

# AGENDA



## SCHOOLS FORUM

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Date: Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021  
Time: 4.30pm  
Place: Microsoft Teams

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### Distribution

#### Members of the Committee

Sarah Lovell (Chair)	Dave Baker (Vice Chair)
Stuart Evans	Will Roberts
Kim Garland	Fr. Malcolm Strange
Clare Haughton	Bernice Webber
David Jenkins	David Williams
Nicola Jones	Louisa Wilson
Louise Leader	Julia Anwar (Sub)
Kirby Littlewood	
Steve Moir	
Pippa Osborne	
Diane Owen	
Lisa Parker	

#### **Appropriate Officers attending:**

Mustafa Salih  
Hilary Smith  
Caroline Warren  
Alison Davies

#### **Councillors attending:**

Erica Williams  
Trevor Jones

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# AGENDA

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- 2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Sarah Lovell)
- 3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Sarah Lovell)
- 4 SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP (Ali Davies)
- 5 ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT  
(Sarah Lovell)
- 6 MINUTES FROM 8 JULY 2021 (Sarah Lovell)
- 7 SCHOOLS FUNDING 2022/23 (Presentation) (Mustafa Salih)
- 8 HIGH NEEDS WORKING GROUP UPDATE (Paper & Presentation) (Susie Weaver)
- 9 SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN
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**South Gloucestershire Schools Forum  
Minutes of Meeting held on  
Thursday 8 July 2021  
Microsoft Teams**

**PRESENT:**

Sarah Lovell (Chair)	Finance Director, Cabot Learning Federation
Dave Baker (Vice Chair)	CEO, Olympus Academy Trust
Richard Aquilina	Governor, Bailey's Court Primary School
Mark Freeman	Headteacher, St Michael's Primary School
Clare Haughton	Page Park Pre-School
David Jenkins	Governor, Crossways Schools
Nicola Jones	Representative Special Academies
Carl Lander	Hanham Primary Federation (HPF)
Steve Moir	Headteacher, Bradley Stoke School
Ross Newman	Early Years Schools Forum Representative
Pippa Osborne	Headteacher Christ Church Junior School
Diane Owen	Chair, King's Oak Academy
Linda Porter	Governor, Watermore School
Fr. Malcolm Strange	Diocese of Bristol Representative
Susie Weaver	Executive Headteacher, Cabot Learning Federation
David Williams	Diocese of Gloucester
Louisa Wilson	Headteacher, St. Stephens C of E Junior School

**Officers:**

Mustafa Salih, Head of Financial Management and Business Support  
 Hilary Smith, Head of Education, Learning and Skills  
 Deb Luter, Schools Finance Officer  
 Hugh Disley, Strategic Lead for Inclusion & SEND  
 Alison Davies, Business Support Manager  
 Maxine Winter, Governor Development Consultant (Observer)

**Others:**

Tamsin Moreton, Enable Trust Representative (Observer)

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Attendees were welcomed by the Chair.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Erica Williams, Trevor Jones, Chris Sivers, Louise Leader, Kim Garland, Kirby Littlewood, Nicola Jones, Bernice Webber

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

#### 4. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

#### 5. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP (Ali Davies)

Item 11 to cover the Membership.

Only two changes: Richard Aquilina has resigned, and this will be his last meeting. Clare Haughton is happy to continue as the Early Years representative. Welcome to Ross Newman now standing as the Early Years representative.

#### 6. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT (Sarah Lovell)

None.

#### 6. MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING – 13 MAY 2021

##### **Schools Budget Consultation – Options**

Mustafa confirmed that a letter has been sent to all schools on behalf of the LA and Schools Forum – closed.

##### **Update in SEND Clusters**

Hugh Disley (HD) to give an update on the presentation at Item 7 on behalf of Ali Ford who was unable to attend.

Remainder of the minutes recorded as accurate.

