



Wirral Schools Forum

Date:	Tuesday, 13 June 2023
Time:	4.00 p.m.
Venue:	Virtual – Microsoft Teams

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AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES
2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2023 (Pages 1 - 6)
3. MATTERS ARISING
4. LACES AND LAC PUPIL PREMIUM (Pages 7 - 14)
5. HOME TUITION UPDATE (Pages 15 - 18)
6. EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP UPDATE (Pages 19 - 28)
7. HIGH NEEDS WORKING GROUP UPDATE (VERBAL UPDATE)
8. WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP (Pages 29 - 32)
9. 2023-24 BUDGET UPDATE REPORT (Pages 33 - 36)
10. 2022-23 OUTTURN REPORT (Pages 37 - 44)
11. SCHOOL BALANCES UPDATE (Pages 45 - 48)
12. WORKPLAN (Pages 49 - 50)
13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 17 January 2023

Present: Adrian Whiteley (Chair)

Schools Group

Shaun Allen
Lisa Ayling
Mark Bellamy
Geraldine Fraser
Simon Goodwin
Kathryn Kennedy
Chris Mervyn
Margaret Morris
Sue Ralph
Andy Ramsden
Shaun Allen
John Weise

Non-Schools Group

Gill Harris
Brian McGregor
Nicky Prance
Joanne Proctor
Anne Rycroft

In Attendance

Yaqub Allen
Sue Ashley
James Backhouse
Katy Bird
Sue Blevins
Asako Brown
Cllr Helen Collinson
Cllr Chris Cooke
Kate Frost
Sally Gibbs
Sarah Harper
Julie Hudson
Catherine McNally
Andrew Snow
Anju Varughese
Simone White
Frances Whiting
Cllr Vida Wilson

1 **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting. It was agreed that the order to the published agenda would be amended, with Item 10 being considered before item 8.

Apologies had been received from Tony Norbury, Moira Loftus and Julie Merry.

2 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2022**

The clerk acknowledged due to a technical issue with the merge, a number of present attendees were omitted from the minutes of the last meeting. With the amendments to correct this it was:

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 22 November 2022 be agreed as an accurate record.

3 **MATTERS ARISING**

No matters were raised.

4 **HOME CONTINUING AND EDUCATION SERVICE (HCES) UPDATE**

Julie Hudson, Teacher: Schools Psychology, provided the Forum with an update on the work of the Wirral Home and Continuing Education Service (HCES), which delivered alternative provision for children who were unable to attend school due to health needs. The report summarised the aims of HCES, the current venue, the effects of school closures during the pandemic, changes to policy and eligibility criteria, and the current budget position and proposed financial changes.

After a discussion on proposed changes, it was:

Resolved (Unanimously) – That

- 1. The report be noted**
- 2. The Transfer of Pupil Premium where appropriate for all pupils be agreed; and**
- 3. The weekly charge for Year 11 pupils be increased from £125 to £140 per week.**

5 **ENERGY UPDATE WIRRAL**

Andrew Snow, Energy Conservation Engineer, provided the Forum with an update on the procurement of electricity and natural gas on behalf of schools, alongside suggested budget changes for the 2023/24 financial year. Developments within energy markets were outlined, where it was noted that the last 12 months had been a period of extreme price volatility following the Russian Invasion of Ukraine. In line with the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) Framework Agreement, the Forum were provided with anticipated 2023/24 Unit Prices, based on data as of November 2022, whilst several uncertainties in projecting future costs were outlined. The following changes to expenditure were suggested as precautionary provisions to take account of the increased prices anticipated for 2022/23. The suggestions were made using the most recent information available:

- Increase provision for natural gas supplied by TGP by 103.29%.
- Increase provision for electricity supplied by EdF by 61.78%.

Members of the Forum discussed the impact of energy price rises for schools not involved in the CCS Framework agreement, and the eligibility criteria of the Government Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

6 SCHOOL LIBRARY SERVICE

Catherine McNally, Schools Librarian, provided the Forum with an overview of the services provided and the future services planned by the Schools Library Service (SLS). The complete budget and additional income generated by the service were highlighted, and it was noted that Funding from the Schools' Forum provided £185,100 at a cost of £8.78 per primary school pupil from maintained schools. Providing a summary of the current service, it was noted that with the closure of public libraries in Wirral, the service had seen an increase in requests with issues now above pre-covid levels. As a result, a number of initiatives to meet the demand had been brought into practice. A summary of current staffing levels were also outlined to the Forum.

Members discussed possible future budgets challenges for the service as more schools converted into academies. Proactive steps to promote buy-in from academies were considered.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

7 SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Frances Whiting provided an update on the membership of the Schools Forum. An overview of the current membership by group was outlined. It was noted that there remained 3 academy vacancies, and a 16-19 representative vacancy due to receiving no response for new representatives at the last request sent out. It was reported that 2 nominations had been received for the Special Governor representative post, meaning an election had been undertaken with a closing date of 20 January 2023.

In the discussion, it was noted that there had been expressions of interest for a number of the vacancies at recent meeting of School Heads, and this would be taken forward by officers.

8 SCHOOLS BUDGET 2023-24 AND 3-YEAR FORECAST

Asako Brown, Senior Finance Business Partner, introduced a report which sought Forum Members views on the proposed Schools Budget for the financial year 2023-24, which totalled £337.017m for Early Years, Maintained Schools, Academies, colleges, and providers. In addition, the forecasts for the following three financial years were outlined to Forum which were used to inform planning the future impact of current decisions. Table 1 of the report provided a breakdown of the 2023-24 budget, and future year forecasts, by each of the funding blocks, Members were informed that the Schools Budget and advice from the Forum was to be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee at its budget meeting on 15th February 2023.

In the discussion, members expressed their concern regarding the reduction of historic commitments within the Central Schools Services block by 20%. In addition, Members expressed that the 6.52% increase of Dedicated Schools Grant was insufficient given the current level of inflation.

Resolved (6:0:2 abstentions) – That

- 1. In accordance with ESFA guidelines, the reduced contributions to Combined Budgets of £0.536m in 2023-24 be agreed for:**
 - **School Improvement**
 - **Local Safeguarding Children’s Board**
 - **School Intervention**
 - **PFI Support**
 - **PFI CLC**
 - **Looked after Children Education Services**
 - **Business Rates, and**
 - **Governors Forum**
- 2. The Schools Budget and views of the Schools Forum be referred to the budget meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee on 15 February 2023.**

9 DE-DELEGATION OF SCHOOL BUDGETS

Yaqub Allen, Principal Information Officer for Schools, introduced a report which sought Members approval on proposals for de-delegation of a number of services to schools, where there was a preference to continue a central service. De-delegation was proposed for the following budgets:

- Contingency
- Special Staff Costs
- School Library Service
- Insurance
- Behaviour Support
- School Improvement
- Former Education Services Grant (ESG) General Duties
- The School Improvement and Monitoring and Brokerage Grant (SIMBG)

Following a discussion, Members representing Special Schools agreed to defer a decision on the Officer recommendation 7 in the report, relating to Special School Forum representatives agreeing a contribution to replace SIMBG costs of £23,200, until after the next meeting of the Wirral Special Schools and Resourced Provision (WISPA), where further information would be provided. Due to budget reporting deadlines and as per the provision for urgent business in the Schools Forum best practice guidance, a decision would be delivered via email correspondence by Special School Representatives following that meeting.

Resolved – That

- 1. The following budgets be agreed for De-delegation by Primary Forum representatives for the financial year 2023-24:**

- a. Contingency (6:0)
 - b. Special Staff Costs, including TU Facilities Time (6:0)
 - c. School Library Service (6:0)
 - d. Insurance (6:0)
 - e. School Improvement (6:0)
 - f. Behaviour support (6:0)
2. A contribution of £347,208 to former Education Services Grant costs be agreed by Primary Forum representatives. (6:0)
 3. The following budgets be agreed for De-delegation by Secondary Forum representatives for the financial year 2023-24:
 - a. Contingency (1:0)
 - b. Special Staff Costs, including TU Facilities Time (1:0)
 - c. School Improvement (1:0)
 - d. Behaviour support (1:0)
 4. A contribution of £347,208 to former Education Services Grant costs be agreed by Secondary Forum representatives. (1:0)
 5. A contribution of £347,208 to former Education Services Grant costs be agreed by Special School Forum representatives. (2:0)
 6. As per DfE guidance, a contribution to replace SIMBG costs of £23,000 be agreed by Primary and Secondary representatives (7:0).

10 SCHOOLS BUDGET VARIATIONS 2022-23

Asako Brown, Senior Finance Business Partner, updated the Forum on the anticipated variations for the current year 2022-23 schools budget. It was reported that the overall schools budget was forecast to overspend by £3.777 million, which was mainly due to pressure in the High Needs Block, meaning an increase in overspend of £0.402m from the position reported to the Forum in November 2022. The Forecast budget variations were outlined with commentary by specific budget area and were summarised below:

- Special Schools £166K adverse
- SEN Bases £135K favourable
- Early Years £15k adverse
- Schools Block de-delegated £17.7k favourable
- Central School Costs £48.4K favourable
- Special Education Needs - Additional resources £1.032m adverse
- Special Education Needs – Top Ups £567k Adverse
- Independent Special Schools £1.512m adverse
- Support for SEN £47k favourable
- Dedicated Schools Grant £34k favourable

In the discussion, the Assistant Director for Education affirmed that work was being undertaken on High Needs financial modelling with the DfE and CIPFA, with the aim of delivering a better value programme.

Resolved – That the report and forecast financial position of the Schools Budget for 2022-23 be noted.

11 **WORKPLAN**

Resolved – That the workplan be noted.

12 **SCHOOLS BLOCK ALLOCATION 2023-24**

Asako Brown introduced a report which presented options relating to proposed changes in the funding rates in the funding formula to address the gap in the Schools Block funding within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Members were informed that a shortfall of £0.147m had arisen in DSG block funding and funding required for individual schools when applying the National Funding Formula rate, which was explained as largely down to changes in pupil characteristics. 4 proposed options to address the shortfall were presented as followed:

Option A	To remove the reception uplift. Wirral's school budget is calculated with the pupil number count for schools in the January census if they are higher than October census, however this is not a part of the NFF and will be removed when DfE introduces the direct NFF.
Option B	To reduce the formula value for all pupil-led factors. In 2023-24 the DfE allows local authorities to have flexibility to set this factor value within 2.5% of the NFF factor value.
Option C	To reduce the lump sum factor value for all schools. The lump sum is a school led factor and each school receives the same value irrespective of its size or phase.
Option D	To reduce the Basic Entitlement per pupil funding rates – the reductions of the rate for the Primary and Secondary will be determined separately considering each area's growth and gap.

Officers recommended that Option A was the most appropriate approach, as it moved the formula closer to the National Funding Formula, and therefore would lead to a smoother transition to the direct NFF.

Members of the Forum discussed in detail the implications of proceeding with option A.

Resolved (10:0:1 Abstention) – That Option A be adopted to address the shortfall in the Schools Block DSG funding.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM June 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

Wirral Virtual School - LACES and LAC Pupil Premium financial year 2023-2024

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wirral Virtual School holds the councils statutory responsibility for overseeing the education of Wirral's children looked after (CLA) and support young people who are at child protection (CP) or child in need (CIN) status. The service utilises a number of funding streams to support the offer for young people as outlined in the report below.

2. STAFFING STRUCTURE

Current staffing arrangements for LACES are as follows:

EPO	Time	Cohort	Number of children on caseload
Virtual Head Trish Lewis	Full time	VSH	769
Education Progress Officer JR	Full time TTO	Post 16	
Deputy SD	Full time	Secondary	
Education Progress Officer CB	Full time		
Education Progress Officer KS	Full time TTO		
Education Progress Officer KB	0.8 TTO		
Education Progress Officer OT	Full time	Special	85
Education Progress Officer JF	Full time TTO	Primary	116
Education Progress Officer EE	Full time		104
Education Progress Officer JM	Full time	Early Years	141
DatA Analyst	0.2	All	784

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Pupil Premium Plus

Looked-after children attract Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding. This is additional government funding provided to help improve the outcomes for looked-after children and close the attainment gap between them and their peers. Local authorities receive a PP+ grant allocation based on the number of children looked after for at least one day and aged 4 to 15 at 31 August, as recorded in the latest looked-after children data return.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>



Pupil premium_
conditions of grant 20

For the financial year 2023-24 this grant will increase as follows:

£2530 total

£2100 to schools in 2 instalments of £1050

£430 held centrally

For the financial year 2023-24	
Total PP+ per child	£2530
Top slice for Wirral Virtual School	£430
Funding to school	£2100 £1050 in the Autumn term and £1050 in the summer term providing progress has been made to accelerate learning. Plus, children new to care in the Spring Term.

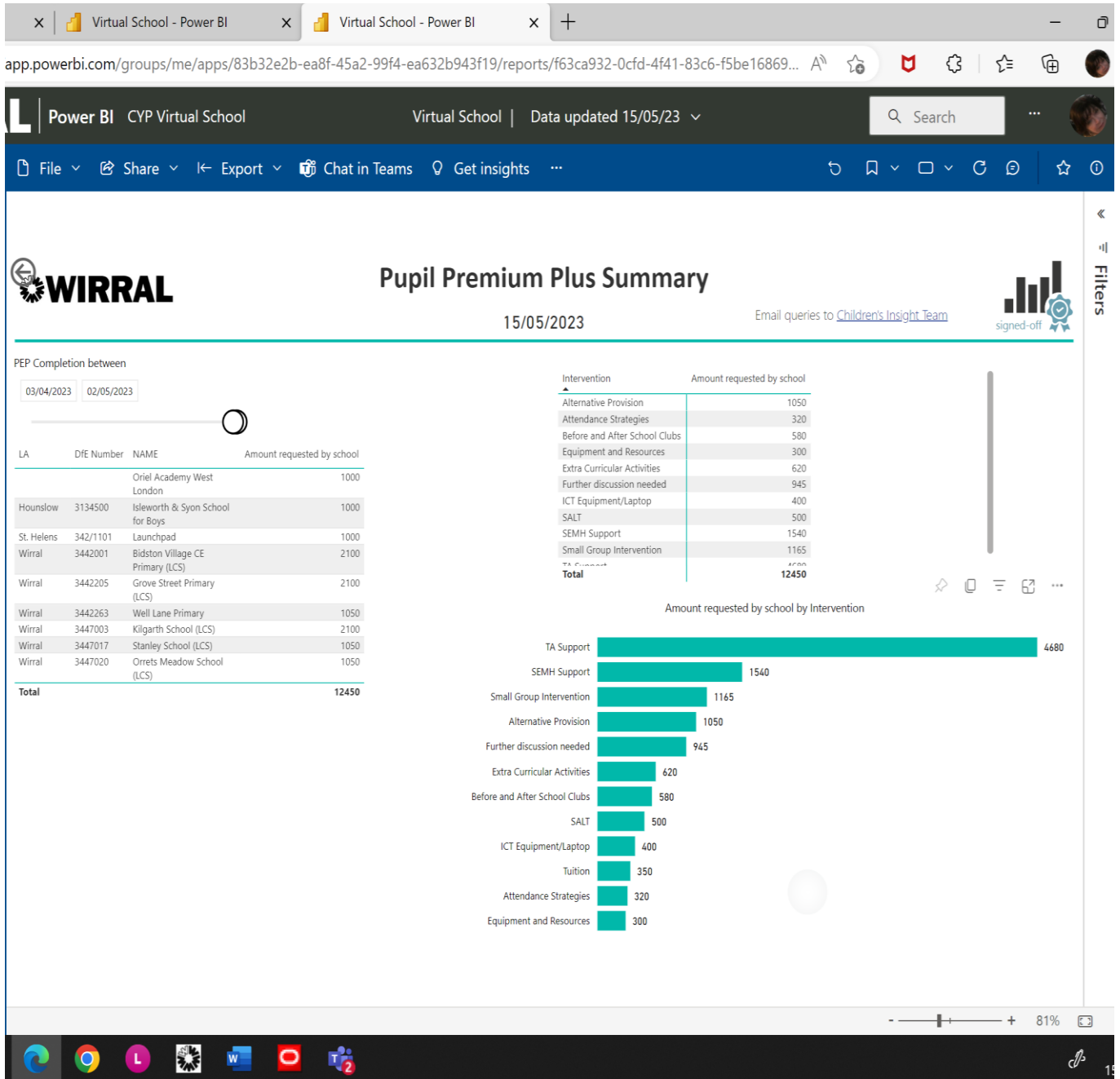
If numbers remain unaltered from last financial year, this gives funding as follows:

Total allocation of PP+ = £2530 x 629 = £1,591,370

Funding allocation to schools = £2100 x 629 = £1,320,900

Top Slice = £430 x 629 = £270,470

Table 1 Funding distributed to Schools this financial year so far which only includes those children new to care in the Spring Term.



Payments made for this Summer Term and next Autumn Term will also come from the current financial year. Generally, what comes in goes out to schools accordingly.

3.2 Table 2 identifies expected spending of Top Slice in the 2023/24 financial year

Money to be paid	
Top Slice = £430 x 629	£270,470
Virtual school staffing	£84,507k
Supply Agency for Tuition and Teacher support	£120,000
Alternative Education Provision	£50,000
Looked after call Attendance collection tool	£7500.00
Training for DTs – past and future	£20,000
Education Psychologists	£20,000
Blueskies Therapy	£20,000
Overspend of £51,537.00	£322,007

We currently have funds in reserve to enable us to meet our commitments this financial year but going forward we will top slice more.

3.3 Recovery Premium Funding for the academic year September 2022 – 31st August 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovery-premium-funding/recovery-premium-funding>



Recovery premium_
conditions of grant fo

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-recovery-premium-funding-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2022-to-2023/coronavirus-covid-19-recovery-premium-2022-to-2023-conditions-of-grant-for-local-authorities>

We have included a section in the PEP for schools to claim this and have encouraged them all to do so over the academic year. If there is any underspend, we can consider how we can utilise this against spending incurred that is appropriate and in accordance with the guidance above which could include attendance, behaviour and emotional support.

Allocations will be calculated on a per pupil basis, based on the following rates:

Mainstream education:

- £145 per eligible pupil in primary schools
- £276 per eligible pupil in secondary schools

Other eligible schools, and special education units in mainstream schools:

- £290 per pupil in primary education
- £552 per pupil in secondary education

3.4 National Tutoring Programme (NTP) Academic year September 2022- 31st August 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-tutoring-programme-guidance-for-schools-2022-to-2023/national-tutoring-programme-guidance-for-schools-2022-to-2023>

In this academic year 2022 to 2023 schools and academy trusts will be provided with a grant to cover **60% of the £18 unit cost**. Schools and academy trusts are required to keep records of all payments related to the school-led tutoring grant.

Using this via 3 routes:

Academic mentors – we cannot do this as a virtual school as we do not have in-house staff members.

Tuition partners – this can be set up via Randstad

School-led tutoring is by far the best method and an example is provided to school as in the email.

Again, we will encourage schools to use this via the PEP and small group tuition and will also consider anything the virtual school can utilise against spending in accordance with the guidance. However, there may be some claw back this year.

Guidance on use of this grant may change again as we approach the end of the academic year and we can evidence spending against this as per last year. However, there may well be some **claw back** this year due to us being unable to use it for the same purposes as in previous years and the shortage of tutors.

3.5 Section 31 Grant Funding

Additional funding of £65,320 for Post 16 PP+ runs until 31st July 2023 (Section 31 grant)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1113274/Post_16_PPP_Sec_31_grant_determination_letter_2022_to_2023.pdf



FW_ Post-16 Pupil
Premium Plus pilot 20



EOI bid
refreshed.docx



Post-16 Sec 31 grant
determination letter 2

Children with a social worker £100k (Sec 31) – anything not used to go in reserve



VSH_Extension_Grant
_Determination_Lette

Previously looked after (Sec 31) – anything not used to go in reserve.



VSH Sec 31 Grant
determination letter 2

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Forum note the report

TRISH LEWIS – VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEADTEACHER

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM June 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

Wirral Home and Continuing Education Service

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.

The Home and Continuing Education Service is an Alternative Provision for Children and Young people who are unable to attend school due to health needs. HCES delivers part of Wirral's statutory responsibility/ duty to provide a suitable education for children who cannot attend school because of their medical needs. The great majority of pupils suffer with poor mental rather than physical health and many have both.

The Service is being managed on an interim basis until the end of academic year 2024. There is a planned co -location with Joseph Paxton Centre from Autumn Term 2023 followed by an amalgamation with JPC from September 2024.

There are no financial changes to be discussed at this time.

3. BACKGROUND

The Home and Continuing Education Service is an Alternative Provision for children whose poor health creates a barrier to education. It does this by:

- Providing a suitable education for the children who have significant medical needs.
 - 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.
 - Developing/contributing to a multiagency graduated response for children with health needs.
-
- Since March 2021 the service offers weekly Enrichment Activities which give much needed social opportunities to the pupils. This was made possible by last years agreement to transfer the Pupil Premium for all eligible pupils whilst they remain with the service. This programme has been really successful with up to 20 pupils per weekly enjoying trips to the cinema, Barnston Dale, the beach and many other local places. We see the most progress made by the group of pupils who attend Enrichment in terms of them re integrating back to school/college and improving their wellbeing.

4. Changes of Venue

The Service has been operating from to Pilgrim Street Arts Centre since July 2022. This has been a wonderful opportunity to develop and embed some much-needed multi agency working with wider teams. A move to co locate on site with Joseph Paxton Centre is scheduled to be complete by Christmas 2023.

5. Current Numbers/Pupils Profile

There are 94 pupils currently receiving teaching with 36 in year 11.

There are 3 primary aged pupils.

31 of the Pupils have an EHCP and 21 are currently under assessment.

Girls- 35

Boys-57

Non-binary-2

6. Web and Hooves for Healing

We use two outside agencies to help with the promotion of wellbeing amongst some of our most unwell children. These are Web Merseyside and Hooves for Healing.

7. Changes to Policy/eligibility criteria

In January 2020 there was a Local Government Ombudsman directive regarding the Eligibility Criteria for HCES. Previously school referrals had to be supported by medical support from a consultant or senior CAMHS practitioner. Following the directive this has been widened to include other medical teams to avoid delays. GP supportive information will be accepted as an interim measure whilst more specific medical evidence becomes available. The admission panel meets bi -monthly.

8. Budget Position

Careful financial management has enabled the service to recruit some additional staff, deliver enrichment activities and respond to the increased demand following the pandemic. More pupils being on site rather than in their homes, has led to a need for more on-site staff and an additional Learning Mentor, we have a full-time SENCO.

The weekly charges of £140 are collected on a termly basis, and the first 12 weeks are not charged for with the exception of year 11, when we charge from day one. Attendance figures are currently emailed to schools on a Friday, but we are about to implement the use of "AP Portal" so schools will be able to log in directly. Schools and parents receive termly reports year leads attend regular school update meetings.

10. Pupil Premium (PP)

Receiving the Pupil Premium from schools has made a big difference to the children. The monies have been used for various activities from rock climbing, bowling, and laser quest to name just a few. The numbers attending Enrichment is growing all the time. The benefits to the children both socially and emotionally are huge. Given the principle that PP funding should follow the child, from April 2023 the PP will be transferred over to Wirral Home and Continuing Education Service for all children. We will only claim the Pupil Premium each term, and only charge for the weeks that a child is with us.

9. SEND Review

The SEND review has called for a reformed and integrated role for alternative provision within Local and National SEND landscape. This will create a springboard for improvement and development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Forum note the report

If the Forum wishes to express any views in relation to this increase, they are invited to inform the Local Authority.

Julie Hudson

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Key

WIRRAL COUNCIL SCHOOLS FORUM REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SERVICES EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Wirral's School Forum with an overview of Early Years for children in Wirral. The overview will include the support that available at each stage, any imminent changes from government legislation and current data available. The report outlines the services available within Early Childhood Services and partners, it is acknowledged there is a much wider system of agencies and partners within Early Years.

2.0 Overview

2.1 Wirral's Early Years Strategy has now been launched to parents, carers and professionals. To support implementation of the Strategy a delivery group has been established with representatives from key stakeholders. The group are working on how children's and parent's voices can be included and how the system can regularly come to together to work on issues for Wirral's youngest children.

2.2 The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on Local Authorities to:

- To secure sufficient childcare for working parents (section 6).
- Secure early years provision free of charge (section 7).
- Limit the requirements local authorities can impose when they make arrangements to deliver early education places for two-, three- and four-year-olds (Section 9A).
- Provide information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents (Section 12).
- Provide information, advice and training to childcare providers (Section 13).

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21>

2.3 The early years workforce is currently facing many challenges. Recruitment of new staff is difficult due to the reduction of students completing early years qualifications. Experienced staff are leaving the sector due to retail now paying more with less responsibility. Children are displaying higher levels of need and it's often unclear if this is a delay in development due to covid pandemic, a SEND concern,

parenting issue or trauma based. The childcare sector feels the early years funding does not cover the cost of places and the rising cost of living is also impacting.

3.0 Antenatal Period

3.1 Expectant parents often receive their first contact with a professional at around 8 weeks gestation, this is their booking in appointment with their midwife. During Covid-19 this was completed over the telephone. As of April 2023, these appointments have moved back to 'in person' in the Children's Centres and other community venues. Not only does this allow for a more detailed discussion with the midwife and parents thus identifying any challenges the family may be facing earlier, it also offers an opportunity for expectant parents to access support services within their communities.

3.2 As an early years partnership, there are many services that expectant parents can access antenatally, they include specialist perinatal mental health support, smoking cessation, 'singing mamas' and 'Mamafit' classes. There is both 'universal' drop-in support in the form of Bumps to Babies groups, which enables parents to build a network of support in the antenatal period as well as being provided with information around healthy pregnancies and infant feeding support (for example).

3.3 Where parents are identified as needing more specialist support, with their consent the parent's challenges can be discussed at Wirral's Pre-birth Liaison meeting. Representation from across Midwifery, 0-19 services, Family Nurse Partnership, Integrated Front Door and Children's Social Care enables a multi-agency discussion identifying challenges and working together to provide the best support for the family, with the unborn at the heart of decision making.

3.4 Within Early Childhood Services (ECS) there is a specialist Pre-birth and infant team who provide intensive support to families who may have previously experienced separation or removal of previous children. The team can complete PAMS (Parent Assessment Manual) assessments which identifies challenges the parents may have and identifies both areas for support and the capacity to make these changes. Evidence based parenting support is offered intensively, as well as working closely with Children's Social Care with the aim to keep the family together and baby to receive the best start in life.

3.5 It is acknowledged that within the antenatal period and the newborn period, this can be a challenging time for relationships. Therefore, we have a skilled workforce who are able to support with parental conflict, and for those situations that escalate to domestic abuse incidents, ECS facilitates course such as Gateway programme and Caring Dads which provide insight into healthy relationships. Often following the

completion of these courses, parents have built up a strong network of support and go on to facilitate their own support groups for others.

4.0 Birth to 1 years

4.1 Through an information sharing agreement with the 0-19 team, ECS receive Birth notifications of children within Wirral. ECS teams visit each family with a 'Welcome to the World' pack, this introduces families to services in their community as well as simple activities that can be done in the home together to support their Child's Development.

4.2 Children's Centre groups focus on the prime areas of learning: Communication and Language, Physical Development and Personal Social and Emotional Development. The development of a strong attachment is key to both the mental health of parents and the emotional and development wellbeing of the baby. Groups such as 'Baby Massage' provide a unique opportunity to help develop this attachment. Language Development is a key challenge for Wirral's children, within the 1st year of life Children's Centres offer Baby Babble sessions, teams are trained by speech and language therapists to provide high quality session which enable parents and carers to interact with their children. Baby Yoga encouraged gross motor skills of both parents and babies, which helps support the development of fine motor skill and a first step in getting ready for school.

4.3 Welcome to the World is an evidence-based parenting course, delivered by the Prebirth and Infant team. It provides practical support for preparing for a baby such as infant feeding support, bathing a baby and preparing for labour and beyond.

4.4 Dolly Parton Imagination Library is a book gifting scheme which has been rolled out across 5 targeted wards of Wirral: Birkenhead and Tranmere, Rock Ferry, Bidston St James, Secombe and Leasowe. The aim of the scheme is to enable families to have access to high quality books, posted each month for free, which can often be expensive for families to purchase and therefore can be a barrier to reading together. Books will continue to be gifted until the child's 5th birthday. Early indications show that parents are reporting they are reading to their children more.

4.5 ECS aims and key performance indicators are part of the wider Early Help and Children's Services agenda, but also closely align with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Wirral and its aim to ensure that Children receive the Best Start in Life. Working with key agencies such as 0-19 service is integral to achieving this. An example of partnership working includes 0-19 service and ECS being jointly accredited as Baby Friendly with UNICEF to Level 3 standard, evidencing that environments and practice across the 2 services promote both infant feeding and responsive parenting.

4.6 Between 9-12 months a family will be invited to their child's first development review, this provides an opportunity to discuss their child's development with a health professional, discuss any concerns they may and access key development message such as the introduction of oral health messaging. If any needs are identified within this review, pathways into ECS as well as other specialist services exist which ensure that families are able to access the support they need.

4.7 From September 2024 15 hours of childcare will be extended to all children from the age of nine months living in a working household. This will potentially increase the number of families accessing work or increasing their hours. The Early years team are currently working on sufficiency to ensure enough provision is available for families.

4.8 All parents can access Tax Free Childcare (TFC), up to £2000 per year for each child to help with childcare costs. In 21/22 2880 families used TFC for 3640 children. Whilst this has been increasing year on year the data shows parents are not utilising this funding. The early years business team will be marketing this offer to encourage more families to make use of this funding.

5.0 1 year to 2 years

5.1 Speech and Language interventions such as Chatter Tots and WELLCOMM assessments are imperative within this age group, we are able to identify delay, implement a package of support, reassess and refer to specialist SALT services if there has been no progress and more specialist support is needed. In addition, each Children's Centre has a Sensory room which is accessible for all families, they can also be accessed by specialist support services such as physiotherapy, vision support and occupational therapy services- who also provide clinics in the Children's Centres.

5.2 Through the development of Wirral's speech and language pathway, the early years partnership co-produced an 18-month community speech and language check, this is quick and easy checklist for parents to utilise and think, know what to expect and when in relation to language development. It also provides information in relation to where families can access support with their child's development, both in person and online.

5.3 As children develop their independence skills this can often bring behaviour that is challenging. Evidence based parenting programmes such as the Nurturing Programme provide support to parents with boundaries and routines, reflecting on how a parent was parented and how this influences your own parenting styles.

5.4 Childminders can access a drop-in session, to support children's social interactions with their peers. Childminders are able to provide peer support to each other and reduce their isolation as well as gain advice and guidance from a quality Improvement officer.

5.5 Children with a delay in development or SEND aged 0-3 can access the portage service. The Portage team, work with parents in the home to break down skills into small achievable steps covering all areas of learning. 38 families are currently working with the portage team. As well as the support offered in the home, the portage team offer sessions of support in partnership with ECS in Children's Centres. Rainbows groups are offered in partnership with Wirral Autism Together, for families who may have identified some social communication challenges for their children. Signing for babies is delivered by Sundowns Charity, for children with Down Syndrome to learn communication skills via Makaton.

6.0 2 years to 3 years

6.1 In partnership with Kings College London the early years team are implementing a randomised control trial to support children's Good Level of Development. The project includes 7 partners coming together to support children attending 20 settings between July 23 till June 24. The results of this trial will inform future delivery plans to support children.

6.2 From April 2024, working parents of two-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of childcare. The early years team are currently waiting for guidance from Department for Education (DfE) on how this will be delivered.

6.3 Currently eligible two-year-olds can receive 15 hours of childcare. DfE send notification of eligible children, children's centre staff visit families within the community to promote the entitlement. The current take-up of the offer is 78%, population 1158 903 taking up, however this is expected to rise for Summer term. Eligibility is dipping due to the raise in minimum wage, tax credits and the income threshold hasn't changed for over 5 years. Wirral's population figure will be 1002 for financial year 23/24.

6.4 From September 23 the staffing ratio for two-year-old children will change from 1:4 to 1:5. The sector currently feel adapting to this figure will impact on staff well-being and are planning to only use the increased ration in emergencies.

6.5 Between 2 and 2.5 years a further developmental check is completed by a health professional, again offering an opportunity to discuss a child's development and identify any challenges that may need support. As with the 9–12-month review, there is a referral pathway to a variety of specialist support services. In particular where a

child is identified as having speech and language needs, the child is referred to ECS for the completion of the WELLCOMM assessment.

6.6 The Early Years Quality Improvement team have a tier approach to supporting early years providers. A universal offer for all providers to access information, advice and guidance when needed. A targeted offer for pre-registration, pre-inspection support or specific identified support. The specialist offer is for providers who receive an inspection judgement less than good, support around safeguarding. Currently 97% of providers are judged to be good or better across early years provision.

7.0 3 years to 4 years

7.1 All children aged 3-and-4years-old are entitled to 15 hours of early years provision. Eligible working parents can receive an additional 15hours of early years provision to support employment. The current take-up for 3-year funding is 91%. This has maintained from last year.

7.2 To support children's learning Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is provided to top up the base rate by 62p per hour. This funding is used to support learning and development of eligible children. Currently 811 receive EYPP funding, unfortunately there is no population data however the system in place ensures 100% of eligible children receive this funding.

7.3 Children with lower level or emerging Special Education Needs are supported with additional funding to providers through the Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF). Early years providers and schools are supporting a review of the funding for September 23 onwards. This academic year the fund has supported 169 children and predominant primary need is communication and interaction.

7.3 Disability Access Fund (DAF) is given to providers for children in receipt of Disability Living Allowance. The £800 for a calendar year is used to ensure the child's access to provision and can be used to support reasonable adjustments or resources to ensure inclusion at the setting. Currently Wirral has 58 children in receipt of DAF.

7.4 Parents or providers can also submit a request for additional support through an Education and Health Care (EHC) Assessment potentially leading to a Plan. Currently Wirral has 99 children under 5 years of age with an EHC plan and 94 on the assessment pathway.

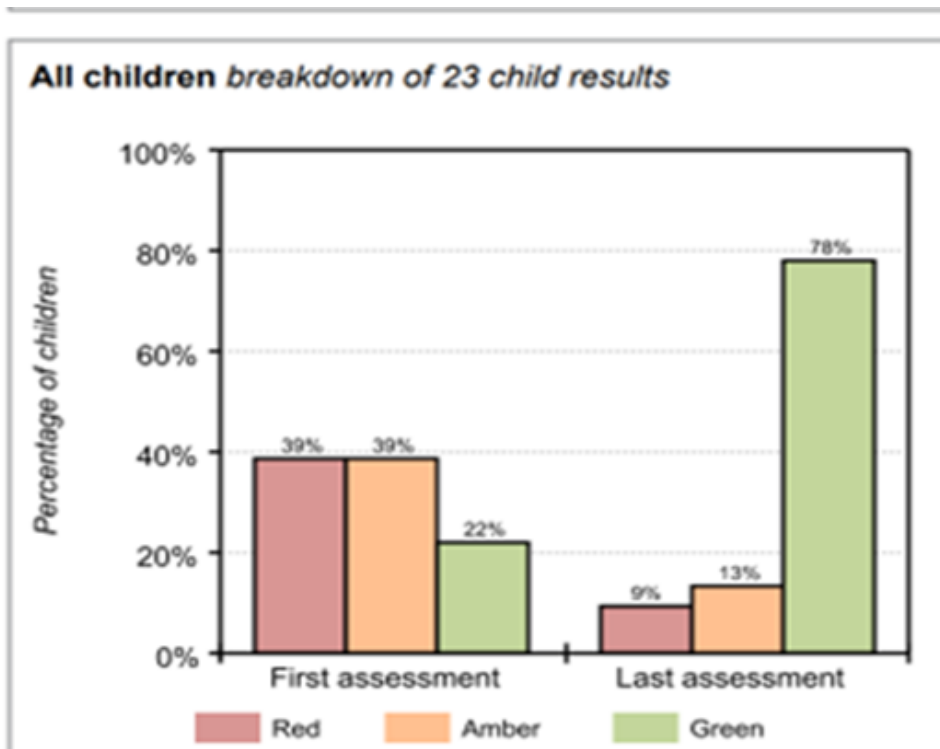
7.5 SEND officer support is available for all Early Years settings and two-year and Foundation 1 classes in schools. The SEND officers support quality first teaching and the graduated approach. As well as providing individual strategies to support children during their time in a setting and then supporting their transition to school.

7.6 The Effective Practice Quality Mark (EPQM) programme offered a set of training workshops to enable providers to achieve a bronze, silver or gold award based on the number of workshops they purchase. Currently 62 settings have signed up to the programme. Wirral's Early Years online platform hosts 20 e-learning courses and has 870 users.

7.7 The quality improvement team read all Wirral early years inspection reports identify trends and devise training to support these trends. For example, curriculum and co-regulation training has been developed to address an identified need. This is supported by training delivered by the SEND team who offer Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) accredited training at level 2 and 3. To date 65 have completed the level 3 training with a further 12 currently completing.

7.8 The early years team have just completed the universal transition programme. Collecting information from early years providers and compiling this into their destination school. This is to start the conversation during the summer term for children transitioning to Foundation 2 classes. 83% of setting submitted information, 11% points increase from last year. Communication and concentration identified as areas of concern across Wirral.

7.9 By using GLD data and in partnership with local schools ECS provide speech and language support in primary schools, by completing a WELLCOMM with identified children, providing a package of support and then rescreening to assess if the intervention has made an impact. Please see table below- from 1st assessment to second assessment.



8.0 4 years to 5 years

8.1 Wirral has seen an increase in the number of children requesting to defer their child starting school. Last year 53 children deferred their place, currently 23 have so far applied to defer their place. Admissions, SEND and Early Years are working together to ensure appropriate funding is in place for children deferring.

8.2 Tracking back of the Good Level of Development (GLD) is completed each year the data is available. The infographic is shared with the early years system to identify the activity that appears to support GLD. For instance, accessing Children's Centre provision, good attendance and taking up early year's entitlements are more likely to mean a child will achieve their GLD.

8.3 The government is providing funding to support the increase in wraparound care within schools. With an expectation that by September 2026 most schools will offer childcare before or after school.

8.4 From September 2025, working parents of children under the age of five will be entitled to 30 hours free childcare per week. Whilst many working parents will have always planned to have their children attend childcare this new offer may mean an increase in demand which could lead to a widening of the attainment gap.

8.5 The early years team also support various projects from My Happy Mind in partnership with public health to support mental health and well-being of children. The Professional Development Programme in partnership with Department for

Education (DfE), Education Development Trust to support teaching of early language, early mathematics and personal, social and emotional development. The expert and mentor programme in partnership with DfE to support settings priorities and needs. The Business support project in partnership with Hemsall's to support the sustainability of settings.

8.6 The workforce development group identified key work streams to support the sector with recruitment and retention issues. Work is being completed to support a commission to implement this plan over the next 12 to 18 months.

8.7 Early years providers are having to cap numbers due to the recruitment issues. Whilst we are still able to place children this is becoming more difficult, and parents are not able to get the days and times they want or need. The Business team are completing a sufficiency check over the next few months to identify areas of pressure to ward level. This will support the implementation of the proposed expansion of early years entitlement funding. The net loss of providers is reducing which is bucking a national trend now. Generally, it is childminders across South and West locality closing and opening.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 School Forum to note the report.

10.0 Appendices

10.1 Early Years Strategy - <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/EY2022>



Final EYFE
Agreement 23-24.pdf

10.2 Early Years Funding Agreement

Simone White – Director of Children, Families and Education

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM 13th June 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

Forum Membership Review

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

1.2 Current Representation

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

Total Membership	Role	2019-2023	2020-2024	2021-2025	2022-2026	2023-2027	Total
5	Primary Headteachers		1	2	2		5
4	Primary Governors	1		2	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						0
9	Academy Representative	2		4	1		7
9	Total Academy Membership						0
1	Non-teacher representative			1			1
1	Teacher representative	1					1
1	Catholic Diocese			1			1
1	Church of England Diocese			1			1
1	16-19 representative						0
3	PVI Early Years Providers			3			3
8	Total Non-Schools Membership						0
30	Total Membership	4	2	14	6	1	27

1.3 There are currently 2 Academy vacancies, with one temporarily being filled by Lisa Ayling. A request has been sent out, but at the time of writing the report, no nominations had been received.

1.4 There is currently still a vacancy for the 16-19 representative.

1.5 There are several terms of office that are coming to an end over the next few months. These members will be contacted, and processes put in place to fill any vacancies that may arise.

1.5 New Members

There has been three new members since the January report, as follows: -

Jon Lawrence, Headteacher of Heswall Primary School as the Primary Representative replacing Emma Johnson.

Paula Wareing, Headteacher of Meadowside School as the Special Governor Representative.

Emma Johnson, Headteacher of Greasby Junior School as the Academy Representative.

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

1.6 Membership Changes

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

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

- 1.7 As the primary schools are converting to academy, this reduces the membership of maintained primary schools to 8 but increases the maintained secondary schools back up to 2. The regulations allow for flexibility during periods of change so it would be reasonable to keep 9 primary members until August 2023 when a term of office for a primary governor comes to an end. Further discussion is required concerning the increase in secondary membership as this may be reduced if any maintained secondary schools convert to academy.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Forum notes the report.

