

# Bristol Schools Forum

**Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 13th January, 2021**

**at 5.00 pm at Virtual Meeting - Zoom Committee Meeting with Public Access via YouTube**

**Present:**

Karen Brown	Maintained Secondary Governor Rep, St Mary Redcliffe & Temple
Melanie Bunce	Maintained Primary Headteacher Rep, St Barnabas
Marian Curran	14 to 19 Citywide Partnership
Rob Davies	Nursery Governor Rep, Speedwell and Little Hayes Nursery Federation
Trish Dodds	Academy Primary Governor Rep, Fishponds Academy
Simon Eakins	Academy Primary Head Rep, Cathedral Primary
Rob Endley	Recognised Teaching Professional Associations (NASUWT)
Simon Holmes	Nursery Head Rep, St Phillips Marsh Nursery
Tracy Jones	Academy Primary Headteacher Rep, Merchants Academy
Sarah Lovell	Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep, Cabot Learning Federation
Garry Maher	Non School Member, Diocese of Clifton Rep
Aileen Morrison	Pupil Referral Unit Rep, St Matthias Park
Steve Mills	Non School Member, UNISON
Sam Packer	Private Voluntary Independent (PVI) Early Years Rep
Ruth Pickersgill	Academy Secondary Governor Rep, City Academy
Chris Pring	Maintained Primary Headteacher Rep, Cabot Primary
Emma Richards	Special School Head, Claremont School
Cedric Sanguignol	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, Bishop Road Primary
Simon Shaw	Maintained Secondary Head Rep, St Mary Redcliffe & Temple
Christine Townsend	Maintained Primary Governor Rep, Whitehall Primary
Wendy Weston	Non School Member, GMB
Stephanie Williams	Academy Primary Head Rep, Bannerman Road Community Academy
David Yorath	Academy Secondary Governor Rep, Cotham School

**In attendance from Bristol City Council:**

Councillor Anna Keen	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Ian Bell	Place Planning Manager
Graham Booth	Finance Manager
Richard Hanks	Head of Service, Education and Skills
Corrina Haskins	Clerk to Schools Forum
Alison Hurley	Director of Education and Skills
Ali Mannering	Trading with Schools Manager
Denise Murray	Director of Finance
Travis Young	Corporate Finance

	Action
<b>1. Welcome</b>	
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
<b>2. Forum Standing Business</b>	
<b>a. Apologies for absence</b>	

<p>Apologies for absence were received from: Kate Matheson, Maintained Primary Governor Rep, St Barnabas Primary.</p> <p><b>b. Quorate</b> The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.</p> <p><b>c. Resignations</b> There were no resignations to report.</p> <p><b>d. Appointment of New Members</b> The Clerk advised of the following new members: Tracy Jones, Academy Primary Headteacher Rep, Merchants Academy.</p> <p><b>e. Notification of Vacancies</b> The Clerk advised of the following Schools Forum Vacancies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One Primary Academy Head;</li> <li>• One Primary Maintained Heads;</li> <li>• Two Primary Academy Governors;</li> <li>• Two Secondary Academy Heads;</li> <li>• One Secondary Academy Governor.</li> </ul> <p><b>f. Declarations of Interest</b> There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
<p><b>3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b></p>	
<p><b>RESOLVED</b> - that the minutes be confirmed as a correct record</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>1. Early Years and Education Transformation Programme AH confirmed that she had not yet had an opportunity to speak to SH in relation to Early Years and Education Transformation milestones and undertook to provide SH with the information followed by a face to face meeting if he had any further questions.</p> <p>2. Self-Evaluation The Chair reminded members to fill out the self-evaluation form as discussed at the previous meeting.</p>	<p>AH</p> <p>All</p>
<p><b>4. Report from Director of Education and Skills including update on Education Transformation Programme Milestones</b></p>	
<p>AH thanked Forum Members for attending in view of the current lockdown and pressures on schools at the current time. She introduced the report and drew attention to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There had been a monitoring visit in November from the Department for Education and NHS England and that went well with confirmation that 89% of the milestones had been achieved or partly achieved, and of the 11% that had not been met the reason for delay was Covid related;</li> <li>• One of key messages from the advisors was that there was clear evidence of strengthening partnership working and this was having positive impacts on bringing provision and systems together;</li> </ul>	

