

HILLINGDON SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 6th December 2023 at 1pm via Teams

Voting members

NAME	ORGANISATION	ATTENDANCE	TERM ENDS
Maintained Nursery (1)			
Shabana Aslam	McMillan Early Childhood Centre	PRESENT	Sep 2026
Maintained Primary - Schools (4)			
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
Maintained Primary - Governors (4)			
John Buckingham	Glebe Primary School	APOLOGIES	Sep 2024
Jim Edgecombe	Whiteheath Junior School	APOLOGIES	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
Maintained Secondary (1)			
Dan Cowling	Oak Wood School	PRESENT	Sep 2026
Maintained Special (1)			
Jenny Rigby	Meadow High School	PRESENT	Sep 2027
Academies (9)			
Harshinder Buttar	Lake Farm Park Academy	PRESENT	Sep 2027
John Garner	Ruislip High School	APOLOGIES	Sep 2026
Nicola Kelly	Charville	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Helen Manwaring	Swakeleys School	APOLOGIES	Sep 2027
Liam McGillicuddy	Bishopshalt	PRESENT	Sep 2027
David Patterson	Queensmead School	APOLOGIES	Sep 2023
Nicola Edwards	William Byrd School	PRESENT	Dec 2027
(2 vacancies)			
Special Academies (1)			
Sudhi Pathak	Eden Academy Trust	PRESENT	Sep 2026
Alternative provision (1)			
Paul Chambers	The Skills Hub	PRESENT	Sep 2027
Private Voluntary & Independent Early Years Providers (2)			
Elaine Caffary	4 Street Nursery	APOLOGIES	Sep 2024
Naazish Haq	Little Companions	PRESENT	Sep 2027
14-19 Partnership (1)			
(1 vacancy)			

Other attendees (non-voting)

Independent Non-Maintained Special School			
Debbie Gilder	Field Heath School		APOLOGIES
Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Schools)			
Eleesa Dowding	Harmondsworth		NOT REQUIRED
Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Governor)			
Jo Palmer	Hillside Infant School and Hillside Junior School		NOT REQUIRED
Graham Wells	Colham Manor Primary School		NOT REQUIRED
Maintained Special			
Pearl Greenwald	Hedgewood School		PRESENT
Bryony Smith	Hedgewood School		PRESENT
Officers			
Ndenko Asong	LA Finance		PRESENT
Michael Hawkins	LA Head of Education & Lifelong Learning		PRESENT
Paul Gulley	LA Finance		APOLOGIES
Julie Kelly	LA Corporate Director of Children's Services		APOLOGIES
Dan Kennedy	LA Corporate Director of Central Services		APOLOGIES
Dominika Michalik	LA SEND Technical Specialist Lead		APOLOGIES
Catherine Mosdell	Independent Clerk		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		APOLOGIES
Observers			
Carol Jumpp-Graham	NEU (Item7A only)		PRESENT

Michael Wilmott	NEU (Item 7A only)	PRESENT
Marina Evans	NEU (item 7A only)	PRESENT

