

Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Tuesday, 19th January, 2021

Present: John Constable, Langley Grammar School (Chair)
Peter Collins, Slough & Eton Church of England Business and Enterprise College
Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery School
Valerie Harffey, Ryvers School
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School
Angela Mellish, St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School
Carol Pearce, Penn Wood Primary School
Kathy Perry, Mighty Acorns Day Nursery
Jon Reekie, Phoenix Infants
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School
Jamie Rockman, Haybrook College
Coral Snowden, Western House Academy
Neil Sykes, Arbourvale School
Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School

Observers: Eddie Neighbour, Upton Court Grammar School
Lea Turkington, Finance Manager, Western House Academy

Officers: Catherine Cochran, Michael Jarrett, Tony Madden, Mark McCurrie and Susan Woodland

Apologies: Kathleen Higgins

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Lea Turkington, Finance Manager at Western House Academy who was observing the meeting on this occasion.

Attendees were reminded of the protocol for holding a remote meeting and it was noted the meeting would be recorded: an assurance was given that the recording would be deleted upon the production of accurate minutes.

Apologies: Apologies for absence had been received from Kathleen Higgins; there had been no apologies from Maxine Wood.

807. Any Other Business

Nothing was tabled.

808. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

809. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 9 December 2020

The Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 9 December 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising from those Minutes: There were none.

810. Schools Forum Membership update

The Clerk reported that she had not received any further nominations for the two Special School/PRU representative vacancies on Schools Forum. As a result, Jamie Rockman and Neil Sykes were reappointed for further 2-year terms of office.

Members of SASH had been advised of the remaining vacancy for a secondary academy representative. As a result, the Chair had received an expression of interest which he would follow up.

811. Update on National/Local Funding issues

There was nothing to add to the discussions of Task Groups and any information could be found in the papers for this meeting.

9.25am: Nicki Willis was admitted to the meeting

812. Schools Block Budget: Final Authority Proforma Tool (APT) and timeline for 2021/22

Susan Woodland explained that all budgets were indicative until sign off by full Cabinet, who were scheduled to meet on Thursday 18 February 2021 (*update: now scheduled for Monday 22 February*).

Just under £194m settlement had been received before recoupment for academies or High Needs, leaving an approximate net settlement of £186m to date. Academy recoupment was due in February and information would be duly updated.

The primary and secondary unit funding for 2021/22, as compared to 2020/21 was highlighted as there had been large increases of approximately 6.5% in primary and 7% in secondary. This was due to Teachers' Pay and Pension grants now being included in the DSG and the increase accounted for approximately £10m more on the previous year. It was stressed that schools would no longer receive these grants separately.

As noted by the 5-16 Task Group, there had been some changes in variances in the allocation of schools' budgets. This included models being based on the October 2019 census and indicative budgets on the October 2020 census. There were some notable large fluctuations in some schools, with overall primary numbers being reduced by about 160 pupils, mainly in Reception, and an increase in the secondary sector. This reflected the rise in primary numbers a few years previously, now moving through the secondary sector. Some schools had experienced more movement, with Our Lady of Peace losing more than 40 pupils and Lynch Hill having admitted 66 in KS4 and 48 in KS3. Overall, there was a 303 pupil increase across the combined primary and secondary sectors.

Indicative budgets could change following the submission to the DfE; any changes would be implemented and shared when the final figures became available. It was confirmed that any differences from the modelled budgets were likely to be due to changes in pupil numbers and it was suggested schools review any significant pupil number changes upon receipt of their budgets.

As part of the DfE's checking process figures could change when the APT was submitted. Susan Woodland explained one reason had been the settlement being funded on less pupils than paid for. Further investigation, it appeared this was due to duplicates in the academy sector as the LA could not run the same reports for academies as they could for maintained. Academies should have resolved such issues directly with the ESFA. Following the LA's discussions with the ESFA about the schools concerned it was thought dual registrations were the cause, as they took time to resolve following census day. Any adjustments on the APT would be cleared by the ESFA. No further changes were anticipated but final sign off by the ESFA and Cabinet would be awaited prior to issuing final budgets to schools. It was confirmed that the figures had been predicated on the introduction of full NFF funding rates although 'mobility' was not yet being used.

