

HILLINGDON SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 2 July 2024 at 1.30pm via Teams

Voting members

NAME	ORGANISATION	ATTENDANCE	TERM ENDS
Maintained Nursery (1)			
Shabana Aslam	McMillan Early Childhood Centre	APOLOGIES	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	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
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	The Willows	PRESENT	Sep 2027
Liam McGillicuddy	Bishopshalt	APOLOGIES	Sep 2027
Ben Spinks	Middlesex Learning Partnership	APOLOGIES	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	APOLOGIES	Sep 2027
14-19 Partnership (1)			
Jonathan Jacob	Global Academy	PRESENT	Sep 2028

Other attendees (non-voting)

Independent Non-Maintained Special School			
Debbie Gilder	Pield Heath School		NOT REQUIRED
Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Schools)			
Eleesa Dowding	Harmondsworth		NOT REQUIRED
Nicky Bulpett	Ruislip Gardens		PRESENT
Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Governor)			
Jo Palmer	Hillside Infant School and Hillside Junior School		NOT REQUIRED
Graham Wells	Grange Park Junior School		NOT REQUIRED
Maintained Special			
Pearl Greenwald	Hedgewood School		PRESENT
Bryony Smith	Hedgewood School		PRESENT
Officers			
Laura Baldry	LA Admissions		PRESENT
Bharti Bhoja	LA Finance		PRESENT
Gary Binstead	LA		PRESENT
Kate Boulter	Independent Clerk		PRESENT
Danny Doherty	LA Finance		PRESENT
Amy Episcopo	LA Finance		PRESENT
Julie Kelly	LA Director of Children's Services		PRESENT
Sailesh Patel	LA Finance		PRESENT
Abi Preston	LA Director of Education & SEND		PRESENT
Philip Ryan	LA Early Years		PRESENT
Observers			
Carol Jumpp-Graham	NEU		PRESENT
Simon Warne	NEU		PRESENT

		ACTION
1.	<p>APOLOGIES & OPENING COMMENTS</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. 	
2.	<p>ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None. 	
3.	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>The draft minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2024 were considered and it was agreed that approval of the minutes be DEFERRED to the next meeting.</p>	TE
4.	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>All matters arising from the draft minutes appeared elsewhere on the agenda.</p>	
5.	<p>SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP UPDATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of members' terms of office would be ending in September 2024 and the next meeting was on 16 October 2024. The nominating bodies for the following categories, which had representatives with terms ending, were asked to confirm their nominations to the Clerk before the next meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Primary Maintained (2 x Representatives and 1 x Shadow Representative) – Primary Maintained Governors (4 x Representatives and 2 x Shadow Representatives) – PVI (1 x Representative) • There were two vacancies for Academy Representatives, and one other Academy member's term of office would end in September. The nominations process for the three academy representative vacancies would be held before the next meeting. • The Forum noted that this was Jim Edgecombe's last meeting after 22 years as a member of Schools Forum, including as Chair. The Forum thanked Jim for his tremendous service and wished him well in his retirement. 	<p>JP/MP</p> <p>AP/KB</p>
6.	<p>FEEDBACK FROM SUB-GROUPS & WORKING GROUPS</p> <p>(a) HIGH NEEDS FUNDING GROUP – 11 JUNE 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2024 were considered and it was agreed that approval of the minutes be DEFERRED to the next meeting. • PH reported that the Group had discussed the £10.5m increase in the DSG deficit due to the addition of funding for over 800 extra EHCPs and had asked for a report showing how these additional EHCPs impacted the 2024/25 budget. Officers confirmed that £4.2m of the £10.5m related to 2023/24 and the remaining £6.3m related to prior years, primarily 2022/23. • An update on the Banded Funding Review had been received. The aim was for mainstream schools to implement the new model from early 2024/25 academic year, and special schools towards the end of the 2024/25 year. • The Group had welcomed the substantial reduction in children being places in independent and non-maintained schools and had requested data for the next meeting on the number of children with EHCPs going in / out of the Borough, whether children were being sent to maintained provision out of borough, and whether specific need groups were being exported. 	PH
7.	<p>ITEMS FOR DECISION</p> <p>(a) DE-DELEGATION OF TRADE UNION FACILITY TIME</p> <p>The Chair reported that he had been contacted by union representatives in relation to the decision made by Forum at its meeting on 6 December 2023 regarding de-delegation of trade union facility time. At that meeting, the Forum had considered a proposal to increase the rate from £2.19 to £6.25, then a further proposal was made at the meeting to agree a lower rate of £4. The matter had been voted on by those Forum members eligible to vote from primary and secondary maintained schools, and the decision had been not to de-delegate. The union representatives had subsequently contacted the Chair seeking clarification as to which rate had been rejected and had indicated that the item had not appeared on the agenda for the 6 December 2023 meeting so there was no chance for Forum members to be informed about the importance of de-delegation.</p>	

