



SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 21 September 2021 at 4.00 pm

Meeting to be held via: **Microsoft Teams**

Public Access to meeting via: <https://youtu.be/OuzZDz-Vdz0>

MEMBERSHIP:	Mr M. Vlahakis	Primary Head Teacher, Cadmus Family of schools
	Mrs C. Draper	Primary Head Teacher, Short Heath Federation
	Mrs M. Sheehy	Primary Head Teacher, Millfield Primary School
	Mrs J. Garratt	Primary Head Teacher, Walsall Wood
	Mr S. Davies	Primary Head Teacher, Christ Church CE (C) JMI School
	Mrs N. Boys	Primary Academy Head Teacher, Lodge Farm
	Mr M. Moody	Primary Academy Representative, Goldsmiths and Rivers Academies
	Mrs S. Bowen	Secondary Maintained Head Teacher, St. Thomas More Catholic School
	Dr A. Bruton	Secondary Academy Head Teacher, Queen Mary's High School
	Mr A. Seager	Secondary Academy Head Teacher, Bloxwich Academy
	Mrs H. Keenan	Secondary Academy Head Teacher, Brownhills Academy
	Mr W. Downie	Secondary Academy Head Teacher, Streetly Academy
	Mrs L. Foster	Primary Governor, Short Heath Federation
	Mr M. Fox	Primary Governor, Kings Hill Primary
	Mr I. Baker	Secondary Academy Governor, Grace Academy
	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 Ladders School, Alternative Provision
	Ms J. Barr	Special School Governor
	Ms M. Turley	Nursery Head Teacher, Ogley Hay Nursery
	Mr T. Hopkins	PVI Representative
	Mr S. Pritchard-Jones	Pupil Referral Unit representative
	Vacancy	16-19 School Forum Representative
OBSERVERS:	Councillor C. Towe	Cabinet Portfolio holder for Education and Skills
	Mr A. Orlik	Observer, C of E Diocese
	Ms S. Guy	Observer, National Education Union

Quorum – 8 members

A G E N D A

1.	Election of Chair	
2.	Election of Vice-Chair	
3.	Welcome and explanation of rules of procedure for virtual meeting	
4.	Apologies	
5.	Minutes – 22 June 2021 – enclosed	
6.	Matters arising from the Minutes To consider any matters arising from the minutes which do not occur elsewhere on the agenda.	
7.	Late items (urgent) to be introduced by the Chair.	
8.	Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.	
9.	SEND Improvement Programme Update – enclosed	
10.	EHCP Timeliness and Performance – enclosed	
11.	School Music Service: Application for Continuation of Music Funding £38,000 in 2022/23 – enclosed	
12.	Procurement – schools to raise or provide clarity on specific procurement issues, so that these can be reviewed and a response provided to a future meeting – verbal report	
13.	De-delegation letter 2021 – enclosed	
14.	Forward Plan – enclosed	
15.	Late items (if any)	
16.	Correspondence – to receive any other items of correspondence that might be of interest or have an effect on the Forum.	

Schools Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 22 June 2021 at 4.00 pm

Digital Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulation 2020; and conducted according to the Council's Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution.

Schools Forum Members Present:

Mr M. Vlahakis (Chair)	–	Primary Head Teacher
Dr A. Bruton (Vice Chair)	–	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Ms J. Barr	–	Special School Governor
Mrs N. Boys	–	Primary Head Teacher
Mr C. Bury	–	Alternative Provision School Principal
Mr S. Davies	–	Primary Head Teacher
Mr B. Downie	–	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Mrs C. Fraser	–	Special School Head Teacher
Mrs C. Draper	–	Primary Head Teacher
Mrs L. Foster	–	Primary Governor
Mr M. Fox	–	Primary Governor
Mrs J. Garrett	–	Primary Head Teacher
Mrs H. Keenan	–	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Mr M. Moody	–	Primary Academy Representative
Mr A. Seager	–	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Mrs M. Sheehy	–	Primary Head Teacher
Mrs M. Turley	–	Nursery Head Teacher
Councillor C. Towe	–	Portfolio Holder, Education and Skills (Observer)
Ms S. Guy	–	National Education Union (Observer)
Mr A. Orlik	–	C of E Diocese (Observer)

Officers Present:

Mr L. Haynes – Deputy Head of Finance – Corporate
Mrs S. Kelly – Director of Access & Inclusion
Ms J. Jones – Group Manager, Children's Services
Mr N. Perks – Quality Assurance Team Manager
Ms T. Pyatt – Head of Inclusion
Mr R. Walley – Tech Acc, Treasury Management & Education Finance Manager
Mr A. Webley – SEND Team Manager
Mr M. Williams – ICT Programme & Project Officer
Dr P. Fantom – Democratic Services Officer

		Action
1. 22.06.21	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explaining the 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.</p> <p>Members confirmed they could both see and hear the proceedings.</p> <p>The Chair reported that Mrs B. Mycock, formerly of the Democratic Services team, had now left the Local Authority to take up a position in the NHS. The Chair noted that Mrs Mycock had been the Clerk to the Schools Forum for a number of years, expressed his thanks for her service and best wishes in her new venture.</p>	
2. 22.03.21	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies had been received on behalf of Mr I. Baker and Mrs S. Rowe.</p>	
3. 22.06.21	<p>Minutes – 9 March 2021</p> <p>The Clerk put the recommendation to the vote by way of a roll call of Forum members and it was:</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2021, a copy having been previously circulated to each Member of Schools Forum, be approved and signed as a true record.</p>	To note
4. 22.06.21	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes of 9 March 2021</p> <p>There were no matters arising from the minutes.</p>	
5. 22.06.21	<p>Late Item/s (urgent) to be introduced by the Chair</p> <p>There were no late items.</p>	
6. 22.06.21	<p>Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)</p> <p>The Forum noted that there were no items for consideration in the private session.</p>	

<p>7. 22.06.21</p>	<p>Appointment of PVI Representative</p> <p>The Forum received a report concerning the appointment of an Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent PVI provider, in accordance with the <i>Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012</i> (see annexed).</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That Schools Forum note the appointment of Tim Hopkins, Strategic Development Manager of Humpty Dumpty Day Nurseries and Pre-Schools Ltd.</p>	<p>To note</p>
<p>8. 22.06.21</p>	<p>SEND Improvement Programme Update</p> <p>The Forum received a report on the progress continuing to be made against the actions outlined in the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) document and the identified risks being managed (see annexed).</p> <p>It was noted that a number of outstanding red actions were to be completed during the next month, thereby reducing the outstanding actions significantly, with 149 (81 per cent) of the actions from the WSoA being completed, completed/ embedded or closed. In preparation for re-inspection, work was being undertaken to ensure that the actions and improvements made were evidenced.</p> <p>The Chair requested that in order to better see the progress being made, future reports should provide a link to the actual actions being referred to in the WSoA. Members requested that an updated version of the WSoA document should be circulated and Mr Webley agreed to circulate this outside of the meeting.</p> <p>Further to a question regarding the SEND team's priorities, Mr Webley the importance was for SEND children to have good outcomes, with inclusive approaches for all schools and access to the right provision. Ms Pyatt added that a specialist provision review was being undertaken and that members of the Forum sat on the review's reference group. This review was to ensure that provision was in line with the inclusion strategy and the SEND strategy.</p> <p>A Member referred to the issued raised in the meeting of the secondary head teachers on the previous day concerning capacity and communication with the SEND team. In response, Mrs Kelly discussed the operational delivery of the SEND team and that arrangements would be made for the SEND team to come out and meet with schools and chairs to listen to the issues. She also noted that there had been a</p>	<p>AW to circulate updated WSoA document</p>

