

Leeds Schools Forum meeting

Microsoft Teams Meeting
 Thursday 20th June 2024 at 16:30

Membership (Apologies in Italics)	
GOVERNORS	HEADTEACHERS
Primary (6 seats)	Primary (6 seats)
David Kagai St Nicholas <i>John Garvani</i> <i>Broadgate</i> <i>Victoria McWalker</i> <i>St Margaret's Horsforth</i> <i>Stratis Koutsoukos</i> <i>St Nicholas</i> <i>Bradley Taylor</i> <i>Kirkstall Valley</i> Vacant	Peter Harris (Chair) Farsley Farfield <i>Julie Harkness</i> <i>Carr Manor Community School</i> <i>Emma Wraighte</i> <i>Fieldhead Carr</i> Rebecca White Sharp Lane Kate Cameron Calverley C/E <i>Jane Astrid Devane</i> <i>Shire Oak C/E</i>
Secondary (1 seat)	Secondary (1 seat)
<i>David Webster</i> <i>Pudsey Grammar</i>	<i>Delia Martin</i> <i>Substitute Helen Williams</i> <i>Benton Park</i>
Special (1 seat)	Special (1 seat)
<i>Russell Trigg</i> <i>East SILC, John Jamieson</i>	Louise Quinn East SILC
Non School	Academies – Mainstream (11 seats)
<i>Christina Smith</i> <i>PVI Providers</i> Vacancy Nick Tones Schools JCC Christopher Thornton 16-19 Providers <i>Dan Cohen</i> <i>Jewish Faith Schools</i> <i>Peter McQuillen-Strong</i> <i>Catholic Diocese</i>	<i>David Gurney</i> <i>Cockburn School</i> Katherine Somers Dixons Academy John Thorne St Mary's Academy Menston <i>Joe Barton</i> <i>Woodkirk Academy</i> <i>Rob Dixon</i> <i>Cockburn School</i> Rachel Colbourn Bramhope Primary Sarah Talbot East Ardsley Kate Burton Alder Tree Primary <i>Simon Princep</i> <i>Abbey Grange CofE</i> <i>Ailsa Hoyland</i> <i>Bruntcliffe Academy</i> Vacant
Officers	
Phil Evans, Chief Officer resources Transformation and Partnerships	Academy – Special School (1 seat)
Louise Hornsey, Head of Service, Finance	Vacant
<i>Chris Sutton, Admissions and Family Information Lead</i>	
Lucie McAulay, Head of Service, Finance	Academy – Alternative Provision (1 seat)
Shirley Maidens, Finance	Vacancy
Dan Barton Deputy Director, Learning	Academy – Special Provision (1 seat)
	<i>Mary Ruggles</i>

	Title	Actions
1	Welcome and Apologies	

	Chair welcomed all and acknowledged apologies Phil Evans was introduced.	
2	Schools Forum Membership	
2.1	Vacancies remain for: 1 x Primary Governor 1 x Alternative Academy vacancy 1 x Academy Special School 1 x SILC Governor 1 x Non-school representatives 1 x Academy Mainstream	
3	Minutes of Previous meeting	
3.1	Agreed as accurate.	
4	Matters Arising	
4.1	Page 3 - SIFD panel – Lucie confirmed that Louise Quinn will be a part of the panel.	
4.2	6.6 Query against Invest to Save and if the post was advertised. Dan confirmed that the post was advertised and there are more posts that are to be advertised, Dan did not have this information at this time.	
5	Transfer of Insurance Arrangements – Lee Allen - LCC Assurance Manager	
5.1	Lee came to the forum to go through the proposed insurance arrangements for schools that LCC arrange insurance for. The proposal is that schools make use of the DfE Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) which has been in place for around 10 years and provides insurance alternatives for schools, offering better coverage and lower excesses compared to traditional insurance. The arrangement was set up by the government to ensure that academies could also access commercial insurance as they would be no longer able to access Local Authority schemes.	
5.2	The RPA cover generally has better terms, the limits are higher, the premiums per pupil are less and can provide additional cover that the LA cannot, such as cyber cover. Lee advised that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 11,000 schools in the country have enrolled in the program as of last month. • If the majority of schools do move to the RPA and if no action is taken, the council will not be able to provide insurance any longer as would not be financially viable. • Other LA's have encouraged schools to move over to the RPA. • Lee has consulted with the Department for Education (DfE), talked to schools who have moved over and attended webinars and consulted with other LA's and the consensus is that it has been a good thing. • There is a flat fee per pupil, around £25 per head. • The RPA do not ask any questions about the conditions of buildings, schools do not need to complete a questionnaire, schools just log in and say they want to join, a very easy process. • Schools will need to manage their own vehicle and engineering (lifts, boilers) insurance. While the RPA covers most insurance needs, schools will need separate arrangements for motor and engineering inspections, which can be obtained through the RPA procurement solution. • The overall cost to schools is lower, with one school saving £5K. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leeds City Council (LCC) plans to stop providing insurance to schools by April 2025, encouraging schools to switch to the RPA or other alternatives that they can arrange themselves. • LCC currently offer a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which has a higher public liability excess, and which is currently charged back to schools, resulting in a loss for the council. The SLA and SSAS, which have been financially unsustainable, will cease by March 2025 as schools transition to the RPA. • The Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) offers a better sickness policy, for example Covid has cost the council £700K. • Lee advises that this change is beneficial for all parties involved. • Benefits for Schools and LCC: Schools will benefit from cheaper and better coverage with minimal effort, and LCC will reduce its risk profile and associated costs. <p>5.3 A question was asked about the de delegated services that covers maternity costs, Lee advised that this is separate, and schools would need to discuss that with their HR. Shirley further clarified that the de delegated budgets that schools pay into and pool, cover this for schools, which is separate to schools' insurance.</p> <p>5.4 Question was asked about the school sickness and absence scheme and what does it mean when it says certain full and part time staff will be covered. Lee advised that it does not cover catering, escorts, cleaning staff.</p> <p>5.5 Lee advised the forum that they will come up with communications and frequently asked question documents, Lee will also enquire with the DfE to see if they would be able to do some webinars for Leeds Schools.</p> <p>5.6 Lee advised the FAQ document provided by the DfE is very comprehensive, however if there are any outstanding questions not covered within the FAQ document, Lee and his team can look into this further.</p> <p>5.7 Lee and his team can also get information related to previous motor claims, so that schools can provide this to their new insurers. Lee can also access schedules of inspections, that can be provided to schools so that are aware of what needs insuring going forward.</p> <p>5.8 Question was asked about putting the RPA back on the agenda for the October Forum- ACTION Chair advised that this will be discussed as a potential agenda item, outside of the meeting. Concern raised about schools that say no to the scheme and do we need to find out why. Lee clarified that in terms of the staff sickness and absence, the council may have to make that decision, if enough schools have dropped out, it may be impossible for the council to offer that cover as it may not be financially viable. The process of working out the premiums starts at the end of July.</p> <p>5.9 Question was asked about whether schools need to wait until March to start with the new scheme, if they have already signed up to the LCC scheme. Lee advised that if all cover aside from staff sickness and absence that has been signed up to, then this would need to continue until March, otherwise schools would be paying twice.</p> <p>5.10 Lee asked how we would share this information with schools. ACTION Dan and Lee will meet up to put some communications together to send to schools ACTION Lee will share the FAQ document with the DfE.</p>	<p>PH & LM</p> <p>DB & LA LA</p>
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6	DSG Outturn Report	
6.1	Lucie presented the Outturn report for outturn position on the DSG at the year end of 2023/24.	
6.2	Lucie advised that there was an in year overspend £1.795M which equates to 0.35% of the total DSG funding received in 23/24. The majority of the overspend sat within the High Needs Block.	
6.3	<p><u>Schools Block</u></p> <p>The Schools Block, summarised in table 2.1 of the report faced an underspend of £417k, the majority of this was an underspend of £407K against the growth fund.</p> <p>De-delegated services budgets were underspent by £991k. This is largely made up of an underspend of £585k on contingency, £144k on maternity costs. There was an assumption in the budget that there would be a transfer from the DSG reserve of £500k to contribute towards the contingency, but due to the in-year underspend, the transfer was not required.</p>	
6.4	<p><u>Early Years Block</u></p> <p>This is summarised at table 3.1 of the report and demonstrates an overall underspend of £1.68M.</p> <p>Section 3.3 to 3.4 of the report outlines the hourly rates for the 2-year-olds and the 3- & 4-year-olds and indicates the increases that came into effect in September 2023.</p>	
6.4.1	Please note that Leeds continues to pay an hourly rate for 3 & 4-year-olds which is above the rate for which we are funded.	
6.4.2	Leeds has received a supplementary grant to fund the increased rates, due to the methodology used in the calculations, Leeds had a shortfall of £168k against the funding.	
6.4.3	We do not get the final funding figures through until July 2024 for September to March, if there is any impact, it will be seen in the 24/25 period.	
6.4.4	Clarification was sought around the SEN inclusion fund listed on the report. LM clarified that this is the SENDIF fund.	
6.4.5	Question was asked about the SENDIF overspend of 57%, and when we set the budget for 24/25 and will we set the budget for that level to be repeated. SM advised that SENDIF bids were outstripping the budgets that we put in for 23/24 and the 24/25 budget has been increased as a result.	
6.5	<u>High Needs Block</u>	
6.5.1	<p>Table at 4.1 summarises the High Needs Block position which demonstrates an overspend of £3.9M. This is after the transfer of £3.3M that was agreed to be moved from Schools Block. Had the transfer not occurred the High Needs Block would be £7.2M overspent.</p> <p>The key areas to note are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of area and residential placements was £2.1M overspent and reflects the increase of the high needs pupils who are currently in residential placements as the educational elements of those places is funded through the High Needs Block. • SEN tops ups to institutions were £2.2M overspent. This is due to more high needs pupils in mainstream schools and is linked to the £6k blocks which had an overspend of £883k. • In total mainstream schools received an additional £8.9M in funding compared to the previous year. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combined underspend on those services provided by children's and families of £872k due to the lack of expenditure against the initial Invest to Save budget. 	
6.5.2	Question was asked about what an unregulated placement is Dan clarified that the unregulated aspect is a social care placement where we fund the education.	
6.5.3	Question was asked about the £1bn national deficit around the High Needs Block and how does this affect Leeds. Dan clarified that at present the position is Leeds is healthier than most other LA's	
6.5.4	Question was asked about the Invest to Save and whether the invest to save budget is working for schools? Dan clarified that this budget is around resource provision to avoid costs. There is funding for 1 post, but the rest of the budget has been removed. LA makes the decision on how the budget is spent.	
6.5.5	Comment was made that the SILC's had a small overspend, compared to the mainstream schools, however going forward the SILC position is not as healthy, and they will be in a deficit position by 25/26. Dan advised that conversations have started around the financial modelling and conversations are starting with the SILC heads.	
6.5.6	Question was asked about whether we are confident that we know where the increase in places is needed and do we have plans in place to address this. Dan clarified there is planning work going on at present and that by the Autumn we should have a plan of where we believe the need is, both in mainstream and specialist provision across the city. Currently the LA believes we will need between 600-800 specialist places over the next few years and there is work in place to provide 300-400 places in the next 2/3 years. The LA will be asking for consultations/expressions of interest in the Autumn to help to fill the gaps in our resource provision.	
6.6	<u>Central Schools Services Block</u> Section 5 of the report. There is a small underspend of £22k.	
6.7	<u>Overall DSG reserves position</u> At the end of 22/23 we brought forward a surplus balance of £9m. This has now reduced to £6.5m which has been carried forward to 24/25. The surplus is made up of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £5.3m against the general DSG £1.2m against the de delegated DSG In 23/24 we refunded £1.25m of the de delegated surplus back to maintained schools, pro rata to their original contribution. Of the £1.2M de delegated balance brought forward in 24/25 it is anticipated that £500k will be needed to assist the funding of the contingency budget and therefore proposing to refund £400k of the de delegated reserves back to schools, pro rata to their original contribution.	
6.7.1	Comment was made about giving more money back to schools, however it was clarified that the amount is a LA decision.	
7	School Balances Outturn	
7.1	Lucie presented the paper on the Outturn 23/24	
7.2	Table 1 summarises the balances at the year end. Overall total school balances including extended school services have decreased from £33.2m to £26.9m.	
7.3	School balances have reduced from £26.2m to £19.6m. The biggest reduction is in the primary schools that have gone down by £5.2m, SILCS have reduced by £908k.	

7.4	The appendix to the report details school balances on a school-by-school basis.	
7.5	Table 2 of the report provides an analysis of the schools surplus and deficit balance. At the end of 23/24 we had 132 schools with a surplus balance and 38 schools with a deficit balance.	
7.6	<p>Surplus balance – at the end of 23/24: 40 schools have an excess surplus balance above the 8% threshold (79 schools in the previous year) Of the 40 schools, 6 have exceeded the threshold for 3 successive years and could be subject to clawback. 38 schools with a deficit balance totalling £4.2m</p>	
7.7	<p>Section 2.2.8 of the report illustrates the values of the ranges of deficit balances. 23 schools have a deficit in excess of £50k. The LA is currently working with these schools to develop deficit action plans. We have also got access to the DfE and their school resource management advisers the SRMA scheme. In 23/24 we recommended 11 schools for SMRA schemes, and these were undertaken. The forum is asked to note that there has been a pause on the SMRA schemes pending the outcome of the election.</p>	
7.8	Extended Service accounts	
7.9	<p>Schools hold £7.4m of balances in extended services accounts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended Schools Facilities (£4.3m in 2023/24, compared to £3.7m in 2022/23) - This is the balance on the running of community facilities such as children’s centres, wraparound childcare, before and after school clubs and sports development partnerships. • Clusters (£1.7m in 2023/24, compared to £2.1m in 2022/23) – This is the balance held by lead schools on behalf of clusters of schools. • Area Inclusion Partnerships (£1.38m in 2023/24, compared to £1.16m in 2022/23) – This is the balance held by the lead or host school on behalf of the Area Inclusion Partnerships. 	
7.10	<p>A question was asked about what the total budget is for the AIPs and why there is such a high surplus. Dan advised it is £5m and that the AIPs are currently undergoing a review and looking at what the vision for the AIPs will be. Therefore they have not had a clawback. However this will also be reviewed. It will be identified where money is not being spent.</p>	
7.11	<p>A further question was asked about the reduction in balances for SILCS and primaries in terms of how much correlation there is with falling rolls. Lucie said falling roles is a contributory factor. Lucie said that the total balances are falling back in line with pre covid. PH said he would like some figures from the previous years and said they have been high in the past so would like that data. ACTION LM to look at the data.</p>	
8	Clawback of Excess School Surplus Balances 2022/23	
8.1	The report provides an update on the clawback of excess school’s surplus balances from 22/23 and the current 23/24 process.	

<p>8.2</p> <p>8.3</p> <p>8.4</p> <p>8.5</p> <p>8.6</p> <p>8.7</p>	<p>The Leeds Scheme for Financing Schools states that if a school has held a balance above 8% of their budget share for 3 or more consecutive years, they are subject to clawback of the excess balance.</p> <p>At the end of 22/23 we had 24 schools that met those criteria for clawback and the total was £1.98m. All schools were asked to complete a statement which outlined their reasons for their excess balances and details of their intended use of the balance.</p> <p>The statements were then reviewed by a panel of School Forum members, with recommendations made to Children and Families who then reviewed and put forward recommendations before the final decision was taken by the Chief Officer.</p> <p>Clawback was anticipated to be £978k from across 12 of the 24 schools.</p> <p>The schools were notified in November 23 and there were several challenges in terms of the process and the decision.</p> <p>The main areas of challenge were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transparency • The timeliness • The poor communication • The lack of opportunity to appeal or respond to any challenge. <p>Dan met with all the schools collectively and individually.</p> <p>Dan and Lucie met with the schools so that they could present their original submission to discuss in depth and address any challenges.</p> <p>After all the meetings, the decision was taken to claw back from 5 schools with the total value being £41k.</p> <p>Question was asked as to why the 12 schools were reduced to 5. Dan advised the forum that the reason that the decisions were taken is because it is about doing the right thing. Dan agreed to review the original reasons and the proposals and the reasons that were put forward by schools were reasonable. Dan used a rigorous process going through them line by line and is confident that the decisions are the right ones. Dan also said that we have a better process for next year.</p> <p>Dan said the money the schools were allowed to keep has been ringfenced and if it is not spent as specified it may be subject to future clawback.</p> <p>At the end of 2023/24, 6 schools have an excess surplus balance above the 8% threshold for three or more consecutive years, totalling £552k. Due to issues with the previous year's clawback process, it has been revised for 2023/24 to enhance transparency and timeliness. Schools liable for clawback have been informed and provided with updated guidance, and they must submit statements explaining their excess balances and intended use for 2024/25. These schools will meet with a review panel to discuss their cases before a final decision is made and communicated by the end of the summer term.</p> <p>Question asked if there can be a representative from the forum on the panel. Louise Quinn agreed to be on the panel.</p> <p>ACTION Question was asked about the new process – Lucie will circulate this.</p>	<p>LM</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p>	
<p>9.1</p>	<p>Dan asked on behalf of Gary Saul, for members to express an interest on being on the EHCP multi agency panel. If anyone is interested, please email Dan or Gary.</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p>Appointment of Chairperson</p>	

10.1	Chair advised that if anyone would like to put themselves forward for the position of Chair, they can contact Kate Brennan kate.brennan@leeds.gov.uk A vote can then be taken at the October Forum.	ALL
11	Forward Plan	
11.1	The forward plan is part of the papers.	
12	Meeting Dates for 2023-24 and Forward Plan	
	The dates for upcoming Forums are part of the papers. All invites have been sent.	
	Close	

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