

CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the additional Schools Forum meeting held on Tuesday 2nd February 2021 at 9.00am via Zoom

Present: Trevor Burton (Academy Representative and Chair), Adam Booker (Special School Representative), Gail Brown (Academy Representative), Andrew Daly (Academy Representative), Di Gomery (Maintained Secondary Governor Representative), Helen Gration (Early Years Sector Representative), Steve Lewis (Academy Representative), Lee Probert (FE Representative), Mark Richardson (Pupil Referral Unit Representative), Claire Rigden (Maintained Nursery Headteacher Representative (VC)), Jenny Rogers (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), James Rourke (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), John Tomsett (Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representative), Dee Statham (Academy Representative) and Helen Winn (Academy Representative)

In attendance: Cllr Keith Orrell (Representing the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education), Amanda Hatton (Corporate Director – People, CYC), Maxine Squire (Assistant Director, Education and Skills, CYC), Richard Hartle (Head of Finance, CYC), Dan Bodey (Inclusion Advisor, CYC), Laura McMurray (School Well Being Service Team Leader, CYC), Sue Day (Consultant, Education and Skills, CYC), Salli Radford (Head of Governor Services, CYC, Coordinator and Clerk)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Cllr Orrell was welcomed to the meeting, which he was attending due the absence of Cllr Cuthbertson.

2. Apologies for absence

All members of the Forum were present.

3. Membership update

Previously distributed. The membership update was noted.

4. Minutes of the York Schools Forum meeting of 26th November 2020

Previously distributed. The minutes of the meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record.

5. Action Plan and Matters Arising

There were no outstanding action point to report.

Matters arising: None.

6. Early Talk for York (ETfY) – Year 1 evaluation report

Previously distributed. Rob Newton presented key findings from the evaluation undertaken in autumn 2020.

It was noted that Westfield, Hob Moor, and Woodthorpe Primary Schools had been included in the project, which would run for a three to five year period. It was further noted that the timeline had been interrupted by the pandemic but that schools had remained engaged throughout.

Rob outlined key points from the report:

- EYFS staff were now more confident in identifying speech and language issues.

- All settings involved now had a Level 3 communication and language practitioner, with training being cascaded within schools.
- Significantly more children (+9%) were being identified with speech and communication needs, with earlier interventions enabled.
- Families were being introduced to strategies ante- and post-natally.
- All settings were keen to continue with the scheme and participants were very positive about the project and outcomes.
- Peer review findings were positive.

Rob outlined the learning points and recommendations taken from the project to date.

It was noted that the York approach was being shared nationally and that an impact evaluation would be undertaken in autumn 2021. It was further noted that York would be used as a test site for a national evaluation project.

Rob outlined the plans to scale up the project, advising that options would be taken to the Early Years Improvement Board. It was noted that the aim was to embed strategies as a way of working rather than a time bound project.

Amanda Hatton advised of the need to align strategies with public health provision, as there was a vision in development that would provide an opportunity for alignment. Rob would take this forward with Peter Roderick, Public Health Registrar.

Questions were invited.

In response to a question regarding the families targeted by the project, and whether these were the most appropriate group, Rob advised that the provision of targeted support via partners to encourage engagement was key to success. Rob further advised that it took time to identify families for

the project, but that the intention was to establish a universal campaign to ensure access for all families, with targeted support put in place as appropriate.

In response to a question regarding the availability of a model standard assessment tool and strategies to pick up children not attending an Early Year setting, perhaps by building into the health assessment, Rob advised that only a small number of children were not attending an EY setting, though this group did show significantly reduced progress on entry to school. Rob advised that development would be followed up by the health visitor team at the two/two-and-a-half year review. It was noted that the Wellcome tool could be used with children not attending EY settings and that the project was considering how to use partner services to screen this group of children. Rob advised that an integrated two-year review was being developed as part of the work of the project, not for universal use with every child but to be undertaken where any concerns regarding development had been identified. It was noted that this approach would be piloted in the project area over the summer term prior to roll out.

