

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2015

School Members: Steve Colledge, Chair - Academy Headteacher
Alison Lowe, Primary Headteacher
Sue Banks, Secondary Headteacher
Jackie Smith, Special Headteacher
Lauren Costello, Academy Headteacher
Andrew Henstridge, Academy Headteacher and Diocese of Clifton representative
Wendy Conaghan, Academy Headteacher
Sharon Kirwan, Academy Headteacher
Jane Wheatley, Academy Headteacher
Ray Williams, Primary Governor
David Bell, Secondary Governor
Charles Law Special Governor
Ben Slater, ETOAS

Non-School Members: Kate Adams, Early Years
Peter Smith, Trade Unions
Ram Thiagarajah, BME
David Francis, 16-19 Partnership

Officers: Ian Burbidge (Head of Finance, Schools)
Anne Mackay (Finance Manager, Education)
Peter Nathan (Head of Education)

Also present: Jo Morris (Early Years) and Marie Horton (School Improvement Advisor).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Janet Urban (Primary Headteacher), Ruth Lee (Diocese of Clifton), Rhian Cockwell (Primary Headteacher) and Andrew Miller (16-19 Partnership).

10. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th July 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

11. Public Question Time

The following question was asked in accordance with standing Order 28 –

Questioner

Alastair Dixon-Patterson, Lydiard Park Academy.

Question

Mr Dixon-Patterson asked a series of questions relating to the (a) special resource provision funding, (b) reference to “money to follow the pupil” funding, and (c) structure of the “education other than at school” (EOTAS) budget.

Response

In Mr Dixon-Patterson’s absence, the Chair confirmed that a written response had been provided and whilst Mr Dixon-Patterson was unhappy with the response given, further clarity on the special resource provision funding could not be provided until after the special resource provision funding task group complete their deliberations.

12. 2015-16 Dedicated Schools Grant Budget Position

Ms Anne Mackay, Finance Manager, submitted a report advising Forum members on the latest projected 2015/16 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) retained budget position and to brief members on the projected year end position against the 2015/ 16 retained budgets based upon available information at the end of August 2015.

Mr Ian Burbidge, Head of Finance, Schools, introduced the report and commented on the changes that had taken place since the last report and in particular highlighted the current projected overspend and explained that this may affect the DSG retained budget held by the Local Authority. He referred to Table 2 of the report highlighting the high risk areas that may essentially affect the budget. Members noted Appendix A of the report which highlighted the reasons for the projected variances. In response to a query regarding the implementation of effective monitoring procedures, Mr Burbidge confirmed that the Finance department critically analysed expenditure and challenged budget managers. Members enquired if a deficit recovery plan had been implemented by the Local Authority. Mr Burbidge advised that a rectification plan would be part of the following year’s budget proposals and that an appropriate level of reserves have to be re-established. Mr Burbidge further updated members on how two, three and four year old funding would be captured, recorded and reported.

Resolved – That the Schools Forum notes:

(1) That the latest projection on the 2015-16 retained budget was an overspend of £0.738m.

(2) That the unallocated Dedicated School Grant balance would be reduced to £0.360m.

13. Monitoring of School Balances

The Forum considered a report submitted by Ms Anne Mackay, Finance Manager and presented by Mr Ian Burbidge, Head of Finance, Schools, setting out the level of school balances, particularly regarding the planned use of 2014-15 surplus balances during 2015-16 and the use of 2015-16 surplus balances in 2016-17 and beyond. Mr Burbidge referred to the estimated school revenue balances expected to be held on 31st March 2016 as forecast by schools in June 2015. Mr Burbidge advised that the Finance department would be contacting a number of schools who were either using balances to support their in-year spend or their 2016/17 spending levels. Members noted that at present, maintained schools had not met the criteria to trigger implementing the fallback mechanism. Further to 6.1 of the report, members debated the principle of claw back and if the criteria should

be amended to reflect that either of the criteria could be met before the claw back mechanism was to be implemented. Members agreed that further information on how this affected schools was required before a vote would be taken.

Resolved – That the Schools Forum notes:

(1) The planned use of schools' surplus balances brought forward at 1st April 2015 and the schools' committed use of these balances in 2015/16.

(2) The surplus balances estimated to be carried forward by schools at 31st March 2016 and the value to be committed for use in 2016/17.

(3) That based on the survey forms received, twenty two schools plan to hold uncommitted balances on 31st March 2016 which exceed the target per pupil values agreed by the Schools Forum.

(4) The analysis of schools' planned use of March 2015 surplus balances in 2015/16.

(5) The indicative future balances to be held by schools at 31st March 2017 and 31st March 2018, 2015.

(6) That further information regarding the effect of the school balances claw back mechanism on schools be submitted at the next meeting of the Forum.

14. Schools Financial Value Standard Returns

Ms Anne Mackay, Finance Manager, submitted a brief report advising the Forum of the position following the submission of the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) self-assessments as required by the DfE for 2014/15. Mr Ian Burbidge, Head of Finance, Schools introduced the report and referred to the requirements of SFVS assessments which non-academy schools were required to complete once a year and submit to the Local Authority, to demonstrate that they have sound financial management practice and processes in place. It was noted that the self-assessment had been completed and submitted by schools by 31st March 2015. Mr Burbidge drew attention to the two extra questions included in this years' SFVS submission.

Resolved – That the Schools Forum notes:

(1) That the Local Authority would be issuing guidance on how best to complete the SFVS return.

(2) That further to (1) above, future submissions by schools should follow this guidance.

(3) That SFVS submissions form part of the Local Authority's finance health check of schools and schools may be contacted to verify evidence in support of their assessments.

15. 2015-16 Dedicated Schools Grant Budget and Forward Look to 2016-17

The Forum considered a report by Mr Ian Burbidge, Head of Finance, Schools, with information on the latest position of the 2015/16 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlements and budget and explained that following the Forum's meeting on 7th July 2015, the report addressed (a) an update on the central equal pay liability, (b) an update on the Notional SEN changes that were introduced in April, (c) Early Years update, (d) Pupil Growth Policy, (e) feedback from the SENRAP modelling pilot, (f) an update on the Special Resource Provision (SRP) review, (g) an update on the general Special Educational Needs (SEN) strategy, (h) an update on the SEN forecasting model, (i) Trade Union Release Time, and (j) an F40 funding group update. He further advised that the report then highlighted items to be considered by members as part of the 2016/17 budget setting process.

Members noted the following points:

- Financial pressure under which the early years setting was operating in.
- Consultation being conducted by Gareth Cheal, Strategic Planning Manager, with various stakeholders to review the pupil growth policy.
- Special Educational Needs Resources and Assessment Panel (SENRAP) moderation of bandings.
- The extra School Forum meeting to be held on 1st December 2015 to review a report by the SRP (Special Resource Provision) Review Task Group regarding special resource provision funding.
- On-going work to forecast future SEN provision in secondary schools. This had indicated future pressure over the next five years.
- Annual review of Trade Union release time and the request for members to discuss at the headteachers associations within the various sectors to enable members to vote at the next meeting of the Schools Forum.
- An update on the F40 fairer funding campaign.
- Proposals to increase the Dedicated Schools Grant reserves would be submitted at the next meeting of the Forum.

Resolved: (1) That the Schools Forum:

(1) Notes that £0.031m of central funding was being retained to meet central equal pay liabilities and that repayment proposals would be brought to a future Schools Forum for discussion.

(2) Notes the impact that the funding changes would have had on the 2014/15 notional SEN funding.

(3) Notes that where a claw-back of funding is required schools will be contacted by the Local Authority (LA).

(4) Notes the current position regarding the take up of early years' places.

(5) Notes that the budget for 2016/17 will need to be reviewed in light of the increasing numbers of students taking up early years' provision.

(6) Notes the potential impact on the number of early years places required following the Governments' announcement increasing early years' entitlement from 15 to 30 hours.

(7) Notes the contents of the letter received from the Early Years Representative.

(8) Notes the proposed time table to review the trigger funding policy to accommodate situations outside the current policy.

(9) Notes the changes to the funding applications made to the Special Educational Needs Resource and Assessment Panel (SENRAP).

(10) Agrees to the principles of universal banding model.

(11) Notes the date of the extra schools forum on the 1st December.

(12) Notes the contents of the Specialist Provision for Special Educational Needs in Swindon report.

(13) Notes the work being undertaken to model SEN secondary school requirements.

(14) Discusses the union letter with their head teacher associations so that forum can vote on this issue in January.

(15) Further to (14) above, members were requested to invite union members to their head teacher associations to discuss trade union release time.

(16) Notes the minutes of the F40 meeting with the DfE.

(17) Notes that there is a need to increase the value of the DSG reserves as part of the 2016/17 budget setting process.

(18) Notes that as part of the 2016/17 budget setting process the £500k reduction in DSG funding for 6th forms will need to be addressed.

16. Post 16 High Needs Funding Update

The Head of Finance, Education, presented a report updating the Forum on the level of funding available and proposes indicative funding allocations to providers for the 2015/16 financial year. Mr Ian Burbidge, Head of Finance, Education referred to the number of pupils accessing this provision and confirmed that this was less than anticipated. He further referred to the proposed 2015/16 post 16 high need bank values and supplements and members noted that this was set by central government.

Resolved: That this Forum notes that:

(1) The latest projected 2015/16 financial year costs arising from the LA new funding responsibilities for Post 16 High Needs Students is estimated at £2.022m for 387 post 16 (excluding school sixth form) high needs students. This includes costs of 55 placements at ISPs of £0.531m and indicative allocations to FE colleges and training providers of £1.491m for 332 students.

(2) The indicative banding values for the academic year 2015/16 have reduced since 2014/15 academic year to fit within the available funding envelope as a result of a significant projected increase in student numbers.

17. Dates of Future Meetings

The Schools Forum is scheduled to meet on the following dates:

- 1st December 2015, 4 p.m. in Committee Room 1.
- 12th January 2016, 4 p.m. in Committee Room 6.
- 15th March 2016, 4 p.m. in Committee Room 6.