

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
THURSDAY 30 JANUARY 2025**

Mark Windle – Badsley Primary (Primary Maintained) (in the Chair)
 Dr Sipra Deb – Wickersley Nursery (PVI Nursery)
 Chris Eccles – Oakwood (Academy)
 David Horrigan – Maltby Learning Trust (Primary Academy)
 Lee Morritt – Aspire
 Colin Price – NEU Representative
 Steve Scott – Happy Kids (PVI Nursery)
 Sharon Stones – Head of Arnold Nursery and Children's Centre
 Nevine Towers - Head of Business and Operations (Primary Academy)
 Nathan Williams – Roughwood Primary (Primary Academy)

Joshua Amahwe – Head of Finance, CYPS
 Mark Cummins, SEND Project Lead, CYPS
 Niall Devlin – Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion
 Louise Keith – Principal Finance Officer, CYPS
 Paula Williams – Service Manager – Education and Inclusion
 Pam Ward – Head of Service, Education, CYPS
 Angela Kemp – Secretary to the Rotherham Schools Forum

Apologies were received from:-

Councillor Victoria Cusworth – Cabinet Member for CYPS
 Lisa McCall – Wales High School
 Lynsey Hadfield - Executive Head, Arnold Nursery
 Mark Ryan – RNN Group
 Lewis Moat – GMB Representative
 Karen Smith - Nexus MAT (Special Academy)
 Cary-Anne Sykes – Head of Service (SEND)
 Sarah Whitby – Head of Service – Access to Education

44. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

The Chair proceeded to share the very sad news that Steve Rhodes, former Chair of the Rotherham Schools Forum had passed away. The Forum paid tribute to Steve's service and the Forums' thoughts were with Steve's family members and the school community at Winterhill School.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

46. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2024 were agreed and approved as a correct record of the proceedings.

47. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Further to Minute No. 36 of the previous meeting held on 13th December, 2024, additional feedback was provided by the Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion following the second Schools Forum Governance Review meeting held on 17th January 2025.

Feedback covered the following:-

- Proposed changes to the Terms of Reference to be incorporated into a working draft that would be reshared with Members of the Review Group for re-review/comment.
- New Forum members would be pursued to fill vacant positions.
- A Self-Assessment would be undertaken annually at the end of each academic year.
- Local Schools Forum Guide would be produced to raise the profile of the Forum and support induction of new members.
- Ideas for improving communication and take up of consultation.
- New Forward Plan / Work Programme items.

Resolved:

That the Schools Forum notes the update provided.

48. 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.

Resolved:

- 1. That the reconfiguration of the Nursery School Head and substitute from Sharon Stones to Lynsey Hadfield (Head) and from Lynsey Hadfield to Sharon Stones (substitute) be agreed.**
- 2. That the appointment of Sascha Schofield as a Special School Governor Representative for a term of 3 years be agreed.**

49. **DEDICATED SCHOOL GRANT (DSG) AND SCHOOLS BUDGETS 2024-25 UPDATE**

The Principal Finance Officer presented a report on the latest position of the schools' budget for 2024/25 and commented on the following:

- The latest confirmed DSG funding allocation position which remained unchanged from the last reported position to Forum on 13th December 2024.
- The de-delegated budgets position which remained on track to spend to budget, with the exception of the Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) which had a small over-commitment forecast for the year.
- The increase to the Central Schools Services Block allocation to cover additional costs relating to copyright licenses.
- The latest forecasted position for the High Needs Block and the factors that were attributable to the variance.
- The latest forecasted position for the Early Years Block and the factors that were attributable to the cost pressure.
- The 24 local authority maintained delegated schools budget position, including balances and factors attributable for this.
- The latest position of those schools operating with licensed deficits which continued to be closely monitored.

Resolved:

1. **That the Schools Forum notes the latest published DSG funding for schools for the 2024/25 financial year.**
2. **That the Forum notes the financial positions of Rotherham's maintained schools and the identified risks against the schools DSG budgets for the year.**

50. **SCHOOLS FUNDING SETTLEMENT 2025/26**

The Principal Finance Officer provided details concerning the schools funding settlement for Rotherham, during 2025/26.

The total amount of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding amounted to £367.331 million, an increase of £32.9 million with funding to be allocated, as follows:

- Schools Block funding = £260.995 million

- Central Schools Services Block funding = £1.794 million
- Early Years Block funding = £42.202 million
- High Needs Block funding = £62.340 million

Attention was drawn to the rationale for the various increases in funding with particular attention drawn to changes to the way pay and pension costs would be funded, the national costs pressures associated with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and the substantial rise in the numbers of children and young people in Rotherham who received support via an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the expansion of early years entitlements to children aged two years and under two years together with the ongoing statutory responsibilities in relation to schools, as well as grants to help meet the costs of universal free school meals for infants.

Further details in relation to Pupil Premium, PE and Sport provision improvements and National Insurance Contribution allocations were expected to be confirmed in due course.

Forum Members shared concern regarding the difficulties associated with planning budgets for next year and the significant pressures within the system due to falling pupil rolls.

Resolved:

That Members of the Schools Forum note the content of the report.

51. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING 2025/26

The Principal Finance Officer detailed the proposed budget for the Schools Block, with particular reference to the following:

- The determinants and values for the various funding factors in the Schools Block.
- The changes made to the school's 2025/26 National Funding Formula (NFF) in relation to rolling in the Teachers Pay Additional Grant (TPAG) Teachers Pay Employer Contribution Grant (TPECG) and Core School Budget Grant (CSBG).
- The changes introduced to split sites funding, noting only one school would be impacted.
- The implemented changes to increase alignment between the local schools funding formula and the national formula during 2025/26 which reflected the outcome of the consultation with schools and the DfE changes to the NFF.
- The proposal to transfer 0.5% of funding to the High Needs Block

as agreed by the Schools Forum at its previous meeting which was now awaiting DfE approval.

- Proposals for the de-delegation of funding back to the Local Authority for Contingency (Schools in Financial Difficulty SIFD), Trade Union and School Improvement.
- Discussions that had taken place with Local Authority Maintained Head Teachers regarding the approach to de- delegation and the associated funding amounts.

A formal vote was required to be taken by maintained school representatives for Primary and Secondary within the Schools Group, on the de-delegation proposals contained in the report. The representative who was eligible to vote, did so in favour of the proposals.

Resolved:

- 1. That the Schools Forum notes the Schools Block DSG allocation for 2025/26 and the implemented changes to the local schools funding formula as outlined in paragraphs 7 to 18 of this report.**
- 2. That the Schools Forum notes that the proposed 2025/26 schools funding formula incorporates a funding transfer of 0.5% to the high needs block (as approved by the Forum on 13th December 2024).**
- 3. That the Schools Forum approves the funding for maintained primary & secondary schools outlined in paragraph 22 to be de-delegated and retained by the Council to fund schools related expenditure.**

52. EARLY YEARS BLOCK BUDGET REPORT 2025/26

The Head of Finance (CYPS) outlined the proposed funding arrangements for Rotherham's Early Years Block for 2025/26 and referred to the following:

- Rotherham's provisional settlement for the 2025/26 early years block of £42.2m which represented an increase of £11.3m compared to the 2024/25 allocation and was attributable to the full year impact of the new and extended entitlements.
- The hourly funding rates for providers.
- The structure of Rotherham's local Early Years Funding Formula for 3 and 4 year olds and 2 and under 2's, which remained unchanged.

- The levels of funding subject to 'pass-through' requirements for providers.
- The changes proposed to how the SEN Inclusion Fund (SENI) would be funded in 2025/26 for Tier 2 and the associated impact and the continuing discussions taking place to determine a clear view for Tier 3 in the future.

The next steps would include concluding the consultation exercise with providers regarding the annual changes to the local formula and the proposed SENI changes, and to inform early years settings and providers of their indicative funding rates by the end of February.

Discussion arose on the continuing cost pressures within the early years sector associated with pay increases and other inflationary costs and a Forum Member shared concerns regarding the reality of what the pass-through rates would be for providers.

Resolved:

1. That the Schools Forum note the provisional DSG funding settlement for the early years block for 2025/26;
2. That the Schools Forum note the proposed arrangements for allocating the early years funding to providers for 3 & 4 year olds, 2 year olds and under 2's, via Rotherham's funding formula.
3. That the Schools Forum note the proposed Inclusion Support Grant funding and provider allocation.

53. CENTRAL SERVICES SCHOOLS BLOCK (CSSB) BUDGET REPORT 2025/26

The Head of Finance (CYPS) outlined the proposed distribution of funding for the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) particularly concerning ongoing responsibilities. Ongoing commitments were detailed as follows:

- Copyright Licences. It was noted that this annual budget allocation was pre-determined by the DfE and the amount for 2025-26 had not yet been confirmed therefore a £21k estimated increase has been included based on the additional funding level provided by DfE for increased costs.
- Teachers Pay / Pension costs (allocation pre-determined by the DfE)
- School Admissions

- Schools Forum running costs
- SACRE
- School Improvement – Safeguarding. It was noted that an additional £41k commitment for School Improvement (Safeguarding) had been proposed for 2025-26 to ensure future arrangements were sustainable.
- Retained Duties (formerly ESG)

Reference was then made to the £81k funding gap resulting from the proposed allocations together with the actions proposed to manage and mitigate the funding gap.

A vote on whether the Schools Forum agreed with the proposed funding arrangements for these activities during 2025/26 was undertaken. Following the vote involving eligible members, the funding proposals were unanimously supported.

Resolved:

- 1. That the Schools Forum approve the proposed 2025/26 budget allocation as outlined in the table in paragraph 18 of the report.**
- 2. That the Schools Forum note the actions to address the net funding gap identified in paragraph 24 of the report.**

54. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Nominations were sought by the Chair for the position of Vice-Chair of Rotherham Schools Forum for the next two years.

Mrs. L. Hadfield was proposed by Mr. C. Eccles and seconded by Mr. L. Morritt and duly appointed to the position of Vice-Chair of Rotherham Schools' Forum.

Resolved:

That Mrs. L. Hadfield be appointed Vice-Chair of the Rotherham Schools Forum for the next two years (2024/25 and 2025/26 academic years).

55. SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN

The Chair explained that following discussion at the Schools Forum Review Meeting on 17th January 2025 several items had been proposed for inclusion on the Forward Plan and added by the Clerk.

Forum Members reviewed the Forward Plan circulated with the agenda

pack and confirmed no additions or amendments were required.

Resolved:

That the Forward Plan be noted.

56. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other urgent business items raised.

57. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Resolved:-

- 1. That the next meeting of the Schools' Forum takes place on Friday, 28th March, 2025 at 8.30 a.m. at Rockingham PDC.**
- 2. That the dates proposed for future meetings as listed on the agenda were agreed.**

The Chair of the Forum concluded business and thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.