

Thursday, 21 March 2024, 10.00 am in the Savoy Suite, The Exchange, County Hall, Preston

**Present:**

**Primary School Governors**

Stephen Booth (LSF Vice-chair)  
Gerard Collins  
Lindy King  
Robert Waring  
Sam Ud-din  
Tim Young

**Primary School Headteachers**

Daniel Ballard  
Sarah Barton  
Jenny Birkin  
Neil Gurman  
Deanne Marsh  
Helen Shaw  
Kirsty Sutton

**Secondary School Governors**

John Davey  
Brian Rollo

**Secondary School Headteachers**

Ivan Catlow  
Oliver Handley

**Academy Governor**

Kathleen Cooper  
Chris McConnachie

**Academy Principal**

Steve Campbell  
James Keulemans

**Special School Academy Headteacher**

Louise Parrish

**Special School Governor**

Mandy Howarth

**Special School Headteacher**

Claire Thompson

**Short Stay Governor**

Sharon Bennett

**Short Stay Headteacher**

Abigale Bowe

**Nursery School Governor**

Thelma Cullen

**Nursery School Headteacher**

Jan Holmes

**EARLY YEARS - PVI**

Sharon Fenton  
Philippa Perks

**OTHER VOTING MEMBERS**

CC Sue Hind  
Bill Mann

**Observers - Non-Voting Representatives**

Sarah Troughton  
Lorimer Russell-Hayes (LASGB)

**Officers in Attendance**

Matthew Dexter  
Millie Dixon  
Toni Rafferty  
Aby Hardy



## **1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Janice Astley, Alison Daly, Rosie Fearn, Michelle O'Neill, CC Jayne Rear, Sarah Robson, Anna Smith, John Tarbox

## **2. Substitute Members**

No Substitute members were present at this meeting.

## **3. Forum Membership**

No forum membership changes to note since the last meeting.

## **4. Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 11 January 2024, were agreed as a correct record.

## **5. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising since the last meeting.

## **6. Recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group**

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group from 7 March 2024.

### **6.1 School Forum Membership**

The Schools Forum regulations require that the balance of Forum membership for maintained primary schools, maintained secondary schools and academies is reviewed to ensure that the number of Forum representatives in these groups is proportionate to the pupil populations across the schools.

Now that the final October 2023 census numbers are available, the Forum membership has been reviewed against the latest pupil data, academy conversions post census date and conversions anticipated up until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

Due to the number of academy conversions in 2023/24, the data shows that a reduction in the number of maintained representatives and an increase of academy representatives is required from September 2024. It is envisioned this will be achieved naturally during the annual review process. If the reduction does not occur through the annual review, then schools members wish to continue, appointment date and term of office will be taken into account, and if necessary lots will be drawn to identify which members are no longer able to serve on the Forum.

The county council is aware that there are a number of academy conversions planned during 2024 and will keep the membership balance under review ahead of the annual membership refresh for September 2025.

As part of the membership review, members requested the geographic membership distribution across the authority to be reviewed. This showed on the basis of the October 2023 census data in comparison to the current membership, that each

district within the county is represented by a maintained voting member on the Forum. It also highlighted that some districts, were marginally over or under representative. This will be reviewed in line with vacancies going forward.

#### *Schools Forum Chairs Group Membership*

The Chairs Working Group is made up of the Forum Chairs and representatives from each sector. It is proposed that each working group, Forum Vice and Forum chair is re-elected in the Summer Term meetings for the next academic year. Current Forum chairs are able to be reappointed during this process. Members are eligible self-nominate for the role. If more than one member comes forward, members of the working group will take a vote.

Also, on 27 February 2024, the LA emailed school and early years members of the Forum, as part of the annual membership review, to ascertain if individuals wish to continue to serve on the Forum in the next academic year commencing in September 2024. Responses were requested by Thursday 28 March 2024.

The outcome of the review will be communicated to the Schools Forum in the Summer Term.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the information.
- b) Welcomed an approach to target vacancies at districts with less representatives in the first instance.
- c) Welcomed the approach to re-elect the Schools Forum chairs annually.

