

Schools Forum

Draft Minutes of Meeting held 17 March 2022 at 10am 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)
CEO REAch2 Academy Trust
Vines Schools Trust

Name

Mr T Parfett (Chair)
Dr Sophina Asong
Mr P Griffiths
Mr S Munday
Mr K Sadler
Mr E Samuel
Mr S Santhaguru

Secondary Voluntary Aided School

Grays Convent

Name

Mrs P Johnson

Standalone Academy Trusts

Woodside Academy

Name

Mr E Caines

Infrastructure Groups

TASS
TPHA

Name

Mr S Bell
Mrs J Sawtell-Haines

Alternative Provision

Olive AP

Name

Ms Jo Gillman

Special Schools

Treetops Academy
Beacon Hill Academy

Name

Mr J Brewer
Mrs Sue Hewitt

Non-school members

11-19 Representative
0-5 EYFS Representative

Name

Dr J Revell
Mr A Melbourne

Also in attendance:

Mrs Michelle Lucas
Mr Malcolm Taylor
Mr David May
Miss Sarah Williams
Miss Teresa Lydon

Assistant Director, Education Skills
Strategic Lead – Specialist Provision/PEP
Strategic Lead – DSG and Schools
Service Manager, Education Support Service
Clerk

1. Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Mr M Vickers and Ms A Winstone.

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

- i. The Forum agreed the agenda and time guide. Dr Asong asked if Item 10 could be moved to the start of the meeting. Mr J Revell advised he would be late to the meeting therefore this item was discussed after Item 8.
- ii. Any Other Business – Mr E Caines would like to discuss refugees from Ukraine and schooling.

4. Dedicated Schools Grant 2021/22 and 2022/23

Mr D May advised that The DSG 2021/22 current forecast is a deficit of £0.760m, an increase of £0.348m. The reserve outturn position would therefore increase the deficit to £2.643m into 2022/23. Mr D May went through a presentation with the members. He advised that the High Needs Block continues to be the significant area of financial risk, with an increase in EHCPs, increases in number accessing Post 16, increases in tuition for pupils not in school (+0.300m) and an increase in targeted support (+£0.171m).

He advised they have received £0.136m for Early Years Block that reduces the outturn by £0.050m to £0.235m.

He commented that the ongoing problem is how to recover the deficit position whilst continuing to meet increased demand and cost with the High Needs Block. An increase in funds to be received in 2022/23 will assist in developing a realistic budget. The main challenge is how to control increased demands for services.

He advised there will be a 2.7% increase in Pupil Premium funding rates in 2022/23. The eligible pupils will be determined by October 2021 census.

Mr D May spoke about the proposal for the High Needs Block Supplementary grant and 2 options were discussed consistent with the value to be received by Mainstream Schools and Academies.

Option A – A rate of £670 per pupil

Option B – A 5% uplift to Top Up values to be paid to Special and AP schools in 2022/23 with a cost implication of £0.377m.

This will be paid in 2 parts a one-off payment to cover the period April to August 2022 and an increase to the band values to be paid from September 2022. This enables the current band values for 2021/22 to remain unchanged.

Mr J Brewer remarked that at Treetops they have a high number of Band 1 and 2 and therefore would support Option A but feels that Beacon Hill will be better off with the % increase to Band values. He commented that the students attending their school have far more complex needs but remain in the same bands as the mainstream schools. Mr D May advised they will be reviewing the band values in 2022/23 for change to be implemented September 2023. With regards to the

Supplementary Grant, it is more about the principle. Option B targets more money to those that incur more staff costs.

Action: Mr D May and Mr M Taylor to review the Band values in 2022/23.

Mr E Caines advised that some of the children attending his school should be in a special school as their needs are so complex, they need 1 to 1 all the time. He commented they do not get funded for this. He feels that the higher needs students need this money.

Mr M Taylor agreed they need to look at the Treetops banding and make sure the additional money is put in the fairest way. He also agreed with Mr E Caines comment but will talk later about the increase in spaces at their resource bases.

Mrs S Hewitt also agrees that as Beacon Hill has the most complex children, they do get more money in the banding, but she also agrees with Mr J Brewer that the Banding needs to be look at again.

