

Bristol Schools Forum

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 12th January, 2023
at 5.00 pm at Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

Present:

Melanie Bunce	St Barnabas
Mandy Cheshire	St Bede's Catholic College
Cllr Asher Craig	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Equalities
Simon Eakins	Cathedral Primary
Simon Holmes	St Phillips Marsh Nursery
Jo Kingston	Diocese of Clifton Dept for Schools & Colleges
Sarah Lovell	Bristol Brunel Academy
Kate Matheson	St Barnabas Primary School
Aileen Morrison	St Matthias Park
Sam Packer	Private Voluntary Independent (PVI) Early Years
Chris Pring	Whitehall Primary School
Emma Richards	Claremont School
Cedric Sanguignol	Bishop Road Primary
Cameron Shaw	Bristol Metropolitan Academy
Rebecca Watkin	LearnMAT
Stephanie Williams	Bannerman Road Community Academy
Jo Willis	Bristol Diocese Board of Education
Aderyn Zajicova	The Limes Nursery School

In attendance from Bristol City Council:

Abi Gbago	Executive Director: Children and Education
Denise Murray	Director: Finance
Richard Hanks (RH)	Interim Director of Education and Skills
Angel Lai (AL)	Finance Manager (Children and Education)
Thomas Jarvis (TJ)	Programme Manager - School-based Inclusion Projects
Samantha Wilcock (SW)	Clerk to Schools Forum

	Action
1. Welcome	
SL welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2. Forum Standing Business	
a. Apologies for absence Apologies for absence were received from: Richard Penska – NorthStar Academy Rebecca Watkin - LearnMAT Steve Mills – UNISON (substituted by Tom Merchant)	
b. Quorate The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.	
c. Resignations	

<p>It was noted that Emma Richards was attending her last meeting and Tonya Hill, Head Teacher at New Fosseway School will take over as representative for ‘Special Maintained’.</p> <p>d. Appointment of New Members The Diocese of Clifton Department for Schools and Colleges representative will now be Jo Kingston.</p> <p>e. Notification of Vacancies The following vacancies were noted: 1 Secondary Academy Governor Representatives.</p> <p>f. Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p>	
<p>RESOLVED – that the minutes be confirmed as a correct record.</p> <p>With reference to the discussions within item 8, Bristol Schools Forum De-delegation 2023/24, the financial information around de-delegation requested by maintained primary school representatives was carried forward as an action.</p>	AL
<p>4. Update from Director of Education and Skills</p>	
<p>RH gave a verbal presentation which outlined the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Family Hubs & Start for Life Programme</u> - The Family Hub Start for Life programme had progressed with confirmation of the funding grant confirmed with between £4.5-4.8m to fund the Family Hubs Programme between 2022-2025 (final award amount to be determined). This would join up and enhance services and be a ‘front door’ to timely access to support for parents and carers including physical hubs with a digital offer alongside. The business plan had been submitted which outlined how funding would be utilised. 2. <u>DSG Management Plan</u> – The engagement programme linked to proposed mitigations had concluded. Engagement confirmed agreement with the proposed areas of mitigations with other areas for consideration suggested. A detailed consultation report would be shared when complete. 3. <u>Maintained Nursery Schools</u> – Following the allocation of funding, work was continuing with nursery schools to review their financial position and identify operating models for the future. The maintained nursery schools increased supplement has been welcomed however it was still important to ensure resilience and reduce in year deficits and future financial pressures. 4. <u>Recruitment and Retention</u> – Following up on discussions within the Early Years Working Group, RH raised the challenge within the sector with the acknowledged potential impact on sufficiency of places. A Recruitment and Retention Forum has been set up with representatives from private, voluntary, independent and maintained sectors along with BCC and WECA. A recruitment campaign and promotion would be taking place as key work and would continue. 	RBW

<p>The new Director for Children and Education, Abi Gbago, was introduced to the Forum and welcomed to the meeting.</p> <p>It was highlighted that the High Needs Working Group meetings had been paused as there were not enough representatives from the Schools Forum. Any interested members were invited to contact the Clerk and further information would be provided regarding the Working Group at the next meeting of the Forum.</p>	Clerk/ RBW
<p>5. DSG Budget Monitor 2022/23 Period 8 (P8)</p>	
<p>AL presented the report which outlined emerging DSG funding levels for 2023-2024 and the forecast financial position for the DSG overall as at the end of November 2022.</p> <p>In response to the report the following themes were discussed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The challenge of the increase in children presenting with high and complex needs alongside pressure from OFSTED for increased quality within the sector at a time of difficulty of the recruitment and retention. Officers acknowledged the recruitment and retention pressures and highlighted the funding agreed 'Belonging in SEND' to support settings in meeting complex needs. The investment funding in training and development around SEND was key to help settings support the youngest children coming into Early Years. 2. Officers suggested presenting a refreshed overview of the scope of the Transformation programme to the Forum to assess that the scope continued to deliver across all objectives. AG highlighted the importance of outward publicity and officers would consider what the Council could do to help push the agenda of retention and recruitment and how the settings could be further supported. A report would be provided to a future meeting. <p>It was AGREED that the in-year 2022/23 position for the overall DSG was noted.</p>	RBW RBW
<p>6. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2023/24 & Schools Block 2023/24</p>	
<p>AL introduced the report which gave an overview of the DSG for 2023/24 and sought ratification on the block allocations agreed in principle at the last meeting. The following points were highlighted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. With reference to Table 1, and the latest DSG allocation announced on 16 December 2022 of £453.226m, information within the report highlighted that the allocation did not include the Bristol indicative allocation of the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant detail of £10,749m. 2. The Central Services Block funding would be reduced by 20% (£0.119m). 3. The High Needs Block forecast spending levels in 2022/23 indicated increased allocation but did not cover current year forecast shortfalls and would not provide additional funding for historic deficits. Mitigation proposals in draft form were being developed with Delivering Best Value (DBV) partners and the benefits had not been reflected in the forecast. 4. The 0.5% agreed in principle with the Forum would be transferred from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block when ratified. This funding would be ringfenced for 	

supporting transformation activities.

5. The Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government (DHCLG) had agreed a three year extension of the 'Statutory Override' to 2026, to allow High Needs mitigations / transformations to be implemented.
6. The hourly rates within Early Years had been increased (3-4yrs by 6p to £5.75 per hour, 2 year olds by 9p to £5.89 per hour) which was proposed passed on in full. This would however represent a real time reduction in funding for both year groups when compared to cost of living pressures. Consultation responses had been taken into consideration.

Following questions in response to the presentation, the forum was advised:

1. The 1% reduction in pupils from October 2021 to October 2022 was noted and would be monitored in terms of sufficiency.
2. The additional funding was noted, and specifically that it would not be applied to the ongoing deficit.
3. The additional grant for this year would in future be amalgamated into the National Funding Formula (NFF). The 'Supplementary Grant' issued would be rolled into the 24/25 funding rates.
4. Guidance had been received regarding allocations to Special PRU and LPs and the allocation had been reflected in the formula.

DM confirmed that the additional allocation was welcomed, however with the increased need and volume of pupils with an EHCP it was acknowledged the position did not necessary change. It had been assumed that the DfE allocation was not a 'one off' and it would be the baseline going forward. Officers would continue to build on a refreshed model and deficit management plan for the future working with the various settings. Clarification was still awaited from Government regarding the impact of energy costs.

The following points were raised during discussion:

1. Although Early Years increases would be passed on in full, consultation responses highlighted that the increase was not enough and that it did not cover real-life increases in costs. SL requested future reports include written responses where they provide context to consultation responses.
2. The need for integrated working with healthcare and broad intervention work across the early years sector was highlighted. Roles that historically would have been held by social care now falling to the Early Years sector.
3. It was suggested that the nursery closures countrywide (4000 in the last year) and the impact of the rise in the living wage compared to the 6pm increase would lead to more closures. The concern of the impact on recruitment and retention and the ability to meet minimum salary levels was flagged and noted.

Officers confirmed that the Transformation Programme was part of the strategic conversations about collaboration across Children's Services and would return as an action to a future meeting. It was important to ensure that Early Years was included within the consideration of Early Intervention and preventative work of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) including how innovation and technology could be utilised. It was suggested that this could be considered further within the Early Years Sub Group prior to returning to a Forum meeting and would be added to the work programme as appropriate.

It was confirmed that voting on this item was applicable to schools members, academies

AL/RBW

AG

Clerk/ RBW

members and PVI representatives.

