

**Minutes of Leicestershire Schools' Forum
via Teams on Tuesday 12th September at 2pm**

Chair / Vice Chair

Martin Towers	Academy Secondary Governor
Suzanne Uprichard	PRU Representative & Maintained Primary Governor

Present

Jane Moore	Director of Children & Family Services
Alison Bradley	Interim Assistant Director for Education, SEND & Commissioning
Deborah Taylor	Lead Member for Children & Family Services
Jenny Lawrence	Finance Business Partner for Schools & High Needs
Rebecca Wakeley	Education Quality & Inclusion Service
Dan Cleary	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Mark Mitchley	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Will Teece	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Peter Leatherland	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Alison Ruff	Maintained Primary Headteacher
Jo Beaumont	Maintained Primary Headteacher
Rebecca Jones	Maintained Primary Headteacher
Kelly Dryden	Academy Special Headteacher
Carolyn Lewis	Diocese of Leicester Director

Apologies

Justine Roberts	Head of Service for Education Quality & Inclusion
Kath Kelly	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Jane Dawda	Maintained Primary Headteacher
Beverley Coltman	PVU Early Years Provider
Ed Petrie	Academy Primary Headteacher
Felicity Clarke	Academy Primary Headteacher
Lauren Charlton	Academy Primary Trustee
Simon Grindrod	Academy Secondary Governor
Jason Brooks	Maintained Special Headteacher
Lisa Craddock	Post-16 Provider
John Pye	RC Representative
Allison Allford	Academy Secondary Headteacher
Robert Martin	Maintained Nursery Governor

1. Apologies for Absence/Substitutions:

Apologies provided for Kath Kelly, Jane Dawda, Beverley Coltman, and Ed Petrie. Felicity Clarke, Lauren Charlton, Simon Grindrod, Jason Brooks, Lisa Craddock, John Pye, Allison Allford, and Robert Martin have not attended.

2. Minutes of the Forum held on 13/06/2023 (previously circulated) and Matters Arising:

Martin Towers discussed the minutes of the last Leicestershire Schools' Forum with forum members, presenting the opportunity to raise any issues or request amendments to the record; no issues of accuracy were raised.

Martin Towers has covered the five action points from the last Forum:

1. Beverley Coltman agreed to provide information on how other Local Authorities (LAs) incorporate Early Years (EY) representation for this forum's agenda. This information has not been provided. Jenny Lawrence has advised that arrangements are already in place for substitutions which would allow another EY representative to attend without making the forum membership larger.
2. The Leicestershire Schools' Forum Self-Assessment was to be completed by Chair & Vice-Chair, circulated amongst forum members for amendments, and submitted to the LA for response. This has been actioned and will be discussed further in Agenda Item 3.
3. Jenny Lawrence agreed to provide clarity on the LA's position on Section 10 Insurance of the Leicestershire Scheme for financing schools as an appendment to the previous minutes. This appendment had been circulated following the previous minutes.
4. Jenny Lawrence agreed to revise Section 3.4 Interest Clawbacks of the Leicestershire Scheme for financing schools as per last forum's vote of approval. This has been completed.

Communications were to be released to maintained schools via the Headteacher's Bulletin to inform of all decisions made by the forum. This has been completed; further communications will continue to be circulated via the Headteacher's Bulletin and Governor's Briefing regarding upcoming agendas.

3. Schools' Forum Self-Assessment:

The Leicestershire Schools Forum held on 14/02/2023 was perceived by the Department of Education (DfE) to be disjointed. This resulted in a representative for the DfE requesting to sit in of the next meeting on 05/06/2023 meetings. The DfE provide a self-assessment toolkit for forums to review their conduct and progress. This toolkit was shared during the last forum for completion and review; it is a tool to support forums in reviewing and discussing improvements. Martin Towers has completed the self-assessment, shared with forum members, and submitted to the LA. Jenny Lawrence has assessed the feedback and has provided responses on behalf of the LA; an opportunity is now presented to the forum to consider whether the responses and measures offered are appropriate.

Kelly Dryden has requested some amendments made to the comments raised within the self-assessment for the sake of clarity. Regarding Question 11, Kelly has suggested making the induction for new forum members an official and compulsory part of joining the forum, rather than an optional process. Regarding Question 14, Kelly believes that the reality of face-to-face meetings needs to be properly considered, as virtual meetings provide a more convenient method for many professionals; the benefits of meeting in person need to be measured against the time impacts of doing so. Regarding Question 16, Kelly has questioned where the contact details for the Business Finance Partner can be located. Jenny Lawrence notes that queries regarding the forum can be directed to LeicestershireSchoolsForum@leics.gov.uk.

Suzanne Uprichard agrees that the induction for new members of the forum should be compulsory. Jenny Lawrence confirms that this can be agreed by the forum as a practice without seeking further approval. Alison Ruff has inquired as to what the proposed format of this induction should be; Alison is mindful of not wanting to put new members off by requiring them to attend induction at County Hall.

It has been raised that there is still a lack of clarity regarding the voting system of the forum. There is concern that some votes could present conflicts of interest due to the divide between academies and maintained schools. It is also unclear how feedback is valued.

It is difficult to compare Leicestershire Schools' Forum performance with other localities. Jenny has recommended that the forum compares its practices against the Forum Responsibilities.

Martin Towers will make amendment to the self-assessment to reflect Kelly Dryden's comments. The amended self-assessment will be re-release with this forum's minutes.

4. Early Years Funding Update:

The Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG) must be used by LAs to increase the hourly rates paid to childcare providers for existing entitlement offers. The grant offers funding from September 2023 – March 2024 and must be paid to providers in full. The additional funding is as follows:

- 3- and 4-year-olds will receive an additional 33p per hour, increasing the rate to **£4.77** per hour, per child.
- 2-year-olds will receive an additional £1.74 per hour, increasing the rate to **£7.07** per hour, per child.
- Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) will receive an additional 4p per hour, per child. This will increase the rate to **£0.66** per universal hour.
- Disability Access Fund (DAF) will receive an additional £53 per eligible child, increasing the rate to **£881.00** per annum for claiming 3- and 4-year-old funding.

Jenny Lawrence has noted that childcare providers are still working within a difficult market; the rate for the Free Entitlement to Early Education (FEEE) is one of the factors suggested to be leading many providers to leave the market. Leicestershire is in a group of the lowest funded authorities for early years provision.

95% of funding needs to be passed through providers and Leicestershire meets this requirement. The LA did not pass on the full increase to providers for 2023-24 due to the LA's need to recover the early years deficit of £4m over a 4-year period; £950,000 is expected to be recovered in this financial year resulting in a reduced increase to providers however all providers have received an increase in funding.

5. 2024/25 Provisional DSG Settlement:

Jenny Lawrence has identified that a lot of work is needed within the LA before 2024-25. The LA is investigating why some schools fair better out of the provisional settlement.

The DSG details changes to the National Funding Formula (NFF) for the next financial year, which is highlighted through the following:

- The core factors in the NFF have been increased by 2.4%.
- The minimum per pupil funding levels have increased to £4,655 per primary pupil and £6,050 per secondary pupil.
- A funding floor will ensure that every school will attract at least 0.5% more pupil led funding than for 2023-24.

- The 2023-24 Mainstream Schools Additional Grant is rolled into core funding.

Changes to the NFF require all LAs to align their funding formulas with the NFF; there will be no changes to Leicestershire's funding formula as it already fully aligned with the NFF. However, the provisional data identifies several primary schools, and some secondary schools will receive a reduction in budget due to a reduction in pupils. The budgets will be updated in December following the October 2023 census.

The LA is working with the School Organisation team to identify changes in pupil numbers that will inform the 2023 school census the reduction in schools' pupils and further decreases in the long-term.

The DfE have announced a national Teacher's Pay Additional Grant (TPAG) to support schools with the September 2023 pay award. This will continue for 2024-25 before rolling into mainstream funding for 2025-26, allowing schools to plan their budgets accordingly.

The Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has published additional information on £40m which can be used to support schools in financial difficulty, on top of the £525m available to schools nationally as part of the TPAG.

The structure of the High Needs NFF is unchanged, although the provisional settlement exceeds the current forecast and is 3% increase per head of population. However, the population factor only accounts for 36% of the settlement calculation. There are national conversations required regarding what this means for specialist provision. The DfE have said previously that the High Needs NFF will be reviewed but there is no evidence of this happening presently; Jenny Lawrence comments that this is unlikely over the medium term as the NFF for mainstream schools has been under ongoing review since 2018.

No update was provided on the High Needs deficit. The deficit is looking to be higher than expected as numbers of pupils needing special provisions continues to increase and TSIL is a complex project and so expected savings are slower than anticipated.

The funding for ongoing commitments through the Central School Services Block remains stable, with an annual contribution of £0.248m for Education Effectiveness to support maintained schools having difficulties. This funding is largely contributing to interventions. This funding remains manageable but there may be risk in the future.

Carolyn Lewis has requested a breakdown of the number of £6k notional budgets versus the number of EHCPs at each school. Jenny Lawrence responded that this would be included in the review of the notional SEN budget and would be presented to Forum if appropriate.

The Local Authority must review the growth policy and reasonableness of the SEN budget for EY. These reviews will be presented to the Schools' Forum in November 2023.

6. High Needs Funding Framework:

The previous Leicestershire Schools Forum (13/06/2023) discussed the notional £6k budget at length, discussing whether the expectation of this contribution from schools was correct and appropriate. The High Needs Funding sets out the legal framework and statutes that dictates that the notional SEN budget is the responsibility of the school.

This report sets out the legal position to which Leicestershire is compliant.

7. Any Other Business:

No other business raised.

8. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting has been scheduled for 21st November 2023 at 2pm. This forum will be used to discuss the SEN and School Growth policy.

9. Actions:

1. Martin Towers will make amendment to the self-assessment to reflect Kelly Dryden's comments. The amended self-assessment will be re-release with this forum's minutes.
2. The Local Authority must review the growth policy and reasonableness of the SEN budget for EY. These reviews will be presented to the Schools' Forum in November 2023.
3. An induction to Leicestershire Schools Forum to be arranged for new forum members.

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Leicestershire Schools Forum Self-Assessment – September 2023

This document assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the school’s forum and presents a local authority response to 21 questions set by the DfE within their published [Schools Forum Self-Assessment Toolkit](#):

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
1. Are meeting dates set in well advance and details (including time and venue) published in an accessible manner to enable interested parties to plan their attendance?	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting dates are normally confirmed at the end of the meeting. Minutes are normally published within 2weeks of the meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim is to set meetings for the academic year, dates are confirmed in minutes of meetings. No further action required
2. Are meetings timed to coincide with key dates? (for example, reporting of funding formula)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historically, meeting dates have moved if key dates or deadlines require it. OR we have had an ‘extra’ meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, dates coincide with the need for decisions in respect of the budget, outturn data and NFF provisional announcement Additional meetings added when specifically required which for 2023 will include a late November meeting to look at new requirements for 2024/24 in respect of revision to growth policy and Notional SEN review No further action required
3. Are meetings held in an accessible venue to enable observers to attend easily?	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings are still in teams currently, collectively it may benefit from being in a face to face setting at least half of the time so we can meet and interact with each other. Possibly back to Beaumanor? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to hold meetings virtually currently expires in March 2024. The recent induction session was offered in face with limited take up resulting in a virtual only session Facilities for hybrid meetings is limited Further actions – Forum members

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
			will be canvassed for preference for virtual or face to face. Hybrid options will be explored
4. Is there a dedicated website link for schools forum, is it current and regularly updated?	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a link. • Could potentially be updated with key information for induction, purpose of forum, decision capabilities etc. • Possibly even a role profile for a forum member and a up to date list with contacts of who represents which area of education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The website has been in place for a number of years and needs to be reviewed for appropriate information and updated where necessary • Needs to be in line with LCC standard practice • Some changes have been made to ensure that membership and the role of the forum are up to date • Further Action – Finance Business Partner to review and instigate any changes, an annual review will be undertaken
5. Are the agenda and papers publicly available on the authority’s website at least 6 working days in advance of the meeting?	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always emailed out with plenty of time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papers published in accordance with LCC corporate standard for committee papers • No further action necessary
6. Are the papers published as a single document, so that users can download easily?	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, normally a single PDF which makes it very accessible for all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papers published in accordance with LCC corporate standard for committee papers • No further action necessary
7. If papers are tabled at the meeting, are they published on the website promptly after the meeting?	Unsure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sure I can remember items ever being tabled, but should they be, then they must be published on the website promptly • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is not routine process and only done in exceptional circumstances • There have been exceptions requiring papers to be tabled at meetings. This has included the outcome of consultation on a school

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
			block transfer where timing has been exceptionally short and in the development of the former High Needs Development plan and now TSIL where issues have been exceptionally fast moving.
8. Are draft minutes published a reasonable time (for example, within 2 to 3 weeks) after the meeting, rather than waiting until the following meeting?	Unsure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have never seen draft minutes, but these are usually only sent to the chair and lead executive, i.e., Jenny. Q: Are all minute’s draft, until verified at the next meeting? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft minutes are not published, minutes are included in the report pack for the following meeting and checked for accuracy and matters arising No further action required, draft minutes were circulated to Chair and Vice-Chair for the June 2023 meeting and will be continued
9. Are the minutes clear and unambiguous, with sufficient detail to illustrate the discussions, without reporting verbatim every point made?	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, they are also checked via page number in each meeting for any inaccuracy. Think they provide a good summary. They are always agreed before becoming a record. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed, it should be noted that minutes for LCC constitutional committees record only decisions and the reasons for them. No further action required
10. Is the constitution clear and appropriate? Including for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a clear process for ensuring proportional representation - the process for electing members and their tenure - the timescale for review is clearly set out - the process for dealing with 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think a refresh of all key elements of point 10 for all would be appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed. The constitution has not been reviewed for a number of years Further action – Finance Business Partner to review constitution and to include all bullet points under question 10. Please note any changes to the constitution require the approval of the County Councils Cabinet.

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
repetitive non attenders			
11. Is there an induction pack or training programme available for new members?	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been a recent improvement with this. • Don't think it's a current set process, might be worth adding something on the GDS training packages / Targeted invitation for new forum members and noting on EEP newsletter? • Members feel that an induction should be made compulsory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools Forum has had a relatively stable membership over previous years, However, this point was significantly highlighted by a large membership turnover in the past year. • Individual induction for members has routinely been offered • Induction materials have been developed and an induction session arranged which had limited attendance • Further actions – new members will be invited to targeted induction sessions

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<p>12. Is the election process clear and transparent? Representatives are elected only by the group they are representing, whether phase-specific for maintained schools, or by the proprietors of academies for academy members.</p>	<p>No</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wouldn't say all members feel they have a good handle on this. • I would also say that non-forum members don't know how to become a member easily. • I accept than not all turned up for the induction when invited but before the induction some of the older members (me) never got that when we started. • Think we need to develop a starter/induction pack. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process for electing / nominating members is set out within the constitution • The constitution also includes a Code of Conduct for both members and the LA setting out clear expectation. • Communication of Schools Forum business has been strengthened. In advance of meetings an alert is now in place to the business to be conducted at meetings and the decisions made. Both are included in both governor and headteacher briefings • Induction pack is now in place • Further actions – revise election / nomination process to ensure it remains applicable
<p>13. Do the papers contain clear recommendations and indicate in a consistent manner whether the item is for information, consultation or decision?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think they have always done this, the most recent change with a box at the start of each section with who is expected to make decision or vote is clearer. • Think it would be good for forum members to know each other's background a bit to give each other comfort of background knowledge. • Will share WPAs governor pack as a suggestion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports have included two tables. The first sets out what is being requested from Forum e.g. decision or noting required and a second setting out which groups of Forum are being asked for that action. This has been in place for a number of years and previously recognised by the DfE as good practice. • Further actions – Forum members to consider whether individual profiles would be helpful and informative. If the decision is 'yes' them it incumbent upon individual members to ensure they are

