

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Held on Wednesday, 10 July 2019 at Chace Community School

Schools Members:

Governors: Ms H Kacouris (Primary), Mrs J Leach (Special), Vacant (Primary), Mr J Donnelly (Secondary)

Headteachers: Ms H Ballantine (Primary), Mr D Bruton (Secondary), Ms R Datta (Special), Ms C Fay (PRU), Vacancy (Primary), *Ms K Baptiste* (Primary), Ms M O'Keefe & Ms T Day (Secondary), Vacant (Primary)

Academies: Ms H Thomas (Chair), *Mrs A Goldwater* (Primary), *Ms A Nicou* (Primary), *Mr A Sadgrove* (All through), *Mr C Lamb* (Secondary), Mrs L Sless (Primary)

Non-Schools Members:

Early Years Provider	Ms A Palmer
16 - 19 Partnership	Mr K Hintz
Teachers' Committee	Mr J Jacobs
Head of Early Years	Mr A Johnson
Education Professional	Ms J Fear
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Cllr S Erbil

Observers:

Cabinet Member	<i>Cllr Jewell</i>
School Business Manager	Esther Campbell
Education Finance	Ms L McNamara
Director of Education	Mr T Theodoulou
Head Budget Challenge	Mr N Goddard
Clerk	Ms Z Hayes

**italics denote absence*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

a) Apologies for absence

Received from Mrs Goldwater, Ms Baptiste, Ms Nicou, Mr Lamb, , Mr Sadgrove and Cllr Jewell. Any other absences reported to Mrs Brown in her absence would be recorded upon her return.

b) Membership

(i) Primary School Governor Representative

John Ellis Governor at George Spicer School was nominated as Primary School Governor representative.

Post meeting note: Member Governor Forum will need to confirm Mr Ellis's nomination.

(ii) Primary School Headteacher Representative

A number of nominations had been received for the vacancy of Headteacher from a Maintained Primary School and the Enfield Primary Headteachers' Conference would need to elect a Headteacher to serve on the Forum.

C) **Change in Governorship**

REPORTED that Mrs Kacouris was now a Governor at St Andrews Church of England School and not that listed within the membership.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

An opportunity was provided for Members to declare an interest whether pecuniary or otherwise regarding any of the items on the agenda. Mr Bruton advised that Cllr Erbil was to become a Governor of Chace Community School. The Chair referred the matter to Mrs Brown for scrutiny on her return.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

3 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- a) **RECEIVED** and agreed the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 May 2019.
- b) There were no matters arising at this time.

4 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

a) **DSG Outturn 2018/19**

RECEIVED a report detailing the DSG Outturn for 2018-19. The Forum were advised that the final position showed a surplus as forecasted of just under £400,000, however, the view of officers was that this was a temporary position due to increased pressure to support pupils with SEND.

Members of the Schools Forum asked for their appreciation of this outcome to be noted.

REPORTED there were other Authorities with no over-spend but were projecting deficit of between £1-3 million and it was felt that without additional investment next year this position would be very difficult to maintain.

The underspend in the Schools Block, was the net position after offsetting the Houndsfield deficit and allowing for underspend in the Unplaced Pupils/Appeals budgets and Business Rates because of schools converting academies during the year. Similarly, the Early Years underspend was due to schools converting to academies during the Spring Term.

NOTED:

- (i) For the Early Years budget, an analysis had been undertaken and it indicated that funding was calculated from a fixed date, however student numbers fluctuate throughout the year. The current year was showing number remaining consistent and any underspend should allow for any funding that may be clawed back by the ESFA.
- (ii) A further contribution to the overall underspend was a late adjustment of £350k by the ESFA for incorrect calculations of import / export for Post 16 placements. Mr Johnson commented that the recognition of the inaccuracies had taken a

considerable amount of time. for the meeting explained how the calculations had been made and going forward the mechanism would be amended.

The Schools Forum members thanked Mr Johnson for his efforts in this regard.