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

Simone White
Director of Children, Families and Education

Appendix 1

Group	Name	Category of Membership	School/Establishment	Term of Office	
Schools	Andy Ramsden	Primary Headteacher (Birkenhead S)	Oxton St Saviours	Sep-20	Aug-24
Schools	Sue Ralph	Primary Headteacher (Birkenhead N)	St Michael & All Angels	Sep-21	Aug-25
Schools	John McDonald	Primary Headteacher	St Albans Primary	Sep-21	Sep-25
Schools	Jon Lawrenson	Primary Headteacher	Heswall Primary	Jan-23	Dec-26
Schools	Chris Mervyn	Primary Headteacher	Brackenwood Infants	May-22	Apr-26
Schools	Charlotte Scott	Primary Governor	St Georges Primary	Aug-21	Jul-25
Schools	Shaun Allen	Primary Governor	Raeburn Avenue	Nov-22	Oct-26
Schools	Julie Merry	Primary Governor	Overchurch Infants/Cathcart	Jan-21	Dec-24
Schools	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	Nov-22	Oct-26
Schools	Paula Waring	Special Governor	Meadowside School	Feb-23	Jan-27
Schools	Kathryn Kennedy	Nursery Representative	Ganneys Meadow	Mar-22	Feb-26
Academy	Moira Loftus	Academy Rep	Townfield Primary	Jun-21	May-25
Academy	Adrian Whiteley	Academy Rep (Chair)	St Anselms	Aug-19	Jul-23
Academy	Helen Johnson	Academy Rep	The Birkenhead Park School	Sep-21	Aug-25
Academy	Emma Johnson	Academy Rep	Greasby Junior	Jan-23	Dec-26
Academy	Mark Bellamy	Academy Rep	Hilbre High School	Sep-21	Aug-25
Academy	Vacancy	Academy Rep			
Academy	Jon Bush	Academy Rep	Oldershaw Academy	Dec-21	Nov-25
Academy	Geraldine Fraser	Academy Rep	Prenton High School for Girls	Oct-19	Sep-23
Academy	Lisa Ayling (Temp)	Academy Rep	Lisa Ayling (Temp)	Nov-19	
Non-Schools	Gill Harris	Non-teacher representative	Wirral Unison	May-21	Apr-25
Non-Schools	Anne Rycroft	Teacher representative	NASUWT	Aug-19	Jul-23
Non-Schools	Joanne Proctor	Catholic Diocese	Christ the King	Sep-21	Aug-25
Non-Schools	Brian McGregor	Church of England Diocese	Woochurch CE Primary	Sep-21	Aug-25
Non-Schools	Vacancy	16-19 Provider			
Non-Schools	Nicky France	PVI Early Years Providers	Barnston Buddies	Jan-21	Dec-23
Non-Schools	Simon Davies	PVI Early Years Providers	Penguins Nurseries	Jan-21	Dec-23
Non-Schools	Jessica Trigg	PVI Early Years Providers	The Mulberry Tree	Oct-21	Sep-25

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 13th June 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

SCHOOLS 2023-24 BUDGET UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Schools Budget for 2023-24 for changes that have been made since it was reported to Schools Forum on 17th January 2023.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The Schools Budget for 2023-24 covers Early Years, Maintained Schools, Academies, colleges, and providers and reflects the following views and formula proposals agreed at the January 2023 meeting:

- A Minimum Funding Guarantee of 0.5% for Wirral mainstream schools
- The Contributions to Combined Budgets reduced by 15% to £535,883.
- The deficit of High Needs funding of £213,286 is transferred to the DSG reserve.
- Headroom in schools funding after applying the National Funding Formula (NFF) to be transferred to a falling rolls/growth fund

The Schools Budget for 2023-24 was agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 15th February 2023 and by Council at its meeting of 27th February 2023.

2.2 DSG Reserve

The 2023-24 budget reflects an in-year deficit of £213,286 to be added to the High Needs deficit. The actual deficit brought forward at 31 March 2023 is £3,072,608 and this means that the DSG deficit reserve will be increased and around £3.3m at the end of 2023-24

3.0 BUDGET CHANGES

- 3.1 The following changes have been made to the budget since that presented at the 17th January 2023 meeting of the Forum:
- Primary and Secondary Budget are adjusted based on the individual schools funding allocation and for the business rates.
 - Academy recoupment – this change has reduced both the Individual Schools Budget and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) by £127,105,003.

- De-delegation – this change has transferred funding of £2,096,444 from Individual School Budgets to the de-delegated block.
- Falling rolls/growth fund – headroom of £17,674 has been identified following the application of the NFF.
- Early Years allocation is split into Individual Schools Budget and Central Schools Cost
- PFI Affordability Gap budget funded by the council has been adjusted to 23-24 budget.

The table attached in Appendix 1 compares the original and revised 2023-24 budgets.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 That the Schools Forum note this report.

Simone White

Director of Children, Families and Education

Appendix 1 - Schools Budget 2023-24

	2023-24 Proposed Budget - January 2023 £	2023-24 Revised Budget - Jun 23 £
Individual Schools Budget		
Primary	124,686,368	97,636,261
Secondary	125,975,398	24,026,697
Special	14,972,721	14,861,376
Wirral Hospitals School	1,728,663	1,723,463
SEN Bases	2,071,000	1,272,499
Sixth Form/Further Education	1,614,000	146,000
Early Years	0	20,858,723
Growth and Falling Rolls Fund	0	17,674
Individual Schools Budget Total	271,048,150	160,542,693
Central School Costs		
Early Years	21,430,382	571,659
Admissions	402,604	402,604
School Redundancy Costs	74,000	74,000
Licenses and subscriptions	286,976	286,976
Schools Forum	10,600	10,600
Contingency	17,718	17,718
Contribution to combined budgets	535,883	535,883
PFI Affordability Gap	1,459,500	2,589,553
Retained duties (ex-ESG)	730,000	730,000
Costs delegated to/de-delegated from schools		
Library Service	0	174,693
Insurances	0	23,677
School Specific contingencies	0	30,204
Special Staff Costs	0	758,135
Behaviour Support	0	139,698
School Improvement	0	470,037
Retained duties (ex-ESG)	0	500,000
High Needs Pupils		
Statements	10,802,569	10,802,569
SEN top-ups	18,185,525	18,185,525
High Needs contingency	687,205	687,205
Independent Special Schools	8,795,780	8,795,780
Home Tuition	364,166	364,166
Support for SEN	2,127,817	2,127,817
Special School Transport	58,200	58,200
Non-school and school delegated Total	65,968,925	48,336,699
Total Costs	337,017,075	208,879,392
Funding		
Dedicated School Grant	(335,344,289)	(206,076,553)
Contribution from DSG Reserve (High Needs)	(213,286)	(213,286)
Funding Total	(335,557,575)	(206,289,839)
Grand Total	1,459,500	2,589,553

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 13th June 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

SCHOOLS BUDGET OUTTURN REPORT 2022-23

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the year end position for the 2022-23 Schools Budget. At this time, the accounts are provisional and subject to audit.
- 1.2 Overall the schools budget has overspent by £3.073m which an improvement of £0.192m since the position reported at the November 22 meeting of the Forum.
- 1.3 The table attached at Appendix 1 compares the detailed Schools Budget with the spend for the year. The reasons for the main variations and comments on specific budget areas are included in section 3.0 below. The Budget and Outturn for each block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is summarised below.

	2022-23 Budget £	2022-23 Spend £	2022-23 Variation Favourable/ (Adverse) £
Schools Block	119,142,322	118,519,353	622,969
Schools Block de-delegated	1,819,643	1,745,441	74,202
Central School Services Block	3,579,849	3,583,384	(3,535)
High Needs	52,379,430	55,520,183	(3,140,753)
Early Years	20,183,630	20,982,142	(798,512)
DSG Grant Income	(195,355,485)	(195,818,395)	462,910
Total before contribution to/-from Reserve	1,749,389	4,532,108	(2,782,719)
Movement on DSG Reserve	(289,889)	(3,072,608)	2,782,719
Total after contribution to/-from Reserve	1,459,500	1,459,500	0
Cumulative reserve balance b/fwd from 2020-21			(1,690,030)
In-year contribution to/-use of reserve			(3,072,608)
Cumulative reserve balance c/fwd to 2023-24			(4,762,638)

- 1.4 At the beginning of 2022-23 the cumulative DSG reserve opened with a deficit balance of £1.690m. The in-year deficit of £3.073m means that the total deficit balance to be carried forward into 2022-23 is £4.763m.

2.0 REVISED 2022-23 BUDGET

- 2.1 There is no change made for 2022-23 budget in this financial year.

3.0 SCHOOLS BLOCK

3.1 Schools – £622,969 Favourable

Individual school balances have been carried forward to 2023-24 in the designated schools reserve. £0.623m favourable variance is due to the academy conversion and the DSG income has been reduced by the corresponding amount.

3.2 Schools de-delegated - School Specific Contingency - £12,661 favorable

The purpose of this budget is to meet exceptional and unforeseen costs, which would be unreasonable to expect the schools and governing bodies to bear. As such these costs can significantly fluctuate year on year and are summarised in the table below.

	2022-23 Budget	2022-23 Spend	2022-23 Variation Favourable/ (Adverse)
<u>Primary and Secondary schools</u>			
Business rates variations	26,100	18,556	7,544
School support	5,145	29	5,116
<u>Special schools</u>			
School support	0	66,500	(66,500)
Special school buy-back	(155,000)	(155,000)	0
Special school balance redistributed	155,000	88,499	66,501
Total	31,245	18,584	12,661

The favorable variance of the Business rate variations of £7.5K underspend which reflects the difference between the actual activity and the expected charges that are levied after the schools budgets have been set.

