

Minutes of the Forum Meeting held on Wednesday, 7 October 2020 Virtual Teams Meeting at 4.30pm

<p>Present: Maintained Primary Sector: Antoinette Fisher (Governor) Bernie Farkas (Head teacher) Jenny Godsall (Head teacher) Karen Scott (Head teacher) Ben Taylor (Head teacher) John McDermott (Governor) Selina Timmins (Governor) Maintained Secondary Sector: Marie Murphy (Head teacher) Maintained Special Sector: Andrew Wilkins (Governor) Academy Primary Sector: Louise Minter (Head teacher) Lynda Mackay (Governor) Academy Secondary Sector: Claire Smith (Head teacher) Charlotte Shadbolt (Governor) Honorary Alderman Norman Davies Pupil Referral Unit: Eleanor Clarke AP Academy: Stephen Steinhaus Specialist Academy No representative Post-16 College: John Callaghan TU Representatives: David Lewis Gillian Clowe Early Years PVI Sector: Gina Godwin Lisa Whitehouse Elected Members Councillor Ken Meeson Councillor Andy Hodgson Officers of the Council: Louise Rees Tim Browne Steve Fenton Stuart McHale Observers: none</p>	<p>Dorridge Primary School Blossomfield Infant School Knowle CofE Academy (proxy arrangement) Greswold Primary Our Lady of the Wayside RC Primary St Alphege Juniors Fordbridge (substituting for Rob Fletcher)</p> <p>St Peters RC School</p> <p>Hazel Oak Special School</p> <p>Streetsbrook EY&I Academy Knowle CofE Academy</p> <p>Tudor Grange Heart of England Langley Academy Triple Crown Centre</p> <p>Solihull AP Academy</p> <p>Solihull College</p> <p>TU Representative NEU</p> <p>Whitesmore/Wise Owls Nursery Tender Years Nursery</p> <p>Director of Children's Services Assistant Director, Inclusion & Additional Needs Head of Business & Performance Childrens Services Finance Manager</p>
<p>Chairperson: Antoinette Fisher – Dorridge Primary School Vice Chairperson: Apologies were received from Darren Gelder Minutes: Alison McWilliam, Senior Forum Administrator</p>	

Item		Action															
1	<p>Apologies for Absence and Welcome Apologies were received from:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Rob Fletcher</td> <td style="width: 30%;">Head Teacher</td> <td style="width: 40%;">Fordbridge Primary School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Geoff Harley-Mason</td> <td>Governor</td> <td>Arden Academy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Darren Gelder</td> <td>Principal</td> <td>Grace Academy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Andy Simms</td> <td>Head Teacher</td> <td>Hazel Oak Special School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sarah Smith</td> <td></td> <td>Church of England Diocese</td> </tr> </table>	Rob Fletcher	Head Teacher	Fordbridge Primary School	Geoff Harley-Mason	Governor	Arden Academy	Darren Gelder	Principal	Grace Academy	Andy Simms	Head Teacher	Hazel Oak Special School	Sarah Smith		Church of England Diocese	
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- 2 **Verification of Chair and Vice Chair for 2020-21**
AF and DG were formally appointed Chair and Vice Chair for 2020-21.
- 3 **Minutes of Last Meeting (7.7.20)**
The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.
- 4 **Matters' Arising**
Extending Community EP Service to Early Years – TB recognises the need for this, but work needs to be done first on the graduated pathway, plus consideration given to whether the Inclusion Fund would be the best way to financially support the service.
Additional Funding for Covid-related Costs – It was noted that schools that have Reserves are unlikely to qualify for additional funding.
- 5 **Cabinet Member's Items – Councillor Ken Meeson**
Covid-19 – Cllr KM thanked schools for their work throughout the emergency, for getting schools open and managing ongoing challenges. It has been a very stressful time for head teachers and staff, but pupils returned to schools very quickly in September, with Solihull's attendance data amongst the highest in the region. Feedback from parents has been mixed – some unhappy that children are not being asked to self-isolate and some unhappy because too many children are being asked to SI.
Elective Home Education - Concern was raised at the previous night's Council meeting about the number of Solihull parents choosing to home educate and particularly whether they understand the implications, such as if they later change their minds, a school place may not be available at the same school. In addition, when a child joins part-way through the year, the school will not receive funding. CKM has asked that colleagues ensure parents understand their obligations and the difficulties that can occur longer term.
SEND Review – Solihull continues to be a member of the f40 group which, in its recent Executive minutes (LINK: [f40 Exec](#)) confirmed that the promised Government SEND Review has been delayed again.
Questions
ND asked what checks are made when parents home educate, in terms of following the National Curriculum and safeguarding.
Parents have a legal right to home educate and some do it very well. A LA's legal obligation is to have a 'reasonable account of the educational provision being made', but there are limited powers for the LA to intervene or check the quality of education being provided, despite campaigns asking that a formal national framework is put in place, including powers for local authorities to check the quality of education. Solihull runs a support service to offer guidance, but this will be under greater strain as more families take this route.
- 6 **Assistant Director's Items - Tim Browne**
Covid19 - Education teams have focused on supporting schools and families through the various Covid-related challenges. Current school outbreak data is:
17 confirmed pupil cases in Solihull schools out of a cohort of 49,000
871 SI, equating to 2% of cohort (down from 5% the previous week)
19 confirmed staff cases
62 SI
These are small numbers, schools are a safe place to be and staff are managing the difficulties and control measures well. Letters will go out to parents again before half term in an attempt to deter young people from congregating across the Borough.
GC has found attending the weekly School Recovery meetings incredibly helpful and supportive for TU members and parents.
Reshaping Education Vision Paper – TB's paper will come out to stakeholders shortly, opening a wider conversation about the Council's future role in education and how we move forward to address the challenges we are facing; what success looks like and how we might achieve it.
Staffing – Charlotte Jones has been appointed the new Head of SEND, starting on 25 November; Jayne Mumford (acting Head of SEND) will be in place until Christmas, allowing for handover. Interviews for the START Manager are expected to take place on 29 October.

The START team will shortly be fully staffed but continues to be under pressure and may require further boosting.
SEND Casework Management System - Implementation started recently and will go live in late spring. The system will strengthen processes, provide alerts when key dates are triggered and enable greater interaction with schools and families amongst other benefits.
Parent Carer Voice – The PCV is now operational, with Heather Delaney as acting Chair.
 Contact details: Email heather_delaney1101@yahoo.com or solihullpcv@outlook.com
Questions

JG raised concern that some of the normal routes of communication with schools had stalled due to Covid, eg. SENCo meetings. TB responded that SSSAB and EdSEND are key communication tools, he also intends to visit Collaborative meetings but will look at further enhancing communications.

TB

7 **High Needs Recovery Plan Update – Tim Browne**

The Head Teacher Reference Group will next meet on 22 October to consider the new plans and current strands. Strands are now:

1. **SEND Commissioning Strategy** – increasing the local supply of specialist places, plans are developing well, led by SF and team.
2. **Inclusion Strategy** - Jayne Mumford will lead on this and target dates have been reset.
3. **SEND Processes** – David Graham and JM are taking this forward.
4. **Financial Strategy** – SMcH is leading, with a paper going to Cabinet shortly setting out the forecasts and planned recovery dates. We are currently looking at a year-end accumulated deficit of £8.4m on the HNB.
5. **Annual Reviews** - this new strand will target the 1,400 backlog of annual reviews and an Action Plan will be put in place to prevent a recurrence of the build-up.
6. **Graduated Pathway** - of support from early help to statutory intervention with a firm focus on early intervention at the lower level.

Questions and Comments

GG runs two nurseries and is currently seeking EHCPs for four children where parents have been told they cannot access specialist provision without them and where the assessment waiting time is 20 months. TB and GG to discuss further outside the meeting.

GC felt that the LA could do more to create and promote employment opportunities for young people with SEND. TB is already pursuing opportunities for apprenticeships and supported internships with key employers to increase employment. JC confirmed that Solihull College had twelve supported internships last year, which was very positive. On behalf of Darren Gelder, AF wanted heads and chairs to be aware that the consultation now in place on the potential closure of Summerfield Education Centre was consulting now on a very different and improved provision.

