



CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on Thursday 4th July 2024 at 8.00am at West Offices

Present:

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

In attendance:

Cllr Robert Webb (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education), Maxine Squire (Assistant Director, Education and Skills, CYC), Richard Hartle (Principal Accountant, CYC) and Helen Marshall Groot (Head of Governor Services, CYC, Coordinator and Clerk)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence

3. Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting of 9th May 2024

Previously distributed.

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

4. Matters arising

Richard Hartle confirmed that he had spoken with the Council Section 151 Officer with regards the interest payments on the Bank Accounts for Schools Scheme.

5. Membership update

Helen Dalby was noted as the new academy representative from NPCAT. Dave Hewitt and Mark Hassack's terms were due to end in September 2024 and had been duly approved for a new three year term of office.

The Clerk highlighted that due to academy conversions over the past year pupil numbers in maintained and academy schools had adjusted the ratio of representatives required on the forum. From September there would be one less maintained representative and one additional academy representative was required. After discussion agreed that the Clerk to draft outline of requirements to share with minutes for consideration of appropriate appointment.

6. Danesgate Behaviour Support Outreach Service

The Chair explained that the previous proposal for the SEMH outreach service had been discussed at York School and Academies Board (YSAB). While there was support for the outreach service, the unanimous decision taken by the academies represented was that they did not feel in position to support the proposed funding proposal.

Maxine Squire explained that alternative models would need to be explored as there were clear financial pressures across the school system for both maintained schools and academies, and contribution through every school was not a supported option. The current de-delegation model was insufficient to pay for the full cost of service so a different offer would need to be considered. The Pay as you Go model also did not work as it provided no security for the host organisation who took the burden of all the risk and uncertainty.

Looking nationally there were a growing number of Academy Trusts and Partnerships that were using SEMH specialist teachers in outreach offers. The proposal was to have SEMH specialist outreach teacher (with qualified teacher status) hosted in Danesgate.

The first option would be that the post was funded under the current de-delegation model. This service could then only be used by maintained primary schools and would put the financial burden primarily on one maintained primary due to the funding formula.

The second option would be to fund the role on a fixed term contract, subject to extension, using YSAB funding for one year to prove the concept. All primary schools would then have access to this service. While it would not be the full model previously suggested it would provide tier 1 preventative work through a specialist teacher. Among other benefits it would allow the Danesgate community to focus on tier 2 and 3 and full time placements be used only for a limited group of people who could not thrive due to SEMH complexity.

The SEMH outreach teacher would be a targeted resource and it was important that it complemented the rest of the offer from the Learning Support Hub (LSH). The Job Description would outline clear descriptors of what the role was for; a qualified teacher skilled in SEMH but also a trauma informed practitioner with the skill to train others to add value and build capacity.

This would also complement work across specialist teaching team where there was co-morbidity with SEMH needs; school integration, school wellbeing, autism teaching team and Danesgate Community.

Maxine highlighted that in the past YSAB funding had been used for system wide work including the School Wellbeing Service and Early Talk for York.

A forum member highlighted the previously shared level of need and noted that both options, either funded through YSAB or de-delegation provided only one member of staff. Maxine explained that a review into the requests to the LSH and how often the existing team had been deployed showed where there had been areas of overlap. It may be looking forwards that it was more appropriate for another team, such as wellbeing team or autism team, to pick up support. It was clear however that there was a genuine need for SEMH and trauma informed support.

A forum member asked whether one staff member would be sufficient when the model previously shared has suggest three staff to meet current need. Chris Nichols explained that the previous model that had been rejected would have met the current need and allowed for growth and support into KS3. One specialist teacher was the next best option with a narrowed focus on primary schools only. Chris continued that reassurance had been sought from the Fair Access teams that the tier 1 service would still be in place from 2025-26 and that there would be systems in place to support academies as well as maintained schools. Chris further explained that from September 2024, there would be only three places left for full time provision at Danesgate which was not sustainable and more preventative work was needed at tier 1.

A forum member asked, if the current model was not working, how the first option (to continue to fund the SEMH teacher through de-delegation) would be sustainable. Chris Nichols explained that the maintained schools were supportive of the outreach service and this was an alternative but lower cost option of tier 1 support. Chris added however if the choice was to cease the de-delegation with no alternative found for funding then the outreach would be disbanded in 2025-26 and no longer available for any school. As explained at a previous meeting, there was a balance consider city wide because if there was less support at tier 1 then there would be an impact on increased need at tier 2 and tier 3.

