
BURY SCHOOLS' FORUM

MINUTES

of the meeting of Bury Schools' Forum on
Tuesday 24th November 2020
Microsoft Teams Meeting

In Attendance:

Nursery

None in attendance

Maintained 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

Maintained Secondary

Joanna Filkins	School Business Manager – Elton High
Tina Owen	Headteacher – Philips High
Susan Southworth	Governor – Derby High
Lawrence Yarwood	Governor – Bury CE High

Special

Helen Chadwick	Headteacher - Millwood
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Special Academy

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

Pupil Referral Unit

Non in Attendance

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
David Waites	Headteacher - Vision MAT

Non-Schools

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

Gail Branch	Head Teacher - All Saints Primary
Lisa Corrigan	Headteacher – Heather Standbridge represented
Rachel O’Neil	Headteacher – Hoyle Nursery
Jonathan Wilton	Headteacher – Joanna Filkins represented
Carina Vitti	14 – 19 Representative

2. Introductions

The Chair welcomed Forum members to the meeting via Microsoft Teams.

Steven Goodwin introduced the three new Headteacher Forum Members, Gail Branch (Maintained Primary), Emma Ford (Academy Primary) and Rachel Pars (Academy Primary) and thanked Simon Waddington for coordinating the recruitment of the correct mix of academy and maintained representatives for the Primary Sector.

Neville Kenyon has resigned from the Secondary Sector to assist in achieving a correct mix of representation from maintained and academy. Schools’ Forum thanked Neville for his contributions during his 7 years as a Forum member. The maintained secondary sector is still over-represented by one member and as there were no further volunteers to step down at the meeting, Steven Goodwin will email those representatives separately to ask for volunteers to reduce the mix. It was explained that the representative could still attend meetings as an observer but would not have voting rights.

3. Minutes of the last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 20th October 2020 were checked and the Forum asked for Page 3 Item 6a&b paragraph 3 to be re-written as the wording was felt to be negative. The remainder of the minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

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

Page 6 Item 7 – Children & Young People Directorate

At the last meeting Forum highlighted their concerns that although strict Covid procedures were being followed in school there was no way in preventing pupils from mixing out of school. The LA reported that communication was going out to parents to remind them of the current rules and that Karen Johnston, Head of Communications at the LA had developed social media updates to improve the communication direct to families as much as possible.

Page 7 Item 8 – National Funding Developments

Forum expressed concern that some schools will start to struggle with the impact of Covid and additional costs incurred and asked if schools were running into a potential deficit because of these extra costs. Forum also queried if there was any news on further funding for areas such as supply.

The LA explained that at the last meeting the impact data from the Census was not yet available but now it is and briefings have taken place. 60% of primary schools and 40%

of secondary schools have falling rolls but with the new formula calculations the per pupil funding factors have increased and so in the majority of cases the gains in the funding factors have mitigated the losses in falling rolls. With future planning and the multiple year planners providing forecasts, schools should be aware of the forthcoming reduction in pupil numbers and anticipate this with future spending and staffing revisions where necessary. Schools regularly show deficits on the horizon but detailed monitoring takes place with the LA's assistance to ensure they sustain a balanced budget. HR discussions and consultations may need to take place and mitigate the impact on staff where possible.

The postcode plotting factors such as lower prior attainment, EAL and deprivation all need finalising but presently out of 60% of primary schools with falling rolls only three schools lose funding on their bottom line. These schools are Summerseat, St. Pauls and Bury & Whitefield Jewish. For comparison, another primary school was referred that has lost 19 pupils and will still gain overall due to the funding increases for components such as deprivation in the formula.

The Heys School (Prestwich Arts College) have lost 77 pupils and will lose over £100k on the schools main budget funding.

Early Years data will not be available until January 2021. Schools will also need to consider if the falling rolls also include SEN pupils.

Covid-19 Funding Update

Steven Goodwin updated the Forum on the ongoing situation for the summer term Corona claim with the outstanding amounts from the first claim due to be finalised this week. It is expected that any information regarding a second window for claims will not be released until the first window has been settled. According to the information the second window will only be for items missed off the summer term claim up to the end of July, plus Free School Meal costs for the Summer holidays.

