

Meeting of the Schools Forum

Tuesday 13th July 2010

(4.00 pm, Oak Room, Building 2 NLBP)

Attended

Members:

- Alan Homes (NASUWT)
- Clare Neuberger (Head, Menorah Foundation)
- Dee Oelman (Head, St Mary's & St John's)
- Derrick Brown (Governor, Ashmole)
- Elizabeth Pearson (Governor, Livingstone)
- Gilbert Knight (Governor, Oakleigh)
- Jeanette Adak (Head, Monkfrith)
- John Marincowitz (Head, QE Boys)
- Jonathan Hewlings (Governor, East Barnet)
- Kate Webster (Head QE Girls)
- Keith Murdoch (Principal, Woodhouse College)
- Ken Huggins (Governor, The Compton)
- Lisa Clarke (Head, Brookhill Nursery)
- Mick Quigley (Principal Inspector, Children's Service)
- Tim Bowden (Head, Holy Trinity)
- Teresa Tunnadine (Head, The Compton)

LA Officers:

- Robert McCulloch-Graham (Director of Children's Service)
- Denise Murray (Strategic Finance Manager)
- Graham Durham (Assistant Director, Inclusion)
- Linda Parker (Strategic Finance Manager)
- Nick Adams (Finance Manager)
- Ola Yerokun (Contracts Officer)
- Carol Beckman (School Funding Manager)
- Nigel Bell (Asset Manager)

Clerk: Claire Gray (Deputy School Funding Manager)

Consultant: Geoff Boyd

Not Present

Members:

- Angela Murphy (Head, Bishop Douglass)
- Angela Trigg (London Academy)
- Anthony Vourou (Governor, St John's N11)
- Hazel Godfrey (Governor, Broadfields)
- Helen Schmitz (Head, Cromer Road)
- Jayne Franklin (Head, Childs Hill)
- Jenny Gridley (Head, Oakleigh)
- Jo Djora (Head, Coppetts Wood)
- Sarah Vipond (Early Years Working Group)
- Stephen Parkin (Governor, St Mary's High)

LA Officers:

- Andrew Travers (Deputy Chief Executive)
- Chris Malyon (Assistant Director of Finance)
- Val White (Assistant Director, PPP)

Other:

- Cllr Andrew Harper (Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Families)

1. Welcome and apologies for Absence

JM welcomed Teresa Tunnadine as a new member of the Forum, in place of Gary Tucker. Apologies were received from Stephen Parkin, Helen Schmitz, Chris Malyon, Val White and Cllr Andrew Harper.

2. Declarations of interest

Declaration of interest forms were circulated to members. To ensure confidentiality these can be returned to Carol Beckman or Sarrosh Malik once completed.

3. Minutes of previous meeting: 18th May 2010

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4. Matters arising

AH asked if there had been any further information regarding continuation of the 1-2-1 Tuition grant. MQ advised that no update on the future of this grant has been received.

5. Items for Consultation

5.1 School Balances – Review of Surplus Balances

Nick Adams

NA presented a summary of the 11 schools with excess balances, and commented that all had co-operated fully in providing documentation that justified the whole of the surplus, not just the excess amount. 9 schools met either the local or national requirements, with items that were deferred and assigned, contractual commitments, or specific projects. 2 schools provided documentation showing exceptional circumstances.

Members were asked to consider if these 2 schools should retain their balances.

Motion carried. Proposed: Jonathan Hewlings, Seconded: Alan Homes.

Members were also asked if there should be a review of the 2 schools with deferred and assigned items in the autumn term to ensure that the spending plans have been implemented as proposed.

Motion carried. Proposed: Jonathan Hewlings, Seconded: Alan Homes.

5.2 Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme

Nigel Bell

NB explained the principles and requirements of the scheme, and clarified that carbon allowances will be fixed for the introductory phase of the scheme from 2010-13. The LA will be collecting energy consumption data from schools, and a full report showing all data will be made available. NB advised that schools will not be required to purchase carbon allowances from their school budgets under current arrangements. However, future arrangements may pass on penalties to schools should energy reductions not be achieved.

AH queried if Academies are included in LA targets, and NB confirmed that they are. JM expressed concern that schools in older buildings would be disadvantaged. NB advised that this is not the case, as it is energy reduction from initial levels that is recognised and older schools would therefore have greater scope for improvement. GK was concerned that special schools will be penalised, as higher temperatures are inevitably needed for pupil welfare at such settings. He asked if there are any grants or allowances available towards installation of items such as solar panels. NB advised that this had been examined, but that the current immature market did not provide sufficient choice or value for provision without long-term commitment by the LA. It was agreed that the scheme is very bureaucratic, but it was noted that the current levy by suppliers on bills has not reduced overall consumption in the market, so new measures are needed.

5.3 Membership & terms of reference of the Schools Forum

Geoff Boyd

In the light of recent government changes to Schools Forum requirements, GB presented an updated document incorporating these revisions into the remit and constitution of the Forum. Members were also asked for their views on reviewing the length of office for membership of the Schools Forum, and whether membership should now be for a 2 or 3 year term. It was the unanimous view that the term of office recommended to the LA should be 3 years, as this would ensure stability through the current period of significant change. It was also a recommendation by Forum that for ease of administration and re-election purposes (providing it meets current statutory requirements) the commencement of the term of office for all existing members should be considered as 13th July 2010. Members were advised to note that changes to representation on the Forum may be essential if a number of schools, especially those with members on the Schools Forum become academies. However, to ensure stability it was agreed that whatever happens in September the current constitution, representation and Chair/Vice-Chair arrangements would apply for the next meeting in October, and will be reviewed in December.

