

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
HAVERING SCHOOLS FUNDING  
FORUM**

**Thursday 28th November 2024 at CEME.  
(8.00 – 9.10 am)**

**Present:**

**Representative Groups**

**LA Maintained School Representatives:**

**Primary:** Kirsten Cooper (Chair)  
Georgina Delmonte  
Hayley McClenaghan  
Chris Speller  
Michael Nunn

**Academy Representatives:**

**Primary:** Chris Hobson

**Secondary** Neil Frost  
David Turrell (Vice Chair)

**Special Schools** Emma Allen (maintained)  
Andy Smith\* (Academy)

**Alternative Provision** Tony Machin

**Non-School Representatives:**

**Early Years PVI Sector:** Bev Nichols

**Trade Unions:** George Blake (Teaching staff union representative)  
Peter Liddle\* (Support staff union representation)

**Non Members in attendance:**

Angela Adams (AA)	Clerk, HGS
Marcus Bennet (MB)*	Head of SEND
Trevor Cook (TC)	Assistant Director of Education
Katherine Heffernan (KH)	Head of Finance (Business Partnering)
Lisa Jones	Principal Education Finance Officer / Observer
Hany Moussa (HM)*	Principal Education Finance Officer
Jacqueline Treacy	Senior Inspector (Schools Causing Concern)

\*for part of the meeting

## 1. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW MEMBERS, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS OR OBSERVERS

All were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from Scott McGuiness, David Unwin Bailey and Emma Reynolds. It was noted that Michael Nunn was attending in place of David Unwin Bailey and Bev Nichols was attending in place of Emma Reynolds

Introductions were made and it was noted that Lisa Jones would be working in Schools Finance alongside Hany Moussa and she was observing her first meeting.

## 2. TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17th OCTOBER 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>TH</sup> October 2024 were received and agreed.

## 3. MATTERS ARISING

The following were matters arising from the previous minutes that were not included elsewhere on the agenda were noted as follows:

- 3.1. Forum constitution (minute 2 refers): A review of the membership and the number of representatives from each group was ongoing. Once the number of representatives needed was confirmed then membership would be reviewed and vacancies filled.

**ACTION: KH / HM**

- 3.2. Union facility time (minute 6 refers): Feedback from H Moussa would be shared when available.

**ACTION: HM**

*H Moussa joined the meeting at this point, 08.13am*

- 3.3. Health and Safety de-delegation (minute 8 refers): Forum members noted that more information about the services provided for health and safety under de-delegation was awaited before this could be looked into further.

**ACTION: KH / KM**

- 3.4. Apprenticeship rates (minute 9 refers): TC confirmed that he had raised the forums concerns with corporate HR with regards to the apprenticeship rates and a response was awaited.

**ACTION: TC**

#### **4. SCHOOLS FUNDING**

##### **Forum members were asked to**

1. Note the update on DfE Funding Policy Note Guidance 2025-26
2. All school and academy members to consider the draft consultation document for the Schools and High Needs Funding 2025-26.
3. LA maintained primary school representatives to review consultation responses and vote on continuing the de-delegation of funding for the following services:
  - (i) Insurance
  - (ii) Free school meals eligibility checking
  - (iii) Maternity leave insurance
  - (iv) EAL service
  - (v) Behaviour support service

LA maintained primary and special school representatives to review consultation responses and vote on continuing the de-delegation of funding for the following services:

- (i) Statutory and regulatory duties
- (ii) Core school improvement activities

##### **DfE funding policy note guidance 2025-26 update – November 2024**

Forum members were advised that there had been no further updates from the DfE with regards to funding. However it was advised that the Teachers Pay Additional Grant, Teacher Pension Contribution Grant and the Core Schools Budget Grant have been rolled in the schools funding and the National Funding Formula factor values and baselines would reflect this. So overall there would not be a large increase in the funding received.

However the National Insurance formula change and the impact of this was expected to be funded in addition in a similar way to the pension grant and pay grant.

##### **Forum members noted the DfE update.**

*A Smith and P Liddle joined the meeting at this point, 8.17am*

##### **Consultation on Schools and High Needs funding 2025-26**

Funding formula rates had been discussed previously and it was noted that there were 2 top slices; one for Growth and Falling Rolls in the Schools Block, and the second was 0.5% for the High Needs Block, so the funding given to schools via the formula needs to have a cap in place.

The draft consultation put forward 2 options for consideration:

- Option A - 0.5% transfer from Schools Block to High Needs
- Option B – no pre-set transfer from the Schools Block to High Needs. Any transfer would be restricted to unallocated funds available.

It had been recommended that option A was preferable.

It was noted that there would be an uplift in the baseline for the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG), and the DfE have presented it differently with the 0% maximum minimum increase.

The consultation would be circulated shortly and funding forum members were asked to feedback to their clusters, so the consultation could be completed before Christmas. Following the conclusion of the consultation, the responses would be brought back to the funding forum for review and agreement.

**ACTION: All forum representatives**

The DfE laid out clear expectations for transfers to High Needs from the Schools Block, and this is mitigated through Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) funding to schools for the additional cost of support for SEND children.

De-delegation and education services consultation

The proposals had been shared along with the responses received, it was noted that 28 out of 40 schools responded.

It was commented that Headteachers and governors were looking at De-delegation and asking if they received a good service for the funding they paid.

Forum members noted from the consultation results that 43% of the respondents did not want to pay for the Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Team. It was questioned on whether 50% of respondents agreeing being the cut-off point for agreeing services, and whether funding should be taken. It was discussed on whether the service should consider a change to a buy in service or traded service. It was noted that the service is valued by schools, and it is needed to ensure that the pupils were supported.

It was noted that de delegation for a service had never been turned down before. There was a lack of clarity around how this would work if it is discontinued as a de-delegated service, would it be available as a paid for service, via traded services?

It was questioned if some schools got more out of the de-delegation than other schools, it could be that 43% of the respondents did not use the service and as a consequence, they could be struggling with their budget due to the additional costs they may incur at commissioning equivalent support.

There were some areas across the borough who wanted to de-delegate for the SEMH service. However due to lower levels of funding to some schools, and

those schools not using the service, there is a reluctance to agree for the de-delegation of the service. Some services were not providing the service to the schools that they needed and schools needed to be able to choose if they used a service that was not statutory.

It was noted that 1 cluster had voted to not delegate to Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Team and Core school improvement activities (SIMB). The forum would use the feedback from the clusters when making a decision but it was agreed that in future, clarity was needed as to the cut-off point and if services could be changed to a buy in service.

**ACTION: HM / KH**

For future consultations, it was noted that the thresholds need to be stated and if the threshold was not met, that the service could be changed to a buy in service for those schools that wanted to commission that service.

**Forum members noted the consultation outcomes.**

KH confirmed that the forum members were representing the schools and needed to vote on the feedback from the clusters. It was noted that not all clusters had an equal spread of maintained and academy schools.

70% was a good response to support the Forum members in making a decision.

It was further noted that support for SEMH had diminished and there had been a split vote the previous year. Questions would be asked of the Funding Forum.

It was agreed parameters needed to be set when voting and the outcomes of the consultation needed to be debated. However what the forum had not been told was, what the outcome would be if it was agreed not to de-delegate funding for the service. Would it become a traded service that they could still use and would being a traded service improve it. Forum members needed the information in order to be able to vote.

If they voted not to de-delegate, the schools could retain the funding and use it as needed at school level. It was noted that there would be an issue around capping but they were not in this position at this time, forum members were reminded it was their responsibility to vote.

In response to a question about maternity insurance and trade union facility time it was noted that these were pooled funds. It was suggested that these titles were changed to better reflect their purpose.

**Eligible forum members voted on de-delegation as follows:**

	Service	Result
A	Insurance	Agreed
B	Free school meals eligibility checking	Agreed
C	Maternity Leave insurance	Agreed
D	EAL Service	Agreed
E	Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Team	1 agreed 5 disagreed
F	Trade Union Facility Time	Agreed
G	Statutory and Regulatory Duties (Maintained Schools))	Agreed
H	Core school improvement activities (SIMB)	3 agreed 3 disagreed

A further impact breakdown was needed for SEMH team and SIMB. The de-delegation consultation would be completed and then the outcomes used to inform the decision at funding forum.

TC undertook to clarify the SEMH offer at the next meeting in January.

**ACTION: TC**

#### **4. HIGH NEEDS**

Funding forum members were asked to

- (i) note the DfE Policy Note update
- (ii) note the projected financial year 2025-26 allocations
- (iii) note the High Needs Task and Finish Group meeting to discuss present next financial year funding levels and arrangements

#### DfE funding policy note guidance 2025-26 update – November 2024

The floor was noted as 7% and ceiling as 10% for high needs funding, the increase would be within that range, but the final details would be confirmed when the information was provided by the DfE.

This had been discussed by the Task and Finish group but the challenge was not to go over the budget which would be presented to the Cabinet in January for agreement.

*M Bennet joined the meeting at this point, 8.49am*

As much as possible the increase in funding would be passed on in the form of top ups. The DfE's High needs allocation is expected to provide additional funding to meet the national insurance costs and there would be an enhanced formula for special needs, however this did not take into account the support staff and special schools. The national insurance increase was estimated to be 52p an hour for support staff.

In response to a question it was noted that it was not known if this funding would come in the form of a separate grant, Schools finance could only model until further information was received from the DfE.

Early years were also impacted and this should be modelled into the early years uplift. Early years would benefit from the increase.

Currently schools received CSBG but next year there would be a separate grant for national insurance reimbursement. How national insurance increase would be funded, either as part of the block or as a grant was still to be confirmed.

The local authority was currently in a deficit position of £15.3m for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) at the end of the financial year 2023-24, and it was anticipated that this would increase to £35.1m by the end of the financial year 2024-25. For the following year, it is anticipated to increase to £60m, i.e. deficit doubling every year.

A draft report was in the process of being drawn up to present to cabinet and if the report. Once cabinet have received the report, the recommendation to agree the in-year funding is expected to be agreed, but the report needed to get through the initial stages of the process before being formally adopted.

The number of children with high needs was not taken into account when calculating funding but an increase in population had been taken into account, 2% had been allowed for this. However the growth in expenditure was increasing by more than the increase in funding.

Next year the picture may be slightly better if the DfE fully compensated for the national insurance increase. At this time there were more questions than answers.

A forum member questioned how the increasing deficit from £35m to £60m would be resolved, especially as not providing the support the pupils needed was not an option. In response it was noted that this was the situation everywhere. There are more LAs in the DfE's Safety Valve programme and Havering would be getting close to this too. 38 local authorities were in the safety valve with a total deficit of £896m, with 107 or two thirds of local authorities in deficit, to a combined value of almost £2bn nationally.

700-800 EHCPs were in place. It was noted that schools usually requested EHCPs, and often when requests for EHCPs came directly from parents, they were rejected. The number of EHCPs for children under the age of 5 were also increasing, however the new banding system would make it easier to support the pupils with targeted support. The number of children with EHCPs increasing was impacting on the increasing deficit that the LA is facing. It was commented that the current system for SEND was broken and change needs to take place to address the issues that children and the LA is encountering to support them.

## **Funding forum members noted**

- **The DfE Policy Note update**
- **The projected financial year 2025-26 allocations**
- **The High Needs Task and Finish Group meeting to discuss present and next financial year funding levels and arrangements**

## **5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Sickness risk fund – Forum members noted that there was a small amount of money in this fund and only half of the schools have subscribed in this current financial year to the fund. It needed to be ensured that this fund was not overspent. Some schools paid in and used it, other schools paid in but didn't access the fund and a number of schools were not aware of its existence. This would be looked into further as the SLA did not match the operation of the fund. The fund was a mutual fund, maintained to support schools.

It was requested that information was circulated with regards to this fund to those participating maintained schools, and the LA operating this on behalf of the schools and there was a risk attached. It was questioned how applicable forum members wished to proceed with this fund. It was agreed that schools needed to have confidence in money going out and coming in. It was agreed to share the information with regards to this fund and further discussions would follow.

**ACTION: HM**

It would be questioned if it was worth paying into, as there was a pooling risk if there were over 20 schools paying in and if there was a high level of sickness absence, which led to an increase in demand.

## **6. NEXT MEETINGS**

Forum members noted the dates of the upcoming meetings for the next academic year.

Thursday 16th January 2025 (room 233)

Thursday 13th February 2025 (room 233)

Thursday 12th June 2025 (room 235)

Meetings to start at 8.00 a.m. at CEME room 233 or 235.

## **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no further items of any other business raised.

Meeting closed at 9:10 am