

Draft Minutes of Meeting

Wednesday 15 January 2020 2.00pm at Guildford Nursery School

Approved by Chair

Present

School and academy members:

Name	School	Role
Rhona Barnfield (Chair)	Howard of Effingham School	Academy member
Kate Keane (Vice Chair)	Ewell Grove Infant and Nursery School	Primary Head
Sally Cave		Nursery school head
Katie Aldred	Bagshot Infant	Primary head
Susan Chrysanthou	Furze field Primary	Primary head
Clare McConnell	Bisley CE (A) Primary	Primary head
Justin Price	Freemantles School	Special school head
David Euridge	Reigate Valley and other	

Name	School	Role
Jo Hastings	Ottershaw Infant and Junior Schools	Academy member
Nicky Mann	Wallace Fields Infant	Academy member
Ruth Murton	Thamesmead School	Academy member
Tim Stokes	Carwarden House Community School	Special academy member
Sian Bath	Private, voluntary & independent nursery providers	
Andrea Collings	Family Voice Surrey	
Jonathan Gambier	Guildford Diocese (C of E)	
Nick Trier	Teaching union member of Education Joint Cttee	

2 Declarations of interest

None

3

Overall schools block DSG had increased by £8m since October for pupil number growth, roughly as expected.

schools block to the high needs block, and had suggested that a decision was not imminent. Therefore two main scenarios had been considered, both with and without the transfer, as set out in the paper.

If the transfer to high needs block was implemented, full NFF was possible, ie

School and academy reps voted 10-0 in favour of a 2.34% minimum funding guarantee (with two formal abstentions)

DG had concerns about the premises factor in the December 2019 DSG allocation and had therefore modelled two further scenarios with a reduction of £0.7m in DSG. With the high needs block transfer this would allow 97.5% NFF factors (2.5% old Surrey) and 5.5% ceiling, still further towards the NFF than estimated in the autumn. Without the transfer it would still support full NFF and no ceiling.

DG emphasised that the final factor values and ceiling percentages might still vary, but that the variations would be consistent with the principles supported by the Forum. The 6.8% ceiling deduction (with block transfer) was worth only £300,000. Thus a small reduction in the value of the ceiling deduction might mean a large increase in the ceiling percentage.

The Chair asked that an explanation of the final (post meeting) adjustments could be shared with the Forum when available. **Action for DG**

Central schools services block

funding, and a small loss of transitional funding, partly offset by increased pupil numbers.

High needs block

sum of £4,300 per pupil in state maintained and independent special schools) This had not been included in previous modelling, partly because of uncertainty over pupil numbers. DG noted that the transformation plan meant a future reduction in the number of pupils in special schools (and a move to mainstream), which would mean a reduction in the basic entitlement funding within the HNB in future years, and that had not been included in the modelling either,

Early years block

There were no changes to report from previously advised fucaDC 7 BDC hlg ,63 (a)cR (e)-3 (co

DM recalled that a special schools banding review had been started two years ago and abandoned with no outcomes. A review might change the distribution of funding but there would still be pressures on all schools. If schools lost funding through such a review, they would need to recover it by other means, eg by higher needs bandings.

DM noted that the high needs block DSG had increased by over 8%⁶ compared with an increase in NFF block at around 5%. He asked on what basis the LA justified the proposed 2.55% increase.

point. Some mainstream schools would receive a minimum increase of 1.84% per pupil (or 2.34%) and special schools were being offered a higher increase than that. The revised proposal had had regard to the impact of Surrey pay increases and to the high proportion of support staff in special schools. The only part of special schools funding which was set nationally was place funding. Top up funding was entirely a local matter.

While any increase would only affect top up, the intention was so to increase top up that the average increase was 2.55% taking place and top up funding together (ie top up rates alone would increase by more than 2.55%). DM noted that this would mean a disproportionate increase in top up for LAN schools (where the top up was a small proportion of the whole).

LM recognised that there had been a delay in the banding review but argued that it was best to establish a proper basis for a further review before starting it; The proposed increase for 2020/21 had not yet been discussed with special school phase council, but the timing of the process was not out of step with that in previous years. There was a need to review the process for coming years.

