

Minutes of the Schools Forum – 18th March 2016

Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Telford Town Centre

Status: Draft

In attendance:

Name	Establishment	Representing
Sue Blackburn – Chair	Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Primary	Maintained primary – South Cluster
Malcolm Boulter (MB)	HLC Primary	Maintained Primary – Governors
Becca Butler (BB)	Queenswood Primary	Maintained Primary - Wellington Cluster
Christobel Cousins (CC)	Lilleshall Primary	Maintained Primary – Newport Cluster
Heather Davies (HD)	The Bridge Special	Maintained Special Schools
Chay Davis (CD)	Ercall Wood Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Ros Garner (RG)	Newport Girls’ High	Academies
Mark Gibbons (MG)	Windmill Primary	Maintained Primary - Central Cluster
Penny Hustwick (PH)	ABC Day Nurseries	PVI & Childminders
Claire Lamb (CL)	Redhill Primary	Maintained Primary – North Cluster
Helen Osterfield (HO)	Tibberton Primary	Maintained Primary - Small Schools
Paul Roberts (PR)	HLC Secondary	Maintained Secondary Schools
Tracey Smart (TS)	Finance Manager	LA Observer
Tim Davis (TD)	Finance Team Leader	LA Observer

1. Apologies – TD.

1.1 Apologies were received from the following:

Jim Collins - Assistant Director, Education & Corporate Parenting

Louise Lowings – Madeley Nursery

Paul Watling - Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families

Andy Wood – Senior Accountant

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising – SB.

2.1 The group reviewed the minutes from the meeting that took place on 22nd January 2016 and accepted them as an accurate record, with the following exception:

Minute 2.5 should read “MB asked what mechanism.....” rather than “MG asked what mechanism...”.

2.2 The minutes can be found at the following link:

Minutes for 22nd January 2016:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3961/january_2016_-_minutes

3. National Funding Formula for Schools Consultation – TD.

- 3.1 Two papers were presented to the Forum, one covering the mainstream school proposals and one the High Needs proposals. They can be found at the links:

<http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3993/march-2016-national-funding-schools-block>

<http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3994/march-2016-national-funding-high-needs>

- 3.2 TD went through the papers in some detail as they were a short summary of much longer DfE documents. A key difference between the two sets of proposals is that the mainstream proposals are for a national funding formula at school level, whereas the high needs proposals are for a national funding formula at LA level.
- 3.3 The mainstream proposals are to be phased in, but are accompanied by a more rapid and radical reduction in the Education Services Grant (ESG) funding provided to LAs. There was some discussion about the impact of this and LAs reduced powers. HD commented that the Severn Teaching School Alliance was already examining proposals to move elements of school improvement to the Teaching School and that this appeared to be in line with the DfE's assumptions about where school improvement services would be delivered in future.
- 3.4 MG asked TD to explain a little more about what ESG consisted of. TD explained that until recent years, funding for some LA education functions had been funded from within the LAs general Revenue Support Grant. However, from 2013 this was separated out as ESG, comprising Retained duties – funded at £15 per pupil for all pupils whether in academies or maintained schools, and the general funding rate, calculated for maintained pupils only. The general funding rate has been cut year on year, from £116 per pupil in a maintained school in 2013/14 to £77 in 2016/17. Under the DfE proposals, the general funding element would cease after August 2017.
- 3.5 The general funding element of ESG paid to academies is also planned to cease, but it appears that the existing protection arrangements will continue. This means that for most local academies, ESG is not allowed to fall year on year by more than 1% of the academies total budget. The ESG allocations will thus diminish for academies over a number of years, rather than the September 2017 timetable for LA ESG being eliminated.
- 3.6 TD outlined the consultation questions. Some of the questions on the mainstream consultation in particular seemed to seek agreement on areas where there is unlikely to be any significant divergence of views – e.g. it seems unlikely that many would dispute that any funding formula for schools should include low prior attainment and deprivation factors. Nonetheless the LA will respond to the consultation. As the consultation deadline is 17 April for both the mainstream schools funding and high needs funding proposals, which is prior to the date of the next Forum, then if possible a draft response will be circulated to Forum members for comments, before submission to the DfE.

