

Minutes of a Meeting of the Schools Forum

Monday, 19 January 2015

Shaw House Church Road Newbury RG14 2DR

Present:

Katharine Andrews	Curridge School Business Manager	Primary Schools
Cathy Burnham	Officer	Education Officer
Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Finance Manager (Communities)	Finance Manager - C&YP
Jon Hewitt	Headteacher The Castle School	Special Schools
Kate House	Headteacher The Ilsleys	Primary Schools
Peter Hudson	Governor Mortimer St John's Infant School	Primary Schools
Ann Kells	Schools Accountant	Schools Accountant
Rod King	Chair of Finance Management Board - Pupil Referral Units	Chair of Finance Management Board - Pupil Referral Units
Carolynn Loosen	Schools Funding Officer	Schools Forum Clerk
Catherine Morley	Headteacher Theale Primary School	Primary Schools
Councillor Irene Neill	Executive Portfolio - Children & Young People, Youth Service, Education, Safeguarding	Executive Portfolio Holder for C&YP
Ian Pearson	Deputy Corporate Director (Communities) & Head of Education Service	Head of Education
Chris Prickett	Headteacher Streatley Primary School	Primary Schools
Chris Prosser	Headteacher	Secondary Schools
David Ramsden	Headteacher Little Heath School	Secondary Schools
Clive Rothwell	Governor John O'Gaunt School	Secondary Schools
Jane Seymour	Service Manager, SEN & Disabled Children's Team	Education Officer
Maria Shepherd	Union Treasurer	Academies
Bruce Steiner	Governor - St Bartholomew's School	Nursery Schools
Suzanne Taylor	Headteacher Hungerford Nursery School	Primary Schools
John Tyzack	Governor Falkland Primary School	Schools' Finance Manager
Claire White	Finance Manager (Schools)	Pupil Referral Units
Stacey Williams	Headteacher Reintegration Service	

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:

Councillor David Allen	Council Member, Shadow Portfolio - Children & Young People, Education, Youth Service, Culture & Leisure	Shadow Portfolio Holder for C&YP
Reverend Mark Bennet		Academies
Patricia Brims	Governor Brimpton School	Primary Schools
Fadia Clarke	Deputy Principal Newbury College	Further Education
Jeanette Clifford	Governor St Bartholomew's School	Academies
Paul Dick	Headteacher Kennet School	Academies
Mary Harwood	C of E Diocese of Oxford Representative	Church of England Diocese
Brian Jenkins	Proprietor Jubilee Day Nursery	PVI
Sheilagh Peacock	Winchcombe School Business Manager	Primary Schools
Derek Peuple	Headteacher Park House School	Academies
Graham Spellman	RC Diocese of Portsmouth Representative	Roman Catholic Diocese
Keith Watts	NUT	Union Representative
Charlotte Wilson	Headteacher Trinity School	Academies

PART I

2. Minutes of previous meeting dated 8th December 2014

The minutes of the meeting on 8th December were approved.

Action

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3. **Actions arising from previous meetings**

All the action points that were due for completion from the last meeting have been completed / in progress or are on this meeting's agenda with the exception of the election of the Maintained Primary Headteacher vacancy which will be progressed at the next Primary Heads Forum.

Action

4. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

Action

5. **Membership**

Reverend Mark Bennet has been appointed to the vacant Academies Governor Representative post.

The vacancy for a Maintained Schools Primary Headteacher Representative will be on the agenda at the next Primary Heads Forum meeting on 11th February 2015.

Action

6. **DSG Budget 2015/16 - Overview**

Claire White presented the report on the DSG 2015/16 and draft budget. The DfE announced the DSG settlement 2015/16 on 17th December.

Action

The Schools' Block

West Berkshire has received a small increase in the per pupil rate of £9 from £4,359 to £4,368, after taking into account the deduction for the carbon reduction commitment, which results in an increase of grant of £198k using the October 2014 census pupil numbers. The increase in per pupil rate is due to the Government allocating additional funding to the least fairly funded local authorities, whereby West Berkshire fell just below average.

The total DSG funding overall has increased by £966k to £96.093m. It is assumed that there will be no carry forward from 2014/15 to 2015/16 as the under spend on the falling rolls fund and growth fund will offset the £166k over spend carried forward in 2014/15. The budget estimate is £95.740m resulting in £353k headroom. The Heads Funding Group recommended that the headroom is to be allocated to schools on a per pupil basis, rather than incorporated into the High Needs Block, particularly as many of the High Needs savings will require schools and early years' establishments needing to purchase more services if required.

DECISION: The Schools Forum agreed that the schools block headroom be allocated out to schools.

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The Early Years Block

The funding rate for the early years block will remain the same in 2015/16. For the first time 2 year olds will be funded on a pupil count (5/12ths January 2015 census and 7/12ths January 2016 census). The initial 2015/16 budget is based on forecast numbers and funded hours as the January census data is not yet available.