5.4 Contracts affecting schools

Ola Yerokun

OY presented details of the cleaning contracts that are due to expire in April 2011, but which offer the option to extend for a further 2 year period. The LA is minded to extend the contract, but Forum members held the view that some schools were unhappy with the level of service received. It was recommended that a short survey of schools should be undertaken before the summer break to assess whether schools were satisfied with both service levels and value for money. JH suggested that negotiation of improved SLAs might be a better option for the term of the extension, rather than moving to a new supplier. OY agreed to undertake a short survey of schools, and that the Forum's comments would be considered when negotiating with suppliers.

5.5 Academies

Mick Quigley

MQ outlined the most recent guidance regarding the process for fast-track conversion to Academy status. Schools that have completed the online application form for conversion have a specified point of contact at the New Academies Division within the DfE, and all applications will be scrutinised by an operations board before being passed to the Secretary of State for a final decision. The LA has established an inter-departmental academy task group that is considering the issues and impact on all schools of additional academies. This group is currently providing support in Financial, HR and Legal matters, amongst other areas. MQ advised members to bear in mind that, once the number of schools converting to Academy status is confirmed, adjustments will be required to the current LA and Schools Budget figures.

5.6 BSF

Denise Murray, Robert McCulloch-Graham

DM reported that she is currently in the process of completing the formal financial closedown of the BSF scheme. The 6 BSF schools would not be expected to make a contribution to the abortive costs. Therefore in containing the costs within the Children's Service and DSG, an additional £200,000 would be redirected to BSF stage 1 from the 2009/10 c/fwd balance earmarked for BSF stage 2. A financial schedule and actual funding will be presented at the next meeting.

RMG stated that the LA is very aware that a significant number of schools are still in need of improvement. However, in light of the withdrawal of capital funding, future investment will need to be prioritised to meet sufficiency requirements and any such projects may have to be resourced internally.

Forum members queried whether the results of the current condition and measurement survey will be available to all schools, and this was confirmed.

GD also highlighted that with the cancellation of the Oak Lodge rebuilding programme, special schools within Barnet are now operating at maximum capacity. If placements have to be purchased elsewhere, this is likely to impact on the Schools Budget in future.

5.7 DSG 2010/11

Linda Parker

LP presented the final DSG 2010/11 figures to members, and highlighted that the overall amount of £213,274,877 (*erratum: £213,273,877 was shown in the original meeting papers*) has increased due to slightly higher than expected pupil numbers. The ISB uncommitted funding has also increased, as the pupil intake of JCoSS will be lower than previously planned and their funding has been reduced accordingly. However, LP advised that in light of additional place funding pressures, adjustments to LACSEG for academy conversions and in-year adjustments to some grants, it is planned to utilise the uncommitted and the additional resources to offset the cost pressures. Use of contingency funding to cover the cost pressures and grant reductions elsewhere will mean that the proposed adjustments required as a result of the recent measurement survey will need to be deferred until 2011/12. Members expressed concern that the level of the unallocated contingency budget seemed high, but officers explained that the majority of this is used to cover moves and changes to statement funding and SEN contingency arrangements.

5.8 Autumn review of the School Funding Formula

Carol Beckman

CB presented a summary of the proposed areas of the funding formula that will be reviewed, modelled and consulted on during the autumn term. Some of the factors depend on the outcome of both the Comprehensive Spending Review and the second DSG review, but these will be incorporated wherever possible once this information becomes available. Analysis and modelling will be undertaken, and it is proposed that a draft consultation paper will be presented to Schools Forum in October. The consultation with schools is planned for the autumn term with the results being reported to the Schools Forum in December.

6. Items for information

6.1 Early Years Report

Carol Beckman

CB updated members on progress regarding Early Years funding, and the planned payment arrangements for the autumn term. Maintained providers will receive additional extension and flexibility funding through the autopayment system until the new funding formula is brought in from April 2011; PVI providers will receive advance (80%) payments at the beginning of each term, with adjustments calculated once the termly pupil census has been submitted and checked. From April all providers will receive funding based on the termly census, not the annual census as has applied previously.

6.2 Cashless systems in Primary Schools

Denise Murray

DM reported to members that a cashless catering pilot will be undertaken by Sunnyfields Primary school, to assess the benefits and cost impact to schools of implementation. The estimated cost of the pilot is £6,000, which will be covered from reassigned BSF funding.

7. AOB

JM thanked members for their attendance and contribution throughout the year, and offered his good wishes for the summer break. The meeting closed at 6pm.

Dates for future meetings

5 th October 2010	4.30pm (with briefing at 4pm)
7 th December 2010	4.30pm (with briefing at 4pm)
1 st February 2011	4.30pm (with briefing at 4pm)
10 th May 2011	4.30pm (with briefing at 4pm)
12 th July 2011	4.30pm (with briefing at 4pm)