

Membership

Membership with differentiated voting rights ~ Total Membership of 26, of whom 22 are entitled to vote on funding formula issues										
Sector Representation (22)	Appointed by the Council following election by:	Member	Dates and Attendance							
			13 October 2020	12 January 2021	23 March 2021	22 June 2021	12 October 2021			
Maintained Nursery School Senior Staff (1)	Primary Headteachers Group	Jane Wilkie (JaneW)	P							
Special School Staff (1)	Special School Headteachers Group	Lucinda Duffy (LD)	P							
Special School Governor (1)	Governors Forum	Mike Frost (MF)	P							
PRU (1)	PRU Management Board	Karen Thomson (KT)	A							
Academy – all phases (8) Agreed this should be: (5 secondary including UTC) (3 primary)	Academy Schools	Gwyn Williams (GW)	P							
		Tim Long (TL)	P							
		John Carlin (JC)	A							
		Bev Scott-Herron (BSH)	P							
		Jon Wright (JonW)	P							
		Gary Cunningham (GC)	P							
		Paula Warding (PWA)	P							
	UTC	Amanda Downing (AD)	A							
Maintained Primary School Sector (7)	WAPH and Governors Forum	Jacqui Wightman (JacquiW)	P							
		Lesley McGann (LM)	P							
		Lyndsey Glass (LG)	P							
		Ian Moss (IM)	P							
		Janet Lazarus (JL) <i>Governor</i>	P							
		Craig Burgess (CB) <i>Governor</i>	P							
		Donna Kendal (DK) <i>Governor</i>	-							
Maintained Secondary School Sector (2)	WASCL	Chris Hunt (CH)	P							
		Ed McGlinchey (EM)	A							
Private Voluntary and Independent Providers (1)	PVI Providers Forum	Kelda Bibby (KB)	A							

Representing	Member	Dates and Attendance						
		13 October 2020	12 January 2021	23 March 2021	22 June 2021	12 October 2021		
<u>Non-Schools Members (4)</u>								
Anglican Diocese (1)	Jane Griffiths (JG)	P						
Roman Catholic Diocese (1)	Chris Williams (CW)	P						
16-19 Institutions (1)	Damian McGuire (DM)	P						
Parent Governor (1)	Vacant	-						

Independent Chair	Maureen Banner (MB)	P						
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Representing		13 October 2020	12 January 2021	23 March 2021	22 June 2021	12 October 2021		
<u>Warrington Borough Council</u>								
Director, Early Help, Education and SEND	Paula Worthington (PWo)	P						
Finance Manager	James Campbell (JC)	Z						
Senior Accountant (Schools)	Garry Bradbury (GB)	P						
Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services	Cllr Matt Smith (CllrMS)	A						

Key

P ~ Present

S ~ Substitute

A ~ Apologies

- ~ Vacancy

X ~ Absent with no apologies

O ~ Observer

Z ~ no connection to Zoom

Trades Union

Laura Watson

(NASUWT)

Lucie Humphreys

(NEU)

Attending on behalf of Shaun Everett and will take over as NEU rep from 01/01/2021

Present:

Ellen Parry

WBC (Presenting Items 5, 8 and 9)

Andrea Riley

WBC (Presenting Item 7)

Cath Cooke

Outgoing WAPH Chair

Apologies

Shaun Everett

(NEU)

Stephen McNulty

WBC (Item 6)

Minutes:

