

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 13 MARCH 2018

Present:

Primary School Head Teachers/Representatives

Ms J Hirst, Bispham Endowed (Chairman)

Ms E Allen, St John Vianney

Primary School Governor Representative

Ms M Lonican, School Governor representative

Academy School Representatives

Mr S Brennand, Unity

Mr R Farley, Westminster

Ms T Harrison, Thames

Mr D Medcalf, St Georges

Mr N Toyne, Devonshire

Ms S Jackson, Highfield (on behalf of H McKenzie OBE)

Mr E Vitalis, Marton/South Shore (Bright Futures)

Special School Academy Representative

Ms S Fielder, Park Academy

Non-Schools Members

Ms A Baines, Staff/Teacher Associations

Mr D Dickinson, Staff/Teacher Associations

Mr R Rendell, Early Years Strategic Group

In Attendance:

Cllr Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning

Mrs L Donkin, Consultant in Public Health

Mr M Golden, Finance Manager

Mr P Turner, Schools Safeguarding Adviser and Acting Head of School Standards and Effectiveness

Mr P Thompson, Head of SEND

Mr C Williams, Democratic Governance Adviser (Minutes)

Mr P Sharples, School Funding and PFI Manager

Ms N Turner, Integrated Commissioning Manager (ITEM 10)

Mrs H Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources

1 INTRODUCTIONS/APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services, Janet Carroll, Roseacre Academy, Simon Hughes, Blackpool and Fylde College, Helen McKenzie OBE, Principal Highfield Humanities College and Wendy Casson, Pupil Referral Unit Headteacher.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

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3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2018 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4 MATTERS ARISING SINCE THE LAST MEETING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE

1. Special Support Assistant (SSA) Redundancy Payments

Mr Golden reported that twelve SSA's had left in 2017/2018 at a cost of £167,000. Lump sum payments made up £79,000 of this cost with the remaining £89,000 relating to pension strain as five of the SSA's were of pensionable age.

The Forum noted that there were seven central SSA's remaining. Two had already agreed to leave in July 2018 at a cost of £9,000. The redundancy and pension strain cost estimate for the remaining five staff currently stood at £84,000 with this cost likely to be spread over the next three financial years.

2. Pupil Referral Unit Top Up Budget Variance

At the March 2017 meeting, a paper was presented setting out the pressures on the PRU's budget resulting from increased numbers. Schools Forum agreed to make a one-off adjustment for the shortfall in place funding, and to right size the income target based on actuals received. When the paper on 2017/2018 budget setting was discussed, Schools Forum approved the proposed allocation, with the exception that an adjustment would be made to right size the income target. This is why the monitoring that had been presented since then was different by the £50,000 compared to what was proposed in the original budget in March 2017.

5 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Mr Turner reported that a review of Early Years staffing including Special Educational Needs and Development (SEND) had been undertaken and more would be reported in due course.

In relation to the Pupil Referral Unit, it was noted that the numbers on roll were currently 271 versus 301 at the same time in 2017. The work of In Year Fair Access (IYFA) Panels was cited as one reason for increased numbers of children having their needs met in mainstream settings as opposed to being sent to specialist providers. The Forum agreed that a significant number of children remained Elective Home Educated (EHE) with 208 as of February 2018 versus 129 in February 2017. It was acknowledged that some of those children may subsequently end up in specialist provision once they tried to reintegrate into a mainstream school setting.

Mr Thompson, Head of SEND, advised that SEND training was underway and had so far supported four schools. Training had been provided to aid in the management and reviewing of SEND provision and it was noted that additional training would also be available in the near future.

Mr Turner explained that there was a greater need than ever to build capacity and a

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successful bid for Opportunity Area funding would help to generate additional high needs budget capacity, to welcome and integrate new pupils and integrate social care support into schools. Mr Turner suggested that a fundamental issue was how to offer the same provision or more within schools but with fewer resources. He acknowledged that a gap in provision existed to prevent exclusion through targeted intervention.

The Forum agreed:

Mr Turner to undertake analysis of data to establish patterns of children becoming Elective Home Educated (EHE) and to report back at the next meeting on 19 June 2018.

6 ACADEMY AND FREE SCHOOL UPDATE

It was reported that the Armfield Academy was on schedule to open in September 2018.

Positive results from recent Ofsted inspections were noted at Baines Endowed, Marton and Waterloo primary schools, all of which had been awarded a 'good' rating.

The conversion of Stanley Primary School to academy status would be from the planned date of 1 April 2018.

The Forum noted the updates.

