

## SLOUGH SCHOOLS FORUM

### SCHOOLS GROUP:

John Constable (Chair), Ben Bausor, Peter Collins, Gill Denham, Valerie Harffey, Emma Lister, Navroop Mehat, Angela Mellish, Eddie Neighbour, Carol Pearce, Jon Reekie, Jo Rockall, Jamie Rockman, Neil Sykes and Maggie Waller

### LOCAL AUTHORITY

Sue Butcher, Neill Butler, Neil Hoskinson, Sabi Hothi, Tony Madden

Cllr Paul Kelly (lead member for education and children's services)

### MEETING DETAILS

**THURSDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2023 AT 9.15 AM  
VIRTUAL MEETING (VIA ZOOM)**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82641505399?pwd=RGNJSEtRM3B3czlmeWJUY1RJbWpQdz09&from=addon>

**Meeting ID: 826 4150 5399  
Passcode: 319974**

## AGENDA

Item	Description	Presenter
1.	Apologies	Chair
2.	Notification of Any Other Business	Chair
3.	Declarations of Interest*	Chair
4.	Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 14.07.23 (including matters arising and action log)	Chair (Pages 1 - 6)
5.	Schools Forum Membership update	Chair (Pages 7 - 8)
6.	Update on National/Local Funding Issues	Neill Butler
7.	2022/23 DSG Outturn	Neill Butler (Pages 9 - 10)
8.	2023/24 DSG and Safety Valve programme update	Neil Hoskinson (Pages 11 - 14)
9.	2024/25 DSG budget setting timetable	Chair (Pages 15 - 16)
10.	Local School Improvement Fund update	Chair
11.	Task group update	Chair
12.	2022/23 Forward Agenda Plan	Chair (Pages 17 - 18)
13.	Key Decisions Log	Chair (Pages 19 - 22)
14.	Any Other Business (notified at start of meeting)	Chair

### \* Declarations of Interest

*The Chair will ask Members to confirm whether they have any declarable interests in relation to any item on the agenda. All Members who believe they may have such an interest must declare it and may only: (a) remain in the meeting while that matter is discussed at the discretion of the Chair, and (b) speak on the matter by invitation. Examples of declarable interests include: where the outcome of a discussion may provide a personal advantage or avoid disadvantage (pecuniary or non-pecuniary), or where the focus of an agenda item and the likely impact of any outcome is wholly or mainly on a school with which the Member is associated.*

# Slough Schools Forum – Minutes of Meeting held on 13 July 2023

## DRAFT MINUTES

<b>Present:</b>	John Constable, Langley Grammar School (Chair) Ben Bausor, Always Growing Ltd Peter Collins, Slough & Eton Church of England Business and Enterprise College Gill Denham, Marish Primary School Valerie Harffey, Ryvers School Angela Mellish, St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School Eddie Neighbour, Upton Court Grammar School Jon Reekie, Phoenix Infants School Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School Jamie Rockman, Haybrook College Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School
<b>Officers:</b>	Neill Butler, Strategic Finance Manager, People (Children) Neil Hoskinson, Associate Director for Education and Inclusion
<b>Observer</b>	Peter Rowe, Slough Primary Heads Association
<b>Apologies:</b>	Carol Pearce, Penn Wood Primary School Neil Sykes, Arbour Vale School Emma Lister, Chalvey Early Years Centre

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and explained that there was no clerk available for this meeting. Instead, the meeting would be recorded and transcribed afterwards.

	<p><b>Notification of any other business</b> JC has one item that he will discuss after we have concluded the agenda items.</p>
946	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b> None</p>
947	<p><b>Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 13 January 2023. (including matters arising and action log)</b> The minutes of the previous meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2023 were agreed they were an accurate recollection of the previous meeting. There were no matters arising.</p>
948	<p><b>Update on National / Local Funding Issues</b> NB updated Forum members on the IRP's recommendation for teachers' pay increases, with 6.5% proposed by the Government; the minimum national starting salary for new teachers would be £30k, representing a 7.1% on the M1 salary. NB confirmed that this still needs agreement nationally from the Unions. There is an increase in funding of £525 million nationally to cover the 7 months from September 2023 to March 2024,, but the methodology for distribution to schools hasn't yet been stated. The full year effect of this is £900 million. This funding has to be distributed as an additional grant because the schools block funding was confirmed in January and we will get the provisional settlement in the next few days – normally this comes in just before the Christmas holidays.</p> <p>JC thanked NB and agreed we won't be able to formally confirm the pay settlement until school teachers pay and conditions document comes out. JC asked whether the additional money is actually genuinely "additional funds" coming in – was this in addition to the "Jeremy Hunt £2 billion". NB confirmed that as far as he was aware, this was additional funding. NB continued by advising that there is a Government web link that you can put in the salary grades and will show the new potential salaries from September. (Link posted in to the chat by NB). JC asked if colleagues had any questions.</p> <p>JoRo ask about the two letters received from Gillian Keegan, with a spreadsheet showing the additional money coming to schools - what period this was for? Was it September to March? JoRo confirmed that all</p>

