



Solihull Schools Forum

Minutes of Meeting

9:30am – 10:30am

Tuesday 14th January 2025

SMBC Orchard House, G.04

Council House, Manor Square, Solihull B91 3QB

Member Category	Member Name	Institution	Attendance (Y/N/ Apols)
HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	Lynn Clark	Marston Green Juniors (Northern)	Present
HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	Bernie Farkas	Blossomfield Infants (Synergy)	Present
HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	Richard Marshall	Oak Cottage (Evolve)	Apologies
GOVERNORS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	John McDermott	St Alphege Inf & Junior (Synergy)	Apologies
GOVERNORS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	Tim Baptiste	Oak Cottage (Evolve)	Apologies
GOVERNORS OF PRIMARY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4)	Paul Jackson	Castle Bromwich Junior School (Northern)	Absent
HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY ACADEMIES (2)	Louise Minter	Streetsbrook I&EY Academy, (Synergy)	Present
HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY ACADEMIES (2)	Holly Lynch	TGA Primary St James (Synergy)	Apologies
HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY ACADEMIES (2)	Mark Pratt	Ulverley School (Mosaic)	Apologies
GOVERNORS OF PRIMARY ACADEMIES (2)	Antoinette Fisher	Dorridge Primary (Rurals)	Present
GOVERNORS OF PRIMARY ACADEMIES (2)	Lynda Mackay	Knowle CofE Primary (Rurals)	Present
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Claire Smith (P)	Tudor Grange (Synergy)	Present
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	VACANCY		
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Darren Gelder (P)	Grace Academy (Unity)	Present
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Stephen Steinhaus (P)	Solihull AP Academy	Present
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or	Stuart Shelton (HT)	St Peters RC (Synergy)	Present

governors) Inc. AP Academy			
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Clare Thorpe (HT)	Langley Secondary (Evolve)	Present
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Andrew Best (G)	Smith's Wood Secondary Academy (Fairfax MAT)	Apologies
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Claire Eaton (R)	Alderbrook	Present
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Janice Hiorns (G)	Park Hall	Present
REPRESENTATIVE OF MAINTAINED SPECIALIST PROVISION (1) attend on rota basis	Andy Simms	Hazel Oak	Present
REPRESENTATIVE OF SPECIALIST ACADEMIES (1)	Nicola Redhead	The Heights	Absent
REPRESENTATIVE OF PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS (1)	VACANCY		
ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (4)	Councillor Annette McKenzie (Conservative)		Present
ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (4)	Councillor Andrew Burrow (Conservative)		Apologies
ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (4)	Councillor Karen Grinsell		Present
ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (4)	Councillor Samantha Gethen		Present
TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES (2)	Jane Davenport	NAHT	Apologies
TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES (2)	Gareth Eastham	NASUWT	Apologies
TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES (2)	Gary Woodhouse (Substitute Member)	GMB	Apologies
REPRESENTATIVES OF EARLY YEARS PVI SECTOR (2)	Gina Godwin	Whitesmore Neighbourhood Nursery (Wise Owls)	Present
REPRESENTATIVES OF EARLY YEARS PVI SECTOR (2)	Lisa Whitehouse	Tender Years	Present

REPRESENTATIVES OF POST-16 COLLEGES (2)	Susan Homer / Lee Jamieson	Solihull College	Apologies Apologies
REPRESENTATIVES OF POST-16 COLLEGES (2)	Dr Martin Sullivan	Sixth Form College	Absent
OBSERVERS	Peter Davis	Diocesan Education Service (The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham)	Apologies
OBSERVERS	Sarah Smith	Education for Birmingham, The Church of England	Apologies
Officers (attend as required)			
Director of Public Health, Education and Inclusion	Ruth Tennant	SMBC	Apologies
Assistant Director Children's Services	Kate Bradley	SMBC	Present
Head of Commissioning for Learning	Bern Timings	SMBC	Present
Finance Manager (Children's Services)	Sarah Cheale	SMBC	Present
Senior Accountant (Children's Services)	Ruth Barnett	SMBC	Present
Accountant (Children's Services)	Steve Fenton	SMBC	Present
Clerk	Jo Heys	SMBC	Present

Item	Minute	Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	
1.1.	The Chair Antoinette Fisher welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. She explained the purpose of this meeting was to ensure that the items that needed approval or agreement from Schools' Forum prior to submission to the DfE on 22 nd January and 28 th February could be considered.	
1.2.	Apologies were received from Tim Baptiste, Andrew Best, Cllr Andrew Burrow, Jane Davenport, Peter Davis, Gareth Eastham, Susan Homer, Lee Jamieson, Holly Lynch, Richard Marshall, John McDermott, Mark Pratt and Sarah Smith.	
2.	Minutes of previous meeting on 17th October 2024 – c/f	
2.1.	Minutes of 17-10-24 were carried forward to the next Forum meeting scheduled for Thursday 27 th March 2025.	
3.	Matters Arising – c/f	
3.1.	Matters arising from the previous Forum meeting that took place on Thursday 17 th October were carried forward to the next Forum meeting of Thursday 27 th March 2025.	
4.	Update from Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder – Councillor Karen Grinsell	
4.1.	Councillor Grinsell wished everyone a happy new year. She explained that the Council had applied for extra financial support (EFS from central Government), as	

	<p>there is currently a £6.8m deficit and for the 3 year forecast, over £20m. There had been a severe impact from appeals of business rates, so less income being received, rising inflation, increasing costs of adult social care and in children's services, special needs costs and the costs of school transport alone amounted to £1m. Councillor Grinsell said the LA was also inadequately funded on homelessness, £8m in adults services and £4m in children's services, without considering the DSG and HNB.</p>	
4.2.	Councils were allocated recovery grants prior to Christmas. Solihull LA received nil funding for that, which is based on the demographic.	
4.3.	AF asked if that could be challenged.	
4.4.	Cllr Grinsell said that it was being challenged by the CEO and the Director of Resources. She said other grants may come in but that particular one, Solihull didn't receive anything for as it was seen from the demographics that we can raise enough from residents.	
4.5.	At the last Forum meeting, the decision was taken by Forum not to make a disapplication request. Cllr Grinsell explained that she supported that decision and the reason is the plans are not far enough developed and would have adversely affected schools, particularly in the north of the borough.	
4.6.	AF clarified that a transfer from the schools block would affect all schools. Cllr Grinsell acknowledged it would have impact across the board and no clear benefits had been identified. She said the expertise was in the room.	
4.7.	Lynn Clark asked about the consideration of raising Council Tax that had been suggested previously.	
4.8.	KG said that the LA is not applying to increase Council Tax above 4.99% (which would involve a referendum) however, considering charging for green waste collections, which currently residents do not pay separately for. They have now had a challenge about this so had to set up a calling committee.	
4.9.	Louise Minter commented that Solihull must be one of the only LAs that do not charge for this.	
4.10.	Janice Hiron asked whether Solihull residents understand? Lots of the services received by Solihull residents are much better than neighbouring authorities provide.	
4.11.	KG acknowledged that you did not have to go far to see the difference.	
4.12.	Darren Gelder said that the issues that a schools block transfer would cause were recognised and the impact on the relationship between schools and the LA. Nothing had changed from the schools' landscape, there was an unfunded teachers' pay rise, so if anything, from the schools' side, the picture has worsened financially. It takes time and process and indication from the Council to go back and look at that again and consider how all schools would be affected. He asked if the LA would be coming back to schools?	
4.13.	KG replied that it is always in the mix every year but whether we will have to will depend on what we can do together to reduce the overspend. Projections in papers that she had viewed showed the trajectory if no mitigations were made for 2030-31 is of a £78m deficit. Government are changing policies in education and still children are educated at high cost out of borough... Timely conversations were needed.	
4.14.	DG said that the ICFP had given clear directions to be very careful about replacing staff, class sizes, who you are taking on and recruitment and an early marker is that it has got worse. He appreciated that it had to be in the mix, but the time that has been spent over many years on this. We have the answers and time would be better spent looking for solutions rather than a yearly threat. It could be a more productive use of time and from a work point of view, this week we are coming together to discuss this but we could work towards a solution instead of repeating the same circle.	
4.15.	KG agreed and gave Council financial... The check-in with the DfE recognised that schools were doing a lot of good work. While the Free School was not a done deal from the Council perspective it would be going to planning committee this week.	
4.16.	LM asked as the DfE have agreed to that funding, they can't take it away?	
4.17.	KG replied the funding could still be withdrawn by the DfE but Solihull has everything on our side.	

