



Minutes of Schools' Forum Meeting

March 14, 2019

Present

Jo Budge – Head Teacher of Blagdon Nursery, Ita McGullion – Manager of Kennet Day Nursery , Justin McMinn – Head Teacher of E P Collier , Cathy Doberska – Head of English Martyrs, John Cosgrove – Head of Christ the King, Tonia Crossman – Head of Emmer Green, Peter Kayes – Governor at Ridgeway (Chair), Richard Rolfe – Governor at Micklands, , Stieve Butler – Head Teacher of Meadow Park, Ann McDonnell – Business Manager of Blessed Hugh Faringdon, Isabelle Sandy – Business Manager of Kendrick, Annal Nayyar – Finance Director of Bayliss Trust (Reading Girls), Andrew Johnson – Head Teacher of Maiden Erlegh (Reading), Ali McNamara – NEU, Mark Hester – Business Manager of Cranbury College.

Apologies

Robert Howell – Head Teacher of Alfred Sutton, Karen Edwards – Head Teacher of The Heights, Simon Utley – Head Teacher of Blessed Hugh Faringdon, Ashley Robson – Head Teacher of Reading School, Rachel Cave – Head Teacher of Highdown, Phil Davies – Head Teacher of Prospect, Tracey Green – Avenue Finance Director, Mandy Wilton – Head Teacher of Cranbury College, Cllr Ashley Pearce – Lead Member for Education.

In attendance/Observers

Claire White – Interim Education & Schools Business Partner, Mark Fowler – Interim Director of Education, Corinne Dishington – Under 5's Service Manager, Steven Davies – Strategic Business Partner, Rhian Schoepe – Minute Taker, Jessica Wall – Governor at Caversham & Newbridge Nurseries, Lisa Bedlow – Head Teacher at Caversham & Newbridge Nurseries.

#	Item	Notes
1	Welcome and apologies	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted.
2	Minutes of the meeting held on 17th January 2019	Minutes were agreed from 17th January 2019. Jane Bunting was present at the last Forum, however was not noted on the minutes.

		<p>Matters arising:</p> <p>Action on Mark Fowler to report back to Heads Meeting in regard to the school improvements strategy. Heads confirmed that Mark had spoken at the meeting.</p>
3	Schools Forum Membership Update	<p>A vacancy at Maintained Primary level has been filled by Head Teacher of Alfred Sutton School, Robert Howell.</p> <p>Secondary Academies have decided on which five representatives are official School Forum members. These are; Kendrick, Reading, Highdown, Prospect & Reading Girls. Other Secondary Academy representatives are able to act as a substitute or attend the Forum as an observer.</p> <p>Tonia Crossman and Justine McMinn's memberships have been renewed for another year as of today.</p> <p>There are still currently three vacancies outstanding for nursery, academy primary & maintained special schools. Jessica Wall was attending with a view to filling the nursery governor vacancy.</p> <p>Out of the available 23 positions within Schools Forum, 20 are currently filled.</p>
4	DSG Budget Monitoring 2018 - 2019	<p>Claire White presented.</p> <p>This is an update on the previous paper presented at January's School Forum.</p> <p>Table 1 shows no change in the DSG allocation since the last Schools Forum report. There will be an adjustment at Year end for Early Years funding. This is based on 5/12ths of the January 2018 census and 7/12ths of the January 2019 census. Based on the draft January census, this is estimated to be a £270k reduction. This will only impact if take up of places is greater than the January average; this is not currently expected.</p> <p>The budget monitoring position (Table 2) has no significant changes. The forecasted outturn is £1.794m; this is less than the £1.885m as reported in January. Any overspend in the High Needs Block is offset by the contingency from Early Years and the underspend from Schools Block</p> <p>Currently Schools Block has a £71k underspend on delegated allocations due to backdated business revaluations. Other funding rates adjustments from variations on business rates bills have balanced out.</p> <p>The Growth Fund and Falling Rolls overall underspend of</p>

		<p>£196k will be carried forwards for growth fund allocations in 2019/20 as agreed at the last Forum.</p> <p>There is no change in Central Schools Block.</p> <p>The Early Years Block is forecasting a £30k difference between DSG funding due for the year and payments made to providers. Adjustments are still going through; therefore, this is subject to change. The maintained nurseries grant has been reduced by £53k due to a reduction in numbers. This overspend has been taken into account in the figures.</p> <p>The High Needs Block remains at £2.4m overspend as of the last meeting. The top up forecast has gone up, however this is offset by underspends in inclusion funding. Top up funding is overspending by £1.9m, with the number of pupils receiving funding up by 111 so far this financial year.</p> <p>The overall DSG position sees over £1m of the brought forward deficit repaid in current year, resulting in a £1.8m DSG overspend carried forward into 2019/20. This is made up of £2.4 High Needs Block less the £300k Early Years contingency and £300k underspend in the Schools Block.</p> <p>There should be no significant increases to the High Needs Block at this point in the financial year. Additional payments to Early Years providers will be met with the Early Years Block contingency. This contingency will be kept within the Early Years Block due to volatility of funding and maintenance of current hourly funding rates.</p> <p>Table 4 shows the year on year position of the DSG deficit which is showing a significant reduction. The recovery plan over the coming years is shown in Table 5. The deficit should be repaid by end of 2022/23; this is a year longer than the DFE had hoped. This is dependent on the success of the High Needs Strategy.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>
5	Central Schools Budget 2019 - 2020	<p>Claire White presented.</p> <p>This is an update on the previous paper presented at December's School Forum.</p> <p>There has not been a lot of change since the last Schools Forum report. Table 1 looks the same with a reduction in spend in 2019/20. Allocation has reduced with an overall net reduction of £77k.</p> <p>Budgets are currently subject to change as these are currently</p>

