

Warwickshire Schools Forum

Minutes of the Meeting on 4 June 2020

Microsoft Teams Meeting 14:00 – 16:00

Attendance

School Forum Members	
Jane Burrows (Chair)	Myton School (Academy)
Peter Reaney (Vice Chair)	Rugby High School (Academy)
Alison Bardsley	Communities Academies Trust (Academy)
Amy Woodward	North Leamington School (Academy)
Chris Atkins	Chetwynd Junior School (Maintained Governor)
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)
Nick Wylie (left 15:30)	Cubbington Primary School (Maintained Governor)
Philip Johnson	Whitestone Infant (Maintained Governor)
Rebecca Harrison	Thorns and Park Hill (Maintained)
Sarah Bromley	PVI representative
Steve Jefferies	Henley-in-Arden School (Academy)
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)
Andrew Felton	Assistant Director (Finance)
Purnima Sherwood	Service Manager for Finance
Neill Butler (Clerk)	Schools Funding & Strategy Manager
Duane Chappell	Strategy & Commissioning Manager (SEND & Inclusion)
Mandy Latham	Senior Officer (Early Years & Sufficiency)
Helen Barnsley	Democratic Services Officer
Jane Gillon	Democratic Services Support Officer
Carl Hipkiss	Development & Analysis Team Manager
Isabelle Moorhouse (from 15:00)	Trainee Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies & Resignations

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Christine Marshall	Exall Grange Special School (Maintained)
Clive Sentence	Alcester Grammar (Academy)
James Higham	Henry Hinde Infant/Junior School (Academy)

In addition Fergus Durrant, Champion School (Academy Governor), emailed at 14:15 to say he had technical problems and was unable to sign into the Teams meeting despite a number of attempts.

The following members did not attend and did not give their apologies:

Alison Davies	The Avon Valley School (Maintained)
Adam Hardy	Catholic Church Archdiocese
Eileen Hunter	Teachers' Union Representative
Mark McGillicuddy	Woodlands School/Unity MAT (Special Academy Governor)

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

It was reported that there were several "typo's" in the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting on 16 January 2020 and the final minutes would be amended accordingly.

Action: Neill Butler to amend the minutes.

Page 3 - Jane Burrows asked about Admissions Service with regard to the legal position (rebate being back-dated for 2018/19) – this is still outstanding and covered in matters arising.

Page 4 – The local authority could not change its decision on top-slicing early years DSG allocation for 3 and 4 years olds as budgets for 2020-21 had already been set.

Page 8 - Neill Butler to bring a report back to Schools Forum in December 2020 outlining the consultation process with schools to distribute any unallocated schools block funding.

Page 8 – It was noted that within the NFF no allocation was made to the sparsity factor which supports our 14 smallest rural schools. Schools Forum in principal supported the funding of the sparsity factor. Discussions are ongoing with the ESFA. Matthew Bown noted the importance of these rural schools having this Sparsity funding. Andy Felton noted this and said this would be escalated with the ESFA.

Page 8 - Ian Budd confirmed that the Deficit Recovery Plan Working Group has met on several occasions and an update will be discussed in Agenda Item 5.

Action: Admissions will be brought back to a future meeting.

3. Update on Matters Arising

Neill Butler went through the update.

Discussions with the ESFA are continuing regarding allocating sparsity funding in 2020-21 for our 14 small rural schools.

Schools Forum approved the 2020-21 DSG budget with 11 members in favour and one abstention.

Schools Forum agreed to delaying the elections to later in the year with all 12 members voting agree to this proposal.

4. DSG Outturn Report 2019-20

Purnima Talked through the report

Purnima outlined the variances on the four blocks:

Schools block had a small underspend of £0.192 million.

High needs block had an overspend of £7.343 million and would be covered in more detail in the deficit recovery report later.

Early years block underspend of £1.848 million will be ring-fenced to create a buffer against any future years clawback of funding.

Central Services block underspend of 0.240 million is equal to the reduced allocation we will receive in 2020-21.

In addition the LA allocated £2.103 million in February 2019 against the planned overspend in the high needs block. Overall the 2019-20 DSG overspend was £2.960 million.

Andy Felton noted that this is the last year WCC can fund any deficit without explicit Secretary of State approval.

Sarah Bromley asked if part of the underspend could be used to support PVI's and Maintained Nursery's. Purnima Sherwood noted that this would be good to take to the Early Years Board and then brought back to SF. Neill Butler and Ian Budd noted that Maintained Nursery Schools were not able to furlough staff or apply for grant funding like other mainstream schools. Neill Butler also noted the need to give funding fairly.

