

Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Thursday, 13th May, 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
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)
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

Officers: Catherine Cochran, Michael Jarrett and Johnny Kyriacou, Tony Madden, Funmi Olagbaiye and Susan Woodland

Apologies: Valerie Harffey and Carol Pearce

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. A welcome to the group was extended to Funmi Olagbaiye, replacement for Susan Woodland, who was attending her last meeting.

The meeting was held remotely and would be recorded: the recording would be deleted upon the production of accurate minutes.

Apologies:

Apologies for absence had been received from Carol Pearce and Valerie Haffrey. No apologies for absence had been received from Maxine Wood.

It was noted that Michael Jarrett would be late joining the meeting and that Jon Reekie would have to leave at 9.50pm.

835. Any Other Business

Nothing was tabled.

836. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

837. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 24 March 2021

The Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 24 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Page 2, minute 828: please amend '*... academy recruitment figures ...*' to read '*... academy recoupment figures ...*'

Page 4, minute 831: increases in funding should read: £0.08p for 2-year olds and £0.06p for 3-4 year olds.

Matters Arising from those Minutes: nothing was noted.

(Update - Page 3, minute 830: the place top-up funding of £10,000 received by those academy schools with resource bases, rather than the £6,000 per pupil, had been clarified. Schools would retain the additional amount which the LA would offset against SEND top-ups).

All those present introduced themselves.

838. Schools Forum Membership update

The Clerk confirmed that a number of member terms of office were due to end on 2 September 2021.

All members concerned would be approached to establish whether they wished to stand for a further term following which requests for nominations would be invited. It was intended to confirm new or reappointed members at the next meeting.

839. Update on National/Local Funding issues

Susan Woodland explained there was little to update at this time although the following were highlighted:

DfE View My financial Insights: access (originally for academy schools) was now also available to maintained schools: [here](#). The information was similar to benchmarking and included RAG-rating. Supporting webinars had been made available.

Pupil Premium: funding was now to be calculated using October census figures rather than January. Schools would have to show how funds had been spent by using the DfE's template which should be posted on websites by 31 December 2021. The DfE would be checking school websites with effect from September 2021.

Maintained Nursery Schools (MNS): the supplement had now been confirmed and there were to be no changes to funding allocations.

The Chair thanked Susan Woodland for her valuable contributions and her support in presenting clear financial information to Schools Forum. On behalf of Schools Forum, Susan Woodland was wished all the best for the future.

In answer to a question, Susan Woodland confirmed the LA did not receive information from the ESFA about the assumptions schools should make in submitting their 5-year forecasts, particularly with regards to GAG funding. It was suggested caution should be exercised, that expenditure could be expected to increase, and that income would remain static.

It was confirmed there had not been any updates to date from the ESFA on how the changes in Pupil Premium funding would affect Alternative Provision (AP) whose pupil numbers were lower at the October census but increased as the academic year progressed (**update:** *the census day for AP's Pupil Premium grant will remain as January as they do not complete an October census*).

840. Growth Fund: financial year-end position

Attendees were reminded that there had been a replacement issued for appendix D of the report.

Tony Madden highlighted that the outturn for the previous year would normally be presented at this time of the year: the information had been made available but there was now a new way of reporting recoupment from April – August annually for academy schools.

9.20am: Coral Snowden was admitted to the meeting

Tony Madden took members through the appendices:

Appendix A: outturn from 2019/20, showing April – August 2020 recoupment for academies with a Growth Fund of £168,000.

Appendix B: outturn for 2020/21 gave final numbers. For two schools from April – August there was a recoupment sum. One primary school and three secondaries were going through expansion, with Marish now in their second bulge year as an academy.

Grove Academy had previously been discussed by Schools Forum and the funding model could not change for their fifth class which Forum had agreed to fund. The LA had charged April – August 2020 funding from the previous year which fell into the financial year 2020/21. £284,000 had been carried forward, £200,000 had been top sliced with the difference deducted April – August. Previously, the sum had been reported but it was now proposed to add this to the DSG. The recoupment had not been reported but the monies would still go out.

Appendix C: showed an estimate for the current year 2020/21 with one school with 2 more years of expansion and another with 2 and 3 years. The £750,000 top slice had been left which it was hoped would not be required in full. It was hoped schools would be flexible enough to take £194,000 recoupment for April – August 2022.

Appendix D: the 2022/23 layout had been changed to show a recoupment sum of £194,000 which would be paid out in 2021/22 and would be a credit. The sum of £194,000 matched 2023. The top slice had been increased to £1m which was due to the sum being recouped.

Tony Madden stressed that amounts of money had not changed but were being shown in a different way, with all in the Growth Fund. The year 2022/23 appeared to have a top slice but this was now all in the DSG. The DSG was refunded a year in arrears; nothing had been lost to the DSG overall and over time but there would be a transition year into the new reporting arrangements. The DSG would always match, it would balance out but not in the year. It was confirmed that growth was stable and figures would be clearer in the following year.

9.30am: Michael Jarrett was admitted to the meeting

It was confirmed that the LA had to look ahead; this included the Place Planning Committee, as there had to be an assurance that funding was allocated to the appropriate place. The next report to Schools Forum would include reference to school place planning. There were surplus places at infant level which were now

filtering through to Junior. There was no certainty of a shortfall in Year 7 but there would be a growth with Year 6 being slightly larger.

The Growth Fund supported schools with falling rolls, but it could only support where there was a temporary reduction. Slough was going through a rolling peak so when large reductions affected a secondary school it was medium to long term. This was cyclical and it is felt too early to consider the establishment of a falling rolls fund at this time.

