

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum

Tuesday 8 February 2022
4.30pm – 6.30 pm

Virtual Meeting

Schools Forum Clerk
Children and Families
Cheshire West and Chester Council
Telephone 07584 206913



Notes for members of the public

Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum

The Council welcomes and encourages you to be at its meetings and Committees.

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The agenda is sometimes divided into two parts. You are allowed to stay for the first part. When the Forum is ready to deal with the second part you will need to leave the meeting because the business will be of a confidential nature, for example, dealing with individual people, contracts and financial affairs of other parties.

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Email: school.relationshipteam@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Telephone: 07584 206913

Agenda for Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum 8 February 2022

1.	4.30	Introductions and apologies		
2.	4.35	Minutes and matters arising of last meeting 2.1 To agree the minutes held 18 January 2022 2.2 Matters arising		Page 4-8
3.	4.45	Arrangements for funding from the High Needs Block 2022-2023	Debbie Freeman Natalie Cole	Page 9-13
4.	5.05	Children's Speech and Language Therapy	Emma Meekin	To follow
5.	5.40	Early Years Funding for 2022-2023	Bo White Natalie Cole	Page 14-18
6.	6.00	Schools Financial Value Standard 2021-2022	Natalie Cole	Page 19-30
7.	6.20	Any Other Business		
8.	6.30 Finish	Next meeting: Tuesday 5 July 2022 Schedule of meetings 2021-2022		Page 31

Minutes of Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum, virtual meeting, on 18 January 2022

Members	Representing	Attendance
Schools and Academies		
Alan Brown	Primary headteachers	Apologies
Julie Chambers	Primary headteachers	Apologies
Sarah Curtis	Primary headteachers	Attended
Ian Devereux Roberts	Primary headteachers	Attended
Kate Docherty	Primary headteachers	Attended
Sharon Broughton	Primary governors	Attended
Duncan Haworth (Chair)	Primary governors	Attended
Lisa Rigby	Primary governors	Apologies
David Nield	Primary governors	Attended
Nick Lacey	Primary governors	Attended
David Curry	Secondary headteachers	Attended
Mike Holland	Secondary headteachers	Attended
David Rowlands	Secondary governors	Attended
Rob Williams	Secondary governors	Attended
Mike McCann	Special headteachers	Apologies
Philip Hopwood	Special governors	Absent
Andy Stewart	PRU	Attended
Deborah Beaumont	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Sarah Connolly	Academies - mainstream	Apologies
Darran Jones	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Luci Jones	Academies - mainstream	Apologies
Jason Lowe	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Helen Studley	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Marie Allen	Academies - special	Attended
Non Schools		
Sue Anderson	PVI early years providers	Attended
Kathryn Magiera	Diocese	Absent
Caroline Vile	Diocese	Attended
Greg Foster	Unions	Absent
Geoff Wright	Unions	Absent
Rob Pullen	CWAPH	Attended
Angela Thornton	PVI early years providers	Apologies
Vacancy	16-19 providers	Vacancy
Official Observers		
Councillor Robert Cernik	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	Attended
Officers in attendance		
Natalie Cole	Finance Manager	
Carolyn Davis	Senior Manager Education and Inclusion	
Charlotte Fenn	Clerk	
Debbie Murphy	Acting Head of Education and Inclusion	
Christine Ridley Thomas	Senior Manager School Intervention Co-ordination & Schools Causing Concern	
Observer		
Councillor Razia Daniels	Shadow Cabinet Member for Children and Families	

1. Introductions and apologies

Apologies were noted.

Duncan reported the following updates to Schools Forum membership:

New secondary governor representative - David Rowlands, Upton-by-Chester High School – previously been in attendance as a substitute.

Sue Anderson, PVI representative, was retiring 31 March 2022.

2. Minutes and matters arising of last meeting

2.1 To agree the minutes from the meeting held 7 December 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on the 7 December 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 Matters arising

2.2.1 Item 3 School Information Management System (SIMS) Update and Options

Carolyn Davis provided an update in response to questions asked at the last Forum. There was no further update from ESS regarding the rate per pupil other than what had already been shared with schools, that the current LA contract prices would rise by 3.5% for 2022-2023.

ESS was writing to schools with their individual contract and quote giving them a six-month break clause option should they sign up by 28 February 2022.

Ian Devereux Roberts reported that he had received an email from ESS today with the said contract & break clause.

2.2.2 Item 4 Government consultation - Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded

Duncan Haworth reported that the outcome of the consultation had been published and the proposals were being implemented, further details were available under agenda item 6.

2.2.3 Item 7 Any Other Business - Vice-Chair and Finance and High Needs subgroup vacancies

Duncan Haworth reminded Forum that they were still looking for a Vice-chair and Finance and High Needs subgroup members. David Rowlands put his name forward for Vice-Chair and subgroup member.

Resolved that Schools Forum agree to appoint David Rowlands as Vice-Chair and subgroup member.

3. Indicative Dedicated Schools Grant Allocations for 2022-2023

Natalie Cole went through the report which detailed the provisional allocation figures for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2022-2023 as published in December 2021.

Forum members attention was drawn to the table in paragraph 4 which summarised the current and indicative next year allocation. It was noted that the table heading should read as 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 and not 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 and this correction would be made before the papers were published.

It was noted that new funding for primary and secondary schools to provide support for the costs of the Health and Social Care Levy and wider costs was being allocated as a supplementary grant.

