

Minutes of the Schools Forum

Meeting held on Thursday 31 March 2022

Members Present

Name	Representing
John Bowra (JB)	Secondary Academy – Governor
Luke Bridges (LB)	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
Ziz Chater (ZC)	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
Harvey Freeman (HF)	Primary Maintained – Governor
Simon Horne (SH) - chair	Secondary Maintained - Headteacher
Ian Kingham (IK)	Special Academy - Deputy Head
Annette Long (AL)	Maintained Nursery - Headteacher
Sarah Maltese (SMa)	Primary School – Headteacher
Sian Morris (SMo)	Primary Academy - Headteacher
Keith Nason (KN)	Trade Unions
Sarah Sands (SS)	Primary Maintained - Headteacher
Matthew Stevens (MS)	Secondary Academy - Headteacher
Clare Wagner (CW)	Secondary Academy - Headteacher
Violet Walker (VW)	Secondary Academy - Headteacher
Councillor David Longstaff	Lead Member for Children’s Services
Officers present:	
Ian Harrison (IH)	Chief Executive and Director of Education and Learning, BELS
Neil Marlow (NM)	Director of School Improvement & Traded Services, BELS
Helen Phelan (HP)	Director of SEND and Inclusion, BELS
Ndenko Asong (NA)	Finance Manager, DSG
Madiha Bhenick (MB)	Finance Graduate Trainee, LBB
Warda Ahmed (WA)	Business Support Officer, BELS (Minute Taker)

1. Apologies

Ben Thomas and Joanne Kelly.

SH welcomed NM to the meeting as the Chief Executive designate for BELS. He also welcomed Ndenko Asong to his first meeting as LBB Finance Manager, DSG.

2. Declarations of Interest

None. New members welcome NA and NM.

3. Minutes of Previous meeting

The Minutes from the 13 January 2022 were agreed as accurate.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. 2021-22 DSG monitoring

NA introduced the paper.

DSG balances of £3.4m had been brought forward from 2020-21. The DSG allocation after recoupment for 2021-22 is sitting at £240.7m. The paper showed changes across the year, including an increase in the High Needs Block of £258,000 from import/export adjustments and an adjustment for early years pupil numbers from the January 2022 census, which resulted in a DSG reduction of £910,000. Overall, there has been a net reduction of DSG funding of £653,000.

The Schools Block has seen an underspend of £2.741m on the Growth Fund and an overspend of £197,000 as a result of increased spending on contingency spending on redundancies. The Schools Forum has already agreed to make adjustments for this by increasing the dedelegated contingency fund.

There is a forecast underspend of £481,000 in the Early Years budget, but that is likely to be taken back through adjustments in future funding as a result of the reducing number of children in early years.

The forecast outturn expenditure for 2021-22 is £238.476m, which means that an estimated £2.259m will be carried forward to 2022-23, increasing the total reserve to £5.503m

The Schools Forum noted the 2021-22 DSG monitoring report.

6. 2022-23 Budget Update

NA introduced the paper.

The latest published Financial Year 2022-23 DSG allocation for the London Borough of Barnet is £393.945m before recoupment for academies. The DfE has also announced supplementary funding to boost the schools and high needs blocks and support the increased costs to operations expected due to the introduction of the health and social care levy. An additional estimated £8.65m of Schools Supplementary Grant funding is expected for the schools block and an estimated £2.45m for the high needs block.

Including the Schools Supplementary Grant income, total DSG for LBB is expected to increase by 6.99% to £405m. The high needs block increases by 12% and the schools

block by 7%. However, there is a decline in the early years block of -3.4%. as a result of the decline in the number of children in Early Years settings.

The report also provided an update on the agreed use of carried forward balances:

- The lump sum funding of nursery schools for 2022-23 had been approved following a positive response in the consultation with early year providers.
- The temporary funding supplement of 4 pence an hour for 3- and 4- year-olds was going ahead.
- The report included an appendix showing the methodology that has been agreed for calculating and processing the funds to schools in respect of migrant children in asylum seeker hotels and from Hong Kong families.

The Schools Forum noted the 2022-23 DSG budget update.

7. High Needs Block expenditure 2021-22 and projected expenditure 2022-23

HP Introduced the paper, which showed the projected outturn for different categories of expenditure for 2021-22 and the estimated budget requirements for each category in 2022-23, taking account of the continuing growth in the number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans requiring specialist places in Additional Resource Provisions and Special Schools. The council is doing a lot to increase local specialist provision in order to reduce the need for placements in the independent sector and outside Barnet.

