

Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 9.30am on Thursday 4 July 2024 via Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube)

Present:

Non-School Members	Colin Shaw, 16-19 Provider Amanda Havers, PVI (<i>Sub: Sophie Conway</i>) Maria Kemble, RC Diocese
Academy Members	Andrew Berry, Mainstream Daniel Jones, Mainstream Darren Woodward, Mainstream Gordon Jones, Mainstream Angelo Goduti, Mainstream Paul Fykin, Mainstream Wendy James, Mainstream (<i>Sub: Matthew Ferrier</i>) Steven Dewing, Mainstream Sue Prickett, Special Angela Ransby, AP Provision (<i>Sub: Ashlee Jacobs</i>)
Maintained School Members	Allison Coleman, Primary (Chair) Robert Lenko, Secondary John Tunaley, Secondary (<i>attending on behalf of Rowena Mackie</i>) Karen Pringle, Nursery (<i>attending on behalf of Ruth Coleman</i>) Shelley Jackson, Special (<i>attending on behalf of Lizzi Murphy</i>)

Observers and Local Authority

Observers	There were observers present at the meeting
Local Authority	Cllr Debbie Richards El Mayhew Adrian Orr Mike Quinton Ros Somerville Gemma Morgan Christina Lewis Julia Grainger Teresa Spilling Jacqueline Dyer

Item No.	Item Description	
1.	Welcome – Virtual Meeting Etiquette	The Chair welcomed members to this meeting. This meeting is a public meeting being live streamed via YouTube.

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2.	Apologies for absence	<p>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sonya Harban, Cllr Andrew Reid, Gordon Jones, Emma White • <i>Karen Pringle (on behalf of Ruth Coleman)</i> • <i>John Tunaley (on behalf of Rowena Mackie)</i>
3.	Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 May 2024 were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting and signed off by the Chair.</p> <p>Page 2: Pupil Projections – Schools Infrastructure and Admissions Team are still working on this data. This information will be ready to present at Schools Forum in October.</p> <p>Page 7: Section 151 Officers regarding Lobbying AO: The Lobbying referred to in the minutes was the Section 151 Officers in the Country and alongside that the Lobbying with the F40 Group. Awaiting announcement of the Secretary of State and Schools Minister. Cllr Andrew Reid is now a member of the F40 Executive Group and the F40 Group will be seeking an early meeting once the new the Schools Minister is known.</p>
4.	SEND Provision – verbal update	<p>Gemma Morgan, Head of SEND Funding and Provider Services in attendance for this item to give an update since last meeting.</p> <p>DSG Deficit Management Plan is shared with Forum on a termly basis. This has recently been updated and shared with DfE, which reflects the current forecast and updated with the outturn. As you were aware there was an error in the first document, however the new version circulated has the correct overspend for 2024/25. It previously showed £110m and should have been just under £103m the correct version was sent to DfE.</p> <p>From a funding point of view there is no update, we are still predicting an overspend of approximately £48m this financial year, which will lead to the overall deficit of £103m.</p> <p>The team are working hard to ensure our forecasting is accurate and making sure changes in forecasting are made early as possible and less frequently as in the past.</p>

