

To all members of the Sunderland Schools Forum

Together for Children
Sunderland
City Hall – Level 2
Plater Way
Sunderland
SR1 3AA

Date: 26th June 2024
Our TFC-SF/ZW

Dear Colleague

SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Schools Forum, scheduled for Thursday 4th July 2024 at 8.30 am. The meeting will be held virtually, and a Teams appointment has been circulated.

AGENDA

24/33	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies Mr David Amos (Headteacher, Academy 360) has put forward an expression of interest in becoming a member of the Schools Forum as a representative for Academy Secondary and All Through.	
24/34	Declarations of Interest	
24/35	Minutes of Previous Meeting School Forum held on 6 th June 2024 (attached)	
24/36	Matters Arising from the Minutes/Agreed Actions (Action Log attached)	
24/37	Feedback from Short Life Working Groups	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusion• Quality Assurance Processes for Service Providers• DBV Funding: Probity (update on working group arrangements)• Pupil Numbers (update on working group arrangements)	KR SM SM/PR KR
24/38	Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transport initiatives (feedback from the Transport Short Life Working Group): Mr Paul Tomlin (SEND Transport Lead)	PT

24/39	<p><u>Reports for Discussion and Decision</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated School Grant Update 2024/2025 (verbal) • EHC Top Up Banding Proposals (updated) (report attached) <p>Voting: All SF Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools Forum Provision Future Dates and Workplan 2024/25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Voting: All SF Members</i> • Schools Funding Reform (report to follow) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Voting: Maintained School Representatives (Members 1 to 6)</i> • Attendance/Elected Home Educated (EHE) Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Voting: All SF Members</i> • High Needs Block Commissioning Arrangements Update 2024/25 (copy of updated report considered at previous meeting attached for information only). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Voting: Not applicable</i> 	
24/40	Any Other Business	
24/41	<p>Date and Time of Next Meeting</p> <p>19th September 2024 at 8.30 am</p>	

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully



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SCHOOL FORUM MEMBERSHIP 2024

				VOTING RIGHTS				
SCHOOL MEMBERS				1	2	3	4	5
1.	Maintained Primary School Headteacher (Mandatory)			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Maintained Primary Schools South Headteacher	Catherine Jones – Headteacher	Thorney Close Primary School	No voting rights: the views of the individual Primary Headteacher Clusters Groups will be put forward by the Maintained Primary Schools representative. In the event of the Maintained Primary School Teacher absence a Deputy will be appointed to share the views of the individual Primary Headteacher Cluster Groups.				
	Maintained Primary Schools North Headteacher	Lisa Wood - Headteacher	Hylton Castle Primary School					
	Maintained Primary Schools Washington Headteacher	Sara Bainbridge - Headteacher	Barmston Village Primary School					
	Maintained Primary Schools Hetton/Houghton Headteacher	Nicola Hill - Headteacher	Hetton Primary					
2.	Maintained Special School Teacher (Mandatory)	James Waller – Headteacher: VICE CHAIR	Sunningdale School	Y	Y		Y	Y
3.	Maintained Nursery Headteacher (Mandatory)	Ailsa Higgins - Headteacher	Oxclose Nursery	Y	Y		Y	Y
4.	Maintained Pupil Referral Service Headteacher (Mandatory)	Donna Walker - Headteacher	Link School	Y	Y		Y	Y
5.	Maintained Faith School Headteacher/Representative	Anne Blakey-Headteacher	St Benet's RC Primary School	Y	Y		Y	Y
6.	Maintained Sector School Governor	Michael Hartnack - Governor	Grange Park Primary School	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
7.	Academy Primary, Infants and Junior	Emma Jarvis – Headteacher (Hetton/Houghton)	Dubmire Primary		Y		Y	Y
8.	Academy Primary, Infants and Junior	Audrey Bolam – Headteacher (Washington)	Oxclose Primary		Y		Y	Y
9.	Academy Primary, Infants and Junior	John Lines – Headteacher (Washington)	Columbia Academy		Y		Y	Y
10.	Academy Primary, Infants and Junior	Lauren Reeves – COO (South)	Vision Learning Trust (Hillview)		Y		Y	Y
11.	Academy Primary, Infants and Junior	Ruth Whiteside – Headteacher (South)	Barnes Primary Academy		Y		Y	Y
12.	Academy Primary, Infants and Junior	Vacant			Y		Y	Y
13.	Academy Primary, Infants and Junior	Vacant			Y		Y	Y
14.	Academy Primary, Infants and Junior	Vacant			Y		Y	Y
15.	Academy Secondary and All Through	David Amos - Headteacher	Academy 360		Y		Y	Y
16.	Academy Secondary and All Through	Madeline Hope – Director of Finance	Bishop Chadwick Education Trust		Y			Y
17.	Academy Secondary and All Through	Dean Juric - Headteacher	St Roberts Academy		Y			Y
18.	Academy Secondary and All Through	Andrew Carr – Director of Finance	Biddick Academy		Y			Y
19.	Academy Secondary and All Through	Joanne Maw – Chief Executive officer	Aspire Learning Trust		Y			Y
20.	Academy Secondary and All Through	Phil Smith – Chief Finance Officer	Castlevew Academy		Y			Y
21.	Academy Secondary and All Through	Paula Hegarty – Executive Headteacher: CHAIR	Oxclose Community Academy		Y			Y
22.	Academy Secondary and All Through	Colin Devlin -	Kepier Academy		Y			Y
23.	Academy Special (Mandatory)	Mick Little – Chief Operations Manager	Ascent		Y			Y

NON SCHOOL MEMBERS								
24.	Private, Voluntary & Independent Nurseries	David Martin	Chilton Moor Nursery		**		Y	Y
25.	Private, Voluntary & Independent Nurseries	Michelle Barr, Nursery owner and Manger	Buttons Nursery Washington		**		Y	Y
26.	Post 16 Provision	Vikki Morton	Sunderland College					Y
27.	Teacher Associations	Andy Lewis						Y
28.	Roman Catholic Diocese	Vacant						Y
29.	Church of England Diocese	David Airey - Headteacher	Venerable Bede CE Academy					Y
TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN OFFICERS & COUNCILLORS								
	Director of Finance	Steve Renwick						
	Head of Accounting & Finance	Debra Orr						
	Director of Education	Simon Marshall						
	Strategic Service Lead – Education	Kim Richardson						
	Lead Member Children’s Services	Cllr M Butler						
	Lead Member Children’s Services Deputy	Cllr I Scott						

MEMBERSHIP VOTING RIGHTS		
1	Scheme for Financing Schools (Maintained)	
2	Schools Block Funding Formula	
3.	De-delegation maintained schools	
4.	Early Years Single Funding Formula	
5.	All other School Forum Decisions	a. Central expenditure relating to schools’ block b. Deficits on central expenditure to be funded from following year’s DSG. c. Voting procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> De-delegation maintained secondary removed as no longer pertinent 		
** PVI representatives can vote on the consultation on the funding formula only.		

SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday 6th June 2024 at 8.30 am

School Forum Member Attendance

Voting

- Paula Hegarty - Chair (PH) Academy Secondary and All Through
- David Airey (DA) Church of England Diocese
- Michelle Barr (MB) Private, Voluntary & Independent Nurseries
- Audrey Bolam (AB) Academy Primary, Infants and Junior
- Andrew Carr (AC) Academy Secondary and All Through
- Colin Devlin (CD) Academy Secondary and All Through
- Michael Hartnack (MH) Maintained Primary – Governor
- Ailsa Higgins (AH) Maintained Nursery Headteacher
- Madeline Hope (MHo) Academy Secondary and All Through
- Catherine Jones (CJ) Maintained Primary School Headteacher
- Andy Lewis (AL) Teacher Associations
- David Martyn (DM) Private, Voluntary & Independent Nurseries
- Jo Maw (JM) Academy Secondary and All Through
- Emma Monaghan (EM) Academy Primary, Infant and Junior
- Karen Raine (KR) Representing Michael Little (ML)
- Academy Special
- Lauren Reeves (LR) Academy Primary, Infants and Junior
- Lisa Rice (LRi) Representing Anne Blakey
- Maintained Faith School
- Phil Smith (PS) Academy Secondary and All Through
- Donna Walker (DW) Maintained Pupil Referral Service Headteacher
- James Waller (JW) Maintained Special School Teacher

Non-Voting

- Sarah Bainbridge (SB) Maintained Primary School Headteacher
- Lisa Wood (LW) Maintained Primary School Headteacher

Together for Children Officers and Councillors

- Debra Dixon (DD) TfC Team Manager, Management Accounting Team
- Emma Leech (EL) TfC Finance Business Partner
- Simon Marshall (SM) TfC Director of Education
- Leigh Morris (LN) TfC Team Manager, School Finance
- Emma Nolan (EN) TfC Finance Business Partner
- Pamela Robertson (PR) TfC Strategic SEND Lead
- Gemma Slater (GS) TfC Trainee Accounting Technician
- Jill Wilson (JWi) TfC Finance Business Partner
- Zena Wilkinson Schools Forum Clerk

School Forum Non-Member Attendance

		Agreed Action
24/23	<u>Welcome, Introductions and Apologies</u>	
	PH welcomed everyone to the meeting.	

	<p>The Clerk advised that apologies for absence had been submitted by Mr Lines, Ms Orr, Ms Richardson, Mrs Blakey (Mrs L Rice in attendance as her representative) and Mr Little (Ms K Raine in attendance as his representative).</p> <p>The Clerk confirmed a quorum was present and the meeting could proceed to business.</p>	
24/24	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>Members NOTED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A declaration of interest from DW, in relation to business to be considered under 24/24 Reports for Discussion (Alternative Provision Updates). - Declarations could be made throughout the meeting, if appropriate. 	
24/25	<p><u>Minutes of Previous Meeting</u></p> <p>Members RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To accept the minutes of the Schools Forum held 7th March 2024 as a true record. 	
24/26	<p><u>Matters Arising from the Minutes/Agreed Actions</u></p> <p>There were no matters arising from the minutes.</p> <p>SF members confirmed they had received a copy of the action log prior to the meeting for consideration.</p>	
24/27	<p><u>Annual Review of School Forum Membership</u></p> <p>SF Members confirmed they had received a copy of the membership list prior to the meeting. Members were requested to verify the content of the membership and the Clerk agreed to make the amendments highlighted.</p> <p>PH noted that Mrs Donoghue had left Sunderland and put forward a proposal to approach Academy 360's new Headteacher, Mr David Amos, to join the SF. Members agreed the proposal.</p> <p>The Clerk advised members that EM would be leaving Sunderland at the end of the academic year and a proposal had been put forward for Emma Jarvis to join the SF. Members agreed the proposal.</p> <p>SF Members RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To appoint Emma Jarvis as a SF member – representing Academy Primary, Infants and Junior (Coalfield's area). - Mr Amos would be invited to join the Schools Forum membership. 	<p>Clerk (completed)</p> <p>PH/ZW (completed)</p>

Feedback from Short Life Working Groups

- **Inclusion**

PR advised colleagues that the above Forum had met and considered transition, explaining that due to the level of work identified an additional Transition Working Group had been implemented.

PR shared that the Inclusion Working Group had also met to considered attendance, advising that Mr K Burns (from the Department for Education) had attended and provided an overview of the national picture for attendance.

EM queried if the schedule for future meetings of the Inclusion Forum could be issued. The Clerk agreed to contact KR.

Clerk
(completed)

SM acknowledged that there may be potential issues around attendance following the implementation of the new Government guidance, from September 2024. SM noted that historically multi academy trusts, with schools within different LAs, may have had different processes to follow, whereby the new guidance issued was specific.

SM advised members that the guidance changes would have implications for staffing resources within TfC and a proposal may need to be presented in September 2024. SM reported that the number of pupils Elective Home Educated (EHE) had increased rapidly and significantly (currently there were 450 children being EHE) and this was outstripping the staffing resource available. SM explained that there were currently only 5 staff members to undertake these roles across the City.

- **Quality Assurance Processes for Service Providers**

SM reported that a recruitment process was underway for the QA roles available, and recruitment included secondment opportunities. PR advise that one post had been recruited to (internally) and an external recruitment process had been implemented for the remaining 2 positions.

PR advised members that the Team had successfully recruited a Specialist Teacher and Higher Level Teaching Assistant, who should be in place for September 2024.

DW queried if the Transition positions had been advertised. PR advised that they had not, as yet.

SM advised colleagues that TfC had advertised a secondment opportunity for an educational psychologist post: SM explained that all attempts to recruit a trained educational psychologist had been unsuccessful, therefore TfC had decided to go down the "grow your own" route. SM explained that the secondments were open to staff within TfC and schools. PR advised that expressions of interest for these positions had been received.