Table 2 was noted, showing the transfer from the High Needs Block (HNB) to Admissions, as agreed at the previous Schools Forum meeting.

It was pointed out that the Maintained Nursery Supplement (MNS) was indicative until September 2021 and would be conditional from September 2021 to March 2022, to be treated as unconfirmed. It was confirmed that the LA had not received any indication of what the conditional issues would be or when they might receive a final answer. Michael Jarrett added that the MNS issue had been raised with the DfE as a financial risk and a long-term plan had been requested. However, it was felt unlikely there would be anything to update whilst annual settlements remained in place.

813. DSG Budget Monitoring Report (all blocks)

Apologies were noted for the supporting paper having been posted as a supplementary document to the agenda.

The overall position of the DSG for the financial year 2020/21 would be outlined as updates were still being received. It was planned that a final paper would be presented at the next meeting of Schools Forum when all blocks had been updated. Members were reminded these were indicative figures.

Schools Block: a carry forward into the current year was expected through the Growth Fund, which it appeared would be overspent this year. The report showed a breakdown of supplementary grants which included the Teachers' Pay grant, Pupil Premium, UIFSM etc., for the current year. As previously noted, Teachers' Pay and Pensions would now be shown within the whole settlement for 2021/22. During the current year there had been two additional grants: Covid-19 Catch-up Premium and Covid-19 School Fund Exceptional Costs.

Early Years: there was a carry forward of £547,000 into the current year which was likely to increase. The end of July adjustment this year had received an increase for additionality of uptake, and it was anticipated there would be a carry forward balance of more than £1m into 2021/22. The supporting paper explained the adjustment made, noting there had been a number of impacts on this sector due to Covid-19, making it difficult to predict a final outcome.

The EY funding settlement would be predicated on the January 2021 census. It was noted numbers might not be as high as previously seen. Where attendance was below 85% of the January 2020 census and the LA could provide evidence for increased attendance in the spring term, the DfE would top up the additional places taken after January 2021 count. This would give settings and the LA more stability offering some protection.

The EY Block was currently forecast to carry forward approximately £1.048m into 2021/22, of which £0.547m related to prior years' underspend. It had previously been reported that the cumulative EY underspend would be £0.547, but it was highlighted that the ESFA would make a final adjustment for 2019-20 in the July update as in previous years. The ESFA had made an additional payment of £0.423m in July 2020, therefore substantiating the £1.048m carry forward balance (**update:** revised figures are below):

Early Years Block	Budget 2020/21 £m	Projection 2020/21 £m	Variance
Income			
DSG Settlement	-14.349	-14.349	0.000
Income Total	-14.349	-14.349	0.000
Expenditure			
Maintained Nursery Schools			

2 Year Old Funding	0.228	0.228	0.000
3-4 Year Old Universal Entitlement	1.552	1.502	-0.050
3-4 Year Old Extended Entitlement	0.290	0.680	0.390
Deprivation	0.028	0.044	0.016
Maintained Nursery Supplement	0.727	0.727	0.000
EYPP	0.019	0.020	0.001
Sub Total	2.844	3.201	0.357
<u>Primary Schools</u>			
2 Year Old Funding	0.028	0.023	-0.005
3-4 Year Old Universal Entitlement	3.745	3.484	-0.261
3-4 Year Old Extended Entitlement	0.329	0.402	0.073
Deprivation	0.045	0.066	0.021
EYPP	0.030	0.039	0.009
Sub Total	4.177	4.014	-0.163
<u>Special Schools</u>			
2 Year Old Funding	0.000	0.000	0.000
3-4 Year Old Universal Entitlement	0.000	0.000	0.000
Sub Total	0.000	0.000	0.000
<u>PVI Sector</u>			
Sub Total	6.289	6.381	0.092
EYPP	0.020	0.020	0.000
Growth	-0.046	-0.046	0.000
Disability Access Fund	0.054	0.000	-0.054
Sub Total	0.028	-0.026	-0.054
<u>Central Budgets</u>			
Early Years Adaptations/ Practical Support	0.050	0.026	-0.024
Early Years Strategic Financial support	0.080	0.080	0.000
Early Years Behaviour Support Services	0.042	0.042	0.000
Central Early Years Expenditure	0.068	0.068	0.000
Early Years Team Contribution	0.485	0.485	0.000
Central Expenditure Total	0.725	0.701	-0.024
Total Expenditure	14.063	14.271	0.208
Projected End of Year Variance	-0.286	-0.078	0.208
Carry forward from 2019/20		-0.547	
Early Years adjustment July 2020		-0.423	
Cumulative Surplus/Deficit		-1.048	

