

**Birmingham Schools Forum**  
 Thursday 24th June 2021  
 2pm – 4pm  
 Remote meeting via MS Teams

## Birmingham Schools Forum Thursday 24th June 2021

<b>Present:</b>	<p>Richard Green Primary Forum          James Hill Mainstream Academy representative (primary) <b>Chair for the meeting</b>          Maxine Charles Primary Forum          Mike White Academies Representative          Jane Gotschel Secondary Academies Representative          Nicola Redhead Academies Representative (Alternative Provision)          Les Lawrence maintained secondary governor.          Sara Reece PVI representative          Catriona Savage PVI representative          Clare Madden Catholic Senior Executive Leader Lumen Christi          Steve Hughes Academies Representative (Special)          Denise Fountain Maintained Special HT          Mike Dunn Maintained Secondary HT          Steve Howell PRU Representative City of Birmingham School          David Room Teacher Associations          Janet Dugmore Support Staff Union representative          David McCallin Maintained Nursery School governor (joined the meeting at 2.20pm)</p> <p>Tim Boyes BEP</p> <p>Lisa Fraser BCC Assistant Director for Education and Early Years (left the meeting at 3pm)          Cllr Kate Booth BCC Cabinet Member Children’s Wellbeing (left the meeting at 3pm)          Clare Sandland Finance Business Partner BCC          Julie Beattie Finance Manager Education and Skills – Fair Funding BCC          Jaswinder Didially Head of Service Education Infrastructure Team BCC (left the meeting at 2.40pm)          Peter Speers Project Manager Education Infrastructure Team BCC.          Kevin Crompton Interim Director Education and Skills BCC          Alan Michell Head of Service Schools Admissions and Fair Access BCC</p> <p>In attendance: Janice Moorhouse (clerk)</p>
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1.	<b>Welcome and apologies for absence.</b>	
1.1	<p>The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting.  <u>Apologies:</u> apologies for absence received from Karen Mackenzie maintained primary governor and Claire Henebury Maintained Nursery HT.</p> <p>Absent: Paul Doddridge Primary Forum.</p>	

1.	<b>Welcome and apologies for absence.</b>	
2.	<b>Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11th March 2021.</b>	
	The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	
3.	<b>Matters arising from the minutes.</b>	
3.1	<p><u>Item 3.1:</u> <b>ACTION:</b> Members suggestions on governor representatives to fill the outstanding vacancies to be sent to the Chair and the clerk: action ongoing.  <b>ACTION:</b> Lisa Fraser to follow up with School and Governor Support.  High Needs sub-group: The Chair reported that the group had not met since the last meeting of Forum.  Clare Sandland suggested <b>ACTION</b> that a meeting be set up for September 2021.  <b>ACTION:</b> Jaswinder Didiially to be invited to the meeting.</p> <p>The on-going concerns related to health visitors raised on several occasions at Early Years Forum to be followed up by Lisa Fraser with Sara Reece and Early Years Forum.  Lisa Fraser reported a meeting had taken place and follow up meetings were planned.  The Chair reported Sara Reece and Catriona Savage continued to voice concerns.  Lisa Fraser stated this was a long-standing issue that would take time to resolve.</p> <p>Mike White to query the difference in Birmingham funding/huge potential variation on the MFG with the DfE.  Mike White reported he had contacted the DfE. To date, no response received.  <b>ACTION:</b> Mike White to circulate the response to members when available.  Mike White reported he had posted the response on the School Forum website and stated that he was reasonably comfortable with the response.</p> <p><u>Item 4.4:</u> Sara Reece asked if the BCC emergency bubble closure funding to support out of school providers would be extended.  Lisa Fraser confirmed BCC emergency bubble closure funding was extended to July 19th.</p> <p><b>Authority approach to managing school deficits.</b>  <u>Item 7.9:</u> Chair proposed <b>ACTION:</b> an in-depth agenda item at a future meeting</p> <p><u>Item 9.2:</u> Jaswinder Didiially to respond to questions raised in a School Forum meeting related to school sufficiency at the next meeting.  See item 4.9.</p>	<p>BCC/LF.</p> <p>BCC/CS.</p> <p>BCC/LF.</p>
4.	<b>LA update</b>	
4.1	Lisa Fraser introduced Kevin Crompton Interim Director Education and Skills and the Chair welcomed him to the meeting.	
4.2	Lisa Fraser thanked all those working in schools and settings and stated BCC's appreciation for all that had been done across the city during this difficult Covid period. There were concerns in	

