

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY 19 JANUARY 2024**

In Attendance:

Kirsty Peart - Sitwell Infant (Maintained) (in the Chair)
 Deborah Ball - Treeton Primary (Primary Academy)
 Dr. Sipra Deb (PVI Nursery)
 Guiseppe DiLasio – Wales (Academy)
 David Horrigan – Maltby Learning Trust (Primary Academy)
 Louise Keith – Principal Finance Officer, CYPS
 Julian Kramer - Interim Assistant Director: Education and Inclusion
 Angela McComb – Primary Maintained Governor
 Lisa McCall – Wales (Academy)
 Lee Morritt – Aspire
 Ian Muffett, Finance Manager, CYPS
 Steve Scott – Happy Kids (PVI Nursery)
 Karen Smith – Nexus MAT (Special Academy)
 Nevine Towers - Head of Business and Operations (Primary Academy)
 Nathan Williams – Roughwood Primary (Primary Academy)
 Mark Windle – Badsley Primary (Primary Maintained)

Apologies were received from:-

Steve Rhodes – Winterhill (Academy)
 Aileen Chambers, Head of Early Years and Childcare, CYPS
 Councillor Victoria Cusworth – Cabinet Member for CYPS
 Chris Eccles – Oakwood (Academy)
 Andy Krabbendam – CEO JMAT (Academy)
 Vera Njelic - Principal Finance Officer, CYPS
 Colin Price – NEU Representative
 Sharon Stones – Head of Arnold Nursery and Children’s Centre
 Pam Ward – Head of Service, Education, CYPS
 Sarah Whitby – Head of Service, Access to Education, CYPS

40. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to today’s meeting and introductions were made.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made

42. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes from the previous meetings held on 1st December 2023.

Agreed: That the minutes be approved.

43. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

44. MEMBERSHIP AND CONSTITUTION OF THE ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS FORUM (STANDING ITEM)

Consideration was given to the membership and constitution of the Schools' Forum and the suggested changes put forward for approval.

Angela McComb wished to place on record her thanks to the Forum on the support she had received during her term of office which had unfortunately come to an end both as a Forum Member and as a Governor.

Pepe Dilasio also confirmed he would be replaced by Lisa McCall as Head of Wales High School and was also tendering his thanks to the Forum.

Julian Kramer was invited by the Chair to share proposals to commence an independent review of the Schools' Forum and its constitution.

It was suggested to Forum Members that a focused, facilitated session be arranged to provide the Forum with an opportunity to deliberate the following issues:-

- The powers and competencies of the Schools' Forum,
- Responsibilities of Forum Members,
- Agree common themes across Rotherham that the Forum would want to explore in further detail,
- Discuss the direction the Forum would wish to take into the future,
- Review the overall membership and constitution (as several vacancies still existed and would need to be considered as part of the review).
- Reinforcement of meeting protocols e.g timely briefing papers with clear recommendations.

It was pointed out that the review would have implications for the High Needs Sub Group and its future work plan. It was the general consensus that the Schools' Forum should set the agenda and work plan for the High Needs Sub Group.

Forum Members were very supportive of the proposal to conduct a review and welcomed the approach discussed. It was noted that the review would be supported and funded by the Local Authority.

Forum Members suggested that an analysis of numbers within each sector be provided to aid further discussion on future membership arrangements.

- Agreed:
- (1) That Lisa McCall, the new Head of Wales High School replace Pepe Di'Lasio as a Secondary Academy Representative.
 - (2) That thanks be given to Pepe Di'Lasio for his contributions as a Schools Forum Member
 - (3) That thanks be given to Angela McComb, outgoing Local Authority Governor, who's term as a Forum Member would end on 31st January 2024.
 - (4) That a piece of work be commissioned to review the operation and effectiveness of the Rotherham Schools' Forum and share findings with Forum Members at a future meeting.

Action: Julian Kramer

- (5) That an analysis of numbers within each sector be provided to the Forum to aid further discussion and consideration of future membership arrangements.

Action: Chris Stones/Sarah Whitby

45. SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report presented by Louise Keith, Principal Finance Officer, CYPS which provided an update as to the 2024/2025 Dedicated Schools Grant Block Funding for Rotherham.

On 19th December 2023, the Department for Education issued the indicative DSG allocations for the 2024/2025 financial year (detailed within the report). It was noted that the allocations remained indicative at this stage due to expected changes being made to the Early Years figures.

In terms of the Schools Block the final allocation was mainly based on funding rates of £5,190.82 for primary children (£4,915.14 in 2023/2024) and £6,747.09 for secondary children (£6,426.61 in 2023/2024) as at the October 2023 pupil census counts plus actual amounts for premises related costs and historic pupil growth.

The October 2023 census count showed that there were a total number of pupils across the borough of 40,078; this was an increase of 55 (-149

in primary and +204 in secondary) pupils from the October, 2022 census count.

Details were provided on overall school block funding allocation which had increased from £230.617 in 2023/2024 to £243.723m in 2024/2025.

In accordance with Minute 31 of the meeting held on 1st December, 2023, the request to transfer 0.5% from the school block to the high needs block was submitted to the Secretary of State.

