

Schools Forum

October 17th 2014 – Minutes

Forum Members Present:	
Stella Saje (Vice Chair)	Primary Maintained Headteacher
Kate Gover	Primary Maintained Headteacher
Ian Dewes	Primary Maintained Headteacher
Ranjit Samra	Secondary Maintained Headteacher
Patsy Weighill	Secondary Academy Headteacher
Samantha Dennis	Primary Academy Headteacher
Paul Hyde	Secondary Academy Headteacher
Philip Hamilton - Chair	Secondary Academy Headteacher
Judith Humphry	Special School Headteacher
Rachel Gillet	Nursery School Headteacher
Martin Davis (on behalf of Latika Davis)	Primary Maintained Governor
Chris Smart	Primary Maintained Governor
Peter Reaney	Secondary Academy Governor
Diana Turner	Secondary Academy Governor
Michelle Nisbet (on behalf of Sybil Hanson)	Church of England Diocese
Steve Dyke	Early Years (PVI)
Lisa Capper	14-19 representative
David Hazeldine (on behalf of Andy Summers)	ASCL
Non Members Present:	
Cllr Hayfield	Portfolio Holder for Education & Learning
Cllr Whitehouse	Elected Members
Cllr Hicks	Elected Members
Sam Kincaid	NASUWT
Avie Kaur	ATL
Laura Kisby	ATL
Nigel Minns	Head of Service, Education and Learning
Sara Haslam	Group Funding Manager (Resources and Schools)
Chris Norton	Strategic Finance Manager
Pat Tate	Service Manager, Vulnerable Learners (Item)
Jonathan Wilding	Interim Commissioning Manager (SEND)
Ruth Waterman	Clerk

Forum Members Apologies:	
Larry Granelly	Primary Maintained Governor
Philip Johnson	Primary Maintained Governor
John McRoberts	Primary Maintained Governor
Latika Davis	Primary Maintained Governor
Keir Beaumont	Secondary Academy Governor
Cathy Clarke	Primary Maintained Headteacher
Susan Shannon	Primary Maintained Headteacher
Ramesh Srivastava	Secondary Maintained Governor
David Kelham	Secondary Academy Governor
Sybil Hanson	Church of England Diocese
Margaret Buck	Catholic Church Schools
Andy Summers	Teachers Union
Ian Froggett	Trade Union Representative

1.0 Apologies

1.1 See above for all apologies.

2.0 Election of Chair

2.1 Philip Hamilton was elected to take over the Chair of the Forum for the October, November and March meetings. It was agreed that Stelle Saje would be the Vice chair.

3.0 Minutes from Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

3.1 Correction: (Page 4, Ref 5.5) – incorrect spelling of ‘principle’

3.2. Correction (Page 5, Ref 8.1) – should read ‘where there is not a need’

3.3 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. There were no further matters arising.

4.0 Dedicated Schools Grant 2014/15 Update Report (Chris Norton)

4.1 Chris Norton presented the report providing an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant funding and its allocation in 2014-15. The report also included the forecast out-turn position for centrally controlled DSG allocations.

4.2 Clarification was sought as to the reason for the underspend on Early Years and Childcare. It was noted that there are some staffing vacancies and also actual income from the traded element was more than was expected. Sara explained that the under spend would be used to off-set the overspend in other areas in this year’s budget and that when setting the 2015/16 budget, if necessary, a revised budget would be included.

5.0 Centrally Retained DSG Savings Programme and Plan (Nigel Minns)

5.1 Nigel Minns introduced the report asking Forum members to note and monitor progress of the Business Case for reform of Warwickshire’s current SEND system.

5.2 Jonathan Wilding, Interim Commissioning Manager (SEND) then shared with members a presentation outlining the draft Business Case.

5.3 Nigel reassured colleagues that work is underway in a number of areas, for example the new AEN school which will open in 2015 and explained that as well as the longer term review being carried out by Jonathan, there are activities underway that will address some of the short-term issues.

5.4 The following comments were made during/following Jonathan's presentation:

- Early years should be part of the process
- Warwickshire special schools are not generic (JW noted that the updated report qualifies this)
- Page 17 (13, d, b) there is no mention of the additional places at Brooke School and Welcombe Hills School
- Teaching Unions welcome the breadth and depth of the analysis although caution this is not just a financial business case but a case for providing the best possible provision for Warwickshire's vulnerable children.
- Another big issue is how to guarantee good support for schools in dealing with mental health issues (CAMHS). No reference made to support for mental health in the report.
- Secondary headteachers commented on the cost implications for ABPs and lobbied for this to remain a priority given the success already seen in this area of work. Nigel confirmed that ABPs are a statutory responsibility for the LA to maintain and they do report into the Access to Education Steering Group regularly.
- It was noted that at present there is no alternative provision for primary age pupils until after half term, when one site will open in Nuneaton.
- The tables to say that figures assume that a number of pupils will move from ISPs into the new special school.

