

## Minutes of Schools' Forum Meeting

December 05, 2019

### Present

Jo Budge – Head Teacher of Blagdon/Caversham/New Bridge Nurseries, Justine McMinn – Head Teacher of E P Collier, Tonia Crossman – Head Teacher of Emmer Green, Peter Kayes – Governor at the Ridgeway (Chair), Richard Rolfe – Governor at Micklands, Ann McDonnell – Business Manager of Blessed Hugh Faringdon, Isabelle Sandy – Business Manager of Kendrick, Ashley Robson – Head Teacher of Reading School, Claire Brown – Business Manager of Prospect, Natasha Lee – Business Manager of The Wren, Symon Cooke - Head Teacher of The Avenue, Mark Hester – Business Manager of Cranbury College, Ita McGullion – Manager of Kennet Day Nursery.

### Apologies

Jessica Wall – Governor at Caversham & New Bridge, Robert Howell – Head Teacher of Alfred Sutton, Cathy Doberska – Head Teacher of English Martyrs, Karen Edwards – Head Teacher of The Heights, Stieve Butler – Head Teacher of Meadow Park, Rachel Cave – Head Teacher of Highdown, Annal Nayyar – Finance Director of Bayliss Trust (Reading Girls), Lee Smith – Head Teacher of Holy Brook, Ali McNamara – NEU, Kate Reynolds – Director of Education, Steven Davies – Strategic Business Partner.

### In attendance

Richard Pearse – Head Teacher of Churchend School, Jane Brown – Business Manager of Churchend School, Cllr Ashley Pearce – Lead Member for Education, Claire White – Interim Education & Schools Business Partner, Deborah Hunter – Head of SEND, Gill Dunlop – Pupil & School Support Service Manager, Rhiannon Schoepe – Minute Taker

#	Item	Notes
1	<b>Welcome and apologies</b>	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted.

2	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting held on October 16, 2019</b></p>	<p>Minutes were agreed from 16th October 2019.</p> <p>Matters arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ashley Robson confirmed the academy secondary representatives for the Forum.</li> <li>- Richard Rolfe confirmed that the remaining maintained primary governor position is not yet filled.</li> <li>- Claire White confirmed that the non-school post-16 position is not yet filled.</li> <li>- The SEND strategy is to go out to schools in January 2020.</li> <li>- The consultation regarding the top slice inclusion fund is to be addressed later in Item 6.</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Schools' Forum Membership Update – confirmation of representation</b></p>	<p>It was confirmed that there remains three vacancies on the School's Forum; maintained primary head, maintained primary governor and non-school post 16 provision.</p> <p>Ashley Robson (Reading School) confirmed that the official Academy Secondary representatives are Kendrick, Highdown, Reading Girls and Prospect. Any observers and substitutions are allowed to attend Schools Forum with agreement and can vote if an official representative is not in attendance.</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <p><b>Kate Reynolds to follow up on the maintained primary head and non-school post-16 representatives.</b></p> <p><b>Richard Rolfe to follow up on filling the new maintained primary school governor position.</b></p>
4	<p><b>DSG Budget Monitoring 2019/20 Month 8</b></p>	<p>Claire White presented.</p> <p>The report contains the current position as of the end of November 2019.</p> <p>Table 1 shows the original and current position of the DSG funding allocation for 2019/20. There is an increase of £450k compared to the original budget due to the points listed in 3.4. The main change from the last report is the high needs allocation being up by £6k due to the settlement of a funding dispute with the DFE over a provider.</p> <p>Table 2 shows the summary budget and forecast for 2019/20. This shows an overspend of £971k compared to the budget, and the overall deficit has risen from £1.6m to £2.6m. Point 4.3 gives a summary of the changes.</p> <p>Due to planned ring-fenced underspends not being used to</p>

offset the deficit, the amount to be repaid is higher by £474k, leaving £497 of other net over spends.

#### Schools Block

Business rates are currently at £9k over the initial allocation. The Growth Fund is estimated to be overspent by £90k due to three secondary schools taking on a bulge class which was not anticipated. Any overspend will come from the 2020/21 schools block DSG allocation. The £40k carried forward for the equality services de-delegation has been paid back to the maintained schools which contributed towards this.

#### Central Schools Block

This is currently on line with no variations.

#### Early Years Block

Actual allocations to providers and funding is based on the average census count however we are yet to have the full figure until after the census in January 2020. There is currently £702k sat in contingency with approximately half being from an additional DSG allocation. This may be required in order to pay out to providers or will need to be paid back to the ESFA in the following financial year. The remaining half (£350k) is due to underspends in the previous year. After the January 2020 census, an assessment can be made on whether there is a level of contingency not required which will allow a one off payment to providers to be made.

