

Meeting of the Dudley Schools Forum

**Tuesday 27th February, 2024 at 6.00pm
on Microsoft Teams**

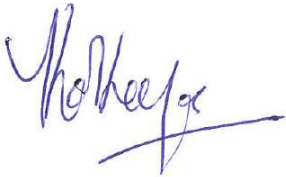
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Agenda - Public Session (Meeting open to the public and press)

1. Introductions by the Chair
2. Apologies for absence.
3. To report the appointment of any substitutes for this meeting of the Forum.
4. [To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 16th January, 2024 \(Pages 5 to 20\)](#)
5. Any other matters arising from the Minutes of the meetings of the Forum held on 16th January, 2024, not included on the agenda for this meeting.
6. Head Teachers Consultative Forum – Budget Working Group Verbal Feedback
7. [Dedicated Schools Grant Stage 2 Budget Planning – Centrally Retained Service Approvals 2024/25 \(Pages 21 to 29\)](#)
8. [Schools Forum Membership Update – Spring Elections Process \(Pages 30 to 35\)](#)



9. Early Years Single Funding Formula and Early Years SEN Inclusion Funding Arrangements and Proposed Changes for 2024/25 (Pages 36 to 46)
10. Delivering Better Value in SEND Update (Pages 47 to 60)
11. Directorate of Children's Services Verbal Update



Chief Executive

Dated: 19th February, 2024

Distribution:

Members of Dudley Schools Forum

Nursery School Headteacher: Miss A Ward;

Primary School Headteachers: Mrs M Harris, Mrs A Hannaway, Ms L Maskell, Mrs S Parkes;

Primary School Governors: Mrs J Belcher (Chair), Mrs J Morgan (Vice-Chair) Mr B Roe and Vacancy;

Secondary School Headteacher: Mr T Harris;

Secondary School Governor: Mrs S Watson;

Special School Headteacher: Miss J Colbourne;

Special School Governor: Mr P Leyshon;

Academy Members: Mrs R Cox, Mr C Finnerty, Mrs J Higgins, Vacancy, Mr S Lanckham, Ms E Stanton, Miss F Sumner, Mr K Tranter, Mrs A Webb and Vacancy;

Pupil Referral Unit Representative: Mrs V Howard;

Non-School Members: Mrs E O'Brien, Mrs J Williams, Mr T Reid and Mrs V Turner;

Non-Voting Attendees

Councillor R Buttery - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People;
Councillor K Lewis - Chair of Children and Young People Select Committee;
C Driscoll – Director of Children’s Services;
S Thirlway, Service Director of Education, SEND and Family Solutions
M Palfreyman – Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion;
C Ludwig – Finance Manager;
J Wilson – Senior Principal Accountant.

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Schools Forum Members

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- The Democratic Services contact officer for this meeting is Gemma Gray, Telephone 01384 815334 or E-mail gemma.gray@dudley.gov.uk

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**Minutes of Dudley Schools Forum
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024 at 6.00 pm
Microsoft Teams**

Present:

Mrs J Belcher (Chair)

Mrs R Cox, Mr C Finnerty, Mrs A Hannaway, Mrs M Harris, Mrs J Higgins, Mrs V Howard, Mr S Lanckham, Mr P Leyshon, Ms L Maskell, Mrs S Parkes, Mr B Roe, Ms E Stanton, Miss F Sumner, Mr K Tranter, Mrs V Turner, Miss A Ward, Mrs A Webb and Mrs S Watson.

Non-Voting Officers:

C Driscoll (Director of Children's Services), C Ludwig (Finance Manager), M Palfreyman (Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion), S Powell (Acting Head of SEND), S Thirlway (Service Director Education, SEND and Family Solutions), J Wilson (Senior Principal Accountant) and G Gray (Democratic Services Officer).

Also in Attendance

Councillor R Buttery (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Councillor K Lewis (Chair of Children and Young People Select Committee)

26 Introductions by the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

27 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Mrs J Morgan and Mrs E O'Brien.

28 **Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members appointed for this meeting of the Forum.

29 **Minutes**

In referring to Minute No. 17 - Head Teachers Consultative Forum – Budget Working Group Verbal Feedback, Mrs L Maskell commented that schools would be arranging for their own new catering providers and that they were not being arranged for schools.

In regard to Minute No. 23 – Delivering Best Value (DBV) in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) update, Mrs R Cox, Academy Member queried whether the details of Headteacher Representation on each workstream of the DBV had been circulated. In response the Service Director Education, SEND and Family Solutions clarified that the details of the Membership would be circulated to Headteachers in due course.

Resolved

That, subject to the amendments and comments made above, the minutes of the meeting held on 14th November, 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

30 **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

31 **Head Teachers Consultative Forum – Budget Working Group Verbal Feedback**

Ms L Maskell, Primary School Headteacher Representative, provided feedback on the discussions held at the Head Teachers Consultative Forum – Budget Working Group (HTCF-BWG) meeting and it was reported that the Head of Inclusion and Outcomes provided an update advising that Headteacher meetings were being arranged for January and February, 2024 and the Primary School Headteacher meeting would concentrate on the update of the Delivering Better Value Programme.

The Budget Working Group were advised that the Local Authority were continuing to restructure and redesign services and it was noted that Social Care had entered into Phase 1 from 10th July, 2023 and that Education, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Family Solutions entered into Phase 2 from 4th December, 2023.

The Local Authority continued to take steps to increase the number of SEND bases by a further eight on mainstream school sites within the Borough.

It was reiterated that Dudley Catering Services would cease on the 31st March, 2024 and that Schools had been entering into alternative contracts with suppliers.

It was noted that Alternative Provision and Inclusion Strategy Development would continue in January, 2024 with a view to be rolled out in the Spring Term, and that data concerning exclusions and suspensions were being scrutinised on a monthly basis and would be shared with school leaders.

It was reported that no further Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspections had taken place since the previous update in November, 2023. It was advised that all inspections had been paused until 22nd January, 2024 to allow for inspectors to receive Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

It was advised that, all Headteachers were invited to attend a meeting with Tim Hill, the new Senior His Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) for Dudley, in December, 2023.

Reference was made to the Dudley Community Toothbrush Scheme, which continued to be rolled out and the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire, which aimed to support and understand the lives of children and young people and would be circulated to all schools in due course.

The Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion shared in detail with the Budget Working Group the six new Education Senior Leadership Team (SLT) priorities for 2023 to 2025.

The Budget Working Group were provided with an update on the Dudley MBC budget situation, and it was noted that there would be no direct impact on school budgets, however, Local Authority services may be affected.

It was reported that a number of schools had been converted to Academy status since the last update in November, 2023, which included Thorns Primary School, Withymoor Primary School, Gig Mill Primary School, Newfield Park Primary School, Hawbush Primary School, Coseley Free School and Eton Star. It was noted that the Area Strategy continued to concentrate on growing the existing Trusts and retaining schools within local organisations where possible.

The Budget Working Group were provided with an update concerning the latest guidance on COVID-19, as schools continued to be affected by a small number of cases.

It was reported that an update regarding the position of the Dudley Schools Grant (DSG) and the process for the academic year 2024/25 was provided, and that there had been a detailed discussion concerning the Designated Schools Grant (DSG) Management plan 2024, which included additional planned or suggested actions within the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme. The existing data from the 2023/2024 Pupil Growth Fund and projected plans for 2024/2025 were also shared with Members at the Budget Working Group.

The Budget Working Group were provided with an update regarding the latest developments and progress concerning the Delivering Better Value in SEND by W Bhatti, DBV Programme Lead. The update indicated the key developments within Workstreams 1 to 4. In particular, it was noted that School Leaders were being invited to a Schools Workshop Day on 15th January, 2024, which aimed to discuss and influence future SEND practices and provision.

Mrs A Hannaway, Primary School Headteacher representative, clarified that Gig Mill Primary School, Withymoor Primary School and Newfield Park Primary School had not yet converted to Academy status, however, it was expected that the Schools would be converted during the spring term.

In response to a question raised by Mrs R Cox, Academy Member representative, the Head of Education, Outcomes and Inclusion clarified that the SLT six key priorities had been shared with Headteachers at Headteacher meetings in September, 2023 and at the Business Managers Forum.

Resolved

That the feedback provided be noted.

32 Schools Forum Membership – Verbal Update

The Democratic Services Officer provided a verbal update and referred to the change of representation for Unions and Professional Associations in that Mrs V Turner had replaced Miss A Middleton following her resignation and would continue in the term of office until 30th April, 2025.

Resolved

That the verbal update on the Schools Forum Membership, be noted.

33 Dedicated Schools Grant Process 2024/25

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the 2024/25 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget process.

The Finance Manager presented the report in detail and in doing so, advised that the purpose of the report was to provide representatives with an update on the provisional 2024/25 DSG settlement that had been received on 19th December, 2023 and that DSG funding would continue to be distributed to the four funding blocks, namely the Schools Block, Early Years Block, High Needs Block and Central School Services Block.

Representatives were referred to the four recommendations set out in the report submitted and advised that further updates on the budget reports would be submitted to future meetings of the forum being held on 27th February, 2024 and 16th April, 2024. Approval would be required for the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) for 2024/25 and the draft Authority Pro-forma Tool (APT) was referred to, which had been tabled as Appendix 1 of the report submitted.

The Finance Manager advised that the deadline for submission of the APT would be 22nd January, 2024, however, approval would need to be required for the level of the MFG funding and further clarification from the DfE was being sought concerning the new Split Site factor.

It was noted that the Early Years Block had increased significantly, and that Dudley was projected to receive £30m for 2024/25 due to the extension in entitlement to younger children, which would start from April, 2024. A detailed report regarding Early Years funding would be submitted to the next meeting of the Schools Forum on 27th February, 2024.

In referring to the High Needs Block it was reported that the total had increased by 5% to £54.1m for 2024/25. Further information would be submitted to future meetings of the Schools Forum concerning the pressures facing the High Needs Block and the historic DSG deficit.

The Finance Manager referred representatives to Paragraph 12 of the report submitted and it was noted that there would be an increase for Planned Places and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Return in 2024/2025, which impacted upon the funding that the Local Authority distributed elsewhere. The ESFA would be notified that Bromley Pensnett Primary School, Rufford Primary School and The Crestwood School had increased by 12 pupil places as a result of new resource bases, together with an increase of 47 pupil places at Halesowen College due to the expansion of their SEND provision. The increase impacted upon the recruitment of the DSG funding with a deduction of £0.28m on the High Needs Block for 2024/25 for post 16 places.

Representatives were referred to Table 1 of the report submitted, which provided a summary of the provisional DSG for 2024/2025. In referring to the Central Schools Block it was noted that funding had been reduced to £1.849m as a result of a reduction of historic funding and that the Early Years Block had increased to £30.777m, which included the additional new funding for 15 hours for three and four year olds, 15 hours for two-year-olds and under two-year-old funding.

The Finance Manager reported that the National Funding Formula had changed to include split site funding within the Schools Block. It was advised that the split site funding allocation criteria was defined by schools being divided by a road, a public road or a railway line and the allocation would be approximately £50,000. It was noted that should the distance between sites be significant, schools could be eligible for further distance funding. The Finance Manager advised that clarification was being sought from the DfE on the relevant criteria for split sites. It was further noted that the National Funding Formula would now need to include the Sparsity factor, however, although this would be part of the formula Dudley Schools did not meet the criteria as the Sparsity factor related to Schools within rural areas.

The Finance Manager referred Representatives to the Local Authority Pro-Forma Tool (APT) presented at the meeting, which provided information regarding the overall budget and would be subject to questioning by the ESFA. The Finance Manager highlighted key points within the information presented and in doing so it was noted that the data for low prior attainment scores would be a rolling average over a three-year period, therefore, the 2022 outcomes had now been included as part of the rolling average, which impacted upon Schools allocations.

It was reported that the MFG operational guidelines, as detailed in Dudley's Authority Proforma Tool (APT), stated that Dudley MBC were proposing an MFG of 0.24% with a total cost of £118,338, which would have an impact on eight schools.

In responding to a query raised by Mrs R Cox, Academy Member Representative concerning when it was anticipated for the funding to be in line with the National Funding Formula, the Finance Manager clarified that the Local Authority were within range for the majority of the factors and that the difference was minimal.

In response to a further question raised by Mrs R Cox, Academy Member Representative concerning the criteria for the sparsity factor, the Finance Manager advised that sparsity factor was considered based on the range of where schools obtained their pupils and the distance, however, it was noted that the sparsity factor was based in rural areas, therefore, this had not been looked into in depth as this did not apply to the Dudley Borough.

The Finance Manager undertook to provide Representatives with further detail on the criterias for the new mandatory sparsity factor and split site factor.

In response to a query raised by Ms L Maskell, Primary School Headteacher representative the Finance Manager clarified that the deadline for Local Authorities to submit the final APT and the detailed tables to the ESFA would be on 22nd January, 2024, therefore, approval from the Schools Forum would need to be sought. It was advised that one School had been added, however, the Local Authority were confident that the MFG of 0.24% would protect the eight schools that were the lowest funded at the minimum of cost to all Schools.

The Finance Manager responded to questions raised by Mrs A Hannaway, Primary School Headteacher representative, concerning the eight schools that would be affected and in doing so clarified that the affected schools were Primary Schools and that there had been more than eight schools identified previously within 2023/2024. It was noted that the eight schools affected for 2024/2025 had already been within the bracket from the previous year.

Resolved

- (1) That the provisional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement for 2024/25 and the impact for Dudley, be noted.
- (2) That further Dedicated School Grant updates, to include the central expenditure budget allocations for Schools Forum approval, be submitted to the meetings of the Forum on 27th February and 16th April, 2024.
- (3) That a Minimum Funding Guarantee for 2024/25 between 0.0% and 0.5% per pupil as specified in the latest operational guidance and as detailed in Dudley's Authority Proforma Tool (APT), and reported at the meeting, be approved.
- (4) That Dudley's APT Proforma submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), tabled as Appendix 1 to the report submitted, be noted.
- (5) That the Democratic Services Officer be requested to circulate the Dudley's APT Proforma submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), tabled as Appendix 1 to the report submitted and presented at the meeting to Representatives.
- (6) That the Finance Manager be requested to circulate the criteria for the new mandatory split site and sparsity factor to Representatives .

34 **Pupil Growth Fund 2023/24 and 2024/25**

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the latest financial information regarding funding allocated from the pupil growth fund contingency for the 2023/24 financial year and the new growth funding allocation received in the National Funding Formula for the 2024/25 financial year.

The Senior Principal Accountant provided a summary of the report submitted, and in doing so advised that the pupil growth funding calculations were for Secondary Schools that qualify for additional funding to meet the lag funding for the National Funding Formula for schools taking on additional pupils. It was advised that Schools would need to meet a certain criteria in order to qualify for the additional growth funding. The criteria primarily would be based on requests from the Local Authority to accept additional pupils and the reconciliation between the number of Year 11 leavers and the number of year 7 starters that exceeded 10 pupils within the year.

Representatives were referred to Table 1 of the report submitted, which outlined the seven Secondary Schools that qualified for pupil growth funding for 2023/2024. It was noted that £1,076,801.25 had been allocated for 323 pupils based on the growth funding method. The allocation for the financial year would be £906,000 and it was advised that there would be a deficit of approximately £170,000 due to the lagged funding, however, the DfE continued to allocate growth funding to Local Authorities and it was estimated that £1,464,770 of additional funding would be provided, which would go towards the underspend and the MFG allocation.

The Senior Principal Accountant referred to the eligibility criteria and funding methodology of growth funding, which had been approved at the meeting of the Schools Forum on 14th November, 2023.

Resolved

That the latest financial information regarding funding allocated from the pupil growth fund contingency for the 2023/24 financial year and the growth fund allocation received in the National Funding Formula for the 2024/25 financial year, be noted.

35 **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Management Plan 2024**

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted regarding an update on the latest DSG Management Plan.

The Finance Manager presented the report and, in doing so, outlined the background of the DSG Management Plan concerning the historic increase in deficit within the High Needs Block, which had resulted in the engagement of the Delivering Best Value (DBV) in SEND. Reports had been submitted to previous Schools Forum meetings, which included information regarding the commissioning of Newton Europe and engagement with The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to analyse data to identify areas for potential savings.

Representatives were advised that there were three key areas that were identified that were putting increased pressure on the High Needs Block which included the increased demand for specialist education provision, new Education, Health and Care Plan's (EHCP's) and EHCP's for young people aged between 19 to 25 year old. In view of the key areas identified, workstreams had been established, which included redesigning the specialist services and the Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) offer, developing and delivering the sufficiency strategy and preparation for adulthood.

The Finance Manager reported that the final DSG Deficit Management Plan, covering the whole of the DSG, would be submitted to the DfE on 19th January, 2024, however, the DfE's main focus would be on the High Needs Block and the measures put in place to mitigate the deficit.

In referring to Annex 1A, 1B and 1C of the report submitted the Finance Manager outlined the existing management plan, the proposals recognised by Newton Europe that could be achieved and the additional savings identified after consultation, however, it was noted that further detailed work would need to be undertaken to identify realistic and robust measurable savings. It was noted that the DSG Management Plan would be a live document, which would be regularly updated and shared with the Dudley Schools Forum.

It was reported that DBV in SEND mitigations that were identified would be included within the budgets for the next year, which impacted upon finances. It was noted that the financial mitigations included:

- supporting pupils within mainstream schools without the need for an EHCP;
- supporting pupils to remain within mainstream schools in preference to special schools;
- supporting pupils within mainstream schools as opposed to independent schools;
- redesigning services for mainstream schools, specialist schools or resource bases and SEND units within schools and
- to support pupils locally within a mainstream school setting

It was intended that these would provide cost savings, however, it was acknowledged that it was important for the mitigations to improve outcomes for pupils within the appropriate local provisions.

In referring to Annex 1C of the report submitted the Finance Manager provided further detail regarding the potential opportunities and additional savings that had been identified, in particular contributions received for Health and Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care and that reasonable targets had been put in place for additional health contributions.

It was noted that a block transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block would need to be explored to demonstrate to the DfE that all options had been considered in order to request for support and funding from the Government to reduce the High Needs Block deficit. It was noted that it was proposed to put forward 1% on support on specific services, which would need to be approved by Schools Forum and the Secretary of State in 2025/2026. Consultations with colleagues and Headteachers would be carried out in order for a decision to be made in November, 2024.

Representatives were referred to points 3 and 5 of Annex 1C of the report submitted and it was clarified that work being carried out for Post 16 – preparing for adulthood, and alternative provisions were now part of the DBV in SEND programme. In reference to point 4 of Annex 1C it was noted that the cessation of EHCP's at transition were being developed, and over 100 EHCP's had been identified for review.

Mrs A Hannaway, Primary School Headteacher Representative, reflected on discussions held at the BWG by Headteachers, and thanked the Finance Manager for taking the discussions into consideration and reporting additional information to Schools Forum.

In reference to Annex 2A of the report submitted regarding discussions at the BWG concerning the average savings, Mrs A Hannaway advised it was understood that the costs would vary from approximately £2,000 per child up to £13,000 across all sectors.

Mrs A Hannaway further stated that it had been noted that there were 88 EHCP's that were due to be ceased between 2022 and the end of the current financial year. Information had been requested at the BWG on the amount of EHCP's that had ceased to date, however, it was acknowledged that further information was currently being awaited and considered it would be helpful if information could be available for the next meeting.

In response the Finance Manager advised that in regard to the average costs for EHCP's, the Finance Team were working towards establishing more sophisticated costings, outcomes and indicators. It was noted that the savings resulting from cessations on EHCP transitions were below the £13,000 average.

Mrs A Hannaway referred to Annex 1B regarding ordinarily available provision together with specialist inclusion services and commented that the work streams and savings were developed, however, schools had only been involved from the end of December, 2023.

In response the Finance Manager explained that the work streams would be a live document and that there would be opportunity to review and set more realistic targets and that any changes would be reported back to future School Forum meetings.

Mrs A Hannaway also referred to the redesign of specialist services and commented that there had previously been an allocation of £3.5m for redesign and restructure associated with the specialist inclusion services, however, noted that this had now been factored into the DBV in SEND programme and queried whether this had now been concluded.

Mrs R Cox, Academy Member representative referred to Annex 1B of the report submitted and remarked that teachers were trained to deal with pupils without the need for an EHCP, however, considered that it was important that the current support that children received in particular children with complex needs that was funded through EHCP's needed to be maintained. Recruitment was of great concern and it was noted that there were jobs that would pay more for less demand and that there was insufficient funding for staff coming in.

In response the Finance Manager advised that there would be support and acknowledged the importance of early interventions. It was recognised that there were children with complex needs that would require an EHCP and support throughout their school career, however, there were children who's needs could be met through early intervention. It was considered that although an EHCP may not be provided, support would still be available.

The Service Director Education, SEND and Family Solutions advised that there were challenges being faced due to budget restraints, therefore, there needed to be an understanding of what was ordinarily available, and what can be done to increase the capacity, skills, and confidence within the wider system to support children without the need for an EHCP as part of a broader graduated approach. It was noted that the change was to provide children the right support at the right level and to meet children's needs in the right way. It had been recognised that the current model was not delivering adequate outcomes for every child with EHCP's in a lot of cases, therefore, the DSG Management Plan would be creating new cultures and new ways of working.

Resolved

That the content of the draft Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Management Plan 2024 be noted.

36 Delivering Best Value (DBV) in SEND Update

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted updating Schools Forum on the Delivering Best Value in SEND programme in Dudley.

The Acting Head of SEND presented the report and, in doing so, advised that there were four primary focus areas around the DBV areas concerning the Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) offer, developing and delivering the sufficiency strategy, preparation for adulthood and redesigning the spend profile.

In regard to Work Stream 1, redesigning specialist services and the OAP offer, it was reported that there had been collaboration with an organisation namely Genuine Partnerships to carry out the four cornerstones and co-production training. Eight training sessions had been received and further training would be available with a view to extend the training to all school settings.

It was advised that a task and finish group supported by four subgroups had been created, which would look at establishing reframing the OAP and joining sites from practices of other local authorities who had successfully developed the OAP framework to support the development process. There were discussions in progress to explore the possibility of the digitalisation of the framework for improved accessibility.

It was reported that a Schools Workshop had taken place at Himley Hall, which was attended by a significant number of people; that outcomes from the Workshop would be collated to capture the feedback that was provided and questionnaires had been shared with education settings to gather feedback to support with refining the specialist services.

The Acting Head of SEND reported that a stakeholder working group had been established undertaking work specific to the redesign of the specialist services and would be carrying out service assessments, gap analysis of specialist service delivery, and it was considered the work was critical in shaping the service delivery requirements. An evaluation of training requirements for mainstream schools was in progress to focus on building capacity within mainstream schools and the development of specialist advisory services.

Representatives were referred to Workstream 2 of the report submitted concerning developing and delivering the sufficiency strategy, and the Acting Head of SEND clarified that the commissioning of the delivery partner 1st Planner was still in progress and that Schools Forum would be updated when this was in place. It was explained that 1st Planner would be developing the SEND sufficiency strategy together with supporting Dudley in providing a comprehensive representation of capacity across special schools and the Alternative Provision Estate.

The Acting Head of SEND further clarified the four SEND Units processes and Bases had now been established at Dawley Brook Primary School and it was considered that once established and the necessary protocols were followed, it would be a great resource, although this would take some time.

Reference was made regarding the establishment of the commissioning of Inclusion Hubs in early years settings and the Acting Head of SEND clarified that there were delays encountered for completion relating to contract finalisation and staffing challenges, although they would be resolved shortly.

Representatives were referred to Workstream 3 of the report submitted concerning preparation for adulthood, and the Acting Head of SEND clarified that the workstream was now a part of the formal agreement with the DfE. The programme for planned workstream activities for January to March, 2024 was outlined within Table 1 of the report submitted and it was noted that this would be shared with relevant working groups in due course.

In regard to Workstream 4 concerning redesigning the spend profile, it was reported that the workstream had not been included within the formal agreement with the DfE, however, it was considered to be a vital action that formed the foundation for other DBV work being carried out.

Resolved

That the content of the Delivering Best Value in SEND Update be noted.

37 Directorate of Children's Services – Verbal Update

The Director of Children's Services referred to the Council's challenging financial position and advised that a number of options were being considered to develop and deliver savings to contribute towards putting money back into the Council's reserves. A report concerning the budget setting had been submitted to the Council's Cabinet meeting on 11th January, 2024, which had subsequently been approved.

It was noted that specific mention had been raised concerning Pens Meadow School at the meeting of the Cabinet regarding the rebuilding of Pens Meadow School onto one site. Extensive discussions were carried out at the meeting, and it was reported that the Cabinet had agreed to proceed with work in view of the legal contract that had already been received and the work that had been carried out for a number of months.

Resolved

That the verbal update on the Directorate of Children's Services, be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.30pm

CHAIR

Dudley Schools Forum – 27 February 2024

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Dedicated Schools Grant Stage 2 Budget Planning – Centrally Retained Service Approvals 2024/25

Purpose

1. For Schools Forum to consider and approve the local authority's requests in respect of the centrally retained expenditure to be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2024/25.

Schools Forum Role and Responsibilities

2. The Forum is the 'guardian' of the local Schools Budget, and its distribution among schools and other bodies, and therefore must be closely involved throughout the development process.

3. Appendix 1 refers to the detailed roles and responsibilities of Schools Forum.

Recommendations

4. That Schools Forum:

- Approve the central expenditure budgets for 2024/25, as detailed in Table 1;
- Approve the cash limited central expenditure budgets for 2024/25, as detailed in Table 2;
- Note the central expenditure budgets for 2024/25, as detailed in Table 3, which were approved at the 14 November 2023 Schools Forum.

Background

5. Schools Forum approval is required each year to confirm the amounts on each line of the centrally retained expenditure budget. Appendix 1 sets out the level of approval required for each service, shown in two categories of this report.

a. Table 1 – Schools Forum approval is required on a line-by-line basis;

b. Table 2 – Schools Forum approval is required on a line-by-line basis: the budget cannot exceed the value agreed in the previous funding period and no new commitments can be entered into.

When using centrally held funding, local authorities must treat maintained schools and academies on an equivalent basis.

Central Expenditure Budgets 2024/25 – Schools Forum Approval

6. For 2024/25 the DfE have increased Dudley's Central School Services Block allocation by £6,000: the budget is now at £1.849m, with an increase of 2% for ongoing services to £1.737m and a 20% reduction to £0.112m for historic commitments. The 2023/24 allocation was in total £1.843m. This includes provision for teachers pay and pensions for centrally retained teachers.

For Table 1, Schools Forum must approve each item of expenditure, however there is no restriction placed by the Regulations on the value of the budget. There are however requirements for 2024/25 included in Table 1:

The Early Years Block centrally retained provision requirements have been revised for 2024-25 applying the 95% pass through rate separately to the entitlements for:

- 9-months-old children up to 2-year-olds of working parents
- 2-year-old children of working parents
- 2-year-old children from disadvantaged families
- 3 and 4-year-olds (universal and additional hours)

Based on the December 2023 provisional DSG allocation the funding to be set aside for early years nursery education is £29.794m. 5% therefore equates to central expenditure of no more than £1.490m. Dudley is proposing to set a centrally retained early years budget of £0.552m (Table 1) which is within the DfE threshold.

