

# CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Schools Forum held on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at 9.00am

## Attendance list:

### Members:

Trevor Burton	Academy Representative and Chair
Adam Booker	Special School Representative
Gail Brown	Academy Representative
Glen Duxbury	Academy Representative (Deputising for Andrew Daly)
Toby Eastaugh	Academy Representative (Deputising for Brian Crosby)
Debbie Glover	Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative [from 9.25am]
Di Gomery	Maintained Secondary Governor Representative
Helen Gration	Early Years Sector Representative
Tricia Head	Pupil Referral Unit Representative
Dee Patton-Statham	Academy Representative (VA)
Lee Probert	FE Representative
Claire Rigden	Maintained Nursery Headteacher Representative
Jenny Rogers	Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative
Lorna Savage	Academy Representative
John Tomsett	Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representative [to 11.48am]

### Observers / Advisors:

Cllr Ian Cuthbertson	Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education [from 9.14am]
Maxine Squire	Assistant Director, Education and Skills, City of York Council
Richard Hartle	Head of Finance, City of York Council
John Thompson	Head of Secondary and Skills, City of York Council
Salli Radford	Head of Governor Services, City of York Council, Coordinator and Clerk
Sophie Wales	Assistant Director, Children's Services, City of York Council [to 9.08am]
Dan Bodey	Inclusion Advisor, Education and Skills, City of York Council [to 9.40am]
Emma Hughes	School Wellbeing Service Team Leader, City of York Council [to 9.40am]
Steve Lewis	Observer

## 1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were taken round the table.

## 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Brian Crosby – Academy Representative, Andrew Daly – Academy Representative and Amanda Hatton – Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities.

Sophie Wales provided a brief introduction to her role following her appointment in September 2018. Sophie outlined the challenges identified and her keenness to work more closely with school leaders to increase engagement on safeguarding and the support available to schools.

The Chair highlighted the work of the School Wellbeing Service which took a proactive rather than reactive approach, suggesting that it would be helpful to find a similar proactive approach through further cross-team working. Sophie expressed a desire to explore ways to strengthen relationships with schools.

Discussion followed, with suggestions noted by Sophie who would follow up at future headteacher meetings and with individual school meetings.

*Sophie Wales left the meeting at 9.08am.*

### **3. Membership update**

Previously distributed. The update was noted.

It was noted that Dee Statham would continue as a Forum member following her appointment as representative for St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academy Trust. It was further noted that Trevor Burton had been reappointed as representative of South Bank Multi Academy Trust.

### **4. Minutes of the York Schools Forum meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

Previously distributed. Subject to the correction of a minor typographical error, the minutes of the meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record of the meeting.

*Cllr Cuthbertson joined the meeting at 9.14am.*

### **5. Action Plan and Matters Arising**

Previously distributed. The summary of completed actions agreed during 2019/20 to date was noted. All action points had been completed.

Matters Arising:  
There were no matters arising.

### **6. School Wellbeing Service – Year 3 outcome report**

Previously distributed. Dan Bodey advised that he had taken the strategic lead of the team as part of his Inclusion Advisor role from September 2019. It was noted that Emma Hughes was moving to a similar role in Leeds and that interviews to replace her would take place during the week commencing 10<sup>th</sup> February.

Dan advised that the report evidenced increasing engagement with the School Wellbeing Service (SWS).

Emma Hughes presented the detail of the report, advising that targets had been set some time ago and that the report measured progress against these targets. Emma outlined key factors in programme delivery during the period. The Forum noted the key points:

- 40% of primary schools had received key training
- Wellbeing Workers had worked with ELSA and pastoral staff to support identification of resources to address frequently occurring issues
- Early identification of need had increased, with schools making more referrals (1,190 consultations in the last year)

- Presenting needs generally mirrored those identified by the national data-set, with anxiety (a national issue) and emotional regulation (particularly in Y5 boys) being frequent drivers for referrals
- In secondary schools, anxiety in girls was a key driver for referrals, again, mirroring national trends

Emma outlined SWS responses to these issues.

