

Minutes of the Schools Forum Meeting

Meeting title:	Schools Forum Meeting	
Date/time	3 February 2021, 17.30-19.00 Meeting convened virtually via Google Meets	
In attendance:	School Members KT Khan (Special School Headteacher rep) Caroline Tyson (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Alex McKenzie (Maintained Pri Governor rep) Lee Laudat-Scott (Maintained Pri Governor rep) Lisa Neidich (Maintained Pri Governor rep) Jane Heffernan (Maintained Sec Headteacher rep) Wendy Mason (Maintained Sec Governor rep) Lisa Clarke (Nursery School Headteacher rep)	Academy Members Claire Syms (Academy Principal rep) Rita Krishna (Academy Governor rep) Alternative Provision Non School Members Cathy Murphy (EY/PVI rep) Adrian Cottrel (16-19 rep)
Additional attendees:	Cllr Anntoinnette Bramble, Cabinet member for Education, Young People and Children Social Care Annie Gammon (DoE, Hackney Education) Donna Thomas (Head of Early Years) Tracey Caldwell (Head of Education Operations, Hackney Education) Naeem Ahmed (Head of Finance, Hackney Council) Ophelia Carter (Head of Schools Finance) Silvi Shrestha (Previous Clerk to the Forum) Chenelle Blake (Clerk to the Forum)	
Apologies:	Anna Cain (Special Academy rep), Asarena Simon (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep), David Davies (Staff rep), Sian Davies (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) - <i>Forum Chair</i> , Richard Brown (PRU rep, Headteacher)	

	Item
1.	Welcome and introductions Members and additional attendees were welcomed to the meeting. It was noted that the Chair sent apologies, therefore the meeting was chaired by the Vice Chair, Alex McKenzie. The Vice Chair introduced the new Schools Forum Clerk, Chenelle Blake, who has assumed responsibility for this meeting from Silvi Shrestha. The Forum thanked Silvi for her work in supporting the Schools Forum, thus far. It was noted that members were asked to submit questions in advance of the meeting; 3 questions were received and will be recorded in the minutes as 'Member Question'.
2.	2.1. Minutes of the last meeting The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record of the meeting held 11 November 2020.

	2.2. Action log - It was noted that actions recorded in the action log were addressed as part of the agenda or complete. In relation to the action noted under 3.1, Tracey Caldwell advised that HR has confirmed 3 academies are contributing to the Trade Union costs; the Trade Union representatives have agreed that they will not provide a service to academies not contributing. As a result, there is no cross funding between the maintained sector and academy sector. 2.3. Matters arising; Member query in relation to the increase in allocation of Central Schools Services Block to the Admissions budget Tracey Caldwell advised that funding received in the past from the Central Schools Services Block (which is allocated to LAs to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils in maintained schools and academies in England) did not fully fund the cost of the admissions service; therefore, the LA has used part of the funds to contribute to the cost of the service and council funding used to top up the balance. There has been an increase in funding from the central grant. The increased funding received is now closing this gap and requiring the LA to top up less.
3	Membership update - a review of the number of secondary phase representatives on the Forum This report addressed a query raised at the last meeting, regarding whether maintained secondary representatives are proportionate in comparison to the primary representatives. The regulation states it should be '<i>broadly proportionate to the number of pupils in each category</i>'. The report confirms the proportionality is correct, due to total number of pupils within each phase. The Forum noted the report, with no further comments or questions.
4.	Early Years Funding Arrangements for 2021-22 The purpose of this report was to consult and ask the Forum for a view on the Early Years Funding proposal; it was noted that the decision rests with Hackney Education, however it is the role of the Forum to give a view on the proposals. Forum was asked to give a view on the proposals regarding: 1. the Early Years proposed funding arrangements for 2021-22 (section 4) 2. the inclusion fund (section 4.12); 3. the use of the central spend and values (section 5); Tracey Caldwell brought the Forum's attention to the following: • Table 1 highlights an increase to the hourly rate by 8p per hour for 2 year olds and 6p per hour for 3-4 year olds. It was noted that the numbers contained in table 1 are an estimate, based on actuals from last year; however, the January 2021 census will confirm the exact numbers and confirm funding in July 2021. • Section 3.3 highlights a change in practice this year, as a result of COVID-19. Normally, the January 2021 census would be used for retrospectively funding previous terms, however due to the volatility and the change in numbers, the January 2021 census will only be used to inform the spring term funding; the January 2020 census will be used to inform the autumn funding. It is likely this will be a one year effect. • DfE has noted the expectation for January 2021 numbers to be low, therefore if there is a substantial increase over the subsequent terms, the LA may be able to apply for funding to cover the increase. Settings will be paid based on their actual numbers, however the LA will potentially have the ability and duty to source additional funding from the DfE, if needed.