	<p>change to the telephony system that had caused some communication difficulties. An update to the WSoA progress would be provided via the head teachers virtual updates. It was pointed out that the backlog of EHCPs had been significantly cleared and the SEND team was now looking at the management of capacity and pressures. Any concerns should be raised directly with Ms Pyatt and Mr Webley.</p> <p>In relation to the assessment places for pupils with SEND coming into the Borough, the Chair noted that in Walsall there were no assessment places currently and asked what was being done to make that happen. In response, Mr Webley stated that it was part of the SEND team's developmental work currently, that there were plans and, furthermore, that this could be incorporated into the specialist provision review.</p> <p>A Member requested that rather than feeding back from 18 or 19 schools, a meeting be arranged before the end of term with as many secondary head teachers attending as possible to discuss the on-the-ground issues. Ms Pyatt was more than willing to meet and work together with schools but also noted that steps were currently being taken to recruit to the SEND caseworker team due to the significant increases to caseloads because of the clearing of the backlog. In terms of increasing placements, she added that the specialist provision review would consider options and models for further development. The Chair requested that meetings be arranged with both the primary heads and secondary heads for then this would allow the participation of as many head teachers as possible.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair enquired how many EHCP assessments are assessed and what proportions are granted and rejected, respectively. Mr Webley stated that when there had been an investigation of some of the historical cases, it was evident that there had not been much scrutiny of the assessment. He indicated that the proportion was presently still approximately 50 per cent. Early identification had improved but where there were complex then that led to an EHCP as well. Later in the discussion, Mrs Kelly noted that in 2020 the percentage of assessments that were rejected was 14.8 per cent. When compared with other West Midlands local authorities, this was the lowest in the region. Where an assessment had been made but no EHCP issued, the percentage was 4.4 per cent, which was also one of the lowest rates in the region.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair requested clarification that EHCP assessment involved a panel from the Local Authority interacting with a school's SENCO. Mr Webley pointed out that assessment could work in a number of ways. A panel was attended by education professionals and SEND casework officers;</p>	<p>TP/AW to arrange meetings</p>
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	<p>however, the bulk of information was feed in via a school's SENCO, or assessment could be at the request of parents. In relation to an example reported by the Vice-Chair, it was agreed that this should be discussed outside the meeting.</p> <p>Mrs Kelly emphasised the importance of conversations taking place in the appropriate place, given the terms of reference and remit of the Schools Forum, which was not an operational forum. The Chair agreed that there were specific arrangements for operational matters and questions, but highlighted the difficulties of getting officers together in one place, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>	To note
<p>9. 22.06.21</p>	<p>EHCP Timeliness and Performance Update</p> <p>The Forum received was a report on the current position regarding EHCP timeliness and performance, which highlighted the mitigating actions being taken to reduce backlogs and areas of improvement (see annexed).</p> <p>The Chair noted that nationally, in 2020 only 58 per cent of reports were completed within the 20-week deadline. He was pleased to note that Walsall was now achieving a completion rate of 77 per cent, but he enquired whether this was sustainable. In response, Mr Webley stated that this was the target and the aim of the team and he expected such performance to be continued.</p> <p>Members acknowledged the improvement but were also concerned that a spike in the rate of assessments would be likely to occur during the next twelve months. They further enquired, in terms of the current position of 755 outstanding annual reviews that were being processed, how did that compare with what the norm should be and what had happened historically? Mr Webley stated that around 100 of these reviews were from 2019 whereas due to Covid-19 the contact with schools/colleges and parents had probably been hindered. He referred to the report, which stressed that these pupils were a priority and would be chased up. Ms Pyatt also pointed out that there had been a 23 per cent increased in the requests to assess, and this was a substantial increase for Walsall when compared to a national increase of 10 per cent.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>	To note

