

## Decisions of the Schools Forum

25 February 2021

Members Present:-

Attended	Name	Representing	Type of Member
<b>Members:</b>	Alexander Banks	Wessex Gardens	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
	John Bowra	Christ's College Finchley	Secondary Academy - Governor
	Jo Djora	The Hyde	Primary Academy - Headteacher
	Keith Nason	National Education Union	Trade Union
	Annette Long	Moss Hall Nursery School	Early Years Provider
	Gilbert Knight	Special Schools	Special School Governor
	Robin Archibald	Broadfields	Primary Academy - Headteacher
	Matthew Stevens	Saracens High School	Secondary Academy - Headteacher
	Sarah Sands	Garden Suburb Infant	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
	Simon Horne	Friern Barnet	Secondary Maintained - Headteacher
	Harvey Freeman	Hasmonean Primary School	Primary School - Governor
	Ziz Chater	Martin Primary	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
	Luke Bridges	All Saints' N20	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
<b>Councillors:</b>	David Longstaff	Chair of the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee	
<b>LA Officers:</b>	Ian Harrison	Chief Executive and Director of Education and Learning, BELS	
	Ben Thomas	Assistant Director, Education, Strategy & Partnerships	
	Jonathan Castle	Head of Finance, Children & Family Services	
	Gareth Evans	Finance Manager (Schools)	
	Claudette James	Assistant Finance Manager (Schools)	
	Ethan Jacobson	CIPFA Graduate Trainee (Finance)	
<b>Observers:</b>	Caron Rudge	BEYA	Nursery Headteacher
<b>Apologies Received:</b>	Jude Stone	Cromer Road Primary School	Primary Community Headteacher
	Ian Kingham	Oak Lodge Special Academy	Deputy Head
	Lucy Rodgers	Colindale Primary School	Primary Community Headteacher

## **AGENDA ITEM**

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received by Jude Stone, Ian Kingham and Lucy Rodgers.

### **2 Declaration of Interests**

None directly affecting the decisions of this meeting.

## **FUNDING FORMULA FOR EARLY YEARS**

### **3 Funding Formula for Early Years**

Ian Harrison presented the report which detailed the background and the results of the recent Early Years Consultation sent to Barnet Early Years Providers. The LA has proposed a temporary amendment to the Early Years Funding Formula to allocate a lump sum to Maintained Nursery Schools. A majority of respondents and a majority of Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) early years providers were opposed to the proposal for a temporary lump sum. A majority of the schools that responded (schools with nursery provision) were in favour.

Jo Djora asked if the nurseries were unable to set a balanced budget. She commented that a lot of the comments from PVIs needed explanations.

Ian Harrison responded that all four maintained nursery school were facing a deficit of £100k per school on average from next year. There was not much more the schools could achieve in cost cutting.

Annette Long said the nursery schools would have been ok if it was not for the pandemic. They had built up reserves from childcare payments but have been drawing on reserves year on year since 2017.

Ziz Chater commented that maintain nursery schools cost more to run than other nursery settings but PVIs disputed this as they also have these costs.

Ian Harrison detailed the comparison of maintained nursery schools to PVIs. PVIs don't have to have a Head Teacher and Qualified Teacher Status staff. Primary schools with nursery classes do not have a separate Head Teacher for early years and they receive a lump sum of £125k which maintained nurseries do not receive.

Sarah Sands raised the following points. Maintained nursery schools need to be protected. One of the PVI responses indicated that the rate for funded places is lower in Barnet than surrounding boroughs. Another indicated that training that should have been provided by Barnet and that the maintained nurseries had to pay for themselves. Sarah said a response should be sent to PVIs in relation to these points.

Caron Rudge raised the following points:

All nurseries are in a very difficult position which has been exacerbated by COVID. Maintained nurseries are a council resource and do not operate for profit whereas PVI's do operate for profit.

During COVID the maintained nursery schools have taken on children in social care and from PVI's and so need to be supported before the resource is lost.

Simon Horne commented that maintained nursery schools should be supported and that it was clear the proposals would not be to the detriment of PVI's. He asked whether PVI's would be able to challenge the council's decision.

Ian Harrison reported that the LA had taken legal advice on the proposal for a lump sum payment to maintained nursery schools and the advice was that this was allowed subject to consultation with all early years and the Schools Forum. He agreed it was important to respond to issues and questions raised by PVI's and he would liaise with Debra Davis, the council's Early Years & Primary Standards Lead, to ensure a response is sent.

Gilbert Knight commented that there was confusion over the underspend as PVI's think it should go to them. There appears to be a communication breakdown between council officers and the PVI's. Ian Harrison explained that many of the questions from PVI's had only been received in the last few days but a response will be prepared.

Keith Nason commented that PVI's have been resourced better in Barnet than other LAs in the past because Barnet had adopted a flat rate provision.

Jonathan Castle outlined the process of maintained nursery schools funding. The initial funding for 2021-22 is based on the January 2021 census. This means that some funding that has already been received could be clawed back. The contingency budget of £400k would be released to fund the clawback. The funding is based on estimates so it will never be 100%.

Officers explained that the proposed funding formula rates would mean that 95% of the DSG funding for 3- and 4-year-olds is passed through to providers, with the central expenditure on early years by the council budgeted to a maximum of 5% of the total available (amounting to £1,361,562).

Annette Long reiterated that there is a misunderstanding of what staffing is required in maintained nursery schools compared to PVI's. Maintained nursery schools must have qualified staff which cost money. PVI's do not have to employ qualified staff.

Ziz Chater queried if there was any scope to raise the hourly rate to give help for PVI's. Ian Harrison reported that in 2021/22 the whole increase in funding from the DfE was being passed onto providers through the hourly rate. He would liaise with Debra Davis and bring back for comparative figures in time for decisions about the 2022/23 rates for Barnet settings.

### **Recommendations:**

(i) The Schools Forum is asked to approve the increase in the hourly rate to providers for 3- and 4-year-olds in line with the increase in funding of the DSG Early Years block i.e. to increase the hourly rate by £0.06 per hour from £5.23 to £5.29 and to note that the deprivation rate based on IDACI will remain at £0.28 per hour.

(ii) In light of the consultation responses from early years providers, the Schools Forum is asked to decide whether it is for or against the proposal to allocate a temporary lump

sum allocation of £42,000 per school, on a one-off basis for 2021-22 only, to Barnet's four maintained nursery schools.

(iii) The Forum is asked to note that the outcome of its discussion and its decision will be reported to the Executive Director, Children's Services, who has been authorised to decide on the formula in consultation with the Chairman of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee.

Items (i) and (iii) were agreed unanimously.

In relation to item (ii) it was agreed unanimously to support the proposal to allocate a temporary lump sum of £42,000 per school, on a one-off basis for 2021-22 only, to Barnet's four maintained nursery schools.

**Any Other Business**

None

The meeting finished at 4.40pm.