

**SCHOOLS FORUM  
19 SEPTEMBER 2024  
16:30 – 17:20**



**Present:**

Elizabeth Savage, Academy School Representative  
Caroline Johnson, Primary School Representative  
Juanita Dunlop, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Trudi Sammons, Primary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Keith Grainger, Secondary School Representative (Headteacher)  
Katie Moore, Academy School Representative  
Rachel Manton, Trade Union Representative

**Observer:**

Councillor Roy Bailey, Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning (Observer)

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Jenny Baker, Special School Representative  
Sue Butler, Early Years PVI Provider  
Tim Griffith, Academy School Representative  
Grant Strudley, Academy School Representative  
Gareth Croxon, Academy School Representative (Headteacher)

**8. Election of Chair**

**RESOLVED** that Elizabeth Savage, Headteacher at Jennett's Park CE Primary School be appointed Chair of Schools Forum for the academic year.

**9. Appointment of Vice Chair**

**RESOLVED** that Jennifer Baker, Headteacher at Kennel Lane School be appointed Vice-Chair of the Schools Forum for the academic year.

**10. Declarations of Interest**

Caroline Johnson declared an affected interest in item 9: 2024-25 arrangements for additional financial support to maintained schools

**11. Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20 June 2024 were approved a correct record.

Arising from the minutes Duane Chappell, Assistant Director Education and Learning confirmed that a meeting would be setup in the near future to discuss medical tuition.

**12. Update to the Schools Forum Constitution**

The Forum considered a report which sought endorsement to minor changes to the Schools Forum's Constitution and Membership.

The new Trade Union representative Rachel Manton was welcomed to the meeting.

The Chair noted that the proposed changes would reduce the Schools Forum membership from 18 to 17 by eliminating the Pupil Referral Unit member. Additionally, a minor change to the election process would introduce fixed term dates for all Schools Forum members.

**RESOLVED** that the updated Schools Forum Constitution and Membership be endorsed.

### 13. **Safety Valve Update**

The Forum considered a report which provided an update to the Schools Forum on progress made on the implementation of the Safety Valve programme, as well as wider SEND improvement work.

Duane Chappell updated the Forum on the Safety Valve Programme, which Bracknell Forest Council had been formally accepted into in March 2024. Several areas of the local authority were being monitored in relation to the programme. This included expanding provision through Special schools and Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs). To support this, an additional £4 million capital grant had been received from the Safety Valve Programme.

Furthermore, the SRP at Sandhurst School had opened at the beginning of September.

Duane confirmed that College Hall had closed on 31 August and that all children from College Hall had been placed in appropriate settings.

She also confirmed that AV1 robots had been purchased to meet the Safety Valve Programme's monitoring requirement related to the use of technology in schools.

Another monitoring report had been submitted to the Safety Valve Programme, and the local authority was awaiting feedback.

Arising from questions and comments, the following points were noted:

- The SRP placement decisions were made by the Decision-Making Group, which determines where children are placed within the local authority. This group consists of a multidisciplinary team. Each SRP has specific admissions criteria based on what they can offer pupils, which the panel uses to determine the appropriate provision for each child. Duane agreed to check that these admissions criteria were published in the local offer (**Action: Duane**).
- Duane would consider if there was a way to publicly share information related to SRP capacity within the borough (**Action: Duane**).
- Work was ongoing to clarify why some SRPs were refusing certain children. If deemed appropriate, the local authority would direct schools to accept the right children.
- The new SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health) school would initially open in temporary accommodation. At this stage, this was not expected to impact the size of the cohort or the school's timeline for opening. Work to appoint a trust to run the site would take place in the following weeks.

- SEMH was the third most prominent need within the borough. It was hoped that the new SEMH school would provide adequate spaces for secondary education, but it was recognized that further capacity for primary school pupils may be necessary. Although no capital was currently available for this, Duane was engaging with primary school heads to discuss ways to meet SEMH provision for primary schools.
- Children with EHCPs (Education, Health, and Care Plans) would be exempt from the planned introduction of VAT for private schools, so there should not be an increase in costs for children with plans being placed in independent schools.

