



Solihull Schools Forum

Minutes of Meeting

9:30am – 11:00am

Thursday 23rd May 2024

SMBC Civic Suite Room 1

Homer Rd, Solihull B91 9SE

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

governors) Inc. AP Academy			
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Clare Thorpe (HT)	Langley Secondary (Evolve)	Y
SECONDARY ACADEMY MEMBERS (10 – principals [or representatives] or governors) Inc. AP Academy	Andrew Best (G)	Smith's Wood Secondary Academy (Fairfax MAT)	Apologies
REPRESENTATIVE OF MAINTAINED SPECIALIST PROVISION (1) attend on rota basis	Andy Simms	Hazel Oak	Apologies
REPRESENTATIVE OF SPECIALIST ACADEMIES (1)	Nicola Redhead	The Heights	Apologies
REPRESENTATIVE OF PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS (1)	Eleanor Clarke	Triple Crown Centre (Mosaic)	Y
ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (4)	Councillor Annette McKenzie (Conservative)		Y
ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (4)	Councillor Andrew Burrow (Conservative)		Y
ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (4)	Councillor Karen Grinsell (Conservative)		Y
ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (4)	Councillor Samantha Gethen (Conservative)		Y
TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES (2)	David Lewis	TU Rep	Y
TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES (2)	Gareth Eastham	NASUWT	Y
TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES (2)	Gary Woodhouse (Substitute Member)	GMB	Y
TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES (2)	Jane Davenport	NASUWT	Y
REPRESENTATIVES OF EARLY YEARS PVI SECTOR (2)	Gina Godwin	Whitesmore Neighbourhood Nursery (Wise Owls)	Y
REPRESENTATIVES OF EARLY YEARS PVI SECTOR (2)	Lisa Whitehouse	Tender Years	Y
REPRESENTATIVES OF POST-16 COLLEGES (2)	Susan Homer	Solihull College	Apologies
REPRESENTATIVES OF POST-16 COLLEGES (2)	Dr Martin Sullivan	Sixth Form College	Apologies
OBSERVERS	Peter Davis	Diocesan Education Service (The Roman	Y

		Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham)	
OBSERVERS	Sarah Smith	Education for Birmingham, The Church of England	Apologies
Officers (attend as required)			
Acting DCS	Tim Browne	SMBC	Y
Head of Commissioning for Learning	Steve Fenton	SMBC	Y
SMBC Senior Accountant	Verity Dixon	SMBC	Apologies
Accountant	Sarah Cheale	SMBC	Y
Assistant Education Business Support Manager	Emma Stoney	SMBC	Apologies
Clerk	Jo Heys	SMBC	Y

Item	Minute	Action
1.	Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Andy Simms, Bernie Farkas, Charlotte Shadbolt, Donna Luck, John McDermott, Nicola Redhead, Susan Homer, Lee Jamieson, Mark Pratt, Martin Sullivan, Paul Jackson, Ruth Tennant, Sarah Smith, Verity Dixon and Emma Stoney.	
2.	Minutes of previous meeting on 22nd February 2024	
2.1.	The minutes from the previous meeting of Solihull Schools Forum which took place on Thursday 22 nd February were approved as an accurate record.	
3.	Matters Arising	
3.1.	AF welcomed Councillor Karen Grinsell, in her new role as Cabinet Member for Children and Education and also the new member of Solihull Schools Forum, Councillor Andrew Burrow, to the meeting. Councillor Burrow explained he is the Chair of the Children's Skills and Scrutiny Board and a Councillor for Meriden. His career was in HR. Forum members welcomed him to Solihull Schools Forum.	
3.2.	AF asked if the list of those on the Task and Finish group had been circulated. TB confirmed it had.	
4.	Cabinet Member Update – Councillor Karen Grinsell	
4.1.	Councillor Grinsell explained that she has taken on the Corporate Parenting role and been given the bigger task of looking after all of Children's Services, which includes the safeguarding and children's services sides as well as the education side, with skills coming in between, to ensure all our children and young people are skilled up ready for life. SMBC is on a journey of improvement and have lots of inspections, currently preparing for imminent SEND inspection. There is also a whole new Looked After Children strategy with the LA moving to a more community parenting strategy. It is everyone's issue to make sure our children raised properly and the best we can; as the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. In terms of Education there is the SEN transformation programme and we are looking closely at education support for vulnerable children.	

