

# Norfolk Schools Forum

Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 13 March 2024 Cranworth Room County Hall

09:00 – 12:30 hours

## Present

Adrian Ball	Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust
Steven Dewing	Sapientia Education Trust
Lacey Douglass	Freelance Early Years Advisor
Mike Grimble	Avenue Junior School
Bob Groome	Joint Consultative Committee
David Hicks	Synergy Multi Academy Trust
Carol Jacques	Earlham Nursery School
Clare Jones	Broad Horizons Education Trust
Karen McIntosh (sub)	City College
Joanne Philpott	City of Norwich School
Rachel Quick	The Wherry School
Sarah Shirras	St Williams Primary School
Joanna Tuttle	Aylsham High School
Matthew Smith (sub)	Sheringham Woodfields School
Vicky Warnes	Joint Consultative Committee
Martin White (Chair)	Nebula Federation

## Representing

Academies
Academies
Early Years Representative
Maintained Primary Governors
Joint Consultative Committee
Academies
Maintained Nursery Schools
Academies
16 – 19 Representative
Academies
Special School Academy
Maintained Primary Schools
Maintained Secondary Schools
Maintained Special Schools
Joint Consultative Committee
Maintained Primary Governors

## Local Authority Officers

Martin Brock	Accountant (Schools, Special Educational Needs, and Early Years)
Michael Bateman	Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Partnership
John Crowley	Assistant Director, Education Intelligence and Effectiveness
Robert Cole	Assistant Director, Partnerships, Schools & Communities
Marilyn Edgeley	Admin Officer
Dawn Filtness	Finance Business Partner (Children's Services)
Daniel Newbolt	Assistant Director, Family Help and High Needs
Kate Philpin	Schools HR Business Partner
Nicki Rider	Assistant Director High Needs SEND and CWD
Alison Toombs	Senior Adviser Inclusion – Learning and SEND
Sara Tough	Executive Director of Children's Services
James Wilson	Director for Sufficiency Planning and Education Strategy

## Apologies:

Helen Bates	Diocese of East Anglia Schools Service	Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia
Stephen Beeson	Diocese of Norwich	Diocese Representative
Martin Colbourne	City College	16 – 19 Representative
Glyn Hambling	Unity Education Trust	Alternative Provision
Daniel Thrower	The Wensum Trust	Academies

A summary of the papers and meeting is available as a concise briefing here:

<https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/school-finance/norfolk-schools-forum/forum-briefings>

## 1. **Welcome and Apologies**

Apologies and substitutions were noted

## 2. **Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

Steve Bush from Cambridgeshire Community Services to attend future meeting.  
Date TBC.

It was resolved unanimously:

to approve the minutes of the meeting of 26 January 2024 as a true record.

## **Declaration of Interest Forum**

This is now a formal process, declaration of Interest forms have been circulated and members are asked to complete and return these by email if they have not already done so.

## **Pension Grants**

The JCC representative reported that the four general secretaries of the teaching unions had contacted the Secretary for Education and her response has been circulated to Forum members.

## 3a. **Local First Inclusion (LFI)**

James Wilson introduced the update on LFI to Schools Forum. This is an important phase in the program. The program is well underway. Level of demand substantially higher than we had allowed for resulting in greater overspend on the budget. This has triggered enhanced monitoring by the DfE. We are working with the DfE on changing our trajectory and refreshing the programme. We need to trust the strategy and ask what more can we do. This item is in two parts. Firstly to update Forum with new figures but also to explain to Forum new thinking and additional schemes.

### Part 1

The Schools Forum received a [presentation](#) and [paper](#) that gave an update on the Local First Inclusion programme with a focus on the work with DfE as part of Enhanced Monitoring and Support ('EMS) and doing this with reference to overall SEND strategic improvement with the Area SEND & AP Strategy, related self-evaluation framework and monitoring via OfstedCQC..

Action: An updated version of the slides will be circulated after this meeting.

Regular engagement meeting with Ofsted/Care Quality Commission (CQC) – we take every opportunity to ensure that DfE and Ofsted/CQC know that our focus is on achieving the right outcomes for children and young people with SEND and requiring AP whilst managing our statutory duties and the budget pressures within 'safety valve'. We have received positive feedback from Ofsted/CQC with their acknowledgement they could see the energy and joint commitment behind the work we are doing. We do not envisage having further contact from Ofsted for possibly eighteen months.

- Comment: (from schools forum members who are also members of LFI executive board and/or Local Inclusion Partnership) confirmed that there is a significant amount of SEND development in addition to LFI, through the area strategy, with impressive commitment through the partnership. However, this did underline the need for ongoing communication to ensure all colleagues are aware of this work. Officers response: Recent event across the eastern region for peer review of self-evaluation and a positive response for the Norfolk plan and the work we are doing.

Michael Bateman provided further detail on the implementation of, and impact to date of the LFI program.

A significant point - in terms of the stock-take we are doing, we need to think again about the funding available for secondary complex needs SRB's due to the zero expressions of interest received. The options could include more ASD SRB's and/or new approaches to special school outreach / satellite provision. . However, on a positive note we have now had one formal expression of interest for an ASD SRB in a secondary school centre in the west.

Individual members raised the following points in relation to the presentation:

- Question: With secondary schools not participating, have you got a bio we could use at JCC meetings with Trusts to try to get interest at a different angle to try and reduce behaviour problems. Officers response: Yes it is about engagement and we can help with that.
- Comment: Secondary school heads not having complex needs top of their agenda – manage this well in their own schools. SEMH and ASD much more top of their agendas. Could have more education on what secondary complex needs looks like. Officers response: Yes helpful.
- Comment: 1:1 TA now costs £24k per annum and we are only receiving £16k of funding for this. Officers response: This has been recognised in conversations with colleagues around banding arrangements do they look differently between primary and secondary? We have picked up on this issue.
- Question: How does early years fit into all of this, with regards to children needing to go into special school rather than mainstream How are we looking as an organisation and a community to how we can get in early to try and help families so that children do not have behavioural issues when they go into mainstream school. Officers response: Good Point. Resonates with profiling we have been seeing in early years, because the work is focused on getting into mainstream school do we need to get further downstream than that – probably. Maximise the way we are trying to bring the system together. Zones are a critical infrastructure.

Agencies working together for a single understanding. Not about money but about how the resources are more effective and supporting children that are much younger. All this work is happening and hope to engage everyone in the right way.

Officers talked about trying to work more creatively with health to create a more inclusive system and speeded up access to mental health services.

### **Next Steps**

Further meetings with SEND and Finance Advisors at DfE being scheduled ahead of submitting a revised version of model. Norfolk is doing everything that it can to resolve the situation, in terms of ensuring original plans continue within context of increasing need.

That concludes part 1 of Local First Inclusion.  
We will feedback to Forum before the academic year finishes on the outcome of the work with DfE.

## **4. Final Pupil Variations**

The Schools Forum received a [paper](#) that provides a minor update to the total final pupil variations for mainstream schools in 2024-25. The paper also sets out options for retrospective pupil number variations.

Individual members raised the following points in relation to the paper:

- Comment: Pupil variation data vs actual pupil numbers for previous 3 years is a good exercise to provide checks and balances. We should review figures from the previous year annually. Others agreed. Officers response: We will bring a comparison of previous year's data each year.

**Forum members noted the information provided.  
Forum members agreed with the LA proposal for retrospective pupil number variations in cases of significant error only.**

## **3b. Local First Inclusion (LFI) part 2**

Part 2 of this item asks Forum members for a steer on the way forward for the LFI programme.

Rob Cole , Asst Director, Partnerships, Schools & Communities, joined at this point of the presentation to talk about the work of the School and Community Teams, specifically about their work over the last term. Alison Toombs Senior Advisor Inclusion, joined for this part of the presentation to talk about inclusion and early support around SEND . Also attending Daniel Newbolt Assistant Director, Family Help and High Needs who has just taken over EHCP and Education Psychology from Nicki Rider.

It is 12 months since the concept of School and Community Teams were designed, since September 2023 there are 80 full time equivalent staff deployed over 15 zones. We are targeting our teams to work within levels 3 and 4 of INDES.

