

CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Schools Forum held on Friday 5th July 2019 at 9.00am

Attendance list:

Members:

Trevor Burton	Academy Representative and Chair
Adam Booker	Special School Representative
Brian Crosby	Academy Representative
Andrew Daly	Academy Representative
Debbie Glover	Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative
Di Gomery	Maintained Secondary Governor Representative
Helen Gratton	Early Years Sector Representative
Dee Patton-Statham	Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative (VA)
Lee Probert	FE Representative
Lorna Savage	Academy Representative
John Tomsett	Maintained Secondary Representative

Observers / Advisors:

Cllr Ian Cuthbertson	Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education
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

1. Welcome

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

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Amanda Hatton – Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities, City of York Council, Tricia Head – Pupil Referral Unit Representative, Richard Ludlow – Academy Representative and Jenny Rogers – Maintained Primary Representative. Claire Rigden – Maintained Nursery Representative was absent from the meeting.

3. Membership update

Previously distributed. The update was noted.

The Chair advised that South Bank Multi Academy Trust had agreed to nominate him for a further term and that he would therefore continue as a representative on the Forum when his current term of office ended in September.

It was noted that conversion of the York Catholic schools to join the newly formed St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Academies Trust (SMCCAT) was likely to require a change to membership, though this would need to be confirmed following the conversions. It was noted that the SMCCAT would be invited to appoint a representative once the revision to membership of the Forum had been confirmed.

Helen Gratton advised that she would be taking a period of maternity leave and would send a deputy during this time.

In response to a question regarding the implications of conversion of the PRU, Salli Radford advised that Tricia Head would remain a member as Alternative Provision academies occupied a separate category within the Forum.

4. Minutes of the York Schools Forum meeting of 9th May 2019

Previously distributed. The minutes of the meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

5. Action Plan and Matters Arising

Previously distributed. With reference to the action plan:

Point 1 – Completed. Update to be taken under item 9.

Point 2 – The Chair advised that the Forum had received information on the Broadband contract at the last meeting and had requested further engagement with schools. It was noted that there had been no engagement with secondary schools and that some schools were therefore considering other providers. It was noted that a paper had been taken to the Headteachers' Briefing but that no estimated costs had been made available.

Point 3 – The FAQ information was ready for circulation but had not been provided for circulation following the meeting. This would be carried forward and actioned.

Point 4 – Completed. John Tomsett had agreed to fill the final vacancy on the Forum.

All other actions from the academic year had been completed.

Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

6. Schools outturn balances

Previously distributed. Richard Hartle presented the report, which included detail of uncommitted school revenue reserves above the permitted thresholds of 5% (secondary) and 8% (primary). Richard advised of the option to claw back uncommitted funds above the thresholds to the Forum for reallocation. It was noted that three primary schools were in this position; detail could be found in Annex 5. Richard advised that the LA was not recommending clawback in recognition of the current budget position and as future funding was unknown. It was noted that small schools would be disadvantaged by the new Funding Formula and that the LA therefore recognised the cautious approach to budgeting.

Richard referred to Annex 2, recommending caution when comparing local data with national figures as this was historical data and was therefore limited in its usefulness.

The Forum agreed that qualifying funds should not be clawed back.

The Forum considered data provided by the LA, noting that reserves were broadly in-line with national levels. The Forum discussed concerns regarding the increase in pension contributions from schools, with Richard suggesting that there would be some central funding to support the recent 2% national pay award in-line with existing central government commitment.

In response to a question regarding the timing of the 2019 pay award announcement, Maxine Squire advised that this was expected to be late but that HR were keeping watch.

Lee Probert provided an outline of the role of the pensions board, further advising engagement with unions as they carry influence on this consultative group. Lee highlighted the prioritisation of equal pension rights following a legal challenge on sex discrimination grounds.

The report was noted.

7. DSG outturn report

Previously distributed. Richard Hartle presented the report, advising of the overall position against DSG allocation at the 2018/19 financial year-end. The Forum noted the report which was taken by funding Block, with detail provided in the circulated charts:

- Schools
- Central Services
- Early Years
- High Needs

Schools Block:

The Forum noted that the Schools Block was subject to significant variation due to central government reconciliation of funding following school conversions to academy status.

Richard advised that the 2017/18 £264k balance shown as carried forward into 2018/19 related to funding allocated by the Forum for the academic year and balanced at the year end.

Central Services Block:

Richard advised that this block included funding to support historic spending commitments; c£3M committed during 2018/19 including the School Improvement Commissioning Fund. It was noted that central government wished to remove this funding, with it anticipated to cease from 2020/21. It was noted that £600k was received by the LA for statutory services.

Richard advised that there had been some underspends against Central Services, including prudential borrowing provisions, though the funding would be used in future due to a need for capital expenditure. It was noted that £281k had been carried forward into 2019/20.

Early Years Block:

Richard advised that funding had been adjusted during the year but that payments were lagged. The Forum noted a surplus of £158k at the 2018/19 year end but that it was expected that the adjustment would remove this.

High Needs Block:

Richard advised of significant pressures on the High Needs Block due to increases in expenditure against budget. It was noted that this was partially offset by a surplus carried forward from the previous year but that a £1.3M deficit would now be carried forward into 2019/20. Richard expressed concern as the LA was no longer permitted to balance an overspend against under-spends in other blocks. It was noted that an

in-year overspend of £1.5M was anticipated during the current year making the current funding model unsustainable. It was further noted that the inclusion review was intended to help address this issue, with Richard advising that central government preparation for the comprehensive spending review indicated that the issues were being recognised.

Richard advised that the current level of deficit would trigger interest from the DfE as the carry-forward deficit was above 1% of funding.

In response to a question regarding pressures on the High Needs Block, Richard advised that paragraph 11 onwards provided detail, with there being significant pressures around alternative provision and therefore significant increases in expenditure. It was noted that costs included transport costs and post-16 provision, with increases in part being due to changes to SEND provision including the extension to age 25.

John Thompson and Maxine Squire outlined the legal complexities around funding applicable to this group of young people.

The Forum noted the increase in identified SEND children in Early Years settings as well as at post-16 level.

In response to a question regarding responsibility for the DSG deficit, Richard advised that this sat with the LA and that it was currently unknown how this would be addressed. It was noted that a significant number of local authorities were in a deficit position, with some currently unable to fund statutory SEND duties due to the impact on their existing deficit.

Discussion followed, with Maxine outlining central government options to address pressure on the care system across both children's and adult's services as the extension of provision had not been accompanied by additional funding and was unsustainable. Richard outlined options.

Further discussion followed. The Chair requested a regular update to the Forum on the High Needs funding position.

In response to a question regarding the option to lobby MPs regarding High Needs funding, Maxine advised that the LA was in contact with the York Central MP who had raised questions in parliament. It was noted that the York Outer MP was also supportive and had made representations. Maxine advised that both MPs had signed the f40 group letter and were actively supporting the f40 campaign.

The Forum asked the Chair to write to Damian Hinds to express the concerns regarding High Needs funding.

Cllr Cuthbertson recommended contact with the appropriate civil service team to influence policy as asking for increased funding had traditionally been pushed back. The Forum broadly agreed with this strategy. Maxine advised that recent independent research by IMPOWER had shown that CYC was the most efficient LA in terms of High Needs expenditure, with this research therefore supporting the view that current funding was inadequate as CYC was encountering pressure on the High Needs block, adding that this could be used as a strong position from which to argue.

Further discussion followed, highlighting the need to publicise the LA's strategy to engage parental support.

Richard advised of the need to remain focussed on the impact of restricted funding on school and Early Years settings as this was not reflected in LA high-level budget analysis.

8. School Improvement Commissioning Fund update

Previously distributed. John Thompson presented the update, advising that fund for 2019/20 stood at £411k with £55k carried-forward from 2018/19. This did not include existing funding commitments to the Wellbeing Worker project and the Pathfinder TSA CPD contribution.

It was noted that an update paper had been taken to the last Forum meeting and that the YSAB was working with the Research School to ensure value from all projects.

John referred Forum members to page 2 of the report, highlighting the proposed principles which were designed to ensure transparent accountability. John advised that an evidence-informed approach was required to underpin bids to the SICF. It was noted that the future of funding was uncertain and that the Forum therefore needed to ensure careful allocation and welcome scrutiny.

In response to a question regarding links to school improvement priorities, John advised that a list of priorities was included in the draft Working with Schools Protocol going to schools for consultation on 8th July. It was noted that these priorities would form the focus for the year.

In response to a question regarding Pupil Premium (PP) strategy and the lack of evidenced impact, Maxine Squire advised that the reasons underpinning outcomes within the PP cohort were not rooted in education but in multiple adverse childhood experiences. Maxine advised that the impact of these experiences could not be mitigated by quality teaching as progress was also dependent on attendance and other factors, with a range of barriers to engagement preventing progress. Maxine advised of the need for a multi-agency / multi-disciplinary approach.

Further discussion followed. John advised that the PP cohort represented one sixth of the total size of the school population but that the group had disproportionately poor outcomes in terms of post-16 destination data, with one third of the PP cohort falling into this category. The Forum discussed this issue, noting that schools were judged on PP progress despite limitations in their ability to influence limiting factors. Further discussion followed.

Returning to the update, John advised that an event for participating projects to support report writing had been successful and all reports had been received. John would report to the YSAB on 15th July.

John advised that the Reading for Real pilot project, using a package based on research evidence, was going well, with a positive impact on behaviour, speech and language recorded.

John advised that the PA attendance project being run by Pathfinder MAT was showing impact, with a 5% net increase in attendance during the 15 week period to date. It was noted that further analysis was to be done. Andrew Daly advised that the project focussed on small groups and was proving positive. The Forum noted the link between attendance and progress. John advised that two secondary schools were receiving support with attendance; addressing issue with vulnerable pupils and with attendance at upper KS4.

It was noted that the Maths Partnership Network was taking time to gather evidence but that this was in progress.

John advised that the South Bank MAT had experienced a change of leadership in one school, with this making evaluation more challenging. John advised that projects required the support of senior leadership and fidelity of evaluation strategies in order to provide real evidence. The Forum noted that a lack of coordination was evident in this project.

John outlined a range of options for further projects:

Social mobility project: This project was being lead by Rob Newton, whose post was currently being funded by the LA. It was noted that the project would require funding to take its work forward. John advised that Rob had engaged schools and Early Years providers and that the plan was well-developed and evidence-informed, with the YSAB unanimous in supporting its intentions. John advised that the YSAB was keen to roll out the project if positive impact was evidenced. The Forum noted the cost of £93k during the first year and the YSAB recommendation of a commitment of £100k to support preparation for roll out.

SEND: John advised that work was being done to identify school-level issues to enable development of a programme to improve SEND provision. It was noted that Pathfinder TSA was supporting a secondary school and some primary schools to join the programme in the autumn term. It was noted that financial information would be included in future updates.

Curriculum review and renewal: Maxine Squire advised that work was being done at regional level to drive curriculum review, with the recommendation of a programme to be taken to the YSAB.

Primary reading and writing / existing projects: It was noted that existing projects would continue into autumn, with a paper to go to YSAB and to the Directors Briefing. It was noted that schools would be invited to take part and that the YSAB would scrutinise proposals. An early September dissemination event was planned.

In response to a question regarding the SEND project which was not focussed directly on education but on the leadership and management of SEND strategy, John outlined the progress made to date and the need to begin peer reviews to support improved training. The Forum noted the limitations of the project to date with this focussed on classroom approaches.

John advised that the YSAB would begin to identify trends and urge schools to join projects that were delivering positive outcomes.

In response to a question regarding the social mobility project, the timeframes required to bring positive impact and how use of the proposed £100k investment would be evaluated, discussion followed, with Forum members expressing support for the project which was using an approach which included health colleagues, children's social care, the Local Area Teams and other agencies. Maxine advised that this lined with the DfE focus on parental engagement. The Chair requested a presentation from Rob Newton at the next Forum meeting. John advised that the project had a clear focus on early oracy and on speech and language. John undertook to circulate project plans with the minutes, advising that the project was transparent and keen to share success criteria and other evaluation information.

John advised that information on funded projects would be shared via York Education. John Tomsett advised that he chaired the YSAB and was confident that projects were appropriate, though it was recognised that projects needed to be publicly accountable.

Further discussion followed. Helen Gration advised that the Early Years Ofsted inspection framework would change in September and that this would need to remain a focus and to be included in future investment. Helen urged the involvement of Early Years settings in projects such as Reading for Real to maximise benefits. Maxine advised that Ebor Academy Trust offered training to Early Years settings.

The Forum was reminded of the position a year previously when was funding allocated to schools without clear expectations, noting that the current system was much improved and was beginning to evidence impact. Maxine outlined the purpose of the pilots and wider involvement of other agencies, advising of the time that it would take to bring impact.

Further discussion followed, with Forum members noting the opportunity to apply for additional funding once evidence of impact was available; e.g. the Education Endowment Fund.

The recommendations for deployment of funds for 2019/20 were unanimously approved:

- **Social Mobility Project - £100k**
- **SEND – secondary schools and a cohort of primary schools to be supported through development of a challenge and review process through Whole School SEND**
- **SEND – progress of the Pathfinder project and feedback from schools on the potential for engaging with alternative approaches to be reviewed in order to inform the development of a SEND related DPC offer to improve classroom practice**
- **Curriculum review and renewal – a programme supporting a “Year of the Curriculum” in York would be supported**
- **Primary reading - £27.3k to support seven schools**
- **Primary reading and writing - £2.4k per school to extend support for writing**
- **Existing projects – extensions to be invited as appropriate, to be submitted by 27th September 2019**
- **New proposals – to be submitted by 27th September 2019**

The meeting adjourned from 10.40am to 10.50am.

Brian Crosby left the meeting at 10.50am.

9 Inclusion review update

Previously distributed. Maxine Squire presented the update, advising that it was very difficult to assess the group within the review as definitions changed according to setting and context. Maxine advised that the Children and Families Act was very complex and that the processes underpinned by this legislation presented an added layer of complexity.

It was noted that the Inclusion Review covered provision for children and young people with SEND and those accessing alternative provision and was therefore very complex as identifying which groups were covered was a key aspect. Maxine advised that High Needs Block funding was included in this complex analysis, advising that

alternative provision access may be funded by the High Needs Block but not be related to SEND. It was noted that this analysis had taken time.

Maxine advised that some areas of spend had been exposed as unusual, including transport which was a significant budget commitment. It was noted that the transport budget for alternative provision was currently £400k, having doubled since 2018/19.

It was noted that there were 240 on roll at Danesgate including the 2018/19 Y11 cohort, many of whom had complex needs requiring high levels of personalisation and were drawing on High Needs funding. Maxine advised of the need to consider the impact of systems change as existing pathways could not be switched off but would require a transition period to be built in to the development of alternative solutions.

Maxine advised that it had been the intention of the Children and Families Act that the majority of SEND children would be in mainstream provision but that this had not been delivered as the growth in numbers of children with complex physical and learning needs had not been fully anticipated. Maxine advised that this was partly due to advances in medical science which had changed the nature of demand on the system and would continue for the full life course of children in the system.

Maxine advised that the parents of children in mainstream education were becoming more demanding as the Children and Families Act had increased expectation. It was noted that delivery of the expectations had not however been adequately funded.

Maxine advised that competing demands and influences resulted in a complex picture and that options would need to be considered. It was noted that it was likely that multiple solutions would be required to address need and that some children would have needs that cannot be met by mainstream education. Maxine advised that the post-19 local offer included some options to address need within the city, there had been a reduction in the numbers of young people accessing alternative provision outside the city; however this remained a significant issue. Maxine advised that strong local providers had increased options to young people but that there was an issue around the availability of placements with accommodation as there were limited opportunities for young people to live more independently in a structured environment. It was noted that the education offer provided significant security for families and that work would be required with adult social care to enable stronger preparations for adult life.

Maxine outlined some of the York ERP and Special School satellite provision which was not available in other local authority areas. Adam Booker advised that the York offer was exemplary, with the satellite collaboration a valuable resource. Adam further advised of the need to think through the consequences of creative solutions in challenging systems and processes.

Maxine advised that the cost of provision outside mainstream education increased significantly and that central government was considering this through a Call for Evidence as the intention of the Children and Families Act had not been delivered

Maxine advised that the SEND cohort in mainstream schools was currently difficult to manage, with the most common reason for exclusions, both nationally and locally, being persistent disruptive behaviour. Maxine advised that work with the Behaviour and Attendance Partnership highlighted non-compliant behaviours as an issue, adding that it was challenging to manage the impact of this behaviour on staff and other pupils but that pupils were safer in school than elsewhere.

Discussion followed. It was noted that the KS3 and KS4 Kestrel model had been highlighted as a valuable resource to support reduced time in mainstream school. Maxine advised that Kestrel provision was adding to costs due to transport but that this could be considered. It was noted that one-to-one provision was also expensive and not supportive of long-term improved behaviour.

In response to a question regarding the number of children with complex needs and the link to the increase in exclusions, Maxine advised that a small number of pupils with an EHCP had been excluded, with 800 pupils with an EHCP in the city at present though this number was rising. Maxine advised of the need to understand what had prompted an EHCP and that a pupil was more likely to be excluded if in receipt of SEND support. It was noted that identification of SEND was determined by schools and varied across the city. Maxine advised of a loss of parental confidence nationally in the ability of schools to meet need, with this prompting parents to look to alternatives. Maxine further advised of the growth in autism and SEMH, with SEMH having broad indicators including behavioural issues that may not be linked to SEND. Maxine advised that there was currently an unhealthy narrative both nationally and locally around mental health, with a tendency to over-medicalise issues. Maxine highlighted the need to identify adverse childhood experiences such as domestic violence, bereavement, drugs and alcohol as these had all been seen in cases taken to the BAP but had not been addressed with support via early intervention. It was noted that great teaching was not enough in these cases.

In response to a question regarding the Special School roll and appropriateness of placements, Adam outlined the role of parental power in terms of the provision of the Children and Families Act. The Forum noted the need to get better at pushing back to ensure children were placed in the most appropriate provision. Maxine outlined the approach taken in some areas to challenge requests including being prepared to go to a Tribunal to establish a wider evidence base and to illustrate issues. Maxine advised that she would arrange for a SEND legal briefing for schools and LA officers to develop understanding of the legal frameworks governing SEND.

Discussion followed. The Forum noted that there would need to be a transition period which would impact on DSG funding once the review had completed.

Maxine advised that some local authorities did not fund Alternative Provision and that schools were asked to go to the market as statutory provision was cut back. It was noted that York was keen to look at multiple ways to deliver Alternative Provision, including Danesgate, but with other local options to reduce transport costs to Kestrel provision. It was noted that there was expertise in the system that needed to be identified and fully enabled in a revised system.

Feedback was invited.

The Chair stated that reform of the BAP was welcome, outlining a significant number of parental requests driving BAP referrals for managed moves. It was noted that the newly appointed School Inclusion Advisor would help. Discussion followed. The Chair suggested that the BAP develop a more effective evaluation process to assess the success of managed moves and other actions. It was noted that secondary headteachers would consider this together at the September secondary heads group which Andrew Daly would arrange.

Further discussion followed. Lorna Savage shared a number of points provided by Tricia Head, advising that some points had not yet been discussed by secondary heads. It was noted that Danesgate had areas of strength but that the LA would need

to ensure that what was good in the current system was not lost and that changes represented an improvement.

The Chair sought the view of primary representatives, with the point being made that Alternative Provision would be better if offered on a more geographical model as this would reduce transport costs.

Helen Gration advised that support for Early Years would help reduce the number of issues throughout the system, advising that she was working with Danesgate on some case studies to track back to the identification of issues. Maxine would include this information in the Call for Evidence.

It was noted that some other agencies referred pupils to Danesgate, including GPs, social workers and CAMHS and that it was necessary to have a clearer admissions process to prevent misuse of resources.

Discussion followed, focussing on attendance as an indicator of future outcomes and the lack of understanding of this by other agencies. Maxine advised that she was keen to focus more resources on attendance with support from other teams.

It was noted that the designation of Danesgate remained an issue and that Tricia Head was keen to establish three routes into the setting, rather than the current PRU route.

It was noted that a paper would be taken to the Council's Executive in November, with feedback on the Inclusion Review required by the end of September to allow financial planning. The Chair thanked Maxine for the work on the review and wished all involved well with the final stages.

10. Schools Forum forward plan

Richard Hartle outlined the forward plan:

September 2019

- Maintained school start budgets 2019/20
- Initial 2020/21 budget paper
- LMS Scheme revisions (provisional)
- Impact of Schools Causing Concern funding
- Presentation by Rob Newton on the social mobility project

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date and time of next meeting

Previously distributed. Meeting dates for 2019/20 were noted. The next meeting would take place on 26th September 2019 at 9.00am.

The meeting closed at 12.00pm.