High Needs: included any overspend and was expected to increase by approximately £4m, taking the cumulative deficit to £18m. It was felt the breakdown of income and expenditure was a fair and clear reflection and although additional monies had been allocated to HNB they did not cover the demands of the Block. Members were aware this area had been under close scrutiny and a great deal of work was being carried out to mitigate the overspend and to streamline the funding. The DfE had now moved to the Deficit Management Plan, which would be covered in more detail during the meeting.

It was noted that in-borough maintained £235,000 overspend was mainly due to those with EHCPs and the work on the funding matrix in 2019. Those in Years 5 and 9 with EHCPs

had been reviewed, in line with new funding matrix and other year groups would follow. Independent schools showed increased numbers and costs. There was an overspend of just under £1m on Post-16s which was due to increased learners and the age range of EHCPs having been extended up to 25 years of age. Out of Borough costs had been outlined in the table provided. Independent schools and out-of-borough costs were two of the areas being included in the work of Mark McCurrie.

Central Schools Services Block (CSSB): The overspends on expenditure were highlighted:

Admissions were due to the increased costs as outlined to Schools Forum at their previous meeting.

An unexplained overspend appearing in the Schools Forum budget was being investigated by Susan Woodland to establish what it covered and it was hoped an answer would be available for the next Schools Forum meeting (**update:** this has now been resolved).

9.55pm: Tony Madden was admitted to the meeting

A typographical correction would be made in the Virtual School report under the 'projections' heading.

In answer to a query, it was confirmed that the High Needs place funding for academies reflected 'zero' as the funding came directly from the ESFA. The information had been included to cover any adjustments which might have to be made to the ESFA.

It was noted that it was good practice to obtain the approval of Schools Forum and, as recommended, Schools Forum:

NOTED the financial position as outlined and,

APPROVED the carry forward of any deficits, dependent on figures coming back to Schools Forum at their next meeting.

The Chair thanked Susan Woodland and her team for all their work in supplying such a comprehensive report for the meeting.

814. High Needs Place Change notification

The LA had submitted the annual ESFA High Needs Placement change form in November 2020. The form described the High Needs placements for the financial year April 2021 – April 2022, with the main changes being at Arbour Vale, Haybrook, Marish and Windsor Forest College Group. The known pressures for the next year were included, with the main changes on previous years being the increased places, including 3 places at Grove Academy effective from September 2021.

10.00am: Kathy Perry left the meeting

Although Grove Academy was an all-through school, it was confirmed that the 3 places were secondary, in line with plans for a secondary unit.

Schools Forum **NOTED** the LA had submitted the ESFA High Needs Placement Change Notification 2021-22 form in November 2020.

815. Growth Fund 2021/22 allocations and issues

It was noted that the supporting report was based on the format and criteria previously presented to Schools Forum.

The need for school places in Slough was primarily due to the birth rate in Slough over a 9-year period increasing by 48%, with the impact of that still being felt. The LA had considered and actioned a number of options to support this expansion. The attention of

members was drawn to Section 5 of the DfE Guidance explaining how the Growth Fund could be used.

Tony Madden explained that all calculations were based on the AWPU figures provided by the LA's Schools Finance and the paper showed how criteria was applied, with secondary AWPU being averaged for Key Stages 3 and 4. Growth was being funded in the second year at academies between censuses as the fund was to support and compensate for any lag a school would experience. It could support expansions for 7 years at primary, 5 years at secondary (being Years 7 -11).

10.05am: Kathy Perry was readmitted to the meeting

In the situation where a small number of additional pupils did not justify a bulge class, schools could be asked to go 2 over PAN in each class. It was felt this was a useful option but had not yet been used. Schools Finance had added a caveat that, if Growth Fund was not available the LA could ask Schools Forum to review this criteria.

