

**WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**8<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2014**  
**MINUTES**

**Present:**

Richard Longster (Chair)

Schools Group

Cllr W Clements	M Morris
K Frost	G Pritchard
C Hughes	M Walker
L Ireland	A Whiteley
D Marchant	G Zsapka
K O'Neill-Edwards	

Academies Group

E Cogan	S Duggan
B Cummings	S Peach

Non-Schools Group

S McNamara	N Reilly
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In Attendance:

S Ashley	A Roberts
J Bevan	Cllr PA Smith
S Dainty	T Ramzy
J Hassall	P Ward
S Howarth	

**Apologies:**

D Armstrong	C McGowan
M Brown	B McGregor
J Devine	A Moore
S Davies	J Owens
J Gordon	J Pearson
S Higginson	J Pierce
B Jordan	K Podmore
D McDonald	P Young

**1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Richard Longster was re-elected as Chair of the Schools' Forum and Julie Pierce was elected, in her absence, as vice chair to serve for the coming 12 months. This will be confirmed at the next meeting.

The Chair welcomed Julie Dawber from the EFA who explained her role of observer.

**2. Minutes from the Meeting Held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2014**

The minutes from the meeting were accepted as a true record.

**3. Matters Arising**

Trade Union Facility time – consultation with headteachers groups had not taken place, so a decision on the 2013-14 underspend of £35,000 was deferred to the next meeting.

**4. Final DSG 2014-15**

Andrew Roberts summarised the report highlighting the changes to the DSG in 2014-15 mainly due to academy recouplement.

The following requests were made by the secondary representatives

- That there is a review of centrally held budgets to ensure value for money.
- to invite the Chief Executive to secondary head teachers WASH meeting

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

**5. Schools Budget Monitoring Report 2014-15**

Andrew Roberts informed the group that there is currently an estimated £900k underspend in centrally managed school budgets at this time. Rates increases for Park and Pensby Primary have been queried with the rates office. The position will be updated in future reports.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

**6. PFI and Central Budgets Review**

PFI costs of £2.3m will no longer be met by the Council from April 2015. Andrew Roberts outlined a proposal for the Forum Formula Working Group to consider how savings can be met from the centrally managed budgets (costs of £650k have previously been identified). It was noted that any savings made from the central budgets will be permanent reductions to budgets.

The membership of the Schools Formula Working Group already includes:-

Richard Longster  
Elaine Cogan  
Jane Gordon  
Gill Zsapka  
Ken Frost

This will be extended to include Cathy Hughes, Deborah Marchant and a secondary headteacher nominated by WASH.

Resolved

The Schools Forum Funding Working Group will examine proposals and discuss in their representative groups and a further report will be submitted to the January meeting.

**7. School Intervention**

Sue Talbot outlined the expenditure in the last year for school intervention and school improvement and summarised the positive impact this has had throughout the school from early years to KS4.

Primary and secondary headteachers thanked Sue Talbot for her work with schools.

Resolved that:-

- the consultant headteachers should prepare an annual report
- the funding of consultant headteacher posts is reviewed in 2015 and every 2 years thereafter
- Forum noted the report

**8. Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) Programme**

Paul Smith summarised the RONI programme that was put in place to improve the early identification of those at risk of not being in education, employment or training when they reach 16. The process is designed to support learners most at risk through a range of intervention activities.

Results indicate that having completed one full academic year outside compulsory schooling 89% of participants are still in some form of education or employment.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

**9. Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) Update**

Sarah Howarth outlined the MEAS offer for 2013-4 which included assessment, advice and support for children who are learning English as an additional language (EAL), awareness training by specialist staff and bespoke support for schools. The priorities for 2014-15 will range from supporting pupils at all stages to ensuring MEAS staff are developed. MEAS is funded by de-delegation of the EAL budget for primary and secondary maintained schools, buyback from some special schools and an SLA for academies.

The achievements of EAL/BME children in KS1 and KS2 are similar to or higher than the Wirral average.

Resolved that:-

- Forum noted the report
- Forum agreed to receive regular MEAS updates

**10. 2 Year Old Funding and Early Years Working Group**

Kath Lloyd summarised the current position for early years provision for 2 year olds. Nationally from September 2014 40% of all 2 year olds are eligible for 15 hours of early education in a nursery placement. Eligibility criteria is based on family income and the FSM thresholds, resulting in a Wirral entitlement nearer 50%

From January 2015 funding from the EFA will be based on participation.

In April 2015 it is expected that a pupil premium for 3 and 4 year olds will be introduced, payable at £300 per eligible child (using FSM thresholds).

The Early Years Working Group monitors the progress and activity of early years funding, particularly 2 yr olds, ensuring that funding reaches the most vulnerable children. The Working Group is made up of the following Forum Members:-

Richard Longster  
Simon Davies

Denise McDonald  
Cathy Hughes  
Janet Devine  
Lyn Ireland

#### **11. High Needs Places**

Andrew Roberts informed the group of the business cases to be submitted to the EFA to change High Needs places in specialist provision in 2015-16. This information needs to be with the EFA by 17<sup>th</sup> October. If agreed funding will increase by £10,000 per place. Proposed place changes are:-

Stanley Special School - 90 places to increase to 98  
Elleray Park Special School – 90 places to 98  
Kilgarth School – 50 places to increase to 55  
Observatory School – 50 places to increase to 55  
Orrets Meadow MLD – 66 places to increase to 71  
University Academy Birkenhead – 30 places to reduce to 20  
Wirral Hospital Schools – 80 places to 120 places and a net cost of £230,000  
West Kirby Residential School – 49 places to 54 places

These increases are required to take into account the current pupil numbers within these settings.

Concern was expressed by forum members about capacity of some special schools even with the proposed increases, particularly at Kilgarth where vulnerable children may require urgent specialist provision during the school year.

#### Resolved

Forum endorsed the application to the EFA for additional places as detailed above.

#### **12. Job Evaluation (JE) – Teaching Assistant Appeals**

The Special Schools requested support from the Schools Forum to meet the cost of successful JE appeals from TA's. Andrew Roberts informed the group that the potential costs from April 2007 to date was £1.4m, with annual salary increases going forward of £170,000. Costs of £700k will be covered by the JE reserve covering the period to March 2011, with the remaining £700,000 met from the High Needs contingency.

The proposal to use the high needs contingency was met with some concern as there are still a number of unresolved JE issues and paying these costs centrally may set a precedent when other costs are identified.

The recommendation was amended, as follows:-

That Schools Forum accepts the use of the high needs contingency to meet the Special Schools part of the JE costs as long as this does not set a precedent for future JE claims.

#### Resolved

Forum agreed this revised recommendation subject to Legal and HR advice. That in agreeing to this a precedent is not being set for future JE claims.

### **13. Future Council budget Options Consultation 2015-17**

Julia Hassall reminded the forum of the budget reductions within the council and summarised how the future budget options for 2015-17 may affect schools:-

#### Children and Disability (£600,000)

This option would involve a holistic review and redesign of services to support disabled children and their families. A detailed consultation will take place before any changes are made.

#### Youth and Play (£450,000)

This option will reduce the funding for youth clubs and play services. Plans are still progressing to open a youth zone in Birkenhead.

#### School Crossing Patrols (£155,000)

This option plans to cease crossing patrols following risk assessment where a pedestrian, pelican or puffin crossing is already in place.

#### School Redundancy Costs (£350,000)

This proposal will reduce the council's budget provision to meet school redundancy costs, bringing the council in line with many other authorities.

### **14. Schools and Early Years Finance Regulations 2014 Consultation**

Andrew Roberts explained that these regulations govern school and early years finance. There are a number of changes in preparation for the 2015-16 financial year, but the following were specifically noted:-

- Regulation 3 requires the School Forum to have a special school Academy rep if there is such a provision in the area.
- Regulation 3 requires the School Forum to have an Alternative Provision Academy rep if there is such a provision in the area.
- Regulation 14 increases the value of an alternative provision place from £8,000 to £10,000 per annum from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.
- Regulation 16 requires local authorities to pay an early years pupil premium of 53p an hour for eligible pupils from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.

### **15. School Funding Outcome of Consultation – Fairer Schools Funding Arrangements 2015-16**

Andrew Roberts summarised the Fairer Schools Funding arrangements for 2015-16, identifying some of the areas covered, as follows:-

- Minimum Funding Level – a new formula for the DfE to allocate minimum funding levels to local authorities, based on a number of characteristics. It was noted that there is no intention to change the Wirral Formula to match these elements.
- High needs and early years funding – the formula to distribute these DSG Blocks will be reviewed by the DfE.
- Changes to the sparsity formula element - not used in Wirral.
- Academies and free schools – non-recoupment academies will be incorporated into LA budgets to streamline processes.

- Carbon Reduction commitment - revised arrangements to top slice DSG.

**16. School Revenue Funding 2015-16 Operational Guidance – Summary**

Andrew Roberts provided a summary of the operational guidance.

**17. Wirral Schools Forum Membership**

Sue Ashley reviewed the current membership of the forum. There are 31 members made up of school, academy and non-school reps.

The following changes will be made this term:-

- 2 x primary governors representatives
- 1 x secondary head representative reduction, as more schools convert to academy status
- 2 x academy representatives
- 1 x teacher representative – Ian Harris has been appointed
- 1 x non-teacher representative
- 1 x Wirral Governors Representative
- Special Governor Representative – extended office until July 2015, at which time nominations will be sought.

Resolved that:-

- Forum agreed to the changes above
- Forum noted the report

**14. Work Plan**

The work plan was provided for information.

The dates of the meetings for the coming academic year are:-

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015 (Date changed from 21<sup>st</sup> January to meet DfE deadlines)

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2015

**15. Any Other Business**

A reserve date for an extra meeting of Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December was provisionally agreed.

The date for the Forum Funding Formula Working group was set for Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 3.30pm at Birkenhead Town Hall.