Sarah Curtis asked if the supplementary allocation was ring fenced as to how schools spend it or was it part of the budget. Natalie confirmed the funding was part of the budget.

Resolved that the Schools Forum note the indicative allocations which would inform the schools block funding formula and DSG budget proposals for 2022-2023 in further agenda items.

4. Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Setting Proposals 2022-2023

Natalie Cole introduced the report which detailed the broad principles for the budget proposals for the next financial year based on the allocations in item 3.

Natalie took Forum through the budget setting proposals outlined in Appendix A. It was noted that further detail regarding 'Growth in high needs - further investment' (ref 4) would be brought to the February Forum under the High Needs agenda item.

Natalie drew Forums' attention to the consultation outcomes, in paragraph 5, which were largely in support of maintaining the 0.5% transfer from schools block to high needs block.

Natalie referred Forum members to Appendix B which outlined the changes to the Central Spend Budgets for 2022-2023.

Resolved that the Schools Forum

- i. approve the continuation of the existing 0.5% transfer from schools block to high needs block for 2022-2023 (vote: unanimous);
- ii. endorse the draft DSG budget proposals in Appendix A for approval by Council (vote: unanimous); and
- iii. approve the central spend budgets in Appendix B (vote: unanimous)

5. Draft of 2022-2023 School Funding Formula for January Submission

Natalie Cole went through the report which detailed the draft School Funding Formula for 2022-2023.

It was noted that the report took into account the decisions taken previously on the principles of the local funding formula, already approved by Cabinet and Forum, and the impact of October 2021 census data provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Forum members were reminded that the draft 2022-2023 funding for each school in Appendix D was for reference only; the final funding statements would be issued to individual maintained schools in February 2022 following final approval by Council and the ESFA.

A discussion followed regarding managed moves, exclusions and Fair Access Protocol following a question from David Rowlands as to whether there was any scope to ensure that funds followed pupils moving schools, as currently this was not done straight way. Mike Holland commented that his school had been involved in a managed move last week and funds have been transferred from the day of the move with no delays.

Rob Pullen commented that this issue had been picked up with Michaela Bridge, Education Access Team & Alternative Provision Manager, who planned to review the policy, but the review was not yet complete. Debbie Murphy agreed to liaise with Officers and request Michaela get in touch with Rob.

Natalie Cole confirmed that under the managed move protocol there was a process to transfer funds when exclusions took place. It was noted that these transfers should be facilitated through Natalie's finance team as they would largely be internal transfers between LA schools.

Resolved that the Schools Forum (School, Academy and PVI representatives) endorse the draft funding formula submission to the ESFA (vote: unanimous)

6. De-delegation proposals for 2022-2023

Natalie Cole took Forum through the report highlighting the responses to the consultation. It was noted that the de-delegation option for licences would cease for 2022-2023 due to the SIMS provider moving to direct charging to individual schools. Schools would receive a direct charge for SIMS and CLEAPPS licences.

Resolved that the Schools Forum (maintained school representatives) agree the services to be de-delegated to the Local Authority for 2022-2023 as detailed for:

- a) Contingencies to cover the cost of staff on suspension (primary and secondary representatives separately);
- b) Free school meals eligibility assessments (primary and secondary representatives separately);

- c) Covering the cost of staff on for maternity/paternity/adoption leave (primary representatives only);
- d) Pooling of funding to cover the costs of trade union facilities time (primary and secondary representatives separately);
a-d Primary Vote: Yes 6, No 0, Abstention 0
a,b,d Secondary Vote: Yes 2, No 0, Abstention 0

- e) School improvement time (primary, secondary and special/alternative provision representatives separately)
Primary Vote: Yes 5, No 0, Abstention 0
Secondary Vote: Yes 2, No 0, Abstention 0

Special/alternative provision Vote: Yes 1, No 0, Abstention 0

7. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2021-2022 Forecast Outturn at Third Review

Natalie Cole introduced the report which provided an update on the financial forecast outturn position for 2021-2022 for centrally held DSG.

It was noted that the overspend and change in position largely related to the increase demand for special places inside and outside the borough. It was also noted that the forecast assumed a balanced position for early years budgets, however the forecast might change once the revised funding allocation have been received in January 2022.

Forums' attention was drawn to the key variances and changes summarised in the table under paragraph 8.

A Director-led priority working group had been established to progress the recommendations from the High Needs Strategic Review. It was noted that the Review had taken place before a deficit position was realised and the recommendations would need to be re-framed for the current financial context.

Resolved that the Schools Forum note the Third Review position on the DSG and next steps.

8. Any Other Business

None to report.

9. Next meeting

Next Schools Forum meeting Tuesday 8 February 2022.

Sarah Curtis asked if the High Needs sub-group would be meeting. Duncan Haworth responded that no date had yet been set but a meeting would be arranged in due course.

Agenda Item 3

Arrangements for funding from the High Needs Block 2022-2023

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update Schools Forum on proposed arrangements for allocations from the High Needs Block for 2022-2023 for commissioned services, places and top up funding.

Recommendations

2. Schools Forum is asked to provide a view on the proposals within the report on financial arrangements for high needs pupils in 2022-2023 for the following.
 - i. Approach to allocating funding for further investment (paragraph 5)
 - ii. Proposals for high needs funding arrangements for schools (paragraphs 6 to 13)

Background

3. Further to the budget setting proposals set out in the January 2022 report to Schools Forum, this report provides further detail on the proposed funding arrangements for high needs in 2022-2023. These proposals are made in the context of the continuing pressures on the high needs block and the approach to setting a balanced in year budget for this financial year whilst longer term plans are developed.

High Needs Budget 2022-2023

4. At the January meeting of Schools Forum, additional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding of £5.795m was allocated for High Needs expenditure to increase budgets to £52.778m. In summary, this was allocated to budgets to fund current expenditure and further growth and investment.

	£000
Growth in high needs budgets to meet current level of expenditure based on the forecast spend in 2021-2022 (as at Third Review). This is mainly to meet the increased cost to date of independent school placements less net variances across other high needs budgets based on the current forecast.	1,165
Growth in high needs - previous year's annual growth based on the assumption that growth in spend will continue as in 2021-2022.	3,496

Growth in high needs – balance available for further growth and investment in specialist provision and support services for increasing demand and costs of provision.	1,135
Total	5,795

5. For the £1.135m available for further growth and investment, priorities for the next financial year will be determined in consultation with Schools Forum and Local Authority Priority Working Group as plans continue to be developed. Initial proposals were discussed with the Schools Forum Finance Sub Group at the meeting on 24 January to allocate the funding as shown in the table below.

	£000
Import/export adjustment – to fund any further increase in the net export of pupils to other local authority provision	200
Early years EHCPs – to fund Early Years Inclusion Support funding for increasing number of children with EHCPs in mainstream nursery settings	200
Speech and language therapy – to fund increased level of provision (see separate agenda item)	200
Development of specialist provision – further places in in borough provision	235
Supplementary funding to providers for exceptional cost pressures	300
Total	1,135

High Needs Funding arrangements for schools in 2022-2023

6. Further to the investment proposals above, the following paragraphs outline the proposed arrangements for funding schools in 2022-2023

Commissioned places in special schools and resourced provisions

7. There are proposals to review current commissioned places for special school and resource provisions in borough to meet demand for places for September 2022. Discussions with schools are underway as the SEN team progresses with meeting the statutory transfers deadline of 15 February. The table below shows in summary the demand for high needs places and gaps in provision for September 2022. Proposals to address this gap will be considered through a combination of increased place numbers and new provisions to be finalised by the Local Authority Priority Working Group.

SEND	Early years transfers	Secondary transfers	In year/ removals in (based on 2021)	Total places required	Places available	Difference
ASC Special/Resource Provision	39	28	4	71	41	30
Complex/medical	33	9	13	55	29	26

CMLD Special	0	30	1	31	30	1
Social Emotional Mental Health	0	17	7	24	17	7
CMLD Resource Provision	0	0	1	1	7	-6
Verbal communication delay	19	0	0	19	0	19
Other	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total	91	84	27	202	124	78

Top up funding

8. The Local Authority also intend to review commissioned place numbers for special schools and Alternative Provision schools taking over number in conjunction with a review of top up funding rates for those schools. This is in line with recommendations being taken forward from High Needs Strategic Review workstream 1, to revisit special school banding, descriptors and values and review the financial values across the levels/bands within the framework to ensure consistency and transparency whilst ensuring spending remains sustainable within High Needs Block. This will be undertaken on an individual school basis taking into account class structures and pupil/staffing ratios to move to a differential rate of funding per school. We would intend this to be cost neutral (i.e. realignment of place/top up funding rather than a reduction in funding). Reviews will take place and be agreed with schools for the 2022-2023 academic year.
9. There are no proposals to amend current mainstream top up rates which are as follows.

Band	Funding rate £
A	4,500
B	7,125
C	11,062

10. Top up funding without an EHCP will continue to be allocated for one year and then reviewed. A multi agency review of top up without an EHCP is being undertaken and will be further reviewed over the next year alongside the DfE SEND Review outcome which is expected by the end of March 2022.
11. There will be further review of Post 16 top up rates for Further Education colleges to be agreed through the College Network Group for Sept 2022. This is particularly in relation to the average funding required to meet the needs of Band A pupils.

Exceptional funding

12. Schools taking pupils over their commissioned numbers will continue to receive top up funding for additional pupils. Schools will continue to be supported with

exceptional funding where it can be demonstrated that the additional top up funding is not sufficient to cover the additional costs as detailed in Appendix A.

13. Following the autumn spending review announcement of extra funding for high needs, additional DSG high needs block allocations were allocated to local authorities. This extra funding recognises the additional costs that local authorities will face in the coming year, although unlike the schools supplementary funding which is to be allocated at school level as prescribed by the ESFA, the additional high needs funding does not have the same requirement and is to be treated as an additional DSG allocation for local authorities to prioritise. In view of the growth and investment proposals and review of places/top up funding, we propose to allocate supplementary funding to Special and Alternative Provision schools based on affordability. Therefore, inflationary increases should initially be met from surplus reserves for 2022-2023. The Local Authority will consider requests from high needs funded schools where it can be demonstrated that additional national insurance and energy costs cannot be afforded from the planned use of reserves. We have earmarked £300k to fund schools in 2022-2023 and will progress the agreement of additional funding alongside the reviews of top up and place funding to ensure schools are sufficiently funded between these mechanisms. This proposal is for 2022-2023 only and will aim to ensure schools are sufficiently funded whilst balancing high needs priorities and demands across all sectors.

Next steps

14. Proposals within the report are to be taken forward through the Local Authority Priority Working Group for implementation for the 2022-2023 financial year and to be included in High Needs budget allocation notifications to schools and academies to be distributed by the end of March 2022. Further reviews in relation to top up funding will be progressed for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Appendix A Existing exceptional funding arrangements

Mainstream - Notional SEN and arrangements for additional funding

Local authorities identify within each school's budget share a notional SEN budget from which schools and academies can provide a level of support for all their pupils with SEN. This is a notional amount of funding and should not be regarded by schools and academies as a substitute for their own budget planning and decisions about how much they need to spend on SEN support, or as a fixed budget sum for spending by schools.

However, local authorities need to take a view on the level of additional support costs that can be met from each school's notional SEN budget in order to make sure that schools have sufficient resources to meet those costs up to the £6,000 threshold, and to determine which schools might need additional funds from the high needs budget which must be agreed on a formulaic basis. Additional funding from the High Needs block will continue to be distributed under the following criteria.

Notional SEN must be sufficient to meet the first £6,000 of each high needs pupil on roll recognising any part year effect of starters and leavers. For schools up to and including 150 pupils, the notional SEN must also be sufficient to cover £6,000 for every 1:50 pupils. Therefore, additional funding will be made available from the high needs block if $\text{Notional SEN} < (\text{number of high needs pupils} * £6,000) + (£6,000 \text{ for every } 1:50 \text{ pupils for schools with } 150 \text{ or fewer pupils})$. Reviews will be carried out on a termly basis.

Resource Provision

Schools that have one or more pupils in Reception will also be allocated funding equivalent to 3B in order to support access to the foundation curriculum. This funding will only be in place whilst there is one or more pupils in Reception year.

Schools funded through commissioned places

Schools will not receive additional place funding where they take pupils over their commissioned place number, only the top up funding element. Exceptions will be considered where over numbers require a change to the structure of the provision and increase the core costs to the school as funded by place funding. These situations will be considered as they arise on a case by case basis. Schools should not request additional place funding for pupils from other local authorities and should contact the CW&C SEN Team.

Agenda Item 5

Early Years Funding for 2022-2023

Purpose of the report

1. This report details the proposed budget allocation for the early years block and funding of the two, three and four year old entitlements for 2022-2023 through the Early Years Funding Formula (EYFF) and Early Years Inclusion Support Fund (EYISF).

Recommendations

2. That Schools Forum review the proposed allocation of the early years block allocation and endorse the increase in base rate funding for 2022-2023.

Background

3. This report follows the principles agreed in the January 2022 report to Schools Forum on the local authority's early years block allocation for 2022-2023. Schools Forum agreed budget proposals to allocate the early years block allocation in full to early years budgets with no changes to central spend. Changes to the local Early Years Single Funding Formula had also been previously agreed by Cabinet in November 2021 when the decisions were taken to amend the methodology for the deprivation supplement and to reduce the value of the quality supplement, with a view to removing it over a two year period.

Early Years Block allocation

4. In the Spending Review announcement, the Chancellor announced a £160m investment in early years funding in 2022-2023 to increase the hourly rates for early years entitlements. The allocation of the investment has been confirmed as follows:
 - a 21p per child hour increase to the 2 year old funding rate to local authorities
 - an increase to 3 and 4 year old rates of 17p per child hour with a minimum funding floor for local authorities of £4.61 per child hour (CW&C funding remains at this minimum level).
 - an increase of 7p to 60p per child hour to Early Years Pupil Premium

- Disability Access funding to increase from £615 to £800 per eligible child.
5. For CW&C, despite the increased investment, the initial allocation for 2022-2023 is a net £0.072m (-0.3%) decrease in the Early Years Block allocation from 2021-2022. This allocation reflects an increase in per child hour funding rates of 3.3% but is offset by lower child numbers reducing the overall allocation available compared to 2021-2022. However, the initial allocation will be updated based on January 2022 census to reflect any changes in take up rates.
 6. Initial early years block allocations for 2022-2023 are shown in the table below. Allocations will be updated in July 2022 from the headcounts taken at the January 2022 census.

Early Years Block	Pupil Numbers	Amount per pupil £	Allocation 2022-2023 £000
3 and 4 year old universal entitlement	4,771	2,628	12,536
Maintained nursery school supplement	26	1,351	35
Extended 15 hours	2,390	2,628	6,281
Total 3 and 4 year olds			18,852
2 Year Olds	796	3,221	2,565
Early Years Pupil Premium	483	342	165
Disability Access Funding	136	800	109
Total Early Years Block			21,691

Budget proposals for 2022-2023

7. The proposed EYFF for three and four year old entitlements is detailed in Appendix A. It is proposed to increase the base rate to all providers from £3.78 to £4.05 for 2022-2023 which includes the national increase of 17p plus the redistribution of deprivation and quality supplements of 10p in line with formula changes agreed by Cabinet in November 2021.
8. Following the increase in funded rate for two year olds, it is proposed to increase the base rate to all providers from £5.30 to £5.51 for 2022-2023 passporting all of the increase in funding.
9. The following sources of funding will continue to be made available for providers in line with funding allocations and eligibility criteria. The budget for Early Years Inclusion Support Funding has been increased in line with current demand (from £519k in 2021-2022). This has been supplemented by £200k from the high needs block to recognise the increase in the number of children with Education Health and Care Plans in mainstream settings and increased spend in 2021-2022. Funding will continue to be made to providers in

accordance with the existing assessment framework which is included in Appendix B.

Budget heading – other funding to providers	Budget £000
Early Years Pupil Premium (60p per eligible 3 and 4 year old child hour)	165
Disability Access Funding (£800 lump sum per eligible child)	109
Early Years Inclusion Support Funding	719
Total	993

10. Further detail on the budgets held as central spend are shown in the table below and are unchanged from 2021-2022. The central spend budget accounts for 4% of the total early years block allocation and complies with the central spend cap of 5% of three and four year old funding (and the requirement to passport 95% of the allocation to providers).

Budgeted central spend	Budget £000
Commissioning Team	121
Early Years Consultants and Early Years Childcare Advisors	439
Early Years Workers	271
Ongoing maintenance for the provider hub	8
Total	839

Next Steps

11. To implement the EYFF funding rates for 2022-2023 and notify providers in accordance with the statutory timeframe of 31 March 2022.

Appendix A Proposed Cheshire West and Chester 2022-2023 Early Years Single Funding Formula

National Funding Formula Requirement	Proposed Cheshire West and Chester 2022-2023 Early Years Single Funding Formula
Base rate	Base rate of £4.05 per child per hour
<p>Mandatory supplement</p> <p>Deprivation: Local authorities must use this supplement to recognise deprivation in their areas.</p>	<p>Additional payment of £0.50 per child hour allocated for children attending the setting who reside in the 30% most disadvantaged areas in England on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (“IDACI”) or in the 30% most disadvantaged areas in Wales on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.</p>
<p>Discretionary supplements</p> <p>Rurality/sparsity: A rurality/sparsity supplement is permitted to allow local authorities to support providers serving rural areas less likely to benefit from economies of scale.</p>	<p>Rurality supplement - £2,000 lump sum if the Setting is defined as being in a Rural or Pre-dominantly Rural Census Output Area under the Council’s Rural / Urban Classification; is more than 2 miles from the next nearest providers and has below 77% occupancy according to the January 2022 census.</p>
<p>Quality: A quality supplement is permitted to support workforce qualifications</p>	<p>Qualification Supplement - Additional payment based on the highest qualified staff member at the Setting. If the highest qualified staff member holds an appropriate Qualified Teacher Status the Provider will receive £0.13 per child per hour. If the highest qualified staff member holds Early Years Professional Status the Provider will receive £0.06 per child per hour.</p> <p>Eligibility to be verified at the January 2022 census and includes the provision of progress and tracking data.</p>

Appendix B Early Years Inclusion Support Funding

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Inclusion Support Funding Descriptors are used to decide on the level of funding required to match need. Banding levels of funding are set out in the table below and are based on the following key principles:

- Needs identified as universal and SEN support are to be met from funding delegated to providers through early years funding, Disability Access Funding and Early Years Pupil Premium. This is in line with the principles of elements 1 and 2 in mainstream and specialist provision where lower level needs are met from delegated funding. Core funding for early years providers also reflects lower staffing ratios than those in mainstream to be met from the hourly rate.
- Band A descriptors are likely to require an additional targeted intervention over a limited period of time which does not increase with the extended entitlement. Therefore one lump sum payment would be made for children regardless of 15 hours or 30 hours entitlement.
- Bands B and C lump sums provide additional funding to individual children with high level and complex needs and reflect an increasing level of support which would reasonably be expected to double, dependent on access to the extended hours. Typically, Band B children would present with communication, ASD and social/emotional difficulties and would not require dedicated 1 to 1 support. A higher complexity of need is presented in Band C which requires a higher level of ongoing support.
- Children with EHCPs would be assessed through the statutory process and would generally be funded at Band C with some at Band B.
- Allocations will be made for 1 year and then reviewed. Children in receipt of funding at the end of the academic year would continue to be funded into Reception for the first 2 terms whilst reviews are undertaken by the school.
- Allocations would be split across providers where a child is accessing more than one provider and would be made on a termly basis subject to the continuation of the child's entitlement.

	Universal and SEN Support	Allocation per annum		
		Band A	Band B	Band C
15 hours entitlement	Delegated funding through EYFF, DAF, EYPP	£1,710	£3,420	£5,130
30 hours entitlement			£6,840	£10,260

Agenda Item 6

Schools Financial Value Standard 2021-2022

Purpose of the report

1. This report is to update Schools Forum on the requirements of the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) submission for maintained schools for 2021-2022 which is due to be submitted to the Local Authority by 31 March 2022.

Recommendations

2. This report is for information and representatives of Local Authority maintained schools and Governing Bodies are asked to share this update with their representative bodies.

Background

3. Current government guidance requires Governing Bodies to complete their SFVS self assessment for 2021-2022 and return it to the Local Authority by 31 March 2022. A reminder letter was sent to Local Authority maintained school headteachers on 25 January 2022, detailing the changes to the assessment and process for submitting returns for the statutory deadline.

Changes to the SFVS self assessment checklist

4. There have been a number of minor changes to the self assessment checklist for 2021-2022 and schools should access the latest documents and guidance notes which are available from the Department for Education (DfE) website at the following link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-financial-value-standard-sfvs>

A summary of the changes that have been made from 2020-2021 is included in Appendix A.

Dashboards for review are now provided by DfE

5. In a further change for 2021-2022, schools no longer need to complete the data for the dashboard review. The dashboard for each school is publicly available on the school benchmarking service website at the following link.

<https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk>

Schools should select their school by name or LAESTAB number, navigate to Start Comparison and select the Self Assessment Dashboard to download and review.

