

# Blackpool Council

6 June 2022

## SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 14 June 2022 at 9.15 am  
@thegrange, Bathurst Avenue, Blackpool, FY3 7RW

## A G E N D A

**1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are asked to declare any interests in the items under consideration and in doing so state:

(1) the type of interest concerned either a

- (a) personal interest
- (b) prejudicial interest
- (c) disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI)

and

(2) the nature of the interest concerned

If any member requires advice on declarations of interests, they are advised to contact the Head of Democratic Governance in advance of the meeting.

**3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** (Pages 1 - 10)

To consider and agree the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 15 March 2022 as an accurate record.

To consider any matters arising not discussed elsewhere on the Agenda.

**4 LOCAL AUTHORITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE** (Pages 11 - 24)

To receive an overview of recent developments within the local authority for information.

**5 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT YEAR END BUDGET MONITORING 2021/22** (Pages 25 - 28)

To report the budget position of the 2021/22 Dedicated Schools Grant and Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves as at 31 March 2022.

**6 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING 2022/23** (Pages 29 - 32)

To report the budget position of the 2022/23 Dedicated Schools Grant and Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves as at 30 April 2022.

**7 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE** (Pages 33 - 42)

To consider the latest developments relevant to the High Needs Budget.

**8 SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING DATES FOR 2023**

To consider and agree the dates for the 2023 Schools Forum meetings:

Tuesday 17 January 2023  
Tuesday 7 March 2023  
Tuesday 20 June 2023  
Tuesday 10 October 2023

**9 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

To note the date of the next meeting as Tuesday 11 October 2022.

**10 GLOSSARY OF TERMS** (Pages 43 - 44)

A glossary of acronyms is included for information.

**Venue information:**

Ground floor meeting room, accessible toilets, no-smoking building.

**Other information:**

For queries regarding this agenda please contact Danielle Bowater, Democratic Governance Adviser, Tel: 01253 477202, e-mail [danielle.bowater@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:danielle.bowater@blackpool.gov.uk)

Copies of the agendas and minutes of the Schools Forum are available on the Council's website at [www.blackpool.gov.uk](http://www.blackpool.gov.uk)

# Public Document Pack Agenda Item 3

## MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2022

### **Present:**

#### **Maintained Primary School Head Teachers/Representative**

Ms H Moreton, Holy Family

#### **Primary Governor**

Ms M Lonican, Our Lady

#### **Special School Maintained Representative**

Mr N Oldham, Highfurlong

#### **Special School Academy Representative**

Ms G Hughes, Park (Sea View)

#### **Academy / Free School Representatives**

Mr S Eccles, St Mary's (BEBCMAT)

Mr R Farley, Westminster (FCAT) (Chair)

Ms T Harrison, Thames / Roseacre (AtC)

Mr M McIver, St George's/Baines Endowed (Cidari)

Mr E Vitalis, South Shore / Marton (Bright Futures)

#### **Pupil Referral Unit**

Ms V O'Farrell, Education Diversity

#### **Early Years**

Ms R Dey, Pebbles Day Nursery

#### **Non-Schools Members**

Mr N Adams, UNISON

Ms A Baines, Staff/Teacher Associations

#### **In Attendance:**

Councillor J Hobson, Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Schools

Mr D Maddocks, Senior Accountant

Mr P Turner, Assistant Director – School Improvement and SEND

Mrs H Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources

Mrs D Bowater, Democratic Governance Adviser (minutes)

### **1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

Roger Farley welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Elaine Allen (St John Vianney); Graeme Dow (Anchorsolme/Sea View), Abrar Hussain (Highfield/Star), Jill Gray (Blackpool Sixth Form College), Angela Wellings (Interim Head of SEND) and Mark Golden (Head of Accountancy, Deputy S151 Officer).

## MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2022

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest noted.

### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18 January 2022 were considered and agreed as an accurate record.

Matters arising from the minutes:

#### **Discussion on SEND budgets to be scheduled for a Schools Forum meeting in early 2022 –**

At the October 2021 Schools Forum meeting it was noted that there were a number of items relating to SEND support including Early Help which were being reviewed and it was agreed that a more detailed overview would be presented to either the January 2022 or March 2022 Schools Forum meeting. At the January 2022 meeting, it was noted that an update relating to Early Help would be presented to the March 2022 meeting. An update was included in the High Needs agenda item at the March 2022 meeting. It was also recognised that a High Needs Working Group meeting had been arranged for 21 March 2022 where further discussions would take place and an update would be presented to the June 2022 Schools Forum meeting.

#### **Paul Turner's team to monitor college attendance within the town and the potential impact on numbers of young people not in education employment or training (NEET) –**

Paul Turner reported that attendance at the Sixth Form College was 87%. A report on attendance would be included in the local authority update at the next Schools Forum meeting.

#### **At the January 2022 meeting, of the Schools Forum members in attendance, the majority did not agree to support the proposed reduction in the budget for Exceptional**

**Circumstances to £100k from 2022/23 –** Hilary Wood reported that the budget for Exceptional Circumstances remained at £165k for 2022/23 and had not been reduced to £100k.

#### **The rate per pupil options for the de-delegation of funding for union duties considering**

**use of the reserves –** Hilary Wood reported that there would be no increase in the per pupil rate in 2022/23, and that it would remain at the 2021/22 rate of £4.20 per pupil.

#### **Actions:**

- **An update from the High Needs Working Group meeting would be presented to the June 2022 Schools Forum meeting to update on Early Help budget plans (Hilary Wood).**
- **A report on college attendance would be included in the local authority update at the next Schools Forum meeting including the impact on numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (Paul Turner).**

#### **4 LOCAL AUTHORITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE**

(Rachel Dey and Tracy Harrison arrived during the item)

Paul Turner provided an update on recent developments from the local authority since the previous meeting. It was noted that inclusion had improved but recognised that elective home education had increased. It was acknowledged that permanent exclusions were at a similar level as the previous year. It was also recognised that schools were doing well to deliver strategies to get young people back into school. The number of pupils at the Pupil Referral Unit was lower compared to previous years.

In relation to inspections, it was reported that both Montgomery and Langdale schools had received Section 5 inspections and the reports were awaited. Blackpool and the Fylde College had been inspected and rated as good and Blackpool Sixth Form College rated as outstanding following inspections. It was further reported that Westminster Primary Academy was also rated as good following an inspection. A further inspection of the local area looking at SEND had been undertaken in March 2022 with the report anticipated in April 2022.

In relation to Education Investment Areas, it was reported that announcements were awaited from central government but it was anticipated that they would be extending the Opportunity Area programme and making further announcements on high needs capital funding. It was agreed that an update would be presented at a future meeting giving further details of Education Investment Areas once the announcements had been received.

It was commented that the Secretary of State would be visiting both Highfurlong School and Aspire Academy on 18 March 2022.

There were no questions following the report.

#### **Action:**

- **An update would be presented at a future meeting giving further details of Education Investment Areas once the announcements had been received. (Paul Turner)**

#### **5 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING 2021/22**

In the absence of Mark Golden, Darren Maddocks reported on the budget position of the 2021-22 Dedicated Schools Grant and the amount of Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves Forecast as at 31 January 2022 for information.

It was reported that the budget monitoring to January 2022 forecast a £697k overspend against a deficit budget of £325k. Therefore, the total in-year shortfall was estimated at £1.022m.

The major in-year variances included the post-16 placements demand being £305k higher than budgeted; Access and Inclusion of £107k due to increased costs for the Oracle building

## MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2022

and resilience coaches; Special Schools placement growth of £154k and Exceptional Circumstances costs higher than budgeted at £175k.

In relation to reserves, it was reported that the local authority was able to account for a transfer into DSG reserves of £1.604m from a provision that had been set aside in the current and previous financial years as discussed at the January 2022 Schools Forum meeting. It was noted that when the transferred provision was added to the brought forward deficit of £5.766m and the in-year deficit of £1.022m, the resulting forecast DSG deficit by 31 March 2022 reduced to £5.183m. This excluded the maintained schools reserves (£3.919m) and the specific Union Fees reserve (£44k).

There were no questions following the report.

### 6 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

Hilary Wood provided an update on the latest developments in relation to the High Needs budget.

It was reported that Blackpool, along with many other areas around the country, was experiencing financial pressures on its High Needs Budget. In order to better understand Blackpool's financial position, a medium-term financial plan had been developed to monitor forecast expenditure against the High Needs Budget, and factor in predictions of where savings may be achieved.

