



City of Westminster

Westminster Schools' Forum Meeting - Minutes

Date and time of meeting: Monday 1st November 2021 at 4.45pm

VIRTUAL MEETING VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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 CE Primary	Present
Primary Head	Rebecca Anson (RA)	St Gabriel's CE Primary	Present
Primary Governor	Andrew Garwood-Watkins (AGW) (Chair)	St James and St John CE Primary	Present
Primary Governor	Vacant		-
Primary Governor	Henry Scutt (HSc)	All Souls CE Primary	Absent
Secondary schools	1 Member		
Secondary Head	Eugene Moriarty (EM)	St Augustine's 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	Michael Bithell (MB) (Vice Chair)	United Westminster Schools Foundation	Present
Primary Academy Head	Louisa Lochner (LL)	Gateway Academy	Present
Alternative Provision Academy	Wasim Butt (WB)	Ormiston Beachcroft	Present
Maintained Nursery Schools	1 member		
Nursery Head	Jo White (JW)	The Portman Early Childhood Centre	Absent
Special Schools	1 member		
Special Schools Executive Head	Jo Petch (JP)	Federation of Westminster Special Schools	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	Present
Director of Education	Ian Heggs (IH)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Apologies
Deputy Director of Education	Richard Stanley (RS)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Present
Assistant Director – SEN & Educational Psychology	Julie Ely (JE)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Present
Head of Admissions and Access to Education	Wendy Anthony (WA)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Present
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 (PM)	Bi-Borough Finance – Children’s	Present
Finance Manager	Nicholas Grey (NG)	Bi-Borough Finance – Children’s	Present
Finance Manager - Schools	Vandana Modha (VM)	Bi-Borough Finance – Children’s	Present
Senior School Governance Adviser/Clerk	Jackie Saddington (JS)	Bi-Borough Children’s Services Education	Present
Observers			
Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning	Cllr Tim Barnes (TB)	Councillor	Apologies
Deputy Cabinet Member for Children’s Services – Specialising in Finance	Cllr Barbara Arzymanow (BA)	Councillor	Present
Principal Lead Adviser	Shelley Duffy (SD)	Bi-Borough Children’s Services Education	Present
Senior Adviser School Inclusion	Hilary Shaw (HSh)	Bi-Borough Children’s Services Education	Present
Governance Administrator	Catherine Lomas (CL)	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea – Legal Services	Present
Bursar	Marie Holmes (MH)	The Greycoat Hospital	Present
Director of Finance and Administration	John McDonald (JM)	The St Marylebone CE School	Present

Item		Action
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies were received from Ian Heggs, Jo Petch and Cllr Barnes.	
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no declarations of interest.	
3.	MEMBERSHIP Louise Ritchie’s term of office expired on 14 October 2021. Rebecca Anson was appointed as a Primary Head representative from 1 November 2021 until 31 October 2023. Edward Lush resigned as a Primary Governor and Simon Mair (Edward Wilson Primary) and Lyn Meadows (Soho Parish CE Primary) have been nominated to replace him. An election will take place in due course. Graeme Smith is no longer Head at Harris Academy St Johns Wood. Susanne Staab (The Greycoat Hospital School) is representing the Secondary Academy Principals post.	
	RESOLUTION: Noted.	
4.	MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 7 JUNE 2021	

	The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2021 were agreed to be a true and accurate record of the meeting.	
	RESOLUTION: The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2021 were agreed to be a true and accurate record of the meeting.	
5.	MATTERS ARISING All matters arising from the last meeting were being addressed via items on the agenda.	
	RESOLUTION: Noted.	
6.	DFE NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA PROPOSALS ASt presented the report and advised that the DfE had issued consultation proposals in July regarding how best to transition to a hard formula and reduce local flexibility for allocating funds to schools. This was a two-stage consultation, with the second stage to include more detailed proposals, following feedback from the first stage. The closing dates for responses was 30th September 2021. She highlighted the key proposals, the different funding factors in the current schools NFF and the principles of the directly applied DSG. She explained that going forward the intention was for all maintained schools to be funded on an academic year basis although returns would still be based on the financial year. Consultation responses had been submitted after consulting with the Headteacher groups. The Chair noted that the falling rolls criteria was different to that of WCC. He asked if that was appropriate and whether the criteria could be adjusted in January 2022. ASt stated WCC, and London generally, would be adversely affected by the proposals. There would be a need to provide evidence that falling rolls was a blip and therefore it was highly unlikely that WCC schools will be eligible. In addition, there would be no funding in the first year. The LA view is that the current WCC criteria is appropriate, and she would not recommend alignment with that proposed by the DfE. The Vice Chair stated he was of the view that the intention was to have a slow and steady transition to the NFF, whilst the Chair noted that there were varied schemes in operation across the country. The Chair questioned whether as steps changed from 2023/2024, the floor as of 2022/23 could be used. ASt said she was due to attend a meeting with the DfE on 5 November and would seek clarification. At this point, it was hard for her to give a view, but she thought the floor would be as of funding from two years previously to implementation.	

	<p>ASt was asked if the application of the MFG would be included in the floor year. She said she would check but at this stage she couldn't see any reason why it would not be included.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION: Noted.</p>	
7.	<p>INDEPENDENT AND NON-MAINTAINED SECTOR PLACEMENTS</p> <p>JE presented the paper. She reminded Members that where the local authority (LA) makes special educational needs (SEN) provision for children and young people subject to Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP), and places them in independent or non-maintained special schools, the cost is charged to the high needs block.</p> <p>She highlighted the information on the placements, tables, and year group analysis. The financial implications were outlined and members were informed that the DSG monitoring position for 2021/22 (month 6) had highlighted a projected unfavourable year end position of £1.225m, against a budget of £1.018m for post 16 placements in the independent sector.</p> <p>The action being taken was outlined, notably the refreshed SEND Strategy identifying action to create capacity in maintained mainstream schools and early years settings, with a view to supporting more pupils with SEN, including SEN Support and EHCPs. The workforce development is aimed at reducing the overall demand for specialist provision.</p> <p>A 'bridging' offer for young people whose long-term provision will best be met through adult social care has been identified following a review of SEN provision for post 16. When the change was made for provision from 0-25 instead of 2-18 no new funding was allocated, which put pressure on the 19-25 sector.</p> <p>JE recommended that consideration should be given to establishing specialist provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties; resources which can cater for learning and language needs to make the position economically viable.</p> <p>The Vice Chair asked JE if there was any support the Schools' Forum could provide. JE explained that the LA was already creating their own provision and keeping provision local, whenever possible. When St Marylebone Bridge moved into their new building she would find it useful if the school would consider increasing their age range for learning and language needs.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION: To agree that consideration should be given to establishing specialist provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties; resources which can cater for learning and language needs.</p>	

8.

DSG MONITORING

ASt presented the paper. She advised members that the change since April was due to the reduction to the High Needs block of £0.684m which was mainly as a result of a data error made by one of the Westminster based FE colleges when recording data in the Individual Learning Record (ILR) return. The data error has now been corrected and will result in an increase to the 2021/2022 DSG allocation of £1.200m in November, with a corresponding increase in allocations to providers and therefore no overall impact on the forecast shown was expected.

ASt referenced the projected year end DSG position as shown in table 2, including overspend and underspend variances, as based on the amended DSG allocation, and the revised budgets. She highlighted that there will be a final adjustment to the Early Years Block later this year and early next year. The overspend in the Schools' Block was in part due to the costs of school reorganisation of £400k and the final overspend of £1,275,000 is forecast on the High Needs Block with the national and London trend increasing High Needs pressures. Numbers are increasing along with the types of provision needed. The main issues being top up costs and costs to the independent sector. Work will continue with the High Needs Review Working Group to obtain best value.

The implementation of a new banded approach to top up payments in mainstream has seen a significant increase in the funding for individual pupils. Whilst an increase in funding was anticipated, the scale of the increase is higher than forecast. Therefore, the banding scales are being reviewed.

