

Minutes - Sheffield Schools Forum

3.00-5.00pm, 21 February 2022, via Microsoft Teams
Chair: Paul Stockley

Schools Forum Members:

Primary Heads Representatives

Nigel Brooke-Smith (Greystones)
Cathy Rowland (Dobcroft Infant)
Paul Stockley (Bradway)

Primary Governors

Alison Warner (Grenoside)

Secondary Head

Linda Gooden (King Edward VII)

Non-school Members

Mo Andrews, Pye Bank CE Primary
Stephen Betts, Learn Sheffield
Karen Simpkin, Early Years providers
Toby Mallinson/Rod Padley, Trade Unions
Vacant Seat, 14-19 Sector

Academies

Keith Crawshaw (Sheffield South East Trust)
David Dennis (Tapton)
Jim Dugmore (Oughtibridge)
Chris French (Mercia Learning Trust)
Stacy McKay (Springs Academy)
Morag Somerville (Steel City Schools Partnership)

Special Academies

Joel Hardwick (Nexus Multi-academy Trust)

Special Schools

Laura Gillespie, Governor (Bents Green)
Sacha Schofield, Head (Bents Green)

PRU

Alan Richards (Sheffield Inclusion Centre)

Apologies: Mo Andrews, David Dennis, Linda Gooden, Joel Hardwick, Andrew Jones, Rod Padley (Lisa Smith and Toby Mallinson attended on behalf of unions)

Also in attendance: Cllr Dunn, Executive Member for Education, Children and Families; Amanda Murray, Strategy and Commissioning (notes); Mark Sheikh, Head of Service, Strategy and Commissioning; Kim Wilson, Assistant Director, School Effectiveness

Presenters: Jacky Beatson, Resourcing Coordinator; Candi Lawson, Strategic Commissioning Manager

1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Introductions were made and apologies noted as above.

2. Previous meeting minutes/matters arising

Agreed as a true and accurate record. All matters arising are covered by the agenda.

With reference to the Schools Insurance item: it was clarified that the Forum voted for the Zurich Municipal option at the December meeting due the benefits which included a 3-year fixed cost, additional support and elements of cover over and above the DfE's Risk Protection Arrangements option.

3. IR Funding Proposals

Mark Sheikh took the Forum through the proposed amendments to the funding arrangements, highlighting key points as follows:

- The current model has not been reviewed for some time, is difficult to understand and requires alignment with national expectations.
- Section 2 highlights the current model and proposed model.
- The proposed, simplified model allocates £10k base funding from the High Needs Block, plus average pupil funding top-up from Schools Block. It would amount to an increase of £1,200 per place.
- The number of places to be funded each year will be agreed by Sheffield City Council (SCC) with the school or academy. Any additional placements will be funded outside the annual funding process through the SEND Growth funding allocation.

Further to questions raised by members, it was confirmed that any complex needs exceptions would be discussed on a case-by-case basis and that existing arrangements for additional funding would continue.

The Forum:

- **noted** the increase in overall IR funding of £906k in comparison with the previous year and the increased number of schools hosting an IR; and
- **approved** the implementation of the revised funding formula from April 2022.

4. Funded Early Learning (FEL)

Early Years Funding – Rate and Allocation 2022/23

Mark presented paper 4a for information and agreement:

- We expect to receive an increase of £1.1m in 2022/23 (the final allocation will be confirmed in July 2023).
- The tables in section 3 of the paper illustrate the current hourly rates plus the 2022/23 increase: a 21p increase to the 2-year-old hourly rate and 17p increase to the 3&4-year-old hourly rate.
- There is a requirement to pass-through a minimum of 95% to providers and we are recommending a 100% pass-through rate to support financial sustainability.
- Also, Sheffield is expected to receive an additional £26k funding for our two maintained nursery schools.
- An additional £24 per pupil is payable to public sector employers via the Early Years Schools Supplementary Grant.
- The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) rate has increased by 7p per eligible pupil hour from 53p to 60p.
- The Disability Access Fund (DAF) for children in receipt of Disability Living Allowance can attract £800 per pupil per annum – an increase of £185. Providers are encouraged to ensure take-up of this funding for eligible children.

