

Schools Forum

Thursday 18 January 2024

14:00

Meeting to be conducted using Microsoft Teams

The meeting will be webcast live and archived for 12 months. It can be viewed at the following link: <https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

John Tradewell
Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services
10 January 2024

Agenda

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
- 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 09 November 2023** (Pages 5 - 18)
- 4. Matters arising**
- 5. Decisions taken by the Chairman under delegated powers** (Pages 19 - 20)
Schools Forum review of numbers January 2024
- 6. Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements** (Pages 21 - 22)
- 7. Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations** (Pages 23 - 24)
- 8. Verbal update on School Budgets 2024/2025**
- 9. High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan** (Pages 25 - 36)

10. **2 year old and under - funding consultation** (Pages 37 - 44)

11. **Work programme and dates of next meetings** (Pages 45 - 46)

- Thursday 21 March 2024 – via Teams
- Thursday 11 July 2024 – via Teams
- Thursday 17 October 2024 – in person meeting to be held at the County Buildings, Stafford.

Membership	
Stephen Drew	Abigail Rourke
William Wilson	Mark Boughey
Richard Sutton	Carolyn Trowbridge
Steve Swatton	Helen Barron
Kim Prince Anson	Jessica Roden
Philip Siddell	Sadie Jones
Richard Redgate (Chair)	Emily Verow
Kirsty Rogers	Alun Harding
Chris Wright	Craig Hodgson
Steve Barr (Vice-Chair)	Lindi Nejrup
Kevin Allbutt	Dawn Freeman
Vicki Lewis	Nicola Mason
Anne Tapp	Andrew Skelding
Steve Breeze	Paul Spreadbury

Notes for Members of the Press and Public

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Minutes of the Schools Forum Meeting held on 9 November 2023

Present: Richard Redgate (Chair)

Attendance	
Stephen Drew	Mark Boughey
Richard Sutton	Carolyn Trowbridge
Steve Swatton	Helen Barron
Kim Prince Anson	Sadie Jones
Kirsty Rogers	Emily Verow
Chris Wright	Alun Harding
Steve Barr (Vice-Chair)	Nicola Mason
Kevin Allbutt	Andrew Skelding
Vicki Lewis	Paul Spreadbury
Anne Tapp	

Apologies given, substitute attended: Philip Siddell, Tim Hopkins attended as substitute

Apologies: William Wilson, Steve Breeze (Rebecca Cann was attending as a substitute for Steve Breeze, but had to give her apologies due to ill health), Abigail Rourke, Jessica Roden and Lindi Nejrup.

Also in attendance: Tim Moss, Sam Tomson, Will Wilkes, Mel Scott, Anthony Humphreys, Joanne Galt, Halit Hulusi, Liam Archer and Simon Humble

14. Declarations of Interest

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

15. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 23

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 13 July 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16. Matters arising

Minute 3 – Update to Minute 30 – 23 March 23 - Nursery funding and wraparound childcare update.

Additional information had been received from the Early Years team regarding School-aged wraparound childcare. It was clarified that the School-aged wraparound childcare, which was different to activity-focused after-school clubs, would be a universal offer, open to all children and families. Parents and carers were expected to pay for the wraparound they use, but eligible parents would be able to use government subsidies

such as Tax Free Childcare and the childcare element of Universal Credit against payment for registered childcare.

The Early Years team had been informed that £289 million would be allocated to local authorities over two years (2024-25 and 2025-26) to support flexible, creative and innovative approaches to creating/expanding wraparound through a variety of delivery models. These could include school-based provision operated by the school or a private provider, cluster/hub models which could be provided on or off school site, or child minders.

A handbook was published at the end of October 2023 and the Early Years Team had been through this to better understand the provision. The Team was also in the process of developing a communications plan so that partners, parents and providers would be informed as to how the new provision affected them.

The Forum was informed that the wraparound childcare process would be added to the work programme and an update would be provided at the Schools Forum meeting taking place in March 24.

Minute 3 –Update to Minute 22 of the 13 July 23 meeting, regarding an update to Minute 8 of the 10 November 22 meeting, relating to Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS).

It was confirmed that there were no Afghan refugees that were going to be evicted from any hotels, and that there "Right to Remain" had been confirmed.

It was also confirmed that refugees that were residing in Staffordshire bridging hotels were now either living in the Community in Staffordshire, if they had chosen to remain in this area, or they were living in the community elsewhere in the Country.

Minute 5 - Membership Update and Meeting Attendance Review

It was noted that, following the process which had taken place in May 2023 to elect new members, Judy Wyman had been included on the Forum as a representative of the Schools' Consultative Group. It was explained to the Forum that Judy had had to step down from this role in the Summer following a change in position within that Group, so would no longer be an acting member of the Schools Forum. Forum members gave their thanks to Judy for her involvement and support over the years. It was also highlighted that Judy had been unwell for some time and was currently in hospital. The Forum sent their best wishes for a full and speedy recovery.

17. Decisions taken by the Chairman under delegated powers

None taken by the Chair since the last meeting.

18. Termly Membership Review and Constitution Update

The Schools Forum received a report from the Director for Children and Families relating to the Termly Membership Review and Schools Forum Constitution Update.

The members were reminded that the membership of the Schools Forum was reviewed within the first two weeks of a new term starting in September, January and April to confirm that the proportions of school representatives remained broadly comparable to the pupil numbers in each of represented categories. The results of that review were included within the Constitution at Appendix C and presented for note by Forum members.

At the same time the opportunity was taken to make minor amendments to the constitution, most notably updating the style and format of the document to ensure it remained in line with current County Council brand guidelines and removing references to the "Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee", which had been changed to "Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee".

It was also proposed that the approval of future amendments to Appendix C of the Schools Forum Constitution be undertaken by the Chair under their designated powers, with the information being presented to members for note at the next scheduled Schools Forum meeting.

Resolved: a. That the September update to Appendix C of the Schools Forum Constitution be noted;
b. That the change of the reference from the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee to the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
c. That the changes of the branding of the Staffordshire Schools Forum Constitution be noted;
d. That it be approved that any future amendments to Appendix C of the Schools Forum Constitution, be undertaken by the Chair under their designated powers, with the information presented to members for note at the next scheduled Schools Forum meeting.

19. Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements

It was reported that, since the last Forum, Notices of Concern had been issued to Abbot Beyne School, Hob Hill CE/Meth(C) Primary School, Moor First School, St John's CE(C) Primary School (Swindon), and Wood Lane

Primary School. These notices had been issued because the schools finished the 2022/23 financial year in a deficit position and were unable to agree a Licensed Deficit repayment plan.

Notice of Concern have been issued to Corbett Primary School, Norton Canes High School and Talbot First School. These notices had been issued because the schools were unable to set a balanced budget for 2023/24.

Two new Licensed Deficit agreements had been put into place for Flash Ley Primary School and Fulfen Primary School.

The Entrust Schools Finance team continued to work with all schools that had existing Notice of Concern or Licensed Deficit agreement.

Resolved: That the issue of Notice of Concerns and Licensed Deficit Agreements be noted.

20. Primary Behaviour Support Services - 2024-25 Financial Year

The Schools Forum received a report of the Director of Children and Families relating to the Primary Behaviour Support (PBS) Service for the 2022 – 2023 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 (2022) report and to provide further recommendations to support the continued development of the Primary Behaviour Support Service.

It was noted that schools in the Cannock Chase area often accessed the service. In response to a query regarding the differences between the level of access by districts, it was noted that there was an awareness and willingness to access the services in the Cannock area. The PBS services was looking to undertake a review of the referrals that have been made by the schools in each district to determine the root causes.

In response to a query asking how aligned is the PBS Service worked with the SEND team, it was noted that monthly governance meetings were held with the Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Improvement, and information was regularly reported to the head of SEND, to determine how the service would work together for the benefit of children with SEN and High Needs.

It was highlighted that the PBS service was only available to, and funded by, maintained schools, and as the number of maintained schools dropped, and the number of academies increased, there would be a

smaller number of children accessing the service. In response to a query asking whether this would cause a risk to the future availability of the service, it was suggested that the PBS service would be viewed as part of the wider provision SCC was working toward implementing. This would start with the Enhanced Assess-Plan-Do-Review (EAPDR) pathway, and the Staffordshire Enhanced District Inclusion Support (SEDIS) Model. These services would be available to all schools regardless of whether they are Academy or Maintained. As part of the EADPR model, SCC was committing to half fund the provision that was required. This was pre-statutory support (before an EHCP), which would bolster the space before the Primary Behaviour Support Services was required.

In response to a question asking whether the metrics of the Academy users access the PBS Service were considered so a succession plan could be put in place as the number of maintained schools depletes it was confirmed that the service was accessed on a 50/50 split between Academies and Maintained schools with academies paying for the service.

