

Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Wednesday, 10th October, 2018

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
Jo Matthews, Littledown School
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School
Angela Mellish, St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School
Eddie Neighbour, Upton Court Grammar School
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

Observers: Jamie Rockman, Haybrook College
Neil Sykes, Arbourvale School

Officers: Catherine Cochran, Domenico Barani, Susan Woodland and Vikram Hansrani

Apologies: Cate Duffy, George Grant, Michael Jarrett and Johnny Kyriacou

No Apologies: Richard Kirkham, Kathy Perry

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new academic year, including three observers: Jamie Rockman, Headteacher of Haybrook College; Neil Sykes, Principal of Arbour Vale School and Brenda Scott from the Orchard Hill College Academy Trust. All those present introduced themselves.

The Chair thanked Maggie Waller for offering to compile the 'Headlines summary' on this occasion.

653. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cate Duffy, George Grant, Michael Jarrett and Johnny Kyriacou. No apologies had been received from Richard Kirkham or Kathy Perry.

It was noted that Navroop Mehat and Vikram Hansrani had advised they would be late arriving at the meeting and Carol Pearce had advised she would need to leave at 9.15am.

654. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

655. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 5 July, 2018

The minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 5 July, 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising from those Minutes:

Minute 648 (Early Years Centrally Retained 2018-19) refers: to date there had been no further discussion between Michael Jarrett and Jo Matthews with regards to the possibility of introducing a pay-as-used system for behaviour support.

Any other Matters Arising were covered by the agenda for the current meeting.

656. Schools Forum Membership/appointment of Vice Chair

The meeting was informed that three terms of office were due to finish on 30 November 2018.

Jo Matthews, representing academy Special Schools/PRUs had agreed to continue for one further year, which the meeting supported.

Jon Reekie, academy governor representative from Phoenix Infant School and Eddie Neighbour, academy representative from Pioneer Education Trust had both expressed an interest in standing for a further term of office. In addition, members were informed that Gillian Coffey, academy representative from Lynch Hill School Primary Academy had tendered her resignation with immediate effect, creating a vacancy. The Clerk would draft a communication, inviting nominations or agreement of member appointments which would be sent to all local academy proprietors. It was intended that the new terms of office should commence prior to the next meeting of Schools Forum.

It was explained that one nomination for the role of Vice Chair of Slough Schools Forum had been received and members **APPROVED** the appointment of Nicky Willis for a term of two years.

The Chair thanked Nicky Willis for her support, adding that it was helpful for the Forum, and supported the roles of Chair and Vice Chair, to continue the secondary/primary balance in the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair.

657. Update on national funding issues/local funding issues

Susan Woodland gave the meeting a verbal update, highlighting the Teachers' pay grant which had been confirmed for 2018/19 and 2019/20, with details available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-fund-pay-rise-for-teachers>

A member queried the teachers' pay grant; it appeared there was an expectation that 1% plus any top up would be funded by schools but it was not clear where the additional top up funding would come from. At the current time, it was understood this would be paid directly by central government.

Members' attention was also drawn to the announcement of the free school meals supplementary grant, with information available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-supplementary-grant-2018-to-2019>

It was noted that the DfE was changing the way in which Local Authorities would receive funding for growth, moving away from an historical to a formulaic method. As yet, it was not known how these changes might affect Slough and the DfE was

expected to release further information during the current term. The growth funding had previously comprised of two funding streams but these had now been added together. It was understood there would still be an element of top slice to form the actual Growth Fund. The DfE was also still working on premises factors and were to strengthen rules on DSG and deficits, with an expectation that LAs would report on any school deficits of more than 1% with effect from March 2019.

A query was raised about the 'sugar tax grant'. It was understood this funding was made through Sports Premium payments, which secondary schools did not receive, and that any Voluntary Aided schools would have this funding included in their capital monies. Susan Woodland agreed to follow this up and the link is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686163/Healthy_pupils_capital_fund_guidance.pdf

8.30pm Vikram Hansrani joined the meeting

It was queried whether PFI would now become clearer. Susan Woodland thought this might be the case as the way of formalising funding was being reviewed and it was understood workshops would be offered to support this work.

The meeting moved to item 9 on the agenda:

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

The Early Years and High Needs Block groups had not met since the last Schools Forum meeting.

The 5-16 Task Group had met on Tuesday 9 October to discuss options for consultation with all schools on the budget share formula for 2019/20. There were a number of uncertainties around the National Funding Formula (NFF) which had been delayed until at least 2021/22. Two options had been presented: the first being to remain at 50% towards the NFF or the second to move 75% towards the NFF.

It was explained that a third option, to move 100% to NFF, had not been included as there were insufficient funds. This was due to the £900,000 top slice taken out of the DSG to support Growth Fund, which would lead to a shortfall of approximately £400,000 if the full NFF rates were applied. Originally, a 2-year period had been planned to move to full NFF rates but that timeline had now been extended and 75% seemed a sensible option to consider. It was stressed that the LA was not unique in top slicing for growth funding as few LAs had the necessary funds available.

The Task Group had considered both the 50% and 75% options sensible and had not expressed a preference as they did not know what the impact of other funding decisions would be on schools; it had been felt the issue should be reviewed at individual school level. It was queried whether members of the Forum should have expected the Task Group to make a firm decision on a preferred option, but it was explained the Group had wanted to find out how schools felt. It was further queried whether the exercise would be pointless as schools would opt for the most favourable option for themselves. The Group had agreed the consultation would allow schools to make individual comments.

The consultation would run from Monday 15 October 2018 until Monday 5 November 2018; a further meeting of the Task Group had been arranged for 13 November to consider the outcome prior to making a recommendation to the LA at the December Schools Forum meeting. The final outcome would be implemented when approved by the ESFA allowing indicative budgets to be made available in January 2019.

8.40pm: Navroop Mehat arrived at the meeting

A query was raised about NDR and it was explained that payment had to be made against actuals, and that the difference paid for rateable values of maintained schools had to be funded. It was pointed out that the Growth Fund was based on AWPU and agreed every year: it was suggested annual consideration should be given to the amount allocated. It was agreed this would be clearer when Tony Madden presented information about the Growth Fund to Schools Forum.

Members present at the meeting were encouraged to respond to the consultation, and to ask colleagues to do the same, whilst being mindful of other potential changes to their budgets e.g. post 16 and SEND.

The meeting returned to the running order of the agenda:

659. Consultation Results on the Scheme for Financing Schools and Licensed Deficit scheme

There had been only three responses to the Scheme for Financial Management consultation and it was queried whether a fair representation had been received. Those maintained schools that had responded to the consultation had shown a preference for the Cash Advance only option. It was requested that it be written into the Scheme that there was a need for Schools Forum to consider this on an annual basis and that there should be involvement in discussions from maintained school members. All maintained representatives agreed and Susan Woodland confirmed this would be included to support maintained schools' input in discussions.

It was noted there was the intention to increase budget monitoring in order to add more assurance against schools going into a deficit situation.

It was added that some further minor changes had been made to bring the Scheme in line with the DfE system.

It was asked whether Schools Forum would have oversight of any recovery plans, to ensure funding was being used appropriately, and that it would be useful for maintained Schools Forum members to be kept informed of any dialogue with the LA. It was felt awareness was needed, but there was no requirement for a formal report to be presented to Schools Forum. An update should be made at the next meeting of Schools Forum to highlight any amendments and to allow a regular update.

The inconsistent amount in paragraph 2.10.4 of the Scheme was queried and Susan Woodland explained that the £20,000 amount quoted had been a historical LA decision, whereas the DfE had quoted £15,000 minimum. It was suggested there might be further discussion about the £20,000 which could possibly be consulted upon. Under paragraph 2.10.2 there was a £60,000 limit which was as per the DfE scheme.

It was confirmed that, as per the document, if a primary school should go over the good practice balance threshold quoted of 5%, the total amount outstanding had to be explained through supporting evidence.

Schools Forum **APPROVED** the Scheme for Financing Schools, which included the licensed deficit scheme on a cash advance basis, allowing an advanced payment to be drawn on a school budget share and deductions made in later months to enable time for the budget deficit to be addressed by the school.

660. SEND commissioning of SEN & AP Places

Vikram Hansrani provided details of commissioned SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) places for academies for 2019/20. It was added that this detail had been used to provide information to the ESFA.

Increases in places at Arbour Vale from 290 to 304 and Ditton Park Academy from 8 to 12 places had been included. Following discussion with Foxborough Primary School there had been a reduction in their places from 8 to 4 and there had been an amendment to the designation at St Ethelbert's Primary School to include ASD. Vikram Hansrani explained there was a move away from the term 'complex need'. It was noted that there would be increases for Littledown and Haybrook over two years, in order to meet demand.

Vikram Hansrani explained that further work was required to show the splits of places. However, the LA was now in a better position to produce that information, which they had not been able to do previously. It was planned this information would be ready to share at the next Schools Forum meeting scheduled for December.

Following a query about the 11 post-16 places at Haybrook College, Vikram Hansrani would follow this up with Jamie Rockman, adding that although the funding had changed, the 11 places were still there. It was agreed the information needed to be captured.

Vikram Hansrani would discuss the impact of four academic years increase with secondary Headteachers.

661. Report of Banding and Resource Base working groups

Vikram Hansrani explained that the Banding working group had been carrying out detailed work since March 2018. This small group of LA officers and school leaders from across all educational sectors had been working on a revised SEND banding model which contained 5 band descriptors, based on the model established by Essex County Council. Final proposals would be presented to Schools Forum in December 2018 and consultation with educational settings and parent/carers on the proposed new banding model would take place in January 2019. In addition, there would be supporting coffee mornings with parent/carers. The new banding model would be implemented with effect from April 2019 for new assessment requests and phase transfers. In addition, the working group was due to meet in November to look at the financial impact of the banding model, to ensure money was spent effectively.

There had previously been a lack of LA support for Resource bases, with incorrect information posted on school websites. This situation had been addressed and

work was ongoing to ensure Banding and Resource base contracts were in place and that spaces were being used correctly.

The Resource Base working group had met on a number of occasions during the spring and summer terms and a Resource Base event had been held in September (co-hosted by Slough Borough Council and Special Voices, Slough Parent/Carer Forum). Meetings were taking place with individual schools regarding numbers, categories of need and Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

9.15am: Carol Pearce left the meeting

Consideration had been given to how the LA would review, address and monitor outcomes going forward and it was planned an appointment would be made to carry out that role.

It was pointed out that as there was no staggered approach to changing the funding model, special schools would face a number of financial challenges. The banding followed the child, but there was insufficient funding to support the infrastructure of special schools. It was acknowledged there was an awareness of some possible risks around funding although it was felt these would be covered and children entering any provision would be those with the most identified need and banding levels would be appropriate. It was felt that the banding group should ensure the funds followed the child, as the banding would be specific to the child, not for the running of the school. It was felt there would be financial risks attached to those assessed from April 2019 onwards.

Vikram Hansrani confirmed that the SLA contracts would be ready by the end of October. A member pointed out that the end of October fell in half term so the contracts would not actually be available before November. It was confirmed that with effect from April 2019 any new statutory assessment for a child would go through the new banding, those already in the system would remain on the old system until they reached a transition stage ie. Nursery to Primary, Year 6 to Year 7. It would not have been possible to reband approximately 1,400 children, hence the need to roll out the new system. This methodology had been included in discussions about the introduction of the new assessments.

It was pointed out that there were historical inequities between special schools which should also be taken into account. Although the work and transparency of the LA was appreciated, special schools would experience a considerable financial loss over a number of years. It was added that, with the current pressure on school budgets, along with consultation of 15 October 2018, schools would not necessarily be aware of the SEN funding, there could be a small number of schools experiencing funding issues. Vikram Hansrani explained such a situation could be handled by LA finance colleagues but there would not be sufficient time to supply the funding information for the 5-16 consultation. It was suggested that, when published, reference was drawn to the fact that there were two separate consultations.

662. Academies Update

It was understood that Arbour Vale School was working towards a conversion date of 1 November 2018.

663. 2018-19 Forward Agenda Plan/Key Decisions Log

The Forward Agenda Plan 2018/19 and Key Decisions Log were noted.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15 am and closed at 9.30 am)