

Minutes of the Schools Forum Meeting

Meeting title:	Schools Forum Meeting	
Date/time	23 June 2021, 17.30-19.00 Meeting convened virtually via Google Meets	
Membership:	<p><u>School Members</u> KT Khan (Special School Headteacher rep) Asarena Simon (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Caroline Tyson (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Sian Davies (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Alex McKenzie (Maintained Pri Governor rep) Lee Laudat-Scott (Maintained Pri Governor 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 Anntoinnette Bramble, Cabinet member for Education, Young People and Children Social Care Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet member for Families, Early Years and Play Annie Gammon (DoE, Hackney Education) Naeem Ahmed (Director of Finance (C&Ed), Hackney Council) Stephen Hall (Assistant Director, School Standards and Progress) Tracey Caldwell (Head of Education Operations, Hackney Education) Chenelle Blake (Clerk to the Forum)	
Apologies:	Alex McKenzie (<i>Forum Vice Chair</i>), Cathy Murphy (EY/PVI rep), Lee Laudat-Scott (Maintained Pri Governor rep), Lisa Clarke (Nursery School Headteacher rep), Richard Brown (PRU rep, Headteacher)	

	Item
1.	<p>Welcome and introductions</p> <p>Members and additional attendees were welcomed to the meeting.</p> <p>It was noted that the Head of Schools Finance, Ophelia Carter sent apologies; therefore, the reports under agenda items 4 and 5 would be presented by Tracey Caldwell, Head of Education Operations.</p> <p>It was noted that members were asked to submit questions in advance of the meeting; no questions were received.</p> <p>Jane Hefeferanan informed members of the agreement recorded within the Hackney Organisational Change Policy, which relates to paying point 7 additional cost enhancements for redundancy; this requires schools undergoing a reorganisation to make further high cost redundancies. Due to Hackney not having a redundancy fund in place, schools in financial deficit are forced to make further redundancy enhancements. HR have advised that the original agreement cannot be located, so it was proposed to SF members, to review the policy to establish where the agreement originated from.</p>

The Chair advised that a review of the Hackney Organisational Change Policy has been placed on the

next meeting agenda for a full discussion regarding redundancies.

Annie Gammon noted the various issues arising from what Jane brought to the attention of SF members, particularly regarding considerations for Hackney to have a redundancy fund and the need to consider the legal implications. It was agreed that a report addressing the above be circulated and presented at the meeting in November.

Jane noted redundancies made in the Education department last year and requested further information on how they were funded and whether they were funded through the Hackney Education budget fund. It was noted that schools are required to fund redundancies centrally from their budgets and it should be fair across the board; it was agreed that a response be prepared by Annie Gammon outside the meeting and be circulated to all SF members.

Action 1: Annie Gammon to prepare and circulate a response to all SF members, advising how redundancies made in the Hackney Education department were funded last year.

The Chair noted that there were no decisions to be made on any of the 3 reports presented.

2. 2.1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record of the meeting held 3 February 2021 and training notes from the session held 21 April 2021 were also agreed as reflective of the session.

The Chair thanked the officers for preparing material for the training, which was useful and informative for members.

2.2. Action log - It was noted that actions recorded in the action log were complete; however, an action relating to the recovery of NNDR data was omitted from the log; it was noted that Tracey Caldwell would provide a response outside the meeting.

Action 2: Tracey Caldwell to provide a written response to SF members regarding the NNDR data.

2.3. Matters arising;

There were no matters arising.

3 Raising Achievement in Primary and Secondary Schools: Evaluation of interventions for under-achieving groups

This report outlines the expenditure of funds to benefit identified groups of pupils who underperform at Hackney schools in 2020-21 and briefly outlines a strategy to maximise the impact on these groups in 2021-22.

Stephen Hall provided a brief update from the report circulated and highlighted the following points in relation to primary schools:

- 2020-21 programmes have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic; however, they have been adapted to be run remotely. Many programmes that were intended to be delivered within schools have been successfully continued.
- The parent reading workshop, 'Jump into a Book Together' was deemed to be too difficult for schools to run during the pandemic, due to restrictions placed on parents and visitors coming into school; however, it is hoped to restart this programme in September 2021.
- Impact measures have been included, as far as possible; however, we are unable to provide data on pupil achievement. It is intended to collate data from pupils, to be shared in due course.
- The remit has been broadened to include unconscious bias training, looking at the cultural relevance in relation to why specific groups are under performing; the SIP programme also continues to focus on this.

Stephen highlighted the following points in relation to secondary schools:

- There have been a variety of funds, which have been given to schools to decide on the use; mainly funds from the Saturday School programme. There are a range of ways in which the schools involved have prioritised the money.
- The same groups of underperforming children are being targeted under the framework.
- There are some impact measures, however it is not the final number expected at the end of this academic year; it is hoped to share this in due course.

Member question: *There are a number of white working class boys struggling at Haggerston School; however, the objective of this funding does not seem to target these boys. How will this group be addressed?*

Stephen Hall answered- This is how the funding has been framed in relation to delegation for the targeting of the specific groups; however, we would welcome a broadening of the remit to include any underperforming group. This is something we would certainly include, however it requires agreement from the Schools Forum.

Member question: *Is there any connection with this work and the work undertaken by Orlene Badu for decolonising the curriculum?*

Stephen Hall answered - Orlene's work has had high impact, with other boroughs interested in the work she is doing; this has also been incorporated into some schools. It is intended to expand this into the programme next year, so it can be offered to maintained schools for free.

Cllr Bramble noted that the initiative for improving outcomes for Young Black Men (YBM) was always intended to ensure benefits for other ethnic minority groups; this is led by the data which indicates outcomes for YBM are worse when compared to their peers across the board, leading to this cohort being less likely to be employed, when compared to their white counterpart.

It was further noted that officers have been asked to look at the performance outcomes of white working class boys; although outcomes for this group is not currently a concern in Hackney, however this group will be monitored. While there is a focus on education, the council is looking at a range of different initiatives.

Member question - *Item 2.2 refers to funding of the Traveller Support Service. Is there a reason why this is just for secondary schools, given the proportion of traveller families in primary schools? What evaluation is being undertaken of the service and the impact on pupils and their outcomes?*

Stephen Hall answered - the Traveller Support Service supports all schools; the report will be amended to reflect this.

Due to being a part of de-delegated funds, the Chair requested that a review on impact of the traveller service be included in a future raising achievement report.

Member question - Attendance is highlighted as one of the main barriers of achievement for traveller pupils; please clarify whether it is the role of the traveller support service to support attendance as contribution to raise achievement?

Annie Gammon answered- the traveller support workers have been working closely with families and schools to *encourage* the to return to school, following increased concerns around the community due to the COVID-19 pandemic; there is no legal process in terms of traveller families being fined for non-attendance, however the team works closely work with the attendance service to address absences.

The Chair requested the role and remit of the Traveller Support Service be included in the report (requested above) addressing the impact of the service.

The Forum noted the report, with no further comments or questions.

4. **Schools' Contingency and Growth Fund**

The report is for information only and provides School's Forum with an update of the allocations made from the 2020-21 schools de-delegated contingency and the use of the Growth Fund.

Tracey Caldwell provided a brief update from the report circulated and highlighted the following points:

- The Schools Forum delegated a budget for £780,000 of contingency funds, which was split into 2 sections: 1) Schools Contingency 2) Schools Support (formally referred to as SRAS). The growth is top sliced from the school's block, therefore not de-delegated.
- There is an underspend in the school's contingency budget of around £200,000, which will be carried forward for this financial year. Any costs associated with the Education Estates Strategy may be deducted in the following year.
- The growth fund will be used to offset other DSG pots, which is the overspend in the high needs pot.
- S3.2 refers to the use of the school's contingency, which is restricted, as there is a specific criteria to be met; the expenses have to be unforeseen and unexpected by the governing body.
- In relation to s3.7, there is no falling schools roll fund, however if the Forum agreed to create this fund it could only be used for circumstances out of the schools control and could not be permitted for surplus places.
- S4.2 shows an adjustment to the NNDR; there were 3 schools which received small amounts for the renaming of the school and for unforeseen circumstances (unexpected by the governing body).
- The Supported Schools fund budget has been allocated, with 15 schools supported through this process.

Member question: There is no evidence in the minutes about an agreement for the growth fund to be used for the DSG high needs block; please can you clarify when this agreement was made for this year 2020-21, as it appears that funds for Good to Great schools are being used for other purposes.

Tracey Caldwell answered- the minutes where this was agreed can be located for clarification. The Growth fund is not used for Good to Great schools, as the schools contingency fund is used for that purpose.

Member question: How is the surplus from the contingency spend being used?

Tracey Caldwell answered- the unspent contingency is being held for any future needs for Hackney schools, in this financial year; this is not being used to offset the overspend in the high needs block.

Member question: Is the growth fund used for falling rolls?

	<p>Tracey Caldwell answered - the growth fund is not permitted for use for falling rolls.</p> <p>The Chair advised that the paper refers to the option to have a falling rolls fund, if agreed by the Forum; however, there has not deemed to be a need for this, as the criteria for allocating funds from the falling rolls fund is very specific. This is something that the Forum can discuss and formally agree if needed.</p> <p>Action 3: Ophelia Carter to write a brief summary report for SF members to clarify the rules around the falling rolls fund and the conditions for use.</p> <p>Member question: <i>There are a number of references in the report noting Schools Forum previously agreeing to the allocation of some funds; it is not clear how long ago these agreements were made and whether there is a need to review in line with changing circumstances or whether there is a need to agree to these decisions each year. There is also a reference to underspend being used to support the Education Estates Strategy; is this a decision to be made by Schools Forum?</i></p> <p>Tracey Caldwell answered - Schools Forum agreed the conditions under which contingencies can be used and one of those includes costs associated to school closures or amalgamations. The decision on the use of underspends for the high needs block, is only in the growth fund, which is not a de-delegated budget from Schools Forum. There is a technical difference between the 2 funds, which can be clarified for SF members. Use of growth fund and contingency is agreed annually by Schools Forum.</p> <p>Action 4: Ophelia Carter to confirm when Schools Forum agreed the use of Growth Fund underspend to be used for overspends in other DSG blocks.</p> <p>Action 5: Ophelia Carter to produce a brief summary report for SF members, to explain the technical difference between use of the contingency and Growth Fund.</p> <p>Action 6: Ophelia Carter to confirm whether the use of the Growth Fund is a Schools Forum decision.</p> <p>The Chair requested clarity on what falls outside of schools' control and highlighted the need to review the accuracy of some criterias; there is confusion around schools control of surplus places, however it is for the local authority (LA) to determine the PAN and put the plan in place for schools sufficiency.</p> <p>Tracey Caldwell advised that the DfE has a listed criteria, one of which stipulates that falling rolls funding should only be used to support schools that have a forecasted need within a short to medium term; therefore, it cannot be used for surplus places if it is a long term issue.</p> <p>The Forum noted the report, with no further comments or questions.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Schools' Closing Balances 2020-21</p> <p>The report is for information only and advises Schools Forum of the balances related to maintained schools in Hackney at 31 March 2021.</p> <p>Tracey Caldwell provided a brief update from the report circulated and highlighted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The overall surplus for schools in Hackney has increased by £3.9m from £13.1m at 31 March 2020 to £17m at 31 March 2021. ● The number of schools in deficit has increased from 9 to 10, with an increased deficit from -

- £1,640,316 at the close of 2019-20 to -£2,229,259 at 31 March 2022; a total increase of -£588,943.
- Table 2 shows the changes in deficit by phase; although values have changed, proportionalities remain the same.
 - There is a vigorous process in place for schools in deficit, requiring these schools to implement a Deficit Recovery Plan with support from the School Improvement and School Finance team. All schools listed are forecasted to have balanced budgets in 3 years.
 - Falling rolls are causing funding pressures for schools, which has led to temporary reductions in PANs introduced.
 - The Education Estates Strategy has been introduced to develop a plan for provision over the next 5-10 years, which aims to alleviate some of the current issues.
 - S5.5 refers to extra and more stringent controls where a school has ended the year with a 12% surplus for 3 consecutive years. The schools which fall under this category (1 nursery school, 7 primary schools and 2 special schools) are required to submit plans to the LA, to be reviewed by a panel, which includes HR, Finance and School Improvement; this panel will be held between July and September this year and will make a decision on the proposed use of the surpluses.
 - S6 refers to balance control mechanisms for schools that have surplus balances which exceeds 5% for secondary schools and 8% for primary schools. These schools are required to present to the LA how they intend to spend the surplus in the coming year.
 - Plans to be reviewed by panel which include, HR, finance and school improvement.

