

**REDCAR & CLEVELAND SCHOOLS' FORUM**  
**MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 24 JUNE 2024 AT 3:00PM THROUGH MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

| <b>ACADEMY REPRESENTATIVES</b>                      |   |
|---|---|
| Ironstone Academy Trust                             | Mr S Alormasor, Normanby Primary School   |
| Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust            | Miss S Williams                           |
| Skelton Primary School                              | Ms S Walker                               |
| Tees Valley Collaborative Trust                     | Mr S Glover                               |
| Tees Valley Education                               | Mrs A Hill                                |
| Special Academies: Mo Mowlam Academy                | Miss R Glover (Vice-Chair)                |
| <b>TRADE UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS REPRESENTATIVE</b> |   |
| NEU   | Mr J Myers                                |
| <b>NON-SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES</b>                   |   |
| PVI Sector (Early Years)                            | Dr J Hawthorne (in part)                  |
| <b>NON-MEMBERS/OFFICERS</b>                         |   |
| Assistant Director for Education and Skills         | Ms C Mahoney (in part)                    |
| Directorate Accountant                              | Mrs E Laird                               |
| Accountant  | Mr A Robson                               |
| <b>ALSO PRESENT:</b>                                |   |
| Lead for Achievement                                | Mrs J Ratcliffe (in part)                 |
| Virtual School Headteacher                          | Mrs J Johnson                             |
| Lead for Inclusion                                  | Mr G Smith (in part)                      |
| Clerk to Schools' Forum                             | Mrs A Douglas, Governance Support Service |

*The meeting started at 3pm. The required quorum was not met at all times and no decisions were taken during the sections of the meeting that were inquorate.*

|          |  | <b>ACTION</b> |
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| <b>1</b> | <b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>   |               |
| 1.1      | Apologies had been submitted in advance of the meeting from Mrs C Chadwick (Saltburn Primary), Mr L Beaumont (Archway), Mrs A O'Gara (Ironstone Academy Trust), Mr M Bloomfield (School Governor), Mr P McLean (Kirkleatham Hall School) and Mr M Robson (Northern Education Trust). Dr J Hawthorne and Mrs J Ratcliffe had advised that they would be late to join the meeting. |               |
| 1.2      | RESOLVED to consent to the absence of the above-named members.   | Clerk         |

|           |  | <b>ACTION</b> |
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| <b>2.</b> | <b>NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>  |               |
|           | No items were declared for consideration under Any Other Business (AOB).   |               |
| <b>3.</b> | <b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>  |               |
| 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       | No such declarations were made on this occasion.   |               |
| <b>4.</b> | <b>MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</b>   |               |
| 4.1       | Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 22 January 2024 had been circulated prior to the meeting. The minutes could not be approved on this occasion owing to the meeting being inquorate at this stage.<br><br><i>Mrs J Ratcliffe and Mr G Smith joined the meeting.</i>  |               |
| 4.2       | <u>Matter Arising, Item 6.4, High Needs Block</u><br><br>Schools' Forum noted the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) for special schools and advised it would be beneficial if the band values could be increased yearly to offset pay awards. The MFG accounted for less than 50% of the school budget. The Assistant Director for Education and Skills recommended establishing a working party to review how funding was allocated to schools. |               |
| 4.3       | <b>Outcome</b><br><br>Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 22 January 2024 was deferred to the next meeting of Schools' Forum.  | Agenda item   |
| <b>5.</b> | <b>APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE 2024-25 ACADEMIC YEAR</b>  |               |
| 5.1       | Members had been invited in advance to express their willingness to serve as Chair of Schools' Forum for the 2024-25 academic year. No names had been submitted in advance of the meeting.   |               |
| 5.2       | RESOLVED that appointment of the Chair of Schools' Forum for the academic year 2024-25 be deferred to the next meeting.  | Agenda item   |

