

HILLINGDON SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 7 December 2022 at 1pm via Teams

Voting members

NAME	ORGANISATION	ATTENDANCE	TERM ENDS
Maintained Nursery (1)			
Shabana Aslam	McMillan Early Childhood Centre	PRESENT	Sep 2026
Maintained Primary - Schools (4)			
Rachel Anderson	Dr Triplett's School	PRESENT	Sep 2023
Kris O'Sullivan	Deanesfield Primary School	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Mel Penney	Glebe Primary School	PRESENT	Sep 2027
Carly Rissen	Colham Manor	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Maintained Primary - Governors (4)			
John Buckingham	Glebe Primary School	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Jim Edgecombe (CHAIR)	Whiteheath Junior School	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Tony Eginton	Minet Nursery & Infant School & Hillside Junior School	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Phil Haigh	Cherry Lane Primary School & Meadow High School	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Maintained Secondary (1)			
Dan Cowling	Oak Wood School	PRESENT	Sep 2026
Maintained Special (1)			
Jenny Rigby	Meadow High School	APOLOGIES	Sep 2027
Academies (9)			
John Garner	Ruislip High School	PRESENT	Sep 2026
Tracey Hemming	Middlesex Learning Partnership	PRESENT	Sep 2024
Nicola Kelly	Charville	APOLOGIES	Sep 2024
Helen Manwaring	Swakeleys School	PRESENT	Sep 2022
Catherine Mosdell	Frays Academy Trust	APOLOGIES	Sep 2023
David Patterson	Queensmead School	PRESENT	Sep 2023
Sandra Voisey	Laurel Lane Primary School	PRESENT	Sep 2023
(2 vacancies)			
Special Academies (1)			
Sudhi Pathak	Eden Academy Trust	PRESENT	Sep 2026
Alternative provision (1)			
Laurie Cornwell	The Skills Hub	APOLOGIES	Sep 2024
Private Voluntary & Independent Early Years Providers (2)			
Elaine Caffary	4 Street Nursery	APOLOGIES	Sep 2024
(vacant)			
14-19 Partnership (1)			
(vacant)			

Other attendees (non-voting)

Independent Non-Maintained Special School			
Debbie Gilder	Pield Heath School		NOT REQUIRED
Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Schools)			
Eleesa Dowding	Harmondsworth		NOT REQUIRED
Kate Needs	Lady Bankes		
Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Governor)			
Jo Palmer	Hillside Infant School and Hillside Junior School		NOT REQUIRED
Graham Wells	Colham Manor Primary School		NOT REQUIRED
Local Authority Officers			
Kate Boulter	Clerk		PRESENT
Paul Gledhill	LA Finance		PRESENT
Vikram Hansrani	Executive Director, Education & SEND		PRESENT
Gemma McNamara	LA Finance		PRESENT
Coral Miller	LA Finance		PRESENT
Lynda Poole	LA SEND		PRESENT
Observers			
(none)			

