

**Warrington Schools Forum**

**Membership**

Membership with differentiated voting rights ~ Total Membership of 26, of whom 22 are entitled to vote on funding formula issues									
Tenure ends 31 August 2020									
Sector Representation (22)	Appointed by the Council following election by:	Member	Dates and Attendance						
			26 June 2018	2 October 2018	4 December 2018				
Maintained Nursery School Senior Staff (1)	Primary Headteachers Group	Jane Wilkie (JWil)	P						
Special School Staff (1)	Special School Headteachers Group	Mike Frost (MF)	P						
Special School Governor (1)	Governors Forum	Trish Chapman (TC)	A						
PRU (1)	PRU Management Board	Sam Rigby-White (SRW)	A						
UTC (1)	UTC	Lee Barber (LB)	P						
Academy Secondary (5)	Academy Schools	Gwyn Williams (GW)	P						
		Tim Long (TL)	P						
		John Carlin (JC)	P						
		Bev Scott-Herron (BSH)	P						
	Governors Forum	Kieran Walshe (KW)	A						
Academy Primary (1)	Academy Schools	Andrew Redman (AR)	A						
Maintained Primary School Sector (8)	WAPH (4)	Hazel Fryman (HF)	P						
		Gary Cunningham (GC)	S						
		Lesley McGann (LM)	P						
		Lyndsey Glass (LG)	S						
	Governors Forum (4)	Stuart Munslow (SM)	P						
		David Hart (DH)	A						
		Janet Lazarus (JL)	P						
		Hazel Coen (HC)	P						
Maintained Secondary School Sector (2)	WASCL (2)	Chris Hunt (CH)	P						
		Ed McGlinchey (EM)	A						
Private Voluntary and Independent Providers (1)	PVI Providers Forum	Ginny Taylor (GT)	P						

Representing	Member	Dates and Attendance						
		26 June 2018	2 October 2018	4 December 2018				
<b><u>Non-Schools Members (4)</u></b>								
Anglican Diocese (1)	Jacqui Wightman (JWig)	P						
Roman Catholic Diocese (1)	Tim Warren (TW)	P						
16-19 Institutions (1)	Julie McCann (JM)	P						
Parent Governor (1)	Vacant	-						

<b>Independent Chair</b>	Maureen Banner (MB)	P						
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Representing		26 June 2018	2 October 2018	4 December 2018				
<b><u>Warrington Borough Council</u></b>								
Head of Education	Hilary Smith (HS)	P						
Finance Manager	James Campbell (JC)	P						
Senior Accountant (Schools)	Garry Bradbury (GB)	P						
Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services	Cllr Jean Carter (CllrJC)	P						

**Key**

P ~ Present

A ~ Apologies

X ~ Absent with no apologies

S ~ Substitute

- ~ Vacancy

O ~ Observer

**Trades Unions**

Shaun Everett (NUT &amp; ATL)

Gary Moge (NASUWT)

**Substitute**

Cath Cooke – on behalf of Lyndsey Glass

Jacqui Wightman – on behalf of Gary Cunningham

**Minutes**

Gill Sykes

	<i>Item</i>	<b>Action</b>
1.	<p><b>Apologies and Welcome</b></p> <p>The chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. Apologies were noted from Kieran Walshe, Andrew Redman, Trish Chapman, Sam Rigby-White, Gary Cunningham, Ed McGlinchey, David Hart and Lyndsey Glass.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Minutes from the previous meeting and matters arising</b></p> <p>The minutes were accepted as a true record, actions had been covered and there were no matters arising.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Scheme for Financing Schools</b></p> <p>GB presented a briefing paper to the forum which is the first directed update of Scheme for Financing Schools since December 2015. GB noted that the relevant sections have been updated as described in the document on the WBC website and My School Services. Some changes to reflect circumstances e.g. recognition that we no longer have statements but EHC Plans. These are recent amendments we are compelled to make to finance for schools, and GB noted that he was happy to discuss any of the items.</p> <p>CH referred to Annex B and whether this has changed the approach for the local authority. GB noted that when top slicing has been considered there has always been a debate with schools forum. It was noted that this had been rejected as funding for high needs pressures.</p>	
4.	<p><b>DSG Outturn 2017/18</b></p> <p>GB presented a report to the forum to confirm the outturn position for the retained Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budgets for 2017/18. The closing position of £1.3m deficit is an improved figure in comparison with earlier higher projections where the forecast overspend was £1.6m and rising. The local authority agreed to fund the overspend corporately as a one-off to enable the High Needs block to start 2018/19 with no accrued deficit.</p> <p>A question was raised about local authority plans to reduce independent school fees. HS noted that renegotiation of some of the packages has taken place in order to bring fees down or for them to reduce the rate of increase. GB noted that various initiatives are being explored, for example increased designated provision places, and special schools to increase local provision. A previous attempt to secure funding for a free school for ASD is being reconsidered. HS noted that on a regional basis we are working with other local authorities to explore establishing a specialist provision and this would be more sustainable and financially beneficial. Noted that effective identification of children across the system at the right time to continue.</p>	

	<i>Item</i>	<b>Action</b>
	<p>HS noted that a work-stream on the Improvement Board relates to working in partnership with Health. There is a real willingness from Health to be involved and there are a lot of positive conversations. HS informed that Yvette McKern (Health) attends the EHC Panel and where there has been a need for health support, Yvette has agreed and taken this back to colleagues.</p> <p>HS noted that we have revised our approach about how to respond to parents when we genuinely think a child's needs can be met locally. If parents insist they want an independent school, then we would go to Tribunal if necessary.</p> <p>GB noted that financial regulations state any underspend on dedelegated items should be reported back after the closure of the financial year, and therefore maintained primary representatives were asked to consider how the contingencies' underspends of £273,201 should be utilised. On behalf of the maintained primary sector J Wig proposed option (a) from the report, for these underspends to be "returned to those schools via the same principle as the original dedelegation". The Chair asked for other comments and noted that only maintained primary representatives could vote on the proposal. A vote was taken and option (a) was agreed unanimously.</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Schools Forum is asked to note the 2017/18 outturn position for DSG, and that this overspend has been funded by corporate reserves. <b>NOTED</b></li> <li>(ii) Maintained primary school representatives are asked to consider how the contingencies' underspends of £273,201 should be utilised. <b>AGREED AS NOTED ABOVE</b></li> </ul>	
5.	<p><b>School Balances</b></p> <p>GB presented a report to the forum with details of the final individual balances for Warrington maintained schools as at 2017/18. Last year there was agreement for £50K of 'excess' balance to be clawed back, and we would be looking at a similar balance this year. Schools Forum are asked to decide whether that process takes place this year, and if so to decide how this would be utilised. It was noted that last year we sought to formalise our approach to balance challenge and potential clawback.</p> <p>It was noted that it does not seem fair to consider clawback when it is not applicable to all schools (not applicable to academies), also when there is special dispensation for one school (as last year) when other maintained schools are subject to clawback.</p> <p>HS noted that discussions have taken place around supporting the development of a 19-25 provision in the local offer. Green Lane governors have established a new provision, a trust called Willow Green. We considered how this could be supported financially and as there is nothing in the high needs budget to support it, a meeting took place with governors and Willow Green Trust members and agreed some of their resource (£21K) could be used to support this. This means that the total balance to be considered for clawback would be £29-£30K.</p>	

	<i>Item</i>	<b>Action</b>
	<p>It was suggested that there should be no clawback for maintained schools and this would avoid a two tier system of academies versus maintained. The Chair noted that only maintained representatives could vote on a decision around clawback. A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed that there would be no clawback this year.</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Schools Forum is asked to note the level of school balances recorded at the end of 2017/18. <b>NOTED</b></li> <li>(ii) Schools Forum is asked to recommend what, if any, methodology should be applied to calculate an appropriate clawback in respect of exceptional balances held as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. <b>AGREED NOT TO CLAWBACK THIS YEAR</b></li> <li>(iii) If a clawback is agreed, Schools Forum should recommend how this aggregate should be utilised for the collective benefit of Warrington schools, bearing in mind the source of this funding, and the funding areas of greatest shortfall. <b>N/A</b></li> </ul>	
6.	<p><b>High Needs</b></p> <p><b>(i) <u>DSG Allocations to Budgets</u></b></p> <p>GB presented a report to the forum and noted that the DSG settlements cover all four blocks. The schools block has been allocated using the new National Formula as previously agreed at Schools Forum. The Early Years block looks substantially more than last year, but this is the first full year of the increased 30-hour offer. GB referred to Appendix 1 which gives a comparison between 2017/18 and 2018/19 for high needs. There is projected significant overspend for Post 16 SEN and independent school fees, and constantly increasing EHCP numbers. It was noted that we will start 2018/19 with a deficit projection on high needs of almost £2.3m, and this is even after the corporate funding of the 2017/18 closing deficit. Steps being made to address this are noted in Paula Worthington's report at 6(ii).</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>It is recommended that Schools Forum note the contents of the report and the financial position on High Needs. <b>NOTED</b></p> <p><b>(ii) <u>SEND Improvement Programme</u></b></p> <p>HS presented a report to the forum on behalf of Paula Worthington (PW), which provides an update to the progress being made to address increasing demand for EHCPs. PW has stated previously that it is not something to be quickly addressed and resolved, but we are looking for a long term sustainable financial position. It was noted that there is a legacy of need that is not a short term fix. The local and national context were noted, this is not just a Warrington issue although we are out of step with our statistical neighbours around numbers of children receiving EHCPs. It was noted that Warrington local authority are funded significantly lower than neighbouring local</p>	

	<i>Item</i>	<b>Action</b>
	<p>authorities. There are a number of strategies in place for better management of the process, with more robust arrangements and challenging back to parents who are seeking options for their children for example independent schools. There is a need to manage future expectations of children and families.</p> <p>Discussion took place around the key points in the improvement plan, including looking at our processes about being more robust in the challenge around how to respond to meeting a child's needs. We need to be confident with our own financial arrangements for supporting a child's needs and making best use of the resources to avoid allocating children to provisions that are inappropriate.</p> <p>The report suggests establishing a new work-stream to consider financial arrangements in terms of targeting resources and services as effectively as possible. A previous report to Schools Forum (January 2017) noted we were able to identify opportunities through clawback and other quick solutions, and now looking at longer term. Establishing a working group to look at the financial arrangements might give us some assurance we are targeting the resources more effectively.</p> <p>Schools Forum were asked to identify representatives to participate in the new finance work-stream, J Wig suggested members of the Formula Working Group (FWG) as they have experience in this field, including: Jacqui Wightman, Lyndsey Glass, Bev Scott-Herron, Tim Long, Gwyn Williams, Stuart Munslow, Mike Frost, Jane Wilkie, Moira Bryan and Maureen Banner. Janet Lazarus informed that she would prefer not to be part of the new work-stream. HS noted from the report that Paul King, Lucinda Duffy and Craig Burgess had already volunteered to be part of the group. Schools Forum, as statutory accountable decision maker, felt the need for wider representation to report back. It was suggested to use the FWG meeting already arranged for 20 September 2018 and report back to forum at the next meeting on 4 October 2018.</p> <p>TL referred to a lot of work on SEN committees at local authority request and whether there was a suggestion of lack of confidence. WASCL and WAPH appointed members are representatives attending a number of meetings regularly investing a great deal of their time. It was noted that we do not lack confidence in the committees.</p> <p>J Wig noted that we need to be careful about talking of demand management when this is about meeting children's needs, we cannot fail to meet needs because it is going to cost too much money.</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>Schools Forum is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Note that the SEN Review Board is driving the change programme for SEND. <b>NOTED</b></li> <li>(b) Note the different approaches and top-up funding levels applied across the region (see Appendix 1). <b>NOTED</b></li> <li>(c) Note that the projected overspend of £2.2 million in the High Needs Block for 2018/19 as of the end of period 1. <b>NOTED</b></li> </ul>	

	<i>Item</i>	<b>Action</b>
	(d) Identify appropriate representatives to participate in the finance work stream to ensure coverage of primary and secondary, as well as mainstream and specialist provision. <b>REPRESENTATIVES AGREED AS NOTED ABOVE</b>	
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>It was noted that individuals can lobby MPs around the issue of funding, and it was again noted that Warrington is funded significantly lower than neighbouring local authorities.</p>	
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>Meeting schedule:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuesday 2 October 2018 5.15pm</li> <li>• Tuesday 4 December 2018 5.15pm</li> </ul> <p><i>(Venue for all meetings – Sir Thomas Boteler CE High School)</i></p>	

The Chair thanked Bev for hosting the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. The meeting was closed.