

Minutes of the Suffolk Schools' Forum held at 9.30am on Thursday 21 November 2024 via Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube)

Present:

Non-School Members	Colin Shaw, 16-19 Provider Sophie Conway, PVI (<i>on behalf of Amanda Havers</i>) Emma White, PVI Anne-Marie Price, RC Diocese (<i>on behalf of Maria Kemble</i>)
Academy Members	Andrew Berry, Mainstream Daniel Jones, Mainstream Lucie Calow, Mainstream (<i>on behalf of Darren Woodward</i>) Gordon Jones, Mainstream Jill Porter-Hardy, Mainstream (<i>on behalf of Angelo Goduti</i>) Paul Fykin, Mainstream James Clark, Mainstream Sue Prickett, Special Angela Ransby, AP Provision (<i>Sub: Ashlee Jacobs</i>)
Maintained School Members	Allison Coleman, Primary (Chair) Robert Lenko, Secondary Rowena Mackie, Secondary Ruth Coleman, Nursery

Observers and Local Authority

Observers	There were observers present at the meeting
Local Authority	Cllr Andrew Reid Debbie Richards Sarah-Jane Smedmor Julia Grainger Sonya Harban Mike Quinton Penny Bates Ros Somerville Gemma Morgan Christina Lewis Emma Laffin Sally Swann Teresa Spilling Jacqueline Dyer Anneka Wright (NASUWT) Gavin Cox (NASUWT)

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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"> • Darren Woodward (<i>Lucie Calow in attendance on his behalf</i>) • Maria Kemble (<i>Anne-Marie Price in attendance</i>) • Angelo Goduti (<i>Jill Porter-Hardy in attendance</i>) • Amanda Havers (<i>Sophie Conway in attendance</i>) • Steven Dewing <p>Following the resignation of Wendy James from Schools Forum, a new nomination was received on behalf of the academies sector. We would therefore like to welcome James Clark who is the Regional Director for Primaries for Exning Primary School and the Eastern Education Group Trust.</p>
3.	Minutes of the previous meeting & issues arising	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 October 2024 were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting and signed off by the Chair.</p>
4.	Approval of De-Delegated budgets 2025-26	<p>Sonya Harban, CYP Strategic Finance Lead introduced this item.</p> <p>The approval of De-delegated budget paper comes every year, it is a paper only relevant for those representing the maintained school sector. Academies have their own arrangements.</p> <p>By de-delegating the recommended element of an individual schools' budgets to the local authority to provide the services as described in Annexes A-D. Service Leads from the LA have provided detail of how funding is used and are in attendance today if any questions are raised.</p> <p>Robert Lenko has been asked to pass on a message from Maeve Taylor, Principal at Thurston Community College who wanted to say a big thank you for the support from the Standards and Excellence Team</p>

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		<p>who've been absolutely brilliant. Maeve has been working with Nicola Willis who made several visits to Thurston and has created links with other heads which has been really useful.</p> <p><u>Questions raised by Forum Members:</u></p> <p>Robert Lenko, Thurston Community College: Do we have specific languages that we need bilingual help for in Suffolk?</p> <p><i>Julia Grainger thanked Robert for his question and for feedback on the Standards and Excellence Team. There are a range of languages spoken across Suffolk, our work tends to be directed at supporting school leaders to share effective practice, to network and collectively work together.</i></p> <p><i>Sally Swann commented that there has been a massive span we have seen a definite increase in need, trends shift and change and we are working with school leaders.</i></p> <p>Ros Somerville mentioned that the SEND Strategy will be translated into the three top languages spoken across Suffolk and that these are Romanian, Portuguese and Polish.</p> <p>Robert Lenko: Page 7 Context of Schools and Settings in Suffolk, mentioning LA maintained sixth forms as 0, but isn't Beyton an LA maintained sixth form?</p> <p><i>JG: This refers to unique separate LA maintained sixth forms as opposed to sixth forms which are part of schools or sixth forms which are academies.</i></p> <p>Robert Lenko: with regards to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community, how do you count or how you find them, are there fixed sites or can they be mobile groups?</p> <p><i>Sally Swann: it is a challenge with the nature of families that move around which is why we have a Gypsy Roma Traveller liaison officer who work closely with families, attendance team, linking with schools, EHE Team and children missing education team.</i></p> <p>Rowena Mackie, Northgate High School: With regards to Union annex, £1.50 for current year and then the £2.00 proposed. Is the voting today that the Trade Union allocation will be £2.00?</p> <p><i>SH: Yes that is what the recommendation is asking,</i></p>