Action: Mark to check if providers can claim for children who have missed claims for DAF from previous years.

The Forum

- **Noted** the overall Early Years income allocation of £35.43m to Sheffield in 2022/23 and the increase of 7p to the EYPP per eligible pupil hour.
- **Approved** the recommendations of the Working Group to:
 - increase the funding for 2-year-olds by the additional 21p per hour to £5.31 per hour, ensuring that the additional 21p per hour Sheffield will receive is passed on in full to providers; and
 - increase the funding for 3&4-year-olds by the additional 17p per hour, increasing the base rate to £4.43.

Early Years Investment Funding

- As reported in February 2021, a £500k contingency fund was created from the positive outturn in 2019/20. It is now recommended that this be distributed to providers based on the number of hours paid to 3&4-year-old providers in 2019/20 to help ease pressure on the sector.
- There will be a minimum of £250 one-off payment to all eligible providers as soon as possible.
- In addition, a positive variation of £544k Early Years funding was confirmed in the 2020/21 final year outturn – made up of £474k for 3&4-year-old funded learning and £70k for the 2-year-old sector. It is now recommended that this be distributed to providers using the number of hours paid in the 2020/21 financial year.

The Forum agreed to the recommendation to distribute the £500k contingency fund and the £544k to providers, as outlined above and in the paper, as soon as possible.

Letter/response to Government re. investing in Early Years

Members discussed the response to our letter to Government regarding the issues faced by the early years sector and considered the next steps:

- The response is generic and doesn't address the issues faced by the sector. Funding is still inadequate and not keeping pace with increasing costs.
- In general, the increases are welcome, but are more beneficial for the public sector providers.
- Unions have been working hard to address the issues – there is a need to respond to ensure the sector can support children by ensuring staff are trained and recruited; and are retained in the sector.
- The sector undertakes critical work, often working with the most disadvantaged children, and provides a foundation for future years.
- Karen Simpkin is concerned that settings will have to close as of April 2022 and would welcome any support – she asked if a Free School Meals model could be applied to Early Years for example to help with costs.
- Cllr Dunn has been lobbying the media to raise the profile of this issue and is happy to meet with Karen Simpkin and other sector representatives to gain further insight into the issues faced.

Action: Karen to provide case studies along with data to help Cllr Dunn communicate key messages.

5. School Improvement Grant

Mark Sheikh summarised the paper as follows:

- Further to a consultation by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), they are proceeding with reducing the local authority School Improvement Grant by 50% in 2022/23 and by 100% in 2023/24.
- Sheffield received a grant of £268k in 2021/22 which was transferred to Learn Sheffield, supplemented by an additional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), allocation to deliver school improvement responsibility.
- Further to discussion with Learn Sheffield, we consulted with maintained schools on three approaches to de-delegation to mitigate this reduction as detailed in paper 5a.
- 24 responses were received and 75% of respondents chose **option 3: restructure the commission and de-delegate to August 2023, followed by a traded model**. This option is therefore being recommended to the Forum.
- Individual School Budgets have been prepared based on this recommendation.

Additional questions and answers raised are as follows:

- If option 3 is chosen and cannot be afforded, this would have no effect as we would call on existing resources.
- This policy direction may be perceived as encouraging schools towards becoming academies, as the grant reduction implies that that local authorities no longer have a role in school improvement and that schools need to fund this going forwards. Alison Warner commented that school improvement underpins cross-city working and this change in policy is therefore a contradiction of what the LA should be responsible for.
- Learn Sheffield worked with SCC to develop the options and feels that option 3 is the lowest cost option to schools as well as providing stability for Learn Sheffield.

All maintained representatives, as named on paper 5a, **voted for option 3** including Linda Gooden who was not present at the meeting, but communicated her preference ahead of the meeting.