#### High Needs Block

Over 75% of the block is payments for statutory top up fees for pupils with EHCPs. Table 3 shows the year on year increases in numbers of EHCPs. The current forecast for top ups is £15.1m which is £1.1m over budget. Table 4 gives a breakdown of costs by type of placement. The largest increases are in mainstream and alternative provisions due to keeping young people in mainstream rather than out of county placements. The actual numbers of EHCPs are growing in all local authorities. There is also an overspend of £30k on NHS contracts as not all academies were included in the contract to start with - free schools now benefit from the contract.

Payments for inclusion funding have not yet been made for this term and may overspend.

#### DSG Deficit Recovery Plan

The deficit recovery plan was submitted to ESFA in June with feedback received at the end of October. This was positive and they were satisfied with the repayment plan as when this was submitted, we were due to repay in four years. They have not requested a meeting with ourselves, however we can

		<p>request one this if it is thought to be worthwhile. The ESFA is more concerned with those local authorities with no strategy and a growing deficit.</p> <p>Table 6 shows the current DSG recovery plan which takes a simplistic view and assumes that costs in the high needs block will rise by £0.5m net of savings each year but the allocation will increase by £2m in 2020/21 and £1.5m in each of the following two years. On this basis, the deficit will still be recovered by 2022/23 however this still depends on the future high needs DSG allocations. The original plan assumed an expenditure of £17.1m in 2022/23 however this will now be around £20.9m. Other local authorities will also struggle with their deficits if the funding does not come in at the expected levels. A detailed refresh of the plan will be produced in the Spring.</p> <p><b>The report was noted along with the current position and pressures.</b></p>
5	<p><b>DSG Budget Overview for 2020/21</b></p>	<p>Claire White presented.</p> <p>This report sets out the estimated funding for each block during 2020/21. Allocations will be confirmed mid-December depending on the outcome of the General Election.</p> <p>Appendix 1 sets out the estimated DSG funding to be received for 2020/21 in comparison to 2019/20. Overall the DSG will increase by £8m (6.5%) to £132m. This is based on the draft October 2019 census figures so could be subject to change when the final allocations are received from ESFA in mid-December.</p> <p><u>Schools Block</u> This will increase by £6m to £94m. £2m of the increase is due to pupil numbers which are now rising in the secondary sector. The rest of the funding is new money which has been allocated through an increase to funding values - £201 per primary pupil and £281 per secondary pupil. Growth Funding is down with transitional protection criteria still being applied for 2020/21 however the growth formula allocates funding above this level to Reading.</p> <p><u>Central Schools Services Block</u> This is down by £112k due to the phase out of funding for historical commitments.</p> <p><u>High Needs Block</u> There is no change to the High Needs funding formula. As Reading is on the funding floor however all Local Authorities will receive a minimum increase of 8% per head of the age 2</p>

to 18 population based on the 2019/20 allocation. This will mean Reading will see an overall increase of £2m with place funding and the import/ export adjustment to be confirmed at a later date.

#### Early Years Block

An additional £66m nationally in funding was announced by the Spending Review. The hourly funding rates for 2, 3 and 4 year olds will increase by 8p. Based on the January 2019 census this will mean an increase of £185k (1.49%). The actual allocation will be based 5/12ths on January 2020 hours and 7/12ths on January 2021 hours. The lump sum for maintained nurseries will continue for the entire financial year.

Teachers pay and pension grants will continue as separate funding streams outside the formula with the rates for 2020/21 to be announced in due course.

Appendix 2 shows the timetable for setting the 2020/21 budgets.

Schools Formula will be covered in more detail in the next paper.

#### High Needs Block

The deficit recovery plan will be refreshed with the latest EHCP data and forecasts; top up bandings for all our settings will be reviewed and may increase. Thus we now may not see a decrease to the deficit in 2020/21.

There is no information on how funding beyond 2020/21 will be allocated. It is hoped that a similar increase to 2020/21 will be received in order to recover the deficit.

More information on the high needs budget will be brought back to Schools Forum in January and March.

#### Early Years Block

It is intended to pass on the full increase of 8p to all providers. Once there is a robust estimate on the current financial years' position, any additional funds can then be allocated out. Deprivation funding will also be likely to see an increase in 2020/21. More information on the Early Years budget will be brought to Schools Forum in March.

#### Central Schools Services Block

Savings will need to be made in order to balance this block. Services which did receive historical funding will have to either fund the reduction from elsewhere or reduce the level of service offered. More information on these budgets will be brought back to Schools Forum in January and March.

**The report was noted.**

6	<p><b>School Formula 2020/21 Final Proposals</b></p>	<p>Claire White presented.</p> <p>The full details of the proposal for the 2020/21 School Formula were not available for the October Schools Forum. A briefing document and proposal for the Reading school formula was sent out to all schools (and Schools' Forum Members) on 24<sup>th</sup> October, this is attached in Appendix 1. Schools had until 19<sup>th</sup> November to respond to this. The responses to the consultation are listed in Appendix 2. 21 responses (24 schools) were received out of a possible 49 schools. A Trust or Federation replying on behalf of all schools it represents has been counted as one response.</p> <p>It was agreed at the last Schools Forum that the school formula for 2020/21 should mirror the National Funding Formula. As a minimum, the factor values will all be at the NFF level excluding the Area Cost Adjustment (ACA). A minimum funding guarantee will be applied at the maximum 1.84% which allows for inflation.</p> <p>After applying the changes as listed in point 3.1, it is likely there will be funding left over from the ACA funding. Not all factors can be increased up to the NFF values, including the ACA, therefore the consultation was based around which factors should be increased with four options being provided to schools as detailed in Appendix 1.</p> <p>Most schools (57%) voted option 1 (to allocate through primary AWPU only). Only primary schools voted for this option however, not all primaries did. Secondary school votes were spread across the remaining three options with option 2 (to increase the additional needs formula factor values) coming second with 24% of the vote.</p> <p>Option 1 would bring most primaries above the minimum funding level of 1.84% with only 7 schools on minimum funding rather than the current number of 30. All secondary schools will be above that level. This would also increase the primary average gain to 3% with secondary schools receiving an increase of over 1% more.</p> <p>Secondary schools have commented that primary schools have already been protected for the last two years which has given them time to prepare for the introduction of the NFF. Under Option 2, primary increases will still be on average 2.7% with secondary increases at 4.6%. This will leave 10 primary schools on minimum funding.</p>

The proposal put forward by the local authority was to apply Option 2 in setting the school formula for 2020/21.

It was commented on that there were more votes for Option 1 and whether the votes were proportionate to the number of primary and secondary schools responding. There were fewer primary schools responding to the consultation than secondary schools in terms of percentages. The summary on page 60 shows all votes received.

The Forum raised an opinion that Option 2 does not suit all secondary schools due to the differences in numbers of pupils with additional needs attending. It was noted that Option 4 seems fairer to all schools. Annexes 4a and 4b list each school along with funding figures based on the options put forward for consultation. For some schools, the different options make no difference to their funding as they are on the minimum per pupil funding. This significantly increases the funding going to schools with low additional needs. The case put forward is that we should be putting additional funding through the additional needs factors to reflect the cost of supporting these pupils.

**VOTE: To accept the Local Authority recommendation for Option 2 – 6 votes.**

**Further voting held on alternative options:**

**Option 1 – 1 vote.**

**Option 3 – 0 votes.**

**Option 4 – 2 votes.**

**Option 2 will be put forward as the Schools Forum recommendation.**

**It was noted that the Local Authority has the final say with the Schools Forum vote being advisory.**

Transfer of Funding from Schools Block to High Needs Block

This funding is for the specific purpose to provide funding for mainstream schools with a higher than average percentage of pupils with EHCPs.

It is proposed that all schools should contribute to the funding through a top slice of the schools' budget. More details can be found in the consultation document in section 6.

		<p>Appendix 2 shows the outcome of the consultation responses. 19 of the 21 responses received agreed to transfer funds for this purpose. 9 of the respondents agreed to transfer a total of £350k and retain the same funding rate and criteria and 8 of the respondents agreed to transfer the maximum 0.5% and widen the criteria to ensure more funding was received by schools and to allow more schools to qualify for the funding.</p> <p>The proposal put forward by the local authority was for £470k (just under 0.5%) to be transferred and that a proposal to change the criteria would be brought back to the Schools Forum in March. This amount will be ring fenced with any underspend carried forwards to the following year.</p> <p>It was questioned whether there will be additional funding for bandings. This is being reviewed and will be brought back to the Forum in March. It is recognised that top up bandings need to be increased going forwards, particularly for those pupils in mainstream with extreme needs.</p> <p><b>VOTE: To transfer DSG from the schools block to the high needs block</b></p> <p><b>Option A (maintain funding level and transfer £350k) – 8 votes.</b></p> <p><b>Option B (increase funding level and transfer £470k) – 2 votes.</b></p> <p><b>Option A received the most votes and it was agreed by Schools’ Forum that £350,000 of funding will be transferred from the schools block to the high needs block in 2020/21 specifically for the inclusion budget.</b></p> <p><u>De-Delegations</u></p> <p>This is for Schools Forum’s information only. Details will be brought back to Forum in January for members to make decisions.</p> <p>Table 1 lists the services offered for de-delegation in 2019/20 and the proposal for 2020/21. The amounts have not changed much between 2019/20 and 2020/21. However, the unit funding may change depending on the outcome of the October census.</p> <p><b>The report was noted.</b></p>
7	Growth Fund Budget 2020/21 – Proposals for	Claire White presented.



