

# HILLINGDON SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 October 2023 at 1pm via Teams

## Voting members

NAME	ORGANISATION	ATTENDANCE	TERM ENDS
<b>Maintained Nursery (1)</b>			
Shabana Aslam	McMillan Early Childhood Centre	PRESENT	Sep 2026
<b>Maintained Primary - Schools (4)</b>			
Kris O'Sullivan	Deanesfield Primary School	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Kate Needs	Lady Banks	PRESENT	Sep 2027
Mel Penney	Glebe Primary School	PRESENT	Sep 2027
Carly Rissen	Colham Manor	PRESENT	Sep 2024
<b>Maintained Primary - Governors (4)</b>			
John Buckingham	Glebe Primary School	APOLOGIES	Sep 2024
Jim Edgecombe	Whiteheath Junior School	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Tony Eginton (CHAIR)	Minet Infant & Nursery School & Hillside Junior School	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Phil Haigh	Cherry Lane Primary School & Meadow High School	PRESENT	Sep 2024
<b>Maintained Secondary (1)</b>			
Dan Cowling	Oak Wood School	APOLOGIES	Sep 2026
<b>Maintained Special (1)</b>			
Jenny Rigby	Meadow High School	APOLOGIES	Sep 2027
<b>Academies (9)</b>			
Harshinder Buttar	Lake Farm Park Academy	PRESENT	Sep 2027
John Garner	Ruislip High School	PRESENT	Sep 2026
Nicola Kelly	Charville	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Helen Manwaring	Swakeleys School	APOLOGIES	Sep 2027
Liam McGillicuddy	Bishopshalt	APOLOGIES	Sep 2027
David Patterson	Queensmead School	APOLOGIES	Sep 2023
(3 vacancies)			
<b>Special Academies (1)</b>			
Sudhi Pathak	Eden Academy Trust	PRESENT	Sep 2026
<b>Alternative provision (1)</b>			
Paul Chambers	The Skills Hub	PRESENT	Sep 2027
<b>Private Voluntary &amp; Independent Early Years Providers (2)</b>			
Elaine Caffary	4 Street Nursery	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Naazish Haq	Little Companions	PRESENT	Sep 2027
<b>14-19 Partnership (1)</b>			
(1 vacancy)			

## Other attendees (non-voting)

<b>Independent Non-Maintained Special School</b>			
Debbie Gilder	Pield Heath School		PRESENT
<b>Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Schools)</b>			
Eleesa Dowding	Harmondsworth		NOT REQUIRED
<b>Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Governor)</b>			
Jo Palmer	Hillside Infant School and Hillside Junior School		PRESENT
Graham Wells	Colham Manor Primary School		NOT REQUIRED
<b>Maintained Special</b>			
Pearl Greenwald	Hedgewood School		PRESENT
Bryony Smith	Hedgewood School		PRESENT
<b>Officers</b>			
Ndenko Asong	LA Finance		PRESENT
Kate Boulter	Independent Clerk		PRESENT
Michael Hawkins	LA Head of Education & Lifelong Learning		PRESENT
Paul Gulley	LA Finance		PRESENT
Julie Kelly	LA Corporate Director of Children's Services		PRESENT
Dan Kennedy	LA Corporate Director of Central Services		PRESENT
Dominika Michalik	LA SEND Technical Specialist Lead		PRESENT
Sheilender Pathak (SHP)	LA Head of Finance Children's		PRESENT
Sailesh Patel (SAP)	LA Finance		PRESENT
Abi Preston	LA Director of Education & SEND		PRESENT
Philip Ryan	LA Early Years		PRESENT
<b>Observers</b>			
Aleksander Kowzan	ESFA		PRESENT
Michael Wilmott	NEU (for item 11 - AOB)		PRESENT

