

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 15 February 2023 held remotely

Present: Councillor T. McInerney (Observer)
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
N Shafiq, Financial Management, HBC
J. Farrell, Education, Inclusion & Provision, HBC
S. Goodwin, Financial Management, HBC
K. Landrum, (Chair) Primary School with a Nursery Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
J. Wilson, Secondary Governor Representative
E. Haver, Special Academy Representative
A. Sheppard, VA Schools Representative
C. Dalton, Secondary Academy Representative
J. Robertson, Small Primary School Representative
E. Hall, All Through Schools Representative (Sub)
B. Barton, 16-19 Provision Representative (Sub)

Action

SCF16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Thalia Bell (sub in attendance) and Jackie Coughlan.

SCF17 MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on 18 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF18 DSG (NON-SCHOOLS BLOCK) AND OTHER GRANTS 2023-24

The Schools Forum considered a report of the Operational Director – Finance, which sought recommendations from the Forum on the DSG 2023-24 for Early Years and High Needs blocks.

As previously advised, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement was announced on 16 December 2022 and Halton was allocated a total of £143.393m, which was broken down as follows:

Schools Block	- 106.745m
Central Schools Services Block	- 0.738m
High Needs Block	- 26.135m
Early Years Block	- 9.775m

In addition to the DSG allocation above, Halton had received £4.796m as part of the recent £2 billion commitment for Education from the Autumn 2022 budget announcements. It was reported that the amount relating to mainstream schools and academies, which would be provided in addition to the formula funding determinations for schools, is £3.741m – the balance of £1.055m is provided to support the High Needs block.

It was noted that Schools Forum approved the Schools and Central Schools Services block (CSSB) determinations and formula unit values at the January meeting; Early Years and High Needs block were considered for approval at this meeting.

The report provided detailed commentary on the Early Years Block and High Needs Block allocations for consideration by Representatives. Schools Forum was requested to approve the hourly rates and supplements to be applied to the 2023-24 Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) determinations for all providers; this was presented in the table on page 6. For High Needs, the Forum was requested to approve the uplifts for 2023-24 for Mainstream Special / Resourced Units, Special Schools and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), and Further Education (FE) establishments.

These requests were discussed and officers provided responses to questions raised by the Forum. The following concerns/comments were made and noted following the discussion:

- PVI Representative – some settings that do not have private fee payers and relied on DfE funding alone could go out of business, this is a concern for now and the future;
- The Council is aware of the Early Years pressures and do provide business support for those settings who were struggling. Noted that there were sufficient places currently in Halton but this was being reviewed continuously;
- Early Years funding sustainability – the DfE was lobbied at every opportunity by the Council and other stakeholders were encouraged to do the same;
- The quality supplement was discussed – PVI Representative requested calculations be done to show the difference it would make to funding if this was removed – Financial Management agreed to look at this;
- Given the emphasis DfE place on the quality

supplement it was felt that this may become mandatory in the future. Previous consultations with the sector have been favourable for the quality supplement to secure high quality provision for children;

- A meeting was requested to discuss banding levels across High Needs settings – agreed this should be reviewed ahead of next academic year; how to process this would be looked at;
- The delays with the Free School were noted; exacerbating pressures on High Needs out of Borough placements;
- Continuing pressures on High Needs budgets – as a national problem this should be recognised by the DfE;
- A query relating to financial modelling for high needs in the future – DSG Management Plan in relation to a 5 year forecast was explained;
- When open Raise Academy will provide up to 25 places for Halton;
- Early Years EHCP numbers were significantly higher in Halton than nationally; staff were reviewing this with stakeholders;
- Comments were shared that the wider system, including academy trusts, need to be considering inclusive offers, as more expressions of interest were needed for resource bases, especially from the secondary and the AP sector;
- All Schools Forum representatives need to look for solutions collectively;
- One representative shared that two schools had paid from their own budgets to send children out of Borough; and
- Other stakeholders including health partners, parents/carers were needed to work collectively to co-produce the approach for meeting high needs effectively.

The report also provided the Forum with updates on the latest Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) forecast outturn position for 2023-23 (paragraph 3.4); and other grants available to schools for 2023-24 (paragraph 3.5). Representatives were referred to Appendix A, which provided a detailed breakdown of the DSG forecast outturn for 2022-23.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) note the report;

Operational
Director - Finance

- 2) agree the 2023-24 hourly rates and supplements for the Early Years Single Funding Formula, applicable with effect 1 April 2023;
- 3) agree the inflationary elements and funding distribution applicable to the High Needs block, with effect 1 April 2023;
- 4) notes the DSG forecast outturn position for 2022-23; and
- 5) notes the other grants updated for 2023-24.

SCF19 MEETING DATES FOR 2023-24

For the information of the Forum, next year's meeting dates were provided as follows:

- 14 June 2023
- 11 October 2023
- 17 January 2024
- 21 February 2024

Meeting ended at 5.05 p.m.