

Schools Forum

Thursday 12 January 2023
14:00

John Tradewell
Director of Corporate Services
4 January 2023

A G E N D A

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022** (Pages 1 - 8)
4. **Matters arising**
5. **Decisions taken by the Chairman under delegated powers**
6. **Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements** (Pages 9 - 10)
7. **Verbal update on School Budgets 2023/2024**
8. **High Needs Block (including Education Banding Tool update and Deficit Management Plan)** (Pages 11 - 18)
9. **Date of next meeting** (Pages 19 - 22)

Membership

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Stephen Drew | Anne Tapp |
| William Wilson | Alison Parr |
| Richard Sutton | Abigail Rourke |
| Steve Swatton | Mark Boughey |
| Kim Prince Anson | Carolyn Trowbridge |
| Philip Siddell | Sarah Clark |
| Richard Redgate (Chair) | Helen Baron |
| Claire Shaw | Jessica Roden |
| Kirsty Rogers | Sadie Jones |
| Chris Wright | Emily Verow |
| Steve Barr (Vice-Chair) | Alun Harding |
| Kevin Allbutt | Craig Hodgson |
| Judy Wyman | Lindi Nejrup |
| Vicki Lewis | Nicola Mason |

Local Authority Observers

Mark Sutton
Jonathan Price

Core Officers

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Alison Barnes | Melanie Scott |
| Will Wilkes | David, Bingham |
| Andrew Marsden | Anthony Humphreys |
| Tim Moss | Carolyn Knight |
| Michelle Williams | Halit Hulusi |

Minutes of the Schools Forum Meeting held on 10 November 2022

Present: Richard Redgate (Chair)

| Attendance | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Stephen Drew | Vicki Lewis |
| William Wilson | Julie Rudge |
| Richard Sutton | Anne Tapp |
| Steve Swatton | Alison Parr |
| Jane Rutherford | Mark Boughey |
| Philip Siddell | Carolyn Trowbridge |
| Chris Wright | Jessica Roden |
| Steve Barr (Vice-Chair) | Emily Verow |
| Kevin Allbutt | Lindi Nejrup |
| Judy Wyman | |

Observers: Jonathan Price

Also in attendance: Alison Barnes, Will Wilkes, Joanne Galt, Debbie Nash, Tim Moss, Anthony Humphreys and Halit Hulusi

Apologies: Kim Prince Anson, Claire Shaw, Kirsty Rogers, Mark Sutton, Steve Breeze, Sarah Clark and Sadie Jones

PART ONE

1. Declarations of Interest

Steve Barr and Judy Wyman declared an interest in relation to agenda item 10.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2022

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 14 July 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Membership update and up-to-date membership list

Lindi Nejrup is the new 'All Primary (Maintained & Academy)' representative, nominated in lieu of a primary school headteacher forum nomination - to serve until September 2026.

Dawn Freeman is the new 'All Maintained Nursery Schools' representative replacing Nadine Key - to serve until October 2026. Nadine was thanked for her involvement in the Schools Forum.

It was also announced that Jane Rutherford would be stepping down from her role in the Schools Forum as the representative of the 'Secondary Heads Forum'. Jane will be replaced by Alun Harding, who is currently on the Schools Forum as an Observer, to serve until November 2026.

Resolved: That:

- a. Lindi Nejrup had joined the Schools' Forum as the 'All Primary (Maintained & Academy)' representative - to serve until September 2026.
- b. That Dawn Freeman had joined the Schools' Forum as the 'All Maintained Nursery Schools' representative replacing Nadine Key - to serve until October 2026.
- c. That Jane Rutherford had left the Schools' Forum as the representative of the 'Secondary Heads Forum' and was to be replaced by Alun Harding to serve until November 2026.

4. Matters arising

Minute 80 – It was raised that, although consistent financial reporting dictated how the figure was calculated, the maintained schools believed that the reserves figure of 24.3m was somewhat misleading as this figure did not account for earmarked, committed or ring-fenced funds.

Minute 81 – Following a query relating to who was now leading on the Education Banding Tool at an operational level following the retirement of the Lead Officer, it was confirmed that this was now the Head of SEND - Halit Hulusi.

5. Decisions taken by the Chairman under delegated powers

None taken by the Chair since the last meeting.

6. Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements

It was reported that, since the last Forum, two new Notices of Concern had been issued; Flash Ley Primary School (deficit position and no recovery plan) and Moor First School (unable to set a balanced budget for 2022/23).

Licensed Deficit plans have also been put into place for Fulfen Primary School and St Leonards Primary School, Stafford.

The Entrust Schools Finance team continue to work with all schools who have existing Notice of Concern or Licensed Deficit agreement.

Resolved: That, the issue and withdrawal of Notice of Concerns to schools be noted.

