

## SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Schools Forum held on Wednesday, 26 May 2021 at 4.30 pm as a virtual meeting.

### Present

Jackie Collins	Head Teacher (Devonshire Infant)	Primary Phase
Dave Jones	Head Teacher (Craneswater)	Primary Phase
David Jeapes	Head Teacher (Mayfield)	Secondary Phase
Jason Crouch	Governor (Mayfield)	Secondary Phase
Share D'all	Governor (Bramble Infant & Nursery)	Primary Phase
Sharon Burt	Academies (Solent Academies Trust)	Special Schools
Laura Flitton	Academies (University of Chichester Academy Trust)	Primary Phase
Sean Preston	Academies (Hamwic Academy Trust)	Primary Phase
Simon Barrable	Representative (Portsmouth College)	16 - 19 Education
Kara Jewell	Representative	Early Years
Terry Norton	Councillor	Conservative Party
Lynne Stagg	Councillor	Liberal Democrat Party
Claire Udy	Councillor	Progressive Portsmouth People People Group

### 14. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Caroline Corcoran, Nys Hardingham, Debbie Anderson and Alison Jeffery.

David Jeapes wished to thank the Vice Chair Dave Jones for stepping in to Chair the last two meetings when he was ill.

#### **15. Declarations of Interest**

Alison Egerton said that there was one outstanding declaration of interest form for Chris Purnell. She has been sent this electronically but due to software issues was not able to access this, so was awaiting a hard copy of the form.

#### **16. Membership Changes**

Alison Egerton said that there are two new School Forum members. Laura Flitton who has joined as a primary academy representative from the University of Chichester Academy Trust and Chris Purnell who has joined as a secondary academy representative from the Kemnal Academy Trust.

There were two continuing School Forum members; Nathan Waites as secondary academy representative and Kara Jewell as early years representative.

Caroline Corcoran is joining the Forum from the next meeting from Salterns Academy Trust as a secondary academy representative.

There are two tenures due to cease before the next meeting. David Jones as primary maintained headteacher representative. David has agreed to stand again and Alison would be writing to primary headteachers after this meeting to see if they are happy for him to continue. Also Share D'all as the maintained primary governor representative who has agreed to stand again and following a recent governors briefing, it was confirmed that her representation was supported. Alison would be writing to everyone to confirm after this meeting.

There was one secondary academy vacancy and officers had circulated information to all the secondary academies in the city but were yet to have a response and this would be chased again.

There is currently one academy primary vacancy. There were three volunteers but one had since dropped out. Following the Schools Forum constitution report on the agenda today, there is potential for the number of primary academy representatives to increase to another post. If this is the case Alison would confirm to those two volunteers that they can both become primary academy representatives which would mean this vacancy would be filled.

The Chair welcomed Laura and Chris and gave thanks to those who had extended their tenure on the Forum.

**17. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 February 2021 and Matters Arising**

The Forum noted one error on page 1 of the minutes; Chris Purnell was from Kemnal Academies Trust (not Thinking Schools Academy Trust).

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 February 2021 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the above amendment.**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

**18. Early years sufficiency update report**

The report was introduced by Mindy Butler, Early Years and Childcare Manager who said that the sector was moving forward with cautious optimism. In January 2021 the number of children in early years settings was around 1,800, on the last data check in May 2021 this has increased to 4,000.

Mindy said she had received a lot of feedback from providers to say how grateful they were for the help and support and also that the Covid-19 discretionary grant for nurseries and childminders had been a great help.

The Quality and Sufficiency Officers had spoken to all providers over the last few months and things were looking positive. Some of the smaller settings were concerned about numbers from September and the Quality and Sufficiency Officers had noted them and will signpost parents that come to the local authority to those settings.

In response to a question regarding if there had been a geographical change of settings with the nurseries that had closed and the ones that re-opened, Mindy said that there was no major gap across the city. There has always been a shortfall in childcare provision in Baffins and one of the providers currently in Baffins is moving elsewhere. Officers are hoping to be able to replace that but on the whole the early years provision is fairly well spaced across the city.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

**19. An evaluation of initiatives to manage the DSG's High Needs Block spending**

The report was introduced by Julia Katherine, Head of Inclusion. She gave a brief summary on how the AV 'no isolation robots' worked and said she would be happy to share a link with the Forum to show them in action, which was welcomed by Forum members.

In response to questions the following matters were clarified:

- With regard to the SEND monitoring and review hub, there was a very large backlog of annual reviews that needed to be responded to within

timescales. The team have already worked through the backlog and are proactively getting involved in annual reviews that are currently taking place. It will mean that PCC staff will be able to be actively involved in more annual reviews which will be very positive. Officers will also be able to respond much more quickly when there is a request for a change of funding, which will be very positive.

- There had not been a difference in the needs of EHCPs due to Covid-19 but there had been a continued increase in the EHCP requests and a continued increase in the overall number which is something to monitor.
- With regard to the Turnaround project, PCC's reintegration rates were much lower and causing concern. The aim of alternative provision in KS3 is always to return the child back into a mainstream school, ideally the school that they came from. The reason the authority wanted to focus on this was to free up alternative provision places for other children that need them. The proposal is to fund three workers to enable that work to continue in the city to increase reintegration rates.
- The Turnaround project, alongside other work that officers are doing, will confirm that the authority has the right capacity and ensure that those children who most need that support receive this. There is another piece of work taking place reviewing alternative provision that mainstream secondary schools commission themselves.

