

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 20 JUNE 2017

Present:

Primary School Head Teachers/Representatives

Ms J Hirst, Bispham Endowed (Chairman)

Ms E Allen, St John Vianney

Special School Head Teacher/Head Teacher Representative

Mr C Andrew, Woodlands

Pupil Referral Unit Head Teacher/Head Teacher Representative

Ms W Casson, Pupil Referral Unit

Academy School Representatives

Mr S Brennand, Unity

Mr M Gray, Waterloo

Ms T Harrison, Thames

Mr D Medcalf, St Georges

Mr N Toyne, Devonshire

Mrs S Wilson, Fylde Coast Academy Trust

Non-Schools Members

Ms A Baines, Staff/Teacher Associations

Mr D Dickinson, Staff/Teacher Associations

Mr R Rendell, Early Years Strategic Group

Ms J Marne, Blackpool and Fylde College (post 16 representative)

In Attendance:

Councillor Cain, Cabinet Secretary (Resilient Communities)

Mrs L Donkin, Consultant in Public Health

Ms S McCartan, Service Manager Children's Centres

Mr P Sharples, School Funding and PFI Manager

Mr P Thompson, Interim Head of SEND

Mrs A Whitehead, Head of Schools, Standards and Effectiveness

Mr C Williams, Democratic Governance Adviser (Minutes)

Mr K Wood, Divisional Commissioning Manager

Mrs H Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning, Mr G Dow and Ms J Carroll, Academy School Representatives, Mrs D Booth, Director of Children's Services, Mr M Golden, Finance Manager and Ms C Butterworth, Primary School Governor Representative.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

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3 NATIONAL SCHOOLS FORUM ASSOCIATION

The Chairman reported that an invitation had been received from Ms Niki Crookdale, Chair of the National Schools Forum Association, for Blackpool Schools Forum to join the National Association. Ms Hirst explained that she would support Blackpool Schools Forum joining, as members would benefit from the sharing of expertise and best practice, receipt of feedback from the Department for Education (DfE) and ability to raise issues of local importance on a national stage.

Forum Members expressed their support for the decision to join the National Schools Forum Association.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 14 MARCH 2017

The minutes of the Schools Forum held on 14 March 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Mrs Wood advised that the response from Central Government regarding the local consultations on the proposed National Funding Formula and High Needs Funding Reform may be delayed as a result of the snap general election held in June 2017.

5 PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

Mrs Donkin provided an update on Public Health initiatives that were of significance to schools.

It was reported that the School Level data for the National Childhood Measurement programme had been sent out to primary schools in May 2017. The letter included links and information on local and national initiatives to help schools support pupil health and wellbeing. Mrs Donkin advised that the Public Health Department wished to support schools to promote health and wellbeing and welcomed discussions with individual settings to establish how best to help those schools achieve a healthy weight among their pupil populations.

Following the success of the PSHE in Secondary School pilot programme, it was proposed to offer a similar programme for primary schools for the 2018/2019 school year, which would allow a consistent approach to the delivery of PSHE across all Primary schools in Blackpool.

The Forum noted that the Healthy Weight Summit held on 2 February 2017 had proved successful with over 40 individuals attending the day and 20 organisations pledging to develop their own Healthy Weight Declaration, which included a number of school settings. As a result, Mrs Donkin informed the Forum of a further event to be held on the 28 June 2017 at 1.30pm at Bickerstaffe Square to review the progress being made to date.

A discussion about free school breakfasts resulted in a wide range of opinions about the value of the scheme. Some members expressed a desire to offer a more traditional style of breakfast should the scheme continue although acknowledged there would be practical considerations that would need to be addressed. Mrs Donkin offered to liaise

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with individual school settings in order to help improve their individual breakfast or school meal offer.

The Forum agreed:

To send out information on current school offerings in terms of free school breakfast provision with a view to improving service levels.

6 MONITORING OF BLACKPOOL CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Ms McCartan, Service Manager Children's Centres, provided an overview of Blackpool Children's Centre performance in 2016/2017.

The Forum noted that Blackpool Children's Centres continued to deliver services to families across all thresholds - Universal, Early Help and Statutory. Examples of the work done by the centres were provided. Those included; hosting weekly universal well baby clinics, undertaking Early Help assessments, providing low level family support and facilitating group contact. Ms McCartan advised that all centres strived to continue providing vital services to those most in need, but acknowledged that to do so without additional funding would be a real challenge in the future.

Various figures were provided to demonstrate the important transformational effect the children's centres were having. The result had been an increase in the number of children accessing various services and consequently progress against over 93% of set outcomes had been achieved. Key successes for 2016/2017 were noted. It was reported that all Children's Centres had achieved the ICAN Good Practice Validation and parents had shaped service delivery. Various centre's had also played an active role in the Syrian Resettlement Programme. In addition, Children's Centre practitioners had renewed their Baby Friendly (Breastfeeding) training and undertaken Perinatal and Infant Mental Health training. Underpinning the operational element, a system of robust Quality Assurance was in place that included monthly case file audits, Safeguarding Supervision, Activity Observations and Activity Evaluations and Service User feedback.

