

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 17 January 2024 held remotely

Present:

A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
N Shafiq, Financial Management, HBC
J. Farrell, Education, Inclusion & Provision
K. Landrum, (Chair) Primary School with a Nursery 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
M. Murphy, 16-18 Provision Representative (Sub)

Action

SCF31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Jane O'Connor (PVI); Ben Barton (16-18 Provision) but named substitute sent, Mary Murphy; Cathy Liko (Community Nursery Schools); and Jackie Coughlan (Primary Infants).

SCF32 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF33 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FUNDING FOR 2024/25

The Forum received a report advising of the Dedicated Schools Grant funding for 2024-25. The indicative individual school budget allocations schedule was emailed to Representatives before the meeting.

This was announced on 19 December 2023, at £154.497m and was broken down as follows:

Schools Block	-	£111,188m
Central Schools Services Block	-	£0,747m
Early Years Block	-	£15,554m
High Needs Block	-	£27,007m

It was noted that this was an overall increase of £11,104m compared to the £143,393m allocated for 2023-24.

The report explained each of the Schools Blocks' funding allocations and the National Funding Formula methods applied. It was noted that the High Needs and Early Years Block budgets would be presented at the February meeting of the Forum. Pupil numbers were highlighted as the primary sector had seen a reduction overall of 250 pupils, whilst the secondary sector had increased slightly by 16 pupils. Officers advised that the individual budgets and formulas presented today would be submitted to the ESFA for approval week commencing 22 January. Once approved the individual schools' budgets would then be distributed to schools.

The Forum was requested to decide the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to be applied to the Schools Block Funding Formula for 2024-25. A level of 0.5% was agreed in principle at the October 2023 meeting and Officers advised that this was still the recommendation following the DSG settlement. The Forum confirmed its agreement with the recommendation of 0.5% MFG to be applied to the Schools Block funding formula for 2024-25.

The Forum was also requested to support the continuation of the National Funding Formula methods, principles and rules for mainstream primary and secondary schools funding allocations and de-delegations for 2024-25. This was agreed by the Forum.

The following was also discussed by Representatives:

- The contingency pot for redundancies – there was some doubt as to whether this was still available so it would be confirmed after the meeting;
- The reductions in primary pupil numbers was occurring in Runcorn and Widnes and consideration of this was being given by the Council;
- Speech and Language Services *Chatterbug* – the handing over of case notes to the new provider was completed but new referrals were currently on hold. HBC staff conducted weekly meetings with the new provider; any further concerns on the services were requested to go to the Operational Director, Jill Farrell; and
- Further to a request for volunteers to sit on a sub-group meeting, Representatives Elaine Haver, Nigel Hunt and Angela Sheppard agreed; further information would follow.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

Operational
Director - Finance

- 1) note the report;
- 2) support the continuation of the National Funding Formula methods, principles and rules for mainstream primary and secondary schools funding allocations and de-delegation for 2024-25; and
- 3) agree to an MFG level of 0.5% being applied to the Schools Block Funding Formula for 2024-25.

Meeting ended at 4.30 p.m.