

CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on Thursday 1st February 2024 at 8.00am at West Offices

Present:

Dave Hewitt (Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representative) Chair, Jenny Rogers (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), Lamara Taylor (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), Steve Lewis (Academy Representative), Adam Booker (Special School Representative), Ken Merry (16-19 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 (Head of Finance, CYC) and Barbara Kybett (Governance Advisor, CYC, Coordinator and Clerk)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was noted that the meeting was not quorate, although as both Maintained Primary Headteacher Representatives were present, a decision could be made on de-delegation of funds for the primary behaviour support service.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Jo Olsen (Maintained Secondary Governor Representative), Gail Brown (Academy Representative), Helen Winn (Academy Representative), Dee Statham (Academy Representative) and Chris Nichols (Pupil Referral Unit Representative).

3. Membership update

Previously distributed. The Forum received the membership update. It was noted that Gail Brown (Academy Representative) and Claire Rigden (Maintained Nursery School Representative) had confirmed renewal of their terms of office, and that Ken Merry was the new 16-19 representative.

4. Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting of 19th October 2023

Previously distributed.

As the meeting was not quorate, approval of the minutes was deferred.

Richard Hartle noted that Item 8 on the agenda, *Procurement of contracts for Maintained Schools*, would be carried forward to the next meeting, with the Forum's agreement.

5. Matters Arising not on the agenda

There were no outstanding action points to report or matters arising from the minutes.

***7. Confirmation of Early Years National Funding Formula**

It was agreed that this item would be taken next.

Previously distributed. Richard Hartle referred to the summary report from the Early Years consultation on the local funding formula. He reminded the Forum that the DfE had announced a significant expansion in the entitlement of working parents to funded childcare: from April 2024, there would be an expansion to 15 hours provision for two year olds for working parents, and from September 2024 this provision for working parents would extend to infants aged 9 months to 2 years. Richard referred to the new hourly rates detailed in his report and advised that further expansion was expected.

Richard also reminded the Forum that a proposal had been brought in October that the new Early Years funding formulae would be developed based on the Local Authority's (LA) current principles, pending further information on the level of funding rates and any new regulations on allocations. This information had now been received and it was proposed that a single funding formula for two year old and younger entitlements would be implemented; this would include a supplement for deprivation.

Richard advised that the LA's consultation for Early Years providers had run from 18th December to 17th January and he referred to the local responses detailed in the report which were overall in favour of the LA's proposal. Richard drew attention to the comments recorded in the report, and advised that, whilst no changes were planned on the basis of these for 2024/25, it would be possible to review the level of the base rate funding and the SEND Inclusion Fund for 2025/26 depending on the DfE directions on reducing the LA's top slice percentage.

Richard reported that the proposal had been presented to the council Executive. He invited the views of the Forum.

A Forum member referred to Paragraph 20 of Richard's report, and the predicted increase in the SEND Inclusion Fund. She noted that the level of need in Early Years had already been highlighted and the impact of this was significant. Maxine Squire explained that the Fund was allocated by the Early Years Inclusion Panel. She highlighted the increase in children presenting with traits of autism and with speech and language needs, and advised that the LA was making greater use of Section 23 notifications from health bodies so that any SEND could be identified earlier.

Cllr Webb noted that the issue of the payment schedule had been raised by a number of providers who had responded to the consultation. Richard advised that this was being considered by the Early Years team.

It was noted that primary schools worked in collaboration with Early Years providers.

Schools Forum members supported the proposal for the Early Years funding rates and the Early Years Single Funding Formulae, to be implemented in 2024/25.

***6. DSG and Schools Budget for 2024/25**

Previously distributed. Richard advised that the title of the report on the agenda was incorrect and should refer to the whole of the Schools Budget rather than just the Growth Funding and ICS Funding. The information in the report had been updated from that presented at the meeting in October. Referring to Paragraph 6, Richard noted that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) comparative figures had been distorted by the expansion in Early Years funding. He highlighted the continuing reduction in Central Services block funding. Paragraphs 7 to 16 contained details about the School Formula Funding and the different factors affecting this. Richard noted the Teachers' Pay Additional grant awarded by the DfE for the 2023/24 financial year and the increase of 0.5% in the minimum per pupil amount for 2024/25. Richard advised that a significant increase in this minimum per pupil amount a few years ago had positively impacted a number of York schools, which did not traditionally benefit from other funding factors due to their pupil cohort. However, the year on year increases had now flatlined which would impact these schools' budgets.