		<p>at the working stage. The saving is all shown in statutory/regulatory services, but this may change after further work. However, the overall budget will not increase.</p> <p>Schools Forum is asked today to agree the overall spend of £1.330m in the block with a monitoring report coming back to Forum in the summer.</p> <p>A query was raised as to how BFfC recruitment and staffing costs affect schools. These costs are from the central education budget, not the DSG; any overspend is picked up by BFfC, not a cost transferred to the schools budget.</p> <p>A permanent Director of Education post is to be recruited to shortly.</p> <p>VOTE: all members approve spends as detailed in table 1</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>
6	Early Years Budget 2019 - 2020	<p>Claire White presented.</p> <p>The Early Years Funding Formula changed in 2017/18. New funding rates were established as well as new regulations for allocation of funding to providers. There is now a single Early Years Funding formula which requires all settings to be funded on the same basis. The first two years of this formula were transitional; from 2019/20 all providers are to be paid on the same rate. The new rates have been in place at Reading for the last two years.</p> <p>Early Years funding is based on 5/12ths of the previous year's January census and 7/12ths of the current year's January census. The ESFA will update the final allocation in the following July.</p> <p>Table 1 shows the difference between the January 2018 and 2019 censuses. The current budget will be set based on January 2019 figures due to the reduction in 3 & 4 year old places.</p> <p>The funding rates have not changed, these are still the same rates as in 2017/18, and no increase has been added for inflation. The minimum rate allocated to Local Authorities is £4.30 p/h for three and four year olds and £5.20 p/h for two year olds. As Reading has an area cost adjustment added as well as an additional needs allowance for three and four year olds, this raises the rates to £5.14 p/h and £5.74 p/h respectively. Due to the decrease in pupil numbers, the funding allocation for 2019/20 has decreased by £468k.</p>

		<p>From January 2018 to January 2019, the number of three and four year olds using the free universal entitlement have reduced by 160 (5.5%) however children accessing the extended entitlement have continued to rise. In addition to this, pupil premium and Disability Access Fund have been allocated to those pupils who require it.</p> <p>Maintained nurseries will continue to receive supplementary funding to protect funding at the 2016/17 funding rates previously received. This is paid as a lump sum and is equivalent to an additional £1.08 p/h.</p> <p>Prior to the National Funding Formula there were different rates for different provider types. Transitional funding came into place in 2017/18 to protect rates. There has not been a decision made on continuing transitional funding beyond the end of the academic year 2019/20.</p> <p>All providers are currently receiving a single base formula of £4.80 p/h for three and four year olds and £5.55 p/h for two year olds. Rates are to stay the same in 2019/20. The expected £300k carry forward must be kept as contingency if actual pupil numbers differ.</p> <p>The budget for 2019/20 is calculated on the previous 12 months of actual hours provision multiplied by the funding rates, as shown in Table 2.</p> <p>Maintained nurseries receive a supplement alongside the funding rate in order to protect them from the drop in rates. Table 3 estimates the 2019/20 funding for each of the maintained nursery providers. Any decreases are due to decreases in the number of hours of provision in 2018/19.</p> <p>A discussion was held around the potential for Reading to pay the Business Rates for maintained schools using the 300k contingency for Early Years. It was raised that other Local Authorities may pay Business Rates for schools; however local authorities are unable to treat providers in a different way. Any contingency cannot be used to pay maintained schools' Business Rates. The regulations do not allow for this as Rates is not in the criteria. Other authorities may be identifying rates separately as part of the lump sum to nursery schools, or are funding it from outside the DSG.</p> <p>It was noted that Reading has kept its use of supplements simple. Any increases in rates would need to be done across</p>
--	--	--