4.18.	KG said the South Solihull Inset Day was a huge success. It had been organised by Lou Minter and there was a very positive atmosphere. The take home was around SEND and our training of teachers and TAs. It was clear schools were dealing with very different levels of need and are we giving everyone the tools they need and enough training. The training delivered by our Educational Psychologists had the biggest take-up.	
4.19.	AF said that some of the suggestions that had been put forward historically had not been followed up on.	
4.20.	LM explained that this was part of the Cradle to Career group of 11 schools.	
4.21.	KG said that there was a lot of work going on in schools.	
4.22.	AF added that it was how we dovetail, and we need to be talking to each other.	
4.23.	LM said human resource is the issue as Darren Gelder had said. None of us have the staff to deal with what's coming in and she provided an example. There is a real issue where schools do end up in a situation where they cannot meet need. It does not matter how much training you have if there are not enough people on the ground. The threat of losing money will mean that schools will cling on in a situation.	
4.24.	Kate Bradley explained that a consultation on the SEND crisis had been launched with a Call for Evidence and urged everyone to respond. These were key conversations, and the collective voice is powerful. KB will forward the link to the consultation.	
4.25.	ACTION: KB to issue link to parliamentary call for evidence on 'Solving our SEND crisis' to Forum members	KB
4.26.	ACTION: Forum members to consider submitting evidence to the parliamentary Call for Evidence on 'Solving our SEND crisis' by Thursday 30th January at 6pm.	All
5.	Update from Head of Commissioning for Learning – Bern Timings	
5.1.	BT confirmed that the Council did not proceed with the school block transfer but thanked all for their discussion and efforts. He explained that the key is how we work together and to ask follow-up questions and his team have been working at pace on an Educational Transformation Plan so that schools work together to identify the issues and make active changes together. That is where additional workstreams, monitored by a new Council management group, will feed into and quarterly updates will be provided, possibly via Headlines.	
5.2.	He added that the DfE is using Solihull as a best practice example in its use of Delivering Better Value.	
5.3.	Since the last meeting, the DSG allocation had been published, on 18 th December and it was in line with expectations. The statutory override is still due to expire in 2026 and the government will publish guidance later on their plan to deal with historical deficits.	
6.	DSG Management Plan - Bern Timings	
6.1.	BT explained that the Council's Financial Scrutiny Board and Cabinet approved the DSG Management Plan on 17 th and 19 th December respectively ready for submission.	
6.2.	There were some changes to the figures. The HNB deficit had increased from £7.2m as reported in October to £8.5m as reported in December. £29.2m accumulated deficit overall.	
6.3.	DfE had confirmed the lowest increase available of 7% for the Solihull provisional HNB funding allocation but this actually represents a 6.8% increase as DfE applied a 0-19 population adjustment to the funding increase after the 7% calculation. It is a £1.6m increase above what was assumed (3%).	
6.4.	£800k has been agreed by Council as a one-off investment to support work with schools beginning in spring 2025 to reduce the long-term high needs spent including those mitigations under consideration in the 25/26 management plan.	
6.5.	BT explained that there may be a change to Looked After Children living out of the borough and government are expected to implement that now. Currently, there is a	