		ACTION
1.	<p>APOLOGIES & INTRODUCTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologies were accepted and recorded in the attendance list (above). The Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate and could proceed to business. • Before commencing business, the Chair reported that Helen Manwaring’s term of office had expired in September 2022 and the nomination/election process for Academy Representatives had not been completed yet. The Forum AGREED that Helen would be a voting member for the purposes of this meeting. • The Chair commented that, at the last meeting, the Forum had made clear that it wished to consult with schools before making decisions on certain matters. Despite this, there were reports on the agenda for this meeting which sought a decision from Forum on those matters without consultation with schools. • Over the past few meetings, the Forum had not been provided with information requested from officers. Many reports were routine items which only needed updating with current figures. 	
2.	<p>ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS None.</p>	
3.	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2022 were AGREED as a correct record of the meeting, subject to the following amendments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shabana Aslam was present. • Paul Gledhill should be Paula Gledhill. 	
4.	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>(a) TRAINING FOR SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERS This item had been on the agenda for over a year awaiting confirmation of dates from the LA Finance Team. At the last meeting, CM had offered dates in March and May 2023 and the Forum had requested the training take place sooner than that, given there were members who had not had any training.</p> <p>CM reiterated that due to workload it would not be possible to deliver training earlier than March. In the meantime, CM had provided a report on Schools Forum Roles and Responsibilities produced from information available on the DfE website, which was considered by Forum, and would provide the basis for training. The Forum commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report underlined the need for training. There were technical phrases which required explanation. • Members needed to be able to make informed contributions, which was not possible without training. • If the LA was unable to provide timely training, consideration should be given to using an external trainer. • The training should be in person. • The Chair and Vice-Chair were happy to assist with delivery of training. <p>The Forum requested that the LA confirm training dates and provide an outline of training content before the next meeting.</p> <p>(b) SCHOOL PROVISION FOR CHILDREN FROM ASYLUM SEEKER FAMILIES VH reported that the LA was liaising closely with the Home Office and the Department for Levelling Up regarding the challenges facing schools. The Forum commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LA had been speaking with government departments about this issue for nine months with no tangible results. • There was no prospect of schools receiving funding for pupils who joined and left between censuses. • One school had taken sixty pupils which required an additional two teachers plus 	<p style="text-align: center;">CM</p>

	<p>interventions, without any funding to support this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to the financial impact, there was an issue with place blocking. Many asylum seeker children stayed temporarily and left at short notice when moved by the Home Office, but could not be removed from the school roll until their new whereabouts was confirmed. A change to admissions criteria might be needed. 	
5.	<p>SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP & CONSTITUTION</p> <p>(a) MEMBERSHIP UPDATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VH reported that the request for nominations for Academy Representatives had gone out to Heads. The Chair advised that the nominations request should go to governing bodies and CEOs. VH was unsure who the request had gone to, or what the closing date was. VH advised that no further progress had been made with the appointment of a second PVI rep and a 14-19 rep. PH advised that the 14-19 rep did not have to be from Uxbridge College, and there might be more success if the search was widened to other 14-19 providers. <p>(b) RESTRUCTURE OF SUB-GROUPS</p> <p>There were currently a number of sub-groups of Forum: DSG/EY, High Needs Funding, and a working group on Early Intervention. There was also the DSG Delivery Group which discussed the LA's quarterly submissions to the DfE. An overlap between discussions taking place at these groups had been identified and it was AGREED that the DSG Sub-Group be temporarily suspended. PH would circulate new meeting dates and membership.</p> <p>(c) CONSTITUTION</p> <p>The Forum considered a report produced by the Chair on the Constitution of the Hillingdon Schools Forum and a draft updated Constitution. The Forum AGREED (1) the document on the LA website titled 'Constitution for the Hillingdon Schools Forum Academic Year 2017/18' be removed; (2) the current membership of the Forum (as set out in the attendance list above) be approved; and (3) an updated version of the Constitution be brought to the first meeting of the 2023/24 financial year, for approval.</p>	<p>VH</p> <p>VH</p> <p>PH</p> <p>KB</p> <p>JE</p>
6.	<p>FEEDBACK FROM SUB-GROUPS & WORKING GROUPS</p> <p>The following sub-group minutes were received and PH provided an overview of the matters discussed:</p> <p>(a) EARLY INTERVENTION GROUP – 15 NOVEMBER 2022</p> <p>The minutes were noted.</p> <p>(b) HIGH NEEDS FUNDING GROUP – 22 NOVEMBER 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Group had identified that establishing growth rate and cost of new and ceased EHCPs was a major factor in achieving the Safety Valve Agreement. If mainly lower value plans ceased, only lower savings were possible. The Group had received a report on independent and non-maintained places which indicated that the number of such places had increased 35% in a year, and the average cost had increased by 15% in the same period. No significant progress had been made with resolving issues with LA payment of top-up funding to schools, and a number of schools continued to have significant underpayments. The Group was concerned that the inaccuracies in payments could have wider impact. If the LA's data was not accurate, there was a risk it did not know where children were placed, which had implications for safeguarding and GDPR. Officers responded that the LA did know where children were, and the issue was around how information was shared between LA departments. The Finance team was working on an improved tracker which would be checked by the SEND team. Past inaccurate payments would be corrected and new processes put in place to ensure it did not happen again. A further update would be provided to the next meeting. Members requested that the LA provide schools with training on the portal which handled top-up payments to ensure schools were using it properly. This had been 	<p>GM</p>

	<p>requested when the system was introduced, but had not been provided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Group had also expressed concern that the inaccuracies in top-up payments to schools meant the impact on the DSG could not be accurately reflected in the budget monitoring reports to Cabinet and Schools Forum. 	GM
7.	ITEMS FOR DECISION	
	<p>(a) CONSULTATION ON 0.5% HIGH NEEDS BLOCK TRANSFER</p> <p>The Forum considered a report which sought the Forum’s approval to transfer 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2023/24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the indicative Schools Block budget of £262.803million, the contribution would be approximately £1,314,005. An assumption that this transfer would be made annually had been built into the five-year DSG Safety Valve Agreement, however annual agreement was required from Schools Forum. Without the Safety Valve Agreement in place, the Council had projected a £63.9million deficit by 2025/26. Through the work of the Safety Valve programme, the Council projected entering an in-year balance position by 2024/25 (Year 4 of the Agreement). This would result in an overall cumulative deficit of £42.6million by the end of Year 5. This deficit would be paid off over 5 years through £20million Council commitment and £22.6million funded by the DfE through the Safety Valve work. <p>The Forum commented that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Forum had stated at its last meeting that it wished to consult with schools before making decisions which affected schools. This recommendation, which, if agreed, would reduce funding in the Schools Block, was presented to Forum for decision without any consultation with schools having taken place. The Forum had been clear when it agreed the transfer for 2022/23 that the matter would be decided each year based on the position at the time. It was noted that the Quarter 2 Safety Valve report had contained different figures from those now reported. The Q2 report had stated the DfE would fund £26million which was £4million different from the current report. It was concerning that the figures kept changing. The Forum asked what would happen if it did not approve the transfer. Officers advised that the LA would submit a disapplication request to the DfE, and it was assumed the DfE would support the transfer given its importance in achieving the aims of the Safety Valve Agreement. The Forum asked if the Council would have to fund the difference from its reserves if the transfer was not agreed. Officers did not answer the question. Some schools had deficits or were facing deficits due to rising costs, and the Forum had a duty to consider the financial sustainability of the Borough’s schools. Whilst mindful of the Safety Valve Agreement, the Forum had to consider the future impact of a reduction in funding for schools to pay off an historical deficit, which the Council had allowed to grow on the assumption that the government would eventually clear the deficit. It was too late to consult with schools, and no information on what the impact would be on schools’ funding had been provided to enable the Forum to make an informed decision. It would be helpful to have modelling on which schools would go into deficit due to reduction of funding if the transfer was agreed. The funding agreement for 2024/25 was not yet available, however it was known that funding was moving toward a National Funding Formula and it should be possible to model based on known information. <p>The Forum AGREED that (1) the decision would be deferred to the January meeting; and (2) to support the Forum in making its decision, officers would provide modelling based on known information showing the impact of the 0.5% transfer on schools.</p>	CM

(b) SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT DE-DELEGATION

The Forum considered a report which sought the Forum’s approval of the introduction of a new de-delegated service area for school improvement activities following the cessation of the school improvement monitoring and brokering grant, and agreement of funding to support the service in 2023/24. The amount requested was £198K or £10.73 per child in maintained schools based on October 2021 census numbers. This figure would be updated in January 2023 to reflect the October 2022 census numbers. If the de-delegation was not agreed, schools would lose the school improvement and governance services currently provided by the LA.

In response to questions from Forum members, officer advised that:

- The service provided by the LA to schools had improved and new appointments had been made.
- Recent appointments to the school improvement team had been made on a one-year contract while funding of the service was under review.
- The Council was subsidising the total cost of the service, which was around £400K.
- Nursery pupils were not included as they came under different funding.
- Currently courses were open to all schools, but from April 2023, when the new funding arrangement started, non-maintained schools would be required to pay for courses.

The Forum commented:

- The Forum had explicitly stated at its last meeting that it wished to consult with schools before making a decision on this de-delegation item. That had not been done and the report was presented for the Forum to make a decision without taking into consideration schools’ views.
- The Council had a statutory requirement to provide some of the services and it would be helpful to know which of the functions covered by the requested funding were statutory, and which were ‘extras’.

The Forum **AGREED** that (1) the decision would be deferred to the January meeting; and (2) to support the Forum in making its decision, and in view of the time limitation which precluded any opportunity to consult fully with schools, MP would consult with members of Primary Forum to seek their views and report back to the January meeting.

MP

(c) SCHOOLS BLOCK OPTION PAPER

The Forum considered a report on the options the Local Authority would model when the final Schools Block budget was issued later in December with the implementation of the hard National Funding Formula. Three options would be modelled:

- (i) Hard national funding formula
- (ii) 5% away from the Hard national funding formula
- (iii) 10% away (compulsory) from the Hard national funding formula

The Forum **NOTED** the update and requested that the report presented to the January meeting include the background to the current funding arrangement so members could understand how this position was reached.

CM

(d) OAK WOOD SCHOOL DEFICIT

The Forum considered a report from Dan Cowling, Headteacher of Oak Wood School, which sought the Forum’s support in asking the Cabinet of Hillingdon Council to write off £2million of the school’s accumulated historic deficit. DC reported that:

- The school’s deficit had peaked at £3.5million in 2018/19.
- The deficit at end of 2021/22 was £2.53million.
- The £1million reduction in the deficit had been achieved at no cost to the LA by sale of the caretaker’s house, one-off financial benefits during the pandemic, reduced expenditure and effective budget management.
- During this time, standards at the school had improved from ‘Requires Improvement’ to ‘Good’.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school wished to obtain the Council's agreement to its proposal to repay £500K in five £100K per year payments from 2023/24 to 2027/28, plus continuing the interest payments of approximately £18-19K a year, and for the Council to write off the remaining £2million of the deficit. <p>The Forum commented that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Forum had no power to agree the proposal but could provide its views. The school had an improving financial position but it was not evident how further substantial reductions in the deficit could be achieved. The Forum had no way of knowing whether any decision by the Council to write off the deficit would impact on available funding elsewhere. The Forum observed that it was not informed when schools applied to the Council for licensed deficits, only informed after a decision had been made by the Council. <p>The Forum AGREED to request the Council look kindly at Oak Wood's proposal to write off its deficit, whilst making clear that the Forum was not committing to any contribution to such a write-off from the DSG.</p>	
8.	INFORMATION ITEMS	
	<p>(a) DSG BUDGET MONITORING MONTH 7 There was no written report. CM advised that there was no significant change from the Month 6 position and a written report for Month 8 would be provided for the next meeting.</p> <p>The Forum observed that it had raised concerns at the last meeting regarding accuracy of figures in the Month 6 report, and looked forward to receiving the written report in January.</p> <p>(b) DSG SAFETY VALVE 3 UPDATE VH advised that the LA was working on the Quarter 3 submission which covered September, October and November 2022. This would be shared with the sub-group which would meet next week prior to submission to the DfE.</p> <p>(c) SEND PUPIL PLACE PLANNING There was no written report. The matter had been discussed at the High Needs Funding Group and the Forum had received the minutes (see Minute 6b above).</p>	CM
9.	<p>AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING The agenda stated that the following reports would be provided for the January meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation on the School Funding Formula for 2023/24 School Budget Surpluses and Deficits <p>Additionally, the following items had been added from discussions at this meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal to transfer 0.5% from Schools Block to High Needs Block. School improvement de-delegation proposal <p>Officers advised that it would not be possible to provide the report on school budget surplus and deficits for January and proposed this be provided to Forum in the summer. The Forum observed that this item was usually provided in September/October, and the information would be nearly a year out of date by next summer. The Forum asked if the LA could arrange for an officer to provide this information for the next meeting.</p>	VH/CM
10.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS None.</p>	

The meeting closed at 3.20pm