In response to a question asking whether the PBS Services had the capacity to continue to provide the service, it was noted that there had been an unprecedented level of request received recently, but that the key targets had been achieved and capacity was being managed.

The report also sought agreement of continued de-delegated funding from maintained primary schools' delegated budgets.

Forum members representing maintained mainstream Primary schools considered this request and unanimously voted in favour to de-delegate this funding for 2023-24 with 3 voting in favour, 0 against and 0 abstaining.

Resolved: a. That the continued improvements and development of the service during 2022/23, be noted.
b. That the proposals and recommendations for the financial year 2023/24, be noted.
c. That the outcome of the maintained primary school vote on de-delegation be approved.

21. Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) 2024-25 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 (2022) report, and to provide further recommendations to support the continued development of MEAS.

In response to a query relating to the past challenges regarding the recruitment of sufficiently qualified interpreters with the requisite skillset to provide services to the various nationalities that were coming into the area, and whether this was something that was still being experienced, it was confirmed that this was still a challenge, but that schools were being signposted towards services that they could access to provide them with the support they needed. It was also highlighted that many schools were making their own arrangements.

The report also sought agreement of continued de-delegated funding from maintained primary and secondary schools' delegated budgets.

Forum members representing all maintained mainstream schools considered this request and unanimously voted in favour to de-delegate this funding for 2023-24 with 7 voting in favour, 0 against and 0 abstaining.

Resolved: a. That the continued improvements and development of the service over the last year and proposals for next year be noted.
b. That the proposals and recommendations for the financial year 2023/24, be noted.
c. That the outcome of the maintained primary school vote on de-delegation be approved.

22. Schools Budget 2024-25: De-delegation, Central Expenditure and Education Functions

The Forum received the School Budget 2024-25 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 2024-25 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 2024-25 are:

Proposed for de-delegation for 2024-25: Budget Area	Primary	Secondary (including middle)
	£m	£m
Insurances (mainly premises related provided by RPA)	1.454	1.165
Staff costs (Maternity Pay)	1.294	1.190
Staff costs (Union Duties)	0.157	0.071
School Specific Contingency	0.391	0.195
Support for ethnic minority pupils or under-achieving groups	1.014	0.366
Licences and Subscriptions	0.593	0.285
Behaviour Support Services	0.610	Delegated
FSM eligibility	0.064	0.033

In response to a question asking what would happen if the Forum voted against the de-delegation of the budgets, it was confirmed that the budget would be delegated to the Schools, but that the Schools would be responsible for delivery of the services.

Forum members representing all mainstream maintained schools considered the budget areas listed in the table above and voted in favour to de-delegate these areas for 2024-25 with 6 voting in favour, 1 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 again been reduced by 20% compared to 2023-24. The provisional allocation for historic commitments for Staffordshire for 2024-25 was £1.045m.

The only heading under which Staffordshire retained funding for historic commitments was prudential borrowing. The indicative budget for 2024-25 was £924,130. Any remaining historic commitment funding would be transferred to the DSG reserve which was 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.

It was proposed that to avoid confusion in the future, the Schools Budget report be restructured to clearly identify which DSG funding block funds the services being provided. The reconstructed report will distinguish between the approvals that are being requested from maintained school representatives and the decisions that are requested from all Forum

members.

All Forum members considered the budget areas of historic commitment funding and approved the use of the Historic Commitments funding, including SEN transport, 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 2024-25 was £4.1m 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 was currently in deficit.

In response to a question asking what was included in the budget line "Planning for the education service as a whole and Admissions", it was clarified that this budget was used to deliver a range of statutory roles on behalf of all schools.

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 2022 and October 2023 school censuses.

It was proposed to be used to fund pupil growth in the National Funding Formula (approx. £1.3m in 2023-24), and allocations as per the Growth Fund policy (approx. £1m). Any underspend will be transferred to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit balance.

In response to a question asking if the Growth Fund Policy was a Staffordshire owned policy or a National policy, it was confirmed that the Policy was Staffordshire owned, but it follows National guidelines.

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 19 voting in favour, 0 voting against and 1 abstaining.

Central Early Years Expenditure

Following the introduction of the Early Years Funding Formula, central overheads were previously limited to 5% of the Early Years Block Funding for 3 and 4 year olds. With the extension of eligibility entitlements in 2024-25, (15 hours for all 2 year olds from April 2024 and 15 hours for 9 months and over from September 2024) the 5% limit had now been expanded to cover all thresholds to allow local authorities to retain more funding to cover the central costs of the new expanded service. For 2024-25, the Local Authority was asking for £2.2m of Early Years funding to be retained centrally. It was highlighted that the growth of the eligibility entitlements made estimating funding uncertain as demand was unknown. Based on the Government's current forecast of take up, the authority's ask of £2.2m (which equated to 2.4% of eligible funding) was considerably below the allowable funding of 5%. This expenditure funded statutory functions, along with back-office administration and overheads, with Members receiving a breakdown of these costs in the report.

The new 2 Year old rate and 9 months and older rate would be subject to the same Government formula requirements as the 3 and 4 Year old rate. Staffordshire intended to run a 4-week consultation with Early Year providers on high level principles for setting the 2 year old and under rates for 2024/25 and beyond. This consultation would start on Monday 13 November 23 and would close on Friday 8 December 23. A paper would be presented at the January 24 Schools Forum which would include the results of the consultation with Early Years providers.

It was confirmed that a working group meeting would be arranged, as in previous years, to support the allocation of the 24/25 funding rates for providers.

All Forum members considered the Central Early Years Expenditure and approved the proposed level of central support as set out in the report with 20 voting in favour, 0 voting against and 0 abstaining.

Education Functions for Maintained Schools Only

The LA asked for provisional approval of a levy of £57.87 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 7 voting in favour, 0 against and 0 abstaining.

Resolved – a. That the outcome of the maintained school vote on de-delegated budgets be noted;
b. That the indicative allocations for both historic commitments, including SEN transport, and ongoing functions within the Central School Services Block be approved and retained centrally for this purpose;
c. That the continued use of the formula driven Growth Funding allocation be approved;
d. That the retention of £2.2m of Early Years funding centrally be approved; and,
e. That the levy per pupil in 2024-25 to fund statutory duties performed by the LA and previously funded by the ESG general duties be approved.

23. High Needs Block Update and 0.5% Funding Switch Request

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 £20.0m overspend. At the end of the last financial year the DSG reserve was in deficit by £14.2m and will deepen to more than £30m given the expected overspend in 2023/24. Indicative Government funding next year would see Staffordshire's High Needs Budget increase to £131m (c.3% higher than 2023/24). However, this was considerably lower than recent rises and – whilst in line with expectation – would likely see the overspend increase in 2024/25 to c£25m. Left unaddressed the accumulated DSG Deficit was forecast to worsen over the next 4 years to between £150m and £225m by 2026/27.

A 'Deficit Management Plan' (DMP) had been developed, based on the Council's SEND Strategy and Accelerated Progress Plan (APP), 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 included a range of interventions and policy reviews that would provide for additional resource / reduce costs in the short and medium term.

A working group of Schools Forum had met on 23 October to review the

information and actions set out in the DMP. Members of the working groups gave a brief summary of the discussion and information shared.

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 2024/25, which formed a key part of the Council's DMP.

Consultation had been conducted with schools and commenced on Friday 15 September and closed at 5pm on Friday 13 October 2023. This allowed four weeks for schools to respond, the results of this consultation were included in appendices 2 and 3 to the report. The view of schools was largely opposed to the transfer but on a low sample response rate of only 10%.

It was noted that 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. It was highlighted that this was a national issue and that Staffordshire's position was not as bad as some other Councils.

Members reflected that the decision was not an easy decision to make and explored the issue thoroughly before the vote was taken.

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, 12 voting against and 4 abstaining. NB – two members of the Schools Forum had left the meeting before the discussion had finished so did not cast a vote.

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.

SEND Strategy & Accelerated Progress Plan

The Schools Forum received an update on the SEND Strategy & Accelerated Progress Plan. The local authority had developed a strategic plan on how it intended to bring the HNB to sustainable levels over time. This included processes that would involve:

- **Developing Targeted Support**

The local authority had supported the SEND & Inclusion district model which, in turn, had created collaborative working between the Local Authority (LA) and schools. As part of this project the LA, schools and other stakeholders, had established a locality-based model - at a District level - enabling early intervention for the benefit of pupils who were identified as being in need. The Council had put in place additional investment of c£3m to support this model.

A further development of the EAPDR Pathway had been co-produced with schools, education settings, Parent Carer Forum, Health, Social Care and Educational professionals in order to support schools and educational settings with capacity to meet a CYP's SEND needs by accessing the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

- **Collaborative Working**

The LA had worked closely with independent providers to identify cost effective provision for high needs placements that offered value for money and ensured good outcomes for pupils with SEND.

