

## **Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Wednesday, 16th January, 2019**

- Present:** John Constable, Langley Grammar School (Chair)  
Peter Collins, Slough & Eton C of E Business and Enterprise College  
Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery School  
Valerie Harffey, Ryvers Primary School  
Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School  
Ray Hinds, Baylis Court School  
Susan Marsh, Colnbrook Primary School  
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School  
Carol Pearce, Penn Wood Primary School  
Jon Reekie, Phoenix Infant Academy  
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School  
Jamie Rockman, Haybrook College  
Neil Sykes, Arbourvale School  
Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School  
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School
- Observers:** Michelle Cooper, Westgate School  
Charmaine Lawrence, Westgate School  
Jo Matthews, Littledown School  
Eddie Neighbour, Upton Court Grammar School  
Brenda Scott, Orchard Hill Academy Trust
- Officers:** Domenico Barani, Catherine Cochran, Cate Duffy, Vikram Hansrani and Michael Jarrett
- Apologies:** Johnny Kyriacou and Susan Woodland
- No Apologies:** Richard Kirkham, Angela Mellish and Kathy Perry

### **678. Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including three observers: Brenda Scott from the Orchard Hill Academy Trust; Michelle Cooper, Headteacher and Charmaine Lawrence, School Business Manager, both from Westgate School. All those present introduced themselves.

Apologies for absence had been received from Johnny Kyriacou and Susan Woodland.

There had not been any apologies received from Richard Kirkham, Angela Mellish or Kathy Perry.

It was noted that Cate Duffy would need to leave early.

### **679. Any Other Business**

Nothing was tabled for discussion.

### **680. Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

## 681. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 4 December 2018

The minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 4 December 2018 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

**Minute 672**, page 6, second paragraph, final sentence should read: “ ..... confirming there would be no implications for the Schools Block.”

### **Matters Arising from those Minutes:**

**Minute 668 (Schools Forum Membership) refers:** It was noted that Jo Matthews had stood down as Special School/PRU Representative. The Chair acknowledged Jo Matthews' valued support and contribution, and explained she would continue as an observer. As a result, the three special/PRU academies had confirmed that Neil Sykes would become Academy Special School member and Jamie Rockman would become Academy PRU member, both for a term of office of two years effective from the date of this meeting.

**Minute 670 (DSG Monitoring Report 2018/19) refers:** a supplementary paper had been issued following discussion at the meeting. As per DfE Regulations, Schools Forum was asked to acknowledge the projected DSG outturn for the year and to formally give approval that the overall deficit be carried forward into 2019-20.

Schools Forum acknowledged the situation and gave approval that the deficit would be carried forward.

**Minute 673 (Banding - High Needs top-up funding - Working Group update) refers:** Vikram Hansrani explained that an email had been sent in early January to those schools with representation at the November Working Group meeting. Friday 25 January had been given as a cut-off for feedback and the Group was due to reconvene on Wednesday 30 January. A report on the final funding model would be presented at the next Schools Forum meeting.

**Minute 674 (Resource Base update) refers:** Vikram Hansrani reported that draft Service Level Agreements (SLAs) had been sent to maintained settings. The documentation for academy schools was approximately two weeks behind schedule but was due to be sent out during the week of this meeting.

## 682. Update on national funding issues/local funding issues

Nic Barani gave a verbal update and confirmed that the Local Authority (LA) had received their 2019/20 DSG settlement of £170.84m, an increase of £5.5m above the originally anticipated amount. The budget setting process was now underway for all four blocks and had to be published to schools by Thursday 28 February. The LA would endeavour to release the information to schools before that date. The following headlines were noted:

- Teachers' pay grant allocated on top of existing budgets.
- Teachers' pension grant: the rates were yet to be finalised, but it was understood they would rise from 16.4% to 23.6% in September 2019. This would be funded by the DfE but funding beyond March 2020 had not been confirmed. Nic Barani would establish whether the funding would be per pupil, as per the teachers' pay award.
- Pupil Premium funding would continue in 2019/20 at the 2018/19 rates.
- Free School meal supplement grant would be £440 per pupil.

- An additional £440,000 funding for the High Needs Block in 2019/20 had been announced in December 2018.

To date, there had not been any information released about the additional funding for the 'little extras' announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Budget.

### **683. Schools Block Budget - Draft Authority Proforma Tool (APT) 2019/20 and Budget Confirmation Timeline 2019/20**

Copies of the APT were circulated at the meeting and it was noted the final version was to be submitted on Monday 21 January. The first page showed all Slough schools and the provisional revenue budget based on unit rates set at 65% to NFF. The numbers on roll gave an indication of how many children the LA had estimated would be on roll compared to the October 2018 census; the figures had been very close in the majority of cases. It was confirmed that this information was the primary factor for funding and the actual number of pupils used in the consultation had been 27,552. The reception uplift was highlighted, where the LA had estimated pupil numbers higher than actual.

The figures gave provisional 2019/20 school budgets. It was confirmed that the additional £100,000 released by reducing the Growth Fund top slice, as agreed by Schools Forum in December 2018, had been distributed back to schools through the formula.

Nic Barani explained there was currently dialogue with the DfE about the continuation funding stream. The outcome of those discussions could affect the final figures marginally.

Copies of the APT proforma were circulated, showing how the settlement was distributed across the formula factors, including 0.61% top sliced and allocated to Growth Fund.

It was confirmed individual breakdowns of budget share could be provided for academy schools, as was the case with maintained schools. In response from a question regarding the primary/secondary ratio, it was noted that moving towards NFF rates was the priority throughout the 5-16 Task Group discussions rather than consideration of the ratio. However, it was noted that the ratio was reducing over time.

The final submitted APT figures would be presented at the next meeting of Schools Forum, but no significant changes were anticipated.

### **684. De-delegated funding for behaviour support services**

The Chair explained that the four maintained representatives on Schools Forum had been invited to vote on the principle of de-delegation of funding to SEBDOS for 2019/20. The purpose of this vote was to confirm whether a de-delegation proposal needed to be brought to Schools Forum for approval. Three of the four representatives had responded, two representing the primary sector, one representing secondary and all three had voted against the principle of de-delegating funding in 2019-20. It was confirmed that it would therefore not be necessary for any delegation of funding from maintained schools' budgets to be included in the Schools Block APT.

It was stressed that this was not a comment on the SEBDOS Service itself but a wish to align the funding methodology across maintained schools and academies.

There was a willingness amongst schools to carry on working with SEBDOS. Jo Matthews added that she had arranged to meet with all the maintained schools to discuss the principle of SLAs. To date, the feedback received had been positive, with the majority indicating they would continue to buy into the service.

A supporting paper was tabled at the meeting which would be posted on the SBC website.

**The meeting moved to items 10 and 11 on the agenda:**

#### **685. High Needs Block - Deficit Reduction Strategy**

The paper circulated with the agenda outlined the pressures and background to the issues associated with the High Needs Block, which had been discussed previously by Schools Forum. The LA had seen a 56% increase in the number of young people accessing an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), against a 15% increase in funding. As noted, a cumulative overspend of £7.08m was predicted for the current year which included the additional £404,000 confirmed by the DfE.

The report included an illustration of the new requests received. It was pointed out that not only was there an increase in the number of EHCPs but also in the complexity of need, which impacted further on funding. Although there was now stronger governance in place, the increase in demand, including a rise in the number of EHCPs in the under 5s and Post 16 categories led to significantly higher top up funding.

Members were aware there had been an increase in complex needs and comparisons were highlighted. With a more robust process now in place, there was a slight reduction in numbers and stability in EHCPs; overall there was more confidence in the system. In addition, there were now more children in the authority, which would inevitably lead to more EHCPs; however, although the percentage of EHCPs had gone down, it was still higher than the national average.

It was confirmed the full academic year had been shown using the current banding model.

It was noted that Early Years Inclusion funding had been included in the High Needs Block budget-setting but without an allocated budget line. This funding was for the gathering of evidence required to apply for an EHCP, funded at a maximum of £14.00 per hour for 15 hours over 22 weeks.

The continued pressures were indicative of the current year, where it had also been necessary to increase resources for independent special school, post 16 and Hard to Place students. Funding for Early Years and Hard to Place had been reviewed but could impact on another block if the charges were transferred elsewhere. Hard to Place funding was not only about a lack of suitable places but also about meeting pupils' need. There had been an issue previously when this funding came from High Needs and there were not enough places available. The figure of £158,000 which had been factored into the 'Hard to Place' budget had been incorrectly allocated to the High Needs Block as it had been for students who were hard to place due to sufficiency issues.

It was pointed out that 2-3 years before, the LA had not been able to meet the needs of a number of children within the Borough and work was ongoing to review placements, including those not being used, with the aim of bringing those children back into Slough. There was a focus on mainstream inclusion to reduce the overspend, along with SEND strategies in maintained schools: the LA was working closely with Arbour Vale and other associated agencies to ensure the right support was in place. Discussions had been held with other LAs experiencing similar pressures and the situation was being monitored.

The ESFA had requested that LAs inform them how deficits, particularly in High Needs, were being addressed. Cate Duffy confirmed that the report shared with the ESFA before Christmas was as presented at this meeting. The ESFA had been told the LA was doing all it could to address the issue. Work was ongoing to improve the systems for schools and children, whilst also dealing with issues individual to Slough. There was clear evidence of underfunding whilst demand increased but this was a national issue.

It was agreed the information presented was helpful but did not address how the deficit was to be reduced. Cate Duffy confirmed that the ESFA had been informed the LA was not in a position to reduce the total deficit but had demonstrated strategies introduced to rationalise the situation and develop closer working relationships with schools. More clarity was requested and members were assured all possible was being done to address the situation. It was confirmed that figures could be allocated against a number of the savings already identified.

