

The KIRKLEES SCHOOLS FORUM

(Schools Funding Consultative Group)
meeting held on **Friday 15th May 2009**
9:30am at the Deighton Centre

Item
2
12.06.09

Present:

Julie Helm	Nursery School Heads (1)
Graham Altoft, Kath Benetis [sub for Gill Goodswen], Carol Crossland, Michelle Lee (vice-chair), Diana Wilson	Primary School Heads (6)
	Middle School Heads (1)
Jackie Eames, Toby Eastaugh, Christine Spencer (Chair), Janet Tolley	High School Heads (4)
Philip Gibbins	Special School Heads (1)
Jo Bailey-Taylor (NASUWT), Pat Colling (Kirklees Governors Association), Sarah Ellis (pre-School Learning Alliance), Howard Roberts (NUT)	Non-school members (6)
Angela Farmer (Senior Finance Officer (Resources & Support)) Warwick Firmin (School Funding Strategy Manager, R&S); Clerk David Gearing (Financial Delegation Manager, R&S); Minute Clerk Rosemary Gibson (Acting Head of Resources & Support) Margaret Swinden (Finance Manager, Resources & Support)	Kirklees Children & Young People Service Officers in Support
	Observers

1. Apologies for Absence

Julie Bowdidge (Learning Service), Jenny Chamberlain (KPH), Margaret Cobb (Learning & Skills Council observer), Gillian Collins (ATL), Gill Goodswen (KPH), Caroline Thompson (KMSH)

Rosemary Gibson was welcomed in her role as Acting Head of Resources & Support and also representing the ChYPS Management Team.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 April

The minutes were agreed to be a true record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising from meeting 24 April

3.1 Staff Retention in Schools affected by the Schools for the Future proposals [minute 4.2.1 of the 24 April meeting]

Margaret Parker, Programme Director for Building Schools for the Future was invited to attend a future Schools Forum meeting to talk about how the Schools Reorganisation budget is being used to support schools affected by the proposals. An update on the idea of Change Director posts for the transitional period would also be welcome.

3.2 Update on the Children & Young People Service Budget [minute 5.3 of 24 April]

It was clarified that the additional £3m generated by the new administration's revision to the initial Council Tax rise actually affected the wider Council budget not just that of the Children & Young People Service.

3.3 Update on Standards Fund [minute 6 of 24 April]

It is understood that both the School Lunch Grant and the KS2 Music Grant are about to be released to schools.

4. Feedback from Heads meetings

4.1 Family Intervention proposal / Sure Start Funding

Kirklees High School Heads [KHSH] were concerned about the projected £600k deficit expected in the 2008-09 retained DSG budget. There was a unanimous view that the £200k underspend in the Kirklees Early Years Service budget should be used to mitigate the overall DSG overspend which will, in the main, have to be recharged against school budgets in the new financial year. Another factor in this decision was the fact that the Family Intervention programme will expand to deal with around 75 families in any case without reliance upon this particular one-off funding.

A similar view was reported back from Kirklees Primary Heads [KPH]. It was questioned whether the proposal was actually the best use to which a temporary windfall could be directed. Other priorities such as the retained DSG overspend and/or boosting Education Social Work support in some way were seen to be better options for use of the money.

It was unfortunate that the report upon the impact of the Family Intervention Projects had not been circulated as that might have enhanced the debate.

Agreed: To not support the proposed use of the money. The underspend will now be considered as part of the wider exercise to deal with the final declared position in the 2008-09 retained DSG budget.

5. Initial reports Year End 2008-09

5.1 Retained DSG

A paper was circulated to summarise the declared year end position in the 2008-09 retained Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget. Taken at face value, the account looks to be in surplus – the total of the budget headings overspent, £1,441,600, is outweighed by the total of the budget headings underspent, -(£1,942,000), to give a net surplus of -(£500,400). **However**, there are several underspends where a case could be made for rolling unspent provision over into 2009-10 to be re-committed then. This would clearly reduce the amount of credit available to offset the overspend total. The paper provides an initial view of what could be regarded as commitments to roll over into 2009-10: -

	£'000s	
Support of for EBD & Exclusions	433.3	[Schools Forum has kept SEN underspends within SEN in the past]
Commitments within LMS Contingency	350.0	SEN BESD Development Plan
	133.0	Catering Single Status
	238.0	FRS17
Insurance Cover Scheme	208.7	[In the past retained for 1 year and then returned to schools buying in]
Schools Forum	1.8	
Premature Retirement	9.5	
TOTAL INITIAL COMMITMENTS	1374.3	

Acceptance of the above commitments would reduce the credit sum available to offset the overspend total to just -(£567.7k), creating a gap to deal with of £873.9k. It is known that both Intech and the Head Teacher Wellbeing Service are preparing proposals to roll forward their underspends into 2009-10 as well. Any uncleared deficit will need to be redeemed by the DSG system in 2009-10.

One significant piece of the jigsaw which is still missing is the final declaration by the DCSF of Kirklees' 2009-10 DSG figure. If the final figure is higher than that used to make the declared 2009-10 Budget Share allocations to schools, then the bonus could be used to help with the brought forward 2008-09 position. The possibility also exists that the final announcement could make the situation even worse. The finalisation of DSG is usually announced in early June. Schools Forum really could do with being in possession of all the relevant figures before being asked to recommend the necessary actions to balance off the account. It was agreed to rearrange the meeting scheduled for 5 June to the afternoon of Friday 12 June to (hopefully) ensure that the final DSG figure is available for consideration.

5.2 School Balances

An initial report on the balance positions presented by individual schools at year end 2008-09 was also circulated to the meeting. The total balance position across schools is largely unchanged - £18.05m at year end 2007-08 and £18.09m at year end 2009-10. However, there are some interesting differences to report within the bottom line. The ISB balance has actually fallen from £13.44m to £11.98m whilst the balances within Standard Fund accounts have risen from £4.21m to £5.84m. This movement was felt by some to be partly due to the allocation of Extended Schools monies late in the year together with National Challenge funding. The number of schools presenting deficit positions has fallen from eight to four (although the total deficit balance has risen slightly between years).

There is a positive trend in the excess balances. The number of schools exhibiting an excess balance fell from 59 in 2007-08 to 50 in 2008-09, with the overall value of the excess falling significantly from £2.81m to £1.54m. A separate list was provided to Schools Forum of the 50 schools, showing the cash value of the excess element. The schools have been sent a letter requiring them to explain and provide evidence of how the excess will be committed.

The report on school balances elicited much comment and debate. As happened last year, a small sub-group of Schools Forum members and officers will meet to consider in some detail the less-than-straightforward evidence provided by some of the schools. The Schools Forum members who volunteered to attend the sub-group were C Spencer, M Lee and J Bailey-Taylor.

6. Nursery Funding Report

To supplement the materials circulated at the last Schools Forum meeting, a further paper was distributed which explained how the sample of 26 private providers was chosen and the steps taken to try to ensure that there is a representative mix of the types of providers delivering the free entitlement in terms of.....

- Deprivation – whether the children they have are from deprived or more affluent backgrounds
- Location – do they serve urban or rural communities?
- Size – small (< 20 places), medium (21-30 places) or large (> 30 places)?
- Quality – what are the providers' Ofsted grades against the Every Child Matters headings of "Be Healthy", "Stay Safe", "Enjoy and Achieve", "Positive Contribution" and "Organisation"? A mix of inadequate, satisfactory, good and outstanding grades is reflected in the chosen sample.

The resulting cost models were revisited as lack of time had prevented their proper consideration at the last Schools Forum meeting.

Comparison of identified unit costs.

- In a maintained nursery unit the unit costs ranged from £3.67 per hour of provision in a 24-place nursery to £3.09 per hour in a 72-place unit.
- For the maintained nursery schools the unit cost varies from £5.05 in a 96-place school to £4.64 in one with 120 places.
- The unit costs in private settings, offering full day care or sessional activity, ranged from £4.75 for a 16-place setting to £3.80 for a 32-place setting.
- The analysis also includes a derived hourly unit cost for childminder activity - £8.91 for 3 places.

Clearly the unit cost exhibits economies of scale – generally, the larger the number of the places, the lower the unit cost.

The discussion largely focused around the practical difficulties surrounding the construction of a Single Funding Formula and how that might impact upon the various types of provider. One of the main difficulties will be for maintained settings in reacting to termly revisions of actual patterns of children's attendance in the provision. There is a problem for the purposes of overall planning in forecasting the effects of the Single Point of Admission and anticipating the demographics of flexibility and choice. For maintained settings with largely fixed staffing costs, how easily can they react to possibly fluctuating funding patterns over the year? Perhaps the annualised hours contract approach enshrined within Single Status will be helpful to the process? Also it might be a good idea for a pool of qualified supply staff to be centrally maintained to be called upon to react to fluctuating patterns of demand?

It was asked whether the numbers of children PVI providers can take is governed by the same physical capacity assessments which determine admission numbers for schools. It was also asked what the adopted hourly rate of funding will assume in terms of staffing – will it reflect teacher salary rates or not? Officers reiterated that work on the Single Funding Formula (SFF) was ongoing and further updates will be provided over the coming months. There is a requirement to carry out an impact assessment of the effects of the SFF upon the various providers of the free entitlement. The shape of the SFF will probably have a common base funding rate with additional factors built in on top to reflect factors such as deprivation levels, rurality and quality issues.

7. Review of the Constitution of Schools Forum

It was noted that there is no Government-led imperative this year to amend the School Forum constitution. The only pressing issue is UNISON's request for formal membership. The regulations state that non-school representation must comprise no more than one third of the total Schools Forum membership. Currently Kirklees' Schools Forum has 6 non-school members out of a total membership of 19. Inclusion of a representative from UNISON would mean some adjustment to the current complexion of the Schools Forum – either the Schools Forum would have to grow by two more school members to remain legal or a UNISON member would have to replace one of the existing non-school members. There was some reluctance expressed by many around the table to change the delicate representative balance which already exists and seems to work very well.

It is still thought that UNISON may not fully understand the role of the Schools Forum. Schools Forum members contribute their professional advice about the topics presented. What Schools Forum business does not touch upon are the employee relations aspects that might arise from proposals and developments. The Employee Liaison Groups fulfil that function, with UNISON already playing an active role in the support staff ELG. It was agreed to write to UNISON to more fully explain the distinction between the two consultation processes, the work the Schools Forum does and how it is expected to conduct its business. Rosemary Gibson agreed to draft the letter on behalf of the Schools Forum. The position will be reviewed again at the next Schools Forum meeting.

8. Draft Schools Forum Meetings Calendar for 2009-10

The meetings calendar for Academic Year 2009-10 circulated last time will now be adopted. There has been no query raised with any of the proposed Schools Forum meeting dates. It was asked if the calendar could be registered with the Children's Management Team so that CMT members will know which dates to avoid when arranging their various meetings with Head Teachers. This will be done.

9. Any other business

A paper on provision for Hearing Impaired and Visually Impaired (HI/VI) pupils is being prepared for a future Schools Forum meeting.

Date and Time of next meeting – NOTE CHANGE of planned date and time

Friday 12 June 2009, **1:30pm to 3:30pm, Deighton Centre**