<p>SM explained that Tfc was hoping to be able to take on Educational Psychology Students but highlighted that it was uncertain whether the students would remain once qualified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DBV Funding: Probity – invitation for expressions of interest to join the Sub Group <p>SM stated that he had not received a lot of interest, from SF members, to become involved in the DBV Funding Working Party and stated that he believed this forum would be beneficial as it would supplement work and provide feedback to the SF. SM highlighted that once the DBV funding ended the DBV Funding Group would need to continue the work.</p> <p>Expressions of interest were submitted by James Waller, Cath Jones and Debra Dixon.</p> <p>Members were invited to contact the Clerk if they would like to join the Working Group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupil Numbers (Working Group proposal from last meeting) <p>SM advised that there was also an invitation for SF members to join the Pupil Numbers Working Group, explaining that he believed representation from primary and nursery school establishments was a particular requirement, in relation to the initial piece of work to be undertaken. SM explained that as the dip in pupil numbers rolled forward secondary school representation would be beneficial. SM reiterated that specific geographical areas would be significantly impacted by the projected reduction in pupil numbers, which he believed the Primary Headteacher clusters needed to be aware of. PH agreed, stating she believed it was important to acknowledge the financial impact falling pupil numbers would have on schools.</p> <p>Expressions of interest were submitted by: Ailsa Higgins; Madeline Hope, Paula Hegarty and Michelle Barr.</p> <p>MH noted that a short life Transport Working Group had been implemented and questioned if this work had now concluded. SM shared that this forum had grown and proposed extending an invitation to Paul Tomlin, SEND Transport Lead, to attend the next meeting present details of the initiatives implemented. Members agreed the proposal.</p> <p>MH stated that he believed this was a positive outcome and it would be beneficial for the SF to receive feedback.</p> <p>SM explained that the original purpose of the Transport Working Group was to use new technology to reduce transport costs, but it had been identified that it would take 2.5 years to secure new electric vehicles, so the proposals taken forward were less carbon friendly but were advantageous for pupils.</p>	<p>Clerk (completed)</p>
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24/29	<p><u>Presentations</u></p> <p>PH verified that there were no presentations to be presented within the meeting.</p>	
24/30	<p><u>Reports for Discussion and Decision</u></p> <p>Alternative Provision Update</p> <p>Members confirmed they had received a copy of the following report prior to the meeting for consideration:</p> <p>DW (Headteacher, Link School) declared an interest in this item of business and confirmed she would not participate within the decision making procedure.</p> <p>➤ Alternative Provision Update (dated 23rd May 2024)</p> <p>SM reported that alternative resource provisions (ARPs) were beyond capacity in all resources, exemplifying the Link School and Hubs. SM stated that TfC were trying to create additional places for September 2024, including within the Link School. SM assured members that TfC were trying to identify additional capacity as quickly as possible and advised that additional resources had been identified, exemplifying placements with training providers. SM acknowledged that these arrangements were not always ideal as pupils needed bespoke packages to meet their needs and shared that work was being undertaken with the Foundation of Light to see what additional resource provisions could be implemented.</p> <p>SM advised SF members that if the rate of permanent exclusions continued as is ARP placements would be full during the Autumn Term, which would reduce the capacity to provide intervention support.</p> <p>SM reported that TfC had reviewed the current funding streams for ARP's: the proposed increases remained competitive, and benchmarking had evidenced that Sunderland ARP resources were still good value.</p> <p>PH invited comments or questions on the report circulated and members confirmed they had no questions or comments.</p> <p>PH noted that the report had put forward three recommendations and invited members to vote.</p> <p>Following a vote SF Members RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To agree the proposed increases, for both the Link School and Hopespring fees, for 2024/2025. • To agree the proposal to increase the commissioned places at Hopespring, from 26 to 30, from June 2024. • To agree the implementation of a 2 year daily rate charging structure for alternative provisions across the City: 2024/25 (£85 per day) and 2025/26 (£90 per day). 	

2024/25 High needs Funding: Potential Increase to EHCP Top Up Bandings

Members confirmed they had received a copy of the following report prior to the meeting for consideration:

- Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) Top Up Banding Rates – Proposed Increases from 1st April 2024

SM highlighted that the SF had agreed to consider the EHCP Top Up Banding Rates annually and noted that the report provided details of current trends and proposed increase options.

PH invited questions or comments on the content of the report.

MH acknowledged, from the context of the report, the pressures being faced within schools but questioned where Sunderland would sit in line with other LA's. SM stated that responding to this question was not straightforward, as the proposals detailed top up funding and not all LA's had the same base rates. PR explained that Sunderland was unusual in that it gave top up funding to mainstream schools within controlled bases, under Section F (the part of the EHCP that lists the specific provision to be delivered to meet the child's SEN). PR explained that the majority of LA's had moved to a banding system, which made comparisons difficult. SM explained that the banding system detailed ranges in terms of needs and support and stated that he believed this approach had both positive and negatives and Sunderland tried to negotiate the best fit in line with the needs of individual children. SM stated that in relation to the High Needs Block (HNB) outlay he believed Sunderland was comparable to other LAs, and potentially more prudent.

JW advised that the National Network of Specialist Provisions shared this kind of information and explained that the style, type and size of the top-up was very variable from area to area. JW explained that from information shared by colleagues nationally Sunderland was not the most 'generous' but equally not the 'meanest'.

KR put forward the following comment on behalf of ML: It was good to see options and comparisons and the two proposed options appeared fair and proportionate, but he felt the main point, for special schools and academies, was that the top ups were only part of their funding. Examples were detailed within the meeting, and it was highlighted that the funding was pro-rata'd down.

PS questioned where the 2.5% proposal originated from. DD provided an overview of the calculations, acknowledging that there may be a need to look at further options.

JW highlighted that within specialist provisions there was a larger cohort of support staff, who had been awarded significant salary increases, and the proposals did not meet the additional

staffing costs. DD confirmed that SF members could consider requesting further funding proposals to be presented.

Members were advised that an increase of 2.5% within the banding rates would incur a projected additional cost of £425,172 from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) HNB for 2024/25 (assuming an increase of 15% in EHCP pupil numbers). DD advised that this projection would increase to an additional cost of £590,000 if there was a 4% increase.

SM highlighted that there was only one pot of funding available and shared that finance colleagues had tried to ensure equity, for maintained and special schools, within the proposals presented and any increase would impact on other areas. SM proposed finance colleagues were requested to re-draft the proposals presented including a 4% increase option.

LW advised that North Primary Headteacher's had raised concerns in relation to how late the report was circulated, explaining that having some of the background information detailed within this meeting would have been beneficial in relation to making a decision. LW explained that North Primary Headteachers had actually scheduled a second meeting (to receive clarification of the proposals being tabled) and queried if it would be possible for Headteachers to be provided with a longer period to consider reports. SM explained that the Finance Team worked as quickly as possible to turn around reports, with limited resources.

CJ advised that South Primary Headteacher's had raised concerns in relation to the HNB overspend. CJ explained that South Primary Headteachers had queried, in relation to proposal 3, whether there could be a split proposal for schools/specialist provisions, as they believed wherever the child was based the funding received should be equitable. SM noted that this would equate to a 2.5% increase for schools and a 4% increase for specialist provisions. CJ shared that wherever the child was placed the funding should be equitable.

SM queried if the National Funding Formula (NFF) allowed these funding decisions. DD explained that the HNB funding usage was delegated to individual LA's but stated that there was a need to look at the projected overspend and ensure the funding for specialist settings was equitable. JW agreed with this comment, stating that in real terms specialist schools had not had funding increases for a period of time.

JW stated that he also believed it was apparent that there was a lack of understanding around the fact that specialist settings were dealing with pupils with more significant needs, which required a higher staffing ratio and resources, and funding was not increasing in line with the complexities being encountered. JW reiterated that there were issues in terms of the proposed increases not meeting costs and also reiterated the required staffing arrangements with specialist provisions.

	<p>DW shared that her establishment sat below mainstream and specialist provisions but had a significant number of children with EHCP's and this needed some consideration.</p> <p>KR explained that the concern was if something was not done now there would be a financial risk to the Authority in terms of meeting the needs of children within Sunderland.</p> <p>CD stated that he agreed with JW's comments and shared that he believed the need for funding in all schools had increased. CD exampled that mainstream schools needed increased support staff members to meet the needs of children with SEN.</p> <p>SM acknowledged that the whole system was in a state of flux as they were dealing with more children with SEN needs and stated that there was a need to have fair and equitable processes.</p> <p>SM advised colleagues with the Sunderland strategy was, wherever possible, not to send children to resources outside of the local area.</p> <p>SM noted that from discussions Proposal 1 was not being considered.</p> <p>CD explained that discussions had been held within the Secondary Headteacher forums about the need for Headteachers of schools/academies within multi academy trusts, to cascade the information to relevant personnel within their Trust. CD queried if options were available to slow down the decision making timescales. SM explained that the Finance Team would need to know specific timescales but noted that the bulk of the work had already been completed in relation to the proposals discussed within this meeting. DD confirmed that it was possible to present the percentage increase calculations for each specialist provision/school but advised that this would be based on the top up currently received.</p> <p>SF members agreed to defer consideration of this item of business and agreed the proposal for the Finance Team to issue a re-drafted report detailing additional percentage increase options and costs. SM proposed the re-drafted report was circulated on Monday. PH agreed this would be beneficial and the additional time would provide an opportunity for colleagues to make an informed decision, for example whether a flat or varied percentage increase should be implemented. SM highlighted that any proposals would need to be discussed with LA's Section 151 Officer, because of the financial implications.</p> <p>DD advised that specialist provisions would receive backdated funding, based on the funding level agreed.</p> <p>Following a vote SF Members RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To defer consideration of the proposals presented. 	<p>Finance Officers</p>
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Dedicated School Grant 2023/24 Final Outturn and 2024/25 Allocation

Members confirmed they had received a copy of the following report prior to the meeting for consideration:

- Dedicated Schools Grant 2023/24 Final Outturn and 2024/25 Allocation

DD explained that this report was presented annually and detailed the DSG spend. DD explained that the overall DGS spend as at 31st March 2023 (including the deficit Reserve balance) was £4,526,222: this gave a final overall DSG Reserve overspend, as at 31st March 2024, of £9,070,410. DD explained that the 2024/25 budgets were based on last years spend and reported that it was difficult to set a balanced budget. DD assured SF members that the projections were in line with Delivering Better Value (DBV) and shared that this was recognised as a national problem.

SM explained that the DBV calculated trajectories for the next 5 years and these trajectories were concerning, therefore every decision needed to be made in line with this context. SM stated that the DSG projections had been considered holistically but the allocated funding was not increasing at the same rate as need.

DW shared that within the Secondary Headteacher forum last year colleagues had agreed to the 0.5% transfer to the HNB but at the last meeting colleagues had discussed the potential of the transfer being increased and the impact this would have on schools. DW explained that she believed this would have a bearing on how school budgets were managed. SM advised that he believed some LA's had submitted an application to the DfE to increase the transfer percentage, in line with their budget requirements, but highlighted that the funding all came from one pot. SM stated that in his view increasing the percentage transferred to HNB would be a last resort. DW stated that Secondary Headteacher's acknowledged the benefits of the 0.5% transfer arrangements but if this was increased additional discussions would need to be held.

PH requested verification that there were no discussions being undertaken to increase the 0.5% transfer. SM reiterated that from his personal viewpoint he could not see the benefit of increasing the transfer percentage and explained that some LA budgets were in significant deficit positions, whereas Sunderland was not. SM assured colleagues that a decision to increase the transfer percentage would not be taken outside of the SF.

EM noted within subsection 2.7 the Residential (non-maintained independent) budget allocation in 2023/24 was £5,830,855 and the final outturn was £7,990,799 (a variance of £2,159,944). EM questioned how many children were in residential (non-maintained independent) resources. DD advised that she believed there were between 100 and 110 children placed in the non-maintained public sector. SM advised that the DBV work undertaken had highlighted the number of children within this

*Verified
NMIS's pupil
numbers:
121 as of 31st
March 2024*

group, explaining that Sunderland did not want to send children outside of the local area, as the cost for these resources outstripped local costs. SM shared that some out of area residential costs had been increased by 60%.

EM noted subsection 3.1 detailed deductions for Academy Recoupment and requested clarification. DD explained that this was the funding recouped on the HNB, and not the overall DSG allocation.

EM questioned if there was a formalised plan to reduce the deficit projections. SM confirmed there was, sharing that as part of the DBV LAs needed to draft a plan detailing proposals to reduce deficit projections.

SM stated that there was a need to keep to the identified strategy, to use Sunderland resources where possible, and shared that it was important for schools and partners to be resourceful.

CJ advised that South Primary Headteacher had agreed to the 0.5% transfer to the HNB for one year, as the majority of schools were implementing additional resource provisions internally. CJ stated that she believed part of the DBV process was to collate details of the wonderful work being undertaken within individual schools and sharing best practice. PR confirmed that sharing good practice was part of the DBV plan and explained that she believed this would be undertaken on a locality basis.

PH queried if Sunderland were at the "safety valve" level option, in terms of the projected deficit. SM explained that the "safety vale" option was for those LAs with the highest deficits (1st Tranche), explaining that these LAs varied in size, and shared that Sunderland came within the 3rd Tranche under DBV in relation to their deficit projections. SM explained that some LAs had received additional income, whereas Sunderland had received £1,000,000.

PS noted that the overall projection was a deficit of £9,070,410 and questioned where this funding would be identified from, exemplifying would this be identified from Reserves or would this require resources to be taken from other areas within the LA. DD explained that there was a need to set a deficit budget and it was the responsibility of the Section 151 Officer to consider the actions needed to reduce this. SM provided an overview of the processes implemented to consider options to reduce the deficit.

PS queried if any political parties were putting forward proposals to meet HN funding requirements. SM stated that he had not heard of any mandates or suggestions of an influx of funding and advised that Councils would be entering a Purdue period, due to the election.

PH queried who was the named Section 151 Officer for Sunderland and SM advised that Paul S Wilson, Director of Finance, Sunderland City Council held this responsibility.

	<p>Following a vote SF Members RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To note and accept the content of the report, as presented. • Approve the carry forward of the overall DSG deficit (of £9,070,410) from 2023/24 to 2024/25. • To receive regular updates on the 2024/25 projected outturn position and how to mitigate the deficit brought forward. 	
24/31	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>Commissioning High Needs Places for 2024/25 in Specialist and Alternative Provisions</p> <p>Members confirmed they had received copies of the following report prior to the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Commissioning High Needs Places for 2024/25 in Specialist and Alternative Provisions <p>PH acknowledged that the report had recently been distributed, explaining that, as Chair, she had agreed a further item of business could be considered.</p> <p>PR explained that she had presented a report in November 2023 detailing proposed commissioned places but since then Phase 7 had been completed and it was felt prudent to take the opportunity to increase the number of commissioned places.</p> <p>PR advised that the proposal was to increase the number of places at Barbara Priestman, from 188 to 192, from September 2024. PR explained that this would enable Barbara Priestman to meet outstanding Year 7 queries and would be beneficial for pupils and financially.</p> <p>PR reported that the proposal was to increase the number of places at Columbia Grange, from 115 to 140, from September 2024. PR stated that this was a unique opportunity to clear long established waiting lists, sharing that there was a significant number of children who had been waiting for a placement for over one year.</p> <p>PR advised SF members that there was a further commissioned placement increase proposal, not detailed within the report: an increase of 5 placements at Sunningdale. PR explained that this would positively impact on waiting lists but acknowledged this decision may need to be deferred until the next meeting.</p> <p>PR informed members that the Mill Hill Primary School ARP for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), had been formally approved by Cabinet.</p> <p>PR assured members that all proposals were in line with protecting HNB and resources within Sunderland.</p> <p>AH advised that Oxclose Community Nursery had an ARP for children with physical and/or medical needs, but this resource was not included within the list of providers. PR explained that</p>	

	<p>the ARP resource was part of the commissioned numbers but not on the list of providers as it was funded slightly different.</p> <p>KR noted the proposed increase in commissioned places for Sunningdale and queried if these were proposed for September 2024 and PR confirmed they were. KR explained that she believed it may be beneficial to ask members to consider the proposal at this meeting, to provide Sunningdale with an opportunity to inform parents of the admission arrangements for September 2024. PH queried if SF members were willing to consider the Sunningdale proposal within this forum, noting that this would not have been discussed within individual forums – Members confirmed they were.</p> <p>Following a vote SF Members RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider the proposal to increase the number of commissioned placements at Sunningdale within this meeting. • To agree the proposed changes in commissioned numbers, for 2024/25 (from September 2024), as detailed in the report and presented verbally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Columbia Grange: increase to 140 (from 115). - Barbara Priestman: increase from 192 (from 115). - Sunningdale: increase by 5 places. 	
24/32	<p><u>Date and Time of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>Provisional: Thursday 19th September 2024 8.30 am Venue: Meeting to be held virtually</p>	

Subject to Approval

Schools Forum Action Log

Date of Meeting	Agenda No	Request	Action	Responsible	Date of Completion	Remarks
06-Jul-23	23/48	Feedback from Short Life Working Parties: School Transport	KR to update members about the progress made in relation to the School Transport proposals including sharing a timeline for draft proposals/project documentation.	KR	ongoing	Ongoing
20-Oct-23	23/62	Feedback from Short Life Working Groups	IWR: SM to present resource proposals for the Hetton Nursery resource.	SM	Nov-23	Ongoing
20-Oct-23	23/63	Reports for Discussion and Decision	Updated reports to be presented to the SF meetings in January and March 2024 detailing the DSG Projected Outturn positions.	SR	Jan-24 and Mar-24	Ongoing
23/11/2023	23/73	Feedback from Short Life Working Groups	Members to put forward an expression of interest to participate in the DBV Working Sub Group at the next meeting, January 2024.	Members		Invitation re-issued 15/2/24: To date expressions received from MH and DD
11/01/2024	24/06.	Presentation: Delivering Better Value	Representative from the CBCL to attend this meeting, Nicola Thompson			E mailed Mrs Thompson, but no response received. Mrs Robertson had agreed to try to support this action (15/2/24).
06/06/2024	24/27	Annual Review of School Forum Membership	David Amos, Headteacher at Academy 360, to be contacted to ascertain whether he would be interested in joining the SF membership.	PH/ZW		Completed and Mr Amos confirmed he would like to be considered for membership
06/06/2024	24/28	Feedback from Short Life Working Groups	Inclusion: Clerk to request a schedule for future Inclusion Forums to be circulated to Headteachers.	ZW		Completed. Details to be shared via the Comms e mails.

standing item

06/06/2024	24/28	Feedback from Short Life Working Groups	Invitation to be extended to Paul Tomlin, SEND Transport Lead, to present details of the initiatives implemented.	ZW		Completed - attending July 24 meeting.
06/06/2024	24/30	Reports for Discussion and Decision	Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) Top Up Banding Rates – Proposed Increases from 1st April 2024	Finance Colleagues	Jul-24	

REPORT TO SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM

4th July 2024

EHCP Top up Banding Rate-proposed increase from 1st April 2024

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Schools Forum with proposed percentage increase to EHCP Top Up Banding Rates from 1st April 2024, and the estimated additional cost to the DSG High Needs block funding to inform decision making.

2. Original Proposed % Increase to EHCP Top up Banding Rates

2.1 Below is a table showing the current estimated cost (as of April 2024) of EHCP Top ups paid to Sunderland mainstream schools, Resourced Provisions in mainstream schools and Special Schools. The table also includes the projected cost of the 2 proposed percentage increases:

The first proposal is to not increase EHCP top up rates from 1st April 2024.

The second proposal is 1.9% which is the average increase to Mainstream school's budgets from 1st April 2024.

The third proposal is for 2.5% increase, which is the latest staff pay award offer from 1st April 2024.

Proposed % increase to EHCP Top ups from April 2024 based on EHCP Numbers as at 1/4/24	2024/25 Financial Year EHCP Top ups projected Cost (based on EHCP No's as at April 2024)	2024/25 Estimated ADDITIONAL Cost of 1.9% increase to top ups	2024/25 Estimated ADDITIONAL Cost of 2.5% increase to top ups
Sunderland Mainstream Schools (including Resourced Provisions) & Special Schools	14,788,575	280,983	369,714

2.2 Below is a table showing the projected additional cost of the 2 proposals after assuming a 15% increase in the number of EHCP's from April 2024.

Proposed % increase to EHCP Top ups from April 2024 assuming a 15% increase in EHCP Numbers in 2024/25	2024/25 Financial Year EHCP Top ups projected Cost (based on EHCP No's as at April 2024)	2024/25 Estimated ADDITIONAL Cost of 1.9% increase to top ups	2024/25 Estimated ADDITIONAL Cost of 2.5% increase to top ups
Sunderland Mainstream Schools (including Resourced Provisions) & Special Schools	17,006,861	323,130	425,172

3. New proposals following discussion Schools forum 8th June 2024

Following discussion at School's Forum 8th June, please see below a further 2 proposals for increases to EHCP Top up values from 1st April 2024.

School's Forum members agreed the proposal of 1.9% increase to EHCP top ups seemed a fair and transparent option. They also agreed the proposal of 2.5% was not inline with the latest pay award as this was the minimum pay award staff would receive, and the average pay rate for all grades is 4% (see Proposal 4).

It was also noted by only increasing EHCP Top up banding rates for special schools pupils, this only increased a proportion of the total Special Schools total HNB funding if Commission place funding was not also increased, and the average overall percentage increase for Special schools funding would therefore vary between schools and work out at less than 1% per school. Funding for Mainstream School pupil places who are on roll in the mainstream schools has been increased by an average of 1.9%, but Special Schools Commission place funding has not been increased. If special Schools received an increase in Funding of 1.9% for EHCP Banding rates & Commission place Funding (i.e. £190 per place) this would mean the increase is inline with Mainstream Schools Funding increase, also fair and transparent with previous years inflation increases (See Proposal 5).

4. Recommendations

4.1 The Schools Forum is recommended to make a decision from the following 3 proposals to increase EHCP Top up banding rates for Sunderland schools from 1st April 2024:

- i. **Proposal 1** – No increase to banding rates
- ii. **Proposal 2** – Increase all EHCP banding rates by 1.9% inline with average overall Budget increase to mainstream schools from April 2024, at an estimated additional cost of £323,130 to DSG High Needs Block for full 2024/25 Financial year (assuming a 15% increase in EHCP Pupil numbers)

- iii. **Proposal 3** – Increase all EHCP banding rates by 2.5% inline with latest proposed staff pay award from April 2024, at a projected additional cost of £425,172 to DSG High Needs Block for full 2024/25 Financial year (assuming a 15% increase in EHCP Pupil numbers)
- iv. **Proposal 4** – Increase all EHCP Banding rates by 4% inline with the average pay increase staff pay award proposal from 2024, at a projected additional cost of £532,693 to DSG High Needs block for Full 2024/25 Financial year (assuming a 15% increase in EHCP Pupil numbers)
- v. **Proposal 5** – Increase all Top up Banding rates by 1.9% inline with average overall Budget increase to Mainstream Schools from April 2024, and also increase Commission place funding for all special School places by 1.9% (£191 per place). This proposal is estimated to cost the High Needs block an additional £547,384 for full 2024/25 Financial year (assuming a 15% increase in EHCP numbers).

If you have any queries in relation to the above report, please contact simon.marshall@togetherforchildren.org.uk or debra.dixon@togetherforchildren.org.uk

REPORT TO SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

4th July 2024

Schools Forum Meeting Schedule and Workplan

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek agreement for the schedule of meetings beyond July 2024, the workplan for the year ahead and to consider additional topics that Schools Forum Members would wish to include.

2. Meeting Schedule and Workplan

- 2.1 Schools Forums are required to meet at least four times a year and in the past Sunderland Schools Forum has met on seven occasions per annum.
- 2.2 A schedule is detailed in Appendix A, which proposes dates of future meetings to July 2024. The schedule proposes eight meetings, with the option of cancelling the October meeting if not required and bringing the December meeting forward to November as agreed in **2023/24**. The workplan has been adjusted to accommodate this proposed change. The rationale for the change is the November meeting should allow the Schools Forum to consider the Funding Formula for the year ahead for further consultation with Schools and Academies as funding determinations are not usually released until late December. This means that there is normally no new information to present at the December meeting. The final funding formula would be agreed at the January meeting, no change to the current process.
- 2.3 The agenda for the Schools Forum is currently managed by Together for Children, on behalf of the local authority, in order to ensure that the Forum's statutory role in relation to school funding is carried out. The Council's Section 151 Officer and Lead Member are standing invitees to the Forum.
- 2.4 To optimise the benefit of the Forum, it has been agreed that appropriate topics would be agreed in advance and relevant speakers invited to make presentations and facilitate discussions. Previous examples include Sunderland City Council in relation to Council Budget Updates, Internal Audit, TfC HR (Schools) and the University of Sunderland. Appendix B (attached) details a proposed workplan for the year ahead.

2.5 Included in the workplan for 2024/25 is the continuation of a new agenda item included for the first time in 2020/21, which is for the Schools Forum to review the effectiveness of the Forum itself. This is good practice in corporate governance and is designed to facilitate an open discussion; it is held without officers present.

3. Recommendations

3.1 The Schools Forum is recommended to:

- i. Agree the dates of future meetings and the proposed work plan for the year ahead.
- ii. Consider additional topics that can be included in the Schools Forum 2024/25 work plan.

PROPOSED FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

- 19 September 2024
- 17 October 2024
- 21 November 2024
- 9 January 2025
- 13 February 2025
- 6 March 2025
- 22 May 2025
- 3 July 2025

All meetings are held on a Thursday between 8.30am and 11.00am either over Teams™ or at the Link School, Pallion.

Schools Forum - Proposed Workplan September 2024 to July 2025

<u>Date of Meeting</u>	<u>Agenda items</u>
19 September 2024	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 School Funding Reform 2 Budget Planning Framework 2025/26 3 HNB Review 4 Dedicated Schools Grant Update and Projected Outturn 2024/25 5 High Needs Block Commissioned Places 2025/26 6 Review of Effectiveness of Schools Forum
17 October 2024 (if required)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 High Needs Block Commissioned Places 2025/26 **It was proposed that if this item of business was not required this date would be used as a training session
21 November 2024	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 School Funding Reform 2 Budget Planning Framework 2025/26 3 HNB Review 4 Early Years Block - Update 5 Growth and Falling Rolls Funding Report 2024/25 6 School Funding Formula - Approval of Exceptions for SoS (if applicable)
9 January 2025	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 School Funding Reform 2 Dedicated Schools Grant Update and Projected Outturn 2024/25 3 Budget Planning Framework 2024/25 4 School Funding Formula <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Individual School Budget Share - Impact Analysis b. Schools Block Return to ESFA 5 High Needs Block 2024/25 Update 6 Early Years Block 2024/25 Update
13 February 2025	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Dedicated Schools Grant - Update 2 HNB Review 3 Early Years Funding Update 2024/25 and 2025/26 4 Schools Forum Membership Report
6 March 2025	Optional: based on outstanding business to be considered
22 May 2025	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 School Funding Reform 2 Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2024/25 3 HNB Review 4 School Place Planning 5 Schools Forum Membership Update (if required)

3 July 2025

- 1 Election of Chair and Vice Chair
- 2 School Funding Reform
- 3 DSG Update
- 4 High Needs Block Commissioning Arrangements Update 2024/25
- 5 Schools Forum Provisional Future Dates and Workplan 2025/26

PROPOSED MEETING SCHEDULE HEADTEACHER CLUSTER MEETINGS & SCHOOL FORUM 2024/2025

SEPTEMBER 2024						
18 Days						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

OCTOBER 2024						
19 Days						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

NOVEMBER 2024						
20 Days						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

DECEMBER 2024						
15 Days						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JANUARY 2025						
20 Days						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

FEBRUARY 2025						
15 Days						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

MARCH 2025						
21 Days						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

APRIL 2025						
12 Days						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

MAY 2025						
16 Days						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

JUNE 2025						
21 Days						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

JULY 2025						
17 Days						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

AUGUST 2025						
31 Days						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
						31

School Forum	Commencing at 8.30 am				
Headteacher Cluster Meetings Wednesday	Secondary 9.00 am	North 8.00 am	South 1.30 pm	Washington 10.00 am	Hetton/Houghton 9.30 am
Primary Area Chairs & Vice Chairs Friday	Commencing at 1.30 pm				
Statutory Assessment Tests	Dates for GCSE exams are still to be verified: AQA from 5 th May to 27 th June Pearson's from 12 th May to 6 th June				

REPORT TO SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

4 July 2024

Attendance Team

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To outline the increased remit and current challenges of the Attendance Team and to request consideration of allocation of high needs block funding to support the team to increase its capacity to ensure continued statutory compliance and effective and timely delivery of service to some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

2. Background

- 2.1 The main function of the Attendance Team is to support all 127 schools in Sunderland to identify the pupils who need support, investigate the issues impacting on their attendance and remove or mitigate the barriers to attendance.
- 2.2 In undertaking the duties associated with supporting attendance the full range of legal intervention measures are utilised as and when appropriate, including:
 - The issuing of Final Warning Notices,
 - The issuing of Fixed Penalty Warning Notices (FPN),
 - The Issuing of FPN for Term Time Leave and Unauthorised absences,
 - Conducting Formal Attendance Review meetings (FAR),
 - Progressing cases to court under s.444(1) and s.444(1a) Education Act 1996 and check cases for compliance making sure the checks and balances are in place for a sound conviction.
- 2.3 Other responsibilities of the team include:
 - Processing and issuing child performances licences,
 - Processing and issuing child work permits,
 - Processing and issuing chaperone applications.

- Undertaking duties associated with the Elective Home Education (EHE) process for those families that choose to educate their children at home.

3. Context

3.1 The scale and scope of the duties of the Attendance Team has changed significantly. This can be attributed in part to the wider context of the many challenges our children, young people and families are facing. Specific challenges that may impact on school attendance can include:

- Mental health of the child,
- Mental health of parents,
- Dissatisfaction with the school,
- Unmet SEN needs,
- Parents feeling that as they educated their child during covid they can do this post covid.

EHE

3.2 The challenges highlighted above have led to an increase in the numbers of children who are EHE. Previously the figure had remained consistent at approximately 40-60 per annum, with the majority of parents choosing this option for philosophical reasons. That number has grown exponentially since Covid and to date Together for Children have approximately 500 children that are EHE; this extended cohort of children are presenting with more complex needs and the reasons pertaining to the decision to EHE are significantly more varied.

Attendance Cases

3.3 The changing scale and scope of the duties of the Attendance Team has also impacted on the team's capacity to respond to attendance cases where schools require timely support and the efficient and effective presentation of those cases that are escalated to court. The pressures on the team are further compounded by the increase in volume of attendance cases and the complexity of those cases.

Prosecutions

3.4 There has also been an increase in the number of trials in court where parents enter a not guilty plea; in addition to more statutory declarations made by parents in court (to have a case reopened) when they want to challenge the evidence offered. This impacts the capacity of the team significantly as the legal preparatory work is extremely time-consuming.

Chaperones

- 3.5 In respect of chaperone approvals, prior to covid the team issued approximately 10-12 approvals every quarter. From August 2023 to date TfC have processed 120 prospective chaperones. This is a time-consuming process as it involves face to face interview in addition to the usual safeguarding checks.

Legislation

- 3.6 There has been new statutory guidance introduced that comes into force in the new academic year which has increased the remit and current challenges of the Attendance Team. The following will all be statutory from 2024-25:

- There is a revised version of [Working together to improve school attendance](#) – this sets out a support first approach with families and TfC will need to demonstrate the support that has been offered before using the statutory tools. This will increase the number of 444 (1a) cases that TfC progress. These cases use more resource in terms of time preparing, serving and presenting to court, as TfC may need to attend court on multiple occasions.
- The DfE have also introduced [regulations](#) to modernise school attendance and admission registers (including updating attendance codes, rules on granting leaves of absence and on who can access registers). This change will likely impact on the team by an increase in the requests for advice and guidance from schools regarding the attendance codes and the correct codes to use when a child is taking part in a performance and is absent from school.
- The DfE are introducing [regulations](#) and publishing details of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices for absence and laying regulations to improve consistency of attendance enforcement across the country. The threshold for issuing FPN has reduced from ten days to five days. This has the potential to increase the number of term time FPN requests that the attendance team receive and subsequently the number of prosecutions.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 The current team structure is as follows:

- Attendance Manager, 1 FTE, Grade 9,
- Attendance Support Officer, 1 FTE, Grade 7,
- Attendance Officers, 3.8 FTE, Grade 5,
- Administrative Support Officer, 2 FTE, Grade 2.

