

## **CALDERDALE SCHOOLS FORUM**

### **16 January 2025 – Virtual Meeting Via Teams**

#### **PRESENT:**

**Karen Morley** (Academy) – Co-Chair  
**Mungo Sheppard** (Primary Maintained)  
**John Eccleston** (Academy Primary Governor)  
**Stuart Hillary** (Academy Secondary)  
**Karl Veltman** (Post 16 Representative)  
**Dan Burns** (Academy Primary)  
**Gareth Morris** (Primary Governors Maintained)  
**Andrea Dyson** (Early Years Rep)  
**Louise Downing** (Primary Governors Maintained)  
**Adam McNichol** (Academy Bursar)  
**Gill Shirt** (Secondary Governor Maintained)  
**Rachel Harling** (Academy Secondary)  
**Brenda Monteith** (Roman Catholic)  
**Denise Gwizdak** (Early Years Rep)  
**Hamish Heald** (Union Representative)  
**Kevin Rivett** (Unions Representative)

#### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

**Jemima Flintoff** (AD Education and Inclusion)  
**Connie Beirne** (Interim Service Manager for Early Years and School Strategy and Performance)  
**Emma Ingham** (SEND & Inclusion Service Manager)  
**Ian Hughes** (Legal Officer)  
**Jane Davy** (Finance Manager)  
**Martyn Sharples** (Senior Finance Officer)  
**Victoria Coyle** (SEN Manager)  
**Steve Drake** (Finance Manager)  
**Corinne Kielty** (Calderdale Finance Officer – observing)  
**Amanda Farron** (Senior Finance Officer - observing)  
**Mick Burns** (Union Representative - observing)

#### **APOLOGIES**

**Lauren Watson** (Primary Maintained)  
**Debbie Sweet** (Special School)  
**Stephen Baines** (Academy Secondary)  
**Phil Hannah** (Academy AP)  
**Richard Horsfield** (Academy Secondary)  
**Cllr Wilkinson** (Cabinet Member – Observing)  
**Ivan Kuzio** (Academy Bursar)

**1. Substitutes nominated for this meeting and apologies for absence. (To be notified in writing 24 hours in advance.)**

None

**2. Members Interests –** Members are reminded of the need to declare any interest they might have in relation to the items of business on this agenda.

John Eccleston is a member of the Calderdale Partnership Improvement Board  
Karen Morley is a trustee at Together Learning Trust, representing primary academies including Scout Road. She is a governor at Christ Church Pellon and Governor at Burnley Road Academy.

Rachel Harling is a trustee at Together Learning Trust and a governor at St Augustine's School which is part of Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust.

**3. Admission of the Public -** it is not recommended that the public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the items of business on this agenda.

Amanda Farron – Calderdale's Senior Finance Officer  
Mick Burns – National Education Union  
Corinne Kielty – Calderdale Finance Officer

**4. Minutes of the Schools Forum held on 14 November 2024**

Hamish Heald (Union Representative) to be moved from 'in attendance' to 'present' for the purpose of the minutes.

Amend Rachel Harling to Academy Secondary on 'in attendance'

Item 14 - amend to 89.5% schools rated good and outstanding

Minutes approved by Schools Forum

**5. Election of Chair and Co-Chair**

Karen Morley will remain as Co-Chair for the interim

**6. Review of Schools Forum Constitution and membership**

PALT has been established on the 1st January. The Co-Chair will review the membership of Schools Forum for the next meeting.

**7. De-Delegation of Funding 2025-26**

The Co-Chair thanked Hamish and Jane for the paper. It shows in the report that the charges for Calderdale are lower than neighbouring authorities. The Co-Chair was in favour of the flat rate but looking at the staffing ratio's in Primary and Secondary, the ratio of secondary to primary is 1.38 to 1.00 which ought to be taken into account.

The Co-Chair had considered, prior to the meeting, guidance in relation to using funds from the central budget to pay for the deficit and felt that this could be justified in accordance with

the guidance by saying the use of this service is available to all schools and on a yearly basis the local authority charge for their direct cost of administration based on all schools joining. It was noted that very soon, all Calderdale secondary schools will be academies and vast majority of primaries will be academies.

Gareth Morris Q: is more work being undertaken in primary schools than secondary schools? Hamish said the work undertaken in primary and secondary feels fairly even however this is without having the figures in front of him. The in-house HR in the academy schools doesn't have too much of an effect on the work, due to it being on a case-by-case basis.

Rachel Harling Q: Are we setting a precedence here for other services that go into deficit by calling on the central funds to address the problem?

Jane said we would have to consider any deficit position being recovered from CSSB on an individual basis. If we agreed this, it would be a one-off payment because of services being made available to all schools and in future a realistic rate would be set. There is a very small amount of de-delegation in Calderdale. The only other we have is School Improvement and I am not expecting to call on the central block again. Union Facilities has been very unsettled the last few years but has been improving with more permanent staff in post.

Rachel Harling Q: with regards to the £21,938.67 deficit, I can see this relates to 23/24. Is there a current year deficit to add?

Hamish said that in 24/25, they have been working hard to bring academies on board for the additional income and there is a feeling there won't be a deficit for this year. There has been more success having a targeted approach towards academies and asking them to pay into the facilities pot. The MATS would prefer a flat rate and with Todmorden High joining the Share MAT, there will be no secondary schools to vote on the higher or lower rates going forward.

Primaries ratified the decision already made at the November meeting to de-delegate. Secondaries voted in favour of the de-delegation.

**Members were asked to vote on the deficit be funded from the CSSB contingency**  
6 approve  
2 oppose

**Maintained representatives only were asked to vote on option two:**  
**Option 2: Maintaining different charges for primary and secondary sectors, a 30% increase (+ inflation) for both sectors with additional funds to be allocated from the Central Block DSG to cover the current deficit.**

4 votes approve  
0 oppose

### **Approval**

1. Secondary funds to be de-delegated for union facilities time
2. Ratified previous approval that Primary funds be de-delegated for union facilities time.
3. To meet the deficit of £21,938.67 from the CSSB 2024/25 contingency
4. De-delegate £3.79 for primary and £5.24 for secondary

## **8. Early Years Funding Formulae and Centrally Retained Funds 2025-26**

The Co-Chair highlighted that the information given in the report is understandable and thanked Martyn for his report and his contribution to Schools Forum.

Andrea Dyson, on behalf of the PVI Sector, would like it noted that we are providing early years on a very uneven playing field compared to School Nurseries. PVI's are subject to VAT, pay business rates and the school nurseries are to receive a grant to cover the upcoming increase in Employer's National Insurance contributions. As an example, EEF funding in 2025 is increasing 3.7% whilst (Totspot Day Nursery as a specific example) payroll is rising by 11% which is a huge gap. Calderdale has lost 97 settings and 1400 early years places since 2020 and it is anticipated that there will be a shortage of places available from September 2025 when Under 2's will also be eligible for the 30 hours working parent funding. Many settings are also struggling with recruitment and retention and settings are not able to pay higher wages owing to levels of funding. This impacts on the number of spaces settings can or will provide.

Martyn added that from the report, you will be aware of the cost pressures in for the majority of providers in the market. In terms of the pressure from September 2025 and the need for additional funded places for the 2-year-olds and under 2 with working parents, the government is going to provide a one off grant of £75 million to support the costs that are due to happen in September. Unfortunately, the LA do not have any detail on how this will be allocated or the conditions of grant.

Schools Forum approved the following 4 recommendations:-

i. request for additional post in the EY&C Sufficiency Team to manage the increased workload due to the expansion of the entitlements. ii. request to fund Finance Services to recruit additional and replacement staff to respond to the increased workload due to the expansion of the entitlements and increased levels of funding. iii. funding early years posts within the Specialist Inclusion Team, specified in the report, from the EY Centrally Retained Funds. iv. To centrally retain £1.07 million (between 2.9% and 3.7% across the entitlements) of the total quantum of funding for the early year's entitlements (excluding EYPP and DAF). The following table shows a breakdown of the Centrally Retained Funding for 2025/26 compared with 2024/25

## **9. Approval of Central School Services Block DSG for 2025-26**

Steve Drake presented the Central Schools Service Block proposed allocation for 2025/26 and the projected underspend for 2024/25 and asked how Schools Forum would like to use the potential underspend of £155k.

Mungo Sheppard Q: do LA officers have any ideas to contribute as to what the money could be offset against?

Jemima said that the LA could look at various options and consult with CPHA and CASH and to then come back to Schools Forum to gain Schools Forum views.

Rachel Harling Q: are we able to look back and see what contingency is required? Should the money be spent this year on initiatives that are in real need of support?

Connie replied that last year, it was useful having the contingency and additional funds were given to the clusters. We are working collectively to address needs and those discussions

with CPHA and CASH would be useful to start the development of the strategy to then come back to Schools Forum to focus on further work that can be completed with schools.

The Co-Chair asked that Jemima, Connie and Steve to consult with CASH and CPHA members and bring back a report for the Schools Forum in April.

Schools Forum approved the recommended allocation of the 2025/26 Central School Services Budget (CSSB) as set out in the report and noted that through its business planning processes the LA will continue to scrutinise and actively challenge its operating models to ensure effective and efficient delivery of its services to reflect statutory requirements – Schools Forum members approved.

## **10. High Needs Block Recovery Deficit Plan**

The Co-Chair highlighted that this is a holding report, and a more detailed report will be available at the Schools Forum Exception meeting on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February. She advised that it would be useful to have the Special Schools funding information included in the future report to help understand special school budgets and give a total view of the High Needs funding. It was requested that the report should include more information on the LA's capital schemes for special needs provision and also the Alternative Provision capital scheme.

Mungo Sheppard Q: are there any more details around the proposed Three Ways and Delta sites? John Eccleston commented that this is a large complex plan which will continue for some time and it is important that Schools Forum is kept aware and up-to-date with the overall big picture.

Jemima responded that the Capital funding for Three Ways and Delta does not come through Schools Forum, but Richard Morse can compile a report on the projects for the Schools Forum meeting in April. The LA are working on a Sufficiency Audit to understand localities and primary needs to have a transparent planning approach to where we put provisions in the future. Once this is at a more finalised stage, this can also be brought to a future Schools Forum meeting for information.

Dan Burns Q: 10 exceptional funding requests are agreed, how many are there in total? Emma responded that there are 15 in total however this doesn't mean that the remaining requests didn't receive funding. Some of the requests could be processed through top up funding which meaning those schools still benefitted, and we didn't overspend. The remaining £135k from the 0.5% Schools Block top slice is available for schools who submit requests within the next 3 months.

Dan Burns Q: are the successful requests published and if not, can they be made available? Emma replied that due to the risk of identifying individual children it is not appropriate to share details with Schools Forum, but this information is with the HNB reference group, CPHA and the settings involved.

Jane would like to make Schools Forum aware the Special Schools have not been completed due to only receiving the DSG in late December. Meetings are attended by relevant officers to oversee the High Needs Block which will feed into the report for Schools Forum on 24<sup>th</sup> February. She advised the LA will be consulting with Special Schools once it has been agreed needs to happen with the funding.

Mungo Sheppard commented that it is essential that there is transparency and clear communications.

## **11. Growth Fund & Falling Rolls**

The recommendation that Schools Forum are to note that £495,671 (which includes £46,455 underspend from growth fund from 2024/25) will be used as first call on the 0.5% transfer from Schools Block to the High Needs Block was approved.

## **12. Update on School Funding Formula**

Schools Forum were requested to give a view on the Schools Block allocation for 2025/26. Schools Forum noted the schools block DSG allocation through the funding formula, noting that 0.5% of the school's block DSG is allocated to the High Needs Block.

## **13. Update on Maintained School Balance**

Schools Forum were asked to note the current position. A further report will be brought to the meeting in April which will be based on Spring term predictions. Woodbank School have a large amount in carry-forward due to the plans for a hydrotherapy pool being installed and extra places but the LA are expecting them to be below the 20% once the capital works have been completed.

Gareth Morris Q: with regards to suspending the clawback mechanism, on the June minutes it says that the balance control mechanism was to continue for another year?

Jane responded that the LA could apply this to schools with an excessive balance and can clawback funds from maintained schools only. It was agreed to suspend it at the June meeting but to keep the mechanism in the local funding arrangements. Use of the clawback was suspended through Covid and following that due to the high increase in teachers' pay and support staff increases. It was suspended this time due to the high number of academies and from April, the LA will only have around 40 primary schools

Gareth Morris Q: is there any threshold as to what the LA sees and an excessive balance or that there is a power to claw back all or part of it?

Jane explained this is 20% of all income which was agreed and in line with academies. The LA have never clawed back before but it would come to Schools Forum to agree what we would clawback and what it would be spent on.

Gareth Morris Q: is there a national picture on what is being held and spent in the academy sector?

Jane said we can see how much academies have as they publish their accounts on their websites. Jane looks at this and writes a report on academy balances for LA officers.

John Eccleston raised his concerns around a poorer experience being delivered for children based in schools with lower income. He is happy if Jane is pleased that schools are using money in the correct way.

Jemima added that the LA monitors schools' positions, and currently the majority of schools have an in-year deficit. As an LA, we can issue financial warning notices if schools aren't spending their funding correctly but there are no concerns currently. Jane informed members that the LA have a monthly Schools Causing Concern meeting to discuss any schools of concern and there are also Team Around The School meetings to also help support schools. The LA meet with schools and the School Improvement Team to confirm the money is being spent appropriately. We are monitoring the schools in deficit closely.

Co-Chair Q: if you are monitoring the MATS and academies and you noted they were heading towards financial difficulties, would you have a hands on or hands off approach? Jane confirmed this would be hands off approach due to them not being an LA school. However, these concerns are raised at Schools Causing Concern to which Connie or Jemima would raise with DfE colleagues. There are no concerns currently.

Schools Forum agreed with the recommendations in the report.

#### **18. Any Other Business**

During the meeting, it was brought to Schools Forum's attention that Martyn Sharples (Senior Finance Officer) was retiring and that this would be his last meeting. The Co-Chair thanked Martyn for his services and on behalf of Schools Forum wished him well in his retirement.

Questions to be submitted a **minimum** 3 days prior to the meeting in writing to:

[CalderdaleSchoolsForum@calderdale.gov.uk](mailto:CalderdaleSchoolsForum@calderdale.gov.uk)

Questions will only be permitted if relevant to the business of the Forum and at the discretion of the Forum Chair.

#### **19. Future Dates**

24 February 2025 – Exception meeting  
24 April 2025  
3 July 2025

All meetings will start at 4pm  
Venue: virtual Teams Meeting