

Islington Schools Forum

Meeting documents and minutes published on [Islington Schools Forum webpage](#).

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 10 November 2022, on MS Teams

Attendees

Present

- Maggie Elliott (ME); Governor, Montem Primary School (Edventure Collaborative Federation with Drayton Park) (Vice-chair) – **Chair for the meeting**
- Jenny Lewis (JL); Head teacher, Thornhill Primary School
- Alan Streeter (AS); Head teacher, Beacon High Secondary School (Islington Futures Federation)
- Patrick Mildren (PM); Head teacher, Canonbury Primary School
- Cllr Angelo Weekes (AW); Islington Council – non-Executive Member
- Fiona MacCorquodale (FM); Head teacher, Prior Weston Primary School and Children's Centre
- Ana Sevilla (ASe); Executive Head, New River Green and Packington Children's Centres
- Andrew Bosi (AB); Governor, Rotherfield Primary School
- Claire Hersey (CHe); Principal Finance Officer, City of London Academy Trust
- Tanya Watson (TW); Head teacher, William Tyndale (Primary Academy)
- Penny Barratt (PB); CEO, The Bridge MAT
- Vicky Linsley (VL); Head teacher, St Mary Magdalene Academy (Secondary)
- Susan Service (SS); Head teacher, Arts & Media School Islington
- Nigel Smith (NS); Head teacher, New River College (Pupil Referral Unit)
- Joe Simpson (JS); Governor, St Peter and St Paul Primary

Other attendees

- Tim Partington (TP); Head of Children's Services, Finance
- Debbie Stevenson (DS); Head of Early Years and Schools Finance Services
- Sarah Callaghan (SC); Director of Learning and Culture
- Candy Holder (CH), Head of Pupil Services
- Sabrina Bryan, Service Manager, Schools Finance
- Jane Wright (JW); Manager Schools and EY Governance (Clerk)

Observer

- Patrick Grant, Local Authority Funding Policy Team, DfE

Apologies

- Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy (AM-L); Executive Head teacher, Rotherfield and Newington Green Primary Schools (Chair)
- Cassie Moss (CM); Head teacher, Yerbury Primary School (Vice-chair)
- Coleen Marshall (CM), 14-19 Partnership, City and Islington College
- Francis Gonzalez (FrG); Head teacher, Richard Cloudesley Special School
- Paul Lasok (PL); Governor, St Aloysius Secondary School (and St Joseph's)
- Alison Cramer (AC); Assistant Director, School Support and Information Services
- Susan Woodland, Interim Finance Manager

Not in attendance

- Sally Franklin (SF); Head teacher, North Islington Nursery and Children's Centre

Meeting minutes

No.	Agenda item	Action
1.	<p>Welcome/Apologies for absence/not in attendance</p> <p>ME welcomed all to the meeting, including Patrick Grant from the DfE who was there to observe and would not be answering questions.</p> <p>Apologies as above.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting (held on 14 July 2022)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accuracy – the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. ● Matters arising (not covered on the agenda) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Item 6 - Internal Audit – common themes, with actions to mitigate them, were to be shared at a Headteachers’ Briefing ○ Item 10 – Responses to the two Government consultations (National Funding Formula and EY funding – staff-to-children ratios) had been submitted by the deadlines. We were now awaiting the outcomes of those consultations. ○ Item 12 – Subgroup updates – ME confirmed that unspent Health and Safety monies had been advertised in Schools Bulletin and to governors, and the process for allocating funding in 2022-23 will get underway at the next Capital Subgroup. <p>Noted</p>	DS/Audit
3.	<p>Schools forum composition – for information and decision</p> <p>The clerk (JW) spoke to a report previously circulated.</p> <p>3.1. Non Schools Voluntary & Community representative</p> <p>Anita Grant, CEO of Islington Play Association, had left her post in Islington in July and so there was a vacancy for this position. This also meant that a new Chair of the Early Years Subgroup would be needed.</p>	Action

	<p>JW was due to speak at the EY Providers' Forum on 16 November about the Forum and to encourage a voluntary-sector manager to take on this role. She would report to the next Forum on this.</p> <p>As mentioned below under AOB, the EY Subgroup was to appoint a new chair at its meeting on 18 November 2022.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Term of office of secondary governor due to end in December</p> <p>The term of office of Paul Lasok, Secondary Governor, was due to end on 11 December 2022. As PL had indicated, he was willing to serve a further term, as allowed by the Terms of Reference. The clerk recommended that PL be appointed for a second term, provided chairs of secondary maintained schools agreed to this – JW would contact the chairs to establish this.</p> <p>Agreed subject to agreement of secondary chairs</p> <p>3.2. Election of chair and one vice-chair</p> <p>According to the Terms of Reference of Schools Forum, the election of the chair and vice-chair should be held every three years. The current chair, Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy (AM-L) had been elected in October 2019. One of the vice-chairs, Maggie Elliott (ME), had been elected in July 2019. (The other vice-chair, Cassie Moss (CM), had been elected in July 2021.)</p> <p>Forum was asked to consider whether to amend the Terms of Reference so that the term of office of chair and vice-chair was four years, in line with the term of office of members. Otherwise, Forum was recommended to agree to the extension of the terms of office of AM-L and ME as chair and vice-chair respectively until the January 2023 Forum meeting, at which elections could be held.</p> <p>Agreed to the extension of the terms of office of AM-L and ME until January 2023 Forum, at which there would be elections to chair and vice-chair.</p> <p>3.4. Special arrangements in relation to the other vice-chair, CM</p> <p>The term of office of Cassie Moss (CM), Primary Headteacher (and Vice-chair of Forum), was due to end on 10 December 2022. This</p>	<p>JW</p> <p>EY Subgroup</p> <p>Clerk</p>
--	---	---

	<p>was her first term of office and she had stated that she would be willing to continue for a further term.</p> <p>CM was, however, expected to be absent for the rest of the academic year. Forum was therefore asked to consider special arrangements in the circumstances in relation to CM’s absence as a member of Forum and as vice-chair.</p> <p>In terms of addressing the absence of a member, one option could be to find a substitute with the same speaking and voting rights, which is permissible according to the Terms of Reference. The substitute must qualify for the appropriate membership category so it would need to be a primary headteacher. This was not discussed.</p> <p>In terms of addressing the absence of a vice-chair, Forum was recommended to elect an interim vice-chair. Fiona MacCorquodale was nominated and elected as Interim Vice-chair.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Consultation results (2023-24) including Scheme for Financing Schools, Growth and Falling Rolls – for Decision</p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had been circulated in advance.</p> <p>Islington’s annual consultation of primary and secondary, maintained and academy schools about the Schools Block Funding Formula had finished, with 10 respondents. DS hoped that all schools on Schools Forum had responded.</p> <p>The consultation had not proposed any divergence from the national hard funding formula – Islington was implementing all factors and values where they could.</p> <p>Proposal 1 – to vary the Minimum Funding Guarantee, with a maximum of +0.5% and applying a cap on the gaining schools.</p> <p>This was broadly agreed in the consultation (8 to 2).</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Proposal 2: To amend the local formula for calculating the notional SEN budget to bring the average percentage of budget in line with current data available</p>	

Finance had put the figures through the DfE Best Practice Models in late summer and this had come out fine for secondary schools, slightly out for primaries.

This was broadly agreed in the consultation (8 to 2).

Agreed

Proposals 3 and 4, about Growth and Falling Rolls funding, generated more debate – Growth 4 in favour, 6 against; Falling Rolls 5 in favour, 5 against. Schools Forum was asked to make in-principle decisions now about the use of this funding in 2023-24 – they would make their final decisions at January Forum after December when we would have final figures.

Growth funding (£300K) had been retained from the Schools Block for bulge or additional classes where schools expanded their Published Admissions Numbers (PANs). There were four schools still receiving funding for these planned increases, with two (Tufnell Park Primary and City of London Academy Highbury Grove) still due to receive funding in 2023-24, so that an amount needed to be set aside. Otherwise, the schools would be taking on extra children in September for which they would not get extra funding until the following budget year. In addition, there was due to be an overspend in the growth and falling rolls budgets in 2022-23 which would need to be recovered in the following year. DS added that in the DfE proposed Direct NFF, schools would still get growth funding.

JL asked for confirmation that the two schools due to receive Growth funding would not also be able to receive Falling Rolls funding. DS confirmed that schools receiving growth funding would not be able to access falling rolls funding also.

DS clarified that growth funding was given to the schools once growth confirmed in the October census, rather than upfront and then potentially clawed back. They had to reach a minimum of 26 and maximum of 28 out of 30 places (93%) filled.

Agreed in principle to proposal 3 to retain funding for schools with additional and/or bulge classes.

In relation to **Proposal 4 to stop retaining Falling Rolls (FR) funding**, DS reported that, given the School Organisation Plan and the falling rolls situation, it was no longer possible to meet the DfE criterion that the places would be needed in the next 3 to 5 years. DS reinforced this message by referring to the DfE proposals when moving to a direct NFF whereby schools would be funded based on a

LAs capital needs SCAP return. A proposal was to move the £400K to the Schools in Financial Difficulty de-delegated budget. The alternative would be to give the money directly to schools, which would equate to about £20 per pupil. Academies would get £105K, maintained schools £295K, equating to circa £8k for a two-form entry school. If just the latter funding was added to the Schools in Financial Difficulty budget, that would increase to £480K. Schools would bid into a panel-led process.

PM asked for terms of reference/criteria the panel would operate by, given other pressures on schools such as agency costs, long-term sickness absence, unforeseen repairs (capital). Most schools were in financial difficulty. He also suggested that schools getting money directly could avoid unnecessary restructures.

JL queried if schools not in financial difficulty would be punished by this approach – mismanagement being rewarded.

VL suggested that £8K was not an insignificant sum for schools.

DS reminded Forum that there was already a budget for schools in financial difficulty - £187K which is currently supporting schools.

SC clarified that the Schools in Financial Difficulty budget was not rewarding financial mismanagement. The cost-of-living crisis was more acute for some schools with falling rolls and she confirmed the current budget was increasingly stretched. DS gave an example of how this funding had been invaluable with one school that had been Requires Improvement, they were not able to access FR funding, but they had been able to get some support through the LA and this budget.

DS stated that this is one option that could be taken forward or as the falling rolls budget would cease, these funds would be rolled in to the local funding formula ensuring every school receives additional funds.

FM suggested a middle way with some FR money given back to schools. DS suggested allocating £10 not £20 per pupil.

ME suggested that admissions could be one part of the criteria – FR a factor not the sole factor.

TW felt that much greater detail was needed before even agreeing in principle. She wanted to see all possible permutations and then wider discussion on criteria, eg include SEND? Schools had manifold

	<p>problems and it was too simplistic to rule those with surpluses out – those surpluses could be for specific purposes. DS reminded the group that criteria related to SEND would be discussed as part of the High Needs block.</p> <p>DS agreed to look at some models and bring them back to the January Forum. SC felt it would be helpful to have a contextual paper on how acute the funding situation was now for schools</p> <p>TW suggested that schools failing in their bids would be bad for morale – better to just give the money to the schools.</p> <p>ME commented that the meeting was clearly split on how to approach this.</p> <p>In addition to the discussions, DS set out the wider financial context for schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers’ pay increases – 5% • Support staff pay increases – 8 to 8.5% • Budget projections provided for both of these around 2% • There was a projected shortfall in funding of at least £2m and this does not take in to account the increasing inflation rates which affect all areas of a school’s budget <p>Agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to no longer having Falling Rolls funding • that in relation to Proposal 4, DS would bring a paper to January Forum with options. • Contextual paper be provided setting out the significance and impact of cost-of-living crisis, rising staffing costs and energy bills are having on schools across the borough. This should be linked to the process to manage deficit budgets by the Council. <p>Proposal 5: With the exception of Trade Union Facility Time and Schools in Financial Difficulty, to continue to de-delegate the current services at values to achieve current funding levels (for maintained schools only)</p> <p>Proposal 6: To not proceed at the moment with proposals to de-delegate any additional monies for any of these services (for maintained schools only):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour Service • Library Service • Premises Insurance 	<p>DS</p>
--	---	-----------

	<p>Proposal 7: To agree to the proposed changes to the 2022-23 Scheme for Financing Schools?</p> <p>Agreed</p>	
5.	<p>Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget Monitor (in year) – for information</p> <p>TP spoke to a report that had been circulated in advance.</p> <p>The forecast balance of the DSG at the end of 2022-23 was £5.317m. This compared to £5.218m at the end of 2021-22. There was a forecast underspend in 2022-23 of £0.099m. The £5.317m was earmarked for future pressures</p> <p>Demand for centrally commissioned provision under the High Needs Block was forecast to increase by 8% to 9% per annum but DfE advice on future increases in funding was 2% per annum. The High Needs block was forecast to go into deficit from 2024-25.</p> <p>There was no variance projected for Early Years, but a balance from 2021-22 of £1.461m – this was expected to be used to offset reducing funding due to reduced numbers of children under the statutory entitlements. There had been an in-year reduction in funding of £450k in 2022-23.</p> <p>Recommendations – to note</p> <p>a) the forecast in-year underspend of £0.099m against the Dedicated Schools Grant at month 6</p> <p>b) that DSG balances were forecast to be £5.317m at the end of the year.</p> <p>c) that these balances were earmarked for in future years to manage increasing pressures on the high needs block and early years block, and to meet cost pressures within schools.</p> <p>Noted</p>	Action:
6.	<p>DSG Funding Settlement (2022-23) – for information</p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had been circulated in advance.</p>	

	<p>Forum was asked to note the Early Years adjustment in relation to the January Census. Due to falling rolls there was a shortfall in allocations of £451K.</p> <p>There were no changes to the information about Schools Block.</p> <p>Noted</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>DSG projected allocations (2023-24) – for information</p> <p>DS spoke to a report that was tabled - the full Census 2022 information for all schools had only just come in. This provided an estimate of the schools' block funding for 2023-24.</p> <p>Column A on the left showed the actual numbers of pupils based on October 2022 Census, compared to Column B Illustrative Funding based on October 2021 Census. The middle column (C), showing the difference between the two, indicated a reduction in pupil numbers of 190 primary children and 32 secondary.</p> <p>Comparing like for like, the loss of pupil numbers was going to equate to a loss in funding of £1.5m (1%).</p> <p>The Supplementary Grant (extra funding from last public spending review) was being moved into the Schools Block from 2023-24.</p> <p>Cost pressures, such as teachers' pay; support staff pay awards and increased energy costs, leading to a shortfall in funding to schools of at least £2m without accounting for the general inflationary increases of circa 11% which affects all areas of a school's budget, had already been raised earlier in the meeting.</p> <p>The £2m for HN Block was keeping pace with the pressures short-to medium-term but would not last long.</p> <p>We were awaiting the outcome of the EY consultation on proposed increased hourly rates.</p> <p>FM asked how the funding situation compared to earlier years. DS replied that the Supplementary Grant did not begin to address the significant cost pressures on schools outlined earlier in the meeting.</p> <p>Final DSG allocations would be announced mid-December.</p> <p>Noted</p>	

<p>8.</p>	<p>Forward Planning – for information</p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had been previously circulated.</p> <p>ME noted the meeting in January would be in-person. She stressed the importance of members attending that meeting at which important decisions on 2023-24 funding formula including de-delegation and central retention would be made.</p> <p>Noted</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>AOB – Central Schools Services Block – Central Retention – for information</p> <p>TP reported. Allocations for the CSSB would need to be agreed by January. More information on the breakdown of items was to be shared with Forum before Christmas, ahead of the January meeting, including information coming from the Quality Assurance meetings that AC was organising with schools. Questions would be put to Forum ahead of the January meeting.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Other AOBs</p> <p>As mentioned in Item 3, the EY Subgroup was to appoint a new chair at its meeting on 18 November 2022.</p> <p>SC gave an update on the consultation about the proposed amalgamation of Copenhagen and Vittoria primary schools. A six-week consultation had begun the previous Thursday. A paper was to go to Executive Board on 9 February 2023 – depending on the outcome of the first consultation and this paper, the statutory process for giving notice and four weeks’ consultation would then start. Final decision would be made in May 2023. Four sessions to explain the rationale had been held at the two schools during the previous week – questions raised had tended to focus on the practical, such as school uniforms.</p> <p>Noted</p>	
	<p>Meeting close and dates of future meetings</p>	

	ME thanked all for their participation in the meeting. The meeting closed at 3.47pm	
	<p>Dates of next meetings</p> <p>(Virtual meetings on MS Teams unless otherwise indicated)</p> <p>Autumn term 2022</p> <p>Rescheduled Capital Sub Group – Thursday 17 November, 12:30pm – 2pm</p> <p>Early Years Sub Group - Friday 18 November, 1pm – 2.30pm</p> <p>Spring Term 2023</p> <p>DSG/Chairs Sub Group – Wednesday 11 January, 2pm – 3.30pm</p> <p>Capital Sub Group - Thursday 12 January, 12.30pm – 2pm</p> <p>Early Years Sub Group - Friday 13 January, 1pm – 2.30pm</p> <p>High Needs Sub Group - Monday 16 January, 11am – 12.30pm</p> <p>Schools Forum - Thursday 19 January, 2-4pm, in person – Laycock Centre, N1 1TH</p> <p>Summer Term 2023</p> <p>Capital Sub Group - Thursday 11 May, 12.30pm – 2pm</p> <p>DSG/Chairs Sub Group - Wednesday 17 May, 2 – 3.30pm</p> <p>Early Years Sub Group - Friday 19 May, 1pm – 2.30pm</p> <p>High Needs Sub Group - Monday 22 May, 11am – 12.30pm</p> <p>Schools Forum - Thursday 25 May 2-4pm, in person – venue tbc</p> <p>DSG/Chairs Sub Group - Wednesday 5 July, 2 – 3.30pm</p> <p>Schools Forum – Thursday 13 July, 2-4pm, in person – venue tbc</p>	