

Minutes of the Schools Forum Meeting

Meeting title:	Schools Forum Meeting	
Date/time	1 February 2023, 17.30-19.00	
Members:	<p><u>School Members</u> Kevin McDonnell (Special School Headteacher rep) Asarena Simon (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Robin Warren (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Sian Davies (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Lisa Neidich (Maintained Pri Governor rep) Andy English (Maintained Sec Headteacher 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) David Davies (Staff rep)</p>
Additional attendees:	<p>Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Cabinet member for Education, Young People and Children Social Care Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet member for Families, Early Years and Play Jacquie Burke (Group Director, Children and Education) Paul Senior (Interim DoE and Inclusion, Hackney Education) Jason Marantz (Interim Assistant Director, School Standards & Improvement) Donna Thomas (Head of Early years, Early Help and Well-being) Naeem Ahmed (Director of Finance (C&Ed), Hackney Council) Sajeed Patni (Interim Head of Finance, Children & Education) Ophelia Carter (Head of Schools Finance) Kathryn Lloyd (Interim Head of Education Operations, Hackney Education) Chris Scott, (Group Accountant, Children and Education Finance)</p> <p>Chenelle Blake (Outgoing Clerk to the Forum) Ann Yiadom (Incoming Clerk to the Forum)</p> <p>Martin Bradford (LB Hackney) - Observer</p>	
Apologies:	Nick Wilson (Head of High Needs)	
Members Absent:	Kevin McDonnell (Special School Headteacher rep), David Davies (Staff rep)	

	Item
1.	<p>Welcome and introductions</p> <p>Sian Davies, Schools Forum Chair welcomed members, additional attendees and observers to the meeting Apologies above were noted.</p> <p>Sian welcomed and introduced the following new Hackney Officers and Schools Forum members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kathryn Lloyd, Interim Head of Education Operations • Ann Yiadom, Strategy, Policy and Governance Officer - incoming Clerk to the Forum
2.	<p>2.1. Minutes of the last meeting held 9 November 2022</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record of the meeting held on 9 November 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</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Administration arrangements for allocation of grants to schools: annual report 2023-24</p> <p>Ophelia Carter noted that the report serves to inform the Schools Forum of the grants arrangements for schools in Hackney, outlining how the grants are distributed and how any Department for Education (DfE) funding is allocated.</p> <p>It is recommended that the Schools Forum note the content of the report.</p> <p>It is anticipated that most grants will continue with the same terms of reference as in previous years. The key grants that all schools have access to are listed in the report with the addition of a new grant, namely The Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) 2023-24.</p> <p>The 2022 Autumn Statement announced that the core schools budget will increase by £2 billion in the 2023-24 financial year, over and above totals announced at the Spending Review 2021. The government is seeking to achieve this through allocation of MSAG; a breakdown for the funding rate of the grant is included in the report.</p> <p>The Local Authority and academies will receive payments of this grant in two tranches. Local Authorities will receive the first payment in May followed by another in October 2023 while academies will receive their first payments in June followed by a second payment in September 2023.</p> <p>Members were advised that the Local Authority is proposing not to make any changes to the current arrangement of allocation and distribution of grants.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Administration arrangements for allocation of Early Years Funding 2023-24</p> <p>Donna Thomas informed the Schools Forum of the annual process reminding members that the current data is indicative due to the census week. Settings have until 5 February to load their census return by which time definitive data will be available in order to finalise the budget.</p> <p>Members are asked to note the report but can also share their views or comment.</p> <p>The Early Years and National Funding Formula implemented in 2017 sets the standard rate for all providers irrespective of settings. The aim is to establish a consistent framework and hourly rate for all eligible 2,3 and 4 year olds to receive free entitlement.</p> <p>The DfE sets the hourly rate by which they fund local authorities. In the case of Hackney Council, the hourly rate has increased by £0.40p for 3-4 year olds and £0.62p for eligible 2 year olds. 95% of the hourly rate has to be passed on to settings for 3 and 4 year olds, retaining 5% to fund statutory early years services. For 2 year olds, 98% is passed onto settings allowing for 2% to be retained by the Local Authority. This is a higher amount than settings received in the previous year although lower than the rate the government funds the Local Authority.</p> <p>Donna shared that settings have complained about not being funded enough. However, Hackney adheres to the rate set by the DfE, who also set the amount to be passed through and retained. Neighbouring Local Authorities such as Islington get funded at a higher rate than Hackney and have a protected rate which has caused providers disquiet.</p> <p>Member question: Can you explain why Islington has the protected rate?</p> <p>Donna explained that the rate was worked out based on the last census return and property rate. It was established that Hackney received a lower rate despite limited variants to Islington as such Hackney urged the DfE to make adjustments. The DfE will make necessary adjustments but have had to keep Islington's rates</p>

protected for now due to sustainability issues for providers as it could otherwise adversely affect settings from remaining in operation.

