

Islington Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 22 October 2020 at 2pm – held virtually.

PRESENT

Forum Members

Anita Grant (AG)	CEO, Islington Play Association
Andrew Bosi (AB)	Governor, Rotherfield Primary School
Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy (AM-L)	Head teacher, Newington Green Primary School (Chair)
Cassie Moss (CM)	Head teacher, Yerbury Primary School (left at 2.50pm)
Jo Dibb (JD)	EGA Secondary – Executive Head of Islington Futures Federation (Vice-chair)
Tanya Watson (TW)	Head teacher, William Tyndale (Primary Academy)
Lisa Horton (LH)	Head teacher, Hargrave Park Primary School
Fiona Maccorquodale (FM)	Head teacher, Prior Weston Primary School
Penny Barratt (PB)	Head teacher, The Bridge Special School (Academy)
Susan Service (SS)	Head teacher, Islington Arts & Media Secondary School
Francis Gonzalez (FrG)	Head teacher, Richard Cloudesley Special School
Maggie Elliott (ME)	Governor, Montem Primary School (Edventure Collaborative Federation with Drayton Park) (Vice-chair)
Paul Lasok (PL)	Governor, St Aloysius Secondary School (and St Joseph's)
Joe Simpson (JS)	Governor, St Peter and St Paul's (arrived 2.50pm)
Nigel Smith (NS)	Head teacher, New River College (Pupil Referral Unit)

Other Attendees

Tim Partington (TP)	Head of Children's Services, Finance
Jane Wright (JW)	Manager Schools and EY Governance (Clerk)
Mark Taylor (MT)	Director of Learning and Schools
Debbie Stevenson (DS)	Head of Early Years and Schools Funding
Penny Kenway (PK)	Head of Early Years and Childcare
Laura Phillips (LP)	Consultant Early Years and Childcare

Apologies

Fiona Godfrey (FG)	Head teacher, Kate Greenaway Nursery School
Vicky Linsley (VL)	Head teacher, St Mary Magdalene Academy
Mita Pandya (MP)	Executive Head, Archway and Willow Children's Centres
Candy Holder (CH)	Head of Pupil Services

Not in attendance

Cllr Rakhia Ismail (RI)	Elected member
Greg Crawford (GC)	Head teacher, Pooles Park

Agenda item	Action
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<p>1.</p>	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/NOT IN ATTENDANCE</p> <p>Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy (AM-L), Chair, welcomed all to the meeting, including the new member, Fiona Maccorquodale, Primary Head representative (Prior Weston).</p> <p>Otherwise see above.</p>	
<p>12.</p>	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS – OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDCARE FUNDING MODELS</p> <p><i>It was agreed to take one AOB at the beginning of the meeting while PK and LP were present.</i></p> <p>This item is to inform Schools Forum about a forthcoming consultation of families and childcare providers, including schools, on proposed changes to the way the council subsidises out of school (OOS) childcare.</p> <p>The proposals fulfil the Labour party manifesto pledge (Spring 2018) to retain a subsidy for OOS childcare that was better targeted to meet the needs of low-income working families. The available budget for subsidising OOS childcare is about £600K.</p> <p>The council recognises the importance of work as a resilience factor for families and as a passport out of poverty. Affordable, high quality childcare is key to supporting families to work.</p> <p>The current allocation is distributed to 28 schools and 6 voluntary sector delivery partners for after-school childcare places for children aged 4-11 and 7 voluntary sector providers for holiday childcare schemes during half term and summer holiday periods.</p> <p>Providers combine the subsidy funding with parental fee income and any other additional sources of funding they secure, such as external grant funding.</p> <p>Feedback has been sought from parents and providers (those who are not currently part of the scheme as well as those who are) to look at how funding could be more fairly distributed while ensuring that undue burdens are not placed on providers given the relative amount of funding each provider would receive. The ambition is to build on the success of the council’s under fives childcare system where those earning least receive most subsidy.</p> <p>A 30-day consultation of families using childcare and providers will begin on 16 November, with final decisions to be made in January 2021, and implementation from summer term 2021.</p> <p>NOTED</p>	
	<p><i>PK and LP left the meeting at about 2.20pm</i></p>	
<p>2.</p>	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16 JULY 2020</p> <p>a. Accuracy – the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the following amendment:</p> <p><i>page 7. In the eighth paragraph, the word "that" on the second line (not the first) should read "than".</i></p>	<p>JW</p>

