

Forum Newsletter

**SOLIHULL SCHOOLS FORUM met on 12th December 2018,
the following is a précis of business undertaken**

Cabinet Member Items

Councillor Ken Meeson reported continuing pressures on school places associated with new housing developments; significant pressures around SEND, including increases in EHCP referrals and a lack of special school places and a dramatic rise in the number of children coming into the care system.



Solihull AP Academy

Stephen Steinhaus reported that the Academy now has 54 pupils and is already making a significant difference to exclusions in the Borough. Additional staff will be recruited in January and pupil numbers are expected to rise to 80 by the end of the academic year

School Funding 2019-20

Central Services and Retained Duties – Steve Fenton outlined the various budget areas and members (as appropriate to their sector) approved all recommendations, including Pupil Growth fund of £350k, Central Services Block historical commitments, totalling £1.447m and the passporting of the Central Services Block grant of £1.089m through to the Local Authority to fund these. Maintained schools approved a reduction in the per pupil rate of funding for TU facilities time to £6.50pp (from £7.50pp) whilst the LA pursues a further reduction for the future.

General Duties – Despite some increases in service costs, there will be no increase on last year's top-slice for maintained schools. Maintained school members therefore agreed the top-slice at £66pp for mainstream, £165pp for special schools and £247.50 for PRUs.

Director of Children's Services & Skills

Sally Hodges explained some of the challenges the Directorate has been facing over the last 12 months, including:

- The climate of rising costs and restricted budgets.
- The exceptionally large number of looked after children and high proportion of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- The rising demand for EHCPs, SEND support services and out-of-borough provision and the financial impact on high needs funding and transport costs.

Members raised concerns about the increasing overspend on the High Needs Block; Solihull's monitoring of children placed in ex-borough provision and contractual negotiations with the independent sector on fees.

School Resource Management Self-Assessment and Financial Benchmarking Tools

A representative from the DfE presented information and answered questions on these two DfE resources. The presentation documents are available on the Forum website.

Assistant Director of Children's Services & Skills

- Phil Leivers confirmed that the consultation around increasing the number of SEND places in the Borough had closed with over 70 responses received from parents, heads and principals, SENCOs, governors and supporting agencies. Eight primary schools have shown interest in hosting an ARP or enhanced provision; Phil would like to hear back from any secondary colleagues who might be interested.
- Following Auckland Education Centre's very disappointing Ofsted inspection in October, plans are now in place to ensure the young people at the Centre are safe and receiving the best education possible whilst no further referrals are being made. Consultation with stakeholders will now take place on the future of the Centre and how the needs of children who would previously have been referred to Auckland can best be met.

Group Reports

Reports for Capital and Finance Work Groups, Education SEND and SSSAB were accepted and no questions were raised. Reports are available on the Forum website.

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

