

Surrey Schools Forum

Minutes of Meeting

Tuesday 1 May 2018 1pm at NASUWT, Send

Approved by members of the Forum at their meeting on 11 July 2018

Present

School and academy members:

Rhona Barnfield (Chair)	Howard of Effingham School	Academy member
Kate Keane (Vice Chair)	Ewell Grove Infant and Nursery School	Primary Head
Donna Harwood- Duffy	Dorking Nursery School	Nursery school head
Joanne Hastings	Ottershaw CE Infant and Junior Schools	Primary Head
Lynn Tarrant	Shawfield Primary	Primary Head
Tess Trewinnard	Wonersh and Shamley Green C of E Primary	Primary Head ¹
Paul Jensen	Sunnydown School	Special school head
Geoffrey Hackett	Stepgates Community Primary	Primary Governor
Eric Peacock	Thorpe C of E Primary	Primary Governor
Fred Greaves	Oakwood School	Secondary governor
Annette Crozier	Manor Mead and Walton Leigh Schools	Special sch governor
David Euridge	Reigate Valley and other PRUs	PRU member
Matthew Armstrong-Harris	Rodborough	Academy member
Ben Bartlett	Hinchley Wood School	Academy member
Roger Blackburn	Queen Eleanor's CE Junior	Academy member
Sir Andrew Carter	South Farnham Primary	Academy member
Stephanie Gibson	Bletchingley Village Primary	Academy member ¹
Ian Hylan	Tomlinscote School	Academy member
James Malley	Therfield School	Academy member
Seb Sales	Connaught Junior School	Academy member
Geoff Wyss	George Abbot School	Academy member

Non school members

Sian Bath	Private, voluntary & independent nursery providers
Jayne Dickinson	East Surrey College : Post 16 provider rep
Deborah Pepper	Guildford Diocese (C of E)
Tamsin Honeybourne	Teachers' Joint Committee
Nick Trier	Teachers' Joint Committee
David Izatt	Family Voice Surrey ¹

Local Authority Officers

Liz Mills (LM)	Assistant Director for Schools and Learning
Lynn McGrady (LMcG)	Head of Finance for Schools and Learning (clerk to Forum)
David Green (DG)	Senior Principal Accountant (Schools Funding)

¹ Item 5 onwards

1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed Caramia Muffett (ESFA observer).

Apologies for absence had been received from:

Katie Aldred	Bagshot Infant School	Primary Head
David Monk	Pond Meadow School	Special academy member

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings

*** 10 January 2018**

The minutes of the meeting of 10 January were agreed as accurate.

Traded arrangements for trade union buyback (facility time) Item 7

Kate Keane advised that, as acting Chair of that meeting, she had written to Ken Akers (Surrey Head of HR and OD), seeking clarification of the proposals. She felt that the discussions at the meeting had led to complete confusion and members needed to have, and had not been given, sufficient information to make the necessary decisions. She suggested that the discussions on funding union facilities time had been confused with discussions on teachers' pay guidance and the end of the Babcock 4S contract. A copy of her letter to Ken is being circulated to members.

*** 15 January 2018**

The minutes of the meeting on 15 January were agreed as accurate. There were no matters arising.

4 DSG provisional outturn 2017/18

LMcG reported that the provisional outturn was a net underspend of £0.299m, made up of underspends on the schools and early years blocks and a large overspend on the high needs block.

Schools block

Growing schools (underspend £1.7m): the need for additional primary classes had reduced from £2.6m in 2015/16 to £1.7m in 2017/18. While there had been an increased need for secondary classes, the increase had not been sufficient to offset the reduced cost in the primary sector.

Falling rolls (underspend £0.9m): this was due to funding being set aside for three schools which had not been good or outstanding at the start of the year, but which would have been entitled to falling rolls funding had they been judged good or outstanding during the year. The surplus could not be released until the end of the year when it was known that the three schools were still not good or outstanding,

Rates contingency savings (underspend £1m): this included £0.186m due to the LA challenging rates valuations. The Forum recorded its thanks to those responsible for securing this saving.

The remainder of the rates underspend was attributed to provision made for increased rates costs due to recent building work. The increases so far had been much lower than expected, although such increases were often delayed and then backdated. These increases were over and above the impact of the periodic national revaluations.

Unallocated (underspend £1.747m): this included unallocated sums brought forward from 2016/17, of which £1.2m had been allocated already in the 2018/19 budget.

“De-delegated” contingency (underspend £0.696m): the LA proposed that this should be returned in future years to those schools which had contributed to the “de-delegated” surplus (including academies which had been maintained at the time the surplus had built up). It was anticipated that surpluses would be returned by the time the hard NFF was implemented. NB £0.328m already thus allocated in 2018/19.

Centrally managed schools block

There had been a small underspend against centrally managed schools block budgets.

High needs block

There had been an overspend of £9.3m (including £3m overspend brought forward from 2016/17) against a budget of £140m. Planned savings had not been fully achieved and there had been a huge increase in demand. Surrey was not alone in facing challenges on the high needs block. Overspends included £1.365m on maintained special schools, £2.2m on individual pupil support (“ISPSB”) with an increase of 431 pupils during the year, and £8.5m on non maintained and independent special school places due to increased numbers of pupils (111 more) being placed there. Costs of post 16 placements had been £2.149m below the budget. Setting this budget had been challenging due to uncertainty in demand. More detailed forecasting work had since been done and this had been incorporated in the latest estimates, but trends in demand in the 19-25 age group were not yet stable. The FE rep noted increased efforts to place 19-25s in supported internships and independent living, and uncertainty as to how long individual learners would stay in college.

Members sought further analysis of the increased NMI costs (eg whether they related to specific areas) and expressed concern that the increase in demand appeared to be a surprise. Officers advised that there had been a 40% increase in the number of EHCPs since 2015/16; and that this level of EHCP growth had been unprecedented. One member noted that the NMI growth included significant growth in day places, not just in residential.

One member suggested that the presentation of the report (ie showing a net surplus of £299k) suggested to readers not at the meeting that only the overall surplus mattered and that the high needs overspend would be met from other blocks.

The Chair sought assurances that the council had no current intention of funding the high needs overspend from other blocks. LM confirmed that there

was a need to look at the balances on all blocks and that there would be a further conversation with the Schools Forum on the issue. There was a need to think about using all resources for all children and there was a huge pressure for those who were most vulnerable. She proposed to have such a discussion as part of a wider substantive update at the next meeting. She suggested that the extraordinary growth in high needs costs made it unlikely that there would be an overall DSG surplus at the end of 2018/19.

When setting the budget, 0.5% of the Schools block can be transferred out with Schools Forum approval. The LA is allowed to move funds between blocks at the end of the year but wanted to discuss the issue.

Early Years

There had been a net underspend, largely due to the difference between the number of children funded by the LA (based on termly censuses) and those funded by the DfE (based on January census only). Termly census numbers were higher than January numbers for two year olds but lower for three year olds.

The outturn variances were compared to the expected final grant allocations, which were lower than the original budget. Central spend on 3-4 year olds was less than 5% of the original estimated grant, but exceeded 5% of the anticipated final grant allocation.

Additional funding of £332,000 had been allocated by DfE in 2017/18 in respect of higher takeup in 2016/17. The additional cost (of the higher takeup) had been met by the council at the time.

Final figures on DSG outturn would be provided at the next meeting.

5 High needs pressures

LM drew attention to the changing landscape for children and schools and for young people accessing services, and to the pressures across budget areas. She proposed a substantive item on this subject at the next meeting. The budget needed to be put on a sustainable basis while meeting children's needs and focusing on the right outcomes for children. A significantly larger overspend was expected in 2018/19. High need budget pressures were being felt nationally. There was a need to think together as to how these challenges could be met, and there would be further discussions at the SEND working group on 10 May.

High needs funding had been largely static for several years despite increased demand. A recent survey of Directors of Children's Services had shown that Surrey's shortfall was small in percentage terms compared to some smaller LAs. (Note: the report for item 5 should refer to an 83% increase in overspend (ie from 3.6% to 6.4% of budget) not in total spending). Surrey's overspend of 6.6% of budget was thus not unusual.

While the LA tried to maximise use of its own special schools, many were full and thus there was a need to access NMI places, particularly when additional pupils were identified during the year as needing specialist places, as it was

difficult to provide additional places in maintained special schools during the year.

LM had concerns as to whether the overspend could be eliminated entirely without significant changes. Surrey was seeing many more children with complex needs who required specialist provision and thus greater use of specialist provision, and it was important that provision had the right impact on children.

LM emphasised that tribunals were not just about parental preferences for NMI placements; they could be about refusals to assess, or differences of opinion. It was important that the LA remained focused on children's needs rather than on "winning" or "losing" tribunals, and NMI placements were right for some pupils.

One member noted that mainstream schools' capacity to support high needs pupils was being reduced as support staff numbers were reduced in response to budget pressures, that the overall level of high needs funding was a political decision for central government, and that public opinion could have an impact. He asked whether the Forum should express a public view on this.

Members sought more information on Surrey's plans for providing more state maintained specialist places. LM advised that 184 additional places had been provided in bulge classes in special schools and a further 300 places were being provided in new free schools. The council was also about to consult on extending the age range of five specialist centres (which required formal consultation) and would continue to look at expanding other existing specialist provision. The sustainable futures programme was looking at how we could meet needs differently.

There was also a need to look at inclusion, including what additional support was needed to facilitate greater inclusion in mainstream schools. One member argued that greater inclusion in mainstream schools benefited both pupils with SEND and others.

LM advised that a programme of work had been initiated including:

- Provision: to develop the right mix of provision;
- Commissioning-to develop market management and contract management in order to achieve best value where NMI places were needed (which was right for some children);
- Early years-involving colleagues from that sector;
- Inclusion- ensuring that schools were inclusive, supporting schools to be more inclusive and supporting the placement of young people with SEND into mainstream provision. The LA had made a bid to the alternative provision innovation fund and had also supported bids by some schools. The inclusion work to be jointly school led;
- Transition, focusing on preparation for adulthood and on lifelong learning, identifying an outcomes framework and supporting that transition well. This was linked to a broader all age learning disability programme and to the development of an all age learning disability service.