TB/GG

8 **DfE Announcements – Steve Fenton**

Reference 'DfE Announcements July and August 2020 Briefing Note'

SF highlighted five key points:

1. As part of the strategy for next year's school budgets, the LA will not be seeking a top-slice from Schools Block to the HNB. The increase in HNB grant will bring us a lot closer to closing the in-year funding gap and the LA needs to consider the implications of its HN Recovery Plan and its approach to paying off the accumulated deficit of c. £8.4m. Further information is awaited from the DfE on this.
2. If Forum consents, we will continue to emulate the NFF in school budgets as far as possible ie. passporting through to schools the same values at local level as those used by Government in the NFF. This has been Solihull's objective for the past two years, adjusting the AWPU slightly to manage funding shortfalls linked to rates and growth funding. For 2021-22 funding from the Teachers' Pay and Pension Grants have been added to the formulae and will be passported through to schools.
3. We will endeavour to treat special schools in a similar way to mainstream, factoring in the Teachers' Pay Grant and other inflationary increases.
4. Forum is asked to support central funding at their historic levels, with no inflationary increases.
5. For EY there have been no formal announcements yet, but the funding strategy proposed will be the same as for 2020-21, with any increase passported straight through

<p>9</p>	<p>to providers through the hourly rate. Forum members approved the funding strategy for 2021-22, as set out in the briefing paper and referenced above.</p> <p>Solihull Scheme for Financing Schools – Steve Fenton <i>Reference ‘Update to the Solihull Scheme for the Financing of Schools’ report</i> This is the financial framework document for maintained schools (not academies, free schools or private nurseries). There are two ‘directed revisions’ that do not require formal consultation with Forum, but is important that schools are fully informed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Risk Protection Arrangement is the national insurance scheme that the DfE has instructed Local Authorities must contain a provision that allows schools to join it from 1 April 2020. Steven Simonds will attend the Finance WG meeting on 26 November to provide details on the RPA and show how it compares with the current Solihull scheme. 2. From the 2021-22 funding year, each school must submit an annual 3-year budget forecast. In Solihull 3-5 year forecasting has been in place for some time as good practice and it is greatly valued. The direction also refers to deficit budgets and says schools must submit a Recovery Plan to the LA when the deficit rises above 5%, but LAs may set a lower threshold. In Solihull, there is already a good system in place, where we operate to a threshold of £5k, usually against a 3-year forecast. SF sought consent from maintained school members that that Solihull’s £5k threshold continues to be appropriate. Members responded that at 5%, it could be too late to recover for some schools and that if the local limit works well, why change it. <p>Maintained school members noted the changes and reaffirmed the local limit as £5k. SF will send the revised Scheme out to schools shortly.</p>	<p>FWG</p> <p>SF</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Work Group Reports <i>Reference Work Group Reports</i> <u>Finance WG - David Lewis</u> It was noted that the full financial impact of Covid (including loss of income to schools) had not yet been quantified; that Combined Services’ funding had been reduced by 20%, with a further 20% cut due in 2021-22; the backlog of cases in the Admissions Service had now been resolved and UK procurement regulations will continue post-Brexit. Members agreed that the Admissions Service is of great value, both financially and in its offering (copy of full report available here LINK:Admissions Report). LM, AF and LMc plan to write to the DfE in a similar vein to the recent f40 letter (LINK:f40 letter) regarding pressure on school resources and asked members to forward any examples for inclusion to amcwilliam@solihull.gov.uk.</p> <p><u>EdSEND – Louise Minter</u> Paul Crulley had provided a START team update, including reference to the poor quality of some EHCP applications and schools saying they cannot meet need. KS felt it was unacceptable that children were being prevented from accessing the specialist support they need because the paperwork is not good enough. Instead, communication and support is needed to ensure paperwork is acceptable. It was agreed to raise this at the next EdSEND meeting. Schools saying they cannot meet need is a long-standing issue for which they need to be held accountable and take their fair share.</p> <p><u>SSSAB - Louise Minter</u> The report was accepted with no questions.</p> <p><u>Capital WG – Andrew Wilkins</u> The report was accepted with no questions. AW thanked Anthony Watson and Ann Pearson for their work in this area.</p>	<p>Members</p> <p>EdSEND</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting 4.30pm Tuesday, 8 December 2020 Virtual <i>Microsoft Teams</i></p>	