

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Held on Wednesday 4 October 2023 at 17:30 on Microsoft Teams

Governors:

Ms Adelaide Amofo
*Mr Tim Hellings**
Ms Caroline Davies
*Mr John Donnelly**

Headteachers

Ms Tammy Day*
*Ms Jennifer Gumbrell**
*Ms Kate Baptiste**
*Ms Celeste Fay**
*Ms Nuala Husband**
*Mr Dominic Smart**

Ms Gilly Taylor

Academies:

Ms Helen Thomas (Chair)*
Ms Susan Ellingham
*Mr Aaron Livingston**
*Ms Androulla Nicou**
*Ms Zoe Thompson**
*Mr Stephen Way**
Vacancy

Schools' Members

Primary
Primary
Special
Secondary

Secondary
Secondary
Primary
Pupil Referral Unit
Primary
Primary
Special

Non-School Members

Mr Kurt Hintz
*Ms Angela Palmer**
*Mr Tony Cuffaro**
*Mr Andy Johnson**
*Mr Ian Hewison**
*Cllr Margaret Greer**

16-19 Partnership
Early Years Provider
Teachers' Committee
Education Professional
Head of Admissions
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Abdul Abdullahi
Vacancy

Observers

Cabinet Member
School Business Manager

Also, present:

Mr Peter Nathan, Director of Education
Mr Steve Muldoon, Assistant Director of Finance
Mr Neil Best, Head of Strategic Resources & Partnership - Education
Mrs Sangeeta Brown, Education Resources Manager
Ms Coral Miller, Finance Manager – Schools & Education
Ms Claire Docherty, NEU
Ms Danusia Brzezicka, Resources Co-Ordinator
Ms Christiana Kromidias, Early Years Team Manager
Mr Andrew Laurence, Head of Commissioning, CYP & Public Health

Clerk's notes

Ms Christiana Kromidias left the meeting at 5.44pm
Cllr Margaret Greer left the meeting at 6.44pm

Mr Peter Nathan, Director of Education chaired the meeting until the Chair for the municipal year 2024/25 had been elected.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP**

- (a) Apologies for absence were received from Ms Gilly Taylor and Ms Susan Ellingham.
(i) Composition of the Forum

NOTED that no changes were needed to the composition of the Forum following the

assessment of the pupil numbers from the January Pupil Census.

(ii) Vacancies and other changes

NOTED that:

- a. Mr John Donnelly, Mr Dominic Smart, Ms Nuala Husband and Ms Androulla Nicou's terms of office were renewed for another term as members of the Schools Forum.
- b. Mr Marc Lewis had left Wren Academy and had been replaced by Mr Aaron Livingston. Mr Aaron Livingston agreed to take over from Mr Aaron Lewis's position on the Schools Forum as an Academy Representative.
- c. Following Ms Jo Fear's retirement after 46 years of service, Mr Ian Hewison joined the Schools Forum as a non-school member.
- d. There was a vacancy for an Academy Representative and a vacancy for a School Business Manager observer. Nominations will be sought for these vacancies.

2. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to identify any personal or prejudicial interest relevant to items on the agenda.

NOTED that no declarations were received.

3. **ITEM FOR DECISION**

Chair and Vice Chair

REPORTED with the cancellation of the Summer term Schools Forum meeting, a Chair and a Vice-Chair were not appointed for the municipal year 2024/25.

The Forum was advised that Ms Thomas had agreed to continue as Chair and Ms Nicou as Vice-Chair for the rest of the municipal year 2024/25.

RESOLVED to the appointments of Chair and Vice-Chair for the rest of the municipal year 2024/25:

- Ms Helen Thomas as Chair of the Schools Forum
- Ms Androulla Nicou as Vice-Chair of the Schools Forum

Ms Thomas thanked Mr Nathan and chaired the remainder of the meeting.

4. **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

RECEIVED the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 8 March 2023.

NOTED that:

- (a) Minutes were a correct record of the meeting.
- (b) There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5. **ITEMS FOR PRESENTATION**

(a) **Early Years: New Framework (attached)**

This item was presented by Ms Christiana Kromidias, Early Years Team Manager

RECEIVED a report from Ms Kromidias of the key highlights from the Early Years: New Framework report.

REPORTED:

- (i) Changes to the Nursery Funding Entitlement will occur in the following phases:
- April 2024: 15 hours of childcare over 38 weeks to eligible parents of 2 year olds
 - September 2024: 15 hours of childcare over 38 weeks to eligible parents of 9 to 36 month olds
 - September 2025: 30 hours of childcare over 38 weeks to eligible parents of 9 to 36 month olds
- (ii) An initial allocation will be paid to LAs based on the January 2023 censuses. A final adjustment will be made to payments using updated January 2024 censuses in Summer 2024

NOTED:

- (i) The DfE were also considering a change to the percentage retained for central services from 5% of funding for three and four year olds to 3% but this would include both three and four year olds and two year olds. There was a concern because take up was like to be low in the first year and the impact this would have for the service.
- (ii) The Forum was advised that no capital funding was being provided to support these changes.