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
			<p>maintained and kept up to date. The Schools Forum area of the LCC website is the only place these could be stored so members need to be comfortable with this information being in the public domain.</p>
<p>14. Is it clear to observers who attendees at the forum are representing? (for example, by use of name plates, indicating sector)</p>	<p>Not on Teams, Yes in face to face meetings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes in face to face situations. • No on teams, as people don't title themselves as 'Martin Towers, Secondary Representative'. • Members discussed meetings being held virtually or in person. Whilst in person meetings were thought to be a good idea to be able to meet people, it was more efficient to hold virtual meetings so that people would not have to travel and therefore more easily attend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name plaques are in place for face to face meetings • June meeting introduced segregated voting procedure via Teams for specific groups
<p>15. Does the chair manage the meeting well, ensuring that all are able to contribute to the agenda items, that no bias towards any sector is evident and that no single person or organisation is able to dominate the discussion?</p>	<p>Work in progress, first meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues were incurred at the commencement of the 2022/23 academic year where no nominations for either chair or vice chair were received, and the issue continued to the February meeting but is now resolved. The new Chair is being supported and is actively contributing to the further development of Schools Forum • No further action required

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<p>16. Is there inclusive participation in discussions for all phases and types of members?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think there are ample opportunities for people to speak up. • Think it takes time for new people, took me 12 months before I thought I could speak up. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation is encouraged both for individuals and membership groups including the ability for non-participating substitutes. • Members need to be aware of the requirements of the role and be prepared to fully undertake this • Expectation are set out both within the constitution and the code of practice included in it. • Further actions – any member of Schools Forum unclear about their role and how to undertake it to contact the Finance Business Partner for clarification
<p>17. Do members actively canvass views and objectively represent their whole peer group at the forum and provide feedback after meetings?</p>	<p>Mixed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think some do, some don't. • Think this is a clear area of future development. • Think members and LCC need to work on members having the ability to contact their peer group easily. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a key requirement for all members who serve on Schools Forum to represent the views of the groups that they are elected / nominated to represent • Full membership details for all members have been provided which includes email addresses for communication within groups. • A dedicated email inbox has recently been set up where the LA can facilitate communication through members of within headteacher / governor briefings if requested • Further actions, Schools Forum members to consider the best method for communicating with

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
			<p>the groups they represent including area in which the LA may be able to facilitate this</p>
<p>18. Where votes are required, is it clear who is eligible to vote for different items?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the change with the minutes, I would say yes. • Think on Teams is hard to know who needs to vote for certain items? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully covered above in Q 13 & Q14 • No further action required
<p>19. Where votes are required, are the arrangements for recording the votes clear and unambiguous?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly in minutes or a Teams poll is used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Team poll was recently included • For face to face meetings votes are recorded as per the decision needed • No further action required
<p>20. Is there a system in place for a decision if votes are tied?</p>	<p>Unsure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't know this, does the Chair have a casting vote? • Some members wondered how on a potential contentious issue a chair would remain objective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The constitution makes no provision for this situation • Further actions – constitution review to confer a casting vote for the Chair. Note – any changes to the constitution require the approval of the County Councils' Cabinet
<p>21. Is the operational & good practice guide used to regularly review the forum's adherence to good practice?</p>	<p>Not to my knowledge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this the constitution? • What does a regular review look like? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has been used in the past but not regularly or routinely • Further actions – implement a review on an annual basis to ensure Forum operates effectively

Source – Questions 1 - 21 and columns 1 -3 are as per the DfE's Schools Forum self-assessment toolkit