Gill Sykes

	<i>Item</i>	Action
1.	<p>Apologies and welcome</p> <p>The chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted. A one minute silence was held in memory of David Hart who had been a member of Schools Forum for a number of years.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes from the previous meeting and matters arising (14 January 2020)</p> <p>The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting and noted that matters arising had been addressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyndsey Glass confirmed that they did get the free school meal money for nurseries. • Andrea Riley noted that Shelley Gerrard is working with Kate Guise exploring the drop in birth rate in Warrington (between 2015 and 2019). With the impact of Covid-19 only time will tell if more 2 year olds become eligible for funding next year. 	
3.	<p>Funding Announcements for 2021/22</p> <p>Garry Bradbury presented his report to the forum and noted that updates were received over the summer with proposals for the National Funding Formula (NFF) and the Warrington school block settlement for the next financial year. The increase will be approximately £10m above this year. One of the major differences between this year and next year is that the separate grant funding for teachers' pay and pensions increases has been absorbed into the formula.</p> <p>The following was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) has been increased in the next financial year from 1.84% to 2% protection and this is good news for schools subject to protection. Individual schools should see an increase of at least 2-3% per pupil next year based on the October census. • We are still one of the “have nots” in the authorities and are members of the f40 pressure group. Warrington is 111th out of 149 local authorities for primary and 122nd out of 149 authorities for secondaries. • The regional settlement for the high needs block is an extra 10%, approximately another £2.5m extra. This is a welcome increase to help with the overspend and cost issues. <p>Questions/comments were invited by the Chair:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) is a change not only in the values but in the dataset being used. Will now use data from 2019 rather than 2015. The DfE wanted to try to keep comparable amounts of funding going into IDACI and they have changed the values of various IDACI bands. Ahead of the new pupil numbers we have used the revised IDACI data to show the effect if applied to this year's formula and this is just to give some early warning about which schools may be affected positively or negatively. Those looking to lose funding may not as various protections may kick in. It is debateable whether changes represent true variations in deprivation levels in some schools. 	

	<i>Item</i>	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gary C queried if the timescales going forward will be different due to Covid. Noted that it shouldn't as the data used is from the most recent census. • When completing the census last week it flagged significant increases in FSM due to circumstances with Covid (likely deprivation measure due to families losing jobs). • Garry Bradbury noted that the FSM increased significantly from last year and may continue to escalate. Whether this will feature into IDACI we don't know. It may depend on when the next dataset takes place. If it is in 4 years we would hope Covid disappears as a determining factor. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(a) It is recommended that Schools Forum note the contents of the report, and consider it along with the discussion this evening on options for consultation and implementation of the Warrington funding formula for 2021/22. NOTED</p>	
4.	<p>Financial Consultation for 2021/22 Arrangements</p> <p>Garry Bradbury presented his report to the forum and noted that the revised composition of the National Funding Formula (NFF) has been released and for 2021/22 we need to consider how we apply that to our local determined formula. We have already established as an overarching principle that we want to reflect NFF in the Warrington local formula and on that basis the default suggestion for next year is to implement that.</p> <p>If there is no substantive change between the current formula model for 2020/21 and that proposed for 2021/22 then there is no requirement for a formal all-school consultation. Having used NFF formula values for 2020/21, any modification of these new values to distribute additional funding, or to retain funding centrally for other specific purposes, will require consultation. Schools Forum is asked to consider the four funding scenarios (detailed in the report) for application in financial year 2021/22, some of which would potentially keep back a small amount of funding from distribution. The report notes a suggested use for contingency funding could be to commission a SEND CPD framework and quality assurance process.</p> <p>Questions and comments were invited by the Chair.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gary Cunningham noted that the primary sector have spoken about this and in the past created pots of money that schools could apply for. Seem to be steering towards scenario 2 even though this needs a consultation. • Jacqui noted that the forum always tried to follow NFF as closely as possible so when it does come in schools are prepared. With the MFG of 2%, even though the increase is a small amount, giving the money to schools is better. • Paula Worthington noted that some of the thinking was whether this was an opportunity to use some monies from the funding formula to create the SEND CPD offer to bring all schools up to the same level and equip all staff. Try to prevent the flow of children out of borough and also to introduce some leverage into the system. Creating a contingency fund would support all schools and their staff and could provide training to stop the movement of SEND children around the system, to ensure a varied and inclusive offer within all of our schools. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The special schools have not got enough capacity and we need to consider whether there is an opportunity to increase capacity. Special schools have not had their funding reviewed for approximately 10 years. • Whichever funding scenario applies, it will need to be checked for affordability once all new data from the October census are available. <p>Gary C proposed that scenario 2 is the preferred option and it was recommended we have a consultation offering scenarios 1 and 2 as possible options. This was seconded by Chris Hunt and agreed by the forum to go to consultation.</p> <p>It is recommended that Schools Forum notes the contents of the report, and discusses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) which funding scenarios should be considered further; DISCUSSED (b) whether this will necessitate a wider consultation, and if so which scenarios should be presented as options. AGREED FOR A CONSULTATION OFFERING SCENARIOS 1 AND 2 AS OPTIONS 	
5.	<p>High Needs Medical Funding</p> <p>Ellen Parry presented her report to the forum and noted that High Needs Medical Funding was brought to Schools Forum last April and at that time the decision was to put it on hold while discussions continued with the CCG about their responsibilities. Other local authorities meet this support through health and school resources, Warrington are the only local authority to provide High Needs Medical Funding (HNMF).</p> <p>The proposal is to remove HNMF from our offer and for it to be phased out over the next few years. We will not take any new applications for funding from the end of the calendar year as the CCG should be providing this support for some children through continuing care. We will support existing cases as long as necessary, but will also put them through continuing care to see if health will pick them up. Meetings have taken place with the CCG for them to understand their responsibility in this. Health acknowledged they should have been funding this support in some cases. We are working with the CCG to have a clear and fair process so parents and schools understand it. We will also be talking with WARRPAC, SENDIASS, schools and colleges to explain the process.</p> <p>Warrington’s Designed Clinical Officer has worked with the CCG and is undertaking training with health professionals so they do not put misleading information in assessments for EHC Plans/Reviews e.g. they must not make any recommendations regarding educational provision.</p> <p>Questions and comments were invited by the Chair.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gary Cunningham asked if we remove HNMF how robust will the systems be and how confident are we that health will pick up the financial responsibility? If we remove this option it needs to be clear that the financial responsibility lies with health. Communication with schools is key so they don’t feel they have to pick up the financial burden. • There is a precedent for the CCG stepping up and particularly with complex needs. The CCG have an algorithm to look at delegated tasks for schools that are not needed to be carried out by a medical person, but just because this is a delegated task it doesn’t 	

	<i>Item</i>	Action
	<p>mean that schools have to fund it. Staff in school can be trained by health professionals and health need to pick up the funding for this. We can't guarantee health will pick up everything, but the local authority would not let a child go without things they need, we just need to make sure the right agency is picking up the cost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted that there are differing ways of delivering support and sometimes whole school training is better at supporting than one-to-one. • We will be working with the CCG to ensure they have a clear and fair process for ensuring that children and young people with complex medical needs are appropriately supported with their health needs in school. <p>Schools Forum is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Note the proposal outlined in section 2. NOTED (b) Support the proposal to remove HNMF from the Warrington offer for new applicants from 1st January 2021. AGREED (c) Support the proposal to maintain the current financial support to those children and young people already in receipt of HNMF (unless these are assessed as being eligible for continuing care funding and support instead). AGREED (d) Note the work that the council and the CCG are undertaking to ensure that appropriate funding and support is provided for those who are eligible for continuing care, as well as promoting the take-up of personal health budgets. NOTED (e) Note that the council will work with WARRPAC and SENDIASS to communicate the changes to parents/carers and with WAPH and WASCL to share the changes with schools. NOTED (f) Note the work being undertaken with health professionals by Warrington's DCO. NOTED 	
6.	<p>Traded Services update</p> <p>Stephen McNulty was not available to attend the meeting and Paula Worthington informed that he is happy to take any questions.</p> <p>Schools Forum is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Note the progress being made to provide sustainable services that offer schools value for money and consistent levels of service. NOTED (b) Recognise that the council is an important provider, commissioner and participant in the Warrington education system. NOTED (c) Encourage colleagues to feedback their views on both SLA's and council services in order to help shape the future of traded services. This can be either via the quarterly schools SLA meetings or by contacting Stephen McNulty: smcnulty@warrington.gov.uk / 01925 442682. NOTED 	
7.	<p>Early Years update</p> <p>Andrea Riley presented her report to the forum and noted that following on from the early years funding formula meeting a couple of weeks ago, the main issues are around the current funding position since the January 2020 census of early years, funding from the DfE and the impact of Covid-19. Highlighting financial pressures on early years funding which has a high</p>	

