

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Held on Wednesday 20 September 2017 at Chace Community School

Schools Members:

Governors: Mrs J Ellerby (Primary), (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 G Weir (Special), Ms
L Whitaker (Primary) – substituted by Ms K Jaeggi (Primary), Vacancy (Secondary),

Academies: *Ms L Dawes (Secondary)*, Ms A Nicou, Mr A Sadgrove

Non-Schools Members:

Early Years Provider *Ms C Gopoulos*

16 - 19 Partnership *Mr K Hintz*

Teachers' Committee Mr J Jacobs

Head of Behaviour Support Ms C Seery

Education Professional Ms J Fear

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Vacancy

Observers:

Cabinet Member Cllr A Orhan

School Business Manager Ms A Homer

Education Funding Agency *Mr O Jenkins*

Also attending:

Assistant Director, Education Mr J Carrick

Assistant Finance Business Partner Mrs L McNamara

Head of Budget Challenge Mr N Goddard

Resources Development Manager Mrs S Brown

Resources Development Officer Ms J Bedford

* Italics denote absence

1. MEMBERSHIP AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

a) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Leach, Mrs Sless, Mrs Whitaker, Ms Dawes, Ms Gopoulos and Mr Hintz.

Noted Ms Jaeggi was substituting for Ms Whitaker.

Reported:

- Mr Goddard had resigned from the Schools Forum. Nominations for the vacancy created were being sought from the Secondary Headteachers Conference.
- Nominations for two primary governors were being sought from Member Governor Forum.

b) Membership

Noted this was Mr Sadgrove's first meeting since his nomination had been accepted.

Mr Sadgrove was welcomed to the Schools Forum

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest expressed.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

a) **Received** and agreed the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 14 June 2017, a copy of which is in the minute book.

b) Matters arising from these minutes

(i) Pupils with ECHPs requiring Element 3 top-up funding: Item 4a (ii)

Reported due to the information containing personal data, officers had been advised the report could only be sent to one named individual. To ensure that the information was being sent to the right person, each school will be asked to confirm the named individual and then it would be the responsibility of the named individual to liaise with anyone else at the school.

Action Mrs McNamara

Clerks note: Cllr Orhan and Ms Hurst arrived at this point

(ii) **Transitional Support for schools for changes to Element 2 funding for Pupils with ECHPs: Item 5b (i)**

Reported as advised by the Schools Forum, total funding for transitional support had been increased from £200k to £400k and the funding had been advanced in September to eligible schools.

(iii) **Letter to Mr Charalambous MP: Item 5c**

Reported that a letter highlighting the difficulties and challenges facing schools in balancing their budgets had been sent to Mr Charalambous MP and consequently, some members of the Schools Forum had met with him last week. The minutes from this meeting would be circulated to Forum members.

Noted Mr Charalambous had listened to the members describe the impact of flat cash funding was having on individual schools budget and had agreed to:

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

Mr Charalambous had stated that he would include examples from individual schools of their experiences in his letter to the SoS and had requested if the Forum would assist by providing with this information.

It was suggested with the agreement of Mr Charalambous, a copy of the letter should also be sent to the Mayor of London and Ms McCartney, GLA Education lead.

Resolved Headteacher representatives would ask volunteers to provide information of their experiences of challenges being faced to Mr Charalambous.

Action: Headteacher representatives

(iv) **Meeting with Leader of the Council: Item 5d**

Reported it had been confirmed that the Leader would be able to attend the January 2018 meeting of the Forum.

(v) **Induction Pack for New Members: Item 7**

Resolved updated induction pack would be circulated to new members.

4. ITEM FOR DISCUSSION & INFORMATION

a) **School Balances – 2016/17: Further Update**

Received a report that provided further information on use of balances above the agreed threshold for retention, a copy of which is in the Minute book.

Reported the Authority had initially indicated in the report circulated that the only school where it was recommended balances should be recycled was Grange Park. Since the papers had been circulated, the Authority had received information from the School. This information provided sufficient evidence, and the Authority was now withdrawing the recommendation for recycling.

Noted:

- i) Members were advised that the Education Resources Group had raised concerns that the School had not responded to requests for information and was now providing information so late in the financial year. The Group also noted potential weaknesses in the School's financial monitoring arrangements and had asked for an audit to be carried out.
- ii) The information provided by schools on the use of balances was vague and did not provide specific information on how the funding was being used to support improvements at the school. Members felt that there needed to be great challenge, especially when a significant number of schools had minimal balances or were facing financial difficulties.
- iii) In response to the question as to whether the information on surplus budgets for maintained school could be made available earlier in the financial year, if there was a possibility of recycling, the meeting was informed this would be difficult. This was because the process for the final closure of accounts took place at the end of May, following which; schools were given one month to respond to the request for information on budgets.