		ACTION
1.	<p>APOLOGIES & INTRODUCTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apologies were accepted and recorded in the attendance list (above). The Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate and could proceed to business. New members Nicola Edwards (HoS at William Byrd) and Ben Spinks (Middlesex Learning Partnership) were welcomed and introduced. 	
2.	<p>ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for Schools - PH 	
3.	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2023 were AGREED as a correct record of the meeting.</p>	
4.	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training for SF members: AP/SAP have liaised with TE/PH and hope to present a draft schedule to the spring SF meeting. It was agreed to set the dates for SF meetings 2024/2025 before setting dates for training. 	SAP
5.	<p>SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP UPDATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy Membership: Applications from William Byrd and the Middlesex Learning Partnership have been received which would leave one vacancy. It is essential appointments are made through the formal process. If anyone knows of a possible candidate, please provide the details. 14-19 Partnership: A member was appointed however resigned. Members note this category is an LA appointment. It was acknowledged that Jonty Archibald (Global Academy) would have the skills however accepted he might not have the time. TE/AP will contact him 	TE
6.	<p>FEEDBACK FROM SUB-GROUPS & WORKING GROUPS</p> <p>(a) HIGH NEEDS FUNDING GROUP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The draft minutes were circulated in advance of the meeting. The LA will provide a report on the Month 7, 2023/24 forecast DSG outturn. Most top-up funding payments have been received; the LA finance team is in touch with any schools where payments remain outstanding. Members were assured payments to the independent schools are in a better position. Minimum Funding Guarantee – Special Schools: Members recognised the difficulty in paying at two different rates and, after consulting with the special schools, agreed to the LA’s suggestions to make a one-off year-end settlement adjustment. The questions over the payment of the 3.4% banded funding were discussed. Concerns were expressed that the level of EHCP funding does not cover associated costs in mainstream schools. The increase in costs at independent, non-maintained schools was noted. There are 406 students (including post-16) at a cost of over £22m which accounts for 40% of the overall budget. The LA SEND team is working on a projected numbers to find ways to manage the funding in future. A query was raised in regard to a named independent school. It was acknowledged that some backlog in payments remain in the independent sector and the importance of independent schools keeping the portal up to date was emphasised. 	

- NA confirmed he has a meeting with the school in question next week and hopes to resolve the outstanding issues.

(b) EARLY YEARS FUNDING GROUP

- Notification of funding has only recently been received therefore nothing to report to his meeting.

7. ITEMS FOR DECISION

7A: De-delegation (Trades Union)

- The late circulation of the paper was acknowledged.
- The TU representatives took the opportunity of explain the importance of their work in support of staff and emphasised their value to schools in resolving issues with staff.
- The current rate per pupil is £2.19 and Members are asked to agree an increase to £6.25. The TU reps accepted this is a high increase and, if not acceptable, asked Members to consider a lower rate of £4.00.
- In discussion, Members felt more information on accountability and value for money would have been helpful. In response, an assurance was given confirming termly reports on activity are provided to Schools HR. Members agreed the annual report to SF from Schools HR was insufficient to justify the requested increase in costs.
- The TU reps stated that all staff have a statutory right to representation and employers have a duty to release ‘in school’ reps to carry out their duties. School reps are also given training on a wide range of topics to ensure professional conduct and standards are in place. If Members agree to the increase, the ‘in school’ reps will be more available and therefore disputes resolved more efficiently. The fees also cover the cost of the Unison & JMB reps based at the Civic Centre.
- It was acknowledged the costs requested apply to the maintained sector only; academies are able to ‘buy in’ however this is not a statutory requirement. Members felt this was an unfair system and the burden of cost was falling to the maintained sector.
- It was clear from discussion, Members would not agree to the £6.25 rate; members were asked to vote on the £4.00 rate.

Decision:

Do members agree to delegate £4.00 per pupil to the TU? Voting is for maintained school members only.		
	For	Against
Primary/Nursery sector	2	5
Secondary sector	1	1

- In discussion:
 - Members recognised the decision for the secondary sector is ‘split’.
 - There is no guidance in the rules regarding split or casting votes.
 - The decision, on behalf of all maintained schools, is delegated to SF members therefore the vote is conclusive.
 - It was noted, in previous years, SF Members did not vote for de-delegation therefore this decision has some precedence.
 - Schools can make the individual decision to ‘buy-into’ the TU and pay the cost directly to the union.
- In conclusion, the TU reps emphasized the valuable service provided to schools and urged SF to reconsider its decision at the earliest opportunity.

7B De-delegation (Pensions admin).

- The paper was circulated in advance of the meeting.
- It was established the pensions admin payment does not apply to the academy sector therefore the decision is for the maintained sector only.

