

Schools' Block Working Group – 24/02/2025

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

1:00pm to 2:30pm

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

Item	Agenda	Lead
1	Welcome and apologies	TM
	1.1 Apologies received from MH, CC and SD	
2	Previous Minutes	TM
	2.1 Previous minutes read and reviewed – agreed to be a true record. 2.2 It was noted by members of the working group that the paper for today's meeting was not received prior to the meeting, only the agenda and previous minutes were received. MB will pass on the feedback and look to see how processes can be improved upon and perhaps streamlined.	
3	Growth Funding Paper	AA
	3.1 A presented an update on the growth fund, which looked at how the money comes in and how it is moved into the Schools Block. The growth allocation for 24/25 was £1.718m, as published by the DfE in December 2023. Following the last Schools Forum meeting, members agreed to the following: 3.1.1 £304k to cover the shortfall in schools budget allocation (actual used is £229k) 3.1.2 £250k for purchase, repair and refurbishment of equipment for schools with additional educational needs (AEN). 3.1.3 £850k (£250k for Croydon Town School and £600k for KS4 pupils in Alternative Provision) 3.2 Using Table 2, it was noted that the budget balances to the aforementioned £1.718m and the table detailed where money was being spent. 3.3 The growth fund available was 24/25 is £1,489.352, and Table 3 illustrated the forecast outturn ending with an underspend of £277,807 Q1: DB: What is the Croydon Town School listed in Table 3? A1: AA: That is a part of the KS4 alternative provision, such as the Virtual School at Oasis Arena. 3.4 There has been an underspend historically where the growth fund is concerned, as shown in Table 3 under the 23/24 underspend. It was noted that there is also an estimated £373,522 of legacy SALT invoices. The plan would be to utilise a transfer to Education Earmarked Reserve for 2 years of Schools' Support funding. 3.5 For 25/26 the growth fund will be £1.22m, of which £415K was used to supplement the allocation to all schools which leaves a balance of £805K. 3.6 AA said that the underspend of £500K from 24/25 could be brought into the growth fund budget for 25/26 with Schools Forum's approval. This would then help bring the allocation of money for 25/26 in line with that distributed in 24/25.	

	3.7 The academy expansions were queried, both AA and BS confirmed that the two schools in question are Archbishop Tenison's and Gresham Primary School. The latter has taken on an additional class that the LA is helping to cover the shortfall. It was noted that if the LA agrees to fund an expansion due to take place in September of one year, the funding is based on the census data from the previous October. This figure does not account for any new starters. Q2: TM: Is there a reason why the LA would agree to bankroll a school to take on more pupils when there are schools with available spaces? A2: BS: Decisions were made in consultation five years ago, which allowed us to combat an increased demand. As there aren't enough in borough children or due to parental choice, there are waitlists at some schools and available place at other schools. Q3: TM: So are we bankrolling places that aren't being filled? A3a: AA: There is increased demand in catchment area for certain schools. The LA has agreed to this funding and are fulfilling the agreement. A3b: BS: The lack in funding for the children recorded in October of one year, will not technically be paid for until April of the following year. 3.8 AA directed the working group's attention to the criteria for setting falling rolls funding. Compliant criteria generally contains some features set out below: 3.8.1 SCAP shows that school places will be required in the next 3-5 years 3.8.2 Surplus capacity exceeds the minimum number of pupils or a percentage of the published admission number 3.8.3 Formula funding available to the school will not support provision of an curriculum for the existing cohort 3.8.4 The school will need to make redundancies to contain spending within its formula budget and it is expected that these posts will be refilled in the following 3-5 years Q4: TM: If we are allocating money to help a school expand and it does not expand, is the money not being utilised appropriately, if at all? A4: AA: There would have been a lot of work undertaken here. If the school is not admitting the pupils it is targeted as part of the expansion, then the funding can allow a school to have the infrastructure necessary to support those numbers	
4	PFI Update	AA
	4.1 Following the vote from Schools Forum at the end of last year to give the PFI £500K, there has been disappointment expressed by the DfE that the factor has been limited. If the PFI shows a deficit following the allocation of this money, then the DfE will not deal with a request from Croydon to support and provide additional fund. They would also not be willing to deal with requests to increase the PFI again. 4.2 The role that Forum plays is vital in setting the budget and the decision has been made to override the decision – a letter will be written from the LA officers regarding the rationale behind certain actions that have been taken by the officers. 4.3 TM queried the notion, indicating that it is concerning that the decisions of Forum can be overridden despite a vote. The same issue with PFI is happening, in that there is a lack of communication. Should the PFI tell Forum what they are spending the money on, it would give members a clearer understanding of how much money should be given to them. 4.4 BS added that the LA is currently locked into a deal with the PFI. An affordability model could show that the £500K is not enough money and is not working, then any shortfall will come from the LA and not the DfE. The LA can only do what they are contractually obliged to do. AA informed the group that there is potential to lose £60K by lowering the PFI funding to £500K. 4.5 CA noted that there still appears to be a lack of accountability as to where the PFI fund is being spent as within the PFI, there must be bands of funding.	
5	Any Other Business	ALL

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Date of next meeting: 19th May 2025 @ 1pm