

Minutes of Schools' Forum Meeting

October 16, 2019

Present

Cathy Doberska – Head Teacher of English Martyrs, Peter Kayes – Governor at the Ridgeway (Chair), Richard Rolfe – Governor at Micklands, Ann McDonnell – Business Manager of Blessed Hugh Faringdon, Karen Edwards – Head Teacher of The Heights, Isabelle Sandy – Business Manager of Kendrick, Annal Nayyar – Finance Director of Bayliss Trust (Reading Girls), Claire Brown – Business Manager of Prospect, Andrew Johnson - Head Teacher of Maiden Erlegh (Reading), Jo Broadhead - Head Teacher of The Wren, Lee Smith – Head Teacher of Holy Brook, Symon Cooke - Head Teacher of The Avenue, Mark Hester – Business Manager of Cranbury College, Ita McGullion – Manager of Kennet Day Nursery, Ali McNamara – NEU.

Apologies

Jo Budge – Head Teacher for Blagdon/Caversham/New Bridge Nurseries, Jessica Wall – Governor at Caversham & New Bridge, Robert Howell – Head Teacher of Alfred Sutton, Justine McMinn – Head Teacher of E P Collier, Tonia Crossman – Head Teacher of Emmer Green, Stieve Butler – Head Teacher of Meadow Park, Ashley Robson – Head Teacher of Reading School, Rachel Cave – Head Teacher of Highdown, Simon Utley – Head Teacher of Blessed Hugh Faringdon, Cllr Ashley Pearce – Lead Member for Education.

In attendance

Kate Reynolds – Director of Education, Claire White – Interim Education & Schools Business Partner, Deborah Hunter – Head of SEND, Clare Warren – School Support (Finance) Lead, Steven Davies – Strategic Business Partner, Rhiannon Schoepe – Minute Taker

#	Item	Notes
1	Welcome and apologies	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Kate Reynolds was welcomed to the Forum as the new Director of Education for Brighter Futures for Children.</p> <p>Apologies were noted.</p>
2	Minutes of the meeting held on 27th June 2019	<p>Minutes were agreed from 27th June 2019.</p> <p>Matters arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forum Membership: Secondary academy heads are to

		<p>meet on the 17th October to determine the membership moving forwards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kate Reynolds is reviewing whether it is appropriate for Schools Forum to have a non-school post-16 representative. - There have been no volunteers as of yet for the new maintained primary governor position. - Maintained School's Budgets: This will be discussed further under item 9 on tonight's agenda.
3	<p>Schools' Forum Membership Update – confirmation of representation</p>	<p>It was confirmed that there are three vacancies on the School's Forum; maintained primary head, maintained primary governor and non-school post 16 provision.</p> <p>It is necessary for the Forum to elect a Vice Chair. Richard Rolfe (Micklands) was proposed by Peter Kayes (Chair) for the role. The action was seconded by Isabelle Sandy (Kendrick). There were no other nominations put forwards.</p> <p>The role will be re-elected on alternating years to that of the Chair.</p> <p>Richard Rolfe was elected as Vice Chair for a 2 year term.</p> <p>Actions: Secondary academy heads to meet on 17th October to determine their membership and advise the Schools' Forum clerk of the outcome.</p> <p>Kate Reynolds to review the inclusion of a non-school post-16 representative.</p> <p>A primary governor to be sought to fill the new maintained primary school position.</p>
4	<p>DSG Budget Monitoring 2019/20 Month 6</p>	<p>Claire White presented.</p> <p>The position of the DSG allocation to be received as of the end of September 2019 is shown in Table 1 alongside the original budget for 2019/20. An additional £444k is available mainly in the early years block.</p> <p>The increase in the high needs block compared to the estimated allocation is due to the confirmation of place number changes and the import/ export adjustment. The difference in funding compared to the original estimate is £48k.</p> <p>The original budget for the Early Years block was based on the estimates from the January 2019 census and has now been</p>

amended to reflect the actuals at an additional £328k. The final confirmation of the claw back for 2018/19 was £68k less than budgeted which has been added to the allocation for 2019/20. Any changes to numbers from the January 2020 census will in theory be offset by a change in provider payments; however there is a contingency to cover any variance.

It is unlikely that there will be additional government funding in the current year due to increases announced for 2020/21 onwards.

