



Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 9.30am on Thursday 29 June 2023 via Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube)

Present:

Non-School Members	Colin Shaw, 16-19 Provider Amanda Havers, PVI Emma White, PVI
Academy Members	Andrew Berry, Mainstream Daniel Jones, Mainstream Darren Woodward, Mainstream Gordon Jones, Mainstream Michelle Roots, Mainstream <i>on behalf of Angelo Goduti</i> Paul Fykin, Mainstream Matthew Ferrier, Mainstream <i>on behalf of Wendy James</i> Andrew Robinson, Mainstream <i>on behalf of Steven Dewing</i> Peter Collins, Special <i>on behalf of Sue Prickett</i> Angela Ransby, AP Provision
Maintained School Members	Allison Coleman, Primary (Chair) Robert Lenko, Secondary Rowena Mackie, Secondary Karen Lodge, PRU Ruth Coleman, Nursery Lizzie Murphy, Special

Observers and Local Authority

Observers	There were observers present at the meeting
Local Authority	Allan Cadzow Adrian Orr 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"> • Cllr Rachel Hood, Sonya Harban, Gemma Morgan and Maria Kemble • Steven Dewing (<i>sub: Andrew Robinson in attendance</i>) • Wendy James (<i>sub: Matthew Ferrier in attendance</i>) • Angelo Goduti (<i>sub: Michelle Roots in attendance</i>) • Sue Prickett (<i>sub: Peter Collins in attendance</i>) <p>There was a small change to the running order of the agenda, due to members availability so Paper D: Early Years funding will now take place after the minutes of the last meeting.</p>
3.	Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising	<p>Page 5: Cllr Rachel Hood met with Nick Gibb and Suffolk MPs. Adrian Orr updated the group following this meeting. There has been communication challenging the DfEs methodology for funding Suffolk and the latest response from finance civil servants at the DfE sets out that Suffolk gets its funding because of how their formula work. We will respond to press the issue that we recognise the formula generates the funding that Suffolk receives, however, our challenge is that the formula is unfair, given that the inclusion of historic elements mitigates against Suffolk’s funding catching up. The latest figures suggest that instead of the gap closing compared to statistical and regional neighbours.</p> <p>Page 7: Action for Daniel Jones and Gemma Morgan to agree where the best place would be to discuss the SEND Suffolk Education Partnership paper. No follow up has taken place as yet. GM to action.</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 April 2023 were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting and signed off by the Chair.</p>

Item No.	Item Description	
4.	Early Years Funded Entitlements & Hourly Rate Changes	<p>Christina Lewis, Head of Early Years and Childcare in attendance for this item. When the report was issued the information was correct, however, more information has been received from the DfE which changes this. The rates are still unknown, no detail of the funding yet. In recognition that it is too late for local authorities (LAs) to go through the approvals process to implement a rise through DSG in September, therefore, when the rates are known, they are going to issue it as a one-off standalone grant that won't go the through DSG.</p> <p>When it's known what the funding rates will look like, the Early Years Provider Forum will be consulted and implementation will take place in September. A report will come to Forum in October.</p> <p>Chair acknowledged on behalf of Early Years members present how tight the funding is for Early Years. Suffolk is a low funded LA, although the LA does passport a high percentage of the grant through to providers.</p> <p>Amanda Havers commented that providers are very grateful for any funding increase and do appreciate and acknowledge the proposal that the maximum amount of funding will be sent through to providers.</p>
5.	DSG Spend 2022-23	<p>Report presented by Mike Quinton, Senior Accountant CYP as Sonya Harban, CYP Strategic Finance Lead is on leave.</p> <p>This paper sets the DSG outturn 2022-23 the final position is a £12.1m overspend as summarised in table 1.</p> <p>Table 2: shows the vast increase in spend is in the high needs block. Since 2021 there has been a 35% increase in placement values. There are over 8,000 pupils placed in our specialist provision, compared with 6,000 a couple of years ago.</p> <p>Table 3: highlights the constituent parts of the high needs block, where the over and underspend were.</p> <p>Table 4: shows the overall position of DSG with £12.1m overspend last year, this being an overall DSG deficit to £27.7m, which is not a good position to be. SCC is part of the DfE Delivering Better Value</p>

