DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

Microsoft Teams

Tuesday 8th October 2024 – 14.00pm – 17.00pm

AGENDA

Item No.	Item	Decision required?	Lead
1	Welcome, introductions and apologies	No	Vice-Chair
	Register/Declaration of business interests		
2	Schools Forum Membership 2024/25 (paper)	Yes	Tony Murphy
3	Minutes of the meeting 14 th May 2024 and Matters Arising	Yes	Vice-Chair
4	Budget Update 2024/25 (paper)	No	Emma Clennell
5	Safety Valve Plan (verbal)	No	Tony Murphy
6	High Needs Subgroup 20 th June 2024 Summary of Meeting (paper)	No	Vice-Chair
7	Future Meetings	No	Vice-Chair
	Tuesday 14th January 2025 2pm Town Hall Tuesday 11 th March 2025 2pm via Teams Tuesday 3 rd June 2025 2pm Town Hall		
8	Any other business		

Date of next meeting 14th January 2025 2pm – Town Hall

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM 8th October 2024

ITEM NO 2

SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP 2024/25

Purpose of Report

This report summarises the changes to the Schools Forum membership since the last meeting and as per terms of reference to appoint Chair and Vice Chair for 2024-2025. **Forum Decision Required**

The Forum is asked to:

a) Note the report; b) Appoint Chair and Vice Chair for 2024-2025

c) Note substitute vacancies / nominations.

Background

This report provides information on Forum membership changes that have arisen since the last Forum meeting.

Chair

As noted at the Schools Forum on 14th May 2024, the Schools Forum Chair, Dean Judson, Deputy CEO at Inicio Academies, retired in July 2024.

Following a request for nominations, Mike Butler has been nominated as the next Chair. DfE guidance states that the Schools Forum should elect a Chair from amongst its own members and based on the Darlington Schools Forum terms of reference, the Chair and Vice-Chair shall be elected from within its membership annually at the first meeting of the academic year.

It should be noted that the Chair can stand for re-election in further successive years therefore office can be extended beyond one year, however, guidance suggests this should not be beyond the Chair's membership term, in this case August 2027 (the same applies for the Vice-Chair).

Current Vacancies

There have been two vacancies for representation on the Schools Forum:

- Secondary Academy representative
- Secondary Academy (Governor) representative

A request for nominations was requested by 30th September.

A verbal update will be provided at the meeting on 8th October 2024 as to the outcome of the nominations.

Recommendations

- That the Schools Forum appoint the nominated Chair, Mike Butler, from the next meeting (14th January 2025).
- That the Schools Forum re-appoint the Vice-Chair, Paula Ayto, who will Chair the meeting on 8th October 2024.
- That the Schools Forum note the nominations for substitutes.

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING 14 MAY 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT: D Judson (Swift Academies Trust (Chair); P Ayto (Reid Street Primary (Vice Chair); J Davidson (Red Hall Primary); H Dummett (Federation of Darlington Nurseries; J Armitage (Rydal Academy Primary); S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); J Blackham (Mount Pleasant Primary); M Ramsay (St Johns CofE Academy); P King (Federation of Mowden Schools); K Reid (Polam Free School); D Lythgoe (St Aidan's Academy); M Kane (Carmel College); T Fisher (QE College); M Butler (Education Village Academy Trust); T Abbott (Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust); J Skirving (St George's CofE Academy); M Fryer (Hummersknott Academy);); C Moss (Pierremont Pre School).

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr. N Wallis; T Murphy (Assistant Director of Education & Inclusion) J Littler (Interim Head of SEND Service for SEND & Inclusion); E Clennell (Finance Manager); J Aconley-Foster (Finance Officer); E Marshall (Education Partnerships Officer - Clerk);

APOLOGIES: S Hudson (Rise Carr College); Elizabeth Baker (Little Acorns);

1. Welcome, Introduction & Register/Declaration of business interests.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and updated the meeting on apologies. The Chair welcomed new members of the Forum. The Chair explained that due to retirement an election for a new Chair would take place before the end of the Summer term to allow a handover in Autumn 2024.