Table 1 – 2024/25 Central Expenditure Budgets For Schools Forum
Approval – No Restrictions on Value

Central Spend on	Value for 2023/24	Value for 2024/25	Comments
Early Years Central Expenditure:			Early years centrally retained spending: from the early years pro-forma on children under 5.
• Early Years Contingency nursery education funding	Nil	Nil	Will be part of the early years pass through budget and outside of 5% limit.
• Early Years Budgets in respect of delegated service items	8,900	8,900	
• Early Years Foundation Advice	313,000	437,400	To support additional administrative costs
• Early Years Funding Administration	97,200	105,600	
Total Early Years Expenditure	£419,100	£551,900	
Places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils	£195,800	£195,800	<p>In making any grant or other payment in respect of fees or expenses (of whatever nature) which are payable in connection with the attendance of pupils at a school which is not maintained by any local authority.</p> <p>Relates to non-SEN pupils some with residential accommodation. These placements relate to either looked after children (LAC) or children on the edge of care.</p>

Admissions	£249,600	£269,100	Expenditure incurred in connection with the Authority's functions. This includes the administration of the system of admissions of pupils to schools.
Servicing of Schools Forum	£5,000	£5,000	Expenditure incurred in connection with the authority's functions of running the establishment and maintenance of, and consultation with, Schools Forums.

7. For Table 2, Forum must approve each item of expenditure detailed and there is a restriction placed up to the value committed in 2023/24.

Table 2 – 2024/25 Central Expenditure Budgets For Schools Forum
Approval – Restricted to Cash Limit of 2024/25 Expenditure

Central spend on	Value for 2023/24	Value for 2024/25	Comments
<u>Capital expenditure funded from revenue</u> Projects must have been planned and decided on prior to April 2013 so no new projects can be charged.	Nil	Nil	Expenditure commonly known as CERA (capital expenditure which an authority expects to charge to a revenue account of the authority within the meaning of section 22 of the Local Government Act 2003).
<u>Contribution to combined budgets</u> This is where the Schools Forum agreed prior to April 2013 a contribution from the schools budget to services which would otherwise be funded from other sources.	Nil	Nil	Expenditure under this heading should only reflect the contribution to a combined service approved by the Schools Forum. Contributions in respect of the following services ceased at the end of 2022/23 financial year:

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Astley Burf • School Visits • Education Liaison • Place planning • Safeguarding • Statistical work
<u>Existing termination of employment costs</u> (costs for specific individuals must have been approved prior to April 2013 so no new redundancy costs can be charged)	£66,700	£66,700	Expenditure in respect of premature retirement costs, or for the purposes of securing the resignation of any person employed in a maintained school where there are consequential savings to the schools budget and such cost have been approved by the Schools Forum.
<u>Prudential borrowing costs</u> The commitment must have been approved prior to April 2013	Nil	Nil	

De-Delegations 2024/25

8. Schools Forum approved the de-delegations for 2024/25 at the 14 November 2023 meeting. These are now summarised in Table 3, for information.

The value of Table 3 is based on the number of maintained mainstream schools as at 31 January 2024. However, where any school converts to an academy after that date then the value of the funding de-delegated for 2024/25 will decrease during the financial year.

Table 3 –2024/25 De-delegations Approved By Schools Forum – Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools split

De-delegation Services for Mainstream Maintained Schools 2024/25	Budgets for De-delegation 2024/25	Budgets for De-delegation 2024/25	Budgets for De-delegation 2024/25
	Primary Sector	Secondary Sector	Total Funding
Union Facilities time	£61,560	£15,440	£77,000

Behavioural Pupil Referral Unit – Primary Outreach Service	£146,500	0	£146,500
Total Funding Approved for 2024/25 De-delegation	£208,060	£15,440	£223,500

Annual Consultation Process

9. The Regulations also state that the Local Authority must consult with the Schools Forum annually in respect of the following in order that Schools Forum can give a view.

- Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs and in particular:
 - the places to be commissioned by the local authority in different schools; and
 - other institutions, and the arrangements for paying top-up funding to schools and other institutions.
- Arrangements for use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school and in particular:
 - the places to be commissioned by the authority and by schools in pupil referral units and other providers of alternative provision; and;
 - the arrangements for paying top-up funding to pupil referral units and other providers of alternative provision.
- Arrangements for early years provision.
- Administration arrangements for the allocation of central government grants.

Further detailed information will be provided at the 16 April 2024 meeting.

Budget Working Group Discussed – Yes: 20 February 2024.

Finance

10. From 1st April 2006, the Schools Budget has been funded by a direct grant; Dedicated School Grant (DSG). This report is financial in nature and relevant information is contained within the body of the report.

Law

11. The Schools Forum is a statutory decision making and consultative body constituted in line with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and its associated regulations, including the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012, to enable members of the local school community to work in partnership with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council when making decisions about school funding and finances.

The funding of schools is prescribed by the Department for Education (DfE) through the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023.

12. There are no material risks to the Council's Risk Management Framework resulting from the contents of this report.

Equality Impact

13. This report has no direct implications for the Council's commitment to equality and diversity.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

14. This report has no direct implications for human resources, organisational development or service transformation

Commercial and Procurement

15. There is no impact on the potential to commercially trade and no impact on our customer base.

Environment/Climate Change

16. This report has no direct implications on the environment or the Council's work in addressing Climate and achieving Net Zero target by 2030.

Council Priorities and Projects

17. The 2022/2025 Council Plan is clear in its ambitions for educational outcomes including raising skills, educational and work potential, increasing good or better schools and closing the gap for disadvantaged pupils. This report relates to the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant funding to support the educational outcomes of children and young people in the borough.



Catherine Driscoll
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officers:

Martyn Palfreyman, Head of Education Outcomes & Inclusion

Telephone: 01384 816276

Email: Martyn.palfreyman@dudley.gov.uk

Catherine Ludwig, Finance Manager

Telephone: 01384 815075

Email: catherine.ludwig@dudley.gov.uk

Centrally Retained Services – Approvals Required for 2024/25

Approval required	Services covered (and funding block)
Schools forum approval <u>is not</u> required (although they should be consulted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• high needs block provision;• central licences negotiated by the Secretary of State.
Schools forum approval <u>is</u> required on a line-by-line basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• funding to enable all schools to meet the infant class size requirement;• back-pay for equal pay claims;• remission of boarding fees at maintained schools and academies;• places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils;• admissions;• servicing of schools forum;• contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for all schools;• contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for maintained schools (voted on by relevant maintained school member of schools forum only);• de-delegated services from the schools block (voted on by the relevant maintained school members of schools forum only).
Schools forum approval is required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• central early years block provision;• any movement of funding out of the schools block;• any deficit from the previous funding period that is being brought forward and is to be funded from the new financial year's schools budget (this should be specifically agreed at

	<p>the time the budget is set, using the latest estimated outturn position);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any brought forward deficit on de-delegated services which is to be met by the overall schools budget.
<p>Schools forum approval is required on a line-by-line basis. The budget cannot exceed the value agreed in the previous funding period and no new commitments can be entered into.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capital expenditure funded from revenue – projects must have been planned and decided on prior to April 2013 so no new projects can be charged; • contribution to combined budgets – this is where the schools forum agreed prior to April 2013 a contribution from the schools budget to services which would otherwise be funded from other sources; • existing termination of employment costs – this is for specific individuals must have been approved prior to April 2013 so no new redundancy costs can be charged); • prudential borrowing costs – the commitment must have been approved prior to April 2013; • SEN transport where the schools forum agreed prior to April 2013 a contribution from the schools budget (this is now treated as part of the high needs block but still requires schools forum approval as a historic commitment.
<p>Schools forum approval is required on a line-by-line basis, including approval of the criteria for allocating funds to schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funding for significant pre-16 pupil growth, including new schools set up to meet basic need, whether maintained or academy; • funding for good or outstanding schools with falling rolls where growth in pupil numbers is expected within three years.

Meeting of the Dudley Schools Forum – 27th February, 2024

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Schools Forum Membership – Spring Elections Process

Purpose

1. To provide Schools Forum with an update in respect of Schools Forum membership.

Schools Forum Role and Responsibilities

2. Schools Forum is responsible for ensuring that the constitution and membership meet the legislative requirements detailed in the School Forum (England) Regulations 2012, which were effective from 1st October 2012, as amended by Regulation 3 of the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2015.

Recommendation

3. That the updated position in respect of the membership of Dudley's Schools Forum, be noted.

Background

4. Dudley's current Schools Forum Constitution allows for 28 members; comprising of 14 School members, 10 Academy School members and 4 Non-schools members.
5. Schools Forum posts are appointed on a rolling basis to cover a three year period. The commencement date for Governors, Academy School representatives and Non School Members is 1st May with Headteacher representatives from 1st November.

6. The Spring 2024 election process will commence in March, 2024 in order to seek Schools Forum representation for the following vacancies covering the three year period commencing on 1st May, 2024:
- Two Primary School Governors, currently as follows:
Mrs J Morgan (Dawley Brook Primary School)
Vacancy
 - One Special School Governor (currently Mr P Leyshon)
 - Three Academy Member Representatives, currently as follows:
Mr S Lanckham (Windsor Academy Trust)
Vacancy (Shirelands Academy Trust)
Vacancy
 - Two Non School Members, currently as follows:

Mr T Reid, Diocesan Deputy Director of Education, Worcester
Diocesan Board of Education

Mrs E O'Brien, Childminder, Early Years Provider Reference Group

Process for the Spring 2024 School Member Representative Elections

7. Correspondence will be issued in March, 2024 to the relevant groups to advise of the forthcoming election process in respect of Schools Forum vacancies including the following timescales:
- Nomination slips must be returned to the Local Authority representative by e-mail by 12 noon on Friday 22nd March 2024.
 - If more than one nomination is received for each category of representative, an election will be held for that category. Ballot papers and supporting material will be sent to all for that category at the address held on the Governor Support database. Once the Ballot exercise has been completed, the successfully elected representatives will be advised by e-mail after Monday 15th April, 2024.
 - Once the appointment has been confirmed by the Director of Children's Services, Democratic Services will be advised of the Schools Forum appointments made in order that the representatives are invited to the June, 2024 meeting. If there are no successful nominations then a vacancy will be maintained until the next election process.

- Nominations for Non School Member Representatives will be requested by the relevant Group.

Successful Appointments to the Schools Forum Vacancies from May 2024

8. Due to the timeline in respect of the election closing date, the Forum will receive a verbal update at the 16th April, 2024 meeting of the progress in respect of the election process.

Budget Working Group

9. This report will be considered by the Budget Working Group on 20th February, 2024.

Finance

10. The funding of schools is prescribed by the Department for Education (DfE) through the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2018.

Law

11. The Schools Forum is a statutory decision making and consultative body constituted in line with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and its associated regulations, including the Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012, to enable members of the local school community to work in partnership with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council when making decisions about school funding and finances.
12. Schools Forums are regulated by the Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 as amended.

Risk Management

13. There are no implications to the Council's Risk Management Framework that result from the proposals contained within this report.

Equality Impact

14. The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy is taken into account when considering the allocation of resources.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

15. This report has no direct implications for organisational development, human resources or service transformation.

Commercial/Procurement

16. There is no impact on the potential to commercially trade and no impact on our customer base.

Environment/Climate Change

17. This report has no direct implications on the environment or the Council's work in addressing Climate Change and achieving Net Zero target by 2030.

Council Priorities and Projects

18. The Dudley Council Plan 2022-2025 is clear in its ambitions for educational outcomes including raising skills, educational and work potential, increasing good or better schools and closing the gap for disadvantaged pupils. The role of Dudley Schools Forum is to advise the Council on matters affecting schools funding, principally the allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), and the local Fair Funding Formula which distributes budgets to schools, early years providers and other maintained education settings.



Catherine Driscoll
Director of Children's Services

Report Author: Gemma Gray
Democratic Services Officer
Telephone: 01384 815334
Email: Gemma.Gray@dudley.gov.uk

Appendix

Appendix 1 – School Forum Membership from 14th February, 2024

List of Background Documents

[Schools Forum Constitution – 1st January, 2018](#)
[The Schools Forums \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

Membership List as at 1st May 2023

		APPENDIX A					
					Headteachers 3 year term of office		
<u>DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM CONSTITUTION</u>		1 May 2021 to 30 April 2024	1 May 2022 to 30 April 2025	1 May 2023 to 30 April 2026	1 November 2021 to 31 October 2024	1 November 2022 to 31 October 2025	1 November 2023 to 31 October 2026
SCHOOL MEMBERS							
Nursery School Headteachers	One nursery headteacher						
Netherton Park Nursery	Miss A Ward, Netherton Park Nursery School, Netherton, Dudley DY2 9QF					√	
Primary School Headteachers	Four primary school headteachers from any of the five townships						
Brierley Hill	Ms Lisa Maskell, Dawley Brook Primary School, Dubarry Avenue, Valley Fields, Kingswinford, West Midlands, DY6 9BP					√	
Halesowen	Mrs Marcia Harris, Cradley CofE Primary School, Church Road, Cradley, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 2UL				√		
North Dudley	Mrs S Parkes, Wren's Nest Primary School, Marigold Crescent, Dudley, DY1 3NX					√	
Stourbridge	Mrs A Hannaway , Headteacher, Gigmill Primary, The Broadway, Norton, DY8 3HL.						√
Primary School Governors	Four primary school governors from any of the five townships						
Brierley Hill	Mr B Roe, Crestwood Park Primary School, Lapwood Avenue, Crestwood Park Estate, Kingswinford, DY6 8RP.		√				
Dudley	Vacancy	√					
Stourbridge	Mrs J Belcher, Peters Hill Primary School, Peters Hill Road, Amblecote, Brierley Hill, West Midlands, DY5 2QH			√			
Brierley Hill	Mrs J Morgan, Dawley Brook Primary School, Dubarry Avenue, Valley Fields, Kingswinford, West Midlands, DY6 9BP	√					
Secondary School Headteachers	One secondary school headteacher from any of the five townships						
Brierley Hill	Mr T Harris, Headteacher, Summerhill School, Lodge Lane, Kingswinford, West Midlands, DY6 9XE					√	
Secondary School Governors	One secondary school governor from any of the five townships						
Brierley Hill	Mrs S Watson, Summerhill School, Lodge Lane, Kingswinford, West Midlands, DY6 9XE			√			
Special School Headteacher	One special school headteacher for all townships						
All townships	Miss J Colbourne, Headteacher, Old Park School, Thorns Road, Brierley Hill, DY5 2JY				√		
Special School Governor	One special school governor for all townships						
All townships	Mr P Leyshon - Pensmeadow & Rosewood School	√					
ACADEMY MEMBER							

	<u>DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM CONSTITUTION</u>	1 May 2021 to 30 April 2024	1 May 2022 to 30 April 2025	1 May 2023 to 30 April 2026	1 November 2021 to 31 October 2024	1 November 2022 to 31 October 2025	1 November 2023 to 31 October 2026
1 Representative	Mr C Finnerty (DRB Ignite Multi-Academy Trust)			√			
1 Representative	Ms J Higgins, Chief Executive (Dudley Academy Trust)			√			
1 Representative	Mr K Tranter, Chief Operating Officer (Dudley Academy Trust)			√			
1 Representative	Miss F Sumner, Senior Operations Manager (St John Bosco Catholic MAC)		√				
1 Representative	Mrs R Cox, Chief Executive Officer (Hales Valley Academy Trust)			√			
1 Representative	Ms E Stanton, Director of Invictus Institute (Invictus Education Trust)			√			
1 Representative	Mr M Kelay, Headteacher, Thorns Collegiate Academy (Shirelands Collegiate Trust) - Retired as at 25/01/2024	√					
1 Representative	Vacancy	√					
1 Representative	Mr S Lanckham, Head Teacher, Windsor High School and Sixth Form (Windsor Academy Trust)	√					
1 Representative	Mrs A Webb (Windsor Academy Trust)			√			
<u>Pupil Referral Units</u>							
All PRUs	Mrs V Howard, Headteacher, Cherry Tree Learning Centre (PRU)				√		
<u>NON SCHOOL MEMBERS</u>							
<u>Representatives from Bodies Approved By Schools Forum</u>							
Unions and Professional Associations, nominated by the staff side of the Directorate Joint Consultative Committee	Mrs Victoria Turner, National Educational Union (NEU)		√				
Worcester Diocesan Board of Education, nominated by the Board	Mr T Reid, Diocesan Deputy Director of Education	√					
Early Years Provider Reference Group, nominated by the Group	Mrs E O'Brien, Childminder.	√					
Dudley 16-19 FE Providers	Mrs J Williams, Interim Principal and CEO, Halesowen College			√			

Dudley Schools Forum 27 February 2024

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Early Years Single Funding Formula and Early Years SEN Inclusion Funding and the Proposed Changes for 2024/25

Purpose

1. To inform Schools Forum of the Early Years funding arrangements and Early Years SEN Inclusion Funding and the proposed changes to Dudley's local funding for Early Years providers for 2024/25.

Schools Forum Role and Responsibilities

2. The Forum is the 'guardian' of the local Schools Budget, and its distribution among schools and other bodies, and therefore must be closely involved throughout the development process.

Recommendation

3. Schools Forum to:

Note the publication of information about proposed Early Years Funding Allocations: Funding Arrangements and Changes for 2024/25. And the introduction of the new entitlements for working parents from April 2024 through to September 2025 as follows.

- From **April 2024**, working parents of 2-year-olds will be able to access 15-hours childcare.
- From **September 2024**, 15-hours childcare will be extended to all children of working parents from age of 9-months.
- From **September 2025**, working parents of children under the age of 5, will be entitled to 30-hours childcare per week.

Background

4. In March 2023, the Chancellor advised that additional funding a 'supplementary grant' of £180m nationally for all early years providers would be available from September 2023 for two terms; this additional funding was to top up their hourly rates to support the increasing costs they were facing to deliver their service such as service charges, staff charges and food charges. The first supplementary grant was paid to providers in autumn term 2023 the final payment will be received by providers in spring term 2024.

5. The Chancellor also announced in March 2023, that government was investing an additional £288m into the early year entitlements for 2024-25 on top of the additional £180m received for 2023-24. Taken together, this will help support early years providers at a national level with the additional National Living Wage costs. And are using this additional £20m to uplift all of the early years funding streams, with the majority going through the early years funding formulae.

6. Schools Forum are advised of the increase in funding for early years provision as per the spending review announcement in 2023, to increase the hourly funding rates paid for next financial year 2024/25 to childcare providers for the governments free childcare entitlements.

7. Dudley's Dedicated Schools Grant funding allocated to the local authority for the three- and four-year olds in early education through the Early Years Block will increase by £0.27 to £5.47 per hour in 2024/25 from an hourly baseline rate of £5.20 in 2023/24.

a) It is intended that providers will receive for the 3- and 4-year-old rate the full increase of £0.27 to £5.07 per hour, from the current £4.80 which will allow Dudley to continue to retain £0.30 centrally for other early years associated costs and retain £0.10 to fund the historic teachers pay and pensions (TPP), grant allocation.

b) The 2-year- old LA allocated rate has increased to £7.78 per hour from April 2024. It's proposed that Dudley will retain £0.20 to support the additional associated administrative costs and to create a contingency fund, it is therefore intended to pass on £7.58.

c) The new 9month-old LA allocated LA rate from September 2024 will be £10.61** It's proposed that Dudley will retain £0.20 to create a contingency fund and therefore pass on £10.41 to providers.

** This funding rate is for a new demographic and have been calculated using a new funding formula. This means that there is no baseline against which they should be compared.

8. It is a requirement that at least 95% of the Early Years funding received by the local authority is allocated directly to the provider. Thus, the amount Dudley can hold back centrally in respect of early years expenditure is a maximum of 5%. Dudley MBC will achieve an overall pass rate of 98.76% for 24/25. The full financial detail and impact of this has been assessed and is presented to Schools Forum in readiness for the necessary approvals in respect of 2024/25 central expenditure to be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant and as part of the Stage 2 DSG Budget Planning 2024/25 report.

9. All Early Years provision receives funding based on the same Basic Hourly Rate. The DfE introduced one mandatory deprivation factor and several supplementary factors which local authorities can include in their Early Years Funding Formula (EYFF) which are subject to a maximum of 10% of the total funding allocated and can include:

- Deprivation – a mandatory factor (Dudley only use this measure) *.
- Sparsity/ rurality
- Flexibility
- Quality
- English as an additional language (EAL)

* The rate for disadvantage is paid at £0.10 per hour per child from disadvantaged postcode and is paid annually in Spring term as a lump sum to all providers

Funding Implications

10. The current 2023/24 Early Years Funding Formula for 3 and 4-year-olds in Dudley comprises of Basic Hourly Rate, a supplement for Deprivation (based on IDACI) and a Lump Sum for Dudley's Maintained Nursery School (Netherton Park) * The 23/24 basic hourly rates for all providers of 3- and 4-year-olds, including Netherton Park is £4.48.

* The local authority will continue to receive supplementary funding for the 2024- 25 financial year, this will increase by 9.45%. This funding is provided in order to enable the local authority to protect the 2016- 17 funding rates for the universal 15-hour entitlement for MNS (that is, the rates that existed before the EYNFF) and the government expects it to be used in this way.

11. Netherton Park Nursery School is funded at the same base rate as all other providers. The provision will be in receipt of £0.390m of Maintained Nursery Supplement (MNS) funding to protect against the reduction in base rate funding which also now includes Teachers Pay & Pension Grant (TPPG).

12. For 2024 to 2025 £0.345m will be ring fenced within the contingency to distribute to the previous recipients of the TPP grant.

13. In the light of the LA funding to be received from DfE it is proposed to inform stakeholders of the following changes for 2024/25:

- To continue to fund childminders, maintained nursery classes and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers at the same Basic Hourly Rate and,
- To increase the hourly rate by £0.27 per hour for 3 and 4-year-olds; therefore, the new hourly rates for all providers of 3-and 4-year-olds, including Netherton Park is **£5.07**
- To increase the hourly rate by £0.19 per hour for 2-year-olds; therefore, the new hourly rates for all providers of 2-year-olds, including Netherton Park is **£7.58**
- To introduce a new hourly rate for 9month-olds from September 2024 of **£10.41**
- To maintain the current methodology and amount funded for deprivation for 2024/25.
- To maintain a contingency budget for 2024/25 to support the lagged funding approach, whereby the final Early Years block is not confirmed until the following July and to support any adjustments in relation to termly payments to providers. Based on indicative modelling the contingency budget for 2024/25 is estimated to be £0.866m which includes £0.345m TPPG allocation.
- Funding is available for 2024/25 Early Years SEN Inclusion Fund as follows.
 - o Early years block £0.120m
 - o High needs block £0.641m

Early Years SEN Inclusion Funding.

Background

14. Local authorities are required to have Early Years SEN (Special Educational Needs) Inclusion Funds to provide additional top up funding to providers to improve outcomes for children with special educational needs. Local Authorities are required to establish a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Inclusion Fund for 3- and 4-year-olds with SEN. In addition, Dudley also offers this funding to providers where a child with emerging need is in receipt of 2-year-old funding (Time for Two's), to enable a timelier graduated response and early intervention.

15. Dudley's Early Years SEN Inclusion Fund is therefore provided to Dudley's private, voluntary, and independent pre-school settings including childminders and for schools with early years provision as a contribution towards meeting the additional needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities.

16. The funds are intended to enable local authorities to work with early years providers and schools to meet the needs of individual children with SEN to support children's learning and development. National guidance also states local authorities should target the fund at children with "lower level or emerging SEN."

17. Dudley continues to be committed to promoting equality and inclusion for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) by removing barriers that prevent children from accessing free places and working with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential.

18. In order to establish the Early Years SEN Inclusion Fund, Dudley combines funding from the early years block and high needs block of the DSG to meet the needs of children with and without EHCPs (Education, Health & Care Plan).

19. The value of the fund must consider the number of children with SEN in the local area, their level of need, and the overall capacity of the local childcare market to support these children.

20. The growth in Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans and budget pressure is a national and local issue. The number of requests for EHC plans in Early Years continues to rise, with a further % increase year on year. Building capacity and strengthening SEN support is key to ensuring children get early intervention that will inform any future assessment and improve outcomes.

21. The review of the Integrated Early Years' Service completed in 2022, centres around a core team and five locality-based teams situated to better engage with local early years and childcare providers, connect with Family Hubs, Education Outcomes colleagues and community assets to ensure a more responsive, seamless, and inclusive Service for Dudley's youngest children.

22. The established locality-based Team around the Setting approach is underpinned by an inclusive philosophy that enhances knowledge, builds capacity and strengthens SEN provision in the early education sector. As well as strengthening multi-agency working and supporting families in their key transitions from home to early years provision and school.

23. The review of the current model of Early Years SEN Inclusion Funding highlighted that requests for Lower Level and Emerging funding have predominantly been for resources that are expected to be found within good quality early years provision.

24. The Early Years SEN Inclusion Fund is designed to meet the needs of children in receipt of early education funding to enhance their access to the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) curriculum. There may be some occasions where it is necessary for allocation of funding outside the agreed criteria due to the level of need or individual circumstances. This includes.

- Discretionary funding, which is considered where criteria may not be met, or panel feel the levels need to be adjusted for a specific reason that will support the inclusion of a particular child.
- Discretionary funding may be allocated for one term or more and like all Inclusion Funding will be subject to review. Some examples of when Discretionary funding may apply is to support a child with complex medical needs where they require support to transition into provision. Or where a child has high support needs and parental choice is that they remain at their local early years setting. Discretionary funding may also be considered for small project work to enhance the provision for a cohort of children with a particular area of need. E.g., to set up an intervention to support complex communication and interaction.

Inclusion Fund Support Packages

25. Support packages are agreed in consultation with Integrated Early Years team members and Providers to enable a bespoke support package that is in response to need in conjunction with Early Education Funding. (See below)

Funding	Termly Amount	Annual (Max)	+	Early Education Funding (EEF)*
Level 1	£750	£2,250	+	EEF = £2,889.90
Level 2	£1,000	£3,000	+	EEF = £2,889.90
Discretionary	Case by case Variable depending on application and circumstances e.g., 30 hours, transition support, project to set up intervention.	Termly or One Off		

*Based on new hourly rate of £5.07 for all providers at 570 hours annually (1,140 hours if child accessing 30hrs).

Early Years Inclusion Hubs 2024.

Dudley has established 4 new Early Years Inclusion Hubs these are located in 4 townships and complement the existing specialist early years pre-school which is a registered charity supported by DMBC.

We are currently exploring options for a fifth hub.

Early Years Inclusion Hub Funding Model 2024-25. See Appendix A

Annual Early Education Stakeholder Consultation 2024-25

26. The annual stakeholder consultation will run from 05 February 2024 until 16 February 2024, seeking views on the proposals. The outcome from the consultation will be reported to Schools Forum at the meeting on 27 February 2024. However, stakeholders will be advised of the new rates for 2024-25 by 20 February 2024.

Other Early Years Funding 2024-25

27. In addition to the new base rates for the 9month-old, 2-year-old and 3- and 4-year-old funding DfE have introduced a new deprivation supplement for disadvantaged 2-year-olds (current Time for Two's), and the new working parent entitlement. Using a basket of measures approach which uses a combination of free school meals (FSM) and a measure based on income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI). In addition, an Area Cost Adjustment (ACA) has been applied to reflect variations in costs (premises) across the country.

DfE have extended eligibility for both EYPP and DAF to all children aged from 9months accessing the new expanded entitlements from 2024-2025.

- Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) – increased by to £0.68 pence per hour which is £388 per eligible child, per financial year.
- Disability Access Fund (DAF) – increased by £29 to £910 per eligible child, per calendar year.

Childcare Sufficiency and Quality

28. Under Sections 6 and 7(as substituted by section 1 of the Education Act 2011) of the Childcare Act 2006; Dudley MBC has a responsibility to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that there is sufficient childcare to enable families to:

- access the free early education entitlement for their child.
- take up, or remain in work, or
- undertake education or training, which could reasonably lead to work.

29. The local authorities' role in supporting sufficiency and providing support and challenge to improve quality in the early years is more crucial than ever since the global pandemic. Improving the quality of provision helps the local authority to improve long term outcomes and school readiness for children. Ensuring sufficient high quality, affordable, accessible, flexible and sustainable provision through good market management to meet local needs is therefore key.

30. However, there is currently a risk to ensuring sufficiency; in that if the amount of funding made available per hour to be paid to providers does not increase sufficiently early years providers will continue to struggle to remain viable; many report that the current rate offered does not cover their costs, with the increase to the National Living Wage, NI contributions increasing from April 2024 and Gas and Electric Service charges and food charges will not be anywhere near to their usual hourly paid for fee rate; although many providers see early education funding as guaranteed income and, if they were not to offer the free entitlement many parents would not use their services.

HTCF - Budget Working Group Discussed

Yes - 20 February 2024.

Finance

31. From 1 April 2006, the schools' budget has been funded by a direct grant: Dedicated School Grant (DSG).

Law

32. The funding of schools is prescribed by the Department for Education (DfE) through the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023.

33. The Schools Forum is a statutory decision making and consultative body constituted in line with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and its associated regulations, including the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012, to enable members of the local school community to work in partnership with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council when making decisions about school funding and finances.

Risk Management

34. There are no material risks to the Council's Risk Management Framework resulting from the contents of this report.

Equality Impact

35. This report has no direct implications for the Council's commitment to equality and diversity.

Human Resources /Organisational Development

36. This report has no direct implications for organisational development, human resources or service transformation.

Commercial/Procurement

37. There is no impact on the potential to commercially trade and no impact on our customer base.

Environment / Climate Change

38. This report has no direct implications on the environment or the Council's work in addressing Climate and achieving Net Zero target by 2030.

Council Priorities and Projects

39. The 2022/2025 Council Plan is clear in its ambitions for educational outcomes including raising skills, educational and work potential, increasing good or better schools and closing the gap for disadvantaged pupils. This report relates to the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant funding to support the educational outcomes of children and young people in the borough.



Catherine Driscoll
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer:

Donna Farnell, Team Lead – Integrated Early Years and Childcare
Children's Service Directorate
Telephone: 01384 814373
Email: donna.farnell@dudley.gov.uk

Appendix A

Early Years Inclusion Hub Funding 2024 - 25

	Rate per Child	Annual Payment per Child	Maintained School	Academy	PVI
Place Funding	£6,000	£6,000	Annual payment in March	Termly	Termly
Early Years Child Funding	£5.07 P/Hour	£2,889.90	Termly	Termly	Termly

Schools Forum 27 February 2024

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND Update

Purpose

1. To provide Schools Forum with an update on the Delivering Better Value in SEND programme in Dudley.

Recommendations

2. That Schools Forum:
 - Note the content of the DBV Update Report

Background

3. This month's update brings a focused review of our recent progress. With the last DBV update less than four weeks ago, we will highlight advancements made in key areas since then. As per the high-level programme plan in Table 2 and shared last month, we are still midway through activities scheduled until the end of March.

To ensure wider workstream stakeholder engagement and participation, we have contacted all primary and secondary schools to 'Join our DBV Workstreams.' A link to the form has been shared listing all the workstreams, sub-working groups, and task and finish groups available.

We are pleased to announce that over 40 schools have requested to participate across multiple workstreams. In some instances, the same educational setting has requested to attend different workstreams with different staff members. To ensure

broad coverage of schools spread across all workstreams and to avoid heavy focus in one area, we will review the total list and inform schools of the workstreams they are part of. Meeting invites and Teams links will be shared after the February half-term break.

Additionally, in response to the last forum's request, the deadline for the Schools survey has been extended. Feedback from this and the 'Schools Workshop Day' held at Himley Hall will be shared in our next update.

The four primary focus areas and the supporting stakeholder groups include:

Table 1 Workstreams and Stakeholder Groups

No.	Workstream Name	Name of Stakeholder Group	Frequency
1	Redesigning our Specialist Services	Specialist Inclusion Service Redesign Stakeholder Working Group	Fortnightly
		Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) Task & Finish Group	Monthly
		OAP Subgroup SEMH (social, emotional, mental health)	Monthly
		OAP Subgroup P&S (physical &/or sensory needs)	Monthly
		OAP Subgroup C&I (communication & interaction)	Monthly
		OAP Subgroup C&L (cognition & learning)	Monthly
		Building Schools Capacity Task & Finish Group (training in mainstream schools)	To be agreed
2	Developing and Delivering our Sufficiency Strategy	Sufficiency Strategy Stakeholder Working Group	To be agreed
3	Preparation for Adulthood and Post 16	PFA Stakeholder Working Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NEET and Employability - Careers, Progression & Transition 	To be agreed
4	Redesigning our Spend Profile		

Activity since last month: Key Developments

4. Workstream 1 - Redesigning our specialist services and OAP offer

We have successfully completed 10 sessions with genuine partnerships as part of our implementation of the four cornerstones framework aimed to create good quality co-production and inclusive practice for children and young people with SEND. We have extended the invitation to all schools in Dudley to join us in this initiative and we hope to see you at one of our upcoming sessions scheduled to take place in March and April.

We are also working towards co-producing our 'Working Together Charter for Dudley SEND,' which will support the four cornerstones framework. The charter will outline our shared vision and help us build trust, communicate effectively, and value the diverse perspectives and contributions of everyone across the SEND partnership. We believe that the charter will benefit all stakeholders involved in the SEND journey, and we look forward to your feedback and input in due course.

The Specialist Inclusion Services stakeholder working group is embedded and meeting on a fortnightly basis. Work continues on identifying gaps to shape the reorganisation of the future service model. The school's workshop has taken place which saw excellent representation from Heads and SENCOs from Early years providers, primaries, secondaries, and post 16. A Headteachers briefing has also taken place where DBV was the main agenda item.

For the Ordinarily Available Provision Workstream (OAP), broader representation has been sought to participate in the sub-groups to inform each of the four broad areas of SEN of the ordinarily available provision. Interest has been expressed from education colleagues from Early Years settings, Schools and Post 16 partners to join the LA with health practitioners to start drafting the content of the OAP framework. The next sub-group meeting is arranged for the end of February.

Following feedback, the OAP task and finish group considered the proposal of using 'Revolution' as the preferred digital platform to 'house' the OAP framework. Implications were discussed, and initial plans for what preparation may be required were shared.

Work continues with the evaluation of the training requirements for mainstream schools. Our core current training offer primarily consists of training offered by our specialist services, complemented by bespoke training opportunities from various providers. Additionally, local independent providers, NHS services such as Speech and Language Therapy, and national providers contribute to our training resources. We have begun gathering information to better understand our training landscape, with the specifics to be determined by the task and finish group.

Workstream 2 - Developing and delivering our Sufficiency Strategy.

Work continues to commission the third-party supplier for our SEND Sufficiency Strategy development. Once completed, the stakeholder working group will be fully established. Nine schools have expressed interest in joining, and we aim to finalise the group as soon as possible. This workstream will support Dudley in providing a comprehensive picture of capacity across the special school and the Alternative Provision estate.

The tender process for the Resource Bases has concluded, and we are currently consolidating the panel's feedback to reach a decision. By the end of February, potential schools will be contacted regarding the outcome. Additionally, we are actively seeking schools, particularly secondary schools, interested in hosting base provision. We encourage interested schools to come forward and express their interest in participating.

As February commenced, we have seen children starting to join the Inclusion Hubs, as in January they had various introduction sessions. The Hub network is working well, and the Early Years Service are supporting each setting to ensure services are well launched. We are yet to deliver an Inclusion Hub for the Brierley Hill area, though we have identified a provider and we are working with commissioning to commence a direct award (pending approval of this approach). We anticipate, all being well for contracts to be concluded by the end of February, where soon after we expect to begin placing Children into the Hub by mid to late March.

Workstream 3 – Preparation for Adulthood

For Workstream 3, our commitment encompasses a range of factors crucial for preparing young people for adulthood. This includes ensuring that transitions, careers, Education, and addressing NEET are all encapsulated within this workstream.

Efforts are underway to establish the setup and structure of this workstream. Given the overlap with Dudley Adult Social Care, specifically regarding Post 19 - Preparation for Adulthood (PFA), our aim is to thoroughly consider any overlaps and remove potential duplication.

We are in the process of establishing two stakeholder working groups. One will focus on NEET and Employability, aiming to formulate a comprehensive post-16 curriculum and pathways strategy. This strategy will offer a holistic approach for post-16 options in Dudley, providing clear routes for various career paths. This effort aligns with the work of the 'I can' project by the virtual schools, which promotes the belief of 'I can be anything I want to be' and outlines the necessary steps to achieve these aspirations.

The second stakeholder working group will concentrate on a Careers, Progression, and Transition into Adulthood Group. We anticipate engagement and participation from primary, secondary, and beyond. We are also collaborating closely with our colleagues in Social Care who manage the Post 19 Preparation for Adulthood Project. To ensure seamless integration across this workstream, the lead for Workstream 3 is also heading the Employability Working Group.

Workstream 4 – Redesigning our Spend Profile

This workstream is not included in the formal agreement with the DfE, but it is a vital action that forms the foundation for all other DBV work being undertaken.

Redesigning our Spend Profile is a strategic response to our commitment to delivering high-quality educational support and services for children and young people with SEND while addressing budgetary constraints. The primary objective of this workstream is to optimise our spending by identifying Post 16 EHCPs suitable for cessation and improving the timeliness of annual reviews. Through these actions,

we aim to enhance service quality, ensure appropriate outcomes within EHCPs, and drive down costs effectively.

Table 2 shows the programme plan of Workstream activities for the period from January 2024 to March 2024, providing a high-level overview of the next steps for each Workstream within the programme. A more detailed breakdown of activities is shared by workstream leads within each of the stakeholder working groups.

Table 2. Programme Plan of Workstream Activities for January 2024 to March 2024

Workstream 1 - Redesigning our specialist services and OAP offer.					
	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
1.1 Commissioning of Genuine Partnerships Purpose: Foster collaborative partnerships to enhance stakeholder engagement, leverage external resources, and promote co-production values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conduct a review of the success measures of the Four Cornerstones ModelArticulate expected positive outcomes to indicate successful co-production efforts.Refresh partnership agreements and monitor their contributions to the DBV programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enhanced collaboration with external partnersImproved stakeholder engagement- Strengthened co-production values	On Track		
1.2 Reframing our Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) Offer Purpose: An inclusive framework for improved access and effectiveness while setting clear expectations for schools and settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Design & develop the OAP framework, focusing on clear expectations for schools and settings.Undertake a baseline assessment on EHCP requests and other relevant metrics before, during and after implementation.Undertake the Schools Workshop Day and incorporate the feedback into the work of 1.3 (Service Redesign)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clear expectations for OAP in schools and settingsEnhanced provision of support, resources, and services	On Track		
1.3 Redesigning our Specialist Services Delivery Models Purpose: Adopt an outward-facing approach to foster greater school support, confidence, and in-house capacity for children with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue with service assessment and gap analysis, highlighting areas for improvement.Collaboratively design ideal services required to meet identified needs and align with the OAP framework.Develop a comprehensive training matrix to enhance staffing capacity and identify gaps, ensuring alignment with overall goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improved support and confidence in schoolsEnhanced in-house capacity to meet children's needs	Monitor		
1.4 Supporting Schools to Build Capacity Purpose: Identify training needs, develop tailored materials, and equip mainstream settings to support children without EHCPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Determine the specific training gaps & needs of mainstream settings.Commission training providers and develop training materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improved capacity of mainstream schoolsEnhanced support for children without EHCPs	Monitor		

Workstream 1 - Redesigning our specialist services and OAP offer.

	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
1.5 Communication Plan for the DBV Programme Purpose: To ensure effective and tailored communication strategies are established and executed for the DBV Programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the draft DBV communication plan and present to the programme group for review and feedback. Craft messages aligned with the programme's goals, determine effective communication channels, and develop a timeline for dissemination. Implement the agreed plan, share messaging using relevant platforms. Establish a mechanism for feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent and Carers of SEND, Schools including broader stakeholders and internal services are well-informed about the DBV programme's objectives, progress and opportunities. Systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of communication efforts, ensuring alignment with programme goals. 	On Track		

Workstream 2 - Developing and delivering our sufficiency strategy.

	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
2.1 Developing and Implementing Sufficiency Plan Purpose: To create a comprehensive plan that ensures there are adequate services and resources to meet the current and future needs of children and young people with SEND in Dudley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage key stakeholders for strategy development and establish stakeholder working group. Work with 1st Planner to commence of in-depth assessment and understand needs. Perform a gap analysis to identify shortfalls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved service adequacy and resource allocation Enhanced understanding of children's needs and capacity gaps. 	Monitor		
2.2 Implementation of Resource Bases/SEND Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the ongoing actions related to the implementation of Resource Bases/SEND Units, focusing on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of resource bases and SEND units. 	On Track		

Workstream 2 - Developing and delivering our sufficiency strategy.

	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
Purpose: To establish and operate Resource Bases and SEND Units to provide specialised educational support and services for children and young people with SEND	effective integration with mainstream schools, data collection, and student placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration with mainstream schools Monitoring student progress 			
2.3 Commissioning of Resource Bases/SEND Units for 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the ongoing actions related to the commissioning of Resource Bases/SEND Units for 2024, including identifying specific schools, and progressing through the tender process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of resource bases Stakeholder consultation and involvement 	On Track		
2.4 Commissioning & Implementation of Early Years Inclusion Hubs Purpose: To ensure the smooth implementation and operation of the Early Years Inclusion Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment & rollout of Early Years Inclusion Hubs 	On Track		
2.5 Implementation of Early Identification Pathway with Health Purpose: To establish and execute an early identification process in collaboration with health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Notification Process is now in place, to increase the profile of this process with GP's and other Health Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced early identification of children's needs through collaboration with Health 	On Track		

Workstream 3 – Preparation for Adulthood

	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
<p>3.1 Develop the Post 16 and Post 19 PFA Pathway</p> <p>Purpose: Create a clear transition pathway for young people with disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List all relevant stakeholders for Post 16 education in the borough. Conduct a survey of current education providers regarding curriculum provision. Start the development of a new 'I-can' strategy highlighting potential career routes for Post 16 and Post 19 students. Establish a Post 16 working group to discuss career progression, retention, curriculum design, and NEET status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowering smooth transition for young people 	Monitor		
<p>3.2 Development of Apprenticeships and Supported Internships</p> <p>Purpose: Create Apprenticeship and Supported Internships opportunities for Young People with SEND in Dudley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish communication channels and partnerships with the local Employment & Skills Board Create a comprehensive list of training and apprenticeship providers across the borough. Evaluate the current availability and demand for supported internships and apprenticeships within the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling pathways to employment for young people 	Monitor		
<p>3.3 Implement Independent Travel Training</p> <p>Purpose: Empower young people with disabilities travel skills for independence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify travel challenges with stakeholders. Develop travel training curriculum. Allocate budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing mobility and independence of young people 	Monitor		

Workstream 4 – Redesigning our Spend Profile					
	Next Steps (Between Jan to Mar 2024)	Impact	RAG Status		
			On track	Monitor	At Risk
4.1 EHCP Cessations – Post 16 Purpose: Improve the annual review process and identify Post 16 EHCPs due for cessation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing review to identify and prioritise Year 11 EHCPs to be targeted for cessation. Implement strategies for improved efficiency in annual reviews. Attend scheduled reviews as required. Focus on resource allocation to ensure the cessation work continues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driving down costs 	Monitor		
4.2 Develop Data infrastructure for DBV Programme Purpose: Design and implement an effective data infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine data sources of impact measures. Finalise DBV dashboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance data driven decision-making 	Monitor		
4.3 Design & implement operational metrics for benefits. Purpose: Develop metrics for benefits calculation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an assessment to identify operational metrics. Review and update the existing forecast model in line with the DBV Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved financial analysis and decision-making 	Monitor		

Finance

5. Grant funding of £1m from DfE will support the ongoing development and initial delivery of the DVB programme outcomes. Base budgets within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) (High Needs Block) and capital funding approved within the local authority's capital programme will also support ongoing activities as detailed above which will seek to achieve required efficiencies. As at the end of the financial year 2022/23, the local authority had a deficit balance on the DSG (High Needs Block) of £26.7m with a current budgeted deficit for 2023/24 of £31.3m and a forecast deficit of £34.0m. The Delivering Better Value in SEND programme aims to bring under control and reverse this increasing deficit, which can, until the end of the 2025/26 financial year, continue to be held in an unusable reserve and carried forward as a deficit on the local authority's DSG balance.

Law

6. The Schools Forum is a statutory decision making and consultative body constituted in line with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and its associated regulations, including the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012, to enable members of the local school community to work in partnership with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council when making decisions about school funding and finances. The funding of schools is prescribed by the Department for Education (DfE) through the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023.

Risk Management

7. There are no material risks to the Council's Risk Management Framework resulting from the contents of this report.

Equality Impact

8. This report has no direct implications for the Council's commitment to equality and diversity.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

9. This report has no direct implications for human resources, organisational development, or service transformation.

Commercial/Procurement

10. There is no impact on the potential to commercially trade and no impact on our customer base.

Environment / Climate Change

11. This report has no direct implications on the environment or the Council's work in addressing Climate and achieving Net Zero target by 2030.

Council Priorities and Projects

12. The 2022/2025 Council Plan is clear in its ambitions for educational outcomes including raising skills, educational and work potential, increasing good or better schools and closing the gap for disadvantaged pupils. This report relates to the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (HNB) funding to support the educational outcomes of children and young people in the borough.



Catherine Driscoll
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officers:

Susan Powell, Head of SEND

Telephone: 01384 816276

Email: susan.powell@dudley.gov.uk

Catherine Ludwig, Finance Manager

Telephone: 01384 815075

Email: catherine.ludwig@dudley.gov.uk