



Minutes

Name of meeting	SCHOOLS FORUM
Date and time	9.00AM – THURSDAY 30 November 2017
Venue	COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE, WESTRIDGE, BRADING ROAD, RYDE PO33 1QS
Present	Beverley Gilbert (Chair) – Brading CE Primary John Bailey – Haylands Primary David Mumford (Substitute) – Island Innovation Federation Paul Buckland (Substitute) – Isle of Wight College Julie Stewart – Medina House School Jackie Boxx – Island Learning Centre Amanda Bitchenor – Chatterbox Day Nursery Eric Hemming – St Blasius CE Primary Academy and St Francis Catholic and CE Primary Academy Robert Dare – Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Observers	Peter Shreeve – ATL
Officers	Brian Pope – Assistant Director, Education & Inclusion Christine Jones – Education Officer (SEN) Brendan Hodson – Senior Accountant Diane Hiscock - Clerk
Apologies	David Thornton – Federation of Carisbrooke and Newport CEPs Mike Hayward – Island Innovation Federation (Gov Rep) Kay Wood – Summerfields Primary Karen Begley – Island Innovation Federation Fidelma Washington – Isle of Wight College Barry Downer - Senior Finance Business Partner

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

2. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

BG had received questions and comments from schools in relation to proposals for reductions and transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. These were circulated for consideration an BP gave an update on these. It was noted that the LA aims to provide a transparent and fair service. As the number of children with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) increases, more funding is required and there will be less remaining for all schools.

Other areas discussed -

High Needs funding has a £1.6m pressure, which will not be met by the £26k additional funding expected.

This is a nationwide issue and Directors of Children's Services are writing to lobby government ministers for more support. The Hampshire Schools Forum is also proposing to write a letter and it was agreed that the IOW Schools Forum should write to the MP.

Action – BG will feedback on this meeting to the Headteachers' Briefing next week.

BG will write to the DfE and cc the MP on behalf of the IOW Schools Forum.

3. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Schools Forum Regulations require LAs to make arrangements for substitute members to attend meetings on behalf of school and non-school representatives. This is provided for in the Terms of Reference, but substitutes for Post-16 Representatives are not included. Members were asked to agree a minor amendment to correct this.

Action – Agreed, DH to amend Terms of Reference

4. APPOINTMENT OF ACADEMY REPRESENTATIVE

An expression of interest in the Academy Representative vacancy had been received from Caroline Sice, Headteacher of Lanesend Primary Academy. Proprietors from other academies were notified and no further nominations were received. All present were in agreement to the appointment.

Action – Caroline Sice appointed as Academy Representative

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED :

THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on [19 October 2017](#) be confirmed

ACTION POINTS FROM LAST MEETING

- 5.1 (Item 6.1) A report on contributions to Trade Union Facilities Time to be brought to the next meeting on 21 December 2017.

An enquiry had been received on whether an Independent School would be able to contribute to and make use of this facility. Independent schools could contribute under the same provision as academies.

- 5.2 (Item 7.3) A link to the Schools Forum webpage had been sent to all members, along with induction information. Pages containing old information have been deleted where possible, but some 'tidying up' is still required. The induction information is also being uploaded to the webpage.

- 5.3 (Item 8.4) Two reports on Elective Home Education had been circulated to members for information.

[ADCS survey Analysis](#)

[EHE LSCB Report](#)

6. HIGH NEEDS FUNDING 2018/19 [Paper B](#)

BH presented a report showing the position regarding High Needs funding, which will be updated at the next meeting in December, following the updated

pupil count from the October Census. He gave an overview of proposals for savings that will allow the LA to set a balanced budget.

- 6.1 The forecast overspend of £991,000 in the High Needs budget remains unchanged and further proposals for savings had been proposed at a sub-group meeting held on 3 November. These are outlined in paragraphs 8 – 17 of the report. All proposed savings are shown in Appendix B of the report.

Members were concerned that the proposals to transfer funding may not have been fully understood by all Headteachers. The 2017/18 budget had already been set higher and Schools Forum had agreed that the funding factors would remain the same at £550,000 from Schools and £80,000 from Early Years.

- 6.2 A saving of £150,000 is proposed by reducing independent placements. This will be achieved through pupils returning to mainstream education and by joint procurement of places with Hampshire. Benefits will be tracked and monitored by a team in Hampshire. The estimated cost of £20,000 to buy in to this provision is outweighed by the anticipated saving.
- 6.3 Discretionary funding may be reduced by £50,000 through the separately proposed additional places at Medina House and St Georges Special Schools and improvements to Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH) provision.
- 6.4 A reduction of 1.5% in Top-Up funding rates in special schools and resourced provisions would save £46,000.
- 6.5 A reduction of 4 Post-16 places would save £14,000. Possible closure of the sixth form at Sandown Bay Academy could result in savings from a total of 6 places. It was confirmed that these are empty places. The DfE would have to be notified and agree place changes in academies.
- 6.6 Increasing the reduction in top-up funding in mainstream schools from 2.5% to 5% would save a £74,000 and a further 2.5% reduction for post-16 providers would result in a saving of around £32,000.
- 6.7 Savings of £60,000 could be made from the Central Services that are funded through the High Needs Block. Further detail will be provided in due course. Some concern over the possible perception of loss of control over management of high needs was raised and discussed. It was confirmed that some statutory SEN services are funded through the council's core budget.

It was agreed that clear communication with Headteachers is required. It is important for all to read Forum papers and understand the background of proposals. Quarterly reports to Schools Forum have now been established, to enable monitoring and scrutiny of the high needs spend and to support transparency.