Mr P Griffiths also agreed that the Banding must be looked at. He also feels that in their mainstream schools they have very complex children but also thinks they will need to compromise for now until the review of the bands. Mr D May advised that this is additional money to what was previously discussed.

Agreed

- a) All Forum members noted contents of the report and offered support and challenge
- b) All Forum members considered the 2021/22 outturn position and discussed options to contain continued increase in HNB expenditure in 2022/23.
- c) 2 Forum members voted for Option A £670 per pupil for Special and AP Schools consistent with that to be paid to Mainstream schools and academies in 2022/23. 12 forum members voted for Option B 5% increase to top up values for Special and AP schools. Option B was agreed.
- d) All Forum members approved band values (Appendix B) to be applied from September 2022 with the caveat that Mr D May reviews the Band Values in 2022/23
- e) All Forum members considered the DSG Management Plan as part of information to be presented at the meeting.

5. Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan 2021/22

Mr D May advised the DSG conditions of grant require that any LA with an overall deficit on its DSG account at the end of the financial year, or whose DSG surplus has substantially reduced during the year, must be able to present a plan to the Department for Education (DfE) for managing their future DSG spend. Management plans should reflect the most current forecast DSG position and be signed off by the relevant leads in finance and special educational needs (SEN) areas.

Mr D May spoke about the 5 Key areas in the High Needs Block:

- Education Health & Care Plans
- Data
- Funding

- Out of Borough Data
- Training and development with the SEND team and school SENCOs to support the person-centred planning approach.

EHCP continue to increase year on year and is higher than any benchmarking marking data. The Deep Dive report in 2021 provides the context to why and more local provision is required. Mr D May commented that reducing health inequalities will have an impact in the long term on the need for SEND provision. Schools must the notional SEND budget before making requests for additional funding.

Data – Mr D May advised they know the current position but need to consider future projections to inform local provision both in the short and medium term. Mr D May shared with the members some projected data on the number of EHCPs by placement type. There is a forecast of a 7% increase year on year. The data projects an increase in demand with a significant increase in Post 16 numbers which is consistent with financial position. More local specialist provision is needed including SEMH -Secondary and ASD Primary. We also need to develop a pathway to learning to start reintegration back to school of the increased number of children being educated not in school.

Funding – Data sets have been used to project costs up until 2024/25. Treetop's Free school will have additional places Sept 2021 and Sept 2022. He advised that HNB funding is a national problem. He gave Member's a scenario where 3 pupils moved to Thurrock. While in their own borough they were costing £100,000. They moved to Thurrock, but we received no funding in 2022/23. We will get the funding in 2023/24. There were no placements for them in borough and the three placements out of borough could cost up to £1m. He advised we are also waiting for the outcome of the House of Commons review of SEN and this is expected before Easter break.

Mr D May advised that the out of borough placements are low in number but a very high cost. It is highly unlikely that the current children can be brought back to Thurrock. Further information required to be considered by primary need to further develop the local offer.

Training and development are key with the SEND team and school SENCOs to support the person-centred planning approach. We need to ensure schools access all training provided to ensure staff are aware of and trained in different aspects of SEND. We need to make sure that all SENCO's attend the SENCO forums where new processes and approaches will be introduced.

Mr D May went through the next steps needed:

- Management of EHCPs
- Use of Notional SEN within schools
- Closure of Plans as appropriate
- Need to develop long term options to support increased demand and the local offer
- Partnership Approach to support children not in school. Need to develop a pathway to learning to start reintegration back into school. Partnership with schools and outdoor education.
- Next Step ESFA Meeting – Summer 2022

Mrs M Lucas advised that they are reviewing plans and will close if not needed especially with post 16 which are then supported by Inspire. She commented they are seeing an increased demand in early years which she feels has not been helped by closures due to COVID. They are trying to do some focused work to bring on speech and language. There is a lot of actively around trying to support children earlier. She advised they also need to keep an eye on the refugees and what their level of need will be.

