

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Held on Wednesday 7 July 2018 at Chace Community School

Schools Members:

Governors: Ms Ellerby (Primary), Ms H Kacouris (Primary), *Mrs J Leach (Special)*, Mrs L Sless (Primary), *Mr T McGee (Secondary)*, *Ms V West (Primary)*

Headteachers: Ms H Thomas (Primary) (Chair), Ms H Ballantine (Primary), Mr D Bruton (Secondary), Ms C Fay (Orchard Side), *Ms H Knightley (Primary)*, Ms K Baptiste (Primary), Ms G Weir (Special), *Ms M O'Keefe / Ms T Day (Secondary)*

Academies: Ms A Nicou (Primary), *Mr A Sadgrove (All through)*, Vacancy

Non-Schools Members:

Early Years Provider	Ms A Palmer
16 - 19 Partnership	<i>Mr K Hintz</i>
Teachers' Committee	Mr J Jacobs
Head of Standards, Schs, Curriculum, & Children Ser.	Ms C Seery
Education Professional	<i>Ms J Fear</i>
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Cllr S Erbil (as an observer for this meeting)

Observers:

Cabinet Member	<i>Cllr Georgiou</i> (substituted by Cllr Levy)
School Business Manager	Ms S Mahesh
Education Funding Agency	<i>Mr O Jenkins</i>

Also attending:

Assistant Director, Education	Ms C Seery
Heads of Budget Challenge	Mr N Goddard
Finance Manager	Mrs L McNamara
Apprenticeship Manager	Ms K Taylor
Resources Development Manager	Mrs S Brown

* Italics denote absence

1. MEMBERSHIP AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

a) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Leach, Mr McGee, Mr Sadgrove, Ms West and Ms O'Keefe.

Noted Cllr Levy was substituting for Cllr Georgiou for this meeting.

b) Membership

The Forum were advised new members joining the Forum included:

- Ms Celeste Fay, the new Headteacher of Orchard Side School;
- Cllr A Georgiou, new Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

Cllr Levy explained Cllr Georgiou was unable to attend and he was attending the Forum on Mr Georgiou behalf;

- Ms Subashini Mahesh was representing the School Business Management Forum;
- Cllr Erbil was attending as an observer for the and Scrutiny Committee;
- Ms Diana Weston was the lead Education Professional.

All the new members were welcomed to the Schools Forum.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

a) **Minutes of the last Meeting**

Received and agreed the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held 7 March 2018 with the following corrections:

To note Mr Jacobs had attended the last meeting and Ms Fear had given her apologies.

b) **Matters arising from the Minutes**

Healthy Pupil Capital Fund

It was questioned when schools would be notified of their allocation. It was confirmed that a letter detailing the final allocations and criteria for using the Fund was due to be sent out to schools. As discussed at the last meeting, schools would be advised of their allocation and the funding would be released on receipt of evidence of spend and completion of an evaluation form.

Following a discussion on whether the arrangements described were those agreed by the Forum and if it was possible to carry out a meaningful evaluation so soon after the works were completed, it was suggested that schools should be informed of the grant and individual allocations be devolved as soon as possible. In the grant notification, schools should be advised that they would be required to confirm and provide details of how the funding was spent by the end of March.

Resolved to inform schools of the grant, criteria and local arrangements for allocating the funding before the end of term.

Action: Ms Doherty and Mrs McNamara

4. **ITEM FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION**

a) **Apprenticeship Levy: Pooling Resources for Community Schools**

Ms Taylor, Apprentice Manager attended to present this item

Received a report seeking the approval of the community school representatives to pool the apprenticeship levy being collected; a copy is included in the Minute Book.

Reported the Authority was responsible for managing the Levy for community schools. The regulations governing the apprentice levy enabled the money to be spent within a two year, after which any unspent money was taken by the Government. The collection of the Levy began in April 2017 and to date only 20% of the funding had been spent and if the rest was not spent by March 2018, it would be lost for use by Enfield schools. So, the Authority had considered options on how the Levy could be better utilised and the option which the Authority was proposing was to pool the Levy and thus enable schools to pursue the possibility of recruiting graduate teacher on an apprenticeship programme.

Noted:

- (i) It was commented that with the limited options for the use of the Levy it seemed reasonable to consider pooling the Levy for one year to ensure it was spent and not claimed back.
- (ii) Following a discussion, it was confirmed:
 - The graduate teacher apprenticeship was due to be introduced from September 2018 and going forward this was likely to be the route for trainee teachers to be employed and it appeared unlikely that Schools Direct would continue. It was acknowledged some schools would not be able to employ a graduate teacher to access the apprenticeship training;
 - The regulations were restrictive on how the Levy was paid and any unspent money was taken by the Government for both it was in monthly instalments: so, any unspent money from the instalment in March 2017 being taken during the 25th month, i.e. April 2019;
 - From the 1st April the regulations had been amended so enabling 10% of the monthly Levy collected to be transferred to one other employer, e.g. an Academy Trust, to

support any named apprentice on an approved training programme. Due to this restriction, the option to transfer funds had not been pursued. However, from 1 July the regulations enabled the Levy to be transferred to more than one employer with no other change to the requirements. The Authority was considering how change could be implemented and the monthly payments managed through the digital account;

– There were some schools using the Levy for apprentices at their school.

It was requested that information on how these schools were using the Levy could be shared. It was stated that due to data protection some information on programmes could be shared. The Forum was informed that guidance on how the Levy could be shared had been circulated to schools, together with a questionnaire asking schools to confirm the areas they would be interested in pursuing for the use of the Levy. The information from the questionnaires would then be used to inform the School Standard training programme;

Resolved to:

- Pool the Apprenticeship Levy for community schools to 31 March 2019;
- Information to be provided on the successful use of the Levy by schools.

Action: Ms Taylor

Clerk's note: Cllr Levy left, and Ms Weir arrived at this point.

b) DSG Outturn 2017/18

Received a report confirming the outturn position for the Dedicated Schools Grant as at 31 March 2018; a copy is included in the Minute Book.

Reported that the deficit position as at 31 March 2018 was £754k. However, this position was likely to change because of a lagged clawback for the low take up of the free nursery entitlement. The final position was projected to be £1.75m.

Noted the reduction in the deficit from the previous forecast was due to removing contingencies and other expected costs not required to be paid for out-borough placements because of using in-borough provision for pupils with high level of SEND.

Resolved to note the update on the year-end position.

c) School Balances 2017– 18 & Schools Budgets 2018-19: Update

Received a report confirming the total balances held by schools as at 31 March 2018 and providing information on three year budgets submitted by schools for 2018/19; a copy is included in the Minute Book.

Reported that:

- the total balances held by schools as at 31 March 2018 was £6.684m (excluding community facilities) and £6.303m (including community facilities) with the balances held by secondary schools reducing by £1.874m compared to £569k for primary schools;
- there were ten schools retaining balances above the threshold of 8% (primary and special) and 5% (secondary) and following discussion with the Education Resources Group the report included recommendations on the balances held by the school's concerned and sought a review of the Scheme for Financing to recycle any balances above the agree threshold and introduce an additional financial threshold for small schools. If these proposals were to be progressed, then there might be a need to consult all schools;
- the three-year Budget Returns received from schools indicated that 54% of primary, 67% secondary and 17% special schools were projecting a deficit by 31 March 2019 due to the cost pressures detailed in the report and the impact following the move to the national funding formula.

Noted:

- (i) The Forum was advised that the Education Resources Group was concerned that some schools were retaining high balances year on year and resources not being used whilst the pupils were at the school. Other issues raised by individual members included whether the high balances in some schools was because of the funding formula or individual were planning effectively.

The Group had suggested that any balances above 8 or 5% should be recycled and the current process to appeal against any money recycled be.