There were no questions, and Mr Nathan highlighted that these were significant changes, and the LA will monitor the offer carefully for potential impacts on space and capital expenditure for equipment, refurbishments, and new buildings.

Ms Kromidias was thanked for attending the Forum and her presenting her Early Years Framework report.

RESOLVED to monitor requirements and costs resulting from the new Nursery Funding Entitlement.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

(b) Children's Centre – Annual Report (attached)

This item was presented by Mr Andrew Laurence, Head of Commissioning, CYP & Public Health.

RECEIVED a report from Mr Laurence of the key highlights from the Enfield Children's Centre Annual Summary report.

REPORTED:

- (i) The Children's Centre in Enfield was a commissioned service, led by De Bohun Primary School, with a single team operating across five main sites located at De Bohun, Eldon, Carterhatch, Raynham and Hazelwood. The service co-delivered with a range of partners operating for 48 weeks a year with a capacity to see up to 220 children every week.
- (ii) The service was recommissioned in 2018 for a period of five years. The Children's Centre was comprised of 12 Family Support Workers who worked with families as part of their caseload (with a maximum capacity of 20) and referrals were received via Early Help Triage.

The total funding the programme received was £440k of which £975k was from the DSG.

- (iii) There was a funding shortfall in 2022/23 because of having to meet the cost of the pay awards. This was met from an underspend accumulated during the COVID pandemic. These funds had also been used to run more stay and plays so increasing provision for families affected by the pandemic to access. Due to the reduced reserves, the service was unable to continue to run at full capacity and meet the ongoing cost and additional costs associated with the latest pay award.

- (iv) The Children's Centre was developing a Family Hub offer, by rolling out a service at the new Ponders End Youth Centre.

In response to questions the Forum was advised that further updates on the funding of this service will be reported to the Forum.

RESOLVED to provide an update for the Forum at a future meeting.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

Mr Lawrence was thanked for attending the Forum and presenting the Children's Centre annual report.

(c) Audit – Annual School Audit Report (attached)

This item was presented by Mrs Sangeeta Brown, Education Resources Manager.

RECEIVED a report from Ms Young, Head on Internal Audit & Risk Management that had been sent to Headteachers, Chair of Governors and Chair of Finance/Resources.

REPORTED

- (i) The audit programme followed the Schools Financial Value Standard headings by testing whether schools were compliant with the requirements of the Scheme for Financing Schools, Finance Manual for Schools, data security, asset management and business continuity practices.
- (ii) The Council monitored the implementation of internal audit actions closely and all overdue actions were reported to both the Assurance Board and the General Purposes Committee. If it was deemed that the responses received were insufficient and/or satisfactory progress had not been made, then the Director of Education was informed.
- (iii) An analysis of the actions arising from full audits showed the total number of actions agreed in 2022-23 had decreased from 143 to 105 in 2021-22, which was in line with expectations as fewer full scope audits were carried out in 2022-23.
- (iv) Schools Cyber Security audit - a questionnaire sent received 54 responses from the 55 sent to maintained schools. The key findings were presented, and schools were recommended to:
- A. present and discuss the report at a Governing Body meeting.
 - B. review their own arrangements against the DfE standards on schools' cyber security, user accounts and data protection and the National Cyber Security Centre Cyber Essentials.
 - C. develop an action plan for improvement, to be monitored regularly by the Governing Body.
 - D. attend audit and fraud training delivered by experienced officers
 - E. source ongoing social interventions to support peer relationships formed in the ASU when students transition back to school.

In response to questions, it was stated that cyber security was disruptive for schools because it led to loss of data.

It was commented that schools were responsible for online and data security and the ESFA arrangements required schools had three backups of data in place to prevent and manage any possible loss. The three backups were a copy of the data held at the school, one copy in the cloud and the third held on a portable disc not at the school.

The Forum noted the outcomes from the audits carried out maintained schools.

6. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION & DECISION

(a) Schools Budget Outturn 2022/23

This item was presented by Ms Coral Miller, Finance Manager – Education.

RECEIVED a report summarising details of the DSG outturn position for 2022/23 including

confirmation of the final DSG allocation from the EFA as at March 2023.

REPORTED the DSG cumulative deficit position for 31 March 2023 of -£12.618K.