Donna informed members about the 3-4 year old entitlement usually being top-sliced for the early years inclusion fund as local authorities must make provision for children with SEND and emerging needs. The inclusion fund acts as a bridge for children with emerging needs and the high needs block. There has been a noticeable demand for the inclusion fund with the need to top-up the fund using the contingency.

As the funding Hackney receives is determined by the spring term census, the Local Authority does not receive any additional money when children join settings after the budget is set by the DfE. This highlights the importance of having a contingency in place so that Hackney can continue to fund children joining at a later stage.

Due to the increased demand it has been decided not to have a separate contingency for 2023-24 but to increase the inclusion fund by £200,000, managing one pot instead of two. The amount will be adjusted, if needed, once census data has been received. Settings are then able to make applications to the inclusion fund based on a set criteria to draw down additional funds for children which tops up their entitlement. The inclusion fund is open to all children irrespective of settings and includes children in nursery classes as the funding follows the child. Funding can then be used for the provision of 1 to 1 workers but also resources, training and support for children to access the curriculum.

Over the years an increased demand for the inclusion fund for children with emerging needs has been noted for children who should have had an EHCP in place. This has been due to the rates being similar to that of a plan. As such, the use of the inclusion fund has been revisited to establish how it was used and identify what settings needed support with. Settings challenged Hackney by stating that the process lacked transparency, that they were unable to determine how they are being funded and on what basis criteria was being applied. Donna shared that a meeting took place with a group of managers followed by a wider consultation with settings. A benchmarking exercise was carried out and it was found that Hackney's rates are higher than other Local Authorities, equalling EHCP rates. Applications for EHCPs were not made as settings would not receive any more support. This has now been revised with settings and weekly briefing sessions have taken place to provide settings with clarity around the rates being there as a top-up not as a replacement and that settings can now make individual applications. Monthly application panels will also now take place instead of termly panels to make the process easier. Donna is aware that this will benefit some more than others.

Member comment: The number of children needing support in the early years is going up. How will the impact of changes put in place be measured and what will it look like? As a maintained nursery school, money has never been requested from the inclusion fund; it is not clear how exactly it will work or if it will go directly to someone's budget or whether an application has to be made in relation to a particular child. If applying for it in relation to a particular child, how is the impact of that money being worked? If EHCP applications aren't being made, are they now going to do that and what is the impact? It would be great if there is an increase in money for maintained nursery schools but members are to be reminded that maintained nursery schools only go from one year to the next with the government, which still puts them in a difficult position as they never know what the funding will be and that is always a challenge.

Donna explained that nursery schools are not expected to apply and noted that as part of meeting the criteria settings need to evidence how they are supporting children's needs before making an application. The additional resource is for children with emerging needs to see if it can make a difference to them accessing the curriculum. In order to measure the impact, it is being proposed to block funding a child for two terms based on their needs with recommendations made, clearly outlining what settings are expected to do with the funding and how outcomes should be met. The expectation is that an application for an EHCP is then put in place should a child require further support.

Member comment: Can Donna share how the inclusion fund was used for 2022-23 to see the allocation.

Action 1: Donna Thomas to share how the inclusion fund was used for 2022-23 at the next Schools Forum meeting

Donna further informed members that Hackney has been invited for a meeting for a new formula for maintained nursery schools, suggesting that movement on working towards an achievable funding model in the coming years is possible and it is hoped that something more long term for maintained nursery schools will be in place.

5. Raising Achievement in Primary Schools: interventions for under-achieving groups 2022-23

The chair informed members that the data was not available in time for a de-delegation decision to be made as such the report is just for noting although any comments are welcomed.

