

Meeting of the Schools Forum

Thursday 14 July 2011
(4pm, Conference Room 1, NLBP)

Attended

Members:	<p>Jeanette Adak (Head, Monkfrith)</p> <p>Jane Chew (St Margaret's Nursery)</p> <p>Shelley Dannell (Headteacher, Pavilion Pupil Referral Unit)</p> <p>Catrin Dillon (Governor, Martin Primary)</p> <p>Paul Ferrie (Head, Ravenscroft)</p> <p>Patricia French (Governor, St Mary's High)</p> <p>Kim Garrod (Governor, Church Hill Primary School)</p> <p>Jenny Gridley (Head, Oakleigh)</p> <p>Gilbert Knight (Governor, Oakleigh)</p> <p>Andrew Macalpine (Governor, Hendon School)</p> <p>Clare Neuberger (Head, Menorah Foundation)</p> <p>Dee Oelman (Head, St Mary's and St John's)</p> <p>Elizabeth Pearson (Governor, Livingstone)</p> <p>Helen Schmitz (Head, Cromer Road)</p>
LA Officers:	<p>Nick Adams (Schools Finance Services Manager)</p> <p>Carol Beckman (School Funding Manager)</p> <p>John Hooton (Assistant Director, Strategic Finance)</p> <p>Robert McCulloch-Graham (Director of Children's Service)</p> <p>Mick Quigley (Assistant Director Schools and Learning)</p> <p>Kerry-Anne Smith (Joint Head of Finance Children's and Adults)</p> <p>Val White (Assistant Director, PPP)</p>
Consultant:	<p>Geoff Boyd (Independent Consultant)</p>
Clerk:	<p>Mark Callaghan (School Resources and Support Officer)</p>
Members:	<p>Tim Bowden (Head, Holy Trinity)</p> <p>Jayne Franklin (Head, Childs Hill)</p> <p>Seamus McKenna (Head, Finchley Catholic)</p> <p>Keith Murdoch (Principal, Woodhouse College)</p> <p>Geoffrey Thompson (Head, Mill Hill High)</p> <p>Angela Trigg (Principal, London Academy)</p> <p>Anthony Vourou (Governor, St John's N11)</p> <p>Kate Webster (Head, QE Girls)</p> <p>Michael Whitworth (Principal, Wren Academy)</p> <p>Sarah Vipond (Early Years Working Group)</p>
LA Officers:	<p>Brian Davis (Principle Educational Psychologist)</p> <p>Andrew Travers (Deputy Chief Executive)</p>
Other:	<p>Cllr Andrew Harper (Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families)</p>

Not Present

1. Welcome and apologies for absence	
<p>In light of the passing of Alan Homes two weeks ago, GK opened the meeting by praising the contribution Alan has made during his time on the Forum. He has been an active and knowledgeable member who has made a great contribution to the education and welfare of children and staff in the borough of Barnet, and on a national level within the union movement. The Forum held a few moments silence to pay respect to Alan and reflect on his contribution to the service.</p> <p>GK advised that Linda Parker, former Head of Finance, has now left Barnet. Linda has been involved in the work of the Forum for a number of years and has been a great help during this period. VW introduced Kerry-Anne Smith to the Forum who will be Linda's replacement.</p> <p>Action: MC to draft a letter of thanks to Linda Parker for her contribution on the Schools Forum.</p>	
2. Declarations of interest	
None declared.	
3. Minutes of previous meeting: 14 June 2011	
<p>The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>It was agreed that in all future minutes Patricia French will be recorded as Patricia Ann French (PAF) to distinguish her from Paul Ferrie (PF).</p>	
4. Matters arising	
No issues raised.	
5. 1 Actions from previous meeting	
JH advised that the issue relating to the Allied Irish Bank will be covered in agenda item 6.3.	
6 Items	
6.1 Schools budget 2011/12	Val White
<p>VW presented the 2011/12 Schools Budget for approval, incorporating the use of the underspend from 2010/11 agreed at the last meeting of the Forum on 14 June 2011.</p> <p>VW distributed an addendum to the budget presented in the papers following changes to the Schools Budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupil numbers. The final pupil numbers which were expected at the end of June were received on 13 July 2011. The local authority was confident that there would be an additional 50 pupils than previously projected from the early years census and the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC). It is proposed that funding for the extra 50 pupils is added to the Individual Schools Budget. In addition to the 50 extra pupils from the PLASC and early years census, the final figures from the Department for Education (DfE) also included an additional 259 pupils from the three-year-old top-up which the local authority was not expecting to receive. VW explained the mechanism behind the top-up, as detailed in the circulated addendum. VW proposed that options are presented at the September meeting of the Forum for the use of the funding for the additional 259 pupils. The local authority would have wished to present these at the July meeting but was unable to do so as the final figures were received from the DfE so late. Reallocation of statements for Academy conversions. VW advised that the local authority has been made aware of an accounting change by the DfE. When schools convert to academies the local authority retains responsibility for paying statement top-ups. Previously this expenditure was included in the ISB line of Section 251, but it has now been moved to line 1.2.1 in the centrally retained part of the budget. This further changes the balance between the centrally retained element and the ISB. <p>As requested at the June Forum meeting a breakdown of contingences has been included.</p> <p>The Schools Budget shown is the same as that presented at the June meeting apart from the above two changes.</p> <p>PF asked whether moving the statement top-ups for academies will further change the CEL? VW confirmed that this will be the case.</p> <p>GK requested a formal vote to approve the Schools Budget for 2011/12 presented in Table 2 of the papers and to approve the breach of the Central Expenditure Limit.</p>	

All members of the Forum voted unanimously in favour of the proposals.	
6.2 Revised Schools Forum Terms of Reference	Carol Beckman
<p>CB noted that it was agreed at the May Forum meeting to reconsider the Terms of Reference (TOR) in line with the expectations of Forum members, the local authority and a changing school community in Barnet. A working group was formed to look at the TOR and the paper presented formalises what was discussed at the working group. The amended TOR now explicitly explains what is expected of members, including the level of knowledge required to ensure they understand the content of Forum papers. The local authority will provide the necessary training. CB stated that in line with this, it will be useful if members provide feedback if papers presented are not understood.</p> <p>VW stated that as there is a changing school community with the conversion of schools to academies, the amended TOR proposes that membership is agreed once per year rather than having in-year adjustments.</p> <p>CB stated that the local authority would like to agree the TOR at the July meeting to enable new members to come into the Forum in September for the beginning of the academic year. This may mean that some members may have to resign and be re-elected.</p> <p>PF asked how free schools will be represented in the membership structure of the Forum? VW stated that it is likely that Barnet will have a free school and it will have to be considered how they are represented and whether this should be by an academy member.</p> <p>The group discussed the structure of training sessions for members. It was agreed that half-day training sessions will be scheduled for early mornings, with the first to take place in the autumn. RMG noted that there will be announcements about changes in the funding formula in autumn so it would be useful to arrange an additional training session early next academic year.</p> <p>GK asked the Forum to vote on the proposal to approve the amended TOR.</p> <p>All members of the Forum voted unanimously in favour of the proposal.</p> <p>Actions: MC to arrange Schools Forum training sessions for members in autumn 2011 and early 2012. LBB to address Free School representation in TOR</p>	
6.3 Scheme For Financing Schools – changes	Nick Adams
<p>NA stated that a lengthy paper was presented at the last meeting outlining changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools. The Forum agreed all changes with the exception of the list of approved bankers. NA presented an addendum to the paper circulated outlining proposed changes to Section 3.6 of the Scheme 'Restrictions on Accounts.'</p> <p>JH explained that that the discussion centred on concerns with Irish Banks, particularly the Allied Irish Bank, and whether or not they are covered for compensation by the Irish government and the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS). This has now been investigated and JH confirmed that the Allied Irish Bank is covered by the Irish government but not the FSCS. Bank accounts for maintained schools are part of the council's liability, and as such it is important that the treasury management policy is adhered to. The advice is that schools should change banks to those on the approved list, but JH noted that there are long-standing relationships in place between schools and banks which make this inconvenient. The issue raising concern is with deposit balances, so the proposal to the Forum was that schools may continue to bank with the Allied Irish Bank on the condition that surplus balances are regularly transferred to an account in an approved bank to minimise the risk to the council.</p> <p>RMG asked JH to explain why there is a risk, and whether the risk is transferred to other schools in the borough which do not bank with the Allied Irish bank? JH explained that the risk is only for maintained schools as independent schools and academies have completely separate arrangements. NA clarified that money delegated to maintained schools from the DSG effectively belongs to the local authority until it is spent.</p>	

