



# **Schools Forum Minutes**

## **21 October 2015**

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**BRENT SCHOOLS FORUM**

**Minutes of the Schools Forum held on  
Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2015 at Queens Park Community School**

**Attended by Members of the Forum:**

**Governors:** Mike Heiser (MH)  
Sue Knowler (SK)  
Herman Martyn (HM)  
Narinder Nathan (NN)

**Head Teachers:** Rose Ashton (RA)  
Lesley Benson (LB)  
Kay Charles (KC)  
Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman (YF)  
Sylvie Libson (SL)

**PRU:**

**PVI Sector:**

**Trade Unions:** Lesley Gouldbourne (LG)

**14-19 Partnership:**

**Lead Member (C&YP):** Cllr Ruth Moher (RM)

**Officers:** Gail Tolley (GT)  
Cate Duffy (CD)  
Sue Gates (SG)  
John Galligan (JG)  
Minesh Patel (MP)  
Norwena Thomas (NT)  
Devbai Patel (DP)

**ITEM DISCUSSION****i. Introductions**

The Forum commenced at 6.15pm.

NN introduced herself as this was her first Forum.

**ii. Apologies for Absence**

Gill Bal  
Martine Clark  
Helga Gladbaum  
Terry Hoad  
Melissa Loosemore  
Titilola McDowell  
Desi Lodge Patch (Retrospectively)  
Andy Prindiville  
Umesh Raichada  
Paul Russell  
Troy Sharpe  
Christine Starkl

**iii. Absences**

Marc Jordan

## 1 Declarations of Interests

None

## 2 Minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 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 – MP reported that this was followed up with DfE with a couple of DfE contacts that DP and NT had in relation to Funding Formula. It's been difficult to obtain telephone numbers as they do not encourage telephone contacts or provide it in any correspondence. They recommend online contacts and this has also been made. HM asked for a log of what was raised and when so that he could look at other options to take this forward. SL said she agreed that it is difficult to contact DfE – she is well aware of this from the time that she did work with the DfE. Officers would continue to pursue this matter and provide an update at the next Forum.

2.2.2 School Meals budget – Update on Schools Meals for Kosher and Pureed meals – As 2.2.1 above

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 School Expansions – Clarification of query regarding hourly rate for expanding schools – This was raised by a former Head Teacher of an all-through school and wasn't a case of asking to review but was for clarification. The June 2015 minutes were incorrect in that it indicated a request to review the pupil rate. If the Schools Forum felt that there was a need to review the per pupil amount, a report would be brought to the Schools Forum. GT confirmed that officers met with the Head and had a discussion with him, and that the matter had been resolved. CD said if there is a need to review per pupil rate, there will be an opportunity to discuss this in considering the Growth Funding report which is on the Forward Plan for December 2015 Forum.

2.2.5 Schools Forum Papers – YF thanked officers for sending out the papers as one PDF document. It was so much better and made it easy to print. He asked that spreadsheets are sent out as Excel as well as included in the PDF pack.

2.2.6 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.

2.2.7 Task Group to review Schools Financial Regulations 2015-16 – MS asked if a task group was set up now. CD reminded members of the agreement at the last Forum this was not going to be looked at until the LAs Ofsted inspection was complete and was scheduled for December's Forum. She asked if any Heads wanted to be part of this group as so far only LB and SL have agreed to join. CD will invite all maintained school heads and COG to join this task group and asked if any other Heads were interested to let her know.

### **3 Benchmarking of End to End Process on School Admissions Applications**

*This report was for information*

3.1 The report was made available but was circulated late. CD appreciated that not all members would have had a chance to read it and asked if preferred it could be brought to next Forum or comments or questions could be emailed after the Forum. It was agreed to defer the report to December's Forum.

### **4 Update on the Implementation of the Early Years Pupil Premium**

*This report was for update and approval by all members.*

4.1 SG presented this report. In February 2015, Schools Forum approved funding to appoint a member of staff to manage the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). Due to Council policy to offer the job to re-deployees first, the recruitment process took long and the post was not actually filled until June 2015. The post-holder is based in Early Years but equally works in Pupil and Parent Services. In the summer the post-holder was involved in processing claims, reviewing the process, identifying where further clarification or training on the EYPP was required for providers and ensuring that this was carried out.

4.2 Information to schools was made available in June to those that attended the EYPP meeting and was posted on the Schools Extranet, highlighting the eligibility criteria and explaining the process for claiming the grant. Currently the claim process defers for maintained schools and PVI providers. It is intended that the same process will apply for both from April 16.

4.3 Section 4.4 provided an update of the claims received. In schools 15 out of 63 schools applied but only 3 pupils were eligible and a total of

£890.40 was paid out. In PVI a total of 48 applications were submitted with 39 providers being eligible and a total of £16,523.28 was paid out.

- 4.4 There was a significant level of work involved in checking through the applications. There were incorrect NI numbers, lack of clarity around eligibility criteria and some schools insisted on all pupils completing a form. The Admin Officer had to contact everyone where there was an error. This put around 76% of the visits on hold.
- 4.5 The take up for the grant is very low and officers are seeking clarity on clawback with the DfE. MH asked if the funding would be backdated to the term or start of the financial year and SG replied that they would aim to backdate it to the child's start date, as there is no restriction on doing so.
- 4.6 YF was concerned that entitlement of money is being denied – only 50p for every £1 spent is high. He appreciated the difficulty in not knowing who these children are and thought there is something very wrong in the operation of the system. In terms of promotion, he asked if the community has been engaged and if creating other ways of promoting, rather than just literature, are being explored. SG said they are engaging community champions who are well trained but only dealing with a small number of providers. At times providers do not want community champions visiting them so this cannot be forced on them.
- 4.7 LB said that the promotion was to PVI only and the training date was announced on 22 June for 10 July. This was at a very short notice to have training towards the end of the school year. All colleagues felt that there was no information being made available and were frustrated. Pupils left in the summer and parents have no interest in filling in the forms after their children have left. The form from the DfE is completely misleading. There is no need to use it as the form for free school meals eligibility check has all the information and does the same job. She felt that the administration has not been thought through. Both SL and LB use the maintained schools and PVI systems and are frustrated that they have to use two separate systems.
- 4.8 LG asked if any other LAs have managed to run this system fully. SG said at the Early Years Heads meeting with other boroughs they all seemed to express the same concerns. It was confirmed that there was no backlog to pay the first term's EYPP. The next term's payments are not due until the end of the term.
- 4.9 SL agreed with LB and said that the total system is shambles. The schools are not happy with another form when parents are already completing one form. It has been poorly thought through. LB asked this officer has time to go out and provide one to one visits.

- 4.10 GT said officers have noted that there has been a lack of communications. It should be noted that this was launched at the Early Years Conference where not all primary schools were present, and therefore it was decided to have a training sessions for those schools that were not present. Also receiving so many forms created additional work and other colleagues had to help out. If Schools Forum does not want to approve one to one visits these can stop even though some schools and settings found them helpful.
- 4.11 SL asked if the information can be picked up from SIMS like for other pupils. SG said SIMS is for school age children. MH asked if the system could be more automated and SG said she would take this back.
- 4.12 It was reminded that the funding for managing the EYPP post cannot be made from the EYPP funding. It has to be funded from DSG.
- 4.13 SL and LB were reluctant to approve any further funding and asked for an update at December's Forum to check that the grant management is on track.
- 4.14 SK suggested approving further funding as requested and see it out in the year. For PVLs it's totally new. It requires strategic work done in order for the providers to get it right. KC added that the money needs to go out to children and if someone is needed to manage it, someone has to be in the post. CD agreed and added that if the post is not approved, the Schools Forum will need to look at an alternative to make sure that the funding is paid.
- 4.15 MH concluded the item asking members if they were in favour of approving the funding until the end of March 2016 and request a quick update at the December 2015 Forum. He asked for votes and it was voted unanimously.  
Post meeting notes: See page 11 and 12 of this minutes providing additional update.

## 5 Schools Causing Concern Budget 2016-17 Funding

*This report was for approval by Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools separately.*

- 5.1 JG presented this report. He thanked members for approving the funding for schools causing concern for the current financial year and said the same was required for 2016-17. The process is being tightened up and funding can only be applied for if schools have in place a Rapid Improvement Group (RIG) or Interim Executive Board (IEB) which monitors its impact. The funding has had a huge impact on schools.

- 5.2 Although the actual number of schools causing concerns is low, most are in financial difficulty. The schools need to develop leadership capacity. The funding request is the same as 2015-16. Improvements are taking place and fewer schools are causing concerns and therefore it is anticipated that the funding will go down at some point in the future.
- 5.3 SL and RA agreed that this was an exceptionally good service and there should be no debate about funding it. RA added that the problem is recruiting good headteachers. JG agreed and informed the meeting that there is a London-wide group looking at this issue. GT as Chair of ALDECs is part of the group.
- 5.4 MH invited all primary representatives to vote and all voted in favour of funding the service in 2016-17. There were no representatives for maintained secondary schools and it was requested that the approval was obtained in writing.  
Post meeting notes: The maintained secondary representative has confirmed to be in favour of de-delegating Schools Causing Concerns budget.

## 6 The Learning Zone at Wembley Stadium

*This report was for approval by all members*

- 6.1 JG presented this report. This report requests funding to run the Learning Zone programme at Wembley Stadium. The programme covers a variety of activities for Brent children and young people during term time, as well as additional activities during school holidays. There has been a significant increase in usage of the service in 2015-16 compared to the previous year. The visits have increased by 87%. Funding for this is vital to maintain a unique learning environment for Brent children. It subsidises for Brent children only. Non-Brent children are charged the full cost. An additional £7k is being requested this year due to withdrawal of sponsorship by the NFL.
- 6.2 SK asked how many schools use this service, as opposed to the number of pupils. It was asked if other clubs beyond Brent have been approached for sponsorship. JG didn't know the number of schools and said he would check this. He said that most stadiums have similar programmes and therefore local partnerships.
- 6.3 All members were asked to make a decision on funding this service in 2016-17 and everyone voted unanimously to fund £88k in 2016-17.

## 7 Schools Funding Formula 2016/17 – Provisional

*This report was for consultation*

- 7.1 NT presented this report. The report provided an update on 2016-17 funding arrangements to schools based on the funding formula, i.e. schools block only. The funding is based on a like for like comparison except that adjustments have been made to update certain known variables such as. rates, amalgamations and permanent expansions where pupil numbers are increasing. The pupil data used is October 2014 as required, but the final funding will be based on October 2015 data.
- 7.2 In 2015-16 only a few schools received MFG but in 2016-17 almost all schools are receiving MFG. The loss per school is therefore mitigated by the 1.5% MFG protection. Two free schools are now included in the funding formula. These are Michaela Community and The Kilburn Grange Primary schools. These are funded by the EFA for the first two terms after which they get included in the local authority's funding formula, i.e. from 2016-17.
- 7.3 Lyon Park Infant and Junior Schools are going through the consultation process to amalgamate to Lyon Park Primary School. The funding is calculated on the assumption that it will amalgamate on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 – were this not to be the case, this will be amended before the final submission.
- 7.4 The funding pot will remain the same unless Brent receives additional funding. MH added that the government is saying that the schools funding will remain cash flat so every school will have to take a cut.
- 7.5 MH invited all members to give their consent on the following recommendations:
- continue to use the current formula with the updated October 2015 data for submission to the EFA in January;
  - cancel the January 2016 Schools Forum meeting which has been tentatively scheduled for this purpose;
  - confirm the final schools block funding at the February meeting, following EFA approval.

All recommendations were voted for unanimously except for (b) which was to keep the January meeting in the diary in case there were too many other items in December 2015.