The overspend of £1.970m will use up virtually all the reserves, leaving only £280k available.

The Chair asked whether the LA applied for too much funding and the error was found or whether the funding had not been received. ASt explained the error was in how the form was completed and no funding had been released.

The Chair sought clarification that this was not impacting on the reserves and ASt confirmed it was not.

KP said she supported the transfer of funds to the High Needs Block as there were more students with EHCPs coming through at KS3/4 and 5. She also supported the review of the banding tool support to support students with SEN.

The Chair recalled that the Forum had previously suggested that the banding tool may need to be adjusted. He said it was essential that the impact on schools was determined early to prevent an overspend in 2022-2023.

	<p>JE reminded members that this was the first roll out of the Education Banding Tool and the principles of transparency and equity, the needs of students and affordability had all been followed. Affordability was understood but consideration would need to be given to whether the weighting points needed to be changed.</p> <p>A comment was made that an increase in pupil numbers with EHCP should not in itself be leading to budget pressures given that the High Needs NFF ensures that funding per pupil increases by at least 8% pa.</p> <p>The Chair summed up by saying it was important that the impact on schools was identified early in order to ensure a balanced budget was achieved.</p> <p>JE left the meeting at 5.25pm.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION: To note the revised 2021/22 DSG allocation of £90.248m and forecast overspend of £1.970m. The forecast in year overspend would result in the DSG reserves reducing to £0.281m which may result in the requirement for a transfer to the high needs block in 2022/23.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>SCHOOL ROLL PROJECTIONS</p> <p>RS and WA jointly presented the paper. Members were referred to the Primary projections. WA reported that the situation was still being reviewed although the position was moving in the direction that had been forecast. She referred members to the School Roll Projections presentation notably the slide outlining the six planning areas.</p> <p>The current position was there is a 21% surplus of places, with 1FE potentially to be removed, although a further 3.5FE was required. Although a significant cohort of Afghan students had arrived in the borough recently, this was not a long-term solution. In addition, the position regarding covid and the implications from that could not be foreseen. The key point to note was that there is still a need to remove 3.5FE.</p> <p>The Chair asked if there is any evidence of a Covid birth rate bulge. WA said it was too early to say and officers had to work with information known now, including looking at hard evidence whilst also making some assumptions.</p> <p>JTS reported that they were not seeing higher birth rates feeding through to nurseries and two nurseries had closed over the summer. There had been a decline in the inner boroughs whilst occupancy was increasing in the outer boroughs. It was also proving difficult to recruit and retain quality staff in central London.</p>	

	<p>DG asked what proportion of primary school pupils on roll in WCC schools were residents. WA reported this stood at approximately 70%, residents form part of the projections, along with imports and exports, at both Primary and Secondary phases. She was also asked if there was still a high rate of movement of pupils from the public to private sector. She said there was still some movement. RS explained that staff in communications at the LA were also working with Headteachers, supporting them to promote their schools, as well as communicating with parents.</p> <p>RS explained that the next steps were to reduce further forms of entry and to work with individual schools to consider the impact of budget positions. These included considering maximising economies of scale and partnership working. Westminster Cathedral and St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary Schools were currently consulting on an amalgamation, and everyone could make representations. He recommended reconvening the ISOS working group that could report to the EPB. This was agreed.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION: i) To note and take account of the forecasts presented with continuing falling pupil numbers, and the above reminder of the Isos recommendations, along with the findings of the risk assessment process, at least 3.5 forms of entry still need to be removed from the overall primary school capacity.</p> <p>ii) To note that the forecasts presented will inform decisions on pupil place planning and asset management; and that the Isos working group will reconvene to review the latest projections and consider steps to reduce capacity by a further 3.5 FE in light of the risk and opportunity factors identified by Isos as set out in 4.2</p> <p>iii) To note that the forecasts will be updated and reviewed by Schools Forum and the Westminster Education Partnership Board annually.</p> <p>iv) To reconvene the ISOS working group to report to the EPB.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>2022/23 PROVISIONAL DSG AND LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA REVIEW</p> <p>AS presented the paper to members, highlighting the information contained in tables 1 and 2.</p> <p>Table 1 showed the published provisional 2022/23 funding allocations of the schools block (based on the National Funding Formula (NFF)), compared to 2021/22 (before the deductions for payments to academies). It was noted that the published allocations will be updated, based on the latest pupil data, to produce final DSG allocations in December. The increase of 1.8% was noted.</p> <p>Table 2 For the purpose of modelling, table 2 showed the provisional schools block had been adjusted, which will be updated by the final amounts agreed for 2022/23 at the January 2022 Schools' Forum.</p>	

