

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 29 September 2022

Present:

David Dilling (Chairman)	Primary Academy Governor (Charles Darwin Academy Trust)
Andrew Ferguson (Vice-Chairman)	Non-School Representative (Church of England)(Aquinas Trust)
Patrick Foley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher (Southborough Primary School)
Chris Hollands	Primary Academy Head Teacher (Aquinas Trust)
Neil Miller	PRU Head Teacher/Governor Academy (Bromley Trust Academy)
Andrew Rees	Secondary Maintained School Head Teacher (St Olaves Grammar School)
Brid Stenson	Non-School Representative (Early Years)
Steve Whittle	Secondary Academy Head Teacher (Impact Multi Academy Trust)
David Wilcox	Secondary Academy Governor (Darrick Wood School)

Also Present:

David Bradshaw	Head of Children, Education and Families Service Finance
Jared Nehra	Director of Education
Philippa Gibbs	Democratic Services Officer
Kevin Walter	Democratic Services Officer
Robert Bollen	Head of Strategic Place Planning
Steve Barnard	Education Skills Funding Agency

9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Clare Bessa.

10 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 JULY 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2022, were approved and signed as a correct record.

11 THE NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA 2023/24 Report CEF22062

The report provided details of the National Funding Formula for 2023/24 and the provisional allocations.

On the 19th July 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) published the illustrative 2023/24 funding for schools under the National Funding Formula. A technical note, published alongside the figures, set out the design of the NFF for 2023/24 for the Schools, High Needs, and Central blocks. Illustrative allocations for Early Years funding had been published separately as part of the early years' consultation published on the 4th July 2022 and had been circulated previously.

2023/24 was the first year of the transition to the 'direct' schools NFF, whereby all mainstream schools across England would be funded through the same national formula without allowing for adjustment through local funding formulae. Therefore, in 2023/24, local authorities would only be allowed to use NFF factors in their local formula and, excluding the locally determined premises factors, must use all NFF factors. Bromley were currently following the NFF as far as possible and this was not an issue. Highlighted changes were:

- a) The 2022/23 supplementary schools grant would be rolled into the NFF by adding grant figures to the baseline data and uplifting the minimum per pupil values by the grant's basic per pupil values.
- b) Local Authorities must move their local formula factor at least 10% closer to the NFF. Bromley were in the main already very close to NFF figures and this should pose no significant issues
- c) Local authorities must identify a notional budget for their mainstream schools, that could help them comply with their duty to meet the special educational needs of their pupils. Bromley already did this through the APT.

For the Schools, High Needs and Central Blocks the National average overall increase was 2.7%. Bromley's increase was 2.6%. The London average was 2.4%. Further details were set out in appendix 1 of the report.

In response to a question, the Head of Children Education and Families Finance confirmed that the 1.6% increase in funding was in addition to the supplementary grant which had been rolled into the baseline.

Members of the Schools Forum noted that as a result of increasing inflation (which was likely to reach 13%) an MFG of 0.5% amounted to a real terms funding cut per pupil of 12.5%. Members noted that was one eighth of a budget. The purpose of an MFG was to stop cliff edges and a proposed 0.5% with a cut of 12.5% amounted to a cliff edge and in light of this the MFG needed to be significantly bigger – more than inflation – to have any impact. Members of the Schools' Forum highlighted that with high levels of inflation, school budgets were effectively being cut and the current position was unsustainable. It was noted that it appeared that the DfE had not supported salary increases for teachers and support staff and the resulting impact on schools would be significant with an even bigger impact on special schools. Ultimately there would be job losses as schools were not in a position to afford the increases. This coupled with increases in energy bills and exponential increases in the number of EHCPs was unsustainable and, ultimately, it would be young people who would suffer the biggest impact from these real terms funding cuts.

The Director of Education highlighted that the LA worked very closely with schools and had engaged with head teachers at both primary and secondary level. These concerns around pressures on schools' budgets had previously been discussed and relayed back to the DfE at fortnightly React meetings.

The Forum recognised that High Needs would continue to be a challenging area and there was a need to work through the detail in order to fully understand the impact.

The Forum also noted that a further report, setting out calculations based on Autumn pupil numbers along with information about the Growth Fund and the Falling Rolls Fund, would be presented to the Schools' Forum in January 2023. The Chairman further noted that in January the Forum would have to put forward an MFG percentage and the issues raised by headteachers around inflationary pressures would be highly relevant as all schools were suffering in terms of trying to balance their budgets.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

12 UPDATE ON HIGH NEEDS FUNDING REVIEW Report CEF22064

The report provided an update on the High Needs Funding Banding Review that commenced in September 2021.

Local authorities had statutory responsibilities to keep the special educational provision in their area under review, working with parents, young people and institutions (as set out in chapter 4 of the SEND Code of Practice). This included the mechanisms and processes for agreeing top-up funding.

The High Needs Banded Funding Review commenced in September 2021 to consider top-up levels for education settings across the 0-25yrs age range for children and young people (CYP) who had Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

The review was designed to examine the existing High Needs Banded Funding models and calculations, as well as explore the outcomes expected from the funding and link complexities of need and expected provision to the different bands of funding. Having clear descriptors of need and/or provision linked to funding bands, created a transparent funding model that allowed clear comparison between CYP and the funding they received.

In response to a question, the Head of Strategic Place Planning confirmed that the review now incorporated the SEN estates review. The review would focus on top-up funding and funding bands and SEN spaces within additionally resourced provision in mainstream school as well as special schools. All schools with specialist provision would be reviewed across 4 terms starting from Autumn 2022. The Head of School Place Planning also confirmed that whilst the programme of

review was prioritised to where additional places could be delivered quickly or there were specific circumstances that required early review, there was some flexibility with regards priority order. The Director of Education confirmed that one area the LA was seeking to prioritise was creating additional local inclusive provision. It was noted that further updates would be brought to Schools' Forum.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**13 PROPOSED CHANGES TO RECOUPMENT POLICY FOR
ALTERNATIVE PROVISION
Report CEF22063**

The report outlined proposed changes to recoupment policy for Alternative Provision (AP) in line with “money following the child” principles and Government guidance.

The Director of Education introduced the report and outlined the context of the report. In 2019, the LA in partnership with schools, undertook a review of AP. The review made a number of recommendations, and these led to the actions set out in the report being taken. One of the key design principles agreed at that time was that “the money follows the child”. In reality this had been implemented only partly and there was now a need to fully implement this design principle. Consequently, the LA was seeking recoupment of costs and further details were set out in the report.

In response to a question, the Director of Education confirmed that no adverse implications for commissioned AP services were anticipated. The budget was predicated on having an effective redistribution of funding in the local area and therefore ensuring a healthy and sustainable approach to AP across the Borough.

Members of the Forum expressed support for the approach to AP and in response to a question the Director of Education confirmed that the Home Hospital Tuition Service was partly DSG funded (with an additional contribution from the LA) and some pressures had been created as a result of the minimal recoupment to date. There was a need to have a redistribution of funding to meet current costs appropriately and sustainably and to consider whether there was a need to have additional AP in order to meet the needs of children and young people across the Borough.

The Forum noted that given Secondary Headteachers had unanimously agreed to the design principles, it was unlikely that schools would refuse to pay. Although no particular issues were envisaged, there were ways and means for the LA to press to recover the funding should that be necessary.

RESOLVED: That the specified amendments to school funding agreements be supported to enable “money to follow the child” in AP provision as agreed in March 2021.

14 DSG DEFICIT RECOVERY MANAGEMENT PLAN
Report CEF22065

The report provided an update on the production of Bromley's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Deficit Recovery Management Plan (DRMP) and invited comments on the key areas being considered under the development of the DRMP.

The Director of Education introduced the report and highlighted that pressures on the DSG had been growing considerably in recent years and Bromley's DSG had now entered a deficit position which was forecast to grow. The Forum noted that Bromley was one of the last LAs in London to enter into a deficit on its DSG. The LA had been working closely with partners to manage the pressures on the DSG and to develop the DRMP.

The Director of Education outlined the pressures on the DSG and provided further detail surrounding the work being undertaken to mitigate these pressures.

In response to a question, the Director of Education confirmed that in his view the amount of transformation required to manage the deficit was achievable. Work on the mitigations had already started and the LA and its partners was well placed to meet the challenges. It was clear that costs would continue to increase, and the LA would continue to lobby the DfE for additional resources to meet these increasing costs.

A Member of the Schools' Forum noted that deficits in DSG was a national problem resulting from chronic underfunding over a number of years with the situation growing ever desperate. The key issue was that there was simply not enough funding and pressures would continue until such time as this was acknowledged and addressed by the DfE.

In response to a question the Director of Education confirmed that at this point the LA was not proposing to make direct reductions in services and that the intention was to drive efficiencies through transformation. Whilst it was clear that there were some challenges there was a clear plan in place and there were excellent partnerships and relationships in Bromley.

In relation to affecting transformation, the Director of Education confirmed that reducing the cost of independent non-maintained provision would be one of the more difficult areas to address. There had been various approaches to address this however the shortage of placements meant that costs remained high.

The Forum noted that there was need to ensure that all schools had consistent access to all the support that was available for children with additional needs. This would help to ensure that all schools were as inclusive as they could be and that the need for statutory assessment was reduced.

The Forum also noted that there was a need to work with parents to manage demand for EHCPs. The Director of Education highlighted the need to increase the confidence of parents that their child's needs could be met locally in mainstream provision with additional support as appropriate to their child's needs.

Parents seeking named provision would continue to be a factor and engagement would need to continue with parents with a need for further partnership working to raise the confidence of parents. Members of the Forum noted that it would be increasingly hard to raise the confidence of parents as the number of support staff decreased due to reduced funding.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the 7 key areas for deficit mitigation and management be endorsed.

15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Director of Education raised the issue of increases in fees in respect of school breakfast and afterschool clubs. The issue had been raised at the last meeting of the Forum and no further comments were made.

16 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meeting would take place at 4.30pm on Thursday 24 November 2022 via MS Teams.

The Meeting ended at 5.55 pm

Chairman