- Section 4.1 provides a reminder that Hackney Education continues to maintain a 95% pass-through of funding to providers; this includes a contingency fund, which is proposed to be retained at £100,000, to cover any additional costs up to March 2022.
- Section 4.8 outlines that the proposed structure of the funding formula remains unchanged from last year, with the exception of the hourly funding rate. A £100,000 contingency is proposed.
- In relation to the contingency for this financial year, it is not possible to confirm any plans for funding until the January census is completed. An update can be provided at the next meeting.
- Section 4.1.2 outlines the proposal of the inclusion fund, which is just over £1,000,000; this is used as the bridge between Early Years and High Needs; a funding panel is used to assess the applications and pass on the funding.
- Section 5 relates to the central funding; this is the proportionality used for the retained 5% and how it is used for the central teams.

Donna Thomas noted the expected reduction in take up for 2-4 year olds, as a part of the Early Years census. The DfE has advised that they will keep this under review and Hackney 'may' be able to make an application in February; Donna emphasised that there is no definitive guarantee of receiving additional funding.

Member question - *The transitional funding, which has already decreased by 5%, is provided to the MNS due to the nature and cost of the school; however, MNS may also benefit from this unallocated contingency, particularly if there were a low take up of places this year. Can you confirm why MNS would not receive the unallocated funds, if they are allocated to nursery classes in schools/settings?*

Donna Thomas answered - It has been considered to redistribute the unallocated contingency to all settings; however if redistributed, the amount is less than £100 for each setting. As a result of the volatility this year, and a possible reduction in the spring term census, the contingency will be maintained to fund any shortfall funding. There is no idea on the impact of the census at this stage; however, maintained nursery schools will receive a supplement, that nursery classes in schools will not.

It was requested to provide an update at the Forum meeting scheduled in July, detailing actual numbers and figures from the January census. **Action - Tracey Caldwell to provide an update.**

Member question - *What is the composition of the panel who are making the judgements on the criteria for the allocation of the grant and are there any special schools represented?*

Donna Thomas answered - A panel was introduced in 2018, with a robust system in place, a wide representation and a clear rationale for the decisions being made. The panel is chaired by the Inclusion Lead from Early Years, with strategic oversight from the Early Years Strategy Manager. The panel includes representation from the Inclusion team, SEND, settings and colleagues from Health.

A member highlighted the use of the maintained nursery school contingency and noted that the maintained nursery schools should not be penalised for receiving supplementary funding as a part of the contingency fund.

It was noted that the PVI sector is happy with the balance of delegated monies, central spending and inclusion; having central services works for the sector.

It was further noted that the Schools Forum Members provided an overall positive view on the report.

5. Changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools

This report was provided for information and for the Forum to note.

