



**Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 1.30pm on Thursday 20 April 2023 via Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube)**

**Present:**

<b>Non-School Members</b>	Colin Shaw, 16-19 Provider Amanda Havers, PVI Pat Chapman, PVI Emma White, PVI Maria Kemble, RC Diocese ( <i>Sub: Anne-Marie Price</i> )
<b>Academy Members</b>	Andrew Berry, Mainstream Daniel Jones, Mainstream Lucie Calow, <i>on behalf of Darren Woodward, Mainstream</i> Gordon Jones, Mainstream Michelle Roots, <i>on behalf of Angelo Goduti, Mainstream</i> Paul Fykin, Mainstream Wendy James, Mainstream ( <i>Sub: Matthew Ferrier</i> ) Steven Dewing, Mainstream Angela Ransby, AP Provision ( <i>Sub: Ashlee Jacobs</i> )
<b>Maintained School Members</b>	Allison Coleman, Primary (Chair) Robert Lenko, Secondary Rowena Mackie, Secondary ( <i>Sub: John Tunaley</i> ) Ruth Coleman, Nursery

**Observers and Local Authority**

<b>Observers</b>	There were observers present at the meeting
<b>Local Authority</b>	Allan Cadzow Adrian Orr Gemma Morgan Ros Somerville Sonya Harban Mike Quinton Christina Lewis Teresa Spilling Barbara Barraclough

Item No.	Item Description	
1.	Welcome – Virtual Meeting Etiquette	<p>The Chair welcomed members to this meeting.</p> <p>This meeting is a public meeting being live streamed via YouTube.</p>
2.	Apologies for absence	<p>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jennifer Hunwicke, Karen Lodge, Cllr Rachel Hood, Darren Woodward (<i>substitute: Lucie Calow in attendance</i>) and Angelo Goduti (<i>substitute: Michelle Roots, in attendance</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Stepping down:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thanks to Jennifer Hunwicke for her support on forum, as she will be moving onto an independent school in May.</li> <li>• Chair thanked Pat Chapman for her valuable input and support at these meetings for over 10 years. Pat has been a dedicated contributor to Forum, bringing her knowledge and expertise to Forum discussions and not just early years. We would like to welcome Emma White who will be the new early years representative who is in attendance at the today's meeting.</li> </ul> <p>Substitutes: Welcome to the substitutes who are joining the meeting for the first time to observe the meeting, as they may need to attend a future meeting on behalf of their representative.</p>
3.	Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 January 2023 were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting and signed off by the Chair.</p>
4.	High Needs Funding Update	<p>Gemma Morgan, Head of SEND Funding and Provider Services in attendance for this item to give an update on the spend within the high needs block.</p> <p><u>High Needs Spend</u> The financial data for this report was taken from Q3, however, now through the Q4 period our variance is not quite as high as 15m. We are still finalising the period 13. The total overspend has been reduced by almost 1.9m now all placements are in for the financial year.</p>

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		<p><u>Overspend</u>  Overspending increased considerably in year and that was mainly due to the increase in the number of children who are being placed in independent and bespoke packages. We are trying to make sure that we can meet the needs of the children, get them placed into provision that's appropriate and make sure they are not out of education for any longer than is necessary. We have seen an 8% rise in our independent settings and 88% rise in our bespoke provision. Bespoke provision is short term intervention whilst waiting for other educational placements to become available, working with those children to find their placements.</p> <p>A breakdown of placements costing in excess of £80,000-£90,000 per year can be found in the paper and we are expecting these numbers to grow. The request for top up funding continues to grow, please refer to the table in paragraph 19, there has been a 17% rise in requests between Autumn 2021-Autumn 2022. Paragraph 21 onwards shows an explanation about the impact of COVID-19 and how costs have been calculated.</p> <p>The High Needs Working Group have looked at how we could increase the top up bands for all our settings so that we are in a position to offer a percentage increase on all of our bands. GM to bring a paper back to Forum, once guidance has been received from DfE on the National Funding Formula (NFF).</p> <p><u>Deficit Recovery Plan</u>  The latest copy of the plan has not been shared with Forum because this is currently being updated following changes to the spend for 2022-23 along with period 13 data. This will be shared with forum members once this has been updated.</p> <p><u>Additional Funding</u>  This was introduced last year, but the DfE were unclear about how the additional funding should be passported onto special schools and academies. Guidance this year has been clearer and agreed that a 3.4% increase must be given to all special schools and PRUs based on their place funding and top up. GM and her team have worked on calculations and shared/agreed with all settings in January/February and payments made by the end of April. Any further</p>

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		<p>information may be known after the DfE high needs funding operational guidance is released in December.</p> <p><u>Delivering Better Value Programme</u>  A bid was submitted for £1m for grant funding to deliver some intervention work within schools and to recruit to some additional assistant psychologist and specialist teachers to provide support in schools. Confirmation has been received to say we have been successful with this bid. Next step to recruit to a project lead and form a Headteacher/ SENCo/SPCF advisory group. GM will update Forum on progress once the programme is established and progress made.</p> <p>Questions were raised by Forum Members:</p> <p><u>Wendy James:</u>  High Needs bands have not been increased since they were put into place in 2018. There has been a 20% increase in inflation since this time. It is essential that banding is increased as soon as possible. Schools are really, really stretched financially and need to know what money they will be receiving, as many of us are having to reduce support staff to save costs.</p> <p><u>Steven Dewing:</u>  Can I ask how the impact of the proposed NJC pay rise is being reflected in high needs funding bands. The staff providing this input have had increases of 20% in 2 years  <i>GM: we have done some work on how we can increase those funding bands. However, we just need to wait and see what the national funding formula looks like from the DfE. We will know imminently what those changes are. We will share this with the group once known.</i></p> <p><u>Robert Lenko:</u>  Thank you, Gemma, for a great report. Regarding paragraph 15, 16 and 17 increases at 56% increases of 88% for bespoke providers, surely this is not sustainable?  <i>GM: Robert I completely agree. We are continuing to develop the SEND capital programme. We have some new local offer provision in the pipeline that includes additional specialist units attached to mainstream schools. We have had Cabinet approval to move</i></p>