1.	<b>Welcome and apologies for absence.</b>	
	<p>relation to the number of cases across the city with a current ratio of 112.8 per 100,000 and with some wards' rates above that figure. BCC's risk assessment template for schools has been updated throughout the pandemic. It takes account of all government and public health guidance.</p> <p>4.3 Kevin Crompton reported on the SEND Ofsted/CQC re-visit to judge if BCC and CCG had made significant progress on the 13 areas identified in the 2018 inspection. A letter on the outcome of the inspection to be publicly available on or about the 15th of July.</p> <p>4.4 Lisa Fraser reported that a new interim Chief Executive for BCC had been appointed. Deborah Cadman was joining the council from West Midlands Combined Authority.</p> <p>4.5 Kevin Crompton gave a summary of the verbal feedback received after the inspection. The self-evaluation feedback, which was made available through the website and stating that insufficient progress had been made in a number of areas, was described as honest and accurate. Basic rights were not being met. Developing Local Provision was innovative and locality working was showing some green shoots. Governance on the SEND Improvement Board was being refreshed. More work was needed with parents/carers and schools. There was a need to identify the parts of the current programme to be sustained and the ones to developed. A subgroup of officers to carry out a thorough review the SEND budget. Aim: a sustainable future providing a good service to children, young people and their families.</p> <p>4.6 David Room referred to the number of previous SEND reviews which had not fixed the problem and the issues which had been continually raised at School Forum and stated his hope for a concentrated effort to put things right. Out of city provision, which put pressures on families and on finance, was not yet resolved. Steve Hughes stated that the DLP project was not the vehicle to address the issue which was serious and worsened by the current situation regarding transition. In November 2019, there was a carry forward of £10.4m in the High Needs Block. There were between 400 to 500 children/young people either out of school, not in the right school or in part time education.</p> <p>4.7 Kevin Crompton stated that the amount of use of out of city and independent school provision was coming down. A good sufficiency strategy was not yet seen. Special schools were doing a good job in difficult circumstances. Most LAs were looking at huge deficits on the High Needs block. Kevin Crompton stated that he did not have sufficient understanding to comment on the £10.4m carry forward.</p> <p>4.8 The Chair commented on the fact that the High Needs block/SEND was regularly raised as a concern at School Forum and asked that how improvements were to be carried out could be shared with members as soon as possible.</p> <p>4.9 Jaswinder Didiaily reported on work, recognised by the DfE as good practice, that was being carried out with primary colleagues, individual schools and MATs impacted by the falling birth rate and looking at numbers for 2021, 22 and 23. The picture was the same across the country. The Chair stated that the information on ward birth rate was useful and asked for any decisions made to be shared with schools as soon as possible. The Chair thanked Jaswinder Didiaily for her support.</p>	

1.	<b>Welcome and apologies for absence.</b>	
	<p>Lisa Fraser reported that the surplus places strategy had been shared on Noticeboard, at different meetings and at Primary Forum.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> surplus places strategy to be re-circulated with the minutes.</p>	BCC/LF
5.	2021/21 Non- school DSG report	
	<p>Report to inform Schools Forum of the DSG Non-schools outturn position as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 circulated before the meeting.</p> <p>The recommendation was for Schools Forum to note the final 2020/21 Non-Schools DSG Outturn Position</p>	
5.1	<p>Clare Sandland and Julie Beattie introduced themselves to members.</p> <p>Julie Beattie stated that there had been delays in finalising the yearend balance.</p> <p>As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, the cumulative net DSG Non-schools outturn position was a surplus of £2.484m.</p> <p>Members noted the breakdown by DSG Block as set out in the table in the report together with the 2019/20 position and noted that the figures reported in the table differed from those published in Birmingham’s Statement of Accounts.</p> <p>Julie Beattie reported that this was due to a late adjustment between Schools Reserves and Non Schools DSG relating to devolved formula capital of £1.1m. This would be adjusted for in the 2021/22 accounts.</p>	
5.2	<p>Julie Beattie reported that there was a net DSG Surplus of £2.5m comprising of a gross surplus of £11.6m and a gross deficit of £9.1m. The total net DSG had improved by almost £11m from 2019/20 – this included repaying £5m from the High Needs budget in 2020/21 as part of the High Needs Deficit Repayment Plan. The LA would be recouping a further £5m in 2021/22 as part of High Needs Deficit Repayment Plan (agreed with Schools Forum January 2020).</p>	
5.3	<p>Julie Beattie reported that £1.8m of the 2019/20 Early Years Block underspend had been utilised to make one-off pro-rata payments to providers to mitigate the risk of an overspend. The Early Years funding formula was difficult to predict with the introduction of the 30 hours targeted entitlement for working families.</p>	
5.4	<p><u>Schools Block £1.4m underspend:</u> Julie Beattie reported this was due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• underspend of £1.2m on de-delegated Closing Schools Contingency Fund</li> <li>• underspend of £0.5m on Growth Fund</li> <li>• underspend of £0.4m against rates budgets</li> </ul>	
5.5	<p>The LA had been supporting schools with deficits to either come out of deficit and/or stop them increasing. As at 31 March 2021, the net balance on the school carry forward excluding academies was £76.4m: £82.8m surplus balances from 207 schools and £6.3m deficit balances from 28 schools.</p>	
5.6	<p>In the financial year 2020/21, three schools converted to academy status. The extent of the final balances would not be confirmed until each school’s surplus/deficit balance had been determined and confirmed with the school.</p>	
5.7		

1.	<b>Welcome and apologies for absence.</b>	
5.8	<p><u>High Needs Block £10.4m net underspend</u>  Julie Beattie reported the underspend related to the £5.0m contribution to the three year debt recovery action plan to repay the £14m High Needs deficit from 2019/20 and the £6.8m underspend against the Developing Local Provision Fund, delayed due to COVID-19.  <b>ACTION:</b> Further details regarding the remaining net overspend of £1.4m, across a range of services to be provided following discussion with the Assistant Director.  Denise Fountain asked for details on the £1.4m which had not been discussed at Special Forum.  <b>ACTION:</b> a full breakdown on the makeup of the £1.4m to be provided as soon as possible.</p> <p><u>Early Years Block estimated £0.9m overspend.</u>  Julie Beattie reported the 2020/21 overspend included £1.8m of 2019/20 Early Years underspend to make one-off pro-rata payments to providers as agreed by Schools Forum in December 2019 within the Early Years annual rates review paper for 2020/21. Without this additional one-off payment, there would have been an in-year underspend on Early Years of £0.9m  The final 2020/21 DSG Early Years Block allocation was yet to be confirmed by the DFE.</p>	BCC/JB/ NJ  BCC
5.9	<p>An estimated clawback at around £3.5m had been included within the outturn position reported. Final allocations were expected to be announced in November 2021. The ESFA to clawback any over funding of non-participation allocation based on 9/12<sup>th</sup> of the January 2020 census and 3/12<sup>th</sup> of the January 2021 census.  Catriona Savage requested a clearer explanation of the financial report on the Early Years block. Catriona Savage stated that there were aspects of the report that she did not understand. The report had not been presented to EY forum.  Lisa Fraser apologised to Catriona Savage for not going through the report before the meeting.  <b>ACTION:</b> Catriona Savage and Sara Reece to meet with Julie Beattie and Lindsey Trivett for a detailed explanation on the content of the report.</p>	BCC/JB/ CS/SR/L T
5.10	<p>Les Lawrence suggested the word 'final' be removed from the recommendation statement (The recommendation was for Schools Forum to note the final 2020/21 Non-Schools DSG Outturn Position) and replaced with 'to note the outturn position' as there could be adjustments to report back to School Forum and a further report needed if circumstance changed.  The Chair asked if there was potential for change and if the report was final.  Julie Beattie stated that amendments would be made in the next financial year and that any further changes would be brought back to Schools Forum.</p>	
5.11	<p>Steve Hughes, referring to the £6m for special school deficits, requested assurance that, in the next year, there would be £6m for distribution and £5m at the end of 2023 giving a cumulative £11m extra in the High Needs block. Julie Beattie advised that £3m of the £6m for special schools' deficits had been funded corporately with only £3m coming from High Needs therefore meaning that there would be a further £8m available for distribution in 2022/23 (assuming funding levels remain as currently)  Clare Sandland stated that a thorough review of the High Needs block is to be carried out and reported back through the sub-group to School Forum.</p>	
6.	<b>2020/2021 School Reserves</b>	

1.	<b>Welcome and apologies for absence.</b>	
6.1	<p>Report for information circulated before the meeting.</p> <p>Julie Beattie reported that it was expected schools would be informed of their balances through School noticeboard w/b 21st June.</p>	
6.2	<p>As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, the cumulative net school balances for BCC maintained schools was £76.433m.</p> <p>LA maintained schools: balances had increased by £24.830m from 2019/20.</p> <p>LA maintained schools in deficit: 28 (11.9 % of the total number)</p> <p>The cumulative value of deficits had decreased by £2.401m to £6.323m.</p>	
6.3	<p>Schools in Surplus: Julie Beattie reported the intention was for audit to review a sample of schools with high surplus balances and those that had moved into significant surplus to seek satisfactory explanations from the schools concerned before deciding if clawback was warranted. Any balances clawed back to be used to offset deficit balances paid by the Council under directed Academy Conversions. Any alternative use of clawback funding would be subject to discussion with School Forum.</p>	
6.4	<p>David Room queried the timeframe in relation to looking at balances.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Julie Beattie to follow up and report back.</p> <p>Steve Howell suggested that, as final governor meetings had taken place, surplus balance forms to be returned in September. When money did not come though, schools across the city had to rely on various pots of money.</p> <p>Julie Beattie noted Steve Howell’s suggestion regarding the return of surplus balance forms and stated that her understanding was that all pots of money had been distributed.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> to look at case by case and report back.</p>	BCC/JB.  BCC/JB.
6.5	<p>Mike White commented that, although good to see a surplus balance, money included in the year’s surplus would be spent during the next financial year and might reverse the position. Regarding balances in excess of recommended levels, the recovery of schools from Covid needed to be taken into account.</p> <p>Mike White queried the effect of early close down on surplus figures.</p> <p>Julie Beattie stated a full review on March spending would be carried out. The early close down had not gone well and would be reflected on, with engagement and feedback from schools welcomed.</p>	
7.	Schools Admissions and Fair Access report	
7.1	<p>Report circulated before the meeting with an overview of the implications of the proposed new School Admissions Code (2021).</p> <p>Alan Michell reported central Government had consulted on a new code that was due to be approved by Parliament on or around 1st July and for implementation September 2021. The government had proposed changes to the Code which aimed to improve support for the in-year admission of vulnerable children and help reduce to a minimum any gaps in their education.</p>	
7.2	<p>To deliver the required changes, support schools to do the same and to support the education of vulnerable children it was proposed to increase the staffing within the School Admissions and</p>	

