

Meeting of the Schools Forum

Tuesday 2nd February 2010

(4.00 pm, Topaz Room, Emerald Suite at NLBP)

Attended

- Members:**
- Alan Homes (NASUWT)
 - Angela Murphy (Head, Bishop Douglass)
 - Dee Oelman (Head, St Mary's & St John's)
 - Derrick Brown (Governor, Ashmole)
 - Elizabeth Pearson (Governor, Livingstone)
 - Gilbert Knight (Governor, Oakleigh)
 - Jayne Franklin (Head, Childs Hill)
 - Jeanette Adak (Head, Monkfrith)
 - John Marincowitz (Head, QE Boys)
 - Johnathan Hewlings (Governor, East Barnet)
 - Kate Webster (Head QE Girls)
 - Keith Murdoch (Principal, Woodhouse College)
 - Ken Huggins (Governor, The Compton)
 - Lisa Clarke (Head, Brookhill Nursery)
 - Mick Quigley (Principal Inspector, Children's Service)
 - Stephen Parkin (Governor, St Mary's High)
 - Tim Bowden (Head, Holy Trinity)
- LA Officers:**
- Carol Beckman (School Funding Manager)
 - Denise Murray (Strategic Finance Manager)
 - Graham Durham (Assistant Director, Inclusion)
 - Linda Parker (Strategic Finance Manager)
 - Olaolu Yerokun (Contracts Officer)
 - Robert McCulloch Graham (Director of Children's Service)
 - Val White (Assistant Director, PPP)
- Clerk:**
- Sarosh Malik (School Resources and Support Officer)

Not Present

- Members:**
- Anthony Vourou (Governor, St John's N11)
 - Gary Tucker (Head, Christ's College Finchley)
 - Hazel Godfrey (Governor, Broadfields)
 - Helen Schmitz (Head, Cromer Road)
 - Jenny Gridley (Head, Oakleigh)
 - Jo Djora (Head, Coppetts Wood)
 - Sarah Vipond (Early Years Working Group)
- Others:**
- Angela Trigg (London Academy)
 - Cllr Andrew Harper
 - Elaine Runswick (16-18 Commissioning Board)
 - Geoff Boyd (Consultant)
 - Lucy Salaman (LSC Partnership Manager)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Harper, Gary Tucker, Tony Vourou, Elaine Runswick, Sarah Vipond, Lucy Salaman and Helen Schmitz.

2. Minutes of previous meeting (20th January 2010)

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Proposed: JH, Seconded: DO

3. Matters Arising

SP asked when the possible claw back of excessive balances would start. LP explained that individual school's situations will be taken in to consideration when checking balances over 5%-8%. For example, if schools order from revenue budgets but are supplied at the beginning of April, this would be taken into account.

SP wanted to know if it would only effect the current financial year. LP said if schools were entering in to a building contract for the following financial year, this would also be taken in to account.

4. Items for Agreement

4.1 Contracts affecting Schools

Olaolu Yerokun presented a table of contracts to the Schools Forum. DM explained that the LA is putting together a system so the Schools Forum can be given prior notice of contracts due for renewal.

JM expressed his concern that although energy arrangements are for 3-4 years, companies do not give quotes until schools are within three months of their expiry. He asked if schools can ask the LA to quote for electricity. OY explained that schools can and also most schools are in the group scheme.

AH said that the LA should look at making tendering efficient and have stronger bargaining powers. If rates are good then schools will opt in. DO asked why contract prices are on a weekly rate. OY replied that it is not a fixed price because market prices vary, so schools pay an average price.

JH commented that this was all very useful information. He said that one more piece of information which could be included on the report is a comment on the outcome of the contract process. He asked how the Schools Forum contributes practically. OY replied that it would be available to the Forum six months before contracts expire.

AH asked why the computer consumables contract is with Havering. OY explained that Havering have lead with other authorities. AM said that the Forum should be told the benefit. She wanted to know why Catering was not on the contracts list. OY replied that there are four contracts which supply catering. DM added that there are no proposals to go out to tender and they will retain in-house service. VW said that it is a traded service, and schools can market test it themselves. AM then asked if the in-house service is checked for value. VW explained that it runs at cost as a business. AM wanted to know how many schools take up the service. VW said the take up has increased as there is now a wider service for kosher meals.

GK asked why heating oil costs £2.17 per litre. OY said he will check.

4.2 Early Years Funding 2010/11

CB gave the Schools Forum an update on the Early Years Funding for 2010/11. Barnet was expecting to introduce an Early Years Single Funding Formula in April 2010, however in December 2009 the government announced that the EYSFF would be delayed until next year until April 2011. She added that the extra time has been helpful as we had not been 100% sure of the formula.

CB asked the Schools Forum to endorse the following:

- PVIs to be funded according to formula from September 2010 (maintained nurseries cannot start so early because of funding regulations)
- 2010/11 Schools funded in the same way as 2009 on a single count.
- Those already in Phase 1 to be funded in the same way as they have since September 2009.

LC commented that some providers are not entirely happy with the formula. CB said they will be looking at it again. SA added that the situation is improving. Four locality meetings are taking place, of which three have been positive but that there would be challenges. Barnet early years is successful because of diverse provision. CB added that the extension of 15hours will still go ahead. The funding would come through the Standards Funds.

Recommendation: That the Schools Forum endorse this plan for the funding of three and four year olds in 2010/11.

Proposer: AH
Seconder: AM

This proposal was unanimously agreed by members.

4.3 London Pay Addition 2010/11

CB introduced the London Pay Addition grant which comes through the Standards Funds because the DCSF omitted it from the DSG. Last year it was distributed by pupil numbers.

AH asked if those who were employed centrally would be included in this years allocation. LP explained that the sum is allocated according to school pupil numbers, while central staff are part of the centrally retained budget.

Recommendation: That the Schools Forum confirms that the London Pay Addition Grant should be distributed pro-rata of pupil numbers.

Proposer: DB
Seconder: SP

This proposal was unanimously agreed by members.

4.4 Standards Fund – Extended Services Disadvantage Subsidy

SA introduced the paper to the Schools Forum. She explained that this Standards Fund grant is to enable all children in care and also those eligible for free school meals to access enhancement activities from which they would otherwise be excluded due to an inability to pay.

In 2010/11 Barnet will receive £928,000 which will be distributed to all schools and the grant is being rebranded. (Last year it was called AZTEC).

By September 2010 all schools must be making the core offer:

- Childcare/safe place to be for secondaries
- Parenting Support
- Varied menu of activities – 8am-6pm
- Swift and easy access to specialist services
- Opening up to the wider community

However the cost of services is excluding some pupils, therefore the government has made more money available. In Barnet schools allowances are generally made by all schools for disadvantaged children. Now there will be money to target those in care or on Free School Meals, so the existing funding can be channeled to support the next set of children who may be just as needy but don't qualify for free school meals (FSM). FSM is a crude measure, but if this subsidy continues then Barnet may look to refine this. Barnet is asking schools to look closely at the needs of eligible pupils as schools are best placed to decide where the money is best used.

EP asked what would happen to schools with no FSM. SA explained that this would be taken into consideration because the LA knows that sometimes parents do not claim free school meals. SA mentioned that Barnet Hill had appeared by mistake on the list as it is now closed. DB asked if there was any other way to distribute money. AM suggested using IDACI. DB also wanted to know if there was any latitude on this and other grants. SA said there was no choice. AH asked if children with disabilities would be included. GD told the Schools Forum that the 340 children in Barnet have access to other funding for short breaks and support.

Recommendation: The Schools Forum is asked to consider and approve the proposal for distribution of the Disadvantage Subsidy to schools.

Proposer: TB

Secunder: JA

This proposal was unanimously agreed by members.

4.5 Startup funding for new reception classes

CB told the Schools Forum that due to a sudden rise in applications to Reception classes the LA had to ask schools in pressure areas to open additional classes. In September 2009 five new reception classes were opened and thanks are due to the headteachers who have been a part of this.

CB explained that after experience in 2009 it is suggested that a single one off payment could be made where in exceptional circumstances a school is asked by the LA to open a Reception class in response to pupil pressure and in order to fulfil the statutory obligation to provide sufficient places. An amount of £10k is proposed which can be used as required as the cohort moves up the school.