Item	Action
<p>pass-through rate to providers of over 98% of 3-4 year old funding and the reserves are low in the early years funding pot.</p> <p>For the Autumn term the DfE is asking local authorities to support the early years sector and to fund as though Covid never happened and to use 2019 data as a benchmark to make sure DSG is passported through to providers.</p> <p>Funding pressures on the early years block is compounded by Covid and how parents continue to access childcare across the next 2 terms. We predict more parents may lose employment which could mean an increase in those who are eligible for the 2 year old funding. There could also be a surge of parents becoming dual working families resulting in an increase of those who want the 30 hour offer. Parents may not need as much childcare due to working from home and use less paid for childcare and this could have an impact on early years provision. Noted that Warrington has built a really good offer of childcare that meets their need. They may use pre-school and childcare and we want to protect the offer we currently have to meet the needs of our working families.</p> <p>There is pressure in sustaining the childcare market to ensure we can have a childcare offer as we move into the spring term. It needs to be recognised that we don't have reserves in the funding pot. We fund some of SEND through the EY block e.g. portage, Area SENCO and SEND EY inclusion fund. We hope that we can retain the funding from the pot to support the services without having an impact on the pass-through rate which was increased by 8p per hour in April. We want to protect that and protect the SEND budget.</p> <p>Questions and comments were invited by the Chair.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jacqui noted that a childcare setting close to her school has closed. If we don't protect early years with a good blend of maintained and PVI, where is the provision going to come from if settings are closing down? • Andrea noted that most childcare settings in Warrington are managing to stay open. A result of CMA before the summer was a dim view of nurseries nationally charging parents when not providing a service. This was raised through the schools Covid group and we are preparing a report to Paula Worthington of the 17 early years bubbles closed and the huge loss of income. We are looking for support from consultancy in completing our Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA), this will ensure we ask the right questions around the pressures and how sustainable the sector is. We have a small amount of money as a hardship grant to get some providers through the spring term and hopefully more stable. • Lyndsey noted that the report says funding has been reduced by £902k, but we did leave £845k in the DSG block last year. Noted that there are pressures on maintained nurseries as well as PVIs because people can't look round. Finding their numbers may have gone down and were expecting 100% of crossover money and only getting 20%. The forum needs to understand when looking at the recommendation that there has been a lot of money left in DSG. Important to leave in and protect not just PVI but also the maintained settings. • Andrea noted that as parents cannot come for a look round, some private day nurseries have adapted the process with a virtual open evening. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted that there are smaller settings who have lost a lot of children and thinking they wouldn't be able to open. Consideration needs to be made of smaller setting and look at a more targeted approach. Can passport 100% of funding over. • Could look at this differently and run at a lower cost by not staffing with teacher salaries. Lyndsey noted that she strongly believes in having a teacher and TA instead of PVI governor and asked if there is flexibility for this term. Andrea noted that there are different models of successfully governor led and all early years providers have to think hard about a sustainable offer. • Damian noted that primaries within their trust have concerns around the funding national level and would like Paula Worthington to escalate this issue. For a number of years the academy sector had suffered a lower rate (since 2019, all settings are funded at the same hourly rate) and there is disparity around maintained school provision and having to subsidise some of the early years provision. One primary school is now evaluating whether the provision should remain open. It is important this is picked up from a national level, it is a national issue not a Warrington issue. <p>Schools Forum accepted the recommendations below with the proviso that Andrea returns in January 2021. We don't want to compromise on quality and require an update to reassure the forum.</p> <p>Action: Andrea Riley to return to Schools Forum in January 2021 with an update.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Schools Forum notes the revised funding allocation for 2020/21 and retrospective 2019/20. (b) Schools Forum acknowledges the approach to funding across autumn term 2020 and how this seeks to manage the Early Years block across the year. (c) Schools Forum are asked to support with sustaining the EY offer and protect early years SEND Services; through allocating DSG if required. 	Andrea
8.	<p>High Needs update re Funding Bands</p> <p>Ellen Parry presented her report to the forum and noted the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal to remove all funding bands was considered and agreed at Schools Forum in April 2019. The new approach was for a more individualised model which would be reviewed after 6 months. • It is now over a year since implementation and review shows that without funding bands there is no ceiling to what schools are requesting. We acknowledge that some children need a special provision and it is the preference of parents to be in mainstream and we would allocate the equivalent to special but they shouldn't exceed the top up funding in a special school or a designated provision. • We have undertaken benchmarking exercises with other North West local authorities discussing different approaches. The majority of local authorities are using funding bands in their approach to awarding top up funding. • Using the new framework the funding outlined in the provision maps has shown a large increase. Individual requests have been increasing and very few are requesting a reduction in funding. Often funding requested is equivalent to the cost of a TA and some children may be getting 1:1 support rather than more inclusive approach. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some interventions included on provision maps should be delivered through quality first teaching. These requests have been removed through Panel or triage. More training is planned for SENCOs on provisions and the sort of support they should be requesting and what should be in the universal offer of quality first teaching. Noted that the graduated approach is also being refreshed and will be provided to SENCOs. • Current benchmarking across the North West local authorities will be used to inform our model of funding bands. We are working on a comparison across the North West and will be taking this back to the North West Forum for a universal North West approach. All these local authorities are using funding bands of some sort and we hope to reduce some of the top ups and distribute funding more fairly for children with more complex needs. <p>Questions and comments were invited by the Chair.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyndsey Glass (LG) noted if we are aligning with other local authorities will the notional amount return to £6,000 (currently £7,500 which was a Warrington agreement)? If we are comparing to other authorities this should be remembered. Ellen noted that we would need to discuss further when looking at the funding bands. • Gary Cunningham (GC) acknowledged that we tried to address the issues by using an alternative approach to funding bands. It was the right decision to try the bespoke model, but does support going back to a funding band model. • Jacqui Wightman (JWight) wanted to highlight for the minutes that we are not doing this to save money and children’s needs still need to be met. Also noted that comments about SEN children with similar needs is difficult as they are so different. • The Chair noted that our responsibility is always about the needs of the children. • Paula Worthington (PW) reinforced the point Jacqui made and also the difficulty with assigning money. The broad spectrum should primarily be on children’s needs and money is secondary. It is with a heavy heart we are considering a move back to funding bands and doesn’t mean we are trying to slot children in. With regard to creating a CPD offer we do have some challenge in encouraging that children are not slotted into compartments of complex needs. <p>Schools Forum is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Note the proposal outlined in section 2. NOTED (b) Support the proposal to reintroduce a funding band methodology for high needs top-ups which will be phased in immediately in new EHCPs and through Annual Reviews once the funding bands have been agreed. AGREED (c) Note the change to the SEND Panels funding allocation decisions. NOTED (d) Support the proposal to update SENCOs with training around the production of provision maps, Warrington’s graduated approach and schools responsibilities for children and young people with SEN. AGREED (e) Support the use of the NW LA benchmarking exercise to inform Warrington’s funding band model. AGREED (f) Note that the council will work with WARRPAC and SENDIASS to communicate the changes to parents / carers and with WAPH, WASCL and the SENCO Network to share the changes with schools. NOTED 	

