

Minutes

Schools Forum

Notes of meeting on 24th June 2021

Members:

Frieda Perry (FP)	Chair - Primary School rep (Hatfeild)
Kirsten Heard (KH)	Secondary School rep (Raynes Park High School)
Carole Cook (CC)	14-19 rep (TRP Ltd)
Julia Waters (JW)	Secondary School rep (Ursuline)
Phyllis Sternberg (PS)	Academies rep (Beecholme)
Lee Mallin (LM)	Academies Governor rep (Harris Morden)
Carla Chandler (CC)	Special School rep (Melrose)
Fiona Duffy (FD)	Primary School rep (Dundonald)

In Attendance:

Nick Wilson (NW)	LBM CSF – Interim Assistant Director for Education and Early Help
Patricia Harvey (PH)	LBM CSF – Finance
Allison Jones (AJ)	LBM CSF – Early Years, Family Wellbeing and Early Help
Jayne Ward (JW)	LBM CSF – Finance
Robyn Northcott (RN)	LBM CSF – PA to Interim Assistant Director for Education and Early Help - Note Taker

Apologies:

Hamish Dowlen (HD)	Secondary School Gov rep (Raynes Park)
Paul Lufkin (PL)	Primary School rep (Wimbledon Park)
Steve Donegan (SD)	Primary School rep (Malmesbury)
Andrew Good (AG)	LBM CSF - Finance
Fr Simon Peat (FSP)	Primary Governor rep (St Mary's)

Item 1	Welcome and introduction
	FP welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.
Item 2	Minutes from previous meeting
	Minutes of the meeting held on 28 th January 2021 were agreed for accuracy.
Item 3	DSG Outturn 2020/21
	PH shared the DSG Outturn 2020/21 report. She noted that no actions are required from the Schools Forum but feedback is invited.

	<p>Pressures are in the High Needs Block which was overspent by £14.492m. PH noted that this is a national pressure, primarily due to increasing numbers of EHCPs. Funding is not increasing in correlation with the growth of EHCP numbers.</p> <p>The cumulative overspend in the DSG is £24.981m. There is a Schools Forum working group looking at the DSG Deficit overall and the Local Authority are required to submit a DSG Deficit Recovery Plan by the middle of July.</p> <p>PH noted that an overspend in the Post-16 budget is a common picture. The increase in funding to include 18-25 year olds when legislation changed in 2014 is not sufficient to cover the demand for Post-16 placements.</p> <p>Special school places are funded on a lagged basis. LA commission places but funding is not received until the following year.</p> <p>There is an underspend of £1.392m in the Early Years budget due to Covid-19 and census changes in data collections by the DfE. The LA continued to pay PVI settings or schools regardless of if they were closed due to Covid. Funding may be clawed back and further guidance is expected.</p> <p>Independent day provision is overspent by £9.611m. PH noted that the independent residential budget was underspent by £521k - this is due to the budget being increased in the previous financial year due to an overspend.</p> <p>As per Schools Forum approval, £656k was transferred from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2021/22. PH noted that only 2 authorities were approved by the Secretary of State to transfer above the 0.5% limit this year.</p> <p>11 schools have had to set a deficit budget this year.</p> <p>The Government have released Covid recovery funding for schools, related to Pupil Premium.</p>
Item 4	DSG Deficit Recovery Plan
	<p>NW shared a presentation. Key points to note:</p> <p>DSG Deficit Recovery Plan to be submitted by mid-July. This is a 5 year recovery plan. A number of work streams have been set up in relation to this, including a Schools Forum DSG Sub-Group which has met twice recently.</p> <p>NW is meeting with leadership team next week to seek a mandate in relation to proposed actions in the DSG Deficit Recovery Plan. The deficit sits on the balance sheet of the Local Authority and is impacting on the investment of services.</p> <p>Overspend is a result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in EHC plans (2016 - 1075, 2020, 2252) • Change in age range to 0-25 • Early identification of need • Use and cost of non-maintained and independent special schools • Change in local school admissions • Development/function of SEND regional market (private sector investment, e.g. Priory Group, Cambian). Heavy marketing from private sector.

	<p>A number of strategic approaches have already been taking including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased special school places from 358 in 2016 to 520 in 2020. There are plans for an additional 80 places. • An additional ARP provision has been set up at Stanford Primary School. • Commissioning and procurement of non-maintained and independent provision through South London Consortium. • Investment in EHCP Coordinators to increase demand. • Reviewed special school Element 3 (top up) banding. <p>Planned approach to balance the budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce reliance on non-maintained and independent provision by exploring possible in-borough provision, investigate bidding for a presumptive free school (LA led), investigate development of ARPs and Post-16/19 provision. • Reduce element 3 top-up funding • Invest in SEN Support to hold number of EHCPs • Invest in EHCP coordinators to enable greater scrutiny at annual reviews Post-16/19. <p>NW noted use of the independent/non-maintained provision - 6% nationally, 13.3% in Merton. Kingston and Richmond have similar figures to Merton reflecting an issue in the local area.</p> <p>JW noted that ARP provision has reduced. Only 2 LA maintained secondary schools have ARPs at this time. NW noted that there is need to look at the school site, capital and leadership of a school considering setting up a new ARP; conversations would also need to take place with Health to ensure they had capacity to support an ARP.</p> <p>FD queried if all ARPs are full at this time. FP confirmed that all places have been taken up at ASD ARPs for September, and PH confirmed that ARPs are full based on census data.</p> <p>NW will update all Headteachers when the senior leadership team has approved plans and there is a clear direction.</p>
Item 5	Any Other Business
	<p>Next meeting: 28th September 2021, 4pm.</p>