

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 16 February 2022 held remotely

Present: Councillor T. McInerney (Observer)
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
N Shafiq, Financial Management, HBC
R. Sprigings, Financial Management, HBC
A. Leach, Education, Inclusion & Provision
M. West, Education, Inclusion & Provision
K. Landrum, (Chair) Primary School with a Nursery Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary Representative - Infant School
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
E. Haver, Special Academy Representative
A. Sheppard, VA Schools Representative
J. McConville, Secondary Academy Representative
I. Critchley, All Through Schools Representative
C. Dalton, Secondary Academy Representative
C. Liku, Community Nursery Schools Representative
A. Evans, Community Secondary Governor Representative (Sub)

Action

SCF18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Thalia Bell, Jim Wilson (named substitute Andrew Evans attended for part) and Heather Austin.

SCF19 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF20 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) OUTTURN 2021-22

The Forum received the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) forecast outturn for 2021-22.

It was reported that the DSG allocation for 2021-22 was £130,991,359 and was broken down as follows:

Schools Block	£99,050,733
CSSB	£ 698,973
Early Years Block	£ 9,862,865
High Needs Block	£21,378,788

The report provided details on the status for each of the above blocks and Appendix A presented a detailed

breakdown of the budgets, forecast and variances. It was noted that the in year position of the DSG balance for 2021-22 was forecast to be £1,783,410 in deficit; add to this the deficit balance from 2020-21 of £995,742, this gave a total deficit of £2,779,152.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

SCF21 CENTRAL SCHOOLS SERVICES BLOCK (CSSB)
BUDGETS 2022-23

The Forum received the Central School Services Block (CSSB) funding for 2022-23.

The grant allocation to the CSSB for 2022-23 was £728,189. The proposed budgets to be funded from the CSSB were presented in paragraph 3.2, against the budget amounts for the previous year.

It was noted that there was an 6.4% decrease in the charge for licences for maintained schools, which were purchased by the DfE and recharged to local authorities.

It was proposed that the unallocated balance of £156,359 be set to the DSG contingency until later in the year, when it could be decided how best it could be used; this was agreed.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) notes the report; and
- 2) agree the Central School Services Block budgets.

SCF22 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK FUNDING FOR 2022-23

The Forum received the High Needs Block grant allocation for 2022-23, which was £19,874,222 after recoupment for per place funding in academies and independent special schools.

Representatives were advised that the 1% transfer request from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block had now been approved by the DfE, this equated to £1,013,903.90. As per the consultation, £250,000 would be used to fund *Invest to Save* projects, with the balance being used to offset the deficit DSG balance.

The DfE had provided an additional £864,263 into the High Needs Block of the DSG to cover the Health and Social

Care Levy and wider costs. The purpose of the Levy and its proposed utilisation was outlined in the report.

With reference to Appendices A, B, C and D mentioned in the report, these were sent to Forum Representatives prior to the meeting for consideration and Representatives were asked to agree the centrally retained budgets in Appendix D.

Clarity was provided on placements at schools' resource bases for pupils with SEND and the funding procedure when the base was not full. The Special Academy Representative raised a query regarding some teachers being employed on term time only contracts as opposed to being paid yearly, commenting that must affect budgets so parity across all schools was needed. Officers would look into this and set up a meeting after half term.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) notes the report; and
- 2) agree the centrally retained budgets.

Operational
Director -
Education, and
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SCF23 EARLY YEARS BLOCK FUNDING FOR 2022-23

The Forum received the Early Years Block funding for 2022/23.

Officers advised that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement was announced on 17 December 2021, giving an indicative allocation of £9,355,753 for the Early Years Block. Halton was continuing to follow the Early Years funding formula with a universal base rate for all sectors, a deprivation factor using IDACI (*Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index*) and the quality factor for staff across all sectors who were qualified at Level 5 and above.

It was announced that the hourly rate received by Halton from the DfE for the provision of free entitlement to 3 and 4 year olds remained at £5.12 and the rate for the provision of free entitlement to 2 year olds had increased by 21 pence per hour to £5.65. The Forum was disappointed with the lack of increase in funding for 3 and 4 year olds.

Since the publication of the agenda, work on the funding formula had started and this was presented to the Forum, together with the proposed centrally retained budgets, which the Forum was asked to approve.

Officers advised that the Authority was unlikely to see any increase to the hourly rate for 3 and 4 year old provision for another few years. Therefore, unless the calculations for 2023-24 allowed the Authority to fund at the current level without incurring any further deficit balance, there may be a need to reduce the rates passed onto providers.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) notes the report; and
- 2) agree the centrally retained budgets.

SCF24 HALTON BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT SERVICE

The Forum considered a report from Behaviour Support Service, which provided an impact report on the Service.

It was reported that the Behaviour Support Service is funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant, as agreed by Schools Forum, and comprised Head of the Behaviour Support Team, a Primary Behaviour Support Teacher, Secondary Behaviour Support Teacher and two family liaison officers.

The service operated with schools to ensure that staff received training to ensure that positive behaviour policies and strategies were used throughout the school consistently. *Team Tech* was delivered to support de-escalation and mental health first aid training helped support children, young people and staff with their own mental health and wellbeing. These positive behaviour strategies aimed to reduce matters escalating which could lead to exclusions and to help retain children and young people within a mainstream schools setting, where that was appropriate. The service also supported schools staff as part of their continuing professional development in relation to positive behaviour management.

It was noted that since the beginning of the pandemic some of the work of the team had been impacted due to restrictions with accessing schools. Now restrictions had been lifted this has improved.

Appended to the report were details of the training and support provided to schools and the benefits of this could be seen through feedback received from schools.

The Forum welcomed the report but considered the

Statement of Impact Evidence Base to be anecdotal. They requested that KPIs be included, as they were for the SEMH outreach for the Bridge School. These would be of more value to schools in determining the impact of the service across primary and secondary settings. Headteachers to agree with the Divisional Manager – Education, an appropriate set of KPIs.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

Operational
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Meeting ended at 4.45 p.m.