- A lot of progress made to date was in changing systems and processes and the impact of this may not be felt on the ground yet;
- In terms of the £427,000 underspend due to Covid restrictions, consideration was being given to how this would roll forward in the future year;
- In relation to reporting against milestones:
  - SEND First Call: a team was now fully in place and the service was proving a useful tool and portal for communication with families;
  - Citywide Workforce Development Plan; a lot of work was happening in this area and was continuing to be rolled out in a sensible way during lockdown by targeting specific training and work. The plan aimed to bring up standards so the foundation was consistent and equitable across the city;
  - Development of the Local Offer: transparency of information had been part of this; looking at how to reach families and improve communication and there was evidence that engagement is improving;
  - Inconsistency of data had been a challenge through Covid e.g. attendance and strategies such as the Attendance and Belonging Strategy were in place to make sure children were not being lost in the system as a result of Covid;
  - Young People not in education, employment or training (NEETs): this had become a critical issue with Covid and so there was a lot of work to try and get young people secured in positive destinations;
  - Specialist provision:
    - The strategy had been adversely affected by Covid which was unfortunate;
    - the on-site feasibility studies had been completed for 49 schemes and 32 had proceeded to the detailed dialogue stage, which was the most time consuming. There were currently 13 approved schemes which would create an additional 154 places in the city. The process would continue with setting up service level agreements after which dates could be identified for phase 1 and phase 2.

AH responded to questions raised by Forum Members as follows:

- *Additional SEND places is what will make a difference, can you give any indications on figures for September 2021?*

It was hoped that some of the 13 approved schemes could be fast tracked to get them up and running, although it was not possible to give exact figures for September and this information would be reported back at a future meeting as well as publishing on the Local Offer.

- *In terms of the timeline for the new specialist provision, a service level agreement would need to be in place before the capital funding was available and for the provider to make a business case for approval by the Regional Schools Commission and so was there a mechanism for Bristol City Council to expedite the SLAs/move quickly through the RSC process?*

Bristol City Council was working closely with the Regional Schools Commission and AH was invited to present at the Regional Headteachers Board about the strategy, so they understood the needs and urgency;

- *Was there any mechanism to liaise with SENCO in different schools?*

The SENCO networks had been re-established to disseminate information to schools as well as the Inclusion in Education Group and it was important to keep building on this cooperative working.

- *Is there a philosophical framework in place to consider which SEND students are best suited to mainstream and which would be better served elsewhere?*  
There were different phases to this, the initial phase was to expand both specialist provision and provision in mainstream settings as well as giving families a choice in their local area. Looking at the long term sufficiency strategy was part of the Written Statement of Action.

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

## 5. Pupil Places and Sufficiency

IB introduced the report and drew attention to the following:

- Birth rates had fallen in recent years and this had an impact on schools;
- The current pressure for school places was in the secondary system while numbers were dropping in primary provision;
- At the same time there was an increased demand for SEND provision;
- Bristol City Council identified the need for 3 additional secondary schools:
  - Trinity Academy which was now open and would move to full size in September 2021;
  - Oasis Temple Quarter the construction of which had been delayed due to the planning application being called in and so would probably not be open by September 2022;
  - Oasis South Bristol which was scheduled for 2023 but may need to be brought forward to ease pressure;
- In terms of east Bristol and the pressure caused by the delay of Oasis Temple Quarter, Bristol City Council had engaged with Cabot Learning Federation to offer more Y7 places by relocating Post-16 provision;
- In terms of managing down primary numbers, there was a reduced Published Admission Number (PAN) at several schools; although it was important in future planning to be mindful that the population would start to increase again;
- Place planning also considered the large-scale plans for housing in certain areas;
- Priority for SEND places was another consideration;
- There were also 3 primary schools where numbers had been consistently small for a number of years which were proposed for closure, St Pius; St Michael's on the Mount and St George. In the case of St Michael's and St George's there would be a new school built on the current site of St George's and priority would be given to children currently attending the two schools. St Pius was proposed to be a straight closure.
- The rise in secondary numbers would soon start to have an impact on Post-16 places;
- September 2021 would see a pressure on school places in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 and this would have a knock-on effect on behaviour/attendance;
- There would also be a pressure on the growth fund as a result of the delay to the opening of Oasis Temple Quarter.

IB responded to questions raised by Forum Members as follows:

- *Does the Local Authority have a statutory obligation to provide Post-16 Education?*  
The LA does need to ensure sufficiency and that there is a range of provision available as it has a statutory obligation to ensure that young people were either in education, employment or training;
- *Should the falling rolls fund be revisited in view of school numbers reducing in primary schools and the housing developments planned in certain areas which will increase*

*demand in the future?*

Future developments e.g. Hengrove Park had been taken into consideration in place planning and it was not likely that any of the schools would meet the current criteria for falling rolls fund.

- *Consideration should be given to doing things differently to address the inequalities across the city e.g. allowing smaller class sizes in areas of greater deprivation while the demand for school places was decreasing to allow these children to catch up;*  
The projections work considered both birth rates and historical patterns such as child mobility and in some of the more deprived area it was notable that there was often movement where families moved out of the area before children started school.
- *What was the number of pupils attending Bristol schools from out of the city and how did this compare with previous years and was this information considered in place planning?*  
This information was taken into account in the projections, and there had been an increase in children attending Bristol schools from outside the city boundary, but there were more children from Bristol attending schools in other local authority areas;
- *Would there be enough places at the new combined school to accommodate pupils from St Michaels and St Georges?*  
Yes, there would be more than enough places and the challenge would be to attract more children to give it a sustainable future.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## **6. Dedicated School Grant (DSG) 2021/22**

GB introduced the report and drew attention to the following:

- The principles were discussed at the previous meeting and Forum now needed to take a formal decision;
- The final DSG allocations were published on 17<sup>th</sup> December and were generally in line with expectations, but had been updated to reflect the pupil figures in the October census, with a slight reduction in primary school numbers and increase in secondary school numbers;
- The teachers' pay and pensions grant would now be subsumed into the DSG and there were different rules about how this would apply to the different settings with mainstream schools covered as part of the schools block; special needs settings would receive a separate payment based on pupil numbers and early years settings would receive a separate grant;
- Central Services Block had reduced slightly to claw back historic commitments such as prudential borrowing;
- Schools Block had slightly increased to reflect the increase in government funding;
- Early Years Block had slightly increase to reflect the rate increase for 2 year olds;
- Formal ratification was required for the transfer of movement between blocks as discussed at the previous meeting with 0.5% being transferred from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block but keeping the money separate to fund the second year of the High Needs Transformation programme and the £147k left over in the Central Schools Block being transferred to the High Needs Block as this was no longer needed;
- A decision was also required in relation to the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF);
- There was an update on the EYNFF consultation as 116 responses had now been received and there was a slight changes in percentages with 83% agreed with passing any increase in base rate on to the provider; 90% agreed with keeping the deprivation

supplement at the current rate; 86% agreed with using System Leadership for the quality supplement and 97% with SEN supplement as the higher rate.

- The proposal was to pass on any increase in 3 and 4 year old rate to the provider but there was no increase; and also to pass on any increase in the 2 year old rate which amounted to 8p per child;
- Forum ratification was also required on Central School Services Block proposals.