IK asked what the extra 2.5% of funding for Special Schools from the School Supplementary Grant will be a percentage of, because, if it just applied to top-up rates, it would not represent an overall 2.5% increase. IH confirmed the intention was to pay an overall increase of 2.5%, so the actual percentage increase in top-up rates would be higher to reflect that. He said he would clarify this for Special Schools after the meeting.

HP also highlighted the SEN Funding Working Group recommendations. HP had met with several headteachers to discuss funding of children in mainstream schools with complex needs. The hourly funding rates in Barnet were looked at with comparative data for Brent, Haringay and Hertfordshire, which showed that Barnet rates are average, in a mid-position in comparison to other local authorities.

The Working Group had identified pinch points, such as some mainstream schools having children with very complex needs awaiting specialist placements, schools in deficit where funding for EHCPs is 60% or more of the SEN Notional funding and funding needed for pupils with complex needs in the process of getting an EHCP.

It was proposed to set aside £526,774 in the budget for 2022/23 to cover the recommendations.

The Working Group also recommended a change in the wording in Education, Health and Care Plans to enable schools to use their funding more flexibly.

SS pointed out the challenges facing schools where one to one Teacher Assistant support is required for children with high needs, given the hourly cost of TAs. The Working Group had not been able to resolve that.

The Schools Forum noted the report on the expenditure against the High Needs Block 2021/22 and the projected expenditure for 2022/23.

The Schools Forum also agreed the following recommendations of the SEN Funding Working Group:

- Fair Share and SEN Notional Funding*

Where the funding for EHCPs in a mainstream school is 60% or more of the SEN Notional funding and the school has a deficit budget, the school will be given additional funding. The amount of funding will be determined by the number of EHCPs and the banded funding rates for the EHCPs, taking account of the school's SEN Notional funding and deficit budget.

ii) *Full funding of pupils in mainstream schools awaiting specialist placement*

The Working Group have agreed the following criteria:

Funding would be from the term after the specialist placements panel where it is agreed that a specialist placement is appropriate. This is for pupils who have an EHCP and who have Banded funding of 'D' or above. The maximum top-up funding a school could receive would be £18,000.

iii) *Exceptional Circumstances Funding for pupils in the process of receiving an EHCP*

The Working Group have agreed the following criteria:

This would only be applied to pupils where the school's provision map shows a need for Banded funding of 'D' or above. Schools will need to request this and provide the evidence to support the request for early funding. EHCP top-up funding to start 6 weeks early (i.e. at 14 weeks of the process), after the decision to issue has been made.

iv) *Wording of the EHCP*

The final recommendation does not include additional funding for mainstream schools, but it does enable schools to use their SEN funding more flexibly, whilst at the same time ensuring that EHCPs are compliant with the SEND Code of Practice, ensuring that provision is individualised to the needs of the child, specific and quantifiable.

Currently, the wording in the EHCP is:

"The funding will support X amount of hours a week based on Banding TA hours. To be provided to ensure that all needs are met and (child's name) makes measurable progress".

The recommended change to the wording in the EHCP is:

"The funding will support X amount of hours a week based on Banding TA hours. This could be delivered in a range of ways, according to the needs of the child, including small group work, paired work, or short bursts of targeted intervention with an adult. The support provided will be designed to ensure that all needs are met and (child's name) makes measurable progress.

8. High Needs Commissioned Places

HP introduced the paper, which provides the Schools Forum with an update on commissioned places for specialist provision, including places in Additional Resource Provisions in Barnet mainstream schools and places in Special Schools in Barnet. The report provides some background in terms of the various developments that have taken

place over the last year or so. There has been a 22% increase in the number of Education, Health and Care Plans over the past two year, with the main area continuing to be autism.

The plan to develop a further provision (ARP) at Friern Barnet for secondary aged young people who have needs in relation to cognition and learning builds on the work that has already done with Broadfields Primary School, who now have two ARPs, an ARP for autism and an ARP for cognition learning which opened in September 2021. The secondary ARP will open in September 2022.

There are also other key developments happening. One is the expansion of Northway special school through a new annex on the site of Grasvenor Infant Academy, which is expected to close in July. This will provide up to 44 additional specialist places from September 2022 rising to 72 additional places the following year. The nature of the needs is autism and cognition and learning, and the majority of those additional places from September this year will go to secondary age young people on the current Northway site, while Grasvenor site will provide for younger children.

There will also be 90 additional places over five years at the Windmill Free Special School which is due to open in September 2023.

The Schools Forum noted the commissioned high needs places for the 2022/23 school year.

9. AOB

SH thanked IH for his work over several years and wished him well in his retirement.

10. Dates for next meetings

Noted.

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