

SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 17 January 2023 **at 1.00 pm via MS Teams**

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
Lee Helyer – Headteacher, Kingsley High School
Sash Hamidi – Executive Headteacher, The Pegasus Partnership Trust
David O'Farrell – Headteacher, St Bernadette's Primary School
Mike Baumring – Headteacher, Kenmore Park Junior School
Nick Waldron – Headteacher, Pinner Park Primary School
Collette O'Dwyer – Headteacher, Park High School
Rashid Benserghin – Headteacher, Roxbourne Primary School
Paul Gamble – Headteacher, Harrow High School
Geraldine Higgins – Headteacher, Sacred Heart High School
Raj Patel – Headteacher, Pinner High School
Annette Cast – Principal, Stanmore College

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 8 November were agreed.

3 Matters Arising

Update on ARMs Provision

POD explained that 4 new ARMs provisions are on track to be delivered September 2023. There are also 10 other schools which have expressed an interest in opening a resource provision. In addition, the LA is working with Harrow College and Stanmore College to access more high needs provision.

4 DSG Budget Setting 2023-24

JF introduced the report which set out the final 2023-24 DSG allocation and details of proposed school budgets for 2023-24

DSG Allocation

JF discussed Table 1 which set out the breakdown of the DSG allocation in 2023-24. DOF raised concern about the differential between the primary and secondary funding allocation stating that primary funding needs to be increased. DOF queried whether this can be raised with the DfE. JF stated that outside of a formal consultation process it is unlikely that there is a forum or process to make this representation.

SH explained that in the original NFF consultation concern was expressed that primary funding was too low. SaH suggested raising through Unions.

Growth Fund

JF set out the proposed commitments to the growth fund in 2023-24. The rationale for the figures was noted and the growth fund, including proposed funding available, was agreed.

MFG

Schools Forum noted the proposed MFG at 0%.

Contingency

Schools Forum noted the proposals for use of the contingency.

- *Funding to support schools during EHCP assessments £300k* – agreed in Nov 2022
Schools Forum revisited the discussion regarding this fund. Clarification is required regarding eligibility criteria, application, and approval process and where the funding will be managed. It was agreed to continue the discussion outside of the meeting

ACTION POD/SaH/LB

- *Fund loss of SIMB grant for up to three years*
Schools Forum, at its meeting in November 2022, requested additional information to understand the costs and benefits to schools of funding the loss of the grant from the contingency. This has subsequently been provided. In addition, the LA has reduced its request from £270k over three years to £180k over 3 years.

It was suggested that the funding be allocated to the LA on a ringfenced basis specifically for the recruitment of an additional school improvement advisor. POD expressed concern that flexibility is needed in order to manage this funding as school improvement is provided by a number of different roles and not one specific post.

After further discussion, funding of £180k was agreed, over three years.

- *Contribute to school budgets in 2023-24 £1.1m* – agreed in Nov 2022
Schools Forum, at its meeting in November 2022, agreed to allocate the remaining £1.1m in the contingency to support school budgets in 2023-24 by allocating funding as a lump sum to schools, outside of the NFF, based on pupil numbers. However, since then the funding has reduced by £200k to support the proposals in the growth fund (agreed above) to £900k as per allocations in Appendix E. As a result of the reduction in request for SIMB funding from £270k to £180k, a further £90k can be released back into the contingency. Schools Forum agreed to add this to the £900k, taking the total one-off funding to support school budgets in 2023-24 to £990k.

Schools Forum noted the methodology of allocating funding to mainstream schools based on pupil numbers. Schools Forum agreed to allocate £10k lump sum to special schools and The Helix, as proposed.

Agreed use of contingency in 2023-24

Proposal	Allocation
2023-24 School Budgets in line with NFF plus allocations for special schools and PRU	£990k
Funding to support EHCP assessment period – funding allocated over 2 years	£300k
Backfilling loss of SIMB grant for 2 years	£180k

High Needs Block

JF introduced the High Needs Block funding allocation for 2023-24 as set out at Table 8. Schools Forum noted the allocation of 3.4% from the High Needs Additional Grant. LH expressed concern that this is still a real cash loss to special schools as the increase does not meet the cost of the pay awards.

SH queried the rationale behind the LA drafting funding proposals for mainstream EHCPs and ARMs provisions without involving schools or without a consultation. POD explained that this is an interim measure to provide some additional funding to schools in 2023-24 whilst the formal funding reviews are underway. However, due to the deficit position on the HNB there are internal council governance requirements which have to be met in order to commit additional funding.

The following points were made:

- funding reviews have been promised for 3-4 years and not delivered
- ARMS have had a 25% real term reduction in funding based on increased costs since 2013
- special schools have also seen real term reductions as the 3.4% increase does not cover the cost of the pay awards
- there is concern that the LA is putting forward a proposal through an internal governance process that has not been discussed or considered by school heads
- comment from the chair: schools will begin to refuse to take pupils with EHCPs or in ARMS provision stating that funding is inadequate for a safe provision
- LA has continued to pay expensive out of borough providers at the expense of its own schools

POD acknowledged the points as raised and confirmed that funding is now in place to bring in additional capacity to lead the funding reviews in 2023-24 and that any proposals being developed are interim proposals to bridge the 2023-24 financial year until the outcome of the reviews can be implemented from April 2024.

Early Years Block

Schools Forum noted the Early Years Block.

Schools Forum:

- Noted the DSG allocation at Table 1
- Agreed the final position on the Growth Fund and sources of funding at Table 2
- Noted overall funding formula and distributed funding at Appendix A

- Noted indicative formula derived 2023-24 budgets at school level at Appendix B and changes between years at Appendix C
- Noted the final MFG from paragraph 25
- Noted the Mainstream School Additional Grant (MSAG) at Appendix D
- Agreed the final position on the use of the 2022-23 contingency (with minor changes set out above) in 2023-24 and noted the one-off funding at Appendix E
- Noted the High Needs Block Funding at Table 8
- Noted the Early Years Block Funding at Table 10

5 Any Other Business

None

The meeting closed at 14:50