

# WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM

30<sup>th</sup> November 2021

## MINUTES

**Present:** Adrian Whiteley (Chair)

### Schools Group

L Ayling	J Merry
J Bush	M Morris
M Forber	A Norbury
E Johnson	S Ralph
H Johnson	J Weise
M Loftus	
J McDonald	

### Non-Schools Group

G Harris	A Rycroft
B McGregor	J Trigg
J Proctor	

### In Attendance:

S Ashley	K Frost
J Backhouse	I McGrady
H Bedwa	L Rice
K Bird	S Robinson
Cllr Clements	C Thomson
C Fenlon	S White

### **Apologies:**

L Davidson	S Goodwin
G Fraser	C Scott
S Davies	

#### **1. Protocols of the Virtual meeting**

- This is a public meeting
- The meeting is recorded for minute taking purposes only
- Remain on mute unless requested to speak
- Raise 'hand' to ask a question, or ask a question in the chat section
- Use Chat to vote as not everyone has the hand symbol.

#### **2. Minutes from the Meeting held on 28<sup>h</sup> September 2021**

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

#### **3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising

#### **4. Election of Vice Chair**

John Weise was elected as the vice chair of the Forum

#### **5. Edsential Update**

Ian McGrady updated Forum on the services provided by Edsential during another difficult year. Edsential co-ordinated Holiday and Activity programmes in 2021 in spring and summer, and will provide the same for the Christmas break. In the summer they reached 4438 children in Wirral during the summer 638 of which were SEND children.

Edsential normal services returned to near normal in September 2021. There has been some disruption due to absence and recruitment. The COP26 Teacher Toolkit supports schools to integrate climate change into the curriculum, which also available on the official COP26 website.

To cover losses due to Covid Edsential have been able to access Business grants, along with refinancing of the business through a loan agreed by shareholders.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

#### **6. Schools' Library Service Update**

Louise Rice updated Forum on the Schools' Library Service (SLS) provided mainly to primary schools through de-delegation. The Service has adapted over the past 12 months due to Covid. Additional Services that are being provided are:-

- the Click & Collect service has been successful.
- a Reading for Pleasure option has been taken up by 90% of schools as children have not had access to public libraries.
- A PE resources pilot to loan PE equipment to schools.

The team also offer services to academies and secondary schools through the Wirral Library Service Level Agreement.

The Wirral Schools Library Services have been asked to join a national SLS service, which may lead to providing services to other local authorities. This is still in early stages of discussion.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

#### **7. Contingency, Special Staff Costs and Insurance**

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

to the increase in maternities during the year, it is expected that the special Staff Costs budget will be increased for 2022-23.

Resolved

Forum noted the report

## **8. Early Years Working Group Update**

Carol Fenlon updated Forum on the Early Years Working Group and service updates since the last meeting. The main points highlighted were:-

- There is now an increase in uptake of places of 2 year olds, which dipped during 2020 & 2021 as parents did not take up .
- There are sufficient places for demand for 2,3 & 4 year olds.
- There is an increased demand and complexity of SEND pupils within early years.
- The inclusive Practice Fund is estimated to overspend due to the referrals of children being higher due to covid pandemic over last 2 years.

Resolved

Forum noted the report and the need to discuss early years funding for children with higher level or complex needs within the High Needs Working Group.

## **9. High Needs Working Group**

James Backhouse briefed the Forum on outcome of the recent High Needs Working Group. The Key areas to be discussed going forward are

- Out of Borough and Independent Provision
- Growth of Primary CLD and how that moves into secondary CLD
- SEMH provision, particularly looking at mainstream base provision
- Review of base provision, including those set up in 2018.
- Look at best practice in other Local Authorities
- Review spend in respect of Exceptional Needs and IPFAs
- Early identification of SEND in early years settings.

The consultation in respect of bases in schools will be sent out shortly. This will be updated in the spring Forum Meeting.

Julie Merry offered to be a primary representative on the High needs Working Group.

## **10. School Improvement and Behaviour Support**

James Backhouse updated Forum on the services delivered by the School Improvement and behaviour Support services through de-delegated funds. The High needs Strategy identifies the requirements within Wirral over & above statutory requirements. The 4 key areas that the de-delegated budgets are used for are:-

- School improvement strategy with School assurance professionals going into schools to quality assure the current position.

- Support School Improvement on Wirral through ECS to develop a “Leading with Strength” programme over the next 2 years.
- A clear CPD offer, particularly in early years education, curriculum development and literacy across the curriculum.
- Further CPD support is to be developed in relation to governance, particularly training and support.

#### Resolved

Forum noted the report and endorses the use of the de-delegated budgets for school improvement and behaviour support.

### **11. Budget Monitoring Update 2021-22**

Christine Thomson informed Forum that the final confirmation of the early years grant has been received and the underspend is final grant is £281,400 which will be ringfenced for use by Early Years.

The expected 2021-22 DSG budget is forecasting an overspend of just under £2m, which is made up of £17m deficit brought into the year, plus an expected in year deficit of £319K. Since September the deficit position has worsened by £1.3m due to Inclusive Practice Fund, pressure on out of borough placements and independent sector.

It was noted that the expectation that £2.7m current year high needs budget could be used to offset the historic deficit was not realistic. The expected spend highlights that there will only be a small in year overspend of the High Needs budget which is more realistic.

#### Resolved

Forum noted the report

Forum noted the final 2020-21 Early Years grant funding and that the underspend is ring-fenced to Early Years sector.

### **12. National Funding Formula Update and Consultation for 2022-23**

Christine Thomson informed Forum of the outcome of the consultation.

Responses were low, but informed the decisions of 2022-23 formula budget as follows:-

- MFG will be applied at 1.25%
- A falling rolls/growth fund will be established from any headroom after applying the 1.25% MFG.

As Birkenhead High Academy School is an all through School, their funds are calculated on an all through minimum pupil funding level (MPPL). Due to the disproportionate number of primary pupils to secondary this allocates less funding than if it was 2 separate schools. A disapplication process is available which will allow the MPPL to be applied to each phase, which has to be agreed by Schools Forum.

### Resolved

- Schools Forum noted the report
- Forum members views were sought for on the proposals:
  - 1.25% MFG for 2022-23 funding formula
  - Falling rolls & growth fund from any spare capacity.
- Schools Forum members agreed to the Disapplication request to DfE for Birkenhead High Academy School.

### **13. Schools Forum Membership Update**

Sue Ashley informed the group of the current Forum Membership and changes since the last meeting. There continues to be academy vacancies and further requests for members will be sent out. The 16-19 representation will be followed up.

### Resolved

Forum noted the report

### **14. Workplan**

The workplan was provided for information. Dates for future meetings are detailed below:-

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2022 (Virtual Meeting)

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022

There may be a March meeting if any issues arise.

Dates for the High Needs working group need to be identified.

### **15. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.