The following points arose from a general discussion that followed:

- Whether the financial cycle worked for reviewing balances because the issue of recycling was discussed last year and was found difficult to implement;
 - Some schools were retaining balances because of the impending pay awards and other costs pressures and the financial uncertainty these were creating;
- (ii) It was questioned what advice the Authority had provided on the impending pay award to support the working budgets and if all schools had included an estimate for this cost in their working budget returns because there were rumours that schools and governors had excluded the impending pay award to balance their budget.

It was stated that schools were advised to consider and allow for impending pay awards and other cost increases, such as pension contribution revaluation due in 2019, at most of the Forums, meetings and workshops held during the budget setting process. Until the outcome of the pay award was known, the advice provided was based on other recent pay awards agreed or previous valuations and increases.

It was observed that there were discussions on the impending pay awards at various meetings and the minutes of these meetings were public documents.

- (iii) The Forum was advised that it was unlikely that additional funding to support cost pressures would be provided before the next Spending Review. The ESFA were visiting some local authorities to carry out health checks. It was confirmed that no response had been received following the last meeting with Mr Charalambous.

The Forum noted that Mr Charalambous has visited a few local schools and was aware of the difficult financial situation facing schools.

- (iv) It was commented that the campaign on fair funding was continuing and information regarding the campaign would be circulated to the Forum members.
- (v) It was remarked the report on balances gave a mixed picture with some schools either in or on the brink of going into deficit and others retaining high balances. The Government would consider schools balances at borough or region level and therefore it could make it difficult to prove the financial crisis. It was important to know the reasons for the surpluses and for these to be compared against pupil progress and outcomes.

Resolved to retain the current arrangements in the Scheme which enables balances above 8% and 5% to be recycled and then schools to appeal against this decision.

d) Pupil Places Planning – Update

Received a report providing information on the current capacity and demand for pupil places: a copy is included in the Minute Book.

Reported the information presented included pupil number projections that were based partly on pupil number data from September 2017 provided by the GLA and other known factors, i.e. new developments. The report also outlined options being considered for supporting schools seeing a significant drop in pupil numbers.

Noted:

- (i) It was commented the report highlighted pupil numbers were down for primary and this was being seen locally with Grange Park Academy seeing a drop-in pupil numbers and the Academy was now considering opening a nursery class. The PVI settings in the area were raising concerns their settings were experiencing either stagnation or reduction in numbers. It was stated that the current policy enabled individual schools to decide and open or close a nursery class. The Authority could comment but was not able to decide on the proposal to open or close a nursery class. The ability for individual providers to make this decision created a risk for both the existing providers in an area and the Authority's ability to meet demand. Officers were working on the childcare sufficiency audit and this should support the Authority's view of whether a new provision was required or not. When the childcare sufficiency audit was finalised, it would be shared with the Forum.

The Forum was advised that the Authority had commented on the proposal for a nursery class as part of the Chase Farm development and had supported this proposal, but only when the school moved to the Chase Farm site and not before.

- (ii) Where schools, academies or free schools were experiencing a drop-in number, officers were in discussion with the individual institute to reach a local agreement to manage the drop-in numbers.

It was confirmed that another meeting with schools to discuss and review pupil numbers would be held in September 2018. The Forum was advised by September 2018 the initial intake would have started, but the Authority will continue to work with schools on projections and to manage in-year movements. Last year, the Admission Service dealt with over 3,300 in-year applications for primary places.

- (iii) There was pressure for places in special schools because in some schools there were not sufficient leavers to release places to admit a new cohort. The Forum was advised that this would an impact on the budget overspend because of the need to place pupils in expensive independent provision.

The Forum noted the update.

5. **WORKPLAN**

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

Action: Mrs Brown

6. **FUTURE MEETINGS**

- a) The date of the next meeting was set as Wednesday 3 October 2018 at 17:30 at Waverley School.
- b) Dates for future meetings:

Dates	Time	Venue
12 December 2018	17:30 - 19:30	Chace Community
16 January 2019	17:30 - 19:30	Waverley
06 March 2019	17:30 - 19:30	Waverley
15 May 2018 (Provisional)	17:30 - 19:30	

7. **CONFIDENTIALITY**

No items were considered confidential.

The meeting closed at 6.45pm.