	Ophelia Carter advised of the DfE's consultation launched last year, which addressed financial transparency of LA maintained schools and academy trusts. The result of the consultation was published in July 2020, highlighting a number of changes to be made. The 2 changes to be adapted in the scheme are directed changes from the DfE; therefore, there is no requirement to consult the Forum members or the wider school community. The 2 changes to be implemented are: 1. Each school must submit a 3 year budget forecast, each year on 1 May. 2. Once a school deficit exceeds 5%, the school must submit a Deficit Recovery Plan to the LA. Ophelia advised that these changes reflect ongoing practice within Hackney; however, due to the directive from the DfE, specific wording must be included in the Scheme for Financing Schools to reflect this. Upon distribution of the final budgets in February, further guidance will be circulated to schools detailing expectations, including the expected level of scrutiny from governors and the LA. The Forum noted the report, with no comments or questions.
6.	Final Schools' Budget & Funding Formula 2021/20 The purpose of this report was to inform the Forum, as the responsibility to set the funding formula rests with the Director of Education. Traey Caldwell brought the Forum's attention to the following key points: • Section 3, table 1 - There are a number of elements which have changed, however the overall impact of these changes is the 1% increase in school funding; this excludes the Teachers Pay and Pension grant and does not take into account the funding impact for individual schools if they have a falling roll. • The Teachers Pay and Pension grant will now be paid as a part of the schools funding formula, rather than a separate grant. • The issuing of the budgets will be completed by 28 February; the LA submitted proforma formulas to the DfE in January. • Section 4.1 - We are continuing to move towards the national funding formula, with the minimum funding guarantee set at 1.02%, to minimise turbulence; this guarantee protects formula change only and does not protect reductions in rolls. Ophelia Carter highlighted Appendix B as the key focus for this report, which illustrates the schools potential budgets and a number of schools with significant falling rolls. As a result, the LA is offering support to assist schools with mitigating the impact from the loss of pupils. A local consultation was launched and closed on 28 January, for some temporary and permanent reductions of school PANs; a report will be presented to Hackney Education SLT, to make a decision on the final PAN numbers and reductions. It was noted that most schools with the highest level of falling rolls are the most disadvantaged; however, overall the deprivation factors have increased. The total deprivation spend in 2020-21 was £21.2million, whereas 2021-22 has increased to £24.42million. If a school is not deprived but has a falling roll, they will not experience any increase in the budget per pupil; however, if deprivation factors favour the school, it is likely they will see an increase per pupil. All schools experiencing a significant fall in their roll, are in discussions with Hackney Education regarding mitigation measures and/or temporary/permanent reduction in PAN.

	Hackney Education is aware of these schools and is closely monitoring the situation. Member question - <i>Is there any further opinion on this going forward? Are there any trends?</i> Annie Gammon answered - It is a part of the LAs responsibility to ensure there are sufficient school places and to support schools to ensure they have manageable budgets; due to many schools running classes that are $\frac{2}{3}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ full, there have been conversations with schools regarding PAN reductions. These reductions will not create an immediate or drastic change, but will happen over time. The national census will provide more information on the current picture in Hackney. Hackney Education is monitoring this matter carefully and ensuring there is enough capacity in the system. There are also plans in place to expand some special school places. There are no concrete figures and in what is currently a turbulent period, there are no ongoing trends; however, the Hackney Education SLT will undertake a review of demographics and more information will be shared with the Forum. Member question - <i>What is the growth fund retained, highlighted under table 2?</i> Ophelia Carter answered - The growth fund retained is for planned growth; this is where there is a suspected increase in numbers and the funds are retained; if this does not materialise, it is declared as unspent growth at the year end. Member question - <i>Can you provide more clarity on the implicit growth in the schools funding formula, highlighted under section 4.5?</i> Ophelia Carter answered - If a school has a planned growth they will have an increase in funding that is proportional to their increase taking place in September; this reflects the 7/12, which is 7 out of the 12 months funded (September to March next year), if you have a planned growth. The Forum noted the report, with no further comments or questions.
7.	Administration Arrangements for Allocation of Grants to Schools: annual report The purpose of this report was for information and for the Forum to note; the report lists the various grants the LA receives directly from the DfE, which is passported directly to schools. It was noted that schools are informed of the intervals where they can expect grant payments. Ophelia Carter highlighted that the 2 significant changes relate to the Teachers Pay grant and Teachers Pensions grant; both grants are now included in the baseline of the schools budget, which schools will receive through the basic entitlement. The COVID-19 grant has been received and funds were passported directly to each school. Ophelia noted the difficulty in managing the grants, as schools liaise directly with the department regarding their claims; the department does not come back to the LA with an explanation of unsuccessful grant applications or when they propose to make payments; however, as soon as the LA is notified of a payment, the LA ensure the school is also notified accordingly. Member question - <i>Are there any observations of successful schools for funding claims?</i> Ophelia Carter answered - Schools that claimed below the threshold were successful and have been paid, i.e the school threshold is £30,000 and they claimed £29,950; however, if the claim was significantly above their threshold, the application was scrutinised further, before a final decision was made. A Forum member noted that there is a significant number of support staff on the pension scheme, which has a significant imbalance, particularly in special schools; however, it does not appear that this is reflected in the funding formula.