Member question: *What does the last statement under s4.7 mean?*

Annie Gammon answered- there are pressures on schools due to falling school rolls, which has particularly impacted some primary schools. Permanent reduction of PANs were introduced last October 2020, to commence from summer 2022. This permanent change allows schools to secure staffing accordingly, rather than managing changes in year or making a temporary change. Hackney Education continues to examine pupil numbers closely and School Improvement Partners (SIPs) are having discussions with schools about their financial situation; in addition, colleagues in the schools finance team talk through concerns and agree a suitable way forward. We are working with schools to recover their deficits and support them through the decision making process.

There have been robust discussions with some schools about the terms of deficit recovery, reflected in guidance from the DfE, to ensure the 3 year budget is balanced. Discussions with schools have been ongoing this year and as a result a number of schools have implemented reorganisations, incurring one off redundancy costs; this will increase the deficit this year, however they are projected to have balanced budgets in the coming 3 years.

Member comment: as a consequence of the above, some schools had to make more redundancies because you cannot always claw back. Some schools could not foresee these issues and are left to make adjustments. This is an issue that needs to be responded to.

Annie Gammon responded - due to the number of schools experiencing falling rolls, it is important that SF members be provided with a report to address these concerns.

The Chair noted that some schools are reducing numbers significantly and some are reorganising more than once, hence incurring redundancy costs repeatedly; this is a complex area of consideration, as schools need to maintain pupil ratios.

Member comment: schools will be sized physically for the larger cohort and still will be charged for the costs of running the bigger school physically.

	<p>Member question: <i>In relation to the requirement for schools to set a 3 year budget, does HE have a standard understanding or document for schools?</i> Tracey Caldwell answered - this is an area for Ophelia Carter to address, which can be circulated outside the meeting.</p> <p>Member question: <i>Have any schools with higher budgets had money clawed back?</i> Annie Gammon responded - the schools are required to submit a plan for the use of the budget which is reviewed by a panel; there was no claw back last year, however there has been 1 claw back made in the past .</p> <p>Member question: <i>The Scheme for Financing Schools states that clawbacks are automatic after 3 years. Are schools issued a warning that they may be subject to a claw back before it takes place?</i> Tracey Caldwell answered - the clawbacks do not take place automatically with no warning, unless it is an exceptional circumstance.</p> <p>It was noted that information on clawbacks are automatically reported to the Schools Forum.</p> <p>The Forum noted the report, with no further comments or questions.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Consultations - verbal update</p> <p>It was noted that there are no significant consultations.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Any other Business</p> <p>The Chair informed that the current Vice Chair, Alex McKenzie has resigned. Alex was thanked for her commitment and contribution to Hackney Schools Forum.</p> <p>There was no other business raised.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Dates of forthcoming meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 10 November 2021 ● 9 February 2022 ● 20 April 2022 ● 22 June 2022
<p>11.</p>	<p>Summary of actions agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Action 1: Annie Gammon to prepare and circulate a response to all SF members, advising how redundancies made in the Hackney Education department were funded last year. ● Action 2: Tracey Caldwell to provide a written response to SF members regarding the NNDR data. ● Action 3: Ophelia Carter to write a brief summary report for SF members to clarify the rules around the falling rolls fund and the conditions for use. ● Action 4: Ophelia Carter to confirm when Schools Forum agreed the use of Growth Fund underspend to be used for the High Needs Block. ● Action 5: Ophelia Carter to produce a brief summary report for SF members, to explain the technical difference between use of the contingency and Growth Fund. ● Action 6: Ophelia Carter to confirm whether the use of the Growth Fund is a Schools Forum decision.