HACKNEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held at 5.30pm on Wednesday 20 June 2018 at Hackney Learning Trust

Present -

Members:  
**Special schools**  
Kt Khan, Headteacher  
David Lowry, Governor  

**Primary schools**  
Mary Walker, Governor  
Caroline Tyson, Headteacher  
Asarena Simon, Headteacher  
Stephen Hall, Headteacher  
Lisa Neidich, Governor  

**Nursery schools**  
Ben Hasan, Headteacher  

**Pupil Referral Unit**  
Richard Brown, Headteacher (Chair)  
Simon Biggs, Governors  

**Academies/Free Schools:**  
Peter Hughes, Headteacher  

**Non-schools members:**  
Cathy Murphy (EY providers)  
Sandra Hall (staff)  

Observers:  
Cllr Chris Kennedy  
Owen Jenkins, DfE  

Local authority:  
Anne Canning, Director of CACH  
Ophelia Carter, Head of Schools Finance  
Jackie Moylan, Director of Finance (Children, Adults and Community Health)  
Andrew Lee, Assistant Director of Education Services  
Frank O’Donoghue, Head of Business Services  
Leah Begley, Clerk to the Forum  
Tim Wooldridge, Early Years Strategy Manager (for item 3)  
Sara Morgan, Principal Primary Advisor (for item 4)

1. **Welcome/Apologies for absence**

1.1. Apologies were given for Linnia Khemdoudi, Rita Krishna, Jane Heffernan and Cllr Bramble. Noted Kristofer McGhee was not in attendance.

1.2. Noted Cllr Kennedy would be attending Forum going forward as the Local Authority representative for Early Years, SEND, special schools and alternative settings. Although Cllr
Kennedy is attending as an observer, the Chair stated Cllr Kennedy could nevertheless contribute to the discussion.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1. There were no declarations of interest noted.

3. Approval of minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 25 April 2018

3.1. Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3.2. Matters Arising

3.3. None.

4. Early Years Report on 30 Hours Free Childcare Entitlement

4.1. The report provided information to Forum on the implementation of the extended free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds, which was increased from 15 to 30 hours from September 2017 for working families.

4.2. A concern of the local authority was the possibility that settings may not offer the entitlement because the hourly rate the LA would provide would be less than the fee parents would otherwise pay. However, this has not been the case. It was noted that only 23% of childminders have offered the provision. This was probably so low for the reason that childminders are economically more fragile, however this is increasing each term.

4.3. The chart on page 2 of the report outlined how many families are accessing the 15 and 30 hour free child care entitlement. Noted this spring, 5076 3 and 4 year olds have accessed the offer and of those, 1556 have taken up the extended entitlement.

4.4. Members queried if the LA could establish how many parents were not taking up the offer. Based on information from the Department of Work and Pensions, Pupil Premium and knowing how many 2 year olds are eligible, a guesstimate can be made, however ultimately this figure is unknown.

4.5. It was queried how many families were excluded from the entitlement; again this was unknown, but it is believed approximately 1009 could be eligible. Noted these families could not be taking up the offer due to the settings they are currently attending. Officers stated more information would be available when September data is available and a comparison can be completed.

4.6. Members asked whether there were sufficient childcare places. Officers confirmed that the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment updated annually suggests there is sufficient capacity across maintained and private sector.

4.7. The Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) allows local authorities to establish a number of unique codes issued for families and the number of how many have been validated. The school/setting would check the code prior to offering a place. According to this measurement, Hackney measure favourably at 97% compared to nationally at 93%. The Family Information Service have not reported any instances of families contacting the service unable to find a suitable place.

4.8. Members questioned whether the LA was aware of the number of parents who send children outside the borough. Noted the code is transferrable however the LA are not provided with those figures, but are aware of the number of families coming into the borough.

4.9. Members stated that some primary schools in Hackney have felt the take up of 30 hours free child care has not been successful in their settings. Therefore it was queried as to whether the LA can gain some understanding of why that is, how significant a gap there is, and how schools can be supported. It was thought that part of this is was the difficulty some schools had in providing wrap around care, but it was reiterated that the LA are not aware of the
number of eligible families who do not access the provision therefore cannot gain an understanding of this gap.

4.10. With regards to supporting schools, it was clarified that when the scheme was initially rolled out, the LA were not provided with funding to support this however still provided support to schools, created banners, posters, leaflets and other marketing materials to be displayed across Hackney. Noted the scheme will take time to embed however so far, it has been largely successful.

