

## **SCHOOLS FORUM**

### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 7 March 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 – Director of Education  
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  
Colette 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  
Sarah Marriott – Headteacher, Pinner Wood Primary School

**Officers in Attendance:** Jo Frost – Finance Business Partner

SH opened the meeting.

#### **1 Apologies and Order of the Agenda**

No apologies were received.

The order of the agenda was agreed.

#### **2 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January were agreed.**

#### **3 Matters Arising**

##### **BBCH Update**

SM updated Schools Forum in relation to the BBCH project. The posts have been advertised for the second time and interviews are being held w/c 13 March 2023.

#### **4 DSG Final Budgets 2023-24**

JF introduced the report which set out the final 2023-24 schools budgets issued to schools on 28 February 2023.

##### **DSG Allocation**

Schools Forum noted the final DSG allocation and distribution of funding.

##### **Growth Fund**

Schools Forum noted the updated growth fund

## Contingency

Schools Forum noted and agreed the updated contingency.

### Agreed use of contingency in 2023-24

| Proposal  | Allocation £'000 |
|---|------------------|
| 2023-24 School Budgets plus allocations for special schools and PRU | £990             |
| Funding to support EHCP assessment period – allocated over 2 years  | £300             |
| Backfilling LA loss of SIMB grant for 2 years                       | £180             |
| Growth fund shortfall   | £200             |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>£1,670</b>    |
| Add back reduced requirement for growth fund shortfall              | -£134            |
| Revised commitments   | £1,536           |
| Balance brought forward   | £1,716           |
| <b>Uncommitted carry forward to 2023-24</b>                         | <b>£180</b>      |

## High Needs Block

JF introduced the HNB and confirmed the additional funding for in borough SEND provision as agreed by Harrow Council Cabinet in February 2023.

*There followed a discussion about various aspects of the additional funding however the majority of the discussion took place under AOB and so the notes from both discussions have been pulled together in one section under AOB.*

## 5 NEU Report to Schools Forum

Schools Forum noted the report from NEU. Schools Forum thanked the NEU for the summary report and requested that the detail behind this report be kept for 5 years. SH explained that this year Schools Forum will accept the report however next year they require a breakdown of activity for the period which they are claiming backfill funding.

ACTION POD

On this basis Schools Forum:

- Agreed to release backfill funding to the two relevant schools for NEU TU union rep duties in 2022-23 (financial year)

SM stated that there is an NASUWT rep working at Hatch End. POD has not been advised by NASWT of a school-based rep.

SM requested that funds be released to Hatch End as the rep has been undertaking TU duties for 1 day per fortnight.

Schools Forum requested that NASUWT provide a report accounting for the days claimed. Subject to receipt of a satisfactory report, Schools Forum would agree to release funding.

ACTION POD

## Any Other Business

### High Needs Block

In relation to the additional funding approved by Harrow Council Cabinet in February 2023 SH made the following points:

- ARMS 10% - acceptable as an interim solution but to be noted that this is only a 10% increase in 10 years
- Special schools – based on guidance, no comments
- EHCPs 3.4% - significant concern by schools

The main points raised in relation to mainstream EHCPs were as follows:

- No increase for 5 years except for 1.25% in 2022-23
- Head teachers feel the funding is totally inadequate
- Head teachers are preparing to write a letter to all parents to explain that Harrow Council does not provide enough funding to support pupils with EHCPs in mainstream schools
- The council funds mainstream EHCPs for Harrow residents in other local authority schools at a higher rate than Harrow residents in Harrow schools
- By not receiving adequate High Needs funding for EHCPs, schools are then required to cut funding for other pupils in order to meet needs.
- Other LA costs and those in out of borough independent non-maintained school provision continues to rise and the council continues to pay these increases

POD responded to the concerns explaining that Members had been told when the funding was last increased and also advised members that the funding reviews in 2023-24 are likely to identify that additional funding is required for SEND in borough provision.

POD also noted that the LA has taken a generous interpretation of the guidance related to the use of the SEND Support Fund which strictly speaking is only be used to fund very exceptional cases where schools have a significantly disproportionate number of EHCPs. However, Harrow schools benefit if they have above average number of EHCPs compared with other Harrow primary or secondary schools. This means that over 50% of Harrow schools benefit from some level of funding from this fund which should be considered in conjunction with other EHCP funding.

POD set out the timescale for the reviews which is to appoint a provider to undertake the reviews in March/April, carry out the work in Summer term, consultation in Autumn term, paper to Schools Forum in January 2024 and to Cabinet for approval in February 2024.

SH reiterated that the increased funding for EHCPs is unsatisfactory. Schools will take the matter further if the +3.4% additional funding for 2023-24 is not increased further. ASCL has advised that schools should offer a final discussion with officers and Members to try to resolve before any next step. SH/SaH/LB offered to meet with relevant officers and Members to further this issue. Any information provided to members should include

- Comparator data with other LAs
- % increase in grade G2 and M5 since 2018-19

ACTION POD/JF

## **Free School Bid**

JF advised Schools Forum that the recent Free School Special School bid to the DfE, despite being described as 'approvable' was not successful with written feedback suggesting this was due to the high number of bids. POD stated that the LA had been offered an opportunity for informal feedback from the DfE and the LA has requested this feedback.

Schools Forum thanked the LA for their work on this bid.

The meeting closed at 14:00