

**South Gloucestershire Schools Forum  
Minutes of Meeting held on  
Thursday 14 November 2024  
Microsoft Teams**

**PRESENT:**

**Forum Members:**

Pippa Osborne (Chair)	Headteacher Christ Church Junior School
Julia Anwar	Head of Business Operations, Olympus Academy Trust
Tania Craig	Executive Head Teacher, New Horizons Learning Centre
Nicky Edwards	Early Years representative
Paul Evry	Chief Finance Officer, Mosaic Partnership
Dave Farr	Finance Manager, Leaf Trust
Kim Garland	Headteacher, Brimsham Green Secondary School
Flo Hiatt	Head of Additional Learning Support, SGSC
Aaron Jefferies	Primary Governor, Coniston Primary School
David Jenkins	Governor, Crossways Schools
Nicola Jones	Representative Special Academies
Jonathan Keohane	Headteacher Callicroft Primary School/Olympus School
Louise Leader	Headteacher, Pathways Learning Centre
Ross Newman	CEO of the Leaf Trust representing Academies
Diane Owen	Chair to Academy Council at King's Oak Academy
Will Roberts	Chief Executive, CSET
Fr. Malcolm Strange	Bristol Diocese
Susie Weaver	Executive Director, Cabot Learning Federation
Sue Wright	Finance Director CSET

**Executive Councillors:**

Ian Boulton, Cabinet Member - Schools, Skills, Employment and Business

**Officers:**

Mustafa Salih, Service Director Resources and Business  
Hilary Smith, Service Director, Education, Learning and Skills  
Deb Luter, Senior Accountant - People (Children)  
Michelle Palmer, Accountant – People (Children)

**Others:** Tamsin Moreton, Director of Finance & Operations, Enable Trust  
Elly Owen, District and Branch Secretary – South Gloucestershire NEU

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Attendees were welcomed by the Chair.

## **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Chris Sivers, Dave Baker, Andy Watson, Bernice Webber, David Williams

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – None**

### **2. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT**

- Schools in Financial Difficulty – Schools have not yet had to submit their schools budgets as the planning meetings are still happening due to the recent grant and pay rise negotiations being worked through and this item will be moved to the December meeting.
- In-person meeting and action regarding the name of Schools Forum will be discussed in AOB.

### **3. MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING – 26 September 2024**

**MS** –We have decided to move any of the papers that relate to setting next year’s school funding levels to the December meeting because they are all linked together as its part of the background to all the other papers setting next year’s budget.

Apologies the LGA report and presentation was not circulated; however these will be circulated shortly together with the School Funding Settlement 2025 presented at today’s meeting.

Update on the Trade Union rep to the forum. This is still work in progress as struggling to find out the right route to contact all the trade unions and when we have the contact details we will write to all individual trade unions to ask them to liaise together to give us a name to put forward and hopefully have a formal rep.

**EO** - Happy to provide a list of Trade Unions. I would like to be the union rep for today as no effort was made to get a rep.

**PO** - Apologies this has not happened but any reps need to be agreed by the body they are representing and while you can stay listed on today’s minutes as a visitor you are very welcome to contribute but you will not be able to vote today.

**EO** - That was the failure of the Council officers and not the Trade Union team and we would have agreed a rep.

Remainder of the Minutes recorded as a true record.

#### 4. High Needs working Group Update (Susie Weaver/Hilary Smith)

**SW** - At the last HNWG meeting we covered a new set of key items on special place planning, ASD and SEMH. Update from LA officers on various themes which will be reported to the HNWG at the next meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> November and take the action for cluster funding as some of this work is really significant and sustained and committed through the Schools Forum decision making. We recognise that some of the updated strands are reliant upon some of that funding. We have an ongoing item within the agenda which is all about clear communication of strands and governance with David and Hilary making sure there is really good communication and make sure our governance teams are in the loop and were pleased with some of specific pieces of work through Mastodon C and need to make sure it is sustainable.

**HS** – Mastodon C work. It is useful to know how we are taking some of that forward as we need to prioritise the areas around ASD and SEMH. We have delivered an expansion at Pegasus and we have been talking about the expansion of New Horizons for SEMH but hasn't progressed as there are a couple of options to fast track. We have identified a strategy that will be developed which was referenced at the last Schools Forum meeting as part of our commitment of our special school planned places this year and tomorrow we will be advising where we want to go with this part of the strategy and to invite schools who wish to expand SEMH provision.

We are still having high levels with SEMH which is significantly higher than the national average. We do need to focus on expenditure in alternative provision but we haven't focussed moving forward with a new model in relation to medical needs where we are looking to reduce the places with Pathways Learning Centre and going ahead in the 2024/25 academic year. We need to reduce that capacity and manage that demand if we can.

We are intending to undertake a trial within the LA around medical needs with greater involvement of our health colleagues in terms of early assessment and to deliver that model in the new year and using existing staff and resources.

**KG** - Is there a sense that schools will respond positively to requests to expand SEMH provision?

**TC** - How will you assess the expressions of interest i.e. experience of dealing with SEMH and successful outcomes

**HS** – We are going ahead with a request to schools to come forward who would be interested but we still need to think how are we going to do this because we want to do it strategically and include it in the discussions with headteachers. We need to decide where the demands are and where they should be located and be an element of capacity and to take account of capital request requirement.

**PO** – While we are a Schools Forum the purpose and constituency is around the finances of schools and the four different blocks of funding, and we are all keeping that at the centre of it and headteachers are looking at a system with tremendous pressures and issues and that all of us are committed to make a difference to the children and the staff behind some of us for many years.

**LL** - This isn't the forum to go into the PLC issues. There is still a lot to be discussed and that will still be a focus on the HNWG in terms of finance. It is essential that SF members consider the importance of the impact of potential reduction in long term sustainability as a whole and recognising what is fair and reasonable in our support over a number of years. For example, HNWG on behalf of Schools Forum to explore a joint impact assessment where we might reduce in one area and exploring alternative to support another system – collaboration and joined upness and pulling those elements and working as one.

**LL** - Can we be certain that the changes being proposed for PLC will synchronise timewise with changes to expanded RB provision? I fear there could be a mismatch in timescales.

**EL** - I think an Impact Assessment would reassure me.

**SW**- Hilary - on this and other points - including this place planning suggestion from Pippa - could you/team come to HNWG with info available next week - thanks.

**SW** – The next HNWG meeting will go into more detail of the terms of reference and best value for money to meeting the children's needs and also note the expressions of interest for schools.

**TC** - QA of options is key to success. A school who wants to do this to protect funding due to falling rolls for example may not have the skill set to run a SEMH provision and that would be a setup to fail model.

**EO** - I am concerned that there is still little consideration of possible redundancies as a result of these reductions.

**LL** - I am concerned that there is still little consideration of possible redundancies as a result of these reductions. I will be picking this up through HNWG Eilly. The impact assessment will also help address this point.

**KG** - Will the cost of meeting students' SEMH needs via expanded RB provision be less than PLC provision? Presumably it is anticipated that the answer is yes, and that this is why it is being pursued. Will we ensure that expanded non-PLC provision will be on stream, and functioning before PLC reduction in places has happened. Can that happen in 2024-2025?

It's also important that we are comparing like with like in terms of the level of needs and costs. There are some lower need SEMH needs, that could be supported in RB's at a lower cost, but I am confident that RB's would be unlikely to be able to support the high level of need of most CYP attending PLC.

**Action: It was agreed to explore an Impact Assessment as a matter of urgency through the HNWG.**

## **5. Dedicated Schools Grant 2024/25 Quarter 1 (Mustafa Salih)**

This is the Q1 position for the schools budget in all the areas of schools expenditure. It is an early position in terms of the outturn for the end of the year. Highlighting ongoing overspend of £10.7m is significant and we are amongst the largest overspends in this area. As part of our Safety Valve work, we have reported to the DfE our reprofiled plan to get back to balance.

Q2 – Projections are going to get more accurate and hopefully start to show a more positive picture.

## **6. Schools Budgets 2024-2025 (Mustafa Salih)**

Mustafa produced a presentation on School Funding Settlement 2025-26 which will be forwarded to SF members after the meeting.

### **Schools in Financial Difficulty**

When we met with the Safety Valve colleagues they suggested that we should look to seek approval from Schools Forum for a bigger block transfer. We had asked the DfE for additional capital funding but there will be no new capital funding as the new Government is working through a new process to review all SEND arrangements. On the Safety Valve, the DfE will get back to us on our profile plan.