Ms McCartan informed the Forum that prior to the Ofsted pause, a total of 89% of Blackpool Children's Centres had been graded as 'Outstanding' or 'Good' as compared to 67% in the North West and 66% in England (as of 31 August 2015). One Children's Centre in Blackpool was graded as 'Requires Improvement', which equated to 11% locally, compared to 32% in the North West and 33% in England. In addition, it was noted that currently there were no 'Inadequate' graded settings in Blackpool compared to a 2% average in England.

The Forum agreed:

To continue to provide financial support to Blackpool Children's Centres through a Contribution to Combined Budgets of £1 million p.a., subject to the evolving situation regarding the implementation of a National Schools Funding Formula.

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7 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT YEAR END BUDGET MONITORING 2016/2017

Mrs Wood presented the budget position of the Dedicated Schools Grant for the 2016/2017 Financial Year and the amount of DSG reserves as at 31 March 2017 along with details of future commitments.

The Forum noted that in terms of costs, by far the most significant overspend at year end had been within the High Needs Block, specifically, Out of Borough Placements which had resulted in an overspend of £291,000. Despite underspends in certain areas, most notably a £111,000 speech and language underspend, overall an in-year deficit of £191,752 along with a planned use of reserves of 192,000 had placed additional pressures on the Dedicated School Grant Reserves.

The Forum noted the report.

8 SCHOOLS SAFEGUARDING ADVISOR DEVELOPMENT

Mrs Wood presented the report and outlined the central recommendation to approve the allocation of £5,280 from Dedicated Schools Grant reserves to allow the School Safeguarding Advisor (SSA) to undertake a Master of Science qualification in 'Safeguarding in an International Context' at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) beginning in September 2017.

Members of the Forum questioned the relevance of the course in terms of benefits it would bring to Blackpool schools. Concerns were also expressed at the potential for other practitioners submitting applications for funding to undertake a course of study. Mrs Wood responded that the course would enhance the overall effectiveness of the School Safeguarding Advisor role and added that the contents of the course would involve research and study that could be undertaken within Blackpool, the results of which could add value and have a positive impact on outcomes for local children. In addition, the approval of the fees would not lead to other applications as the School Safeguarding Advisor post was the only such role funded by the Forum.

The Forum agreed:

1. To approve the allocation of £5,280 from Dedicated Schools Grant reserves to allow the School Safeguarding Advisor to undertake a Master of Science qualification in 'Safeguarding in an International Context' at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) from September 2017.
2. For Mrs Wood and Mrs Whitehead to liaise with the Schools Safeguarding Advisor regarding the potential to conduct various course study elements within Blackpool to maximise the relevance and value to the Local Authority.
3. For the Schools Safeguarding Advisor to present a summary report at the end of each academic year of study detailing the work he has undertaken as part of the course.

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9 NATIONAL ANALYSIS OF SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA

Mr Sharples outlined the proposals to note the information provided in the analysis of Local Authority Schools Block Funding Formula Factors for 2017/2018 and to establish a working group to review options for the allocation of funding via the Blackpool Schools Funding Formula in 2018/2019, the National Funding Formula transitional year.

The Forum noted that a government guidance document entitled 'Schools Block Funding Formulae 2017 to 2018' provided an overview of the 2017/2018 formula factor values chosen by local authorities as at 9 March 2017. It also provided charts and a brief commentary on the range of unit funding amounts selected and the proportion of Schools Block funding distributed under each of the permitted factors.

As previously noted, no formal response to the consultation on National Schools Funding Formula had been published by Central Government, possibly as a result of delays due to the general election held on 8 June 2017.

In relation to the proposed Working Group, Mr Sharples advised that it was hoped this would be set up by September 2017. Mr Rendell, Ms Hirst and Mr Medcalf volunteered to join the Working Group.

The Forum agreed:

1. To note the information provided in the analysis of Local Authority Schools Block Funding Formula Factors for 2017/2018.
2. To establish a working group to review options for the allocation of funding via the Blackpool Schools Funding Formula in 2018/2019, the National Funding Formula transitional year.

10 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UPDATE

Mr Thompson presented the report and detailed a number of proposals designed to improve Special Educational Needs Provision in Blackpool.

The Forum was informed that currently a significant number of Blackpool pupils who required special provision were transported to out of borough independent special schools at considerable cost, starting from £32,000 up to £50,000. There were currently 66 pupils in a variety of age ranges placed out of area. This often meant that pupils of primary and secondary age travelled for over 40-50 minutes to and from school. According to Mr Thompson, this was not an ideal situation for pupils who often displayed challenging behaviours and were often the most vulnerable members of society. The Local Authority had received approval from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Department for Education (DfE) to proceed with the Expression of Interest submitted for a Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Free School to be opened in Blackpool. Were the Special School to go ahead, Mr Thompson advised it had been estimated that the costs per pupil would be in the region of £18,000.