	discrepancy in their own guidance. We are a net exporter in this area. Therefore, no savings to DSG Management Plan.	
6.6.	Figures for 2025-26 showed a forecast of £11.7m deficit without mitigations. This could be brought down to £10m by the end of next financial year and an accumulated deficit of £30m with mitigations.	
6.7.	Stuart Shelton queried the figures as it showed a £29.2m deficit for 2024-25 rising to £39m.	
6.8.	KB clarified that for the DfE we have to show a mitigated vs unmitigated position and what we are trying to show is the mitigated position.	
6.9.	Sarah Cheale added that the LA is expecting growth in placements and SEND by the end of the financial year so it is partly affected by that.	
6.10.	SShelton said the report appears to contradict as one line says we are doing well because there are not as many EHCPs in 3.2 but 1.7 details the ongoing growth in EHCPs as a factor in the deficit increasing.	
6.11.	BT clarified that even though growth is slowing, the cost per placement is increasing.	
6.12.	SShelton asked about the table showing the reduction in exclusions and the rationale for 6-day provision. He commented that it was quite a big thing to try to do and asked what the plan was behind that? We can only stop excluding if we have support or other avenues. He provided a current example.	
6.13.	AF added that this is only going to be exacerbated by reducing staff.	
6.14.	SShelton stated it is not going to be feasible.	
6.15.	BT said that the key is reducing the planned spend but we are conscious that there will be some spend. Once Saturn becomes full, the LA would commission places.	
6.16.	Claire Smith requested clarification that those places on the waiting list have now been decommissioned? We accept we may need to keep and expect there to be lots of children who need spot-purchased places. Apollo has come online at primary level but often with high-cost tuition amounts.	
6.17.	Stephen Steinhaus said he had raised concerns and challenges about 2 of the 3 mitigations. The removal of the subsidy given to the change in commissioning requested by heads in the second of a three-year agreement with the LA now changing these costs. He said he was still awaiting a meeting with the LA in terms of commissioning, the LA being the primary commissioners. There was an earlier meeting and some discussion, again around three-year programmes that are now being stripped back, and he understands the cosh that the LA and mainstream schools are under but of course the impact of this goes live on Friday. We are saying we are putting this in writing to the DfE when there are several conversations that he was not getting a response back on.	
6.18.	Bernie Farkas said that a lot of this could be mitigated by early intervention and 3.2 showed Solihull was well below national comparators but it felt there was a perverse incentive not to give children who need them interventions early on. The experts on that are the headteachers, SENCOs, teachers in class who know they need that support and without that they cannot access the ARPS available in secondary school, for example at Alderbrook. How does that link to exclusion rates in Solihull? It is really concerning to headteachers.	
6.19.	LM agreed.	
6.20.	Gina Godwin said she had raised it time and time again when putting in EHCPs.	
6.21.	LM said equally, we need to look at a different system where the child does not have to have an EHCP but can still access provision and early help.	
6.22.	BF said historically, going back 20 years, a parent could obtain an EHCP and ARP through annual reviews, that child could then unhook and be reintegrated at Year 9. Parents want their children to socialise and this worked. It is a false economy not to put this in place otherwise the bill at the other end, upon leaving education, is far greater in terms of what those children can contribute.	
6.23.	JHiorns supported BF's comments. She said nine times out of ten when the exclusion panel paperwork is read you wonder why earlier intervention had not happened.	
6.24.	LM commented that some of this issue is on health as it is difficult to access support without a diagnosis, but you should not have to have a diagnosis.	

6.25.	KG added that the LA is pushing back a lot on health and they recognise they must be involved. Headteachers go into school and get physically and verbally insulted and with the greatest of respect, not many other colleagues will know what the impact of that is and it is huge.	
6.26.	Gina Godwin gave an example and said the waiting list for SALT is just far too long. KG replied that the CEO of ICB had taken that on board and is making it a priority.	
6.27.	DG said exclusions haven't gone up because 84.5% kids in a PRU have an EHCP.	
6.28.	The amount of work that goes in to reduce permanent exclusions is significant but there comes a point where we as mainstreams need to look for that input elsewhere. Permanent exclusions are needed in terms of complexity and severity, staff attacks, while looking forward and considering mitigations. Need a reality check and early intervention. But how is key. The young people coming through will miss school and then we get them at secondary. If we are saying that this will happen but across the borough our permanent exclusions are increasing and the amount the schools do to keep them in is increasing. Schools can't afford it and it isn't going to magically disappear.	
6.29.	AF acknowledged the frustration but advised that this was not the right table for the conversation. The Headteachers' Reference Group could be revisited to debate.	
6.30.	DG emphasised that the proposals put forward need to be based in reality and it is right that we do raise what are these based on as we are agreeing to this.	
6.31.	AF agreed it must be raised in a meaningful way and taken forward.	
6.32.	BT said the Management Plan is a crude tool and the Educational Transformation Plan is where we will make a difference. We are not here to make a financially sustainable system, we are here to make the best system for children and being financially sustainable will fall from that. We know it will not balance for 2026 and there are lots of good ideas and how we realise those and use initiatives and facilitate schools to come together and see the impact on children's experiences and outcomes and then on financials. He stated he was conscious that this isn't a solution in itself but a tool that outlines the problem.	
6.33.	Lisa Whitehouse added she has run a Nursery for 18 years and recently knew of 3 children deferring their Reception place. What impact would that have on finances?	
6.34.	Seeing more deferrals in relation to SEND and interestingly we have seen real success and headteachers being supportive. It is one of those small changes we are seeing and certainly from a child perspective it means they are ready for school when they start.	
6.35.	GG said financially recently discouraged from doing that but we can only keep them until their fifth birthday because then we don't receive funding as they are legal school age and for some children that works if they have a summer birthday and there is an unfairness there for those that do not have a summer birthday. She had questioned Rosie why we can't have some of the school funding but we can't.	
6.36.	BF gave an example, in which it was suggested to the placement officer to repeat the Nursery year but it wasn't allowed. As summer born, the child could defer.	
6.37.	GG said still only get 3–4-year-old funding but it is possible.	
6.38.	LM said it would not work for every child but for some children having an additional year in FKS would make the difference.	
6.39.	LW added that it was about creating parental confidence.	
6.40.	GG said we are actually discouraged but will do what the child needs. It would have a knock-on effect for school places.	
6.41.	BF said it was a cynical perspective but if you have time within Nursery to get evidence parents can take to tribunal once in school. She gave an example.	
6.42.	CS asked for clarification on the approval of the DSG Management Plan as she was expecting another document. She was grateful for the guidance notes, which were very helpful and recognised that it may be too much detail.	
6.43.	BT said that the spreadsheet can be shared.	
6.44.	ACTION: BT to issue DSG Management Plan spreadsheet document to all.	
6.45.	SShelton said he was uncomfortable agreeing to a reduction in 6-day exclusion spend.	BT
	BF echoed this.	

