

SOUTHWARK CHILDREN'S SERVICES - SCHOOLS FORUM

THURSDAY 8th DECEMBER 2022

14.00 to 15.30

Via Teams

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Attendance and Apologies: - See Annex A

The Clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate

2. Declaration of Interests

Members were asked to declare any pecuniary or other interests they might have that were greater than the interests of other members of the Schools Forum in any matter on the agenda for discussion. None were declared.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of 29th September 2022

3.1 These were agreed for accuracy.

3.2 Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising from the meeting of the 29th September 2022

4. Dedicated Schools Grant 2022-23 Budget Monitoring and Financial Update

4.1 The report had previously been circulated with the agenda and gave details of the financial position as at 29th September 2022, there are significant pressures on the high needs block. The projection showed a net in year deficit of £3m making a total projected outturn deficit of £24m, driving the deficit are the increased number of EHCPs.

4.2 Grant for Ukrainian children under the Homes for Visas Schemes. It was proposed to pass the grant to schools for the children concerned. The grant covers the provision for individual schools, support children with SEN, and overarching services that the Local Authority provide. It was proposed that 80% of the grant would be distributed based on individual pupils, the Local Authority will retain 20% of the grant to support children with SEN as they arrive. Other Local Authorities are doing something similar to the proposal for an 80 -20% split. The proposal for the methodology for the distribution of the funding was agreed.

4.3 Clarification of the Terms of Reference for the Balance Control Mechanism Panel, the panel was set up last year to consider any decisions regarding the capping at schools. The panel will next week to consider the schools reviewed in September and the appeals put forward. The Terms of Reference were circulated for review and comment. The Terms of Reference for the Balance Control Mechanism Panel were agreed.

5. Safety Valve Application and High Needs Budget for 2023/24

5.1 This report covers the progress of the application made in October 2022. A decision is expected before the end of this financial year. There is additional school funding which includes High Needs funding as part of the Autumn Statement which is a contribution towards the increased inflationary pressures experienced by schools. The DFE has requested the Local Authority to remodel the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Management Plan once the additional funding has been received.

- 5.2 As part of the DSG Management Plan there has been a reduction in the centrally retained expenditure that is charged to the High Needs block. Since 2018/19 the Local Authority have significantly reduced the centrally retained funded for the High Needs Block, the funding has been reduced from £5.9 million to £3 million, there has been a significant review and the proposal is to further reduce the centrally held funding to £1.7 million. The expenditure incurred by the Local Authority will not decrease, it will move to the general fund.
- 5.3 An independent consultant has been engaged to undertake further work on benchmarking of the top-up rates. This work is focusing on statistical neighbours and covers local government funded provision including mainstream maintained and academy provision, reconsideration of any further work on LA MS SEND resource base (RB) top ups, special school top ups and Further Education Post 16 top up rates. A programme of meetings and visits is ongoing with special and alternative provisions.
- 5.4 The DSG Management Plan has a freeze top up rate for the duration of the plan until 2026-27, however, the decision to freeze top up rates is an annual decision.

6. Dedicated Schools Grant 2022 -23 Central Retained Budget

- 6.1 School budgets must be submitted to the DfE on the 20th January 2023, the final details of the settlement are not yet available. Final decisions on the budget will be made at the meeting on 12th January 2023.
- 6.2 The Schools Forum was asked for a view on the top-slices to the schools block in Table A of the circulated paper. Top slices are taken from the Growth Fund, Falling Rolls Fund, The de-delegated services individually detailed in Table 3 in section 4.5 and the Education Support Services where the Local Authority undertake statutory services for maintained schools. The purpose of the Falling Roles Fund is to support those schools with a falling roll which is expected to rise, to protect those schools from staff redundancies when the roles are falling, then to reappoint staff when they rise in the future. Some schools will see rising roles when schools come together and amalgamate. The fund has been maintained at £300,000. The Growth Fund supports those schools who go over 30 pupils in one class.
- 6.3 The de delegated Services is funding taken from schools budget to support the Central Services which include the Learning and Achievement Team, Family Early Help, Maternity Fund and Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund. The overall principle adopted is that those services should be treated in a similar way to schools, the settlement is cash frozen. Pupil numbers are falling and most calculations are based on those reducing pupil numbers.
- 6.4 There has been a previous debate about the Learning and Achievement de delegation. The Schools Monitoring and Brokerage Grant was withdrawn from Central Government over two years. The proposal included in the paper was to increase the Learning and Achievement de delegation to offset the drop in the grant.

