



MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM
Wednesday 20 June 2018 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Governors

Mike Heiser (Chair)
Karen Zajdel
Geraldine Chadwick
Martin Beard
Titilola McDowell
Michael Maurice
Tim Jones

Head Teachers

Lesley Benson
Martine Clark
Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman
Melissa Loosemore
Rose Ashton (Vice-Chair)
Gill Bal
Kay Charles
Andy Prindiville
Jayne Jardine

Early Years PVI

Paul Russell
Sylvie Libson

Officers

Brian Grady
Sue Gates
Andrew Ward
Dena Aly
Nikolay Manov
Sasi Srinivasan
Sarah Miller (observer)
Farzana Aldridge (Brent Schools
Partnership)

Lead Member

Councillor Agha

14-19 Partnership Observer

Mark Stacey

ABSENT

Pupil Referral Unit

Vivien Dean

1. **Apologies for Absence and Membership**

Governors

Helga Gladbaum
Narinder Nathan
Jo Jhally

Head Teachers

Gerard McKenna
Troy Sharpe

Trade Union

Lesley Gouldbourne

Members welcomed Michael Maurice and Tim Jones who had been elected to sit on the Schools Forum as Primary Governors.

It was noted that there was one vacancy on the Forum - a Secondary Academy Head.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Mike Heiser declared that he was a Governor representative at the Brent Schools Partnership Board (BSP).

Kay Charles declared that she was Chair of the Brent BSP.

Martine Clark declared that she was Vice-Chair of the Brent BSP.

Sylvie Libson declared that she was a member of the Brent BSP.

3. **Deputations (if Any)**

None.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 21 February 2018, be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. **Actions arising**

The Forum examined the Action Log which had been included in the Agenda pack for the meeting and noted that actions 16, 21, 22 and 28 would be considered at the current meeting.

6. **Raising the Achievement of Black Caribbean Boys in Brent Schools**

Brian Grady introduced the report which sought agreement to allocate funding to raise the Achievement of Black Caribbean Boys in Brent schools which was below the national average. The issue had been discussed by Brent Council's Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in 2016 and although attainment had improved in 2017, it had remained well below that of pupils nationally at the end of Early

Years Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1, 2 and 4. A Black Caribbean Strategy Group, led by Brent Schools Partnership (BSP) Specialist Centre for Black Caribbean Achievement, had been set up and had been meeting regularly since September 2017. Furthermore, a strategic framework had been developed which set out detailed actions to be taken by a range of stakeholders to strengthen capacity and expertise to raise achievement and support parents to contribute to their children's learning (for details, please see Appendix 3 on pages 23-25 of the Agenda pack).

Kay Charles, in her capacity of Chair of the BSP, highlighted that the proposal outlined in the report had been based on evidence-based approaches and information which had been collected from a wide range of sources. The paper reflected BSP's belief that Brent should be leading development and innovation related to strategies to raise the attainment of Black Caribbean students and schools had to be supported to build the necessary capacity to deliver this. She explained that the proposal had been developed in such a way that it was inclusive of all schools in Brent and it would be based on peer support, aimed at maximising resources available and creating sustainable capacity for the whole Borough (for information about individual components of the project, please see paragraph 3.14 on page 13 of the Agenda pack).

Members of the Forum welcomed the report. They enquired how impact would be monitored in the aftermath of the initial two-year period. Farzana Aldridge (Strategic Director, Brent Schools Partnership) stated that the BSP would manage the programme and regular updates would be provided to the Schools Forum on impact.

In relation to funding, it was noted that Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserves would be used for two academic years as set out in recommendation 2.1 of the report (page 11 of the Agenda pack) which would be in line with the decisions made by the Schools Forum at the meeting on 21 February 2018. However, Mr Grady acknowledged that a sustainable approach had to be secured and that this had informed the detail of the proposal.

A Member of the Schools Forum raised the issue of schools not being willing to share data on Black Caribbean Boys. Mr Grady responded that the Local Authority would explore solutions to address information sharing barriers and an update would be provided to Forum.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Raising the Achievement of Black Caribbean Boys in Brent Schools report, be noted;
- (ii) The following funding for two academic years to deliver the actions to raise the attainment of Black Caribbean boys as set out in paragraph 3.14 of the report be agreed:
 - 2018-19 of £359,500
 - 2019-20 of £205,250
- (iii) Six-monthly reports on the progress in the use and deployment of the allocated spend, and the resulting impact on securing improvement for this group of pupils be provided to the Schools Forum; and

- (iv) An update on potential solutions to address information sharing barriers be provided to Schools Forum.

