

Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Wednesday, 8th May, 2013

Present: Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
Julia Shepard, Beechwood Secondary School (Vice-Chair)
Barbara Clark, Godolphin Junior School
Gillian Coffey, Lynch Hill Primary School
John Constable, Langley Grammar
Harry Duffy, Ryvers Primary School
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College
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
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School
Virginia Barrett, East Berkshire College
Jean Cameron, Slough Children's Centres
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School

Observers: Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court, Angela Mellish, St Bernards, Eddie Neighbour, Slough Grammar, Lynda Bussley, NUT

Officers: Steve Elson, George Grant and Michelle Perkins (Clerk)

Apologies: Robin Crofts, Jo Matthews, Paul McAteer and Philip Gregory

PART I

214. Apologies

Apologies were received from Robin Crofts due to compassionate leave, Philip Gregory, Jo Matthews and Paul McAteer.

215. Declarations of Interest

None

216. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Page 1: Steve Elson updated Schools Forum that the Principal Accountant, Attul Lad has been appointed at SBC and will begin his role in June. Steve will train him on the schools formula work.

Page 2: The briefing session on the formula is still to be arranged (dealt with later in the agenda). Virginia Barrett will be providing input regarding Post-16. Financial training for Headteachers was discussed at SSEF: it will be an induction session for new Headteachers organised by the Slough Learning Partnership.

Page 3: Maggie Waller advised Schools Forum that the academy governor nomination was Paul Adams from Slough Grammar. No other nominations were received.

Action: Michelle Perkins will communicate with all academy heads putting forward this nomination and seeking election prior to Schools Forum in July.

Maggie Stacey advised that Primary Heads will elect a representative for maintained schools at their next meeting.

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

217. Growth Fund

Steve Elson presented the paper explaining the growth fund, prepared in response to a number of queries for clarification regarding this fund. He noted that, for academies, this should go through on the academy cash sheet in June.

Schools Forum noted that there is a typo in paragraph 5.3, the figure should be £385,000, not £350,000. An amended version of the paper will be circulated with these minutes for information.

Schools Forum noted the contents of the report.

218. Two Year Old Funding Formula

Steve Elson reported that the DfE has increased the responsibility for local authorities to provide 15 hours free nursery education to 20% of the most deprived two year olds from September.

Jean Cameron explained that the eligibility criteria are based on the same criteria as eligibility for free school meals.

Local criteria has also been incorporated which includes children subject to a Child Protection plan or Children In Need plan. There is a referral process for children that fall outside of the usual criteria but would benefit from a place due to low income.

Schools Forum agreed the recommendation and recommended the two year old funding formula to the Local Authority for implementation.

219. Formula Review 2014/15 - Verbal Update

Maggie Waller gave a verbal update on the work being carried out regarding the primary/secondary balance of funding. Sam Ellis, a funding specialist who has experience of working across both phases, is being commissioned by the Slough Learning Partnership to carry out the work. Maggie Waller, Maggie Stacey, Steve Elson and Robin Crofts had a preliminary meeting with him and provided an update as follows:

Sam has begun to populate a model for Slough using baseline data. He will be meeting with Maggie Waller, Jo Rockall, Maggie Stacey, Steve Elson and Robin Crofts again on 13th May to look at the work in more detail and determine whether more data is needed and what the next steps will be. Following this meeting, next steps will be confirmed including at what stage a small task and finish group would be needed.

Concerns were raised about due regard being given to this piece of work by the Local Authority in its decision making process. Maggie confirmed the importance of the cycle in terms of consultation with all schools and then any recommendations being considered by Cabinet. Maggie also confirmed that a paper is coming to Schools Forum in July written by Gloria Walker about the role of Schools Forum and the work and decision making flow coming in and out.

220. Review of Scheme for Financing Schools

Steve Elson explained that the Scheme for Financing Schools has a statutory framework but that local recommended changes can also be included. The purpose of the report is to lay out the revised changes and ask Schools Forum to accept them. The recommended changes are outlined in the table in section 5.2 of the report. Maggie Waller clarified that any changes Schools Forum agree will then go out to all schools for consultation and the results of that consultation will come back to Schools Forum for approval of final changes.

Helen Huntley raised concerns about the clarification that top up payments should be made monthly unless otherwise agreed in 3.1 of the table. She referred to the impact on staffing of monthly top ups due to the financial loss that they will incur every time a statemented pupil leaves. It was agreed that Helen will discuss this with Jackie Wright and bring an update back to July Schools Forum. This can then be fed into the consideration of the results of the consultation.

Schools Forum agreed for the changes to go out to consultation and to include a sentence about the concerns surrounding top up payments.

Jon Reekie circulated an additional appendix to clarify the wording in 2.15 of the Scheme regarding purchasing, tendering and contracting requirements. It was suggested that the paragraph in italics which explains the wording, be included in the consultation and that the overall wording of this section of the Scheme be reviewed for clarity. An electronic copy of the paper tabled by Jon will be circulated with these minutes.

Discussion took place about the balance control mechanism on page 20 (Appendix 2) of the scheme. There was some discussion about the importance of working collaboratively and the impact on learning. It was noted that there is greater freedom now for academies than previously when the restrictions were tighter than those for maintained schools. Maggie Waller suggested maintaining the balance control mechanism in the interests of accountability but to review the wording. Julia Shepard suggested looking at the percentages again, making sure the Head is present at any discussion re balances and that SSEF be involved.

Action: Steve Elson will provide a draft of the consultation and email this to Schools Forum prior to consultation with all schools. (Update note post meeting: this is allowing for the consultation to be done and brought back to the July Forum.) Steve will check with the DfE how to deal with the underspend which formerly went back into headroom.

221. Centrally Retained Budgets

Steve Elson introduced the paper which is for information. It pulls the information together about the previously agreed blocks into one paper. Further clarification on PFI contributions is needed for July Schools Forum. Schools Forum noted the

contents of the paper but asked that clarification be given on each area of expenditure to explain what it pays for.

Julia Shepard discussed a piece of work that was done with the LA 2-3 years ago about understanding the areas of expenditure and what it pays for. It was felt that it would be useful to cross check the two pieces of work.

This item will be brought back to September Schools Forum following further work done in SSEF.

Action: Steve Elson will ask Robin Crofts about its importance in terms of the Services to Schools Review and ask whether it needs to be looked at more urgently.

222. Analysis of Funding Formulae

Steve Elson explained that the report shows Slough in comparison to the national position

Action: Maggie Waller to send the report to Sam Ellis to assist him in his piece of work.

Schools Forum noted the contents of the paper.

223. Academies Update

Item deferred to July meeting.

224. 2012/13 Work Programme and Key Decisions Log

Maggie Waller explained the purpose of the key decision log: to bring together summary details of any key issue or decision made by Schools Forum.

Action: The work programme will be reviewed to reflect agreed changes to the July agenda.

The briefing on the on the formula was discussed:
It was agreed to hold it on **28th June after Heads' Termly at 10:30am – 11:30am.**
Confirmation of venue will be sent.

225. Any Other Business

Julia Shepard provided Schools Forum with a verbal update on St Joseph's:

St Joseph's have paid back £290,000 from the £1 million that came out of headroom and a further £110,000 will be paid back shortly. Julia noted that the school is now in a much better position and is financially robust.

Julia Shepard and Father Kevin O'Driscoll thanked Schools Forum for its support. Schools Forum thanked Julia and the governors for their hard work in putting the school in such an improved position.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.05 am and closed at 9.40 am)