



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM
held on Wednesday 21 February 2018 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Governors

Mike Heiser (Chair)
Karen Zajdel
Helga Gladbaum
Geraldine Chadwick
Narinder Nathan
Martin Beard
Titilola McDowell

Head Teachers

Lesley Benson
Martine Clark
Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman
Melissa Loosemore
Kay Charles
Troy Sharpe
Gerard McKenna

Pupil Referral Unit

Vivien Dean

14-19 Partnership

Mark Stacey

Officers

Brian Grady
Andrew Ward
Dena Aly
Nikolay Manov

ABSENT

Head Teachers

Jayne Jardine

Early Years PVI

Paul Russell

1. Tribute to Herman Martyn

The Chair informed the Forum that Forum member Herman Martyn had passed away, aged 86. Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman delivered a eulogy, highlighting Mr Martyn's commitment to public service, honesty, integrity, sharp mind, charisma, presence and generosity. He noted that in 2008 Mr Martyn received a Brent Community Champions

Award from Brent Council in recognition of his contribution to education in the Borough. In 2014 he was made an MBE in The Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Mr Martyn had been involved with Jewish schools for over 30 years and had been a Governor at Michael Sobell Sinai School since 2002.

Forum members welcomed the tribute by Rabbi Freeman and the Chair noted the valued contribution of Mr Martyn to Forum over many years for the record.

2. Apologies for Absence and Membership

Governors	Jo Jhally
Head Teachers	Rose Ashton (Vice-Chair) Gill Bal Andy Prindiville
Early Years PVI	Sylvie Libson
Trade Union	Lesley Gouldbourne

The Chair noted that the membership of 12 Forum members expires in August 2018. The Governance Officer supporting the Forum would contact them individually and would start making arrangements for elections to take place following the meeting on 20 June 2018.

In accordance with article 2.3.5 of the Schools Forum Terms of Reference and Constitution, the Forum reviewed the membership of Mr Umersh Riachada (Primary Governor) who had not attended any meetings for over a year. It was **RESOLVED** that Mr Raichada's membership be terminated.

The Chair noted that there are three vacancies on the Forum - a Secondary Academy Head and two Primary Governors.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Deputations (if Any)

None

5. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 17 January 2018, be approved as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to amending the Minute item 6 (Early Years National Funding Formula - Year 2 2018/19) to reflect better the discussion on the change in the regulations for receiving the 30-hour entitlement, as follows:

“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 would 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”.

6. Matters arising (if any)

Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Budget and Mainstream Funding Formula 2018/19

A nursery headteacher commented that inflationary pressures had not been reflected in the Early Years Block in the same ways as in other blocks. She commented that a significant proportion of staff in Early Years were paid at the lower end of the pay scale. Despite the fact that a National Joint Council (NJC) pay award would come into force in April to support those employees, it remained challenging to set a balanced budget. Moreover, different types of providers were funded in the same way, although they faced different pressures. This led to a discussion on whether reserves could be used to support the Early Years Block as currently providers had to cover the additional expenditure associated with the pay rise. In relation to this, a primary governor highlighted that the time for planning school budgets had been very short and asked if reserves could be used to support schools who had lost funding. Brian Grady explained that the report presented at the last meeting of the Schools Forum had set the budget based on recommendations made by the relevant Task and Finish Group. Therefore, it would be difficult to propose variations to the budget ad hoc as any changes had to be approved through the appropriate governance arrangements, i.e. be agreed by the Task and Finish Group and presented to the Schools Forum for a final approval.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Appropriate steps forward be discussed by the Early Years Task and Finish Group and officers; and
- (ii) The budget-setting process for the 2019/2020 financial year be initiated earlier than the one for 2018/2019.

Schools Forum Action Log

A member of the Schools Forum requested that the Schools Forum Action Log be circulated as part of agenda for future meetings and it was **RESOLVED** that the ‘Review of the Schools Forum Action Log’ be included as a standing item on the agenda for future meetings.

7. Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block 2018/19

Andrew Ward introduced the report which provided an update on the work of the High Needs Task and Finish Group, which had been asked to look at the 2018/19 High Needs Block budget (Appendix A on page 15 of the Agenda pack). Members heard that the budget had been presented to Cabinet and had been approved.

The Group had met three times since the Forum meeting in October 2017 and had considered the changes required to the 2018/19 budget, including a review of the top up, leading to a 2% top up being included in the presented budget.

Directing members' attention to Appendix B, Mr Ward highlighted that it had been accepted that it would be appropriate to uplift the budget for special provisions so it was consistent with the 2% top up across the Block. Moreover, the strategy of increasing the amount of placements available in the Borough would be continued. Mr Ward noted that section four of the report (page 11 of the Agenda pack) highlighted the main changes to the budget. He pointed out that a single top-up rate for Brent River College had been calculated to provide consistency across the two sites, with detailed information being available in Appendix C.

The Forum heard that the Early Years Inclusion Fund was predominantly funded by the High Needs Block and some funding from the Early Years Block, with the risk of overspend remaining with the High Needs Block. In relation to Ashley College (section six on page 12 of the Agenda pack), the High Needs Task and Finish Group had recommended funding to be remodelled to reflect better the services provided by the setting. The new model would include a shadow budget for 2018-19 that would inform the budget to be brought to the Schools Forum for approval for 2019-20.

Mr Ward said that there had been a number of discussions on ways to use the reserves in relation to provision for young people with SEND aged 19-25. A primary governor expressed concern about the lack of activities for young people with SEND aged 19-25 which led to a discussion on the provision available for young people when they left school. The 14-19 Partnership representative on the Forum reported that one of United Colleges Group's priorities was to expand provision for this group of young people and therefore the College was keen to participate in discussions on this matter.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block 2018/19 report, be noted;
- (ii) The detailed allocations within the High Needs Block budget for 2018/19 be noted;
- (iii) A mapping exercise on high needs provision for 19-25 year olds be undertaken, utilising approximately £50k of DSG reserves;
- (iv) The mapping exercise referred to in (iii) be completed in time to inform the budget for 2019/20; and
- (v) The Task and Finish Group proposal to develop options for an Inclusion Support Fund, to be funded from DSG reserves, be endorsed.

8. Dedicated Schools Grant Mainstream Funding Formula 2018/19

Andrew Ward introduced this report, which was presented to the Schools Forum in response to a request made at the January 2018 meeting. It provided detailed analysis of the changes in funding for each school in the Borough between 2017/18 and 2018/19. Although funding for the majority of schools had increased, the pounds per

pupil allocation might have fallen at some schools. Referring to the average percentage change per pupil outlined in appendix 1 (pages 24 and 25 of the Agenda pack), Mr Ward noted that it was 2.1%. The Forum heard that the majority of the funding was coming from capital funding (per head), with the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) reflecting the additional funding from the Department for Education (DfE) and the reserves.

Referring to the appendices to the report, Mr Ward explained that each row provided a commentary on changes to school funding allocations.

Appendix 1 compared the number of pupils on roll (after adjustments for pupil number variations) against the total funding formula allocated net of deductions for de-delegations and education functions. It also showed the amount allocated per pupil for each school, with the MFG allocated and the change from 2017/18 to 2018/19 provided for information. Appendix 2 showed the change in each school's funding make up from 2017/18 to 2018/19 and Appendix 3 provided the same information, but averaged out on a per pupil basis.

The Forum commented that the data had been presented in an easy to understand format. It was noted that Appendix 3 was helpful as it provided information on the sum of deprivation funding allocated to each school and it allowed members to understand the difference a child made to the funding allocated to a particular school. A member proposed that a similar format was used to present data about the deprivation index and per child funding in Early Years.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant Mainstream Funding Formula 2018/19 report, be noted.
- ii) A similar format be used to present data about the deprivation index and per child funding in Early Years.

9. Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Forecast 2017/18

Andrew Ward introduced this report, which provided an updated position to that reported at the January 2018 Schools Forum. He noted that the underspend had increased to £2.6 million, mainly due to revised pupil growth forecasts and that this was consistent with the change in pupil numbers. Further significant changes were not expected in the Schools Block. The High Needs Block reported a slight underspend. In relation to the Central School Services Block, there was an underspend of £8,000 due to employee costs. The Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) had been recalculated based on the January 2018 headcount.

The Schools Forum would discuss potential ways of utilising the DSG underspend at its meeting on 20 June 2018. Furthermore, it was agreed that a report, providing a breakdown of costs associated with the School Admissions service, would be presented at a future meeting of the Schools Forum.

Responding to a question about the underspend on the Schools Block and Pupil Growth budget, Brian Grady informed members that he had met with a number of

schools in relation to projected demand for primary school places. Mr Grady reassured them that conversations about local projections on demand continued and updates would be provided to the Forum over the coming academic year.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant Financial Forecast – 2017/18 report, be noted; and
- (ii) A report, providing a breakdown of costs associated with the School Admissions Service, be presented at a future meeting of the Schools Forum.

10. Dedicated Schools Grant Pupil Demand Task and Finish Group 2018/19

Dena Aly presented the report which followed a paper presented at the Schools Forum meeting in December 2017. The Pupil Demand Task and Finish Group had met to consider growth in the secondary sector in conjunction with rising rolls and, as a result, two models had been proposed (section 3.3 of the report on page 39 of the Agenda pack). The first option constituted a payment of a lump sum to schools in the year in which the growth occurred, calculated on the Average Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) rate. The second option was to use a pupil variation adjustment to the funding formula in the year in which growth had occurred. Ms Aly noted that for both models, funding would occur in the first year, following which rising rolls would be used. She highlighted that rising rolls funding would be based on actual numbers rather than estimates and the key principle applied would be that funding would follow the pupil.

Ms Aly directed members' attention to Appendix A (page 42 of the Supplementary Agenda pack) which showed the impact of both options on an individual school and explained the examples provided. She stressed the total amount of funding in both scenarios was the same, with the difference being how and when payments were made. Members heard that Appendix B (page 44 of the Supplementary Agenda pack) illustrated the overall financial impact of both of these models, highlighting that the biggest pressure would be in 2022/23.

The Task and Finish Group recommended the second option. The pupil number variation in the first year would be simple and transparent and it would provide a guaranteed cash flow boost in the first year of growth, providing the expanding school with a degree of certainty on its growth funding. In subsequent years the rising rolls mechanism would be used, providing the school had met the rising rolls threshold.

The Pupil Demand Task and Finish Group had examined the threshold and agreed that 1.75% increase in pupil numbers equated to a much larger number of pupils in secondary schools than primary, and the actual number of pupils that this percentage equated to would vary greatly depending on the size of the secondary school. Therefore, the Group recommended changing the threshold for the secondary sector to an absolute value of 15, with no amendment for primary schools. The proposed new threshold would be lower than the present trigger point for the majority of secondary schools (see Table 1 on page 41 to the Agenda pack).

A primary headteacher asked whether the rising rolls threshold could be set to the absolute value of 15 or 1.75% increase in pupil numbers, whichever is greater, and if

approving the recommended option could potentially cause financial difficulties for schools which incurred upfront costs. Andrew Ward explained that secondary schools were expected to have budgets that would allow them to accommodate upfront costs and enable them to manage their cash flow. Nevertheless, it was noted that it would be easier for bigger schools to absorb additional students and, therefore, this policy proposal may not incentivise smaller schools to expand.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant Pupil Demand Task and Finish Group 2018/19 report, be noted;
- (ii) For secondary schools that expanded in response to the basic need to accommodate pupils, by 30 places or more, a pupil number variation be applied in the first year of growth, based on the number of planned places;
- (iii) Increases in actual pupil numbers in subsequent years be funded by the rising rolls mechanism; and
- (iv) The threshold for triggering the rising rolls mechanism be changed to an absolute value of 15 pupils per secondary school.

11. Any other Urgent Business

None.

The meeting ended at 7:28 pm.

MIKE HEISER
Chair