

# Bristol Schools Forum

**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 28th September, 2021**  
**at 5.00 pm at Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

## Present:

Melanie Bunce	Maintained Primary Headteacher Rep, St Barnabas
Rob Davies	Nursery Governor Rep, Speedwell and Little Hayes Nursery Federation
Simon Eakins	Academy Primary Head Rep, Cathedral Primary
Simon Holmes	Nursery Head Rep, St Phillips Marsh Nursery
Tracy Jones	Academy Primary Headteacher Rep, Merchants Academy
Sarah Lovell (Vice-Chair)	Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep, Bristol Metropolitan Academy
Kate Matheson	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, St Barnabas
Aileen Morrison	Pupil Referral Unit Rep, St Matthias Park
David Otlet	Recognised Teaching Professional Association (NEU)
Sam Packer	Private Voluntary Independent (PVI) Early Years
Chris Pring	Maintained Primary Headteacher Rep, Cabot Primary
Cedric Sanguignol	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, Bishop Road Primary
Simon Shaw	Maintained Secondary Head Rep, St Mary Redcliffe & Temple
Jeff Sutton	Non School Member, GMB
Liz Townend	Diocese of Bristol Board of Education
Rebecca Watkin	Academy Special School Headteacher Rep, LearnMAT

## In attendance from Bristol City Council:

Abioye Asimolowo (AA)	Finance Manager
Samantha Flowers (SF)	Programme Manager, Education Transformation
Corrina Haskins (Clerk)	Clerk to Schools Forum
Denise Murray (DM)	Director of Finance
Angel Lai (AL)	Finance Manager (Children's and Education)
Travis Young (TY)	Principal Accountant

	Action
<b>1. Welcome</b>	
SL (Vice-Chair) chaired the meeting in the absence of a Chair. She welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
<b>2. Election of Chair 2021-2023</b>	
It was agreed that, as no one had come forward to take on the role, the election of Chair would be revisited at the next meeting.	
<b>3. Forum Standing Business</b>	
<b>a. Apologies for absence</b>	
Apologies for absence were received from: Trish Dodds, Academy Primary Governor Rep, Fishponds Academy Steve Mills, Non School Member, UNISON	

<p>Ruth Pickersgill, Academy Secondary Governor Rep, City Academy  Emma Richards, Maintained Special School Headteacher Rep, Claremont  Cameron Shaw, Academy Secondary Head Rep, Bristol Metropolitan  Stephanie Williams, Academy Primary Head Rep, Bannerman Road Community Academy</p> <p>It was also noted that Alison Hurley, Director of Education and Skills, was unable to attend the meeting due to illness.</p> <p><b>b. Quorate</b>  The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.</p> <p><b>c. Resignations</b>  The Clerk reported that the terms of office of the following members had expired and they would not be seeking re-election:  Christine Townsend, Maintained Primary Governor Rep and former Chair of Schools Forum  David Yorath, Academy Secondary Governor Rep and former Chair of Schools Forum.</p> <p>AGREED that both Christine and David be thanked for their work on Bristol Schools Forum.</p> <p><b>d. Appointment of New Members</b>  The following new members were noted:  Cameron Shaw - Academy Secondary Head Rep, Bristol Metropolitan  Jeff Sutton – Union Rep (GMB)  David Otlet – Union Rep (NEU)</p> <p><b>e. Notification of Vacancies</b>  The following vacancies were noted:  Academy Secondary Governor Rep  Academy Primary Governor Rep  PRU Governor Rep  Clifton Diocese Rep</p> <p><b>f. Declarations of Interest</b>  There were no declarations of interest.</p>	<p>CH</p>
<p><b>4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b></p>	
<p><b>RESOLVED</b> - that the minutes be confirmed as a correct record</p> <p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>1. DSG Management Plan</b></p> <p>It was noted that the DSG Management Plan would come back to the next meeting in November.</p> <p><b>2. De-delegated accounts update</b></p>	

