

## EAST SUSSEX SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES of a meeting of the Schools' Forum held remotely with Microsoft Teams on 14 January 2022

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### PRESENT

Hugh Hennebry - **Chair** (Uckfield College)  
Gavin Bailey (Swale Academy Trust)  
Richard Blakeley (Harlands Primary)  
Phil Clarke (Trade Union Representative)  
Jon Gilbert (Diocese of Chichester)  
Katherine Rabson Stark  
Kate Owbridge (Ashdown Primary)  
James Freeston (King Offa Primary Academy)  
Richard Preece (Saxon Mount and Torfield)  
Sarah Pringle (Seahaven Academy)  
Joanna Sanchez (Diocese of Arundel and Brighton)  
Tom Scully (University of Brighton Academies Trust)  
Monica Whitehead (Claverham Community College)  
Jo Foulkes (Sabden Multi Academy Trust)

Cllr Bob Standley (Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability)  
Alison Jeffery (Director Children's Services)  
Nathan Caine (Head of ISEND)  
Elizabeth Funge (Head of Education)  
Mark Whiffin (Head of Finance)  
Edward Beale (Schools Funding Manager)  
Rachel King (Clerk)

### 27. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

27.1 The Chair welcomed all and thanked everyone for their attendance. A warm welcome was given to Katherine Rabson Stark, Katherine is the new representative for Governors in Primary Phase. It was confirmed the meeting was quorate, recognising the apologies below.

27.2 Apologies received from:

- Geoffrey Lucas (Etchingam CE Primary School) unable to join
- Phil Matthews (Hailsham Community College Academy Trust)
- Helen Key (Chailey School)

28. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING 19 NOVEMBER 2021

28.1 Amendment made to 8.2, second bullet point.

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

29. MATTERS ARISING AND DE-DELEGATED ITEMS

29.1 There were no matters arising or declaration of interests

30. DSG (DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT) BUDGET 2022/23

30.1 Forum members were provided with an update on the DSG budget and asked to note the DSG allocations for the school, central school services block, high needs and to approve the early years DSG budget.

30.2 A key question was asked re 6.1 from the DSG paper. What is the remaining 5% used for for? This money is for the Early Years team to use for providing advice and support for Early Years providers, training, admin support and support of the early years portal.

30.3 All Forum members were asked to vote to approve Early Years block funding, votes below

Number voting 'Yes'	Number voting 'No'
13	0

31. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT MONITORING AND BROKERING GRANT

31.1 This item is a follow on from the paper brought to the July 2021 forum. The members of the forum were provided an update on the Department of Education's (DfE) consultation on the removal of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant and how this will be managed in East Sussex 2022/23.

31.2 The forum were informed that since the paper provided was written, the DfE have published the outcome of the consultation and have decided to go ahead with those changes. There will be a 50% reduction from 2022/23.

31.3 Key questions regarding the LA paying for DBS checks

- How much were they and the answer was £40
- Do other LA's pay for the DBS checks and it was confirmed by two members that Kent LA and Southwark in London LA do not pay for DBS checks. Academy's pay for the DBS's.

32. USE OF HIGH NEEDS BLOCK FUNDING (HNB)

32.1 This item is a follow up to the agenda item discussed at the November forum which relates to the use of some of the HNB funding in 2022/23. The forum was provided with an outline of a proposal through which uncommitted HNB from the 2022/23 financial year allocation could be used to support inclusive practice in mainstream schools and reduce pressures in demand for specialist placements.

National data shows that East Sussex has a comparatively low number of children and young people with EHCPs placed in mainstream schools. Whereas the national percentage has remained relatively static, East Sussex has fallen significantly over the last four years. This is set against a local picture of increasing demand for statutory assessments (up 40% on the same period last year) and a reduction in the number of children with EHCPs placed in mainstream primary schools being accepted at consultation by their local secondary school. Combined, these factors are limiting the flexibility of special schools in East Sussex to admit children, in-year, at times of crisis.

The High Needs Block settlement for East Sussex for 2022/23 has a headroom of £5m which presents as an opportunity for schools and the LA to work differently and create some options for improving mainstream inclusion across the county.

## 32.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Schools' Forum:

- a) supports the allocation of £5m (to be reviewed annually) to undertake activities aimed at promoting mainstream inclusion.
- b) supports the proposals for working groups to be set up to explore options, following discussions with the Joint primary and Secondary Board in February; and
- c) identifies any other thematic areas for exploration which would contribute to this strategic agenda.

32.3 Alison Jeffery Director of Children's expressed that this subject is an important strategic issue and realises the difficulty when emerging from the pandemic and the challenges that schools are facing. It might explain the drop of mainstream secondary schools taking EHCP's. With this resource ESCC need to think strategically to find the best possible way to use funding. We are open to ideas and reflections and really need people who understand to be part of discussion. In order to lay the foundations for this, we will be proposing some breakfast briefings before Easter to make sure everyone is on the same page.

32.4 Key points in discussion.

- It was asked of members to make sure every school is represented individually rather than a one size fits all approach and not just for those that put there selves forward.
- The transfer of special schools back to mainstream, is there data to use from other LA's to compare as a benchmark. There is no national figure but look at how ESCC can identify.
- Developing leaders in this area of school life, could we promote as an important and worthwhile responsibility to take on.
- Relation of parental confidence, managing and engaging with parent group to take in account of key issues.
- Provision is being requested from parents and not schools

## 33. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

33.1 Forum members were reminded that an email was recently sent out asking for some representatives to be part of the Growth Fund working Group. (Ideally, looking for 2 Primary (One maintained and One Academy rep) and 2 Secondary (Also one maintained and one academy rep) Responses required by 21 January 2022

Meeting concluded at 09:23 am

Next meeting – Friday 13 May 2022 08:30am. Location TBC - Microsoft Teams or Wellshurst Golf and Country Club.