



Schools Forum

Date: 16 September 2021

Time: 8.30 am

Venue: Via MS Teams

Item/Paper

A

Public

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON 17 JUNE 2021 – HELD VIA MS TEAMS

Present

School Forum Members

Bill Dowell (Chair)
Alan Doust – Secondary academy headteacher (from 9.15)
John Hitchings – Academy governor
Sandra Holloway – Primary governor
Marilyn Hunt – Primary headteacher
Sue Lovecy – Secondary academy headteacher
Stephen Matthews – Primary governor
David O’Toole – Secondary academy headteacher
Alan Parkhurst – Primary headteacher
Michael Revell – Primary governor
Mark Rogers – Primary headteacher
Andrew Smith – Post 16
James Staniforth – Post 16
Charles Thomas – Professional association representative
Carla Whelan – Primary academy headteacher (left at 9.00)

Members

Kirstie Hurst-Knight (left at 9.25)
Nick Bardsley

Officers

Jo Jones
Neville Ward
Stephen Waters
Phil Wilson
Helen Woodbridge

Observers

Roger Evans
David Vasmer

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Karen Bradshaw, Sabrina Hobbs, Mark Cooper, Reuben Thorley and John Parr

David O’Toole had advised that he may have to leave the meeting early and Alan Doust had advised that he may be late in arriving.

The chair welcomed James Staniforth and Kirstie Hurst-Knight to their first Schools Forum meeting.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 were agreed as a true record.

John Hitchings reminded officers to send a summary update of academy and LA schools.

James Staniforth introduced himself. He advised that together with his role as principal of Shrewsbury Colleges Group, he is also a governor of a secondary

ACTION

PW

school.

Page 2 – catch up premium – Phil Wilson advised that he had picked this up with the DfE and will cover further at agenda item 4.

The F40 report and COVID related funding report had been circulated.

Neville Ward confirmed that he had thanked the providers at the last network meeting.

The DfE education recovery support document was shared via the chat. This makes reference to the recovery premium for 2021-22 - £302 million. Further guidance is to follow and allocations will be available in December. Another £218 million will be available for tutoring in schools.

The chair thanked the administrative clerk for her continued support.

3. **Updated Dedicated Schools Grant 2021-22**

Jo Jones presented her report which was as expected.

Shropshire's 2021-22 DSG allocation was updated in March 2021 to include recoupment for academies and deductions for high needs places funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

	Provisional DSG £m	Recoupment / Deductions for HN places £m	Latest DSG £m
Schools Block	183.383	124.426	58.956
Early Years Block (Provisional)	17.028	0	17.028
High Needs Block	31.527	5.276	26.251
Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)	2.599	0	2.599
Total DSG	234.537	129.702	104.834

Neville Ward advised of the changes to the Early Years Block calculations adding that there is now an additional summer term headcount which is underway. There is also a summer term census to determine final allocation for 2020-21 and to inform budget allocations for 2021-22.

Andrew Smith asked if point 5 was new. Jo Jones agreed to find out more about this.

JJ

4. School Balances as at March 2021

Jo Jones presented her report.

The report analyses the actual levels of individual local authority maintained schools' balances as at 31 March 2021 and compares these with the previous year's position.

It was reported that the overall level of school balances held by maintained schools in Shropshire has increased over the last financial year by £2.332m (78%) to a total balance of £5,332,962.

	March 2020	Balance	March 2021	Balance	Variance	
	Number of Schools	March 2020	Number of Schools	March 2021	£	%
		£		£		
Primary Schools						
In Deficit	4	-41,025	2	-10,203	30,822	-75%
In Surplus	81	3,509,888	82	5,567,677	2,057,789	59%
Net Total	85	3,468,863	84	5,557,474	2,088,611	60%
Secondary (inc All-Through) Schools						
In Deficit	1	-474,420	1	-437,621	36,800	-8%
In Surplus	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Net Total	1	-474,420	1	-437,621	36,800	-8%
Special Schools						
In Deficit	1	-202,304	1	--53,198	149,106	-74%
In Surplus	1	209,241	1	266,307	57,066	27%
Net Total	2	6,937	2	266,307	259,370	2972%
All Schools						
In Deficit	6	-717,749	4	-501,022	216,727	-30%
In Surplus	82	3,719,129	83	5,833,984	2,114,855	57%
Net Total	88	3,001,380	87	5,332,962	2,331,582	78%

Overall surplus balances have increased by £2.114m (57%) during the year, in contrast to reductions to overall surplus balances in previous years.

