

AGENDA



SCHOOLS FORUM

Date: Thursday 7th December 2023
Time: 4.30pm
Place: Microsoft Teams

Distribution

Members of the Committee

Pippa Osborne (Chair)	Dave Baker (Vice Chair)
Julia Anwar	Ross Newman
Jo Dent	Diane Owen
Stuart Evans	Lisa Parker
Kim Garland	Will Roberts
Clare Haughton	Fr. Malcolm Strange
Aaron Jefferies	Katherine Marks
David Jenkins	Susie Weaver
Nicola Jones	Bernice Webber
Louise Leader	David Williams
Nicola Bailey	Kathryn Absalom
Sue Wright	

Appropriate Officers attending:

Mustafa Salih
Hilary Smith
Caroline Warren

Councillors attending:

Ian Boulton

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AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Pippa Osborne)
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Pippa Osborne)
4. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT (Pippa Osborne)
5. MINUTES FROM 2ND NOVEMBER 2023 MEETING (Pippa Osborne)
6. SCHOOLS BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENT UPDATE (Verbal) (Mustafa Salih)
7. SAFETY VALVE UPDATE (Verbal) (Mustafa Salih)
8. SCHOOL FUNDING CAMPAIGN UPDATE (Verbal) (Pippa Osborne)
9. COMMS PLAN (Verbal) (Hilary Smith)
10. FOCUS ON SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH (SEMH)
Responding to SEMH demand including proposed new arrangements for referrals to PLC (PowerPoint attached separately) (Hilary Smith)
11. IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW BANDING AND TOP UP ARRANGEMENTS FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION UPDATE
(Verbal) (Mustafa Salih)
12. SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN
13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

**South Gloucestershire Schools Forum
Minutes of Meeting held on
Thursday 2nd November 2023
Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT:

Pippa Osborne (Chair)	Headteacher Christ Church Junior School
Dave Baker (Vice Chair)	CEO, Olympus Academy Trust
Julia Anwar	Head of Business Operations, Olympus Academy Trust
Nicola Bailey	Headteacher, Olympus Academy Trust
Kim Garland	Headteacher, Brimsham Green School
Aaron Jefferies	Primary Governor, Coniston Primary School
David Jenkins	Governor, Crossways Schools
Nicola Jones	Representative Special Academies
Louise Leader	Headteacher, Pathways Learning Centre
Ross Newman	Early Years Schools Forum Representative
Diane Owen	Chair to Academy Council at King's Oak Academy
Lisa Parker	Headteacher, Warmley Park School
Will Roberts	CEO, Castle School Education Trust (CSET)
Fr. Malcolm Strange	Diocese of Bristol
Susie Weaver	Executive Principal, Cabot Learning Federation
Bernice Webber	Headteacher, Old Sodbury CE Primary School
Sue Wright	Finance Director, CSET

Executive Members:

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, Schools Finance Team Leader
Caroline Warren, Finance Business Partner

Others:

Tamsin Moreton, Director of Finance & Operations, Enable Trust (representing Nicola Jones)
Nicky Edwards, Early Years representative (Guest)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Attendees were welcomed by the Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Ian Boulton, Chris Sivers, Kathryn Absalom, David Jenkins, David Williams

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – None

2. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT (Pippa Osborne)

Pippa, Dave Baker, Louise Leader and Diane Owen joined the Cabinet Members Briefing on 19th October where they met Cllr. Ian Boulton, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, Employment and Business and Daniel Ward, Communications Officer and shared an extensive list of the impact and sacrifices schools have to make in order to balance the budgets

It was agreed some next steps would be about raising the profile with the broader public and to share with the press a bit more of that awareness of the challenges schools are facing and that headteachers and schools not feeling alone and to show closer working and building partnerships with headteachers and the LA.

Need to emphasise it is quite shocking and we must not paper over the cracks and everyone has to make cuts.

HS – There has been a challenge on the equalities agenda and how well our schools have improved in the recent years. The education outcomes are good overall but the gap between the disadvantaged and the rest is getting bigger.

Action: HS to do a piece of work with schools on how we can try and unpick this gap and how this compares with other LAs and the benefits they have especially with children of a disadvantage.

PO - English as an Additional Language (EAL) is another challenge and are often let down as we do not have the resources to have staff to support with the increasing numbers of children from Hong Kong and Ukraine.

Action: Pippa to send over the notes of the meeting and the list of sacrifices to add to the minutes.

3. MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING – 28th September 2023

Minutes recorded as accurate.

4. Setting the Schools Budget 2024-25 (Mustafa Salih)

Mustafa went through the report highlighting key areas on the ongoing transfer of the £2.2m from the schools block to the high needs block. There was a typo in paragraph one that 2023-24 should read 2024-2025.

Recommendation. Schools Forum to approve the following Option:

Option 1: a £2.2m transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, which continues the same level of transfer that had been secured for 2023-24 and allows the investments in Cluster Funding Early Help, Early Years, and EHCP processes to support the DSG Recovery Plan to continue.

We have to consult the Schools Forum and that view has to be considered by the Council in February next year as part of setting the Schools Budget 2024-25. We also provide the outcome of the consultation with the Schools Forum to the DfE. The Council does also need to obtain the Secretary of State for Education's approval for the £2.2m transfer and with that regard it is also important to point out that the £2.2m transfer is assumed in our Safety Valve agreement signed by the DfE.

Staying on track with the Safety Valve agreement and failure to maintain that progress could put at risk the £25.5m secured through the Safety Valve Programme.

DB – comment in chat. *“Do we need to note in the minutes about Mustafa's 2024-25 budget report that there will be a grant from April 2024 to fund the 5.8% increase in employer contributions for teachers' pensions that was announced at the end of last week?”*

In the 'chat' section. *Extract of the briefing from David Jenkins for Governors audience:*

“Yet, despite all the successes described above and despite the annual transfer of £2.2M from the Schools Block to the High Needs block over the last four years and an increase in funding from the DfE that South Glos benefitted comparatively better than other Local Authorities, the High Needs Block deficit remains stubbornly constant. An increase in demand was always assumed and accounted for, but it has risen by much more than was forecast. One area of need that has increased significantly and which is now much higher than the national average is SEMH, particularly in the secondary sector. An analysis of why there has been such a growth in SEMH need will be a priority focus in the new academic year.”

Members unanimously approved Option 1 of agreeing to the £2.2m transfer for the next financial year 2024-25 with the understanding that a narrative would go with the approval and to make sure that it is not just to Members but also the Secretary of State (SoS) as well and we are assured that the SoS looks at all those requests for transfers. This effectively developed an option 2 as follows:

Option 2: a £2.2m transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, which continues the same level of transfer that had been secured for 2023-24 and allows the investments in Cluster Funding Early Help, Early Years, and EHCP processes to support the DSG Recovery Plan to continue in 2024/25 and a clear explanation of the pressures facing school budgets and the need for more Government funding to be added to the Disapplication Request and to the February Cabinet report .

Pippa as Chair to potentially draft a short paragraph to try and sum up the views of Schools Forum and have David Jenkins paragraph circulated and then hopefully Mustafa can go back to the Members and the SoS.

Pippa fully intends to sign this off from the members of Schools Forum and that encompasses all South Gloucestershire schools and academies.

Decision: The Forum unanimously approved Option 2 as set out above.

Action: To add Option 2 in the Minutes.

5. Schools in Financial Difficulty Update (Deb Luter)

Deb went through the Financial report that was sent to the Forum.

We are working much closer with the Schools Improvement team and Schools Admissions team and to help those schools in financial difficulty which is very well received by the schools.

MS – We are a Forum of maintained and academy schools and we can only do a report on maintained schools as we have no access or mandate for Academy school budgets. Would the Forum be in favour of trying to cover the Financial position of Academy schools as well as maintained schools in future reports like this?

Action: The Forum approved including Academies and Mustafa was asked to send an email out to the different CEOs of the different MATs with the data needed to give the Forum a wider picture of all schools in financial difficulty.

5. Dedicated Schools Grant 2023/24 Quarter 1 (Caroline Warren)

CW shared the report on the update of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the Safety Valve position as at Quarter 1 2023/24.

PO – **Action for HNWG on what the numbers are for pupils with EHCPs in mainstream but who should be in specialist provision but because a specialist place cannot be found they remain in mainstream with additional support funded. This can be a hidden cost, but also can be seen as a benefit.**

Nicky Edwards who stepped down from the role of the Early Years representative on the Forum but is now back on the Forum as an Early Years Rep asked the question of why we can't plan to spend that Early Years Block underspend and wouldn't it be useful to spend it in this financial year.

Action: MS to review legality of this option and discuss with Nicky.

6. High Needs Working Group Update (Susie Weaver)

KG - Does the contingency include budget for those students with EHCPs who require specialist provision, but who currently remain in the mainstream sector?

Action: To be explored at the next HNWG meeting on the 29th of November and also to explore investment in EYFS and report back to the Forum.

7. Schools Forum Forward Plan

Proposed financial amendments around breach funding to move to January 2024 (Caroline Warren).

NE – 2-year early years funding coming in November for working parents and not December in which case if the DfE release the early years funding formula could we consider putting it on the forward plan earlier than normal?

