

**THE SOUTHWARK SCHOOLS FORUM
MINUTES OF THE MEETING
Thursday 22nd March 2018**

- 1. Attendance and Apologies:** See Annex A
 - 1.1 Rebecca Sherwood was substituted by Lynne Cooper as the maintained nursery school representative.
 - 1.2 The meeting was not quorate.
- 2. Declaration of Interests**

Members were asked to declare any pecuniary or other interests they might have that were greater than the interests of other members of the Forum in any matter on the agenda for discussion. There were none.
- 3. Minutes of the Meeting of 18^h January 2018**

These were agreed as accurate
- 4. Matters Arising from Minutes**
 - 4.1 Secondary Headteacher representation on the Partnership Board is being progressed.
 - 4.2 Assessment of Eligibility for FSM Applications – The Chair said that although this had been discussed, the cost charged by the LA to schools compared to the cost of the charges by the private sector is such that it questions the value for money of the service.
- 5. Budget Monitor – 2017-18 and 2018-19 Dedicated Schools Grant Update**
 - 5.1 A report had been circulated prior to the meeting that gave the financial position as at 28th February 2018 for the 2017-18 Dedicated Schools grant (DSG).
 - 5.2 The probable deficit of £3.5m was confirmed. The Schools Forum asked for detail on paragraph 2.1 relating to “overfunding of schools” from earlier year’s, Dave Richards reported and these related to Free Schools and had been resolved.
 - 5.3 The issues around Early Years funding were noted in that the two IT systems used for data gathering and management are not totally compatible and requires a lot of extra manual input to resolve and achieve accuracy.
 - 5.4 The Schools Forum also expressed concern that the statement in paragraph 5.2 saying that 85% of schools at December 2017 had an in-year deficit. Many schools were drawing on previous years’ reserves to address the pressures of inflation and pay rises and it was now getting to a crucial point where this cannot be maintained.

The report was noted.

6. Dedicated Schools Grant – 2018-19 Schools Budgets

- 6.1 This previously circulated report gave further information on the local authority's proposal to extend the Schools Block Maternity Fund and Contingency Fund to nursery and special schools as well as the 2018-19 Schools Budgets.
- 6.2 The Schools Forum was concerned that details of some of the 2018-19 non-DSG budgets had not yet been made available to schools, these included Southwark's Free Healthy Schools Meals scheme. In addition funding for Early Years, SEN Top Ups, the Free Fruit scheme were also yet to be received. Dave Richards said that these should be issued the week beginning 26th March 2018.
- 6.3 The LA set out in paragraph 2.1 the charges it proposed to make to Nursery and Special schools for their inclusion in both the Maternity Fund and the Contingency Fund for 2018-19. There were concerns expressed by Lynne Cooper on behalf of maintained nursery schools that nursery schools ranged in size, both in pupil numbers and staffing, so having a flat fee would be unfair.
- 6.4 At the same time Simon Eccles reminded the Schools Forum that for primary and secondary schools the contributions to these funds are treated as de-delegated with the relevant Schools Forum representatives empowered to make the decision on behalf of their respective constituencies, special schools and nursery schools were not.
- As a consequence Simon Eccles said that he could not make a decision on behalf of special and hospital schools, they would need to be consulted individually, some may wish to partake, some may not. Lynne Copper said that all maintained nursery school Headteachers had met and that she was able to say that all of them wished to participate, if it was a fair scheme.
- 6.5 The LA said that they would review their proposals and get back to the relevant school sectors.
- 6.6 The same applied to the Contingency Fund with perhaps this being treated as a service level agreement rather than an automatic buy back. On both Funds it was felt that special schools may well do a cost benefit analysis to determine whether they participated and that could result in reduced take up. The original position was that it would have to be that all schools participate so as for the scheme to be financially viable.
- 6.7 The proposals around the supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools were noted and agreed.
- 6.8 The Schools Forum concurred with the analysis that the LA had done on projecting the impact on schools budgets of the funding rates being static but costs rising. The Chair said that this needs to be borne in mind by Schools Forum members when looking at requests for funding to be transferred or used for other purposes.
- 6.9 The proposal to maintain the 2017-18 level of SEN top up rates in 2018-19 was noted.

- 6.10 The process for realigning Education Health Care Plan funding for pupils with plans finalised prior to April 2017 was explained by the LA and was noted.
- 6.11 Taking account of the reduction in Early Years funding to maintained nursery schools of £133k but a supplementary funding settlement of £1.532m, the value of each element used in the funding formula was noted.
- 6.12 The criteria to be used for the Growth Fund criteria were noted. With regard to The Falling Rolls Fund, the criteria needs to be amended so as to give the decision making power of applying the criteria to the LA with the only the outcome of such decisions being frequently referred to the Schools Forum and shown in the annual out-turn for each financial year.
- 6.13 It was noted that existing criteria would be reviewed by the LA's proposed Working Group of the Schools Forum on addressing the projected overspend in the High Needs block.

7. High Needs Block Funding Financial Strategy 2018

- 7.1 This report had been circulated and set out the Local Authority (LA) strategy of how to bring expenditure in line with the funding including the extra costs of a growing pupil population with an increasing complexity of children's needs. The key proposal of which is to set up a Schools Forum sub-group.
- 7.2 An analysis of the 2017-18 High Needs Block overspend was received by the Schools Forum at its January 2018 meeting and this had been re-circulated with the report.
- 7.3 The Schools Forum welcomed the proposal for the Group, the chair commented that some of the proposals in the appendix would appear not to be viable, namely:
- a) only one top up band at a very high level and then have a panel to bid to
 - b) increase the notional SEN % and so reduce top up levels across the board
 - c) require schools to use their uncommitted balances to pay for high needs
- It was also clarified that schools with falling rolls might use their physical space to provide additional SEN capacity.
- 7.4 The proposed Terms of Reference were accepted and Manda George, Simon Eccles and Lynne Cooper expressed an interest in joining the Group. It was noted that the Group's membership should include two members who are also members of the Schools Forum.

8. Scheme for Financing Schools

- 8.1 This had been consulted upon and the final version circulated to members for formal approval.
- 8.2 A general comment was made that the document should be consistent with the font that is used.
- 8.3 Reference was made to paragraph 2.1.2 of the scheme relating to meeting of LA deadlines for financial reports – this the Schools Forum felt they could not totally

support as schools were being asked to close well before the end of the financial year and so giving inaccurate reports of the true financial position of the school. As a consequence, as the outturn is used as a basis for setting the next year's budget, this will also be inaccurate. The LA said it will be working with School Business Managers to devise a new process for 2018-19.

- 8.4 Finally, paragraph 4.2.3 relating to surplus balances needs to be re-worded and brought in line with the balance control mechanism – this was accepted.

9.0 Any Other Business

There was no other business

10. Date of Future Meetings

17 May 2018 – subsequently cancelled and 12 July 2018

Annex A SCHOOLS FORUM ATTENDANCE SHEET 22nd March January 2018

VOTING MEMBERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PRESENT
Anita Gallagher	Primary School Headteacher	Apologies
Manda George	Primary School Headteacher	Yes
Pia Longman	Primary School Headteacher	Apologies
Gregory Doey	Primary School Headteacher	Apologies
Laura Johnson	Primary School Governor	Yes
Vacant	Primary School Governor	
Rebecca Sherwood	Nursery School Headteacher	Sub Lynne Cooper
Simon Eccles	Special School Headteacher	Yes
Nicola Howard	Early Years – Private/Voluntary and Independent Settings	Yes
Steve Morrison	Academy	Yes (for part)
Mickey Kelly	Academy shared	Apologies
Simon Wattram		Apologies
Mike Antoniou	Academy	Apologies
María Rodrigues	Special School Academy	No
Yomi Adewoye	Pupil Referral Units	Apologies
Sister Anne-Marie Niblock	Secondary School Headteacher	Yes
Kieran McIntosh	FE SEN	No
Catherine May	Diocese Board	Apologies
Betty Joseph	Trade Unions	Apologies

Senior Officers in Attendance

Nina Dohel	Yes
Jenny Brennan	Yes
Terry Segarty	Yes
Russell Dyer	Yes
Dave Richards	Yes
Yvonne Ely	Yes
David Cross	Clerk