

NORFOLK SCHOOLS FORUM

AGENDA

Meeting on Friday 26 January 2024 09:00 – 12:30

Venue: Cranworth Room County Hall

Members will be asked on the day for their permission to record the meeting to support the preparation of the minutes. The recording will be deleted once the minutes are approved.

09:00 – 09:05	1	Welcome and Introductions Apologies	Report	
09:05 – 09:15	2	Election of Chair/Vice Chair	Decision	
09:15 – 09:30	3	Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising <ul style="list-style-type: none">Teachers pay and pensions Action: Officers will follow this up.De-delegation/Central School Services Block - Members asked if there is still a budget for PATHS?		3-16
09:30 – 09:40	4	Review Membership	Information	17-19
09:40 – 10:40	5	Strategic Planning (inc. Local First Inclusion) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Programme Update	Information/ Comment	20-28
10:40 – 11:00		COFFEE		
11:00 – 11:30	6	Proposed DSG Budget including central costs and final Early Years formula for 2024-25	Information	29-48
11:30 – 11:45	7	Pupil variations 2024-25	Information	49-51
11:45 – 12:15	8	Disapplication for Sparsity Distance	Information	52-54
12:15 – 12:20	9	Review 2023-24 Future Meeting Plan	Information	55
12:20 – 12:30	10	Any Other Business		

Date of Next Meeting
Wednesday 13 March 2024, 9.00am – 12.30pm,
Cranworth Room County Hall

Matters Arising:

- **Teachers pay and pensions**

Action: Officers will follow this up.

An email has been shared with an update on what information has been sent out. Members highlighted that if there is different information to what was said at last meeting a communication should go out to update schools.

- **De-delegation/Central School Services Block - Members asked if there is still a budget for PATHS**

No, there is no longer a specific budget for PATHs support. However, a budget of £121k is used towards posts that provide a range of support accessed via referral into inclusion:

- RHSE support – through fully and partially subsidised training, webinars and CPD etc
- Mental Health and Wellbeing – links to Mental Health Support Teams, ensuring these are linked to the wider transformation of the NSFT offer for CYP and schools
- Anti-bullying support
- Prejudice reporting and anti-racism support for schools
- PATHs support – for schools who still use this as part of their whole school approach

Norfolk Schools Forum

**Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 22 November 2023 Cranworth Room
County Hall
09:00 – 13:00 hours**

Present

Adrian Ball
Helen Bates
Martin Colbourne
Steven Dewing
Lacey Douglass
Carolyn Ellis-Gage
Alex Griffiths

Mike Grimble
Bob Groome
Glyn Hambling
David Hicks
Carol Jacques
Clare Jones
Joanne Philpott
Sarah Porter
Rachel Quick
Joanna Tuttle
Vicky Warnes
Martin White (Chair)

Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust
Roman Catholic Diocese
City College
Sapientia Education Trust
The Heather Nursery
The Parkside School
Brooke and Hempnall Primary
Schools
Avenue Junior School
Joint Consultative Committee
Unity Education Trust
Synergy Multi Academy Trust
Earlham Nursery School
Broad Horizons Education Trust
City of Norwich School
The Heart Education Trust
The Wherry School
Aylsham High School
Joint Consultative Committee
Nebula Federation

Representing

Academies
Roman Catholic Diocese
16 – 19 Representative
Academies
Early Years Representative
Maintained Special Schools
Maintained Primary Schools
Maintained Primary Governors
Joint Consultative Committee
Alternative Provision
Academies
Maintained Nursery Schools
Academies
Academies
Academies
Special School Academy
Maintained Secondary Schools
Joint Consultative Committee
Maintained Primary Governors

Sara Tough
James Wilson
Michael Bateman
John Crowley
Dawn Filtress
Martin Brock
Jon Nice
Marilyn Edgeley

Executive Director of Children's Services
Director for Sufficiency Planning and Education Strategy
Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Partnership
Assistant Director, Education Intelligence and Effectiveness
Finance Business Partner (Children's Services)
Accountant (Schools, Special Educational Needs, and Early Years)
Senior Advisor
Admin Officer

Apologies:

Daniel Thrower
Hayley Porter-Aslet
Sarah Shirras

The Wensum Trust
Church of England Diocese
St Williams Primary

Academies
Church of England Diocese
Maintained Primary Schools

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies from Sarah Shirras – sub: Alex Griffiths
Daniel Thrower – no sub arranged

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes were accepted as a true record.

- Review of redundancy costs for maintained schools – review ongoing.

- Further information on funding of audits for maintained nursery schools – provided.
- Maintained Nursery Schools – teachers’ pay and pensions grant funding, costing implications for schools with nurseries if they lose this – covered in item 5.
- Minutes from Early Years Consultative Group – have been sent and in future will be published online.
- Work of communications group – covered in item 3.
- Apologies to Mike Grimble that his email was not forwarded to Michael Bateman. Michael B will discuss with Mike Grimble.
- Catering – Forum will have regular updates. The Chair has received an email about a communication that will go out to schools in the form of an MI sheet which will include link to survey. The Chair urged all members to look at the MI sheet when issued and follow link to survey.
- Teachers pay and pensions email & update on what information went out. Officers have received an email and will circulate this to Forum members.

Last handful of schools to update for 2022/23 will be completed by end of month – currently working on 2023/24 data and expect this to be done by March 2024.

Comments:

Members highlighted that if this is different to what was said at last meeting a communication should go out to update schools.

Action: Officers will follow this up.

3. Local First Inclusion

Sara Tough provided an introduction to this item confirming that we wanted to use a longer period of time in the meeting today for LFI as Officers have received additional information from the Department for Education (DfE) that they wish to share with Members.

Sara reminded Schools Forum that the LA supply comprehensive updates to the DfE as part of the tri-annual reporting cycle and these are essentially the LFI monitoring reports which include DSG updates. The last report to DfE (September 2023) showed an increase in EHCPs and a continuing rise in demand for specialist provision ahead of the impact of the work of LFI.

This results in the overall timeline to address in year and cumulative deficit extending by 9 months. The LA had planned to meet with the DfE following the December tri-annual report, following fair funding consultation and our detailed remodelling of the High Needs Block/ DSG. However, the DfE have written to us requesting a meeting this November (noting that the DfE are having similar meetings with other LA’s within the Safety Valve programme).

The DfE need assurance that the combined DfE/NCC investment through LFI will have the results that we planned, to improve outcomes for children and young people whilst doing so in a way that leads to a balanced budget. They need to have ongoing confidence in the Norfolk programme of work.

Sara set out that the session this morning will be based on a briefing of Schools Forum of the latest LFI position and the work to be undertaken prior to the DfE meeting and following within a timeline up to 31st March 2024 when the LA will submit a revised DSG management plan to the DfE.

Sufficient time would be given to a group discussion to ensure that the LA's next steps were informed by Schools Forum's views and that we could take collective action.

Sara also stated that the discussion today follows on from a similar briefing with the LFI Executive Board the previous Friday, with the representatives from Forum on that group, this was an extremely positive meeting.

James Wilson advised that DfE are asking us to refresh the plan to ensure that it remains on track and with revised emphasis within the plan for those elements that need changes. Between now and March the LA will engage with Forum Members and the wider education system as we work through the refresh.

James wanted to be clear that our view is, within the context of LFI being a six-year programme, that the programme itself is now well under way and we have collectively made strong progress in delivering what we said we would do. It was acknowledged that some aspects of the programme will take time to be felt by schools, families and children and that impact of SRBs and AP changes will be felt more into the future.

The LA continues to engage with the independent school sector and there was a reduction in the previous period regarding the rate of new placements. However, overall demand for specialist provision is high and the consequence of this, if not mitigated, is a longer period prior to deficit reduction overall.

A presentation followed that set out information that would be used within the DfE meeting at the end of November and covered the remodelling work to date on the overall HNB/DSG with a focus on specialist placements alongside updated EHCP referral figures, with the latter showing that we had now exceeded 10,000 EHCPs in Norfolk (which is a significant rise in the published figure earlier this year where Norfolk were 4.7% of school age population with EHCP compared to 4.1% nationally). Other information within the slides set out the likely high-level timeline between now and end of March 2024 with the work with the DfE and how Executive Board and Schools Forum would be involved.

A group discussion followed with the key points raised and questions answered:

- What would be the implication of not being able to deliver the financial benefits within current timeline / funding package?

In response: essentially DfE would withdraw the offer of Safety Valve and we would not benefit from the joint investment and the cumulative deficit would not be addressed. The discussions with the DfE which will now commence will likely involve some re-setting of the specific trajectories for Norfolk.

- Is this to some extent about supply creates demand? Can we make sure expectations about places in new special schools are managed so this isn't seen as a way that things will continue. With pent up demand the case could be even worse.

You have created expectations where there are special school places where there weren't before.

In response: the LA are not advertising new places in the same way as before and taking children from current pending lists and balancing need of children with pragmatism of home address / location of school to reduce travel time and reduce travel costs. We need to target the most appropriate and effective placements and promote benefits of local mainstream provision.

- There is an issue around ‘paperwork’ that is used to underpin special school referrals and the impact if these do not reflect up to date EHCP information (following recent annual reviews for example, and/or reflecting latest EP advice) which can lead to ‘inappropriate’ referrals. The LA can help special schools further to ascertain priority for limited placements through more tailored information as part of placement consultation. This occurs within Tribunal cases also and does not help when trying to manage admissions strategically.

In response: The LA recognises the system is ‘panel’ based and the range of work underway through LFI needs to lead to more relationship-based models of engagement to ensure admissions can be managed in a way that meets the challenge of statutory frameworks, best practice and pragmatism for scarce placement resource.

- Operating budgets for special schools are now coming under pressure, with this potentially exacerbated by difference between existing schools and new schools. We have to make sure these special schools continue being successful.

In response: this is similar to the SRB issue earlier this year where we referenced the fact that was a difference between the existing SRBs and the new ones coming online, with the new ones benefitting from a new funding model that recognises inflation. We need to address in the LFI programme and make sure these schools are financially sustainable and support them.

- Referral rates are really variable across the county. How much analysis has gone into this and into the strategic plan of actions?

In response: we can go further on that and think together about having conversations in a structured way. Whether we have zone-based conversations or more individually targeted – how we do it is for discussion but agree should be part of the programme. The refreshed LFI plan is likely to include a specific proposal for how we can use this data collectively as a system, highlighting the differential levels of referral and outcome, and support and challenge appropriately

- Issue of medical services and GPs encouraging referrals in the way educationalists are not.

In response: the future state will be an integrated front door. This will give us the opportunity to engage directly with GPs or other professionals to be part of deciding the right route. We all need to think carefully how we have communications with GPs about how we communicate positively with them to advise parents appropriately.

- New 'free at the point of delivery' service through School & Community teams is welcome. However, this has occurred at a time when there has been a temporary freeze on the traded part of Educational Psychology and Specialist Teacher service. Therefore, school leaders would appreciate advice on where to access other educational psychological support.
- We have to be clear if the latest high EHCP referral rates and associated specialist provision requests is 'a blip' or if this signals a new higher rate of need in absolute terms. Therefore, a need to ensure that we can manage parental expectations alongside parental confidence and only develop the range of specialist provision that is needed in absolute not relative terms.

Action – Michael B to share slides with Forum Members following this meeting.

4. Schools Block Transfer and Notional SEN

4a. Schools Block Transfer

- **Consider and comment on the proposed changes to the distribution formula of the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant**

There were no comments from members.

- **Consider the feedback from the autumn 2023 Fair Funding Consultation**

There were no comments from members.

- **Vote on continuation of the movement of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2024-25**

Vote: Unanimously agreed.

- **Vote on the potential movement of additional funding (an additional 1%) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2024-25 and provide a clear indication as a Forum as to whether such a movement is supported.**

Members Comments with LA responses in italics:

- Honesty of people saying they will do this in the interests of the system.
- A more co-ordinated approach to the responses.
- It was noted that people could respond to consultation without saying who they were.

