

Schools Forum
School Funding and SEN Working Group
MS TEAMS MEETING

27th May 2021

Minutes

Present: Marie Taylor (Chair), (Finance, local authority ((LA)), Grant Davis (Finance, LA), Neil Baker (Christchurch), John Hawkins (Teacher / Governor rep), Catriona Williamson (Mere), Andy Bridewell (Ludgershall Castle), Lisa Percy (Hardenhuish), Cate Mullen (Head of Inclusion & SEND, LA), Rebecca Carson (Woodford Valley) Sam Churchill (Hilmarton)

Apologies: Helean Hughes (Director LA) Georgina Keily-Theobald (Downlands) and from Simon Thomas and Alison Enever who do not have updates for this meeting.

1.	<i>Welcome and Apologies</i>	
2.	<p><i>Minutes from previous meeting</i></p> <p>The actions from the minutes of the previous meeting were run through and the minutes had been accepted at the March Schools Forum meeting as an accurate and true record.</p> <p>GD confirmed 3 schools had been selected by Deloitte the Council's auditors to be part of a sample - - any bank charges are refundable – GD to contact the schools.</p> <p>GD to request a copy of audit of previous school audit – NB believes some useful HR etc improvements could be shared with all schools. NB happy to speak to HR.</p>	<p>GD</p> <p>GD</p>
3.	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	
4.	<p>Budget Monitoring for the period to 31st March 2021 (MT)</p> <p>MT shared her report with the group. The overspend for 20/21 is £7.906m which is a small movement from the last report.</p> <p>Highlights: Early Years – small variance, EY will have a separate DSG reserve wef 1st April 2021. COMF rollover & New allocation of £0.6M which is good news</p> <p>School Budgets – the underspend is largely driven by the growth fund and this offsets the DSG overspend position.</p> <p>The HNB overspend is £11.507m – again, based on higher numbers of EHCPS and levels of support requested.</p> <p>The pressures on the HNB continue and the HNB working group will be prioritising demand management, savings projects, commissioning and spend controls.</p>	

	<p>Of major concern remains the impact of this on the DSG deficit reserve balance which is held in the local authority's balance sheet. The reserve balance is now forecast to be £18.717m.</p> <p>This overspend will continue to be cash flowed by the local authority as per the DfE guidance.</p>	
5	<p>HNB Recovery Group Update (CM)</p> <p>Cate shared the minutes and update on dyslexia friendly schools which is to be the "spotlight" for SF. Ian Abbot to attend Schools Forum meeting.</p> <p>Demand - CM updated that the average monthly requests were 50-65 – for March there were 154 and so there could well be implications on the HNB.</p> <p>Savings plans – it was proposed that due to the increases in demand and impact of COVID - an alternative way of tracking progress be introduced by monitoring price and volume – so ISS project, cost per learner could decrease as our own SS are able to take more complex learners. Tracking volumes and pro-rating back numbers of EHCPs will allow us to understand the wider picture and how various placements link together.</p> <p>Discussed were the costed provision map with links to outcomes for learners – important that notional SEN is available in school budgets to cover costs of SEN support and SENCO etc as well as the expected first £6,000 of every EHCP learners' costs.</p> <p>CM clarified it was important for schools to have evidence for the DfE Ofsted Inspectors when they challenge, and the costed provision map has a useful dual purpose for schools.</p> <p>HNB group to consider next steps but likely to be a pilot of initial EHCP requests and banding uplifts – seems a pragmatic approach with minimal additional workload – joint working on the "form" or submission as this has proven problematic for many other local authorities and onerous for school SENCOS – both to be minimised.</p> <p>LP – ensure schools do not think they have to invest in expensive software CM queried whether NPA / top up rates had been significantly reduced as part of a previous savings plan – MT confirmed not whilst she was in this role - GD to check historical rates & share with the group.</p> <p>NB – the team needs to be praised for challenging requests (best value) CM – need to be careful as the C&F Act has a very low legal threshold to start an assessment – it's very difficult to refuse.</p> <p>National funding remains the largest issue</p> <p>From Lisa Fryer's ISS presentation at March SF – 2 ISS providers had unfavourable Ofsted reports (final page for relevant slide.) the LA contact parents to advise of options – parental preference is often to remain at school – the LA can work with the provider to improve.</p>	GD
6	<p>School Improvement Brokering & Monitoring Grant</p> <p>MT took the group through the DfE consultation and the LA response. There is a possibility that the funding will reduce – linked to the number of academies and that the LA duties will increase. The service risks are significant dilution of current support. The financial risks are not being able</p>	

	<p>to transfer from the CSSB to the HNB and or, for schools forum to consider alternative funding.</p> <p>JH – good and exceptional support from his school SIA – immensely grateful and would support the LA’s response.</p>	
7	<p>F40 and Other Updates</p> <p>GD took the group through the report, Impact of Pupil Premium – change of census date locally and nationally Not good timing post pandemic and at a time of economic downturn NB pointed out schools need to be clear that despite funding not being provided for the higher numbers of pupils, that the statutory responsibility to all PP pupils remains. GD to expand paragraph in his report. GD to share report and concerns with Kate Wilkins (SE)</p>	<p>GD GD</p>
8	<p>Schools Forum Meeting Format</p> <p>MT shared report – GD pointed out we could also have additional meetings as required and have done so in the past JH – agreed Dec / Jan better in person CW – no travel time and time away from school minimised NB – blended approach good to be in the room for some, agree principles in Dec reduces the number of variables & set budget in Jan, decision making, reduces time LP – do need human contact, new membership – MT shared with the group she was running inductions for Dominic Muns (Ed & Skills) and Suzanne Wickham (SEND) (newly elected Cllrs) and both she and Grant would be happy to do this for any new school forum member if this was useful</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Voting required at Schools Forum</p>	<p>All</p>
9	<p>AOB</p> <p>There was no aob.</p>	
10	<p><i>Date and Time of Next Meeting</i></p> <p>Next meeting – date provisionally set at: Thursday 27th September @ 8.30am This is planned as a virtual teams meeting.</p> <p>Next Schools Forum meetings are Thursday 10 June and Thursday 7th October 2021 @ 1.30pm. These are planned as a virtual teams’ meetings.</p>	