|           |  | <b>ACTION</b> |
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| <b>6.</b> | <b>APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE 2024-25 ACADEMIC YEAR</b>   |               |
| 6.1       | Members had been invited in advance to express their willingness to serve as Vice-Chair of Schools' Forum for the 2024-25 academic year. No names had been submitted in advance of the meeting.  | Agenda item   |
| 6.2       | RESOLVED that appointment of the Vice-Chair of Schools' Forum for the academic year 2024-25 be deferred to the next meeting.   |               |
| <b>7.</b> | <b>VIRTUAL SCHOOL: PREVIOUS ACADEMIC YEAR'S SPEND, AND CHANGES TO PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS FOR THE 2024-25 ACADEMIC YEAR</b>   |               |
| 7.1       | <p><b>Purpose</b></p> <p>To inform Schools' Forum members of spending in 2023-24, and to advise of changes to Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) for the 2024-25 academic year. A briefing paper had been shared with Schools' Forum in advance of the meeting for information.</p>  |               |
| 7.2       | <p><b>Discussion/Challenge</b></p> <p><u>Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) Funding for 2024-25</u></p>  |               |
| 7.2.1     | <p>All schools currently received £1,400 in PP+ funding for every child in our care (CioC) in their schools over the course of the academic year. This was paid in 3 termly instalments, with £500 allocated in the autumn, followed by £450 in each of the spring and summer terms. From April 2024, PP+ for CioC and previously CioC had increased by £160 per child. However, the Virtual School proposed not to change the amount allocated to schools in the forthcoming academic year. Following consultation with Designated Teachers, the current arrangements had been adequate to support with closing the gap between CioC and their peers who were not care experienced. It was proposed that the additional £160 per pupil be retained centrally, and would be distributed to schools in response to additional funding requests in extenuating circumstances to support children and young people for whom the need was greatest. <b>A member of Schools Forum shared their experience of how a young person who had been at risk of suspension had been supported with additional funding, providing 1:1 support for wellbeing work. This had resulted in the continued success of his foster placement and had prevented suspensions.</b></p> <p><u>Funding for the Current Financial Year</u></p> |               |
| 7.2.2     | <p>The Virtual School received a PP+ grant, an extended duties grant, and a post 16 grant totalling £901,000. By the end of April 2024, £951,000 had been spent. However, this was not an overspend as additional grants and funding had been received. While funding was allocated on a financial year basis, the Virtual School operated in line with the academic year.</p>   |               |

|       |   | <b>ACTION</b> |
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| 7.2.3 | <p>The Virtual School Headteacher shared a breakdown of PP+ spending for the financial year 2023-24, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staffing costs for the Virtual School team,</li> <li>- PP+ payments to schools,</li> <li>- Staffing contributions to other teams,</li> <li>- Extended duties (to raise the profile of all children with a social worker and the associated statutory responsibilities),</li> <li>- Post-16 funding,</li> <li>- 'Other' spending categories. The 'other' spending included Welfare Call, Adoption Tees Valley, rewards, staff training and memberships of professional bodies, IT support, designated teacher training, placements and alternative education tutors, and counselling and assessments. Additionally, the CioC awards ceremony had been held recently and had been a very successful event.</li> </ul>   |               |
| 7.2.4 | <p><b>Schools' Forum inquired about the total number of children enrolled at the Virtual School.</b> There were almost 300 statutory age children, and nearly 400 when including Early Years and Post-16 students. <b>Schools' Forum further questioned how the Virtual School measured value and effectiveness.</b> The Headteacher assured Schools' Forum that each individual case in the Virtual School was assessed to measure value and effectiveness. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) were developed collaboratively with the young person, their carer, the school, and the Virtual School. These plans included both educational and holistic targets. Progress towards those targets was measured each term, evaluating whether the money spent had been well-utilised and provided value for money. Additionally, a wide array of measures was used, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</li> <li>- Academic progress</li> <li>- Suspension rates</li> <li>- Mental health and wellbeing</li> </ul> <p>Whilst there were no national comparators, the Department for Education (DfE) provided annual figures for children who had been in care for 12 months or more. Additionally, the Virtual School Headteacher met with Tees Valley Headteachers and North East Headteachers regularly, providing an opportunity to share information. Data provided by Welfare Call could be used for benchmarking. The Virtual School reported to the Corporate Parenting Board which held the school accountable.</p> |               |
| 7.2.5 | <p><b>Schools' Forum noted that funding could be withheld if schools were not delivering the support agreed in PEPs, and inquired what proportion of funding had been withheld in the current academic year.</b> The Virtual School Headteacher was pleased to report that no funding had been withheld. The Virtual School team were passionate advocates for children and young people and worked in partnership with schools to achieve the best outcomes.</p>   |               |