Members suggested that:

- Parental perception may be a barrier to greater inclusion in mainstream;
- More could be done to smooth transition into mainstream provision -eg by starting pupils with SEND in colleges in August when the colleges were quiet (East Surrey College tried to provide “taster” days);
- Some schools were seen as more SEND friendly than others
- More might be done by schools to develop outreach to their feeder schools, in order to allow pupils gradually to get used to their new placements;
- SEND caseworkers needed to know what provision was available in the local area.

LM noted that caseworkers were only involved with pupils and parents once an application had been made for an EHCP. Schools had discussions with parents prior to applying for an EHCP whereas the LA didn't.

One member asked whether the Forum would be asked for continuous transfers of funds to high needs. LM responded that the Forum was not being asked at this point to transfer funds but to behave differently in managing resources. The LA and schools needed to work together differently in order to meet the needs of all children in Surrey. All of us needed to balance pressures on a daily basis. The HNB funding gap in 2018/19 could be £30m or more. The member argued that transfers of this order would deprive other children and sought costed proposals for improvement. LM suggested that the shortfall could be reduced if we worked together to provide differently.

The Chair proposed that the next Forum meeting should be dedicated to high needs, following the meeting of the SEND working group,

Members asked for further information on the ages and categories of need where the growth in demand had occurred, prior to the June meeting.

6 Commons select committee Call for evidence

DG drew members' attention to two inquiries by the House of Commons Education Select Committee –on school and college funding and on SEND. They had called for evidence on both, with deadlines of 30 May for school and college funding and 14 June for SEND. The LA expected to respond and encouraged colleagues to respond and also to suggest issues which the LA might consider in its response. The Chair encouraged all colleagues to respond and asked for the LA to circulate its draft response.

The Vice Chair suggested that the SEND working group might contribute to the evidence for the SEND inquiry.

7 Growing schools policy exception: request from St John the Baptist School, Woking

DG advised the Forum that St John the Baptist Catholic Comprehensive School had asked for growing schools funding for academic year 2017/18 for a class of 30 admitted on appeal, as the appeals panel had taken the view that physical space was available to admit additional pupils, because of building work already completed to accommodate future expansion. If

supported by the Forum, this would require a variation from the growing schools funding policy previously agreed by the Forum, which stated that pupils admitted on appeal should not attract growth funding in the year of admission. In later years, such pupils were funded in the normal way via the preceding October census. After taking advice from DfE, the LA believed that its policy was compliant with DfE expectations. The school sought funding for the additional 30 pupils for the first year on an exceptional basis and the paper already circulated to Forum members, set out why the school saw the circumstances as exceptional. DG advised that the pupils admitted on appeal had already been allocated places elsewhere and thus the additional places had not been necessary for the LA to fulfil its duties. The LA had asked the school to increase PAN, but only from September 2018. DG sought a decision from the Forum as to whether funding should be provided, as growing schools criteria were a decision for the Forum.

The Chair noted that although the number of successful appeals seemed high, other oversubscribed secondary schools experienced similar total numbers of appeals.

Some members suggested that more information from the school would be useful (eg on the level of balances and possible Diocesan funding). The Forum considered whether the decision should be deferred, in the absence of a representative from the school, but agreed that a decision should be made now.

Members noted in discussion that;

- the circumstances were unusual, but other schools would lose pupils as a result of the appeals, and would already have had staff in place for September 2017;
- similar situations had occurred in other schools, which had not been funded,
- the funding was being requested by a growing school and not one in financial difficulties;
- difficulty in recruiting staff at a late date, and budget issues, could be used as a defence against appeals.

Members suggested that approval of funding would set a precedent.

LMcG advised the Forum that all members could vote, as this was not specifically a vote on the funding formula.

The Forum agreed by a clear majority, on a show of hands (with 1 opposed and 2 abstentions), not to support the school's request for additional funding²

8 Mainstream schools funding update

DG advised that it was known that DfE was working on various issues for 2019/20 but that there was nothing to report yet. DfE usually announced changes for next year in June /July. Proposals would be brought to the Forum in June/July if they were available by then.

² Update: it has been confirmed from our records that St John the Baptist School does not use the Surrey County Council schools appeals service

One member noted that the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Body was making its recommendations later each year and asked whether the government could be asked to bring the process forward. Another commented that the government had actually stated that it would submit its evidence to STRB later than previously.

9 Schools Forum issues

Items for next meeting (25 June) to include, in addition to high needs

- Final 2017/18 DSG outturn;
- Principles of autumn schools funding consultation (an additional meeting may be required if DfE make announcements too late for the 25 June meeting).
 1. The main issue in mainstream funding was likely to be how far to go towards the full NFF;
 2. Early years: LM recommended bringing the early years funding consultation closer to the timescale for the schools funding consultation
 3. Union facilities time;
 4. Remodelling delivery of behaviour support services.

10 Any other business (if agreed by Chair in advance)

There was no other business.

Meeting ended 2.35pm

Date of next meeting:

Monday 25 June 2018 1pm at Dianthus, Wishbone Way, Woking