

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting title: Nottinghamshire Early Years and Schools Forum
Date and time: 11th November 2021, 2pm to 4pm
Location: Teams meeting

Membership

'A' denotes absence

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| | Andrew Rossington | Maintained Primary Head Teacher - Gedling |
| A | Ben Waldram | Maintained Primary Head Teacher - Newark |
| A | Helen Atkins | Maintained Primary Head Teacher - Mansfield - (Vice Chair) |
| | Steve Border | Maintained Primary Head Teacher - Rushcliffe |
| | David Phillips | Maintained Secondary Head Teacher |
| | Dr Philip Smith | Academy Representative |
| | Halina Augus | Academy Representative |
| A | Andy Seymour | Academy Representative |
| | Anne Hall | Academy Representative |
| | Neil Holmes | Academy Representative |
| | James Macdonald | Academy Representative - (Chair) |
| | Neil Robinson | Academy Representative |
| | Matt Rooney | Special School Head Teacher |
| | Jamie Hutchinson | Academy Special School Head Teacher |
| | Colin Barnard | Governor Maintained School Representative |
| | Andy Palmer | Governor Maintained School Representative |
| | Fiona Jones | Governor Academy Representative |
| A | Paul Hawkins | Governor Academy Representative |
| A | Jacque Sainsbury | Governor Special School Representative |
| | Laura Gapski | PVI - Early Years Group Member |
| | Karen Richards | PVI - Early Years Group Member |
| A | Nigel Frith | Church of England Diocese Representative |
| | Daniel Moore | Catholic Diocese Representative |
| A | Louise Knott | 14-19 Partnership Representative |
| | Joe Jefferies | Trade Union Representative - NASUWT |
| A | Jo Myers | Trade Union Representative - UNISON |

In attendance:

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| Cllr Sam Smith | Conservative County Councillor for Newark East |
| Marion Clay | Service Director, Education, Learning and Skills |
| Naomi Clark | Senior Finance Business Partner, Children and Families Finance |
| Claire Dyson | Risk and Insurance Manager, Financial Strategy and Compliance |
| Laurence Jones | Service Director, Commissioning and Resources |
| Irene Kakoullis | Group Manager, Early Childhood Services |
| Mark Needham | Finance Business Partner, Children and Families Finance |
| Colin Pettigrew | Corporate Director, Children, Families and Cultural Services |
| Deborah Nicholson | Clerical Assistant, Children and Families Finance (Clerk) |

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| 1. | <p>Welcome</p> <p>James Macdonald welcomed all members to the meeting. Introduced Deborah Nicholson who was in attendance to take the minutes.</p> | |
| | <p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies were received from Jacqui Sainsbury, Toni Gardner, Ben Waldram, Andy Seymour and Paul Hawkins.</p> | |
| 2. | <p>Minutes – 16th September 2021</p> <p>Minutes approved as accurate and correct. James Macdonald thanked Matt Rooney for hosting the last meeting.</p> | ACTION |
| 3. | <p>3a. Election of Vice Chair</p> <p>James Macdonald started the process for election of the vice chair. Ann Hall and Matt Rooney put themselves forward for consideration. After a vote, Anne Hall was elected.</p> | |
| | <p>3b. Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) for Schools</p> <p>Claire Dyson presented the paper. As of 1st April 2020 the Department for Education extended the RPA to local authority maintained schools. Feedback was requested from 171 schools and obtained from 84 schools a number of which have shown an interest in joining the RPA. However, NCC is currently in a long term agreement with Zurich Municipal until April 2022 and schools are tied into that.</p> <p>NCC is preparing to go out to tender for insurance provision to start from May 2022 and it is unclear whether local authority schools will be included in the tender. It may be decided, within NCC, that all schools switch to the RPA to have an all in or all out position as it may not be viable to offer insurance to a reduced number of schools. A decision on who will decide this has not been made yet.</p> <p>Fiona Jones asked whether schools could be offered the NCC insurance on an individual basis. Claire Dyson responded that this would be impractical and not financially feasible. Feedback has been noted and will be taken forward to the decision making process.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION/S</p> <p>That the Forum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the content of the report – noted | |
| | <p>3c. DSG Budget Monitoring including High Needs Update</p> <p>Mark Needham presented the paper and highlighted that the overspend is down to £900,000. This was comprised of an overspend of £2.49m in the high needs block which was offset by an underspend of £1.57m in the early years block. The biggest overspend was £2.2m on independent providers. There is a £0.5m overspend on Post 16 and a firm forecast on this will be forthcoming when the September intake has been fully accounted for.</p> <p>There is a backlog of EHCPs which complicates future estimates.</p> <p>The early years forecast is predicting a large underspend but this should be treated with apprehension and uncertainty.</p> <p>Funding has been calculated differently to take account of any reduction in pupil numbers at the January 2021 census during lockdown. The basis for funding has changed from 5/12</p> | |

