

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday 25 February 2020
Robertson House, Stevenage

ATTENDANCE:

Chair	Alan Gray
School and PVI Members	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Dave Allen, Geraint Edwards, Robert Fielden, Corina Foster, Anna Greetham, Alan Henshall, Jo Kavakeb, Jan Liversage, Frances Manning, Tracy Prickett, Alison Saunders, Nikki Smith, Robert Smith, Gemma Williamson
Non-School Members	Gary Dixon
Substitutes	
Officers	Simon Newland, Jonathan Burberry, Debbie Pettit, Cheryl Faint, Melany Knowles, Rachael Adler, Ben Fuller, Tracy Warner, Mireille MacRaid
Apologies	Cllr Terry Douris, Cllr Mark Mills-Bishop, Cllr Mark Watkin, Cllr Judy Billing, Nick Rowlands, Wayne Morris, Carole Bennett, Matt Gauthier, Peter Hilton
Observing	John Grubb, Nicki Youngs, Andrew de Csilléry

1. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

Jo Kavakeb, Squirrels Nurseries, replaces Jessica Breakwell as the Nursery PVI representative.

The minutes were recorded as accurate.

Matters arising

Integrated Therapies – it was noted that the interim report will be brought to either the May or June Schools Forum; the Forward Plan Programme has been updated to reflect this.

Item 7 – Format of budget share documents – the updated timescale for the early years budget share data will be Monday 2 March. This will be available of the Early Years Portal.

Charging for admissions appeals – Simon Newland provided an update on this. A working group has been set up; the recommendation from the working group is to cap the number of appeals charged for at 12.5% of a school's PAN. The cap would have a cost (due to reduced income from charges) of approximately £20k. The Authority will be implementing this cap in 2020-21 and therefore it is likely there will be an overspend on the Central School Services Block budget of £20k as a result **Forum was asked to note the change in the order of the agenda – Item 5 will be covered first as this feeds into Item 4.**

2. Standards and quality in Hertfordshire Schools

Andrew de Csilléry, Ben Fuller and Tracy Warner attended from Herts for Learning; Ben Fuller presented the paper to provide Schools Forum with an overview of the standards and quality in schools and early years settings for the academic year 2018/19. The following key points were highlighted:

- There is a high standard of attainment across the board with Hertfordshire in the top or 2nd quintile in almost every indicator
- The percentage of Hertfordshire schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted is good against national statistics.
- Data has been broken down for maintained vs academies; the performance of both sectors is key for all Hertfordshire pupils.
- The greatest area of concern is the pupil premium attainment gap.
- FSM gaps – although Hertfordshire has a wide gap, it should be noted that in many of the statistical neighbour LAs with narrower gaps than ours, attainment of both FSM and non-FSM pupils is lower than in Hertfordshire. At Key Stage 4, only one statistical neighbour LA has FSM pupils achieving higher than in Hertfordshire (2 LAs at Key Stage 2).
- Vulnerable groups:
 - achievement gaps have been there for a while and steps to support schools close the gap are needed
 - the secondary school gap is closing; the Great Expectation framework is linking across the phases and support from DSEAs is good.
 - improvement to close the gap remains a focus of Hertfordshire County Council and Herts for Learning
- EBACCs – currently at 48% in Herts; this is reported on as a DfE measure
- Downward trends in progress at the end of KS2 attributed to a lack of input from TLA HfL support. Evidence indicates that where schools buy in/or schools are given support through de-delegation standards are improving.
- A similar pattern is evident for early years.
- HfL is running a reading fluency project which is having demonstrable impact
- 93% of primary schools buy in HIPs
- Internal pupil assessment data is not looked at by Ofsted in the new Education Inspection Framework
- HfL is supporting teachers in the classroom who provide support for their peers
- KS1/KS2 attainment data is strong
- HfL is seeking how they may reverse the trend in KS2 progress and closing the gaps by
 - accessing those schools who are currently not engaging to get best practice and sharing with schools where it is working. Smart working so it can be achieved within the existing funding envelope
 - looking at the work of our statistical neighbours to bring it back into Hertfordshire
- Recruitment policy – HfL welcomes applications from colleagues with experience in providing support to those schools in challenging areas and with proven experience in raising attainment of disadvantaged pupils. The commitment of applicants to the closing the gap agenda is explored at all interviews

Hertfordshire Strategy for School Improvement document – this is progressing well and in its final draft stage; discussions have taken place with colleague representatives and next steps will be to take this to approximately 30 schools for feedback before going to consultation.

HfL colleagues took a number of questions from Forum members.

Schools Forum thanked HfL colleagues and recognised the hard work provided by Herts for Learning.

3. High level needs budget strategy – final proposals

NB - Forum were asked to note that the table in Item 4.6 ‘Summary of changes’ should reflect a monetary value of £000’s and not £M.

Simon Newland presented this paper as a further update to Schools Forum to set out final proposals for the HLN DSG budget for 2020-21.

In previous years, DSG has been used to meet some of the costs of CLA with SEND in independent placements and it had been proposed that the contribution should be increased by £1.5M. Forum were asked to note the revised proposal set out in the paper that for the coming year 2020-21 this level of increase would not be implemented. Only £0.5M of additional charge for CLA with SEND would be made to the high needs budget in 2020-21, with this being funded by a contribution from DSG carry forward. . The remainder of the budget shortfall resulting from these revised proposals would be found by saving £1M in Children’s Services. .