Other members asked why the 8% increase was not being passed on to schools and suggested that, if state special schools could not afford to meet in NMI schools instead, at a higher cost.

LM contrasted the £13.8m increase in high needs block funding with the total pressure, which was around £50m. Thus the increased funding was nowhere near the total pressure. Funding increases for schools needed to be linked to strategies and outcomes, including the capital strategy. The 8% funding increase had to be considered in the context of a much higher cost pressure. The overspend was a combination of more children in the system and more NMI placements.

The Chair noted that many LAs across the country had high needs block that the LA and partners were working together on an area strategy to achieve better outcomes for children and sustainability of the high needs block.

⁶ Although members referred to an 8% increase in discussions (based on figures from the previous meeting), the actual % increase with the additional £1.6m is 9.3%

LM recognised the need for a consistent funding model for specialist provision, but proposed to focus on special schools first, as special schools funding had not been reviewed for some time and the mixture of pupil needs had changed over time. JW suggested that the 2.55% increase would be an interim increase while the review work was done.

The Chair suggested that any review could not be implemented until 2021/22 LM proposed that a review could be implemented in September 2020 for special schools if the Forum agreed. There would need to be transitional arrangements.

Another member argued that special schools could save the LA money by flexible arrangements if case workers were more aware of the scope. LM agreed that there was a need to empower staff to agree pragmatic solutions.

DM argued that total funding for special schools should be based on building a schools based on funding equivalent to mainstream for equivalent staffing arrangements⁷ He argued that such a model should be agreed before any banding review was undertaken.

Several members supported a higher increase than 2.55%.

LM advised that if the Forum supported a higher increase, that view would be reported back to the lead Cabinet member, (Julie Iles) who would then discuss the issue with the Cabinet if appropriate. Julie Iles was also a member of the SEND partnership board. If the Forum did not support the proposed increase the LA would not propose a lower increase. LM had had discussions with the Executive Director and Cabinet member on the issue following the previous Forum meeting.

LM proposed that the increased funding (whatever it might be) should be distributed by a more nuanced mechanism than a standard percentage increase to all schools JP wanted a vote on any proposal. The LA would propose a distribution method.

One member suggested that schools with large surpluses should not receive an increase The Chair noted that information on surplus balances was not always available to the LA (eg from some multi academy trusts) and that there was no mechanism for taking balances into account when setting
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reflected need.

LM recalled that a year ago the LA had proposed to recover excess surplus balances from schools and that the Secretary of State had rejected the proposal. DM thought surplus balances should be treated separately from funding rates and thought the LA already had ample evidence.

The Forum agreed that the proposed increase of 2.55% in special school funding was insufficient. The Forum did not recommend any specific level of increase

b) Review

proposals for alternative provision. Individual schools would be approached with proposals.

6 Update on growing schools fund criteria and budget

DG had circulated an updated growing schools budget and additional criteria. The cost for 2020/21 could now be contained within the published DfE allocation.

The Forum approved the revised growing schools budget and additional criteria

7 Schools Forum issues

Next meeting: **Thursday** 30 April 2020, 1pm venue Online Meeting

LM suggested that in view of the complexity of the autumn schools funding consultation, some sessions (or webcasts or both) might be organised next year for colleagues to ask questions about the proposals, These might be in mid September (subject to DfE timescales). The Forum supported this proposal.

The forward plan would be updated to clarify the issues on which the Forum had decision rights.

A revised constitution had been published. Changes mainly reflected changes in responsibilities introduced by DfE since the previous update.

8 Any other business

There was no other business apart from that already covered above.

Meeting ended 4.00pm

Annex

Requested amendments to minutes of 10 December meeting (amendments boxed and in bold)

Other business: Schools block transfer disapplication requests

Ben Bartlett (BB) gave a presentation comparing information presented by the LA to the Schools Forum, to the Cabinet and to the Secretary of State in respect of the proposed transfer of funding from



BB noted the series of transfers from schools funding to the high needs block over the last few years (as set out in the consultation paper). He pointed out to Forum Members the discrepancy in how those figures had

