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| **Schools’ Forum Meeting**  **25 March 2021** |

**Attendees:**

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| **Members**  Carole Bradley (CB) (Primary - Large <50%)  Tracey Gibson (TG) (Secondary)  Martyn Gordon (MG) (Horizon School )  Lisa Grieg (LG) (Academy – Special)  Stephen Hammond (SH) (Academy – Secondary)  John Hardy (JH) (VA Small)  Katy Hill (KH) (Diocese of Durham)  Mark Hughes (MH) (16-19 Sector)  Sue Sharpe (SS) (Primary - Large Deprived)  Chris Simmons (CS) (Academy Governors)  Penny Thompson (PT) (Early Years)  Mark Tilling (MT) (Secondary)  David Turner (DT) (Primary – Small)  Lee Walker (LW) (Primary Academy >50% FSM)  Zoe Westley (ZW) (Special)  Rachel Williams (RW) (Diocese – RC)  Jo Wilson (JW) (VA Large) | **Local Authority Officers**  Amanda Whitehead (AW) (Assistant Director Education)  Danielle Swainston (DS)  (Assistant Director Joint Commissioning)  Jacqui Braithwaite (JB) (Integrated Services for Learning Manager)  Sandra Shears (SSh) (Children’s Finance)  Jane Watt (JWa) (Children’s Finance)  Jo Stubbs (JS) (Administrator) |

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| **Agenda Item** | | **Action** |
| **1** | **Apologies -**  Apologies were submitted by the following:  Lynne Chambers (Primary Academy >25%<50% FSM)  Mandy Hall (Primary Academy >25% FSM)  Jo Heaton (Diocese – C of E) (Katy Hill substituting)  Neil Nottingham (Primary Academy >50% FSM)  Linda Richardson (PVI) |  |
| **2** | **Minutes of the Last Meeting – 2 February 2021**  The Chair thanked MT for chairing the last meeting.  Minutes approved – it was highlighted that as requested an agenda for the Schools Capital Sub-Group had been included with the agenda papers.  MT queried whether members had approved funding from the SEMH pot for urgent building modifications at High Tunstall at the previous meeting. DS confirmed they had. The Chair asked that officers provide more information on the origin of this funding following queries from Heads.  **Outstanding Actions Log**  DS indicated that today’s High Needs Block review would encompass the High Needs Task and Finish Group whole system approach. She would then advise the Children’s Strategic Partnership when those meetings restarted.  MT advised he would convene a Strategic School Board meeting to look at how best to use the outstanding monies in the SEMH capital pot and bring suggestions back to a future Forum meeting. The Chair asked that details of the available monies be passed on to MT.  Officers were still waiting for detail on the salary disclosure requirements from the Department for Education before being in a position to provide a standardised form of words.  **Lee Walker (LW) (Primary Academy >50% FSM) left the meeting.** | **SSh** |
| **3** | **High Needs Block Review**  DS gave a comprehensive presentation on the scope of the proposed review into the High Needs Block Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The aim was to establish a 3-year financial strategy to support children and young people with SEND. This would ensure that costs were considered over the medium term rather than being focused on one financial year. Details were given of the current usage of this funding, how a MTFS would be produced (including a proposal to complete a DfE Management template) and which new strategies and approaches might need to be considered in order to add value while saving money. A provisional review was presented for consideration – final recommendations would need to be agreed for presentation to Children’s Services Committee October/November 2021.  Key areas for review were proposed as follows:   * Horizon School Funding Model * Inclusions Strategy * Top Up Ranges * Special School Provision * Special Schools MFG * Speech and Language Provision * ARPs   DS explained that without this review of the overall High Needs Block funding system there would be significant deficits in the coming years. A banding review had been carried out in isolation during 2018 but it was felt that the spending across the whole system needed to be examined in detail in order to save money effectively. This would require involvement from all heads and could potentially be a future standing item on the Head teachers’ meeting agenda.  JH suggested that the Inclusions Strategy include an additional point to calculate actual school spend on SEND compared to the £6k notiononal money schools received for SEND. DS confirmed this would be added and notional funding could be discussed during school clinics.  CS highlighted the importance of making the need fit the funding rather than the other way around. He acknowledged the importance of identifying savings areas and redirecting funding into them particularly as Covid would probably result in more children coming into the system with additional needs exacerbated by lockdown and isolation. DS agreed regards the need fitting the funding however there was only one amount of funding available and the review would supply proof to the DfE that it was being used sensibly.  TG queried how the funding allocations were calculated. JWa advised that there was not a clear link between the volume and complex of need and the money received. 40% of the formula was based on a baseline fixed rate amount, something officers felt the DfE needed to move away from.  ZW requested that a link to the national DfE consultation be shared in the minutes to encourage schools to respond. The Chair asked that the link be send to Forum members who could then share it with the relevant groups.  Members expressed their support for the review and the proposals to lobby Government to make amendments to the funding formula. They felt it was important that the various key areas were given equal weight and were happy to approve the draft review as presented to them with the addition to the Inclusions Strategy as discussed previously. DS confirmed that an overview of each key area would be taken to the various Head Teachers for their input before being brought back to Forum for further discussions in June before final proposals were brought back in September/October. The Chair queried whether this amount of work could be completed in that space of time. DS acknowledged this was challenging but felt all the areas needed to be considered holistically. The aspiration was that it be completed in time for the 2022/23 budget but this could be reconsidered in June if the timelines were too tight. A fortnightly progress email would be sent to all Heads.  **Decision**  That the proposed review scope be taken to all Heads for their input and consideration as written with the addition to the Inclusions Strategy of comparison of SEND notional funding to actual SEND expenditure.  That the result of these discussions be brought back to the June meeting of the Schools Forum. |  |
| **4** | **Any other business** |  |
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|  | The Chair referred to a previous Early Years funding block deficit for 2-year-old provision which the Forum had recommended be considered by a specially convened task and finish group. JWa advised that the DfE had begun a data collection exercise with a proposal that early years funding be based on 3 census points. It was intended that the group be reconvened following discussions between DS and PT. |  |
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| **14** | **Date and time of next Forum meeting** |  |
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|  | Thursday 10th June at 10am |  |
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|  | The meeting concluded at 1:40 pm. |  |

Outstanding Schools’ Forum Actions Log

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| **Meeting** | **Description** | **Owner** |
| **21/06/19** | High Needs Task and Finish Group – document and implement a whole system approach to an inclusive ethos across the full school estate – to lead initially via the Head Teacher Group and then through the Children’s Strategy Partnership | John Hardy |
| **24/09/20** | Provide standard form of words for new salary disclosure (Financial Transparency for Schools) | Jane Watt |
| **25/03/21** | Provide details of funding remaining in the SEMH pot for discussion at future Head Teacher meetings | Sandra Shears |