

# THURROCK SCHOOLS' FORUM

17 September 2020 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  
Mrs N Graham  
To be advised  
Dr Sophina Asong  
Mr Griffiths  
Mr E Samuel  
Mr S Munday  
Mr K Sadler  
Mrs E Wigmore  
Mrs N Cashell

### ***Secondary Voluntary Aided School***

Grays Convent

### **Name**

Mrs M Miller

### ***Standalone Academy Trusts***

Woodside Academy  
Giffards Primary

### **Name**

Mr E Caines  
Mrs N Haslam

### ***Infrastructure Groups***

TASS  
TPHA

### **Name**

Mrs P Johnson  
Mrs J Sawtell-Haines

### ***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  
Mrs M Shepherd  
Mr A Melborne  
Ms Alison Jones  
Dr J Revell

## THURROCK SCHOOLS' FORUM

<b>Introductory Items</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Time Guide</b>
1.	<b>Welcome from Chair</b>	1 min
2.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	2 mins
3.	<b>Agreement of agenda, time-guide and notification of 'Any Other Business'</b>	2 mins
<b>Items for Decision</b>		
4.	<b>Dedicated Schools Grant 2019/20 and 2020/21</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presented by David May</li> </ul>	25 mins
5.	<b>Dedicated Schools Grant 2021/22</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presented by David May</li> </ul>	25 mins
6.	<b>High Needs Block 2020/21</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presented by David May</li> </ul>	25 mins
<b>Items for Information</b>		
7.	<b>Academies &amp; Free Schools Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal update by Sarah Williams</li> </ul>	5 mins
8.	<b>Schools Forum Membership Structure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presented by Sarah Williams</li> </ul>	5 mins

## THURROCK SCHOOLS' FORUM

9.	<b>Schools' Forum Forward Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To consider and agree any urgent additions to the forward plan, presented by Sarah Williams</li></ul>	5 mins
<b>Closing Items</b>		
10.	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 June 2020</b>	5 mins
11.	<b>Matters Arising</b>	5 mins
12.	<b>Any Other Business</b>	5 mins
13.	<b>Date of next meeting</b> 19 November 2020	

## THURROCK SCHOOLS FORUM REPORT

DATE: 17 September 2020  
SUBJECT: Dedicated Schools Grant 2019/20 and 2020/21  
REPORT OF: David May  
THE REPORT IS: For Decision

### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The DSG reserve outturn position is a deficit of £1.978m. This is an overall improvement of £0.678m achieved through a combination of improved in year position and the transfer to reserves from the Schools Block.
- 1.2 The significant area of financial risk is the continued increase in demand for EHCP. Additional costs are being incurred in maintaining pupils in mainstream provisions or where this is not possible commissioning additional specialist provision.
- 1.3 Early years providers during the summer and autumn term have been guaranteed a level of funding based on known take up and a minimum funding guarantee. Payments have also been advanced to support provider's cash flow.
- 1.4 The DSG 2020/21 projected outturn position is a deficit of £0.638m, as a result of continued demand within the High Needs Block that exceeds the budget available.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The Schools Forum is recommended to:
  - a) Note the contents of the report and offer comments on action taken or that could be considered.
  - b) Agree the financial position for 2019/20 and projection for 2020/21 that will be included in returns to be made to the ESFA.
  - c) Agree to receive regular updates on the 2020/21 projected outturn position.

### 3. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 To inform members of the Schools Forum of the outturn position in relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2019/20 and impact on 2020/21 budget, in accordance with the Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012.

### 4. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2019/20

- 4.1 The final outturn position is underspend of £0.678m before the application of the planned transfer to the DSG reserve to the schools block as set out below:

<b>2019/20</b>	<b>DSG</b>	<b>Outturn</b>	<b>Variance</b>
	£m	£m	£m
Schools	10.279	8.470	(1.809)
Central Services	2.073	1.890	(0.183)
High Needs	18.621	20.183	1.562
Early Years	12.427	12.179	(0.248)
<b>Total</b>	<b>43.400</b>	<b>42.722</b>	<b>(0.678)</b>

With the planned transfer to the reserve the outturn position would have been a deficit of £0.570m. This is a reduction from that previously reported.

- 4.2 The outturn position reflects the following in year pressures that have been reported throughout the year:

- Schools Block – Pupil Growth, in line with projections, has an underspend of £0.714m.
- Schools Block – Expected Schools Block contribution to DSG deficit of £1.248m. If this had been actioned in year the final outturn position would have been a deficit of £0.570m.
- High Needs Block – An overspend of £1.562m. This is less than projected outturn previously reported by £0.500m. Officers will monitor 2020/21 expenditure to identify if any invoices, relating to 2019/20 have been received late as a result of Covid 19. The overspend reflects increased demand for EHCP and specialist places.
- Early Year Block – The amount of funding distributed to providers is calculated to exceed the original funding allocation from the ESFA. This reflects an increase in take up off the early years offer. An adjustment to the DSG income to be received has been projected of £0.095m that is reflected in the figures shown. As discussed previously this funding is to be used to support increases in funding rates to Early Years providers from April 2020.

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

## 5. DSG Reserve

- 5.1 The DSG has a carried forward deficit of £1.978m into 2020/21. The movement in 2019/20 is reflect in the table below:

<b>DSG Deficit - Summary</b>	<b>£m</b>
Historic Deficit 2018/19	(2.656)
DSG 2019/20	0.678
<b>DSG Deficit to be C/fwd. into 2020/21</b>	<b>(1.978)</b>

<b>DSG Deficit - Detail</b>	<b>£m</b>
Historic Deficit 2018/19	(2.656)
DSG 2019/20 - SB Contribution	1.248
<b>DSG Deficit Plan</b>	<b>(1.408)</b>
DSG 2019/20	(0.570)
<b>DSG Deficit to be C/fwd. into 2020/21</b>	<b>(1.978)</b>

- 5.2 As a result of having a DSG deficit at 31st March 2020, a return is required to be submitted to the ESFA that outlines the reason the deficit has occurred and actions to be taken to contain expenditure within the funding envelope provided. This is covered elsewhere on this agenda.
- 5.3 The 2019/20 outturn position demonstrates that expenditure has been contained within the resource available, although each funding block has its own storey to tell. The ongoing problem is how to recover the deficit position whilst continuing to meet increased demand and cost within the High Needs Block.
- 5.4 The position in Thurrock reflects that being experienced by a significant number of Local Authorities. Information gathered by the Local Government Association found that in 2019/20 97% of Local Authorities expected there HNB to be in deficit.
- 5.5 In March a meeting was held with the ESFA on the deficit position, a shared understanding of the current position and actions being taken to reduce expenditure within budget limits. The ESFA supported Thurrock in seeking to balance the in-year position before tackling the historic deficit. A follow up meeting with the ESFA is planned to be arranged during the autumn term.

## 6. Dedicated Schools Grant Note to the Accounts 2019/20

- 6.1 As part of the Statement of Accounts the Local Authority is required to include a note within its accounts, which sets out how the DSG has been deployed in accordance with the regulations. The note sets out the position included in this report and will be included in returns to be made to ESFA on the use of the DSG and use of reserves.

## 7. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2020/21

7.1 Appendix B shows the 2019/20 outturn position alongside the 2020/21 budget. The key area remains the High Needs Block.

7.2 The current projected outturn for 2020/21 is an overspend of £0.638m.

2020/21	<u>Funding Settlement</u>	<u>Academy Recoupment</u>	<u>Final DSG</u>	<u>Outturn</u>	<u>Variance</u>
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Schools	126.839	(117.660)	9.179	8.214	(0.964)
Central Services	1.850	0.000	1.850	1.816	(0.034)
High Needs	26.021	(5.322)	20.699	22.335	1.636
Early Years	12.699	0.000	12.699	12.699	0.000
<b>Total</b>	<b>167.409</b>	<b>(122.982)</b>	<b>44.426</b>	<b>45.064</b>	<b>0.638</b>

7.3 The key areas are:

- Schools Block – Pupil Growth, reflecting known commitments, has an underspend of £0.964m.
- Central Services Block – Delay in the recruitment has resulted in an underspend of £0.034m.
- High Needs Block – An overspend of £1.636m with the following main areas:
  - Increased demand for EHCP's and specialist placements within Thurrock, has an overspend of £0.375m.
  - Increased demand for Post 16 placements has an overspend of £0.388m
  - Increase demand for non-maintained and independent specialist placements has an overspend of £0.873m.
- Early Years Block – A breakeven position is currently forecasted. Additional expenditure of £0.054m has been incurred during the summer in response to Covid 19. This can be accommodated from the increased DSG allocation for 2019/20.

7.4 Dedicated Schools Grant Deficit 2020/21.

The table below shows the forecasted position at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

<b>DSG Deficit - Summary</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>Deficit % of DSG</b>
Historic Deficit 2018/19	(2.656)	
DSG 2019/20	0.678	
Historic Deficit 2019/20	(1.978)	1.26%
DSG 2020/21	(0.638)	
<b>DSG Deficit to be C/fwd. into 2021/22</b>	<b>(2.616)</b>	<b>1.56%</b>

## 7.5 Early Years Block – Impact of the Coronavirus

In order to support providers the following package of support was implemented for summer 2020 term:

- In 2020/21, the Dedicated Schools Grant funding is determined by the January census in each year. The summer and autumn term census have no impact on the level of DSG funding to be received by Thurrock. Normal practice is for summer term numbers to be higher than the autumn term. This variance in numbers supports the hourly rate paid.
- Summer Term payments were calculated based on the headcount where a child had registered to take up a place. In addition a minimum payment equal to the spring term value was also guaranteed. For the summer term settings were guaranteed income if it was open or not and if the child attends or not.
- In some instances, however, where a provider did not open and the parent wished the child to access early year's provision, funding followed the child with payments to be recovered from the original provider in the autumn term.
- Payments were made significantly earlier than normal to support the cash flow of each setting

The Department for Education on 20th July issued revised guidelines, on the funding of local authorities and childcare providers for the early years free entitlements, for the autumn term 2020. The key change for Early Years DSG funding is that the January 2020 census data will be used to fund Local Authority as opposed to the normal January 2021 census data.

Based on the information received Thurrock has agreed the following for the autumn term:

- Provisional lists, census information and payment profile to follow the normal guidelines.
- Where a child registers to take up a place and does not attend any other setting, payment will be made to the setting holding the place.
- Minimum funding guarantee, for each setting, equal to the value paid in autumn 2019.
- If a setting chooses not to open, no payment will be made.
- The Local Authority will continue to fund providers which have been advised to close, or left with no option to close, due to public health reasons.

## 8. REFERENCES TO OTHER KEY DOCUMENTS / PREVIOUS REPORTS

- School Forum meeting March 2020 – Dedicated Schools Grant 2019/20 and 2020/21

## 9. 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: Strategic Lead, Corporate Finance  
E-Mail: [dmay@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:dmay@thurrock.gov.uk)



Thurrock Borough Council  
Schools Forum

Agenda Item No: 4  
17 September 2020

Phone: 01375 652092

**Appendix A**

<b><u>Dedicated Schools Grant 2019/20 and 2020/21</u></b>		<b><u>2019/20</u></b>	<b><u>2019/20</u></b>	<b><u>2019/20</u></b>	<b><u>2020/21</u></b>
		<b><u>Budget</u></b>	<b><u>Outturn</u></b>	<b><u>Variance</u></b>	<b><u>Budget</u></b>
		<b><u>£m</u></b>	<b><u>£m</u></b>	<b><u>£m</u></b>	<b><u>£m</u></b>
Schools Block		10.279	8.470	(1.808)	8.105
Central Services Block		2.073	1.890	(0.183)	1.850
High Needs Block		18.621	20.183	1.562	20.784
Early Years Block		12.427	12.179	(0.248)	12.395
<b>Dedicated Schools Grant</b>		<b>43.400</b>	<b>42.722</b>	<b>(0.678)</b>	<b>43.133</b>
SB	Maintained Schools Budgets	7.278	7.278	(0.000)	6.720
SB	Business Rates	0.000	(0.034)	(0.034)	0.000
SB	School Licences	0.122	0.122	0.000	0.126
SB	Growth Fund	1.631	0.917	(0.714)	1.259
SB	Deficit Recovery	1.248	0.188	(1.060)	0.000
CSSB	Statutory and Regulatory duties - Education	0.410	0.336	(0.074)	0.379
CSSB	Statutory and Regulatory duties - Finance	0.082	0.082	(0.000)	0.140
CSSB	School Place planning	0.053	0.053	0.000	0.029
CSSB	Admissions	0.230	0.188	(0.042)	0.260
CSSB	Schools Forum	0.010	0.008	(0.002)	0.010
CSSB	SACRE	0.010	0.008	(0.002)	0.010
CSSB	Contribution to Combined budgets	1.278	1.215	(0.063)	1.022
HNB	Place Funding	0.108	0.139	0.031	0.397
HNB	Top Up Funding - Thurrock Academies	1.667	2.684	1.017	2.846
HNB	Top Up Funding - Thurrock Resource Provisions	2.272	2.195	(0.077)	2.593
HNB	Top Up Funding - Thurrock Special Schools	3.614	3.654	0.040	4.156
HNB	Top Up Funding - Thurrock Alternative Provision	1.258	1.268	0.010	1.445
HNB	Top Up Funding - Other Local Authorities (4-16)	1.011	0.968	(0.043)	1.043
HNB	Top Up Funding - Post 16	1.166	1.780	0.614	1.787
HNB	Pupils not in School	0.000	0.362	0.362	0.161
HNB	Residential - Non Maintained and Independent	1.500	1.270	(0.230)	1.100
HNB	Non Residential - Non Maintained and Independent	1.800	1.585	(0.215)	1.100
HNB	Commissioned Services	1.158	1.230	0.072	1.149
HNB	Additional High Needs Targeted	0.200	0.369	0.169	0.200
HNB	Home Hospital Education Services	0.000	0.017	0.017	0.000
HNB	Travellers Team	0.051	0.043	(0.008)	0.053
HNB	Home to School Transport	1.787	1.787	0.000	1.787
HNB	High Needs Central Team	1.030	0.832	(0.198)	0.967
EYB	3&4 Year old	10.046	10.020	(0.026)	10.040
EYB	2 year olds	1.808	1.690	(0.118)	1.836
EYB	Early Years Central Team	0.573	0.469	(0.104)	0.519
<b>Dedicated Schools Grant</b>		<b>43.400</b>	<b>42.722</b>	<b>(0.678)</b>	<b>43.133</b>

**Appendix B**

<b><u>Dedicated Schools Grant 2019/20 and 2020/21</u></b>		<b><u>2019/20</u></b>	<b><u>2020/21</u></b>	<b><u>2020/21</u></b>	<b><u>2020/21</u></b>
		<b><u>Outturn</u></b>	<b><u>Budget</u></b>	<b><u>Outturn</u></b>	<b><u>Variance</u></b>
		<b><u>£m</u></b>	<b><u>£m</u></b>	<b><u>£m</u></b>	<b><u>£m</u></b>
Schools Block		8.470	9.179	8.214	(0.964)
Central Services Block		1.890	1.850	1.816	(0.034)
High Needs Block		20.183	20.699	22.335	1.636
Early Years Block		12.179	12.699	12.699	0.000
<b><u>Dedicated Schools Grant</u></b>		<b><u>42.722</u></b>	<b><u>44.426</u></b>	<b><u>45.064</u></b>	<b><u>0.638</u></b>
SB	Maintained Schools Budgets	7.278	6.737	6.737	0.000
SB	Business Rates	(0.034)	0.000	0.000	0.000
SB	School Licences	0.122	0.126	0.126	0.000
SB	Growth Fund	0.917	2.316	1.351	(0.964)
SB	Deficit Recovery	0.188	0.000	0.000	0.000
CSSB	Statutory and Regulatory duties - Education	0.336	0.379	0.379	0.000
CSSB	Statutory and Regulatory duties - Finance	0.082	0.140	0.140	0.000
CSSB	School Place planning	0.053	0.029	0.029	0.000
CSSB	Admissions	0.188	0.260	0.231	(0.030)
CSSB	Schools Forum	0.008	0.010	0.006	(0.004)
CSSB	SACRE	0.008	0.010	0.010	0.000
CSSB	Contribution to Combined budgets	1.215	1.022	1.022	0.000
HNB	Place Funding	0.139	0.397	0.397	0.000
HNB	Top Up Funding - Thurrock Academies	2.684	2.779	3.095	0.316
HNB	Top Up Funding - Thurrock Resource Provisions	2.195	2.593	2.593	0.000
HNB	Top Up Funding - Thurrock Special Schools	3.654	4.156	4.073	(0.083)
HNB	Top Up Funding - Thurrock Alternative Provision	1.268	1.445	1.480	0.035
HNB	Top Up Funding - Other Local Authorities (4-16)	0.968	1.043	1.012	(0.031)
HNB	Top Up Funding - Post 16	1.780	1.787	2.175	0.388
HNB	Pupils not in School	0.362	0.161	0.320	0.159
HNB	Residential - Non Maintained and Independent	1.270	1.100	1.785	0.685
HNB	Non Residential - Non Maintained and Independent	1.585	1.100	1.288	0.188
HNB	Commissioned Services	1.230	1.149	1.149	0.000
HNB	Additional High Needs Targeted	0.369	0.200	0.175	(0.025)
HNB	Home Hospital Education Services	0.017	0.000	0.000	0.000
HNB	Travellers Team	0.043	0.052	0.053	0.001
HNB	Home to School Transport	1.787	1.787	1.787	0.000
HNB	High Needs Central Team	0.832	0.950	0.954	0.004
EYB	3&4 Year old	10.020	10.345	10.345	0.000
EYB	2 year olds	1.690	1.836	1.836	0.000
EYB	Early Years Central Team	0.469	0.517	0.517	0.000
<b><u>Dedicated Schools Grant</u></b>		<b><u>42.722</u></b>	<b><u>44.426</u></b>	<b><u>45.064</u></b>	<b><u>0.638</u></b>

## THURROCK SCHOOLS FORUM REPORT

DATE:	17 September 2020
SUBJECT:	Dedicated Schools Grant 2021/22
REPORT OF:	David May
THE REPORT IS:	For Decision

### 1. FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT

- 1.1 The ESFA on 20 July announced provisional funding allocations for 2021/22 through the schools, high needs and central school services funding blocks of the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- 1.2 In 2021/22 the DSG will increase by an extra £2.2bn; £730m of this is being directed to the High Needs Block.
- 1.3 The ESFA has updated the National Funding Formula in 2021/22 with new factor values, and made some technical changes. Key changes are:
  - The 2019 update to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) has been incorporated so that deprivation funding allocated through the formulae is based on the latest data.
  - Funding previously received through the Teachers' Pay Grant (TPG) and Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grants (TPECG), including the supplementary fund, to mainstream schools for pupils from reception to year 11 will be allocated through the schools NFF; by increasing the basic per pupil funding; and by increasing the minimum per pupil funding.
  - School funding is increasing by 4% overall. The Minimum per Pupil Funding Levels are £4,180 per primary pupil, £5,215 per KS3 pupil and £5,715 per KS4 pupil, all including the pay and pensions grant amounts.
- 1.4 In 2021/22, each local authority will continue to set a local schools funding formula, in consultation with local schools. The ESFA will, later this year, put forward plans to move to a 'hard' NFF in the future, which will determine school funding allocations directly, rather than local funding formulae.
- 1.5 In the autumn the ESFA will issue an early modelling version of the authority proforma tool (APT) to help decision making and consultation with schools.
- 1.6 Final dedicated schools grant allocations will be published in December 2020. This final allocations will use the Oct-20 census data.

1.7 The provisional settlement for Thurrock is shown below:

	<b>Funding Settlement 2019/20</b>	<b>Funding Settlement 2020/21</b>	<b>Increase 2020/21</b>	<b>Provisional Settlement 2021/22</b>	<b>Increase 2021/22</b>
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Schools	118.840	127.474	8.634	136.550	9.075
Central Services	2.073	1.850	(0.223)	1.699	(0.151)
High Needs	23.847	25.468	1.621	28.074	2.606
<b>Total</b>	<b>144.760</b>	<b>154.792</b>	<b>10.032</b>	<b>166.323</b>	<b>11.531</b>

The Schools Block excludes Growth Fund that was £1.386m in 2020/21.

- 1.8 The funding allocations are consistent with the national methodology used in 2020/21. No significant additional funding had been allocated to the High Needs Block to address funding gaps being experienced by the majority of Local Authorities. This is necessary if a hard National Funding Formula is to be adopted.
- 1.9 In 2020/21 Thurrock introduced the National Funding Formula in full, therefore changes for 2021/22 will involve using updated data sets provided by ESFA and new factor values as outlined in the National Funding Formula.
- 1.10 Officers will continue to work through the detail and provide updated reports to Thurrock's Cabinet, Schools Forum and Schools.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Schools Forum is recommended to:
- Note the contents of the report.
  - Agree to receive detailed information on the formula to be applied and impact at school level in 2021/22.

## 3. REFERENCES TO OTHER KEY DOCUMENTS / PREVIOUS REPORTS

- The national funding formulae for schools and high needs 2021/22  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/901889/FINAL\\_2021-22\\_NFF\\_Policy\\_Document\\_MB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/901889/FINAL_2021-22_NFF_Policy_Document_MB.pdf)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-16-schools-funding-local-authority-guidance-for-2021-to-2022>

## 4. 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: Strategic Lead, Corporate Finance  
E-Mail: [dmay@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:dmay@thurrock.gov.uk)  
Phone: 01375 652092

## THURROCK SCHOOLS FORUM REPORT

DATE: 17 September 2020  
SUBJECT: High Needs Block 2020/21  
REPORT OF: Malcolm Taylor / David May  
THE REPORT IS: For Decision

### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides information for School Forum members in relation to:

- DSG High Needs Block 2020/21;
- Thurrock High Needs Block context;
- Commissioning arrangements for high need places in specialist provisions from September 2020;
- Band Values implemented from September 2020;
- Outreach Services 2020/21;
- Feedback from Headteachers Briefing January 2020;
- High Needs Block Strategy
- High Needs Budget 2020/21, associated risks and projected outturn.
- High Needs Indicative Budget 2021/22
- Next Steps

1.2 The report brings together all information held on the High Needs Block so the context of increased demand and continued budget pressures can be discussed and action agreed.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 School Forum members are asked to consider the information provided and discuss solutions to the continued increase in demand and financial implication.

### 3. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2019/20

- 3.1 Reported elsewhere on this agenda is the DSG Outturn report. The key components relevant to this report are:
- The High Needs Block had an overspend of £1.562m. The overspend reflects increased demand for EHCP and specialist places.
  - The DSG has a carried forward deficit of £1.978m into 2020/21.

### 4. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK 2020/21

- 4.1 Thurrock's High Needs Block funding allocation for 2020/21 is £25.385m, an increase from the 2019/20 allocation of £2.133m or 9.2%.
- 4.2 The table below shows the transfer from other funding blocks that increased the budget available to £26.020m.

**Table 1: High Needs Block Funding Change**

High Needs Block	2020/21 £m
National Funding Formula 2020/21	24.222
Import / Export Adjustments	(0.516)
	23.706
Basic Entitlement (390Pupils @ £4,183.21)	1.631
Additional funding Special Free School	0.048
<b>Funding Settlement 2020/21</b>	<b>25.385</b>
Transfer from Schools Block	0.635
<b>High Needs Block Budget 2020/21</b>	<b>26.020</b>

- 4.3 In 2020/21, as part of the national funding formula, the Individual Schools Budgets calculated £17.881m as Notional SEN funding.

## 5. THURROCK CONTEXT

- 5.1 In Thurrock (Autumn 2019), out of a school population of 29,680; 4,333 (14.6%) children and young people were identified as having special educational needs, 3,134(10.6%) were SEN Support and 1,199 (4%) had an Education Health and Care Plan.
- 5.2 In 2019/20 193 new plans were completed, 148 were completed (77%) within the 20 weeks statutory timescale.
- 5.3 The annual increase, over the last financial year for the school population was 2%. However, the annual increase in the number of EHCP's maintained by Thurrock increased by 9%, with 1,677 EHCP's being maintained across the following placement types:

**Table 2: Number of EHCPs by Placement Type**

<b>Data source: SEN2</b>	<b>31/3/16</b>	<b>31/3/17</b>	<b>31/3/18</b>	<b>31/3/19</b>	<b>31/3/20</b>
Mainstream schools or academies	623	618	624	679	830
Resourced Provision or SEN Units	23	104	87	101	113
Maintained special schools or special academies	346	347	341	383	361
NMSS or independent schools	32	35	32	33	36
Hospital schools or Alternative Provision	11	5	4	6	12
Post 16	15	28	169	235	213
Other	17	114	84	101	112
<b>Total number of EHCPs by placement type</b>	<b>1,067</b>	<b>1,251</b>	<b>1,341</b>	<b>1,538</b>	<b>1,677</b>
<b>% Annual Increase</b>		<b>17%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>9%</b>

- 5.4 At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, 943 (55%) pupils with plans attend mainstream schools, 373 (23%) pupils attend special schools, 213 (13%) attend post 16 provision, with 33 (2%) CYP with EHCP educated in independent special schools. The independent specialist provision placements cost in the region of £3m per annum.
- 5.5 The latest SEN2 return shows that Thurrock currently maintains 1,677 plans across the 0-25 age range, an increase in every age category.

**Table 3: Number of EHCPs by Age Group**

<b>Data Source: SEN2 - Age at 31/08 each year</b>	<b>31/3/16</b>	<b>31/3/17</b>	<b>31/3/18</b>	<b>31/3/19</b>	<b>31/3/20</b>
Under 5 years of age	21	48	58	72	80
Aged 5-10	424	470	482	548	629
Aged 11-15	439	458	474	521	582
Aged 16-19	183	271	290	344	302
Aged 20-25	0	2	27	53	84
<b>Total number of EHCPs by Age Group</b>	<b>1,067</b>	<b>1,249</b>	<b>1,331</b>	<b>1,538</b>	<b>1,677</b>



5.6 This can be further explained through the primary need of each EHCP:

**Table 4: Number of EHCPs by Primary Need**

<b>Data source: SEN2</b>	<b>31/3/17</b>	<b>31/3/18</b>	<b>31/3/19</b>	<b>31/3/20</b>
Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)	295	314	358	422
Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)	234	244	283	300
Moderate learning difficulty (MLD)	242	260	266	296
Physical disability (PD)	87	95	103	105
Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)	249	258	298	326
Severe learning difficulty (SLD)	25	24	24	30
Specific learning difficulties (SPLD)	24	23	26	22
Hearing impairment (HI)	24	29	32	32
Hearing impairment (HI)	21	21	22	21
<b>Total number of EHCPs by primary need</b>	<b>1,201</b>	<b>1,268</b>	<b>1,412</b>	<b>1,554</b>
Unknown/Other/Not in Category above	50	63	126	123
<b>Total number of EHCPs by primary need</b>	<b>1,251</b>	<b>1,331</b>	<b>1,538</b>	<b>1,677</b>

5.7 The table below shows the increase over a 3 year period from 2017 to 2019, against primary need:

**Table 5: Increase in the Number of EHCPs by Primary Need**

<b>Data source: SEN2</b>	<b>Increase 31/3/17 to 31/3/20</b>	<b>Change 31/3/17 to 31/3/20</b>
Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)	127	43%
Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)	66	28%
Moderate learning difficulty (MLD)	54	22%
Physical disability (PD)	18	21%
Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)	77	31%
Severe learning difficulty (SLD)	5	20%
Specific learning difficulties (SPLD)	(2)	-8%
Hearing impairment (HI)	8	33%
Hearing impairment (HI)	0	0%
<b>Total EHCPs by primary need</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>29%</b>
Unknown/Other/Not in Category above	73	146%
<b>Total EHCPs by primary need</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>34%</b>

5.8 The table below shows the benchmarking data for 2019:

**Table 6: Extract from SEND Performance Dashboard**

SEND Performance Dashboard	Thurrock 19/20	Thurrock 18/19	Stats Neighbours	East of England	England
% of SEN Support pupils (R to Yr. 11)	11.4%	11.2%	12.1%	11.2%	11.9%
% of pupils with an EHCP (R to Yr. 11)	4.2%	3.8%	3.3%	3.0%	3.1%

The % age of pupils with SEN Support is less than statistical neighbours and England but comparable with East of England. In 2018/19 but higher in 2019/20. However in all comparisons the % of pupils with an EHCP in Thurrock is higher and with 2019/20 data the percentage is likely to increase.

5.9 In Summary Thurrock continues to experience significant demand for EHCP's that in comparison with all benchmarking data is higher.

Using the information presented in 5.8 above the financial impact can be calculated:

Pupil Numbers 27,367 (Primary and Secondary)  
Thurrock Increase 0.4% (4.2% - 3.8%)  
Assumptions 15 hours per week; £10 per hour; 38 weeks  
Additional Cost £0.624m

Pupil Numbers 27,367 (Primary and Secondary)  
Thurrock Increase above Statistical Neighbours 0.9% (4.2% - 3.3%)  
Assumptions 15 hours per week; £10 per hour; 38 weeks  
Additional Cost £1.4m

These figures are consistent with the outturn position in 2019/20 and projected for 2020/21.

5.10 Thurrock needs to understand why demand is greater than statistical neighbours. In addition schools will need to be able to demonstrate how the notional SEN budget is being utilised to support pupils.

## **6. COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS 2020/21 ACADEMIC YEAR**

6.1 The agreed 2020/21 commissioned numbers was submitted to the ESFA in November 2019.

6.2 Discussions have been ongoing with each specialist provision on the place value and the development of a service level agreement unique to each provision. The challenge has been on ensuring the place value enables the provision to recovery its costs against securing value for money within a challenging budget position.

6.3 In 2020/21 the commissioned numbers in specialist provisions have increased to 657; this is an increase of 77 from original 2019/20 submission (580 pupils).

6.4 The increase for 2020/21 can be broken down into 5 key areas:

- Expansion of the Inclusion base at East Tilbury and the Resource base at Quarry Hill by a combined 14 additional places.

This reflects our strategic priority of creating more local provision to meet the needs of our children. In place, within the primary sector are 2 resource bases for SEMH (Quarry Hill and Dilkes), with 20 places and 2 inclusion units (East Tilbury and Thameside), with 16 places.

The inclusion units are turnaround places and the expectation is that the pupil will attend for 2 terms and be reintegrated back into mainstream setting;

- Increase by 10, from 20 to 30 places for Social Emotional Mental Health at Ormiston Park, this is based on assessed need with a phased implementation from January 2020;
- Increase by 11 places to 85 at Olive Alternative Provision, reflecting current demand for places in 2019/20.
- Proposed establishment of a new 20 place secondary Social Emotional Mental Health provision in 2020/21.
- Establishment of additional provision at Treetops of 16 places, equally split between the two new bases for Verbal Behaviour (VB) and Moderate Learning Disabilities (MLD). This will prevent these places being commissioned from providers outside of Thurrock at higher costs.

- 6.5 The table below shows the commissioning intention at each specialist provision for 2019/20 and 2020/21:

**Table 7: High Needs Block Commissioned places 2020/21**

Institution Name	Total	Total	Total
	2019/20 ESFA Places	2019/20 Updated Places	2020/21 ESFA Places
LANSDOWNE PRIMARY ACADEMY	8	8	8
STANFORD-LE-HOPE PRIMARY SCHOOL	5	5	5
ORTU CORRINGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL	20	20	20
DILKES ACADEMY	10	10	10
HARRIS ACADEMY CHAFFORD HUNDRED	20	20	20
ST CLERE'S SCHOOL	17	17	17
ORMISTON PARK ACADEMY	20	20	30
EAST TILBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL	6	10	10
THAMESIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL	6	6	6
QUARRY HILL	0	6	10
OLIVE AP ACADEMY - THURROCK	74	74	85
TREETOPS SCHOOL	293	309	309
BEACON HILL ACADEMY	75	75	75
<b>ACADEMY</b>	<b>554</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>605</b>
WARREN PRIMARY	18	18	18
CHAFFORD HUNDRED PRIMARY	5	5	3
STANFORD-LE-HOPE SCHOOL	3	3	3
INCREASE TO SPECIAL PROVISION			8
NEW SECONDARY SEMH PROVISION			20
<b>THURROCK</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>657</b>

## 7. HIGH NEEDS BAND VALUES 2020/21 ACADEMIC YEAR

- 7.1 In 2019/20 the schools forum approved the reduction of band values by 1.5%. This decision was made as a means by which to control expenditure within the High Needs Block. Providers accepted the decision for 1 year only with the understanding that band values would be reviewed as part of the 2020/21 commissioning process.
- 7.2 The key principle is that all providers will be fully funded for agreed staffing ratios and support. It is not expected that within the resource provisions that the mainstream School would subsidise the cost.
- 7.3 During 2019/20 Officers have discussed with each specialist provision; their associated costs and staffing ratios, options available and the band values required to ensure the provision can provide an agreed standard of provision as outlined in the Service Level agreement.

7.4 The table below shows the Band Values for 2019/20 and 2020/21. The changes to band values are applied from the start of the academic year:

**Table 8: High Needs Block Band Values 2020/21**

Band Descriptor	Place Funding	AWPU	Top Up Funding	Band Value 2019/20	Place Funding	AWPU	Top Up Funding	Band Value 2020/21
Special Band 1	£10,000	£0	£1,458	£11,458	£10,000	£0	£2,000	£12,000
Special Band 2	£10,000	£0	£3,211	£13,211	£10,000	£0	£3,500	£13,500
Special Band 3	£10,000	£0	£18,311	£28,311	£10,000	£0	£22,000	£32,000
Special Band 4	£10,000	£0	£18,538	£28,538				
Special Band 5	£10,000	£0	£22,700	£32,700				
AP Band 1	£10,000	£0	£17,000	£27,000	£10,000	£0	£17,000	£27,000
Mainstream - Primary Band 1	£6,000	£2,947	£5,978	£14,925	£6,000	£3,750	£4,250	£14,000
Mainstream - Primary Band 2	£6,000	£2,947	£8,564	£17,511	£6,000	£3,750	£8,500	£18,250
Mainstream - Primary Band 3	£6,000	£2,947	£15,336	£24,283	£6,000	£3,750	£15,250	£25,000
Mainstream - Primary Band 4	£6,000	£2,947	£16,053	£25,000	£6,000	£3,750	£18,750	£28,500
Mainstream - Primary Band 5	£6,000	£2,947	£18,053	£27,000	£6,000	£3,750	£20,250	£30,000
Mainstream - Secondary Band 1	£6,000	£4,415	£4,510	£14,925	£6,000	£5,000	£3,000	£14,000
Mainstream - Secondary Band 2	£6,000	£4,415	£7,096	£17,511	£6,000	£5,000	£7,250	£18,250
Mainstream - Secondary Band 3	£6,000	£4,415	£13,868	£24,283	£6,000	£5,000	£14,000	£25,000
Mainstream - Secondary Band 4	£6,000	£4,415	£14,585	£25,000	£6,000	£5,000	£17,000	£28,000
Mainstream - Secondary Band 5					£6,000	£5,000	£19,000	£30,000
Mainstream - Secondary Band 6					£6,000	£5,000	£25,000	£36,000
Mainstream - Secondary Band 7					£6,000	£5,000	£29,000	£40,000
Mainstream - Nursery	£0.00	£0	£17,000	£17,000	£0.00	£0	£32,000	£32,000

7.5 The increase in costs reflects the small bases that have been established specifically in the primary sector. Whilst the provisions continue to offer value for money to Thurrock, when compared to alternatives, the next stage would be to consider if the size of some of the basis could be increased to allow the band value to reduce as economies of scale are achieved.

## 8. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

8.1 Bespoke partnership and performance agreements are to be finalised in the autumn term with each of Thurrock's specialist provisions.

## 9. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK OUTREACH BUDGET 2020/21

- 9.1 A review of the High Needs Block Outreach services and costs have been undertaken. The table below shows the Outreach provision and cost that is available within Thurrock.

**Table 9: High Needs Block Outreach 2020/21**

Academy/Service		2020/21
Osbourne Trust	HI / VI	£340,000
Treetops	Portage	£240,000
Treetops	Outreach	£300,000
Beacon Hill	Outreach	£180,000
School Wellbeing Service		£50,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£1,110,000</b>

- 9.2 These services are included as appropriate within the partnerships agreements with agreed performance targets to support the inclusion agenda within Thurrock.

## 10. OUT OF AREA PLACEMENTS

- 10.1 The Local Authority continues to look to place pupils seeking specialist placements in local provision in the first instance and only place in Independent or non-maintained schools where there is no other local option available that could meet the needs of these pupils.
- 10.2 Schools Forum needs to be aware that of the current commissioned places a small number of places are currently taken up by pupils from other local authorities; however, we have 86 pupils currently placed in schools in neighbouring local authorities.
- 10.3 As a local area, at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, we have 74 pupils in independent specialist schools and non-maintained specialist settings.

**Table 10: Out of Authority Specialist Placements**

	<u>Pre16</u>	<u>Post 16</u>	<u>Total</u>
Residential 52 Week	12	5	17
Residential 38 Week	3	4	7
Day Provision	39	11	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>74</b>

## **11. HEAD TEACHERS BRIEFING 29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2020**

- 11.1 In order to make all schools aware and seek innovative solutions to the issues faced in the High Needs Block, Head Teachers agreed that the High Needs Block would be a key discussion item on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020.
- 11.2 At the meeting presentations were made outlining the key issues both in terms of continued increase in Education, Health and Care Plans and the implication on the Dedicated Schools Grant and particularly the High Needs Block.
- 11.3 The following question was asked:  
“Please consider how we can build parental confidence and ensure that pupil’s needs are appropriately met at SEN support. Consequently reducing the level of need for Education, Health and Care Plans.”
- 11.4 A summary of the points raised are shown below:
- Would the development of an Early Help offer support the system and lead to a reduction in the number of EHCP’s;
  - Increased parental understanding of system and process. Clarification and promotion of what parents should expect from all schools without the requirement of an EHCP;
  - Identify training needs within schools to support inclusion;
  - Greater focus required on the Notional SEN amount of each school and how schools are using this to meet need;
  - Consistency of the EHCP process.
- 11.5 These points were discussed with the ESFA in March 2020 and will be included in future training to SEN staff and Schools and Academies.

## **12. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK STRATEGY**

- 12.1 Thurrock recognises that the development of our high needs strategy is multi-agency and reliant upon a range of partners including our schools, parents/careers, young people, health and social care.
- 12.2 The large majority of our schools are either part of multi academy trusts or stand-alone academies which means our partnership approach is critical in the development of our longer term strategy.
- 12.3 Work has been undertaken to develop our strategic principles and we are in the process of reviewing and updating these. The development of local provision is a key priority and we have commissioned a number of local educational pathway opportunities through all key phases. This will only be achieved if we have clearly articulated our shared vision to provide outstanding local provision to meet the needs of our SEND learners.

