



Schools Forum Minutes 2 December 2015

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BRENT SCHOOLS FORUM**Minutes of the Schools Forum held on
Wednesday 2 December 2015 at The Village School****Attended by Members of the Forum:**

Governors: Helga Gladbaum (HG)
Mike Heiser (MH)
Titilola McDowell (TM)
Herman Martyn (HM)
Narinder Nathan (NN)
Umesh Raichada (UR)
Christine Starkl (CS)

Head Teachers: Rose Ashton (RA)
Lesley Benson (LB)
Kay Charles (KC)
Desi Lodge Patch (DLP)
Melissa Loosemore (ML)
Troy Sharpe (TS)

PRU: Terry Hoad (TH)

PVI Sector:

Trade Unions: Lesley Gouldbourne (LG)

14-19 Partnership:

Lead Member (C&YP):

Officers: Gail Tolley (GT)
Cate Duffy (CD)
Minesh Patel (MP)
Norwena Thomas (NT)
Devbai Patel (DP)
Sue Gates (SG)
Carmen Coffey (CC)

ITEM DISCUSSION**i. Introductions**

The Forum commenced at 6.05pm.

MH asked if anyone was new and DP said that it was DLP's first Forum. MH welcomed DLP to the Forum.

ii. Apologies for Absence and Membership

Gill Bal
Martine Clark
Sue Knowler
Narinder Nathan
Andy Prindiville
Sylvie Libson
Paul Russell
Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman
Cllr Ruth Moher

iii. Absences

Marc Jordan

iv. Membership

DP reported that there were a number of members that had missed two or more consecutive meetings and letters will be sent to remind them of the Schools Forum rules and regulations on attendance.

1 Declarations of Interests

- 1.1 MH asked members if they had any interests to declare and there were none.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 21st October 2015 and Matters Arising

2.1 Accuracy

- 2.1.1 There were no corrections to the minutes therefore they were approved as an accurate record.

2.2 Matters Arising

- 2.2.1 Update on VAT as to why the VA schools are not exempted from paying VAT on the governors' liability of capital funding – DP reported that a reply was received from DfE. As the VAT rules are dictated by HMRC, DfE is not able to change the way VAT is charged. If Brent VA schools had concerns, it was suggested speaking to their local MP who would be able to take it up with the appropriate Minister.

- 2.2.2 School Meals budget – Update on Schools Meals for Kosher and Pureed meals – The DfE response was similar to above but DfE highlighted that the schools meals price is generous as it is. They are paying £2.30 a meal where a survey indicated that the meal costs on average £2.03p. This could drop to as little as £1.87 if the take up rose to around 70%. Again schools could take this matter up with their local MP who would then take it up the Education Minister. HM said the response was not satisfactory. He had arranged to meet with the MP on Monday and will report back to the Forum with progress.

- 2.2.3 Review of impact of funding a full-time post to manage Early Years Pupil Premium Grant (EYPPG) – This was on the agenda for this Forum.

- 2.2.4 Set up a Task Group to review Schools Financial Regulations 2015-16 – This was set up and Schools Financial Regulations have been finalised and are on the agenda for this Forum.

- 2.2.5 De-Delegation Items – LB said that the Free School Meals eligibility service should be charged to nursery and special schools as well as to academy schools. CD said that the same should apply to all de-delegation items.

- 2.2.6 Benchmarking of End to End Process (School Admissions) – This was on the agenda for this Forum.

- 2.2.7 School Invoices for property license, to find out what this related to – CD contacted SL to find out what this related to and SL couldn't remember. It was presumed to have been resolved.

3 Further Update on the Implementation of the Early Years Pupil Premium

[This report was for update and approval](#)

- 3.1 SG presented this report. As requested at the last Forum this report was brought with further update. There are still a fair number of queries where the officers have to go back to providers for clarification. Page 2 of the report indicated the different output on two systems. A number of applications are being rejected on the Eligibility Checking System (ECS) even though there is clear evidence that the parents are in receipt of benefits. This is being followed up with DfE and their technical team is looking into it. In the meantime those with evidence of benefits are being paid the Pupil Premium.
- 3.2 UR asked what level of the allocation was underspent. The total allocation was £384,123 and £70,412 has been either paid or forecasted to be paid which will leave £313,708 underspend.
- 3.3 GT said although Brent take-up is low, it is still higher than Lambeth and Newham. MH said it's probably an issue across the country.
- 3.4 LB said that SG and CC took the time to go and speak to her which was very useful. She added that there were still problems in that schools with PVI and Maintained schools have to use two systems. SG's team had looked at it with Tribal but could not identify a link between the two systems. She said that there must be someone in IT that could resolve this by perhaps downloading data from one system to another. SG was satisfied that everything that could be done was being done.
- 3.5 GT said that we continue to look into this at strategic level and with ICT officers. GT is not engaged at that level but was satisfied that officers have looked at it.
- 3.6 MH concluded the item by saying that a decision on this was held off at the last Schools Forum and asked all members to vote on the recommendation:
- a. Approve the extension of the contract for the EYPP processing assistant for a further 6 months from February 2016 to August 2016 to enable further support to PVI providers and schools until the EYPP is embedded in settings. The cost of this post for a twelve months period will be £35k.

This was voted for unanimously.

4 School Admissions

[This report was for update.](#)

4.1 CC presented this report. The report was brought to Schools Forum on request. Schools Admissions is divided into two main categories. Co-ordinated rounds of admission at Reception and 11+, the other category being in-year admissions. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to deal with Reception and 11+ transfers. Some schools manage their in-year admissions but the LA provides this service to all community schools.

4.2 The Admissions Team went through a change in management In January 2012 when the service transferred to Customer Services. The service returned to Children and Young People (C&YP) department in November 2014.

4.3 The team manages appeals process for maintained schools only. This has been successful in general. There was one lost appeal last year and none this year.

4.4 Benchmarking has been challenging because each authority works differently. There is a group carrying out a benchmarking exercise which will be available in January 2016.

4.5 It was highlighted that paragraph 3.3 had an error in the calculation in that a school was missing.

Post meeting notes: The paragraph is actually correct and has 53 schools in total as stated in the report and as follows:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Secondary including VA and Academies | 10 |
| Secondary Free School | 1 |
| Primary schools | 32 |
| Primary Academy and VA | 9 |
| Primary Free School | 1 |
| TOTAL | 53 |

4.6 MH asked CC to inform members of the new admissions criteria. CC said that there is a consultation out currently to introduce criteria for staff with children and those children receiving Pupil Premium & Early Years Pupil Premium grant. In addition there is a DfE consultation currently out which proposes that schools be charged for school admission service and therefore operate as traded service.

4.7 ML said schools feel a relief in LA managing the appeals process and thanked officers for providing a well managed service. TS asked if LA would manage VA schools appeal and CC replied that there was no reason not to manage any schools that requested it.

4.8 The report was noted by all

5 Pupil Growth Budget 2015-16 and Request for 2016-17 Funding

[This report was for approval](#)

- 5.1 CC presented this report. The report set out expenditure in 2014-15, provided projected expenditure in 2015-16 and requests continued approval of £3.5m for school expansions and £1.13m for rising rolls for 2016-17. CC said that members will be familiar with the pressures on primary school places which started with some schools filling up places followed by expansions with bulge and permanent classes. The growth in primary pupil population has increased by 18% from May 2008 to May 2015.
- 5.2 The current projections indicate that the demand for Reception places is levelling off from 2016 due to a low birth rate in 2012 but is projected to increase again as recent birth rates have risen. In secondary phase, there are currently sufficient places in Years 7, 8 and 9 but Years 10 and 11 are under pressure.
- 5.3 Children who are new arrivals to the UK in Years 10 and 11 are interviewed to assess their level of English and are then placed in schools or in one of the English as an additional language projects to support them with English. This is either at Queens Park Community School or Claremont High School as detailed in Appendix 1 and 2.
- 5.4 In 2014-15 bulge and annexe school places were funded from growth funding but from 2015-16 the agreed permanent expansion places are added to the Schools Funding Formula and are therefore funded through ISB. ML asked if any work has been carried out on families moving out from Brent to up North. CC said that not much work has been carried out but she was aware that some schools were losing 17% of children whilst others had a lower loss. CD said that an internal group was looking at the people affected by benefit cap and officers will have some information by next Forum.
- 5.5 GT said that she would bring this up at the termly Head teachers meetings. She added that one mustn't make assumptions. There are instances where a families move out of London to better accommodation. Brent had a family that moved to the Midlands from a one bedroom to three bedroom house with a garden and was able to have hospital treatment. Brent has a housing resettlement officer in the Midlands who supports families to settle in. Some families are moved out at short notice as little as 24 hours.
- 5.6 KC asked if £3.5m would be sufficient as it's less than last year. CC was confident based on the current year but if suddenly the pupil numbers go through the roof, there could be a shortfall. KC said that this should be noted in order to be flexible with the budget.

5.7 TS asked if rather than bulge classes if expansion by a form of entry or two would be better. CD replied that very many primary schools do expand but the challenge is that there are no more schools that can expand. There is no land for any new schools and the critical issue is that these pupils will move to secondary schools.

5.8 MH invited members to vote on the following recommendations:

- a. Note the expenditure on pupil growth in 2014-15 and the projections for 2015-16 – **this was noted.**
- b. Reviewed the 2014-15 expenditure allocated for the growth in pupil numbers and the expenditure projections for 2015-16 – **this was noted.**
- c. Approve pupil growth funding for additional classes and places needed for 2016/17 at the current years projected expenditure of £3.5m – **This was voted for unanimously.**
- d. Approve Rising Rolls Funding of £1,129,952 – **This was voted for unanimously.**

6. Schools Financial Regulations

[This report was for consultation](#)

6.1 CD presented this report. She reminded members that Schools Financial Regulations were brought to September 2015 Forum, where further update was requested. Following this, a Task and Finish Group was set up. Written feedback was received from SL in consultation with other Head Teachers and the group met in November to go through the regulations. The updated regulations are attached as Appendix A and Summary of Agreed Changes as Appendix B.

6.2 RA asked if the auditors interpret the same regulations. Her school received Priority 1 because two of their governors email address was missing. There didn't appear to be any consistency in the way schools are audited. GT said this was clearly an issue to be taken outside of the Schools Forum. CD noticed and accepted that there were issues from the meeting. She and John Galligan met with internal audit which has now merged with Ealing, Hounslow and Brent. Head of Audit is keen to speak to Head Teachers and Governors to explore this further. RA said that they are using new documents to challenge old decisions that are two to three years old. CD said it was important to raise all the issues that schools have to Head of Audit when he meets with them.

6.3 LB said she was part of the Task and Finish Group. LB left the meeting feeling divided because she felt like the only one not listening at the meeting was the Audit Officer. She felt that Audit would not understand the problems faced at schools.

- 6.4 LB agreed with SL's comments about accepting gifts and said it could be a contentious issue. She referred to paragraph F.5.4 which requests governors to set a limit on gifts. For schools that may receive many gifts, how are they to know what limit to set. NT said it was up to governors to set a reasonable limit. LB asked if this was new policy. GT stated that it's not new to register all gifts received but it's new in Brent to set a value of gift. CD said there are many policies which are easy to find on the Internet. Most have £30 gifts limit. KC said it was helpful to have a limit set by governors.
- 6.5 MP said that schools should be aware that Brent's Audit contract is to be retendered which will be going out in January and that feedback from schools will feed into this.
- 6.6 HG said it was important for Governors to scrutinise the budget especially as schools are not always terribly good at finances. She was a primary governor at a school where the finance wasn't handled well and having a set of rules would prevent mismanagement of funds.

7. AOB

- 7.1 UR asked if the Schools Forum dates could be changed to another day as he runs a nightclub for people with learning disabilities and these are always on Wednesdays. DP replied that Umesh had sent an email to all requesting this change to which SL had replied that Wednesday was chosen as most schools have parents/governors/CPD meetings on Mondays, Tuesday and Thursdays. LB agreed that this was the case for her school too. Therefore the days other than Wednesdays would prove to be difficult for school staff.
- 7.2 The meeting scheduled for **13th January 2016 is cancelled**. The next Forum will be on Wednesday 24th February 2015 at The Village School.

The Forum ended at 7.20pm

ACTION LOG

| Item No | Action | Due | Owner |
|----------------|--|------------|--------------|
| 1 | De-delegations and other centrally provided services to be charged to academies, nursery and special schools | Feb 16 | CD |

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