

THURROCK SCHOOLS' FORUM

28th November 2024 at 10:00 – 12:00

Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams

AGENDA

Multi Academy Trusts

Catalyst Academies Trust
Harris Federation
Ormiston Park
ORTU Federation
Osborne Co-operative Academy Trust
REAch2 Academy Trust
South West Essex Community Education Trust
The Gateway Learning Community Trust (GLC)
Vine Schools Trust
Christus Catholic Trust

Name

Mr T Parfett (Vice Chair)
Mrs N Graham
To be advised
To be advised
Mr Griffiths
Mr E Samuel
Mr S Munday
Mrs V Reid (Chair)
Mrs E Wigmore
Mrs J Seymour

Secondary Voluntary Aided School

Grays Convent

Name

Mrs P Johnson

Standalone Academy Trusts

Woodside Academy
Giffards Primary

Name

Mr S Proctor
Mrs N Haslam-Davis

Infrastructure Groups

TASS
TPHA

Name

Mr S Bell
Mrs J Sawtell-Haynes

Alternative Provision

Olive AP

Name

Mr M Vickers

Special Schools

Treetops Academy
Beacon Hill Academy

Name

Mr J Brewer
Mrs Sue Hewitt

Non-school members

Diocese of Chelmsford
Diocese of Brentwood
0-5 EYFS Representative
0-11 Representative
11-19 Representative

Name

Miss S Jones
G Corry
Mr A Melbourne
Ms A Jones
Mr S Bowak

THURROCK SCHOOLS' FORUM
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Introductory Items		
Item	Item	Time Guide
1.	Welcome from Chair	10:00
2.	Apologies for Absence	10:02
3.	Introductions New member - Grace Corry has replaced Maria Shepherd representing Diocese of Brentwood	10:05
4.	<i>For decision</i> Dedicated Schools Grant 2024/25 and 2025/26 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• David May presenting	10:15
5.	<i>For decision</i> Dedicated Schools Grant 2025/26 - Presentation to be made at the meeting based on latest information available. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• David May presenting	10:30
6.	<i>For decision</i> Schools Budget Survey 2024/25 - October 2024 - <ul style="list-style-type: none">• David May presenting	10:45
7.	<i>For information:</i> Delivering Better Value Grant – Verbal Update <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Andrea Winstone presenting	11.05

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8.	<i>For information</i> Review of Forward Plan 2024/25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah Williams presenting 	11:20
Closing Items		
9.	Minutes of the previous meeting held on 14th September 2024	11.25
10.	Action Log	11:35
11.	Any Other Business	11:45
	Date of next meeting Thursday 16 th January 2025	

THURROCK SCHOOLS FORUM REPORT

DATE: 28 November 2024

SUBJECT: Dedicated Schools Grant 2024/25 and 2025/26

REPORT OF: David May

THE REPORT IS: For Decision

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The projected outturn for 2024/25 is a forecasted deficit of £1.151m, with additional risks of £0.985m identified.
- 1.2 The movement to reserves of £1.151m will change the surplus position of £0.630m to a deficit of £0.521m. This was planned to support identified funding pressures in the High Needs Block in 2024/25, whilst benefits from the Delivering Better Value in SEND programme are realised.
- 1.3 There continues to be significant risk within the High Needs Block:
- Continued increase in demand for EHCP's; and
 - Sufficiency of local offer to prevent high-cost external placements.
- The materialisation of the identified risks of £0.985m would increase the deficit to £1.5m.
- 1.4 Information has been released on a Core Schools Budget Grant (CSBG) 2024/25 for the period September 2024 to March 2025. This report proposes how this funding should be allocated to Special, AP and Early Years providers of the 3-&-4-year-old offer.
- Special / AP providers. 2 approaches are shown with the paper. Recommendation is Option 1 to distribute the funds consistent with methodology used by the DfE. This will allow ease of consolidation into 2025/26 funding allocations.
 - 3-&-4-year-old Providers. Recommendation is to passport the full 9p increase to all providers with an adjustment payment made for the autumn term and funding rates increased for payments to be made in the spring term.
- 1.5 An update is included on the DSG Management Plan to reflect the increase in numbers and costs.
- 1.6 In previous years information would have been received from the ESFA on proposed NFF factor values and indicative funding allocations for 2025/26. At the time of writing this report no information has been received. At the meeting a presentation will be made on key budget issues and a proposed timeline for decision making across both January and March meetings.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Schools Forum is invited to:
- a) Note and seek clarity on the contents of the report.
 - b) Agree to the distribution of Core School Budget grant as outlined.

3. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

3.1 To inform members of the Schools Forum of the projected outturn position in relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2024/25, in accordance with the Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012.

4. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2024/25

4.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant is forecasting an outturn position of £1.151m (2%) overspend, against a revised budget of £62.121m, as shown below:

Dedicated Schools Grant 2024/25	School Block £m	Central Services Block £m	High Needs Block £m	Early Years Block £m	Total £m
Funding Settlement	167.156	1.610	38.912	22.718	230.396
Academy Recoupment	(161.025)		(7.250)		(168.275)
Funding Block Transfer	(0.400)		0.400		0.000
Final DSG	5.731	1.610	32.062	22.718	62.121
Forecasted Outturn	5.326	1.610	33.741	22.595	63.272
Variance to Budget	(0.405)	0.000	1.679	(0.123)	1.151
Previously reported variance (Sept-24)	0.000	0.000	1.620	(0.103)	1.517
Movement from previously reported	(0.405)	0.000	0.059	(0.020)	(0.366)
Risk - Not included in figures above	0.000	0.000	0.985	0.000	0.985

Appendix A provides further detail on the key areas of expenditure.

4.2 The net overspend is driven by:

- Expansion of places within Special Schools from Sept-24 at a cost of £0.345m.
- Out of Borough Placements. Overspent by £0.351m. Includes three joint funded placements agreed in the spring term with a full year cost implication to the DSG of £0.528m.
- Medical Tuition - £0.431m, continued demand for tuition services.
- Top Up Funding Academies - £0.769m. Review of EHCP Plan, resulting in additional support to maintain places in mainstream schools and academies and an increase in interim funding to provide support whilst EHCP assessment is completed.
- Post 16 - £0.262m. Placements will be subject to ongoing confirmation during the autumn term.

Offset by:

- Delay in the opening of the Primary Autism Resource base, a saving of £0.093m.
- Delay in opening of the new SEMH - OA North View provision, a saving of £0.347m.
- Growth £0.405m, includes contingency for Bulge classes to open November 2024
- Early Years central team, saving £0.123m reflects current payroll structure, includes Grants to offset salaries.

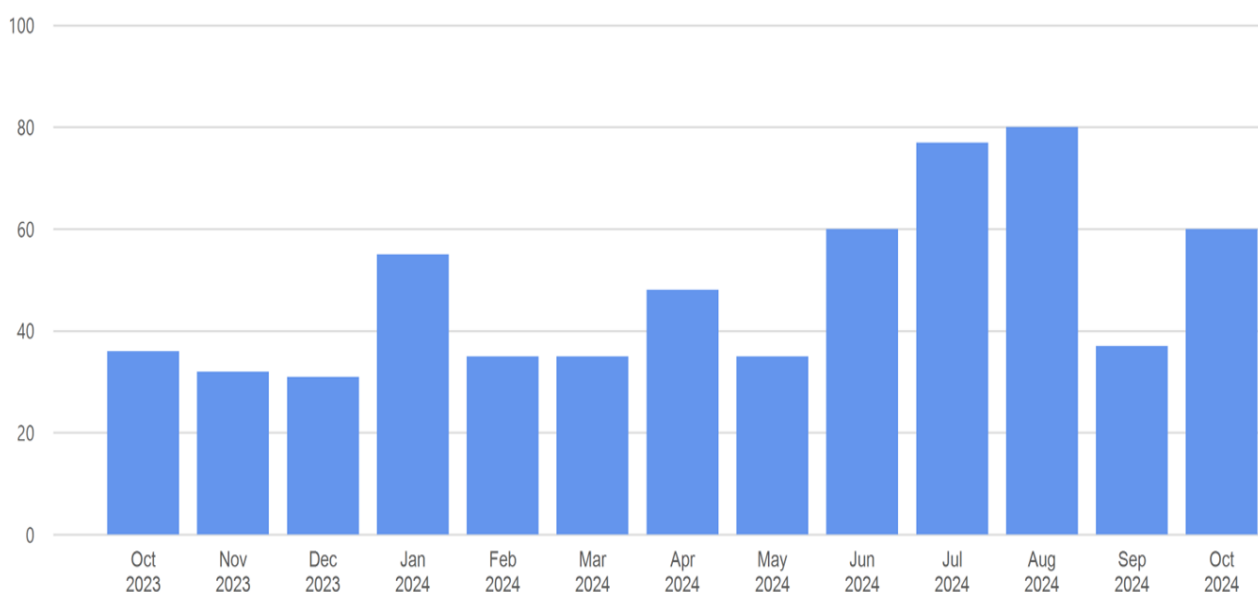
4.3 The movement between reporting periods is a net decrease of £0.366m. This is primarily due to revised Growth forecast included in projections.

4.4 The risks identified in the table above, £0.985m are not included in the forecast outturn position but are noted that they may materialise as the year progresses.

- Post 16 - Increase in Student Numbers, Tuition and Out of Borough placement costs £0.485m. Ongoing validation to understand the extent of the financial pressure.
- Out of Borough placements. No contingency is available, £0.500m. All new placements will have a full cost implication on the HNB budget and outturn position.

