

**Meeting of the Schools Forum
Held on Tuesday 10th December 2024 at 12.00pm
via MS Teams Digital Platform**

MINUTES

Quorum: 40% (8 of the 18 current School/Non-School Members)

NAME	Organisation - School Members	Attended
Rachel Lewis	Hindley Sure Start Nursery	No
Louise Curran	Rowan Tree Primary	Yes
Anne Isherwood	Three Towers Alternative Provision Academy	Yes
Tracy Mingaud-Cunningham	Primary Governor	Yes
Adrian Hardy	Secondary Governor	Yes
Gary Hayes	Orrell St James Primary	Yes
Fiona Quinlivan	Howe Bridge St Michael's Primary	Yes
Julie Hassan	St Oswald's Catholic Primary	Yes
Matthew Boyle	Leigh St Thomas CE Primary School	Yes
Lisa Hobden	St Patrick's Catholic Primary School	Yes
Alan Birchall	Byrchall High (Chair)	Yes
Andy McGlown	St. Peters RC High School	Yes
Martin Wood	The Deanery High School	No
Paul Davies	Fred Longworth High School	No
	Organisation - Non School Members	
Sue Morris	Care Love Learn Childcare Limited	No
Peter McGhee	St John Rigby College	Yes
Max Atkins	Wigan NEU	Yes
Need nominated member	Diocesan Representative	
	Organisation- Nominated observers	
Cllr Jenny Bullen	Cabinet Member	Yes
Karen Parkin	NEU	
Mike Wilkinson	Wigan NASUWT	Yes
Mark Clayton	GMB	Yes
	Organisation - In Attendance	
Mark Rotheram (KR)	LA Finance – Strategic Finance Manager	Yes
Kirsten Reid (KR)	LA Finance – Group Finance Manager (Schools)	Yes
Cath Pealing (CP)	Assistant Service Director, Education	Yes
Kellie Williams (KW)	Service Lead SEND	Yes
Jo Sullivan	Clerk to the Forum, Wigan Council Governor Services	Yes

	Item & Intended Outcome	Lead
1.	Apologies for Absence No apologies were received.	Chair
2.	Agreement of Any Other Urgent Business to Be Added to the Agenda No other business was raised.	Chair
3.	Previous Minutes Members confirmed that the minutes from the Forum meeting held on 17th October 2024 were a correct record.	Chair
4.	Schools Block Funding Formula 2025/26 Members had received details of the indicative DSG allocations for 2025-2026 and models to be reviewed to determine potential transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block in advance of the meeting. KR talked through the reports and highlighted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The national funding formula (NFF) model for the school's block calculates an "indicative" budget for each individual school in their host Local Authority (LA) and the aggregated total of such forms the LA baseline schools block allocation. The schools block allocation is expressed as separate per pupil primary and secondary rates for each LA and includes funding for premises based on historic spend and growth on a formulaic basis. • The published provisional NFF schools block funding (excluding funding through the growth and falling rolls factor) for 2025-26 is £285,123,804. It includes the funding for rates of £1,836,888. This leaves £283,286,916 to be passed onto schools. <p>Q. The minimum funding levels had increased. Was this a Local or national decision?</p> <p>A. National. In 2024/25 schools received the Teachers Pay Additional Grant (TPAG), the Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant (TPECG) and the Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG) in addition to the DSG. For 2025/26 funding previously distributed through these grants will be allocated through the Schools Block funding formula through adding to the baseline, increasing the basic per pupil funding, FSM6 and lump sum funding and increasing the minimum per pupil funding. This includes an uplift to ensure the full 12 months of salary costs are fully funded at a national level.</p> <p>MR stated that the Department for Education has recognised that the timescale for the publication of the National Funding Formula (NFF) has been unprecedented this year given the timing of the General Election. The NFF was issued on the 28/11/24, and in this timescale, modelling has proved to be very difficult given the increase in allocation distributed via the funding formula. This will only be able to</p>	KR/MR

be properly worked through when the 25/26 Authority Pro Forma is released later in December 2024.

Q. Was this an issue as the money was being added into the basic income?

A. Yes. Going forward it is anticipated that the total funding would be distributed through the pupil led factors making year on year comparisons easier, with the information being received earlier.

Q. Most grants were for staffing costs, where were they drawing the line between the pupil allocation and the deprivation allocation?

A. This was being driven nationally and MR would look at the policy framework and see if there was any further explanation.

(The National Funding Formula publication states 'as a result of the rolling in of the grants, different NFF factors are being increased by different amounts. The FSM6 factor is increasing the most (in percentage terms), followed by the basic entitlement, the lump sum and the minimum per pupil levels. Other additional needs factors are increasing by a lesser proportion since the previous grants used FSM6 as a proxy for additional needs more widely. The exact impact on pupils and schools will depend on the local formulae, but on average the FSM6 factor value is increasing by a higher proportion than other factors, and as a result, the proportion of funding allocated through the FSM6 factor in the schools NFF is increasing. This will have a positive impact on equalities as there is a positive correlation between pupils attracting FSM6 funding and pupils with SEND.'