5.5 Nigel added that it is the LAs intention to increase SEN resources based provision in mainstream schools. In the longer term, this will be done by specifying that all new schools must include this type of provision until capacity is sufficient. In the short term, the LA is meeting with special school headteachers to discuss how they can support this process and will also be contacting mainstream headteachers to ask for expressions of interest in starting to develop provision now. A number of headteachers have already expressed an interest following the recent presentation at the Heads' Briefings. He added the Sufficiency Strategy will also include the longer term strategy for ensuring sufficient SEN places in Warwickshire.

6.0 Allocation of additional DSG for 2015/16 (Sara Haslam)

6.1 Sara Haslam presented the report providing information to the Forum to make an informed decision on the final allocation of funding between the DSG blocks. Sara reminded colleagues that the amount of funding is still only an estimate so votes will be based on the principle rather than a specific amount of money being allocated.

6.2 The Forum were asked to vote on whether they agree to the removal of capping arrangements from the schools funding formula in 2015/16.

6.3 The Forum were asked to take this opportunity to review the policy for allocating funding to schools where additional classrooms are required to accommodate an increase in pupil numbers. Feedback this year from some schools indicates that the current contribution is insufficient to meet all of the running costs of a new classroom.

6.4 There will be additional pressure on the DSG budget in 2015/16 with the opening of the new AEN school in Nuneaton and the expansion of Aylesford school to provide primary provision. Pre-opening costs and any dis-economies of scale for new schools must be funded by the DSG. Conversations have not yet taken place to confirm the amount needed to cover costs associated with Aylesford however an initial estimation of these costs for 2015/16 is £200,000.

6.5 Judith commented that Welcombe Hills and Brooke School (special schools) have both received a one-off contribution this year to accommodate additional pupils, however due to the nature of the provision this has resulted in 4 new classrooms rather than one. Sara advised that separate provision has already been made to cover these costs.

6.6 Sara added that the LA is also responsible for meeting certain costs to fund the opening of Free Schools in the county, regardless of where the school will be located e.g. even if the school is situated in an area where no additional capacity is required the LA are required to fund this

6.7 Sara asked members to vote on the 7 areas as set out on page 1 of the report:

6.71 (1.0) Allocation of funding between the three blocks:

- It was agreed to take a vote on all three options with the two most popular choices going forward for a second vote. Option 1 and Option 3 went forward for the final vote. Option 1 received the most votes in the second stage. Therefore, the Forum agreed to allocate the additional DSG funding between the blocks as follows: Schools Block 78%; EY Block 7.1%; HN Block 14.4%. The exact amount of funding is still to be confirmed.

6.72 (2.0) Removal of capping arrangements from 2015/16:

- The Forum agreed to remove the current capping arrangements from the schools funding formula from 2015/16.

6.73 (3.0 and 4.0) Review of the Pupil Increase Funding Policy and retention of sufficient funding to cover associated cost increase in 2015/16:

- Some members felt that they were unable to vote on the options set out for revising the Pupil Increase Funding Policy as not enough information had been provided on the financial impact in future years. However, others felt that those schools that have been asked by the LA to expand would need to know sooner rather than later how much funding they will be getting so a delay in making a decision would not be helpful.
- Forum members asked for the LA's view, and Sara recommended option 2. However, she did point out that this would result in additional budget pressures next financial year and the Forum could take the decision now to resolve this if they agree to hold back £240,000 from the additional DSG.
- The Forum voted and agreed to continue with the existing Pupil Increase Funding criteria but to add an allocation for resources and materials from 2015/16. This increases the per school contribution from £27,500 to £32,930. As this will result in additional costs in 2015/16, the Forum also agreed to put aside £240,000 from the additional DSG to cover these increased costs. It was agreed that the funding criteria would be reviewed on an annual basis.

6.74 (5.0) Retention of funding to cover pre-opening costs of new academy schools:

- The Forum agreed to retain an amount of £200,000 in the centrally managed Schools Block in 2015/16 to cover the pre-opening costs of the newly built academy schools opened in response to increased pupil numbers.

6.75 (6.0) Allocation of funding within the High Needs Block:

- The Forum agreed to allocate the additional funding within the High Needs Block only to budgets where funding is focused directly on pupils.
- Patsy and Ranjit asked the LA to recognise the importance of the ABPs and that this area remains a priority for funding from the HNB. Further discussion required around the allocation of funding from the ABP budget to primaries.

6.76 (7.0) Allocation of funding within the Early Years Block:

- There was some discussion as to whether the Forum wanted to vote on this following the paper presented at a previous meeting by the maintained nursery schools requesting an amount of one-off funding to allow them to continue to offer training and support to other early years providers. However, no further information had been submitted by the nursery schools and to wait until the November meeting will cause further delay in Early Years settings being notified of 2015/16 budgets.
- It was therefore decided to take a vote and it was agreed to allocate the Early Years Block funding to providers by an increase to the per hourly funding rates included in the Early Years Single Funding Formula for 3 and 4 year olds.

7.0 Early Intervention Service – update on outcomes/impact (Pat Tate)

7.1 Pat Tate presented the report, requested at a previous Schools Forum, which provided an overview of the SLA outcomes with the Early Intervention Service. The report includes hard data on the impact of EIS and details of how the service is quality assured. The EIS also holds SLAs with individual schools and Academy Chains these report directly to those customers who directly fund that work. This report focuses on the SLA that has arisen out of proposals and papers that have been brought to Schools Forum previously and is funded through DSG..

7.2 Ian asked if the process of engaging primary headteachers in the commissioning process had started. Pat explained that the Steering Group which involves headteachers has been place for the last two years. The draft SLA was shared with the Primary School Improvement Board before final sign-off and the first report on progress will go to the group later this term.

7.3 Patsy requested that secondary schools are also engaged in the process of commissioning Early Intervention support and involved in reviewing the SLA, as the support is not just accessed by primary schools but secondary as well. Pat explained that the current commission is for primary schools only and that funding is not drawn from secondary ABPs to pay for this. EIS are currently only commissioned to work in the Northern ABP. EIS report to the Primary School Improvement Board as well as the Access to Education Group, where both primary and secondary schools are represented.

7.4 Steve was concerned that the nursery sector did not appear to be included in the commission and they currently receive no support from EIS. Pat explained that there is a 0-5 service within the Integrated Disability Service managed by Zoe Harwood that provides support to PVI and maintained nurseries in terms of SEN, Health and speech and language etc.

7.5 The SISGs are to be known as the Links. Nuneaton Link will open in November at Stockingford Primary, Bedworth Link in the Spring Term at Wheelwright Lane and work is underway to develop the Rugby Link at the Boughton Leigh Schools.

8.0 Sufficiency Strategy (Nigel Minns)

8.1 June was unable to attend therefore Nigel presented the report, providing a brief summary and outlining the strategy which is currently out for consultation. It was noted that there were inaccuracies regarding the Alcester pupil numbers and also the 6th form pupil numbers.

8.2 Nigel asked colleagues to get in touch with June if there were any further inaccuracies in the data and to respond to the consultation by the deadline of Friday 24 October if they had any other comments to make.

8.3 Nigel added that the document is a first attempt and that further versions would be produced to include Early Years, Post-16 and SEND provision. The strategy will need to be integrated with the childcare sufficiency statement.

8.4 David Hazeldine commented that Teaching Unions welcome the document as it provides an informative foundation for further discussion, however there are a number of points they would like to be included in the report to Cabinet:

1. They would like the report to include a full statement of the current in-county special school provision and capacity within special schools.
2. Unions strongly support the idea of expanding the proportion of pupils whose additional educational needs are met in mainstream schools. However, they would like to see satellite provision being based on existing special school sites as well as new sites and think pupils should stay on the role of the special school.
3. Would like to see existing partnerships built upon, e.g. ABPs, consortia etc. Schools working together to provide the best outcomes for children must be the future.
4. Feel that raw data from known housing developments would be the most solid criteria to use, rather than moderating sufficiency data e.g. parental preference, popularity etc.

8.5 In response to David's first point, Judith pointed out that special schools do not have a pupil admission number due to the specific needs of the children, although they could give some indication of the numbers they can accommodate.

8.6 Ranjit urged the LA to seize this opportunity to work jointly with other services, e.g. health, social services, police etc. to build all of the services that will support our communities together, rather than in isolation.

8.7 There is a need for Warwickshire to make more of the capital funding that could be available and to ensure greater contributions from developers etc.

9.0 Update on change in schools funding regulations (Sara Haslam)

9.1 Sara Haslam presented the report and highlighted the main changes in terms of the make-up of the Schools Forum.

9.2 The regulations now state that there must be a representative of special academies if there is one in the local authority's area. For Warwickshire, this would mean there would be two representatives of approximately 1000 children being educated in special schools. Sara noted that the LA view is that the Schools Forum does not need any more representation than there is currently. Judith explained that special school heads work together irrespective of whether they are maintained or academy and that she would represent the views of all special school colleagues on the Forum.

9.3 Some concern was raised about the perception that the SEN reforms need to 'bed in' (page 2). In ABPs and Unions there are real concerns about students age 19-25 years who should have a statement but do not, and at the point of transition they are at a far greater risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

10.0 Update on Schools Capital Programme (Sara Haslam)

10.1 Sara presented the report which was for information only. Sara explained there is still no announcement from the DfE on future capital allocations and that the LA is continuing to pressure the DfE for a decision.

11.0 Academy Update (Sara Haslam)

11.1 Sara presented the usual report for information, with the addition of a summary table to show where the academies are and how many children in Warwickshire are currently educated in academies. Members were glad of the additional information but would prefer it if the report highlighted the recently converted academies so it is easy to see at a glance which are new.

12.0 Forward Plan (Chair)

12.1 Agreed that an item would be added to the Forward Plan for Sara to bring a report on commissioning places for high needs from 15/16 onwards.

13.0 Chairs Business

13.1 Philip suggested that meetings run from 1-4pm, instead of 2-5pm in future as there was only a small number of people left at the end of the meeting. Sara will check that the same room in Northgate House is available and will email confirmation to members.