

SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday, 3 March 2021 at 5:30pm

Schools' Members		
Governors:	Mr J Ellis	Primary
	Mr T Hellings	Primary
	*Ms H Kacouris	Primary
	Ms C Davies	Special
	Mr J Donnelly	Secondary
Headteachers	Ms M O'Keefe *	Secondary
	Ms K Baptiste	Primary
	Ms G Taylor	Special
	Ms C Fay	Pupil Referral Unit
	Ms N Husband	Primary
	Ms T Day	Secondary
	Mr D Smart	Primary
Academies:	Ms H Thomas (Chair)	
	Ms K Turnpenney	
	Ms A Nicou	
	Ms Z Thompson	
	Ms S Ellingham	
	Mr M Lewis *	
Non-School Members		
	16-19 Partnership	Mr K Hintz
	Early Years Provider	*Ms A Palmer
	Teachers' Committee	Mr T Cuffaro
	Education Professional	Mr A Johnson
	Head of Admissions	Ms J Fear
	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	*Cllr S Erbil
Observers		
	Cabinet Member	Cllr R Jewell
	School Business Manager	Ms S Mahesh Ms E Campbell
	Education & Skills Funding Agency	*Mr G Nicolini

Also present:

Mr P Nathan, Director of Education
 Mr N Goddard, Head of Budget Challenge
 Mrs L McNamara, Finance Manager
 Sangeeta Brown, Education Resources Manager
 Suzy Francis, Head of Educational Psychology
 Ms Z Hayes – Clerk

Clerk's Notes:

Ms Turnpenney left the meeting at 6.10pm
 Cllr Jewell left the meeting at 6.30pm
 Mr Donnelly left the meeting at 6.45pm
 Ms Fay left the meeting at 6.55pm
 Ms Campbell left the meeting at 7.00pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

a) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Ms M O'Keefe, Mr M Lewis and Cllr Erbil.

Noted Ms K Turnpenney was only able to attend for the first 30 minutes of the meeting.

b) Membership

The Forum confirmed the nominations of Ms Davies, Mr Lewis and Ms Ellingham to the Forum.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All present Members were given the opportunity to declare any prejudicial interest they may have in respect of items on the Agenda. None were made.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- a) The Minutes of the Schools' Forum Meeting held on 20 January 2021 were AGREED.
- b) Any matters arising would be covered within the Agenda items of this meeting.

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

a) DSG Budget Monitoring Report 2020-21

The report provided the latest projections for the DSG.

REPORTED:

- The current forecast showed the position as at end of January which, as previously reported, showed the main areas of change continue to be:
 - Pupils with EHCPs in mainstream schools,
 - New Post 16 High Needs students requiring supported,
 - Out of Borough Placement spend had increased slightly.
- The changes had increased the net overspend for 2020/21 by £393k between the period November to January. The accumulative projected overspend was £8.1m. This projection didn't include any further adjustments for pupils with EHCPs in mainstream schools nor spend on any new placements.

Questions were invited. There were none.

b) High Needs Commissioning

REPORTED:

- Table 1 of the circulated document did not reflect the updated figures provided in the earlier agenda item.
- The report included information presented at the previous meeting on the new developments to support the rising demand for supporting pupils with SEND,
- Latest data on Post-16 indicated demand for support continuing to rise. Officers were working on identifying alternative in-borough offers for this student group. The Forum was advised placement costs were being reviewed to ensure they were sensible and appropriate, as well as assessing whether it was possible to provide better offers locally which, it was envisaged, would provide cost savings.
- In response to a **question**, it was planned for the Early Years development proposals to be presented to the Forum at its next meeting.
- In response to a **question**, it was advised that pupils had transferred back to in-borough provision at Durants School. Russet House had also increased provision by expanding at Suffolks. More places were planned at West Lea and Oaktree. The moves were planned and pupils were considered for transfer to in-borough provision at, primarily, appropriate transition times in a student's education.
- The Forum was informed that Durants School currently had 35 pupils in attendance at the partially refurbished Pitfield Way site. The School was looking to take an additional 22 students from the beginning of the new academic year. If accessibility on the site could be improved, the site could accommodate an additional 40 pupils. Approximately £150k of the funding required for this accessibility project would need to be met either by the school or from capital. The remaining £150k, revenue elements of the project, the Forum was being asked to agree the recommendation for this to be met from the High Needs Block as an invest to save opportunity because some pupils could be transferred back from out-borough provision and others remain in-borough. There was a **question** related to how this additional spend would impact the finance available to other Special Schools, when the Forum

had been advised that the DSG Budget was likely to be over £8million in deficit. It was stated that this spend would not reduce funding for other schools as the additional spend will increase the overspend but with some pupils transferring back out-borough provision, it was anticipated that the costs should be recouped within financial year.