	Ophelia confirmed that the on costs are not reflected in the schools funding formula. The Forum noted the report, with no further comments or questions.
8.	Consultations - verbal update Ophelia Carter informed of the following consultations: • 2021 Exam Replacement consultation launched on 15 January 2021; this related to the cancellation of exams, however this has now closed. • Recent local consultation with 6 schools, regarding the reduction of their PANs. This closed on 28 January 2021. Annie Gammon advised the Forum of a consultation that closed last friday, regarding the mechanism to be used in secondary schools to award GCSE and A-Level awards this summer, in the absence of external exams; further information on this process is expected in the next few weeks. A consultation was also held regarding vocational exams.
9.	Any other Business Member question - <i>Is there any update on the impact of October's cyber-attack on council departments, particularly in regards to National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) payments and records here (rather than the CSC aspect)? Is there any update when/if data might be restored, and what the impact on schools' budgets has been, if any? Have there been any issues with GDPR as a result of the hack?</i> Tracey Caldwell answered - The hack has not impacted school funding. It is understood that there has been no impact on NNDR, however this can be followed up. Restoration of data is complex, however this is being worked on in each department, to restore data and systems in a planned manner, with efforts to prioritise key services. In relation to GDPR, there was some limited information released on the dark web; all teams who had data released have been contacted, risk assessments have been completed and the appropriate people have been contacted. No information has been shared on the World Wide Web, so the risk of wide circulation is viewed as low (it was not widely available on a public forum or visible through search engines); however, where a risk is highlighted as <i>high</i>, actions have been taken by the relevant departments. Education networks were not affected by the attack. Ophelia advised that schools' monthly budget payments go through a national treasury account and these payments are made directly from the Hackney Education Finance team; as a result, the cyber attack had no impact on payments. However, the attack did cause some difficulty with SEND payments, which were rejected, but subsequently successfully processed. The NNDR systems were affected by the attack, however, it is unlikely that this impacted schools' budgets; Hackney Education Finance mitigate against any losses or gains, resulting in a net-nil position; Hackney funds the NNDR, with an estimate of costs at the beginning of the year and assessment of the actual costs at the end of the year, with a net off of any difference, if it is material; therefore, it is not envisaged that the attack has impacted NNDR. A member raised the issue of academies not having a net-nil position last year, resulting in no record of payments due to the attack; there is also no hard copy for the NNDR. This has negatively impacted the school budget, as there is no back up data. Member question- <i>What is the impact on the NNDR data, both safeguarding and finance related and when will this be recovered?</i> Answer - An enquiry can be made, to establish when data will be recovered. Action- Tracey Caldwell to follow up the recovery of NNDR data.

	Cllr Bramble informed of the extensive work done with Children's Social Care and ICT teams, to ensure a robust alternative system is in place around the welfare and safeguarding of the children and young people in Hackney. With the impact of the current pandemic and cyber attack, the ICT team is under an increased amount of stress and are trying to work through the system, with an ongoing investigation underway. Lead Members and Senior Officers across the council are having ongoing meetings, with a RAG rated approach against all the impacted systems. Member question - Does this impact the process of EHCPs or support for young people with missing data? Tracey Caldwell answered - The EHCP process has not been impacted, however there may be an impact if the SEND team is required to access data from CSC.
10.	Dates of forthcoming meetings • 21 April 2021 - Training session on High Needs Block, including an update on Special Needs Analysis Paper (SNAP). Annie Gammon advised that the update on SNAP will include information on the demographic trends and provision of places for all ages. • 23 June 2021