	<p>the Slough schools are listed on this spreadsheet. NB asked if we could share this spreadsheet in the chat and he would look in to it.</p> <p>MW asked whether DfE will be re-prioritising in order to release this as 'new money' to schools? JC confirmed that this was currently unclear.</p> <p>NB wanted to ask about the Early year's supplementary grant. Back in the Spring, the Chancellor announced that there would be an increase in rates from September 2023 and also an extension of eligibility for early years providers. This doesn't impact on every school, but the headlines are that the two-year-old funding is going up by 3.2% and 6.3% for 3 and 4 year olds. NB confirmed that the LA was still waiting for the rates for individual local authorities, but these would be shared as soon as possible with early years providers. The increases would be effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September. NB also confirmed an increase to the maintained nursery Schools lump sum, equivalent of around £10k pounds per for each of the 5 maintained Nursery Schools in additional funding.</p> <p>There were no further questions and JC thanked NB for the update.</p>
949	<p><b>DSG Management Plan &amp; DfE "Safety Valve" programme update.</b></p> <p>JC referred to the two papers for this item in the agenda pack</p> <p>NB began by referring to the current financial position. The outcome position is much better than it has been in previous years. A projected overspend in the high needs block is partly offset by an underspend in the schools block because of the growth fund. Budget management reports for this year mean that the high needs spend is being tightly monitored in much more detail than previously. The Q1 position is still to be confirmed but the direction of travel on the spend side appears to be going in the right direction. The LA is required to have to have a balanced overall DSG in order to have the £25.5 million cumulative historic deficit written off by the DfE.</p> <p>NH noted that there were still likely spending commitments, with a backlog of SEND cases in the system that the LA should be paying for. The LA is currently getting EP advice for a large number of cases which will then translate into EHC plans with funding attached, and possibly with special school placements involved. Once these were confirmed, the level of commitment should be clear and the level of EHC plans known. NH asked Forum members to note that the Safety Valve programme was predicated on built on previous rates of EHC plan increases and what we are now seeing is three times that level year on year. Most LAs on the Safety Valve programme are finding they are struggling to hit targets. Slough is in a relatively good position at the moment.</p> <p>VH asked what were the potential consequences of not meeting the targets for the Safety Valve programme. What action would the DfE take?</p> <p>NH responded by explaining that the DfE have confirmed that the detail of the DSG management plan which underpins the Safety Value programme can be re-negotiated, so that's where we are at the moment. However, the bottom line is that the LA still has to break even in 2025-26. NH acknowledged that given the pressures coming through on the High Needs Block, this would appear difficult to achieve; the Safety Valve programme doesn't reflect the very different national position compared to 12 months ago.</p> <p>JC referring to VH's question about "what happens if you don't meet the targets" and asked for confirmation that the output from the safety valve programme is the writing off of the of the cumulative deficit, through some mechanism which relieves the council of that burden.</p> <p>NH confirmed this is correct. Targets are set for each year, with 'chunks' of funding received if those targets are met. The largest amount was has already given in year one. What is at risk is the next chunk of the funding. NH also stated his belief that the LA could have pushed harder on some of the other support available, for example in relation to capital funding, and that this would be revisited in the renegotiation.</p> <p>NH confirmed that previously the safety valve plans were brought to Schools Forum as a final document. Under the renegotiation, changes in one area may need to be offset with changes somewhere else. Schools Forum direction on these principles which should underpin these decisions will therefore be very welcome, rather than the LA coming to Forum with final decisions made on schools' behalf.</p>

	<p>JC thanked NH and confirmed that this was helpful clarification and a welcome declaration of commitment to collaborative working, which is something that Forum members have always valued. JC referred back to Forum's repeated requests for impact assessments and linked this to a sense amongst Forum members of this being 'done to' rather than 'working with. NH advised that his assumption was that Forum would have been made aware of the potential impact of participation in the programme before the LA committed to it.</p> <p>JC requested clarification from NB on how many people remained in Slough who were involved in the negotiation of the original safety valve deal, as it were; NB confirmed it was just him. JC noted that that this gave some perspective in that the DfE appear to be being more flexible about how the program operates and with people now in position who largely weren't involved when it was originally embarked on, the whole situation could be looked at with largely fresh eyes.</p> <p>NH reflected that this was helpful. However, it did not mean that the safety valve plans were being redrawn. In his view the biggest change was not that somebody different was looking at the safety valve, but rather what was happening nationally in SEND in terms of the pressures coming through.</p> <p>GD asked about the timescale for any negotiation and whether this would affect next year? NH confirmed that the next meeting with DfE was the following week, but that the detailed scrutiny would happen over the summer with a view to having an idea by September of where we stand.</p> <p>GD asked NH if he had any sense of the scale of the SEND backlog and whether it would push us back into a major high needs block deficit. NH confirmed that at present they understood how many applications for EHCPs were in the backlog and how many were likely to need a special school place. He reiterated that this was a national issue and anticipated that the DfE would end up putting more funding in to high needs support at a national level – although there were a lot of politics associated with this. n.</p> <p>PC commented on the complexity of balancing the decisions being made in schools with the DSG priorities. LAs need to make sure the safety valve works out properly, but if schools don't make the right decisions, things could go wrong. It was essential to use the Education Partnership Board as the local mechanism for ensuring that decision making at school and at LA level was mutually beneficial and not disadvantageous to each other. The reality is that schools are not necessarily working in alignment harmony with the Safety Valve objective, because there isn't a shared understanding of how the programme might be changing, and what that will mean for everybody.</p> <p>NH commented that the way the safety valve programme is set up must reflect the decisions schools are making. The Code of Practice means that certain things have to be done for young people with SEND. If schools have a young person with a need, they are statutorily responsible for delivering with support from the High Needs Block.</p> <p>MW asked about the Central School Services block and whether the outstanding issue around an apparent underfunding in the CSSB had been addressed. NB responded that he was aware that there was some funding coming out of the CSSB which should be funded from the Council's general fund. This was highlighted as part of the Safety Valve, and in discussions with the DfE. Since then the LA has actually transferred about £250k out of the CSB and in to the general fund. That burden is no longer on the DSG but is part of the Slough deficit. It is mainly related to the virtual school, which will still be funded. There was also some funding of staff costs that weren't actually support costs for the DSG but were costs that should be funded from the general fund. They have been transferred out. At the moment the Central School Services block is in a balanced position.</p> <p>MW asked if the DfE may provide additional protection because there was an historical error where we have had to transfer money every year from school to the CSSB. NB confirmed that historical spend on the CSSB is being reduced by 20% year on year down to zero; an opportunity for Slough to put in a disapplication about 3 years ago for it to be protected was, unfortunately, missed. However, the burden on the CSSB isn't significant, amounting to around £30k. NB hoped this could be managed within the overall allocation without going back to the DfE; as the error responsibility for missing the opportunity was missed lay with Slough, it probably couldn't be reopened.</p>
950	<p><b>Primary-secondary funding ratio</b></p> <p>JC advised that item 7 concerns the primary-secondary funding ratio, originating from a letter sent to me as Chair of Forum by Pete Rowe on behalf of the Slough Primary Heads Association.</p>

	<p>JC advised that the letter was asking for Forum members to revisit the primary secondary funding ratio, and that he had added some background the paper to inform the discussion. JC noted that Pete Rowe had been invited to the meeting as an observer, and would be asked to contribute to the meeting and explain a little bit more of the background.</p> <p>PR noted the government's push to all local authorities to be moving closer towards the National Funding Formula (NFF) but that Slough remains an outlier. He reiterated the points made in the letter and suggested that as other LAs moved closer to the median primary-secondary ratio, there would have to be a good reason for Slough not to do that.</p> <p>JC asked primary members if there was anything they wanted to contribute, on the basis that they would have been part of the SPHA discussion which led to that letter. GD suggested that there was strong case to put this on the agenda for next year and discuss it again.</p> <p>JC confirmed that the primary secondary ratio is an output, not an input, to the formula. It is a consequence of the decisions that are made around the different factor values. Forum makes recommendations to the LA about the values associated with the different factors, and that these are increasingly close to the National Funding formula rates. NB confirmed that the only factor for which Slough is not yet completely aligned with the NFF is mobility, but we are moving towards it. NB also pointed out that the final ratio is impacted by the relative sizes and distribution of schools. In Slough, a relatively small authority, the smallest school is a primary with 180 pupils but the biggest school in pupil terms, is also a primary school – this is unusual. Where there are lots of small schools, the ration is skewed because each school is attracting the lump sum. PR responded that in his view the lump sum argument did not account for the discrepancy in the ratio. NB agreed it would be helpful to understand exactly why the Slough ratio was not closer to 1:1.29.</p> <p>JC suggested there was a piece of work to do in the autumn term to determine the extent to which the ratio is determined by school structure, or by decisions that are made around factor values. It would be helpful to understand how decisions that are made in the next funding round about factor values influence the ratio and to provide a very clear explanation of where Forum is able to recommend changes where it cannot.</p> <p>MW confirmed as the previous chair of forum and as a primary representative she would endorse the importance of understanding the factors and their complexity, and understanding which ones are driving the ratio is an important piece of work which could be undertaken through the 5 to 16 Task group. MW reminded members of the process; the task group looks at the formula and the implications of any recommendations, and Forum makes recommendations to the LA.</p> <p>NM asked about MW's recommendation to go through the 5-16 task group and if that wasn't the case, how else would this get done? MW confirmed that in some authorities there may not be such a task group, in which case the detailed work would be done in the full Forum. However, the task group approach allowed for a more detailed scrutiny of the proposals. JC confirmed that not every Forum works in that way, but historically, the impact in Slough has been to give the proposals for the formula very close scrutiny, with in-depth discussions about particular schools, and how to manage the move towards the NFF to avoid a funding 'cliff edge'.</p> <p>PR agreed that working through the 5-16 task group was the best approach Forum members agreed that that JC should write back to SPHA confirming the agreed process for discussing the ratio in the autumn term.</p>
<p><b>951</b></p>	<p><b>Local School Improvement Fund</b></p> <p>JC reminded Forum members that the Slough Local School Improvement is a sum of money set aside over a number of years for school improvement. The fund was originally set up using DSG underspend and additional underspends from LA budget lines associated with school improvement. These were transferred to a ring-fenced fund held on behalf of local schools by the Slough Teaching School Alliance (STSA) and to be directed towards school improvement projects. When the STSA company was finally wound up earlier this year, the final balance of £162k included the remaining balance of the local school improvement funds, and the remaining operating surplus from STSA's activities. In addition a further sum of around £70k originally held within the primary phase has remained unspent for a number of years. This was originally set aside for a recruitment focused marketing project, with a more recent agreement by Forum to put that money back into the LSIF.</p>