4.2.	The recent announcement of the new specialist alternative provision and post-16 provision is excellent news and the LA has been allocated funding for another 150 place school, with the proposed site at Sans Souci. HTs will all have involvement for what you need and in the plans going forward.	
4.3.	<p>The LA is also opening three new children's homes, the first of which is ready. Ofsted is visiting next week to give approval to place three children there and the others will follow shortly.</p> <p>AF commented that the news of the new free school was very welcoming. Cllr Grinsell agreed.</p> <p>Cllr Grinsell said she would very much like to visit some of the schools and nurseries. AF said that that would be very welcome and worthwhile for Cllr Grinsell to see how creative schools can be even on limited budgets.</p>	
5.	Deficit Management Plan and Schools Block Transfer update – Tim Browne	
5.1.	Tim Browne gave a summary of the outturn figures, explaining the in-year deficit is now around £4.3m. It was anticipated to be lower than that but due to the increase in EHCPs, which have increased by about 5% there is an extra £1.5m deficit. Had been forecasting 1% increase in EHCPs as population had also fallen by about 1%.	
5.2.	TB explained that this was not unusual and at a recent DBV meeting of 25 attendees, just two were seeing a deficit reduction, the rest were seeing a deficit increase. Environment remains challenging. Lots of work around refreshing the plan and revising the demographics in each year.	
5.3.	Originally budgeted for 2024-25 in year deficit £3.1m rising to £4.6m then falling to £1.5m the year after but mitigations won't manage that.	
5.4.	<p>Although EHCPs are increasing this is at a reduced rate, so have seen a 13% drop as opposed to 6% increase nationally, so really challenging but better.</p> <p>The new specialist provision is so important to reduce the increased costs and will save £4.5m and aim to get it up and running for Sep 2027 and run it ourselves rather than via DfE as this will speed up the process.</p> <p>SF, TB and others will refresh DSG Management plan to be resubmitted in January and will report back. The Delivering Better Value work, which holds all the mitigating factors to reduce the deficit, will be overlaid and will be reported back at a future Forum.</p>	
5.5.	<p>Around the Schools Block Transfer, if we did decide to do that, we need to ensure it is a meaningful transfer.</p> <p>Stephen Steinhaus joined the meeting at 9:44am.</p>	
5.6.	<p>TB summarised that there were lots of discussions and demographic changes would be overlaid. He explained that the primary sector has fallen significantly but there is significant growth in secondary until 2027 then a reduction and post 16 increase. There were very significant changes and worries over primary colleagues in particular.</p> <p>AF said Ann Pearson is planning to bring the demography report to the meeting of Finance Working Group on 18th June.</p>	
5.7.	AF asked whether fewer EHCPs have been applied for or if it is that fewer have been granted.	
5.8.	<p>TB replied that it was a mixture of both, bringing in line with national figures, so positive. Still outperforming national and regional targets with 87% EHCPs issued within 20 weeks last year but this adds more pressure to DSG/HNB. It is the right thing to do and gives a positive outcome but difficult.</p> <p>Cllr Burrow commented that not only are primary numbers changing but where they are is different across the borough and significant.</p>	
5.9.	<p>TB agreed and also mentioned the infant / junior mix and issue that taking out too many places may result in a fall below sufficiency but it is recognised that we cannot carry on as we are. There are significant pockets of housing developments.</p>	

	<p>Section 106 funding applications have changed. Much clearer about developments and tariff per house and child and this will benefit enormously. Developments are often on the edge of areas. People living in wrong place!</p> <p>Some developers are very keen to have new build schools and therefore LA need to have robust conversations.</p>	
5.10.	<p>AF commented that there have been discussions about using spaces in primary for AP or in a different way.</p>	
5.11.	<p>Darren Gelder commented that this was timely as lots of HTs are presenting budgets. Been here for about 9 years. Increases cost about 1/3 million without extra staffing and without clear patterns of where funding can come from. Schools may be facing the most challenging circumstances ever. Not just here but in other LAs. 80% of UK schools will be presenting a deficit budget in next 3 years. Solihull does incredibly well contextually and Solihull schools being in top 10 but as soon as we remove the parenting and what goes on that will change. He added that there is a significant increase in the number of parenting roles HTs are taking on in terms of knocking on doors to get pupils in to school for their GCSEs and SATS as well as basic parenting for nursery. It is a worry but those are contextual challenges we are facing as well for next couple of years.</p>	
5.12.	<p>Claire Smith asked about the timings of the Schools Block Transfer as schools need to plan ahead and asked if next year's budgets will be cut.</p>	
5.13.	<p>SF replied that it would be towards November time. Details would come to Forum in October or November on the back of DSG Management Plan. Last year it was no-one's fault but DSG Plan built from scratch and late in day January window so was terrible for everyone. If there are to be discussions, bring it forward to October or November would be best. For Council financial year 25/26 and academies 25/26.</p>	
5.14.	<p>Clare Thorpe asked if there was any intention to claw back funds. SF confirmed that there were not. Claire Smith said it was helpful to know in planning.</p>	
5.15.	<p>TB added that the DfE is putting more pressure on the system in what can be charged and this can cause issues for core budgets. Clare Thorpe asked if the approach was being reviewed. SF said TB and he met last week with DfE to discuss and agreed that the approach last year was the right approach and that it would be very difficult to adopt a different type of approach. We stressed to DfE about what schools are telling us is unfair but DfE did not accept it.</p>	
5.16.	<p>He added they had met with the two top people in the country and were told pretty much anything else would be illegal. Minimum per pupil element has been key to ministers and so there was no point in even asking.</p>	
5.17.	<p>Louise Minter said she felt it would not be well received and it was simply not fair. AF concurred and added that it is so frustrating that they are in their ivory towers and so out-of-touch with what is going on within schools. SF responded that what they are saying is that the minimum is an absolute minimum and acknowledged it was good news for some.</p>	
5.18.	<p>Tim Baptiste asked in terms of demography, what the implications were for primary schools with out of borough pupils. TB responded that that is taken into account and the LA liaises with other neighbouring LAs to ask them not to build other schools. LA would make representations to any planning applications.</p>	
5.19.	<p>Lynda Mackay asked if we are looking at the same percentage as last year.</p>	
5.20.	<p>TB said that any decision we make is informed by AP, specialist provision et cetera. SF added that this is triggered by DSG Management Plan, which schools have agreed to. Having a coherent DSG Management Plan is key and that is the rock. DSG review groups feed in and cost those initiatives as the HNB drives it.</p>	

