

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Held on Wednesday, 7 December 2022 at 17:30 on Microsoft Teams

Governors:

Ms Adelaide Amofo
Mr T Hellings *
*Ms C Davies **
Mr J Donnelly

Headteachers

Ms T Day *
Ms J Gumbrell
Ms K Baptiste
Ms C Fay
Ms N Husband
*Mr D Smart **
Ms G Taylor *

Academies:

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

Schools' Members

Primary
Primary
Special
Secondary

Secondary
Secondary
Primary
Pupil Referral Unit
Primary
Primary
Special

Academy
Academy
Academy
Academy
Academy
Academy
Academy

Non-School Members

Mr K Hintz *
Ms A Palmer *
Mr T Cuffaro
Mr A Johnson *
Ms J Fear
Cllr M Greer
Cllr A Abdullahi
Ms L Culora / Ms C Bignell *

16-19 Partnership
Early Years Provider
Teachers' Committee
Education Professional
Head of Admissions
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member
School Business Manager

**Indicates Absence*

Also, present:

Mr P Nathan, Director of Education
Mrs L McNamara, Finance Manager
Mrs S Brown, Education Resources Manager
Mr J Carrick, Deputy Head of Behaviour Support Service
Mr N Ellerby-Jones, Head of SWERRL

Clerk's notes

Ms Ellingham and Ms Baptiste joined the meeting at 5.35pm
Ms Thompson and Ms Amofo joined the meeting at 5.40pm
Mr Carrick left the meeting at 5.50pm
Ms Husband joined the meeting at 5.55pm
Mr N Ellerby-Jones joined the meeting at 6.00pm and left at 6.6.21pm
Cllr Abdullahi and Cllr Greer left the meeting at 6.30pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

- (a) Apologies for absence were received from Mr Smart, Ms Day, Mr Hintz, Mr Way, Ms Palmer and both Ms L Culora / Ms C Bignell.
- (b) Noted:
 - (i) The absence of Ms Davis, Mr Hellings, Ms Taylor and Mr Johnson.
 - (ii) Nominations were being sought to fill the vacancy for an academy representative.

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 5 October 2022.

NOTED that:

- (a) The Minutes were a correct record of the meeting
- (b) Matters arising from the Minutes: There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. **ITEMS FOR PRESENTATION**

(a) **Secondary Behaviour Support Service – Annual Report**

This item was presented by Mr Carrick

RECEIVED a presentation from Mr Carrick of the key highlights from the Secondary Behaviour Support Service (SBSS) Annual report.

REPORTED the following services within SBSS provided support to young people:

- Outreach team included a manager and mentors. The team provided one to one support and group work to secondary schools and to pupils placed in alternative provision;
- REACH programme enabled Year 9 pupils to receive over a period of eight weeks intensive support and then returning to the school that referred them;
- Nexus, unlike the other areas which were funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant, was funded by the Council. The Service worked collaboratively with schools and children's services to improve pupils' behaviour, promote inclusion, and support students educated in alternative provisions to prevent and reduce exclusions.

The highlights during the year included:

- SBSS continued to support and work with schools and headteachers to reduce number of students being permanently excluded. This had resulted in permanent exclusions reducing to single figures from 50-60 exclusions a few years ago;
- A link had been developed with Pearson, publishing company, which had led to schools receiving variety of free revision books for students in key stage three and four.
- Nexus 3 to 5 had been introduced to reduce youth violence by providing after school support between 3 – 5pm. The activities provided included boxing, debating club.
- SBSS was now working with admissions to reduce managed moves again with aim of avoiding exclusion.

The challenges faced by SBSS was similar to school that of insufficient resources to support the increasing need. Since the beginning of the academic year, there had been four confirmed permanent exclusions and three pending. SBSS was working to ensure schools considering exclusions spoke to the SBSS or SEN Service for a student with an education, health and care plan (EHCPs).

NOTED

In response to questions:

- Information on suspensions had been difficult to capture because data was not provided to local authorities by schools but accessed from the Pupil Census data published by the Department of Education (DfE). However, under the new guidance schools were required to provide information to their local authority. Data was currently being provided in a manual format and it was taking time and resources to enter the information onto the system. Due to concerns of accuracy of this data, DfE publication was continuing to be used for the most accurate information, but this information was dated.

The trend for suspensions appeared to be going down but further work was required to assess the number of day and multiple suspensions and then support schools to consider strategies that may reduce multiple suspensions.

In addition, schools were also working on developing their own inclusion strategies and approaches to reduce suspensions.

It was stated the aim was to support children and young people to remain at school because the loss in teaching and learning had a far reaching impact on the young person's life. In addressing behaviour and assist in reducing suspensions, it was important to understand and address the underlying cause. The implementation of trauma informed practice would begin to support this understanding, but further work was needed. For LAs, it was difficult to respond because the suspension had already happened, so the proactive work of SBSS to prevent suspension was important.

- Detailed data on ethnicity was not available for this meeting. However, the main concern for a number of years had been the overrepresentation of boys being permanently excluded across different ethnicity groups and next year a boys' achievement project was planned to look into this in more detail.
- Family support service was also available with a specific worker working with families of vulnerable young people. Nexus also carried out targeted work with schools.

It was stated that the Nexus Steering Group had oversight of all the work being done by schools, community groups and Council services to support vulnerable families and their children who may be at risk of exclusions. It was suggested that Cllr Greer may find it useful to attend the Nexus Steering Group.

RESOLVED Mr Cato would liaise with Cllr Greer about attending the Nexus Steering Group.

ACTION: MR CATO

Mr Carrick was thanked for attending the Forum and presenting the SBSS Annual report.

(b) SWERRL (Primary Behaviour Support Service) – Annual Report

This item was presented by Mr Ellerby-Jones

RECEIVED a presentation from Mr Ellerby-Jones of the impact of the work of the primary behaviour support service (SWERRL) as detailed in the Annual report.

REPORTED:

- Following the pandemic, despite managing increasing difficulties and challenges as well as moving to new premises, SWERRL continued to work and support pupils and schools and this had resulted in another year with no permanent exclusions.
- The pandemic and period after there had been an increase in demand for support with number of requests increasing from around 60s to 90s, partly due to the change for children from restricted social to school based learning experience.
- With the start of this academic year, there was an increase in requests for support across all year groups, particularly in Reception, Years 1 and 2, with pupils experiencing and presenting social emotional mental health and other behavioural challenges. This

increase, particularly in the lower year groups, may have been because the pupils were not school ready when they returned as a consequence of their schooling being disrupted and lack of school socialisation opportunities during the pandemic. SWERRL was working with schools to find strategies and interventions to support these pupils. The strategies included trauma informed practice and ARC (attachment, regulation and competency) model to support attachment issues and reduced distress pupils may be feeling.

- SWERRL provided schools with individual consultations with particular teachers to whole school INSET and training such as Cosy and safe physical intervention. All training was being aligned with the principles used for trauma informed practice. The number of times these courses are run had been increased.

RESOLVED the full annual report would be forwarded to Forum members.

Mr Ellerby-Jones was thanked for his presentation.

5. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION & DECISION**

(a) **Schools Budget – Update**

Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Monitoring Report 2022/23

This item was presented by Ms McNamara

RECEIVED a monitoring report detailing the forecast for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget 2022/23.

REPORTED the deficit brought forward was £12.6m. The budget forecast as at September 2022 projected the deficit increasing to £14.9m. An increase in the deficit of £1.2m from the previous forecast.

NOTED areas contributing towards the increase in the deficit included:

- The PRU allocation increasing slightly to reflect the outcome from place funding review.
- Four new nurture groups opening during the year,
- Overspend by SBSS because staff had been recruited to previously vacant posts. The Forum were advised that SBSS's funding had not changed since 2016 and had to manage cost pressures by not recruiting to some posts but now had to fill the vacant posts to meet the rising demand for support,
- Post 16 was reporting an overspend, but this position may change following the start of the new academic year as learners leave or their EHCP cease.
- Salmon Brooks opened in September with 27 pupils being admitted and the cost of these placements was included in the forecast.

In response to a question, it was confirmed one of the main pressures on the high needs budget was pupils placed in outborough independent provision. To reduce reliance on outborough independent provision was by increasing in-borough provision. This included expanding existing special schools and opening a new special schools.

The Forum noted the forecast and accumulative deficit position as at September 2022.

(b) **School Funding Consultation Document**

This item was presented by Mrs Brown

RECEIVED a summary of responses to the local funding consultation document.

REPORTED 23 responses had been received by the deadline; of these 18 supported the proposal for transferring 0.5% from the Schools to High Needs block to support schools with high number of pupils with EHCPs. Based on the responses and subject to the available resources, it was recommended that the Forum support the transfer of 0.5% from Schools to High Needs block.

NOTED

It was commented that the response rate was very low and whether some work was required to assess why it was low. As an academy representative, the Trust supported this proposal but the number of pupils with high level of needs varied between schools in the borough, so it was suggested that this variation should be reviewed. In response, it was stated that it was difficult and complex because of all the varying factors such as parental choice, perception of support provided by particular schools and social economic demography. The introduction of the Inclusion Charter aimed partly to begin to highlight and address this. Also, officers were discussion whether a research project on this should be commissioned.

RESOLVED to support the transfer of 0.5% from the Schools to High Needs block to support schools with high number of pupils with EHCPs.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

(c) Dedicated Schools Grant 2023/24 – Update

This item was presented by Mrs McNamara

RECEIVED a report providing an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2023/24.

REPORTED the modeling presented at the last meeting had been updated and still used the indicative allocations published in July and data from the October 2021 Pupil Census.

