

Slough Schools Forum
Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday, 24th October 2012
at Beechwood Research and Conference Centre, Slough SL2 1QE

Members present: Maggie Waller (Chair), Julia Shepard (Vice Chair), Paul McAteer, John Constable, Jo Rockall, Helen Huntley, Jon Reekie, Barbara Clark, Mary Sparrow, Jean Cameron, Jo Matthews, Nicky Willis, Charlie McGeachie, Martin Davis, Father Kevin O'Driscoll, Harry Duffy

Observers: Lynda Bussley

Other attendees: Chief Executive, Ruth Bagley, Angela Mellish, Mercedes Hernández Estrada, Roger Thomas

Officers: Robin Crofts, Wendy Sagar, Roger Edwardson, Michelle Perkins (clerk)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Maggie Stacey, St Anthony's Primary, Virginia Barrett, East Berkshire College, Christine Mountford, First Steps Day Nursery, Philip Gregory, Slough Centre Nursery and Maureen Mallinson, Westgate Academy.

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

Robin Crofts has been in contact with the three free schools and clarified that the majority of their pupils will be from Slough and that the site would not have an impact on intake, even if some may be in South Buckinghamshire. Schools Forum agreed to the money being held and kept under review.

Invitations have been sent for a Task & Finish Group for notional early years and a date is being fixed for the first meeting, likely to be 20th November.

Robin Crofts provided statistics regarding eligibility of free school meals: primary 17%; secondary 13% and special schools 36%.

It was confirmed that the £70,000 for Littledown School was formally approved at the last SSEF meeting.

The minutes of the meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

4. Implementation of DfE Funding Reform – update on progress (verbal)

Wendy Sagar provided a verbal update on progress as follows:

Information was received from the DfE on block baselines.

A letter has been received from the DfE confirming that a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) will continue but a percentage has not been given yet.

Officers have asked the DfE whether the implementation of the two year old element of the notional early years block can be deferred from April to September 2013 but no response has been received as yet.

High needs numbers have been confirmed including 55 for Haybrook. More work is to be done in phase 2 on resource units.

Maggie Waller has contacted the DfE to ask about local flexibility with moving around weightings within the factors. Maggie reported that the DfE's response was that it was unlikely they would want to freeze local formulae for 2014/15.

5. Proposed arrangements for Schools Block 2013/14 including formula

Wendy Sagar took members through the recommendations in the report

Chief Executive, Ruth Bagley reported that the decision lies with Cabinet and they have delegated this to the Chief Executive and Leader. The decision as to which factors will go into the formula needs to be made by 31st October and weightings need to be decided by mid January. The Task & Finish group has been working on this and will continue its work. Schools Forum noted this feedback as per recommendation 2.1.

Recommendations 2.2 – 2.8 were endorsed as follows (for ease of reference, numbers in brackets refer to the relevant paragraph within the report):

Paragraph 5.10 – 5.14

Schools Forum noted the allowable factors in paragraph 5.10.

Schools Forum agreed not to include the factor for looked after children or English as an additional language as the DfE datasets do not target the real need in Slough appropriately and recommended that all the other relevant factors be included in the Slough formula. See paragraph 5.12 – 5.14.

Paragraph 5.15 and 5.16

Julia Shepard noted that The Task and Finish group had been tasked to look at the impact of the funding changes and minimising turbulence. Appendix F and G were noted as representative of the conclusions of the group to date. These still leave some schools as significant winners and losers but members proposed Appendix F and G as options for consideration. Appendix G moves 1% of funding to basic entitlement from low attainment. Discussion took place about longer term concerns post MFG. It was agreed that the secondary Headteachers would give feedback to officers by Friday 26th October regarding option 2 - Appendix G which has the effect of smoothing the distribution across non-selective

and selective schools to the benefit of the selective schools. There was concern raised about significant losses for some primary schools and the Task and Finish group will explore this further.

There was discussion around the primary / secondary ratio of funding distribution – see paragraph 5.38 – 5.41). Officers are concerned that the DfE will come back to SBC on this.

It was agreed that the Task and Finish group would meet again in November to consider

- data for other LAs regarding primary and secondary ratio
- what lies behind the primary / secondary differences in the Slough formula based on need
- models which show the reasons why individual school's losses are as they are.

Ruth Bagley emphasised the need to seek to influence discussions regarding any national funding formula in terms of the unique diversity within Slough.

Paragraph 5.22

The Task and Finish group's recommendation to distribute deprivation funding using 51% free school meals (FSM) and 49% IDACI was endorsed by Schools Forum. It was noted that the FSM was Ever6 FSM.

Paragraph 5.28

Schools Forum noted the different unit values allocated to primary and secondary school pupils for low cost high incidence SEN. Discussion took place around flawed datasets that sit behind these.

Paragraph 5.29

Schools Forum agreed the recommended model for pupil mobility which maps the current turbulence factor to the compliant mobility factor.

Paragraph 5.30

Schools Forum agreed the standard lump sum factor.

Paragraph 5.31

Schools Forum agreed the split site factor – the final unit value is to be confirmed by January.

Paragraph 5.32

Schools Forum agreed the factor for rates and PFI – current formula factors are replicated in the recommended model.

Paragraph 5.33

Schools Forum noted regulations regarding requesting additional factors to be included and that there are no relevant issues here for Slough.

Paragraph 5.34

Schools Forum noted the briefing note in Appendix E which explains the new arrangements for funding pupils with SEN.

Paragraph 5.35

Schools Forum noted the recommendation that budget adjustments relating to the year would be made in the following year's budget rather than altering the existing one.

Paragraph 5.36

Schools Forum noted that a 5% cap on gains forms part of the MFG calculation.

Paragraph 5.44 – 5.46

Wendy Sagar confirmed that de delegation is an annual decision.

Recommendation 2.5 regarding de delegation of outreach (former behaviour support) was agreed by maintained schools and academies members present also stated their support for the service. Schools Forum recommended that Academies enter into a similar commitment to the maintained schools through a Memorandum of Understanding. Jo Matthews indicated that a Memorandum of Understanding will be circulated to schools in November.

Recommendation 2.6 regarding Trade Union staff costs was agreed. Kevin Gordon, Assistant Director Professional Services at SBC can provide information regarding the current arrangements.

Paragraph 5.49

Recommendation 2.4 regarding retaining centrally relevant funding for significant pupil growth was agreed by Schools Forum. The Task and Finish group need to agree clear criteria and bring it back to Schools Forum.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Wendy Sagar agreed to provide a list of issues and tasks that the Task and Finish group needs to consider when it next meets.

Michelle Perkins to arrange next Task and Finish Group meeting for November.

6. Schools Forum Regulations

Schools Forum noted the new regulations and good practice guide. Maggie Waller reported that the Schools Forum constitution will be updated in line with these although we are largely compliant already. There will also be a review of pupil numbers in academies once the October census is verified to ensure that the balance of membership is right.

7. Academies Update

Robin Crofts provided Schools Forum with an update on Academies as follows:

16 academies are in place and 6 schools are going over to academy status in the next 6 months.

Willow Primary School is formally going through the process and will be a sponsored academy from 1st February 2013.

No other formal arrangements are in place.

8. Updated Work Programme, Key Decisions Log and date of next meeting

Schools Forum noted the work programme, key decisions log and date of next meeting which is 14th November 2012.

Sincere thanks was given to Wendy Sagar for all the work she has carried out regarding schools finance and Schools Forum wished her well for the future.