

Schools' Block – Working Group

Minutes

20th January 2023

Attendees	Initials	Organisation	Present
Tyrone Myton (Chair)	TM	Shirley Performing Arts College	✓
Markie Hayden	MH	Norbury High Schools for Girls	X
Mark Humphreys	MHu	St Thomas Becket, Catholic Primary	X
Dan Bowden	DB	Greenvale Primary School	✓
Chris Andrews	CA	St James the Great Primary School	✓
Clare Cranham	CC	Kensington Avenue Primary School	✓
Charles Quaye	CQ	Finance Manager	✓
Shelley Davies	SD	Director of Education	X
Darran Money	DM	Education Business Support Lead	X
Mori Bates	MB	Clerk	✓

Item	Agenda	Lead
1	Welcome and apologies	TM
	<p>1.1 Previous minutes read and reviewed – agreed to be a true record.</p> <p>1.2 Apologies received by MH and SD.</p>	
2	Previous Minutes	TM
	<p>2.1 Previous minutes read and reviewed – agreed to be a true record.</p> <p>2.2 There was a consensus amongst the membership that there needs to be a further appeal for more individuals to join the Schools' Block Working Group.</p>	
3	DSG – 2023/24 Growth Budget	CQ
	<p>3.1 CQ presented a paper on the DSG 2023/24 Growth Budget for which the working group is asked to note the 23/24 Growth budget, the Growth Budget after the DF Authority Proforma update and the implementation of the agreed growth budget allocation.</p> <p>3.2 Following the agreed upon methodology at the last Schools' Forum meeting, this has been applied to the Growth Budget accordingly.</p> <p>3.3 The money in the Growth Fund Allocation can be used to support academy expansions, alternative provisions for KS4 and the therapies. Any surplus left over is then used to offset the deficit and so we can reallocate any remaining funds back into the various factors.</p> <p>3.4 The methodology used by the DfE was introduced for the 2019/20 financial year and has remained the same since. The funding is based on a growth in primary and secondary school pupil numbers, taking into account that an Area Cost Adjustment could increase pupil numbers, affecting the allocation and figures.</p> <p>3.5 The final growth allocation for 24/25 was published by the DfE in December at £1.718m. Following the disapplication process, the shortfall of £304K has been covered by using a portion of the growth allocation funding. This means that the final budget available for 24/25 will be £1.404m.</p> <p>3.6 As SALT is a commissioned practice whereby the locality team can distribute the money, it is an acceptable factor to put money into.</p> <p>Q1: DB: At the next meeting, would it be possible to know how much of the therapies' pot has been claimed? A1: CQ: The requests are still coming in for the therapies and so I can put some spend to date figures to the paper. ACTION - CQ</p> <p>3.7 CQ explained to the working group that the amounts being allocated to existing or new factors relating to the growth fund are based on the conditional – for example, if there is an academy expansion within that financial year.</p>	CQ

	<p>Q2: TM: If the sums are allocated on a conditional basis, what happens to that money if there is no growth in the areas the money is sitting in – where does the money go at the end of the financial year?</p> <p>A2: CQ: At the end of the year, the money would be used to clear the High needs deficit and is designed to balance the budget. Any underspend across these areas must be reported at the years’ end to Schools’ Forum.</p> <p>3.8 It came into question as to whether the money can be distributed more evenly, to be utilised in areas where it is needed, such as therapies. CQ explained that there is some room for Forum to move money between existing factors under the Growth Fund Allocation. However, the Working Group would have to present a suggestion with solid reasoning, and it would go to a vote at Forum. TM stated that both year 11 provisions and the therapies would benefit from additional funding and asked again whether the money can be moved.</p> <p>Q2: DB: What about schools where the budget does not allow us to purchase the therapies’ provisions with a view to it being claimed back? Most of our therapies is having to be done in house due to the cost.</p> <p>A2: CQ: That methodology would possibly make us fall outside of the DfE restrictions. The AWPU being used alongside the funding formula was the fairest way to distribute the money.</p> <p>3.9 TM asked whether we could put more money into Therapies so that money in other areas can be accrued. CQ said that if the Group Working wanted to do so, then this is where a contingency fund. This would come in handy to give the fund to perhaps schools that are struggling financially if, for example, the fund focused on the therapies.</p>	
4	Any Other Business	ALL
	<p>Contingency Fund:</p> <p>To create a contingency fund, a recommendation would have to be put together requesting an amendment. The proposal is then submitted to Schools’ Forum for approval. By implementing a contingency fund, this would potentially show strategic forward thinking.</p> <p>The potential suggestions of adjustments to the Growth Fund Allocation, following suggestions by the members of Schools’ Block consist of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase funds in KS4 alternative Provisions. 2. Increase funds in the Therapies. 3. Contingency plan that all schools can apply to of a certain amount to allow access and provisions for all our pupils. <p>It was suggested that meeting be arranged with Jolyon Roberts as the chair of Schools’ Forum regarding the contingency plan and other suggestions made by the working group. The meeting is due to take place on Monday 5th February, subject to the Chair of Schools’ Forum’s availability. ACTION – MB to arrange a meeting before the pre-meet on the 21st February</p>	MB