

Slough Schools Forum
Meeting held on Wednesday, 16th May, 2012 from 0815 at
Beechwood Research and Conference Centre, Slough SL2 1QE

- Members Present:** Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
Julia Shepard, Beechwood Secondary School (Vice-Chair)
John Constable, Langley Grammar
Harry Duffy, Ryvers Primary School
Martin Davis, Colnbrook Primary School
Helen Huntley, Special Schools
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton Secondary School
Charlie McGeachie, Montem Primary School
Maggie Stacey, St Anthony's RC Primary School
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School
Virginia Barrett, East Berkshire College
- Observers:** Lynda Bussley, NUT
- Other attendees:** Angela Mellish, Northampton Diocese, Roger Edwardson,
Rochelle Fearon (Clerk)
- Officers:** Clair Pyper and Wendy Sagar
- Apologies for absence:** Barbara Clark, Robin Crofts, Emma Foy, Diane Lister,
Maureen Mallinson, Kevin O'Driscoll, Jon Reekie and Mary Sparrow

PART I

126. Declarations of Interest

None.

127. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

- SEN Funding Review: Successful discussion sessions have been held.
- Headroom will be an agenda item at the July Schools Forum.
- Our response to the consultation on Improving the Assurance System for financial management in LA maintained schools had been circulated and the submission subsequently made.
- SEN Funding Review – all comments are to be submitted by 30 May and this item will then be brought back to the next meeting. We are already working towards the plans laid out by the government within the recent Queen's Speech.

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record. Maggie Waller welcomed Virginia Barrett who was attending for the first time representing East Berkshire College.

128. Membership Review and Update

Maggie Waller talked through the review of Academy representation on Schools Forum which had been undertaken. A snapshot using January pupil numbers demonstrates that the present membership accurately reflects the composition required by the Schools Forum constitution.

There are a number of Schools Forum members whose term of office is coming to an end. In the primary phase there are five whose term ended last August who agreed to stay on for a further year and there are three members whose term ends this year, plus the absence of a PVI representative. There are obvious concerns around continuity and it was agreed that these current members be asked if they would be willing to accept a nomination for a further term. The situation concerning the number of Academies is a fluid one and it was agreed to review Academy representation annually in October from this year onwards.

Following advice from the DfE the Forum will seek membership to represent Children's Centres. The DfE has confirmed this is appropriate and in the short term the member may be an officer of the Local Authority (LA). Changes are likely in the not too distant future on the arrangements for Schools Forums which may result in the need for a further review.

The issue of non-attendance is not currently covered within the Schools Forum constitution. A proposal to add a clause to consider whether to replace any member who does not attend for four consecutive meetings was approved.

All proposals regarding membership (outlined in paragraph 5.4 of the report) were agreed.

Maggie Waller suggested members should consider the nomination of a substitute where they have not yet done this.

Members whose terms are coming to an end were asked to advise Rochelle Fearon either by email – rochelle.fearon@slough.gov.uk - or in person if they are willing to continue. In the light of their decisions nominations will be sought from the relevant schools and governing bodies.

129. Presentation on School Funding Reform and Arrangements for 2013-14

Wendy Sagar updated the group with a presentation on schools funding reform and arrangements for 2013-14. It was noted that the aim of the DfE is to fund schools through a national funding formula from April 2015 and that the proposals and arrangements for April 2013 are the building blocks which will support such a reorganisation. Wendy talked through the proposals in respect of simplifying local funding arrangements, improving the way local areas are funded, improving arrangements for funding pupils and students with high needs and simplification of Early Years funding arrangements. In addition members of the Forum were updated on some of the key implications, including developing the role of schools as commissioners, the impact of the move to 3 blocks within the DSG, the impact on the current Slough Fair Funding formula and the impact on special schools and PRU's. Please note this presentation will also be made available in the Schools Forum section at www.slough.gov.uk.