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		<p><i>forward. Some of those will reduce our reliance on the bespoke provision and the independent sector. We have had an announcement that a severe learning difficulties school will be built for us by the DfE, based between Ipswich and Lowestoft that will be for 117 children plus a nursery, potentially opening in 2025. More work needs to be done about what we can offer within the local offer and that's some additional work that my team will be doing with our providers to see where we can develop our existing vision to make more spaces, utilising those lower cost spaces within our existing establishment.</i></p> <p><u>Gordon Jones</u>  How accurate do we think the increases are going to be in the next two 3-4 years, are those increases just through internal growth? People who are already in Suffolk, plus are we getting increases from outside of the area, because I would have thought all these are factors in? Getting a fairer allocation of funds from central government into Suffolk. Suffolk has historically always been underfunded and we are being based upon historical levels rather than current needs. How is that fitting in with the administration seeking correct funding from central government?</p> <p><i>GM: We are still funded based on historical data, historical spending in a year where we were particularly prudent about what we did and didn't spend. As part of the delivering better value programme, we've shared all our information with them and all the data will be fed back to the DfE regarding Suffolk's position. Re the demand that grows through the system, we have updated and refreshed the SEND sufficiency plan. We will share with you the current position of the deficit recovery plan. Cllr Rachel Hood continues to lobby government.</i></p> <p><i>SH: With high needs we are concerned about what might happen with regards to the bandings of the top up level, and we are waiting to see what comes out of that. We're assuming as per the original green paper where they might set to those banding levels; however, we don't know whether they'll set them higher than what we pay now or potentially lower. The problem with Suffolk, it's not our spending, it's our funding. Councillor Hood met with minister Nick Gibb yesterday and as part of that, Sonya and Mike did some work looking at our funding on a high needs block. If we were funded at the same level as Norfolk, who spent a lot more in 2017-18, there would be an extra 11.5m in</i></p>

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		<p><i>our high needs block. What we are advocating to is to get rid of the historical element as it is not representative of different local authorities (LA).</i></p> <p><i>At the end of this financial year we are going to have a deficit of almost 30m on our high needs block. That's still lower than other LAs but it's heading exponentially higher in each year. This will be, our biggest overspend and this continuing increase and it's going to take a lot of time for the changes we're putting in place to have an effect. We are working with schools doing the early intervention work.</i></p> <p>Allan Cadzow commented: Our poor funding in the high needs block is also exacerbated by our very poor funding in all the other blocks: the early years block, schools block. Rachel is tirelessly advocating, as Gordon previously did. There is no reason why funding should be different between Norfolk and Suffolk. It is a very difficult situation, causing stress for schools, early years, and families and children.</p> <p>Chair commented that this is one of our biggest areas of concern and knows that Gemma and her team are doing everything possible to do their best for the children in Suffolk.</p>
5.	2022-23 DSG outturn	<p>Sonya Harban, CYP Strategic Finance Lead introduced this item.</p> <p>This is verbal update of the 2022-23 DSG outturn. The finance teams have been busy doing year end and period 13 closed yesterday. Positive news for high needs block is the actual dedicated schools grant element of inclusion overspend was 12.1m which was less than what was on Gemma's report. Some of that is around the bespoke provision, where about a million of that was less than Gemma's team were forecasting. Then there was an additional budget transfer in relation to the import and export of packages, which was not necessarily featured on the figures that Gemma was doing at Q3. A relatively good news story, not that much different from what we were saying at Q3 where we were forecasting 11.7m overspend. Gemma's report also does include the core funding on inclusion, which we overspent by over 0.5m. DSG overspend will end up at 12.1m because there was additional spend on growth, mitigated by the</p>

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		<p>clawbacks in terms of recruitment and rates. 12.1m will be moved to our DSG reserves, putting us in a deficit position at the end of this financial year of 27.7m.</p> <p>The DSG outturn report that will be presented at the June meeting will give more detail.</p>
6.	AOB	<p><u>2024 April Meeting</u> After discussion, agreed to move the April 2024 meeting to the beginning of May, to have a clearer end of year picture before the papers are circulated.</p> <p><u>Daniel Jones:</u> Would like to add a brief item to share the action plan from the recently formed SEND Task Group from the Suffolk Education Partnership.</p> <p><u>ACTION:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move April 2024 meeting date to take place early May, Teresa to action.</li> <li>• To be agreed outside the meeting whether this should be considered at Forum or the High Needs Working Group. Gemma to advise.</li> </ul>
7.	Forward Agenda	<p><u>June</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DSG Outturn report</li> <li>• SEND Update and DSG deficit recovery plan</li> <li>• Early Years funded entitlements, hourly rate changes</li> </ul>
8.	Date of the next meeting	<p>The next meeting is confirmed as <b>Thursday 29 June 2023, 9.30am Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube).</b></p>
		<p>Meeting closed at 10.10am.</p>