

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING
Held on Wednesday 4 March 2020 at Chace Community School

Governors: Mr J Ellis (Primary), Ms H Kacouris* (Primary), Mrs J Leach (Special), Mr J Donnelly (Secondary), Mr T Hellings (Primary).

Headteachers: Mr D Bruton (Secondary), Ms K Baptiste (Primary), Ms R Datta (Special), Ms C Fay (Pupil Referral Unit), Ms N Husband (Primary), Ms M O’Keefe* / Ms T Day* (Secondary), Mr D Smart (Primary)

Academies: Ms H Thomas (Chair), Mrs A Goldwater, Ms A Nicou*, Mrs L Sless*, Mrs A Cattermole, Ms Z Thompson*

Non-Schools Members:

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

Observers:

Cabinet Member	Cllr R Jewel*
School Business Manager	Ms E Campbell

Other Attendees

Mr P Nathan	Director of Education
Head of Finance	Mr N Goddard
Finance Manager	Mrs L McNamara
Resources Development Manager	Mrs S Brown
Clerk	Ms A McLellan

Other Observers Ms S Francis

** italics denotes absence*

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

Apologies for absence were received from Ms Kacouris, Ms O’Keefe, Ms Day, Ms Nicou, Mrs Sless, Mr Hintz, Ms Palmer, Ms Thompson, Cllr Erbil and Cllr Jewel.

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. No declarations were made.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

RECEIVED and agreed the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 January 2020.

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

REPORTED that;

(a) Schools Budget – 2019/2020 Monitoring Update

RECEIVED a report providing details of the DSG budget monitoring position for 2019/20.

REPORTED that the latest forecast for 2019/20 indicated an overspend of £5.336m resulting in a DSG cumulative deficit of £4.924m. A change of £476k to the position reported at the last meeting.

NOTED

- The change was due to additional costs being incurred for pupils placed in Outborough / Independent provision and also for pupils with ECHPs in Enfield mainstream schools. The additional costs were due partly to an increase in the support required and also discrepancies in the information held by the various parties and systems on placements;
- In response to a **QUESTION** on whether the LA should do an audit of SEN systems, it was stated that the information a systems review was being carried out because currently information on placements was held in four independent systems and each requiring manual input, thus increasing the scope for errors.

Members commented that schools found it difficult and time consuming to follow payment and other queries from the information provided by the Authority. It was stated that it was planned to install an alternative system to replace all the current systems and remove the scope for errors. Separately, the Authority had reviewed staffing within the SEN Service and had found the caseload held by individual officers was as high as 400 cases. To reduce the pressure for staff, the staffing levels had been increased to reduce the caseload to 200 -250 for each officers. This change should improve the information relating to pupils with EHCPs.

In response to a **QUESTION**, it was advised deciding which systems to use was a corporate decision.

Clerk's note: Ms S Francis arrived at this point.

- Members discussed the need for caution when setting the high needs budget due to the overspend.

RESOLVED to note the overspend being projected and to provide an update on SEN systems and staffing at a future meeting.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

(b) High Needs Places 2020/21

RECEIVED:

- a report providing a summary of the high needs places to be commissioned for 2020/21;
- a paper outlining details of a high need review commissioned was **TABLED**.

REPORTED during previous discussions the Forum had been advised that a high needs review was planned to be undertaken. The aim of the review was to identify areas where funding was used effectively and where a change in the current arrangements would lead to a better use of resources. EY had been engaged to carry out the review. The paper tabled included a scoping document provided to EY and a draft project plan received from EY.

NOTED:

- The Forum was informed that the scope of the review was discussed with the Education Resources Group and this Group had identified six volunteers to meet and share their views of High Needs with the EY. In response to a **QUESTION**, it was confirmed that the volunteers were members from both Schools Forum and Education Resources Group. The Forum felt it would be useful to have another individual from a Secondary School as part of the group.
- The Forum highlighted the need to communicate and work in partnership with the Schools Forum. It was confirmed that this would be the case. Following discussion with the Education Resources Group, meetings were planned with Headteachers, parent representatives, SENCOs and School Business Managers to gather information and comments. A member suggested involving SENDIAS, but it was viewed this was not appropriate for this review.

