

**Schools Forum**

Date: 14 March 2024

Time: 8:30 a.m.

Venue: Via MS Teams

Paper

**A**

Public

**MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 11 JANUARY 2024 – HELD VIA MS TEAMS****Present****School Forum Members**

Bill Dowell (Chair)  
John Hitchings – (Vice Chair)  
Mark Cooper- Academy Headteacher  
Shelley Hurdley- Early Years  
Lisa Henshall – Academy representative  
Mark Rogers – Primary Headteacher  
Sian Lines – Diocese of Hereford  
Andrew Smith – Independent Post 16  
Sandra Holloway – Primary Governor  
Carla Whelan – Academy representative  
Sarah Finch – Academy representative  
Sarah Godden – Academy representative  
Alison Ashley- Special School representative  
James Staniforth – Post 16  
James Pearson - TMBSS  
Reuben Thorley – Secondary headteacher  
Marilyn Hunt – Primary Headteacher (From 9.20)  
John Boken – NEU

**Officers**

David Shaw  
Jo Jones  
Stephen Waters  
Neville Ward  
Helen Owen

**Observers**

Nick Bardsley

The chair welcomed all to the meeting. Lisa Henshall from St. Bartholomew's Multi Academy Trust, Alison Ashley from Learning Community Trust, Sarah Finch from the Marches Academy Trust and Sarah Godden from TrustEd were introduced as new members to Schools Forum.

**1. Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Sarah North, Gwilym Butler and Sue Lovecy.  
Marilyn Hunt advised that she would be late.

**2. Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

Stephen Waters advised that he would be bringing the matter of provisional high needs block funding to the next Schools Forum meeting.

**3. School Funding Arrangements 2024-25**

- DSG Schools block for 2024-25 headlines



- Reduction of 407 Primary Pupils, Increase of 37 secondary pupils.
- Overall reduction of 370 pupils.
- 23-24 Total Pupils 36,700.
- 24-25 Total Pupils 36,330.
- Equates to a loss of funding of £1.893m (PUF/SUF).
- Overall Shropshire Schools have been funded an additional £9.3m compared to 23-24.
- Growth fund allocation of £695,575.
- Commitments for growth funding for academies for Summer Term total £264k.
- Bowbrook Primary funding for 8 extra places in Y1 and 30 places in Reception.
- Expected growth commitments for 24-25 total £350k.

#### **Affordability of the NFF**

- In order to balance our DSG schools block and submit a compliant APT we will need to adjust the schools funding. We can do this by either 'capping and scaling' or reducing factor values.
- While schools will see increases in their budget share compared to 2023/24, it is not as anticipated as there will need to be changes to the formula.
- Where the local authority chooses to apply capping and scaling, if there is a change in per pupil funding of more than the cap they set, then gains over this cap are scaled back according to the scaling factor the local authority chooses to apply.
- Where a school receives a minimum per pupil funding level (MPPFL) allocation, they will be exempt from capping and scaling in the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) calculation. Where they do not receive a minimum funding level allocation, capping and scaling will not take the budget lower than the MPPFL. New and growing schools are also exempt from capping and scaling.
- The capping and scaling are modelled on keeping the MFG at 0.5% to ensure all schools receive this minimum increase and then increases above this have been capped at 12.5% to achieve balancing the schools block.
- Capping and scaling will reduce certain schools gains across all factors, for example those schools that have gains with the split site changes for 24-25 or schools that have seen increases in other factors such as FSM.



## **Affordability of the NFF**

- Reducing factor values
  - We have also modelled on reducing the Basic Entitlement factor (also known as AWPU) as this is a factor that all pupils attract in schools. The modelling shows a reduction of 0.3% to achieve balancing the school's block.
  - As before all schools subject to MPPL and MFG funding will not have any reductions. New and growing schools are not exempt from this factor value reduction.

Forum members discussed the creation of new schools within the LA, the creation of any further new schools in the future and the impact on existing schools in the surrounding area.

Mark Rogers enquired whether the set funding for Bowbrook of 30 children per class had been approved with Schools Forum.

Jo Jones responded that this was something agreed in the initial offer when the school was set up

Mark Rogers asked what happens with regards funding when a child moves from a mainstream school to a setting where they need High Needs Funding. Stephen Waters clarified that the funding is based on the census numbers and so would remain the same until a subsequent census.

There was some discussion around the impact larger schools are experiencing compared to that of smaller ones in the AWPU model and whether other models had been looked at.