3.3 Schools de-delegated - Special Staff Costs - £42,894 favourable

There was a £0.043m underspend on Special Staff costs as shown in the table below:

	2022-23 Budget	2022-23 Spend	2022-23 Variation Favourable/ (Adverse)
Maternity, Paternity & Other Staff Costs	628,700	585,807	42,894
TU Facilities	150,078	150,078	0
Insurances & Recharges	6,700	6,700	0
Total	785,478	742,585	42,894

The increased pupil rate in the de-delegation was agreed for 2022-23 budget reflecting the continuing pressure on the maternity/paternity pay. The 22-23 demand was less than anticipated and resulting in a £0.043m underspend.

3.4 Schools de-delegated - Insurances - £19,623 favourable

This budget covers the cost of governors' liability insurance for Voluntary Aided (VA) schools. The claims received from the VA schools in 2022-23 were less than anticipated.

3.5 Schools Block DSG - £462,910 favourable

The favorable variance in grant income compared to budget mainly relates to Early Years and School block funding. The adjustment to the Early Years grant allocation will be calculated using the Spring 23 census, and this is not confirmed until July 2023. An accounting transaction is processed to reflect the expected. The school block grant adjustment is as mentioned in 3.10. The other variances are related to the import/export process and the change to the allocation for an alternative provision out of borough placement in High Needs block as reported at the November 2021 meeting.

• Academy Conversion Recoupment	(£622,969)
• Early Years Adjustment	£1,074,046
• High Needs Recoupment/Adjustment	£11,833

4.0 CENTRAL SCHOOLS SERVICES BLOCK

4.1 Central Schools Services block - £3,535 adverse

Overall, the Central Schools Services Block is overspent by £4k due to the business rates revaluation during the year funded from the contingency budget. This variance balanced with the favourable variances balance from the Admissions team and the Schools Forum budget which has not been utilised.

4.2 Contribution to Combined Budgets – balanced

These contributions support services that would otherwise fall outside of the schools budget. The contributions combine with other council resources for the educational benefit of children.

The £630.5K 2022-23 budget was utilised across the following areas:

	Budget
	£
School Improvement	237,600
Discretionary Rate Relief Top Up	76,752
LCSB contribution	21,600
Governors Forum	1,602
PFI Support Team	44,496
PFI CLC	49,320
Looked after Children Education Services	101,160
School Intervention	97,920
Total	630,450

5.0 EARLY YEARS BLOCK

5.1 The overall position on the Early Years block when compared to budget was an overspend of £798.5k. Due to the funding mechanism for early years, budget does not reflect actual grant income thus it is more appropriate to review early years financial performance against the expected grant income for the year. In addition, the variance for 2022-23 includes £41.9k Disability Access Fund (DAF) underspend. After adjusting for these two factors, the early years underspend for 2022-23 was £275,533 as summarised in the table below. Note that the variance is indicative at this time and is subject to confirmation once the final grant allocation for 2022-23 is published.

	2022-23 Grant £	2022-23 Spend £	2022-23 Variation Favourable/ (Adverse)
2 year-olds	2,976,326	3,012,094	(35,768)
3/4 year-olds (Universal)	10,835,221	10,640,353	194,868
3/4 year-olds (Extended)	5,622,329	5,497,596	124,733
	<u>19,433,876</u>	<u>19,150,044</u>	<u>283,832</u>
Pupil premium	237,440	240,085	(2,645)
Disability Access Fund	116,800	74,878	41,922
MNS Protection	485,299	478,981	6,318
Central Costs	534,261	534,261	0
Inclusive Practice Fund	450,000	503,895	(53,895)
Total	21,257,676	20,982,143	275,533

5.2 Payments to providers - £283,832 favourable

Payments to providers have resulted in a surplus of £283.8K against anticipated DSG funding. This year's Early Years grant allocation is calculated using the number of hours taken up across 2-year-old and 3 & 4-year-old provision based on January 22 (5 months) and January 23 (7 months) census. 2 year-old payment overspend is due to the total hours of January 23 is lower than actual hours of the Summer and Autumn 22 term.

5.3 Disability Access Fund – £41,922 favourable

There was an underspend on the fund of £41.9k which is mainly due to slippage in spending plans. The fund is ring-fenced to be used on services in line with the principles and aims of DAF, such as training and equipment, it is therefore proposed that the underspent funding is used on further, in addition to the total £120.6k surplus brought forward from 2021-22.

5.5 Early Years Central Budget - balanced

The expenditure of the central budget was in line with this year's budget.

5.6 Inclusive Practice Fund - £53,895 adverse

The demand for support for Early Years has continued in 2022-23. The total Inclusive Practice fund expenditure in 22-23 was £728.9k, £225k expenditure was met by the increased budget from the High Needs Block.

6.0 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK

6.1 Special School Places - £166,032 adverse

The 2022-23 budget includes growth of 105 places to be allocated to schools from September 22. An additional 166 places in total (9 places from April 22 and 157 places from September 22) have been allocated to the schools resulting £166K overspend.

6.2 Special Education Needs Additional Resources (excluding Early Years) - £930,550 adverse

Pressure on this budget has continued throughout the year in line with the requests for Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments resulting in an overspend of £930.6k. 2022-23 budget for Specialist personal support was increased reflecting the demand increase, which resulting the adverse variance in 2022-23 was less than the one in 2021-22 (£1.792m).

The majority of the overspend relates to:

- Units of Resource – there has been a growth in plans during the year and overspends of £330.3K for Secondary pupils and £966.8K for Primary pupils. This overspend is partly covered by an underspend of £142.4K for out of borough placements has been generated.

6.3 Special Education Needs Top Ups - £378,598 Adverse

Although the budget was increased in 2022-23 reflecting the increased demand, the overall position on top-ups was an overspend of £378.6K which is summarised as follows:

	Budget £	Forecast £	2022-23 Variation Favourable/ (Adverse)
Top-Ups for Maintained Special Schools	9,625,088	9,900,082	(274,994)
Top-Ups for Resourced Provision	2,217,681	2,009,131	208,550
Alternative Provision	1,318,200	1,285,000	33,200
FE & 6th Form Top-Ups	2,225,000	2,431,435	(206,435)
Additional Nursing Support	160,000	112,518	47,482
Exceptional Needs	1,390,500	1,576,901	(186,401)
Total	16,936,469	17,315,067	(378,598)

The adverse variance is mainly from the overspend in Top-ups for the Special Schools and Further Education which are related to the increased places from September 22. The demand for the exceptional needs continues to increase and the spend in 2022-23 was £324.2K more than the spend in 2021-22.

6.4 High Needs Contingency - £401,726 adverse

The overspend is due to the need to respond to the demand for additional places. Additional provision has been generated in the form of temporary place funding and temporary accommodation.

6.5 Independent Special Schools - £1,637,680 adverse

The demand increased throughout the year and the pupil number increased to 157 at the end of the financial year. The budget for 2022-23 was increased reflecting the anticipated increase in the number of pupils and the costs, however the actual level of demand was exceeded than expected. The demand is expected to continue into 2023-24.

6.6 Home Tuition Service - £37,876 favourable

The small underspend is due to a slippage of sessional staff expenditure that occurred during the year.

6.7 Support for SEN - £131,282 favourable

The underspend is mainly due to staff vacancies in and Communications Differences teams and Vulnerable Children. The Clinical Psychologists team structure is currently under review to accommodate the current demand for the service.

7.0 UPDATE ON SPECIFIC RESERVES

7.1 The 2022-23 budget included a planned deficit of £290K in the High Needs Block that was to be carried forward into the reserve at the end of the financial year. The actual pressure on the High Needs Block in the year was more than anticipated and resulted in £3.341m overspend. This has been partly offset by underspend in the Early Years block thus generating a net deficit for the year of £3.073m. This will be added to the DSG reserve resulting in a total deficit of £4.763m to be carried forward into 2023-24.

7.2 The Council continues to develop its deficit recovery strategy and an update on this is included as a separate item on the agenda.

7.3 Whilst the overall DSG reserve to be carried forward to 2023-24 is in deficit by £4.763m, this includes a cumulative surplus of £162.5K in respect of the Early Years Disability Access Fund.

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 The overspend of £3,072,608 generated in 2022-23 has resulted in an overall DSG reserve deficit of £4,762,638 at 31 March 2023.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That the Forum notes the report and the financial position of the Schools Budget for 2022-23, subject to confirmation of the final grant allocation for 2022-23.

