

Schools Forum

Draft Minutes of Meeting held 12 March 2020 at 8:30am
Conference Centre, Harris Academy Chafford Hundred
Chafford Hundred, Grays, RM16 6SA

In Attendance:

Primary Academies

Headteacher – Kenningtons
Headteacher – Abbots Primary
Principal – Woodside Academy
Headteacher – Giffards Primary
CEO - Catalyst Academies Trust
Executive Head - East Tilbury Primary & Nursery

Ms J Sawtell-Haynes
Mrs L James
Mr E Caines – Vice Chair
Mrs N Haslam-Davis
Mr T Parfett
Mrs L Coates

Primary Maintained Schools

Secondary Academies

CEO – Osbourne Co-operative Academy Trust
CEO – ORTU Federation Ltd
Governor – Hathaway Academy

Mr P Griffiths (The Chair)
Dr S Asong
Mr S Sweeting

Secondary Maintained Schools

Headteacher - Grays Convent

Mrs P Johnson

Special Academy

Headteacher-Beacon Hill Academy
Headteacher – Treetops School

Ms S Hewitt
Mr J Brewer

Non School Members

0-11 Representative
11-19 Representative
Diocese of Brentwood

Ms A Jones
Dr J Revill
Mrs M Shepherd

The Olive Academy

Ms C Hunnisett

Also in Attendance:

Mrs Sheila Murphy - Corporate Director of Children's Services
Mr Malcolm Taylor - Strategic Lead – Specialist Provision/PEP
Mr David May - Strategic Lead - DSG and Schools
Ms Sarah Williams - Educational Specialist, Service Manager
Miss Teresa Lydon - Minute taker

1. **Welcome from the Chair**

The Chair welcomed the Forum to the meeting.

2. **Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Winstone, Mrs Lucas and Mrs S Jones.

3. **Agreement of Agenda, Time-Guide and Notification of Any Other Business**

- i) No items changed.
- ii) The Forum agreed the agenda and time guide.
- iii) The Forum agreed to add the following to Any Other Business Coronavirus.

The Chair proposed that they continue with pre-meets. He advised this will need two separate rooms. The pre-meet would start at 8.30 and the main meeting at 9am.

Action: S Williams to look into venues with two meeting rooms.

4. **Dedicated Schools Grant 2019/20 and 2020/21**

Mr May commented that Thurrock Cabinet approved that the National Funding Formula would be implemented in full in 2020/21. Following discussion with the EFSA the inflationary increase applied to the Basic Entitlement increased from 1.68% to 2.125%. This reflects clarification of pupil growth to be included in the funding formula for the summer 2020 term.

He advised that the High Needs Block (HNB) continues to experience significant increase in demand and costs. This is presenting a very challenging position in both 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Schools Block

Mr May advised that in 2020/21, this funding will continue to be distributed using the Schools National Funding Formulae (NFF). Thurrock's key principles that have been applied in 2020/21 are:

- National Funding Formula values have been applied;
- An inflationary increase of 1.02125 to the Basic Entitlement values, this is an increase from that previously reported;
- Retained growth fund of £1.385m
- Transfer of £0.635m from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block to support an increased demand for Specialist placements and Education, Health and Care Plans.

Early Years Block

Mr May advised that the updated funding rates have been reflected in the latest release of information. The final confirmed allocation will not be received until July 2020 to reflect the outcome of the January 2020 census return.

In 2019/20 the updated allocation is an increase of £0.639m. This has been allocated to payment to providers reflecting the increase in early years take up. The projected outturn for 2019/20 is £0.167m, including the £0.123m brought forward from 2018/19.

Included within the funding announcement is an additional £66 million investment in early years. The ESFA have confirmed that the hourly rate paid to Thurrock will increase by 8p. This is the first increase in the hourly rate that Thurrock has received since 2016/17.

In addition the use of the carry forward has been considered and the final option is to:

- passport in full the 8p increase in hourly rates to providers
- increase the hourly rate paid to 3 and 4 year old providers by an additional 2p per hour, with a cost implication of £45,000
- increase the deprivation quantum and change the formula to be based on the postcode of the child, not the setting – deprivation funding would increase from £220,000 to £285,000, a cost Implication of £65,000
- the total cost implication of £110,000 to be funded from the available carried forward allocation of £167,000

The rates to be paid to providers from April 2020 will be:

- 2 year-olds £5.15
- 3 and 4 year-olds £4.28.

This proposal has been discussed with both the Early Years managers Forum and the Childminders forum.

Mrs L James asked if the Local Authority were going to support private settings due to a change in small businesses by the government.

Mr Caines also asked about sick pay and if they now needed to pay sick pay to staff.

Action: Mr Taylor to take this question back and discuss with the Local Authority and get clarification on this.

Pupil Premium Grant

The EFSA have confirmed the Pupil Premium Grant per pupil rates for 2020-21 are as follows:

Pupils in year groups reception to year 6 recorded as Ever 6 free school meals (FSM)	£1,345
Pupils in years 7 to 11 recorded as Ever 6 FSM	£955
Looked-after children (LAC) defined in the Children Act 1989 as one who is in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, an English local authority	£2,345

Children who have ceased to be looked after by a local authority in England and Wales because of adoption, a special guardianship order, or child arrangements order (previously known as a residence order)	£2,345
Pupils in year groups reception to year 11 recorded as Ever 6 service child or in receipt of a child pension from the Ministry of Defence	£310

He advised that the Virtual School Headteacher was responsible for the use of the Pupil Premium for looked after children (CLA). This grant would be used to improve attainment, narrow the gap and accelerate progress as identified in the young person's Personal Education Plan (PEP).

AGREED

All Schools Forum members present agreed to the following recommendations:

- a. Increase in the hourly rate paid to 2 year old providers by 8p from £5.07 to £5.15 per hour.
- b. Increase the hourly rate paid to 3 and 4 year old providers by 10p from £4.18 to £4.28 per hour.
- c. Increase the deprivation quantum and change the formula to be based on the postcode of the child, not the setting, for 3 and 4 year olds. Deprivation funding to increase from £220,000 to £285,000.

The Schools Forum noted the change to the Schools Funding Formula that was approved by the ESFA on 17 February 2020.

5. High Needs Block 2020/21

Mr May advised the reports shows everything they have been working towards for the last 12 months. The High Needs Block has received additional funding. He advised this is not enough but they have tried to set a budget. There is a continued increase in EHCPs and this is a continued trend.

In Thurrock (Autumn 2019), out of a school population of 29,680; 4,333 (14.6%) children and young people were identified as having special educational needs. Of these, 3,134(10.6%) were SEN Support and 1,199 (4%) had an Education Health and Care Plan.

In 2019 240 new plans were completed, 182 were completed (76%) within the 20 weeks statutory timescale.

In 2019/20 the local authority commissioned 580 pupils in specialist provisions. In 2020/21 the commissioned numbers will increase to 657; this is an increase of 77 from original 2019/20 submission.

The increase for 2020/21 can be broken down into 5 key areas:

- Expansion of the Inclusion base at East Tilbury and the Resource base at Quarry Hill by a combined 14 additional places.

Within the primary sector are 2 resource bases for SEMH (Quarry Hill and Dilkes), with 20 places and 2 inclusion units (East Tilbury and Thameside), with 16 places.

The inclusion units are turnaround places and the expectation is that the pupil will attend for 2 terms and be reintegrated back into mainstream setting. Mrs Coates did not feel that re-integrating after two terms was realistic for all pupils. Mr Taylor commented that there will be cases where they are in these provisions for a longer period of time as they are at risk of Permanent Exclusion (PE) or not ready to return to mainstream.

- Increase by 10, from 20 to 30 places for Social Emotional Mental Health at Ormiston Park, this is based on assessed need with a phased implementation from January 2020;
- Increase by 11 places to 85 at Olive Alternative Provision, reflecting current demand for places in 2019/20.
- Proposed establishment of a new 20 place secondary Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) provision from September 2020.
- Establishment of additional provision at Treetops of 16 places, equally split between the two new bases for **Verbal Behaviour (VB)** and **Moderate Learning Disabilities (MLD)**. This will prevent these places being commissioned from providers outside of Thurrock at higher costs. The key principles is that all providers will be fully funded for agreed staffing ratios and support. During 2019/20 Officers have discussed with each specialist provision their associated costs and staff ratios required to ensure the provision can provide the agreed standard of provision and this is outlined in the Service Level Agreement.

