Minutes of a meeting of held at 5.30pm on Wednesday, 6 February 2019 at Hackney Learning Trust

Members Present:  
**Special schools**
Kt Khan, Headteacher  
**Primary schools**
Caroline Tyson, Headteacher  
Asarena Simon, Headteacher  
Stephen Hall, Headteacher  
Mary Walker, Governor  
Lisa Neidich, Governor  
**Secondary schools**
Paula Whyte, Head of School  
Martin Jermyn, Governor  
**Nursery schools**
Ben Hasan, Headteacher  
**Pupil Referral Unit**
Richard Brown, Headteacher (Chair)  
**Academies/Free Schools:**
Peter Hughes, Principal  
Rita Krishna, Governor  
**Alternative Provision members:**
Anna Cain (The Boxing Academy)  
**Non-schools members:**
Sandra Hall (staff)

Observers:
Cllr Chris Kennedy  
Cllr Anntoinette Bramble  

Local authority:  
Annie Gammon, Director of Education / Head of HLT  
Ian Williams, Group Director, Finance and Corporate Resources, LBH  
Frank O’Donohue, Head of Business Services, HLT  
Jackie Moylan, Assistant Director of Finance, LBH  
Ophelia Carter, Head of Schools Finance, HLT  
Sara Morgan, Principal Primary Adviser, HLT  
Silvi Shrestha, Clerk to the Forum

1. **Welcome/Apologies for absence**
   1.1. Apologies were given for on behalf of Cathy Murphy. Linnia Khemdoudi was not present.

2. **Declarations of interest**
   2.1. Rita Krishna declared her role as Vice Chair of Garden School.
3. Approval of minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 7 November 2018

3.1. Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting held on 7 November 2018.

4. Matters Arising

4.1. SEND updates from Annie Gammon

4.1.1. Disapplication request – the Secretary of State has endorsed the disapplication request, to transfer 0.5% from the schools block to the high needs block.

4.1.2. The Secretary of the State letter, dated 17 December 2018, on high needs provision and support was noted by members. Annie Gammon added that there is a significant funding gap in high needs and the local authority is meeting that gap through savings in other areas.

4.1.3. Judicial review – There is no further news on the judicial review. The co-design workshops are continuing to take place and are looking at how best to match funding levels with the needs of pupils with SEND. Monthly meetings will conclude following the next 3 meetings.

4.1.4. SEND capital bid – Settings were asked to bid for the SEND capital funding to take on additional capacity. Significant amount of funding is currently being spent on out of borough settings. Bids have been made for new facilities for Garden School and for additional ARP resources at Queensbridge Primary School. A feasibility study is being conducted for the latter.

4.1.5. A member noted the high costs to the local authority for out of borough provision and queried whether a preventative model is being considered by HLT. Annie Gammon noted that, in principle, early intervention might meet a child’s need and also prevent the need for an EHCP plan. Whilst this is an approach the LA would pursue (and has pursued in terms of its earlier proposals), there would not be an immediate change whatever arrangements are put in place.

**Action:** Annie Gammon to update Forum on preventative approaches or models as developments occur or once the co-design group has reported.

4.2. Noted the update provided by the local authority on measures in place to ensure that eligible parents apply for FSM. The FSM online process is being promoted by the local authority, however, Hackney’s FSM application is in decline. Annie Gammon updated that the online application process is being reviewed and the findings will be reported back to Forum.

**Action** – Annie Gammon to provide an update at the next Schools Forum meeting on the online FSM process.

5. Presentation on the Council’s financial position and pensions update (Ian Williams)

5.1. Ian Williams noted the valuable contribution of members on the Schools’ Forum and provided the following key updates on the Council’s financial position;

5.2. Various factors have contributed to the financial challenges faced by the Council, including significant cuts to local government funding. The Council are looking into bridging the funding gaps through better utilisation of assets, increases in council tax and organisation change, including new ways of working. The Council is also looking at making savings beyond the next financial and generating income from external sources. There are concerns on the local government ‘fairer funding’ review, which is a review of how councils receive funding, as it could lead to repatriation of funds from Hackney to other areas.

5.3. Schools are experiencing financial challenges due to cuts to funding and inflation. Noted
5.4. A member enquired about the projection on the fall in pupil roll and how it impacts the growth fund especially in Primary Schools. It was noted that pupil roll is 10% lower than expected. There are a number of factors contributing to this including; Brexit, increased house prices and a cap on housing benefit. Based on past census and population data, the drop in pupil roll was not predicted. The situation now is that it is not expected to rise. Information on school growth fund is covered under new growth formula agenda item later in the agenda.

