

**LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM  
 8 OCTOBER 2020**

**PRESENT:**

Joanne Noble (Headteacher, Gainsborough Nursery School), Anthony Stevens (Governor, The Holt Primary School, Skellingthorpe), Martin Kyle (Head Teacher, St Faith and St Martin's Junior School), Ian Randall (Head Teacher, Reepham Church of England Primary School), Catherine Stratton (Head Teacher, Saxilby Church of England Primary School), Michele Anderson (Head Teacher, Spalding High School), Rachel Barrett FCCA (Governor, North Kesteven Academy), Professor Ken Durrands CBE (Governor, The King's School, Grantham), Mark Woods (Chief Executive Officer, Stamford Welland Academy), Gavin Booth (Head Teacher, Boston St Thomas' C E Primary School), Katie Graviil (Head Teacher, Kirkby la Thorpe Church of England Primary Academy), Simon Morley (Head Teacher, Boston West Academy), Josh Greaves (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Wellspring Academy Trust), Paul Thompson, Martin Shelton (College Principal, Linkage Community Trust), Helen Stokes (Branch Secretary, UNISON) and Julia Merivale (Manager, Trinity Day Nursery).

Officers in attendance:-

Michelle Andrews (Head of Early Years), Elizabeth Bowes (Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Sheridan Dodsworth (Head of SEND), Nick Harrison (Democratic Services Officer), Mark Popplewell (Head of Finance (Children's Services)), Martin Smith (Assistant Director for Children's Education), Tony Warnock (Operations and Financial Advice Manager) and Teresa Rowson (Finance Team Manager, Schools Finance Team).

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Gavin Booth be elected as Chairman of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum for 2020/21.

**GAVIN BOOTH IN THE CHAIR**

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Josh Greaves be elected Vice-Chairman of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum for 2020/21.

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3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

An apology for absence was received from Penny Davies, (Governor, Saxilby C E Primary School).

4 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

There were no declarations of members' interest made at this stage of the proceedings.

5 MINUTES OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM MEETING HELD  
ON 16 JANUARY 2020

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum meeting held on 16 January 2020 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Paul Thompson (Faith Group Representative) to his first meeting of the Forum.

The Chairman advised that an election would be held in due course to fill the current vacancies on the Forum.

7 NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA FOR SCHOOLS - UPDATE FOR 2021/22

The Forum gave consideration to a report from Elizabeth Bowes, Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team, which provided a summary of the updates from the Department of Education (DfE) relating to the national funding formula (NFF) for schools, central school services, high needs and early years for 2021/22. Page 17 of the report provided the Forum with background information relating as to why the national funding formula was introduced.

The Forum was advised that on 30 August 2019, the Prime Minister had announced an investment of over £14bn in primary and secondary education between 2020/21 and 2022/23. Through this investment and the move towards the 'hard' formula in 2020/21, the DfE had stated that the minimum per pupil levels of funding applied to all schools would become a mandatory factor in 2020/21 and that there would be no ceiling cap, so that all schools would attract at least their full allocations under the formula.

It was reported that on 20 July 2020, the government had announced its funding intentions for 2021/22, including the publication of the Schools Revenue Funding 2021/22 Operational Guidance and the provisional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations for 2021/22. The Forum was advised that for 2021/22, the DSG would continue to comprise of four block – Schools block, Central Schools block, High

Needs block, and Early Years block. Details of the provisional allocations for 2021/22 were shown on page 18 of the report.

Details relating to each of the four blocks were shown on pages 18 to 21 of the report. It was highlighted that the provisional allocation for the Early Years block was still to be confirmed.

The Forum noted that within the Schools block there were two key technical changes for mainstream schools funding, these were:

- Funding from the teachers' pay grant and teachers' pension employer contribution grant has been incorporated into the national funding formula for 2021/22. The funding had been added to the basic per pupil entitlement; to the minimum per pupil funding levels, and to the schools' 2020/21 funding baselines so that it was protected through the funding floor for protection purposes; and
- The 2019 update to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) has been incorporated so that deprivation funding allocated through the formulae is based on the latest data.