Table 2 shows a summary of the current budget and forecast per block. The deficit forecast for the end of the financial year has increased to £2.401m. This is £0.777m over budget. £0.474m is due to planned ring-fenced underspends being used for the growth fund and early years in-year. This leaves a net overspend of £0.303m.

Schools Block

The under spend carried forward in schools block from 2018/19 has been earmarked for the Growth Fund. Since setting this budget, three secondary schools have agreed a bulge class from September, totalling £262k. As some of this budget will no longer be required for primary, part of this spend can be offset however this will leave £156k. This will need to be met from the 2020/21 schools block DSG allocation.

Central Schools Block

As most of these budgets are contributions, it is unlikely there will be any variance. It is required for this block to find savings in the coming years.

Early Years Block

There is an additional £702k being kept aside for contingency due to funding and expenditure being based on future census data. Should payments made to providers not match the funding, this would lead to an overspend which would impact on the funding rate to providers in the following year. This contingency can only be used to fund providers through the set Early Years' formula and not to increase hourly rates or change the formula.

High Needs Block

The overspend in the high needs block is due to the statutory top up fees for pupils with EHCPs. Since 2015, EHCPs have increased by 317 or 33% as shown in Table 3.

Table 4 shows an increase in both forecast spend and number of EHCPs since the budget was set. The current top-up

		<p>forecast is £14.7m which is £841k over budget. The percentage of EHCPs within the school population is higher than the population growth, with growth moving from primary to secondary schools overall.</p> <p>Other budgets within the high needs block are on-line, however the inclusion fund could overspend depending on the outcome of the review. This is to be discussed in further detail in item 8 on tonight's agenda.</p> <p>The high needs block deficit has been decreased partly through the transfer of underspends from other blocks. Table 5 shows the deficit in recent years. A focus is being made on a strategy to develop local provisions in order to prevent specialist provisions being made out of county.</p> <p>The ESFA was tasked with reviewing our recovery plan with feedback due for September. Due to the announcement for additional high needs funding, this has been delayed.</p> <p>Table 6 shows the current DSG recovery plan which now assumes an 8% increase in funding for 2020/21 alongside a 1.5% increase to revised base funding in the following two years. Half of this funding will go towards the increase in expenditure however no decision has been taken yet and the plan remains for illustrative purposes only. In the current position, the DSG will have a small deficit still at the end of 2022/23.</p> <p>The overall budget for 2019/20 was noted along with the current pressures on each block and how this impacts on the deficit recovery plan.</p>
5	<p>School Funding Update for 2020/21</p>	<p>Claire White presented.</p> <p>A supplementary paper on this item was provided based on the further announcement by the Department for Education made on 11th October 2019.</p> <p>In September it was announced by the Secretary of State for Education that there will be an extra £7.1b of national funding to schools and high needs over the next three years. £2.6b of this will be in 2020/21.</p> <p><u>Schools Block</u></p> <p>Funding for primary and secondary schools will see an overall increase of £4.3m or 4.9%. Core factor values will be increased by 4%, with all schools seeing a minimum funding increase per pupil of 1.84% in line with inflation. Minimum per pupil funding levels were announced at £3,750 for primaries, rising</p>

to £4,000 in 2021/22 and at £5,000 for secondaries. This will direct money to schools that do not benefit from other funding, for example those with low deprivation and/ or high prior attainment.

High Needs Block

There is no change to the high needs formula, with £700m additional funding distributed in 2020/21. Under the formula, Reading will lose funding, however we will be on the funding floor with a minimum increase of 8% per head (age 2 to 18 population) for the 2019/20 allocation. Table 1 on the supplementary paper shows that there will be £1.9m extra funding, which is a year on year change of 9.5%.

Early Years Block

There has been no information on this as yet, this is usually released in late November. £66m has been promised nationally, however it has not been confirmed how this will be distributed. Hourly rates for two, three and four year olds will increase but it is unknown by how much.

The maintained nurseries lump sum has been promised to the end of academic year however it is not yet known whether it will continue or if other arrangements will be put into place for those schools who currently receive it.

Central Schools Block

This will see a reduction of £123k due to no additional national funding along with the historical commitments funding being reduced by 20% (£166k).