## 8 De-Delegations 2016/17 – Maternity, Licenses, Trade Union Facilities Funding

*This report was for approval by the maintained primary and secondary schools separately.*

- 8.1 NT presented this report. This is one of the annual requests to de-delegate Maternity, Licenses and Trade Union Facilities funding. The request for Maternity is £8.50 per pupil, Trade Union Facilities £83,578 and for Licenses £6,100. In addition £195,230 was to be centrally retained for licenses centrally negotiated by DfE. The copyright licenses included in the de-delegation are British Pathé and CLEAPSS
- 8.2 SL asked if this covered premises licenses as her school had received an invoice already. It was confirmed that this was for copyright only and not for property-related issues. CD said she will find out from the property team what that license covers.
- 8.3 MH said they have had long discussions in the past about Trade Union and asked if members wanted to reopen that discussion. YF asked if more schools convert to academy does the total request for funding get reduced and it was confirmed that it has reduced and will continue to do so. LG said yes the academies subscribe centrally and they are charged directly. Both Ark and EACT have agreed to subscribe to the Trade Union Facility funding but GBT does not buy into the service. The charges are made by schools buying through BESTBrent. Currently not all services are included e.g. FSM eligibility criteria. CD will look into a way of charging the schools upfront.
- 8.4 The recommendations to de-delegate Maternity Grant, Trade Union and Licenses funding were approved by all unanimously. There were no representatives for maintained secondary schools and it was requested that the approval was obtained in writing.

Post meeting notes: The maintained secondary representative has confirmed to be in favour of de-delegating Maternity, Licenses, Trade Union Facilities Funding.

## 9 AOB

None

The Forum ended at 7.45pm

## ACTION LOG

Item No	Action	Due	Owner
1	Update on VAT – why the VA schools are not exempted from paying VAT on the governors' liability of capital funding and Academies are exempted – to continue follow up and provide a log of activities.	Dec 15	Finance
2	Update on additional School Meals funding for pureed and kosher meals – to continue follow up and provide a log of activities.	Dec 15	Finance
3	Short update on Review of impact of funding a full-time post to manage Early Years Pupil Premium Grant. Update on EY PPG payments.	Dec 15	SG
4	Set up a Task Group to review Schools Financial Regulations 2015-16.	Dec 15	CD
5	De-delegations and other centrally provided services to be charged to academies, nursery and special schools.	Feb 16	CD/RJ
6	Benchmarking of End to End Process on School Admissions Applications.	Dec 15	CC
7	Some schools were invoiced for property license. To find out what the property license covers.	Dec 15	CD

**Addendum – EYPP update:**

This is additional information clarified after the meeting in response to concerns raised about delay in payments. It has been clarified that the free school meal payments are up to date, no known delays.

**1. EYPP payments**

PVI providers - payments are all completely up to date.

Schools - all payments that were for Summer term that had been received by this department were paid at the end of term.

Applications received later than this but still relating to the summer term, were processed in September and paid before the half term.

Autumn applications (427), which were reported to the Schools Forum , were paid by half term. The 60 that were reported as having missing information, 37 were updated and paid in October, the remaining 23 had to be physically sent back to schools as they required a signature. Of these 21 have now been processed and will be paid within the next three weeks. We continue to receive more forms on a daily basis and we will process and send for payment within 3 weeks. Therefore all complete applications are being paid considerably sooner than the end of term guarantee.

**2. Systems solution**

Using existing systems such as SIMS and SAMS for EYPP data entry by schools is not an option as they are not set up for this. Currently parents apply for free schools meals through the parent portal. Approvals show up on the SAMS system and schools input this data on to SIMS for payment.

The plan for a systems solution to EYPP is to set schools up on Tribal for them to use the provider portal to submit EYPP claims, the checks and subsequent payment will be carried out by the council. This will mean that schools only have to enter the data once and payment will automatically happen.

**3. Communications**

As explained in the paper, this was launched at the Early Years conference in February, there is information on the Extranet, the council's website alongside FAQ's, training has been made available to PVI providers. Training was also made available to schools, although we accept that the second training date in July was too close to the end of term.

Going forward, we are preparing more written information but this will not be distributed until the systems solution is completely ready and we plan to have a presence at the Schools Finance Conference in January 2016. There will also be an invitation to schools to attend the regular training in December on the provider portal and specific training will be planned for January / February with an aim for launching this in Summer term 2016.