A table showing the Band Values for 2019-20 was presented to all members.

At the Headteachers briefing in January 2020, key issues both in terms of continued increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), the implication of the Dedicated School Grant and particularly the High Needs Block was discussed in detail.

The following questions were asked:

Consider how we can build parental confidence and ensure that pupil's needs are appropriately met at SEN support. Consequently reducing the level of need for Education, Health and Care Plans.

A summary of the points raised are shown below:

- Would the development of an Early Help offer support the system and lead to a reduction in the number of EHCP's;
- Increased parental understanding of system and process. Clarification and promotion of what parents should expect from all schools without the requirement of an EHCP;
- Identify training needs within schools to support inclusion;
- Greater focus required on the Notional SEN amount of each school and how schools are using this to meet need;
- Consistency of the EHCP process.

These points were discussed with the ESFA.

Work has been undertaken to develop our strategic principles and they are in the process of reviewing and updating these. The development of local provision is a key priority and the Local Authority have commissioned a number of local educational pathway opportunities through all key phases. This will only be achieved if we have clearly articulated our shared vision to provide outstanding local provision to meet the needs of our SEND learners.

Over the coming months a range of sessions will be held with Headteachers, Governors, Parents and Carers, SENCOs and School Business managers to clarify the SEN system and the expectation and requirements at each stage of the process.

In order to set a balanced budget the report highlighted a number of key risks that were acknowledged by all and will be closely monitored throughout the year, with updated reports presented to each meeting of the schools forum.

Mr May advised that at the ESFA discussion yesterday they were impressed with the partnership approach with the schools. They are aware that all the funding has gone into schools. They acknowledged as a result of an increase in pupil numbers there will be a correlation with EHCPs. They also acknowledged the risk in the budget and that the local authority were seeking to mitigate this. They understood the strategies and the reasons for increasing resource bases and moving children from out of borough back into the borough provision. They asked them to look at EHCP thresholds and make sure they are consistent with other authorities. Thurrock needs to work with parents and schools to try and reduce EHCPs by giving the support within the school environment. The Chair advised that against other local authorities, the growth was faster here. Mr Caines commented that this is not just the EHCPs but children being put in resource bases where he feels that the school would be able to support them. The Chair commented that they did discuss what mainstream schools should deliver. Mr Taylor felt that because of parental pressure and the reputation of Treetops and Beacon Hill this is part of the reason for the growth in EHCPs in the borough.

Mr Caines commented that he feels there is also extra pressure from parents who want to move their children from mainstream schools to

specialist provision when they move to secondary school when he feels that mainstream school would be able to support them.

The Chair acknowledged the good work that is being done within the borough. Mr Taylor commented that they have particular challenges in the parent forum groups and this has led to a local issue around the strength of the parent carer forum. Mr Taylor felt it was hard to convince parents that support put in mainstream schools would meet their child's needs. This is the key to reducing some of the plans.

Mr Taylor commented at the moment they have around 40 children who are on a waiting list for a place at one of their specialist schools. Mrs James asked about the children's health needs. Do they get the money they need for this? The Chair commented that the Local Authority provided the right challenge for this to the ESFA.

The Chair commented that the meeting with the DfE was a support measure and did not come out with any solutions and felt they were taking solutions from the Local Authority. Mr May commented that he feels that more money will go into the High Needs Block next year. Mrs Coates commented around the 20 new places for SEMH and asked that the people involved in moving Year 6 children into Year 7 should have discussions with the provisions the children are in at the moment. She feels that some children are not ready to move into a secondary school in September 2020. Mr Taylor commented that they are still waiting for the data on what will best meet the needs of these children. He commented that they have enormous challenge in getting Year 6 children into secondary schools as the schools are pushing back these children. Mrs Coates feels that there is a piece of work to be done across Year 6 children moving to Year 7.

Mr Taylor commented that another important point from DfE meeting was that specialist independent school places were very costly. A small number of Specialist Placements outside the LA have been extraordinarily high over the past couple of years. The Chair asked what these settings say when they are challenged about their costs. Mr Taylor commented it is very difficult for the LA to get any changes put in place. The DfE did understand this but did not offer any solutions. Mr Caines commented we need to be able to provide our own provision within the LA. He advised that they could also approach another authority to work together to provide affordable provision together. Mr Taylor advised that they need residential provision for pupils who need to be away from their parents during the week. He commented the difficulty with residential is the capital and staffing. They looked at this a few years ago and it was not feasible to try and provide this within the borough.

The Chair commented that if they are looking at Alternative Provisions across secondary schools they should be done in an appropriate timescale. Mr Taylor commented that the risks in the budget need to be understood by the school forum.

The Chair advised that the DfE Meeting was challenging and appropriate but there was no solutions. The future is going to take years to unravel unless the DfE give some more funding next year.

AGREED

The School Forum members considered and commented on the information provided in the report. The Chair asked all members to agree the revisions to the band values to be implemented from September 2020 that reflect discussion held with providers. 2 members abstained from voting all other members agreed.

6. Funding arrangements for permanent exclusions 2020/21

Mr May discussed this item as Mrs Lucas could not attend the meeting.

The methodology for the calculation of exclusion charges for mainstream pupils is set out within the School Finance Regulations and is unchanged from previous reports.

The report highlighted the change to pupil values recommended to be implemented in April 2020 for Maintained schools and September 2020 for Academies. This was the only change proposed and keeps the policy in line with the Schools 2020/21 Funding Formula.

Mrs Hunnisett asked if the money follows the child in all cases. Mr May commented that if the places are already commissions i.e. The Olive Academy places already commissioned then the money would go to the High Needs Block.

Mr Caines commented that he felt this would help discourage schools to exclude pupils. Would the Local Authority be policing possible off-rolling by schools instead? Mr Taylor commented that this is being monitored by Ofsted. He also commented that encouraging EHE inappropriately would be challenged.

Mrs Haslam-Davies asked that all information is shared with the Headteachers once agreed. Mr Taylor commented this is in the guidance that has gone to all schools. This will be re-visited at the Headteachers briefings. Mr Taylor asked representatives to take this back to TASS and THFA. Mrs Haslam-Davies would like an email sent to all Headteachers.

**Actions: Mr M Taylor to put this as a general item for TASS and
TPHA.**

AGREED

Schools' Forum members approved the update to the charges/allocations for all mainstream schools and use this mechanism to form an agreement with all academies.

Schools Forum members accepted the changes to be applied from April 2020 for the changing/allocation mechanism for permanent school exclusions:

7. Schools Forum Structure/Membership 2020

Ms Williams spoke about the structure of the forum. She advised that all schools will be Academies shortly apart from Grays Convent.

She would like to setup a sub-committee to discuss the forum structure going forward. The following colleagues agreed to be part of the group. Mrs Coates, Ms Sawtell-Haynes, Mrs Johnson, Mr Caines, Mr Brewer, Mrs James and Dr Asong.

AGREED

All School Forum members agreed to a sub-group to work with the LA on a fair structure that can be presented to the Forum meeting in June 2020. The new members will need to be appointed in time for the Forum meeting in September 2020.

8. Pupil Place Plan Update

Ms Williams talked through her presentation on how the Pupil Place Plan is put together.

The Chair commented that there was more detail than he has seen before. He also commented that at the meeting with DfE yesterday they advised that there are many future developments going ahead in the next 10 years.

Mr May commented there is nothing factored in for growth in the High Needs Budget. This money is lagged and given when children are already in the system.

The Chair thanked Ms Williams for her presentation.

The Chair advised that they made their bid for the new Free School Thames Park on the basis that it was needed. He asked if this would affect other schools in Thurrock. Ms Williams commented that these bids were based on basis need at that time which was five years ago. She also commented that these schools would be needed in the future.

Dr Asong asked what measures are being made to protect schools that are being affected by the new Free Schools.

Action: Ms Williams to look into the effects of the new Free Schools in Thurrock.

AGREED

The Schools Forum members noted the process for the Pupil Place Plan (PPP) and the impending publication of the 2020-2024 Pupil Place Plan.

9. Academies and Free Schools Update

Ms Williams advised the forum that Bonnygate Primary and Warren Primary were due to convert to Academy on the 1st June 2020 joining the Osborne Co-Operative Academy Trust. She also advised that there was now only one secondary school, Grays Convent which remained a local authority maintained school.

She commented that they were working on the temporary accommodation behind South Essex College in Grays for Thames Park one of the new secondary Free Schools due to open in September 2020. There is minimal internal remodelling works required. There are also some ground works to be undertaken in order to create a safe and secure outdoor space.

Orsett Heath Academy the 2nd Free School will open in temporary accommodation at the Thurrock Rugby Club and the development of the accommodation is well underway and scheduled to open in September 2020.

The Chair commented that currently there are parents holding three school offers for Secondary places in September 2020 and therefore the number would change for all secondary schools in the next few weeks, once parents advise what offer they are going to keep.

Treetops has had an initial timetable of key dates agreed. The contract has been awarded. The building will be a net zero building construction. Mr M Taylor commented that there is two temporary classrooms and they are looking at two more temporary classrooms for end of this year.

The Reach 2 land transaction has now been completed. This is a private arrangement between the DfE and a private land owner. This is situated in Aveley. Mr Parfett advised that this is situated in Love Lane, Aveley. The Chair asked if there is a projection of when this will open. Ms Williams advised they do not know at the moment. Mr Caines asked if this school is needed. Ms Williams advised that this would not be delivered for at least three years and at this stage would be needed. She also commented there is a potential large development around this area.

AGREED

The School Forum members noted this report.

10. Thurrock School Forum Forward Plan 2019-2020

All the following Agenda Items/Focus were agreed for the next meeting.

- Academies and Free Schools Update
- DfE Consultations
- DfE Benchmarking Data
- Union Facility Time Annual Review

- Thurrock Code of Practice for delivery of early education for 2, 3&4 year olds
- Schools Forum Membership 2020
- Review of Forward Plan 2020-21

In addition to the forward plan:

1. Mrs Coates would like an update on the Alternative Provision
2. Mrs James would like to know where the pressures are i.e. Education, Health, etc. Mr Taylor will look into this
3. Mrs Sawtell-Haynes would like the forum to look at SEMH children. She feels that some children who currently have an EHCP due to SEMH may not need this type of support.

11. Minutes of Previous meeting

All governors were happy with the content.

12. Matters arising

Mrs Haslam-Davies commented that the IDACI rankings were not sent to the schools.

Action: Mr May to send IDACI rankings to all schools.

13. Any other Business

Coronavirus

Mr M Taylor advised they are going to meet with Mr Brewer, Ms Hewitt and Mrs Murphy to discuss issues which may affect the Special Schools due to the high needs of the children.

Mr Caines spoke about the different rumours on why Little Thurrock Primary had been closed yesterday. He wanted to know who gave permission for this to happen. The Chair advised as the CEO of the school he made the decision to close the school so that a deep clean could take place as there was links to a child with an underlying condition and a visit to Great Ormond Street Hospital. The Chair feels that all communication should go through Comms in the Local Authority but they cannot always stop social media giving their opinion before this happens.

Mr Caines would like clarification on who can close the schools. Mr Taylor commented that historically when the schools were all maintained they would need to discuss with the Local Authority. As most schools are now Academies this decision would be taken by the head of the Trusts.

All schools need a sensible approach as it affects other people i.e. parents that work in the NHS who would not be able to go to work due to child care arrangements

Mrs Murphy commented that Public Health advice is that the whole family should isolate if one person is suspected of having this virus.

Mrs Haslam-Davis asked in the event that the schools needs to close will staff still come into school. What should be expected from Thurrock Catering staff regarding any deep cleans.

Mrs Murphy spoke about any vulnerable children who would go without a meal if the schools had to shut. There needs to be further discussions if the schools close. The Chair commented that maybe they could look into keeping a school open in each area so that children who needed to be cared for could attend and meals would be available. Mrs Coates commented that maybe they could look at linking with the foodbanks. Ms Sawtell-Hayes commented that they could use the free school meals money to fund this.

Mrs A Jones commented that in some other local authorities early years will not be funded if they close. Mr May commented that as the children were on the spring census the settings would get their money. However this could be more difficult next term if children have not taken up places.

The Chair advised they need to recognise that there are some very vulnerable children who will need to be discussed if the schools were to close.