Overall deficit balances have decreased by £216,727 (-30%), in contrast to a 30% increase in deficit balances in the previous year. Deficit balances have decreased in all sectors: secondary, primary, and special.

Unfortunately there is no information regarding academy balances but it is hoped to have some data to report on in the Autumn meeting.

Schemes for financing local authority maintained schools

The Department for Education has updated the statutory guidance on Scheme for the Financing Schools. The changes include the requirement for maintained schools to submit a 3-year budget forecast each year, and the directive for schools which have a deficit of over 5% to submit a recovery plan to the local authority

An update of the Shropshire Scheme for the Financing of Schools will be presented for Schools Forum's consideration and comment in the Autumn term.

School Forum members were advised that they should contact Jo Jones for further information about school balances.

Mark Rogers suggested that schools are accruing more this year. Although they have spent more money on cleaning and lost some income, there is generally still a saving overall although this doesn't seem to be accepted nationally. He was concerned that information for academies is not readily available and was pleased that balances for LA schools have been anonymised.

Jo Jones will consider reporting methods for this next year.

JJ

Marilyn Hunt asked about deficits and asked if there is one in place on conversion, would the remaining schools still have to carry this. She was advised that if the school was sponsored, it would be the case. In the current case of a special school, there should not be any deficit. It will be reported at the next meeting if there is a residual deficit.

PW

The requirement for three year budget forecasts will be covered further at the next meeting. Phil Wilson advised that he is working with the schools finance team to support maintained schools with this. Mark Rogers did not think that this would be an issue as it was a requirement of the SFVS return so should already be in place. It was agreed that some quality assurance from the LA will be required.

James Staniforth confirmed that the requirement for a three year forecast had been in place for FE for some time.

5. **Growth Fund Allocations 2020-21 and 2021-22**

Phil Wilson presented his paper.

2020-21 Growth Fund

Allocation of £976,988, of which £667,055 was originally set aside for distribution to schools requiring growth to meet basic need – balance of £309,933 was earmarked to part fund transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to meet pressures on the latter.

Total of £377,000 as distributed to 8 schools in 2020-21 – balance of £290,055 was used to offset the overall overspend on the Dedicated Schools Grant at the year end.

2021-22 Growth Fund

Allocation of £959,993, of which School Forum agreed a sum of £521,993 to be earmarked to part fund transfer of 0.5% - £876,000 - from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to meet pressures on the latter, leaving a balance of £438,000 for distribution to schools requiring funds in 2021-22

4 secondary academies will be receiving funding in the Summer term based on allocations from September 2020 through to the end of August 2021 at a committed cost of £140,000

Pre-opening costs for the new mainstream school in west Shrewsbury, planned to open in September 2022, will be charged to the Growth Fund – total estimate is £153,000 (£47,000 in 2021-22 and £106,000 in 2022-23).

6. **Provision of Trade Union Facility Time in Shropshire**

Charles Thomas presented his paper.

Trade union facility time is subject to de-delegation and approval by Schools Forum on an annual basis. The funding is already accounted for in the budget. The budget for facility time has significantly reduced over recent years. The decrease in the budget has led to 2 days per week for NEU and NASUWT and just a half day for NAHT.

The National Funding Formula has seen a steady year on year rise. Last year (2020-21) the rise was 3.67% going to 4.5 % this year (2021-22).

Phil Wilson explained that consultation on de-delegation will take place in October as usual including the provision of Trade Union Facility Time. This will be included as a third proposal. Schools Forum will then make a decision after the consultation. Schools Forum agreed that this could be included in the consultation papers.

The chair thanked Charles Thomas for his input.

7. Dedicated Schools Grant Monitoring

Stephen Waters presented the paper.

The 2020-21 outturn position for the DSG is a £0.478m in-year surplus, This surplus needs to be added to the £1.710 DSG deficit carried forward from 2019-20 resulting in a cumulative DSG deficit of £1.232m to be carried forward into 2021-22.

