

HILLINGDON SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 17 January 2024 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	APOLOGIES	Sep 2024
Maintained Primary - Governors (4)			
John Buckingham	Glebe Primary School	PRESENT	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	PRESENT	Sep 2026
Nicola Edwards	William Byrd	PRESENT	Sep 2028
Nicola Kelly	Charville	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Helen Manwaring	Swakeleys School	APOLOGIES	Sep 2027
Liam McGillicuddy	Bishopshalt	APOLOGIES	Sep 2027
Ben Spinks	Middlesex Learning Partnership	PRESENT	Sep 2028
(2 vacancies)			
Special Academies (1)			
Sudhi Pathak	Eden Academy Trust	PRESENT	Sep 2026
Alternative provision (1)			
Paul Chambers	The Skills Hub	APOLOGIES	Sep 2027
Private Voluntary & Independent Early Years Providers (2)			
Elaine Caffary	4 Street Nursery	PRESENT	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	Pield Heath School		APOLOGIES
Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Schools)			
Eleesa Dowding	Harmondsworth		NOT REQUIRED
Nicky Bulpett	Ruislip Gardens		NOT REQUIRED
Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Governor)			
Jo Palmer	Hillside Infant School and Hillside Junior School		PRESENT
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
Kate Boulter	Independent Clerk		PRESENT
Julie Kelly	LA Director of Children's Services		APOLOGIES
Dan Kennedy	LA Director of Central Services		APOLOGIES
Sheilender Pathak (SHP)	LA Finance		PRESENT
Sailesh Patel (SAP)	LA Finance		PRESENT
Abi Preston	LA Director of Education & SEND		PRESENT
Philip Ryan	LA Early Years		PRESENT
Observers			
None			

		ACTION
1.	APOLOGIES & OPENING COMMENTS Apologies were accepted and recorded in the attendance list (above). The Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate and could proceed to business.	
2.	ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS None.	
3.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2023 were AGREED as a correct record of the meeting subject to the following amendments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The page numbering was incorrect. There were 5 pages not 7 pages. • Minute 1 – Introductions - Ben Spinks was an observer not a member at the meeting. • Minute 7A – De-delegation (Trade Union) – Amend the ‘Decision’ to “Do members agree to delegate to the TU?”. 	
4.	MATTERS ARISING (a) TRAINING FOR SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERS This was DEFERRED to a future meeting.	TE/AP
5.	SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP UPDATE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ben Spinks, new Academy Representative, was welcomed to his first meeting as a member of Forum. • There remained two vacancies for academy representatives and another round of nominations would be arranged. • The LA was looking for someone to fill the 14-19 Partnership vacancy. • Primary Forum had nominated Nicky Bulpett to fill the vacancy for a Shadow Representative for Maintained Primary Schools. 	KB/AP AP
6.	FEEDBACK FROM SUB-GROUPS & WORKING GROUPS (a) HIGH NEEDS FUNDING GROUP The Forum noted the minutes of the High Needs Funding Group held on 9 January 2024. The following points were highlighted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress had been made with the top-up funding arrears however it was still not up to date. • The special school 3% MFG and 3.4% DfE increases on the overall per pupil funding payments would be paid as lump sum in 2023-24. This funding would be built into the 2023-24 per pupil funding for consideration on future funding adjustments. • Discussions were ongoing about increasing the portal top-up funding rates for special schools for 2024-25 to include the 2023-24 MFG. (b) EARLY YEARS FUNDING GROUP – 16 JANUARY 2024 The Forum noted the notes of the Early Years Funding Group held on 16 January 2024. This was a single agenda item meeting to discuss the options for consultation on Early Needs funding for 2024-25 (see Minute 7d).	
7.	ITEMS FOR DECISION & NOTING	
	(a) SUMMARY OF DSG FUNDING ALLOCATIONS 2024-25 The Forum considered a report which provided an overview of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding announced by the Government on 19 December 2023 and the indicative amounts of each block of the DSG that would be allocated to Hillingdon for 2024/25. The following points were highlighted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final allocation of Hillingdon’s 2024-25 Schools Block DSG was £281million, which represented a £4.6million (1.7%) increase and a 1.6% increase in per pupil funding from 2023-24. Nationally the percentage increase in Schools Block funding was 2.2% and the per pupil increase was 2%. • There would be a separate pay grant for teachers’ pay (TPAG) and additional funding to support with increases to employer contribution rates for the Teachers’ Pension Scheme from April 2024. These would both be in 2024-25 and were over and above the funding schools would receive via the National Funding Formula. The Forum NOTED the report.	
	(b) SCHOOLS BLOCK 2024-25 BUDGET & FUNDING FORMULA The Forum considered a report which set out the principles of the Hillingdon schools local	

	<p>funding formula for 2024-25, as agreed by Schools Forum at its meeting on 6 December 2023, the 2024-25 funding factor values, and the draft 2024-25 funding allocations for each school. The report sought the Forum’s agreement to set the 2024-25 budget for growth of £1.219million, and the agreement of Maintained School Representatives to contribute towards the cost of General Education Duties carried out by the Council on behalf of maintained schools and a proposed contingency fund to assist maintained schools in financial difficulty. Officers reported that in other local authorities, maintained schools paid much more for central support services than what was proposed, and noted schools currently did not currently fund for maintained statutory services. Forum was asked to consider a contingency fund which was intended to support schools in challenging positions. The General Education Duties had been funded by the LA’s general fund in the past, and if Forum did not agree, the LA would submit a disapplication request to the DfE.</p> <p>The Forum commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would have been helpful for the ‘top slice’ requests to have been included at the last meeting when de-delegations were discussed. • The Scheme for Financing Schools stated that the LA was required to cover the cost of school redundancy payments where the Council’s procedures and processes had been followed. • A small number of schools in the Borough which were experiencing significant financial pressure as a result of taking disproportionate numbers of asylum seeker children. These schools were not receiving any financial support from central or local government. • Mainstream schools were paying a lot of money for SEND under-provision, to support children who would benefit from the expertise of a special school. • The introduction of a central charge for maintained schools could influence schools towards academisation. • The Forum did not consider it had enough information about the criteria and eligibility for accessing the contingency fund to be able to make a decision. <p>It having been put to a vote by Maintained School Representatives, the Forum AGREED: (1) not to contribute towards the cost of General Education Duties carried out by the Council on behalf of maintained schools; (2) not to contribute to the proposed contingency fund to assist maintained schools in financial difficulty.</p> <p>It having been put to a vote by all members of Forum, the Forum AGREED the 2024-25 budget for the growth fund, subject to the figures being re-worked to allow for the ‘top slice’ items not agreed.</p>	
	<p>(c) CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK 2024-25 BUDGET</p> <p>The Forum considered a report which set out the functions the Council intended to fund from the 2024-25 Central Schools Service Block (CSSB) grant. This was a block of the DSG intended to fund local authorities to carry out the statutory duties they held for both maintained schools and academies, as defined by the DfE.</p> <p>Officers advised that, since the report had been circulated, it had been identified that amendments were needed to the detail of the report, although the total allocation for 2024-25 of £2,429K (a net reduction of £51K from last year) would not change.</p> <p>The Forum AGREED to delegate final approval of the CSSB budget to the Chair, subject to there being no change to the total allocation.</p>	<p>TE</p>
	<p>(d) EARLY YEARS 2024-25 BUDGET & HOURLY RATES</p> <p>The Forum considered a report on the initial allocation of Early Years Block funding for 2024-25 including the extended entitlements for working parents of 2 year old children and children from age 9 months. The report provided an update on the National Funding Formula for Early Years, and funding rates and draft budget for April 2024 to March 2025 for 3 and 4-year-old universal entitlement and additional hours for working parents, 2-year-old entitlements for disadvantaged families and the entitlement for working parents, and under 2s entitlements for children aged 9 months to 2 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DfE had extended the number of free childcare offers available to working parents 	

in 2024/25. There would be new working parent entitlements introduced for 2-year-olds and children aged 9 months to 2 years during the year. The 2-year-olds offer would be for a maximum of 15 hours per week from 1 April 2024, and the under 2-year-olds offer for a maximum of 15 hours per week from 1 September 2024. It was intended that these offers would be extended further in 2025-26 to a maximum of 30 hours per week.

- Local authorities were required to set a local formula for both the 2-year-old offer and the under 2s offer in the same way as it had for 3- and 4-year-olds over the past 6 years.
- The report detailed all the offers and the corresponding budgets required for approval based on the 2024/25 hourly rates issued by DfE and the activity data from the January 2023 census and DfE estimates for the new offers.

The Forum commented that:

- At its meeting on 16 January 2024, the Early Years Funding Group had been presented with four options for 2, 3 and 4 year olds funding for 2024-25.
- The Group had agreed that two of the models (Options 1 and 2) should go forward for consultation.
- Options 3 and 4 built in additional inclusion funding which the Group agreed to in principle, but felt that introducing this so close to implementation of the formula would cause difficulty and instability for settings’ financial planning. A new working group would meet from April to consider proposals to increase inclusion funding for 2025-26.

The Forum (1) **NOTED** the report;

(2) **AGREED** to consult maintained nursery schools, primary schools with nurseries, PVI providers and childminders on Options 1 and 2 as recommended by the Early Years Funding Group;

(3) **AGREED** to delegate the decision on the EY funding options consultation to the Early Years Funding Group at its meeting on 7 February 2024, and to inform the PVIs and childminders of their funding immediately thereafter;

(4) **NOTED** that final agreed funding would be presented to the Schools Forum meeting on 20 March 2024.

(e) FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY

At the end of November 2023, the Hillingdon Council had received one-off funding of £491,623 as part of £20million allocated by the DfE between local authorities who had aggregated school-level deficits as a proportion of their total maintained schools’ income above 1%. Guidance from the DfE stated that the funding should be used towards elimination of the deficit balance and should take into account those in greatest need.

The Forum considered a report which set out Hillingdon Council’s proposals to distribute the £491,623 funding. The report proposed that the funding be distributed between the five schools which had deficits at 31 March 2023, and that the calculation for the allocation take into account not only the size of the deficit of each school as at 31 March 2023 but also the size of the deficit as a proportion of the school’s 2023-24 budget share.

Officers had to consider the needs across all schools in deficit across the Borough and the calculation was based on a share of the funding relating to the size of the deficit compared to the school’s budget. This was due to the ability for schools to pay back budgets being linked to the size of their budget.

The Forum commented that:

- Two of the five schools had large deficits and had been monitored by the Forum for some time. The other three had relatively small deficits and their backgrounds and reasons for falling into deficit in 2023 were not known to the Forum.
- Many schools were experiencing challenging financial circumstances and had only avoided falling into deficit by making difficult budgetary decisions. It would be helpful to have more context about the schools in deficit, such as whether the deficit was increasing, staffing levels and pupil numbers.
- There seemed no logic to the proposed allocation of funding. Under the proposal, the three schools with relatively small deficits would have their deficit reduced to very

	<p>small amounts (£12K, £20K and £6K). One school would receive £255K and have its deficit almost halved from £520K to £265K. The school with the largest deficit of £2,957K would receive £186K which would not have much of an impact on its overall deficit position.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several members of the Forum stated they would support the entire £491K funding being given to the school with the largest deficit. • The Forum suggested that consideration be given to allocating the funding on the basis of closing balances so that the school with the largest deficit received the highest amount. <p>The Forum NOTED that the final decision on allocation of the funding would be made by the Council, however the Forum urged the Council to take into consideration the Forum's comments and amend the proposed distribution to a fairer system.</p>	
8.	INFORMATION ITEMS	
	<p>(a) HIGH NEEDS UPDATE Officers advised that the High Needs Group were receiving regular and detailed reports of the work going on in this area.</p> <p>(b) FINANCE UPDATE Officers advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council was awaiting responses from the DfE regarding the amended Safety Valve Agreement and the transfer to the High Needs Block. • The DSG was showing a 12.8million in-year overspend at Month 7 which made the cumulative deficit £26.5million. • The Scheme of Financing Schools would be updated to remove references to LIBOR before publication. 	
9.	FOR NOTE – AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING – AS PER FORWARD PLAN The Forum noted that agenda items were set out on the Forward Plan.	
10.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS None.	

The meeting closed at 3pm