

MILTON KEYNES' SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 15 OCTOBER 2020 AT 3.00 PM
VIA MS TEAMS

PRESENT:

Primary School Representatives

Kirk Hopkins – Oldbrook School

Primary School Governors

Charlie Deycon – Wavendon Gate School

Paul Hussey – Inclusive Learning Federation (**Chair**)

Antony Moore – Giles Brook School

Jake Yeo – Bushfield School

Secondary School Representatives

Paul Herbert – St Paul's Catholic School Governor

Kate Warren – St Paul's Catholic School SBM

Academy Representatives

Neil Barrett – Stephenson Academy

Jane Edwards – Heronsgate School

David Gibson - MKET

Andy Squires – Denbigh School

Robert Tite – IFtL

Academy Governors

John Howe – Denbigh School

Dave Moulson – Ousedale School

Nursery School Representative

Natalie Fowler – Knowles Nursery School

Deb Spinks – Moorlands Centre Nursery School

Shared Vote

Early Years Providers Representative

Helen Middleton - Pre School Learning Alliance

Diocesan Authority

Michael Manley – Northampton Catholic Diocese

Tony Wilson - Oxford C of E Diocese

14-19 Partnership

Amy Langford – Milton Keynes College

Teachers' Trade Union Representative

Anita Richards – National Education Union District Secretary

CLERK: Sue Puddifoot – Governor Support – Children’s Services

LA OFFICERS: Marie Denny – Group Head, Learning and Inclusion
Sonia Hattle – Senior Finance Business Partner
Michelle Hibbert – Schools Strategy and Corporate Accountant
Natasha Hutchin – Head of Finance
Simon Sims – Head of Service Education Sufficiency, Access and Attendance

ALSO PRESENT: David Tooley – Member of the press
Alex Wolfe - Milton Keynes NEU Branch Officer
Stuart Coe - NEU Eastern Region MK Support Officer

SF 758 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE *Item 1.1*

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, especially new members Charlie Deycon and Robert Tite.

Apologies for absence had been received by the clerk from:

Elisabeth Morrison – Brooklands Farm School
Finlay Douglas – White Spire School

It was noted that Norman Miles – MK Primary PRU and Francis Grant – Great Linford Primary School were absent.

SF 759 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST *Item 1.2*

There were no disclosures of interest other than Anita Richards would have comments with regard to item 2.4 - 2021/22 De-delegated Services.

SF 760 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING *Item 1.3*

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2020 were agreed as an accurate record. There were no matters arising.

SF 761 MEMBERSHIP AND CONSTITUTION *Item 1.4*

There remained a maintained primary school vacancy and the remaining academy vacancy had recently been filled.

SF 762 FORECAST OUTTURN 2020/21 (Sonia Hattle) *Item 2.1*

The purpose of this report was to inform Schools Forum of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding allocation and the period six forecast outturn position for 2020/21.

Sonia Hattle drew attention to the report which included the latest DSG funding allocation for 2020/21. The High Needs Block allocation had been updated resulting in additional funding of £60k due to the import and export adjustment. The increase had been added to the High Needs contingency and the budget updated to reflect this.

Use of the confirmed January 2020 census data for the Early Years Block had resulted in an increase of £43k and the budget had been updated accordingly.

The 2020/21 budget had been set with a surplus balance of £1.936m and the period six forecast position estimated a surplus carry forward of £2.564m. The significant variations to the budget for each block were detailed in section 4 of the report:

Schools Block – the predicted surplus carry forward into 2021/22 was £0.425m (0.2% of the DSG allocation). The increased underspend of £0.398m against budget was due to the growth fund contingency not expected to be required, additional carry forward from 2019/20 and a reduction in actual business rates.

Early Years Block – the predicted surplus carry forward into 2021/22 was £0.427m (2.0% of the DSG allocation). The underspend against budget of £0.183m was due to a reduction in the carry forward from 2019/20 and an underspend on three and four year olds as the increase in grant in 2020/21 was not fully passed on to providers in order to build up a small contingency. However, an overspend on two year olds was forecast as take up was higher than the allocation. Autumn 2020 attendance was expected to be lower for the majority of providers due to Covid-19. Therefore, for providers with a significant loss of funding (more than 10%) from autumn 2019, by using the autumn 2020 data, assessments would be made to see if it would be appropriate to pay them a top up to bring them closer to autumn 2019 funding. The top up would increase their funding to a maximum of 90% of autumn 2019.

