



SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING MINUTES

HELD ON 4th June 2020

2.00pm

Microsoft Teams meeting

Position	Attendee	11 July 2019	19 Sep 2019	21 Nov 2019	16 Jan 2020	18 Mar 2020	4 June 2020	
Chairing the meeting								
Chair	Brian Peacock		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Vice Chair	Diane Atkinson							
18 School Members	Appointed Members	Meetings attended						
8 Maintained schools reps – 1 Secondary; 4 Primary; 1 Special; 2 Nursery and 1 PRU Headteacher places								
Secondary Headteacher	Diane Atkinson	Not Quorate	✓			Meeting cancelled		
	Peter Tite from 1 Oct 19			✓	✓		✓	✓
Primary Headteacher	Elizabeth Hargreaves		✓	✓	✓			✓
Primary Headteacher	Susan Aldred		✓	✓	✓			✓
Primary Headteacher	Michelle Smith		✓	✓	A			✓
Primary Headteacher	Carolyn Morris		A	✓	✓			✓
Special Headteacher	Rik Robinson		✓	A	✓			✓
Nursery Headteacher	Gillian Crompton		✓	A	✓			✓
PRU Headteacher	Jo Siddle to 1 Apr 20		✓	A	✓			✓*rep*
1 Free School rep								
Free School	Julie Bradley from Jan 19		✓	A	Vacant		Vacant	
4 Governors – 1 Secondary and 3 Primary governors								
Secondary Governor	Mike Zammit		A		A			
	Gillian Yates from Jan 20				✓		A	
Primary Governor	Brian Peacock		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Primary Governor	Pauline Lovick		A	✓	✓		✓	
Primary Governor	Helen Holden from Jan 19		A	✓	✓		✓	
Academy reps – 2 Secondary' 1 Primary' 1 Special and 1 Alternative Provision								
Secondary Academy	Dean Logan		✓	A	✓*rep*		✓	
Secondary Academy	Brendan Loughran	Vacant	Vacant					
	Diane Atkinson from 1 Oct 19			✓	✓		✓	
Primary Academy	Donna Simpson		✓	✓	✓			
Special Academy	Jen Ashworth		A	✓	A			
Alt' Provision Academy	Gary Holding		✓	A	✓*rep*			
Non School Members – 1 Teacher Unions, 1 Non-Teaching unions, 1 Post 16 FE College and 1 Early Years Provider								
Teacher Unions	Simon Jones		✓	✓	A		A	
Non-Teaching Unions	Paul Crewe		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Post 16 FE College	VACANT							
Early Years Provider	Tracy Ellett		A	A	A			
School Forum Members present								
<i>Quorate 40% of filled posts</i>		8	8	8	8		8	
In Attendance								
LA Officers	Adam Clarkson		✓					
LA Officers	Kirsten Reid		✓	✓	✓		✓	
LA Officers	Jayne Ivory / Carol Grimshaw / Alison Ashworth- Taylor		✓	✓	✓		✓	
LA Officers	Jo Siddle						✓	
LA Officers	Jenny Hackett		✓	✓	✓		✓	
LA Officers	Safiyya Mulla / Amy Brooks		A	✓	✓		✓	
Council Members	Cllr Maureen Bateson		A	✓	A		✓	
Council Members	Cllr Julie Gunn		A	A	✓		✓	
LA Officers	Corrine McMillan		✓		✓			
Total			4	5	6		7	

1. Welcome and introductions

Brian Peacock (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Gillian Yates and Simon Jones.

Brian Peacock welcomed Trish Walker and Charlotte Rolfe (joint head teachers) from St Thomas's PRU.

2. Minutes from the previous meeting

It was agreed that the minutes from 16th January 2020 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

A review of recent meetings shows that these matters arising remain unresolved:

N/A

4. Vacancies for 2019/20 academic year

Vacant posts are:

- PRU as Jo Siddle now attends as a Local Authority Officer. Trish Walker and Charlotte Rolfe have joined the meeting as joint head teacher of the PRU.
- Free School as Julie Bradley has resigned. It was agreed that the head teacher or a governor from QEGs could be asked if they would be happy to sit on the forum.
- Early Years Provider as Tracy Ellett has difficulty attending due to the time of the meetings. JS to discuss with Joanne Stewart at SLT meeting with regards to an Early Years provider rep.
- It was suggested that a post 16 rep would be beneficial. JS to discuss with colleagues at St Mary's College/Blackburn College with regard to this.

5. Summary of key messages from the cancelled meeting on the 19th March 2020

JH informed that the setting of budgets took place before the cancelled meeting.

12% more money was allocated to the High Needs Block this financial year. Part of that will be used to update top-up banding rates following a review. The review can be a lengthy process, therefore an interim measure is to apply a percentage increase to top-up rates. Schools will see the change on the summer term high needs statements.

Early Years block has seen an increase in free hourly rate. This has been passed to providers.

Issues with the central school services block are that the DFE previously informed that no increase could be made to historical commitment funding above the original level of allocated funds. In addition the commitments must be wound down. The historical commitments are music services, funding for School Improvement Groups, broadband

connectivity and capital expenditure. This financial year DFE have cut the budget by 20% with the potential to cut further in upcoming years.

It was clarified that in the past (prior to NFF) the School Improvement Group money was top-sliced with the agreement of all representatives on the Forum, and this now formed the (reducing) Central School Services Block allocation. Going forward, it is possible to de-delegate funding from the Schools Block to maintain the SIG budget at the same level. A vote is required when setting 21-22 budgets.

It was clarified that the de-delegated music money still stands for this financial year. The music service has £100,000 in reserves

A schedule showing the full allocation of the 2020/21 DSG was presented.

Action: JH to bring monitoring reports to meetings going forward.

6. Use of de-delegated funds 2019/20

JH informed that the agreed de-delegated funds were supplied for free school meal eligibility checks, maternity reimbursements and trade union duties. Support for trade union duties is currently underspent this year as not all academies were invoiced for 18-19 so were caught up in 19-20.

Maternity reimbursements is significantly overspent (£74,000 overspend). This may require further discussions about de-delegating more funds in the next financial year.

7. Schools out-turn position 2019/20

JH outlined that the end of year process this year has been unusual given the current circumstances. This has meant that some adjustments haven't been made and therefore in some cases has distorted the year end figure. Claw back of excess reserves has not been applied if it was clearly shown that the reserves were not adjusted properly at year end. The free school meal supplementary grant took some schools over the 12% limit, however these schools haven't been penalised for this.

One school (Lammack) breached the 12% rule, however this was due to being officially requested by the LA to freeze capital work due to place planning. MS, EH, SA, AAT agreed that in this circumstance it was unreasonable to claw back the funds.

Schools with deficit reserves were discussed. It was noted that St Pauls' RC is owed a significant amount of money from the diocese for capital works, but had failed to make provision for this debt.

All 7 schools with deficit budgets have a recovery plan in place. 4 of those 7 schools are planning to recover within one financial year, whilst others have recovery plans over a longer period of time.

8. New policy for school redundancy costs

DFE guidance regarding redundancy costs outlines that Local Authorities should recover redundancy costs unless good reasons exist for not doing so. A policy should be in place, however what is required to be in the policy is unclear.

To keep paying redundancy costs without a set criteria is not sustainable. The LA reached out to colleagues from other north west LA's to draft a local policy that is in line with LA neighbours. The draft policy needs to be approved through the council approval system. The initial step is to be put to the schools policy development group. (Next meeting is on 24 June 2020)

Concerns were raised with regards to the sentence "School must buy in to the Local Authority HR service". Schools Forum members noted that this doesn't provide the school freedom to buy elsewhere.

It was clarified that this would be because Blackburn with Darwen HR would have to audit to ensure all policies had been followed correctly.

It was suggested that safeguards could be put in to place, whereby other HR providers could be approved by the council. This would ensure that we are protected. If schools use a provider which is not approved by Blackburn with Darwen the liability will not be taken on by the council.

This would potentially need to be a re-wording within the policy, as schools are given the freedom to choose their own providers. A possibility of the HR provider/the school covering the cost for Blackburn with Darwen audit was suggested.

To update the policy would require an outline of the risk of buying in to alternative HR providers, with lack of adherence to policies would be a liability to the school.

Action JH is to discuss the possibility of the audit with HR. HR to provide a cost to do a review of another HR redundancy process.

Once the policy is approved, this will apply retrospectively for the whole financial year.

9. Any Other Business

Covid-19 Issues

The DFE guidance for claims process to recover costs or lost income for schools is unclear. However, DFE have informed that schools cannot put in a claim in that will create a surplus (cannot make a profit from the claim). The email received from the DFE representative will be sent out to provide some clarity.

Schools loss of income e.g. no breakfast / after school club was discussed. Schools can furlough staff who run breakfast/after school clubs however it becomes complicated when staff have multiple duties in school e.g. TA.

All schools can put a claim in. JH will contact maintained schools to provide support with the claims.

Future Meetings

It was agreed that the 9 July meeting is to be cancelled.

11 February 2021 meeting will be moved to either the 18 or 25 March 2021 – all agreed.

Maureen Bateson and Elizabeth Hargreaves

Maureen informed that she will be stepping down to assistant executive member to provide support and advice to Julie if required. Maureen thanked all schools forum member for their efforts and contributions to make a difference to children throughout the borough.

Brian Peacock thanked Maureen Bateson on behalf of the forum for her valuable contribution to the meeting. Her view point and contributions have been very much appreciated.

Elizabeth Hargreaves is retiring as Headteacher of Feniscowles primary school. This was her last meeting as a long standing member of schools forum.

Brian thanked Elizabeth Hargreaves on behalf of the forum for her valuable contribution to young people in Blackburn with Darwen and her contribution to the schools forum.

10. Date and time of next meeting

The next Schools Forum Meeting will be held on Thursday 22nd October 2020, location to be announced.

Dates for future meetings proposed are:

- 10th December 2020
- 14th January 2021

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.