



Derby City Council

Schools Forum
Tuesday 1 July 2025
4.30pm – 6pm
Microsoft Teams

Present		
Mike Pride (Chair)	Maintained Special	
David Blackwell	Primary Academy	
Janet Bowlzer	Accountant, DCC	
Charlotte Brett	PVI Representative	
Sharon Buckby	Director for Learning, Inclusion and Skills, DCC	
Karen Clarke	Governor	
Aaron Denton		
Ian Dewes	Primary Academy	
Ann Donaghy	Secondary Academy	
Cheryl Fearn	Union Representative	
Jonathan Gallimore	Primary Academy	
Janice Hadfield	Head of Finance, DCC	
Kieran Picken	National Education Union	
David Blackwell	Primary Academy	
Sara Warren	School Operations Manager	
Neil Wilkinson	Secondary Maintained	
Apologies		
Cllr Paul Hezelgrave		
Pete Cade		
Phil Smith		
Ashley Guest		
No.	Item	Actions
01/25	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting</p> <p>ID picked up a matter re: growth funding, this is working progress and the action can be closed on the minutes.</p> <p>The minutes were noted as a true and accurate record of the last meeting.</p>	
02/25	<p>Dedicated Schools Grant 2024/25 – Financial Outturn</p> <p>Janice went through this report which is a summary of the financial outturn for the last financial year.</p> <p>Page 1 – 5 elements to note</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outturn position for 24/25 was £3.5m, more favourable than £5.121m when the original budget was set. • 24/25 DSG reserve position in section 4.0 stating a cumulative deficit of £16.189m 	



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point 5.0 to note requirement of Deficit Management Recover Plan • Point 6.0 Maintained School Revenue Balances held by LA, bottom of Page 1 breakdown of DSG funding by each block last year and gross amounts which come into the LA before any recoupment. Page 2 includes detail of each blocks outturn. • 3.2 reporting a 65k underspend because of the revaluation of school premises non domestic rates. Central Services block reported a balance position. • 3.4 Early Years reporting £1.4m underspend but some of this is needed for clawback and funding of balancing hours relating to the stretched offer in Derby. • Early Years funding increased from April 2024 for working parents for 2 year old, with access for 15 hours free childcare, 15 hours of free childcare was extended to all children from the age of 9 months. And from September 2025, working parents of children under the age of 5 will be entitled to 30 hours free childcare per week. The nurseries stretched early years funding offer means parents can spread their funded childcare hours over more weeks of the year, however this does impact on the LA and also requires them to manage a very complex system of funding and claiming. • There is also detail for each type of funding element stream ie <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 and 4 year olds – reported underspend of £0.324m because of the reduced uptake in the Autumn term, this will be adjusted in 25-26 due to the January census. - Working parents 2 year olds – reported a £0.165m underspend due to slightly lower take-up, this underspend will be required in 25-26 for the stretch offer - Disadvantaged 2 year old – reported a £0.305m underspend due to lower numbers first planned, this money will be clawed back in 25-26. - Working parents 9months to 23 months – reported a £0.317m underspend, clawback of 114k of the remaining money will be needed to fund the stretched offer. • 3.5 High Needs Block, there is a deficit of just over £5m, the estimated in year deficit was £8.6m, the following year movements contributed to mitigating the deficit by £3.585m. • The breakdown on Page 3 shows the elements of high needs block with variances. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post 16 pressures of over 2m against the original budget of £2.690m. - Maintained School's Element 3 – outturn spend of £0.374m - Special Schools saw a small underspend of £0.324m - Personal Budgets – underspend of £0.167m - Independent Schools – underspend of £2.391m 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 4 – breakdown of average costs for independent schools and average costs for other LA schools. • Underspends listed on top of Page 5 are due to staffing and contingencies that weren't needed throughout the year. • Point 4.0 DSG Reserve balances for 24/5 have an accumulative balance of £16m. • Point 5.0 gives a recap of the Deficit Management Plan • Point 6.0 shows there are currently 36 schools maintained by Derby City Council, and the total balances held by all schools was recorded as £8.63m, small increase of £0.020m from the previous years balance of £8.61m. At the end of 24/25 most maintained schools carried forward a surplus balance averaging 14%, however 5 schools were reported as having a deficit financial position, these include Ashgate Nursery, Central Nursery, Portway Infants, Wren Park Primary and Gayton Junior who are all working on a deficit recovery. Original plan was to bring schools back into balance at the end of 27/28, and at the moment this is on track and is being continually monitored. • Point 7.0 shows the Licenced Deficits – Formal notification. <p>DS congratulated all on progress and asked if the funding was being used for legal, tribunals etc. SB confirmed this would be out of the general fund and team do the majority of the work who have been brought in over the last 12 months who can deliver. And also commented that the independent sector are now Post 16 focus to reduce Post 16 placements and bring youngsters back, there is a planned return of 10 to mainstream/special provision. Many parents are saying they would like to come back into the system, the work being carried out is not just the LA, this couldn't be done without the schools and there are incredibly effective schools within Derby that are making the difference.</p> <p>ID echoed Davids's congratulations and asked are the specific schools working on the deficit recovery increasing or decreasing comparing to recent years, JH said they are increasing.</p> <p>NW asked if LA were asking schools so this could be gauge better, JH replied that it is a requirement to have these conversations with schools, did use to ask for written statements above 11% but this isn't written in the scheme for financing schools now, unless working with the schools it is not something that can be asked.</p> <p>SW did comment that the it needs to be recognised that it is very difficult to try and predict funding and income, she is still waiting for 6th form funding and if it was known how much all the funding was this could be allocated appropriately.</p>	
03/25	<p>Quarter 1</p> <p>JH reported in the new financial year, allocations for the dedicated £37m, last year's £338m increase in the allocations. As far as Schools</p>	

	<p>Block and Central Block are concerned these are on balance, and EY block is reporting a balanced position, but clawbacks will need to be taken.</p> <p>High Needs is reporting an unmitigated forecast position with a deficit of £5.8m, against £6.5m. Over the summer the Finance team are to work with Sharons team to understand where we are placing children</p> <p>SB commented that this reflects on what Sara has talked about, work that is carried out now has much more focus on the children we know are in the system, recordings and timeliness is better, no backlog of plans, better picture of direction of travel. Matrix is also better at looking across how funding is being used and delivered. In the next 2 months drip down work will be carried out and will be in a much better position of understanding position for this year and predictions for next year. Been difficult working on unmitigated trajectory. This will be shared with School Forum.</p> <p>All note statutory override has been extended to March 2028 which 2.5 year timespan to continue the work that is being done, there are challenges within this is we won't know for Autumn term but possibly for the Spring term where we will be or what is the potential risk and the likely impact of sharing the deficit of Derbyshire districts under our remits.</p> <p>Expectation by the DfE will be that there will be safety valve teams to work together once combined debts are known and the structural deficit will be removed but with an expectation that there will be a balanced budget within a period of time. School Forum will be kept updated so a broader picture can be seen.</p>	
04/25	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>CB talked about the school's transition portal and transitions to nursery and reception as a lot of primary schools are picking and choosing whether they want to sign up to the portal. CB commented that this is a challenge and very time consuming for her and staff and need to find a way for this to be workable for everyone.</p> <p>DB/JG to link with CB outside the meeting to find a way to move this problem forward for the next academic year.</p>	DB/JG/CB

Date of next meeting – To be set