



CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM
Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting
held on Thursday 17 October 2024
at 8.00am at West Offices

Present:

Dave Hewitt (Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representative) Chair, Jemma Dunne (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), Lamara Taylor (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), Andrew Daly (Academy Representative), Helen Winn (Academy Representative), James McGann *deputising for* Mark Hassack (Academy Representative), Steve Lewis (Academy Representative), Andrew Robinson *deputising for Gail Brown* (Academy Representative), Adam Booker (Special School Representative), Chris Nichols (Pupil Referral Unit Representative), Joy Kettle *deputising for Ken Merry* (16-19 representative), Tracey Roberts (PVI Early Years Representative)

In attendance:

Cllr Robert Webb (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education), Martin Kelly (Corporate Director, Children and Education, CYC), Maxine Squire (Assistant Director, Education and Skills, CYC), Richard Hartle (Principal Accountant, CYC), Mike Barugh (Principal Accountant, CYC), Barbara Mands (Head of Education Support Service), Dan Bodey (School Inclusion Advisor), Amy White (Professional Support Officer Effectiveness & Achievement) and Helen Marshall Groot (Head of Governor Services, CYC, Clerk)

1. Welcome

Dave Hewitt welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Helen Dalby (Academy Member), Claire Rigden (Maintained Nursery School Representative).

3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Dave Hewitt was formally confirmed as Chair of York Schools Forum for a term of one year.

Steve Lewis was formally confirmed as Vice Chair of York Schools Forum for a term of one year.

4. Membership update

Previously distributed.

The Forum received the membership update. The Academy member vacancy was noted and it was agreed that the decision on the member would be taken by

academy members via Yorkshire Schools and Academies Board (YSAB), in line with good practice guidance.

5. Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting of 4th July 2024

Previously distributed.

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record and were duly noted as approved.

6. Matters arising not on the agenda

The meeting dates for the year were noted and the Chair highlighted that the forward plan would grow along with the workstreams from YSAB.

Richard Hartle explained that the Council Executive Budget meeting would be held on 23rd January, therefore budget decisions required by the Forum would be required prior to currently scheduled meeting date of 30th January. Forum members agreed to move the date 23rd January and Cllr Robert Webb (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education) would feedback.

7. Schools Forum Forward Plan, Operation & Good Practice Guidance

Previously distributed.

The Chair explained that the document shared overviewed the Forum's primary responsibilities and suggested conducting an audit would be a sensible step to ensure that the strategic work, challenge and scrutiny was in line with good practice.

Action: Small working group to review each phase and report back at the next meeting was agreed as;
Dave Hewitt, Andrew Daly, Chris Nichols and James McGann

8. Danesgate Outreach Service model

Chris Nichols provided brief recap of the situation to date and the need to find an alternative to the outreach service funded by de-delegation. Forum members had previously acknowledged the necessity for an effective tier 1 outreach service however the initial proposed enhanced offer and financial modelling costing £211k was rejected.

The majority of Learning Support Hub (LSH) referrals to the outreach service were EYFS and Primary School age with 52% of referrals for children in Key Stage 2.

Potential funding through YSAB had been discussed for an adjusted enhanced offer focused on early intervention in school. The proposal was for 18 months of funding however this would not fully fund the whole offer and a top up charge to schools that use service would be applied.

Andrew Daly explained that YSAB were due to meet the following week where the proposal would be presented, adding that he had met with Chris to review the proposal and careful consideration had been given to reflect on, and remove, potential barriers.

A forum member asked about the pathway from outreach into short stay PRU. Chris explained that the outreach workers naturally would see where there was connectivity so could support transition into the short stay PRUs. Dan Bodey added that while tier 1 outreach work referred through the LSH may prefix any request to allocate a short stay PRU, it would still be necessary for the PRU referrals to go through PFAN.

9. YSAB - relationship to School Forum

Previously distributed.