A key decision will be whether to transfer funding from the schools block to the high needs block. There will be a consultation on transferring this funding to the Inclusion fund to relieve the pressure there. This will be discussed in further detail in Item 8 on tonight's agenda.

The teachers' pay and pension's grants will continue as separate funding streams outside of the formula for the next three years. An increase has been announced as a minimum teacher's salary of £30k.

The timetable will be tight to complete work on the 2020/21 budget. A consultation will go out to all schools by the end of week commencing 21st October. This will require responses to be back by the 15th November in time to be taken to for next Schools' Forum on 5th December 2019. A provisional timetable is shown in Table 1.

The funding changes for 2020/21 were noted as well as the

		<p>tasks and timetables for completing the 2020/21 budget.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>School Formula 2020/21 Initial proposals</p>	<p>Claire White presented.</p> <p>This will be the third year of moving towards the National Funding Formula (NFF). There has been no commitment from the Government in regards to when the move to the NFF will happen.</p> <p>Nationally, there are still many schools that are far off the NFF; Reading is currently very close and is using all NFF factors at the base values, but doesn't apply the area cost adjustment to all factors.</p> <p>The schools block allocation is calculated based on last years' data to give the units of funding to be used in the final funding allocation. As the factors making up the NFF will change from year to year, this will leave a mismatch between the funding received by the local authority and what would have been allocated through the NFF. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the 2019/20 actual funding; once the equivalent data for 2020/21 has been received, a comparison can be made between the two.</p> <p>Point 4.1 lists out the changes announced for the NFF Factors.</p> <p>Point 4.4 sets out the proposed strategy in setting the school formula, with Appendix 3 illustrating what this might look like per school. This is to show how the formula allocates funding to schools if pupil numbers and characteristics remained the same year on year.</p> <p>In comparison to the budget announcement on 11th October, figures in Appendix 3 are very close. Some schools are seeing a significant increase in budgets due to having low deprivation and/ or a high prior attainment and therefore benefitting from the minimum per pupil funding levels. More information will be shared with the Forum when the consultation on the funding strategy for 2020/21 takes place.</p> <p>If there is to be any further funding available, an order of priority should be established. It is proposed that the AWPU is increased rather than looking at other factors. This will reduce the number of schools on the minimum funding as well as bringing all schools up to similar per pupil funding base levels with any differences due to additional needs. Other options will be modelled within the consultation. The paper was not brought to the Forum due to the lateness of the information;</p>

		<p>however it will be sent to all members for information, and will be discussed at the next meeting.</p> <p>The basis of the school funding formula for 2020/21 was noted.</p> <p>The approach to setting the school formula for 2020/21 was agreed.</p> <p>A final proposal will be brought back to the Forum in December for discussion with the final formula brought to Forum in January 2020.</p>
7	SEND Strategy Update	<p>Deborah Hunter presented</p> <p>The SEND strategy is refreshed each year, this year it took place in October with a multi-agency workshop around a theme of “Making SEND Everyone’s Business”. Working groups – or strands - meet regularly to discuss</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data and Information to Inform Decision Making <p>Reading is currently data rich but information poor, with this not being interrogated to help the strategies. The second annual SEND Data Report will be sent out to heads, SENCOs and partners. This now includes an Early Years section with children being tracked through from specialist provisions. A Post 16 data chapter is being developed. This will look at young people and track where they are educated, the courses they take and their progress. It is important to ensure young people do not move out of borough by having local support. A cross authority working party has been set up to look at Health data. Currently there is no data on how many children have a diagnosis of autism and the support they receive.</p> 2. Early Intervention through to Specialist Provision. <p>This strand is chaired by Ramona Bridgeman. She has worked with children and young people as well as their families in order to gain an understanding of their views on autism as well as arranging autism training for schools and settings three times a year. Currently this is provided for by an Educational Psychologist, with a fuller offer to be made going forwards. There is also a plan to trial a new format of EHCPs in order for them to be more child-friendly and</p>

accessible. These will be produced alongside the families and children as well as giving young people the opportunity to help set their own outcomes.

The strand is looking into the creation of local provisions to meet the changing needs of children. Blessed Hugh Farringdon is auditing the needs of pupils currently in The Base. It is necessary for a primary resource to be set up in the North of Reading to meet the needs of pupils in the catchment area.