SP asked if this would apply to schools in the current financial year. CB replied it would be for the five schools due to open new Reception classes in 2010/11. VW added that there may be 8 or 9 more classes in the following year. VW explained that the one off lump sum will help to the school to accommodate the extra children.

DO was concerned that junior school headteachers had not been involved. MQ explained that schools would need to include it in their forward planning.

DB commented that putting £10k in is welcomed. He said it would be useful to have numbers and names of schools. He asked if the £300k contingency for reorganisations would either go back to the schools budget, used for this or go to the Schools Forum. CB replied that the extra classes have been recognised as a pressure on the ISB. LP explained that in 2009/10 £400k was kept aside for reorganisations. In 2010-11 the budget for reorganisations within the centrally retained budget is reduced to £200k as additional funding has been moved into the ISB to fund additional classes.

VW added that the January PLASC shows that there are an extra 200 in Reception this year whereas last year there were 150 extra. AM said that the reorganisation issue should be brought up separately - she added that she welcomes the proposal, but is concerned about the difficulties of trying to predict the next six years. MQ explained that LA are not suggesting that the £10k will cover cost for the next six years, but it is a contribution towards school budgets. An Early Years consultant recently costed the equipment and resources needed for a reception class, which was not a luxury list, but totalled £14,000. Some of this amount (e.g. ICT) would be funded from capital resources.

CN told the Schools Forum that her school put in £15k for a new class. They bought bigger furniture so it could be used for older classes as well. TB asked if there would be retrospective funding as Barnet did get some extra money from the DCSF. VW said that the £1m was for capital.

Recommendation: That the Schools Forum considers the proposal of a one-off start up grant of £10k to schools asked to open a new Reception class in exceptional circumstances.

This proposal was unanimously agreed by members.

4.6 2009/10 DSG – Centrally Retained Budget Monitoring

LP presented a report to inform the Schools Forum about the projected outturn of the centrally retained schools budget. The current projection is an underspend of £256k. The Schools Forum was asked to choose from two options for the use of the projected underspend:

1. the full amount of the underspend (£256,000) to be carried forward to the new financial year and taken into account in setting the Schools Budget for 2010-11. It is proposed that £100,000 is allocated to the schools contingency budget in 2010-11 and the remaining amount, currently estimated at £156,000, earmarked for a pilot to assist schools to introduce a 'cashless' system for collection of income (see below for further details).
2. To distribute to schools the underspend in the schools contingency budget (£225,863) prior to 31st March 2010. The likely impact of this is an increase in school balances and if individual schools had balances in excess of 5% secondary or 8% primary and special school of budget share the balance may be clawed back. The amount per pupil on the current projected underspend would be £5.25 and the redistribution to schools would vary from £320 for the smallest school to £6,419 for the largest school.

The LA prefers option 1 which gives the opportunity to improving value for money.

DM said she had done some research of various options of cashless systems which can be expensive, but we could get economies of scales if schools bought in together. The system links to the ICT options under BSF. She said the LA does not want to miss this opportunity as the money won't be available in the future.

AM said that the need for cashless systems only arose because of the decision to recharge schools for cash collection. The catering service is a traded service and the cost of cash collection should have been covered within that contract. DM said that this would not be just for catering.

JM told the Schools Forum that Parentpay's marketing is very slick and the company is keen to work with schools so there should be no need to pay for a feasibility study. KW expressed her concern that it was not equitable. She said schools would rather have the cash from the underspend.

VW explained that this is a one off opportunity especially for smaller schools. KH asked how schools that already have the system set up would benefit. RMG replied that it was not possible for smaller schools to make this kind of an investment. EP added that if a big group of schools did it together they would get a better deal which smaller schools would benefit from. TB agreed with the proposal but was not sure if parents would be able to engage with this technology.

JH said that the issue is a problem for smaller schools, however the secondary schools can help the smaller schools with training. AM agreed with the issue around parents not being able to use the service. She also added that the underspend should go back to the schools. AH explained that it would be a small amount of money if it goes back to schools. He said he would support the recommendation.