	<p>b. Matters Arising – there were none.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>SCHOOLS FORUM COMPOSITION</p> <p>The clerk (JW) gave a brief verbal update.</p> <p>On 1 January 2021, there will be these vacancies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current and a further second academy head teacher • Another primary head teacher • Two primary governors <p>Proposed actions/actions to be noted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The clerk (JW) to write again to secondary academy heads in relation to current vacancy and forthcoming vacancy to ask to select two representatives. • The clerk (JW) to seek nominations for one primary head teacher representative in November. • The clerk (JW) will arrange elections for two primary governor representatives in November. <p>NOTED</p>	<p>JW</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>DSG BUDGET MONITOR (IN YEAR)</p> <p>TP reported to a paper that had been circulated.</p> <p>Due to the uncertain impact of Covid-19, particularly with regard to the early years block, a position for the DSG overall is not provided. We are not anticipating a cost pressure on the DSG overall at this stage.</p> <p>4.a. Schools Block</p> <p>This consists of funding centrally retained for growth (£300k) and falling rolls (£400k). The allocations could reduce following the October school's census, but this is not considered likely. There is an insignificant overspend of £13k (+2%) anticipated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • + £107 (+35%) overspend against the budget for growth • - £94k (-24%) underspend against the budget for falling rolls <p>4.b. De-delegated Budgets</p> <p>This is funding de-delegated by maintained schools for specific functions. A variance of £136k (-36%) underspend against the school redundancy budget is anticipated, although this forecast is subject to change pending further school reorganisations.</p> <p>4.c. Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)</p> <p>No variances are currently forecast against the CSSB (£1.627m), although the DfE top-slice for copyright licenses has increased from £122k in 2019/20 to £143k this year (21% increase).</p> <p>4.d. High Needs Block</p> <p>This is an area about which there have been increasing concerns in recent years, with rising costs, including the government raising the age of eligibility with no additional funds to local authorities, and needs becoming more severe and complex.</p>	

	<p>An underspend of about £300K is expected this year – we received additional funding for high needs from the DfE as part of the 2020/21 DSG funding settlement. However, we will have a much clearer understanding of demand and any impact of Covid-19 in the coming weeks. The government has not committed to additional funding in future years.</p> <p>4.e. Early Years</p> <p>Funding for free entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. This is our biggest area of risk given normal funding is based on participation (spring headcount). The government is currently funding based on the previous January census to mitigate the impact of reduced numbers due to Covid. However, the DfE have informed LAs that they will be returning to participation-based funding from January 2021, and there is considerable concern about the spring headcount 2021.</p> <p>The EY contingency budget from previous years has been used to support EY, but this then limits our capacity to support 2 year olds, given government funding does not cover the costs fully. There is also growing expenditure on SEND in the Early Years.</p> <p>We should be informed of the settlement for EY by Christmas.</p> <p>TW asked about the scope for exceptional needs this year. TP said he would check with Candy Holder (CH). DS referred to the Financial Consultation where cluster funding has been presented as an option for supporting schools with high level numbers and need. Once the consultation has been completed, decisions about cluster funding can be made in January 2021. Otherwise this is SEND funding.</p> <p>LH asked how £300K SEND underspend compares with previous years. TP replied that last year there was an overspend of £85K and of £900K the year before that. However, 2022/23 could be problematic.</p> <p>FG referred to the restricted support from the government in relation to PPE and Covid costs, and also to the impact on children with SEND of not being in schools – needs increased.</p> <p>CM asked if the Redundancy Budget was in line with school reorganisations – concern about the impact on schools having to bear 50% of the redundancy costs. DS clarified that this is de-delegated expenditure. The contribution schools make is reviewed periodically to reflect the call on the budget and the needs of the schools.</p> <p>Reorganisations mainly take place in summer. At this stage, DS felt 50% was a fair contribution. Schools may now be looking at their senior leadership team (SLT) rather than teachers and TAs, where costs may be significantly higher. TP added that the LA will carry forward as much of this budget as it can to 2021/22 and he clarified that there is no extra funding available from the council which is projecting significant shortfalls.</p>	TP
5.	<p>DSG ALLOCATIONS (2021-22)</p> <p>A table had been circulated before the meeting. This showed illustrative figures using October 2019 numbers – the actuals will be reported once the October census figures are in.</p> <p>5.a. Schools Block – an indicative increase of £8.1m (6.2%), but this now included the Teachers’ Pay and Pensions Grant funding of £5.2m which used to be a separate grant – actual increase of £2.3m. This increase will reduce if there are decreases in pupil numbers in October census.</p> <p>5.b. Historic Commitments- a further reduction of 20% this year and future years over 5 years for services being provided.</p>	

	<p>5.c. High Needs - £3.6m extra. DfE is looking at longer-term funding of HN – a consultation is to come looking to make the funding more stable. The £3.6m includes £600K for Teachers’ Pay and Pensions (staff in special schools, PRUs and independent schools). £3m balance – safe for the medium term, but needs are increasing.</p> <p>5.d. EY Block – no information yet about 2021-22. Operational guidance due in late November/early December. This should include the methodology for funding in Spring Term 2021. A report will come to Forum in November with actual pupil numbers from the October census.</p> <p>5.e. MT commented in relation to falling school rolls that the LA is keeping an eye on population projections beyond this year. With more secure internal information, we will be able to take actions earlier.</p> <p><i>JD left the meeting at 2.53pm</i></p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>SCHOOL FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS (2021-22)</p> <p>6.a. The National Funding Formula (NFF) will remain ‘soft’ next year, so allowing some flexibility at local level. Islington is effectively operating the hard NFF. It should be noted that it is a proposal as part of the consultation with schools that we continue to mirror the NFF, subject to funding affordability. The main difference is the minimum funding guarantee, where for 2021-22 the range is between 0.5% and 2%.</p> <p>6.b. Increased per pupil funding (to £4,180 in primary; £5,715 in secondary) includes Teachers’ Pay and Pensions funding.</p> <p>6.c. Key changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9% increase in base rates from 2020/21 • 3% increase in factors values except Free School Meals – 2% increase. <p>IDACI factor – every 4 years this is re-calibrated across Super Output Areas (SOAs). Data has been updated from 2015 to 2019 data. In order to keep all funding the same overall, 2nd, 3rd and 4th bands are going up by 9% while the other three are going up by 3%.</p> <p>6.d. High Needs</p> <p>There is growth nationally of £730m - £3.6m locally as discussed earlier.</p> <p>NOTED</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>SCHOOL FUNDING CONSULTATION (2021-22)</p> <p>7.a. The consultation document had been circulated prior to the meeting. DS hoped that all schools had responded to the consultation.</p> <p>7.b. A M-B asked about the review of HN funding – will it be good practice based. DS reminded the meeting that the DfE had asked LAs a year ago for information for data relating to HN. MT added that the LA is continually liaising with the DfE about a whole range of issues.</p> <p><i>7.c. Update after the meeting – following requests from headteachers, it was agreed to extend the deadline for the consultation until 6 November 2020.</i></p>	

<p>8.</p>	<p>CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK (CSSB) – RECALCULATIONS OF APPORTIONMENT</p> <p>8.a. Forum was asked to note the reduction in CSSB funding in future years and the steps being taken to manage this with Schools Forum as set out in the report – TP reported.</p> <p>8.b. CSSB provides funding for the provision of central services to schools and academies by local authorities. Allocations are agreed by Schools Forum on a line by line basis annually in accordance with the DSG operational guidance. Funding for this block is split into 2 elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An element for ongoing duties that local authorities have a statutory duty to deliver for all pupils in maintained schools and academies, such as school admissions and servicing of Schools Forum. The Council will provisionally receive a £0.021m (2.15%) increase in funding for this element in 2021/22. This allocation will be updated in the autumn to reflect October 2020 pupil numbers. • An element for historical commitments that pre-date 2013/14, funding for which is being reduced by £131K (20%) in 2021/22. This follows a 20% (£167k) reduction in 2020/21, in line with the DfE’s plans to phase this funding out for local authorities. <p>8.c. Following a comprehensive review of the DSG in 2017/18 by the Council and Schools Forum to meet increasing cost and demand pressures in relation to high needs, funding within the CSSB was freed up for investment in high needs. Given the increase in HNB funding for 2020/21 this contribution has been reversed by Schools Forum, to meet the shortfall in CSSB funding.</p> <p>8.d. The Council is likely to see a further reduction in CSSB funding of £366k by 2024/25, which is equivalent to 23% of the CSSB allocation of £1.627m in 2020/21.</p> <p>8.e. In order to manage the expected reduction in CSSB funding for these services the Council and schools need to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What services schools would like us to continue to provide, and are therefore happy to pay for. This could, where appropriate, be through alternative mechanisms such as trading or polled budgets. However, this will introduce more volatility, risk and uncertainty into Council budgets, therefore will need to be carefully assessed and considered. In particular, it would not be appropriate for statutory services. • What costs are essentially fixed? For example, the cost of copyright licence charges is determined by the DfE each year, and is automatically top-sliced from our CSSB allocation. This has seen significant above inflation increases in recent years. • What can we do for less? • Are there any discretionary services we can reduce / cut and what are the implications? <p>8.f. Options being considered to manage the reduction in funding for 2021/22</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission appeals – we are exploring whether the cost of the admission appeals clerking service can be reduced by using remote forums for this service, such as Zoom and MS Teams. • Sports co-ordinators – contribution towards cost of school sports advisor / coordination of school sports competitions. We are exploring alternative means for paying for the provision of this service to schools. • Legal services SLA – we are exploring whether this can be offered on a traded basis to schools. There is risk in this option in that the SLA effectively acts as like an insurance policy for schools, ensuring they access appropriate legal advice when necessary, minimising potential liabilities. Under a traded option, they may be less likely to do so. • NQTs – review of the costs of service / level of service that schools require. Provision of a training programme for each NQT as required by statutory guidance / statutory induction monitoring and guidance service provided by the Council. Training could be provided on a ‘pay as you go’ basis or more realistically left to schools to organise for themselves – an option which is easier for large secondaries than for primaries. • Overheads (see below) – overheads against CSSB services were last reviewed in 2017/18 through Schools Forum and are due to be reviewed again to ensure that they are still proportionate as CSSB funding reduces. <p>More detailed proposals will be prepared for Schools Forum to consider in November.</p> <p>CM felt that there could be a risk of receiving inappropriate advice if Legal Services were subject to an SLA. Also it was important for all Islington NQTs to receive a consistently high quality service.</p> <p>NOTED</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>HIGH NEEDS STRATEGY</p> <p>Deferred to November/future meeting.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS</p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Section 48 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 requires Local Authorities (LAs) to prepare a Scheme for Financing Schools that sets out the financial relationship between the LA and its maintained schools.</p> <p>The Department for Education (DfE) has produced a model scheme with the following mandated changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ From 1 April 2020 schools to submit a 3-year budget forecast each year, at a date determined by the local authority between 1 May and 30 June <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Islington currently requires schools to submit a financial forecast in CFR format covering a further two years beyond the current year’s budget. No changes have been made to the Islington 2020-21 Scheme for Financing Schools 	

	<p>➤ From 2021-22 funding year (delayed due to COVID-19) ,schools must submit a recovery plan to the local authority when their revenue deficit rises above 5% at 31 March of any year. Local authorities may set a lower threshold than 5% for the submission of a recovery plan if they wish. The 5% deficit threshold will apply when deficits are measured as at 31 March 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Islington requires a deficit recovery plan of any school entering into a deficit position. No changes have been made to the Islington 2020-21 Scheme for Financing Schools <p>➤ Other important changes to the guidance - from 1 April 2020 local authority maintained schools (LAMS) will be able to join the risk protection arrangement (RPA) instead of taking out insurance. The DfE have not had time to conduct a consultation on a directed revision but may do so later.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Islington - whilst this is not a formal directed revision, the Islington scheme has been updated to include: <i>10.1.14 An alternative to taking out insurance with another provider, a school may join the Secretary of State's risk protection arrangement (RPA) for risks that are covered by the RPA. Where all primary and/or secondary schools join the RPA collectively, then the phase representatives on the Schools Forum may agree to de-delegate funding.</i> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>That the maintained school forum representatives note the directive changes to be included in the 2021-22 Islington Scheme for Financing Schools.</p> <p>That the maintained school forum representatives agree the inclusion of the RPA addition to 10.1.14 of the 2020-21 Islington Scheme for Financing Schools.</p> <p>That should agreement be obtained from Schools Forum, the updated Scheme will be published to schools relating to the 2020-21 financial year.</p> <p>AGREED</p>	
11.	<p>SCHOOL FORUM WORKPLAN</p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had been circulated. High Needs item moving in to future meeting. Audit programme – the Audit Team is now fully staffed so the Audit Programme will be in place for next year – in July 2021 the findings will go to Schools Forum for discussion about the findings and any actions needed. Audit will be attending SBMs briefings.</p>	
12.	<p>AOB and close of meeting</p> <p>DS gave a verbal update on COVID exceptional costs – 33 schools who had claimed within the financial limit and the three items have just received their funding. Other schools are still to receive their payments. We should have a full picture of which schools receiving funding by the end of November.</p> <p>A M-L thanked everyone for their inputs and closed the meeting at 3.25pm</p> <p>Dates of future meetings overleaf:</p>	
	<p>DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS</p>	

SCHOOLS FORUM

Thursday 26 November 2020, 2-4pm:

Thursday 21 January 2021, 2-4pm

Thursday 20 May 2020, 2-4pm

Thursday 15 July 2020, 2-4pm

	<u>DSG SUBGROUP</u>	<u>CHAIRS' AGENDA PLANNING SUBGROUP</u>
Thursday 14 January 2021	2-3pm	3-4pm
Thursday 13 May 2021	2-3pm	3-4pm
Thursday 8 July 2021	2-3pm	3-4pm

EARLY YEARS SUBGROUP

Friday 4 December 2020, 1-3pm

Friday 15 January 2021, 1-3pm

Friday 7 May 2021, 1-3pm

CAPITAL SUB GROUP

Thursday 12 November 2020, 12.30-2pm

Thursday 24 February 2021, 12.30-2pm

Thursday 13 May 2021, 12.30-2pm

HIGH NEEDS SUB GROUP

Monday 16 November 2020, 11am to 1pm

Monday 1 March 2021, 11am to 1pm

Monday 17 May 2021, 11am to 1pm

The meeting closed at 3.50pm