- 12.4 Thurrock School Effectiveness and SEND are in the process of becoming a hub for the Autism Education Trust (AET). This is a DfE supported programme that is designed to raise autism awareness and improve practice for mainstream early years' settings, schools and post 16 institutions.
- 12.5 The AET will assist us to reduce the demand for and costs of specialist autism services by helping the Council to support schools to meet the needs of autistic children and young people.
- 12.6 Over the coming months a range of sessions will be held with Headteachers, Governors, Parents and Carers, SENCOs and School Business managers to clarify the SEN system and the expectation and requirements at each stage of the process.
- 12.7 A wide range of training and CPD opportunities are being developed to ensure that school and setting staff have the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to meet the needs of a wide range of special educational needs. This will include Speech & Language, Communication, behaviour, Autism, HI, VI etc.
- 12.8 The SEND team is developing a new guidance document to support schools with provision for SEN Support and to identify what should be in place, provided for different needs before an EHCP needs assessment is requested. This should be published this term.

### **13. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK BUDGET 2020/21**

- 13.1 In order to set a balance budget the following key risks were acknowledged for 2020/21:
- Top Up Funding - Thurrock Schools & Academies - Budget to equal the 2019/20 forecasted outturn. Potential financial Risk £350,000;
  - Top Up Funding - Other Local Authorities (4-16) - Budget to equal the 2019/20 forecasted outturn. Potential financial Risk £60,000;
  - Top Up Funding - Post 16 – Small increase to the 2019/20 forecasted outturn. Potential financial Risk £170,000;
  - Pupils not in School - A 56% decrease in cost compared to 2019/20 forecasted outturn. Potential financial Risk £60,000;
  - Residential - Non Maintained and Independent - A 20% decrease in cost compared to 2019/20 forecasted outturn to reflect increase in local offer. Potential financial Risk £300,000;
  - Non Residential - Non Maintained and Independent - A 20% decrease in cost compared to 2019/20 forecasted outturn to reflect increase in local offer. Potential financial Risk £300,000;
  - Additional High Needs Targeted - A 40% decrease in cost compared to 2019/20 forecasted outturn. Potential financial Risk £100,000;
  - Total Potential Financial Risk £1,340,000.



13.2 The current HNB projected outturn as at August 2020 has highlighted a projected overspend of £1.636m with the following key areas:

- Increased demand for EHCP's and specialist placements within Thurrock, has an overspend of £0.375m.
- Increased demand for Post 16 placements has an overspend of £0.388m
- Increase demand for non-maintained and independent specialist placements has an overspend of £0.873m.

13.3 The table below shows the High Needs Budget and projected outturn for 2020/21.

**Table 11: High Needs Block 2020/21**

<b>High Needs Block</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2020/21</b>
-	<b>Outturn</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Outturn</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
High Needs Block	23.642	25.854	25.854
Import / export adjustments	(0.444)	(0.516)	(0.516)
HNB Free School Adjustment	0.054	0.048	0.048
	23.252	25.386	25.386
Schools Block transfer	0.595	0.635	0.635
<b>Funding Settlement</b>	<b>23.847</b>	<b>26.021</b>	<b>26.021</b>
Place Funding	0.139	0.397	0.397
Place Funding Academies to be recouped	5.226	5.322	5.322
Top Up Funding - Thurrock Schools & Academies	2.684	2.779	3.095
Top Up Funding - Thurrock Resource Provisions	2.195	2.593	2.593
Top Up Funding - Thurrock Special Schools	3.654	4.156	4.073
Top Up Funding - Thurrock Alternative Provision	1.268	1.445	1.480
Top Up Funding - Other Local Authorities (4-16)	0.968	1.043	1.012
Top Up Funding - Post 16	1.780	1.787	2.175
Pupils not in School	0.379	0.161	0.320
Residential - Non Maintained and Independent	1.270	1.100	1.785
Non Residential - Non Maintained and Independent	1.585	1.100	1.288
Commissioned Services	1.230	1.149	1.149
Additional High Needs Targeted	0.369	0.200	0.175
Travellers Team	0.043	0.052	0.053
Home to School Transport	1.787	1.787	1.787
High Needs Central Team	0.832	0.950	0.954
<b>High Needs Block Budget / Projected Outturn</b>	<b>25.409</b>	<b>26.021</b>	<b>27.657</b>
<b>Surplus / Deficit</b>	<b>1.562</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>1.636</b>

13.4 The overall DSG Position at the end of 2020/21 is forecasted to be a deficit of £0.638m. This would increase the deficit carried forward into 2021/22 to £2.616m.

#### **14. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK BUDGET 2021/22**

14.1 Indicative funding allocations for 2021/22 show a £2.6m increase in High Needs Block funding.

14.2 This additional funding is welcome to support the ability to deliver a balanced budget. However the following need to be considered as part of the 2021/22 budget process:

- Current transfer from the Schools Block of £0.635m;
- Impact of Inflationary increases;
- Continued increase in demand for EHCP;
- Opening of Treetops Free School; and
- Accumulated DSG deficit of £2.616m.

#### **15. SPECIAL FREE SCHOOLS**

15.1 From 2019/20 onwards, funding for special free school places will be included in local authorities' high needs allocations. Funding for these places will be deducted from local authorities' high needs allocations by ESFA, and paid directly to schools, as for special academies. The EFSA will use the basic entitlement factor, the import/export adjustment and further adjustments in the National Funding Formula to ensure that this change will not result in an unfunded cost for local authorities. Local authorities with a special free school will receive £10,000 for every place at the free school through the formula adjustments mentioned above<sup>1</sup>.

15.2 The guidance above will apply to Treetops Free School on opening in 2021/22.

**16. NEXT STEPS**

- 16.1 Officers to consider the data to understand the reasons why Thurrock EHCP's are greater than statistical neighbours.
- 16.2 The SEN team to challenge School's on the use of Notional SEN funding.
- 16.3 Officers to consider options to increase the local offer based on future projected levels of demand. This will be with a view to meeting new demand and seeking where possible to reduce the number of out of borough placements.
- 16.4 In October meetings will be arranged with all Thurrock specialist settings to discuss commissioned numbers for 2021/22 to enable a return to be submitted to the ESFA in November.
- 16.5 Officers will continue to scrutinise costs and budgets and reports will be made to each future meeting of the Schools Forum and Headteacher briefings.

**17. REFERENCES TO PREVIOUS REPORTS**

- 17.1 Schools Forum 16th January 2020 – Dedicated Schools Grant 2020/21
- 17.2 Schools Forum 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019 – High Needs Block – Commissioning Intentions and Service Partnership Agreement

**18. 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 either:

**NAME:** Malcolm Taylor

**ROLE:** Strategic Lead: Specialist Provision / Principal Educational Psychologist

**E-MAIL:** Mwtaylor@thurrock.gov.uk

**NAME:** David May

**ROLE:** Strategic Finance Lead: Children's, DSG and Schools

**E-MAIL:** dmay@thurrock.gov.uk

## THURROCK SCHOOLS FORUM REPORT

DATE:	17 September 2020
SUBJECT:	Update on Schools' Forum Membership
REPORT OF:	Sarah Williams
THE REPORT IS:	For Information

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the new membership structure from September 2020. As agreed at the last forum meeting in June 2020, all new meeting dates have been set for the academic year, all new members are now in post and all new members have received a calendar invite to attend the virtual meetings for the academic year.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

For forum members to note the contents of this report.

### 3.0 MAIN BODY OF REPORT

#### 3.1 *Meeting dates for the academic year 2020-21*

- *17<sup>th</sup> September 2020*
- *19<sup>th</sup> November 2020*
- *19<sup>th</sup> January 2021*
- *18<sup>th</sup> March 2021*
- *17<sup>th</sup> June 2021*

### 3.2 School forum membership structure

<b><i>Name of Multi Academy Trust - 10 members</i></b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
CEO – Catalyst Academies Trust	Mr T Parfett	CEO
Harris Federation	Mrs N Graham	Assistant Director
CEO Ormiston Park	To be advised	
CEO ORTU Federation Ltd (Stanford & Corringham Trust)	Dr S Asong	CEO
CEO Osborne Co-operative Academy Trust	Mr P Griffiths	CEO
CEO REAch2 Academy Trust	Mr E Samuel	Headteacher Purfleet Primary
CEO South West Essex Community Education Trust (SWECET)	Mr S Munday	CEO
CEO The Gateway Learning Community Trust (GLC)	Mr Sadler	CEO
CEO Vine Schools Trust	Miss E Wigmore	CEO
CEO Christus Catholic Trust	Ms N Cashell	CEO
<b><i>Secondary Voluntary Aided School</i></b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Grays Convent	Ms M Miller	Governor
<b><i>Standalone Academy Trusts</i></b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Woodside Academy	Mr E Caines	Principal
Giffards Primary	Mrs N Haslam	Headteacher
<b><i>Infrastructure Groups</i></b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
TASS	Mrs P Johnson	Chair of TASS
TPHA	Mrs J Sawtell-Haines	Chair of TPHA
<b><i>Alternative Provision</i></b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Olive AP	Mr Mark Vickers	CEO
<b><i>Special Schools</i></b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Treetops Academy	Mr J Brewer	Headteacher
Beacon Hill Academy	Ms Sue Hewitt	Headteacher
<b><i>Non-school members</i></b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Diocese of Chelmsford	Miss S Jones	
Diocese of Brentwood	Mrs M Shepherd	
0-5 EYFS Representative	Mr A Melborne	
0-11 Representative	Ms Alison Jones	
11-19 Representative	Dr J Revell	

### **3.3 *Role and responsibilities of the schools forum***

- Schools can expect to have their views canvassed and to receive feedback from their representatives.
- Schools forum members have a responsibility to represent the interests of their peer group rather than the interests of their own individual school.
- Schools staff and governors should make sure that the representatives they choose are competent to act as their advocates.
- They should also ensure that they are aware of schools forum business and make their views known about decisions affecting schools' finance.

### **3.4 *School Forum Powers and Responsibilities table***

Please see appendix 1.

### **3.5 *Schools forum operational and good practice guide***

Please see appendix 2.

### **3.6 *Training for forum members – Introduction to Delegated School Grant (DSG)***

Training for all forum members to attend has been scheduled to take place on 15 October, 9:30-10:30am. The training will be held via Microsoft Teams. A calendar invite has been sent to all members.

## **4.0 FINANCIAL / RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

There should be no financial implications to sector groups, as the fair spread of representation allows each sector to agree funding decisions on an equitable basis.

## **5.0 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:** Sarah Williams  
**ROLE:** Service Manager for School Capital, School Catering, School Admissions and Pupil Place Planning  
**E-MAIL:** [sjwilliams@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:sjwilliams@thurrock.gov.uk)  
**PHONE:** 01375 - 652971



## Schools forum powers and responsibilities

Function	Local authority	Schools forum	DfE role
Formula change, including redistributions	Proposes and decides	Must be consulted, voting restrictions apply, and informs the governing bodies of all consultations	Checks for compliance with regulations
Movement of up to 0.5% from the schools block to other blocks	Proposes	Decides	Adjudicates where schools forum does not agree local authority proposal
Contracts (where the local authority is entering a contract to be funded from the schools budget)	Proposes at least one month prior to invitation to tender, the terms of any proposed contract	Gives a view and informs the governing bodies of all consultations	None
Financial issues relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, in particular the places to be commissioned by the local authority and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding</li></ul>	Consults annually	Gives a view and informs the governing bodies of all consultations	None

Function	Local authority	Schools forum	DfE role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arrangements for use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school, in particular the places to be commissioned by the local authority and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding</li> <li>• arrangements for early years provision</li> <li>• administration arrangements for the allocation of central government grants</li> </ul>			
Minimum funding guarantee (MFG)	Proposes any exclusions from MFG for application to DfE	Gives a view	Approval to application for exclusions
Carry forward a deficit on central expenditure to the next year to be funded from the schools budget	Proposes	Decides	Adjudicates where schools forum does not agree local authority proposal
Any brought forward deficit on de-delegated services which is to be met by the overall schools budget.	Proposes	Decides	Adjudicates where schools forum does not agree local authority proposal
De-delegation for mainstream maintained schools for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contingencies</li> <li>• administration of free school meals</li> <li>• insurance</li> </ul>	Proposes	Maintained primary and secondary school member representatives will decide for	Will adjudicate where schools forum does not agree local authority proposal



Function	Local authority	Schools forum	DfE role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• licences and subscriptions</li> <li>• staff costs (supply cover)</li> <li>• support for minority ethnic pupils (underachieving groups)</li> <li>• behaviour support services</li> <li>• library and museum services</li> <li>• School improvement</li> </ul>		their phase; middle schools are treated according to their deemed status	
General duties for maintained schools and contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for maintained schools	Proposes	Would be decided by the relevant maintained school members (primary, secondary, special, and PRU)	Adjudicates where schools forum does not agree local authority proposal
Central spend on and the criteria for allocating funding from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• funding for significant pre-16 pupil growth, including new schools set up to meet basic need, whether maintained or academy</li> <li>• funding for good or outstanding schools with falling rolls where growth in pupil numbers is expected within three years</li> </ul>	Proposes	Decides	Adjudicates where schools forum does not agree local authority proposal
Central spend on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• early years block provision funding to enable all schools to meet the infant class size requirement</li> <li>• back-pay for equal pay claims</li> </ul>	Proposes	Decides	Adjudicates where schools forum does not agree local authority proposal

Function	Local authority	Schools forum	DfE role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• remission of boarding fees at maintained schools and academies</li> <li>• places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils</li> <li>• admissions</li> <li>• servicing of schools forum</li> <li>• contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for all schools</li> </ul>			
<p>Central spend on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• capital expenditure funded from revenue; projects must have been planned and decided on prior to April 2013 so no new projects can be charged</li> <li>• contribution to combined budgets; where the schools forum agreed prior to April 2013 a contribution from the schools budget to services which would otherwise be funded from other sources</li> <li>• existing termination of employment costs; costs for specific individuals must have been approved prior to April 2013 so no new redundancy costs can be charged</li> <li>• prudential borrowing costs; the commitment must have been approved prior to April 2013</li> </ul>	<p>Proposes up to the value committed in the previous financial year and where expenditure has already been committed</p>	<p>Decides for each line</p>	<p>Adjudicates where schools forum does not agree local authority proposal</p>

Function	Local authority	Schools forum	DfE role
Central spend on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>high needs block provision</li> <li>central licences negotiated by the Secretary of State</li> </ul>	Decides	None; but good practice to inform forum	None
Scheme of financial management changes	Proposes and consults the governing body and head of every school	Approves; schools members only	Adjudicates where schools forum does not agree local authority proposal
Membership: length of office of members	Decides	None; but good practice would suggest that they gave a view	None
Voting procedures	None	Determine voting procedures	None
Chair of schools forum	Facilitates	Elects; may not be an elected member of the council or officer	None

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Education & Skills  
Funding Agency

# **Schools forum**

**Operational and good practice guide**

**May 2020**

# Contents

Introduction	4
Section 1 – schools forum regulations: constitution, and procedural issues	5
Regulations	5
Schools forum powers	5
Term of office	8
Schools members	9
Election and nomination of schools members	10
Election and nomination of academies members	12
Non-schools members	12
Other membership issues	14
The role of executive elected members	14
Recording the composition of schools forums	15
Observers	15
Participation of local authority officers at meetings	15
Procedures	16
Quorum	16
Election of a chair	16
Voting procedures	17
Substitutes	17
Defects and vacancies	18
Timing	18
Meeting	18
Public access	18
Working groups	19
Urgent business	19
Schools forum resources	20
Section 2 – effective schools forums	21
Introduction	21
Induction of new members	22
Training	22
Agenda setting	23

Preparation for a schools forum meeting	23
Chairing the schools forum	24
Clerking the schools forum	25
Good practice for schools forum meetings	26
Meeting notes and recording of decisions	27
Communication	27
News updates	28

## Introduction

1. This guide is designed to provide local authority officers and schools forum elected members with advice and information on good practice in relation to the operation of schools forums.
2. It is organised in two sections:
  - section 1 provides information on the constitutional and organisational requirements for schools forums
  - section 2 covers a number of key aspects of the operation of schools forums at local level, drawing on good practice from a number of schools forums
3. GOV.UK contains details of all the announcements, documents and other information relating to school funding and schools forums, including the national funding formula (NFF). This website also has a range of useful links to other sites that may be of relevance to schools forum members.
4. If you have any queries about the operation of schools forums please [contact us](#).

# Section 1 – schools forum regulations: constitution, and procedural issues

## Regulations

5. National regulations govern the composition, constitution and procedures of schools forums. Local authorities can provide schools forum members with a copy of these regulations.
6. [The Schools Forums \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2020](#), which will come into force on 18 June, make provisions to enable schools forums to meet remotely while they are unable to meet physically in a room during the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19).
7. This includes, but is not limited to, telephone conferencing, video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming.
8. These arrangements are currently in place for the 2020 to 2021 financial year, up to the end of March 2021.

## Schools forum powers

9. Schools forums generally have a consultative role. However, there are situations in which they have decision making powers. The respective roles of schools forums, local authorities, and the Department for Education (DfE) are summarised in the [schools forum powers and responsibilities guidance](#).
10. The overarching areas on which schools forums make decisions on local authority proposals are as follows; in each case, the local authority can appeal to the Secretary of State if the schools forum rejects its proposal:
  - de-delegation from mainstream maintained schools budgets (separate approval will be required by the primary and secondary phase members of schools forum), for prescribed services to be provided centrally
  - to create a fund for significant pupil growth in order to support the local authority's duty for place planning (basic need), including pre-opening and diseconomy of scale costs, and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund
  - to create a fund for falling rolls for good or outstanding schools if the schools' surplus capacity is likely to be needed within the next three years to meet rising pupil numbers and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund
  - agreeing other centrally retained budgets, including for local authority statutory responsibilities; where these relate to maintained schools only, voting is by the



primary, secondary, special and pupil referral unit (PRU) members of schools forum

- funding for central early years expenditure, which may include funding for checking eligibility of pupils for an early years place, the early years pupil premium, or free school meals
- authorising a reduction in the schools budget in order to fund a deficit arising in central expenditure, or from de-delegated services, which is to be carried forward from a previous funding period in the current funding year the schools block is ring-fenced; local authorities require schools forum approval in order to move up to 0.5% from the schools block to other blocks

11. Local authorities should be aware that the provisions of the [Local Government Act 2000](#) restrict the delegation of local authority decisions to cabinet, a member of cabinet, a committee of cabinet or an officer of the council, which would not include schools forums. As a result the local authority cannot delegate its decision making powers to the schools forum, for example, decisions on the funding formula.

12. Regulations state that the local authority must consult the schools forum annually in connection with various schools budget functions, namely:

- amendments to the school funding formula, for which the voting is restricted by the exclusion of non-schools members except for private, voluntary and independent (PVI) representatives
- arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs in particular the places to be commissioned by the local authority and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding
- arrangements for the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school, in particular the places to be commissioned by the local authority and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding
- arrangements for early years provision
- administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to schools via the local authority

13. There's no specific definition of these consultation requirements over and above the wording in the regulations. It's a matter for the local authority to decide on the appropriate level of detail it needs to generate a sufficiently informed response from schools forum.

14. Consultation must also take place when a local authority is proposing a contract for supplies and services which is to be funded from the schools budget and is in excess of the EU procurement thresholds. The consultation must cover the terms of the contract at least one month prior to the issue of invitations to tender.

15. The schools forum has the responsibility of informing the governing bodies of all schools maintained by the local authority of the results of any consultations carried out by the local authority relating to these issues.

16. Local authorities will need to discuss with the schools forum any proposals that they intend to put to the Secretary of State to:

- vary the minimum funding guarantee (MFG)
- use exceptional factors
- vary pupil numbers; Secretary of State approval is no longer required for increases relating to changes in admission limits or reorganisations
- allow additional categories of, or spending on, central budgets
- amend the sparsity factor
- vary the lump sum for amalgamating schools
- vary the protection for special schools and special academies
- move up to 0.5% from the schools block, where the schools forum do not agree, or move more than 0.5% from the schools block

17. Proposals will then need to be considered by the Secretary of State.

18. The schools forums regulations provide a framework for the appointment of members, but allow a considerable degree of discretion in order to accommodate local priorities and practice. A [quick guide to the structure of schools forums](#) is available.

19. There is no maximum or minimum size of a schools forum. Local authorities will wish to take various issues into account in deciding the actual size, including the need to have full representation for various types of school, and the local authority's policy on representation of non-schools members. However, care should be taken to keep the schools forum to a reasonable size to ensure that it does not become too unwieldy.

20. Schools forums must have:

- schools members
- academies member(s), if there is at least one academy in the local authority's area
- non-schools members

20.1. Schools and academies members together must number at least two-thirds of the total membership of the schools forum and the balance between maintained primary, maintained secondary and academies members must be broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category.

20.2. The structure of schools forums should be regularly reviewed, we suggest good practice is to review the membership as a standing agenda item at each meeting.

20.3. Academies members must represent mainstream academies and, if there are any in the local authority area, special academies and alternative provision academies.

20.4. There is no requirement for academies members to represent specific primary and secondary phases, but it may be encouraged to ensure representation remains broadly proportionate to pupil numbers.

20.5. Academy members must be separately elected and designated from maintained school representatives.

21. Schools forum members will need the skills and competencies to manage forum business, as detailed in [school forum powers and responsibilities guidance](#), and to take a strategic view across the whole education estate whilst acting as representative of the group that has elected them.

22. They should be easily contactable and pro-active in raising the profile of issues and communicating decisions, and the reasons behind them, effectively. Good practice would be to offer training to new or existing schools forum members.

## Term of office

23. The term of office for each schools member and academies member should be stipulated by the local authority at the time of appointment; this should follow published rules and be applied in a consistent manner between members.

24. Members do not need identical terms, there may be a case for varied terms so that there is continuity of experience rather than there being a complete change in the membership at a single point.

25. The term of office should not be of a length that would hinder the requirement for the structure of the schools forum to mirror the type of provision in light of the pace of academy conversions.

26. Examples of how this may work include:

- holding vacancies until the schools forum structure is reviewed providing that this does not mean holding vacancies for an unreasonable length of time; for example, we would expect this vacancy to be filled for the following school term
- increasing the size of the schools forum temporarily to appoint additional academy members, then deleting schools member posts at the end of a term of office, or when a vacancy arises
- considering continuity of service; where an academy conversion affects the school of a current schools member, consider appointing that person as an academies member

27. The length of term of office for non-schools members is at the discretion of the local authority. Schools and academies must be informed, within a month of the appointment of any non-schools member, of the name of the member, and the name of the body that that member represents.

28. As well as the term of office coming to an end, a member ceases to be a member of the schools forum if they resigns from the schools forum, or no longer occupy the office by which they became eligible for election, selection or appointment to the schools forum. For example;

- a secondary schools member must stand down if their school converts to an academy
- a schools member representing community primary school governors who is no longer a governor of a community primary school in the relevant local authority must cease to hold office on the schools forum even if they remain a governor of a school represented by another group or sub-group
- a member gives notice in writing to the local authority
- a non-schools member is replaced by the local authority, at the request of the body which the member represents

## **Schools members**

29. Schools members represent specified phases or types of maintained schools within the local authority. As a minimum, schools forums must contain representatives of primary and secondary schools, unless there are no primary or secondary schools maintained by the local authority. Middle schools and all through schools are treated according to their deemed status.

30. Where a local authority maintains one or more special schools, the schools forum must have at least one schools member from that sector. The same applies to nursery schools and pupil referral units (PRUs).

31. The local authority has discretion to divide the groups referred to above into one or more of the following sub-groups:

- headteachers or headteachers' representatives in each group
- governors in each group
- headteachers or headteachers' representatives and governors in each group
- representatives of a particular school category, for example, voluntary aided

32. Headteachers can be represented by other senior members of staff within their school. Governors can include interim executive members of an interim executive board.

33. The sub-groups do not have to be of equal size; for example, there may be more representatives of headteachers of primary schools than governors of such schools, or vice versa.
34. The membership structure of the schools forum should ensure there is sufficient representation of each type of schools member in each group to ensure that debate within the schools forum is balanced and representative.
35. As a minimum, there must be at least one representative of headteachers and one representative of governors among the schools members.
36. Whatever the membership structure of schools members on a schools forum, the important issue is that it should reflect most effectively the profile of education provision across the local authority to ensure that there is not an in-built bias towards any one phase or group.

## **Election and nomination of schools members**

37. The relevant group or sub-group is probably best placed to determine how their schools members should be elected.
38. It's good practice to ensure that a vacancy amongst a represented group would be filled by a nominee elected according to a process determined by all those represented in that group; for example, community primary school headteachers, or secondary school governors, ensuring that everyone represented has had the opportunity to stand for and vote in the election.
39. The process must be restricted to the group in question; a headteachers phase group could only vote as a whole for headteacher members if the voting excluded academies, as academies members form a separate group.
40. It's not appropriate for a single person to be elected to represent more than one group or sub-group concurrently; for example, if they were a governor at a primary and secondary school, they can stand for election from either group but can be appointed to represent only one of those groups.
41. The purpose of ensuring each group or sub-group is responsible for their election process is to guarantee there is a transparent and representative process by which members of schools forums are nominated to represent their constituents.
42. Appropriate support to each group or sub-group to manage their election processes should be offered by the clerk of a schools forum, or the committee or democratic services of a local authority. This may just include the provision of advice but may also consist of providing administrative support in running elections.