6. The DfE are also now providing a further analysis through the View My Financial Insights (VFMI) tool which provides users in schools with an automated assessment of their school's data based on similar schools. VFMI is not publicly available and users must have a registered DfE Sign In and been assigned a VMFI permission to be able to log in and have data showing for the school. Further information is available at the following link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trusts-view-my-financial-insights>

New requirement for recording related party transactions

7. In a new requirement for improving the financial transparency of maintained schools, the DfE require all schools to maintain a record of any related party transactions and submit this to the Local Authority as part of the SFVS submission and response to question 26. Further guidance on the definition, procedures and template for recording related party transactions is provided at the following link against question 26. The template to be completed is available at the second link below and shown in Appendix B.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-financial-value-standard-sfvs/2019-to-2020-checklist-guidance>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-financial-value-standard-sfvs>

Key audit findings from 2020-2021 assessments

8. The information provided by schools is reviewed by the Schools Finance Team and by Internal Audit in assessing the level of assurance that could be placed on the financial management in operation in the Authority's schools. The Local Authority are not able to confirm that each school are operating the level of controls in the framework as this would involve individual school audits. Instead a number of schools are visited in the autumn term and key themes from the assessment reviewed across all schools. General feedback is provided by Internal Audit to schools on the key findings, areas of best practice and opportunities for improving financial controls when this work is completed. Key findings from the 2020-2021 audit review are included in Appendix C and will be circulated to schools in the School bulletin.

Next Steps

9. Governing Bodies should approve the SFVS submission for return to the Local authority by 31 March 2022. The Local Authority will review the returns to complete the annual assurance statement to the DfE and to determine the internal audit plan for 2022-2023.

Appendix A Summary of changes to checklist questions from 2020-2021 to 2021-2022

Q	2020-2021 Questions	Q	2021-2022 Questions	Comments
Governance				
1	In the view of the governing body and senior staff, does the governing body have adequate financial skills among its members to fulfil its role of challenge and support in the field of budget management and value for money?	1	In the view of the governing body and senior staff, does the governing body have adequate and up-to-date financial skills among its members to fulfil its role of challenge and support in the field of budget management and value for money? Is there a plan in place to address any gaps?	Amended wording
2	Does the governing body have a finance committee (or equivalent) with clear terms of reference and a knowledgeable and experienced chair?	2	Does the governing body have a finance committee, or equivalent, with clear terms of reference and a knowledgeable and experienced chair?	Same
3	Does the governing body board receive clear and concise monitoring reports of the school's budget position at least six times a year?	3	Does the governing body receive clear and concise monitoring reports of the school's budget position at least 6 times a year?	Same
4	Are business interests of governing body members and staff properly registered and taken into account so as to avoid conflicts of interest?	4	Are business interests of governing body members and staff properly registered and taken into account so as to avoid conflicts of interest?	Same
5	Does the school have access to an adequate level of financial expertise, including when specialist finance staff are absent, e.g. on sick leave?	5	Does the school have access to an adequate level of financial expertise, including when specialist finance staff are absent, for example , on sick leave?	Slight amendment to wording
School Strategy				
6	Does the school have a realistic, sustainable and flexible financial strategy in place for at least the next 3 years, based on realistic assumptions about future funding, pupil numbers and pressures?	6	Does the school have a realistic, sustainable and flexible financial strategy in place for at least 3 years , based on realistic assumptions about future funding, pupil numbers and pressures?	Slight amendment to wording

7	Is the financial strategy integrated with the school's strategy for raising standards and attainment?	7	Is the financial strategy integrated with the school's strategy for raising standards and attainment, through integrated curriculum and financial planning?	Amended
8	Does the school have an appropriate business continuity or disaster recovery plan, including an up-to-date asset register and adequate insurance?	8	Does the school have an appropriate business continuity or disaster recovery plan, including an up-to-date asset register and adequate insurance?	Same
Setting the Annual Budget				
9	Does the school set a well-informed and balanced budget each year (with an agreed and timed plan for eliminating any deficit)?	9	Does the school set a well-informed and balanced 3-year budget and has this been submitted to the local authority?	Amended
10	Does the budget setting process allow sufficient time for the governing body to scrutinise and challenge the information provided?	10	Does the budget setting process allow sufficient time for the governing body to scrutinise and challenge the information provided?	Same
11	Is the school realistic in its pupil number projections and can it move quickly to recast the budget if the projections and the reality are materially different?	11	Is the school realistic in its pupil number projections and can it move quickly to recast the budget if the projections and the reality are materially different?	Same
12	Is end year outturn in line with budget projections, or if not, is the governing body alerted to significant variations in a timely manner, and do such variations result from explicitly planned changes or from genuinely unforeseeable circumstances?	12	Is end year outturn in line with budget projections, or if not, is the governing body alerted to significant variations in a timely manner, and do they result from explicitly planned changes or from genuinely unforeseeable circumstances?	Same
13	Are balances at a reasonable level and does the school have a clear plan for using the money it plans to hold in balance at the end of each year?	13	Are balances at a reasonable level and does the school have a clear plan for using the money it plans to hold in balance at the end of each year?	Same
Staffing				

14	Does the school review and challenge its staffing structure regularly to ensure it is the best structure to meet the needs of the school whilst maintaining financial integrity?	14	Does the school review its staffing structure regularly to ensure it is the best structure to meet the needs of the school whilst maintaining financial integrity?	Slight amendment to wording
15	Has the use of professional independent advice informed part of the pay decision process in relation to the head teacher and is it tightly correlated to strong educational outcomes and sound financial management?	15	Has the use of professional independent advice informed part of the pay decision process in relation to the head teacher and is it tightly correlated to strong educational outcomes and sound financial management?	Same
		16	Has the school published on its website the number of employees (if any) whose gross salary exceeded £100k?	New question
16	Does the school benchmark the size of its senior leadership team annually against that of similar schools?	17	Does the school benchmark the size of its senior leadership team annually against that of similar schools?	Same question, different question number
Value for Money				
17	Does the school benchmark its income and expenditure annually against that of similar schools and investigate further where any category appears to be out of line?	18	Does the school benchmark its income and expenditure and investigate further where any category appears to be out of line?	Slight amendment to wording, different question number
		19	Has the school leadership team considered the results of the self-assessment dashboard or other DfE benchmarking tools?	New question. Previously Q29.
18	Does the school have procedures for purchasing goods and services that both meet legal requirements and secure value for money?	20	Does the school have procedures for purchasing goods and services that both meet legal requirements and secure value for money?	Same question, different question number

19	Is the governing body given the opportunity to challenge the school's plans for replacing contracts for goods and services that are due to expire shortly?	21	Is the governing body given the opportunity to challenge the school's plans for replacing contracts for goods and services that are due to expire shortly?	Same question, different number
20	Does the School consider collaboration with others, e.g. on sharing staff or joint purchasing, where that would improve value for money?	22	Does the school consider collaboration with others, for example , on sharing staff or joint purchasing, where that would improve value for money?	Slight amendment to wording, different question number
21	Do you compare your non-staff expenditure against the DfE recommended national deals to ensure you are achieving best value?	23	Do you compare your non-staff expenditure against the DfE recommended national deals to ensure you are achieving best value?	Same question, different number
22	Does the school maintain its premises and other assets to an adequate standard and make best use of capital monies for this purpose?	24	Does the school maintain its premises and other assets to an adequate standard and make best use of capital monies for this purpose?	Same question, different number
Protecting Public Money				
23	Is the governing body sure that there are no outstanding matters from audit reports, internal audit reports or from previous consideration of weaknesses by the governing body?	25	Is the governing body sure that there are no outstanding matters from audit reports or from previous consideration of weaknesses by the governing body?	Slight amendment to wording, different question number
24	Are there adequate arrangements in place to manage conflicts of interest or any related party transactions?	26	Are there adequate arrangements in place to manage related party transactions and has a complete list of related party transactions been appended to the checklist document (see template for recording related party transactions)?	Amended, different question number
25	Are there adequate arrangements in place to guard against fraud and theft by staff, contractors and suppliers? (Please note any instance of fraud or theft detected in the last 12 months)	27	Are there adequate arrangements in place to guard against fraud and theft by staff, contractors and suppliers?	Amended, different question number

26	Are all staff aware of the school's whistleblowing arrangements and to whom they should report concerns?	28	Are all staff aware of the school's whistleblowing arrangements and to whom they should report concerns?	Same, different question number
27	Does the school have an accounting system that is adequate and properly run and delivers accurate reports, including the annual Consistent Financial Reporting return?	29	Does the school have an accounting system that is adequate and properly run and delivers accurate reports, including the consistent financial reporting return?	Slight amendment to wording, different question number
28	Does the school have adequate arrangements for audit of voluntary funds?	30	Does the school have adequate arrangements for audit of voluntary funds?	Same, different question number
SFVS Dashboard				
29	Have the results of the dashboard been carefully considered and potential follow-up actions identified?			Replaced by Q19

Appendix B Template for recording related party transactions

Schools financial value standard			Value of all Contracts		£0															
Template for recording related party transactions (RPTs)			Spend in current year		£0															
This template should be completed by schools to record any related party transactions that have been arrived at through proper procedures. This should be appended to the SFVS checklist to be submitted to the local authority.																				
Please complete each of the columns from C to L below, entering additional rows beyond row 16 if necessary.																				
No	Goods / services provided	Start date of contract	End date of contract	Value of contract	Spend in current financial year	Name of related member of staff / governor	Position of related member of staff / governor	Relationship with supplier organisation	Was a competitive tendering process carried out?	Did the governing body approve the RPT?										
1	<i>A brief description of what was provided.</i>																			
2																				
3																				
4																				
5																				
6																				
7																				
8																				
9																				
10																				
.etc.																				

Summary of Key Themes identified from an Internal Audit Review on SFVS

Internal Audit has recently undertaken a review of the School Financial Value Standard (SFVS) to obtain assurance over the accuracy of these returns. Schools are recommended to review these findings and areas for improvement and ensure that these are considered when undertaking the SFVS return for 2021/22.

	Finding	Recommended Best Practice
1	<p><u>SFVS Assessment</u> In some instances key elements of the SFVS were not referred to in the response to each question.</p> <p>For example, Question 24) Are there adequate arrangements in place to manage conflicts of interest or any related party transactions?</p> <p>Many schools did not refer to the Gifts and Hospitality Policy in the response. It was therefore difficult to ascertain if the response was correct.</p>	<p>Schools should access the latest DfE guidance available for the completion of the 21-22 assessment. Please see the link below.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-financial-value-standard-sfvs.</p> <p>A new Council SFVS Guidance Checklist will also be issued by the Schools Finance Team for the change in questions for the 21-22 assessment.</p> <p>Schools should consider all elements of the DfE and Council guidance when considering the response to each question.</p> <p>Each element should be referred to within the response to evidence that a 'Yes' answer is appropriate.</p>
2	<p><u>Review of Key Documents</u> There was not always evidence within Governing Body minutes that key documents, for example, Manual of Internal Financial Procedures (MIFP), School Fund Terms of Reference, Contracts Register etc had been formally reviewed and approved.</p> <p>There was not always evidence that the Governing Body had received and reviewed the finance reports six times in accordance with the SFVS requirements.</p>	<p>Schools should ensure that sufficient evidence is retained of the approval of all key documents.</p> <p>Where documents are presented for review this should be documented within the minutes of the meeting stating the report presented and any discussion / challenge of the information presented.</p>

	Finding	Recommended Best Practice
	Internal Audit was informed that the documents had often been presented however there was no formal approval evidenced within the minutes.	
3	<u>Business Continuity / Record Keeping</u> Where there have been recent changes to finance / office staff it was often difficult to locate key documents to support the SFVS. Internal Audit was informed that this is due to being unable to follow previous filing systems / record management systems.	The Manual of Internal Financial Procedures (MIFP) and internal planning documents should be sufficiently detailed to ensure that all officers (including new employees) can locate key information. All appropriate staff should be aware of the location of files containing information such as invoices, orders etc. Where there is a change in office / finance personnel there should be an appropriate handover (wherever possible) to ensure that new staff are clear where key documents are located.
4	<u>Finance Reports</u> Finance reports are manually created by the School Business Manager / Bursar. Where this occurs often there is no evidence of reconciliation by a second officer to confirm the accuracy of the reports and that they match source data.	Governors should be provided with official reports from the finance system. If information is presented manually, governors should be provided with a report from Unit 4 (or the local finance system for local bank account schools) that enables them to reconcile the actual expenditure and budget with any manual presentation. Manual spreadsheets should be avoided as they duplicate the information that is readily available from the system and is open to error or omission.
5	<u>Purchase Cards</u> The following issues were identified in relation to purchase cards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was not always evidence of pre-approval for expenditure. • Receipts were not always evident to support the expenditure incurred. • There are occasions where flowers / gifts have been purchased for officers within the school from the school budget. 	Pre-approval for purchases should be evidenced in writing and be undertaken prior to the purchase being made. If purchase card holders have authority to spend (via the Scheme of Delegation) pre approval is not required, as long as segregation of duties is achieved in the process ie a second officer reconciles the purchase card expenditure and the purchase is authorised retrospectively on the Dcal system by another officer. If schools wish to continue to purchase flowers / gifts for staff in certain circumstances this should be documented in a Well Being Policy. This ensures that there is a fair and consistent approach. The Well Being Policy should be formally approved by Governors.
6	<u>Quotations</u> Quotes not always received for purchases in accordance with the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A competitive process should be undertaken where expenditure for goods / services (or cumulative spend with a supplier) exceeds the

	Finding	Recommended Best Practice
	threshold identified within the school's MIFP.	<p>quotation threshold as identified within the Scheme of Delegation (this should not be higher than £10,000). Three quotations should be requested and these should be retained on file.</p> <p>Where the goods / services are specialised and three quotes cannot be obtained, this should be reported to the Governing Body for discussion and approval.</p>
7	<p><u>Asset Register / Inventory</u> Generally detailed inventories are retained. However, testing identified that the inventories were not always checked on an annual basis to confirm that the inventory is accurate and up to date.</p>	<p>An independent check of the Asset Register / Inventory should be undertaken on an annual basis and evidence of this retained.</p> <p>In accordance with the Scheme for Financing Schools this is only required for items above £1,000, however, the school may wish to consider the level that it feels appropriate. Internal Audit suggests that portable and desirable items are checked on an annual basis.</p> <p>The agreed limit should then be recorded in the school's MIFP.</p> <p>A report detailing any surplus / missing items should be presented to the Governing Body.</p>
8	<p><u>School Fund</u> The audit identified instances where there was a 'mixing of funds' ie money is being moved between the School Fund and the official budget.</p>	<p>In accordance with the Scheme for Financing Schools the unofficial fund monies shall at all times be kept completely separate from Council monies. Council payment or income transactions shall not be made via unofficial funds, and vice versa.</p>
9	<p><u>Contract Register</u> There was often no contract register in place within the school.</p>	<p>The SFVS guidance notes (on the Government website) state that 'It is good practice for a school to maintain a contract register, which should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the contract start and end date • the current value of the contract • the lead in time for procurement • information on early termination, for example, any dates or penalties incurred for early termination • any potential for extension of the contract and • an indication of exit strategies or re-procurement plans <p>The register should be shared with the governing body regularly to make them aware of any upcoming milestones in the contract register timetable and</p>

	Finding	Recommended Best Practice
		<p>provide them an opportunity to challenge procurement plans.'</p> <p>The contract register should include all purchases above £10k (not only standard maintenance contracts). This ensures that there is a central record of all guarantees / warranties for major purchases.</p>

**Cheshire West and Chester
Schools Forum
8 February 2022**

Agenda item 8

Schedule of meetings 2021-2022

Schools Forum – all meetings 4.30pm – 6.30pm

Date	Venue	Proposed agenda
Tuesday 5 July 2022	MS Teams tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School funding arrangements for 2023-2024• DSG 2021-2022 outturn including schools' balances• Directed revisions to schemes for financing schools• Education – Basic Need Capital Programme 2021-2025• Annual review of Schools Forum membership, constitution, and terms of reference

Schools Forum Finance sub-group

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday 14 June 2022	2.00 – 4.00 pm	MS Teams tbc

Schools Forum High Needs sub-group - dates to be confirmed