5.21.	<p>Clare Thorpe said with 80+ EHCP Langley stand to lose the most money and not making a judgment on any other school, it would be a significant challenge for Langley and another school in a similar position. It is worth everyone here knowing it will have significant challenges in the long run. Langley has made no exclusions and is an exceptionally inclusive school but will stop being so.</p> <p>AF noted the timing of this.</p>	
5.22.	<p>Stuart Shelton added that there had been a very good discussion last week in the DSG T&F Group. What came out was that in some areas, unclear spends in schools and unclear local spends, not in AP. But need to understand more on Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 and a better model would be to put more into Tier 1 to prevent extortionate spend in Tier 3. Really important before next meeting we get those figures as there is going to be a significant amount outside of that. He has asked his schools to feedback how much is being spent on Tier 1 approach.</p>	
5.23.	<p>Kate Bradley and Ed to get some information about what is spent outside of £7.1m TB commented that we have that information.</p> <p>Lynn Clark suggested that it was important to also consider what schools are funding themselves.</p> <p>TB acknowledged the LA wouldn't know that.</p> <p>Louise Minter commented that that adds to the picture.</p>	
5.24.	<p>Stuart Shelton added that the cost of pupils not in Saturn is more than the cost of pupils in Saturn. If we know where we are and we can use that for Tier 1, alleviates more in Tier 2 and 3 but need to know those costs.</p> <p>TB agreed.</p> <p>SS said it was a very good meeting. LM echoed this.</p>	
6.	Finance Working Group report – David Lewis	
6.1.	<p>David Lewis explained that the Finance Working Group meeting on 30th April was a slightly unusual meeting as there were no DSG figures. As the deficit is involved, figures must go to full Council first and so hope to have them at FWG in June. However, there were no shocks and no great variance.</p>	
6.2.	<p>Major part of the meeting was about Capital Works. Capital Works team are responsible for capital works not only for maintained but for all schools. £3m is allocated for maintained maintenance over 3 years, which is pretty poor and schools still have to make a contribution where capital works are involved.</p>	
6.3.	<p>DL explained that there is a new Childcare Expansion Capital Fund money with money available; £400k split around EY and wraparound. DL did not know how it would be distributed but the funding is there and is for expansion and capital not running costs. He added that Forum heard about EY fees at the previous Forum meeting in February.</p>	
6.4.	<p>The Heights is now open and there are further developments. Tied into work Ann Pearson is doing and capital will follow.</p>	
6.5.	<p>DL noted that the Head of Procurement, Chris Lowe had retired and therefore procurement will be discussed at the next FWG meeting.</p>	
6.6.	<p>Claire Smith raised how SEND money gets through. LA was going to look at how money is distributed and the delays in allocating money to see if there was any way to release that money early and Verity Dixon had said she would raise with Tim Browne.</p>	