Agreed

- a) All Forum members noted contents of the presentation

6. ESFA Consultations

Mr D May advised that the Outcomes of the SEND review and next steps in National School Funding Formula consultations were expected this term:

Agreed

- a) All Forum members noted contents of the presentation

7. Thurrock Budget – Children's Services

Mr D May advised that the projected outturn for 2021/22 is an overspend of 4.653m overspend mainly due to Key area placements and Home to school transport.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Growth of £3m is primarily around placement but also to support transport. He advised that savings of £3.5m are agreed for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Mr D May spoke about finances in Thurrock for 2023/24 and beyond:

- The MTFS shows a funding gap remaining of £8.905m (2023/24) and £5.364m (2024/25) a total of £14.269m.
- This has arisen primarily from the projected long-term impact of Covid-19, including impact on both Adults' and Children's Social Care, the impact of higher inflation and the reversal of temporary support mechanisms.
- Need to reform services further for a sustainable medium/long term cost base. Further work is planning to start to develop options for future years.

Agreed

- a) All Forum members notes the content of the presentation

8. Education Offer for SEND pupils

Mr M Taylor advised that in terms of autism in the primary stage there is a greater demand. They have identified two Trusts, Catalyst and the SWECET Trust for additional resource bases. It has been agreed that these resource bases will open at Aveley Primary and Stifford Clays Primary. Mr M Taylor advised they are hoping to open in the summer term. Aveley Primary will initially take 4 pupils moving to 6 and 10 in the longer term. Stifford Clays Primary will also go to 10 in the longer term.

He advised that they have significant demand for autism and several children who are being supported in primary schools. As the bases open, they will look at the need and whether they will need to open more mainstream resource bases. This will be looked at in September. Treetops and Treetops Free school have also increased their numbers. The Free school is under construction but in the interim they have put in some additional accommodation. He also commented they will always need residential accommodation for certain pupils, and this is the case across all LAs. SEMH is more complicated and more often they are having to look for residential placements.

Agreed

- a) All Forum members noted contents of the report

9. Pupil Place Planning Review

Miss S Williams went through a presentation on Pupil Place Planning (PPP).

She advised that she has a PPP team who meet monthly to discuss review current vacancies and identify sufficiency concerns. The PPP document for 2022-2026 is almost ready to be sent out for consultation.

She commented that the planning areas remain the same but will be looking at these once the local plan is finalised.

The birth data has dropped by 7% since last year and by 16% since 2015/16 which was the highest birth data in Thurrock.

Mr J Revell asked about migration and if it is equal in and equal out. Miss S Williams advised that although we can get data for children moving to the borough, we do not have any data on those who are moving out. Mr J Revell asked if we had any data on Post 16. Miss S Williams advised she will come back to him with this information.

Action: Miss S Williams to look at Post 16 data

Mr J Revell would also like a slide on children with disabilities and how many there are. Miss S Williams advised she would discuss with Mrs A Winstone as this was her area.

Action: Miss S Williams to discuss with Mrs A Winstone figures on children with disabilities

Mrs M Lucas spoke about children attending school out of borough. She advised they are looking at this in more detail to try and find out why this happens. She feels that one reason is the lack of faith schools in secondary in the borough especially for boys. Mrs P Johnson commented that most of their in-year transfers from her school are moving north for social housing. They lose very few children to other Thurrock schools.

Mr A Melbourne was surprised in the birth data dropping for 2020/21. He feels there will be a need for growth in the early years sector in the future and that this is just a COVID blip.

Dr Asong asked if they could look at numbers of children being educated at home and feel this should be more visible.

Action: Miss S Williams to speak to Mrs A Winstone about figures for children being educated at home.

Agreed

- a) All Forum members noted the process against the Pupil Place Plan 2022-2026

10. Outcomes for Disadvantaged Children

Dr Asong in the absence of Mr J Revell advised that the work about the outcomes for disadvantaged children started early in 2021. Data showed that black and minority groups did achieve well at 16. They now needed to look at groups that were not progressing as well by the

age of 16. She commented it was difficult to find data for Traveller, Gypsy and Roma groups as it was not measured. The population is not very large in Thurrock and the total 0 to 16 pupils was 63. She advised that the budget last year they noted that £50,000 was being spent to support these children. It was difficult to see how this money was being spent and they will need to know what proportion is spent on services to this community not on salaries. She commented that the good news was that they now know what the action is. Also need to know the interventions taking place to help these groups of children. As part of the 11 to 25 partnership they plan to track the children to see the outcomes for 11- to 16-year-olds. Their next step is to meet with officials in the council to identify what schools these children are attending and have a look at the interventions that have been put in place aimed at their advancement.