It was noted that the additional income in 2022/23 and subsequent years, together with the transfer of the provision for new and growing schools, had contributed to a forecast position whereby the cumulative deficit could be recovered within a four-year period by March 2026. It was reported that the Medium-Term Financial Plan contained a number of ambitious assumptions so concerted efforts were required to contain expenditure. Hilary Wood also highlighted the place planning strategy that was in development to look at the placements of young people with High Needs.

Hilary Wood also provided an update on the Department for Education's (DfE) Safety Valve programme. It was reported that the Safety Valve intervention was introduced in 2021/21 to assist those local authorities with the highest percentage Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit. Local authorities were asked to develop substantial plans for reform to their high needs systems and associated spending, with support and challenge from the DfE. The authorities were held to account for their reform and savings via regular reporting to the DfE and received additional funding over time to contribute to their historic deficits depending on delivery of the reforms.

It was reported that Blackpool had been invited to take part in the second round of the safety valve programme of 2022/23, commencing in September 2022. It was acknowledged that the invitation was based on the deficit position as at March 2021, which showed a deficit of 4.4% against DSG levels, rather than more recent forecasts of deficit recovery plans. As further details were expected in spring 2022, the local authority had been asked to prioritise the development of a DSG management plan, using the DfE's standard suite of

## MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2022

spreadsheets.

It was reported that the High Needs Funding Working Group had been reconvened to meet on 21 March 2022 to discuss Blackpool's approach to the exercise and a full report would be presented to the Schools Forum meeting in June 2022.

It was noted that the associated safety valve funding would assist with the deficit and that the additional scrutiny placed on the budget could have a positive impact on the service for children and young people in Blackpool.

Questions on the safety valve programme were welcomed.

One member asked whether the DfE had issued a framework to provide assurances that the quality of provision would be protected during the safety valve programme and associated plans to avoid an adverse impact. In response, Hilary Wood confirmed that this could be raised with the DfE but from informal discussions with other authorities, the focus had been on the finances. Paul Turner also commented that he would request that the success of the Opportunity Area programme be taken into consideration.

Hilary Wood provided an update on early help interventions to target funding towards initiatives that provided early help to support schools, delivering better outcomes and avoiding costly interventions at a later stage. It was reported that the High Needs Funding Working Group on 21 March 2022 would be asked to consider priorities for schools.

It was reported that £400k per year has been set aside and the Working Group would consider a number of existing initiatives whose temporary funding had been due to end in the short-term, with a view to shaping the local authority's plans for the most effective use of this funding, thereby ensuring that the benefits of these projects did not end when the funding finished. It was noted that proposals would be presented to Schools Forum in June 2022.

Questions on the Early Help interventions were welcomed.

Paul Turner advised that there was a need to address the number of Elective Home Educated (EHE) young people in Blackpool and reported that there was a full-time member of staff and seconded officer working in this area. He asked Schools Forum members to consider whether they would like to ring fence part of the proposed £400k allocation to finance further EHE officers. He suggested that there was a significant number of children on the EHE list and the officers would be recruited to effectively monitor the cohort and encourage the return to mainstream settings benefiting schools' budgets and also any potential safeguarding concerns.

One member asked whether staff could be seconded from other areas to fulfil these roles as the preference would be to use existing resources if reductions were required elsewhere in the High Needs budget.

Darren Maddocks comments that the local authority finance team would advise against new

## MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2022

commitments while a deficit remained.

It was agreed the Schools Forum would delegate the powers to respond to the local authority on the additional EHE posts to the High Needs Funding Working Group meeting on 21 March 2022 in order that this could be considered alongside other options for use of the inclusion funding.

### **Actions:**

- **It was agreed that an update on proposals for early help interventions to support schools be presented to the June 2022 Schools Forum following discussions at the High Needs Funding Working Group on 21 March 2022.**
- **The High Needs Funding Working Group to be given delegated powers to respond to the local authority on the additional EHE posts on behalf of the Schools Forum.**

Hilary Wood went on to provide an update on the review of special school funding. The outcome of the discussion paper was outlined in the report summarised as follows:

- Additional pupils in excess of commissioned places will be funded in full in the months where the number of pupils exceed 2% above commissioned places.
- All nursery pupils to be funded as if they attend on a full-time basis.
- The banding of pupils will be reviewed where schools believe that they are wrongly banded.
- No further uplift to be applied in 2022/23, given the other changes being made.

Finally, it was reported that the key performance indicators were included and contained a number of financial and non-financial key performance indicators to allow Schools Forum members to understand trends and impact around SEND and inclusion, it was noted that the indicators were the same as those presented to the January 2022 Schools Forum meeting due to the quarterly reporting timescales.

There were no further questions following the update.

### **7 EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA 2022/23**

Hilary Wood presented the early years funding formula 2022/23 for consultation and asked Schools Forum to consider and agree the local authority's proposed formula for Early Years funding for three- and four-year old early education, as well as the value of the Inclusion Fund for 2022/23, and to note the funding rate for two-year olds.

At paragraph 3.3 of the report, it was noted that the amount should read £4.50 not £4.44 for the overall funding rate for three and four year olds in 2021/22.

It was reported that the local authority proposed to pass through the full amount of the government increase to Early Years providers through the single funding formula. It was proposed that the overall hourly Base Rate increased by a total of 18p per child per hour to include the 17p additional funding, together with 1p from savings. This would bring the Base Rate up to £4.36 per hour, compared to £4.18 in 2021/22.



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It was further reported that the Early Years Inclusion Fund was set aside from the three- and four-year old grant in order to support settings to improve early learning and development outcomes for children with additional needs. In light of higher demand for support from the Inclusion Fund in 2021/22, it was proposed for 2022/23 that the value of the fund be increased and apportioned at 4p per hour. This would equate to approximately £60k per annum, compared to the budget of £30k set aside in 2021/22. This would be funded from the savings identified in central expenditure.

It was finally reported that Government funding for eligible two-year olds had increased by 21p to £5.57 per child per hour for 2022/23, from £5.36 for 2021/22. Hilary Wood confirmed that the local authority's intention was to pass through the full amount of the government increase, together with 1p from savings, to Early Years providers and increase the rate to £5.39 in 2022/23 (from £5.17 in 2021/22).

Members including all school and early years members were asked to vote on the proposals.

All school and early years members in attendance, eligible to vote, agreed to the local authority's proposed formula for three- and four-year old early education for 2022/23.

All school and early years members in attendance, eligible to vote, agreed that the Early Years Inclusion fund for three- and four-year olds should be apportioned at a rate of 4p per hour, equating to approximately £60k per annum.

Finally, all members agreed to note the local authority's funding rate for two-year olds of £5.39 per hour.

### **Resolved:**

- **To note that the overall funding rate for three and four year olds funding rates should read £4.50 not £4.44 for the overall funding rate for three and four year olds in 2021/22 in the report.**
- **Following a vote, all school and early years members in attendance, eligible to vote, agreed to the local authority's proposed formula for three- and four-year old early education for 2022/23.**
- **Following a vote, all school and early years members in attendance, eligible to vote, agreed that the Early Years Inclusion fund for three- and four-year olds should be apportioned at a rate of 4p per hour, equating to approximately £60k per annum.**
- **All members agreed to note the local authority's funding rate for two-year olds of £5.39 per hour.**

### **8 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET PROPOSAL 2022/23**

Hilary Wood presented the proposals for the use of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2022/23 for consultation. It was acknowledged that the provisional estimates for expenditure against the Dedicated Schools Grants in 2022/23 presented in January 2022 had been updated.

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In relation to the Schools Block, the allocation was £98.818m. It was noted that, as agreed by Schools Forum in previous meetings, a transfer of 0.5% equating to £494k had been made to the High Needs Block, and the remaining growth contingency of £90k had been added into the Schools Block. The total amount allocated to schools and academies through the local schools formula was noted as £98.414m.

It was reported that schools had received their budget statements in February 2022 and special schools had received theirs in March 2022.

Hilary Wood also reported that a small balance of £6.5k remained following the running of the formula. The amount was the difference between the allocations within DSG for business rates compared to the actual allocation through the local formula. The Department for Education had proposed a change to the treatment of business rates payments, however this would not be introduced in Blackpool in 2022/23. It was anticipated that the balance would either be recovered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, or be required to fund any in-year adjustments to business rates funded through the formula.

It was reported that the Central Schools Services Block allocation in 2022/23 would be £1.196m, which is made up of £684k of ongoing funding, plus a reduced amount of £512k in respect of the historic contribution to combined budgets.