<p><b>decision</b></p>	<p>Growth Fund is to be used to meet the cost of increases in pre-16 pupil numbers in either new schools or bulge classes set up to meet basic needs.</p> <p>Funding received by the local authority is allocated through a separate formula; however it remains part of the schools block DSG allocation. In 19/20 a new formula was used to allocate funding based on actual growth in pupil numbers.</p> <p>Growth factor values have increased by 4% compared to the previous year and also include an area cost adjustment for Reading. In 2019/20, Reading's allocation decreased from £2.1m to £1.6m with £1.3 estimated to be received in 2020/21.</p> <p>The budget must be managed carefully to ensure it is not over allocated. If there is a shortfall in funding, a top slice from the schools budget would be required which would reduce the amount available to allocate to all schools through the schools formula.</p> <p>Appendix 1 shows a detailed breakdown of the Growth Fund estimates over three years until 2022/23. There are two primary schools completing expansions in 2020/21 as well as a new school due to open at Green Park in September 2020. In the secondary sector, one school is still expanding and up to two bulge classes will be required in 2020/21. £970k will be required in funding - £338k for new schools and £632 for bulge classes/ expanding schools. This should all be met from the in-year allocation.</p> <p>Looking forward to future requirements, a new eight form secondary is due to open from September 2021. If this is delayed, then additional bulge classes will be required. It's likely there will be a shortfall in the growth funding received in 2021/22. Any under allocations in 2020/21 will be ring fenced to carry forward into 2021/22.</p> <p>Currently, funding for bulge classes has been allocated based on the funding rates from 2018/19. It is proposed that this is changed to take into account the minimum pupil funding levels used in the national funding formula from 2020/21, being £3,750 for primary and £5,000 for secondary. Although these figures are less than the current rates, they will provide consistency and are higher than the AWPU rates used by other Local Authorities. It is also proposed to increase the one off grant amount for new schools to £67k.</p>
------------------------	--

		<p>Kendrick is currently looking for advice from the admissions team due to plans to take additional pupils from 2020. Appendix 1 does not list specific schools for bulge classes as they are as yet unknown. This will be managed by the Admissions team early in the new year.</p> <p>If the new secondary school is not ready in time for September 2021, bulge classes will need to be managed. A spike in pupil numbers is predicted in 2023 with a further increase in 2024. 2021 already has a tight forecast on pupil numbers.</p> <p><b>The proposed budget of £1,492k for the growth fund in 2020/21 was agreed with any unspent funds being carried forward towards meeting increased demand in 2021/22.</b></p> <p><b>The revised growth fund criteria to be applied (minimum pupil funding levels used for bulge classes/expansions - £3,750 primary, £5,000 secondary, and an increase in the one off grant to £67,000 for new schools) were agreed for 2020/21.</b></p> <p><b>The report was noted.</b></p>
8.	SEND Update	<p>Deborah Hunter presented.</p> <p>The report updates the Schools' Forum on the progress of SEND Strategy.</p> <p>Data and performance group. Fiona Tarrant is advising on communication and presentation. Ensure that the data is operationalised as well as strategic.</p> <p>There will be SEND events held three times per year for schools, parents and partners to help open up a line of communication.</p> <p>Newsletters will be sent out to SENCOs in order to provide updates about support and initiatives in the local area.</p> <p>The 'Preparing for Adulthood Information Guide' is available as a booklet online with physical copies also available. Schools are advised to use this as part of Year 9 and Year 11 reviews. This will also link into the online vocational profiling tool to assist commissioning of courses for post-16 education.</p>

		<p>The Mental Health Support Team trailblazer is due to go live in January 2020. Alongside this, a Mental Health Surgery will take place on a Wednesday morning as part of the One Reading Partnership Hub. Pupils and parents can refer into the service as well as schools and GPs.</p> <p>Darlington Ihenacho will be the social care SEND ambassador which will give social care a more active role in SEND.</p> <p><b>The report was noted.</b></p>
9.	<b>Agenda Items For Next Meeting</b>	<p>The next meeting will be held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (5pm) at the Civic Centre – Council Chamber.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DSG budget overview for 2020/21</li> <li>• Final school funding formula for 2020/21</li> <li>• De-delegations for 2020/21</li> <li>• SEND strategy update</li> <li>• DSG Budget monitoring 2019/20 - Month 9</li> </ul>
10.	<b>Any Other Business</b>	<p>A Merry Christmas was wished to all.</p> <p>Rhiannon Schoepe will be stepping down from Schools Forum as minute taker. Thanks were extended to her from the Forum.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 18:08</p>