

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Held on Wednesday, 8 December 2021 at 17:30 on Microsoft Teams

Governors:

Mr J Ellis
*Mr T Hellings**
Ms H Kacouris
*Ms C Davies **
*Mr J Donnelly**

Headteachers

Ms T Day
Ms K Baptiste
Ms C Fay
Ms N Husband
Ms M O'Keeffe
Mr D Smart
*Ms G Taylor**

Academies:

Ms H Thomas (Chair)
Ms S Ellingham
Mr M Lewis
Ms A Nicou
Ms Z Thompson
*Ms K Turnpenney **

Mr K Hintz
*Ms A Palmer **
Mr T Cuffaro
*Mr A Johnson **
Ms J Fear
*Cllr S Erbil **

Observers

Cllr M Uddin*

**Indicates Absence*

Also present:

Mr P Nathan, Director of Education
Mr N Goddard, Head of Budget Challenge
Mrs L McNamara, Finance Manager
Mrs S Brown, Education Resources Manager
Mrs P Swain, Clerk

Clerk's notes:

Ms Thompson joined the meeting at 17:35
Ms Ellingham joined the meeting at, 17:50
Ms Kacouris joined the meeting at, 18:03
Ms Baptiste joined the meeting at 18:06
Mr Ellis left the meeting at 18:40
Ms McNamara left the meeting at 18:45

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Hellings, Ms Turnpenney. Mr Johnson and Cllr Uddin.

REPORTED that this was Ms Helen Kacouris last meeting. Due to changes in the make-up of pupil numbers, the position vacated by Ms Kacouris would be filled with an academy representative.

Schools' Members

Primary
Primary
Primary
Special
Secondary

Secondary
Primary
Pupil Referral Unit
Primary
Secondary
Primary
Special

Non-School Members

16-19 Partnership
Early Years Provider
Teachers' Committee
Education Professional
Head of Admissions
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cabinet Member

NOTED that a request had been received from the Enfield Learning Trust for a member from the trust to join the Forum. Members noted that currently Ms Nicou, Deputy Chief Executive/Chief Financial Officer from the Enfield Learning Trust was a member of the Schools Forum.

Ms Nicou informed the Forum that she was aware that Stephen Way had expressed an interest in joining the Schools Forum. Mr Way was a National Leader of Governance was also Chair of Governors at Prince of Wales School. Members reflected that the Forum would benefit from more Headteacher representatives and requested that nominations be opened to all academy trusts to ask for Headteacher applicants. It was noted that the makeup of the Forum may possibly change again due to pupil numbers and lead to other vacancies in the new year.

RESOLVED that Mrs Brown would write to all academies requesting nominations for the current vacancy.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members were invited to identify any personal or prejudicial interest relevant to items on the agenda.

No declarations were received.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

RECEIVED the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 6 October 2021.

NOTED

- (a) The Minutes were a correct record of the meeting
- (b) There were no matters arising from the Minutes which were not addressed in items on the Agenda

4. ITEMS FOR PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION

(a) DSG Budget Monitoring Report 2021-22

This item was presented by Louise McNamara.

RECEIVED the DSG Budget Monitoring Report 2021-22.

REPORTED the report provided details of the latest DSG monitoring position for 2021/22 including confirmation of the latest DSG allocation from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) as at November 2021.

Members were asked to **note** the contents of the report and the projected DSG cumulative deficit reported for 31 March 2022.

As reported previously, the accumulated DSG carry forward from 2020/21 was an overall deficit of £9m which included the outstanding clawback of Early Years funding by the ESFA. The current projected overall deficit was £12.9m.

NOTED

- (i) The original estimate of the gross DSG for 2021/22 was £373.187m. Of this, the ESFA deducted £2.1m to fund directly places in mainstream academy units and academy special schools. Following in-year revisions to reflect academy and college recoupment for the Schools Block and High Needs, the latest expected total net DSG was DSG £224.9m.

The Forum would be kept informed of any further revisions to the DSG allocation.

(ii) As reported, the main areas of change since the last update included the following variations:

- A decrease in the amount of Growth Fund required during this year;
- The ESFA clawback was lower than the anticipated amount for the Early Years underspend carried forward from 2020/21;
- Less places than planned were opening and resulted in an underspend .
- A significant overspend in out of borough placements since the start of the academic year due to a rise in demand for placing pupils in specialist provision.

It was stated whilst residential placements had levelled off, costs were rising with specific needs, for example the cost for a Post 16 student was in excess of £150k. In other areas, the increased bureaucracy of the current systems was becoming apparent, for example Enfield was being charged by Whittington Hospital for services for Enfield children placed in Haringey. Now, the LBE would have to look to do the same. It was anticipated that the Government's SEND Green Paper as a response to the two SEND consultations due to be published in March 2022 would begin to address some of these areas.

- Exceptional Needs – A £500k contingency was included in the 2021/22 original budget to allow for an expected increase in mainstream pupils with EHCPs. The funding adjustments made for the summer and autumn terms has fully utilized this funding with an 8.5% increase in pupils from the spring to the autumn position. Any adjustments for the spring terms 2022 will continue to put additional pressure on the budget.

(iii) In response to comments, it was noted that the DSG budget remained under considerable pressure due to ongoing high needs overspends. As part of an ongoing programme to provide the most cost-effective way of meeting pupil needs, in September 2021 additional in borough high needs places were made available and the early intervention programmes supported by the Forum over the last year had begun. The aims of both these strategies being to reduce the longer-term financial impact.

The Forum **noted** the latest budget position and projected increase in the accumulative deficit.

(b) School Funding Arrangements:

Update and Summary of Proposals for 2022/23: Summary of Responses

This item was presented by Sangeeta Brown.

RECEIVED the School Funding Arrangements 2022/23: Responses to Consultation Report.

REPORTED that the report provided a summary of the responses received to the proposals contained in the consultation documents on the school funding arrangements for 2022/23 and recommendations for the local funding arrangements for 2022/23.

The Forum was reminded the proposals in the consultation were based on October 2020 data and indicative funding information provided by the DfE and both were likely to change when the October 2021 Pupil Census data and the final DSG settlement was announced by the Government. Therefore, the final position would be subject to the available resources.

The consultation document was published 20 October with a deadline of 17 November 2021. By the deadline only four responses had been received.

NOTED

- (i) in response to a question on the low response rate. It was confirmed that at networking sessions, headteachers, governors and school business managers were alerted to the publication of the document. The Forum members acknowledged that the National Funding Formula (NFF) rates had been implemented locally and possibly the proposals were perceived as not requiring a further response.
- (ii) Following the responses received and in view of the previous views sought from the Schools Forum, for the local arrangements for 2022/23, it was recommended:
 - To continue to use the NFF unit rates for the mainstream funding formula;
 - Transfer of 0.5% from the Schools to the High Needs block to fund mainstream schools with high numbers of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) Element 2, the first £6,000, for pupils with EHCPs for the number above each school's calculated average incident;
 - To amend the local early years funding formula for the nursery entitlement for three and four year old and the allocation of the Inclusion Fund be amended in line with the national regulations;
 - The update on the special schools place funding review. It was confirmed that officers had been in close discussions with special schools and stakeholders on the principles governing the review and the proposed methodology. It was expected that this would continue to be the case as the benchmarked average costs model continued to be developed and finalised.

RESOLVED to note the update and agree:

- NFF unit rates continue to be used for the local mainstream funding formula;
- 0.5% of funding be transferred from the Schools to the High Needs Block to support mainstream schools with an above calculated average number of pupils with pupils with EHCP;
- To amend the local early years funding formula for the nursery entitlement and the allocation be amended in line with the national regulations;

(c) Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget 2022/23 - Update

This item was presented by Louise McNamara.

RECEIVED an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant Budget 2022/23.

REPORTED the information in the report was based on the DSG Budget position based on initial funding announcements made in July 2021. The draft Budget had been prepared using the information from the announcement and estimated pupil data. The draft Budget would be updated and finalised when the Government announced the final Budget Settlement and the validated dataset for 2022/23. The announcement and validated dataset were expected mid - late December.

The final Budget would be presented to Schools Forum in January 2022 and will seek agreement to the proposed allocation of the Budget for 2022/23, including the use of the NFF unit rates for the local funding formula and transferring 0.5% from the Schools to the High Needs block.

NOTED

- (i) The mainstream units rates were fixed. The funding each mainstream school receives

will be based on October 2021 Pupil Census. The final allocation was likely to vary from the modeling information included in the consultation document and included in the papers for this meeting. The key reason for the variance was a change in pupil numbers and eligibility for other proxy factors.

The Forum was advised that October 2021 Pupil Census data just received showed a significant decrease in pupil numbers in the borough. There was a discussion on declining pupil numbers and the following points arose:

- The overall decline in pupil numbers was 2.2%;
 - There was insufficient data to fully assess the impact of leaving the European Union;
 - Officers were working on future projections, which were to form part of the discussion with the next Admission and Pupil Place Planning Board meeting;
 - Secondary schools would find it useful for future planning to receive current information on current pupil numbers for Years 4 to 6;
 - It was suggested that an update on the changing pupil numbers be provided to mainstream headteachers.
- (ii) The DfE had indicated that some additional funding would be provided for schools to meet the cost of the 1.25% national insurance increase from 2022/23 but this had not yet been confirmed.
- (iii) The position for the High Needs block was being assessed and updates would be provided over the next two meetings of the Forum.

