

SCHOOLS' MANAGEMENT FORUM – MIDDLESBROUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING HELD ON:

WEDNESDAY 17 JANUARY 2024 AT 9:15AM

PRESENT:

Maintained Primary School Representatives	
Julia Rodwell	Park End Primary (East cluster)
Tessa Smith	Prospective SMF Member, Berwick Hills Primary (East cluster)
Maintained Special School Representative	
Emma Fox	Prospective SMF Member, Priory Woods School and Art College
Pippa Urwin	Beverley School (in part)
Primary Academy Representatives	
Helen Steele (Chair)	Caldicotes Primary Academy, AET (East cluster)
Adam Cooper (Vice Chair)	Abingdon Primary School, Legacy Learning Trust
Beverley Hewitt-Best	Newham Bridge Primary, Legacy Learning Trust (South cluster)
Emma Watson	The Avenue Primary, Lingfield Education Trust (South cluster)
Heather Adams	Pallister Park Primary, Our Children 1 st
Jackie Walsh	Green Lane Primary Academy, Legacy Learning Trust
Joanne Smith	Breckon Hill Primary School, Legacy Learning Trust
Kate Barkley	Viewley Hill Primary, Lingfield Education Trust (in part)
Louise Stogdale	Prospective SMF Member, Pennyman Primary, Tees Valley Education
Sarah Lymer	CEO, Legacy Learning Trust
PRU Representatives	
Leanne Chilton	River Tees Multi-Academy Trust
Secondary Academy Representatives	
Helen Dalby	NPCAT
Michael Laidler	Acklam Grange, Legacy Learning Trust
Mary Brindle	MacMillan Academy, Endeavour Academies Trust
Simon Reader	Kings Academy
Local Authority Officers	
Rob Brown	Director of Education and Partnerships
Trevor Dunn	Head of Access to Education
James Glover	Trainee Accountant
Dianne Nielsen	Delivering Better Value DBV Lead
Caroline Cannon	Strategic Lead for Inclusion
Sheila Marley	Early Years and Family Hubs Manager
Also Present	
Amy Douglas	Governance Professional (Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council)
Observers	
Anita Jefferies, Grace Mitchell, Graham Skidmore, Helen Seymour, Jackie Lowe, Jennifer Duncan, Katie Haycock, Katy Hall, Louise Davies, Lisa Taylor, Nick Flint, Nicola Russell, Sophie Moss, Susan Robinson, Tracy Houston.	
1.	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
	The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and a round of introductions took place.
2.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
2.1	No apologies had been submitted in advance of the meeting.
2.2	Kate Barkley had advised that she would be late to join the meeting.

3.	NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS
	No items were declared for discussion under Any Other Business.
4.	DECLARATION(S) OF INTEREST(S) IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA
4.1	SMF members were given the opportunity to declare any pecuniary interests or other conflicts of interest relating to items on the agenda for the current meeting.
4.2	No such declarations were made on this occasion.
5.	MEMBERSHIP UPDATE
5.1	<p><u>Purpose</u></p> <p>To address the current membership and school representation at SMF, reflecting the recent changes in dynamic with maintained school and academy status shifting over recent academic years. It was essential that the Forum was fully representative of all sectors to meet DfE requirements.</p>
5.2	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>In advance of the current meeting of SMF, where key financial information would be shared that would affect all schools in the borough, the Local Authority (LA) had consulted with all schools regarding the membership of the group. Considering the increased numbers of schools who had become academies, it was essential that SMF membership was reviewed in order that it accurately reflected the composition of Middlesbrough schools. This would ensure that when the group took key decisions on the Dedicated Schools Grant, and the ongoing work linked to the Delivering Better Value DfE partnership, the decision would be reflective of the wide scope of interests.</p>
5.3	<p><u>Proposal</u></p> <p>Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) membership would be considered to ensure a fair and broad range of representation from the range of MATs that schools were now part of. Clusters had been asked to review their representation, to ensure it was reflective of the range of maintained schools and MATs in the borough.</p>
5.4	<p><u>Discussion</u></p>
5.4.1	<p>The following appointments were made to SMF: Maintained Primary School representatives: Tessa Smith and John Dixon (replacing Anita Jefferies). Maintained Special School representative: Emma Fox. Primary Academy representative: Louise Stogdale, Tees Valley Education.</p>
5.4.2	<p>The following trusts were now represented at SMF: AET, Endeavour Academies Trust, Legacy Learning Trust, Lingfield Education Trust, Our Children 1st, Tees Valley Education, River Tees MAT, NPCAT. The clerk advised that the membership of academies was over the constitution, as the Terms of Reference of SMF allowed for 13 academy representatives.</p>
5.5	<p><u>Outcomes</u></p>
5.5.1	<p>SMF recognised the vacancy for a maintained school governor.</p>
5.5.2	<p>SMF noted the correct representation at maintained primary school and maintained special schools following the appointments noted at 5.4.1.</p>
5.5.3	<p>Academy representation would be reviewed outside of the current meeting and reduced from 15 members to 13.</p>

6.	MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8 NOVEMBER 2023
6.1	Minutes of the SMF meeting held on 8 November 2023 had been circulated in advance of the meeting, to be approved and signed as a true record. SMF members also had an opportunity to question progress with any matter discussed at that meeting which would not arise during the present meeting. <i>Pippa Uwrin joined the meeting.</i>
6.2	There were no matters arising that would not be addressed during the present meeting.
6.3	<u>Outcome</u> RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record.
7.	MINUTES OF EMERGENCY MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2023
7.1	Minutes of the emergency SMF meeting held on 12 December 2023 had been circulated in advance of the meeting, to be approved and signed as a true record. SMF members also had an opportunity to question progress with any matter discussed at that meeting which would not arise during the present meeting.
7.2	There were no matters arising that would not be addressed during the present meeting.
7.3	<u>Outcome</u> RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record.
8.	LOCAL AUTHORITY BUDGET UPDATE FOR INFORMATION
8.1	<u>Purpose</u> To receive an overview of the current financial situation in the Local Authority (LA).
8.2	<u>Discussion/Challenge</u>
8.2.1	Recent local media reports had indicated that the LA was at risk of bankruptcy. SMF was advised that the LA was moving into a period where it was likely that a Section 114 report would be issued, or exceptional government funding would be sought. This was because expenditure would exceed the resources available. A wide-scale review of LA owned buildings had taken place, as there could be the potential to use capital as revenue through the sale of assets. Numerous LAs were in similar positions.
8.2.2	A public consultation had been undertaken. Over time, it would become more challenging to deliver services as more savings had to be achieved. The LA sought to find alternative ways of delivering services where possible, and aimed to avoid a situation in which services would significantly change or cease. Ultimately, there was not enough money for the LA to continue to run its services in the ways that it had done previously.
8.2.3	In response to a query, SMF members were advised that the LA would not claw back money from the Schools' Block to the LA. The council deficit, and the deficit referred to in the report relating to the Dedicated Schools Grant, were not to be confused with each other.
8.2.4	A point of clarity was sought regarding whether there had been sufficient money available, prior to the 0.5% transfer to the High Needs Block, to deliver the National Funding Formula. SMF members were informed no deductions had been made in the growth funding before the recent working group.

8.3	<p>A caveat had been included to allow for changes as the money received was not sufficient for the LA to deliver everything it was required to.</p> <p><u>Outcome</u></p> <p>A further update on the LA's financial position would be shared at the next meeting of SMF.</p>
9.1	2024-25 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) SCHOOLS' BLOCK
9.1.1	<p>The purpose of the report, which had been circulated in advance, was to provide an update on the DSG Schools' Block, National Funding Formulae (NFF) 2024-25. SMF were guided through the changes to the NFF, including rolling the 2023 to 2024 mainstream schools additional grant (MSAG) into the NFF. Detailed information on how this would be achieved had been included in the report. Following a consultation in 2022, the plan was to implement a direct NFF, with funding allocated directly to schools based on a single formula. To support the transition to the direct NFF, LAs were required to bring their own formulae closer to the schools NFF, with a further 10% closer in 2024-25.</p>
9.1.2	<p>SMF had agreed, in an emergency meeting in December 2023, to transfer 0.5% from Schools' Block to the High Needs Block. Prior to modelling options, a number of changes were required. These were the deduction of the 0.5% transfer, the addition of 110 new places, increased numbers for an existing new school and the addition of a Growth Fund. Following the changes, an over allocation of just over £1m had to be reduced to meet the budget. Ways in which changes could be made were shared with members of SMF, and attention was drawn to the impact on individual schools as outlined in Appendix A. Capping would limit the percentage increase any school could receive compared to the previous year. The scaling factor set how much of the additional gain was deducted from a school's allocation. New and growing schools were exempt from the cap and scaling impact.</p>
9.1.3	<p>Mr Glover confirmed that the recent working group meeting had taken place as planned. An issue with not all members receiving the invitation was noted and would be investigated further following the current meeting.</p>
9.1.4	<p>In response to a query, it was confirmed that the figures in 2023-24 did not include the MSAG. Discussion took place on the discrepancies between individual schools in terms of losses and gains. SMF was advised that the as the MSAG had been included, option 3 arbitrarily put a limit on how much funding schools could be allocated, and it was a levelling tool. The complexities of the situation were discussed further. SMF members were informed that drawing comparisons between 2023-24 funding and 2024-25 should be considered in terms of the increase year on year. Some schools would receive smaller increases in funding than others. No schools would lose funding, but some would not gain as much as others.</p>
9.1.5	<p>As the meeting was held virtually, voting on the three options took place using the chat functionality.</p> <p><u>Outcomes</u></p>
9.1.6	<p>By way of a majority vote, SMF approved Option 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 0.25% Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG), 147k Growth funding, 0.5% High Needs transfer, additional places included. - ALL NFF values, except a decrease in all AWPU levels but between NFF and the minimum allowed values. - The AWPU rates are reduced by the following amounts: Primary: 54.4 KS3: 72.44 KS4: 86 <p>Option 2 would reduce the MFG, meaning that the AWPU rates would be reduced by less than option 1, as more funding would be freed up by reducing the MFG.</p>

9.1.7	SMF approved the 2023-24 School Formula and submission of the final APT (modelling tool) proforma to the Education and Skills Funding Agency.
9.1.8	SMF agreed to roll forward any reserve balance in Schools' Block from recoupment calculations in 2023-24 and create the 2024-26 Growth Fund budget in Schools' Block to potentially support any additional required above those identified in the report or for subsequent APT support.
9.1.9	On behalf of SMF, the Chair extended thanks to Mr Glover for the time he had dedicated to ensuring SMF had access to all the information required to support decision making, and for the clear presentation of what was a complex issue.
9.2	2024-25 EARLY YEARS BLOCK INDICATIVE BUDGET
9.2.1	SMF were guided through a summary of the report which provided an update on early years unit rates for 2024-25. The report had been circulated to the group in advance of the meeting.
9.2.2	The early years block was provided to the LA to fund universal free entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds, 30 hours entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds, 15 hours funding for 2-year-old entitlement, early years pupil premium and disabled access funding. There would be two new elements for 2024-25: 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of children from 9 months to 2 years old (from 1 September 2024), and 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of 2-year-old children (from 1 April 2024). Information was shared on budget allocations, supplementary payments, and the early years funding rates. The SEND inclusion fund was a mandatory requirement of the early years formula, and an allocation of £300,000 had been set aside for SEN inclusion in 2024-25, funded from DSG early years.
	<u>Outcomes</u>
9.2.3	SMF noted the early years budget allocation for 2024-25 including supplementary payments (mandatory and discretionary).
9.2.4	SMF noted the proposed early years formula and rates for 2023-24.
9.2.5	SMF noted the potential risks of the proposed increase in rates for 2023-24.
9.2.6	SMF approved the SEN Inclusion Fund total budget of £300,000.
9.2.7	SMF approved the pass-through central allocation.
9.3	2024-25 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) – CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK (CSSB)
9.3.1	SMF were guided through a summary of the report which provided a breakdown of services potentially to be provided from the CSSB retained budget. The report had been shared in advance of the meeting for information.
9.3.2	The total of the CSSB for 2024-25 as per the settlement was £1,045.854. This included Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution funding for centrally employed teachers. The CSSB funding was for ongoing responsibilities and historic commitments. The grant had reduced the historic element by 20% when compared to 2023-24 by £30.4k. The DfE had indicated that this element would continue to reduce by 20% year on year and would be nil once the hard funding formula was implemented. SMF were guided through the list of services that were proposed to be funded from the CSSB in 2024-25, and further information was provided on centrally retained budgets.

	<u>Outcomes</u>
9.3.3	SMF noted the decrease in the historic element of CSSB and increase in ongoing responsibilities element of CSSB grant funding and overall budget set for 2024-25.
9.3.4	SMF agreed the services to funded from the CSSB as per the report.
9.4	2024-25 DE-DELEGATION BUDGET DECISIONS
9.4.1	SMF were guided through a summary of the report, which had been circulated in advance to allow time for scrutiny, which reviewed the de-delegation decisions for the 2024-25 financial year. Maintained primary schools would be invited to vote on de-delegation of services offered within the report.
9.4.2	A list of services which could be de-delegated was shared for information. An overview of the areas that the LA was offering as a de-delegation/buy back service was provided. A detailed model had been provided at Appendix A, and additional information regarding licenses had been provided at Appendix B.
9.4.3	Narrative had been included in the report on additional school improvement services, with a proposal to cover the £50k reduction in grant funding in 2024-25. Discussion followed on whether all schools had paid for additional school improvement services last academic year, and where this had been captured. Mr Glover confirmed that £25k had been requested last year for learning hubs, but school improvement had not been included on the de delegation/buy back form sent to schools, as it had already been agreed in the meeting.
9.4.4	<u>Outcome</u> Maintained primary representatives voted on which budgets were to be de-delegated in 2024-25 as follows: Trade Union Facility Time – approved. Capita One – approved (one vote not in favour noted). Technology Forge – approved. CLEAPSS Membership and RPA Service – approved. Additional School Improvement Services – accepted as already agreed previously.
10.	DELIVERING BETTER VALUE PROGRAMME UPDATE
10.1	There had been 39 exclusions since the start of the current academic year. Exclusion rates continued to be high, and there would be an overspend in the 2023-24 high needs budget.
10.2	SEND and Inclusions clinics would launch in the coming week in five schools.
10.3	The LA was in the process of seeking to recruit an Annual Review Officer.
11.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
	No items had been declared for consideration under Any Other Business. The Chair thanked all those present for their attendance and support.
12.	ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS
	The following matters were declared for discussion at the next meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Standing item: LA Budget Update - Standing item: DBV Update

13.	DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS
13.1	The dates of the future meetings of the Schools' Management Forum were as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wednesday 6 March 2024- Wednesday 12 June 2024
13.2	All meetings would be held via Microsoft Teams and would start at 9:15am.

Meeting closed at 11:00am.