

## Minutes of Schools' Forum Meeting

24 June 2021

### Members Present

Justine McMinn – Head Teacher of E P Collier; Cathy Doberska – Head Teacher of English Martyrs; Peter Kayes – Governor at the Ridgeway; Richard Rolfe – Governor at Micklands (Chair); Dani Hall - Co-Chair of the Federation between Oxford Road Community School & Wilson School; Jo Budge - Executive Head Teacher of Reading Early Years Schools Federation; Tonia Crossman – Head Teacher of Emmer Green; Simon Uttley – Head Teacher of Blessed Hugh Faringdon; Symon Cooke – Head Teacher of The Avenue; Ita McGullion – Manager of Kennet Day Nursery; Ashley Robson – Principal of Reading School; John Salberg – Principal of The Wren; Annal Nayyar – Finance Director of Bayliss Trust (Reading Girls); Jane Brown – Business Manager of Churchend; Isabelle Sandy – Business Manager of Kendrick; Claire Brown – Business Manager of Prospect School (substitute); Mandy Wilton – Head of Cranbury College; Alison McNamara - NEU.

### Apologies

Karen Edwards – Head Teacher of The Heights;

### In attendance

Cllr Ashley Pearse – Lead member for Education; Ann McDonnell – Business Manager of Blessed Hugh Faringdon; Kate Reynolds - Director of Education & Research; Steph Heaps – Schools & DSG Business Partner; Clare Warren – School Support Lead; Siobhan Egan – Service Manager IT & Data Intelligence; Corinne Dishington – Service Manager Under 5s; Vanessa Hurdle – minute taker.

	Item	Notes
1	Welcome and apologies - Chair	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Steph Heaps read out the protocol for the virtual meeting and confirmed who was eligible to vote and for which votes. Recording of the meeting commenced. The recording will be retained until the minutes have been approved.</p> <p>Apologies were noted.</p>

2	Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2021 - Chair	<p>Minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting from the 11 March 2021.</p> <p><b>Matters arising:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Academy Membership – Discussed under Item 3.</li> </ul>
3	Schools' Forum Membership Update – including confirmation of representation - Chair	<p>Richard confirmed that the Forum remains at full membership. Symon Cooke (Head of The Avenue) has confirmed that he will remain as the Special Schools' Representative. Andy Johnson (Head of Maiden Erlegh School in Reading) will replace Ashley Robson as an Academy Representative from September 2021.</p> <p>Cathy Doberska (Head of English Martyrs) noted that her term is due to end in July. Nicky McVeigh (Head of Christ The King) will take over as the Primary Voluntary Aided Representative. Karen Edwards' (Head of The Heights) term is also due to end in July 2021. Richard will contact her to see if she wishes to continue as a member. Jane Brown (Business Manager at Churchend) advised that the Head, Richard Pearse, will be leaving at the end of this term. The new Head Teacher is happy to replace Richard as a representative from September 2021.</p>
4	Schools' Forum Constitution/Terms of Reference for 2021/22 - Schools/DSG Business Partner	<p>Steph Heaps presented.</p> <p>Richard clarified that the Constitution is largely unchanged from the previous one. A vote is required for this item to keep in line with statutory requirements.</p> <p>Steph explained that there is no minimum or maximum number of members required for the Schools' Forum. The average across the UK is 20-25 members. Reading has 23 members. Table 2 shows the January 2021 census figures and the apportionment of the number of pupils. Currently the proportion of members still fits within the requirements, so this will remain unchanged.</p> <p>The only change that has been made to the Constitution is a permanent provision to enable the Schools' Forum to meet remotely (Appendix 1). The Schools' Forum has previously discussed the idea of moving to a hybrid model so that some of the meetings can be held in person and some on-line. If a face-to-face meeting is held at the Civic Centre then the Forum will be required to allow people to attend the meeting remotely as well. This needs to be looked at in more detail.</p>