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		<p>Moderation from Spring and Summer Term. The last report gave an overview of autumn term moderation. Spring term moderation has now finished. Spring term there were 780 new requests for high needs funding in mainstream settings, compared to 483 in the previous year, giving an increase of 62%. We received 352 requests for increase in bands, compared to 135 the year before. SCC received 69 requests for decreases in spring term, compared with 21 in the previous year.</p> <p>Summer term moderation is underway, we are going through the Q2 moderation which should be finished in the coming days when the funding will be paid to schools. There has been an increase of 30% compared with Summer 2023. 447 requests for new bands this year, compared with 342 last year so an increase of over 30%. Requests for increase bands, 87% from last summer term. A comprehensive analysis will be presented at the next meeting for all three terms (Autumn, Spring, and Summer) for 2023/24.</p> <p><u>Question raised by Forum Members:</u> Chair: Were you expecting an increase in the region of 30% this time? GM: <i>Year on year we are predicting that we will see that rise as we are seeing it each year. Data wise we are looking at where those increases are, which years there is most activity and requests for those increases.</i></p> <p>Darren Woodward: Can we see that the overall primary roll is falling with regards to pupil numbers and if the request is particularly Reception/Y1? GM: <i>That will be part of the analysis that I will bring to the next meeting. We need to look at what years are seeing increases in those requests and have been collecting that data for the last 2-3 years. It is not in the transition year group, its throughout the age ranges.</i></p>
5.	DSG Spend 2023-24	<p>Mike Quinton, Senior Accountant, CYP updated members on the 2023-24 DSG Outturn which includes the High Needs Block, current forecast 2024-25, benchmarking and regional neighbours.</p> <p>Page 1, Point 5: mentions about overspend of £12.112m. Table 1 shows the constituent parts of the total DSG (CSSB, Early Years, HNB and Schools Block). There was a £26.3m overspend on DSG last year. Small underspend in the CSSB, savings/staff</p>

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		<p>vacancies not filled under the regulatory and other statutory duties. Underspend on the Early Years Block which related to the 2022/23 adjustment which happens in 2023/24, therefore overestimated the recoupment which meant there was a greater underspend, which has moved into the Early Years reserves. Recoupment/rates element of the schools' budgets, where schools convert to academies, slight difference on the rates invoices and also on recoupment. Growth and falling rolls is just under £2m. Growth cases are falling along with a drop in primary numbers at Primary level. Underspends on schools block element, look to reinvest that or put into schools block for 2025/26, decisions to be made during the autumn term.</p> <p>Point 7: Early Years underspend £192,073 this relates to 2022/23 and the difference in the recoupment from EFSA during 2023-24. In 2023/24 the activity showed that we were underspending in the Early Years area, we expect the DfE to recoup just under £600,000 in July. To report back in autumn term what the difference is and how to reinvest into early years provisions.</p> <p>High Needs Block overspend was £27,689m which Gemma already presented.</p> <p>Table 5: Reserve position for DSG for 2023/24. The overspend of £27,689m has resulted in a deficit balance on HNB of £55.7m. Overall DSG deficit at end of last year £54.1m.</p> <p>MQ gave some helpful context between Suffolk and other LAs with regards to DSG deficit 2023-24.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norfolk = £81.5m • Somerset = £56m • Dorset = just under £60m • Devon = £115m <p><u>Questions raised by Forum members:</u> Darren Woodward: How close are we as a local authority to the DfE expecting us to go down the safety valve route? Ros Somerville, Assistant Director for Inclusion responded to this question: When Suffolk were asked to join the Delivering Better Value (DBV) the DfE drew up an agreement with local authorities and provide them with additional funding. However, there are very</p>

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		<p><i>clear criteria that need to be met and that involves bringing back in a balanced budget. Suffolk are in close liaison with DfE.</i></p> <p>Table 6 gives an early forecast for all other areas are going to be on budget, however, the HNB £48.5m overspend which would lead to an overall deficit for Suffolk at the end of 2024-25 of just over £100m.</p> <p>Benchmarking against statistical and regional neighbours. High Needs Block: Suffolk being 111th out of 151 authorities based on a per pupil head. For reference Norfolk is 90th.</p> <p>MQ/SH to bring other analysis of other LAs especially our statistical neighbours around deficit positions to October/November Forum meeting.</p>
6.	Take up of the extended Early Years entitlements - verbal update	<p>Christina Lewis, Head of Early Years and Childcare updated Forum on extended entitlements.</p> <p>No changes to the funding rates which will be implemented in April. A report will be brought to a future Forum meeting.</p> <p>From April, 2 years olds of working parents became eligible for 15 hours of funding. This is the first term for processing these. To date there have been an additional 2,767 claims new to that funding. After processing late claims, expecting that to increase to around 3,000. IT is in place and parents have not contacted to say they cannot find a place. Children may already be in a setting as a fee paying child, these are classed as converters, this means places have not had to be recreated, they have just changed from fee paying to funded. In September, 9 month olds will come into place, a few may be converters but more will be new to the system. Working with providers to create spaces. DfE have issued that they expect around 60% of eligible 1 year olds and only 35% of eligible 9 month olds to access in September.</p> <p>Karen Pringle, Nursery Representative: <i>Setting has seen a lot of converters. Fee paying parents have reduced considerably this term for both the nursery school and the private daycare that run alongside. Predicting to be fuller in September than normal. Occupancy usually tails off in July because of school leavers or moving to school. We take new children in September, but then birthdays occur</i></p>