4.11. A member queried whether officers had visited schools that had to adjust their nursery provision due to lack of take up and considered whether parents required the care all year round and in line with what children centres provide. Officers confirmed they had visited these settings and other schools/settings across the borough. It is understood that parents require wrap around care therefore the LA is working with schools to help set up breakfast and after clubs, partnerships with child minders etc. Also, prior to September, the LA had a more flexible offer allowing HLT to offer subsidised places however this flexibility has been taken away and the impact on schools is apparent.

4.12. It was noted that there was an opportunity to see how other local authorities are implementing the changes and potentially take learning from these.

4.13. As queried in a previous Forum meeting, it was clarified that the number of Early Years settings was 123 and out of these, 103 offer places to 2 year olds. Of those 103 settings, 96 are providing places for children eligible for the free 15 hour entitlement. The remaining settings are largely independent schools that are not registered for children under 3.

4.14. Members noted the report and thanked Tim Wooldridge for an informative and interesting report.

5. **Raising Achievement in Primary Schools**

5.1. The report set out how the local authority planned to spend funding allocated by Schools Forum to raise achievement in primary schools in 2018/19. It was intended that the funding would assist in improving outcomes for Turkish, Kurdish and Cypriot children, Caribbean boys and increase the proportion of year 6 pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.

5.2. HLT’s School Improvement team have identified interventions that have had a positive impact on progress over the last 5 years. All interventions will be delivered by teaching assistants and training is led by HLT officers. This aspect will be quality assured through regular visits to the schools and observations of the 1:1 sessions with staff and pupils. Also, each school will nominate an SLT member to oversee the delivery of the programme.

5.3. The Saturday School programme was less successful in previous years due to a lack of attendance, however parental feedback did note that they found it a valuable resource. It was believed that alongside pupils not wanting to attend school on a Saturday, it also took place over a long period of time. Therefore with this in mind, three alternatives are currently under consideration and will be taken to the Primary Consultative Group:

- 1 – Revision of how Saturday schools are delivered by blocking sessions rather than spread over the whole academic year.
- 2 – Discussions with other secondary schools to hold Saturday sessions rather than just one.
- 3 - Redirect the allocation of the grant to primary schools who will then be asked through SIP visits to account for the spend and impact.

5.4. Noted once final results are published in July, the impact will be considered further.

5.5. The Chair noted that Forum has always supported priority groups hence the agreement to allocating funding to support KS2 outcomes. Noted the report was useful in addressing the issues raised at the last Forum meeting regarding monitoring the impact.
5.6. Members welcomed the paper as it detailed the measurement of impact and addressed the quality of data submitted. This report going forward will be helpful to review the progress. Also members welcomed the options for the Saturday school provision.

5.7. It was queried whether the voice of the children accessing the provision could be added to the report, to which Officers agreed this should be considered. Action: SM

5.8. Members questioned whether tracking pupil’s progress could be more rigorous if considered at certain points throughout the year, allowing the effectiveness of the intervention to be monitored. Officers agreed to consider this. Action: SM

5.9. The report was noted and welcomed by Forum members.

6. **Schools Contingency and Growth Fund**

6.1. The report provided members with an update on the allocations made from the 2017/18 schools de-delegated contingency and the use of the growth fund.

6.2. Table 1 of the report identified 3 primary schools who were in receipt of funds from the contingency element and 9 schools receiving funds from the SRAS element. It also noted the number of years schools had been in receipt of the funding. Noted £50k of direct funding was included in the funding. A breakdown of the funding received, why and how the funding should have helped was included.

6.3. The conclusion included a summary of the combined use of contingency and growth fund which noted a deficit of £38,680 which will be met from HLT reserves.

6.4. The Chair clarified the report was anonymised, however Forum had previously requested information to be included on the length of time schools had been in the process. This information was requested from the LA as Forum was be concerned at the possibility of schools being in the process for a long period.

6.5. It was queried how the schools identified from A-L compared to figures in the appendix. Noted one school in deficit had been in receipt in SRAS funding which is was to make improvements.

6.6. The schools who have more than 5% would not be eligible to receive SRAS funding.

6.7. Noted an amendment in the report in point 4.3.3 should reference 3.1 rather than 3.2. Action: OCa

7. **Update on High Needs Arrangements**

7.1. The report provided members with an update on the high needs funding arrangements for 2018/19. A data booklet was also provided in appendix A for information.

7.2. The report noted that all statements were now converted to Education, Health and Care Plans and all were converted within timescale.

7.3. The forecast DSG cost pressure was reported as £6.1m, plus £1.3m including transport costs. The cost pressure has been partly offset by savings activities and reserves. Noted the cost pressure was not unique to Hackney and the majority of London Councils were facing similar issues. Senior officers met with DfE officials recently who confirmed comments within this report were a replication of the same costs pressures across the country.