Maxine Squire presented the paper summarising the relationship between YSAB and Schools Forum, outlining the historical priorities focused on driving sector led improvement in the city and the evolution that had taken place since 2017 driven by the changing landscape nationally and within York.

YSAB allowed the key decision makers from the system to work together on school improvement, supporting the LA in its statutory duty to help schools causing concern. It was noted that in 2017 there were more schools requiring formal packages of school support, and one tangible impact demonstrating the success of the model was that the number of schools of concern has significantly declined.

From March 2020 YSAB met weekly as part of a city wide response to the Covid 19 pandemic and through that working at pace YSAB developed new joint ways of working and allowed development of relationships with other areas of the LA such as Public Health. This detailed work moved the purpose of YSAB onwards which looked at key principles recovering from Covid and introducing important new resources for reading, adaptive teaching and SEND.

One of the current year areas of focus was on resetting relationship between the work of Schools Forum and YSAB considering the differences and links between the two bodies.

Maxine briefly outlined the funding available to YSAB through the centrally retained DSG which from £1m in 2017 had been reduced by 20% a year by central government as schools moved towards national funding formula. The

unallocated pot in YSAB for the current year was noted at £131k. No announcements had been made regarding 2025-26 however the assumption was that the gradual reduction would continue. YSAB worked strategically on how to use that funding to make the sector stronger, based on whole city priorities. Investments in the Pathfinder Teaching School Hub and the Research School were highlighted as successful examples of reinvestment in the York system.

Andrew Daly (Academy Member – YSAB Chair) thanked Maxine for the summary, highlighting the effective work that had been done in the city over time and YSAB's contribution. The YSAB meeting taking place the following week would set the direction for the coming year and the proposed approach would be to identify the remaining system issues city wide to direct clear task and finish workstreams, with set outcomes, along with a small allocation of funding to facilitate. Outcomes and progression would be reported at Schools Forum as an accountability measure, an audit trail of how public money was being used and invested into York school system.

Cllr Robert Webb (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education) welcomed the positive move and asked what would drive the decisions on priorities. The Chair explained that there would be a number of different drivers both on a local and national level. Andrew Daly added that regional comparators suggested that, not unexpectedly, the priorities would likely be around disadvantaged outcomes, SEND and place planning.

A forum member asked for further clarification on the funding. Richard Hartle explained that the expectation was that there would be a 20% reduction again which would bring the budget to £124k for 2025-26.

Forum members were in agreement that it was important to understand the expectations that YSAB were working with, creating impactful specific pieces of work that can be properly funded and monitored.

Cllr Robert Webb asked whether there was a link with Public Health. Discussion followed relating to the Public Health contribution to the school Wellbeing Service and other referral led connections plus future potential opportunities.

10. Schools Budget and Dedicated Schools Grant for 2025/26

Previously distributed.

Richard Hartle explained that the indicative allocations were usually announced in July however this had been delayed in the current year and an announcement was expected following the Chancellor's budget on 30th October with detailed figures expected to be received in December. As such there had been no specific modelling completed for 2025-26 and approval could not be sought at the current meeting.

Richard continued that the DfE had published a summary policy document for the schools national funding formula (NFF) which had been shared as annex 1 to the report. This document showed the same structure and funding factors would be used however there was no added value resulting in gaps in the information. The detail would be available and presented at the meeting on 23rd January.

Richard proceeded to talk forum members through the report highlighting the Schools Block and PFI factor. The Forum had previously agreed to follow the DfE NFF at school level following school consultation, and there was little scope to move away from that due to the regulations. In relation to the PFI factor the proposal was to link to inflation and broadly the amount allocated to PFI schools should match what the government allocated to the LA.

In response to a question relating to the percentage change in the Schools Block Richard explained that funding factors and pay award factors were included and then allocated on number of pupils, so falling pupil numbers would affect the total. A more nuanced calculation would be provided when the figures were received.

