



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM
held on Wednesday 17 January 2018 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Governors

Mike Heiser (Chair)
Karen Zajdel
Helga Gladbaum
Geraldine Chadwick
Herman Martyn
Jo Jhally
Titilola McDowell

Head Teachers

Rose Ashton (Vice-Chair)
Lesley Benson
Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman
Gill Bal
Kay Charles
Troy Sharpe
Andy Prindiville
Gerard McKenna

Early Years PVI

Paul Russell
Sylvie Libson

14-19 Partnership

Mark Stacey

Trade Union

Lesley Gouldbourne

Officers

Brian Grady
Sue Gates
Andrew Ward
Dena Aly
Nikolay Manov

Observer

Raphael Moss

ABSENT

Pupil Referral Unit

Vivien Dean

1. **Apologies for Absence and Membership**

Governors

Narinder Nathan
Umesh Raichada
Martin Beard

Head Teachers

Martine Clark
Melissa Loosemore
Jayne Jardine

There was one vacancy on the Forum - a Secondary Academy Head.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Karen Zajdel declared that she was part of the Early Years Under 5's specialist nursery panel.

3. **Deputations (if Any)**

None.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 6 December 2017, be approved as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to making the proofing corrections requested.

5. **Matters arising (if any)**

None.

6. **Early Years National Funding Formula - Year 2 2018/19**

Sue Gates introduced the report which provided an update on the Brent's Single Early Years Funding Formula which had been agreed at the January 2017 Schools Forum meeting. Ms Gates said that the base rate funding rate remained £4.46 which had been made up 90% of allocated funding, with the remaining 10% covered by the deprivation factor. Funding full time nursery places for children meeting free school meals criteria at some schools had been approved until March 2018 and further arrangements had been put in place until the 2018 summer term. However, as no further disapplication arrangements were permitted by the Department for Education (DfE), reserve funding had been identified to cover the gap. Ms Gates highlighted that it had been decided to set the percentage of early years funding retained centrally by the local authority at 5% which was the maximum that could be retained. In addition, supplementary funding from the DfE for the nursery schools had been reduced and the initial allocation for additional resources for maintained nursery schools for 2018/19 was £797,000. Ms Gates said that the Early Years Task and Finish Group met to discuss options for the

distribution of the amount no longer used to fund full time nursery places using Free School Meals criteria (section 3.7 of the report on page 13 to the Supplementary Agenda pack) and informed the Forum that option 3 was preferred.

Ms Gates commented that the 30 hour take up in Brent was good and the Borough ranked 15th in London. However, a primary governor challenged this statement as the 839 children who had taken up places constituted only 54% of the DfE's estimated number of eligible children and accounted for 85% of the places planned for in the budget. In response, Ms Gates explained that the take up was 85% because some children did not meet the criteria until a certain time in the year. As this was this first year in which the entitlement was available, parents who were working might have made alternative arrangements – for example, they could rely on family care and the proportion of such families was higher in Brent compared to other boroughs. Furthermore, Ms Gates said that as parents' circumstances changed, this impacted their eligibility so it would not be possible to reach 100% take up.

Members of the Forum discussed that there had been difficulties with the online system, including problems with eligibility codes, and these had made some parents give up. A Member of the Forum referred to an article, according to which, 40% of private nurseries were not taking up the 30-hour offer because it did not fully fund their expenses which meant that nurseries were either working at a loss (the funding was less than what providers charged for that additional time) or had to reduce their opening hours. Moreover, the change in the regulations for receiving the 30-hour entitlement meant that the most vulnerable children who used to qualify under the old criteria based on receiving free school meals could not benefit. It was noted that unemployed parents who most needed the support could not qualify for it and this could have a negative impact on their children as they received less hours. Ms Gates said that in order to address the concern around the lack of alternative funding for vulnerable children, the Early Years Task and Finish Group had considered options and it proposed that funds of approximately £400,000 be added to the budget for the Early Years Under 5's specialist nursery panel. She explained that allocating this funding to the panel rather than adding it to the hourly rate meant that it continued to be targeted at vulnerable children who met different criteria and referred to Table 2 (page 15 to the Supplementary Agenda pack) which illustrated the proposed total funding for distribution.

An academy headteacher asked if there was a correlation between the number of children in a nursery and it offering the 30 hours childcare entitlement. Ms Gates responded that she would not be able to confirm such a trend until a full evaluation was carried out, but she said that such a correlation was likely to occur.

A nursery headteacher welcomed the recommendation of the Early Years Task and Finish Group and said that it could be used to address the needs of children with (mild) Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who did not qualify for

additional funding and, therefore, remained vulnerable. Furthermore, nursery provision often made substantial difference later at school so it was important to assess the needs of the child at an appropriate time so they were given the best start in life.

A Member of the Forum enquired about the consequences of receiving a large number of applications that met the Band 3 criteria. Andrew Ward explained that this would cause pressure on the High Needs block which would have to be monitored throughout the year. Mr Ward noted that the Early Years funding formula already allocated the maximum percentage (10%) for deprivation and explained that it would not be possible to take a more flexible approach towards this matter.

The Schools Forum agreed that Brent Council would provide a briefing note at the June Forum on the early years services provided by the Council as part of a report on the Early Years Block outturn.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The contents of the Early Years National Funding Formula – Year 2 report, be noted;
- (ii) The following changes to the Brent Early Years Funding Formula be noted:
 - The decision to set the percentage of early years funding retained centrally by the local authority at 5%.
 - Supplementary funding from the DfE for the nursery schools had been reduced as the initial allocation for additional resources for maintained nursery schools for 2018/19 was £797k
- (iii) The following recommendation of the Early Years Task and Finish Group be accepted:
 - The amount no longer used to fund full time nursery places using Free School Meals criteria be allocated to the Under 5's Nursery Panel and that both PVI and maintained providers could apply for this.
- (iv) A briefing note on the early years services provided by the Council as part of a report on the Early Years Block outturn, be provided to members.

7. Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Forecast - 2017/18

Andrew Ward introduced the report which provided an updated position to that reported at the December 2017 Schools Forum. He noted that underspend had increased to £2.5 million, mainly due to revised pupil growth forecasts. Furthermore, an underspend of £250,000 on out of borough placements and capital charges was expected. Mr Ward directed the Forum's attention to the Early Years Block section in Appendix A (page 5 to the Agenda pack) and noted that there was a low take up of Early Years Pupil Premiums, along with an underspend on Early Years Central Spend.

Members of the Schools Forum commented that the Dedicated Schools Grant reserves would reach £8.5 million prior to the planned drawdown of £2.5 million and it was noted that a part of this reserve was earmarked to the High Needs and Early Years blocks. An academy headteacher raised a question about the School Admissions budget and the way the money was spent. Mr Ward reminded the Forum that this request had been recorded in the Forum's Action Log and an update would be provided at a future meeting.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Forecast – 2017/18 report, be noted.

8. **Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget and Mainstream Funding Formula 2018/19**

Andrew Ward introduced the paper which provided information about the mainstream funding formula for 2018/19 which had been calculated in line with previous Schools Forum recommendations. The Forum heard that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) had been announced at a total of £311.8 million across all four blocks for 2018/19 which was an increase of £3.7 million compared to the 2017/18 allocation. Mr Ward reminded members that it had been agreed to use reserves to compensate inflationary pressures as the school block increase of 0.5% per pupil by the Department for Education (DfE) had been considered to be insufficient. Mr Ward highlighted for the Forum's attention section 4 of the report (page 8 to the Agenda pack) which outlined data and pupil changes in the October 2017 Census. It was noted that the total number of students in mainstream schools remained stable as there was a fall of just 14 pupils compared to the previous year - secondary pupil numbers had risen by 217, while primary numbers had fallen by 231. Moreover, there had been an approximately 10% drop in the number of pupils who qualified for the English as an Additional Language (EAL) measure which was only partly explained by the decreasing numbers of pupils in reception and year 1.

In relation to the secondary low attainment factor, Mr Ward said that it remained at 23% (the same as in October 2016) and he informed members that further details were provided in Appendix 1 to the report. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) methodology had not changed which meant that there were not the same funding fluctuations that had been experienced in Brent in previous years.

Following a consideration of the DSG reserves at previous meetings of the Schools Forum, it had been recommended to use £2.5 million in the mainstream funding formula to protect schools from inflationary pressures, which included utilising the reserves to sustain the resulting funding formula in 2019/20. Moreover, the Forum had not recommended any fundamental changes to the local funding formula for mainstream schools so the additional £1.7 million from the DfE and £2.5 million of reserves would be allocated proportionately across the current mix of pupil funding

factors (for more detail, please see section 6 of the report and Appendices 2 and 3). Mr Ward reminded members that the ratio between primary and secondary provision would be the same as the national average.

Referring to Appendix 3 (page 17 to the Agenda Pack), Mr Ward said that it contained information about individual school allocations prior to any changes in funding levels, which would depend on individual circumstances. He noted that allocations reflected the fluctuation in primary and secondary pupil numbers, i.e. most secondary schools allocations were increasing, while the reduction in the number of primary school children had greater impact on some schools than others.

A Member of the Schools Forum asked questions about the ability to allocate funding from one block to another and the position on this in 2019/20. Mr Ward responded that the local authorities will set the Mainstream Funding Formula for 2018/19 and 2019/20, and the government had set out plans to fully implement a National Formula for 2020/21. This would however require primary legislation. Reallocating resources between blocks is possible, but any significant moves of more than 0.5% required the approval of the Secretary of State. In response to a statement that this was the second year of a tight Mainstream Funding Formula, Brian Grady said it would be sensible to start planning for the following year's formula early so preparation would commence soon.

The Schools Forum commented that inflationary pressures had had an impact on providers and their ability to deliver placements as the value of their allocations had decreased over time. Furthermore, pupil numbers and the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) would have the biggest impact on the amount of funding allocated to a particular school. As no significant changes in the MFG were expected, fluctuations of pupil numbers would have the biggest impacts on the amount of money a school received. However, schools would be aware of these circumstances and they would be expected to plan their budgets accordingly.

In response to a question about the EAL measure, Mr Ward explained that this component attracted funding for one year and noted that typically primary schools would benefit from it as data was linked to individual pupil reference numbers and captured those with English as an additional language for one year from the point this had been first recorded, usually when a child had entered the education system.

The Schools Forum agreed that the percentage of funding gained or lost by each school would be provided at the next meeting of the Schools Forum. Furthermore, by 28 February 2018 each school would receive their individual funding formula that would outline their funding.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget and Mainstream Funding Formula 2018/19 report, be noted;
- (ii) The mainstream funding formula, as outlined in the report, be recommended for adoption by the Council for 2018/19;
- (iii) DSG Schools Budget, as set out in the report, be recommended for adoption by the Council for 2018/19;
- (iv) Pupil growth budgets be presented at the next meeting of the Schools Forum; and
- (v) Feedback from the work of the High Needs Task and Finish Group be presented at the next meeting of the Schools Forum.

9. **Proposed dates for Schools Forum meetings in 2018/2019**

RESOLVED that meetings of the Schools Forum be scheduled on the following dates:

Date	Venue	Time
Wednesday 20 June 2018	The Village School	6:00 pm
Wednesday 10 October 2018	Queens Park Community School	6:00 pm
Wednesday 12 December 2018	The Village School	6:00 pm
Wednesday 16 January 2019	Queens Park Community School	6:00 pm
Wednesday 27 February 2019	The Village School	6:00 pm

10. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

The meeting closed at 7.28 pm

MIKE HEISER
Chair