<p>6.7.</p> <p>6.8.</p> <p>6.9.</p> <p>6.10.</p> <p>6.11.</p> <p>6.12.</p> <p>6.13.</p> <p>6.14.</p> <p>6.15.</p>	<p>Steve Fenton replied that there is a published timetable for schools in Headlines and it is incorporated into the Schools Budget workbook. The LA is paying to all settings regardless of type half termly in advance, which is better than DfE monthly in arrears. We have processed Summer 1 as quickly as possible and this week Summer 2 for out of borough and special. He said they were sticking to plan and there is much greater focus on data sheet providing. The team has also produced a school budget tool so schools can track, which is pre-populated for maintained schools. LA has listened to what schools have said.</p> <p>Claire Smith mentioned timing. The item at February Forum presented with schools listed 1-20 and how funding allocated. Claire's notional SEN budget 250k does not even cover EHCP which is £295k and doesn't even include xxx pupils.</p> <p>Spreadsheet 1 -20 schools very high SEN need and allocate that.</p> <p>SF said that revised methodology calculating revised SEN was implemented for April. One bit that we are waiting for is school census data from January 24 and to make first summer term calculations. We have agreed the methodology, doing it on termly basis and looking at where there is a shortfall.</p> <p>Claire Smith said that this was helpful to know and hopefully not so dire but still looking at phasing it in.</p> <p>SF explained that there was a protection mechanism and also noted that schools had wanted to be able to make a representation.</p> <p>Claire Smith commented that it felt like the first time she was hearing this and asked how schools are initially informed.</p> <p>SF replied that Forum agreed the methodology which is then incorporated into school budget workbook that contains funding data for every school.</p> <p>DG requested a hyperlink be included.</p> <p>Claire Smith added that she does not know at the moment if she can afford to replace an English teacher who has handed in notice.</p> <p>AF asked Lance Gordon from TGA if the discussions had been helpful.</p> <p>Lance Gordon said it had helped but it would be useful to have access to Solgrid.</p> <p>SF explained that Solgrid is a vehicle for all schools and governors to access and contains a vast array of funding information. We publish by statutory deadline by mid January so that all schools can see what their core budgets are going to be. In school budget workbook we then add on grants we know about. Solihull service packages and our exemplification of notional SEN budget are all included. Staff turnover may result in new staff not being aware.</p> <p>Claire Smith acknowledged that it would be helpful to include this as part of induction.</p> <p>Lynn Clark added that previously, Finance Officers would come out to schools to explain and that it was very different on Teams and less frequent. Finance is such a big beast and it is important to understand it.</p> <p>Darren Gelder commented that it was not easy to find.</p> <p>Antoinette Fisher and Louise Minter agreed that this could be looked into.</p> <p>Lisa Whitehouse updated on EY funding. 2 year olds have been given 15 hours' funding. Majority of parents just took the funding and Ann Pearson is doing work as sufficiency is an issue. In September when 15 hours for 9 month olds is introduced, those will be brand new places and the Government had alluded to that, as the 2 year olds are existing parents so September will be very different. Solihull has very good results for Early Years. Majority of nurseries are businesses and without sufficient places, parental choice will be reduced which then reduces quality.</p> <p>Gina Godwin commented that safety is also an issue. It was really difficult to find good staff and she explained she will not employ staff she does not trust.</p> <p>Therefore, currently she cannot take babies because she cannot get staff.</p> <p>GG added that she also managed to get an EHCP for a child from Birmingham and immediately received funding. That never happened for Solihull although do receive Inclusion Fund. Lisa Whitehouse commented that it depends if given with additional.</p> <p>GG said she had never received it and had discussed this with EY team.</p> <p>SF said his understanding was it would depend on the resources listed within EHCP, if that is felt to be commensurate but if EHCP says different, funds would</p>	
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	<p>flow. He asked Lisa Murray to do a comparison on additional staffing and how that compared to the Inclusion Fund and that looked ok. He said he hoped that this was more semantic than literal and that we have a mechanism that works.</p> <p>GG no one has ever asked.</p> <p>SF said that EHCP should always trump Inclusion Fund 1 or 2.</p> <p>GG asked about the difference between Solihull and Birmingham.</p> <p>SF said issue with Birmingham is that nothing would be received until EHCP awarded as there is no Inclusion Fund.</p> <p>GG said reciprocal and differential thresholds.</p> <p>AF commented that the luxury with a short agenda is that it allows for issues to be raised.</p> <p>AF asked CS if her question had been answered.</p> <p>CS confirmed it had.</p> <p>SF added second point to add is that it is agreed at Forum that notional SEN guidance is reviewed bi-annually so will be coming back to Forum in October or November. Used to occasionally go to secondary Bursars Group.</p> <p>AF said it would definitely be helpful for primary too.</p> <p>SF said he would be very happy to go along and explain.</p> <p>AF thanked DL for his report and everyone for the good discussion.</p>	
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1.</p>	<p>SSSAB report – Louise Minter</p> <p>Louise Minter gave a verbal report following the SSSAB meeting of 18th April, explaining it was largely a discussion around the HNB deficit and budget and plans. Darren Gelder provided an update around Early Help Strategic Board and what that was doing. Beate Wagner was there to give us an update and there were conversations around Headlines, looking at improvements as it seems to be getting longer and longer, so Clair McNeill and David Butt were looking at streamlining it. Also, three Task & Finish Groups have been set up linked to DSG – one around AP, one around effective service going forward and the third looking at ARP and ARC provision and internal hubs and pooling EHCP money as can't afford to do what always have done and drawing on the expertise of schools who have gone down that route to look at further mitigation to bring down costs.</p>	
<p>8.</p> <p>8.1.</p> <p>8.2.</p>	<p>AOB</p> <p>AF invited Nicola Redhead from The Heights to July Forum meeting to give an update.</p> <p>Another thing to take away and think about as AF's role as Chair of Forum and DL is also standing down from the role of Chair of FWG. No interest or applicants for either role yet so please do let AF / DL know if you might be interested.</p> <p>Meeting ended 10:30am.</p>	