

## Minutes of Schools Forum Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at 2.30 pm

<b>Members</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Voting</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>Vacancy</b>	Primary Maintained Headteacher	Voting	In process
<b>Vicky Aspen</b>	Special Maintained Headteacher	Voting	n/a
Victoria Richmond	Primary Academy Headteacher	Voting	Absent
Paul Jackson (Vice Chair)	Secondary Academy Headteacher	Voting	Present
Marie Woolston (Marie Sweetlove -Smyth standing in)	Special/PRU Academy Headteacher	Voting	Absent
Kyle Taylor	CFO Multi Academy Trust	Voting	Apologies
Richard Warnham	Governor Primary Maintained	Voting	Present
Barbara Fincham	Governor Primary Academy	Voting	Present
<b>Vacancy</b>	Governor Secondary Maintained	Voting	n/a
Peter Martin (Chair)	Governor Secondary Academy	Voting	Present
Justin Stuart	Governor Special and PRU	Voting	Apologies
Hannah Cartwright	Early Years Representative	Non-voting	Apologies
Simon Cook	16-19 Provider Representative	Non-voting	Absent
Hillary Sanders	C of E Diocese Representative	Voting	Present
<b>Vacancy</b>	RC Diocese Representative	Voting	n/a
<b>Vacancy</b>	Teaching Unions Representative	Non-voting	n/a
Stuart Gardner	CEO Multi Academy Trust	Voting	Present
Elizabeth Halton	SPI over 19 Provisions	Non-voting	Apologies
<b>In Attendance</b>			
Celia Buxton	Assistant Director of Education and SEND LA		Present
Maria Beaney	Finance Business Partner LA		Present
Sarah Phillipson	Governance Professional		Present
Tracey Coombs	Portfolio Holder for Education		N/A
Paul Clarke	Strategic Head of Education; Planning and Access		N/A
Leanne Farach	Director of Children Services		N/A

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1. Welcome, attendance and apologies

As noted above.

Victoria Richmond and Simon Cook were absent.

2. Declaration of Interests

No changes to the previously declared interests and no conflicts to the agenda.

3. Minutes from the previous meeting 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**Accuracy:**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate representation of the meeting.

**Matters Arising:**

None

Minutes from the previous meeting 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024

**Accuracy:**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate representation of the meeting.

**Matters Arising:**

None

4. Schools Forum Policy Review – Maria Beaney:

MB referred to her previously shared report, explaining that the aim was to set up working groups to review the current policies with a view to introduce new proposals; however, this group has only met once, and so the LA propose to keep the current policies until the working groups can meet, review and amend new policies and then brought back to the forum.

- The Medway Scheme for Financing Schools
- Medway Growth Policy – find other growth policies from other LA
- Medway School in Financial Difficulties Policy

**Q - What is the timescale so they do not overlap?**

A - They will be in effect from January 2025.

**Decision - The Schools forum members noted and commented on the policies noted above.**

5. Schools Reserves Outturn Report – Maria Beaney:

MB explained The Medway Scheme for Financing Schools outlines the maximum carry-forward reserves for any maintained schools as follows:

- Revenue: 8% of their total yearly grant income (I01, I02, I03, I05 and I08)
- Capital – A school must spend their annual Devolved Formula Capital Funding (DFC) and any brought forward balances within three years.

At their annual May meeting, Maintained Schools, Schools forum members will vote on whether to claw back any funding from a maintained school whose reserves are above the maximum allowable limits.

2023-2024 Year-End Schools Revenue and Capital Reserve Balances - Maria Beaney:

MB stated that as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, 23 maintained schools had revenue reserve balances totalling £3.2 million, showing an increase of £0.7 million from the previous year.

School funding has increased, and new grants have been issued.

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Luton Primary and St Benedict's converted to academies during 2023/24, and their funding is not included in this report. The Local Authority actively engages with schools in deficit recovery plans.

The authority is actively engaged in deficit recovery plans with two schools and is proactively working with two more schools to address potential deficits in the future. It was noted that no school has higher than permitted revenue reserves, and only one school has higher than permitted capital reserves and provided a brief explanation of their position.

**Decision - The Schools forum members noted the position on schools' balances for 2023-2024 as per Section 2.6**

**Decision – The Schools forum members voted to agree not to enact the capital clawback for the school over the maximum carry-forward limits as per Section 3**

### 6. SEND Improvement Plan – Celia Buxton:

CB explained that the Local Authority has implemented an improvement plan following an inspection by Ofsted. The plan was developed in collaboration with various stakeholders, including the parents and carers forum, and focuses on six areas of development. These areas include governance, communication with parents and stakeholders, reducing waiting lists for health and education services, ensuring smooth transitions, and providing adequate provisions outside of education. The DfE monitors the plan on a six-monthly basis and has undergone thorough governance and scrutiny processes involving the partnership board and other relevant stakeholders.

### **Q – You were looking to employ EP Services to clear the backlog; how has this gone?**

A - The Local Authority currently manages 11 agencies, with agency EP not working full-time but contributing intermittently. They have a rolling recruitment process in place to address staffing needs and have restructured the EP service to include senior, assistant, and trainee EPs. The authority is facing a backlog of 377 young people waiting for an AP assessment, which currently takes about 40 weeks to complete. Their goal is to align with the national standard of 65% completion within 20 weeks by December 2024. To address the backlog, the Local Authority has enlisted the expertise of an individual experienced in working with other authorities and is exploring ways to expedite the process, particularly with private EP reports.

### **Q—What is being done for suspension and exclusion services, as no one is available to support parents or schools?**

A—That post has been vacant and has now been appointed (third week). We will get back to supporting the schools as he works through the backlog.

### 7. AP High Needs Top-up Funding Arrangements – Celia Buxton:

CB explained that the Local Authority is currently commissioning alternative provisions for children at different key stages. Focusing on providing placements for children with specific needs, such as those excluded or in reintegration programs. The authority are working on providing additional support for primary schools to address challenging behaviours and looking to establish clear pathways for children accessing different providers, aiming to have the new commissions out in July 2024. Updates are being provided on existing provisions, such as training and outreach services, with a plan to launch hubs providing support for parents and carers of young people. Furthermore, the authority are considering reintroducing non-EHCP top-ups to address the long waiting times for EHCPs. This is to start this year and SEND notional top ups will continue, to allow access to funding while waiting for ECHPs process.

Note: The appendix of the tabled paper is included.

**Q – Where would the money come from for this additional funding? Would success be an increase in funding?**

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A - They would overlap for a short term. We have a low number of ECHPs because we have so many waiting.

**Q - You are already struggling to get ECHPs. Would this not increase and blur the boundaries between the two?**

A—I will have to have a separate team to deal with this particular area. If we were up to date with the ECHPs, we would not be doing this, but we currently have a 40-week waiting list for children with no funding.

**Q - Have you budgeted for extra staff?**

A - The costs are being requested from the general funds and not the school block funds.

**Decision—The Schools forum members voted to agree the consultation on non-ECHP top-up, temporarily replacing the SEN Nominal budget top-up.**

8. The 2024-25 Forward Plan:

MB shared meeting dates and agenda points for 2024-2025.

9. Funding Support Business Cases – Standard Item:

None.

10. AOB:

None.

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## KS3 and 4 Alternative Provision 2024

Accessed through FAP, placement decisions made by the forum:

- 65 commissioned places at the Rowans
- 65 commissioned places at Will Adams
- 8 Assessment placements (currently 16)

This is the provision for those PEx'd and on 8–12-week reintegration programmes.

Accessed through the LA:

- 30 Section 19 placements.
- 12 Complex health needs Tier 4 – Triple R.



## EY, KS1 and 2 Alternative Provision

Alternative provision consultation actions -

Further commissioned support requested for **July out to tender October start**

- Classroom based strategies
- SEMH outreach support
- Relationships with Families

Fund for Nurture pilots.

**Process available end of May**

Clear pathways and feedback routes.

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## Already available support

- ALT - SEMH coaching projects – cohorts full with further demand
- Fortis Trust Outreach Service –Term 1+2 – 132 referrals
- Fortis Trust training - 52 schools, 477 attendees
- Rivermead reintegration –Terms 1-3 - 38 referrals
- Trauma Informed School programme – 75 schools

## Additional Activity



Request schools forum permission to consult on non EHCP top-up, replacing SEN notional budget top-up. (all phases)

Hub launches in May half term.  
Parent Information packs, including Ordinarily Available Document.

Joint Area SEND Improvement plan published 10<sup>th</sup> May