Emma advised that the SWS had a good relationship with specialist CAMHS provision, sharing information and referring where necessary. It was noted that there were 14 referrals to CAMHS in the last year, with a 100% success rate in referrals being followed up. Forum members noted that this was a supportive process which reduced waiting time for children in need of CAMHS support.

Emma presented impact measure data, with pre and post intervention questionnaires showing that pupils, parents and teachers found interventions positive, and parental satisfaction being demonstrated.

Emma outlined plans for the future of the SWS and to further develop relationships with CAMHS. Questions were invited.

In response to a question regarding the restructure of the service and whether this would impact on existing positive structures, Emma advised that the SWS would be restructured in-line with the Trailblazer model. Dan further advised that this was currently on hold until leadership appointments had been secured. Emma advised that the SWS had piloted the restructure in the west and north of the city, with the outcome being a more effective model which maximised the benefits of resources.

*Debbie Glover joined the meeting at 9.25am.*

Discussion followed, with the Forum noting that the SWS was helping to reduce pressure on CAMHS whilst ensuring that appropriate referrals were made.

In response to a question regarding consultations in year groups and whether this was across all schools or in specific schools or areas, Emma tabled secondary data showing that the focus for referrals had moved down through Y11, Y10 and Y9 over the last three years and was now beginning to level. Emma advised that this may mean that schools were now able to identify issues earlier, though the peak remained in Y11, whilst Y5 was the peak year in primary schools.

In response to a question regarding targeted interventions, Emma advised that exam stress and anxiety had been identified as an issue during the first year of the SWS, with this addressed via support with schools which had reduced the spike in subsequent years.

In response to a question regarding the pressure of reformed terminal exams on students and whether this was reflected in the data, Dan advised that this was a contributory factor and had also impacted on attendance. Further discussion followed.

In response to a comment regarding the SWS being given a key action to develop a pathway to address trauma, attachment and early childhood experiences, and the need to revisit this action, Emma advised that a pilot intervention had been developed as CBT was not meeting the needs of more complex children. Emma further advised that the new model was more focussed on the relationship with a key adult to work over a longer period with the family and Wellbeing Worker. It was noted that this

required a year of commitment and was more difficult to deliver, using a number of therapeutic models. Emma advised that outcomes had not yet been assessed as this was a longer-term trial with three children. The Forum asked that school leaders be kept informed.

The Chair reminded members that the SWS received £105k from Schools Forum and thanked Emma for her very positive evaluation and clear report.

Helen Gration advised that Early Years providers had discussed transition to school and were keen to be involved in early childhood experience work to ensure issues were captured on transition to school. Dan advised that the SWS was working with all transition phases to improve processes, with a pilot being run with an infant school and two EY providers.

In response to a question regarding the work of the SWS in FE settings, Emma advised that the service worked with York College and school sixth forms at present. It was noted that the SWS data did not pick up internal York College data which logged other counselling referral routes. The Forum agreed that it would be helpful to combine data to provide an overall picture as well as service-specific data. The Forum further noted the challenges in gathering this, noting that it would be helpful in securing funding and allocating resources. Maxine Squire advised that this would form part of the inclusion review and joint strategic needs assessment.

*Dan Body and Emma Hughes left the meeting at 9.40am.*

## 7. **Setting the School, Early Years, High Needs and Central Services budgets for 2020/21**

Previously distributed. Richard Hartle presented the report and recommendations relating to the 2020/21 financial year. It was noted that Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding was provided to the LA by the DfE and included funding from Early Years to Y11 for both LA maintained and academy schools.

The Forum noted the 2020/21 allocations, which included a 5.3% increase in overall DSG:

	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>Increase</b>	
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>%</b>
Schools Block	98.164	103.951	5.787	5.9%
Early Years Block	10.842	11.036	0.194	1.8%
High Needs Block	19.556	21.028	1.472	7.5%
Central Schools Services Block	3.663	3.175	(0.488)	(13.3%)
	<b>132.224</b>	<b>139.189</b>	<b>6.965</b>	<b>5.3%</b>

**Overall DSG Funding** – Richard advised that the total allocation represented core funding plus historic commitments which the DfE were keen to unwind. Richard advised that a reduction of c£3m was anticipated over a period of years in the central block, with 2020/21 being the first year of reduction in funding for historic commitments. It was noted that the impact on schools could be significant, with commitments such as the School Improvement Commissioning Fund currently being funded from this block.

In response to a question regarding the reasons for the relatively small increase in the Early Years Block, Richard advised that the minimum increase possible had been applied by the DfE, with York being at the bottom-end of the recently introduced Early Years Funding Formula (EYFF). Helen Gration advised that some local research had

shown an underspend of £158k in 2018/19, which Richard advised had been carried forward and had been due to the lagged nature of DSG allocation and the timing of census information being gathered. Richard advised that the LA had been aware that £158k would be clawed-back by the DfE as funding had been based on estimated take-up. Richard further advised that all available funds had been allocated to providers. In response to the suggestion that other LAs had used local underspends to improve their hourly rate, Richard advised that these underspends may have been due to cautious budgeting, further advising that CYC did not aim to retain a contingency but allocated all funding, noting that any overpayment against the Block would be clawed-back by the DfE. Richard agreed to arrange a written summary of EY funding to provide assurance. Discussion followed, with the Forum noting the 8% fee increases likely in some EY settings from April 2020 in response to increased costs.

**Schools Block** – Richard advised that the Schools Block was allocated to schools via the Local Funding Formula (LFF), with the ESFA providing funds directly to academies. Richard proposed continuation of the LFF, mirroring the National Funding Formula (NFF) for 2020/21.

It was noted that schools would receive an average funding increase of 6% per pupil based on autumn 2019 census data which equated to 1.84% per pupil for schools on the minimum funding guarantee, rising to 10.44% in schools benefitting from their full gains under the NFF due to there being no limit on gains in 2020/21. The Forum noted that the top-up for minimum per-pupil amounts would benefit a small number of schools. Richard advised that in 2020/21 the minimum amount per primary pupil would increase to £4k.

A member raised a query regarding the minimum funding guarantees in special and PRU settings, stating that it was difficult to plan strategically when working to protect the current offer of these settings. It was noted that there was no direct information available from the DfE in relation to a minimum funding guarantee for PRUs. Maxine Squire advised that there were many unknown factors relating to SEN funding due to an ongoing national review which would bring clarity. Discussion followed, with the inadequacies inherent in the current system being stressed. Richard advised that the High Needs Block had been frozen for three years, with some increases in 2020/21 though these would not cover the current deficit. Richard outlined the plan to address this as far as possible in the interim.

In response to a question regarding the option to flex funding from the NFF, Maxine advised that the relative position was not favourable, as York was at the bottom of the funding list and had agreed that modelling the NFF was the fairest approach to the distribution of funds. The Chair stated that area cost adjustment factors were not adequate, adding that the Forum was working with the f40 group to lobby to improve funding, though this had only been partially successfully to date. Richard highlighted the lobbying successes of the f40 group over time. It was noted that both local MPs were active in raising school funding issues.

Discussion followed. The Forum noted the concerns raised by the EY representative, as EY settings were particularly impacted, though the LA was unable to address this issue locally as national funding was determined by central government.

**Richard agreed to bring an update on the work of the f40 group to next meeting.**

Further discussion followed.

Richard advised that a new methodology had been introduced to calculate the mobility factor. It was noted that this impacted a very small number of schools and was not a significant financial impact.

Richard advised that the Teachers Pay Grant which covered salary increases from 2018, and the Pensions Grant, would be continued as a separate payment for 2020/21. It was noted that these grants were not guaranteed in future years and may be moved into the NFF.