RESOLVED the Schools Forum:

- noted the draft budget position for the Schools Block for 2022/23;
- confirmed their agreement to the transfer of 0.5% from the Schools to the High Needs Block to support the current arrangements for mainstream schools with high numbers of pupils with EHCP, Element 2, the first £6,000, for pupils with EHCPs for the number above each school's calculated average incident;
- following the DSG settlement was announced, the funding formula and budget allocations will be reviewed and reported back to Schools Forum at the 19 January 2022 meeting for consideration and agreement;

ACTION: MRS MCNAMARA

- Ms Fear and Mr Rowley to attend the Primary and the Secondary Headteachers Conferences to provide an update on pupil numbers.

ACTION: MS FEAR AND MR ROWLEY

(d) Central Services School Block and De-delegation of Central Services – 2022/23

This item was presented by Sangeeta Brown

RECEIVED details of the proposed allocation of the Central Services School Block (CSSB) and seeking agreement for de-delegation of Central Services for 2022/23.

REPORTED that the report provided information on the planned use of the Central Schools Services block (CSSB) and required the maintained schools' representatives to **consider** and **agree** the central services available for de-delegation.

NOTED

- (i) The DfE had confirmed, for 2022/23, there were no changes to the responsibilities

covered by the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB).

(ii) The Forum noted the proposals for the use of the CSSB.

(iii) The proposal to cut the School Improvement Brokerage Grant would have a significant impact in supporting maintained schools. It was stated without support through de-delegation it would be difficult to support maintained schools. Following a discussion, the ensuing points arose:

- The rationale for cutting the grant were that local authorities (LAs) had not issued many warning notices to schools. It was stated that LAs used the grant to avoid issuing notices and support schools at risk or in an Ofsted category;
- Primary headteachers had not had enough time to fully assess the impact of the proposed changes and therefore were seeking to defer the decision on de-delegation to the January Schools Forum meeting.

It was requested that officers meet with primary headteachers to discuss the changes to the School Improvement Brokerage Grant;

- Secondary headteachers had discussed the cessation of the grant and all the other services listed for de-delegation. The view was to support de-delegation for all services including the provision required for the cessation of the School Improvement Brokerage Grant.

Secondary maintained representatives agreed to defer decision on delegation to the January meeting;

- It was confirmed that the funding provided through de-delegation did not support academy trusts. If a Trust required support, then this had to be brokered separately;
- It was requested that information be provided on the use of the schools in difficulties fund;
- Noted that funding to LAs will continue to be reduced, although the Council will fulfill statutory services going forward it was unclear how services would be funded, there was a lack of clarity from central government;
- It was suggested that maintained representatives and the Chair meet for a quick discussion prior to the start of the January Schools Forum meeting.

RESOLVED to:

- Note the use of the CSSB;
- Defer the decision on de-delegation of services for 19 January 2022 meeting;
- Mr Nathan to meet with maintained primary headteachers to discuss School Improvement de-delegation;

ACTION: MR NATHAN

- Information on use of schools in difficulties fund to be provided to maintained schools representatives;
- Arrange a brief meeting for maintained schools representatives and the Chair just before the start of the 19 January meeting.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

5 **WORKPLAN**

RECEIVED the Schools Forum Workplan 2021-22.

RESOLVED to **agree** and update the Workplan for any items from the meeting.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

6 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Helen Kacouris took the opportunity to let the Forum know that it had been a privilege and honour to be part of the group and wishes the Forum good luck for the future. Members extended their thanks for her support and contribution to the Schools Forum.

There were no other items to consider.

7 FUTURE MEETINGS

- (a) The date of next meeting of the Forum will be 19 January 2022 at 5.30pm.
Meeting venue to be confirmed.

- (b) **NOTED** dates of future meetings as detailed:

Date	Time	Venue
09/03/2022	5:30 - 7:30 PM	TBC
11/05/2022	5:30 - 7:30 PM	TBC
06/07/2022	5:30 - 7:30 PM	TBC
05/10/2022	5:30 - 7:30 PM	TBC
07/12/2022	5:30 - 7:30 PM	TBC

8 CONFIDENTIALITY

No items discussed within the agenda were to be treated as confidential.

Meeting finished at 6:50pm