

Schools Forum

Wednesday, 17th January, 2018
at 4.00 pm – 6.00 pm

Regents Park Community College

King Edward Avenue, Shirley Southampton SO16 4GW

This meeting is open to the public

LEAD OFFICER

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Present

Chair and Vice Chair		
Jonty Archibald	Head Teacher	Regents Park Community School
Primary School Representatives		
Julie Swanston	Head Teacher	Woolston Infant School
Amanda Talbot-Jones	Head Teacher	St Denys Primary School
John Draper	Head Teacher	Swaythling Primary School
Mark Sheehan	Head Teacher	Mansbridge Primary School
Peter Howard	Head Teacher	Fairisle Junior School
Primary Governor		
Richard Harris	Governor	Moorlands Primary School
Secondary School Representatives		
Keith Pinney	Business Manager	Cantell School

Special Schools Representatives		
Jonathan Howells	Head Teacher	Cedar School
Colin Grant	Governor	Cedar School
Academy Representatives		
Sean Preston	Chief Financial Officer	Hamwic Education Trust
David Turner	Academy Governor	
Lyn Bourne	Head Teacher	St Anne's Catholic School
Pupil Referral Unit Representative		
Alison Parsons	Head Teacher	Compass School
PVI Early Years Provider		
Anna Wright		Paint Pots Nursery
Non Schools Representative		
None		
Observers		
Jedd Hayward	NASUWT	
James Rouse	St. Anne's Catholic School	
Rachel Adams	Daily Echo	
SCC Officers		
Councillor Darren Paffey	Cabinet Member	Education and Skills
Hilary Brooks	Service Director	Children and Families Services
Mel Creighton	Service Director	Finance & Commercialisation
Jo Knight	Service Lead Finance Business Partnering	
Alan Voyzey	Finance Business Partner for Education	
Paul Atkins	Capital Programme Manager	
Anne Downie	Early Years	
Christine Rice	Business Manager	
Sam Gibson	Communications Manager	
Kaye Cantor	Meeting Support (minutes)	
Stephanie Wickenkamp	Meeting Support (minutes)	

MINUTES

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr Archibald welcomed delegates to Regents Park Community School. He gave apologies for not having attended the previous meeting and thanked Vice Chair, Mr Harry Kutty, who chaired in December. RH thanked JA for hospitality in hosting the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES AND CHANGES OF MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)

Apologies were noted from:

Jo Cassey	Service Lead, Education and Early Help
Harry Kutty	Head Teacher, Cantell School (represented by Keith Pinney)
Susanne Ottens	Head Teacher, Fairisle Infant & Nursery School and Hardmoor Early Years Centre
Martin Brown	Head Teacher, The Sholing Technology College
Andy Evans	Head Teacher, Great Oaks School (represented by Jonathan Howells)
Chris Ode	NASUWT - Observer (represented by Jedd Hayward)

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declarations were made; some delegates completed forms before the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 6 DECEMBER 2017

JA reviewed first for accuracy and the following was noted:

Page 6: b) Update from High Needs Block Working Group

Third paragraph from end page, first line – SP requested ‘*increase*’ be changed to ‘*transfer*’.

Page 12: (6) Any Other Business – item 1) newsletter

First line - MS requested ‘*two other schools*’ be changed to ‘*one other school*’.

ACTION: Meeting Support to amend published minutes.

ACTION: PA to feedback to MS before Schools Forum for discussion at the March meeting.

JA reviewed the actions in the minutes:

Page 3: Item 1 - timely LA papers - HB confirmed the LA is committed to circulating accurate papers in a timely way.

Page 3: Item 1 - Benchmarking opportunities - PA confirmed this will be addressed during his review.

Page 4: Item 4a - Southampton Schools Forum constitution - HB confirmed a draft had been circulated with no feedback received from delegates. It was agreed this action is completed.

Page 6: Item 5a - Update on the Capital Programme: PA will continue to feedback as this develops.

Admissions policies: PA has produced a draft update. This will be brought back to the Forum and delegates will be advised when it is published.

Page 7: Item 5b - Evaluation of HNB tribunals – this is an ongoing piece of work by Tammy Marks.