Forum were asked to raise any comments which would be drawn to the attention of the upcoming Cabinet and Council meetings determining the Council's Budget and the following comments were raised:

- Concern that Early Years settings remained open during lockdown, but would only be funded for the children attending and this was not financially sustainable as many parents were choosing not to send their children to nursery during lockdown due to concerns about Covid 19. AH confirmed that the funding was ambiguous in relation to Early Years and reassured Forum that the Council was working with the Regional Schools Commission and other Local Authorities to look at how this could be fed back to government as well as getting clarity on the guidance. She confirmed that there was a lot of lobbying nationally and regionally on the issue of how funding based on census figures would work while children were not in school.
- There was a concern that the lack of secondary school places would result in an increase in school appeals which would have a detrimental impact on the budget of schools;
- Bristol City Council was requested to continue lobbying government about schools being able to claim back additional costs which had resulted from the Covid pandemic.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the 2021/22 funding levels be noted;
- 2) the final transfers between blocks be approved as set out in the report;
- 3) the Early Years National Funding Formula be approved as set out in the report;
- 4) the following feedback be passed on to Cabinet and Council, for consideration in making final decisions on the Schools Budget for 2021/22:
  - Concern that Early Years settings remained open during lockdown, but would only be funded for the children attending and this was not financially sustainable as many parents were choosing not to send their children to nursery during lockdown;
  - The lack of secondary school provision would result in an increase in the number of school appeals and this will have a detrimental impact on schools;
  - Bristol City Council be requested to continue lobbying to enable schools to claim back additional costs resulting from the Covid pandemic;
- 5) the following Central School Services Block allocations be agreed:
  - LA Core Functions £1.069m (as per Appendix 1);
  - School Admissions £0.526m;
  - Schools Forum £0.023m;
  - Combined Services £0.599m (as per Appendix 2).

GB/DM/  
Cllr Keen

## **7. Schools Block 2021/22**

CT asked SL to take over as Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

GB introduced the report and drew attention to the following:

- The final agreement of Forum was needed on the formula;
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee had been set at the lowest level;
- Preserve the lump sum;
- £2m would be allocated to the Growth Fund, as current commitments amounted to £1.5m and it was usual to set the fund higher than known commitments;
- Any spare money would go to Additional Educational Needs and these had been inflated by 8%;
- 16 schools would receive less money in absolute terms and 33 when the Teachers' Pay and Pensions Grant was taken into account, but in all cases the reduction was due to falling numbers of pupils on roll rather than the funding formula.

The following questions/comments were raised:

- *Has the decision to allocate more funding to Additional Educational Needs achieved the aim of addressing deprivation?*

GB/TY confirmed that although some of the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) figures had gone up and others gone down as a result of a new index, overall more money had been allocated for deprivation.

- *Why did the Education and Skills Funding Agency decide that Pupil Premium would be defined by the October 2020 census rather than the January 2021 census and did Bristol City Council know this was going to happen?*
- *Approaches by Forum Members to the ESFA to explain the decision had not been successful.*

GB confirmed that the Council did not receive any notice about the change and the reasoning was unclear. DM undertook to follow this up by writing to the EFSA and liaising with other schools.

DM

#### **RESOLVED -**

- 1) that the proposed arrangements for the 2021/22 mainstream funding formula, including the amount set aside for the Growth Fund be approved; AGREED
- 2) that the following feedback is passed on to Cabinet and Council, for their consideration in making final decisions on the Schools Budget for 2021/22:
  - request for representations to be made to the EFSA to explain the reasoning for the changes to Pupil Premium to be based on the October 2020 census rather than January 2021 census.

#### **8. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget Monitor**

GB reported that the DSG Budget Monitor for period 8 was similar to the position reported at the previous meeting, but there had been a slight increase in the High Needs Block deficit to £8.5m.

**RESOLVED** that the in-year 2020/21 position for the overall DSG be noted.

#### **9. Any Other Business**

##### **1. Composition**

The Chair advised that the report on the Schools Forum composition would be deferred until the next meeting in March.

##### **2. UNISON Letter**

The Chair reported that union colleagues had submitted a statement in relation to prioritising education workers for a vaccine against COVID. She advised that this issue was not within the remit of Schools Forum but suggested that CH circulate to members for information if there were no objections and this was agreed.

CH

### **3. Alternative Provision**

A concern was raised about the financial impact on Alternative Provision caused by the drop in referrals due to the Covid pandemic and asked that Bristol City Council continue to review funding arrangements.

The meeting closed at 6.40 pm.