

Islington Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20 May 2021 at 2pm – held virtually (MS Teams).

PRESENT

Forum Members

Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy (AM-L)	Head teacher, Newington Green Primary School (Chair)
Alan Streeter (AS)	Head teacher, Beacon Height Secondary School (Islington Futures Federation)
Jenny Lewis (JL)	Head teacher, Thornhill Primary School
Patrick Mildren (PM)	Head teacher, Canonbury Primary School
Coleen Marshall (CMA)	14 to 19s partnership - City & Islington Sixth Form College
Cassie Moss (CM)	Head teacher, Yerbury Primary School
Tanya Watson (TW)	Head teacher, William Tyndale (Primary Academy)
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
Paul Lasok (PL)	Governor, St Aloysius Secondary School (and St Joseph's)
Vicky Linsley (VL)	Head teacher, St Mary Magdalene Academy
Claire Hersey (CHe)	Principal Finance Officer, City of London Academy Trust
Maggie Elliott (ME)	Governor, Montem Primary School (Edventure Collaborative Federation with Drayton Park) (Vice-chair)
Francis Gonzalez (FrG)	Head teacher, Richard Cloudesley Special School
Joe Simpson (JS)	Governor, St Peter and St Paul's (first hour)
Andrew Bosi (AB)	Governor, Rotherfield Primary School

Other Attendees

Tim Partington (TP)	Head of Children's Services, Finance
Jane Wright (JW)	Manager Schools and EY Governance (Clerk)
Debbie Stevenson (DS)	Head of Early Years and Schools Funding
Alison Cramer (AC)	Assistant Director, School Support and Information Services

Apologies

Fiona Godfrey (FG)	Head teacher, Kate Greenaway Nursery School
Mita Pandya (MP)	Executive Head, Archway and Willow Children's Centres
Nigel Smith (NS)	Head teacher, New River College (Pupil Referral Unit)
Cllr Rakhia Ismail (RI)	Elected member
Anita Grant (AG)	CEO, Islington Play Association

	Agenda item	Action
1.	<p>Apologies for absence/not in attendance</p> <p>AM-L welcomed all to the meeting, including the four new members, Alan Streeter,</p>	

	Jenny Lewis, Patrick Mildren and Colleen Marshall. Apologies as above.	
2.	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 January 2021</p> <p>a. Accuracy – the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting..</p> <p>b. Matters Arising – there were no matters arising.</p> <p>AGREED</p>	
3.	<p>Schools forum composition</p> <p>The clerk (JW) spoke to a report previously circulated.</p> <p>3.1. Update on elections/appointments since last Forum meeting</p> <p>3.1.a Primary head teacher representatives Patrick Mildren, Head of Canonbury, was elected unopposed – term of office up to 31 March 2025. Jenny Lewis, Head of Thornhill, was elected unopposed on 6 May 2021 – term of office until 5 May 2025.</p> <p>3.1.b. Secondary head teacher representative Alan Streeter, Head of Beacon High, was elected unopposed - term of office up to 31 March 2025.</p> <p>3.1.c. Primary Academy Representative</p> <p>Primary academies agreed to the re-appointment of Tanya Watson, Head of William Tyndale. Term of office up to 31 March 2025 (final term of office according to terms of reference).</p> <p>3.1.d. 14 - 19 Partnership representation</p> <p>Colleen Marshall, Vice-Principal of City and Islington College, has agreed to take up the position to replace Bryan Johnson, with term of office up to 13 May 2025.</p> <p>3.2. Upcoming elections/appointments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Non Schools Member Early Years Practitioner representative from 30.8.21 (currently MP) ○ Non Schools Voluntary & Community representative from 27.9.21 (currently AG) ○ PRU (New River College) from 25 October 2021 (currently NS) <p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non Schools Member Early Years Practitioner representative – JW will raise at a summer term meeting of heads of children’s centres • Non Schools Member Voluntary and Community representative – to raise at Early Years Providers Forum in summer term (attended by private, voluntary and independent nurseries) <p>3.3. Election of Vice-chair</p> <p>With the departure from the Forum of Jo Dibbs, there was a vacancy for vice-chair.</p>	Clerk

