

Minutes

SCHOOLS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY 15
OCTOBER 2019 IN DARKE HALL, COACH HOUSE, GREEN PARK, COMMENCING AT 1.30
PM AND CONCLUDING AT 3.50 PM**

PRESENT

Headteachers

Ms N Lovegrove
Ms K Tamlyn
Ms J Antrobus
Ms J Cochrane
Ms P Coppins
Ms S Cromie
Ms J Freeman
Mr D Hood
Mrs J Male
Mr K Patrick
Ms S Skinner

Early Years Representative
Cheddington Combined School
Newtown School
Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School
Manor Farm Community Infant School
Wycombe High School
King's Wood School & Nursery
Cressex Community School
Alfriston School
Chiltern Hills Academy
Growing Together Federation (Bowerdean &
Henry Allen Nursery Schools)
Kite Ridge School
Stoke Mandeville Combined School
Chiltern Wood School
Long Crendon School
Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School
Chalfont Community College
Cressex Community School
NASUWT
National Education Union

Governors

Mr S Sneesby
Ms E Stewart
Mr B Taylor
Mr H Beveridge
Mrs G Bull
Mr R Page
Dr K Simmons

Representative

Ms C Glasgow
Ms S Stephens

In Attendance

Officers

Mr J Carter, Mr G Drawmer, Ms H Slinn, Ms E Williams, Ms C Beevers,
Ms J Try and Ms S Bayliss

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

Ms K Tamlyn opened the meeting and asked for nominations for the election of Chairman. Mr K Patrick was nominated. The forum was asked to vote on the nominee.

RESOLVED: The forum APPOINTED Mr K Patrick as the Chairman.

Mr K Patrick as the new Chairman asked for nominations for the Vice- Chairman. Ms K Tamlyn was nominated and the forum took a vote.

RESOLVED: The forum APPOINTED Ms Tamlyn as the Vice- Chairman.

Election of sub groups- The members of the sub groups were agreed as follows:

Contingency Group: Meet once yearly.

David Hood (Chairman)

Eileen Stewart

Janice Freeman

Paula Coppins

SFFG- meet prior to each School Forum (SF) meeting:

Kathryn Tamlyn- Primary Sector (Chairman)

Steven Sneesby (Vice Chairman)

Sue Skinner (Early Years/ Maintained Nursery representative).

Gaynor Bull (Secondary academy representative).

David Hood (Secondary maintained representative).

Kevin Patrick (Secondary academy representative).

Julia Antrobus (Infant maintained representative).

Maintained Schools Sub-committee (De-Delegation)- Annual meeting.

Janice Freeman (Chairman).

RESOLVED: The forum APPOINTED the members of the sub-groups.

It was requested if a column could be added on to the agenda/minutes paperwork to show which sector each member was representing.

ACTION: Ms C Beevers

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from: Mr A Wanford (Green Ridge Academy), Ms A Cranmer (Bucks County Council), Ms P Thompson-Omenka (Bucks County Council) and Ms D Rutley (Aspire PRU).

Schools Forum Membership (schools)

Ms J Try, Finance Business Partner (Schools), gave an overview of the report provided. Ms Try highlighted that in 2018 the Schools Forum (SF) agreed the current membership and that the membership will be reviewed on annual basis.

The report also addressed previous discussions at Schools Forum regarding the representation between Grammar and Upper schools and updated members on the legal advice which allowed local discretion on this matter in line with the forum's constitution. The table set out the current pupil numbers compared to the current membership and highlighted a vacancy for a Maintained Junior representative and a Maintained Special School representative

School Forum October 2019 : Based on January 2019 Census Data

Schools by Type and pupil numbers				Membership Based on Pupil Numbers		Current Constitution		Current Members	
School Type	Total Schools	Pupil Numbers	% of Total Pupils	Maintained	Academy	Maintained	Academy	Maintained	Academy
Primary Maintained	152	36,959	44%	8		8		7	
Primary Academy	33	9,661	12%		2		2		2
Secondary Maintained	6	5,956	7%	1		2		2	
Secondary Academy/Free	31	31,248	37%		7		6		6
SubTotal	222	83,824	100%	9	9	10	8	9	8
Nursery Maintained	2	315		1		1		1	
Special Maintained	8	1,116		2		2		1	
Special Academy	2	303			1		1		1
Pupil Referral Unit	3	124		1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	459	169,506		13	11	14	10	12	10

The following points were raised and discussed:

- Mr D Hood advised he had someone from a combined school that was interested in the available primary maintained position. It was advised the post would need to be advertised through the usual channels. It was stated that there were differences in funding between infant and combined, and someone from the combined sector may not represent the infant sector accurately.
- Maintained special school forum members were happy for the vacancy to be advertised in the same way as above. There were some concerns on the fact that there were 12 maintained special schools and trying to pull resource could be difficult. Ms H Slinn advised it could be fed through the Special schools meeting and it was advised this could be a governor rather than a head teacher.
- It was asked if there was a problem of looking at the number of schools and/or pupil numbers. Ms Try confirmed they were guided by the DfE and after clarification it was stated the mix should be based on pupil numbers.
- It was highlighted that the Forum needed to ensure there was fair representation across the board.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were set out in the report:

- 1. To seek representatives from the Maintained Junior School and Maintained Special School sector in line with the current constitution set out in 3.2. of the report**
- 2. To note the Secondary school membership pupil number analysis set out in 4.2 and 4.3 for further discussion and agreement.**

RESOLVED: Forum Members AGREED recommendation 1 and AGREED that a further report be brought back to the next Schools Forum to consider 5:3 split Upper: Grammar schools and a further refinement of maintained and academy representation.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING / MATTERS ARISING

RESOLVED: The minutes from the meeting held on 18 June 2019 were AGREED as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising:

Page 14, Healthy Pupil Funding- It was confirmed there was an update due to go out in the School's Bulletin.

All other actions had been completed or were due to be discussed at the meeting.

5 SCHOOLS FORUM INDUCTION

Ms E Williams, Head of Finance (Children's Services) gave an overview of the report provided and confirmed that the induction report would be reviewed and updated annually.

RESOLVED: The forum NOTED the report.

6 SCHOOLS FORUM FUNDING GROUP UPDATE

Mr K Patrick gave an overview of the action points from the last meeting of the Schools Forum Funding Group held on 25 September 2019. The action notes would be appended to the minutes.

ACTION: Ms C Beevers

Ms Try gave an update on the Local Authority's response to the DfE's Financial Transparency Consultation. Mr Patrick requested that the response be attached to the Schools Forum minutes.

ACTION: Ms J Try

RESOLVED: The forum NOTED the update.

7 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2019-20

Ms J Try, Finance Business Partner (Schools), gave an overview of the report provided, the following points were raised in discussion:

- A member of the forum queried the overspend on Growth Fund. It was asked if issues with St Michael's could have been predicted earlier. Ms Try confirmed that lessons had been learnt from St Michael's forecasting but the methodology used to allocate Growth Fund monies needed to be reviewed including how other local authorities use and allocate growth fund.
- The forecasted overspend on business rates was now lower than reported as mandatory charitable relief had been successfully applied for from the District Councils.

Recommendations

- 1. That Schools Forum note the forecast outturn (year-end) position as set out in the report.**
- 2. Agree the recommended proposals for the use of DSG Reserves as set out in 4.2 in the report.**

RESOLVED: The forum NOTED the forecast outturn (year-end) position as set out in the report.

RESOLVED: The forum took a vote on the proposals for the use of DSG Reserves. 14 in favour and 5 abstained. The recommendation was AGREED.

8 SEN QUARTERLY UPDATE

Ms E Williams, Head of Finance (Children's Services) and Ms H Slinn, Head of SEN, gave an overview of the report provided. The following points were raised in discussion:

- It was asked that given investment was not in mainstream schools, how was it going to be achieved. It was confirmed that budget had not decreased and that the table compared last year's overspend position with this year's budget.
- Tribunal costs came out of the budget. Ms H Slinn confirmed it did not come out of the budget directly but it did come out of the education budget. It was requested that the cost of tribunals be shared with the forum. The details were later shared in the meeting that the cost is covered by the local authority at a budget of £205k.

- It was noted in table 3.2 in the report (SEND Service Area Support), that you could see a difference in the areas, the level of detail, clarity and explanation was better than ever received.

Recommendations

- 1. To NOTE the current update on high needs budgets and actions to reduce reliance on high cost placements and to ensure resources are spend in the most effective way.**
- 2. To NOTE the revised time line for the delivery of a banded funding mechanism for special schools from April 2020.**

RESOLVED: The forum NOTED the update and the revised timeline.

9 NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA (NFF) AND OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE 2020-21

Ms J Try, Finance Business Partner (Schools) gave an overview of the report provided, the following points were raised in discussion:

- The principles agreed last year were highlighted, including the over-arching principle that the local formula should reflect the national funding formula to avoid disruption to school budgets once the hard formula is introduced by the government. It was asked how the forum were expected to consult when they were unaware of what the impact would be. It was explained at the time the report was written that it was hoped that the indicative allocations would have been released, but they were released just before the meeting. It was agreed that more time for modelling was need prior to consultation. The consultation on the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee would be sent out via Schools Bulletin to allow for a better discussion and a recommendation would be brought back to the December meeting.

ACTION: Ms J Try

- Ms J Try confirmed an increase of £7 million on last years High Needs allocation was due in 2020-21. It was asked by a member of the forum if it was a one off amount. Ms Try confirmed that once more clarity was received from the DfE members of the forum would be updated. At this stage only a 1 year funding announcement had been received and therefore no details had been given about ongoing funding levels.

Recommendations

- 1. To note the information contained in this report.**
- 2. To agree the principles to be adopted for 2020-21 local funding formula within the overarching principle that the local funding formula reflects the NFF.**
- 3. To agree how the consultation on the level of MFG should take place over the autumn term (see paragraph 5.2 of the report).**
- 4. To note that the local funding formula for 2020-21 will be modelled when**

information from the DfE becomes available and this will be brought back to Schools Forum for consideration.

RESOLVED:

1. The Forum **NOTED** the report.
2. The Forum **AGREED** the principles.
3. The Forum **AGREED** the consultation process.
4. The Forum **NOTED** that the local funding formula for 2020-21 would be modelled when information from the DfE became available and would be brought back to Schools Forum for consideration.

10 DE-DELEGATION 2020-21 CONSULTATION WITH SCHOOLS

Ms J Try, Finance Business Partner (Schools) gave an overview of the report provided.

The following points were raised and discussed:

- It was asked if De-Delegation could be used to support School Liaison Officers but it was advised it would not be possible to use De-Delegation according to the Operational Guide as it can only be used to fund services for maintained schools.
- It was asked if the 2017-18 and 2018/19 spend could be shared with the sub-committees. This was agreed and would be sent with papers for the meeting.

ACTION: Ms J Try

Recommendations

1. To continue with the arrangements agreed last year, that the details of any de-delegation proposals for 2020/21 be considered at a meeting of the maintained schools subcommittee with recommendations to be brought back to Schools Forum for final decisions.

RESOLVED: The Forum AGREED the above recommendation with a report to then come back to the Forum for a vote.

11 UNITARY UPDATE

Mr G Drawmer, Head of Achievement and Learning, BCC, gave a verbal update on unitary, the following points were raised and discussed:

- The forum discussed the process of TUPE for schools staff and Mr Drawmer confirmed that there was minimal impacted expected and that a further update from HR would be sent to schools.
- Mr Drawmer confirmed that the reassignment of leases with academies was being dealt with by the Legal department and no cost to the school was expected.
- A unitary update would be added as a standing item.

ACTION: Ms C Beevers

12 FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED: The forum **NOTED** the forward plan.

The AOB item would be added back on to the agenda as a standing item.

ACTION: Ms C Beevers

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

03 December 2019, 1.30pm, Darke Hall, Green Park, Aston Clinton.

CHAIRMAN

Schools Forum Funding Group

Action Notes for meeting held on 25 September 2019

Agenda item number	Action	To be completed by	Completion date
1	Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman		
1	Election of Chairman and Vice- Chairman deferred to the next SFFG meeting.	CB	By next SFFG meeting
1	After electing Chairman and vice chairman agree membership and chairs of all sub committees Add to forward plan and SF agenda.	KP/CB	SF meeting

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4	Minutes of the previous meeting		
4	Steven Sneesby was present but not included in the minutes of last meeting Add to the minutes of the last meeting	CB	For next meeting
4	Confirm with Simon Kearey around representation - Milbrook or Great Kingshill	CB	For next meeting

5	Review of the constitution		
5	Add in constitution paper to SF meeting.	CB/EW	For SF meeting
5	To refresh table under item 5, page 8 of the agenda, the % representatives of Grammar against Upper. Review and correct	JT	for circulation of SF papers
5	To reflect in the report the decision that was made when the review was completed one year ago regarding membership numbers.	JT	By circulation of SF papers

7	SEND Quarterly Update		
7	3.2 to add a more detail on the impact of the team structure and differences between the areas. To add risk factors.	HS	For circulation of SF papers
7	3.5- Remove item (b) and reword as paragraph rather than bullet points.	HS	For circulation of SF papers
7	Add educational equipment update into report	HS	For circulation of SF papers
7	Place introductory paragraph to section 7 to say this is an outline and this is what we are working towards with actions in place with realistic timelines.	HS	For circulation of SF papers

