

Minutes of the Forum Meeting held on Monday, 4 October 2021 Virtual Teams Meeting at 5.30pm

<p>Present: Maintained Primary Sector: Antoinette Fisher (Governor) Bernie Farkas (Head teacher) Karen Scott (Head teacher) Richard Marshall (Head teacher) John McDermott (Governor) Lynn Clark (Head teacher) Lisa Clarke (Governor) Maintained Special Sector: Andrew Wilkins (Governor) Jane Davenport (Head teacher) Academy Primary Sector: Louise Minter (Head teacher) Lynda Mackay (Governor) Jenny Godsall (Head teacher) Ben Taylor (Head teacher) Academy Secondary Sector: Marie Murphy (Head teacher) Darren Gelder (Principal) Claire Smith (Head teacher) Clare Thorpe (Head teacher) Charlotte Shadbolt (Governor) Pupil Referral Unit: Eleanor Clarke AP Academy: Stephen Steinhaus Specialist Academy No representative Post-16 College: No representative TU Representatives: David Lewis Gillian Clowe Early Years PVI Sector: Gina Godwin Lisa Whitehouse Elected Members Councillor Annette McKenzie Officers of the Council: Councillor Richard Holt Tim Browne Steve Fenton Stuart McHale Michele Sadler Observers: Tina Whitehouse Gareth Eastham Saroj Pal</p>	<p>Dorridge Primary School Blossomfield Infant School Greswold Primary Oak Cottage St Alphege Juniors Marston Green Juniors Castle Bromwich Juniors</p> <p>Hazel Oak Special School Reynolds Cross Special School</p> <p>Streetsbrook EY&I Academy Knowle CofE Academy Knowle CofE Academy Our Lady of the Wayside</p> <p>St Peters RC Academy Grace Academy Tudor Grange Academy Langley Academy Heart of England Academy</p> <p>Triple Crown Centre</p> <p>Solihull AP Academy</p> <p>Solihull College</p> <p>TU Representative NEU</p> <p>Whitesmore/Wise Owls Nursery Tender Years Nursery</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills Assistant Director, Inclusion & Additional Needs Head of Commissioning for Learning Children’s Services Finance Manager Head of Inclusion Service</p> <p>Summerfield Education Centre NASUWT Children’s Services Finance Manager</p>
<p>Acting Chairperson: Acting Vice Chairperson: Minutes:</p>	<p>Darren Gelder – Grace Academy Antoinette Fisher – Dorridge Primary School Alison McWilliam, Senior Forum Administrator</p>

Item		Action						
1	<p>Apologies for Absence and Welcome Apologies were received from:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Sarah Smith</td> <td style="width: 30%;"></td> <td style="width: 40%;">Church of England Diocese</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lindsey Stewart</td> <td>Acting Principal</td> <td>Solihull College</td> </tr> </table>	Sarah Smith		Church of England Diocese	Lindsey Stewart	Acting Principal	Solihull College	
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Paul Jackson Hon Alderman Norman Davies	Governor Governor	Castle Bromwich Junior School Langley Secondary Academy
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The Chair welcomed Richard Marshall (Oak Cottage), Lynn Clark (Marston Green Juniors), Chare Thorpe (Langley Secondary Academy), Paul Jackson (Castle Bromwich Juniors) and Councillor Richard Holt (incoming Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills) as new members to Schools Forum.

2 **Minutes of Last Meeting (12.7.21)**

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3 **Matters' Arising**

Membership Vacancies – AMc has written to schools seeking governors to fill the three secondary academy vacancies.

Covid – This remains a concern for all.