Decision:

Do members agree to de-delegate the pensions admin at £1.28 per pupil? Voting is for maintained school members only.		
	For	Against
Primary/Nursery sector	7	0
Secondary sector	2	0

- The Chair declared the decision to de-delegate the pensions admin is **approved**.

7C: Schools block 24/25 NFF(and consultation returns)

- The four options were presented to the October meeting at which time Members endorsed Option 4.
- SAP confirmed 35 responses to the consultation have been received.
- There were no additional comments or questions therefore the meeting moved to vote.

Do members agree to de-delegate Schools Block NFF for 2024/2025?		
	For	Against
All eligible schools	8	0

- The Chair declared the decision to de-delegate the pensions admin is **approved**.

7D: Schools Block Transfer

- In response to a query on the SF right to vote on a sum greater than 0.5%; it was confirmed the DFF guidance states, SF can approve up to 0.5% on its own volition however a vote is required even if the matter is referred to the Secretary of State.
- SF has ‘no power’ on transfers above 0.5% however the guidance stated SF is ‘required to vote’ specifically where a safety valve is in place.
- SHP stressed the need to set agreed parameters; the result will then be included in the disapplication process and all schools will be consulted.
- In discussion, SHP agreed, ideally, the consultation would be in advance of the SF vote but there is scope for a later consultation. Members agreed, as the safety valve has been in place for a couple of years, officers should have been aware of the guidance and ensured the consultation was undertaken in advance of SF.
- AP confirmed the importance of the vote. The LA wants to work in partnership with schools; officers are aware of the level of work involved. The High Needs budget is everyone’s responsibilities; officers understand the pressure points that need to be addressed. Savings are required and we need to find a way to ensure the funding available can be used to meet needs.
- The Schools Block funding helps to support schools with a high number of EHCPs in place. The LA is looking to increase capacity and bring children currently in the independent schools into local facilities. Any movement will be at a natural transition point.
- In discussion, Members agreed the school community has a joint responsibility however there was a suggestion that schools, particularly schools in deficit, are ‘bailing out’ the LA.

Decision:

It was established that special schools cannot vote.

Do members agree to transfer 0.75% to High Needs.		
	For	Against
All eligible schools	1	7

Action: SHP confirmed he will now consult with all schools and circulate the paper presented to SF.

7E: SEN Notional Funding – review consultations received.

- SHP confirmed twenty-seven responses were received, twenty-six of which approved option one. One school recommended option 2.
- SHP stated the option one will be entered onto the ESFA schools budget setting template (the APT) subject to any ESFA limits built into the APT template.
- Members agreed to ‘note’ the report.

Decision:

Do members agree for the Council to use option 1 from the SEN Notional Funding?		
	For	Against
All eligible schools	9	0

8.

INFORMATION ITEMS

8A: DE-DELEGATION OF THE SIMB GRANT

- SF did not approve this item during discussion at the October meeting which has allowed the LA to ask the Secretary of State to review the de-delegation process.
- In response to a question, SAP confirmed the LA has informed the Secretary of State of the decision made at the October meeting.
- One procedural query was made: SF made a decision at the October meeting; the LA disagreed and has referred back to the Secretary of State. If the LA has the power to seek to overturn SF decision – what is the point in the SF vote?
- SAP confirmed the LA is working within statutory guidance and there is a mechanism in place to resolve disagreements between SF and the LA.
- AP stated the LA has a statutory duty to provide the service but the funds are not available. The LA did pay last year.
- A Member suggested the LA could raise funds from council tax revenue.
- NA reaffirmed the council’s wish to work collaboratively with schools. The DfE will arbitrate where there is a difference of opinion between the LA and SF. It was noted, the DfE does not automatically support the LA position. NA emphasised the importance of SF engaging with the process and reiterated the importance of the SF vote.

DECISION: Members note that the LA has submitted a dis-application to retain the schools improvement funding for 2024-25.

8B: 2023/2024 DSG budget monitoring.

- SHP confirmed the cabinet paper is due to be published later today (6/12/23) and he would therefore give a verbal update. SHP confirmed the paper will be circulated to SF when published.
- The in-year forecast as at month 7 is now an in year overspend of £12.820m, which is an adverse movement of £8.358m since the last forecast.

- The cumulative deficit for end of 2023/2024 is now forecast at £26.487m, largely due to the increasing numbers and costs of High Needs provision.
- The mounting DSG deficits is a national problem and faced by many councils.
- Members expressed concern at the increasing overall deficit It would be helpful to know how much of the deficit is historical and how much relates to the current year.
- Teachers' Pay & Pension payment not made in FY2022-23 have now been paid covering all outstanding payments for this grant.
- Members agreed on the importance of seeing the month 7 figures in the Cabinet report once it has been published before any meaningful discussion can take place.

8C: High Needs update

- Members agreed this item has been discussed throughout the meeting.

8D: Finance update

- SAP confirmed a grant of £491k has been received which will be used to support schools in financial difficulty.
- A strategy is needed going forward, to include schools in deficit and those falling into financial difficulty; a draft paper will be presented to SF for discussion/approval.
- One member drew attention to the historical deficit at his own school. The DfE guidance states the funding should be used to limit deficit and where the greatest need exists. The LA received the grant at the end of November.
- AP stated the LA is aware of difficulties faced by individual schools however must take a broad borough-wide view.
- It was reiterated that Cabinet approved licenced deficits. In the past, SF has not been consulted in advance of the Cabinet decision. It was recognised that SF may have a valuable view. It was noted that some schools have the potential to increase student numbers which would have a positive impact on funding.
- Licenced deficits are approved in November; Members agreed it would be helpful if the approval could be brought forward to the spring when schools are setting their budgets.
- **Action:** A paper will be presented to the next SF.

8E: Asylum Seekers

- The paper was circulated in advance; MH invited questions or comments.
- The provision seems considered. Is there provision for non-Ukrainian pupils?
- In general terms, pupils who join a school post-census take a lot of resources and are then moved on by the LA, often with no notice. Is any funding available?
- MH: The funding is 'per pupil' and in addition to Free School Meals. The challenge in accommodating the transient pupils is recognised. There is some support available via LEAP. The funding available will be promoted in the next briefing.
- The Ukrainian Support Worker is now in place.
- The details of financial support for Ukrainian pupils were acknowledged.
- The difficulty in keeping track of the more transient pupils, particularly those living in hotels, was recognised along with the associated safeguarding risks, including identifying children 'missing in education'.
- Members acknowledged and thanked the LA for the huge amount of support available.

8F: Scheme for Financing Schools

- SHP confirmed the scheme was proposed at the October SF, and has been approved following appropriate consultation. In developing the scheme, the LA consulted

	<p>with all maintained schools. All twenty responders agreed with the recommendations and SF is now asked to give formal approval. The scheme is complaint with guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One member raised an issue regarding paragraph 2.3.1 which relates to the historical deficit and is detrimental to his school. It would not be possible for his school to provide a three-year budget and other schools might be in a similar position. • In response, SHP confirmed this element of the scheme has not changed. All maintained schools have been consulted and SF approved the scheme at the October meeting. Whilst individual school positions are acknowledged, the scheme is for all schools. • The LA is requesting SF approval however approved is not a statutory requirement. • The Chair stated, as an agenda item, the paper is provided for information rather than approval and apologised for any ambiguity. • Decision: Members 'note' the document. 	
9	<p>Agenda Items for the next meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard Agenda • Outcome of the de-delegation paper 	
10	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PH agreed, Funding for Schools was adequately discussed throughout the meeting. 	
	<p>In closing the meeting, TE thanked everyone for their preparation and contribution to the meeting.</p>	

The meeting closed at 15:44hrs.