



**Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Children's Services Directorate**

A

Draft Minutes BARNLSLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY
14th DECEMBER 2021**

PRESENT

Headteacher Representatives

Paul Crook and Kirsty Wordsworth

Governor Representative(s)

Molly Beever, Adrian England, Margaret Gostelow, Sandra James, Jackie Milliner
and Michael Sanderson

Special Education Provision Representative

Josh Greaves

14-19 Years and Further Education Representative

Tom Smith

Barnsley MBC Elected Representative

Councillor Sarah Tattersall

Officers

Josh Amahwe

Strategic Finance Manager (Core Services
Directorate) Barnsley MBC

Amber Burton

Head of Service (Special Educational Needs)
Barnsley MBC

Anna Turner

Interim Joint Head of Education and
Partnerships (Barnsley MBC)

Shafeek Khan

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Formal apologies had been submitted by Mr Buckley, Ms Hammerton and Ms Sleight

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Representatives from the Forum declared their interest in relation to matters being considered as part of Agenda Items 6 and 7 of today's meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

The minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 21st October 2021 were approved as a correct record

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

No matters arose through considering the minutes of the previous meeting.

5. REPORTS

Maintaining the Capacity and Resilience of Schools to the Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Progress Report

Ms Turner presented a report which provided the Schools Forum with an insight into how schools were meeting the continuing challenges of the Covid-19 Pandemic as part of maintaining teaching and learning standards and enabling students to achieve their potential, particularly during the Autumn Term.

Ms Turner referred to the following matters in the report:

- Guidance to schools and settings on reducing transmission of the virus, keeping schools open and, where necessary, when to instigate resilience plans and remote learning
- Take up and outcomes of lateral flow and PCR tests
- Pupil attendance rates in the Borough and comparison with the National benchmark
- Take-up of vaccinations among children aged 12 – 16 years in Barnsley compared to other areas in the Region.
- Maintaining learning and teaching standards (including arrangements for learning recovery; supporting pupils in preparing for exams including via the 'GROW' Mentoring Programme; targeting improvements in pupil performance and inspection support to schools)
- The potential impact of the Omicron variant upon the capacity and resilience of schools and settings, including obstacles to the recruitment and selection of key staff

RESOLVED

1. To note the report and for further progress reports to be submitted for the Forum's consideration

Department for Education consultation on proposed changes to how local authority school improvement functions are funded

Ms Turner and Mr Amahwe presented a joint report on proposed changes to how local authority school improvement activity is funded. These proposals were as follows:

- To remove the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant which is currently allocated to local authorities to support school improvement activity
- To make provision within the Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations (2022/23) to enable local authorities to fund all their school improvement activity (including core school improvement activity) via the de-delegation process from school budgets

The purpose and timetable for the proposed changes, together with the Borough's response to the consultation were all acknowledged by members of the Forum

RESOLVED:

2. That this report be noted as part of the Forum's consideration of proposed Schools Funding Block allocations (2022/23) at the next meeting.

Outcome of the Local Authority's consultation with schools on proposed changes to the local schools funding formula (2022/23)

Mr Amahwe presented his report on the outcomes of the recent consultation with schools on this matter. The comments of schools to each of the proposed changes, together with the Local Authority's indicative response was noted as follows:

Question 1: Do you support the proposed AWPU values for primary, KS3 and KS4 and the approach being taken to fully align to the NFF?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	29	10	39	98%
Disagree	1	0	1	3%
Not sure	0	0	0	0%
Not answered	0	0	0	0%
	30	10	40	100%

All but one response (98%) agreed with the proposal for AWPU values for primary, KS3 and KS4 to be fully aligned to the NFF rates. No reason was provided for why the proposal was disagreed with.

Question 2: Do you support the following proposals?

- a) Uplift of the current unit values for the FSM (Ever6) and IDACI deprivation measures in line with the NFF values?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	28	10	38	95%
Disagree	1	0	1	3%
Not sure	1	0	1	3%
Not answered	0	0	0	0%
	30	10	40	100%

A significant proportion (95%) of schools were supportive of the proposal to increase the unit values of the deprivation factors, whilst still maintaining the overall proportion at NFF or close to NFF level.

b) Addition of the FSM deprivation indicator in 22-23 and for the phased approach to aligning the FSM unit value to the NFF?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	26	9	35	88%
Disagree	2	1	3	8%
Not sure	2	0	2	5%
Not answered	0	0	0	0%
	30	10	40	100%

A significant majority of schools (88%) supported the proposal to introduce the FSM deprivation indicator in the 2022/23 funding formula. However, the response of a number of schools indicated a preference for full alignment to the NFF unit value in 2022/23 rather than the suggested phased approach. Schools would prefer the unit rate to be increased closer to the NFF rate.

Question 3: Do you support the introduction of the Sparsity factor in the local funding formula from 22-23?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	23	5	28	70%
Disagree	2	0	2	5%
Not sure	5	4	9	23%
Not answered	0	1	1	3%
	30	10	40	100%

Most respondents agreed (70%) with the proposed introduction of the Sparsity factor, though 23% were unsure about its inclusion. Some of the responses raised the question of why include the factor if no schools would be affected or impacted by its inclusion within the local funding formula.

Question 4: Do you support the proposal to increase the unit values for the Mobility, Low Prior Attainment and English as an Additional Language factors to NFF levels?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	29	10	39	98%
Disagree	1	0	1	3%
Not sure	0	0	0	0%
Not answered	0	0	0	0%
	30	10	40	100%

Excluding one school, all respondents were generally supportive of the proposal to increase the unit values for Mobility, Low Prior Attainment and English as an Additional Language to the NFF levels. No comments were put forward by the school objecting to the proposal.

Question 5: Do you support the proposal to increase the lump sum factor to £117,800 (compared to the NFF £121,300)?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	23	6	29	73%
Disagree	6	4	10	25%
Not sure	1	0	1	3%
Not answered	0	0	0	0%
	30	10	40	100%

A large majority of schools that responded (73%) agreed to the proposal to increase the lump sum factor to £117,800. However, a sizeable proportion of schools (25%) disagreed and would prefer a full alignment / increase of the lump sum amount to £121,300 in line with the NFF value.

Question 6: Do you support the proposal to set the MFG at 2% (aligned to the NFF) which would ensure all schools see an increase in their pupil led unit funding?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	28	10	38	95%
Disagree	0	0	0	0%
Not sure	2	0	2	5%
Not answered	0	0	0	0%
	30	10	40	100%

There was overwhelming support for the proposal to set the MFG at 2% with 95% of schools expressing support. However, 5% were unsure but did not provide reasons for their caution.

Question 7: Do you support the principle of capping and scaling funding gains to achieve a more equitable distribution of gains across all schools?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	24	5	29	73%
Disagree	4	5	9	23%
Not sure	2	0	2	5%
Not answered	0	0	0	0%
	30	10	40	100%

Whilst most schools agreed with the use of capping and scaling within the formula, there was a mixed response with some schools that did not entirely agree. Most primary school responses agreed in principle, 50% of secondary schools disagreed that capping or scaling should be applied on the basis that schools that have suffered from historical underfunding cannot afford for much needed gains to be capped. The expressed view was that the NFF should be allowed to allocate funding in its entirety and operate the way it is intended. Those schools that agreed feel that it is beneficial to distribute the funding more equitably and ensure the allocation of funding is fair.

Brief discussion arose over the use of the terms 'capping' and 'funding floors' and Mr Amahwe clarified any distinction. Responding to Councillor Tattersall's suspicion that the consultation questions could have led to an element of

confusion or uncertainty in schools' responses, Mr Crook felt that members of the Secondary Head Teachers Group in the Barnsley Alliance demonstrated a sound understanding and there was no cause for any concern. Mr Amahwe added that future consultation would include additional background information to support schools and MAT boards with their response

In analysing the responses to the consultation, together with central government's expectations concerning the closer alignment of local schools' funding formulae with the NFF whilst maximising pupil-led funding, the Local Authority's proposed changes to the Barnsley Schools Funding Formula was as follows:

Basic entitlement factor (AWPU)

- To increase secondary AWPU rates in line with the 2022-23 NFF unit values (both for KS3 and KS4). This will result in a 3% increase in secondary AWPU values.
- No increase should be applied to the primary AWPU rate, to be maintained at the same level as in 2021-22. This will ensure a closer alignment to the NFF, as Barnsley's primary AWPU rate is higher than the NFF rate.

Deprivation factor

- An uplift in the current unit values of both the FSM Ever6 and IDACI measures for primary and secondary phases in line with the 2022-23 NFF values. In addition, it is proposed to phase in the inclusion of the FSM deprivation indicator in the 2022/23 formula, with the indicator rate to be set as close to the NFF value depending on affordability.

Sparsity factor

- The sparsity factor allocates funding to schools that are remote (measured by sparsity distances) and are small, based on average year group size. It is proposed to introduce this factor in the 2022-23 local formula where schools meet the funding criteria (as per the October 2021 Census).

Mobility factor

- The unit values for both primary and secondary phases will be increased to match NFF levels. The proportion of funding allocated through this factor (0.1%) matches the NFF level.

Low Prior Attainment factor

- The unit values and the proportion of funding allocated through the prior attainment factor will be updated to match the NFF values. The overall proportion of funding in Barnsley's formula will be aligned with the current 2022-23 NFF rate of 6.7%.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) factor

- It is proposed to increase the unit values for the EAL factor to the NFF level for both primary (£565) and secondary phases (£1,530). The small cohort of eligible EAL pupils in Barnsley means that the funding proportion is 0.3% compared to the NFF level of 1.1% (due to the large number of EAL pupils in large inner-city areas).

Lump Sum Factor

- Whilst there is majority support (73%) to increase the lump sum factor to £117,800 (compared to the NFF level of £121,300), several schools would prefer it is increased to the NFF level. It is proposed to assess the affordability position following confirmation of Barnsley's funding allocation in December 2021 and the proposed decision on the 1% funding transfer proposal.

Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)

- A 2% MFG is proposed for 2022/23 which is the maximum allowed under existing regulations (the regulations that allows local authorities to set MFG between 0.5% and 2%). It is intended to maintain the MFG at this rate irrespective of the level of the level of funding transfer to high needs.

Capping and scaling

- It is proposed that for 2022/23 scaling is applied within the formula to ensure affordability and that the MFG amount is accommodated with the overall funding.

RESOLVED:

- 3 To note the response of schools and MAT Boards to the outcomes of the consultation and the proposed changes to be made by the Local Authority to Barnsley's schools funding formula.**

Proposed percentage transfer of funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Block to the High Needs Block (2022/23)

Further to the proposed changes to other elements of the local schools funding formula, Mr. Amahwe and Ms. Burton then presented a specific report on the final question within the recent consultation, the proposed transfer of 1% of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to help tackle cost pressures particularly relating to the costs of independent, out of area SEND school places.

Mr. Amahwe and Ms. Burton outlined the context which made the percentage transfer critical and referred to the following:

- Forecasted increase in demand for places from children with an education or health care plan or complex needs, during 2022/23 onwards
- The significance of the Local Authority's DSG Management Plan in seeking to bring expenditure within the approved budgetary limits by 2025.
- Restrictions upon the use of wider local authority budgets and use of reserves
- The importance of enhancing the capacity of local, in-Borough mainstream and special schools to meet the needs of children closer to home as part of a graduated response to school places.
- The importance of early identification of needs and early intervention.

Mr. Amahwe added that the proposed percentage transfer of 1% would have minimal impact on schools funding positions, particularly as the proposed increase in the Lump Sum Factor in the local schools funding formula would offset any impact whilst enabling a 2% minimum funding guarantee and minimum per pupil funding thresholds to be met in both primary and secondary phases during 2022/23. The number and distribution of responses were as follows:

Question 8: Do you support the proposal to transfer 1% from the schools' block to the high needs block for 2022/23 and for this to be applied to meet the cost of placing SEND pupils in new commissioned local SEND places?

	Primary	Secondary	Total	Percentage
Agree	19	3	22	55%
Disagree	9	5	14	35%
Not sure	2	1	3	8%
Not answered	0	1	1	3%
	30	10	40	100%

Whilst 55% of those schools which responded to the consultation agreed to a 1% transfer (£1.7 million) a significant minority of schools disagreed or were unsure of the transfer (43%). Of those schools which supported the proposal 63% were primary schools whilst 50% of secondary school respondents did not agree with the proposal. A range of reasons were provided by schools who disagreed or were unsure of the proposal. These included more effective debt-reduction measures, the impact of such a percentage transfer upon individual schools and the need to call on central government for additional funding. In the emerging discussion, Mr Amahwe added that these schools understood the reasons for the proposal but qualified their support.

Mr. Crook commented that by agreeing to the proposed transfer not all schools in the Borough would be 'winners' and that it would have been useful, in the interests of balance, to have included details of what each school would have received under the schools funding formula if the proposal did not proceed. Mr. Greaves queried whether the additional funding, if agreed, would only help in closing the cumulative deficit rather than enhance the quality of practice and provision. Ms Burton responded that the additional funding would be used to improve the capacity of local mainstream and special schools to best meet the needs of SEND children and young people closer to home and

prevent the use of out of area independent and costlier provision. In this sense, the additional funding would be kept in Barnsley and given back to local schools, including via top-up funding.

In view of the responses made to the recent consultation and the subsequent discussion at today's meeting, the Chair of the Forum moved that a vote be undertaken on whether the proposed transfer should be agreed.

MOTION:

That the proposal to transfer 1% of funding from the Schools Block (or £1.7 million) to the High Needs Block be agreed by the Schools Forum

When put to a vote of members of the Schools Block who were present at today's meeting all eligible members (10 members) voted in favour of the motion.

RESOLVED:

- 4. That the Schools Forum agrees to the proposed transfer of 1% of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to help tackle cost pressures during 2022/23 as part of the DSG Management Plan.**
- 5. The Local Authority proceeds with its disapplication request to the Department for Education in accordance with funding transfers from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of over 0.5% with the outcome to be reported to a future meeting of the Forum.**

6. CONFIDENTIAL AGENDA ITEMS

No confidential reports were submitted at today's meeting.

7. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

No issues were raised at today's meeting.

8. SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN AND SCHEDULE OF FUTURE MEETINGS (2021/22)

Members noted the current version of the Forum's Forward Plan and were invited to add to the document. The dates of the remaining two meetings of the Forum during 2021/22 were also noted. The Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum expressed his gratitude to members of the Forum for their attendance and contributions to today's meeting. He also wished everyone a safe and healthy Christmas and a happy New Year.

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(Signed by the Chair of the Barnsley Schools Forum)