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		<p><i>through the year. Predicting that will be more children in September and are concerned there won't be enough spaces in January and April. This is a concern both for the parents who will be looking for a place and also for the setting, because if they find a place somewhere else, they won't come back to us later as parents don't tend to change settings once child is settled.</i></p> <p>Amanda Havers, Early Years Representative: <i>Seeing a similar issue at setting, converters with one or two extras. Had enquiries for September, January and April, parents trying to get in in advance are new, but think availability come January and April will be very limited.</i></p> <p>Chair commented if you need to try to create new places, what's the planning that you would do for that? Can you give us a brief overview of that please?</p> <p>CL: <i>We undertake business checks with providers to see if they could restructure their days slightly differently to free up more spaces, if they offer their sessions in different ways, you maybe able to get three children in a day rather than two, because children don't always go in for the whole day, eg. one in the morning and one in the afternoon. If you restructure your day and extend it, you maybe able to get three in one day. There is a small amount of capital for expansion, eg. possibly turning a fair size cupboard into a baby room / an extra toilet or take more children. One issue is the lack of workforce available, we are working with a lot of colleges and the Job Centre Plus, to try and create opportunities and we are working with our skills colleagues to bring early years boot camps into Suffolk as well as a way of introducing people into the early years' workforce.</i></p>
7.	AOB	<p>Chair acknowledged this is Adrian Orr's last meeting before retiring from the County Council in August. Adrian's first meeting with Forum was on the 17 January 2017. On behalf of Forum, Chair thanked Adrian for his support to herself and other Chairs for the last 7.5 years.</p> <p>The key things Adrian has done to help forum is his work on our governance, spending time looking at the governance of other Schools' Forums around the</p>

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		<p>country, to present to our forum what you felt would be the best governance structure for Suffolk and the best way of running our meetings and structuring our papers which has been really helpful. Keeping your eye on the national picture to help us understand the context around that. Forum have done a lot of work with the F40 Group and supporting our cabinet leads in their interactions with the F40 which has been enormously helpful. The liaison work you do between your colleagues and other teams within the County Council and on Schools Forum and the work you have done to help us understand better what roles and responsibilities the County Council have for children and how our work links with them, has been enormously helpful. Therefore, on behalf of Forum, we wish you a very happy retirement, Adrian.</p> <p>Adrian thanked Chair for her kind words and support. Adrian also thanked all school leaders, Academy leaders, early years setting leaders, governors who contribute to forum. We have a more complex task than ever in managing the resources which are not enough to meet all the requirements and we do the best job with the support that we get from all of you that give up voluntarily, your time from busy jobs and busy other activities to do that and the impact of your work is reflected in the facts that Michael shared that although yes, we have got huge deficit, actually on a lower level of funding our deficit is less than some authorities that get significantly more money than we do. I wish you all the best for the future.</p>
8.	Forward Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of Central School Services Block 2025-26 Budget • Early Years final outturn 2023-24 • SEND Provision Update (Standing item)
9.	Date of the next meeting	The next meeting is confirmed as Thursday 3 October 2024, 9.30am Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube).
		Meeting closed at 10.10am.