Richard advised that the Pupil Growth Fund had been reduced over the last few years from c£800k to £629k. The Forum noted that Infant Class Size Funding (ICSF) was drawn from this and helped address the impact of lagged funding on specific schools with a significant increase in pupil numbers. Richard advised that the fund had been oversubscribed and overspent in recent years and could not be continued, with the LA therefore proposing to continue to run the formulas and cash limit totals to ensure that costs did not exceed the £629k available. It was noted that the LA proposed that funding requirements in excess of £629k would be reduced pro-rata to ensure budget was not exceeded. In response to a question regarding a modelling exercise, Richard advised that it was difficult to model and predict as requirements varied from year to year. It was noted that the fund was carried forward if unspent.

The Forum discussed options, with questions being taken. Richard outlined the option to review autumn census data and trends to help give an indication of funding available at the end of the autumn term to help schools in financial planning.

**The Forum agreed to support the introduction of a cash limit on funding allocations from the pupil growth fund in order to manage the budget within a reducing funding allocation from government.**

**Early Years Block** – Richard advised that the EY Block would receive an uplift of 1.84% which would increase the current hourly rates by 8p resulting in £4.38 for three and four year-olds, and £5.28 for two year-olds. Richard advised that the increases would be passed on to providers, subject to the 5% contribution to the LA's EY service. It was noted that no contingency would be held against the EY Block. Helen Gration stated that she would raise concerns regarding poor levels of funding and the impact on parents with Maxine Squire and Amanda Hatton. It was generally agreed that EY funding was not adequate.

In response to a question regarding the financial pressure on nurseries across the city and whether any were at risk of closure, Maxine advised that the EY team had been asked to undertake a risk assessment. It was noted that the York system was not well funded but that this was not due to any decisions taken by the LA. Discussion followed, with the Forum noting that the funding of maintained nursery schools was an HM Treasury decision. Maxine advised that both local MPs had taken low funding of EY to Parliament. The Forum agreed to support future lobbying for improved EY funding. Further discussion followed.

**High Needs Block** – Richard advised of a £1.47m (7.5%) increase in funding. It was noted that, whilst this was welcome, High Needs budget remained under significant pressure, with the LA projecting an overspend of c£2m in the current financial year. It was noted that this would contribute to an estimated overall deficit DSG balance of c£2.7m against the DSG at the beginning of 2020/21.

Discussion followed, with Richard advising that a further in-year overspend was anticipated during 2020/21. It was noted that the DfE would require a recovery plan for

this deficit and that Elected Members would need to respond as the deficit level would exceed the threshold. Richard advised that he anticipated that the DfE would expect the LA to consider transferring 0.5% from the Schools Block into the High Needs Block in 2021/22. It was noted that this request would be brought to Schools Forum for discussion. Maxine advised that the Association of Directors of Children's Services was challenging the DfE on this strategy on the grounds that it was unsustainable. Further discussion followed, with the Forum noting that 0.5% would not address the overall High Needs deficit.

In response to a question regarding the inclusion review and national SEN review and the need for clarity regarding strategic planning arising from these processes, Maxine advised that the inclusion review was in its final phase but would be unlikely to deliver significant savings. Maxine further advised that the review had tried to identify cost efficiencies but that the external review element had not identified savings. Maxine outlined the significant increase in EHCPs and the increase in the number of children in care. The Forum noted the impact of parental pressure on the inclusion review process and the requirement to consult parents as stakeholders – a process that would take time. Maxine outlined the local and national factors influencing the complex picture, providing examples of models in place in other areas.

Central School Services Block – Richard advised of a £488k reduction in funding for 2020/21, with the LA proposing to reduce costs in response. It was noted that this was an LA decision but that this was being brought to the Forum for consultation.

Richard outlined two proposed savings:

- Prudential borrowing costs – removal of the as yet uncommitted budget provision for prudential borrowing against secondary basis need capital expenditure. It was noted that the LA had not drawn down this funding recently but was accessing government grant funding in the first instance, with this having been adequate to date. It was noted that the capacity to borrow may be required in the next few years and that it would be the LA's responsibility to ensure adequate school places should the government grant not be sufficient.
- Schools broadband contract – cessation of the contribution of £195k. Richard outlined the unusual nature of this contribution to a contract that was not typical of other school contracts. Richard further advised that schools would need to seek their own solutions, with some schools already looking at alternative options. It was noted that the budget retained by the Forum should be for the benefit of all schools and academies and that this was not the case now with the Broadband contract, hence the proposed reduction.