		<b>ACTION</b>
1.	<p><b>APOLOGIES &amp; INTRODUCTION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apologies were accepted and recorded in the attendance list (above). The Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate and could proceed to business.</li> <li>Before commencing business, the Chair reported that David Patterson’s term of office had expired in September 2023 and the nomination/election process for Academy Representatives had not been completed yet. The Forum <b>AGREED</b> that David could be a voting member for the purposes of this meeting.</li> </ul>	
2.	<p><b>ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NEU report - case for an increase in facilities for trade union local officers</li> </ul>	
3.	<p><b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2023 were <b>AGREED</b> as a correct record of the meeting.</p>	
4.	<p><b>MATTERS ARISING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All matters arising from the meeting held on 29 June 2023 were covered elsewhere on the agenda.</li> <li>A member commented that, at its meeting on 29 June 2022, the Forum had requested that ‘School provision for children from asylum seeker families’ remain as a standing item on the agenda, and for figures on the number of Ukrainian children in the Borough to be circulated to Forum members. AP confirmed that a report on this would come to the next meeting. DK advised that the LA kept raising with the DfE the issue of funding for asylum seeker children, but no solid progress had been made.</li> </ul>	<b>AP</b>
5.	<p><b>SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP UPDATE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There were two new members of Forum: Kate Needs had been nominated by Primary Forum as a Primary Maintained Representative, and Naazish Haq had been nominated by the LA as a PVI Representative.</li> <li>There were vacancies for four Academy Representatives due to terms expiring in September 2023 and people leaving their school roles. KB/AP would liaise to send out the call for nominations.</li> <li>There was a vacancy for a Primary Maintained Shadow Representative, and Primary Forum would be asked to nominate a replacement.</li> <li>There was a vacancy for a 14-19 Partnership Representative.</li> </ul>	<b>KB/AP</b> <b>MP</b>
6.	<p><b>FEEDBACK FROM SUB-GROUPS &amp; WORKING GROUPS</b></p> <p><b>(a) HIGH NEEDS FUNDING GROUP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Forum noted the minutes of the High Needs Funding Group held on 3 October 2023.</li> </ul> <p><b>(b) EARLY YEARS FUNDING GROUP – 10 OCTOBER 2023</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Forum noted the minutes of the Early Years Funding Group held on 10 October 2023 and the report on the Early Years National Funding Formulae Update for 2024-25.</li> <li>It was noted that the disability access fund and early years pupil premium were under-claimed, and settings should ensure they claimed for all children who might be eligible.</li> </ul>	
7.	<p><b>ITEMS FOR DECISION</b></p> <p><b>(a) SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS</b></p> <p>The Forum considered a report which proposed revisions to the Scheme for Financing Schools, which had not been updated since 2020. The proposed revisions were minor and included a revision directed by the DfE which required schools in deficit to submit a recovery plan to the LA if their deficit rose about 5% at 31 March of any year. The Forum commented that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Para 2.13 on page 13 allowed schools to agree a loan for NQTs (which should be ECTs) of up to £1500 repayable over one year, and it was suggested that consideration be given to increasing this figure to £3000 repayable over two years.</li> <li>A figure of £189,330 given in relation to tender services in the table on page 12 differed from the figure of £138K given on the Council’s website. Officers to check figures.</li> </ul>	<b>SAP</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Para 4.9 on page 21 stated “The local authority may only license deficits up to a maximum of 40% of the total of surplus balances at the end of the previous financial year held by schools maintained by the authority.” The Forum requested that officers provide details of what percentage of Hillingdon’s schools currently had licensed deficits, and a three-year forecast for this. Officers advised that they could provide this to the June 2024 meeting after the 2024/25 school budgets had been submitted to the LA.</li> <li>• Currently the same card purchasing limit of £6K applied to all schools and it was suggested that consideration be given to revising this.</li> </ul> <p>The Forum <b>APPROVED</b> the revised Scheme for Financing Schools for consultation with maintained schools.</p>	<b>SAP</b>