7. Primary Behaviour Support Services - 2023-24 Financial Year

The Schools Forum received a report of the Director of Children and Families relating to the Primary Behaviour Support Service for the 2021 – 2022 Financial Year.

The purpose of the report was to provide details of the current Primary Behaviour Support Service offered to Staffordshire maintained primary schools, to update on the progress that had been made on the delivery of the recommendations made in the Autumn term (2021) report and to provide further recommendations to support the continued development of the Primary Behaviour Support Service.

The report also sought agreement of continued de-delegated funding from maintained primary schools' delegated budgets. **The approval of this item would take place during the voting process of agenda item 10.**

Following a request to provide figures to show the number of students who had been excluded from Primary Schools, and whether these figures could be broken-down between maintained and academy schools, the Forum was reminded that this was a service provided to maintained schools only and didn't include academy schools. It was explained that this information was available for maintained schools and was agreed that it would be shared with the Schools Forum.

Members queried if quantitative data was available that would allow the Forum to measure the outcomes of the provision. It was explained that the data was available on a district level and could be shared with the Forum, however, when assessing the trends and data, the Forum would need to take into consideration that there may be other services supporting a child so the outcomes may not be attributable to one service.

Resolved: That:

- a. the continued improvements and development of the service during 2021/22, be noted.
- b. the Primary Behaviour Support Services data be shared with Forum members as agreed.
- c. the proposals and recommendations for the financial year 2023/24, be noted.

8. Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) 2023-24 Financial Year

The Schools Forum received a report of the Director of Children and Families relating to the Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) for the 2021 – 2022 Financial Year.

The purpose of the report was to inform the Schools Forum of the delivery of the current MEAS offer to maintained schools, to update on the progress that had been made on the delivery of the recommendations made in the Autumn term (2021) report, and to provide further recommendations to support the continued development of MEAS. It was noted that the report recommendations only referred to agreeing "to the continued de-delegated funding from maintained primary school's delegated budget for 2023-2024 financial year", whereas the MEAS service was available for both Primary and Secondary Schools. It was agreed that the report should be amended to state this. It was noted that the report recommendations only referred to agreeing "to the continued de-delegated funding from maintained primary school's delegated budget for 2023-2024 financial year", whereas the MEAS service was available for both Primary and Secondary Schools. It was agreed that the report should be amended to state this.

The report also sought agreement of continued de-delegated funding from maintained primary and secondary schools' delegated budgets. **The approval of this item would take place during the voting process of agenda item 10.**

In response to a query relating to the removal of a number of Afghan refugees that had been housed in Newcastle under Lyme and settled in schools in this area, to Manchester and whether they had been able to re-join the original schools, it was

confirmed that this information was not available at the meeting but would be sought and shared with Forum members.

In response to a query relating to the limited funding information in the report, it was confirmed that the detailed cost information was included in the de-delegated item No 10.

Resolved: That:

- a. the continued improvements and development of the service over the last year and proposals for next year be noted.
- b. That additional information requested in the meeting be shared with the Schools Forum.
- c. That the proposals and recommendations for the financial year 2023/24, be noted.

9. Schools Budget 2023-24: De-delegation, Central Expenditure and Education Functions

The Forum received the School Budget 2023-24 de-delegation, central expenditure and education functions report. The report sought approval from the Forum for the Local Authority to retain Dedicated School Grant (DSG) funding to deliver services on behalf of schools and Early Years.

De-delegation

Members noted that the budget areas proposed for de-delegation in 2023-24 were the same as those in the previous years. There was also an assumed level of inflation, these primarily affect pay award inflation. The areas proposed for de-delegation for 2023-24 are:

| Budget Area | Primary £m | Secondary (including middle) £m |
|--|-----------------------|--|
| Insurances (mainly premises related provided by RPA) | 1.200 | 0.932 |
| Staff costs (Maternity Pay) | 1.261 | 1.072 |
| Staff costs (Union Duties) | 0.151 | 0.064 |
| School Specific Contingency | 0.390 | 0.185 |
| Support for ethnic minority pupils or under-achieving groups | 0.948 | 0.345 |
| Licences and Subscriptions | 0.601 | 0.236 |
| Behaviour Support Services | 0.572 | Delegated |
| FSM eligibility | 0.066 | 0.035 |

Forum members representing all mainstream maintained schools considered the budget areas listed in the table above and unanimously voted in favour to de-delegate these areas for 2023-24 with 6 voting in favour, 0 against and 0 abstaining.

Central School Services Block (CSSB)

Members noted that the funding in the CSSB was split into Historic Commitments and Ongoing Functions.

Historic Commitments

It was noted that funding for historic commitments had been reduced by a further 20% compared to 2022-23. The provisional allocation for historic commitments for Staffordshire for 2023-24 was £1.3m.