In response to a question regarding ways in which the project linked with speech and language therapists and whether staff in the pilot settings were more prepared to work with children to reduce referrals to therapists, Rob advised that data showed a move towards referrals, with work done in school in parallel to the referral. Rob further advised that colleagues in participating settings had been able to access a speech and language therapist who had provided support and helped with capacity and waiting list issues including ensuring referrals were appropriate. It was noted that this support could be phased out over time as staff became more skilled and confident.

Maxine Squire provided more context, advising of the changing approach to joint use of resources.

In response to a question regarding the scale of data being considered, whether the pilot schools might not produce indicative data and how York-wide data would be gathered, Rob advised that the project included work with Public Health colleagues to gauge prevalence. Rob further advised that analysis suggested between 7% and 50% prevalence, dependent on socio-economic status, acknowledging the need for a clear view of likely York prevalence estimates.

Rob Newton left the meeting at 9.30am.

7. School Well Being Service – Year 4 outcome report

Previously distributed. Dan Bodey and Laura McMurray presented the report, which had been jointly commissioned by Health, CYC and the Forum. Dan outlined the ways in which the service was working with schools in supporting staff development, providing one-to-one work and referring appropriate cases to CAMHs.

Dan described the year as one of change, with himself and Laura joining the project as well as there being other staff changes. It was noted that new appointees had a clinical health background but had also worked in schools, with Dan advising that the range of backgrounds was key to developing the service.

It was noted that the School Wellbeing Service worked with schools organised into six clusters aligned to fair access protocols and that the service had been maintained during the pandemic. Dan advised that fortnightly meetings with CAMHs had been a key development.

Dan advised that a bid was being developed to provide support to the service in the form of investment and additional staffing. This would ensure that future challenges could be addressed.

Laura provided a summary of data, advising that 185 consultations had taken place during the last year, a decrease from the previous year due to school closure periods. Laura advised that comparative data over four years of service delivery had shown emotional regulation and anxiety as the main issues, with Y4 and Y5 pupils and Y9, Y10 and Y11 students being most likely to be referred. It was noted that the pressures of the pandemic had affected children, and that KS2 pressure had been identified as a factor.

It was noted that in primary school boys accounted for 60% of consultations, with this data being in line with national. In secondary schools girls accounted for 63% of consultations, again, this reflected the national picture. It was noted that Y10 accounted for the highest number of consultations, with anxiety being the most common need identified.

Other common concerns identified were noted:

- Health anxiety
- Fear of leaving house
- Money concerns
- Sleep problems
- Worries about school work

It was noted that many of the issues were linked to the pandemic.

Laura advised that 64% of students receiving an intervention reported an improvement in their condition and that service satisfaction remained high despite the interruption caused by the pandemic.

It was noted that regular meetings with CAMHs were helping ensure that all referrals were followed-up and that team members attended cluster fair access meetings. It was further noted that Laura attended secondary phase fair access meetings.

Laura advised that Mental Health Champions scheme had been further developed, with a range of activities in place across schools and colleges. It was noted that projects had been well received by students and staff and that the scheme would continue to receive support. A specific report would be circulated.

Laura advised that support had continued during the pandemic, from March 2020, with 71 consultations completed during lockdown. Laura further advised that 94% of schools had reported receiving effective support from the service during this period, and that resources produced for schools had been well received.

Laura advised that the service had undertaken 380 consultations during the 2020 autumn term. It was noted that the team was now fully staffed and had been in a position to deliver support in school settings during the autumn term. Laura advised that from January 2021, services had been run remotely via phone or a virtual platform, with team members contacting parents and carers to ensure referrals were followed up. It was noted that parent consultations were continuing until schools reopened. Laura advised that schools were being provided with weekly challenges around mental health and wellbeing, with this initiative receiving positive feedback. It was noted that the team had created staff wellbeing resources as well and that feedback was invited on this.

Questions were invited. The Chair thanked Dan and Laura for the report, stating that it was positive to see the strong evaluation focussed on outcomes.

In response to a question regarding the needs that were anticipated in coming months and how these might be prioritised given the scale of referrals, Laura advised that the service was encouraging schools to bring any child with presenting needs to a consultation. Laura further advised

that any themes identified (such as anxiety around the return to school), the team would consider supporting at universal level through workshops or other initiatives. It was noted that the service had anticipated a cohort with concerns regarding the return to school in September and had responded with this strategy. Dan advised that the service would review information provided by CAMHs, considering age data and themes, further advising that the service was agile enough to respond to emerging need in an effective way.