NOTED

- (i) the indicative Schools block allocation and the following information was used for the illustrative model to inform individual school allocations:
- Use of the national funding formula unit rates,
 - Allowed for any adjustments for the PFI shortfall,
 - Academy growth.
 - Minimum funding guarantee (MFG) set at 0%,
 - Assumed Schools Forum agreement for a disapplication request to remove MFG protection for Wren Academy be submitted,
 - Assumed agreement to the 0.5% transfer to the High Needs block for schools with high number of pupils with EHCPs
 - The gap being bridged by reducing the per pupil rate.
- (ii) Previously, the Forum was advised that the modelling was indicating a £0.5m funding gap and the options to address the funding gap were to adjust the per pupil unit rate, reduce the 0.5% transfer or a mixture of both. The updated information presented in report circulated for this meeting assumed agreement to the 0.5% transfer and adjusted the per pupil rate to achieve a balanced position. This had resulted in the increase in the per pupil rate being reduced from 2.7% used in the initial modelling to 2.5%.

However, the Government had announced an additional £2bn for next year. At a recent meeting, the DfE was advised the additional money would most likely be allocated on a similar basis to the previous pay and pensions grant provided to schools. With no other information available, the methodology previously used for the pay and pensions grant was used and added to the model presented. This indicated an average increase in funding for school would be between 5.1 – 5.3%

- (iii) The Forum was informed, as agreed at the last meeting, a disapplication request to cease the protection provided to Wren Academy had been submitted. The outcome of this request was awaited.

RESOLVED to:

- Note the revised Schools Block formula allocations for 2023/24
- Agree the 0.5% transfer from the Schools to the High Needs block.

ACTION: MRS MCNAMARA

(d) Central Services School Block and De-delegation (2023/24)

This item was presented by Mrs Brown.

RECEIVED a paper detailing the planned use of the Central Schools Services block (CSSB) and central services that required mainstream school representative to approval for de-delegation.

NOTED

- (i) The CSSB was based on two elements, statutory duties and historic commitments. Statutory duties were those duties that the local authority was required to provide to all schools including academies and free schools. Historic commitment were services provided by children's services to support children and young people to access education. In line with national policy, the historic commitment element was being reduced by 20% year on year.
- (ii) The services listed for de-delegation were the same as this year. However, it was proposed to increase slightly the per pupil rates for CLEAPSS and long service awards to reflect current costs. The per pupil rate for these services had not changed for a number of years, but there was now a need to increase the rate to reflect additional costs.

It was stated the awards were normally presented at a ceremony at the Civic, but consideration was now being given as to whether the award presentation should take place at the individual schools because it was felt this would be better and more appropriate for the individual receiving the award. The change of venue would be discussed and agreed with individual headteachers.

Some maintained school Forum representative had sent apologies for this meeting. So, in order to seek their views on de-delegation, a Microsoft form was sent out to all maintained school representatives earlier in the day. By the Forum meeting, three forms had been received and these were from Mr Smart, Ms Day and Ms Husband. However, Ms Husband was at the meeting and would be invited to vote for each item.

The maintained school Forum representatives were asked if they were happy to accept the responses received on MS Forms and these be used and added to the votes cast by the members present at the meeting. No objections were received to this suggestion.

It was commented that maintained secondary school representative had been consulted prior to the meeting and five schools had responded. As this was a majority, it was agreed to support all the central services listed for de-delegation.

RESOLVED to accept the responses on MS Forms and the maintained members present were asked to cast their vote for the individual de-delegated items. Table below confirms the services to be de-delegated.

Central Services	Secondary	Primary
Licenses & Subs – CLEAPPS	Yes	Yes
Free School Meals Eligibility	Yes	Yes
NQT Recruitment Support & Applicant Tracking System	Yes	No
Union Duties	Yes	Yes
School Improvement Service - 1	Yes	No
School Improvement Service - 2	Yes	No
Schools in difficulties fund	Yes	No
General Data Protection Regulations	Yes	Yes

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Forum thanked Mrs McNamara for all her work and her presentations. The work and presentations were never very easy, because whenever budgets were mentioned budgets, it was always a difficult and generally not good news. Ms McNamara was thanked for doing this so well over the years. The Forum wished Mrs McNamara all the best.

Mrs McNamara thanked the Forum. She felt supported because the Forum worked well and collaboratively.

Ms Thomas wished everyone a relaxed and enjoyable Christmas break.

7. WORKPLAN

RECEIVED and resolved to update Workplan from this meeting.

8. FUTURE MEETINGS

(a) The date of next meeting agreed to be held on 18 January 2023 virtually on MS Teams.

(b) NOTED dates of future meetings as detailed:

Date	Time	Venue
08/03/2023	5:30 - 7:30 PM	TBC
05/07/2023	5:30 - 7:30 PM	TBC
04/10/2023	5:30 - 7:30 PM	TBC
06/12/2023	5:30 - 7:30 PM	TBC

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

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