4 **Assistant Director's Items - Tim Browne**

TB provided the following update:

- Carly Speechley will no longer be joining the LA as Director of Children's Services. The post will go out to advert again shortly and TB will continue as Acting DCS in the interim.
- The new arrangements for Reshaping Education commenced 1 September 2021 and it is anticipated that posts will be fully staffed by January. The new [Structure](#) comprises five service areas.
- In July Cabinet Member approved £1.5m additional funding. This has allowed the EHCP team to almost double in size to cater for both the increased demand and improve service performance. The number of EHCPs completed within the statutory 20 week period has increased from 13% a year ago to 83% - well above the national and regional average.
- Pressure on the High Needs Block continues, with £2.9m overspend in 2019-20 and an accumulated deficit of £12m. TB is reasonably comfortable with this position, however it is likely that matters will worsen before they start to improve, particularly as more young people are being identified whose needs are not currently being appropriately met. A High Needs forecast will be taken to Cabinet in December to reflect on the improvement journey and anticipated spend over the next three years.
- The Joint Additional Needs Strategy will go to Cabinet in December, with the Accessibility Strategy, Inclusion Strategy and Alternative Provision Strategy following on. Alongside this, the implementation phase and improvement journey are under way to deliver a first class service to the Borough's schools, children and families.

Questions and Comments

DG – Improvements in meeting the 20 week timescale for EHCPs is a tremendous achievement, but when can schools expect to see broader tangible improvements 'on the ground'?

TB – Some schools are already starting to see the impact, however some areas, i.e. the Inclusion Service, will not be fully staffed until January and improvements are dependent on having the infrastructure in place. TB reminded members that this is a five-year improvement journey. Despite a recent 19% increase in specialist provision, Solihull still has insufficient specialist places and accessing capital takes time. The addition of the ASD free school (from September 2023, with some early places commissioned for September 2022) will make a significant impact, together with provision delivered through the AP Strategy.

DG – Thanked the service for the work going on and recognised that colleagues will always want to be in a position where they are able to support the children in their care.

5 **DfE Announcements – School Funding 2022-23 and Beyond – Steve Fenton**

Ref [DfE Announcements](#)

SF presented key areas from the paper:

- The Government says this will be the largest cash increase for schools in a decade:

£2.6b in 2020-2021, £4.8b in 2021-22 and £7b in 2022-23 when compared to 2019-20. Allocations are separate to Covid interventions worth over £3b.

- School funding will increase by 32% in terms of core funding. Core factors have increased by 3% as a guaranteed baseline, every school will receive at least a 2% uplift in per pupil funding.
- The Government says that FSM6 deprivation factor was brought forward by nine months, thus increasing funding for deprivation. However, in the NFF there is no change to Government policy in the rate for pupil deprivation premium.
- Business rates will be handled centrally for academies and ESFA will bill LAs. This should make matters easier once it is settled, but there may be more to do in year one.
- High Needs funding will increase by a further 9.6% (£780m), with every LA receiving at least an 8% increase per head of population. Solihull will receive an increase of 8.1%, an allocation of £2.7m. This is welcome and will go towards stabilising the rate of increase and help Solihull to move closer to a stand-still position. However it will not reduce the accumulated deficit due to continued growth in both demographics and complexity of need; this remains a concern at local level.
- The NFF Consultation deadline has now passed. f40 submitted a comprehensive [response](#). Proposals will largely impact Local Authorities rather than schools.
- SF referenced item 301 of the paper regarding DSG Deficits and HN Exceptional Funding where the regulations and treatment of deficits have changed. The LA must now:
 - carry all of the deficit forward to set against the schools' budget in the next financial year; or
 - carry part of the deficit forward to set against the schools' budget in the next financial year and carry the rest of it forward to the following financial year; or
 - not set any of the deficit against the schools' budget in the next financial year, but carry all of the deficit forward to the following financial year
- So Forum approval is no longer required to transfer funds between Schools' Block and the HNB. Any surplus funding to Schools' or any other Block, once NFF factors have been met, can automatically go to the HNB. For Solihull this is unlikely to be an option. In the past three years, there has been insufficient money in the funding allocation to fully emulate NFF factors and a scaling back of the AWPU has been undertaken in order to meet all funding factors. Therefore, it is hard to imagine Solihull generating any surplus that could be used in accordance with the new rules.
- The LA has no plans to propose a transfer between Schools' and HNB and under a hard NFF, this would not be an option.
- The table on page 8 shows NFF values for 2022-23 and demonstrates Solihull's closeness to these in the current year.
- We await an announcement on whether the Government will additionally fund the increased NI contributions or whether this is expected to be funded from within the 3% increase.

Questions and Comments

JD – Will the increased funding apply to special schools?

SF – No, nor to Alternative Provision or specialist providers. As in previous years, Forum will work to arrive at a similar increase for these provisions from increased funding in the HNB.

DG – What is the long term plan to repay the deficit?

SF – Our focus is to stabilise the current spend and match it to current budgets and see how the Government responds longer term. It is likely the deficit will increase before it starts to reduce. Under a hard NFF the LA will have no opportunity to apply any other resources from the DSG to pay off long term accumulated deficits.

TB – There needs to be a national solution to HN spend, but this will not be before the SEND Review. The DfE has done deals with a number of authorities to write off their deficits using draconian approaches that Solihull would not wish to consider. Solihull's deficit is much lower than many authorities and TB feels comfortable with the current position.

SMcH – Current DfE regulations allow the LA to continue to carry forward the deficit. However, the Council will have no leeway to support a deficit long term, given its precarious

	<p>financial position post-Covid, so a national solution is needed.</p> <p>6 Alternative Provision Strategy – Michele Sadler Ref AP Discussion Document The document brings together current thinking – varying expectations; what the LA needs to meet its statutory duty and what schools need, what AP is, where it fits in with the educational landscape, routes in and commissioning arrangements. It seeks to identify the right number and type of places needed to meet need and ascertain gaps in provision. MS has already presented the document to various groups (EdSEND, SGA) and has received some helpful feedback, in advance of holding a wider consultation later in Autumn term. <u>Questions and Comments</u> DG – Clarity and coherence about pathways in and out of AP are key to ensuring students can access a suitable and appropriate curriculum. DG sought clarification around Actions 1 (Summerfield/Solihull Academy) and 2 (local part-time vocational places)? MS – Action 1 – A decision on Summerfield/Solihull Academy is due in the next few weeks, then we can move forward with what places the Academy will offer. Action 2 – MS needs to better understand the need for this provision. Solihull College used to offer part-time vocational courses for schools to access, however this has ceased. This needs to be revisited with local colleges and details gathered about what schools need. SS – Solihull College is no longer able to offer this provision and very few FE providers offer this to students such as those at Solihull Academy, so AP vocational courses are having to be sourced from further afield. The options are to cultivate relations with providers or ‘grow our own’ locally. MS – Will reflect on the wording around this area and discuss further with DG and SS.. DG – Felt it unfair to refer to the perverse incentives linked to double funding where students are on dual registration; no school would exclude a student for financial gain. MS – Asked members and colleagues to reflect on Action 7 (primary AP provision) and LA Support Services (the key area of which is the Inclusion Service) and let her have any feedback at msadler@solihull.gov.uk It was agreed that MS would bring a report on the Inclusion Service to the November meeting and a further update on the AP Strategy in January.</p> <p>7 Group Reports <u>Finance Work Group - David Lewis</u> Members accepted the report with no questions. <u>EdSEND Group - Louise Minter</u> LM provided a verbal report on areas covered at the 29 September meeting. See EdSEND Group Report. It was noted that SSSAB and Capital Work Group have not yet met this half term.</p> <p>8 Any Other Business – Darren Gelder DG reminded members and the wider schools’ community that Schools Forum provides an opportunity for colleagues to raise questions and seek answers in support of education for young people within the Borough. Please raise any items with Antoinette Fisher, Darren Gelder or Ali McWilliam (schoolsforum@solihull.gov.uk). The same opportunity applies to Forum’s standing work groups.</p> <p>9 Date of Next Meeting Thursday, 25 November 2021 at 5.00pm Virtual Teams Meeting</p>	<p>MS</p> <p>Members</p> <p>Fwd plan</p> <p>members</p>
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