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## BURY SCHOOLS' FORUM

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### MINUTES

of the meeting of Bury Schools' Forum on

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

Microsoft Teams Meeting

#### In Attendance:

##### Early Years

Rachel O'Neil                      Headteacher – Hoyle Nursery

##### Maintained Primary

Gail Branch                      Headteacher – All Saints CE Primary  
Emma Moncado                  Headteacher – St Joseph's RC Primary  
Claire Simon                      Headteacher – Bury & Whitefield Jewish Primary  
Martin Van Hecke                Headteacher – Whitefield Primary  
Simon Waddington                Headteacher – Hollins Grundy Primary  
Richard Ainsworth                Governor (Plus Governors Forum)

##### Maintained Secondary

Susan Southworth                Governor – Derby High  
Lawrence Yarwood                Governor – Bury CE High

##### Academy

Emma Ford                        Headteacher – Radcliffe Hall – Christ Church MAT  
Rachel Pars                        Headteacher – Elton Primary – Bury College Education Trust (BCET)  
Brian Roadnight                  Headteacher (**Chair**) – Shaw Education Trust (SET)  
Heather Standbridge              School Business Manager – St Teresa of Calcutta RC MAT

##### Special

None in attendance

##### Special Academy

Kristie Bloomfield                Oak Learning Partnership  
Orienne Langley-Sadler          Oak Learning Partnership

##### Pupil Referral Unit

Non in Attendance

##### Non-Schools Sector

Carina Vitti                        14 - 19  
Tony Durack                        NASUWT  
Geoff Hirst                         NAHT  
Helena Thom                        NEU

##### Children's Services Department:

Julien Kramer                      Interim Assistant Director for Education & Inclusion  
Steven Goodwin                    Head of Strategic Business & Finance  
Alison Vidler                        Principal Finance Officer (Schools & Systems Finance)  
Elissa Reeve                        Senior Finance & Business Manager (Clerk)

## 1. **Apologies for absence**

|                   |                                                   |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Tina Owen         | Headteacher – Philips High                        |
| Helen Chadwick    | Headteacher - Millwood                            |
| Lisa Corrigan     | Headteacher – Heather Standbridge represented     |
| Cllr Tamoor Tariq | Cabinet Member children & Young People and Skills |

Julien Kramer and Orienne Langley-Sadler apologised in advance for a late arrival to the meeting.

## 2. **Introductions**

The Chair welcomed all Forum members to the meeting via Microsoft Teams and Carina Vitti to her first meeting. Carina Vitti introduced herself as the Principal of Holy Cross College and University Centre.

## 3. **Minutes of the last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November were checked and the Forum asked for Page 2 Item 2 paragraph 2 to be corrected to "Steve Goodwin introduced the three new Headteacher Forum Members..." and not "Governors".

The remainder of the minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

## 4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes (16/06/20)**

### **Page 2 Item 3 – Introductions**

Forum queried if there had been any progress made in achieving a correct mix of representation from the maintained secondary sector which was over-represented by one member. Steven Goodwin apologised that due to time constraints the issue still needed resolving and there had been no volunteers to step down. This will be actioned for the next meeting.

Action  
SG

### **Page 2 Item 4 – Matters Arising from the Minutes (16/06/20)**

The Forum queried Covid funding and Steven Goodwin confirmed that the second round of emergency funding had now closed and the LA had no information as yet of how many schools submitted a claim or values of claims. The first round of funding had in the majority been reimbursed but there were a couple of schools who were yet to receive any funding as they breached the claim limit. These schools are liaising directly with the DfE.

The Workforce Fund announced is very restrictive and only allows claims above set thresholds. The window for this claim opens in February but the date is yet to be confirmed and, at per current guidance, only November and December additional workforce requirements will be eligible to claim for. There has been no recognition of additional workforce requirements from the start of the 2020/21 academic year or the ongoing costs schools are still facing. This is a matter of concern and the LA is waiting for further information from the DfE.

The Covid Catch Up funding is being paid to schools and the schools need to be aware that their spending plans for the use of this grant need to be published on the school website. The requirements to publish this information is detailed in the 'what schools must publish online' Guidance on Gov.uk.

The Forum expressed concern about the lack of funding for schools and the caveats around the funding when available.

## **Page 5 Item 5ii – School Crossing Patrol**

Progress has been made in the methodology in the school crossing patrol costings. The LA is still working through and validating where patrols are and analysing areas where there are two or three patrols shared with neighbouring schools to ensure the costings are fair. The charges will be via a recharge mechanism being mindful of vacancies and the movements of the patrol officers from one site to another. The system will be in place from April 2021.

## **5. Schools and Academies Funding 2021/22**

Steven Goodwin presented his previously distributed report:-

### a) DSG Allocation

The figures previously shared at the last meeting were based on the October 2019 Census data however the information has now been updated with the validated October 2020 Census data and up to date pupil numbers. All areas have received a funding increase with the total DSG Allocation increasing by 7.5% and more than £13 million.