A member raised a question as to why the school names were not detailed in the modelling.

At a meeting with the EFSA a recommendation was made to ensure the appendices to the reports are also published. Given that the modelling was not in the public domain and we are making a decision on principles to be adopted it was decided to just use a school number identifier in these appendices. When the final version is submitted to Schools Forum in January the school names will be detailed in the appendices.

Forum Members:

a) agreed the formula factors, rates and principles as set out in section 4 to be used for school's block allocations in 2024/25.

b) noted that growth funding allocations will only be available in December 2024.

c) confirmed the agreement of the principles to be applied for the 2025-26 financial year.

A Member commented that the maximum 0.5% block transfer would be unsustainable for some schools.

MR - £1.4m was an illustration of the maximum amount of funding that could be transferred from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block with Schools Forum approval. (Without the need for disapplication to the Secretary of State for Education). In general terms Wigan's school block funding for 2025/26 has increased year on year by 2.39%. The exact funding figures for each individual school will only be known when revised pupil numbers are released later this month.

	<p>The Local Authority are seeking approval for a £750k transfer to the HNB.</p> <p>Members noted that the Forum needed to be mindful of the pressures on school.</p> <p>Cllr Bullen stated that the Local Authority did not like asking for the transfer, but the pressures were regional and national. Looking ahead we were hopeful of reforms under the new Government that would take some pressure off both the HNB and school budgets.</p> <p>Members agreed to a £750k transfer from the Schools Block the High Needs Block. This did not solve the structural issues within the High Needs Block, and Members were aware that something structurally needed to be done on top of this to move towards a balanced High Needs position.</p>	
5.	<p>De-Delegation 2025/26</p> <p>Members had received information on proposals for de-delegation values for the financial year 2025-2026 in advance of the meeting, including calculations. The proposals only applied to maintained schools and only maintained schools could comment on and agree the proposals.</p> <p>In line with the uplift method previously agreed at Schools Forum, the Local Authority is seeking approval for an increase in value of the de-delegations by the 2.39% increase in Wigan's schools block allocation for 2025/26. It is not proposed to uplift the contingency element and so the overall increase would equate to 2.10%</p> <p>Forum members of maintained schools approved the proposed changes to the de-delegation rates for 2025-26.</p>	KR/MR
6.	<p>High Needs Block Finance Update</p> <p>Members had received the latest financial projections for 2024/25 and the 2025/26 Provisional Allocation in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>KR – we had set out changes of funding that we had received throughout the year, which had increased and decreased over the year. KR talked through report.</p> <p>CP commented that the initial allocations issued did not reflect the number of EHCPs we currently have. KR would check this and report back to January meeting.</p> <p>The forecast was showing an £11.6m deficit in year for 2024-25. A detailed review of Post 16 was underway. We had worked with special schools to ensure that they are correctly funded. EHCPs were increasing. Further work to be done with colleagues across the North West to make sure other Local Authorities were paying for their own children. There would hopefully be one policy across the GMC to buy into an approach which should hopefully ensure we were not double paying for children.</p> <p>Q. Once we entered into a contract, they could not increase costs, was this correct?</p>	KR/MR

	<p>A. Yes. KW had organised meetings in the new year informing providers that we would not be paying any uplifts next year. We would write to providers to confirm this position.</p> <p>As per Appendix 1 the revised forecast as at the end of November 2024 estimates that the 24/25 year-end spend on the High Needs Block will be £61,801,469. This will result in an in-year deficit of £11.669m resulting in the overall High Needs Deficit increasing to £17.254m as at the 31/03/25.</p> <p>We would be calling on our inclusion champions across the Local Authority to ensure that schools were offering inclusive education for our children. There was work to be done and we need to ensure that we work together collaboratively.</p> <p>A Member commented that the notional SEND spend was very high for schools in comparison to the notional amounts actually received for pupils. KW replied that they were aware that reforms needed to happen across education. We had created a sufficiency plan for our specialist provision needs which includes expansion of current special schools, resourced provision and SEN units.</p> <p>Members accepted that the Local Authority were doing the best they could to move this along.</p> <p>Schools' Forum noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the information relating to the funding for next year and the current in-year projections. b) they supported the request to transfer funds from the school's block to the high needs block. c) meetings of the Schools Forum High Needs sub-group would continue at regular intervals and report on recovery plans. 	
7.	<p>Any Other Urgent Business</p> <p>No other had been raised.</p>	Chair
	<p>Future Meeting Dates</p> <p>To note the agreed meeting dates (all via MS Teams):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 1 – Thursday 16th January 2025 at 1.30pm • Spring 2 – Thursday 13th March 2025 at 1.30pm • Summer 1 – Thursday 15th May 2025 at 1.30pm • Summer 2 – Thursday 26th June 2025 at 1.30pm <p>The meeting closed at 12:58pm.</p>	Chair

Background documents (available for public inspection):

Appendices to the circulated briefing reports disclose important facts on which the reports are based and were relied upon in preparing the reports. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact the Forum Clerk
j.sullivan@wigan.gov.uk