7. **Strengthening Leadership Development and Succession Planning in Brent schools**

Brian Grady introduced the report which sought agreement from the Schools Forum to allocate funding to secure the full and effective implementation of a strategy to strengthen leadership, development and succession planning in schools across the Borough.

Members of the Forum welcomed the paper and said they were pleased that the programmes would be available to all establishments in Brent. They acknowledged that the route through teaching had changed and that it had been challenging to encourage teachers to become leaders. Therefore, it was necessary to deliver programmes that equipped people with the right set of skills and provided them with appropriate levels of support. Farzana Aldridge (Strategic Director, Brent Schools Partnership) commented that the three programmes were aimed to support a number of leaders while developing a shift in culture in schools. Work had already commenced on developing a Leadership Charter, which would list a set of commitments to which every school in Brent should sign up to. This would demonstrate the schools' commitment to leadership development at all levels, and support for schools in delivering the commitments within the Charter would be provided through consultancy work and advice. This approach was expected to address teacher shortages and problems associated with recruiting Head Teachers. A Member noted that it was essential to support new teachers to identify and fulfil their ambitions as having successful leaders was a prerequisite for having successful schools. It was pointed out that the Leadership Charter would be developed in partnership with governors as the success of the initiative would depend on their engagement.

The Forum discussed that if the programme was officially accredited, it was likely to attract higher numbers of teachers as they would know that their qualification would be widely recognised. Ms Aldridge said that she had had conversations with the Institute of Education in order to gain accreditation.

It was noted that the Leadership Development Programme and the Leadership Charter could be self-sustainable if schools worked collaboratively to develop their members of staff.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Strengthening Leadership Development and Succession Planning in Brent schools, be noted;
- (ii) The following funding for two years to deliver the actions that had been identified to strengthen the provision for leadership, development and succession planning in all schools in Brent be agreed:
 - 2018-19 of £282,000
 - 2019-20 of £163,250

- (iii) Six-monthly reports on the use and deployment of the allocated spend, and the resulting impact on strengthening leadership and succession planning in Brent schools be provided to the Schools Forum.

Michael Maurice and Rose Ashton left the meeting at 6:30 pm.

8. **Early Years Projects funded from allocated Dedicated Schools Grant reserves**

Sue Gates introduced the report which proposed that allocated Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserves were used to fund three Early Years (EY) initiatives.

The first one was the establishment of a **development grant** to support providers who were facing challenges related to supporting children with higher levels of development needs with ensuring their business sustainability. The grant would be put in place for one year to relieve cost pressures faced by providers and allow time for renewed business sustainability to be explored. The grant would be calculated at 20p per hour for each Nursery Education Grants (NEG) for three- and four-year olds free entitlement hour delivered by settings in the previous year. Subject to confirmation from the Schools Forum, this grant would be made available to all settings offering the free entitlement and guidance would be made available outlining any terms and conditions relating to the administration and the spend of the grant.

The **Progress for all project** addressed issues which were impacting all settings such as lower than national average take-up rate of the EY free entitlement and lower attainment rates by priority groups. Ms Gates said that Brent's Early Help service had been awarded a £50,000 grant from the Department for Education for the project and the money would be used to fund a pilot covering three ward areas. If funding was to be allocated from the DSG reserves, it would be used to put in place more widespread, long-term projects with clear measurable objectives aiming for a sustainable impact. In addition, work would take place to support home learning and raise awareness of childcare options. Outcomes of the pilot were expected to be available following the completion of the pilot in September 2018 and if 'Progress for all' was to be implemented, this would take place from September 2018 to December 2020.

The **Superheroes project** related to the exploration of an early years and primary age prevention programme that emphasised early identification and intervention to support young people to not get involved with gangs. Members heard that the issue of the role of superheroes in play had been explored at the Brent Early Years Conference in January 2018 and settings had been keen to access support to equip practitioners to develop practice in this area. The project would draw on best practice across EY settings and schools and would be focused on early identification of vulnerable children and supporting them to develop skills to avoid dangerous situations.

In relation to expenditure, Ms Gates said that the reserve amount allocated to Early Years by the Forum would cover part of the two projects and all the cost of the Development Grant (for more details, please see section four of the report (page 63 of the Agenda pack)).

Members of the Forum enquired how the outcomes of the Superheroes project would be measured and Ms Gates explained that predicting the impact of EY interventions was challenging. She suggested that effectiveness would be measured by assessing children's attributes and understanding of issues such as gangs, knife crime and aggressive and disruptive behaviour before and after they had participated in the project. Furthermore, there would be various initiatives aimed at engaging families and, in the long-term, the project was expected to help the Local Authority create an Early Intervention Strategy.

An Early Years PVI member noted that EY budget and the Early Years Task Group were mainly focused on Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings so primary schools with receptions or nurseries had little contact with Early Years Team. Brian Grady noted that actions would be taken to increase the engagement of the Team with nurseries and primary schools.

In relation to the scope of the Superheroes project, Ms Gates said that it was expected that it would continue until mid-primary stage. It would be led by Early Help and Early Intervention and direction and guidance would be provided through the Early Years Task Group, while schools would be involved in measuring impact. Members of the Schools Forum queried how the project would be governed. They also asked how children could be clearly tracked as they progressed through the education system so the number of children associated with gang activity who had been identified in the early years declined. In response, Ms Gates said that the project had not been sufficiently developed to enable this, but once it was, the 2015 Home Office and Early Intervention Foundation practice review could be used to support the evaluation of impact.

The Schools Forum discussed what other key stakeholders could be involved in the project. Ms Gates noted that a mapping exercise would be conducted to gather information and identify best practices that could be included in a systematic approach to early identification of vulnerable children. Forum members requested that existing groups in the Borough were engaged with rather than initiate a new series of groups to support a stand-alone project.

A Forum member questioned whether it was feasible to attempt to roll the Superheroes project out across the whole of the Borough as its complexity could have been underestimated. They proposed running a small-scale pilot, involving one or two schools, and identifying lessons learned before expanding the geographical coverage. In addition, Members expressed concerns in relation to the lack of clarity what the programme would involve and its cost.

As the report outlined three separate proposals, the Chair decided to take separate votes on each one.

The Development Grant (as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report (page 61 of the Agenda pack)) was then put to the vote by a show of hands and declared **CARRIED**.

The Progress for all project (as set out in paragraphs 3.2-3.5 of the report (pages 61-62 of the Agenda pack)) was then put to the vote by a show of hands and declared **LOST**.

The Superheroes project (as set out in paragraph 3.6-3.11 of the report (pages 62-63 of the Agenda pack)) was then put to the vote by a show of hands and declared **LOST**.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Early Years Projects funded from allocated Dedicated Schools Grant reserves, be noted;
- (ii) A revised version of the paper be presented at a future Schools Forum meeting, containing additional information on the scopes of the Progress for all and the Superheroes projects as per the discussion at the current meeting; and
- (iii) The Early Years Task Group would meet to reflect on the discussion at the current meeting.

9. **Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Outturn 2017/18**

Andrew Ward introduced this report which set out the final Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) outturn against the budget set for 2017/18 and provided detail on the overall £1.8 million underspend. He informed Members that the 2017/18 Statement of Accounts had been submitted to the Council's external auditor and was expected to be finalised and approved by the statutory deadline (31 July 2018).

Mr Ward informed the Forum that the underspend had been caused by an underspend on school growth and rising rolls within the schools block (£2.1 million) and this was despite a £1 million reduction in the budget in 2017/18. Furthermore, there was also an underspend in the Early Years block, largely due to an underspend on nursery provision for three and four year olds in maintained schools and a planned underspend on central budgets. In contrast, the High Needs block had overspent in 2017/18 by £1.6 million, primarily due to overspends on top-up funding to mainstream settings, and a higher amount of recoupment for High Needs post-16 than anticipated. There had been an underspend of £0.3 million on High Needs recruitment which had not been predicted.

Members heard that the DSG underspend of £1.8 million would be added to existing reserve of £6 million, so that reserves would total £7.8 million as at the start of 2017/18. Mr Ward reminded the Forum that it had been approved to use £2.5 million for allocation in the funding formula in 2018/19 and 2019/20. An additional £2 million reserves would be retained as a contingency against cost pressures and potential funding reductions within the High Needs block and the Early Years block.

Dena Aly directed Members' attention to Appendix B (page 45 of the Agenda pack) which contained a breakdown of individual balances by school. The overall balances had decreased by £2.7 million and although this was the second year in which balances had decreased, Ms Aly said that it was not possible at present to identify a pattern. Six primary schools had finished the year in deficit and 13 had small balances (less than 8%), while most special schools and Pupil Referral Units had increased their balances. Improvement projects and other planned activities had been the main reasons for spending funds and most schools had been able to manage pressures without deviating from their balances significantly. In terms of future steps, Ms Aly noted that most schools were likely to have taken actions to

address the drops in their balances and schools in deficit would be required to set balanced budgets.