	<p><b>(b) DE-DELEGATION FINANCE PAPER</b></p> <p>The Forum considered a report which proposed de-delegation from schools’ budget shares for funding the statutory functions of the Education Improvement Service in monitoring and supporting maintained schools. Officers advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DfE had removed the school improvement grant in 2022/23 and it was expected that maintained schools would fund statutory services through de-delegation.</li> <li>• A request for de-delegation for the Education Improvement Service had been refused by the Forum at its meeting on 18 January 2023. Since then, there had been improvements to the Education Improvement Service, which members of the Forum would be able to confirm.</li> <li>• The range of services provided to maintained schools included supporting where there was a cause for concern such as performance outcomes, staffing changes or headteacher support, finance support, governor training, SEND support and post-16 support.</li> <li>• A decision on the de-delegation was required by 17 November 2023. If the Forum did not support the de-delegation, the LA would submit a disapplication request to the DfE.</li> <li>• Forum members were expected to have consulted with their respective groups prior to this meeting.</li> </ul> <p>The Forum commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It had not been made clear to Forum members before the meeting that they would be required to consult with their respective groups in order to make a decision at this meeting.</li> <li>• The next Forum meeting was on 6 December 2023 so there was no time to formally consult with schools and consider the responses at a meeting.</li> <li>• When this was considered in January, the Forum’s reasons for refusing had included schools being unhappy with the LA School Improvement Service for many years, Hillingdon performing badly compared with other London boroughs, no clear plan having been provided setting out how the service would be improved and what benefits this would bring to schools, and an observation that some of the statutory services were already funded from the DSG. It was felt that these areas would need to be addressed to gain the support of schools at that time.</li> <li>• One member, whose school’s contribution would be £6.5K, observed that self-improving schools would need to be persuaded why to buy into the LA service rather than commission services privately. Officer responded that the proposal related to de-delegation of statutory services only</li> <li>• In response to a question as to whether this could be funded from DSG central services, officers advised that DSG central services paid for essential services for both maintained and academies such as safeguarding and the LADO. The de-delegation of statutory services for schools was required because that was the model the DfE wished maintained schools to use to fund this.</li> <li>• There was a discussion about the de-delegation of school improvement duties being similar to a MAT top slicing its schools, where schools may have to pay towards school improvement support but only use it when they require improvement.</li> <li>• One member asked how much maintained schools have de-delegated from schools’ budgets already for other services. It was clarified that there are no contributions made from schools’ block for central services at the Council – it is allocated in its entirety to schools (with the exception of the growth contingency fund).</li> </ul>	<b>AP/MP</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Chair reported that the two secondary maintained heads had informed him that they did not support this de-delegation.</li> </ul> <p>The Forum <b>AGREED</b> that schools would be consulted as follows with responses required by 3 November 2023 (1) MP would consult members of Primary Forum;</p> <p>(2) AP/MP would work together to agree wording to go out in the Schools Bulletin;</p> <p>(3) other primary representative members of Forum would send their views to the Chair.</p> <p>The Forum <b>NOTED</b> that the secondary maintained heads had confirmed they did not support this de-delegation so secondary did not require further consultation.</p>	
	<p><b>(c) PROPOSED CONSULTATION – SCHOOLS BLOCK 2024/25 NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA</b></p> <p>The Forum considered a report which provided a briefing on the decisions required for the 2024/25 budget setting process for the provisional Schools Block allocation of the DSG, following the receipt of revised provisional funding allocations in October 2023 and the revised Authority Proforma Tool in October 2023. The Forum was asked to consider the four proposed models and discuss any preferences with respect to the options available for the distribution of Schools Block funding in Hillingdon prior to consultation with the wider school’s community.</p> <p>The Forum commented that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Models 1 and 2 were not suitable. There was little difference between Models 3 and 4.</li> <li>The report suggested there would be a transfer of 0.75% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. The Forum could not agree any transfer over 0.5% so would not have the authority to approve this.</li> </ul> <p>Officers advised that the 0.75% transfer was fundamental to the budget. The LA proposed to submit a disapplication request. The LA is required to discuss this with Forum. A vote is not appropriate as Forum has no power to approve any transfer in excess of 0.5%.</p> <p>The Forum <b>AGREED</b> to consult schools on Model 4, and for it to be explained that the figures provided were indicative and subject to change when the October census figures were available and confirmation of any decision relating to the 0.75% transfer.</p>	
	<p><b>(d) PROPOSED CONSULTATION – SEN NOTIONAL FUNDING</b></p> <p>The Forum considered a report which provided information on the requirement for local authorities to identify a notional SEN budget for their mainstream schools to help them comply with their duty to meet the special educational needs of their pupils. The report sought the Forum’s approval of a consultation with mainstream schools on the proposed calculation of SEN notional funding contained within their mainstream schools’ budgets for 2024/25. In response to questions from Forum members, officers advised that the notional funding would have no effect on school budgets but was required by the DfE to guide LAs in discussions with mainstream schools as an indicator of what schools might be spending on SEND support and high needs pupils.</p> <p>The Forum <b>AGREED</b> the consultation with all Hillingdon mainstream schools on the proposed calculation of SEN notional funding contained within their mainstream schools’ budgets for 2024/25</p>	
8.	<p><b>INFORMATION ITEMS</b></p>	
	<p><b>(a) 2023/24 DSG BUDGET MONITORING (MONTH 5)</b></p> <p>The Forum considered a report which stated that the DSG forecast position at Month 5 was an overspend of £4,462K. The deficit brought forward from 2022-23 was £21,887K and after taking into account the expected safety valve funding of £7,750K, the cumulative deficit carried forward to 2024-25 was £20,879K.</p> <p>The Forum commented that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The figures reported had not been updated since month 2 monitoring, as work was still continuing to produce a more accurate figure for December Cabinet.</li> <li>There was no point trying to speculate what the actual figures were, and the Forum looked forward to receiving a more accurate report at the next meeting.</li> </ul> <p><b>(b) SAFETY VALVE AGREEMENT - UPDATE</b></p> <p>Officers provided an update on the Safety Valve Agreement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LA was in discussion with the DfE to update the Safety Valve Agreement. Some of the data previously provided was not accurate and some planned savings had not been achieved. The plan was being renegotiated based on the latest cleansed data and consideration was being given to extending the period of the Agreement.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a significant gap in funding resulting in a DSG overspend due to a number of pressures including high placement costs and inconsistent funding of EHCPs. All areas were being analysed to identify how to deliver strong support and outcomes for children within available funding.</li> <li>• The ring fencing of the DSG may be ending with potentially serious consequences for the Council.</li> <li>• The Forum and other stakeholders had not been receiving the updates they should in relation to the Agreement. In future there would be much greater transparency and shared monitoring and progress reports.</li> <li>• An update would be provided to the December Forum meeting.</li> </ul> <p>The Forum commented that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers were thanked for providing a clear update on the budget and Safety Valve position. It had been evident to Forum for some time that the deficit was increasing, however in the absence of any reports it had not been possible for Forum to monitor or confirm its speculations.</li> <li>• If not controlled, the deficit had the potential to wipe out the Council’s reserves when the DSG ring-fencing was removed.</li> <li>• It was reassuring to hear that there would be greater transparency in sharing of information in future.</li> </ul> <p><b>(c) HIGH NEEDS UPDATE</b> Officers advised that the Council was proposing a pilot project to fund support of high needs children in mainstream schools using outreach from the behavioural support team at the Skills Hub.</p>	<b>AP</b>
9.	<p><b>FOR NOTE – AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING – AS PER FORWARD PLAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Forward Plan was <b>NOTED</b>.</li> <li>• School provision for children from asylum seeker families to be a standing agenda item.</li> </ul>	<b>KB</b>
10.	<p><b>SCHOOLS FORUM REVIEW</b></p> <p><b>(a) FINDINGS OF REVIEW &amp; NEXT STEPS / DRAFT INDUCTION PACK</b> The Forum considered the responses and actions arising from the review of Schools Forum carried out in the summer, together with a draft induction pack for new members. The Forum commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The induction guidance referred to the SBUF which was no longer used. Funding was based on the National Funding Formula.</li> <li>• The content and dates of training for Schools Forum members, many of whom had never received any training, should be progressed as a matter of urgency.</li> </ul>	<b>AP</b>  <b>SF TASK &amp; FINISH GROUP</b>
11.	<p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <p><b>(a) NEU – CASE FOR AN INCREASE IN FACILITIES FOR TRADE UNION LOCAL OFFICERS</b> The Forum considered a report from the NEU which sought the Forum’s agreement to an increase in the de-delegated funding for trade union facilities time to £6.25 per pupil, the establishment of a facility for academy schools to buy into the facilities funding agreement, and the membership of the Forum include formal representation from trade unions.  The Forum commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would be helpful for the report to set out what was statutory.</li> <li>• The Forum had previously received the budget for trade union facilities time and it had been apparent that not all academies were buying in, but were benefitting. The latest figures should be provided to show how time/cost was split.</li> </ul> <p>The Forum <b>AGREED</b> that (i) the proposal should be consulted upon for discussion at the December Forum meeting; and (ii) Schools HR be asked to provide the latest income and expenditure figures for union time.</p>	<b>SAP</b>

The meeting closed at 3.25pm