9.2 That, DSG for 2022-23 includes a cumulative surplus of £162,531 of ring-fenced Early Years Disability Access Fund.

Simone White

Director of Children, Families and Education

Appendix 1 - Budget Variations 2022-23

	2022-23 Budget £	2022-23 Spend £	2022-23 Variation Favourable/ (Adverse)
Individual Schools Budget			
Primary	96,718,989	96,096,020	622,969
Secondary	22,291,955	22,291,955	0
Special	13,411,216	13,577,248	(166,032)
Wirral Hospitals School	1,589,422	1,589,422	0
SEN Bases	1,112,565	907,890	204,675
Sixth Form/Further Education	268,000	268,000	0
Early Years	19,199,369	19,943,986	(744,617)
Growth and Falling Rolls Fund	131,378	131,378	0
Individual Schools Budget Total	154,722,894	154,805,898	(83,004)
Central School Costs			
Early Years Costs	534,261	534,261	0
Admissions	388,009	367,790	20,219
School Redundancy Costs	76,000	76,000	0
Licenses and subscriptions	259,856	259,856	(0)
Schools Forum	10,600	0	10,600
Contingency	25,434	59,788	(34,354)
Contribution to combined budgets	630,450	630,450	0
PFI Affordability Gap	1,459,500	1,459,500	0
Retained duties Central (ex-ESG)	730,000	730,000	0
Costs delegated to/de-delegated from schools			
Library Service	183,783	183,783	0
Insurances	24,909	5,286	19,623
School Specific contingencies	31,245	18,584	12,661
Special Staff Costs	785,478	742,585	42,894
Behaviour Support	142,131	143,107	(976)
School Improvement	149,999	149,999	0
Retained duties de-delegated (ex-ESG)	502,098	502,098	0
High Needs Pupils			
Additional resources	9,665,491	10,649,936	(984,445)
SEN top-ups	16,936,469	17,315,067	(378,598)
High Needs contingency	561,104	962,830	(401,726)
Independent Special Schools	6,734,980	8,372,660	(1,637,680)
Home Tuition	364,166	326,290	37,876
Support for SEN	2,127,817	1,996,535	131,282
Special School Transport	58,200	58,200	0
Non-delegated school costs Total	42,381,980	45,544,605	(3,162,625)
Total Costs	197,104,874	200,350,503	(3,245,629)
Funding			
Dedicated School Grant	(195,355,485)	(195,818,395)	462,910
Total before Movement in DSG Reserve	1,749,389	4,532,108	(2,782,719)
Contribution to/from DSG Reserve	(289,889)	(3,072,608)	2,782,719
Grand Total	1,459,500	1,459,500	0

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 13th June 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

Delegated School Balances as at 31st March 2023 and Deficit Budgets Review

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report advises the Forum of the level of school balances as at 31st March 2023, the decrease in balances and actions required for schools with a deficit budget.

1. School Balances

School balances at 31st March 2023 have reduced to £13.5m. This is a reduction of £2.5m after the 2021-22 balance has been adjusted for 3 academy conversions during the year.

School Phase (no of schools)	31.3.2022 Balances £	31.3.2023 Balances £	Difference £	Change
Nursery (3)	336,203	132,411	-203,792	Decrease
Primary (74)	12,265,146	10,251,887	-2,013,258	Decrease
Secondary (4)	1,142,929	2,123,946	981,017	Increase
Special (11)	2,231,930	1,008,493	-1,223,437	Decrease
Total (95)	15,976,208	13,516,737	-2,459,470	Decrease
Academy Conversions (3)	331,192			
Total	16,307,399			

The average school balance for a primary school has reduced to £138,539 compared to £163,589 in 2021-22. The overall secondary school balance is an increasing net surplus position, with only 1 of the 4 schools remaining in a, much reduced, deficit position.

2. Deficit Budgets

There are 16 schools that have ended the financial year with a deficit balance (compared to 12 in 2021-22). The overall value of the deficits has increased by £889k from £1.9m to £2.8m.

- There is 1 Nursery School in deficit, which has increased during the year. The LA are working with them to reduce their costs.
- There are 11 Primary Schools in deficit
 - 2 schools that had deficits in 2021-22 have moved into a credit position.
 - There are 7 schools who have moved into a deficit position this year.

- Of the 4 schools still in deficit since last year, 2 of them have increased their deficits, whilst 2 have reduced their deficits significantly. 1 has a notice of concern and the others will continue to work towards their licenced deficit plans.
- There is now only one secondary school in deficit, but they have reduced their deficit by £328k through the year and are working through an agreed licenced deficit plan.
- There are 3 special schools with deficit budgets. They all have a Notice of Concern and the LA are working with them to reduce costs.

3. **Monitoring School Balances 2022-23 and 2023-24**

Projections from the Period 9 review in February indicated that school balances would reduce significantly over the next 2 years, as illustrated below. On this basis balances are projected to reduce by £11.4m in 2023-24 and a further £14.7m in 2024-25 into an overall deficit position.

Balances as at	Period 9	Actual
31/03/2023	£11.6m	£13.5m
31/03/2024	£2.1m	To be confirmed
31/03/2025	-£12.6m (deficit)	To be confirmed

The actual position for March 2023 is £1.9m better than anticipated at Period 9 monitoring. The projected reduction in balances in future years is dropping more rapidly than identified in previous years. The position for the next 2 years will be clearer after budget setting in July, as current year budget and projections will be based on more up to date information.

Period 9 estimates confirm continuing difficulties for schools over the medium term, with 69 (out of 92) schools indicating a deficit position in 2024-25 if no action is taken to make savings.

Monitoring budgets has been made more difficult with inflation, utility costs and pay awards being difficult to estimate over the last 12 months, with continuing difficulties into this financial year.

4. **Action Taken to Date**

- Letters have been sent to schools who finished the year in deficit to inform them of the process going forward if a balanced budget cannot be set.
- There have already been meetings with some schools and governors to review and consider the financial position going forward, with more planned.
- Where schools are reviewing staffing levels this is, in a number of cases, leading to reduction of fixed term staff or even the consideration of redundancies.
- LMS and HR continue to work with schools to balance budgets and plan any reduction in staff numbers or hours.
- LMS Bursars through the Financial Support SLA are working with Headteachers and governors to provide more detailed projections, particularly where schools have falling rolls.

5. Future Action

- Ensure schools who cannot set a balanced budget agree a licenced deficit plan with the LA before Governors sign off the budget. Schools will be 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.
- Review Schools projections completed as part of the budget setting process. Contact schools who are likely to move into a deficit position in 2024-25 and discuss any remedial actions to prevent this from happening.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Forum notes the report.
2. That schools' balances continue to be monitored.

Simone White
Director of Children, Families and Education

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WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM – 13th June 2023 WORK PLAN

Meeting Date	Tuesday 26th September 2023	Tuesday 21st November 2023	Tuesday 16th January 2023	March 2023 Provisional meeting	Tuesday 11 th June 2024
Virtual / Physical					
	Elect chair & vice chair				
Budget	Budget monitoring 2023-24 School Balances Update Growth & Falling Rolls Fund	Budget Monitoring 23-24 Update	Budget Monitoring 23-24 Q3 Schools Budget 24-25 De-delegation of budgets School Balances update		Provisional outturn 2023-24 Schools Budget 2024-25 School Balances update -
Consultation	2024-25 National Funding Formula for Schools, High Needs and Early Years funding arrangements if new info out Brokerage & Monitoring Grant consultation	National Funding Formula Update for 2024-25			- - - -
DfE Regs & guidelines	Schools Forum Membership If updated • DfE Operational Guide • School Finance Regs • Scheme for Financing Schools	Schools Forum Membership If updated • DfE Operational Guide • School Finance Regs Scheme for Financing Schools	Schools Forum Membership If updated • DfE Operational Guide • School Finance Regs Scheme for Financing Schools		Schools Forum Membership If updated • DfE Operational Guide • School Finance Regs Scheme for Financing Schools
Working Groups	High Needs Early Years	School Formula High Needs	High needs Early Years		High Needs Early Years
Other	School Admissions Wirral Traded Services Update Special School Places	De-delegated services • Contingency, Spcl Staff Costs, Insurance • Library Service • School Improvement • Behaviour Support Edsential Update	Sensory Support Service Update Energy update Wirral Alternative Provision Update		LACES /LAC PP Update - Home Continuing and Education Service (HCES) update Agree Meeting dates

JB - James Backhouse, SMA - Sue Ashley, AV – Anju Varughese, CF – Carol Fenlon, CK Catherine Kerr, JH – Julie Hudson, AB – Asako Brown

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