

(DRAFT MINUTES TO BE AGREED AT NEXT SCHOOLS FORUM ON 15TH JANUARY 2014)
Schools Forum Meeting held on the 11th December 2014 at The Avenue

PRESENT

Peter Kayes	Governor, Redlands - CHAIR
Eileen McElligott	Governor, English Martyrs
Charles Clare	Headteacher, Geoffrey Fields Junior
Viv Angus	Headteacher, Reading Girls School
John Cosgrove	Headteacher, Christ the King (RC) School
Karen Hillier	Governor, Caversham/Newbridge
Julie Kempster	Riverside Day Nursery
Anne Higginbotham	Headteacher, St Michaels
Mark Hester	School Business Manager, Cranbury College
Marianne Best	Headteacher, Cranbury College
Phil Davies	Headteacher, Prospect School
Lee Smith	Headteacher, Holybrook
Joan Boyd	NUT
Isabelle Sandy	School Business Manager, Kendrick
Rachel Cave	Headteacher, Highdown
Diana Heath	Headteacher, Norcot Nursery, on behalf of Lisa Bedlow
Justine McMinn	Headteacher, EP Collier
Joanne Harper	Principal, UTC Reading

RBC

Russell Dyer	Finance
Steve Davies	Finance
Kevin McDaniel	RBC
Chris Stevens	RBC SEN

Observer

Rob Dunford	Internal Auditor, RBC
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APOLOGIES

Sue Bourne	Headteacher, The Avenue School
Ashley Robson	Headteacher, Reading School
Cathy Doberska	New Christ Church
John Ennis	Lead Councillor, Education RBC
Nicola Maytum	Headteacher - JMA
Lisa Bedlow	New Bridge & Caversham Nurseries

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- Welcome and introductions made.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2014

- Minutes agreed by Schools Forum

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES/ SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP ISSUES (STANDING ITEM)

- No other matters arising
- Justine McMinn has joined the Schools Forum
- Outstanding Academy memberships assumption made that representation will continue as agreed; RD advises will continue on with the existing arrangements; will continue to send agenda and minutes through to Meadow Park and All Saints

- The Heights have a right to be represented as well and RD will look into this
- Reading College (post 16 representation) is already included

4. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK BUDGET MONITORING UPDATE 2014-15

Presented by Russell Dyer and Kevin McDaniel

- Forecasting an overspend of £1.3m
- Background is that it was noted in March 2013 that an overspend would mean a deficit rolled forward and could impact on schools budgets and top up values;
- significant overspend on special/resource for both RBC and non-RBC
- Clearly on DSG there are some flexibilities to fund the one off deficit; namely the £0.4m surplus from the previous year and the early years block carry forward of £1.3m
- Increase in number of places at special schools (due to increased need)
- High gross external placements and gaps in provision
- Analysis completed and attached to report; significant increases in costs & activity year on year
- Increase in the number of pupils placed in special schools; increase in the number of statements; increase pupils at independent special schools
- Percentages of Reading placements by types of schools appears high
- Unit costs risen with special schools (close to the Reading border and used quite heavily)
- National trends on special needs; Compare Reading experience to National experience - broadly similar
- The overspend last year was flagged and consultant was looking at this (Peter Gray)
- KMD recommends a system wide look
- PK - notes Reading growth is above the national average
- When referring to independent schools in document SD confirms that this is referring to independent special schools
- Suggest to set up a working group; needs something more reactive and responsive; - JC
- Suggestion to identify the children earlier
- Growth in ASD
- **Help at KS1 and look at how to encourage parents to engage with support services and schools at an earlier stage**
- The amount of overspend is an indication of the need
- Why is there an increase in Reading over the national trend?? What support is needed at mainstream level to support the students to remain where they are? CS highlights age for Brookfields entry is 5; Considerable costs come from students excluded from special schools at KS3
- Three separate issues 1) How to manage this 2) Level of cost associated with this issue 3) identifying why there is a bigger need (Is there genuinely a bigger need than the national average and therefore should be lobbying for more funding)
- High cost block is divided into 12/13 levels and high cost block will not be looked at till at least 2016 the earliest by EFA

Recommendation

- Set up a working group as soon as possible
- Funding & deficit approval to be reviewed again at the next meeting
- School Forum members put forward are JC, MB, CS, EM (and Prospect School to take away and advise if will be part of this working group)

