

SCHOOLS' FORUM

11 February 2020

Commenced: 10.15am

Terminated: 11.25am

Present:	Susan Marsh (In the Chair)	Governor, Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Lisa Lockett	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Andy Card	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Lisa Gallaher	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Steve Marsland	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Richard O'Regan	Secondary Schools – L/A Maintained
	David Ainsworth	Secondary Schools – Academies
	Jenny Langley	Secondary Schools – Academies
	Elizabeth Jones	Governor, Secondary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Donal Townson	Governor, Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Rebeckah Hollingsworth	Tameside Pupil Referral Service
	Elaine Horridge	Diocesan Representative
	Scott Lees	Tameside Teachers' Consultative Committee
	Tim Bowman	Assistant Director, Education TMBC
	Christine Mullins	Finance Business Partner, TMBC
	Louisa Siddall	Senior Accountant, TMBC
	Wendy Lees	Senior Finance Officer, TMBC
	Wendy Poole	Head of Risk Management and Audit Services
	Councillor Leanne Feeley	Executive Member
Apologies for absence:	Karen Burns	Primary Schools – Academies
	Robin Elms	Special Schools – L/A/Maintained
	Elaine Sagar	Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector
	Heather Farrell	Primary Schools - Academies
	Simon Wright	Primary Schools – Academies
	Marie Wright	Primary Schools – Academies
	Gill McFadden	Business Manager, Secondary Schools-Academies
	Alan Harrison	Secondary Schools-Academies
	Ian Noone	Diocesan Representative
	Anton McGrath	14-19 Sector
	Councillor Oliver Ryan	Executive Member

55 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

56 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of the School's Forum held on 17 December 2019.

RESOLVED

That that the minutes of the meeting of the School's Forum held on 17 December 2019 be approved as a correct record.

57 INSURANCE FOR SCHOOLS

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director of Education and Assistant Director of Finance, presenting the Government consultation response in relation to extending the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) to the Local Authority Maintained Schools sector.

It was outlined that the Department for Education had been considering extending the RPA, currently operational for Academy Trusts to the Local Authority Maintained Schools sector so that this sector could benefit from potential savings associated with the scheme. As the charge for RPA is based on pupil numbers only, the charges from the Local Authority based on commercial insurers were not competitive.

The Forum considered the results of the consultation, which ran from 9 September to 4 November 2019. These findings were summarised as follows:

- 55% of respondents to the consultation supported the proposed extension of the RPA cover to Local Authority Managed Schools (LAMS). They suggested that their current commercial insurance was potentially not cost effective and they could save money if the RPA was extended to LAMS.
- 25% of respondents disagreed with the proposal and suggested that the current commercial market worked well. They, therefore, did not consider it necessary to extend RPA to LAMS.
- 20% of respondents were unsure and noted that they would need further information before reaching a decision.

It was further highlighted that the cumulative response from the Local Authority Maintained Schools sector was strongly positive, with 83% agreeing to the extension of RPA to LAMS, from April 2020.

It was explained that the RPA was not an insurance scheme but was a mechanism through which the cost of risks would be covered by Government funds and that this was a voluntary arrangement, which over 6,100 academies had joined since it was launched in September 2014. It was also stated that the coverage of risk offered by the RPA was commensurate with that currently offered by commercial insurers.

With regard to extending RPA to local Authority Maintained Schools, a number of membership issues were highlighted, including:

- Church academies would only be permitted to join the RPA if they had written approval from their trustees. This would apply to Church LAMS.
- It is acknowledged that, in most maintained schools, the Local Authority would retain ownership of the school property and the associated liabilities relating to providing an education service, staff employment and property maintenance and would need to be satisfied with the overall risk cover that a school had in place.
- PFI schools would need to be reviewed as the document states that, for PFI schools who paid for premises/Building insurance via the PFI Unitary Charge, it was unlikely that they would benefit from joining the RPA. Under the current arrangements for academies, Multi Academy Trusts were allowed to leave them out and this would also need to apply to Local Authority PFI schools.

It was stated that RPA would be offered on a voluntary basis from 1 April 2020 and would be open to any Local Authority Maintained Primary or Secondary Schools who were not contractually committed to another arrangement. This would also be open for Local Authorities to join up all of their schools after securing approval from Schools' Forum.

Although it was accepted that this timeframe would be tight, it was explained that the Local Authority was currently out to tender for its insurance portfolio with new arrangements commencing from 1 April 2020. With this in mind, schools were not restricted by any Local Authority long term arrangements at the current time.

In terms of costs, it was explained that the cost of RPA for academies 2019-20 was £18 per pupil. It was proposed that this cost would remain the same and intended that the Early Years Finance

Regulations 2020-21 would provide Local Authorities with a duty to deduct membership fees from the budget shares of all school joining the RPA.

It was discussed that statutory inspections would need to be reviewed as, in previous years; Engineering inspections had not been charged back to schools. It was further explained that some schools arranged their own inspections and the Local Authority's expectation would be that these services were procured by schools.

RESOLVED

That it be agreed that all Local Authority Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools opt in to the Risk Protection Arrangement en masse subject to the following conditions:

- (i) Further clarification is obtained regarding PFI Schools; and**
- (ii) Urgent communication is arranged with church Schools and approval of trustees sought.**

58 SCHOOLS' FORUM FORWARD PLAN

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director of Finance and Assistant Director of Education, outlining the Forward Plan of reports and meeting deadlines for the Financial Year 2020-21, as follows:

Date	Venue
Tuesday 23 June 2020	Discovery Academy
Tuesday 29 September 2020	Discovery Academy
Tuesday 24 November 2020	Discovery Academy
Thursday 14 January 2021	Discovery Academy

RESOLVED

That the meeting dates set out for 2020-21, and the reports to be tabled at each meeting, be noted.

59 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET UPDATE FOR 2019-20

The Assistant Director of Finance and the Assistant Director of Education submitted a report updating Forum members on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position for the Financial Year of 2019-20.

The report stated that the projected in-year deficit for the Dedicated Schools Grant was £5.426m. It was explained that there was a projected surplus of £0.106m on the Schools Block; this related to a surplus of growth funding and a small surplus relating to business rates adjustments. It was also explained that the Central Schools Services Block had a nil variation and the Early Years Block had a projected surplus of £0.247m. However, the High Needs Block continued to have a significant deficit. This was projected to be (£5,779m).

It was highlighted that growth within the High Needs budget had continued at expected levels and that, when setting the budget in February 2019, predictions indicated that there would be an in- year overspend of £5.51m and, after taking into account the Dedicated Schools Grant reserves, there would be a year-end overspend of £2.28m.

It was explained that the latest figures showed the projected overspend at March 2020 had increased slightly to £2.55m, assuming further growth of £0.69m for the Spring term. Members of the Forum were also made aware that this growth could also be demonstrated by the increased number of Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) as there continued to be a significant number of requests for assessments. It was predicted that the number of Education and Health Care Plans could increase by a further 90-120, taking the total to approximately 1,683 by March 2020.

With regard to the Early Years Funding Block, an update was provided, with projections demonstrating that the funding position had significantly improved for 3 and 4 year olds. However, this also highlighted that there was still significant pressure on funded hours for 2 year olds. It was explained that the final settlement for Early Year's funding would be announced in June/July 2020 and would be reported to the Schools' Forum in the Summer term of 2020.

Consideration was given to known pressures and commitments for 2019-20 and it was stated that, should all projections materialise, there would be a deficit of £2.077m on the Dedicated Schools Grant. As a result, it was made clear that a Deficit Recovery Plan may need to be submitted to the Department for Education outlining plans for recovery over the next 3 years. With this in mind, it was explained that the position would be closely monitored and updates would be provided to the Schools' Forum.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report be noted.

60 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FUNDING FORMULA 2020-21

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director of Finance and Assistant Director of Education, outlining arrangements concerning Dedicated Schools Grant Funding for 2020-21.

It was stated that the provisional Dedicated Schools Grant settlement for 2020-21 of £212.246m was received on 19 December 2019 and that, in accordance with the Schools and Early Years Finance (England) (No 2) Regulations 2018, this must be deployed to schools and/or pupils.

A breakdown of the provisional settlement for each funding block was provided for members of the Forum, alongside detailed explanation of the increases for each funding block. It was explained that the increase of 4.6% to the Schools Block was related to an increase in pupil numbers, uplift for Retail Price Index (RPIX) of 3.03% on Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schools and an increase in Department for Education funding rates.

With regard to the High Needs Block, the increase of 18.4% related to an increase in pupil numbers and per head gain linked to the National Funding Formula. It was explained that the Gains Cap for 2020-21 was set at 17%, allowing Local Authorities to see an increase up to this amount. With this in mind, it was further explained that Tameside were seeing an increase of 18.37% including growth in pupil numbers.

In addition, the report outlined the increases in the Early Years and Central Schools Services Blocks related to an increase in Department for Education funding rates and increased pupil numbers.

It was explained that the Schools Block was the largest element of Dedicated Schools Grant funding and provided the majority of funding for Mainstream Schools and Academies, with additional elements potentially being allocated through the Early Years and High Needs Blocks. It was outlined that the Schools Block settlement from the Department for Education was made up of the following funding:

1. A primary unit of funding (PUF) of £4,297.57
2. A secondary unit of funding (SUF) of £5,458.85

This core school funding covered all pupil and school led factors in the funding formula. Members of the Forum were made aware that Primary and Secondary units of funding were multiplied by the pupil numbers on Reception to Year 6 plus pupils aged 4 to 10 who were not assigned to a year group for Primary and pupils in Years 7 to 11, pupils aged 11 to 15, not assigned to a year group for Secondary.

3. Premises – this includes Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and business rates which were based on historical spend

4. Mobility – to support schools in which a high proportion of pupils first join on a non-standard date
5. Growth – this is calculated using the difference between the Primary and Secondary numbers on roll on the October 2018 and October 2019 censuses

The report detailed that the total Schools Block settlement for 2020-21 was £169,918. With regard to the proposed funding formula for Mainstream Schools, reference was made to the previous decision of Schools' Forum to support a disapplication request to the Secretary of State to move 1% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. Forum members were informed that this application had not been supported and this was detailed in a letter from the Education and Skills Funding Agency, dated 15 January 2020. As a result, it was explained that, in line with the agreement of Schools' Forum in November 2019, the local Authority would transfer 0.5% of Schools Block funding to the High Needs Block. This was a total of £0.849m.

In addition, the report referred to the approach to allocating funding that was agreed by Schools' Forum in December 2019. It was confirmed that, should the Local Authority have additional funding to allocate, which was to stay as close to the National Funding Formula as possible, funds would be allocated in the following way:

1. Include a Mobility Factor
2. Increase Basic Entitlement
3. Reduce the Gains Cap
4. Increase the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)

With regard to the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG), it was highlighted that Schools' Forum had agreed to include a 0.5% MFG. However, it was explained that, due to the updated settlement and data set from the Department for Education, the MFG can actually be set at 1.84%. In addition, the Gains Cap, which limits the gain in pupil-led funding per pupil that a school receives, had now been set at 4% as opposed to the 3.4% cap consulted upon in December 2019. Any gain above this would be used to partly offset the MFG and allow a balanced Dedicated Schools Grant budget to be set.

The details of the report outlined growth within the Borough. This was related to the Growth Fund agreed by Schools' Forum in June 2019. Forum members were made aware of the definitions of both explicit and implicit growth; how explicit growth related directly to the Growth Fund and how implicit growth related to adjustments to pupil numbers when calculating the funding; in this case for new and growing schools. Forum members were made aware that the estimated Growth Fund required in 2020-21 was £0.633m and, as stated in the Growth policy, the final growth allocation would be based on numbers taken from the October 2020 census.

As in previous years, members of the Forum were asked to consider supporting safeguarding in the Borough; through making a contribution of £0.100m towards the cost of Tameside Safeguarding Children Partnership (TSCP). All schools were asked to support the continuation of this arrangement for 2020-21, which equated to approximately £2.83 per child.

It was stated that, in December 2019, the provisional 2020-21 High Needs Block allocation of £24,599m (before Academy recoupment) was released. Members of the Forum were made aware that this was an increase in funding of £3.817m compared to the 2019-20 settlement. It was also explained that the number of commissioned places has been agreed with Special Schools and Resourced Units for September 2020. It was explained that this would be presented at Schools' Forum in June 2020. In addition, it was confirmed that there were no planned changes in top up rates for Special or Mainstream Schools.

Members of Schools' Forum were reminded that a High Needs Review had been carried out, in consultation with all Schools and Academies and that this had been met with agreement. It was, therefore, discussed that the next phase of this work would be to agree a plan for implementation, prioritising the following changes:

- Looking at the Social, Emotional and Mental Health provision in the borough and expanding the current provision at Thomas Ashton
- Review the Post 16 provision for the most vulnerable pupils in the borough and establishing post 16 provision at Cromwell
- Looking at resource provision and establishing an increase in units in each locality, where demand dictated
- Investigating the establishment of locality budgets, and looking at sustainability of this funding

Alongside these measures, it was also explained that a review of the SEND support services would be taken, alongside other Greater Manchester Authorities, in order to consider options for joint working. In addition, a review of Element 3 top up funding was also discussed.