5.5. Richard Brown noted the recent report by the Children Commissioner about the large number of Elective Home Educated (EHE) children in Hackney and queried, whether they can be accommodated if they return to mainstream schools. Most secondary schools in Hackney are at capacity so there would be a resource implication. Annie Gammon informed the Chair that there is a significant number of children within the OJ community who are home educated. Children who return to mainstream schools from EHE were, in the first instance, put in alternative provisions.

5.6. Ian Williams explained the local authority’s pension scheme and how the rates are determined. The Council’s contribution will be reduced next year to 33%. Members noted how liabilities are calculated, e.g. increases in life expectancy, whilst some results from changing economic conditions e.g. increased inflation and reducing gilt yields, both of which increase the present value of liabilities.

5.7. Member enquired about pension contribution of maintained schools and why it is different to academies. Richard Brown noted that there has been a reduction in pension costs for Hackney Schools overall in recent years, and that it should be remembered that academies are separate pension bodies in their own right, whilst all maintained schools belonged to the Council as the pension body. Ian Williams further explained that the pension contributions of academy schools are determined by pre-existing liabilities – their contribution is not always lower than maintained schools. If a new academy opens, without existing staff, deficit and liabilities, the pension contribution will be less than a school which has converted to an academy and has pre-existing liabilities. Members agreed that it is important for the Council to recognise the variation of cost to schools where some pay more pensions.

5.8. It was also noted that the level of pension contribution also depends on the age profile of the staff of a school; if the age profile is high, the contribution amount will be higher. In addition, if a maintained school converts to an academy, its pension contribution will also depend on whether staff were previously part of the pension scheme.

5.9. A member enquired whether the pension fund can be split into schools and non-schools. Ian Williams clarified that it is not feasible to split the pension fund due to the risks that would arise, both for schools and the fund overall.

6. Raising Achievement in Primary Schools: Evaluation of interventions for under-achieving groups academic year 2017-18 (SM)

6.1. The above report was shared with governors. Sara Morgan provided the following highlights.

6.2. The project was to support reading of Year 2 Turkish, Kurdish, Turkish Cypriot pupils (TKTC project) and improve outcomes of Year 3 Black Caribbean Boys (BCRB project). The cohort includes 53 pupils and the project involves 14 hours additional funding for those pupils.
6.3. Part of the project was to train Teaching Assistants to lead daily reading sessions with pupils. Training sessions for the teaching assistants was provided by a HLT officer. A nominated SLT member from the schools participating in the project were responsible for the delivery of the project. Noted that schools with stronger leadership were a lot better at tracking the achievement of their pupils. In addition, 4 out of the 5 teaching assistants got the Hackney Reacher Coach award.

6.4. It was noted that 63% of TKC pupils in the intervention group and 56% of supported pupils are working at expected standard. The latter is below the national average.

6.5. Member enquired about how the expected progress is measured. Sara Morgan clarified that progress is measured through book bands – pupils in Year 2 are expected to reach the purple book band. 

Action: Sara Morgan to provide clarity on the definitions of progress, and on the evaluation of impact in comparable terms to regular school measures of progression, and specifically what the ‘expected progress’ and ‘outstanding progress’ terms mean.

6.6. It was noted that the Saturday Schools programme for Year 6 pupils who were at risk of not meeting expected standards and included 19 additional funded hours. The mathematics programme was delivered by a HLT officer. A member enquired about whether any of these pupils have SEND and EHCP. It was noted that the budget is for under achieving pupils, not necessarily with SEND.

Action – SEND data to be provided at the next meeting.

6.7. The Saturday School initiative had faced issues of non-attendance and consequently, it was decided that the individual schools should receive the funding to support school-based booster sessions for identified pupils. Sara reported that all pupils have progressed in reading, writing and maths. However, white British pupils are a cohort whose progress is lacking in writing – this issue is being looking into.

6.8. A member enquired about outcomes for BCB. Sara Morgan clarified that the progress measure of 0.4% was based on pupils who attended the Saturday sessions, and not on the whole cohort.

6.9. Sara reported that Headteachers have been pleased to receive earmarked funding to support these pupils. Most Headteachers are spending the funds on Easter ‘catch up’ groups and booster classes.

6.10. Richard Brown noted that Forum will want to see that the money being used to support underachieving schools is having an impact and is backed up by evidence. Important that the SIP process is successful.

6.11. A member queried whether the 1.7% progress in reading of the Saturday School cohort is substantive progress relative to what would be expected. Action – Sara Morgan to quantify the rate of progression and provide the information the next Schools Forum meeting.