The Forum noted further that the DfE did not require the Local Authority to consult with schools concerning the above technical changes.

Further information within the guidance in relation to the Schools block was detailed on pages 19 and 20 of the report, which included an overall increase in the NFF of 4%, key formula factors monetary values increasing by 3% and pupil-led funding increasing, by at least 2%.

Appendix A (page 25) to the report provided a funding comparison of the NFF factors from 2020/21 to 2021/22.

The Forum noted that published information outlined that within the Central School Services block, the Local Authority (LA) would continue to carry out central functions on behalf of maintained schools and academies, comprising of two distinct elements. These were on-going responsibilities and historic commitments. It was highlighted that the on-going rate per pupil for 2021/22 would be £32.75 (compared to the 2020/21 rate of £31.84). It was noted further that the final allocation would be subject to the October 2020 school census. The report highlighted the further 20% reduction in historical commitment funding and the impact this would have with long term contracts remaining in place.

It was reported that the published information had also outlined that within the High Needs (HN) block the provisional allocation for 2021/22 had increased by £9.507m to £102.449m. The increased allocation also included the Teachers' pay and Teachers' pension grants for high needs establishments. The Forum noted that the increased funding in the HN block was welcomed, however, with the current trajectory of spending and forecasted HN block overspend; and the uncertainty of future years HN

block allocations beyond 2021/22 there was still an urgent need for transformation in the SEND arena and support from the schools sector.

It was highlighted that provisional information for the Early Years block had not yet been released, but confirmation had been received that funding had been confirmed for Maintained Nursery schools to the end of 2020/21 academic year. The Forum was advised further that the DfE had confirmed that the LAs autumn term 2020 funding would be based on the January 2020, rather than the January 2021, which would provide more financial certainty for Early Year settings.

It was highlighted that some authorities, despite their best effort still had historic deficits from their DSG. The Forum noted that in these cases, the DfE would be working together with the LA to agree a plan of action to enable the LA to pay off their debt.

In conclusion, the Forum was advised that the funding announcements were again positive news for Lincolnshire; however, there was still a large level of uncertainty at a national level due to a number of factors including Covid-19 and Brexit.

Details of the proposed next steps were included on page 22 of the report. The Forum was reminded that the NFF consultation for mainstream schools 2021/22 funding would be commencing in the autumn, and all schools were encouraged to participate in it.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- How were governing bodies going to maintain accuracy with their planning with the unknowns of Teachers pay and pensions and the extra funding needed to manage Covid-19. The Forum was advised that schools needed to adopt scenario planning to estimate and incorporate such costs into their medium term finance plans. There was recognition that there would be increasing costs, and officers had raised these with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) regarding Covid-19, but had been advised further funding would not be available beyond the summer term to support schools with the ongoing costs of the pandemic;
- How Nursery schools would meet the 2020 teachers pay award, when nursery schools would not be receiving a funding increase? Officers advised that this would need to be met from 2021/22 funding levels, which were still to be confirmed. It was highlighted that the government grant to nursery schools would be added to the Early Years block; and that this funding announcement was yet to be received beyond the 2020/21 academic year. Again, scenario planning for the future was encouraged; and
- A question was asked whether the LA was proposing in the consultation for High Needs funding increase for alternative provision and specialist settings to mirror that of mainstream schools. The Forum was advised that full consideration would be taken in relation to this including the assessment of affordability of the HN block. It was highlighted that a review would be taking place of special schools and alternative provision school funding; and that it was hoped to implement measures in April 2021.

RESOLVED

That the National Funding Formula for Schools Update for 2021/22 be noted.

8     DE-DELEGATION OF MAINTAINED PRIMARY SCHOOLS BUDGETS  
       2021/22 AND 2022/23

The Chairman invited Mark Popplewell, Head of Finance – Children's Services to present the report to the Forum.

The Forum was advised that the purpose of the report was to seek approval from the maintained primary school representatives' of the Forum to the LA's proposals for the de-delegation of certain budgets in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Details of the background to the key features of the de-delegation arrangements were provided on page 27 of the report.

The Forum was reminded that for 2019/20 maintained primary schools had agreed to de-delegate funding for:

- Contingency, i.e. termination of employment costs for schools in financial difficulty, and exceptional unforeseen costs; and
- Ethnic Minority and Traveller Education Team (EMTET).

It was confirmed that no funds had been de-delegated for maintained secondary schools.

It was reported that the cumulative underspend at 31 March 2020 was £0.312m after commitments for additional maintained school improvement services.

The Forum noted that the de-delegation budget for 2020/21 had been agreed by maintained primary school representatives at the meeting of the Forum in October 2019. The final per pupil rates using the October census for 'contingency termed' budgets had been set at £29.23 per pupil; and EMTET at £6.01 per pupil. Appendix 1 to the report provided further information regarding current services for the Forum to consider.

Particular reference was made to primary maintained intervention funding, which supported maintained primary schools to make rapid, identified improvements where school finances would otherwise prevent this from happening. It was highlighted that for 2019/20, the budget had funded 67 different schools for specific reasons. The Forum noted that an outcome of this had been that 38 of the schools were now rated green with no known issues; and 26 were now rated as being vulnerable rather than being high risk or being schools causing concern.

The Forum was advised that it was proposed that maintained primary schools de-delegation 'contingency termed' budgets remained and the charges for 2021/22

should continue at the same per pupil rate as in 2020/21 (£29.23 per pupil) and that the EMTET would require a fixed budget to support staffing, which determined a provisional rate of £6.42 per pupil. Details of what would be financed as a result of the per pupil rates was shown on page 29 of the report.

#### RESOLVED

That agreement be given by primary maintained representatives to the proposal for de-delegation of the budgets for the period 2021/22 and 2022/23 (in principle) as detailed on page 29 of the report.

#### 9 REVISED SCHOOLS BUDGET 2020/21

The Chairman invited Mark Popplewell, Head of Finance – Children's Services to present the report to the Forum.

The Forum was advised that the purpose of the report was to notify the Forum of the revised Schools Budget for 2020/21 and to seek support for the proposed use of the underspending from 2019/20.

The Forum was advised further that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was a ring-fenced grant that could only be spent for the purposes outlined in the Department for Education's School's and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations.

It was reported that the cumulative underspend carried forward at 31 March 2020 was £12.618m before accounting for commitment of £7.312m. The Forum noted that the uncommitted sum of £5.306m represented 0.89% of Lincolnshire's overall 2020/21 DSG (£595.282m). This reflected the net underspending of £0.064m on budgets in 2019/20 held centrally within the DSG.

Appendix A to the report provided the Forum with an explanation of the major under and overspendings of the Central DSG Budgets for 2019/20. Particular reference was made to the HN top up funding, which reflected the rise in the number of pupils with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans in Lincolnshire. Also highlighted was out of county placements, the Forum noted that EHC plan placements were only made when there was no Lincolnshire school able to take pupils.

Appendix B to the report provided the Forum with details relating to the existing 2019/20 DSG commitments, which totalled £7.312m. Particular reference was made to the temporary rate increase in the early years sector for 3 and 4 year old entitlement; the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Strategy; and Sector-led school investment. It was noted that some commitments could not be fully quantified at this stage, but when work streams were finalised, or the government's position was confirmed, spending would start to take place.

The Forum was advised that it was proposed that the remaining uncommitted sum of £5.306m was held in reserves, due to the current spending levels in the area of SEND and the uncertainty in the financial environment going forward. A full explanation of the LAs position was detailed on pages 38 to 41 of the report.

In conclusion, the Forum noted that the LA did not have a deficit in its overall DSG account, unlike some other LAs, who had large overspends on their High Needs block.

The Forum noted further that the LA proposal to hold the uncommitted sum in reserves was due to the anticipated growth in costs in the area of SEND; and the tighter financial environment expected going forward.

It was highlighted that the LA proposals to retain financial capacity within the DSG reserves was to temporarily manage unfunded cost pressures and transformational activities which were seen as important measures to securing a financially sustainable DSG.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- What measures were being put in place to measure the improved outcomes from the HN block. It was agreed that there needed to be a measurement of the investment made. Reassurance was given that this would be reviewed;
- Multi-faceted approach to mainstream. The Forum was advised best practice supported existing funding, but that checks would need to be done, to ensure that they were achieving targets in the sector led review;
- Whether the Early Years underspend could be used to address Early Years hourly rate. The Forum was advised that the reserves were only a temporary measure, which the LA applied in 2020/21, whilst considering the overall affordability of the DSG. A permanent solution was required on nursery school funding rates.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the Revised Schools Budget 2020/21 report presented be noted.
2. That support be given to the Local Authority's proposal for the use of the uncommitted sum, as outlined in section five of the report.

#### 10 ANNUAL REPORT ON SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

The Chairman invited Sheridan Dodsworth, Children's Services Manager, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities to present the report to the Forum.

The Forum was advised that the purpose of the report was to provide the Forum with an annual update of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), as required by the Schools' Forum Regulations.

In guiding the Forum through the report, reference was made to:

- The background information relating to SEND;

- The national context – It was reported that in January 2020 there were 390,109 children and young people (0-25) in England with an EHC plan; this was an increase of 36,100 (10%) from January 2019. It was noted almost half of the new plans made in 2019 were for those aged between 5 and 10 years of age. Further details were provided on pages 50 and 51 of the report);
- The Context in Lincolnshire – The Forum was advised that 16.3% of pupils on the roll of Lincolnshire schools had a special educational need. As of January 2020, 5,118 children and young people (0-25) had an EHC Plan. It was highlighted that this was a 10% increase from January 2019. The Forum noted that there had been 747 new EHC plans recorded in 2019; and 1,390 requests for EHC Assessments had been made throughout 2019. Further activity data was provided on pages 51 – 52 of the report;
- High Needs Funding Analysis – Page 53 of the report provided the Forum with a table, which highlighted the total funding allocated over the last five years for learners with high level needs who attended mainstream schools and academies; as was information relating to Special Schools and Independent Non-Maintained Specialist Provision and Independent School placements in Lincolnshire;
- Trajectories and risk around SEND activity – The Forum was advised that it was anticipated that if the education sector and partners continued to respond as they currently were to children and young people with additional needs then the authority would be responsible for in excess of 8,000 EHC plans by 2023. At the end of September 2020, the authority already had over 6,000 EHC plans, which was almost a 50% increase over the six years since the introduction of the SEND reforms. It was reported that the HN Budget for 2019/20 was £85.297m. For 2020/21 the budget was £92.943m; and current spending commitments were showing a forecasted overspend. Members were reminded that Building Communities of Specialist Provision strategy approved in November 2018 would create additional capacity through significant capital investment in the Special School estate. It was highlighted that under the current trajectory, indications were that the new places created would be filled in a short space of time, unless steps were taken to support young people to return to mainstream provision when they were ready. It was highlighted further that it was currently rare for a young person to transition from Special School to mainstream despite the fact their outcomes in Special Schools were likely to be poorer. Outcome information for children and young people was detailed on pages 54 and 55 of the report;
- Transformation in Lincolnshire for children and young people with SEND – The Forum noted Lincolnshire had a very well established collaboration with the Parent Carer Forum and colleagues across the health sector; and that using the collaborative approach, the system was working together to change the way in which children and young people with SEND were supported. It was highlighted that an 'Inclusive Ambition' had been co-produced to ensure that change happened. A list showing ten system ambitions and key activities were shown on pages 56 to 58 of the report; and
- Covid-19 – Page 58 of the report provided the Forum with details of the actions undertaken following the government's announcement in March 2020



of school closures. It was reported that eighteen of the nineteen Special Schools had been open throughout lockdown.

In conclusion, the Forum was advised that SEND in Lincolnshire was not without challenge, and that there was a committed and ambitious partnership that was already changing its approach to supporting children and young people with additional needs, to ensure that funding was directed to the right activities to maximise their outcomes.

