

Nottingham City Council

Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held remotely via Zoom on 29 June 2021 from 1.47 pm - 2.49 pm

Membership

Present

Judith Kemplay (Chair)	Maintained Primary Schools
Meeta Dave	Primary Academies
Kerrie Fox	PRUs
Kerrie Henton	AP Academies and Free Schools
Tim Jeffs	Primary Academies
Patricia Lewis	Maintained Special Schools
Stephen McLaren	The Nottingham Nursery School
Janet Molyneux	Maintained Primary Schools
Cath Rowell	Secondary Academies
Andy Smith	Secondary Academies
Terry Smith	Maintained Primary Schools
David Tungate	Secondary Academies
Sheena Wheatley	Trade Unions
Bob White	Secondary Academies
Lisa Wilson	The Nottingham College

Absent

Paul Burke	Secondary Academies
Lee Morgan	Special Academies
Debbie Simon	Early Years PVI
James Strawbridge	Primary Academies

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

John Dexter	- Education Director
Christine Green	- Strategic Finance Business Partner
Julia Holmes	- Senior Commercial Business Partner
Nick Lee	- Director of Education Services
Kathryn Stevenson	- Senior Commercial Business Partner
Janine Walker	- Head of SEND and Vulnerable Pupils
Phil Wye	- Governance Officer

34 Apologies for Absence

Paul Burke
James Strawbridge
Ceri Walters

35 Declarations of Interest

None.

36 Minutes of the last meeting

The Forum confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2021 as a correct record.

37 Membership

The Forum welcomed new members Lisa Wilson, representing Nottingham College, and Andy Smith, representing secondary academies.

38 Proposal for targeted funding above notional SEN for primary schools

Kathryn Stevenson, Senior Commercial Business Partner, introduced the report outlining rationale and criteria for providing targeted funding to qualifying primary schools. Additional funding outside the main funding formula for mainstream schools and academies where the number of their pupils with SEND and/or high needs is not reflected adequately in the funding they receive through the local funding formula.

- (a) under the National Funding Formula, schools receive funding for additional needs, and the cost of this up to £6000 for individual pupils, through a combination of deprivation and Low Prior Attainment (LPA) factors. This means that where schools have disproportionately high numbers of high needs pupils in comparison to deprived and LTA pupils they are not adequately reflected in the Formula;
- (b) the Local Authority is proposing to identify these schools with disproportionate numbers of high needs pupils compared to the size of their deprived and LPA cohorts that are generating their funding for additional needs. Where actual numbers of high needs pupils are more than 2 above the ordinary threshold, targeted funding will be provided from high needs to cover in full the costs of the first £6000 of additional needs;
- (c) for 2020/21 the formula will result in 16 schools receiving targeted funding allocations, with the first £6000 cost being met for 55 high needs pupils across those schools;
- (d) the schools with the highest proportion of high needs pupils use up to 90% of their notional SEN budget on the first £6000 cost of these pupils, compared to a city average of 33%. The proposed additional funding will have the impact of bringing all schools into the range of needing 38-59% of notional SEN budgets for supporting the first £6000 cost of these pupils;
- (e) all primary schools were invited to share their views and comments on the proposals as part of a consultation which took place between 20th May and 15th June 2021. 18 responses were received, with ten schools being fully supportive and the remaining eight being uncertain on concerns about their budget being detrimentally impacted;

The following points were raised during the discussion which followed:

- (f) pupil numbers will be based on the January census so in-year admissions may not get picked up but the system does provide a fixed amount per year to each school for certainty and has less of a lag built in than the previous system;
- (g) it can be a major problem if several children with high needs start at a school simultaneously with no warning. With the new system panels are built in almost every 6 weeks to speed up funding processes;
- (h) feedback on how the new system has worked can be provided when the new budget is set for next year.

Resolved to

- (1) note the new criteria for allocating targeted funding from the High Needs budget to primary schools from April 2021;**
- (2) note that the projected £0.330m cost of the proposal in 2021/22 will be funded from the overall £8.052m budgeted from the High needs for mainstream schools.**

39 2020/21 Dedicated Schools Grant - Outturn Report

Julia Holmes, Senior Commercial Business Partner, introduced the report setting out the 2020/21 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) outturn position and the updated reserve balance, and highlighted the following:

- (a) the overall budget allocation for 2020/21 was £289.578m. There was an underspend of £3.789m, representing 1.3% of the total budget. The underspend will be allocated to the Statutory School Reserve (SSR) leaving an uncommitted balance of £3.738m;
- (b) within the Schools Block there was an underspend of £0.733m within the Pupil Growth fund, mainly because the remaining balance that could not be equitably allocated to all schools during the budget setting process was allocated to this fund;
- (c) within the Central Schools Services Block there was an underspend of £0.243m mainly due to Virtual School funding being substituted by funding from the Pupil Premium Plus Grant;
- (d) Within the Early Years Block there was an underspend of £0.341m on funding for providers mainly due to the lower number of children accessing provision during the pandemic compared to the previous year. There were also underspends on Early Years Disability Access Funding and the Early Years SEN Inclusion Fund;
- (e) Within the High Needs Block there was an underspend on High Level Needs support in mainstream schools because implementation was delayed due to the pandemic. There was also an underspend of £0.928m on Behaviour PRUs and devolved Alternative Provision as permanent exclusions were greatly reduced due to the closure of schools, and a small underspend on Support Services due to a combination of reduced mileage costs, staffing underspends and income being

over budget;

- (f) There was an overspend on Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools due to a number of children moving into the City during the year requiring specialist autism places who could not be accommodated at Rosehill as places were not available, tribunal decisions resulting in placements in INMSS settings and fee increases from providers;
- (g) the SSR balance as at 1 April 2020 was £6.999m, but after in year movements during 2020/21 the balance is £9.485m, with an uncommitted balance of £3.738m as of 1 April 2021. Schools Form Sub-Group meetings will be set up to review the usage of this reserve to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 and reduction of exclusions, taking into account risks, grants and 'bigger' picture discussions.

The following points were raised during the discussion which followed:

- (h) a possible usage of the reserve could be to support schools with Pupil Premium funding that was affected due to moving of the census date by the government. This will be explored to see if it will be possible under funding regulations;
- (i) the Local Authority is in a good position in having a reserve, as many other Local Authorities do not have one;
- (j) the Sub-Group will need to know how much of the SSR is available and what it can legally fund before making any decisions.

Resolved to

- (1) note that the 2020/21 financial outturn position of the DSG was an under spend of £3.789m (1.3% of the overall budget) against a final budget of £289.578m, as per Table 2 of the report;**
- (2) note that this under spend has been allocated back to the Statutory Schools Reserve (SSR) resulting in a closing balance of £9.485m for 2020/21, as per Table 7 of the report;**
- (3) note that the uncommitted balance on the SSR balance is £3.738m, as per Table 7 of the report.**

40 Meeting dates for the 2021/22 academic year

The Forum agreed to meet on the following Tuesdays at 1.45pm:

2021

12 October
7 December

2022

18 January
1 March
26 April

Schools Forum - 29.06.21

28 June