The Chair asked for Members to raise any objections to agreement to this release of funding. None were made.

Resolved to accept the recommendation of providing up to £150K to support revenue related works at Durrants School.

- Fern House School was currently being rebuilt and its capacity would rise from 48 to 70 places on completion. The additional places would come on stream from 2022.
- Oaktree School had 120 pupils on roll following its expansion.
- Salmons Brooke, a new school for SEMH pupils, had been due to come on stream in January 2022 but may not now be completed until June 2022 and able to take pupils from September 2022.
- Waverley School had expanded and developed a satellite provision at Honilands school and would utilise another room to offer an additional 9 places from September 2022.
- Waverley School offered all-through provision, which was proving increasingly difficult to fulfil. Officers were in discussion with the School and local FE providers to identify other solutions.
- Post 18 information showed numbers increasing from 825 in the current financial year to 912 next financial year.
- Special schools would continue to receive Schools receive £112,000 for providing outreach to mainstream schools.
- West Lea School was continuing to be commissioned to deliver to home and hospital provision. The School was reporting an underspend and consideration was being given as to whether to clawback this funding or it be retained by West Lea.
- It was acknowledged that it was good that the provision within the borough was increasing but there was a **question** as to whether these places were being taken up by pupils transferring back to in-borough provision or rising demand for support and if those placed resided within the Borough. It was stated that as places became available officers were working with families for their child to return to in-borough provision at suitable transition times and work was still continuing for an accurate trend of the rising demand for support.
- Rachel Walker, Head of Advisory Service for Autism (ASA), had been invited to attend the meeting to talk the Forum members through the detail of her Report. Ms Walker had not been in attendance.

Resolved the annual report of the ASA would be discussed at the next meeting.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

- Based on the annual report received, the Service would continue to be commissioned through Russet House with the commissioning in place for three years. In reply to a **question**, it was confirmed that the commissioning would take the form of an SLA which would be reviewed annually.

Resolved to commission ASA to provide support for pupils with autism for the next three years subject to an annual review.

Separately, the new early intervention development to be delivered by the ASA presented at the previous meeting required funding to be released for it to start from September 2021.

Resolved to support the allocation of funding to the ASA to deliver early intervention for pupils with autism from September 2021.

- Another development discussed at the previous meeting was the Speech & Language Hub, funding now needed to be allocated within the budget for this service to start from September 2021.
Resolved to support the allocation of funding for the Speech & Language Hub to provide support for pupils in mainstream schools from September 2021.
- While the Forum was still awaiting detailed information regarding Early Year Support and provision, there was no objection to the 'earmarking' of an element of the budget for this service.
Resolved subject to detailed information that funding be earmarked to support early years as part of the early intervention strategy.
- Eldon School had extended their ARP from 8 to 16 places. Further developments for the coming year included additional primary ARPs and a secondary Speech & Language ARP. It was confirmed that discussions with the school regarding the ARP developments were on-going.
It was stated that the Authority was formalising the process when a school wanted to take on a new facility and the new process would be agreed with the SEND Partnership Board for agreement in order to ensure transparency.
Ms S Brown advised that it was planned to invite primary schools to submit 'expressions of interest' for hosting an ARP.
The Forum was advised that Bowes School had vacated the Broomfield site and pupils had moved to the main school site. The ARP at Bowes was now sited at Delta School but still managed by Bowes.
- Plans were in progress to de-commission the current full-time Nurture Groups and begin to commission part-time Nurture Groups. The change from full to part time would be implemented from September 2021.
- Following testing of the calculator for top ups for mainstream schools, the plans to pilot the new methodology with a few schools for new EHCPs. At the same time, stakeholders would be briefed on the new methodology and provided with updates on progress being made on the pilot.
- In response to a **question**, the Forum was advised that it was difficult to provide individual costs for the different settings, however financial information on spend and number of students placed had been included in the strategic document presented at the last meeting.
- An error was reported in the final column of Table 8 which should have read '20/21'. Post 18 places had increased from 255 to 302 however, there was still pressure due to rising demand. Services at Barnet & Southgate College had been improved and this improvement had increased their costs. The Forum was advised that the SEND local offer had to be clear in its distinction between Education and Adult Social Services and the increase in age to 25 had not been reflected in the funding for education.

In summary the Forum was informed that work would continue on reviewing the current provision to ensure local needs were being met. The review would include an analysis that provided a forecast of future demand. In addition, a Consultant had been appointed to carry out a review of the special schools place funding.

The Forum thanked officer's for a comprehensive Report.

c) Schools Budget 2021/22

REPORTED:

- The APT had been submitted to the ESFA and then the final budget had been considered by Cabinet on 3 February and agreed at the Full Council Meeting on 2 March 2021.

- Following agreement of the budget, the individual school's budget allocations presented to the Forum were circulated to schools.
The formal budget allocations for mainstream schools were circulated on the day of this meeting and it was anticipated budget allocations for Special Schools would be circulated within the next few days.
Schools' budget allocations were fixed, other than for high Needs as this changed on a termly basis as the funding followed the pupil.
- As previously reported, the DSG overspend was being carried forward into the new year.
- There were small increases of 6p/hr for three and four years olds and 8p/hour for 2 year olds in nurseries had been passed on in full to providers.
- High Needs block had increased by £5.9m of which £700k related to the transfer of the pay and pension grants. In addition, £2.1m would be recouped by the ESFA for Fern House and ARPs within Academies.
- Nurture Group information circulated figures showed 7/12, this calculation should read 5/12.
- Exceptional Needs would continue to be adjusted through a termly exercise.
It was reported at the last meeting that for schools with a high level of pupil numbers with an EHCP, the first £6k of costs would be funded from the transfer of 0.5% agreed by the Forum at the last meeting. Due to the increase in the number of EHCPs, the calculated average had reduced from 1/50 to approximately 1/35. The new average was used to fund schools the first £6ks for the number of pupils above the calculated average.
- The PRU continued to be funded in the same way, the only change was that to pension and pay funding.
- Revised pupil numbers for post-16 students meant that there was an additional pressure of £500k on the budget.
- Home and Hospital provision funding remained unchanged.
- Out-borough provision had been discussed in detail earlier in the meeting and the Forum was advised that it was felt that it would be closer to budget predictions in the coming year.
- The £1m early intervention developments for autism, speech & language and early years had been incorporated into the budget.
- Some additional charges for the Educational Psychology Service had also been incorporated into the budget.
- There was an estimated over-spend of £2.5m and an overall budget deficit of between £10-11million was currently projected for 2021/22.

d) High Needs Consultation Document

A presentation on the current arrangements for the High Needs Formula and the proposals contained in the consultation and their impact.

REPORTED:

- The DfE Consultation document was published shortly before half term with responses were required by 24 March 2021.
- The DfE had carried out an initial Review and the consultation included some proposals to change how funding was allocated for 2021/22.
- The Local Authority had been advised that there were to be further consultations following the publication of the outcomes from the SEND Review and a 'call for evidence' consultations, which were likely to result in changes to the National Funding Formula.
- The consultation document published included proposals to amend the historic spend used for the formula from planned to actual spend for 2017/18.

It was felt that a later year than 2017/18 should be used to calculate the historic spend as this better reflect the impact of the SEND reforms.

- EHCPs did not currently feed into the proposed indicators of whether a pupil required access to High Needs provision.
- In response to a **question**, the meeting was advised that the formula currently did not fully recognise children from 0 -5 years and it was difficult to identify an appropriate data source that could be used for funding purposes.
- The Forum supported the suggestion for a small working group to be established to consider the proposals and responses to the consultation.

Resolved Mr Johnson, Mr Smart, Ms Thomas and Ms Nicou would be part of the working group.

ACTION: MR JOHNSON, MR SMART, MS THOMAS ANS MS NICOU

e) School Budget 2021/22 – Review

A presentation with headline information on schools' budget was given to the Forum. The key points that arose were:

- 92.4% of funding was spent on pupil led activities.
- £635k had been spent on pupil protection funding.
- FSM eligibility had increased by 22%, funding had decreased by 8.9%.
- Most funding levels were down, many due to the drop in pupil numbers.
- In response to a **question**, it was confirmed that Pupil Premium would be based on the October Census. It was stated that there was to be a local campaign to raise awareness of the importance of this funding and increase uptake.

5. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Scheme for Financing Maintained Schools.

REPORTED there were no significant changes to the Scheme. There may need to be revisions when further information regarding any changes to procurement processes following the UK's departure from the EU had been published.

6. WORKPLAN

The workplan was received.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No matters were raised.

8. FUTURE MEETINGS

- a) The meeting scheduled for Wednesday, 12 May 2021 at 5:30pm was confirmed and agreed to be held virtually. The focus of the meeting would be 'High Needs.'
- b) The final meeting of the Forum for the current academic year would be held on 14 July 2021 at 5:30pm. This meeting would also be held virtually.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

No item discussed within this agenda was felt to be confidential.

The meeting was closed at 7:20pm