Using the DfE SEND capital funding to create additional provision in Staffordshire special schools based on a detailed analysis of need, specifically in relation to Social Emotional Mental Health needs and Autism.

A pre-statutory SEDIS model accessed via an Enhanced Assess-Plan-Do Review Pathway to provide mainstream educational settings with the resources and support to deliver the graduated response.

- **Partner Contributions**

It was highlighted that the Council would continue to ensure a fair contribution was made from health and social care partners towards the cost of specialist places and provision where appropriate.

It was explained to the Forum that no single action alone would be sufficient to mitigate the existing deficit; this would only be addressed through a combination of interventions. A longer-term financial management plan had been developed that was consistent with the actions and objectives outlined in the Council's Accelerated Progress Plan and wider SEND Strategy.

Members welcomed the update on the actions being taken through the Accelerated Progress Plan and DMP and requested that further updates be included in the Work Programme

Resolved: a. That the High Needs Block budget 2023/24 and latest forecast outturn be noted;
b. That the latest budget assumptions 2024/25 be noted;
c. That the Deficit Management Plan 2023/24 – 2027/28 be noted;
e. That the outcome of the Council’s consultation with schools regarding the 0.5% funding switch in 2024/25 be noted;
f. That the outcome of the Schools Forum vote on the 0.5% funding switch in 2024/25 be noted.

24. Work programme and dates of next meetings

The future work programme, date of next meeting and future meetings were shared with forum members.

Work Programme

It was agreed that an update on the consultation undertaken with Early Years providers relating to high level principles for setting the 2-year-old and under rates for 2024/25 and beyond, would be included on the work programme and presented at the January 24 Schools Forum.

The work relating to the wraparound childcare process would also be added to the work programme, with an update being provided at the Schools Forum meeting taking place in March 24.

It was also requested that the work relating to the Accelerated Progress Plan and Strategy for Special Provision (including information relating to the Special School work and SEDIS model) be added to the Schools Forum Work Programme so an update could be provided at a future meeting.

Dates of next meetings

- Thursday, 18 January 2024, 2:00pm – via Teams.
- Thursday, 21 March 2024, 2:00pm – via Teams.
- Thursday, 11 July 2024, 2:00pm – via Teams.
- Thursday, 17 October 2024, 2:00pm – in person meeting to be held at the County Buildings, Stafford.

Resolved: a. That the dates of the next meetings be noted.
b. That the additional items be added to the 2024 Schools Forum Works Programme.

Chair

Termly review of membership of Staffordshire Schools Forum

Agenda Item 5

January 2024

The total number of Schools Forum maintained schools and academy members is 23. The Schools Forum regulations state that, where there are any, there must be one member for each of the following: maintained nursery schools, maintained special schools, maintained PRUs, special academies and alternative provision academies.

This is the case in Staffordshire so there are 5 members from these schools and academies (1 from each type - 5 members). This means that 18 Schools Forum school members represent the mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies.

NoR as at latest Schools Census date – October 2023 and school status as at 01.01.2024

Phase	Maintained - NoR		Academy - NoR		Grand Total	
Primary Phase	21,693	33.5%	43,076	66.5%	64,769	53.1%
Secondary Phase	6,261	11.0%	50,909	89.0%	57,170	46.9%
Grand Total	27,954	22.9%	93,985	77.1%	121,939	100%

Number of primary members is 53.1% of 18 = 9.6

Rounded to the nearest whole number, **10 primary members** are required.

Number of secondary members is 46.9% of 18 = 8.4

Rounded to the nearest whole number, **8 secondary members** are required.

Staffordshire Schools Forum has members from the middle and secondary headteachers forums and one primary member nominated by all schools and academies deemed primary (1 from each - 3 members)

Number of maintained primary members is 33.5% of 9 = 3.01

Rounded to the nearest whole number, **3 primary maintained members**

Number of academy primary members is 66.5% of 9 = 5.99

Rounded to the nearest whole number, **6 primary academy members**

Number of maintained secondary members is 11% of 6 = 0.66

Rounded to the nearest whole number, **1 secondary maintained members**

(NB there has to be at least 1 maintained secondary school member, where there is at least 1 maintained secondary school)

Number of secondary academy members is 89% of 6 = 5.34

Rounded to the nearest whole number, **5 secondary academy members**

Based on the calculations above, schools members of Schools Forum are as follows:

10 primary Schools Forum members

- 1 primary school representative (in lieu of primary school headteacher- forum nomination)
- 3 primary maintained school representatives
- 6 primary academy representatives

8 secondary Schools Forum members

- 1 middle school headteacher forum nomination
- 1 secondary school headteacher forum nomination
- 1 secondary maintained school representatives
- 5 secondary academy representatives

Schools Forum – 18th January 2024

Notices of Concern

Recommendation

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

Report of the Director for Children and Families:

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 the last Forum, there are no new Notice of Concerns or Licensed Deficits to report on.
5. The Entrust Schools Finance team continue to work with all schools who have existing Notice of Concern or Licensed Deficit agreement and those schools who continue to require support.

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 – 18th January 2024

Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools

Recommendation

1. The Schools Forum approves the revised Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools (SSFS).

Report of the Director for Children and Families:

PART A

Why is it coming here – what decision is required?

2. Any amendments to the SSFS, Financial Regulations for Schools and Procurement Regulations require approval from Schools Forum.

Reasons for recommendation

3. The SSFS has been reviewed and updated.

PART B

Background:

4. Section 2.15 Notice of Concern previously referred to the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People, this has been amended to refer to the Director for Children and Families only.
5. The list of reasons a Notice of Concern will be issued has been amended. The first bullet point now reads:
 - When years two and three of the school's published multiyear modeller indicate the school cannot operate within their in-year funding, and reserves are not sustainable.
6. Two bullet points stating why a Notice of Concern should be issued have been removed, these are:
 - Revenue Deficits where there is no recovery plan
 - Failure to set an in year balanced budget by 31st May
7. Further detail has been provided, stating the actions the authority may take when a governing body fails to comply with a Notice of Concern. This reads:

Where a governing body fails to comply with the Notice of Concern, the authority may issue a warning notice to a school as set out in the [Schools causing concern statutory guidance for local authorities and regional directors](#). When a school does then not comply with their warning notice, it will become eligible for intervention within the meaning of Part 4 of the Education and Inspections 2006 Act. In this situation, there are a number of statutory powers the local authority may use, these include:

- the power to require the governing body to enter into arrangements
- the power to appoint additional governors
- the power to appoint an interim executive board (IEB)
- the power to suspend the delegated budget

8. The Director of Corporate Services has been changed to the Director of Finance Services.

9. In Section 4.9 Licensed Deficit Scheme, the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities has been changed to the Director for Children and Families only.

Report author:

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Schools Forum – 18th January 2024

High Needs Block update

Executive Summary:

- The forecast outturn for the 2023/24 High Needs Block is £20m overspend (no change from quarter 2).
- At the end of the last financial year the DSG reserve was in deficit by c £14.2m and will deepen to more than £30m given the expected overspend in 2023/24 given the expected overspend in 2023/24.
- The provisional Government funding settlement for 2024/25 will see Staffordshire's High Needs Budget increase to £132.4m (a net rise of circa 4%). Whilst this is in line with expectation, the rise is significantly lower than recent years and given the continuing growing demand, the existing overspend will likely increase further next year and going forward.