There has been no information about a further claim for September onwards, the DfE have been emailed about the ongoing concerns about increasing costs and exceptional costs the schools are incurring. The DfE said that the situation is undergoing their "active consideration". Steven Goodwin is meeting with the DfE later in the week and will raise the situation again, however the DfE have already implied that staffing, supply and maternity costs are workforce management issues which should be managed within the budget.

The DfE has also said that some school balances are increasing because of lockdown and the reduction of costs during the summer term.

The last minute October half term free school meals costs will be funded through a Defra Grant which has been ring-fenced for this purpose. The announced Winter Food Scheme covers the period from Christmas 2020 to Christmas 2021 so schools should be planning the Christmas 2020 FSM and ordering vouchers now. The scheme only covers the main Christmas, Easter and Summer holidays and currently does not mention half terms although the final information has not yet been released.

The Forum asked Steven Goodwin to ask the DfE if schools who have remained open throughout for vulnerable pupils and children of keyworkers and only managed to do so by using agency staff would be reimbursed. If the schools do not receive any reimbursement for this they may have to make the decision to close as it is not affordable to continue. If the DfE want the schools to remain open they need to fund the extra costs as if they do not want to help pay for the extra costs then they cannot ask schools to support the situation any further.

5. **DSG Deficit**

a) DSG Management Template

Steven Goodwin informed the Forum of the several weeks of work which has taken place for the DfE. The DfE have selected a small group of LA's to help with the deficit recovery and will look at the action plan, provide advice and support in achieving a deficit recovery and hopefully providing some more funding although this is not guaranteed.

The LA is welcoming the intervention and support offered and the initial virtual meeting is due to take place on 17th December which will include the Executive Director of Childrens Services, Assistant Director of Education and Learning, Chief Finance Officer, SEN Strategic Lead along with the DfE's intensive team including former Chief Finance Officers as advisors.

The template was an immense task with a huge amount of data from in borough and out of borough SEN including categorising into mainstream, independent non maintained special, personal budgets etc. As the document was so large it kept crashing the systems so people involved were sent extracts to complete with Steven Goodwin compiling the finished document. The template is the starting point of the discussions with a view of developing a robust recovery plan and reaching an agreement with the DfE before 31 March 2021.

Julien Kramer reiterated that the LA is grateful for the DfE's support and acknowledge the substantial and timely piece of work involved in the preparation of the DSG Management Plan plus the work already taking place with Jane Harrison leading the transition of identified out of borough pupils back to Bury which will help to reduce costs and investments made by Bury LA to put the legacy issues right.

Julie Kramer said that it may be time for Schools' Forum members to consider the future strategic role of the Forum and become more creative and involved in monitoring or "deep diving" to help ensure LA compliance to the deficit recovery and to help identify areas where money could be spent more wisely with areas that may need to have targeted support and intervention.

If the DfE do give any more funds they will want to know that it will be invested wisely. The role of the Forum is changing as the national funding formula means that there is no influence in school funding and the role will become wider than purely financial. It was suggested that subgroups are brought back to bring suggestions for the Forum to consider.

The LA will update Forum in the January meeting on the DfE deficit recovery plan meeting.

i) CLAS

At the last meeting Primary Members agreed to cease de-delegation of primary funding for CLAS from 1st April 2021. The LA can confirm that it is not reducing the immediate contribution from the High Needs Block and Melanie Griffin (CLAS Manager) is working through the traded offer and service review. The service review is ongoing and early indications suggest that Union consultation may not be required as the re-structure will focus on natural wastages and the removal of vacancies, the Unions will be kept updated. There is no further detail at this stage and Forum will be kept updated especially if there is any impact of staff.

ii) School Crossing Patrol

Steven Goodwin detailed the School Crossing Patrol summary and thanked Alison Vidler for the work involved in compiling the information. The summary is based on current situation and the school budget funding previously provided will more than offset the costs. This will not be a buyback offer and will be charged directly to relevant schools. It will be discussed individually with schools especially where two crossings service a school, this will clarify where any shared crossings are in operation. Dialogue is still needed with highways regarding road safety measures.