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		<p><i>however will be an opportunity if this is not agreed.</i></p> <p>A vote took place by LA Maintained Primary and Secondary Members only:</p> <p><u>Trade Unions</u></p> <p>1. Do you agree the de-delegation of funding back to the LA for Trade Unions?</p> <p>After voting 2 primary maintained school in favour, 0 members against to a per pupil amount of £2.00.</p> <p>After voting 2 secondary maintained school in favour, 0 members against pupil amount of £2.00.</p> <p><u>Local Authority School Improvement function statutory duties</u></p> <p>2. Do you agree the de-delegation of funding back to the LA for school improvement?</p> <p>After voting 2 primary maintained school in favour, 0 members against to a per pupil amount of £6.56 (lump sum £1,000).</p> <p>After voting 2 secondary maintained school in favour, 0 members against to a per pupil amount of £6.56 (lump sum £2,000).</p> <p><u>Support to underperforming ethnic groups and bilingual learners</u></p> <p>3. Do you agree the de-delegation of funding back to the LA for Support to underperforming ethnic groups and bilingual learners?</p> <p>After voting 2 primary maintained school in favour, 0 members against to a per pupil amount of £1.91.</p> <p>After voting 2 secondary maintained school in favour, 0 members against to a per pupil amount of £1.91.</p> <p><u>Specialist Education Services (SES)</u></p> <p>4. Do you agree the de-delegation of funding back to the LA for SES?</p> <p>After voting 2 primary maintained school in favour, 0 members against to a per pupil amount of £12.18.</p> <p>After voting 2 secondary maintained school in</p>

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		<p>favour, 0 members against to a per pupil amount of £12.18.</p> <p>This concludes the voting for de-delegation.</p>
5.	Schools Block Funding Formula: 2025-26	<p>Mike Quinton, Senior Accountant – CYP updated Forum on the Schools Block Funding.</p> <p>Suffolk have been following the National Funding Formula (NFF) for the past 7 years. MQ attended a detailed meeting with DfE colleagues on Wednesday 20 November which he shared with Forum.</p> <p>In 2026-27 DfE will be looking at NFF and potentially some reforms. Brief update: SEND reforms especially in mainstream schools, however no details as yet. Looking at factors within the school block, how they are distributed to make sure they are fair. Deprivation funding, IDACI is based on free school meals (FSM) elements but also on low output areas, some rural and small schools miss out on deprivation funding. Falling rolls is a massive problem with birth rates falling. There could be some changes over the next couple of years but we will keep you updated through this forum and various other forums.</p> <p>Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Education and SEND thanked Mike for his update about pockets of deprivation in rural areas and leading to funding issues. Andrew will work with Julia Grainger’s Team in order to raise this with DfE.</p> <p>The Chair commented that as Andrew Reid is a working closely with the F40 group and a number of those authorities are from rural areas, this might be something that collectively may wish to feedback by that route.</p> <p><u>Questions raised by Forum Members:</u> Gordon Jones: Does the 1.4 take into account the growth in immigration? Also, table 1 in the report, Norfolk and Lincolnshire, slightly higher funding for High Needs and showing no deficit in comparison with Norfolk and Suffolk? Norfolk’s school forum paper showing a reducing deficit on high needs from 2026-27 and in-year surplus from 2030-31? MQ: Norfolk are part of the safety value programme and DfE are supporting them.</p>

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		<p><i>Ros: Norfolk as stated, are part of the safety valve and have had an injection of money from the DfE against what they are putting in as well and savings that they have committed to make. I believe they have only received half the money from DfE, because they are finding it very difficult to make the savings that are required in order for the rest of the money to be released. Ros to explore further with Norfolk.</i></p> <p><i>MQ: Regarding Lincolnshire from the meeting yesterday they are overspending in this financial year between £15-20m, they mentioned they have been transformative in their SEND services over the last 4-5 years.</i></p> <p>Robert Lenko: Falling rolls are hotspots accounted for, like Thurston which is expanding? <i>MQ: Penny, Bates, School Planning Manager from Schools Infrastructure Team can discuss this in the growth and falling roles item later in the meeting. Penny did take a paper to the CYP leadership team about a month ago on those issues.</i></p> <p>The last table in the report shows the percentage of deficit over the HNB income that for those authorities. There is a survey waiting to be finalised and when published MQ will share with Forum.</p> <p>No changes to the funding factors that we've had in previous years. Headline figures of £2.3 billion of additional funding coming (£1 billion into HNB and £1.3 billion allocated to schools) However, grants received this financial year is part of the £1.3 billion as well as pupil premium funding.</p> <p>DfE will publish more information at the end of this month.</p> <p>Rowena Mackie, Northgate High School: Are there any forums where you can agitate for the fact that when the government or the DfE are talking about pay rises being fully funded? <i>MQ: The funding that we get never quite fully covers the increases that we're seeing for teachers and supporters, support staff as well. At the meeting yesterday there was talk about localising the formula which may be part of the reforms.</i></p>

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6.	Early Years Update / Outturn	<p>Christina Lewis, Head of Service, Early Years and Childcare updated the group on this item. The DfE have not yet released their funding rates for 2025/26. The rates should be released at the end of November. This year, DfE have put a deadline on that LAs must let their early years providers know what the rates will be by 28 February.</p> <p>Christina will bring a paper with proposals to the January meeting. Once anything is agreed Christina will advise the early years providers.</p> <p>Christina has spoken with early years providers and have agreed in principle how they would like any uplift to be distributed.</p> <p>Early Years will be receiving an additional grant on 29 November in recognition of increase staff costs. This has been agreed with the Early Years Forum that we will distribute that to providers based on summer term claims to make it fair and equitable.</p> <p>SH commented following a meeting yesterday with Regional DCS, concerns were raised with regards to early years in terms of rates, given that early years providers and a lot of their staff are on national living wage and national insurance changes will impact on that sector. There is a real understanding that unless the rates go up by,15-20%, there's going to be a real sufficiency problem in the sector next year. We really need to work closely together on this and possibly some lobbying.</p> <p>Lucy Calow, Unity Schools Partnership (substitute for Darren Woodwood): Are there any new provisions with early years this autumn, who won't be eligible for any of the grant? <i>CL: there will be one or two who've come on stream since the autumn term who won't be eligible for it. The DfE have based on the summer term as it was felt that was the fairest way. It's intended for the settings to help them with their staff costs that have increased.</i></p> <p>It is a real concern we are working on and of course the funded entitlements have recently expanded and are expanding again next September. We need more and more places, but many of our providers are</p>

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		finding it hard to survive.
7.	Suffolk Pupil Projections – Growth and falling Rolls	<p>Mike Quinton, Senior Accountant introduced this item and handed over to Penny Bates, School Planning Manager.</p> <p>The falling rolls fund was implemented a couple of years ago to work alongside the growth fund.</p> <p>No funding has been distributed over the last 18 months through the falling rolls criteria in Suffolk. This paper is to get Forums agreement to make 1). the criteria more accessible to schools and 2). to reduce the fund from £200,000 to £100,000.</p> <p>DfE will audit the LA to check the funding is being used in the right way. In the revised criteria the Ofsted judgement and local planning data has been removed. After looking at figures the total number on roll has dropped by at least 5% between the October census information. The intake of pupils is less than 90% of the schools PAN.</p> <p>As mentioned earlier it looks like falling rolls will be part of the DfE reforms.</p> <p>Penny took over at this point and gave a brief overview of the data in tables on pages 4 and 5. Knowing these numbers will continue to fall and what these means for our 253 primary schools. Approximately 125 will see a fall in rolls between 2024-25 and 150 between 2024-27. These figures are based on forecasts.</p> <p>The peak in secondary pupils entering at Year 7 was in 2023, the numbers are likely to start falling but not as much as primary. Housing has been factored in and number for secondary are forecast to increase from 2023 to 2028 by about 3,500 and a peak in 2027.</p> <p>Annual pupil forecasts are distributed to all schools, primaries sent out in June, and secondaries sent out in January. It is encouraged that all schools review those and come back to the team if any questions.</p> <p><u>Questions raised by Forum Members:</u> Emma White, Early Years Provider, Is the data</p>