There was some discussion on the impact of the changes to the split sites factor which affected two schools in York. Richard advised that any negative impact would not be significant, in terms of the whole school budget, and would likely be spread over several years.

Richard advised that the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) would be rolled into the National Funding Formula from

2024/25. The new Teachers' Pay Additional Grant would, however, be paid separately in 2024/25.

Richard reminded the Forum that the growth fund was used in part to fund additional classes to meet Infant Class size legislation, but as the allocation to the growth fund by the DfE was decreasing year on year, Infant Class Size funding in the city was at risk. The LA would try to mitigate the impact of a reduction or removal of this funding, but amounts paid to schools were difficult to predict as they were based on October census figures. New approaches to this funding would need to be discussed by Schools Forum prior to setting the 2025/26 budget.

Ken Merry joined the meeting at 8.30am.

Richard reported that there had been a significant increase in funding for the High Needs block in the past two years, but the increase would return to lower levels in 2024/25. This smaller increase would not prevent the Safety Valve agreement being met but would limit options for spending.

Central Services funding would see a net reduction of 11% in 2024/25. Richard highlighted the reduction of 20% in funding for historic commitments. All Central Services block funding had been reduced proportionately, and it was intended to continue on that basis, but Richard cautioned that the LA would soon exhaust its options in terms of services to reduce. Funds would need to be taken from the School Improvement Commissioning budget in 2024/25 to support other areas of the Central Services block. Maxine noted that there would be uncertainty around government policy regarding school funding, given the time left for the current parliament.

It was noted that the Forum would be asked for views around managing the reduction in Central Services block funding.

In response to a question, Maxine advised that the School Improvement Commissioning fund had been used to support School Wellbeing Workers, along with other school improvement initiatives.

Cllr Webb outlined what information would be needed by the Forum in order for members to offer views on the use of Central Services block funding which would include: how the funding had been deployed in the last ten years, what services were at risk and what the impact on schools would be. There would also need to be a discussion on how responsibilities within this area would be shared between schools and the LA.

Richard was asked if there was any information from schools of the gap between staff pay award costs and the grants awarded to cover them. Richard was of the view that DfE grants to cover teachers' pay awards tended to be fair, but the increases in support staff pay, which were the equivalent of 10% for those on the lowest bands, were not covered as well by DfE grants and this in particular had impacted on schools' budgets. It was noted that primary and special schools, which relied more heavily on teaching assistant support, were more affected by increases in support staff pay. Richard acknowledged that schools were facing a challenging financial outlook.

Returning to his report, Richard referred to the decision on de-delegation by maintained primary schools for the Behaviour Support Outreach Service provided by the Danesgate Community.

Maxine reported that Dan Bodey, the LA's Inclusion Advisor, had been working with Chris Nichols, headteacher of the Danesgate Community, on a new model of support as the current outreach

service was not financially sustainable. It was important that maintained primary schools had the opportunity to feed back on any review of the service and Maxine therefore proposed an extraordinary meeting of Schools Forum.

There was discussion on the use of the Behaviour Support Outreach Service by academies schools to ensure that there was clarity on academy recharges.

Steve Lewis joined the meeting at 8.47am. The meeting was quorate from this point on.

Maintained primary school headteachers had requested further clarification on the use of, and payment for, the Behaviour Support Outreach Service and referrals to the Learning Support Hub before a decision on de-delegation could be made.

Maxine advised that it was clear that the current de-delegation alone did not cover the cost of the service; schools would need to consider their use of Alternative Provision in the future, particularly in light of evidence that Alternative Provision did not consistently improve educational outcomes. In response to a question, she confirmed that this was an area of challenge for all LAs. It was noted that older children were also demonstrating behavioural challenges, as evidenced by increased suspension and exclusion rates, and that the high level of EHCPs being awarded was not a solution.