High Needs Block – the predicted carry forward into 2021/22 was £1.707m (3.8% of the DSG allocation). This included a small underspend against budget of £0.042m. The High Needs contingency of £0.486m was not expected to be needed but progress would be further reported in December.

Prior questions submitted by Schools Forum asked if there were a target amount for contingencies. It was explained that there were no fixed amounts but reasonable contingencies were required to maintain a strong position for the future.

Also, referring to the independent school fees within the High Needs block, a question had been asked to confirm the split of residential placement costs to day costs placements.

The split between day placements costs and 38 and 52 week placements would be answered as an addendum to the papers in the form of a FAQ document, detailing all questions submitted.

Schools Forum noted the latest DSG funding allocations for 2020/21 and the latest outturn position.

SF 763 GOVERNMENT UPDATES AND 2021/22 BUDGET SETTING

(Sonia Hattle)

Item 2.2

The purpose of this report was to provide Schools Forum with an update on Government announcements relating to the National Funding Formula (NFF) and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Schools Forum noted the announcements made for 2021/22 and beyond given in section 3 of the report. Local authorities would continue to set a schools funding formula in consultation with local schools. Two workshops would be held in November 2020 to support schools' understanding so they could respond to the consultation. Further information was also expected in future announcements.

It was stressed that the DfE published school level allocations were not what schools would receive in 2021/22. This was due to several reasons; demographic pressures (e.g. increases in the number of children attracting a particular formula factor i.e. free school meal funding), local measures for managing pressures (including growth pressures and lag and rates increases) and transfers between funding blocks.

Changes to the Schools Block of the NFF and the considerations for Milton Keynes were detailed in sections 4.3 and 4.4 of the report. Section 4.6 gave options to be considered and these would form the basis of the consultation with all schools.

Any disapplication requests required would need to be submitted to the ESFA, one request had been made to exclude the 2019/20 carry forward from the baseline as this funding was one-off. No comments or questions were raised and Schools Forum supported this request.

Other information on the funding blocks, de-delegated services, DSG deficit reporting and financial transparency of local maintained schools was included in the report.

A summary of the timeline for events was also included in section 11.

Other schools funding updates referred to the school improvement monitoring and brokering grant, pupil premium, teachers' pay and pension grant, Covid-19 catch-up premium, PE and sport grant, universal free school meals, Year 7 catch-up and free school meals supplementary funding.

Schools Forum pointed out that Early Years settings and particularly maintained nursery schools (MNS), did not receive and were not eligible for financial support through the NFF. (See also the FAQ document.)

Annex A detailed the 2021/22 Schools Funding Consultation.

Schools Forum asked if FSM and FSM Ever 6 doubled up on each other, together with deprivation (IDACI) funding. The Head of Finance stated that the factors could be broken down to get individual feedback. It was

also reiterated that the early years sector were frustrated as primary and secondary schools received increases in funding but MNS were at a standstill once more when they were still providing extra cleaning and subject to Covid-19 compliant measures. Lack of grants, particularly the teachers' pay and pension grant (as it was not yet clear if MNS's would continue to be funded for this), put considerable strain on MNS budgets.

The Head of Finance asked Schools Forum if they would be willing to consider this matter further at the next meeting, if there were no updates regarding early years and PVI settings from the DfE in the interim. Schools Forum agreed to this measure. In the meantime, officers would continue to lobby the DfE on this subject, with data to be provided by the sector.

Headteachers had raised concerns on the timescales in place to prepare and receive their draft budgets but this had always been challenging and was due to the nature of the funding system being driven by an October count date. The Head of Finance also gave a brief overview of the wider Council financial position, which remained incredibly uncertain in light of income reductions and cost pressures as a result of Covid-19.

Government announcements for funding for next year were awaited, but if additional funding was not forthcoming, there would need to be cost reductions identified across MKC. The MKC draft budget would be reported to Cabinet in December and finalised in February.

Schools Forum noted the updates on the NFF and DSG and agreed the draft 2021/22 budget consultation on funding the schools block shortfall due to pressures relating to growth (Annex A).

