

Minutes - Sheffield Schools Forum

3.00-4.30pm, 18 December 2023, Learn Sheffield, Savile Street
Chair: Keith Crawshaw

Schools Forum Members:

Primary Heads Representatives

Nigel Brooke-Smith (Greystones)
Helen Kenyon (Pipworth)
Chris Holder (Lowfield)

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
Fiona Hawksley/Lisa Smith, Trade Unions
James Smythe, Sheffield College 16-19
Sector

Academies

Keith Crawshaw (Sheffield South East Trust)
David Dennis (Tapton School Academy Trust)
Jim Dugmore (Peak Edge Academy Trust)
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

Aileen Hosty/Laura Rzepinski (Bents Green)
1 x vacant seat

PRU

Alan Richards (Sheffield Inclusion Centre)

Apologies: Mo Andrews, Jim Dugmore, Chris French, Aileen Hosty, Joel Hardwick, Stacy McKay, Lisa Smith, James Smythe

Also in attendance: Cllr Dawn Dale, Chair of the Education, Children and Families Policy Committee; Andrew Jones, Director, Education and Skills; Amanda Murray, Education and Skills (notes); Mark Sheikh, Head of Service, Resourcing and Business Planning

Presenters: Matt Peers, Head of Commissioning – Education and Childcare, Integrated Commissioning Service

1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

Introductions were made and apologies noted. Fiona Hawksley was welcomed as a new member to represent trade unions, sharing the seat with existing Forum member Lisa Smith.

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Previous meeting minutes/matters arising

Agreed as a true and accurate record. No matters arising.

3. Early Years Wraparound Provision – Policy Update

Matt Peers gave an update on the programme as per Paper 3:

- Sheffield has been allocated funding of £2.68m over three financial years to create new or expand existing provision.
- By September 2026, all wraparound childcare should be sustainable.
- The proposal for developing delivery capacity and spend of the allocation is going to Committee in February.
- We have a capital allocation of £850k and will be seeking expressions of interest from the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) and nurseries in early January.

Forum discussion can be summarised as follows:

- Karen Simpkin explained that the sector doesn't have the staff to accommodate this expansion and cannot recruit. The hourly rate is inadequate to cover the 1:3 ratio required and other costs, for example business rates and increase in minimum wage.
- Concerns re. staffing were echoed by other members regarding who will be responsible in schools and academies, and the time required for upskilling.
- Academies will need to make an application to the Education and Skills Funding Agency to change the age range.
- The resource available is inadequate and we therefore need to manage expectations – requests are already being received for the provision.
- The £850k capital allocation is inadequate and will likely only fund a few projects. We may be able to repurpose some buildings to create space but that won't resolve the staffing situation.
- The Childcare Grant will give additional funding for childminders. However, many childminders have closed.
- How can schools expand their provision if they don't have any more space?
- Cllr Dale added that it is important to be clear that the funding is for three years and that families will have to make a contribution to provision.
- The report talks about how Sheffield '*will*' respond, but this would be better described as '*should*'.
- The issues facing early years affect the whole sector and any response should be Forum-wide.

The Forum **noted** the update and **endorsed** the proposal to seek Committee approval with extreme caution and requested that members consider supply issues and geographical dispersal.

Action: Matt to provide a further update for the June meeting of the Forum.

4. Indicative Budgets (Schools, High Needs and Early Years)

Mark Sheikh presented Paper 4 highlighting the following key points:

- The presentation outlines the overall statement, principles and changes for 2024/25.

- The budgets are currently indicative with the final allocation due to be confirmed by the end of the week, and figures are based on the October 2022 Census.
- Slide 3 details the provisional allocation:
 - Schools Block has an overall cash increase of £11.3m and an additional Teachers' Pay Grant of £8.2m.
 - There are two new funding streams for the Early Years Block totalling just over £14m.
 - The total indicative budget for 2024/25 is £663m, an increase of £38.4m.

Early Years Block

- Slide 4 summarises the early years funding headlines:
 - The DfE is set to implement all proposals including extending the Disability Access Fund and Early Years Pupil Premium to all eligible 2-year-olds and under.
 - The exception is that the Deprivation factor for 2-years-olds and under is not mandatory and we are in the process of consulting with the sector about this.
 - Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) will be based on a termly headcount for the new Extended Entitlement and Under 2-year-olds only – providers will need to provide numbers monthly.
 - A new SEN Inclusion Funds is to be set up for 2-year-olds and under.
 - There will be new childcare grants of £600 to new childminders and £1200 for childminders registering with a childminder agency.
 - There will be extended entitlements for 2-year-olds working parents as per the slides, and Wraparound care as discussed in agenda item 3.
- Slide 6 details the increases to the hourly rates.
- In previous years, the Forum made the decision to top-slice 5% of funding, but more recently we have been passing on 100% of funding to providers and plan to continue with this (except the £400k Inclusion Fund which forms part of the consultation).

High Needs Block

- Funding is increasing from £99m to £103.7m in 2024/25.
- There continues to be increasing demand and increasing level of complexity, but the funding is not sensitive to the increase in numbers.
- There is a major concern that we will not be able to afford all requests and there is a £12m pressure.