- No choice – got to give our approval but shocking that in supporting the LFI programme Members felt they had no choice but to support this. Don't think that it is right they are expecting this movement to take place. It is noted that although this was not a Forum decision the DfE want a view as to whether or not Forum supports the movement of the additional 1% and the disapplication request.

In response, the LA's understanding Secretary of State will not release their funds without having a vote recorded from Schools Forum supporting the transfer and that is their way of holding the school system to account. There is a requirement for the LA to make an investment and it is their way of saying that schools are equally accountable for delivering this.

- Money moving from one place to the other while schools still under pressure financially.
- 1.5% is £10m at the end of the Safety Valve process.
- This is an investment in inclusion, disappointed about element 3 funding potentially being reduced because where we have got schools that are heavily incentivised to be inclusive and have done fantastic things and to reduce that because other schools aren't being inclusive is significant. Not talked about holding schools not being inclusive to account.

In response: Suggested seeing the 1% as investment into early intervention. If the plan is working correctly, schools get much more back than funding taken away through the block transfer. It was clarified that there is no reduction in Element 3 funding; indeed, there is substantial investment, albeit the LA recognises that the potential rise in Notional SEN threshold will change the conversation with some schools about access to Element 3.

- How do we hold schools to account – NCC needs more bite around this.
In response: we do challenge schools and trusts on exclusions data, but this is only part of the picture. Over a 6-year period if transfer happens £64m comes out and £309m comes back, element 3, SRB's. It's right to link that to the support and challenge concept.
- This year the consultation responses show a greater understanding of the system as a whole.
- Projecting confidence to Government is important. However, there will be a lack of confidence in the vote next year and following years if improvements don't materialise. Then people sitting here will have difficulty going against that consultation response.

Vote - Unanimously agreed

Officers wanted it recorded that they thanked Schools Forum for their decision and said it was a huge vote of confidence in the programme and for sustaining the effort despite it being hard.

The Chair said it was a reflection of the positivity they want to express and also the understanding that this really is the last chance to deal with the HN Block deficit.

- It was commented that although the LFI programme received positive support only a small number of school leaders outside of those on Forum had commented, and so there remains a challenge in communicating and securing buy-in from across the whole education system.
- Late notification of briefings was highlighted as potentially resulting in poor attendance.
- The documentation sent out was of a better quality this year.

4b. Notional SEN

Due to the limited number of responses from the survey the LA is unable to draw any conclusion as to the view of the school system.

Therefore, the LA recommend that we do move to Option 2 and begin incremental moves to the national average from April 2024 at 1% change in Year 1 of a 3-year change.

Members comments with responses in italics

- What will the difference look like in schools with that percentage change?
In response: technical papers illustrate this at school level. Key point is that it does not change the funding allocation a school receives but changes the conversation when you ask to access other funding.

- Do all Heads understand that and the whole notion of Notional SEN?

In response: no but the LA has gone to great lengths to try to explain it.

- Wording used by the LA last year on different topic was that if there wasn't a consensus from Forum then the LA would retain the status quo.

In response: This is a different situation and the LA's view is that the situation with Notional SEN has changed as the DfE expects all Safety Valve authorities to take on board the new national guidance.

Vote on Option 2

For 18

Against 1

Abstentions 0

5. Remaining School Block Decisions

5a. Funding Cap / Sparsity Funding:

From the consultation responses, the status quo did not come through as the preferred option but no clear consensus on the other options. The paper provides a view on the LA's suggested option. The decision is with County Council Members at the end of January, NCC Members usually go with Forum's recommendation.

Members comments with responses in Italics:

- Clear preference for option 2, option 4 creates more disruption.
- The LA was asked to explain why the survey results appeared to favour option 2 but the LA was stating that there was no clear consensus and suggesting option 4 to the Forum

In response: The results are different depending upon the 'lens' that they are viewed through (school, pupil or response) and the responses received were more from schools affected by the sparsity funding cap issue, which may mean that those unaffected do not fully understand the implications of the proposals and have not engaged with the survey and the LA needs to consider what would be the fairest option for all schools. Option 4 treats all gains fairly and will mean that any school newly becoming eligible for sparsity funding would see gains in 24-25, whereas Option 2 would favour sparsity gains over other gains and only those schools eligible for sparsity funding in 23-24 would have MFG applications. Option 4, therefore, means that all schools are impacted proportionately by the Schools Block transfer to the High Needs Block.

- What is going to happen to the National Funding Formula? DfE does not seem to be in any hurry to move to the hard National Funding Formula. A lot of LAs are not even mirroring currently. Option 4 is closer to what would happen normally. I am in favour of Option 4.
- Impact is that the schools that qualify for the sparsity factor have received no benefit at all, they have lost it all in the MFG. So, with the way MFG works it is going to be 50 years before they see any benefit from sparsity.

In response: option 4 it would be the most beneficial for those schools affected by caps for any gains as the cap on gains would be removed completely.

Forum were asked to vote for their preferred option:

Option 1 Hard cap on gains – 0 votes

Option 2 MFG adjustments – 3 votes

Option 3 Scaling/capping – 0 votes

Option 4 Reduce unit values and remove cap – 15 votes

1 Abstention

5b. Falling Rolls

The LA does not recommend setting up a falling rolls fund at this time. At this point in time no evidence that any school would meet the required criteria.

On this basis, the LA does not recommend that Norfolk's 2024-25 funding formula operates a Falling Rolls fund, but that this is reviewed annually by the LA and Schools Forum.

Unanimously agreed

5c. Maintained Schools' Audits – Consultation

Members comments with responses in italics:

- Do not support this after realising that schools can choose their own provider.
- Norfolk Audit Services (NAS) are short staffed – can only do about 20 audits a year.

In response: Conversations with NAS are taking place as to how this would be delivered if there was a decision for a top-slice approach, but also how the level of demand will be met if we stay with the status quo.

- Quality of audit and how effective it is. Not capacity long term.

In response: At this time limited resources, the LA would look at putting that in place if there is a decision that is required.

- Papers state £300 per year per school. Our school spends £1,200 per year on audits. If you put both into one financial year that is the difference for a small school between a surplus and a deficit.
- Where does it sit for LA in terms of level of risk?

In response: risk considerations are far more than just the financial element. Financial RAG rating is a part of that, including intervention and support. Have had conversations with NAS around what that offer will look like in the future and where does the teeth come in if a school is not accessing audits.

- Everyone else audits every year, schools only every 5 years – this is what needs to change.
- Whilst schools are in charge of deciding to have an audit that they have to pay for when money is tight, they are not going to choose it.
- The Chair said that he thought Forum should make a recommendation at this meeting today.

**The maintained Schools Forum members are asked:
Make a recommendation for whether or not Maintained Schools' Audits should be charged to maintained schools' budget shares in 2024-25, considering feedback from the autumn 2023 Fair Funding Consultation.**

There was unanimous agreement not to top-slice maintained schools budget shares for 2024-25.

6. Early Years Funding

Following the LA's autumn Early Years consultation survey, the LA is now seeking a recommendation from Schools Forum to guide the formula for 2024-25. Final proposals will be brought to the next Forum meeting. Norfolk County Council's Cabinet will make the final decisions on 29 January 2024.

Norfolk will receive £7.4m of new funding across the lifetime of the project. The LA are advertising for expressions of interest from providers who want to join the consultative executive group to shape how we roll this out.

There was a request for representation from this group to provide a link to Forum. Joanna Tuttle and Sarah Porter volunteered to undertake this role. Carolyn Ellis-Gedge agreed to identify a representative from the special schools' sector.

After considering the consultation responses, the LA's proposal is that we have the same approach across all funding and remove all optional supplements leaving just the statutory deprivation supplement.

The LA also asked how we should fund central costs and after considering the consultation results, the LA approach is that all funding streams should contribute an equal percentage, at the minimum level required to fund centralised support.

Teachers Pay and Pensions Grant (TPPG) – the conclusion was that, in line with other decisions, the best way forward would be to consolidate TPPG funding within the base rate so it is equally distributed to all providers.

SENI Fund – consensus was that this should be increased.

Members comments with responses in italics:

- Information in the paper very useful
- Good responses – key was having good early years consultation group.
- Is the assumption that central costs will continue to be looked at because they may need increasing because of the changing age group and is it around administration more than anything?

In response: the top slice is used to understand the requirements, administer the funding and support the sector in meeting current and new requirements. The simpler the model, the less we spend on administering. Officers said they think Early Years Pupil Premium and the DAF funding will be equally applied to the year groups.

- TPPG – how many schools will it affect?

In response: page 57 of paper shows there are 5 different scenarios, this applies to all providers. In terms of removal of TPPG there is one provider who will lose 12p, 57

that will lose 2p, everyone else gains between a 2p and 22p. 102 providers will get 22p increase based on the assumptions in the paper.

- Could be significant in some schools.

In response, most schools are not receiving this currently.

Recommendations

- a. Does Schools Forum agree that our new formula approach will take the same approach for supplements across all funding streams and only include mandatory supplements?

Unanimously Agreed

- b. Does Schools Forum agree that we should top slice all funding streams equally, and at the minimum level, to fund central costs?

Unanimously Agreed

- c. Does Schools Forum agree that we should consolidate TPPG funding within the base rate to distribute to all providers?

For 17

Against 1

Abstain 1

- d. Does Schools Forum agree that we should increase the SENIF fund to meet the increase in demand. (Rates to be determined once the Norfolk DSG allocation is known)

Unanimously Agreed

7. Special Schools Funding

The report summarises the responses to the autumn 2023 consultation with Norfolk Schools in relation to the Special Schools Funding formula specifically in relation to GCSE provision from April 2024.

The LA are requesting, in line with DfE guidelines, that a view rather than a recommendation (as stated in the paper) be expressed from Forum.

The important thing to state is a that this should not be seen as just impacting on Special Schools. It was noted from the consultation that Special Schools support option 1 but responses show lack of support for this from mainstream sector.

Members comments with responses in italics

- Interesting view and goes back to contextualised information provided within the technical papers; not entirely sure most people understand how special Schools are funded. Special Schools are funded on a place value. Beyond that there is an individuality around a child's needs done through audit. Important thing around audit is about need not provision. Are current funding arrangements actually relatively discriminatory, in that we are limiting their expectations and options and removing destination planning for these young people? Why we are

asking people to consider the GCSE issue is because there are 30 – 40 children in this group, it is not a small group. Saying this would come from our current funding has created a divisive rift between those schools that do GCSE's and those that don't. The whole process has not been particularly helpful. Our children should be allowed options. We all have increased costs with regards to exams. I don't feel the papers were appropriate that they gave the information and think there was dis-information placed there.

- Why GCSE, what about funding for other things – are we creating a precedence?
- Goes back to what do you fund. Could be funding beyond the class-based capacity.
- Question about whether the whole funding needs to be looked at.
- View given that, yes, if it is based on need not provision based on the quality of EHCPs and the evidence; this is a flawed system.
- It is not a provision-based view.
- Our costs are not as high as special schools, but we are funding out of our AWPA so specifically for GCSEs seems slightly unfair to mainstream schools.
- There is no differentiating between the banding based on age for special schools.
- Since initial funding was looked at, special schools have changed and diversified - something to consider one type of additional need can generate x funding. This is about equity within the model, the fundamental issue is facing us all. Soon there will be 18 schools - this is pushing the model all the time.
- Risk of precedent at such a micro level in one area of education with this. All schools making difficult choices over curriculum and opens door to counter claims.
- All discussions about not enough money in the system to provide what we need for young people in Norfolk and agree we have got such variety in our special school system. Because of that, and thinking about the outcomes, if you have invested this money into these new special schools, what is it that you expect is going to give you value for money. If it is young people having GCSEs, that needs to be invested in. You can't just say all special schools need this amount of funding. There is so much individual detail needs to be addressed as a whole thing rather than in sections.
- If we are paying the same rate throughout the whole of those pupils lives that is completely different to how main school funding works; small amount of money to improve the equality across education.

In response: the decision to make today is around GCSEs, but the LA can commit to a wider review on how this works for next year.

- Agree would get more unity of views from Forum if looked at as a more general funding issue.
- Echo feeling in the room lots of valid points from different sides. Now get recognition that there is real concern around changing profiles of special schools and what expectations there are for outcomes so we are suggesting as a group from what's been said that discussions need to happen on a wider level, and if we have a commitment from NCC that this will happen in a timely manner then that is a positive outcome from this morning.
- It was highlighted that residential provision is still to be discussed at a future date. Point made discussion needs to be with non-special school representatives as well.

It was noted this was a vote for a preferred view.

Schools Forum voted on whether the special schools' funding formula for 2024/25 could be amended in respect of GCSE provision.

For	7
Against	9
Abstain	2

8. De-delegation/Central School Services Block

Schools Forum members are asked to decide on the de-delegation of services relevant to their sector and to approve the level of growth fund and growth criteria for 2024-25 and to approve the funding of central services from the Central Services Block for 2024-25.

Forum decisions are as follows:

- 1a Unanimously Agreed – primary staff costs de-delegation
- 1b No– secondary staff costs de-delegation
- 2a Unanimously Agreed – primary FSM eligibility de-delegation
- 2b Unanimously Agreed – secondary FSM eligibility de-delegation
- 3a Decision deferred – special schools buyback of services, need decision by end of year
- 3b Agreed to remove this decision, trusts decide separately on this issue
- 4 Unanimously Agreed – nursery schools buyback of services
- 5a Unanimously Agreed – growth fund

Members comments with responses in italics

- in principle fine, concerned as to whether it's sufficient in certain areas.

In response: this is what the LA expects to be reasonable.

The Growth Fund is always challenging; in the past, the view of Forum was that this needs to be prudent; if overspent goes against overall DSG position.

- 5b Unanimously agreed – growth criteria
- 6a Unanimously agreed – admissions funding (ongoing central functions)
- 6b Unanimously agreed – Forum budget (ongoing central functions)
- 6c Unanimously agreed – boarding fees (ongoing central functions)
- 7 Unanimously agreed – responsibilities held for all schools from CSS

Block

Members comments

- Members asked if there should still be a budget for PATHS?

Action: Michael B to check that PATHS does not exist anymore

9. Review 2023-24 Future Meeting Plan

Election of Chair/Vice Chair of Forum will take place at the January meeting. Any member who is interested in either role, and wishes to discuss this, can contact James Wilson.

10. AOB

None

11. Next meeting 26 January 2024 – 09:00 – 12:00 Cranworth Room County Hall.

Schools Forum

Item No. 4

Report title:	Schools Forum Membership
Date of meeting:	26 January 2024

Executive summary

The Local Authority is required to review the membership of Schools Forum on a regular basis in line with updated pupil numbers. The representation for mainstream schools remains broadly proportionate based on the October 2023 census data. This paper is for information only and no changes are required to membership at this time.

Schools Forum Structure

The membership of Schools Forum needs to reflect the proportion of pupil numbers in the different school sectors as per the Schools Forums (England) regulations 2012.

Although there has been a small increase in the proportion of academy pupils since the structure of Schools Forum was last reviewed in January 2023 the representation for mainstream schools remains broadly proportionate based on the latest split of maintained and academy pupil numbers and number of mainstream schools members.

Minimum Requirements

Schools members – Must be at least 2/3rd of Schools Forum membership

Where the local authority maintains the following type of schools they should each be represented on the Schools Forum:

- Primary Schools
- Secondary Schools
- Special Schools
- Nursery Schools
- PRUs

For each group above the representation can be made up or Headteachers (or their representative) and/or Governors.

There must also be representation (if such exists in the local authority area) for:

- Mainstream academies including free schools, UTCs, and Studio Schools
- Special academies including free schools
- Alternative Provision academies including free schools

Academy representation is not restricted to principals, senior staff or governors.

Primary schools, secondary schools and academies must be broadly proportionately represented on schools forum, based on the total number of pupils registered at them.

Non-school members – Must be no more than 1/3rd of Schools Forum membership

- 1 16-19 representative
- 1 Early Years PVI representative

Before considering other groups, the local authority must consider diocesan representation.

Any relevant person may represent these non-school groups.

Current Representation

School members – 15 members

- 1 Primary maintained Headteachers
- 2 Primary maintained Governors
- 1 Secondary maintained school representative
- 7 Academy representatives
- 1 Special School Headteacher
- 1 Nursery School Headteacher or Governor
- 1 Special School Academy representative
- 1 AP Academy representative

Non School members – Up to 6 members

- 1 16-19 representative
- 1 Early Years PVI representative
- 1 C of E Diocesan Rep
- 1 Roman Catholic Rep
- 1 JCC Primary Rep
- 1 JCC Secondary Rep

Therefore, as required, at least two-thirds of Schools Forum members are schools/academy members.

Check of mainstream schools' representation based on pupil numbers from October 2023 census:

Primary Maintained	29,210	= 27.08%
Secondary Maintained	1,133	= 1.05%
Primary and Secondary Academies	77,518	= 71.87%

Total 107,861

Schools Forum currently has a total of 11 school members for maintained primary schools, maintained secondary schools and mainstream academies.

The latest mainstream pupil numbers from the October 2023 Census give the following proportions for representation (out of 11 mainstream school members):

2.98 primary representatives (currently Schools Forum has 3 representatives, so this is broadly proportionate)

0.12 secondary representatives (there must be at least 1 representative so current membership is correct)

7.91 academy representatives (currently Schools Forum has 7 mainstream academy representatives so this is still broadly proportionate but may need to be reviewed in future years if the proportion of pupils in mainstream academies increases further and the proportion in primary maintained schools decreases)

Schools Forum is asked to note the information provided.

Schools Forum

Item No. 5

Report title:	Local First Inclusion
Date of meeting:	26 January 2024

Executive summary

Previous reports to Schools Forum for Local First Inclusion (LFI) have been based on the regular, 'Tri-annual', reports to the DfE as part of their 'safety valve' reporting framework. However, a Tri-annual report was not required by the DfE in December 2023 because, since October 2023, Norfolk has been engaged with the DfE as part of their enhanced monitoring and support process which will result in the submission of a revised DSG recovery plan by 31st March 2024.

Therefore, the report to January 2024 Schools Forum is focussed on providing the context for this process, the 'stock-take' we are under-taking across the LFI programme and the DSG remodelling work currently underway. There is also a summary of key achievements and next steps across the Local First Inclusion programme.

Due to the nature of the ongoing discussions with the DfE, we will provide the latest updates within a slide-deck presentation within the January Schools' Forum meeting.

Schools Forum are asked to:

1. Note the process of enhanced, monitoring and support, related 'stock-take' and the comprehensive refresh and remodelling work taking place up to 31 March 2024
2. Provide comment, support and challenge regarding the next steps plans for the Local First Inclusion programme
3. Provide comment, support and challenge regarding the DSG remodelling work

1. Enhanced Monitoring & Support (EMS)

The DfE wrote to the LA in October 2023 setting out the need to enter a period of enhanced monitoring and support following on from the submission of our second Tri-annual report in September 2023.

We had provided information within that report to the DfE, based on the briefing to Schools Forum in July 2023, that whilst the Local First Inclusion programme had been established as planned there were some indicators that meant we needed to revisit the financial modelling assumptions.

Below is an extract from the letter from the DfE explaining the process:

As you are aware, the DfE enters into Safety Valve agreements with local authorities under the expectation that the commitments set out in their agreement will be met, and in turn provides the authority with additional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) payments to help eliminate the accumulated historic deficit. In all Safety Valve agreements, there is an expectation that (taking account of the funding from DfE) the deficit will have been eradicated by the end of the agreement period.

Norfolk's recent monitoring report stated that the local authority is off track with the delivery of its Safety Valve agreement and is:

- Forecasting a cumulative deficit of £11.8m in 2028-29
- Expected to balance the overall deficit in 8 years, as opposed to the agreed position of 7 years

The EMS programme within Safety Valve is designed to allow a local authority time to produce an updated or revised DSG management plan to get the agreement back on track, with support and challenge from Safety Valve SEND and financial advisors. There is no scope to renegotiate the funding attached to your Safety Valve agreement as part of this process.

- Show that Norfolk will return to an in-year balance as quickly as possible, and that any deficit growth in the meantime is reduced as far as possible;
- Be stretching but deliverable for Norfolk, as tested by our expert ex-local authority CFO advisors and DfE SEND advisors;
- Eradicate the DSG deficit by the end of the agreement period (including DfE funding as set out in the original agreement).

As part of this process we have met with the DfE on two occasions to date, 27th November and 18th December, and further meetings are planned during the spring term and in advance of 31st March and the submission of a revised plan.

We have been able to engage School Forum representatives within the Local First Inclusion Executive Board regarding the meetings to date, setting out the engagement with the DfE financial advisers (x2) and SEND advisers (x2) and the need to provide updated 'pupil flow' information to illustrate mitigation of risks linked to special school referrals and the impact of ongoing high EHCP referrals. We will provide further information within a slide-deck presentation at the January Schools Forum meeting.

2. Local First Inclusion 'Stock-take'

We signalled in our July and September updates to Schools Forum, and within our September Tri-annual report to the DfE, that we would be undertaking a review of the Local First Inclusion programme to understand further potential impact on the finance risk mitigations. This 'stock-take' of activity across the LFI programme is core within our current work with the DfE and is summarised below:

flourish SEND NORFOLK Norfolk County Council

SEND Strategic Improvement: 'Stock-take'

- Area SEND & AP Strategy
- Local First Inclusion
- Courageous Conversation

Safety Valve activity is explicitly part of our Local First Inclusion programme...
...and is complemented through our ongoing Area SEND & AP Strategy partnership working...and informed by recent peer review 'courageous conversations'

- DfE SEND & AP Improvement Plan

All Norfolk SEND strategic improvement is sense checked against national plan to ensure alignment as necessary / possible

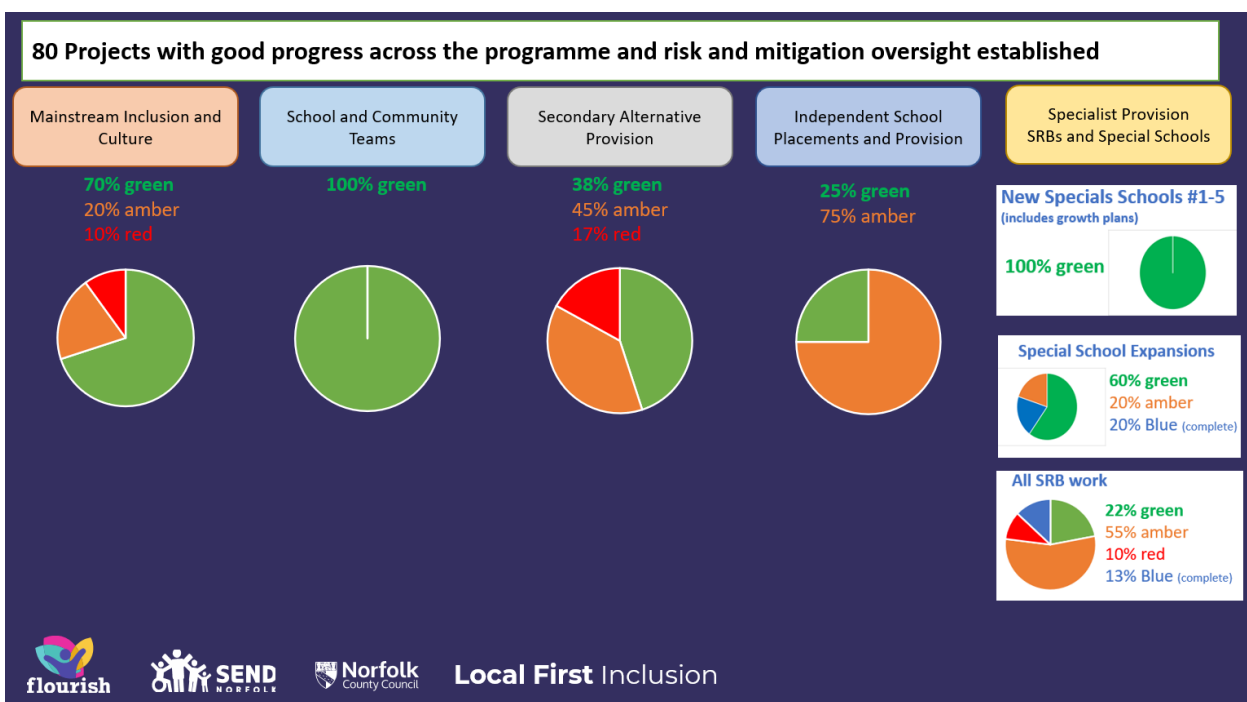
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Local First Inclusion stock-take and £re-modelling timeline

- October 2023 to January 2024: stock-take
- December 2023 to March 2024: £re-modelling

Local First Inclusion

We have provided the DfE with high level information regarding the progress of our five workstreams across Local First Inclusion and making the point that benefits, both in terms of improved outcomes for children and young people and in terms of financial risk mitigation, were always assumed to flow in the middle/late years of the programme.