Noted budgetary actions on **Pages 10 and 11** are on the agenda for today's meeting.

Page 11: Item 5d - Trading with Schools – AP confirmed Kevin Allan has been invited to the Special Heads Conference.

Page 12: Item 6 AOB (1) PA to investigate alleged differentiation of funds received by schools following MS's query – MS is keen to understand criteria for provision and stated all schools should be funded on the same basis. PA has capital figures and will go back to MS when finance have confirmed revenue transactions. This will be addressed before next Schools Forum.

ACTION: PA to provide MS with information.

Page 12: Item 6 AOB (2) MS query regarding School Improvement money

AV stated the School Improvement Grant is addressed in the finance papers for the meeting today. It has been confirmed by the Government that the grant will continue for another year, with national funding of £50 million each year. Southampton have received the first instalment of £101K and hold this. A second instalment is due in April and if issued on the same basis, AV expects this to be between £68K and £69K.

MS asked if funds are going back into the schools' pot. JA stated this has to be used for Schools improvement and is held outside the DSG. JA confirmed with AV that this was not delegated and the Education Department will develop proposals to support school improvement initiatives.

Page 12: Item 6 AOB (3) Section 251 return discrepancy meeting – JD confirmed the meeting went ahead. This is a complex issue which is focussed on the costs of providing statutory services by the authority that were recharged to maintained schools. Following a review the charges to schools in the current year have been refunded in full.

ACTION: *Post meeting note: Meeting Support noted Lyn Bourne's request to be included on the delegates attendance for the December meeting (complete).*

The minutes were agreed.

5. LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATES

JA explained that he had met with HK and LA officers to continue working together, ensuring timely release of papers. JA explained to members that a processing error by the Education Funding Agency had necessitated the issue of updated school meals data and this had resulted in the authority having to provide revised financial information for Forum members. JA emphasised working to maintain an open dialogue with Schools Forum members and LA Officers.

HB agreed the LA is committed to open dialogue. Members were reminded that central Government cut Southampton's Education Support Grant by £1M, which resulted in schools being asked to contribute £1M to compensate for the cut.

MC stated that during collation of the budget for 2017/18, additional ways of funding the gap were identified; the LA therefore did not need to take this contribution from schools.

HB apologised on behalf of the LA for the mistake and stated that the £1M contribution from schools will be repaid within a week. HB assured Schools Forum members that changes have been made to processes to prevent this from happening again.

MC stated that despite there being a shortfall of £225K in 2018/19, the LA will not be asking schools for this money.

HB highlighted the continuation of working with colleagues and urged members to come forward if something does not seem right. HB repeated apologies on behalf of the Council, confirming that repayment to schools would be made.

JA reaffirmed that Maintained Schools who paid the £49 per pupil budget will receive a refund in due course.

KP queried whether at the end of the financial year Secondary Schools who stayed within 5% and Primary Schools who stayed within 8%, will be taken into account with reference to surpluses. HB confirmed this.

PA stated that SCC is committed to a full review of Education Services. The review will be value driven and be delivered through a full engagement with schools. The service review will consider all direct services and supporting services and will include a full review of SLA's, Charging Mechanisms, how services are accessed and delivered. A full scope for the review will be bought to March 2018 Schools Forum for Sign-Off and the review will run to the end of June.

**SCHOOLS, HIGH NEEDS & EARLY YEARS BLOCK 2018/19 BUDGET,
INCLUDING AGREEMENT BY SCHOOLS FORUM FOR ALL CENTRAL
EXPENDITURE AND DE-DELEGATED BUDGETS FROM SCHOOLS BLOCK.**

5i) Schools Block and Central Schools Services Block

AV confirmed the NFF will be implemented over the next two years to enable distribution of delegated funds to schools.

AV explained the recommendations in relation to DfE allocations outlined in his paper; this includes the new central schools element.

The Schools Block allocation provided by the DfE totalled £139M; an increase for the 2018/19 financial year of £4.9M. Increased pupil numbers would cost £2.6M leaving a balance of £1.3M to fund all inflationary and cost pressures.

AV confirmed that the APT deadline return for completion is the 19 January 2018.

