

Schools Forum

Draft Minutes of Meeting held 19 November 2020 at 10am Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams

In Attendance:

Multi Academy Trusts

Catalyst Academies Trust
ORTU Federation
Osborne Co-operative Academy Trust
South West Essex Community Education Trust
The Gateway Learning Community Trust (GLC)
Harris Federation

Name

Mr T Parfett (Vice Chair)
Dr Sophina Asong
Mrs Louise Coates)
Mr S Munday
Mr K Sadler
Mrs N Graham

Secondary Voluntary Aided School

Grays Convent

Name

Mrs M Miller

Standalone Academy Trusts

Woodside Academy
Giffards Primary

Name

Mr E Caines
Mrs N Haslam-Davis

Infrastructure Groups

TASS
TPHA

Name

Mrs P Johnson
Mrs J Sawtell-Haines

Alternative Provision

Olive AP

Name

Mr M Vickers

Special Schools

Treetops Academy
Beacon Hill Academy

Name

Mr J Brewer
Mrs Sue Hewitt

Non-school members

Diocese of Brentwood
0-5 EYFS Representative
0-11 Representative

Name

Mrs M Shepherd
Mr A Melbourne
Ms Alison Jones

Also in Attendance

Mr Malcolm Taylor

Ms Michelle Lucas
Mr David May
Ms Sarah Williams

Mrs Alison Picknell

Ms Teresa Lydon

Strategic Lead – Specialist
Provision/PEP

Assistant Director, Education Skills
Strategic Lead – DSG and Schools
Service Manager, Education Support
Service
School Effectiveness and Early Years
Manager
Clerk

1. Welcome from the Chair

Mr T Parfett advised that Mr P Griffiths (Chair) had sent his apologies and as Vice Chair he would chair this meeting. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. 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 Microsoft Teams.

2. Apologies for Absence:

Mr P Griffiths, Ms A Winstone and Mr J Revell sent their apologies for the meeting.

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

- i) The Forum agreed the agenda and time guide.
- ii) Mr D May asked to present Item 5 before presenting Item 4. Revised paperwork was sent out for Item 7 Thurrock Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020. Mrs A Picknell in the absence of Ms A Winstone will present this report.
- iii) COVID winter Grant.
- iv) Outcomes of children from different social groups to be presented by Dr S Asong.

4. Dedicated School Grant 2020-21

Mr D May summarised the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2020-21 report which was sent out to all forum members prior to the meeting.

He advised that the DSG 2020/21 projected outturn position is a deficit of £1.617m, as a result of continued demand within the High Needs Block that exceeds the budget available. The DSG has a carried forward deficit of £1.978m into 2020/21. The 2020/21 projected in year position will increase the deficit to £3.595m.

The Schools Block growth fund allows officers to ensure there are places available with Thurrock schools for all children of school age. It is currently forecast an underspend of £0.833m.

The Central Services block has a projected underspend of £0.046m.

The High Needs Block is the significant area of financial risk and is broken down into the four following areas:

- The continued increase in the number of EHCP. Additional costs of £0.696m are forecasted in maintaining pupils within Thurrock schools or other Local Authority mainstream schools and academies.
- Post 16 – Increased pupil numbers are forecasted with additional cost of £0.400m.
- Residential and Non-Residential Non-Maintained and Independent placements forecast an overspend of £1.100m.
- Increase in supplying tuition packages for pupils not in School, costing additional £0.300m

They are continuing to review the local offer and commissioned places available within Thurrock.

The Early Years Block has a breakeven forecast based on the latest information available. It will be reviewed once the final autumn term payments have been made.

To support LAs, the ESFA have released a DSG management plan template to assist:

- compliance with the DSG: conditions of grant 2020/21
- monitor how DSG funding is being spent
- compare data on high needs spend between LAs
- highlight areas where LAs may wish to review spending
- form evidence-based and strategic future plans for the provision of children and young people with SEND
- present complex funding information simply to schools forums and other external stakeholders
- provide a consistent reporting format to help LAs share best practice and initiatives

This template will be populated on a termly basis and presented to the Schools Forum. The EFSA are recommending that this plan should be brought to the School Forum before the next budget is set. It will also form the basis of any future discussions with the EFSA.

AGREED

- a) All Forum members agreed the financial position for 2020-21 and offered comments on action taken or that could be considered.
- b) All Forum members agreed to receive regular updates on 202-21 projected outturn position.

5. Dedicated School Grant 2021-22

Mr D May went through the presentation which summarised the Dedicated Schools Grant 201-22 report which was sent out to all forum members.

Mr D May advised that the 20th July the EFSA announced provisional funding allocations for 2021/22 through the schools, high needs and central school services funding blocks of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

He advised that in 2021/22 the DSG will increase by an extra £2.2bn; £730m of this is being directed to the High Needs Block.

The ESFA has updated the National Funding Formula (NFF) in 2021/22 with new factor values, and made some technical changes. Key changes are:

- The 2019 update to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) has been incorporated so that deprivation funding allocated through the formulae is based on the latest data.

- Funding previously received through the Teachers' Pay Grant (TPG) and Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grants (TPECG), including the supplementary fund, to mainstream schools for pupils from reception to year will be allocated through the schools NFF; by increasing the basic per pupil funding; and by increasing the minimum per pupil funding.
- School funding is increasing by 4% overall. The Minimum per Pupil Funding Levels are £4,180 per primary pupil, £5,215 per KS3 pupil and £5,715 per KS4 pupil, all including the pay and pensions grant amounts.

Final DSG allocations will be published in December 2020. October 2020 census data will be used for this allocation.

Mr D May handed out a Thurrock funding formula slide at school Level to all forum members.

He advised that there is increase of between 6 and 11% for individual schools.

Thurrock's High Needs Block in 2021/22 provisional increase is £2.670m or 10.31%.

The key areas for consideration are:

- The High Needs Block 2020/21 projected outturn position is a deficit of £2.58m, after the transfer of £0.630m from Schools Block.
- continued increase in demand for EHCP's
- Commissioned Numbers 2021/22 – All forum members received a report
- Uplift to Band Values to ensure funding provided covers costs incurred.
- Treetops Free School to open 2021/22
- Thurrock Management Plan 2020/21 and Detailed budget 2021/22 to be presented January meeting

He advised that the EFSA were happy with everything that has been done but as an Authority we need more money.

Mr D May commented that COVID has had a significant impact on Early Years. ~We are awaiting further details from the EFSA.

Mr D May advised that the decision for the Forum was to agree that the funding can be moved from Schools Block to the High Needs Block.

Mr A Melborne asked when they will get the final decision from the EFSA regarding Early Years. Mr D May advised he is looking into this. Mr A Melborne asked what else they could do to protect the Early Years. Mr D May is looking to guarantee setting what they received in Spring 2020 to be match for Spring 2021.

AGREED

- a) All Forum members noted the contents of the report.
- b) All forum members considered the information presented at the meeting on the formula to be applied and the impact at school level in 2021-22.
- c) All forum members agreed to continue to transfer up to 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.

6. High Needs Block Commissioning Intentions, Band Values and Services Partnership Agreements for 2021-22

Mr D May advised that the report issued to all forum members was based on a return that was made to the EFSA the previous week. The report provides information to School Forum members in relation to the commissioning and funding arrangements for high needs places in specialist provisions from September 2021.

Mr D May advised that recent guidance, published in September 2020, sets out that local authorities must:

- ensure place numbers reflect both recent agreed commissioning activity and strategic planning to secure suitable SEND provision and AP in line with local authorities' and schools' statutory responsibilities;
- consult with their maintained schools, local academies and FE institutions to determine funded 2021/22 high needs place numbers;
- ensure that an institution's funded place numbers include places agreed and commissioned by other local authorities, and their plans for increasing or reducing future placements;
- the high needs national funding formula and adjustments reflect the funding distribution in those local authorities where the academies and FE institutions in their area have a significant number of pupils or students who live in other local authority areas;
- return a place number for the institutions in their area that reflects the commissioning by both their authority and all other local authorities;
- the band values to be paid to special and AP academies in 2021/22 must include additional funding at least equal to the amounts of Teachers Pension Grant (TPG) and Teachers Pension Employees Contribution Grant (TPECG) paid in 2020/21;
- submit changes to 2021/22 high needs place numbers in academies and FE institutions to ESFA by 13 November 2020

Thurrock proposed commissioned places remains unchanged for Thurrock for 2021/22.

Mr M Taylor advised that they are expecting to put another 20 place next term into Treetops and another 20 from September 2021.

