

**South Gloucestershire Schools Forum
Minutes of Meeting held on
Thursday 19 November 2020
Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT:

Sarah Lovell (Chair)	Finance Director, Cabot Learning Federation
Dave Baker (Deputy Chair)	CEO, Olympus Academy Trust
Terry Redfern (rep for Kim Garland)	Headteacher, Brimsham Green
Pippa Osborne	Headteacher Christ Church Junior School
Nicky Edwards	Natural Choice Nurseries
Diane Owen	Chair, King's Oak Academy
Stuart Evans	South Gloucestershire and Stroud College
Fr. Malcolm Strange	Diocese Rep
Steve Moir	Headteacher, Bradley Stoke
Susie Weaver	Executive Headteacher, Cabot Learning Federation
Carl Lander	Hanham Primary Federation (HPF)
Louise Leader	Headteacher, Pathways Learning Centre
Linda Porter	Governor, Watermore School
Lisa Parker	Headteacher, Warmley Park School
Susan Brobyn	Director of Finance & Operation, CSET
Bernice Webber	Headteacher, Old Sodbury CE Primary
Will Roberts	CEO, Castle School Education Trust (CSET)

Officers:

Mustafa Salih, Head of Financial Management and Business Support
Hilary Smith, Head of Education, Learning and Skills
Caroline Warren, Finance Business Partner
Michelle Palmer, Senior Finance Officer
Alison Davies, Business Support Manager

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Attendees were welcomed by the Chair.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Trevor Jones, Clare Haughton, David Jenkins, Richard Aquilina

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - None

3. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT

None

4. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Three people have left Schools Forum and we have gone out for nominations for those posts.

Two posts coming to the end of term. A couple of amendments for schools and once updated will publish a new list on the website.

2 vacancies for Primary Maintained Headteachers, to be discussed at the Heads' Executive meeting next Friday.

5. MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING – 20 OCTOBER 2020

Action: MS to share the dates of the forthcoming Governor Consultation meetings. Done

Action: MS to review the formula in more detail as to why some schools have benefited and others have not.

MS - We went through the calculations in quite detail and all the calculations were correct.

CW – Gave an explanation of the calculations as it looked like the all-through schools were getting back more than primary or secondary and having gone through it, the formula is correct.

SL – Thank you for confirming the formula is accurate and has been applied

Diane Owen to be removed from the list of attendees for the October meeting as she had sent apologies for the meeting.

Confirmed remainder Minutes were an accurate reflection of the meeting.

6. SCHOOLS BUDGET CONSULTATION - OPTIONS

MS – Not able to email a formal report out but did share the consultation responses for the Forum Members to review ahead of the meeting.

MS produced slides for the Forum.

Following the consultation process we are seeking a formal view from the Schools Forum for the disapplication to be sent out tomorrow to the secretary of state.

The disapplication request will be based on Schools Forum views tonight. We then wait until probably the end of December for our actual Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) figures and National Funding Formula (NFF) is released, which will allow us to start setting the schools budgets for 2021/22 and hopefully we would have heard

from the Secretary of State by 21st January when we meet again as a Forum. If not approved by the SoS, we will need to bring some other options back to the Schools Forum.

It will go to Cabinet first and get approved at Full Council on 10th February. By 28th February 2021 we would need to have sent all schools their budget allocations.

Consultation outcomes – I presented the Options at 2 governor sessions which were very well attended and there was quite a lot of engagement. I also presented at Secondary and Primary Heads' groups. Based on the terms of the consultation, it was a quite clear cut response.

Out of 117 schools, 87 responded.

- 84% were in favour of Option 2, the Council's preferred Option to transfer £2.2m and matches the Schools Forum recommended Option from the previous meeting.
- 14% in favour of Option 3.
- 2% in favour of Option 1.

Feedback comments from schools were included in the email, some challenging comments asking for more clarification of the work we are doing improving the SEND system. Recognise work needed to be done in that area and will be discussed at HNWG to talk about what we are doing is positive and will lead to change in figures.

£2.2m to support pupil places to make sure we continue the cluster funding – some support for schools to allow them for residential savings. Some funding into the early years sector as we know that the earlier we can intervene and give some support for our special schools to meet specialist need and not drift to residential places the better.

Schools Forum to make a formal approval of that recommendation.

MS - We do need to work on the cluster funds and making sure schools are more engaged and understanding of the work being done and I think it would be quite useful to have a bit more detail in the HNWG group with a view of what we can do better in that area and for schools to see the benefit.

SW - Next meeting of the HNWG will be purposeful and clear and move forward to get back on track. New meeting date of 16th December arranged and to keep abreast of who can attend that date. Bring a report back to the Schools Forum following the meeting on 16th December.

HS – Some clusters are reporting 90% being involved in the cluster initiative and at the last cluster monitoring board there were high levels across the board on the message of focusing and delivering to schools. Suggested a newsletter to raise the profile. The launch of the South Glos Way Toolkit was attended by over 200 people and we need to give some thought to how we make sure we see more of a coherent strategy.

Action: HS to take forward the request for a regular update at the end of each term.

DO – Communication – I notice some of the comments were querying the impact of this money but wondered whether more needs to be done to make schools aware the Forum are doing that challenge on their behalf and schools do understand the challenges.

MS – Following on after the Forum's views, whether it would be worth producing a joint letter to schools saying thanks and explaining where we are going to next and answer and challenge the scrutiny of the Schools Forum report.

DO – They have to ensure they are being heard.

SL – Good to acknowledge.

Action: MS – To draft something and the Chair agreed to sign the letter.

SL – We have had a high level of engagement from schools in terms of the response and it looks positive to pursue Option 2 and transparency what the fund is being used for to invest the £2.2m.

SL – Requested any objections to the above proposal. None received. Approved by the Schools Forum.

Sarah thanked Mustafa and Caroline Warren in relation to the work – challenging in terms of timeframe and the pandemic. Full support of the disapplication going to the Secretary of State and we would need to manage that if not approved.

NE – Is there any news regarding the Early Years deficit?

MS – We have put a strong case as part of the issue to the DfE using the census data to fund us next year but have not heard back yet and will give an update at the next Schools Forum.

7. HS – We talked about the review of the Inclusion fund and to support early intervention to use that High Needs funding to match the Inclusion fund to use that whole pool of funding more strategically.

8. IMPACT OF SEND CLUSTERS

HS – COVID has had an impact in terms of the pace of progress but all the clusters are operating and moving as best as they can from the start of the academic year.

Evidence of Impact

HS – Difficult times for education outcomes and have requested Internal Audit to provide assurance that the governance arrangements are robust and to prepare a report and share at the next Schools Forum on the initial feedback that it does have the potential to deliver the objectives but also deliver value for money and we stay focussed on the key objective.

Requests for EHC needs assessments have continued during the lockdown period (March 2020 – August 2020). For the academic year 2019/2020 there were 202 requests across all clusters and 135 agreed (67% agreed).

Needs assessment

Clusters seem to be making a difference and we need to drill into the data across all the schools and see where the needs assessments are coming from. Quite a number of parents doing direct referrals so the aim of the clusters is to meet the needs of pupils earlier and provide a greater level of SEN support.

Exclusions

We have seen some impact in relation to exclusions and again the clusters are using the data to support and challenge some schools. The Fixed Term Exclusions have significantly increased and again the clusters are aware of this and able to then put that back to schools. Important for all schools to be engaged so that we can make the system work as a whole.

Summary

Feedback getting directly from schools and also via the individual cluster leads shows a desire to work in partnership as a whole to have a significant impact. Positive feedback from SENCOs who are benefiting from the opportunities of this pilot. Internal audit will provide assurance to Schools Forum that the appropriate financial controls are in place. The Audit team will also be asked to provide a view on value for money. In terms of children with complex needs and because of the cluster of schools and change in curriculum, we have received quite a lot in relation to children with social and mental health needs and this is a big area of focus going forward.

PO – Do we anticipate a rise in EHCP applications now as a result of the increased need for COVID?

HS – Yes, we can definitely see a significant spike in social and mental health needs as a consequence of COVID and need to put focus on that area.

HS – Kim Lloyd leading on the SEN clusters with Kate and the toolkit in terms of what do we need to do to accelerate our progress in relation to EHCNa and look at how we put greater emphasis on that area.

LL – EHCHa - if we had the HNWG reassuring Forum members that some of these questions would have been asking around some of the data, are we certain that we have got the key learning across the clusters and take forward.

Action: HS – To provide extra level of detail to the report and to pick up at the next meeting.

NE – Are there any funding resources to help with the issues caused by COVID?

HS – There are additional funding streams to respond to the additional pressure of COVID as opposed to transfer from high needs block to schools block but it is something we are looking at and we are developing our strategy for primary mental health in developing our capacity for funding from the funding for wellbeing and education and the Council have matched that funding. Also there is the money available from NHS England to create Primary Health Specialists. We are going to benefit as Phase 1 from the start of next year and we are using some of the additional funding to support and respond to the impact of COVID.

HS – It is useful to provide an appendix to understand the difference in terms of the make up of the clusters and the communities they serve.

SL – To note the report and to encourage participation in clusters. More work to be done for all schools to participate and forum to support that endeavour. Agreed with HS suggestion to have an update in the summer before the summer break. Look forward to seeing what the impact is in relation to the work later in the year.

SCHOOLS FORUM FORWARD PLAN

Jan 21st	1	Growth Funding Policy	Caroline W
	2	Q2 update	Caroline W
	3	Deficit Recovery Plan	Mustafa Salih
	4	Early Years Funding	Hilary Smith
	5	Internal Audit feedback from Academies	Dave Baker
	6	NFF Funding rates for 2021/22	Mustafa Salih
	7	High Needs Working Group Update	Susie Weaver

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

HS – We have appointed Hugh Disley as the new Lead for Inclusion and SEND and Hugh will be joining us on 4th January. Hugh will be taking some lead of the HNWG in future.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- i. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)
- ii. National Funding Formula (NFF)
- iii. Secretary of State (SoS)
- iv. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)
- v. High Needs Working Group (HNWG)
- vi. Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)
- vii. Education Health Care Needs Assessment (EHCNa)
- viii. Department for Education (DfE)
- ix. SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator)