

Meeting title	SCHOOLS FORUM
Date	Tuesday 28 th March 2023 – via Teams
Forum Members Present	Jo Marsh (Chair), Kevin Burnett, Alun Williams, Hayley Trottmann, Steven Mackay, Fiona Skinner (sub for Emily Massey)
Forum Members Not Present	Louise Malik, Roz Lambert, Clare Crowther, Tim Howes, Mary Cox, Jo Stoaling, Emily Massey
Observers	Cllr Dine Romero
Officers Present	Christopher Wilford, Richard Morgan, Mary Kearney-Knowles, Becky Biddlecombe (notes), Phillip Frankland, Rosie Cullis, Rosemary Collard, Olwyn Donnelly
Officers Not Present	Mandy Bishop, Will Godfrey
Distribution	As above plus Ed Gregory Education Director, Diocese of Bath & Wells Cllr. Richard Samuel: Cabinet Member Resources Cllr. Kevin Guy: Leader of the Council Cllr. Vic Pritchard: Chair of PDS Panel Mandy Bishop, Wendy Jefferies, Andy Rothery, Jeff Wring, Paul Hiscott, Olwyn Donnelly
Next meeting	27 th June 2023

1.	Apologies Received	ACTION
	JM: Welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
	No Declarations of Interest.	
3.	Minutes of the last meeting (31st January 2023)	
	Minutes approved from the last meeting.	
4.	DSG – Safety Valve Programme	
	<p>CW – Positive news, we have been accepted into the safety valve programme. Really good input from everyone.</p> <p>CW formally thanked Richard, Rosemary, Olwyn, and Rosie for all of their hard work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since submitting the plan, we have had positive feedback. The first part of the DSG recovery plan is to improve support and Scrutiny. • OD – we have a 3-stage project. We have had great support from colleagues in schools, it has been fantastic. We are getting into a good place and hoping to second a colleague from the partnership 	

trust to help us. By the end of the summer term, we are hoping to have a clear vision.

- We are looking at the system of SEND support looking at the 5-year plan. First step is to set up a SEND and CPD Strategy across B&NES which will include setting up a SEND & AP Advisory Service to triage requests. The Service will also be gathering information where there are gaps and needs, should we need to help with additional support. The resource that goes across B&NES will be built up over the years as we get feedback. We have spoken to other local authorities, and this works well for them. Julie dyer will be working alongside me on this project.
- CW – this is a very interesting piece of work; it is moving on nicely. CW thanked OD, for the speed in which this project has worked. Nearly all LAs are responding to this challenge from the DFE. There is going to be a lot of change, through the implementation plan we will ensure it lines up correctly.
- The next part of the plan is to ensure, there is sufficiency and suitability of placements. The LA will ensure that there are sufficient places and children are placed in the most appropriate provision. A key part of this plan is capital investment, this work has moved on within the last few months.
- RCollard – I am hoping you are all aware we have been successful in getting the bid for the Special School. With regard resource bases, Secondary schools are progressing though Primaries we have struggled with. We have a possibility of an ASD base in Bath and possibly a S&L in Keynsham and SpLD in Norton Radstock area – though all these are at fairly early stages.
- OD has submitted the bid for the free AP school. The bid for the additional funding for the safety valve project, I have not heard anything back from that.
- CW – fingers crossed we hear back from that.
- The third part of the review is looking at reducing high-cost placements. The reduction of these costs is essential to the core of the recovery plan, the financial health of the DSG and children's service budgets.
- RCollard – the residential at Bath college is moving. The local authority is helping the college to develop a 12-bed development, in Westfield.
- CW – The outcomes of this new development will be early help, better long-term sufficiency and will reduce DSG pressures. In our plan we had to detail the costs and show when they will kick in to reduce the budget spend. The Financial outcomes is spread over the next 6 years. We will be rigorously monitored with the progress we make on these plans.
- The Financial contributions have been agreed at the forum.
- KB – If you make more savings than expected, are we allowed to keep that to one side, or does that need to be taken of the DFE contribution?
- CW – It is a good question, I am not sure
- RM – In the next 6 years they will be assessing how much funding we will need and will reduce the contribution.
- KB – I was trying to understand the basis on which reviews might happen. Given the risk factors outlined, can we call for a review and say to the DFE we actually need more?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CW – Yes, I get that, it would be nice. If we see a continued growth in the EHCP requests, I think we will have a lot of local scrutiny from the DFE about what we are doing and how we are doing it. I don't think we will be able to ask for more. • KB – With the agreement, with the robust monitoring, you would think that they would also see that if the plan in place was robust and rigorous then surely it should be forthcoming? I was keen to see that in the agreement – but it seemed one sided sadly. • CW – I think what we have got is what we have got. 	
5.	Sensory Support for pupils with braille	
	<p>OD – this is good news; the sensory support service had identified a real challenge around teaching assistants who were specialist in braille. Currently we have 14 braille users, it is increasingly difficult to maintain and keep the teaching assistants. To address this the sensory support service have proposed a model with a proportion of TA time, and the fund will come direct from the sensory support service. The cost goes across the 4 LA's. For B&NES the contribution comes to £5972.40 a year.</p> <p>KB – you mentioned they are going to supply a portion of the time with children with the EHCPs, I just wanted your view, although you say there is an increase cost of 5000 pounds, there won't be an increase cost if these children already have EHCPs.</p> <p>OD – It will be a saving to schools, both financially and recruitment.</p> <p>KB – I thought if there is a EHCP they must have a TA to support them, and instead of the school doing that the money is redirected.</p> <p>OD – It is extra money on top</p> <p>RM – We looked at this, it is complex if we tried to redirect the resource for schools for a couple of hours each week the administrative cost will be in excess of 6 thousand pounds. It would be a saving for any school who have a braille user.</p> <p>JM – Any help, for the resources is welcome. The information and knowledge sharing is useful, it will only ever bring improvement with how we are accessing earlier systems.</p>	
6.	Growth Funding 2023-24	
	<p>RM – The growth factor funding has been increased by 3.4% for 23-24. We have not utilised the full allocation in 22-23; we received an allocation of 445k, and we have allocated £328k to schools. Our budget allocation from the DFE for 2023/24 is £372k. We anticipate that with a 3.4% increase in the factor values as requested we would spend £320k. The policies show how schools will attract the support, there are various elements to the methodology. We are looking for a decision from the forum, to increase the funding factor values by 3.4%.</p> <p>AW – Does this apply to special and AP?</p> <p>RM – It is for primary and secondary only. When it comes to special and AP, we need to follow a set of guidance.</p> <p>AW – If I read the paper properly, are you expecting an under spend?</p> <p>RM – At this moment in time, we are anticipating we will spend £320k.</p> <p>AW – You are asking for a 3.4% increase?</p> <p>RM – We want to increase the factor values and if we did that, we would estimate that we would spend £320k we would have an underspend.</p> <p>AW – Where are you anticipating the growth?</p>	

