

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Held on Friday 15 September 2017 at Chace Community School

Schools Members:

Governors: Ms Ellerby (Primary), Mrs J Leach (Special), Mrs L Sless (Primary), *Mr T McGee (Secondary)*, Vacancy (Primary), Vacancy (Primary)

Headteachers: Ms H Thomas (Primary) (Chair), Ms H Ballantine (Primary), Mr D Bruton (Secondary), *Ms M Hurst (Pupil Referral Unit)*, *Ms H Knightley (Primary)*, *Ms L Whitaker (Primary)*, Ms G Weir (Special), Vacancy (Secondary)

Academies: Ms L Dawes, *Ms A Nicou*, *Mr Sadgrove*

Non-Schools Members:

16 - 19 Partnership	<i>Mr K Hintz</i>
Early Years Provider	<i>Ms C Gopoulos</i>
Teachers' Committee	Mr T Cuffaro (substitute)
Education Professional	Ms C Seery
Head of Behaviour Support	Ms J Fear
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Tbc

Observers:

Cabinet Member	<i>Cllr A Orhan</i>
School Business Manager	<i>Ms A Homer</i>
Education Funding Agency	<i>Mr Owen</i>

Also attending:

M.P. for Southgate	Mr B Charalambous
Work Experience with M.P.'s Office	Ms N Arram
Executive Director Children's Service	Mr T Theodoulou
Assistant Finance Business Partner	Mrs L McNamara
Resources Development Manager	Mrs S Brown

* Italics denote absence

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Mr Charalambous was welcomed to the meeting.

Ms Thomas thanked Mr Charalambous for meeting with the Schools Forum. She explained that Forum felt it was important to highlight the difficulties and challenges facing schools in balancing their budget. The challenges had arisen due to the flat cash per pupil funding and the current difficulty in recruiting good quality teachers. At the end of last financial year (2016/17), 50% of Enfield schools reported an in-year deficit. From the information available for this year, it was unlikely this situation would improve.

The aim of the meeting was to share our experiences and seeking Mr Charalambous support in lobbying the Government to provide sufficient funding for schools and education to meet their statutory obligations towards children and young people.

The Forum's view, going forward, was that the Government should provide schools with sufficient funding to meet any new pressures that were not within the control of individual schools, i.e. pay awards, National Insurance increases.

2. DISCUSSION

(a) Individual schools budget

Noted the implication on the ground for individual schools for setting and maintaining a balanced budget were:

- **Secondary Schools:**

Increasing class sizes: this was a general strategy employed by all schools. The experience for:

- Oasis Hadley had increased class sizes for Years 7 and 8 from 25 to 30 pupils per class.
- Chace Community School was taking an additional three pupils in each class and so increasing class sizes.

Reducing GCSE and A levels subject offer: both the schools, as well as the other secondary schools have reduced the number of subjects offered to students.

Support Staff: reducing the staff employed to only retaining teaching assistants where their pay could be supported by Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) or other additional allocated hours.

The concerns for secondary schools was that these strategy, in some instances, had been in place for a number of years but the continuous pressure of meeting additional costs, such as pay awards, with no additional funding was untenable.

- **Primary Schools:**

Diminishing resources to support the curriculum: As well as increasing class sizes and reducing support staff, most primary schools had reduced the resources to support the delivery of the curriculum. For example, Alma School; a few years ago had a resources budget of approximately £100k to support the curriculum and ICT and this had now reduced and currently stood at £10k. The School and the Governing Body were concerned that there now was no contingency to maintain an ICT Plan or safeguard against any unforeseen circumstances.

Curriculum Offer: most schools had reviewed their curriculum offer, were delivering the basic national requirements, and were no longer able to offer a wide and varied curriculum.

- **Special Schools:** individual schools had no flex in their budget to develop and support fully the children and young people in their schools.

Staff Absence: where possible staff absences are not covered by supply. Teaching staff were advised to first, ensure pupils were safe and then consider delivering the curriculum.

Family School Workers: These and other support worker posts had to be cut.

(b) High Needs:

Increasing demand for support: the demand for supporting pupils with SEND was increasing exponentially. The reasons for the increase were:

- 1 Due to the impact of the SEND Reforms: the Reforms required children and young people with SEND aged between 2 and 25 years old to be supported. This extension in the age range has seen an increase in the number of assessments and number of Education, Health and Care Plans being issued.
- 2 Enfield was a net importer with more families with children and young people with SEND moving into the borough.
- 3 The general improvement in health care and mortality rates had meant an increase in life expectancy for some of the most vulnerable children and young people.

Budget Savings: to manage the financial pressure both the Schools Budget and the Council, the Schools Forum had supported to the deletion of the Foundation Stage Support Service. The loss of this Service was partially mitigated by the creation of the Inclusion Fund. The Fund did not fully fund the support required for the pupils so loading an added pressure for schools.

Impact for Schools: Previously, schools had a few pupils with SEND or behavioural problems, the needs of these pupils could be met from the additional support provided through the Statement process and resources from within the school and the Local Authority. The increasing demand for supporting pupils with SEND and no resources within schools or the Local Authority, schools were finding it difficult to maintain pupils in their schools.

(c) Free School Meals (FSM) Eligibility:

Welfare Benefit Reforms: FSM was one of the main indicators used for funding and supporting pupils from a deprived background. The impact of the Reforms had seen a significant decrease in the number of pupils eligible for FSM. For example, Alma school before the Reforms had 57% of pupils eligible for FSM and now only 23% were eligible. The School had not seen a reduction in the level of deprivation in the area nor experienced a change in the pupils and their home circumstances.

Schools were also seeing a significant increase in the number of families and children with no recourse to public funds, with families in the east of the borough often living in dilapidated and cramped accommodation.

(d) Recruitment and Retention of Teaching Staff:

Recruitment: schools had been unable to recruit good quality teachers to cover their timetable needs for the new academic year and had to resort to using agency / supply staff. The reasons for recruitment difficulties included:

Affordability: teaching staff could not afford to live in Enfield because of low pay: Enfield paid staff outer London Weighting. Where teaching staff had been recruited: they tended to commute from Hertfordshire or other areas outside London, moved to neighbouring boroughs that were able to pay more because of inner London Weighting, moved overseas or left the profession.

The experience in Enfield was borne out by a recent survey, which found that outer London authorities were the most effected by the teaching recruitment crisis. Recent experiences had been:

Use of Agencies for Supply: the charges applied by agencies average around £220 -£240 per day for varying quality of teachers. Recent experience of Oasis Hadley was charges of over £270 per day for cover by an agency. It was most likely that the teacher provided by the agency would only be paid around a third of the amount paid by the School. A greater number of teaching staff are applying through agencies rather than directly to schools.

Moving Overseas: teachers once they have gained some experience moved abroad to areas such as Dubai. These teachers were able to earn more money – often tax free - with less stress.

Leaving the Profession: The number of teachers that were either planning to or had left the profession was increasing. This was because of low pay, heavy workload, stress of the job and inability to find good quality affordable housing.

Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs): Changes introduced by the Government had meant a reduction in the number of NQTs entering the profession. Agencies were able to promise early visits to colleges and sign up NQTs and then schools had to go to agencies to recruit the NQTs as either staff or supply. Where it was:

- For Recruitment purposes, the agency charged schools an introductory fee, plus the daily rate for the candidate to attend the school for interview and observation.
- For Supply cover, the staff provided had little or were inexperienced and there was concern regarding quality control because of the variability of the quality of staff. If a supply applied and was successful in obtaining a permanent post at the school, then there was a requirement to pay exit fee and this was on average 20% of the agreed

salary and some school had paid up to £10k only for the member of the staff to leave after a short time for the reasons stated above.

- (e) Mr Charalambous explained he was a governor at two primary schools in Enfield. As a governor, he was aware of the challenges facing schools and had highlighted these in his maiden speech in the House of Commons. He had asked the Secretary of State to explain how the additional £1.3b to be provided by the Government would address all the pressures facing schools.

Mr Charalambous was also aware of the pressures facing the Council and how the funding methodology meant a reduction of funding provided to Enfield. Unfortunately, the recent experience of other local authorities had shown carrying out a referendum for Council tax increase did not yield the required result. This was because the referendum required the local residents to vote in favour of an increase in Council tax and this not easy to achieve.

Mr Charalambous would do as much as he could to ensure schools received sufficient funding to meet the needs of their pupils. As part of this, he will continue to be involved in the Fair Funding for Schools campaign. He would also work with other MPs to agree an early day motion to address the agency recruitment and charging issues.

Resolved:

- (a) Mr Charalambous would:

- Agree with other MPs for an early day motion to address the teacher recruitment and consequent charges faced by schools from agencies;
- Write to the Secretary of State, and copy to the Shadow Secretary of State, outlining the challenges and difficulties facing schools. With their agreement, the letter would be signed by all three MPs for Enfield;

- (b) Schools Forum members would support Mr Charalambous by providing case studies and evidence for the letter to the Secretary of State.

Action: Mr Charalambous and Schools Forum Members

6. Ms Thomas thanked Mr Charalambous for meeting the Forum. She hoped that he would be able to attend a future meeting of the Forum to report on progress in improving funding for schools.

7. **CONFIDENTIALITY**

No items were considered confidential.