4.5 The table below shows the significant increase in the number of requests for assessment of EHCP. Thurrock currently maintains 2,423 which is 6% of the school age population. This is higher than the national of average of 4% and statistical neighbours of 4%. We are commissioning a review of EHCPs in Thurrock to gain a better understanding as to why Thurrock is higher.

EHCP Requests between 01/10/2023 and 30/10/2024.



5. DSG RESERVE

5.1 The movement to reserves of £1.151m will change the surplus position of £0.630m to a deficit of £0.521m. This was planned to support identified funding pressures in the High Needs Block in 2024/25, whilst benefits from the Delivering Better Value in SEND programme are realised. Risks of £0.985m are not reflected.

DSG Reserve - Summary	£m
DSG Unusable Reserve at the end of 2021/22	1.883
DSG Usable Reserve	(2.513)
DSG Balance 31/03/2024	(0.630)
DSG Outturn 2024/25	1.151
DSG Projected Balance @ 31/03/2025	0.521

- 5.2 The Government extended the DSG statutory override in December 2022 for a one-off period of three years up to 31 March 2026. When the statutory override falls away, the accumulated DSG deficit will be the responsibility of each Local Authority.
- 5.3 The engagement in the SEND Delivering Better Value programme is designed to support Local Authorities in the management of the Dedicated Schools Grants. The DSG Management Plan 2024/25 to 2028/29 submitted, validated, and approved through the DBV programme shows an accumulated deficit of £17m in March 2029.
- 5.4 The approved plan showed a forecasted deficit for 2024/25 of £2.364m. The position at Period 6 is a deficit of £1.151m. This is an improved position of £1.213m. However, if the risks identified materialise with no mitigation this would increase the deficit to £2.136m.
- 5.5 This reflects the national position of the High Needs Block and the challenges faced in meeting increased demand, complexity of need and price increases.
- 5.6 A long-term solution is required to funding available to support Schools and the High Needs Block.

6. Core Schools Budget Grant 2024/25

- 6.1 The core school budget grant (CSBG) will provide almost £1.1 billion to support schools with their overall costs in the 2024/25 financial year, in particular following confirmation of the 2024 teacher pay award. This matches what ESFA have calculated is needed to fully fund, at a national level, the teacher pay award and the support staff pay offer in financial year 2024/25, over and above the available headroom in schools' existing budgets.
- 6.2 The following base funding rates are to be applied for the period September 2024 to March 2025:

Mainstream

- a basic per-pupil rate of £76 for primary pupils, including pupils in reception.
- a basic per-pupil rate of £108 for key stage 3 pupils
- a basic per-pupil rate of £122 for key stage 4 pupils
- a lump sum of £2,900
- a FSM6 per-pupil rate of £70 per eligible primary pupil
- a FSM6 per-pupil rate of £100 per eligible secondary pupil

Special and AP Schools

- £610 per place using published place numbers.

Centrally employed teachers.

- A per-teacher funding rate of £2,428.

Early Years

- An increase of 9p per hour for 3-&-4-year-olds.

6.3 Thurrock is responsible for the distribution of Special, AP and Early Years funding allocations.

Special and AP Schools

6.4 The funding provided allocated £610 per place. Over previous grants received the Schools Forum has agreed this to be distributed through a lump sum and a per pupil value.

6.5 In 2025/26 all of these additional grants are proposed to be incorporated into core budget allocations. To facilitate this transition, it is proposed that this grant be distributed on the same methodology used by DfE as shown in the table 1 below:

Table 1: Distributed based on Place Numbers

School Name	Places	ACA	Place funding	Amount
Treetops Free School	147	1.04661	£610	£93,849
Treetops School	318	1.04661	£610	£203,021
Beacon Hill Academy	75	1.04661	£610	£47,882
Olive AP Academy	85	1.04661	£610	£54,267
Total - Thurrock Schools	625			£399,018

If the previous methodology had continued to be applied the following would have been paid:

Table 2: Distributed based on a hybrid of Lump Sum and Place Numbers.

School Name	Lump Sum	ACA	Places	Value	Total
Treetops Free School	£9,000	1.0466	147	£555	£94,382
Treetops School	£9,000	1.0466	318	£555	£193,704
Beacon Hill Academy	£9,000	1.0466	75	£555	£52,562
Olive AP Academy	£9,000	1.0466	85	£555	£58,371
Total - Thurrock Schools			625		£399,018

Early Years

6.6 For early years providers delivering the 3-&-4-year-old offer, 9p per hour will be added to the hourly rate to be paid from September 2024.

6.7 Providers will receive an adjustment payment on the 6 December for the Autumn term, with the hourly rate increased in January and paid as part of the advance and final payments.

