

EAST SUSSEX SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES of a meeting of the East Sussex Schools Forum held at Wellhurst Golf and Country Club on 18 January 2019.

PRESENT

Richard Thomas (Pevensey & Westham Primary)
Richard Blakeley (Parkside Primary)
Lizzie Field (Park Mead Primary)
Monica Whitehead (Claverham Community College)
James Freeston (King Offa Primary Academy)
Phil Matthews (Hailsham Community College Academy Trust)
Joanna Sanchez (Diocese of Arundel and Brighton)
Debbie Gilbert (Burwash CEP School)
Richard Preece (Saxon Mount and Torfield)
Mandy Watson (Diocese of Chichester)
Hugh Hennebry - Chair (Uckfield College)
Helen Key (Chailey School)
Frank Stanford (Sabden Multi Academy Trust)
Andrew Ferguson (Rye Academy)
Kate Owbridge (Ashdown Primary)
Vicky Richards (St Mark's CEP School)
Sarah Pringle (Seahaven Academy)
Phil Clarke (Trade Union Representative)
Stuart Gallimore (Director Children's Services)
Cllr Bob Standley (Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability)
Fiona Wright (Assistant Director Education & ISEND)
Edward Beale (Schools Funding Manager)
Mark Whiffin (Head of Finance)
Sarah Rice (Finance Manager – Schools)
Nathan Caine (Head of ISEND)
Emily Taylor (Strategy and Engagement)
Amanda Altenhoven (Clerk)

7 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

7.1 Hugh welcomed all and thanked everyone for their attendance. He confirmed the meeting was quorate, recognising there had been a number of apologies.

7.2 Apologies received from:

- Jane Johnson (Newick CE Primary)

- Emily Beer (Willingdon Community)
- Anna Robinson (Beacon Academy)
- Victoria Stevens (Eastbourne Academy)
- Geoffry Lucas (Etchingam CE Primary School)

8 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

8.1 The Minutes for 23rd November were signed off by the Chair as a true record.

9 MATTERS ARISING AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

9.1 There were no declarations of interest.

9.2 There was one matter arising with regards to the EALS consultation. Fiona commented that the consultation is still ongoing and comments are still welcome. It was noted that Secondary Heads have this matter on their agenda for their meeting next Tuesday.

10 PLACE COMMISSIONING PROCESS

10.1 Emily Taylor led on this paper. The purpose of this paper was to give an update on the school places commissioning process.

10.2 Emily outlined the graduated changes taking place around the process of commissioning specialist provision places in special schools and special facilities to maximise occupancy and efficiency of the use of High Needs Block (HNB) funding. The papers discussed were with reference to the last 3 years. Despite demand there were still places sitting empty 3 years ago at a cost to the HNB of £300K and there has been a discussion around the projected places. Emily discussed the forecasting model that looks at this demand and projected numbers in school. Emily then went on to explain how this process has been further developed to establish a set of commissioning principles. The new principles were discussed, which set out that funding would be recouped if places were under capacity by 5% or more for a period of 3 months. It was agreed with special heads that there would be flexibility in how this repayment was made, in order to protect the integrity of the single value top up system¹, that reflected that schools with similar cohorts should be funded equitably in a system based on the cost of provision.

10.3 Last year in the autumn term there was a discussion with heads around how to best use the places available and where there might be empty spaces looking at how to best fill these places.

10.4 Emily discussed looking forward to the year 2020 and the places in new free schools that are opening, that will need to be filled by children with the highest level need. Emily discussed the HNB review, looking across a range of provision through mainstream and special schools which recognises that there is a discrepancy in this continuum between need and provision. Para 2.6 sets out the development of a matrix for special schools to work alongside the existing matrix for mainstream schools to ensure that our highest cost placements are used by those children with the highest needs. Again there have been discussions with head teachers, looking at the continued need for children within the provision. It was commented that the Special Head teachers met with Nathan, Fiona and Emily and it was noted that this was a very useful conversation.

¹ The top up is the same value for all children attending the school.

10.5 It was confirmed that the model outlined in the paper is the new way of moving forward and setting out the type of need for each young person. There was a comment with regard to the ISEND figures which indicated an increase in special education places. Nathan advised that forecasting shows significant growth and an external company ISOS had evaluated East Sussex's position regarding EHC plans and provision. There are now more children with EHCPs in special schools than in mainstream schools. Where a child is placed within a special school it costs the HNB more, removes a child from their community and does not necessarily provide better outcomes.

10.6 There were a number of comments regarding young people not attending (ie absent from) a special school. Nathan advised that this is not a huge number but there is a need to ensure we are maximising the use of this provision, bearing in mind the cost of a special school place. A further question was asked, if there have been any thoughts for places taken up by children with long term absence: would special schools be able to fill their place with another child. Nathan advised that it is the aim for such places to then be accessed by a child waiting for a special school place.

10.7 There was discussion regarding the link between the number of children with EHCPs placed in special schools compared to mainstream schools. There are 200 less children with EHCPs in ES mainstream schools than was the case three years ago. School representatives stated that mainstream schools are finding it more difficult to get children an EHCP and are catering as best they can. It was asked if there is a difference, now, in terms of how many EHCPs are being granted at panel compared to the old Statements of SEN. Emily responded that this is partly due to the historically high number of EHCPs in East Sussex and that the mainstream Matrix and rigorous panel process had stopped the increase in numbers. An EHCP could potentially be to the detriment of the child, rather than an opportunity. It was asked how reduced timetables work, as one school noted that a graduated increase of a timetable was written into an EHCP over a course of a calendar year. Nathan asked for details of the specific case mentioned so that the LA can look into this. He stated that we are seeing an increasing number of parents asking for a reduced timetable or elect for their child to be home educated whilst maintaining an EHCP.

11 DSG 2019/20 BUDGET

11.1 Ed Beale presented this paper which related to the 2019/20 DSG Budget. The Schools Block, Central School Services Block and High Needs block budgets were detailed for information only and discussions and required approvals had taken place at previous forums. Ed explained that The Early Years block budget required approval today.

11.2 Schools Block appendix B - Ed talked through the paper and explained that the Growth fund and Falling rolls fund were approved at Forum in November 2018 and the remaining funds are allocated to schools / academies via their budget shares.

11.3 Ed highlighted that the allocation from the DfE was £6.7m more than 18/19 and there were two reasons for this: £1.8m due to an increase in Numbers On Roll (NOR) and £4.9m in additional funding from the DfE.

11.4 CSSB budget Appendix C – This was approved at the November 2018 forum, but again presented here for completeness. Ed talked through the figures and explained that the final allocation was £61.3k more than the indicative allocation due to an increase in NOR. £23.1k relates to CLA licenses which are recouped by the DfE and the remaining £38.2K has been added to the transfer to the Schools Block.

11.5 Ed confirmed that the total amount that has been transferred from the CSSB to the Schools Block, and therefore into school budgets, is £4.03m.

11.6 The Chair of the Forum, Hugh Hennebry commented that the schools were very appreciative of the transfer and thanked the Council for this action.

11.7 High Needs Appendix D - Approval of budget is not required. Ed explained that the place funding for special schools and facilities remains unchanged for 2019/20. Ed explained that the allocation for Special Academy place funding has increased and Special School place funding has decreased due to a school becoming an academy.

11.8 Early Years budget Appendix E - This required approval from forum. Ed talked through the figures and explained how the different hours awarded worked for early years and how the funds distributed worked with the hours.

11.9 Ed explained that there was a substantial reduction in the allocation from the DfE for 19/20 due to the way the DfE calculated the funding for the additional 15 hours.

11.10 Approval of Early Years budget: Carried For – 14 Against – 0 Abstentions - 1

12 REVIEW OF SCHOOLS FORUM CONSTITUTION, ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND MEMBERSHIP

12.1 Sarah Rice introduced this paper. Sarah highlighted that in September 2018 the ESFA had issued an updated operational guidance for Schools Forum. This guidance was highlighted at the September Forum meeting and linked into the website. The ESCC Schools Forum constitution has now been reviewed in light of the updated guidance and there is no change required as a result of the review. The paper included a copy of the constitution, together with a summary table published by the DfE outlining key roles and responsibilities of the Schools Forum as a useful reminder for representatives. Sarah also highlighted that in reviewing the constitution a review of membership was also carried out. The aim is that membership is proportionate to the number of pupils attending settings in East Sussex with all schools types and phases represented. Sarah highlighted that, similar to the position reported in January 2018, the recent review highlighted that there is one more Secondary member than required and there could be one more Primary academy representative.

12.2 It was asked how long the term is to be a member, Sarah advised 4 years. Academy trusts are asked to nominate and vote in their reps, and in general the relevant phase and/ or group of schools would be consulted when a change in representation or vacancy were required to be filled.

12.3 There was a comment regarding the EALS vote back in the September 2018 meeting and how the separate phase voting impacted the vote - it was suggested it could have potentially turned out differently had the phases voted together. An action was noted for Schools Forum representatives and Local Authority officers to investigate the procedures by which votes are taken by phase of school to ensure the impact across phases is understood. Sarah Rice to meet with Richard Thomas, Helen Key and Sarah Pringle and report back to the March Forum.

12.4 It was proposed that in the interests of stability current membership would continue and, when an appropriate vacancy arose, the opportunity would be explored to redistribute the membership in line with the review. Forum were asked to agree the current constitution. Vote for the Review of Schools Forum Constitution: Carried For – 18 Against – 0 Abstentions - 0

13 FORUM MEETING DATES

13.1 The future year meeting dates were presented in the papers. Ed highlighted them and confirmed that a timetable of the year ahead, which will set out future planned agenda items against each meeting, would be issued to all members before the next meeting.

14 AOB

14.1 Currently a consultation is under way regarding the funding of increases to teachers' pensions employer contributions. This is just for the year 2019-20.

14.2 Link to the GOV consultation: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/funding-increases-to-teachers-pensions-employer-contributions> (please press Ctrl and click on link to access). Forum members were encouraged to respond to the consultation.

The meeting ended at 9.18 am.

Next meeting - Friday, 22nd March 2019, at 0830 hours at Wellshurst Golf Club