Following a lengthy and robust debate, it was agreed that de-delegation by maintained primary schools for the Danesgate Community Behaviour Support Outreach Service would continue for 2024/25, pending a review of the Service.

It was also agreed that an extraordinary meeting of Schools Forum would be held before Easter to consider a review of the Danesgate Community Behaviour Support Outreach Service with changes to be implemented for 2025/26.

Maxine noted that she had already suggested an audit of the use and cost of Alternative Provision and its impact on outcomes for pupils.

8. Procurement of contracts for Maintained Schools

This was deferred to the next meeting.

9. Ratification of LMS Scheme

Previously distributed. Richard advised that the Local Management of Schools (LMS) Scheme applied only to maintained schools. He reported that the Scheme had been updated to reflect new DfE directives, and to clarify and update terminology. There had been a consultation period on the updated version; no responses had been received. The Scheme was therefore ready to be ratified by the Forum.

A query was raised about Paragraph 5.3 *Interest Clawback*. Richard explained that the LA could charge interest on balances, where not to do so would lead to additional costs for the LA. He agreed to present the current Bank Accounts for Schools (BAfS) Scheme to the next meeting of the Forum, including details of the interest calculations .

Richard confirmed that the LMS Scheme should be reviewed on annual basis by Schools Forum at the Spring meeting.

The LMS Scheme was ratified by Schools Forum.

10. Safety Valve quarter 3 monitoring report

Previously distributed

Maxine referred to the Safety Valve quarter 3 monitoring report, and reported that the Council remained on track to meet the requirements of the agreement. She noted that a more challenging phase of cost savings awaited, as financial stability would need to be achieved by the end of the Safety Valve agreement. A joint commissioning strategy and inclusion plan had been established with Health Services, as this was required by the DfE. Maxine advised that the council would be inspected under the new Ofsted framework, and she would be asking for representatives from schools for the SEND Partnership Board.

Maxine reported that work had also been undertaken on the SEND sufficiency strategy and this would be presented to the council Executive in the summer.

Maxine highlighted the increasing pressure from parents and carers for EHCPs and special school places. She advised that demand for Early Years special school places now outstripped supply. The council was working with the parent and carer forum around appropriate messaging. Maxine observed that the SEND Act of 2014 did not anticipate the significant increase in the diagnosis of autism and ADHD. The complex behaviours arising from these disabilities were impacting on mainstream education: schools had responded by offering one to one support for these pupils, but this intervention was often not the most effective, as it did not prepare children for adulthood.

Maxine advised that there had been successful work in the city around supported pathways to employment and she highlighted recent training for education professionals provided by the ADHD Foundation which had been very well received. Next steps included work on understanding neurodiversity with the ADHD Foundation.

It was suggested that there was currently a gap in trauma training for education professionals. Maxine responded that this would be addressed in future training sessions.

There was some discussion on the financial challenges schools faced in meeting the SEND universal offer. It was agreed that the current system of provision for pupils with SEND was not fit for purpose and structural change was required.

Returning to her report, Maxine advised that Safety Valve projects for the summer would focus on the current use of Alternative Provision and the development of models of different ways of working. Maxine shared some reflections on the current system and what changes might be needed.

Finally, Maxine encouraged Forum members to be more involved in the projects led by the council as part of their role in system leadership.

Schools Forum members noted the progress on delivery of the Safety Valve recovery plan and thanked Maxine.

11. Schools Forum forward plan

The following items were noted:

May meeting: Use of Central Services block funding/School Improvement Commissioning Fund; presentation of the Bank Account for Schools (BAfS) Scheme, including the interest calculation; Energy contracts for maintained schools.

July meeting: pupil growth and issues around class size funding; maintained schools' budget outturn; Safety Valve report.

An extraordinary meeting of Schools Forum would be called to clarify the cost and funding of the Danesgate Community's Behaviour Support Outreach Service.

12. Any other agreed business

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

Maxine welcomed Ken Merry, the new 16-19 representative to the meeting, and invited suggestions from him for future agendas.

13. Dates and time of meetings for the current academic year

9 May 2024

4 July 2024

All meetings would take place on Thursdays from 8.00 to 9.30am at West Offices.



The meeting closed at 9.50am.