School Budgets Allocation

Mark drew the Forum's attention to key points on paper 5b:

- In comparison to 2021/22 Sheffield has received an increase of £13.2m Schools Block (£2.7m was due to an increase in pupil numbers).
- We will receive an additional £12m Supplementary Fund Grant to support the Health and Social Care Levy, plus other cost pressures which will be provided as grant funding in 2022/23 and rolled into the base funding from 2023/24.
- The increase in funding equates to 5% for primary and 5.9% for secondary.
- Sheffield's primary Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) is still higher than the National Funding Formula (NFF).
- Local authorities are still being encouraged to move towards the NFF.
- The principles and approach used to calculate the school budgets can be found in section 1.6 of the paper.
- Sheffield has seen an overall increase in pupil numbers of 373.
- Growth funding is £2.29m with 1.61 available for in-year growth.
- Sheffield has now introduced the Sparsity factor with two primary schools benefiting from a total of £20k.

- One primary school (Gleadless) no longer occupies a split site and therefore no longer qualifies for split site funding.
- No changes to de-delegation are being proposed.
- Section 3.7 details overall cash gainers and losers from the formula – 97 primaries and 28 secondaries will see gains.
- Central Services Schools Block (CSSB):
 - A reduction of £759k has been applied to historic commitments in 2022/23.
 - Section 8 shows the breakdown of ongoing responsibilities, including support for Learn Sheffield.

Additional comments can be summarised as follows:

- It was reiterated that the Supplementary Grant is intended to cover the cost of increased energy bills.
- Pupil numbers and trends are still in line with previous predictions/expectations.

As per the recommendations in the paper, the Forum:

- **Approved** the 2022/23 budget for primary and secondary schools set at £395.9m – Appendix 1.
- **Approved** the MFG Disapplication applied relating to Split Site Funding.
- **Noted** the growth funding allocation of £1.61m.
- **Noted** the transfer of £1.5m from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.
- **Noted** the de-delegated budgets of £1.9m and for maintained schools to agree de-delegation of £0.62m of services (excluding School Improvement) – Appendix 2.
- **Noted** and agreed the contribution to the Central School Services Block budget.

6. High Needs Block Funding Allocation

Mark highlighted key points from paper 6 for information only:

- There continues to be an increase in demand for places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- There is a £12m increase in allocation, but we still have a legacy shortfall of £3.3m funding.
- The Supplementary Grant of £3.29m is not separate funding – it is being distributed as part of top-up funding.
- Funding for special schools is being increased by £994 per place – an average of 5%.
- Places have increased by 168 which equates to an additional £4.5m.
- Integrated resources (IR) funding will increase by £0.9m as per the revised model outlined in paper 3.
- A provision of £4m has been identified to fund additional specialist places in pre and post-16 provision.
- An allocation of £2.3m has been made for post-16 provision delivered through Longley Park, Sheffield College and Sheaf Training.
- Investment in the Locality model is being increased by £1.5m.
- The budget for Sheffield Inclusion Centre (SIC) is being increased in line with special schools by 5% per place and we will continue to commission 250 places. There are currently 170-180 pupils in the SIC. The existing funding model will continue and a top-up provision of £325k has been made and a further allocation

of £150k to support children with EHCP plans– further detail at section 4.3. We will review the SIC commission at the June Forum.

- Specialist support services are detailed in section 6.1 of the paper.

Additional comments from the Forum included:

- The increase in funding is appreciated, but the issue is that there is currently no capacity in the system. Mark confirmed the 5-year plan will look at places and sufficiency of provision.
- To consider if/how SIC staff could be re-deployed into the schools if and when they are over-staffed. Alan Richards confirmed that placement numbers are starting to increase again as a result of the end of Covid restrictions but noted the comment.

Action: Nicola Shearston and the team to share 5-year sufficiency plan also to include PRU capacity and jointly present this with paper the PRU.