New system of support for complex needs in mainstream -the sample of 54 cases has been completed but it is unclear whether this fully represents the 1600 children with EHCPs not in receipt of funding.

It is proposed to freeze multiple case allocations as described in the paper.

The paper identifies emerging funding gaps in future years, although the future financial position will be dependent on the amount of high-level needs DSG, which is not yet known. As previously reported the Authority will undertake a review of high needs budgets in order to identify potential savings. Officers need to consider how best to involve stakeholders, including headteachers, in this process.

Action: Simon Newland to write to the headteachers’ associations about the review of high needs budgets.

Schools Forum agreed all the recommendations in section 3 of the paper.

Vote collectively on Items 3.1(i) through to Item 3.1 (viii)

VOTE					
For	15	Against	-	Abstain	-

5. Speech, language and communication support in maintained nursery schools – Ludwick Enrichment Group

NB - Forum were asked to note the following change in the paper – the last sentence of Item 5.1 is to be amended to read “Ludwick Nursery **did** oppose this proposal”.

Melany Knowles presented this item to Schools Forum and provided information on Ludwick Enrichment Group which has been running as a pilot for several years. Following consultation with maintained nursery school HT's; it is now proposed to repurpose £55k funding, with MNS providing matched funding, across the 14 nurseries incorporating the good practice from Ludwick.

Ludwick has made representation and is opposed to the proposal. They have also requested an extension beyond the end of this next academic year until 2021.

In the discussion it was noted that Hertfordshire already has an integrated therapies service commissioned which delivers the same service so why was there a need to split this funding across the 14 nurseries. It was suggested that this resource would be better used if spread across all young people in Hertfordshire who have these areas of needs.

A compromise proposal was put to the meeting that, should Ludwick close, the funding released would go to the SEND development fund in 2020-21. It was noted that this amended proposal had not previously been outlined to Schools Forum.

Schools Forum was asked to consider the recommendations in section 3 of the paper.

Regarding recommendations 3.1(i) and 3.1(ii), two options were voted on, i.e. that as outlined in the original paper and the compromise recommendation.

Option 1 (as per the original paper)

- (i) To agree to repurpose £55k from Early Years Centrally retained funding to support the development of bespoke SLC support in all 14 Maintained Nursery Schools.
- (ii) To agree this funding should be allocated to Maintained Nursery Schools in proportion to pupil numbers at each school.

VOTE					
For	-	Against	-	Abstain	1

Option 2 (adjusted recommendation)

- (i) To agree for 2020-21 to repurpose 7/12th of the £55k (ie. £32k) from the budget for the Ludwick Enrichment Group to the Early Years SEND development fund; to be ringfenced pending a future discussion on how to use this resource.

VOTE					
For	11	Against	2	Abstain	2

Option 2 was adopted and Forum requested that an Impact Statement be produced and brought back to Forum on how best to use this funding.

Forum agreed recommendation 3.1(iii) as per the original paper

- (iii) To continue to fund Ludwick Enrichment Group until the end of the 2019/20 academic school year, to allow a short transition.

VOTE					
For	13	Against	1	Abstain	1

4. Early Years budget 2020-21

Jonathan Burberry presented this paper seeking support from Schools Forum for the 2020-21 early years budget.

In discussion several points were raised in connection with the central early years' budgets.

Section 5.2 School Improvement – The question was raised as to whether the offer is equitable for each sector. A commitment to work towards the equity of the offer over the next year would be welcome.

Mireille MacRaid, who attended from Herts for Learning (HfL) outlined the support offered by HfL to PVI providers.

Section 5.3.1 SEN emerging needs budget – it was noted that this budget is overspending, and the proposal is to increase it by £100k.

Section 5.3.2 SEN support – Again the question was raised as to whether the offer is equitable for each sector. The further work on the relative balance of SEND needs between schools and PVI settings (mentioned in the paper) is viewed as key to taking this forward. One aspect to consider in the work is differences between sectors in how long children have been attending.

It is also necessary to be clear on the cost impact on the early years SEN team from the current Integrated Services for Learning restructuring.

An update on this will be added to the items for the June meeting in the forward work programme.

Early Years Transition Project - Transition information will go out to schools at the end of this academic year. A report on the Transition Project will be brought to Schools Forum in June.

Forum agreed the recommendations as outlined in the paper but with an amendment to item 3.1 (iii) to reflect the outcome of the discussion under item 5 about the Ludwick Enrichment Group.

The Forum:

- i) supported the early years budget proposals set out in this paper,
- ii) supported the increase in the unit funding rates for early years set out in annex A.
- iii) agreed the central early years budgets for 2020-21 set out in annex C, subject to the amendment relating to the budget for Speech, language and communication support in maintained nursery schools agreed in item 5.

VOTE					
For	15	Against	-	Abstain	-

6. Schools Budget Monitor Report 2019-20 End of Autumn Term (Q3)

Debbie Pettit presented this paper to inform Schools Forum of the monitor position for the Schools Budget for 2019-20 at the end of the Autumn Term 2019.

The monitor position set out in the paper was noted by Schools Forum.

7. Forward work programme

The forward work programme and agenda for the next meeting was reviewed.

8. Any other business

No further business was raised.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday 6 May 2020 (subsequently cancelled) with the next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 24 June 2020

Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Venue: Ash Room, HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage