



Walsall Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an annual report of the work of the Forum covering the period 6 July, 2022 to 7 March, 2023.

**Date of
meeting**

2.0 Update from Local Area Improvement Board

- 2.1 The Forum considered an update on the work of the Local Area Improvement Board and noted that further updates on the Local Area Improvement Board would be submitted to the Learning Alliance. 06.07.22

3.0 Lamb Grant

- 3.1 A school improvement group was established to enable them to make a decision on future funding streams. 06.07.22

4.0 Substitute Members

- 4.1 The process for appointing substitutes was considered. 06.07.22

Forum agreed that the body nominating a member nominates a named substitute member for each member that they nominate and that substitute members be encouraged to shadow the nominated member prior to substituting for that person and also attend training, when made available to nominated/exiting members.

Further, in the case of sole providers, such as the Pupil Referral Unit and Alternate Provision School, the substitute would be nominated by the appointed representatives.

In the case of governor representatives, substitutes would be appointed via election.

5.0 Annual Report

- 5.1 The Annual Report for 2021/2022 was approved. 06.07.22

6.0 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

- 6.1 Mr Max Vlahakis was appointed Chair of Schools Forum and Mr A. Seager was appointed Vice Chair of Schools Forum for the 2022/2023 academic year 26.09.22

7.0	School Music Service 2023/24	
7.1	Schools Forum granted £38,000 music funding to Walsall Music Education Hub & Service in 2023/24 in line with previous years.	26.09.22
8.0	Local Area Improvement Board update - Sendi / Walsall Learning Alliance	
8.1	Deferred to October meeting.	26.09.22
8.2	The Forum noted that the Alliance had superseded the Strategic Education and Inclusion Board. A launch had taken place with representations from all sectors in attendance and its first formal meeting had taken place. Forum noted the report and welcomed a further update in Spring 2023.	18.10.22
8.3	Forum noted that updates on EHCP's and Annual Reviews was helpful as it enabled those on Schools Forum to feedback to other bodies to give an updated position.	13.12.22
	<p>The Director of Access and Inclusion advised that SEN development formed part of the Walsall Learning Alliance Agenda, which was represented by all sectors.</p> <p>There was an item in the Forward Plan for Schools Forum to hear from Walsall Learning Alliance, which provided opportunity for Schools Forum to remain updated.</p>	
	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.	07.03.23
9.0	School Improvement Working Group	
9.1	Deferred to October meeting.	26.09.22
9.2	The Chair confirmed that the Group had been formed to manage the schools element of the pooled budget funding, the lamb Grant.	18.10.22
10.0	Specialist Support Services	
10.1	The Forum received an update and noted that all of the information about the development of specialist places both in special schools and in the specialist resource provision that are being developed in mainstream schools were reported to the specialist provision review group.	26.09.22
	<p>The Head of Finance – Technical and Transactional stated that finance had been working on the funding envelope as there would be an increase in places going forward. This was aided by a template from the Department for Education to help predict the demand against the funding that was likely to be available from the higher need block over the same period. The initial draft would be discussed with the ESFA and further actions in terms of sufficient funding is available it would be referred to Schools Forum</p>	

11.0 **School Improvement Working Group**

- 11.1 It was confirmed that the Group had been formed to manage the schools element of the pooled budget funding, the lamb Grant. 18.10.22

12.0 **Proposed Mainstream Schools Local Funding Formula 2023/24**

- 12.1 Schools Forum noted that, as there is a requirement to utilise all allowable factors in the local formula for 2023/24, a full consultation exercise with all mainstream schools in Walsall would be required. 18.10.22

Forum:-

- endorsed the recommended local funding formula options to be consulted on with all mainstream schools and academies within Walsall for 2023/24.
- noted that the matter would be reported to Cabinet to seek approval to enter into formal consultation and confirmed that the outcome of consultation would be considered by Schools Forum on 6 December 2022 to allow them to make a final recommendation to Cabinet at its meeting on 14 December 2022 to determine the formula that will be utilised to distribute funding to mainstream schools and academies within Walsall for 2023/24.

- 12.2 In response to a query regarding the available options, the Head of Finance – Technical and Transaction clarified that whilst Schools Forum were consulted on a preferred option, the decision would be made by Cabinet on 14th December, 2022. As such, any decision which did not represent the majority of pupils would benefit from the inclusion of reasons for that decision as this would provide Cabinet with context when considering the matter. 06.12.22

Forum agreed that funding option 4 be used as the basis of the Schools Funding Formula for 2023/24.

13.0 **Final Mainstream Funding Formula 2023/24**

- 13.1 Schools Forum noted the overall level of dedicated schools grant and note the funding factor values for 2023/24. 17.01.23

Forum noted that Cabinet had supported the recommendation to approve option 4 as detailed in paragraph 12.2 above) and that the funding factor values for 2023/24, which ensure that allocations to mainstream schools via the local funding formula are both affordable within the funding that is available.

14.0 **Maintained Schools De – Delegation**

- 14.1 A copy of a joint letter from the NAHT, National Education Union and ASCL regarding the de-delegation of funding for supply cover costs, including for trade union facilities time was submitted and noted. 26.09.22

It was confirmed that Academies would buy in services (via an SLA)

individually as the vote in October, 2022 covered maintained primary and secondaries.

- 14.2 Schools Forum members representatives from maintained Primary Schools and maintained Secondary Schools considered and voted upon the de-delegation recommendations with the exception of 2.2 through to 2.7 as the sole maintained secondary representative was absent from the meeting. 18.10.22

Forum agreed that the representative be contacted to ascertain their decision given that the deadline for reporting the decisions to the Education and Skills Funding Agency was end of October. This was duly carried out by Officers.

Maintained Primary School members of Schools Forum did not approve de-delegation of Additional School Improvement Services (estimated at £7.00 per pupil).

15.0 **Review of Maintained Schools Balances 2021/22**

- 15.1 Members were provided with a summary of balances held by maintained schools at 31 March 2022 as reported to the DfE under consistent financial reporting regulations. 18.10.22

Following a query raised, Mr Haynes, advised that the Local Authority monitored maintained schools' forecast balances on a termly basis and confirmed that there were only a handful of schools at the upper end of the balance control mechanism limit. Mr Haynes agreed that it would be useful context for average balances to be included in future reporting and that in the meantime, a briefing note providing more clarification would be circulated to schools forum members.

16.0 **Review of Dedicated Schools Grant – update on 2022/23 Forecast Position**

- 16.1 Schools Forum were advised of, and noted, the DSG forecast outturn position for 2023/23. 18.10.22

17.0 **'Exceptional Circumstances' disapplication Request for 2023/23**

- 17.1 Following a discussion, the Schools Forum unanimously supported the proposal to apply to the Secretary of State for a disapplication for a period of up to 6 years, which (if approved) aimed to ensure that appropriate funding continued to be allocated to support the premises rental costs of the school concerned, minimising uncertainty and the financial impact that would otherwise be placed upon that schools budget. 18.10.22

18.0 **Central Expenditure Budgets 2023/24**

- 18.1 Schools Forum noted that the vote not to de-delegate the remaining 50% of the Local Authority School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering (**LAMB**) grant back to the Local Authority to meet its statutory duties in relation to school improvement guidance had been referred to the Secretary of State who had overturned the decision and therefore the de-delegated funds which were requested will now be de-delegated 17.01.23

back to the Local Authority to fulfil its statutory duty.

Schools Forum approved the basis for the central expenditure for the 2023/24 financial year.

19.0 Proposed Early Years Funding Formula for two, three & four years olds 2023/24

19.1 The Forum considered the proposed early years funding formula. 07.03.23

Further to discussion regarding the allocation of maintained nursery school funding and the need for further time to consider this element, the Forum:-

1. Noted the work undertaken by officers and recommends the Early Years Funding Formula that is proposed for 2023/24 to Cabinet; and
2. Requested that 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;
3. Note that this recommendation will then be reported to Cabinet on 22nd March 2023 to seek their approval.

20.0 Proposed High Needs Funding Formula 2023/2024 - including an Overview of the DSG Management Plan

20.1 Schools Forum received a report and recommend the proposed Walsall High Needs Funding Formula to Cabinet, to seek approval and agreement to implement the formula from 1 April 2023. In doing so, it agreed to establish a working group. 07.03.23

21.0 Schools Forum Membership 13.12.23

21.1 Members resigned/no longer eligible:-

- A. Stoddart, Secondary Academy Head 07.03.23
- J. Barr, Special School Governor 07.03.23

Members appointed:-

- Mr James Ludlow – Principal Joseph Leckie Academy 07.03.23
- Mr David Smith – Blue Coat Academy 07.03.23

Substitute Member (WASH)

- Sarah Murcott – Executive Headteacher, West Walsall E – ACT Academy/Willenhall E- ACT Academy 07.03.23

22.0 **Correspondence**

22.1 The Forum received and noted correspondence as follows:-

- The Chair referred to correspondence from Primary Forum to which the Clerk outlined the content thereof and confirmed that a response had been sent; 13.12.22
- School Improvement De Delegation Letter – addressed in paragraph 14.1 above) 17/01/23

23.0 **Recommendation**

23.1 That Schools Forum notes the report.

Contact: Neil Picken, Principal Democratic Services Officer
01922 654369 – neil.picken@walsall.gov.uk