- The Forum was advised although the outcomes from the review may inform lobbying for more resources, it was necessary to look at the outcomes and consider which could lead to better use of the available funding. There needed to be a degree of accountability. Both data and stakeholders' views would be used to identify possible options and impact. With the High Needs block in deficit, there was a need to consider how the high needs budget could be managed within the available resources.
- There was no cost for the work being done by EY. The consultant carrying out the work would be attending the next Education Resources group meeting. There was a need to move quickly but the timeline given was optimistic and work was likely to continue beyond this. Work would be overseen and monitored by the Education Resources Group. The aim was for the review to be completed by the end of the academic year.
- In response to a **QUESTION**, a Nurture Group review had begun. A paper had been presented to the Education Resources group and their comments noted. The next stage involved talking to schools with Nurture Groups about potential options and seek their views and comments.

It was commented that Nurture Groups were historic and there were some schools without Nurture Group that would benefit from this provision. In response, the Forum was advised the aim was to make this provision equitable across schools and details of future provision or the effect on the budget were not known at this stage.

A **QUESTION** was asked regarding whether the Nurture Group review would involve Headteachers without a Nurture Group. It was stated that initially the review would involve schools with a Nurture Group and following this, discussions would take place with other schools and stakeholders. The review on Nurture Groups including criteria and allocations required completion by the end of the academic year.

- A **QUESTION** was asked regarding the status of the EY report. The Forum was advised that work at the stage was to identify options for consideration. The Authority was responsible for high needs but would work in collaboration with schools and the Forum when considering the options to be pursued.
- A member mentioned that there may be an alternative option to the new classes at Oaktree School. Neil Best was recommended as a contact for this.

(c) Schools Budget Update 2020/21: Update

RECEIVED a report on the proposed budget position for 2020/21 and the schools funding formula.

REPORTED the disapplication request for the LAC transfer had been refused and, the funding released had been used to adjust the FSM Ever 6 unit rate. Following the submission of the final unit rates, the DSG for Enfield was confirmed as £351.3m. Final individual school budgets had been distributed.

NOTED

- There had been an increase in the funding delegated for pupils with EHCPs in mainstream schools because of an increase in the number of pupils exceptional needs requiring support. In response to a **QUESTION** it was stated that the £12,000 for SEN exceptional needs was not identified separately because it was being subsumed by the phased move to the NFF lump sum rate.
- The position of outborough placements would continue to be monitored on a monthly basis.
- Due to an increase in need for SEN and Educational Psychology services, as well as restructuring both services, changes were being considered to the commissioning arrangements for the delivery of the Speech and Language Service.

- In addition to the current years' £5m deficit, a further overspend of £2.8m was projected. The Forum noted that overspending was a national issue and were advised that regular updates would be provided.
- A **QUESTION** was asked as to whether a high needs working group or committee should be created. The Schools Forum was informed the current arrangements for consultative and partnership groups were being reviewed and may include a Partnership Forum. A School place planning and admissions forum was being considered and it was planned for the Terms of reference to be sent out for consultation after Easter. The Schools Forum would be kept informed of this and other developments.
- In response to a **QUESTION**, it was stated that there were 27 recommendations in the Poverty Commission Report. Children's Services were assessing priority areas in terms of need. The process had begun with the Speech & Language Therapy service (S<) being recommissioned. The increase in S< for under 2 Years began a year ago. It was not planned for the Poverty Commission Report to be brought to this Forum, but it would be useful for Enfield to look at the report collectively.

It was remarked that it was necessary for there to be transparency about where funding was being spent. Members requested information on the use of Section 106 money.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

- The Forum was made aware the regulations required a deficit recovery plan to be put in place if the projected DSG spend was above 1% of the resources available. As the current projections indicated an overspend of approximately £8m, there was a need for the Authority to work with the Forum to develop a deficit recovery plan. Following the closure of accounts and submission of the Section 251 Budget Statement, it was likely the DfE would contact the Authority to seek information on progress being made towards a deficit recovery plan. It was suggested that the focus for the next Schools Forum meeting be High Needs. At this meeting, the Forum would be provided with an update on the work carried out by EY on High Needs and the Nurture Groups review.

The Forum noted the update on the Schools Budget for 2020/21.

5. WORKPLAN

RESOLVED to update the Workplan with items arising from this meeting.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

6. FUTURE MEETINGS

NOTED the next meeting as 6 May 2020 at Chase Community School.

The following meeting was planned for 15 July 2020, venue tbc.

7. ITEMS TO REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL

NOTED there were no items to remain confidential.