There is likely to be a significant under spend in 2014/15 (currently estimated at £762k) due to low take up of two year old places. The Early Years Steering Group will be requesting a carry forward of the 2014/15 under spend to maintain funding rates and provide a contingency for the volatility of funding and place take up. The final decision will need to be made at the March meeting.

The current estimate of early years DSG funding 2015/16 is £7.934m and the budget estimate is £7.560m resulting in £374k headroom in 2015/16. This will be updated at the next meeting once data is received from the January 2015 census.

The recommendation from the Heads Funding Group is to retain the early years' headroom to offset any shortfall in both the early years and high needs blocks in 2015/16.

ACTION: The early years' block 2015/16 will be further considered at the next HFG and a decision will be made at the Schools' Forum meeting in March.

HFG

The High Needs Block

The High Needs Block has been fixed at the 2014/15 level plus an additional £144k from national headroom and £17k for the full year effect of increases in the 2014/15 academic year places. The bid for funding for additional places in 2015/16 was unsuccessful and will now need to be found from existing grant allocation. It is estimated that £200k will remain of the contingency budget to carry forward into 2015/16. The total High Needs DSG funding is £17.911m and the budget estimate is £18.961m resulting in a shortfall of £1.050m. The savings to be considered in agenda items 8 and 9 amount to £843k which would still mean a shortfall of £207k. The HFG agreed in principle with the savings proposals but asked for further information on outcomes for each service and impacts of the proposed cuts.

ACTION: The high needs block 2015/16 will be further considered at the next HFG and a decision will be made at the Schools' Forum meeting in March.

J Seymour /
HFG

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7. Final School Budget 2015/16

Claire White presented the report on the primary and secondary school formula and school budget for 2015/16. It was proposed that £767k is recommended for central retention in 2015/16; £250k for the Growth Fund, £40k for the Falling Rolls Fund, £126k for licences, £42k for Schools' Forum and £309k for School Admissions.

The Heads Funding Group recommended that the £767k of Schools' Block funding be centrally retained and that the schools' block headroom of £353k be allocated to schools on a per pupil basis, at £18 per pupil.

DECISION: The Schools' Forum agreed that £767k should be centrally retained and the schools' block headroom of £353k should be allocated to schools on a per pupil basis. The final pupil rates in the formula will be £2,937 primary and £4,364 secondary. All other rates to remain the same as 2014/15.

ACTION: Schools to be notified of their budget allocations for 2015/16.

Action

C White

8. High Needs Budget Proposals 2015/16

Jane Seymour presented the report on the High Needs budget proposals 2015/16.

At the last Schools' Forum the high needs budget proposals were estimated to be £1,931k over the expected funding in 2015/16. It is now expected to be £1,050k following a review of the budget projections using the latest costs and pupil information. The report contained proposed savings of £843k to the proposed budgets 2015/16 which leaves a shortfall of £207k.

The proposed savings are:

Language & Literacy Centres	£67k
Specialist Inclusion Support Service	£36k
SEN Pre School Children	£10k
Cognition & Learning Team	£80k
Equipment for SEN pupils	£13k
Early Intervention	£27k
Medical Support	£5k
PRU Outreach	£80k
Home Tuition	£29k
Vulnerable Children	£20k
Pupil Referral Units (see item 9 on the agenda)	£476k
Total	£843k

Action

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Top up funding is statutory and demand driven. Peter Hudson asked Jane Seymour if she could quantify the risk of reducing the non maintained and independent special schools budget estimate by £311k. Jane Seymour stated that it was difficult to predict tribunals and failure of fragile placements but that the previous proposed budget had been too pessimistic.

The Language & Literacy Centres savings proposals could be achieved by rationalising the provision.

The SISS budget could be reduced by reducing the level of support provided or by charging schools for certain aspects of the service.

The SEN Pre School Children budget saving would mean fewer children would be supported, or children receive a lower level of support.

The Cognition and Learning Team would achieve their proposed savings by charging schools for certain services and setting an income target.

The equipment for SEN pupils could be achieved if equipment was only purchased for pupils attending mainstream schools. Special schools would fund the equipment from their own budgets.

The early intervention budget supports the Early Years Language Project but this is not a statutory service so the project could be ceased.

The Medical Support budget has had no spend against it during the last year and therefore the proposal is to delete it.

The PRU Outreach saving could be achieved by reducing the number of outreach sessions pupils receive on re-entering mainstream school with more of the support coming from the school itself.

The Home Tuition saving could be achieved by offering more e-learning packages and reducing external support packages.

The Vulnerable Children Fund is used to help schools support their most vulnerable pupils on an emergency short term basis. The saving could be achieved by changing the criteria either limiting it to primary schools or shortening the term of the support.

The members asked whether merging teams and functions had been investigated. Structural change had not been considered due to cost and time constraints. Joint commissioning of therapy services with other Berkshire authorities is being discussed but this would not affect 2015/16.

ACTION: Although these proposals were accepted in principle the proposals will be further discussed at the next Heads Funding Group meeting where they will be reconsidered in the light of the further information on quality and outcomes for each service and return to

**J Seymour /
HFG**

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the Schools' Forum for decision on 9th March.

9. PRU Budget Proposals 2015/16

Cathy Burnham presented the report on the Pupil Referral Units budget proposals 2015/16.

Currently there are four funding bands which are based on the pupil's needs and the staffing ratio requirement.

For pupils in the Reintegration Service primary schools only pay 50% of the lowest band for a maximum of 12 weeks and secondary schools pay the lowest band but for a maximum of 6 weeks. In both primary and secondary the difference between the payment by the school and the band is paid by the High Needs Block.

Where a pupil is in the KS4 Alternative Curriculum the school pays £1500 a term, which is the equivalent of the AWPU, for a maximum of 2 years and the High Needs Block pays the difference between the AWPU and the actual band.

The effect on the High Needs Block is a forecast over spend of £400k in 2014/15 and for this pressure to remain in 2015/16.

The PRUs delegated budgets are forecasting a combined surplus of £400k (Alternative Curriculum £265k and Reintegration Service £135k), which is comprised mostly of contingency for potential running costs.

Ian Pearson read out the comments from Paul Dick and Charlotte Wilson regarding the PRUs surplus balances and questioned the recommended 2% increase in their budgets.

In the short term it is proposed that in the financial year 2015/16 the four current bands are averaged and a single band is used therefore the schools pay a greater proportion of the real costs and also reducing the bureaucracy involved in agreeing which band a pupil should be funded on.

The long term proposal from 2016/17 is that the PRU top up funding budget be delegated to the schools who directly commission services from the PRUs, alternative providers or develop their own resources.

Stacey Williams, Headteacher of the Reintegration Service, spoke on behalf of the PRUs. Stacey stated that there had been no discussion regarding a single band and there were other options including a return to the methodology used in 2013/14. Currently SEN top up funding comes out of the PRU top up funding. Stacey felt that the proposal represented the LA position from the high needs funding point of view, but did not look at how much the PRUs needed to function. It is the view of the PRUs that the proposal needs more modelling which takes time.

Action

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David Ramsden and other members felt that schools should be consulted on these proposals as they also supported the PRUs financially and that these should be examined at the next HFG.

ACTION: Schools consultation document to be produced on the longer term PRU proposal of delegating the budget from 2016/17.

ACTION: Impact data to be produced for HFG and Schools Forum. Report to return to the next Schools' Forum.

**C Burnham
/ HFG**

10. Early Years Budget Proposals 2015/16

Claire White and Maria Shepherd presented the report on the draft early years funding and budget 2015/16.

The current forecast for 2014/15 is an under spend of £762k, which currently includes the estimated January 2015 census and take up during the Spring term. This forecast will be updated at the next Schools Forum once the January census data is available. The under spend is due to the slow take up of 2 year old children compared with the funding provided. The under spend is partly offsetting the over spend on 3 and 4 year old funding.

It is proposed that the overall early years under spend be ring fenced to the early years block and carried forward to continue to plug the shortfall in 3 and 4 year old funding, which will enable funding rates to stay the same in the short term.

Assuming the carry forward from 2014/15 remains in the block the estimated funding for 2015/16 is £7,934k but this will be updated once the January 2015 census data is available.

ACTION: Final proposals will be presented at the next Schools Forum meeting.

Action

**C White / M
Shepherd**

11. Update on Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund

Claire White presented the report on the growth fund and falling rolls fund.

Following the October 2014 census all schools were invited to make a funding request if they felt that their circumstances met the growth fund criteria. Six schools (Calcot Junior, John Rankin Infants, Purley, Spurcroft, Theale Primary and The Willows) met the criteria and payments of £148k have been made leaving an unspent balance of £102k in the growth fund.

No schools were eligible for the falling rolls fund as in order to qualify the school needs to have a good or outstanding Ofsted report. The under spend is £120k.

Action

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The total under spend of £222k will be carried forward and has been added to the schools block estimate of funding for 2015/16.

12. DSG Monitoring 2014/15 - Month 9

Shannon Coleman-Slaughter presented the report on the DSG monitoring 2014/15 as at 31st December 2014.

As at 31st December 2014 the forecast DSG under spend is £193k of which £192k is in the high needs block, although there are areas of pressure within the high needs block; special schools top up funding £104k, academy schools top ups £125k and PRUs £400k. The early years block is forecasting on budget and the schools block is forecasting an under spend of £1k.

Action

13. Update from the SE Directors of Children Services Group

This item was carried forward to the next Schools' Forum on 9th March 2015.

Action

I Pearson

14. Forward Plan to 31st March 2015

Any further items for the forward plan should be sent to Claire White.

ACTION: Reminder to HFG members regarding requirement to attend the 26th February meeting.

Action

C Loosen
/ C White

15. Any Other Business

There were no items under any other business.

Action

Meeting closed at 6:30 pm

Date of next meeting: Monday 9th March 2015
Time: 5pm
Venue: Shaw House