In terms of the review of high needs provision, members were advised that the DfE had given the Local Authority £57,000 to carry out a strategic review of high needs provision and the Council was seeking applications from interested organisations to carry out the review in respect of provision for Blackpool pupils. The review would consider the

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effectiveness and value for money of the full range of provision both locally and out of area. The deadline for applications was 20 June 2017 with a final report expected by September 2017.

Mr Thompson reported that Local authority SEND staff had met with Highfield and Marton schools to discuss the closure of the SERF provision in both schools from September 2018.

With reference to the SEND Service Review, Mr Thompson advised that an all options review of the Local Authority SEND team had started in November 2016. The review had so far looked at capacity within the team, and job roles and responsibilities covered by the service. Once draft proposals from the Commissioning team and the Director of Children's Services to change the structure and offer to schools from the SEND team had been agreed, the Forum would be updated on the implementation timescale of the new structure. It was anticipated the new structure would be delivered to staff in July 2017 with a view to implementation in September 2017. Whilst there was no cost savings target attached to the review, it was expected that approximately £75,000 would be saved through the reallocation of workloads and disestablishment of unfilled posts.

The Forum agreed with the concept of an approach to SEN that was whole school focused and not focused on individual pupils. That way, it was envisaged that teachers and support staff would be better able to deal with a wide range of complex SEN and become better qualified in the process.

Forum representatives welcomed a closer working relationship with the Local Authority designed to improve outcomes, add value to existing provision and meet the unmet needs of many children across Blackpool.

The Forum agreed:

1. To note the approval of the local authority's Expression of Interest for a new special free school.
2. To note the Local Authority's plans for a review of high needs provision.
3. To note the Local Authority's plans to close the SERF facilities at Marton and Highfield.
4. To consider the SEND review in detail and be made aware of future developments.

11 INCLUSION

Mrs Wood reported that a bid had been formulated to try to obtain funding from the government's new Strategic School Improvement Grant, specifically to improve Inclusion. Initially eight schools had been identified for additional support. If successful, it was hoped that this could be expanded so that the initial application, if approved, would act as a pilot project or precursor to something larger.

The concept of improving inclusion was agreed as a priority for the Forum and any measures designed to increase transparency and provide clarity were welcomed. Mrs Wood advised that the recently introduced secondary in-year fair access panel meetings had been well attended by Headteachers and had already been successful in aiding inclusion. It was hoped that work undertaken on managed moves and transfer protocols for first day of term would yield similarly positive results.

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The Forum noted the update.

12 EARLY YEARS COMMISSIONING REVIEW

Mr Kim Wood, Commissioning Manager, reported that the outcome of the Early Years Commissioning Review consultation had not yet been published due to the general election held on 8 June 2017. However, it was noted that proposals were under consideration that would achieve the required level of cost reductions without the need for any compulsory redundancies.

The Forum noted the update.

13 ACADEMY UPDATE

Mrs Amanda Whitehead, Head of Schools, Standards and Effectiveness, provided a verbal update to the Forum.

She reported that there had not been any major structural changes to announce. The Forum noted that Moor Park Primary School had indefinitely deferred its decision to join the Mulberry Multi Academy Trust (MAT), but that Stanley Primary School was on track to join the MAT in September 2017. Also announced was the decision of Claremont school to become Westminster Primary Academy as of 1 September 2017.

The Forum noted the update.

14 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

In terms of Local Authority updates, it was reported that Ms Diane Booth had assumed the role of Director of Children's Services.

The Forum was advised that a number of Ofsted inspections had occurred since the last meeting with Kincaig, Christ the King, St Marys and The Pupil Referral Unit all retaining 'good' ratings, and Boundary being upgraded from 'requires improvement' to 'good'. Mrs Whitehead added that following changes to the Ofsted ratings criteria, it had become more difficult to be awarded 'good' or 'outstanding' status. It was also reported that St. Nicholas Primary school had achieved 'Teaching School Status'.

Following a 3 March 2017 Ofsted HMI meeting in Piccadilly, Manchester, it was agreed that an annual meeting be held with senior education figures from the Local Authority to discuss Education, Early Years, Further Education and Skills and Social Care provision across Blackpool.

Mrs Whitehead advised that through the School Improvement Board and its various Sub-Groups, discussions were ongoing on how schools could take a more active role in measures designed to improve inclusion and access. Alongside this, Ms Sally Shaw, Head of the Corporate Delivery Unit, would be devising a communications strategy for the Board.

The Forum noted the update.

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15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the date of the next meeting would be Tuesday 10 October 2017.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 12.00 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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