



Wirral Schools Forum

Date:	Tuesday, 29 September 2020	
Time:	4.00 p.m.	
Venue:	Virtual Meeting	Contact
	sueashley@wirral.gov.uk for public Access	

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AGENDA

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR & VICE CHAIR
2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30TH JUNE 2020 (Pages 1 - 6)
3. MATTERS ARISING
4. HOME TUITION SERVICE UPDATE (Pages 7 - 10)
5. EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP UPDATE (Pages 11 - 14)
6. SCHOOLS BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2020-21 (Pages 15 - 22)
7. GROWTH AND FALLING ROLLS FUND REPORT (Pages 23 - 26)
8. 2021-22 FUNDING FORMULA CONSULTATION
Paper to follow
9. SCHOOL BALANCES UPDATE (Pages 27 - 28)
10. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP UPDATE (Pages 29 - 32)
11. OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS FORUMS (Pages 33 - 62)

For Information

12. **WORK PLAN (Pages 63 - 64)**
13. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM

30th June 2020

MINUTES

Present: Adrian Whiteley (Chair)

Schools Group

L Ayling	T Kelly
M Bellamy	E McGunigall (Deputy)
R Bridges	R Mahoney
K Brown	M Morris
J Bush	Cllr Norbury
G Fraser	D Spencer
C Hughes	J Weise
H Johnson	

Non-Schools Group

S Bennett	N Prance
S Davies	S Ralph
G Edwards	A Ryecroft
L Krimou (Deputy)	

In Attendance:

S Allen	T Ghosh
S Ashley	S Robinson
A Bellingham	S Talbot
C Fenlon	C Thomson
S Harvey	

Apologies:

L Davidson	E Morris
E Longbone	E Neal
N Lightwing	I Harris

Protocols of the Virtual meeting

- Remain on mute unless requested to speak
- Raise 'hand' to ask a question, or ask a question in the chat section
- Use Chat to vote as not everyone has the hand symbol.

1. Minutes from the Meeting held on 15th January 2020

The minutes from the meeting were accepted as a true record.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Early Years Update

Carol Fenlon updated Forum on the Early Years Working Group discussions, particularly in light of Covid19 response: -

- Government agreed 2,3 & 4 year old much funding would continue to be paid, with payments being made earlier than usual.
- There has been a small number of double funding where key worker children had to move settings where original setting was closed.
- 68% of providers are now open, providing sufficient places for children.
- A Childcare Response Exceptional Circumstance Grant scheme has provided 60 settings with financial support.

The report also highlighted a number of ongoing items:-

- Vulnerable 2 year olds will be a priority for September as numbers have fallen during the summer term due to Covid19.
- A consultation is due in the autumn with proposals on early years rates for April 2021.
- Inclusive Practice Fund requests have been reduced and will not be paid in full if children have not been attending during the summer term.
- Changes are being made to the Transition process in light of Covid19 with a multi -agency approach to the process.

The Early Years team are still waiting for guidance on the summer holiday period and will consider how to manage funding available for vulnerable children during this time.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

4. High Needs - Clare Mount School Places

Tarun Ghosh advised the Forum of the request from Clare Mount Specialist Sports College to increase pupil numbers by 10 from September 2020.

Numbers have continued to rise over the years and as the school is currently over its current admission numbers the 10 places will be permanent if agreed.

There has been a shift in the profile of the school from mild to moderate learning difficulties to SEMH needs.

As part of the Budget Report in January 2020 resources were made available for 40 places. These were identified to support increased places in Special Schools during the financial year, instead of using the high needs contingency budget. The additional Clare Mount places will be taken from this resource.

Special School places are generally taken up by need, but parental choice has been high for Clare Mount. Due to the increased capacity of the school a double mobile will be added to the site. This is short term, but work has started to review of the capital estate for special schools in the long term.

Forum raised its concerns in relation to the ongoing affordability of the plan and asked for a clarification of the strategy. The plan should consider the balance between mainstream support & specialist school support. An alternative to additional places at special schools may be children going to independent special schools which are far more costly. Consideration also needs to be given to an affordable solution due to the DSG overspend highlighted in a later report.

Tarun thanked the headteacher, governors and staff of Clare Mount School for helping him to understand the school profile and the excellent service they provide.

Resolved

1. Forum Agreed an increase of 10 places for Clare Mount specialist Sports College from Sept 2020 to a total of 226 places
2. Forum agreed 226 base funding per place from September 2020 plus banding per pupil for Clare Mount
3. Forum agreed that the 10 additional places be included in the High Needs place change notification process in November 2020

5. High Needs Foxfield Places

Tarun Ghosh advised the Forum of the request from the LA to provide an additional 6 places (amended to 7) at Foxfield from September 2020, specifically for Year 7 pupils. Their numbers are increasing in the longer term as pupils increase from their feeder schools. This will require further consideration as the year 7 cohort moves through the school due to lack of places by 2022.

Meadowside has a similar profile of pupils, which has a small capacity at Meadowside. Where a school meets the needs of a child it is then that parental preference then comes into play. These pupils are the most vulnerable in Wirral with complex needs.

These places will be met from the resource of 40 places identified in the Clare Mount School paper above.

Tarun thanked the head teacher for providing an understanding of the profile of the children and the service the school provides to meet their needs.

Resolved

1. Forum agreed an increase of 7 places for Foxfield School from September 2020 to a total of 147 places.
2. Forum agreed 147 base funding per place from September 2020 plus banding per pupil for Foxfield.
3. Forum agreed that the 7 additional places be included in the High Needs place change notification process in November 2020.

6. Schools Budget Outturn 2019-20

Adrian Bellingham outlined the year end position for the 2019-20 Schools Budget which is still subject to audit and is therefore provisional. There is an overspend of £1.2m which is an improvement from the January prediction.

Main variances identified:-

- £5.639m underspend due to Bebington High conversion to academy, which is offset by a reduction in the DSG.
- £226k overspend due to increase of de-delegated maternity costs.
- £1.495m overspend in the high needs block due to an increase in the number and complexity of cases.
- Early Years underspend £499k due to the lower uptake of 3&4 year old than expected and an underspend of Disability Access Fund (DAF) requests.

DAF is to be spent on specific principles and it is proposed that a total of £114.3k is ringfenced from this and previous years underspend is ringfenced along with £67k 2019-20 early years activity costs not met until 2020-21 budget.

The remainder of the underspend for Early Years block offsets the overall year end DSG balance. Work is being done by the Early Years working group to improve uptake.

As the deficit of £1.2m for 2019-20 is less than 1% a recovery plan does not have to be formally submitted to the ESFA, but a recovery plan is required to show how the deficit will be recovered.

Resolved

1. Forum noted the report
2. Forum agreed the £245,305 DSG is ringfenced to DAF £178k & EY late charges £67k
3. Agreed High need working group is to meet before the next Forum meeting to discuss the Council's deficit recovery plan to be arranged by Tarun Ghosh (Head of SEN and Inclusion).

7. Schools Budget 2020-21 Update

Adrian Bellingham outlined the Schools Budget for 2020-21, which was agreed by Council in March 2020.

£1.7m has been re-allocated in respect of de-delegated budgets from schools. The growth and Falling rolls fund of £466k will be made available for allocation. The in-year DSG surplus of £644k will be used to offset the High Needs deficit from 2019-20, so the DSG reserve is expected to be a deficit of £0.6m

Resolved

Forum noted the report

8. Growth and Falling Rolls Fund 2020-21

Shaun Allen advised Forum members of the proposed criteria for the growth fund and falling rolls fund.

This fund came about because NNF elements were adopted for the Wirral Formula along with the maximum MFG of 1.84% and no schools were then capped to cover this cost. It was agreed that the remaining funds of £466k would be held in a Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund.

The proposed criteria of the funds were submitted to DfE as provisional in January and are detailed in Agenda item 8.

Due to regulation separate funds have been proposed as the LA are required to report on them separately. Where funds above the budgeted amount are required, this will offset against the overall DSG position. Where a fund underspends this may be carried forward to the following funding period.

Forum members questioned some of the proposed criteria, some of which needs to be checked against the regulation. The decision can be deferred to the September meeting so that Members can review the criteria with further data being brought to the September meeting.

Resolved

1. Forum noted the report.
2. Schools Forum agreed to defer a decision on the Growth Fund criteria to the September Meeting.
3. Schools Forum agreed to defer a decision on the Growth Fund criteria to the September Meeting.

9. Update on School Balances and Deficit Position

Sue Ashley confirmed that the school balances as at 31st March 2020 were £7.9m as at 31st March 2020, a reduction of £750k since last year.

School budget projections continue to show a downward trend in school balances as costs continue to rise and uncertainty continues around grant funding and the added complication this year of Covid 19.

If no action is taken 63 schools indicate a deficit budget by March 2022.

Headteachers and School Finance Staff continue to work together to reduce costs where possible.

A Forum member requested a review of the protected funding for nursery schools to ensure it is allocated appropriately to all nursery schools.

Forum members requested a report to be presented at Schools Forum in autumn term to highlight the financial impact of Covid-19 on school budgets.

Resolved

Forum noted the report and will continue to monitor school balances

10. School Forum Regulation

This document was provided to show the change in regulation to enable virtual Schools Forum Meetings until March 2020-21. This was covered first on the agenda for clarity.

11. Workplan

The workplan was provided for information.

The date and time of the next meeting is **Tuesday 29th September 2020**. This will be a virtual meeting unless restrictions on social distancing are lifted.

Suggested dates for future meetings

Tuesday 10th November 2020

Tuesday 19th January 2021 (dependent on APT return)

Tuesday 11th May 2021

Tuesday 29th June 2021

High Needs working Group – date to be arranged.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM Tuesday 29th September 2020

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

Update on the Change to Funding for Wirral Home and Continuing Education Service

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Home and Continuing Education Service is Wirral's response to its statutory duty to provide a suitable education for children who cannot attend school because of their medical needs. 1 in 10 school children will suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder¹ which is reflected in the referrals to the service (approximately 90% are through CAMHS).

This report is a summary of progress in the service following the introduction of charging the referring schools for home education from the 13th week of work. This was first presented to Schools Forum in May 2018.

2. BACKGROUND

The Home and Continuing Education Service aims to respond to the changing needs of Wirral's children who cannot attend school for physical or mental health reasons by:

- Providing a suitable education for the children of Wirral who have medical needs that prevent them from attending school by ensuring that: they make the best educational progress that their health needs allows and that they achieve outcomes that allow them to access the most suitable pathway to prepare them for their future success.
- Providing sufficient hours of continuing education in line with statutory guidance; the equivalent of full-time or for the number of hours the child's health condition allows. "Full-time education" is not defined in law but it should equate to what the pupil would normally have in school – for example, for pupils in Key Stage 4 full-time education in a school would usually be 25 hours a week. When education is delivered via one to one tuition it is not, necessarily, expected to be 25 hours a week.² One to one teaching is, by its nature, more intense than class teaching.
- Developing a multiagency approach to a graduated pathway for sick children that enables access to a full or fuller time education in the most appropriate education setting for that child, e.g. 1:1 teaching, small group teaching, part or full time within a mainstream or special school. The overarching aim is that the child should be as fully included in the education process as their health condition allows.

