Notes of the Schools Forum Meeting - 17 June 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/time/venue:</th>
<th>17 June 2020, 16.30-18.00</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting convened via Google Meet</td>
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| Members:               | Adrian Cottrell, Alexandra McKenzie, Anna Cain, Asarena Simon, Caroline Tyson, Cathy Murphy, Jane Hefferman, KT Khan, Lisa Clarke, Lisa Neidich, Martin Jermyn, Mary Walker, Peter Hughes, Richard Brown, Sandra Hall and Sian Davies |

| Additional attendees   | Annie Gammon, Councillor Anntoinette Bramble, Councillor Caroline Woodley, Jackie Moylan, Michael Pegram, Ophelia Carter, Silvi Shrestha (Clerk), Stephen Hall, Tracey Caldwell and Yusuf Erol |

| Apologies:             | Rita Krishna |

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<th>Item</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Welcome and apologies for absence</strong></td>
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<td>The Chair welcomed attendees to the virtual Schools Forum meeting. Apologies were given on behalf of Rita Krishna.</td>
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<td><strong>2. Affirmation of meeting etiquette – see attached</strong></td>
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<td>The Chair affirmed the meeting etiquette shared with members ahead of the meeting.</td>
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<td>The Chair reminded members that questions submitted in advance of the meeting regarding the information within the reports would be addressed as part of the relevant agenda items and noted in the minutes as 'Member question'.</td>
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<td><strong>3. Declaration of interest</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>There were none.</td>
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<td><strong>4. Minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 5 February 2020</strong></td>
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<td><strong>4.1 Approval of minutes</strong></td>
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<td>It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 5th February were an accurate record.</td>
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<td><strong>4.2 Action log</strong></td>
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<td>The action log was reviewed and it was noted that actions from the previous meetings were either complete or would be addressed as an agenda item in this meeting or subsequent meetings.</td>
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<td><strong>4.3 Matters arising not addressed as part of the agenda</strong></td>
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<td><strong>i. Early Years</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Member question</strong> - Was the Early Years January census information available?</td>
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<td>DT clarified that due to the COVID-19 situation, Early Years settings were not required to complete the census. A light touch census was completed and submitted in June. Payments would be made to settings based on the information received from them. <strong>Action</strong> - Information on the census to be shared with Schools Forum (DT).</td>
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### Member question - Additional funding from the government for nursery schools to cease after April 2020/21 has Hackney received further guidance expected in the summer term and if so what is it?

DT stated that a guidance was not received but Schools Forum would be notified when there was an update.

### Member question - Does the Millfields Children Centre closure mean that only outreach services would be available from the Centre from the end of this academic year?

DT clarified that the nursery service at Millfields Children Centre, which accommodated children from 6 months to 4 years of age would not be available. Outreach and stay and play sessions would still be available.

### Member question - Has the Council made a decision on the use of the contingency fund?

DT clarified that a decision had not been made. This information would be presented to Forum members in November’s meeting.

A member requested for the following information to be included in the contingency report - income lost by PVIs due to the current situation. **Action** - DT

### ii. FSM

**Member question** - Is the local authority able to identify the total FSM eligibility in the borough. 

Stephen Hall (SH) clarified that the local authority had information on the percentage of pupils eligible and claiming FSM. The local authority did not hold information on the percentage of pupils eligible but who chose not to claim.

### iii. Academies to contribute to Trade Union (TU) administrative/facility costs:

The Chair updated that he had written to Hackney Academy Principals encouraging their schools to contribute towards the TU facility costs. He had received responses from some schools. 

The Chair reiterated that TU facility time is currently only funded by Maintained, Community and Voluntary Aided schools, however, there have been circumstances when trade unions have supported academy staff. If Academies contributed towards this, the overall cost would decrease. If agreed, HLT would share the payment process with Academies and would invoice with the total cost per pupil.

Peter Hughes requested for further information on the amount academies would be required to pay, how much this would reduce the overall rate for all schools and what the money would be spent on. **Action** - The Chair agreed to share this information with Academy Principals.

### iv. SEND Needs Analysis Paper (SNAP)

Members requested for an update on SNAP as this was a valuable piece of work. The clerk explained that an update was due to be provided in April 2020, however, due to the COVID-19 situation, the meeting was cancelled. An update would be provided in the next academic year. Annie Gammon (AG) added that Alison Farmer would be joining HLT as the Head of High Needs and School Places in August 2020. She would be able to present the information to members in the next academic year. The item was on the forward plan for April 2021 but could be brought forward.
5. **Raising Achievement in Primary and Secondary Schools: Evaluation of interventions for under-achieving groups 2019-20 (full academic year and progress: position to date)**

Stephen Hall (SH) shared the following key information from the above report. The strategy for allocating funds to specific areas was reviewed and there was a renewed approach in 2019-20 to use the delegated funds to raise the profile of underperforming groups whilst challenging the systemic issues underlying underperformance.

A range of activities and projects were set out for 2019-20 to support pupils in maintained Primary schools. Some programmes commenced in the Autumn term. Some programmes that were due to start in March 2020 did not commence due to the disruptions caused by COVID-19.

The report highlighted the activities carried out, the number of pupils who participated and the breakdown of funding. However, the impact of the programmes could not be shown as there was a lack of data due to lack of assessments.

A member suggested that the effectiveness of the programmes could be evaluated through attendance of staff and pupils.

A member suggested future reporting to include information on programmes that were not working or were not effective.

6. **Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) Insurance Scheme**

Michael Pegram (MP) attended the meeting to present the information to Forum members.

The DfE launched the RPA Insurance Scheme for Academies and it was a successful venture within that arena. Following a consultation in November 2019, the DfE have extended the RPA, to permit Local Authority Maintained Schools (LAMS) to join from 1 April 2020.

The purpose of the report was to bring this opportunity to Forum’s awareness and ensure members were also aware of how the RPA differs from the Council’s insurance offer so schools were able to make an informed decision about which offer to opt for.

There were differences between the two offers in the cover provided, the scope and effectiveness of supplementary services and in the discretionary fund.

Schools had the choice to opt for a scheme most suitable for them. The government would not actively promote RPA with Hackney Schools immediately. Over the course of the year, MP would be speaking with schools about whether they would like to leave the local authority’s scheme or not.

The Academy Headteacher representative affirmed that the RPA scheme had provided exceptional cover and would recommend it.

7. **Schools’ Contingency and Growth Fund outturn 2019-20**

Ophelia Carter (OC) spoke to the above report and highlighted the following key information;
The purpose of the report was to provide an update to members on the allocations made from the 2019-20 schools de-delegated contingency fund and the use of the Growth Fund.

In November 2019, School Forum members approved the de-delegation of £794,500 from the Schools Block for maintained primary & secondary schools only. This was made up of two elements: £250,000 of schools contingency and £544,500 to support schools under the ‘Schools Requiring Additional Support’ policy (SRAS).

In addition, Table 1 in the report illustrated the NNDR budget adjustments and the two schools that received this funding. It also illustrated the number of schools that were supported as part of the SRAS process.

**Member question** - Is the contingency budget of £795K effectively created by removing funding that is available for distribution to all schools.

OC confirmed that, as stated in the report, the contingency budget was created by de-delegating funds from maintained schools, with the requisite of Schools Forum approval.

**Member question** - Given that both the schools that received the schools element of contingency had revenue reserves of £235k and £886k is it fair that this is paid from the contingency? Furthermore, given that only 8 out of 39 primary schools were in deficit - is it fair that those schools with reserves receive funding for the intensive and enhanced support?

The contingency fund should only be accessed if they have no funding to pay for it which doesn't seem to be the case in the majority of cases.

OC explained that the NNDR is a cost that is identified at the beginning of the year and schools are not accountable for NNDR - the local authority has to meet this cost. Schools who received the Enhanced and Intensive support will not have purchased this support.