Workstream progress								
	Defined scope	Projects resourced	Detailed Analysis	Sector engagement	Pilot	Operational	Test and Learn	Benefit Delivery
Mainstream Inclusion and Culture	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	Some elements operational		starting
School and Community Teams	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	starting
Secondary Alternative Provision	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ Pilot early 2024			
Independent School Placements and Provision	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	Some elements operational		starting
Specialist Provision SRBs and Special Schools	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	Places being delivered		starting

We have ensured that the DfE are aware of the significant work undertaken to provide more funding to mainstream schools within 'Element 3' and alongside this the roll-out of School and Community Teams. The development of specialist provision is a mixed picture, with some new provision up and running from earlier phases of SEND transformation activity but with a slower pace than modelled for new primary and secondary 'phase 2' SRBs. However, our engagement with the independent sector is providing finance benefits in advance of all new specialist provision being developed and we have secured DfE funding for two new special schools and they are currently responsible for delivery of those schemes in time for September 2026 opening.

1st stage achievements – implementing our workstreams and projects in line with timeline and scheduling

Mainstream Inclusion and Culture	School and Community Teams	Secondary Alternative Provision	Independent School Placements and Provision	Specialist Provision SRBs and Special Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 95% of mainstream schools (primary and secondary) signed up to INDES & IPSEF approach Revised Element 3 funding guidance issued with a focus on access within SEN Support cohort – significant increase in spend (approx. £30m compared to £20m previous year) to pump prime early intervention A common vision for mainstream inclusion and full alignment between Local First Inclusion and co-produced Norfolk Area SEND & AP Strategy refresh (2024-2029). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 School & Community Teams launched 92% of recruitment achieved at 1st stage and 2nd stage to move to 100% underway - 90+ staff operational wef September 2023 Delivered 103 Core Consultations with Educational Psychology with S&C Teams combined Supported 116 schools with IAG & interventions at individual pupil level Supported 165 families to ensure join up between access to curriculum and home support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary school leaders (principals and CEO level) engaged in School Led AP model design 10 X 18 AP Units + original 270 PEX prevention 'places' School Led AP Model mirrors DfE SEND & AP Improvement Plan 3 Tiers model Norfolk approach supported by sector specialists (e.g., Mark Vickers) and will complement / lead the national 'pathfinder' LA approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network of 35 independent schools engaged in LFI alongside BAU 2 X schools (220+ pupils) currently trialling 'open-book' approach to test their operating model against Good state-funded at half the price Full open-book approach rolling out from Spring Term with new 'negotiator' team BAU fee increase requests challenged 'line by line' resulting in reduction, e.g., largest cohort school requested 11% fee increase and we negotiated down to 5% increase 	<p>Phase 1 special schools and specialist resource bases open and approaching full capacity in line with growth plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 370 extra special school places 76 (growing to 178) SRB places <p>Phase 2 special schools and specialist resource bases moving through formal consultation / build stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 270 special school places 114 (growing to 210) SRB places primary 180 secondary SRB places Expression of Interest stage

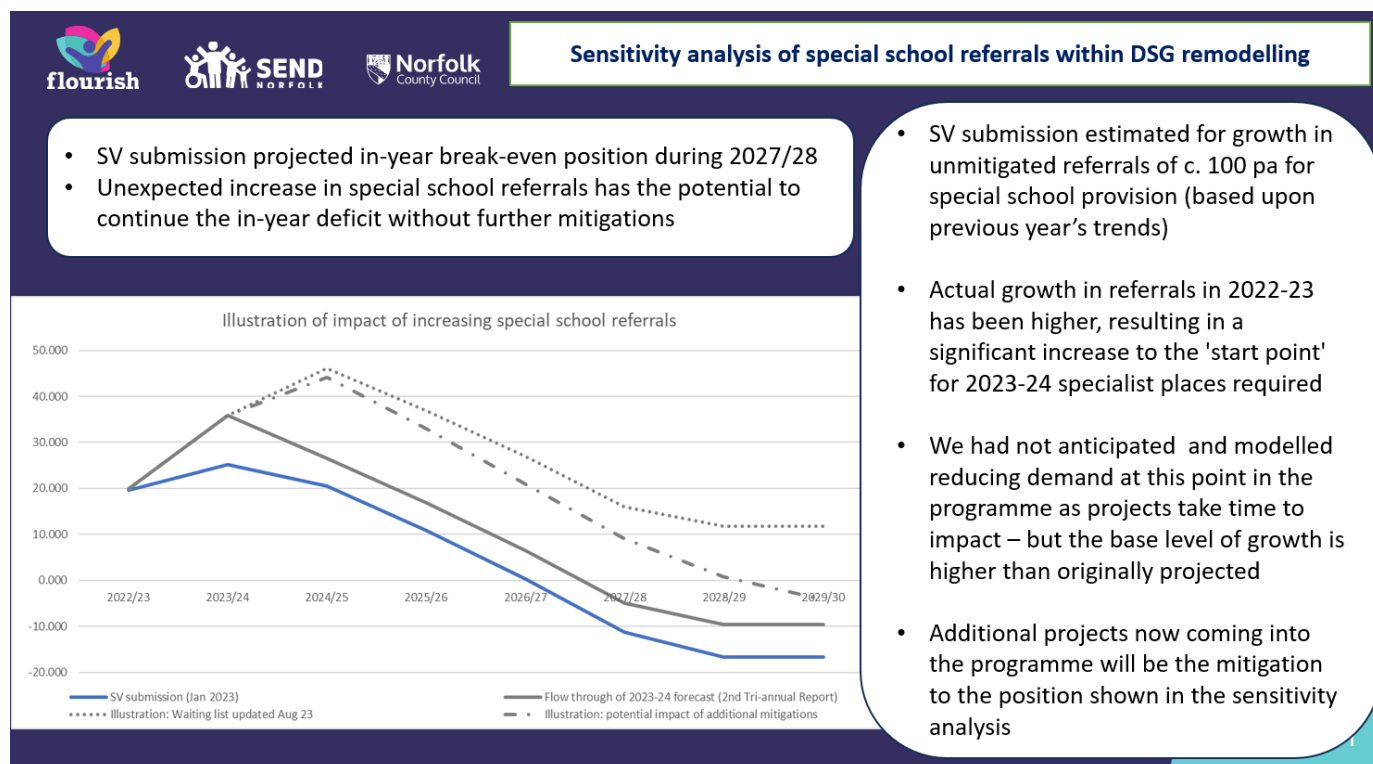
Continuous cycle of review – combining scheduled projects with new actions informed by stock-take

Mainstream Inclusion and Culture	School and Community Teams	Secondary Alternative Provision	Independent School Placements and Provision	Specialist Provision SRBs and Special Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewed focus - LA and School Leaders (spearheaded by Schools Forum and Educate Norfolk reps) - to ensure SEN Support is consistent and high quality to directly increase parental confidence 2nd stage of 15 x Zones roll-out focussed on peer-to-peer school leader support & challenge, facilitated by new Zone Inclusion Ratings Data Packs Innovating ahead of national SEND & AP changes i.e. approach to interpretation of legal test/thresholds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New SEND 'Front-Door' – managing demand through effective triage and early support for both SEND & PEX 2nd stage of 15 x Zone roll-out will include alignment of health services, e.g., SALT delivery e.g., SALT, GP/Consultant referrals via triage Analysis of <i>relative</i> need 'vs' <i>absolute</i> need with outcome directing partnership work with PCF to determine parental <i>expectations</i> 'vs' parental <i>confidence</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed Moves revised protocol led by LA to reduce PEX and 'deflect' cohort away from 'PRU'. Building on evidence base that LA facilitated managed moves lead to sustained placement compared to school-led managed moves Directly influencing individual school / MAT behaviour policy, e.g., one-off serious incident where no pattern of previous behaviour issues 10 X AP unit pilots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted casework and 'marketing' for first refusal to parents of children in current independent schools to move to Good/Outstanding state funded provision ahead of aging out process Dual registration of state-funded special and mainstream to transfer with 'soft landing' following key stage review Adapt and adopt learning from 'pathfinder' LA's – to complement our full roll out of Open Book approach to fees reduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced School to School (S2S) outreach model from special school to mainstream, specialist partner outreach deployed at Zone level (complex needs) and countywide level (ASD/SEMH) Development of new special school MAT directly aligned to Local First Inclusion and Area SEND & AP Strategy Special school consultation model 'filter' between parental preference and professional consensus.

4. DSG Remodelling & Next Steps

We are continuing to analyse all 'pupil flow' information to determine the impact of current referrals for EHCP and special schools and how our new offers of support within mainstream schools will affect provision and costs across the LFI programme. We have shared, and updated, the 'sensitivity analysis' with the DfE that we first explored with Schools Forum in July 2023.

The updated version of this, below, illustrates the way that we need to continue our efforts to ensure there is a greater supply of state-funded special school provision alongside greater and more consistent mainstream inclusion.



We are also providing detailed reports to NCC Cabinet, as part of current budget cycle, and will provide reports regularly to both Scrutiny and People & Communities committees. A report to NCC Cabinet on 29th January 2024 sets out the latest budget position for the High Needs Block, following fair funding consultation process and Secretary of State decision making regarding Schools Block to High Needs Block transfer. Within the Cabinet report we have confirmed the following:

The financial modelling for the DSG recovery plan submitted as part of the Safety Valve agreement was based upon the best available information at the time of preparation, including projected transformation over a number of years, many at the early stages of planning due to the short-timescale for the development of the plan with the DfE. Since the plan was submitted and agreed, additional pressures (including significant inflationary pressures) have been experienced, as well as continuing increases in demand for support to meet high levels of special educational needs. Significant work has also been

undertaken to develop the transformation programme and the detailed projects within it, including reviewing and revising the costs and benefits projections as the detail takes shape. The agreed multi-year plan has been shared in previous reports.

The financial modelling of the multi-year DSG recovery plan is complex, with many aspects not entirely under the control of the local authority, such as demand for specialist provision, independent sector placement charges and the medium-to-longer term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon high needs including alternative provision. Therefore, a significant proportion of initial work for the programme has been engaging very large numbers of partners in the systems, such as schools and academy trusts in Norfolk, to enable the scale of change required over a number of years to be delivered.

It was always expected that the initial years of the recovery plan would actually see an increase in in-year deficits prior to a reduction and, ultimately, break-even / surpluses. This is to enable investment in earlier help and inclusion, particularly within mainstream settings, prior to the benefits of both the capital and revenue investment being realised.