Concern was expressed by Forum members that with the continued budget cuts, more issues would be passed to schools that were also experiencing reduced funding. Cate Duffy acknowledged there were collective pressures around better provision being provided in mainstream settings which could take 2-3 years to embed. It was acknowledged that workforce development could be offered through SENCo training, peer to peer work etc.

It was confirmed a paper exploring the possibility of reassigning funding between blocks was to be drawn up.

It was reported that since the formation of the Resources Base Working Group, the Base at Foxborough had been closed but work continued with Priory and Early Years providers.

A Forum member challenged the use of the term 'historic failings' in connection with Resource Bases. It was agreed that there should be transparency about these issues, which had concerned a small minority of Resource Bases, and were focused on around commissioning arrangements.

In response to a query from a Forum member, the link between High Needs and PFI was acknowledged and it was confirmed that PFI would be taken into account to reduce the deficit. This would be supported by a paper to Forum for the March 2019 meeting.

**9.20am: Cate Duffy left the meeting**

**686. High Needs Block - Centrally Retained Budget 2018/19**

Vikram Hansrani explained that historically the use of centrally retained High Needs funding had not been clear, but in response to a request from Forum made earlier in 2018, the supporting paper gave details of the services and resources available by allocated budget. Forum members acknowledged that a great deal of work had gone into preparing the information now made available, and welcomed the transparency.

Vikram Hansrani explained that a new Speech and Language Therapy service provider, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT) had been appointed late in 2018 and were to start working on EHCPs with effect from week beginning Monday 21 January 2019. Headteachers and SENDCOs had been informed by email and a list of all the children concerned had been provided to BFHT: members were assured that the LA was working closely with the new provider to ensure all children were accounted for. There would be no further funding available and work therefore also continued to address the management of the funding gap.

The content of the new commissioned services was queried and whether this would be available from Friday 1 February when the previous contract arrangements expired. Vikram Hansrani confirmed that a further meeting was due to be held during the current week, after which a communication would be made giving updated information, including details of a launch date.

**The meeting returned to items 8 and 9 on the agenda:**

**687. Early Years Centrally Retained Funds 2019/20**

A report had been made available explaining the reduction to the Early Years Centrally Retained Funds 2019/20, giving line by line detail as requested by members. The Early Years Inclusion Funding (Grant) gave details of financial support to the LA and central Early Years statutory expenditure duty, separated out for information.

It was noted that, due to the reduction in DSG funding by approximately £50,000, proposals had been put forward to reduce the service. The funding for 2, 3 and 4-year olds, which had been extended to cover 30 hours, was a statutory provision. It was proposed that SEBDOS was retained at £42,000. The £25,000 reduction proposed for practical support could be justified as that figure had historically not been fully utilized; the reduced figure of £50,000 allocated was manageable but would be reviewed mid-year. Further savings included the loss of a member of staff, whose work would be covered by colleagues and another member of staff had reduced their hours.

Other aspects had increased and the funding for 2, 3 and 4-year olds had to be maintained. There had been one year to ensure the model was fit for purpose and it was now being shared by the DfE as an exemplar with other LAs. There would be in-year adjustments during 2019/20 which were, as always, subject to change.

Schools Forum members noted and agreed the use of Centrally Retained Funds 2019/20 for the Early Years block.

**688. Early Years Block 2019/20 - Proposed Formula**

It was noted that a Task Group meeting was being arranged for Thursday 7 February. Members would be asked to review an increase in the formula of £0.03

per hour for 3 and 4-year-old funding and by £0.01 per hour for 2-year olds. The LA had contacted those supplying providers and the majority had favoured an increase: those that did not support an increase for 2-year olds did not actually provide for that age group.

**The meeting returned to the running order of the agenda:**

**689. Update from Task Groups: 5-16, HNB and Early Years**

**Early Years:** as noted, planned to meet Thursday 7 February

**5-16:** had not met.

**High Needs Block:** had not met.

**690. Academies Update**

There was nothing to report.

**691. 2018/19 Forward Agenda Plan/Key Decisions Log**

The 2018/19 Forward Agenda Plan and Key Decision Log were noted and the Forward Agenda Plan would be amended to include items discussed.

The agenda for the Schools Forum meeting scheduled on Wednesday 15 May was short and, if it were decided the meeting should be cancelled, all attendees would be informed.

**692. Any Other Business**

**Nursery Funding**

Philip Gregory and Michael Jarrett drew members' attention to a national issue regarding supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools. If supplementary funding were withdrawn, maintained nursery schools would be at risk of closure. The funding for Slough had already been reduced from £1.3m to £730,000. The LA had met with, and supported Nursery School Headteachers but it was difficult to plan ahead as the DfE had delayed their decision. Providers across the country were lobbying MPs and Forum members offered their support: Philip Gregory would send the Chair copies of the supporting documentation and the Chair agreed to write on behalf of Schools Forum to the Education Secretary.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15 am and closed at 9.35 am)