

## **SCHOOLS FORUM**

Minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2009

### **Present**

Primary School Teachers:	Elaine Hamilton, Sue Meckiff, Sue Robertson and Ron Lawrence.
Secondary Head Teachers:	Kathy Griffiths and Karen Raven
Primary Governors:	Tricia Spedding, Angela Chapman, Norrine Redfern and Geoff Boyd
Secondary Governors:	Andrew Downes (Chairman), Chris Davies, Janet Bell and Jenni Mogridge.
Non-School Representatives:	David Bridger (Church of England), Alison Register, Diana Manville (Joint Teacher Liaison Committee) and Mrs Mary Riley (Catholic).

### **Also present**

Karen Fletcher-Wright , (Assistant Director, Children & Young People Services)  
Rob Carling (Head of Children and Young People Finance)  
Mandy Russell (CYP Finance Group)  
Gill Bratley (CYP Finance Group)  
Helen Long (Democratic Services)

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received Hilary Ryder, Janet Bell, Meryl Davies and Viv Hinchcliffe.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

#### **3. FINAL STANDARDS FUND GRANT 1:1 ALLOCATION 2008/09D DCYP09067**

Members of the Forum considered an information report on the distribution of unallocated Standards Fund Grant. The report had been previously considered by the Children and Young People Senior Management Team. The Standards Fund Grant 1.1 (School Development Grant) had a balance of £410,446 which needed to be allocated to schools and spent by July 2009.

CYP SMT considered a number of proposals to allocate the balance to schools and the report to the Schools Forum outlined the final agreed allocation and the principles upon which the allocation was based.

Standards Fund Grant 1.1 is currently £10.9 million, of which 31% already allocated to primary, 61% to secondary and 4% to special schools. CYP SMT agreed that the remaining funding should be allocated to primary schools only.

The allocation was made on the basis of free school meal entitlement. This decision was based on the findings from the recent ISOS report which identified that about two thirds of fsm eligible pupils across Bromley were in just 21 schools. All these schools had more pupils eligible for fsm than the outer London average. Four of these schools were at or just above the average for inner London (35%). The report identified that those schools at about 20% and above face greater challenges.

This principle was also endorsed by DCSF who monitor the allocation of School Development Grant against the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for fsm in each school. This was due to the fact that many of the constituent grants that were merged to form the School Development Grant were distributed using this measure.

The funding had therefore been allocated to primary schools with a fsm percentage of 20% or higher. Those schools with a percentage of 40% or higher had been given a weighting of 3, those between 30% and 40% a weighting of 2, and those between 20% and 30% a weighting of 1. These weightings had then been applied to the fsm entitlement pupil numbers, and the remaining grant allocated accordingly.

This funding would be allocated to schools as part of the final Standards Fund Payment. This allocation would not form part of the baseline allocation for 2009/10.

Forum members expressed their concerns that the report was brought to them as information only. As a Forum they strongly felt that they should have been consulted prior to any decision being made. Officers recognised these concerns and apologised. They gave assurances that in future the Forum would be consulted prior to any decisions being made. Officers also reported that the funding for the 2010/11 distribution would be considered by the CYP SMT and this would be presented to the Forum for consideration.

The forum noted that the secondary schools did not benefit from this funding.

**RESOLVED that:**

**(1) the report is noted and the distribution of the funding.**

**(2) officers note the Forum's concerns that such issues should be brought to them for consultation before any decisions are made.**

#### **4. CHANGES TO EARLY YEARS FUNDING DCYP09066**

The Forum members considered a report which gave an overview on the review of Early Years Funding covering the changes to the free entitlement for parents of 3 and 4 year old children, the increased flexibility of the entitlement and the proposed new funding formula. The proposals for the new funding formula would require additional funding from the Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG) in 2010/11. This would be one of a number of competing priorities for DSG funding and would be the subject of full consultation with Members, Governors, Head Teachers, Early Years providers, the Schools' Forum and other interested parties.

Using Schools Forum funding Bromley had commissioned a consultant to produce a report on the single funding formula for early education for three and four year olds in Bromley. They undertook desk and primary field research to provide a comprehensive picture of the situation in Bromley, and to comply with the DCSF guidance. This research had involved reviewing relevant documents, consulting the stakeholders, and obtaining information from a sample of Early Years settings. This had included:

- attending meetings of the Early Years Sub-Group to ensure familiarity with issues;
- a meeting at Phoenix Pre-school to identify potential issues for settings working with three and four year olds with additional needs;
- Consultation with providers followed by telephone consultation with the Chair of the EYDC Partnership and the lead Pre-School Learning Alliance.

A copy of the report was appended to the report.

Officers reported that, together with the Early Years sub group, they had been formulating views on the Early Years funding issues. One of the main concerns was the statutory increase in free entitlement from 12.5 hours per week to 15 hours per week. At present Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers can charge for additional hours, removing this financial flexibility means they will be totally dependant on the Nursery Education Funding which at the present level, will not cover their full costs. Additionally some sessional providers said they would opt to open only in the morning, thereby offering just one session a day, rather than two. If this happens it could significantly reduce the number of childcare places offered across the borough. This could therefore affect Bromley's ability to provide the statutory nursery provision in the borough.

The chair of the sub-group explained that the proposals would go out for consultation. The consultation would start in Early June and finish in late July. It was anticipated that there would be an overwhelming response from PVI providers. He added that it was quite possible that the proposals may change after the consultation depending on what information came forward from it.

The formula would not provide funding for all settings, only those that demonstrated an improvement in quality. One requirement of the process was that there was one singular formula for all nursery setting, PBVI and maintained.

Initial calculations showed that, based on current take up; this formula was not affordable within the current budget. Maintained settings were currently funded on places, but would be funded on pupil take up under the new formula. Assuming the take up dropped to around 95%, this would free up some funding to support the cost of the additional supplements, leaving a funding shortfall of around £33,000.

The PVI settings were currently funded on pupil numbers so there was less scope for funding the additional costs. Based on the current volume of three and four year olds, the cost of implementing the supplements would be around £335,000. At present there is some capacity within the 2010/11 DSG headroom, but there would need to be full a consultation and support from the Schools Forum before the Director of Children and Young People Services can recommend the use of additional funding in this way.

The cost of the additional hours across both sectors was £1,528,597. The additional hours were to be introduced to the 25% most deprived settings from September 2009, therefore the cost in the first financial year was estimated to be:

$$£1,528,597 \times 7/12 \times 25\% = £222,920.33.$$

Standards Fund in the sum of £398,878 had been allocated to Bromley for that period, but could only be used to fund the additional 25%, not to subsidise any changes in the formula. Members also considered further standards funds for the following year.

One member queried the supplements on the formula and was concerned that if too many supplements were identified this would affect the bottom line figure.

The forum also asked for information on what other authorities were doing. The Chairman of the sub group explained that this had been in the sub-group's terms of reference and they had information to show that some authorities were behind whilst others were doing it wrong.

One forum member asked if it was Bromley' intention to have more maintained nurseries. In response officers said that this was not the intention

and the borough was heavily reliant on the PVI settings. They had been out to talk to providers and there were a lot of concerns about the funding affecting their viability to continue. If the PVI settings were unable to survive financially under the funding provided by the new proposed formula then Bromley may have difficulty fulfilling its statutory duties and may have to consider opening more maintained nurseries.

The Forum felt that there needed to be some outcomes from the funding. It was explained that there were targets so that failing settings could be identified and supported.

Members of the Forum raised concerns regarding the measurement of quality and would like to have a debate, in the future, about how quality would be measured. They also felt there needed to be a reference regarding how quality would be managed.

The Chairman of the Forum reported that the group had debated about releasing the report for consultation and it had been agreed that it would be difficult to get views without sending the report for background information.

In conclusion the Forum noted the report and that they would receive further reports in due course.

**RESOLVED that:**

**(1) the report is noted and released for consultation**

**(2) that an update report will be brought to the Forum in September.**

**5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**AGENDAS AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

Members of the Forum raised concerns that agenda papers were being distributed a few days before the meeting. This did not give members sufficient time to read all the reports in details. They would also like to have a formal work programme so that they could monitor agenda items.

Officers and the clerk to the Forum would meet to arrange a work programme and a schedule for report production so that the agenda was dispatched in line with other committees i.e. 5 clear working days before the meeting.

**SCHOOLS FORUM BUDGET**

The Chairman reminded members of the budget for the forum. A summary of the budget had been requested. The final outturn was due in July and members would be consulted on how to use any under spend. In the

past this had been used to purchase HCFS software. The under spend was likely to be approximately £9,900.

**6. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

**All meetings are at the EDC unless otherwise stated.**

**Thursday 16th July 2009 @ 4.30pm**

**Thursday 24th September 2009 @ 4.30pm**

**Thursday 26th November 2009 @ 4.30pm**

Chairman

The meeting ended at 6.15 pm