	<p>The Forum commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The item had been on the agenda which was published before the meeting on 6 December 2023. • The Forum had a full debate at the December meeting with two union representatives in attendance who also spoke. In its discussion, the Forum had raised concerns regarding the lack of evidence of how the money was spent and its impact, and issues of transparency and fairness in relation to the funding being taken only from maintained schools and not academies. • One of the maintained school members of Forum, who was also Chair of Primary Forum, confirmed she had spoken with one of the union representatives before the December meeting and obtained feedback from other primary maintained heads. • The motion voted on in December was whether the Forum agreed to de-delegate. Both voting bodies (primary maintained and secondary maintained) had voted not to de-delegate any amount. <p>For the avoidance of doubt, the Forum agreed to repeat the vote and, having been put to a vote, all primary and secondary maintained representatives who were eligible to vote AGREED not to de-delegate any amount for trade union facility time. No primary or secondary maintained representatives voted in support of de-delegation.</p> <p>The Forum observed that it had not received a report on use of de-delegated trade union facility time funding for some time and requested that, when the matter was considered again in December 2024, Bob Charlton be asked to provide a report on how the money was spent, the benefits of de-delegation, and any suggestions to improve the equity of how facility time was funded in Hillingdon.</p>	TE
8.	INFORMATION ITEMS	
	<p>(a) SCHOOLS AND ACADEMY BALANCES 2023/24</p> <p>The Forum considered a report which showed the revenue balances held by Hillingdon maintained schools at the end of the financial year (31 March 2024) and compared this with balances held by academies within the Borough at 31 August 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total school balances for the LA's maintained schools dropped by 4% to £11.3m. • Academy balances to 31 August 2023 increased by 29% to £38m. • The total deficit balance across all schools was £8.5m, made up of 8 maintained schools (£2.7m) and 8 academies (£5.8m). • In March 2024 a further 3 maintained schools moved into deficit. • 42% of maintained schools had to use their reserves to balance their budget in 2023/24, compared with 34% of academies. • 15 schools had a surplus above the recommended 8%, and 5 schools had a balance over 20%. There could be an opportunity to look at more effective use of balances and a report on this would be brought to Forum in due course. <p>The Forum NOTED the report and commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around 70% of schools had an in-year deficit last year which was a concern. The Forum requested figures on how many schools had put an in-year deficit in their 2024/25 budget and whether this would result in a cumulative deficit. • The report appeared to repeat a table but with slightly different data. Officers would correct this and re-issue the report. 	DD DD DD
	<p>(b) SCHOOLS FORUM TRAINING</p> <p>The Forum considered a report which set out a framework as the structure and platform for the Finance training with Forum members which was proposed to take place in September as a 5-hour session covering finance law, governance, DSG funding and the annual cycle, and what these meant for members of the Forum in terms of planning and expectations. The Forum commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to a suggestion as to whether there could be 'core' training which then split into different sessions for maintained and academy representatives, the Forum observed that members needed to understand both. • 5 hours was a long session and consideration should be given to splitting it into two 2.5 hour sessions. • Given a number of new members could be joining Forum in the autumn, the training should be held in October rather than September to capture new members. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresher training should be arranged for early 2025 and thereafter annually. This could pick up any changes that arose as a result of the General Election. • There were mixed views as to whether in person or videoconferencing would be better. In person was preferable, however video was easier to attend. <p>The Forum NOTED the report and asked officers to progress arrangements for the training.</p>	DD
	<p>(c) SCHOOLS IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY –DRAFT POLICY</p> <p>The Forum considered a report which sought the Forum’s view on a draft policy for Schools in Financial Difficulty. The LA had a responsibility and a liability to ensure that schools were financially managed responsibly and this new policy covered how the LA could effectively engage with schools which were in deficit or at risk of deficit. 28 schools were in that position currently and the policy set out how these schools would be RAG-rated and the Head of Finance and Head of Education would work together to provide support for schools in difficulty.</p> <p>The Forum commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy mentioned a ‘task force’ and it would be helpful to have clearly defined who this was and what is role was. • The policy referred to support costs being passed to the school, which did not seem appropriate for a school already in financial difficulty, and the Forum observed that the LA had a statutory duty to provide support to schools. Officers clarified that this would only apply if specific resources needed to be bought in, and that costs would be agreed with the school beforehand. The rationale was that occasionally specific external expertise might be needed to mitigate the deficit. 	
	<p>(d) ADMISSIONS - UPDATE</p> <p>The Forum considered a report which provided an update on admissions for September 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In primary, 3623 offers had been made against a PAN of 4260 making a total of 14.95% vacant spaces, and in secondary 3443 offers had been made against a PAN of 3662 making a total of 7.5% vacant spaces. • Officers advised that a further 86 primary and 38 secondary offers had been made since the report was circulated, reducing the primary vacancy rate to 13% and secondary to 6.5%. • The vacancies were not evenly spread across schools. Some schools had significant vacancies. • Based on projections, this was the last year additional ‘bulge’ classes in secondary schools would be needed. • The School Organisation Plan had been finalised which would help schools’ planning. <p>The Forum NOTED the report and commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary numbers were close to last year’s census levels. Secondary was lower. • The decrease in secondary numbers could impact the DSG with a drop in the Schools Block funding. • The result of the General Election could impact independent school fees and push more children into state schools. Officers reported they had received a number of calls from parents making general enquiries about spaces. • The Forum requested that updated figures be circulated when available. 	LB
9.	<p>FOR NOTE – AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING – AS PER FORWARD PLAN</p> <p>The Forum noted that agenda items were set out on the Forward Plan.</p>	
10.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>None.</p>	

The meeting closed at 3.25pm