

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

GATESHEAD SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Thursday, 19 September 2024

PRESENT:	Peter Largue (Chair)	Trade Union Representative
	Mark Barrett	Maintained Secondary Headteachers
	Julie Goodfellow	Primary Academy Headteacher
	Alison Hall	Primary Maintained Headteacher
	Steven Haigh	Secondary Academy Headteacher
	Paul Harris	Primary Maintained Headteacher
	Rebecca Matthews	AP Academy Headteacher
	Ethel Mills	PVI Sector Representative
	Michelle Richards	Special Schools Headteacher
	Jacqui Ridley	Maintained Primary Governors
Brendan Robson	Secondary Faith Academies	

IN ATTENDANCE:	Terence Appleby	Gateshead Council
	Philip Cole	Gateshead Council
	Suzanne Dunn	Gateshead Council
	Kelly Flavin	Gateshead Council
	Barry Grenfell	Gateshead Council
	Kate Lowes	Gateshead Council
	Carole Smith	Gateshead Council

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence received from Sarah Diggle, Councillor Gallagher and Councillor Haley.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 11 July 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

With the minor ammendment of update to the apologies of absence for Alison Hall.

3 QUARTER 1 DSG MONITORING

The Forum received a report on Quarter 1's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) projected outturn position for 2023/24.

The Council's budget for 2024 is £123.352m with a final outturn for the year of £125.527m an overspend of £2.175m. £2.177 of this projected overspend is in the High Needs Block. This is due to:

- +£1,293k Top-ups
- +£312k Support for Inclusion
- +£542K Alternative Provisions Services

The balance of the DSG reserve on 31 March 2024 was £2.719m. Factoring in the in-year overspend of £2.175m and the Early Years clawback for 2023/24 of £0.131m decreased the balance to £0.413m on 31 March 2025.

It was noted that the High Needs Block is not sustainable, and work is being undertaken to look at sustainability issues going forward.

RESOLVED:

- The School Forum notes the report.

4 EARLY YEARS 2-YEAR-OLD FUNDING FORMULA

The Forum received a report for information on the early years 2-year-old funding formula.

As part of the DfE Section 251 (S251) data collection, the DfE required Councils to provide them with details of their early year's formulas. The DfE raised some queries on the S251 budget return which included the request that the deprived and working parent 2-year-old formula be disaggregated and required separate entities on the return. On review of the updated data the DfE responded 1 August 2024, that the pass-through rates of 2-year-olds for working parents did not comply with the 95% pass through rate and was only 92.4%.

The DfE S251 contact was e-mailed 2 August highlighting that Gateshead calculated the 2-year-old formula as one formula and the pass-through rate at 95% for the single formula. The issues that changing the formula part way through the year could cause for settings, with a request to submit a retrospective disapplication of the Schools and Early Years Financial Regulations on the basis that this was a genuine misunderstanding of the requirement for a 95% pass through rate for both elements of the 2-year-old funding.

On the 22 August at which the DfE provided their solution to the situation this was:

- The Council would not be able to apply for a retrospective disapplication of the regulations
- The S251 return would remain as completed with the formula for 2-year-olds of working parents being left as having a 92.4% pass through rate.
- A letter would be sent from the DfE to the Council to state that is it technically in breach of the Schools and Early Years Finance Regulations, but no action would be required by the Council for 2024/25 financial year.

The DfE has acknowledged that Gateshead Council are not the only Council to have experienced this issue and there is going to be an update on the operational guidance to correct the error of interpretation for 2025/26.

RESOLVED:

- i. That the report is noted.

5 EARLY YEARS INCLUSION FUND PROPOSAL AND DRAFT CONSULTATION

The Forum received a report on the use of the Early Years Inclusion Fund (EYIF) for 2024/25 to establish early years assessment hubs and to fund low and emerging SEND in early years settings.

In 2024/25 it is proposed that a £47,188 of the £540,238 EYIF is used to set up 2 early years assessment hubs within Gateshead. The aim of the hubs is to provide time measured intensive assessment and observation, with transition support back to the child’s “home” early years setting. A summary of the proposal was attached in appendix 1 of the report. Schools Forum supported the set-up of the hubs and agreed with the proposals in the draft consultation document.

The premises costs of the hubs will be brought back to Schools Forum when available.

The second part of the report proposed the allocation of the remainder of the EYIF be allocated to settings using the settings weighted ACORN hours for 2024/25 until process linked to SEND thresholds can be developed.

RESOLVED:

- i. The School forum agreed the proposal for the early years hub, and the proposed allocation of the EYIF
- ii. Schools Forum approved the draft consultation document to be sent out to all settings on the proposed uses of EYIF

6 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING: 7 NOVEMBER 2024

The date of the next meeting will be Thursday 7th November 2024.

Chair.....