		<p>The Forum will be updated as to how the meetings will be held going forward at a later date.</p> <p>Peter Kayes raised the issue of Head Teachers being able to appoint a substitute if a regular substitute is not available. Peter made the suggestion that an amendment should be made to state that 'Voting Members' are allowed to appoint a substitute. A proviso should be made that there is at least one Head Teacher present and a Governor.</p> <p><b>14 members agreed the proposed change to the Constitution</b></p>
5	<p>DSG Outturn 2020/21 including update on deficit recovery plan - Schools/DSG Business Partner</p>	<p>Steph Heaps presented</p> <p>Table 1 sets out the DSG Outturn for 2020/21 compared to the original and revised budget. The outturn shows a deficit of £1.356m. This is £413k less than the previous year's deficit and £431k less than the in-year budget. The actual amount to be repaid is £2.132m, which relates to the High Needs Block. The other variances are contained within the relevant blocks.</p> <p>Schools Block – The surplus of £622k, which relates to growth funding, will be carried forward and will be used to pay for additional secondary bulge classes in 21/22 and beyond.</p> <p>Early Years Block – This started with a contingency of £412k. Due to the impact and uncertainty of covid-19, it had been assumed that all of this contingency would be wiped out. Instead there has been an underspend of £154k. This will be carried forward into 21/22 to be used as contingency.</p> <p>Based on Spring term funding, there is the potential to receive some additional funding from the DfE once the final allocations are confirmed. It is estimated that this is likely to be a maximum of £68k.</p> <p>Table 2 – shows the variances.</p> <p>The bulk of the deficit of £2.132m sits in the High Needs Block. This is £344k overbudget, which is only £42k more than the 19/20 deficit. This is better than had been predicted as at month 9, it had been estimated that the overspend would be £400k. This is a good outcome as Reading is seeing an increasing number of EHCPs. There was an increase of 43 EHCPs in year.</p> <p>The Top-up budget was overspent by £250k. This is only £24k more than was spent in 19/20. The average cost of a</p>

		<p>placement for 20/21 was £13,106 compared to £13,105 in 19/20. It had been estimated in the budget that placements would cost £13,171.</p> <p>Table 3 – Top-up Budgets</p> <p>This shows a breakdown of the top-up budgets and where the variables sit. There are some quite large variances and these areas will be monitored quite closely throughout the year. The budget monitoring will be presented at the next Schools’ Forum meeting. It may be a case that the budgets are re-aligned according to the figures.</p> <p>DSG Deficit Recovery Plan – At the end of 19/20, the deficit was 1.43% of the allocation and at the end of 20/21 it had reduced to 1.03% (£2.132m). It is estimated that for 21/22, the deficit will increase by £239k, leading to a deficit of £2.371m. This increase is due to the additional place funding in local schools, which will be a one-off cost. This should mean lower costs for the increasing number of higher cost places in independent schools.</p> <p>Top-up costs have been increased by 2% for inflation in the recovery plan. An external review on top-up funding is taking place. The outcome from this review will be shared with the Forum as soon as it is available. Schools should expect to see an uplift from September 2021, but a rate has not yet been agreed. It has also been assumed that funding will increase by £2m for 21/22 and 22/23 on the same basis as for 20/21, followed by a slight reduction of £1.5m thereafter. It has also been assumed that the transfer of £484k from the School Needs block to the High Needs block will continue until the deficit is repaid.</p> <p>Appendix 3 shows the full deficit recovery plan. It is predicted that the deficit will be repaid by 2025/26.</p>
6	<p>Maintained School Balances – School Support Lead</p>	<p>Clare Warren presented.</p> <p>The Maintained Schools’ balances for 2020/21 were £3.39m. This was an increase of £576k over 19/20. It was a very unusual year for schools with some schools being able to make savings as they did not require agency staff or did not run any trips or have any overtime costs, whilst other schools lost income due to not having any lettings.</p> <p>Seven schools ended the year in deficit at a total cost of £1.25m. This is an increase on last year’s deficit figure. These</p>

		<p>schools are being offered support to bring them back to a financially sustainable position.</p> <p>2021/22 Budgeted Balances – The overall balances for 21/22 are budgeted to decrease by £1,880k. It has been very difficult to set the budgets for this year due to the uncertainty in pupil numbers and the recovery from the pandemic.</p> <p>Richard mentioned that the figures set out in Appendix 1 suggest that the Primary schools are having a very hard time at the moment, possibly due to a reduction in numbers.</p> <p>Ashley Robson noted that most of the maintained schools in Reading are Primaries, with the majority of secondary schools being Academies and that a comparison between the experiences of primaries and secondaries should not be drawn.</p> <p>Simon Uttley also mentioned the projects that schools were not able to undertake/complete last year due to the pandemic. These were not savings, as they had been committed and can now take place.</p>
7	DSG Budget 2021/22 – Schools/DSG Business Partner	<p>Steph Heaps presented.</p> <p>The report sets out the 2021/22 DSG budget in its usual format and this is the format that will be monitored over the year. The allocation is currently £81.9m. The first changes are likely to be received shortly, usually an update in July, which should contain updates to the High Needs block.</p> <p>The July update would normally include changes for Early Years <a href="#">Funding allocations</a> based on the January <a href="#">2021</a> census. Due to the changes going forward to Early Years' funding, no changes are expected to be announced in July. The earliest that a change is likely to be announced is November 2021. Early Years is now funded per term. Usually funding would have been 5/12ths of the January 21 census and then 7/12s of January 2022. Funding is now being done as follows each term: summer term 5/12s, autumn term 4/12s and spring term 3/12s.</p> <p>It is currently very hard to predict the position that Reading will be left in using this new method. However, if numbers are high, then Reading should do well as the funding is on a like for like basis, which is the method that Reading uses to pay out to providers. It is hoped that further information on the top-up</p>

		<p>funding of 85% will be announced before November and that it will possibly be issued in September.</p> <p>Table 2 shows a breakdown of the budget per block. The High Needs Block includes the payment of the previous year's deficit as forecast when the budget was set. This now needs to be revised to £2.371m based on the outturn.</p> <p>The variances to note for the year and risks emerging show that there is likely to be an underspend of £74k in the Schools' Block Growth Funding. This does not take into account the carry forward of £622k, meaning that there could be a potential underspend of £696k in total. This will be carried forward for future use. The requirements for funding this year's bulge classes from September 2021 are currently not known and probably will not be known until closer to September. The October meeting should give a clearer position of the Growth Funding for 21/22. There should not be any other variances in this block.</p> <p>Central Block – No variances are expected in this area. However, if there are, they will be carried forward into the next year and managed within the block itself.</p> <p>Early Year's Block – Over 95% of the funding relates to the free entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. The budget has been based on the 19/20 funded hours as this is the last full year of data. The hourly rates have been increased by 6p and 8p by the DfE and this increase will be passed on to the providers.</p> <p>The Maintained Nursery Transitional Grant has now been confirmed for all of 21/22. It is currently unclear as to whether this Grant will continue in future years.</p> <p>High Needs Block – The level of top-up fees being paid to Reading schools is under review. This means that either a new model will be implemented or the rates that Reading uses are increased. Last September was the first time in a while since schools had seen an increase. This was for 5% on average. An increase of 2% has been factored into the 21/22 budget, but it is possible that it could be higher than this. This would then need to be taken into account in the deficit recovery plan as it would have an impact. When the options are reviewed, the long-term effect will need to be taken into consideration.</p> <p>The Inclusion Fund, which is a transfer from the Schools' Block to the High Needs Block, has been set at £484k for 21/22, compared to £350k in 20/21. This provides funding to</p>
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		<p>mainstream schools with a high percentage of pupils with EHCPs. Previously, the allocation basis of this used Reading's statistical neighbours' percentage. Looking at the spring term census, it seems likely that the allocations may need to be made using a different and higher basis.</p>
8.	<p>Scheme for Financing Schools Update – Schools/DSG Business Partner</p>	<p>Steph Heaps presented.</p> <p>Richard confirmed that a decision was needed on this item.</p> <p>There have not been many changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools, but this is a document that all LAs must produce for Maintained Schools. It sets out the LA's financial relationship with its schools.</p> <p>The last update received from the DfE was on 23 April 2021, and due to the pandemic, changes have been kept to a <del>minimum</del> minimal. The updates are mainly concerned with links to the latest on-line regulations.</p> <p>One statutory change in the guidance has been reflected in the Scheme. This is that all schools must submit a recovery plan to their LA if their revenue deficit rises above 5%. School budgets are already closely monitored by the School Support Lead so this should not be an issue.</p> <p>The other compulsory change made by the DfE is that schools must now submit a 3 year budget forecast. This is something that is already in place within the LA.</p> <p><b>13 members agreed the change to the Scheme for Financing Schools</b></p>
9.	<p>SEND Strategy Annual Update – including update on Top-Up review – Director of Education</p>	<p>Kate Reynolds presented.</p> <p>Kate confirmed that at March's meeting, an annual, detailed SEND update would now be presented at the June meeting. However, individual papers will be presented at other meetings as and when required. The SEND Local Area Inspection is currently taking place. Over 200 documents have been produced over 4 days for this inspection.</p> <p>Kate reminded the Forum that there has been investment, which will see a further 179 places for pupils with EHCPs. Some from September 2021 and some from September 2022.</p> <p>A further issue is the top-up funding which is currently being reviewed. However, the Forum should note that besides the outcome of the current inspections, there is also the SEND</p>

		<p>Review from the Government. It is understood that this Review may signal significant changes to funding. If Reading has to wait for the outcome of this Review, then rates will be uplifted in the meantime.</p> <p>There will be a new framework in place for Alternative Provision from September 2021 to ensure that the provision is appropriate and of the right quality for the pupils. The SEND Team is currently producing 100% of EHCPs within the 20 week statutory timeframe. The national figure is currently running at 58%.</p> <p>There is also work being undertaken with Therapeutic Thinking Schools. This has meant that there has not been any permanent exclusions of pupils with SEND in the last two years.</p> <p>A review of the Service Level Agreement has been undertaken for all the resource bases. Additional resource bases are being put into Early Years, Primary and Secondary.</p>
10	<p>Early Years SCD Resourced bases update – Under 5s Service Manager</p>	<p>Corinne Dishington presented</p> <p>Corinne updated the Forum on the two SCD resource bases, which are being put into Norcot and Blagdon Nurseries. The intention is that there will be 10 full-time places in each. This will actually translate into 20 part-time places in each and will mean that a total of 40 extra children can be supported. This complements the provisions that already exist at Snowflakes and Dingleys.</p> <p>A comprehensive training package will also be included as part of the proposal based on the Autism Growth Project. It is hoped that additional speech and language therapy can be commissioned as well as Occupational Therapy to support the bases.</p> <p>There will be a Joint Admissions Resources Panel for Primaries and Secondaries to ensure a seamless support service. The proposal is currently out for consultation and this closes at the end of June. If all goes to plan, then the resource bases will open from September 2021.</p>
11	<p>Agenda items for next meeting</p>	<p>The next meeting will be held on 14 October 2021 as a virtual meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DSG budget setting strategy for 2022/23</li> <li>• Initial proposals for school funding formula for 2022/23</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget monitoring 2021/22 month 6 (including update on deficit recovery plan)</li> </ul>
	Any other business	<p>Richard thanked Steph for all her hard work and wished everyone a very happy summer break.</p> <p>The meeting finished at 17.42.</p>

## Summary of Actions Outstanding

SF Date & Item no.	Action Required	Responsible Person
24/6/21 – Item 3	Membership – Karen Edwards to remain a member.	Richard Rolfe