

CALDERDALE SCHOOLS FORUM
24 February 2025 – Virtual Meeting Via Teams

PRESENT:

Karen Morley (Academy) – Co Vice Chair
Mungo Sheppard (Primary Maintained)
John Eccleston (Academy Primary Governor)
Stuart Hillary (Academy Secondary)
Karl Veltman (Post 16 Representative)
Gareth Morris (Primary Governors Maintained)
Louise Downing (Primary Governors Maintained)
Adam McNichol (Academy Bursar)
Rachel Harling (Academy Secondary)
Hamish Heald (Union Representative)
Kevin Rivett (Unions Representative)
Stephen Baines (Academy Secondary)
Phil Hannah (Academy AP)
Ivan Kuzio (Academy Bursar)
Debbie Sweet (Special School)

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 (Head of Legal and Democratic Services)
Jane Davy (Finance Manager)
Victoria Coyle (Interim Head of SEND)
Steve Drake (Finance Manager)
Amanda Farron (Senior Finance Officer - observing)

APOLOGIES

Brenda Monteith (Roman Catholic Diocese Rep)
Denise Gwizdak (Early Years Rep)
Andrea Dyson (Early Years Rep)
Dan Burns (Academy Primary)
Richard Horsfield (Academy Secondary)

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 & Phil Hannah part of the funding.

Karen Morley is a trustee at Together Learning Trust, representing primary academies including Scout Road. She is a governor at Christ Church Pellon and trustee and 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

4. Minutes of the Schools Forum held on 16 January 2025

Page 7 – To amend the information Jane gave around Schools Causing Concern meetings for better reading.

5. High Needs Block Funding 2025/26

Steve apologised to Forum Members as the figures on the report have updated since it was submitted for distribution. He will amend the report for the distribution of the minutes and for the Schools Forum website. The special schools allocation shown in 2d) was understated by £1,322,577 and should have been £14,721,913. This figure is also reflected in Appendix 2 & means that the forecast in year overspend is £17,106,369"

Debbie Q: How many children are educated in special extra district? What is the analysis of needs?

There were 121 children in independent in 2023 and in February 2025, this increased to 216. The main need identified for children in independent schools is Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH). There is constant decision making to find the best solution. SEN officers complete the case work and there is also a resourcing panel which Jemima signs off.

Debbie Q: In February 2025 there were 216 placed in independent settings, how does this compare to those in maintained special schools? Is it common that once a child is placed for SEMH, that is their only option?

It is a lot less and is around 40% of the special schools' intake. The resource panel has focused on phased transfer to independent schools and a lot have been rejected this time and we are using exceptional funding requests and the development of ARPs to ensure

children can stay in mainstream wherever possible. Officers were asked more questions prior to the meeting from Debby Sweet and they will respond to her directly.

Phil Q: What is the value for money per child? We want to help support and offer places. How well do we measure progress of those in independent schools and their expected outcomes?

Costs are high for independent school places, but we currently do not have enough state funded specialist places, and we do see positive outcomes for children in those schools. If we can progress the Special Free School bid with the DFE, many of these children could have had their needs met within a state funded school.

Rachel Q: How confident are we that capital plans will meet need? Or will we find ourselves building a school but then needing another school, due to children outweighing the current predictions?

The work to ensure we have the sufficient specialist places includes transformation in mainstream schools. The work to support mainstream inclusion is key. We are focusing our energy into supporting provisions to help children remain local and plans will need to work at pace. Local authorities around the country are seeing the same issues. A new free school will be likely to take 3 years to open so mainstream inclusion is a key focus for us.

Adam Q: We have an overspend of £17 million, where is the money coming from to cover the overspend? The allocation being proposed, is this enough to be sustainable for financial years going forward? What is being done to address the longer-term need?

The High Needs Deficit group are focusing on how to turn the deficit around. We are potentially facing a cumulative deficit of £17m currently due to previous years deficits. The potential end to the government's statutory override for High Needs deficits threatens many councils. The LA expected the Government to instruct us to capitalise the deficit and ultimately reduce this over the years. By spending less on the independent sector, this will allow more funds to go to our mainstream and special schools, training for staff, SEND high needs bandings and expanding provision through the exceptional funding requests. We are working on a sufficiency analysis which breaks down the primary and secondary needs of children, types of provisions we have, primary and secondary needs and the costs. The sufficiency information will be published in summer and brought to Schools Forum for information. The sufficiency work will support us to plan and open new provision based on better data intelligence.

John Q: Are we meeting the need of children in special schools who are not SEMH in the system?

There are children in mainstream schools who have SEMH which is a wide area of need. Not having a SEMH school creates a more expensive pathway. We have children with higher needs who need a smaller setting, and who are attending expensive independent schools. Because we have a range of independent special schools in the area, fewer children are

educated out of area that many other LA's, but we do have an increasing number accessing independent placements.

John Q: Have we got a timescale for this plan that will set us on the road to recovery? We have confidence in the Mainstream Inclusion Calderdale framework being launched at the end of the year to help us support more children to remain in local schools. The development of our ARPs and Tier 1 and 2 AP is supporting children to stay in mainstream schools. Last year, we had 57 young people whose request was not fulfilled to go to a specialist school but this year the number was 15.

Karl Q: What processes do specialist, and private providers go through for setting the price per pupil? Can they set their own price? Will we be able to run ours for a much lower cost and is there any legislation where they need to cap the amount?

The White Rose framework sets its own price reviews. This sets a 3.5% increase this year and there is work on going on how we commission places. Independent providers can set their own price as they are providing places that most local authorities cannot meet, due to rising demands.

Mungo commended we are in it together and need to upskill mainstream schools. It was discussed at the North Halifax cluster meeting how we can work together. Falling roles need to be taken into consideration. SEMH is a big factor in schools.

Debby added the price of places outside of LA provision is high, 4 years ago there was a promise to provide additional ADHD provision which was never met, the cost of that provision would have been £28-£32K per place which would have been lower than the provision provided outside of the LA provision. ARP (Alternative Resource Provision) is low.

Hamish voiced his concerns around the money being spent on the private and independent sectors. The staff in those schools' work with children with very challenging behaviour and have less rights than those teachers working in mainstream. He would support staff being able to be protected by the same rights. Private and independent schools also don't pay into the union's facilities pot.

Rachel Q: What are the biggest barriers and are they being addressed in terms of resources centrally for the LA to deliver? Are we investing now to reduce those barriers to allow the outcomes we want to be in place soon? If mainstream is key to this, should we be investing in ARPs now? Looking at the £17 million overspend, do we have a 3-year projection where that will be and from a DfE perspective?

In part, we know capital costs for building a special school is expensive and capital allocations are quite small, its calculated at £100,000 per child per place when building a new school. There is a process around opening new schools currently, whereby LAs must go through a free school bid with the DfE. If the free school is agreed, it is for academy chains

to bid to open and run the school. The bid and awarding process is time-consuming. We are trying to use our resource to make it stretch as far as we can for the ARPs and inclusion in mainstream schools. We meet monthly with DfE, and as funding was not in deficit until recently in Calderdale, we are not under DfE intervention over the High Needs deficit, which many LA's are. The government are clear that the system is not working well enough for children with SEND nationally and are conducting a curriculum review. Ofsted are reviewing their framework to consider more measures for inclusion when they judge school effectiveness.

The Chair asked if anyone has questions to shape the reports being brought to these meetings, this would be welcomed by officers.

John would like governors to be more aware of the information around the LA's financial situation and to be given more information at the CGA. Jemima is happy to attend meetings with governors on Teams or face to face

Action for John to arrange with Jemima. There are also Local Governing Board meetings which Debby can help arrange for Jemima and officers to attend.

18. Any Other Business

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

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 April 2025

3 July 2025

All meetings will start at 4pm

Venue: virtual Teams Meeting