¹ Future in Mind: Promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing NHS England DoH 2015 Chapter 3 page 25

² Ensuring a Good Education for Children who cannot attend school because of health needs. May 2013 DFE-00307-2013 page 4

Progress towards revised service structure

	Proposed	Actual August 2020
Head of Service	Full time	0.8
Deputy Head of Service	Full time	0.8 Remains on casual basis
General admin/exam officer	0.6 week	0.4
Finance clerk	0.6 week	Not appointed
1 learning mentor	0.8	Remains casual
Contracted teacher	FTE 1.0	1 x 0.8 1 x 0.4 3 x 0.3 2 x 0.1 2.5 FTE
1 HLTA	Full time	0.6 casual

	F2	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Y14	
2016/17	2	3	3	0	0	4	3	8	7	19	20	31	8	4	1	113
2017/18	0	2	2	5	2	3	7	11	17	17	22	43	12	2	3	147
2018/19	0	0	2	3	1	4	4	9	13	19	32	35	17	2	2	143
2019/20	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	8	15	22	16	37	9	5	3	122

Changes to the WH&CES offer:

Electively Home Educated pupils

Although the guidance (DFE-00307-2013) states that provision should be available to pupils whether or not the child is on the roll of a school, the service has withdrawn the facility to educate these pupils for the following reasons:

- The parents of the children have taken responsibility for the child's education which is their prerogative. The children easily become stuck on home education with no exit back to a school.
- As no funding can be drawn down at any time, this often places a significant strain on the Home Education budget.

*Electively Home Educated: 2 Brothers, elder in Year 10 been with HEd since May 2018 and unlikely to transition to a school; younger now in Year 5 been with HEd since June 2019. No longer under the care of CAMHS, we are working towards transitioning him into a primary school.

	Pupils with EHC Plans	Electively Home Educated
2016 - 2017	18	2
2017 - 2018	38	1
2018 - 2019	41	5
2019 - 2020	29	4*

Summary of Budget / staffing changes from 2019/20

1. Admin support has reduced by 0.6. The admin assistant expressed a wish to return to her contracted hours (0.4). This leaves the service without office cover for 3 days per week which present a challenge in terms of JCQ/awarding bodies' requirements and the effective running of the service. The salary has risen by cost of living rises. Funding has remained the same as 2018/2019.
2. Learning Mentor covers group session work, co-ordination of CIEAG through Career Connect, and transition to Post 16 provision if this is appropriate for the pupil. Her work has levelled off as she has developed and systems and procedures in addition to further developing relationships with Post 16 providers.
3. Cost of Invigilators has also levelled off as more pupils are becoming able to attend the base for lessons and examinations. GCSE, BTEC and Functional Skills examination were cancelled because of COVID-19, this removed the need for invigilators and will also mean the service may be eligible for a refund of examination entry fees.
4. Apprenticeship Levy costs – introduced automatically as part of payroll costs in April 2017 - no extra budget allocated to cover costs.
5. Pension deficit increased costs as part of payroll - no extra budget allocated to cover costs.
6. Contracted and casual staff pay has increased by the cost of living increase only. Contracted staff have not been able to access pay increases through Teacher Appraisal or by professional development and pay progress.
7. Casual Teacher hours pay increased from

£204,717 in 2017/18, £ 339,822 in 2018/19 & £450,000 in 2019/2020 - as a direct result of needs led demand and significant increase in pupil referrals from schools, delays in placing pupils with EHC Plans, delays in transition back to schools, increase in Year 11 and Post 16 pupils.
8. Charging schools £80/week/child started in September for pupils who had been in receipt of Home Teaching for 12 weeks before the end of July 2018. 2 terms have been charged to schools, the final term in is in financial year 2019/20 and is always going to be accrued. It has to be borne in mind that teacher salaries and on-costs rise year on year.

An increase of charges to schools is to be proposed from April 2021. This is being discussed with the Local Authority.

9. PFI Rental costs for the CLC building go up each year by RPI but the budget allocation has not increased.
10. Expenditure on other supplies and services are kept to a minimum of average £4500 per annum which is not excessive.
11. In 2019/20 Hilbre charged the service £12,000 for fees to support HES's operation. The management of the service's finances requires a substantial amount of Finance Director/Finance team time, especially the chasing up of schools and other establishments who do not pay the charges or Pupil Funding Elements. Pressure on the budget has meant the part time finance clerk has not been appointed.
12. Year 11 Exam fees average £12500, fees go up as pupil numbers increase.
13. LA Re-Charges remain static at £10,100. No idea what these cover so queried with the LA.
14. Claimed from schools:
Year 11 AWPU & pupil funding elements and charges to schools
2019/2020 - £300,000
15. Head of Service retiring 31st October 2020, Julie Hudson taking over the role in the interim and conducting a review of the service.

Paul Boyce
Director of Children, Families and Education

**WIRRAL COUNCIL
SCHOOLS FORUM 29th SEPTEMBER 2020
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND
EDUCATION
EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update Wirral's School Forum of discussions at the recent sub group, Early Years working group, with regards to; ***take up of early years free entitlements, take up of 2 year disadvantaged places, sufficiency + sustainability, Early Years SEND funding and the early years funding rate 2021 consultation.***

2.0. Universal 15/30 hours –3 + 4 early years free entitlements (EYFE).

Currently there are 5,387 children accessing a funded place, which is around 84%. Settings inform the return of children has been steady with some settings being full, whilst others not so and not quite clear of the understanding why, as yet. Wirral's Early Years Team continue to report attendance to the Department for Education (DfE) weekly, although register returns from settings, which has reduced significantly from an average of 43% to 33% with a particular drop in school data since the start of autumn term. To mitigate this early years (EY's) officers, attend the weekly attendance strategy meetings with education officers to further maximise data capture. Impact of this has seen a rise in school data returns this week. In addition, early years attendance monitoring is something the Liverpool City Region (LCR) EY's partnership is keen to continue with and recently have engaged with the Local Government Association (LGA) for peer support in adopting an LCR best practice solution.

3.0. 2-Year Funding;

Children eligible for free disadvantaged 2 year funding placements were not categorised within the "vulnerable" cohort to continue attending a setting, during the initial COVID19 lockdown period, unless the child's parent was a "keyworker" or the child met the "vulnerability" criteria. Subsequently, there was a decrease of take up of placements during the summer term of this cohort. In comparison, in Autumn 2019 Wirral's take up was 86% whereas currently it is 69%, this is in line with the national average of 69% for the Spring term 2020. Initially parents noted they were too anxious for their 2-year olds to return to settings, when all age children were encouraged back by central government early June. There has since been a drive by Wirral's Early Years Team to re-engage parents through robust targeting strategies, which is starting to see a steady increase of responses to eligibility notification letters.

4.0. Sufficiency + Sustainability of Places

There remains to be sufficient childcare places across Wirral. During the COVID19 summer period on average 55% of those identified as "vulnerable" continued

attended a setting. There were very few instances where parents needed support in finding alternate provision. Wirral's Family Information Service (FIS) worked at pace to broker childcare where required and most providers were extremely flexible in accommodating "ad hoc" arrangements to support both keyworker and vulnerable children, which on the recent DfE return accounted 3,000 children attending in these categories. During the summer term almost 33% of providers remained open, which increased to 98% by the end of July for the start of Autumn term in September. At the start of the weekly data reporting to the DfE Wirral had 372 childcare providers (inclusive of school provision for 2 + 3-year olds). To date there are 366, with 6 closures across the period. Of the 6, 4 were childminders that have either retired or decided on a career change. However, the childminder closure figure has been offset by newly registered, showing a growing confidence in the sector. The remainder 2 have been nurseries, 1 in Wallasey and 1 in West Wirral, both noted due to impact of Covid19 through a lack of sufficient children taking up places to sustain the setting. However, for the Wallasey setting there is a new provider interested in re-opening it.

Furthermore, out of school providers did struggle across the summer holiday period with existing registered parents finding alternate childcare and a reluctance of new parents taking up the offer. In addition, due to the delay in DfE guidance being released (end of July) it did not enable providers to project financial standing across this period.

The key concerns of all providers as we move further into the Autumn term are.

- end of the furlough scheme on 31st October, if parents' employment is terminated and they no longer require childcare.
- availability of staff deployment should staff need to self isolate and maintaining ratios.
- Funding for Spring term 2021, as potentially no further Central government **impact** funding support and providers could be expected to fund on actual attendance which still may be low.
- paying staff that themselves must stay home to look after children sent home from school, as a bubble has collapsed.
- reduced or lack of provider reserves to go through a second wave, following surviving the first wave.

To mitigate for the above, business support workshops are currently being considered to explore providers business continuity arrangements, in order to promote good practice such as; considering how financially bubbles are formed, bubbles set through mixing funded and fee paying children and possibly charges for self-isolation periods. Subsequently, the DfE are tendering such workshop facilitations.

5.0. Early Years SEND Funding

5.0.1 Inclusive Practice Funding (IPF)

Inclusive Practice Funding remained in place for those children still in attendance during the COVID19 summer period, it was paused for those who did not. Referrals for the fund continued to come into the early years SEND team and the IPF panel sat in August, to review 20 requests for Autumn term support. The IPF panel also agreed to support with transition funding of children entering F2 provision, where

required, if they were known to the Early Years SEND team throughout the summer term.

It is anticipated that there will be a strain on this fund as more children return to settings over the coming months. This is being closely monitored and where necessary alternate interventions to funding support will be applied.

5.0.2 Disability Access Fund (DAF)

Since January 2020, the early years team have received notifications from 0-19 health services of children early identified with complex needs, who could be eligible to apply for the disability living allowance (DLA), a criterion to access this fund. This enables better pinpointing of families to support with the application of DLA. Which in turn informs of provision adjustment requirements, to enhance mainstream provision as a suitable option. There have been very few requests for DAF during the COVID19 summer period, mitigation of this is by the SEND officers contacting settings directly to promote it.

To note: the data exchange established in January 2020 did pause through the COVID19 summer period, due to re-alignment of various colleagues' duties and is now being restored and reset.

6.0. Early Years Free Entitlement Consultation

In Wirral, Early Years Funding Entitlement (EYFE) is set as follows all funding providers receive the base rate of £3.76 this is topped up by supplement dependent on eligibility.

Supplement	Criteria	Rate
Quality	Qualified staff member to level 6 with early years specialism	13p
Flexibility 1	Flexible delivery between school hours 9-3:30	15p
Flexibility 2	Flexible delivery outside of school hours 8-9 or 3:30- 7:00	15p
Deprivation low	On average children attending the provision live in an affluent area	4p
Deprivation medium	On average children attending the provision live in a medium deprived area	12p
Deprivation high	On average children attending the provision live in a highly deprived area	19p

Wirral is aiming through a consultation process with providers to review the above and work towards a minimum hourly rate of £4.00 per hour, inclusive of supplements. However, it should be noted that the early years funding that Wirral receives is a finite sum. This consultation exercise will identify whether the £4.00 hourly rate can be achieved whilst keeping within the funding available. The consultation will be launched in this autumn term, for review and proposals in Spring term 2021.

7.0. RECOGNITION OF GOOD PRACTICE DURING COVID19

The Chief Executive of the National Day Nurseries Association recently wrote to Wirral's Chief Executive, Paul Satoor and Director for Children's Services, Paul

Boyce, in relation to the support the early years team has shown to the childcare sector during COVID-19. The National Day Nurseries Association is 'the voice of the sector' and has more than 60 networks of nursery operators that meet regularly across the UK.

The letter said:

"We understand that your Early Years Team has taken a number of actions during the pandemic which made this challenging period more manageable for providers. Our coverage up and down the UK means that we are often made aware of the relationship between local authorities and the sector. Where a local authority has been identified as having worked hard to get the balance right between high quality childcare being available for the few during lockdown; and future-proofing the sector so that post-COVID, sufficient childcare places are available for all that need them, we believe this should be highlighted and acknowledged. At a time that has been difficult for us all, we really do appreciate your support to a sector which is quite often forgotten, over-looked or ignored but yet so vitally important to children, families, and the economy. I would like to thank you for the collaborative working with providers in your area and for acknowledging the crucial role that childcare plays within the economy and its recovery."

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Forum to note the report.

Paul Boyce - Director of Children, Families and Education

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 29th SEPTEMBER 2020

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

SCHOOLS BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2020-21

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Forum on the Schools Budget position and anticipated variations in the current year.
- 1.2 Overall the schools' net budget is forecast to overspend by £1.7m which is mainly due to pressure in the High Needs Block. When the budget was set it was expected that there would be a surplus £644k in the High Needs Block and it was planned that this would be used to make a contribution to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserve. The gross overspend against budgeted expenditure is, therefore, £2.3m but has been partially offset with the £644k budgeted surplus bringing the in-year projected deficit for 2020-21 to £1.7m.
- 1.3 At the end of 2019-20 the DSG reserve closed with a deficit balance of £1.3m. The forecast in-year deficit of £1.7m means that the closing balance on the DSG reserve is expected to be £3m. A DSG Deficit Management Plan is currently being developed and this is explained in more detail in section 5.0 of this report.

2.0 REVISED 2020-21 BUDGET

- 2.1 Since the last budget report was presented to Schools Forum, the budget has been updated to reflect the Academy recoupment and the most recent Early Years allocation. The impact of these changes is to reduce both the expenditure and grant income budgets by £104.8m. In addition, the Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund have been identified separately in the Individual Schools Block section. There has been no change to the overall budget which remains at £1.2m. The table attached in Appendix 1 identifies the changes in the budget.

3.0 FORECAST BUDGET VARIATIONS

The budget variations that make up the forecast £1.7m overspend are identified in the table attached in Appendix 2. The reasons for the variations as well as comments on specific budget areas are given below.

3.1 Primary, Secondary and Special Schools

Schools activity is expected to be delivered on budget. The schools budget includes both the Growth and Falling Roles budgets of £233k each. The monitoring report assumes that both of these funds will be fully spent in year.

3.2 Early Years Grant

The Early Years budget of £20.2m reflects the funding required for 2, 3 and 4-year olds who are entitled to receive free Early Education and Early Years Pupil

Premium, as well as the 3 and 4-year-old extended offer. The budget for this is based on the January 2020 Census.

As a result of the COVID outbreak it is expected that providers will experience reduced take-up of childcare places for the Autumn term. Ordinarily providers would be funded for the number of actual number of places filled but DfE guidance announced in July sets out that:

- LAs should continue to fund early years providers who are open and offering their usual entitlements places at broadly the levels they would have expected to see in the 2020 autumn term had there been no coronavirus outbreak.
- In addition, LAs should continue to fund providers which have been advised to close, or left with no option to close, for public health reasons.

The impact of this is that payments to providers are likely to reflect a higher number of childcare places than have been taken up. As a result of this, the funding mechanism for LAs has changed for 2020-21 and this now has a heavier weighting on the 2020 census number. Whether this change to the funding mechanism will be sufficient to cover total costs will not be known until 2021 when the final Early Years funding will be confirmed.

For the purposes of this monitoring report it has been assumed that actual activity will be within budget and that grant income will be sufficient to cover costs.

It is expected that LA's and childcare providers will return to the normal approach from 1 January 2021 but the DfE will keep this under review.

3.3 **Central Early Years Budget – projected £29,100 favourable variance**

An underspend is expected within this centrally managed budget as a result of some part-year vacant posts.

3.4 **Contribution to Combined Budgets**

The combined budgets of £0.7m are broken down as follows:

	Budget
	£
School Improvement	264,000
Discretionary Rate Relief Top Up	85,300
LCSB contribution	24,000
Governors Forum	1,800
PFI Support Team	49,400
LACES	112,400
School Intervention	108,800
CLC PFI	54,800
Total	700,500

It is anticipated that these budgets will be fully committed.

3.5 **Schools Forum – projected £10,600 favourable variance**

There are no commitments to date against this budget of £10,600.

3.6 Insurances – projected £10,000 favourable variance

This de-delegated budget is projected to underspend by £10,000, reflecting a reduced number of claims received in recent years.

3.7 Special Education Needs Statements – projected £878,623 adverse variance

Pressure on this budget continues to grow with an overspend of £879k projected despite an increase in the budget from 2019-20.

An overspend of £165k is expected for Primary Schools due to growth in the number of plans. The Summer term saw a growth of 125 and further growth of 100 plans for the Autumn term and 75 plans for the Spring term has been forecast.

An overspend of £272k is expected for Secondary Schools due to forecast growth in plans. Growth of 160 plans for the Autumn term and a further 120 plans for the Spring term is expected.

Demand for 'out of borough' placements is expected to continue at the 2019-20 level, and this will cause a further pressure of £400k, £140k for Primary and £260k for Secondary.

3.8 Special Education Needs Top Ups – projected £521,094 adverse variance

Although there was an increase in this budget from 2019-20, growth in demand is still greater than planned and an overspend of £521k is forecast. The budget, forecast expenditure and overspend is summarised as follows:

	Budget	Projected	Projected
	£	Spend	Variance
		£	£
Top Ups for Maintained Special Schools	8,427,900	8,391,501	36,399
Top Ups for Resourced provision	1,048,600	1,183,583	(134,983)
Alternative provision	1,318,200	1,238,000	80,200
FE and 6 TH Form Top Ups	1,683,200	1,964,620	(281,420)
Additional Nursing Support	159,900	129,043	30,857
Exceptional Needs	782,000	1,034,147	(252,147)
Total	13,419,800	13,940,894	(521,094)

An overspend of £135k is forecast for Top Ups for resourced provision due to increase demand.

FE/6th Form budget is currently projecting an overspend of £281k due to an increase in places.

Exceptional Needs is forecast to overspend by £252k due to the growth in 12 applications from September.

Moderate underspends for; Top Ups for Maintained Special Schools of £36k, Alternative Provision £80k and Additional Support £31k have partially off-set the overspends in other activities.

3.9 Independent Special Schools – projected £931,388 adverse variance

The budget is based on 105 places, but demand is increasing, and the forecast expenditure is based on demand increasing to 126 by September. The forecast level of demand will generate an overspend of £931k.

3.10 Home Tuition – projected £100,000 adverse variance

The Home Tuition budget remains the same as 2019-20. Due to cost pressures in 2019-20 the budget overspent by £93k. These cost pressures have continued into 2020-21 resulting in a forecast overspend of £100k.

3.11 High Needs Contingency – projected £35,000 adverse variance

This budget funds the 90% Notional SEN Guarantee, where mainstream schools are compensated if their element 2 costs exceed 90% of their notional SEN allocation. The overspend relates to a revenue contribution to adaptations that are needed for a specialist facility for deaf pupils.

3.12 Support for SEN – projected £223,260 favourable variance

An underspend is projected mainly relating to vacant posts within the Clinical KIND/Clinical Psychologists and Communication Difficulty teams, although these are partially off set by an overspend within the Physical/Medical budget relating to the Mediquip contract.

3.13 DSG - £174,590,200 - £0.167m adverse variance

At the end of financial year 2019-20 the value of the DSG grant income received was adjusted to reflect the expected final grant allocation in relation to Early Years. This is usual practice and reflects the timing difference between the closure of accounts and the date by which the Council is notified of the final allocation. Unfortunately, the level of grant income due was overstated by £167k thus the deficit b/fwd. from 2019-20 should have been reported £167k worse. The impact of the overstated income will now be reflected 2020-21 accounts and will contribute to the increased DSG reserve balance to be carried forward into 2020-21.

4.0 UPDATE ON RESERVES

4.1 The final DSG deficit balance carried forward into 2020-21 was £1.3m. This includes ring-fenced funding of £245,305 in respect of; Early Years Disability Access Fund (£178,140) and Early Years charges that were levied too late to be included in the 2019-20 accounts (£67,165). Due to the forecast in-year overspend of £1.7m, it is expected that the closing reserve balance to be carried forward into 2021-22 will be in deficit by £3.1m.

5.0 DSG DEFICIT MANAGEMENT PLAN

5.1 In response to the deficit position identified at the end of financial year 2019-20, the Council embarked on the development of a DSG Deficit Management Plan in line with DFE requirements. DFE requirements include the need for each qualifying LA to produce a plan and to provide detailed and timely data relating to high needs and activity and costs.

To date the relevant stakeholders have been advised of the situation by letter and also in the appropriate forums and this includes the High Needs Working Group. The Council will consult with the relevant stakeholders as the plan develops. A more detailed update on progress and the potential financial impacts of the plan will be reported at the November 2020 Schools Forum meeting.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 The Schools Budget will be monitored throughout the year, and any projected variances against budget will be reported to the Forum.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That the Forum notes the report.