Andrew Jones added that:

- Special school places have increased by 50% in the last 10 years.
- Complexity of need is outstripping the funding per pupil.
- We were historically underfunded (by approximately £4m).
- Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) have doubled within mainstream in the last two years.
- There are various levels of need – not just EHCPs.
- There is no more physical space.

David Dennis commented that at school level, behavioural and speech and language needs are an issue as there is no capacity, and that he feels the hubs are a temporary arrangement.

Central Services Schools Block (CSSB)

As per slide 9:

- Ongoing commitments are likely to increase by £90k to account for the increase in pupil numbers.
- However, historic commitments are likely to decrease by £486k (these are used to support the MAST Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy).

Capital Allocation

- The Basic Needs Allocation of £26.09m for 2025/26 will likely all be needed for the number of places required by the end of the decade.
- We have an estimated £100m spend required on maintained schools to meet building condition requirements, with £45m being considered a priority need.
- We are unable to reclaim £660k that we spent pro-actively to resolve issues with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) – Cllr Dale has written to the Government about this.

Schools Block

- We have an overall cash increase of £11.3m.
- The Growth Fund of £2.9m is to be confirmed.
- The continued transition to the National Funding Formula (NFF) is detailed on slide 11 and key changes for 2024/25 include:
 - The Split Site factor will be formularised and the loss will be protected by the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG).
 - The Growth Factor will be tightened up.
 - New Falling Rolls funding will be provided – TBC (we previously set aside funds for this).
 - Changes to Notional SEN are optional and we are not recommending any at present.
- The Teachers' Pay Additional Grant is set to continue for 2024/25.
- We are proposing redirecting £1.5m for SEND locality funding as per the consultation and the budget figures take account of this.
- The complexity of the issues will require collaboration across academy trusts that is specific to localities.
- The timeline for publishing final budgets is shown on the last slide and they will be presented to the February Schools Forum.

Forum discussion around the Falling Rolls Fund – how it links to sufficiency planning and potential expansion - can be summarised as follows:

- We don't yet know the amount of the funding.
- Falling rolls can be due to parental preference or the population in an area, and it is currently affecting primary most.
- The funding is short-term. Longer term we would need to review/reorganise the system.
- Parental preference creates issues and impacts disproportionately on different areas.
- Clarity is needed regarding the timetable.

Actions:

- Matt Peers to bring further information to the June Forum meeting.
- Chairs to discuss at the Chairs' de-briefing.

Models for Individual School Budgets

- The Funding Group reviewed models to determine how the funding could best be distributed to help continue to support small primary schools (see slides 12-17).
- The recommended model is Model 3 which sets the primary Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) at £119 - £20 per pupil over the NFF level, and it enables us to mirror the NFF at 98% for Free School Meals factors. This supports small primaries whilst still also targeting schools with high levels of social deprivation.
- The appendix shows the *indicative* allocation at school level.

Members of the Forum, including those represented on the Funding Working Group, discussed the reasons for their choice of model:

- They felt it was about getting the balance right for the city but agreed that small schools in less deprived areas would struggle.
- It was acknowledged that primary funding is generally insufficient and that this was the most moral way to support all schools with the limited funding available.
- Nigel Brooke-Smith pointed out that schools in the southwest of the city are always underfunded even though they have children travelling across the city from more deprived areas who do not attract the additional levels of funding that is allocated in deprived areas.
- It was agreed that we need to focus on providing good *local* schools and that we should flag this issue with the Admissions team.

The Forum noted the contents of the presentation and paper and **approved** the recommended Model 3.

5. Redirection of £1.5m to High Needs Block

Mark Sheikh summarised the request in Paper 5:

- We are required to consult annually to transfer up to 0.5% between blocks.
- The proposal is redirect £1.5m from Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2024/25 to provide mainstream schools with additional support via Locality funding.
- 22 responded to the consultation, with 18 (82%) in favour of the redirection and indicative budgets have been produced taking this into account.

The Forum agreed to the transfer with the proviso that:

- Next year we review the amount of the transfer (up the maximum permitted).
- We ask localities to report back on how the money was spent/the impact that it's had.

6. SEND Consultant's Review

This item was postponed to the February meeting due to staff sickness.

7. SEND Provision Funding Working Group

Paper 7 provides an update on the work of the group to date which includes:

- Clarification of the processes.
- Consideration to the funding model – it was agreed to continue with the guaranteed funding model for the short-term and to find a solution for complex cases, and to review the model again longer-term.
- Consideration around the implementation of a split site factor.
- There are no tangible proposals to note at this stage, but a further update will be given to the February Forum.

8. AOB

Food Supplement Vouchers

A £30 voucher has been issued to 32,000 families for the Christmas holidays. Funding has not yet been confirmed for next year and we are therefore assuming at this stage that the February issue will be the last.

Forum Members' Survey

- The Chair summarised that whilst 57% of the 14 respondents said they may be more likely to attend if the meetings were held online; 86% felt that face-to-face meetings were more engaging.
- 78% were happy to continue to meet at Learn Sheffield and the same number thought that it would be a good idea to hold some meetings online depending on agenda items.
- Agreed to continue as we are and keep under review.

Forum Title

Karen Simpkin asked if the Forum would consider changing its name to include Early Years in the title.

Action: Chairs to consider the request at the Chairs' de-briefing.

Date of next meeting: 26 February 2024, 3.00-5.00pm, Learn Sheffield, Albion House, Savile Street