- 6.5 Based on requests from previous schools forums to look more closely at the de-delegation and use of funds for Family early Help, the proposal is to reduce the Family Early Help de delegation by a similar amount. Members discussed the Family Early Help support and that services have been taken up by academies who do not de-delegate funds. Moving forwards schools forum members agreed that there should be a charge to academies for those services. This would help offset any reduction in de-delegation. Some academies have arranged meetings to discuss options and costs for the Early Help Services. Academies have said that budgets have already been set and the costs for the service could not now be factored into budgets. Reminder letters will be circulated to academies in January 2023 with details and costs of the Early Help Service. the principle adopted currently is that the overall costs for de delegated services has not been moved to schools, potentially this could be reversed and the Learning and Achievement de delegation could be increased without making reductions elsewhere. The main services are the Schools in Financial Difficulty Panel, there may be more schools putting forward restructures and redundancy costs will remain high. The Maternity Fund, which acts like an insurance policy for schools with maternity cases, the contribution to schools would be reduced. The decision from academies will be made by the end of the autumn term. Concerns were raised regarding the timing of the letter to academies and how stretched primary school budgets were. The concerns were noted.
- 6.6 Education Support Services and the statutory services for maintained schools would reduce in line with pupil numbers and not increase with inflation.

7. Dedicated Schools Grant – 2023 -24 Schools Funding Formula

- 7.1 The report outlines anticipated issues relating to the 2023/24 schools funding formula and seeks Forum's views on areas to investigate further. The provisional allocations provided to the Local Authority in July 2022 indicates there will be an increase in the funding of 0.3% next year. There has been extra funding allocated to schools, it is believed that the additional funding will be a separate grant. It has been assumed that the extra increase will be around 3%. It is thought that there will be a large increase in the business rates that schools pay estimated at 11%. It was proposed that the minimum funding guarantee should be set at 0%, even the minimum limit of 0% may be difficult to achieve. The ESFA have advised the Local Authority to set the funding rates at the minimum level allowable under the National Funding Formula. The Local Authority could apply for a deregulation from the funding agreement, in order to achieve that the Secretary of State would need to give an approval. This would not be given, the Secretary of State would only approve a reduction in funding rates.

8. Dedicated Schools Grant – Early Years Budget

- 8.1 The report sets out the provisional thinking on the 2023/24 Early Years Block, Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation. The Forum members approved the consultation of Early Years providers on the Teachers Pay and Pension Grant seeking views across the sector on introducing a factor based on quality within our funding formula which could ease some of the losses and gains that potentially would occur with the merging of this grant into the main funding formula. The grant was a separate one to cover the costs of a pay award and the increase in pension contributions. The funding was put in the school budget but maintained as an individual grant to each nursery school and class based on the amount of expenditure they had. Next year the funding will be placed in the overall funding pots and distributed across Early Years providers. The DFE are suggesting that Local Authorities make use of the regulations with what is termed as a quality factor, that quality factor can be loosely defined as having a qualified teacher in a nursery class, an amount can be allocated for a provider with a qualified teacher.
- 8.2 Increase the hourly rate for the 2, 3 and 4 year olds was approved.

8.3 Nursery schools agree the distribution of the supplementary funding (estimated at £1.2m) between themselves was approved.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

10. Dates of Meetings for 2022/23 - Virtual

12 January 2023

16 March 2023

15 June 2023

Annex A**SCHOOLS FORUM ATTENDANCE SHEET****8th December 2022****VOTING MEMBERS**

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PRESENT
Janice Babb	Primary School Headteacher (RC)	Yes
Susannah Bellingham	Primary School Headteacher (Com)	Apologies
Pia Longman	Primary School Headteacher CofE	Yes
Vacant	Primary School Headteacher (Com)	
Vacant	Primary School Governor (Com)	
Vacant	Primary School Governor (VA)	
Rebecca Sherwood	Nursery School Headteacher	Yes
Heidy Tully	Special School Headteacher	Yes
Nicola Howard	Early Years – Private/Voluntary and Independent Settings	Yes
Steve Morrison	Academy	Yes
Nick Tildesley	Academy (Primary)	
Declan Jones	Academy	Yes
James Wilson	Academy	
Steph Lea	Special School Academy	Yes
Yomi Adewoye	Pupil Referral Units	
Vacant	Secondary School Headteacher	Yes
Vacant	FE SEN	Awaiting nomination from LA
Jenny Brennan		Yes
Catherine May	Diocesan Boards	Yes
Betty Joseph	Trade Unions	Yes

Senior Officers in Attendance

Nina Dohel	Yes
Yvonne Ely	Yes
Dave Richards	Yes
Kate Bingham	Yes
Nikki Tilson	Yes
Richard Hunter	Yes
Neil Gordon-Orr	Yes
Hayden Judd	Yes
Andrea Dennis	Yes
Eniko Nolan	Yes
Sarah Cooper	Clerk