Paul Boyce
Director of Children, Families and Education

Appendix 1 - Schools Budget 2020-21

	2020-21 Budget (Sep 2020) £	2020-21 Budget (Jun 2020) £
Individual Schools Budget		
Primary	82,980,000	105,710,300
Secondary	25,293,000	104,530,400
Special	11,368,300	11,368,300
Wirral Hospitals School	1,354,300	1,354,300
SEN Bases	988,000	1,672,000
Sixth Form/Further Education	36,000	1,344,000
Early Years	20,239,300	21,511,800
Growth Fund	233,000	0
Falling Rolls Fund	233,000	0
Individual Schools Budget Total	142,724,900	247,491,100
Central School Costs		
Early Years	518,700	518,700
Admissions	372,200	372,200
School Redundancy Costs	81,000	81,000
Licenses and subscriptions	244,900	244,900
Schools Forum	10,600	10,600
Contribution to combined budgets	700,500	700,500
PFI Affordability Gap	1,247,700	1,247,700
Retained duties (ex-ESG)	730,000	730,000
Costs delegated to/de-delegated from schools		
Library Service	188,200	188,200
Insurances	25,600	25,600
School Specific contingencies	66,100	66,100
Special Staff Costs	701,400	701,400
Behaviour Support	107,000	107,000
School Improvement	150,700	150,700
Retained duties (ex-ESG)	504,800	504,800
High Needs Pupils		
Statements	6,237,000	6,237,000
SEN top-ups	13,419,800	13,360,300
High Needs contingency	360,000	360,000
Independent Special Schools	4,134,000	4,134,000
Home Tuition	400,500	400,500
Support for SEN	2,210,200	2,269,700
Special School Transport	58,200	58,200
Non-delegated school costs Total	32,469,100	32,469,100
Total Costs	175,194,000	279,960,200
Funding		
Dedicated School Grant	(174,590,200)	(279,356,400)
Contribution to DSG Reserve (High Needs)	643,900	643,900
Funding Total	(173,946,300)	(278,712,500)
Grand Total	1,247,700	1,247,700

Appendix 2 - Budget Variations 2020-21

	2020-21 Budget £	2020-21 Spend £	2020-21 Variation £
Individual Schools Budget			
Primary	82,980,000	82,980,000	0
Secondary	25,293,000	25,293,000	0
Special	11,368,300	11,368,300	0
Wirral Hospitals School	1,354,300	1,354,300	0
SEN Bases	988,000	988,000	0
Sixth Form/Further Education	36,000	36,000	0
Early Years	20,239,300	20,239,300	0
Growth Fund	233,000	233,000	0
Falling Rolls Fund	233,000	233,000	0
Individual Schools Budget Total	142,724,900	142,724,900	0
Central School Costs			
Early Years	518,700	489,600	29,100
Admissions	372,200	372,200	0
School Redundancy Costs	81,000	81,000	0
Licenses and subscriptions	244,900	244,900	0
Schools Forum	10,600	0	10,600
Contribution to combined budgets	700,500	700,500	0
PFI Addordability Gap	1,247,700	1,247,700	0
Retained duties (ex-ESG)	730,000	730,000	0
Costs delegated to/de-delegated from schools			
Library Service	188,200	188,200	0
Insurances	25,600	15,600	10,000
School Specific contingencies	66,100	66,100	0
Special Staff Costs	701,400	701,400	0
Behaviour Support	107,000	107,000	0
School Improvement	150,700	150,700	0
Retained duties (ex-ESG)	504,800	504,800	0
High Needs Pupils			
Statements	6,237,000	7,115,623	(878,623)
SEN top-ups	13,419,800	13,940,894	(521,094)
High Needs contingency	360,000	395,000	(35,000)
Independent Special Schools	4,134,000	5,065,388	(931,388)
Home Tuition	400,500	500,500	(100,000)
Support for SEN	2,210,200	1,986,940	223,260
Special School Transport	58,200	58,200	0
Non-delegated school costs Total	32,469,100	34,662,245	(2,193,145)
Total Costs	175,194,000	177,387,145	(2,193,145)
Funding			
Dedicated School Grant	(174,590,200)	(174,423,387)	(166,813)
Contribution to DSG Reserve (High Needs)	643,900	0	643,900
Funding Total	(173,946,300)	(174,423,387)	477,087
Grand Total	1,247,700	2,963,758	(1,716,058)

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 29th September 2020

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

2020-21 GROWTH FUND AND FALLING ROLLS FUND

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to propose the criteria for accessing the Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund in 2020-21, which have been created for the first time as part of Wirral's funding formula.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 At the June 2020 meeting, Schools Forum was presented with a report that outlined the proposed criteria for accessing both the Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund in 2020-21 and these are given below:

a. The proposed criteria for Wirral's 2020-21 £233k Growth Fund is...

- Mainstream schools and academies can access the fund.
- pupil numbers grow because of basic need to above 6.5% of the budgeted numbers between the budget setting period and October census.
- growth funding will be equivalent to the Basic Entitlement factor (AWPU) only for the additional pupils (i.e. over the 6.5%).
- funding is for the remainder of their relevant funding period (pro rata).

b. The proposed criteria for Wirral's 2020-21 £233k Falling Rolls Fund is...

- the fund is accessible to 'Good' or 'Outstanding' mainstream schools and academies.
- the Number On Roll (NOR) is less than 80% of its Published Admission Number (PAN);
- planning data shows surplus places will be required within 3 years.
- falling rolls funding will be equivalent to the basic entitlement factor (AWPU) only over the 6.5% threshold
- e.g. if drop by 8%, would receive basic entitlement for 1.5% of its previous intake for the relevant funding period.

2.2 Following careful consideration of the proposal the Schools Forum felt that they needed further information before they could commit to accepting the proposed criteria and this is detailed below.

3.0 FURTHER INFORMATION

3.1 The following information was requested:

1. Do the criteria meet DFE regulations?
The criteria are based on the recommended criteria as per the Schools revenue funding Operational guide.
2. Need for separate funds?
EFSA recommend the use of separate funds to support the development of clear objective trigger points for qualification and a clear formula for calculating allocation of the funds. Individually funds can under or overspend thus where there is pressure on one fund e.g. Growth Fund, this can be off set by any under-utilisation of the Falling Rolls Fund. The collective surplus/deficit balance of both funds will be carried forward into the following financial year.
3. What is the basis for 6.5% threshold applied to both the Growth and Falling Rolls Funds?
Analysis was undertaken of the year on year changes in pupil numbers (2018-19 compared to 2019-20 October Census) by school and this identified that a 6.5% threshold should be affordable within the financial limits of the funding made available for 2020-21.

Relatively small changes in the threshold can have a significant impact on the number of schools that qualify, the value of additional funding for each qualifying school and the total cost. This is demonstrated in the table below which compares the impact of applying the proposed 6.5% threshold with small changes to the threshold percentage.

Baseline percentage change	Growth fund £233k			Falling Rolls fund £233k		
	Number of schools benefitting	Range of additional funding per school £	Total cost £	Number of schools benefitting	Range of additional funding per school £	Total cost £
1. Proposed threshold	7	£2.4k to £91.9k	£235k	6	£0.6k to £184.1k	£266k
2. Proposed less 1%	8	£4.7k to £108.4k	£315k	8	£0.1k to £230.8k	£340k
3. Proposed less 1.5%	8	£5.7k to £121.3k	£360k	9	£2.2k to £254.1k	£389k
4. Proposed less 2%	8	£6.8k to £134.2k	£404k	12	£0.5k to £277.4k	£445k
5. Proposed less 3.5%	20	£0.1k to £172.8k	£651k	14	£1.4k to £347.5k	£562k

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Given the significant differences in individual schools funding that is applicable for qualifying schools, Schools Forum may wish to consider applying a 'ceiling' on the maximum funding applicable to any one school. Thus, for example, if the 6.5% thresholds proposed also included a ceiling of £50k per school the total cost outlined in the table above will reduce by £74k for Growth and a further £134k for Falling Rolls.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That the Forum notes the report.
- 5.2 That the Schools Forum agrees criteria set out in Option A or Option B below.

Option A - Schools Forum agrees the criteria for the 2020-21 Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund as outlined in paragraph 2.1a and 2.1b.

Options B – Schools Forum agrees the criteria set out in Option A but with the addition of a £50k ‘cap’ on the amount of funding that any one school can receive in an academic year as follows:

The proposed criteria for Wirral’s 2020-21 £233k Growth Fund is...

- Mainstream schools and academies can access the fund.
- pupil numbers grow because of basic need to above 6.5% of the budgeted numbers between the budget setting period and October census.
- growth funding will be equivalent to the Basic Entitlement factor (AWPU) only for the additional pupils (i.e. over the 6.5%) to a maximum of £50,000 in any one year.
- funding is for the remainder of their relevant funding period (pro rata).

The proposed criteria for Wirral’s 2020-21 £233k Falling Rolls Fund is...

- the fund is accessible to ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ mainstream schools and academies.
- the Number On Roll (NOR) is less than 80% of its Published Admission Number (PAN);
- planning data shows surplus places will be required within 3 years.
- falling rolls funding will be equivalent to the basic entitlement factor (AWPU) only over the 6.5% threshold to a maximum of £50,000 in any one year.
- e.g. if drop by 8%, would receive basic entitlement for 1.5% of its previous intake for the relevant funding period.

Paul Boyce
Director of Children, Families and Education

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 29th September 2020

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS

School Budgets and Indicative Deficit Balances

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a regular report presented to Schools Forum describing the current and projected financial position for schools together with action that is being taken. The position remains challenging, even with additional funding received in 2020-21 DSG.

2. BACKGROUND

There are ongoing cost pressures in schools arising from pay awards, teacher pension increases, other inflationary pressures and changes in pupil numbers. School budgets have been held at flat cash for a number of years, however, there has been a significant increase in funding for 2020-21, with funding for Teachers Pay Grant (TPG) and Teachers Employers Contribution Pension Grant (TPECG) to cover additional Teacher pay costs. The effects of Corona Virus, particularly during the Summer term has made it difficult to predict some income and expenditure whilst setting school budgets.

3. Indicative Balances

The final cumulative school balances as at 31st March 2020 were £7.9m, reflecting a number of difficult decisions taken by schools and governing bodies to restructure and reduce costs. When schools set their budget for 2020-21 they also review their financial position for future years. The table below summarises this position and indicates that balances may reduce by £2m in 2020-21 and a further £8.3m in 2021-22, leaving a negative balance at this time.

At budget setting there was a conservative provision built in for TPG and TPECG after 31st March 2021, as at the time it was confirmed that it would be added to the DSG, with no clarity on how it would be distributed through the formula budget. Since then it has been confirmed that £180 will be added the Pupil Entitlement for mainstream schools to ensure TPG & TPECG is re-allocated appropriately through the formula.

These figures do not take into consideration additional school funding announced in the government spending round.

Table 1

	Actual Balances at Mar 2020 £	Expected Balance at Mar 2021 £	Expected balances at Mar 2022 £
Nursery	340,638	144,602	-143,683
Primary	6,428,693	5,840,181	181,505
Secondary	-352,809	-596,648	-883,296
Special	1,506,892	491,470	-1,557,898
Total	7,923,414	5,879,605	-2,403,372

4. Individual School Deficits

There are currently 6 schools with licenced deficits and agreed budget plans. In addition, there are 6 schools with a Notice of Concern.

On the basis of table 1 the number of schools who may have a deficit budget as at March 2022 would increase to 52 (21 in March 2020), each school with an average deficit of £102k.

Table 2 – expected deficits in March 2022

	Number of schools	Expected number of schools with a deficit	% schools with a deficit
Nursery	3	1	33%
Primary	78	41	53%
Secondary	4	2	50%
Special	11	8	73%
	96	52	54%

The position for Primary Schools and Nursery schools have improved slightly since last year, but challenges still remain for Special Schools.

5. Action Taken to Date

- Licenced deficit plans have been agreed with 2 further schools that cannot set a balanced budget in 2020-21, with 4 schools still working through their plans.
- A Notice of Concern is in place at 6 schools. 4 of these are new since July 2019.
- There are 2 schools still working with the LA to set their budgets, but it is likely that they will move into a notice of concern category.
- LMS and HR continue to work with schools to balance budgets and plan any reduction in staff numbers or hours. Where schools are reviewing staffing levels this is in a number of cases leading to a consideration of redundancies.
- There are continued discussions with Headteachers and school finance staff where budgets are not balancing in future years.
- School Bursars continue to support Headteachers and governors with more detailed projections.