<p>AA confirmed that the current amount outstanding from 2020-2021 had reduced from £140k to £80k.</p> <p><b>3. Teachers pay and pensions grant</b></p> <p>AA confirmed that the grant had been subsumed into the DSG for the current year and this would continue to be the case going forward so there would no longer be a separate allocation. He undertook to provide Schools Forum members with a link so that they could check the position for different settings.</p> <p>In response to a further question about how the funding was calculated in relation to special schools, TY confirmed that it was based on historic place data, but he would provide information on individual schools on request. It was agreed that it would be useful to share the response with Forum members.</p>	TY
<p><b>5. Verbal Update from Director of Education and Skills</b></p>	
<p>It was noted that as the Director of Education and Skills was unable to attend the meeting, she would provide an update at next meeting on 30 November.</p>	AH
<p><b>6. Education Transformation Programme Update</b></p>	
<p>SF gave an update on the Education Transformation Programme as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This was the third update to Schools Forum on the Education Transformation Programme.</li> <li>2. Work had started on the programme in October 2019 with a formal launch in March 2020, although some of the SEND improvement work predated the programme.</li> <li>3. The programme was an umbrella for a number of projects (often those where funding was assigned) but there was also a lot of service improvement work happening outside the programme.</li> <li>4. The report gave an update on progress against spend, especially in relation to the funding transferred to the High Needs Block as previously agreed by Bristol Schools Forum.</li> <li>5. In terms of progress and spend, there had been a delay as a result of the Covid pandemic especially in relation to school-based interventions.</li> <li>6. As the money had been ringfenced for the transformation programme, this had been carried forward.</li> <li>7. In terms of governance, there was an Education Transformation Board chaired by Alison Hurley, the programme was included in the Council's change portfolio and reported to the Corporate Leadership Board as well as updates being provided to Schools Forum.</li> <li>8. There were links to the SEND Written Statement of Action and the DSG Management Plan was now also a part of the programme.</li> <li>9. The RAG rating related to the delivery of the major investment pieces in the programme rather than performance of projects.</li> <li>10. The programme had an end date of September 2022.</li> </ol>	
<p>The following comments and questions were raised by Forum Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>There was a request for a representative of FLORA (Families Local Offer Resources &amp; Advice) to attend the next meeting of the Early Years Task and Finish Group.</i></li> <li>2. <i>While noting that the RAG rating was about programme delivery, it was important for Schools Forum to have information about the impact and outcomes of the programme.</i></li> </ol> <p>SF responded that a lot of the income and outcome data was already in the public</p>	SF

domain such as the timeliness of assessments for Education Health and Care Plans and the number of exclusions, attendance data and specialist provision. She also stated that some of the benefits might not be realised with immediate effect.

3. *Was there any feedback to evidence that parents/carers were having a more positive experience?*

SF responded that there was an annual parent/carer survey, the baseline was the survey which had taken place in the October after the Ofsted visit and the results of the next survey were due to be published soon.

4. *There appeared to be a disconnect between lived experience for families and the reported improvements as a number of families were struggling to get support in relation to the SEND process and their voices needed to be heard.*

5. *It would be good to see evidence of input from health colleagues, family support and social care to ensure an integrated approach for families.*

It was suggested that this could be fed back to the SEND Partnership Group via AH and reported back to a future meeting of Schools Forum.

DM confirmed that the Education Transformation Programme was a live document and there needed to be a feedback loop to reassure Forum that any comments raised would be considered and actions amended accordingly.

SF/AH

It was noted that there may be a future request for Forum to transfer funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs budget to continue the projects beyond September 2022.

AGREED to note:

1. the progress made across the Education Programme to date.
2. that the Programme is ongoing until September 2022.
3. the current spend profiles against the funding allocation (committed and forecast).

## 7. DSG Budget Monitor

AL introduced the report and drew attention to the following:

1. The report gave an update of the position as at the end of July (period 4).
2. The DSG ended the 2020/21 financial year with an overall deficit of £10m and there was an in-year forecast deficit of £11m.
3. Schools Block: forecast underspend due to 3 schools closing and 1 opening which meant a surplus of £400k and also a current underspend in Growth Fund.
4. Early Years: forecast overspend due to emerging SEN.
5. High Needs: forecast overspend of £11.5m in this academic year, the main driver being top up funding requests.
6. In response to comments raised earlier about the ask for next year, it was likely that Forum would be requested to transfer £450k to the High Needs block to continue supporting the Education Transformation Programme.
7. There would be a further update on the DSG Management Plan at the November meeting.
8. The Period 5 report had been published on the previous day and so this information was now in the public domain.

