

# CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

## Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on Wednesday 10th May 2023 at 8.00am at West Offices

### Present:

Dave Hewitt (Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representative) Chair, Adam Booker (Special School Representative), Gail Brown (Academy Representative) Steve Lewis (Academy Representative), Chris Nichols (Pupil Referral Unit Representative), Lee Probert (16-19 representative), Carolyn Ray *deputising for* Andrew Daly (Academy Representative), Claire Rigden (Maintained Nursery Headteacher Representative (VC), Tracey Roberts (Early Years Sector Representative)

### In attendance:

Cllr Andrew Waller (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education), Martin Kelly (Corporate Director, Children and Education, CYC), Maxine Squire (Assistant Director, Education and Skills, CYC), Richard Hartle (Head of Finance, CYC), Rob Newton (Social Mobility Project Manager, CYC) and Barbara Kybett (Governance Advisor, CYC, Coordinator and Clerk)

### 1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mark Hassack (Academy Representative), Jo Olsen (Maintained Secondary Governor Representative), Jenny Rogers (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), James Rourke (Maintained

Primary Headteacher Representative), Dee Statham (Academy Representative) and Helen Winn (Academy Representative).

### **3. Membership update**

Previously distributed. It was noted that the terms of office for Andrew Daly and Steve Lewis (Academy Representatives) had been renewed.

### **4. Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

Previously distributed. The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record and were duly noted as approved.

### **5. Matters Arising not on the agenda**

There were no outstanding action points to report.

### **6. Early Talk for York – update and business case.**

Previously distributed.

Rob Newton presented a business case for the Early Talk for York programme. He reminded Forum members that speech, language and communication skills in a child's early years were closely linked with good outcomes in later life and reported that there was now evidence to demonstrate that Early Talk for York had been successful in improving outcomes, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Rob highlighted the link between speech, language and communication needs and Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs which were a focus area for the city.

Rob shared data showing communication and language outcomes for Early Years pupils which demonstrated that the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils who had accessed the Early Talk for York programme were now better than the national average for disadvantaged pupils. He shared similar data for pupils with SEND demonstrating that the programme had continued to improve outcomes.

Rob reported that most Early Years settings in the city were now using the Wellcomm Toolkit, which had been provided through Early Talk for York. Data from the use of the toolkit had been collated in January 2023. Rob highlighted the proportion of children, over 40%, aged two to five years who were below expected developmental levels, which was evidence of the significant need across the city.

Rob summarised how Early Talk for York had delivered on local priorities, including outcomes for disadvantaged children, and early identification and preventative action in relation to SEND.

*Cllr Waller joined the meeting at 8.10am.*

Rob advised that the programme had received commendation from external bodies, including Ofsted and CQC, during inspections of other organisations. The programme had also attracted interest from other local authorities, the Sutton Trust and the Education Endowment Foundation, amongst others. It had been shortlisted for an MJ award.

Rob expressed his enthusiasm for and commitment to the continuation of the programme and advised that the cost would be c£100k per annum. This included commissioned speech and language therapists based at York Hospital. Rob sought a commitment from Schools Forum of three years' funding to allow the programme to expand with confidence.

Maxine Squire reported that funding for the programme had been discussed at a meeting of the York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB), where it had been agreed that it should be a priority for the city, with a commitment to funding over the longer term. This would ensure that the programme was sustainable and would impact children beyond their early years.

A question was raised about work with children under two years of age, who had fallen behind due to the impact of the pandemic on the development of speech and language.

*Claire Rigden joined the meeting at 8.14am.*

Maxine underlined the link between the development of speech and language and SEMH needs, noting that the city had historically had a large gap between the outcomes of disadvantaged children and their non-disadvantaged peers, which it had struggled to close. Early Talk for York had been successful in closing this gap, but its long term success would not be evident until Key Stage 1 data was available. It was important to commit to longer term study of the impact of Early Talk for York, which would inform what support was needed in future for these children and their parents or carers.

*Lee Probert joined the meeting at 8.16am.*

Martin Kelly observed that longer term interventions were key to improving school attendance and to reducing the number of suspensions and permanent exclusions. Maxine agreed and shared further reflections on the need for long term commitment to programmes which had demonstrable evidence of success. There was further discussion on the positive impact of Early Talk for York and whether the funding sought was in fact sufficient for future years. Rob advised that the funding was sufficient but, as always, more could be achieved with a higher level of commitment.

It was noted that engagement in Early Talk for York was likely to be stronger if all settings were made aware of the impact. There was some discussion on the most effective way to communicate the success of the programme, on possible income streams for funding it in the future, and on further avenues for its delivery, such as providing training for post-16 childcare students.

Maxine reported that YSAB had recommended that centrally retained funding should be used to provide £100k for the programme in 2023/34, during which time further consideration would be given on how the funding would be sourced over the longer term.

Members of Schools Forum agreed to fund the Early Talk for York programme for 2023/24.

The Forum thanked Rob Newton and he left the meeting at 8.33am.

## **7. Reports from Task and Finish groups for SEN banding and Alternative Provision**

Previously distributed

Maxine reported that the Alternative Provision (AP) task and finish group had met several times in February and March 2023 and had considered the following:

- the current provision, how it was being used and who for
- consistent thresholds for the use of AP across schools
- identification of any sufficiency gaps
- how much was currently spent on AP and what outcomes were being delivered
- who should fund AP - school and Local Authority commissioned provision
- the Danesgate Outreach service – who was it for and how would it be funded in the future.

Maxine highlighted that AP was now an element of the Ofsted inspection framework and was also part of inspections of Local Authorities in areas such as SEND. The new SEND inspections included challenging deep dives into AP. Maxine reported that Danesgate was the only registered provider of AP in the city. The Local Authority had produced a directory of AP and had established a robust programme of quality assurance. It was noted that there was a reluctance amongst AP providers to register and there was a risk that the broad range now available would be reduced if registration was mandatory.

Maxine advised that the task and finish group had considered key questions around the use of AP, including routes for pupils back into mainstream education. She noted that AP was now being used by both the primary and secondary sector, with the growth particularly in the primary age group, and advised that the group had considered whether mainstream settings were ensuring that their offer was appropriate before accessing AP.

There was further discussion on the target group for AP. Maxine commented that the majority of pupils attending Danesgate had SEND and this therefore might not be an appropriate setting for them. She referred to the challenging pupil behaviour being experienced by secondary schools and the existence of a further group of pupils with very complex needs, for which the current AP was not the solution. The cost of out of city full time provision for these young people was prohibitive and their families wished them to be educated closer to home.

Maxine summarised the recommendations from the task and finish group which were detailed in the paper:

- the development of an AP strategy for the local area
- the collation of information on the direct commissioning of AP by schools
- the development of an enhanced specialist provision for complex high needs, linked to Applefields School; case studies would be created from the pilot due to begin in June 2023
- the development of additional vocational Key Stage 4 provision at York College and Askham Bryan College, although this was contingent on sufficient numbers to form a viable cohort
- the use of £1.4m of SEND capital plan funding to support additional AP places for primary and secondary pupils.

There was discussion on the level of need across the mainstream sector and the propensity to use AP as a “safety valve”, rather than a considered strategy to meet the needs of pupils.

Maxine summarised the next steps:

- the publication of an AP strategy for September 2023
- the pilot provision for pupils with complex high needs, to begin in June 2023
- the identification of a cohort of Year 9 students who would benefit from a partnership with York College to start from Sept 2024
- additional Kestrel places
- the development of an SEMH outreach service.

Chris Nichols agreed that a review of the Kestrel provision was needed as it was being used primarily for pupils with SEND which was not its purpose. Maxine agreed that the model of AP provided by Kestrel and by the outreach service was in need of review.

Questions and comments were invited.

In response to a suggestion that a more extensive review of provision might be needed, Maxine noted that education for children and young people was determined by statutory frameworks, but she agreed that AP should focus on outcomes which would enable young people to progress, and should be different from the mainstream environment in which the pupil had struggled. There was further discussion on the complexities involved in addressing the issues and the challenges faced by mainstream schools.

Lee Probert commented that he was interested in sourcing funding for physical space for an AP at York College.

Members of Schools Forum supported the recommendations from the Alternative Provision task and finish group.

Moving to her paper on the work of the SEND Banding task and finish group, Maxine advised that the aim was to make the current approach to SEND banding more transparent and effective. The task and finish group had discussed:

- reviewing the current use of element 3 funding
- considering the use of banding to support inclusion in mainstream
- how the allocation and use of top up funding could be made more consistent and transparent
- place and top up funding in specialist schools and settings.

Maxine reported that the group had considered models from other areas, and she referred to the one which had been previously distributed. She summarised the group's recommendations which included:

- a small scale project using the model shared with the Forum
- support for SENDCos in arranging interventions
- the city's published guidance for SEND provision to be re-drafted for September 2023 based on an example from another Local Authority; Maxine reported that the SEND parent/carer forum would be involved in the re-drafting; the guidance would be presented to YSAB in July and also to elected members and would include sections relating to Early Years and Post-16
- a School Inclusion Fund to be put in place to support extra interventions with pupils, before, and if possible to avoid, the statutory assessment route
- an SEN capital fund to support inclusion in mainstream to be put in place

- new guidance about Local Authority advisory panels for statutory assessment and resource allocation to be published and shared with stakeholders to increase transparency.
- the Local Authority to work with the specialist settings to review the current special school banding framework and to establish a clear place-based framework; this would allow the specialist settings to have greater clarity around budget management.

Tracey Roberts noted the importance of SEND funding for Early Years settings, which had been reduced. Maxine agreed that this would be part of the review in terms of early intervention.

*Andrew Waller and Martin Kelly left the meeting at 9.23am.*

Maxine suggested that the proposed provision maps could also be used in Early Years settings. She would give the matter further consideration.

## **8. Local Area SEND Partnership Operational Plan 2023-25**

Previously distributed

Maxine advised the plan, which had been circulated for information, had been a requirement of the latest SEND inspection. She tabled the latest version, noting that it had been a collaborative document. The plan detailed how the SEND strategy would be delivered from 2023-2025.

Maxine also advised that Schools Forum itself could be inspected under the local area SEND inspection, which would focus on the lived experience of pupils with SEND and their families.

Maxine highlighted the main changes from the previously circulated plan and Schools Forum members were invited to share any feedback.

## **9. Schools Forum forward plan**

- DSG outturn and maintained schools' balances 2022/23

- Safety valve report
- AP strategy and update on SEND
- Update on the School Improvement Commissioning Fund

#### **10. Any other agreed business**

There was no other business.

#### **11. Dates and time of meetings during the current academic year:**

- 12th July 2023

All meetings were scheduled to start 8am in West Offices.

The meeting closed at 9.33am.

APPROVED