6. Future Action

- Contact schools with large projected deficits in future years to discuss ways to reduce in year deficits going forward.
- Schools requesting a licenced deficit are required to demonstrate how the budget will come back into balance within 3 years (4 years in exceptional circumstances).
- Where agreement cannot be reached a Notice of Concern will be issued, requiring an immediate action plan to be agreed by governors.
- Consider the potential impact of additional funding in National Funding Formula elements on the schools' funding formula for 2021-22. This may ease the budget pressures for some schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Forum notes the report
2. That school budgets continue to be monitored.

Paul Boyce
Director of Children, Families and Education

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM 29th September 2020

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

Forum Membership Review

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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.

		2016-2020	2017-2021	2018-2022	2019-2023	2020-2024	Total
Total Membership							
5	Primary Headteachers	1		1	1	2	5
4	Primary Governors	1	1	1	1		4
1	Secondary Headteachers					1	1
1	Special Headteacher			1			1
1	Special Governors			1			1
1	Nursery Representative					1	1
13	Total Schools Membership						
9	Academy Representative		4	1	2		7
9	Total Academy Membership						
1	Non-teacher representative					1	1
1	Teacher representative				1		1
1	Catholic Diocese			1			1
1	Church of England Diocese				1		1
1	Further Education		1				1
3	PVI Early Years Providers	1			1		1
8	Total Non-Schools Membership						
30	Total Membership	3	6	6	7	5	27

There are currently 3 vacancies and 3 representatives whose term of office is due to come to an end by the end of the year.

- There is 1 x Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector vacancy, with another due at the end of September, - expression of interest will be sent to the PVI's from the Early Year's Team to request volunteers for 2 positions. Nicky Prance's term of office has come to an end but she has offered to continue until it is filled and Simon Davies Term of Office is due up at the end of September.
- There are 2 x Academy Representative vacancies, with another due to come to an end in December. A request was sent out to all Academies for 3 nominations, earlier this month. It was agreed at Forum previously that there should be representation

from Primary academies, which is no longer the case since Emma Neal, Oak Tree MAT, resigned in July. Lisa Ayling's term of office ended in November 2019 and she agreed to remain on the Forum until the position was filled.

- There will be a vacancy for a Primary Governor representative in November, a request will be sent out shortly to fill this position.

New Members

There have been a number of changes to the membership since June, they are as follows:-

Andy Ramsden – Primary Headteacher (Birkenhead South) representative replaces Rebecca Bridges.

Kate Takashima – Primary Headteacher Representative (Deeside), replaces Kate Brown.

Simon Goodwin – Secondary Headteacher representative, replaces Tony Taylor.

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

Membership Changes

Regulations governing the forum requires school/academy membership to take account of pupil weighting. Although there is one primary school currently planning to convert to academy in January 2021 this does not affect the current school/academy split.

Recommendations

- Forum notes the report

Paul Boyce

Director of Children, Families and Education

**Wirral Schools Forum
Membership as at 29th September 2020**

Appendix 1

Group	Name	Category of Membership	SCHOOL /establishment	Date of Election	Date of renewal
Schools	Andy Ramsden	Primary Headteacher (Birkenhead S)	Oxton St Saviours	Sep-20	Aug-24
Schools	Nikki Lightwing	Primary Headteacher (Birkenhead N)	Manor Primary	Apr-16	Mar-20
Schools	Emily Morris	Primary Headteacher (Wallasey)	Eastway Primary	Oct-19	Sep-23
Schools	Kate Takashima	Primary Headteacher (Deeside)	West Kirby Primary	Sep-20	Aug-24
Schools	Liz Davidson	Primary Headteacher (Beb/Brom)	Brookhurst	Jul-18	Jun-22
Schools	Dave Spencer	Primary Governor	Pensby Primary	Jul-17	Jun-21
Schools	Roy Wood	Primary Governor	Hillside Primary	Oct-18	Sep-22
Schools	Tim Kelly	Primary Governor	Grove Street	Dec-16	Nov-20
Schools	Cllr Tony Norbury	Primary Governor	Prenton Primary	Sep-19	Aug-23
Schools	Simon Goodwin	Secondary Headteacher	South Wirral High	Sep-20	Aug-24
Schools	Margaret Morris	Special Headteacher	Elleray Park	Sep-18	Aug-22
Schools	John Weise	Special Governor	Hayfield Primary	Dec-18	Nov-22
Schools	Cathy Hughes	Nursery Representative	Leasowe Early Years	Jun-20	May-24
Academy	Vacancy	Academy Rep			
Academy	Adrian Whiteley	Academy Rep (Chair)	St Anselms	Aug-19	Jul-23
Academy	Helen Johnson	Academy Rep	The Birkenhead Park School	Sep-17	Aug-21
Academy	Rebecca Mahony	Academy Rep	Birkenhead High School Academy	Jan-17	Dec-20
Academy	Mark Bellamy	Academy Rep	Hilbre High School	Sep-17	Aug-21
Academy	Andy Waller	Academy Rep	West Kirby Grammar School	May-18	Apr-22
Academy	Jon Bush	Academy Rep	Oldershaw Academy	Dec-17	Nov-21
Academy	Geraldine Fraser	Academy Rep	Prenton High School for Girls	Oct-19	Sep-23
Academy	Lisa Ayling	Academy Rep	Prenton High School for Girls	Dec-15	Nov-19
Non-Schools	Steve Bennett	Non-teacher representative	Wirral Unison	Sep-20	Aug-24
Non-Schools	Anne Rycroft	Teacher representative	NASUWT	Aug-19	Jul-23
Non-Schools	Susan Ralph	Catholic Diocese	St Michaels & All Angels	Nov-18	Oct-22
Non-Schools	Greg Edwards	Church of England Diocese	The Priory	Sep-19	Aug-23
Non-Schools	Sue Higginson	16-19 Provider	Wirral Metropolitan College	Sep-17	Aug-21
Non-Schools	Nicky Prance	PVI Early Years Providers	Barnston Buddies	Apr-15	Sep-19
Non-Schools	Simon Davies	PVI Early Years Providers	Penguins Nurseries	Oct-16	Sep-20
Non-Schools	Ellie Longbone	PVI Early Years Providers	Stepping Stones	May-19	Apr-23
New Members since June Meeting					
Vacancies and members whose term of office has finished or is due to finish					



Education & Skills
Funding Agency

Schools forum

Operational and good practice guide

May 2020

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Introduction

1. This guide is designed to provide local authority officers and schools forum elected members with advice and information on good practice in relation to the operation of schools forums.
2. It is organised in two sections:
 - section 1 provides information on the constitutional and organisational requirements for schools forums
 - section 2 covers a number of key aspects of the operation of schools forums at local level, drawing on good practice from a number of schools forums
3. GOV.UK contains details of all the announcements, documents and other information relating to school funding and schools forums, including the national funding formula (NFF). This website also has a range of useful links to other sites that may be of relevance to schools forum members.
4. If you have any queries about the operation of schools forums please [contact us](#).

Section 1 – schools forum regulations: constitution, and procedural issues

Regulations

5. National regulations govern the composition, constitution and procedures of schools forums. Local authorities can provide schools forum members with a copy of these regulations.
6. [The Schools Forums \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2020](#), which will come into force on 18 June, make provisions to enable schools forums to meet remotely while they are unable to meet physically in a room during the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19).
7. This includes, but is not limited to, telephone conferencing, video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming.
8. These arrangements are currently in place for the 2020 to 2021 financial year, up to the end of March 2021.

Schools forum powers

9. Schools forums generally have a consultative role. However, there are situations in which they have decision making powers. The respective roles of schools forums, local authorities, and the Department for Education (DfE) are summarised in the [schools forum powers and responsibilities guidance](#).
10. The overarching areas on which schools forums make decisions on local authority proposals are as follows; in each case, the local authority can appeal to the Secretary of State if the schools forum rejects its proposal:
 - de-delegation from mainstream maintained schools budgets (separate approval will be required by the primary and secondary phase members of schools forum), for prescribed services to be provided centrally
 - to create a fund for significant pupil growth in order to support the local authority's duty for place planning (basic need), including pre-opening and diseconomy of scale costs, and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund
 - to create a fund for falling rolls for good or outstanding schools if the schools' surplus capacity is likely to be needed within the next three years to meet rising pupil numbers and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund
 - agreeing other centrally retained budgets, including for local authority statutory responsibilities; where these relate to maintained schools only, voting is by the

primary, secondary, special and pupil referral unit (PRU) members of schools forum

- funding for central early years expenditure, which may include funding for checking eligibility of pupils for an early years place, the early years pupil premium, or free school meals
- authorising a reduction in the schools budget in order to fund a deficit arising in central expenditure, or from de-delegated services, which is to be carried forward from a previous funding period in the current funding year the schools block is ring-fenced; local authorities require schools forum approval in order to move up to 0.5% from the schools block to other blocks

11. Local authorities should be aware that the provisions of the [Local Government Act 2000](#) restrict the delegation of local authority decisions to cabinet, a member of cabinet, a committee of cabinet or an officer of the council, which would not include schools forums. As a result the local authority cannot delegate its decision making powers to the schools forum, for example, decisions on the funding formula.

12. Regulations state that the local authority must consult the schools forum annually in connection with various schools budget functions, namely:

- amendments to the school funding formula, for which the voting is restricted by the exclusion of non-schools members except for private, voluntary and independent (PVI) representatives
- arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs in particular the places to be commissioned by the local authority and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding
- arrangements for the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school, in particular the places to be commissioned by the local authority and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding
- arrangements for early years provision
- administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to schools via the local authority

13. There's no specific definition of these consultation requirements over and above the wording in the regulations. It's a matter for the local authority to decide on the appropriate level of detail it needs to generate a sufficiently informed response from schools forum.

14. Consultation must also take place when a local authority is proposing a contract for supplies and services which is to be funded from the schools budget and is in excess of the EU procurement thresholds. The consultation must cover the terms of the contract at least one month prior to the issue of invitations to tender.

15. The schools forum has the responsibility of informing the governing bodies of all schools maintained by the local authority of the results of any consultations carried out by the local authority relating to these issues.

16. Local authorities will need to discuss with the schools forum any proposals that they intend to put to the Secretary of State to:

- vary the minimum funding guarantee (MFG)
- use exceptional factors
- vary pupil numbers; Secretary of State approval is no longer required for increases relating to changes in admission limits or reorganisations
- allow additional categories of, or spending on, central budgets
- amend the sparsity factor
- vary the lump sum for amalgamating schools
- vary the protection for special schools and special academies
- move up to 0.5% from the schools block, where the schools forum do not agree, or move more than 0.5% from the schools block

17. Proposals will then need to be considered by the Secretary of State.

18. The schools forums regulations provide a framework for the appointment of members, but allow a considerable degree of discretion in order to accommodate local priorities and practice. A [quick guide to the structure of schools forums](#) is available.

19. There is no maximum or minimum size of a schools forum. Local authorities will wish to take various issues into account in deciding the actual size, including the need to have full representation for various types of school, and the local authority's policy on representation of non-schools members. However, care should be taken to keep the schools forum to a reasonable size to ensure that it does not become too unwieldy.

20. Schools forums must have:

- schools members
- academies member(s), if there is at least one academy in the local authority's area
- non-schools members

20.1. Schools and academies members together must number at least two-thirds of the total membership of the schools forum and the balance between maintained primary, maintained secondary and academies members must be broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category.

20.2. The structure of schools forums should be regularly reviewed, we suggest good practice is to review the membership as a standing agenda item at each meeting.

20.3. Academies members must represent mainstream academies and, if there are any in the local authority area, special academies and alternative provision academies.

20.4. There is no requirement for academies members to represent specific primary and secondary phases, but it may be encouraged to ensure representation remains broadly proportionate to pupil numbers.

20.5. Academy members must be separately elected and designated from maintained school representatives.

21. Schools forum members will need the skills and competencies to manage forum business, as detailed in [school forum powers and responsibilities guidance](#), and to take a strategic view across the whole education estate whilst acting as representative of the group that has elected them.

22. They should be easily contactable and pro-active in raising the profile of issues and communicating decisions, and the reasons behind them, effectively. Good practice would be to offer training to new or existing schools forum members.

Term of office

23. The term of office for each schools member and academies member should be stipulated by the local authority at the time of appointment; this should follow published rules and be applied in a consistent manner between members.

24. Members do not need identical terms, there may be a case for varied terms so that there is continuity of experience rather than there being a complete change in the membership at a single point.

25. The term of office should not be of a length that would hinder the requirement for the structure of the schools forum to mirror the type of provision in light of the pace of academy conversions.

26. Examples of how this may work include:

- holding vacancies until the schools forum structure is reviewed providing that this does not mean holding vacancies for an unreasonable length of time; for example, we would expect this vacancy to be filled for the following school term
- increasing the size of the schools forum temporarily to appoint additional academy members, then deleting schools member posts at the end of a term of office, or when a vacancy arises
- considering continuity of service; where an academy conversion affects the school of a current schools member, consider appointing that person as an academies member

27. The length of term of office for non-schools members is at the discretion of the local authority. Schools and academies must be informed, within a month of the appointment of any non-schools member, of the name of the member, and the name of the body that that member represents.

28. As well as the term of office coming to an end, a member ceases to be a member of the schools forum if they resigns from the schools forum, or no longer occupy the office by which they became eligible for election, selection or appointment to the schools forum. For example;

- a secondary schools member must stand down if their school converts to an academy
- a schools member representing community primary school governors who is no longer a governor of a community primary school in the relevant local authority must cease to hold office on the schools forum even if they remain a governor of a school represented by another group or sub-group
- a member gives notice in writing to the local authority
- a non-schools member is replaced by the local authority, at the request of the body which the member represents

Schools members

29. Schools members represent specified phases or types of maintained schools within the local authority. As a minimum, schools forums must contain representatives of primary and secondary schools, unless there are no primary or secondary schools maintained by the local authority. Middle schools and all through schools are treated according to their deemed status.

30. Where a local authority maintains one or more special schools, the schools forum must have at least one schools member from that sector. The same applies to nursery schools and pupil referral units (PRUs).

31. The local authority has discretion to divide the groups referred to above into one or more of the following sub-groups:

- headteachers or headteachers' representatives in each group
- governors in each group
- headteachers or headteachers' representatives and governors in each group
- representatives of a particular school category, for example, voluntary aided

32. Headteachers can be represented by other senior members of staff within their school. Governors can include interim executive members of an interim executive board.

33. The sub-groups do not have to be of equal size; for example, there may be more representatives of headteachers of primary schools than governors of such schools, or vice versa.
34. The membership structure of the schools forum should ensure there is sufficient representation of each type of schools member in each group to ensure that debate within the schools forum is balanced and representative.
35. As a minimum, there must be at least one representative of headteachers and one representative of governors among the schools members.
36. Whatever the membership structure of schools members on a schools forum, the important issue is that it should reflect most effectively the profile of education provision across the local authority to ensure that there is not an in-built bias towards any one phase or group.

Election and nomination of schools members

37. The relevant group or sub-group is probably best placed to determine how their schools members should be elected.
38. It's good practice to ensure that a vacancy amongst a represented group would be filled by a nominee elected according to a process determined by all those represented in that group; for example, community primary school headteachers, or secondary school governors, ensuring that everyone represented has had the opportunity to stand for and vote in the election.
39. The process must be restricted to the group in question; a headteachers phase group could only vote as a whole for headteacher members if the voting excluded academies, as academies members form a separate group.
40. It's not appropriate for a single person to be elected to represent more than one group or sub-group concurrently; for example, if they were a governor at a primary and secondary school, they can stand for election from either group but can be appointed to represent only one of those groups.
41. The purpose of ensuring each group or sub-group is responsible for their election process is to guarantee there is a transparent and representative process by which members of schools forums are nominated to represent their constituents.
42. Appropriate support to each group or sub-group to manage their election processes should be offered by the clerk of a schools forum, or the committee or democratic services of a local authority. This may just include the provision of advice but may also consist of providing administrative support in running elections.

43. As a minimum, we recommend the clerk of a schools forum make a record of the process by which the relevant schools within each group and sub-group elect their nominees to the schools forum, and be able to advise the chair of the schools forum and local authority on action that needs to be taken, where necessary, to seek new nominees.

44. In determining the process by which elections should be operated it is perfectly legitimate for a local authority to devise, in consultation with their schools forum, a model scheme for the relevant schools within a group or sub-group to consider and be invited to adopt. However, such a model scheme cannot be imposed on that body of schools, alternative schemes may be adopted. A single scheme need not be adopted universally.

45. Care should be taken to ensure that every eligible member of a group or sub-group has an opportunity to be involved in the determination of their group's election process, is given the opportunity to stand for election if they choose to do so, and is involved in the election of their representative(s).

46. It would not be compliant with the regulations for the steering committee or chair of a parent group simply to make a nomination to represent their group or sub-group on a schools forum. Schools members must be elected, and are not necessarily restricted to principals, senior staff or governors.

47. The local authority may set a date by which the election should take place and must appoint the schools member if the election has not taken place by that date. The person appointed should be a member of the relevant group.

48. We recommend any scheme takes into account a number of factors:

- the process for collecting names of those wishing to stand for election
- the timescale for notifying all constituents of the election and those standing
- the arrangements for dispatching and receiving ballots
- the arrangements for counting and publicising the results
- any arrangements for unusual circumstances such as only one candidate standing in an election
- whether existing members can stand for re-election

49. In the event of a tie between two or more candidates, the local authority must appoint the schools member. The local authority may decide to appoint someone else rather than one of the candidates and might wish to take into account the experience or expertise of the individuals, and the balance between the different types of school represented on the schools forum.

Election and nomination of academies members

50. Academies members must be elected by the proprietor bodies of the academies in the local authority's area, and they are probably best placed to determine the process.

51. Academies members are there to represent the proprietor bodies of academies and are, therefore, not necessarily restricted to principals, senior staff or governors. The same factors should be taken into account as for the election of schools members.

52. For the avoidance of doubt, free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools are classed as academies for this purpose. There is no distinction between sponsored and converter academies.

53. There are three sub-groups for academy members:

- mainstream academies
- special academies
- alternative provision (AP) academies

54. It is for the proprietors of academies within each of these sub-groups to elect their representatives. It is not appropriate, therefore, for headteacher phase groups to determine representation unless the academy proprietors have agreed and even then the voting would need to exclude maintained school representatives.

55. There is no requirement for academies members to be split into primary and secondary sub-groups. However, local authorities may wish to encourage academies to consider the pupil proportions across all academies when electing their representatives.

56. Where there is only one academy in a sub-group in the local authority's area, their proprietor body must select the person who will represent them.

57. It is possible for a single person to be appointed as an academies member to more than one schools forum. For example, if an academy chain is located across multiple local authorities; providing they are elected on each occasion in accordance with the agreed election process for each separate schools forum.

58. As with schools members, the local authority may set a date by which the election should take place and must appoint an academies member if the election does not take place by that date, or if an election results in a tie between two or more candidates.

Non-schools members

59. Non-schools members may number no more than a third of a schools forum's total membership, excluding observers. A representative of providers of 16 to 19 education must be elected from those providers.

60. This includes those in the FE sector (FE and sixth form colleges) and other post-school institutions that specialise in special education needs, where 20% or more of their students reside in the local authority's area. As with academies, the providers are probably best placed to determine the election process.

61. The local authority must appoint at least one person to represent early years providers from the PVI sector. Early years PVI settings need to be represented because funding for the free entitlement for three- and four-year-olds and eligible two-year-olds comes from the dedicated schools grant, and all settings are funded through the early years national funding formula.

62. Before appointing additional non-schools members to the schools forum, the local authority must consider whether there are Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses situated in the local authority's area; and, where there are schools or academies in the area with a different religious character, the appropriate faith group, should be represented on the schools forum.

63. If diocesan authorities nominate members for appointment as non-schools members, they may wish to consider what type of representative would be most appropriate; for example, schools-based such as a headteacher or governor, or someone linked more generally with the diocese, for example a member of the education board.

64. It's also good practice for local authorities to ensure that the needs and interests of all the pupils in the local authority are adequately represented by the members of a schools forum.

65. The interests of pupils in maintained schools can be represented by schools members. Some pupils in a local authority, however, are educated in hospitals, independent special schools and non-maintained special schools.

66. Certain types of non-schools members can play an important role in representing the interests of these groups of pupils. They can also play a role in representing the interests and views of the services that support those groups of vulnerable and at risk pupils who nevertheless are on the roll of maintained schools, such as looked after children and children with special educational needs.

67. The purpose of non-schools members is also to bring greater breadth of discussion to schools forum meetings and ensure that stakeholders and partners other than schools are represented.

68. Organisations which typically provide non-schools members are trades unions, professional associations and representatives of youth groups. Parent groups could also be considered.

69. However, as there are limited numbers of non-schools members able to be on a schools forum, care should be taken to ensure that an appropriate representation from wider stakeholders is achieved.

Other membership issues

70. There are three restrictions placed on who can be a non-schools member of a schools forum. The local authority cannot appoint:

- an elected member of the local authority who is appointed to the executive of that local authority (a lead member/portfolio holder) ('executive members')
- the director of children's services or any officer employed or engaged to work under the management of the director of children's services, and who does not directly provide education to children (or manage those who do) ('relevant officer' (a) and (b))
- other officers with a specific role in management of and/or who advise on funding for schools ('relevant officer' part (c))

71. Schools forums have the power to approve a limited range of proposals from their local authority; the restrictions ensure that there is no conflict of interest between the proposing body (the local authority) and the approving body (the schools forum).

72. However, non-executive elected members and those officers who are employed in their capacity as headteachers or teachers, and those who directly manage a service which provides education to individual children or advice to schools, are eligible to be members of schools forums.

73. In the case of non-executive elected members, they may be a schools member (by virtue of them being a school governor), an academies member, or a non-schools member. As a non-schools member they may be well placed to fulfil the broader overview and scrutiny role they have within the local authority in general.

74. However, the inclusion of non-executive elected members and certain officers is not a requirement. Many schools forums do not have such members, and it is for each local authority and schools forum to consider how best to ensure the right balance of school and non-school representation on the schools forum, taking into account their local circumstances and preferences.

The role of executive elected members

75. A schools forum needs to ensure that there are systems in place for executive members of the council to be aware of its views on specific issues and, in particular, any decisions it takes in relation to the schools budget and individual budget shares.

76. Executive members with responsibility for education or children's services, or local authority resources, are able to participate in schools forum meetings. By doing so such elected members are able to contribute to the discussion and receive first-hand the views of the schools forum.

77. It is good practice for this to be the case and the regulations provide the right for executive members to attend and speak at schools forum meetings. However, there is no requirement for this to happen so at the very least there should be clear channels of communication between the schools forum and executive members.

78. Communication may also be assisted if schools forum members attended relevant cabinet meetings as members of the public, for example, when the funding formula is decided.

Recording the composition of schools forums

79. Each local authority must make a written record of the composition of its schools forum detailing the numbers of schools members and by which group or sub-group they were elected, the number of academies members and the number of non-schools members, their terms of office, how they were chosen and whom they represent.

80. This record should also indicate the term of office for schools and academies members. It is good practice for this to be published on the schools forum website so schools and wider stakeholders can easily find who their representatives are.

Observers

81. The regulations enable the Secretary of State to appoint an observer to attend and speak at schools forum meetings, for example a representative from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

82. This allows a conduit for national policy to be discussed at a local level and provide access for schools forum to an additional support mechanism, for example, where there are highly complex issues to resolve.

Participation of local authority officers at meetings

83. Only specific officers can speak at meetings of the schools forum. These officers are:

- director of children's services, or their representative
- chief financial officer, or their representative
- any person invited by the schools forum to provide financial or technical advice

- any person presenting a paper to the schools forum, but their ability to speak is limited to the paper that they are presenting

84. In the majority of cases, schools forums are supported by a specific officer. In the course of their work, however, schools forums will be required to consider a whole range of issues and they may consider it appropriate that other officers attend for specific items of business.

85. Where this is the case, the local authority should meet the schools forum's requests as far as possible. It is best practice to record attendance at meetings as well as membership to ensure elected members are attending and contributing to discussions.

Procedures

86. Many procedural matters are not prescribed in the regulations and are at the discretion either of the local authority or the schools forum itself. However, there are requirements in the regulations relating to the following.

Quorum

87. A meeting is only quorate if 40% of the total membership is present; this excludes any observers, and it is 40% of the current membership excluding vacancies.

87.1. If a meeting is inquorate it can proceed but it cannot legally take decisions (election of a Chair, or a decision relating to funding conferred by the funding regulations).

87.2. An inquorate meeting can respond to local authority consultation, and give views to the local authority. It would normally be good practice for the local authority to take account of such 'unofficial' views, but it's not legally obliged to do so.

87.3. In practice, the arrangements for meetings should be made to reduce the chance of a problem with the quorum. The quorum stipulation is in the regulations to help ensure the legitimacy of decisions

Election of a chair

88. Under the regulations, if the position of chair falls vacant, the schools forum must decide how long the term of office of the next chair will be.

88.1. This can be for any period, but the schools forum should consider carefully whether a period exceeding two years is sensible.

- 88.2. A long period will also cause problems if the member elected as chair has a term of office as a member which comes to an end before their term of office as chair ends.
- 88.3. The schools forum must elect a chair from amongst its own members, so it is not possible to elect an independent chair.
- 88.4. Any elected member of the local authority or officer of the local authority who is a member of a schools forum may not hold the office of chair.
- 88.5. Schools forums can also appoint to a position of vice chair to provide cover if the chair is absent, or the post vacant.

Voting procedures

89. The regulations provide that a schools forum may determine its own voting procedures, except that voting on:

- the funding formula is limited to schools members, academies members and PVI representatives
- de-delegation is limited to the specific primary and secondary phase of maintained schools members
- retaining funding for statutory duties relating to maintained schools only is limited to maintained primary, secondary, special, and PRU members

90. The powers which schools forums have to take decisions on a range of funding matters increase the importance of clear procedures, for example, decisions are made on a simple majority or the threshold to be met if higher.

91. These procedures should take account of any use of working groups by the schools forum, for example a decision might be taken by voting to accept and adopt a report by a working group.

92. As part of any voting procedure there should be clarity in the procedures for recording the outcome of a vote, and any resolutions a schools forum makes in relation to any vote taken.

Substitutes

93. The local authority must make arrangements to enable substitutes to attend and vote, where appropriate, at schools forum meetings. This applies to schools members, academies members, and non-schools members. The arrangements must be decided in consultation with schools forum members.

Defects and vacancies

94. The regulations provide that proceedings of the schools forum are not invalidated by defects in the election or appointment of any member, or the appointment of the chair. Nor does the existence of any vacancy on the schools forum invalidate proceedings.

Timing

95. Schools forums must meet at least four times a year.

Meeting

96. Schools forums can meet remotely, until 31 March 2021, while they are unable to meet physically in a room during the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19). This includes, but is not limited to:

- telephone conferencing
- video conferencing
- live webcast
- live interactive streaming

97. Where the regulations make no provision on a procedural matter, local discretion should be exercised.

98. It is for the local authority to decide how far it wishes to establish rules for the schools forum to follow, in the form of standing orders. While it is entitled to do so, it is good practice to allow the schools forum to set its own rules as far as possible.

Public access

99. Schools forums are more than just consultative bodies. They also have an important role to play in approving certain proposals from their local authority, and are therefore involved in the decision making process surrounding the use of public money at local level.

100. Schools forums are required to be open to the public.

101. Papers, agendas, and minutes, must be publicly available well in advance of each meeting. It's good practice to explain on the website that the schools forum is a public meeting, and that papers are published at least a week in advance. Local authorities should ensure their websites are accessible and easy to find.

102. Some schools forums already operate very much along the lines of a local authority committee. This is perfectly legitimate and will provide a consistent framework for the running of meetings that are open to the public, and the publishing of papers and

agendas well in advance of the meeting and minutes published promptly as required under Regulation 8(13) of the Schools Forum Regulations 2012.

103. Local authorities should ensure their schools forum clerk's contact details are published on their website and that it is clear to interested parties how they can attend the meeting remotely.

Working groups

104. It's open to a schools forum to set up working groups of members to discuss specific issues, and to produce draft advice and decisions for the schools forum itself to consider.

105. The groups can also include wider representation, for example, an early years reference group can represent all the different types of provider to consider the detail of the early years single funding formula. The reference group would then be able to give its considered view on the local authority's proposals to the schools forum.

106. The schools forum should not delegate actual decisions or the finalisation of advice to a working group, as this may have the effect of excluding legitimate points of view. These have proved effective for larger local authorities; examples of some working groups are for high needs and early years.

Urgent business

107. It's good practice for the local authority to agree with its schools forum an urgency procedure to be followed when there is a genuine business need for a decision or formal view to be expressed by the schools forum, before the next scheduled meeting.

108. The local authority may call an unscheduled meeting, or put in place alternative arrangements such as clearance by email correspondence or some other means.

109. Such instances should be avoided as far as possible but are legitimate provided all members of the schools forum have an opportunity to participate, the logistics provide a reasonable opportunity for consideration and the local authority policy on data security is not compromised.

110. It's not legal for the chair to take a decision on behalf of the schools forum, no matter how urgent the matter in question; however, a schools forum may wish to put in place a procedure for the chair to give the local authority a view on an urgent issue.

Schools forum resources

111. The costs of a schools forum fall in the central school services block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG).

112. It's legitimate to charge the running costs of schools forums to this budget, including any agreed and reasonable expenses for members attending meetings, the costs of producing and distributing papers, and costs of room hire and refreshments, and for clerking of meetings.

113. Beyond these costs, some schools forums have a budget of their own to use for activities such as commissioning research or other reports.

Section 2 – effective schools forums

Introduction

114. As the previous section outlined, local authorities have responsibility for establishing schools forums. They also have an ongoing responsibility to provide them with appropriate support, information and guidance in carrying out their functions and responsibilities.

115. The following outlines some aspects of what local authorities and schools forums should consider in ensuring that their schools forums are as effective as possible. The pace of academy conversions in particular means that this significant sector must be properly represented, and feel that it is able to play a meaningful part in the discussions of the schools forum.

116. Central to the effectiveness or otherwise of a schools forum will be the relationship between it and its local authority. The local authority will have a significant influence on this through the support it provides; the resources it devotes, and the weight it gives to the views of schools forums.

117. There are therefore a number of characteristics of this relationship that are particularly important:

- partnership: having a shared understanding of the priorities, issues and concerns of schools, academies and the local authority
- effective support: the business of the schools forum is supported by the local authority in an efficient and professional manner
- openness: it's important that a schools forum feels it is receiving open, honest and objective advice from its local authority
- responsiveness: local authorities should as far as possible be responsive to requests from their schools forums and their members; schools forums themselves should also be aware of the resource implications of their requests
- strategic view: members of schools forum should consider the needs of the whole of the educational community, rather than using their position on a schools forum to advance their own sectional or specific interests
- challenge and scrutiny: schools forums may be asked to agree to proposals from their local authority that will have an effect on all schools and academies in the local area; the extent to which schools forums can scrutinise and challenge such proposals is an important aspect of their effectiveness

118. The characteristics identified above are just some of the aspects that will contribute to an effective schools forum. The following provides more detail on some of the specific issues that local authorities and schools forums may wish to consider in thinking about their own arrangements.

Induction of new members

119. When new members join the schools forum, appropriate induction materials should be provided. These might include material relating to the operation of the schools forum together with background information about the local and national school funding arrangements; typically they might comprise:

- the constitution of the schools forum
- a list of members including contact details and their terms of office
- any locally agreed terms of reference explaining the relationship between the schools forum and the local authority
- copies of minutes of previous meetings
- the programme of schools forum meetings for the year
- the local schools forum web address

120. This operational and good practice guide, suitably supplemented by local material, should also be provided to new members on their appointment.

121. Where there is sufficient turnover of schools forum members in any particular year the local authority may wish to organise a one-off induction event to brief new members.

122. Such an event would usefully include an outline of the role of the schools forum and the national funding arrangements for schools and local authorities. It might also include an explanation of the local funding formula and any proposals for review. The opportunity could also be taken to explain the main reporting requirements for school and local authority expenditure.

Training

123. Ideally schools forum members should be able to use some of the budget set aside for schools forum running costs for accessing relevant training activities.

124. Some training will be provided by officers of the local authority but members may wish to attend national or regional events, the costs of which, where necessary, can be supported from the schools forum budget. Local and national bodies have a key role to play in developing the competencies of forum members.

125. Training will need to be provided in response to any changes in the role of the schools forum and national developments in respect of school funding, to ensure that members can be fully effective when detailed discussions are taking place.

Agenda setting

126. The process by which the agenda for a meeting or cycle of meetings is set is in many respects one of the key determinants of the effectiveness or otherwise of a schools forum.

127. The frequency and timing of meetings of the schools forum should be agreed in advance of each financial or academic year; these should take into consideration deadlines for the local authority such as disapplication requests and the submission of the authority proforma tool (APT).

128. It's good practice to publish the dates of meetings on the schools forum website. In drawing up this cycle of meetings, in consultation with the schools forum, the local authority should provide a clear overview of the key consultative and decision-making points in the school funding cycle.

129. These will be drawn from a combination of national and local information and should inform the basic agenda items that each meeting needs to cover. For instance, meetings will need to be scheduled at appropriate points to enable the schools forum to consider the outcomes of local consultations and national announcements.

130. Although the business of schools forums must be open and transparent, it is recognised that from time to time items of a confidential nature will need to be discussed.

131. It's recommended local authorities apply the same principles they apply to council or cabinet meetings when judging an item to be confidential, and adopt similar practices for dealing with those reports in the meeting, for example placing them together at the end of the agenda.

Preparation for a schools forum meeting

132. It's vital that the schools forum is transparent, open and has clear communication lines to all of the members that are represented. This ensures the wider school family are aware of the business discussed, the impact on their setting and the reasons for the decisions.

133. The vast majority of a schools forum's business will be done on the basis of prepared papers. It is therefore important that these are concise, informative and produced in a timely and consistent manner.

134. Recommendations should be clearly set out at the beginning of each report. It's also helpful if the front of the report confirms whether the report is for information or decision and who is eligible to vote where relevant.

135. It's good practice for the schools forum and local authority to agree a standard for papers. It is usual for papers to be dispatched at least one week prior to the meeting at

which they will be discussed to allow members to consider them and if necessary canvass views from the group they are representing.

136. Papers should be published on the local authority's website at this time to enable representations to be made to schools forum members.

137. Consistency in the presentation of papers also contributes to the effectiveness of meetings; it helps set the tone of meetings, facilitate the engagement of all members, and signal the importance the local authority attaches to the work of the schools forum.

138. Ideally such a standard should be agreed between the schools forum and local authority.

139. Publishing papers as a single PDF file is helpful as it saves time and avoids accessing multiple documents both in advance of, and during, the meeting. An executive summary of the reports can provide schools forum members and members of the public with an overview of the agenda and the decisions required.

140. Publishing papers on a publicly available website well in advance of the meeting ensures that all interested parties are able to access papers.

141. Some schools forums ensure each represented group meets in the days immediately prior to the schools forum meeting to ensure the agenda is discussed and schools forum members are properly briefed by the group they represent.

142. Although on occasions it's inevitable that schools forums will receive late or tabled reports it does create some difficulty for members as they will not have been able to seek the views of those they represent.

143. Schools forums can consider adopting a flexible arrangement for the time immediately prior to the meeting. For example it could be used for training of new members, or as a drop-in session for members to ask items of clarification, or for members to meet without officers to discuss the agenda.

Chairing the schools forum

144. The Chair of a schools forum plays a key role in setting the tone, pace and overall dynamic of the schools forum. They should provide an environment within which all members are able to contribute fully to discussions and guide the schools forum to making well informed decisions.

145. The relationship between the chair and the local authority is therefore vital. The chair should be very clear on the substance of the agenda items, understand the issues involved and the decisions and actions that need to be taken in respect of school forum business.

146. It's good practice for there to be a pre-meeting between the senior officer of the local authority supporting the schools forum and the chair of the schools forum to ensure that all the issues are clearly understood.

147. Equally, the chair has the responsibility of representing the views of the schools forum back to the local authority. For example, they should, where appropriate, take the initiative to make suggestions for improvements to the way the business is conducted, and, in exceptional cases and with support of the members of the schools forum take the view that they do not have sufficient information on which to base a decision and ask that an item is deferred until further information is available. However, in doing so, the chair and schools forum should be fully aware of the consequences of deferral.

148. The independence of the schools forum is paramount. Enhancing the role of chair to a paid position, rather than the reimbursement of reasonable expenses, could blur the lines of independence.

149. Similarly, if the chair undertakes significant work for the local authority in another capacity, for example as an external consultant, they could be viewed as equivalent to an officer of the local authority.

150. Local authorities could consider if sharing contact details of the schools forum chair with neighbouring local authorities would be helpful for peer support and improving networking opportunities.

Clerking the schools forum

151. Clerking of a schools forum should be seen as more than just writing a note of the meeting. A good clerk provides an invaluable link between the members of the schools forum, the chair and the local authority. It's a role often undertaken by an employee of the local authority though we would recommend consideration is given to the use of an independent clerk.

152. Clerks should manage the logistics of the meeting in terms of ensuring dispatch of papers and producing a note from the meeting. Meeting notes should be clear enough for non-attendees to get a sense of the discussion as well as clearly indicating the conclusion and action agreed in relation to each agenda item.

153. Verbatim reports of a schools forum's discussion, however, are unlikely to be very useful. Schools forums may consider whether a simple action log should be maintained by the clerk to ensure all action points agreed are followed up.

154. Beyond this a good clerk can:

- provide the route by which schools forum members can access further information and coordinate communication to schools forum members outside of the formal meeting cycle

- respond to any queries about the business of the schools forum from headteachers, governors and others who are not on the schools forum themselves
- be responsible for ensuring contact details of all members are up to date
- maintain the list of members on the schools forum and advise on membership issues in general
- assist with the coordination of nomination or election processes run by the constituent groups
- keep the schools forum website up to date, for example by posting latest minutes and papers
- monitor, on a regular basis, the schools forum and general schools funding pages on GOV.UK, and arrange for the distribution of any relevant DfE information to schools forum members
- if appropriate, provide technical advice in relation to the schools forum regulations and in relation to the operation of a schools forum's local constitution
- organise, operate and record any voting activity of the schools forum in line with the provisions of its local constitution

155. Not all of these tasks may be able to be undertaken by the schools forum clerk. However, each one is important and there should be arrangements in place to ensure they are discharged adequately.

Good practice for schools forum meetings

156. Schools forums should ensure there is a clear debate of all agenda items. Whilst sub-group meetings are valuable in working through detailed issues, schools forums should consider that the level of debate held at the schools forum meeting and recorded in the minutes will be the official reflection of the level of challenge and discussion on each issue.

157. The use of nameplates for schools forum members also showing which group they are representing can be helpful to members of the public and presenters of papers. In addition the use of coloured cards or coloured nameplates can be helpful when specific members of a schools forum are eligible to vote on specific items, for example, voting on de-delegation or changes to the funding formula.

158. Consultations with the schools forum are a key responsibility of a local authority, ranging from the funding formula to the letting of contracts. Each consultation will be different and depend on the subject being consulted on, but local authorities should consider the following factors as good practice for effective consultation:

- plan and consult early
- allow reasonable timescales for response, as forum members may need to consult the groups they represent
- an open and honest approach

- fully inclusive
- allow for ongoing dialogue
- provide feedback
- clear communications

Meeting notes and recording of decisions

159. A vital part of the effective operation of a schools forum is to ensure that an accurate record of the meeting is taken. This must include the clear recording of votes where there are contrary views. Recommendations to, and decisions of, schools forums must be clearly set out.

160. Notes or minutes of each schools forum meeting should be produced and published on the local authority website as soon after the meeting as possible to enable members and others to see the outcome of any discussions, decisions, and votes.

161. It is good practice to formally agree the accuracy of the note and minutes at a subsequent meeting, but the publication of the draft minutes should not be delayed as a result.

162. We recommend a log of the decisions is published within 3 working days of the meeting, and the draft minutes within 10 working days so that interested parties can access them and consult on them, if necessary, before the next meeting.

163. In order to provide clarity about representation at each meeting, it is good practice for the minutes to record the group or subgroup that each member represents against their name.

Communication

164. Communication to the wider education community of the discussions and debates of, and decisions made by, the schools forum is fundamental to their effective operation.

165. The more schools and other stakeholders know about the proceedings of the schools forum, the more their work will be an important and central part of the context of local education funding.

166. This is particularly important given the decision making role the schools forum has. Local authorities should consider the operational differences between the types of stakeholders and plan their communications accordingly.

167. For example, ensuring effective communications across the PVI sector may be more difficult than with schools, which are more likely to have existing channels of communication.

168. Each schools forum should therefore be clear what its channels of communication are.

169. It is fundamental that each member of schools forum represents the views of the group or sub-group that they represent and that all those with an interest in funding work together to ensure that their views are taken into account.

170. Communications directly between members and those they represent is essential; professional associations and phase groups could be suitable channels. This will ensure that schools forum members have an ongoing dialogue with the constituents of their group or sub-group and are therefore well able to represent their views at schools forum meetings.

171. The schools forum should also consider additional communication processes, which could include:

- drawing schools' attention to the fact that all its agendas, minutes, and papers, are publicly available on the local authority's website ; this should include the publication of formula consultation documents
- an annual report on the proceedings of the schools forum
- attendance by the chair, or other schools forum member, at other relevant consultative or management groups such as any capital working group; or senior management meetings of the children's services department
- a brief email to all schools, early years providers, and other stakeholders, after each schools forum meeting informing them of the discussions and decisions with a link to the full papers and minutes for further information
- a schools forum newsletter can be a less formal and more interesting way of communicating forum business and raising the profile of the schools forum and its members

News updates

172. Most, but not all, members of the schools forum will already be in receipt of regular information on school funding matters from the local authority and DfE. Other schools forum members should be copied into such information flows so that they can be kept abreast of developments between meetings.

173. Many local authorities have already established dedicated schools forum websites on which they post key information for schools forum members and other interested parties on a regular basis.



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**WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM – 29th September 2020
WORK PLAN**

Meeting Date	10th November 2020	19th January 2021	11th May 2021	29th June 2021	September 2021
					Elect chair & vice chair
Budget	DSG Deficit plan Update	Budget Monitoring Schools Budget 20-21 De-delegation of budgets Update on School budgets/balances	Schools Budget update 2020-21 Schools Budget provisional outturn 19-20 Update on School budgets/balances	Update on School Balances and Reserves School Budget Monitoring Schools Budget provisional outturn 20-21	Budget monitoring Q2 Update on School budgets/balances Growth & Falling Rolls Report if fund continues
Consultation	National Funding Formula Update for 2021-22			2021-22 School Funding Arrangements if new info out	2021-22 National Funding Formula for Schools, High Needs and Early Years
DfE Regs & guidelines	Schools Forum Constitution School Forum Membership Financial Transparency changes Apr 2021 Scheme for Financing Schools updates	School Finance Regulations Schools Forum Structure (identifies voting rights)	DfE Operational Guide if updated		School Forum Membership
Working Groups		School Formula High Needs Early Years	School Formula High Needs Early Years	School Formula High Needs Early Years	School Formula High Needs Early Years
Other	De-delegated services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contingency • Special Staff Costs • Library Service • Insurance Energy update Wirral Edsential Update IG Traded Services Update Sensory Support Service Update	MEAs Update Forum Membership	High Needs Funding arrangements	Traded Services Update LACES /LAC PP Growth Fund - Update on allocations	Forum Membership Home Tuition Update Alternative Provision School Admissions

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