Jane Burrows noted not much relief available even for Schools due to the current conditions. Alison Bardsley Agreed.

Andy Felton asked about Furlough for Maintained Nursery – to be covered later in the Agenda.

Action: Neill Butler to discuss Early Years underspend with the Early Years Working Group.

5. DSG Deficit Recovery Plan

Duane Chappell presented the report.

Overspend on the HN Block requires a DSG recovery plan.

Recovery plan has been completed with the help of a working group which included members of Schools Forum.

One important area of note is the growth in high needs spending over recent years has been 16% which is significantly above our statistical neighbours.

Duane informed Schools Forum that whilst we can recover the current overspend over 3 years we are not sustainable and will continue to create further deficits each year.

Significant changes will be required to become sustainable including the Government recognising that overall grant funding is inadequate to meet current increases in need.

Alison Bardsley questioned whether it was for Schools Forum to approve the DSG recovery plan?

Martin Davis stated that demand increasing greater than supply and we need to lobby for further funding with the DFE. Suspects that it will be mission unachievable.

Jane Burrows agreed, but is adamant that we need to make fundamental changes and evolve regardless in order to make efficiencies

Philip Johnson noted that there are a number of concerns in schools about some of the proposals particularly in the need to act more effectively in the Nursery sector to address problems before the children arrive in mainstream school. More liaison is needed between special and mainstream settings. Recognition that more Early intervention is also needed and flexibility to move between sectors.

Mary Anne Burrows agreed that much more needs to be done at nursery level, however, more support for training and from the specialist services is needed. Duane Chappell noted that we need to make capacity in the settings. Matthew Bown noted that it goes back to strengthening the links between special and mainstream.

Andy Felton said lots of work on the Strategy to take this forward needs to be done by WCC in order to strengthen the plan and accelerate the plan. Concern however on the post COVID position that may impact on our ability to lobby. Andy went on to say that 2 other things need to be done in parallel:

- A decision on the 0.5% disapplication
- WCC reserve to use for bridging finance in the short/medium term.

Nick Wylie asked about the implications of failing to address the overspend in the next 2-3 years. Andy Felton suspects it will ultimately be a 5 year plan to fully turn the tanker around based on experiences in other authorities. If we can break the back in 3 years though we may be able to support the gap.

Nick Wylie also mentioned that he does not agree that there is conflict between the Local Authority and Schools Forum as mentioned in the report.

Matthew Bown reiterated that the links between special and mainstream is crucial. Ian Budd mentioned that training may be needed in this area. Andy Felton said that Duane and he also have experience of this change in other authorities and know the complexity and difficulties ahead to get this moving. In Staffordshire the school's engagement and willingness to change was brilliant, the bigger issue was shifting the culture in County Council services.

Becky Harrison praised the working group but was still wary regarding a 0.5% disapplication which could be used for sparsity funding.

Nicci Burton noted the usefulness of the DSG recovery working group. Jane Burrows stated that going forward this will be opened up to further members. Emails to be sent to Neill Butler to ask to join.

Martin Davis said that management teams in primary schools are stretched, support needs to be available here. Duane Chappell agreed that support is key but mainstream schools do need to take further children to stop them going into ISPs

Nick Wylie said that he is still keen to see more measurable success criteria which we can review at future meetings.

Jane Burrows noted the updates on the recovery plan will become a standing item on the SF agenda.

All schools Forum members supported the work that has been done of the DSG deficit recover plan.

6. Assistant Directors Update

Ian Budd covered the following issue.

Thanked DSG deficit recovery plan working group and others are welcome to join going forward.

COVID-19

Initial response reset and recovery.

No headteacher should be working through issues in isolation – twice weekly meetings which have influenced what time and effort has gone into.

Guidance to update on DFE, OFFSTED, Public Health England etc.

Updates with Trade unions and Support Staff unions

Huge work done with Primary colleagues on a risk assessment framework. Progression has been made to wider working by most primaries this week.

Refresh to the Early Years Strategy

Education refresh strategy, E-learning strategy, Wellbeing offer etc.

Matthew Brown raised an issue of E-learning in schools and is there going to be more support from the LA? Ian Budd confirmed this was something that needed to be seriously considered going forward.

7. Chair's Business

None

Time and Date of the Next School's Forum

2:00 pm – 5:00 pm, Thursday 1th October 2020, Meeting venue to be confirmed