#### 7. UPDATE ON SEND CLUSTERS

HD gave a summary of the main points in the report as follows:

Evaluation highlights significant focus on building confidence of parents in the offer for SEN Support. Despite the COVID situation, Clusters have continued to focus on the project and develop further, especially through the close working of SENCOs within each area.

Data shows that there is significant increase in SEN support being considered as highly or moderately impactful for children and young people, including occupational therapy, behaviour and autism during the last year.

Overall the report shows that we have built firm foundations on which to accelerate progress through, possibly, an easier year in 2021/22.

Worth noting that recently appointed Principal Educational Psychologist, Helen Cox, took up post on Monday, bringing significant additional leadership capacity to the service.

Looking ahead, Helen will consider the role of the EPS and how they can best add value to the clusters, especially in relation to working with Parents/Carers. The Parent and Carer Forum will be involved in supporting the evaluation of anything new that is taken forward.

HD thanked the schools and Integra for their support and also noted the significant efforts and difference that Ali Ford and Claire Heron have made to the team since their arrival in April.

Recommendations:

- To note the report and to have a more robust evaluation in place for next year.
- To support the chairs of the different clusters in encouraging participation of the inclusion of all schools which will add benefit in all we do.

HS stated that there is now a level of stability across the whole team with all vacancies filled by permanent staff and much more integrated working across Education, Learning and Skills (ELS) to support improvements in SEND. Additionally, closer involvement of Integra, for example in training and support and guidance to SENCOs. Further, we are building closer relationships with Social Care and Health which will have an impact on the support we can give to the SEN Clusters. There is a real appetite across the Clusters to work together via the Cluster Boards and move forward as one.

Diane Owen (DO) – Why no feedback from Clusters?

HD – We are still trying to get that information – the day to day running since January has been difficult for some schools in particular.

Sarah Lovell (SL) – How can the Forum promote the SEN clusters' work and support the Cluster leads? How do we encourage colleagues and try to get them on board to look at the local need; the more we get involved, the better the improvement will be.

Steve Moir (SM) – The complexities and challenges we are dealing with require time and I think the realisation for all of us to see the real impact is going to take more than a year in putting infrastructure together and encouraging colleagues.

HD – system-wide support for speech and language communication issues for example, cannot be resolved in 2 or 3 years. Although we can start to commission better which may deliver some quick wins, the majority of impact will be in medium and longer term.

**Action: To bring back a progress report on the impact of the Clusters to Schools Forum in the autumn.**

DO – Who has been the audience of the presentation? Is it just Schools Forum? Should it be seen by schools as it shows positive things?

HD – We have been sharing with SENCOs and trying to refine the presentation and share it at a broader event and the High Needs Working Group (HNWG).

## **8. Update on working with Schools on Budget Planning and Schools with Financial Challenges in 2020/21 and planned activity for 2021/22**

Mustafa Salih (MS) gave a summary of the report, which is for information. We set up a process in the council amongst the key officers to try and monitor and review schools requiring more support with their financial position and management. It covers more than Schools in Financial Difficulty (SIFD) in trying to identify schools that might be having a longer-term challenge. We meet on a regular basis and agree schools needing a bit more support through Integra.

Within the report it does show that maintained schools' balances improved year on year on average by the end of 2021. There are still a number of schools having difficulty balancing their budgets and focus.

Deb Luter (DL) went through the report and asked for any feedback.

Richard Aquilina (RA) – Is training up to speed for governors? Are governors trained for those SIFD?

DL – There were 3 sessions covering all aspects of income in schools which were very well attended and will be running again in September this year. We do encourage schools to include governors and for those who have not, we can recommend they come along. Schools find it difficult to get governors to attend but Headteachers can also attend the training.

HS – We do identify those schools which are struggling and will be encouraging associated governors to attend necessary training courses.

DL – In the letters that go out to Category 1 and 2 schools, we recommend that governors attend the training.

HS – Impact of the Small Schools Strategy. We are being more proactive looking at what opportunities exist, identifying that many struggle in terms of the leadership costs they are carrying and, therefore, what opportunities might there be to take a more collaborative approach. We are also focusing on early years and future sustainability. Additionally what other opportunities may exist to meet the wider needs of the community.