**RESOLVED** that the Forum Notes:

- The progress made on delivering the Safety Valve intervention programme up until submission of the first monitoring report to the DfE in May 2024.

14. **2025-26 initial Budget Preparations for the Schools Budget and related matters**

The Forum received a report to provide an update to the Schools Forum in respect of the 2025-26 Schools Budget for mainstream schools together with other relevant finance related matters

Paul Clark explained to the Forum that the DfE funding framework and the uplift to funding rates would typically be confirmed at the September meeting of the Schools Forum. However, due to the change in government, these details were still pending confirmation. As a result, less information was available than usual. Despite this, significant changes to the funding framework were not anticipated due to the limited timescales.

Arising from questions and comments, the following points were noted:

- It had already been agreed by the council that if the financial situation improved, the top slice to the High Needs Block would be reversed.
- Forum Members confirmed that a 5-year commitment to the Block Transfer had been made by schools which would be honoured.
- Several delegated services worked closely with SEN support services to address special educational needs. Duane was conducting a review of delegated services to identify what services the local authority could offer to maintained schools. This was influenced by the increasing academisation, which was shifting how funding was allocated.

**RESOLVED** that the Forum **agrees**:

- That subject to consideration of school responses to the annual financial consultation and general affordability, the approach to setting the 2025-26 budget should remain broadly the same as for 2024-25, and in particular:
  1. That there should be no change to the current budget strategy of:
    - a. as far as possible, replicating the National Funding Formula;
    - b. setting minimum per pupil funding increases between financial years at the lowest amount permitted by the DfE;
    - c. meeting additional diseconomy and post opening costs at new and expanding schools in accordance with the approved policy;
    - d. maintaining a centrally managed Growth Fund for in-year allocation of funds to qualifying schools;
    - e. using the Central Schools Services Block to finance the permitted

services.

- That in respect of the Safety Valve programme, the equivalent of 1% of Schools Block remains needed to help finance the High Needs Block deficit and that the planned Block transfer continues as follows:
  1. a funding transfer from individual school budgets capped at 0.5%, estimated at 0.42% of Schools Block funding;
  2. the unallocated balance on the Schools Block DSG Growth Fund, estimated at 0.43% of Schools Block funding;
  3. a balancing transfer from the Central Schools Services Block estimated at 0.15% of Schools Block funding.
- That in respect of the he proposed outline content of the autumn term financial consultation with schools. The Schools Forum offered no objections to proposed outline content of the financial consultation.

15. **2024-25 arrangements for additional financial support to maintained schools**

The Forum received a report that sought agreement from the Schools Forum in respect of proposals for additional financial support to schools, in particular, approval of new or amended applications for licensed deficit arrangements. An update was also provided on the current position in respect of previously agreed financial support arrangements.

The Forum was informed that three additional schools had requested support to manage a deficit for 2024/25. This followed five schools reporting deficits for 2023/24, one of which had since paid off its deficit. If the financial arrangements were approved, the total deficit for maintained schools would rise to £0.970 million, representing a £0.155 million increase.

**RESOLVED** That subject to the school governors confirming the relevant financing schedule and compliance with the associated terms and conditions of the deficit scheme the Schools Forum:

**AGREES** the following deficit limits for 2024-25:

- i. Ascot Heath Primary School £0.150m;
- ii. Cranbourne Primary School £0.150m;
- iii. Harmanswater £0.145m (new for 2024-25);
- iv. New Scotland Hill Primary School £0.070m (new for 2024-25);
- v. Owlsmoor £0.075m (new for 2024-25);
- vi. St Michael's Easthampstead Primary School £0.135m;
- vii. Winkfield St Mary's Primary School £0.245m.

and **AGREES** the dissolution of the following licensed deficit which has been fully repaid:

- vi. The Pines Primary Schools £0.035m.

16. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The dates of Schools Forum meetings for the forthcoming academic year were:

14 November 2024.  
5 December 2024.  
15 January 2025

13 March 2025.

**CHAIRMAN**