Tony Madden took the meeting through the supporting appendices:

Appendix A: very little change made in 2020/21. As no further underwriting was required for Grove Academy the line had been removed. There were two further contingency sums, one for a primary class but there would not be a bulge unless necessary and it was unknown whether Grove had opened a fifth Year 7 class and, if so, an extra teacher had been employed. If not required there would be a carry forward of £315,000.

Appendix B: it was noted this was the best estimate for 2021/22. Four schools had expanded and would continue to appear on reports, with one primary and two secondary contingency classes. The correct AWPU had been used in line with the agreed figures and a carry forward of £121,617 was projected.

Appendix C: the following years had been projected using the 2021/22 AWPU figures. There was a large increase as explained by Susan Woodland of over 10% but allowances had to be taken into account. AWPU for 2021-22 included an element for the Teachers' Pay Grant and Teachers' Pension Employers Contribution Grant which had previously been separate grants. At the end of 2022/23, the current carry forward was estimated to be £49,000.

In answer to a query, it was confirmed that if a school with a bulge class lost another class, with the overall number of classes remaining the same, there was no need for growth funding. The Fund was primarily to support additional staffing costs.

It was confirmed that the AWPU now included the Teachers' Pay and Pensions, making a significant difference between the primary and secondary AWPU rates quoted. These would even out going forward unless other grants were incorporated into the DSG. It was suggested AWPU might be applied at the correct rates but it was pointed out this would result in a large increase from KS3 to KS4 as KS4 was weighted to include the exam element. In addition, it might not be to the advantage of primary schools to apply the individual AWPU rates, as historically the rates had always been averaged.

As recommended, Schools Forum:

AGREED:

- the principles of allocations for 2021/22 and,
- the carry forward and top slice for 2021/22, which was in line with previous years and aligned with the Schools Block as noted by the Task Group and,

NOTED the forecast outturn for 2020/21

10.20am: Tony Madden left the meeting

816. Early Years update

Michael Jarrett reported that through the DSG settlement Early Years had received a positive increase of £44m across the country.

Early modelling had been completed which the Early Years Task Group was to consider at their meeting scheduled for Thursday 21 January. Four options were to be proposed and when the work was completed the detail would be shared with the sector through Survey Monkey. It represented an increase of:

£0.08p hour for 2-year old provision

£0.06p hour for 3 and 4-year old provision

As previously discussed, MNS remained a risk and was an ongoing issue. Long-term certainty had been requested but no assurances had been forthcoming. It was suggested that whilst comprehensive annual spending reviews continued, this was unlikely to change.

Any proposals from the Task Group and responses from Survey Monkey would be reviewed and, in order to meet the timeframe, an update would be circulated to Schools Forum members via email. It was hoped proposals could be tabled at the next meeting of Schools Forum.

It was added there had been favourable responses from the sector about these proposals and this was felt to be encouraging.

817. DSG Deficit Management Plan update

The Chair thanked Mark McCurrie for his comprehensive report.

Mark McCurrie confirmed the report was very detailed in order to ensure the LA was meeting the conditions attached to the DSG grant: he outlined the background, explaining the previous single DSG Recovery Plan had been changed to the DSG Deficit Management Plan (the Plan) for this and future years. The ESFA expected the Plan to be a 'live' document, with the main focus being the strategies put in place to reduce the High Needs deficit. Further strategies would be introduced and narratives updated, allowing progress to be tracked in the information made available to key stake holders.

The Plan contained information by specific areas, allowing access to spending breakdowns by sector and enabling a view of pressure points. The Plan already contained financial details and, with the inclusion of new internal financial systems, there would be more alignment with financial information.

It was pointed out that the LA's deficit was reasonably large in comparison to some others LAs and the ESFA acknowledged that repayment would take time.

10.25am: Kathy Perry left the meeting

Members noted that the Plan had been included as the appendix for this item and apologies were extended as the type was small in some sections. A number of critical points were drawn to the attention of Schools Forum:

A number of assumptions had been made, with the HNB being the main focus: these had been discussed with the Task Group. The version presented (1.3) demonstrated the current position and if no further changes were made, these would be the forecasts for some years to come. Transfer requests between blocks of up to 0.5% had been included. The Plan was a useful tool and gave focus to the sectors factoring into High Needs. Over time it would be possible to analyse mitigated against unmitigated risks in order to demonstrate savings.

