

Minutes of the Schools Forum Meeting

Meeting title:	Schools Forum Meeting	
Date/time	22 June 2022, 17.30-19.00	
Members:	<p><u>School Members</u> Kevin McDonnell (Special School Headteacher rep) Asarena Simon (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Sian Davies (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Robin Warren (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Lisa Neidich (Maintained Pri Governor rep) Jane Heffernan (Maintained Sec Headteacher rep) Wendy Mason (Maintained Sec Governor rep) Lisa Clarke (Nursery School Headteacher rep) Richard Brown (PRU rep, Headteacher)</p>	<p><u>Academy Members</u> Claire Syms (Academy Principal rep) Phoebe Clapham (Governor rep)</p> <p><u>Alternative Provision</u> Anna Cain (Special Academy rep)</p> <p><u>Special School Members</u> Jo Clare (Special School rep)</p> <p><u>Non School Members</u> Cathy Murphy (EY/PVI rep) Adrian Cottrel (16-19 rep) David Davies (Staff rep)</p>
Additional attendees:	Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Cabinet member for Education, Young People and Children Social Care Annie Gammon (DoE, Hackney Education) Naeem Ahmed (Director of Finance (C&Ed), Hackney Council) Jo Larkin (Head of Human Resources, Hackney Education) Ophelia Carter (Head of Schools Finance) Sajeed Patni (Interim Head of Finance, Hackney Education) Monica Imbert (Head of Education Operations, Hackney Education) Chenelle Blake (Clerk to the Forum)	
Apologies:	Lisa Clarke (Nursery School Headteacher rep), Richard Brown (PRU rep, Headteacher), Wendy Mason (Maintained Sec Governor rep)	
Absent:	Adrian Cottrel (16-19 rep), Cathy Murphy (EY/PVI rep), Phoebe Clapham (Governor rep)	

	Item
1.	<p>The Schools Forum Chair welcomed attendees to the last meeting of the academic year.</p> <p>Apologies above were noted.</p> <p>It was noted that Annie Gammon would join the meeting at 6:00pm.</p>
2.	<p>Minutes of the last meeting held 20 April 2022</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record of the meeting held 20 April 2022.</p> <p>2.2. Action log</p> <p>It was noted that actions recorded in the action log were either complete or addressed on the agenda of this or following meetings.</p> <p>2.3. Matters arising with written responses:</p> <p>2.3.1 Data on severance costs for the last year</p>

	<p>It was agreed that the written response answered the Member's question raised at the last meeting.</p> <p>2.3.2 Use of unallocated surplus funds from growth and school contingency It was noted that this would be addressed under agenda item 4.</p> <p>2.3.3 Claim back of 20% VAT on refurbishments It was agreed that the written response answered the Member's question raised at the last meeting.</p> <p>2.3.4 Confirmation of the 3 or 4 academies and free schools who have agreed to contribute to the trade union facilities</p> <p>Jo Larkin advised that the following academy schools have agreed to contribute to the trade union facilities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Northwold 2. Petchey 3. Bsix <p>It was noted that there is a possible 4th school and it would be a good position if it is a secondary school</p> <p>A number of schools have agreed in principle to contribute; however, they still need to consider the total amount of contributions etc. 3 schools have refused.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Update on recommendations from Working Group, including support for redundancy payment criteria</p> <p>It was noted that the draft criteria to assess funding of school redundancies, a draft email seeking expression of interest from School Forum members to be appointed to the redundancy panel, along with a draft self nomination form were circulated for Members' consideration and comment.</p> <p>Monica Imbert advised that Hackney is keen for School Forum feedback and views, despite not requiring Schools Forum approval.</p> <p>Monica provided context on the redundancy issue raised by Schools Forum members; this led to the formation of a working group, which has recommended a redundancy panel to consider business cases in line with a redundancy payment criteria.</p> <p>It was noted that it is proposed to convene the redundancy panel meetings on a termly basis; Schools Forum Members were invited to give a steer on dates to avoid in each term.</p> <p>Member question: Will the panel receive from the requesting school a set of information for consideration or will the school be required to present to the panel? <i>Sajeed Patni responded - a proforma will be completed and submitted by the Headteacher, which will be provided to the panel as a pack of information for consideration.; the decision will be made on this basis.</i></p> <p>Member question: Are termly panels frequent enough, as this might be a long time for schools to wait when undergoing redundancies? <i>Monica Imbert responded - this frequency could be increased; however, dates will be set for the academic year, to allow Members enough time to commit to being on the panel and for Headteachers to have ample time to prepare their business case.</i></p> <p>Member comment: It would be helpful to include examples as an appendix to the criteria; Sajeed Patni noted this suggestion.</p> <p>Member question: The criteria makes reference to 'where a school has refused to engage with the local authority's policies and procedures'; does this mean a refusal to engage historically or currently?</p> <p>Member comment: It would be helpful to provide clarity on timeframes for the local authority not meeting the redundancy costs.</p> <p>Member question: What is the statutory criteria for Local Authorities to fund school redundancy costs?</p>

The Chair responded - the statutory guidance states the local authority will meet the cost of the redundancy.