<p>10. 22.06.21</p>	<p>Mainstream Schools Local Funding Formula Review</p> <p>The Forum received a report that sought to identify recommended actions to support the development of a mainstream funding formula for 2022/23 (see annexed).</p> <p>The Chair pointed out that members were needed to join a working group established to contribute to the development of the schools local funding formula for 2022/21. This group would meet once before the end of the summer term and once in the autumn term, and its recommendations would be presented to the Schools Forum and to the Cabinet in October. He emphasised the importance of representation on the group of members from primary and secondary schools, together with early years.</p> <p>A member noted that it would have been helpful had the Black Country figures been provided, as it was important to understand why Walsall was behind other Black Country areas in terms of the funding factor primary: secondary weighting, with the rate being 1:1.24 (reduced from 1:1.25 in 2018) whereas Wolverhampton was 1:1.36 and Stoke-on-Trent was 1:1.29.</p> <p>Mr Walley advised that the review for the 2019/20 financial year had taken place in October 2018, after which a number of changes had been implemented. Progress toward the National Funding Formula (NFF) had slowed since that point, however, as majority of the additional funding since then had been allocated to increased numbers of children rather than further moves toward the NFF. The aim of the proposed working group would be to understand and report on options to move Walsall further toward the NFF values in preparation for a hard implementation by the DfE.</p> <p>The Chair reminded the Forum of the process carried out in 2018 in order to arrive at the agreed level of 1.24. The Vice-Chair also pointed out that the discussion had been in terms of attempting to prevent schools from losing too much. However, she had recently become aware of the extent to which Walsall's secondary schools were losing out when compared with those in other local authority areas, and felt this to be an issue the working group should consider. Other members referred to the disadvantage to Walsall children, who were being funded at a rate 11 per cent below that in Wolverhampton, and that this would worsen when the transition had been made from a 'soft' to a 'hard; national funding formula.</p> <p>The Chair informed the Forum that in 2018, the officers had been requested to measure and compare against other local</p>	
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	<p>authorities and that, as well as the ratios, the amount of funding per child in both primary and secondary schools had been considered.</p> <p>Mr Haynes noted that the report as presented had set out that there had been a number of conversations over time since the 'soft' national funding formula had been brought in. This had provided local authorities and schools forums with the opportunity to set their own priorities rather than adhering to a 'hard' national funding formula approach. Furthermore, Walsall's priorities had been concerned with balancing the movement of schools towards the national funding formula over time, so that they were ready when the 'hard' formula was fully implemented, whilst ensuring that the minimum number of schools experienced a reduction year-on-year.</p> <p>Mr Haynes also referred to paragraph 4.4 of the report, and informed the Forum that over the last two years additional funding had gone into funding increased pupil numbers. In previous years the decision had been made to keep the lump sum at £175k per school, and with the funding received via the national funding formula being £117,800 per school, this had meant that an additional lump sum funding £57,200 of funding had to be provided for each Walsall primary and secondary school but with more primary schools in Walsall this does affect the overall split of funding between the two phases of schools.</p> <p>Further comments by members of the Forum were made concerning the impact of the lump sum on small, one-form entry primary schools, and the impact of an increase from a ratio of 1:1.25 to 1:1.29 for secondary schools, especially when compared with schools in other Black Country local authority areas.</p> <p>A number of members indicated that they would wish to become members of the working group, including the Chair and Vice-Chair, Mr Downie, Mrs Keenan, Mr Seager, and the Chair requested that any others interested in joining should email Mr Haynes directly.</p> <p>Further to an enquiry regarding the timescales in which Walsall would be aligned to the national funding formula, the Chair advised that this remained under consideration by the DfE. Mr Haynes reiterated, adding that in terms of setting a local funding formula the working group should consider what the local priorities were and the options to be considered to meet these priorities. This was normally agreed at the Forum's October meeting, to allow time for formal consultation before being brought back to the Forum's December meeting and the Cabinet for final agreement.</p>	
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	<p>Resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That a working group be established to contribute to the development of the Schools Local Funding Formula for 2022/23; 2. That the working group arrange to meet in the summer term and autumn term in order to make recommendations to the October meeting of the Schools Forum 	Working group meetings to be set up
11. 22.06.21	<p>Early Years Central Funding</p> <p>The Forum received an update report regarding the £500k retained central budget for Early Years duties, which was presented following a request made at the last meeting of the Forum (see annexed).</p> <p>The report noted that each year the DfE allocated DSG Early Years funding based on the number of children that the Local Authority funded for year 2, 3 and 4 places and the DfE expected that up to 5 per cent of funding should be retained to provide a central service to deliver statutory Early Years duties. Currently, Walsall Council retained 2.28 per cent of the overall Early Years block, resulting in a higher hourly rate to providers.</p> <p>Mr Haynes advised that the proposed central DSG budgets were presented to the Forum's meetings in January each year, and that in January 2021 the Forum had approved the current £500k central DSG budget and Early Year's services were using that budget in the current financial year.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That the Early Years team continue to deliver the Local Authority's statutory duties in respect of the continuation of Early Help 0-5 support to children and families.</p>	To note
12. 22.06.21	<p>School Ready Budget Update</p> <p>The Forum received the annual update report concerning investment into the School Ready Budget (see annexed).</p> <p>The report provided evidential information to demonstrate to the Forum how the £250,000 fund allocated for School Ready improvement continued to be utilised well in order to deliver improved School Ready outcomes for children by the age of five years. In Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Ofsted grading, this remained at nearly 4 per cent above the national average. For inspected Early Years schools' provision, 93.1</p>	

	<p>per cent had been judged to be good or outstanding, and this compared to an 88.6 per cent national average. For private, voluntary or independent (PVI) settings, 96.9 per cent had been rated as good or outstanding, which compared with a 96 per cent national average.</p> <p>The Chair requested that future reports should indicate whether the Forum was to note or to vote on the recommendations as it was considered that the wording of the recommendation needed to be clearer.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That Schools Forum confirmed it was content with the plans for 2021/22.</p>	To note
<p>13. 22.06.21</p>	<p>One Source – School Epayslips</p> <p>The Forum received a verbal update from Mrs Kelly regarding the movement away from paper payslips and the introduction of electronic payslips. She advised that the Authority would be working with schools to implement this for all teaching and school staff from January 2022 and that information would be provided to Head teacher briefings and sessions were to be arranged for September 2021.</p> <p>Mr Williams added that he would provide the relevant email address to the Forum so that anyone wishing to sign up for Epayslips early would be able to do so.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That the verbal report be noted.</p>	To note
<p>14. 22.06.21</p>	<p>Annual Report</p> <p>A copy of the Annual Report of the Democratic Services Officer, covering the period 23 September 2020 to 9 March 2021, was submitted (see annexed).</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That the Annual Report be noted.</p>	To note
<p>15. 22.06.21</p>	<p>Dates of Future Meetings</p> <p>The report of the Democratic Services Officer was submitted (see annexed).</p> <p>The Clerk put the recommendation to the vote by way of a roll call of Forum members.</p>	

	<p>Resolved:</p> <p>That Schools Forum agreed to hold its meetings for the 2021/22 academic year on the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday, 21 September 2021 • Tuesday, 12 October 2021 • Tuesday, 9 December 2021 • Tuesday, 18 January 2022 • Tuesday, 8 March 2022 • Tuesday, 21 June 2022 • Special meetings to be arranged, if required. 	
<p>16. 22.06.21</p>	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p>A copy of the Forward Plan was submitted (see annexed).</p> <p>Mr Haynes reported that the feedback derived from the meetings to be arranged by Mr Webley would be used to inform the High Needs Funding Formula for future years, and he noted that the final report was scheduled for March 2022.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>	<p>To note</p>
<p>17. 22.06.21</p>	<p>Late Items</p> <p>There were no late items for consideration.</p>	
<p>18. 22.06.21</p>	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>There were no items of correspondence.</p>	
	<p>Date and Time of next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of Schools Forum is scheduled for Tuesday, 21 September 2021, commencing at 4.00 pm.</p>	

The meeting terminated at 4.58 pm.

Signed

Date:

Schools Forum**21 September 2021****Subject: SEND Improvement Programme Update****Confidential: No****1. Purpose**

The SEND Local Area Improvement Programme is to address the areas of concern identified by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in the SEND Local Area inspection February 2019. This is being delivered through a Written Statement of Action (WSOA). The WSoA includes focus areas within the nine areas of concerns, along with agreed actions to improve the quality and timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

2. Summary

Work continues to gather the evidence of actions and impact from the written statement of action ahead of re-inspection. Workshops have now been held for the identified areas of concern. Work is now ongoing to collate and collect the evidence in order to answer the 'so what' question and fully evidence the impact

3. EHCP Performance

Please see EHCP timeliness and Performance report

4. Local Offer

The main piece of work to update and review the Local Offer is now complete and the new, fully compliant pages have gone live on Monday 6th September. A soft launch means that the pages will be live, so people will be able to find them if they are looking for the Local Offer; however the pages are not yet publicised. This is to allow time for the search engines to 'crawl' the pages and for searches for Walsall Local Offer to update across Google and Bing. It also provides time for partners and others to update any links they may have to the Local Offer

5. SEND Improvement Governance

As the SEND Improvement Programme, that was put in place following the development of the Statement of Action, draws to a close and we await re-inspection, our focus has begun to shift to how we will continue to improve SEND services for children and young people in Walsall and continue the journey we have been on over the past two years, ensuring that ongoing SEND improvement is embedded in our day to day work.

A paper was presented to the Local Area Improvement Board (LAIB) in July which outlined the work which had been completed to review and redesign the Strategic Education Improvement Board, culminating in the creation of the Walsall Learning Alliance. In the new structure of the Walsall Learning Alliance, SEND will sit as a work stream alongside Raising Standards, Vulnerable Groups, Transition and Recruitment and Retention.

Long term, responsibility for the oversight of continuing SEND improvement will sit with the Walsall Learning Alliance and feed into the wider Walsall Strategic Partnership. These arrangements and the connected governance of the wider partnership are currently being developed and this will provide us with a strong governance roadmap for SEND provision moving forwards.

Current practice:

- The LAIB will continue in its current format until the re-inspection has taken place. This will ensure the robust oversight of the past two years continues and support the Local Area in its preparations for re-inspection.
- The Walsall Learning Alliance will begin to operate under its new terms of reference and start to provide oversight of SEND improvement alongside the LAIB. The Learning Alliance and LAIB will share an independent chair, ensuring consistency of oversight and, when the time comes, a smooth transition into the new permanent governance arrangements. The future of the LAIB will be re-assessed following the re-inspection.
- The Workstream Leads meeting will continue. As well as continuing to work through the remaining, outstanding actions in the WSoA and ensuring completed actions are embedded, this group will be responsible for ongoing SEND improvement, identifying and implementing ongoing SEND improvement actions and ensuring existing services are delivering good quality support for children and young people with SEND, their parents and carers and professionals. This group will feed into both the LAIB and the Learning Alliance. To reflect the extended responsibilities and Walsall's commitment to ongoing SEND improvement beyond the WSoA and the re-inspection, this group will be renamed **SEND Strategic Improvement Group**.

5. Preparation for re-inspection

The preparation for re-inspection continues to be a key focus. WSOA Work stream leads have contributed to summarising what actions have been completed and what remains to be completed. A key focus of the next upcoming months will be too evidence impact of the developments.

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SEND Team Manager

Email: alex.webley@walsall.gov.uk

21 September 2021

Subject: EHCP Timeliness and Performance	Confidential: No
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1. Purpose

This report is to provide an update to the forum on the current position regarding EHCP timeliness and performance, highlighting the mitigating actions taken to reduce backlogs and areas of improvement.

2. Recommendations

To note the contents and developments shown within this report.

3. Background

The Children and Families Act, (2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (2015) present statutory guidance to Local Authorities, health services, early years settings, schools and further education providers about their obligation to identify and meet the needs of Children and Young People aged 0-25 years who have SEND.

Walsall Local Authority is subject to a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) as a result of the Walsall SEND Inspection on February 2019. The multi-agency SEND Local Area Improvement Board (LAIB) continue to meet on a monthly basis in order to monitor the progress of the SEND WSOA, EHCP timeliness and SEND Improvement.

4. Compliance Update Figures**4.1. Progress Report Re Completion Of EHCP Plans in 20 Weeks 2021 (Walsall)**

	2021							
	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug
Number of EHCP Plans Issued, excluding exceptions	34	33	25	23	17	19	33	37
Number of these issued in 20 weeks	22	20	11	17	5	9	7	13
% in 20 weeks	64.7%	60.6%	44.0%	73.9%	29.4%	47.4%	21.2%	35.1%
Cumulative % in 20 weeks	24.8%	28.8%	30.7%	33.6%	35.8%	37.5%	37.6%	37.6%

4.2. Headline figures as of August are demonstrated in the EHCP Timeliness dashboard below:

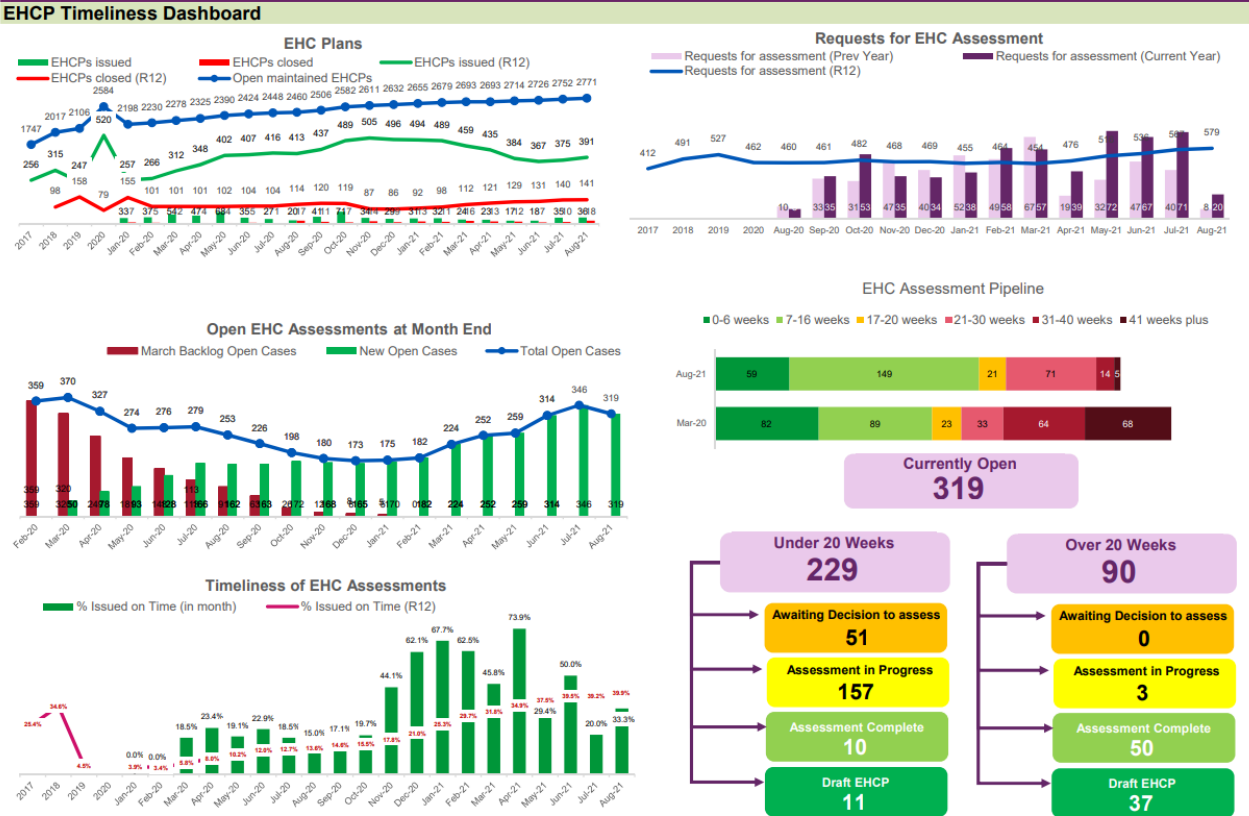
4.3. Timeliness dipped significantly over May, June and July 2021. At this current time the service has faced difficulty in maintaining the timeliness of past performance. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused an increased pressure on the EHC Assessment Service.

Following the school return, the EHC team began to receive increased requests for EHC assessments.

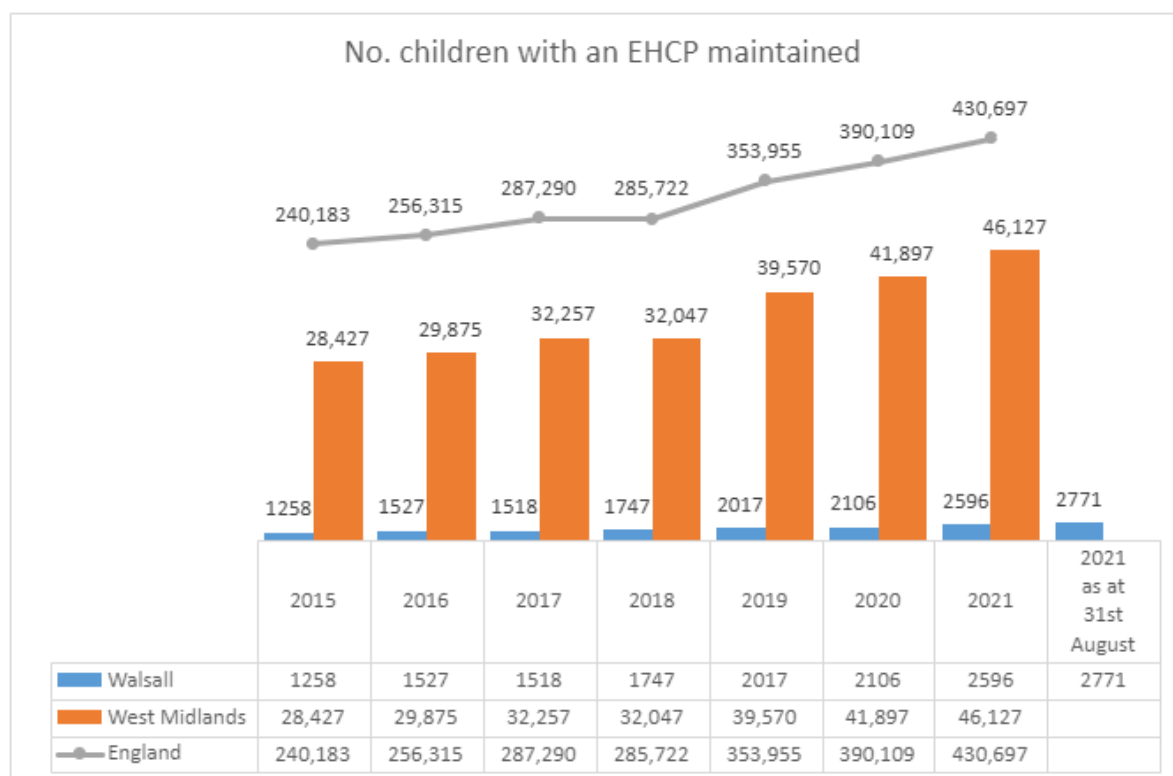
4.4. The team received 209 requests for an EHC assessment between May- June 2021, this represents a 75% increase in requests for assessments compared to that of May – June 2020. A number of permanently employed staff members have left the service over the past months, which has also caused further strain. However, these staff members have been replaced by interim members of staff, whilst we replace these members of staff.

4.5. Pressures have proactively been recognised and are being actioned accordingly by ensuring interim staff are in place whilst recruitment of 6 permanent staff members are secured. As reflected in the timeliness data for August, this has increased timeliness to (35.1%) from the previous month.

4.6. Interviews for permanent staff members within the EHCP team are commencing the week of 13th September.



5. The National and Local Context (SEN2 Data – Jan '21)



- Nationally, there were 430,697 children and young people with an EHC plan maintained by local authorities as at January 2021, this is an increase of 40,588 (10%) from 2020.
- This increase is also reflected in the West Midlands figures, with an increase of 4,230 (10%) EHC plans from 2020.
- In Walsall, there is a significant increase in the number of CYP for whom Walsall Council maintain an EHC Plan. On the return date (14th January 2021) this stood at 2,596, the highest number of EHC Plans recorded in Walsall over the past five years. Walsall's increase is much higher than National and West Midlands at 23.3% an increase of 490 EHC plans from 2020.
- The number of CYP with an EHC Plan has been gradually increasing since March 2019. In August 2020, this stood at 2,460 and has increased by 12% over the last 12 months and now stands at **2,771**.

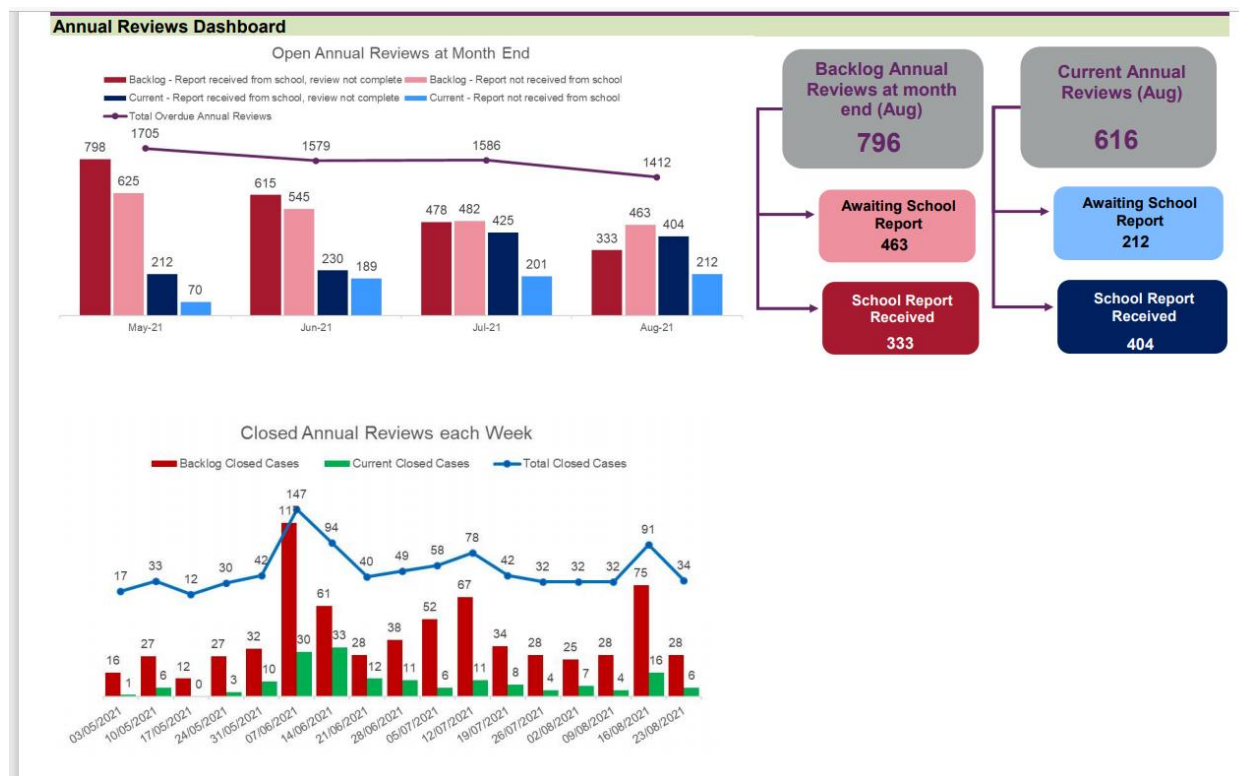
Percentage of pupils with statement of special educational needs (SEN) or EHC Plan, based on where the pupil attends school in January.

- In 2021 the percentage of pupils with a SEN or EHC Plan was 3.3%, this has increased by 0.4 percentage points compared to 2.9% in 2020.
- Walsall has the same increase between 2020 and 2021 when compared to national, while the West Midlands and statistical neighbours had smaller increases.
- The largest increase was 0.29 percentage points for statistical neighbours from 3.47% in 2020 to 3.76% in 2021.
- Walsall has seen a continued increase in the percentage of pupils with a SEN or EHC Plan since 2015 with an overall increase of 1 percentage point, from 2.3% in 2015 to 3.3% in 2021.
- Walsall has a larger increase between 2015 and 2021 than national (0.9 %pts) and West Midlands (0.6 %pts).

6. Annual Review Backlog

As referenced in the last Schools Forum meeting, a backlog of EHCP's developed as a result of Covid-19 and the subsequent school closures. Following the schools reopening, scheduled reviews progressed, however this resulted in an increase of due annual reviews each month, which caused further pressure to schools and settings, as well as creating additional resource pressures within the SEND Team

The current position is identified in the dashboard below:



As of August 2021, there are 1412 open annual reviews. This consists of 333 backlog reviews where we [LA] have received the report from the school and 463 backlog annual reviews where the report from the school is still outstanding. 409 annual reviews are currently with the EHC Assessment team i.e. the report has been received from school but the review process is not yet complete.

Additional resource has been secured within the EHC Assessment Team with dedicated interim staff members employed to manage the backlog of annual reviews.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Forum are asked to:

7.1 note the contents of this report.

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Schools Forum

September 2021

Application for Continuation of Music Funding £38,000 in 2022/23

Purpose of report

- To consider the work of Walsall Music Education Hub & Service in supporting Walsall schools and young people with music provision and opportunities.
- To consider continuing Schools Forum financial support for the Music Education Hub's activities at Walsall Arena and Arts Centre.

Recommendations

To approve £38,000 School Forum funding be granted to Walsall Music Education Hub & Service in 2022/23 in line with previous years.

Background

Over 5,000 pupils take part in weekly music tuition and ensemble activities in Walsall through Walsall Music Education Hub & Service's delivery programmes. Weekly after school opportunities provided at Music Centres for Choral, Vocal, Instrumental and Rock and Pop are firmly established.

The continued impact of financial and time pressures on schools, in combination with the shift in the musical, cultural and educational environments post-pandemic, mean that Walsall Music Education Hub & Service is well positioned to continue to provide outlets for young people to rehearse, participate and perform outside of traditional school hours and settings.

This additionality enriches and enhances the musical opportunities for Walsall's children and young people and enables further progression by bringing together young people from a variety of schools and other educational settings, to work collaboratively on music which may be limited within the constraints of individual schools.

Open-access programmes for music beyond the school setting enable Walsall's young people to engage in activities for extended periods of time, to fully develop their potential and, if appropriate, embark on vocational and continuation pathways into the creative industries and Higher Education.

Guided by Department for Education (DfE), Arts Council England (ACE), Headteachers, Hub advisory group and other stakeholders, Walsall Music Education Hub & Service has

developed a framework to support Walsall schools in maximising the impact of music, within a broad and balanced curriculum and the National Plan for Music Education, both in and outside the school. This plan helps schools identify and provide essential additional support for their children's musical needs.

Walsall schools have traditionally been recognised for high levels of musical engagement. This is testament to the cohesive bonds of the deeply embedded partnership arrangements that have existed for many years and have enabled the Hub to continue to offer, stabilise and enhance the musical opportunities for Walsall's children and young people during the unprecedented times of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Proposal

Schools Forum to continue to work in partnership with Walsall Music Education Hub & Service to provide essential resources and support to Walsall schools and young people for their musical education.

Financial Implications/Value for Money

The continued below-inflation increments of DfE/ACE grant funding combined with increases in essential costs and very limited direct streams of local government funding, place increasing year-on-year pressure on the economy of scale required to sustain the core functionality and maintain a diverse portfolio.

In 2022/23 the music grant level will remain approximately the same in real terms. However, the National Plan for Music Education brief continues to expand to include pre-school, early years, health & wellbeing agendas and post 18. This puts increased pressure on the Hub to find funding to maintain the additionality that is currently provided. Individually, schools are under great economic pressure to provide the full breadth of educational provision. The School Forum funding ensures Walsall's children and young people to have enhanced & enriched access to music education.

The proposed 2022/2023 revenue budget for Music is:

Walsall Music Education Hub & Service	
Budget 2022/23	
Income	
<i>Schools Forum support?</i>	38,000
Income from schools	276,000
Income Concerts & Performances	10,000
ACE DfE Grant	481,418
Other earned /Generated Income	20,000
Other income	10,000
Total Income	835,418

A £38,000 contribution (~4.5% of Music Hub's budget) levers access to the broad spectrum of opportunities and schemes which normally would not be available within core portfolio due to financial constraints. All Walsall schools and young people have access to this service. The contribution of £38,000 equates to just ~73.5p¹ per child per annum but collectively unlocks access to all the activities and services listed.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

School Improvement

Walsall Music Education Hub & Service provides a range of opportunities and initiatives for Walsall children, young people and schools which are made possible by the provision of resourcing from Schools Forum.

