

SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 4 May 2021 **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
Steven Deanus – Headteacher, Roxeth Primary School
Chris Briggs – Headteacher, St Joseph's Primary School
Councillor Christine Robson – Portfolio Holder Young People & Schools
Clare Tarling – Finance Director, Pinner High School
PK Maselino – Headteacher, The Helix Education Centre
Lee Helyer – Headteacher, Kingsley High School
Rashid Benserghin – Headteacher, Roxbourne Primary School
Nick Waldron – Headteacher, Pinner Park Primary School

Officers in Attendance:

Jo Frost - Finance Business Partner
Carole Wells – SEND Programme Manager

SH opened the meeting.

1 Apologies and Order of the Agenda

Apologies were received and accepted from:

Lisa Michael – AHGB

The order of the agenda was agreed.

2 The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2021 were agreed.

3 Matters Arising

Growth Funding – general

In response to a number of schools expressing concern that NOR had increased significantly since the October 2020 census it was agreed that there would be a fund to support schools whose NOR has increased between October 2020 and May 2021 census. A diminimus will be applied so that schools will only be funded per pupil over a certain percentage increase which will be agreed after reviewing the overall census NOR changes. This will be brought back to a later schools forum.

ACTION JF

4 DSG Budget Outturn 2020-21

JF introduced the report which set out the provisional outturn position on the DSG for 2020-21.

Early Years Block

There is a provisional underspend on the EYB of £1.566m mainly as a result of COVID-19 as a number of settings remained closed during parts of 2020-21 and participation was significantly reduced. It is anticipated that this will be either be clawed back or required to support the 2020-21 budget as participation was significantly lower on the January 2021 census which will be used to , in part, determine funding for 2021-22.

Schools Forum agreed to earmark this underspend pending finalisation of clawbacks and the 2021-22 budget later on this year.

Schools Block

There is an underspend of £167k on the Schools Block which had been previously reported and relates to the growth fund.

High Needs Block

There is a provisional overspend of £860k on the High Needs Block. This has reduced from the figures reported in previous periods however this adds to the existing deficit of £2.944m taking the projected cumulative deficit at March 2021 to £3.8m

Schools Forum noted the position on the Schools and High Needs Blocks.

Meeting outcomes

Schools Forum

- Agreed to earmark the Early Years underspend to future EY clawbacks/budget reductions
- Noted the position on the Schools Block
- Noted the position on the High Needs Block

5 DSG Deficit Management Plan

CW introduced the report which set out the updated DSG Deficit Management Plan for 2021-2024. Schools Forum was asked to review, comment and discuss the DMP and note that the DMP does not bring the deficit back into balance.

CW explained that further work needs to be undertaken to enable and facilitate partnership working to enable and support more inclusion. There needs to be consideration of wording in EHCPs, lobby the government to set consistent and clear guidelines, get schools involved in panels and decision making. It is recognised that COVID-19 has limited capacity to further these discussions.

SD queried the position in other LAs. CW explained that most London LAs have a deficit to varying degrees. However Harrow's number of EHCPs and spend is proportionately in line with other LAs. The projections include growth in complexity which adds to the pressures.

MB queried the projected growth between 2020 and 2022. CW explained that part of the growth was due to data cleansing but also anticipated increases in EY and FE students.

SH noted that the major changes in growth are projected in the INMSS sector. CW explained that the projections assume that capacity in-borough is finite. There is limited physical capacity for additional specialist provision and therefore growth would likely need to go to INMSS where there is capacity.

SM queried the appendix and whether it's possible to show the spend per EHCP. CW agreed to circulate

ACTION CW

SH queried whether Harrow is an outlier in regards to it's ability to manage the deficit. JF explained that the majority of LAs have a deficit of some degree. The DfE has agreed safety valve agreements with five LAs with the highest deficits (circa £20m each).

LH noted that growing new places would require double funding at the start whilst young people continued to be placed out of borough. CW agreed that the shift would take time.

PK suggested that The Helix could offer a different type of provision or service which would support the SEND Strategy. CW agreed to take forward these discussions

ACTION CW/PK

Meeting outcomes

Schools Forum:

- Noted the position on the Deficit Management Plan

6 Any Other Business

None

Next Meeting

The meeting closed at 1.55pm

The next meeting will take place on 13 July 2021.