

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 24 September 2015

Present:

Andrew Downes (Chairman)	Secondary Academy Governor
David Bridger (Vice-Chairman)	Non-School Representative (Church of England)
Colin Ashford	Primary Academy Governor
Geoff Boyd	Primary Maintained Governor
Leah Crawley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher
David Dilling	Primary Academy Governor
Lee Mason-Ellis	Primary Academy Head Teacher
Sam Parrett	Non-School Representative (14-19 Partnership)
Karen Raven	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Alison Register	Non-School Representative (Early Years)
Keith Seed	Special Head Teacher/Governor
Aydin Önaç	Secondary Maintained Head Teacher

Also Present:

Jane Bailey	Assistant Director: Education
James Mullender	Head of Education Finance
Amanda Russell	Head of Schools Finance Support
Julia Waldman	Head of Schools, Early Years Commissioning and Quality Assurance
Graham Walton	Chief Executive's Department

46 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Andrew Downes be appointed Chairman and David Bridger be appointed Vice-Chairman for the 2015/16 academic year.

47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Patrick Foley, Neil Proudfoot and David Wilcox. It was noted that there was now a vacancy for a Secondary Academy Head Teacher as Neil Miller had moved to Burwood School.

48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alison Register declared an interest as the owner of a private nursery in the borough.

49 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25TH JUNE 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2015 be confirmed.

50 REVIEW OF EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA
Report ED15107

A number of issues had arisen relating to Early Years settings which might result in changes to the Early Years Funding Formula. In particular, as a result of changes under the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act, PVI settings based in schools and academies that were not maintained nurseries were no longer required to be registered separately by Ofsted, but the schools were now required to change their age range to include children from age 2 from these settings.

No changes had been made to the Funding Formula for 2015/16, but the local authority would be considering whether changes were needed for 2016/17 and would need to consult Schools Forum. As part of this clarification was being sought from Ofsted and the DfE, and the early Years Forum would be briefed at their next meeting.

RESOLVED that the issue is noted.

51 REVIEW OF BULGE CLASS/EXPANSION FUNDING
Report ED15108

At the Forum's previous meeting a sub-group had been established to consider bulge class/expansion funding for schools. The report summarised the conclusions of the sub-group, which had agreed a definition of a bulge class as a one-off additional form of entry agreed with the local authority to overcome pressure for places beyond the normal planning process, and expansion as a school taking an additional form of entry on a year by year basis until they reach full capacity. The sub-group had considered that, although this was beyond the scope of Schools Forum, it would be helpful to establish a protocol for how bulge classes were funded.

The sub-group had concluded that there was a real cost to schools for bulge classes/expansions, as these pupils were not incorporated within the funding formula until the April following admission for maintained schools, or the following September for academies. It was considered that the principle that all pupils should attract the same level of funding should be maintained. Under the current formula schools were funded for 30 additional pupils, but two options had been developed based around funding for fewer than ten pupils, eleven to twenty pupils, or twenty one to thirty pupils.

The real pressure in the next few years was expected to be felt in the secondary sector, where there were four bulge classes in 2015/16. However, the two free schools due to open in September 2016 were expected to result in a temporary over-supply of places. Karen Raven and Aydin Önaç registered the concern of secondary head teachers that an additional class had been allowed at Coopers when three nearby schools were under-subscribed, and requested that the planning data behind this decision be made available.

Officers were asked to attend the next Primary Head Teacher's Forum the following Thursday to explain the issues. It was proposed that an enlarged sub-group would meet to try to finalise the work, and more modelling would be carried out on the options.

RESOLVED that the work so far of the sub-group be noted, and further work be carried out to enable a final report to be brought to the Forum's next meeting prior to consultation.

52 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT REDUNDANCY BUDGET
Report ED15105

At the meeting on 25th June 2015 the Forum had considered a request to agree the creation of an earmarked reserve of £300k for redundancy costs to be funded from Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The proposal had been deferred to allow the regulations to be checked.

A further report was presented which confirmed that it was possible to charge redundancy costs to the DSG, with the approval of the Schools Forum, if savings exceeded costs, the budget did not increase from the previous year and provided that approval from the Secretary of State was obtained. It was now proposed that, rather than create a reserve, a budget funded from the DSG underspend carried forward from previous years would be set up. The budget would be earmarked for redundancy costs relating to DSG funded services only, where the ongoing annual savings exceeded the redundancy costs. The Forum was informed that although education services was currently subject to market testing, and there was a need to ensure that the configuration of the department was fit for purpose there were currently no specific plans for redundancies, and the budget was requested so that appropriate funding decisions could be made in a timely way in future.

Members of the Forum were still sceptical that this was an appropriate or necessary use of DSG funds and after discussion it was decided that the proposal could not be supported.

RESOLVED that the recommendation to agree that a disapplication request be made to the Secretary of State to allow the creation of a DSG Redundancy Reserve of £300k is not supported.

53 APPLICATION TO SECRETARY OF STATE TO REQUEST MFG EXEMPTION
Report ED15110

The Forum received a report asking for their support for an application to the Secretary of State for a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) exemption. The application form was attached to the report as appendix 1.

The Council and the Schools Forum had agreed that £3.5m of unspent Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would be allocated to schools for 2015/16 at

£79 per pupil to be included in the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) funding. However, this was for one year only, and to ensure that the MFG did not artificially replicate this funding for future years it was necessary to make a formal application to the Secretary of State to ask for this amount to be excluded from the MFG calculation.

RESOLVED that the application for a Minimum Funding Guarantee exemption relating to additional funding that was allocated to schools in 2015/16 be supported.

54 REVIEW OF FUNDING FORMULA
Report 15109

The report outlined the process and potential timeframe for a full review of the local authority funding formula following a request from secondary head teachers in relation to the allocation of the additional £19.5m Fairer Funding allocation and concerns about the financial pressure facing schools and the current primary/secondary ratios. The earliest possible date for a change to be implemented was the 2017/18 financial year, but there was risk that this could be overtaken by the introduction of the National Funding Formula. A draft timetable was included with the report, and a summary of the difficult issues that such a review would need to overcome. It was noted that the final word on the second page of the report should be corrected to read “exemption”, not “exclusion.” It was also confirmed that the review would focus on the Schools Block not include the High Needs and Early Needs blocks.

There was general support for a review. The Chairman asked for volunteers for a working group on the issue – this would include David Dilling, Andrew Downes, David Bridger and Karen Raven, and it was suggested that head teachers from outside the Forum could be co-opted.

RESOLVED that the proposed process for reviewing the funding formula be supported.

55 2014/15 EDUCATION EXPENDITURE ANALYSIS (SECTION 251 RETURN)
Briefing ED15106

The Forum received a briefing on Education expenditure during 2014/15 based on the outturn statement submitted to the Secretary of State under Section 251 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

56 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Vice-Chairman reminded forum members to give reasonable notice of any issues that they wanted to raise under Any Other Business.

57 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting dates were 26th November 2015 and 14th January 2016.

The Meeting ended at 6.26 pm

Chairman