The scale of the challenge faced by Norfolk within the current funding arrangements from the Government cannot be understated. The high-level medium-term plan is shown in the table overleaf.

The Local Authority submitted a disapplication of regulations request to the Secretary of State in November 2023 requesting a further 1% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2024/25, in line with the 'safety valve' plan modelling. This request is equivalent to £6.354m and the application has been approved and is in addition to the 0.5% approved by Norfolk Schools Forum.

The current financial year outturn forecast, 2023/24, is £34.9m overspend at the end of period 8 (end of November 2023).

The High Needs block allocation generated by National Funding Formula for 2024-25 is £142.155m, an increase of £6.509m (4.8%) from £135.646m in 2023-24 (as at the November 2023 DSG update).

The increase of £6.509m between years includes an increase of £1.650m based on the number of pupils in special schools (including independent), up from 2,638 to 2,992 pupils. The remaining increase, £4.859m, is due to previously announced and expected DSG increases through the High Needs National Funding Formula for 2024-25.

A transfer of 1.5%, c£9.532m, from the Schools Block (0.5% agreed by Schools Forum and additional 1% approved by Secretary of State following a disapplication request by the LA), increases the total amount available for High Needs Block in 2024-25 to £151.687m.

The total funding available for the High Needs Block for 2024-25, after block transfer, is £151.687m.

Given the scale of the challenge, the Local First Inclusion programme is complex, with 80 individual projects across five over-arching workstreams. The programme started formally in April 2023 and significant progress has been achieved across the programme. However, as would be expected with a six-year programme of activity the benefits, to children and young people and to the budget, are planned to accrue throughout the period 2023 to 2029 and in the short-term the pressures continue. Indeed, the referrals for Education Health & Care Plans are continuing to rise at record levels. Additionally, inflation levels have been significantly higher than expected bringing additional cost pressures throughout the education system, as seen elsewhere.

Norfolk has entered into a period of enhanced monitoring and support with the DfE (from October 2023 to March 2024) to ensure that our plan remains on track. We are currently undertaking a ‘stock-take’ of all activity across the programme to review the future years’ modelling alongside a comprehensive programme refresh that will identify new initiatives and mitigations that will revise the trajectories and introduce new initiatives with the aim of bringing the plan back on track to ensure that the joint DfE and NCC investment continues to address the needs of children and young people and addressing the underlying budgetary pressures.

Taking into account that comprehensive work is being undertaken to review the DSG recovery plan at the time of preparation of this report, the proposed High Needs Block budget for 2024-25 based upon the current trends projected forward, which will be revised once the review work is complete to ensure that the plan can be kept on track.

A deficit budget for 2024-25 is required to reflect the revenue invest-to-save activity agreed as part of the multi-year to return to a balanced in year position in the future (through the Local First Inclusion programme), along with the current demand for high needs, specialist education placements and provision, particularly independent provision, exceeding the funds available.

The table below shares those current 2024-25 projections as the proposed budget alongside the 2023-24 forecast, as at the end of November 2023, for comparison.

	2023-24	2024-25
High Needs Block	£m	£m
High Needs Block DSG Income	-135.646	-142.155
1.5% Schools Block transfer	-9.015	-9.532
Total income	-144.662	-151.687
Maintained / Academy / Free Special Schools	54.181	59.636
Specialist Resource Bases & Deaf Resource Bases	7.883	10.088
Independent Special Schools	47.839	44.482
Alternative Provision	2.415	3.035
Short Stay Schools	7.825	7.202
Post-16 (Further Education)	9.376	10.835
Other Provisions	6.335	7.853
Inclusion fund (including mainstream SEN / EHCP support)	31.460	34.658

Speech & Language, Sensory, YOT, CAMHS	3.560	3.780
High Needs Inclusion Infrastructure, cluster teams inc. parent link workers	5.911	7.001
Other, including TPG/TPECG, H&SC levy and new school start-up costs	2.739	2.660
Total Expenditure	179.524	191.230
In-year +deficit/-surplus	34.863	39.543
Cumulative Balance without contributions from DfE and LA	108.739	148.282
Cumulative Contributions:		
DfE Cumulative Contributions	-30.000	-40.000
NCC Cumulative Contributions	-5.500	-11.000
Cumulative Deficit Balance	73.239	97.282
Total DSG Reserves Forecast:		
Schools/CSS Block Forecast Variances for 23-24 (added for both years)	0.045	0.045
Total Forecast DSG Deficit on Reserves	73.284	97.327

We will provide a further update on this work during the Schools Forum discussion in January.

5. Schools Forum are asked to:

1. Note the process of EMS (enhanced, monitoring and support) and related 'stock-take' and DSG remodelling work taking place up to 31 March 2024
2. Provide comment, support and challenge regarding the next steps plans for the Local First Inclusion programme
3. Provide comment, support and challenge regarding the DSG remodelling work

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained or want to see copies of any assessments, e.g. equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper, please get in touch with:

Officer Name: Michael Bateman **Tel No:** 01603 307502 **Email address:** michael.bateman@norfolk.gov.uk



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Schools Forum

Item No. 6

Report title:	Proposed Schools Budget 2024-25
Date of meeting:	26 January 2024

Executive summary

Schools Forum is asked to:

- Note information provided for the 2024-25 Dedicated Schools Block allocations and other DfE grants (Sections 1 and 2);
- Note the funding announcements in relation to High Needs Block (Section 3);
- Note the funding announcements in relation to the Schools Block (Section 4);
- Note the funding announcements in relation to the Early Years Block (Section 5);
- Note the retention of 4% of 3- and 4-year-old, 2-year-old, and under 2's base rate allocations for EY central services (£2.776m), agreed at the November'23 meeting (Section 5);
- Note the information provided in respect of the final Early Years Block formula for 2024-25 (Section 6)
- Note the funding announcements in relation to the Central School Services Block (Section 7).

1. Background

This report follows on from the Dedicated Schools Grant reports to Norfolk Schools Forum in November 2023 (items 4 to 8), available [here](#), providing updated DSG information now available from the DfE.

1.1 Key Decisions and Recommendations Previously Made

At the November 2023 meeting of Norfolk's Schools Forum, the following key decisions, recommendations and views were shared:

- Schools Forum agreed to a continuation of the movement of 0.5% Schools Block to High Needs Block for 2024-25;

- Schools Forum Members were asked to vote on an additional 1% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2024-25, and to provide a clear indication of whether such a movement was supported. Schools Forum members voted unanimously in support of the additional transfer;
- Recommendation to increase notional SEN by 1% of formula value from April 2024;
- Recommendation on how gains should be treated in the formula for mainstream schools (removal of cap by reducing factor values);
- Recommendation for Falling Rolls fund (no fund for 2024-25);
- Recommendation for charging of maintained schools' audits (agreed not to charge all schools' budgets);
- Recommendations for Early Years formula, including agreement to LA retaining the minimum top-slice required for central services (agreed up to 4% of all allowable funding streams in 2024-25).
- View of special schools formula GCSE provision (agreed not to change formula);
- De-delegation / Central School Services Block decisions by the appropriate sector representatives;

Further information is available within the minutes of the meeting, available [here](#).

1.2 Key events or changes since November 2023 Forum

Key events or changes since the last Schools Forum meeting:

- Submission by the LA of a disapplication request to move an additional 1% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2024-25;
- DSG 2024-25 allocations and guidance published in December 2023;
- Confirmation of increases to the 2-year-old and 3-and-4-year-old Early Years National Funding Formula hourly rates as well as the Maintained Nursery Supplement for 2024-25;
- Autumn 2023 Early Years census;
- Authority Proforma Tool issued by DfE.
- The Local Authority submitted a disapplication request to the DfE/Secretary of State in support of amending/increasing the sparsity distance for Duchy of Lancaster School, following contact by the Headteacher. Schools Forum members were canvassed for their support via email by the LA in advance, and all of the responses received (17 out of 21 members responded) supported the disapplication. Following a subsequent meeting between LA and DfE reps to clarify the issue, a final decision is now awaited from DfE/Secretary of State.
- Secretary of State approved the LA's disapplication request for an additional 1% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2024-25 mid-January.

2. Central Government Funding Allocations

2.1 2024-25 Dedicated Schools Grant Allocation

The total core Schools Budget nationally will total over £59.6 billion in 2024-25 – the highest ever level per pupil, in real terms, as measured by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS).

This total includes the additional funding for teachers' pay announced in July 2023; the Teachers Pay Additional Grant (TPAG) provides an additional £482.5m in 2023-24, and £827.5m for 2024-25 for mainstream, special and alternative provision schools.

TPAG will be allocated outside of the National Funding Formula in 2024-25 (except for Early Years which is included in the published hourly rates). Further details on the TPAG can be found here: [Teachers' pay additional grant 2024 to 2025: methodology - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/teachers-pay-additional-grant-2024-to-2025-methodology)

Norfolk's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation for 2024-25 was published by the DfE in December 2023 and totals £853.156m before academy recoupment. This compares to a total DSG allocation of £786.830m in 2023-24 as at the November 2023 DSG update; an overall increase of £66.326m between years (including £20.446m of Mainstream Schools Additional Grant rolled into the DSG for 2024-25).

2.2 DSG - Changes Between Years (by Funding Block)

The overall difference in the DSG allocation from the prior year funding is set out in the table overleaf:

Funding element	2024-25* (£m)	2023-24** (£m)	Change (£m)	Explanation for change
Early Years Block				
Early Years 3- & 4-year-olds: 15 hours universal entitlement	32.829	29.354	3.475	Increase in hourly rate from £4.90 (£5.24 from Sept'23 including EY Supplementary Grant) to £5.48
Early Years 3- & 4-year-olds: 30 hours for working parents	12.570	11.239	1.331	Increase in hourly rate from £4.90 (£5.24 from Sept'23 including EY Supplementary Grant) to £5.48
Early Years 2-year-olds: 15 hours, disadvantaged	5.783	4.289	1.494	Increase in hourly rate from £5.71 (£7.56 from Sept'23 including EY Supplementary Grant) to £7.70
Early Years 2-year-olds: 15 hours, working parents entitlement	10.786	0.000	10.786	New entitlement at an hourly rate of £7.70
Early Years Under 2's:	7.438	0.000	7.438	New entitlement at an hourly rate of £10.48
Early Years Pupil Premium 3- & 4-year-olds	0.602	0.549	0.053	Increase in rate from £0.62 to £0.68 per eligible child
Early Years Pupil Premium 2-year olds	0.331	0.000	0.331	New entitlement at an hourly rate of £0.68 per eligible child
Early Years Pupil Premium Under 2's	0.017	0.000	0.017	New entitlement at an hourly rate of £0.68 per eligible child
Nursery Schools Supplement	0.445	0.365	0.080	Increase in hourly rate from £3.80 to £4.64
Early Years Disability Access Fund 3-& 4-year-olds	0.400	0.276	0.124	Increase from £828 to £910 per eligible child
Early Years Disability Access Fund 2-year olds	0.106	0.000	0.106	New entitlement at £910 per eligible child
Early Years Disability Access Fund Under 2's	0.027	0.000	0.027	New entitlement at £910 per eligible child
Schools Block	635.437	601.033	34.404	Change in pupil numbers £0.273m, School Supplementary Grant rolled into DSG (£20.446m) and additional money from DfE through NFF £13.685m.

Central School Services Block	4.231	4.080	0.151	Reduction of 127 pupils, but funding per-pupil has increased from £36.88 to £38.50 per pupil. Funding towards historic commitments has reduced by 20% (a reduction of £0.020m).
High Needs Block	142.155	135.646	6.509	Includes £1.650m for increase of 354 pupils in special school (inc. independent) places, and £4.859m other additional funding distributed through National Funding Formula.
Total	853.156	786.830	66.326	

*Source: DfE's DSG allocation tables 2024-25 (published Dec'23)

**Source: DfE's DSG allocation tables 2023-24 (Nov'23 update)

Note: All figures are shown rounded to nearest thousand per DfE allocation table

2.3 Movement Between Funding Blocks

Movement of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block was agreed by Schools Forum at the November 2023 meeting with the intention of alleviating the forecast pressure on the High Needs Block caused by the demand on high-cost specialist placements, the increase in high needs in the school population and the proportion of placements in independent provision as opposed to state-maintained provision. Based on the updated DSG allocation for 2024-25 this is a one-off movement of approximately £3.177m.

With the full support of Schools Forum, the Local Authority submitted a disapplication of regulations request to the Secretary of State in November 2023 requesting a further 1% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2024-25, equivalent to approximately £6.354m. The Secretary of State has now approved Norfolk's disapplication for this additional transfer and after the block transfers the new totals will be £625.905m for Schools Block and £151.687m for High Needs Block.

2.4 Existing DSG Cumulative Deficit

Norfolk is carrying an outstanding DSG deficit of £45.9m from previous financial years as a result of pressures within the High Needs Block. A further DSG deficit of £27.4m for 2023/24 is forecast based upon the latest information available (after expected funding contributions during 2023/24 of £2m from DfE for Safety Valve programme and £5.5m of LA funding). The overall DSG starting position for 2024/25 is, therefore, forecast to be a deficit of £73.3m.

2.5 Other Schools Grants

2.5.1 Pupil Premium

The DfE has stated that Pupil Premium funding will increase in 2024-25. The new rates will be:

Primary FSM6 pupils: £1,480
Secondary FSM6 pupils: £1,050
Looked-after children: £2,570
Children who have ceased to be looked-after: £2,570
Service children: £340

The DfE will publish allocations and conditions of grant in spring 2024.

Detailed guidance is available for Pupil Premium:

[Pupil premium - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

2.5.2 Other grants for 2024 to 2025

Teachers' pay additional grant for 2024 to 2025

The DfE have published the methodology document for the teachers' pay additional grant (TPAG) for 2024 to 2025

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pay-additional-grant-2024-to-2025>

Teachers' pensions grant for 2024 to 2025

There will be an additional grant for 2024 to 2025 to reflect the additional costs of the increase to the employer contribution rates to the Teachers Pensions' Scheme from April 2024. Further details will be announced by the DfE in due course.

Schools Forum is asked to:

- **Note information provided for the 2024-25 Dedicated Schools Block allocations and other DfE grants.**

3. High Needs Block

The High Needs block allocation generated by National Funding Formula for 2024-25 is £142.155m, an increase of £6.509m (4.8%) from £135.646m in 2023-24 (as at the November 2023 DSG update).

The increase of £6.509m between years includes an increase of £1.650m based on the number of pupils in special schools (including independent), up from 2,638 to 2,992 pupils. The remaining increase, £4.859m, is due to previously announced and expected DSG increases through the High Needs National Funding Formula for 2024-25.

A transfer of 1.5%, £9.532m, from the Schools Block (0.5% agreed by Schools Forum and additional 1% approved by Secretary of State following a disapplication request by the LA), increases the total amount available for High Needs Block in 2024-25 to £151.687m.

Given the scale of the challenge, the Local First Inclusion programme is complex, with 80 individual projects across five over-arching workstreams. The programme started formally in April 2023 and significant progress has been achieved across the programme. However, as would be expected with a six-year programme of activity the benefits, to children and young people and to the budget, are planned to accrue throughout the period 2023 to 2029 and in the short-term the pressures continue. Indeed, the referrals for Education Health & Care Plans are continuing to rise at record levels. Additionally, inflation levels have been significantly higher than expected bringing additional cost pressures throughout the education system, as seen elsewhere.

Norfolk has entered into a period of enhanced monitoring and support with the DfE (from October 2023 to March 2024) to ensure that our plan remains on track. We are currently undertaking a 'stock-take' of all activity across the programme to review the future years' modelling alongside a comprehensive programme refresh that will identify new initiatives and mitigations that will revise the trajectories and introduce

new initiatives with the aim of bringing the plan back on track to ensure that the joint DfE and NCC investment continues to address the needs of children and young people and addressing the underlying budgetary pressures.

Taking into account that comprehensive work is being undertaken to review the DSG recovery plan at the time of preparation of this report, the High Needs Block budget for 2024-25 will need to be based upon the current trends projected forward, which will be revised once the review work is complete to ensure that the plan can be kept on track.

A deficit budget for 2024-25 is required to reflect the revenue invest-to-save activity agreed as part of the multi-year to return to a balanced in year position in the future (through the Local First Inclusion programme), along with the current demand for high needs, specialist education placements and provision, particularly independent provision, exceeding the funds available.

The indicative High Needs Block budget for 2024-25, including an estimate of the future DSG deficit on reserves, is shown in the table below:

	2023-24 Forecast	2024-25 Indicative Budget
High Needs Block	£m	£m
High Needs Block DSG Income	-135.646	-142.155
1.5% Schools Block transfer	-9.015	-9.532
Total income	-144.662	-151.687
Maintained / Academy / Free Special Schools	54.181	59.636
Specialist Resource Bases & Deaf Resource Bases	7.883	10.088
Independent Special Schools	47.839	44.482
Alternative Provision	2.415	3.035
Short Stay Schools	7.825	7.202
Post-16 (Further Education)	9.376	10.835
Other Provisions	6.335	7.853
Inclusion fund (including mainstream SEN / EHCP support)	31.460	34.658
Speech & Language, Sensory, YOT, CAMHS	3.560	3.780
High Needs Inclusion Infrastructure, cluster teams inc. parent link workers	5.911	7.001
Other, including TPG/TPECG, H&SC levy and new school start-up costs	2.739	2.660
Total Expenditure	179.524	191.230
In-year +deficit/-surplus	34.863	39.543
Cumulative Balance without contributions from DfE and LA	108.739	148.282
Cumulative Contributions:		
DfE Cumulative Contributions	-30.000	-40.000
NCC Cumulative Contributions	-5.500	-11.000
Cumulative Deficit Balance	73.239	97.282
Total DSG Reserves Forecast:		

Schools/CSS Block Forecast Variances for 23-24 (added for both years)	0.045	0.045
Total Forecast DSG Deficit on Reserves	73.284	97.327

Schools Forum is asked to:

- **Note the funding announcements in relation to the High Needs Block**

4. Schools Block

The Schools Block allocation for 2024-25 is £635.437m; an increase of £34.404m from the £601.033m received in 2023-24. This increase includes £20.446m of School Supplementary Grant that has been rolled into the DSG in 2024-25.

The Schools Block will be allocated to mainstream schools and academies in 2024-25, after deductions for an agreed growth fund and any agreed transfers to High Needs Block, mirroring National Funding Formula factor values and methodologies as closely as possible subject to a final calibration of the formula to funds available (as set out in the autumn 2023 consultation).

Schools Forum agreed at the November 2023 meeting:

- A top slice of £1.072m Schools Block funding for a growth fund for maintained schools and academies;
- An additional top slice of £0.185m as part of the growth fund to be allocated to new schools for pre and post-opening costs;
- A transfer of 0.5% (£3.177m based on final Schools Block allocation) from Schools Block to High Needs Block to support pressures within the High Needs Block and to support recovery of the DSG deficit.

In addition to the 0.5% transfer agreed by Schools Forum in November 2023, Schools Forum members fully supported a further transfer of an additional 1% (£6.354m) to High Needs Block. The LA submitted a disapplication request for the additional 1% transfer to the DfE and this has now been approved by the DfE/Secretary of State.

The total Schools Block will be £625,905,132 including the agreed £1.257m growth fund that will be allocated in-year based on the growth fund criteria agreed by Schools Forum in November 2023 (£1.072m for in-year growth and £0.185m for the pre-opening costs of new schools).

Schools Forum is asked to:

- **Note the funding announcements in relation to the Schools Block**

5. Early Years Block

5.1 3- and 4-Year-Old Universal Entitlement

The DfE have stated that nationally they have allocated an additional £22.5m in respect of the September 2023 teachers' pay award, as well as £34.7m additional funding to support providers with the costs of employer contributions to the teachers' pension scheme, which are due to increase from April 2024. This funding has been included in the hourly rates for 3 and 4-year-olds and MNS supplementary funding and is in addition to that previously distributed through the teachers' pay grant and the teachers' pension employer contribution grant, which was mainstreamed in 2023 to 2024.

The indicative Early Years Block for 3- and 4-year-old universal entitlement (15 hours per week) in 2024-25 totals £32.829m compared to £29.354m in 2023-24 (as of Nov'23 update). The DSG increase of £3.475m is due to an increase in the hourly rate from £4.90 per hour in 2023-24 to £5.48 per hour in 2024-25, based on the same number of funded hours for both years to provide the LA with an indicative budget. Note that the £5.48 per hour for 2024-25 includes the additional funding for EY Supplementary Grant that increased the combined rate to £5.24 per hour from Sept'23. The like for like increase is therefore £0.24 per hour.

The 2024-25 published rate for Norfolk's 3- and 4-year-old funding is £5.48 per hour from which all provider basic hours, supplements and central costs must be funded.

5.2 3- and 4-Year-Old Additional Entitlement (Working Parents)

Working parents may access an additional 15 hours of funded 3- and 4-year-old early education, taking the total amount to 30 hours per week of funded childcare. Based on the January 2023 census, the DfE has provided indicative funding of £12.570m for the estimated take up of the additional 15 hours by parents in 2024-25, compared to £11.239m in 2023-24 (as at Nov'23 update). The increase in DSG funding is due to an increase in the hourly rate from £4.90 per hour in 2023-24 to £5.48 per hour in 2024-25, based on the same number of funded hours for both years. Note that the £5.48 per hour for 2024-25 includes the additional funding for EY Supplementary Grant that increased the combined rate to £5.24 per hour from Sept'23. The like for like increase is therefore £0.24 per hour.

5.3 2-Year-Old Disadvantaged Entitlement

Parents can access 15 hours of funded 2-year-old early education, if they meet the eligibility criteria. The DfE has allocated DSG of £5.783m provisionally based on the January 2023 census (compared to £4.289m in 2023-24 as updated at November 2023). The Local Authority will receive £7.70 per hour for Early Education of 2-year-olds (£5.71 per hour in 2023/24), however, note that the £7.70 per hour for 2024-25 includes the additional funding for EY Supplementary Grant that increased the combined rate to £7.56 per hour from Sept'23. The like-for-like increase is therefore £0.14 per hour.

5.4 2-Year-Old Working Parents Entitlement (NEW)

From April 2024, there is a new entitlement of 15 hours for eligible working parents of 2-year-old children. The DfE have allocated £10.786m to Norfolk, based on a rate of £7.70 per hour and an estimate of take-up.

5.5 Under 2's Working Parents Entitlement (NEW)

From September 2024, there will be a new entitlement of 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of children from 9 months to 2 years old. The DfE have allocated £7.438m to Norfolk, based on a rate of £10.48 per hour and an estimate of take-up.

5.6 Early Years Pupil Premium

Early Years Pupil Premium continues for 2024-25 at an increased rate of £0.68 per hour (£0.62 per hour in 2023/24) and as well as being for eligible 3 and 4-year-olds receiving universal funding, but not the additional 15 hours, this has been extended to 2-year-olds and under 2's. The maximum claim is 570 hours per child. The initial published allocation for all ages totals £0.949m.

5.7 Disability Access Fund

The Early Years Block includes a Disability Access Fund for children in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, aiding access to early years places. For 2024-25, as well as 3- and 4-year-olds, from April 2024 this entitlement has been extended to include eligible 2-year-olds and from September 2024 also under 2's that are accessing the entitlements. Early years settings are eligible for £910 per year (increased from £828 in 2023/24) for each child in receipt of Disability Living Allowance. The allocation for 2024-25 is £0.534m in total.