Recommendations:

That Schools Forum notes:

1. the High Needs Block budget update 2023/24 and latest forecast outturn
2. the update on the latest DSG government settlement

Report of Director for Children and Families

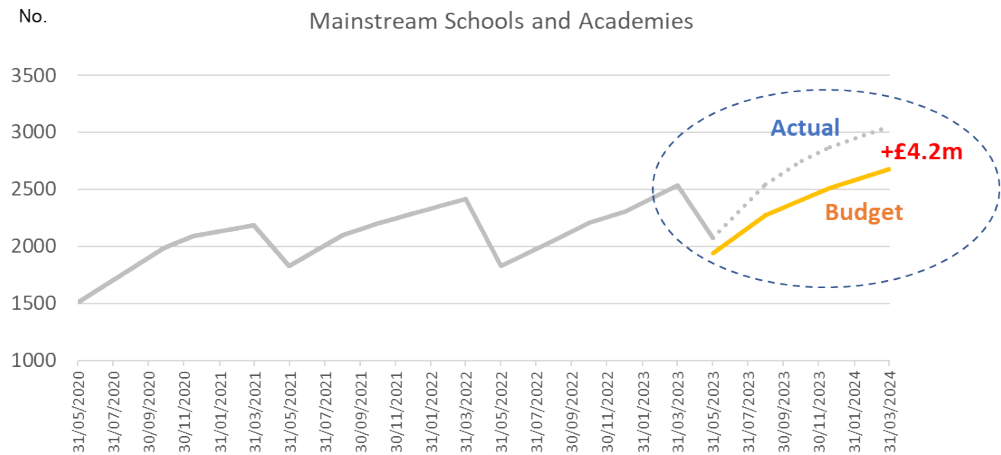
Background

3. The financial risk of the High Needs Block (HNB) has been a standing agenda item at Schools Forum. The increase in demand on the HNB has been reported regularly. Pressures on the HNB are ongoing 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 'top up' 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 2023/24 and Forecast
4. For Staffordshire the High Needs budget 2023/24 is £127m; an increase of £12m compared with 2022/23 (10%). This increase has been passed on in full for the provision of SEND support; none of this funding increase will be used to repay historical deficits. Most significantly this has ensured for 2023/24 Special School budgets have been set to include:

- a Minimum Funding Guarantee of 0.5%; ensuring that funding for all Special Schools, on a like for like basis, will increase next year by a minimum of 0.5%. This is in line with Government guidance for a MFG of 3% over 2 years (Staffordshire approved MFG in 22/23 was 2.5%).
 - there will be no capping of school gains
 - [a payment equivalent to a further 3.4% will also be made to schools calculated in accordance with government guidelines outlined above]
5. Staffordshire’s request this year for a transfer of 0.5% (equivalent to c £3.1m) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block was refused by Schools Forum at its meeting November 2022. The Council submitted a disapplication request for the block transfer which was rejected by the Secretary of State for Education.
6. Whilst the additional Government funding is recognised, this is not keeping pace with rises in cost and demand and the gap is continuing to increase. The forecast overspend this year is circa £20m (no change from the forecast overspend reported at quarter 2) (see Appendix 1 for more detailed overview):

<u>High Needs Budget 2023/24</u>	Budget 23/24 £m	Outturn £m	Over / (Under) spend £m
Planned Places	35.0	35.0	(0.0)
Top Up Budgets	44.3	55.3	11.0
<u>Non Top Up Budgets</u>			
Independent Schools (Mainstream & Special)	29.3	37.2	7.9
Alternative provision (inc Hubs)	3.8	4.5	0.7
Post 16	5.5	5.8	0.3
Other	9.1	9.1	(0.0)
Total Net Spend	127.0	146.9	19.9
Total Funding	(127.0)	(126.9)	0.1
Net Outturn	0.0	20.0	20.0

7. Key variances arising
- An overspend of c £11m against the school ‘top up’ budgets including most significantly:
 - i. a rise in the number of children with EHCP/AEN support in Mainstream Schools and Academies leading to a £4.2m overspend:



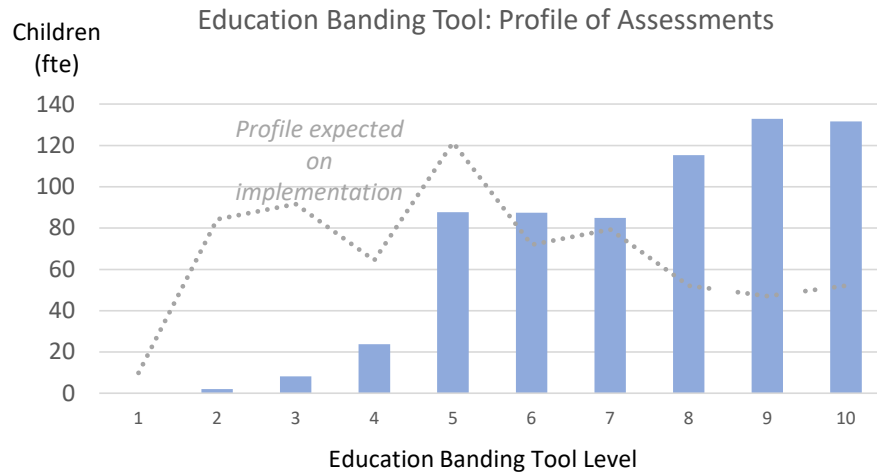
- ii. An overspend of £5.3m in special schools and academies due to the combined impact of increasing demand, complexity and costs:

	2023/24			
	# fte		£m	
<u>Top Ups</u>				
Matrix 1	340	19%	0.1	
Matrix 2	640	36%	1.1	
Matrix 3	817	45%	7.0	8.1
School Specific	1797			2.2
Additional Places				2.1
Enhancements				2.8
Exceptional Need				0.6
Residential				1.8
Adjustments (part time / backdated)				0.6
EBT (1-10)	674			7.6
EBT (school specific)				0.5
EBT (override)				0.1
Allowance for more growth				1.0
Total Spend				27.5
Budget				22.2
Variance				5.3

Average £/fte 0.008

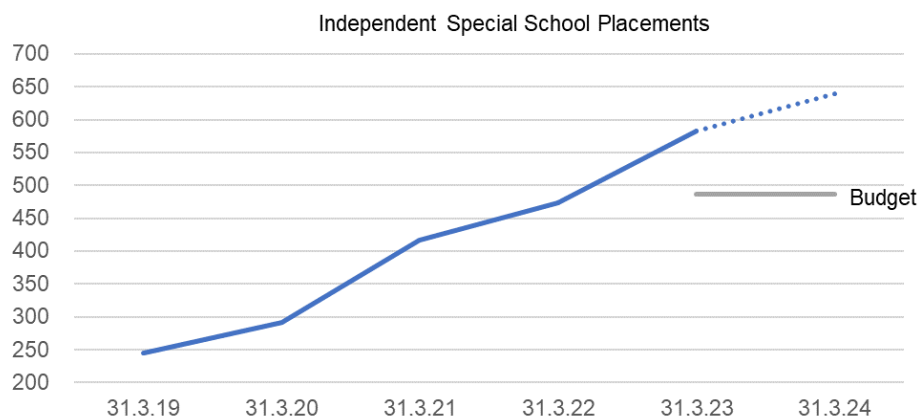
Average £/fte 0.012

The following shows the profile of assessments allocated under the Education Banding Tool. It is heavily weighted towards the highest banding levels 8-10, considerably higher than had been anticipated, and is giving rise to the significantly higher average cost per child (fte) compared to the existing Matrix model.



iii. An overspend of c £0.4m for Pupil Referral Units due to increasing numbers of pupil exclusions which are now back to pre-pandemic levels

- An overspend of c £6.9m in Independent Special Schools



- Other net overspends of c £2.1m, most significantly for Independent mainstream provision, alternative provision, Post 16 provision and Early Years (SEN Inclusion fund).

Education Banding Tool (EBT) Update

Following the planned review of the EBT during Summer 2023, the decision was made, from 1 August 2023, to suspend the EBT to calculate the top-up funding for Staffordshire pupils with an EHCP and therefore from this date we have reverted back to the previous funding models for mainstream and special schools.

All schools were informed of this following the confirmation at the 13 July 2023 meeting of Schools Forum in a letter, from the Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Improvement, dated 19 July 2023.

SCC remains committed to the EBT and is currently undertaking a remodelling of both mainstream and specialist band values, ensuring the quality assurance steps are in place, as well as a review of the EBT formula, with the intention of reinstating the EBT from **Autumn 2024** with the assurance that all issues experienced have been resolved.

SEND staff have continued to complete a PNP for new EHCPs and where there are changes to a plan following a review, with the aim to provide a new data set to use for budget modelling in **Spring 2024** and to support future decision making regarding the reinstatement of the EBT. The individual PNPs will remain an internal document and will not be shared with parent/carers or Education Providers.

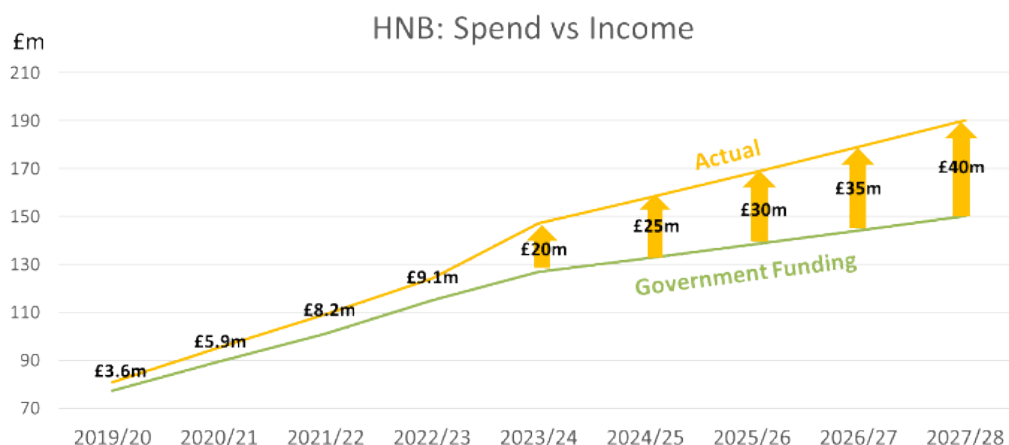
SCC will continue to keep schools informed of this progress during this term, with the aim of an education provider consultation undertaken prior to an agreed re-launch of the EBT.

