

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Held on Wednesday, 19 January 2022 at 17:30 on Microsoft Teams

Governors:

Mr J Ellis
*Mr T Hellings**
*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
Ms S Mahesh
Ms J Gumbrell

Schools' Members

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
School Business Manager
Secondary Headteacher

**Indicates Absence*

Others present:

Mr P Nathan, Director of Education
Mrs L McNamara, Finance Manager
Mrs S Brown, Education Resources Manager
Mr N Best, Head of Strategic Resourcing & Partnerships - Education
Mrs P Swain, Clerk

Clerk's notes

Mr Nathan joined the meeting 5.48pm
Ms Ellingham and Ms Thompson joined the meeting 5.51pm
Cllr Uddin left the meeting at 18.59pm
Mr Ellis left the meeting at 18>44pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Donnelly, Mr Hellings and Mr Hintz.

NOTED:

- (a) the absence of Ms Davies.
- (b) This was Ms O'Keeffe's last meeting as a secondary headteacher representative. Members thanked Ms O'Keeffe for her support and contribution to the Forum. The Forum extended a welcome to Ms Gumbrell, who was attending as an Observer and would be taking over from Ms O'Keeffe from the next meeting.

REPORTED that a letter had been sent to all academies at the start of this term requesting nominations for the current vacancy for an academy representative. A nomination had been received for Mr Stephen Way, ELT Partnership to join the Forum.

The Chair noted Mr Way's nomination. She advised that there was already a member from ELT on the Forum and as the letter seeking nomination had been circulated at the beginning of term that it was prudent to allow some time for any other nominations to be submitted before considering Mr Way's nomination. Furthermore, the Forum was informed that Mr Ellis was standing down as a governor representative at the next Forum meeting. If further nominations were received, they could be considered alongside Mr Way's nomination as there was an opportunity for Mr Stephen Way was Chair of Governors at Prince of Wales Primary School.

RESOLVED to confirm the position on the academy vacancy and Mr Way's nomination at the next meeting.

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 8n December 2021.

NOTED that:

- (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 2022/23

This item was presented by Ms McNamara.

RECEIVED and reported the report provided details of the initial 2022/23 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation, announced on 16 December 2021, together with the October 2021 dataset used to calculate formula budget shares for primary and secondary schools.

The Forum was advised that the December 2021 Budget Settlement confirmed the DSG allocation was £378.48m, an overall increase of £5.5m compared to 2021/22 and was, as expected, based on the indicative information circulated to members in July 2021. The ESFA also circulated the October 2021 dataset and Authority Pro Forma Tool (APT) to use for the 2022/23 formula allocations.

The dataset used for the Schools Block confirmed a fall in mainstream pupil numbers of 960 (-1.9%), which had impacted the budget settlement. The draft budget for the Schools Block had been formulated using the recommendations from the last meeting of transferring 0.5% from the Schools to High Needs block and applying the national funding formula unit rates. This had resulted in a budget gap because although there had been a fall in mainstream pupil numbers eligibility for other formula factors, in particular FSM and Ever6 FSM, had increased between Oct20 and Oct21. Some of the budget gap had been addressed by adjusting the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) to the lowest permitted level of 0.5% but a £300k budget gap remained and options to address this had been discussed with the Education Resources Group. The Group had advised to maintain the 0.5% transfer to the high needs block as they felt this supported schools with the highest levels of SEND and address the budget gap by reducing the per pupil (AWPU) unit rate. They felt this would impact on all schools equitably. The unit rates and formula allocations detailed in the appendices had been formed on this basis. As part of the formula funding exercise and associated analysis, it was noted that Wren Academy had received a MFG in 2020/21 and would continue to receive additional MFG

protection unless a request with the Forum's approval was submitted to the Secretary of State (via ESFA) to disapply this MFG protection.

The report also included some information on the other blocks within the DSG and the central services requiring approval for de-delegation deferred from the last meeting.

NOTED

- (i) When the Wren Academy opened in September 2020, the data for the proxy factors used to inform the 2020/21 funding formula was based on data from two neighbouring secondary schools. The data used for the 2021/22 formula was based on actual data recorded on the October 2020 Census, which reflected much lower factor eligibility than the estimated data in 20/21, but the MFG was based on the higher eligibility used in the previous year's formula allocation, which resulted in the Academy receiving an erroneous MFG protection. To correct this position for 2022/23 and future years, a disapplication request must be submitted to the ESFA. The paper circulated outlined three possible courses of action.

