

Minutes of Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum, held at Queen's Park High School, Chester, on 10 February 2020 subject to approval at the 7 July 2020 meeting

Members	Representing	Attendance
Schools and Academies		
Alan Brown	Primary headteachers	Attended
Julie Chambers	Primary headteachers	Apologies
Sarah Curtis	Primary headteachers	Attended
Ian Devereux Roberts	Primary headteachers	Attended
Kate Docherty (Chair)	Primary headteachers	Attended
Duncan Haworth	Primary governors	Apologies
Helen Hill	Primary governors	Attended
Paul Healey	Primary governors	Attended
Kath Lloyd	Primary governors	Attended
David Nield	Primary governors	Attended
David Curry	Secondary headteachers	Attended
Mike Holland	Secondary headteachers	Attended
John Freeman	Secondary governors	Apologies
David Rowlands	Secondary governors	Attended
Mike McCann	Special headteachers	Apologies
Jane Hughes	Special headteachers	Substitute
Phil Hopwood	Special governors	Apologies
Katie Tyrrie	Nursery headteachers	Attended
Andy Stewart	PRU	Attended
Luci Jones	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Jason Lowe	Academies - mainstream	Absent
Chris Priddey	Academies - mainstream	Substitute
Helen Studley	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Lyndsay Watterson	Academies - mainstream	Attended
Vacancy	Academies - mainstream	Vacancy
Vacancy	Academies - mainstream	Vacancy
Marie Allen	Academies - special	Apologies
Non Schools		
Paula Adolph	PVI early years providers	Absent
Sue Anderson	PVI early years providers	Attended
Kathryn Magiera	Diocese	Absent
Caroline Vile	Diocese	Absent
Greg Foster	Unions	Absent
Geoff Wright	Unions	Absent
Rob Pullen	CWAPH	Apologies
Vacancy	16-19 providers	Vacancy
Non-voting Observers		
Councillor Robert Cernick	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	Absent
Officers in attendance		
Mark Parkinson	Director of Education and Inclusion	
Paul Arista	SEN Manager	
Natalie Cole	Finance Manager	
Charlotte Fenn	Clerk	
Debbie Freeman	SEN Manager	

Anna Jones
Sue Lawson

Finance Manager
Commissioning Officer

1. Introductions and apologies

Kate Docherty acted as temporary Chair in the absence of the Chair, Duncan Haworth and Vice-chair, John Freeman.

Apologies were noted.

Kate reported that Councillor Meardon had stepped down from her role of Cabinet member for Children and Families, Councillor Robert Cernick had taken over the role.

2. Minutes and matters arising of last meeting

2.1 To agree the minutes from the meeting held 14 January 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14 January 2020 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following correction:

Page 5 Item 1 Introductions and apologies
Helen Hill - governor at Woodlands Primary not Eaton Primary
Paul Healey - governor at Eaton Primary not Woodlands Primary

2.2 Matters arising

2.2.1 Item 2.2.2 Early Years Provider Hub

Sue Lawson reported that the LA was currently procuring Servelec as the Early Years Hub provider. It was anticipated that as Servelec was an existing provider there would be a smooth transition along with any necessary training. Sue Anderson asked if the data held by the old system would be transferred over. Sue Lawson was not sure but expected that it would be.

2.2.2 Item 5 Any Other Business - Funding Gypsy Romany Traveller (GRT) Pupils

Mark Parkinson reported that a draft letter was currently being revised to make their case stronger.

Item 3 High Needs Review

It was noted that Sarah Banks, Senior Manager, Disabled Children's Service had been identified as the lead for remodelling residential provision.

Paul Arista provided a brief update on the steps moving forward to develop post 16 provision. It was noted that work was being done to look at trends to identify why there had not been an increase in take up of provision.

3. Council budget setting update

Anna Jones presented a PowerPoint presentation to Forum which provided an update on 2020-21 revenue budget and future year gap, and an overview of the key areas of investment for Children & Families. The presentation would be circulated to Forum after the meeting.

4. Early Years Funding for 2020-2021

Sue Lawson introduced the report which detailed the proposed budget allocation for the early years block and funding of the two, three and four year old entitlements for 2020-2021 through the Early Years Funding Formula (EYFF) and Early Years Inclusion Support Fund (EYISF).

Sue sought comments from Schools Forum on the proposed changes within the report.

The group had a heated debate around the lack of funding of the Early Years sector. Sue Anderson voiced her concerns that despite the increase in the base rate the early years sector was still underfunded and did not address such issues as the increased minimum wage. Sue also commented that, as a result of the underfunding, the sector was losing quality staff and not attracting new people. Sue also pointed out that the increase to 30 hours had made the situation worse, settings were effectively subsidising government policy and there was no respect for the sector.

Sue Anderson was asked what Early Years representative groups were doing to get these issues recognised. Sue responded that as it was a large and diverse sector there were several groups representing them, two had been lobbying government. There had been talk of striking but there was no one group to coordinate such a response as they were all in competition with each other. The sector needed better support; the current system looked only at the needs of parents and not at funding providers.

A question was asked as to what percentage of early years costs went on staffing. Katie Tyrie responded that as the provision was so diverse it was difficult to compare costs.

Resolved that Schools Forum

- i. approve the increase in base rate funding for 2020-2021 (vote: unanimous); and
- ii. note concerns that the national funding for Early Years settings was not sufficient.

5. Special Educational Needs (SEN) Funding for Mainstream and Special Schools – Funding from the High Needs Block 2020-2021

Debbie Freeman introduced the report updating Schools Forum on proposed changes to allocations from the High Needs Block for 2020-2021 for commissioned places and top up funding.

Debbie took Forum Members through each of the proposed changes.

A number of issues were raised by Forum members around the proposal to reduce the top up funding to one year before review, rather than two. These included not enough time for a child to improve or to see sustainable progress; retaining staff and giving

notice; the capacity to do earlier reviews; the amount of paperwork involved in the review process and more parents might go for EHCP.

It was noted that this recommendation had come out of the High Needs Review. Mark Parkinson stressed that the change was to ensure children were making progress and the initiative was making a difference, and identify those children who should have had an EHCP. It was acknowledged that not all pupils' progress was well monitored.

Mark informed Forum that officers did not have to seek Schools Forum's approval for the proposed changes but wished to take into consideration their concerns and agreed to reconvene the Schools Forum SEND subgroup to look at models and at mechanics to address the timing & volume issues raised and take on board suggestions from Forum members.

Resolved that Schools Forum endorse the

- i. increase of 3% to mainstream top up funding bands;
- ii. introduction of Post 16 Banding funding for colleges to reflect mainstream top up levels using 0-25 Inclusion framework;
- iii. changes to Resource Provision funding;
- iv. additional high needs support criteria;
- v. changes to commissioned special school place numbers; and
- vi. top up funding agreed to be in place for one year instead of two before review.

6. Central Spend budgets 2020-2021

Natalie Cole introduced the report outlining the proposed level of prescribed central spend budgets for 2020-2021. Forum members' attention was drawn to the proposed changes in appendix B.

Resolved that the Schools Forum approve the proposed changes to the level of central spend budgets for 2020-2021 for the activities defined in the Section 251 statement as set out in appendix B

7. Letter to schools 2019-2020 budget planning

Natalie Cole made reference to the letter circulated with the papers regarding the proposed change to the Cheshire West and Chester Scheme for Financing Schools. School Forum noted that the deadline of 1 June for the formal budget plan submission would remain unchanged as was the draft budget to be ratified and approved by the Governing body at the end of the Spring term.

8. AOB

Kate Docherty informed Forum that this might be the last meeting for Paul Healey as Eaton Primary was scheduled to convert to an Academy in June.

9. Next meeting

Tuesday 7 July 2020 4.30 – 6.30 Queen's Park High School, Chester

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