

Warwickshire Schools Forum

Minutes of the Meeting on 16 January 2020

Northgate House Conference Centre, Warwick, 13:00 – 15:30

Attendance

School Forum Members	
Jane Burrows (Chair)	Myton School (Academy)
Peter Reaney (Vice Chair)	Rugby High School (Academy)
Alison Bardsley	Communities Academies Trust (Academy)
Alison Davies	The Avon Valley School (Maintained)
Amy Woodward	North Leamington School (Academy)
Christine Marshall	Exall Grange Special School (Maintained)
Clive Sentence	Alcester Grammar (Academy)
Fergus Durrant	Campion School (Academy Governor)
James Higham	Henry Hinde Infant/Junior School (Academy)
Julie Forshew	Nathaniel Newton Infant School (Maintained)
Martin Davies	Telford Junior School (Maintained Governor)
Mary Anne Burrows	PVI representative
Matthew Bown	St. Paul's CofE Primary School (Maintained)
Nicci Burton	Atherstone & Bedworth Heath Nursery Schools (Maintained)
Rebecca Harrison	Thorns and Park Hill (Maintained)
Sarah Bromley	PVI representative
Sybil Hanson	Coventry C of E Diocese Representative
Officers/Observers	
Cllr Colin Hayfield	Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools
Ian Budd	Assistant Director (Education Services)
Purnima Sherwood	Service Manager for Finance
Jane Carter	SEND 0-25 Strategy & Commissioning Manager
Neill Butler (Clerk)	Schools Funding & Strategy Manager
Becky Robinson	Principal Accountant
Mandy Latham	Senior Officer (Early Years & Sufficiency)

1. Apologies & Resignations

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Chris Atkins	Chetwynd Junior School (Maintained Governor)
Mark McGillicuddy	Woodlands School/Unity MAT (Special Academy Governor)
Nick Wylie	Cubbington Primary School (Maintained Governor)
Philip Johnson	Whitestone Infant (Maintained Governor)
Simon Lomax	Nuneaton Academy (Academy)
Steve Jefferies	Henley-in-Arden School (Academy)

Apologies were received from the following Officer:

Richard Ennis	Assistant Director (Interim) - Finance
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The following members did not attend and did not give their apologies:

Adam Hardy	Catholic Church Archdiocese
Eileen Hunter	Teachers' Union Representative

Since the December 2019 meeting Simon Lomax - Nuneaton Academy has resigned from Schools Forum.

It was confirmed that we would continue to hold elections in March 2020 for Schools Forum members rather than undertaking elections now for the vacancies.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

It was reported that there were several “typo’s” in the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting on 5 December 2019 and the final minutes would be amended accordingly.

Action: Neill Butler to amend the minutes.

3. Update on Matters Arising

Neill Butler went through the update.

Jane Burrows noted on Page 7 regarding Admissions Service about legal position (rebate being back-dated for 2018/19) – this is still outstanding and to be carried forward

The following was agreed regarding the record of members:

- Noted that Alison Davies was not a no-show as she had not received papers because an old email had been used.
- It was agreed that in the future where there are 3 no-shows, Jane will send the Schools Forum Member a letter to remind them of their commitment to attend meetings.
- Alison Bardsley raised that where 3 apologies, becomes equivalent to a no show
- It was agreed that as part of the new year election the importance of attendance will be reinforce.

4. Early Years National Funding Formula 2020/21

Neill Butler presented the report.

The report covers 2 issues. Amending the existing rate and applying the additional funding from Government from April 2020

There are 2 rates: the universal rate and the deprivation rate.

Previous assumptions indicated that 1 in 4 pupils attracted deprivation funding.

Over the summer information was provided by the be Early Years Team which suggested that only 1 in 8 pupils attracted the deprivation rate.

This means that from April 2020 the universal rate, deprivation rate or both could be increased.

The Early Years Working Group proposed that the deprivation rate should stay the same and to increase the universal rate which would benefit all Early Years providers.

This would move the universal rate from £3.96 per hour to £4.02 per hour.

In December 2019 the Government announced that is was raising the early years rates by £0.08 per hour. After taking a top slice of 5% this would leave £0.07 to be applied to the universal rate so increasing it to £4.09 per hour.

Nicci Burton: what is cost for 2 year olds when top slice is taken? Answer – no top slice for 2 year olds

Sarah Bromley – Will council keep 1p? Answer Yes will keep 22p/hr instead of 21p. The additional £0.01 top slice equates to approx. £65k. Sarah then asked if the council consider not keeping 1p; and passporting the full 8p. Birmingham passing the full amount. And Worcestershire are retaining 1p for Special Needs provision.

Neill responded by saying that we had considered other options but it was felt that to top slice the whole allocation by 5% was a more consistent approach.

Alison Bardsley – why are the most vulnerable children not getting share of the increase? Answer: Working group is of view £0.53 is sufficient within deprivation rates. Base rate is so low, so to increase it goes to all children including those in deprivation. This is in addition to the Early Years Per Pupil Premium which is more effective factor re deprived children (rather than based on post code).

Neill committed to taking it back to working group. But can't delay the decision.

Proposal is to make a decision on 7p with further decision regarding the 1p to come later to the March meeting.

Neill committed to taking it back to working group. But can't delay the decision.

In favour – unanimous yes

Action: Neill Butler to take 5% centrally retained funding back to the Early Years Working Group

7. Schools Block Disapplication Consultation

Jane Carter presented the report.

Nicci Burton asked a question about why we received less than expected. Jane Carter said she had a response from a DfE advisor and this will be forwarded on. It was calculated on number of factors that don't benefit the Shire counties. Eg low deprivation and high attainment – it works against you. Metropolitans have therefore done better with the extra funding – and have been able to reinstate services that they had previously cut. We are in the reverse position of this and are struggling to clear the deficit. Only got £4.8m. So we remain one of the lowest funded authorities and hence why WCC is a member of the f40 Group.

Jane Burrows asked if this is being escalated and taken to National level. Ian Budd confirmed that it is.

Jane Carter went on to say that the current overspend is £5.4m. Waiting to hear if regulations will change based on consultation. If LA cannot fund current in year overspend; increases to £11.8m when combine 20/21 overspend.

Jane Burrows asked how likely is it that LA can't fund 19/20 deficit? Ian Budd responded – can't predict and do not yet know when outcome will be confirmed

Last schools forum discussed the 0.5% and disapplication to avoid deadline being missed but Schools Forum were not asked to make a decision on this at that time. Need to make decision today about withdrawing the disapplication or proceeding with it..

Jane Carter outlined the results of the consultation

- Response rate improved compared to last consultation.
- 21% response rate. 48 responses out of 230 schools.
- 43 responses said no 90%
- 4 responses said yes 8%
- 2 responses made no comment 2%

Jane Burrows: do we know if the responses were secondary schools as this would represent higher number of pupils. Neill Butler informed Schools Forum that 11 responses were received from secondary schools and 37 from primary schools. This represented 31% of secondary schools and 19% of primary schools responding to the disapplication consultation

Jane Carter then gave an overview of the comments received from schools:

Ian Budd confirmed that the NFF can be implemented. So, the last 3 questions on consultation are void, as we can meet the NFF now that we have the final allocation

Ian Budd expressed gratitude for those who take on system leadership roles e.g. schools forum; Task and Finish groups, etc. and this is a system-wide issue for Schools Forum to consider Moving £1.7m reduces but doesn't eradicate overspend

Report from High Needs Task & Finish Group gave detail of patterns of provision in County (Oct report) and talked about plans in short term and medium term. If overspend remains over 1% in 2019/20 we must compile a recovery plan to the DfE.

Ian Budd talked through flowchart and the decision-making process regarding the 0.5%. Ian supported the recommendation to transfer 0.5% to high needs and the fact that the challenge will be £1.7m greater if we don't do the transfer. Ian also confirmed that regardless of decision – a lot of hard work was ahead of us.

Ian wants all of our Young People to thrive; wants them all to be supported, for those with complexity of need to aspire and place them appropriately and support them. High Needs Task & Finish (HNT&F) group – have some of the best support and outstanding practice – we need to have this consistently across the system. Plus some systemic behaviours which don't meet our values.

National audit report – evidence based representations to Govt are required. In WCC, many more in specialist provision than in other LAs. System is not as inclusive as other LAs – so we must collectively work on this

So there is a different distribution of HNB in WCC compared to others. So much is spent in special and AP;

We have situation where EY get 1% but in WCC get 0%; Primary get 10% when statistically get 16%; Secondary 6% compared to 10% statistically

Should be simpler ways to distribute the resources. Need collective appetite across system to meet the needs of young people. Will need clear discussions with Heads in schools to facilitate more funding coming freely into schools to get upstream support of needs. Need step change now.

Peter Reaney: currently funding allocation for next year has increased so that if do agree, not losing anything from NFF. And on top of this there is £2.7m unallocated. So £1.7m can be taken from that leaving £1m surplus for schools. If agreed – it still leaves £3.7m overspend in high needs block.