It was AGREED that Schools Forum:

- a) Noted the 2023/24 funding levels**
- b) Approved the final transfers between blocks**
- c) Approved the EYNFF**
- d) Provided feedback to Cabinet and Council for consideration in making final decisions on the Schools Budget for 2023/24**
- e) Agreed Central School Services Block allocations**
 - LA Core Functions £1.171m (as per Appendix 1)
 - School Admissions £0.575m
 - Schools Forum £0.023m
 - Combined Services £0.477m (as per Appendix 2)

AL introduced the next report which sought agreement of the Schools Forum on the final application of the funding formula for mainstream schools and academies for 2023/24, prior to final decision by Cabinet and submission of the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The proposals were based on the November agreement of the Schools Forum and consultation outcomes of the sector and outlined within the report. Following the presentation of the report and with reference to discussions at the previous meeting, the Forum moved to vote on the recommendations.

The Schools Forum:

- (a) Approved the proposed arrangements for the 2023/24 mainstream funding formula, including the amount set aside for the Growth Fund**
- (b) Consider feedback to Cabinet for their consideration in making final decisions on the Schools Budget for 2023/24**

The Schools Forum considered the feedback to be provided to Cabinet and Full Council prior to decisions to be made on the budget. The following points were highlighted:

- Whilst additional funding was welcomed in the new financial year, The Schools Forum noted the substantial ongoing cost pressures in the Early Years sector and significant challenges of High Needs which was of continued concern.
- The falling rolls within primary schools and future sufficiency of places was also of continued concern.
- With reference to the Schools Block – it was noted that the continued move towards hard National Funding Formulae (NFF) meant deviation from local priority factors such as AEN factors. The BSF continued to consider pupils with additional needs and any funding left over would specifically support those pupils.

AL/ Cllr
Craig

7. Delivering Best Value in SEND

RH introduced the report which updated the Forum on the development of the DfE's Delivering Better Value in SEND programme, key areas of focus for the forthcoming grant application and next steps. Following presentation of the report the following key themes were highlighted through discussion:

1. The report highlighted where priority cohorts of children featured within settings as well

as EHCP proportions per provision with comparison to statistical neighbours and the England average. Further analysis would consider the impact of non-statutory top up funding SEN support on total spend and whether it was the most appropriate route to funding.

2. The grant application and work streams identified through the process would be aligned with the DSG Management Plan. Further information relating to costs were being finalised with partners and would return to Forum.
3. Reference was made to the proposed closure of St Barnabas School, officers confirmed that the proposal was linked to long term financial sustainability of the school. The issue of sustainability and sufficiency of places was a wider topic of interest to the Forum.
4. Early intervention was important to lead to timely appropriate provision. Delays securing a paediatrician report and autism interventions led to frustration for parents and a lack of confidence in the system. A consistent inclusive approach across schools within the City would lead to reduced demand for specialist provision or an EHCP. Work was ongoing around workforce development including how the training and development offer relates to the needs of a local area. SENCO clusters and networks hold knowledge and experience and assist new SENCOs coming into post and enable consistency.
5. With reference to the consideration of the future role of non-statutory top up funding, it was important to consider the relationship of services provided and funding systems of North Somerset Council as well as other neighbouring authorities.

The Schools Forum noted the content of this paper in order to understand the focus of the grant application and, if successful, how this aligns to the DSG Management Plan and High Needs Block Recovery Plan.

8. Belonging with SEND Programme

TJ introduced the report which updated the Forum on the progress of the Belonging with SEND programme and sought approval on the next steps and areas of focus for the next academic year. In response to the report, the following points were highlighted during discussion:

1. The third round of grant assessment had been delayed to allow opportunity for programme review. The third round was now planned to close at the end of March with delivery dates that had led to funding being rolled into the next academic year. Phase three had been targeted to where need had been identified such as training and 'oven ready' pieces of work.
2. Output evaluation would be appropriate to the project. Output from grants already awarded were reviewed at milestones although challenges around recruitment and retention has been a barrier to the implementation phase.
3. Community and voluntary sector organisations had requested access to funding applications. If agreed, robust quality assurance processes would be applied.
4. Nursery schools were not in the scope for the funding however, colleagues were developing a relevant program for Early Years Language Development which could then be extended to Reception and KS1. The Bristol Early Language work was funded jointly with Public Health.

The School's Forum:

- 1. Reviewed the progress to date and next steps for implementation of the Programme.**

<p>2. Approved the rollover of the Programme funding to cover the academic year 2023/24.</p> <p>3. Approved the extension of the Programme Management role up to the end of September 2024.</p> <p>4. Approved the widening of the criteria to include Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations as recipients of funding.</p>	
<p>9. Any Other Business</p>	
<p>There was none.</p>	

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm.