

Islington Schools Forum

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

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023, 2pm at Islington Town Hall.

Attendees

Present

- Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy (AM-L); Executive Head teacher, Rotherfield and Newington Green Primary Schools (Chair)
- Alan Streeter (AS); Head teacher, Beacon High Secondary School (Islington Futures Federation)
- Jenny Lewis (JL); Head teacher, Thornhill Primary School
- Patrick Mildren (PM); Head teacher, Canonbury Primary School
- Fiona MacCorquodale (FM); Head teacher, Prior Weston Primary School and Children's Centre (interim Vice chair)
- Nigel Smith (NS); Headteacher, New River College (Pupil Referral Unit)
- Penny Barratt (PB); Chief Executive Officer, The Bridge MAT
- Susan Service (SS); Head teacher, Arts & Media School Islington
- Paul Lasok (PL); Governor, St Aloysius Secondary School (and St Joseph's)
- Maggie Elliott (ME); Governor, Montem Primary School (Edventure Collaborative Federation with Drayton Park) (Vice-chair)
- Francis Gonzalez (FrG); Head teacher, Richard Cloudesley Special School

Other attendees

- Jon Abbey (JA); Corporate Director of Children and Young People
- Tim Partington (TP); Assistant Director Finance, Children's, Schools & Resources
- Jane Wright (JW); Manager Schools and EY Governance (Clerk)

- Debbie Stevenson (DS); Head of Schools & Early Years Finance Services
- Alison Cramer (AC); Assistant Director, School Support and Information Services
- Kate Bingham (KB); - Observing
- Diana Valcheva (DV); Headteacher, Kate Greenaway Nursery School – Observing

Apologies

- Tanya Watson (TW); Head teacher, William Tyndale (Primary Academy)
- Vicky Linsley (VL); Head teacher, St Mary Magdalene Academy (Secondary) - resigned
- Cllr Angelo Weekes (AW); Islington Council – non-Executive Member
- Colleen Marshall (CMA); City and Islington College for 14-19 Partnership
- Andrew Bosi (AB); Governor, Rotherfield Primary School
- Sarah Callaghan (SC); Director of Learning and Culture

Not in attendance

- Ana Sevilla (ASe); Executive Head, New River Green and Packington Children’s Centres
- Matthew Hillman (MH); Headteacher, The Pears Family School (AP Academy)
- Joy Odunayo Abegunde (JA); VCS Providers, Islington Play Association
- Joe Simpson (JS); Governor, St Peter and St Paul’s Primary

Meeting minutes

No.	Agenda item	Action
1.	<p>Welcome/Apologies for absence/not in attendance</p> <p>AM-L welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were as above.</p>	
2.	<p>Declaration of Interest</p>	

	<p>The chair asked if anyone had a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest to declare in relation to the agenda items at the meeting. None were declared.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Schools Forum composition – for information and decision</p> <p>JW (the clerk) spoke to a report previously circulated.</p> <p>Update on vacancies / ends of terms of office</p> <p>3.1. A primary academy position was due to become vacant at the end of term when Tanya Watson, Head of William Tyndale Primary Academy, was due to leave her post. By 3 July, the clerk had received one nomination from Tanya Watson for Sophie Gavalda, due to take up the William Tyndale headship in September 2023. Forum noted this outcome and confirmed term of office would be 1.9.23 to 31.8.27.</p> <p>3.2. Maintained Nursery Headteacher Following the resignation of Sally Franklin, Head teacher of North Islington, on 25 May from the Forum, the clerk had consulted the other two heads and they proposed an arrangement whereby Diana Valcheva, Head teacher of Kate Greenaway, would take the place, and with Karen Smith, Head teacher of Margaret McMillan assisting her and attending when Diana was not able to. Forum agreed to this arrangement – term of office 1.9.23 to 31.8.27.</p> <p>3.3. Maintained Primary Headteacher Following the resignation of Cassie Moss, Head teacher of Yerbury, from the Forum in June, nominations were requested by the clerk by 10 July. To date, no nominations had been received, so the clerk will email the headteachers again in September to seek nominations. At the same time the clerk will ask for nominations for another primary headteacher representative given Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy will be resigning from the Forum on 31.8.23. Noted</p> <p>3.4. Secondary Academy Following the resignation of Claire Hersey, Business Manager of COLAT, from the Forum in June,</p>	<p>JW</p>

	<p>nominations were requested by the clerk by 3 July, and again on 3 July. To date, no nominations had been received, so the clerk will email the secondary academies again in September to seek nominations. In addition, Vicky Linsley (VL); Head teacher, St Mary Magdalene Academy (Secondary) – had resigned on the day of the meeting, so the clerk will be seeking two secondary academy representatives in September. Noted</p> <p>3.5. Maintained Secondary Headteacher The terms of office of Susan Service (SS) (first term of office), Headteacher of Arts and Media School Islington, ended on 28 February 2023. The Clerk had written to the secondary headteachers on 22 June suggesting that SS continues for another term of office, as she was willing to do this, but that if other headteachers wanted to be nominated, they should contact the Clerk by 3 July. No objections to SS continuing and no further nominations had been received, so it was recommended to Forum that SS would continue on the Forum with a further term of office until 27 February 2027. Agreed</p> <p>3.6. Maintained Special School The terms of office of Francis Gonzalez (FG) (first term of office), Headteacher of Richard Cloudesley, ended on 10 January 2023. The clerk wrote to the two maintained special school headteachers on 26 June suggesting that the two heads discuss how they wanted to take this forward. In the light of their responses, the Clerk suggested FG to continue – so new terms of office up to 10 January 2027, with Cerys Normanton, Head of Samuel Rhodes, to support him and attend when he was not able to. Agreed</p> <p>3.7. Terms of office next due to end Joe Simpson, Governor at St Peter and St Paul’s – 5.3.24 Penny Barrett, Director of Bridge Academy – 31.3.24. Noted</p> <p>3.8. Elections of Chair and Vice-chair</p> <p>The clerk chaired this item. Members of Forum had been asked to nominate members to be chair and vice-chair.</p>	<p>JW</p>
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	<p>Election of Chair The current chair, Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy, was due to step down from the chair at the end of this term. The clerk had received one nomination, for Maggie Elliot (ME) and there were no further other nominations at the meeting. ME was elected unopposed to be chair from 1 September 2023 until 31 December 2024 when her term of office on the Forum was due to end, so there would need to be new elections in autumn 2024.</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Election of Vice-chairs With ME becoming chair on 1.9.23, her position as vice-chair would therefore be vacant from then. In addition, the other vice-chair position was vacant due to the resignation of CM from Forum. There were two nominations for these positions, one of them Fiona MacCorquodale (FM), Interim Vice-chair to cover for CM, the other Susan Service (SS), Headteacher of Arts and Media Islington Secondary School.</p> <p>Agreed that FM be elected substantive vice-chair until 12.7.26 and that SS be elected vice-chair from 1.9.23 until 31.8.26.</p>	
4.	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 May 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy – the minutes were agreed as a true record subject to one correction – under Item 6 Draft School Balances, on page 6 of the minutes, fourth paragraph down, to replace ‘the outside’ with ‘the DfE’. • Matters arising – the clerk advised that, as agreed at the last meeting, Matthew Hillman and Joy Abegunde were being invited to join the High Needs Subgroup and Early Years Subgroup respectively. 	
5.	<p>Scheme for Financing Schools (Local) – for decision</p> <p>DS spoke to a paper previously circulated. The scheme had been brought to May Forum prior to being released for consultation with schools from 1 to 30 June. There were only two responses. The consultation had been advertised</p>	Action:

	<p>on Schools Bulletin, Governor Hub and to chairs of governors and other reminders. There will be a rethink about how to encourage more responses in future years.</p> <p>Neither response disagreed with the proposals, which were set out in Appendix A.</p> <p>ME said that she had responded – DS said she would reply to her query about what happens after licensed deficits. KB clarified that, in line with statutory guidance, this scheme set the framework or rules, while details of procedures sat outside the framework. The lengthy escalation process had been explained at Headteachers’ Briefing. It was still in the power of Schools Forum to revise the procedures. ME suggested revising the procedures in November. JA mentioned that schools applying for licensed deficits managed the process in different ways. ME reported that she and the headteacher of her federation had written several letters asking for licensed deficits and had had no response as to what the next steps were. There was an issue around communications with the LA, but also around thresholds and escalation points. PL asked if Forum could see the procedure document. AM-L suggested this be looked at in the autumn. DS offered to go through the proposed changes line by line, but Forum agreed the Scheme 2023-24, with the caveat that Forum would look at the procedures in autumn 2023.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>School Balances (FINAL – prior year) – for information</p> <p>DS spoke to a report previously circulated.</p> <p>The draft figures had been brought to Forum in May. The schools’ planned uses of surpluses were now available, apart from an accounting issue in two schools meaning that their information being reported to the DfE would be reduced. The information in relation to three schools had changed, with an improvement to the balances outcome of £175K.</p> <p>The final end-of-year balance was £6.4m.</p> <p>Schools with ratified budgets have been RAG rated:</p>	<p>Action:</p>

- Red – schools in deficit as of end 2021-22/projecting to end 2022-23 in deficit
- Amber – schools projecting cumulative surplus in 2022-23 but in-year deficit and projecting cumulative deficits in years 2 and 3 unless action taken in current year
- Green – schools projecting cumulative surplus in 2022-23 and in years 2 and 3.

The ESFA guide was that schools should not have a surplus of more than 8% (primary) and 5% (secondary). There may be a discussion about clawback for schools in that position, but the DfE has not done such clawback for some time.

15 schools were in deficit as of 2022-23 financial year end. 16 schools were due to be in deficit by end of 2023-24. By end of 2024-25, the figure was projected to rise to 26 schools. The cumulative deficit would be £5.5m, rising to £15m by end of 2025-26.

JL asked if the situation laid out related to the situation prior to implementing measures in the School Organisation Plan. DS commented that there will be additional costs and income coming through following the teachers' pay announcements, but there would also be more challenges with future pupil numbers reported in the October Census – further drops in school roll figures. The implication of schools possibly overestimating their school rolls could be that the cumulative deficit by end 2024-25 would be £6m. AC clarified that the School Organisation Plan was based on current schools and budgets.

AM-L felt there was pressure to speed up actions to tackle the school roll issue. JA agreed but reminded Forum that to amalgamate or close schools was a long and complex process, and that plans must safeguard Islington's estate. AC added that plans were progressing in relation to School Organisation for September 2024 and September 2025. JL suggested that schools be involved with those plans and that the LA help them with their strategies. AC replied that this was a very sensitive area, and that it was important to sequence the communications correctly/trigger informal consultations at the right time. FM commented that for a

	<p>school closure in August 2024, the informal consultation would take place after October 2023 half-term.</p> <p>Following the model used for the Vittoria and Copenhagen amalgamation informal consultation, staff and the parent community would be notified first, then the wider community of stakeholders.</p> <p>JA reflected that this was happening in other London boroughs. SS said it made a difference to know that Islington was not alone.</p> <p>Noted</p>	
7.	<p>DSG Outturn (FINAL – prior year) – for information</p> <p>TP spoke to a report previously circulated. The position remained unchanged from the draft position reported at the May Forum, with DSG balances standing at £5.083m at the end of 2022-23. This surplus was to be fully spent within two years due to demand pressures on High Needs.</p> <p>Noted</p>	Action:
8.	<p>DSG Allocations (in year)</p> <p>DS spoke to a spreadsheet that had been previously circulated. The EY adjustments were due very soon. The Government had announced in the spring 2023 Budget that funding of £204m nationally for additional wrap-around care was to be paid this year as a stand-alone grant in September. In 2024-25, £288m funding (£204m plus a further £84m) was to be included in the DSG EY Block.</p> <p>Once the EY operational guidance is received in September, the allocations in Islington will be clarified – DS' current estimate is £680K. There is also an increase in the EY offer funding rate for 3 and 4year olds of 8p and for 2 year olds of £2.45p.</p> <p>FM asked if the forthcoming changes in EY ratios would be reflected in EY funding. This was not clear, given the changes in ratios will not be enforced.</p> <p>Noted</p>	Action:

<p>9.</p>	<p>DSG Schools Block estimated funding (new year)</p> <p>DS spoke to a spreadsheet that had been previously circulated. When projecting ahead, accuracy was variable. The 2024-25 figures were based on latest admissions as of 23 June. The top part of the sheet projected a decrease of 235 pupils, equating to a reduction in funding to schools of £1.4m.</p> <p>ME commented that this projection was the same as the drop this year. DS pointed out a bigger drop in secondary was projected compared to this year, and the most vulnerable would be most impacted.</p> <p>There would be a better estimate in November when we would be clear what the DSG allocations and salary costs funding were.</p> <p>Noted</p>	<p>Action:</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Forward planning</p> <p>DS advised the meeting of a new item for the November 2023 agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations – with links for Forum members to complete at the meeting. The Chairs’ Group would have an extra meeting in September to discuss what the consultations would cover, eg QA of services. That meeting would also look at how the subgroups are reporting into the main Forum meetings. <p>There were comments at the meeting about the difficulties people had had accessing the online QA survey. It was noted that MS Forms would be better for this – having to log on was a barrier.</p> <p>DS also advised that Growth and Falling Rolls funding would be covered at the January 2024 meeting. AC added that roll projections would be a standing item at Forum meetings.</p>	<p>Action:</p> <p>ME, SS, FM, DS, TP</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>Quality Assurance survey</p>	

	This had been covered in earlier items. Forum members were urged to respond to the QA survey.	
12.	<p>AOB</p> <p>The Mayor of London’s Fund – universal Free School Meals from September 2023 – equated to £2.65 per meal. Islington had been funding Free School Meals at £2 per meal. The GLA has agreed to Islington passing the extra 65p on to the schools.</p> <p>The Council is looking to retrospectively increase the funding for schools for universal free school meals for the summer term 2023 to £2.41 (the DfE funding rate for free school meals) subject to funding.</p> <p>ME advised the meeting that had been no subgroup meetings since the last Forum meeting. There would need to be a Capital Subgroup meeting in September to look at the Estate Plan.</p> <p>There being no further business, AM-L thanked all for preparing for the meeting and for their contributions and wished them a happy summer.</p> <p>Schools Forum thanked AM-L for doing a wonderful job as Chair of Forum over the past three years.</p>	DS/Deirdre Vimpany to arrange
	<p>Dates of next meetings</p> <p>(virtual meetings on MS Teams unless otherwise indicated)</p> <p>Schools Forum – face to face, venues tbc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 9 November, 2 to 4pm • Thursday 18 January, 2 to 4pm • Thursday 23 May, 2 to 4pm • Thursday 11 July, 2 to 4pm <p>Chairs Subgroup</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 4 October, 1 to 2pm 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wednesday 1 November, 2 to 3pm• Wednesday 10 January, 2 to 3pm• Wednesday 15 May, 2 to 3pm• Wednesday 3 July, 2 to 3pm <p>Early Years Subgroup</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friday 17 November, 1 to 2.30pm• Friday 12 January, 1 to 2.30pm• Friday 17 May, 1 to 2.30pm <p>Capital Subgroup</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monday 6 November, 11 to 12.30pm• Friday 9 February, 12.30 to 2pm• Friday 16 May, 12.30 to 2pm <p>High Needs Subgroup</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monday 16 October, 11am to 12.30pm• Monday 15 January, 11am to 12.30pm• Monday 20 May, 11am to 12.30pm	
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