	<i>Item</i>	Action
9.	<p>Proposal for Free School Meals funding from academy schools</p> <p>Ellen Parry presented her report to the forum and the following key points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A report was presented to Schools Forum in January 2020 indicating the intention to increase the FSM charge for maintained schools to bring charges in line with academies. • This proposal was subsequently discussed at WAPH Executive in March 2020 and one action from the meeting was around a request for academies to passport their money across at the start of the year so that all schools were doing the same. This fits in with the family of schools model where regardless of school status all are equally supported. • The report today brings a proposal to Schools Forum to seek agreement from academies to transfer all of their FSM funding allocations (benefits-related and UIFSM) to the School Meals Service each academic year from 1 September 2020. • In July we contacted the CEO of multi academy trusts to request a transfer of funding for April and July to offset some of our costs for FSM. So far only one has committed to this transfer. It was emphasised that FSM funding is given solely to provide meals for children. <p>Gary Cunningham agreed it would be morally wrong to use the funding any other way and they needed to check the correct amount before transferring funding back to the local authority to ensure schools are not leaving themselves liable to risk.</p> <p>Damian McGuire noted that their trust agreed to the transfer but have an issue with the proposal. Commitment was given that we would remain when the trust was set up. We would pay FSM but don't believe we should hand across all the funding and then have no recourse to deal with any deficiency in the service. The trust is still committed to remain within the school meal service.</p> <p>Lyndsey Glass noted that any inefficiency in the service can be addressed/challenged at the School Meals Headteacher Working Group. Additional attendees would be most welcome to join the group to discuss any issues around the school meals service and to try to improve the service for children. Jacqui informed that the group hold the service to account and academy reps joining would have the same control as the rest of the service. It provides a challenge as critical friends around improving the quality of the service. Damian and Gary C agreed to join this group which would give an opportunity to air any concerns.</p> <p>Action: Ellen Parry to invite Damian and Gary C to the next meeting.</p> <p>Jacqui noted that the maintained sector is enabling the FSM service to exist. In the past we had budgets topsliced and we wouldn't want to return to that. Due to changes in food/staffing costs and conversion to academies we have had a deficit and need to share this between us to keep the service going.</p> <p>The Chair noted that not everyone is in agreement and are not ready to commit to the recommendations, but we must not lose sight of how important school meals are. It was agreed that this item should be deferred until the next Schools Forum to allow the following actions:</p>	Ellen