5.8 EY Final Allocations and Budgeting for 2023-24

For disadvantaged 2-year-olds, as well as for the 3- and 4-year-old allocations, the final Early Years Block DSG allocations for 2024-25 will be based on 5/12th of Part Time Equivalent data from the January 2024 Census and 7/12th of PTE data from the January 2025 Census. The local authority will account for EY Block income on an accruals basis, entering estimated adjustments into the accounts at year end to reflect the estimated final EY Block funding for 2024-25. The final adjustment to 2024-25 Early Years Block will take place in July 2025, after year end.

For the new working parent entitlements, the funding allocations for children of working parents aged 9 months up to and including 2-year-olds, the final allocation to the LA in 2024-25 will be based on two additional data termly headcounts in summer'24 and autumn'24 as well as through the January'25 census.

Initial budgets, and the funding formula, will be set based on the DfE's indicative Early Years Block allocation.

5.9 Maintained Nursery Supplement

The Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) places nursery schools on the same funding model as all Early Years Settings, but with supplementary funding of £0.445m (increased from £0.365m in 2023/24) provided to continue to protect fixed sums that the 3 Nursery Schools in Norfolk used to receive. This increase is based on a £0.84/hr uplift to the supplementary funding rate. The fixed sums fund the higher overheads and cost of qualified teaching staff in a Nursery School.

The LA has determined from the information provided that the MNS protection provided by DfE is made up of:

£372,279 Maintained Nursery School Protection (protecting fixed sums)
£54,690 Teachers Pay and Pension Grant
£18,231 Teachers' Pay Additional Grant
£445,200 Total

In addition to the Maintained Nursery Supplement (MNS) provided to nursery schools by the DfE, the LA currently provides additional protection to the schools to meet the remainder of the fixed sums that were paid to nursery schools prior to the introduction of the Early Years National Funding Formula (less a reduction of 1.5% per year previously agreed for transition). The combined total level of protection in 2023-24 for nursery schools is currently £359,862 made up of £313,750 within the MNS allocation from DfE and £46,112 additional protection provided by the LA from EY Block.

On the basis that the total protection continues to be reduced by 1.5%, the new total protection required for 2024-25 would be £354,464. The uplifted Maintained Nursery School Protection provided by DfE of £372,279 is now in excess of the figure to be protected. Therefore, it is proposed that no additional protection should be added by the LA from the Early Years Block.

5.10 EY Pass-Through/Central Services

For 2024-25, LAs are required to pass-through at least 95% of the funding of the following factors (separately) to providers:

- 9-months-old children up to 2-year-olds of working parents
- 2-year-old children of working parents
- 2-year-old children from disadvantaged families
- 3 and 4-year-olds (universal and additional hours)

Up to 5% can be retained by the LA towards central services.

In previous years the 5% could only be retained from 3 & 4-year-old funding (universal and additional hours).

At the November'23 meeting, Schools Forum were asked to vote on retention of a top-slice from all funding streams equally for 2024-25, at the minimum level required. The Local Authority will continue to use this funding to provide central support and administer payments to all providers of Early Years Education, in schools and in private, voluntary and independent settings. Based on the 2024-25 published DSG allocations, a top-slice of 4% (the minimum amount required by the LA to support services) based on all of the allowable funding streams will be £2,776,216. This has been taken into account in the modelling of hourly rates to providers for 2024-25.

Therefore, the LA will plan to pass through 96% of the funding to providers, meeting the DfE's requirements.

The 2024-25 split of services to which the 4% will contribute are:

NCC Early Years Service & Finance	Centrally Retained DSG	LA Contribution to Service
Early Years Staff Costs	£1.938m	
Early Years Finance Staff Costs	£0.205m	
Contribution to Portage	£0.161m	
Training Programme and Projects		£0.200m
Funding Panel	£0.110m	£0.120m
Contribution to external contracts, including Speech and Language and S2S	£0.362m	
TOTAL	£2.776m	£0.320m
	£3.096m	

Schools Forum is asked to:

- **Note the funding announcements in relation to the Schools Block**
- **Note the retention of 4% of 3- and 4-year-old, 2-year-old, and under 2's base rate allocations for EY central services (£2.776m), agreed at the November'23 meeting.**

6. Final Early Years Formula 2024-25

6.1 Introduction

Following the LA's autumn early years consultation survey, feedback from the Early Years Consultative Groups and as agreed at the 22 November 2023 Schools Forum meeting, the LA are now asked to note the final 2024-25 early years formula made in line with the recommendations from Schools Forum.

A final decision regarding the formula will be taken by Norfolk County Council's (NCC) Cabinet on 29 January, along with other decisions regarding the DSG budget.

6.2 Dedicated Schools Grant Early Years Block (EYB)

The DfE published the indicative EYB allocations in December 2023, including confirmation of increased hourly rates that Norfolk will receive in 2024-25 and the additional funding for the expanded entitlements.

The 2024-25 published rates for Norfolk must fund providers for childcare hours claimed as early education, supplements, SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF), contingency and central costs retained by the Local Authority.

	3- and 4-year-olds	2-year-olds	Under 2's
2024-25	£5.48	£7.70	£10.48

For comparison, the rates for 2023-24 were:

	3- and 4-year-olds	2-year-olds	Under 2's
April 23	£4.90	£5.71	n/a
Sept 23	£5.24	£7.56	n/a

The increase in September 2023 was because local authorities received an Early Years Supplementary Grant, this was additional funding as a result of the 2023 Spring Budget announcements.

The 2024-25 rate for 3- and 4-year-olds includes £0.06 previously allocated as a separate Teachers Pay and Pensions Grant.

6.3 Local Formula Principles

The following principles were agreed by Schools Forum at the meeting held on 22 November 2023 in line with the consultation with Early Years providers and the views of the Consultative Groups.

- a) The formula approach will take the same approach for supplements across all funding streams and only include mandatory supplements.
- b) We should top slice all funding streams equally, and at the minimum level, to fund central support and administration costs.
- c) We should consolidate Teachers Pay and Pensions Grant (TPPG) funding within the base rate to distribute to all providers.
- d) We should increase the Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) to meet the increase in demand.

6.4 Proposals

6.4.1 Hourly Base Rates

Based on the agreed principles, the proposed hourly base rates are:

	3- and 4-year-olds	2-year-olds	Under 2's
2024-25	£5.03	£7.09	£9.69

These rates are expected by Government to fund free, high quality, flexible childcare. It is not intended to cover the cost of meals, other consumables, additional hours, or additional service.

The base rate will decrease for 2-year-old funding from £7.49 to £7.09. The £0.40 reduction will be redistributed to providers to fund a deprivation supplement and SENIF. A proportion will also contribute to the 4% top slice for central spend.

Eligible Under 2s and 2-year-olds will also now be entitled to Early Years Pupil Premium, meaning that in most cases, disadvantaged 2-year-olds will be funded at a higher rate than previously.

6.4.2 Supplements

Except for the deprivation supplement, the quality and flexibility supplement will be removed from the formula. The rate will remain at £0.21 and will be calculated on the total number of funded hours for children whose home address postcode is in a deprived area determined by the index of deprivation (IDACI).

The use of the deprivation supplement remains mandatory for 3 and 4-year-olds and discretionary for 2-year-olds and children aged 9 months up to 2 years nationally, for Norfolk the supplement will be available across all funding streams.

6.4.3 SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF)

Local authorities are required to establish SENIFs for all children with SEN and accessing their early education entitlement. The aim of this funding is to support local authorities to work with providers to address the needs of individual children with lower level or emerging SEN.

The funds will be increased for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds and a new fund introduced for under 2's for 2024-25. The budget reflects anticipated demand at 3% of each funding stream.

	3- and 4-year-olds	2-year-olds	Under 2's
2024-25	£1.36m	£0.497m	£0.223m
2023-24	£0.850m	£0.050m	n/a

Children with more complex needs and with an education, health and care plan (EHC) plan will continue to be eligible to receive funding via the High Needs block of the DSG.

6.4.4 Maintained Nursery Supplement (MNS)

The MNS published amount for 2024-25 is £445,200. This includes £72,921 for Teachers' Pay and Pension Grant (TPPG) and Teachers' Pay Additional Grant (TPAG), which will be distributed as part of the MNS.

The 2023-24 MNS was £364,603 which included £50,852 for TPPG.

The hourly rate has increased from £3.80 to £4.64 for maintained nursery schools which means the formula no longer requires to provide an annual protection. This protection has been reducing by 1.5% each year to reach the level funded by the DfE.

6.4.5 EY Block Contingency

It is proposed that the level of contingency reduces to 0.25% (£173,514) of the Early Years Block for 2024-25, to maximise the funding distribution to providers.

6.4.6 EY Block Central Spend

It is proposed that the level of central spend is reduced to 4% but top sliced across all funding streams equally to fund central support and administration costs. This means the top slice is fairly distributed between all providers and funding distribution maximised.

6.4.7 EY Block Distribution

	3 and 4 year olds	2 year olds	under 2 year olds	TOTAL
EYNFF Hourly Rate 2024-25	£5.48	£7.70	£10.48	
PTE (15 hours)	10,510	1,318		
PTE extended (15 hours)	4,024			
PTE expanded (15 hours)		2,458	1,245	
Indicative Number of Hours (38 weeks)	8,284,340	2,151,858	709,724	
EYNFF Estimated Allocation	£45,398,184	£16,569,309	£7,437,909	£69,405,401
Less Central Retained Spend @ 4%	£1,815,927	£662,772	£297,516	£2,776,216
Contingency @ 0.25%	£113,495	£41,423	£18,595	£173,514
SEN Inclusion Fund @ 3%	£1,361,946	£497,079	£223,137	£2,082,162
	£42,106,815	£15,368,034	£6,898,660	£64,373,510
Less Deprivation Supplement (mandatory)	£359,286	£104,194	£23,563	£487,043
Available for Distribution to Providers	£41,747,529	£15,263,840	£6,875,097	£63,886,467

The part-time equivalent (PTE) hours are indicative for the expanded entitlements.

6.5 2024-25 EY Rates Proposal Summary

The proposed final formula for 2024-25, based upon the above recommendations is therefore:

	Current Rate 2023-24 (£/hr)	Proposed Rate 2024-25 (£/hr)
Base rate (3-to-4-year-olds)	4.65	5.03
Base rate (2-year-olds)	7.49	7.09
Base rate (under 2 years)	n/a	9.69
Deprivation supplement	0.21	0.21
Quality supplement	0.10	n/a
Quality TPG/TPECG supplement	0.24	n/a
Flexibility supplement	0.10	n/a

Schools Forum is asked to:

- **Note the information provided in respect of the final Early Years Block formula for 2024-25**

7. Central Services Schools Block

The Central School Services Block allocation for 2024-25 is £4.231m (£4.080m in 2023-24) and covers centrally retained budgets that support schools. The increase of £0.151m includes a reduction of 127 pupils between years, and an increase in the amount allocated per-pupil (from £36.88 per-pupil to £38.50 per-pupil), partially offset by a decrease in funding for historic commitments (reduced from c£0.098m to £0.079m). This LA proposes to use this DSG block as follows (agreed with Schools Forum in November'23):

- To meet the cost of central licences for all schools which will be charged to the LA by the DfE, estimated at c£0.779m;
- To fund the following items agreed on a line-by-line basis by Schools Forum at the November'23 meeting:
 - School Admissions (£487,000)
 - Servicing of Schools Forum (£30,000)
 - Fees to boarding schools for pupils without SEN (£100,000)
- To provide a budget for the LA to meet other responsibilities held for all schools including the cost of Teachers' Pension employer contributions for centrally employed teachers (the remainder, totalling c£2.840m)

See Annex A for the list of responsibilities held by the LA for all schools.

The DfE has not yet confirmed the figure that it will deduct towards licences for 2024-25 for all schools due to ongoing negotiations but this is expected soon.

