

Meeting	Schools Forum
Date	28 th January 2025
Time	2pm to 4pm
Venue	Teams

Attendees

Chair	Jo Marsh
Core Group	Jo Marsh, Kevin Burnett, Louise Malik, Richard Morgan, Roz Lambert, Laura Donnelly, Phillip Frankland, Ray Egbufoama, Julie-Anne Kellaway, Jo Stoaling, Mandy Bishop, George Samios, Kate Wilson, Christopher Wilford, Fiona Skinner, Hayley Trotman, Christopher Kinsella, Helen McDicken, Becky Biddlecombe (notes)
Apologies received	Mary Kearney-Knowles Alun Williams Olwyn Donnelly

1.	Welcome and Apologies	ACTION
	JM welcomed everyone to the meeting, apologies were noted.	
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	
	<p>Members reviewed the minutes of the last meeting held on the 3rd December, minutes were approved as an accurate representation.</p> <p>KB asked LD about the High needs working group and asked roughly what the timescales will be for reporting some proposals back to Schools' Forum?</p> <p>LD confirmed a meeting will take place soon and the Group should have some proposals ready for the next Schools' Forum meeting.</p> <p>LM said that this would be too late if it affected people and contracts and changes that may have come into effect in September may have to be delayed until January for example</p>	
4.	Schools Budget 25-26	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RM provided an update on the schools' budget for 2025-2026, highlighting the increases in each of the four blocks and the methodology used for allocations. Also discussed the impact of pupil number shifts on funding and the additional grants rolled into mainstream funding. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RM explained that the early years block saw a significant increase due to the additional provision that needs to be funded. • KB asked about the full funding of the Area Cost Adjustment and whether this was down to the DfE. RM discussed the methodology used for allocations and explained that currently the amount of schools' budget B&NES has received doesn't allow B&NES to pass on the full 1.5% - it can only pass on 0.86%. This is due to the fact that schools have allowed 0.5% transfer of schools' budget to High Needs and the data that feeds the NFF is out of synch with DfE methodology. • RM noted that all NFF factors had been fully funded • RM highlighted the impact of pupil number shifts on funding, noting that the primary sector has 23 schools on the minimum funding guarantee, up from 11 last year. The significant changes in pupil numbers, either growth or reduction, are the primary reason for these shifts. • Three large grants have been rolled into mainstream funding, and he provided an analysis of the impact of these grants on the overall funding. (Special Schools will continue to receive separate grants.) He noted that the primary average per pupil increase was 0.6%, and the secondary was 1% when excluding the additional grants. • RM discussed the need for further information from the Department for Education (DfE) regarding the National Insurance grant methodology and potential adjustments for teacher pay awards • He suggested that the Schools Forum consider raising concerns about inflationary pressures on schools. 	
5.	Early Years Funding Formula	
	<p>PF updated members on the early years funding formula.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The early years funding formula includes a 6.9% increase across the board. PF explained the impact of the uplift and the challenges faced by early years providers, including the National Insurance increases and the living wage. The uplift is necessary to address the increased budget, and the final round of changes implemented over the past few years. • PF discussed the challenges faced by early years providers, including the impact of National Insurance increases and the living wage. The uplift might only help providers maintain their current financial position or potentially leave them worse off. • PF mentioned that the Early Years Reference group and sector feedback supported the proposal, despite concerns about the impact of the funding uplift on providers. He emphasized the importance of passing the proposal to help providers with their financial planning. <p>Comments: RL and KW expressed their concerns about the impact of the funding uplift on disadvantaged families and the recruitment of experienced staff. They supported the proposal but highlighted the ongoing challenges in the sector. Noting that increased fees might make</p>	

	<p>it difficult for low-income families to access childcare.</p> <p>KW highlighted the challenges in recruiting experienced staff, particularly in the context of increased staffing costs and the need for emotional support and communication for children affected by COVID-19. Emphasized the ongoing struggle to provide quality care and support for disadvantaged families.</p>	
6.	AOB	
	<p>Attendance at HN Working Group: LD expressed to members the attendance at the last High needs working group was poor. LD urged school's forum members to ensure their representatives attend the next meeting. LD will send round the future dates</p> <p>Auto-enrolling FSMs: RM/CW explained the process of auto-enrolling eligible children for free school meals, which aims to increase the number of children receiving meals and pupil premium funding. The process is expected to be implemented by September 2025. Have to be cautious about GDPR, and need to request permission from parent to do it i.e. "We think you're eligible, can we check please." RM explained that schools will continue to receive information about eligible children from the local authority, and they will need to record this information in their school census. The process aims to streamline the identification of eligible children and ensure they receive the necessary support. (The auto-enrolment process would be particularly helpful for Infant schools as parents don't seem to register for FSM because of Universal Infant School Meals – and schools miss out on PP etc ..)</p>	
7.	Actions	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create the first draft of the funding pressure letter addressing the financial challenges faced by schools and early years sectors, including themes suggested by forum members. SF Agreed that letter be drafted by RM, PF & LM around school funding and Early Years funding (& SEND funding), and JM will have final input as Chair • LD - High Needs Working Group Meeting: Send out new dates for the next High Needs Working Group meeting and ensure representatives are informed and encouraged to attend. • CW - Provide an update on the free school meals auto-enrolment process at the Head Teachers Conference on the 13th. 	
8.	Meeting dates	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18th March 2025 • 8th July 2025 	
9.	Date of next meeting: 18th March 2025	