|           |  | <b>ACTION</b> |
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| <b>8.</b> | <b>DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FINAL OUTTURN POSITION 2023-24</b>  |               |
| 8.1       | <p><b>Purpose</b></p> <p>To inform School's Forum of actual income and expenditure against the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to the year ending 31 March 2024. A briefing paper had been circulated in advance of the meeting for information.</p>   |               |
| 8.2       | <p><b>Discussion/Challenge</b></p> <p><u>Outturn</u></p>   |               |
| 8.2.1     | <p>The outturn for the 2023-24 financial year was a net deficit of £6.012m which was held across four reserves. In two years' time, that unusable reserve would potentially be moved back to being a useable reserve which would impact the council's sustainability.</p>  |               |
| 8.2.2     | <p>Schools' Forum was guided through the outturn position by each block, as detailed in the briefing paper. An overspend occurred in Central Schools Services Block (CCSB) relating to inclusion and welfare, due to fine/SLA income not being realised which would ordinarily offset expenditure (£90,000). The local authority (LA) had also revisited the DSG guidance regarding allocating allowable costs towards DSG CCSB which resulted in a £258,000 overspend in relation to strategic management, asset management and a Choice Advisor. Other small variances amounted to £11,000. The Early Years Block had fewer claims against 3- and 4-year-old extended hours places offset by higher universal provision.</p> |               |
| 8.2.3     | <p>The overspend had predominantly been in the High Needs Block. The reliance on independent schools owing to limited capacity in the borough had contributed to the highest level overspend, followed by pressures related to permanent exclusions.</p>   |               |
| 8.2.4     | <p>Special school top ups had exceeded the budget following an increase in pupil numbers and those requiring additional funding over range 4.2.</p> <p><u>School Balances</u></p>  |               |
| 8.2.5     | <p>Maintained schools continued to face financial pressures and whilst the overall school balances had a surplus, this surplus had reduced by £0.524m compared to the end of the financial year 2022-23.</p>   |               |

|   | <b>ACTION</b> |
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| <p><u>Budget 2023-24</u></p> <p>8.2.6 The DSG allocation for 2024-25 would be £154.360m. This would be broken down as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- £112.917m Schools Block</li> <li>- £0.809m CSSB</li> <li>- £27.851m High Needs Block</li> <li>- £12.783m Early Years Block.</li> </ul> <p>Block transfers had been included in the figures noted above.</p> <p>8.3 <b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>8.3.1 Schools' Forum noted the overspend in 2023-24.</p> <p>8.3.2 Schools' Forum noted the carry forward of balances to 2024-25.</p> <p>8.3.3 Schools' Forum noted the latest DSG allocation for 2024-25.</p> <p><i>Dr J Hawthorne joined the meeting.</i></p>  |               |
| <p><b>9. DELIVERING BETTER VALUE (DBV) PROGRAMME</b></p>  |               |
| <p>9.1 <b>Purpose</b></p> <p>To inform Schools' Forum of the objectives and progress of the Delivering Better Value Programme (DBV).</p> <p>9.2 <b>Discussion/Challenge</b></p> <p>9.2.1 The LA had been awarded £1m to support improvement to the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system. Nationally, this was known as the DBV programme, but in Redcar and Cleveland, the project had been titled 'Building Confidence, Thriving Children'.</p> <p>9.2.2 Research had shown that parental confidence was low around secondary schools' ability to meet needs. Many parents struggled to navigate the SEND system and were unsure how to seek help. Transition at secondary school was described as a 'cliff edge'. Issues with sufficiency had been highlighted. A more inclusive system would support more children and young people to remain in mainstream schools and reduce the current reliance on independent non-maintained provision.</p> |               |

