



City of Westminster

Westminster Schools' Forum Meeting – Minutes

Date and time of meeting: Monday 11th November 2024 at 5:15pm at Westminster Archives Centre

Representing	Name	Organisation	Attendance
Primary Schools	6 Members		
Primary Head	Alix Ascough (AA)	All Souls CE Primary	Present
Primary Head	Darren Guttridge (DG)	Edward Wilson Primary	Present
Primary Head	Lee Duffy (LD)	St Mary's Bryanston Square CE Primary	Present
Primary Governor	Carol Foyle (CF)	Queens Park Federation	Present online
Primary Governor	Simon Mair (SM)	Edward Wilson Primary	Absent
Primary Governor	VACANT		
Secondary schools	1 Member		
Secondary Head	Eugene Moriarty (EM)	St Augustine's CE High School	Present
Academies	6 Members		
Secondary Academy Principal	Peter Broughton (PB)	Westminster City School	Present
Secondary Academy Principal	Richard Ardron (RA)	Marylebone Boys School	Present
Secondary Academy Principal	Susanne Staab (SS)	The Greycoat Hospital School	Present
Secondary Academy Proprietor Nominee	Samantha Green (SG)	Harris Academy St John Wood	Present
Primary Academy Head	Claire Cleary (CC)	Gateway Academy	Present
Alternative Provision Academy Principal	Michelle Burgess-Allen (MBA)	Ormiston Beachcroft	Apologies
Maintained Nursery Schools	1 member		
Nursery Head	Liz Hillyard (LH)	Tachbrook Nursery School	Present online
Special Schools	1 member		
Chair of Governors	Andrew Garwood-Watkins (AGW) (Chair)	Westminster Special Schools Federation	Present
Early Years (PVI)	1 member		
PVI	John Trow-Smith (JTS)	LEYF	Present
14-19 Representative	1 member		
Secondary Head	Kathryn Pugh (KP)	St Marylebone CE School	Present
Officers in Attendance			
Director of Education and Libraries	Ian Heggs (IH)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Present
Assistant Director – SEN and Educational Psychology	Julie Ely (JE)	Bi-Borough Children's Services	Present

Lead Strategic Finance Manager	Anita Stokes (AS)	Bi-Borough Finance – Children’s	Present
Senior Finance Manager Schools and Education	Poonam Gagda (PG)	Bi-Borough Finance – Children’s	Present
Finance Manager Capital and Schl Budgets	Rahul Ganatra (RG)	Bi-Borough Finance – Children’s	Present
Business and Finance Officer, School Standards	Natalija Sorokina (NS) (Note Taker)	Bi-Borough Children’s Services Education	Present
Observers			
Finance Manager RBKC Schools	Alison Prior	Bi-Borough Finance – Children’s	Present
Cabinet Member for Communities, Children and Public Protection	Cllr Aicha Less	Councillor	Present
Finance Manager School Deficits	Estera Wojcik	Bi-Borough Finance - Children’s	Present
Finance Manager WCC Schools	Fatima Mulla	Bi-Borough Finance – Children’s	Present
Assistant Finance Manager SEND	Guvneet Dhillon	Bi-Borough Finance – Children’s	Present

Item #	Item
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies were received from MBA and LH; however, LH eventually joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams. CF also joined the meeting via Teams. The online attendance by these two members had been agreed with Chair AGW prior to the meeting.</p>
2.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
3.	<p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>NS provided the following update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SG was a new member, who joined the Academies category. Her term of office started from 11/11/2024. - AGW changed groups on the membership and was now under the Special Schools category starting a new term of office from 11/11/2024. - A number of members’ terms of office will be expiring later in November 2024. Some of these members will continue to serve on the Schools’ Forum as it has been confirmed through their nominating groups. Where this has not yet been confirmed, NS will liaise with the relevant groups to ensure replacement members are identified.
	<p>RESOLUTION:</p> <p>Members noted the above.</p>

4.	<p>MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 17 JUNE 2024</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 17th June 2024 were approved.</p>
	<p>RESOLUTION: Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 17th June 2024.</p>
5.	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>IH mentioned the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wendy Anthony, Head of Admissions and Access to Education, is in the process of finalising this year’s school place planning projections, which will be presented to the Schools’ Forum at its next meeting in January. - The Isos place planning working group continues its work and will be meeting in December. An update from its December meeting will also be brought to the Schools’ Forum meeting in January. <p>There were no other matters arising.</p>
	<p>RESOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Wendy Anthony to present School Place Planning Projections 2024/25 at the next Schools’ Forum meeting. ii) Wendy Anthony to provide an update from the Isos place planning working group meeting on 10th December at the next Schools’ Forum meeting.
6.	<p>EARLY YEARS BUDGET GRANT 2024-25 – by RG</p> <p>RG presented the report that had been shared with the members in advance as part of the meeting papers. RG specifically went through the points in relation to the funding rates methodology in Section 2 of the report.</p> <p>A member asked if the first batch of payments of the EYBG had been made to schools yet. RG agreed to confirm this outside of the meeting, with an update to be provided in the minutes. (The increased payments will go out December with the first payment will for September - December 2024 and then monthly from then on.)</p> <p>A member asked if the LA was able to see in separate lines the additional funding that was rolled into the DSG. AS advised it was not possible and that in the case of the EYBG, they could only see the overall funding rates for different groups. For mainstream schools (5-16), it is also just an overall funding pot, and only NFF figures can be identified. Everything else is not separated out.</p>
	<p>RESOLUTION: Members noted the rates for the EYBG from September 2024 to March 2025 as detailed in section 2 of the report.</p>
7.	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM HIGH NEEDS BLOCK REVIEW GROUP (HNBRG) UPDATE – by JE</p>

