

Minutes of a Meeting of the Schools' Forum

Monday 15th June 2015

Shaw House

Present:	Reverend Mark Bennet	Academies	Governor	Kennet School
	Patricia Brims	Primary Schools	Governor	Brimpton Primary School
	Jacquie Davies	Pupil Referral Units	Headteacher	Alternative Curriculum Service
	Paul Dick	Academies	Headmaster	Kennet School
	Reverend Mary Harwood		Church of England Representative	Oxford Diocese
	Jackie Hegg (substitute)		Further Education Representative	Newbury College
	Brian Jenkins		Early Years PVI	Jubilee Day Nursery
	Sheilagh Peacock	Primary Schools	School Business Manager	The Winchcombe School
	Clive Rothwell	Secondary Schools	Governor	John O'Gaunt School
	Graham Spellman		Roman Catholic Representative	Portsmouth Diocese
	Suzanne Taylor	Nursery Schools	Headteacher	Hungerford Nursery School
	John Tyzack	Primary Schools	Governor	Falkland Primary School
	Keith Watts		Union Representative	
	Charlotte Wilson	Academies	Headteacher	Trinity School
	Shannon Coleman-Slaughter		Finance Manager C&YP	
	Ian Pearson		Head of Education	
	Claire White		Schools' Finance Manager	

Action

1. APOLOGIES RECEIVED

Richard Blofeld	Primary Schools	Headteacher	Robert Sandilands School
Councillor Dominic Boeck		Executive Portfolio for C&YP	
Councillor Mollie Lock		Shadow Portfolio Holder for C&YP	
Fadia Clarke		FE Representative	Newbury College
Jon Hewitt	Special Schools	Headteacher	The Castle School
Kate House	Primary Schools	Headteacher	The Ilsleys Primary School
Peter Hudson	Primary Schools	Governor	Mortimer St John's Infant School
Catherine Morley	Primary Schools	Headteacher	Theale Primary School
Derek Peale	Academies	Headteacher	Park House School
Chris Prickett	Primary Schools	Headteacher	Streatley Primary School
Chris Prosser	Secondary Schools	Headteacher	The Downs School
David Ramsden	Secondary Schools	Headteacher	Little Heath School

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING DATED 9TH MARCH 2015

The minutes of the meeting on 9th March were approved.

3. ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Consultation between the Cognition and Learning Team and schools regarding

what services are charged for and the costs – Ian Pearson reported that details about the traded service have been circulated to schools for them to decide which elements they may wish to purchase.

Revised Work Plan for 2015/16 – attached to this agenda

Claire White reported that Jeanette Clifford had attended the CIPFA course on Education Finance.

All other actions are due to be completed at a later date.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

5. MEMBERSHIP

The Chair welcomed Reverend Mark Bennet, representing Academies, to his first meeting of the Forum.

Jeanette Clifford has resigned from the Forum due to her recent election as a West Berkshire Councillor. Paul Dick confirmed that her replacement will be Bruce Steiner, a Governor at St Bartholomew's School.

6. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) OUTTURN 2014/15 AND CARRY FORWARD TO 2015/16

Shannon Coleman-Slaughter presented the report on the DSG outturn for 2014/15. The overall position was an under spend of £1.1m (compared to the month ten forecast of £975k under spend).

The Schools' Block was £149k underspent, £119k of which related to the primary schools in financial difficulty de-delegated budget. As this is a ring fenced budget it was recommended that this is carried forward and added to the 2015/16 pool. The growth fund was also underspent, and it was recommended that the remaining underspend in this block of £30k be added to the 2015/16 fund for the benefit of all schools who meet the criteria.

The Early Years Block was £606k underspent, slightly less than previously forecast. It had already been agreed at the last meeting of the Schools' Forum that the under spend in this block would be carried forward to go towards funding the 2015/16 early years budget.

The High Needs Block was £345k underspent, slightly higher than previously forecast. It was recommended that this be carried forward to go towards the shortfall in funding in the high needs block for 2015/16. This would then leave a shortfall of £120k compared to the budget of £265k.

DECISION: It was agreed that the underspend of £1,099,530 be carried forward to the 2015/16 budget as follows:

Primary schools in financial difficulty £118,850 (though it was noted that primary schools may wish to consider the amounts for de-delegation in 2016/17 in light of this)

Contingency - Growth Fund £29,640

Early Years Block towards funding the budget as set - £606,090

High Needs Block towards funding the budget as set - £344,950

ACTION: 2015/16 budgets to be amended accordingly

S.
Coleman-
Slaughter

7. SCHOOL BALANCES 2014/15

Claire white presented the report on the end of year school balances as at 31st March 2015. Overall, the level of balances held by schools has gone up, which given the current pressures school budgets are facing is a surprise and it will be interesting to compare this to the national picture. The balances held by the PRUs have gone up significantly, whilst Secondary school balances have significantly reduced. Special schools are still holding high balances. Ian Pearson stated that the School Forum decision in March to change the top up rates for PRUs from the high needs block should reduce the balances these schools are currently holding.

Only one of the three schools planning a deficit budget in 2014/15 actually closed in deficit, though eight schools closed with an unplanned deficit. These eight schools have worked with accountancy and set balanced budgets in 2015/16. The four schools that were in this position last year all managed to close with a surplus this year.

Three schools closed with an excess surplus balance (greater than 8% in primary schools or 5% in secondary schools). This is the same small number as last year (none of whom have an excess this year). The forum members were asked to consider the explanations set out by each of the three schools in their balance control return and decide whether they were acceptable or whether further explanation is needed. Members agreed that the excess balances at both Englefield (£3,338) and Lambourn (£2,162) were small and had reasonable explanations, and no further action was required. However the Inkpen excess surplus of £15k needed further explanation, particularly as the school appeared to have no reason for continuing to hold over 8% (£30k) in contingency. It was also noted that this school had previously had an excess surplus, albeit when there was a different head teacher and school business manager in post. Ian Pearson reminded members that Academies have no claw back scheme, and that this is a small school subject to volatile funding. But he agreed that the school needed to explain their position in relation to their three year budget.

DECISION: Inkpen be invited to the next Heads Funding Group to explain and justify their excess surplus. Heads funding Group to make a recommendation to the next Schools Forum on whether to claw back the excess.

ACTION: Inkpen to be informed and invited to next HFG

C. White

8. VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S FUND – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014/15

Ian Pearson presented the report on how the vulnerable children's fund has been spent over the last three years, which has been set at £80,000 for the last two years, now reduced to £60,000 for 2015/16. The majority of the funding goes towards providing additional TA support in schools.

9. SCHOOL FINANCIAL VALUE STANDARD – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014/15

Item slipped to next meeting

10. TRADE UNION FACILITIES TIME – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014/15

Item slipped to next meeting

11. LATEST SCHOOL FORUM OPERATIONAL AND GOOD PRACTICES GUIDE

Claire White advised that there were no apparent changes to the latest guide (published March 2015) other than format, but it would act as a useful recap if all members of the forum could read it again. In addition, the EFA has also produced a Schools Forum Self Assessment Toolkit for local authority officers and elected members to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their schools forum (this is available to download on the EFA website). From this checklist, Claire drew attention to two points for discussion:

Is it clear to observers who attendees at the forum are representing? E.g. by use of name plates, indicating sector. Members felt that this is not necessary as if there are any new attendees, introductions are made at the start of the meeting.

Do members actively canvass views and objectively represent their whole peer group at the forum and provide feedback after meetings? This tends to be more difficult for Governor representatives, who asked whether Governor Services could draw to the attention of all Governors the role of the Forum when the opportunity arose, for example at Governor training, and make it known where copies of the agenda and minutes could be found.

ACTION: To be raised with Governor Services

I. Pearson

12. FORWARD PLAN – JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2015

The plan was noted, and Members of the Forum asked to send any requests for reports to Claire White.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ian Pearson stated that we currently know very little about the Government's plans for school funding next year and beyond, and that so far the only announcements made were:

- Changes to early years funding (from 15 hours to 30 hours)
- The intention to move to a national funding formula over a three year period, whilst at the same time protecting school budgets.

Meeting closed 5.45 p.m.

Date of next meeting: Monday 13th July 2015
Time: 5pm
Venue: Shaw House