January census, 7/12 of January 2022 census to being 5/12 May 2021 census and 4/12 October census and 3/12 January 2022 census in order to try and align pupil patterns. The last two censuses have not yet been formalised which makes a forecast difficult.

The funding calculation is not in the same weekly pattern. The summer term is based on 5/12 of 38 weeks which is 15.83 weeks. However, we will only make payments for 13 weeks now as the summer term numbers are usually higher. This should benefit us and is why the underspend is being shared. However, the next two censuses will work the other way round. For example, the autumn term is based on 4/12 or 12.67 weeks of funding but we will pay out for 14 so if the census is higher than predicted in the forecast tool then the underspend will go down. If it is less the underspend will go up.

The final allocation will not be published until July 2022 but we should have an indication by the time of the final accounts report in June 2022. Any underspend will be reported to Schools Forum and consideration given to distribute it.

The opening balance of reserves was £3.982m and with the carry forward and forecast it is expected to be £2.796. As we expect to use some of this to reassess Early Years payments it is likely there will be a surplus of £1.2m.

Karen Richards stressed how crucial it is for early years to get every penny they can as the hourly rate has gone up 14% since 2010 and minimum wage has gone up by 56%. It is crucial we do not hang onto it as a local authority then have to go the Secretary of State to get it back. I do not want to fall into the trap of it being swallowed up into DSG and they we have to apply to get it back again. Every penny should go where it needs to be.

Laura Gapski asked the cost of a week's funding. Mark reported this comes to £1.3m at a rough estimate (£50m funding / 38 weeks).

James Macdonald stated an increase in SEND funding is expected for 2022-23 and suggested that it needs to be concentrated on as he does not want to be in the situation of 2-3 years ago where a 0.5% top slice of the schools budgets had to be reallocated. He requested an update on future funding.

Mark Needham reported that between £9.5m and £10m was expected with the final amount to be confirmed in December. However, the problem is the extra EHCPs and the cost of independent sector provision is expensive. For example, last year £6m was put into the independent sector but we are still forecasting overspent by £2m due to sheer volume of children and price increase from independent providers. This is despite strategies from Marion's team trying to avoid the independent sector. However, the overspend will have to come off the 2022-23 budget.

Daniel Moore made the point where in his school he is subsidising early years provision from the main school budget.

Matt Rooney asked if the local authority is able to consider committing to increasing the internal market. Special school funding has not increased for around 6 years (*) and there have been huge increases in costs in that time. Special schools need to be properly funded if they are expected to create new markets and work in new ways, or just retaining the pupils they already have to prevent them going into the independent sector. Problem needs to be looked at across the board. Mark Needham (*) addressed the increase rate for special schools by Matt and mentioned that most special schools had seen an increase 2 years ago when an exercise was done to equalise the rates, St Giles (Matt's Schools) are paid above this rate, so they did not benefit two years ago. He also confirmed this issue will form part of the overall HNB budget discussion with Marion Clay (and her team) about what to do with the special school places rates with various options costed.