## **7. Any Other Business**

**PO** – Feedback on exploring the name of the Schools Forum to include Early Years. Started to look at our neighbouring authorities and during a wider search the only was Nottingham. I am recommending that we maintain South Gloucestershire's title as Schools Forum.

I propose a standing item on the agenda either once or bi-annually for Early Years issues to give credence to that sector.

**NE** – Appreciation from the Early Years reps for your feedback.

**Action: Pippa to contact Nicky outside this meeting and this item to be put on the Forward Plan.**

## 7. Schools Forum Forward Plan 2024/2025

<b>Dec 2024</b>	<b>05<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Microsoft Teams</b>	
		Special Place Planning	Hilary Smith
		Update on Schools in Financial Difficulty as part of the Deb Luter role in supporting those schools and schools budget options to block transfer	Mustafa Salih
		School Budgets 2025-26 Including Options for a Block Transfer	Mustafa Salih
		Trade Union Facilities pooled Budget Report and TU rep	Mustafa Salih
		Rescheduled in-person meeting in January 2025 and based at Winterbourne Academy	Pippa Osborne

<b>Jan 2025</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>In-person meeting at Winterbourne Academy</b>	
		Early Years Funding 2024-2025	Jo Briscoombe
		Proposed Financial Amendments: Breach Funding	Caroline Warren
		Growth Funding Policy update	Caroline Warren
		Falling Rolls Policy 2024 – 2025 (report)	Caroline Warren
		Special Schools Funding Arrangements	Mustafa Salih
		Q2 Financial Monitoring report 2024 – 2025	Mustafa Salih
		School Budget Announcement	Mustafa Salih

<b>March 2025</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Microsoft Teams</b>	
		F40 update	Mustafa Salih
		Q3 DSG Report 2024-2025	Mustafa Salih
		Safety Valve update	Mustafa Salih
		EHC Breakdown	Hilary Smith
		<b>HNWG</b>	<b>Hilary Smith</b>
		Place Pressures	Hilary Smith

<b>May 2025</b>	<b>08<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Provisional Forum Date – depending on need for any decision reports</b>	
		Academisation update	Michelle Trigg
		Safety Valve update	Mustafa Salih
		HNWG update	Susie Weaver
		Mainstream Place Numbers	Hilary Smith
<b>July 2025</b>	<b>03<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>Microsoft Teams</b>	
		Membership of the Forum	Michelle Trigg
		Schools in Financial Difficulty Update (Report) (Maintained Schools & Academies update)	Mustafa Salih
		Funding Update (including School's supplementary grant)	Mustafa Salih
		Outturn Report 2024-2025 verbal update (outturn report)	Mustafa Salih
		Financial Regulations for Schools	Justine Poulton
		Scheme for Financing Schools – DfE Directed Changes	Caroline Warren
		HNWG update	Susie Weaver

<b>Sept 2025</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Microsoft Teams</b>	
		Schools Forum Membership update	Michelle Trigg
		Outturn 2024-2025 Report	Caroline Warren
		Proposed Financial Arrangements – Falling Rolls Funding (Low Pupil Number Contingencies)	Caroline Warren
		Financial Regulations for Schools	Justine Poulton
		Place Planning	Hilary Smith
		Safety Valve update	Mustafa Salih
		Special Schools Funding update	Mustafa Salih
		Year 3 of New Banding and Top-Up Arrangements Review and Update	Mustafa Salih

<b>Nov 2025</b>	<b>06<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Proposed in person meeting – venue to be confirmed.</b>	
		Current Position on school places across schools system in South Gloucestershire Update	Hilary Smith
		High Needs Working Group Update	Hilary Smith?
		School Budgets 2025-2026 (verbal update)	Mustafa Salih
		Schools in Financial Difficulty Update	Deb Lutter
		Q1 Financial Performance Report 2023-2024	Caroline Warren

<b>Dec 2025</b>	<b>04<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Microsoft Teams</b>	
		Schools Budget Announcement	Mustafa Salih
		Implementation of new banding and top up arrangement for special schools and alternative provision	Mustafa Salih
		Proposed Financial Amendments: Breach Funding	Caroline Warren