

## **Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Tuesday, 1st October, 2019**

**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 Primary School  
Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School  
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School  
Angela Mellish, St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School  
Eddie Neighbour, Upton Court Grammar School (Observer)  
Carol Pearce, Penn Wood Primary School  
Jon Reekie, Godolphin Infant School  
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School  
Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School  
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School  
Jamie Rockman, Haybrook College  
Neil Sykes, Arbourvale School

**Observers:** Eddie Neighbour, Upton Court Grammar School  
Brenda Scott, Orchard Hill Academy

**Officers:** Catherine Cochran, Domenico Barani and Vikram Hansrani

**Apologies:** Ray Hinds, Kathy Perry, Johnny Kyriacou and Neil Wilcox. No apologies from Jo Matthews.

As noted, apologies for absence had been received from Ray Hinds, Kathy Perry, Michael Jarrett, Neil Wilcox and Johnny Kyriacou. There had been no apologies from Jo Matthews.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and welcomed them to the first meeting of the academic year. An apology was extended to all those who had experienced problems receiving the supporting documentation; it had also been necessary to email a detailed spreadsheet, rather than publish it on the website and hard copies of the spreadsheet were available at the meeting.

### **720. Declarations of Interest**

Apologies for absence had been received from Ray Hinds, Kathy Perry, Michael Jarrett, Neil Wilcox and Johnny Kyriacou. There had been no apologies from Jo Matthews.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and welcomed them to the first meeting of the academic year. An apology was extended to all those who had experienced problems receiving the supporting documentation; it had also been necessary to email a detailed spreadsheet, rather than publish it on the website and hard copies of the spreadsheet were available at the meeting.

There were none.

### **721. Any Other Business**

The Chair had one item under Any Other Business.

## **722. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 4 July 2019**

The minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 4 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

**Page 1:** Please note that Carol Pearce had sent apologies for absence.

### **Matters Arising from those Minutes:**

**Page 3, minute 713, first paragraph:** The DSG Budget Deficit Recovery Plan had been submitted to the ESFA in June 2019 and sign-off was awaited.

It was confirmed that the ESFA had allocated one of their specialists to work closely with the Local Authority (LA) in monitoring recovery plans and making efficiency savings.

**Page 3, minute 713, fourth paragraph:** It was confirmed that the possible approach from the LA to Schools Forum, requesting a reassignment of £93,000 from the High Needs Block to Early Years (in relation to the Early Years Inclusion Fund) would not be pursued until the DSG Budget Deficit Recovery Plan had been agreed. The request for a transfer of £700,000 (0.5%) from Schools Block to the High Needs Block in Year 3 (2020/21) was on the agenda for this meeting.

**Page 3, minute 713, final paragraph:** Nic Barani would request clarification from Neil Wilcox on the historic origins of the £184,000 which related to the PFI Contribution for Arbour Vale.

## **723. Schools Forum Membership**

It was confirmed that, following due process, the following members of Schools Forum had been reappointed for a further two-year term of office:

John Constable, Headteacher, Langley Grammar School (Academy representative)  
Valerie Haffrey, School Business Manager, Ryvers School (Academy representative)

Kathleen Higgins, Headteacher, Beechwood School (Academy representative)  
Navroop Mehat, Headteacher, Wexham Court Primary School (Maintained representative)

Angela Mellish, School Business Manager, St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School (Maintained representative)

Carol Pearce, Governor, Penn Wood School (Maintained representative)  
Jo Rockall, Headteacher, Herschel Grammar School (Academy representative)  
Maggie Waller, Governor, Holy Family Primary School (Maintained representative)

Nicky Willis, Executive Principal, Cippenham Primary School (Academy representative)

The Chair thanked all those concerned for their willingness to renew their membership.

There remained vacancies for one further Academy representative and also a 16-19 Provider representative. The Clerk would make the necessary arrangements.

## **724. Update on National/Local funding issues**

It was noted that the main paper had been supplied in two parts. Part A requested Schools Forum approve the transfer of £500,000 from the High Needs Block to the Schools Block. This was to correct an historical error in the 2017/18 baseline and, although the request had also been made to the ESFA over the past two years, they had advised they were unable to make the correction. It was confirmed that the same request had been made to Schools Forum the previous year. The Chair invited comments.

A member queried whether Schools Forum could request that the ESFA make this transfer, but it was repeated that the LA had been advised the ESFA was unable to do so.

The funds would form part of the 2020/21 Schools Block allocation and it was therefore beneficial to action this transfer early in the term. Schools Forum **APPROVED** the transfer as outlined.

Part B of the report gave an update on national issues and feedback from the two recent 5-16 Funding Task Group meetings. Schools Forum was asked to note the options for the 2020/21 local formula, details of which schools would be consulted upon. It was known that a 3-year settlement was to be made by the DfE but, at this stage, it was unknown how much would actually be received at local level: this detail was expected later in the current month. However, it had been necessary for modelling work to commence.

DfE had indicated that the LA would receive a minimum 1.84% per pupil increase in overall funding. Nationally, DfE had stipulated that the per pupil primary sector minimum funding would increase to £3750 in 2020/21 and a minimum of £4,000 in 2021/22 and from £4,800 to £5,000 for secondary in 2020/21. It was noted that the majority of Slough schools were already receiving funding at these levels. There would also be a continuation of £1.5 billion for teachers' pensions, which was treated separately.

The supporting report highlighted the updates, including the National Funding Formula (NFF) factor rates which would increase by 4%, excluding FSM, which would increase by the rate of inflation. It was confirmed that the ESFA was moving towards a hard formula by fixing the minimum per-pupil funding rates. The MFG had also been changed, with a range from +0.5% minimum to a maximum of 1.8%, with capping and scaling for growth removed.

It was noted that LAs were authorised to transfer 0.5% from the Schools Block to other blocks, primarily to ease in-year pressures on the High Needs Block.

The LA was to issue a separate consultation regarding support for the High Needs Block. A number of options had been discussed and the first models had been drawn up prior to the ESFA releasing their data.

The LA had worked on three options for the 5-16 Schools Block in 2020/21: 65%, 85% and full NFF. The second Task Group meeting had agreed to reduce from three to two transition options, 65% and 85%. 65% represented the current position, and 85% essentially a half-way position between that and full NFF. Nic Barani emphasized that it was not advisable to move to 100% NFF as, although Slough could afford this within the current allocation, applying the full NFF formula could possibly result in a potential capping of current funding levels.. The models provided were based on actual or estimated pupil numbers; it was explained that an email

had been sent to schools requesting pupil numbers in order to model with more accuracy but there had only been approximately 50% response. Nic Barani emphasised again that the amount of funding in the Schools Block had been increased by 1.8% which would increase individual schools' funding.

It was noted that figures shared were as accurate as possible, based on the information provided by the DfE and by schools in respect of pupil numbers. Option 1 (65%) was based on MFG +0.5%, so any schools on full MFG protection would receive a minimum increase of 2% on the previous year when MFG was set at -1.5%. Option 2 would be 85% as part of the move towards NFF. It was added that Slough historically had high deprivation so schools which were more reliant on this factor would receive a smaller increase under this model. The circulated graph was a summary of change, indicating a mix between those gaining and losing. Nic Barani invited questions to be directed to himself or his team.

In answer to a query, it was confirmed there had been no indication from the DfE to date with regards to the continuation or amount of Pupil Premium funding going forward. It was added that it would be helpful for Headteacher colleagues to have this information as this funding could impact on budgets. It was not included in the figures presented and it was currently assumed it would continue.

In answer to a further question, Nic Barani indicated that column K in the modelling spreadsheet showed some schools with decreased rolls. It was confirmed again that not all schools had responded to the request for pupil numbers and it was known that not all Slough primary schools were full. The Annual Pupil Census would give more indication and the LA would receive this information from the DfE in early November.

The Chair thanked all those who had been involved in the work of the Task Group and their endeavors to formulate an approach which minimised potential issues for schools. The Task Group recommendation was that two options should be reviewed, being 65% NFF as in 2019/20 but inflated by the additional monies and MFG, or 85% NFF which was working towards full implementation. Schools Forum were asked whether the consultation should go out on both options or just one and, if so, which one?

Nic Barani agreed that consideration would be given to including the base model and it was pointed out that a lot of information was being shared in a short space of time. There would be an explanatory document accompanying the consultation: it was planned to send the consultation out during the current week, giving a two-week turn around period (**update: the consultation went live on Friday 4 October**).

It was **AGREED** that the 65% and 85% models should go forward to consultation, as recommended by the Task Group.

It was queried whether the final decision could be delayed until more information were available, particularly as there was a great deal of uncertainty for schools around High Needs funding. Nic Barani explained that due to the budget setting timeline, the deadline was November and this issue would be addressed at the next meeting of Schools Forum, which was scheduled for Tuesday 12 November. The LA was only able to work with the information available to them.

A Headteacher confirmed there was a considerable impact on school budgets for those supporting pupils with High Needs, particularly if the school concerned had falling rolls.

In regard to the request for a 0.5% transfer from Schools Block to the High Needs Block, it was noted that the LA was anticipating a total cumulative overspend in the region of £10.8m on the High Needs Block at the end of the current year. This was due to a number of contributory factors which had been shared with Schools Forum previously. The LA continued to do all it could to mitigate the pressures on the High Needs Block. Liaison continued with other LAs and work was ongoing to negotiate broker deals for placements. The requested top slice would be approximately 25% of the expected in-year deficit for 2020/21, not for the historic deficit.

Discussion followed about communicating the consultation information to schools and it was noted this was usually emailed via Headteachers and School Business Managers. It was pointed out that if The Link were used, not all schools now subscribed. It was agreed it was a good suggestion for the information to be shared via phase groups. Members were asked to urge colleagues to respond. A request was made for all Schools Forum members to receive notification.

The 5-16 Task Group was scheduled to meet on Monday 21 October to consider the results.

The Chair thanked Nic Barani for the comprehensive reporting provided and the detailed data made available at recent Task Group meetings.

#### **725. 5-16 Funding 2020-21**

This item had been covered under the above item.

#### **726. Proposal to transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block**

A further consultation was to be circulated alongside the main consultation, requesting agreement to transfer 0.5% (£0.7m) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, as part of the SBC High Needs Deficit Recovery Plan. Schools Forum members noted that the LA was expected to make such a request by the DfE.

#### **727. Scheme for Financing Schools**

Nic Barani confirmed that the consultation on the Scheme for Financing Schools had now closed. The responses were being reviewed and updates would be presented at the next Schools Forum meeting.

It was noted that the consultation had been sent out to schools at the beginning of the current term.

#### **728. SEND Banding Update**

Vikram Hansrani confirmed that following approval by Schools Forum in March 2019, the LA's proposed new SEND banding model had been phased in from 1 April 2019. The LA was now in a position to start analysing data and would provide quarterly updates to Schools Forum.

It was acknowledged that the banding model was a complex document and there continued to be concerns about pressures on the High Needs Block: these would continue to be closely monitored.

The highlights to date showed a similar correlation between SEND panel decisions and SEND officers but there was some inconsistency between schools' assessments and panel decisions. The PVI sector had been supportive of the new banding model, the banding matrix was now being used by schools and had been positively received. Some settings had suggested levels were greater than offered by the banding model. Further training was to be made available and, as part of the DSG Plan, SEND officers required greater input.

A member pointed out that as it was early in the introduction of the new Banding model, impact was not yet evident. It was added that it continued to be difficult for Special schools and PRUs who did not receive the funding increases whilst block funding had remained the same for the past 5-6 years.

Schools Forum **NOTED** the update given on the new banding model and that quarterly updates would be presented to Schools Forum.

#### **729. Update from Task Groups: 5-16, HNB and Early Years**

As noted, the 5-16 Task Group had met twice and, as noted, was due to meet on Monday 21 October. The Early Years Task Group had also scheduled a meeting. The High Needs Task Group had not met.

#### **730. Academies Update**

There were no academy conversions to report but it was noted that Cippenham Infant and Primary schools had been given permission to merge.

#### **731. 2019/20 Forward Agenda Plan/Key Decisions Log**

Meeting dates within the 2019/20 Forward Agenda Plan were highlighted, which reflected a slight amendment to the usual pattern. The Key Decisions Log was noted for information.

#### **732. Any Other Business**

The Chair announced this would be Vikram Hansrani's last meeting and wished him well for the future in his new role in Hillingdon. On behalf of Forum, the Chair thanked Vikram Hansrani for his informative reports and hard work.

**(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15 am and closed at 9.20 am)**