The LA are asking the Schools Forum for agreement in principle to charge schools as this should not be funded via the High Needs Block but does need an agreement before further discussion can take place with Unions, schools and highways.

More work needs to be undertaken with regards to actual costings and sharing costs where one crossing patrol services more than one school.

Forum queried some of the data relating to specific schools and it was confirmed that the data was collated via the LA transport team and schools will have the opportunity to confirm the crossings / proportion of crossing costs once the information is finalised.

Forum agreed in the majority to the costs of the school crossing patrol being transferred from the High Needs Block to individual School and Academies

iii) Headroom

At the last meeting Forum deferred the decision to allow the LA to transfer an agreed amount of unallocated Schools Block funding to the High Needs Block. Although the final figures will not be known until the confirmation of business rates and the falling and growing rolls figures the Forum were asked to again consider the transfer of funding in principle.

Steven Goodwin said that in the previously discussed DSG Management Template he had to put an amount in anticipation of the Forums' agreement and put a figure of £250k which equates to 0.18% of the Schools Block Funding. Schools' Forum are allowed to transfer up to 0.5% of funding without the approval of the DfE which would equate to £790k. The £250k would be very welcome in the overall Deficit Recovery Plan and will help sustain future investment in the High Needs Block which will ultimately benefit all schools in the longer term.

The £250k transfer is also a good way of showing the DfE that the Forum and Bury schools support the High Needs recovery. Forum queried where the £250k would be invested and it was confirmed that initially it would be targeted at the whole High Needs Block and is not being identified for a specific service area.

Forum highlighted that the previous agenda item was for the school crossing patrol costs to come from schools budget and now schools are being asked for a further £250k. Steven Goodwin reminded the Forum that in 2015 the budgets for School Crossing Patrol was given across to schools with the view that Schools would then buy back the service but unfortunately there was little uptake from the schools and to protect the service it was funded with a tenuous link via the High Needs Block. With the large High Needs deficit the spending is being scrutinized and the historic situation needs to be corrected as the service should not be paid for via high needs funding.

The Headroom funding is not funding being taken from schools. The LA has applied the National Funding Formula to the Schools Block funding accordingly and cannot deviate from this formula. The remaining amount is to cover business rates, falling / growing roles support and also schools of concern will be assisted where possible and the money which is left after this is the money the LA is requesting to be transferred to help with the deficit.

Forum pointed out that the £250k would help towards the historic costs of the School Crossing Patrol which should not have been paid from the high needs block.

The High Needs Block is there ultimately to help support schools. If the money is not transferred it does not help the schools as the LA cannot deviate from the formula therefore the funding will be retained to help support falling rolls and growth. The Forum queried what would happen at this point if not spent and Steven Goodwin said that he would need to seek advice from the DfE regarding this.

The LA asked if Schools' Forum was an agreement in principle of the notional transfer of funds to contribute towards the High Needs Block deficit after the NF Formula has been applied with an indicative figure of £250k.

Action All members

A vote took place but no majority decision was made therefore Forum asked for the proposal to be brought to the January meeting for re-discussion and a full vote. Forum said that it was hard to agree when it was difficult to pinpoint the funds to any one service and it would be helpful if Forum had an analysis of where the money would be spent.

Steven Goodwin said that the figure was a realistic and fair proposal and been put in the DSG Recovery Plan. The plan is to be discussed with the DfE in December and to go to this meeting with an indicative figure showing the schools support to the deficit recovery would have been helpful. Steve however agreed to the deferring of the vote until January with a view that this would be an early agenda item and all members should be present for the vote where possible.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The dates of the next meetings were confirmed as follows:

**The next meeting will be the 3rd week in January date TBC
All further meetings to be scheduled and emailed this week**

7. Any Other Business

There was no further business to discuss.