In response to a question about deadlines for decision on the way forward, Richard Hartle responded that the proposal would need to be confirmed in autumn term ahead of building the Danesgate and maintained schools start budgets for 2025-26.

Cllr Robert Webb (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education) asked whether there had been any consideration of discussions with Public Health for support. Maxine explained that Public Health had investment in the Wellbeing service and the school reintegration worker. The safeguarding statutory partners would be approached for support however it would be important to establish the role over the first year as a proof of concept and show the impact. The key was early intervention that kept children out of Danesgate unless necessary.

7. York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB) Annual Report

Previously distributed.

Maxine Squire presented the YSAB annual report on behalf of the Chair of the Board. Maxine talked through the report overviewing a brief history of YSAB, funding considerations and purpose. The report also provided detail on the YSAB priorities for 2023-24 and how impact had been reported and evaluated.

The funding provided to establish the alternative provision at York High was highlighted as a successful partnership investment and good example of system leadership. The establishment of INSPIRE had reduced exclusions and, following the initial investment from YSAB, was now fully funded by the academy.

Maxine explained that YSAB Members were rigorous in asking questions when discussing funding options and focused on whole city impact, always with robust discussion about the allocation of resources. While York was a small city with limited resources the report highlighted the important work being conducted at the forefront of education. There were two nationally recognised system leadership resources in York; Huntington Research School and the teaching school hub at Pathfinder.

It was noted that the end of year balance from £400k annual budget was £248k and the board had yet to consider commitments for 2024-25.

Forum members had no questions and thanked Maxine for the report.

8. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Outturn 2023/24

Previously distributed.

Richard Hartle explained the requirement to present to Schools Forum the factual statement of year-end of DSG and the maintained schools outturn. Annex 1 to the DSG report demonstrated the funding blocks with the budget, actual and variance noted. The surplus of income over expenditure was noted as £2.4m compared to previous year deficit of £2.7m. The resulting £300k carry forward deficit was noted as a net figure.

Surpluses had been carried forward against two areas; Central Service block and Early Years block. Early Years was calculated on expected take up but adjusted during the year to match the actual numbers with a final adjustment after the spring

term census. This surplus would need to be carried forward as there was an expectation that it would be clawed back.

Richard explained that while there was a £300k net deficit it was important to focus on the High Needs block which alone had a £1m deficit. The overall position had been brought down because of Safety Valve funding of £2m.

In response to a question Richard explained that there would be an adjustment in July when the DSG for 2024-25 was received however forecasting was generally accurate.

9. Maintained Schools Outturns 2023-24

Previously distributed.

Richard Hartle briefly outlined the information that had been provided which included the 2022-23 carry forward, 2023-24 start budget, variances and outturn plus balance as a percentage of core funding. It was noted that every school with the exception of four, were showing in-year deficits for 2023-24. The cumulative in year position was a c£1.1m deficit, though the cumulative revenue balance was positive. There were a number of schools causing concern and work was being undertaken with those schools to turn the position around.

Richard highlighted Danesgate who had started the 2023-24 year with a £500k deficit carry forward and explained that significant work had been done over the last year to bring that bring down too £200k deficit carrying forward. The work done would see that balance brought back to net in the next two years. Chris Nichols added his thanks to the local authority for their support.

A forum member asked what the plan was to bring the budgets in line and how would the deficits be funded in the meantime. Richard explained that there were a number of schools working closely with the Council's Chief Financial Officer after submission

of the 2024-25 budgets and that work included a strategic look at organisational structures. The funds could not be moved between maintained schools unlike in MATs which created a complicated process.

In response to a further question Richard explained that the surplus of the other schools underpinned the debt and the local authority was supporting with cash advances. The local authority would ultimately have to pick up deficits so it was essential not to get into a position of a net deficit.

Cllr Robert Webb highlighted that the rules were stacked against maintained schools which was leading them to make tough decisions as pupil numbers fall.

There was a discussion among forum members of the contributory factors to the current position including reducing budgets, rise in additional needs, falling birthrate and restrictions around infant class sizes. The picture was highlighted as very similar across academies as well as maintained schools.

A forum member noted the cumulative balance at 2.8% of core funding and asked how that compared to previous years. Richard explained that it was down from 5% and explained that there would be a similar drop in subsequent years unless there were organisational structural changes or change to funding.

An academy representative explained that their Trust was sitting at 2% reserves as a percentage of funding and the Trust had made significant cuts for the next year. This would put them in a balanced position however hard decisions had been needed.

A forum member commented that a collaborative open discussion across all schools and academies would be beneficial going forward. The Chair highlighted that those discussions had been a feature of the YSAB meetings historically. Further discussion followed relating to the local plan and housing developments and Maxine explained

that she would be proposing the reinstatement of the School Organisation Committee.

10. Education Funding – first draft letter

Previously distributed

The Chair indicated that the letter remained draft and there were elements subject to review and revision pending the outcome of the General Election. Ken Merry was asked to provide funding information and context relating to post 16. Richard Hartle would provide the relevant data relating to notional SEN funding. It was further suggested that an additional paragraph be added relating to the rapidly changing demographic in York and supporting the city's most disadvantaged pupils.

The PVI representative provided input on the Early Years funding formula which was noted as a city-wide concern. There were increased expectations from parents to receive free early years provision and a brief discussion followed relating to the Labour proposal to have 100,000 extra early years places in school-based provisions.

11. Safety Valve

Previously distributed

Maxine Squire highlighted that the local authority remained on track for the delivery of plan. It was highlighted that majority of local authorities involved in Safety Valve had not been able to deliver despite an offer of an extended time period. There were a number of contextual challenges including a national increase in Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) which was reflective in York.

Savings on transport from DSG was highlighted as a successful element delivered within the plan with a next step to look at transport for 16-19. Learning would be taken from other local authorities' consultation on this.

It was highlighted that the SEND employment forum had been successfully established and York College had developed a supported internship in partnership with Aviva. A post-16 local offer map had been commissioned and would be led by a colleague in York Learning to review current provision and future sufficiency.

Ken Merry explained that the Aviva supportive internship was an interesting programme which could potentially provide a blueprint for a similar offer for other employers. Further details on that programme would be reported back to the Schools Forum at a later date.

Maxine continued that there were increasingly complex needs in young people where it was not clear on what their pathway to adulthood might be. Creative approaches to supporting young people who struggled to tolerate any education setting were required.

The SEND Sufficiency Plan would be sent to the SEND Partnership Board the following week after which it would be shared more widely and published in September 2024.

12. SEN Banding

Previously distributed

Maxine Squire explained that the SEN Banding linked to an outstanding piece of work from the Safety Valve plan and central to both the Safety Valve Plan but also the DfE SEND and Alternative Provision Plan.

The SEN banding had been developed and published in 2018. The task and finish group had looked at how other local authorities were approaching the use of high needs funding and how to manage and allocate to make greatest amount of difference.

Maxine continued to talk through the paper and highlighted the progress on recommendations from the 2023 task and finish group including the costed provision map model, banding being underpinned by ordinarily available provision, publishing new guidance on resource allocation and advisory panels and work with specialist settings.

The overall intention was to make the banding system less complex and readjust the levels of banding so that they accurately mirrored the current situation and were better able to manage the pressures across the high needs block. The revised system would be implemented from 2025.

It was highlighted that EHCPs must be more specific in their language. Providing an example of a 'bespoke curriculum' this was vague, raised the expectations of parents and generally could not be met in mainstream provision. The goal of the EHCP was supporting those children with additional needs to adulthood and this would not be achieved by taking away levels of independence. The Code of Practice was clear that targets and support should be aimed at encouraging independence through a strengths based model, but EHCPs were often needs based.

A forum member highlighted that schools had increasing numbers of parents asking for the costing for EHCPs. Maxine explained that this would form part of work alongside the Parent Carer Forum as it was important that there was clear understanding of what was reasonable to expect from mainstream schools.

A forum member asked in regard to the banding model versus the provision model, that the presumption was that the cost of provision was being fully met by schools or

were children not having their needs met. Maxine explained that it was important to consider not just the needs of individual children but how to build capacity in provision across the whole system, a system that looked at deploying resources to encourage more inclusion in mainstream and better meet the needs. The current high need system was set up in a way that funding did not cover the provision and this was hugely impactful on school budgets.

13. Schools Forum forward plan

The following items were noted:

- Danesgate Outreach Service model
- Education Funding
- YSAB priorities
- 2025-26 Budget
- SEND Banding update

10. Any other agreed business

There was no other business.

11. Dates and time of meetings for the next academic year

Thursday 17th October 2024

Thursday 30th January 2025

Thursday 8th May 2025

Thursday 3rd July 2025

All meetings start at 8.00am and will take place at West Offices.

The meeting closed at 9.34am.