A further report providing details of the rates applied to the individual formula funding rates would be presented at the next meeting in April 2024. The rates applied would continue to be in line with the previous decisions reached in respect of the gradual transition to the national funding formula.

A summary of comparative information was provided on the Central Services Schools Block allocation and details on rates for pupil premium in 2024 to 2025 that was announced on 19th December 2023 was referred to as detailed in the report submitted.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) would continue to pay the Teachers Pay Additional Grant (TPAG) as a separate grant that would cover the whole of the 2024/25 financial year.

Mainstream academies would receive an additional allocation to cover April to August 2025 due to their funding cycle following the academic year.

Forum Members were advised that the High Needs Waiver disapplication was still awaiting formal approval.

Agreed:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

46. EARLY YEARS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report presented by Julien Kramer, Interim Assistant Director: Education and Inclusion which provided information on the statutory guidance in place for the allocation of early education funding and proposals for the local funding formula 2024/25.

The report provided substantial detail on the following areas:-

- The changes to the National Funding Formula and expanded entitlements
- The Early Years Block and increase in Department for Education (DfE) funding rates from 2023/24
- Local Authorities central retention from the Early Years Block
- Funding for 9-month-old entitlement

- Inclusion Support Grant
- Proposals to distribute the Early Years Teachers Pay Additional Grant

The Department for Education (DfE) had consulted on changes to the National Funding Formula for 2024/25 with the introduction of an entitlement for 2-year-olds of working parents from April 2024 and children from 9 months from September 2024.

Local Authorities were required to allocate the funding to early education providers based on a local funding formula which was detailed in the report.

Forum Members were made aware of several adjustments to the allocation. Local Authorities could retain up to 5% across 3 / 4 year old, 2 year old and 9 month entitlements (reducing to 3% in future years), Early Years Pupil Premium would apply across all age ranges (previously 3 / 4 year olds only) and the Disability Access Fund would apply across all age ranges (previously 3 / 4 year olds only). It was emphasised that Schools Forum could express a view on the recommended retention; in line with DfE guidance, it would be for the local authority to finally determine.

Forum Members were advised that the projected Early Years Block funding for 2024-25 was £29 million which would be distributed to 250 schools / providers again in line with DfE guidance. It would be allocated initially as an 'indicative' allocation in January 2024.

Local Authorities were also required to consult providers on annual changes to their local formula, including the Schools' Forum, on changes to local early years funding formulas, including agreeing central spend by 28th February, 2024 whilst noting the final decision rested with the Local Authority.

Details were shared on the options that were being proposed for consultation with the sector, and with interested parties. These were detailed as:-

Option 1:- Retain the current local funding formula in 2024/25 as set out in detail as part of the report with the addition of a Central Retention on 2 year old and 9 month old funding streams.

Option 2:- Central Retention of 5% of 3 / 4 year and 30 hour funding and 3% from 2 year old and 9 month funding streams. Retain 1% of 3 / 4 year old budgets to distribute as a deprivation supplement.

This model would maximise the 3 / 4 year old base rate to all providers and provide the mandatory additional deprivation supplement to all providers who would have qualified under Option 1 but at a single rate. There were 9% of providers who received 2p / hour less increase than

Option 1 however 91% of providers would benefit from an increased base rate.

Option 3:-

Either Option 1 or 2 for 3 / 4 year olds and no deprivation supplements to be introduced for 2 year olds or 9 month – 2 year olds single rates for all providers as detailed in the report.

It was noted that the Early Years and Childcare Team had held detailed informal discussions with providers regarding the proposals. The consultative process would commence as soon as possible subsequent to Schools Forums briefing.

Discussion focussed on the detail available on rates retention and its purpose. A Forum Member felt that the increase in deprivation supplement may not be enough to deliver the necessary impact required.

There was wide ranging discussion on the scale of the task, the cost of delivery and the anticipated impacts from the extra funding.

Forum Members were interested in the proposal to retain an initial 5% which would be reducing to 3% in future years. Julien Kramer offered to provide a supplementary briefing note to cover this issue. The note would be distributed promptly and would provide elucidation on this matter. Several Forum Members believed that the level of funding proposed for 3 / 4 years olds was insufficient to meet the needs of Rotherham children.

The expansion plan was welcomed. Those present also felt that due consideration should be given to the delivery and the sustaining of provision given the sector was experiencing difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff.

Forum Members suggested that it would be useful for an analysis to be provided on nursery closures and numbers of places lost. This would help provide further perspective to the current situation.

A Forum member suggested that there may be a disconnect between the detail within the report and what was in fact reality within the sector. It was queried what provisions would need to do should all options proposed be unsuitable. In this unlikely eventuality, the Local Authority would take guidance from the Department for Education (DfE).

It was confirmed that various supplementary information would be made available as part of the formal consultation process.

The Chair agreed to follow up with officers in relation to timescales for the consultation to be concluded.

Forum then voted on the five recommendations that were put forward.