7. Delivering Better Value in SEND programme

- 7.1 The Delivering Better Value in SEND programme aims to support LA's to improve delivery of SEND services for children and young people while ensuring services are sustainable.
- 7.2 Thurrock grant application was approved by DfE DBV Programme Board on 29 February. Quarterly returns and discussions are made / held with the DfE. The outline plan is shown below, with expenditure to be incurred during 2024/25:

Thurrock DBV: Use of Grant

Workstream & Area	Impact	Total Cost	Spend 2024/25
Workstream 1- Improving mainstream capacity and ability to meet needs of children and young people at SEND Support and with EHCPs.	Schools - Release to attend training	£450,000	£550,000
	Cost of training and venue hire	£100,000	
Workstream 2a - Improving mainstream capacity and ability to meet needs of children and young people at SEND Support and with EHCPs.	Primary Outreach	£180,000	£300,000
	Secondary Outreach	£120,000	
Workstream 2b - Review of Outreach services to prioritise and mainstream year 1 investment	SEND specialist engaged to review and prioritise outreach offer.	£75,000	£75,000
Workstream 3 Reducing the high INMSS placement costs	Increase to commissioning capacity to ensure VFM being secured.	£75,000	£75,000
		£1,000,000	£1,000,000

- 7.3 Workstream 1 – Following discussions, schools have been requested to submit individual or trust combined training plans to allow phased release of grant. Updates will be required throughout the year to meet agreed outcomes and DfE reporting requirements.

Training - Funding Allocations		Budget	Schools	Total
Payment to Schools	Primary	£8,000	39	£312,000
Payment to Schools	Secondary	£12,000	13	£156,000
Schools Training Budget			52	£468,000
To support AP and training to be provided by Thurrock				£82,000
Total				£550,000

It is planned that payments to schools will be made as shown in the table below:

Payments to Schools				
Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Apr-25	Total
£1,333	£2,667	£2,667	£1,333	£8,000
£2,000	£4,000	£4,000	£2,000	£12,000

- 7.4 Workstream 2a – Olive AP and The Osborne Academy Trust have developed a new outreach offer to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions and suspensions. This has been presented to schools and further feedback has been sought to ensure we are meeting the identified needs for outreach across our school community.
- 7.5 Workstream 2b - A review of outreach provision was commissioned in Spring term. This has identified strengths and ways to strengthen the outreach offer. All outreach providers engaged well with the commissioned review. Recommendations will be discussed with outreach providers during the autumn term. A report will be presented to a future meeting of the Schools Forum.
- 7.6 Workstream 3 – A review of INMSS placement costs is underway to consider current cost implications and if value of money is being secured. Recruitment of new Commissioner to support with this workstream has concluded and Officer is now in post they will begin reviewing the 10 highest cost placements and look to benchmark this across other similar sized authorities to ensure best value. Our aim is also to develop a strong partnership relationship with the IMMS providers with the aim of driving down costs and identifying other placements as and when they are required.

8. DSG Management Plan 2024/25

- 8.1 The DSG Management plan had been updated to reflect the latest projected outturn position and the ongoing financial implications into future years. This is shown in the table below:

LA + DBV MITIGATED Projection	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Mainstream schools or academies	1,171	1,088	1,309	1,322	1,335	1,349
Resourced Provision or SEN Units	141	138	232	252	262	272
Maintained special schools or special academies	496	521	569	577	585	593
NMSS or independent schools	63	46	63	59	59	55
Medical/Home Tuition	45	182	46	48	49	51
Post 16	167	318	172	177	182	188
AP (EHCP)	7	9	115	115	115	115
Total EHCP / Places funded by HNB	2,090	2,302	2,506	2,550	2,588	2,622
Table 3c Mitigated and DBV	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Total Expenditure	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Mainstream	7.621	9.474	9.731	10.010	9.986	10.281
Resources	5.043	5.575	5.967	7.639	7.233	7.711
Special Schools	12.580	13.617	13.825	14.837	16.113	17.273
NMSS or Independent	3.960	4.006	6.384	6.217	6.407	6.220
Medical or Home Tuition	1.078	1.193	0.809	0.857	0.908	0.962
Post-16 or FE	2.563	2.777	2.642	2.776	2.918	3.067
AP	2.721	2.749	2.670	2.725	3.081	3.139
Total	35.565	39.391	42.029	45.062	46.646	48.654
Other H2S Transport	1.600	1.600	1.600	1.600	1.600	1.600
Total	37.165	40.991	43.629	46.662	48.246	50.254
DSG Assumed	38.111	39.312	40.079	41.282	42.520	43.796
In Year Position HNB	(0.946)	1.679	3.549	5.380	5.726	6.458
In Year Position Other Funding Blocks	(0.219)	(0.528)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
DSG Deficit/(Surplus)	0.534	(0.631)	0.520	4.070	9.450	15.176
Accumulated Deficit/(Surplus)	(0.631)	0.520	4.070	9.450	15.176	21.635

- 8.2 The impact on the updated plan (P6) to that which was submitted as part of the DBV programme are reflected in the table below:

Impact of Changes	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Latest Accumulated Deficit/(Surplus)	(0.631)	0.520	4.070	9.450	15.176	21.635
SEND DBV Programme Accumulated Deficit	0.080	2.364	5.830	9.511	13.385	16.879
Change in Accumulated Deficit / (Surplus)	(0.711)	(1.844)	(1.760)	(0.061)	1.791	4.756

- 8.3 A detail review of the assumptions embedded within the plan will be undertaken as part of the development of the 2025/26 budget.

