

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL - SCHOOLS FORUM

Date:	Thursday 20 March 2025
Location:	Southwark Diocesan Board of Education, 48 Union Street, London, SE1 1TD
Time:	2pm

VOTING MEMBERS		ATTENDANCE
Maintained Nursery School		
Helen Rowe – Dulwich Wood Nursery Headteacher	HR	No apologies
Maintained Primary School		
Susannah Bellingham – Brunswick Park Headteacher	SB	Apologies
Kate Wooder – Bridges Federation Executive Headteacher	KW	Attended
Jane O'Brien – Heber Chair of Governors	JO	Apologies
Janice Babb – St James the Great & St John's Catholic Federation (RC) – Co-Chair	JB	Attended
Megan Pacey – Dulwich Village CofE Chair of Governors	MP	Attended
Maintained Secondary School		
Catherine May – St Savior's & St Olave's Headteacher	CM	Apologies
Maintained Special School		
Heidi Tully – Tuke Headteacher	HT	Attended
Pupil Referral Unit		
Michael Jarrett – SILS	MJA	No apologies
Academy Primary School		
Haley Foxworthy – Nexus Education Schools Trust (Assistant Director)	HF	Attended
Vacancy	N/A	N/A
Academy Secondary School		
Steve Morrison – Kingsdale Foundation School	SM	Apologies
James Wilson – Bacon's College	JW	Attended
Matt Jones – Ark Globe Academy (Chair of SASH)	MJ	Attended
Jessica West – Ark Walworth Academy	JWN	Apologies
Felicity Corcoran – St Michael's Catholic College	FC	Attended
Alison Harbottle – The Charter School East Dulwich	AH	Attended
Academy Special School		
Steph Lea – Spa Education Trust Executive Headteacher	SL	Attended
Non-School Representatives		
Nicola Howard – Early Years Private/Voluntary. 1 st Place Children's and Parents Centre	NH	Attended
Pia Longman – Southwark Diocesan Board of Education – Co-Chair	PL	Attended
Jane Button – 16 to 19 Year Providers. Southwark College Principal	JBN	Attended
Betty Joseph – Trade Unions	BJ	Attended
Vacant – Archdiocese of Southwark Schools'	N/A	N/A

LA OFFICERS		ATTENDANCE
Alasdair Smith – Director, Children and Families	AS	Attended
Aron Brown – Senior Finance Manager	AB	Attended
Eniko Nolan – Assistant Director of Finance	EN	Attended
Kate Bingham – Schools Finance Consultant	KB	Attended
Hayley Furniss – Governor Development Advisor (Clerk)	Clerk	Attended

OPTIONAL		ATTENDANCE
Anna Chiva – Assistant Director for SEND and Inclusions	AC	Attended
Jenny Brennan – Assistant Director Family Early Help and Youth Justice	JBB	Attended

Quorum required – 40% which is 9
Members in attendance – 14

ITEM NO.		ACTION FOR
1	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES All were welcomed to the meeting which PL chaired. Apologies received from JWN, SM, SB, CM, JO. No apologies received from HR or MJA.	
2	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST None.	
3	SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP UPDATE Standing agenda item. There are currently two vacancies, one for an Academy Primary School member and one for an Archdiocese of Southwark Schools' member.	
4	APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES FROM 16 JANUARY 2025 Minutes were AGREED as accurate. All actions were covered in the agenda.	
5	FEEDBACK FROM SUBGROUPS <i>High Needs</i> – see item 8. <i>Schools Forum Governance Improvement</i> AS provided an update. All actions in the plan have been completed apart from one as per the next item. Closing report will be shared at the next meeting. AS reported that the work done by the group was successful in improving the governance of the Schools Forum. <i>Schools Financial Support Panel</i> JB advised that six funding applications were received this year, five of which were for restructures to support redundancy costs.	

	A total of £536k was requested of which £388k had been committed. There was an exceptional legal claim of which £45k was committed.	
6	<p>TRAINING PROGRAMME</p> <p>Report with proposed training programme was shared prior. This is the last action outstanding on the governance improvement action plan.</p> <p>The Schools Forum was asked for comment on the training.</p> <p><i>It was confirmed that training is for both new and existing members. Member asked if any were mandatory.</i></p> <p>It should be mandatory for new members. The technical information around DSG would be useful for all, and the other sessions would be helpful as refreshers.</p> <p>The training programme resulted from members not feeling informed or knowledgeable enough to make decisions.</p> <p><i>Member asked when the training would be available.</i></p> <p>At the start of the next academic year.</p> <p><i>Member asked if governors could attend this training as well which would help them with financial monitoring.</i></p> <p>Budget setting and monitoring training is offered by Southwark Council for governors. This is a training needs analysis for the Schools Forum so recommendations can be made but it may be more useful for members on the forum.</p> <p>Member fed back that the refresher training delivered before a previous meeting was helpful.</p>	
7	<p>SCHOOL FINANCIAL PROCEDURES MANUAL</p> <p>Report was shared prior. The Schools Forum noted the major changes to and the publication timetable for the refresh of the 2025/26 School Financial Procedures Manual which is for maintained schools only.</p>	
8	<p>HIGH NEEDS BANDING REVIEW UPDATE</p> <p><i>High Needs Subgroup (HNSG) minutes (8A) were shared prior.</i></p> <p>SL advised that the meeting was productive, and members had engaged with the content. Discussion was thorough with lots of clarification seeking. Improving communication was an important topic so that schools are aware of support available, as well as the banding review and recommendations to take forward.</p> <p><i>Member emphasised that the role of the SEN consultants and their intended impact needs to be clear.</i></p> <p>To address confusion with resource bases and what is and is not funded, AC advised that a mapping exercise took place by the LA to identify which schools have 'own school provisions' – this came out at 52%. This will come back to the subgroup for discussion.</p>	

Impact of the SEN consultant's role was discussed, and work is being undertaken to clarify roles and avoid duplication. Their work is based around supporting development with the curriculum to support inclusion, but they have inevitably become involved in individual case work over the last year.

Member added that more recent EHCPs (education and health care plans) help to quantify progress but there remains too much variance.

Banding Redesign Resource Base Review Progress report (8C) was shared prior, AC gave a detailed update on this.

The Schools Form noted:

- the next steps for the new banding matrix and agree that this will cover children in both early years and school-age (aged 0-16 years, plus pupils in special school sixth forms), across all settings (mainstream, resource base and special). Work will continue with all groups, including a meeting of special school Headteachers.
- that there a transitional funding mechanism will be implemented, should any school be negatively affected by the banding review.
- that there should be minimum levels of banding (and therefore minimum levels of needs) for access to resource bases and special schools, alongside clarity on Ordinarily Available provision.
- the progress of the Resource Base Review and agree the direction of travel as noted, particularly in relation to levels of need.
- that these proposals link to other developments including:
 - Peer to peer support for resource bases
 - Support, quality assurance and expectations for 'nurture' classes

Point 36 in the report under the Impact on School Budgets section that states "a 5% transitional funding can be agreed for each school at this stage" was incorrect. Transitional funding was agreed as a principle but the reference to 5% should have been removed.

Member commented that clarifying what resource base means will be the most important part of the review.

Member asked if children are identified as having needs, how they access funding.

The intention of the review is not to minimise EHCPs but to ensure resources can be given to children in a timely way. Some children cannot access SALT (speech and language therapy) for example unless it's through an EHCP which is not right. Schools should be given better access to support such as this. The review will look at how funding would be accessed. There are opportunities to consider early intervention funding which should be aligned to an SEN support plan with clear governance and accountability to ensure funding is being used as it should so the child receives the intervention and support.

Member of the HNSG commented that extra funding does not mean there is access to the resources that special schools have.

Member asked if banding reviews have been seen to work elsewhere, what the impact of them was and what lessons were learnt during the transition.

AC confirmed that reviews have been carried out multiple times but no matter how much planning is done, things can still be challenging but preparation and planning is essential to mitigate this. Some of the ways to ensure success during transition is to work with schools on which banding they will get (particularly special schools), having school leader and SENCO involvement, ensuring the timelines for implementation are reasonable, and having clear communication and transparency.

Member added that, moving forward, permission to fail should be granted as the review is new and there should be consideration of matching meeting needs with capacity to deliver. To confirm, there are four elements to the review: outreach work to mainstream schools, nurture group, resource base clarification and special schools. Member asked about capacity in buildings for schools eligible to take a resource base.

Any provision that takes a resource base must want the children in the school and include them as part of the school. There may not be the confidence, so looking at models of delivery such as a special school 'deliver at' may help. Either way, the leadership team and governors of that secondary school must be on board.

Member asked about progress made on opportunities to get students in the right part of the system to ensure effective intervention.

AC advised that work has been being done on SEND modelling and different allocations. Early intervention funding may come before an EHCP.

Member asked how the banding would interface with the 30 hours free element of childcare.

SENDIF funding has been extended to align with those hours. An EHCP is for educational delivery, not for Early Years provision so work is being considered to mitigate some of the risks. Individual scenarios have been being reviewed on a case-by-case basis to avoid inequity.

Member advised that funding descriptors to explain to parents and carers, and transition arrangements from primary to secondary to ensure clarity on what the school can provide are important parts of the review.

Descriptors are key but the quality of EHCP plans during transition are also important. The parent career forum is working closely with the LA on this.

SVA Impact on Attainment and Absence report (8B) shared prior addressed the previous request for a high-level summary on the impact of the safety valve in relation to outcomes and attendance for students with SEND. AC briefly read through and confirmed that outcomes and attendance are doing as well as prior to the safety valve and better than inner-London and national.

	<p><i>In appendix 1 of the report in the second table, member asked what the adjustment made was to reach 19.5% of SEN pupils meeting the required standard in Y1 Phonics screening in Southwark for 2024 and where it came from.</i></p> <p>The data was taken straight from The Cabinet last year so this would need to be checked.</p> <p><i>Member declared that as adjustments are made to meet safety valve expectations, attendance and persistent absence should be monitored.</i></p> <p>JBB has a robust system to review attendance, so this is closely monitored. More money has gone into the system than before the safety valve and there have been no financial cuts made.</p> <p><i>Member asked why page 6 of the report mentions that 'each special school has kept their curriculum under review'.</i></p> <p>This came from The Cabinet report, the link can be found in the paper (here).</p> <p>It was noted that the Schools Forum would like to see information on how pupils who are persistently absent with SEND will be monitored. It was confirmed that this will be shared as part of attendance reporting anyway.</p> <p>Previous action was for the High Needs Subgroup to provide an impact report on the funding management review and paying schools and providers on time. Paper will be going to the next High Needs Subgroup meeting and will come back to the June Schools Forum meeting.</p>	HNSG
9	<p>SUMMERHOUSE REVIEW</p> <p>Summerhouse Funding Report with an update on the use of the de-delegated budget that funds the service was shared prior which was noted by the Schools Forum. AC read through key highlights.</p> <p>A review of the Summerhouse model is taking place and is planned to come back to the Schools Forum in June, but this may just be an update if it has not been possible to complete the review by then. There will be no change to the funding to ensure the service remains stable to serve the community. The majority is spent on staffing.</p> <p>Member commented on the extra funding that comes with free school meals and behaviour support for vulnerable children. The work done at Summerhouse with a student was commended, particularly their trauma-informed approach.</p> <p><i>Member asked what the maximum number of children they can take is as the report says it varies annually.</i></p> <p>AC advised it would be about 80, but currently working at an average of around 50. Stakeholder feedback as part of the review being undertaken will be important to identify some of the barriers in sending children there.</p>	

	<p>Member replied that time spent there is short and managing the child's transition back into school can be challenging. Having more flexibility would be beneficial.</p> <p>Member gave feedback on some success stories from the Summerhouse service.</p>	
10	<p>SCHOOLS FORUM COMMISSIONED REPORTS</p> <p>Penalty Notices Update was shared prior, JBB gave an overview.</p> <p>The Schools Forum noted the contents which presented data illustrating the marked increase in the issue of penalty notices through Southwark's Local Authority and School's implementation of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices as set out in the Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTTISA) statutory guidance.</p> <p>Member commented that point 30 which states that 'the additional burden from the new duties will need further review of resource allocation' cannot be done in isolation and needs to encompass wider structures.</p>	
11	<p>UPDATES FROM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES</p> <p>AS shared a verbal update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A recent Ofsted inspection has meant that a school that was of concern is no longer. 97% of schools in the borough are now the equivalent of being graded as good or outstanding. - Progress with meeting the challenges of reduced pupil numbers and school closures is continuing. - SEND capital strategy is to be published in the next couple of months which will document public assets to ensure they are used for the benefit of children in the borough. - SEND inspection of the LA is imminent. This can impact work on the banding review as lots of resources are being committed to this. - Children social care reforms guidance was published yesterday which includes targeted family help. - Southwark Schools' Bulletin has been redesigned to be more informative for all schools, it will include updates on all the above and other information. Schools can request that information is shared to school's network through this. 	
12	<p>FORWARD PLAN</p> <p>Forward plan was shared prior which contained items for the next meeting's agenda. The Schools Forum was asked for comment. None received.</p>	

13	DATE AND DRAFT AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING Thursday 26 June 2025, 2pm at Tooley Street	
14	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>AB shared the announcement that was made by the DfE on 18 March about National Insurance grant to be given, and how it will be distributed for the difference school phases. Most of the money will be received by the LA in September so schools can expect to receive it in October. Mainstream schools can use an online tool to estimate NI funding. There will be an increased rate for those with a commissioned resource base. Funds will be added into the core schools budget grant for special schools.</p> <p>AB also provided an update regarding PP (Pupil Premium), of which rates have now been confirmed for 2025-26.</p> <p>Member thanked staff for providing reports in response to requests.</p>	

Item	Action	For
8	Report at the next meeting on the impact on the funding management review and paying schools and providers on time.	High Needs Subgroup