43. As a minimum, we recommend the clerk of a schools forum make a record of the process by which the relevant schools within each group and sub-group elect their nominees to the schools forum, and be able to advise the chair of the schools forum and local authority on action that needs to be taken, where necessary, to seek new nominees.

44. In determining the process by which elections should be operated it is perfectly legitimate for a local authority to devise, in consultation with their schools forum, a model scheme for the relevant schools within a group or sub-group to consider and be invited to adopt. However, such a model scheme cannot be imposed on that body of schools, alternative schemes may be adopted. A single scheme need not be adopted universally.

45. Care should be taken to ensure that every eligible member of a group or sub-group has an opportunity to be involved in the determination of their group's election process, is given the opportunity to stand for election if they choose to do so, and is involved in the election of their representative(s).

46. It would not be compliant with the regulations for the steering committee or chair of a parent group simply to make a nomination to represent their group or sub-group on a schools forum. Schools members must be elected, and are not necessarily restricted to principals, senior staff or governors.

47. The local authority may set a date by which the election should take place and must appoint the schools member if the election has not taken place by that date. The person appointed should be a member of the relevant group.

48. We recommend any scheme takes into account a number of factors:

- the process for collecting names of those wishing to stand for election
- the timescale for notifying all constituents of the election and those standing
- the arrangements for dispatching and receiving ballots
- the arrangements for counting and publicising the results
- any arrangements for unusual circumstances such as only one candidate standing in an election
- whether existing members can stand for re-election

49. In the event of a tie between two or more candidates, the local authority must appoint the schools member. The local authority may decide to appoint someone else rather than one of the candidates and might wish to take into account the experience or expertise of the individuals, and the balance between the different types of school represented on the schools forum.

## **Election and nomination of academies members**

50. Academies members must be elected by the proprietor bodies of the academies in the local authority's area, and they are probably best placed to determine the process.

51. Academies members are there to represent the proprietor bodies of academies and are, therefore, not necessarily restricted to principals, senior staff or governors. The same factors should be taken into account as for the election of schools members.

52. For the avoidance of doubt, free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools are classed as academies for this purpose. There is no distinction between sponsored and converter academies.

53. There are three sub-groups for academy members:

- mainstream academies
- special academies
- alternative provision (AP) academies

54. It is for the proprietors of academies within each of these sub-groups to elect their representatives. It is not appropriate, therefore, for headteacher phase groups to determine representation unless the academy proprietors have agreed and even then the voting would need to exclude maintained school representatives.

55. There is no requirement for academies members to be split into primary and secondary sub-groups. However, local authorities may wish to encourage academies to consider the pupil proportions across all academies when electing their representatives.

56. Where there is only one academy in a sub-group in the local authority's area, their proprietor body must select the person who will represent them.

57. It is possible for a single person to be appointed as an academies member to more than one schools forum. For example, if an academy chain is located across multiple local authorities; providing they are elected on each occasion in accordance with the agreed election process for each separate schools forum.

58. As with schools members, the local authority may set a date by which the election should take place and must appoint an academies member if the election does not take place by that date, or if an election results in a tie between two or more candidates.

## **Non-schools members**

59. Non-schools members may number no more than a third of a schools forum's total membership, excluding observers. A representative of providers of 16 to 19 education must be elected from those providers.

60. This includes those in the FE sector (FE and sixth form colleges) and other post-school institutions that specialise in special education needs, where 20% or more of their students reside in the local authority's area. As with academies, the providers are probably best placed to determine the election process.

61. The local authority must appoint at least one person to represent early years providers from the PVI sector. Early years PVI settings need to be represented because funding for the free entitlement for three- and four-year-olds and eligible two-year-olds comes from the dedicated schools grant, and all settings are funded through the early years national funding formula.

62. Before appointing additional non-schools members to the schools forum, the local authority must consider whether there are Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses situated in the local authority's area; and, where there are schools or academies in the area with a different religious character, the appropriate faith group, should be represented on the schools forum.

63. If diocesan authorities nominate members for appointment as non-schools members, they may wish to consider what type of representative would be most appropriate; for example, schools-based such as a headteacher or governor, or someone linked more generally with the diocese, for example a member of the education board.

64. It's also good practice for local authorities to ensure that the needs and interests of all the pupils in the local authority are adequately represented by the members of a schools forum.

65. The interests of pupils in maintained schools can be represented by schools members. Some pupils in a local authority, however, are educated in hospitals, independent special schools and non-maintained special schools.

66. Certain types of non-schools members can play an important role in representing the interests of these groups of pupils. They can also play a role in representing the interests and views of the services that support those groups of vulnerable and at risk pupils who nevertheless are on the roll of maintained schools, such as looked after children and children with special educational needs.

67. The purpose of non-schools members is also to bring greater breadth of discussion to schools forum meetings and ensure that stakeholders and partners other than schools are represented.

68. Organisations which typically provide non-schools members are trades unions, professional associations and representatives of youth groups. Parent groups could also be considered.



69. However, as there are limited numbers of non-schools members able to be on a schools forum, care should be taken to ensure that an appropriate representation from wider stakeholders is achieved.

## **Other membership issues**

70. There are three restrictions placed on who can be a non-schools member of a schools forum. The local authority cannot appoint:

- an elected member of the local authority who is appointed to the executive of that local authority (a lead member/portfolio holder) ('executive members')
- the director of children's services or any officer employed or engaged to work under the management of the director of children's services, and who does not directly provide education to children (or manage those who do) ('relevant officer' (a) and (b))
- other officers with a specific role in management of and/or who advise on funding for schools ('relevant officer' part (c))

71. Schools forums have the power to approve a limited range of proposals from their local authority; the restrictions ensure that there is no conflict of interest between the proposing body (the local authority) and the approving body (the schools forum).

72. However, non-executive elected members and those officers who are employed in their capacity as headteachers or teachers, and those who directly manage a service which provides education to individual children or advice to schools, are eligible to be members of schools forums.

73. In the case of non-executive elected members, they may be a schools member (by virtue of them being a school governor), an academies member, or a non-schools member. As a non-schools member they may be well placed to fulfil the broader overview and scrutiny role they have within the local authority in general.

74. However, the inclusion of non-executive elected members and certain officers is not a requirement. Many schools forums do not have such members, and it is for each local authority and schools forum to consider how best to ensure the right balance of school and non-school representation on the schools forum, taking into account their local circumstances and preferences.

## **The role of executive elected members**

75. A schools forum needs to ensure that there are systems in place for executive members of the council to be aware of its views on specific issues and, in particular, any decisions it takes in relation to the schools budget and individual budget shares.

76. Executive members with responsibility for education or children's services, or local authority resources, are able to participate in schools forum meetings. By doing so such elected members are able to contribute to the discussion and receive first-hand the views of the schools forum.

77. It is good practice for this to be the case and the regulations provide the right for executive members to attend and speak at schools forum meetings. However, there is no requirement for this to happen so at the very least there should be clear channels of communication between the schools forum and executive members.

78. Communication may also be assisted if schools forum members attended relevant cabinet meetings as members of the public, for example, when the funding formula is decided.

## **Recording the composition of schools forums**

79. Each local authority must make a written record of the composition of its schools forum detailing the numbers of schools members and by which group or sub-group they were elected, the number of academies members and the number of non-schools members, their terms of office, how they were chosen and whom they represent.

80. This record should also indicate the term of office for schools and academies members. It is good practice for this to be published on the schools forum website so schools and wider stakeholders can easily find who their representatives are.

## **Observers**

81. The regulations enable the Secretary of State to appoint an observer to attend and speak at schools forum meetings, for example a representative from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

82. This allows a conduit for national policy to be discussed at a local level and provide access for schools forum to an additional support mechanism, for example, where there are highly complex issues to resolve.

## **Participation of local authority officers at meetings**

83. Only specific officers can speak at meetings of the schools forum. These officers are:

- director of children's services, or their representative
- chief financial officer, or their representative
- any person invited by the schools forum to provide financial or technical advice

- any person presenting a paper to the schools forum, but their ability to speak is limited to the paper that they are presenting

84. In the majority of cases, schools forums are supported by a specific officer. In the course of their work, however, schools forums will be required to consider a whole range of issues and they may consider it appropriate that other officers attend for specific items of business.

85. Where this is the case, the local authority should meet the schools forum's requests as far as possible. It is best practice to record attendance at meetings as well as membership to ensure elected members are attending and contributing to discussions.

## Procedures

86. Many procedural matters are not prescribed in the regulations and are at the discretion either of the local authority or the schools forum itself. However, there are requirements in the regulations relating to the following.

## Quorum

87. A meeting is only quorate if 40% of the total membership is present; this excludes any observers, and it is 40% of the current membership excluding vacancies.

87.1. If a meeting is inquorate it can proceed but it cannot legally take decisions (election of a Chair, or a decision relating to funding conferred by the funding regulations).

87.2. An inquorate meeting can respond to local authority consultation, and give views to the local authority. It would normally be good practice for the local authority to take account of such 'unofficial' views, but it's not legally obliged to do so.

87.3. In practice, the arrangements for meetings should be made to reduce the chance of a problem with the quorum. The quorum stipulation is in the regulations to help ensure the legitimacy of decisions

## Election of a chair

88. Under the regulations, if the position of chair falls vacant, the schools forum must decide how long the term of office of the next chair will be.

88.1. This can be for any period, but the schools forum should consider carefully whether a period exceeding two years is sensible.

- 88.2. A long period will also cause problems if the member elected as chair has a term of office as a member which comes to an end before their term of office as chair ends.
- 88.3. The schools forum must elect a chair from amongst its own members, so it is not possible to elect an independent chair.
- 88.4. Any elected member of the local authority or officer of the local authority who is a member of a schools forum may not hold the office of chair.
- 88.5. Schools forums can also appoint to a position of vice chair to provide cover if the chair is absent, or the post vacant.

## **Voting procedures**

89. The regulations provide that a schools forum may determine its own voting procedures, except that voting on:

- the funding formula is limited to schools members, academies members and PVI representatives
- de-delegation is limited to the specific primary and secondary phase of maintained schools members
- retaining funding for statutory duties relating to maintained schools only is limited to maintained primary, secondary, special, and PRU members

90. The powers which schools forums have to take decisions on a range of funding matters increase the importance of clear procedures, for example, decisions are made on a simple majority or the threshold to be met if higher.

91. These procedures should take account of any use of working groups by the schools forum, for example a decision might be taken by voting to accept and adopt a report by a working group.

92. As part of any voting procedure there should be clarity in the procedures for recording the outcome of a vote, and any resolutions a schools forum makes in relation to any vote taken.

## **Substitutes**

93. The local authority must make arrangements to enable substitutes to attend and vote, where appropriate, at schools forum meetings. This applies to schools members, academies members, and non-schools members. The arrangements must be decided in consultation with schools forum members.

## Defects and vacancies

94. The regulations provide that proceedings of the schools forum are not invalidated by defects in the election or appointment of any member, or the appointment of the chair. Nor does the existence of any vacancy on the schools forum invalidate proceedings.

## Timing

95. Schools forums must meet at least four times a year.

## Meeting

96. Schools forums can meet remotely, until 31 March 2021, while they are unable to meet physically in a room during the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19). This includes, but is not limited to:

- telephone conferencing
- video conferencing
- live webcast
- live interactive streaming

97. Where the regulations make no provision on a procedural matter, local discretion should be exercised.

98. It is for the local authority to decide how far it wishes to establish rules for the schools forum to follow, in the form of standing orders. While it is entitled to do so, it is good practice to allow the schools forum to set its own rules as far as possible.

## Public access

99. Schools forums are more than just consultative bodies. They also have an important role to play in approving certain proposals from their local authority, and are therefore involved in the decision making process surrounding the use of public money at local level.

100. Schools forums are required to be open to the public.

101. Papers, agendas, and minutes, must be publicly available well in advance of each meeting. It's good practice to explain on the website that the schools forum is a public meeting, and that papers are published at least a week in advance. Local authorities should ensure their websites are accessible and easy to find.

102. Some schools forums already operate very much along the lines of a local authority committee. This is perfectly legitimate and will provide a consistent framework for the running of meetings that are open to the public, and the publishing of papers and

agendas well in advance of the meeting and minutes published promptly as required under Regulation 8(13) of the Schools Forum Regulations 2012.

103. Local authorities should ensure their schools forum clerk's contact details are published on their website and that it is clear to interested parties how they can attend the meeting remotely.

## **Working groups**

104. It's open to a schools forum to set up working groups of members to discuss specific issues, and to produce draft advice and decisions for the schools forum itself to consider.

105. The groups can also include wider representation, for example, an early years reference group can represent all the different types of provider to consider the detail of the early years single funding formula. The reference group would then be able to give its considered view on the local authority's proposals to the schools forum.

106. The schools forum should not delegate actual decisions or the finalisation of advice to a working group, as this may have the effect of excluding legitimate points of view. These have proved effective for larger local authorities; examples of some working groups are for high needs and early years.

## **Urgent business**

107. It's good practice for the local authority to agree with its schools forum an urgency procedure to be followed when there is a genuine business need for a decision or formal view to be expressed by the schools forum, before the next scheduled meeting.