- 6.8 It had been estimated that pupils at St Georges Special School would increase to 176, but the school is already reaching capacity and SEN officers feel that further increase can be avoided. Therefore, this has been reduced to 173 for 2018 - 19, leading to a saving of £60,000.
- 6.9 The additional savings allow for an increase in places at Medina House Special School by 4 in 2018-19 at an estimated overall cost of £124,000 and a further 2 in 2019-20 at an estimated overall cost of £144,000. It was confirmed that the actual costs may be slightly different. This will help to ease the problem where children are waiting in mainstream primary schools for places to become available at the special schools.

- 6.10 Overall, the savings proposals would result in the requirement to find a further £347,000 in order to set a balanced budget. Therefore, a proposal is made to transfer £349,000 (0.5%) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.
- 6.11 These are difficult decisions that have to be made and communication with headteachers is key. The aim is to offer the best provision for all children. The Schools Forum exists for the purpose of consultation but ultimately, the decision on the high needs budget lies with the LA. Nationally, Lead Members for Children's Services are being asked to make similar recommendations.

Action – BH, CJ and BG to report to the next Headteachers' Briefing.

- 6.12 Members discussed the possibility of revisiting, trying to identify any other ways of making the necessary savings. It was agreed that every option has been considered in full and an extremely rigorous process has been followed.

Further discussion included how funding might be increased. One issue is that funding for EHE children has a negative impact on the Schools' Budget; numbers of EHE children are rising and all schools are affected. School funding is based on the census, which covers all children that are in school, whereas High Needs funding is based on the 2 – 18 population.

RESOLVED :

THAT the position regarding High Needs Funding be noted. Forum members expressed support for the savings proposed in Appendix B.

7. The proposal to transfer 0.5% of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block was further discussed. The indicative amount to be transferred would be £349,000 to be confirmed in December.

If the final amount is slightly more (i.e. if the 2018/19 schools block funding is higher than the indicative allocation), the provision of a minor contingency for the high needs spend would be available. If the final amount is less, further savings will be required.

- 7.1 LA Officers are required to present any proposal to transfer funding between blocks, to Schools Forum. An overview of transfers made historically between 2015 and 2017 was given in para 21 of [Paper B](#) and it was noted that additional responsibilities were transferred to the High needs Block in 2017/18. Previous transfers were not sufficient to meet the pressures and have resulted in a forecast overspend of £991,000 in 2017/18.

- 7.2 A reduction in funding of £174,000 is expected due to the import/export adjustment for pupils who are sent to (or received from) other authorities. This reduces the expected increase in funding to £26,000. An overview of increasing demand on high needs spending was shown in para 24 of the report.

8. **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Appendix C of the report showed a strategic plan to manage funding over the next 5 years to 2022. It is hoped to relieve the need for transferring funding from other blocks through

- A reduction in the need for additional post-16 places and EHCPs
- joint commissioning arrangements and improved provision
- 1% increases in high needs funding for the years following 2019/20.

However, funding has only been confirmed to 2019/20 and future funding after this is unknown. Ongoing scrutiny and updates will help to establish a better view.

- 8.1 Planned improvements to SEMH provision and SEN support in schools, to better meet the needs of pupils, will hopefully alleviate the need for more places in special schools and external placements. It was agreed that there is more pressure on schools and increased external support from other services such as Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHs) would be beneficial. CJ confirmed that work is ongoing to clarify thresholds for pupils to access services and to form a plan to address ongoing issues, as part of the SEND reform. This will include support for secondary and post-16 pupils.

More work should be carried out with parents, to ensure their understanding of the support that is provided through EHCPs. It would be helpful to have conversations with SEN Co-ordinators (SENCOs), Parent Voice and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS).

Members agreed that a leaflet outlining the basic information on support and EHCPs would be useful.

- 8.2 Collaboration with Hampshire is planned to gain efficiency in joint commissioning of placements. The School Improvement and SEN teams will work more closely together and collaborate with Social Care and Health teams. For example the £2.1m cost of external placements in 2017/18, expected contributions from social care and health are £186,000 and £242,000 respectively.

9. IMPACT

A consultation on the proposal to transfer 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block closed on 27 November. 29 responses were received and a small majority were in support of the proposal. A [report on the consultation](#) responses was circulated prior to this meeting, including questions that were raised.

- 9.1 An estimate of the impact of the transfer was shown in Appendix D of the report. There would be no impact on schools already below the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG). It was noted that the LA could apply to the DfE to allow an exception to the MFG, which would mean that schools receiving MFG protection would also contribute to the proposed transfer. A further report showing the [impact of the 0.5% transfer with and without MFG](#) protection was circulated and discussed.

Schools forum members decided not to pursue the option of an MFG exemption for the 0.5% transfer, as schools below the threshold would already be likely to see a reduction in funding. However, forum members stated that they would take into account that schools are receiving protection for the 0.5% transfer through the MFG when deciding on the level of MFG to include in the local funding formula in December.

In this case, the impact on individual schools would be different than that shown in Appendix D.

It was noted that primary schools currently have good relationships and work well together. The perception of any decision made may affect this.

The work covered under SEN Central spend headings in Appendix A was clarified. SENDIASS is funded through the LA.

The overall impact of the 0.5% transfer would be that the Schools Block would increase by £1.1m instead of £1.4m - to be distributed via the local funding formula.

Special schools and Pupil Referral Units are funded in a different way and do not benefit from the uplift that goes to schools.

RESOLVED:

That the transfer of 0.5% of the final Schools Block funding to meet the high needs pressures be agreed (8 for 1 against)

10. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

An additional meeting of the Schools Forum has been arranged to take place **Thursday 21 December 2017 – 9.00am** at Westridge CLC.

11. DATES OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday 16 January 2018

Thursday 22 March 2018

Thursday 10 May 2018

Thursday 19 July 2018

All at 9.00am

Westridge Community Learning Centre, Brading Road, Ryde PO33 1QS

CHAIR