



City of Westminster

Westminster Schools' Forum Meeting - Minutes Date and time of meeting: Monday 19th June 2023 at 4.45pm at Westminster City Hall

Representing	Name	Organisation	Attendance
Primary Schools	6 Members		
Primary Head	Lee Duffy (LD)	St Marys Bryanston Square CE Primary	Present
Primary Head	Darren Guttridge (DG)	Edward Wilson Primary	Apologies
Primary Head	Rebecca Anson (RA)	St Gabriel's CE Primary	Apologies
Primary Governor	Andrew Garwood-Watkins (AGW) (Chair)	St James and St John CE Primary	Present
Primary Governor	Lyn Meadows (LM)	Soho Parish CE Primary	
Primary Governor	Simon Mair (SM)	Edward Wilson Primary	
Secondary schools	1 Member		
Secondary Head	Eugene Moriarty (EM)	St Augustine's CE High School	Present
Academies	6 Members		
Secondary Academy Principal	Richard Ardron (RA)	Marylebone Boys School	Present
Secondary Academy Principal	Peter Broughton (PB)	Westminster City School	Present
Secondary Academy Principal	Susanne Staab (SS)	The Greycoat Hospital School	Present
Secondary Academy Proprietor	Paul Wood (PW)	Westminster Academy	Present
Primary Academy Head	Louisa Lochner (LL)	Gateway Academy	Present
Alternative Provision Academy	Wasim Butt (WB)	Ormiston Beachcroft	
Maintained Nursery Schools	1 member		
Nursery Head	Liz Hilliard (LH)	Tachbrook Nursery School	Present
Special Schools	1 member		
Special Schools Headteacher	Noel Gibb (NG)	Westminster Special Schools Federation	Apologies
Early Years (PVI)	1 member		
PVI	John Trow-Smith (JTS)	LEYF	Present
14-19 Representative	1 member		
Secondary Head	Kathryn Pugh (KP)	The St Marylebone CofE School	Present
Officers in Attendance			
Executive Director of Children's Services	Sarah Newman (SN)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Apologies
Director of Education	Ian Heggs (IH)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Present
Interim Assistant Director of Education	Shelley Duffy (SD)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Present
Assistant Director – SEN & Educational Psychology	Julie Ely (JE)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Present - online

Head of Bi-Borough Early Education and Childcare Service	Iraklis Kolokotronis (IK)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Present
Lead Strategic Finance Manager	Anita Stokes (ASt)	Bi-Borough Finance – Children's	Present
Senior Finance Manager	Poonam Gagda (PG)	Bi-Borough Finance – Children's	Present
Head of Transformation and Innovation	Justine May (JMa)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	
Finance Manager Schools	Vandana Modha (VM)	Bi-Borough Finance – Children's	
Finance Manager Capital and Schl Budgets	Rahul Ganatra (RG)	Bi-Borough Finance – Children's	Present
Senior School Governance Adviser/Clerk	Jackie Saddington (JS)	Bi-Borough Children's Services Education	Apologies
Governance and Inclusion Officer/ Clerk	Grace Herbert (GH)	Bi-Borough Children's Services Education	Present
Observers			
Cabinet Member for Young People, Learning and Leisure	Cllr Tim Roca (TR)	Councillor	Present
Bursar	Marie Holmes (MH)	The Grey Coat Hospital	Present

Item		Action
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies were sent by Darren Guttridge, Rebecca Anson, Noel Gibb, Jackie Saddington and Hilary Shaw.	
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no declarations of interest.	
3.	MEMBERSHIP GH advised that Louisa Lochner, Headteacher at Gateway Primary Academy will be retiring at the end of the academic year and that JS will be working to identify a new Primary Academy representative from September 2023.	
	RESOLUTION: JS to organise and identify new representation of a Primary Academy Head from September 2023.	JS
4.	MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON 20 MARCH 2023 The minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2023 were agreed to be a true and accurate record of the meeting.	
	RESOLUTION: Noted.	