Jo Jones replied that she hadn't done any other modelling, that there is work done within the APT that can't be seen which takes things into account, like minimum per pupil funding that would result in the differences. James Staniforth expanded on this point, suggesting that due to the complexity of factors at work, the smaller an institution, the larger the impact those factors have. It was agreed by Forum Members that there is a need to make sure any decision made on funding is in the direction of the National Funding Formula.

The Chair reiterated that this is a proposal merely for this year to cover the eventualities that had arisen.

David Shaw suggested doing some work before the next forum meeting and linking in Andy Nicholl's work on place planning to see how demographic changes around age profiles in Shropshire would impact the schools block and the high needs block moving forward.

**Schools  
Forum  
Members**



The Chair agreed that work should be done before the March meeting, with the formation of a reference group, with David Shaw, Jo Jones, Stephen Waters and Heads and Governors of schools to Map out the future direction in terms of Pupil Growth and the financial implications.

**Recommendation – to ensure a fairer distribution of reduction the LA recommend reducing the Basic Entitlementment (AWPU) factor by value 0.3%.**

**VOTE – Maintained and Academy school representatives voted unanimously to accept the recommendation to ensure the growth commitments are covered and the adjusted NFF is affordable.**

#### **Transfer to the High Needs Block**

David Shaw provided context to the paper.

- In addition to reducing the NFF to afford growth funding Schools forum were asked to discuss and consider a potential transfer to the High Needs Block.
- The High Needs block is expected to be in deficit at the end of 2023/24 and the deficit is increasing year on year.
- A transfer from the Schools Block into the High Needs Block would go part way to alleviate these pressures. Modelling has been done on the same basis as before to achieve varying amounts of potential transfer values.

There was agreement between Schools Forum members that as historically funding had been transferred over to the High Needs Block when there was a surplus, due to cuts in schools block this year, they would not agree to it in this case.

James Staniforth asked for clarification with regards whether the deficit will need to be repaid at some point in the future and if so by whom.

David Shaw replied that whilst the deficit sat technically outside of the council's balance sheet, it will need to be paid eventually.

Mark Rogers enquired whether due to High needs funding being related to legacy payments over time, by transferring money to the High needs Budget it was covering up the need for higher funding.

David Shaw answered that this is the case, there are a range of factors at play in how high needs funding is calculated and work regarding this will be shared with colleagues to help with the choices regarding this funding.



Stephen Matthews asked about the expense of independent special school placements being the main cause of the deficit and whether this transfer would enable us to build provisions to address this.

David Shaw agreed that the independent special school expenses are a driver in the costs that are being incurred and that there is a separate budget that can be drawn down on for the development of the building and the physical infrastructure for future provision.

**VOTE- Maintained and Academy School representatives voted against a further reduction to the NFF to enable a transfer to the High Needs Block.**

#### **Early Years Funding 2024-25**

4. Neville Ward presented his paper that included a vote on rates of funding.

- Confirmation of indicative budgets for 24/25
- Budgets cover the existing EY entitlements and the new entitlements which come into place this year.
- Different reporting requirements for new entitlements which will impact on indicative budgets.
- Need to ensure increasing central costs whilst maximising hourly rate paid to providers.

There was some discussion amongst Forum members about the increase in school-based provision and the place for private and voluntary early years provision across the whole of the county.

#### **Hourly Rates of Funding for 24/25**

We are then proposing the following hourly rates of funding to providers to support the provision of the free entitlements:

<b>Entitlement</b>	<b>23/24 Rates</b>	<b>Increase</b>	<b>24/25 Rates</b>
<b>3&amp;4 YO – both universal and extended</b>	<b>£4.75</b>	<b>+20p</b>	<b>£4.95</b>
<b>2YO – both disadvantaged and expanded</b>	<b>£6.90</b>	<b>No Change</b>	<b>£6.90</b>
<b>9-Month-old from Sept 24</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>£9.05</b>



**VOTE – Forum voted unanimously to accept the proposed funding rates for Shropshire for 2024/25**

**Communications**

- 5.
- The chair confirmed that the work of f40 is continuing.
  - The chair reiterated the need to keep the pressure on for fair funding for early years.

**Future Meeting Dates:**

6. Thursday 25 January 2024 (since cancelled)  
Thursday 14 March 2024  
Thursday 13 June 2024

The meeting closed at 10:15 am.