9. Dedicated Schools Grant 2025/26

- 9.1 In October an NFF policy note was published to support the sector with their planning ahead of the final NFF allocations. This document included indicative schools NFF factor values, alongside information on the mainstream schools, high needs, and central school services funding for 2025/26. It also includes details on the grants being rolled into the schools NFF from 2025/26.
- 9.2 The Budget announced an additional £2.3 billion for mainstream schools and young people with high needs in 2025/26. This means that core school funding will total almost £63.9 billion next financial year.
- 9.3 The Department for Education is now in the process of calculating the schools and high needs national funding formula (NFF) for 2025/26, to inform local authorities and schools of the funding they can expect to receive next year. It is understood that the final NFF allocations and full schools operational guide will be published by the end of November. The Dedicated Schools Grant funding allocations will be confirmed week commencing 16 December.
- 9.4 This is a significant delay with this indicative allocations and guidance traditionally released in July.

The structure of the schools NFF for 2025/26

- 9.5 The 2025/26 schools NFF will use the same formula factors as in 2024/25. Protections will remain compulsory in the local authority funding formulae at minimum per pupil levels (MPPLs) and the funding floor that ensures that a school's funding is protected from excessive losses year-on-year.
- 9.6 The only structural changes being made to the NFF for 2025/26 are in relation to the PFI factor. In Thurrock, with no PFI schools this will have no impact.
- 9.7 The teachers' pay additional grant (TPAG) and the teachers' pension employer contribution grant (TPECG) 2024 will be rolled into the NFF for 2025/26. The recently announced core schools budget grant (CSBG) will also be rolled into the schools NFF for 2025/26.

Local authority formulae in 2025/26

- 9.8 As in previous years, local authorities will be responsible for deciding local funding formulae for mainstream schools in their area. The funding levels that schools – both maintained schools and academies – receive will be determined by the respective local formulae.
- 9.9 In 2024/25, each local authority will continue to set a local schools funding formula, in consultation with local schools. Local authorities were required to bring their own formulae closer to the schools NFF from 2023/24. This transition will continue in 2025/26.
- 9.10 Thurrock's funding formula will continue to implement the following principles consistent with the decision made by Cabinet from 2020/21:
- National Funding Formula including Area Cost Adjustment values to be applied.
 - Where this is unaffordable the Basic Entitlement value, to be included, will be reduced to contain within the funding available. The reduction to be applied will be weighted, consistent with the distribution of funding between Primary and Secondary.
 - Growth fund to be retained to support sufficiency of school places.
- 9.11 At the time of writing this report no information has been received. At the meeting a presentation will be made on key budget issues and a proposed timeline for decision making across both January and March meetings.

10. REFERENCES TO OTHER KEY DOCUMENTS / PREVIOUS REPORTS

- School Forum meeting 19-09-24 – DSG and DSG Mgmt. Plan 2024/25
- School Forum meeting 13-06-24 - Dedicated Schools Grant 2023/24 & 2024/25
- School Forum meeting 14-03-24 - Dedicated Schools Grant 2023/24 & 2024/25
- School Forum Meeting 16-01-24 - Dedicated Schools Grant 2023/24 & 2024/25

11. CONTACT DETAILS OF LEAD OFFICER / AUTHOR

If you have any queries or comments in advance of the Schools Forum meeting about this report, please contact.

Name: David May
Role: Head of Strategic Finance Business Partnering, Corporate Finance
E-Mail: dmay@thurrock.gov.uk

