

EAST SUSSEX SCHOOLS' FORUM

MINUTES of a meeting of the Schools' Forum held remotely with Microsoft Teams on 09 July 2021

PRESENT

Hugh Hennebry - **Chair** (Uckfield College)
Sarah Pringle (Seahaven Academy)
Gavin Bailey (Swale Academy Trust)
Mandy Watson (Diocese of Chichester)
Joanna Sanchez (Diocese of Arundel and Brighton)
Jo Foulkes (Sabden Multi Academy Trust)
Phil Matthews (Hailsham Community College Academy Trust)
Helen Key (Chailey School)
Phil Clarke (Trade Union Representative)
Tom Scully (University of Brighton Academies Trust)
Jane Johnson (Newick CE Primary)
James Freeston (King Offa Primary Academy)
Richard Preece (Saxon Mount and Torfield)

Cllr Bob Standley (Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability)
Stuart Gallimore (Director Children's Services)
Edward Beale (Schools Funding Manager)
Nathan Caine (Head of ISEND)
Elizabeth Funge (Head of Education Improvement)
Kirsten Coe (Schools Finance Team Lead)
Lesley Leppard (Clerk)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 Hugh welcomed all and thanked everyone for their attendance.
It was confirmed the meeting was quorate, recognising the apologies below.

1.2 Apologies received from:

- Kate Owbridge (Ashdown Primary)
- Richard Blakeley (Harlands Primary)
- Susan Thompson (Ditchling Primary)
- Monica Whitehead (Claverham Community College) not present
- Geoffrey Lucas (Etchingham CE Primary School) not present

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 14 MAY 2021

- 2.1 The minutes for the meeting held were approved as a true record and will be signed by the Chair and scanned to Lesley Leppard.

3. MATTERS ARISING AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- 3.1 Nathan thanked those who met with all the East Sussex MP's for the High Needs Block Consultation discussion. An update has been sent to Hugh Merriman. There is no update yet from the DfE, but once received this will be sent out.
- 3.2 Hugh requested an update on whether future Schools' Forum meetings would be able to be held virtually recognising that this was more convenient for most headteachers. The clerk will enquire and update the Forum members.
- 3.3 There were no declaration of interests.

4. School Improvement and Brokering Grant Update (Information)

- 4.1 An update of the main points of the paper was given.
- 4.2 A question was raised about what data would be shared and a discussion was held.

5. Monthly Top Up Funding (Information)

- 5.1 The main points of the paper were discussed.
- 5.2 The Forum were advised that there is a small amount of capacity in the High Needs Block this financial year and it is right that this is passported to mainstream school in recognition that the top-up values had been frozen for a number of years,
- 5.3 A question was raised relating to [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website where the stats were found to be different from those East Sussex County Council (ESCC) provided. An explanation was given on how the paper used data relating to the 0-25 age population whilst the stats found on the website used the school-aged population data.
- 5.4 A point was raised that it was important to ensure the figures were correct as this is how funding would be allocated. Clarification was given that the figures used in the paper related to the same population (i.e. 0-25) for both ESCC and national.
- 5.5 It was raised that special schools were being slightly overlooked and they were in a challenging financial position. Nathan advised that special schools did receive an increase in the top-up in September 2020 and were, overall, in a much better financial position than mainstream schools. However, if the current top up was causing a difficulty in funding provision in any special school, schools are welcome to contact him directly and the issue would be investigated.

6. Proposal to provide short term additional funding (Information)

- 6.1 Nathan advised that SENCOs had reported that they felt there were times when they were forced into using the statutory assessment process to access funding when they felt that an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) was not needed, but there was no other route to secure short-term resources. The aspiration of these proposals is to make available resources for schools on a short-term basis without the need to apply for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment.

- 6.2 A discussion was held regarding the high number of EHCPs in East Sussex. The scheme being proposed would be for a 2-year pilot of funding to support to schools to improve provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- 6.3 It was acknowledged that there needed to be a thorough process in place to ensure that demand did not outstrip the resource. Other Local Authorities had made non-statutory funding available but where there were not appropriate controls, this led to escalating and unsustainable costs to the High Needs block.
- 6.4 A question was raised about there being a prerequisite for schools to request short-term additional funding prior to requesting an EHC needs assessment. Nathan advised that it was not a pre-requisite. However, where schools chose to go down the statutory route first, if the statutory thresholds were not met, additional funding might not be available, so it would be sensible to explore the option of short-term additional funding where this might help a child overcome some short-term barriers.
7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
- 7.1 The Chair asked Forum members to think about the challenges of the group.
- 7.2 **ACTION:** All to think about how the Forum blends in with the Primary and Secondary Boards and how to strategically join them all together.
- 7.3 **ACTION:** All to think about talent management and how we encourage others to join the Forum when there are vacancies. How the group is managed and chaired alternating between Primary and Secondary as Chair.
- 7.4 The Forum were asked to reflect by the next meeting in September where they would formalise a way to get new members.
- 7.5 The Chair gave a thank you to Stuart Gallimore who was retiring for his contribution to the Forum and wished him a happy retirement.

Meeting concluded at 09:17 am

Next meeting – Friday 17 September 2021 08:30am. Location TBC - Wellshurst Golf and Country Club or Microsoft Teams.