HS – To take this forward as an action with Jo Briscoe who might bring a report to Schools Forum at the end of December/early January.

Jan 2024	18th			
			School Budgets (Part 2)	Mustafa Salih
			Growth Funding Policy update	Caroline Warren
			Proposed financial amendments around breach funding	Caroline Warren
			Early Years Funding 2024-2025	Claire Perry Jo Briscoe
			Q2 Performance Report 2023-2024	Mustafa Salih
			Centralised School Arrangement Improvements & Future Academisation	Hilary Smith

March 2024	07th			
			Q3 Performance Report 2023-2024	Mustafa Salih
			Safety Valve update	Mustafa Salih
			High Needs Working Group	Hilary Smith

May 2024	09th		Provisional Forum Date – depending on need for any decision reports	

July 2024	4th			
			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 2023-2024 verbal update outturn report)	Mustafa Salih

8. Any Other Business

None

Meeting closed

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Schools Forum					Last updated:			
Action No.	Date	Agenda item	Back ground	Decision / Action Made	Owner	Due date	Latest update	Previous updates (and dates)
6	02/11/2023	Other items the chair decides are urgent	Meeting held with LA, Cabinet Member, Pippa, Dave, Louise, Diane on 19th October - Shared extensive list of sacrifices schools have to make to balance school budgets, also mentioned increase in EAL children but lack of funding means we don't have resources in terms of staff to support them as we would like to	Pippa to type up notes of meeting & list of sacrifices made by relevant schools and circulate to the Forum	PO	07/12/2023		
7			There has been a challenge on the equalities agenda and how well our schools have improved in the recent years. The education outcomes are good overall but the gap between the disadvantaged and the rest is getting bigger. Other LAs have more school funding to support disadvantaged pupils than our schools do.	HS to do a piece of work with schools on how we can try and unpick this gap and how this compares with other LAs and the benefits they have especially with children of a disadvantage.	HS	Ongoing		

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8	02/11/2023	Setting the Schools Budget 2024-2025 and Consultation on £2.2m DSG Block Transfer	Discussion held on Proposed options to agree or decline the £2.2m DSG Bock Transfer	<p>a) CC to note in the minutes</p> <p>b) PO to draft agreement on behalf of members of the forum for option 1 with some stipulations to be included, to add text in chat re paper from David Jenkins - send to MS to forward to Members & Secretary of State</p> <p>c) CC to add Option 2 into the minutes as not stated in the report.</p>	<p>CC</p> <p>PO / MS</p> <p>CC</p>	07/12/2023		
9	02/11/2023	Schools in Financial Difficulty update	To provide an update on Schools in Financial Difficulty	MS to carry out a piece of work to collect data from Academies as report only based on Maintained Schools - to contact CEO's from schools to participate in collection of data.	MS	31/12/2023		
10	02/11/2023	Q1 Financial Performance update	Issue of SEND pupils in mainstream with expensive packages because of a lack of specialist places should be reviewed.	CC to add to HNWG agenda re; number of students with EHCP's in mainstream	CC	29/11/2023		

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11	02/11/2023	Forward Plan	Normally the EYSFF settlement from the Government comes very late in December leaving little time to consult. The DFE have said this will be available in November this time so could it be consulted on and brought to the Forum earlier than normal.	HS to take this forward as an action with Jo Briscoe who might bring a report to Schools Forum at the end of December/early January.	JB/HS	Dec23 / Jan24		
12								
13								
14								
15								

SCHOOLS BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENT UPDATE (Verbal) (Mustafa Salih)

SAFETY VALVE UPDATE (Verbal) (Mustafa Salih)

SCHOOL FUNDING CAMPAIGN UPDATE (Verbal) (Pippa Osborne)

COMMS PLAN (VERBAL) (Hilary Smith)

FOCUS ON SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH (SEMH)

Responding to SEMH demand including proposed new arrangements for referrals to PLC (PowerPoint attached separately)

**IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW BANDING AND TOP UP ARRANGEMENTS
FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION UPDATE
(Verbal) (Mustafa Salih)**

SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN

Proposed dates for 2023/24 Academic Year:		

Dec 2023	07th			
			Schools Budget Announcement (verbal)	Mustafa Salih
			Safety Valve Update (verbal)	Mustafa Salih
			School Funding Campaign Update (verbal)	Pippa Osborne
			Comms Plan (verbal)	Hilary Smith
			Focus on Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) Responding to SEMH demand including proposed new arrangements for referrals to PLC (presentation)	Hilary Smith
			Implementation of new banding and top up arrangement for special schools and alternative provision (verbal)	Mustafa Salih

Jan 2024	18th			
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March 2024	07th			
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