1.	<b>Welcome and apologies for absence.</b>	
7.3	<p>Fair Access Service and to establish a bespoke in-year team of four staff reporting to the current in-year lead officer. The restructured School Admission and Fair Access Service and embedded Schools Portal provided a bedrock to establish this new team but were not sufficient in themselves to meet the new requirements in addition to the continuing pressure on the in-year system.</p> <p>Schools Forum approval was being sought to fund the School Admissions and Fair Access Service to an additional £160,548 per annum to support the delivery of an efficient and effective service in response to the requirements of the proposed new School Admissions Code (2021).</p>	
7.4	<p>Alan Michell reported the benchmarking data reported in the October 2020 report to Schools Forum confirmed that for admissions funding in 2018 Birmingham was funded at a lower rate per pupil (£8 per head) compared to the England average (£9). The proposal to increase funding by £160,558 would support the closing of that gap, support the service to meet the requirements of the new Code and provide the required support particularly to vulnerable children in the admissions process as identified by the Children in Need review</p>	
7.5	<p>Mike White queried where the additional money would come from. Julie Beattie reported a contingency amount from the CS block had been sent to Alan Michell.</p>	
7.5	<p>By a show of hands, the appropriate members unanimously approved the additional £160,548 per annum for the School Admissions and Fair Access Service.</p>	
8.	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
9.1	<p>Proposed 2021/22 meeting dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thursday 23rd September 2021</li> <li>• Thursday 18th November 2021</li> <li>• Thursday 9th December 2021</li> <li>• Thursday 20th January 2022</li> <li>• Thursday 10th March 2022</li> <li>• Thursday 23rd June 2022</li> </ul>	
9.2	<p>Julie Beattie reported that she and Clare Sandland were not available on Thursday 23rd September. It was agreed that the next meeting be brought forward to Thursday 16th September.</p> <p>Message via Teams Chat from Lisa Fraser:</p> <p>‘Colleagues, I am sorry that I need to leave the meeting at this point. I have one AOB: It's important that Birmingham Schools Forum operates in accordance with the Schools Forums Regulations as reflected in the Constitution of Birmingham’s Schools Forum, and also in accordance with the ESFA’s guide. To ensure this is the case, and to look at potential ways of improving the operation of the forum, we will be undertaking a review of the way the forum is currently working. This will include looking at how documents are shared and published, public access to the meetings, the election process for members and other areas highlighted in the ESFA toolkit for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of schools’ fora. I will provide you with an</p>	

1.	<b>Welcome and apologies for absence.</b>	
9.3	<p>update on this work at the next forum meeting in the autumn term. I would welcome members' views on this and will ensure these views are considered as part of the review.'</p> <p>Denise Fountain queried the timeline on the review of the constitution.  <b>ACTION:</b> Chair to speak with Lisa Fraser.</p> <p>Members' last meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Steve Hughes</u>: Catriona Savage expressed special thanks to Steve Hughes for his work and contributions to school forum meetings. He would be missed.</li> <li>• <u>Jane Gotschel</u>: on members' behalf, the Chair gave many thanks for her contributions and good wishes to Jane. Jane wished colleagues all the best.</li> <li>• <u>Clare Madden</u>: many thanks and good wishes from members. Clare thanked everyone and promised to contact the diocese regarding her replacement on forum.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair commented on the experience of members that was being lost.</p>	Chair
9.4	<p>Transition arrangements</p> <p>Tim Boyes asked members to note the public health advice on the arrangements for children with special needs that had gone out through BEP, LA newsletters and communications.</p>	
	The meeting closed at 3.30pm	