The only heading under which Staffordshire retains funding for historic commitments was prudential borrowing. The indicative budget for 2023-24 was £924,130. Any remaining historic commitment funding will be transferred to the DSG reserve which is currently in deficit.

Forum approval was also required for the SEN transport budget of £250,140. This was now funded from the High Needs Block.

All Forum members considered the budget areas of historic commitment funding and approved the use of the Historic Commitments funding as set out in the report with 19 voting in favour, 0 voting against and 1 abstaining.

Ongoing Commitments

Members heard that the estimated cost for other ongoing education functions for 2023-24 was £3.9m and were to be funded by DSG through the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB). Any underspend on the CSSB would be transferred to the DSG reserve which is currently in deficit.

All Forum members considered the budget areas of ongoing commitment funding and unanimously approved the use of the Ongoing Commitment funding as set out in the report with 20 voting in favour, 0 against and 0 abstaining.

Growth Funding

Members noted that, as in previous years, the growth funding allocation had been derived using a formula which allocates growth funding based on the differences between the primary and secondary numbers on roll in Middle Super Output Areas (MSOA) in the local authority on the October 2021 and October 2022 school censuses. It was proposed to be used to fund pupil growth in the National Funding Formula (approx. £2m in 2022-23), and allocations as per the Growth Fund and Infant Class Size policies (approx. £740k). Any underspend will be transferred to the DSG deficit balance.

All Forum members considered the Growth Fund allocation and voted in favour of the continuing use of the Growth Funding allocation as set out in the report with 18 voting in favour, 0 voting against and 2 abstaining.

Central Early Years Expenditure

The Local Authority was asking for £1.9m (4.0%) of Early Years funding to be retained centrally. This expenditure funded statutory functions, along with back-office administration and overheads, with Members receiving a breakdown of these costs in the report.

It was agreed that a working group meeting would be arranged, as in previous years, to support the allocation of the 23/24 funding rates for providers. Full details of the allocation would be brought back to the Schools Forum meeting to be held in March 2023.

All Forum members considered the Central Early Years Expenditure and approved the proposed level of central support as set out in the report with 18 voting in favour, 0 voting against and 2 abstaining.

Education Functions for Maintained Schools Only

The LA asked for provisional approval of a levy of £56.47 per pupil from maintained schools to fund Education Functions (as set out in Appendix 3 of the report) previously funded by the Education Services Grant.

In response to a query relating to the increase in levy being primarily against asset management costs, it was confirmed that there was a contract in place with Entrust to deliver this service on behalf of the Local Authority, and that Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) had recently been renegotiated.

All mainstream maintained Schools Forum Members unanimously agreed to approve the levies per pupil (set out in Appendix 3 of the report) to fund the costs of the associated services, with 6 voting in favour, 0 against and 0 abstaining.

Resolved – That:

- a. the outcome of the maintained school vote on de-delegation be approved;
- b. the indicative allocations for both historic commitments and ongoing functions within the Central School Services Block be approved and retained centrally for this purpose;
- c. the continued use of the formula driven Growth Funding allocation be approved;
- d. the retention of £1.9m of Early Years funding centrally be approved and that a working group meeting be arranged to support the allocation of the 23/24 funding rates; and,
- e. the levy per pupil in 2023-24 to fund statutory duties performed by the LA and previously funded by the ESG general duties be approved.

10. High Needs Block

The Schools Forum received a report from the Director of Children and Families relating to the High Needs Block (HNB).

Members heard that the forecast outturn for the 2022/23 High Needs Block was £6.0m overspend. At the end of the last financial year the DSG reserve was in deficit by £8.6m

and will deepen given the expected overspend in 2022/23. Indicative Government funding next year would see Staffordshire's High Needs Budget increase to £122m (c.6%). However, this was insufficient to close the gap and it was likely that a further overspend will arise in 2023/24 of c £8m - there was also a risk that this could be significantly worse given clarifications in the HNB Operational Guide 23/24 regarding the funding of other authority 'Looked After Children'. Left unaddressed the accumulated DSG Deficit was forecast to worsen over the next 4 years to between £70m and £100m by 2026/27.

A 'Deficit Management Plan' (DMP) had been developed, based on the Council's SEND Strategy, that aimed to develop a more inclusive system where more Children and Young People (CYP) with SEND access mainstream education - wherever possible within their local community - and if appropriate with specialist support. This would provide for a more sustainable model, with better outcomes for our CYP and reduce reliance on the non-maintained and independent sector. This would take time to impact and, in order to limit the extent of the accumulated deficit arising over the next few years, the DMP also includes a range of interventions and policy reviews that would provide for additional resource / reduce costs in the short and medium term.

Given the continuing SEND demand, and growing deficit, Schools Forum were asked to approve the transfer of 0.5% funding from the schools block for high needs in 2023/24, which formed a key part of the Council's DMP.

Consultation had been conducted with schools with a response of 25% replying, the results of this consultation were included in appendices 2 and 3 to the report.

Whilst the Forum understood the pressures faced by the Council, it was felt that Members had to vote for the schools they represented and that while funding was needed for the HNB it was felt that this should not be at the expense of the Schools Block of the DSG. It was highlighted that this was a national issue and that Staffordshire's position was not as bad as some other Councils. Members also shared concerns that Schools were struggling to support students coming out of covid, and it was suggested that a lot of work on the SEND offering and model would need to be undertaken. At this stage some members felt that they could not support funding a system that they considered to not be functioning properly at this time.

The Forum considered the information in the report and voted against the proposal to transfer 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2023/24 with 2 voting in favour, 16 voting against and 2 abstaining.

Members were informed that, as the Schools Forum have not supported the 0.5% Block Transfer Request, the Local Authority would be applying to the Secretary of State to make a final decision on the application to make this switch.

The Deficit Management Plan would be monitored going forward and regularly brought to Schools Forum meetings as part of the routine High Needs Block update report.

The Chair suggested that the Schools Forum Recovery Working Group be reconvened to support the Local Authority with the development of the deficit management plan. This would allow members a more detailed awareness of the data that is being shared

in the recovery template of the deficit management plan. A provisional date had been arranged for the Working Group to take place on 28th November 2022 and Richard Redgate, Alison Parr, Emily Verow and Kevin Allbutt volunteered to participate.

Resolved: That:

- a. the High Needs Block budget 2022/23 and latest forecast outturn be noted;
- b. the latest budget assumptions 2023/24 be noted;
- c. the Deficit Management Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27 be noted;
- d. the outcomes of the Council's consultation with schools regarding the 0.5% funding switch in 2023/24 are noted;
- e. Schools Forum Recovery Working Group be reconvened to support the Local Authority with the development of the deficit management plan.

a) Deficit management plan report

b) 0.5% Block Transfer Request

11. Work Programme and date of next meeting

The future work programme, date of next meeting and future meetings were discussed.

Work Programme

The future work programme was presented to the Forum.

Resolved: That:

- a. the Work Programme be noted.
- b. the Recovery Working Group meeting taking place on the 28th November be added to the Work Programme.
- c. the working group meeting, arranged to support allocation of Early Years funding, be added to the Work Programme.

Date of next meetings

- 12 January 2023
- 23 March 2023
- 13 July 2023 - face to face meeting – Council Chamber, County Buildings, Stafford.
- 19 October 2023

Resolved: That the date of the next meeting be noted.

Chairman

Schools Forum – 12th January 2023

Notices of Concern

Recommendation

1. Members note the issue and withdrawal of Notice of Concerns to schools.

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for People:

PART A

Why is it coming here – what decision is required?

2. No decision required.

Reasons for recommendation

3. The agreed protocol for issuing a Notice of Concern includes the provision that information on the issue and withdrawal of a Notice of Concern will be provided to the Schools Forum on a termly basis.

PART B

Background:

4. Since last Forum, no new Notice of Concerns have been issued or withdrawn.
5. The Entrust Schools Finance team continue to work with all schools who have existing Notice of Concern or Licensed Deficit agreement.

Report author:

Author's Name: Melanie Scott, Senior Education Accountant, Entrust Support Services Ltd
Ext. No.: 07921 277815

List of background papers:

Schools Forum 7 December 2016 – Item 6 Notices of Concern: revised protocol
School Forum

School Forum 28th March 2019 – Item 39 Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for
Financing of Schools

Schools Forum – 12th January 2023

High Needs Block update

Executive Summary:

- The forecast outturn for the 2022/23 High Needs Block is £7.8m overspend (forecast overspend at Q2 £6m).
- At the end of the last financial year the DSG reserve was in deficit by c £8.6m and will deepen given the expected overspend in 2022/23.
- Additional Government funding next year will see Staffordshire's High Needs Budget increase to £122m (c 6%) and in line with previous forecasts. However the Government have confirmed additional funding next year of £400m nationally of which Staffordshire will receive c £4.8m. Part of this additional funding must be paid directly to Special Schools (and PRUs) to ensure a further funding rise of 3.4% next year (on top of the fixed MFG).

