

**Meeting of the Schools Forum
Held on Thursday 16th May 2024 at 1.30pm
via MS Teams Digital Platform**

MINUTES

Quorum: 40% (8 of the 18 current School/Non-School Members)

NAME	Organisation - School Members	Attended
Rachel Lewis	Hindley Sure Start Nursery	Yes
Louise Curran	Rowan Tree Primary	Apologies
Anne Isherwood	Three Towers Alternative Provision Academy	Yes
Tracy Mingaud-Cunningham	Primary Governor	Apologies
Adrian Hardy	Secondary Governor	Yes
Gary Hayes	Orrell St James Primary	Yes
Fiona Quinlivan	Howe Bridge St Michael's Primary	Yes
Julie Hassan	St Oswald's Catholic Primary	Yes
Wendy Hughes Matthew	Golborne All Saints Catholic Primary	Apologies
Lisa Hobden	St Patrick's Catholic Primary	Yes
Alan Birchall	Byrchall High (Chair)	Yes
Andy McGlown	St. Peters RC High School	Yes
Martin Wood	The Deanery High School	
Paul Davies	Fred Longworth High School	
	Organisation - Non School Members	
Sue Morris	Care Love Learn Childcare Limited	
Peter McGhee	St John Rigby College	Yes
Max Atkins	Wigan NEU	Yes
Need nominated member	Diocesan Representative	
	Organisation- Nominated observers	
Cllr Jenny Bullen	Cabinet Member	Yes
Karen Parkin	NEU	Yes
Mike Wilkinson	Wigan NASUWT	Yes
Vacancy	Unison	
Matthew Boyle	Leigh St Thomas CE Primary School	Yes
	Organisation - In Attendance	
Mark Rotheram	LA Finance – Strategic Finance Manager	Yes
Kirsten Reid (KR)	LA Finance – Group Finance Manager (Schools)	Yes
Cath Pealing (CP)	Assistant Service Director, Education	Yes
Jo Sullivan	Clerk to the Forum, Wigan Council Governor Services	Yes

The meeting was quorate.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Louise Curran, Wendy Hughes, and Tracy Mingaud-Cunningham.

Matthew Boyle (Leigh St Thomas) was welcomed to the Forum. Mr Boyle would join the Forum in September 2024 as the new LLG consortia representative in place of Wendy Hughes (Golborne All Saints) who was retiring.

2. **Agreement of Any Other Urgent Business to Be Added to the Agenda**

The following item was raised for discussion:

Karen Lewis from GMB union had expressed interest in joining the Forum. Members noted that Unison had not put forward a nomination for some time. GMB had 60 members across the Wigan schools.

Members **agreed** to appoint GMB (representative – Karen Lewis) to the Forum.

3. **Previous Minutes**

Members **confirmed** that the minutes from the Forum meeting held on **18th January 2024** were a correct record.

There were no matters arising from the minutes which were not included on this agenda.

4. **Scheme For Financing Schools**

Forum Members had received a report detailing the proposed updates to the local scheme in advance of meeting.

Changes to the document had been highlighted and circulated to Members in advance of the meeting.

Members from maintained schools **approved** the proposed updates to the local scheme in line with DfE guidance.

5. **Schools Finance System**

BUSINESS DISCUSSED HERE IS MINUTED AS CONFIDENTIAL

6. **2023/24 DSG and School Balances Out-turn**

Forum Members had **received** a report on the year end position of the Schools Budget and DSG for 2023-24, which included an update on the level of school's balances as at 31/03/2024.

KR highlighted that:

- Underspend in Early Years block.
- Overspend in high needs block.

- Reduction in funding growth 11% year on year.
- Small growth in NFF quite small for basic need.
- Final DSG position deficit of £0.700m.
- High Needs Subgroup to review plan for recovery.
- School balances had been a positive message overall with an increase what we had retained overall, however some schools were still in deficit.
- 37 maintained schools had an in-year overspend.
- 9 schools reported an overall cumulative deficit which totalled £0.5m.
- Academies balances not yet available as financial year ran academically.

KR referred Members to Appendix 1, 2 & 3.

Anne Isherwood withdrew from the meeting at 2pm.

Q. Where was the DSG surplus sitting?

A. In councils reserves and with current projections we could only see this increasing. We needed to continue work with the High Needs Subgroup and bring the action plan to the next Forum.

Q. Teacher grant – had you done any work on where the shortfall had come? Some schools lost out on the formula of the grant.

A. Not yet had the official allocation for the teacher's grant. This made it difficult to calculate what each school's grants were. We were expecting it in May, but it was looking more like July. Another hidden cost was additional costs for Teaching Assistants which were not funded.

Forum Members **noted** the information in respect of school balances and out-turn.

7. 2024/25 Central Supplementary Funding

Forum Members had **received** a report with an update on the supplementary funding approved and to be paid from centrally retained budgets in advance of the meeting.

KR highlighted that:

- Growth, disproportionate SEN, and contingency (maintained only).
- No changes this year.
- Underspend on growth and contingency but more applications could be submitted during the year.
- Disproportionate SEN overspent by £17,834. The budget was overspent in 2023/24 by £6,826.
- Referred to Appendix 1.
- Lots of schools with financial difficulties and it was important to remember that the School Improvement Team also supported these schools, not just the Finance Team.
- Where schools were providing additional support to pupils not EHCP, we did not provide financial support.

Note – Members noted that having more EHCP pupils than previously in school, did not mean that schools were disproportionate. It was a disproportionate calculation based on an average.

CP gave credit to schools for all their work and understanding in these challenging budget times and thanked Forum Members for their representation of schools in their consortia.

Forum Members **noted** the information in respect of supplementary funding.

8. Any Other Urgent Business

No other business had been raised.

9. Future Meeting Dates

Summer 2 – Thursday 27th June 2024 at 1.30pm (via MS Teams).

The meeting closed at 14:20pm.

Background documents (available for public inspection):

Appendices to the circulated briefing reports disclose important facts on which the reports are based and were relied upon in preparing the reports. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact the Forum Clerk

j.sullivan@wigan.gov.uk.