108. The local authority may call an unscheduled meeting, or put in place alternative arrangements such as clearance by email correspondence or some other means.

109. Such instances should be avoided as far as possible but are legitimate provided all members of the schools forum have an opportunity to participate, the logistics provide a reasonable opportunity for consideration and the local authority policy on data security is not compromised.

110. It's not legal for the chair to take a decision on behalf of the schools forum, no matter how urgent the matter in question; however, a schools forum may wish to put in place a procedure for the chair to give the local authority a view on an urgent issue.

## **Schools forum resources**

111. The costs of a schools forum fall in the central school services block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG).

112. It's legitimate to charge the running costs of schools forums to this budget, including any agreed and reasonable expenses for members attending meetings, the costs of producing and distributing papers, and costs of room hire and refreshments, and for clerking of meetings.

113. Beyond these costs, some schools forums have a budget of their own to use for activities such as commissioning research or other reports.

## Section 2 – effective schools forums

### Introduction

114. As the previous section outlined, local authorities have responsibility for establishing schools forums. They also have an ongoing responsibility to provide them with appropriate support, information and guidance in carrying out their functions and responsibilities.

115. The following outlines some aspects of what local authorities and schools forums should consider in ensuring that their schools forums are as effective as possible. The pace of academy conversions in particular means that this significant sector must be properly represented, and feel that it is able to play a meaningful part in the discussions of the schools forum.

116. Central to the effectiveness or otherwise of a schools forum will be the relationship between it and its local authority. The local authority will have a significant influence on this through the support it provides; the resources it devotes, and the weight it gives to the views of schools forums.

117. There are therefore a number of characteristics of this relationship that are particularly important:

- partnership: having a shared understanding of the priorities, issues and concerns of schools, academies and the local authority
- effective support: the business of the schools forum is supported by the local authority in an efficient and professional manner
- openness: it's important that a schools forum feels it is receiving open, honest and objective advice from its local authority
- responsiveness: local authorities should as far as possible be responsive to requests from their schools forums and their members; schools forums themselves should also be aware of the resource implications of their requests
- strategic view: members of schools forum should consider the needs of the whole of the educational community, rather than using their position on a schools forum to advance their own sectional or specific interests
- challenge and scrutiny: schools forums may be asked to agree to proposals from their local authority that will have an effect on all schools and academies in the local area; the extent to which schools forums can scrutinise and challenge such proposals is an important aspect of their effectiveness

118. The characteristics identified above are just some of the aspects that will contribute to an effective schools forum. The following provides more detail on some of the specific issues that local authorities and schools forums may wish to consider in thinking about their own arrangements.



## Induction of new members

119. When new members join the schools forum, appropriate induction materials should be provided. These might include material relating to the operation of the schools forum together with background information about the local and national school funding arrangements; typically they might comprise:

- the constitution of the schools forum
- a list of members including contact details and their terms of office
- any locally agreed terms of reference explaining the relationship between the schools forum and the local authority
- copies of minutes of previous meetings
- the programme of schools forum meetings for the year
- the local schools forum web address

120. This operational and good practice guide, suitably supplemented by local material, should also be provided to new members on their appointment.

121. Where there is sufficient turnover of schools forum members in any particular year the local authority may wish to organise a one-off induction event to brief new members.

122. Such an event would usefully include an outline of the role of the schools forum and the national funding arrangements for schools and local authorities. It might also include an explanation of the local funding formula and any proposals for review. The opportunity could also be taken to explain the main reporting requirements for school and local authority expenditure.

## Training

123. Ideally schools forum members should be able to use some of the budget set aside for schools forum running costs for accessing relevant training activities.

124. Some training will be provided by officers of the local authority but members may wish to attend national or regional events, the costs of which, where necessary, can be supported from the schools forum budget. Local and national bodies have a key role to play in developing the competencies of forum members.

125. Training will need to be provided in response to any changes in the role of the schools forum and national developments in respect of school funding, to ensure that members can be fully effective when detailed discussions are taking place.

## Agenda setting

126. The process by which the agenda for a meeting or cycle of meetings is set is in many respects one of the key determinants of the effectiveness or otherwise of a schools forum.

127. The frequency and timing of meetings of the schools forum should be agreed in advance of each financial or academic year; these should take into consideration deadlines for the local authority such as disapplication requests and the submission of the authority proforma tool (APT).

128. It's good practice to publish the dates of meetings on the schools forum website. In drawing up this cycle of meetings, in consultation with the schools forum, the local authority should provide a clear overview of the key consultative and decision-making points in the school funding cycle.

129. These will be drawn from a combination of national and local information and should inform the basic agenda items that each meeting needs to cover. For instance, meetings will need to be scheduled at appropriate points to enable the schools forum to consider the outcomes of local consultations and national announcements.

130. Although the business of schools forums must be open and transparent, it is recognised that from time to time items of a confidential nature will need to be discussed.

131. It's recommended local authorities apply the same principles they apply to council or cabinet meetings when judging an item to be confidential, and adopt similar practices for dealing with those reports in the meeting, for example placing them together at the end of the agenda.

## Preparation for a schools forum meeting

132. It's vital that the schools forum is transparent, open and has clear communication lines to all of the members that are represented. This ensures the wider school family are aware of the business discussed, the impact on their setting and the reasons for the decisions.

133. The vast majority of a schools forum's business will be done on the basis of prepared papers. It is therefore important that these are concise, informative and produced in a timely and consistent manner.

134. Recommendations should be clearly set out at the beginning of each report. It's also helpful if the front of the report confirms whether the report is for information or decision and who is eligible to vote where relevant.

135. It's good practice for the schools forum and local authority to agree a standard for papers. It is usual for papers to be dispatched at least one week prior to the meeting at

which they will be discussed to allow members to consider them and if necessary canvass views from the group they are representing.

136. Papers should be published on the local authority's website at this time to enable representations to be made to schools forum members.

137. Consistency in the presentation of papers also contributes to the effectiveness of meetings; it helps set the tone of meetings, facilitate the engagement of all members, and signal the importance the local authority attaches to the work of the schools forum.

138. Ideally such a standard should be agreed between the schools forum and local authority.

139. Publishing papers as a single PDF file is helpful as it saves time and avoids accessing multiple documents both in advance of, and during, the meeting. An executive summary of the reports can provide schools forum members and members of the public with an overview of the agenda and the decisions required.

140. Publishing papers on a publicly available website well in advance of the meeting ensures that all interested parties are able to access papers.

141. Some schools forums ensure each represented group meets in the days immediately prior to the schools forum meeting to ensure the agenda is discussed and schools forum members are properly briefed by the group they represent.

142. Although on occasions it's inevitable that schools forums will receive late or tabled reports it does create some difficulty for members as they will not have been able to seek the views of those they represent.

143. Schools forums can consider adopting a flexible arrangement for the time immediately prior to the meeting. For example it could be used for training of new members, or as a drop-in session for members to ask items of clarification, or for members to meet without officers to discuss the agenda.

## **Chairing the schools forum**

144. The Chair of a schools forum plays a key role in setting the tone, pace and overall dynamic of the schools forum. They should provide an environment within which all members are able to contribute fully to discussions and guide the schools forum to making well informed decisions.

145. The relationship between the chair and the local authority is therefore vital. The chair should be very clear on the substance of the agenda items, understand the issues involved and the decisions and actions that need to be taken in respect of school forum business.

146. It's good practice for there to be a pre-meeting between the senior officer of the local authority supporting the schools forum and the chair of the schools forum to ensure that all the issues are clearly understood.

147. Equally, the chair has the responsibility of representing the views of the schools forum back to the local authority. For example, they should, where appropriate, take the initiative to make suggestions for improvements to the way the business is conducted, and, in exceptional cases and with support of the members of the schools forum take the view that they do not have sufficient information on which to base a decision and ask that an item is deferred until further information is available. However, in doing so, the chair and schools forum should be fully aware of the consequences of deferral.

148. The independence of the schools forum is paramount. Enhancing the role of chair to a paid position, rather than the reimbursement of reasonable expenses, could blur the lines of independence.

149. Similarly, if the chair undertakes significant work for the local authority in another capacity, for example as an external consultant, they could be viewed as equivalent to an officer of the local authority.

150. Local authorities could consider if sharing contact details of the schools forum chair with neighbouring local authorities would be helpful for peer support and improving networking opportunities.

## **Clerking the schools forum**

151. Clerking of a schools forum should be seen as more than just writing a note of the meeting. A good clerk provides an invaluable link between the members of the schools forum, the chair and the local authority. It's a role often undertaken by an employee of the local authority though we would recommend consideration is given to the use of an independent clerk.

152. Clerks should manage the logistics of the meeting in terms of ensuring dispatch of papers and producing a note from the meeting. Meeting notes should be clear enough for non-attendees to get a sense of the discussion as well as clearly indicating the conclusion and action agreed in relation to each agenda item.

153. Verbatim reports of a schools forum's discussion, however, are unlikely to be very useful. Schools forums may consider whether a simple action log should be maintained by the clerk to ensure all action points agreed are followed up.

154. Beyond this a good clerk can:

- provide the route by which schools forum members can access further information and coordinate communication to schools forum members outside of the formal meeting cycle

- respond to any queries about the business of the schools forum from headteachers, governors and others who are not on the schools forum themselves
- be responsible for ensuring contact details of all members are up to date
- maintain the list of members on the schools forum and advise on membership issues in general
- assist with the coordination of nomination or election processes run by the constituent groups
- keep the schools forum website up to date, for example by posting latest minutes and papers
- monitor, on a regular basis, the schools forum and general schools funding pages on GOV.UK, and arrange for the distribution of any relevant DfE information to schools forum members
- if appropriate, provide technical advice in relation to the schools forum regulations and in relation to the operation of a schools forum's local constitution
- organise, operate and record any voting activity of the schools forum in line with the provisions of its local constitution

155. Not all of these tasks may be able to be undertaken by the schools forum clerk. However, each one is important and there should be arrangements in place to ensure they are discharged adequately.

## **Good practice for schools forum meetings**

156. Schools forums should ensure there is a clear debate of all agenda items. Whilst sub-group meetings are valuable in working through detailed issues, schools forums should consider that the level of debate held at the schools forum meeting and recorded in the minutes will be the official reflection of the level of challenge and discussion on each issue.

157. The use of nameplates for schools forum members also showing which group they are representing can be helpful to members of the public and presenters of papers. In addition the use of coloured cards or coloured nameplates can be helpful when specific members of a schools forum are eligible to vote on specific items, for example, voting on de-delegation or changes to the funding formula.

158. Consultations with the schools forum are a key responsibility of a local authority, ranging from the funding formula to the letting of contracts. Each consultation will be different and depend on the subject being consulted on, but local authorities should consider the following factors as good practice for effective consultation:

- plan and consult early
- allow reasonable timescales for response, as forum members may need to consult the groups they represent
- an open and honest approach

- fully inclusive
- allow for ongoing dialogue
- provide feedback
- clear communications

## Meeting notes and recording of decisions

159. A vital part of the effective operation of a schools forum is to ensure that an accurate record of the meeting is taken. This must include the clear recording of votes where there are contrary views. Recommendations to, and decisions of, schools forums must be clearly set out.

160. Notes or minutes of each schools forum meeting should be produced and published on the local authority website as soon after the meeting as possible to enable members and others to see the outcome of any discussions, decisions, and votes.

161. It is good practice to formally agree the accuracy of the note and minutes at a subsequent meeting, but the publication of the draft minutes should not be delayed as a result.

162. We recommend a log of the decisions is published within 3 working days of the meeting, and the draft minutes within 10 working days so that interested parties can access them and consult on them, if necessary, before the next meeting.

163. In order to provide clarity about representation at each meeting, it is good practice for the minutes to record the group or subgroup that each member represents against their name.

## Communication

164. Communication to the wider education community of the discussions and debates of, and decisions made by, the schools forum is fundamental to their effective operation.

165. The more schools and other stakeholders know about the proceedings of the schools forum, the more their work will be an important and central part of the context of local education funding.

166. This is particularly important given the decision making role the schools forum has. Local authorities should consider the operational differences between the types of stakeholders and plan their communications accordingly.

167. For example, ensuring effective communications across the PVI sector may be more difficult than with schools, which are more likely to have existing channels of communication.

168. Each schools forum should therefore be clear what its channels of communication are.

169. It is fundamental that each member of schools forum represents the views of the group or sub-group that they represent and that all those with an interest in funding work together to ensure that their views are taken into account.

170. Communications directly between members and those they represent is essential; professional associations and phase groups could be suitable channels. This will ensure that schools forum members have an ongoing dialogue with the constituents of their group or sub-group and are therefore well able to represent their views at schools forum meetings.