JF asked if the cost would be £385k. DM explained that amount would cover the infrastructure for all schools and then maybe the Harnessing Technology grant could be used. DB told the Schools Forum that the cashless catering service would support some schools and not all. He added that central money should benefit all schools and not only some, unless it was only for primary schools.

DM said the LA estimates it will cost more than £156k, so we will need to look for other sources in the Children's Service to contribute.

JM reminded the Schools Forum that there were two options to choose from or members can roll this item forward and discuss at the next meeting. He added that he is supportive towards smaller schools getting a cashless system and that secondary schools can do it themselves. DB suggested schools that currently have the system to help the smaller schools with cashless catering and offered to be involved in this.

It was agreed to consider this further at the next meeting.

4.7 2010/11 DSG and Schools Budget

LP circulated an updated spreadsheet to the members replacing the one sent with the Schools Forum papers. She explained that the DSG is based on pupil numbers from the January 2010 School Census. The majority of maintained schools had submitted the data last week, but data from the PVLs is not yet available so we are currently using last year's numbers for them. There is an expected increase of 553 pupils which has helped pressures in schools budget. There is also approximately £453k more from LSC.

From April 2010 funding for all nurseries will be on participation. The extension of the free entitlement will be funded through the Standards Funds. LP told the Forum that there are various pressures on the central expenditure listed in her report. The figures circulated today do not breach the CEL.

DO asked why the DCSF would not be funding for JCROSS. LP explained that the DSG for 2010-11 is based on pupil numbers as at January 2010 and JCROSS had no pupils on roll in January. VW explained that the local authority requested additional funding from the DCSF on two occasions but were told no additional funding will be provided. JH said if you open a school at any time other than January this situation would arise.

DO said that trades union facilities are not all funded by facilities time. She requested an explanation of the £177k resource to fund partnership in schools to promote every child matters. RMG reminded that members that this was discussed at the last meeting and the local authority will work with schools and experiment with appointing a new profession of interdisciplinary workers. AM also queried what the combined services budget was for. RMG explained that the Schools Forum can expect to see more detail in future.

JM commented that the underspend was quite large for 2009/10. He asked if this could be avoided next year. AH explained that allocating in advance is difficult, especially for SEN. GD added that the LA faces huge pressures for complex cases and increased parent rights.

JH asked why line 1.2.4 was less than the current year provisional outturn. GD advised that there are 43 children in the older age group who are moving out of residential settings, although there may be younger ones moving in.

DB wanted to know if the one-off £100k of the reorganisation contingency will go into the ISB. LP explained that in setting the ISB, the requirement for 5 new reception classes opening in September 2010 was taken into account. The reorganisation contingency is required should there be unforeseen costs arising during the year.

Recommendation: The Schools Forum is asked to approve the provisional 2010/11 schools budget as outlined in the report and in the revised table circulated at the meeting.

This proposal was unanimously agreed by members.

4.8 Traded Services 2010/11

VW presented a list of Traded Services for 2010/11. An item about cash collections was circulated to members and will also be available in the schools circular.

AM asked about the overall increase. VW said there has been an increase of 2.4% for Governor Service. JH queried the 4% for Finance Support. She replied that the driver was an increase in salaries and overheads, which are also benchmarked. She concluded that the increases are not as high as feared.

5. Items for information

5.1 Children and Young People Plan

VW presented the paper showing a review of the plan. She said that Headteachers had already seen this. The Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership Board will be called the Children's Trust Board from April.

RMG clarified the relationships with different boards. The Children's Trust is a mechanism for planning with sub boards. The Trust will have true representation from family of schools. He said the new trust will be discussed at CYPSPB. The overlap between services needs to be eliminated.

AH asked if there would be more information available about procurement and commissioning. RMG explained that it is complicated and will take at least a year to get everything sorted out. We are currently looking for more efficient way of commissioning and a closer relationship with the PCT. RMG said he hopes to engage the Schools Forum in the future.

5.2 Building Schools for the Future

VW made a presentation including the key dates. The Strategy For Change submission will hopefully be followed by an invitation to present the Outline Business Case by August.

6 Any Other Business

8. Dates of future meetings

Tues 18 th May 2010	4.30pm (with briefing at 4pm)
Tues 13 th July 2010	4.30pm (with briefing at 4pm)