8	National Funding Formula (NFF) and Operational Guidance 2020-21		
8	Highlight actions required in report for item 8.	JT	For circulation of SF papers
8	Highlight principles in recommendation so the decision is already made and the discussion doesn't need to be made in the following meeting.	JT	For circulation of SF papers
8	Add a caveat in 4.1 in High needs block to state- currently the funding announcement is only for one year and proposals for use of funding will need to reflect this.?	JT	For circulation of SF papers
8	Can a piece be done under this agenda item at SF An explanation of the decision making issues/process.	JT	SF meeting

10	Financial Transparency in Maintained Schools		
10	To ensure that additional workload for schools or officers is noted in the response	JT	To note at SF meeting
10	Chairman to report back to Schools Forum that the Funding Group had considered the response	KP	To note at Schools Forum meeting

11	Forward Plan		
11	Need to be signing off banding values in December and January meeting. Add to January meeting on forward plan.	CB	By next meeting
11	Add verbal unitary update by Gareth to the October forward plan and draft agenda	CB	By SF meeting
11	Invite IMPOWER to do a presentation at the December meeting	EW	ASAP
11	Add timings to the SF meeting agenda	CB	By SF agenda publish

Department of Education's Consultation

Financial transparency of local authority maintained schools and academy trusts.

Response from Buckinghamshire County Council

Proposal 1: Making public where local authorities are failing to comply with deadlines for completing assurance returns and financial collections

We have reviewed the approach to late returns that the ESFA has adopted this year for the academy sector, whereby they publish (on GOV.UK) the names of trusts who are late in submitting more than 2 out of 4 annual returns and believe similar measures could be used in the LA maintained schools sector.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
<p>We propose to publish the names of local authorities on GOV.UK who fail to comply in any financial year with more than two deadlines from the following collections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School Financial Value Standard (SFVS) ▪ Dedicated Schools Grant CFO assurance statement ▪ Consistent Financial Reporting ▪ Section 251 Budget ▪ Section 251 Outturn <p>LA response: – Neither agree nor disagree.</p> <p>Comments: This proposal will not impact on BCC as we comply with the deadlines each year. It would be helpful to know what would happen after the names are published.</p>			

Proposal 2a: Strengthening DSG annual assurance returns: Collecting the number of schools with suspended budgets and notices of financial concern through existing DSG assurance statement

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
<p>We propose to collect the number of schools with suspended budgets and notices of financial concern through the existing DSG assurance statement signed by the local authority CFO at the end of the financial year.</p> <p>LA response: – Agree</p>			

Proposal 2b: Strengthening DSG annual assurance returns: Adding a new section to the DSG assurance statement that captures the amounts that LAs have recovered from investigating fraud

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
We propose to add a new section to the DSG assurance statement that captures the amounts that LAs have recovered from investigating fraud			
LA response: – Agree			

Proposal 3: Requiring maintained schools to provide local authorities with 3-year budget forecasts

Local authorities are required to maintain schemes for financing schools, which set out the financial relationship they have with their maintained schools. We have recently introduced a requirement for academies to send the department a three-year budget plan and we believe that this could be extended to maintained schools in the form of sending a three-year budget plan to their maintained authority.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
We propose a directed revision of the schemes for financing schools to make it a requirement for maintained schools to provide local authorities with three-year budget forecasts			
LA response: – Agree, Maintained Schools in Buckinghamshire are currently required to submit 3 year budget plan			



Proposals 4 (a, b, c): Strengthening Related Party Transaction arrangements in maintained schools:

The three proposals are alternatives to one another.

Academy trusts must report all Related Party Transactions (RPTs) to ESFA in advance of the transaction taking place, using ESFA's on-line form. This requirement applies to transactions made on or after 1 April 2019. Since April 2019, all academy trusts have had to seek approval from the ESFA for RPT payments of more than £20,000 and all transactions below £20,000 must be declared. The arrangements for reporting RPTs in maintained schools are not as stringent as those in academy trusts.

Proposal 4a: Making schools append a list of RPTs to their response to the new question in the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) about their arrangements for managing RPTs, so that the information goes to the local authority and can be passed on to the department

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
<p>We propose to make schools append a list of RPTs to their response to the new question in the SFVS about their arrangements for managing RPTs. In addition, we would insert additional columns into the CFO Assurance Statement, to request the number of RPTs and value for each to be disclosed.</p> <p>LA response: Neither agree nor disagree.</p> <p>Comments: It would be helpful to see further clarification on requirements within LA annual accounts and whether this already includes requirements for schools</p>			

Proposal 4b: Making a directed revision to the statutory Scheme for Financing Schools to require schools to report all RPTs, or RPTs above a certain threshold, directly to the local authority

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
<p>We propose to amend the scheme for financing schools to require schools to report all RPTs, or RPTs above a certain threshold, directly to the local authority.</p> <p>LA response: Neither agree nor disagree.</p> <p>Comments: as above, it would be helpful to see further clarification on requirements within LA annual accounts and whether this already includes requirements for schools</p>			



Proposal 4c: Making a directed revision to the statutory Scheme for Financing Schools to require schools to seek permission from the local authority to enter into RPTs above a certain amount.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
We propose to amend schemes to require schools to seek permission from the authority to enter RPTs above a threshold.			
LA response: Neither agree nor disagree.			
Comments: We are unsure of the scale of the issue and whether it would therefore be an increased burden on LA.			

Proposal 5: Requiring maintained schools to be subject to internal audit at least every 3 years

Schools are within the overall audit arrangements determined by the local authority’s statutory section 151 officer (CFO). Authorities operate internal audit teams whose work is then relied on by their external auditors. Most audit plans use a risk-based approach with some themed audits. We have learned in discussion with local authorities that the cycles for auditing-maintained schools vary a great deal and, in some cases, have fallen into disuse. Consequently, we think there is a case for action.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
We propose to make a directed revision to the scheme guidance to require that every maintained school be subject to internal audit at least every 3 years.			
LA response: Disagree			
Comments: Local authorities agree their audit plans on a risk assessment and include both direct audits of maintained schools and themed audits to focus on specific risk areas across a number of schools. The new measures would constitute a New Burden on the LA as additional staffing would be required in order to ensure every school was audited in the proposed timescale. We estimate an additional 2 members of staff at an estimated cost of £120k.			



Proposals 6 (a, b, c): Strengthening arrangements to help schools that are in financial difficulty:

Proposal 6a: Requiring schools to submit a recovery plan to their maintaining authority when their deficit rises above 5%

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
We propose to make a directed revision to the scheme for financing schools requiring schools to submit a recovery plan to their maintaining authority when their deficit rises above 5%.			
LA response: Disagree			
Comments: Agree schools should submit a recovery plan regardless of the % of the deficit and not over a specific threshold – it would be helpful to get clarification of how 5% will be measured.			

Proposal 6b: Collecting information on the number of recovery plans in each LA through DSG annual assurance returns from the CFO

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
We propose to collect information on the number of recovery plans in each LA through the DSG annual assurance return from the CFO.			
LA response: agree			
Comments: It would be helpful to have clarity on the reporting requirements proposed			

Proposal 6c: Writing to local authorities each year when the end-year data is published, specifying the threshold of deficit that would trigger contact with the Department

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
We propose to formalise the approach to working with LAs and include a request for high level action plans from some LAs. This will be achieved by:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing published data on the school balances in each LA • Use this data and evidence-based requests from LAs to ensure support is focused where it is needed • Request high level action plans from LAs in which the number or proportion of school revenue deficits over 5% is above a certain level. 			
LA response: Neither agree nor disagree.			
Comments: Greater clarity is required on the approach and LA should have the ability to categorise deficits and judge the financial management within schools. A school with a large deficit and a recovery plan maybe better financially managed			



and therefore a lower overall risk than a school with a small deficit/surplus but no financial strategy to recover the deficit or stop it from growing.

Proposal 7: Increasing transparency in the reporting of high pay for school staff

Currently there is a disparity between public access to information on high salaries within maintained schools and academies. Salary ranges within the national pay framework are published annually in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document – these apply to teachers and leaders in maintained schools.

Academy trusts must disclose in their published financial statements information about each individual earning over £100k - specifically (i) their total FTE salary in £10k bandings, e.g. £100k - £110k, (ii) their job role and description and (iii) whether they are predominantly focussed on curriculum and education leadership or school business management leadership. We believe that this measure should be introduced for LA maintained schools and would require them to publish annually on their websites the number of individuals earning over £100K in £10K bandings.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
We propose that all LA maintained schools should be required to publish annually on their websites the number of individuals (if any) earning over £100K in £10K bandings			
LA response: Disagree.			
Comments: Better to consolidate information on all schools on a LA website/ accounts. On individual school websites identifying the individual will be too easy – how does this comply with GDPR?			

Proposal 8: Increasing transparency in reporting maintained school income and expenditure

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
We propose that all LA maintained schools should be required to publish annually on their websites their latest Consistent Financial Reporting statement of income, expenditure and balances.			
LA response: Agree.			
Comments: Would checking on compliance and accuracy of data be a LA responsibility?			

New financial burdens on local authorities

Local authorities are invited to provide information on any new burdens they believe would arise from the proposals in this document.

New burdens include a cost for the 3 year Audits estimated to be £120k.