- (iii) The Out of Borough provision reflected fluctuations during the term and that there was nothing significant to report on High Needs expenditure.
- (iv) Following a discussion, the Forum was advised that:
- the £900k received towards the beginning of the year had been included and that there was awareness by the DfE of the pressure the High Needs block;
 - the School Improvement Service was supporting schools in financial difficulties or those due for an OFSTED Inspection in the next year.

b) **School Balances 2018-19 & Schools Budgets 2019-20: Update**

REPORTED:

- i) Balances held by schools had been £794,000 at the year end, which was a reduction from £1.8 million from Secondary and £598,000 from Primary Schools.
- ii) The position for individual schools was most Secondary Schools were in deficit and that the majority of schools were continuing to function by drawing on their balances.
- iv) the meeting was to be updated later concerning schools that have balances over the permitted threshold.
- v) the three-year financial plans submitted by schools were projecting to be in deficit by year three.

NOTED

- (i) In response to a **question**, the view was that most schools were not anticipating that parental contributions would meet the shortfall.
- (ii) A concern was raised at the bank charges being incurred by schools in deficit. It was estimated that these could amount to as much as £250k, thereby increasing their financial difficulties. It was questioned whether the Local Authority was confident that schools would be able to manage this deficit and put robust plans in place to turn things around. In response, the meeting was advised that the Local Authority charged the costs incurred and did not add any other costs to these charges. There was a process was in place to support schools with their individual issues with the Authority working actively with schools, some of which had more of a challenge than others and their plans may be more long term.

Information and an update on how schools were supported would be provided to the Forum.

- (iii) the benchmarking information on the proportion of schools in deficit in Enfield compared to other local authorities showed Enfield around average and that the problem was a National, and in particular London, one.

It was remarked that some of the local authorities used for benchmarking were not necessarily a comparable with Enfield and, possibly, not helpful and whether the Authority had capacity to manage the scale of the problem. It was stated that information would be brought to the Forum on the plans for managing and supporting schools in deficit

ACTION: MS SEERY & MRS BROWN

- (iv) An Appeal Panel had been convened to hear appeals against schools with surplus balances above the threshold of 8% for primary and 5% for secondary.

The Chair **REPORTED** that the Panel's view was that the majority of the school's appealing to retain balances had not demonstrated in their appeal that they met the criteria for retaining balances or understood the impact of not doing so with some schools not attending the Panel hearing.

The Forum were asked to comment upon a proposal to bring the percentage for retain surplus balances by primary or special schools to be in line with that of secondary schools (5%). A discussion ensued, and the following points arose:

- a change for the coming year was too short notice for schools with a surplus to plan appropriately and earliest it could be implemented should be 2021;
- to support small schools, the threshold for retaining balances be reduced to 5% for all schools (or a sum of £75k, whichever is the greater);
- the guidance for the Appeal Panel be amended to state an expectation that a representative from the School appealing attend the Panel Meeting and that schools must advise Governors of the threshold;
- possibility of the Authority contacting schools with surplus balances in earlier Quarters and providing appropriate support and advice

ACTION: MS BROWN

- (v) it was observed that church schools had different regulations in place concerning capital expenditure and all schools may need to look at their Scheme of Delegation.

It was suggested that training on budgetary matters for Headteachers and the induction process for new Headteachers be improved.

ACTION: MS MCNAMARA

- c) **DfE Consultation: SEND Consultation – initial draft response**

Noted the draft response circulated.

Ms Thomas reminded the Forum that there was an opportunity for all schools to respond to this.

ACTION: ALL

5 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The Forum's attention was drawn to the Internal Audit for Maintained Schools which would be reported to the Council's Audit Committee.

6 WORKPLAN

RESOLVED to ask St Ignatius or Bishop Stopford Schools if they could host the Schools Forum Meeting scheduled for 2 October 2019.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Noted Ms Ballantine would be stepping down as a member of the Forum upon her retirement.

The Forum thanked Ms Ballantyne for her support and contribution to the work of the Forum.

8 FUTURE MEETINGS

In response to a request for Schools Forum dates for the remainder of next academic year (beyond March), it was **NOTED** that these would not be circulated until September.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

9 CONFIDENTIALITY

No items discussed at this meeting were to be considered confidential.

ALL MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM WERE THANKED FOR THEIR WORK OVER THE ACADEMIC YEAR AND THE MEETING WAS CLOSED.