SL – We are still allocating payments to 2 schools we approved a few years ago. How is that progressing and an update on Chipping Sodbury School?

MS – That is finished, and the full amount is now available going forward.

Chipping Sodbury is now an Academy. Agreed with the ESFA their final balance would be transferred to the ESFA. That final deficit is significantly reduced from where the school started and was able to get on top of its financial situation which is a positive outcome.

DO – Are there are any plans to advertise the availability of the funding for SIFD?

MS – We do not advertise for Maintained schools but to have it as an option for those schools in financial difficulty. Slightly different for Academies as we do not work with those schools, but we could look at that.

**Action: At the next Forum give a reminder of the availability of funding for SIFD.**

## 9. High Needs Working Group (HNWG) Update for Information

Susie Weaver – Reflecting on the way the purpose of the group has changed over the last year in the Terms of Reference. Previously we didn't have the staffing and structure in place and we were unclear about how the HNWG was providing support.

We recognised that this is a long game, that requires focus on different strands and themes. Also that next year we need to focus on better communication and ensure awareness through distribution across a wider network.

There are some strong points of progress. There is high engagement and good commitment with the LA team which will continue to next year. We have agreed to identify a special schools' governor to join the HNWG.

In Theme 2, we are looking at the top-up funding and how that might look and will be modelling that up to review those changes.

A summary of the 5 Themes will be pulled together and will need to be shared with Mustafa and then Schools Forum to be communicated to the broader sector.

There is good involvement with parent/carers now and use that engagement to feed into the LA work of the joined-up themes across the LA.

HD – Kate East has drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between schools and the Cluster Boards which will be a formal document, so they know what they are signing up to and the commitment. There will also be Terms of Reference and we are looking at Educational Psychologists and strategic approach as opposed to an individual approach.

## 10. Dedicated Schools Grant 2020/21 Outturn

MS – Important background is that we still have a large deficit and that cumulative deficit is continuing to grow. The outturn for 2021 is £7.5k showing an improved position compared to Q3 which is quite positive.

The other positive position is on the Early Years Block and the potential for that. Schools Forum approved the proposal on using the underspend on the schools' block to offset those early years ones and that the early years deficit has been covered. The ongoing risk in that area has been eliminated. Still in conversation with the ESFA to fund that shortfall.



In terms of the £7.5k overspend, the HNWG is focused on changing elements to bring down all those themes and try to reduce that overspend over the next 3 to 4 years.

Each budget is ring fenced so we know if it is a budget that is insufficient and that we are going to spend more than the available budget. The pressures continue to be the same, EHCP, top-ups, out of authority placements and the numbers of exclusions continue to be high. Still a massive challenge and a large deficit.

SL – It is a better position than Q3 and we recognise, as a Schools Forum, that HNWG needs to focus on this on behalf of the Forum.

## 11. Schools Forum Membership, Constitution & Self-Assessment

Purpose of the report is to review the membership of the Schools Forum. The latest membership list will be updated following the meeting.

Constitution of the Schools Forum will be reviewed in the autumn 2021 together with the membership.

Ross Newman has joined Schools Forum as the representative for the Early Years Group.

We will take forward the Maintained primary vacancy and the position of academies with the relevant groups.

Review of the membership will be a standing item for each meeting.

Latest guidance from the ESFA around meetings allows for virtual meetings to take place indefinitely but we recognise the need for face to face also and so will consider which meetings that would work best for.

Dave Baker (DB) – Re point 17 of the self- assessment - Are we sharing key information with the groups we are representing?

SL – How to ensure we can access those groups we are representing?

Ross Newman (RN) – Similar difficulties with early years providers and how to create a better strategy to get more views of the early years sector to feedback to this group.

**Action: Please feedback on point 17 to AD so that we can see if there are any gaps in sharing key information.**

### Recommendations:

1. Change from academies membership – 1 more primary and 1 less secondary.
2. Update list and vacancies following the meeting and election of new members.
3. Review the constitution.
4. See action above re point 17 of the self-assessment – all to feedback to AD

## 11. Any Other Business

## **Leavers:**

On behalf of the Schools Forum, Dave Baker thanked Mark Freeman for his sterling service and commitment which dates back well over 10 years. He is absolutely all about children and ensuring effective use of the public purse. We will miss your challenge and support Mark.

Mark Freeman – Thank you to Dave. On the Forum, when it started, I would really echo that it is important to challenge, and we should be about representing our constituents. It is a great Local Authority and never wanted to go anywhere else and have valued the relationship. It has been quite hard work and interesting and hopefully I have contributed over the years.

Sarah Lovell said a big thank you to Richard Aquilina who has been an active participant in terms of challenge, really represented the governing body on the Forum and will be missed.

No further business.

Meeting closed.

## Schools Funding 2022/23 (Presentation)

# South Gloucestershire council

## SCHOOLS FORUM

**23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021**

### **High Needs Working Group (HNWG) Update**

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the work of the HNWG.

#### **2. Background**

##### 2.1

The Schools Forum has agreed to transfer £2.2 million of funding from the School Block to the High Needs Block to support investment which will enable improvements to be achieved and which involve more efficient use of resources. It is essential that accelerated progress in addressing the deficit can be demonstrated.

##### 2.2

A deficit recovery programme of work has been formulated with an agreed governance and reporting structure. There are five priority areas of focus, outlined as five themes (see fig.1) which are now providing the framework and opportunity to improve provision, outcomes, efficiency and reduce expenditure. These themes are now clearly feeding into the overall DfE deficit recovery plan underpinning the programme.

##### 2.3

The themes were identified after determining the main causes of the deficit using a cause-and-effect diagram and extensive data analysis on both nationally and locally available data.

#### **3. Programme governance structure and communication**

##### 3.1

The governance structure, including communications routines is illustrated in Figure 2. The High Needs Working Group, taking their direction from the Schools Forum, provide consultation, direction and challenge to the HNWG officers where the programme themes are managed and the work is carried out. The new link governor has now worked alongside the HNWG Chair and LA officers to establish the role and has been involved in pre-meeting and two HNWG meetings. This is providing a further reinforcement of the links through Schools Forum and the impact of this is evident.

##### 3.2

Communication flows are working effectively and there is a regularity to the formal updates including link members of the HNWG reporting to Heads Exec. The last report from HNWG outlined the expectation from the group that Leads of each theme would share an overview of progress and impact with HNWG and would contribute to the broader communication out

to Heads Exec and other forums. This approach was trialled in the summer terms, with positive feedback and is now clearly established as a way of working across the HNWG. The quality of the reporting, both in advance of the HNWG, and within the structure of the meeting has now improved significantly, enabling the members of the HNWG to fulfil their roles and duties effectively.

#### **4. DSG deficit recovery programme plan | Updates**

##### **4.1**

The deficit recovery programme plan continues to demonstrate progress and action, and an update regarding the broader plan and how this links across to the written statement of action was shared as part of the September HNWG meeting. A piece of work is being undertaken to outline an Executive Summary to capture the initial agreement with regard to the School Block transfer, the plans, progress and impact to date. This will be shared with a wide range of stakeholders in the Autumn Term. This communication will be supplementary to a briefing which has been organised for 28 September to follow this meeting of Schools Forum and is for all Headteachers so that they understand the proposed approach to Theme 2 including timescales and the commitment required to succeed.

#### **HNWG DSG Recovery Plan**

##### **4.2**

The governance structures are now in place in key areas and the work streams developing effectively with some very clear markers for action, implementation and early signs of impact in both provision and efficiency. The additional governance structures, added last year, through an agreement at Schools Forum is proving to be a useful augmentation for the group. The link governor representative has been involved in a planning meeting with the HNWG Chair, supported by LA officers, and has now attended two HNWG meetings and provided a useful perspective. There is still a requirement to seek Special School governance representation to ensure there is a balance in the newly augmented structure and members of the HNWG and broader Schools Forum are requested to consider suitable representation.

##### **4.3**

The July meeting invested time examining the progress of Theme 2, with additional focus group work taking place alongside the work of the HNWG, and Theme 1, considering the cluster project expansion and other elements to build capacity across the system. In the first meeting of 2021-22, the focus was placed on the Theme project summary updates, and considering the progress, risks and impact of each strand of work. Theme 3 leads also shared a proposal for a temporary financial investment to enhance the Early Years early intervention approach, and this work is developed in partnership with the Parent Carer representatives. HNWG gave their support for this work to progress and further details of the proposal will be shared in the presentation to Schools Forum included on the agenda.

In addition, the LA officers have been working alongside the leaders of the themes to begin to outline and project where the financial impact of commissioning places will be further examined and progress towards the deficit recovery programme can be modelled.

Specifically in relation to Theme 2, which has the potential to deliver significant savings, details of the proposed approach, timeline and the commitment from schools in readiness for implementation of the changes, should that be agreed, will be shared via a presentation to the Forum which is also included on the agenda for the meeting of 23 September.

### 5. Next steps

An Executive Summary to be drafted and shared with a wide range of stakeholders, as led by South Gloucestershire LA Officer and Link Governor. Further focus on the outlined themes as part the HNWG cycle, identified through the termly meetings of HNWG.

### RECOMMENDATION

Theme leads to pursue the scope of the work outlined in the updates provided to HNWG in September and report back to HNWG in the November meeting.

Report Author Susie Weaver/HNWG

Figure 1

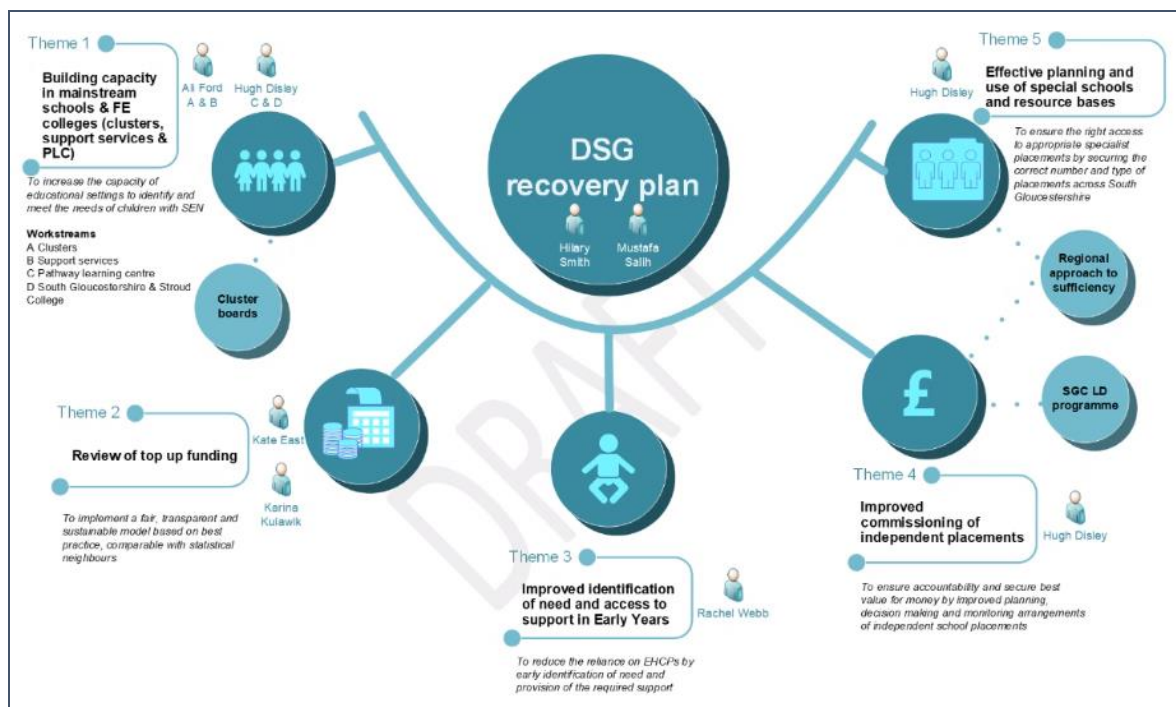
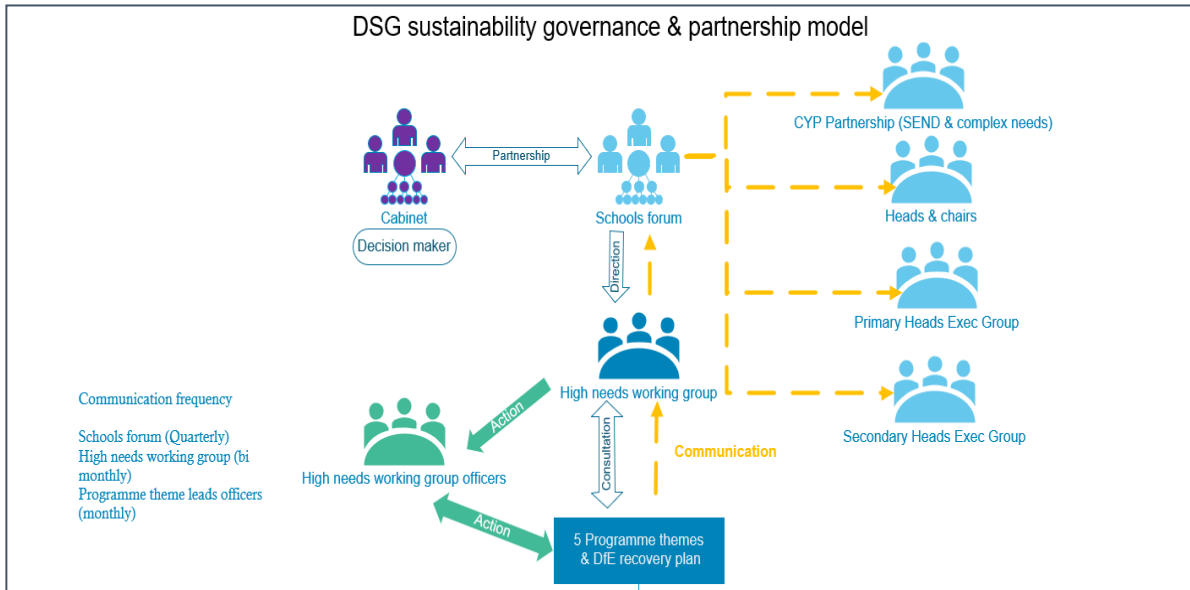


Figure 2



## FORWARD PLAN

Oct	21st			
		7	School Funding 2022/23 outlook	Mustafa Salih
		8	Deficit Recovery Plan	Mustafa Salih
		9	SEND Banding Proposals	Hilary Smith
		10	HNWG Update	Susie Weaver
		11	Impact of SEND Clusters	Hilary Smith
Nov	18th			
		7	Schools Budget Consultation	Mustafa Salih
		8	Q1 update	Caroline W
		9	HNWG Update	Susie Weaver
Jan	21st			
		7	Growth Funding Policy	Caroline W
		8	Q2 update	Caroline W
		9	Deficit Recovery Plan	Mustafa Salih
		10	Early Years Funding	Hilary Smith
		11	NFF Funding rates for 2022/23	Mustafa Salih
		12	HNWG update	Susie Weaver

All future meetings will be held on Microsoft Teams until further notification from the Forum Chair.

### Dates for 2021/22:

Academic Year 2021-2022 (All Thursday)	
Oct	21st
Nov	18th
Jan	20th
March	24th
May	12th
July	7th



## 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS