

Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 9.30 am on 14 January 2019 in the Conference Room, Landmark House, Ipswich

Present:

Non-School Members	Amanda Havers, Early Years Helen Wilson, 16-19 Provider (Vice Chair) Sharon Waldron, Diocesan (Anglican) Maria Kemble, Diocesan (Catholic) Pat Chapman, PVI
Academy Members	Lynne Eldrett, Mainstream Dawn Carman-Jones, Mainstream Mark Kemp, Special Jo Stanley-Bell, Mainstream Steve Lovett, Mainstream Colin Turner, Mainstream Julia Upton, Mainstream Angela Ransby, AP Provision Darren Woodward, Mainstream Jenny Milsom, Mainstream
Maintained School Members	Allison Coleman, Primary (Chair) Gillian Mitchell, Primary Graham Alcock, PRU Jan Hatchell, Special Lil Newton, Nursery

Observers and Local Authority

Observers	There were observers present at the meeting
Local Authority	Sue Cook Adrian Orr Judith Mobbs Nathan Jones Sonya Harban Michael Quinton Teresa Spilling

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1.	Welcome and Apologies	<p>The Chair welcomed new members to Schools Forum following an election for Academy representatives.</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Alison Bowman, Maria Kemble and Cllr Gordon Jones.</p>
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 November were agreed and signed off by the Chair.</p> <p>Item 4 (page 3): CSSB Corporate Landlord Responsibilities. Briefing paper to go out with the schools budget packs.</p> <p>Item 7 (page 6): letter has not gone out to Academies as yet, due to notification from Ofsted regarding forthcoming SEND Inspection.</p> <p>Item 9: Early years proforma – meetings have taken place in last two weeks, another meeting is planned in February. Once finalised the proforma will be sent through via email.</p>
3.	Submission of Schools Block Funding Formula: 2019-20	<p>Schools Forum is asked to agree the preferred approach to be used for the 2018-19 school budgets. The recommendation is to follow the prescribed National Funding Formula unit values as agreed at previous forum meetings.</p> <p>Schools Forum is required to be consulted on the schools funding pro-forma, which is used to calculate individual schools' budgets.</p> <p>As part of the local authority's schools block pro-forma submission to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), there is a requirement for political approval after the Schools' Forum. This will need to be given by the Cabinet member, Education & Skills and Director of Children's Services.</p> <p>The final pro-forma for 2019-20 must be submitted to the ESFA by the 18th January 2019.</p> <p>Alternative options</p> <p>As stated in previous reports, the Schools Forum agreed that Suffolk should adopt the National Funding Formula (NFF) unit values with effect from 2018-19 and that this approach to be continued into 2019-20.</p>

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		<p>Therefore, at this point there are no alternative options proposed.</p> <p>Who will be affected by this decision? All schools, including academies, will be affected by the decision.</p> <p>Updates have been provided to Schools Forum at the past two meetings confirming the agreed approach to the budget setting for 2019-20 and applying the NFF. Mirroring what we did last year. Fewer schools affected by minimum funding guarantee and 78% of schools are gaining funding in 2019-20. More schools gaining more than 2%.</p> <p>Discussions took place Forum members raised questions around unit amount, minimum funding guarantee and the impact of the teacher pay grant. Forum were reminded that by following the NFF unit values the direction of travel is towards the NFF when it is fully implemented; with the intention of reducing the impact at that time.</p> <p>All forum members confirmed they were content with the recommendation to use NFF unit values as set out in Paper B.</p>
4.	The High Needs Block – current expenditure, trends and future forecast	<p>To note the current position regarding the significant pressures on the DSG High Needs Block due to a continued increase in the numbers and complexity of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).</p> <p>To note the current and future impact of the lack of sufficient local specialist placements for children whose needs cannot be met within mainstream schools on the high needs block and the potential growing risks from this pressure.</p> <p>To note the early indications of the impact of the introduction of the new funding system for the allocation of high needs top-up funding in mainstream settings and the potential forecasted impact of the introduction of the new system for specialist settings.</p> <p>To note that these combined pressures have</p>

