

**Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum, Queen's Park High School,
Chester 11 February 2019 (approved at the 8 July meeting)**

Present:

Marie Allen
Sue Anderson
David Curry
Sarah Curtis
John Freeman
Kate Docherty
Carol Gahan
Phil Hopwood
Mike Holland
Luci Jones
Kath Lloyd
Mike McCann
John Murray (Chair)
David Rowlands
Andy Stewart
Katie Tyrie
Lyndsay Watterson
Susan Yarnall

Representing:

Academies - Special
PVI
Secondary headteachers
Primary headteachers
Secondary governors
Primary headteachers
Primary governors
Special governors
Secondary headteachers
Academies - Primary/Secondary
Primary governors
Special headteachers
Academies - Primary/Secondary
Secondary governors
PRU
Nursery headteacher
Academies - Primary/Secondary
Primary governors

Officers:

Natalie Cole
Charlotte Fenn (Clerk)
Mark Parkinson

1. Introductions and apologies

Apologies were noted from Hilary Berry, David Bradburn, Greg Foster, Amanda Harrison, Duncan Haworth, Jason Lowe, Councillor Meardon, Ian Devereux Roberts, Sarah Worthington, Caroline Vile (not reported at meeting) and Harry Ziman.

2. Minutes and matters arising of last meeting

2.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 Matters arising

2.3 Item 1. Introductions and apologies

It was noted that Luci Jones was covering the Academies vacancy while elections were taking place. Elections were due to end on 1 March. It was also noted that CWAPH would confirm who would be taking over from Cheryl Bullen by the next CWAPH meeting in March.

3. Special Educational Needs (SEN) Funding for Mainstream and Special Schools – Funding from the High Needs Block 2019-2020

Natalie Cole, Finance Manager, introduced the report and took Forum members through the proposed changes to allocations from the High Needs Block for 2019-2020 for commissioned places and top up funding.

Natalie Cole drew Forum members' attention to appendix A which detailed the proposed special school band funding rates for 2019-2020, which in effect was a staged implementation of the original planned tapered reduction.

John Murray sought comments from Forum on the proposals outlined and declared an interest in respect of the proposed interim additional resource provision funding as his school was a resource provision school.

Mike McCann reported that CWASSH had raised concerns regarding the band three funding for special schools and was meeting with Debbie Steele to discuss the funding gap between the actual costs and the contribution from health.

Mark Parkinson informed Forum that the resources released, as a result of these proposals, would be made available to CWASSH, in order to produce an action plan on outreach work proposals to support inclusion in line with the current direction of travel.

Natalie Cole acknowledged there were issues as to how the banding rates had been set and suggested that it might help if special schools met to look at staffing and how schools were structuring provision and how different levels of need were supported.

John Murray drew Forum members' attention to paragraph 11 and the timeframe for implementation of the revised descriptors for mainstream pupils.

4. Early Years Funding for 2019-2020

Natalie Cole took Forum through the report which detailed the proposed budget allocation for the early years block, Early Years Funding Formula (EYFF) and Early Years Inclusion Fund (EYIF) and sought Forum's view on the proposed changes.

Natalie referred Forum to paragraph three and the recommendations from the Finance sub group which had been approved by Cabinet in November, following the consultation. Forum's attention was drawn to the changes to rurality eligibility criteria and further measures to the eligibility criteria to access the quality supplement.

It was noted that the changes were due to be implemented from April 2019 and the current payment methodology to providers would be retained but reviewed during the year to incorporate some improvements.

Forum members' attention was drawn to the budget proposals outlined in appendix A and the increase in the base rate.

Natalie referred Forum members to paragraph six which detailed the budgets held as central spend. It was noted that the only change was the additional post to implement the Leuven Scales. It was also noted that central spend funding was subject to a cap but the stated funding was well within the limit.

Natalie took Forum members through paragraphs seven and eight which detailed the changes to the Early Years Inclusion funding and key principles for the proposed banding levels. Forum members sought clarification regarding band B and C figures in the table under paragraph eight. It was noted that 30 hours entitlement in receipt of band B or C would receive double that of the amount received at 15 hours entitlement.

Mark Parkinson informed Forum members that the proposal to automatically fund the first two terms in reception for children already in receipt of funding was to help with transition and give schools time to review the needs of the child. A framework would be produced mapping out the banding descriptors and values.

Sue Anderson asked if any work had been done on who would be the winners and losers as a result of the changes in supplements. Natalie responded that the impact of the changes would be reviewed once the January pupil data was available and the base rate would be increased if possible.

Sue Anderson questioned whether the LA would be able to enforce the submission of the required paperwork for receipt of the quality factor supplement. Mark Parkinson responded that the supplement would not be paid without receipt of the necessary data. The data needed to be analysed to ensure funding was being targeted correctly.

5. Central Spend budgets 2019-2020

Natalie Cole introduced the report which outlined the proposed level of prescribed central spend budgets for 2019-2020 which required Forum's approval.

Forum's attention was drawn to appendix B which outlined two proposed changes to the centrally held budgets; the increase for expenditure on children under five due to the Leuven Scales implementation and the reduction to the falling rolls fund for the third year of capped allocation. There were no comments from Forum members regarding the proposed changes.

Resolved that the Schools Forum approve the proposed changes to the level of central spend budgets for 2019-2020 for the activities defined in the Section 251 statement.

6. Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum draft response to funding increases to teachers' pensions employer contributions Government consultation

John Murray introduced the paper and informed Forum that the response, to the consultation, had been drafted following discussions with the Finance sub group at their January meeting. John sought comments and amendments to the response which was due to be submitted by the 12 February deadline. Forum members agreed the draft response and no amendments were put forward.

Resolved that the Schools Forum task the Schools Forum Clerk to submit the response, as drafted, on behalf the Schools Forum.

7. Increase funding for schools petition

John Murray introduced the item which referred to a petition which the f40 group were encouraging schools, governors and Schools Forums to support. It was noted that an email had been circulated by the Clerk on behalf of the Schools Forum Chair drawing schools and governors' attention to the petition.

Sue Anderson made a plea that when colleagues petitioned against underfunded schools that they did likewise in support of the PVI sector which was also underfunded and made reference to a separate petition to increase early years funding. Sue agreed to circulate information to Forum members regarding the early year's petition.

David Rowlands endorsed Sue Anderson's plea for colleagues to support an increase in early years funding as the early years provided an essential foundation for pupils' education.

Mark Parkinson raised the question as to, whilst the f40 group were campaigning for schools, why had they not picked up the early years agenda and agreed to write to the f40 group on this matter.

John agreed to remind CWAPH and CWASH to circulate the petition to governors and encourage them to sign up individually.

It was noted that the petition ended on 19 May 2019.

8. Any other business

8.1 Fischer Family Trust (FFT) Licence

Natalie Cole reported that an opportunity had arisen to sign a two or three year contract with FFT. Prices would be frozen for the duration of the contract with discount of five percent on a two year contact and 10 percent on a three year contract. It was noted that FFT was funded through the combined budgets which government was phasing out.

David Rowlands asked how useful was FFT data now compared to three years ago; was it still relevant? Several head teachers confirmed that FFT data was of value and would become more relevant as the data sets grew.

John Murray put to the vote agreement for a three year contract.

Resolved that the Schools Forum agree to a three year contact with FFT
(vote: unanimous).

8.2 Retirement of Chair

John Murray informed Forum that he was retiring as Headteacher at the end of summer, the next meeting would be his last and a new chair would need to be sought in time for the Autumn term meeting.

8.3 School Forum meetings

John Murray informed Forum that a proposal had been put forward to move Forum from a Monday to a Tuesday for the next academic year's meetings. The Clerk would be circulating an email to Forum members to canvas opinions on this change.

9. Next meeting

Monday 8 July 2019.