171. The schools forum should also consider additional communication processes, which could include:

- drawing schools' attention to the fact that all its agendas, minutes, and papers, are publicly available on the local authority's website ; this should include the publication of formula consultation documents
- an annual report on the proceedings of the schools forum
- attendance by the chair, or other schools forum member, at other relevant consultative or management groups such as any capital working group; or senior management meetings of the children's services department
- a brief email to all schools, early years providers, and other stakeholders, after each schools forum meeting informing them of the discussions and decisions with a link to the full papers and minutes for further information
- a schools forum newsletter can be a less formal and more interesting way of communicating forum business and raising the profile of the schools forum and its members

## News updates

172. Most, but not all, members of the schools forum will already be in receipt of regular information on school funding matters from the local authority and DfE. Other schools forum members should be copied into such information flows so that they can be kept abreast of developments between meetings.

173. Many local authorities have already established dedicated schools forum websites on which they post key information for schools forum members and other interested parties on a regular basis.



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## Thurrock School Forum Forward Plan for 2020 – 2021

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item / Focus
<b>November 2020</b>	Academies and Free Schools Update – <b>Standing Item</b>
<b>9:00 – 11:00</b>	Childcare Sufficiency - <b>Standing Item</b>
<b>Virtual Meeting</b>	Funding Options 2020-21
	Falling Roll Policy
	School Capital Programme and Pupil Place Planning Update
	Growth Fund – <b>Standing Item</b>
	Tuition Support Services
<b>16 January 2021</b>	School Budgets
<b>9:00 – 11:00</b>	Funding Consultation
<b>Virtual Meeting</b>	
<b>12 March 2021</b>	Academies and Free Schools Update - <b>Standing Item</b>
	Dedicated Schools Grant Projected Outturn 2019/20
	Early Years Funding Formula 2020/21
<b>9:00 – 11:00</b>	High Needs – Verbal Feedback from meeting to be held with EFSA Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> March
<b>Virtual Meeting</b>	High Needs Band Values and SLA
	Funding arrangements for permanent exclusions 2020/21
	Schools' Forum Membership
	Pupil Place Planning Review
<b>June 2021</b>	Academies and Free Schools Update - <b>Standing Item</b>
	DSG Outturn 2019/20
	DSG Budget 2020/21
<b>9:00 – 11:00</b>	DSG Recovery Plan
<b>Virtual Meeting</b>	Union Facility Time Annual Review - <b>Standing Item</b>
	Thurrock Code of Practice for delivery of early education for 2, 3&4 year olds - <b>Standing Item</b>
<b>Venue to be confirmed</b>	Schools Forum Membership Review 2020-21 - <b>Standing Item</b>
	Review of Forward Plan 2020-21

## Schools Forum

### Draft Minutes of Meeting held 25 June 2020 at 8:30am Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams

#### In Attendance:

##### **Primary Academies**

Headteacher – Kenningtons	Ms J Sawtell-Haynes
Headteacher – Abbots Primary	Mrs L James
Principal – Woodside Academy	Mr E Caines – Vice Chair
Headteacher – Giffards Primary	Mrs N Haslam-Davis
CEO – Catalyst Academies Trust	Mr T Parfett
Headteacher – Aveley Primary	Ms N Shadbolt

##### **Secondary Academies**

CEO – Osbourne Co-operative Academy Trust	Mr P Griffiths (The Chair)
CEO – ORTU Federation Ltd	Dr S Asong
Governor – Hathaway Academy	Mr S Sweeting
CEO – South West Essex Community Education Trust	Mr S Munday

##### **Secondary Voluntary Aided Schools**

Headteacher – Grays Convent	Mrs P Johnson
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##### **Special Academies**

Headteacher – Beacon Hill Academy	Ms S Hewitt
Headteacher – Treetops School	Mr J Brewer

##### **Non School Members**

0-11 Representative	Ms A Jones
11-19 Representative	Dr J Revill
Diocese of Brentwood	Mrs M Shepherd

##### **The Olive Academy**

Ms Charlotte Wright

##### **Also in Attendance**

Mrs Sheila Murphy	Corporate Director of Children's Services
Mr Malcolm Taylor	Strategic Lead – Specialist Provision/PEP
Ms Michelle Lucas	Assistant Director, Education Skills
Mr David May	Strategic Lead – DSG and Schools
Ms Sarah Williams	Service Manager, Education Support Service
Mrs Alison Picknell	School Effectiveness and Early Years Manager
Mrs Sue Lamkin	School Improvement Support Officer
Ms Teresa Lydon	Clerk

**1. Welcome from the Chair**

The Chair welcomed the Forum to the meeting. He advised that Amanda Ludlow from the DFE would be joining the meeting as an observer. He advised that as this was the first Microsoft Teams meeting there were some new protocols. If a member had a question they either email on chat or clicked on "raise their hand" to speak. All voting would be done via Chat. The Chair asked all members to click the mute button until they wanted to speak this was to address the feedback that can take place on TEAMS.

**2. Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies for absence were received from: Mrs L Coates. Mrs N Graham was absent from the meeting.

**3. Agreement of Agenda, Time-Guide and Notification of Any Other Business**

- i) No items changed.
- ii) The Forum agreed the agenda and time guide.
- iii) The Forum agreed to add the following to Any Other Business
  - Mr D May to update on the Outturn Position
  - Dr Asong wishes to discuss working with disadvantage.

**4. Forum Membership 2019-20**

Miss S Williams spoke about the new membership structure from September 2020. She thanked the members of the sub-group which worked in partnership with the council on this new membership proposal.

She talked through the proposed structure to include all CEO's, one school member for secondary VA school, the chair of TASS and chair of TPHA, two special school members, one member for alternative provision, two members for the standalone academies, four non-school members, which include the diocese of Brentwood and Chelmsford, 0-11 group and 11-19 group. In total, across all sectors excluding council officers there will be 19 forum members. All forum members must ensure they delegate a designated officer to deputise in the event the forum member is unable to attend any of the meetings. In addition, where CEO's have been identified as a forum member, the CEO may delegate their role to an alternative officer within their multi academy trust who can vote on forum decisions on their behalf. Alternative Provision currently sits within the Multi Academy Trusts system and is represented by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the individual trust.

She commented that nominations should be agreed from the stand alone academies and put forward to the Clerk. She also commented that the council were happy to meet with the standalone academies and discuss the paperwork before any forum meetings to ensure that standalone academies were kept informed of forum business.

Financial meetings will continue to be held in the form of consultation meetings, separate from the School Forum meetings so that all schools have the opportunity to discuss and respond to future funding decisions.

Mrs P Johnson commented that there is not a representative for the Christus Catholic Trust MAT. She also commented that Grays Convent is a Secondary Voluntary Aided (VA) school and not maintained. She advised as the Chair of TASS and the representative of the Secondary VA School she would have two votes. At present she does not have a governor to represent her VA school. Mrs M Lucas advised she is happy to look into the Christus Catholic Trust representative outside of this meeting.

The Chair commented that they could move to a structure where Headteachers put forward a member to representative them. Dr Asong felt this was a good idea. Mr E Caines asked if the representative from the Multi-Academy Trusts would only be the CEO. He commented that each Special School has its own representative as do the Alternative Provision. Mr Caines feels that primary schools are being under represented and therefore could affect discussions on how they are funded. Mrs J Sawtell-Haynes felt it was very complicated structure and recognised the complexities relating to membership. She felt they needed more discussion on Special Schools having two representatives as they were both Academies – the complexities of two schools who are dealing with very different groups of children was the reason they were both represented on the forum. The Chair commented that Bulphan Primary and Orsett Primary were part of the Vine Trust and therefore should have a representative as they are not part of the Diocese. He also commented that it does not have to be a CEO who represents the Trusts that it could be a Headteacher. Miss S Williams advised again that they were willing to meet standalone academies to discuss paperwork for any future meetings. Mrs M Shepherd also feels that the Christus Catholic Trust should have a representative on the forum. The Chair asked Mrs M Lucas if she would consider a representative from this Trust. She commented that she is more than happy for The Vine Academy Trust and the Christus Catholic Trust to have a voice in the School Forum.

**Action: ML to look into representation from Christus Catholic Trust and the Vine Trust MAT. Need to consider Tudor Court as this is an empty MAT.**

**AGREED**

All Schools Forum members present agreed to the following recommendations:

- a) The Chair advised that the new proposal for the structure of the schools forum from September 2020 with additional options discussed above was carried by the majority of the members. Agreed
- b) The Chair advised that members noted the changes in guidance from the DfE in how the forum meetings will be conducted from 26th June to March 2021 but that it was also agreed that they would look into Zoom or Google classrooms as a better platform but needed to be mindful that this needs to be a safe and secure system. Agreed with consideration of alternative platforms for meetings.
- c) All members agreed to the current Chair of the forum remaining in post for 12 months whilst the new structure of the forum is embedded and the issues associated with the public health emergency are reviewed. Agreed

## **5. Union Facility Time**

Mrs S Lamkin advised that Thurrock Council administrates the Union Facility Time budget on behalf of all schools in Thurrock. They are proposing a reduction in the annual service charge for 2020/2021 to £2,500. It was agreed by Schools Forum no charge would be made to schools for the year 2019/2020 as the balance was sufficient to cover claims. During the year 2019/2020 three claims have been received, processed and subsequently been reimbursed. The total amount claimed to date is £463. 23. This is significantly lower than in previous years. Due to Covid-19 there may be a rise in the number of claims made this term, however there is a current balance of £20,524.24. Based on this amount of surplus, the Forum may wish to consider that no contributions are required for 2020/2021 and that schools may then contribute a lower per pupil rate in 2021/2022.

Mrs J Sawtell-Haynes commented that in a year when they are not collecting money the charge seems excessive. Last year they were charged £3,000. Mrs M Lucas commented that the LA will review the charge in the New Year.

### **AGREED**

- a) All forum members agreed to the LA continuing to administer the Union Facility Time.
- b) All members agreed the contribution rate for schools for 2020/2021.

The Chair commented that they needed an agenda item to discuss future year contributions. He is very grateful to all schools for their co-operation

**Action: Union Facility Time to be added as a future agenda item to discuss future contributions.**

## **6. Draft EY Code of Practice 2020**

Mrs A Picknell advised that the report provides information regarding the 2020 Code of Practice (CoP) for the Delivery of Early Education and Childcare for Two, Three and Four Year olds. The CoP sets out the expectations of Thurrock Council, Early Education and Childcare Providers; and refers to funded early years provision.

The Chair asked how many provisions are good or better. Mrs A Picknell advised that one provision was "Inadequate" and one "Requires Improvement". The Chair commented that this is a strong record in Thurrock. Mrs L James asked about the take-up of the funds. Mrs A Picknell commented that the provisions are RAG annually and they look across the provisions. They have an Early Years SENCO who advises on what funding is available.

### **AGREED**

All forum members noted this report.

## **7. Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2020/21**

Miss S Williams discussed the Forward Plan for 2020-21. The Chair asked that they include as future agenda items:

1. Union Facility Time future contributions Spring 2021
2. The DSG Outturn position
3. Protecting falling rolls at schools due to the opening of new free schools.

E Caines commented that COVID needs to be an item on the school forum going forward.

The Chair thanked all colleagues in Thurrock, Headteacher's and the Staff during these unprecedented times. He also advised that free schools meals has been extended during the summer holidays.

## **8. Minutes of previous meeting**

All governors were happy with the content.

Mr M Taylor asked for the following change: Mr Taylor commented that another important point from DfE meeting was that specialist independent school places were very costly. Placements outside the LA have outrageous charges and have been extraordinarily high over the next couple of years. **This needs to be amended to:** Mr Taylor commented that another important point from DfE meeting was that specialist independent school places were very costly. A small number of Specialist Placements outside the LA have been extraordinarily high over the past couple of years.

## **9. Matters arising**

Dr S Asong commented that the new free schools are affecting the roll of other schools. Mr E Caines asked do we need public money spent on schools which he feels may not be needed. The Chair also commented that even though one of the new free schools was part of his Trust he also feels that the timing of the two free schools may have caused some short term issues re places.

No other matters arising at this time.

## **10. Any other Business**

Mr May commented that the final outturn position of the DSG reserve as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 is a deficit of £1.978m. This is an in year reduction of £0.570m achieved through a combination of improved in year position and the transfer to reserves from the Schools Block.

The final High Needs Block (HNB) position is an overspend of £1.562m. This is less than the previously reported by £0.500m.

As a result of having a DSG deficit at 31st March 2020, a return will be required to be submitted to the ESFA that outlines the reason the deficit has occurred and actions to be taken to contain expenditure within the funding envelope provided.

Dr Asong would like the forum to look at a way to record what we value e.g. equal access to education, transparency. She advised we need to measure outcomes for working class children, disadvantaged children, ethnic minorities outcomes etc. She would also like to report on the outcomes after the children leave school. The Chair asked Mrs M Lucas to respond on how we could improve these outcomes through this forum. Mrs M Lucas commented that a significant amount of money has gone into the High Needs Block to help vulnerable children. She also commented that schools may need to look at how they are spending their money at individual school level. Mrs M Lucas suggested a sub-group be formed to take this piece of work forward. The Chair

commented that by introducing the funding formula this year it has had an increase in helping different groups i.e. EAL group.

**Action: ML to look at a subgroup to discuss outcomes of children from different social groups**