

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 26 November 2015

Present:

Andrew Downes (Chairman)	Secondary Academy Governor
David Bridger (Vice-Chairman)	Non-School Representative (Church of England)
Leah Crawley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher
Patrick Foley	Primary Maintained Head Teacher
Lee Mason-Ellis	Primary Academy Head Teacher
Neil Miller	PRU Head Teacher
Karen Raven	Secondary Academy Head Teacher
Keith Seed	Special Head Teacher/Governor

Also Present:

Jane Bailey	Assistant Director: Education
Philippa Gibbs	Chief Executive's Department
James Mullender	Head of Education Finance
Amanda Russell	Head of Schools Finance Support

58 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Dr Martin Airey, Colin Ashford, Geoff Boyd, Aydin Onac, Sam Parrett, Neil Proudfoot, David Wilcox and, David Dilling.

59 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to minute 61 (Alternative Provision Funding), Neil Miller declared an interest as the Head of the Pupil Referral Unit.

In relation to minute 62 (Maintained Primary School De-Delegation 2016-17), Patrick Foley declared an interest as his school received funding for union/facilities time.

In relation to minute 64 (Outcome of consultation – Bulge Class Funding), Andrew Downes and David Bridger declared interest as a Directors of Learning Trusts.

60 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24TH SEPTEMBER 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2015 were approved, and signed as a correct record.

61 ALTERNATIVE PROVISION FUNDING

The Schools Forum powers and responsibilities stated that the Forum should be consulted on the number of places commissioned by the Local Authority (LA) and the arrangements for paying top up funding.

Funding for Alternative Provision (AP) settings and special schools was paid on the place plus approach, i.e. settings were funded for an agreed number of places, negotiated annually, plus top up funding based round the actual number of pupils.

The top up funding for all special schools and units was reconciled to actual pupil numbers on a termly basis. As part of the initial contract negotiations with Bromley Trust Academy (BTA) it was agreed that the AP places would not be adjusted in the first year (i.e. September 2014-August 2015) but would be adjusted in subsequent years.

BTA had expressed some concern around the financial viability of managing its budget in this way and the LA had therefore proposed a compromise as follows:

- BTA funded for 135 places: 45 at Midfield Campus and 90 at Hayes Campus.
- Hayes Campus places funded at £10,000 plus £8,000 top up
- Midfield Campus places funded at £10,000 plus top up of £14,000k for statemented pupils and £17,000 for non-statemented pupils (as transport costs were funded form RSG for statemented pupils)
- LA was proposing that top up funding would be reconciled annually based on May census date, being the point at which pupil numbers were likely to be at their highest.
- Funding would be adjusted only where pupil numbers fell below 80% of agreed place numbers, at which point funding would be adjusted by 50%.

The Forum queried why it was unacceptable for the funding for BTA to be reconciled on a termly basis when this did not happen for special schools. In response, the Head of Schools Finance Support reported that it was considered that pupil numbers in special schools were more stable and predictable due to the pressures on special educational needs (SEN). In addition, the Director of Education highlighted that it appeared that there was going to be a move away from place funding to pupil-led funding on a national scale and as a result this appeared to be the fairest approach.

During discussions the Schools' Forum identified that there needed to be more discussion and debate surrounding how the vision for the future of alternative provision fitted with funding arrangements. The Chairman indicated that these discussions needed to progress before the Schools' Forum would be in a position to make any recommendations.

RESOLVED: That the proposals outlined above be supported for the current year (2015/16) with a further review of usage for the 2016/17 academic year, based on actual numbers of usage, being undertaken in June 2016 and reported back to the Schools' Forum.

62 MAINTAINED PRIMARY SCHOOLS DE- DELEGATION 2016-17

The Forum considered a report providing details of a proposal to review the de-delegation of funding relating to facilities for maintained primary schools. Maintained schools had the option to hand back to the LA to manage specific areas of funding on their behalf (de-delegate) in line with the DfE regulations. The two areas delegated in Bromley were supply staff costs (covering maternity, jury service, suspension and, union/facilities time) and free school meal eligibility.

The Joint Teacher Liaison Committee (JTLC) had requested that the Forum review the de-delegation for supply costs for 2016/17. In 2015/16 the total budget for all these areas was £177,000, calculated at £18.50 per pupil. However, of this total only around £3,000 related to facilities time related expenditure, this being around 31p per pupil. The JTLC requested that the facilities time related expenditure should be dis-aggregated from the budget and that alternative arrangements then be made for maintained primary schools to contribute to a separate "pot" along with academies. The implication of this being that the amount to be de-delegated would reduce to around £18.19 per pupil.

Following discussion the Forum agreed the proposals in principle but felt that it would be more appropriate for a decision to be taken at the next meeting when more members would be present.

RESOLVED: that the proposals be agreed in principle, but that an item for decision be placed on the agenda for the Schools' Forum meeting in January 2016.

