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MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2019

Present:

Primary School Head Teachers/Representative

Ms J Hirst, Bispham Endowed (Chairman)

Primary School Governor Representative

Ms M Lonican, School Governor, Our Lady of the Assumption

Special Academy Representative

Ms S Fielder, Chair of Governors, Park Community Academy

Academy Representatives

Ms A Bailey, Star Academies

Ms T Harrison, Thames

Ms J Heywood, Revoe

Mr D Logan, Roseacre (Achievement Through Collaboration)

Mr C Wardle, St Georges

Pupil Referral Unit

Ms W Casson, Educational Diversity

Non-Schools Members

Mr N Adams, Staff / Teacher Associations

Ms A Baines, Staff/Teacher Associations

Mr S Hughes, Blackpool and the Fylde College

Mr R Rendell, Early Years Strategic Group

In Attendance:

Councillor K Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration

Mr M Golden, Finance Manager

Ms J Mills, Consultant in Public Health

Mr P Sharples, School Funding and Private Finance Initiative Manager

Mr P Thompson, Head of SEND

Mr P Turner, Head of Service for School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion

Mrs H Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources

Mrs D Bowater, Democratic Governance Adviser (minutes)

Mr S Rae, ISOS representative (observer)

Mr S Day, ISOS representative (observer)

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

New members of the Forum were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Elaine Allen, St John Vianney; Karen Haworth, Woodlands; Simon Brennand, Unity; Roger Farley, Westminster; Edward Vitalis, Bright Futures; Derek Medcalf, St Georges; and Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services.

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2019

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were noted.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting pending the amendment of the school name from 'Park School' to 'Park Community Academy'.

Matters arising from the minutes that were not discussed elsewhere on the agenda were considered:

Item 3: As discussed under matters arising from the March 2019 meeting, an update on the review of the Pupil Referral Unit was sought. It was noted that the review report had been completed and presented to the Pupil Referral Unit, no further updates would be presented to the Schools Forum.

Item 4: Children's Centre Consultation update - members of the Staff and Teacher Associations had raised concerns relating to the settlement agreement for staff affected by the changes in the Children's Centres. It was noted that it was within the Schools Forum remit to discuss use of resources and the impact on finances and members had previously received the financial impact information. It was agreed to delegate responsibility to a member of the Schools Forum to attend future discussions on the matter, with a remit to agree to proposals for which the financial implications were within the overall funding already agreed by Schools Forum. Jo Hirst agreed to attend the discussions.

Resolved:

- **That Jo Hirst would represent the Schools Forum at future discussions relating to Children's Centres.**

4 REVIEW OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP AND CONSTITUTION

Paul Sharples, Schools Funding and Private Finance Initiative Manager provided an update on the membership of Schools Forum for 2019-2020. It was noted that the membership had been reviewed and no changes were required.

Schools Forum representatives were reminded that members may nominate an appropriate substitute from the group they represent, to attend the Forum on their behalf subject to notification in advance, to the Clerk.

Resolved:

- **To remind members of the Schools Forum that they may nominate an appropriate substitute from the group they represent, to attend the Forum on their behalf subject to notification in advance, to the Clerk.**

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2019

5 PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

Judith Mills, Consultant in Public Health provided an update report on work undertaken by Public Health since the previous meeting.

It was reported that the Summer Holiday Activity Programme was funded by the Blackpool Opportunity Area and had provided both activities and food in the six most deprived areas of the town. It was reported that following evaluation of the Activity programme, the findings would be circulated.

The Schools Health Education Unit (SHEU) Survey was undertaken in Spring 2019 and findings indicated that 28% of boys and 42% of girls sometime felt afraid of going to school because of bullying and 39% of secondary school responders had used an e-cigarette or vaporiser. All responders were thanked for their input, it was recognised that there had been more primary school responses than secondary.

The Stop Smoking Model working with schools to proactively support and encourage young people to make informed choices about tobacco use would continue until October 2019 and participating schools would receive feedback on the project and discuss the next steps. It was recognised that there had been limited engagement with the drop in sessions despite the choice of location being made by the young people involved.

The Bystander Initiative pilot undertaken in Blackpool colleges had looked at how to prevent the increase in domestic abuse and sexual violence in society and to change social norms in peer cultures at all levels from high schools to college and university. The draft evaluation of the initiative had been sent to the colleges for comments.

Finally, it was reported that there was a planned redesign to the Children and Adolescence Mental Health Service (CAMHS) across the Lancashire and South Cumbria footprint to develop a more consistent approach to services. It was noted that there would be no tender process but a combined delivery to create a new type of professional group as there were limited mental health nurses available. Judith Mills confirmed that headteachers (primary and secondary) could have input into the process by contacting Judith.mills@blackpool.gov.uk

Resolved:

- **To circulate the Public Health Update to all headteachers for information (Danielle Bowater).**

6 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Paul Turner, Head of Service for School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion provided the update report for information. It was reported that two Consultants to support schools with certain subjects had been recruited and a new School Admissions Portal for the Education Management System was available to streamline admissions processes.