It was suggested Schools Forum review numbers in more detail and it was agreed this would be helpful information.

841. SEND update

Johnny Kyriacou explained that following recent changes, SEND was to be led by himself, with Chelsea Barnes overseeing Inclusion. In order to reassure Schools Forum it was noted that work had already commenced on developing long-term plans for the Service and to back up this work consultancy support had been bought in. A selection of schools would be contacted directly for input to the plans. It was noted that Johnny Kyriacou had met with specialist schools to share the Project Plan.

HNB centrally retained funding was now being closely reviewed and a more detailed update would be given at the next Schools Forum meeting. The realigning of the funding was being considered; this work was complex but ongoing.

An interim SEND Commissioner, Claire Goss, had been appointed. Another advertisement had been released in order to fill the long-term vacancy for a Finance Officer: it was hoped a positive update could be given at the next meeting.

Fair Access Funding was an area which had historically been funded from the HNB. It was now being queried whether it was appropriate to fund from that Block to the total of £170,000 as only a small number of children required support to fund a school place. It was therefore proposed this sum be reduced to £120,000 this year and, following discussions with Headteachers, the figure be reduced to zero. Further exploration was required to agree where the funding should come from, and more information would be made available at the next meeting.

Concerns were expressed about the possible impact on alternative provision due to the number of pupils admitted through Fair Access funding. It was felt £120,000 was a reasonable amount to support the Panel and discussion was required on where future funding should come from as there would also be an impact on secondary schools. The aim was to ensure the funding was in the right place and that it came from the correct place.

It was queried whether this work would consider the Fair Access Protocol in other Local Authorities, by reviewing other funding models. It was thought such information would inform discussions. On behalf of primary schools, it was requested that the review include how nursery children were funded when transitioning into Reception classes due to a number of primary schools having EHCPs when there was no funding attached. Michael Jarrett explained the challenge was that inclusion funding was for low-level emerging need for a small amount of support, the best was done to support the two levels of funding. The Children & Families department worked closed with Finance colleagues for the

benefit of the children and would be prepared to review suggestions. Nurseries did not always consider EHCPs so there were unintended consequences.

Johnny Kyriacou added it was about realigning and ensuring the funding was allocated where it should be: there appeared to be a lack of preventative work in Slough and the whole system would be reviewed with inclusion a high priority in all the work to be done. If savings could be made, these could be used to fund inclusion support.

It was agreed this issue and review should be discussed as soon as possible.

9.50pm: Jon Reekie left the meeting

842. DSG Management Plan update

Johnny Kyriacou informed Schools Forum that there had recently been an informal meeting with the DfE who had requested a more formal meeting with LA representatives for an update in June/July.

The DSG Management Plan was very comprehensive, and work was ongoing to maintain it: this included ensuring contracts in place were appropriate, that funding was being spent appropriately and value for money was being obtained.

The Council had recently recognised the High Needs Block situation and the issue was being kept under their review. It was not possible at this time to advise on how much could be saved although Schools Forum and the DfE were assured they would be made aware of any savings.

The input of Headteachers and SEND colleagues would form part of the process.

843. Maintained Nursery School funding

Further to discussions at the previous meeting, the Chair had written to the Secretary of State on behalf of Schools Forum regarding the MNS supplementary funding. On this occasion a response had been received by Vicky Ford, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, outlining the Government's commitment to Nursery funding. The issue was to be kept under annual review, which had now been extended until the end of April 2022.

Michael Jarrett confirmed this was a national financial challenge, with a number of nurseries having had to close but there were still five nurseries open in Slough. The LA was to review Early Years provision across Slough in the 10 local children's centres.

In the past, schools could request financial support from their LA if they were in a deficit position. However, this was no longer an option and the LA was not in a position to accept such requests. Work was ongoing to manage any deficit budgets but this was likely to lead to changes, some of which would involve difficult decisions. LA representatives had met with Headteachers and there would be meetings with those nurseries in a deficit position, endeavouring to bring their budgets to a break even position this year. Some free consultancy had been obtained to support the three involved in order to better understand the pressures, working alongside finance colleagues.

There was to be a whole borough review because of expansion, there would be changes to the MNS and at this stage it was unknown what those would look like.

It was confirmed this had been made clear to the sector, who also recognised there was a wider strategy and EY provision review. However, as a report had to be made to governing bodies it would be useful to be informed of the MNS consultation progress and provisional plans for the way forward. It was explained funding was based on participation rates and there were a number of complexities, with the private sector also to be considered, and worked with, to encompass all sectors. The review was moving quickly to allow meetings with governing boards and because the LA could not support deficit budgets. Reports would be made to Schools Forum and Cabinet.

10.10am: Philip Gregory left the meeting

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

None of the Task Groups had met.

845. Academies update

It was noted that Cippenham School, part of the Gold Rose MAT, was to transfer to the Elliott Foundation Multi Academy Trust with effect from September 2021. It was added that the Elliott Foundation were keen to work with the LA.

Nicky Willis Headteacher, announced she would be leaving at the end of the current term.

846. 2020/21 Proposed Forward Agenda Plan/Key Decision Log

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

The next Schools Forum meetings was currently scheduled to be held on:
Tuesday 6 July 2021

It was likely the meeting would be held remotely and members would be advised of the final arrangements.

847. Any Other Business

Nothing had been tabled.

The Chair thanked everyone for their time and contributions.