63 UPDATE OF EARLY YEARS FUNDING FOR 2016/17

The Forum considered a report providing an update on changes to Early Years (EY) and the impact on the related funding. Previously, the Forum had been advised of some changes to the OFSTED registration process for Early Years settings which could potentially affect funding. In line with DfE regulations, Bromley had a similar but different funding formula for maintained and PVI settings, reflecting different staffing requirements and premises related expenditure. Historically, when schools with maintained nurseries converted to academies they continued to be viewed as maintained settings as opposed to PVI and were funded accordingly, this being based on advice provided by the DfE at the time of the first such conversions in 2011. The DfE had recently issued some further guidance which appeared to address the ambiguities in the original guidance, particularly with regard to staffing requirements in maintained school nursery settings. It would appear that EY settings at academies should be funded

as PVI settings. There were seven primary academies being funded as maintained settings, plus only four nurseries at the remaining maintained schools.

To ensure that no settings were financially disadvantaged by this, the LA was proposing that the EY funding formula should be rationalised, that the maintained funding formula should be rationalised, and that the maintained funding levels, being the lower of the two, should be increased to match the PVI funding levels.

The Forum noted that the cost of the proposal (£66,000) would be found from within the Early Years' funding block.

RESOLVED: That the proposals to align Maintained and PVI Early Years Funding for 2016/17 be supported.

64 OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION - BULGE CLASS FUNDING

The Forum considered a report providing detailed feedback on the consultation with schools regarding bulge class/expansion funding.

A circular outlining in detail the funding proposals was sent out to all schools and in total ten responses were received. A meeting of the Primary Head Teachers Group was held on 1 October 2015 and the proposals were discussed with the Head of Schools' Finance Team and the Primary Head Teachers Schools' Forum representatives.

From the consultation results, there was a very small split in favour of the current funding process. The Schools' Forum regulations stated that the central spend level and the method for allocating growth funding should be proposed by the LA and decided by the Schools' Forum. However, in view of the lack of clear guidance from the consultation responses it had been very difficult for the LA to recommend either of the options before there had been an opportunity for full discussions with the Schools' Forum.

The Forum agreed that it was essential that the correct number of school places was provided and that schools should not be deterred from agreeing to accept bulge classes.

It was felt that in order to take a decision for the future more detailed figures would need to be provided for detailed consideration.

RESOLVED: That the current arrangements remain in place for 2016/17 and a further review being undertaken for 2017/18 with more detailed information provided for consideration.

65 REVIEW OF FUNDING FORMULA - 2017/18

The Forum considered a report which provided feedback from the Working Group (WG) set up to undertake a review of the LA funding formula. The WG considered a detailed analysis of the Bromley Funding Formula elements compared to a number of neighbouring local authorities (appendix 2 of the report). The WG group felt that they were able to draw a number of conclusions from the data as follows:

- Bromley primary : secondary ratio was low compared to other LAs
- Bromley % basic entitlement was in line with other LAs
- Bromley % pupil led was in line with other LAs
- Bromley AWPU allocations were generally in line with other LAs – if not necessarily in actual values, in terms of the primary : secondary splits.
- The Bromley lump sum was generally in line with other LAs in terms of both its allocation and its spread.

It was concluded from this that the review should therefore focus on the other elements within the formula, namely Deprivation, EAL and Low Cost/High Incidence SEN, but with particular focus on the last two elements where there was a differential between the primary and secondary amounts.

Some initial modelling was carried out looking at EAL and Low Cost/High Incidence SEN as follows (appendix 3 of the report):

- Primary EAL increased to £1129 in line with secondary
- Primary LC/Hi Sen reduced to £1,000 in line with secondary

The impact of this was such that it shifted the primary: secondary ratio from 1:1.19 to 1:1.24 which was slightly more in line with other LAs. However, because of the impact of the MFG mechanism, no primary schools could lose more than 1.5% of their budget share per pupil and secondary schools did not benefit from this change.

The Head of Schools' Finance Support reported that the implications of the Government's Autumn Budget Statement, delivered on Wednesday 25 November 2015, was that there would be a move towards a national funding formula from April 2017. If this were to happen it was possible that Bromley could receive additional funding which would enable the discrepancy around the ratio to be addressed.

The Forum noted that a number of secondary schools in Bromley were experiencing a funding crisis as a result of funding pressures implemented nationally. It was felt that there needed to be a much fairer system for all schools but that in order for any decisions to be taken there needed to be a clearer indication of the national funding formula.

RESOLVED: That,

- 1. the Working Group note the comments of the Schools' Forum outlined above; and**
- 2. initial consultation with all schools around the scope of the review of the funding formula for 2017/18 be approved.**

66 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

67 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 14 January 2016 and the Chairman emphasised the importance of this meeting.

The Meeting ended at 6.10 pm

Chairman