SF 764 GROWTH FUNDING 2021/22 (Michelle Hibbert)

Item 2.3

The purpose of this report was to provide Schools Forum with an update of the growth funding, pupil number adjustments and the revised growth fund criteria. Approvals were required on pupil number adjustments, growth fund criteria and any further changes to those criteria.

Planned growth for September 2021 was included as Annex A.

The 2020/21 allocation for growth had been £3.2m. The DfE had provided a helpful calculator to estimate what the 2021/22 allocation would be, however this calculation was subject to change following confirmation of the October 2020 census results. This provisional allocation was £2.3m, a significant drop and therefore there would be pressure on growth funding. Options to manage the expected shortfall of £2.4m were given in section 8 of the report. It was noted that last year, funding had been managed through adjusting the AWPU.

Schools Forum questioned if contingency funding of 90 pupils was reasonable, could this be altered to 30. Officers had worked with place planning colleagues and they confirmed that this would be looked into with revised figures brought back to Schools Forum in December.

Funding for the first 5 places was given separately but with 30 pupils per class, should this figure not be 25? The Head of Finance confirmed that the usual base was 30 as had been discussed by the Schools Reference Group but more work would be done with reference to previous new growth actual pupil numbers.

Schools Forum agreed the pupil number adjustments required to support growing schools for 2021/22 (section 4).

Schools Forum approved the 2021/22 updated growth fund criteria (section 5).

Schools Forum noted the draft growth forecast for 2021/22 (section 6).

Schools Forum agreed that final numbers, including contingency places, would be confirmed at the December Forum meeting.

SF 765 DE-DELEGATED SERVICES 2021/22 (Cindy Stanton and Linda Bartlett)
Item 2.4

The purpose of this report was to give **maintained primary** school members of Schools Forum the opportunity to agree to de-delegate funding during the 2021/22 financial year for the specific purposes outlined.

Schools Forum noted the introduction of traded services would take further work.

Facilities Time – the expected underspend for 2020/21 for teaching staff was £26k as provision of these services had been much lower than anticipated. To provide facilities time in line with previous years, £4k was being requested. The amount requested for support staff was £25k. The funding request was detailed in Annex A.

Anita Richards stated that the teachers' union offices were having trouble accessing the funding as there was no set process and this may be the reason for the carry forward. Unless a robust system was in place, forecasting the amounts required was being based on less work than was actually taking place. Ways of claiming funding needed clarification and it was agreed that further discussion between union representatives and MKC staff would take place.

RESOLVED

2.1 Schools Forum **maintained primary** members **agreed** to de-delegate facilities time of £4k for teaching staff and £25k for support staff:

In favour	5
Against	0
Abstentions	0

Support for ethnic minority pupils – Linda Bartlett explained that it had not been possible to build the traded service due to the pandemic and closure

of schools. There was £20k to be carried forward to support continued work. If the core work was lost before the traded service was in place, the service would not be able to be offered and redundancies would be necessary, thereby losing the experience that had taken years to build. It was emphasised that just one more year of de-delegation would be required. The request was detailed in Annex B.

Schools Forum commented that more narrative on the impact and demand for the service would make understanding clearer. Linda stated that outcomes were higher for EAL pupils in MK than for figures given nationally. Work had taken place in 78 schools this year. Most of this had been done in the spring term before schools closed in March.

Schools Forum also confirmed the request would be for one more year while the traded service was built.

RESOLVED

2.1 Schools Forum **maintained primary** members **agreed** to de-delegate support for ethnic minority pupils of £90k:

In favour	5
Against	0
Abstentions	0

SF 766 UPDATE FROM SUB-GROUPS OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM *Item 3.1*

Minutes of the meeting of the Early Years Reference Group held on 24 September 2020 were noted. None of the other reference groups had met.

SF 767 FORWARD PLANNING *Item 4.1*

For the foreseeable future, Schools Forum meetings would be held virtually and take place via MS Teams.

- **10 December 2020**
2020/21 Forecast Outturn
Government Updates and 2021/22 Budget Setting
Annual Report on Alternative Provision
Annual Report on High Needs
Annual Report on Early Years
Scheme for Financing Schools
2021/22 Schools Forum Planning
- **14 January 2021**
2020/21 Forecast Outturn
Government Updates and 2021/22 Budget Setting
- **18 March 2021**
Forecast Outturn 2020/21
Government Updates and 2021/22 Budget Setting

The meeting closed at 4.05pm