The Chair invited questions on the proposals.

The Forum noted that the requested update on the broadband contract had not been provided. In response to a question regarding the level of the current contract and likely impact on schools currently accessing broadband via the contract, it was noted that the impact was likely to mean a 50% increase in charges to schools. The Chair advised that schools had been advised week commencing 3<sup>rd</sup> February of financial impact from April 2020, with very little additional information. Discussion followed, with the Forum noting the increase in broadband costs and also in Civica purchasing system costs. The view was expressed that the failure to arrange a procurement exercise had left schools feeling forced into picking up additional costs. Further discussion followed. Forum members expressed concern regarding the lack of notice of cost increases and the option to seek alternative providers.

Further discussion followed.

**The Forum agreed that it was not in a position to approve or reject the proposal to withdraw financial support for the broadband contract given the lack of consultation time provided. The Forum was not therefore asked to make a decision regarding the broadband contract.**

**The Forum considered and agreed to remove the uncommitted budget provision for prudential borrowing.**

**The Forum noted that other existing Central School Services Block resource allocations would be continued. These were:**

- **School Admissions - £0.178m**
- **Servicing of schools Forums - £0.042m**
- **Termination of Employment Costs – £0.383m**
- **Prudential Borrowing Costs (existing commitments) - £0.312m**
- **School Copyright Licence Agreements - £0.110m**
- **Former ESG Retained Budgets - £0.370m**
- **Contribution to Combined Budgets - £1.771m**

It was noted that the School Improvement Commissioning Fund would be available during the coming financial year at current levels (£966k), with no inflationary uplift.

In response to a question regarding the £383k termination of employment costs allocation and whether this was available to maintained schools only, Richard advised that the fund represented a historic commitment dating from prior to the 2013/14 reformations and included enhanced pension costs that were ongoing. The Forum noted that occasional eligible redundancy costs were not funded from DSG.

In response to a question regarding historic budget commitments made by the Forum relating to Children Looked After and the Safeguarding Advisor, and why these had not been considered for some time, Richard advised that these aspects would be considered by default as DSG reductions were implemented in future years. The Chair requested discussion of priorities and potential saving areas at the September Forum meeting. Agenda for September.

John Thompson advised that he had reported to the Forum on the work of the School Safeguarding Advisor at a previous meeting but could repeat this exercise as the role was very wide ranging.

In response to a question regarding the cost of consultations and of servicing of Schools Forum, Richard advised that the LA was obliged to take some consultations to schools but that this varied from year to year. It was noted that introduction of the new National Funding Formula had included a significant consultation exercise.

The Chair thanked Richard for his report.

## **8. York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB) allocation of School Causing Concern funding 2019/20 update**

Previously distributed. John Thompson presented the report, advising that the YSAB had met to consider funding requests and had agreed distributions which were included in the report. It was noted that some YSAB members were also members of the Schools Forum and were woven into the fabric of activity. John outlined his role in facilitating meetings and producing progress reports and monitoring. John advised of the significant levels of scrutiny applied to the process, with this historically robust but

now further refined. It was noted that Ofsted inspections had taken place at some schools supported by YSAB and, though this support had not been reflected in the reports, feedback to governing boards was that Ofsted was very interested in the approach being taken in York.

It was noted that the next YSAB meeting would take place in March, with an April meeting to consider the risk assessment of Outstanding schools. John Tomsett congratulated Vale of York Academy on its recent inspection outcome, advising that current Outstanding judgements would be under scrutiny as Ofsted had indicated a desire to rebalance Good and Outstanding school judgements. It was noted that attendance remained a challenge and that secondary attendance would be supported by the School Improvement fund going forward.

In response to a question regarding attendance rates and PA rates, it was noted that trends in secondary schools showed an increase in both levels of absence, with York attendance data moving below the national average and showing a significant dip in 2018/19. In response to a question regarding the impact of secondary curriculum reform, Maxine advised that pupil voice would be considered as part of an attendance project, with the need to target the PA group to ensure an understanding of barriers to attendance.

Discussion followed, with the Forum noting an overall increase in PA. Maxine advised of the need to undertake detailed analysis to identify trends over time. Members reported that some parents were seeking medical grounds to keep children off school or to request home tuition. The impact of holidays in term time was also noted.

The Forum noted that attendance patterns were identified in EY settings, with Maxine stating that she was keen to identify trends to enable early intervention and that a multi-agency approach was required to encourage good attendance.

The update was noted.

## **9. Inclusion Review update**

Maxine Squire advised that a full update would be provided to the secondary headteachers' forum on 7<sup>th</sup> February. It was noted that an external review conducted by Impower had concluded, with headlines shared at Director's briefings. Maxine advised that Impower had considered how cost-effective the current system was, concluding that this was currently as cost-effective as it could be but was subject to increasing pressure. Maxine advised that this pressure came from a number of factors including a growth in pupil numbers, the extension of the age range supported to 25 and parental expectations and concerns about mainstream provision meeting need. The LA was revisiting the way bandings were being used to ensure that the graduated response was working effectively. It was noted that bandings were sometimes being regarded as thresholds by parents and providers seeking to access the maximum resource by making need fit to the threshold rather than delivering the graduated response. It was noted that the LA was seeking to use banding documents to support the accurate assessment of need and to divorce them from resourcing criteria. It was noted that some complex needs did not equate to a set amount of cost. Maxine advised that parents liked Enhanced Resource Provision (ERPs) and preferred for their children's needs to be met in mainstream schools with an ERP. It was noted that there was some strong ERP in the city although there was still work to do to ensure that transition between settings and phases was improved. Maxine outlined the process required to review systems and analyse need to inform future ERP planning. It was noted that one-to-one provision was very expensive and the LA was keen to

ensure provision was reflective of actual long-term need. The Forum noted the challenges in other LAs and recent Local Government Ombudsman review outcomes which indicated the need to review practice now. Maxine outlined the weaknesses in the EHCP assessment system against a background of increased requests for assessment which were coming from both providers and parents.

*John Tomsett left the meeting at 11.48am.*

In response to a question regarding the timeline for conclusion of the review, Maxine advised that provision would need to be agreed for the next academic year, including the number of ERPs, what these would offer and what needs would be met. Maxine advised that a SEN improvement board with input from education and skills, and health and social care (including input from the CCG) would oversee this process. Maxine highlighted the current overreliance on education funding, advising of the need to begin discussion regarding partnership planning to address need. It was noted that the May Forum meeting would be provided with a further update.

In response to a question regarding the alternatives to placing some children outside York, Maxine advised that these options may offer best value when seeking provision for complex need. Maxine reiterated the need to map provision and keep children in the city where possible, though there may be options that offered better value through access specialist support elsewhere.

The update was noted.

#### **10. Schools Forum forward plan**

Richard Hartle outlined the forward plan:

##### **May 2020**

- Inclusion review
- F40 update
- Contract review
- 14-19 provision
- LMS scheme – revisions (subject to DfE consultation)

##### **July 2020**

- DSG outturn 2019/20
- Maintained school balances as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020

##### **September 2020**

- Priorities and potential saving areas

#### **14. Any Other Business**

The Chair advised that Lorna Savage was attending her last Forum meeting, thanking her for her contribution and wishing her well.

The Chair advised that Tricia Head was attending her last Forum meeting, thanking her for her contribution as both a member and Vice-Chair, and wishing her well.

The retiring members were warmly applauded.

#### **15. Date and time of next meeting**

York Schools Forum Meeting – 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020

The next meeting would take place on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020 at 9.00am.

The meeting closed at 11.55pm.