Flexibility in the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) is being allowed in 2018/19 so that the MFG which provides per pupil funding protection can be set at between +0.5% and -1.5%. Whilst the Schools Block is ring-fenced, some limited flexibility is permitted in that up to 0.5% may be transferred to other blocks subject to consultation and Schools Forum approval.

Distribution of funding was based upon increased allocations for the additional needs factors including IDACI, English as an Additional Language and Low Attainment. These factors were increased within the local formula to target support at the most deprived schools.

AV confirmed that all schools will have increased allocations which will be in line with additional funding announced by the Secretary of State in summer 2017. AV explained that as a result of the introduction of transitional relief for business rates in 2017/18, after school budgets had been finalised, adjustments of over and under allocations would be made in the new financial year. AV noted that the six schools that had formed the Aspire Trust from September 2017 would be entitled to mandatory rates relief, but as the arrangements had not been finalised, further adjustments to business rates would be done in the new financial year.

5ii) Allocation of total amount of DSG

AV explained the three available options in relation to NFF allocations.

Option A – Distribute £138.305M	1.52%
Option B – Distribute £138.653M	1.78%
Option C – Distribute £139.001M	2.05%

AV clarified this vote was open to Maintained and Academy Schools. AV requested an agreement on the principles adopted and stated agreement on a way forward is needed during this meeting due to there being no deferral time in relation to the submission of the APT.

Key discussion points:

- SP stated that there was not enough statistical detail included within the papers provided to be able to vote. SP explained that he could not vote based on principles as they were not provided. MS agreed this and commented that there were no figures relating to IDACI Pupil Premium eg. free School Meals.
- PH stated his preference in seeing details which measure deprivation factors for each school, to inform decision making.
- JA confirmed that individual schools could not be identified from the papers. Anonymization of schools was decided by the Chair, Vice Chair and LA officers for fair decision making. The aim is to get the maximum amount delegated to schools in a fair way.
- RH sympathised with the LA in having to adhere to tight DfE deadlines.
- HB apologised for the delay in issuing the papers and reassured members that the timeline next year to receive papers will be earlier.
- JA suggested an ‘in principle’ vote for this year with a view to reviewing the process for the following academic year.
- AV reiterated the national soft formula will apply for the next two years and there will be an opportunity to address the relationship between the two formulas once detail has been received in advance of the next settlement. DT commented that further details are required to enable a smooth transition in the future.
- SP explained that the figures provided mean that the MFG would enable every school to receive a 0.5% increase per pupil; he felt this was unaffordable. SP queried the figures provided with regard to MFG.

- MS queried whether the entire 0.5% would apply. This was discussed; AV confirmed 0.5% would apply, however noted the percentage could have been set at a lower level.

JA agreed a break for LA officers to clarify the finance queries.

Break for 15 minutes.

MC explained that the 0.5% increase had been reflected in the figures on a per school basis, as opposed to per pupil. MC confirmed that this information be taken away for revision and confirmation that it corresponds with the Appendices provided. SP stated his intention to abstain from voting until per pupil figures and MFG figures were confirmed.

JA asked whether this affects the LAC element. AV explained that LAC is not an element within the NFF. It is a factor within the local formula which distributes £130K to schools for Looked After Children. However, as the Pupil Premium funding had been increased from £1,900 per pupil to £2,300 per pupil, it is proposed that this element is removed from the local formula.

AGREED: JA confirmed with Schools Forum members that they were content with the 'in principle' vote and this was agreed without a vote.

ACTION: MC/JK to issue clarification of the Appendix figures for Schools Block and provide details of the MFG calculation. **Post meeting note:** *(completed and distributed to Schools Forum Members).*

Appendix 1 – Schools Block/Central Schools Services Block

5iii) Schools in Financial Difficulties Fund 2018/19: £100,750

JA clarified that the vote is for continued support towards Schools in Financial Difficulties fund for 2018/19.

This item is for maintained primary and secondary schools only.

Key discussion points:

- JH noted criteria around the fund is unclear; PA will address in the review.
- RH queried whether there is a surplus in the fund and whether this is available to schools on a loans basis. He further commented that on this basis, additional funds are not required.
- JD commented that the allocations which provided grants of £20K to individual schools would not make a difference to school deficits.

- JS felt that money was paid in but not used. JS asked if funds would be reallocated back to schools and PA confirmed it is part of the review to look at the whole process.
- SP commented that newly converted Academies should be eligible for a refund if they have contributed.

ACTION: This item was not agreed and will be addressed as part of the review of services which support schools.

5iv) De-delegated funds for Trade Union duties: £46K

AV asked if support is to continue for another year and confirmed the fund for TU duties applies only to Primary schools.

AGREED: The group agreed that de-delegated funds for TUs will continue for 2018/19.

Appendix 1 – Central Schools Services Block

5v) Primary Review Growth Fund: £260,400

Key discussion points:

- SP queried whether Thornhill Primary School is missing and PA stated this school is now an Academy. With the addition of Thornhill, SP thought this would bring the total to £295K. The authority will investigate whether or not Thornhill should be included in the schedule of schools supported in 2018/19.
- MS asked whether schools might get extra funding from Capital; MS is concerned that Capital is taken into account and funding is equitable. PA and HB responded capacity is part of the review and is dependent on the specifics of an individual school. PA will be providing more details in due course.

JA requested a vote be taken, subject to the addition of Thornhill being clarified by SP and the authority.

AGREED: 10 Delegates in favour: 0 against.

ACTION: SP to check whether growth at Thornhill Primary is 45 or 60 pupils.

5vi) Admissions function: £422,100

AV explained that the calculation is based on the same figure as last year.

Key discussion points:

- RH stated he would only support the Admissions function if it was based on good evidence as required. RH felt the maximum figure should be less if based on last year's expenditure. PA replied this was a reasonable statement.
- MS commented some schools have their own Admissions function.
- RH asked about long term absence. PA will be bringing a paper to Schools Forum in March.

JA asked for a vote to be taken to support the Admissions function from the central block with the caveat it is reviewed if savings are identified: the figure currently requested is the maximum amount and will be revised down if necessary.

AGREED: 7 Delegates in favour: 0 against

ACTION: PA to produce Admissions policies paper for March Schools Forum.

5vii) MASH and Early Help: £626,800

AV explained the figure is the same level as the current year.

Key discussion points:

- MS commented this was the same figure but with fewer preventative Social Workers. AV replied this is a nominal funding contribution. HB emphasised the important work carried out by MASH and Safeguarding team with schools.
- PH commented that schools paid for their own Tier 2 Social Workers. There was a discussion about schools linked Social Workers; some do not have these any more. JS stated previously a SW visited which the school paid for but this no longer happens.

HB stated that expansion is planned for the 0-19 community model. This enables SWs to be out in community to help prevent MASH referrals. HB was not aware of any previous arrangement and confirmed that funding would be used to reinstate this previous arrangement. RH asked if as an advisory body the Schools Forum could also vote to formally advise on the reintroduction of SWs for schools. All members were in favour of this with no vote taken.

A vote was then taken to agree the budget:

AGREED: 7 Delegates in favour: 0 against.

ACTION: HB to progress reinstating SWs to schools.

5viii) CLA and MPA Licences: £138,100

AV explained this fee is top sliced nationally from the Dedicated Schools Grant. Payments are made by the funding agency on behalf of all authorities and then recharged. JA confirmed there is no negotiation. PA stated this vote is for maintained schools only.

AGREED: 11 Delegates in favour: 0 against.

5ix) High Needs Block

AV updated on the adverse variances of at least £3.5M for 2018/2019. Final figures have been received for the High Needs Block of the DSG and the settlement provides an increase of just under £1.1M after the application of the capping criteria which limits increases to 3%.

There is a forecast pressure of £2.44m above the 2018/19 High Needs Allocation and proposals to transfer the permitted 0.5%, (£695,000) subject to Schools Forum approval, would reduce this to £1.74m. The LA's recommendation is to transfer 0.5% to HNB.

AV commented that over the next two years the High Needs Block should provide further favourable settlements.

HB explained that if the 0.5% was not transferred, there will be a significant further pressure on HNB, which will need to be sourced from other services. HB stated much work is being carried out to address the overall pressure. HB noted that SEND is a growing pressure, as well as increased EHCP assessments and out of city placements.

Key discussion points:

- JH queried whether there was anything that Schools Forum could do or whether the LA Cabinet would be able to write to the DfE. Cllr Paffey responded that he would be happy to write a letter and suggested that Schools Forum members jointly sign this. RH requested for the letter be copied to LGA Chair of Children's Services.
- Cllr Paffey reminded members that additional funding from the Government does not mean there is enough money; any extra funding received is to pay for additional pupils.
- JA explained he had attended a Hampshire Schools Forum in December 2017, where similar pressures were noted. AV agreed that pressures within the High Needs Block are being experienced across the country.

JA asked all members to vote on the following transfer options:

i) **0.5% (£695K)** transfer from the Schools Block to High Needs Block.

ii) **0.25%** transfer from the Schools Block to High Needs Block.

iii) **No transfer** from the Schools Block to High Needs Block.

Key discussion points:

- RH stated this as a crucial and mandatory vote, commenting that members should let the LA officers handle the balancing of financial figures.
- JD queried whether using the £160K from the Central Schools Block could offset some of the HNB pressure impact. Further, JD queried following the Sec. 251 return of £422K from the Admissions functions this year and £368K last year, whether this could be transferred to offset the High Needs Block pressure. MC responded it has already been contributed to decrease the pressure in the next financial year.
- PH asked whether the second round of Schools in Financial Difficulties funding could be applied for, to offset the pressure. HB responded that this was still an area to address.
- PH queried whether a difference was made for the 11 schools which received £20K funding for deficit budgets. PA commented this impact is negligible.
- JH spoke on behalf of Special Schools and stated that the transfer of 0.5% would go directly towards bridging the gap.
- MS commented a review for top-up values for Special Schools was promised, to see whether any children with SEND can be supported within mainstream schools.

HB responded that PA is drafting a paper in response to HNB pressures, including inner city placements, for the March meeting. PA explained this separate review will address the pressures and reasons behind them, ensuring demand is bought back into the city. PA highlighted expensive spot purchasing decisions. PA's aim is that by working collectively to find solutions to the issues, the pressure will be mitigated.

JD proposed a compromise of 0.5% be transferred to HNB with the caveat that any identified savings would be used support to off-set the pressure.

AGREED: As there was a split vote, Schools Forum Chair, Jonty Archibald, had the deciding vote:

i) **0.5% (£695K)** transfer from the Schools Block to High Needs Block: 7 Delegates in favour.

ii) **0.25%** transfer from the Schools Block to High Needs Block: 6 Delegates in favour.

iii) **No transfer** from the Schools Block to High Needs Block: 1 Delegate in favour.

It was confirmed that 0.5% would be transferred from the Schools Block to High Needs Block.

5x) Early Years

AV noted an indicative provisional allocation from the DfE of £16.341M. The allocation is not finalised until 2019 and can go up or down dependent upon participation. AV noted that the authority had implemented the National Funding Formula from April 2017. The criteria on central spend top-slicing is a cap of 7% for the current year, which drops to 5% for 2018/19.

The proposal is to note the provisional allocation and approve the central spending elements to deliver the service within the 5% retention.

Key discussion points:

- AW commented 95% gives £4.89 and stated because of local conditions she felt it is impossible to get the top rate of funding.
- AW queried overheads of £176K.
- AW queried why the funding lines for Universal Provision are separated out and the £56K supplement to maintained nurseries. AW asked whether there would be a reduction.

AV clarified the two figures given in the report appendix; the first is for 15 hours entitlement and the other figure relates to the extended provision for the higher entitlement of 30 hours per week.

In reply, AD stated DfE has said that they want all providers to be subject to the same funding formula from 2019-20 therefore maintained nurseries will not continue to receive additional funding; the hourly rate will be based on the same supplements. However, the one maintained nursery school will receive 2 years protection in the form of a lump sum of £56K. However this lump sum is considerably less than the amount agreed in previous years by Schools Forum for this nursery.

There are several providers who do receive the top rate of funding. Some of the 95% pass-through to providers is used to provide an Inclusion Support Fund which is to support early years providers with 3 and 4 year olds with emerging pre-EHCP SEND. It is not yet known what the cost is for the full year.

AV stated the overheads are in respect of central department costs and services including finance, HR and IT support and central accommodation costs.

SP asked about comparator figures for other LAs in terms of the top slice. AD replied most are at 5%, however in the past some LAs have gone as high as 20%.

PH questioned 11 vacancies shown on the council's structure charts and asked what the situation is with these.

AD replied there is an error on the structure chart, as not all the posts shown are vacant. For example 3 Early Years Advisory Teacher posts were removed as part of Phase 3 of SCC's transformation, but are showing as vacancies on the structure chart. HB confirmed a new structure chart will be produced following Phase 3 transformation savings, with removal of some vacant posts. There are some nursery posts which are vacant but, due to recruitment issues, are currently being filled by agency staff to ensure the nurseries remain within Ofsted ratios costs.

JA asked for a vote on the recommendations:

- i) to note provisional Early Years Block of £16.341M
- ii) Approve the central expenditure element of the Early Years Block summarised in Appendix 1.

AGREED: 10 Delegates in favour: 0 against.

5xi) Education Services Review

PA proposed a review of Education Services be explored with schools; this would scope out the entire statutory and non-statutory service. PA stated the LA are committed to placing schools at the heart of the work and that this will be a value-led service review. The review will include LA SLA's, direct and supporting services, utilities and whole asset management.

PA stated he would present a report at the next Schools Forum meeting, identifying how the service review will move forward.

Key discussion points:

- RH asked for Governors to be involved, noting they bear legal responsibilities. PA agreed and noted this.
- JH queried whether the review will be based around quality of service provision or financial drivers. PA emphasised the review will be value-led, making sure anything the city council delivers is of the right value. If services are not meeting schools' expectations the council will address. PA added that value driven savings will be made but not cost led, remaining an effective value proposition for schools.
- JA queried the timescales for the review in relation to SLA's already being circulated to schools. PA responded that detailed proposals will be available in March 2018, subject to sign off and agreement. PA confirmed they would be finalised prior to sharing at March 2018's Schools Forum meeting. PA explained that workshops would commence shortly after Schools Forum and run through until June 2018, with the outcome of realigned services.

- MS queried whether the review was possible within the short timeframe. PA replied he is confident that it is achievable.
- AT-J queried whether this would be completed internally or externally. HB responded that this would be an internal review.
- JA asked for clarification when the documents are issued for March Schools Forum meeting, whether these could be shared with other colleagues or just for Schools Forum members. PA confirmed for information of members only at this stage.

HB is looking forward to working together with Schools Forum members on the review to achieve the best service outcomes.

Cllr Paffey stated that the council is a different shape from five years ago; this is a value driven piece of work as opposed to financially driven. Cllr Paffey emphasised collaborative working and encouraged input from schools.

ACTION: PA to present Review of Education during March Schools Forum meeting.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Clarify process for applications for funding from the Schools in Financial Difficulties Fund.

This was covered at 5iii) above and would be considered as part of the review.

b) School to Academy Conversion Charges.

PA explained School to Academy conversion charges will form part of the aforementioned review. PA commented that more clarity is required on the process for this; he will address and feedback at a later Schools Forum meeting. PA confirmed to SP there will be no charges for maintained schools to academies until a review has taken place.

c) Revised consultation and budget setting processes.

PA stated the LA is committed to more timely papers and progress with budget setting processes for the future. This will be incorporate into PA's review.

JA thanked PA.

7. CLOSING REMARKS AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

CG thanked officers and asked for future page numbering of reports to reflect total number of pages.

ACTION: Officers to paginate their reports accordingly.

SP commented that he would value a breakdown of the proposed funding rates per factor for Primary and Secondary schools within the revised budget papers and this was noted and the relevant information provided by the authority.

HB thanked all delegates for their attendance.

Next meeting:

Wednesday 28 March 2018

4:00pm – 6:00pm

Venue: Regents Park Community College, SO16 4GW