

Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Wednesday, 18th April, 2012

Present: Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
Julia Shepard, Beechwood Secondary School (Vice-Chair)
Barbara Clark, Godolphin Junior School
John Constable, Langley Grammar
Harry Duffy, Ryvers Primary School
Martin Davis, Colnbrook Primary School
Maureen Mallinson, Westgate Secondary School
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton Secondary School
Charlie McGeachie, Montem Primary School
Kevin O'Driscoll, St Joseph's High School
Jon Reekie, James Elliman Primary School
Mary Sparrow, Wexham Secondary School
Maggie Stacey, St Anthony's RC Primary School
Lynda Bussley, NUT (Observer)

Observers: Lynda Bussley, NUT

Other Attendees Angela Mellish

Officers: Robin Crofts, Clair Pyper and Wendy Sagar

Apologies: Helen Huntley, Diane Lister, Jo Rockall, Councillor Natasa Pantelic, Emma Foy and Christina West

PART I

113. Apologies

Jo Rockall, Diane Lister, Natasa Pantelic, Helen Huntley, Emma Foy, Christina West

114. Declarations of Interest

Lynda Bussley (item 4)

115. Minutes of last meeting 6th March 2012 and Matters Arising

SEN Funding review: It was confirmed the £40k Services Supporting Behaviour funding is still available, and will be carried forward by SBC. Concern was expressed about the time it has taken to resolve this matter. Clair Pyper and Robin Crofts will continue to work on and progress the issue. There are implications around the Head of Service retiring this August.

Haybrook funding: A meeting took place immediately after the last Schools Forum between Helen Huntley, Clair Pyper and Wendy Sagar where a misunderstanding had been cleared up. Subsequent productive meetings have taken place between Wendy Sagar and Helen Huntley.

Schools Forum Membership: Maggie Waller will undertake a review before the next meeting with support from officers and also review the constitution with regard to non-attendance.

116. Services to Schools and Academies - Charging Policy 2012-13

A review has been undertaken and new SLAs developed to offer to Academies. These will be available on the SBC website imminently (note the response deadline will be extended). Maggie Waller sought clarity around Trades Union representation. Maintaining the gross £20k budget for trade union representation was agreed in principle however, it was noted that the full amount could not be guaranteed unless all Academies buy back in to the service. Clair Pyper advised that the number of schools becoming Academies substantially reduces the amount previously available for funding services and difficulties will arise for providers, whether the LA or schools, should Academies not buy into the service. Schools Forum noted the charging arrangements for 2012-13, including the new arrangements for Academies.

117. School Specific Contingency

Wendy Sagar advised the Forum of the projected outturn 2011-12 and proposed budget for 2012-13, and brought a number of issues to members' attention. Work has been undertaken on updating the amount set aside as contingency.

- Discussion took place around the budget allocation for DSG withdrawn grants in 2011-12 and how the allocation has worked. This budget was transferred to the Individual School Budgets (ISB) during the review carried out in 2011. Wendy will distribute information on the withdrawn grants.
- As a result of the inclusion of the school specific contingency in LACSEG recoupment for 2012-13, the DfE asked LAs to review the elements of the budget. On review, it was determined that a number of the budgets within the contingency should be part of the LA Managed Budgets. As a result, a number of lines within contingency have been transferred to LA Managed budgets for 2012-13. Wendy explained to the group how this works in practice.
- Paul McAteer and Julia Shepard asked for an update on the SEN Strategy and statement numbers. Robin Crofts summarised the substantial progress made over the last 10 years resulting in many more children being supported within the authority and mainstream schools. Statements of SEN had reduced as a result to a figure around 700. This, however, is now rising due to the increasing population of young children in Slough, with most statements being in the 4-7 year age group. Slough currently has approximately 815 statements reflecting the influx of more vulnerable families. Placing pupils out of the authority may begin to become a pressure and the SEN review outcomes will strive to manage a difficult situation.

Schools Forum noted the projected outturn 2011-12 and endorsed the proposed budget 2012-13.

118. Local Authority Budgets Funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant

6. LA Budgets Funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant

Wendy Sagar advised the Forum of the projected outturn 2011-12 and proposed budget for 2012-13, and brought a number of issues to members' attention. Key issues are:

- Impact of review of LA Managed Budgets in 2011
- Impact of Academy recoupment
- Projected underspends in 2011-12. The reconfigured Schools Improvement Service only operated for a part year, and will require the full budget allocation in 2012-13. The budget for condition surveys will be carried forward to 2012-13 when it is expected the surveys will be conducted. It is not considered prudent to reduce

further the budget for independent special schools, in light of the increasing numbers of statements and the capacity of mainstream and special schools to meet needs.

