

THE CUMBRIAN SCHOOLS' FORUM
Draft MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
22 November 2021
via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT

Lisa Balderstone (PRU)
Claire Birkett (West Maintained Primary)
Huw Davies (Primary Academy)
Rachel Field (West Maintained Primary)
Stephen Gilby (North Maintained Secondary)
David Grimshaw (North Maintained Primary)
Matt Hardwick (South Maintained Secondary)
Daniel Hinton (Special Schools)
Rhiannon Hughes (Maintained Nursery Schools)
Simon Laheney
Chris McAree (North Secondary Academy)
John McAuley (RC Diocese)
David Nattrass (North Maintained Primary)
Ian Nicol (South Maintained Primary)
Vanessa O'Dea (CE Diocese)
Jennifer Rowlands (West Secondary – representing Tom Hailwood)
Sue Sanderson (Cabinet Member – Schools and Learning)
David Spruce (North Maintained Primary)
Cathy Styles (South Maintained Primary)
Ruth Webster (South Maintained Primary)
Kris Williams (North Secondary Academy)

Officers in Attendance:

Dan Barton	(AD – Education and Skills)
Marie Barnes	(School Improvement)
Susan Milburn	(Group Accountant – People)
Amanda Chew	(Finance Manager)
Nicola Shiels	(Forum Support)

Observers:

Apologies for Absence

John McAuley (RC Diocese)
Alan Rutter (Teachers' Professional Associations)

PART 1: ITEMS LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Dan Barton, AD – Education & Skills open the meeting, explaining the vesting date of the new unitary councils on Cumbria's footprint would potentially be a natural end point for Schools Forum in its current form. The lead-in to that date was likely to involve a lot some changes and after which two new school forums could be needed. Taking this context into account, Alan Rutter and David Nattrass who had been chair and vice-chair of Schools Forum in recent years had agreed, subject to Forum approval, to continue in these roles until vesting day in 2023.

1. Appointment of Chair

Alan Rutter was appointed as chair of Schools Forum until April 2023.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair

David Nattrass was appointed as vice chair of Schools Forum until April 2023.

3. Membership

Schools Forum noted the following membership changes:

- i) Alison Claricoats, Lanercost CE Primary School and Matthew Jessop, Crosthwaite CE Primary Schools had resigned from Schools Forum;
- ii) Judith Schafer, Solway Community School had been replaced as west maintained secondary representative by Tom Hailwood, also of Solway Community School;
- iii) Other new members:
 - David Grimshaw, Inglewood Junior School and David Spruce, Appleby Primary School, representing north maintained primary schools;
 - Claire Birkett, Beckermest CE School and Rachel Field, Ashfield Infant School, representing west maintained primary schools;
 - Ian Nicol, Leven Valley CE Primary School, representing south maintained primary schools; and
 - Huw Davies, Ghyllside Primary School, representing primary academies.

4. Exclusion of Press and Public

It was agreed that all items would be considered in the public domain.

5. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this stage.

6. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meetings of the Schools Forum held on 20 October 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

It was reported that since the meeting of Schools Forum held on 20 October, further work on bandings had been done as part of the special school funding formula review and a further report would be presented at the next meeting of full Forum in January 2022.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

7. School Funding Formula Consultation Outcome 2022-23

Cumbria had adopted the NFF since its introduction in 2018-19. Last year, following consultation 0.5%, equating to £1.558m of Schools Block, was transferred to the HN Block and after considering the growth fund budget of £0.20m there was a leftover balance which was allocated to schools through the funding formula by increasing the value of the APWU per pupil factor.

On 21 October 2020, Schools Forum agreed that all Cumbrian primary and secondary schools and academies should be consulted on the school funding formula for 2022-23; on whether the NFF should continue to be adopted in 2022-23 and to seek views on whether up to 0.5% of School Block should be transferred to the HN Block to assist with the ongoing budget pressures, on the same basis that was applied last year, with any residual balance remaining after applying the formula on this basis being allocated to schools through the school funding formula. The consultation was launched on 22 October for a period of three week, closing on 10 November 2021.

Following the launch of the consultation the government announced a further £1.6bn nationally for schools in recognition of budget pressures due to national insurance increases, high needs and responding to COVID19. The split of this funding at a local level had not yet been announced.

A report was presented that asked Schools Forum members to review the results of the consultation and to make a recommendation to Cabinet as to the formula that should be used in 2022-23 to allocate funding to Cumbrian schools.

16 responses had been received from mainstream schools, academies and special schools. This had reduced from 41 compared to the previous year.

All 16 (100%) respondents agreed with the recommendation of the Schools Forum that the national funding formula should be used to allocate funding to schools in Cumbria in 2022-23. When asked if a transfer of up to 0.5% should be made from the Schools Block to the HN Needs Block after allocating the NFF in full 15 (94%) respondents were in favour and 1 (6%) respondent was not in favour.

A summary of the results and comments made by respondents were set out in Appendix 3 to the report. Respondents expressed concern about the ongoing financial challenges faced by schools and continuing HN budget pressures and sought assurance about the local authority's plans to resolve this longer term.

The report included two options for the 2022-23 financial year and Schools Forum were asked to recommend one of the options to Cabinet. It was noted if Schools Forum recommended Option 2, the increase in school budget shares would be locked in for the calculation of the MFG and may make the NFF unaffordable in future years. It would also be subject to any further restrictions imposed on local authorities such as the DfE's proposed requirement for LAs to move their local formula closer to the NFF.

Whilst Forum members were unsurprised at the low level of responses to the consultation, it was concerning. This may have related to the timing of the consultation and also the level of detail in the consultation paper. It was suggested that as part of future consultations, headteachers may welcome the opportunity to join an event where a more detailed explanation was provided.

These concerns were noted and LA officers would look to build a one-off surgery or Teams event into future consultations where more detail/context/background to the consultation could be presented.

Other issues raised related to the application of MFG protections and the 0.5% transfer to the HNB. It was suggested that more detailed figures would be more meaningful if they were included in future consultation documents. A response to the MFG query would be provided outside the meeting.

Schools Forum recommended to Cabinet that the national funding formula was implemented in full in Cumbria in 2022-23, impacting maintained schools from April 2022 and academies from September 2022, and after taking into account the growth fund budget, any residual surplus remaining in the Schools Block up to a maximum 0.5% to be transferred to High Needs Block to support the Recovery Plan. Any remaining leftover balance remaining after applying the formula on this basis, to be allocated to pupils through the school funding formula by increasing the age-weighted pupil unit (AWPU) factor.

8. De-Delegation 2022-23

De-delegation continued to be an option for maintained schools in 2022-23. Funding of de-delegated services was allocated through the Schools Block but could be de-delegated for maintained primary and secondary schools with Schools Forum approval.

DfE were proposing some changes to the way in which School Improvement activity for maintained schools was funded from 2022/23 which may impact on the de-delegation options presented. A consultation had been launched recently seeking views on the proposed withdrawal of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering grant (SIMBG) to be replaced by de-delegation. The consultation sets out the DfE rationale for making this change which included giving maintained schools greater influence over the activity undertaken and supported the government's longer-term ambition for all schools to become academies.

To summarise, it was proposed that the current level of SIMBG would be reduced by 50% from 2022-23 and it would be removed completely by 2023-24. The SIMBG grant funding available to Cumbria for maintained schools in 2021-22 is £0.888m. As the grant was allocated on an academic year basis and crossed over two financial years the September 2021 to March 2022 allocation is £0.485m. Using this allocation as a basis for estimating the grant funding available for 2022-23 financial year if the proposals go ahead it was predicted that there would be a reduction of £0.472m compared to the 2021-22 level.

Schools Forum members were asked to note the potential financial implications and were also encouraged to respond to the DfE consultation which would close on 26 November. Once the outcome of consultation was known an update on the implications for the Council, which may potentially include requesting approval from Schools Forum representatives to fund this service through de-delegation, would be provided. It was

expected that due to the timeline for finalising the schools budget for 2022-23 that the outcome would be published before the next Schools Forum in January 2022.

Schools Forum considered the potential implications of the proposals relating to the SIMBG going ahead and maintained schools representatives deciding not to de-delegate this funding. It was suggested that as this was viewed as a service of value to schools, LA colleagues should undertake to explain and justify the service clearly via CASH, PHA and other meetings with stakeholders.

It was not anticipated that there would be significant change from the 2021-22 budgets. Contingencies included exceptional unforeseen costs, schools in financial difficulties and costs relating to new, re-organised or closed schools. The staffing costs included teacher maternity and union duties reimbursements.

The maintained schools' representatives recommended that the following services should be de-delegated for 2020-21:

De-Delegated Service	Primary	Secondary
Contingencies	Yes	Yes
Staff Costs	Yes	Yes
Library Services	Yes	No

9. Cumbria Schools Forum – Membership

Schools Forums must have schools members, non-schools members and academy members if there was at least one academy in the local authority area. The balance between primary, secondary and academy members should be broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category.

Where a local authority maintained one or more special school the schools forum must have at least one schools member from that sector. The same applied to nursery schools and pupil referral units (PRUs). In addition, there must be one member for special academies and alternative provision academies, including free schools, if such existed in the local authority area.

As schools converted to academy status the school member representation on the Schools Forum should periodically be reviewed in terms of proportionality. A report was presented that set out a review of school member representation on the Forum based on pupil numbers as reported in the May 2021 census update.

Currently, the Schools Forum was made up of 24 school constituencies, 20 representing maintained schools and academies (9 maintained primary, 3 maintained secondary, 6 secondary academy and 2 primary academy) plus 4, 1 each representing special schools, special academies, maintained nursery schools and PRUs.

To maintain a membership that was broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category, it was proposed that, from 1 January 2022, the split of school members should change, reducing the number of maintained school members from 12 to 11 and increasing academy members from 8 to 9. The report set out a number of options to adjust the composition of the Schools Forum in order to maintain a membership that was broadly

proportionate to pupil numbers in each category. The options also sought to maintain a membership that would ensure geographical representation from across the county.

At the meeting on held on 26 November 2019, Schools Forum agreed that attendance at meetings should be monitored and recorded so that instances of non-attendance could be reported to the Schools Forum in order to determine what action should be taken. The report included a copy of the record of attendance at meetings. Despite the unusual circumstances of 2020 and 2021 attendance at Schools Forum meetings had been generally good. It was however agreed that either the chair or vice-chair would contact any members that did not attend regularly as it was important that all constituencies were properly represented.

The Schools Forum had two established working groups, the School Budgets Working Group and the SEN Working Group or High Needs Group (formerly known as the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group). Each member of the full forum should also contribute to at least one of the working groups; some were members of both working groups. Those members new to Schools Forum indicated which of the two working groups they wished to join.

The report also detailed any 'vacant' constituencies that would need to be filled. A letter would be sent to all schools via the School Portal to notify them about Forum representatives and current vacancies.

Schools Forum

- i) noted the contents of the report and the proportionate split between maintained school representatives and academy representatives, based on pupil numbers in each sector as at May 2021;
- ii) considered the options set out in paragraphs 4.12 and 4.14 regarding membership of the Forum and recommended that the membership should be adjusted to reflect the proportional split between maintained schools and academies in line with paragraphs 4.12(i) and 4.14(i);
- iii) noted the record of attendance at Schools Forum meetings over the last 12 months; and
- iv) agreed that the membership of the Forum should be reviewed in relation to proportionality, and any other issues, again during the autumn term 2022.

10. Date of Next Meeting

- i) The next meeting of the Schools Forum would be held on Wednesday 12 January 2022. The meeting would begin at 9.30am and was likely to be via Microsoft Teams. Final arrangements would be circulated prior to the meeting.
- ii) Proposed meeting dates for meetings of Schools Forum and the two working groups would be circulated for comments after the meeting.

11. Any Other Business

- i) CCC Budget Consultation 2022-23
The County Council had launched its annual budget consultation on 18 November 2021. Part of the usual planning ensured that Schools Forum were made aware of the consultation in order that they could respond as appropriate.

Schools Forum noted that the annual consultation on the CCC budget for 2020-21 was ongoing and that responses could be submitted by the closing date of 6 January 2020. A link to the consultation would be circulated to all Schools Forum members: [Budget Consultation 2022/23 - Cumbria County Council - Citizen Space](#)

ii) Circulation of Papers

A concern was raised about papers being issued just before meetings; was there scope to circulate papers further in advance of meetings to allow members time to read, digest and share/seek views of constituents? It was also suggested that papers could be circulated in more than one mailing with an indication of what was new in additional mailings.

The concerns and comments were noted and a commitment to issue some, if not all papers, further in advance of meetings was given.

E&S/NS

23 November 2021