	<i>Item</i>	Action
	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A meeting of the School Meals Working Group to take place and come up with an alternative proposal to be presented to Schools Forum. • Ellen to prepare a paper which includes details of the academies that have returned the funds and those that haven't (need transparency going forward). <p>Schools Forum deferred the following proposals:</p> <p>(a) Note the preferred proposal outlined in section 2. DEFERRED</p> <p>(b) Support the preferred proposal to seek agreement from academies to transfer all of their free school meal funding allocations to the School Meals Service each academic year from 1st September 2020. DEFERRED</p> <p>(c) Support the alternative proposal if the preferred proposal is not agreed. DEFERRED</p>	Ellen
10.	<p>Membership</p> <p>The academy representation was queried and it was agreed that the split should be 5 representatives from the secondary sector and 3 representatives from the primary sector.</p>	
11.	<p>AOB</p> <p>Agreed for the next meeting to be via Zoom and for it to start at the earlier time of 4.30 pm.</p>	
12.	<p>Meeting schedule for 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 January 2021 at 4.30 pm via Zoom • 23 March 2021 • 22 June 2021 • 12 October 2021 <p>All Tuesdays at 5.15 – 7.00 pm unless held virtually and will then start at 4.30 pm (<i>Venue or virtual arrangements TBC</i>)</p>	

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was closed.