<p>6.46. 6.47. 6.48. 6.49. 6.50. 6.51. 6.52.</p>	<p>BT said he was conscious there will be some spend but we do have to commission places so when Saturn is full those additional places would be commissioned. AF said approval in principle was being sought.</p> <p>SSteinhaus added that he had raised his concerns at Forum but not discussed. He was not comfortable to vote as there were outstanding actions. KB explained that politically it had been signed off.</p> <p>AF added that all were now aware that there are significant reservations about some aspects.</p> <p>Schools Forum approved the DSG Management Plan with reservations as detailed above, specifically the cessation of spend on the additional Saturn programme.</p>	
<p>7. 7.1. 7.2. 7.3. 7.4. 7.5. 7.6. 7.7.</p>	<p>School Funding update 2025/26 – Steve Fenton</p> <p>SF said School Funding update remained very similar to the report considered by FWG with numbers updated to reflect the government grant announcement.</p> <p>Mark Firmstone explained the School Funding update 2025/26 report was presented to FWG, who scrutinised the document and endorsed it. The key element we have some control over is the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG), with the rest of the figures following the NFF. In terms of MFG, FWG recommended to continue to retain it at the maximum permitted level of 0.0% so for the schools that experience some turbulence in funding have some degree of protection.</p> <p>From modelling SF can say the impact is significant for schools that do receive it at the higher level, but makes very little difference to other schools if at the lower level. The LA has traditionally agreed to fund at the maximum permitted level and FWG was happy to continue with this strategy.</p> <p>MF confirmed and said it was fair to ask why some schools do not achieve the minimum per pupil floor and when looked into, it was random fluctuations in changes to the cohort. Not associated with falling rolls.</p> <p>SF said 14 schools don't achieve it, 10 at the lower level.</p> <p>Schools Forum recommended the continuation of the Minimum Funding Guarantee at the maximum permitted level of 0.0% for 2025/26.</p> <p>SF explained in terms of top-up rates, the headline increase for mainstream is 2%. DSG Management Plan is using 3%. Would Forum wish to express views on this? FWG were happy to recommend 3% to Forum.</p> <p>Schools Forum recommended the top-up rates increase of 3%.</p>	
<p>8. 8.1. 8.2. 8.3. 8.4. 8.3. 8.4.</p>	<p>8. DSG Central Expenditure 25/26 – Steve Fenton</p> <p>Growth Fund - although there are falling rolls in primary, numbers were still peaking. Ann Pearson had negotiated 112 growth places in secondary for Sept 25. Overall coming down from £1.2m to around £1m and still need growth fund of that level.</p> <p>Central Services Block is just a grant we receive, and the Council subsidises any difference from the core budget.</p> <p>Early Years Block - 3% inflation to Early Years block and full year impact of growth, enormous growth forecast for next year by £10m and need to ensure we have capacity to administer the additional and expanded entitlements.</p> <p>Contingency Fund - want to minimise that.</p> <p>Inclusion Fund – each strand is proportionate and for under 2s, the team are reporting very little awarding of support at moment so recycled a lot of that money into the headline rate which fits with incentivising providers for under 2s.</p> <p>De-delegations Inflationary increase added but overall income falls as more schools become academies.</p>	