<p>5.</p>	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p><u>Deferred minutes from meeting held on 18 January 2023</u></p> <p>LH advised that within the minutes, the wording for Item 10, paragraph 2 ‘<i>Review Of The Maintained Nursery Supplement Allocation</i>’, needs to be made clearer. PG advised that the phasing would be a three-year approach and the numbers behind the calculations will be reviewed annually. It was agreed that this would be made clearer for colleagues.</p> <p>JTS advised that within Item 10, paragraph 4, information around the suggestion of following the EYPP numbers and re-distributing any underspend to the nurseries from the Early Years Block with the view to incentivising sign up to the pupil premium nursery stage needs to be made clearer as the notes do not reflect the discussion held.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION:</p> <p>i) Clarification around the wording of the phasing and calculation timelines to be implemented into the notes from January 2023.</p> <p>ii) Clarification around the wording of the EYPP numbers and re-distributing underspend to incentivise sign up to the Pupil premium nursery stage to be implemented into the notes from 18 January 2023.</p>	<p>AGW/JS</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>FEEDBACK FROM HIGH NEEDS BLOCK REFERENCE GROUP</p> <p>JE presented the report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting to provide feedback from the reference group and comment on the updated budget for 2024/2025.</p> <p>The reference group met on 15 May and noted the WCC SEND commissioning plan. Whilst the plan sets out the positive response to parent preference and future demand, it cannot respond to the underlying drivers of need.</p> <p>The reference group noted that despite falling primary rolls, the requests for statutory assessments are continuing to increase. There were 164 new EHCPs issued during the calendar year 2022 compared to the 137 EHCPs issued the year previous. The proportion for EHCPs for autistic pupils has reached 43% of the total, with speech, language and communication needs as the second most prevalent reaching 23%.</p> <p>During the meeting, members of the reference group were advised of the emergent findings from the first wave of the diagnostic work which was undertaken as part of the National Programme and the DfE’s programme which included 55 Local Authorities with High Needs deficits. The findings from the diagnostic work highlighted that the demand for EHCPs for children with Autism, Social/ emotional mental health and speech and language are growing 20% faster than any other need type. JE advised that WCC data is reflecting the National pressures in this area. These findings advise that these needs should be the main focus in terms of planning future provision. Further advice from the National programme was around increasing the ability of mainstream schools by upskilling staff. The findings inform that teachers feel they do not have access to the specialists that they need to support them in their work.</p>	

JE advised that WCC has a SEND strategy for 2021-2024 which was co-produced with families and recognises prioritising the development of staff, especially those that work with children with communication and interaction needs, including relevant training. The reference group noted concerns around the potential legacy costs schools could incur as a result of professional development and increasing specialist staff skills.

Another challenge is the physical accommodation constraints schools face and it was questioned if physical space driven by falling rolls could offer opportunities to target capital investment. The group proposed that specific initiatives around speech and language and autism are not put in place at the moment, instead a focus on budget and pupil developments could be made available to tackle the root causes of the current pressure and the use of budget capacity to allow for the further volume of price increases which are anticipated.

The Group also considered proposals around recoupment from other LAs for their residents as schools have reported that it has been challenging to receive the payment back for the admin element charges. JE advised that going forward the suggestion will be for schools to make a single charge to recover all costs from other Local Authorities rather than various charges throughout the year. The reference group endorsed this and recommended to Forum that this should be the approach going forward.

The important subjects to tackle in the Autumn term include EBT, revisiting the commissioning plan and comparison of the data Nationally to allow an analysis to be brought back and discussed with Schools Forum at a future meeting. During the Spring term the focus will include looking at the requests for statutory assessment, and the drivers, in more detail.

