

Meeting title	SCHOOLS FORUM
Date	Tuesday 27 th June 2023 – via Teams
Forum Members Present	Jo Marsh (Chair), Jo Stoling, Kevin Burnett, Louise Malik, Steven Mackay, Mary Cox, Clare Crowther, Roz Lambert, Fiona Skinner for Emily Massey, Emma Yates for Alun Williams
Forum Members Not Present	Alan Williams, Emily Massey
Observers	
Officers Present	Christopher Wilford, Richard Morgan, Mary Kearney-Knowles, Becky Biddlecombe (notes), Phillip Frankland, Rosemary Collard, Will Godfrey
Officers Not Present	Mandy Bishop, Olwyn Donnelly
Distribution	As above plus Ed Gregory Education Director, Diocese of Bath & Wells Cllr. Member Resources Cllr. Kevin Guy: Leader of the Council Cllr. Dine Romero: Chair of PDS Panel Mandy Bishop, Wendy Jefferies, Andy Rothery, Jeff Wring, Paul Hiscott, Olwyn Donnelly
Next meeting	26th September 2023

1.	Apologies Received	ACTION
	JM: Welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted as above.	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
	Members were reminded to complete the declaration of interest forms once per year and to declare anything pertaining to the papers being presented.	
3.	Minutes of the last meeting	
	Changes to minutes – Forum minutes accepted.	
4.	DSG – Safety Valve Programme	
	Quarter 1 monitoring CW -Submitted quarter 1 position, which involves the specific agreements within the safety valve plan. The paper was submitted on the 15 th of June, we are yet to receive a response back from DfE, this is part of the arrangements to ensure we are reporting back to school's forum, so you are all aware of the progress. There is some flex in our financial forecasting, it is very tight, and we need to deliver our plans very quickly in order to reverse some of the	

growth (in EHCPs / costs). The document provides updates on the different sections of the recovery plan.

First part is work doing on SEN early help and system support OD has been leading on this and has made good progress. The send commitment document will be published in August 2023 and launches in September. This will be for all schools to adhere to. We are recruiting a SEND inclusion leader; this person will have a significant role setting up the service area with all schools. We are also looking to recruit for a project manager who will join the LA from September for one year, this will be setting up the service area and support around AP.

Rosie has done an audit for independent school placements, Rosemary had done the audit of the special schools. Rosie has left, so RC will be picking that up in the next few weeks to have a look at the outcomes and to see whether there's anything that we can do to reduce the placements out of county.

The audit of the special schools. I've done the audit of the banding for Fosseway and had a conversation with Fosseway. They are also doing an audit of their bandings and we have an agreement that they will be more rigorous with the consultations if we do consult with the children on the lower bands. We still need to do Three Ways bandings and have a conversation with JS.

Resource bases update

RC: There are 3 secondaries, which are all new builds.

The one at Somervale, Midsomer Norton Partnership. I've just had the project development through the planning is going to go next and we're hoping to open that base in September 25.

RC is working closely with the Palladian trust for an ASD based at Ralph Allen that's sitting with us at the moment to release the costings so that that can go forward. Also working closely with St Gregory's and the Clifton Diocese for a resource base at Saint Gregory's School, which would be MLD and HI.

Hoping to open a speech and language based at Westfield primary in January and then looking at working with Fosseway and Round Hill for an ASD primary base opening September 24. And then there's also a potential, one at Mulberry Park and one at Peasedown Saint John. But those are very initial discussions and haven't progressed very far yet.

Special school update

RC: successful in the bid, we are in phase 2 And had an engagement event how multi academy trusts could work with the school, we are waiting for the tenders to go ahead closing date is 31st August. The DfE will organise interviews to find out who will be awarded the bid for the new special school.

Alternative provision school update

CW: we have been invited to interview next week, which will be a positive process. This is to do with the AP site we are opening at Culverhay. We also did bid for some additional capital finance from the DfE to develop a small residential school with 4 bedrooms attached to it.

RC: we were successful in getting a contribution towards that. It didn't quite fulfil the whole amount that we wanted, but it was a very good contribution of £4 million and we've got £1 million that we can put towards it from our high need's capital funding grant for capital work. We have £5m towards the building of this school and I'm looking at how we're going to do it and where we're going to do it.

