

**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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