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		<p>resulted in a current deficit of £2.5million which is likely to continue to rise over the remaining quarter of this financial year, despite rigorous controls on expenditure and decision-making regarding specialist placements.</p> <p>To note the work of the Council's Policy Development Panel in seeking to address the need for additional specialist places within the local education offer in response to the recent Sufficiency Review.</p> <p>To review Suffolk's position in the context of other local authorities and consider possible next steps.</p> <p>Reason for recommendation To provide Schools' Forum members with up to date information on the continuing significant and escalating pressures on the high needs block and the high risk of further overspend in making appropriate provision for the growing number of children with specialist education needs.</p> <p>Who will be affected by this decision? This situation affects all education providers in Suffolk.</p> <p>High Need Block (HNB) is a real challenge, committed to bring back reports to Schools Forum. Forum decided to move more funds from HNB. How to distribute funds, which illustrates a place on graph, which is broken down into three parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to reform • Growth/demand • Suffolk underfunded <p>This report was discussed in two parts.</p> <p><u>Part 1:</u></p> <p>200 new places in last 18 months – thanks to heads of special schools in Suffolk being supportive in creating these new places for students. The graph on page 7 – 2018 illustrates how we have brought down the costs of students in independent places due to the fact that we could place more of them in county.</p>

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		<p>We have now reached the point that special schools in Suffolk are full. One special school alone has had 15 requests for placements. The number of young people placed in independent provision continues to rise.</p> <p>Implementation of the new High Needs Funding System is a big challenge, starting with mainstream this year and young people accessing specialist provision in September 2019.</p> <p>A paper taken to Cabinet in September 2018 sets out the principles to meeting the growing demand for SEND provision. It also describes the decision to set up a Policy Development Panel (PDP). A report is going back to Cabinet on 29 January. The PDP recommends expansion of provision to bring more children back to Suffolk where appropriate to reduce the costs of individual placements.</p> <p>Discussion re high needs included transport pressures and the outcomes of the sufficiency review which used data from education health and care. The new building for Riverwalk and a new Free School 2020 are further steps towards increasing specialist places in Suffolk. The PDP report will be making further recommendations for additional places.</p> <p>SCC has applied to the DfE's latest free school round indications are that they will fund all bids that meet the criteria, therefore likelihood of this being approved have increased.</p> <p>The implication of pressures on the high needs block is that we have an overspend that we cannot currently find more ways to control, so it is important for forum to note it is a challenging situation. There is also recognition of the pressures schools are also under should the need arise to request funding from the schools block.</p> <p>As part of NFF, when transition arrangements are taken off this will provide more money for special needs. Forum will need to discuss any overspend on high needs, based on analysis of the position at year end, in October and agree what how to address in</p>

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		<p>next year's budget. This gives time to see whether Government will provide further support to local authorities for SEND over the next 6 months.</p> <p><u>Part 2:</u></p> <p>Judith Mobbs provided an update on the process to moderate the move of mainstream High Needs pupils onto the new banding system referred to on page 10 of report. Schools had been sending in packs for moderation and bandings were allocated to those pupils. However, a quality assurance exercise took place with selected cases to look at the move between new and old bands. This random sample showed that earlier work for the moderation has not been conducted effectively for a significant proportion of cases. This has only just come to light since this Schools' Forum report was published. We will be writing to schools shortly and tell them of the situation and to be careful re committing expenditure until this is resolved. Plans are being put in place to repeat the moderation of all cases that mainstream schools have submitted.</p> <p>It should be noted that the new funding system for mainstream high needs pupils is more generous from the previous one. While bearing in mind this overall picture of this change, now need to work on ensuring the bandings are accurate for each pupil.</p> <p><u>In response to questions about the moderation process it was confirmed that every single case was looked at by a small team of moderators who had been trained to carry out the work.</u> However, when five Specialist Teachers reviewed a small sample a proportion were on too high a banding and a few were on a lower banding.</p> <p>Budget packs will go out to maintained schools on 15 February and to Academies at the end of February.</p> <p>A Working Group of mainstream schools to be set up and seeking representation from Forum members. Gill Mitchell and Dawn Carman-Jones offered to be part of this working group.</p> <p>There is a Special Heads Group later this week where Jan Hatchell will also seek nominations.</p>

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		<p>ACTIONS/OUTCOMES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JM to write to schools to alert them to the position. • JM to set up a working group of mainstream schools in order to work through issues together. • All cases will be moderated again urgently and schools informed of the outcomes as soon as possible. Schools with high numbers of cases will be reviewed first.
5.	Introducing A New High Needs Funding System in Suffolk – Proposals for Transitional Support Arrangements	<p>To consider the case for supporting an accelerated approach to transitioning specialist settings in Suffolk from the current to the new high needs top up funding model, rather than using the national minimum funding guarantee that would be too slow to implement a fair and equitable outcome for all learners and providers.</p> <p>To agree to the principle of disapplication from the 1.5% MFG to support the more rapid movement to a system of equitable allocation of funds to support children and young people of Suffolk irrespective of where they live and what school they attend, with a recommendation of a 5-year migration period.</p> <p>To propose that a similar level of transitional protection is applied to Pupil Referral Units, but not to post-16 providers.</p> <p>Dependent on the views of Forum regarding the above, to agree the support of Forum regarding a submission to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for a disapplication of the minimum funding guarantee and the implementation of the arrangements supported by Forum instead.</p> <p>Reason for recommendation</p> <p>Due to the current significant disparity in top up funding rates between specialist providers, the introduction of the new funding system for high needs top up would take well over a decade to implement unless an agreement is reached regarding an accelerated transitional arrangement and an application is made to the ESFA for a disapplication of</p>

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		<p>the minimum funding guarantee to enable this.</p> <p>Alternative options The alternative option would be to implement the arrangements for transition as per national guidance. This would mean applying the minimum funding guarantee for schools of a maximum movement of 1.5% per annum which would take many years to implement and no transitional protection for pupil referral units. This would have the respective disadvantages of being very slow to impact for some parts of the system and creating financial shock and instability in other parts.</p> <p>Who will be affected by this decision? All specialist education providers in Suffolk. This includes special schools, pupil referral units and post-16 providers.</p> <p>Nathan Jones presented this item and circulated an updated modelling chart (table 1 on page 5).</p> <p>The tables demonstrated alternative transitions over 3, 4, 5 year periods.</p> <p>Work has been undertaken with the LA through the High Needs Group and conversations with providers re the transitional approach for the new funding system. The proposed transitional approach will affect special schools, SSC's and PRUs. The new bandings will be applied to post 16 providers without transition arrangements as only a relatively small proportion of their budgets.</p> <p>Recognised that the figures used were not fully accurate for the modelling process which was based on an average of c, d, e, f bandings. For instance, the modelling did not include any Band I pupils. Work has been carried out with the PRU's re the specific impact of the new banding system on them. SSC's on the old system were only funded at 25% of allocation, so the length of the transition period will impact on how quickly they can gain the additional income the new model entitles them to.</p> <p>Using MFG it would take 14 years to translate from old bandings to new bandings for the school most underfunded.</p>

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		<p>As part of the discussion of the proposals, a number of points of clarification were made. Whilst PRUs could be moved straight onto the new funding system out of fairness it is proposed to include PRUs in the transitional arrangements. The proposed 5 years of transitional protection will provide a reasonable time to adjust.</p> <p>Whilst there is not the need to get agreement from schools to apply for disapplication of the MFG, it would be better that the schools in question agree and that forum is supportive. Other alternative provision is funded through one of those institutions covered, they are not funded directly through the High Needs Block.</p> <p>In terms of a query about the rationale of taking money out of specialist provision; the new funding arrangements are not about saving money but implementing the funding available more effectively across the system. In part it is being redistributed between specialist provision and mainstream.</p> <p>There will be a clearer idea of the impact on special schools when final audit data comes in in February.</p> <p>PRU heads are in a difficult situation, an 11% cut to the sector based on the modelled figures. However, there is a level of concern about the figures for instance, the rise in numbers has not been reflected in the figures. It is recognised there are viability issues; so specific conversations being held with those settings.</p> <p>Forum were reminded that they had made a collective decision of a banding system based on pupil need and not the cost of particular settings; although recognised the potential impact on individual settings.</p> <p>A special school head commented they do not consider themselves to be underfunded, they have had this level of money for the last 7 years, so hard to have a reduction in that.</p> <p>The disapplication submission will not be proposed to special school heads until after the February audit work has been done; so that the effect on their actual</p>

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		<p>budgets will be known. Information on this to be circulated to Forum members.</p> <p>Next Schools Forum meeting is not until April so this report using early modelling data has been brought to this meeting for in principle discussion.</p> <p>Funding for dual placements will need to be considered. This will be revisited at a later date. Discussion to take place in Summer.</p> <p>After considering the impact on the range of settings of either MFG or the different transition periods proposed, Forum Members agreed that a transition period of 5 years would be reasonable for settings to implement.</p>
6.	Forward Agenda	<p><u>April items noted as:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFVS • Schools monitoring and financial risk • Annual review of Suffolk's scheme for financing schools. <p>Whether these items need to be considered by Forum will be reviewed.</p> <p><u>July item to add:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overarching Growth Policy
7.	Date of the next meeting	The next meeting is confirmed as Tuesday 30 April, 9.30am in the VMC at Landmark House.
		Meeting closed at 11.20.