**Notes from the Schools Forum meeting**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/time</th>
<th>5 February 2020, 17.30-19.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Members:</strong></td>
<td>Adrian Cottrell, Alexandra McKenzie, Asarena Simon, Ben Hassan, Caroline Tyson, Cathy Murphy, Jane Heffernan, KT Khan, Lisa Neidich, Martin Jermy, Mary Walker, Peter Hughes, Richard Brown (Chair), Rita Krishna, Sandra Hall and Sian Davies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional attendees:</strong></td>
<td>Annie Gammon, Councillor Anntoinette Bramble, Councillor Christopher Kennedy, Donna Thomas, Frank O'Donoghue, Jackie Moylan, Ophelia Carter, Silvi Subba (Clerk) and Stephen Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apologies:</strong></td>
<td>Anna Cain and Lisa Clarke</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence**
   The Chair welcomed members to the Schools Forum meeting. The Chair announced that the meetings were open to the public and an observer was present at the meeting, however, would not be allowed to contribute to any discussions.

   Apologies were received on behalf of Anna Cain and Lisa Clarke. It was noted that Ben Hassan was in attendance as Lisa's substitute.

2. **Declaration of interest**
   There were no declaration of interest.

3. **Minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 6 November 2019**

   3.1. **Approval of minutes**
   It was agreed that the minutes of the last meeting were an accurate record subject to the following correction;

   ‘Ophelia Carter nominated Alex McKenzie as Vice Chair’

   3.2. **Action log**
   **Academies contribution toward TU facilities time costs** – The Chair updated that he has had conversations with the Head of HR (HLT) regarding the issue. He had conducted further meetings with Academy Principals to gauge their awareness of the issue. It was agreed that the Chair would write a letter to Academy Principals about contributing towards the Trade Union facilities costs for their schools following his initial conversation with them.

   3.3. **Matters arising**
   A member stated that the local authority’s SEND Needs Analysis Paper (SNAP) was a valuable piece of work and requested for the paper to be brought to the Forum so members were given an opportunity to provide an input especially in terms of making financial decisions.

   **Action – Clerk to add SNAP update to Schools Forum agenda for 29 April.**

4. **Schools Forum evaluation**
   The Schools Forum evaluation report was noted by members. The Chair welcomed comments on the improvement of the Forum.

   The Vice Chair stated that she would like information on the analysis of cost of exclusion to schools and cost of the YBM project; for e.g. amount of money spent on REU, the cost of Alternative Provision to schools. A discussion took place on whether this matter was within Schools Forum’s remit. It was noted that Forum sign off funding for the PRU in the borough, however, the costs of exclusion could
not be quantified. It was agreed that the clerk would review the Terms of Reference and confirm the remit of Schools Forum in terms of exclusion, recognising that the Forum should not duplicate matters being considered in other meetings. **Action – Silvi Shrestha (29 April 2020)**

Annie Gammon highlighted further work conducted by the local authority on exclusion; as part of the Hackney Schools Board, the panel ‘Enhancing Belonging for All’ would be looking at disproportionate rate of exclusion. In addition the Exclusion Board which reviewed exclusion in the borough meets monthly. There was opportunity for governors to be part of the Exclusion Board.

### 5. Underperforming Groups Strategy Update

Stephen Hall provided the following key updates on the strategy to support underachieving pupils:

A review of the funding for underachieving pupils was conducted to gauge how the money was being spent. It was discovered that funding for maintained secondary schools was also available to support underachieving pupils within this phase. This funding has been offered to secondary schools on receipt of a project proposal that met the following criteria; improve outcomes for pupils from TKTC groups; continue to improve outcomes for pupils from Caribbean backgrounds, particularly black Caribbean boys; reduce the proportion of pupils from TKC and BRCB communities at risk of underperformance in English or Mathematics. The evaluation of the success of the project and reporting will focus on improved attainment of TKTC and BRC in KS3, KS4 and KS5.

A member noted that the achievement of the underperforming group was consistently low. As this is a longstanding issue, the member enquired how the updated strategy was different and would have a positive impact. Stephen highlighted that previous strategies had not changed for a long time and the impact was not measured consistently. The new strategy adopted for Primary had a wraparound approach with a focus on the community and upskilling existing school staff rather than relying HLT officers. Evaluation of the success in the primary phase would be taken from validated KS1 and KS2 pupil outcomes for target groups alongside the number of pupils engaged in projects. Further analysis would be conducted by HLT officers using impact measures such as attendance, attitudinal questionnaires and, where appropriate, pupil progress measures.

A member enquired whether schools have been informed about who would be receiving the funds. Stephen Hall stated that this information would be provided to schools. Primary schools had been informed about the amount they would receive.

Forum members stated that they would like periodic reporting on the evaluation of the projects as they have the responsibility to decide whether de-delegated funds should be used to support these projects in the future.

### 6. Early Years Funding Arrangement for 2020-21

Forum members noted the purpose of the report, i.e. to consult with Schools Forum on financial issues relating to arrangements for Early Years provision including proposed central spend on Early Years Block provision for 2020-21.

Donna Thomas provided the following key information;

The base rate for the Early Years NFF in 2020-21 had increased by 8p per hour for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. It was noted that Hackney was one of the lowest paid local authority. This has affected staff pay which is at lower rates. Funding for enhanced transitional rate was protected.

Table 3 highlighting how the 2019-20 budget was comprised, and reconciled to the 95% pass-through was noted. Donna stated this format would continue for 2020-21. It is planned for the inclusion fund to
be increased due to an increase in applications from settings. It should be noted that the final 2020-21 allocations would be confirmed once the pupil data is received at the end of February. In the last 2 years, an Early Years contingency fund of £450K was set aside to safeguard settings from any shortfall due to decreased take up of places, as the DfE fund Early Years settings retrospectively based on the January census. If actual take up in the spring term exceeded the funds paid out to settings the contingency would cover this. It has been decided to decrease the contingency fund to £100K in 2020-21. For 2019-20 the position arity on the January 2020 census would not be known until July, when the local authority would decide how to distribute the remaining contingency fund. Forum members requested the relevant officer notify Forum of the Local Authority’s decision and their reasons for the decision. If the position was clear an update could be given in June.

Action – Donna Thomas (17 June 2020)

A member sought clarity on whether the inclusion fund was available for pupils with EHCP, and if so, how could schools access the funds. Donna clarified that the inclusion fund was available to support children with emerging SEND needs who did not yet have an EHCP. The funds could be used for early intervention and monitoring support.

A member sought clarity whether the funding was available for pupils who fall within this category but attend nursery settings in schools. Donna clarified that the funding was available to these pupils. Information on how to apply for the funding was available on the Local Offer.

In addition, the Early Years Inclusion Fund Update report for Schools Forum in November provided clarity on the funding.

Action – The clerk to recirculate the report for information.

A member enquired whether the local authority had a view on what would happen when the additional funding from the government for nursery schools ceased after April 2020/21. The nursery schools received a substantive amount of funding through the temporary initiative and the ceasing of these funds would have a significant effect. Donna Thomas stated that early conversation on this has started and the local authority would be monitoring the situation. The team was waiting for the government to make a decision on the funding. It is anticipated that a guidance on this will be published in the summer term.

A member raised concerns about the closure of Millfields Children Centre and its impact to families. Donna Thomas clarified that Millfields Children Centre was not closing, but that the childcare provision would cease. The decision to cease the child care provision was made by governors of Millfields School. The nursery would close at the end of the academic year. Children who require childcare provision would be given priority places in surrounding Children’s Centres.

A member stated that the low per hour base rate is Hackney could be due to the fact that Hackney’s rates have not been re-evaluated. Frank O’Donoghue clarified that the business rates re-valuation is conducted by an external body (the EFSA) and the re-valuation has not yet been done for Hackney. Cllr Kennedy added that the local authority had written to the external body every 6 months. Forum advised writing to the external body again to apply for a re-evaluation.

A member suggested that the contingency funds could be used to increase the hourly rate of funding. Donna stated that the local authority had two proposals for the contingency fund. The use of the funding would be decided once the January census was received. The funding would not be used for any other purpose than to support the settings. The Chair reiterated the Forum’s interest in learning about the Council’s decision and requested for an update to be provided at a future meeting.

7. Administration Arrangements for Allocation of Grants to Schools: annual report

A report informing Forum members on the arrangements for distributing grants to schools as required by The School and Early Years Finance Regulations 20 was noted. Ophelia Carter welcomed
feedback from members on whether grants were distributed in a timely manner. Members noted the grants (for maintained schools only) listed in the report.

There were no further questions from Forum members.

8. **Schools Final Budget and Funding Formula 2020/21**

The report confirming the final funding formula for 2020-21 and the schools budget allocation for 2020-21 based on Forum’s decision in November was noted.

Ophelia Carter highlighted the following key information;

Table 2 illustrated the allocation of funding including the School Block DSG income. The total spend had increased in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20 by 1.5%.

Two national changes to funding values have also been incorporated into the final model for Hackney; the 4% inflated rate of the NFF and a new Mobility rate.

The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) would not protect schools against a fall in roll but the range has increased to +0.5 to +1.84%. If the roll continued to drop, schools would have to reorganise accordingly. Annie Gammon added that HLT officers have had conversations with schools about managing their roll and finance.

A member stated that the local authority should take into consideration the equalities impact due to falling pupil roll. Some schools with significant drop in pupil roll will be impacted and there needed to be an understanding if this has an equalities impact.

The final agreed formula for 2020-21 ensured the full distribution of the Schools Block DSG resources after the Growth and SEND transfer have been deducted.

The impact of pupil roll changes was highlighted in Appendix B, Schools Budget Breakdown. Funded roll in maintained schools fell by 1.5% and increases in academies and free schools by 2.7%. There was an overall reduction in roll of -59.

A member queried how long it would take Hackney schools to adopt the NFF fully. Ophelia Carter stated that this decision would be for Schools Forum and the Director of Education. A discussion took place on whether schools would benefit from imposing the NFF rather than a gradual move towards it. For the present, the transitional funding arrangement would ensure there was no significant reduction in funding in the total pot to be shared between Hackney schools, and the question was more about how adopting the NFF factors fully would change the weighting of funding to some schools rather than others.

It was discussed whether a direct move to the NFF would mean large reduction in budget for many schools. If the NFF values were imposed in Hackney (or elsewhere), it would have a detrimental financial effect on many schools because of the overall reduction in funding. At the moment the government were taking a levelling up approach without reducing the transitional protection that protects Hackney school funding.

Indicative budgets would be sent to schools in January and the final schools’ budget confirmed in February.

Members noted that the PPG funding had increased, therefore, schools that have high level of deprivation would see an increase in funding which has a significant positive impact.

Schools Forum noted the Schools Final Budget and Funding Formula 2020/21 report and there were no further questions.
9. **Consultations Update – verbal update**

Ophelia Carter informed members of the current government consultation on extending the risk protection insurance to maintained schools. It was agreed that Ophelia Carter would provide a written update and the relevant information to Forum members in April so a decision could be made in June on whether to buy into the insurance.

**Action – Ophelia Carter (verbal update on 29 April 2020 and written report on 17 June 2020)**

10. **Free School Meal report**

Schools Forum members noted the Free School Meal report which provided a background on FSM eligibility and information on funding implications and the decline in FSM application.

Frank O’Donoghue highlighted the following key information from the report:

The report updated on implication of FSM eligibility; the previously reported decline in the number of pupils reported nationally in school census’s as eligible for FSM had reversed slightly in January 2019. There was also a decline in the number of FSM applications received by the local authority. This decline in FSM eligibility has had a financial impact to school due to loss of Pupil Premium Grant.

Members noted that the report stated that there was a continuing decline in eligibility of FSM, however, the report also stated that data was not available to assess the total FSM eligibility in the borough. It was clarified that the local authority collect data from applications received; the definite data available is on pupil eligible for FSM and currently claiming.

The local authority had a range of measures in place to ensure eligible parents apply for FSM; these measures were not implemented in other boroughs. These measures have led to a high level of FSM applications; 8% higher than inner London boroughs.

Members questioned the validity of the statement made in the report that schools receive monthly lists of all eligible pupils and all pupils who have applied and are not eligible. Frank O’Donoghue clarified that the Pupils Benefits Service was able to check which pupils who have applied for FSM. Schools were sent a list of pupils who have applied and were either eligible or ineligible, therefore, schools could identify those who have not applied for FSM.

Members noted the efforts of the local authority and schools to ensure that eligible parents apply for FSM, however, agreed that more could be done to promote FSM, through a poster campaign.

**Action – Local Authority Officers (update to be provided on 29 April 2020)**

11. **Final DSG position for 2019/20**

Forum members noted the report providing information on the final DSG position for 2019/20. Ophelia Carter also highlighted the outturn for 2018-19 which was a deficit of £1.5million. This overspend has been met from the Council’s balances, but will increase pressure on the DSG in future years.

There were no further questions from Forum members.

12. **Forthcoming meetings in 2019/20;**

- 29/04/20
  
  Agreed agenda: Workshop on High Needs Block

A member stated that the new SFVS gathered valuable information from schools and expressed an interest in learning more about what other schools had added onto their SFVS. It was noted
that the local authority is awaiting submissions from schools and will then provide this information.

- 17/06/20
  SFVS

13. Confidential items

There were no confidential items.

Meeting close: 18.50