The outcomes of the vote were:

1. Forum unanimously did not support the option to retain 5% of 3 / 4 year old and 30 hour funding and 3% of 2 year old (working and disadvantaged) and 9 month funding to cover central Early Years and Childcare Service running costs as there was no information shared with the Forum about what this money will be used for.
2. That consultation on the Early Education funding options presented be supported.

Action: Julien Kramer/Aileen Chambers

3. The complex distribution of the Inclusion Support Grant (ISG), based on the current model, was not supported.
4. That the Teachers Pay Additional Grant be distributed in a lump sum to all providers.

Action: Julien Kramer/Aileen Chambers

5. That the funding of the above entitlement for the EY Block with any shortfall being funded through the High Needs Block was not supported, pending further clarification.

Following the vote, it was agreed by Schools Forum that the interim director will:

- provide a supplementary briefing note to share information about in the proposal to move from retaining an initial 5% which would reduce to 3% in future years.
- Provide an analysis to forum on nursery closures and numbers of places lost to support understanding of current provision in the local area.
- Make a representation to the Department for Education (DfE) to implement a simplified system for the distribution of Inclusion Support Grant (ISG).

47. EDUCATION SAFEGUARDING ROLE

Consideration was given to the report presented by Julian Kramer, Interim Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion which was deferred from the previous meeting held on 1st December 2023. Further information had been included within the report for Forum Members to consider in relation to the funding and associated impact on schools regarding the provision of the Education Safeguarding Lead post.

Attention was drawn to details within the report that all Forum Members

had previously agreed to subscribe to at its meeting on 22nd September 2022. A recap on the arrangements regarding the appointment of the Safeguarding Lead role was provided along with details regarding the associated funding agreement also agreed at that time.

Reference was made to the commentary provided within the report regarding the outcomes achieved since the Education Safeguarding Lead had been in post.

The post would continue to be funded through a traded service offer with schools alongside the part funding from the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP). The traded service would offer a core level of support with additional charges for some aspects of the menu detailed in the report. This would be offered at a small subsidy cost to schools.

A funding formula had been developed to cover the single post for 2023-24 and information regarding the safeguarding post recharges were outlined in the report.

A funding formula for any future posts would be considered at a later date.

The traded service would be prioritised for all Rotherham schools although it was noted that there was potential to take the offer to a sub-regional market in the future.

Discussion ensued by Forum Members on the provision of a Service Level Agreement for schools to sign in view of the previous concerns raised by Forum regarding the funding arrangements for the role.

Forum Members acknowledged that this was a critical and valuable role however shared their concerns in relation to how consistent and quality standards would be maintained across the borough and sought assurances on the robustness of the arrangements being proposed.

Forum Members suggested that a three-to-five-year model is developed to support future planning and would welcome an annual Safeguarding progress report being presented back to Forum. Specific details on what the core offer would be and what additional services would be available to purchase would also need to be shared with Forum Members.

Forum Members noted the need to explore how schools continue to trade in the future, how they can become more creative and use means to share good practice.

Agreed: (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That consideration be given to developing a three to five year model.

Action: Julian Kramer

(3) That a Safeguarding progress report be presented to future Schools' Forums annually.

Action: Julian Kramer

48. HIGH NEEDS SUB GROUP

Consideration was given to a verbal update by Julien Kramer, Interim Assistant Director: Education and Inclusion.

It was suggested that the High Needs Sub Group, once re-established, should be instructed on its requirements by the Schools Forum. Reference was then made to the discussions that had taken place earlier in the meeting regarding the agreement to commission a refresh of the Forum's purpose and direction and Forum Members were advised that this work would be prioritised in the first instance.

Forum Members recognised the value of completing the refresh exercise before re-establishing the High Needs Sub Group and acknowledged that they would then be in a better position to instruct the Sub Group on its requirements once the refresh exercise had been completed.

Agreed: That the information be received and noted.

49. SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN (NON-FINANCE REPORTS)

Further to Minute No. 37 of the previous meeting held on 1st December, 2023, views were sought on which officers would lead on the suggested items previously discussed and agreement was sought on which dates those items could be programmed to come forward to Forum.

The following proposed agenda items were discussed and dates for future reporting was noted by the Clerk and would be added to the Forward Plan for future reference.

- High Needs Sub-Group Updates – Reporting arrangements to be agreed following the Forum's Refresh.
- Early Years Provision – April meeting (subject to consultation timescales).
- Attendance, Exclusions and Suspensions Data – April meeting
- PRU Numbers – April Meeting
- SEND Sufficiency – Standing Item at all meetings.
- Reduced Timetables – Understanding and Impact – June meeting.

Agreed:- That the information be received and the Forward Plan be updated by the Clerk.

50. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair invited Forum Members to share any other items for business.

Forum Members were advised that Joshua Amahwe, would be the new Head of Finance for Children and Young Peoples Service and would commence in post on 4th March 2024.

Forum Members requested that it be placed on record their disappointment at the number of officer apologies submitted for today's Forum meeting and further emphasised that non-attendance of report authors was not considered appropriate and had resulted in limited expertise being available at the meeting to answer Forum Member questions.

51. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Agreed: That the next meeting of the Schools' Forum take place on Friday 26th April, 2023 at 8.30 a.m. at Rockingham Professional Development Centre.