

HILLINGDON SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21 May 2020 at 2pm via videoconferencing

Voting members

NAME	ORGANISATION	ATTENDANCE
Maintained Nursery (1)		
Ludmila Morris	McMillan Early Childhood Centre	PRESENT
Maintained Primary - Schools (4)		
Rachel Anderson	Dr Triplett's School	APOLOGIES
Duncan Greig	Breakspear Primary School	PRESENT
Kris O'Sullivan	Deanesfield Primary School	PRESENT
Sophia Shaikh	Grange Park Junior School	ABSENT
Maintained Primary - Governors (4)		
Jim Edgecombe (CHAIR)	Whiteheath Junior School	PRESENT
Tony Eginton	Minet Nursery & Infant School and Hillside Junior School	PRESENT
Phil Haigh	Cherry Lane Primary School and Meadow High School	PRESENT
Jo Palmer	Hillside Infant School and Hillside Junior School	PRESENT
Maintained Secondary (1)		
Liz Horrigan	Harlington School	APOLOGIES
Maintained Special (1)		
John Goddard	Hedgewood School	PRESENT
Academies (9)		
Aftab Ahmed	Guru Nanak Sikh Academy	PRESENT
Bob Charlton	Charville Primary School	PRESENT
Tracey Hemming	Middlesex Learning Partnership	APOLOGIES
Robert Jones	Haydon School	APOLOGIES
Helen Manwaring	Swakeleys School	PRESENT
Catherin Modsell	Frays Academy Trust	PRESENT
Peter Ryerson	Guru Nanak Sikh Academy	PRESENT
David Patterson	Queensmead School	PRESENT
Sandra Voisey	Laurel Lane Primary School	PRESENT
Special Academies (1)		
Sudhi Pathak	Eden Academy Trust	PRESENT
Alternative provision (1)		
Laurie Cornwell	The Skills Hub	PRESENT
Private Voluntary & Independent Early Years Providers (2)		
Elaine Caffary	4 Street Nursery	PRESENT
Lesley Knee	Ruislip Methodist Preschool	PRESENT
14-19 Partnership (1)		
(vacant)		

Other attendees (non-voting)

Independent Non-Maintained Special School		
Debbie Gilder	Pield Heath School	PRESENT
Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Schools)		
Rachel Blake	Whiteheath Infant School	NOT REQUIRED
Shadow Representative (Maintained Primary - Governor)		
John Buckingham	Glebe Primary School	PRESENT
Mr Graham Wells	Colham Manor Primary School	NOT REQUIRED
Local Authority Officers		
Kate Boulter	Clerk	PRESENT
Steve Denbeigh	LA Finance	PRESENT
Vikram Hansrani	Assistant Director, SEND & Inclusion	APOLOGIES
Peter Malewicz	Finance Manager - Children and Young People Services	APOLOGIES
Graham Young	Lead Finance Business Partner - School	PRESENT

		ACTION
1.	<p>INTRODUCTION & APOLOGIES</p> <p>The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, which was being held by videoconferencing using Zoom due to Covid-19. The Forum agreed ground rules for the conduct of the meeting to ensure all participants had opportunities to express their views.</p> <p>Apologies were accepted and recorded in the attendance list (above). The Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate and could proceed to business.</p>	
2.	<p>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2020 were agreed as a correct record.</p>	
3.	<p>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2020</p> <p><u>Minute 3 – LAC placements</u></p> <p>A report on whether all LAC placements were into registered homes would be provided to the next meeting.</p> <p><u>Minute 5(a) – Exclusions payments following an IRP</u></p> <p>GY confirmed the LA had a system in place to charge schools in accordance with the guidance when a decision to exclude was quashed and the Governing Body did not reinstate. The Admissions Team shared information with the Finance Team, who raised an invoice for academies or deducted the amount from the cash advance for maintained schools. In the 2019/20 financial year there was one occasion when this happened and the school was charged £4,000 as per the guidance.</p> <p><u>Minute 5a – SEND Strategy Group</u></p> <p>VH had sent apologies. In his absence, GY reported that the SEND Strategy Group had met on 15 May 2020 and was well attended by members from the local authority (SEND, finance, social care), education settings (primary, special & secondary, early years, post 16), parent/carer members, CCG colleagues and health providers. The meeting centred around the LA and health partner's response to Covid-19 and how each service was supporting children/young people and schools, as well as key legislative updates from the DfE in regards to SEND. Due to the focus on Covid-19, an update on the SEND Sufficiency group had been deferred for consideration at the next meeting of the SEND Strategy Group, which was likely to be held in June 2020.</p> <p><u>Minute 6(f) – Healthcare contribution</u></p> <p>The LA was exploring employing a Designated Clinical Officer to provide a link between health and education to ensure fair allocation of contributions. The cost of independent placements was being monitored by the High Needs Sub-Group, which had observed that currently there was only a healthcare contribution if a child was in a residential placement.</p> <p><u>Minute 6(b) – Secondary school places</u></p> <p>PH reported that the same secondary schools as last year had vacancies. One school had 41 vacancies on a reduced PAN of 60, and two other secondary schools had over 30 vacancies.</p> <p><u>Minute 6(h) – Disapplication request - MFG</u></p> <p>The Chair had not appealed the decision.</p>	GY
4.	<p>FEEDBACK FROM SUB-GROUPS</p> <p>The Forum NOTED the minutes of the DSG/EY Sub-Group held on 5 May 2020 and of the HN Sub-Group held on 12 May 2020. The following issues were discussed:</p> <p>(a) DISECONOMIES FUNDING</p> <p>In September 2019, the DSG/EY Sub-Group had considered a report on a school whose draft 2019/20 budget submitted to the LA had indicated a diseconomies requirement of £689K, a significant increase on its previous year's submission of £400K. The Group had considered some areas of the budget to be unrealistic given the school's income and the financial pressures that all schools were having to adapt to, and officers had subsequently met with the school and requested a revised budget. A revised budget plan without many changes</p>	

	<p>was submitted by the school. At its meeting on 21 May 2020, the Group referred the matter to the Schools Forum for consideration, with a recommendation that the diseconomies funding was not approved as the level of funding requested was not reasonable compared with how other schools were managing their budgets.</p> <p>A member of the Forum who was also a representative of the school observed that the school had already made £120K savings, and was continuing to look for further savings.</p> <p>The Forum AGREED to invite the Executive Headteacher to the next meeting of the DSG/EY Group to discuss the matter, with a view to the Schools Forum making a decision at its meeting on 30 June 2020.</p> <p>(b) ALTERNATIVE PROVISION Both the HN Group and the DSG/EY Group had recommended that the cost of Alternative Provision, which currently sat in the Central Services Block, be moved to the High Needs Block. The Schools Forum AGREED the proposal.</p>	<p>KB</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>INFORMATION ITEMS</p>	
	<p>(a) COVID-19 DISCUSSION Neither DK nor VH were present to provide an update.</p> <p>The Forum commented that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VH had given a presentation to the Hillingdon Termly Governors Meeting the previous day, and it was AGREED that the presentation would be appended to the minutes. • The government had asked schools to plan to open to some year groups (Early Years, Year 1 and Year 6) from 1 June 2020 subject to certain test being met. A final decision would be confirmed by the government on 28 May 2020. The government had indicated a desire for other year groups to return before the summer break but had not yet issued further guidance on this yet. • The DfE would reimburse schools for additional costs resulting from Covid-19 where clear records were kept and the school did not have resources of its own to fund it. <p>(b) 2019/20 DSG PROVISIONAL OUTTURN The Forum considered a monitoring report on the DSG budget 2019/20:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DSG outturn position was an in-year overspend of £6,485K, an adverse movement of £713K on the Month 11 position due to ongoing pressures in the cost of High Needs placements, where growth continued throughout the year. • When the £8,492K deficit brought forward from 2018/19 was taken into account, the cumulative deficit carried forward to 2020/21 was £14,977K. • There was an overspend of £5,816K in the High Needs Block. The adverse movement from Month 11 related to backdated funding for further growth in pupils with SEND. • The Central Services Block had an overspend of £668K predominantly as the result of an increase in the number of pupils accessing Alternative Provision along with an increase in the number of looked after children in high cost, out of borough residential placements. The Forum had agreed that the cost of Alternative Provision should be reported in the High Needs Block in 2020/21 (see minute 4b). • The Early Years Block had a £187K overspend following adjustments to funding to reflect the January 2019 census. An estimated retrospective funding adjustment based on January 2020 census data had been included. An overspend of £42K due to under-achievement of savings targets set by the Schools Forum was offset by vacant posts in the FIS and underspend on the vulnerable children budget and SEN inclusion fund. • An import/export adjustment data error by the ESFA, notified to the LA in March 2020, had resulted in a £36K income reduction to the DSG for 2019/20. • There was a £222K underspend in the Schools Block as a result of Schools Forum's decision to withhold growth contingency allocations for two schools due to insufficient projected pupil growth in September 2019, and two basic need academy schools not requiring diseconomies funding in 2019/20. 	<p>VH/KB</p>

LAC placements and Alternative Provision

The Forum considered reports on the number of LAC placements and exclusions:

- There were 14 LAC placements for children without an EHCP, totalling £493K.
- There had been 60 permanent exclusions across year groups 7 to 11 in financial year 2018/19. This included 8 pupils from outside Hillingdon who attended Hillingdon schools.

The Forum commented that:

- It was surprising there had only been one £4K payment to the LA resulting from an IRP given the total number of exclusions.
- The number of exclusions for 2019/20 was expected to fall as a result of the closure of schools to most pupils, which would impact on The Skills Hub's funding.
- There could be a sharp rise in the number of exclusions and EHCPs when schools opened more widely.
- The total spend on LAC placements appeared high given these figures were for children without EHCPs and did not include health or social care funding. The High Needs Group would look at this in more detail.

DSG Overheads

The Forum considered a breakdown of the Overheads recharge to the DSG, which was £1,620K in 2019/20. The recharge had been capped in recent years so that the calculated charge did not exceed the agreed budget. According to the model, the actual charge to the DSG in 2019/20 should have been £1,668k, so the actual charge had been £48K less than the amount calculated by the model. GY confirmed that the Early Years Centres overheads were no longer charged to the DSG.

(c) SCHOOL BALANCES

The Forum considered a report on the level of revenue and capital balances held by Hillingdon schools as at 31 March 2020 (maintained) and 31 August 2019 (academies).

- 5 of the Borough's 54 maintained schools ended the 2019/20 financial year in deficit, a combined total of £3.6million. The majority of this was in one secondary school.
- 36 of the 54 maintained schools (66.7%) had an in-year deficit.
- Maintained schools ended the 2019/20 financial year with a cumulative closing surplus balance of £10.7m, which represented a £1.6m decrease from the previous year total. A number of schools had low balances and were expected to experience financial difficulties in 2020/21.
- A comparison with maintained schools' budgets set at the start of 2019/20 showed a £6million reduction in balances had been forecast, which compared favourably with the outturn position of £1million reduction. The LA Finance Team was questioning schools which had a marked difference between budget and outturn to encourage realistic forecasts to be made when budgets were set.
- 6 of the Borough's 45 academy schools were in deficit for financial year 2018/19. 21 academy schools had an in-year deficit in 2018/19.
- Generally, academy schools appeared to have reasonable balances, totalling £33.7million, and total balances had increased compared with the previous year. However, a number of schools had a lower balance, and 6 of the schools were showing a deficit.

The Forum commented that:

- Some secondary schools had low balances and could encounter problems if the same level of income and expenditure continued.
- Pupil numbers appeared to be the biggest factor in determining whether a school was able to report a surplus balance.
- The funding formula calculated lower additional needs funding for some schools and this could be looked at.
- There were a number of valid reasons why some schools ended the year with a better

PH/GY

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	<p>balance than forecast. When setting budgets, schools had to plan for a 'worst case scenario' and were very careful when making in-year decisions regarding resources as it would be irresponsible to take financial risks. Unplanned changes, such as staff members leaving during the year, could affect the budget vs outturn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forum continued to have concerns that some schools were benefitting disproportionately from the MFG. The DfE had refused the LA's disapplication request to amend the formula and officers' conversations with the ESFA indicated that a further submission would have the same response. • The Deficit Recovery Plan submitted to the DfE had highlighted concerns regarding the financial viability of the Studio Colleges, and the data presented showed that two of these had increasing deficits. One had changed ownership and the year end position was more positive than the previous year, but still in deficit. The DfE had not commented on this point. 	
6.	<p>DSG BUDGET 2020/21</p>	
	<p>(a) COMPARISON OF 2020/21 BUDGET TO 2019/20 OUTTURN</p> <p>GY advised that the comparison of outturn position against budget would be deferred to the next meeting. This was due to additional pressure in the High Needs Block at the end of 2019/20 as a result of the SEND Team clearing a backlog of EHCP assessments, some backdated to September 2019.</p> <p>(b) DSG DEFICIT RECOVERY PLAN</p> <p>GY advised that the LA would be required to submit another Deficit Recovery Plan. Last year the deadline had been 30 June however the deadline for this year had not been announced yet.</p> <p>The cumulative deficit carried forward to 2020/21 was £14,977K, and the 2020/21 budget showed an in-year deficit of £7,175K. The additional High Needs costs identified at the end of 2019/20 would increase the 2020/21 in-year deficit by around a further £1.5million.</p> <p>The Forum commented that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a significant deficit which was growing because government funding was not keeping pace with the increase in demand for high needs provision. The latest SEN 2 Data analysis indicated that the number of pupils with an EHCP across England had grown from 287,290 plans in 2016/17 to 353,995 plans in 2018/19, an increase of 23%. In the same period, the proportion of the pupil population with an EHCP had increased from 3.31% to 4.1%, and was continuing to increase in 2019/20. • Council reserves could not be used to cover the DSG deficit. When agreeing the DSG deficit budget for 2020/21, the Council had acknowledged that the funding gap was a matter for the government and Schools Forum. • The LA and Schools Forum had collaborated to carry out a comprehensive review of potential savings last year when the previous Deficit Recovery Plan had been produced. Some of the suggestions made in the Plan, such as reviewing the MFG formula and clawing back academy balances, had been rejected by the DfE. • The LA continued to implement the actions identified in the Deficit Recovery Plan which were within its control. • It would not be possible to reduce the cumulative DSG deficit until an in-year surplus budget could be set. The increasing demand for high needs provision made this unlikely to be achieved without a corresponding substantial increase in government funding. 	
8.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING Tuesday 30 June 2020 at 2pm.</p>	

The meeting closed at 3.15pm.