

# Forum Newsletter

**SOLIHULL SCHOOLS FORUM met on 27th September 2018,  
the following is a précis of business undertaken**

## Finance Work Group

- At period 5, the funding Monitoring Statements show an anticipated year-end overspend of around £1.2m on the High Needs Block and an overall starting deficit of £1.455m on the DSG.
- The DfE has said that it will be looking to reduce the level of historic spend in the Combined Services budgets, which for Solihull includes areas such as Sports, Health and Safety training and Collaborative funding. The Finance Work Group will look at this in more detail once the DfE has provided more information.



## Special Educational Needs Report

SEND is a key focus of activity, in terms of managing the financial risks associated with the growing number of children with additional needs, the increasing complexity of needs and Solihull's reliance on high-cost out-of-borough provision and associated transport costs due to an insufficiency of places in-borough.

- On 13 November the LA will host an Inclusion Conference for Head Teachers, Chairs of Governors and SENCOs to review what 'inclusion' means in Solihull.
- The LA is preparing a bid for funding to open an 80-100 place Free School for Autism. This would form part of a wider plan, working with the CCG and higher education, for a Centre of Excellence for Autism in Solihull, to include therapeutic and teacher training facilities and a research unit. The bid will be submitted by 15 October, with the outcome to be announced in the new year.

Full minutes and papers are available to view and download on the [Schools Forum website](#).

## Assistant Director of Children's Services & Skills - Update

- Phil Leivers confirmed that Sally Hodges (Director of Children's Services & Skills) will be leaving the Local Authority at the end of March 2019 and Simon Rushall (Assistant Director for Children & Families) will leave in October/November 2018. Acting-up arrangements are in place for the AD role and the recruitment process is under way for the Director's post.
- Sadly Solihull was unsuccessful in its joint bid with Coventry and Warwickshire to win Strategic School Improvement funding to undertake a programme of work around SEND and inclusion. As no awards were made to the West Midlands, feedback is being sought from the DfE as to how SSI money is being allocated.
- Work is taking place to reform Solihull's Engage/Early Help Service, with a view to community groups delivering preventative work around children at 'edge of care' linked to the national 'troubled families' agenda; whilst Engage focuses on the most complex cases.

## SEND Commissioning Strategy

A draft SEND School Place Commissioning Strategy has now been approved by Cabinet Member for consulting with schools and stakeholders. This uses a forecasting model to establish what demand might be up to five years ahead. The Strategy sets out how the Authority will need to respond to increasing demand, particularly in areas such as Post-16, Autism Spectrum Disorder and Social, Emotional and Mental Health and confirms the principles around inclusion that will require collaborative support across Solihull's educational community.

## Schools' Funding, DfE Announcements 2019-2020

On 25 July the DfE published formal proposals, an Operational Guide for Local Authorities and tables showing indicative school funding for 2019-20. Of particular note:

- There is a technical change to the way Local Authorities will be funded for growth, however this will have no impact on how the LA funds schools.
- Solihull primaries will receive £3,838pp and secondaries £4,994pp, based on October 2017 pupil data and subject to change when October 2018 data is applied. There will be a £4m increase in the Schools Block (predominantly for secondary schools as the main beneficiaries of the NFF), an additional £400k in the High Needs Block and an additional £22k in the Central Services Block.
- The DfE has confirmed that LAs will continue to operate a local funding formula for an additional year through to 2020-21.
- The DfE has made no reference to Early Years, with the assumption that funding levels will roll forward at the same rates.

Private Voluntary Independent (PVI) nursery members raised concern at the level of funding, which has been exacerbated by the introduction of the 30 'free' hours and will be further tested when the living wage increases in April 2019. Around 25% of PVI nurseries are already losing money and funding pressures are likely to result in closures and a lack of provision in some parts of the Borough. It was acknowledged that all Early Years providers are struggling with the current funding situation.