CW: Review of the Joint Agency pool, which we're at the final stages of with our health colleagues. key part of our safety plan. We need to be aware of and work through when we conclude those discussions with our health colleagues. The final piece in there is around SEN staffing changes, so one of the things that the DfE seems to do is monitor our job vacancies.

- Rosie Cullis has left us for the Northeast of England (Cumbria?). She's returned to where her family are, and we have interviewed and appointed. Laura Donnelly is currently assistant head and Senco at a Secondary School. She's got a very good reputation. She interviewed excellent and will be joining from the 1st of September.
- Rosemary continues to support us even though she's officially retired, she comes to help us with work, and we're eternally grateful at this moment in time.

RM: for quarter 2 the DfE are requiring significant data, we are developing a dashboard where all the data will be stored.

5. Early Years Funding increases

- PF: Follow on from the previous meeting, the DfE are going to be providing extra funding. The additional funding will be provided as a supplementary grant, and we are encouraged to engage with our providers but not formally consult.
- In order to make the process slightly easier, they have decided to make it a supplementary grant rather than putting it through the dedicated school's grant. And then they intend to go back with additional funding to the normal route for the spring next year.
- RM: the DfE haven't specified the individual rates, that you have to allocate we need to have a decision on how we allocate that in the standard way.
- SM: agreed with RM if it mirrors the patterns of the grants then in that case it's not a formal decision.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC: budgets should be formed, and we should have our income set for September, I think in terms of morale of the sector, it is worth taking it back to early years forum. • RL: mirrored CC thoughts, the morale needs to be boosted if we can engage at that level, it would be helpful. I think there has been a 30% increase with children with funding. • RM: it's likely that the DfE will specify the details of how the grant will be distributed to individual settings. The guidance could come in the next week or so. • KB: agreed with what has been said, if RM can't foresee any future problems, and happy that school forum can delegate this sounds sensible for speed. If PF, CC and RL to go to the early year's forum. • JM: vote on the recommendation that we will delegate the decision to the Director of Education, should there be any funding sort of freedom in the calculation once the detail becomes known. <p>All school forum members agreed.</p>	
6.	Project Search- Fosseyway Disapplication	
	<p>The paper explains that a formal disapplication is required to allow Fosseyway to retain 3 pupils on roll beyond their normal school leaving age.</p> <p>RC: request to school's forum to vote on this to put this through to the DfE. There are three students currently at Fosseyway from September will be over age, they want to remain so they can attend project search. It is now the only project search running and to give these people a chance, we need to ask the DfE if they can remain.</p> <p>KB asked if there were any implications for any other education setting (finance et al). RM said there wasn't</p> <p>All school forum members agreed.</p>	
7.	Maintained Schools Balances	
	<p>RM: Paper that publicises the balances of maintained schools, we have 7 maintained schools left, the documents show the balance from March 2023 and compares to 2021 and 2022. This paper comes every year, there is a reduction in the overall balance held by the 7 schools, shifting down from over a £1 million down to £800k. There is a school with one deficit, they have a recovery plan.</p> <p>St Johns has a recovery plan that will bring it back into balance. 2 other LA schools have taken DfE advice as projecting deficits over the next 2 years</p>	

	<p>RM asked if this was a similar picture for MATs → it was! MATs said be real problems if not more funding and all pay awards fully funded</p> <p>This picture shows that the financial pressures are beginning to hit schools.</p> <p>All forum members agreed they understand what is going on.</p>	
8.	Meeting dates 2023-24 academic year	
	<p>Future meeting dates agreed by forum members. Agreed to keep meetings online – even though been previously suggested to have one meeting in person (January time when most decisions made)</p>	
10.	AOB:	
	<p>RM: SM retiring, the individual school academies in which there is three, they would need to nominate a new representative. SM said he would ask his successor if he'd like to be a standalone academy rep. Another gap is maintained school governor.</p> <p>Action – Members to look for new members to join.</p> <p>Forum members thanks SM for his time with the school forum.</p>	
11.	Date of next meeting: 26th September 2023	