Sybil Hanson: represented Diocese for many years – and has heard this narrative before. Doesn't seem to have improved or moved forward. What assurances are there that this transfer will actually resolve the situation?

Councillor Colin Hayfield: this is big problem, and this is a demand led service £1.7m won't address problem – so will still need structural change. Council has underwritten deficit until now. But council doesn't have responsibility for educational needs – this has to come from Schools Forum. So should look at every avenue possible. These are all of our children and they deserve to be supported.

Alison Davis: demand is not equally spread; so, this mechanism gives 1 way of distributing – that is not actually proportional on the need across schools

Jane Burrows: what are comparisons with other LAs on out of county placements? Jane Carter confirmed we spend far more than statistical neighbours.

Jane Burrows said this has been raised as an issue at SF for many years. Plus have asked for transparency on pupil numbers re OOC spend for many years – and we still don't have it. Jane also referred to prior year outturn numbers and compared them to high needs forecast – and worries that Schools Forum still don't have transparency of the high needs spend

Ian Budd: confirmed that in last year that organisation's DNA is to be open book. HNT&F group has had open book information from service re data and evidence-based information. Ian also noted that they have been open about behaviours across the organisation too. So if there are outstanding information requests – they will be followed up. Ian Budd confirmed he is happy to share any information that has already been shared with T&F groups. Will take step of faith around transformation programme

Colin Hayfield agreed it is reasonable to ask for transparent information on how money is spent. E. g. could have specific item on SF meeting. Will make it available.

Peter Reaney: have information on where money is spent – but want more information about drivers – i.e. numbers of pupils in each type of provision. Ian Budd confirmed the HNT&F group has this.

Matthew Bowen: there is a free school for additional needs; further special school in process; should have positive effect on out of county spend and bring spend down? Ian Budd: Yes the Pears project should reduce OOC spend – will take careful planning and delivery. But other components to this.

Clive Sentence : when Schools Forum voted on this before – there was expectation that SF would approve. But did not go through as the money being sliced would remove ability of schools who have to deal with intervention. He is not of the view that things have changed. Those schools who voted against it had it right then – especially primary schools. No concrete options presented as a plan to convince him. This suggests there is a culture of lack of control. Shouldn't proposed overspends when non-statutory planned overspends, e.g. ABP's. Lack of recovery plan – who is

responsible for recovery plan? Ian Budd: at October meeting Schools Forum action plan proposal was discussed. Can't make step changes unless ownership amongst head.

Alison Bardsley: surplus in schools block in 20/21 – reason for £2.7m is due to not spending the growth funding allocated. Rest seems unclear. DfE has said that's what we need but NFF says we don't. concerns her not knowing what the surplus money is for. Also if 0.5 transfer doesn't happen what happens to the surplus? 1% deficit which keeps growing. If surplus remains in schools block and not spent, what happens to it. Does it offset the HN deficit? Neill Butler: Underspend in the schools block cannot be used to offset overspend in other blocks.

Alison Bardsley: If do transfer 0.5% - still need recovery plan. Purnima Sherwood: noted that risk that overspend is masked if the transfer is made. But the issue is a national one and being discussed at national forums and WCC feeding into CCN and LGA discussions with Treasury. Any reporting on expenditure/overspend can reference the transfer so that it is not masked. Modelling shows that can achieve NFF; that schools are at least 1.84% better off (based on same pupil numbers) compared to 19/20; and still have £1m surplus even if do the 0.5% transfer. If don't do transfer have £2.7m surplus – huge imbalance across SB and HNB with surplus in former and deficit in latter. So from finance perspective need to support the transfer to address this imbalance. Highly likely that recovery plan will need to be made as a result of this year's deficit. That will need to incorporate the 20/21 forecast deficit too – so is a positive thing that need to do the recovery plan – which will need to be done with input across the system to address what is a system wide issue.

Jane Burrows recommended that the NFF 2020/21 was discussed next ahead of the vote regarding the 0.5% transfer form schools block.

5. School National Funding Formula 2020/21

Neill Butler presented the report.

WCC have received an 6.81% Increase in Schools Block DSG. We were expecting a rise of 4% due to the increase in pupil led funding factors and 1.7% due to increase in pupil number. We have, therefore, received an increase of 1.1% above expectations.

The reason for this increase is due to more money being allocated by the DfE for our Primary Units of Funding offset by a slight decrease in our Secondary Units of Funding.

This means we can implement the 'hard' NFF in 2020/21 and still have £2.7 million surplus. The issue for Schools Forum is how do we consult with schools on how we allocate this money, subject to any outcome form the 0.5% disapplication.

The surplus will in the short term be held against the Growth Fund allocation as there are future years budget pressures on this fund.

A paper will be brought back to Schools Forum in March 2020 with proposals for consultation with schools on the surplus.

Becky Harrison: how many schools are in deficit? Neill Butler: About 20 maintained schools in deficit with some being small schools. The changes to the funding formula for 2020/21 favours larger schools.

Sybil Hanson: actual situation at small primaries is still not good, so every pound they get from schools block is welcome.

Alison Davis: overall agreeing that secondaries and large primaries not impacted – but small primaries would be impacted – so consider using the surplus focusing on small primaries.

Christine Marshall – out of county spend is difficult. In background, Christine can confirm how hard they have worked to take in pupils who 1/2/3 years ago would have gone OOC. Her school cohort has changed dramatically. Is a national headline that children are getting are more complex. Need to not look at OOC spend or numbers; need to look at that in conjunction with total numbers/demand.

Jane Burrows: flagged that for 0.5% transfer guidance states that Schools Forum must see details of demand on the High Needs budget in order for it to make informed decisions. Jane went on to say that as far as she is aware this has never happened.

Nicci Burton – fear for most heads is that true overspend is masked.

Decisions:

- (1) Advise Cabinet to move to the 'hard' NFF in 2020/21. This was agreed Unanimously
- (2) Vote re move from 0.5% from schools block to the high needs block: In favour 3; against 10; abstaining 3
- (3) Paper for consultation to schools: This was agreed Unanimously

Action: Neill Butler to bring a report back to Schools Forum in March outlining the consultation process with schools to distribute any unallocated schools block funding.

Ian Budd will see Leader of the Council, Izzi Seccombe, this afternoon, who will decide whether to continue with disapplication or withdraw it. The Recovery plan will need to be done closely with SF and HNT&F group. May need some 'away time' re SEN transformation programme; needs to be owned by Heads across the system

Jane Burrows: asked Ian Budd to let Schools Forum know what the decision is by the Leader
Jane Burrows: asked if deficit recovery plan should be started now; and should there be a working party set up by Schools Forum to help on that. Ian Budd: agreed it would be a good idea.

Volunteers for the working group are:

Jane Burrows
Amy Woodward
Becky Harrison
Nicci Burton

Ian Budd recommended that the group could also cover off the data requirements referenced earlier on in terms of transparency

Action: Ian Budd to set up the Deficit Recovery Plan Working Group

6. Special Schools Funding Formula 2020/21

Neill Butler introduced the report.

2 schools of the 3 maintained Special Schools responded and both were in favour. Since paper drafted, have new census data, so Round Oak would lose £19,000 not £60,000 as per the Appendix

Amy Woodward – 2 schools responded – were they the ones doing better? Answer was yes. Round Oak has IEB in place so is this fair to change their funding detrimentally when they are vulnerable right now?

Nicci Burton – did non-responding schools give any response? No

Vote – Unanimously in favour of moving to a single census point

8. DSG Monitoring Report 2020/21

Purnima Sherwood presented this report.

Amy Woodward: asked what the £0.528 million overspend on ABP in paragraph 4.2? Jane Carter said she would confirm what this related too.

Clive Sentence: raised concerns over the underspend on admission as this needs to be spend as the service is in danger of imploding.

Decision:

Schools Forum unanimously approved the net transfer of £0.067 million to the growth fund resulting from Academisation and that any overspend in the Schools Block will be offset by any underspends in the Growth fund before carrying forward any Growth fund balance into the new financial year.

9. High Need DSG Budget Allocation 2020/21

Purnima Sherwood went through the report.

Jane Burrows: commented on the increase of £700 million and how this is reflected against increased pupil numbers in Warwickshire.

10. Central Schools Services DSG Budget Allocation 2020/21

Purnima Sherwood presented the report

Jane Burrows: Asked why paragraph 2.3 suggested pupil led funding was going down whilst pupil number had been said to be going up in other agenda items. Becky Robinson to follow this up.

11. Assistant Director's Update

This was covered under item 7.

12. Forward Plan

Neill Butler presented the forward plan.

13. Chair's Business

F40 – have a fair funding conference in March for anyone interested. This was circulated earlier today to SF.

Time and Date of the Next School's Forum

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm, Thursday 19th March 2020, Northgate House Conference Centre, Warwick