- Schools Block increased by 7.4% or £9.6 million (£6million of this relates to the Teacher Pay and Pension Grants included in the DSG from 1 April 2021 and no longer via separate Grants in future years)
- Central Schools Services Block increased by 23.1% or £178.4k (82% of this relates to the transfer of Teacher Pension & Pay Grants for centrally employed teachers)
- High Needs Block increased by 9.8% or £3.2 million (1% of this relates to the Teacher Pension & Pay Grants)
- Early Years Block by 1.4% or £195.5k

Pupil numbers have been validated with a decrease of 212 pupil in the primary sector and an increase of 25 pupils in the secondary sector. Overall this results in a £804k reduction of funding due to pupil numbers. This affects 60% of primary schools. The LA is working with schools to ensure they manage their costs with falling rolls.

### b) Formula Unit Values

There has been no change to these figures from the last meeting and the LA is committed to apply the National Funding Formula (NFF) values into schools. The unit values have seen an additional increase of £180 per pupil for primary and £265 per pupil for secondary for the transfer of the Teacher Pension & Pay Grants into the Basic Entitlement factor.

The financial impact sheet on Page 3 is an extract of the document submitted to the DfE to confirm how the Schools Block has been allocated and to assist in providing the academies their funding through their GAG (General Annual Grant).

The funding analysis per sector details that the primary sector's funding increased by 6.62% and the secondary sector by £8.37%.

### c) Minimum per-pupil Funding Level (MFL)

The DfE have specified a minimum level of funding per pupil that schools must receive which is £4,180 per primary pupil and £5,415 per secondary pupil. 21 schools/academies have been assisted with MFL funding for 2021/22.

Forum asked if there was a pattern to the schools needing this support and it was confirmed that it is usually the schools in less deprived areas that do not receive as much deprivation or low prior attainment funding. In the 21 schools there was only 1 secondary.

Forum asked if the LA thought that Bury's settlement was good news and Steven Goodwin explained that it was a very good result for the Schools Block with Bury seeing one of the highest percentage increases in the country with the increases being provided through the National Funding Formula recognising the historic low funding of the borough.

The Early Years Block is not as good news with all LA's receiving 1.4% and Bury is one of the bottom LA's for funding in this area.

The High Needs increase is a good percentage and puts Bury in the top 20 in the LA's increases but even with £3m extra the LA has been spending an extra £4.5m per year. The LA is currently working with the DfE on a transformation plan for High Needs and trust this process will assist the DfE is recognising the specific circumstances within Bury that results in the current High Needs formula not providing sufficient funding to meet all demands in this area.

As part of the three year phase of the £14.5billion investment into education, Forum were advised that the Schools Block will see an further increase for 2022/2023.

Forum queried where the MFL funding came from and it was confirmed that when the DfE allocate the schools block funding the MFL is anticipated in the national funding formula settlement and built into the funding allocation given.

d) Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)

The MFG provides an additional protection which is designed to mitigate excessive turbulence in per-pupil funding from one year to the next. Therefore if schools funding falls below 2% per-pupil then the MFG element of the formula is actioned. This protection supported 27 schools/academies in 20/21.

e) Schools Block Transfer

Regulations allow for LAs, with the approval of their Schools' Forum, to transfer up to 0.5% (half a percent) from the Schools Block to support pressures in other DSG block areas. This would equate to £675,921 in Bury however after the NFF formula has been applied to the Schools Block and allowing for the Growth and Falling Rolls allocation of £318,625 there is £254,604 left available for transfer. The LA is asking Schools' Forum to support the High Needs Block by agreeing to the transfer of £254,604.

At the last meeting Forum members asked was the proposed level of funding transfer would look like and Steven Goodwin explained that £250k could fund any of the following:-

- 5 to 12 special school places depending on the severity of pupil needs
- Two of the Secondary SEMH Hubs
- The full costs of the Primary Inclusion Partnerships
- The costs of the SEN Team

Above all the contribution to High Needs will continue to benefit all schools and academies from High Needs support services and continued investment into inclusion.

**Forum members unanimously agreed to the transfer of £254,604 funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.**

The LA acknowledged the agreement and thanked the Forum for their contribution and support.

f) Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)

Steven Goodwin explained that the CSSB was introduced in 2018/19 to be used for former Education Services Grant (ESG) functions such as Education Welfare, ongoing responsibilities such as Admissions and historical commitments which for Bury is the Safeguarding in Schools Officer. This is additional funding to the Schools Block.

The line-by-line breakdown of the allocation was presented

**Forum members unanimously agreed to the recommended CSSB as outlined.**

g) Early Years

Due to the current pandemic situation, early years settings have been protected by ensuring funded headcounts have been based on pre-Covid census data. For 2021/22 the DfE guidance is to revert back to actual headcounts as of January 2021 and an alternative protected funding model is to be introduced. The details are awaited and all early years settings will be informed as soon as practically possible of the impact of the new calculation when known.

There have been some concerns that home learning arrangements for early years pupils not accessing provision may not be able to be counted in the census. As early years settings are to remain open during lockdown to all pupils they may not be funded if the setting decides to close. If a parent chooses not to send their child into the setting then that is a parental choice and the funding will continue. Forum stated that although some settings are open there is only 50% attendance due to children being kept at home.

Guidance is due any day and has been promised before the Census day and will be forwarded to early years setting when available.

Bury maximises the funding given to the early years settings and although LA's can retain up to 5% of the Early Years Block funding, Bury retains only around 3%. The proposed hourly rates for 21/22 are £5.36 for 2 year olds and £4.24 for 3 & 4 year olds. These rates are subject to Schools' Forum approval and will be applied to the funding formula with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

**Forum members unanimously agreed to the proposed Early Years hourly rates of £5.36 and £4.24.**

The other funding unit values for early years remain unchanged such as EY Pupil Premium @ £0.53 per-hour and the Disability Access Fund @ £615 per eligible pupil.

h) Special & PRU

A banded funded model is in place for Bury's Special schools which is linked to moderated assessments of SEND in accordance with the graduated approach and criteria included in the SEND Code of Practice. The banded model and values for 2021/22 were outlined in Steven Goodwin's report and included £660 per banding for the Teachers Pay and Pension Grant.

**Forum members unanimously agreed to the proposed Special School Place Funding values for 2021/22 as outlined in the report.**

Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) are funded on the same basis as special school in respect to a Place and Top-up funding model. PRUs are also required to receive increased funding for 2021/22 in respect to the Teachers Pay and Pension grant transfer into the High Needs Block. The proposed place and top up value is £20,660.

**Forum members unanimously agreed to the proposed Pupil Referral Units Funding values for 2021/22 as outlined in the report.**

i) PPG

The Pupil Premium Grant unit values will remain unchanged for 2021/2022. From April 2021 Pupil Premium allocations will be calculated based on the number of eligible pupils recorded by schools in their census in October 2020, previously it has been based on the January census each year.

**6. DSG Deficit Recovery**

The LA has met with a senior DfE team which included representatives from the DfE funding policy, SEN Team and two former Chief Finance Officers from other LA's.

The ultimate aim is that the DfE will support the High Needs Block financially but also to provide help to address the policy, systems and procedures. The LA welcomes the intervention and challenge to current methods.

The LA is developing a Transformation Plan and has commissioned partners to help with this process. The plan needs to be presented to the DfE in February with a recovery plan to be agreed in March. Once the plan is available it will need stakeholder engagement and will be shown to Schools Forum, BASH and BAPH for input before the DfE agrees the final version.

Forum asked if the DfE expressed areas of concern and it was confirmed that a Recovery Plan and 5 Year Forecast had been submitted and the DfE was analysing the data and comparing with other Local Authorities. The borough has a very high volume of high needs, EHCPs and out of borough placements which all need to be looked at.

A main aim is to transition pupils back to in-borough placements and 'stem the flow' of pupils going out of borough along with further developing the inclusion work and further increasing capacity in Bury schools including mainstream, special and resource provisions

Another area which needs to be addressed is that the current IT systems used at the LA does not hold all the data from 0 to 25 years in one place.

**7. Risk Protection Assurance**

At the October 2019 Forum meeting it was discussed that the DfE were proposing to extend the Risk Protection Assurance to cover maintained schools from April 2020, although Bury schools were tied into the LA's current agreement until April 2021. However, Steven Goodwin informed Forum that without conversation or consultation with schools the LA now has committed to extending the agreement with the current provider and entered into another long term agreement for insurance.

Forum asked who had made the decision and were informed that the LA's Corporate Purchasing and Insurance Teams along with the Chief Finance Officer had made the decision and even Childrens Services were not consulted.

Forum expressed how concerned they were that this decision had been made on the behalf of schools without any communication and expressed their disappointment with the LA.

Forum discussed that perhaps the LA had not consulted schools as if schools opted to go with the RPA though the DfE then the LA would not have as much bargaining power and expressed concern that the schools could be subsidising other areas. It was also discussed that the schools could be disadvantaged if the LA made a large claim at any point.

Steven Goodwin said that he has not seen any figures but has been assured that the market and competition had benefited the situation and the schools will be happy with the reduced costs. As soon as the detail is known it will be forwarded onto schools.

Action  
SG

Forum asked Steven Goodwin to confirm with Insurance that in future any agreements relating to schools should undergo a consultation with the schools and no future extensions to the insurance arrangement should be made without schools being involved

#### **8. Date of Next Meeting**

All further meetings to be scheduled and emailed shortly

#### **9. Any Other Business**

There was no further business to discuss.