3. Improving Emotional Wellbeing

This strand is now jointly working with the ONE Reading partnership as it is an agreed priority across Reading partners. A Trauma Informed practitioner has been jointly commissioned and training is currently underway. The Mental Health Support Team held a soft launch in September before going live in January 2020. Therapeutic Thinking Schools has seen much support with only eight schools not signing up. Schools have seen a 25% decrease in fixed term exclusions at primary level since the training was carried out.

The Mental Health Strategy will continue to be supported across Reading partners with a triage system in development.

4. Preparing for Adulthood

This strand is a new team focusing on preparing young people for adulthood. Transition work has started for 17 year olds and with time, this will decrease down to 9 year olds. The Preparing for Adulthood Policies and Pathway has been developed with a dedicated team of seven staff.

Moving forwards, a Post 16 group will look at trialling vocational profiling with schools assisting in the pilot. The strand will also work closely with commissioning to look at alternatives to support workers; this could be by increasing direct payments to give young people more flexibility in sourcing their support.

5. Review of Short Breaks Provision.

A second draft of a new cultural short breaks offer is circulating after listening to parents/ carers and young people. The strand has worked alongside the Avenue

		<p>School, culture, Leisure and Parks in order to build accessible and universal opportunities for SEND.</p> <p>The self-evaluation framework has also been refreshed and a link to this will be circulated out to schools. The updated framework has been put together with a range of partners. It is important for SEND strategy developments to be included in service plans – to ensure effective communication and engagement with all partners.</p> <p>It was noted that analysis in the number of under 5s with statutory needs assessments had increased over three years. Portage and Early Help services are working to help identify the right settings for children with statutory needs assessments. With this increased support, only one child has had an EHCP within the first six months of joining mainstream school.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p> <p>All schools are to include the SEND strategy in their plans. This will be circulated after the strategy board on the 6th November.</p>
8.	Inclusion Fund Review	<p>Deborah Hunter presented.</p> <p>The Inclusion fund is to financially support mainstream schools with a higher percentage of EHCPs by covering the first £6k of additional costs. The allocation criterion for this funding was agreed in July 2018 by Schools Forum. Funding is targeted to schools which have a higher percentage of EHCPs than the local authority statistical neighbours. For Reading in 2018/19, this is 1.6% for primary and 1.7% secondary. Funding is paid retrospectively for each term and is recalculated after each term using census data. The funding is for mainstream only with specialist provisions receiving base funding for these places.</p> <p>The Inclusion Fund payments made for the academic year 2018/19 are shown in Table 1. These totalled £331k against a budget of £250k. 24 schools received funding with 15 schools seeing an increase in pupils with EHCPs across the year.</p> <p>As the allocation method for academic year 2018/19 was a trial, a consultation was sent to mainstream schools to determine if the funding was meeting its purpose and how the fund should be used in the 2019/20 academic year.</p>

		<p>The full questionnaire responses can be found in Appendix 1. Overall, 12 responses came back from 49 schools; a return rate of just under 25%. Most questionnaires rely on response levels of roughly a third in order to be considered valid.</p> <p>The main conclusions that can be drawn from the responses are as follows; schools have stated that they hold no influence over accepting pupils with EHCPs. The Inclusion funding therefore has no influence over accepting pupils. However, schools have appreciated the funding and it has been used to improve the provisions for pupils which would have been difficult otherwise. There is support for funding to continue as removing this would impact negatively on the quality of provisions and of the overall financial position of the schools. There was however, a mixed response on the criteria used to allocate the funding but this was determined to be due to a misunderstanding of how the calculation works. This is clarified in point 3.3.</p> <p>Most schools fed back that they would like to see the budget increase; however only two schools out of six thought it would be fair to top slice this from Schools Block.</p> <p>This consultation with schools was to ensure the views of the schools were heard; it was sent to all heads to share with their SENCO, senior staff members and bursars.</p> <p>The current method does address meeting the first £6k of funding in a fair way, however the percentage threshold can be considered for change. Currently there is £250k set aside in the budget, but with £331k spent in 2018/19, Reading is already overspending using the current percentage threshold. With the threshold lowered, the funding will be open to more schools to claim. In order to be fair to schools with a high percentage of pupils with EHCPs, the fund should continue but the percentage threshold above which funding is received should not increase.</p> <p>For the remainder of the year (Autumn term 2019 and Spring term 2020), the same method will apply although this will likely result in an overspend and therefore increase the deficit in the high needs block for the current financial year. Schools with a resource unit will have the number of places deducted rather than pupils as they receive base funding for all places whether or not they are filled.</p> <p>It is proposed that from Summer term 2020, funding will be top sliced from schools block Dedicated Schools Grant (up to 0.5% can be transferred with Schools' Forum approval). If this</p>
--	--	---

		<p>figure is higher than £350k, there will be a small increase to both the funding received by the schools and the amount of schools receiving the funding. This will mean that all schools will contribute to the fund with this then distributed to the schools that require it.</p> <p>The Forum requested further information on how Reading compares to national figures in regards to ECHP numbers in order to get a wider picture of the issue.</p> <p>Other Local Authorities have previously used models other than relative percentage, for example the Exceptional Needs funding. These practices were stopped as like Reading, they moved to a more equitable way going forwards.</p> <p>Forum noted their surprise at the low levels of responses given from the schools, with only a 25% return rate.</p> <p>When asked if the Inclusion fund should continue, ten out of ten schools answered yes, however there were 12 responders to the questionnaire. It was clarified that two schools did not answer this question. It was noted that there was no pattern to responses given and the numbers of pupils receiving EHCPs at those schools.</p> <p>Forum questioned whether Band A EHCPs have increased due to the Inclusion funding being in place. It was confirmed that there was no connection between the Inclusion fund and funding through EHCPs. SEN Panel is robust with the banding descriptors based on the evidence provided. This will be fed back to SENCOS for their information. A request to see more heads and SENCOS sit on panels has been acted upon and the number of representatives has increased.</p> <p>The report and questionnaire responses were noted.</p> <p>The continuation of the Inclusion fund to the end of the financial year (March 2020) was agreed.</p> <p>It was agreed to consult with schools on ‘top-slicing’ the Schools Block to pay for the Inclusion fund in 2020/21.</p>
9.	Maintained School budgets/deficits 2019/20	<p>Clare Warren presented.</p> <p>A three year budget with regards to carried forward balances</p>

		<p>was presented in point 1.1 showing a decrease in balances overall. Schools have also been cautious in regards to pupil number predictions due to overall uncertainties in the funding they receive.</p> <p>There is concern over the falling primary pupil numbers as bulge classes move up into secondary as well as the impact Brexit is having over the lack of investment in IT and buildings in addition to families choosing to leave the UK.</p> <p>Generally, schools are better off than had been budgeted, mainly because of grants being confirmed for teachers pay and pensions. In 2018/19, the budgeted carried forward figure for all maintained schools was £745k; however the actual figure was £2,245k.</p> <p>The forum is to note that the budget as shown in point 1.1 does not take into consideration the new funding announcements.</p> <p>The three schools with the surplus funds have submitted clear plans; one school has upcoming building works, one has refurbishments, redecoration and IT investment, and another will invest in IT but this will be a considered strategy with the surplus not being spent straight away.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>
10.	Agenda Items For Next Meeting	<p>The next meeting will be held on Thursday 5th December 2019 (5pm) at the Civic Centre – Council Chambers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSG budget overview for 2020/21 • Growth Fund 2020/21 • Final proposals for school funding formula for 2020/21 • SEND strategy update • DSG Budget monitoring 2019/20 - Month 8
11.	Any Other Business	<p>Congratulations to Symon Cooke and The Avenue for their Section 8 Ofsted inspection. Outstanding rating maintained.</p> <p>Kendrick is looking to increase their 2020 intake from three to four forms. This will be an additional 32 students. They wish to explore use of the growth fund and whether this can be claimed to support the school during the first year of intake. The Growth Fund is only to fund basic needs; if there is no requirement for the places then no funding will be released.</p>

		<p>The Local Authority is to determine this – Kendrick will liaise with the admissions team. There will be a paper on the Growth Fund coming to the Forum next meeting.</p> <p>A reminder was given for members to raise any issues they wish to discuss ahead of the Forum.</p> <p>The Forum gave thanks to Claire White for her contributions to Schools’ Forum. It was noted that the format of the papers are much easier to follow.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 18:35.</p>
--	--	--