In response to a question regarding opportunities to increase resilience in order to reduce incidence, Dan advised that the service was able to use data to anticipate need, with the speedy flow of information in order to identify commonality of need a key factor.

A Forum member reflected on the reduction by 25% in young people able to access support from the service during the pandemic and what the service would need to consider in order to ensure capacity was sufficient to meet future need. It was noted that York College had seen a deterioration in student mental health but had also experienced increased efficiency to ensure nothing was missed. Laura advised that the delivery of virtual sessions would continue until consultations could move to face-to-face, with targeted group work being co-delivered with school staff where appropriate or via whole class interventions to improve resilience. Dan advised that the service was aware of the number of consultations during the autumn term and understood the need to consider group delivery and how best to increase capacity. It was noted that capacity for mental health services was the biggest challenge and that the service would continue to use resources to best effect. Dan advised that the service hoped to supplement existing resources with the bid for additional support.

Laura McMurray left the meeting at 9.52am.

8. Setting the School, High Needs, Early Years and Central Services Budgets for 2021/22 including decisions on options and delegations

Previously distributed. The Chair drew the attention of Forum members to recommendations at the end of the paper, advising that these would require detailed consideration.

Richard Hartle reminded Forum members that the 2021/22 represented the fourth year of alignment to the National Funding Formula (NFF), though a key update in 2021/22 was the merging of the teachers' pay and pensions grants into the DSG. It was noted that paragraph 5 outlined this change. Richard advised that the baseline figure included the former grants, which had changed year on year. Richard outlined the percentage increases across funding blocks:

	Adjusted for pay and pensions grants 2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	Increase £m	Increase %
Schools Block	108.278	112.597	4.319	4.0%
Early Years Block	10.924	11.067	0.143	1.3%
High Needs Block	21.331	22.923	1.592	7.5%
Central School Services Block	3.175	2.766	(0.409)	(12.9%)
	143.708	149.353	5.645	3.9%

Schools Block:

Richard advised that the LA proposed continuation of alignment to the NFF in allocating funding to schools, with funding factors remaining broadly the same.

It was noted that all main factors had been increased by 3%. Forum members noted that per-pupil funding amounts had also increased.

Richard advised that a mechanism had been put in place to ensure academies received funding during the period April to August 2021 to address the lag in incorporation of teachers pay and pensions grants to the NFF.

Richard advised that the government continued to move towards a hard NFF, with proposals expected later in the year. It was noted that during 2021/22 schools would still receive funding through local formula at the rates set out in the NFF, resulting in a range of increases from 2% up to 7.5% per pupil.

In response to a question regarding paragraph 12 and the potential impact of the move to the hard NFF on a maintained school, Richard advised that impact would be marginal within York as the city was already following the NFF. It was noted that a small number of schools received PFI funding with the LA passed on directly and that Richard was not yet certain how this would be replicated within the NFF as there were so many mechanisms in place nationally.

In response to a question regarding the impact on this group of schools and whether the change represented a push towards academisation, Richard advised that two maintained and two academy schools operated under a PFI arrangement. It was noted that one impact would be a limitation of the ability of the LA to move away from the NFF, with this removing the ability to adjust the formula to meet local needs.

In response to a question regarding the LA's ability to manage a deficit position, Richard advised that this was currently manageable as LA expenditure for maintained schools was permitted to move into deficit. Richard further advised that this was likely to be changed in future, as maintained schools would probably need to comply with DfE deficit management requirements.

In response to a question regarding the changed relationship with maintained schools and whether this would be similar to those shared with academies, Maxine Squire advised that 23 maintained schools remained. In response to a question regarding the number currently in deficit, Richard advised that eight maintained schools fell into this category and were being supported to address the position. It was noted that this support would not be removed and that the DfE may take on responsibility if this were not left with the LA. Maxine advised that the DfE was intending to use the same financial standards across maintained and academy schools.

The Chair asked members to consider the recommendation relating to the Schools Block. Discussion continued.

The Forum agreed to continue to follow the DfE's national funding formula for schools in 2021/22, as set out at Annex 1.

