senior Finance Business Partner, presented a report which updated the Forum on the funding announcements for 2024-25 and the consultation process for mainstream Primary and Secondary schools. The report set out the provisional gross National Funding Formula (NFF) allocations for Wirral. Changes to the provisional allocations for the Schools Block, High Needs Block and Central Services Block were highlighted. It was noted that that the 2023-24 Mainstream Schools Additional grant (MSAG) was to be rolled into the schools NFF for 2024-25. In relation to the High Needs Block, it was noted that provisional funding identified an increase in gross funding of £2.56m(4.23%) which was a lower percentage uplift compared with the previous years.

**Resolved – That**

- 1. The report be noted**
- 2. The Schools Forum support the disapplication requests to be submitted to the Department for Education for:**
  - a. Birkenhead High School Academy (12:0:1 Abstention)**
  - b. Church Road (13:0)**

### 33 **GROWTH & FALLING ROLLS FUND**

Asako Brown, Senior Finance Business Partner, presented a report outlining options for the Falling Rolls and Growth Fund for 2023-24. The report recommend that the 2023-24 Falling Rolls and Growth Fund was carried forward to 2024-25 as the value was deemed too low to distribute to multiple schools as useful individual allocations. It was noted that this was permitted under the DfE Schools Forum Operational Guide.

**Resolved – That**

- 1. 2023-24 Falling Rolls and Growth Fund to be carried forward to 2024-25. (13:0).**
- 2. The Future Focus as set out in section 4.0 of the report be noted.**

### 34 **BUDGET MONITORING 2023-2024**

Asako Brown, Senior Finance Business Partner, presented a report which provided an overview of school budget variations for the current year 2023-24 schools budget. It was reported that overall the schools budget was forecast to overspend by £4.98m, which was attributed to pressure in the High Needs block. It was noted that the pressures within the High Needs Block reflected the national picture, and that the Local Authority was participating in the Department For Education Delivering Better Value programme.

**Resolved – That the financial position of the Schools Budget for 2023-24 be noted.**

### 35 **BUDGET MONITORING PACKAGE FOR SCHOOLS - VERBAL UPDATE**

Sue Ashley, Traded Services Manager, provided Forum Members with a verbal update on the Budget Monitoring package for schools. It was reported that the Local Authority were undertaking an exercise to consider the use of a new IT system in relation to School finances. Work was being carried out to identify software that would provide a suitable back-office system for the Local Authority, whilst allowing schools the ability to run scenarios that could highlight effects on budgets e.g. staffing changes.

It was noted that the Traded Services Manager was in contact with the procurement department on options. A future report would be provided to Forum on progress including costs for maintained schools, but it was affirmed that the Local Authority would be looking to absorb the costs of the initial set up of any new IT system.

**Resolved – That the update be noted.**

### 36 **DELIVERING BETTER VALUE - VERBAL UPDATE**

James Backhouse, Assistant Director for Education, provided Forum Members with a verbal update on the Local Authorities participation in the Department for Education (DfE) Delivering Better Value in SEND programme. It was reported that the programme aimed to support local authorities improve delivery of SEND services for

children and young people whilst working towards financial sustainability. The Local Authority began participation of Phase 1 of the programme in June 2023 with the goal of addressing the challenges found within the High Needs Block deficit. Phase 1, was a diagnostic stage delivered with Newton Europe and CIPFA, involving an evidence based and data-driven deep-dive to understand the reasons behind the challenges in the High Needs Block and to identify steps going forward. Next stages of the programme included implementation of outcomes of the diagnostic stage. It was noted that the programme would ultimately culminate in a Business application to the DfE to release grant funding, alongside the development of a deficit management plan with the DfE.

**Resolved - That the update be noted.**

**37 WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP**

Anju Varughese, Finance Business Partner provided an update on the membership of the Schools Forum. An overview of the current membership by group was outlined. It was noted that 3 vacancies remained for a Primary Governor, 16-19 representative and Academy representative.

Since the last update, The Forum had gained 5 New Members: Kate Ball (Headteacher representative), Luci Jones (Academy representative), Carys Wynn-Green (Academy representative), Michael Farrelly (Teacher representative), Holly Barker (Special Headteacher).

**Resolved – That**

- 1. The report be noted; and**
- 2. The membership split between primary, secondary and academy group be monitored closely as schools continue to convert to academy.**

**38 WORKPLAN**

Anju Varughese, Finance business partner, presented the Schools Forum Workplan for members consideration.

**Resolved – That the workplan be noted.**

**39 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Forum reaffirmed its preference to continue meeting Face to Face and requested that the Clerk would make arrangements for this going forward.

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## WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM: 21 November 2023

REPORT: MANAGING DIRECTOR, ESENTIAL COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Edsential has fulfilled its mission as a Community Interest Company during this difficult year. We have constantly adapted to schools' needs and safety requirements to be the sustainable, high quality partner that schools could rely on during these challenging times.

### 2. BACKGROUND

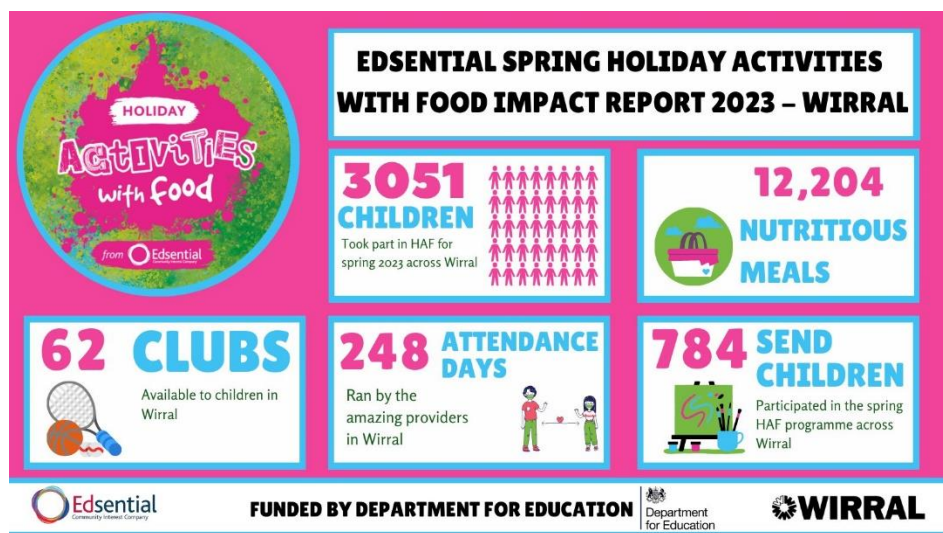
Holiday Activity and Food programme coordination 2022/23

Edsential continued to coordinate the HAF programme for Wirral:

#### Winter 22:



#### Spring 23



#### Summer 23



Service delivery highlights:

**Young musicians take part in their first-ever live gig**

Edsential’s young musicians from ‘New Noise’ and members of Future Yard’s ‘Sound Check’ training programme performed live music to a large audience on Saturday 2 April.

They have been working alongside each other over the past 11 weeks at the New Noise Music Centre in partnership with Future Yard, leading up to this spectacular day designed to showcase all the amazing work of the different bands.

The New Noise Junior project was created to support the next generation of music makers, offering a space for young people aged 14-16 to experiment across a range of instruments and music-making techniques – including guitar, bass, keyboards, drums, DJing and rapping – in sessions led by a team of hugely experienced and passionate tutors.

[Young musicians take part in their first-ever live gig - Edsential](#)

**School Travel Awards: Best Residential Experience 2023**

On 6th June 2023, members of the Conway Centres team made their way to The Royal Lancaster Hotel in London for the awards ceremony where they were presented with the Best Residential Experience award by Olympian and broadcaster Katharine Merry.

Edsential’s Conway Centres welcomes more than 20,000 children and young people every year for an adventure-filled residential at the four centres across Cheshire and North Wales.

See our new video of pupils experiencing arts and real adventurous activities: [Home - Conway Centres](#)

## Inflation

We are continuing to experience significant pressure due to inflation in food, staff, energy and transport costs; pressures we appreciate our schools are also experiencing. We have taken difficult decisions to keep our cost increases as low as we can, but the opportunity to continue to do so will be reduced next year as most cost saving opportunities will have been exhausted. Next year, we are forecasting the National Living Wage to increase by 7-9%, food inflation to be 8-9% and general CPI at c.4%.

However, given we are a social enterprise that reinvests all income to improve our services, we will continue to keep any price increases as low as possible.

On behalf of our 1000 staff I would like to thank everyone who supported us during this year.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the report is noted.

**lan.mcgrady@edsential.co.uk**

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## WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM 21<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2023

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

#### DELEGATED BUDGET FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT UPDATE

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##### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Forum on the services delivered from the Behaviour Support and School Improvement functions funded by de-delegated school budgets.
- 1.2 For the financial year the following breakdown highlights the funds that are allocated to the de-delegated budgets for schools' improvement and behaviour support.  
  
School improvement - £149,600  
Behaviour support - £140,133
- 1.3 The local authority has a responsibility to have regard to the Schools Causing Concern statutory guidance. This guidance is clear, local authorities must exercise its education functions with a view to promoting high standards.
- 1.4 The school improvement strategy is now fully embedded and being further developed across Wirral schools with significantly increased capacity within the school improvement team. External school assurance professionals have been commissioned to all maintained school and a comprehensive CPD programme offered to all schools. System leadership is being developed from staff within schools to enable a self-sustaining system.
- 1.5 In relation to Behaviour Support the Local Authority has an Inclusion Team consisting of a Senior Manager, three Strategy Managers and three Officers. There has also been a recent recruitment of two additional officers to support managed moves and in school support. The teams also have access to a Behaviour and Support officer who administers the paperwork linked to Permanent Exclusions. The team has a wide range of experience including Primary, Secondary, Specialist and Alternative Provisions.

##### 2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The local authority has several statutory duties and must exercise its function in these areas. In relation to oversight of Standard Assessment Tests:
  - 2.1.1 Moderating of the teacher assessments carried out at the end of key stage 1 and 2 by schools in at least 25% of maintained schools each school year and ensure that every school will be subject to moderation at least once every four

years.

- 2.1.2 Appointing a person to complete the assessment moderations who has recent experience of provision of the National Curriculum in primary schools.
- 2.1.3 Monitor the administration of the phonics screening check in accordance with Key stage 2 tests and phonics screening check.
- 2.2 The local authority has responsibility to support higher standards of education across the school it maintains. In addition, the local authority should work in partnership with the Regional Schools Commissioner to share any concerns they may have in relation to a local academy. To support this the local authority is embedding the school improvement strategy approved by committee last year.
- 2.3 The Strategy sets out a vision for school improvement to: raise aspirations and improve outcomes for all children in Wirral. It aligned to the proposed Wirral Plan 2026 and the priority to secure brighter futures for all regardless of their background.
- 2.4 The Head of School Effectiveness has had the support of three additional officers as Senior Schools advisors. They have supported schools in relation to strategic objectives regarding improvement areas. In addition, they will be the main link between the schools and the commissioned School Assurance Professional and any CPD opportunities that are available to the school.
- 2.5 The school improvement team have commissioned a comprehensive CPD programme for Early Years, English, Maths, Science and Humanities along with well-being course for headteachers to support primary schools and leaders for the remainder of the academic year. The training is being led by educational professionals who have a background of expertise in the given area.
- 2.6 A key cornerstone of the school improvement strategy is the support of a school assurance professionals to quality assure the current position of our maintained schools. This will be facilitated by education professional with the relevant experience to articulate with schools' leaders and governors' areas each school should be developing during the current academic year. This offer will be free for all maintained schools, academies can access this support, but this will have a cost associated.
- 2.6(a) An intensive support programme is being offered to schools in Bands 3 and 4 which will compliment the full CPD offer and include thorough data analysis of the previous years' SATs examinations.
- 2.7 The work of the Inclusion Team has increased significantly since the last the academic year. Catherine Kerr, in the role as Head of Inclusion and Attendance is overseeing support for schools within this area.
- 2.8 The service is developing and implementing effective strategies to increase school's capacity to include young people experiencing difficulties with their emotional well-being and behaviour regulation with clear referral routes into the team. The team also hold weekly drop-in sessions for schools, and this will

continue in partnership with the Educational Psychologist Team in the near future.

- 2.9 The service continues to deliver LA wide training to educational professionals to support in managing young people with behavioural difficulties, for example Team Teach and Restorative Justice, of which the team are qualified in to deliver.
- 2.10 The Inclusion Team are working on a three footprint model which aligns to the same clusters as the Senior School Advisors to allow collaboration between school improvement and inclusion. Each of the three groups has an Inclusion Strategy Manager who triage the referrals and allocate the relevant officer.
- 2.11 In addition, the Senior Officer for Inclusion and Alternative provision leads on the continuous development of Alternative Provision linked to the Wirral Guild with strengthened Quality Assurance and challenge and will be the point of contact with Progress Schools, the new Estart provision and Key Stage 2 Provision at St Peters Primary School – The LA commissioned provisions for its statutory requirements for permanently excluded young people.
- 2.12 To date the team have trained 191 practitioners in Team Teach and referrals from schools last year was 150.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Endorse the developments in relation to the strategic use of de-delegated budgets to support school improvement and behaviour support.
- 3.2 Receive a further update in relation to de-delegated budgets in six months.

**James Backhouse,**  
**Assistant Director of Education**

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## WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM 21<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2023

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

#### DE-DELEGATED BUDGETS - CONTINGENCY, SPECIAL STAFF, AND INSURANCE COSTS

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##### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to summarise the current provision for contingency, special staff, and insurance costs that are funded by de-delegated budget from Wirral's maintained primary and secondary schools.

##### 2.0 SCHOOL SPECIFIC CONTINGENCIES

2.1 This is a de-delegated budget, and is used for exceptional and unforeseen costs, which would be unreasonable to expect the schools and governing bodies to bear.

2.2 Special schools access these services on a buy-back basis.

2.2 This budget is used to meet adjustments for Business Rates, where actual charges are greater than those estimated when setting the budget. Other costs met from this budget vary each year, but in the past have included:

- Support for schools in Key Stage 1 where a larger than usual reception class (above the published admission numbers) requires additional staff;
- In exceptional cases deficits arising from closing schools;
- Support for managed moves

2.3 At January 2023 Schools Forum it was agreed to de-delegate this budget for primary and secondary maintained schools at £1.13 and £2.15 per pupil, respectively.

2.4 The contingency budget for 2023-24 is as follows:

	<b>Budget</b>
	<b>£</b>
Primary Schools	22,483
Secondary Schools	<u>7,721</u>
<b>Gross budget</b>	<b><u>30,204</u></b>

##### 3.0 SPECIAL STAFF COSTS

3.1 This de-delegated budget makes provision for staff maternity, paternity and trade union facility time for both teaching and non-teaching staff. It may also in certain circumstances meet additional costs arising from staff suspensions.

- 3.2 Maternity costs make up approximately 87% of the overall spend. While a member of staff is on maternity their costs are held centrally, while the school meets the cost of any required supply cover. Costs can vary greatly from year to year depending on the number of maternity cases, and the salary costs of those staff.
- 3.3 This budget also meets paternity costs, by reimbursing the cost of supply cover for the statutory 2 weeks of paternity leave allowed.
- 3.4 The Trade Union Facilities time budget has regard to guidance which confirms that representatives are entitled to reasonable paid time off during working hours to undertake Trade Union duties and relevant training. Wirral like many LA's has a local facility agreement in place. The budget for facility time also includes non-teacher representation.
- 3.5 Special Schools access these services on a buyback basis and there is a separate SLA for Academy schools.
- 3.6 Then financial position for 2022-23 was as follows:

	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Cost</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Maternity/Paternity	691,462	646,705
Trade Union Facilities	87,316	89,180
Insurance & Recharges	<u>6,700</u>	<u>6,700</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>785,478</u></b>	<b><u>742,584</u></b>

- 3.7 At January 2023 Schools Forum it was agreed to de-delegate this budget for primary and secondary maintained schools at £31.22 (staff £27.51 + TU £3.71) and £38.14 (staff £34.43 + TU £3.71), per pupil respectively.
- 3.8 The budget for special staff costs in 2023-24 is as follows:

	<b>Budget</b>
	<b>£</b>
Maternity, Paternity & Other Staff Costs	664,295
Trade Union Facilities	87,140
Insurance & Recharges	<u>6,700</u>
<b>Total budget</b>	<b><u>758,135</u></b>

#### **4.0 INSURANCE**

- 4.1 This budget covers the cost of governors' liability insurance for Voluntary Aided schools. A VA school's governing body should insure 10% of the replacement cost of the whole of the school premises. Where a VA school makes a claim under the policy, the Department for Education has the power (but not an obligation) to pay capital grant, usually at 90% of relevant expenditure, with governing bodies being responsible for the other 10%.
- 4.2 For several years Wirral schools have de-delegated budget to meet the cost of this insurance. Since 2017-18 only Primary schools have de-delegated, all secondary VA schools now having converted to Academy status.

- 4.3 VA schools purchase the insurance and can then claim the cost back from the Authority. Spend in recent years from this budget is as follows:

	<b>Spend</b> <b>£</b>
2019-20	17,286
2020-21	10,931
2021-22	7,202
2022-23	11,000

- 4.4 It should be noted that even though the governing body need only insure 10% of its premises liabilities, it is essential that proper security measures are taken to protect the premises and appropriate risk management advice to minimise losses is accessed.
- 4.5 At January 2023 Schools Forum it was agreed to de-delegate this budget for primary schools at £1.19 per pupil and this has resulted in a budget for 2023-24 of £23,677

## **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 That the Forum notes the report.

**Simone White**  
**Director for Children, Families and Education**

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## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### SCHOOLS FORUM 21<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2023

#### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

#### SCHOOL'S LIBRARY SERVICE UPDATE

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### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report updates the Forum on the recent changes to the Schools' Library Service and the service plans for the future.

### 2.1 BUDGET

2.2 The Schools Library Service is a de-delegated service, mainly for Primary Schools, although other schools can access services on request. Funding from the Schools' Forum provides £189,900, the equivalent of £8.78 per primary school pupil which is from maintained schools. Academies have the opportunity to buy back into the service. The make-up of the complete budget is shown below.

2023-24

Staffing £96,300

Other costs including book fund £60,435

Support Services Recharge £33,165

TOTAL £189,900

Income Secondary Schools £1000 cr

Income Academies £8771.22 cr

Income Special Schools £1066 cr

TOTAL £10,837.22

### 3.1 2023-24 PRIORITIES

- We will continue to maintain our current level of book, artefact loans and audio-visual resource provision for both maintained and academy schools as a standard service.
- We will continue to offer our expert librarian advice for the remodelling of school libraries on a first come, first served basis. We currently have a list of schools waiting for our services due to its popularity.
- We will continue to ensure our book stock, resources and offers to all schools remain relevant and up to date.

- We have made good on our intention to increase our academy uptake, with 5 schools now signed up. We hope to continue this trend and have had contact with all schools hoping to become academies in the future. We continue to encourage all Wirral academies to buy into the service.
- With the closure of 8 public libraries, SLS is proving to be even more essential for schools. Our reading for pleasure boxes are incredibly popular and an invaluable tool for schools hoping to improve post pandemic literacy levels.
- After promotion on the BBC schools website, our microbits are more popular than ever and we have more sets available for schools to borrow.
- We are currently in the middle of a move from our JP base to Ridgeway school. As you can imagine this is a huge undertaking and we would like to extend our thanks to the staff at One Call for their support. This move was not in our plans for 2023 but it must be noted that our schools have been very supportive and understanding. However, it cannot be underestimated the impact this move has had on both staff and service. We are currently working between two sites, neither of which are fully operational, and it should be assumed that our January deliveries will be late. Our main concern is a lack of space for all of our resources, but we are hoping that we will have access to an offsite storage space. As ever, we are sure that SLS will continue to thrive in its new base, thanks largely to the hard work and enthusiasm of the staff.
- We would like to extend an invitation to all Councillors, interested Council Officers and School Governors to visit our new SLS base to see what we do and how much our service has to offer, especially as 2024 marks 50 years of Wirral Schools Library Service.

#### **4.1 STAFFING**

4.2 There are currently 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  FTE members of staff:

- 2 \* 0.5 Schools' Librarian - job share
- 1 \* 0.6 Assistant Schools' Librarian -  $\frac{3}{4}$  post
- 1 \* Library Manager- ft post

Additional temporary staff members are employed three times a year to help facilitate the collection and delivery of resources to and from schools at the beginning and end of each term.

The service will be based at:  
 Ridgeway school  
 Noctorum Ave,  
 Birkenhead,  
 Prenton  
 CH43 9EB

Please see our entry in the Wirral Traded Services Brochure for more information on the service we offer.

## **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 That the Forum notes the report.

**Louise Rice and Catherine McNally  
Wirral Schools' Library Service  
November 2023**

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## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### SCHOOLS FORUM – 21<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2023

#### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

#### DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FUNDING FOR 2024-25 UPDATE

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### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Forum with an update of the 2024-25 Schools Block funding following the government announcement of the changes in the DSG National Funding Formula (NFF) in October 23.
- 1.2 The report seeks the Forum view of how any spare capacity within the funding available should be allocated following the feedback from the consultation with schools on the 2024-25 funding. The outcome of the consultation and the Forum decision will inform the allocation of funding to schools which will then be considered in the budget recommendations presented to the February 2024 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.
- 1.3 The report provides the update for the funding in the DSG EY block and additional grants available to Wirral in 24-25.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Department for Education (DFE) has published the revised provisional NFF allocations in October 2023 alongside an admission that the original version of the plans which was published in July 23 contained an incorrect estimate of pupil numbers. The revised allocation for Wirral's Schools block funding for 2024-25 is changed to £264.04m. There is no change in the indicative funding for High Needs block and Central Schools Service block funding.
- 2.2 The table below is the revised provisional gross funning (i.e. before academy recoupment) allocations for Wirral, based on 2022-23 pupil numbers:

	<b>Schools Block</b>	<b>High Needs Block</b>	<b>Central Services Block</b>
2023-24 Final Allocation	£250,661,766	£60,534,360	£2,057,781
2024-25 Indicative Allocation	£264,038,977	£63,095,753	£2,038,449
Increase/(reduction)	£13,377,211	£2,561,393	(19,332)
Increase/(reduction)	5.34%	4.23%	(0.94%)

The 2023-24 Mainstream Schools Additional grant (MSAG) is rolled into the schools NFF for 2024-25. The table below is the schools block funding comparison including MSAG in 23-24:

	<b>Schools Block</b>
2023-24 Allocation including MSAG	£259,138,071
2024-25 Indicative Allocation	£264,038,977
Increase/(reduction)	£4,900,906
Increase/(reduction)	1.89%

2.3 The revised provisional school block allocation includes the following changes:

- The core factors in the NFF (such as basic per-pupil funding, and funding for additional needs such as deprivation) will increase by 1.4%, and 1.6% increase to the free school meals (FSM) factor.
- Through the minimum per pupil funding levels, every primary school will receive at least £4,610 per pupil, and every secondary school at least £5,995.

2.4.1 For 2024-25, Local authorities have the freedom to set the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) in local formulae between +0% and +0.50% per pupil and a consultation exercise has been undertaken with schools to obtain their views on the MFG level for 2024-25.

### **3.0 2024-25 FUNDING FORMULA CONSULTATION**

3.1 The consultation took place between 3rd October 2023 and 23rd October 2023 and sought views on the following:

Level of MFG for 2024-25 for two options as follows:

- + 0.50% - this would give all schools at least the minimum 0.5% increase in per pupil funding and allow those due to gain most from the formula (i.e. those deemed underfunded) to gain closer to their full allocation.
- + 0% - no adjustment added to the formula and some schools has less than 0.5% increase in per pupil funding, which the DfE expects to implement in the future years.

3.3 In addition, views will be sought on the usage of any funding that may be left following the allocation of the confirmed 2024-25 schools block allocation. In previous years, such funding was allocated to a Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund.

3.4 To support the consultation processes, the information made available to schools included a financial model to identify the indicative impact of the MFG options on each school.

### **4.0 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES**

4.1 The responses to the consultation are be summarised as follows:

Q1 - What level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) would you like to be included in the funding formula from April 2024? There were 10 responses to this question with the +0.5% option being favoured albeit with a majority.

Q2 – Why have you selected this option? There were 5 responses and the feedback on the reasons for selecting this option included to ensure no schools are adversely affected and to ensure a minimum increase for all schools.

Q3 – Do you have any comments on how any spare capacity within the funding available should be allocated. For example, establish a Growth Fund and/or Falling Rolls Fund? There were 6 responses to this question. 3 responses were supportive to set up a falling roll and/or growth fund with other suggestions that the fund to use to support SEN (Special Educational Needs) pupils, to support early intervention and to benefit schools.

## **5.0 APPLICATION OF THE CONSULTATION OUTCOME**

5.1 The MFG rate of +0.5% will be applied to the formula for 2024-25 as per the outcome of the consultation with schools.

5.2 A falling rolls/growth fund will be established from the headroom in the schools block final allocation after applying the MFG rate of 0.5%.

## **6.0 EARLY YEARS FUNDING UPDATE**

6.1 Early Years (EY) Extended Entitlements

In July 2023 the Government announced that all eligible working parents in England will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week for 38 weeks per year from the term after their child turns 9 months old until when they start school. This will be rolled out in stages:

- From April 2024 – all working parents of 2-year-olds can access 15 hours per week.
- From September 2024 – all working parents of children aged 9 months to 3years-old can access 15 hours per week.
- From September 2025 – all working parents of children aged 9 months to 3 years-old can access 30 hours per week.

LA Delivery support funding as a part of the expansion of the EY entitlement has been allocated to support local authorities meet programme and delivery costs associated with rolling out the expanded EY entitlements. The funding is available 2023-24 financial year and the allocation to Wirral is £76,602.

6.2 Early Years Supplementary Grant

The Government announced additional £204 million of supplementary funding to local authorities through the standalone Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG) nationally for the period September 2023 to March 2024.

The grant is intended to be passed in full to early years providers and it has been decided the increased hourly rates are added to the base rate for each funding stream for the period. This has resulted in the hourly rate is increasing by £1.79 for 2-year-olds and £0.33 for 3- and 4-year-olds for 2023-24 from September 23.

Pupil premium rate has been increased to £0.66 per hour and Disability access funding (DAF) to £881.

### 6.3 Wraparound Childcare Programme

The purpose of the grant is to ensure all schools offer wraparound childcare from 8am -6pm during term time, schools can determine how they will meet this offer. This will increase the supply of wraparound places, to ensure or guarantee provision for all parents who may need it, meeting current demand and building further demand.

The maximum amount of the grant available to Wirral is as table below.

<b>FY 23-24</b>	<b>FY24-25</b>	<b>FY 25-26 (Provisional)</b>	<b>Total</b>
17,005	1,090,347	508,917	1,616,268

Capital funding £100m nationally for local authorities to support delivery of the reforms to the early years' entitlements (£80m) and wraparound provision (£20m) is also announced. The details and the allocation to Wirral are expected to be announced in November 23.

