

Schools Forum

16th October 2024

York Schools and Academies Board and the relationship to Schools Forum

Summary

1. This report provides members of Schools Forum with an update on the role of the York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB) and the relationship between YSAB and School Forum.

Background

2. In April 2017 Schools Forum agreed to the continued use of funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to support sector-led school improvement arrangements in York. York has been developing and supporting sector-led improvement since 2010 and has used centrally retained DSG to support the commissioning of school improvement activity. Between 2010 and 2017 these arrangements had been delivered through geographical cluster arrangements and the commissioning of support from the teaching school alliances.

3. In 2017-18 it was agreed to allocate funding differently based on the need to maximise the impact of funding on the city's most significant school improvement priorities and to strengthen accountability by presenting monitoring and evaluation reports to Schools Forum. This was designed to ensure that there was a clear and transparent audit trail in place. This led to the development of the work of the York Schools and Academies Board.

4. YSAB began to meet in 2017-18 and its original purpose was to ensure that a robust accountability framework for the use of centrally retained school improvement funding was in place with a clear line of reporting back to schools forum. The membership of YSAB was drawn from senior local authority officers and the Chief Executives of the multi-academy trusts. The work of YSAB centred on developing the mechanism for ensuring that the funding to support schools causing concern was allocated equitably to maximise the impact of interventions to bring about school improvement.

5. It was agreed that the allocation of schools causing concern funding (which at that time was £400K) needed to be done equitably to ensure that money was being used to address the highest priorities for school improvement in the city. This meant that the funding received by individual schools was closely targeted according to need and based on the sharing of detailed risk assessment information between the local authority and the chief executives/chief accounting officers of the multi-academy

trusts (MATs). The Board has since been joined by the headteacher of the Research School and the Chair of Schools Forum. This is to ensure that the system leadership roles within the city's school system are fully represented in this strategic partnership.

6. At the time that YSAB was formed there were many more schools causing concern than is currently the case. Also at that time the national, regional and local landscape looked very different. The majority of the York MATs were still in their infancy and had not developed their central teams. In 2024 the landscape looks very different and the work of YSAB has evolved. This has been reflected in the move away from commissioning individual interventions for schools causing concern towards system leadership priorities for the city as a whole.

7. The decision to model the National Funding Formula has meant that there has been a reduction in the amount of funding that can be retained in the Central Services block of the DSG. The centrally retained school improvement fund is considered to be a historic commitment by the Department for Education (DfE). There has a process in place which means that funding for these historic commitments have been reduced by 20% a year. In 2024-25 the amount of uncommitted funding available to YSAB is £131K.

8. During 2024-25 it has been agreed to refresh the relationship between Schools Forum and YSAB. This is particularly important given the changes that have taken place both in maintained schools and MATs post 2020. During the Covid Pandemic YSAB was meeting weekly and its focus shifted towards ensuring a partnership response to that public health emergency. During the Covid YSAB became the main strategic school partnership. Post pandemic there has been a focus on education recovery and in the last 2 years the full impact of the pandemic on school attendance and on special educational needs has been seen. This has shifted the work of YSAB away from commissioning school improvement interventions for individual schools towards supporting whole system improvement through commissioning city wide projects e.g. Early Talk for York, SEND Champions, Adaptive Teaching and the WalkThrus.

9. In 2024-25 the focus will be on re-establishing and strengthening the relationship between Schools Forum and YSAB. As a result YSAB will be reducing the number of formal meetings it has during the year and will focus on facilitation of a small number of high priority task and finish workstreams which will report to Schools Forum. These workstreams will be finalised at the next meeting of YSAB on 21st October and reported on to the Schools Forum meeting in January 2025. YSAB will remain accountable to Schools Forum for the use of the remaining centrally retained funding and will continue to have delegated authority to agree its prioritisation and allocation.

Recommendations

This paper is for information and therefore there are no recommendations arising from the paper.

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