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		<p>national? <i>PB: Yes, it is a pattern that has been seen nationally.</i></p> <p>Emma White, Early Years Provider: raised a question whether schools could start opening a nursery within them and a provider already running to help set that up?</p> <p><i>CL: The school based nursery program is in its first phase at the moment and schools are applying, but they have to prove that they are repurposing an existing part of their building, any surplus space and funding is up to £150,000. They can choose if they would like to provide the nursery provision themselves, or if they would like to partner with another organisation, if you know of a school locally and there's a need you might want to approach them to say are they considering developing a new nursery under this scheme and could you work together. We don't have a brokerage role, its fully driven by the DfE, there's no role for the local authority apart from we get to say a). if Pete Mumford (who's works with Penny), gets to say if he thinks the site that's being proposed is appropriate and I get to say, if we need the spaces in that area because we would never say we would support it if it was going to jeopardise an existing provider.</i></p> <p>Mike Quinton commented about the increase in VAT on private schools, currently unsure on the impact that this will have on state funded schools, will there be an influx on pupils from private schools coming into state sector. DfE are looking at the impact of this. Penny added that there is a group monitoring the number of applications/enquiries being made, however, we do not know the number of applications directly made to academies.</p> <p>A vote took place by all members:</p> <p>Do you agree to amend Suffolk's Falling Rolls policy to ensure that the funding can be utilised?</p> <p>After voting 12 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <p>This concludes the voting for this item.</p>

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8.	High Needs Funding	<p>Gemma Morgan, Head of SEND Funding and Provider Services in attendance to give an update on the high needs funding and the decision around the schools block contribution.</p> <p>The deficit for this financial year is forecast at £51m overspend which gives an approximate deficit of £106m.</p> <p>Suffolk's deficit recovery plan (appendix) is shared with this report, all LAs are asked to complete this by DfE if they have a deficit. Suffolk has 4 responses which is explained in bullet point 14.</p> <p>Since 2021 0.5% of the schools block has been contributed towards the deficit in the high needs block. Children in SEND are our collective responsibility and this funding goes towards making sure they have the opportunities and support to access an education journey.</p> <p><u>Questions raised by Forum Members:</u></p> <p>Andrew Reid: Clarification around increase in funding for next year? <i>MQ: The increase in funding for next year for each LA should be between 7%-10% but currently that's unknown.</i></p> <p>Comment raised by Gordon Jones: Whether it's 7% or 10%, it is 7% on an extremely low and inadequate figure. Whilst any money is welcome, the correct amount of money will be even more welcome.</p> <p>Robert Lenko: Commented about the news about 83,000 suspension and exclusions has gone up. Has the spread in Suffolk between the primary and the secondary sector for SEN as it's quite scary that primary needs much support for young children. <i>GM: We have high needs funding for all of our settings across mainstream. We have the data and can bring back to the group.</i></p> <p>ACTION: Gemma to share High Needs Funding Bands between the different year groups.</p> <p>Rowena Mackie: Is the SEND Capital Programme going to deliver</p>

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		<p>enough for our young people in Suffolk and are there any plans to be looking at how that progresses? <i>GM: The SEND Capital Programme continues, we are looking at revisiting what is needed, built units, expanded special schools and built special schools. We are looking at the remainder of the budget and the best way to spend moving forward. Producing a new SEND needs assessment, which we are doing jointly with health and our colleagues and Social Care at sufficiency planning, work around trajectories and planning around needs.</i></p> <p>Emma White: VAT on private fees, will this have an impact? <i>GM: where we have children in independent settings as a LA we are exempt from paying VAT. Thanks were passed onto Gemma and her team for all the good work that they do and very challenging financial circumstances.</i></p> <p><i>MQ: Pressures in HNB – employers National Insurance contribution increase next year, private providers for independent places are likely to go up, therefore we need to be mindful of that.</i></p> <p>A vote took place by all members:</p> <p>Do you agree to the continuation of the 0.5% contribution to the High Needs Block Deficit Recovery, from the Schools Block?</p> <p>After voting 15 forum members in favour, 0 members against.</p> <p>This concludes the voting for this item.</p>
9.	AOB	None.
10.	Forward Agenda	<p>Early Years (Sonya to work with Christina with regards to reserves to help support providers)</p> <p>Increasing demand in SEND (income/funding not matching). With deficit its SCC having to fund the borrowing cost of deficit.</p> <p>Chair commented having been in the governor role for a long time and has seen the increasing demand throughout the decades.</p> <p>Chair thanked Forum for their time and contributions this morning. Best wishes for Christmas and see</p>

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		everyone in the New Year.
11.	Date of the next meeting	The next meeting is confirmed as Thursday 9 January, 9.30am Microsoft Teams (and live streamed through YouTube).
		Meeting closed at 10.55am.