In 2021/22 it is proposed the following changes will be implemented to maintain parity with the increase to school funding and maintaining the principle of full cost recovery:

Resource Bases - Increase to Basic Per Pupil Values

- Primary 2020/21 = £3,750 2021/22 = £4,180
- Secondary 2020/21 = £5,000 2021/22 = £5,415

These values include the specific grants for Teachers Pay and Teachers Pension Employee Contribution (Primary = £180pp and Secondary = £265). For Special and AP academies a new payment will be included to replace the specific grants for Teachers Pay and Teacher Pension Employee Contribution. The ESFA have calculated this at £660pp.

The additional proposal was to top up funding a 3% uplift to be applied, consistent with the inflationary increase applied through the National Funding Formula.

The Local Authority continues to look to place pupils seeking specialist placements in local provision in the first instance and only place in Independent or non-maintained schools where there is no other local option available that could meet the needs of these pupils. Schools Forum needs to be aware that of the current commissioned places a small number of places are currently taken up by pupils from other local authorities; however, currently 86 pupils are placed in schools in neighbouring local authorities.

As a local area, at the 31st March 2020, there were 74 pupils in independent specialist schools and non-maintained specialist settings.

The Chair asked for Appendix 1 to be explained. Mr D May advised this is the proposed Band Values to be applied from Sept 2021. They include a 3% uplift to top up funding, consistent with the inflationary increase applied through the National Funding Formula. The Band values are then used to fund individual Resource bases, based on the level of need, agreed staffing structure and the principle of full cost recovery.

Dr S Asong asked what drives the banding. Mr M Taylor commented that the mainstream costs were worked out based on the actual costs discussed with the resource bases. They were then put in different banding levels. This also depended on what services was being delivered. Dr S Asong asked if this could be broken down so all School Forum members could understand. She would like to understand the threshold. She also asked if there was any documentation that could explain these thresholds. Mr M Taylor commented that this is a different process as they are looking at the costs to run the resource bases. He also advised that the academies do not need to share these costs but they are very transparent. Mr T Parfett advised that their base is purely based on staff costs. He also commented that their main cost is staffing. Mr M Taylor commented they would need agreement with all resource bases to share this information.

Action: MT to discuss with resources regarding sharing the framework that was used to choose the bandings for each resource base and the costs

Mr D May advised that he would bring to the next meeting the budget they are paying to each resource base.

Mr E Caines would like to know how many children would normally be in each band so they could compare costs and account for the money they are spending depending on need. Mr T Parfett advised that all their children are on the same band. Mr E Caines would like to know a typical amount. Mr M Taylor commented they can show the banding for each base. One of the lowest is the Speech and Language base. Mr D May commented that the MPPG is the AWPU. Mr M Taylor advised they can bring to the next meeting costs for out of borough placements.

Action: MT to put together costs for out of borough placements for next meeting

Dr S Asong commented that the total cost of the provision determines the banding. Mr M Taylor advised that the costs they have identified has come from a discussion about the

needs of the pupil. Mrs L Coates commented that she runs two alternative provisions and they are both on a Band 5. She also advised that they will be in a deficit from next year onwards.

Dr S Asong advised that the question was simple all she wanted was a list of criteria that identifies the Band in which the provisions are put in to. Mr M Taylor advised we want to make sure that the budget is spent in the best way possible. Mr T Parfett advised that Dr S Asong would like to know how these figures came to be and Mr M Taylor advised they will be able to go back to bases and discuss with them.

Mrs J Sawtell-Haines commented that if all schools sets their budgets they would want more money. There is a big different between a UPS teacher and a MP teacher. How do you determine which staff are needed in these provisions. Mr M Taylor commented that they have challenged around costs and have set a level of staffing with a few caveats. He also advised they have also pushed back on costs including staffing costs. These bases are a more affordable option than out of borough provisions. They do re-negotiate if the bases need more money.

Action: Mr D May to include numbers at each resource base to the January meeting

AGREED

- a) All forum members noted and commented on the contents of the report.
- b) All forum members support the commissioned numbers for 2021/22 that were required to be submitted to ESFA on 13th November 2019
- c) All forum members approve the increase in band values to be applied from September 2021 but wanted clarity on what band values were applied to each setting.
- d) All forum members approve the increase in the funding to support Outreach services from September 2021.

7. Thurrock Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020

Mrs A Picknell summarised the report sent to all School Forum members.

She advised that there are currently 196 providers in Thurrock offering 3,614 full time equivalent early education and childcare places for 0-5 year olds. Across Thurrock, 117 childminders are signed up to deliver 411 early years funded places. There are an additional 58 childminders registered to deliver 110 places who are not currently signed up to deliver early years funded places.