ASt informed members that the maximum amount that can be transferred via the Schools' Forum is £126k, otherwise approval of the DfE is needed. This won't cover an 8% increase in numbers. It is unlikely that restructuring costs will be covered and this will need de-delegation. At £400k this will need £53 AWPU per pupil.

Table 3 ASt informed members that the characteristics shown at Table 3 related to 2020, not 2021. She outlined the options, explained the MFG was 1% and AWPU was the balancing figure.

ASt reported she had consulted with Headteachers. WISSIC preferred Option 1, whilst the Primary Headteachers preferred Option 3, as they felt it was morally the right thing to do. Referring to 6.8 in the paper she said that when comparing with the agreed principles Option 3 gave the largest amount for the Primary sector. Option 2 is the compromise between the two and meets the principles set by the Schools' Forum.

The Chair asked what the final date was for submitting the budget to the DfE. ASt said this was 24 January 2022 but if the decision was left until the January Schools' Forum this would mean it would be very difficult for Officers to finalise the figures. He asked for clarification on the date of the census. RS said he would need to check with the Business Intelligence team, whilst ASt said the finance team usually received clean data in December.

The Chair said that the Forum needed to understand the impact of decisions and questioned whether a better decision will be reached with the full facts from the census or if the census data was irrelevant to the Principles.

It was pointed out that many primary schools will need to look at staff restructuring plans this term and will need to submit their structures to Governing Bodies for approval. It was essential a decision was taken at this meeting. Alternatively, there is a formula in place to address under-performance and need.

Primary Headteacher Views – DG

DG reported that the Primary Heads preferred Option 3 as they felt this was the fairest option and the NFF recognises disadvantaged pupils should receive more funding. Approximately 50% of pupils live out of the Borough, so it is also the right option for residents in the borough.

Secondary Headteacher Views - KP

KP reported that the secondary Heads considered the unknowns of the NFF and felt it was imperative to move quickly. She said she accepted the points made but it was also important to look at the long-term goal. Any move that reduces the per pupil funding potentially affects the future floor, possibly 22/23. If adjustments are made to NFF factors without full details this could take schools to the lower level per pupil. The wider role of the Schools' Forum is to protect the funding for all schools in the future. Therefore, Option 1 was the preference of the Secondary Heads. There are short term advantages for Options 2 and 3, although Option 2 is the compromise option. Option 3 doubles the difference of variance from 1.4% to 2.8%.

General Views

The Chair reminded members that they should make their decision based on what is best for all pupils, not their own sector. Officers had recommended Option 2 which also moves 25% towards the NFF. In the absence of an agreement it would be necessary to take a vote.

If the Schools' Forum did not vote for Option 3 Members will be letting down the disadvantaged pupils as well as not meeting the demands of the Primary schools.

Secondary schools do take students from out of borough, but these students also come from deprived areas.

The Primary Headteachers voted unanimously for Option 3 which makes it difficult to compromise.

At the last meeting a clear process was agreed and this was to consider the recommendation of Officers. ASt had listened to both Primary and Secondary Headteachers before reaching her conclusion. Option 2 was a good compromise.

CLLrs make the final decision and the Forum could put forward the views of each sector and let the CLLrs make the decision. There is a precedent for this. To move to Option 3 is to effectively move to the NFF, albeit deferred to 24/25 or 25/26. The original formula took into account the NFF. The Chair reminded members that the Schools' Forum needed to come to a view and not absent responsibility. Elected Members need a recommendation to consider. Members have not gone against the recommendation of the Schools Forum to his recollection. He was reminded of a decision within the last few years where a change was made.

	<p>As no consensus could be reached it was agreed that members would vote on Option 2. Following a vote (via teams) the clerk announced that Option 2 was carried by a majority of 9 to 4.</p> <p>JTS asked if it was possible to move on another 25% for next year. KP said this had been discussed at WISSIC and Secondary Headteachers would welcome an agreement for two years. This was supported by some other members as it would give stability to schools.</p> <p>ASt informed members it would be easier if the Schools' Forum aligned with the DfE with a move of 25% from 22/23 as it would make it easier. It was noted this would be 18-19% in reality. It was not possible to remain as is as there has to be a move of 10% anyway.</p> <p>The Chair suggested moving another 25% to give stability to schools for two years, subject to there being no adverse change in 23/24.</p> <p>Some members said they understood there would be no change for two years and did not think it was sensible to make a decision for two years, given that the position of school funding is moving rapidly. It was felt stability was important but recent experience showed turbulence in funding and therefore a review should take place in a year's time. It was agreed to review the position in a year's time.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) To review updated figures after information has been received from the ESFA, but before the 21st January 2022 statutory deadline for the ESFA APT submission. ii) To agree option 2 for one year, and to review the position next year. iii) To note the next steps for finalising schools funding for 2022/23. iv) To note that proposals will be brought to the January 2022 meeting of the Schools' Forum regarding the falling rolls criteria and funding, potential transfer to the high needs block and de-delegation for maintained schools (including restructuring costs). 	
<p>11.</p>	<p>EARLY YEARS PAYMENTS FOR SCHOOLS</p> <p>IK introduced the report. He reminded members that the local authority was proposing to consult with schools to ascertain if monthly payments would be a viable option for them. This was in accordance with the 'Early Education and Childcare Statutory guidance for local authorities' (DfE, June 2018).</p> <p>As agreed by the Schools Forum in June 2021, the local authority carried out a consultation with the private, voluntary, and independent providers in the summer</p>	

	<p>term and the majority of settings have decided to move to monthly payments from January 2022.</p> <p>It is now recommended that consultation takes place with schools with nursery classes and maintained nursery schools regarding monthly payments. The consultation will take place between 2nd November – 3rd December with the intention that monthly payments would be brought in for April 22.</p> <p>The Synergy system would be used as the system has been tested, is known and works well. This was agreed.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION: i) To consult with schools with nursery classes and maintained nursery schools regarding monthly payments between 2nd November – 3rd December, with the intention that monthly payments are brought in for April 22, and the Early Education and Childcare Funding Team will support schools.</p> <p>ii) Consultation response to be brought to the Schools Forum meeting in January 2022.</p>	
12.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p><u>Education Partnership Board</u></p> <p>It was requested that a report is brought to the next meeting on the work of the Education Partnership Board. It was agreed that a paper on falling rolls and the views of the EPB would be brought to the next meeting.</p>	
	<p>RESOLUTION: Officers to provide a paper on falling rolls and the views of the EPB to the next meeting.</p>	
13.	<p>DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS</p> <p>Thursday 20 January 2022 – 4.45pm – Venue tbc Monday 21 March 2022 – 4.45pm – Venue tbc Monday 6 June 2022 – 4.45pm – Venue tbc</p>	

Meeting closed at 6.36pm

ACTIONS

Item 9	To reconvene the ISOS working group to report to the EPB.	RS
Item 10	To review updated figures after information has been received from the ESFA, but before the 21st January 2022 statutory deadline for the ESFA APT submission.	ASt
Item 11	To consult with schools with nursery classes and maintained nursery schools regarding monthly payments between 2nd November – 3rd December, with the intention that monthly payments are brought in for April 22, and the Early Education and Childcare Funding Team will support schools.	IK
Item 11	Consultation response to be brought to the Schools Forum meeting in January 2022.	IK
Item 12	Officers to provide a paper on falling rolls and the views of the EPB to the next meeting.	RS/WA