- Impact of technical transfers from the school specific contingency budget, and
- Known pressures on LA Managed budgets, including funding for the PRU.

Schools Forum noted the expected outturn for 2011-12 and endorsed the proposed budget for 2012-13

119. Latest Schools Budgets 2012-13

A revised Appendix B was circulated at the meeting. Schools Forum noted the latest Schools Budget 2012-13, incorporating final school budget shares, the school specific contingency and LA managed budgets. There is currently £739,000 headroom available and a report will be brought to the next meeting of the Forum with recommendations for allocation. Members of the Forum requested that the LA consider the option of increasing the minimum funding guarantee (MFG).

120. School Funding Reform and Arrangements for 2013-14

The latest consultation was issued by the DfE on 26 March. In the past, Schools Forum has appointed a Task & Finish group to work with officers on a joint response. Wendy Sagar suggested another time limited group to formulate a response. A date will be circulated by Rochelle Fearon via email. If members wish to contribute but find the date unsuitable, they were requested to make submissions electronically to Wendy which will be included in the discussions and / or response.

121. Accountability for Dedicated Schools Grant

Clair Pyper informed the group that discussions had taken place at SSEF around the need for improved accountability. Providers, whether the LA or schools, need to provide assurance that funding is being well spent. The proposals circulated were outlined by Julie Evans. The LA and schools will be held accountable for the quality and outcomes of the service/s provided through the template attached at Appendix A. Financial accountability will be assured through completion by schools and LA service providers of the template at Appendix B. Members of the Forum endorsed the suggestion that the finance template is based on school terms, rather than quarters. Julie advised that scrutiny of school balances both within Slough and nationally is being undertaken by central government, although there is no prospect of funding being taken away from schools. It was noted that Schools Forum welcomed increased accountability.

It was agreed to amend the wording of the latter part of paragraph 5.9 to read: 'Local Authority Officers will review the under or overspend in May and either recommend (i) a carry forward, (ii) a reduction of any new year allocation or (iii) a repayment request / include in headroom.

Julie Evans explained how any carry forward amounts would be managed and that for separate funding streams this may work differently. Julie also clarified that this proposal did not apply to delegated or SEN statement budgets. Charlie McGeachie felt presentation of the proposals was critical and it would be helpful to produce examples for headteachers to use for reference purposes. Clair Pyper emphasised that SSEF is supportive of the need to ensure money is being well spent, producing positive outcomes for children.

122. Consultation - Improving the Assurance System for financial management in LA maintained schools

Wendy Sagar explained that the National Audit office has been reviewing government departments and some weaknesses have been identified within the DfE, who are now consulting on proposals to strengthen arrangements. Responses are required by 11 May. It was agreed a draft response on behalf of the LA and Schools Forum be circulated to the group, inviting input to a response.

123. SEN Funding Review Update

Schools Forum endorsed the progress being made with the SEN funding review. The Task and Finish group has undertaken considerable work on this. The proposals place Slough in an excellent position, as they are compatible with DfE funding proposals and the SEN Green Paper. The consultation will be circulated to schools, the responses collated and brought back to Schools Forum.

It was noted that Arbour Vale School currently continues to receive top-up funding, initially approved as a one off and rolled forward whilst more thorough review of need was carried out. It was noted that work has been ongoing to resolve their original funding issues. These are now largely being addressed via the banding mechanism. As a result, once all the changes to the formula are implemented, top-up funding will cease as the formula will deliver appropriate funding.

Clair Pyper reiterated that SSEF, the Primary and Secondary Heads groups and Schools Forum make decisions on a range of issues within agreed priorities. All headteachers have a clear route for their input via representative headteachers and it should be clear there is a final point beyond which no further discussion may take place and the particular issue is resolved. Mary Sparrow felt the model of the SEN Review was an excellent one to follow and that Jackie Wright had ensured everyone was given an opportunity to contribute.

124. Academies Update (verbal)

Robin Crofts informed the group that a further three schools had become Academies on 1 April: Cippenham Primary, Cippenham Infant and Westgate. 'Expressions of Interest' have been received from more schools and an * update for Members was recently delivered to the Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Committee. It is possible that with the 10 current Academies and the existing Free School there will be 22 out of 47 Slough schools with Academy status at the end of the 2011-12 academic year.

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<http://www.slough.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=4400&Ver=4>

125. Updated Work Programme 2011-12

It was clarified that the last two meetings for 2012 will be:

Wednesday, 16 May – Membership and meeting dates 2012/13 to be added to the agenda
Wednesday, 4 July

The meeting closed at 0950 with considerable thanks to Julia Shepard and her team for their hospitality and support.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15 am and closed at 9.50 am)