

SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 2 July 2019 **at 1.00 pm at Whitmore High School**

Members Present: Sue Hammond – Headteacher, Whitmore High School (CHAIR)
Pam Virdee – Headteacher, Longfield School (VICE CHAIR)
Mike Baumring - Headteacher, Kenmore Park Junior School
Rebecca Hastings – Headteacher, Cedars Manor School
Sue Maguire – Headteacher, Hatch End High School
Nigel Hewitt – AHGB
Anne Monahan – Headteacher, St Anselm's Primary School
Geraldine Higgins – Headteacher, Sacred Heart Language College
Paul Gamble – Headteacher, Harrow High School
Ian Noutch – Academy High School Finance Manager
Christine Robson – Portfolio Holder, Young People & Schools
Louise Browning – Headteacher, Norbury Primary School

Officers in Attendance: Jo Frost - Finance Business Partner

SH opened the meeting.

1. Apologies and Order of the Agenda

Apologies were received and accepted from:

Patrick O'Dwyer – Div. Director Education Services (Special Needs Services)
David O'Farrell – Headteacher, St Bernadette's Primary School
Anna Smakowska – Headteacher, Woodlands School
Rutinder Mahil-Pooni – Headteacher, Kenmore Park Infant School
Keven Bartle – Headteacher, Canons High School

The order of the agenda was agreed.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 7 May 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2019 were agreed

3. Matters Arising

SH raised a query about the recent consultation in respect of funding for EHCPs in mainstream schools and whether the baselining exercise carried out by the DfE in respect of the High Needs Block included the funding for the £6ks for EHCPs in mainstream schools.

JF explained that the report to Schools Forum had previously covered this and as the baseline was capped to the overall affordability of the DSG but Harrow was spending more than the allocation because of the contribution to the contingency. JF to provide a written response to SH email

ACTION JF

In response to POD's action from the previous meeting JF gave an update on the matrix banding work and other SEN Strategy group work

There was an item included in this about considering proposals to address any negative impact the realignment of the £6k would have on schools with higher numbers of EHCPs

SM requested that this should be considered as a proportion of the whole school population and not just those with large numbers of ECHPs.

SEND Call for Evidence

SH explained that the secondary headteachers had produced a response to the DfE's call for evidence and had circulated it to the group. Primary colleagues will be working on a response, led by Jo Daswani.

4. 2019-20 DSG Budget Monitoring

JF introduced the report which set out the first quarter budget monitoring report for 2019-20.

The report highlights a projected HNB overspend of £3.690m and a small underspend on the Schools Block of £127k in relation to the Growth Fund.

Early Years

JF explained that the current forecasts are to budget but an adjustment will be made to the budget in July to reflect the January 2019 census data. It is anticipated that there will be a likely reduction in respect of 3 & 4 year old and 2 year old funding due to a reduction in participation from the January 2018 to the January 2019 Early Years Census.

High Needs Block

JF explained that the HNB budget had been set at a deficit of £3.3m to reflect the projected shortfall on the overall allocation for 2019-20. The projected overspend is now expected to actually be £3.6m.

JF explained that the forecasts included possible placements for known young people that could happen as well as some capacity for overall growth.

Growth Fund

JF explained that there will be an underspend on the growth fund of £127k due to reallocation from the DfE for growth funding previously allocated to academies by the LA.

Contingency

The report set out the likely impact on the contingency. There is still funding earmarked for clawback for adjustments in relation to the Early Years census and that the final figures should be known at the end of the Summer Term. Any funding not required can go back into the contingency.

Assuming that all of the Early Years funding is required there will be a possible contingency balance of £1.397m by the end of the financial year. The LA requested that Schools Forum consider using some or all of this to mitigate pressures on the High Needs Block.

JF explained that a decision would have to be made on this by the September or October meeting so that if any was required to be included in the School Funding Formula for 2020-21 this would have to be allocated in October. JF also explained that any unspent/uncommitted contingency would by default be offset against the High Needs Block deficit at the end of the year.

In respect of using some of the contingency to support the pressures on the HNB Schools Forum held a vote and unanimously voted not to use the contingency for this purpose.

A discussion followed about other possible use of the contingency.

The following options were considered

- Supporting schools with falling rolls/low pupil numbers
- Provide transitional funding to schools to mitigate the realignment of the £6ks for mainstream EHCPs from the HNB to the Schools Block
- Allocate to the Schools Funding Formula for 2020-21

It was agreed that the decision could not be made until the consultation on the EHCP banding matrix proposals were known. Schools Forum agreed to delay the decision until October.

5. School Place Planning and Admissions

JF introduced a report by Raj Parmar setting out the latest position for primary and secondary place numbers.

A discussion followed about secondary place numbers as the report is showing a possible pressure for Y7. A number of members expressed concern about expansion of secondary schools on a permanent basis to meet the current pressure which may have an adverse impact on those schools currently with vacancies and increase the overall number of school places available in future years which might not be needed. Secondary heads on Schools Forum agreed that all schools needed to work together to ensure this does not happen and if any expansion is required it should be done through bulge classes or infill rather than permanent expansion. SH agreed to raise this with all secondary heads.

ACTION SH

Any Other Business

Ian Nouch announced he is stepping down from Schools Forum in the future as he will no longer be working with Harrow schools. Schools Forum thanked Ian Nouch for his contribution to Schools Forum and wider support to schools over the past few years.

Next Meeting and Agenda Items

The next meeting will take place on 10 September 2019 at Whitmore High School

The meeting closed at 2.30pm

Future Dates

10 September 2019
15 October 2019
19 November 2019
14 January 2020
10 March 2020
5 May 2020
7 July 2020