Jason Marantz shared that the data is the first dataset in two years following the covid pandemic, explaining that it was not possible to obtain the data from the DfE in time for the autumn meeting. The data will continue to be reviewed and compared with the view to obtaining insights and present to scrutiny.

A summary of the evaluation of last year's programmes is included in the report.

Historically, the primary raising achievement programs focused on Black Caribbean and Turkish Kurdish / Turkish Cypriot children. Owing to the absence of assessments over the last two years and the impact of lock down, it was anticipated that a variety of themes would emerge.

Key highlights:

- There were favourable comparisons for KS1 & 2, fairsing above national levels in all areas.
- Black Caribbean and Turkish Kurdish / Turkish Cypriot pupils still underperform generally however, the gap in maths is smaller yet higher or in line with national data for the Black Caribbean groups.
- KS1 performance of Indian pupils in writing and maths was found to be lower in boys which has not been seen prior. This cohort is small in Hackney but will require further interrogation to understand the narrative.
- KS2 data indicates that Black and Turkish Kurdish / Turkish Cypriot pupils have the lowest proportion of pupils achieving; gap remains in comparison to other groups in the borough.
- The Caribbean group fared slightly lower when looking at reading, writing and maths combined than the Turkish Kurdish / Turkish Cypriot cohort and when compared to other groups in Hackney.
- Nationally, there is a gap in the Black Caribbean group for reading, writing and maths combined and are not performing in line with national expectations with reading and maths; however are in line with writing.
- KS2 performance of Indian pupils again highlighted a trend that needs probing in reading and maths (assessed by test) although not in writing (assessed by teachers).
- 28% of Traveller pupils, who make up a small part of the 'other' group, achieved expected standards in reading, writing and maths highlighting underachievement.

Member comment: With the future decision making in mind, there are primary schools suffering significantly from falling rolls who then might have a small number of cohorts but will still require support as if being in larger schools with larger numbers of kids. Is there a risk of those schools who are already losing resources, losing more resources, because, if going to put in an intervention it can cost as much or as little to put it in for two kids as it can for five. What is the thinking about that?

Jason acknowledged the point made as valid and valuable. It may be the case that there are key underperforming groups in the area targeted for more resources although a school could have another group requiring support which could be proportionally bigger e.g. Traveller or Indian pupils. The report summary reaffirms the commitment to Black Caribbean pupils and Turkish Kurdish, Turkish Cypriot pupils when making decisions but to also decide on whether to continue to allow for flexibility to have a school by school conversation. It is correct that interventions can cost the same especially for 3 of the 4 programmes with the Project Reader being offered on a pupil by pupil basis although still having the same base cost.

Member comment: During covid, some primary schools had pupils who were less likely to go to school or access online learning. Does this have anything to do with the Indian group not achieving as well as they have in the past?

Jason echoed that this could be a hypothesis, but cannot be confirmed based on the data alone.

The Chair acknowledged the challenging environment noting the aforementioned high levels of children with needs coming into the system which will change the balance of outcomes as children travel through it.