Resolved:

- **To circulate the Local Authority Update to all headteachers for information (Danielle Bowater).**

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2019

7 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources, provided an update report on High Needs. As reported previously, Blackpool alongside other authorities was experiencing financial pressures on its High Needs Budget. A nine point action plan had been developed to better use available resources.

It was reported that additional funding of £700million for high needs had been announced in the Chancellor's Spending Round however the allocation to authorities had not been released. It had been announced that the allocation would result in an increase of between eight and 17%, subject to changes in population.

It was reported that the medium term plan had been revised and updated and a forecast in year overspend on the high needs block from 2019/20 had worsened from £1.5million to a predicted £2.0million, this was over and above the £431k funding transferred from the Schools Block and the dedicated schools grant deficit of £417k brought forward from last year. With the predicted minimum extra funding from the Spending Round monies, expenditure may increase in 2020/21 but the in year deficit may reduce to £884k with further reductions in subsequent years to start to offset the pressures. The cumulative deficit against the Dedicated Schools Grant would reach £3.5million by the end of 2021/22. In this regard, Mark Golden proposed that the recovery plan be extended for a further two years to a five year plan for future presentation to the Department for Education (DfE).

It was acknowledged that an overspend was a national problem, not isolated to Blackpool. Following discussion, it was noted that the statistics showing a comparison of overspend with other authorities would be included in the next High Needs update. It was further commented that the more the Authority tried to offset the overspend from other budgets, the less realistic picture was presented to the DfE.

Schools Forum members considered the proposals for funding for pupils in mainstream schools without an Education Health and Care Plan. The proposals outlined the process for supported places in mainstream settings to enable schools to apply for two terms of funding. It was reported that the High Needs Working Group had highlighted that financial pressures can arise from pupils who have emotional needs, the proposed process would address this. It was acknowledged that the proposal would result in an increase in spend initially but was anticipated as a 'spend to save' option. Following discussion, it was agreed to approve the proposals for funding for pupils in mainstream schools without an Education Health and Care Plan pending feedback from headteachers and SENCO's.

Finally, an update on the new Lotus School was presented. The new school was scheduled to open in September 2020 offering 48 places for 10 to 16 year olds with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. The local authority had been liaising with the Champion Education Trust to identify pupils to take up the places in the new school.

Resolved:

- **Comparison statistics relating to the high needs overspend in Blackpool compared to other local authorities to be presented in the next High Needs update (Hilary Wood).**

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2019

- **To approve the proposals for funding for pupils in mainstream schools without an Education Health and Care Plan pending feedback from headteachers and SENCO's (Phil Thompson).**

8 INCLUSION

Paul Turner, Head of Service for School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion provided an update report. It was reported that Chief Executive Officers from the Multi Academy Trusts with secondary schools in Blackpool had developed a proposal for the creation of a continuum of provision to support high needs pupils, to improve inclusion and reduce permanent exclusions in their schools.

The proposal outlined a commitment from each of the secondary schools to admit an agreed number of pupils via the In Year Fair Access process and develop in house inclusion programmes. Each academy would commit to permanently exclude no more than three pupils each year (amalgamated at Trust level where appropriate), with penalties covering the full cost should the number be exceeded.

The proposals would reduce permanent exclusions and reduce the number of pupils on the Out of School Register. The proposed costs of the scheme were £1.08million. This would cover £5k per In Year Fair Access admission plus an amount per school to develop the required in house provision, the commissioning of three assessment places, whole school behaviour reviews and project management and evaluation costs.

It was reported that Blackpool Council had committed to contribute £200k towards the costs and the Opportunity Area Board were considering a contribution. Any shortfall of funds was expected to be covered by savings to the High Needs budget arising from a significant reduction in permanent exclusions. Schools Forum members were asked to support the implementation of the plan.

Following discussion, it was acknowledged that the large Pupil Referral Unit in Blackpool was predominantly fed by secondary schools therefore a better system in secondary schools was sought. Further comments welcomed the paper and the better promotion of inclusion. A change in the system and process was needed and it was positive that secondary settings had acknowledged this.

Schools Forum members determined that the process should have a mechanism for accountability inclusive of action plans per school and an impact assessment report. It was acknowledged that the contracts with schools would specify criteria. It was acknowledged that the Opportunity Area Board, The School Inclusion Team, Department for Education Team, School Improvement Board and Schools Forum would monitor progress.

(Wendy Casson left the meeting)

Schools Forum agreed by a majority vote, to support the implementation of the plan pending the following:

- The Blackpool School Improvement Board be asked to monitor the inclusion action plans by way of a standing item 'Secondary Inclusion Project Monitoring'

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2019

- At the November 2019 Blackpool School Improvement Board meeting signed contracts with guidelines for the school plan (including the action plan, associated costs, impact assessment criteria and milestones) to be presented.
- Without an agreed inclusion action plan for each school, no funding from Schools Forum responsible budgets would be released.

Paul Turner, Head of Service for School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion provided an update on Illuminate Funding. It was reported that a budget of £85k was in place to support schools who admitted pupils with challenging needs. Payments had been on hold while proposals for secondary schools were considered and the criteria for primary pupils were reviewed. Following the proposals for secondary In Year Fair Access admissions, it was recommended that the Illuminate Funding reverted to apply to primary pupils only in accordance with the criteria and any payments relating to eligible pupils admitted since the scheme was put on hold be released to schools.

Schools Forum members unanimously agreed to approve the recommendation that the Illuminate Funding reverted to primary pupils only in accordance with the revised criteria. Any payments relating to eligible pupils admitted since the scheme was put on hold would be released to schools.

Resolved:

- **To support the proposals for secondary inclusion, pending the conditions outlined.**
- **To approve the recommendation that the Illuminate Funding reverted to primary pupils only in accordance with the revised criteria. Any payments relating to eligible pupils admitted since the scheme was put on hold would be released to schools.**

9 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING 2019-2020

Mark Golden, Finance Manager, provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget monitoring 2019/20. It was reported that the forecast gap on the DSG in 2019/20 had increased by £500k and the forecast DSG deficit was £2.459million by 31 March 2020. The increase in the out of borough placements was identified as a contributory factor. As reported at item 7, the forecast would trigger a need to provide a deficit recovery plan to the Department for Education by June 2020.

Phil Thompson indicated that a proposal had been taken to the schools Twilight sessions to look to provide special educational needs provision on mainstream sites to cater for pupils with Education Health and Care Plans. It was agreed that the proposal be discussed at the next Schools Forum meeting.

Resolved:

- **The proposal to provide special educational needs provision on mainstream sites to cater for pupils with Educations Health and Care Plans to be presented at the January 2020 Schools Forum (Phil Thompson).**

10 SCHOOLS AND EARLY YEARS FUNDING UPDATE

Paul Sharples, Schools Funding and Private Finance Initiative Manager provided an update report on the latest developments relevant to the Schools Funding Formula. It was

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2019

reported that the National Funding Formula factor values would increase by 4% with the exception of the free school meals factor which would increase at an inflation rate of 1.84%. Premises funding would continue to be allocated at local authority level.

It was reported that there would be no National Funding Formula gains cap applied to local authority allocations compared to 3% applied at school level in 2019/20. In 2020/21, each local authority would continue to set a local schools formula, in consultation with local schools. The government had re-confirmed the intention to move to a single 'hard' national funding formula to determine every school's budget, although timescales had not been set.

It was acknowledged that the minimum per pupil funding (MPPF) consultation would run until 22 October 2019 with the government response due to be published in November 2019.

Finally, it was reported that the government had announced an additional £66million to increase the hourly rate paid to childcare providers through the government's Early Years free entitlement grants.

The report indicated that the teachers' pay grant and teachers' pension employer contribution grant would continue to be paid separately from the national funding formula in 2020/21. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the Department for Education had indicated that teachers' pension employer contributions would continue beyond 2021.

11 EXTENDING THE ACADEMIES RISK PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS TO LOCAL AUTHORITY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

Paul Sharples, School Funding and Private Finance Initiative Manager provided an update report on the consultation issued by the Department for Education (DfE) on 'Extending the Academies Risk Arrangements to Local Authority Maintained Schools'. Interested parties were invited to comment on the proposal to extend the Academies Risk Protection Arrangements to include local authority maintained schools in order to reduce the cost of protecting them from risk. It was noted that the consultation closed on 4 November 2019.

Resolved:

- **Paul Sharples to circulate the paper to all headteachers for information.**

12 FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS AND ACADEMY TRUSTS

Paul Sharples, School Funding and Private Finance Initiative Manager provided an update report on the consultation issued by the Department for Education (DfE) on the 'Financial Transparency of Local Authority Maintained Schools and Academy Trusts'. It was reported that the proposed new measures outlined would align some of the lines of accountability of maintained schools to be the same as academies.

The report was noted.

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2019

13 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Schools Forum was agreed as Tuesday 14 January 2020 at 9.15am, @the grange, Bathurst Avenue, Blackpool, FY3 7RW.

Chairman

(The meeting ended 11.46am)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

Danielle Bowater Democratic Governance Adviser

Tel: 01253 477202

E-mail: danielle.bowater@blackpool.gov.uk