The Chair said that the SEND Monitoring and Review Hub was an eminently sensible way to proceed and an excellent initiative. He also said that the AV 'no isolation' robots was a fantastic initiative which Forum members would be interested to see the progress of this project.

With regard to the Turnaround project, Julia said that she was happy to add in the comparative figures when this report comes back to the Schools Forum. The Chair said in terms of the reintegration it was worth looking at where that child was a few terms before compared to after the project.

**RESOLVED Schools Forum noted:**

- (1) The progress the SEND Monitoring and Review Hub has made and that a full evaluation of the impact of the work after 18 months will be brought to Schools Forum in 2022.**
- (2) Continued funding of 6 AV1 'No Isolation' robots £15k per annum.**

**Schools Forum endorsed funding for the Turnaround project circa £100k per annum with a minimum commitment of 3 years. Any future funding would be based on a full evaluation of the project.**

## **20. Schools Forum Constitution 2021-22**

The report was introduced by Angela Mann, Finance Manager. She outlined the two proposed changes to the Constitution. The first is the membership of the Forum which is reviewed annually based on the October census. A slight change of the structure was proposed as outlined in paragraph 4.7 of the report based on the fact that there are now more academy schools in the city.

The other change is to make it explicit that Schools Forum can meet virtually following advice from the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The School and Early Years Finance (England) regulations 2021 amended The Schools Forums (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 to make permanent the provision to enable Schools Forums meetings to be held remotely.

**RESOLVED Schools Forum approved the revised constitution attached at Appendix A, to take effect from 26 May 2021**

## **21. Schools Specific Contingency request**

The report was introduced by Angela Mann, Finance Manager.

In response to a question Julia Katherine said that this was a consequence of the move to remote working due to the pandemic with all staff working from home. There was an oversight where some of the information that should have been checked was not and this was misplaced virtually. As a result officers have changed their procedures to ensure that this cannot happen again. The change in the census date has meant it had a bigger impact that it would ordinarily have had.

In response to a further question, Julia said that she was not aware of this being a concern for any other schools in the city. Officers have double checked as far as possible and no one had alerted the authority to any other issues.

**RESOLVED Schools Forum approved the request from Manor Infant School for financial support to the sum of £17,485 from the schools specific contingency to cover a shortfall in funding as set out in Appendix 1.**

## **22. Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring**

The report was introduced by Alison Egerton, Group Accountant. She drew attention to the High Needs area which was forecasting an underspend of £1.7million. The main cause of this was the reduced number of pupils with EHCPs compared to what officers had forecasted within the budget. Officers felt this was mainly due to the two Covid-19 lockdowns and it was expected that these numbers would increase going forward.

In response to a question regarding the underspend Alison explained that there are a couple of unknowns that there was no way of calculating. The first is the Early Years block which is normally adjusted in July, based on the January census data. There are going to be changes in the way that pupil numbers are counted which may impact the funding the authority receives over the 2021-22 financial year for the early years block. There are some concerns about the overall impact on the funding. The second is the high needs block as it was very unusual to have an underspend. Until the full impact of the EHCP numbers is over the course of this financial year is known, there needs to be a level of caution. Alison recognised though that there are potential measures to put in place that might help to smooth any growth in High Needs funding in future years for 2022-23 budget.

The Chair said it would be good, once officers are in a position of more clarity, to explore with the Forum the general principles on how to spend any underspend. Alison said this would be helpful but was conscious that the authority is expecting to receive information about the 2022-23 funding over the next few months. She suggested that this come back to the Forum in the autumn.

**RESOLVED School Forum noted the forecast year-end budget position for the Dedicated Schools Grant as at 31 December 2020, together with the associated explanations contained within this report.**

### **23. Future Schools Forum meetings**

The Chair explained that Schools Forum are asked to consider whether they wish to proceed with virtual meetings going forward as permitted under the amended Schools and Early Years Finance (England) regulations 2021 or whether they wish to revert to face to face meetings.

The consensus was that virtual meetings worked well and were much more convenient. Officers said that it allows them to be more productive with their time but would be happy for either option. It was noted though that virtual meetings make it more difficult for Forum members to network at the start or end of meetings. A suggestion was made that Forum members could have time at the end of the meeting to network once the livestreaming had ended and this was welcomed. It was also suggested that when officers are aware of any contentious decisions needing to be made, these take place at a face to face meeting.

Alison Egerton said that this approach was fine and officers would give the Forum plenty of notice on if a meeting would be virtual or face to face. The meeting on 7 July would be a virtual meeting as there was nothing contentious coming to that meeting.

**RESOLVED that Schools Forum meetings continue as virtual meetings with a virtual social either at the start/end of the meeting and when there is a contentious report that these meetings be held face to face.**

**The dates of future meetings were noted as follows:**

- **7 July 2021**
- **6 October 2021**
- **1 December 2021**
- **19 January 2022**
- **9 February 2022**

**All meetings are at 4:30pm**

The meeting concluded at 5.30 pm.

---

David Jeapes  
Chair