

Walsall Council Schools Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 7 March 2023 at 4.00 pm

Digital Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Schools Forum Members Present:

Mr M. Vlahakis	Primary Head Teacher, Cadmus Family of schools
Mrs C. Draper	Primary Head Teacher, Short Heath Federation
Mrs A. Arnold	Primary Head Teacher, Delves Infant School
Mrs J. Garratt	Primary Head Teacher, Walsall Wood
Mr S. Davies	Primary Head Teacher, Christ Church CE (C) JMI School
Mr A. Seager	Secondary Academy Head Teacher, Bloxwich Academy
Mr W. Downie	Secondary Academy Head Teacher, Streetly Academy
Mrs L. Foster	Primary Governor, Short Heath Federation
Mrs C. Fraser	Special School Head Teacher, Castle Business and Enterprise College
Mrs E. Phillips	Academy Special School, Phoenix Academy
Mr C. Bury	Principal, The Ladder School, Alternative Provision
Ms M. Turley	Nursery Head Teacher, Ogley Hay Nursery
Mr T. Hopkins	PVI Representative

Officers Present:

S. Rowe – Executive Director – Children's Services

S. Kelly – Director of Access and Inclusion

Mr R. Walley – Technical Accounting, Treasury Management & Education Finance Manager

Mr L. Haynes – Head of Finance – Technical & Transactional

Mr N. Picken – Principal Democratic Services Officer

Mr R Thomas – Head of Inclusion

Ms L. Meredith – Finance Business Partner

Observers Present: S. Guy (National Education Union)

		Action
1. 07.03.23	Welcome. The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explaining and rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information System (CMIS) webpage. A roll call was taken of those members present who confirmed they could both see and hear the proceedings.	

	<p>Mr Downie advised that Ms A. Stoddart was no longer a member of the Forum and that the following appointments had been made by the relevant proprietor bodies:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr James Ludlow – Principal Joseph Leckie Academy • Mr David Smith – Blue Coat Academy <p>Mrs Foster advised that Ms J. Bar was no longer a Governor and so not a member of Schools Forum.</p>	
2. 07.03.23	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Moody and Mr Fox.</p>	Noted
3. 07.03.23	<p>Minutes</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 17th January, 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record.</p>	
4. 07.03.23	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes of 17th January, 2023</p> <p>Attendance/membership – a discussion took place regarding reserve members and application of Constitution rules in relation to non-attendance. A review of attendance would be provided to the next meeting.</p> <p>Members agreed that each of the representative bodies be requested to re affirm existing appointments and also appoint a nominated representative as a reserve member. Guidance in respect of reserve members was requested.</p> <p>Mr Downie informed the Meeting that the reserve member for Academy Secondary Heads was:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah Murcott – Executive Headteacher, West Walsall E – ACT Academy/Willenhall E- ACT Academy 	NP to draft guidance for next meeting.
5. 07.03.23	<p>Late Item/s (urgent) to be introduced by the Chair</p> <p>None</p>	
6. 07.03.23	<p>Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)</p> <p>There were no items for consideration in the private session.</p>	

<p>7. 07.03.23</p>	<p>Proposed Early Years Funding Formula for two, three & four years olds - 2023/24</p> <p>A report was submitted: -</p> <p>(See annexed)</p> <p>The Technical Accounting, Treasury Management & Education Finance Manager provided an overview of the content of the report. It was reported that nursery school provision had raised some concern in respect of the proposed allocation of a maintained nursery school supplement. However, to avoid any impact on the early years funding formula, Ms Turley had a proposal to put forward.</p> <p>Ms Turley sought clarity as to whether this particular element needed to be voted, as it is a local authority decision, or whether it could be delayed to allow further work with nursery heads to be undertaken in relation to the maintained nursery supplement as it affects 8 schools. As such, a meeting to further discuss this matter was achievable to ensure that allocations were fair to all. Once at Cabinet, it was requested that the decision in respect of the maintained nursery supplement be delegated to the Executive Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills to agree the final allocation methodology. It was confirmed that all maintained nursery provision heads were in agreement with this proposal.</p> <p>The Head of Finance – Technical & Transactional confirmed that the early years funding formula i.e. the universal rate for 3 & 4 year olds and the supplements that are payable to all providers and the universal rate for 2 year olds are required to have Schools Forums support by the end of March, followed by Cabinet approval. However the specific element in terms of maintained nursery schools supplement is funding specifically for maintained nursery schools. The 8 nursery heads were seeking further time to review this particular element and that Cabinet delegate this decision to the Executive Director of Children's Services and Portfolio Holder.</p> <p>The Chair sought the view of Schools Forum and received support for the approach as outlined.</p> <p>Resolved by roll call - unanimously.</p> <p>That Schools Forum:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the work undertaken by officers and recommends the Early Years Funding Formula that is proposed for 2023/24 to Cabinet; and 	
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	<p>2. Cabinet be advised that whilst Schools Forum did support the early years funding formula they recommended further work is undertaken with nursery heads directly in relation to the Maintained Nursery Schools Supplement, and that Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills to agree the final allocation methodology within the totality of Maintained Nursery Schools Supplementary funding that will be available. And;</p> <p>3. Note that this recommendation will then be reported to Cabinet on 22nd March 2023 to seek their approval.</p>	
<p>8. 07.03.23</p>	<p>Proposed High Needs Funding Formula 2023/24</p> <p>A report was submitted: -</p> <p>(See annexed)</p> <p>The Technical Accounting, Treasury Management & Education Finance Manager provided an overview of the content of the report.</p> <p>In response to a question regarding surpluses, the Head of Finance – Technical & Transactional confirmed that, in the past, Schools Forum had been made aware of surpluses to put forward proposals collectively from the local authority and schools. He explained that in the first few years of the DSG management plan, a surplus was likely but these surpluses would be required in later years of the plan to balance the 5 year period. Officers would monitor delivery of the plan. If actions have been delivered and a surplus remains at the end of the 5 year plan a report would be submitted to Schools Forum as to how best to use the underspend across education provision.</p> <p>The chair referred to a working group on the main budget with officers and SEN budget and suggested it may be an idea for High Needs Funding. The Director of Access and Inclusion agreed noting the conversations were underway and confirming that a working group would be created. The SEND and AP National Improvement Plan had been released which states that there will be a national funding formula introduced. It is recommended therefore that look at the national funding formula improvement plan up until 2025 alongside our own. This would avoid making changes that could be changed again in future and ensure that proposed changes were aligned to national strategy. It was further suggested that any report from</p>	

	<p>the working group be considered by both Schools Forum and the Learning Alliance to keep all informed.</p> <p>In relation to rates for special schools and mainstream schools, the Head of Finance – Technical & Transactional clarified that these were based on work undertaken in 2020/2021 which were based on costs for providing that support to the different levels in a special school or mainstream setting. As such, information wasn't available to amend that. However, this could be considered as part of the 2024/25 year in the context of the wider DSG management plan.</p> <p>A question was raised regarding the small schools top up rate which is pro rata to number of weeks attending. The Head of Finance – Technical & Transactional confirmed that it only applied to small special schools and was different to formulas such as ARP.</p> <p>A further discussion ensued on the difference between mainstream and special needs top up for SCMH and whether anything could be changed, should the need arise before setting the budget for 2024/25. The Head of Finance – Technical & Transactional advised that there was a formula, based on a number of factors, used to determine top up rates and advised that this could be reviewed by the working group. In addition, should the need arise to review rates for the 2023/24, a report could be submitted to Schools Forum, for further decision by Cabinet. However, this would need to be fed into the DSG management plan position and would leave to a smaller than planned underspend.</p> <p>Resolved (by roll call) – unanimously.</p> <p>That Schools Forum:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the proposed Walsall High Needs Funding Formula for 2023/24 and provides any comments and feedback in relation to that. 2. Recommend the proposed Walsall High Needs Funding Formula to Cabinet, to seek approval and agreement to implement the formula from 1 April 2023. 3. Notes the work that has been undertaken to develop the Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan, the position that this identifies and direction of travel and actions that will be required, and that this plan will be subject to ongoing (at least annual) review and update and in-year reporting. 	
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	4. That a working group be established to consider/monitor High Needs Funding and the SEND and AP National Improvement Plan providing feedback to Schools Forum and the Learning Alliance.	
8. 07.03.23	Walsall Learning Alliance (termly update) The Primary Head, Short Heath Federation provided an update on the work of the Walsall Learning Alliance noting that the meeting was now chaired by an independent person.	
8. 07.03.23	Correspondence None.	
9. 07.03.23	Forward Plan Resolved:- That the forward plan be amended as follows:- October – Maintained Schools Delegation to read Maintained Schools De Delegation December – Mainstream Schools Local Funding Formula 2023/24 be removed.	
10. 07.03.23	Late Items None.	
11.	Date and Time of next meeting It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 20 th June, 2023 at 4.00pm	

The meeting terminated at 4.47 pm.

Signed

Date: