

# EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CARDIFF SCHOOLS' BUDGET FORUM



**Time:** 8.30am – 10.30am  
**Date:** 13.11.2024  
**Location:** Microsoft Teams  
**Present:** Vice Chair – Nic Naish (NN), Cllr Sarah Merry (SM), Cllr Chris Weaver (CW), Melanie Godfrey (MG), Ian Allwood (IA), Eifion Austin (EA), Angela Jardine (AJ), Jennie Hughes (JH), Nicola Price (NP), Paul Tucker (PT), Tim Adams (TA), Stuart Davies (SD), David Silver (DS), Ann Griffin (AG), Abigale Cuthbert (AC), Nick Alexander (NA), Suzanne Scarlett (SS), Marc Belli (MB), Matthew Evans (ME), Carys Prytherch (CP), Ivor Gittins (IG), Will Howlett (WH), Matt O'Brien (MO), Brett Andrewartha (BA), Education Management Clerk

**Apologies:** Andrew Skinner (AS), Helen Williams (HW), Emma Richards (ER), Gareth Rein (GR), Richard Portas (RP), Sarah Parry (SP), Alison Poole (AP), Carly Davies (CD), Phillip Andrews (PA), Diane Gill (DG), Alison Powell (AP), Catherine Power (CP), Cllr Joel Williams (JW), Suzanne Williams (SW), Geraldine Foley (GF), Patrick Brunnock (PB), Wayne Murphy (WM), Sara Allen (SA),

Ref	Conclusions/Actions	Who
1.0	<b>Apologies and welcome</b>	
1.1	The Chair welcomed members and accepted apologies.	
2.0	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising</b>	
	The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.	
2.1	Matters arising/actions from the previous meeting:  Minute 5.1- IA fed back an issue to ZSB regarding some headteachers not adhering to the redeployment policy. Headteachers impacted were engaged when undergoing the compulsory redundancies process, and feedback was incorporated into the policy. HR reported no further issues had been raised. Concerns were asked to be put to ZSB. NN will raise a matter separately with ZSB on lack of response from HR on available staff for redeployment.  <b>Action:</b> MG had followed up with WG regarding nonfunctioning of supply teacher booking and will follow up again.  Discussion today will inform the agile funding stream for ALN needs. Progression on benchmarking was presented to the efficiency board and is being finalised. <b>Action:</b> A focus group is looked to be set up (mainly primary sector ask).	MG  JH/EA
3.0	<b>Finance SLAs/Budget Update</b>	

3.1	<p>IA noted uncertainty at present to inform service level agreements (SLAs). SLAs will conform to a more robust timetable, providing clarity earlier, communications and timings of SLAs (notifying costs) would be strengthened.</p> <p>All SLAs (delivery and costs) to schools will be determined by 1<sup>st</sup> February. Services are encouraged to communicate material changes for 2025/26. All areas are committed to manage costs down where possible, balancing increased service delivery costs whilst acknowledging schools' pressures.</p> <p>NN requested waste management communicate changes to SLAs; costs were varied and unknown until landed. <b>Action:</b> IA will ensure any charges from Cardiff Council to schools are communicated to schools in advance.</p> <p>Provisional settlement will be communicated on 11<sup>th</sup> December.</p> <p><u>Formula</u> Indicatives to schools are looked to be communicated earlier again, subject to how much could be allocated to schools. Formula modelling will begin in the middle to end of January and will be shared when finalised (likely mid-February).</p>	IA
4.0	<b>SBF Webpage</b>	
4.1	<p>MO and IA noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MO's team had engaged with the LA web team to update SBF webpages.</li> <li>• The Section 52 budget has been published on the site. The Section 52 outturn and spend over the years will be published shortly when finalised.</li> <li>• Translation is being undertaken prior to publishing other papers on the web site, including minutes of meetings.</li> <li>• Membership was updated to reflect current positions.</li> <li>• A process has been established to ensure the webpage is updated regularly.</li> <li>• Members were asked to please contact MO if they would like to see further information added.</li> <li>• NN welcomed the information shared, useful to compare spend on like for like schools.</li> <li>• EA added information will be used for benchmarking, presented in an interactive manner.</li> </ul>	
5.0	<b>Pay Award</b>	
5.1	<p>IA noted a letter would be received from WG on quantum of teachers' pensions and pay award by 31<sup>st</sup> November 2024. The actual amount received would be distributed by the LA to schools. Schools and the SBF will be notified when the amounts were known.</p> <p>MB was reassured by advice given at a meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November by the Cabinet secretary to secondary headteachers that the pay award would be fully covered, based on payroll actuarial rather than a lump sum. IA caveated; full assurance could not be given on expectations of being fully funded, pointing out grants were passported to schools (10 to 15 percent of staff were funded by grants not by the formula). WG had advised grants would be covered (particularly for teachers' pension), the amounts would be notified to schools when received.</p>	

	<p>MB pointed out LAs should be sufficiently funded and asked MG to continue to lobby for pay to be covered.</p> <p>EA reiterated assurances on full funding to LAs were not provided at ADEW, a lump sum was suggested. Method and amount were yet to be confirmed.</p> <p>IA highlighted assurance was needed that the equivalent amount of pay award, teachers' pensions and in-year grant for 2024/25 (minimum of £10m), plus additional for other pay awards would need to be received in Cardiff Council's settlement for 2025/26. Furthermore, there were increased NI costs to employers for employees and a lower threshold. Central government and WG had expressed aspirations for LAs to be compensated. All twenty-two LAs had raised concerns on increased costs, applicable for staff and payment to providers. Support is anticipated for NI costs for employees but less certain on NI costs to providers (i.e. social care). The figure to cover these costs (gross less liabilities) would need to be known before understanding the amount that could be provided to schools.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> MG will draft a communication to the WG education department on behalf of the headteachers of the city, the SBF and unions.</p> <p>TA noted NASWUT were fully in favour of the letter.</p> <p>AJ received a notification regarding an error in the published STPCD calculation of 5.5% to ALN allowances (section 2, paragraph 4). The minimum figure should be £2,728 and maximum £5,379. The amended document will be republished and initial underpay rectified at a later date.</p>	MG
6.0	<b>Special Schools</b>	
6.1	<p>A special school funding workshop will be held on 15<sup>th</sup> November, focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues in special schools</li> <li>• Formula of allocating funding</li> <li>• Pupil descriptors</li> <li>• Teacher ratio</li> <li>• Teacher to pupil ratio of descriptors</li> <li>• TA to pupil ratios within descriptors of need</li> </ul>	
7.0	<b>School Funding Formula Work Streams Update</b>	
7.1	<p>Further work was undertaken on funding streams within the formula. Papers and financial modelling of changes (interactive spreadsheet) were shown, including proposal of latest Work Streams to be reviewed for implementation in 2025/26.</p> <p><u>Protection for Schools with Falling Rolls of More than 5%</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback was interpreted as a commitment from members for all schools to be sustainable.</li> <li>• DS questioned financial impact.</li> </ul> <p><u>Nursery Places Funding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Places historically were commissioned for the financial year, giving assurances to schools. A different funding mechanism was proposed for nursery places, on a termly rather than annual basis.</li> </ul>	

- Funded places were looked to be reduced by 12.
- AJ drew attention to financial planning for staffing, staff would be more attracted to a year's contract than a term, pointing out possible changes to nursery staff with places filling over the year.
- NN added there may be parental preference for morning or afternoon nursery provision, a termly basis would be challenging to amalgamate classes. Negative feedback would be expected from primary headteachers. Reception classes are full time.

**Action:** Proposal to be put to primary school conference.

EA/MG

MB cautioned proposals that may impact on secondary or special school budgets. Cost implications would need to be seen before feedback could be given.

Discussion followed on how to progress workstreams.

WH echoed recruitment and retention of staff, and the unpredictability of nursery, the level of need and challenge must be considered.

PT drew attention to consistency of staff, the ability to support pupils from the outset was an important factor. Staff appointed for a term would need to undertake training and provide the same quality of provision, supporting the children from day one. The provision is a challenging part of the school as the needs of the children were unknown prior to joining (rarely are any of their needs recognised before attending schools).

EA concluded the lack of equity between a nursery full by September and full by Easter was acceptable due to consistency and assurance of funding, enabling appointment of satisfactory staff and assisting in inclusivity of nursery schools.

NN added the reality of the proposal could be problematic, pupils need to be met prior to starting nursery, ensuring smooth transition. Amalgamation of nursery staff was more challenging than other provision.

AJ drew attention to staff development and a possible tendency for temporary posts, not funded directly and with agency costs. With the right nursery provision parents were onboard with the school from the start.

NN urged caution, nursery is the foundation to learning and attitude to education/school context, key to education.

#### Secondary School Attendance Officer (SAO) proposal

The review seeks to refresh funding for SAOs, to meet current challenges and reverse trends of lowering attendance.

It was proposed to increase funding of attendance officers from £1.26m to £1.65m, this includes inflation increase and funding for a further eight SAOs. Clusters with several SAOs may be required to have fewer to allow equity of service across the city. SBF will receive reports on performance/effectiveness of the new arrangements on a citywide basis.

MB voiced concerns with the minimum expectation of staff assisting with attendance (a graduated response is required), SAOs are not the only staff to drive improved attendance. Minimum expectations for all schools on raising attendance should be set out. The school had paid for additional attendance support from their budget, the school culture sits with headteachers. Accountability and impact of significant spend on SAOs over the years was questioned. The authority must hold families to account, ensuring school attendance. The issue might be exasperated for schools that require more SAOs and face losing them.

ME noted significant funding disparity per cluster, which did not necessarily correlate with funding for disadvantaged areas, several areas with challenging situations were performing well. Where money was spent in the main did not appear to correspond to where needs were. The increase to keep in line with inflation was welcomed. FPNs for parents of non-attenders was disagreed with.

More work to be undertaken by finance and the attendance team on scrutiny and finer detail was recommended, sharing good practice rather than putting more money in.

SD welcomed the review, supporting the increase in funding and SAOs. Education Welfare Service value for money and impact on work in improving attendance across the city was suggested to be evaluated.

NN noted varying patterns of work had emerged over the years with SAOs, some had developed well, others needed refreshing.

CP pointed out SAOs cover diverse area of need. Consistency is needed across clusters/the city with the role of SAOs in relation to primary schools, secondary and the WM sector. Primary schools do what they can with limited support. Some lack the same level of attendance officers. FPNs were not a solution to non-attendance, families in greatest need must be supported.

PT reiterated funding and how shared across the city had not been reviewed for some time. Funding should be shared on current information due to changes to catchment area boundaries and many new schools. Inconsistencies between schools would be expected due to priorities. The LA are recommended to share good practice identified with all. The role of SAO and teacher in primaries and secondaries to be set out for clear expectations on what to do with the money and allocation of time.

NN noted mixed views, common themes included expectations from SAOs across the city, non-attendance being a citywide issue, not based on one school or area. Best use of funding to be identified for families to encourage pupils into schools.

**Action:** PN would lead on good practice and implementation of funding.

PN

EA noted intention for funding will be confirmed in January, following various communications to schools from the Achievement department in education.

NN noted staff employed on contracts, earlier notice on capacity changes were asked to be communicated.

Broad agreement was given for inflationary increases to be given to schools. Increase of capacity to be considered.

### Step 3 and 4 funding to secondary schools

The proposal to increase allocation by £600k was outlined, no comments received.

### Funding that is a function of Pupil Teacher Ratio

It was proposed to merge workload and performance management funding into AWPU, through the teachers' pay funding envelope or administrative funding envelope. Both have a lump sum and pupil elements. How teachers and support staff are funded through the formula to be considered for primaries and secondaries next year.

ME and MB supported the principle of simplifying the formula.

### Financial modelling

EA presented a model detailing:

- Primary Schools Formula Allocation (six example primaries defined by FSM eligibility and NoR) and capping of ALN mainstream proposal, limiting losses and gains.
- Streamlining of AWPU proposal regarding premises-based funding per pupil/support staff
- ALN mainstream proposal (impacts primary and secondary sector)
- Protection for Schools with Falling Rolls of More than 5%
- Nursery Funding
- Examination Fees
- School Attendance Officer Funding
- Step 3 and 4 Funding (secondaries)

**Action:** following suggestion it was agreed for work undertaken with proposed changes to the formula to be presented at each of the school conferences to gather feedback. The model will be shared in advance for discussion. Development of focus groups for work streams would be put to the conferences initially for expressions of interest. EA will gather conference dates. To also be presented at Cardiff Governors Association for awareness of potential changes.

SD requested a medium sized secondary be added to the model.

A simplified sheet detailing KPI achievements sought through the funding model, with investments/efficiencies from the system, was asked to be produced in advance of school conferences, for discussion.

DS pointed out small primaries would appear to be worse off; many were already in deficit and struggling. EA explained changes shown in exemplars of small primaries would likely be outliers (nursery reduction/low uptake of FSMs). Volatility would be minimised with capping of ALN mainstream. The purpose of the review was to refine the formula, evolving to meet current needs, and work through impacts, informing the function of the formula going forward. The model will be presented in greater detail.

EA

	<p>NN questioned whether changes being made might have an unsustainable impact on some smaller primaries. EA noted little change.</p>	
8.0	<b>MSF Contribution</b>	
8.1	<p>EA noted month six outturn report (spend to date), contribution and changes to MSF will be an agenda item in January.</p> <p>The paper will be circulated in due course.</p>	
9.0	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
9.1	<p><u>Efficiency Boards.</u></p> <p>SS noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The secondary efficiency board was paused, subject to MG discussing with the Chair of secondary conference arrangements going forward, to ensure as productive as possible.</li> <li>• The primary efficiency board will meet on 22<sup>nd</sup> November. Several areas were identified to pursue. Work on section 52 statements and benchmarking has moved forward. A separate meeting with primary headteachers on supply and agency costs is scheduled.</li> <li>• A special school funding workshop for in-depth discussion is scheduled for 15<sup>th</sup> November.</li> <li>• The form and purpose of the efficiency boards for the new calendar year will be reviewed this term.</li> </ul> <p><u>January Agenda item</u></p> <p>It was agreed for Grant Updates to be an agenda item at the next meeting.</p> <p>ME noted LA statutory duties and requested an update on grants following the Middle Tier Review, suggesting schools be funded directly, with a percentage to support learners in the classrooms.</p> <p>NN expressed disappointment that an outline of Cardiff proposals to Cabinet was in the public domain before being shared with schools. Changes were asked to be communicated to schools prior to social media.</p> <p>SS noted information on the future of the LA education grants and high-level assumptions is expected to be circulated after the settlement in December. Funding for PL and curriculum to schools would continue. Elements previously retained for reform were subject to change, in context with proposals for the national body. Contribution consumed by the national support teams, local teams and regional footprint is being considered.</p> <p>The Cardiff outline report on the Middle Tier Review and high-level principles was put to Scrutiny on 12<sup>th</sup> November and will be considered by Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> November. HW and MG will communicate next steps shortly.</p> <p>EA noted detail was required before information could be communicated on grant funds.</p>	Clerk

	<p>NN requested an update on EIG contributions, historically with a percentage contribution. Whether schools must contribute, and amount was unclear. EA explained a response from WG on expectations of reports from schools on the school standards element was pending. Communication on the flexibility of grant allocation suggested minimal reporting, the match funding element may be discontinued. (EIG was a Consortia based grant; the school standards grant WG based.) <b>Action:</b> EA will follow up with WG and confirm when known.</p>	EA
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### Acronym Reference

SBF	School Budget Forum
SB	School Balance
BSR	Budget Strategy Report
DSB	Delegated School Budget
CC	Cardiff Council
WG	Welsh Government
LG	Local Government
LA	Local Authority
TU	Trade Union
HR	Human Resources
NI	National Insurance
FY	Financial Year
CT	Council Tax
Q_	Quarter_ (number relating to)
FP	Financial Plan
FS	Financial Services
PA	Pay Award
RWL	Real Living Wage
FSM	Free School Meals
MTFM	Medium Term Financial Management
MTFP	Medium Term Financial Plan
MTBS	Medium Term Budget Strategy
MTFB	Medium Term Financial Budgets
LFMO	Local Financial Management Officer
CCHF/HF	Cardiff Council Hardship Fund/ Hardship Fund
LGHF	Local Government Hardship Fund
MSF	Mutual Supply Fund
CNE	Complex Needs Enhancement
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
SOP	School Organisation Programme
PDG	Pupil Deprivation Grant
SEN	Special Education Needs
ALP	Additional Learning Programme
LAS	Local Authority Settlement
EOTAS	Education Other Than at School

MEAG	Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Learners
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