

SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 8 March 2022 **at 1.00 pm via Zoom**

Members Present: Sue Hammond – Headteacher, Whitmore High School (CHAIR)
Louise Browning – Headteacher, Norbury School (VICE CHAIR)
Patrick O'Dwyer – Divisional Director Education Services
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
Lee Helyer – Headteacher, Kingsley High School
Sash Hamidi – Executive Headteacher, The Pegasus Partnership Trust
David O'Farrell – Headteacher, St Bernadette's Primary School
Rashid Bensserghin – Headteacher, Roxbourne Primary School
Collette O'Dwyer – Headteacher, Park High School
Mike Baumring – Headteacher, Kenmore Park Junior 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:

Sarah Marriott – Headteacher, Pinner Wood Primary School

The order of the agenda was agreed.

2 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2022 were agreed.

3 Matters Arising

Action carried forward from meeting 16 November 2022.

Is it possible to track a cohort of students from mainstream secondary provision and the cost of the EHCP compared with cost of college provision. Request extended to include primary to secondary.

ACTION JF

Update on new entrants to Harrow schools since October 2021 Schools Census

POD provided an update. 52 students from out of borough have been given a place at a Harrow school. 42 students who are resident of Harrow but who previously did not attend a Harrow school have now been given a place at a Harrow school. These figures will be checked back to the January 2022 census. SH queried what the net inflow/outflow position is since October 2021 census.

ACTION POD

Trade Union Facilities Time Consultation Update

POD provided an update. The LA is intending to consult on two models, one proposed by a headteacher working group and the other proposed by the LA. The intention is to start the consultation on 14 March for 2 weeks.

SaH queried whether this funding paid for work carried out by the TU rep for other LAs. POD explained that this should not be the case and whilst the funding would enable the rep to have time off for regional meetings and training, this funding can only be used to support Harrow staff in Harrow maintained schools, academies & free schools. POD explained that the LA will be requesting information from unions to confirm this is not happening.

4 National Funding Formula Background Information

JF introduced the report which set out the background to the NFF and the current position in Harrow. JF explained that the report had been prepared as a result of a number of queries at the previous Schools Forum meeting and subsequently by email mainly in relation to the differential between the primary and secondary funding rates.

JF explained that the table showing other London LA's primary and secondary funding ratio was from 2020-21 and since then a number of these LAs have moved nearer to the NFF.

There was a general discussion about the content of the report. There was a general recognition that the overall funding level remains the same and that any change between how funding is allocated between primary and secondary would be a shift from one sector the other.

SH explained that one of the advantages of moving to the NFF has been that schools who should benefit from gains in the formula due to increases in eg deprivation have been able to gain where historically gains had to be capped in order to afford the MFG.

SaH queried whether there was a possibility of introducing a Falling Rolls Fund.

SH explained that this fund has been discussed periodically when there were falling rolls in the secondary sector and it was never implemented partly because schools had to be judged Ofsted Good or Outstanding and this would have excluded one school in particular. But also the general view that for every vacant place that is funded this reduces funding available for pupils actually in school.

RB queried whether this could be considered for schools which are on a recovery path as trying to stabilize numbers on rolls is one of the main challenges.

JF explained that the Falling Rolls Fund has strict criteria of which one is that the LA place planning shows that the vacant places will be needed within the next 3 financial years. There is no discretion as to eligibility and no qualitative factors.

CB queried the scale of falling rolls. POD stated that we are seeing approx. 300 fewer children in reception classes year on year.

SH reminded Schools Forum that funding is provided through the contingency to support schools whose numbers on roll increase between the October and following May census. SH asked Schools Forum to consider whether there should be a Falling Rolls Fund in the future or whether the current arrangements to support schools with increases between October and May was sufficient for now. Members voted as follows:

Funding for increase in NOR	8
Trigger Funding	0
Undecided	1
Abstention	1

RB queried why 2% was the threshold for this funding. SH explained that there needed to be a trigger but this could be reviewed in September 2022 to determine whether this continues to be the appropriate threshold.

ACTION JF

5 Review of ARMs and EHCP Funding

SH explained that this item had been added to the agenda in response to a number of queries from headteachers regarding funding for ARMs and EHCPs as there has been no increase in funding levels for a number of years.

POD explained that the ARMs review is very much a priority. Covid has delayed this. Catherine Milmine is in the process of setting up the next headteacher group. Implementation of any changes will be April 2023. SH queried whether headteachers would be expected to do all of the work. POD clarified that the review is being carried out by the LA but that headteacher voices must be part of this.

POD explained with regards to the special schools the review was due to be carried out in 2021-22 but after conversations with special schools it was accepted that this review could be delayed to 2022-23 due to Covid. POD clarified that this delay would not have been proposed if the LA didn't think that special schools had enough funding in this financial year.

POD set out the position in relation to EHCP top up funding in mainstream schools. This review cannot be carried out before 2022-23. However, it should be noted that the EHCP Support Fund has increased from £500k in 2021 to over £800k in 2023. In addition, the LA is proposing to provide an additional 1.25% on the top up funding to fund the NI increase Health & Social Care Levy and wider costs.

SH stated that the fact that the top up funding is not indexed is wholly unacceptable. Prices in the independent sector continue to rise which the LA funds.

SaH queried why this review is not considered more important.

POD explained that all these reviews are substantial pieces of work. The LA is currently investing in additional staff in SEND services however there is still a capacity issue as only a fixed number of people have the skills and expertise to carry out the reviews.

SH queried why inflation cannot be applied in 2022-23 as an interim measure until the review is carried out.

JF explained that there is no mechanism for this and no governance process as this would have to be signed off by the LA and in the absence of a formal review and consultation there is no rationale for any increases. As a point of principle it would also be difficult to agree any future indexation as the HNB is allocated annually so it is not possible for the LA to commit to ongoing funding increases without knowing its future years funding allocations. However, the 1.25% can be agreed as this additional funding in the HNB for this purpose.

MB queried what the LA is doing to increase in-borough provision as increasing spend in the HNB has been a problem for a number of years.

POD clarified that the LA has not had a conversation about freezing funding to schools to manage the HNB deficit. At present there are 3 or 4 new ARMs provision in the pipeline and there are also conversations about expanding some existing specialist provision.

LB stated that is disappointing that something else can't be done in the interim as it is difficult to meet pupils needs without adequate funding.

SaH queried whether any of the uncommitted contingency funding could be used to support a transitional arrangement in 2022-23. It was agreed that this could be discussed at a future meeting

ACTION JF

SH requested information on whether other LAs apply indexation to EHCP/ARMs/special school funding

ACTION JF

6 Update on BBCH Project

LB provided a verbal update on the BBCH Project. LB explained that there has been slow progress. There has been discussions about possibly working with the voluntary sector but this has now been discounted as an option and the likely next steps is for 2 key workers to be recruited. Details need to still be worked out as to whether they will be employed by the LA or school(s). There are also discussions as to whether this can follow the Social Workers In Schools (SWIS) model.

LB explained that there is still some work to undertake with Sarah Douglass to finalise the research report which is taking longer as parental engagement is varied.

LB clarified that the project will work with a wider group than just pupils of Black Caribbean Heritage.

5 Any Other Business

Schools SLAs

MB expressed concern about the LA SLA offer for building maintenance having not yet received any figures for next year or any information about possible rebates for 2021-22 for reactive maintenance. SH requested that MB set out a list of issues on an email and SH will formally write to Dipti Patel and Michael O'Rourke in the Community directorate in her capacity as Chair of Schools Forum.

Schools Payroll

LH queried whether there was any financial support available to schools in the transition phase of moving to new payroll provider. JF suggested that LH contact Akhil Wilson in the HR service as Kingsley is in a unique position and this would have to be dealt with a specific issue rather than generic to all schools

Thank you and goodbye to Councillor Robson

Councillor Robson thanked Schools Forum for its hard work and support. Schools Forum thanked Councillor Robson for her interest and attendance at Schools Forum and for her wider work in support of children in Harrow.

The meeting closed at 2:45pm