It was reported that the High Needs Block forecast expenditure in 2022/23 totalled £28.657m. Funding for this was made up of £28.261m from the High Needs Block, £946k from the additional Spending Review allocation, the transfer of £494k from the Schools Block, plus £49k funding for new and growing special free schools. This total of £29.751m resulted in a forecast surplus of £1.093m in this funding block.

In relation to the Early Years, expenditure against the provisional Early Years Block allocation of £8.649m presented a breakeven position. It was reported that the allocations would be updated once the January 2022 and the January 2023 census have been processed.

Questions were welcomed.

It was acknowledged that there would be a strain on school settlement budgets with the potential 3% pay increase for teachers and the £30k starting salary for teachers plus the potential increase of building costs including gas and electricity. It was suggested that information on this be collated and circulated to headteachers and business managers to highlight the issue. Hilary Wood noted that the school finance team had the information and shared it with schools so they could share it with academies. It was also commented that there was an assumption that government expected the Schools Supplementary Grant to cover inflation pressures and no further funding was anticipated.

There were no further questions on the DGS Budget Proposal for 2022/23.

### **Action:**

- **Information on increasing running costs for schools be collated and circulated to headteachers and business managers (Hilary Wood).**

## MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2022

### 9 COVID FUNDING UPDATE

Hilary Wood presented an update regarding financial support provided in the education sector during the Covid-19 outbreak since the previous meeting. Information was provided on the in-school vaccination programme and air cleaning units, the national tutoring programme and the national testing programme for schools and colleges.

It was proposed and agreed that information on the financial support provided in the education sector during the Covid-19 outbreak would be presented as required rather than as a standing item.

#### Resolved

- **Information on the financial support provided in the education sector during the Covid-19 outbreak would be presented as required rather than as a standing item.**

### 10 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as Tuesday 14 June 2022.  
It was recognised that the meeting would be held in person if feasible.

### 11 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The glossary of terms was provided for information.

#### Chairman

(The meeting ended 10.05am)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:  
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**Report to:** **SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**Relevant Officer:** Paul Turner – Assistant Director  
**Date of Meeting:** 14 June 2022

## LOCAL AUTHORITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE

### 1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide an overview of recent developments within the local authority to the Forum.

1.2 Action required:

- For information (no decision required)

### 2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 This report is presented for information only.

### 3.0 Background Information

3.1 Attendance has been steadily over 90% on average over this academic year. Attendance in the primary phase has been better than in the secondary phase.

Other than Year 7, the attendance on average across secondary year groups has been below 90%. Schools have been affected by Covid and also recurrent seasonal illnesses. It is hoped that the next academic year will see a return to relatively normal patterns of attendance and absence.

The figures below represent the latest statistics for overall absence and persistent absence:

Primary 6.42 / 20.54

Secondary 9.57 / 31.06

Special 9.24 / 30.23

PRU 33.17 / 69.05

### Exclusions and suspension

Permanent Exclusions are now at a higher level than last year. Suspensions (fixed-term exclusions) are higher than last year.

Permanent Exclusions – 15 compared to 13.

Suspensions – 1245 compared to 887.

### **PRU numbers**

PRU numbers are still significantly lower than they have been historically. There are 165 pupils on roll, with 12 dual-registered and to return to their schools and 74 due to leave by the end of this academic year. That will leave the pupil roll at 79.

### **Ofsted inspections**

A number of schools have been inspected since the last meeting, with Montgomery, Hawes Side and Langdale having their reports published.

Montgomery – Requires Improvement.

Langdale – Good.

Hawes Side – Good.

### **SEND and Local Area SEND inspection**

The SEND Area inspection report (appendix 4a) has now been published and the partnership is required to produce a Written Statement of Action against four points, which are –

- The lack of specificity, ownership and accountability in the area's improvement strategy for SEND.
- The duties around preparing children and young people for adulthood not being fulfilled.
- The poor communication with parents and carers across the area.
- The long waiting times for some therapies.

This has an implication for the High Needs Block as the local authority will need to modify the strategy to ensure that it meets the expectations of Ofsted and CQC and improves outcomes for families.

The local authority appointed a new Head of SEND, Charlotte Baron, who will commence in post on 13 June 2022. Thanks are extended to the outgoing Head of SEND Angela Wellings.

### **Education Investment Areas**

At the time of writing there has been no update on Education Investment Areas.

**4.0 List of acronyms:**

**PRU – Pupil Referral Unit**

**SEND – Special Education Needs and Disabilities**

**List of Appendices:**

Appendix 4a – Joint Area SEND inspection in Blackpool.

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**11 May 2022**

Victoria Gent  
Director of Children's Services  
Blackpool Council  
Number One  
Bickerstaffe Square  
Blackpool  
FY1 3AH

Andrew Bennett, Interim Chief Officer, Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group  
Paul Turner, Local Area Nominated Officer, Blackpool Council

Dear Ms Gent and Mr Bennett

### **Joint area SEND inspection in Blackpool**

Between 28 February and 4 March 2022, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Blackpool to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The inspection was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted, with a team of inspectors including an Ofsted Inspector and a children's services inspector from the CQC.

Inspectors spoke with children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), parents and carers, and local authority and National Health Service (NHS) officers. They visited a range of providers and spoke to leaders, staff and governors about how they are implementing the SEND reforms. Inspectors looked at a range of information about the performance of the area, including the area's self-evaluation. Inspectors met with leaders from the area for health, social care and education. They reviewed performance data and evidence about the local offer and joint commissioning.

As a result of the findings of this inspection and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) is required because of significant areas of weakness in the area's practice. HMCI has also determined that the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group are jointly responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted.

In reaching their judgements, inspectors took account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SEND arrangements in the area. Inspectors considered a range of information about the impact of the pandemic and explored how the area's plans and actions had been adapted as a result.

This letter outlines our findings from the inspection, including some areas of strengths and areas for further improvement.

## **Main Findings**

- The area has been too slow to implement the 2014 reforms. It is now almost eight years since the code of practice was published, yet leaders have only just started to prioritise the education, health and care provision for children and young people with SEND. Many children, young people and their families in Blackpool continue to be let down.
- Partners across the area are now working together to develop a new SEND strategy. Leaders have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses across the area and their self-evaluation accurately reflects this. But, while long-term ambitions have been agreed, there is a limited shared understanding about what needs to be done, by when and by whom, to achieve these. Although it is clear that leaders are now prioritising SEND across the area, there is not a shared understanding of what the improvements will look like.
- The area has not paid sufficient heed to the views of children, young people, parents and carers. In some instances, important decisions about key services, such as the short breaks provision, have been taken which have negatively impacted on lived experience of families. While this is beginning to change, there are still missed opportunities to listen to children, young people and their families and act on their views.
- Too often, professionals' poor communication with parents and carers exacerbates their anxieties and concerns. Parents and carers are frustrated when they do not know how to get in touch with services. The high turnover of staff in some teams means that parents and carers do not always have a consistent, known professional who they can contact when they need to. Professionals do not consider what would be most helpful for parents and carers consistently when deciding how to communicate with them. This is because communication methods are not routinely co-produced.
- Some parents and carers spoke highly of leaders' efforts to maintain services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools remained open to vulnerable children and young people throughout local and national restrictions. Health services adapted their ways of working so they could continue to identify and meet children and young people's needs. Parents and carers appreciate the

emotional and practical support that they have received from frontline professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Parents and carers are quick to sing the praises of many frontline staff who make a positive difference. There are staff who go the extra mile every day to give children, young people and their families the help and support that they need. These individual professionals are a 'lifeline' for the families that they work with.
- Despite efforts to reduce waiting times, parents and carers, children and young people experience considerable stress and anxiety due to long waits to access some services. Many parents and carers' perception is that the area has put barriers in place to make it harder for them to access education, health and care (EHC) plan assessments and specialist short breaks. Where there are delays, parents and carers report that these lead to their children and young people's needs escalating. Families find it hard to cope as a result.
- Parents and carers are the experts regarding their children's needs. However, some feel that professionals are too quick to dismiss their concerns. This is particularly the case when children and young people's needs are less visible or when they mask their needs. This leaves some parents and carers feeling isolated and struggling to cope.
- Parents and carers are rightly concerned about their children and young people's futures. Some young people have access to suitable advice, guidance and support to help them realise their aspirations. But, too often, young people have to rely on the help of friends and family to help prepare them for their adult lives. The pathways into greater independence and employability are not well developed. Some young people are left 'high and dry' as the services that they received as children do not link up with equivalent services for adults.
- The online local offer is not sufficiently helpful, informative or up to date. Too many parents and carers are not aware of this website. Those parents and carers who have visited the local offer website struggle to find the information that they need.

## **The effectiveness of the local area in identifying children and young people's special educational needs and/or disabilities**

### **Strengths**

- The introduction of the graduated response toolkit has increased the skills and expertise of school staff. It has helped staff to identify children and young people's emerging needs and put in appropriate support quickly. SEND advisory teachers offer valued advice and guidance to settings to make sure

that this toolkit is used effectively. This has improved provision for children and young people receiving SEND support.

- The area's processes to support the identification of needs in the early years are effective. Early years practitioners benefit from the support of the early years advisory teachers and the area SEND coordinators (SENDCos). Importantly, these practitioners receive effective training and support. This means that young children have the right support in place when they start primary school.
- The informal outreach service provided by specialist schools is making a positive difference. These specialist staff help their mainstream colleagues to better identify, assess and meet the needs of children and young people. This helps children and young people get the support that they need in their mainstream settings. This service helps to build the knowledge, skills and confidence of mainstream school staff.

### **Areas for development**

- Parents and carers report that, all too often, professionals dismiss their concerns about their children or young people's needs. They feel that some professionals, in particular school SENDCos, lack the expertise needed to understand how children and young people mask their needs. This leads to delays in children and young people having their needs identified and met. On occasion, this means that needs can escalate to a point of crisis.
- The requested changes to EHC plans following annual reviews are not completed in a timely manner. Many children and young people's EHC plans are outdated. Consequently, these plans no longer accurately reflect the child or young person and their needs.
- The social care needs of children and young people with SEND are not routinely or reliably identified, assessed or met. The requirement for an assessment by the complex care needs team to access specialist short breaks is a barrier for many families. Added to this, frequent changes in social workers in the complex care needs team has caused drift, delay and an inconsistent approach. This has left parents and carers feeling frustrated as their families have not had the support that they need.
- Many parents and carers are frustrated by the neurodevelopmental pathway. They do not understand how the pathway works. Poor communication means that they worry that their child or young person has been 'lost' in the system. There is now a dedicated practitioner who contacts families whose children have been accepted onto the pathway. But too many families do not feel that things have improved.
- Parents and carers find it hard to get hold of the information that they need. They struggle to navigate the SEND system. Often, the information provided

to parents and carers is not relevant or is written in language that is too difficult to understand. Most parents and carers want consistent named professionals who they can contact when they have any worries or queries.

## **The effectiveness of the local area in meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities**

### **Strengths**

- The most vulnerable children and young people with SEND benefit from the wealth of specialist services available. For example, children looked after and at risk of exploitation benefit from targeted support to keep them safe. This means that the most vulnerable children and young people with SEND have their needs met well.
- The area's well-regarded special schools provide an effective service for children, young people and their families. Many mainstream settings in the area also meet the needs of children and young people with SEND well. Parents and carers with children in these schools report positively about how staff advocate for them and signpost them to where they can gain valuable support as a family.
- The area has supported children, young people and their families to access services remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some services carried out home visits to check that families had the technology required to attend online appointments. They used these home visits to provide information so that families knew what to expect of the service. This made sure that more families could benefit from new ways of working.
- The child and adolescent support and help enhanced response service is available to older young people who require mental health support. The service is valued by young people and their families. This early intervention often prevents a deterioration in young people's mental health.
- The relationship between the parent carer forum and area leaders has improved over the past 12 months. The parent carer forum works with area leaders now to make decisions about services for children and young people with SEND. This means that these decisions match what children, young people and their families want and need.

### **Areas for development**

- For many parents and carers, an EHC plan and special school place for their child are the 'golden ticket'. Historical weaknesses in the area's secondary schools have meant that parents and carers have been eager to gain a place for their child in one of the well-regarded special schools. This parental

preference for a special school place has been exacerbated by a number of other SEND services wrapping themselves around the special schools so that they have become a 'one-stop shop'. The area is reversing this trend. However, there are high numbers of children and young people who attend special schools whose needs could be best met in mainstream schools.

- The lack of a well-developed strategy for joint commissioning means that leaders have not prioritised some of the most pressing areas of need. For example, young people who access some services out of area are frustrated by the obstacles that they encounter. This includes not being able to access specialist equipment in a timely manner.
- Children and young people wait too long to access some speech and language services. These children and young people's needs remain unmet. These long waits cause many families frustration and distress.
- There is not enough time allocated to the designated clinical officer role. This limits the capacity of this key role in influencing improvements across the area. For example, there is limited capacity to carry out robust quality assurance processes for EHC plans. This means that the quality of the health input to these plans is sometimes inconsistent.
- There is no strategic approach to co-production (a way of working where children, families and those that provide the services work together to create a decision or a service that works for them) across the area. While some teams have co-produced aspects of their work, this is not consistent. Many parents, carers, children and young people do not feel that they are fully involved in making important decisions that affect their lives.
- The lack of capacity in the SEND information and advice support service over the past 12 months has reduced the number of families that benefit from this service. There is not the advocacy available that some families need. While leaders have recognised these issues and have started to address them, there is much to do to develop an effective service.
- Recent changes to the area's short-breaks provision have impacted negatively on some families. Some children and young people can no longer access activities that they previously routinely attended. Many families feel that the current short-breaks offer does not meet the needs or interests of their children and young people.
- The intended outcomes for children and young people in EHC plans are often too vague. Many plans do not set out specifically what children and young people should know and be able to do. They do not set out clearly how each outcome will benefit the child or young person. This makes it difficult for professionals to evaluate whether the planned provision is meeting children and young people's needs sufficiently well.

- Co-production is not embedded into the area's ways of working. Consequently, opportunities to better tailor planned improvements to the needs of children, young people and their families are being missed.
- Children and young people's experience of access to school nurses in mainstream schools is not consistent. Only some children and young people can access school nurse services at their school. This means that other children and young people do not have support from a school nurse at an early stage, for example as part of a team around the child. Moreover, young people preparing to move to adult services do not get the advice and services that they need consistently.

### **The effectiveness of the local area in improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities**

#### **Strengths**

- The numbers of children and young people with SEND who have been permanently excluded has reduced considerably over the past few years. Moreover, at the same time, the number of children and young people on the roll of the area's pupil referral unit (PRU) has reduced dramatically.
- Consequently, the PRU staff now offer a more preventative early intervention package of support for children and young people who are at risk of exclusion. Consequently, more of these children and young people return successfully to their mainstream schools.
- The intended outcomes in recent EHC plans better reflect the aspirations of children, young people and their families. Consequently, provision is better matched to what is most important for children, young people and their families. This helps more children and young people to achieve the goals that matter to them. For example, almost all young people aged 16 to 17 years are in education, employment or training.
- The community nursing service provides care for children and young people with complex care needs in their own homes as well as in schools. These nurses work closely with children, young people, their families and other professionals to agree care plans. This means that children and young people's specific wishes are respected, and their individual needs are met.
- There is a wide range of provision across the area to improve children and young people's mental health and well-being. For example, one local provider offers groups, activities and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual children and young people. Providers such as this are supporting children, young people and their families' social and emotional mental health needs.

These needs might otherwise require referral to the child and adolescent mental health service.

- Most children with SEND aged between 11 and 16 years attend good or better mainstream schools. The recent improvement in the overall effectiveness of a number of the mainstream secondary schools in Blackpool means that more of these children and young people receive a better quality of education.
- Across the area, children in primary schools who require support for SEND attend and achieve well. This means that they are well prepared for their move to secondary school.

### **Areas for development**

- Leaders do not evaluate the impact of EHC plans to improve the education, health and care outcomes for children and young people. Leaders do not know how well the area meets the needs and improves the outcomes of different groups of children and young people.
- Preparation for adulthood is not well developed across the area. The lack of understanding about this across the partnership has limited the opportunities available to young people. Transitions are often poorly planned. Across all partners, planning for adulthood starts too late and does not provide young people with the advice and guidance that they need to make well-informed decisions. These weaknesses are exacerbated by the lack of useful, up-to-date information and analysis to help leaders better understand what is available and what more needs to be put in place.
- Across the area, children and young people who require support for their SEND and those who have an EHC plan do not achieve well at the end of key stage 4.

### **The inspection raises significant concerns about the effectiveness of the local area.**

The area is required to produce and submit a WSOA to Ofsted that explains how the it will tackle the following areas of significant weakness:

- the lack of specificity, ownership and accountability in the area's improvement strategy for SEND
- the duties around preparing children and young people for adulthood not being fulfilled
- the poor communication with parents and carers across the area



- the long waiting times for some therapies.

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

<b>Ofsted</b>	<b>Care Quality Commission</b>
Andrew Cook Regional Director	Mani Hussain Deputy Chief Inspector, Primary Medical Services, Children Health and Justice
Pippa Jackson Maitland HMI Lead Inspector	Daniel Carrick CQC Inspector
Julie Killey Ofsted Inspector	

Cc: Department for Education  
Clinical commissioning group(s)  
Director Public Health for the area  
Department of Health  
NHS England

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**Report to:** **SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**Relevant Officer:** Darren Maddocks, Senior Accountant  
**Date of Meeting:** 14 June 2022

## **DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT YEAR END BUDGET MONITORING 2021-2022**

### **1.0 Purpose of the report:**

- 1.1 To report the budget position of the Dedicated Schools Grant for the Financial Year Ended 31 March 2022 - Appendix 5a.
- 1.2 To report the amount of Dedicated Schools Grant reserves as at 31 March 2022 – Appendix 5b.
- 1.3 Action required:
  - For information

### **2.0 Recommendation:**

- 2.1 To note contents of the report.

### **3.0 Background:**

- 3.1 As reported at previous Forum meetings there are significant pressures on the High Needs Block.
- 3.2 Work is ongoing to manage the cost pressures with the development of a High Needs Block Medium Term Financial Plan incorporating an inclusion strategy and a social, emotional and mental health Free School. However, expenditure continues to out strip Department for Education funding in the short term.
- 3.3 The High Needs Budget over spent by £616k in 2021-22 as a result of previously reported pressures in Special Schools, Pupil Referral Units, Exceptional Circumstances Funding and Post 16 Education.
- 3.4 The Early Years Block under spent by £137k relating to a lower demand for childcare places than budgeted.
- 3.5 The Schools Block over spent by £10k which was as a result of an historic equal pay cost offset by staff savings within School Admissions.
- 3.6 Schools Forum set a deficit budget of £327k for the 2021-22 financial year, adding the over spend of £561k has resulted in a total in-year deficit of £888k. Therefore the

position as at 31 March 2022, after incorporating the brought forward balance of £5.762m and offsetting the previously reported release of the New & Growing Schools provision (£1,694k) is a deficit of £4.956m.

- 3.7 Maintained School balances increased from £3.58m to £4.13m over the year to 31 March 2022, no schools are in deficit with an average balance as a percentage of School Budget Share at 16.7%, up from 15.2%

**4.0 List of Appendices:**

- 4.1 Appendix 5a - Dedicated Schools Grant 2021-2022 Budget Monitoring Report to 31 March 2022.  
Appendix 5b - Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves as at 31 March 2022.

**List of Acronyms:**

DSG	-	Dedicated Schools Grant
LA	-	Local Authority
HNB	-	High Needs Block
SSA	-	Special Support Assistant
ESFA	-	Education and Skills Funding Agency
SERF	-	Special Education Resource Facility
PRU	-	Pupil Referral Unit

## Appendix 5a - Dedicated Schools Grant 2021-2022 Budget Monitoring Report to 31 March 2022

Service	2021/22						Comments
	Budget £000s	In Year Adj. £000s	Recoupment £000s	Adjusted Budget £000s	Forecast Outturn £000s	Variance £000s	
<b>Schools Block</b>							
Local School Budget							
- Delegated	94,745	0	(74,490)	20,255	20,255	0	
- Third Party & Public Liability Insurance (de-delegated)	0	0	0	0	0	0	
- Union Duties (de-delegated)	19	0	0	19	19	0	
- Free School Meals Eligibility Checks (de-delegated)	18	0	0	18	16	(2)	
- Education Functions (retained)	164	0	0	164	164	0	
Pupil Growth Contingency	0	0	430	430	430	0	
	94,946	0	(74,060)	20,886	20,884	(2)	
<b>Central School Services Block</b>							
Servicing of Schools Forum	17	0	0	17	17	0	
Licences & Subscriptions	89	0	0	89	89	0	
School Admissions	160	0	0	160	133	(27)	Staffing Underspend
Contribution to Combined Budgets - Children's Centres	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Former ESG Retained Duties							
- Education Welfare	228	0	0	228	228	0	
- Asset Management	63	0	0	63	63	0	
- Statutory / Regulatory Duties	86	0	0	86	86	0	
Equal Pay	0	0	0	0	39	39	Equal pay Reserve
	643	0	0	643	655	12	
<b>Total Schools Block</b>	<b>95,589</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(74,060)</b>	<b>21,529</b>	<b>21,539</b>	<b>10</b>	
<b>High Needs Block</b>							
<b>Special Schools</b>							
Place Funding	5,508	0	(3,290)	2,218	2,167	(51)	
Top-up Funding	3,918	(6)	0	3,912	4,120	208	Increase in Number pupils
<b>SERFs</b>							
Place Funding	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Top-up Funding	0	0	0	0	(23)	(23)	FDC Released
Transport	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Resource Provision</b>							
Place Funding	760	0	(267)	493	513	20	Underwriting agreed for 2 years
Top-up Funding	585	0	(0)	585	570	(15)	
<b>Pupil Referral Units</b>							
Place Funding	1,913	0	0	1,913	1,913	0	
Top-up Funding	1,237	0	0	1,237	1,413	176	Pressure on Income Target due to low KS2 provision numbers & Reduction in PRU numbers
Other AP	100	0	0	100	63	(37)	Lee use TAS than in previous Years
<b>Mainstream Schools</b>							
Top-up Funding	2,353	30	0	2,383	2,329	(54)	Numbers Increase by less than expected
Exceptional Circumstances Funding	165	0	0	165	358	193	Higher number of Claims in 21/22
Post-16 Education	2,514	(30)	(1,016)	1,468	1,755	287	Higher Recoupment than anticipated & 2 Additional High cost Placements
Out of Borough	4,992	(6)	0	4,986	4,990	4	
Specialist Advisory and Referral Service (SARS)	1,368	0	0	1,368	1,330	(38)	Staffing Underspend
Access and Inclusion	941	0	0	941	891	(50)	Cost of Oracle building and Resilience Coaches for full year plus Mental Health Support, Offset by 1 Off COP in Year Saving
Other High Needs Central Services (Management, Central Support Costs, Admin Support, Pension Top-slice)	772	0	0	772	767	(5)	
<b>Total High Needs Block</b>	<b>27,126</b>	<b>(12)</b>	<b>(4,573)</b>	<b>22,541</b>	<b>23,157</b>	<b>616</b>	
<b>Early Years Block</b>							
2 Year Old Grants	1,665	(16)	0	1,649	1,659	10	
Early Years Pupil Premium	102	(7)	0	95	96	1	
3 & 4 Year Old Grants	6,552	(343)	0	6,209	6,089	(120)	Correction of Year end adjustment figures following updated information from the ESFA
Early Years Inclusion Fund	30	0	0	30	71	41	
Disability Access Fund	50	0	0	50	20	(30)	
Early Years Central Services	384	0	0	384	345	(39)	
<b>Total Early Years Block</b>	<b>8,783</b>	<b>(366)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8,417</b>	<b>8,280</b>	<b>(137)</b>	
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>131,498</b>	<b>(378)</b>	<b>(78,633)</b>	<b>52,487</b>	<b>52,976</b>	<b>489</b>	
<b>Dedicated Schools Grant Income</b>							
Dedicated Schools Grant Income	(130,747)	117	78,633	(51,997)	(52,088)	(91)	
ESFA Free School Income	(333)	261	0	(72)	0	72	Lotus School Income slightly less than forecast
Transfer from growth contingency	(91)	0	0	(91)	0	91	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(131,171)</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>78,633</b>	<b>(52,160)</b>	<b>(52,088)</b>	<b>72</b>	
<b>In year (under)/over spend</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>888</b>	<b>561</b>	

**Appendix 5b - Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves as at 31 March 2022**

Description	Brought Forward 1st April 2021	Total Expenditure FY 2021-22	Surplus / (Deficit) at 31st March 2022	Comments
DSG Reserve	(5,762,002)	888,402	(6,650,404)	
New & Growing Schools	0	(1,694,169)	1,694,169	Provision released into reserves
Maintained School Balances	3,583,777	(545,593)	4,129,370	
	(2,178,225)	(1,351,360)	(826,865)	

**Report to:** **SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**Relevant Officer:** Darren Maddocks, Senior Accountant  
**Date of Meeting:** 14 June 2022

## **DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING 2022-2023**

### **1.0 Purpose of the report:**

- 1.1 To report the budget position of the 2022-23 Dedicated Schools Grant as at 30 April 2022 - Appendix 6a.
- 1.2 To report the amount of Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves Forecast as at 30 April 2022 – Appendix 6b.
- 1.3 Action required:
  - For information

### **2.0 Recommendation:**

- 2.1 To note contents of the report.