	<p>JC advised that the proposed use of the LSIF proposal was the result of discussions between PC, PR and NB, thinking about how to utilise that money to best advantage over the next couple of years. The key issue is, who looks after the money and who authorizes its allocation. The proposal set out in the paper asked Forum to agree to apportion the LSIF funds to the primary and secondary phases, and for the primary and secondary phase associations to decide on how it would be spent. .</p> <p>PC confirmed that this had been discussed at length within SASH meetings and at the Slough Education Partnership Board, and also emphasised the willingness of schools to work cross-phase to make really good use of this money. PR confirmed that this from the primary phase and noted that there were already provisional plans in place for a joint conference day between the phases using some of this funding.</p> <p>NH confirmed that he fully supported the use of the LSIF funds in this way, noting that school improvement should be led by schools. The LA could offer people, knowledge and links to support this.</p> <p>JC thanked NH and proposed that a plan be brought back in September for Forum's approval around the allocation for the next academic year, with a regular report back to Forum on how that money is being used. Forum members endorsed this proposal and agreed with the principles for the administration of the LSIF set out in the paper.</p>
<b>952</b>	<p><b>School's Forum Membership Update</b></p> <p>JC notified Forum members that there was a vacancy for secondary academy representation; a volunteer has come forward and this would be progressed through the secondary heads association. JC noted that there is still a vacancy for a primary academies member and asked if PR, as the Chair of SPHA could take this back again to the primary heads.</p> <p>JC asked Forum members to note that a number of colleagues had terms of office that come to an end at the end of August. JC confirmed he would be writing to those colleagues asking, if they wished to extend their membership for a further 2 year term of office.</p> <p>MW noted that Forum currently has minimal Governor representation, and asked if this could be pursued in both phases. MW suggested it might be possible to have directors of a MAT who have come up through a Governor route? JC thanked MW for her valid point.</p>
<b>953</b>	<p><b>Reappointment of Chair for 2023/2024</b></p> <p>JC confirmed that he was happy to continue as chair. There were no other offers, and Forum members endorsed JC's extension in the role for the next academic year.</p>
<b>954</b>	<p><b>2023/2024 Forward Agenda Plan</b></p> <p>JC drew members' attention to the proposed forward agenda. This included an earlier meeting in September to allow for specific formalities to be completed, eg noting the DSG outturn from the previous year. JC asked for members to notify him if any of the proposed dates clashed with other commitments, eg headteacher meetings. The agenda would be clarified and amended as appropriate in consultation with NB as the year progressed.</p> <p>JC confirmed that the 5-16 Task Group members would be contacted in the autumn term with proposed dates for meetings.</p>
<b>955</b>	<p><b>Key Decisions Log</b></p> <p>This was updated after the January meeting and it would be further updated following this meeting.</p>
<b>956</b>	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>AM asked about education finance support for maintained schools, requesting an update on staffing with contact details; AM also noted difficulties in contacting anyone on the education finance team through email. NB confirmed that there was an issue with the management of the education finance inbox which was currently being addressed; he has a fairly new team and the difficulty they are facing is finding finance staff that have school experience. NB asked for any school with concerns to contact him directly.</p>

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# Slough Schools Forum Membership

This version - Sept 2023

School	Type of school	Name and role	Elected/appointed by	Term of office ends
<b>ACADEMIES (11 members)</b>				
<b>Special schools/PRUs (2 members)</b>				
Arbour Vale School ( <i>OHCA</i> )	Special School	Neil Sykes (Principal)	Academies	31 December 2023
Haybrook College Trust	PRU	Jamie Rockman (CEO)	Academies	31 December 2023
<b>Primary academies (4 members)</b>				
Phoenix Infants Academy ( <i>Baylis Court Trust MAT</i> )	Academy	Jon Reekie (Governor)	Academies	31 December 2022
Ryvers School	Academy	Valerie Haffrey (School Business Manager)	Academies	31 August 2025
Marish Primary School ( <i>Marish &amp; Willow Trust</i> )	Academy	Gill Denham (Headteacher)	Academies	31 December 2023
Vacancy	Academy	Vacancy	Academies	
<b>Secondary academies (5 members)</b>				
Herschel Grammar School ( <i>Schelwood Trust</i> )	Academy	Jo Rockall (Headteacher)	Academies	31 August 2025
Langley Grammar School	Academy	John Constable (Headteacher)	Academies	31 August 2025
Slough & Eton CofE School ( <i>SEBMAT</i> )	Academy	Peter Collins (Headteacher)	Academies	31 December 2023
Upton Court Grammar School ( <i>Pioneer Education Trust</i> )	Academy	Eddie Neighbour (CEO, Pioneer Education Trust)	Academies	31 August 2025
The Langley Academy	Academy	Rhodri Bryant (CEO, Arbib Trust)	Academies	31 August 2025 (TBC)
<b>MAINTAINED SCHOOLS (4 members)</b>				
<b>Primary maintained (3 members)</b>				
Holy Family Primary School	Voluntary Aided	Maggie Waller (Governor)	Maintained schools	31 August 2025
Penn Wood School	Community	Carol Pearce (Governor)	Maintained schools	31 August 2023
Wexham Court Primary School	Community	Navroop Mehat (Headteacher)	Maintained schools	31 August 2023
<b>Secondary maintained (1 member)</b>				
St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School	Voluntary Aided	Angela Mellish (SBM)	Maintained schools	31 August 2025
<b>MAINTAINED NURSERIES (1 member)</b>				
Chalvey Nursery School	Nursery	Emma Lister (H/T)	Maintained Nursery HTs	31 August 2023
<b>NON-SCHOOL MEMBERS (2 members)</b>				
<b>16-19 Provider (1 member)</b>				
Windsor Forest Colleges Group	16-19 Provider	Vacancy	16-19 Providers	TBC
<b>PVI Provider (1 member)</b>				
Always Growing Ltd.	PVI Provider	Ben Bausor	Local Authority	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2025
<b>TOTAL MEMBERSHIP</b>				<b>16 members</b>

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## 2022-23 DSG Provisional Outturn Summary

**871 Slough**

Cells requiring input

Details of the deployment of DSG receivable for 2022/23 are as follows:

Notes	Central expenditure £	Individual schools budget £	Total £
A Final DSG for 2022/23 before academy and high needs recoupment			202,294,114
B Academy and high needs figure recouped for 2022/23			125,134,024
C Total DSG after academy and high needs recoupment for 2022/23			77,160,090
D Plus: Brought forward from 2021/22			0
E Less: Carry-forward to 2023/24 agreed in advance			0
F Agreed initial budgeted distribution in 2022/23	743,175	76,416,915	77,160,090
G In-year adjustments	0	0	0
H Final budget distribution for 2022/23	743,175	76,416,915	77,160,090
I Less: Actual central expenditure	743,175		743,175
J Less: Actual ISB deployed to schools		76,513,972	76,513,972
K Plus: Local authority contribution for 2022/23	0	10,800,000	10,800,000
L In-year carry-forward to 2023/24	0	10,702,943	10,702,943
M Plus: Carry-forward to 2023/24 agreed in advance			0
N Carry-forward to 2023/24			10,702,943
O DSG unusable reserve at the end of 2021/22			-25,469,999
P Addition to DSG unusable reserve at the end of 2022/23			0
Q Total of DSG unusable reserve at the end of 2022/23			-25,469,999
R Net DSG position at the end of 2022/23			-14,767,056
S 2022-23 In-year Deficit (O-R+K)			97,057

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# Slough Schools Forum

## 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023

### Finance & Safety Valve Update

#### **DFE Safety Valve Monitoring Report**

The latest DFE Safety Valve Monitoring Report was completed on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September and is the first full report on progress against the key targets in its Safety Valve Agreement. Overall Slough Borough Council is on track to meet the deficit control and reduction targets set out in the agreement.

The provisional outturn position for 2022-23 is an overspend on all DSG blocks of £0.097m with an overspend on the High Needs DSG Block of £0.407m. This contrasts with a forecast overspend on all DSG Blocks at quarter 3 of 2022-23 of £1.638m. 2023-24 Period 5 Budget Management report for High Needs DSG has total forecast spend of £22.3m against a budget of £25.1m.

The SEND Statutory team has built up a backlog of 290 live cases where a request for an EHC plan has been received but the process has not been completed. Although, the potential costs of these cases is obviously not included in the overall figures above, it is possible to estimate how many will translate into an EHC plan and what the average costs of a plan have been since September 2022 (see below). This forecast is for additional High Needs Block top-up funding of £2.6m. Therefore, even including this additional forecast spending, this would give an overall projected spend of £24.9m and an estimated underspend of 0.2m in 2023-24.

More work is being undertaken to refine our modelling forecasts and a more accurate estimate of the final outturn for 2023-24 will be available in the December 2023 update report. The review of mainstream resource bases has identified some young people that have been placed that we will need to consider a special school setting for in the future. It will be important to ensure that we develop additional spaces with Arbour Vale School to meet this demand.

There is pressure both in terms of demand for EHC plans and existing settings requesting larger than usual cost of living inflationary increases. The Council has agreed a maximum uplift policy of 3.5% which we have been able to adhere to so far.

Mitigations here are inbuilt and based on rigorous process and decision-making, which is already seeing an impact. In addition, there is potential for capital projects to support commissioning of places as population fluctuates (this is anticipated and planned for), and these are being incorporated into the current draft of the Council's Place Planning.

#### **Key Factors Behind Current High Needs Block Position**

Key factors in the current positive position are the reduction in the average cost of a new EHC plan and the increase in the percentage of pupils being placed in mainstream settings. The average cost of a newly issued plan has decreased from £11,086 in July-Sept 2020 to £8,478 in July-Sept 2022; this exceeds the savings figures set out in CR4 of the Management Plan. The proportion of newly issued plans designated mainstream as type had increased from 81% to 92% and settles at +/- 90% with some fluctuation at times e.g. mover ins and phase transfers.

This has been achieved by reviewing panel processes ensure and assuring that only pupils whose needs cannot be met at local Maintained Provisions are being placed in independent non maintained special schools [INMSS]. Consultation processes are being strengthened and INMSS schools are only being consulted with where appropriate.

Commissioning has been better informed and quality, appropriateness and value for money are the key considerations. Spend to save options must be produced on any expenditure or suggestion of an Out of Area placement.

### **High Needs Block and Safety Valve Monitoring Actions**

A new High Needs Block and Safety Valve Monitoring Board has been formed which includes the Director of Childrens Services, the Section 151 Officer, the Education Finance Lead, the Associate Director of Education and Inclusion and the SEND Consultant leading on commissioning. The Board is in the process of agreeing a timetable for project management actions including an action plan, a risk log and a finance dashboard that includes panel decisions and corresponding future budget projections.

This will include testing existing Safety Valve Agreement assumptions against future data trends for EHC plans, average costs and placement decisions. This will allow early identification of potential gaps and possible mitigations, including alternative savings.

One important area of work will be ensuring that there is a focus on mainstream school inclusion numbers, use of school SEND funding and the graduated approach available to all pupils. This should help to manage future requests for High Needs Block funding by reducing demand for EHC plans.

Work is underway on a joint commissioning strategy to be brought to the SEND Partnership Board by the end of December 2023 with a Commissioning and Transformation consultant appointed to lead on this work. Capacity analysis of current SRP provision has been conducted and detailed SLAs agreed for each setting will be issued. Another key workstream is a new joint commissioning approach for integrated health therapies.

Current placements are being reviewed for all young people placed in INMSS including post 16 college placements. The effectiveness of the setting is reviewed after taking into consideration the young person's outcomes, aspirations but also ensuring quality of placements and value for money.

A review of the process for permanent exclusions and preventative placements has been started and will be completed by April 2023. It is clear that the existing model is not sustainable and cost reductions have already been implemented around a more manageable costing to reflect the LA's Statutory responsibilities around exclusions. Further reductions have been proposed over a three-year period to mitigate impact and allow the schools to develop other models of delivery with schools.

This work will be supported by a refreshed Place Planning Board including a working party focusing on SEND sufficiency. Initial scoping meetings have taken place to identify opportunities for wider delivery with Arbour Vale School, Haybrook College and Littledown School to develop more alternative provision and special school places.

A Preparation for Adulthood [PfA] Lead officer has been appointed to assure annual reviews consider ceasing EHC plans as appropriate. An operational guide for ceasing EHC plans appropriately has already been agreed. PfA will now be starting before NCY 9 and will ensure that, at key transitions, consideration is given to whether placements are still the most appropriate placement for the child or young person.

Work has begun to co-produce a new Matrix for banded funding ready for implementation in March 2024. This will ensure that funding matches the needs of each young person accurately and are modelled both operationally and financially to ensure that needs are met while keeping regard to sustainability and the existing financial envelope. Our matrix funding levels will be informed by the existing models used by statistical neighbours and other South-East authorities.

## **MTFS Savings**

The planned savings for Home to School Transport of £480k were achieved in 2022/23 and we are on track to achieve the planned additional savings of £115k in 2023/24.

The planned savings to be achieved through a staff restructure of the education staffing teams of £210k will be fully achieved from 2024/25 onwards but, due to the delay in implementing the new structures, a one-off saving of £105k is expected in 2023/24.

Increases for inflation on contracts (£253k for Home to School Transport and £105k for the Regional Adoption Agency contract) have not been added to base budgets as this requires a Cabinet decision which will follow from the P3 exercise.

## **Statutory Direction Issued to Slough Borough Council**

On August 4<sup>th</sup> this year, the Secretary of State for Education issued a Statutory Direction to Slough Borough Council in relation to its SEND services. The DFE acknowledged that there has been “considerable change in senior leadership at SBC” and that the new team are “determined and motivated to bring positive change”. Nevertheless, SBC accepted the decision because there has clearly been a lack of progress against the areas of significant weaknesses at the time of the DFE visit in February.

One condition imposed by the DFE as a result of the Statutory Direction is that the remit of the Children’s Services Commissioner, Paul Moffatt, will be extended to include SEND functions. The Commissioner already oversees the SEND Partnership Board and a SEND report is included on the agenda for every Getting to Good Board.

## **Department for Education (DFE) Monitoring Visit July 2023**

The feedback from the DFE officials attending the latest monitoring visit acknowledged the hard work that has been put into improving SEND 0-25 services in Slough since the start of March. The SEND Partnership Board new project reporting and data dashboard now provides a good understanding of the quality of the services being provided. Whilst the improvements made were too recent to have made a significant difference to the quality of SEND 0-25 service, the monitoring evidence showed early signs of improvement.

A number of key actions that had been taken were shared with the DFE officials including the establishment of a Strategic Inclusion Partnership Board providing strategic oversight, a data dashboard measuring performance against agreed KPIs and a live cases dashboard to support decision making for individual pupils.

Shortly after the visit, the latest monthly reporting to the DFE included the fact that 28 EHC plans had been finalised in July. This is the most in one month since the inspection and included 5 that had been completed within statutory timescales which is again the best performance since 2021. The key factors in this change of performance are the changes to the team and the sourcing of more locum educational psychologists to complete assessments. Although this is very encouraging and evidences the improvement in the service, it is not yet at the level of the service in 2020 when around 30-35 plans were completed each month. Given that some of the team are still inexperienced, new officers are now in place and that systems are still being improved, it is hoped that this level will be achieved (and potentially surpassed) in the new term and the team are determined to maintain this standard moving forwards.

## **Report Contact**

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**Agenda Item 9****Slough Schools Forum****28<sup>th</sup> September 2023****Schools National funding Formula and Budget Setting Timetable 2024-25**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Process</b>
<b>2023</b>		
2 October	Education Finance	Send out consultation DSG Block funding transfers. Consultation to run for 4 weeks.
5 October	Schools	Number on Roll (NOR) Census date.
1 November	Schools	Final date for schools to return census.
9 November	Schools Forum	Report on schools consultation outcome for DSG block funding transfers.
17 November	Education Finance	Deadline for submitting a disapplication to DfE if schools forum do not agree to any SBC proposals to transfer DSG block funding.
Mid-December	DfE	Authority Pro-Forma Tool (APT) is sent to La's updated with October NOR census data. Education Finance undertakes modelling of funding for individual mainstream schools and academies.
<b>2024</b>		
11 January	Schools Forum	SBC proposes mainstream schools and academies funding and early years funding for 2024-25 to Schools Forum.
15 January	Cabinet	Political approval required for final 2024-25 schools funding formula and early years funding formula.
22 January	Education Finance	Deadline for submission of final 2024-25 APT to the DfE
29 February	Education Finance	Confirmation of budget shares sent to mainstream maintained schools for 2024-25, together with indicative budgets for 2025-26 and 2026-27.
9 March	Education Finance	Schools Forum approve the central schools services block DSG budget for 2024-25

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**SLOUGH SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**PROPOSED FORWARD AGENDA PLAN 2023/24**

Updated 25/09/23

**Substantive Agenda items**

<b>Meeting 1 – Thursday 28 September 2023</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1	2022/23 DSG monitoring	Q4/final outturn for 202/23 – Forum to <b>note</b>
2	2023/24 DSG monitoring	Q1 report - Forum to <b>note</b>
3	Safety Valve plan update	Update on progress with DfE ‘Safety valve’ programme
4		
5	2024/25 DSG workplan	To include confirmation of process for Schools Block 2024/25 consultation.
6	Task Groups	Confirmation of role and membership of task groups
<b>Meeting 2 – Thursday 9 November 2023</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1	DSG Monitoring Report 2023/24	Q2 report - Forum to <b>note</b>
2	DSG Management Plan update	To include update on DfE ‘Safety valve’ programme
3	Provisional DSG settlement 2024/25	Forum to <b>note</b> position and make <b>provisional recommendation</b> on any headroom allocation.
4	Growth Fund report	LA <b>confirms</b> outturn from 2022/23 Update to allocations for 2023/24 Review of likely position at end of 2023/24 LA <b>confirms</b> of 2024-25 ‘top slice’ from Schools Block. Forum <b>agrees</b> allocation criteria
5	DSG Consultation 2024/25	Report on schools consultation outcome for DSG block funding transfers
5	DSG Block transfer proposals 2024/25	Forum to consider and make provisional <b>decision</b>
<b>Meeting 3 – Thursday 11 January 2024</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1	Resource Provision and AP place commissioning	LA to <b>confirm</b> places commissioned in academies for 2023/24
2	DSG Schools Block 2023-24 – confirmed settlement	Forum <b>notes</b> final DSG settlement, <b>recommends</b> local formula to LA, <b>confirms decisions</b> on block transfer requests
3	Early Years block 2024/25	LA <b>confirms</b> funding arrangements for 2024/25
<b>Meeting 4 – Wednesday 13 March 2024 (TBC)</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1	DSG Monitoring Report 2023/24	Q3 report – Forum to <b>note</b>
2	DSG Management Plan update	To include update on DfE ‘Safety valve’ programme
3	Schools Block – confirmation of individual schools’ budgets 2024/25	LA <b>confirmation</b> of individual budgets for 2024/25 following APT submission and any subsequent adjustments
4	DSG HNB centrally retained 2024/25	LA <b>confirms</b> allocation of HNB centrally retained funding.
5	DSG EY centrally retained 2024/25	LA <b>confirms</b> allocation of EY centrally retained funding
6	Central School Services Budget 2024/25	Forum <b>approves</b> CSSB budget allocations for 2024/25
<b>Meeting 5 – Thursday 13 June 2024 (TBC)</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1	DSG Monitoring Report 2023/24	Q4 report and outturn – Forum to <b>note</b>
2	DSG Management Plan update	To include update on DfE ‘Safety valve’ programme
3	Growth Fund - outturn from 2023/24 financial year	LA <b>confirms</b> outturn from 2023/24 and any consequent update to the allocations for 2024/25
4	Scheme for financing schools	<b>Approval</b> of revised scheme by maintained school reps following consultation.
5	Annual membership review	

<b>Standing items for all meetings</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Chair	Apologies/AOB/declaration of interests	
Chair	Minutes of previous meeting	
Chair	Matters arising including rolling action log	
Chair	Forum membership update	As required
LA	Update on national/local funding issues	Verbal notification of any updates
LA	Academies update	Notification of any changes to school status
Chair	Forward agenda planning	Sets out proposed agenda for the remainder of the year
Chair	Key decisions log	Records key Forum decisions over running 2-yr period

ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/22			
Issue and decision	Forum date	Agenda item	Minute ref
<b>School Forum membership update</b>	09/12/21	4	866
Gill Denham confirmed as academies member			
Chair to write to Coral Snowden and Peter Collins to ask if they wish to continue in post from January 2022			
<b>DSG 2021/22 Monitoring report</b>	09/12/21	6	868
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the current DSG position as set out in the monitoring report			
<b>DSG funding update 2022/23</b>	09/12/21	7	869
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the provisional DSG allocation for 2022/23 as set out in the report			
<b>Schools Block 2022/23</b>	09/12/21	9	871
LA to provide scenario modelling with and without requested 0.5% DSG top slice, to inform decision on block transfer in January meeting			
<b>Early Years update</b>	09/12/21	10	872
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the verbal report on EY funding			
<b>Scheme for Financing Schools</b>	09/12/21	11	873
Changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools, required in relation to the UK leaving the European Union, <b>APPROVED</b> by maintained school members, subject to confirmation from maintained secondary member (absent from meeting)			
<b>Schools Forum membership update</b>	19/01/22	5	879
Peter Collins confirmed as academies member for two years until January 2024			
Coral Snowden’s term extended until July 2022			
Nominations to be sought for secondary academy member vacancy			
<b>DSG 2021/22 monitoring report</b>	19/01/22	7	880
Forum <b>NOTED</b> current 2021/22 DSG position			
<b>DSG Management Plan update</b>	19/01/22	8	881
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the verbal update from Johnny Kyriacou on the DSG management plan			
<b>SEND Banding</b>	19/01/22	9	882
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the verbal update from Chelsea Barnes on changes to the SEND banding matrix			
<b>Growth Fund update</b>	19/01/22	10	883
Forum <b>APPROVED</b> the Growth Fund criteria for 2022/23			
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the forecast position for the three years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24			
<b>Schools Block 2022/23</b>	19/01/22	11	883
Forum <b>APPROVED</b> the transfer of £100k from Schools Block to the CSSB			
Forum <b>APPROVED</b> the transfer of the balancing 0.44% figure (£676k) to the High Needs block transfer.			
Report to brought to March Forum meeting describing in detail the difference that this funding has made and how the funds transferred are being allocated.			
<b>Early Years funding 2022/23</b>	19/01/22	12	884
Forum members endorsed the EY Task Group recommendation and <b>APPROVED</b> Option 1 from the 2022/23 funding consultation			
<b>AOB – School Improvement funding</b>	19/01/22	16	888
Discussion to be arranged between LA officers and the chairs of SPHA and SASH to develop proposals for school improvement funding to take to the School Improvement Board and bring back to Forum.			