4. Remit of High Needs Sub-group – TD.

4.1 A paper was presented to the Forum and can be found at the link:

<http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3962/march-2016-remit-of-t-and-w-forum-hn-sub-gp>

4.2 TD went through the paper and asked for any comments. PR asked whether the ultimate decision on the deployment of High Needs DSG remained with the LA. TD confirmed that it did, and that the group's role was to assist and advise the LA to make these decisions.

4.3 The remit will be discussed in more details with the sub-group at its first meeting on Tuesday 22nd March 2016.

5. Pupil Growth & KS1 Contingency Fund – TD.

5.1 TD presented the papers regarding this agenda item, which can be found at the following link:

<http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3963/march-2016-pupil-growth-and-ks1-contingency-paper>

<http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3964/march-2016-growth-fund-application-paper>

<http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3965/march-2016-ks1-fund-application-paper>

5.2 TD said that the LA was now proposing that decisions about growth fund allocations should take place at the May meeting, rather than in the Autumn Term, so that schools knew whether or not they had been allocated additional funding in advance of the additional pupils arriving in school. TD also said that there was a possibility of further growth at Lawley Village Primary, beyond the September 2016 reception class, as there was pressure on places in the area.

5.3 PR and MB outlined the situation at HLC Primary, which was expanding its reception intake to 90 from September 2016, in agreement with the LA. They expressed the view, supported by other Forum members, that this type of planned growth (e.g. involving an increase in a school's Pupil Admission Number - PAN) was different to unplanned growth, likely to be more ad-hoc. Such growth should be funded with some surety, rather than being part of an overall cash limited decision making process involving all sorts of pupil growth (and KS1 issues).

5.4 Several members expressed the view that £100,000 did not seem sufficient – TD reminded the Forum that discussions regarding the growth fund and the sum committed to it had taken place at previous Forum meetings. TD also commented that whilst the decision could be taken to allow the growth fund to overspend in 2016/17, given the changes in the schools funding system taking place from 2017/18 onwards, it was not clear how such an overspend would be funded from DSG in that year.

- 5.5 MG commented that he too felt that there was an important distinction between planned and unplanned growth. TD commented that it was not always clear that this distinction made a difference to individual schools affected by growth. For example there was a local secondary school with an expected intake in September 2016 of close to its PAN. The likelihood at present was that such a level of intake will continue into the future. Given the size of the other year groups, this would imply a level of annual pupil growth well in excess of 30 pupils for the foreseeable future. However, this would be 'unplanned' in the sense that it does not arise from a change in the school's PAN.
- 5.6 It was agreed that TD would collate data based on expected admissions and circulate to Forum members prior to the May meeting. Based on this, the Forum would decide whether to make allocation decisions at the May meeting and whether schools would be given the opportunity to make submissions to the Forum to inform this process.

6. SEN Contingency Workings for 2016/17 - TD

- 6.1 A paper was distributed to the Forum showing allocations for the first term, and the allocations for the full year if it was decided to distribute the whole £100,000 using the Spring Term data. The paper can be found here:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3966/march_2016_-_sen_contingency_allocations_working

- 6.2 TD explained the allocation methodology. MG queried whether the removal of a direct link between the first 15 hours of Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) and funding could have reduced the incentive for schools to follow through the process for pupils unlikely to be allocated more than 15 hours of support. TD responded that analysis of the number of statements/EHCPs over the last few years shows a clear trend. Lower level statements have decreased whereas higher level (above 15 hours) have increased, providing some support for the situation suggested by MG.
- 6.3 The Forum considered that distributing the fund in two tranches, allowing data to be updated for the Autumn Term for the second tranche, was likely to be a more accurate measure of need. It was therefore agreed to continue with the existing methodology, 5/12 distributed based on Spring Term data and 7/12 distributed based on Autumn Term data.

7. Any Other Business - SB

- 7.1 The next meeting of the Forum, in the Walker Room, Meeting Point House will be as follows:

Friday 20th May 2016, 9.30 am

- 7.2 Details of all planned meetings can be found at the following link:

http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/507/forum_meetings