Individual members raised the following points in relation to the presentation:

- Comment: Really useful analytical feedback on the work the School and Community Teams are doing. Quantitative data provided useful in understanding the impact of the School and Community.
- Comment: Transitions and remit focus – huge gap where families have an EHCP. Officers response: There was a focus upon early years transition during the summer/autumn term of 2023, which will be repeated this year. There is the opportunity to support phased transfer which could be explored further.
- Comment: From a secondary perspective we have not felt any impact from this work – is this intentional? Officers response: No not specifically, in terms of cohort size and demand reception, years 5 and 6 and going into year 7 was where we felt we could make the most impact. We have engagements planned to help us understand the need across schools.
- Comment: Is perception zones are working well? Officers response: They are a place to collaborate, with regard to understanding cohorts and needs within communities in addition to aligning the delivery of services and provision through partnership working.

Officers are working to develop profiles that will describe the resources and need in a zone. Subsequently, the next step would be supporting partners to collaborate to deploy resources and activity to reflect the needs of children and families within each zone.

- Question around cost, with regards to understanding the costs averted due to the preventative activity school & community teams are undertaking. Officers response: It may be possible to undertake some cost benefit analysis over time to understand the financial impact the early prevention activity has. This is a task that the team will explore further and provide as part of LFI reporting. Action: Officers agreed to explore cost benefit analysis in addition to providing data on school engagement.

Comment: Do not ignore transition years 2 and 3 and we need to avoid inconsistency of messaging. Officers response: Engagement with all schools has taken place and further communications are planned for early years providers, in addition to developing content on the Norfolk schools website.

At this point Rob Cole & Alison Toombs talked about further activity underway to develop a new joined-up approach to offering earlier help for SEND. The principles of the model is based around having a team around approach.<sup>i</sup> Members of the school forum received a presentation based upon developing:

Strategic meetings: A termly meeting with each trust (or equivalent) using data to champion inclusive practice, challenge where further cultural development is required and align SEND and inclusion strategies across the system.

Team around the School: Regular school-level meeting to individual children and cohorts, coaching schools to deliver successful SEND and inclusion provision. Can also deploy team around school resources to support.

Way Forward Meetings: Meeting with family and school to discuss the best way forward for a child focusing on existing plans. Supports a decision-making function in meeting with family, where an EHCNA application has been made.

Family and Professional Phonenumber: Phonenumber offering information, advice and guidance on the SEN landscape. Can convene a team around the school meeting, or way forward meeting as needed to cohere support around a child and prevent needs escalating

- Comment: Way forward meeting. Significant for schools, when you have made an application for an SRB etc and all are told the child's needs exceed that service – schools are left facing the family. So these meetings not just for families but also for schools. System not helping schools when you reach a dead end.

At this point Dan Newbolt talked about what will be the next key areas of focus. This is the first stage of undertaking further engagement. Once this stage is completed, then we can move to understanding the resource requirements and then into developing and finalising the plan for implementation.

Individual members raised the following points in relation to the presentation:

Comment: Encouraged by model you have described. Positive way forward. In reducing EHCPs referrals part of early discussions described in model could have greatest impact of anything we have done, although looks very labour intensive. Officers response: Your feedback is very important. Through remodelling we will have to look at the whole resource 'envelope'.

- Comment: Reassuring that you are thinking of starting earlier and how as a sector can early years get involved. Officers response: Think we have got a framework where we could potentially extend to early years.

The model wants to get to where needs are met early.

- Comment: Lots of children with EHCPs where if we could have done something earlier and they may not have needed a plan.

## 5. **System leadership, achieving our shared ambitions.**

Schools Forum were asked to consider how they collectively could perform a bigger strategic role feeding back into the education system and shape the future. We have some developing systems but not looking at the bigger picture in the way this group does. We are suggesting a working party as the way forward.

## 6. **Shared Parental Leave**

The Schools Forum received a [paper](#) on Shared Parental Leave.

**It was resolved to:**

**Bring further information around maintained schools to the next meeting in May.**

**Set up a task and finish group.**

The following Forum members volunteered to be on a task and finish group to consider the issue of Shared Parental Leave.

Matt Smith, Carole Jacques, Martin White, Sarah Shirras, Joanne Tuttle..  
Martin Brock, Kate Philpin and Martin Oswick, Finance Team Manager would also be part of this group.

It was requested that Finance Support Officers are aware of and understand the issue of Shared Parental Leave when supporting schools with their budgets.

## 7. **Review future meeting plan**

All meetings to finish at 12.30.

## 8. **AOB**

None

The next Schools Forum Meeting will be held on 17 May 2024 in the Cranworth Room County Hall.