Growth fund:

Richard outlined the process to manage growth relating to in-year pupil growth and infant class size funding (ICSF). It was noted that the government was reducing growth fund allocations over time including a reduction of £390k in 2021/22. Richard advised that growth would be challenging to manage given this reduction, advising that the Forum had agreed to a cash limit within the 2020/21 budget. It was noted that the LA

would need to reduce allocations to 75% of full value given the level of funding available.

In response to a question regarding the frequency of ICSF allocation in the context of the impact on small schools of a 75% reduction, Richard advised that this varied as it was linked to multiples of 30 pupils in Y1 and Y2, with trigger points causing schools to drop in and out of the eligible group.

The Forum agreed to the continuation of the current infant class funding and pupil growth funding formulae as described at Annex 2, subject to the cash limiting previously agreed by the forum.

Early Years Block:

Richard advised of the increases in the hourly rate applicable to 2 year olds (£5.36) and 3 and 4 year olds (£4.13), including the proposal to reflect proportionately in funding rates passed on to providers. Richard further advised of an estimated increase in the lump sum received by St Paul's Nursery to £99k following a period of reductions.

The Forum agreed the LA's proposals for early years funding in 2021/22 as set out at paragraph 16.

High Needs Block:

Richard advised of a 7.5% increase in High Needs funding. It was noted that the current year overspend of c£4M was likely to result in a cumulative carry-forward deficit of c£10M at the beginning of 2021/22. Richard advised that previous meetings had discussed the requirement for LAs to limit their deficit or provide a recovery plan. It was noted that this process had been suspended due to the pandemic, though Richard expected the DfE to initiate this shortly and to address the in-year deficit and cumulative deficit in the future. It was further noted that inclusion

review work would support this process, along with the savings options set out at the previous meeting and detailed in Annex 3 of the paper. **It was noted that consultation was ongoing and that Richard would bring a full deficit reduction plan to a future meeting.**

Central Services Block:

Richard advised that the Central Services block was made up of two strands; core funding for statutory services, and historic commitments that had been reducing over time. Richard outlined the history of this process and the different approaches taken across the country, with the DfE keen to align these. The Forum noted the total £1.97M historic commitment allocation, the reduction from 2020/21 resulting in a shortfall of c£500k that would need to be balanced by a reduction in expenditure.

Richard advised that paragraphs 23 - 28 set out these historic funding commitments. Richard outlined the discussion on the possible reduction of expenditure to date and the need to consider options.

Lee Probert left the meeting at 10.30am.

The Chair drew Forum members' attention to the proposals to effect a reduction in expenditure of £550k and the potential impact on the School Improvement Commissioning Fund (SICF).

In response to a question regarding the impact on maintained schools, Richard advised that the total funding received for this group would reduce from £966k to £762k for 2021/22. Richard further advised that impact would be subject to the annual SICF plan, which would consider how funding would be allocated. Maxine advised that the majority of available funding was committed to supporting school support plans and YSAB work with schools requiring intervention. It was noted that the full spending allocation was not currently being spent, and that the majority of settings requiring support were maintained rather than academy schools.

The Chair advised that the Forum had anticipated a reduction in this funding stream for some time. Richard advised that the issue was first flagged when the NFF was introduced, with some commitments ongoing and likely to impact on the LA when funding ceases.

The Forum confirmed their continued agreement to maintaining the LA centrally retained budgets at their current levels as per paragraphs 30 to 34:

- **School admissions £0.178m**
- **Servicing of Schools Forum £0.042m**
- **School copyright licence agreements £0.110m**
- **Former ESG retained budgets £0.370m**

LA maintained school de-delegations:

Richard advised that maintained school de-delegations had reduced over time through the development of traded services. Richard thanked maintained headteachers for their feedback on de-delegations.

Forum members considered the proposals, noting the need for decisions to be made by maintained school representatives by eligible phase in each case.

The Forum agreed on the amount of de-delegations from schools formula funding to be made from maintained mainstream school budgets for 2021/22, as described:

- **Schools general contingency of £4 per pupil to be discontinued.**
- **Free School Meal Eligibility Assessment Services to move to a fully traded operating model with no change to charges in 2021/22.**
- **Behaviour Support Outreach Service to be continued at the current level of offer for 2021/22.**
- **All decisions were unanimously agreed by maintained primary and secondary representatives.**

9. Inclusion Review update

Previously distributed. Maxine Squire summarised key points, advising of a projected overspend of £5.1m in the current year with a £10m cumulative carry-forward deficit at the beginning of the 2021/22 financial year. Maxine advised of the need to begin corrective activities to address the in-year position and feed into the recovery plan to address the deficit.

It was noted that the review had revealed the connectivity of issues, with an increase in requests for statutory assessments leading to a growth in the SEND cohort. Maxine advised of an incremental rise in the number of children and young people with EHCPs up to age 25.

Maxine advised that the starting point for the review had been very different, with only one pathway for SEMH concerns in 2015. The review had sought to address pressure on the Danesgate Community but during the process, it had become clear that a full system review was required and the remit had broadened to take in all aspects of provision. It was further noted that the Local Area SEND inspection had sharpened the process. Maxine advised that SEND reforms had been child-focussed and driven by the voice of children and families. In addition, the review had proved to be a complex process due to the interdependencies of elements of the system. It was noted that any changes would affect other aspects of the system; however, it was necessary to take corrective measures with a system response.

Maxine provided context to the 11 recommendations included in the report.

Amanda Hatton left the meeting at 11.03am.

Sue Day advised that the review process had identified pockets of good practice and that the LA was currently seeking to understand the Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) cohort that was not being supported by existing processes.

Maxine asked Forum members to reflect on the recommendations, advising that consultation was required with stakeholders and that this process would begin in March or April and would present challenge. Maxine advised of the intention to create a stronger system.

Sue outlined the care to be taken during the consultation and implementation phases to minimise impact on service users. It was noted that significant work remained to be undertaken with families in order to investigate potential models for local area provision.

Questions were invited.

In response to a question regarding the total financial saving to be generated by the recommendations, whether there were schools which would be significantly impacted by the proposed Danesgate traded offer, and how outcomes might be evidenced, Maxine advised that the written statement of action had identified an outcomes-based framework and that this was driving the work of the local area group of partners. Maxine further advised that high-level statements with measurable outcomes embedded were included in this framework, outlining the process and providing examples. Dan Bodey provided further examples of work undertaken to reduce behavioural issues using a multi-agency approach. It was noted that a reduction in exclusions at York High School had been evidenced following a planned programme that had reduced need for the high-impact responses often provided by Danesgate.

Discussion followed with expressions of support for the overall project and the move to consultation being offered. Maxine advised that that adjustments could be made to the process as it moved forward, but that support was now required to move forward.

Gail Brown and Andrew Daly left the meeting at 11.30am.

In response to a question regarding Early Years sector involvement and the impact of Covid to the review process during the remainder of the academic year, Maxine advised that Early Years providers would be involved in the next steps, with their being some implications around central services which would impact on Early Years settings. Maxine further advised that the LA was considering how to engage with providers and other stakeholders, and that the pandemic could not be allowed to delay the process that would be run as completely as possible using a range of engagement methods.

The Chair encouraged Forum members to engage with the consultation process. Maxine undertook to alert Forum members to opportunities through the clerk.

Di Gomery left the meeting at 11.33am.

Richard Hartle advised of the need to consider the financial impact of recommendations included in the paper. It was noted that Richard would bring the DSG deficit recovery plan to the Forum regularly, including updates on the impact of the consultation process. It was noted that the Forum would need to consider the DfE's response to the deficit recovery plan.

Dan Bodey left the meeting at 11.35am.

10. Schools Forum forward plan

Richard Hartle outlined the forward plan:

May 2021

- School Improvement Commissioning Fund report and planning / York Schools and Academies Board
- Deficit recovery plan
- Inclusion review

July 2021

- DSG outturn
- Inclusion review
- Deficit recovery plan

11. Any other agreed business

Forum Chair – The Chair advised that he would be stepping down at the end of the academic year. Forum members interested in taking the role of Chair were invited to speak to the Chair or Clerk.

12. Date and time of future meetings

Meeting dates 2021/22 – Previously distributed. The meeting dates were noted.

The next meeting would take place on **4th May 2021 at 9.00am.**