There were no declarations of business interests.

There were no items raised under Any Other Business.

2. Minutes of Meeting 12th March 2024 and Matters Arising

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

The matters arising from 16th January are still outstanding:

• High Needs Block: The Interim Head of SEND to provide data on requests for assessment for discussion at a future high needs subgroup meeting and report to the Schools Forum.

JL confirmed that the high needs subgroup will consider further at its next and subsequent meetings to inform future budget discussions.

• IDACI rates: It was clarified that IDACI rates A-F from 2023/24 to 2024/25 have increased as per the NFF rates. EC confirmed that the 2024/25 data is based on the

latest 2019 update and that there is no indication of a review date soon for the deprivation factors. EC would confirm if there were any changes to this position.

The matters arising from 12th March were:

• **Membership:** The Clerk confirmed that a formal election process had taken place and the Primary Academy representation filled by St. Bede's has now been filled by The Rydal Academy, John Armitage; and the Primary Academy substitute vacancy has been filled by St Teresa's RC Primary Academy, Paula Strachan.

3. Schools Forum Membership Update

The Schools Forum welcomed new members -

- Whinfield Primary School moved to Academy status on 1st May 2024. Following a vote by Primary Forum, Shirley Welsh, Headteacher of Whinfield Primary School becomes a Primary Academy representative.
- To replace Shirley Welsh, the Maintained Primary School representative has been confirmed as Julie Davidson, Headteacher at Red Hall Primary School.
- John Armitage, Headteacher at Rydal Academy Primary School has been voted a Primary Academy representative.
- Paula Strachan, Headteacher at St Teresa's RC Primary School, was also nominated for a Primary Academy vacancy, and has been offered a substitute position.
- Caroline Moss, Manager at Pierremont Pre School has joined as a non-schools member, PVI representative.

4. Budget Update 2023/24

The Finance Manager updated Forum regarding the 2023/24 budget position and the reserves balances as per the previously circulated report.

The Finance Manager outlined the key points from the report:

- Schools Block
 - The schools block underspend of £50,000 proposal to roll forward bringing the reserve to £346,025.

Central Schools Block

The central schools block is underspent by £56,456 bringing the reserve to £578,277. This will cover up to 4 years of the historic element against the block which is subject to 20% reduction per year imposed by the DfE.

High Needs Block

- The high needs block underspend of £865,358 is mainly due to invest to save projects not taking place and post 16 places coming to a natural end.
- The improved position on the high needs block of £87,549 has been due to various placement changes as noted in the report. The Finance Manager specifically identified that the affordability gap will continue into 2024/25 and the PFI rate increase will impact this going forward.

Early Years

- The Early Years block is currently overspent by £444,323 in year mainly due to the SEN inclusion funding demand. The Finance Manager pointed out that there will be an adjustment to 2023/24 funding following the January Census data collection. There has been increased demand in the nursery hours provided to 3&4 year-olds, and it is therefore expected that additional DSG funding will address some of the shortfall.
- The Finance Manager highlighted that a DfE consultation on the deadline to publish the early years hourly rates is currently in progress. The LA will inform the Schools Forum on the outcome and any impact on the budget setting process at a future meeting.

• Risks to the budget were highlighted and these are being considered by the high needs subgroup.

The Finance Manager brought attention to the Appendices and highlighted the improvements on placement percentages particularly in mainstream and independent placements however noted that special school placements have increased.

The Schools Forum thanked the Finance Manager for the clarity of the report. **Recommendations**

- Schools Forum noted the year end budget position;
- Schools Forum approved the carry forward budgets from 2023/24 to 2024/25 as detailed in the report.

5. High Needs Subgroup Meeting Report

A summary of the high needs subgroup meeting held on Thursday 14th March 2024 was circulated with the report.

