

**MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**Wednesday 11 December 2019 at 6.00 pm**

**Present:**

**Governors**

Jo Jhally  
Martin Beard  
Geraldine Chadwick  
Michael Maurice  
Titilola McDowell  
Narinder Nathan  
Mike Heiser (Chair)

**Head Teachers**

Martine Clark  
Russell Davey  
Lesley Benson  
Michelle Ginty  
Raphael Moss  
Andy Prindiville

**Officers**

Andrew Ward  
Dena Aly  
Shirley Parks

**Trade Union**

Jenny Cooper

**Pupil Referral Unit**

Vivien Dean

**16-19 Provider Representative** Mark Stacey

**1. Apologies for Absence and Membership**

**Governors**

Helga Gladbaum  
Tim Jones

**Head Teachers**

Jayne Jardine  
Gill Bal  
Melissa Loosemore  
Gerard McKenna

**Trade Union**

John Roche (*Jenny Cooper deputising as job-share*)

**Early Years PVI**

Sylvie Libson  
Paul Russell

## 2. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

## 3. **Deputations (if any)**

None.

## 4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019, be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

## 5. **Matters arising**

The Forum examined the matters arising and in reviewing the relevant action points listed in the minutes, it was noted that:

- Actions Nos. 48, 51, 53: To consider feedback from forum members that some parents were waiting until a child was three years old to start their early years education journey; to discuss the challenges of high maintenance costs for early years providers in meeting the demands of delivering the 30-hours free childcare offer; and to provide more information about the Nursery Education Grant (NEG) would be considered at the next Early Years Sub Group. Andrew Ward (Head of Finance, Children & Young People, Brent Council) stated that the date for the Early Years Group meeting had not yet been arranged, but would be timetabled between January and February Schools Forum.

**(Action 55: Andrew Ward)**

- Action No 49: To review split site funding to confirm how allocation met the stipulated Brent criteria. Dena Aly (Senior Finance Analyst, Children & Young People, Brent Council) confirmed that the checks had been done, and would be evidenced in a future Schools Forum report.

**(Action 56: Dena Aly)**

- Action 52: The consultation on schools funding had taken place, and would be reported on in this meeting.
- Action 54: To review the change in split of terms for NEG payments. This had been followed up separately.
- All other actions were due to be brought to future Schools Forum Meetings.

A member of the Forum referred to the suggestion made at the last meeting that there should be a cap on split site funding due to economies of scale. Andrew Ward stated that the methodology would be brought in a future paper, and that any change would not require consultation with all schools but would be subject to a Schools Forum vote. A member of the Forum responded that they would like to see the financial impact of any proposed change. Andrew Ward to revisit and if appropriate, to bring an update to the January Schools Forum.

**(Action 57: Andrew Ward)**

## **6. Schools Block - Consultation on 2020/21 Local Funding Formula for Mainstream Schools**

Andrew Ward introduced the report and stated that the consultation was undertaken in line with DfE guidance. It was acknowledged that the timeframe was very short, but that this was necessary to work within the constraints of the budget setting timetable and DfE funding announcements, which occurred later than usual. Mr Ward stated that the Model Sought to address the three areas of financial pressures which were discussed at the last forum meeting - mobility, pupil growth (which mainly affected secondary phase pupils); and recognising that all schools were affected by cost inflation.

Mr Ward directed members of the Forum to the consultation document shown in Appendix 1, which was sent to all schools and academies, and included all required financial modelling. Mr Ward stressed that it was prepared using October 2018 data, which informed the 2019/20 financial year funding. It was therefore indicative but did not reflect the amounts the schools would receive in 2020/21 as both pupil numbers and pupil data would change.

It was estimated that that £3.5m additional funding would be added to the schools block. Mr Ward highlighted that this equates to 1.5% which was not a significant increase compared to past years.

Mr Ward discussed the mobility-funding factor, which was released by the DfE in the autumn and was modelled in Appendix B. He stated that a total of £0.75m had been allocated to this factor, and that the model strived to attain a reasonable balance between the pressures, whilst providing schools who met the threshold with enough funding to be worthwhile. It was believed that this funding factor would be used in the NFF, which was the intention for all schools to move towards.

Members of the Forum were directed to the section on secondary pupil growth. The estimated cost of growth in 2019/20 was £3.1m, which meant a £1.7m increase from the current budget. These proposals set out to close that gap by

reducing the rising rolls rate by 15%, and utilising £0.8m of the £3.5m additional funding. This left a gap in the growth fund of £0.555m. The model proposed to allocate the remaining additional funding to all primary and secondary schools, but to scale back the increases to secondary schools in order to fund the £0.555m gap.