### **3.0 Background:**

- 3.1 The monitoring report at Appendix 6a reflects the budgets as approved at the March 2022 Schools Forum.
- 3.2 Budget monitoring to the end of April 2022 is forecasting a £579k under spend against a budgeted under spend of £1,608k, a variance of £1,029k to plan.
- 3.3 The major in-year variances are as follows:
  - Out of Borough placements demand higher than budgeted of £607k.
  - Special School placements pressure of £258k.
  - Resource provision £112k pressure relating to an additional class at Marton.

### ***Reserves***

- 3.4 The statement of forecast reserves is set out at Appendix 6b to this report. Budget monitoring for the 2022/23 Financial Year is forecasting a £579k surplus which will reduce the brought forward deficit of £4.956m to £4.377m by 31 March 2023. This excludes the maintained schools reserves of £4.129m

## **4.0 List of Appendices**

4.1 Appendix 6a - Dedicated Schools Grant 2022-2023 Budget Monitoring Report to 30 April 2022.

Appendix 6b - Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves Forecast as at 30 April 2022.

### **List of Acronyms:**

DSG	-	Dedicated Schools Grant
LA	-	Local Authority
HNB	-	High Needs Block
SSA	-	Special Support Assistant
ESFA	-	Education and Skills Funding Agency
SERF	-	Special Education Resource Facility
PRU	-	Pupil Referral Unit



## Appendix 6a - Dedicated Schools Grant 2022-2022 Budget Monitoring Report to 30 April 2022

Service	2022/23						Comments
	Budget	In Year Adj.	Recoupment	Adjusted Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	
<b>Schools Block</b>							
Local School Budget							
- Delegated	98,179	0	0	98,179	98,179	0	
- Third Party & Public Liability Insurance (de-delegated)	0	0	0	0	0	0	
- Union Duties (de-delegated)	19	0	0	19	19	0	
- Free School Meals Eligibility Checks (de-delegated)	19	0	0	19	19	0	
School Improvement	25	0	0	25	25	0	
- Education Functions (retained)	166	0	0	166	166	0	
Business Rates	6	0	0	6	6	0	
Pupil Growth Contingency	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	98,414	0	0	98,414	98,414	0	
<b>Central School Services Block</b>							
Servicing of Schools Forum	18	0	0	18	18	0	
Licences & Subscriptions	93	0	0	93	93	0	
School Admissions	168	0	0	168	168	0	
Contribution to Combined Budgets - Children's Centres	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Former ESG Retained Duties							
- Education Welfare	235	0	0	235	235	0	
- Asset Management	68	0	0	68	68	0	
- Statutory / Regulatory Duties	101	0	0	101	101	0	
Equal Pay	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	683	0	0	683	683	0	
<b>Total Schools Block</b>	<b>99,097</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>99,097</b>	<b>99,097</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>High Needs Block</b>							
<b>Special Schools</b>							
Place Funding	5,894	0	0	5,894	5,939	45	Includes Provisional Uplift
Top-up Funding	4,529	0	0	4,529	4,742	213	Includes Provisional Uplift
<b>SERFs</b>							
Place Funding	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Top-up Funding	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Transport	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Resource Provision</b>							
Place Funding	519	0	0	519	565	46	1 Additional Class @ Marton
Top-up Funding	530	0	(0)	530	595	65	1 Additional Class @ Marton
<b>Pupil Referral Units</b>							
Place Funding	1,850	0	0	1,850	1,850	0	
Top-up Funding	1,252	0	0	1,252	1,252	0	
Other AP	100	0	0	100	100	0	
<b>Mainstream Schools</b>							
Top-up Funding	2,479	0	0	2,479	2,479	0	
Exceptional Circumstances Funding	165	0	0	165	100	(65)	
Post-16 Education	2,860	0	0	2,860	2,860	0	
Out of Borough	4,760	0	0	4,760	5,367	607	3 High cost placements
Specialist Advisory and Referral Service (SARS)	1,531	0	0	1,531	1,531	0	
Access and Inclusion	1,414	0	0	1,414	1,452	38	Temp Staffing Costs to reduce back log
Other High Needs Central Services (Management, Central Support Costs, Admin Support, Pension Top-slice)	772	0	0	772	772	0	
<b>Total High Needs Block</b>	<b>28,655</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>28,655</b>	<b>29,605</b>	<b>950</b>	
<b>Early Years Block</b>							
2 Year Old Grants	1,500	0	0	1,500	1,500	0	
Early Years Pupil Premium	100	0	0	100	100	0	
3 & 4 Year Old Grants	6,578	0	0	6,578	6,578	0	Early Years Innovation cost
Early Years Inclusion Fund	60	0	0	60	60	0	
Disability Access Fund	70	0	0	70	70	0	
Early Years Central Services	341	0	0	341	371	30	
<b>Total Early Years Block</b>	<b>8,649</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8,649</b>	<b>8,679</b>	<b>30</b>	
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>136,401</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>136,401</b>	<b>137,381</b>	<b>980</b>	
<b>Dedicated Schools Grant Income</b>							
ESFA Free School Income	(137,870)	0	0	(137,870)	(137,870)	0	
Transfer from growth contingency	(49)	0	0	(49)	0	49	Included in Special School Line
	(90)	0	0	(90)	(90)	0	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(138,009)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(138,009)</b>	<b>(137,960)</b>	<b>49</b>	
<b>In year (under)/over spend</b>	<b>(1,608)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,608)</b>	<b>(579)</b>	<b>1,029</b>	

**Appendix 6b - Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves Forecast as at 30 April 2022**

Description	Brought Forward 1st April 2022	Total Forecast Expenditure FY 2022-23	Forecast Surplus / (Deficit) at 31st March 2023	Comments
DSG Reserve	(4,956,235)	(579,268)	(4,376,967)	
Maintained School Balances	4,129,370	0	4,129,370	
	(826,865)	(579,268)	(247,597)	

**Report to:** **SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**Relevant Officer:** Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources  
**Date of Meeting:** 14 June 2022

## HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

### 1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To update Schools Forum members on latest developments relevant to the High Needs budget.

1.2 Action required – for consultation (local authority decision).

### 2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To note the contents of this report.

2.2 To note the decision of the High Needs Working Group to agree to the funding of two additional Elective Home Education Officers at a cost of c.£100k, using powers delegated to it at the Schools Forum in March 2022, as set out in paragraph 3.13.

2.3 To support the recommendation of the High Needs Working Group that the remaining £300k set aside for Early Help should be used to develop a Family Support Workers in schools model that is fully integrated with the Council's Early Help team, as set out in paragraph 3.14.

2.4 To support a contribution from the High Needs budget to costs of the Early Years Inclusion Fund, as set out in paragraph 3.23.

### 3.0 Background Information

#### *Medium-term financial plan*

3.1 As reported in previous meetings, Blackpool, along with many other areas around the country, is experiencing financial pressures on its High Needs Budget. In order to better understand Blackpool's financial position, a medium-term financial plan has been developed to monitor forecast expenditure against the High Needs Budget, and factor in predictions of where savings may be achievable.

3.2 Despite additional government funding in recent years, pupil numbers in high cost placements are continuing their upward trend. Costs in 2021/22 exceeded the High

Needs funding allocation by £2.374 million. However, transfers from other funding blocks, together with the release of the new and growing schools provision, combined to offset pressures, with the cumulative deficit against Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reducing by £805k to £4.957 million at the end of March 2022.

- 3.3 The medium-term financial plan has been revised to take account of updated forecasts and the funding allocation for 2022/23 (see Appendix 7(a) to this report). Assumptions have been made about inflationary uplifts on relevant expenditure lines in 2022/23, but no assumptions have yet been made about increases to income or costs beyond 2022/23. The plan has also been extended to 2026/27 so that the local authority continues to have a five-year forward view of financial forecasts.
- 3.4 As reported previously, given the scale of the deficit and the ongoing pressures on costs, it has been assumed that a 0.5% transfer from Schools Block will continue to be required in future years, although this will be subject to approval by Schools Forum each year. This is therefore shown on the Medium-Term Financial Plan for illustration purposes in each year until 2026/27, when it is anticipated that the direct National Funding Formula may be implemented.
- 3.5 Despite a substantial uplift in High Needs funding for 2022/23, emerging pressures mean that forecast costs are once again out-stripping income, with an estimated overspend of £400k for the year. It is only transfers from other DSG blocks that look set to bring about a net repayment of £579k, reducing the cumulative deficit to an estimated £4.378 million by March 2023.

### ***Safety Valve Programme***

- 3.6 At its meeting in March 2022, Schools Forum was given an update on Blackpool's inclusion in the Department for Education's (DfE) Safety Valve programme for those local authorities with the highest percentage DSG deficits. The programme requires those local authorities to develop plans for reform to their high needs systems and associated spending, with support and challenge from the DfE, to rapidly place them on a sustainable footing. The authorities are held to account for their reform and savings via regular reporting to the DfE. The DfE in turn helps the local authorities with additional funding over time to contribute to their historic deficits, contingent on delivery of the reforms. Capital funding can also be made available to support the creation of local provision if projected revenue savings can be demonstrated.
- 3.7 An introductory meeting with DfE and ESFA officials was held in May 2022, where they set out their expectations of what is required in order to enter into a Safety Valve agreement with them, namely:
- The local authority's plans show the delivery of sustainable high quality provision (i.e. not making cuts that impact negatively on quality).

- Demonstration of a balanced in-year High Needs budget in the coming years.
- Where possible, the local authority can contribute to the writing off of the historic deficit from future High Needs allocations

3.8 While involvement in the programme does not formally commence until September, some preparatory work is required, with timescales along the following lines:

- End June 2022: submission of early draft of DSG Management Plan, using DfE's standard suite of spreadsheets.
- Mid-July 2022: follow-up meeting to receive comments on draft plan.
- September 2022: submission of updated DSG Management Plan along with any other relevant strategic papers.
- October 2022(?): introductory meeting with Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Director of Children's Services to present issues and strategy.
- October to December 2022: period of intensive work and scrutiny of plan by ESFA.
- December 2022(?): further meeting to present formal proposals to Safety Valve team.
- By end March 2023: Safety Valve agreement in place.
- April 2023: commencement of quarterly monitoring.

3.9 The DSG management plan allows local authorities to plot the financial impact of no action being taken, then add actions – or 'mitigations' – to the plan to demonstrate how savings can be achieved to arrive at an in-year balanced budget. Local authority officers are now prioritising the development of this tool, taking into account courses of action that are already planned to address the deficit position. It is hoped that the Safety Valve programme will afford opportunities to accelerate existing plans, particularly around the creation and rationalisation of local provision in order to reduce costs.

3.10 It will be essential that work on the DSG management plan dovetails with actions being taken in response to the Written Statement of Action issued following the recent Joint Area SEND Inspection, and the DfE has appointed the same SEND Advisor to support both of these workstreams.

### ***Early help in schools***

3.11 Following discussions at the Schools Forum meeting in March 2022, a meeting of the High Needs Funding Working Group took place on 21 March 2022 to consider priorities for early help in schools.

3.12 An amount of £400k per year has been allowed for within the Medium-Term Financial Plan for future early help initiatives. The Working Group consider a number of existing projects whose temporary funding is due to end in the short-term, and

made recommendations for the most effective targeting of this funding.

3.13 The initiatives considered were:

- The continuation of temporary funding for an existing Elective Home Education (EHE) Officer, and new funding for an additional EHE Officer to cope with the increased numbers of children and young people educated at home, taking the total number of officers up to three. The group recognised the importance of this work, given the increasing numbers of children educated at home, and the safeguarding risks this can present. With powers delegated to it by the Schools Forum in March 2022, the working group agreed to the allocation of c.£100k for this purpose.
- Resilience Coaches – originally funded through the National Lottery Community Fund’s HeadStart programme, and currently funded by the High Needs block. While the working group acknowledged the benefits for those pupils receiving support, they felt that the focus of the team’s work on transition to secondary school was too narrow, given the level of need across the town. There was also duplication in the type of support offered with other areas of the system.
- Academic Resilience Approach – also currently funded through the HeadStart programme, this is a whole-school approach to resilience underpinned by asset-based and co-productive principles. The working group felt that the programme had been successful, in that it feels as if the approach is embedded in those schools that have embraced it, and that it is self-sustaining.
- Pathways for All – a careers programme funded by Right to Succeed. The group observed that this attracts philanthropic funding, although they felt that it was relatively expensive for the number of students that it supported. It was also noted that there is potentially double funding, with the support provided via the Lancashire careers partnership. It was felt that schools should fund this support from their own budgets if they valued it.
- School-to-Home Support – a project funded by the Opportunity Area that works with pupils, families and schools to improve educational outcomes. Members of the group were of the opinion that this is a valued service, with the right ethos. However, they noted that it was not integrated with Council systems, and that there was duplication with the work of other teams.
- Family Support Workers in schools – this Opportunity Area project commenced as a pilot in a very small number of schools, and was highly valued by one school in particular. It was noted that many schools already

employ their own Family Support Workers, but that these work separately to the Council's team. The group questioned why this should be funded in its entirety by the High Needs block, as there are also benefits from this approach for social care and Health.

- 3.14 In conclusion, the High Needs working group recommended that the remaining £300k set aside for Early Help should be used to develop a Family Support Workers in schools model that is fully integrated with the Council's Early Help team. They recommended that the model should be co-produced with schools, and jointly commissioned with and funded by social care and Health.

#### ***Review of special school funding***

- 3.15 Following an update at the last meeting, special schools have asked the local authority to revisit funding allocations for 2022/23 in light of significant cost pressures, and in consideration of the Schools Supplementary Grant received by the authority for High Needs provision, but which mainstream schools have received directly.
- 3.16 A proposal has been put to special schools for their consideration regarding an uplift to top-up rates that would equate to additional funding of between 3 and 4% per school, plus changes to the lump sum arrangements. Pending feedback from schools and trusts, assumptions of increased costs have been built into the latest forecasts of expenditure.

#### ***SEND place planning***

- 3.17 Given the upward trend in the number of pupils in specialist places over recent years, the local authority is taking a more strategic approach to planning for places for pupils with SEND. Currently, only around 41% of children and young people with EHC plans attend a mainstream school or setting, compared to a national picture of around 50%. With the exception of Lotus School, which is growing to full capacity, all special schools are currently full.
- 3.18 A meeting was held in April 2022 with various school and academy leaders to share thoughts and seek feedback. The group agreed the following principles that should underpin future planning for places:
1. Pupils to be educated in mainstream settings wherever possible.
  2. Support for Early Years and KS1 pupils to be provided via specialist outreach into mainstream settings unless complex needs require specialist provision.
  3. Resourced Provision to be used for pupils who are able to access an element of mainstream provision, with objective to access full-time mainstream wherever possible.

4. Placement in Alternative Provision should be discouraged for pupils with EHC plans.
5. New admissions into special schools to be used only for pupils who are not able to access mainstream provision.
6. Pupils must be supported in their preparation for adulthood, with transition, where possible, into mainstream further education or supported internships from the earliest appropriate age.
7. Out of Borough places only to be used for pupils with the most complex needs that cannot be met locally.

3.19 The vision for SEND provision in 2025 can be summarised as follows:

- Quality First teaching in all Blackpool schools, and more young people with additional SEND needs educated in mainstream schools, settings and colleges.
- High quality outreach offer available to mainstream schools.
- Increasing parental confidence and satisfaction in ability of mainstream schools to meet needs of children and young people with SEND.
- Resourced provision for biggest areas of need in primary and secondary mainstream schools.
- Stabilising numbers in Blackpool special schools with sufficient building capacity to safely accommodate pupils.
- Reducing numbers of pupils with EHC plans in alternative provision and out of borough settings.
- Local Intensive Support Centre to meet more complex needs.
- Clear plans in place to meet Preparation for Adulthood requirements.

3.20 All of the above needs to align with the local area's response to the Written Statement of Action following the recent inspection, and with the DSG management plan being developed under the Safety Valve programme. If this can be successfully achieved, High Needs costs will start to stabilise, allowing a more planned approach to the use of available resources.

3.21 In order to create sufficient capacity for this plan in local special schools, a number of capital works have been completed or are in the pipeline, including adapting the Oracle to accommodate Park's post-16 pupils, providing additional temporary accommodation at Park's main site, and planning for an expansion at Highfurlong.

### ***Early Years Inclusion Fund***

3.22 Local authorities are required to have inclusion funds for all three and four year olds with SEND who are taking up the free early years entitlements, regardless of the number of hours taken. These funds are intended to support local authorities to work with providers to address the needs of individual children with SEND. The value of the fund must take into account the number of children with SEND in the local area,



their level of need, and the overall capacity of the local childcare market to support these children. Local authorities can establish their SEND inclusion funds using funding from either one or both of their Early Years block and High Needs block of the DSG.

- 3.23 As a result of a forecast overspend on the £30k inclusion fund budget in 2021/22, the budget for 2022/23 was doubled to £60k through efficiencies realised in the early years central expenditure. The actual expenditure by the end of the 2021/22 financial year was £71k, and forecasts for 2022/23 are now even higher. Until now, all costs have fallen to the Early Years block, but it is now proposed that the High Needs block contributes to costs, and an estimate of an additional £30k has been included in forecasts for the current and future years.

### ***SEND equipment***

- 3.24 A change to the Council's approach to the funding of equipment for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities has recently been agreed. Last year, the local authority indicated its intention to amend the SEND equipment policy so that schools would be expected to meet the first £500 of the costs of equipment. However, the implementation of this change has proved problematic and bureaucratic, and would result in disproportionate costs for those schools with a high number of pupils requiring equipment.
- 3.25 As a result, it has now been decided to revert to the previous system, whereby the local authority orders and pays for any equipment costing over £300, and the school orders and pays for any small items costing less than £300. Schools could also be allocated any larger items of recycled equipment from stores at no cost to them.
- 3.26 Should any schools incur a significant volume of costs under the £300 limit that they feel they cannot meet from their budget, they would be able to apply to the local authority for financial support under the Exceptional Circumstances process.
- 3.27 The revised arrangements came into effect on 1st June 2022.

### **List of acronyms:**

DSG – Dedicated Schools Grant  
DfE – Department for Education  
SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities  
EHE – Elective Home Education

### **List of Appendices:**

Appendix 7(a): High Needs Medium-Term Financial Plan



## High Needs Block Medium-Term Financial Plan

Forecasts exclude inflationary impact, and costs and income are stated at 2022/23 levels

Service	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Notes Current Version
	Actual £000s	Actuals £000s	Forecast £000s	Budget £000s	Budget £000s	Budget £000s	Budget £000s	
<b>High Needs Block</b>								
<b>Special Schools</b>								
Place Funding	4,950	5,457	5,939	5,982	6,000	6,029	6,029	Highfulong from 85 to 105 from Sep 2021 Lotus 24 from Sep 2020, 40 from Sep 2021, 48 from Sep 2022 Park from 290 to 300 from Sep 2021 Woodlands 120 2021/22 onwards includes £660 per place for TPG/TPECG
Top-up Funding	3,388	4,126	4,742	4,781	4,797	4,823	4,823	Special School top-up: based on April 2022 figures
<b>SERFs</b>								
Place Funding	260	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mereside SERFs decommissioned from Nov 2020; Boundary and Bispham Endowed SERFs decommissioned from Dec 2020
Top-up Funding	117	(23)	-	-	-	-	-	
Transport	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>Resource Provision</b>								
Place Funding	190	780	565	493	480	480	480	Mereside and Thames Resource Provisions opening Nov 2020; Boundary, Revoe and Marton Resource Provisions opening Jan 2021. Boundary closing March 2022.
Top-up Funding	234	570	595	684	684	684	684	
<b>AP Provision</b>								
PRU - Place Funding	2,208	1,934	1,850	1,850	1,850	1,850	1,850	Reduced from 250 places to 200 from September 2020, 185 from September 2021 2021/22 onwards includes £660 per place for TPG/TPECG
PRU Top-up Funding	1,359	1,391	1,252	1,252	1,252	1,252	1,252	Forecast numbers:- Fixed funding agreed based on September 2020 to March 2021 173, April to August 2021 215, September 2021 to March 2022 147, April to August 2022 178. September 2022 onwards - funding to be agreed, forecasts based on 152 pupils. Teachers pay award/superannuation costs and KS2 Engagement Coaches & Therapist in 22/23
Other AP	293	63	100	100	100	100	100	
<b>Mainstream Schools</b>								
Top-up Funding	1,837	2,299	2,479	2,479	2,479	2,479	2,479	1.75% Uplift in 2021/22 & 2% uplift in 2022/23. Future Years' forecast to be reviewed following outcome of banding review.
Exceptional Circumstances Funding	193	358	100	165	165	165	165	Proposed changes agreed by Schools Forum Jan 2022
Post-16 Education	2,569	2,801	2,860	2,885	2,885	2,885	2,885	3% Uplift in 2022/23 & built in the increase in numbers from 2021/22 onwards
Out of Borough	5,360	4,998	5,369	5,394	5,458	5,458	5,458	Based on 16 year-olds leaving, 40 new placements each year @£30k per place, offset by transfers into Lotus starting in September 2020 and Resource Provision from Apr 21. 3% Uplift in 2022/23.
Specialist Advisory and Referral Service (SARS)	1,056	1,330	1,531	1,531	1,531	1,531	1,531	1.75% Uplift in 2021/22 & 2% 2022/23
Access and Inclusion	811	891	1,452	1,518	1,408	1,408	1,408	1.75% Uplift in 2021/22 & 2% 2022/23
Other High Needs Central Services	767	767	772	772	772	772	772	
(Management, Central Support Costs, Admin Support, Pension Top-slice)								
<b>Total High Needs Block Expenditure</b>	<b>25,613</b>	<b>27,743</b>	<b>29,607</b>	<b>29,886</b>	<b>29,862</b>	<b>29,917</b>	<b>29,917</b>	
<b>High Needs Block allocation</b>	<b>22,276</b>	<b>25,369</b>	<b>29,207</b>	<b>29,207</b>	<b>29,207</b>	<b>29,207</b>	<b>29,207</b>	
<b>In-year (surplus)/deficit - High Needs Block</b>	<b>3,337</b>	<b>2,374</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>710</b>	
<b>Schools Block Transfer</b>	<b>(115)</b>	<b>(457)</b>	<b>(494)</b>	<b>(494)</b>	<b>(494)</b>	<b>(494)</b>	<b>(494)</b>	
<b>Other Block (Surplus) / Deficit</b>	<b>(565)</b>	<b>(2,722)</b>	<b>(485)</b>	<b>(410)</b>	<b>(328)</b>	<b>(262)</b>	<b>(210)</b>	
<b>In Year (Surplus) / Deficit DSG</b>	<b>2,657</b>	<b>(805)</b>	<b>(579)</b>	<b>(225)</b>	<b>(167)</b>	<b>(46)</b>	<b>6</b>	
<b>Cumulative DSG (Surplus) / Deficit</b>	<b>5,762</b>	<b>4,957</b>	<b>4,378</b>	<b>4,152</b>	<b>3,985</b>	<b>3,939</b>	<b>3,945</b>	

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## Glossary

ACA	Area Cost Adjustment
AP	Alternative Provision
ASCL	Association of School and College Leaders
AtC	Achievement through Collaboration
ATL	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
BEBCMAT	Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
BFC	Blackpool Football Club
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CJRS	Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
CSSB	Central Schools Services Block
DfE	Department for Education
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EHA	Early Help Assessment
EHE	Elective Home Education
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency
ESG	Education Services Grant
EY	Early Years
FCAT	Fylde Coast Academy Trust
FSM	Free School Meals
FSM6	Free School Meals Ever 6
GAG	General Annual Grant
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
HNB	High Needs Block
IDACI	Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index
KS1/2/3/4	Key Stage 1/2/3/4
LA	Local Authority
LGFS	Local Government Finance Settlement
LSOAs	Lower Super Output Areas
MAT	Multi Academy Trust
MFG	Minimum Funding Guarantee
MPPF	Minimum per-pupil funding
MTFP	Medium Term Financial Plan
NAHT	National Association of Head Teachers

# Glossary

NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
NEU	National Education Union
NFF	National Funding Formula
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds
NUT	National Union of Teachers
NW	North West
PEX	Permanent Exclusion
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PTA	Professional Teaching Association
PUF	Primary Unit of Funding
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector
RPA	Risk Protection Arrangement
RPIX	Retail Price Index excluding mortgage interest
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SERF	Special Education Resource Facility
SSA	School Support Assistant
SSA	Special Support Assistant
SUF	Secondary Unit of Funding
TUC	Trades Union Congress
VAT	Value Added Tax