

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **SCHOOLS FORUM** held on **WEDNESDAY, 4TH DECEMBER, 2024** at 6.00 pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

### **MEMBERS OF THE FORUM PRESENT**

Katy Forsdyke, Christ Church School (Hampstead) (Chair)  
Daniel Silverstone, Parliament Hill (Vice-Chair)  
Jen Allan, Eleanor Palmer Primary School  
Mark Anthony, Maria Fidelis School  
Jules Belton, St Mary & St Pancras Primary  
John Hayes, Gospel Oak Primary School  
Perina Holness, Thomas Coram Centre  
Bob House, Camden School for Girls  
Deborah Issacs, Edith Neville Primary, Richard Cobden Primary, Primrose Hill Primary  
Nicholas John, Acland Burghley School  
Kateryna Law, Camden School for Girls  
Vijita Patel, Swiss Cottage School  
Alex Wilson, Heath School

### **MEMBERS OF THE FORUM ABSENT**

Rob Earrey, Fitzjohns Primary School  
Nick Hewlett, Hawley Primary  
Jacob Sam, Hampstead School

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor Marcus Boyland  
Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion  
Victor Saunders, Schools Budget Financial Advisor  
Nick Smith, Head of Education Commission & School Organisation

**The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Schools Forum and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.**

## **MINUTES**

### **1. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP LIST**

#### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the membership list be noted.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were noted from Rob Earrey, Nick Hewlett, and Jacob Sam.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

**4. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

**5. MINUTES**

**Correction – Minute Item 5**

An error was identified that incorrectly stated that the minutes of the meeting on the 5 November 2024 had been approved, this should have stated that the minutes of the meeting that took place on 11 September 2024.

**Correction – Attendance**

Jen Allan and Deborah Isaacs confirmed that they had been in attendance at the meeting that took place on 5 November 2024.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the last meeting held on 5 November 2024 be approved as a correct record, subject to the amendments above.

**6. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no urgent business.

**7. SCHOOL FUNDING 2025/26**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion.

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Victor Saunders, Team Leader Schools and Designated Schools Grant, introduced the report which provided an overview of proposals for the local funding formula for 2025/26. The following information was highlighted:

- Due to the timing of the October Budget by the new government there had been a delay in the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding announcements for 2025/6, however, it was confirmed the final National Funding Formula (NFF) structure would not change significantly.
- Tools had been provided to each school, outlining estimated cost increases, which would support the budget setting process. The tool accounted for projected increases in inflation, which as of November 2024, the Bank of England had projected that inflation would be about 2%, by the end of 2026.
- The report had provided an update on the core schools budget which would increase by £2.3 billion, £1 billion of which was committed to supporting special educational needs and disabilities.
- The government had also committed to providing £6.7 billion of capital funding in 2025/26, which would go towards rebuilding, renovation and maintenance.
- The report had stated that the high needs block (HNB) allocation would increase by an estimated £2.85 million, however further modelling had found this increase to be around £3.8 million. This was a stronger position, as this projected figure would mean the 2025/26 HNB would be within budget.
- The funding formula had previously been agreed every six years; however, the regulations had changed, and it was a requirement for the funding formula to be consulted upon each year. Therefore, a standing item would be on the School's Forum agenda every September. It was not envisaged there would be yearly changes, it was intended to fulfil statutory obligations.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and invited questions and comments from the Forum. Responding to questions, officers provided the following information:

- To determine the estimated grant, the per pupil figure was uplifted by 2.3% and then multiplied by the enrolment figures.
- Projected figures were based on the roll figures census as of October 2023, as the data for October 2024 had not yet been updated.
- In terms of longer-term financial planning, it was noted that a spending review would take place later in the year, which would provide further detail, including the forecast level of inflation, which was estimated to be 2%.
- The Government was expected to fund the National Insurance increase through a separate grant. However, it had not yet confirmed whether any grant would be provided for teachers' pay rises from September 2025.
- Sometimes it was necessary for SEND pupils to go to independent non-maintained placements out of borough, these were typically high-cost and low-incidence.
- A detailed analysis of placements was anticipated and further information on this would be provided later, which would provide more detailed information on the profile of need.

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- Updated figures were expected to be available to schools by the end of December, similar to the previous year, with further updates in January. Figures would then be finalised in late January or early February, pending ESFA approval.

Forum members emphasised that the figures needed to account for the significant impact of falling rolls, with some schools having pupils leave weekly, due to moves out of the Borough. Therefore, although budgets appeared to be increasing, for some schools, budgets might remain the same or decrease due to decreasing pupils on roll. Fixed costs would remain the same for schools despite a decline in pupils, which would cause additional financial strain.

### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the Schools Forum:

- a) Note the estimated National Funding Formula allocations, which are indicative allocations to support budget planning and are not yet the final school budgets, to individual schools as set out in Appendix 1;
- b) Note the level of deductions and reserves to be used to support the funding allocations to schools;
- c) Note the Education and Skills Funding Agency's continued use of the Central Schools Block replacement of the former top sliced amounts;
- d) Approve the de-delegated budgets as set out in section 2.1 of the report;
- e) Note the current forecast spending plans and funding for the high needs and early years blocks;
- f) Note the potential effects of the future funding and cost pressures outlined on schools' budgets; and
- g) Agree to the disapplication request to the Education and Skills Funding Agency for the 2025/26 local authority proforma tool to continue to include the existing "exception premises factors" for Holy Trinity and St Silas, Our Lady Roman Catholic Primary, and Regents High Schools.

## **8. SCHOOL MEALS DELIVERY IN SCHOOLS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Education and Inclusion.

Nick Smith, Head of Education Commissioning and School Organisation, introduced and summarised the report which provided an update on the outcome of the tender process for the procurement of the new school meals contract.

It was reported that interim arrangements had been in place, and they had been advantageous in terms of price per meal.

The Head of Education Commissioning and School Organisation advised that whilst the new contract was underway, potential insourcing of the service would be explored. Early engagement on insourcing had commenced and a session had been

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arranged for 10 December 2024, which would inform potential opportunities for an in-house provision.

Responding to a question, the Head of Education Commissioning and School Organisation, reported that 15 schools had confirmed their attendance at the session, these were mostly primary schools due to the school meal arrangements being more diffuse in secondary settings. However, all schools were welcome to attend the session and any school that wished to join could contact the Head of Education Commissioning and School Organisation.

**RESOLVED –**

That the Forum note the report.

**9. WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion.

Nick Smith, Head of Education Commissioning and School Organisation, introduced and summarised the report which outlined the work programme and action tracker. The Forum was informed that work on the Early Years Funding item, which was due for consideration at the February 2025 meeting, had commenced and colleagues in Early Years were contributing to this. An update on school place planning would also be provided at the February meeting.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**10. FUTURE MEETING DATES**

The remaining meeting dates for the 2024-25 academic year were noted, as follows:

- Wednesday 5 February 2025
- Wednesday 4 June 2025

**11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 6.41 pm.

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**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**