- 6.4 The EY funding for 2024-25 has not been announced at the time of this report writing, however, a survey for the funding entitlement is to be taken place in this month by the EY team. Further details are to be communicated to the schools and the providers accordingly.

## 7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the Forum notes the report.
- 7.2 Schools Forum's views are sought on the proposal to include +0.5% Minimum Funding Guarantee within Wirral's funding formula in 2024-25.
- 7.3 Schools Forum's views are sought on the proposal to a falling rolls/growth fund form any spare capacity within the 2024-25 school allocation.

**Simone White**  
**Director of Children, Families and Education**

## REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### MAINSTREAM SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

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#### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a brief outline of Mainstream Admissions during the most recently fully completed 2021-2022 admission year.

#### 2.0 Mainstream Admissions

2.1 Statutory roles of the Mainstream Admissions team include the administration and allocation of places in all primary and secondary schools, and representing the Council in school place appeals.

For entry to primary/secondary school in September 2022 there were over 3,300 applications for primary school (Foundation 2) and 3,600 for secondary schools (Year 7). The team co-ordinates admission to school with all own admission authority schools within Wirral and other admission authorities in England.

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Any Preference	None	No Application offer
Foundation 2	3,120 (95%)	101 (3%)	13 (<1%)	3234 (99%)	46 (1%)	43
Year 7	3275 (90%)	228 (6%)	31 (1%)	3542 (97%)	119 (3%)	37

On-time applicant offers by preference rank and non-applicant offers as at National Offer Day 2022. Wirral residents only, excludes late applications and pupils with an EHCP. "None" indicates a place was offered at a school not given as a preference.

2.2 The team produces appeal statements and presents appeals on behalf of all community and voluntary controlled (VC) schools as a statutory function. Academy, Aided and Foundation/Trust schools prepare and present their own appeals.

For information, the outcomes for the community and VC school appeals handled by the team are shown below.

	Withdrawn (%)	Refused (%)	Agreed (%)	Total
2019-2020	39 (42%)	53 (56%)	2 (2%)	94
2020-2021	44 (44%)	53 (53%)	3 (3%)	100
2021-2022	36 (46%)	42 (53%)	1 (1%)	79

Outcome of appeals lodged for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools by academic year. Withdrawn includes resolved and withdrawn appeals.

The outcome of appeals was similar to previous years.

2.3 The team administers the grammar school selection tests on behalf of the four non-Catholic grammar schools. Around 1,900 children are tested each year. The team is responsible for disseminating the outcome of the selective tests to parents.

2.4 As well as admissions to Foundation 2 and Year 7, the team also processes around 2,000 in-year transfers between and into/out of Wirral schools.

2.5 The Council's Fair Access Protocol applies to "hard to place" young people in specific categories, principally children without a school place due to being new to the area with no place available locally. 74 young people were placed at Wirral

secondary schools and 2 in Wirral primary schools, through the Fair Access Protocol in 2021-2022, compared to 82 secondary and 2 primary in the previous year. This figure excludes placements into Alternative Provision, placements into mainstream schools from the Progress School, or Managed Move decisions.

Of the 76 placements in 2021/22 via Fair Access, 75% related to children who were new to Wirral without a school place, 18% to children returning from elective home education and 7% to transfers between Wirral schools for other Fair Access reasons.

- 2.6 The role of the Fair Access Panel, with a wide membership including officers with responsibility for alternative provision, special educational needs and educational psychology, exclusions etc. and includes decisions on Managed Move destinations, as well as re-integration decisions for young people with a single permanent exclusion.

### **3.0 Finance**

- 3.1 The overall budget for School Admissions in 2023-2024 is £402,604. The costs include:

Staffing (8.6 FTE)	£306,498
Overheads	£1,200
Software & Third Party	£94,479
Selection	£43,400
Income/recharges	(£42,974)
Total	£402,604

- 3.2 Forum should note that there are from time to time unavoidable increases in staffing costs due to nationally agreed public sector pay awards and third party costs which may necessitate a concurrent rise in the Admissions budget to avoid an overspend.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Forum notes the report.

**Simone White**  
Corporate Director for Children and Families

## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023

#### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

#### New Budget Monitoring System for Schools

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### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Wirral Maintained schools are required under the Scheme for Financing Schools, to provide budget setting, budget monitoring and 3-year projections throughout the financial year. Headteachers have requested, through Wirral Schools Forum, to consider alternatives to the current process for budget monitoring to allow more control, particularly when considering the effects of staffing changes on budget projections.

### 2.0 THE CURRENT PROCESS

2.1 The current process is managed through an Excel spreadsheet for each school. For those buying into the Premium & Standard Plus Financial Support SLA this is a comprehensive spreadsheet that calculates the cost of salaries, staffing changes, income & non-staffing expenditure, projecting income & expenditure to the end of the year, along with 3 year projections. Those schools who buy the standard service are provided with a summary spreadsheet for completion but may have school specific systems in place to manage their staffing costs and projections.

2.2 The current system/process has the following limitations to provide the flexibility that schools have requested through Schools Forum:-

- The reports only provide schools with data at set periods in time.
- If staffing scenarios are required schools have to refer back to their LMS Bursar.
- Schools receive a PDF version of the report for headteacher & governor meeting
- Entering data, particularly staffing, can be time consuming if there are many changes.
- Staffing data is re-entered every year at budget setting.
- It also relies on the LMS team to have a high level of Excel expertise.
- Collating the overall school picture is manual & time consuming

### 3.0 BOUGHT IN SYSTEMS

3.1 Selected market leading School Specific Budget monitoring systems (Access, Arbor & Bromcom) have been looked into by the LMS team.

3.2 A new bought in, school specific, Budget Monitoring system will address some of the issues with the spreadsheet, as well as other benefits as follows:-

- Provide budget setting & budget monitoring data in a more timely manner for schools.
- Staffing data will be entered once, with only staff changes going forward.
- Provide scenarios to see the effect of additional spend/income on projections, again this can be managed by the school or through the Financial Support SLA.
- Allows schools to take control of their own finances, if they wish, or to continue purchasing a high level of support from the Financial Support SLA.
- Reduce the need for Excel expertise within the LMS team.
- Local Authority back office access, providing accurate, summarised school data on a more timely basis.
- School level access, from full access for finance staff to viewing level for governors.

#### **4.0 THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS**

4.1 The process to purchase a school specific budget monitoring system through the LA is as follows:

- A business case is presented to the Change Advisory Board (CAB) to consider.
- Once this is agreed the procurement process can begin through the Chest.
- The requirements will be agreed to purchase a bought in, school specific budget monitoring system.
- The aim is for implementation for a new system for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

4.2 The business case is being presented to the CAB on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November.

4.3 There will be a cost to purchasing a more robust budget monitoring and projection system. There will be an annual central charge, along with a license charge per school. The estimated costs are as detailed below and the mechanism for charging to the schools will be finalised after the procurement process but will not be confirmed until the procurement process has been completed.

- Central cost £6k - £7k, reducing to £2k - £3k in future years
- Annual license cost for each school will be confirmed following procurement process

#### **5.0 RECOMENDATIONS**

5.1 Forum notes the report.

**Simone White**  
**Director of Children, Families and Education**



## WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 21<sup>th</sup> November 2023

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

#### **Excessive clawback mechanism consultation outcome with Wirral maintained schools.**

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report outlines the feedback to schools' forum in relation to the surplus clawback consultation that was conducted from the 28<sup>th</sup> September until the 9<sup>th</sup> November in relation to a clawback mechanism for Wirral Maintained Schools.

At the schools' forum meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> September it was approved by forum that the consultation should take place to capture feedback in relation to the questions that were outlined in the report, it was outlined that the schools balances position for Wirral maintained schools was still historically high in comparison to pre-covid levels and that some schools on Wirral had significantly high revenue budgets. Following the approval at schools' forum the consultation questions were circulated, and the following report gives an overview of the responses. The consultation received 13 responses from Wirral Schools.

Many other local authorities do have a clawback mechanism in place to address excessive balances where they occur. An excessive balance would be one that is higher than the DfE good practice guidance. Wirral currently does not have a mechanism in place. DfE guidelines state it is good practice for primary, nursery and special schools to have a balance reserve of 8%, for secondary schools this would be 5%.

#### **1.0 Consultation feedback**

**Q1 - Do you believe a clawback mechanism should be implemented on Wirral in relation to excessive school balances above the DfE recommended amounts?  
Yes/no**

7 school responses of yes  
5 school responses of no  
1 school response abstain

***Do you have any additional comments you wish to share in relation to this question?***

*It must be made clear that this only relates to funds within the formula elements of the DSG, not school funds, grants, etc. Can we clarify if there are any exemptions? (pupil premium, PP+ or SEN?)*

*What level of approval would be needed for capital projects identified as a reason for holding an excessive surplus?*

*As long as the 3 year projection shows a surplus and there is not an agreed plan to spend the existing surplus.*

*Why would any school want that?*

*Our surplus funds are committed from our delegated budget and accounted for the next four years.*

*We need a carry forward to find staffing structure but also to have contingency funds for high level of SEN pupils with EHCPs remaining in mainstream school and not receiving adequate funding levels from the LA.*

*The money we use for surplus is pupil funding money originally allocated to school and will support current pupils over their time here.*

*If there is an excess balance with no clear plan then those funds can be better invested elsewhere.*

*Why is there a difference between clawback from Primary and Secondary schools?*

*we believe a clawback mechanism should be implemented but only where the carry forward is not being used to set budgets for the following years without going into a deficit budget.*

*We do not believe that the answer to this question is as simple as 'Yes' or 'No'. The question requires more than a binary answer and should take into account what schools are intending/planning to do with the excess balances that they have. We believe that if a school has a clear plan for the future spending of the excess balance, then it is only right that they should be allowed to keep it.*

*Our view is that the local authority should be challenging schools that are building significant reserves and have no plans for how it will be used to improve outcomes for Wirral Children. In these circumstances, where there are clearly no plans in place, then it would be correct to use a clawback mechanism to retrieve any excess balance above the DfE recommended amounts.*

*There are many reasons that schools have surplus budgets and we believe this is a conversation to have with individual schools.*

*In our own case, we maintain a carry forward because in our 3 year projections our budget goes into deficit if we do not have the carry forward.*

*We are not as a school denying our children resources or equipment but being prudent in our managing of the budget.*

**Q2. If a clawback mechanism is to be implemented on Wirral, which of the following approaches do you feel would be appropriate in calculating the claw back amount?**

**A) 50% of excess balances above the DFE recommended amount of 8% for primary schools/ 5% for secondary schools, for the average surplus balance over 4-year period.**

**B) 50% of excess balances above the DFE recommended amount of 8% for primary schools/ 5% for secondary schools, for the average surplus balance over 3-year period.**

**C) 50% of excess balances above the DFE recommended amount of 8% for primary schools/ 5% for secondary schools, for the average surplus balance over 2-year period.**

In relation to option A – 6 responses choose a 50% clawback over a 4-year period  
In relation to option B - 3 responses choose a 50% clawback over a 3-year period  
In relation to option C – 3 responses choose a 50% clawback over a 2 year period  
There is one response without selecting any option

***Would you like to share any other alternative proposals in relation to a clawback mechanism?***

*I think it should be looked at on school level basis. Clearly high schools who have 9m excess sitting in bank accounts and not committed should be challenged, but small primary schools with a 10% carry forward which is clearly accounted for is a different matter. I think it's the commitment of funds that should be questioned.*

*Why the 50% figure? If you started at 10% and moved up 10% at a time for future years then it would be a gradual increase that allowed schools to manage their futures. A 50% increase does not allow schools to make long term, properly controlled and considered plans to reduce spending and curtail/adapt what they had in mind for the betterment of Wirral's children in their care.*

*There could be individual conversations with schools where there are high surplus budgets. Schools must be able to evidence how the money will be used in their three-year projections.*

***Q3. If a clawback mechanism is to be implemented, it would be expected any claw back would be transferred to the high needs block, this is linked to the scheme for schools financing that states, "some level of redistribution would support improved provision across a local area". Would you support this approach? yes/no***

7 school responses of yes

6 school responses of no

The following comments were also written;

*I don't agree with it going to high needs though as it will just added into the overall budget and not be specifically allocated. Already issues around this.*

*Yes, if the high needs funding would have a direct impact on the support available to schools*

*Yes, it is important that any clawback benefits the most vulnerable children across the whole of the Wirral.*

*No, unless there is a very clear identified use of the money.*

***Would you like to share any other options for the use of funds that are subject to claw back?***

*I would like it to be shared equally among schools*

*The full amount raised through clawback should be identified, discussed and its use directed, by forum. The process, including any disapplications, should be fully transparent. A primary PRU. We are fire fighting.*

*I think a full consultation with headteachers at PHCG should be undertaken around clawback and high needs funding spend.*

*It would be useful to support mainstream schools with provision for SEND children.*

*Schools would feel better if the money went back into the budget pot for the financial year, maybe with a small element into the high needs hole. So that would increase the amount on offer for all schools and benefitting all children, but 50% is far too much. Support for pupils in mainstream from appropriate specialist services, transition work for primary to secondary schools - areas where pupils are likely to fail due to lack of support and thus relieve the pressure on the specialist sector. However these need to be quality assured and recruited to carefully to ensure the service is targeted and effective for those most in need, with professionals with relevant experience recruited.*

*It be distributed amongst all schools prioritising those with deficit budgets.*

**Q4. As part of the consultation would you like to share any other comments in relation to school budget positions as part of this process?**

*Some schools are running at a significant loss - the clawback needs to go into areas of need, such as SEN, but also to schools where finances are absolutely crippled. My school runs at a loss, even after everything has been stripped back to the bare minimum.*

*I am totally opposed to the clawback.*

*The LA should have planned more strategically for the current situation, including the academy agenda, and schools should not be penalised for their inadequacy.*