Recommendations:

That Schools Forum notes:

1. the High Needs Block budget update 2022/23 and latest forecast outturn
2. the update on the latest DSG government settlement

Report of Director for Children and Families

Background

3. The financial risk of the High Needs Block has been a standing agenda at Schools Forum. The increase in demand on the High Needs Block has been reported regularly. Pressures on the High Needs block are on-going due to the continued increase in a range of areas. These include:
 - Additional needs requests
 - Increase in pupil numbers requiring EHCPs,
 - Extension of age group to 25 for those with EHCPs,
 - Increase in independent placements and costs,
 - Increase in Matrix funding for special schools,
 - The funding of increased numbers of pupils educated 'other than at school' (EOTAS)
 - Increase in the number of pupils permanently excluded (and back to pre-pandemic levels)
- Budget 2022/23 and Forecast
4. For Staffordshire the High Needs budget 2022/23 is £114.8m; an increase of £13.7m compared with 2021/22 (13.6%). There has been no transfer of funding from the Schools Block this year to supplement the SEND budget.

This increase has been passed on in full for the provision of SEND and high needs; none of this funding increase will be used to repay historical deficits. For 2022/23 Special School budgets 22/23 have been set based on:

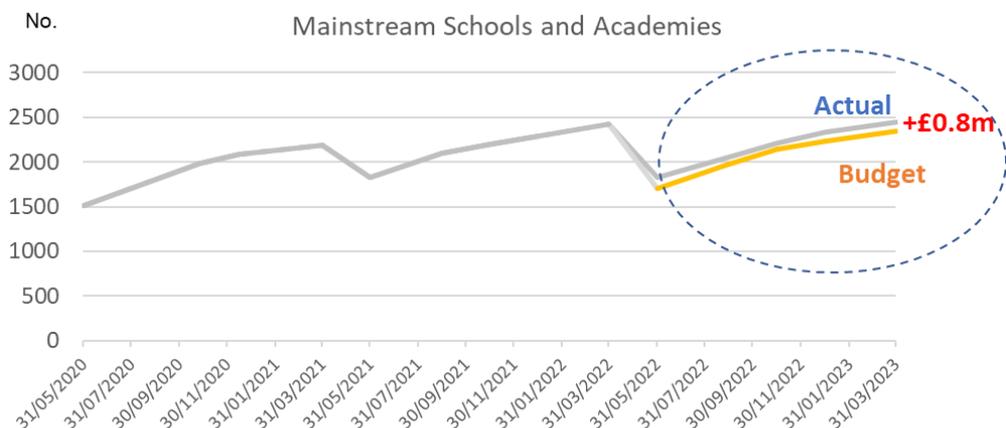
- i. a Minimum Funding Guarantee of 2.5% (higher than the MFG set by Government of 0%); ensuring that funding for all Special Schools, on a like for like basis, increased by a minimum of 2.5%.
- ii. no capping of school gains

5. Whilst the additional Government funding is recognised, rises will only keep pace with rises in cost / demand and this is insufficient to close the gap. The forecast overspend this year is circa £7.8m, higher than the forecast overspend reported at Q2 of £6m and largely due to additional demand and costs for Independent provision (a more detailed overview of the High Needs Block budget is provided within Appendix 1):

| High Needs Budget 2022/23 | Budget 22/23 £m | Outturn £m | Over / (Under) spend £m |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Planned Places | 33.1 | 33.1 | 0.0 |
| Top Up Budgets | 40.6 | 42.8 | 2.2 |
| Non Top Up Budgets | | | |
| Independent Schools (Mainstream & Special) | 25.7 | 30.1 | 4.4 |
| Alternative provision (inc Hubs) | 3.7 | 3.8 | 0.1 |
| Post 16 | 4.7 | 5.6 | 0.9 |
| Other | 7.0 | 7.4 | 0.4 |
| Total Net Spend | 114.8 | 122.8 | 8.0 |
| Total Funding | (114.8) | (115.0) | (0.2) |
| Net Outturn | 0.0 | 7.8 | 7.8 |

6. Key variances arising

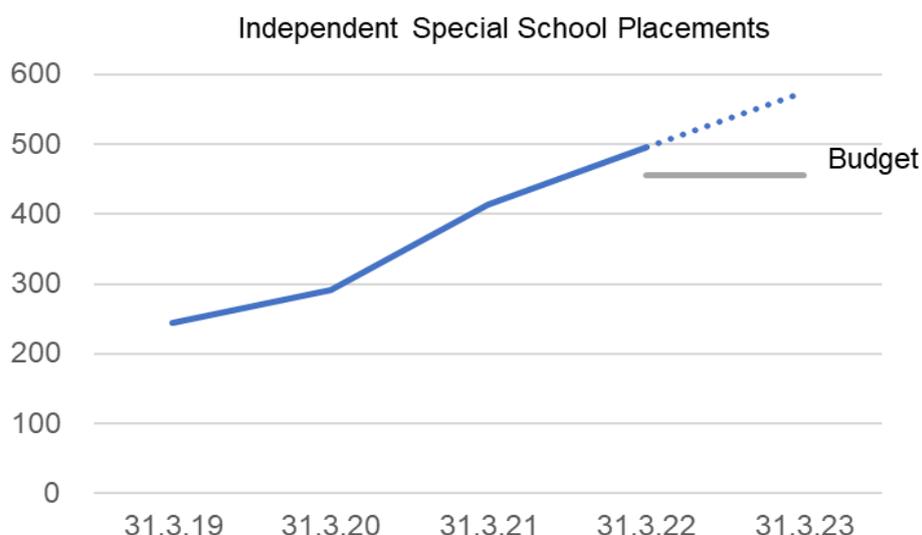
- i) An overspend of c £2.2m against the school 'top up' budgets, largely a result of:
 - the number of children with EHCP/AEN support in Mainstream Schools and Academies leading to a £0.8m overspend:



- An overspend of £1.0m in special schools and academies, arising as a result of both an increase in demand and a rise in the proportion of children receiving higher levels of top ups as a result of increasing needs:

| Top Ups | 2022/23 | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|-----|----------|-------------|
| | # fte | | £m | |
| Matrix 1 | 489 | 22% | 0.1 | |
| Matrix 2 | 769 | 35% | 1.3 | |
| Matrix 3 | 969 | 44% | 8.3 | 9.6 |
| School Specific | 2227 | | | 2.7 |
| Additional Places | | | | 2.2 |
| Enhancements | | | | 3.2 |
| Exceptional Need | | | | 0.7 |
| Residential | | | | 1.8 |
| Adjustments (part time / backdated) | | | | 0.3 |
| EBT (1-10) | 111 | | | 1.1 |
| EBT (school specific) | | | | 0.1 |
| EBT (override) | | | | 0.0 |
| Allowance for more growth | | | | 0.6 |
| Total Spend | | | | 22.4 |
| | | | Budget | 21.4 |
| | | | Variance | 1.0 |

- ii) An overspend of c £4.1m in Independent Special Schools; this is c £1.3m higher than previously forecast and reflects additional places/demand and increasing costs (over the year there has been a rise of nearly 10% in the average placement cost for Independent provision)



- iii) Other net overspends of c £1.5m due to increasing demand, most significantly for Post 16 provision (£0.9m) and Early Years (SEN Inclusion fund) (£0.3m).

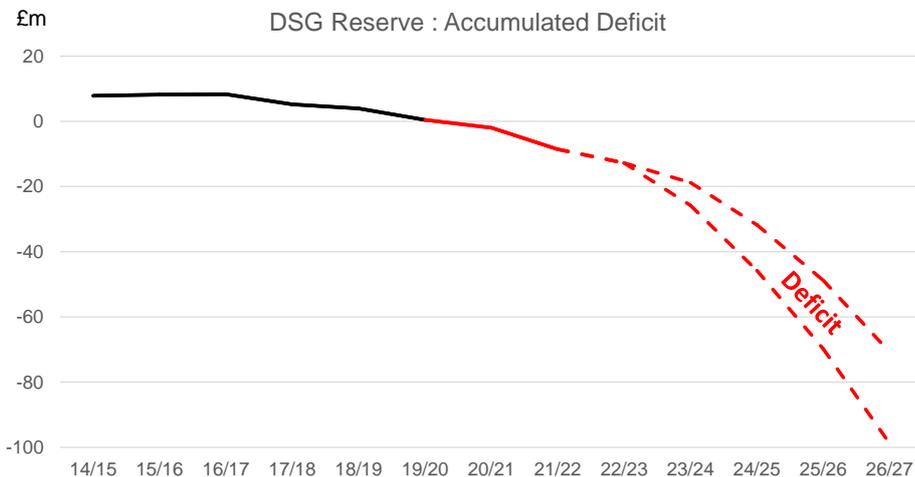
Note: the High Needs Block does not include the following costs:

- SEND home to school/college transport; this is funded from the Council's general fund resources. The budget in 2022/23 is £18.3m and the latest forecast is that this budget will overspend by £3m this year.

The main issues driving up the cost of this budget are the increase in demand, the placement of children and young people in education settings beyond their own community including independent out of county special schools, an increase in the average cost per pupil which includes both transport and escort costs and an increase in single occupancy journeys.

- prudential borrowing; a further amount of £0.924m is funded from the Central Block for historical but on-going debt charges as a result of borrowing previously taken out to finance historical capital investment in our Special Schools.

7. As a result of the on-going overspend in the HNB, over the last few years the DSG reserve has been fully depleted and at the end of last year was in deficit by £8.6m. Given the latest forecast overspend 2022/23 that deficit is likely to increase this year to c £16.4m (before under/overspends from other blocks).
8. Going forward it is anticipated that demand – and costs - will continue to increase in line with historic rises. Given the anticipated annual HNB overspend, this could see the overall accumulated DSG deficit increase to between £70m and £100m by the end of 2026/27:



- Government Funding 2023/24

9. For Staffordshire the indicative High Needs Block allocation 2023/24 will be c £122m – a rise of £7m (6%) compared to 2022/23 (subject to final settlement). This is consistent with the funding levels previously assumed and reflected in the forward projections and Deficit Management Plan.