Colleagues queried item 3.7 of the report regarding increasing the available budget for specialist resourced provision and other pupil developments and questioned what the cost of the budget increase for Schools Forum is to agree. AS advised that the addition would be of £579k for further developments - £140k and £439k from additional DSG from the High Needs Block. JE advised that there developments currently underway where capacity is being increased. There is a need to create more specialist places locally at schools in both existing resource bases and potential new resource bases as the majority of EHCP pupils are in mainstream provision. It was also commented that it could also consist of expansions for special school places. AGW commented that the reference group recommends that Schools Forum does not go forward with the DBV programme, and the funding is instead better deployed for different initiatives and services. The additional money that remains available goes towards more specialist provision, existing resource bases increasing their places offered, brand new resource bases in mainstream schools and places locally according to needs being presented. Officers will need to present proposals on how the funding will be spent before funds are agreed and released.

	<p>RESOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Schools Forum approved the discussion from May HNBRG from section 3 of the report was as discussed and agreed the budget as per paragraph 3.7. ii) To note the recommendations re future recoupment charges in Section 4 of the report. iii) To note the forward plan for the HNBRG in section 5 of the report. 	
<p>7.</p>	<p>DSG OUTTURN AND SCHOOL BALANCES 2022/23</p> <p>AS advised that in 2022/2023, there was a £2.267m underspend and the majority of this relates to High Needs. £750k relates to funding set up for post-16 at the end of 2021/22 which was not needed and the impact of 22/23 with a number of places being closed. The re-calibration of the education banding tool has also reduced the forecasted spend from the beginning of the year. There has also been a favourable movement on High Needs since the March report. Funding for looked after children who have their education element paid by the Local Authority has improved by £59k and there has also been a reduction in cost forecasted for Speech and Language Therapy.</p> <p>With the in-year underspend being in line with forecast, we move from a deficit last year of £1.167m to a cumulative surplus of £1.1m. AS advised that the team is currently working on the forecast for the current year.</p> <p>Overall school balances have reduced by around £600k. There are now 15 schools in deficit compared to the 11 at the end of March 2022 and two thirds of schools had an in-year deficit on their budget. The 15 deficit schools are rag rated as red and the number of schools rag rated as amber, including those going into deficit for the first time, are around the same. The number of schools rag rated as green (those with balances that look healthy) has reduced to 16.</p> <p>Of the 15 schools which are in deficit, six have deficit recovery plans which have been licenced, six have plans which are currently in progress and there are three schools of concern which have not provided a deficit recovery plan to the service. IH advised that he and SD met with two of the three schools and commented that they are currently working on their plans to be provided to the service.</p> <p>Colleagues queried why the other school has not yet submitted their plan and what is the follow up from the Local Authority if they do not. IH and AS advised that there have been meetings with the Heads and Chairs of those schools showing concern and if applicable, the appropriate diocese would be involved to assist in moving this forward.</p> <p>It was questioned what the likelihood is of the schools with plans in progress being approved and why are they later than everybody else? AS advised that some plans are late due to the schools not expecting to be in deficit and noting an overspend at closing which has tipped them in to deficit resulting in their three-year plans needing review including actions which can be taken to reduce costs such as potential staffing</p>	

