

PRESENT

Committee Members

Schools:

Primary Schools – Head Teachers: Jagdeep Birdi (Colville Primary School); Amie Kelleher (Servite Catholic Primary School); David Sellens (Thomas Jones Primary School);

Primary Schools – Governors: Peter Bassett (Fox Federation); Chris Blewett (Oxford Gardens); Alison Mould – Vice-Chair (Fox Federation);

Secondary Schools: Paul Walton (All Saints' Catholic College); Amanda Sayers (Governor - All Saints' Catholic College);

Academies: Mariella Ardron (Chelsea Academy); Anna Jordan (Kensington Aldridge Academy);

Nursery School: Claire Fry (Chelsea Open Air Nursery School)

Non-schools:

RBKC: Cllr Preety Hudd (Con); Cllr Abdullahi Nur (Lab); Cllr Will Pascall (Con)

PVI Forum: Claire Dimpfl (Tadpoles Nursery School)

14-19 Representative: Craig Hanlon-Smith (North Kensington Centre at Morley College)

Council Officers

Ian Heggs, Bi-borough Director of Education and Libraries

Iraklis Kolokotronis, Head of Early Years and Asset Strategy

Nicola Martin-Francis, Senior Finance Manager, Schools and Education

Nimca Muhudin, Governance Assistant

Anita Stokes, Lead Strategic Finance Manager for Children's Services

1 MEMBERSHIP

The Forum agreed the temporary substitution of Paul Walton the acting headteacher of All Saints' Catholic College. The Forum also acknowledged the vacancy in Special Schools and Academy Representatives and officers assured members that they were working to fill the position.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Julie Ely, Grant Monaghan, Rebecca Timms, and Andrew O'Neil; with Paul Walton as a substitute for Andrew O'Neil.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Members proposed and agreed the rewording of the post-meeting note in section five of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2025. Governance amended the wording and presented an updated version. As such, the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the chair.

5 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT OUTTURN AND SCHOOL BALANCES

The Chair introduced the item and invited Officers to comment on the report. Officers noted a £841,000 underspending made up of three areas. There was underspending of £188,000 in the schools' and central schools' block, £913,000 in the high needs block, and overspending of £260,000 in Early Years. They explained that the overspending in Early Years was related to deprivation overpayments, and that there was an ongoing investigation to identify the issue. Officers also informed members that they were expecting two significant school restructuring business cases and proposed that the underspending of the previous year as well as the in-year budget be set aside to cover the expected costs.

Regarding school balances, the opening balance was £6.848m and the closing balance in the 2025/26 financial year was £4.861m of which the main change relates to the academisation on St Thomas More. Officers noted a reduction in the number of schools in deficit from a forecast five to two. Additionally, following agreements around the threshold balance control mechanism, officers had also reviewed how potential clawbacks could be redistributed.

The Chair invited comments or questions from members of the Committee.
Forum Members:

1. Expressed concern that Early Years' providers may have made provision dependant on funding that was now going to be clawed back. They sought assurance that schools struggling would not be affected by this and asked if this had been communicated to early years settings. Officers stated that payments had not been significant as they were only a small percentage of the whole rate they received. They had not yet informed Early Years settings as they needed to identify and understand what the issue was and come back with a definitive answer. They assured that once the main issue was identified they would liaise with the Department for Education (DFE) to figure out the next steps to be taken and would come back to forum.
2. Asked whether deprivation overpayments were more likely to have been made to maintained nurseries, Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Early Years settings or if there was an equal spread of where those payments had been made. Officers affirmed that it was an equal spread, and that it was dependent on a system that used post codes.
3. Questioned if it was lawful for the local authority to clawback funding generated by schools that was used to sustain themselves and sought clarification on the methodology used for this calculation, specifically

whether the funding generated by schools would be treated separately from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Officers explained that it was lawful, and that they were trying to adopt an approach where there could be potential for clawback and redistribution to other schools.

Schools' Forum AGREED to:

- 5.1 Note the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit carry forward position,
- 5.2 Note the level of schools' balances,
- 5.3 Note that schools' three-year budget plan positions will be reported to the next Schools Forum; and
- 5.4 Agree the methodology for the redistribution of any funds clawed back from schools with excessive balances at the end of 2025/26 - (paragraph 4.5).

6 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE HIGH NEEDS BUDGET REVIEW GROUP

The Chair introduced the item and invited officers to comment on the report. Following feedback from the High Needs Budget Review Group (HNBRG), Officers informed members that the top up for Ormiston and Kensington Queensmill would need to be reviewed and recommended a top up increase of £4,000. Although the school had requested that it be backdated to April, the increase would instead be applied from July as they were already in this current financial year.

Officers noted that St Charles Sixth Form had a lack of funding of up to £114,000. They explained that there was delay in receiving the £6,000 funding for pupils coming from outside the borough, and that they would not get the adjustment until April 2026. Officers had met with the DfE and asked if a special case could be made, but they did not agree to any exceptional funding. Officers also notified the forum that there was a White Paper to be expected in Autumn.

The Chair invited comments or questions from members of the committee.
Forum members:

1. Questioned who decided to increase St Charles's roll from 58 to 74. Officers stated that it was due to an increase in demand, and while place numbers had been agreed, funding could only be passed on once it had been received into the DSG. Officers reminded forum that a decision was not to be made and that it was brought forum to bring awareness to the issue and to note with concern to support the local authorities' case to the DfE.
2. Noted that there was an increase in post-16 places and as a result, most post-16 providers were looking to expand their offer in the next two to three years.
3. Sought assurance regarding the £4,000 top up increase for Ormiston Kensington Queensmill, if costs were comparable with other costs across

London. Officers confirmed that it was and that the average costs for alternatives from the independent sector was £61,000.

Schools' Forum AGREED to:

- 9.1 Agree an increase in the top up for Kensington Queensmill to £32,700 with effect from July 2025 (para 3.3)
- 9.2 Note with concern the difficulties facing Sixth Form Colleges (para 3.6)
- 9.3 Endorse proposals for delivery of the Fairer Futures SEND Strategy 2025-2030 (para 5.2)
- 9.4 Note the outturn 2024-25 (para 1.1) and cumulative deficit; and successful completion of grant funded workstreams (section 4)
- 9.5 note the additional 2025/26 funding for Core School Budget Grant for special schools, Alternative Provision and hospital providers is estimated to total £364,091 (section 7)
- 9.6 Note the forward plan for the High Needs Budget Review Group (section 8).

7 2026/27 SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA OPTIONS FOR CONSULTATION

The Chair introduced the item and invited officers to comment on the report. Officers highlighted that they were seeking approval to begin the consultation for the potential funding formula for 2026/2027. The reminded forum members that in 2025/2026 they moved the minimum amount of 10% towards the National Funding Formula (NFF) Factor. Officers explained that although they would not be receiving further details or requirements for the 2026/2027 for the National Funding Formula until autumn, it would not the hinder the start of the consultation process.

The Chair invited comments or questions from members of the committee. Forum Members:

1. Questioned if there was a pattern in the data presented in Appendix A and why there was such a large difference in percentage change in per pupil funding when it reached the 20% towards NFF Factor value in comparison to the 10%; suggesting that the changes are kept minimal. Officers explained that it would be hard to see a pattern due to the different factors in the formula but the aspect that changes is that it was reducing the standard funding per pupil and increasing the funding for deprived pupils which shifts money to more deprived children. They also reminded members that they were not agreeing the percentage move towards the NFF in this meeting and that they could still propose to move the minimum amount to create the least turbulence.
2. Asked if it was likely that the MFG would be set to 0.9 instead of 0.5. Officers explained that as the government were trying to move schools towards the NFF focusing more funding on deprivation, it was unlikely that the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) would be more than 0.5% increase and instead could potentially be 0% per pupil change. This would also not affect the overall

schools block of the DSG but the update of the IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) data would.

Schools' Forum AGREED to:

- 7.1 Note the new schools School Budget Support Grant (section 3)
- 7.2 Agree the principles for agreeing the schools funding formula for 2026/27 budgets (paragraph 4.1);
- 7.3 Agree the options to go forward for consultation with primary and secondary headteacher groups in September / October 2025 (section 5); and
- 7.4 Note the next steps for agreeing the schools funding formula for 2026/27 budgets (section 6).

8 EARLY YEARS LOCAL SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING AND NI CONTRIBUTION AND TEACHERS PAY GRANT

The Chair introduced the item and invited officers to comment on the report. Following the DfE's announcement in May 2025 regarding Early Years providers' national insurance contributions and teachers' pay grant, officers decided that they would distribute the grant at a flat rate across all providers for both schools and early years settings in PVI sectors. They also noted that the rate for under twos was different and that they would pass 100% of that rate to schools and settings. Officers also stated that the early years national insurance contribution and teachers pay grant would only be available to the public sector and early years. They highlighted the discrepancy between the public sector and PVI sector, with the PVIs having expressed their dissatisfaction with this decision.

The Chair invited comments or questions from members of the committee. Forum Members:

1. Noted the pressure faced by the private and voluntary sector as they expressed their concerns around funding, sharing that they had already lost five nurseries this year. They highlighted that they were not only receiving insufficient funding, but also their self-generated income was subject to taxation.

Schools' Forum AGREED to:

- 4.1 Note the local supplementary funding and
- 4.2 Note the early years national insurance contributions and Teachers' Pay Grant for 2025/26.

9 ANY OTHER ORAL OR WRITTEN ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Officers informed the members that this was Craig Hanlon-smith's last meeting with the Schools' Forum. Craig shared a few words reflecting on his time with the Forum and noted that he would update officers on the interim arrangements following his departure.

The meeting ended at 5.58pm

Chair