<b>DSG monitoring report 2021/22</b>	<b>10/03/22</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>894</b>
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the latest DSG position.			
<b>DSG Schools Block 2022-23</b>	<b>10/03/22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>895</b>
Kamaljit Kaur confirmed she would follow up NNDR payment mechanism and issue clarification for all schools.			
<b>CSSB budget 2022-23</b>	<b>10/03/22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>896</b>
Forum <b>APPROVED</b> transfer of £180,815 from High Needs block to the CSSB for 2022-23			
Forum <b>AGREED</b> allocation within the CSSB as proposed by the local authority.			
<b>EY centrally retained budget 2022-23</b>	<b>10/03/22</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>897</b>
Forum <b>AGREED</b> the use of the central retained funding as proposed by the local authority.			
<b>DSG Management plan update</b>	<b>10/03/22</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>898</b>
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the Cabinet report on current status of DSG Management Plan and accompanying verbal update			
Written or verbal update to be given at next meeting			
<b>Task group update</b>	<b>10/03/22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>899</b>
Work of Task groups (Schools Block, High Needs and EY)			
<b>Forward agenda and Key decisions log</b>	<b>10/03/22</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>901</b>
Key decisions log to be updated for May meeting (Chair)			
<b>Forum membership</b>	<b>05/07/22</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>906</b>
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the adjustments to members' terms of office to better align with the academic terms.			
Chair agreed to seek nominations to fill primary and secondary vacancies in September			
<b>Update on national/local funding issues</b>	<b>05/07/22</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>907</b>
Chair agreed to collate and return Forum response to DfE consultation on national funding formula.			
<b>High Needs Budget 2022/23</b>	<b>05/07/22</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>911</b>
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the allocation of centrally retained funding			
<b>Scheme for financing schools</b>	<b>05/07/22</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>912</b>
Maintained Forum members <b>AGREED</b> the proposed minor change to the current Scheme raising the tender threshold from £10k to £25k			
<b>ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/23</b>			
<b>Issue and decision</b>	<b>Forum date</b>	<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Minute ref</b>
<b>DSG 2022/23 Monitoring report</b>	<b>10/11/22</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>923</b>
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the current DSG position as set out in the monitoring report			
<b>DSG Management Plan update</b>	<b>10/11/22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>924</b>
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the verbal update from Johnny Kyriacou on the DSG management plan and the application to the DfE Safety Valve programme			
<b>Schools Block 2023/24</b>	<b>10/11/22</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>926</b>
Forum <b>APPROVED</b> the transfer of £100k from Schools Block to the CSSB.			
Forum <b>APPROVED</b> the transfer of the balancing figure (0.5% less £100k) to the High Needs block, subject to confirmation in January 2023 following final DSG settlement.			
Forum <b>ENDORSED</b> the LA recommendation that DSG headroom be allocated through the basic entitlement factor			
<b>Resource provision and AP place commissioning</b>	<b>13/01/23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>937</b>
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the number of resource and alternative provision places commissioned by the LA in academies for September 2023.			
<b>Growth Fund 2023/24</b>	<b>13/01/23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>938</b>
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the proposed 2023/24 Schools Block top slice of £565k to support the Growth Fund.			
<b>DSG Management Plan and Safety Valve programme</b>	<b>13/01/23</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>939</b>
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the verbal update from Johnny Kyriacou on the DSG management plan and the application to the DfE Safety Valve programme			

<b>DSG settlement 2023/24</b>	<b>13/01/23</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>940</b>
Forum <b>CONFIRMED</b> the overall 0.5% transfer from Schools Block to the CSSB (£100k) and HNB (0.5% less £100k) as provisionally approved in November 2022.			
Forum <b>ENDORSED</b> the LA's proposals for the overall 2023/24 DSG allocation.			
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the LA's continued commitment to allocate DSG headroom through the basic entitlement factor.			
<b>DSG Management Plan update</b>	<b>14/07/23</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>949</b>
Forum <b>NOTED</b> the verbal update from Neil Hoskinson on the DSG management plan and the application DfE Safety Valve programme			
<b>Primary-secondary funding ratio</b>	<b>14/07/23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>950</b>
Forum <b>AGREED</b> that discussion of the impact of the formula decisions on the primary-secondary ratio be discussed within the 5-16 Task Group Chair was tasked with responding to the SPHA letter			
<b>Local School Improvement Fund</b>	<b>14/07/23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>951</b>
Forum <b>AGREED</b> the proposed principles for the future operation of the LSIF, to now be delegated to the phase associations with a regular report back to Forum.			
<b>Schools Forum membership update</b>	<b>14/07/23</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>952</b>
Forum <b>NOTED</b> that the terms of office of a number of members would end in August 2023. Chair to write to members asking if they wish to continue. Chair to seek nominations to fill primary and secondary academy vacancies			
<b>Reappointment of Chair</b>	<b>14/07/23</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>953</b>
John Constable reappointed as Chair for the AY 2023/24			
<b>Forward agenda plan</b>	<b>14/07/23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>954</b>
Forum <b>AGREED</b> the structure of meetings proposed for 2023/24			
<b>ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/24</b>			
<b>Issue and decision</b>	<b>Forum date</b>	<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Minute ref</b>

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