With regard to Early Years Funding, the report outlined an increase of £297,091 based on the Schools, Early Years and Alternative Provision census data from January 2019. It was explained that this would be updated to reflect the January 2020 and 2021 census data. Members of the Forum were informed that consultation had also taken place with regard to Early Years funding, in order to gather opinion on a number of proposals. However, the results of this consultation were not yet available. With regard to funding for 3 and 4 year olds, the hourly rate of funding received by the Local Authority had increased from £4.51 in 2019-20 to £4.59 2020-21 (2%) for both universal and extended entitlement. It was proposed that deprivation bandings for 3 and 4 year olds remain as 3 bandings, as had previously been used.

The report outlined the continued mandatory requirement for a SEND Inclusion Fund and members of the Forum were made aware that the allocation for 2019-20 was £0.150m. However, due to increasing demand, it was proposed that this be increased to £0.180m and that these allocations continue to be agreed through the Early Years Panel. The central retention based on the current settlement would, therefore, be approximately £0.69m.

It was outlined that this centrally retained funding would support:

- Early Education Funding Team – This fully supported the administration of Early Years funding, the annual costs associated with the Servelec IT system, which was used to calculate and process the payments to Schools and Private, Voluntary and Independent providers.
- Family Information Services – This supported an Information Officer. This post provided advice, guidance and information to families wishing to access Children's services and was implemented to support the increased demands from the early years extended provision.
- Early Years Quality Improvement Team – This supported 4 Quality Officers and 2 SENDCOs. Support was, primarily, in relation to: signposting and promoting the standard 15 hours offer and extended 30 hours offer; OFSTED regulations and standards; and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities related issues.
- SEND Team – funding support for an Early Years SEND Caseworker as specific support for SEND in Early Years.
- Making it REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy). This was aimed at supporting practitioners to build parents' knowledge and confidence so that they could help their children with reading and writing and create a positive, early, home learning environment. This programme was evidence-based and had been very successful in Oldham at raising Good Level of Development in Early Years. There were currently trial and test cohorts in 8 Primary Schools in Tameside. The funding would be used to bring Private, Voluntary and Independent Providers and more School Nurseries on board with Making it REAL.
- Embedding WellComm in Private, Voluntary and Independent Providers and School Nurseries with a focus on transition to schools. WellComm was an early language assessment and toolkit used to identify language difficulties and address them within both the setting and at home.

With regard to funding for 2 year olds, the report highlighted an increase in the hourly rate of funding of 1.5%, from £5.30 in 2019-20 to £5.38 in 2021. In 2019-20, the provider hourly rate allocated was £5.20 with £0.10 per hour retained centrally. It was proposed that the hourly rate to providers be increased to £5.24 with £0.13 per hour retained centrally. In addition, it was proposed to establish a SEND fund of approximately £5,000.

It was outlined that there were no proposed changes to the Early Years Pupils Premium funding allocation (EYPP) and that allocations to individual providers continue to be based on a maximum eligibility of 38 weeks per year, 15 hours per week and an hourly rate of £0.53. Similarly, there were no proposed changes to the Disability Access Fund (DAF), with the allocation rate for eligible children proposed to remain at £615 per child.

Consideration was given to the Central School Services Block (CSSB) and it was explained that this brought together:

- Funding previously allocated through the retained duties element of the Education Services Grant (ESG)
- Funding for ongoing, central functions such as admissions, which were previously top sliced from the schools block
- Residual funding for historic commitments, of which there were none for Tameside MBC

It was stated that allocation to the Local Authority was based on a per pupil element of £27.51 for ongoing duties, totaling £0.953m. It was further explained that operational guidance for 2020-21 requires the local Authority to formally request approval from Schools' forum on central retention of the following:

- £0.226m to support the School Admissions service
- £0.005m to support the costs of the Schools Forum
- £0.546m to support elements of the Councils Centrally retained duties (formally the retained duties element of the ESG) In addition, it was stated that National Copyright School Licenses are also funded from this block with the amount for 2019-20 being £0.176m.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the content of the report be noted and supported;**
- (ii) That the Funding formula for Mainstream Schools be approved;**
- (iii) That the Growth fund be approved;**
- (iv) That continued contribution to Tameside Safeguarding Children's Partnership be agreed;**
- (v) That the central retention of Early Years Funding be approved;**
- (vi) That the allocation of the Central Services Schools Block be approved; and**
- (vii) That a breakdown of the Central Services Schools Block be provided to members of the forum.**

61 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next meeting of the Schools Forum will be held on Tuesday 23 June 2020 at 10.00am, Discovery Academy, Porlock Avenue, Hyde.

CHAIR