

SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 17 November 2020 **at 1.00 pm via Zoom**

Members Present: Sue Hammond – Headteacher, Whitmore High School (CHAIR)
Louise Browning – Headteacher, Norbury School (VICE CHAIR)
Rebecca Hastings – Headteacher, Cedars Manor School
Patrick O'Dwyer – Divisional Director Education Services
Geraldine Higgins – Headteacher, Sacred Heart Language College
David O'Farrell – Headteacher, St Bernadette's Primary School
Mike Baumring – Headteacher, Kenmore Park Junior School
Sue Maguire – Headteacher, Hatch End High School
Clare Tarling – Finance Director, Pinner High School
Steven Deanus – Headteacher, Roxeth Primary School
Nick Waldron – Headteacher, Pinner Park Primary School
Chris Briggs – Headteacher, St Joseph's Primary School
PK Maselino – Headteacher, The Helix Education Centre
Councillor Christine Robson – Portfolio Holder Young People & Schools
Anne Monahan – Headteacher, St Anselm's Primary School
Nigel Hewett – AHGB Representative

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:

Jo Daswani – Headteacher, Whitchurch Primary School
Paul Gamble – Headteacher, Harrow High School

The order of the agenda was agreed.

2 The minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2020 were agreed.

3 Matters Arising

a. Trade Union Duties funding for academies

JF advised Schools Forum that the consultation with academies and free schools had closed with no objections to the proposal. This will therefore be implemented from 1st April. Two schools raised concerns about the value per pupil. This will be calculated in January as part of the overall budget setting process and schools will be informed.

b. Scheme for Financing Schools consultation

JF reported that the above consultation had closed and there had been no responses. Therefore, the proposed amendments as set out in the consultation and discussed at Schools Forum in September will proceed as proposed. The updated SFS will be distributed to all maintained schools later this term.

c. Deficit Recovery Plan

Schools Forum requested an update on the HNB Deficit Recovery Plan. It was agreed that this could be brought back in March when the plan has been updated to reflect September 2020 movements and realign the recovery plan to account of the fact that Covid has paused some of the plans proposed in the next 18 months.

4 DSG Budget Setting 2021-22

JF introduced the report which set out the changes to the 2021-22 School Funding Formula and the outcome of the School Funding Formula consultation.

SH reiterated the importance of schools being aware of the TPG and TPECG being rolled into funding formula baseline and in particular that that the funding would only relate to September 2018 and 2019 pay increases and any further increases for September 2020 and beyond would not be reflected in the funding.

SH queried the changes in IDACI and whether there was any information about the national picture. JF stated that this may be available once the October 2020 census datasets had been distributed to LAs in December.

JF explained that there had been 9 responses to the Schools Funding Consultation which all supported the application of the highest MFG within the allowable range and subject to affordability of the whole funding formula.

Schools Forum voted and all members voted in favour of applying the highest MFG within the allowable range subject to affordability.

The final MFG will be determined in January during the completion of the Authority Proforma Tool in advance of submitting school budgets to the DfE.

5 Q2 DSG Budget Monitoring 2020-21

JF introduced the report which set out the position on the DSG at Q2 in 2020-21.

- Schools Forum noted the balanced position on the Early Years Block but noted that due to Covid the distribution of funding is different this year and makes forecasting the final outturn difficult.
- Schools Forum noted the projected overspend of £3.157m on the High Needs Block.
- Schools Forum noted the projected underspend of £155k on the Schools Block (Growth Fund)
- Schools Forum noted the position on the contingency and agreed to hear Item 6 before making a final decision on how this would be committed.

6 Raising Achievement and Reducing Exclusions of Black Caribbean Boys in Harrow Schools

POD introduced the report which set out a rationale to seek agreement from Schools Forum to allocate funding to raise the achievement of boys of Black Caribbean heritage (BBCH) in Harrow schools and to reduce the risk of permanent exclusion for this group.

POD set out the proposal which would be school led and for which 95% of the funding requested would be spent by schools with a further 5% contributing to LA functions in relation to data gathering

and analysis and an element of officer support time across other services to support the project. It is proposed this would be funded from the schools brought forward contingency.

This is proposed to be a focused project but with outcomes that can be applied to other groups.

Questions were raised by the Forum

GH queried whether other areas of the LA are contributing and how the funding amounts requested had been calculated. POD explained that there is already another internal project in the LA to set up an independent researcher looking at permanent exclusions. The funding amounts are an estimate based on previous projects but the working group would keep this under review. GH welcomed a school led project and that it would be kept under review by Schools Forum.

POD also stated that it was important that the working group seek to establish how this work could be sustained once the project has ceased.

LB queried who would lead the working group. POD expressed his view that it should be led by a representative schools' working group and may be developed across groups of schools or in existing clusters of schools. LB queried how they could ensure that children's services and health would be part of the project. POD advised that as well as a data analyst an officer from social care would join the working party and the Council would look at other appropriate support.

In general, Schools Forum supported the project in principle however the amount and length of funding was discussed in conjunction with the projected balance on the schools brought forward contingency as set out in Item 5 on the agenda.

Use of the schools brought forward contingency

- LA requested £274k previously earmarked to High Needs projects be rolled forward to 2021-22 as Covid had paused or prevented a number of projects from proceeding. This was AGREED.
- Secondary bulge class funding £274k has not been needed for September 2020. It was suggested that this funding be reduced to £100k and the remainder be released back to the contingency. This was AGREED.
- Item 6 funding request was discussed. At this stage Forum members were reluctant to release the full £230k funding request until the working group and more detailed project parameters were established. There it was suggested that funding for Y1 of £80k, as noted in the paper, be released and the funding for Y2 of £150k be agreed in principle but not yet released. This was AGREED.

A discussion took place regarding the remainder of the contingency and how to commit it.

MB expressed concern about the impact of Covid and how the claims for reimbursement of costs so far had been limited to three specific areas but that the biggest area of pressure has been employing supply staff where permanent staff are sick or self isolating. A number of other members agreed with this and queried whether some of the unspent contingency could be earmarked to a 'Covid Support Fund' that might help schools cover some of the existing cost pressures.

SH stated that a mechanism for distributing the funding would have to be considered as it would not be fair to distribute on a 'first come, first served' basis and that those schools who had capacity to put together a bid would benefit more than those schools who didn't.

SH suggested that this could be considered in more detail in January when more is known about further possible government Covid claim schemes in the Autumn term and also have a better indication of the impact of Covid on school balances.

SH suggested the following option for the remaining funds in the contingency

Option A – 50/50 split between ‘Covid Support Fund’ and Schools Funding Formula

Option B – all allocated to a ‘Covid Support Fund’

Option C – all allocated to the Schools Funding Formula

A vote took place and the outcome was as follows

Option A – 7

Option B – 1

Option C – 0

Final proposal for Schools Contingency

Description	Value
High Needs Block Projects	£274
Secondary school bulge classes	£100
Raising Achievement BBCH Project Y1 (agreed & released)	£80
Raising Achievement BBCH Project Y2 (agreed in principle subject to updates to SF)	£150
Establishment of ‘Covid Support Fund’	£532
Allocated to Schools Funding Formula 2021-22	£532
Total	£1,120

7 Any Other Business

Thank yous

SH expressed thanks to Jo Daswani who is stepping down from Schools Forum and Anne Monahan who is retiring at the end of December for their contribution to Schools Forum over the last few years. Schools Forum wished them well.

SH requested that primary colleagues seek a replacement for JD (AH replacement already identified).

Next Meeting

The meeting closed at 2.30pm

The next meeting will take place on 19 January 2021.