

Schools Forum

Draft Minutes of Meeting held 25 June 2020 at 8:30am
Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams

In Attendance:

Primary Academies

Headteacher – Kenningtons	Ms J Sawtell-Haynes
Headteacher – Abbots Primary	Mrs L James
Principal – Woodside Academy	Mr E Caines – Vice Chair
Headteacher – Giffards Primary	Mrs N Haslam-Davis
CEO – Catalyst Academies Trust	Mr T Parfett
Headteacher – Aveley Primary	Ms N Shadbolt

Secondary Academies

CEO – Osbourne Co-operative Academy Trust	Mr P Griffiths (The Chair)
CEO – ORTU Federation Ltd	Dr S Asong
Governor – Hathaway Academy	Mr S Sweeting
CEO – South West Essex Community Education Trust	Mr S Munday

Secondary Voluntary Aided Schools

Headteacher – Grays Convent	Mrs P Johnson
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Special Academies

Headteacher – Beacon Hill Academy	Ms S Hewitt
Headteacher – Treetops School	Mr J Brewer

Non School Members

0-11 Representative	Ms A Jones
11-19 Representative	Dr J Revill
Diocese of Brentwood	Mrs M Shepherd
Diocese of Chelmsford	Miss S Jones

The Olive Academy

Ms Charlotte Wright

Also in Attendance

Mrs Sheila Murphy	Corporate Director of Children's Services
Mr Malcolm Taylor	Strategic Lead – Specialist Provision/PEP
Ms Michelle Lucas	Assistant Director, Education Skills
Mr David May	Strategic Lead – DSG and Schools
Ms Sarah Williams	Service Manager, Education Support Service
Mrs Alison Picknell	School Effectiveness and Early Years Manager
Mrs Sue Lamkin	School Improvement Support Officer
Ms Teresa Lydon	Clerk

1. Welcome from the Chair

The Chair welcomed the Forum to the meeting. He advised that Amanda Ludlow from the DFE would be joining the meeting as an observer. He advised that as this was the first Microsoft Teams meeting there were some new protocols. If a member had a question they either email on chat or clicked on “raise their hand” to speak. All voting would be done via Chat. The Chair asked all members to click the mute button until they wanted to speak this was to address the feedback that can take place on TEAMS.

2. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence were received from: Mrs L Coates. Mrs N Graham was absent from the meeting.

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
 - Mr D May to update on the Outturn Position
 - Dr Asong wishes to discuss working with disadvantage.

4. Forum Membership 2019-20

Miss S Williams spoke about the new membership structure from September 2020. She thanked the members of the sub-group which worked in partnership with the council on this new membership proposal.

She talked through the proposed structure to include all CEO's, one school member for secondary VA school, the chair of TASS and chair of TPHA, two special school members, one member for alternative provision, two members for the standalone academies, four non-school members, which include the diocese of Brentwood and Chelmsford, 0-11 group and 11-19 group. In total, across all sectors excluding council officers there will be 19 forum members. All forum members must ensure they delegate a designated officer to deputise in the event the forum member is unable to attend any of the meetings. In addition, where CEO's have been identified as a forum member, the CEO may delegate their role to an alternative officer within their multi academy trust who can vote on forum decisions on their behalf. Alternative Provision currently sits within the Multi Academy Trusts system and is represented by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the individual trust.

She commented that nominations should be agreed from the standalone academies and put forward to the Clerk. She also commented that the council were happy to meet with the standalone academies and

discuss the paperwork before any forum meetings to ensure that standalone academies were kept informed of forum business.

Financial meetings will continue to be held in the form of consultation meetings, separate from the School Forum meetings so that all schools have the opportunity to discuss and respond to future funding decisions.

Mrs P Johnson commented that there is not a representative for the Christus Catholic Trust MAT. She also commented that Grays Convent is a Secondary Voluntary Aided (VA) school and not maintained. She advised as the Chair of TASS and the representative of the Secondary VA School she would have two votes. At present she does not have a governor to represent her VA school. Mrs M Lucas advised she is happy to look into the Christus Catholic Trust representative outside of this meeting.

The Chair commented that they could move to a structure where Headteachers put forward a member to representative them. Dr Asong felt this was a good idea. Mr E Caines asked if the representative from the Multi-Academy Trusts would only be the CEO. He commented that each Special School has its own representative as do the Alternative Provision. Mr Caines feels that primary schools are being under represented and therefore could affect discussions on how they are funded. Mrs J Sawtell-Haynes felt it was very complicated structure and recognised the complexities relating to membership. She felt they needed more discussion on Special Schools having two representatives as they were both Academies – the complexities of two schools who are dealing with very different groups of children was the reason they were both represented on the forum. The Chair commented that Bulphan Primary and Orsett Primary were part of the Vine Trust and therefore should have a representative as they are not part of the Diocese. He also commented that it does not have to be a CEO who represents the Trusts that it could be a Headteacher. Miss S Williams advised again that they were willing to meet standalone academies to discuss paperwork for any future meetings. Mrs M Shepherd also feels that the Christus Catholic Trust should have a representative on the forum. The Chair asked Mrs M Lucas if she would consider a representative from this Trust. She commented that she is more than happy for The Vine Academy Trust and the Christus Catholic Trust to have a voice in the School Forum.

Action: ML to look into representation from Christus Catholic Trust and the Vine Trust MAT. Need to consider Tudor Court as this is an empty MAT.

AGREED

All Schools Forum members present agreed to the following recommendations:

- a) The Chair advised that the new proposal for the structure of the schools forum from September 2020 with additional options discussed above was carried by the majority of the members. Agreed
- b) The Chair advised that members noted the changes in guidance from the DfE in how the forum meetings will be conducted from 26th June to March 2021 but that it was also agreed that they would look into Zoom or Google classrooms as a better platform but needed to be mindful that this needs to be a safe and secure system. Agreed with consideration of alternative platforms for meetings.
- c) All members agreed to the current Chair of the forum remaining in post for 12 months whilst the new structure of the forum is embedded and the issues associated with the public health emergency are reviewed. Agreed

5. Union Facility Time

Mrs S Lamkin advised that Thurrock Council administrates the Union Facility Time budget on behalf of all schools in Thurrock. They are proposing a reduction in the annual service charge for 2020/2021 to £2,500. It was agreed by Schools Forum no charge would be made to schools for the year 2019/2020 as the balance was sufficient to cover claims. During the year 2019/2020 three claims have been received, processed and subsequently been reimbursed. The total amount claimed to date is £463. 23. This is significantly lower than in previous years. Due to Covid-19 there may be a rise in the number of claims made this term, however there is a current balance of £20,524.24. Based on this amount of surplus, the Forum may wish to consider that no contributions are required for 2020/2021 and that schools may then contribute a lower per pupil rate in 2021/2022.

Mrs J Sawtell-Haynes commented that in a year when they are not collecting money the charge seems excessive. Last year they were charged £3,000. Mrs M Lucas commented that the LA will review the charge in the New Year.

AGREED

- a) All forum members agreed to the LA continuing to administer the Union Facility Time.
- b) All members agreed the contribution rate for schools for 2020/2021.

The Chair commented that they needed an agenda item to discuss future year contributions. He is very grateful to all schools for their co-operation

Action: Union Facility Time to be added as a future agenda item to discuss future contributions.

6. **Draft EY Code of Practice 2020**

Mrs A Picknell advised that the report provides information regarding the 2020 Code of Practice (CoP) for the Delivery of Early Education and Childcare for Two, Three and Four Year olds. The CoP sets out the expectations of Thurrock Council, Early Education and Childcare Providers; and refers to funded early years provision.

The Chair asked how many provisions are good or better. Mrs A Picknell advised that one provision was "Inadequate" and one "Requires Improvement". The Chair commented that this is a strong record in Thurrock. Mrs L James asked about the take-up of the funds. Mrs A Picknell commented that the provisions are RAG annually and they look across the provisions. They have an Early Years SENCO who advises on what funding is available.

AGREED

All forum members noted this report.

7. **Schools' Forum Forward Plan 2020/21**

Miss S Williams discussed the Forward Plan for 2020-21. The Chair asked that they include as future agenda items:

1. Union Facility Time future contributions Spring 2021
2. The DSG Outturn position
3. Protecting falling rolls at schools due to the opening of new free schools.

E Caines commented that COVID needs to be an item on the school forum going forward.

The Chair thanked all colleagues in Thurrock, Headteacher's and the Staff during these unprecedented times. He also advised that free schools meals has been extended during the summer holidays.

8. **Minutes of previous meeting**

All governors were happy with the content.

Mr M Taylor asked for the following change to the minutes of meeting held 12 March 2020:

Mr Taylor commented that another important point from DfE meeting was that specialist independent school places were very costly. Placements outside the LA have outrageous charges and have been extraordinarily high over the next couple of years. **This needs to be amended to:** 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.

9. Matters arising

Dr S Asong commented that the new free schools are affecting the roll of other schools. Mr E Caines asked do we need public money spent on schools which he feels may not be needed. The Chair also commented that even though one of the new free schools was part of his Trust he also feels that the timing of the two free schools may have caused some short term issues re places.

No other matters arising at this time.

10. Any other Business

Mr May commented that the final outturn position of the DSG reserve as at 31st March 2020 is a deficit of £1.978m. This is an in year reduction of £0.570m achieved through a combination of improved in year position and the transfer to reserves from the Schools Block.

The final High Needs Block (HNB) position is an overspend of £1.562m. This is less than the previously reported by £0.500m.

As a result of having a DSG deficit at 31st March 2020, a return will be required to be submitted to the ESFA that outlines the reason the deficit has occurred and actions to be taken to contain expenditure within the funding envelope provided.

Dr Asong would like the forum to look at a way to record what we value e.g. equal access to education, transparency. She advised we need to measure outcomes for working class children, disadvantaged children, ethnic minorities outcomes etc. She would also like to report on the outcomes after the children leave school. The Chair asked Mrs M Lucas to respond on how we could improve these outcomes through this forum. Mrs M Lucas commented that a significant amount of money has gone into the High Needs Block to help vulnerable children. She also commented that schools may need to look at how they are spending their money at individual school level. Mrs M Lucas suggested a subgroup be formed to take this piece of work forward. The Chair commented that by introducing the funding formula this year it has had an increase in helping different groups i.e. EAL group.

Action: ML to look at a subgroup to discuss outcomes of children from different social groups