	<p>restructures. Both the Head and Governors need to be happy with the three-year plan before plan is sent through to finance for licence. IH and AS advised that the Local Authority work closely with schools to help support the process.</p> <p>Colleagues commented if there is any additional assistance that can be provided to support schools in submitting plans on time as it was previously agreed that the timeframe for schools to submit three-year plans and budgets would be brought forward. AS advised that with Estera Wojcik in place, the team will be more on top of the monitoring of deficit recovery plans throughout the year which will advise earlier if additional support is required and will allow the service to be timelier in spotting errors and providing adequate support in producing follow up year plans. AS also commented that the service is becoming more robust at chasing the monitoring returns for schools in deficit and then involving, if necessary, the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors.</p> <p>AS advised that the Local Authority are encouraging schools to use the DfE school resource management support which has provided helpful feedback and to communicate with one another on their experiences and sharing best practice and the changes they have made to overcome some of the challenges they are facing.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION:</p> <p>i) To note the DSG Carry Forward position in sections 2 and 3 of the report.</p> <p>ii) To note the level of schools’ balances and summary RAG ratings in section 5 of the report.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>DFE NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA – 2ND STAGE CONSULTATION AND LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA REVIEW 2024/25</p> <p>Key findings from the outcome of the consultation includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Needs funding has been confirmed to have continued flexibility. AS commented that even with the full NFF in place, there will be flexibility to transfer funds to the High Needs budget with corresponding reductions to mainstream schools funding allocations. It was confirmed that there will be a formal application process for this. • There will be a national approach to calculating the notional SEND budget (DfE now call it the indicative SEND budgets). • Whilst Westminster may receive funding for falling rolls, it is highly unlikely that schools will be allocated funds for falling rolls as SPAC data needs to provide evidence that places are needed within the next 3-5 years which is unlikely to happen within the borough. AS advised that the funding will potentially be able to be used for revenue costs associated with repurposing or reducing school places for use of SEND units. Guidance with further details of this will be available from July. • There is also a change to the way split-site funding will work which will be calculated nationally resulting in further rules that need to be applied consistently across the country rather than each Local Authority having their own basis which may affect Westminster split-site funding allocations for next 	

year. Further information will be provided in July and so an additional update for this will be brought back to a future Forum meeting for discussion.

- Once the NFF comes in, the minimum funding guarantee will be part created based on the previous years funding that schools receive. For Academies this will be from their General Annual Grant (GAG) allocations and for maintained schools, it will be from their formula allocation budget.
- With regards to the Formula funding options for 2024/25 and the move to the NFF, at the last Forum it was agreed that the models within section 4.1 of the report would be consulted with Headteacher groups in the Autumn term and brought back to Forum in November for agreement for 2024/25. It was agreed that whilst these options would be the move towards the NFF they would be subject to future changes in schools funding.
- In paragraphs 2.14 and 2.15 of the report, there are some exceptional circumstances which allows Local Authorities to make additional funding allocations including the continuation of funding for a third year in relation to amalgamated schools. For example, for the amalgamation of St Vincent de Paul and Westminster Cathedral, as it is a national requirement from the DfE, the amalgamated school received 100% of the joint lump sum in the first year and in the following year they received 85%. The guidance advises that this can continue. Currently the Local Authority are able to ask for a combined lump sum adjustment for a third year with agreement from Forum and then by providing an application to the DfE. The ask is for a final allocation for St Vincent de Paul for a combined 70% lump sum which would be £82,620 in 2024/2025. This was part of a plan for the amalgamation and the additional costs that the school have been incurring due partly to the split-site they are operating from which will cease in the 2023 Autumn Term. As it was only a short-term arrangement, the school were not eligible to receive split-site funding.

It was queried if the policy relating to the third-year amalgamation funding for St Vincent de Paul is for general school amalgamation or specific to the school. AS advised that the first two-year funding is a national policy and the ask for the third-year funding is a local incentive to support amalgamated schools within Westminster. The funding for this would come from the overall Schools Block Funding - DSG.

Colleagues commented due to the potential of further amalgamations going forward, the amount of funding being taken from the DSG for the third year may not be sustainable. It was advised that it could depend on the circumstances of the amalgamation, considered on a case-by-case basis rather than a blanket policy. A recommendation of using funding from reserves rather than the DSG may be helpful if agreed as it is hard to find justification of one school receiving the funds, after already being funded for two years, rather than it being recycled back into the DSG to be used for all schools and pupils.

It was agreed that this item should be deferred to the Forum meeting in November incorporating a wider conversation as there is a need to support schools within the amalgamation process to ensure schools in the future feel supported and incentivised to do so if needed.