In response to comments, it was stated that the disapplication process requires the Authority to consult with the affected school and their views would be considered by the ESFA. Following a discussion, the ensuing points arose:

- Forum members were advised that the Academy and the Authority considered Option 3, a phased removal 2021/22 of MFG would enable the Academy to incorporate the change into their future planning. The modelling for the draft Budget presented to members assumed agreement of Option 3.
- If no action was taken, the 2021/22 MFG would continue to be protected and would amount to £240k of in 2022/23 but applying a phased removal suggested in Option 3 would reduce this amount to £115K
- It was confirmed that this MFG protection would be funded from the Schools Block and would have an adverse impact on the funding available for other schools in the borough, on average £2,000 for a primary school. Members considered this was a significant amount of money for ~~some~~ schools. ~~Exact figures were not available.~~
- The Forum sought the Member from the Wren Academy (the Academy CFO) to comment on this request. The Member commented that the Academy had made financial plans based on the information provided by the ESFA and the Authority. The reduction would result in the Academy facing financial difficulties and potentially a deficit. The Academy had not been given advance warning of the proposed MFG disapplication but recognised the need to fund all schools accurately and sought a phased approach to get to this point.
- The Forum acknowledged that some valid points had been made and the difficulties ~~in accurately financing the opening of the Academy~~ ~~when new schools opened.~~ There were concerns that the Academy had not raised a query when an additional £210k MFG had been received in 2021/22 because all schools were required to make decisions year on year based on increases and decreases in pupil numbers and contextual data used for schools. Members felt strongly that the Academy should have realised they had been over funded last year, and therefore should not have set a budget on the basis and assumed that they would continue to receive this excess funding; It was difficult for the Forum to understand how a budget had already been planned based on over funding rather than expected funding for the actual pupils on roll.

The Member from the Academy commented that they Academy had been surprised to receive the additional funding but had not queried this. ~~as assumed that the allocations from the ESFA and Authority were correct.~~ The Academy considered it unfair to completely remove and disapply the MFG protection from the 2022/23 budget.

The Forum was advised that the Authority were not expecting the Academy to pay back the additional funding received last year;

- Members were advised that the Wren Academy Trust had over £1million in reserve and the view of Forum members was that Trusts were expected to manage any

shortfalls in funding for individual academies from the overall reserves.

Member from the Academy remarked that reserves were ~~held~~ earmarked for the other school in the Trust for planned 6th form expansion. Whilst accepting the principle of funding, the Academy did not consider there had been sufficient consultation on this matter. If the MFG was removed in full, this would leave the school in deficit.

The Forum was advised that the Authority needed to complete a template for the MFG disapplication request for Wren Academy and asked that a formal vote by School Members only be taken on this request. The Forum was reminded of the three available options:

- 1) Do nothing – Retain the current protection and use the higher per pupil levels rather than levels that reflect the context of the academy's current cohort
- 2) Submit disapplication to remove 2021/22 of MFG in full – this will release the maximum funding (£240k) to be used in formula applications but result in significant year on year funding reduction for the academy
- 3) Submit disapplication for phased removal 2021/22 of MFG – protect the new cohort of pupils to the 2021/22 per pupil rate but remove the MFG protection for earlier cohorts to enable the Authority to set unit rates in line with those presented to the Forum while providing the Academy with a phased removal of protection.

Whichever option the Forum chose, in the Autumn 2022 term, following receipt of budget information for 2023/24 indicative budgets will be prepared and if required an MFG disapplication will be submitted to the ESFA to remove any remaining protection.

The outcome of voting for the three options presented was confirmed as:

Option 1 – Do Nothing – No Votes

Option 2 - Submit disapplication to remove 2021/22 of MFG in full – 8 Votes

Option 3 - Submit disapplication for phased removal 2021/22 of MFG - 2 Votes

There were two abstentions. **Do we need to say that one of these was the Chair who wished to abstain to avoid accusations of not remaining impartial??**

RESOLVED the disapplication would be submitted to the ESFA based on the above result and decision by the Forum.

ACTION: MRS MCNAMARA

- (ii) The Forum were informed that there may be some minor changes to the unit rates circulated due to some final adjustments to the formula allocations and outcome of the disapplication request. They confirmed that they would accept the rates in principle on the proviso that the adjustments led to a positive change.
- (iii) In addition to the basic DSG allocations, additional grants have been made available to support the Schools and High Needs Blocks in 2022/23. Enfield's indicative allocation for the separate supplementary grant was £8.23m, and confirmation of the final allocation from the ESFA was expected later in the Spring term. The additional funding aimed to support the cost pressures being faced by schools including the 1.25% national insurance increase and pay awards.
- (iv) The initial increase for the High Needs Block was £5.03, 8.3%, but this had increased to £7.5m, 12.45%, due to the announcement of the additional supplementary grant.
- (v) The increase in the hourly rate used to fund the Early Years block remained as previously reported. The final allocation would change to reflect pupil numbers recorded in the January 2022 Census. This update was expected in July 2022.
- (vi) The Central Services Schools Block (CSSB) had decreased by £50k, the net of a 20% reduction for the historical commitments element offset by an increase in funding for ongoing functions.
- (i) Members were reminded that the chosen formula factors, unit rates and formula allocations would need to be submitted to the ESFA by their prescribed deadline of 21st January 2022. The disapplication could not be included until it had been agreed by the

ESFA so the initial submission made would exclude this. A revised version would be submitted when the outcome was received.

RESOLVED the Schools Forum noted the 2022/23 DSG settlement and draft budget and:

Agreed to:

- The continuation of the 0.5% transfer from the Schools to High Needs block;
- The unit rates and formula allocations as detailed in Appendices B and C
- If the unit rates were adjusted to ensure funding was utilised following the outcome of the disapplication request, then the revised unit rates used to be circulated to all Forum members.

ACTION: MRS MCNAMARA

- A request to disapply in full the MFG protection for Wren Academy to be submitted to the ESFA for the Secretary of States approval.

ACTION: MRS MCNAMARA

(b) De-delegation of Central Services for Maintained Schools

REPORTED at the previous meeting, maintained schools members were provided information about the services for which de-delegation was sought for 2022/23. To allow for a further briefing session and to enable schools to have more time to consider the options, it had been agreed that decision on de-delegation be deferred to this meeting.

Maintained school representatives were now asked to vote and confirm which services they agree to de-delegate for 2022/23. Any de-delegation confirmed would cease at the start of the 2022/23 academic year.

NOTED since the last meeting, both sectors had met with headteacher colleagues to confirm the views of their sector.

In response to comments, it was stated that the proposal to cut the School Improvement and Brokerage Grant would have a significant impact on supporting maintained schools. Without support through this de-delegation it would be difficult for the Authority to support maintained schools. The changes had not considered how the funding has been used to prevent the need to issue warning notices. The decision to cut the grant had been made even through the majority of the responses to the consultation sought the grant to be retained.

An urgent motion in the name of Councillor Mahtab Uddin, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, would be raised at the Council meeting on 26 January. The motion sought the Council to oppose the Department for Education's decision to remove the School Improvement and Brokerage Grant which paid for local authority school improvement services across England. This was a cut to education of over £41 million nationally and £240,000 annually to Enfield which threatens support to our schools most in need of support. Enfield Council would be asking the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Education to ask that the proposed cut to local authority services does not go ahead and support to local authority schools is not taken away.

Maintained school representatives were guided to an online form.

RESOLVED following voting the position on de-delegation of Central Services is as follows:

Services	Primary	Secondary
Licenses & Subs – CLEAPSS	Yes	Yes
Free School Meals Eligibility	Yes	Yes
NQT Recruitment Support & Applicant Tracking System	No	Yes
Union Duties	Yes	Yes
School Improvement Service: Statutory	No	No
School Improvement Service: Non-statutory	No	Yes
Support for Schools in Difficulties	No	Yes
General Data Protection Regulation	Yes	Yes
Long Service Awards	Yes	Yes

(c) High Needs Strategy - Update

This item was presented by Sangeeta Brown

RECEIVED a report providing an update on the budget, high level data on the rising demand for SEND support, progress on the agreed strategies and the first working draft of the Dedicated Schools (DSG) Management Plan.

NOTED

- (i) This was a regular update provided to the Forum on the financial position with regards the High Needs block and the provision and interventions being developed to support the continuing rising demand for supporting pupils with SEND. The report also included an extract from the DSG Management Plan which all LAs posting a DSG overspend were required to complete.

Following discussion, the ensuing points arose and brought to members attention:

- The Forum was advised that increase highlighted in the budget report in the High Needs block funding was welcomed. However, if the demand remained at the same level, then it was unlikely to address the in-year deficit and the structural deficit of £3m per annum would continue to grow.
- The Section 251 Budget Statement 2021/22 was recently published. The published data indicated as Enfield approximately two thirds of English LAs had planned to bring forward into 2021/22 a DSG deficit and others a balance of zero or above. Enfield's deficit of 1% of the total national deficit held by all LAs is 43rd highest of all LA's, this was a concern for the LA.
- The 2021 data shows that Enfield's total pupil population had decreased while at the same time there was a significant increase in the number of pupils with EHCPs but a slight reduction in pupils identified as SEND support. There was a greater level of need but a reduction in number of pupils
- Officers would look to see if the DSG Management Plan could be shared on Google Drive for ease of accessibility.
- It was confirmed that high needs benchmarking data was used by the Authority to inform and forward plan provision and support the DSG Management Plan.

RESOLVED:

- Information on pupil numbers would be presented at the next Primary Headteachers' Briefing.

ACTION: MR BEST

- The Forum found the current reporting arrangements to inform the Forum as being sufficient and did not consider there was no need for the High Needs Working Group to meet again to monitor progress.

5 WORKPLAN

RECEIVED the Schools Forum Workplan 2021-22.

Members were asked to **note** and **agree** the Workplan.

RESOLVED to **agree** the Workplan for the remainder of the School Academic Year 2021/22.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other items to consider.

7 FUTURE MEETINGS

- (a) The date of the next meeting of the Forum will be 9 March 2022. This would be a virtual meeting.

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

Date	Time	Venue
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.