

REDCAR & CLEVELAND SCHOOLS' FORUM
MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 22 JANUARY 2024 AT 3:00PM THROUGH MICROSOFT TEAMS

MEMBERS PRESENT:

SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES	
Pupil Referral Unit	Mr L Beaumont, Archway (in part)
Maintained Primary School Headteacher	Miss T Cooper, South Bank Primary
Maintained Special School Representative	Mr P McLean, Kirkleatham Hall School
School Governor	Mr M Bloomfield, Belmont Primary/Chaloner Primary
ACADEMY REPRESENTATIVES	
Ironstone Academy Trust	Mrs A O'Gara, Nunthorpe Primary Academy
Ironstone Academy Trust	Mr S Alormasor, Normanby Primary School (in part)
Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust	Miss S Williams
Northern Education Trust	Mr M Robson (Chair)
Saltburn Primary School	Mrs C Chadwick
Skelton Primary School	Ms S Walker
Tees Valley Education	Mrs A Hill
Tees Valley Collaborative Trust	Mr S Glover
Special Academies: Mo Mowlam Academy KTS Academy	Miss R Glover (Vice-Chair) Mrs S Gunn
TRADE UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS REPRESENTATIVE	
NEU	Mr J Myers
NON-SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES	
PVI Sector (Early Years)	Dr J Hawthorne (in part)
NON-MEMBERS/OFFICERS	
Assistant Director for Education and Skills	Ms C Mahoney
Directorate Accountant	Mrs E Laird
Accountant	Mr A Robson
ALSO PRESENT:	
Lead for Achievement	Mrs J Ratcliffe-Dowling
Clerk to Schools' Forum	Mrs A Douglas, Governance Support Service

The meeting started at 3pm. The required quorum was met at all times.

		ACTION
1	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
1.1	Apologies had been submitted in advance of the meeting from Mr J Faulkner, Mr G Smith and Mrs S Hill. Dr J Hawthorne had advised that he would be late to join the meeting.	Clerk
1.2	RESOLVED to consent to the absence of the above-named members.	
2.	NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	No items were declared for consideration under Any Other Business (AOB).	
3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
3.1	Schools' Forum members were given the opportunity to declare any pecuniary interests or other conflicts of interest relating to items on the agenda for the current meeting.	
3.2	The Chair advised that his daughter had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with high needs funding, and attended a school within the borough.	
4.	MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING	
4.1	Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2023 had been circulated prior to the meeting. Having given members an opportunity to highlight any inaccuracies, the minutes were accepted as a true record of proceedings. All action points were confirmed as having been completed.	
4.2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px;"> <p>Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2023 were approved as a true record of proceedings.</p> </div>	
5.	MINUTES OF MEETING: 4 DECEMBER 2023	
	The meeting scheduled for 4 December 2023 had been stood down as it had been inquorate. Notes of the meeting had been shared for information.	
6.	REPORT RECOMMENDING ALLOCATIONS OF THE DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT FOR 2024-25	
6.1	<p>Purpose</p> <p>To inform Schools' Forum of the proposed use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2024-25 via an update on the four funding blocks, and to seek approvals (where required) for the use of the funding. A report had been circulated to Schools' Forum in advance of the meeting to allow time for scrutiny and consultation where appropriate.</p>	