Other elements for the Forum to consider were relating to the Growth Fund and Early Years block. While the allocations for Early Years DSG had not been released, the proposal was to continue with the proportions agreed last year following consultation, subject to the final budget. If not agreed then there would be significant time restraints to consult on an alternative. Tracey Roberts (PVI Early Years Representative) highlighted that it was difficult to commit when there were no figures or indications of the impact. Richard commented that the ideal option would be to agree another review before the rates were set for the following year, but as there was no information that option was not possible. There was a stipulation that the LA must consult on significant changes, and as such the forum agreed to the proportions of the hourly rates in principle pending the detailed information presented in January.

In relation to the High Needs block, Richard highlighted the consideration of the 0.5% top slice to support high needs as part of the deficit recovery plan to deliver a balanced high needs budget. When previously considered due to minimum per pupil funding levels (MPPFL) this would have fallen on only a third of schools. If given dispensation to disapply the MPPFL then 0.5% off every school, though this would require full consultation and approval at Schools Forum on how to ringfence that 0.5% and how it would be targeted back into schools.

Discussion followed relating to this as a problematic approach of pulling money from one underfunded block to another which masked the problem. Several forum members highlighted that this would be an unpopular proposal for schools and academies. Richard explained that he was not aware of any LA where the Schools Forum had agreed to the 0.5% top slice as a proposal. The decision could however be escalated to the Secretary of State. In response to a further

question Richard explained that within the current regulations 0.5% could be implemented if agreed by the forum, however if proposing more than 0.5% or to disapply the MPPFL then this would need agreement by the Secretary of State. It was highlighted that 0.5% was the maximum any LA had been allowed to apply to date.

It was noted that the Safety Valve was ending 2025-26, with a possible consideration of an extension period to 2026-27.

Cllr Robert Webb highlighted that there was recognition of the problem from the LA, schools and parents and there must be reforms to the rules and systems that have contributed to current situation in order to support the young people in the city.

In relation to the recommendations;

Members of the forum confirmed that they were content for the schools budget to continue to be allocated to schools under the formula and factors contained within the schools NFF.

Members of the forum noted that further modelling would be required around the pupil growth & infant class size funds to understand whether current arrangements can remain affordable within the growth allocation provided by the DfE.

Members of the forum agreed to continue to allocate early years funding under the proportions agreed following the 2023 consultation exercise with providers, *subject to the final announcement on early years funding from the DfE.*

Members of the forum noted the expected impact on centrally retained historic commitment budgets for 2025/26 following a further 20% reduction in funding from the DfE

11. Maintained school start budgets 2024/2025

Previously distributed.

Richard Hartle referred to the details in the report highlighting the position across city of the submitted maintained school start budgets, and the effect on the in year and cumulative position. Schools that had requested a licensed deficit budget following the production of recovery plans, plus the LA's the decision were noted. Richard and Maxine would be meeting those schools and governors where the licence had not been accepted over the current term.

A forum member asked if the recent announcement on pay awards had seen a positive shift on budgets. Richard explained that there had been a modest improvement however there was a legacy impact of historic awards.

Academy members present highlighted that the budget challenges were similar in multi academy trusts. Falling pupil numbers and the lag effect on funding was discussed and the importance of accurate modelling to make decisions now to get ahead of the future problem.

A discussion followed relating to messaging out to parents and the public on school budgets and sustainability.

12. LMS Scheme Review update

Previously distributed.

Richard Hartle advised that the Local Management of Schools (LMS) Scheme applied only to maintained schools and minor technical changes reflecting changes from DfE had been made as an update for implementation of the scheme from 1st April 2025. As none of the proposed changes were expected to have material impact the proposal was to seek approval from the maintained members not to undertake full consultation. The relevant forum members approved this approach and approved the updated scheme without full consultation.

13. SEND Banding update

Previously distributed.