These include:

- **Music Centres**

Walsall Music Education Hub & Service continues to provide after school activities at the Walsall Arena and Arts Centre to facilitate opportunities for ensembles, bands, choirs and orchestras which might otherwise be unavailable in schools. The provision of borough wide after school Music Centres enable young people to develop group skills and play alongside their peers. Increased pressure within schools for time and resources means this outlet for musical development is becoming increasingly important for Walsall's young people.

- Open-access evening Music Centres throughout the school year for Choral, Vocal, Instrumental and Rock and Pop.
- Specialist provision for SEND, LAC, Virtual School students to include large-scale events and workshops.
- Continuation pathways for Vocal, Instrumental and Rock & Pop.
- Ensemble opportunities for orchestras, bands, percussion ensembles, choirs, music theatre, rock and pop academy, world music, music and dance companies, and bespoke projects.
- Use of a variety of rehearsal spaces, three auditoria as performance spaces, to include the Walsall Arena and a digital recording studio at Walsall Arena and Arts Centre.
- Opportunities to perform in different venues in the local community and the West Midlands region.

¹ Based on school census data (May 2017)

- **Large Scale Ensemble Events**

Walsall Arena and Arts Centre provide use of all three of its large performance spaces for the Music Hub to organise and stage large-scale music events including:

- Primary schools massed Choir, a seasonal themed run of show style performances in the Walsall A3 Arena and online streamed presentations
- Junior and Infant Singing Festivals
- Orchestra of the Swan (OTTS), a 'big orchestra' event for upper KS2, KS3, 4 and 5
- Big Sing, a secondary focused vocal event in partnership with MusE
- Music Centre Concerts - 15 annual concerts spread through the year for Choral, Vocal, Instrumental & Rock n Pop Music Centres
- Aspiring Musicians of Walsall (AMOW), a competition event for individual vocalists and instrumentalists
- Music Mash Up, a transition and leadership event for primary and secondary students
- Summer Fest, the SEND school's annual music festival

- **Virtual/ Digital/ remote learning (COVID-19)**

The Walsall Music Education Hub & Service continues to develop, incorporate and enhance the following digital learning mechanisms and resources first introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Virtual centralised Vocal and Instrumental Ensembles
- Digital resource gateway
- Asynchronous digital learning
- Music Centre-based remote synchronous learning
- School-based remote synchronous learning, adopting individual school's preferred delivery platform
- Online instrument focused tutorials
- Generic virtual music education resources via the Hub's website
- Targeted tutorials/ lessons via the Hub's YouTube channel
- Virtual *Live Music*, a remote alternative to the summer term *Live Music* programme for schools performed by professional musicians

- **Projects**

Walsall Music Education Hub & Service organises and arranges the following projects:

- Live Music, a school-based project performed by professional musicians
- World Music, class projects to discover & explore South American Samba, Caribbean Steel Pans, African djembe drumming and Indonesian Gamelan
- Welsh National Opera, collaborative projects with *Welsh National Opera* to create and perform opera
- Orchestra of the Swan (OOTS), professionally supported large ensemble using *BBC 10 Pieces*

- Royal Opera House, a scholarship and bursary opportunities for students across Walsall in partnership with Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
- Early Hurly Burly, a regional pre-school and early years project
- Collaborative projects in partnership with the other West Midlands Music Education Hubs, such as *Sing!* a regional project performed at Symphony Hall
- Access to Music, a new Virtual School Project to commence in September 2021 to offer every Y4 LAC a direct musical learning opportunity on an instrument of their choice
- NAG Composition project, a new initiative to engage KS2, 3, 4 & 5 students with Musical composition using visual art stimuli, in association with Walsall's New Art Gallery

- **Partnerships**

The Music Education Hub has active and collaborative working arrangements with the following:

- University of Wolverhampton
- Black Country Music Education Hubs
- West Midlands Music Education Hubs
- Walsall Council
- Walsall Virtual School
- Black Country Dance Hub
- Charanga, online learning resource and ongoing CPD for schools
- Rainbow Rhyme, early years music education specialists
- BC Music, SEND music education specialist
- Orchestra of the Swan (OOTS)
- Welsh National Opera
- Exam boards – ABRSM, Trinity, London College of Music, Rock School
- Flexus Dance Company
- Early Hurly Burly
- Summers Song Ltd

- **Music Educator Networks (*MusE* and *Mini MusE*)**

Walsall Music Education Hub, continues to develop the MusE network groups for Walsall music teachers from primary and secondary schools. We collaborate on an increasing number of events and CPD opportunities for staff linking Key Stages, aiding transition and development work across the sector. Some examples include:

- regular CPD within termly twilight meetings from resource sharing to specific strategies for Deep Dive assessment and Model Music Curriculum
- large-scale projects such as *Big Sing* and Orchestra of the Swan
- an ongoing “buddy” system to partner together music departments/schools/teachers
- improving joint working and mutual peer review
- moderation work for KS4
- annual curriculum conference opportunities
- termly Charanga training

- transition and pupil leadership events like “Music Mash Up”
- creation of partnership events like World Music Days
- collegiate support and open forum discussions
- networking

- **Charanga**

Walsall Music Education Hub & Service partners with Charanga, a digital music Education resources specialist, by subsidising the annual subscription for the *Musical School* support programme for Primary Schools.

This exciting Primary music scheme for the National Curriculum provides easy access to contemporary digital resources for music teachers and schools. It provides online music learning resources for young people at all year levels and at all stages of development.

The package includes planning, and whiteboard resources, plus free training and CPD based in schools and centrally at Walsall Arena and Arts Centre. The scheme is non-specialist friendly, completely inspection framework compliant and enables primary schools to have superb and easy-to-use music curriculum resources.

- **Music Mark**

WMEHS is a pro-active member of *Music Mark*, a nationally recognised organisation, advocating and lobbying on a national level to promote music and music education.

Walsall Music Education Hub & Service mediates and facilitates access to *Music Mark* school membership which is free to all Walsall schools (with all associated costs borne by the Walsall Music Education Hub & Service) and can only be accessed through engagement with the Music Hub.

Music Mark Award is available to schools which appreciate the value of music education as part of a broad, balanced and relevant school curriculum and demonstrates a willingness to engage in the development conversations at a national level related to improving music provision for all children and young people.

Members eligible to vote

All



Dear Director

We are writing on behalf of all employees working in your local authority area who are members of NAHT, ASCL and the National Education Union (NEU).

Acting in accordance with advice issued by the Local Government Association and the National Employers' Organisation for School Teachers, the vast majority of schools made the right decision last year by agreeing through their Schools Forum to 'de-delegate' funding for supply cover costs, including for trade union facilities time.

We believe that the central retention and distribution of this funding is the most effective and efficient arrangement, and we would like to work with you to ensure that this arrangement continues. Discussions are now taking place in your authority on funding arrangements for supply cover costs from April next year and we are asking you to pass the information in this letter to members in your Schools Forum and to encourage them to vote for de-delegation of funding arrangements for supply cover costs.

Successive governments have recognised the importance of good industrial relations and have legislated to provide a statutory basis for facilities time as follows:

- Paid time off for union representatives to accompany a worker to a disciplinary or grievance hearing.
- Paid time off for union representatives to carry out trade union duties.
- Paid time off for union representatives to attend union training.
- Paid time off for union 'learning representatives' to carry out relevant learning activities.
- Paid time for union health and safety representatives during working hours to carry out health and safety functions.

These provisions are contained within the Employment Relations Act 1999 and the Trade Union Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977.

NAHT, ASCL and NEU have members and union representatives in academies as well as maintained schools within your local authority area and, in addition to seeking your support for de-delegation, we are seeking your agreement for the local trade union funding arrangement to be formally extended to academies within your local authority boundary.

As the DfE Advice on Trade Union Facility Time acknowledges, the trade union recognition agreement between the authority and the recognised unions will have

transferred to each academy school as the new employer of the transferred staff as part of the conversion process to academy status under TUPE. We believe that, following conversion, academies should also become parties to local authority trade union facilities arrangements.

The academies within your authority will have received funding for trade union facilities time in their budgets and they are permitted to use that funding to buy-back into local authority arrangements. Indeed, many academies across England have already agreed to buy in to local authority trade union facilities arrangements.

Pooled funding will help the local authority and all schools to meet their statutory obligations on trade union facilities time. Setting up a central funding arrangement will allow academies to pay into a central pool if they wish to. But most importantly it will help maintain a coherent industrial relations environment where issues and concerns whether individual or collective can be dealt with more effectively. All these points are echoed in the advice issued by the LGA and NEOST.

We urge you therefore to support the de-delegation of funding for trade union facilities time and to continue or establish (if you did not do so previously) a mechanism whereby academies within your authority are able to buy into a central fund for trade union facilities time. If you agree to do so, we will write to academy principals to encourage them to buy in to your arrangement.

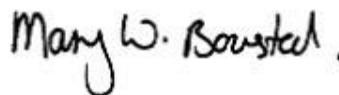
Yours sincerely



**General Secretary
ASCL**



**General Secretary
NAHT**



**Joint General Secretary
NEU**



**Joint General Secretary
NEU**

WALSALL

SCHOOLS FORUM

FORWARD PLAN OF DECISIONS

The forward plan sets out decisions which the Schools Forum intend to take over the following 4 months. Preparation of the forward plan helps the Schools Forum to programme its work. The purpose of the forward plan is to give plenty of notice and an opportunity for consultation on the issues to be discussed. The plan is updated in the middle of each month with the period of the plan being rolled forward by one month and republished. The plan is available for public inspection at the First Stop Shop, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall. Copies of the plan can be obtained from Democratic Services, Walsall MBC, Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall, WS1 1TW. The forward plan can also be accessed from the Council's website at www.walsall.gov.uk.

Please note that the decision dates are indicative and are subject to change. Please contact the above addressee if you wish to check the date for a particular item.

The Schools Forum agenda and reports are available for inspection by the public 7 days prior to the meeting of the Forum. The papers can be seen at First Stop Shop at the Civic Centre, Walsall. The papers are also available on the Council's website referred to above shortly before the meeting. Background papers are listed on each report submitted to the Schools Forum and members of the public are entitled to see these documents unless they are confidential. The report also contains the name and telephone number of a contact officer. These details can also be found in the forward plan.

Meetings of the Schools Forum are open to the public and take place at a venue within Walsall. Occasionally there are items included on the agenda which are confidential and for those items the public will be asked to leave the meeting.

www.walsall.gov.uk

**FORWARD PLAN OF DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN
BY SCHOOLS FORUM
FROM SEPTEMBER 2021**

DECISION TO BE CONSIDERED	BACKGROUND PAPERS AND CONTACT OFFICER	DATE ITEM TO BE CONSIDERED
SEND Improvement Programme	SEND Team Manager	Standing Item for each meeting
EHCP Performance Framework / Timelines	SEND Team Manager	Standing Item for each meeting
Election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2021/22	Democratic Services Officer	September 2021
School Music Service	Walsall Music Education Hub & Service. Walsall Arena & Arts Centre (Forests Arts Centre)	September, 2021
Update on Local Government Pension Scheme Charges (if required)	Finance Manager	September, 2021
SEND Improvement Programme (Standing Item for each meeting)	SEND Team Manager	October, 2021
EHCP Performance Framework / Timelines (Standing Item for each meeting)	SEND Team Manager	October, 2021
Proposed for Mainstream Schools Local Funding Formula 2022/23	Finance Manager	October, 2021
Maintained Schools Delegation	Finance Manager	October, 2021

Review of Maintained Schools Balances 2020/21	Finance Manager	October, 2021
Review of Dedicated Schools Grant – update on 2021/22 Forecast Position	Finance Manager	October, 2021
Strategic Education and Inclusion Board Update on Impact of Board	Chair of Walsall Strategic Education Inclusion Board and School Governance Manager	October, 2021
SEND Improvement Programme (Standing Item for each meeting)	SEND Team Manager	December, 2021
EHCP Performance Framework / Timelines (Standing Item for each meeting)	SEND Team Manager	December, 2021
Proposed for Mainstream Schools Local Funding Formula 2022/23 (if required)	Finance Manager	December, 2021
SEND Improvement Programme (Standing Item for each meeting)	SEND Team Manager	January, 2022
EHCP Performance Framework / Timelines (Standing item for each meeting)	SEND Team Manager	January, 2022
Mainstream Funding Formula 2022/23	Finance Manager	January, 2022
Central Expenditure Budgets 2022/23	Finance Manager	January, 2022
SEND Improvement Programme (Standing item for each meeting)	SEND Team Manager	March, 2022
EHCP Performance Framework/Timelines (Standing item for each meeting)	SEND Team Manager	March, 2022

High Needs Funding Formula 2022/23 (if required_	Finance Manager	March, 2022
Proposed Early Years Funding Formula for Two, Three and Four Year Olds (if required)	Finance Manager	March, 2022
SEND Improvement Programme (Standing item for each meeting)	SEND Team Manager	June, 2022
EHCP Performance Framework / Timelines (Standing item for each meeting)	SEND Team Manager	June, 2022
Schools Forum Annual Report	Democratic Services Officer	June, 2022
Dates & Venue for 2022/23 meetings	Democratic Services Officer	June, 2022