5. EARLY YEARS BLOCK UPDATE

Presented by Russell Dyer

- Update on Early Years block and noted there is a subgroup of which Karen and Julie are members
- Met in November 2014 to consider issues particularly funding on central retained services
- Update on 2 year old funding; from April 2015 funded on participation basis (currently on a placement basis) based upon January census and the risks flowing from that
- Drive up numbers by census day
- Risk going forward due to moving to participation basis for a shortfall in 15/16 year
- Increase level of take-up to fund non-eligible rising 3's (at the moment the eligibility are children from deprived backgrounds only)
- Review what funding is being carried forward next year to manage this and what can be released
- Nursery placements vary term by term

Discussion held around using 50k to fund non-eligible rising 3's. Having been consulted, Schools Forum agreed with the proposal

6. SCHOOLS FORMULA 2015-16

Presented by Russell Dyer

- Summarising what was agreed at last meeting
- Estimate for headroom on DSG was not yet available
- As regards Authority's decision on the SEN notional budget was option (2) as highlighted in the report. This was previously discussed at Schools Forum 16th October but the vote was split. The decision brings the LA into line with the mid-range for other LAs in this area.
- Schools Forum meeting in January will discuss any headroom although it is likely that this may be committed to the high needs block

7. DE-DELEGATIONS AND CENTRAL RETENTIONS 2015-16

Presented by Russell Dyer

- PK suggests that the meeting can discuss the report but defer any decision until the January meeting when all the information is known on available headroom
- Centrally retained expenditure will need approval but no increases are sought
- Equal pay claim will stay the same at £0.55m; if estimate reliable then there would be no extra provision needed for this beyond 2015-16
- Liability, based on estimates is £1.5m; annual provision not being asked to increase
- Growth fund - expanding school (expanding provision, bulge classes, falling rolls etc)
- Funding on an academic year basis and not a financial year basis explains some anomalies
- Early years centrally retained will be discussed at next early years funding group in January prior to the next Schools Forum
- Richard Tyndall report can be relied upon
- An overall approval sought for central retentions (no increases proposed)
- Defer decision to January 2015 meeting (all school members to vote)

8. DE-DELEGATIONS 2015-16

- This is for maintained schools only to vote on, not academies
- Behaviour Support Services (well used and well respected service); the level of buy-back has been small which is concerning regarding continued provision of the service

- One of the options for local authority replaces 2nd half of buy-back with an insurance premium so to keep this service (insurance service cannot be on standby)
- In 10/11 there was no buy-back and the exclusion figures escalated
- MB - there will be no capacity to support at all if this team goes (behaviour issues will have to be dealt with in the schools); this provision has been highly successful in preventing exclusions
- EM - if this is a resource highly needed then suggest to completely de-delegate
- Academies would need to buy-in
- KMD - pragmatic suggestion to suspend the 2nd year of the Tyndall report and maintain base funding; IS and also to make sure that this is marketed properly and fully to the schools. Suggest keep at the same level and then the working group for high needs can pick up whether additional resources are needed to be de-delegated in 2016/17.
- Support for English as an additional language; This has been successful; some schools have used a lot other schools not at all; the council continues to fund the statutory minimum that needs to be funded
- Central funding for next financial year sees a reduction of £400k in government grant to the education team; a new request for a de-delegation to support maintained schools when in crisis (which the local authority can no longer fund directly on the reduced grant) a new fund of £200k is sought.
- Learning - Formal warnings and interim executive boards; propose fund of £50k to off-set structural costs and will be one-off for a school in these circumstances; the Chair declared an interest in this item as Chair of an IEB
- Facilities agreement continues for maintained members (common policy items, pay appraisals, changes to safeguarding policies, health and safety) - £51k. The LA supports this.
- Bring the de-delegations back to January 2015 meeting for voting.

9. PROPOSED DATES/TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- Next Schools Forum is on the 15th January at 5.00pm at The Avenue
- Training session will be available at 4.00pm at The Avenue on the 15th January prior to schools forum, unless otherwise notified.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- None noted
- PK (chair) reminds members that they can put items on the agenda for future meetings by contacting either officers or the Chair in advance.