It was suggested that an additional meeting of the Education Resources Group could be held in the Spring term to discuss any requests for retaining balances above the threshold.

- iv) It was confirmed that schools were provided with reminders on the need to seek approval for retaining balances above the agreed thresholds. Reminders were included in the Governing Bodies Termly Pack, highlighted at the School Business Management Forums and detailed in Governors Finance Handbook.
- v) It was commented the surplus budgets should not be part of the conversion process for schools becoming academies, especially if as a result; these schools could extract more money from the maintained schools budget. It was stated that there were regulations detailing the treatment of surplus balances and transfer of funds.
- vi) A view was expressed whether surplus budgets was the right metric and may be assessing Value for Money would be better metric.

It was remarked that information on how and when the spending was due to be incurred would enable an assessment of value for money. It was stated that a pro-forma was available to collect this information.

Resolved to review and identify any amendments to the Scheme for Financing to reflect the views of the Schools Forum.

Action: Mrs Brown

Clerks note: Mr Bruton left at this point

b) Schools Budget 2017/18 – Monitoring

Received a report that provided an update on the DSG budget monitoring position for 2017/18, including confirmation of the final DSG allocation for 2017/18, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book.

Noted

- i) the final outturn position for 2016/17 was a net deficit of £3.360m. The final position had changed since the last meeting because of a negative adjustment by the DfE to reflect the lower uptake of the free nursery entitlement.

- ii) The current projections for 2017/18 were indicating an overspend of £2.95m; this was dependent upon the current underspend for the low take up of the 30 hours nursery provision was not clawed back by the DfE. If the underspend was clawed back, then the DSG overspend would increase to approximately £4.5m.
- iii) The other areas underspending and supporting the DSG overspend were the Growth Fund and lower liability for rates because of recent academy conversions. It was stated that the underspend on the growth fund was because the funding was only required to fund the growth at Bowes Southgate.
- iv) The main area contributing to the overspend was the on-going pressure to provide specialist provision for pupils with SEND and this was reflected by an overspend of £2.2m being reported because of the number of pupils placed in out of borough independent day placements.

It was stated that there is a need to reduce the number of pupils being placed in out of borough independent provision; the Authority was working on increasing places in in-borough provision.

The Forum noted the update included in the report.

c) **High Needs: Update**

Received a report providing a brief update on the review of the High Needs provision, funding and spending: a copy of which is in the Minute Book.

Reported the review of High Needs Provision had started and the report provided background information and data gathered for the review and how the implementation of the review was structured.

Noted

- i) The increased demand on high needs was the main pressure on the DSG. The concern was how the ongoing pressure and DSG overspend would be managed. The findings from the research were that the increase in demand to support pupils with SEND was not unique to Enfield and it was a national issue with over a third of outer London authorities reporting a deficit at the end of 2016/17 and half at the end of 2017/18. The most significant increase in supporting pupils with SEND was since the introduction of the SEND Reforms.
- ii) Enfield had a high spend reported on Section 251 for other support services because it included central and alternative services such as special schools outreach provision, nurture groups, etc.
- iii) As part of the review, alternative pathways for post 19 students were being explored to support learner to progress and develop their skills for employment or manage the transition to adult services.
- iv) In developing appropriate provision to meet future needs, data on the current ECHPs was being gathered and analysed with a view to increase in-borough provision by creating additional places, increasing the number of Additional Resource Provision or Specialist Units.

Current developments were focussing on supporting pupils with SEMH or ASD and the provision being explored to support pupils in-borough and reduce out- borough placements included:

- To expand Russet House to intake additional pupils;
- Bring pupils with SEMH from out of borough provision to be educated in borough;
- Create alternative provision for KS2 pupils with ASD;
- ASD provision from September 2019 at the Minchenden site;
- A new free school for 70 secondary and post 16 pupils with SEMH.

Clerks note: Mr McGee left at this point.

- v) The Forum was informed that the PRU was under acute pressure to support pupils being excluded from mainstream schools. The School was presenting, on a weekly basis, EHCPs for SEND Panel to assess for the young people that were continuing to be admitted to the PRU. From the increase in EHCPs, it could be seen that the pressure was growing because of the reduction or cuts in support services by schools and the Local Authority; who are affected by diminishing resources. For schools, there was also the added pressure of the Government stating they wanted inclusion, whilst Ofsted measured and assessed schools on data and results.

The recent experience of staff at the PRU was an increase in the number of pupils with SEMH. It was explained that recent research showed if primary pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties were not supported in their early years, this developed into SEMH, as they grew older. This was because if the pupils had not acquired the appropriate speech, language and communication skills, their frustrations at not being able to communicate manifested into behavioural issues.

