

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM

26th September 2018

MINUTES

Present: Adrian Whitely (Chair)

Schools Group

L Ayling	H Johnson
M Bellamy	T Kelly
R Bridges	N Lightwing
J Bush	R Mahoney
L Davidson	M Morris
M Forber	D Spencer
L Ireland	T Taylor

Non-Schools Group

S Bennett	I Harris
S Davies	N Prance
A Donelan	

In Attendance:

S Allen	A Davies
S Ashley	S Harper
S Blevins	C McNally

Apologies:

E Atkinson	E Neal
M Bulmer	A Rycroft
B Cassidy	S Talbot
B Chadwick	A Waller

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Adrian Whitely was elected as Chair and Amanda Donelan was elected as Vice Chair for 2018-19 academic year.

2. Minutes from the Meeting held on 4th July 2018

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

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Early Years

As the July meeting was not quorate the recommendations of the Early Years Working group were not voted on. Shaun Allen reminded the Forum of the 2 recommendations.

The first was a request that the £140k increase in the Central Early Years budget, which was for temporary for 2 years from 2017-18, be retained as permanent budget to remodel the central staffing functions to effectively fulfil all the business functionalities within the statutory requirements. It was agreed at July's Forum to carry out a proxy vote for all members by e-mail before the end of the summer term. The second was to maximise the use of the IPF & DAF carry forwards to further support SEND children.

Resolved

1. Forum agreed (via proxy email vote) to use the £140k to remodel the central staffing functions.
2. Forum agreed to maximise both the Inclusive Practice Fund and Disability Access Fund carry forwards to support SEND children.

3.2 Revised Pay Scales for Support Staff (Verbal Report)

Sue Blevins informed the Forum of the draft revised pay spines for support staff from April 2019. As part of the 2 year pay deal in April 2017 it was agreed that there would be an assimilation of the lower grades due to the reduced differentials over the last few years. There is an estimated cost of £1.8m for maintained schools and £0.5m for academy schools (only includes academies where payroll is with Wirral). The new payscales are still subject to discussion with the Unions. Sue invited Forum Members to a meeting on 4th October for their views.

Resolved

Forum noted the verbal report, and requested a further update at the November meeting.

4. Library Service Update

Catherine McNally updated the Forum on the Library Service. Most of their funding is through de-delegation from Primary Schools. They are continuing to offer a premium service to primary schools and promote services to academies, where there has been some uptake since April.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

5. Budget Monitoring & Final DSG

Shaun Allen updated the Forum on the Schools Budget for 2018-19. At this time the schools budget is expected to have an overspend of £0.5m. This relates to top-ups and place funding from the additional special school places from September 2018 as well as increased EHCPs and IPFAs in primary and secondary schools. Overspends are partially offset by projected underspends on Independent Schools and SESS. The DSG for 2017-18 was finalised in July which included an additional £48k due to revised supplementary funding for nursery schools.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

6. High Needs Update – Emslie Morgan Places

Adrian Whiteley updated Forum on the current position of Emslie Morgan Academy (EMA). Places had previously been increased to 100 and this report requests that they are reduced back to 80 places from September 2019. The pupil numbers in September 2018 were 44, but will rise during the academic year. Due to a poor Ofsted report some Key Stage 3 pupils have been placed at Progress Schools Birkenhead since 2017 as EMA were not meeting the needs of the pupils. Progress Schools has had success in re-integrating the majority of these pupils back into mainstream schools. A pilot project “Progress Pathways” starts in September 2018 working with a maximum of 20 Key Stage 4 pupils.

Resolved

1. Forum agreed to reduce the funded places at EMA by 20 to 80 from September 2019.
2. Forum agreed the allocated high needs funding be used to offset the cost of Progress Pathways.
3. Forum noted that a review of Progress Pathways will take place in 2019.

7. School Revenue Funding 2019-20 Operational Guidance, 2019-20 National Funding Formula (NFF) and Local Formula Consultation

Shaun Allen updated the Forum on changes to the NFF, key items in the operational guidance and the Formula Consultation sent to schools in September, with a closing date of 17th October. All Schools are encouraged to respond to the Survey electronically. The transition to the NFF has been extended for a further year, with LAs now setting a local formula in 2020-21.

Following the end of the consultation period a funding formula for 2019-20 will be recommended to Schools’ Forum in November, with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ vote. If Forum do not agree the recommendation, a further vote will take place on the preferred formula.

Resolved

Forum noted the report, and requested sight of the report to November’s Forum, with the recommendation of the 2019-20 funding formula, as early as possible to give members sufficient time to discuss with the groups they represent.

8. Free School Meals Eligibility Update

Shaun Allen informed Forum of the developments within the Free School Meals Eligibility process currently managed by the Benefits Team. The introduction of Universal Credit and the end of the opt-out process due to GDPR has reduced their effectiveness, and increased the risk of eligible children not being identified. The de-delegation amount is not sufficient to cover Benefits team’s work and increased checks for the Benefits team resulting from a handful of schools independently purchasing Capita’s on-line checker system (OSFM).

Capita’s OFSM is an alternative system that would be maintained by schools. Wirral could purchase it on behalf of maintained schools, at a discounted rate, through increased de-delegation. Running 2 systems simultaneously is not a viable option, so the report seeks forums views and recommends purchasing the online system with increased de-delegation.

The schools that have already purchased the system independently have identified further FSM pupils which has more than covered the cost of the licence. If the LA purchase Capita OFSM Academies will be able to buy it at the discounted rate, but there would no longer be access to the Benefits Team.

Resolved

- The views of the Forum and the report were noted
- Forum Agreed to defer the decision to approve the purchase of the Capita's Online System until the November meeting to allow members to discuss this with their colleagues.

9. Update on School Budget Position

Sue Ashley informed the Forum on the indicative school balances for March 2019 and 2020, which continue to reduce. The number of schools with expected deficit balances in future years continue to rise. Work is ongoing in schools to review projections and ensure plans are financially sustainable. The projections used do not take account of the effect of the National Funding Formula in future years or the increases in support staff pay awards or employers contributions for Teachers Pensions from 2019.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

10. Contingency, Special Staff Costs and Insurance

Shaun Allen outlined the purpose and use of Contingency, Special Staff costs and Insurance budgets. These budgets are currently de-delegated.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

11. Forum Membership update

Sue Ashley updated Forum on the current membership and vacancies. Since the paper was prepared the Primary Governor and Special Schools Headteacher vacancies have been filled and a Special Schools Governor position has become vacant.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

12. Workplan

The workplan was provided for information.

The dates of the meetings for the 2018-19 academic year are:-

Wednesday 7th November 2018 (outcome of consultation)

Wednesday 16th January 2019

Wednesday 15th May 2019

Wednesday 26th June 2019

13. Any Other Business

There was no other business