Take-up of early years entitlements is not compulsory and not all parents will choose to take up some or all of their entitled hours. This adds a further layer of complexity to estimating demand. Increasing demand for places will follow from Thurrock's continued promotion of, the benefits of early education to parents. Increasing demand for places will follow from Thurrock's continued promotion of, the benefits of early education to parents.

The increase, to 30hrs of early education and childcare for working parents, proposed by the government in 2017 has steadily had an impact on demand. However, 3&4 year old entitlement places are still meeting this demand.

AGREED

a) All forum members noted the contents of the report.

8. Academies and Free Schools Update and Forward Plan for 2021

Ms Williams advised that Warren primary converted to academy status on 1st November and Bonnygate primary is scheduled to convert on 1st December 2020. All school are now academies with the exception of Grays Convent School.

Ms S Williams shared the Forward Plan with all forum members.

Mrs S Hewitt commented on the date for the next meeting. This should be the 19th of January.

Action: Ms S Williams to update date of next meeting.

AGREED

All forum members noted this report.

9. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 17th September 202

All governors were happy with the content.

10. Matters Arising

Action: A Winstone will send around the figures for the number of EHCPs at each schools.

Action: Miss S Williams to add Transport to the January agenda

11. Any Other Business

Mrs M Lucas discussed the COVID Winter fund. She advised that the Government are giving the Local Authorities money to ensure that all children receiving free school meals get food vouchers over Christmas week and the February half term. There is also funding available for disadvantaged children i.e. care leavers, no recourse to public funds etc. Mrs M Lucas would like schools to support them for the two weeks during Christmas and the February half term by re-engaging with the voucher companies and giving out vouchers to these families. All schools used Edenred over the summer. Mr T Parfett advised he did some research and the accounts have closed down but can be re-opened. Mr M Lucas will be sending out an email to all schools regarding this.

Mrs L Coates advised this took hours of staff time trying to get the vouchers out. Parents really struggled to access them. She is not sure how the Heads will respond.

Mr K Sadler advised they used Tesco's and will support the voucher system but needs to know the value of the voucher. Mr M Lucas commented it will be £15.00. Mrs M Lucas will email all Head Teachers today to see how they can get this started.

Mrs S Williams commented that the Local Authority will have to report this back to the DFE. Edenred are now sending the parents a gift card. Mr K Sadler commented that one of the difficulties was what parents were spending the money on and Tesco's limited this to food.

Mrs Jo Sawtell-Haines asked if they could just upload the information to the Local Authority and then this would be uploaded to Edenred. Mr M Lucas will look at what is the best way forward and will email all Head Teachers to find the best way and the logistics of this.

Nicky commented that one of the issues was that every school try to book vouchers at the same time. Schools were closed at that time. Second issue the Edem Red voucher went into their Junk box and some parent advising that they had not received it but they had and had spent it.

Dr S Asong spoke about the schools forum sub group set up to examine outcomes for disadvantaged and unrepresented student and young peoples in Thurrock. To give an account of the progress so far they have included a client list to be reported on (Looked After Children, SEND EHCP, SEND K, Teenage Pregnancy, Traveller Children, Black and Minority Ethnic, White Working Class Boys and children whose parents earn less than 26,500 per annum.). She advised that the second meeting discussed membership of the sub group so that it was more representative of the services that children and young people benefit from in Thurrock. So far the membership is Mrs M Lucas (Chair) Dr S Asong (schools) Ms Teresa Salami-Oru (Health) and Mr M Vickers from The Olive Academy and Mr J Revell from Post 16. The sub group would like at least two more member who bring another prospective i.e. someone from primary or any other services to join the group. Mrs M Miller would like Young Carers added to this client list. Dr S Asong has done this. At the third and most recent meeting the group attempted a definition of what outcome might look like. They noted attainment, attendance, exclusion (inclusion), health outcomes and wellbeing outcomes (yet undetermined), cross phase progression i.e. primary to secondary, secondary to post 16. Mr T Parfett asked the group to prepare a position paper for next meeting to be held in January 2021. An action that emerged was for the Forum to calendarise regular and continued dates to look at outcomes of these groups compared to others.

Action: Ms S Williams to add Outcomes for disadvantaged and unrepresented student and young peoples in Thurrock to the forward plan.

The Chair thanked all forum members.

12. Date of next meeting

Date of next meeting is 19 January 2021