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| <p>Marion Clay clarified that an additional £6m was put into INM which took it from £13m to £19m and it still overspent. Provision has run out in the market. Now the council has committed £12m to building another special school. Of the £5m SEND capital allocated this year £2m had to be allocated to the expansion of Yeoman Park school and the remainder spent on projects to expand current special schools. This won't necessarily meet immediate demand. A significant amount of SEND capital was announced in the spending review but it is unknown if it will be allocated on a needs basis or if there will be a bidding round. The reality is there is a balance between working on inclusion within the wider sector and creating special school places. The additional money coming via the higher needs block will be required for place funding and that will be the best part of the £9m less the £2m overspend.</p> <p>Laura Gapski queried under /overspend per term to show the different funding versus payment weeks that was explained earlier (e.g. 13 week payout Vs 15.83 funding). Mark did a rough calculation on the 3 main areas in EY and calculated the summer term was £4.3m underspent, Autumn was £1.1m over and spring was £1.7m over. Making the net forecast £1.5m underspent.</p> <p>Karen Richards stated there is a rise in special needs requirements in early years which will follow through the education system.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>That the Forum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the financial contents of the report – report noted. | |
| <p>3d. EY Funding Update</p> <p>Irene Kakoullis presented the paper on the annual consultation on the early years budget in December for funding in 2022-23. It is proposed that all of the additional funding is passed to the early years sector. NCC is not proposing to retain any this in the next financial year so the hourly rates will increase for schools and PVI settings. The consultation will be based on the current hourly rates with the view that these will go up pending the December announcement on additional funding. Approval will be sought for the underspend to go back to early years. It is appreciated that this makes it hard to plan finances. There is a quick turnaround on the consultation which will go out to schools and early years and PVI settings.</p> <p>Laura stated receiving the uplift at the end of July is unhelpful to parents who have to pick up any shortfall in funding. When the funding arrives late, are settings expected to refund parents? A new system is required to determine settings open all year round. This should be raised with the Secretary of State. Post pandemic, there is no uplift for April when our overheads go up again. Settings are rapidly being lost.</p> <p>Karen requested transparency from NCC that the underspend is passed on in full.</p> <p>Irene Kakoullis stated the Forum will decide if the underspend on the hourly rate will go back to early years settings.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>That the Forum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider the proposed questions for the consultation on early years funding 2022-23. Questions considered and approved. | |

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| | <p>3e. 2022-23 National Funding Formula (NFF) verbal update</p> <p>Naomi Clark presented a paper on the summary of the provisional 2022-23 Dedicated Schools Grant funding allocations and changes to the National Funding Formula. Also, the proposals for the 2022-23 local funding formula consultation. Figures are based on October 2020 census until these are updated in December. The main changes are summarised.</p> <p>This is the final year that rates will be recorded in the APT as part of the funding formula. Final adjustments will happen in 2023-24 with payments reflected in the DSG from April 2023.</p> <p>We are not asking for the 0.5% from the schools block but we can still do that via the Forum.</p> <p>A disapplication was request for Minster MPP due to no changes to the NFF MPP methodology. An amendment is required to the school's 2022-23 funding.</p> <p>Consultation will run from last week in November to 5 December. Responses will be circulated prior to next Schools Forum.</p> <p>James asked for views on addressing the affordability gap.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>That the Forum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the disapplication for the Minster School. Approved. 2. Consider and approve the consultation questions and timetable. Both approved. | |
| | <p>3f. Schools Financing Scheme</p> <p>Naomi Clark presented an updated schools financing scheme. This will be distributed to maintained schools for feedback. Once that has been received it will come back to Schools Forum for approval.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>That the Forum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the contents of the report – report noted. | |
| <p>4.</p> | <p>Any Other Business</p> <p>James Macdonald reported a consultation on School Improvement Grant and encouraged members to complete it on an individual basis. The consultation period is short.</p> | |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Confidentiality</p> <p>There were no confidential items.</p> | |

6. Date and time of next meeting

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| Thursday 9 December 21 | 2-4pm | Chilwell School |
| Thursday 24 February 22 | 2-4pm | Virtual – Microsoft Teams |
| Thursday 16 June 22 | 2-4pm | Virtual – Microsoft Teams |