Chair of the High Needs (HN) Subgroup, Paula Ayto (Schools Forum Vice-Chair) provided some background information relating to discussions held by the subgroup about the high needs budget risks, solutions and exploration of proactive support. An example of these are the re-alignment of bases and outreach services, providing earlier intervention that could positively impact VPP budgets where exclusions have recently impacted the increase of the budget. This can also apply to Early Years inclusion.

The Schools Forum thanked that subgroup for its work.

6. Safety Valve

The Assistant Director explained for the benefit of the new members, the Safety Valve agreement as a mechanism to address the high needs block deficit. It was re-iterated that the local savings and payments received have reduced the deficit but this needs to continue.

7. Beaumont Hill Academy Memorandum of Understanding – Presentation

The Schools Forum were asked to note the joint work between the LA and Education Village Academy Trust (EVAT) particularly addressing the financial risk issues to Beaumont Hill Academy (BHA) in the context of local challenges on the high needs block. A working group has been discussing a future strategy for BHA.

The Assistant Director and EVAT Chief Executive outlined the context to the EVAT financial position over the previous 3 years. There have been rising new admissions at band 5a and more bespoke packages to sustain places to avoid ISP, a raise to PAN, requiring new classes and an increase to class sizes.

The working group have reviewed the existing position and considered alternative models for collaborative place planning within legal parameters. An invest-to save approach has been agreed with a shared aspiration to increase places in BHA to reduce reliance on out of area ISPs. 30 additional places will be freed up in existing BHA accommodation with a plan to move Beaumont Hill's Sixth form into the opposite former Sure Start building utilising capital funding and a minimum funding level of range 5b for all BHA placements is proposed.

The Schools Forum discussed and agreed the key principles underpinning the joint agreement:

- Commissioning needs to take place at an earlier stage, Year 6 placements should not be the norm.
- Parental preferences are considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Joint LA commissioning intentions, which are agreed every year, are upheld by LA's and challenged where appropriate.
- Tribunal consultation documentation must be strengthened, and the Darlington mediator is providing training for all school SENCo's.
- The current ranges are clear, and it is not necessary to move to a unique range model for the special school however there will be a future project to review mainstream top up levels.
- Use of the LA capital grant funding is appropriate to provide additional BHA accommodation.
- A DfE significant change request for the additional class will be made and the aim is to open this accommodation by September 2025.

There were questions relating to the move to a minimum funding level of 5b. It was noted that this would be in effect from September 2024. It was proposed that any existing pupils accessing Beaumont Hill would have a minimum funding guarantee applied. This would not stop any pupil undergoing current assessment being allocated 5a range funding, rather if specialist provision at Beaumont Hill was required, a 5b range would be applied on admission.

The Forum requested assurance on the use of ISP and whether this is due to a lack of existing capacity or complexity of need. The Interim SEND Head of Service confirmed that there were pressures on High Needs Block funding from ISP placements in the post 19 sector and from LAC placements, but work was underway in developing a post 19 pathway. Additionally, there is a short-term risk linked to available capacity within BHA due to a physical lack of space restricting increased numbers until the capital works has been completed.

The Schools Forum consensus relating to the funding change model and additional class was positive to enable BHA as a provider to move to financial sustainability. The Memorandum of Understanding would be shared with members, and it was suggested that the LA meeting that has been called to consider the inclusion charter, can be used to share / discuss further.

Action: The Assistant Director to share the MOU.

8. Time/Location of next meeting:

Tuesday, 8th October 2024 - 2pm TEAMS

The Schools Forum noted that the remainder 2024/25 Academic Year dates are:

Tuesday, 14 th January 2025 - 2pm	Town Hall
Tuesday, 11 th March 2025 – 2pm	TEAMS
Tuesday, 3 rd June 2025 – 2pm	Town Hall

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM 8th October 2024

BUDGET UPDATE 2024/25

Purpose of Report

1. To update Forum regarding the 2024/25 budget position.

The report is for information and therefore no decisions are required.

Background

- 2. Schools Forum was notified at the January 2024 meeting of a Dedicated Schools Grant budget (DSG) allocation of £119,006,003 and a budget was agreed accordingly.
- 3. A block transfer was agreed to move £150,000 from the Schools Block reserve to the High Needs Block, as part of the Safety Valve plan.
- 4. Several adjustments have been made to the DSG allocation which have increased the overall funding to £119,843,632 and therefore the budget since the January meeting has altered. These changes are described in the following paragraphs.
- 5. The revised budget is detailed in appendix 1.

Budget Changes

- 6. As Forum members will recall the initial high needs block allocations includes an estimate for the place funding, which is updated annually based on the number of places occupied by Darlington pupils from outside of Darlington and Darlington pupils in other local authority areas. This is known as the "import/export" adjustment. When the ESFA have updated the high needs allocation for this indicator, the block has increased by £201,000. This has been assigned to the "unallocated high needs line" rather than increasing one of the high needs budget lines, increasing the High Needs Block to £21,035,831, prior to recoupment.
- 7. We have had two increases to the early years block, £396,382 following the census information and £240,447 for the under 2s part time equivalent estimated hours. These adjustments have resulted in an increase to the Early Years block to £12,272,600. The block may be subject to clawback in June/July next year, when the January census information is completed.
- 8. The table below shows the adjusted DSG Funding prior to recoupment by the ESFA.

DSG Block Allocation	Funding Confirmed at the January 2024 Forum	Adjustments to the DSG	Revised DSG Allocation
Schools Block Central Schools	£85,642,394	0	£85,642,394
Block	£893,007	0	£893,007
High Needs Block	£20,834,831	£201,000	£21,035,831
Early Years Block	£11,635,771	£636,829	£12,272,600
Total DSG Allocation	£119,006,003	£837,829	£119,843,832

Summary of Revised DSG Funding Allocation

- 9. The Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) have recouped an additional £2,009,771 in relation to the academisation of Whinfield Primary School, increasing the recoupment amount to £81,882,587 for the school budget share for mainstream Academies.
- 10. Some adjustments have been made to the recoupment within the high needs block, an additional £20,000 has been recouped for the increased places within Post 16 provision.

Reserves

- 11. Schools Forum were notified in the May 2024 Forum meeting paper, of the year end budget position for 2023/24 and agreed the carry forwards in the reserves as follows:
 - Schools Block. Had an in-year underspend of £50,000 increasing the reserve to £346,026.
 - **Central Schools Block**. There was an in-year underspend of £56,456 with a brought forward reserve of £578,277. Forum will recall that this reserve was to be used to smooth the 20% reduction each year of the historic element of the Central Block.
 - **Central Schools Block.** There is a brought forward reserve of £44,139, the reserve is ringfenced for PFI and other central costs.
 - **High Needs Block**. The year end position was an underspend of £865,357 which decreased the deficit prior to Safety Valve payments to £5,557,792, this is being addressed through the Safety Valve programme.
 - **Early Years Block**. There was an in- year overspend of £444,323 bringing the reserve, prior to clawback or reimbursement to a deficit of £413,058.

Reserves	BF from 2022/23	2023/24 Outturn Position	CF into 2024/25
Schools Block	296,026	50,000	346,026
Central Schools Block	521,821	56,456	578,277
Central Schools Block - PFI	44,139	0	44,139
High Needs Block	(6,423,149)	865,357	(5,557,792)
Early Years Block	31,265	(444,323)	(413,058)
Total Reserve Balances	(5,529,898)	527,491	(5,002,408)

Summary of Reserve Balances Carried Forward into 2024/25

NB – Deficits are shown in brackets in red, Surpluses are shown as a positive figure

12. We have received a reimbursement in the early years block of £215,270 following the census reconciliation, as expected this will offset some of the increased entitlement costs and reduce the deficit on the block. However, the Early years block will still be in a deficit position due to the demand pressures within the SEN Inclusion funding.

13. We have successfully completed the first two years of the Safety Valve programme and at the end of the March 2024 we had received payments totalling £3,154,000 to be held towards the repayment of the High Needs Block deficit. Therefore, the closing net position across all the DSG blocks at the end of 2023/24 was a deficit of £1,848,408.

Budget Position – Appendix 1

Schools Block

14. The in-year schools block is estimated to be underspent by £25,047 at the end of the financial year, this is unallocated funding agreed in January Forum to be held in reserve for future years. There may be a further recoupment adjustment for the academisation of Whinfield Primary school and this will be reflected in the January report if necessary.

Central Schools Block

15. The in-year central schools block is estimated to be underspent by £27,663. This is due to unallocated funding within the block and a small movement in the Centrally employed teacher provision.

High Needs Block

- 16. At the time of writing this report due to the proximity of the start of the new academic year it means that some of the data in relation to placements and payments is not yet available. Therefore, the resource bases have been shown to budget and growth has been assumed for independent, mainstream and special school provision, with inflationary assumptions for out of area provision. The High Needs block is currently projecting an overspend of £120,985, taking into account growth projections and the allowance of £150,000 transfer from the School Block Reserve. The main movements from the budgeted figures are:
 - a. Marchbank is reporting an overspend of £70,000, this is due to the increase of four additional places and additional payments over and above element 3 for four pupils.
 - b. Pre 16 Independent provision is anticipated to overspent by approx. £251,232, due to placements that have been made where no state funded special school provision was available, which is generating a projected underspend in out of area special schools of £48,000. However, it is very early in the year and this projection should be taken with caution, as although growth of 6 prorated placements has been factored in it may not be high enough, due to limited capacity in state funded provision and persistent legal challenge from parent/carers for independent specialist provision.
 - c. The overall Post 16 provision is projected to be underspent by approx. £178,000 based on the current information, however at the time of writing this report the Autumn term payments have not been made and therefore this position should be treated with caution. Prorated growth of four placements has been allowed for, two of which are post 19 extensions to independent provision agreed via legal challenge.
 - d. Mainstream school top ups are estimated to be overspent by £106,314 based on summer term payments and the projected growth in EHCP's. This overspend will be subject to further change as assessments are made during the autumn and spring terms.
 - e. The PFI is expected to have an overspend of £100,000 due to the pressures of the affordability gap.

Early Years

- 17. The early years block is projected in line with budget, there is likely to be some pressure within the SEN Inclusion fund, but as the revised offer starts from September it is unclear what the levels of expenditure will be prior to the Autumn term payments being made. There will be some movements within the 2 year old working parents and under 2's expenditure depending on the take up of the extended entitlements. Therefore, this area is reported with nil variance and will be reviewed in the January forum.
- 18. We have received confirmation of indicative payments for early year providers in relation to the Teachers 2024 pay award, the funding is required to be fully distributed to providers and the final allocations will be published by the ESFA at the end of October.

<u>Reserves</u>

19. The DSG brought forward deficit after the Early Years reimbursement for 2023/24 actual provision levels now stands at £4,937,137 prior to Safety Valve payments, to date we have received £3,580,667 from the ESFA towards the high needs deficit.

<u>Overall</u>

- 20. The in-year budget for 2023/24 across all the DSG blocks is currently projected to be overspent by £68,275 however as outlined above, these are subject to the on-going challenges within the high needs block, as well as increased demand in SEN inclusion. Therefore, these are subject to potential further demands in the remaining two terms of the financial year and should be treated as indicative at this stage.
- 21. The overall estimated budget position for 2024/25 is a deficit of £5,005,413 including the brought forward deficit from 2023/24, excluding the Safety Valve payments.