Schools Forum is asked to:

- **Note the funding announcements in relation to the Central School Services Block**

Annex A

Responsibilities held for all schools

Statutory and regulatory duties

- director of children's services and personal staff for director (sch 2, 15a)
- planning for the education service as a whole (sch 2, 15b)
- authorisation and monitoring of expenditure not met from schools' budget shares (sch 2, 15c)
- formulation and review of local authority schools funding formula (sch 2, 15d)
- internal audit and other tasks related to the local authority's chief finance officer's responsibilities under section 151 of LGA 1972 except duties specifically related to maintained schools (sch 2, 15e)
- consultation costs relating to non-staffing issues (sch 2, 19)
- plans involving collaboration with other local authority services or public or voluntary bodies (sch 2, 15f)
- Standing Advisory Committees for Religious Education (SACREs) (sch 2, 17)
- provision of information to or at the request of the Crown other than relating specifically to maintained schools (sch 2, 21)
- revenue budget preparation, preparation of information on income and expenditure relating to education, and external audit relating to education (sch 2, 22)

Education welfare

- functions in relation to school attendance (sch 2, 16)
- responsibilities regarding restrictions on the employment of children (sch 2, 18)
- functions in relation to the exclusion of pupils from schools, excluding any provision of education to excluded pupils (sch 2, 20)

Asset management

- management of the local authority's capital programme including preparation and review of an asset management plan, and negotiation and management of private finance transactions (sch 2, 14a)
- landlord responsibilities, including those in relation to land leased to academies for schools (sch 2, 14b)

Other ongoing duties

- licences negotiated centrally by the Secretary of State for all publicly funded schools (sch 2, 8); this does not require schools forum approval
- operation of the system of admissions and appeals (Sch 2, 9)
- fees or expenses payable in connection with the attendance of non-SEN pupils at schools not maintained by any local authority (sch 2, 10)
- remission of boarding fees at maintained schools and academies (sch 2, 11)
- servicing of schools forums (sch 2, 12)
- back-pay for equal pay claims (sch 2, 13)

- writing to parents of year 9 pupils about schools with an atypical age of admission, such as UTCs and studio schools, within a reasonable travelling distance (sch 2, 23)

Historic commitments

- capital expenditure funded from revenue (sch 2, 1)
- prudential borrowing costs (sch 2, 2(a))
- termination of employment costs (sch 2, 2(b))
- contribution to combined budgets (sch 2, 2(c))
- special educational needs transport costs (sch 2,2(d))

Source: [Schools operational guide: 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114444/Schools_operational_guide_2024_to_2025.pdf)

Schools Forum

Item No. 7

Report title:	Planned Growth (Pupil Variations) 2024/25
Date of meeting:	26 January 2024

Executive summary

To inform Schools Forum of pupil variations requested in Authority Proforma Tool (APT) submission for 2024/25

Local authorities are no longer expected to request approval from the Secretary of State to increase the pupil numbers used for calculating funding for specific schools where:

- there has been, or is going to be, a reorganisation, or;
- a school has changed, or is going to change, its admission limit.

Instead, the ESFA expects local authorities to present any pupil variations to their Schools Forum to illustrate the impact to overall funding and specific schools' budgets.

The exception to this is that any request for a negative pupil variation adjustment would still require a disapplication with compelling evidence as to why it should be approved. Norfolk has not requested any negative adjustments for 2024/25.

For new schools, the regulations require that local authorities estimate the pupil numbers expected to join the school in September and fund in the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) submission accordingly. Norfolk has one new free school opening in September 2024 which is Cringleford Prep School.

The information for Norfolk's pupil number variations on the initial budget shares for 2024/25 is attached. The effects on those individual schools' budgets have been calculated through the APT for 2024-25. If there are any final changes following validation of the APT by the DfE then amended final pupil variations will be brought back to Schools Forum in March.

The modelling of estimated numbers has been based on a 1.5% transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block, with +0.5% MFG protection (Option 1 of the funding consultation, updated with actual data and using a factor value adjustment in place of a cap). This shows a total difference of £610,975 in pupil variations when compared to the October 2023 census based estimated school budgets.

These pupil variations are lower than the estimated £659,489 set aside out of the growth factor provided by DfE for the modelling of all consultation options in the autumn term due to pupil number differences and the factor value adjustment.

In-year growth identified by the Admissions team continues to be funded via the in-year top-sliced growth fund for Sept '24-March '25 (Sept '24-August '25 for

academies), for which a £1.072m growth fund was agreed at the November Schools Forum meeting (plus £0.185m for the pre-and post-opening costs of two new schools in Cringleford and Silfield).

No action required: Information only.

Option 1 from APT - 1.5% transfer, +0.5% MFG & factor value adjustment						
School	Reason	Oct '23 Census NOR	Budget based only on Oct '23 NOR	Estimated Pupils Sept '24	Budget using (5/12 x Oct '23 NOR + 7/12 x Sept '24 NOR)	Difference Due to Pupil Variation
			£		£	£
White House Farm	Growing school	217	1,059,336.83	277	1,208,812.81	149,475.98
Wymondham College Prep School	Growing school	329	1,517,588.20	388	1,676,249.03	158,660.83
St Clement's Hill Primary Academy	Growing school	247	1,223,912.87	306	1,373,847.98	149,935.11
Cringleford Prep School	New free school	0	0.00	30	152,903.55	152,903.55
		793	3,800,838	971	4,411,813	610,975

Schools Forum

No. 8

Report title:	Sparsity Distance - Disapplication
Date	26 January 2024

Executive summary

The Local Authority has made a disapplication request for a change to the average sparsity distance calculation for Duchy of Lancaster CE School for 2024-25. The school, and the LA, believe that the DfE had mis-calculated the sparsity distance by including a nearby secondary site as a compatible school within their calculations. Correction of the data will ensure that the school is funded equally to other sparse schools in Norfolk. The DfE have acknowledged the issue and approved the request for a sparsity distance amendment for this school for 2024/5.

NOTE: Schools Forum member Adrian Ball (Diocese of Ely MAT) has disclosed an interest, as Duchy of Lancaster CE School is one within the trust.

For information only.

Schools Forum members were asked via email whether they would support the disapplication for the 2024-25 financial year. The LA received 17 responses from Schools Forum members, all of which were supported the disapplication.

1. Sparsity Distance

The sparsity factor allocates funding to schools that are remote, measured by sparsity distances, and are small, based on average year group size.

The DfE measures sparsity distances using road distances. To calculate a school's sparsity distance, they take all the pupils for whom the school they attend is the nearest compatible school from their home postcode and find the average shortest road distance from these pupils' home postcodes to their second nearest compatible schools.

A school is then eligible for sparsity funding in the NFF if both of the following are true:

- its sparsity distance is equal to or above the main distance threshold (2 miles for primary/all-through schools, 3 miles for secondary schools), or above the tapered distance threshold (1.6 miles for primary/all-through schools, 2.4 miles for secondary schools), and;
- the average year group size (calculated as the Authority Proforma Tool-adjusted pupil count divided by number of year groups present at the school) is below the relevant size threshold, being 21.4 pupils per year

group for primary schools; 120 pupils per year group for secondary schools; and 62.5 pupils per year group for all-through schools.

The standard sparsity factor values within the National Funding Formula in 2024-25 are £57,100 for primary schools and £83,000 for secondary schools and all-through schools. A school can funding receive up to these amounts within their budget share for the Sparsity factor, depending on their calculated sparsity distance/size.

2. Distance Calculation Correction

The Headteacher of Duchy of Lancaster CE School had noticed that surrounding schools were being funded for sparsity, but that Duchy of Lancaster CE School was not, and asked the LA to investigate. The DfE have provided the LA with a sparsity distance of 1.23 miles for Duchy of Lancaster CE School for 2024-25 which is below the funding threshold, whereas surrounding compatible schools all have sparsity distances exceeding 2 miles (e.g All Saints Academy, Edmund de Moundeford VC Primary School, Mundford CE Primary School, The Norman CE Primary School).

Based on pupils' postcode data provided by the Headteacher of Duchy of Lancaster CE School, the Headteacher and LA Education Funding Team are both in agreement that the sparsity distance should exceed 2 miles (calculated as 2.59 miles) when using the methodology outlined in guidance by the DfE.

It is thought that the error has occurred due to Icen Academy having a site nearby to the Duchy of Lancaster CE School, and with Icen Academy being an all-through school, the DfE have counted that site as compatible for Duchy of Lancaster's pupils. However, the Icen Academy site at Methwold is for secondary pupils only, so it is not a compatible site for the pupils at Duchy of Lancaster CE School, and therefore the true sparsity distance is higher than the DfE have calculated. Icen Academy does have primary pupils on its Hockwold site, but that is 6.4 miles away. After exclusion of the Icen Academy Methwold site, the sparsity distance is then similar to surrounding schools.

Surrounding schools have not been impacted by the same error, since the Methwold site is very close to Duchy of Lancaster CE School, so it doesn't impact the measured distance noticeably or change the funding for the other schools.

3. Disapplication for Sparsity Distance 2024/25

After seeking support from Schools Forum members via email in January 2024, the LA submitted a disapplication request to the DfE for a change of sparsity distance in the APT for Duchy of Lancaster CE School, which would enable the school to be funded for sparsity in 2024-25 and ensure fairness of the formula as intended.

Out of 21 Schools Forum members, 17 members responded, and all of those said that they would support the disapplication request, with one of those responses adding a comment about the impact on other schools' budgets (but still supporting it), and another declaring an interest in the school (Adrian Ball – Diocese of Ely MAT).

The LA, having held a subsequent meeting with the DfE to clarify the request has now received approval from the DfE. In that meeting the LA requested for the DfE to also fund additional sparsity to Norfolk in respect of this school, as part of the National Funding Formula. The DfE has said that the data issue will be corrected at source from 2025/26.

The impact to the Duchy of Lancaster CE School is Sparsity factor funding of £56,101.44 in 2024-25. The impact on other schools is small, being spread over 400 schools, equivalent to approximately £0.52p per pupil on average.

Action required: For information only.

Schools Forum members were asked via email whether they would support the disapplication for the 2024-25 financial year. The LA received 17 responses from Schools Forum members, all of which were supported the disapplication.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper, please get in touch with:

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SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN – 2023/24 Academic Year

I – Information & Discussion D- Decision

	Autumn Term			Spring Term			Summer Term	
29/9/23 (Friday)	September (Cranworth Room CH)		26/01/24 (Friday)	January (Cranworth Room CH)		17/05/24 (Friday)	May (Cranworth Room CH)	
09:00 – 12:00	Strategic Planning (inc. Local First Inclusion)	I	09:00 – 12:00	Election of Chair/Vice Chair	D	09:00 – 12:00	Strategic Planning (inc. Local First Inclusion)	I
	Provisional DSG Allocations for 2024/25 and Fair Funding Consultation for Mainstream Schools' Formula	D		Review Membership	I		Dedicated Schools Grant 2023/24 Outturn	I
	Early Years Funding Consultation	D		Strategic Planning (inc. Local First Inclusion)	I		Annual Audit Report (Norfolk Audit Service)	I
	Special Schools Funding Review	D		Proposed DSG Budget including central costs	I			
				Pupil variations 2024/25	I			
				Sparsity Disapplication	I			
22/11/23 (Wednesday)	November (Cranworth Room CH)		13/03/24 (Wednesday)	March (Cranworth Room CH)		10/07/24 (Wednesday)	July (Edwards Room CH)	
09:00 – 13:00	Strategic Planning (inc. Local First Inclusion)	I	09:00 – 12:00	Strategic Planning (inc. Local First Inclusion)	I	09:00 – 12:00	Strategic Planning (inc. Local First Inclusion)	I
	Early Years Block 2024/25 Funding Formula Update (inc. consultation outcomes)	D		Final pupil variations (only if changed from January)	I		Updates on Scheme for Financing Schools (Financial Regulations)	D
	Schools Block (inc. consultation outcomes and Schools Block transfer)	D		Next year's plan	D		Dedicated Schools Grant Consultation Preparation	I
	De-delegation/Central Schools Services Block	D						
	Special Schools Funding Consultation	D						