	<p>The clerk emailed members of the Forum on 13 May seeking nominations for vice-chair. The vice-chair needed to be a head teacher, given the other vice-chair was a governor.</p> <p>The clerk had received no nominations ahead of the meeting, nor did she receive any at the Schools Forum meeting. Head teachers needed more time to think about this, so it was agreed to bring back the election of vice-chair to the July Schools Forum meeting.</p> <p>NOTED AND AGREED</p>	Clerk.
4.	<p>School Balances (DRAFT: 2020-21)</p> <p>This is an interim report, prior to deduction of earmarked balances for capital purposes. A final report will come to Forum at the July meeting.</p> <p>School balances are currently £9,458,688 compared to a balance of £10,274,842 in 2019-20, representing a decrease of £0.816m over 2020-21.</p> <p>Nine schools were expected to end in deficit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drayton Park • Canonbury • Duncombe • Grafton • Highbury Quadrant • Prior Weston • St Andrews • Winton • Beacon High <p>AMSI School had moved out of deficit.</p> <p>It had been a strange year for schools, with savings to be made while sources of income such as lettings and out of school activities had been impacted by COVID. Some were only just in deficit and, if the schools had notified the Finance team earlier, action may have been possible to avoid them going in to deficit.</p> <p>DS commented on the significant change in outturn positions between the end of quarter 3 when balances were projected at £4.1m and the end of quarter 4 when balances had increased to £9.4m, so £5m higher in only three months. We would not expect significant movements in budgets in the last three months of the financial year.</p> <p>The Finance Team has written to those schools with a variance greater or lesser than 10% between those two periods, as there are implications for budget planning and monitoring.</p> <p>There is a proposed change in the Scheme for Financing Schools (Item 7) whereby we will ask schools to submit a monthly budget monitor for all three months of quarter 4 so the LA can keep a closer eye on outturns.</p> <p>There will also be targeted training to schools – headteachers, school business managers and governors – around budget planning and monitoring.</p>	

	<p>AB asked if this situation with regards to Qtr 3 was unique this year or an historical pattern. DS said they would check what had happened in previous years.</p> <p>She added that by the end of May, all maintained schools will have submitted their ratified budgets for the next three years, including projected balances. These will be brought to the Forum in July 2021.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that budget setting was being carried out against a context of falling rolls and the School Organisation / Places Planning programme. This was why Alison Cramer (AC), who is leading on this work, was attending Schools Forum now.</p> <p>FrG asked if there was an early indications of why some percentages in the spreadsheet in Appendix A were so high. DS replied that this could reflect the accuracy of ratified budgets that were submitted in May 2020.</p> <p>CM commented that some savings may be false if activities did not take place. She felt it was a good idea to ask schools to submit balances monthly in the final 3 months.</p> <p>AC commented that the School Organisation Board was aiming for strategic thinking across the budget strands, so for example involving Candy Holder in relation to SEND and Penny Kenway in relation to Fairer Together. The chair of the board is Dave Hodgkinson who is the Director of Resources at the council.</p> <p>TP understood that school budgets are under pressure, but he said it was critical for schools to be as accurate as possible, as the information about school balances was being used to make strategic decisions.</p> <p>SS stressed that it had not been a normal year and that it was important to check trends in the past and proceed with caution. She added that surpluses may disappear in the next two years due to falling rolls.</p> <p>DS confirmed in response to AM's question that July Forum will look at the three years prior to 2021-22, then 2021-24.</p> <p>NOTED</p>	<p>DS</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Provisional DSG Budget Outturn</p> <p>TP reported to a paper that had been circulated.</p> <p>The council was just closing its accounts now. There was not expected to be a change but July Forum would confirm the outturn or discuss any update.</p> <p>There was an underspend of £4.6m, partly reflecting the COVID impact. The largest underspend was in relation to High Needs mainly due to children not being in settings and the delay to the roll-out of additional needs funding.</p> <p>Schools Block – centrally retained funding for growth (£300k) and falling rolls (£400k).</p> <p>The following variances against the budget were forecast, leading to a net overspend of - £163k:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> - £93k underspend against the budget for falling rolls (23%). <input type="checkbox"/> - £70k underspend against the budget for growth (23%). 	

Also the one off cash payment of £321K in relation to the Secondary Unit of Funding from 2019/20.

Proposals for how to use these underspends would go to Forum in July.

De-delegated budget (maintained schools)

There were the following underspends:

- £61k underspend against the de-delegated NQT release time budget (0.5%).
- £2k unallocated priority support and schools in financial difficulty funding (0.5%).
- £22k underspend against the redundancy budget (5.9%).
- + £5k overspend against the trade union facility time budget (8.3%).

These would be forwarded to 2021/22 except for the NQT money as the system was changing with the Early Career Framework (ECF) coming in from September 2021. A paper on how to manage that £61K underspend would come to Forum in July (Anthony Doudle).

Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)

Underspend of £44K in relation to school admissions – staffing and remote hearings costs lower. The Government is reducing this funding over time – by £570K over the next three years.

Higher Needs

Delays in the roll-out of the area-based model in mainstream settings led to carry forward of £447K from the budget of £600K. There was also underspend of £275K in relation to provision not in our special schools, and £254K underspend in relation to managed moves and exclusions. Also the extra £589K from the DfE was unallocated.

However, there was an overspend of £23K for SEND Outreach and it was worth noting that costs (of topping up EHC plans) will increase by an extra £900K in 2021/22.

In addition, following the consultation by the DfE on funding distribution of High Needs funding across the country, Islington could lose almost £947K in 2022/23.

Early Years

There was an underspend of £2.496m - £463k of this underspend was the 2 year old balance from previous years and was being held to smooth in new funding arrangements for providers in future years. It was noted that the DfE may withdraw permission for disapplications in future. There was a small underspend for 3s and 4s re. disability access fund.

The contingency balance was about £1.4m. TP reminded Forum of the need to be careful about this – fewer top-ups had been needed as some children were not in their settings due to COVID, but this situation would change. Also, as funding for 2s, 3s and 4s had returned to participation based, it was estimated that we could lose £762K.

CM referred to the increasing number and complexity of cases of children with SEND, the fact that the DfE had only recently provided extra funding for demographic pressures and only on a one year at a time basis. Also no extra money had been provided when the responsibilities of LAs had been extended to young people aged up to 25 years old.

	<p>AM asked in relation to SB funding if there was any early information/indicators of pupil numbers in September. JL added that it is difficult to set budgets without pupil numbers. AC replied that very early data would be available imminently – not yet modelled amount of DSG based on numbers. DS said she would aim to model DSG and Falling Rolls funding in time for July Forum.</p> <p>NOTED</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>High Needs Place Numbers 2021-22</p> <p>DS spoke to a report previously circulated.</p> <p>Forum was being asked to agree, retrospectively, place numbers at maintained special schools, the pupil referral unit (New River College) and resource units, as it does every year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laycock Hearing Unit – 64 places • NRC – 108 places (physical capacity) – funded at that level and funding from Higher Needs block (base budget) • Richard Cloudesley – 87 places • Samuel Rhodes – 124 places <p>Top up funding to maintained schools – inflationary increase of 4% - same top up being applied to special schools, PRU and resource units. The additional top up allocated to special schools and the PRU to reflect historic premises funding was rolled into pupil top up post the increase.</p> <p>SS asked how many students would 108 places at NRC equate to. This fluctuates – between 60 and 140. There were fewer in the COVID year, plus Alternative Provision children were on roll.</p> <p>CM was surprised to see 10 fewer spaces in special schools. DS explained this reflected lower numbers in the COVID year. While they will move out of maintained to special schools, the maximum capacity has been reached in special schools.</p> <p>DS confirmed in answer to a question from FM that there would be funding in 2021-22 for the new hubs and resource units in mainstream schools.</p> <p>FrG stated that Richard Cloudesley was at maximum capacity with 68 in terms of buildings – they have had to convert the staff room into classroom space.</p> <p>PB mentioned that The Bridge is not included in the report – they had actually expanded and numbers are expected to go up.</p> <p>DS confirmed to TW that academies did receive top up funding.</p> <p>AGREED</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Scheme for Financing Schools 2021-22</p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had previously been circulated.</p>	

	<p>There were no directed changes from the Government. But there were local proposed changes which will have to be consulted on in June before coming to Schools Forum in July for formal decision.</p> <p>As mentioned under Item 4 above, a key local change is the proposal that all schools provide a monthly monitor to LA in the final quarter of the final year (January to March) and for the school to report on material variances on projected balances. Schools in deficit and schools buying in to the LBI Finance SLA already do this.</p> <p>AM queried how this information would be used – it is good practice but has impact in terms of workload</p> <p>Another key change proposed – to highlight the governing body’s responsibility for acknowledging and responding to future years’ deficit financial forecasts. The scheme will specify that the governing body is responsible for ensuring appropriate action is taken to address deficits and that this is documented within relevant minutes.</p> <p>The LA can ask for further information in relation to submitted 3-year budget forecasts, eg pupil number forecasts and income assumptions. This to be included as a proposal within the Scheme.</p> <p>CM queried the extra cost of extra monitoring work with the increased submission of balances. DS explained that her Traded Services do this work anyway at no extra cost to schools. Issues that could be looked at to avoid deficits included ensuring raising accruals and projecting EHCP children accurately. Identify problems sooner so can make changes and have tighter end of year balances.</p> <p>AM suggested the vision for education in Islington was missing from the scheme. AC flagged up that exploring the local vision for education was the purpose of the meeting of head teachers with the Chief Executive, Linzi Roberts-Egan, later that day. She clarified that the Scheme was a technical document. The vision should inform Schools Forum decisions rather than this ‘rulebook’.</p> <p>NOTED</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Schools Forum Workplan – Forward Planning</p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had been circulated prior to the meeting. Changes to the last version were in red.</p> <p>The July 2021 agenda will include final school balances and DSG outturn 2020-21, estimated DSG allocations for 2022-23 and proposals for use of Falling Rolls/Growth funding for 2022-23.</p> <p>It was noted that currently it was a busy time for Admissions, with numbers constantly changing, and no information about DfE increases until late June/July.</p> <p>NOTED</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Report from Capital Subgroup</p> <p>ME, chair of the subgroup, gave a verbal update.</p>	

	<p>This term the group had discussed what happened to the previous year's capital budget and had looked forward. The budget of £4.7m had been underspent by £2.1m due to the impacts of COVID. This balance has been carried forward to 2021-22.</p> <p>The budget for 2021-22 was £3.1m – to be confirmed. The plan on spending this was based on asset management plans held by LBI – there were currently no large school projects. One area was new High Needs provision - £1.8m. This was to be aligned with the SEND Review and across all types of setting – maintained, alternative provision, special schools. This programme was being discussed/planned by the High Needs Subgroup and Disability Board. Matched-funding– the school's contribution had reduced to 25%. £230K plus underspend from 2020/21 14 schools had submitted 16 applications for this funding. Decisions were due to be made the following week.</p> <p>ME asked for more people on this group – FM volunteered. ME thanked FM and asked secondary and special school members to think about joining too as under-represented on the group at present. It was noted that people not on Schools Forum could also be invited. FrG and JL also volunteered.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>School Organisation Programme / Places Planning</p> <p>AC gave a verbal update.</p> <p>The 2020 School Place Planning Projections had been published. This showed a 14% surplus across primary places; and 16% surplus in Reception at 2019/20, and a 16% surplus in secondary that would reduce to 10% over the next five years. . In part this drop in demand for places has been driven by declining birth rates across London. Falling EU migration is also a recognised factor driven by the decrease in immigration, particularly for work. Surplus places in primary is a key priority to address.</p> <p>The School Organisation Programme Board meetings had had good representation from head teachers and chairs of governors – two meetings so far. The terms of reference and principles for carrying forward this work had been agreed.</p> <p>In autumn 2021 there would be consultation on proposals for 2023 admissions,</p> <p>AM suggested the workshop with the CE on school places planning needed to look at options, thinking and discussion. The vision for education discussed at the first workshop with the CE would need to feed in.</p> <p>AM noted the possible need to close buildings and the threat of free schools then opening in these spaces, thereby compounding the surplus places problem – important instead to use any spaces that may be freed up creatively. AM asked if this was part of the scope of the board.</p> <p>AC confirmed she would add innovation and use of spaces to the principles.</p> <p>AC explained briefly the principles of the programme at the request of SS.</p> <p>JL asked when we projected numbers would be going up again – to avoid under capacity in the future. And how we change the mind set of parents whose perception of schools was linked social media?</p>	

	<p>AC referenced the School Place Planning report and the 'Do the Maths 2020' Report published by London Councils.</p> <p>NOTED AND AGREED for Terms of Reference to be circulated with these minutes</p>							
<p>11.</p>	<p>AOB and close of meeting</p> <p>AM suggested holding the next forum on 15 July in the big hall at Newington Green Primary – large enough to comply with COVID safety requirements.</p>							
	<p>DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS</p> <p><u>SCHOOLS FORUM</u></p> <p>Thursday 15 July 2020, 2-4pm</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;"></td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;"><u>DSG SUBGROUP</u></td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;"><u>CHAIRS' AGENDA PLANNING SUBGROUP</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thursday 8 July 2021</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2-3pm</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3-4pm</td> </tr> </table> <p><u>EARLY YEARS SUBGROUP</u></p> <p><u>CAPITAL SUB GROUP</u></p> <p><u>HIGH NEEDS SUB GROUP</u></p>		<u>DSG SUBGROUP</u>	<u>CHAIRS' AGENDA PLANNING SUBGROUP</u>	Thursday 8 July 2021	2-3pm	3-4pm	
	<u>DSG SUBGROUP</u>	<u>CHAIRS' AGENDA PLANNING SUBGROUP</u>						
Thursday 8 July 2021	2-3pm	3-4pm						