	<p>RM – There are 8 school's currently receiving allocation mostly in primary, it is mainly in the Keynsham area. We also have the new schools that are opening and still expanding, we have one based in Mulberry Park and one based at Norton Hill Primary.</p> <p>KB – Does anything happen at the end of this, if you under spend will those growth areas get anymore?</p> <p>RM – The allocation of the growth factor is part of the dedicated school's grant. Any under spend will contribute to the overall position. The £50k that we are predicting will contribute to the Safety Valve position.</p> <p>KB – The policies that are set up, have these been reviewed recently? Do they show if there is anything missing?</p> <p>RM – If you remember we did a full consultation of the methodology on this, we kept the methodology on this for both opening grants to be in the same format we have had in the last 5/6 years, this is now in line with the DFE's future plans. We have linked it to the formula allocations. This is exactly where it should be.</p> <p>AW – It is a very helpful and useful grant to have, it is the right amount.</p> <p>JM – Asks forum members, to accept the proposal</p> <p>All forum members accept the proposal.</p>	agreed
7.	A.O.B.	
	<p>Early years and the recent Budget announcements –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PF – A letter regarding the impact of current funding rates had been sent off to the Minister following the last meeting. Events have snow balled since we last had our meeting, and there were a lot of announcements in the Budget. The changes are for early years education and childcare, which will result in further changes to the existing offer and for wraparound childcare at primary age ranges. • Next April all working parents of 2-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours per week over 38 weeks. From September 2024 that offer will be lowered further to the age range of 9 months upwards and from September 2025 the age range from 9 months to 3-year-olds will be able to access 30 hours a week over 38 weeks. Roughly that will work out at 22 hours a week if this is taken over the whole year. • September 2024 until September 2026 the government will be putting money out via the councils over the 2 academic years to provide wrap around childcare in all primary schools. This push is so it can be announced by 2026 all schools will have a wraparound breakfast and after school offer for working families. • This will result in a lot of papers to the Forum, the first of which will be a review of the money of the existing 2- and 3-year-old offer as the Government will be putting in extra funding from this September. The Government have said they will put in an extra £204 million pounds this September across the country; they are talking of headlining increases of 30% for the 2-year-old rate and an increase of 4% for the 3 and 4-year-old rate. • The Government will also increase the funding with an additional uplift of £288 million for the financial year 2024/25. However, all of this is caveated by the ongoing pressures on the sector around work force retention and recruitment. I will be bringing lots of information to this forum. 	

	<p>DR – Do you have any sense that this is something that is over and above what some places are being asked to deliver in terms of early help?</p> <p>PF – This offer is linked to an economic and financial agenda. Some parts of the sectors have raised concerns around the benefits for children however there has been nothing announced about additional help for children.</p> <p>DR – One of our biggest issues in B&NES the costs we are fully covered. Will this address that?</p> <p>PF – This is all to be in the detail. The fact that the 3- and 4-year-old rate is going up at a lower percentage is a concern for the sector.</p>	
8.	Date of next meeting: 27th June 2023	