A Member of the Forum enquired whether the Local Authority received information on the balances of academies and Mr Ward explained that their accounts were published and it was possible to look at their net current assets, but this would not provide an easy comparison. In a similar way, examining the accounts of an academy school would not be informative when these were part of larger Multi Academy Trusts.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Outturn 2017/18 report, be noted; and
- (ii) A further report regarding school budget plans be presented at the Schools Forum meeting in October 2018.

10. **Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Outlook Report**

Andrew Ward introduced this report which outlined the issues the Schools Forum would face when setting the 2019/20 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), also known as the 'Schools Budget'. Mr Ward said that there was not much information on the national funding formula available and High Needs and the Early Years Task Groups would continue to meet to set a balanced budget for 2019/20. Mr Ward highlighted that the predicted funding gap was £1.4 million and noted that as it was not sustainable to continue using reserves and reallocate underspending. There was a risk that school allocations would have to be reduced in cash terms in future years in order to balance the budget. Additional information about planning the budget would be available following the Teacher Pay announcement and once data from the October 2018 census became available.

Mr Ward directed Members' attention to section six of the report (page 53 of the Agenda pack) which focused on the mainstream funding formula. He said that the primary to secondary funding ratio was in line with the national funding formula at 1:1.28. The mix of additional need funding factors and school funding factors had not changed in recent years and was not an exact match for the national funding formula. However, changing it would require a consultation with all schools which would have to be built into the budget timetable. Therefore, it could be more beneficial to adjust the pupil funding factor allocations proportionally as this could be done in consultation with Schools Forum rather than with all schools.

Mr Ward emphasised that the DSG budget was set by the Council in consultation with Schools Forum as per the timetable set out in Table 3 (page 55 of the Agenda pack).

A Member of the Forum noted that the growth fund had declined and enquired whether unused funding should be shifted to falling rolls funding. They also commented that the number of primary students was falling which had caused a capacity issue for schools that had expanded and recommended at looking at how this problem had been tackled by other local authorities.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Outlook – 2019/20 report, be noted;
- (ii) That the High Needs Task Group would continue to meet in 2018/19 and would recommend a balanced High Needs budget for 2019/20;
- (iii) That the Early Years Task Group would continue to meet in 2018/19 and would recommend a balanced Early Years block budget for 2019/20; and
- (iv) Members of the Schools Forum to send their feedback, comments and suggestions regarding falling rolls funding to Brian Grady and Andrew Ward.

Andy Prindiville and Sylvie Libson left the meeting at 7:55 pm.

11. High Needs Task and Finish Group Report

Dena Aly presented the report which provided an update on the work of the High Needs Task Group. The Group last met in May 2018 and had continued its work on the development projects funded by the reserves earmarked for High Needs. The Inclusion Support Panel would allocate funds of up to £250,000 to support schools in improving their capacity to provide for pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Members heard that the Head of Inclusion had written to all schools to advise them on how to bid for the available funding and allocations would be agreed and confirmed in the autumn term. Furthermore, a draft specification for the post-19 provision had been presented to the Group. It had been agreed that an independent consultant would be recruited in the autumn term and an update would be presented at the Schools Forum meeting in December 2018. The Group had also reviewed the Low Cost High Incidence funding support model which was aimed at supporting schools with higher proportions of SEND students. It had been agreed by the High Needs Block Task Group to replace the old arrangements under which the SEND register had been used as a proxy indicator to allocate funds to those schools which had 4% or more of pupils on the register. This model had allocated £30,000 in 2017/18, using it in 2018/19 would result in zero allocations. Therefore, the Group decided to replace it with the model outlined in Appendix A (page 59 of the Agenda pack). Ms Aly highlighted that the new arrangements would support approximately 50% of the schools with highest proportion of SEND students at a cost of £120,000.

Ms Aly informed Members of the Schools Forum that approximately £500,000 of the reserves earmarked for High Needs was still available for further development projects or to mitigate overspends.

The Schools Forum welcomed the report, however, a member enquired why the proposal to replace the Low Cost High Incidence funding support model had not been voted on and whether schools which had reserves would be eligible to receive funding. Andrew Ward explained that the Inclusion Support Panel and the post-19 provision had been presented previously to the Forum and had been approved, hence, this paper was a progress report which did not contain any new proposals. As far as changing the Low Cost High Incidence model was concerned, the

increase of the funding available to £120,000 would be funded from the existing budget and that the Task and Finish Group had been delegated to confirm the allocation details.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the High Needs Task and Finish Group Report, be noted; and
- (ii) The High Needs Task Group be retained to monitor the post-19 High Needs review and recommend a 2019/20 High Needs block budget.

12. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm

MIKE HEISER
Chair