|       |   | <b>ACTION</b> |
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| 9.2.3 | <p>The following priorities had been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- System leadership and SENCO development</li> <li>- Transition</li> <li>- Early system intervention and navigation</li> <li>- Data visibility</li> <li>- Bring Back project (pertaining to the use of independent schools)</li> <li>- Review of high needs top ups</li> <li>- Trading services, including Educational Psychologists and specialist teachers.</li> </ul> <p><u>System Leadership and Transition</u></p>   |               |
| 9.2.4 | <p>Work had begun with a company called Whole Education to support SEN co-ordinators (SENCOs). 8 out of the 10 secondary schools in the borough had engaged with the process, along with specialist providers, the pupil referral unit and alternative provision. There was a focus on continuous professional development (CPD) for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, and autistic spectrum conditions (ASC). A co-ordinated approach to upskill staff would support with the creation of a more inclusive system. A transition visioning day had agreed principles and information sharing documents had been updated. The principles had been presented to the Strategic Education Board and would be shared at the forthcoming meeting of the Education Inclusion Panel. 20 primary schools would participate in the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project.</p> <p><u>Early Intervention and Navigating the SEND System</u></p> |               |
| 9.2.5 | <p>Flow charts would be produced, which would support families during the long waiting time for assessment and diagnosis. Research would be conducted around establishing a single point of access, as it could be beneficial for families to have access to a named contact for any queries or concerns. The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) offer would be improved, and the Integrated Care Board had recruited for additional capacity.</p> <p><u>Data Visibility and Dashboards</u></p>   |               |
| 9.2.6 | <p>The Local Offer, within the Redcar and Cleveland information directory, would be redesigned. Improved data dashboards would be created for the local area and for schools.</p>   |               |

|        |  | <b>ACTION</b>            |
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|        | <u>Bring Back Project</u>  |                          |
| 9.2.7  | Over 100 young people were currently placed in independent non-maintained schools (including post-16 provision). Additional resource had been appointed in the SEND team to create a review team to focus on how those young people could transition back to the LA system.  |                          |
|        | <u>Review of High Needs Top Up</u>   |                          |
| 9.2.8  | The Assistant Director would seek to create a sub-group including members of Schools' Forum to consider how much funding was allocated for SEND needs. <b>ACTION: Assistant Director/Schools' Forum</b>  | CM/<br>Schools'<br>Forum |
|        | <u>Opportunities to Trade</u>  |                          |
| 9.2.9  | Two Assistant Educational Psychologists were in post and recruitment was underway to support trading for early intervention. Preparations were underway to trade the specialist teaching service from 2025-26.   |                          |
| 9.2.10 | <b>Schools' Forum emphasised the critical need for governors to have a comprehensive understanding of SEN. Governors often served on permanent exclusion panels and behaviour panels, where a clear understanding of the intersection between behaviour and SEN was crucial. This knowledge was essential for supporting governors in holding schools accountable.</b> The Assistant Director advised that whilst a range of training sessions were available to governors, attendance at those sessions was not mandatory. Upskilling SENCOS would continue to be a top priority. Governors had a key role to play but that role was voluntary. The LA would continue to explore additional measures to better equip governors in fulfilling their responsibilities. <b>A member of Schools' Forum shared their experience of serving as a governor in a multi-academy trust, where clear guidance had been issued to governors in advance of exclusion panels. It was proposed that flowcharts could clarify roles and responsibilities.</b> |                          |
| 9.2.11 | <b>In response to a query from School's Forum</b> , the Assistant Director confirmed that the £1m allocated to the LA had been a one-off allocation. All of the priorities discussed as part of the project had been fully costed. The Assistant Director would share the full costings at the next meeting of Schools' Forum for information. <b>ACTION: Assistant Director, Education and Skills. In response to a further inquiry</b> , the Assistant Director confirmed that the LA would be held accountable if it did not reduce the deficit. Meetings were held with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the DfE every 6 months. During those meetings, the LA had discussed the challenges and limits on what could be achieved with existing resources.  | CM                       |
| 9.2.12 | <b>Schools' Forum highlighted the importance of achieving positive outcomes in KPIs including transition, school admissions and exclusions and asked how the LA could facilitate collaboration between various stakeholders to</b>   |                          |