Questions/discussion

Paul McAteer: Asked about the situation concerning Academy SEN placements – Wendy confirmed the LA will continue to commission places from Academies where appropriate.

Helen Huntley: Asked about LAG funding for post 16 high needs pupils. Wendy confirmed the LA will commission places and any provider will need to supply a rate per pupil. This kind of market place approach will have implications for the funding

of resources such as Haybrook. The situation was discussed and it was agreed to include concerns in our response to the consultation.

Julia Shepard: Felt that our current funding formula reflects the special local situation in Slough of mobility and turbulence. Current understanding is that proposals within the consultation around growth may result in schools incurring substantial costs for which they have not been funded. The time lag for Academies would be greater than for maintained schools. It was agreed that this concern should be included in the consultation response. Using the October pupil count on which to base calculations could create funding difficulties for many schools as numbers increase significantly in-year.

Clair Pyper: Felt it important to note that in effect these proposals will make schools and Academies commissioners, especially relating to places in specialist settings. Clair emphasised that it is crucial to get this right and the LA would be very keen to work with schools to develop procurement arrangements and establish the role of Slough Learning Partnership within the new set up.

Wendy Sagar: The LA is responsible for clawing back AWPU from schools for any permanent exclusion. This can be overlooked within our local situation in Slough where collaborative working has virtually eliminated permanent exclusions. Wendy also informed the group that the DfE has recognised these changes will affect high needs pupils the most.

It was agreed that we will need to review our formula and bring full recommendations to the September 12th meeting of Schools Forum. Clair emphasised that these major changes are hugely significant with many implications and this needs to be reinforced to all concerned over the coming weeks. It was agreed that information giving should target key groups in schools e.g. Headteachers, Governors, Bursars and Business Managers.

Maggie Waller noted a contradiction in the main document relating to the role of Schools Forums which will need clarification following the consultation period.

Wendy concluded by advising the group that in reality the major decisions have already been made. A key issue is that the changes are communicated well to everyone. There will be huge challenges to implement everything being proposed.

130. Draft response to School Funding Reform and Arrangements for 2013-14

Our draft response to the consultation had been read by Forum members in advance of the meeting. Please note that any further input from schools would still be welcome but is required by the **end of the week ending 18 May**.

Growth/Turbulence

Clair proposed including in the response a cross reference to Slough being acknowledged by the DfE as 10th in country for growth.

Deprivation

Paul McAteer queried the primary/secondary ratio. Maggie Waller agreed to explore the historical reason behind this differential.

Following discussion the response was approved by the group, subject to amendments as noted in the minutes.

131. Implementation of School Funding Reform and Arrangements for 2013-14

Clair thanked Wendy for the huge amount of work that has been undertaken thus far. Wendy informed the group that Finance are working to appoint to a post which would support the necessary modelling work. It is important that tiers of information should be made available for specific people within schools and Academies. The groups identified to date are Heads' Termly on 26 June, Chairs of Governing Bodies' meeting on 11 June and the Bursars' meeting scheduled for 21 June. LA representation at the Bursars' meeting is to be resolved by Wendy. Collaboration with FE providers is also vital. Virginia Barrett felt that East Berkshire College is already working closely with schools but could only benefit from further discussions. Information sessions are planned and the possibility of a short term Task and Finish Group was discussed. Maggie Waller proposed to expand the Schools Forum meeting on 4 July and make this issue a substantive agenda item. This was agreed.

132. Academies - verbal update

Since the last Cabinet update report was submitted Littledown has applied for Academy status.

133. Updated Work Programme

The agenda for 4 July was discussed and agreed. Members were asked to advise Rochelle Fearon of any clashes with school meetings of the dates proposed for 2012/13. Wendy Sagar advised the group it is important to note the first three dates scheduled in September and October are vital In order to meet the deadlines for responding to the DfE on school funding arrangements for 2013.

Maggie Waller thanked everyone for attending and for the continued hospitality and support of staff at Beechwood.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15 am and closed at 9.40 am)