Budget 2024/25 and Going Forward

8. In 2024/25 Staffordshire's high needs budget will increase to c £132.4m (a net increase of just 4% compared to 2023/24). Whilst this is broadly in line with expectation, this is significantly lower than previous years and the assumption is that, going forward, the HNB will continue to rise annually by just c 3% - 4% p.a. from 2025/26.
9. This means that the funding gap will continue to grow as costs and demand continue to rise, increasing the overspend on the HNB as actions to address this locally are in their infancy.

		23/24	24/25
Basic Entitlement Factor	No Pupils in special schools	3382	3696
	Rate £	4660	4660
	£m	15.8	17.2
Historic Element (fixed)	£m	32.0	32.0
Population	Proportion of national	1.37%	1.37%
	Funding Allocation (£m)	2,861	3,235
	£m	39.2	44.3
National Funding Formula (e.g. Free School Meals, IDACI, Bad Health, Disability, Low Attainment KS2 & KS4)	Proportion of national	1.16%	1.14%
	Funding Allocation (£m)	2,861	3,235
	£m	33.3	37.0
Hospital	£m	0.7	0.7
Import/Export Adjustment	Net	224.2	203.0
	£	6000	6000
	£m	1.3	1.2
Supplementary Grant	£m	4.8	
GRAND TOTAL	£m	127.0	132.4

10. Though previous rises have been passed on in full for the provision of SEND (none has been used to repay historical deficits), funding has struggled to keep pace with increases in demand and cost and have been insufficient to ‘close the gap’ which has gradually increased. Given the lower level of Government funding now assumed going forward, we anticipate the annual funding gap will increase significantly year on year. It is forecast there will be a further overspend next year of at least £25m and – left unaddressed – will likely increase annually going forward to at least £40m by 27/28:



Note: the HNB Operational Guidance 2024/25 (section 18.1) provides guidance regarding the maintenance and funding of EHCPs for other authority ‘Looked After Children’. There is a risk that this could lead to a significant additional burden and we continue to monitor the situation.

Accumulated DSG Deficit

11. 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 (22/23) there is an accumulated deficit of c £14.2m. Given the latest forecast overspend 2023/24 of £20m that deficit is likely to increase this year and, after the transfer of anticipated surpluses from Growth Fund and Central Block, is forecast to be over £30m in deficit at the end of the current year:

	£m
Accumulated deficit b/f	14.2
- Forecast HNB Overspend 23/24	20.0
- Forecast Growth Fund surplus 23/24	-1.5
- Forecast Central Block surplus 23/24	-0.5
Forecast Accumulated deficit end of 23/24	32.2

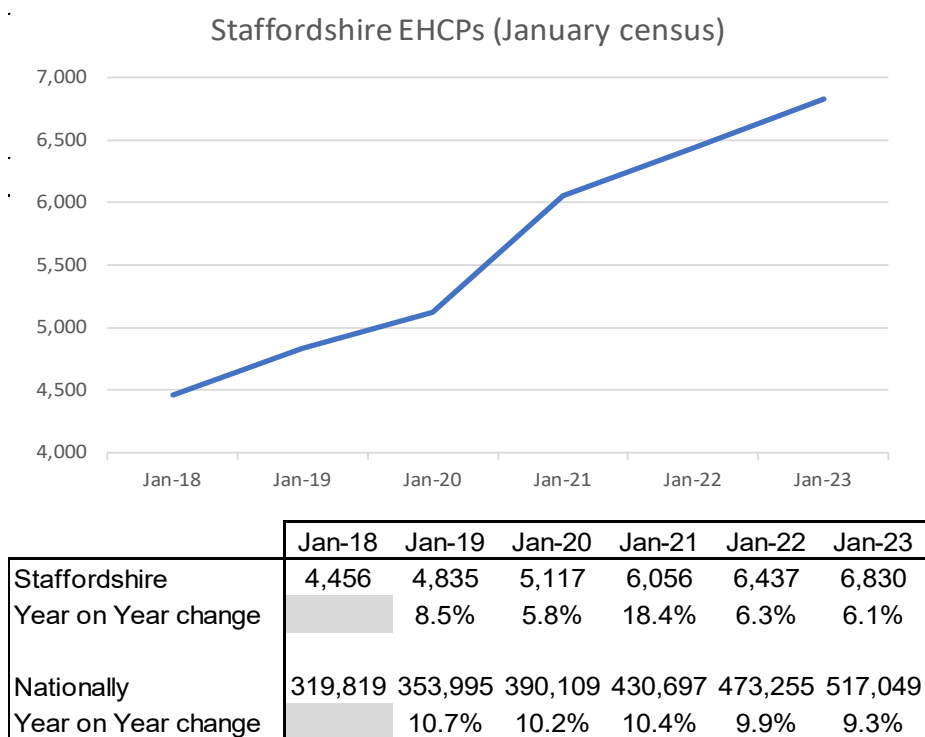
12. The HNB overspend – and accumulated deficit - is mainly due to increased demand for Special Educational Needs provision and in particular:

- the rise in demand for Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs) following national reforms from 2014;
- increasing complexity of children’s needs; and

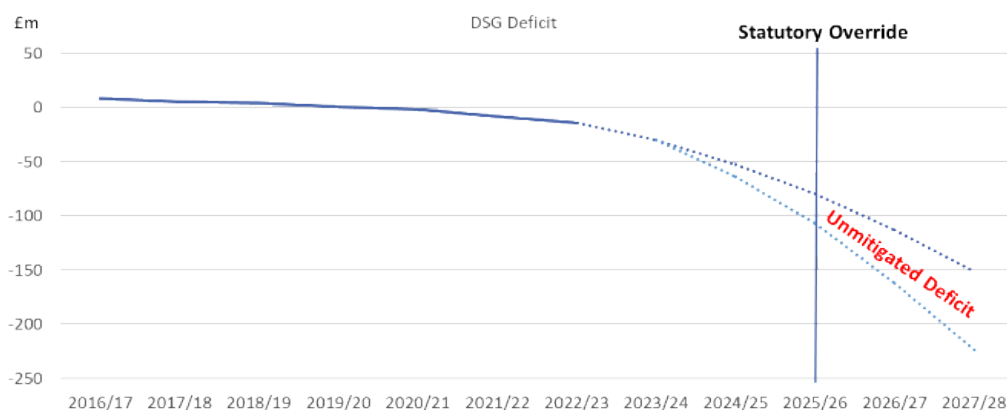
- the rising demand and costs for out of county (Independent) placements.

In particular there has been a significant increase in demand for those CYP with a primary need of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), Speech, Language and Communication (SLC), or Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and there is an increasing population of CYP presenting with anxiety and associated mental health conditions which are preventing attendance at school, placing increasing pressure on the Alternative Provision element of the HNB due to the additional use of tuition and EOTAS.

13. The following shows the rise in demand for EHCPs within Staffordshire over the last 5 years; whilst increases are in line with (in fact slightly below) the national trend, data also indicates that we have too many CYP with EHCPs educated in the specialist sector:



14. Pressures on the HNB and resulting accumulated DSG deficit is a key risk faced by the Council and is being monitored closely as part of its corporate finance and performance reporting. 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 £150m and £225m by the end of 2027/28:



15. Given the current level of ‘DSG deficits’ within the system, a government intervention has been brought forward (DLUHC) requiring authorities to hold DSG deficits in a separate reserve in the authorities accounts¹. Whilst initially a temporary ‘statutory override’ for the 3 years 2020/21 to 2022/23, due to the worsening situation this has since been extended to end of 2025/26. It is currently unclear how accumulated deficits will be managed beyond that time.

SEND Strategy & Accelerated Progress Plan

16. The local authority has a strategic plan on how, over time, it intends to bring the HNB to sustainable levels:

Developing Targeted Support

- The local authority is supporting the SEND & Inclusion district model which has created collaborative working between ourselves and schools. As part of this project the LA, schools and other stakeholders, have established a locality based model - at a District level - enabling early intervention for the benefit of pupils identified as being in need.
- A further development of the Enhanced Assess-Plan-Do-Review (EAPDR) Pathway has been co-produced with schools, education settings, Parent Carer Forum, Health, Social Care and Educational professionals in order to support schools and educational settings with capacity to meet a child or young person’s SEND needs by accessing the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

Collaborative Working

- The LA is working closely with independent providers, both existing and new, to identify cost effective provision for high needs placements that offers value for money and ensures good outcomes for pupils with SEND.
- Using the DfE SEND capital funding to create additional provision in Staffordshire special schools based on a detailed analysis of need, specifically in relation to social emotional mental health needs (SEMH) and Autism.
- A pre-statutory Staffordshire Enhanced District Inclusion Support Model (SEDIS) accessed via an Enhanced Assess-Plan-Do Review

¹ The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020

Pathway to provide mainstream educational settings with the resources and support to deliver the graduated response.

Partner Contributions

- The Council will continue to ensure a fair contribution is made from health and social care partners towards the cost of specialist places and provision where appropriate.

17. The Council has put in place significant additional investment of c £3m to support a locality based model - at a District level - enabling early intervention for the benefit of pupils who are identified as being in need. This is essential to enable the long term changes outlined above but is an additional pressure on existing scarce/overstretched HNB resources.

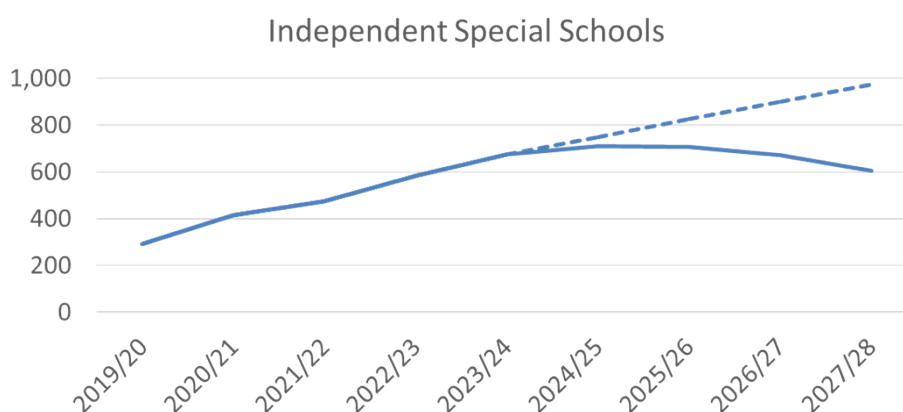
18. No single action alone will be sufficient to mitigate the existing deficit, but this will only be addressed through a combination of interventions. A longer term 'deficit management plan' has been developed that is consistent with the actions and objectives outlined in the Council's Accelerated Progress Plan and wider SEND Strategy. This was presented, in summary, to the Schools Forum in November.

- Deficit Management Plan

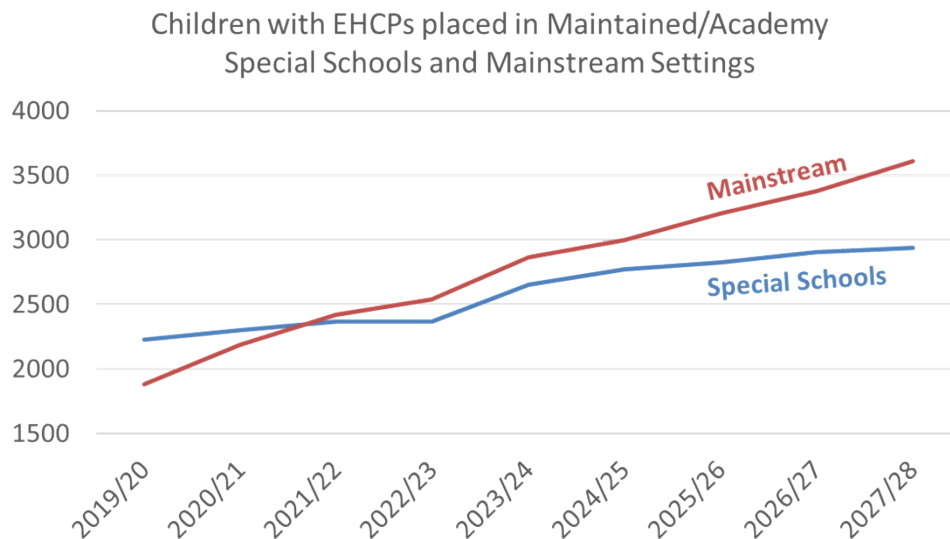
19. The DMP will mitigate – as far as possible - the funding gap which is expected to increase to c £40m by 27/28. This will require difficult decisions that impact on service delivery across all sectors including:

- a. fundamental to the strategy is the development over time of a more inclusive system where more of our children are educated and supported in our mainstream schools. By working with mainstream and special schools we will seek to provide the necessary support and capacity that will reduce the reliance on more expensive independent provision where this is not appropriate or necessary bringing the proportions of children educated within each part of the system in line with national proportions (target saving £18m by 2027/28).

As a result, it is anticipated that reliance on more expensive Independent provision will gradually reduce over the next few years:



However, over that same time, it will also require an increase in the number of children with EHCPs placed within our Maintained/Academy Special Schools and Mainstream settings:



- b. the Council will review existing policy, non-statutory provision and consider alternative delivery and funding options that could reduce the pressure on HNB (target saving c £4m by 2027/28)

UPDATE: SCC continues to work up options for the provision of residential educational provision (c £1.8m p.a.). This is a complex issue and will take time and it has been agreed that existing contracts should be extended for a further 2 years up to July 2026.

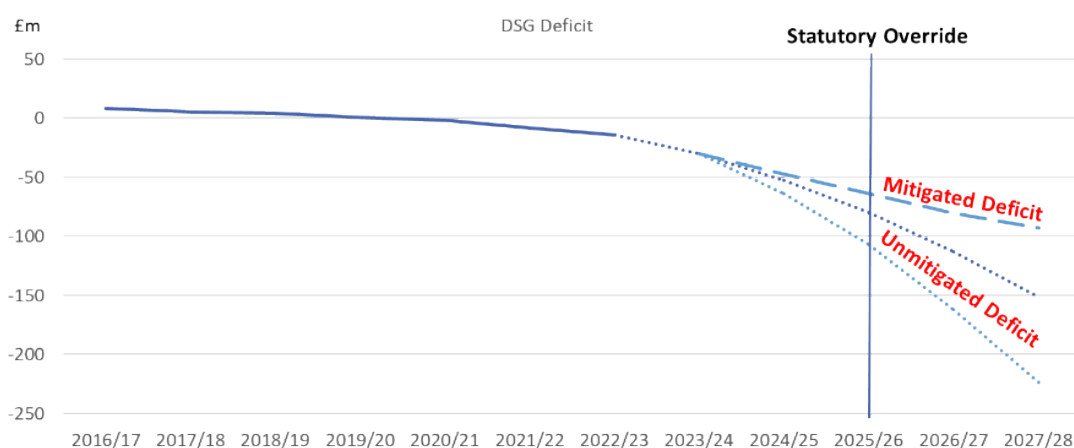
- c. Transfer of 0.5% funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block (circa £3.2m in 24/25). This will be invested to fund the Council's transformation programme outlined above.

UPDATE: Schools Forum rejected the request for a 0.5% funding switch at its November meeting 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.

- Other
20. Schools Forum has agreed that the following other contributions should be earmarked for transfer to the Council's DSG reserve:

- surplus Growth Fund money (after amounts have been used to fund NFF shortfalls and contributions to schools for in year growth²). In 2023/24 this is estimated to be c £1.5m and a further £1m contribution is forecast for 24/25.
- surplus unallocated funds, as part of the allocation of on-going education functions (central schools services block). For 2023/24 this is estimated to be c £0.5m and for 2024/25 is c £0.3m (including both on-going functions and historic commitments);

21. Whilst this will not address the accumulated deficit, it will limit the extent to which the shortfall will increase over the next few years to be addressed over the longer term (but is still expected to be at least £100m by 27/28). Going forward the Council will seek further opportunities to make efficiencies and – with our partners across the sector (e.g. Society of County Treasurers (SCT), EMFOG, LGA, CCN and the F40) - will continue to lobby central government for funding increases which properly match the levels of need in Staffordshire.



22. 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.