OC explained that the Schools Growth Fund was top sliced and not received through de-delegation. OC highlighted the information presented in Table 2 which provided a breakdown of the use of the Growth Fund.

There were no further questions from Forum members.

8. **Schools' Closing Balance 2019-20**

It was noted that the names of Schools as part of this report would remain confidential. OC spoke to the above report which provided an analysis of the level of financial reserves held by schools at 31 March 2020. The report also identified the schools that may be subject to automatic claw-back review process due to carrying balances in excess of the threshold for 3 consecutive years.

The following key information was shared with members;

School reserves had decreased from £15.9m at 31 March 2019 to £13.1m at 31 March 2020; a decrease of £2.8m or -18%. In addition, there was a decrease in capital reserves from £1.4m to £0.7m (a reduction of £0.7m), and a decrease in school revenue reserves from £14.9m to £13.2m, (a reduction of £1.7m) in 2019-20.

Schools that had a surplus balance would be considered for a clawback. The process would be determined by whether the clawback was reasonable due to exceptional circumstances. The schools would be asked to provide a surplus plan. If the school had ring-fenced the funds for specific projects, they would be asked to provide justification for this. Schools Forum
would be kept informed of the progress of the surplus balance claw back mechanism and the emerging deficit issues.

**Member question** - When looking into the claw back of combined capital and revenue balances over 12% held for 3 or more years will the local authority take into account factors such as unpaid invoices unpaid at the yearend alongside expenditure to meet school priorities/development plans for the following year. Given the limited capital allocation to a school the following two factors will be taken into account 1) when planning capital works such as toilet refurbishment there will be a need to carry forward capital and 2) important to maintain a balance to meet costs arising from ageing boilers.

OC clarified that if above factors were included in the surplus spend plan, they would be considered. The clawback system was agreed by the Schools Forum. OC reiterated that if Schools have a surplus the local authority would not automatically clawback this money but it would be a consideration. Factors that would lead to a clawback included the number of years of retaining a surplus and the level of surplus.

A member stated that schools were expected to have a spend plan if they were in surplus or a deficit plan if they were in deficit. The member queried what the local authority would do if these plans did not work in achieving their objectives. AG stated that the local authority would implement a more robust escalation process. **Action - it was agreed for this process to be shared with Schools Forum at the next meeting in November.**

A member highlighted the importance of monitoring falling pupil roll as this impacts schools financially. The member enquired if there were strategic plans to support schools with falling pupil rolls. AG stated that information was shared with schools at the Headteachers Briefing about the options schools have when faced with significant fall in pupil roll. The local authority would not consider closing schools but would support schools to make permanent changes such as making changes to PANS through consultations. **Action - A report to be provided on this issue, at the next meeting.**

**9. SFVS**

OC provided the following key information;

In April 2019, the DfE introduced a dashboard reporting on the SFVS as a quick way of enabling schools to analyse their internal controls. The schools are required to include the most up to date data available to them, and not rely on published data which may not be the latest available information.

25 Primary schools and 3 secondary schools in Hackney have returned their SFVS. The information contained in the dashboard was used to note red ratings in the primary phase which occurred more than 4 times.

**10. Forthcoming meeting dates in 2020/21 and the forward plan were noted;**

- 11 November 2020, 17.30-19.00 - Early Years Contingency fund update
- 3 February 2021, 17.30-19.00
- 21 April 2021, 17.30-19.00 - Training session on High Needs and National Funding Formula
- 23 June 2021

**11. Confidential items**

There were none.
12. AOB

The Chair announced that he would not be nominating himself for the role again in the next academic year. He welcomed questions from anyone interested in nominating themselves for the role.

The Chair thanked the following members, whose membership was ending in August 2020, for their valuable contribution to the Schools Forum:

- Mary Walker (Maintained Primary School Governor)
- Asarena Simon (Maintained Primary School Headteacher)
- Cathy Murphy (Early Years representative)
- Pete Hughes (Academy Principal representative)
- Sandra Hall (Staff representative)