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		<p>Programme explore ways we can bring down the deficit moving forward.</p> <p>Table 5: predicted overspend 2023-24, early forecasting by Gemma Morgan's team around £15m overspend on high needs block.</p> <p>As mentioned in paragraph 19, Suffolk is still low in the table at 121 out of 150 local authorities on a per pupil head on our DSG funding.</p> <p>Table 6: Provides helpful information with regards to funding for the HNB per pupil with our statistical/regional neighbours.</p> <p>Table 7: Illustrates the historical funding that we were locked into back into 2017-18 on high needs spend. DfE have said that this gap should close as we move into the national funding formula but this will take time.</p> <p>Comments were raised by members:</p> <p>Robert Lenko: Where does this fit into the Deficit Recovery Plan?</p> <p>Mike Quinton: <i>Gemma Morgan and her team are working in really difficult circumstances at the moment, with the increasing pupil numbers and increasing costs. We have phase 2 and 3 of the capital programme to get as many pupils into our in-house provision rather than sending them to bespoke and independent placements. The team have recently been able to get all the pupil/cost information into one database which will assist forecasting.</i></p> <p>Gordon Jones: Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme, what does the DfE say about the level of funding? DfE safety valve 0.5% annual transfer? Funding of high needs is still unfair, historical funding. What action and progress have we made following the meeting with Nick Gibb and others?</p> <p>Allan Cadzow: <i>Those in the DBV programme in the first tranche get about £1m which we are investing in school facing services to help schools and be more inclusive. In terms of progress over the last 4 years, we have to keep pushing and also Rachel continues to engage Suffolk MPs and lobby government.</i></p> <p>Adrian Orr: <i>We are on a relentless mission</i></p>

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		<p><i>challenging Suffolk's funding, we are seeing a slight shift, we now have insight to the DfE's figures which we have not had before so we can ask some further questions, the other thing which is helpful to us is that DfE are admitting to the effect of the historic element being in the calculation.</i></p> <p>Andrew Berry commented possibly setting up a working group consisting of CEON/SEP/LA to discuss how we can support this as a community in Suffolk.</p> <p>Following a conversation earlier in the week, Mike Quinton commented about us as a local authority to feed in with other local authorities querying some of the national funding formula.</p> <p>F40 Group and the Worth Less Group are slipping off the radar and would be good to get these back up and running.</p> <p><u>ACTION:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEON/SEP/LA Working Group to be set up, outside of this meeting, to see how support can be given and a stronger lobbying voice developed, as a community in Suffolk.
6.	High Needs Funding Update	<p>Allan Cadzow presented this report as Gemma Morgan, Head of SEND Funding and Provider Services is unwell.</p> <p>This report describes the spend in 2022-23, £0.5m difference from what was predicted. The 2023-24 budget has increased to over £15m in terms of the deficit. The pressures in SEND is continuing an upward trend. The DSG deficit recovery plan came out at the end of last week. Allan, Mike and Adrian are happy to answer any questions that members may have or email Allison or Teresa who will seek replies.</p> <p>Allan Cadzow wanted to pass on his thanks to schools for all their efforts to help special needs children.</p> <p>Darren Woodward: Does the local authority feel confident that there is sufficient funding in the team to</p>

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		<p>manage the volume of the EHCPs and turn them around within the time scale that's expected, which is clearly a long way short of the time scale that's meant to happen?</p> <p><i>Allan Cadzow: We have a recovery plan and further 7 EPs starting in September, also we are working with politicians and our finance team to get more resource. There are more things we need to improve, and we are working up a business plan in order to do this.</i></p> <p>Daniel Jones wanted to emphasise that SEND is a national challenge, and hopefully although it's newly formed, the Suffolk Education Partnership which is a collaboration between the local authority and Trusts, will work with the SEND task group, to help get stakeholder involvement on processes. We are keen to try and make sure that all the schools in Suffolk are as inclusive as possible, for example, by making sure every school gets inclusion quality mark when it's part of SEP, really advocating and amplifying the LAs intent for that, as well by putting on some open events in the autumn.</p> <p>Allan Cadzow: the High Needs Block deficit is held as a separate deficit inside the County Council, so a negative reserve. At the moment the DfE are allowing us to continue that, but if they made that part of the County Council deficit and made it a part of the local authority deficit across the country, it would actually bankrupt lots of local authorities. If we had proper funding, we'd have either very small or no deficit.</p> <p>Andrew Berry commented with regards to the high needs trends section, Daniel is correct, we need to keep more children in mainstream schools, its positive to see things mentioned: the SENCo helpline, virtual forums, multi-agency consultation appointments with SENCOS, which are all really key points. I would be interested to see how those roll out because they are in very early stages but are absolutely what we need to do to keep our children in mainstream schools.</p> <p>Chair commented that we will keep plugging away with central government and echoes thanks to those who are working very hard across the Suffolk system in this space.</p> <p>Sue Prickett was not in attendance at the meeting but shared the following comment re: 'continuing the</p>

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		pressure to have historic weighting removed from the calculation for HN Block funding and I believe the data in the spreadsheet you've just supplied illustrates this with the growing number of children needing support over the years'.
7.	AOB	None.
8.	Forward Agenda	<u>October:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of Central School Services Block (CSSB) 2024-25 • Early Years final outturn 2022-23
9.	Date of the next meeting	The next meeting is confirmed as Thursday 5 October 2023, 9.30am Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube).
		Meeting closed at 10.20am.