6.12. A member questioned about how the reading progress of KS1 pupils in the TKCB project is monitored. Action – Sara Morgan to report back about reading progress of KS1 TKCB pupils.

7. Final Schools’ Budget & Funding Formula 2018/19 (OCa)

7.1. Ophelia Carter presented the above report and highlighted the following four recommendations;

- To note the allocation of resources available in the Schools Budget
- To note the outcome of the local authority request for a 0.5 transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.
- To note the final 2019-20 schools formula agreed by the Director of Education.
- To note the impact of the large roll variances on school budgets shown in appendix B.

7.2. Schools were consulted in October 2018 on the options that the LA were considering in respect to the 2019-20 funding formula. The DSG Schools Block was announced on 17th December which confirmed the allocation for Hackney (see table 2 in the report for a breakdown of fund allocation). The SLT and the Director of HLT agreed the Hackney funding formula principles at a meeting in January.

7.3. Noted the Appendices; Appendix A is a summary of the funding rates for the 2018-19 budget compared with the 2019-20 budget and a full NFF version. Appendix B is modelled using 2018-19 pupil role, to show impact on like for like basis. Appendix C shows the impact of the new local funding formula. Some Primary School lose by £9,000 despite an increase in roll because funding is calculated on deprivation factors.

7.4. Noted that a number of schools in Hackney are suffering from significantly low pupil roll numbers and the local authority is working closely to support these schools. Noted that a falling roll fund is available but it is primarily for good or outstanding schools in a regenerated area, and strict conditions are attached to its use.

Recommendations: agreed without amendment or addition.

8. Administration arrangements for allocation of grants to schools: annual report (OCa)

8.1. The above report was shared with members. It recommends Schools Forum review the administrational arrangements for distributing central government grants to schools (excluding the Dedicated Schools Grant).

8.2. Members noted the information on various grants from the ESFA.

8.3. Member enquired whether there is an indication that Year 7 catch up grant will continue beyond 2018-19. It was noted that there is no update on this matter.

8.4. Member raised concerns about teachers' pay and what will happen in 2020-21. It was noted that retention of well qualified staff will become a financial challenge.

Recommendations: agreed without amendment or addition.

9. Early Years Block Budget 2019/20 (OCa/DT)

9.1. Members noted the above report was to consult Schools Forum on the financial issues relating to arrangements for early years provision including proposed central spend on the Early Years Block provision for 2019-20. Donna Thomas provided the following key highlights.

9.2. The EYNFF guidelines state that a certain amount of funding has to be 'passed through' to settings – this rate is set as a proportion of the hourly rate. This remains at 95% of the budget for 2019-20 (as highlighted on table 2 of the report). The pass through rates should include a small contingency. A small contingency fund (2% of 3-4 year old budget) has been added. This amounts to £450K and will be used to fund new places in the New Year.

9.3. Members note there was a nominal change to the Disability Access Fund. There is not a demand on the budget hence the amount allocated by7 government has decreased.
9.4. The funding allocation for 2019-20 will be based on January pupil census. The Nursery budget is protected.

9.5. The overall centrally retained budget for 2019-20 has been retained at 5% (Table 5 of the report). On previous occasions, Schools’ Forum would have been asked to approve the central spend, however, this is not now a requirement and the spending is reported for information. There are no changes to proposed EY central spend to what was approved last year. The central spend includes expenditure on safeguarding arrangement in Early Years (EY) provision.

9.6. Funding on Inclusion bridges the gap between EY and High Needs block.

9.7. Quality improvement, focusses on increasing number of children who access good and outstanding provision. It includes support to PVI settings and one to one work with children. Main changes include increased transparency on where money is spent, noting its impact and moving to termly payment, rather than having to bid every half term.

9.8. Member enquired about the allocation of 6% of central spend to inclusion. Donna Thomas clarified that this fund is available for nursery classes, for children who require additional support etc. Schools can apply for this funding from HLT to support pupils regardless of EHCP.

9.9. Member queried the process for applying for this funding. Donna Thomas clarified that the application process is being finalised. Schools will have the application guidance by March.

10. Consultations Update (OCa)

10.1. Noted the live consultation on teachers’ pension contribution.

   Action – Ophelia Carter to share the consultation response with members.

11. Meetings for 2018/19:

11.1. It was recommended for the Schools’ Forum meeting on 24th April to be cancelled as there is no business for discussion for that meeting. This was agreed by members.

11.2. It was noted the next School’s Forum meeting will take place on 19th June.

12. Any other business

12.1. None.

13. Confidential Items

13.1. None.