		<p>the board.</p> <p>As part of the Centrally Retained Budget, the Local Authority can retain up to 5% of their three and four year old allocation. Schools Forum is asked to agree this figure for 2019/20; it is proposed that this will remain at £581,600. A breakdown of what this pays for is in point 7.2. (An error is in the agenda pack, point 7.2. Where the proposed Centrally Retained Budget is given as £556,600, this should be £581,600. Also, the costs for Early Years Team should be £375k, rather than £350k).</p> <p>The pass through rate compares the average three and four year old rate paid to providers to the actual hourly rate received. For Reading, this works out at £4.89 compared to £5.14. This is 95.2% and therefore above the 95% minimum requirement. Adding the contingency fund would increase this to 97.8%.</p> <p>Table 3 shows the overall position of the 2019/20 budget. It is currently over by £60k. It is proposed that this is met by the contingency. (An error is in Table 3. Where the Maintained Nursery Grant proposed figure is £251,350, this should be £251,530. The total expenditure is therefore £12,139,780 and the budget is over by £60,700).</p> <p>The hourly funding rates will remain the same as in 2018/19 as shown in point 8.4.</p> <p>Table 4 shows a comparison of Reading to other surrounding Local Authority rates. Reading has the highest rate for three and four year olds. One authority has a higher two year old rate.</p> <p>Appendix 1 gives a breakdown Early Years Entitlement Budget for 2019/20 across provider type and numbers of children receiving each entitlement. This also shows the current number of providers within each type.</p> <p>VOTE: all members approved the centrally retained Early Years budget for 2019/20 as detailed in point 7.2.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>
7	SEND Strategy Update	<p>Mark Fowler presented.</p> <p>The SEND strategy looks to strengthen capability within schools to meet the SEN needs of their pupils. It is necessary</p>

	<p>for schools to identify, assess the required level of support within schools and to address the needs. This can be done by adaption of the curriculum and teaching etc., so improving the support open to pupils. After this, if further adaptation is needed, pupils can be assessed and put forward for an EHCP. Reading's number of EHCP's is currently higher than the national average. This is due to not enough support at an early stage, which leads to intensifying the difficulties and requiring more intervention – and more expensive intervention – later on.</p> <p>Reading is also looking to increase the provision of specialist school places at a local level, as we see more young people being educated out of borough. Reading was successful in its joint bid with Wokingham and West Berkshire to receive government funding to create a special school within borough. We are now looking to pursue a SEN special free school in Reading. This will have 150 places open to young people with ASD as well as social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The current timescale sees the school open in 2022. Procedures are currently starting with a stakeholder engagement event. Bidding will then be open for the regional schools commissioner to identify the right sponsor. The location of the school is yet to be confirmed.</p> <p>The need to identify specialist provisions inside schools is ongoing. This is in both North and West Reading. Three schools in the West have registered their interest. Helen Redding and Sonia Aulak are encouraging schools in the North to partake.</p> <p>Phoenix is looking into taking girls after it has relocated and expanded on another site.</p> <p>The report was noted</p>
8.	<p>Claire White & Corinne Dishington presented.</p> <p>This is an update on the previous paper presented at January's School Forum.</p> <p>There has been no change since the last Schools Forum report. Budgets are currently being looked at to ensure they align with the deficit repayment strategy as shown in line 4 of Table 2. Currently, the strategy expects expenditure to be £20.4m in 2019/20. Table 3 gives a total proposed budget for 2019/20 of £20,724m. Therefore, savings of £300k are required; however this depends on the final outturn position for 2018/19.</p>

		<p>Early Years are working to identify both pupils' needs and the necessary support earlier in the school environment. It is important to make use of Early Help and to work collaboratively with social care. It was noted that the EHC panel is working well to ensure there is a good level of discussion and focus around cases. A note to schools that only appropriate requests should be coming to panel.</p> <p>Cathy Doberska noted that English Martyrs is part now of a trailblazer scheme and as part of this, will receive additional funding.</p> <p>Appendix 1 has been submitted by Deb Hunter (Principal Child & Educational Psychologist). This discusses the Schools Inclusion Panel pilot and the redirection of the £50k funding agreed last year for a practitioner scheme to assist individual schools with implementing the Therapeutic Thinking Schools tools and ethos.</p> <p>In regards to the proposed budgets for 2019/20, top up funding will remain at the current rates. Resource unit places are funded at £6k for a filled place and £10k for an unfilled place as per pupil numbers on the October 2018 census.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>
9.	Schools Forum Meetings 2019 - 2020	<p>Claire White presented.</p> <p>Schools Forum is required to meet four times per year. Reading's Forum has been meeting six times per year. It is proposed that this is reduced to five times per year, reducing the meetings being held in the summer term to just one, due to the reduction in the number of agenda items now coming through for this period.</p> <p>Table 1 shows proposed dates for 2019/20 with the key agenda items being listed in point 3.</p> <p>There were no objections to the proposed dates.</p> <p>It was requested that Schools Forum co-ordinate with Local Joint Forum in regard to dates as there are members who attend both meetings.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>

10.	Agenda Items For Future Meetings	<p>The next meeting will be held on 17thJune 2019 (5pm) at the Civic Centre – Council Chambers.</p> <p>DSG Outturn 2019 – 2019 Maintained Schools balances 2018 – 2019 and budgets 2019 – 2020 Schools Forum Constitution update.</p>
11.	Any Other Business	<p>Update on Scheme for Financing Schools. The DFE has updated this with technical changes; Claire White to update the scheme held by Reading and put a version online in next few weeks.</p> <p>Reading is currently waiting for census data in order to set early years budgets. This is expected to come through in the next week. School deadline for budget returns is 31st May this year. Claire will look into how Reading can receive census data earlier next year.</p> <p>Ali McNamara from Unison encouraged Forum members to respond to surveys and engage with unions.</p>