10. In the recent Autumn Statement, the Chancellor confirmed additional funding for schools of c £2bn nationally of which £400m will be directed to the HNB. It is estimated that Staffordshire will receive a further £4.8m in 23/24 and is subject specific additional terms and conditions including:

- Part of this additional funding must be used to provide additional support to Special Schools (and PRUs). Payments must be made equivalent to 3.4% of the estimated total grant funding for each school (planned places and average top up payments 22/23)
- This additional funding is on top of MFG calculations 23/24
- Amounts must be separately identified and paid during 23/24

- Deficit Management Plan

11. A longer term financial management plan to recover the deficit, using the ESFA recommended 'deficit management plan' (DMP) template, has been developed that is consistent with the actions and objectives outlined in the Council's Accelerated Progress Plan and wider SEND Strategy. This was presented, in summary, to the Schools Forum in November.

12. A key part of the DMP was for a funding transfer of 0.5% from Schools Block to High Needs Block in 2023/24. This was rejected by Schools Forum in November and as such the Council has now made a disapplication request to Secretary of State to approve the transfer; at the time of writing this report it is not yet known if that request has been approved.

13. The DMP will be updated in due course for any changes once the outcome of the disapplication is known and to reflect changes arising from the final government funding settlement and associated MFG decisions etc. Proposed changes to the DMP will be brought forward and shared with Schools Forum at future meetings.

14. The 'High Needs Block Working Group' is scheduled to meet on 9 January and will consider in more detail the modelling and assumptions that make up the DMP.

- Education Banding Tool

15. The SEND Teams continue to work with Imosphere (the provider of the EBT software) to review, reflect on and develop the EBT methodology. This term, we are meeting to explore trends in the 6-month data set with a view to ensuring that the approach accurately reflects the provision that children and young people require to meet their needs. This work should address some of the minor discrepancies we are aware of related to the sensitivity of the EBT methodology particularly for children with very complex medical and motor needs. We are also exploring how we might extend EBT into the post 16 phase. Further updates will be available once this analysis has been completed.

- Government Response to the SEND and Alternative Provision green paper

16. In response to the SEND and Alternative provision consultation, the government has confirmed that a full response will be published in an Improvement Plan expected early in 2023.
17. It is expected that the Improvement Plan will focus on delivery; outlining the immediate steps the DfE will be taking, and how long-term sustainable systemic change will be secured. We will report on the implications for Staffordshire following the publication of the plan.

- SEND developments

SEND and Inclusion District Hubs

18. Of the children and young people no longer recorded on the SEND and Inclusion register during the academic year 2021/2022, nearly two thirds received an appropriate graduated approach and required no further intervention or support. Just over 10% required an EHCP to meet their needs.
19. During the autumn term a further 311 children and young people have been closed to the hub of which, 64% received an appropriate graduated approach.
20. The number of children and young people who receive a permanent exclusion and known to the SEND & Inclusion hubs continues to increase. We would expect any youngster permanently excluded for persistent disruptive behaviour to be known to a hub. This has increased to 61% during the Autumn term 2022 compared with only 46% in 2021.
21. As at the end of the Autumn term 2022, 1452 children and young people continue to be open to the SEND & Inclusion hubs.

Other developments

22. A Task and Finish group has been established and is designing a new holistic pathway to support early intervention prior to a request for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA). The county council is also reviewing the current Educational Psychology capacity as they play a critical role in the educational support available to children with SEND.
23. The countywide review of special provision (mainstream and special) is underway and in the Spring term will be consulting on a proposed strategy during the spring term. It is expected that the implementation of the agreed strategy will commence from September 2023.
24. Further investment is being secured to support the annual review and phase transfer process. This also includes the systems and processes for where an EHC plan can be ceased because the outcomes have been met or the young person is no longer accessing education.

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Appendix 1 - Forecast Outturn 2022/23 (as at Quarter 3)

| 2022-2023 HIGH NEEDS BUDGET (as at Quarter 3) | Latest Budget | Forecast Outturn | Over/(Under) spend |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | £m | £m | £m |
| Planned Places | 33.1 | 33.1 | 0.0 |
| Top Up Budgets | 40.6 | 42.8 | 2.2 |
| Staffordshire Special Schools and Academies | 20.9 | 21.8 | 0.9 |
| Staffordshire Mainstream Schools | 15.0 | 16.4 | 1.4 |
| Pupils in other LA Special & Mainstream Schools & Academies | 2.2 | 2.4 | 0.2 |
| Pupil Referral Units | 2.5 | 2.2 | (0.3) |
| Non Top Up Budgets | 41.1 | 46.9 | 5.8 |
| Independent Schools Mainstream | 1.8 | 2.1 | 0.3 |
| Independent Schools Special | 23.9 | 28.0 | 4.1 |
| Independent Hospital Fees | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.1 |
| Early Years PVIs | 0.2 | 0.5 | 0.3 |
| Alternative provision (inc Hubs) | 3.2 | 3.2 | 0.0 |
| Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.1 |
| SEN Support Services | 6.6 | 6.6 | 0.0 |
| Post-16 FE Placements & Top-ups for ISPs | 4.7 | 5.6 | 0.9 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 114.8 | 122.8 | 8.0 |
| Funding | (114.8) | (115.0) | (0.2) |
| High Needs Allocation from Government | (114.8) | (115.0) | (0.2) |
| Transfers from other Blocks | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| NET FORECAST OUTTURN | 0.0 | 7.8 | 7.8 |

Schools Forum Work Programme

There are a number of items the Schools Forum considers annually; these are set out in the work programme below.

The "Schools Forums: operational and good practice guide" (October 2013) states that:

Local authorities should as far as possible be responsive to requests from their School Forums and their members. Schools Forums themselves should also be aware of the resource implications of their requests.

Forum Members are therefore able to suggest an item for consideration at a future Forum meeting as long as it is within the remit of the Forum. Any request must be agreed by the Schools Forum before being included on the work programme. Each Forum agenda is set by the Chairman in consultation with the Director and the Clerk. The scheduling of items included on the work programme will therefore be agreed through this process and taking account of resource implications and agenda management.

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| Meeting | Item | Details |
|----------------------------|--|---------------|
| Spring Term 23 March 23 | Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements | Standard item |
| | High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan | Standard item |
| | Schools Budget Update | Standard item |

| Meeting | Item | Details |
|---------------------------|--|---------------|
| Summer Term 13 July 23 | High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan | Standard item |
| | Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements | Standard item |
| | Growth Fund - Allocation Funding 2023/24 | Standard item |
| | Schools Budget 2022/23 Final Outturn | Annual item |

Agenda Item 9

| Meeting | Item | Details |
|---------|--|----------------------------|
| | Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations | General update if required |
| | Election of Chair and Vice Chair | Every two years |

| Meeting | Item | Details |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| Autumn Term 19 October 23 Page 20 | High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan | Standard item |
| | Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements | Standard item |
| | Primary Behaviour Support Services – 2024-25 Financial Year | Annual item |
| | Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) 2024-25 Financial Year | Annual item |
| | Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations | General update if required |
| | Schools Budget 2024-25: De-delegation, Central Expenditure and Education Functions. | Annual item |
| | Education Banding Tool update | As required |

| Meeting | Item | Details |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Spring Term 11 January 24 | High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan | Standard item |
| | Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements | Standard item |
| | Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations | General update if required |
| | Education Banding Tool update | As required |

| Meeting | Item | Details |
|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Spring Term 21 March 24 | Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements | Standard item |
| | High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan | Standard item |
| | Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations | General update if required |
| | Schools Budget Update | Standard item |

| Meeting | Item | Details |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| Page 21 Summer term - 11 July 2024 | High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan | Standard item |
| | Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements | Standard item |
| | Growth Fund Allocation 2023/24 | Standard item |
| | Schools Budget 2022/23 Final Outturn | Annual item |
| | Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations | General update if required |
| | Education Banding Tool update | As required |

| Meeting | Item | Details |
|--------------------------|---|---------------|
| Autumn Term 17 Oct 24 | High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan | Standard item |
| | Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements | Standard item |
| | Primary Behaviour Support Services – 2025-26 Financial Year | Annual item |
| | Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) 2025-26 Financial Year | Annual item |

| | | |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| | Deficit management plan report | General update |
| | Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations | General update if required |
| | Schools Budget 2024-25: De-delegation, Central Expenditure and Education Functions. | Annual item |
| | Education Banding Tool update | As required |

| Meeting | Item | Details |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Spring Term 18 January 23 | High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan | Standard item |
| | Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements | Standard item |
| | Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations | General update if required |
| | Education Banding Tool update | As required |

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| Pending | |
|---|---|
| County Council Redundancy Policy | When there is something to report |
| In relation to minute 39 (150721) growth fund and schools not being asked to submit financial self-declarations post Covid. | It was asked if this could be added to the work programme so that it wasn't missed. |
| Education Banding Tool working group minutes to be circulated to Forum members as and when available | |
| Recovery Working Group to be reconvened to support with the development of the deficit management plan. | To take place on the 28 th November 2022. |
| Central Early Years Expenditure Working Group | To be arranged in January/February 2023 to support the allocation of the 23/24 funding rates. |