Recommendations

- 22. <u>That Forum notes the current budget position.</u>
- 23. That Forum notes the current high needs block position and the fluidity of this area.
- 24. That Forum notes the ongoing pressures within the SEN Inclusion Funding.
- 25. <u>That Forum notes the split of funding across the Education Sector within the high</u> <u>needs block.</u>

Emma Clennell Finance Manager Operations Group

BUDGET	MANAGEMENT	2024/25

AGENDA ITEM 4 - Appendix 1

	BUDGET MANAGEMENT 2024	4/25											AGENDATI	EM 4 - Appendix 1	
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Expenditure by Type

		Sum of Pro rata'd	Average Cost per	% of of the Block
Row Labels	Sum of Total Spend	Head Count	Placement	Spend
Mainstream	£4,315,585	504	8,556	26.3%
Post 16	£1,178,547	169	6,974	7.2%
Resource	£326,000			2.0%
Special	£4,277,817	264	16,195	26.1%
Alternative Provision	£1,911,433	91	20,939	11.6%
Independent	£3,880,933	59	65,457	23.6%
Other (Transport)	£525,000			3.2%
Grand Total	£16.415.315	1.088		

The table excludes place funding that is recouped directly from the ESFA



Schools Forum High Needs Monitoring Sub-Group Thursday 20th June 11am-1pm Hummersknott Academy

Summary of Meeting

Attendees and Apologies:

Paula Ayto (Chair)	Primary Academy	Reid Street Primary	Attended
	Vice-Chair Schools Forum	School	
Alex Nelson	Primary Academy	West Park Academy	Attended
Deb Hindson	Primary Academy	Heathfield Academy	Apologies
Caroline Green	Special School	Beaumont Hill Academy & Marchbank Free School	Apologies
James Keating	Secondary Academy	Hummersknott Academy	Attended
Sally Hudson	Maintained	Rise Carr College (PRU)	Attended
Andy Gilpin	Non School/Post 16	Darlington College	Apologies
Rachel Somerville	Secondary Academy	Hurworth School	Attended

Local Authority:

Joanne Littler	Interim Head of Service for SEND & Inclusion	Attended
Emma Clennell	Finance Manager	Attended
Helen Watson	Senior Strategic Commissioning Manager – Children/Young People and SEND	Attended
Eleanor Marshall	Education Partnerships Officer	Attended

ltem No.	Item Discussion
NO. 1	Welcome, introductions and apologies
	Register/Declaration of business interests – None
	Any Other Business – None
2	Minutes of meeting held on 18 th April 2024
	The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.
	Matters Arising
	ISP case study – JL presented an ISP case study. It was agreed the learning included earlier intervention and a more holistic approach could have met needs in a different way. The group discussed the importance of CYP voice.
	Item 4 – OT update



The referral route for schools and the the LA OT sensory offer including the Sensory Smart Families sessions was discussed. It was agreed there is some lack of understanding of the core offer and the individual work with pupits. It was suggested that an update to SENCos would be helpful. Action: JL to liaise with Anne Davidson for further SENCo support. The group also asked what secondary regulation support there was in place relating to the primary transition. Action: JL will request an update from Anne Davidson AOB item - Liquid Logic (LL) JL confirmed that data cleansing is still ongoing in LL and that she has requested a year- on-year SEND2 analysis from LL. This has been requested for a DFE meeting. She also pointed out that the ongoing data work will support the WSOA monitoring visit which is due in September 2024. 3 Membership update The Chair suggested that non attendees be contacted to confirm their commitment to this subgroup. ACTION: JL to contact persistent non attendees. 4 Resource Base Update The Heattifield base will be open from September and referrals will be approached from this point. Contracts and specifications are still being finalised. The Hurworth base discussions are leading to a review of finances, and these will be presented at a future meeting. A significant change request would need to be submitted and the same process as the Heathfield base would be proposed. 5 Outreach Review Update The group noted the support primary schools provide in areas of nur		
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	6	Beaumont Hill Academy (BHA) Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)



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	The presentation that was given at Schools Forum was previously circulated. It was noted that a minimum funding guarantee of a 5b is now in place for BHA and a memorandum of understanding is in place in principle from September.
6	Meeting Schedule/next meeting
	 It was agreed to cancel the next meeting on Thursday 18th July 2024 – 10am. 2024/25 dates would be programmed on a similar basis as this academic year.
7	Any other business
	 Future programme activity was discussed and agreed: 6-day cover spend/new models Hurworth Resource Base business case Revised safety valve plan