

**Minutes of the Forum Meeting held on Tuesday, 8 December 2020
Virtual Teams Meeting at 4.30pm**

<p>Present: Maintained Primary Sector: Antoinette Fisher (Governor) Bernie Farkas (Head teacher) Karen Scott (Head teacher) John McDermott (Governor) Rob Fletcher (Head teacher) Maintained Secondary Sector: Marie Murphy (Head teacher) Maintained Special Sector: Andrew Wilkins (Governor) Jane Davenport (Head teacher) Academy Primary Sector: Louise Minter (Head teacher) Lynda Mackay (Governor) Academy Secondary Sector: Darren Gelder (Principal) Claire Smith (Head teacher) Charlotte Shadbolt (Governor) Geoff Harley-Mason (Governor) 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 Elected Members None Officers of the Council: Tim Browne Steve Fenton Stuart McHale Observers: None</p>	<p>Dorridge Primary School Blossomfield Infant School Greswold Primary St Alphege Juniors Fordbridge St Peters RC School Hazel Oak Special School Reynolds Cross Special School Streetsbrook EY&I Academy Knowle CofE Academy Grace Academy Tudor Grange Academy Heart of England Academy Arden Academy Triple Crown Centre Solihull AP Academy Solihull College TU Representative NEU Whitesmore/Wise Owls Nursery Assistant Director, Inclusion & Additional Needs Head of Business & Performance Childrens Services Finance Manager</p>
<p>Chairperson: Antoinette Fisher – Dorridge Primary School Vice Chairperson: Darren Gelder - Grace Academy Minutes: Alison McWilliam, Senior Forum Administrator</p>	

Item	Action																					
<p>1 Apologies for Absence and Welcome Apologies were received from:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Councillor Ken Meeson</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Cabinet Member, Children, Education & Skills</td> <td style="width: 33%;">SMBC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Louise Rees</td> <td>Director, Children's Services</td> <td>SMBC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sarah Smith</td> <td>Observer</td> <td>Church of England Diocese</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Norman Davies</td> <td>Governor</td> <td>Langley Secondary Academy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ben Taylor</td> <td>Head Teacher</td> <td>Our Lady of the Wayside RC Primary</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lisa Whitehouse</td> <td>PVI</td> <td>Tender Years Nursery</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jenny Godsall</td> <td>Head Teacher</td> <td>Knowle CofE Primary Academy</td> </tr> </table>	Councillor Ken Meeson	Cabinet Member, Children, Education & Skills	SMBC	Louise Rees	Director, Children's Services	SMBC	Sarah Smith	Observer	Church of England Diocese	Norman Davies	Governor	Langley Secondary Academy	Ben Taylor	Head Teacher	Our Lady of the Wayside RC Primary	Lisa Whitehouse	PVI	Tender Years Nursery	Jenny Godsall	Head Teacher	Knowle CofE Primary Academy	
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<p>2 Minutes of Last Meeting (7.10.20) The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>																						
<p>3 Matters' Arising Page 3 - TB Attending Collaborative Meetings - TB has been attending Collaborative</p>																						

	<p>meetings and will continue to engage with Collaboratives in their preferred manner. <u>Nursery EHCP Applications</u> - TB and GG have discussed this off-line. Page 4 - Risk Protection Arrangement/Insurance Scheme - This was discussed at FWG and is included in the FWG Report to Forum. <u>Revised Scheme for Financing Schools</u> - SF will send this out to schools post-Christmas. <u>Letter to DfE Regarding Additional Covid-related Costs/Loss of Income</u> - LM is handling this, but it has not been sent yet, see agenda item 8. <u>Quality of EHCP Assessment Applications</u> - This was raised at EdSEND and some additional guidance, including exemplar applications has been promised. Retain this action until resolved.</p> <p>4 Assistant Director's Items - Tim Browne <u>Covid-19</u> - Covid-related work continues to be the main focus for the LA's Education teams. Today's school outbreak data is: 74 confirmed pupil cases in Solihull schools 2,000 pupils self-isolating (5.4%) 25 confirmed staff cases 182 staff self-isolating <u>Re-shaping Education</u> - The paper and questionnaire have been well received by the schools' community and staff. There have been some common themes and TB asked stakeholders to continue to feed in their comments. The engagement phase will continue until the end of January. <u>Staffing Update</u> - TB welcomed Charlotte Jones to the meeting. Charlotte has recently taken up the role of Head of SEND. Amanda Hana has been appointed START Team Manager and will start on 4 January. <u>Questions and Comments</u> RF - Following today's DfE announcement, there is confusion about the opportunity for schools to have an additional INSET day on 18 December and how this would affect schools' requirement to continue 'track and trace' work into the holiday period. RF asked what information and support the LA could give. TB - Further national guidance is expected on 9 December and information/guidance will go out to schools through Headlines. Specific questions can be raised at the 11 December School Cell meeting.</p> <p>5 High Needs Recovery Plan Update – Tim Browne <i>Reference 'Dedicated Schools Grant Recovery Plan' report to Full Cabinet 5 Nov 2020</i> The accumulated overspend is still projected to be £8.6m at year-end. There are a number of initiatives planned for the next three years which, based on a number of assumptions, should bring the in-year budget back to break even. The LA is pressing hard for a national solution to the accumulated debt as it is accepted that we cannot manage this by taking funding from the young people who need it now. There has been increasing pressure in the system since 2017, with 19.4% growth in EHCPs in the last full year and, based on new requests since September and assuming they continue at the same rate, a 39% increase this year. DG was pleased to know that the LA had no intention of requesting a top-slice from schools to support High Needs.</p> <p>6 School Funding 2021-22 - Steve Fenton, Stuart McHale <u>Central Services, Pupil Growth, Retained Duties for All Schools</u> <i>Reference 'School Funding 2021-22 - Central Services' report</i> Forum has a responsibility to take a view on permitting the funding of centrally held items. Some years ago Forum agreed its budget strategy to passport all funding to schools and EY budgets and as part of that continuing strategy, the LA is asking to maintain the 2021-22 central budgets at 2020-21 levels. Recommendations are: - Growth Fund - continues at £350k, there will be sufficient funds in the Schools Block to maintain that level. The Fund will underspend this year due to the stalling, due to Covid, of a number of initiatives, including St Augustine's expansion. Any under (or over) spend would be carried forward to the following year. - Licencing Fees - is set at the level of grant received, with no impact on schools.</p>	<p>SF</p> <p>EdSEND</p>
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- Historic Commitments - The Government has cut this grant to below the level required to fulfil the LA's annual Prudential Borrowing commitment of £1.1m. However the DfE has agreed that this is a protected budget and will top-up the difference.
- Early Years - Following a question at Forum last year, reports have now split the costs between staff and other services. The plan is to retain the contribution at £526k, with the percentage contribution reducing as annual funding increases, with a level of around 4% next year against a cap of 5% of total budget.
- Family Information Service - retain funding at £250k.
- Early Years Inclusion Fund - retain at £250k plus a HN top-up of £90k. This budget will form part of TB's review. Spend against this budget was £153k in 2018-19 and £217k in 2019-20. It is appreciated that take-up this year has been affected by Covid.
- EY Contingency Fund - £130k helps to manage volatility in monies paid out and the lagging of grants received.
- Primary Schools Contingency - this £100k (£6.40pp) de-delegation is used as a pool largely to support mainstream primary schools faced with redundancies to avoid going into deficit budget.
- TU Facilities Time - Forum has supported reducing the cost from its high point of £7.50pp to a proposed 2021-22 level of £5.50pp, with the future goal of achieving £5pp.

Members approved the proposals as contained in the report and appendices and as recommended by Finance Work Group.

General Duties for Maintained Schools Only

Reference 'School Funding 2021-22 - General Duties' report

Forum was asked to approve for 2021-22 the allocation of a financial contribution, fixed a number of years ago and subsidised by the LA, for maintained mainstream, special schools and PRUs at levels of £66pp for mainstream and £165pp for special schools and PRUs. For mainstream, the figure represents the DfE's equivalent pupil rate, but for PRUs and special schools, a local arrangement was agreed by Forum three years ago at a level below the DfE rate. The contribution funds the LA's statutory duties that enable maintained schools to function.

When schools academise, their General Duties contribution is redirected from the LA to their MAT in order to fund support services. So General Duties contributions to the LA will reduce over time as more schools academise. SF was able to reassure members that the LA had no intention of raising the rates to make up the loss.

Appendices show the services in scope, the teams that carry out the work and the costs apportioned to each team (costs are apportioned by team rather than by specific activity.)

Questions

RF - Can the LA assure schools that there will be no increase in rate for any sector, despite loss of contributions due to academisations?

SF assured members that the LA cannot top-slice at a rate above the DfE set rate, ie. £66pp for maintained schools. Although the DfE rates for PRUs and special schools are £280pp and £247pp respectively, the LA will continue to honour its commitment to the reduced rate of £165pp as agreed by Forum for these settings.

Members approved the proposals as contained in the report and appendices and as recommended by Finance Work Group.

Covid-related Funding Items

Winter Support Scheme - The LA has received a Government grant to support families in significant financial need over the Christmas period. This is a combination of a supermarket food voucher (as per previous FSM arrangement), support for fuel costs in the new year and significant grant support for voluntary services in the community, ie. foodbank type arrangements.

FSM Voucher System - The LA has signed a contract with Ed & Red to supply the vouchers, with the distribution to be administered centrally rather than through schools. A £30 voucher will be issued to every child currently eligible for FSM (excluding Universal Infant FSM), before schools break up. A communication will go out to schools, for passing onto parents, together with a briefing note for schools. It is not expected that schools will be a line of support for parents, but it is likely that families will contact schools with any questions. Information will be made available on websites and other channels and the LA's

<p>7</p>	<p>Connect Service will be fully briefed to respond to queries as a 'helpline' arrangement. Covid-related Claims - The opportunity for schools to submit a financial claim to the DfE for additional costs incurred between March and June has been reopened and runs until 22 December. No information is known yet about the opportunity to claim for beyond June.</p> <p>Work Group Reports <u>EdSEND - Louise Minter</u> Members accepted the report. <u>Questions</u> RF - Current compliance with the 20 week EHCP process limit is 93%, with the aim of reaching a sustained 95%, is this likely to drop in the short term? TB - there is a risk that the figure will drop if we are unable to secure additional resources, which are currently being sought. Solihull's number of assessment and Plan applications is rising more quickly than national figures, no regional data is available yet. <u>SSSAB - Louise Minter</u> Members accepted the report. It was noted that League Tables will not be in general distribution this year, however Performance Tables will be used by Ofsted for future inspections. <u>Finance WG - David Lewis</u> Members accepted the report. It was noted that HN spend had increased by £200k since September, against the Independent School Fees budget. Eight projects are currently in scope to expand in-borough capacity. These will take time to come on-line and will form part of a three-year improvement plan which also includes interventions in mainstream schools to ensure all are capable of catering for a greater complexity of need. DL recommended members look at the options now available for insurance. The RPA has now been extended to maintained schools and the LA has renegotiated its SAIF scheme which, as well as being competitive on price, also includes cover, at no additional cost, for items such as wraparound and nursery provision.</p>	<p>Members</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Implications of Covid-19 on Schools - Antoinette Fisher AF, LM and LMc will be preparing a letter to go to the DfE and local MPs regarding the implications of Covid-19 on schools (also reference f40 papers circulated to Forum members today). AF invited members to share their thoughts: DG - North Solihull secondaries report a huge increase in mental health issues amongst young people and their families as their biggest challenge. This will not be short-lived and is showing through in pupil behaviour and their inability to cope. CS - The eligibility to claim for additional costs is stymied by limited timeframes in which to claim, inability to claim if a school has reserves, restricted claim categories and inability to claim for post-June spend. Cleaning costs have been a significant spend and IT, both in terms of additional investment in school systems and kit to support students at home. Loss of income from clubs has a significant impact. MM - Additional £20k spent on washbasins and £000s on a marquee as the school has insufficient space to house additional washing facilities. With 85 additional Covid-related duties for teachers, additional staff have had to be taken on. Keeping a school open and safe has come at a huge cost to schools. RF - Loss of income from after-school clubs and wraparound care has had an enormous impact. JD - Reynalds Cross has hired additional toilet facilities. LM - The mental health and wellbeing of schools' senior leadership teams is under severe strain; without the LA's support some would feel very damaged by it. TB - It is clear that school leaders have been under phenomenal pressure and the LA will continue to support their case in any way it can.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting PLEASE NOTE THE 12 January 2021 MEETING HAS BEEN CANCELLED A replacement date will be set for February/March time in due course.</p>	