Key Risks identified to date included:

: the number of maintained EHCPs, which continued to grow in Slough year on year, being a little higher than average above average growth rates;
: the shortage of local therapeutic support interventions both pre and post statutory;
: a lack of local specialist provision in resource bases and special schools, leading to pupils being placed in the independent sector. It was added that a proportionate use was now being seen in Slough.

There was an increase in the number of EHCPs being maintained where ASD was the primary lead and monitoring of this would continue. Slough had a higher number of young people with speech and language needs which continued in those being granted an EHCP in the 20-25 year old group, although this was now leveling off.

It was stressed this was the current position and strategies were likely to change.

The Workforce Development Plan was being reviewed in order to promote inclusive practice to support schools. Analysis to show financial impact would be included in the Plan. The resource base review had been affected by the Covid-19 situation but it was anticipated the review could be closed in February. Any recommendations arising from the review would be included in the Plan.

A further approach was to review the SEN panel process to ensure decisions were legally binding and linked to the banding matrix. Capital investment plans were also under review and would be linked to other streams and factored into the Plan.

EHCP figures were mapped against residential population figures. However, predications had been made on historical figures as the population figures focused on school age and not the EHCP 0-25 years age range. There was approximately 2.6% growth on average over the years but a year-on-year increase had been factored in. Part of this work would be to establish why there was that growth above population growth.

It was noted that the mainstream factor had been assumed with an increased factor of 14% built in year on year, further to the recent review of the banding matrix. More work was to be undertaken to decrease that amount.

The 2022/23 HNB income settlement had used an 8% growth as opposed to the 11% income growth for 2021/22. Mark McCurrie explained it was considered prudent to plan on less income rather than more.

10.35am: Peter Collins left the meeting

The expenditure and income assumptions were highlighted, as there was an increase in both, with income increasing at a slightly higher rate than expenditure. It was noted this was shown in the table at 5.31 of the report.

It was noted that a forecasted reduced deficit should be seen over the forthcoming years but the accumulative position would continue to grow.

Budgeting would continue on a more prudent basis but the main area of focus would be the mainstream sector due to the growth of EHCPs and pupil numbers. There had also been a big change in the financial reporting of costs for independent schools and Post-16.

In answer to a query it was noted that the Plan did not have to be submitted to the DfE but had to be made available. It would have to be published as part of the local offer and would be presented to Schools Forum termly. It was also likely the ESFA would request regular update meetings with the LA and would review Schools Forum papers.

No increase in expenditure was forecast but there had been an application for additional resource base places. The information made available concerning resource bases referred to place funding rather than overall expenditure; as the majority were academy resource

bases this funding would come from the ESFA rather than the DSG. Top ups for resource bases were reported in the figures for mainstream, with top up funding as a whole included in the Plan but not place funding for academies.

It was understood there were possibly 32 other LAs undertaking this work but there had not been any collaborative work to date. It was confirmed that, going forward it would be useful for the LA to work with their neighbours.

In response to a question, Mark McCurrie explained he would aim to present a further version of the Plan to Schools Forum in March. However, as the resource base review had not been completed by Christmas as originally planned, it would be necessary to keep this under review and add it to the forward agenda plan.

818. Update from Task Groups: Early Years, HNB and 5-16

As noted, the Early Years Task Group was due to meet on Thursday 21 January.

No further dates had yet been set for meetings of the HNB Task Group and the 5-16 were not scheduled to meet.

819. Academies update

It was understood the conversion of Khalsa Primary School to multi-academy trust status remained on schedule to take effect from 1 February 2021.

820. 2020/21 Proposed Forward Agenda Plan/Key Decisions Log

The Forward Agenda Plan 2020/21 and Key Decisions Log were noted.

It was noted the next meeting of Schools Forum was scheduled to be held on:
Wednesday 10 March 2021 at 9.15am

Members would be advised if there should be any change.

821. Any Other Business

Nothing had been tabled.

The Chair thanked everyone for their time, in particular LA Officers and their teams for the detailed reports presented. All were wished well during this difficult time.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 9.15 and closed at Time 11.00)