

Schools' Block Working Group – 25/11/2024

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

11:30am to 1:00pm

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

Item	Agenda	Lead
1	Welcome and apologies	TM
	1.1 Apologies received by DB.	
2	Previous Minutes	TM
	2.1 Previous minutes read and reviewed – agreed to be a true record.	
3	Dedicated Schools Grant 2025/26 & School Funding Formula Factors Review	CQ
	<p>3.1 CQ presented a paper on the Formula Factors for 25/26, centring around the updates for voting, by which the Schools Block working group must give the rationale behind their recommendations of specific factors. CQ explained that the working group had to review and agree on the non-NFF factors for the 25/26 schools budget setting – IDACI A, Lump Sum, Split Site, PFI, MFG, Growth and Looked After Children.</p> <p>3.2 It was also noted that there would need to be a recommendation for the 25/26 LA disapplication request to transfer £1.2m from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block as part of the Safety Valve strategy.</p> <p>3.3 CQ drew the working group’s attention to Table 2 in the paper, which highlighted the factors a recommendation would be noted for. The factors that were moved to the NFF last year cannot be changed and are effectively locked in for this year.</p> <p>3.4 In relation to the PFI, as Croydon has one PFI school, it must use this factor. The options for this factor are to add an inflationary increase to last year’s rate or for the rate to remain to stay the same. If the PFI school wanted additional funds, then they would be required to complete the DfE Affordability model.</p> <p>Q1: TM: Where we have voted previously for the NFF rate to be applied, are we unable to move out of that at all? This meeting almost becomes redundant if we move to the NFF. A1: CQ: It is not formalised that we have been locked in. There are changes going on within the DfE and this is just the decisions they have made for the current situation.</p> <p>Q2: TM: There is another disapplication request in the paper – is this on top o the £1.2m from last year? If so, how many years will we continue to do this? A2: CQ: This money is on top of last year’s and a part of the Safety Valve agreement, meaning we would only have to vote on this for another two years.</p> <p>3.5 TM noted that there appears to be a slight change to the methodology behind PFI, a change which requires more information, because it is difficult to know how much we should give if we do not know how much the school is spending in the year.</p> <p>3.6 JR added that the TPAG, TPECG and CSBG are all figures that have not been put into a general pot as the grants go to individual schools. It would not be possible to distribute money that is allocated to</p>	

	<p>each school. If the money is going into the APT, then how will schools be able to cope if they have already budgeted for an amount they have previously been told about. CQ assured the working group that when the APT comes in, the figures will be clearer.</p> <p>3.7 CA stated that the aforementioned grants cannot be divided up between the schools as each school will have a different staff makeup and cannot be treated equally under these grants.</p> <p>3.8 The working group believed that the schools appeared to be being told one thing and the LA are being told something, meaning that additional information needs to be obtained from the DfE as to where the money from this grant is really going.</p> <p>Q3: CA: Relating to PFI again, what happens if a school completed the Affordability Model but we're not willing to give them more? A3: CQ: The DfE aims to treat schools evenly. To go above the normal inflation of funds needs justification and the affordability model will help to prove they should have more money.</p> <p>3.9 It was mentioned that there was potential for the PFI to be reduced, especially given that there are schools who appear to have the funds to take over another school, then they should have the money to fund their own school.</p> <p>3.10 The Recommendations:</p> <p>3.10.1 IDACI Band A – the working group recommend above the NFF</p> <p>3.10.2 Lump Sum – recommendation to move to above the NFF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Given that this is the only way to support our small primary schools who are starting to struggle – the DfE will cap the percentage. <p>3.10.3 Private Finance Initiative – possibility of reducing the figure to £500k</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members of the working group voiced concern that there is a feeling that there is less time to make informed decisions where not all the relevant information is available. - CQ said that if the school believes they require more money, then they can apply for more money with the affordability model <p>3.10.4 Minimum Funding Guarantee – recommendation of 0.5%</p> <p>3.10.5 Growth – recommendation to stay the same</p> <p>3.10.6 Split Site – recommendation to move to the NFF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JR declared interest relating to this position in Pegasus Trust <p>3.10.7 Looked After Children – recommendation to continue the funding</p> <p>3.11 Disapplication request – there was a general consensus that this could be recommended on the basis that this is a part of the Safety Valve agreement and with a view to this only being the case until it ends in two years.</p>	
4	School Improvement Paper	SD
	<p>4.1 SD presented a paper on the School Improvement service, for which a decision needs to be made in regards to the grant for school improvement support. Previously, the LA came up with a model to last the span of three years that we are now at the end of.</p> <p>4.2 The current proposal utilises the previous agreement that Schools Forum agreed upon.</p> <p>4.3 School Improvement in itself requires a lot of support throughout the years. The support in place now may only be a general overview of improvement rather than a specific or tailored area of support. SD added that we can investigate further so that schools can receive access to specialised support in core subjects.</p> <p>4.4 It was suggested by the working group that a broader range of support from the School Improvement system may help schools across the board. SD stated that a separate meeting should take place around the School Improvement system for headteachers and members of the LA. There is also scope for modelling something for core secondary subjects.</p>	
5	Any Other Business	ALL

Date of next meeting: 13th January 2025 @ 1pm