Member comment: The document should clearly state the criteria for both sides, making it clear when it does and does not apply; Sajeed Patni noted this and suggested lifting this directly from the statutory guidance.

Member comment: Schools should feel that they have a good chance of having necessary redundancy costs funded by the local authority; taking into consideration the legal position of local authorities. Therefore, it is suggested that the criteria is stated first, followed by the reasons why a local authority would not cover the requested redundancy costs.

The Chair emphasised the local authorities responsibility to clarify when they will not cover the costs of school redundancies; this creates a transparent process and document.

Member comment: It would be helpful to know what excess surplus balances are, so it is suggested to insert a numerical figure.

Ophelia Carter responded - The excess is likely to be a percentage rather than a numerical figure.

Member question: In relation to savings not being replaced with new expenditure, how will the local authority check that the role is not being replaced /renamed and that the redundancy is not just a short term fix for financial improvement?

Sajeed Patni responded - Ultimately, schools that have falling rolls will have financial pressure, which is alleviated by making a post redundant, deleting the post from the structure and making a budget saving. This saving aims to improve the financial position of the school; therefore, the post is not to be replaced. In light of this, there is a reliance upon schools to appreciate this requirement and to ensure they do not try to replace the expenditure.

Member comment: This should not be a punitive measure for schools; instead, the local authority could undertake to monitor the budget for a period of time, to ensure what is stated does not happen.

Sajeed Patni responded - It is intended for the business case to show that by making savings on the redundancies, it will allow the school to recover its financial position. Additionally, there is a financial monitoring and analysis aspect within the process.

Member question: How does the second point relate to the bullet point referring to 'staffing reductions arising from deficits caused by factors within the schools control'? Is a falling roll the only factor considered as being outside the schools control with setting the budget?

Sajeed Patni responded - The first section is a direct lift from the statutory guidance, clarifying where a local authority would not meet the costs of school redundancies. The second section aims to show what the panel will consider as a part of the business case submitted by the school and decision making.

Member question: Do the items in section 2 represent how a school would qualify for redundancy payments and the items in section 1 represent the criteria where a school would not qualify? Are there any other criteria, except falling rolls, listed in section 2, which would mean you would qualify for redundancy?

Sajeed Patni responded - There is no additional criteria.

Draft email

Member comment: There are a number of typos in the draft email, which need to be corrected.

Monica Imbert advised that Hackney is proposing termly, however is open to further consideration.

Member comment: It would be most helpful to forward plan all panel dates for the next academic year and set half termly, rather than termly panel dates.

Self nomination form

It was suggested to include a declaration of interest signature box, for the School Forum representative to declare that they are not employed or directly associated with the school requesting redundancy costs funding. It was agreed to include this on the self nomination form.

Member question: Is the mechanism for redundancy support payments agreed by the panel, a matter for consideration by Schools Forum or the local authority?

	<p><i>Ophelia Carter responded - This is a matter for the local authority to consider and agree.</i></p>
4.	<p>Schools' Contingency and Growth Fund Outturn 2021/22</p> <p>Ophelia Carter advised that the report outlines the allocations made from 2021/22 de-delegated contingency and use of the growth fund.</p> <p>It was noted that £766,460 was approved for de-delegation from the Schools Block in 2021/22; this was made up of £241,680 of schools contingency and the remaining £524,780 to support schools as outlined in the Good to Great Policy.</p> <p>It was further noted that the Growth fund is top sliced from the Schools Block, with the criteria for use set by Schools Forum. In 2021/22 the budget set aside for growth was £143,600; payments made are summarised in table 2 of the report.</p> <p>Ophelia advised that it is planned to carry forward the School Contingency surplus of £157,953 to 2022/23. The balance of the Schools Growth fund of £121,600 will be used to fund the growth of Haggerston school in 2022/23.</p> <p>School Forum Members noted the contents of the report, with no questions or comments.</p>
5.	<p>Schools' surplus balances 2021/22</p> <p>Ophelia Carter advised that the report is an analysis of the final reserves held by Hackney maintained schools as at 31 March 2022, informs of the revenue deficit balances held by schools at the end of the last financial year and highlights the schools that may be subject to automatic claw back of surplus balances.</p> <p>Overall, school reserves have decreased from £16.7million in 2020/21 to £16.1 million this year (2021/22) This is a reduction of £600,000.</p> <p>In relation to deficit schools, all those carrying forward a deficit balance in excess of 5%, have or are in the process of submitting a deficit recovery plan; this plan must be approved by the local authority.</p> <p>All schools listed at table 3, paragraph 4.3 are in receipt of support from Hackney Education; this support is for both managing finances and HR issues involved in the process of making efficiency savings.</p> <p>It was noted that the schools in 2021/22 carrying forward balances in excess of 5% (for secondary) and 8% (for primary and special) are listed in the report. These schools are required to supply documentary evidence detailing their plans for use of their surplus balances, known as a Surplus Spend Plan. At Appendix B, Hackney analyses the last 3 financial years, to review the movement from one year to the next.</p> <p>Schools Forum was advised of the schools which fall into the balance control mechanism (surplus balances over 12% for 3 consecutive years), which could trigger an automatic claw back (listed in the report).</p> <p>It was noted that Hackney is currently assessing the Surplus Spend Plan of 1 school, due to the changing circumstances. The Leadership team of this school intends to review the plan for the new 2022/23 academic year; this also involves some building works.</p> <p>Member comment: One special school shows very healthy figures based on the appendices to this report; however, it is apparent that falling rolls is deemed a financial pressure, however expansion of places is not deemed a financial pressure; this is incorrect. As Governors, it is important to make decisions that are sustainable for the long term; in light of this, a lot of work must be done behind the scenes to address dealing with sustainability issues, so special schools can be a full partner in the expansion of places and not put in the position where they are asked to make decisions which are financial unsustainable</p> <p><i>Ophelia Carter responded - The Interim Head of High Needs and School places is aware of these concerns across the borough and there is an internal meeting before the end of the summer term to discuss these matters.</i></p> <p>Member comment: The funding process is a little unclear about whether there is allowance for any school or setting to build up a 50% surplus; therefore it is assumed that there is a projection about capital, however it</p>

	<p>seems a little strange for this to come through pupil funding. In these instances, it appears that the school is an organisation that has been significantly over funded for years, with no query from the local authority.</p> <p>Member question: The control mechanism of claw-backs and the consideration of the Surplus Spend Plan intends to tackle this issue; however, when will this be implemented, as there are currently no claw back incidents taking place? <i>Nick Wilson responded - [It is assumed that this in reference to New Regent College] There is current activity for change in funding, to be implemented from September 2022.</i></p> <p>Member question: This is in relation to New Regents Colleges (NRC) and their charges; is the setting contributing to the high level of surplus? NRC has higher fees compared to some other providers. Annie Gammon responded - In light of NRC being moved into a new building, there was an expectation that the setting would have to pay more running costs and maintenance, some of which is still being worked on. There have been discussions with NRC and as highlighted by Nick Wilson, there is expected to be a change from the next academic year. In relation to fees, this will also be addressed through discussions.</p> <p>Schools Forum members noted the contents of the report with no further questions or comments.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Deficit Budget Policy</p> <p>Ophelia Carter advised that the policy has been formed and is for Schools Forum Members to note.</p> <p>Member comment: There should be earlier intervention and practical help on budgets, to avoid the growth of any deficits and threats to staffing levels and pupil provision. <i>Ophelia Carter responded - We work closely with schools on this, with some schools also targeted for support.</i></p> <p>It was suggested that the policy be amended to reference support available for schools and to exemplify the monitoring role; Ophelia Carter noted this suggestion.</p> <p>Annie Gammon advised that the system in place for working closely with schools with a deficit, has been more robust over the last few years. Advice has been provided to Headteachers and Governors to advise, support and monitor changes.</p> <p>Annie further agreed with the comment in relation to keeping a closer and taking action earlier.</p> <p>Member question: Can there be more specific training on financial management for Headteachers and in particular a financial induction for those who are new to Headship, as this is a challenging area? It is important to support schools in a preventative, rather than a reactive way. Ophelia Carter noted the suggestions and agreed to take it forward.</p> <p>Schools Forum members noted the contents of the report with no further questions or comments.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Raising Achievement in Primary Schools: interventions for under-achieving groups 2021-22</p> <p>Stephen Hall advised the report outlines the strategies undertaken and funding used to reduce performance gaps for underperforming groups in 2021/22. This is presented to Schools Forum annually and Members are required to agree the specific groups for which funds should be spent (detailed under paragraph 3 of the report).</p> <p>It was noted that Schools Forum requested to widen parameter groups and make them less restrictive, following a report on the Travellers Service, presented in February 2022; therefore, this report requires Members to make a decision on the groups suggested and agreed on how the groups will be decided i.e. through data sets.</p> <p>Stephen noted that there was an error in the report under paragraph 3.2; the correct total of overspend is £31,000 coming out of the Hackney Education, not de-delegated budget. Members noted this clarification.</p> <p>There are systemic approaches, which include developing leaders, support from the travellers service, curriculum provision resources and the School Improvement Partner Programme.</p>

	<p>There has been a broad reach in relation to the number of schools; however, hard data will be provided later in the year.</p> <p>Schools Forum Members were asked to confirm if there is an appetite for broadening the parameters of the groups detailed in the report. The following comments/questions were raised:</p> <p>Member comment - It is worth evaluating the impact, through review of next year's data.</p> <p>Member question - The underachieving groups have remained the same for the past few years; are the most efficient programs in place to help improve the outcomes for these pupils? Should we widen to the other groups i.e groups new to the country, such as refugee groups? <i>Annie Gammon responded - 15-20 years ago there were groups who underachieved compared to others nationally; however, across the Hackney system the quality of education has been on a journey with 97% schools now judged as Good or Outstanding; notwithstanding that there are still gaps which need to be addressed. Hackney Education will do some analysis and will come up with strategies for School Forum to endorse or comment, with supporting data.</i></p> <p>Stephen Hall advised that these programmes were rejuvenated 2-3 years ago. It would be helpful to be informed about the groups, however once the data becomes available it will be possible to review the trajectory.</p> <p>Member comment: We should not tie the hands of the local authority; there should not be delays to implement changes before the next Schools Forum meeting, due to unavailable data.</p> <p>The Chair summarised Schools Forum's agreement with the potential need to expand to any underachieving groups identified through data analysis and Hackney Education's professional judgement around how this should happen for the next year, while we await the available data.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Consultations</p> <p>Ophelia Carter advised that the report alerts School Forum members to the four live DfE consultations, with links to access online surveys.</p> <p>It was noted that Hackney Education will be submitting a response to SEND review and will implement the direct national funding formula. Copy of responses will be shared.</p> <p>Member comment: All schools should be encouraged to complete the de-delegation consultation, as it refers to changes to the national funding formula, which will have an impact on all schools. <i>Annie Gammon agreed with this comment; the more responses from hHackney both collectively and individually, the better.</i></p> <p><i>Annie further noted that in relation to Hackney's response to the SEND Review consultation, there will be four sessions to gain feedback from 2 parents and 2 professionals. This will be used to finalise the Hackney Green paper response.</i></p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p><u>Schools Supplementary Grant</u></p> <p>Kevin McDonnell brought School Forum Members attention to the Schools Supplementary Grant, designed to provide additional support costs to health and social care levy etc; This will go directly into mainstream schools and it is welcomed; however, a similar fund for special schools and AP settings, is not going directly to schools. There is additional money going into higher needs budgets for local authorities, however DfE guidance states 'for special schools and AP settings to discuss how their top pot will change as a result of additional money going in'.</p> <p>Kevin advised that he has raised this question raised with Hackney, however has not received a response. In light of this, Kevin would like to convey on behalf of special schools and AP settings, the need for reassurance that this additional money going into the high needs block will not be used to fill a gap in the budget, but instead will go to the settings it is intended to; despite there not being a direct formula to support this.</p>

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	<p>The Chair acknowledged that the point raised by Kevin is not part of School Forum's remit, however it is in Schools Forum's interest to know that a response will be provided in due course.</p> <p>Nick Wilson advised of the intention to meet with special schools and AP settings before the end of term, to initiate these conversations.</p>
10.	<p>Dates for 2022/23</p> <p>Schools Forum Members were asked to note the dates for 2022/23 and advised that calendar invitations would be sent out in due course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 9 November 2022● 1 February 2023● 19 April 2023 - <i>held as training/development session for Schools Forum Members</i>● 21 June 2023
11.	<p>Summary of actions agreed:</p> <p>There were no actions agreed.</p>