8.5.	Schools Forum approved the growth fund being retained at £700,000 to reflect continuing need for bulge classes in secondary and some growth in primary and to fund payback of loan to DfE.	
8.6.	Schools Forum approved the growth fund criteria detailed in Appendix A of the report.	
8.7.	Schools Forum approved that the Central Services Block contribution approved as equal to the amount of DSG Central Services grant received £1,647,374.	
8.8.	Schools Forum approved the Central Service Block “historical commitments” at the expected grant level of £1,115,000 in respect of the prudential borrowing commitment.	
8.9.	Schools Forum approved that the Early Years Block central spend as: £270,638 Early Years Advisory Team (+3.0%), £392,389 FIS team (+3.0%) and £289,234 EY Services recharge, £70,000 SEN Support (from 2024-25).	
8.10.	Schools Forum approved that the Early Years Inclusion fund is set at £704,445.	
8.11.	Schools Forum approved that the Early Years contingency fund is set at £128,532.	
8.12.	Schools Forum approved that a primary school de-delegation of £6.80 per pupil (£54,045) continues in line with previous years, which includes inflation increase of 3.0%.	
8.13.	Schools Forum approved a de-delegation for Trade Union Duties of £5.40 per primary pupil / £13.50 Special for 2024-25 (total £53,253) in line with the target level set by Forum. This assumes a 3.0% inflation increase.	
8.14.	Schools Forum approved a de-delegation for General Duties in respect of £70.50 primary / £176.25 special and £10.70 primary / £26.75 special for Advisory service (ex-grant) (total £800,784). This assumes a 3.0% inflation increase.	
9.	Early Years Rates 2025/26 – Steve Fenton	
9.1.	SF explained that FWG had not considered this due to the timing of when the grant details were released but had provided initial thoughts to the early years reps on Forum and received very helpful responses. Applied key principles detailed in 3.4 then applied those to the new funding regime. In future we will have full-year impact and historic data so it may be possible to tweak the rates but broadly speaking the recommended rates fall out from the application of the principles.	
9.2.	Under 2s SENIF is where officers in the Directorate have said we can reduce and tweak.	
9.3.	Gina Godwin had predicted that in terms of under 2s but that this may change in future.	
9.4.	SF said knowing in-year we are not paying it out, we have increased the rate that we have paid out in the terms so far.	
9.5.	GG added there was a good take up of inclusion.	
9.6.	GG requested clarification that the only difference in 3-4 between PVI and other Nurseries now was that the pension rates are different?	
9.7.	SF confirmed and explained it was from historic grant and will stay but won't increase and that is the only difference between a PVI and a school nursery setting.	

9.8.	SF advised that a draft would go out to all providers for consultation and the statutory deadline to notify all providers by is 28 th February.	
10.	10. Scheme for the financing of schools – Steve Fenton	SC/SF
10.1.	SF explained that this only applies to maintained schools and included amendments and statutory changes.	
10.2.	BF asked about Annexe 1.2 regarding redundancy payments. Redundancy costs must be charged to LA budget. Is it LA will be responsible to single status pension strain?	
10.3.	ACTION: SC and SF to respond to query on redundancy payments and pension strain.	
10.4.	Lynn Clark asked if there was a cycle to internal audits as she had one next week and it is the first one in 13 years so what is the proposed cycle?	
10.5.	SF said he understood it to be a risk-based approach.	
10.6.	LC asked about balance control mechanisms – some schools with quite substantial reserves and substantial profit because of a very successful business. Should those be mixed with the school budget as it can look misleading?	
10.7.	KB responded that that comment was factored in and formed part of conversations for schools with bigger reserves in terms of sustainable budgets. Schools should not be penalised for being a business.	
10.8.	SF said it is legal requirement that all funds are accumulated for financial reporting into single account on financial statements. It is right that those schools with surpluses from whatever source should plan for how those funds are used for the benefit of pupils. He would expect schools operating private childcare would need to ensure provision is made as a specific line for the risks associated with ceasing trading, for example the council would not fund any costs (such as redundancy) for winding-down costs of any entrepreneurial activity.	
10.9.	LC said there was no indication that some of that is business profit. High reserve may be profitable business, and context is needed as it is not schools hoarding the school budget.	
10.10.	SF said Government have said it is all school money; the source is irrelevant.	
10.11.	BF added that it reflects the changing times and landscape of education, historically schools very rarely ran a business. Schools have changed but the government's position has not. 8% reserves is outdated and she did not know any business that runs with that level of reserves.	
11.	Finance Working Group report – Mark Firmstone The Finance Working Group report from the meeting of 17 th December 2024 was received.	
12.	AOB	
12.1.	Code of Conduct – Jo Heys explained all Forum members need to sign the Code of Conduct on annual basis. Hard copies were available to sign at the meeting or copies can be taken away and emailed back to schoolsforum@solihull.gov.uk by Friday 5 th February.	
	Date of the next meeting The date of the next meeting of Solihull Schools Forum is Thursday 27 th March 2025 at 9:30am – 11:30am in Room 1, Civic Suite.	