	<p>JE presented the recommendations of the HNBRG as detailed in the report which had been shared with the members in advance as part of the meeting papers. JE specifically drew attention to points 3.1, 3.3 and 3.4, the tables under section 4 and section 6.</p> <p>JE also highlighted the information as detailed in points 4.6 and 4.7 in relation to the National Audit Office report and the subsequent announcement of the Government to allocate additional £1bn to High Needs.</p> <p>With regards to point 3.4, AA, a member of the Behaviour Working Party, pointed out that the Working Party had not yet identified the criteria of what exactly the funding could be spent on; however, they were open to ideas. JE acknowledged the comment and advised that they wanted to start sooner to be able to impact on cases of particular concern. The members agreed that having clear criteria in place would ensure fair access to the resources.</p> <p>A member asked who, under this pilot, would be checking that the proposals submitted to access the funding were value for money. JE advised that, as officers, they would need to identify a range of measures that they would share with bid makers. It would also need to be agreed whether it would be a group of officers, or whether it would consist of non-officer members and if so, who they would be.</p> <p>The members confirmed their general agreement of the recommendation as detailed in point 3.4; however, they asked to see further information around criteria, definition of success and how it would be measured. JE agreed to bring this back to the Schools’ Forum meeting in March.</p> <p>A member asked for clarification of what ‘Independent Special School increases’ meant as found in the table under point 6.3. AS explained that it stood to cover price increases in independent special school placements. AS also confirmed that the total allocation as detailed in that same table was the total allocation as received from the DfE.</p>
	<p>RESOLUTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Members agreed the HNBRG refreshed terms of reference for the HNBRG (point 2.2 and Appendix A) and noted the forward plan (point 7.1). ii) Members agreed £250,000 set aside for the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee School can be used for 11.2% increase in top up funding, backdated to April 2024 (point 3.1). iii) Members note the funding agreement with Pears Family School (point 3.3). iv) Members generally agreed the recommendation to establish £250,000 budget in 2025/26 for pilot work and putting in place a process to invite bids (point 3.4). → JE to bring to the Schools’ Forum meeting in March a report to provide further details of the pilot (i.e., criteria, how success is defined and measured, etc). v) Members agreed to allocate the Core School Budget Grant (CSBG) for SEN/AP in line with the allocations from the DfE which total £328,370 (section 6).
8.	2025-26 DSG POSITION AND LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA – by AS

The 2025-26 DSG Position and Local Funding Formula report had been shared with the members in advance as part of the meeting papers.

AS referred to the Government's budget announcement which came out after the 2025-26 DSG Position and Local Funding Formula report had been written. More information is expected on the Schools Block over November and December. However, it has been announced that, nationally, £2.3bn is being added into the Schools Revenue budget for 2025-26, and £1bn of that is being added to High Needs as already mentioned by JE above. This funding for High Needs is not targeted just at local authorities with deficits. The remaining £1.3bn nationally seems to be mainly used to fund the agreed teachers' pay award. The maximum MFG is being set at 0%. When more information is received from the DfE, it will be shared accordingly, with an update also provided at the Schools' Forum in January. The LA are also awaiting the DfE to make the schools budget APT tool available so the LAs are able to run the funding information through to calculate school budgets.

AS highlighted point 1.3 of the report, which confirmed the model that the Schools' Forum agreed in moving towards the NFF which included a further 30% move towards the NFF rates in 2025/26

A member pointed out the timeline referencing the date of the Schools' Forum meeting on 13th January and the date of 22nd January by which the LA needs to submit the budgets on the APT tool. It is also important for the headteacher groups to receive the necessary information beforehand so they have an opportunity to discuss it collectively within their groups before the Schools' Forum meeting on 13th January. The Forum had previously agreed to review the chosen model annually to consider the changing school funding landscape; however, due to the no indicative DSG publications, there does not seem to be a sufficient window for schools to do so given the above dates and the dates of primary and secondary headteachers' meetings in December and early January respectively.

AS acknowledged the above and reiterated again that it was dependent on when the information was released by the DfE. Chair AGW added that this information would show schools what their funding would look like in 2025-26, and there would be an opportunity for schools to consider any possible changes for 2026-27.

Other members discussed that the idea of an annual review was to check if they were moving towards the intended outcomes and to sense check the figures to possibly decide whether a more significant review of the situation would be necessary.

Primary headteacher representatives agreed to call for an extraordinary meeting to coincide with the WSSIC meeting on 10th January to ensure that both headteacher groups reviewed the funding information at the same time ahead of the Schools' Forum meeting on 13th January.

RESOLUTION:

- i) **Members agreed to review school budget figures after information had been received from the ESFA, but before the January 2025 statutory deadline for the ESFA APT submission.**
 - ➔ **Primary headteachers to meet on 10th January for an extraordinary meeting to review the school budget figures, to coincide with the secondary headteachers' meeting.**
- ii) **Members noted the next steps for finalising schools funding for 2025/26 (section 5).**

	<p>iii) Members noted that proposals would be brought to the January meeting of the Schools' Forum regarding de-delegation for maintained schools (including restructuring costs).</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>2024-25 DSG MONITORING AND ESTIMATED SCHOOL BALANCES – by AS and PG</p> <p>The 2024-25 DSG Monitoring and Estimated School Balances report had been shared with the members in advance as part of the meeting papers.</p> <p>AS presented the report and highlighted point 1.3. She also informed of the error in the High Needs allocation which had now been acknowledged by the DfE. The figure has not yet been corrected but it is anticipated that the high needs block will go up by about £500k or more.</p> <p>AS further drew attention to the details for the different blocks as per points 3.1, 3.6 and 3.7.</p> <p>A member queried how some of the overspends and underspends balanced each other out as per Table 2 for over 16s and under 16s top ups. JE confirmed that it was not a case of funding not reaching particular groups and that the review of all the different groups outside the statutory school age was ongoing. AS also added that the LA no longer had to pay for The City of Westminster College placements, which had been a recent change and was therefore not reflected in the budget.</p> <p>AS clarified that the different grants for special schools (e.g., teachers' pay award, pension award, etc) were not part of the top up figures and that increases to the High Needs top up funding would be approved by the Schools' Forum. A member advised it would be helpful to see what was making up the High Needs funding in addition to the DSG, which AS agreed to include in future papers.</p> <p>PG talked through section 4 of the report highlighting points 4.4, 4.3, 4.6. PG also advised of the typing mistake in point 4.1 which should have quoted years 2024 and 2025 instead of 2023 and 2024 (post meeting note – an amended version has been included).</p> <p>IH acknowledged the hard work that schools had been doing with regards to their deficit recovery plans, and where this had been particularly challenging, schools had been working in partnership with their governing bodies, Dioceses and the LA around alternative plans. If schools are thinking about revising their published admissions number for September 2026, now is the time to start the consultation process.</p> <p>IH also referred to Appendix A (A6) and pointed out that the Licensed Deficit Plan for Our Lady of Dolours RC Primary School needed to be reviewed, which PG confirmed and agreed to correct in the table. (post meeting note – the appendix has been corrected)</p>
	<p>RESOLUTION:</p> <p>i) Members note the revised 2024/25 DSG allocation of £99.740m and forecast overspend of £0.859m, which can be funded from the cumulative DSG surplus.</p> <p>ii) Members noted the high needs import / export adjustment relating to a regional college being followed up with the DfE (point 1.3).</p>

	<p>iii) Members noted the projected year end school balances and that information would be presented to future Schools' Forum meetings regarding the timeliness and quality of financial returns (section 4).</p> <p>iv) Members agreed the disapplication request to the DfE, should that be necessary, regarding the agreed allocation of the funds for schools in financial difficulty agreed by Schools Forum in June 2024 (section 5).</p>
10.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>Chair AGW advised that it was PG's last Schools' Forum meeting as she was leaving the LA following an external promotion. On behalf of all members and officers, AGW thanked PG for all her work over the last few years and wished her well.</p>
	<p>RESOLUTION: Members noted the above.</p>
11.	<p>DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS</p> <p>Monday 13 January 2025 – 4.45pm – Westminster Archives Centre Monday 17 March 2025 – 4.45pm – Westminster Archives Centre Monday 23 June 2025 – 4.45pm – Westminster Archives Centre</p> <p>The meeting closed at 6.11pm.</p>

ACTIONS

Item 5	To present School Place Planning Projections 2024/25 at the next Schools' Forum meeting.	Wendy Anthony
Item 5	To provide an update from the Isos place planning working group meeting on 10 th December at the next Schools' Forum meeting.	Wendy Anthony
Item 7	To bring to the Schools' Forum meeting in March a report to provide further details of the pilot (i.e., criteria, how success is defined and measured, etc).	Julie Ely
Item 8	To meet on 10 th January for an extraordinary meeting to review the school budget figures, to coincide with the secondary headteachers' meeting.	Primary Headteachers / Anita Stokes
Item 9	Breakdown of high needs funding to be provided in future Forum papers	Anita Stokes