*Budget positions are precarious and I know in my school staffing the school to meet the increased SEND needs we are having to support is potentially putting us in deficit and potential redundancy.*

*The funding for SEND is not in line with current need or staff salaries - schools are topping up by a lot more than 6 units - this needs to be analyzed and investigated further.*

*If the clawback is only to be for maintained schools, will it make very much difference? Is it some of the larger secondary schools, who are academies who carry forward the largest amounts of money?*

*Our school is able to staff our school in a way that provides the best provision for our children because we have always used an historical carry forward. If we are not able to carry the same amount forward, we would be looking to make staff redundant as we cannot balance our in year budget with the staffing that we have.*

*As part of this process, budgets for special schools need to be looked at again. The complexity of the children and the challenging behaviours that this brings are increasing at an alarming rate. We are happy to support children with complex needs, but providing the correct provision should not come with financial implications and place the school in a position where it is operating with a deficit budget.*

*Yes, the council have promoted that schools should be business savvy and work as such. To be able to improve our buildings, which is council stock, the only way we could do that is by creating a revenue credit. For example, building repairs. Consistently, we were put off replacing areas, so we had to fund most of it from within our revenue credit gained from multiple years of planned credits. Similarly in 2010, we had to part fund the joining of our two buildings.*

*The clawback may well penalise those who have been extremely savvy with their money, kept their schools in the right OFSTED category and maintained good results for the wider of Wirral's children.*

*Schools have worked hard to save money so they can keep supporting their own pupils; what will be put in place to support these schools if they go into deficit at a later date due to this clawback mechanism? Surely it is not the right time to be taking money off schools when the costs are going up and funding levels are stagnating. The timing of this process being discussed seems insensitive to schools and adds further stress on school leaders, who are already under pressure and trying to manage budgets and futureproof their schools, whilst delivering effective, good quality education to pupils and the community of Wirral.*

*This consultation should have included the elements of income and credit to be used in any such calculation, so that we could accurately see the proposed impact on our schools. FMS do not know what areas are to be used... I've asked them to clarify and they can't.*

*If this was going to be a longer term policy for the council to fill SEND black holes then we would need at least a year's notice to be able to adapt our spending plans and make decisions for the future. Our overspend is forecast to be over £120,000, so you can see how rapidly we are heading to the recommended 8% buffer, but if you take 50% of our surpluses away then we, and many like us, will be on a speedy way to deficits and multiple redundancies across school. This will further impact schools across Wirral, more than now, and place a huge burden on council traded services, namely HR.*

*During covid years, it was difficult to get in professional services, spend on maintenance and supply staffing, so it increased schools' credits further. Many schools are now coming down from those issues. Our budget looks to be below 8% within the next two years as we have works and projects completed.*

## **2.0 Consultation feedback response in relation to specific areas**

- 2.1 Analysis of all Wirral maintained budgets show a mixed a picture, there are currently 19 schools (including special schools and nurseries) with a deficit budget of £2.8 million. Support is being put in place to support these schools in returning to balanced budget position.
- 2.2 The removal of the 16 schools in deficit from the headline figure leaves the remaining Wirral maintained schools with a remaining balance of £16.3 million. Across the remaining schools, revenue reserves vary significantly, progressing from low reserves to schools with 25% revenue budget reserves. The DFE guidance in relation balance reserves in the eventuality of unexpected costs is 8% for primary, nursery and special schools and 5% for secondary schools.
- 2.3 The number of Wirral maintained school, including nurseries and special schools at the end of the last financial year with a balances in excess of the recommended DFE carry forward amounts of 8% for primary and 5% for secondary is 23 schools. These currently have a surplus budget above the DFE recommended amount of £5.5 million, this is

based on closing carry forward at the end of the financial year and any clawback amount would be based on average over a number of years.

- 2.4 The DFE recommended amounts differ for primary and secondary schools due to the size of the institutions, for this reason the DFE recommended amount is slightly higher for primary schools.
- 2.5 It is a common practice that the calculation of the clawback amount each school is liable is based on the school budget share. Funds deriving from sources other than the local authority will be taken into account in this calculation if paid into the budget share account of the school.
- 2.6 Any school that is identified to have an excess balance and liable for clawback will have an opportunity to meet with the local authority to outline their current financial position, as per the scheme for schools financing the clawback will be in relation to carried forward funds that have not been identified for a specific use, this is the reason for the clawback being the average amount over a period of several financial years. If the clawback is approved, schools will be reviewed annually.
- 2.7 Wirral does not currently have a clawback mechanism, many other local authorities do. The 50% amount over the DFE recommended carry forward is in line with other local authority claw back mechanisms.
- 2.8 Once schools with excess balance have met with the local authority, if it is identified they do have an amount subject to clawback, this would then need final approval by school's forum. The rationale in relation to the amount of clawback for the individual school would be classed as exempt information and not be disclosed in public, Wirral Schools Forum currently does not share the finance position of individual schools, balances are grouped by school type.
- 2.9 Any decisions on how any clawback funding is used would be through consultation with schools forum, it was suggested it should be consulted through the relevant headship group. Schools Forum reports can be shared at other meetings but the decision making must be taken by schools forum as per the schools scheme for financing.
- 2.10 Any funds that are subject to clawback can be utilised as approved by schools forum, the suggestion of the high needs block was based on models used by other local authorities where claw back funds are used to address a deficit in the high needs block. This is also permissible in the schools' scheme for financing. Schools' forum can decide to use the funds in another way in relation to specific areas as per the request of schools' forum members. The claw back funds cannot be transferred to the council budget, the funds are from the DSG and must remain in one of the relevant blocks.

### **3.0 Scheme for financing schools**

- 3.1 Under the most recent scheme for financing local authority-maintained schools. In section 6.1 and 6.2 the DFE guidance makes clear. In 6.1 the guidance articulates a provision which allows a carry forward from one financial year to the next any surplus/deficit budget the school may have.
- 3.2 In 6.2 the guidance articulates that the scheme may have a mechanism to claw back excess surplus balances.

3.3 It states the mechanism should be focused on only schools which have built up significant excessive uncommitted balances or where some level of redistribution would support improved provision across a local area.

#### **4.0 Options following the consultation**

4.1 The relevant members of schools forum must now decide if they wish to approve a excessive balance claw back mechanism.

4.2 If a clawback mechanism is approved, the relevant changes to the scheme for financing local-authority schools will be made.

4.3 Schools who are eligible for an excessive clawback mechanism will be identified and will be invited to meet with the local authority regarding their current budget position. Schools will be allowed to give representation regarding the use of any funds currently in excess of the DFE recommended amount.

4.4 Following this meeting the local authority will inform schools of the amount of excess balance liable to be used in calculating a claw back amount.

4.5 The relevant schools forum members will have final approval for any calculated clawback amount. The use of any claw back funds would then need approval by the relevant schools forum members.

