

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM

15th May 2019

MINUTES

Present: Adrian Whiteley (Chair)

Schools Group

L Ayling	N Lightwing
R Bridges	M Morris
J Bush	T Taylor
L Davidson	J Weise
M Forber	R Wood
H Johnson	

Non-Schools Group

I Harris	S Ralph
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In Attendance:

S Allen	J Forsey
S Ashley	V Ikin
A Davies	I McGrady
C Fenlon	S Talbot

Apologies:

M Bellamy	E Neal
K Brown	N Prance
S Davies	D Spencer
A Donelan	A Waller
R Mahoney	

1. Minutes from the Meeting held on 16th January 2019

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

2. Matters Arising

High Needs Review

The interim report from the independent SEND review has not yet been circulated to Schools Forum Members as the report was not structured as requested. Although it had been shared with the High Needs Working Group, the consultants were asked to re-structure the report before it was circulated further. This has now been produced and has been shared with all Special School Headteachers. It will

be shared with Forum members once approved by the Corporate Director for Children's Services.

3. Sensory Service

Vanessa Ikin briefed the forum of the support and advice provided by the Sensory Service to the children and young people with significant visual/hearing impairment in Wirral. There are currently 604 children accessing the service, supported by 8.8 fte teachers, a rehabilitation officer and 9.1fte specialist teaching assistants (TAs). There is also a specialist base at Townfield primary and two pupils currently supported in out of area establishments.

Projections suggest an increase in Early Years children who are blind, so specialist TAs need to be reviewed for September 2019. This service is part of the High Needs Review.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

4. Edsential Update

Ian McGrady updated Forum on Edsential's third year of trading as a Community Interest Company. Highlights from 2018-19 are: -

- the Conway Centre Anglesey provides sailing opportunities for children throughout the country, with a national programme for people with disabilities.
- £1.1m of savings in catering passed onto schools and parents in Wirral and CWAC.
- Edsential are working hard to be the first school catering provider to be fully sustainable palm oil certified.
- Duke of Edinburgh scheme continues to thrive, with "junior" D of E scheme launched for KS1 & 2 this year.

Wirral Schools have benefitted from Edsential's Grant funding. Community and group bids were more successful: -

- Deeside Cluster – Recycling Plastic Pledges
- Wallasey Cluster – Attendance
- Birkenhead North Cluster – Arts Passport App
- Riverside and Thornton Hough Primary schools won individual bids.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

5. Home Education Service

Jackie Forsey updated Forum on the changes to the Home and Continuing Service since the previous report in May 2018. The service provides support for children who cannot attend school for physical or mental health reasons.

The impact of the new structure and funding were identified, particularly

- all those entered for qualifications passed.
- those who transitioned into EET (79%) are supported by a Learning Mentor.
- some pupils are being re-integrated back into school.

The revised structure has not been fully implemented due to ongoing budget pressures. Referrals to the service have increased in recent years and the service is experiencing similar budget pressures as those faced by schools, and as such overspent by £110k in 2018-19.

The service, which falls within the remit of the SEND review, supports pupils who are electively home educated, and from post-16 who are unfunded due to not being on a school roll. In light of the recently published Timpson Report on off-rolling, this will be discussed further at the High Needs working group.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

6. Early Years Update

Carol Fenlon briefed the Members on the discussions from the recent Early Years Working Group as follows: -

- Updated proposals on the Charging Policy is awaiting Senior Leadership and Cabinet agreement after a challenge brought about at the January Schools Forum.
- The new Early Years staffing structure is now in the process of being implemented.
- New processes are being developed to maximise the use of IPF particularly on the criteria for those SEND children taking up the 30 hour offer.
- A consultation concerning the Quality supplement will be issued in the autumn term to ensure there is a consistent approach across the sector.

Resolved

Forum noted the report.

7. Budget Outturn 2018-19

Shaun Allen outlined the year end position for the 2018-19 Schools budget, which is still subject to audit and is therefore provisional. There is an overspend of £141k which is significantly better than the January prediction, partially due to additional funding received relating to High Needs (£712k), and the closure of

Kingsway Academy (£173k). £15k of the overspend relates to the LA's contribution to the PFI affordability gap.

The underspend on the Disability Access Fund allocation is ringfenced for use on related initiatives as per DfE guidance, and therefore cannot be used to offset other pressures.

Resolved

8.1 Forum noted the report and the financial position for 2018/19.

8.2 The remaining £1.4m in the DSG reserve be ringfenced as follows:

- £181.5k to support the Inclusive Practice Fund;
- £114.2k to support the Disability Access Fund;
- £1.119m to support High Needs and general budget pressures in future years (subject to 8.3).

8.3 A report on the Growth Fund will be brought to Schools Forum in June, to include the potential redistribution of the £173k returned by ESFA on the same basis as the Growth Fund distribution.

8. School Balances at 31st March 2019 and Deficit Budgets

Sue Ashley confirmed that the school balances as at 31st March 2019 are £8.9m, a reduction from last year of £1.06. With increased costs, particularly Teachers Employers Contribution Pension and increased staffing costs projections for future years suggest this downward trend will continue to the point that by March 2021 there could be an estimated overall negative balance if action is not taken., with a possible 74 schools in a deficit position.

School budget projections are subject to a number of uncertainties in terms of future grant allocations, which are subject to the government spending review in autumn.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

9. Schools Budget Update 2019-20

Shaun Allen outlined changes to the Schools' budget since it was approved at Schools' Forum in January. These include:

- Primary and secondary schools' budgets have reduced to take account of changes for de-delegation and academy recoupment;
- Early Years budgets have been adjusted and reduced to take account of the Early Years Census in January 2019;
- High needs adjustments for 6th forms and academy provision;
- A PFI adjustment in respect of the affordability gap;
- An LA contribution of £186k to the Schools budget elements of the SEN restructure.

Resolved

Forum noted the report and the changes made to the Schools Budget.

10. Workplan

The workplan was provided for information.

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

Wednesday 26th June 2019.

A meeting of the High Need Working Group was arranged for 09:30 on 6th June 2019, at Birkenhead Town Hall to consider the interim report from the SEND review.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.