

Solihull Schools Forum



Minutes of meeting

Time 5pm

Date Monday 28th November 2022

SMBC Civic Suite Room 1

Homer Rd, Solihull B91 9SE

Member Category	Member Name	Institution	Attendance (Y/N/ Apols)
HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	Lynn Clark	Marston Green Juniors (Unity)	Y
HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	Bernie Farkas	Blossomfield Infants (Synergy)	Y
HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	Richard Marshall	Oak Cottage (Evolve)	Y
GOVERNORS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	John McDermott	St Alphege Inf & Junior (Synergy)	Apologies
GOVERNORS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	Antoinette Fisher Chair	Dorridge Primary (Rurals)	Y
GOVERNORS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	Donna Luck	Merstone School	Apologies
GOVERNORS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	Paul Jackson	Castle Bromwich Junior School (North)	N
HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY ACADEMIES (2)	Louise Minter	Streetsbrook I&EY Academy, (Synergy)	Apologies
HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY ACADEMIES (2)	Jenny Godsall	Knowle CofE Primary (Rurals)	Y
HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY ACADEMIES (2)	Ben Taylor	Our Lady of the Wayside (Evolve)	Y
GOVERNORS OF PRIMARY ACADEMIES (2)	Lynda Mackay	Knowle CofE Primary (Rurals)	Y
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Claire Smith (P)	Tudor Grange (Synergy)	Y
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Charlotte Shadbolt (G)	Heart of England (Rurals)	Y
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Darren Gelder (P) Vice Chair	Grace Academy (Unity)	Y

SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Stephen Steinhaus (P)	Solihull AP Academy	Apologies
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Stuart Shelton	St Peters RC (Synergy)	Y
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Clare Thorpe (HT)	Langley Secondary (Evolve)	Apologies
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Andrew Best (G)	Smith's Wood Secondary Academy (Fairfax MAT)	Y
REPRESENTATIVE OF MAINTAINED SPECIALIST PROVISION (1) attend on rota basis	Andy Simms	Hazel Oak	Apologies
REPRESENTATIVE OF SPECIALIST ACADEMIES (1)	Trevor Scott	Castlewood School	Apologies
REPRESENTATIVE OF PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS (1)	Eleanor Clarke	Triple Crown Centre	Y
ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (3)	Councillor Annette McKenzie (Conservative)		Y
ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (3)	Councillor Michael Gough (Conservative)		N
ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (3)	Councillor Andy Hodgson (Green)		N
TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES (2)	David Lewis	TU Rep	Y
TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES (2)	Gareth Eastham	NASUWT	Apologies
TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES (2)	Gary Woodhouse (Substitute Member)	GMB	N
REPRESENTATIVES OF EARLY YEARS PVI SECTOR (2)	Gina Godwin	Whitesmore Neighbourhood Nursery (Wise Owls)	Y
REPRESENTATIVES OF EARLY YEARS PVI SECTOR (2)	Lisa Whitehouse	Tender Years	Apologies
REPRESENTATIVES OF POST-16 COLLEGES (2)	Rebecca Gater	Solihull College	Apologies Lee Jamieson attended

REPRESENTATIVES OF POST-16 COLLEGES (2)	Martin Sullivan	Sixth Form College	N
OBSERVERS	Peter Davis	Diocesan Education Service (The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham)	Partially virtually
OBSERVERS	Sarah Smith	Education for Birmingham, The Church of England	y
OBSERVERS	Donna O' Carroll	SMBC	Y
OBSERVERS	Clare Pagan	SMBC	Y
Officers (attend as required)			
Assistant DCS	Tim Browne	SMBC	Y
Head of Commissioning for Learning	Steve Fenton	SMBC	Y
Head of Inclusion	Michele Sadler	SMBC	N
School Place Planning Team Leader	Ann Pearson	SMBC	N
Childrens Services Finance Manager	Sarah Cheale	SMBC	Y
SMBC Senior Accountant	Verity Dixon	SMBC	Y
Head of SEND 0-25	Charlotte Jones	SMBC	N
Clerk	Suzanna Corrigan	SMBC	Y

Item	Minute	Action
1	<p>Apologies Trevor Scott Claire Thorpe Rebecca Gater – Lee Jamieson in her place. John Mc Dermott Lisa Whitehouse Stephen Steinhaus Louise Minter Andrew Simms Gareth Eastham Donna Luck</p>	
2	<p>Minutes from last meeting Agreed</p>	
3	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>3.1 Note to new members that the previous Forum meeting was unprecedented and is not usually how the meeting takes place.</p>	

	3.2 Outstanding Items from previous meeting will be covered within this meeting.	
4	<p>Cabinet Member's update – Councillor Michael Gough</p> <p>4.1 No update as Councillor Michael Gough not present.</p> <p>4.2 Antoinette Fisher noted that there is no obligation for councillors to attend the Forum but it would be appreciated if they did attend so as to understand the strength of feeling around the table.</p> <p>4.3 Jenny Godsall raised the point that this Forum is a formal link of sharing information to cabinet members to ensure we have confidence that they understand what is happening and the strength of feeling around it. Can we request that they attend?</p> <p>4.4 Antoinette Fisher agreed that council members getting the information first hand would be better but stated that Tim Browne does update them regularly on the strength of feeling. It was noted that no cabinet members were present at the last meeting due to a clash. Antoinette will clarify with cabinet members.</p> <p>4.5 Eleanor Clarke stated that if the upcoming OFSTED report, which is quite damaging, didn't bring them to the table what would. It should be an expectation that they attend.</p> <p>4.6 Jenny Godsall expressed her concern over the reputational damage to Solihull from this report.</p> <p>4.7 Steve Fenton clarified that Forum regulations state that the lead member for education (The Portfolio Holder) cannot be a member of Forum but may attend as an observer. The council arrangement is that they appoint two elected members who sit on Forum.</p> <p>4.8 Bernie Farkas wanted it noted that we do have a councillor present- Councillor Annette Mc Kenzie.</p> <p>4.9 Antoinette Fisher thanked Councillor Mc Kenzie for attending.</p> <p>4.10 Councillor Mc Kenzie said that she will share this with her cabinet colleagues.</p>	<p>AF</p> <p>AM</p>
5	<p>Assistant DCS update – Tim Browne</p> <p>5.1 Peter Campbell is now in post as Director of Children's Services.</p> <p>5.2 Expecting the OFSTED report in the 2nd week of January 2023.</p> <p>5.3 High Needs – in discussions with Newton as part of the DFE's Delivering Better Value Programme.</p> <p>5.4 Bid for £1 million – discussion with heads on how best to spend this.</p> <p>5.5 We have submitted a bid for another special free school – if approved would be 4 to 5 years before it opens.</p> <p>5.6 Aiming to expand provision in the short term but must be careful to get the balance right.</p> <p><u>Questions and comments</u></p> <p>5.7 Antoinette Fisher questioned whether the new Autism free school ("The Heights" operated by Forward Education Trust) would be ready by September 2023.</p> <p>5.8 Tim Browne stated that the school will open in September; however alternative accommodation will be provided if the building is not ready.</p>	

	<p>5.9 Lynn Clark asked when we will be informed of the outcome for the bid for the special school and when would it be ready to accept children.</p> <p>5.10 Tim Browne expected this to be known by summer 2023 with the reality of opening to children in four to five years.</p> <p>5.11 Bernie Farkas questioned the age of children attending as 7+ so no provision for younger children and what would be the profile of the children.</p> <p>5.12 Tim Browne stated that it's children with very high need ASD and SEMH complexities, there are very few pupils requiring such provision at the infant phase – Mill Lodge ARP (8 places) is designed to take the profile of pupils we were sending to ARK Napton. To cater for pupils with much higher needs than can be accommodated in our secondary/primary ASD ARPs.</p>	
6	<p>Constitution / T of R 2022-23 - Steve Fenton</p> <p>6.1 Minor changes made to wording only</p> <p>6.2 Forum agreed to approve the Constitution</p>	
7	<p>School Funding update 2023-24 - Steve Fenton</p> <p>7.1 The report deals mainly with the school funding announcement made July 2022, but since then there has been an Autumn budget statement. However the government have not yet published detailed information such as revised NFF factor levels or revised DSG grant levels.</p> <p>7.2 The July settlement shows a 1.99% increase in Schools Block DSG and pupil funding.</p> <p>7.3 Since then we have had the Autumn Statement and nationally, there seems to be £1 billion extra per year for each of the next two years (a further 2.4% increase on the 1.99%, but it is not clear).</p> <p>7.4 From the Headline announcement, £2.3 billion but in the small print it states that they are deducting the supplementary grant, as the NI increase has been abolished.</p> <p>7.5 Awaiting NFF unit values data to be published.</p> <p>7.6 Important to note in point 4.1 school funding is unlikely to match inflation.</p> <p>7.7 Government required all authorities to move closer to the NFF by 2027/28 if not before.</p> <p>7.8 In Solihull we are already at NFF but we will now need to include two new mandatory factors of mobility and sparsity.</p> <p>7.9 In point 3.12 there is no proposal from the authority to seek any transfer from High Needs Block.</p> <p>7.10 Under full national funding formula any transfer is impossible.</p> <p>7.11 Lynn Clark queried whether this meant collaboratively training in things such as AET, as this would be a more effective and efficient way forward within the partnership.</p> <p>7.12 Steve Fenton agreed, and Tim Browne stated that there would be a small working group discussing this.</p> <p>7.13 As stated in point 2.2 we, as Forum, need to endorse the NFF strategy to include mobility and sparsity and endorse the NFG permitted max of 0.5%.</p> <p>7.14 Forum agreed to carry forward school blocks deficits against school blocks DSG.</p>	