JH stated that the local authority will work with schools which bank with the Allied Irish Bank to help them make any necessary arrangements.

NA noted that St Michael's is the only school which made a comment and it would be useful to arrange a meeting to clarify the issues outlined in their letter.

GK asked the Forum to vote on the proposed changes to the Scheme.

All members of the Forum supported the proposal.

7 Items for information

7.1 Contracts affecting schools

Val White

VW presented a paper outlining existing school contracts, noting that Ola Yerokun should be contacted if schools have any issues with contract information.

Action: MC to email a link to the relevant page on the council website where this information is held.

7.2 Pupil Premium

Carol Beckman

CB presented a paper outlining the funding methodology for the pupil premium for looked after children. This differs from the pupil premium paid for service children and free school meals which is allocated based on pupil numbers in the January census. To be eligible for the pupil premium for looked after children, the child has to have been continuously in the care of the local authority for six months.

CB corrected an error in the paper distributed confirming that it will be the SEN team not the Head of the Virtual School who will manage the pupil premium for eligible Barnet children in Independent Special Schools.

There is uncertainty regarding cross charging between authorities for Barnet looked after children attending schools outside Barnet as authorities differ on whether the council should be paid directly or payments should be made to individual schools. The proposal is that Barnet pays schools and academies directly in 2011/12. Schools with looked after children from outside of Barnet should request the funding from the relevant local authority.

GB noted that schools should be aware that they have to claim money if it is not forthcoming.

GB asked whether schools are aware which authorities they have to claim from? CB stated that this is not necessarily the case as the DfE do not use the PLASC information because they feel it is not reliable.

PF asked who a school should contact if they have a child in Haringey? CB advised that they should contact Haringey council. GB stated that they should be notified automatically by Haringey council, but in reality this may not necessarily happen.

JC asked whether the rule that the child has to have been in continuous care for six months applies nationally? CB confirmed that this is the case for the whole of England.

GK asked whether this information has been cascaded to all schools? CB confirmed that an article has appeared in the School Circular informing schools of this.

7.3 Schools compliance review

Val White

VW presented a paper to the group summarising the council's current review of external expenditure. The purpose of the review is to ensure that all correct procedures have been followed for external contracts. There will be an article in the School Circular in September advising governors of the things they may want to check in schools to ensure they are compliant with contract standing orders.

PF asked whether schools will have to look at contracts retrospectively for compliance? VW advised that it is about proportionate risk, and individual schools should make judgements about which issues can be easily rectified and which require a programme of action. PF asked how this will affect academies? VW advised that as an academy, the school is an independent organisation, but they should be aware there are

issues specific to academies such as VAT. NA noted that there will likely be similar compliance issues in the financial arrangement the academy has with the YPLA. GB added that contract compliance is not a new issue and has been in the regulations since Local Management of Schools (LMS) first started. It should already be taking place in every school.

8 Any Other Business

No issues raised.

The meeting closed at 16:52.

Dates for future meetings

29 September 2011	4.00pm
7 December 2011	4.00pm
1 February 2012	4.00pm