- 2020-21 outturn by block:

	2020-21 DSG Allocation £ m'	2020-21 Expenditure £ m'	2020-21 Variance £ m'
Early Years Block	16.796	16.592	- 0.204
Centrally controlled or retained High Needs Block	20.929	20.977	0.047
Central Schools Services Block	2.791	2.780	- 0.011
De-Delegated Items from Schools Block	0.354	0.334	- 0.020
School Growth Fund from Schools Block	0.667	0.377	- 0.290
Total	41.537	41.059	- 0.478

Early Years Block

£0.204m underspend reported against a provisional Early Years Block allocation of £16.796m. The final Early Years DSG allocation for 2020-21 is published later in the year. The underspend relates to reduced take up of places for 2 year olds (£0.151m) and 3-4 year olds (£0.093m) when compared to the number which Shropshire is funded for based on January 2020 census data. These underspends are after the double-funding of nursery places due to Covid-19 which led to additional costs of approximately £0.150m

The main area of growth is SEN support - £0.029m overspend.

Neville Ward confirmed that the underspend will be taken up with revised allocations.

High Needs Block

In-year deficit of £0.047m. Given that £0.842m of high needs funding represents a one-off transfer of funding from the Schools Block as approved by Schools Forum, this indicates that the High Needs Block DSG allocation to Shropshire is insufficient to meet needs

Main variances:

High Needs Budget Area	2020-21 Variance £ m'	Reason for Variance
Top-Up Mainstream Schools	0.204	Increase in demand for top-up funding in mainstream schools reflecting the national picture. Number of EHCPs in mainstream schools decreased from 2018 to 2020 but during this time Shropshire has introduced the Graduated Support Pathway payments which has increased spending in this area through SEN support and early intervention
Top-Up Special Schools	0.182	Increase in demand for top-up funding in special schools reflecting the national picture. Increasing at a similar rate to mainstream schools. There has been an increase in the number of mainstream special school pupils with an EHCP from 574 in 2018 to 613 in 2020
Post 16 FE College Placements	0.029	Significant growth as a direct result of changes in legislation under the Children and Families Act. Large increase in numbers at 2 lower cost, mainstream colleges in particular as a consequence of an increase in number of P16 students with an EHCP from 189 in 2018 to 313 in 2020. Important to note that while the overspend is relatively low (£0.029m), the increase in actual expenditure compared to 2019-20 is much higher (£0.409m)
Independent Special Schools	-0.137	Underspend reported due to investment in supporting children to access mainstream provision in specialist hubs within mainstream schools. National benchmarking data indicates that Shropshire has 0.49% of it's pupils in Independent Special School placements in 2019-20 compared with the national average of 0.22% so may be scope to reduce expenditure in this budget area. As with P16 College Placements important to note that while an underspend is reported the actual expenditure has increased by £0.208m compared to 2019-20
Support For Inclusion	-0.317	One-off underspends experienced in year resulting from less expenditure on 6th Day Provision (£0.130m underspend). Also, one-off backlog of AWPU funding transfers from schools to the High Needs Block where pupils have been excluded (£0.227m)

Growth Fund

Similarly to 2019-20 financial year - an underspend against the Growth Fund within the schools block totalling £0.290m. This had the effect of reducing the overall cumulative deficit carried forward by increasing the in-year surplus from £0.188m to £0.478m.

Alan Parkhurst suggested the need to raise issues around Graduated Support Pathway (GSP) with the new head of service when appointed. There is a need to check if there is evidence of a reduction in EHCPs, ie, is the system effective?

James Staniforth found this to be a very helpful paper. He advised that increased numbers of students attending college mean that the colleges can invest in specialist staff.

It was confirmed that the DSG recovery plan will be updated and shared with Schools Forum in September.

Schools Forum unanimously approved that the £0.478m in-year underspend is offset against last year's deficit carried forward of £1.710m and carried forward into 2021-22 financial year to give a cumulative deficit of £1.232m

The chair summarised that much work will be required to balance the high needs budget.

John Hitchings advised that this would have been Sabrina Hobbs last meeting. The chair agreed to send a letter of thanks and best wishes.

Chair

8. Communications

The need to keep up pressure re high needs funding was agreed.

9. Future meeting dates:

Thursday 16 September 2021
Thursday 4 November 2021
Thursday 2 December 2021
Thursday 13 January 2022
Thursday 27 January 2022 (provisional)
Thursday 17 March 2022
Thursday 16 June 2022

The meeting closed at 09.45