7.4. Noted the LA had published the Capital Grant Funding plan on the Local Offer. Business cases for the ASD specialist post 16 provision and primary ARP are currently being completed.

7.5. Resource levels for post 16 high needs students continues to be revised and an approach will be agreed for September 2018 stay. Work has taken place with Adult Social Care and health
to ensure the approach is not purely education focussed, but also considers employment pathways, housing etc.

7.6. The report noted funding for New Regents College had been agreed for the next 3 years.

7.7. All 3 special schools have been notified of their single cohort resource levels for 18/19 however one school is yet to agree. The LA believed the funding levels are financial viable however will be monitored to ensure no deficits or surpluses occur.

7.8. As previously reported, the proposals on funding for mainstream SEND pupils had not been accepted. In response, a co-design task and finish group is being formed to gain views from stakeholders and parents/carers on how best to proceed. The group will be run by an independent Chair. In the meantime, the current resource level framework will remain in place.

7.9. Noted for 18/19, £982k had been set aside for the EY Inclusion Fund.

7.10. The cost of independent and non-maintained provision remained a significant area of spend, reasons being the high number of pupils with complex needs, limited amount of provision with the maintained sector and the LA’s limited ability to control the costs charged by these settings. It was noted other LA’s are facing similar issues.

7.11. However to reduce spend in this area, whilst still meeting parental preference, officers are continuing to work to reduce out of borough and independent spend by developing a sufficiency strategy and provision.

7.12. To date, there are 2-3 bespoke personal budgets agreed in relation to EHCP’s and 34 children receiving a personal transport budget. Going forward, discussions will take place with health and adult social care to explore the infrastructure to manage such payments.

7.13. Officers noted a deliberative event will take place on 26 June for stakeholders, parents and carers which will inform discussions with the Task and Finish Group. LB to send details to members. **Action: LB**

7.14. The data booklet provided high level summary of various data sets within SEND. It was noted there was a 50% increase in EHCP’s therefore resulting in a significant increase in spend.

7.15. Table 5 on the report noted 2.64% of 0-19 population were in receipt of an EHCP which was in the high sector, compared to other boroughs. Table 8 compared to our statistical neighbours in terms of EHCP’s, which is slightly greater than the inner London average.

7.16. The Chair felt the report was clear and felt a greater level of confidence in the LA’s plans to reduce and manage spend within the SEND service.

7.17. KT Khan disputed a section within the data booklet that referenced The Garden’s place numbers at 150; the member noted due to a change in the cohort and high level of need, the school believe the maximum that can be admitted is 140. Officers did not agree that they accepted this case in respect of numbers.

7.18. Regarding section 5 of the report, KT Khan also stated agreement regarding the top up amount had not been agreed with The Garden School and from the schools perspective, this is still in negotiation.

7.19. Members also queried in table 11 of the data booklet why the spend is increasing but the budget was not. Officers stated the table demonstrated the cost pressure faced by the LA by noting the budget was sufficient in 13/14 however since changes in legislation in 14/15, numbers of children with plans increased significantly and the LA were not provided with any more money to fund these pupils.

7.20. It was felt that the report presented the number of EHCP’s negatively due to the cost pressure attached to them. However officers and members agreed that children have a right to provision however much funding should be allocated by the Government. Forum wholeheartedly supported the increase being sought. Officers stated the LA will continue to support children with high needs in the current financial situation.

7.21. Members noted an issue at secondary level regarding keeping pupils within borough, having different cost pressures balanced with parental choice. It was considered how the LA could
incentivise schools to take on the challenge and meet pupils’ needs. It was appreciated that schools are currently under greater cost pressures.

7.22. It was noted in regard to Orthodox Jewish funding noted in table 11, that the reason for the reduction was a result of it being re-classified as independent under another heading.

7.23. Officers clarified that conversations are taking place with health and social care regarding joint funding proposals to meet the needs of children. Also the transitional arrangements are currently under review to ensure young adults are supported in placements that continue would move across to adult social care. Work continues with children social care to increase their input in the EHCP process. The working relationship with CCG is positive, particularly the protocol on transition to adulthood.

7.24. The Chair noted Forum has applied pressure to reduce pension contributions for support staff and suggested the group should continue to revisit this issue.

7.25. Members noted the report.

8. Further meetings

8.1. The following meeting dates were noted by members for the next academic year:
   - 7 November 2018
   - 6 February 2019
   - 24 April 2019
   - 19 June 2019

9. Any other business

9.1. None.

9.2. No confidential items were noted.

9.3. The Chair thanked members whose terms of office was ending in August for their contributions and thanked all members for contributions this academic year.