<p>6.</p>	<p>Final Schools Budgets and Funding Formula 2023-24</p> <p>Ophelia shared that the report primarily serves to inform the Schools Forum of the final schools funding formula and individual schools budget allocation.</p> <p>Members are recommended to note the distribution of the 2023-24 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), the final 2023-23 schools formula and to also note the large roll variances on school budgets as shown in appendix B.</p> <p>The total DSG of £225M less a 0.5 top slice of £1.1M from the schools of high needs block less £278K growth give rise to £278M. After deducting recruitment for academies and delegated services, the remaining balance for distribution of maintained schools is £139M. Table 2 at 3.2 sets out this calculation.</p> <p>Ophelia shared additional key factors to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The loss of 536 pupils when comparing to the October 2022 and October 2021 census • Overall increase in primary and secondary funding rate averaging 5% which includes mainstream supplementary grant which was allocated separately in 2022-23 • 2023-24 onwards the national non-domestic rate will be excluded from schools block with budgets and payments being administered centrally by the EFSA • Individual estimates from NNDF was included for 2023-24 indicative budget recently issued to primary and secondary maintained school <p>In local formulas, where Hackney has been consistent with the 2022-23 NFF rate, this has been uplifted to 2023-24 NFF levels due to an increase. FSM for over 6 is the only factor that was lower which has been increased in the 2023-24 NFF rate.</p> <p>Primary AWPU is now 6.5% closer and secondary 4% closer to NFF levels. Allowable rate for MFG per pupil has remained the same as at 2022-23 at 0.17. Analysis of 2023-24 budget is in appendices A and B.</p> <p>Appendix A illustrates funding rates for 2022-23 and 2023-24 for both the local funding formula and NFF rates whilst Appendix B provides the breakdown of individual schools budget allocation for 2023-24.</p> <p>There are 2 models illustrated in the appendices, one showing a new formula distributed using 2023-24 roll which exemplifies the true impact of changes; the second model is the full NFF formula. Implementation at this stage would give rise to the reliance of 0.5% MFG for all schools.</p> <p>Schools are experiencing fall in rolls which generate larger adverse income variances. Majority of schools affected by this have through agreement with the local Local Authority, where feasible, been granted a temporary or permanent reduction in PAN. Other options for schools are being considered as outlined in the Estate strategy Paper. Ophelia further shared that the formula has been approved by the Director of Education and it is hoped that a clear link to existing priorities agreed in Hackney will be retained.</p> <p>Chair comment: In relation to falling rolls and the schools estate strategy for primary schools, the chair queried where the funding comes from for that expense and where the funding sits within the framework?</p> <p>Paul Senior explained that the current process is evolving and that a series of proposals is being worked through. As there is no separate central pot, local available resources will have to be explored in conjunction with schools that are in scope for potential closure and amalgamation. Paul further reassured members that conversations will take place at the appropriate level to take this forward.</p> <p>The chair highlighted the need for the Schools Forum to understand the risk of this impacting the schools budget and general school income.</p> <p>Paul noted that it will have to be evaluated but that processes are still at an early stage to be discussed. More information and clarity will be provided in the April meeting.</p> <p>Action 2: Add 'Funding for school estate strategy' to the next agenda (April)</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Distribution of High Needs Funding</p>

	<p>Following the request made by Schools Forum members at the November meeting for an illustration of how the high needs funding is used, Sajed Patni shared the section 2.1 return which is an annual return submitted to the DfE that becomes publicly available data.</p> <p>In 2021-22 there was an overspent by £6.2M. After taking into account circa £1.1M received from the schools block, the overall overspent came down to £5.1M; this has lowered the position although the overspent remains significant. The budget for 2023-24 has a similar distribution as in 2021-22.</p> <p>Sajeed further provided an outline of the current overall deficit on the council's account as a result of high needs overspend in recent years, which at the end of 2021-22 was just under £14M. For 2023-24 the deficit is expected to be circa £18M at the end of the financial year.</p> <p>Steps are being taken to address the overspent. For example, Hackney is part of tranche 2 of the DfE's Better Value Programme, with much of the work getting underway in the first quarter of this calendar year.</p> <p>Member comment: It was noted that the review of the special schools funding was issued today, which includes proposals for longer term solutions for the funding for all three SEND schools as well as a clear in-year solutions for Ickburgh School. In respect of this, it was queried when the proposal for the forecast cumulative deficit at Ickburgh school will become a confirmed decision?</p> <p>Paul noted that a forum for special schools was put in place in November where it became clear that there was an issue financially. A forensic special school accountant was commissioned to carry out an emergency review. The accountant has met with special school heads and a series of proposals emerged that have been shared with special school leaders who will be asked to have conversations with their chair of governors and their governing body. Depending on how subsequent conversation with governors goes and the feedback received Paul will determine how to proceed and request the chair to enact an emergency process such as an in-between meeting if needed.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Any other Business</p> <p>The next Schools Forum meeting is scheduled to take place on 19 April which has been held for training. It was suggested to provisionally set aside the date for Paul Senior to undertake an implications conversation of the estate strategy.</p> <p>Members were made aware of the formal appointment of Jason Marantz as Assistant Director of Education. Schools Forum member congratulated Jason on his appointment</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Remaining dates for 2022/23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 19 April 2023 (<i>date set aside for training</i>) ● 21 June 2023
<p>10.</p>	<p>Summary of actions agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Action 1: Donna Thomas to share how the inclusion fund was used for 2022-23 at the next Schools Forum meeting ● Action 2: Add 'Funding for school estate strategy' to the next agenda (April)