	<p>RESOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) To defer discussion to agree to allocate St Vincent de Paul a final additional 70% lump sum (£82,620) in 2024/25 to take account of the amalgamation with Westminster Cathedral and use of the additional site, as shown in paragraph 2.15 of the report, subject to agreement by the DfE to the next meeting. ii) To note the principles for agreeing the schools funding formula for 2024/25 budgets as shown in section 3 of the report. iii) To note the options agreed to go forward for consultation with primary and secondary headteacher groups in September / October 2023 as shown in section 4 of the report. iv) To note the next steps for agreeing the move to the NFF factor values and schools funding formula for 2024/25 onwards as shown in section 5 of the report. 	
<p>9.</p>	<p>ISOS WORKING GROUP FEEDBACK</p> <p>IH advised that a substantive paper will be presented to Schools Forum in the Autumn Term, by Aaron Sumner, the Chair of the working group.</p> <p>An in-depth discussion around ongoing falling rolls in the primary sector was held and key headlines include 15 schools currently in deficit with the caveat that the overall numbers of deficit in WCC is larger than 15. This number only contains maintained schools in deficit and does not include academy schools.</p> <p>There is a recommendation from the working group for schools to consult on their PANs this Autumn as it is a 2-year process and so consultations need to be started in the 2023 Autumn Term for the 2025/2026 academic year. Wendy Anthony's team are assisting schools with temporary caps however it was advised that these need to be made permanent to help reduce the current surplus capacity in WCC, which is 27%. These caps are not recognised by the DfE, and the Local Authority has to report on actual number of places in schools. The latest projections will be available and shared with Schools Forum in the Autumn term. IH added that as WCC is a highly mobile borough, there will also be the numbers on roll based on the October Census Data included within the projections.</p> <p>It was queried if the report in the Autumn Term will include any proposals from schools wanting to increase their PAN within WCC and neighbouring boroughs. IH agreed this update could be provided and advised that Wendy Anthony works closely with other boroughs and would be made aware of any schools increasing their PANs. There are no maintained schools within WCC intending to increase their PANs and these would not be agreed by the Local Authority with the caveat being that a maintained school could potentially increase the specialist places they provide. It was also noted that the Local Authority maintains good links and relationships with Academies and MATS and an early conversation around potentially increasing their PANs and the effect that it would have on the landscape would be held.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION: Noted.</p>	

<p>10.</p>	<p>SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS</p> <p>PG advised of the proposed minor changes found within the table on page 2 of the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention of funds from the sale of land taken directly from the DfE update • Minor change to an annex following the amalgamation in September 2022 • Adding further detail around deficit recovery plans into the submission of budget plans section. <p>Once the consultation has been run, if agreed, the changes can be included within an updated version for November 2023. It was advised that the St Mary Magdalene and St Stephen’s amalgamation would be included in the next issue of the Scheme.</p> <p>It was asked if it could be clearer that there is an expectation that internal drafts of budgets will be provided by the end of March so that they can be implemented ahead of sharing with the Council. It was advised that this could be done if helpful.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) To review and approve the updated Scheme to be consulted on with all maintained schools in line with provision 1.4 of the policy. ii) To note that the outcome of the consultation will be reflected in the next issue of the Scheme. 	
<p>11.</p>	<p>DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS</p> <p>It was agreed that future meetings will be held in-person. The meeting dates for the 2023/2024 academic year are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday 13 November 2023 – 4.45pm – Westminster City Hall • Wednesday 17 January 2024 – 4.45pm – Westminster City Hall • Monday 18 March 2024 – 4.45pm – Westminster City Hall • Monday 17 June 2024 – 4.45pm – Westminster City Hall 	
<p>12.</p>	<p>AOB</p> <p>Colleagues thanked Louisa Lochner for her many years of dutiful service at School’s Forum, working groups and the valued input she contributed. All wished her a happy retirement.</p>	

ACTIONS

<p>Item 3</p>	<p>Identify new representation of a Primary Academy Head from September 2023</p>	<p>JS</p>
<p>Item 8</p>	<p>To defer discussion to agree to allocate St Vincent de Paul a final additional 70% lump sum (£82,620) in 2024/25 to the next meeting</p>	<p>AS</p>

