

Minutes of the Schools Forum Meeting

Meeting title:	Schools Forum Meeting	
Date/time	01 May, 17.30-19.00	
Members:	<p><u>School Members</u> Kevin Reynolds (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Robin Warren (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Sian Davies (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep) Lisa Neidich (Maintained Pri Governor rep) Sam Billington (Maintained Pri Governor rep) Andy English (Maintained Sec Headteacher rep) Farzana Chowdhury (Nursery School Headteacher rep) Richard Brown (PRU rep, Headteacher)</p>	<p><u>Academy Members</u> Phoebe Clapham (Governor rep)</p> <p><u>Alternative Provision</u> Anna Cain (Special Academy rep)</p> <p><u>Special School Members</u> Jo Clare (Special School rep) Kevin McDonnell (Special School Headteacher rep)</p> <p><u>Non School Members</u> David Davies (Staff rep)</p>
Additional attendees:	<p>Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Cabinet member for Education, Young People & Children Social Care Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet member for Families, Early Years & Play Jacquie Burke (Group Director, Children & Education) Paul Senior (Interim DoE & Inclusion, Hackney Education) Joe Wilson (AD Send and Inclusion) Jason Marantz (AD School Standards & Improvement) Donna Thomas (AD Early years, Early Help and Well-being) Nick Wilson (Head of SEND Delivering Better Value Programme) Vernon Stowbridge (Interim Director of Finance (C&Ed), Hackney Council) Sajeed Patni (Interim Head of Finance, Children & Education) Ophelia Carter (Head of Schools Finance) David Court (Interim AD School Estate Strategy) Kathryn Lloyd (Interim Head of Education Operations, Hackney Education) Ann Yiadom (Clerk to the Forum) Chris Scott (Group Accountant)</p> <p>Martin (Observer)</p>	
Apologies:	David Davies (Staff rep), Lisa Neidich (Maintained Pri Governor rep), Robin Warren (Maintained Pri Headteacher rep)	
Members Absent:		

	Item
1.	<p>Welcome and introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologies above were noted. • It was noted that the meeting did not have a quorum. Therefore, items will be discussed, but any voting will be deferred to the next meeting.
2.	<p>2.1. Minutes of the last meeting held 07 February 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendments required to member comment on page five: "It is felt that an agenda is being pursued to exclude disabled children from the education system". This was followed by a refutation that the LA is not excluding disabled children from the education system. The minutes should be amended to reflect the

	<p>following: <i>"It is felt that an agenda is being pursued to exclude disabled children from the education system, both mainstream and special schools, by not providing the necessary funding which makes their inclusion in education possible or effective."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Action amend minutes accordingly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minute approval deferred as meeting not quorate <p>2.2. Action log</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Actions were reviewed, and it was noted that some items on the action log are scheduled to be addressed in today's agenda. <p>2.3. Matters arising</p> <p>Action from SF meeting held 5 July 2023: Review of modelling data to understand and anticipate impact of continual falling roll on schools block funding and delegation levels</p> <p>Response provided - please see here</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Raising Achievement in Primary Schools: Interventions for under-achieving groups 2023-24</p> <p>The purpose of this report, which also includes secondary schools, is to reaffirm commitment to the identified cohorts, with flexibility to address groups who underperform, such as the Traveller group and Indian pupils, who are underperforming in Hackney compared to the national picture.</p> <p>Due to an underspend, it is proposed that the surplus be rolled over to the next term.</p> <p>The report provides an overview of the available offer. Currently, no evaluation data is available, but it should be provided in the autumn meeting.</p> <p>The secondary offer has been reintroduced for maintained schools with additional funding. Schools have designed their own projects, all eligible schools have been successful, and they have put plans in progress. A mid-year update will provide further details. Primaries have been allowed the same flexibility. The LA would like to continue the offer, with some adjustments, and encourage schools to share their initiatives to learn from each other.</p> <p>Member comment: Is it about raising achievement or benchmarking and external tables? I agree with the approach of having something in reserve to respond to smaller groups. Should children who are not in mainstream education be considered, those in the gap between mainstream and PRU? Could we implement a learning-focused intervention to identify gaps and get pupils back on track?</p> <p>JM noted a good point being raised responding that it depends on how success is measured. The report notes two ways of measuring: each project on its own, which does not link with SATs results but with reading levels, or schools determining the impact through discussions. Although this is often translated into SATs results. Schools could also be provided with the learning and grant money with support from the LA. Reviewing the backgrounds of children can be looked at, but clarity is required on how to measure success. JM is interested in the impact of early literacy development in schools to fund projects and learn from early intervention, and is happy to continue this conversation offline</p> <p>JB highlighted that groups underachieving are always the same and queried whether different approaches have been considered, such as other LAs focusing on engaging parents and providing schools with funds for staff honorarium for parental outreach. A lot of money is being spent, but the progress seems insufficient for these groups and questions whether there is enough challenge to ensure the right outcomes for children and that money is spent wisely?</p>

	<p>JM notes some progress in KS2 with Black Caribbean boys which needs to be closely monitored adding that various models have been explored and can continue to do so. The way of measuring success needs to be clear. The LA is looking at tables and end of year outcomes but hasn't solved it all. How parental work is measured and translated needs to be clear. What needs to be done is to focus on children in Year 2 and at the end of Year 6, though it is sometimes difficult as outcomes do not always translate</p> <p>Chair commented that it isn't just about SATs scores. It's important to ask what specific strategies are in place to increase parental involvement, especially in communities with historically low engagement in school activities. A well-thought-out strategy is needed. The recommendation is to extend funding beyond the current group being supported. How would it be ensured that the offer for key groups being targeted is not diluted?</p> <p>JM explained that schools suffering the most with the attainment of Black Caribbean and Turkish Kurdish Turkish Cypriot pupils need to be identified, and spoken to, which already occurs through the SIP programme. Schools can be asked what their needs are, what's on offer and how to make it work, allowing for self-selection as well. However, it is acknowledged that the programme needs regular reviews and clear measurement criteria.</p> <p>Re Parental Engagement, JM noted that it is about supporting parents to read with their children at home and teaching them the necessary skills. The evaluation of individual programmes, as well as end-of-year attainment, can also be reviewed.</p> <p>Member comment: The outcomes for Turkish Cypriot Kurdish children are almost identical, with little variation compared to Caribbean children. This is not highlighted as an area of challenge for schools or the LA. Has any work or conclusion been drawn on the best support for them? When looking at disparities in KS2 reading and writing for African heritage and Caribbean heritage children, there is a significant disparity. This cannot simply be attributed to skin colour or racism. Is there a cross-reference to deprivation or other factors? It is a more complex picture that should be worked on to target efforts more effectively.</p> <p>JM acknowledged that the situation is always evolving and changing and agrees with the points made about the challenges. Intersectionality is taken into account and notes that the report mentions that for the Turkish Kurdish Turkish Cypriot group, there is a massive overlap with EAL (English as an Additional Language) which hasn't been fully examined yet. However, the team has been challenged to look into this. In the Black Caribbean community, there tends to be an overlap with SEND and disadvantage. The report summarises the current picture, the success seen so far, and how it translates in some areas but not in others with comments from this conversation going to be acted upon. The ideal model involves trying evidence-based programmes that schools want to implement, which can be funded. Alternatively, best practices from other places can be reviewed with a view to emulate them, with an agreed-upon method for evaluation.</p> <p>Chair noted that had the meeting been quorate SF were to agree on recommendations to maintain the focus on the raising achievement programme for Turkish Kurdish Turkish Cypriot and Black Caribbean pupils, and consider extending support to other groups on a discretionary basis.</p> <p>Voting has been deferred to the next meeting.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>2024/25 Budget framework and amendment to the Growth Policy</p> <p>Remaining amount will be allocated as outlined in the report.</p> <p>Member comments (received in advance): <i>Sebright and another Hackney school received some funding because of an above average transfer of pupils from Randal Cremer. Sebright received £96k.</i></p>

Response: Sebright received £96k and Hoxton Garden received £68k. This was funding provided to the Schools from unused carried forward De-delegated funding which was discussed with Schools Forum in July 2023 (item 3).

The justification for providing the funding was based on Hackney Education making a discretionary financial contribution in recognition of the temporarily unfunded additional burden of pupil movement to the schools as a result of the closure of nearby schools. The additionality was assessed by looking at data for 25 schools who received between 1 and 6 children from the closing schools, and these children are unfunded for those schools, so the first six children to join Hoxton Garden and Sebright were also not funded in recognition of normal pupil movement. Hoxton Gardens and Sebright had increases of pupils numbers of over 7% as a result of the closure of other schools.

For Sebright - 34 children joined Sebright from Randal Cremer between the January 2023 and October 2023 census. So 28 children were funded at a pro-rata rate of £6,000 (full year) based on the term when the children joined the school.

For Hoxton Garden - 28 children joined Hoxton Garden from Randal Cremer and De Beauvoir between the January 2023 and October 2023 census. So 22 children were funded at a pro-rata rate of £6,000 (full year) based on the term when the children joined the school.

The rate of £6,000 was based on the financial resources we had available to us to be able to make this contribution.

The contribution came from the £227,000 De-delegated carry forward from 2022/23 which was discussed with Schools Forum in July 2023.

Member comments (received in advance): *In addition, schools receiving children from the closing schools could request £1000 for each SEND pupil. Are these funding streams coming from the growth fund? If so, it should be broken down and shared. If not, where does this funding lie and should this also come to school's forum for transparency?*

Response: This funding allocation also came from the £227,000 which was discussed at Schools Forum in July 2023.

Member comments (received in advance):

1. In order to make an informed decision on the recommendations included in this report, can school's forum receive answers to the following questions:

- *Have any schools received funding already to support the transition of pupils from closing schools? What has this been provided for? What is the funding mechanism for this i.e. source of funding, transparency of criteria and allocation, reporting and Governance.*

Response: In addition to the responses I gave to Robin Warren's questions above on funding provided to Sebright and Hoxton Gardens and the £1,000 for each SEND pupil - other streams of funding provided include £40k each (one lot of £10k and one lot of £30k per school) to support schools who are subject to closure/amalgamation, the bulk of which was earmarked from the £210,000 outlined at the meeting in July 2023 and the £227,000 also.

- *Have any schools received additional funding to support them to remain open despite the falling roll? What is the funding mechanism for this?*

Response: There is the Redundancy Panel process which has been in place since April 2022, this is funded from the Council's General Fund.

In addition there was additional funding of £360k provided by the DFE fairly late in the 2023/24 financial year for Schools in Financial Difficulty, a report to outline how this has been distributed is scheduled to come to the Schools Forum meeting in June 2024 as part of the outturn reporting processes. However, very briefly the funding criteria for the grant was relatively flexible and allowed the local authority to decide how the funding is to be allocated. However it was reasonable to have a methodology which targets schools who have deficit balances or are on the verge of falling into deficit.

The criteria applied was fairly detailed and 8 schools received funding of just under £45k each, those schools were: Grasmere, Holmleigh, Lauriston Primary, Our Lady and St Joseph, Queensbridge, William Patten, London Fields and Simon Marks.