|            |  | <b>ACTION</b> |
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|            | <p><b>achieve lasting change.</b> The Assistant Director advised that a meeting had been scheduled for later in the current week to determine achievable goals in those areas. Schools as the primary stakeholders, would play a pivotal role. There would be ongoing discussions to define and implement inclusive practice to address the most significant needs effectively. There were no simple solutions. The start of the programme could be delayed until the necessary personnel were in place.</p>   |               |
| 9.3        | <b>Outcomes</b>  |               |
| 9.3.1      | The Assistant Director would seek to create a sub-group including members of Schools' Forum to consider how much funding was allocated for SEND needs.   | CM            |
| 9.3.2      | Full costings of the Building Communities, Thriving Children programme to be shared at the next meeting of Schools' Forum.   | CM            |
| <b>10.</b> | <b>OVERVIEW OF PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS</b>  |               |
| 10.1       | At the previous meeting of Schools' Forum, members had requested that the LA share an update on the numbers of permanent exclusions, noting the lack of provision for excluded students. Schools' Forum had been invited to consider alternative provision and commissioning extra places in advance of the meeting.   |               |
| 10.2       | In the current academic year, 85 permanent exclusions had been issued in Redcar and Cleveland, with an additional 10 pending. Of those 85 students, 63 had been allocated home tuition owing to a lack of available places in alternative provision. 10 students had successfully transferred back into the secondary system. The provision of two hours of home tuition per day could potentially cost between £75,000 and £82,000 per month. Levels of student engagement with home tuition varied, leading to additional costs in officer time. Furthermore, 31 permanent exclusions issued this year had later been rescinded.   |               |
| 10.3       | Efforts were being made to understand and address the reasons behind permanent exclusions. A disproportionate number of excluded students were eligible for pupil premium funding, free school meals, had been or were currently involved with social care, and had safeguarding issues.   |               |
| 10.4       | There was a need for a willingness to change and for schools to consider how each child could belong in their setting. Whilst schools understood the contexts that vulnerable children came from, leaders had not always been assured of sufficient evidence that schools had made reasonable adjustments to support disadvantaged students. This included considering and supporting students with the impact of trauma, being young carers, substance misuse in the home, and the special educational needs of parents. A detailed overview of the contextual information pertaining to excluded students would be shared at the next meeting. <b>ACTION: Assistant Director for Education and Skills/Inclusion Team</b> | CM            |

|            |  | <b>ACTION</b> |
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| 10.5       | Suspensions had doubled in the present academic year, though there were some encouraging signs. It was crucial for schools to help governors understand the context behind these suspensions and permanent exclusions. With the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) at full capacity, there was an urgent need to determine where excluded students could be placed. The current system was not sufficient, as evidenced by one school alone issuing 26 permanent exclusions since September 2024. Improvements were necessary to better support those students and address the underlying issues leading to exclusion.  |               |
| 10.6       | <b>Schools' Forum inquired whether the effectiveness of the Fair Access Protocol (FAP) was monitored.</b> The Assistant Director explained that every LA had a FAP to support hard-to-place children and young people who moved into the area. It was important to discuss with schools the funding they might need to support children or young people admitted through the FAP system. The protocol was carefully managed and agreed upon by all schools. If the protocol had not been in place, and managed moves had not been active, there could have been a significant increase in permanent exclusions. Ensuring the effective operation of the FAP was crucial for minimising exclusions and providing necessary support for vulnerable students. |               |
| 10.7       | <b>Outcome</b><br><br>A detailed overview of the contextual information pertaining to excluded students would be shared at the next meeting.   |               |
| <b>11.</b> | <b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>  |               |
|            | The LA planned to introduce automatic enrolment for free school meals (FSM) in both primary and secondary schools. Parents would need to opt out if they did not wish to participate in the FSM program. This initiative was expected to increase PP funding for schools. Currently, approximately 250 pupils in the borough were eligible but not yet registered for FSM. <b>In response to a query from Schools' Forum</b> , it was confirmed that this approach only applied to parents who are already eligible and did not extend to working parents who did not already meet the criteria. <b>Schools' Forum agreed that this was a very good idea.</b><br><br><i>Ms C Mahoney withdrew from the meeting.</i>  |               |
| <b>12.</b> | <b>ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS</b>   |               |
|            | No items were identified on this occasion.   |               |
| <b>13.</b> | <b>DATE OF THE FUTURE MEETING</b>  |               |
| 13.1       | The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 1 October 2024 at 3:00pm. The meeting would be held virtually.   |               |
| 13.2       | At the request of Schools' Forum, the meeting scheduled for Monday 9 December 2024 would be moved to an earlier date, and the revised date would be circulated at the earliest opportunity.  | Clerk         |

Meeting closed at 4:15pm.