The Forum noted the overall High Needs Block funding arrangements, including the resource allocation of £39.8m for 2022/23 – all as detailed in the paper and as summarised above.

7. School Balances Update

Further to the actions noted from the December Forum, Mark Sheikh gave an update on progress:

- The Funding Working Group reviewed further analysis of school balances.
- Maintained schools held a surplus balance of £16m as at March 2021 and academies held £36m as at August 2020. This total equates to approximately 12.5% of school budgets.
- The Working Group reviewed the balances and spending plans of the 10 schools with the highest balances as detailed in the paper. Some schools had committed to undertake building work which has been delayed, but there are still substantial balances remaining.
- The agreed next steps include further analysis around site costs, site visits and regular monitoring.

The Forum noted the update and made additional comments as follows:

- It was suggested that we consider if the responses received from schools are reasonable and realistic, and that we should be more assertive about the money being used for children who are currently in the system.
- SCC is challenging academies when they request funding for expansion projects.
- The surplus funds cannot be transferred between funding blocks to alleviate the pressure in early years for example.
- Governors need advice on use of surplus in the near future as budgets are due to be set.
- It was reiterated that schools and academies should work together for the benefit of the children in the city.
- Special schools have reserves for expansion, but no indication of how much capital funding they will receive – the June paper should clarify this.

Action: Mark to check the maximum permitted movement of funds between DSG blocks.

8. **Locality Funding Review Update**

Candi Lawson presented paper 8a, highlighting key points as follows:

- A review is in progress regarding how SEND Element 3 funding is allocated to ensure that plans are appropriately resourced to meet children's needs in mainstream and to ensure that we meet our statutory duties.
- A multi-agency group has been established to steer and guide the review.
- Officers are currently attending locality meetings and a full consultation will be held over the summer.
- Various funding models are being considered as set out in section 4, with a view to implement by September 2022.

Additional Forum discussion clarified the following points:

- This review is just for statutory school age pupils in the first instance and it won't just cover Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- Previous lessons have been learned – funding should follow EHCPs, but be adaptive.
- This approach needs to be fully costed out as it can become more expensive than expected – there is often a change of need for example at transition points.
- Early years will be reviewed as of summer 2022 and the review will be undertaken in the same way.

Forum members noted that the funding has already been agreed and noted the action plan for implementation.

Exclusion Prevention Fund – Impact and Delivery Report

Candi presented paper 8b to update the Forum on the impact of work funded by the previous £1.5m transfer to the High Needs Block:

- The paper sets out the areas funded and the gives evaluation data for the current financial year.
- Case studies and feedback are included to highlight the impact as well as next steps, including a regular review/commissioning cycle.
- The funding has enabled us to set up the infrastructure, provide staff training and invest in a number of direct interventions.
- The inclusion tracker helps us to see the changes and demographic information.

Forum members noted the previous use of the funding, the impact to date and the future plans. The case studies were welcomed.

9. **School Meals Update**

Cllr Dunn reported that the leader, Cllr Fox has convened a meeting with school meal providers as a result of the recent complaint highlighted in the press. We are encouraging take up of the Council's offer, via the contracted provider, as standards are higher than with other providers.

Additional comments included:

- The Taylor Shaw contract has just been renewed. 90+ schools are part of the contract and information on this process has been shared with schools.

- Forum members requested that Chairs of Governors and School Councils are included in any communications.

10. AOB

Rates Bills

Forum members were reminded not to pay rates bills directly as of April 2022 and to cancel any direct debits after the final payment for this year.

PFI Contracts

Phase one ends in 2026 and a working group is being set up. It was suggested that membership of the group should include representation from phase two groups.

Infant and Junior amalgamation

Paul Stockley reminded the Forum of the need to challenge governors around value for money when a headteacher announces their departure, including exploring the potential for amalgamation of the two schools. Also, that there is a need for a strategic approach and requested that consideration be given as to which body could take this role of challenging governing bodies

Date of next meeting: 28 June 2022, 3.00-5.00pm, venue TBC/Online