- *Can school's forum receive information about the destination of pupils leaving closing schools? Can we have a breakdown of the numbers of pupils joining each Hackney school from a closing school. Are Nightingale and Princess May receiving the majority of pupils?*

Response: The destination schools of pupils who have already moved from September 2023 to 22 April 2024 are:

- Baden powell - 14 pupils have moved with 11 spread over 5 hackney schools, 3 moved out of borough.
- Colvestone - 37 pupils have moved, with 36 to 12 other hackney schools [12 joining shacklewell and 7 at Queensbridge], 1 moved out of borough
- De Beaviour - 44 pupils have moved, with 31 moving across 10 hackney schools [7 joining queensbridge and 6 at Hoxton Garden], 13 moving out of borough
- Randal Cremer - 79 pupils have moved, with 75 moving to 13 Hackney schools [29 to Hoxton Garden and 23 to Sebridght], 4 have moved out of the borough.
- In September 2024 - We are expecting 120 children to move to Nightingale from Baden Powell and 32 children to move to Princess May from Colvestone .

Note - Admissions have five more allocation rounds before the end of the school year, these figures are likely to change.

Member comments (received in advance): *2. The report and amendments are specifically related to the current closure process. How will this be used in future closure processes?*

Response: It is envisaged that similar criteria will apply to future school closures, assuming that they all happen at the end of an academic year, similar considerations in relation to annual budgets and the split (5/12ths and 7/12ths) will apply. Any future criteria will be developed/updated to take account of any issues and lessons learned, if the current change to the growth policy proposed in the report is agreed by Schools Forum.

The reference to the £306k allocated by the DfE and how schools receive this funding was noted by the Chair who queried whether schools had to apply for this funding, or whether it was allocated based on the LA's knowledge of their financial situation? Are there schools outside of the eight who would have qualified but did not receive funding? Only primary schools were mentioned; does this also apply to secondary schools in similar situations?

SJ noted that the funding was announced in July 2023 but reached the LA late. The guidelines on funding allow for flexibility but require allocation before the financial year ends and cannot be rolled forward if the LA goes into overspend. The LA has been overspending due to high needs pressures for the past five years. Focus was on

how to disseminate the funding. Detailed criteria were applied, and the plan was to present this to the schools forum in June.

The primary consideration was not to spread the funding too thinly. The funding was aimed at primary schools, considering seven points, including the closing positions for each school in 2022-23 and forecasts at period 10 for the 2023-24 financial year. A working group of officers decided to concentrate funding on primary schools as they faced the most pressure. Schools marked for closure or with inherent issues with falling rolls were not considered. The rationale was to alleviate temporary pressures without long-term effects, benefiting schools recovering financially. For federated schools, individual budgets were submitted, and the federation submitted an amalgamated budget. The October 2023 census showed a 5% or more decrease. The final criterion was schools with financial issues linked to the redundancy panel, who had to submit a business case rather than receiving this funding. A more detailed report will be provided in the June meeting.

The Chair further queried what the plan for supporting secondary schools is. Noting the DfE's guidance on growth and falling rolls, what strategies will be implemented to support schools? If there is growth in numbers, schools might not be eligible for specific funding due to the particular area, such as the Hasidic community. This may disproportionately impact a school's eligibility for funding. How will schools in such areas be supported?

The DoE acknowledged the importance of this issue noting that it is on the agenda for the secondary heads group and the falling rolls advisory groups. It is important to make the best use of every resource available to the LA to support schools before they reach a vulnerable stage.

Member Comment: There was mention of £6k per pupil already allocated to some schools that meet criteria, yet the report only mentions around £4k. Why is there a difference?

Response: The £6k per pupil relates to money already distributed to schools as part of the de-delegated funding carried forward, which was discussed in the schools forum in July. This current funding is for the next year, derived by dividing £2.1 million by 455 pupils, which applies to closing schools. These are two different rates: £6k has already been distributed.

Member Comment: It is understood that the £6k has already been distributed, but what is the rationale for schools receiving a proportion of children from closing schools having different amounts at different points?

Response: The rationale for £6k was derived by working backwards from the £270k agreed from the de-delegated pot money carried forward from 2022/23. The £4,633 being proposed is from dividing the total amount of money by the number of pupils. These funds come from two different sources with different rationales. We haven't equalised the rates but worked backwards rather than setting a standard rate.

Member Comment: It might be worth considering what schools need rather than what money is available moving forward.

Member Comment: Another question concerns schools receiving additional funding to remain open despite falling rolls. The most vulnerable schools serve the most vulnerable communities and are significantly disadvantaged. The schools mentioned are not impacted by falling rolls, and some are even oversubscribed. What is the rationale for these schools receiving money to support falling rolls if they are not subject to this issue?

Response: Schools that fell into the listed criteria did have elements of falling rolls. Where schools have had issues with depleting resources but are not considered subject to falling rolls, the idea was to apply funding to help them address deficits. The June report will explain and specify that the funding is for schools in financial difficulty and their ability to recover rather than giving money to schools with inherent falling rolls. The June report will make the criteria clearer.

	<p>Member Comment: The report will be welcomed. The current explanation feels contradictory, so more detail in the June meeting will be appreciated.</p> <p>Action: provide detailed report to next meeting</p> <p>Chair queried: The funding given to some schools has the capacity to improve their financial situation. How will it be ensured that this meets long-term needs and not just short-term?</p> <p>OC noted that instead of funding schools where there is an unrecoverable deficit, we are funding schools where deficits can be recovered, thus meeting a deficit recovery plan sooner.</p> <p>Chair further queried what the impact on schools that may close in the future is? It is not known which schools will close, but a matrix is available that outlines the criteria. The DoE further added that the relevant papers will be shared at the next meeting</p> <p>Member Comment: We would have been asked to make a decision, but more information is required. Secondly, transparency around what OC has articulated should be shared with all schools to ensure fairness and equity. What attempts is the LA making to protect more vulnerable communities, as the schools listed are not vulnerable? Will mechanisms be used to protect schools in vulnerable communities, and is this already happening?</p> <p>The DoE noted that there appears to be a a mixing of documents. The Growth Fund is entirely different and is not related to schools in financial difficulty. Criteria can be shared with members at the next meeting. JB added that the points raised are well-made, and there will be an opportunity to discuss them in more relevant meetings.</p> <p>Member Comment: Not confusing the issue, the response was about schools in financial difficulty, but the schools are oversubscribed and have no protected factors. Growth funding is intended to target schools that take in children without additional resources. More information is welcomed for informed decisions on this.</p> <p>DoE commented on the helpful conversation that has taken place adding that the the proposed policy will be discussed further at the next meeting</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Action from SF meeting held 5 July 2023:</p> <p>Clawback mechanism in place for schools with substantial carry forwards and update on the current status of ARP (Alternative Resource Provision) funding.</p> <p>The fundamental scheme will be deferred to the next meeting as it was not quorate.</p> <p>Chair queried whether there is a clawback mechanism in place for schools with substantial carry forwards. In some LAs, there is a movement of funds from one school to another and questioned whether there are any clawback plans in the near future, or plans to move surpluses. Additionally, the chair highlighted that in some neighbouring boroughs, funds are frozen and schools have no access to them and queried whether there any such mechanism the LA can implement and what criteria the LA uses.</p> <p>The LA will work with schools to develop spend plans. The criteria vary, but in the past, we have encouraged schools to spend funding on capital projects or new initiatives, not on staffing or recurring costs. However, the DoE noted that there are no plans to implement a clawback mechanism at present.</p>

6.	Any Other Business <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Call for Schools Forum Members to Join Working Group for Further Discussion on the DVB Programme<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Jo Clare and Sian Davies have expressed their interested to be part of the sub-group as well as the chair
7.	Upcoming dates for 2023/24 <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Wed 19 June 2024 Dates for 2024/25 <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Wed 6 Nov 2024● Wed 5 Feb 2025● Wed 7 May 2025● Wed 2 July 2025
Summary of actions agreed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Agenda item 2: Amend previous minutes accordingly (refer to 2.1)● Agenda item 4: provide detailed report to next meeting	