- vi) It was commented that the growth in primary pupil numbers had been evident for over six years and the appropriate funding and provision was planned and provided, but why has this not been recognised for pupils requiring specialist provision.

It was stated the aim of the review was to consider how the available resources could be used to reduce number of pupils being placed in out borough specialist provision by developing in-borough provision. It was recognised in the short term that there will continue to be an increase in spending, but a reduction should be seen over the medium term. Going forward, this strategy required the Forum to be aware and understand the impact of budget decision on delivery of provision and services in the medium term.

The Forum noted the update included in the report.

Clerks note: Ms Fear left at this point

d) School Funding Arrangements – 2018/19

Received a report detailing the School Funding Arrangements – 2018/19; a copy of which was included in the Minute Book.

Reported confirmation was received in August 2017 from the Government, for 2018/19, there would be a 'soft' implementation of the National Funding Formula (NFF), with a 'hard' implementation at the earliest in 2019/20. Further information on the final arrangements for implementation was awaited. Until this information was available, it was difficult to assess fully the impact for Enfield. However, there was a requirement to consult on the local arrangements and because of the time available to agree local arrangements, there was a need to consider the timescale and principles for reviewing local arrangements. A suggested timetable was circulated at the meeting, a copy of which was included in the Minute Book.

Clerks note: Mr Sadgrove left at this point

Noted

- i) The key principals previously used to support funding changes were to consider what was best for Enfield and provided stability and least turbulence at individual school level. It was stated that it was being recommended that these principles be used when considering the implementation of the 'soft' NFF

The Forum was advised that a 'soft' NFF meant that the funding provided to local authorities was based on the NFF, but there was local flexibility on how this funding was distributed locally. The flexibility included a move to NFF, remain with the local arrangements or something in-between.

When further information was published by the DfE, the aim would be to assess the requirements against the agreed principals and develop options for the funding arrangements for 2018/19. The options would be shared with the Forum at the next meeting before being circulated to key stakeholders for a view.

- ii) To support the implementation, the Government had provided an additional £1.3bn over two years (2018/19 & 2019/20) for both the Schools and High Needs Blocks.

It was commented that the additional funding would not address the historical underfunding and that the proposed 2% rise in teachers' pay was another pressure to be absorbed by schools.

The Forum's view was that lobbying to increase the amount of funding provided to schools had to continue.

Mr Jacobs advised the Forum that the National Education Union would be updating the Schools Cut website to reflect the recent Government announcements.

- iii) Due to the tight timescale, the period for consulting on any changes was likely to be two weeks.

Resolved to accept the timetable and principals for reviewing local funding arrangements.

Clerks note: Ms Nicou left at this point

5. ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Internal Audit – Maintained Schools Annual Summary – 2016/17

Received a report providing a summary of findings from the internal audits of maintained schools during 2016/17; a copy of which was included in the Minute Book.

Reported the information was to support Governing Bodies and School Leadership teams to use and identify any potential areas of risk, opportunities, and for any improvements that may enhance financial and operational processes.

It was proposed that this report would be uploaded onto Governor Hub and the Schools Portal so it was available to all Governing Bodies and schools.

Noted the Internal Audit service had examined the governance and financial management within maintained schools, focussing on major processes to assess compliance with the Scheme of Financing School and the Councils Finance Manual for Schools, and that effective governance and financial practices had been applied.

It was commented that the report was found to be helpful and provided useful information on supporting improvements in financial management.

The Forum noted the report.

6. WORKPLAN

Any additional items arising from the meeting would be added to the workplan

ACTION: Mrs Brown

7. FUTURE MEETINGS

Ms Thomas reminded members that it was important to attend all meetings and if anyone was unable to attend, then they should ask a colleague from their sector to attend on their behalf. Sector representatives were reminded of the current vacancies on the Schools Forum and the Education Resources Group.

Noted:

- a) The date of the next meeting clashed with the primary Headteachers residential and it was requested if the Schools Forum date could be changed.
- b) The Forum suggested that the date of the December meeting be reviewed to enable sufficient time for the funding review.

Resolved:

- a) Revised date for the next meeting is 6 November 2017 from 5:30pm to 7:30pm at Chace Community School.
- b) Proposed dates for future meetings:
 - 13 December 2017 5:30 - 7:30 PM **(NB changed date)**
 - 17 January 2018 5:30 - 7:30 PM
 - 07 March 2018 5:30 - 7:30 PM
 - 09 May 2018 5:30 - 7:30 PM

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

No items were considered confidential.

The meeting closed at 7:30 pm.