

# MINUTES OF MEETING

**Meeting title:** Nottinghamshire Early Years and Schools Forum  
**Date and time:** 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024, 2pm to 4pm  
**Location:** St Giles School – DN22 7NJ

## Membership

*'A' denotes absence*

	Andrew Rossington	Maintained Primary Head Teacher
A	Steve Border	Maintained Primary Head Teacher
	Helen Roberts	Maintained Primary Head Teacher – (Vice Chair)
	David Phillips	Maintained Secondary Head Teacher
	Anne Hall	Academy Representative
A	Neil Holmes	Academy Representative
	James Macdonald	Academy Representative - (Chair)
A	Neil Robinson	Academy Representative
A	Daniel Moore	Academy Representative
A	Ella Tuxford	Academy Representative
	Katie Thackery	Academy Representative
	Matt Rooney	Maintained Special School Head Teacher
	Jamie Hutchinson	Academy Special School Head Teacher
A	Colin Barnard	Governor Maintained School Representative
A	Andy Palmer	Governor Maintained School Representative
	Amanda Harrison	Governor Academy School Representative
	Laura Gapski	PVI - Early Years Group Member
	Karen Richards	PVI - Early Years Group Member
A	Nigel Frith	Church of England Diocese Representative
A	Louise Knott	14-19 Partnership Representative
	Joe Jefferies	Trade Union Representative - NASUWT
A	Jo Myers	Trade Union Representative - UNISON

## ***In attendance:***

Peter McConnochie	Director of Education and Inclusion, Children and Families
Steve Hawkins	Senior Finance Business Partner, Children and Families
Karen Hughman	Group Manager, Education Access, Standards and Safeguarding
Mandy Stratford	Early Years Strategic Manager, Early Childhood Services
Sarju Sheta	Finance Business Partner, Children and Families Finance
Jason Gooch	Finance Business Partner, Children and Families Finance
Toni Gardner	Assistant Accountant, Children and Families Finance (Clerk)

<p><b>1. Welcome</b></p>	<p>James Macdonald welcomed all members, and welcomed back Steve Hawkins who has returned to Nottinghamshire County Council as Senior Finance Business Partner. Thanks to Matt Rooney for hosting the Forum meeting at St Giles School.</p> <p>A reminder to members that there is a mileage expense form which Toni Gardner will send out to all members.</p>
<p><b>Apologies</b></p>	<p>Apologies were received from Steve Border, Neil Holmes, Ella Tuxford, Colin Barnard, Andy Palmer, Louise Knott, Cllr Nigel Moxon, Colin Pettigrew, Gareth Moss, and Irene Kakoullis.</p> <p>Apologies accepted.</p>
<p><b>2. Minutes – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024</b></p>	<p>Page 4 under item 3b DSG Budget Monitoring Period 2, third paragraph to read ‘An attempt to increase the banding rates of 10 special schools over the next three years matching banding rates at Fountaindale’.</p> <p>Minutes approved as accurate.</p> <p>Members were advised following a new government the Education, and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will be absorbed into the Department of Education (DfE) in part by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024, completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, with 95% of staff moving across.</p> <p>National Funding Formula rates and guidance normally received in July, have not yet been received by Local Authorities (LA) the delay in this could mean we have to change our scheduled meetings / consultation around when information is received and request members if there could be some flexibility. Intention for now to keep with the same timeline until information is received. November meeting to be held virtually for now and any change will be communicated to members.</p>
<p><b>3. 3a Election of Chair &amp; Vice Chair</b></p>	<p>Anne Hall nominated James Macdonald as chair this was seconded by Helen Roberts</p> <p>Anne Hall nominated Helen Roberts as vice chair this was seconded by Joe Jefferies</p> <p>Suggestion was made that we should elect chair and vice chair for longer than one year, possibly for a five year term. We need to see if this is possible and would need to change the constitution accordingly.</p>
<p><b>3b DSG Early Years &amp; School Forum Membership</b></p>	<p>Toni Gardner presented the paper.</p> <p>Though schools have converted in year not enough to change the composition of the Forum for academic year 24-25, this could be different next year as more</p>

<p>schools will be converting, members advised this is a yearly paper and is review every September.</p> <p>Will be going out to recruit where we have vacancies as soon as possible, may have more responses as we have changed Nottinghamshire constitution to allow two people instead of one person to be a member from the same trust.</p> <p>Once website is updated to send link to all members so that it can be distributed out to interested parties around Nottinghamshire.</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDATION/S</b></p> <p><b>That the Forum:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the contents of this report - noted.</li> <li>2. Agrees to retain the membership as set out in paragraph 5 of the report – all members agreed unanimous vote.</li> </ol>	<p><b>TG</b></p>
<p><b>3c DSG Budget Monitoring</b></p> <p>Sarju Sheta presented the paper with Jason Gooch covering the Early Years section.</p> <p>Period 4 the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) is forecasting a £6.777m overspend, High Needs Block forecasting a £7.174m overspend. The overspend was detailed as per table on page 2.</p> <p>Looking to increase the banding rates for 10 special schools over the next 3 years.</p> <p>Cost pressures on the High Needs Block was detailed, also cost pressures in other areas that are not fully funded by the High Needs Block such as Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transport with an expenditure of £22.6m in 24/25 compared to £18m spend in 23/24.</p> <p>Overspend in High Needs Block (HNB) is not just in Nottinghamshire, other Local Authorities (LAs) are overspent so a national picture. Some authorities are estimating an overspend of £100m.</p> <p>Jamie Hutchinson – in terms of quality assurance and money spent in alternative provision how is this being checked?</p> <p>Peter McConnochie/Karen Hughman confirmed that commissioning and resources have a quality assurance oversight but recognise the market is expensive and demand outstrips capacity. There are regular senior officer meetings around children who require these places, which are only bought to these meetings when there is nowhere else appropriate to place the children.</p> <p>Conversation was had around if a special school can meet the needs and if that schools is able to access the same amount of funding as an alternative provision.</p> <p>Matt Rooney - Cost of alternative provision what is the most expensive and the cheapest could this be worked through in the High Level Needs (HLN) working group. Some pupils in special schools are visiting Independent Non Maintained</p>	

(INM) to be told needs can't be met as they are too complex for them to take on. A real opportunity and tangible piece of work for the working group to focus on.

Peter McConnochie – yes, a real opportunity to discuss in more detail but also for the working group what are the priorities to focus on, a requirement to understand where the pressure comes from in the current market.

Concern expressed over the current forecasted overspend, is this coming from 25/26 grant allocation or reserves.

Current reserve stands at £19.5m approx. of which £7.6m approx. is ring fenced for future growth in mainstream schools. This year's overspend would be covered by the general reserve, but unsustainable if there is an overspend year on year.

Sarju Sheta - confirmation that the £7.174m overspend does not include the £700k expected cost to St Giles for the additional 44 children therefore overspend figures is almost £8m.

Nottinghamshire to date have done extremely well managing resources allocated to them, spoke in the past about the historic factors that make up the formula when allocating to the Local Authority and how it disadvantages Nottinghamshire.

Last year we were forecasting a £6m underspend, 4 months on we're looking at a £8m overspend. The jump in numbers on page 3 for new pupils accessing INM is significant.

Andrew Rossington – There's a knock on effect which also needs to be considered. Children in mainstream schools that have complex needs that are not able to get into special schools or INM's, mainstream schools are having to support these children which has a huge impact on school budgets.

David Phillips and James Macdonald agree the same is being seen in the secondary sector as well as the primary sector.

Karen Richards – Private, Voluntary, or Independent (PVI's) can top up and can ask parents something not available to schools, not ideal for PVI's and at times get penalised for it but done to meet the needs of the children.

Karen Richards - Have we got a 10 year plan for example to open the provisions that we know we are going to need in a decade's time.

Karen Hughman – There's a new school being built in Mansfield, a significant expansion of another special school, and the DfE have committed to building Nottinghamshire another new special school. There are significant big areas of growth and several smaller areas.

Hopefully a roll out of trying to work jointly with our academy trust secondaries and some of our special schools, as there also seems to be a need for some smaller co-located satellite units for special schools working in partnership with mainstream, especially looking at a transport budget being so huge.

Jason Gooch - at the last meeting in June, we presented the outturn position for the Early Years Block at that point the early figures were indicative. ESFA confirmed final funding allocation at the end of July and there was no movement from what was presented, as there's no change LA will proceed with what was agreed at the last meeting that part of the underspend will be distributed back out

<p>to the sector, payments will be made in the next couple of weeks at a rate of 5p per hour per pupil.</p> <p>Funding allocations three and four year olds for the universal and the additional hours and the disadvantaged 2 year olds will be based on the average of two January census as we have had for a few years now.</p> <p>The new entitlements, which is the two year old working parents funding will be allocated to the authority based on termly headcounts/census.</p> <p>All this into consideration there's still an expectation that the Local Authority will receive funding for more pupils than what is paid out as it's paid based on, bums on seats with a net result of £279k approx. underspend.</p> <p>The estimated figures that we will be funded for is just over 25,000 part time equivalent pupils, the local authorities estimated uptake is around 24,500 this is the main reason for the underspend.</p> <p>Forecasting an underspend on the Disability Access Fund (DAF), is due to how we are funded versus' s actual take up.</p> <p>Net overspends of £10k on remaining allocations.</p> <p>Forecasting is based on future projected headcounts, with new entitlements difficult to predict what is going to happen and what numbers will materialise. Local authority is expecting a forecasting assignment that will change the gap between what the local authority is funded on and what we pay out on, with the gap getting smaller, will keep forum members updated and continue to monitor.</p> <p>Matt Rooney – What happens to the underspend from DAF is it clawback? Mandy Strafford – it sits within Early Years Block and has been used to offset any overspend, inclusion fund being one of them. DAF is also used for workforce development and training rather than using the inclusion fund so more of this can go out to the sector.</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDATION/S</b></p> <p><b>That the Forum:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notes the content of the report – noted.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>3d 2025-26 National Funding Formula – verbal update</b></p> <p>Steve Hawkins – reconfirmed that guidance and allocations the local authority would have received in July have not yet been received.</p> <p>Have a consultation timeline for this year but this is a draft and subject to change depending on information the LA receives and when.</p> <p>The LA is assuming with it being so late, principles of funding will be like previous years and therefore the LA's consultation timelines will be the same.</p> <p>Nottinghamshire will continue to mirror the National Funding Formula (NFF) as close as possible, with options to decrease factors, decrease Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) or introduce a gains cap if the formula is unaffordable.</p>	

<p>Draft timeline: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 31<sup>st</sup> October Forum papers go out for 7<sup>th</sup> November Forum meeting (requesting comments prior to the meeting due to tight deadlines).</li> <li>- 7<sup>th</sup> November Forum meeting – consultation draft with hope this is agreed having asked for comments prior to meeting.</li> <li>- Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November to Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November School Consultation</li> <li>- 28<sup>th</sup> November Forum papers go out for 5<sup>th</sup> December Forum meeting.</li> <li>- 5<sup>th</sup> December meeting – voting on formula.</li> </ul> <p>Need to continue to try and get more engagement to the consultation, ensure CEO's, business managers and finance personnel/finance director are aware they can attend.</p> <p>Look to put some provisional dates in now for virtual consultation meetings and get sign up. Consultation title 'Update on how labour is going to fund schools' with a note with it may move depending on distribution of final guidance.  Look to book in at least 4 sessions for 45 minutes, upload the consultation link within the chat during the presentation so that it's there ready for the attendees to click on and complete.  Suggestion to investigate recording a presentation with officers there to answer questions after the meeting on in the chat.</p> <p>Could share presentation with Forum members at the 7<sup>th</sup> November forum meeting.  Mandy Stratford – intention is to run the early years consultation at the same time.  Peter McConnochie – work/consultation for High Needs Block to be worked through initially with this new working group.</p> <p>November meeting to be virtual and will make the December meeting a face to face.</p>	<p><b>TG</b></p>
<p><b>3e Working Group Update – verbal update.</b></p> <p>High Level Needs Working group – James Macdonald chaired meeting.</p> <p>Peter McConnochie - met for the first time 9<sup>th</sup> July to begin to work through what the subgroup would/could be looking into on behalf of the Forum. The purpose of the group and how to begin to drill down into the detail, understanding the funding, the pressures and opportunities, a deeper oversight of this block and how it's proportioned and why, so that we're not going through a High Needs conversation at the last minute.</p> <p>A need to group the areas, list actions, and attach names to move it forward as it was not discussed in that detail in the working group 9<sup>th</sup> July.</p> <p>Thinking about an external piece of consultancy around the HNB, as the group felt there may not be the capacity within Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC), the piece of work would look at a whole number of areas one of which would be how do we support mainstream schools better. How do we reduce pupils going out to INMs and spend this money in a more efficient way that better meets the needs of the young people.</p>	



	<p>the services into a new partnership is achieved. The existing staff and account managers will remain in place as the service transfers across into our new joint venture partnership.</p> <p>It is proposed that the existing contract terms in schools catering contracts, including pricing, will continue for the first year of any new partnership model, allowing schools to experience the new partnership in operation.</p> <p>A further more detailed update will be provided at the next schools forum on the 7th November.</p> <p>Any questions can be emailed to <a href="mailto:customerinfo@nottsc.gov.uk">customerinfo@nottsc.gov.uk</a></p>													
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Confidentiality</b></p> <p>There were no confidential items.</p>													
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Date and time of next meeting</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="148 759 1334 913"> <tr> <td>Thursday 7 November 2024</td> <td>2-4pm</td> <td>Microsoft Teams</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thursday 5 December 2024</td> <td>2-4pm</td> <td>TBC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wednesday 5 March 2025</td> <td>2-4pm</td> <td>Microsoft Teams</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thursday 12 June 2025</td> <td>2-4pm</td> <td>In person – Location TBC</td> </tr> </table>	Thursday 7 November 2024	2-4pm	Microsoft Teams	Thursday 5 December 2024	2-4pm	TBC	Wednesday 5 March 2025	2-4pm	Microsoft Teams	Thursday 12 June 2025	2-4pm	In person – Location TBC	
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