Referring to the report Maxine Squire explained that a commitment to review the SEND banding had been made in the original Safety Valve agreement. Central government had put more money into High Needs over recent years however this had not made material difference in fully funding the need. The current banding system in York relating to areas of primary need had sub levels of bands and this required simplifying to establish what was the need, what provision was required to meet that need, and review against each descriptor what was the reasonable financial envelope to support inclusion in mainstream schools. Banding in special schools also required review to ensure they were aligned, meaningful and practical in terms of translation to provision in those schools. The impact of the cost to send children to special provision out of the city was highlighted, where the cost of one out of area place could fund four places in the city.

Action: Small working group representing all sectors to review and report back at the next meeting was agreed as;
Maxine Squire, Tracey Roberts, Jemma Dunne, Adam Booker, Helen Winn, Andrew Robinson and Rachel Hewston.

14. Safety Valve monitoring report

Previously distributed.

Maxine Squire explained that in discussion with the DfE, the last monitoring report had signalled that a small deficit was accruing. York had done everything possible to stay within the terms of agreement and there were several national changes required to make it work as there were elements of unintended costs which could not be controlled. There was an acknowledgement that f40 LAs were finding it harder to stay within parameters.

Progress however was being made in some areas and this was having an impact as outlined in the report. Updates would continue to be presented to the Schools Forum.

15. Early Years Entitlements and Revenue and Capital

Previously distributed.

Barbara Mands presented the report explaining that the government had announced extended EYFS entitlement for working parents, following the previous expansion and implementation of 15 hours for 9 month olds from September 2024. This entitlement was expected to double to 30 hours from September 2025. An overview of the EYFS registered settings and commissioning in York was provided in the paper and the £333k Childcare Capital Extension Grant for York was to be used to have places ready to meet demand. In addition there was revenue funding from DfE for a significant expansion of wrap around care.

Barbara continued to explain the central government ambition around nursery schools, reinforcing that if schools wanted to consider school nursery provision they must first confirm with the LA that there was a sufficiency need. York had benefited from the adopted model of Shared Foundation Partnerships of all providers of EY working collaboratively and this had been instrumental in the previous successful expansion. A dialogue at local level would be needed to understand viability of new breakfast clubs and school nursery provision.

Barbara explained that a deep dive into sufficiency had been completed with key aspects highlighted; baby places in specific areas, after school for SEND and ensuring that eligible 2 year olds of non working parents were not displaced.

Key risks were outlined in the report and the LA were working closely with the DfE to mitigate where possible. Risks were noted as; failure to provide sufficient places, low levels of sectors funding recruitment, retention of practitioners with no pipeline of staff coming in and planning permission.

Forum members were asked to note the content of the report and consider implications for the sector and schools.

Tracey Roberts (PVI Early Years Representative) highlighted significant concerns on the speed required to implement the increase of places and the resulting quality of provision. Staffing into new school-based provision would inevitably pull from existing provision and, as highlighted in the report, there were a finite number of practitioners. An increase in school places would result in a decrease elsewhere, potentially putting settings out of business. The main consideration for the LA should be quality provision, not opening places just to fulfil an obligation. Existing providers with the ability to expand and staff to facilitate that expansion should be consulted.

Barbara explained that places would be needed and there was significant consideration required on the rising number of SEND and this would all be managed carefully. Younger places were needed year round and the aim was to provide quality places to give the best start in life. Tracey commented that with increased school provision, PVI providers would have the majority of the 0-2 year olds while school took 3-4 year olds, and this was not sustainable.

Maxine highlighted that it was important that LA, schools and PVI worked jointly and strategically.

Cllr Robert Webb (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education) commented that the national announcement of additional places would be welcomed in areas where, currently, there was not sufficiency. There were positive aspects from the extended entitlements to be welcomed in York, but it was important to think about how to implement the plan, considering what was best for the children. A forum member commented that, in some areas, getting children into quality primary school nursery settings would be hugely beneficial.

16. Any other agreed business

Action: The Chair requested that the Clerk email all members in the next week confirming the January date change and a summary of the working groups.

Date and time of meetings for the current academic year:

Thursday 23rd January 2025

Thursday 8th May 2025

Thursday 3rd July 2025

The meeting closed at 9.41am