7 PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

Mrs Donkin advised that the new service model for 0-5 children's public health services (health visiting) would be introduced from April 2018 as part of a nationally mandated requirement for local authorities to commission delivery of five health and development reviews as part of 0-5s children's public health services. The Forum was informed that in Blackpool, the new model would consist of eight universal contacts to all families, six within the first year of life plus two additional health reviews, including an integrated child health review to assess school readiness. This new model represented a significant development as it would not only offer more opportunity for contact with children and families in Blackpool with a health visitor, but would enable additional needs to be identified and addressed at an early stage; and allow for interventions for families to address current or anticipated issues that would likely impact on positive outcomes for children.

Following successful campaigns in Nov 2015 and Spring 2017, the Council's Public Health department were planning to run the Give-Up Loving Pop (GULP) campaign again in 2018. The Primary school campaign would involve small weekly challenges to encourage continued participation and an inter-school competition to see which class in each year could amass the most pop-free days in a 21 day period. In terms of the high school campaign, this would be run with the assistance of HeadStart (in tandem with, or just after the primary school campaign) and would use Snapchat as the main conduit for the campaign. For early years Public Health had been working with colleagues across the North West to develop a set of campaign resources for under 5s. These would focus on a message of good oral health and use the tagline 'give me water or milk only please'.

It was reported that the free school breakfast evaluation had been completed and the Council's free school breakfast webpage had been updated to include a summary of the

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findings which could be viewed at:

<https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Education-and-schools/School-meals/Free-breakfasts.aspx>

The Forum was notified of the next Schools/Public Health Working Party meeting. Representatives from all schools were encouraged to attend the next meeting which was due to take place between 4-5pm on 26 April 2018, Conference Room 3A, Bickerstaffe House. Mrs Donkin suggested that for more information, or to confirm attendance, interested parties should contact Alan.shaw@blackpool.gov.uk.

8 INCLUSION UPDATE

The Forum discussed the challenge of reducing the use of short term alternative provision including out of borough placements. It was accepted that there would always be a need for this type of offer but that recently there had been some over-reliance on it which had become a barrier to inclusion.

Mr Turner suggested that more could be done to keep higher numbers of children in mainstream settings, for example resilience building exercises and greater transition working between schools.

9 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING 2017/2018

Mr Golden reminded Forum members that there continued to be significant pressures on the High Needs Block though he advised that work was ongoing to manage the cost pressures in the medium term with the development of an inclusion strategy and the opening of a new social, emotional and mental health Free School scheduled for September 2019. However, expenditure continued to be out of balance with Department for Education funding in the short term.

The Forum was informed that the High Needs over spend had reduced since the last report (November 2017) by £45,000 from £894,000 to £849,000 mainly due to reduced numbers at the Pupil Referral Unit. Also, the Schools Block and Early Years Block had forecast an under spend of £23,000 and an over spend of £27,000 respectively, which represented an improvement of £14,000 since November 2017.

DSG reserves as reported in January were forecast to be £367,000 in deficit by 31 March 2018. However, given the improving position explained above this had since been forecast to reduce to a deficit of £308,000 by the end of the financial year. Mr Golden added that this would be carried forward to 2018-2019 as approved at the last Forum meeting. The Schools Block and Early Years Block were forecast small variances of £18,000 under and £34,000 over, respectively.

Following a question about LAC pupil premium, Mr Golden advised that there may be an underspend and subsequently an improvement to reserves as a result. When asked about why schools had not been applying for LAC pupil premium, Mr Thompson suggested that low rates of Personal Education Plans (PEP) completion may be a major contributory factor to the low uptake. He added that an Electronic system (E-PEP) may yield better uptake of the funding as this had proven successful in other authority areas. The current completion rate of approximately 40% in Blackpool was considered far below a desirable

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rate.

The Forum noted the report.

10 CHILDREN'S CENTRE REVIEW

Ms Nicola Turner, Integrated Commissioning Manager, explained that the children's centre review had been completed and would be submitted for formal sign-off by the Council's Corporate Leadership Team on 10 April 2018 with schools being notified of the decision thereafter.

Concerns about potential redundancies and schools subsequently being unable to meet their Service Level Agreements were discussed. Forum members were keen that whatever the decision, it should be taken with the best outcomes for children in mind.

The Forum noted the update.

11 EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA 2018/2019

Mr Sharples presented the report and advised the Forum of the local authority's proposed formula for three/four-year old early education and the funding rate for two-year olds. The proposed formula was based on new arrangements set out by the Department for Education, and followed a period of consultation with providers.

