

# Islington Schools Forum

Meeting documents and minutes published on [Islington Schools Forum webpage](#).

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 January 2023, The Laycock Centre

## Attendees

### Present

- Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy (AM-L); Executive Head teacher, Rotherfield and Newington Green Primary Schools (Chair)
- Maggie Elliott (ME); Governor, Montem Primary School (Edventure Collaborative Federation with Drayton Park) (Vice-chair)
- Joy (Odunayo) Abegunde (JOA); Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), Islington Play Association
- Jenny Lewis (JL); Head teacher, Thornhill Primary School
- Alan Streeter (AS); Head teacher, Beacon High Secondary School (Islington Futures Federation)
- Patrick Mildren (PM); Head teacher, Canonbury Primary School
- Fiona MacCorquodale (FM); Head teacher, Prior Weston Primary School and Children's Centre (Interim Vice-chair)
- Andrew Bosi (AB); Governor, Rotherfield Primary School
- Claire Hersey (CHe); Principal Finance Officer, City of London Academy Trust
- Tanya Watson (TW); Head teacher, William Tyndale (Primary Academy)
- Penny Barratt (PB); CEO, The Bridge MAT
- Susan Service (SS); Head teacher, Arts & Media School Islington
- Nigel Smith (NS); Head teacher, New River College (Pupil Referral Unit)
- Joe Simpson (JS); Governor, St Peter and St Paul Primary
- Paul Lasok (PL); Governor, St Aloysius Secondary School (and St Joseph's)

## Other attendees

- Tim Partington (TP); Head of Children's Services, Finance
- Debbie Stevenson (DS); Head of Early Years and Schools Finance Services
- Jon Abbey (JA)
- Alison Cramer (AC); Assistant Director, School Support and Information Services
- Jane Wright (JW); Manager Schools and EY Governance (Clerk)

## Observer

- Local Authority Corporate Finance, Kate Bingham
- Sophie Garalda, William Tyndale Primary

## Apologies

- Cllr Angelo Weekes (AW); Islington Council – non-Executive Member
- Cassie Moss (CM); Head teacher, Yerbury Primary School (Vice-chair)
- Coleen Marshall (CM), 14-19 Partnership, City and Islington College (attempted to access the meeting remotely)
- Vicky Linsley (VL); Head teacher, St Mary Magdalene Academy (Secondary)
- Matthew Hillman (MH), The Pears Family School (invited very late to the meeting)
- Francis Gonzalez (FrG); Head teacher, Richard Cloudesley Special School
- Sarah Callaghan (SC); Director of Learning and Culture
- Candy Holder (CH), Head of Pupil Services

## Not in attendance

- Sally Franklin (SF); Head teacher, North Islington Nursery and Children's Centre

## Meeting minutes

No.	Agenda item	Action
1.	<p><b>Welcome/Apologies for absence/not in attendance</b></p> <p>AM-L welcomed all to the meeting, including Joy Abegunde (JOA) who was joining Schools Forum as Non Schools Voluntary &amp; Community representative.</p> <p>Apologies as above.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Minutes of the previous meeting (held on 10 November 2022)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accuracy</b> – the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to amendment of the word ‘permittable’ to ‘permissible’ in Item 8, page 5.</li> <li>• <b>Matters arising</b> (not covered on the agenda) – there were none.</li> </ul>	
3.	<p><b>Schools forum composition – for information and decision</b></p> <p>The clerk (JW) spoke to a report previously circulated. JW chaired the first part of this item – <b>Election of Chair and Vice-chair of Schools Forum.</b></p> <p>JW had received no nominations for chair prior to the meeting. A nomination was received at the meeting for Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy (AM-L) to be elected. AM-L informed Forum that she would be leaving the Forum at the end of the academic year to focus more on her schools. There were no other nominations.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b> unanimously to re-elect Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy as Chair of Schools Forum for three years or until she leaves Schools Forum.</p> <p><b>Election of Vice-chair</b></p> <p>JW clarified that the election of one vice-chair was needed. FM was interim vice-chair covering for CM. JW had received one nomination from Maggie Elliott (ME) who was prepared to continue as vice-chair. JW reminded the meeting that ME’s third term of office was due to end in December 2024. There were no other nominations.</p>	Action

**Agreed** unanimously to re-elect Maggie Elliott as Vice-chair of Schools Forum for three years or until she leaves Schools Forum.

### **Apportionment of Primary and Secondary Places in Line with School Census 2022**

There did not need to be any change to the distribution of primary and secondary schools places (between maintained sector and academies/free schools) on Schools Forum as a result of the distribution of places filled at primary and secondary.

**Noted**

### **Update on Membership**

#### **Non Schools Voluntary & Community representative**

JW had spoken at the EY Providers' Forum on 16 November about the Forum and, as a result, Joy Abegunde from Islington Play Association had put herself forward. JW emailed managers of VCS EY provisions asking for any objections to Joy's appointment and any further nominations. JW had received three emails in support of Joy's appointment, no objections and no further nominations. JA was therefore appointed for a term of office of 4 years up to 5.12.26.

**Noted**

#### **Secondary Governor representative**

JW had sent an email to chairs of secondary maintained schools asking for any objections to Paul Lasok's appointment for a second term of office and for any further nominations. JW had received no objections and no further nominations. PL was therefore appointed for a further term of office of 4 years up to 11.12.26.

**Noted**

**Free School Alternative Provision** representative. Originally this position was being shared between ArtsXchange and The Pears Family School. Since the last meeting it had been clarified that ArtsXchange, while physically in Islington, is technically not an Islington setting, so they could not be on Islington Schools Forum. Therefore, for the time being at least, the Free School AP representative was Matthew Hillman (MH).

**Noted**

<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Settlement (Future Year) – for Information</b></p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had been circulated in advance.</p> <p>The DSG settlement was received in December. In Column A, the Schools Block (SB) formula was applied to the final October Census 2022 figures, showing a reduction in pupil numbers of 404 primary and 44 secondary compared to Column B which had Illustrative Figures calculated in July 2022. This fall in pupil numbers represented a reduction in funding of £2.8m.</p> <p>The fall in pupil numbers also impacted Ongoing Duties and Historic Commitments funding of the Central School Services Block (CSSB) – the latter was also being reduced by 20% each year.</p> <p>The Government’s Autumn 2022 Statement was bringing new monies to schools and High Needs (HN), recognising costs pressures schools are facing (£2.3bn nationally) – For Islington, this translates to an additional £5m to primary and secondary schools which was outside the SB DSG and not included in the DSG Settlement spreadsheet. For HN this was being included in the settlement from 2023-24 - £1.8m (plus the £2m announced in Autumn 2021 settlement).</p> <p>In relation to the Early Years (EY) funding block, the increase in hourly rates for 2 year olds (up by 67p) and for 3 and 4 year olds (up by 24p). For 3 &amp; 4 year olds, this increase included inflationary increases as well as the rolled in Teachers’ Pay and Pensions Grant which sat outside the funding block previously.</p> <p>In response to questions asked and points made by Forum members, the following points were clarified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AC would circulate the secondary roll projections.</li> <li>• It was not possible to consider roll projection data on a continuous basis as it is based on a number of factors at various points in the year and is monitored as data becomes available to us.</li> <li>• There was a suggestion of Forum looking now at the applications for secondary schools for September 2023, but AC clarified that data relating to this would go first to the School Organisation Board. AC added that such data should be shared with Forum when it is appropriate to. DS had brought the latest information to the July 2021 and 2022 meetings.</li> </ul>	<p><b>AC</b></p>
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	<b>Noted</b>	
5.	<p><b>School Funding Formula (future year) – for decision</b></p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had been circulated in advance.</p> <p>Growth funding was agreed in principle at November 2022 Forum.</p> <p>Islington was following the National Funding Formula (NFF) factors and values, apart from a couple of deviations.</p> <p>When applying the NFF in full and reducing the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to 0% (the minimum permissible), there was a shortfall of £691K in the funding envelope. There are two possible reasons for this change; in the 2022-23 local formula it was necessary to deviate from the NFF by increasing the base rate values. In doing so, this increased the baseline for the following financial year. The other reason is the supplementary grant which moved into the NFF may not have matched the exact allocations schools received as a separate grant.</p> <p>Some implicit growth funding must be released upfront for COLPAI as it is a growing school that has yet to admit all year groups. Also, PFI costs were uplifted by 13.54% in line with retail price index in November 2022 – adjustments in line with inflation in February 2023 will be made in 2024-25.</p> <p>At November Forum, it was agreed to discontinue Falling Rolls funding given we could no longer meet the DfE criteria, and there had been discussion about what to do with that funding, such as adding it to the funding for Schools in Financial Difficulty. With the shortfall now, it was confirmed that extra funding was no longer available.</p> <p>In order to remain within the funding envelope, DS suggested two options:</p> <p>Option 1 – cap gains of schools (as agreed in principle at November Forum), this was not the recommended solution as this would directly impact schools whose funding had been allocated according to cohort needs, to cap funding would reduce funding and impact on disadvantaged schools and children</p> <p>Option 2 – deviate from NFF and this time proportionately reduce the base rate across primary, KS 3 and 4. This follows the rationale as in the previous year which impacts on all schools fairly. The proposed</p>	Action:

	<p>factor value rate remains within the permitted range as set out by the ESFA.</p> <p>DS clarified that with Option 2, the base rate would reduce proportionately across primary, KS3 and KS4. It was confirmed there would be winners and losers with Option 1, while everyone would lose, but to a lesser extent, under Option 2. Option 1 was seen to be more volatile a solution.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Base Rate unit value be reduced proportionately across primary, KS3 and KS4 to meet affordability limits of Schools Block funding (option 2)</li> <li>b. Formula factors and values used in local School Funding Formula are agreed</li> <li>c. Schools Forum agrees to retain £300K for Growth funding.</li> </ul> <p><b>Noted and unanimously agreed</b></p>	
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>DSG Central Retention (2023-24) – for decision</b></p> <p>TP spoke to a report that had been circulated in advance. In addition, information had been supplied before Christmas and in the meeting papers pack about the services funded through central retention. This information included the funding levels, the function and the must haves and must dos of each service, as well as the outcome of quality assurance (QA) activities with schools where relevant and any changes proposed for 2023/24.</p> <p>Two decisions were needed – in relation to central retention in principle in Central School Services Block (CSSB) and the EY Block. Decisions relating to the High Needs Block were for the LA to make, in consultation with Forum.</p> <p><b>Early Years Block</b> – a paper on this area had been considered by the EY Subgroup on 13 January which had agreed in principle to the proposals - the overall Early Years Block allocation from the DfE was still provisional (dependent on outcome of January 2023 and 2024 Census). Central retention remains at 5% of EY funding for the free entitlements (2, 3 and 4 year olds). The level of central retention proposed for 2023/24 is £914K, with an increase of £15K from 2024/25. This follows two years of decreases in funding due to a drop in numbers of children accessing the free offer (Covid, etc). The central retention will contribute to Finance, ICT and data services,</p>	

Family Information Service, EYFS Team, Strategy and Management and Strengthening Parenting (Incredible Years courses).

**CSSB** – Forum was asked to note that there had been a further reduction of 20% in the historic duties in CSSB (£84K), following a 20% reduction each year in the past three years. Overall CSSB is reduced by 6.7% due to a reduction in school roll.

Schools Forum was asked to agree central retention under the CSSB each year, except for copyright licences which is an automatic top-slice by the DfE. The cost of centrally retained services for schools and academies is £1.438m against allocation of £1.379m – the shortfall of £0.059m can be met by a balance of £0.210m held from previous years.

Schools Forum discussed at length the issue of quality assurance of services funded through CSSB and EY Blocks. The points raised included:

NS commented that at the recent Heads' Briefing, there had been a big focus on how schools will balance their budgets. He suggested all services in relation to education be looked at and he referred to a detailed QA exercise that Schools Forum had carried out some years ago.

AM-L commented on the lack of QA processes, with services reporting what they do and not on the quality of their work.

AC clarified that the QA survey sent out in summer 2022 to elicit feedback from schools resulted in only 8 schools responding, so it had been considered that the outcome of that survey was not statistically robust enough to share the results.

JA agreed that if more money is devolved there should be QA to show what difference the services made, value, cost, etc. He added that services had to be adequately funded to be good quality.

FM confirmed that QA had not come up at the EY Subgroup.

PM commented that the services delivered needed to be what schools needed – capacity to change. He queried how schools can ask for changes to services.

AM-L asked about timing – did decisions about the Central Retention have to be made today or could it be later in the term? TP replied that the LA had to submit a report to the DfE in March on EY funding.



	<p>JA suggested that possibly a succinct report on what EY had delivered this year and what they had achieved could be produced to help with decision-making.</p> <p>AM-L commented on the timing of the QA survey (summer 2022) and the sharing of information on services funded through central retention around Christmas.</p> <p>TP said he would prefer not to postpone – he had proposed in his paper an extraordinary meeting of Schools Forum in March to confirm decisions.</p> <p>AC commented that more QA action had been proposed for the autumn. It was proposed that the QA work could take place this term, with self-assessment and reporting to QA panels.</p> <p>AM-L set out three options for Forum to decide today, with PL adding a fourth:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Agree the central retention in principle with QA to take place before final decision</li><li>2. Vote on central retention now</li><li>3. Postpone the decision on central retention, undertake the QA and bring back the vote at a later point</li><li>4. Agree central retention provisionally, subject to further QA report and then adjust decisions as necessary.</li></ol> <p>JA suggested the development of a good quality QA framework by the March meeting – NS felt it would not be possible to develop this and apply it to the services in time for the meeting in March. Members of Forum were invited to be on a reference group to comment on the draft framework.</p> <p>ME suggested that applying the framework every two years would be sufficient – it had been a big project to be on the QA panels in the past.</p> <p>TW acknowledged that the breakdown of services in the information shared at Christmas was helpful – further breakdown of some information, including identifying proposed changes and greater transparency, would be needed. JL asked for greater consistency across reports, to include potential opportunities.</p>	
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	<p>AM-L expressed her dissatisfaction with the lack of progress with the QA work that had been promised last spring.</p> <p>The recommendation that Schools Forum was finally asked to vote on was:</p> <p>To provisionally agree to the central retention (EY and CSSB) subject to the production of a good quality Quality Assurance framework to be brought to a special meeting of Schools Forum in March 2023.</p> <p><b>All those in favour: 13 votes</b>  <b>All those against: 1 vote</b></p> <p>NS, JOA and TW agreed to be on the Reference Group, and AM-L would invite other headteachers to join it through her summary of the minutes of this meeting on Schools Bulletin.</p> <p>TP was to resend the papers breaking down the services to Forum for this special meeting so members could prepare.</p>	<p><b>AC, NS, JOA, TW, DS, TP</b></p> <p><b>TP</b></p>
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>High Needs Places (future year) – for decision</b></p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had been circulated in advance.</p> <p>Forum was asked to agree in principle the number of specialist provision places to be commissioned in 2023-24 at the Pupil Referral Unit/alternative provision, special schools and the hearing unit at Laycock Primary. Also, to agree the arrangements for top-up funding for individual high needs pupils - this will, in the first instance, be increased in line with national guidance on allocating additional funds coming into the High Needs Block 2023-24. Options for how to spend additional funds would be discussed at the HN Subgroup.</p> <p>PB queried whether there could be discussion about in-year adjustment in line with termly census.</p> <p>JL raised the issue of the new Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs) – DS confirmed there was a separate arrangement for their funding outside of DSG.</p> <p>PS suggested syncing the funding of all special needs and alternative provision (AP) given academies submit their information around October/November. NS pointed out that in terms of numbers of pupils, that time of year was not good for AP – May best.</p>	

	<p><b>Recommendation</b> that Schools Forum support the commissioning and funding arrangements for maintained special schools and resource units in 2023-24.</p> <p><b>Agreed</b></p>	
8.	<p><b>DSG Budget Monitor (in year) – for information and to note</b></p> <p>TP spoke to a report that had been circulated in advance.</p> <p>Forum was asked to note a forecast in-year overspend of £0.068m (at month 9).</p> <p>Also, that DSG balances were forecast to be at £5.150m at the end of the year. The balances were earmarked to manage increasing pressures on the HN and EY blocks and to meet cost pressures within schools.</p> <p>There had been very high demand for the Priority Early Years panel (EY additional SEN funding), whereas there had been underspends for this in earlier years. Additional HN funding was projected to be at 2% per year from 2024/25. Therefore, the balances were expected to be spent in the next two years.</p> <p>EY Block – funding based on participation. The numbers have been falling and we are able to provide some protection but again the balances are declining.</p> <p>TW queried whether funding for SEN services across HN and EY could be amalgamated to achieve savings.</p> <p>JL suggested broadening commissioning rather than commissioning from the same services.</p> <p>PB advised Forum that there were two working groups going through the HN budget, line by line and they will do this again – for discussion at HN Sub-group. Taking a solution-focused approach to making the best use of the money. JL volunteered to be involved.</p> <p><i>JS left at 3.35pm.</i></p> <p><b>Agreed</b> (as amended on the paper – a) – overspend not underspend</p>	
9.	<p><b>Forward Planning – for information</b></p>	

	<p>DS spoke to a report that had been previously circulated.</p> <p>She would add the Emergency Schools Forum to take place in March 2023.</p> <p><b>Noted</b></p>	
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>Subgroups updates – for information</b></p> <p><b>EY Subgroup 13 January</b> - FM reported. Meeting was well attended, with all sectors represented. There will be a short consultation in the next week or so on the Early Years Funding Formula.</p> <p><b>HN Subgroup 16 January</b> - PB had already talked about the working groups scrutinising the HN budget.</p> <p><b>Capital Subgroup 12 January</b>- ME reported. Two meetings since last Forum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The group has asked for more information on the ARPs.</li> <li>• There was an opportunity to bid for lots of funding in relation to the carbonisation of schools.</li> <li>• The process for Match-funding in 2022/23 slipped a bit – letters are going out this week inviting expressions of interest by 17 March 2023 for the 2023-24 financial year. There is provisionally £200K available for this – DfE to confirm but to get people thinking now.</li> <li>• LBI is reviewing premises managers' houses on school sites – there will be a plan by May on the use of these 20 houses.</li> </ul> <p><b>Noted</b></p>	
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>AOB</b> – there were none.</p>	
	<p><b>Meeting close and dates of future meetings</b></p> <p>AM-L thanked all for their participation in the meeting. The meeting closed at 3.55pm</p>	
	<p><b>Dates of next meetings</b></p>	

	<p>(Virtual meetings on MS Teams unless otherwise indicated)</p> <p><b>Spring Term 2023</b></p> <p>NEW - Schools Forum special meeting - Thursday 23 March, 2-4pm, on MS Teams.</p> <p><b>Summer Term 2023</b></p> <p>Capital Sub Group - Thursday 11 May, 12.30pm – 2pm</p> <p>DSG/Chairs Sub Group - Wednesday 17 May, 2 – 3.30pm</p> <p>Early Years Sub Group - Friday 19 May, 1pm – 2.30pm</p> <p>High Needs Sub Group - Monday 22 May, 11am – 12.30pm</p> <p>Schools Forum - Thursday 25 May 2-4pm, <b>in person</b> – venue tbc</p> <p>DSG/Chairs Sub Group - Wednesday 5 July, 2 – 3.30pm</p> <p>Schools Forum – Thursday 13 July, 2-4pm, <b>in person</b> – venue tbc</p>	
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