Mr A Melbourne thanked Dr Asong for her summary. He asked how well they know the details of disadvantaged children and Traveller, Gypsy and Roma children in early years. She advised that this currently is not done very well. They need to look at this along with the ages groups of 11 to 12 looking at whether they are dropping out between primary and secondary and the ages of 16 to 17 to see how many continue to Post 16.

Mrs M Lucas commented that this piece of work is to gather what is the story behind this and how they can support in the future the issues and affect change.

Mr J Revell joined the meeting and advised they have access to the data and are now looking at data from previous years.

M Taylor advised that the Traveller Support Service do very good work with transitioning pupils from primary to secondary and support parents in making applications and getting their children into school. He commented that lots of these families choose to home educate. Some families employ tutors to help. It is more difficult to monitor this. He also advised that there are cultural difficulties where travellers do not want their children especially girls attending school and mixing with other children. Boys go on from primary into employment with their families choosing this rather than continuing with their schooling. He advised there are also many settled families who may not formally identify as part of their data.

Dr Asong asked if Mr Taylor could join the sub-group as he has a lot of knowledge around this group of children. Mr Taylor is happy to support this group.

Dr Asong advised that they will be concentrating on disadvantaged white working-class boys' data to be discussed at the next meeting.

Dr Asong asked for the forum and Thurrock Council to keep this agenda item in case they need resources to support these groups but that for now they will access interventions through infrastructural partnerships.

Action: Miss S Williams to keep outcomes for disadvantaged children as an agenda item

11. Schools' Forum Forward Plan

Miss S Williams shared the Forward Plan. She advised that in June they will also set the meetings for the next academic year.

Miss S Hewitt would like an agenda item on the SEND review. Mr D May advised this would be part of the EFSA consultation but Miss S Williams will add as an item.

Mr D May also asked for permanent exclusions to be added to the next agenda. Dr Asong would like this broken down by groups so they can see the disadvantaged groups within this data.

Dr Asong advised that they will be looking at disadvantaged white working-class boys and will be discussing at the next meeting.

Action: Miss S Williams to add the above to the Forward Plan

12. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th January 2022

The Chair went through the minutes of the previous meeting for accuracy. All governors were happy with the content.

13. Matters Arising

Actions outstanding:

Action 1: Mrs A Winstone to look at where children with EHCPs are moving in from and look at any trends.

Action 2: Miss S Williams to send out to all members a copy of the principals for expansion.

Action 3: Mrs A Winstone to share with Miss S Williams where children with EHCPs move to after Year 11

Action 4: Mr M Taylor to discuss changes to wording in previous minutes with Mr T Parfett

14. Any Other Business

Mr E Caines would like to take children over numbers who are refugees from the Ukraine, however he needs re-assurance that he will not have to take other children over number though appeal. Mr M Taylor advised that they will centrally co-ordinate at the LA and will use the fair access process to place these children in school. He advised they will contact one school asking them to take if however, this is not possible they will approach the next nearest school. He advised there is money coming into the LA to support refugees, but we are currently waiting for more information on this funding. If schools get requests direct, they need to pass these to the school admissions teams to co-ordinate. Miss S Williams advised they are also checking with the LIAAG group to find out how they are administrating these applications for school. Mr M Taylor advised that if these children have SEN needs, they will look at giving interim momentary support without waiting for an EHCP. Mr A Melbourne asked if there are any details on the early years process. Mr M Taylor has asked for the early years settings to let the local authority know about number of refugees from the Ukraine attending their settings.

Mr E Caines spoke about fuel costs and commented that we should be looking at using less fuel. He commented we can all help by turning down the thermostat. Thurrock also need to be looking at Solar power.

Mrs J Sawtell-Haines spoke about the increased cost of their energy costs and would like to know if there is any extra money. Mr D May advised that this would have been included in their supplementary grant.

Mr A Melbourne commented that there are increased fuel costs for Early years, but they do not receive the supplementary grants.

15. Date of next meeting

Thursday 23 June 2022 – Virtual via MS Teams.