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² In accordance with the Councils' Growth Fund Policy

Appendix 1 - Forecast Outturn 2023/24 (as at Quarter 3)

2023-2024 HIGH NEEDS BUDGET (Quarter 3)	Latest Budget	Forecast Outturn	Over/(Under) spend
	£m	£m	£m
Planned Places	35.0	35.0	0.0
Top Up Budgets	44.3	55.3	11.0
Staffordshire Special Schools and Academies	21.7	26.9	5.2
Staffordshire Mainstream Schools	17.9	22.1	4.2
Pupils in other LA Special & Mainstream Schools & Academies	2.3	3.5	1.2
Pupil Referral Units	2.4	2.8	0.4
Non Top Up Budgets	47.7	56.6	8.9
Independent Schools Mainstream	2.3	3.3	1.0
Independent Schools Special	27.0	33.9	6.9
Independent Hospital Fees	0.2	0.3	0.1
Early Years PVIs	0.4	0.8	0.4
Alternative provision (inc Hubs)	3.2	4.0	0.8
Education Other Than At School (EOTAS)	0.6	0.5	(0.1)
SEN Support Services	8.5	8.0	(0.5)
Post-16 FE Placements & Top-ups for ISPs	5.5	5.8	0.3
GRAND TOTAL	127.0	146.9	19.9
Funding	(127.0)	(126.9)	0.1
NET FORECAST OUTTURN	0.0	20.0	20.0

Schools Forum – 18 January 2024

Early Years: 2-Year-Old and Under Funding Consultation

Executive Summary

- The 2023 Spring Budget announced additional funding for the existing early years entitlements for working parents, by extending the 30 hours free childcare offer from the point their child is 9 months old continuously through their early years to the start of school removing the barriers to work. This is a government phased introduction commencing April 2024.
- This report complies with the government's requirements for Local Authorities to consult with early years providers, maintained nurseries and Schools Forum on elements of the early years funding formula for the new entitlements.
- There is no change to the entitlements for 3- and 4-year-olds or their funding formula.
- The results of Staffordshire County Council's consultation with Early Years (EY) settings are summarised in **Appendix A** of this report.

Report of Director of Childrens & Families

Recommendations

1. That Schools Forum members note the results of the Staffordshire consultation process from early years providers and maintained nurseries summarised in **Appendix A**.
2. That Schools Forum members note the proposals on the early years funding formula for the new entitlements.
3. That Schools Forum members consider and comment on the proposals for the 2024-25 Early Years funding formula for 2-year-olds and under 2-year-olds.

Background

4. The government's 2023 Spring budget announced additional funding for the existing early years entitlements for working parents, by extending the 30 hours free childcare offer from the point their child is 9 months old continuously through their early years to the start of school removing the barriers to work.

5. This announcement involved an extension to entitlements for early years childcare for working parents in England. This will mean working parents will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks of the year from the term after their child turns 9 months old to when they start school.
6. This introduction will be rolled out in stages (on a phased basis):
 - a. From April 2024, all eligible working parents of 2-year-olds can access 15 hours per week.
 - b. From September 2024, all eligible working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3 years old can access 15 hours per week.
 - c. From September 2025, all eligible working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3 years old can access 30 hours free childcare per week.
7. The government has also extended eligibility for the early years pupil premium (EYPP) and the disability access fund (DAF) to all children accessing the entitlements from 2024-25. To provide support for disadvantaged children in the younger age groups.
8. The government has proposed the funding formula for the new entitlements' cohort follow the shape of the existing 3- and 4-year-olds formula, meaning the structure of the new formula will be:



9. Although the new formula is following the same structure as the existing 3 and 4-year-old formula, the Government are taking a slightly different approach to deprivation in the additional needs factor. They are using a combination of free school meals data and a measure based on the income deprivation affecting children index to reflect the different levels of deprivation across the country.
10. Local authorities must plan to pass through as least 95% of their funding from the government to early years providers for each entitlement separately. The 95% pass through includes the following budget lines:
 - base rate funding for all providers
 - supplements for all providers, including deprivation.

- the funding paid directly to providers from the special educational needs inclusion fund (SENIF) – Staffordshire currently funds this out of the centrally retained thresholds (5% limit for central expenditure to ensure as high a rate as possible is passed out to the providers base rate)
 - contingency funding – to manage the demand fluctuations between the number of children the Local Authority (LA) is funded for, based on the January census and the number of children the LA pays to providers, based on a termly census.
11. The Government have stipulated that their prescribed listed optional funding 'supplements' that are available for 3- & 4-Year-Old should also be available. Possible Funding Supplements include:
- a. Rurality/Sparsity – to enable local authorities to support providers serving rural areas less likely to benefit from economies of scale.
 - b. Flexibility – to support providers offering flexible provision for parents.
 - c. Quality – to support workforce qualifications or system leadership.
 - d. English as an Additional Language – to recognise differences in attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage between children whose first language is English and those who have English as an additional language.
12. The adoption of any of the above optional 'Funding Supplements' would reduce the Base Rate.
13. On 29th November 2023, the Department for Education (DfE) announced that the deprivation supplement will also be an optional requirement with respect to funding for 2-year-olds and under, which was a change to their consultation position, where they stated that the deprivation supplement would be mandatory.
14. Any funds needed to administer and deliver the service by the Local Authority should be funded from the rate provided up to a maximum of 5%. This is approved by the Schools Forum annually.
15. If a local authority proposes to make any changes to the funding formula it used the previous year that affects early years providers, it will be required to consult with Schools Forums, maintained schools and early years providers.
16. The introduction of the new entitlements for eligible working parents of children aged between 9 months and 2 years has led to a change to our existing formula. Staffordshire is therefore required to consult with these bodies on the new formulae for 2 Year Olds and Under. Staffordshire, as the

local authority, has the ultimate say in the formula adopted, although the decision made will take these consultations into consideration.

17. This report summarises the responses to the Early Years funding consultation for 2 Year Olds and under held via an online survey with early years providers and sets out the proposed formula for the new entitlements.

Consultation

18. The initial consultation was set to take place between 13th November 2023 to 8th December 2023.
19. Following the above announcement (paragraph 13) by the DfE regarding the deprivation funding supplement, a supplementary question was sent out on the 6th December 2023 to early years providers to gain views on adopting the deprivation as an optional funding supplement.
20. The deadline for responses to the supplementary question was the 15th December 2023. The results of the consultation can be seen in Appendix A.
21. Alongside the results of the consultation, it is important to note that 217 Early Years Providers provided a response. Of these responses: -
 - The majority 52% (114 providers) agreed the contingency amount should be no more than 1% of the total budget with the majority of 93% agreeing with any unused contingency being redistributed back to providers in the year following the underspend.
 - 57% (125 providers) agreed that if the deprivation factor had been mandatory, it should be the only funding supplement (note: any additional supplements will reduce the base rate) with the majority preferring no other funding supplement be introduced.
 - 84% (184 providers) agreed with the Income deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) metric being used to assess whether a setting qualifies for this additional payment to their base rate.
22. An additional Supplementary survey was also circulated concerning the governments amended guidance regarding discretionary deprivation. There were 76 responses received to this question with most responses 67% (51 providers) agreeing with no deprivation supplement being paid for 2-year-olds and under.

Proposal

23. Having regard to all the information available, Staffordshire County Council is proposing to maximise the base rate as far as possible for the 2-year-old rate and under 2-year-old rate and not use any additional funding supplements, including deprivation.
24. Staffordshire County Council is also proposing for the contingency budget to be no more than 1% of the Early Years budget. Any underspend on the contingency budget should be returned to providers the following year.

SENIF

25. Staffordshire County Council (SCC) are currently reviewing the systems and criteria for SENIF funding to ensure the needs of children with SEND are supported effectively in light of the extension of early years entitlements from 9 months to 2 Year Olds. The numbers of children accessing SENIF continues to rise, therefore SCC are currently analysing how funding is allocated, implemented, and monitored to ensure improved outcomes for children with SEND. Staffordshire currently funds this from a combination of the centrally retained thresholds (5% limit for central expenditure) and the High Needs Block.
26. The government intends to conduct a more detailed review of SENIF arrangements that are currently in place across local authorities nationally. Focusing on the extent to which they are meeting current need and drawing examples of best practice together to suggest longer-term changes to improve the extent to which SENIF's can meet children's needs.
27. Eligibility for the early years pupil premium and the disability access fund will be extended to eligible children aged 2 years old and under accessing the entitlements from 2024-25.
28. While not part of the consultation it is important to note that at the Schools Forum meeting on 9th November 2023 it was proposed that Staffordshire County Council would retain £2.2m, estimated to be 2.4%, in order to administer and deliver the early years service. This proposal was approved by Schools Forum.

Report author:

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Background Papers:

Further details of the Early years technical guidance can be found at the attached link.- [Early Years Funding Policy](#)

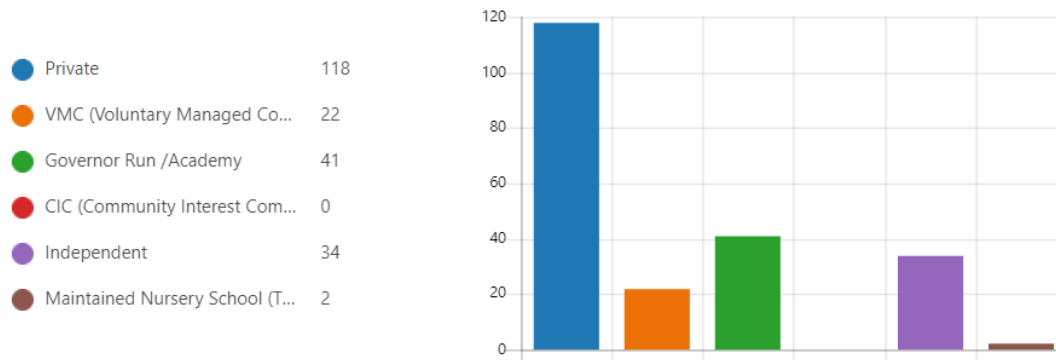
Results of Consultation Survey – Early Years Funding: Entitlements Extension Consultation

Early Years Funding - Extended Entitlements

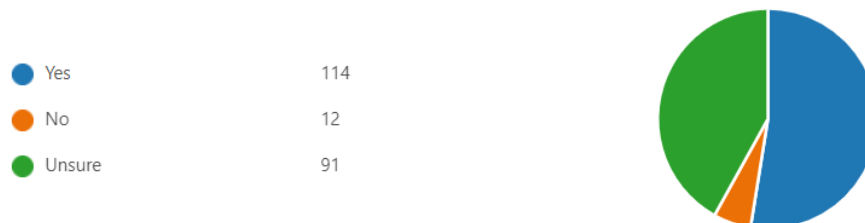
217 Responses 14:09 Average time to complete Closed Status

1. Provider Name

2. What provider setting are you representing

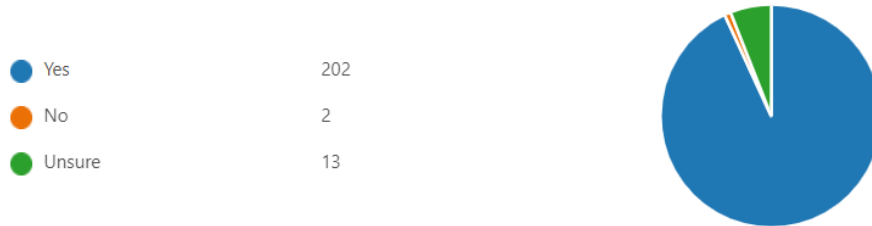


3. Do you agree the contingency amount should be no more than 1% of the total budget?

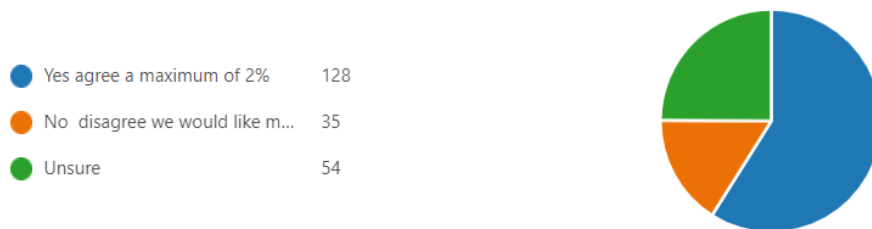


Results of Consultation Survey – Early Years Funding: Entitlements Extension Consultation

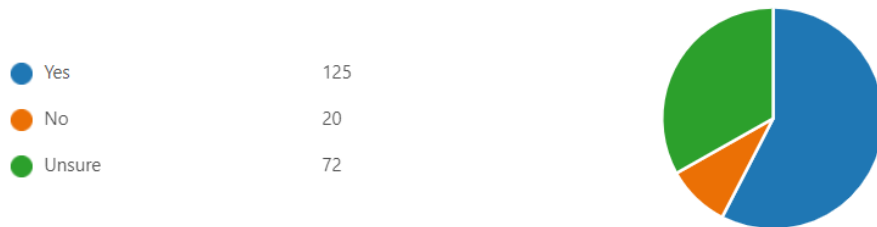
4. In the event of an underspend should any unused contingency be redistributed back to providers in the year following the underspend? (subject to affordability)



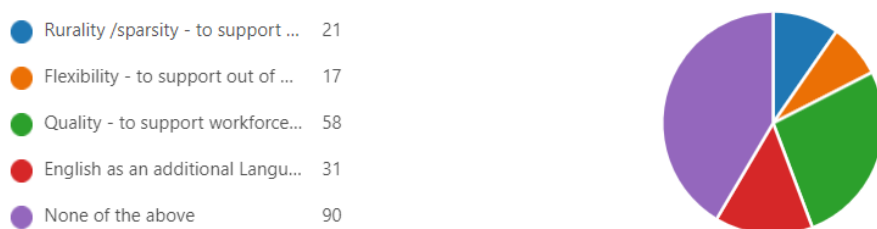
5. The governments Early Years Funding formula has a mandatory additional needs factor for Deprivation . Do you agree that no more than 2% of each of the governments funding rates should be set aside to fund the deprivation budget? (An increase to the deprivation factor will reduce the base rate)



6. Do you agree that the deprivation factor is the only funding supplement? (note: any additional supplements will reduce the base rate)

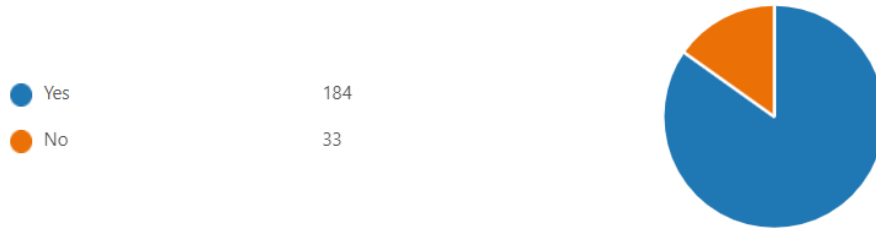


7. If you would like any additional funding supplements introducing in addition to the existing mandatory deprivation factor which of the following would you like to be introduced?



Results of Consultation Survey – Early Years Funding: Entitlements Extension Consultation

8. Currently a significant number of settings receive deprivation supplements. We use the government metric the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) to assess whether a setting qualifies for this additional payment to their base rate. Any metric used to assess qualification needs to be objective, quantifiable and readily available. Do you agree that IDACI should be continued to be used?



Supplementary Question

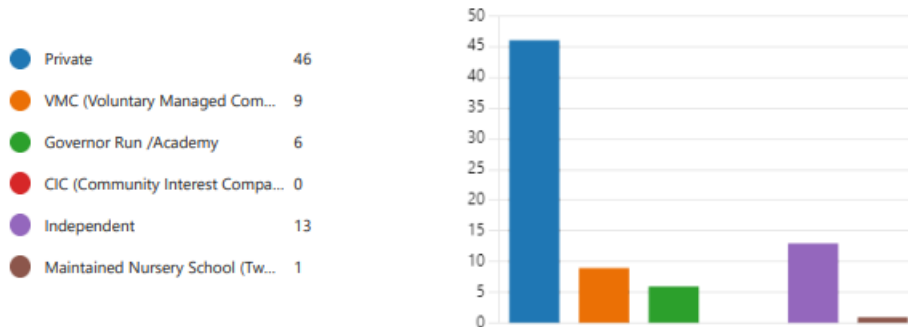
76
Responses

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1. Provider name

2. What provider setting are you representing



3. Whilst the funding stream for two year olds (2YO) and under is in its infancy, do you agree that the base rate should remain as high as possible and that no deprivation supplements should be paid for two year olds and under? (Any supplements paid will lower the base rate for all providers)



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.

Meeting	Item	Details
Page 45 Spring Term 21 March 24	Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements	Standard item
	Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations	General update if required
	Schools Budget Update	Standard item
	High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan and education Banding Tool	Standard item
	Update on wraparound childcare process.	General update if required

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

Meeting	Item	Details
Autumn Term 17 Oct 24	Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements	Standard item
	Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations	General update if required
	Primary Behaviour Support Services – 2025-26 Financial Year	Annual item
	Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) 2025-26 Financial Year	Annual item
	Schools Budget 2024-25: De-delegation, Central Expenditure and Education Functions.	Annual item
	High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan and Education Banding Tool update	Standard item

Meeting	Item	Details
Spring Term 13 January 25	Notices of Concern and Licensed Deficit Agreements	Standing item
	Update to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools & Procurement Regulations	General update if required
	Verbal update on School Budgets 2024/2025	Standing item
	High Needs Block including Deficit Management Plan	Standing item

Pending

Update relating to the Accelerated Progress Plan and Strategy for Special Provision (including information relating to the Special School work and SEDIS model)

When there is something to report