

LEWISHAM SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 16th January 2020

Membership (Quorum = 40% i.e. 9) ✓ = present ✕ = absent a = apologies
s = substitute

		Attendance				
Primary School Headteachers		11/07	17/10	12/12	16/01	Date of Appointment
Paul Moriarty	Good Shepherd	✓	✓	a	a	Dec 2018
Manda George	Torridon Primary	✓	a	✓	✓	Dec 2018
Sharon Lynch	St William of York	✓	✓	✓	✓	Dec 2018
Keith Barr	Kender	✓	✓	✓	✓	Dec 2018
Matthew Ringham	Our Lady & St Philip Neri	✕	a	✓	✓	Dec 2018
Nursery School Headteacher						
Cathryn Kinsey	Clyde Nursery	✓	✓	✓	✓	Oct 2018
Secondary School Headteachers						
Naill Hand	Prendergast Ladywell		✓	✓	✓	July 2019
David Sheppard	Leathersellers Federation	✓	✓	a	✓	June 2018
Mark Phillips	Deptford Green	✓	✕		✓	Jan 2020
Clare Cassidy	Sedgehill	✓	✓	✓	✓	Dec 2017
Special School Headteacher						
Lynne Haines	Greenvale	✓	✓	a	✓	Oct 2018
Pupil Referral Unit Headteacher						
Heather Johnston	Abbey Manor	a	✓	✓	✓	Dec 2017
Primary School Governors						
Rosamund Clarke	Perrymount	a	✓	a	✓	Dec 2018

Secondary & Special School Governors						
Pat Barber	Bonus Pastor	✓	a	a	✓	Dec 2018
Ruth Elliott	Watergate	✓	✓	✓	✓	Mar 2019
Academies						
Dr Tesca Bennett	Haberdashers' Knights Academy	✓	✓	✓	✓	Oct 2018
14-19 Consortium Rep						
Asfa Sohail	Lewisham Southwark College		✓	a	✓	Mar 2019
Early Years – PVI						
Dawn Nasser	Rose House Montessori	✓	a	✓	✗	Jan 2017
Diocesan Authorities						
Sara Sanbrook-Davies	Southwark Diocesan Board of Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	Dec 2019
Yvonne Epale	Education Commission – Catholic Diocese of Southwark	✓	a	a	✓	Feb 2018

Lynne Haines	Forum Chair	✓	✓	a	✓	Oct 2017
Keith Barr	Forum Vice-Chair	✓	✓	✓	✓	Oct 2017
Also Present						
Pauline Maddison	Interim Executive Director - CYP					
Angela Scattergood	Director of Education Services					
Mala Dadlani	Group Finance Manager					
Lurenco Reynolds-Moxam	LB Lewisham					

Vaughan Williams	Clerk

1. Apologies and Acceptance of Apologies

None.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Minutes of the Meeting – 12 December 2019

Agreed.

4. Matters Arising

The Chair confirmed that Mark Phillips had been re-elected as a Secondary School Headteacher representative.

5. Scheme for Financing Schools – Feedback from Consultation

The purpose of this report was to update Schools Forum on the recent consultation on the Scheme for Financing Schools (SfFS) which ran from October to December 2019, and to consider the feedback from Schools. Additionally, Schools Forum were asked to further consider the revisions arising from a change in process as outlined in this report.

Of the four schools who responded to the consultation two supported the Draft Scheme in full and

two schools made observations concerned with redundancy and the requirement on schools to provide statutory information/data. With regard to redundancy the Group Finance Manager confirmed that the current wording, in the scheme, did not compromise the DfE requirement that each redundancy is considered on a case by case basis. In exercising good financial management schools should be mindful of the redundancy risk and on the basis that the cost could be borne by them, to prudently account for it.

Regarding the requirement on schools to provide information and data, Schools Forum noted that some schools fail to meet their statutory obligation to make the necessary returns. The problem has arisen where some schools have opted out of services (external payroll) and fail to make the appropriate returns on the basis that they will incur additional costs from their provider. This issue has been raised by External Audit as being non-compliant as part of the final accounts process. Schools Forum further noted that although schools are free to choose where to buy services they would need to factor in all costs associated with meeting their statutory obligations rather than requesting that Lewisham should meet the cost.

The Group Finance Manager tabled a paper which sort to clarify the wording in section 1.5 (Delegation of Powers to the Headteacher) of the SfFS to read as follows: please note for ease of reference the relevant SfFS wording is attached as consulted with additional wording in green.

1.5 Delegation of powers to the Headteacher

Subject to the requirement that

- the first formal budget plan of each financial year
- **the second budget plan**
- **SFVS and any specific documents** must be approved by the Governing Body

Each Governing body is asked to consider the extent to which it wishes to delegate its financial powers to the Headteacher, and to record its decision (and any revisions) in the minutes of the Governing Body.

The LA has no wish to impose uniformity on schools but considers that the following level of delegation to Headteachers is desirable:

- Governors adopt a scheme of delegation devolving defined responsibilities for day to day financial decisions to the Headteacher.
- Any virement should either be authorised by the Head or Chair of Governors. It is recommended that all transfers valued at £1,000 or more are made by the Chair of Governors and any others by the Head. The Head however, must report to governors, if he/she makes a budget virement because the overall responsibility for managing the school's budget ultimately rests with the Governing Body.

Other guidance is included in the Schools Finance Manual.

With regards formal returns requiring Governing Body sign off “A Governing Body may delegate responsibility to a working group (e.g. resources committee) to undertake the detailed review of the budget plans/SFVS /other documents. For a school that is able to set a balanced budget in the current year (and at least the next financial year), submission to the LA ratification may take place post submission to the LA. The Full Governing Body must ensure that they have been provided with all appropriate supporting information to enable ratification. Where the school is in a Deficit Recovery Plan or unable to set a balanced budget it may not delegate any powers to a working group e.g. resources committee. Detailed working may still be undertaken by the working group but the full governing body must have full sign off before submission to the LA. Additional time has been factored in to the submission time lines to recognise this requirement.”

Having given consideration to the feedback from schools and the revisions arising from change in process as outlined in the report the following was agreed:

Decision

Schools Forum agreed the wording set out in the draft SfFS concerned with section 11.10: Redundancy.

Schools Forum agreed the wording set out in the draft SfFS concerned with section 2.1.3: Requirement on Schools to Provide Statutory Information/data.

Schools Forum agreed the revised tabled wording set out in the draft SfFS concerned with section 1.5 (paragraph 1.11): Delegation of Powers to the Headteacher.

6. Dedicated Schools Grant 2020/21 Funding Settlement

The purpose of this report was to update Schools Forum with details of the final funding settlement for the 2020/21 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The report further proposed that the individual schools budget (ISB) remain in line with the mandate approved by Schools Forum at its meeting in December 2019.

Prior to introducing the report the Group Finance Manager alerted Schools Forum that on face value the funding settlement may look favourable but Lewisham is receiving less money than comparable boroughs. The correct completion of school census returns, particularly with regard to free school meals and English as an additional language, was paramount as the DfE is bound by the LA submission and historic base line data. Schools Forum noted the contents of Table 1 of the committee report which illustrated the gross DSG settlement for 20/21 relative to 2019/20. Overall the DSG for 2020/21 had increased by 6.263m.

Schools Block - Schools Forum noted that the schools block had received an overall increase in funding net of £2.486m as illustrated in Table 2 despite an overall reduction in pupil numbers of 307. The funding for Primary Age pupils (£5125.27) and for Secondary Age pupils (£6859.10) remained in line with the information presented to Schools Forum in December. The Group Finance Manager said that although 2 options for APT submission were being presented the only difference was the treatment of Growth being either a stand-alone budget or part of the APT.

The Group Finance Manager reported that taking account of movement in pupil numbers and FSM6 the de-delegation position this year remains in line with 2019/20 at a value of £2.016m. Additional, de-delegation was sought to support copyright licences for schools. For ease of collection Schools Forum were asked to approve de-delegation of licences as the preferred method over an invoice based system. Schools Forum further noted that growth funding not used in 2018/19 was allocated to schools as agreed.

Decision

Schools Forum Noted the Following:

- Increase in funding net of £2.486m as set out in Table 2, paragraph 1.14
- Variance as set out in Table 3, paragraph 1.15 noting the funding receivable for Primary Age pupils at £5125.27 and for Secondary Age pupils at £6859.10 which is in line with the information presented to Forum in December.
- Overall reduction in pupil numbers of a net 307.
- The two options for APT submission with the difference being the treatment of growth being either a stand alone budget or part of the APT.

Schools Forum Agreed the Following:

- Option 2 (section 1.22) for the APT submission.
- MFG uplift of 1.84%.
- Total cost of £209,305
- A balance of £631,714, of which £200k to remain in Growth Fund, £200k to support errors and omissions as the APT is not final until DfE ratification.
- School Forum approved the transfer of the residual £230k to the High Needs Block to support the additional SEN pressures in Schools. To be allocated on a lump sum basis.
- The de-delegation as detailed in the report.

Central Services to Schools Block (CSSB) - Schools Forum noted the contents of Table 5 of the committee report which confirmed CSSB funding for 2020/21 and that relative to 2019/20 there had been a net reduction of £0.775m. The Group Finance Manager said that there are two parts to the calculation the first of which is formulaic. The increase shown in the rate receivable from £40.37 to £41.15, i.e. 78p which is equivalent to 1.9% and generates an increase of approximately £16k. Schools Forum noted that there historic issues around the commitments budget which meant there had been a reduction of approximately £791k, or net £775k if this is offset with the increase.

Funding managed by each Local Authority, also varied depending on the main priorities as set during the baseline year of 2012/13. For Lewisham, the funding supports the High Needs Block, Lewisham Learning Partnership, Pension Contribution Commitments and Corporate Recharge Support. Schools Forum noted that of the £4.7m increase in funding for the High Needs Block, approximately 50% of the budget supports the contribution to the High Needs Block, and that the most prudent approach would be to apply the reduction to the High Needs Block Contribution.

Schools Forum Noted the Following:

- A net reduction of £0.791m to be applied to the High Needs Block contribution as outlined in paragraph 1.41.

High Needs Block – With reference to Table 6 of the committee report the Group Finance Manager confirmed that the base line increase in funding was £4.7m in addition to receiving an extra £4.8k per SEN pupil. Although there appears to be a reduction in pupil numbers and associated funding this is currently being queried with the DfE.

Schools Forum noted that the High Needs funding allocation was provisional subject to an 'import/export adjustment' which is an adjustment between LA's taking account of place movement between boroughs. Although the final figures are still awaited it is anticipated that the figure will be cost neutral. Confirmation is also awaited from the DfE regarding a disapplication for a one off transfer from revenue to capital which, if approved, will be considered as part of the mitigation plan by the High Needs Working Group.

In summary, Schools Forum noted the net funding increase in the High Needs Block of £1.415m which will be used to support costs for schools with a higher proportion of SEN pupils, supporting pilot working on SEN support and resources to support swifter turnaround of EHCP etc.

Schools Forum Noted the Following:

- An overall increase of £4.213m (table 6, para 1.36).
- Derived at an increase of £4.713m as advised to Schools Forum in December, being offset with an overall reduction in pupil numbers in special school and independent provision of £0.494m . A query has been raised with the DfE and we are awaiting a response.
- Response to the Disapplicaiton request for the transfers from Revenue to Capital is still awaiting decision from DfE
- Assuming DfE supports the transfer a total of £1.415m increase will remain to support SEN spend.

Early Years Block – The Group Finance Manager introduced the contents of Table 7 of the committee report concerned with Early Years funding. Schools Forum noted the increase of £0.339m which included an hourly rate increase of 8p for 2, 3 and 4 year olds and as agreed by Forum in the Autumn term the revised formula distribution was set out in Table 8.

Regarding 2 year old funding Schools Forum had previously been advised that Lewisham receives £6.50 per hour of which £6 is directed to providers based on the termly count. Although this funding is based on January counts, allocations are made over 3 terms which was illustrated in Table 9. Following the admission of 40 more children the provisional underspend of £238,626 had been reduced to £185k with the balance being used to support deprivation for 3 and 4 year olds. The additional funds will support the most vulnerable during the early part of their life which intern may reduce the pressure in the longer term on the high needs block.

Subject to Schools Forum approval the new provisional allocation is now a more appropriate £790K (previously £250k) which goes some way to address the concerns previously raised by both the Group Finance Manager and the Director of Education.

Decision

Schools Forum Noted the Following:

- Confirmation of the increase of 8p in each 2 year old and 3 year old funding.

- Figures remain provisional until the January 2020 and January 2021 figures are finalised.
- The inclusion fund for 2020/21 is now anticipated to be circa £790K.

Schools Forum Agreed the Following:

- Approve the Early Years 3 & 4 local formula as illustrated in (table 7, paragraph 1.42).
- Approve the distribution of the Early Years 2 year old increase as outlined in (table 8, paragraph 1.44).

7. Any Other Business.

DS queried if unspent funds had previously been allocated out to schools from the Growth Fund. MD confirms this to be the case in 2018/19.