

**Early Years Working Group – 18/09/2025**

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

2.00pm to 3.30pm

| <b>Attendees:</b>       |                                                     |                                     |          |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Theresa Staunton (TS)   | <b>Chair</b>                                        | PVI representative on Schools Forum | ✓        |
| Jeni Murphy (JM)        | Early Years Strategic Lead                          |                                     | ✓        |
| Denise Bushay (DB)      | Schools Places & Admissions Head of Service         |                                     | <b>X</b> |
| Leigh McGuinness (LM)   | Park Hill Infant School and Tunstall Nursery School |                                     | <b>X</b> |
| Shelley Davies (SD)     | Director of Education                               |                                     | <b>X</b> |
| Mark Southworth (MS)    | Consultant Lead, Locality Inclusion Project         |                                     | <b>X</b> |
| Melanie Farris (MF)     | Croydon Locality SEND Support Senco                 |                                     | ✓        |
| Maria Reeve (MR)        | Head of Purley Nursery School                       |                                     | ✓        |
| Yetty Osonaie (YO)      | Alpha Day Nursery                                   |                                     | <b>X</b> |
| Kim Berham (KB)         | Head of Sparkles and Millie's Pre-schools           |                                     | ✓        |
| Sophoya Davis (SD2)     | Child Minder in Croydon                             |                                     | ✓        |
| Shamsa Akhtar (SA)      | Managing Director at J and S Playhouse Nursery      |                                     | <b>X</b> |
| Jenette Indarsingh (JI) | Head of Thornton Hearth Nursery School              |                                     | ✓        |
| Kate Lanning (KL)       | Head of School, Tunstall Nursery School             |                                     | ✓        |
| Mori Bates (MB)         | Clerk                                               |                                     | ✓        |
| Abioye Aimolowo (AA)    | Finance Manager                                     |                                     | <b>X</b> |
| Brian Smith (BS)        | Finance Officer                                     |                                     | ✓        |
| Yetsie Adeboye          | Finance Officer                                     |                                     | ✓        |

**Agenda Items****1 Apologies and welcome TS**

Apologies received by DB, AA, JB and SD

**2 Previous Minutes TS**

2.1 Minutes were reviewed by the working group and agreed to be a true record.

**3 Sufficiency Update JM**

3.1 JM provided the working group with an update, with some key points noted.

- 3.2** Data has been extracted from Synergy for the Summer term. The current actual budget stands at £69,440,489, with a total expenditure of £22,535,959.53 which shows a variance of £46,904,529.71.
- 3.3** It was proposed that the contingency fund be distributed proportionately between the settings delivering the relevant entitlements.
- 3.4** Table 2 showed the available funds for each of the funding types within Early Years, with WF2YOs being the only category to have an overspend in. However, the overall funds available at the time of the meeting was £1,955,412.70
- 3.5** Table 3 showed the variance between the Summer termly figures against the predicted numbers from the DfE. The 3&4YOs indicated a bigger variance than the other funding categories, although it is important to note that the DfE figures are for the entire year, whereas our figures are calculated from the termly census.
- 3.6** There has been an updated MNS budget for this financial year, for which there has been a reduction in the MNS budget. The LA will continue to work to allocate funding to the nursery schools based on the actual census figures, rather than the DfE predicted figures.

## **4 Finance Notes**

- 4.1** TS noted that it has been eight quarters since we last saw a finance paper to reflect what Oracle is reporting. As it stands, we are only aware of where Synergy is, but the two platforms are not the same and so the working group needs to know where the Early Years sector is financially. A paper was not presented for 24/25 or 25/26, making for two years without a report.
- 4.2** It is important to know that the funds are being reconciled across the systems so that future funds can be allocated. Outturn noted a balanced budget, but without an in depth analysis or line by line information, it is difficult to know the bigger picture
- 4.3** BS requested that TS send a previous report
- 4.4** In summary, with further confirmation from AA, we will look to distribute the rectified budget '25. TS added that it must be confirmed by finance that the proposed method of distribution is acceptable.

**4.5** The working group was conscious of the contingency fund and whether this can be utilised, but TS reiterated that this pot was created as per the guidance from the DfE.

## **5 AOB**

**5.1** MF will be overseeing the Early Years SEND provision following a restructuring within the SEND service which is still in a transitional phase. The current aim is to review the financial processes and how they can be streamlined. MF added that they want to adopt a whole department working model in mind for future processes, rather than dividing it up into specific sections.

### **Action Log:**

#### **Current Actions:**

|    |                                                                                          |             |        |         |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------|---------|
| 1. | Finance paper update for 24/25 budget for the next meeting                               | Finance     | Jan'25 | Pending |
| 2. | An update was requested regarding the CLSS and SENIF payments for the Early Years Sector | LA Officers | Mar'25 | Pending |