**Individual members are asked to complete the annual membership eform by the deadline if they have not already done so.**

## **6.2 Schools Block Budget 2024/25**

At the Schools Forum on 11 January 2024, decisions and recommendations about the 2024/25 Schools Budget were agreed.

In connection with the Schools Block, the Forum unanimously supported the 2024/25 Schools Block proposals, including:

- The DfE's National Funding Formula (NFF) methodology should continue to be used as the Lancashire formula for 2024/25;
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) be set at +0.5% for 2024/25, mirroring the National Funding Formula;
- Growth Fund allocation not being utilised with National Funding Formula Budgets.
- The use of the Minimum Pupil Funding (MPF) rates contained in the NFF for any new Growth Fund allocations from April 2024:
  - Primary £4,610 per pupil
  - Secondary £5,995 per pupil

On 18 January 2024, the County Council's Cabinet formally approved the Schools Budget for 2024/25.

The Authority Proforma Tool (APT), setting out the agreed Schools Block proposals for 2024/25, was then submitted to the ESFA for compliance checking ahead of the 22 January 2024 deadline.

Some elements of the Schools Budget require compliance checking by the ESFA and approval was received on 20 February 2024.

Budget statements for 2024/25 were prepared and issued on 28 February 2024.

Since 2022/23, the DfE calculate the PPG allocations based on October school census data, rather than the January school census. This means that actual PPG information will be available much sooner, and the DfE have indicated that 2024/25 allocations should be notified to the LA in the summer term.

Once we receive the confirmed 2024/25 PPG allocations from DfE, we will inform schools of their actual PPG allocation for 2024/25 later in the financial year.

Academy schools will receive their PPG allocations directly from the ESFA.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the information

### **6.3 Inclusion Hub Funding 2024/25**

Following a consultation with schools in the autumn term 2023, the Forum again voted to de-delegate funding for primary inclusion hubs in 2024/25. The de-delegation cost was held at the 2023/24 rate of £11.00 per pupil for maintained primary schools and generates circa £1m for inclusion hub activities in Lancashire.

The distribution methodology has used pupil numbers and a deprivation factor to calculate the allocations for each district. For 2024/25, it is proposed to continue this methodology, the working group was provided with the allocations calculated for each district from April 2024.

District allocations are very similar to those for 2024/25, with 1 district receiving a marginally higher allocation and 8 slightly lower allocations. The largest change for a single district is a circa £3.1k increase in funding and the smallest change is circa £1,000.

Further updates will be presented to the Forum in due course about the operation of the hubs, and the Forum will need to make formal decisions in October 2024 about de-delegation options for 2025/26.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the report.
- b) Requested the de-delegation to be reviewed for 2025/26 and evidence based reports to be provided to the Schools Forum prior to the de-delegation process in the Autumn Term.

#### **6.4 Growth Fund Policy Update 2024/25**

The county council has a responsibility under section 14 of the education act 1996 to ensure that there are sufficient primary and secondary school places in the county.

Since 2014, the Schools Forum has had in place a Growth Fund Policy to assist schools/academies commission by the LA for basic need growth. The policy ensures that a transparent and formulaic process is used for allocating additional funds that takes account of expanding schools' needs whilst minimising the effect on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

The policy has been amended from time to time since its introduction, to take account of various developments. The latest substantive amendment of the policy was agreed by the Forum in March 2021, to support the establishment and growth of a new school in Lancashire.

A copy of the latest policy was provided to members which has been updated for April 2024, to take account of the 2024/25 growth fund rates agreed by Forum as part of the budget setting process (based on the relevant Minimum Pupil Funding (MPF) rate contained in the National Funding Formula) and Schools Operational Guide.

For the first time in 2024 to 2025 local authorities will be required to provide growth funding where a school or academy has agreed with the local authority to provide an extra class to meet basic need in the area (either as a bulge class or as an ongoing commitment). In Lancashire, this will be funded through the Growth Fund. The policy has been amended slightly to reflect this.

In addition payment options have been removed from the policy, payments will be made by the following;

- This will be payable in a primary school / academy include a payment profile of an equal payment in each of the seven years.
- This will be payable in a secondary school / academy include a payment profile of an equal payment in each of the five years.

The Working Group

- a) Noted the updated policy.

**The Forum ratified the working Group's recommendations.**

#### **7. Recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group**

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group from 5 March 2024.

##### **7.1 Matters Arising**

Members raised the following items;

### *Post 16 Commissioned Places*

It was raised that currently, Post 16 commissioned places are not redetermined annually, unlike the pre 16 places.

Officers agreed this would be reviewed for the 2025/26 budget setting process. Further update – Post 16 places are agreed in line with college places which are not determined and set for the year. The LA has always aligned commissioned places in both Post 16 in special schools and colleges for consistency, so there is no additional place funding for post 16 special schools places.

### *Commissioned Place Process*

Members shared feedback around the 2024/25 commissioned places process, in particular the Indicative Commissioned Place Numbers letter which was sent in October 2023.

Forum representatives will discuss with their sectors and report back to the Summer cycle of meeting where the process will be agreed for 2025/26.

### *Intervention Cap Places for PRU's*

Members raised this item at the last meeting and requested an update. It was noted Officers are currently reviewing the process and that modelling for 2025/26 has begun. This will be presented to the working group in due course.

## **7.2 School Forum Membership**

The High Needs Block considered the Schools Forum Membership outlined in Item 6.1.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the information

## **7.3 High Needs Block Budget**

At the Schools Forum on 11 January 2024, decisions, and recommendations about the 2024/25 Schools Budget were agreed.

In connection with the High Needs Block, the Forum unanimously supported the 2024/25 High Needs Block proposals, including:

- Agreeing on an increase in commissioned places.
- The historic commitments element transferred to the High Needs Block (from CSSB) to continue for;
  - 200K to Emotional Health and Wellbeing commissioned service
  - 150K to for the Multi-Agency safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- Increasing the Weighted Pupil Numbers (WPN) rate across all school and FE settings by 2% to £5,440;

- For Specific Factors Special School and PRU School Specific factors uplifted by 2% as in 2023/24
- As the overall high needs funding increase is now included in the 2024 to 2025 high needs funding formula, the Dedicated Schools Grant conditions of grant for 2024 to 2025 requires local authorities to pass on the same level of additional funding to these schools. The distribution of additional high needs funding at 3.4% to all Special Schools and PRUS.

On 18 January 2024, the County Council's Cabinet formally approved the Schools Budget for 2024/25.

Some elements of the Schools Budget required compliance checking by the ESFA and approval, this was received on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024, and Schools Budgets were released on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

Since 2022/23, the DfE now calculate the PPG allocations based on October school census data, rather than the January school census. This means that actual PPG information will be available much sooner, and the DfE have indicated that 2024/25 allocations should be notified to the LA in the summer term.

Once we receive the confirmed 2024/25 PPG allocations from DfE, we will inform schools of their actual PPG allocation for 2024/25 later in the financial year.

Academy schools will receive their PPG allocations directly from the ESFA.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the information.

#### **7.4 SEN Data**

In February 2024, the School's Forum received a letter from the Lancashire Special School Business Manager network. The letter outlines the current issues schools are experiencing with termly redeterminations.

During the recent LSSHTA meeting, members raised concerns around inaccuracies and the timing of the SEN data collection in October 2023. As a result, a letter was sent to the Schools Forum.

As a group they are becoming increasingly frustrated with termly redeterminations and out of authority funding and the impact this has on school budgets and the provision for pupils.

The errors with the termly redeterminations were raised by the group 2019 which resulted in some improvement. However, this is not the current situation. A summary of the:

- WPN on the revised funding statement does not match the count submitted
- School specific numbers are incorrect on the funding statements
- New admissions are not included and leavers are not removed
- Bandings (agreed by SEND) are incorrect.

- Pupils disappear off the count for no reason or reappear having left years ago
- Where there are issues i.e. incorrect bandings or missing pupils – funding is not backdated
- Issues and errors flagged up are never acted upon

Schools Improvement and Inclusion officers were present at the meeting to respond to the letter received. A team of Business Support Officers have been assigned to cleanse the SEN data. This work is ongoing and may take a long time.

The LA are currently in the process of commissioning a company to create live attendance data for every child across the authority. This will be a new system and will contribute to improving the SEN data. It was noted at the working group that live attendance data is a statutory requirement from September 2024. Lancashire is currently looking to implement this system before September, updates and communication will be provided to schools at the earliest opportunity.

The Working Group

- a) Noted the information.
- b) Raised concerns around the validity of the SEN data and the impact this may have on funding.
- c) Welcomed the initiatives

### **7.5 High Needs Block Monitoring 2023-2024**

Due to the cost and demand led pressures on the High Needs Block budget, arrangements were introduced from 2018/19 to provide the Forum with termly budget HNB monitoring. A report detailing the available period 1 to 10 2023/24 data monitoring and analysis was presented to the working group.

It was noted that the High Needs Block budget is currently forecasting a circa £5.59 m overspend at 31 March 2024.

The monitoring is an estimate of the full year forecast, based on expenditure that has occurred in the period between April 2023 – January 2024.

It was noted that there remains significant ongoing financial pressure facing this block as the demand and costs continue to rise.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report.
- b) Raised concerns around the forecasted balance at March 2024 and encouraged the LA to develop short and long term plans to reduce the strain on the block.

**The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations.**



## 8. Recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group from 12 March 2024.

### 8.1 Schools Forum membership

The Early Years Block noted the Schools Forum Membership outlined in Item 6.1.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the information.

### 8.2 Early Years Block Budget 2024/25

At the Schools Forum on 11 January 2024, decisions, and recommendations about the 2024/25 Schools Budget were agreed.

In connection with the Early Years Block, the Forum unanimously supported the 2024/25 Early Years Block proposals, therefore the 2024/25 rates are as follows:

#### *3 and 4-year-old entitlements*

Due the increased funding Lancashire has received, the Lancashire base rate for 3 and 4-year-old entitlements is £5.41 per hour in 2024/25, an increase of £0.33 per hour from 2023/24.

The 2024/25 funding rates:

2023/24 Base rate	£5.08 per hour
2024/25 DfE uplift	£0.27 per hour
2024/25 Additional funding from within the Early Years Block	£0.06 per hour
2024/25 Base rate	£5.41 per hour

#### *3- and 4-year-old Supplementary funding hourly rate for maintained nursery schools*

Lancashire will receive a £0.63 increase in the supplementary funding hourly rate for maintained nursery schools in 2024/25, which will be passed to the maintained nursery schools, providing a revised hourly supplement rate of £5.18 per hour.

#### *2-year-old entitlement*

Following the Early Years 2024/25 funding announcements, it was agreed in conjunction with the Early Years Working Group that Lancashire adopts one single funding rate for 2-year-old entitlements, plus a deprivation supplement based on a similar mechanism to that which currently exists within the 3- and 4-year-old formula.

Therefore, the Lancashire base rate for 2-year-olds will be £7.10 per hour from April 2024, plus a deprivation supplement where necessary.

#### *Under 2-year-old entitlement*

From September 2024, the base rate will be set at £9.51, plus a deprivation supplement based on a similar mechanism that currently exists within the 3- and 4-year-old formula.

### *Early Years Pupil Premium*

Lancashire will increase our early years pupil premium rate by 2p to 68p per hour, equivalent to up to £387 per eligible child per year, for 2024/25, in line with national announcements.

### *Disability Access Fund*

Lancashire will increase the disability access fund by £29 to £910 per eligible child per year for 2022/23, in line with national announcements.

### *Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund*

Local authorities are now required to have a Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund for all eligible 3 and 4-year-olds, 2-year-olds and under 2's (from September 2024) who are taking up the free entitlements, regardless of the number of hours taken. For 2024/25 the Lancashire fund will total £2.65m due to the increased demands and extended entitlements.

On 18 January 2024, the County Council's Cabinet formally approved the Schools Budget for 2024/25.

Some elements of the Schools Budget require compliance checking by the ESFA and approval was received on 20 February 2024. Early Years budget statements for 2024/25 were prepared and issued on 28 February 2024.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the information.

## **8.3 Early Years Rates 2024/25**

The working group were presented a breakdown of the 2024/25 rates and how the rates are funded in Lancashire. It was noted that local authorities are required to pass-through at least 95% of their 3 and 4-year-old funding to early years providers.

Lancashire is one of only four LA's nationally that do not use any EY funding for centrally retained services. Lancashire is funded based on January Census. The working group noted that no funding is received for supplementary hours, however Lancashire funds settings for supplementary hours. Due to this, actual funding rate paid to providers is higher than funding received from DfE. A breakdown is provided below.

2 YO 24-25		3/4 YO 24-25	
24-25 Base Rate + Average Deprivation Rate	£7.48	24-25 Base Rate + Average Deprivation Rate	£5.50
Estimated Full Year Hours	5,036,781	Estimated Full Year Hours	14,448,275
Total Supp Hours Jan 23	24,906	Total Supp Hours Jan 23	39,681
Estimated Full Year Supp Hours	86,038	Estimated Full Year Supp Hours	137,078
Total Amount Paid	£37,699,845	Total Amount Paid	£79,531,002
Total Supp Hours Paid	£643,990	Total Supp Hours Paid	£754,552
Total Hours Paid - Total Supp Hours Paid	£37,055,855	Total Hours Paid - Total Supp Hours Paid	£78,776,449
Percentage of Supp Hours Paid	1.71%	Percentage of Supp Hours Paid	0.95%
Average IDACI Rate	£0.38	Average IDACI Rate	£0.09
Total Amount Paid	£37,699,845	Total Amount Paid	£79,531,002
Total Hours - Total Supp Hours	4,950,742	Total Hours - Total Supp Hours	14,311,196
Total Amount Paid/Net Funded Hours	<b>£7.61</b>	Total Amount Paid/Net Funded Hours	<b>£5.56</b>
Additional Supplementary Funding Rate	<b>£0.13</b>	Additional Supplementary Funding Rate	<b>£0.06</b>
Average Rate Paid Minus DfE Funding	<b>-£0.07</b>	Average Rate Paid Minus DfE Funding	<b>-£0.09</b>

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the information and the presentation.
- b) Requested this information to be shared at the Schools Forum.

#### **8.4 Early Years Inclusion Fund Update**

The working group received a verbal update from the Early Years Inclusion Fund meeting which was held on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Key issues from the meeting were discussed at the working group. A summary was provided at the meeting.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the information.

#### **8.5 Early Educations Funding headcount and Interim Payments 2024**

A report was presented at the working group due to recent feedback from a small number of nurseries and several childminders raising concerns about the current payment terms. This is a particular concern for providers due to the increase in numbers of funded children from April 2024 onwards, and the resulting decrease in 'private' income. Several providers are now requesting monthly payments.

Therefore, a consultation will be arranged shortly to gather the views of the sector. It is envisioned the consultation will open shortly and analysis will be reviewed by the working group during an extraordinary meeting in May to allow processes to be implemented for September. The outcome will be reported during the Summer Term meetings.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the information.
- b) Welcomed the consultation and the extraordinary meeting to review the results.

#### **8.6 Early Years Deprivation Rates 2024/25**

It was reported at the working group that since the release of the 2024/25 budget statements, unfortunately the authority have identified that there has been a data error in the deprivation rate calculations. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data was used instead of the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) which has resulted in some rates being incorrect.

To protect settings in 2024-2025 that would face a reduced rate as a result of this error, it was proposed to the working group that the original deprivation rates will be honoured where the correct rates for 2024-2025 are less.

This protection would only apply from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. In addition, deprivation rates for the 2025-2026 financial year will be re-calculated using child level postcodes/data from the Autumn 2024 claims. The new deprivation rates will be updated in the Provider Portal towards the end of March/early April 2024.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the information.

- b) Supported the proposal to honour deprivation rates stated on the 2024/25 Budget statements for this year only.

## **The Forum ratified the Working Group's recommendations.**

### **9. Forum Correspondence**

There was one item of correspondence received which is addressed in Item 7.

### **10. Any Other Business**

#### *10.1 Payroll Teachers Pensions Query*

Following concerns raised by members at the Working Groups around Teachers Pension reporting since the implementation of Oracle Fusion, the Schools forum clerk requested an update from the Payroll service. The information below was provided.

Regular communications around this Teachers Pension reporting issue have been issued to schools via the HR and Payroll bulletins (as per the below message), for dissemination within each school. Teachers' unions and Teachers' Pensions are also aware of the issue. The most recent update which has been communicated to all schools in the Spring Term can be found below.

*Following the upgrade to Oracle Fusion, Teacher Pensions contributions have continued to be deducted from salary payments and paid over to TP each month. There remains the current issue preventing TP from allocating the contributions to the appropriate teachers' record. We are aware that this causes concern among our teacher colleagues and continue to address cases on an individual basis in retirement cases. Please be assured that this issue remains a very high priority, work is due to commence imminently with one of our partners on a solution and we will advise once ready for deployment.*

#### **HMRC self-assessment Teachers' Pensions information**

*Due to the on-going issues with the reporting of service information to Teachers' Pensions, if any employee requires an update to their service in order to obtain their annual allowance details, please submit a request to [payroll-clients@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:payroll-clients@lancashire.gov.uk). Please note that this will bring your service up to date for the current time, we can't submit manually on an on-going basis due to the high volume of teachers that LCC needs to report, as we require a technical solution to complete the backlog of reporting and recommencement of monthly data.*

*Due to the number of teachers employed by LCC (in excess of 12,000) it is not possible for manual updates to be submitted, unless an employee is planning for retirement within this academic year. Please rest assured that your pension contributions are being paid over to TP and your service record will be updated as soon as possible following the implementation of a system solution.*

Further updates have been requested from the service and will be communicated to members in due course.

The Forum:

- a) Noted the information.

## 10.2 Grants

The ESFA has recently released conditions of Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant (TPECG). Mainstream school allocations will be calculated by the ESFA, the LA has local discretion for Special and PRU allocations.

Funding will be based on 2023/24 academic year commissioned places at £595 per place. As the initial funding the local authority will receive will be based upon the agreed commissioned places for 2023/24, initial allocations to providers in the Summer term will be based on 2023/24 commissioned places. This will then be adjusted in March 2025, based on the 2024/25 academic year commissioned places. A ready reckoner for maintained schools is available of the ESFA website.

The ESFA will confirm in due course how the high needs element of the TPECG 24 funding will continue to be provided in 2025 to 2026.

Following the Teachers Pay Additional Grant (TPAG) funding for 2023/24, the Local Authority to confirm the plan for Special and AP Schools in 2024/25.

As the initial funding the local authority will receive will be based upon the agreed commissioned places for 2023/24, initial allocations to providers in the Summer term will be based on 2023/24 commissioned places. This will then be adjusted in March 2025, based on the 2024/25 academic year commissioned places.

It is anticipated that from 2025/26 onwards the funding will then be rolled into the core budget allocation as part of the high needs national funding formula.

The Forum:

- a) Noted the information.

## 10.3 Register of Interest forms

Following the last meeting, the process to collect the data has been reviewed. As a result, to ensure collating the data is efficient an online questionnaire will be sent out shortly to members

The Forum:

- a) Noted the information.

## 11. Date of Future Meetings

To note that the next scheduled Forum meeting will be held at 10.00 am on Thursday 21 March 2024. Arrangements for the meeting will be confirmed in due course.

A copy of the forum schedule for the 2023/24 academic year can be found [here](#). Proposed dates for 2025/26 Schools Forum meetings were included in the papers

The Forum:

- a) Noted and approved the 2025/26 schedule subject to one amendment.