NOTED the DSG budget remained under considerable pressure due to ongoing high needs overspends. The Forum was advised due to some variations there was a slight underspend during the last quarter, which had resulted in the deficit being lower than the amount projected in January 2023.

The Forum noted the outturn position for 2022/23 and the increase in the accumulative deficit.

(b) Schools Balances 2022/23

This item was presented by Mrs Brown, Education Resources Manager.

RECEIVED a report confirming the total balances held as at 31 March 2023, an update on actions taken for schools reporting surplus balances above the threshold of 5% and £100k and an update on actions taken to support schools in deficit.

REPORTED

- (i) School revenue balances at 31 March 2023 totalled **-£1.336k** (including community facilities). An overall decrease in balances of £949k accounted by the change in balances for each sector as follows:
 - A. Secondary: increase of £1,133k, the range had narrowed and from -42 to 4.6% to -32 to 6.3% with 4 schools experiencing a drop in pupil numbers
 - B. Primary: of £1.982k, the range had widened from -25% to 9.9% to -37 to 9.1% with 35 schools experiencing a drop in pupil numbers
 - C. Special: decrease of £100k, the range had widened from 3 to 8 to 2.4% to 10.7%.
- (ii) Four schools had balances above both thresholds. The use of these balances were discussed with Education Resources Group and the recommendation not to recycle was supported.
- (iii) Eighteen schools had reported a deficit position at the year-end. The Authority was following the process agreed with the Forum to develop and agree a deficit recovery plan with these schools.
- (iv) The continuing decline in mainstream pupil numbers and increase in number of pupils eligible for Free School meals.

NOTED

- (i) More schools were likely to experience financial difficulties due to increasing inflationary and costs pressures, unfunded pay awards and declining numbers on roll. It was stated that officers were working with schools in line with the process agreed with the Forum.

The current projections indicated that the birthrate was continuing to decline. Pupil numbers were being monitored.
- (ii) It was commented for secondary schools there were other additional external factors other than just pupil numbers, these included new schools opening or some expanding in the borough when the additional places were not required.

The Forum noted the 2022/23 year end position for maintained schools and the increase in the deficit for the overall balances held by maintained schools.

(c) Responses to consultation: Mainstream Schools Top-up Funding

This item was presented by Mrs Brown, Education Resources Manager

RECEIVED a summary of responses for the proposed local arrangements for funding top ups for pupils with Education, Health Care Plans (EHCPs) in mainstream schools.

REPORTED as agreed with the Forum, a consultation document was published outlining the proposal to increase the hourly rate to £15.50 and move to a banding system to allocate

funding to pupils with EHCPs. In total 36 responses were received by the deadline.

NOTED

- (i) Banding descriptors would be developed for supporting pupils below band A and above band E
- (ii) Some existing plans from a variety of schools would be tested against the new criteria to ensure there were no inconsistencies or ambiguities.
- (iii) The new banding system would be introduced from April 2024 to assess new requests for support and those requiring an assessment as part of the annual review process.

The Forum noted the feedback following consultation and supported the increase in the hourly rate and arrangements for introducing banding system to allocate top up funding to pupils with EHCPs.

(d) Schools Funding Arrangements (2024/25)

This item was presented by Mrs Brown.

RECEIVED a report providing a summary of the national arrangements published by the DfE and the areas for review to inform local arrangements.

REPORTED the funding arrangements for 2024/25 included indicative allocation for the DSG using October 2022 Pupil Census data and also a response to the consultation from mainstream schools on the National Funding Formula (NFF) carried out in Autumn 2022.

NOTED:

- (i) Schools Block: for 2024/25, national increase in funding for mainstream schools NFF was 2.7% per pupil. Enfield's overall indicative allocation was £316.4m, an increase of 2.57%.
- (ii) High Needs Block: for 2024/25, national increase was £440m in 2024/25.
- (iii) Early Years Block: for 2024/25, no information had yet been published. However, the DfE had confirmed early years settings would receive a one-off supplementary grant to support cost pressure. The grant totalled £204m and covered the period from September 2023 to March 2024.
- (iv) Central Services Schools Block (CSSB): for 2024/25, Enfield's indicative allocation was £2.4m with a small increase for statutory functions and, in line with the policy of phasing out historic functions a 20% reduction.
- (v) DfE consultation responses for 2024/25 NFF for mainstream schools confirmed:
 - A. NFF for growth/falling pupil roll funds
 - B. Introduction of NFF for schools located on split sites
 - C. Continuing to enable transfer of up to 0.5% from Schools to High Needs Block
 - D. Development of a national approach to calculate individual schools notional SEND budgets
- (vi) The Schools block increase was being added to the following formula factors: per pupil, FSM Ever 6 and the lump sum.

The minimum per pupil funding levels were being retained and had also been increased.
- (vii) The arrangements for national factors that were being introduced were as follows:
 - A. Growth: factor that funded schools where they had agreed with the Authority to open an additional class in order to meet basic need. It was uncertain at this stage if this factor would be used locally.
 - B. Falling Rolls: removal of the restriction that only schools judged Good or Outstanding at their last Ofsted inspection could be supported. However, in order to assess eligibility, there was a new requirement that data from the school capacity survey (SCAP) be used to confirm pupil places were required within the next 3 – 5 years. For this reason, it was uncertain at this stage if this factor would be used locally.

- C. Split sites: NFF for schools located on two or more sites based on a formula using lump sum (£54,300) and distance measure (up to £27,100). For 2024/25, schools would be protected against any losses and gains would be capped.
- D. It was confirmed funding up to 0.5% could be transferred from Schools to High Needs Block. In previous years, Enfield transferred 0.5% from the Schools block to fund schools with above average number of pupils with EHCPs. The Forum was asked to confirm if they were agreeable for the Authority to consult on continuing for 2024/25 with the transfer to support schools with above average number of pupils with EHCPs.

RESOLVED to consult stakeholders on transferring 0.5% from the Schools to the High Needs Block to support schools with above average number of EHCPs.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

(e) Schools Budget – Update (2024/25)

This item was presented by Ms Miller

RECEIVED an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant 2024/25 with the final budget settlement expected in December. The data used for the projections was based on the October 2022 census and will be updated with the published October 2023 census data.

REPORTED the DSG budget position, for 2023/24, as at the end of Quarter 1 (June 2023) projected an in-year overspend of £2.62m with a cumulative deficit of £17.9m. The report being presented to the Forum provided the draft budget position and other updates on the Schools budget for 2024/25.

NOTED

- (i) For 2024/25, the indicative DSG allocation was £423.036m, a net increase of £10.972m across the four funding blocks.
- (ii) Early indication of pupil numbers was showing a reduction from 49,322 on 2023/24 to 48,791 for 2024/25, an overall reduction of 531 pupils.
- (iii) Allowing for the 0.5% transfer, the indicative amount available within the Schools Block was £314.78m. The illustrative model presented allowed for 0.5% minimum funding guarantee and assumed the continuation of 0.5% transfer. It was stated the increase for individual school was likely to be between 0.5 – 2% with primary schools most likely receiving minimum increase. The Forum expressed their concern that the increase would not support the current cost pressures facing individual schools.

RESOLVED an update on the Schools budget position would be provided when the final budget settlement and dataset had been received from the DfE.

ACTION: MS MILLER

7. WORKPLAN

RECEIVED and **RESOLVED** to update Workplan from this meeting.

8. ANYOTHER BUSINESS

- Scheme for Financing Maintained Schools 2023/24
REPORTED that the Scheme had been published and a copy could be found on the [Enfield Website](#) or the Hub.
- Schools in financial difficulties
REPORTED a number of schools were experiencing cashflow issues either due to being deficit or insufficient funds to meet planned expenditure. The Authority was planning to send a letter to all schools outlining revised processes to support cashflow issues and arrangements to seek a rolling credit agreement due to a structural deficit. The aim of the changes was to formalise any agreements between a school and the Authority.

It was stated that that the Authority was not in receipt of funds either from the DSG or the

DfE to manage these credit agreements. The Forum was notified, in line with the Scheme for Financing, the Authority would be charging interest of 1% above the base rate for any requests for additional funds from January 2024.

The school representatives noted the update and it was requested from the Authority that any funding related to SEN pupils be paid in a timely manner as this would assist schools with their cashflow.

- Programmes Supporting High Needs Pressure

- Delivering Better Value (DBV)

- The Authority was due to receive a grant of £1m to support interventions to support the high needs pressure.

- Change Partnership Programme

- Enfield was working with three other London authorities and the delivery of this programme should provide £4m in total for the authorities involved in this programme.

9. **FUTURE MEETINGS**

NOTED that:

(a) Date of next meeting is Wednesday 6 December 2023 at 5.30pm on MS Teams.

(b) Dates of future meetings are detailed below.

Date	Time
17 January 2024	5:30 - 7:30 PM - online
06 March 2024	5:30 - 7:30 PM – in person
03 July 2024	5:30 - 7:30 PM - online
02 October 2024	5:30 - 7:30 PM - online
04 December 2024	5:30 - 7:30 PM - online
05 March 2025	5:30 - 7:30 PM - TBC

10. **CONFIDENTIALITY**

No items discussed within the agenda were to be treated as confidential.