- 4.2 The team are critically lacking capacity. In order to mitigate the capacity issues, specifically in respect of Elective Home Education, it is proposed to create the following posts to add to the team:

- Business Manager, 1 FTE, Grade 8 (Min £49,921 / Max £55,452)
- Teacher, Main Scale 1-6 (Min £39,988 / Max £55,569)

- 4.3 The two additional posts will enable the Elective Home Education function to be effectively managed to support some of our most vulnerable young people, whilst allowing the remainder of the team to focus on other duties. It is expected that the posts will also support some of the wider functions of the Inclusion Service as and when required.

5. Proposed Costs

- 5.1 The additional cost of the proposed staffing structure is estimated as a minimum of £89,909 per annum at bottom of scale and a maximum cost of £111,021 including on costs at top of scale. The additional cost is proposed to be funded from DSG High Needs block.

6. Risks

- 6.1 TfC are facing significant challenges in meeting the statutory obligations in respect of EHE as the Attendance Team do not have sufficient resources to undertake the process in a timely manner.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Schools Forum is recommended to:
- i. Consider the information provided in the report and agree to the proposal being funded from the high needs block on a permanent basis.

REPORT TO SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM

6th June 2024 Update to previous report on Commissioned numbers (November 2023)

Commissioning High Needs Places for 2024/2025 in Specialist and Alternative Provisions

1. Purpose of the Report

Schools' Forum members to consider the proposed amendments to commissioned places in three special schools, Columbia Grange, Sunningdale School and Barbara Priestman Academy, for the academic year 2024 - 2025. It also includes the opportunity to ratify the commissioning of places for Mill Hill Primary School, which at the time of the last report was subject to cabinet approval and therefore not included in the ESFA return.

2. Columbia Grange

Forum members will be aware that Columbia Grange is significantly oversubscribed with a lengthy waiting list which exceeds an academic year for many children. This results in Primary Schools holding complex children within mainstream, with subsequent pressures on staffing and resources. There is also a financial risk as some parents are unlikely to wait for a special school place for this length of time leading to a demand for independent / non-maintained places at significant additional expense, often via legal appeal. The proposal is to increase place numbers from **115 to 140** from September 2024, which will enable the current waiting list to be cleared. This is subject to a successful application for a change request, which I understand the Trust have made.

3. Barbara Priestman

Due to tribunal appeals we require additional places at Barbara Priestman and are proposing an increase from **188 to 192**, which the Trust have advised can be accommodated within the current site. This will enable us to finalise outstanding year 7 queries and potential appeals for September 2024 places and prevent the need to place (or the risk of being forced to place) in the independent / non-maintained sector. This increase does not require a change request.

4. Sunningdale

Sunningdale School have capacity to increase their places from **136 to 141** from September 2024, which would again enable us to accommodate for September a number of children whose plans are currently being considered under consultation.

5. Mill Hill Primary School (16 place Additional Resource Provision – ASD).

Although we have previously shared plans for this new Additional Resource Provision with School's Forum, at the time of the last commissioning report the ARP was subject to cabinet approval, which has now been granted. This provision is part of our existing financial mitigations and is designed to prevent additional expenditure by both protecting valuable Specialist places so they can be allocated to the children with the highest level of need and avoid unnecessary placement of children within the independent and non-maintained sector. It is planned that these places will provide some immediate capacity for children currently on the waiting lists at other provisions, where parents wish to move for an immediate place, and also provide some much needed in-year capacity in line with increased levels of demand predicted through the Needs Assessment Process.

Recommendations

School Forum members are asked to:

- (i) Consider and comment on the information provided in the report.
- (ii) Agree to the proposed changes in commissioned numbers for 2024/2025

If you have any queries in relation to the above report, please contact Pamela Robertson, Strategic Lead - SEND, in the first instance.

Revised Appendix A Changes in bold)

Special Units and Resourced Provisions								
Organisation / Provider	Type	2021/22	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2024/25
		Agreed Places	Actual Places	Agreed Places	Actual Places	Agreed Places	Proposed Places	Increase in Places
Academy 360	Academy	35	34	35	35	35	35	0
Biddick Academy	Academy	35	33	35	36	35	35	0
Farringdon Academy	Academy	35	28	35	32	35	35	0
Hetton School	Academy	10	8	10	7	10	10	0
Oxclose Primary Academy	Academy	7	9	7	7	7	7	0
Oxclose Secondary Academy	Academy	12	8	12	12	12	13	1
Thorney Close HI	Maintained	12	14	14	15	14	14	0
Hudson Road (SEMH) NEW	Maintained	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	16	16
Usworth Colliery	Maintained	12	8	14	15	15	26	11
Washington CAP	Academy	22	23	27	27	27	27	0
JFK – Treehouse Provision	Academy	16	16	24	24	24	24	0
Mill Hill primary School ARP NEW	Maintained	-	-	-	-	-	16	16
Total Special Units and Resourced Provisions		196	181	213	210	214	242 (258)	28 (44)

Special Schools Including Post 16 Places								
Organisation / Provider	Type	2021/22	2021/22	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2024/25
		Agreed Places	Actual Places	Agreed Places	Actual Places	Agreed Places	Proposed Places	Increase in Places
Barbara Priestman Academy*	Academy	178	174	178	175	178	188 (192)	10 (14)
Columbia Grange	Academy	115	115	115 (+5)	120	115	115 (140)	0 (25)
North View Academy	Academy	80	78	85	85	85	85	0
Portland Academy	Academy	174	182	190	190	198	204	6
Trinity New Bridge Academy*	Academy	130	130	140	134	134	134	0
Sunningdale School	Maintained	105	108	130	121	136	136 (141)	0 (5)
Harry Watt (Opens September 2020)	Academy	80	82 (+14) from Jan 22	138	140	164	176	12
Total Special Schools* Including Post 16 Places		862	869	976	965	1,010	1,038 (1067)	28 (62)