During discussion, the Forum raised the following points:

- How long would it be before all the places created by the Building Communities of Specialist Provision strategy were filled? The Forum was advised that it was hoped initially that the strategy would future prove SEND places for the next ten years, however, with the current trajectory (4% each year) it was now felt this would now be three/four years;
- The success of the LENS Project in closing the gap. It was highlighted that the LENS project had been successful in embedding educational support for SEND; and that it was hoped it would be continuing as part of the support package for schools; and
- How many children and young people with SEND had to go out of county to receive support? The Forum was advised that currently there were approximately 100 children and young people going out of county to meet their SEND needs. It was noted that there was also some children and young people in independent provision within Lincolnshire.

## RESOLVED

That the Annual report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities presented be received.

## 11 REPORT ON EARLY YEARS - RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

The Chairman invited Michelle Andrews, Children's Services Manager, Early Years to present the report, which provided the Forum with an overview and an update on the progress of the 2019 priorities; and provided information on the response and delivery of Early Years and Childcare support during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and the recovery phase.

The Forum was advised that there were 933 registered childcare providers in Lincolnshire, which included registered child minders, private, voluntary and independent group based provision, and Early Years provision being delivered by schools and academies.

It was noted that childcare provision in Lincolnshire allowed working families to access full day care for children aged 0-5 years, it also offered the Early Years Entitlement (EYE) 15 hours or 30 hours for eligible 2, 3 & 4 year olds and out of school care for school aged children up to 14 years (18 years for children with a Special Educational Need or Disability).

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The Forum was advised that the Early Years, Childcare and Children's Support (EYCC) provided information, support, challenge, and training opportunities to all Early Years and childcare providers within Lincolnshire. This included academies, schools, private, voluntary and independent providers, registered child-minders and out of school clubs. Page 62 of the report provided details of the EYCC responsibilities.

Pages 63 and 64 provided the Forum with an update on the nine key priorities for EYCC for 2019/20.

Pages 65 to 71 provided the Forum with details of the response to Covid-19 and the response made.

Details of the EYCC key five priorities for 2020/21 were shown on pages 71 and 72 of the report.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Report of the Early Years – Response and Recovery be received.
2. That the priorities for Early Years and Childcare for 2020/21 as shown on pages 71 and 72 of the report be agreed.

**12**     **ACADEMIES AND TRUST UPDATE**

The Chairman invited Mark Popplewell, Head of Finance – Children's Services to present the report, which provided the Forum with information on the latest number of academies, pupils in academies and academy trusts.

It was highlighted that since the effective date of the last report (1 December 2019), three primary schools had converted to academy or sponsored academy status, which meant that 38.8% (109) primary schools were now academies and 49.9% (28,551) of FTE primary pupils were educated in academies.

It was reported that a further two primary schools were intending to be academies by 1 March 2021.

Information relating to the projected six month status of all Lincolnshire State Schools was provided on pages 73 to 75 of the report presented.

The report also provided a list of academy trusts that currently had the greatest number of academies in Lincolnshire.

**RESOLVED**

- That the Academies and Trust update be noted.

**13**     **LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM - WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman invited comments from members of the Forum relating to the work programme detailed on pages 77 to 80 of the report pack.

The Forum's representative on the Lincolnshire Learning Partnership Board (Martin Kyle) extended thanks to the LLP for their support and guidance during the Covid-19 outbreak. Thanks were also extended to the Chairman of the LLPB for her support and contribution to the Board.

The Forum was also advised that the LLP and the Strategic Education Group were evolving; and that an update on the Sector Led Approach for School Improvement was scheduled to be considered at the January 2021 meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme as presented on pages 77 to 80 of the pack be noted.

#### 14 FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED

That the meeting dates as detailed below be agreed:

- Thursday 14 January 2021 at 1.00pm;
- Thursday 22 April 2021 at 1.00pm;
- Thursday 24 June 2021 at 1.00pm; and
- Thursday 7 October 2021 at 1.00pm.

The meeting closed at 3.20 pm