Appendix A

<u>Dedicated Schools Grant</u>		<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2024/25</u>	<u>2024/25</u>	<u>2024/25</u>
		<u>Outturn</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Projected</u>	<u>Variance</u>
		<u>£m</u>	<u>£m</u>	<u>Outturn</u>	<u>£m</u>
SB	Schools Block	155.651	166.756	166.351	(0.405)
CSSB	Central Services Block	1.608	1.610	1.610	(0.000)
HNB	High Needs Block	37.165	39.312	40.991	1.679
EYB	Early Years Block	13.987	22.718	22.595	(0.123)
Dedicated Schools Grant Funding Settlement		208.411	230.397	231.547	1.151
Less Academy Recoupment		(157.667)	(168.275)	(168.275)	0.000
Dedicated Schools Grant Received		(51.908)	(62.121)	(62.121)	0.000
(Under) / Overspend		(1.163)	0.000	1.151	1.151
SB	Maintained Schools Budgets	4.018	4.454	4.454	0.000
SB	Growth Fund	0.993	1.277	0.872	(0.405)
CSSB	Statutory and Regulatory duties - Education	0.544	0.511	0.511	(0.000)
CSSB	Statutory and Regulatory duties - Finance	0.159	0.174	0.174	0.000
CSSB	School Place planning	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.000
CSSB	Admissions	0.301	0.301	0.301	0.000
CSSB	Schools Forum	0.006	0.009	0.009	0.000
CSSB	SACRE	0.010	0.015	0.015	0.000
CSSB	School Licences	0.154	0.173	0.173	0.000
CSSB	Contribution to Combined budgets	0.406	0.400	0.400	0.000
HNB	Place Funding	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
HNB	Top Up Funding - Thurrock Academies	3.771	4.535	5.304	0.769
HNB	Top Up Funding - Thurrock Resource Provisions	4.077	4.672	4.579	(0.093)
HNB	Top Up Funding - Thurrock Special Schools	7.375	7.871	8.217	0.347
HNB	Top Up Funding - Thurrock Alternative Provision	1.865	2.265	1.895	(0.370)
HNB	Top Up Funding - Other Local Authorities (4-16)	1.549	1.385	1.738	0.354
HNB	Top Up Funding - Post 16	2.563	2.515	2.777	0.262
HNB	Pupils not in School	0.617	0.540	0.538	(0.002)
HNB	Medical Tuition	0.419	0.193	0.624	0.431
HNB	Residential - Non Maintained and Independent	1.841	1.854	1.942	0.087
HNB	Non Residential - Non Maintained and Independent	2.118	2.155	2.065	(0.090)
HNB	Commissioned Services	1.185	1.245	1.245	0.000
HNB	Additional High Needs Targeted	0.550	0.600	0.600	0.000
HNB	Home Hospital Education Services	0.042	0.030	0.030	0.000
HNB	Travellers Team	0.050	0.052	0.054	0.001
HNB	Home to School Transport	1.600	1.600	1.600	0.000
HNB	High Needs Central Team	0.515	0.500	0.500	0.000
HNB	SEND DBV	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
HNB	Year 11s	0.000	0.050	0.033	(0.017)
EYB	3&4 Year old	11.732	13.700	13.700	0.000
EYB	2 year olds Disadvantaged	1.923	2.117	2.117	0.000
EYB	2 year olds Working parents	0.000	3.445	3.445	(0.000)
EYB	Under 2 Year olds	0.000	2.821	2.821	(0.000)
EYB	Expansion of the EY offer	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
EYB	Early Years Central Team	0.332	0.635	0.512	(0.123)
Dedicated Schools Grant		50.744	62.122	63.272	1.151

Schools Forum

Schools Budget Survey 2024/25

David May
Head of Strategic Finance Business Partnering
dmay@thurrock.gov.uk
November 2024

Schools Budget Survey 2024/25

Oct-24 - 31 Responses received (Apr-24 – 20 Responses received).

School Budget Survey		Oct-24		Apr-24	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Were you able to set a balanced budget in 2024/25?	12	19	9	11
2	Were Reserves used to set a balanced budget?	18	13	11	9
3	Are Reserves available to support future year budgets?	18	13	12	8

Schools Budget Survey 2024/25

Oct-24 - 31 Responses received (Apr-24 – 20 Responses received).

School Budget Survey		Oct-24		Apr-24	
4	What percentage increase for support services pay has been included when considering 2024/25 budget?				
		2%	2	2%	1
		3%	7	3%	6
		3.5%	1	4%	5
		4%	6	5%	7
		5%	1	6%	1
		6%	2		
	£1,290 per pay point		4		
	£1,500 per pay point		1		
	£1,925 per pay point		6		
	Unknown		1		

Schools Budget Survey 2024/25

Oct-24 - 31 Responses received (Apr-24 – 20 Responses received).

School Budget Survey		Oct-24		Apr-24
5	What is your expected level of reserves at the end of 2024/25 as a percentage of your 2024/25 budget.			
	Negative (deficit) forecasted	7		Not Asked
	Less than 5%	8		
	Between 5% and 9.99%	15		
	Greater than 10%	1		

Schools Budget Survey 2024/25

Oct-24 - 31 Responses received (Apr-24 – 20 Responses received).

School Budget Survey		Oct-24	Apr-24
6	What are the 3 key financial challenges in 2024/25?		
	Unknown Staff Costs	31	17
	Cost of Living / Energy Costs - Inflation	22	14
	Level of Funding for SEN to maintain excellent levels of provision	19	12
	Unknown	10	5
	Future planning for EYFS - Space and funding and meeting needs for	1	5
	State of school buildings and the cost to keep them in a safe condition	5	1
	Change in Pupil numbers	4	0

Schools Budget Survey 2024/25

Oct-24 - 31 Responses received (Apr-24 – 20 Responses received).

School Budget Survey		Oct-24		Apr-24
7	Are you expecting any additional challenges in setting 2025/26 budget?			
	Unknown Staff Costs	18		Not Asked
	Level of Funding for SEN to maintain excellent levels of provision	12		
	Cost of Living / Energy Costs - Inflation	7		
	State of school buildings and the cost to keep them in a safe condition	4		
	Change in Pupil numbers	3		

Schools Budget Survey 2024/25

Oct-24 - 31 Responses received (Apr-24 – 20 Responses received).

- Pressures in the system are nationally recognised by Local Authorities, Academies and Schools:
 - Inflationary increases have been greater than increases in funding.
 - Increased EHCP numbers, complexity of need and cost to support but limited increase in funding.
 - Unknown 2025/26

Thurrock School Forum Forward Plan for 2024 – 2025

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item / Focus
Thursday 16th January 2025	Dedicated Schools Grant – Finance Report & Presentation
	Growth Fund 2024/25
	ESFA Consultations - Standing
	Thurrock Code of Practice for delivery of early education for 2, 3&4 year olds - Standing
	Childcare Sufficiency
	Review of Forward Plan 2024/25 - Standing
Thursday 13th March 2025	Thurrock Budget – Children’s Services
	Dedicated Schools Grant – Finance Report - Decision
	High Needs Block and Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan – Decision
	ESFA Consultations - Standing
	Pupil Place Planning Review - Standing
	Review of Forward Plan 2024/25 - Standing
Thursday 12th June 2025	Dedicated Schools Grant – Finance Report - Decision
	Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan - Decision
	Meeting dates for the academic year 2025/26
	ESFA Consultations - Standing
	Union Facility Time Annual Review
	Review of Forward Plan 2024/25 - Standing

THURROCK SCHOOLS' FORUM

19 September 2024 at 10:00 - 12:00
Virtual Meeting - Microsoft Teams

In attendance

Multi Academy Trusts Name

The Gateway Learning Community Trust (GLC)
South West Essex Community Education Trust
Catalyst Academies Trust
Christus Catholic Trust

Mrs V Reid (Chair)
Mr S Munday
Mr R Latham
Mrs J Seymour

Secondary Voluntary Aided School Name
Grays Convent

Mrs P Johnson

Standalone Academy Trusts Name

West Thurrock Academy
Giffards Primary

Mr S Proctor
Mrs N Haslam-Davis

Infrastructure Groups Name

TASS
TPHA

Mr S Bell
Mrs J Sawtell-Haynes

Special Schools Name

Beacon Hill Academy
Treetops School

Mrs Sue Hewitt
Mr J Brewer

Non-school members Name

0-5 EYFS Representative
11-19 Representative

Mr A Melbourne
Mr S Bowak

Also in Attendance:

Assistant Director, Education & Commissioning
Head of Financial Management, Children Services
and Dedicated Schools Grant
Head of Service - Education Support Service
Head of Service – School Effectiveness and SEND
Head of Service - Specialist Provision & PEP
Clerk

Mrs M Lucas
Mr D May

Ms S Williams
Mrs A Winstone
Mr M W Taylor
Ms S Hardy

THURROCK SCHOOLS' FORUM

- 1. Welcome from Chair**
The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
Apologies received from Mr M Vickers.
- 3. Agreement of agenda, time-guide and notification of 'Any Other Business'**
The Forum agreed the agenda and time guide. No additional items received.
- 4. School Forum Membership Review and Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Decision required: Recommendation to agree Mrs Reid as Chair.

Agreement - 13
Abstain - 0
Against - 0

AGREED.

Decision required: Recommendation to agree Mr Parfett as Vice Chair.

Agreement - 13
Abstain - 0
Against - 0

AGREED.

Membership of ORTU and Ormiston Park Academy Trusts to be reviewed.
Mrs Seymour advised that the CEO of Mossbourne is Mr Peter Hughes from 1 October.

- 5. Dedicated Schools Grant 2024-25**
Mr May shared short presentation (from information in the report pack). One minor update.

Current projected outturn (at end August), deficit £1.5m. £1.6m of that relates to High Needs Block. £600k due to increase in numbers and review of EHCPs.

The surplus started this year of £630k and will, therefore, turn into a deficit of £886k based on current projections. Thurrock in process of commissioning a review to understand why EHCPs are higher than national and regional comparisons.

HNB max deficit in any year is £1.562m, however moving forward will have deficit of £4m per year which means will need an increase in funding of a minimum of 10% just to stand still. Concerning.

Information on Core Schools Budget Grant (Sept-April period). Allocations to be published by October, with grant distributed to Providers as a one-off payment for the autumn term. This will be part of the core DSG funding in 2025/26.

Early Years information published yesterday, 9p per hour increase on the 3- and 4-year-olds.

Action: Mr May will bring this back to the November meeting.

In the report is the timetable of the payments to providers. Allows for early advancement based on the estimates at the beginning of each term, also allows for 1 reconciliation payment around $\frac{3}{4}$ way through the term.

DBV grant application – workstream 1 (training). Following discussion with schools, schools are requested to submit their training plans to release the grant. Will also depend upon receiving feedback/evidence from schools on how the grants have been used to allow LA to make the returns to the ESFA and, if successful, will then release the next tranche of money.

THURROCK SCHOOLS' FORUM

Mr Melbourne said although it is simpler for payments to EYs settings, the second payment settings receive is around 3 weeks later which is not helpful or preferable for them due to cash flow. Would be better for it to be earlier. Would have fed this back earlier if it had been possible to know that before the message went out. Settings are dependent on the funding.

Mr May said the 2nd census, because of the new release not being until the end of the year in November, has caused some problems. Will look at this in the future as waiting for the updated guidance from ESFA on how the spring and summer counts will work. Hoping for an additional count, as they have done for this term, at midpoint to allow us to maximise the uptake of the new offer. Dependent upon that, can refresh it. When we look at the new cash flow, will look at the 2 termly payments to ensure that they are beneficial to providers than what it would have been if they received it on a monthly basis, so trying to support settings in that way. This term is just an anomaly due to this being a year to November count, but certainly will be something will look at, and certainly will be refreshing that for the next financial year to make it quicker and more efficient as it can be.

Mr Melbourne appreciated that, *however* didn't think monthly payments would be a good route either. It is mainly due to cash flow impacts of getting the balance money so much later as they are already on or past the limit already.

Mr May said he did a return yesterday to ESFA which asked about monthly payments but nothing about the advantage of it being termly, so Mr May emailed them back with comments on that which they did note. Hoping it will still be the 2 options and not the move to monthly for everyone as it is worse for cash flow for settings.

Mrs Sawtell-Haynes asked if it was possible to have a copy of the return that schools will need to do to help schools be able to advise how they will spend the money, and the impact. It would also help to see what information is required.

Mrs Winstone advised to look on the form for the grant request as it details what it should be used for on there. It should be used for increasing mainstream schools' ability to take children with higher needs therefore reducing the need for plans.

Mrs Sawtell-Haynes said seeing a copy of the return would still be helpful.

Mrs Winstone said she will get the return sorted by end of next week.

Mr Proctor put a question in the Chat: Is the pay grant for 7/12? Should we expect an additional 5/12 in the summer?

Mr May said the pay grant release is from September to March. Will get wrapped up into the school funding. Therefore, may be that academies will then receive a payment for the summer term, but no information out on that yet.

Mrs Hewitt asked how the Core School Budget grant will be applied to special schools?

Mr May said will bring this back to the November meeting when he will have more information.

Mr May said reports will be presented at the November meeting re reviews of the current Outreach service and the outcomes of the INMSS places.

Next return on the DBV grant to ESFA 4 October.

DSG Management Plan – £18.8m forecasted deficit by 2028/29 – an increase of nearly £2m due to the changes. Need continue to monitor to understand what the changes are that will be implemented in the next few years.

Hopefully, after the budget information will be released by DfE to allow time to consider prior to the next meeting, along with key risks and decisions on HNB.

THURROCK SCHOOLS' FORUM

Mr May had been asked to develop a further questionnaire to go out to schools, asked for comments.

Once agreed, Mrs Winstone will put a link to it on MS Forms.

Mrs Reid said seems reasonable and was helpful last time. Happy to complete it.

There were no other comments.

Decision required: Mr May asked for a vote to see if people would find it useful and would complete it.

Agreement - 11
Abstain - 0
Against - 0

AGREED.

6. Review of Forward Plan 2024/25

Additional items Mr May mentioned today will be covered in the finance report at next meeting.

Mrs Winstone asked for a DBV update on grants. Also pointed out that the Childcare Sufficiency report is duplicated in November and January, should be January.

7. Equipment Policy

Mrs Winstone referred to points 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 regarding cost of £2,000.

Mrs Hewitt said a few issues were picked up when this was introduced particularly via their outreach team when they were supporting children with complex needs in mainstream schools. Asked if aware of any problems with how it has been running in terms of disadvantaging those children?

Mrs Winstone said no. Advised there were some difficulty with children not of school age as the DSG doesn't cover that, however when looking at each of those cases 9/10 times it was referred to Health to pay for the health equipment.

8. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 June 2024

Reviewed and agreed as an accurate record.

9. Action Log Review

All actions from previous meeting completed.

10. Any Other Business

Mrs Winstone reminded colleagues to please complete and return the DBV form.

Date of next meeting

- Thursday 28th November 2024

Thurrock Borough Council
Schools Forum - Action Log - Agenda Item: 10

School Forum Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Action details	Action Owner	Action or Decision	Relevant Timescales	Action Status	Additional information
14th September 2024	5	Early Years information published yesterday, 9p per hour increase on the 3- and 4-year-olds. Action: Mr May will bring this back to the November meeting.	DM			Completed	This is included in the finance report to be circulated