In response to questions, Forum was advised:

1. There had been a further increase of £3m in the deficit position from period 4 to period 5.
2. The position continued to be worrying with the ongoing pressures of £24m and risk of

further increases as a result of future panel decisions.

3. The DSG was the only area of the Council budget that could carry a deficit, but a plan was required to manage this going forward.
4. The DSG Management set out the rationale for the increase in spending and would look at interventions and whether these could flatten the curve.
5. The increase in High Needs spending was a national issue and not unique to Bristol.
6. The Council had also made representations to DfE and MHCLG and asked for confirmation on when the Government would publish its review of the SEND system, how historic deficits would be dealt with and the ability to carry deficits going forward.
7. If the 2021 Spending Review did not address the points raised and increase funding envelopes, Forum could assist by providing case studies and joining the Council in future representations.
8. Government guidance was clear that Council reserves could not be used to fund the increase in High Needs expenditure.
9. The report included commitments/money owed until the end of the financial year.

AGREED – that the in-year 2021/22 position for the overall DSG be noted.

### **8. Update on DSG 2022-23 with potential funding levels**

TY introduced the report as follows:

1. The report included information on what had been announced by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA) as indicative funding and arrangements around the settlement, but it was based on current pupil data and may change as a result of the spending review.
2. Early Years: was not part of this announcement but it was looking like there would be a return to the pattern of using data from the January census.
3. Schools Block: there would be an increase in the national funding for schools. The funding floor would increase (by 2%), as would the minimum per pupil funding levels. Bristol already funded above the level of the percentage increase.
4. Central Block: this was slightly down due to the unwinding of historic elements.
5. The Local Authority would be consulting with schools and would bring a further report back for decision at the November meeting of Schools Forum.
6. EFSA was consulting on the introduction of a hard National Funding Formula (NFF) from 2023/24 and so this could be the last chance to influence NFF in Bristol.

In response to questioning, Forum was advised:

1. In relation to the Health and Social Care tax, the Council had been advised that it would be fully compensated for the additional national insurance contribution, but officers would be checking the formula once detailed information was received.
2. The consultation with schools would ask questions on the level of the minimum funding guarantee, any movement out of the Schools Block to other blocks and maintained mainstream schools would also be consulted on the de-delegated budget. The consultation would be sent to Heads via the Heads' Bulletin and Trading with Schools would also send to Business Managers.

The further additional comments were raised:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In asking schools to consider a movement between blocks, it would be useful to include information about what the money would be used for if approved.</li> <li>2. There was a request that the consultation also be sent to Schools Forum members.</li> <li>3. To assist schools in making a decision about de-delegation, information was required on the maternity scheme to include how much schools were paying/receiving and the level of reserves. It was also noted that there had been a decision to put on hold the funding for TU contributions in the previous year and this would need revisiting.</li> <li>4. In considering membership of the Finance Sub-Group, it was agreed that SE, SL, CP, CS and RW would be invited to attend.</li> </ol> <p><b>AGREED</b> that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the potential 2022/23 indicative funding levels be noted.</li> <li>2. the proposed restrictions relating to the DSG be noted.</li> <li>3. the Local Authority consultation with schools on items in the local formula, particularly MFG, transfers between blocks, and formula factors be noted, and the consultation details be circulated to Schools Forum members in addition to Heads;</li> <li>4. the Local Authority consultation with schools on their views on de-delegation be noted and the results of the consultation be reported to Forum for their decision at the meeting in November.</li> <li>5. the Finance Sub-Group be re-established for a meeting in October to consider funding formula proposals for 2022-23.</li> <li>6. the proposed funding levels are subject to change following update of the Spending Review 2021 and the Autumn 2021 census data be noted.</li> </ol>	<p>TY</p> <p>CH</p>
<p><b>9. Any Other Business</b></p>	
<p>1) Scheme for Financing Schools</p> <p>AA advised that a consultation on a revised scheme for financing schools 2022/23 would be launched in October and Forum members were asked to promote the consultation to ensure a meaningful response rate with a view to the scheme being reported back to Schools Forum for final approval.</p>	<p>AA</p>

The meeting closed at 6.14 pm.