The Forum was informed that following the consultation, a number of proposals were put forward that included the removal of the quality supplement linked to an Ofsted outstanding assessment as the Early Years Strategic Group felt that there was inconsistency between judgements across settings, and that the supplement did not provide any funding for those providers striving to achieve outstanding. There was also a proposal to reduce the Inclusion Fund to £10,000 as no payments had been made so far during the current financial year against the Inclusion Fund.

Concerns were noted about the possible impact of the proposals on the level of choice available to parents in terms of education options for three and four year olds.

The Forum agreed:

1. The local authority's proposed formula for three- and four-year old early education for 2018/2019 as outlined in paragraph 3.4.
2. To note the local authority's funding rate for two-year olds at £5.00 per hour.

12 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

Mr Thompson reported that in relation to special school places, the number of pupils at Park Academy had been steadily increasing over recent years. This had been in part, but not wholly due to the extension of the age range from 4-16 to 2-19, and the increased occupation of sixth form places over the last three years. Forum members noted that the current number of commissioned places stood at 234. However, it was anticipated that the school would start September 2018 with at least 255 pupils. In the longer term, the Local Authority's view was that numbers needed to be managed down to a maximum of 250, with a larger number of pupils supported to stay in mainstream settings. It had

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therefore been proposed to increase the commissioned number of places to 255 for the academic year 2018/2019 for one year only, with a view to this being reduced back to 250 from September 2019. The position would be reviewed with the school early in the next academic year.

In relation to the Pupil Referral Unit, it was noted that the overall numbers on roll had dropped from 302 in February 2017 to 268 in February 2018. Mr Thompson circulated an anonymised breakdown of pupils currently placed outside the Borough with associated cost breakdowns and Forum members expressed concern at both the overall number and high costs associated with each individual placement. Mr Thompson used the data to emphasise to schools members why utilising all the available skills and support available to them was essential if the number and cost of such placements was to be reduced in any meaningful way. By working with the Council's inclusion team, it was hoped that better provision could be provided in mainstream settings and better outcomes could be ensured which avoided young people becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Forum members echoed Mr Thompson's sentiments and added that a cultural shift would be required in order to address excessive or inappropriate placements in the future. Mr Thompson suggested that perhaps some schools lacked awareness of the full range of services available to them and the fact that professional support was not limited to the completion of Education Health and Care Plans.

Forum members were keen that some form of working party be set up that would involve Headteachers, SENCO's, the Council's SEND team and other relevant partners. The group could look at gaps in current mainstream provision and help to develop a strategy to address those issues identified and possibly look to improve the potential of any future Opportunities Area funding bid.

The Chairman praised the honest and frank discussions and the genuine desire of Forum members to work collaboratively to achieve positive outcomes for those children with the greatest needs.

The Forum agreed:

1. To note the analysis of expenditure on Out of Borough placements, as requested by Schools Forum at its meeting in January 2018.
2. That Schools Forum notes the update on the local authority's plans for a new special free school. (a report is scheduled to go before the Council's Executive on 12 March 2018)
3. To note the update on the review of high needs provision carried out by Premier Advisory Group.
4. To note the planned increases in commissioned special school places for 2018/2019.
5. That Schools Forum notes the update on the latest number on roll at Educational Diversity.

13 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET PROPOSAL 2018/2019

Mrs Wood introduced the report and outlined the Local Authority's proposals for the allocation of Dedicated Schools Grant in 2018/2019.

Members were reminded that at the meeting in January 2018, Schools Forum was

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presented with the provisional estimates for expenditure against Dedicated Schools Grant in 2018/2019. This early consideration was required in order to support the request for the transfer of 0.5% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, given the projected pressures in that area.

Mrs Wood reported that estimates of expenditure against the High Needs Block had been updated since the January 2018 meeting. This now showed a breakeven position against the total of the allocation of £18.957m plus the £400,000 transfer from Schools Block and the £400,000 contribution from the local authority agreed at that meeting. However, Forum members noted that this did not address the forecast deficit of £308,000 that would be carried over from 2017/2018 as outlined in the previous report.

Members of the Forum agreed that overall a positive message of a balanced budget had been presented. However, concerns were noted that whilst the measures previously agreed would suffice for 2018/2019, the same problems may arise in subsequent years if additional processes were not put in place to address the root causes of those areas identified as being responsible for high levels of overspend.

The Forum agreed:

To approve the proposed Dedicated Schools Grant budget for 2018/2019.

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the date of the next meeting would be Tuesday 19 June 2018.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 11.57 am)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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