#### **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Schools' forum members are requested to make a decision regarding the commencement of a clawback mechanism for Wirral Maintained Schools.

2. If a clawback mechanism is approved, agree the time period the clawback will be calculated over – A) 4 years B) 3 years C) 2 years.

3. If the clawback mechanism is approved, the relevant forum members agree to meet again regarding the schools identified for the clawback mechanism.

**Simone White**  
**Director of Children, Families and Education**

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## WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

#### Forum Membership Review

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## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report describes the current representation of the Forum and membership changes.

## 1.2 Current Representation

The table below details the current makeup of the Wirral Schools' Forum representation and when the terms of office are due to expire.

Total Membership	Role	2019-2023	2020-2024	2021-2025	2022-2026	2023-2027	Total
5	Primary Headteachers			2	1	2	5
4	Primary Governors			2	1		3
1	Secondary Headteachers		1				1
1	Special Headteacher					1	1
1	Special Governors					1	1
1	Nursery Representative				1		1
<b>13</b>	<b>Total Schools Membership</b>						<b>12</b>
9	Academy Representative			2		4	6
<b>9</b>	<b>Total Academy Membership</b>						<b>6</b>
1	Non-teacher representative			1			1
1	Teacher representative					1	1
1	Catholic Diocese			1			1
1	Church of England Diocese			1			1
1	16-19 representative						0
3	PVI Early Years Providers			3			3
<b>8</b>	<b>Total Non-Schools Membership</b>						<b>7</b>
<b>30</b>	<b>Total Membership</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>

1.4 There are currently 5 vacancies and 2 representatives whose term of office is due to come to an end by the end of the year.

- There is 1 x 16-19 provider vacancy. No nominations have been received.
- There is 1 x Primary Governor vacancy. Expressions of interest will be sent out shortly to fill this position.
- There are 3 x academy representative vacancies. The expressions of interest have been sent out but at the time of writing this report, no nominations have been received.

## 1.5 New Members

There has been **one** new member since the September report, as follows: -

**Lorraine Prescott**, Headteacher of St Anne's Primary School as the Primary Headteacher Representative replacing Andy Ramsden

Appendix 1 identifies all current members and their role on School's Forum.

## 1.6 Membership Changes

Regulations governing the forum requires school/academy membership to take account of pupil weighting.

Current		Pupil no's Jan 23 Census	Expected	
9	Primary	21,263	44.2%	8.4
1	Secondary	3,842	8.0%	1.5
9	Academy	22,975	47.8%	9.1
<b>19.0</b>		<b>48,080</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>19.0</b>

1.7 As the primary schools are converting to academy, this reduces the membership of maintained primary schools to 8 but increases the maintained secondary schools back up to 2. The regulations allow for flexibility during periods of change so it would be reasonable to keep 9 primary members and 1 secondary member as we await more academy conversions later in the year.

## 2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Forum notes the report.

2.2 As schools continue to convert to academy, the membership split between primary, secondary and academy will need to be monitored closely.

**Simone White**  
Director of Children, Families and Education

## Appendix 1

Group	Name	Category of Membership	School/Establishment	Term of Office	
Schools	Lorraine Prescott	Primary Headteacher (Birkenhead S)	St Anne's Catholic	Oct-23	Sep-27
Schools	Sue Ralph	Primary Headteacher (Birkenhead N)	St Michael & All Angels	Sep-21	Aug-25
Schools	John McDonald	Primary Headteacher (Wallasey)	St Albans Primary	Sep-21	Aug-25
Schools	Kate Ball	Primary Headteacher (Deeside)	Brookdale	Sep-23	Aug-27
Schools	Chris Mervyn	Primary Headteacher (Beb/Brom)	Brackenwood Infants	May-22	Apr-26
Schools	Charlotte Scott	Primary Governor	St Georges Primary	Aug-21	Jul-25
Schools	Shaun Allen	Primary Governor	Raeburn Avenue	Nov-22	Oct-26
Schools	Julie Merry	Primary Governor	Overchurch Infants/Cathcart	Jan-21	Dec-24
Schools	Vacancy	Primary Governor			
Schools	Simon Goodwin	Secondary Headteacher	South Wirral High	Sep-20	Aug-24
Schools	Holly Barker	Special Headteacher	Stanley School	Sep-23	Aug-27
Schools	Paula Wareing	Special Governor	Meadowside School	Feb-23	Jan-27
Schools	Kathryn Kennedy	Nursery Representative	Ganneys Meadow	Mar-22	Feb-26
Academy	Moira Loftus	Academy Rep (Vice-Chair)	Townfield Primary	Jun-21	May-25
Academy	Adrian Whiteley	Academy Rep (Chair)	St Anselms	Sep-23	Aug-27
Academy	Vacancy	Academy Rep			
Academy	Emma Ball	Academy Rep	Greasby Junior	Jan-23	Dec-27
Academy	Mark Bellamy	Academy Rep	Hilbre High School	Sep-21	Aug-25
Academy	Luci Jones	Academy Rep	Cheshire Academies Trust (Gayton, I	Sep-23	Aug-27
Academy	Vacancy	Academy Rep			
Academy	Vacancy	Academy Rep			
Academy	Carys Wynn-Green	Academy Rep	Concordia	Sep-23	Aug-27
Non-Schools	Gill Harris	Non-teacher representative	Wirral Unison	May-21	Apr-25
Non-Schools	Michael Farrelly	Teacher representative	NEU	Sep-23	Aug-27
Non-Schools	Joanne Proctor	Catholic Diocese	Christ the King	Sep-21	Aug-25
Non-Schools	Brian McGregor	Church of England Diocese	Woochurch CE Primary	Sep-21	Aug-25
Non-Schools	Vacancy	16-19 Provider			
Non-Schools	Nicky Prance	PVI Early Years Providers	Barnston Buddies	Jan-21	Dec-23
Non-Schools	Simon Davies	PVI Early Years Providers	Penguins Nurseries	Jan-21	Dec-23
Non-Schools	Jessica Trigg	PVI Early Years Providers	The Mulberry Tree	Oct-21	Sep-25

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WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023 WORK PLAN

Meeting Date	Tuesday 16th January 2024	March 2024 Provisional meeting	Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
Virtual / Physical	Physical		Physical
Budget	Budget Monitoring 23-24 Q3 Schools Budget 24-25 De-delegation of budgets School Balances update		Provisional outturn 2023-24 Schools Budget 2024-25 School Balances update
Consultation			- - - -
DfE Regs & guidelines	Schools Forum Membership If updated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DfE Operational Guide</li> <li>• School Finance Regs</li> </ul> Scheme for Financing Schools		Schools Forum Membership If updated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DfE Operational Guide</li> <li>• School Finance Regs</li> </ul> Scheme for Financing Schools
Working Groups	High needs Early Years		High Needs Early Years
Other	Sensory Support Service Update  Energy update Wirral Alternative Provision Update		LACES /LAC PP Update  Home Continuing and Education Service (HCES) update  Agree Meeting dates

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