	ACTION
<p>6.2 Discussion/Challenge</p>	
<p>6.2.1 Mrs Laird guided Schools' Forum through the high level of detail contained in the report, drawing particular attention to the following areas. Members were informed that the DSG was the main source of government funding for the provision of education services by local authorities (LAs) (and other institutions) and was divided into four notional blocks – the Schools Block, the High Needs Block, the Central School Services Block and the Early Years Block. Each block was determined by a separate National Funding Formula (NFF). The Schools Block funding for 2024-25, issued to the LA under the NFF, gave a total allocation £112.917m. The allocation had been based on pupil numbers captured in the October 2023 census.</p> <p><i>Mr L Beaumont joined the meeting.</i></p>	
<p>6.2.2 Relevant NFF changes from 2023-24 included the addition of the mainstream schools' additional grant (MSAG) into the NFF and increasing the NFF factor values (detailed in Appendix A). Low prior attainment data was still used. The minimum funding guarantee (MFG) could be set between 0% and 0.5%. Split sites funding had been formularised and was a mandatory factor. A methodology had been introduced for the first time for calculating and allocating funding for falling rolls.</p>	
<p>6.2.3 In October 2023, Schools' Forum approved the recommendation to make a transfer of 0.5% of Schools Block. This was calculated as £561,702 from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2024-25, which would create an overall gap of £515,222. To ensure the affordability of the transfer there were very few options without moving away from the NFF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce the growth funding to the level required for 2024-25, - Cap schools that make the largest gains, - Reduce the MFG to 0%. <p>Members of Schools' Forum were guided through the impact of applying each option in order, as detailed in the report.</p> <p><i>Dr J Hawthorne joined the meeting.</i></p>	
<p>6.3 Proposals</p>	
<p>6.3.1 It was recommended that the LA remained as close to the NFF as possible, therefore the proposal was to reduce the growth fund, cap gains at 2.69% and keep the MFG at the highest level of 0.5%. This would result in all schools seeing per pupil gains of between 0.5% and 2.69%.</p>	
<p>6.3.2 The maintained schools' representative confirmed that maintained schools approved the continuation of the current arrangement for the de-delegation of free schools meals eligibility for maintained schools at the 2024-25 rate of £4.60 per pupil. This equated to an 8% increase in rate to reflect increased staff costs.</p>	

	ACTION
<p>6.4 High Needs Block – for Information</p>	
<p>6.4.1 The allocation for 2024-25 and how it had been derived under the NFF for high needs had been detailed in the report. Additionally, for 2023-24 the MFG for special schools had been set to between 0% and 0.5% equivalent to mainstream schools.</p>	
<p>6.4.2 The additional 3.4% funding received in 2023-24 would be converted to a per pupil amount and added to special schools' and pupil referral unit budgets. Arrangements for previous years teachers' pay and pension grant would continue and a new funding for 2024-25 would be provided at a rate of £446 per place. Allocations were expected to be published in May 2024.</p>	
<p>6.5 Early Years Block – for Discussion</p>	
<p>6.5.1 Mrs Laird advised that the consultation period had been extended by one week and would close on 2 February 2024.</p>	
<p>6.5.2 The Early Years Block had seen a significant increase in funding to allow for the expansion of entitlements to include the Early Years entitlement (15 hours per week) for eligible working parents of children aged 2 years old (from 1 April 2024), and the Early Years entitlement (15 hours per week) for eligible working parents of children aged 9 months to 2 years old (from 1 September 2024). In response to a query regarding the funding not beginning until September 2024, Mrs Laird advised that this was national government policy and was beyond the control of the LA.</p>	
<p>6.5.3 Schools' Forum was guided through the illustrative Early Years block allocation, and prior years information for comparison. The final grant allocation would be adjusted in summer 2024 to reflect the January 2024 census for 3- and 4-year-old funding, with a further adjustment to reflect January 2025 census information at the end of the 2024-25 financial year. The current formula for 3 and 4-year-olds comprised of a base rate for all providers at £4.67 per hour plus a deprivation supplement and a quality supplement for school providers to compensate for the teachers' pay and pension award (TP&P).</p>	
<p>6.5.4 The formula for disadvantaged 2-year-olds was currently a base rate for all providers only. As part of the expansion of entitlements it had become necessary to develop a formula for 2-year-olds and under 2s of eligible working parents. This was subject to a consultation which would end on 2 February 2024. A copy of the consultation had been provided in advance of the meeting and would be considered at Item 6.</p>	
<p>6.5.5 Deprivation funding would continue for 3- and 4-year-olds, and potentially 2-year-olds and under 2s following the consultation. The IDACI rates had been set using the new NFF unit values for primary IDACI pupils pro-rated to achieve an hourly rate, details of which had been included in the report for information.</p>	

	ACTION
6.5.6 The council would fund providers with Early Years' pupil premium at a national rate of £0.68 per hour per eligible pupil (£0.62 per hour 2023-24) up to a maximum of 570 hours.	
6.5.7 A member noted that several LAs had evenly shared the additional funding for the current year and were considering the same arrangement in the following year. Discussion followed on the particular impact of the three options outlined in the report on the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector. There was a disparity in funding owing to staffing ratios, and the increased operating rates for smaller settings were highlighted. PVIs had not benefitted from recent government grants such as the energy efficiency grant. The provision within the PVI sector was offered on a par with all other local settings, and members highlighted that PVIs should not be penalised when there was no disparity in the quality of education offered. Schools' Forum agreed to discuss the issues further during Item 6.	
6.6 Central School Services Block (CSSB) – for Information and Vote The CSSB provided funding for LAs to carry out central functions on behalf of state funded maintained schools and academies in England. The block was split into 'on-going responsibilities' and 'historic commitments.' Funding for on-going responsibilities was allocated according to a formula at a per pupil rate. In 2024-25, the final allocation in Redcar and Cleveland was £0.740m. Members were guided through the proposed estimated spend for the on-going responsibilities element of the CSSB as detailed in the report.	
6.7 Recommendations	
6.7.1 That Schools' Forum noted the proposals for Schools block: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that gains to schools be capped at 2.69% - that the minimum funding guarantee was set to 0.5% - that the growth fund was partially distributed through the NFF - the continuation with the agreed notional SEN allocations in schools' block 	
6.7.2 That mainstream maintained schools voted to continue with de-delegation of funding for the Free School Meals eligibility service.	
6.7.3 That Schools' Forum approved the proposed spend for the on-going responsibilities element of the 2024-25 Central School Services Block.	
6.7.4 That Schools' Forum noted the change to the Early Years Block and the consultation that had been distributed to all providers.	

		ACTION
6.8	Outcomes	
6.8.1	A draft model had been created that suggested indicative rates. Further modelling would take place and schools would be advised of the revised rates. Schools would be invited to participate in the modelling process next year. Mrs Laird would facilitate a learning session for any colleagues wishing to understand the process in more detail and would share proposals in the summer term. ACTION: MRS LAIRD	Mrs Laird
6.8.2	Schools' Forum approved all recommendations noted above at points 5.7.1 to 5.7.4.	
6.8.3	The Chair thanked colleagues for their contribution to discussion and their participation in recommending the proposals in the report.	
7.	CONSULTATION ON EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULAE 2024-25	
7.1	Currently all parents of 3 and 4-year-olds were able to access 15 hours of free early education for 38 weeks of the year and eligible working parents could access an additional 15 hours of free entitlement. Parents of disadvantaged 2-year-olds could access 15 hours of free entitlement. The government was extending the eligibility to free entitlement so that all eligible working parents would be able to access 30 hours of free entitlement for 38 weeks of the year from the term after their child turned 9 months old. This would be rolled out in stages.	
7.2	The DfE had consulted LAs and Early Years providers on its proposals for funding LAs for the new Early Years free entitlement and had published illustrative LA level hourly funding rates. For 2-year-olds, the LA hourly funding rate would be £7.78 and for under 2-year-olds, the rate would be £10.61.	
7.3	The report, that had been shared with Schools' Forum in advance of the meeting, comprised a consultation with all Early Years providers in Redcar and Cleveland to seek views on the proposed new local Early Years funding formulae for the new 2-year-olds and under 2s free entitlements for 2024-25. A copy of the guidance had been included, providing a summary of the key aspects. Mrs Laird guided Schools' Forum through the high level of detail contained in the report, and the three questions in the consultation were highlighted.	
7.4	Consultation Question 1: LAs are allowed to retain up to 5% of the new funding in 2024-25. Do you agree that the centrally retained funding for 2-year-olds and under 2s should remain at 2.5% to cover the additional should be kept to a minimum to maximise the amount of the funding available to distribute to early years providers?	

		ACTION
7.5	<p>Consultation Question 2:</p> <p>a) Do you agree that the new funding formulae for 2-year-olds and under 2s should comprise of a single formula (option 1)?</p> <p>b) Do you agree that the new funding formulae for 2-year-olds and under 2s should comprise of a base rate and the deprivation supplement only and not use the optional supplements?</p>	
7.6	<p>Consultation Question 3:</p> <p>Do you agree that the Teachers Pay Grant for 2024-25 should be absorbed into the overall entitlements (Option 2) creating a more equitable rate between schools and PVI sector?</p>	
7.7	<p>An overview was shared of the areas not impacted by the consultation, as detailed in the report.</p> <p><i>Mr S Alormasor withdrew from the meeting.</i></p>	
7.8	<p>Members noted that the national minimum wage had increased, although the lower earnings limit had not increased, resulting in a pension contribution increase. Clarity was sought clarity on the maximum of 12% to be distributed through supplements. Mrs Laird confirmed that option 3 related to the whole value of the funding being distributed. Members stated that if funding was not distributed evenly, there was a risk of schools gaining and PVIs losing out on funding. PVIs noted the importance of parity for all providers offering a very good service.</p>	
7.9	<p>Members highlighted that funding was linked to the teachers' pay grant, and challenged how many teachers were in post in the PVI sector compared to teachers in schools, raising the question of equity. The role of the LA was to ensure sufficiency. Proposed rates in the report were indicative, but finalised rates were not expected to be significantly different.</p>	
7.10	<p>Outcome</p> <p>A paper would be shared on the outcome of the consultation.</p>	Mrs Laird
8.	<p>LOCAL AUTHORITY PROVISION OF THE OUTDOOR EDUCATION CONTRACT FOR EDUCATIONAL VISITS RISK ASSESSMENT, AND TRAINING FOR MAINTAINED SCHOOLS</p>	
8.1	<p>Purpose</p> <p>To request that the costs of the outdoor education contract secured by the LA be covered by schools.</p>	

		ACTION
8.2	<p>Discussion/Challenge</p> <p>It was the responsibility of the LA to ensure that maintained schools were covered by a skilled and qualified outdoor education service. The LA had bought the package from North Yorkshire County Council, including the Evolve system. The LA did not have a budget to fund the arrangement. Academies secured the service through their own arrangements. However, the LA had continued to provide the service to some previously maintained schools that had since academised. The Assistant Director for Education and Skills had contacted the academies concerned with information on how to secure the service in future. The representative from Tees Valley Education requested that the information be shared again. ACTION: CM.</p>	
8.3	<p>Proposal</p> <p>The LA would continue to secure the contract for outdoor education for maintained schools and seek the money back from those schools to cover the contract. The cost next year would be £128 per school plus £1.40 per pupil. Questions were invited, and Schools' Forum agreed that the proposal was not contentious.</p>	
8.4	<p>Outcomes</p>	
8.4.1	Schools' Forum approved the proposal for the LA to secure the contract for outdoor education for maintained schools and claim the money back from those schools.	
8.4.2	The information on how to secure the outdoor education service would be shared with Tees Valley Education.	CM
9.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	No items had been declared for consideration under any other business.	
10.	ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS	
	The Assistant Director for Education and Skills would share information on numbers of permanent exclusions, drawing attention to the lack of provision for excluded students. Schools' Forum was invited to give consideration to alternative provision and commissioning extra places in advance of the meeting.	Agenda item
11.	DATE OF THE FUTURE MEETING	
	The next meeting would be held on Monday 24 June 2024 at 3pm. The meeting would be held virtually.	

Meeting closed at 4:15pm.