	<p>Schools Forum resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To endorse the current strategy of emulating the national funding formula (NFF) as closely as possible. For 2023-24 this will involve including 2 new mandatory factors of mobility and sparsity. b) To agree to using the AWPU (Age Weighted Pupil Unit) as a “balancing figure” if applying the NFF unit rates gives an under or over allocation of schools block dedicated schools grant. c) To endorse the approach whereby budget modelling assumes MFG at the permitted maximum (as in previous recent years), which for 2023-24 is +0.5%. d) To endorsing the approach that Solihull will only apply (carry forward) a schools block deficit against the 2023-24 schools block DSG. 	
8	<p>Early Years funding formula change proposal - Steve Fenton</p> <p>8.1 The rates for next year are still unknown.</p> <p>8.2 From the modelling produced Solihull came out as over 4% which put Solihull into the higher benefitting group of authorities.</p> <p>8.3 Government are looking to incorporate teacher pay grants which only applies to schools in the Early Years funding formula. Point 3.8 in the report explains the reasoning.</p> <p>8.4 We likewise need to introduce new funding for the teacher pension grant.</p> <p>8.5 Steve Fenton to model this and bring it back to the next meeting, it was looking appropriate to have a factor for pension element (the increase was both significant and only relates to teachers), less so for the teacher pay grant (all settings have faced pay awards, the grant relates to an unusual funding deal between the DFE and Treasury, rather than compensation for unusually high award).</p> <p>8.6 Gina Godwin shared her concern and worry over not being able to plan for Early Years due to lack of details on funding. 95% of her setting is funded by the EY funding and she can't put a levy onto parents.</p> <p>8.7 Steve Fenton referred to point 3.61 in the report regarding the 21p rise.</p> <p>8.8 Antoinette noted that this was the only platform for some members such as Gina Godwin to share their concerns and opened the floor to any more comments.</p> <p>8.9 Gina Godwin stated that things are getting more difficult. Some settings have gone bankrupt. In more deprived areas there is even less flexibility.</p> <p>8.10 Darren Gelder stated that we are seeing a complexity of needs at an earlier age and this needs to be recognised and he echoed earlier comments that the council representatives need to be here to hear this.</p> <p>8.11 Gina Godwin stated that they feel undervalued in Early Years. We are told by government that it is important but it is underfunded.</p> <p>8.12 Steve Fenton stated that we can only make modest choices, for example, the increase in inclusion fund spending to be charged to the High Needs Block, rather than increase the EY DSG inclusion fund.</p> <p>8.13 We have seen an increase of 300% in 3 years in SEN.</p> <p>8.14 Deprivation had funding increase last year and we will try to do the same again this year. This increase will go straight to the settings.</p>	SF

	<p>Forum resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) For Officers to model a factor to incorporate teacher pay and pension grants as special factors, based on the level of grants added to the Solihull EY DSG funding block. b) To increase deprivation by a similar % to basic hourly rate. c) To pass on any increases in the funded rates through increasing the basic hourly rate for all settings the basic hourly rate. 	
9	<p>Notional SEN Budget – proposed change – Steve Fenton</p> <p>9.1 Fulsome report as a useful reminder to everyone about all things SEN Notional budget.</p> <p>9.2 From the Green Paper and the NFF the government are thinking that there is a clear logic to work towards a national calculation of a Notional SEN budget, and it continues to be important to give school leaders an indication of the resources within their school funding that could reasonably be related to SEN.</p> <p>9.3 Government have produced a model. The report compares that model with Solihull’s current model, similar in some regards, but also some important differences.</p> <p>9.4 The calculation can matter to some schools, as Solihull (and other LAs do use the notional SEN to determine additional funding for schools with exceptional levels of SEN.</p> <p><u>Questions and comments</u></p> <p>9.7 David Lewis would like to see this modelled to see what impacts it would have and what adjustments if any we can do. We will run with it for now.</p> <p>9.8 Claire Smith made the point that SEN funding can be complex and challenging and makes planning difficult. She suggested that support should be provided particularly for those new into roles.</p> <p>9.9 Steve Fenton agreed that it is complicated and stated that it is up to us to make it simpler.</p> <p>9.10 Jenny Godsall agreed and suggested we should take the opportunity to do something different.</p> <p>Forum resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Model closely to the government model b) Consider suitable protection arrangements for schools that would face a significant loss of funding that they currently receive with the current Solihull calculation. 	
10	<p>Central Budgets and de-delegations 2023-24</p> <p>10.1 Forum has explicit approval power in relation to Central Services</p> <p>10.2 Steve Fenton went through each report separately.</p> <p>10.3 <u>Growth Fund</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increased by £250,000 this year b) Growth fund is used in two ways – to fund bulge classes and planned growth. c) Increase in fund this year due to pressure from Hong Kong Visa Scheme, Ukrainian and Afghanistan resettlement schemes and inward migration. 	

- d) First local authority to receive an £800,000 loan from the government due to the pressures.
- e) David Lewis questioned how we accommodate them.
- f) Steve Fenton suggested to Forum that in these uncertain times we keep Central Services and can roll over as we navigate chaos.
- g) It shouldn't impact school budgets as it's a separate component.
- h) The figures are looking a bit dated and need a refresh.
- i) Darren Gelder queried a spend of £83,000 on Complaints. Is it reasonable? Is it accurate? Could the money be spent best elsewhere? As an academy we have our own investigation officers. In these uncertain times we need to know that we are getting the best value.
- j) Steve Fenton stated that this money is ringfenced and goes to offset subsidies.
- k) Bernie Farkas queried how we are working off a set of calculations that are roughly four years old.
- l) Forum discussed how can they be asked to sign this off when the figures are outdated. Forum questioned certain aspects of the report such as Complaints and Income Awards.
- m) Antoinette Fisher stated that it is correct that we, as Forum, challenge this. We need to understand what we are being asked to approve. A review or update of figures is required.
- n) Verity Dixon explained that this is a job that she is undertaking now but has only been in the post since July.
- o) Sarah Cheale stated that this is not a position we choose to be in at the council.
- p) Jenny Godsall asked if the report could be updated for this time next year so that we are not put in the same position.
- q) Steve Fenton stated that we need to re check definitions
- r) Need to approve the Growth Fund at £600,000, Central Services block at £1.3 million (2.5% decrease)

VD

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10.4 Central School Services Block – Retained and General duties elements.

- a) Solihull now receives zero funding for historical commitments (combined services), other than £1.1m for prudential borrowing commitment
- b) De-Delegations – needs to increase by £5, to £10 for loss of school improvement grant – as required by the government. Up to £76.
- c) Jenny Godsall queried on contingency fund whether we have any falling pupil roles?
- d) Steve Fenton said there were, and it is used where school unable to fund management of change costs without going further into deficit.
- e) Trade Union duties remains at £5.
- f) Lynn Clark questioned whether, following re-examination of recharges, we could compare this year's and next year's figures.
- g) Verity Dixon stated that this already in place and we will do our best to compare.
- h) Forum agreed that next time there will be a revision of central costs / recharges.

10.5 Early Years

- a) Figures for EY advisory team are pretty robust.

	<p>b) FIS team – up to date figures. c) Propose that the EY inclusion funding remains at £250,000 d) Contingency fund at £30,000 mainly used as a balancing figure.</p> <p>Forum Resolved: Central services (a) That the growth fund be maintained at £600,000 and that the growth fund criteria is approved as shown in Appendix C, recognising the considerable on-going pressure on secondary and primary school places. (b) That the Central Services Block equal to the amount of DSG grant received (£1,338,492 provisional, representing a 2.5% decrease) be approved as set out in the report. (c) That the Central Service Block – historical commitments be approved at the expected grant level of £1,115,000, in respect of prudential borrowing commitment only, noting there are now no other remaining Combined Services items.</p> <p>Early Years (d) To approve central spend of £253,380 Early Years Advisory Team, £257,253 FIS team, and £289,234 EY Services recharge be approved for 2023-24, which is below the statutory limit of 5% of EY funding. However, should the EY grant increase in value for inflation, and subject to the 5% limit permit, Forum approved inflation increase of 2.5% for the Advisory Team and FIS team elements, noting there was increase 2022-23 or 2021-22. (e) That the Early years Inclusion fund funded from the Early Years Block remains at £250,000. (f) That the Early Years contingency fund remains at a reduced level (currently £36k, but Forum noted this may flex a little as the Council prepares the detail of early years funding rates).</p> <p>De-delegations – Maintained schools only (maintained schools only may vote) (g) To approve de-delegation of General Duties: Primary (£76.00 per pupil), special (£190.00), and PRU (£290.00). (h) To approve the primary school contingency de-delegation of £6.40 per pupil (£83,427) continues, as for previous years. (i) To approve a de-delegation for Trade Union Duties of £5.00 per pupil for 2023-24 (£65,177), as for 2022-23, noting this is at the target level set by Forum some years ago.</p>	
11	<p>Work Group reports:</p> <p>a) Finance Group 07-11-22 David Lewis 11.1 We anticipate that there will be a further debt this year due to high needs of £3.2 million with a deficit of £16.6 million. 11.2 Admissions are a real success under extreme pressure. Applications have almost doubled from 1,600 to 3,002 in a year. 1013 from Hong Kong with no extra funding. Appeals are up 300%. Out of 358 appeals 3 were successful. 11.3 Jenny Godsall made the point that every time there is an appeal the school has to pay. 11.4 Antoinette Fisher explained the Capital WG will amalgamate with the Finance WG. The T of R for Finance WG will be amended to reflect this.</p>	

	<p>b) EdSend, SSSAB (Solihull Schools Strategic Accountability Board) and Conference Louise Minter (verbal report by Lynda Mackay on behalf of Louise Minter)</p> <p>11.5 Schools are struggling with Oracle Cloud</p> <p>11.6 Heads expressed concerns about the upcoming Work Force Census.</p> <p>11.7 Regarding inclusion: ongoing concerns about the significant and complex needs of some children resulting in pupils and staff being unsafe.</p> <p>11.8 Heads felt that that responses to EHCP team were ignored.</p> <p>11.9 Urgent need for intervention.</p> <p>11.9 Exclusions are significantly high (37)</p> <p>11.10 Claire Smith questioned what the long-term plan for these children is. Parents are questioning her when there is no provision. Led to believe that this will now be done through tuition services.</p> <p>11.11 Tim Browne responded that we are in unprecedented times, and we are looking to shore this up in the short term as we are unsure if it is a blip or trend.</p> <p>11.12 Antoinette Fisher stated that it is hard to keep an eye on these children.</p> <p>11.13 Darren Gelder stated that this is a trend that will continue.</p> <p>11.14 Nicole Fowles is sending a questionnaire to all schools to gather information on High Needs in schools.</p> <p>11.15 Peer to peer support programme will restart.</p> <p>11.16 Clair Mc Neill's report showed issues around recruitment and retention. Jenny Godsall stated that a questionnaire has been sent to all schools around this.</p> <p>11.17 Ed Safeguarding group has not met since July as no chair.</p> <p>11.18 No refreshments at SSSAB.</p> <p>11.19 NAHT report from Jane Davenport and Sarah Hobden gave a report on Supporting Families Programme.</p>										
12	<p>AoB</p> <p>12.1 Lynn Clark queried why we meet at 5pm? Could we meet at a time during the day? Is it for councillors?</p> <p>12.2 Antoinette stated that it was historically in the evening, after school, and when car parking was available.</p> <p>12.3 Steve Fenton to poll members</p> <p>12.4 Next meeting is 26th January and time to be confirmed</p> <p>12.5 Antoinette thanked all for attending and wished all a Merry Christmas.</p> <p>12.6 Meeting adjourned.</p>	SF									
13	<p>Dates of future meetings – times to be confirmed</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="331 1637 1248 1749"> <tr> <td>Forum</td> <td>Thursday, 26 January 2023</td> <td>Room 1 Civic Suite</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Forum</td> <td>Thursday, 25 May 2023</td> <td>Room 1 Civic Suite</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Forum</td> <td>Thursday, 13 July 2023</td> <td>Room 1 Civic Suite</td> </tr> </table>	Forum	Thursday, 26 January 2023	Room 1 Civic Suite	Forum	Thursday, 25 May 2023	Room 1 Civic Suite	Forum	Thursday, 13 July 2023	Room 1 Civic Suite	
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