

## **SCHOOLS FORUM**

### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 12 September 2023** **at 1.00 pm via MS Teams**

**Members Present:** Sash Hamidi – Exec Headteacher, The Pegasus Partnership Trust (CHAIR)  
Nick Waldron – Headteacher, Pinner Park Primary School (VICE CHAIR)  
Patrick O'Dwyer – Director of Education  
Steven Deanus – Headteacher, Roxeth Primary School  
Chris Briggs – Headteacher, St Joseph's Primary School  
Sue Hammond – Headteacher, Whitmore High School (CHAIR)  
Louise Browning – Headteacher, Norbury School (VICE CHAIR)  
David O'Farrell – Headteacher, St Bernadette's Primary School  
Mike Baumring – Headteacher, Kenmore Park Junior 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 7 March were agreed.

#### **3 Matters Arising**

##### **Election of Chair & Vice Chair**

Sash Hamidi was nominated and seconded for the role of Chair

Nick Waldron was nominated and seconded for the role of Vice Chair

SH requested a formal note of thanks to Sue Hammond who has fulfilled the role of Chair of Schools Forum for many years and for all the work she has undertaken for Harrow schools in general.

#### **4 DSG Budget Setting 2024-25**

JF introduced the report which set out the changes to school funding for 2024-25 and indicative school budgets.

Schools were advised that these are indicative budgets and will be updated in January 2024 to reflect changes from the October 2023 schools census including pupil numbers, pupil characteristics and final MFG dependent on affordability of overall formula

MB queried whether this funding included the London Mayor's UFSM allocations. JF clarified that these are separate.

SH queried whether the LA would continue funding for the London Mayor's UFSM programme beyond the one-year programme funded by the Mayor of London. POD confirmed that the LA will not provide funding beyond the end of the existing programme.



NW and SH raised particular concern about the cost implications of the proposed non-teaching support staff pay awards as there is no extra funding for these.

### **Growth Fund**

JF advised that growth funding will be updated in December 2023 based on the October 2023 schools' census. In January 2024 Schools Forum will need to decide how much funding to allocate to the growth fund to support new mainstream places in 2024-25.

SH request that the LA share its latest school projections. POD advised that the next report will be going to Cabinet in November 2023 and will be circulated at that point.

ACTION POD

### **Notional SEN**

JF introduced the item which set out the DfE's requirement for LAs to review the notional SEN calculation for 2024-25 despite there being no national approach to the calculation of Notional SEN.

SuH explained that the problem with SEN Support figures is that schools self-identify pupils with SEN Support so this is not an objective measure of whether funding is appropriate or not but could disincentivize schools to identify more pupils with SEN support

JF explained that the number of pupils with SEN Support would not change the level of actual or notional SEN funding because the calculation is a % of the existing main school budget. Hence it notionally identifies an SEN budget for a school budget does not impact or change actual cash funding to schools.

NW raised concern that this is a government initiative to refute schools' claims that they do have sufficient funds to support pupils with SEN and SEN Support.

JF stated that an initial review of the 2023-24 Notional SEN will be brought back to the meeting in November 2023.

## **5 Update on DSG 2023-24**

JF introduced the report which set out the projected DSG position for 2023-24

### **Early Years**

JF introduced the item relating to the Early Years Supplementary Grant which is new for September 2023 and will continue into 2024-25 financial year.

There was a query as to when providers would get the Early Years Supplementary Grants. JF stated that it would be provided alongside providers claims for the main EYSFF funding on a termly basis.

### **High Needs**

JF set out the projected position on the HN Block for 2023-24 which has a forecast overspend of £2.014m mainly as a result of increased number of children, young people moving into the independent sector in particular from mainstream schools and price and other inflationary increases.

NW queried how many pupils currently in mainstream provision who would be allocated a specialist provision if there were places available. POD estimates around 90 at this point.

An update on the SEND funding reviews was requested. POD stated that the review will include a view as to whether we are funding appropriately in all settings, whether we have the right



arrangements for pupils with SEND and if there are any other ways of making provision that might be better for the child and support the delivery of a sustainable budget. The review is due to complete by end September 2023 and the outcome for any decisions required will go to Cabinet in February 2024. In between those dates the findings will be fed back to schools and where necessary consultation will take place towards the end of this term.

SH requested an update on the new ARMs provision. POD explained that they are due to open in mid to late October however all the pupils identified for the provision in the first phase of opening are already in the school.

### **Deficits**

JF set out the update to the Local Authority (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (updated 2022) which set out statutory rules for how the DSG deficit is calculated which no longer allows for separate reserves with surpluses to be held for some blocks of the DSG where the overall net outcome is a deficit. JF explained that this means going forwards any underspends from other blocks will need to be consolidated with any deficits on the HNB. There will be no opportunity to repurpose underspends to other blocks or for other projects.

### **Growth Funding 2023-24**

JF raised the issue of school places for September 2023 on behalf of Raj Parmar Head of School Organisation, Admissions and Attendance. There is currently a pressure on places in KS2 which might mean a bulge class is required later this term or next term. In addition, there is potential to open a Y11 ESOL class from January 2024. Both of these would require Schools Forum approval in respect of releasing funding from the growth fund for these classes.

MB added that there is currently 300 cases weekly at the Fair Access Panel and all schools are being asked to take over numbers in some year groups.

SuH queried whether primary schools whose PANs have been informally reduced can resolve the shortage of places. POD explained that in most cases they are not geographically located in the planning areas where the demand is higher.

There was a query as to whether the LA could transport pupils to a school with vacancies. POD explained that this would be a precedent that we would not want to set as children can travel free on public transport. In addition, JF pointed out that the disproportionate costs would make it unaffordable.

SuH queried whether the guidance on distance travelled to school could be reviewed so that if the acceptable mileage was further, this could help to resolve the issue where demand and places are not in the same area.

ACTION POD

LB pointed out that Harrow has many great transport links, and it would be risky to provide transport and set a precedent we couldn't continue with.

Schools Forum requested a short paper setting out the current pressures by year group and the proposals for use of the growth fund. If necessary, this can be considered virtually if a decision is required before the next Schools Forum meeting in November.

ACTION POD

Schools Forum wished to thank Raj and her team for all the work they are doing to secure school places for children.



### **Any Other Business**

There is a vacancy for an academy representative (primary or secondary)

ACTION SH

The meeting closed at 14:50