The school-by-school modelling of the impact of all the above proposals applied to 2019/20 as shown in Appendix B was discussed. Mr Ward acknowledged that these were modest increases, as the overall increase to schools block funding was relatively small.

Mr Ward discussed responses to the consultation, which had been included in full but anonymised. The model strived to attain reasonable balance in response to these comments.

Members of the Forum asked when the formula was last reviewed, whether there were plans to review it again and how close current allocations were to the National Funding Formula (NFF). Mr Ward responded that this consultation was, in a sense, a review of the formula. Mr Ward clarified that the formula was amended for deprivation funding for 2018/19. Since the NFF was the clear direction of travel, there was a question about whether it was worth reviewing the current formula. Mr Ward stated that Brent was already some years beyond the original plan for NFF implementation, and that the indications were that most Brent primary and secondary schools would receive less under the NFF and that a minimum pupil-funding guarantee would be applied.

A secondary headteacher commented that there seemed to be no publicly available report on what the top sliced schools block funding had been used for, Mr Ward stated that this information was available in previous Schools Forum reports and was available in the published Section 251 documents.

An observer of the meeting made the point that since growth funding was not included in the allocations in Appendix B, the cut in rising rolls rates meant that growing schools would not benefit from the funding increases shown. Mr Ward responded it would be difficult to model the rising rolls, and that these schools could also receive increased funding through the mobility factor. A primary head teacher questioned whether schools should be receiving both mobility and growth funding, and stated they were both linked. Mr Ward responded that there would be some schools, who receive both, but there was not a perfect correlation and that there would be a number of schools, particularly primary schools, which had mobility but were not receiving growth funding.

Mr Ward directed members of the Forum to the consultation responses shown in Appendix 2 of the report. It was noted that, of the nine responses received, five were primary and four were secondary, which was not a proportionate representation. Overall, approximately half of responses indicated the balance

of funding was reasonable. The other half showed divergent views about how this should be allocated. Mr Ward highlighted that although the consultation was necessary, there was no obligation for Schools Forum to follow these views.

The Chair clarified that the Forum was asked to either agree with the proposed model, or revert to the default position.

Members of the Forum discussed the paper. A primary headteacher stated that there were schools with very high mobility but did not receive rising rolls as numbers dip before census dates. A primary governor discussed a UCL paper which stated local authorities typically categorised bandings above 20% as 'high' and 30% as 'very high' mobility, and that there was usually a reason for high mobility, such as special needs or a second language. Pupils could arrive without an EHCP and leave during the year, resulting in high costs.

A secondary governor asked about the rationale behind the amount allocated to mobility. Mr Ward stated that the paper attempted to explain this. It was a balance between all the factors, and that the average amount allocated needed to be useful to schools while leaving meaningful amounts to the other pressures.

The 6% threshold for mobility was discussed. It was enquired whether this threshold could be increased, and whether a percentage threshold was biased in favour of smaller primary schools. Mr Ward stated that the 6% was a DFE threshold so could not be changed. A primary governor responded that larger schools had less ability to absorb the cost of these pressures, and that even a small amount of funding was useful for small schools, particularly those with falling rolls. A member of the Forum commented that the lagged funding system provided some protection to schools with falling rolls. Mr Ward highlighted that Schools Forum had previously voted against establishing a falling rolls fund. A member of the Forum added that the model did not consider late arrivals in the autumn term. Mr Ward clarified the methodology was set by the DFE and could not be changed.

A nursery headteacher highlighted that Early Years funding allocations were determined termly, which was difficult to manage, and that nursery schools would welcome a mobility factor at some point if it became possible.

Members of the Forum discussed the reduction to the rising rolls rate. They enquired whether this would affect large schools who had been asked to expand the most. Mr Ward stated there was some crossover with mobility, which would compensate for this to an extent, and added that funding pupil growth was an optional decision for the Council and not a DfE requirement. Shirley Parks (Head of Partnership, Planning & Performance, Brent Council) added that the schools affected were larger schools who were more resilient to the impact of growth.

A member of the Forum asked whether the adjusted funding formula could be reversed if schools funding improved. Mr Ward stated that this was an option. Another member of the Forum stated that the model felt like the least unfair way forward, and therefore would support it.

Mr Ward confirmed that Schools Block funding allocations would be presented in the January Schools Forum, as well as, high level Early Years Block and High Needs Block Allocations. The Early Years and High Needs sub groups would then reconvene and more details allocations would be reported in February. All schools must have their final funding statements by 29<sup>th</sup> February.

**RESOLVED:**

The 2020/21 Local Funding Formula for Mainstream Schools in Brent, as presented in the report along with appendices, was then put to the Schools Forum vote by a show of hands and declared **CARRIED**.

**Date of Next Meeting:** 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020 in the Village School