**OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SCHOOLS FORUM**

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Wednesday 7 February 2024 commencing at 10.00am and finishing at 12.30pm.

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| **Present:** |  | |
| **Members:** | Nathan Thomas (Academy Secondary School Headteacher) – in the Chair  Carole Thomson (Academy Secondary School Governor Rep) | |
|  | Catharine Darnton Vice Chair (Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep)  Chris Hart (Maintained Secondary Headteacher Rep)  Jacqui West (Alternative Provision / PRU Headteacher Rep)  Brenda Williams (Maintained Primary School Governor)  Natalie Wilson (Maintained Nursery Headteacher School Rep)  Robert Majilton (Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep)  Lorraine Wilson (Special School Headteacher Rep)  Maureen Thompson (Academy Primary Governor Rep)  Jeanne Lapsley (Special School Governor Rep)  Tom James (Primary Maintained Governor Rep)  Victoria Woods (Academy Primary School Headteacher Rep) | |
| **In attendance:** | Councillor Howson, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People’s Services  Kate Reynolds (Interim Deputy Director for Education, Oxfordshire County Council)  Martin Goff (Head of Access to Learning)  Danny Doherty (Finance Business Partner, Oxfordshire County Council)  Sue Douglas Accountant Education Financial Services, Hampshire County Council  Sharon Keenlyside (Senior Democratic Services Officer) | |
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| *These notes indicate the outcomes of this meeting and those responsible for taking the agreed action.*  *If you have a query please contact Sharon Keenlyside, Committee Officer (*[*committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordsire.uk*](mailto:committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordsire.uk)*)* | |

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| * 1. **Apologies and welcome**   The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and introductions were made.  There were no objections to the meeting being recorded.  Apologies for absence were received from Row Martin (Council of Oxfordshire Teacher Organisations (COTO)); Louise Izzo (Early Years VI Rep).   * 1. **Declarations of interest**   There were none.   * 1. **Update on Membership**   Martin Goff informed members that he had sent messages to those interested in the Schools Forum headteacher vacancies, inviting them to take up the post. There were enough vacant posts for all. Names would be forwarded to the Forums clerk.  Kate Reynolds agreed that a report on Forum membership and the election process in accordance with the Constitution, would be brought to the Schools Forum meeting in June.  It was agreed that the headteachers who had applied for the vacant headteacher rep posts, would be invited to the meeting in June either as pre-election observers or as members if formal election was not a requirement.  There were currently two Academy Secondary Governor vacancies that would be re-advertised.  Members commented that the effectiveness of the Forum was being compromised by the vacancies. | **ACTION**  Martin Goff  Kate Reynolds  Martin Goff |
| **2.0 Minutes**  The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record.  **2.1 Matters arising from the Meeting of 16 January 2024.**  Actions from the last meeting  Danny Doherty had possession of Sarah Fogdens’ notes.  A concise calendar of required annual agenda items for Schools Forum, including a “matters arising” list, would be created to ensure that Forum had a clear roadmap of actions.  Deborah Smit’s presentation on SEND had not been published on Governor Hub. To be published after this meeting.  Members had asked for clarity and information on the £3.3m budget for the four intervention projects: Special Schools Reach & Outreach, Enhanced Provision in Secondary Schools, Behaviour and Relational Practice. Martin Goff would bring a paper to the meeting in June.  It was agreed that the Forum would receive a regular update on SEND including financial aspects.  The Chair requested clarity on the school banding system and arrangements going forward so that there was complete transparency for all schools: primary, secondary and special.  De-delegated Functions/Union Duties 2024-25  The Forums’ Union Rep had emailed clarification that the decision of keeping the rate the same as the previous year, was correct.  Additional Support for Maintained Schools in Financial Difficulty 2023-2024  Kate Reynolds informed Forum that the funding for 2023-24 would be carried forward to 2024-25 and a report would be brought to Junes’ meeting on how the funding would be allocated.  There had been four phases of work around finance projects, and as a result, it had been calculated that schools had saved £395,875. The consultant that had carried out this work had visited 21 schools and conducted 31 meetings via Microsoft Teams. The consultant had been asked to identify four emerging themes: the disconnect between SEND funding and support staff costs, funding for special schools, most maintained nursery schools had accumulated large deficits over several years to the point where current provision has become unsustainable and lack of strategic planning by headteachers and governors which sometimes resulted in short-term decision-making affecting school budgets.  The consultant would like to thank the headteachers and governors of the schools he had reviewed for their openness and cooperation.  Councillor Howson discussed concerns about pooled budgets with Local Authorities outside of Oxfordshire, particularly at a time when many schools had falling rolls. Councillor Howson would take this forward as a political action. | The Chair  Martin Goff/Clerk  Martin Goff  Kate Reynolds  Kate Reynolds  Kate Reynolds  Cllr Howson |
| **3. Update on School Funding and APT**  Danny Doherty presented the previously circulated report and answered questions from members.  Table 1 Line 15 – Danny Doherty would delete the text “Add to Growth Fund”.  A report on ‘School Funding and APT’ would be submitted to the Schools Forum meeting in June.  **3.1 Special Schools funding formula and funding for High Needs (Delivering Better Value (DBV)) Schools**  The Forum considered a previously circulated report which set out the 2024-5 proposed funding arrangements for Special Schools and High Needs (DBV) funding.  Danny Doherty presented the report and informed members that there was no change for 2024-25 to the principles of the special  school / special academy funding model used in 2023-24.  It was noted that on 19 February 2024, there was to be a significant meeting with Cabinet Ministers about Special School funding.  It was noted that there was an inaccuracy in section 2.12 of the report: 0.5% was the Funding Floor and the increase should read 1.4%.  It was also noted that there was no mention of the Teachers Pay Additional Grant relevant to Special Schools.  The Forum was concerned about various inaccuracies contained within the report. It was noted that in section 2.13 of the report, PRU needed to be amended to AP and section 6.12 was out of date and required information concerning the Hospital School.  Members discussed various concerns around the funding model used and agreed that it needed to be remodelled, as discussed over many years past.  Remodelling would take a significant amount of time and could not be completed in time for budgets to be set on 1 April 2024.  The Forum discussed setting a short-term provisional budget in view of the meeting taking place on 19 February.  Danny Doherty explained that in regard to High Needs Funding, there had been an increase of 5% in 2024/25. The previous rates had been honoured and inflated in line with what had been set out in the DSG process. The deficit would increase to £144M over the next few years.  The Chair will set out a road map for the year to ensure future agendas where planned and included opportunities for the concerns of the Forum and expectations around banding and funding formulas to be explored.  **AGREED**:   1. to reluctantly accept no change for 2024-25 to the principles of the special school / special academy funding model used in 2023-24, for schools to set school budgets in April 2024, 2. that Forum would like a specific action plan over the next twelve months on the remodelling of the funding formula, 3. that the top up rates suggest that the 0.5% does not replicate what is received in primary and secondary schools in 2024/25, 4. note the requirements under the DSG conditions of grant in respect of the Minimum Funding Guarantee and the requirement to pass on part of the additional high needs funding for 2024-25 to special schools, AP and the hospital school, 5. note the report for High Needs. | Danny Doherty  Danny Doherty  The Chair |
| **4.0 Early Years Funding Update and 4.1 Early Years Funding Formula.**  The Forum considered a previously circulated report updating Schools Forum on the funding arrangements for early years for Financial Year (FY) 2024-25 which shall directly impact the funding for Private-Voluntary-Independent settings (PVIs), Private Nurseries, Nursery classes in Schools and Childminders.  Danny Doherty and Martin Goff presented the report and highlighted the main points.  The Forum was disappointed that in section 8 of the report – Centrally Retained Funding - there were only 2 Specialist Support staff from the Eyesenit Team. Eyesenit staff were crucial in providing early information and were heavily relied upon.  Officers explained that the Early Years structure was being reviewed and that the figures had not yet been finalised.  Members enquired about the sufficiency for 9-month-olds as many providers were reluctant to take them. Officers explained that business modelling was underway and there were issues around the workforce.  It was noted it was not an area of expertise for members in the room and that there no Early Years VI Rep present.  **AGREED** to:   1. note the funding rate for two-year old, disadvantaged entitlement, 2. note the introduction of two new entitlement provisions for “2yrs olds” & “9-months to 2 years old” working entitlements: 3. the 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of 2-year-old children (new entitlement from 1 April 2024). 4. the 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of children from 9-months to 2 years old (new entitlement from 1 September 2024), 5. note the provisional published Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) figures for Early Years Pupil Premium, Disability Access Fund and Maintained Nursery Schools Supplementary Funding (Published on 19th December 2023) |  |
| **5. Traded Services for Schools Update**  The Forum considered a previously circulated report which provided a briefing/update on activities being carried out and to provide an explanation of planned charges for Education and Learning services to schools for 2024/25 school year.  Kate Reynolds presented the report and highlighted the main points.  The Chair asked if the packages set out on pages 10-11 of the report were currently being funded through the DVB and early intervention. Kate Reynolds would report back with this information.  The Forum requested a paper on the APR offer and what the County Council received through the insurance package. Officers clarified that the rate was £24.52 per pupil.  **AGREED** to note the report. | Kate Reynolds  Danny Doherty/Martin Goff |
| **6. Update on Current and Future Arrangements in LA Education** (standing item).  Kate Reynolds informed the Forum that recruitment for a permanent Head of SEND was underway, and a Deputy Head of SEND would be appointed after Easter. Kim James, Head of Learning and School Improvement would be leaving in March and an interim would be appointed before recruiting for a permanent replacement.  Kim would be greatly missed and the Forum would like to thank Kim for all her hard work.  Councillor Howson informed Forum that there was a newly formed Education and Young Persons Scrutiny Committee.  The Council was disappointed to receive the £45k Service Grant as they had expected more. This would put pressure on Services. |  |
| **7. Forum**  The Forum had before it a report which outlined the support which would be put in place by Oxfordshire County Council to  support the Schools’ Forum so it can continue to fulfil its’ statutory functions.  Kate Reynolds informed Forum that a Schools Partnership Officer role had been created and the job description completed. The Chair was involved in the recruitment process. It was proposed that the post was jointly funded by OCC and the Schools’ Forum on a 70/30 split. Members queried the number of hours of support required. Officers agreed to review on an annual basis and adjust accordingly.  The Forum thanked Sharon Keenlyside and Chris Reynolds for stepping in and supporting Forum.  Danny Doherty clarified that the Schools Forum budget for 2024/25 was £130k with Trade Union facility not £132k as in the report.  **AGREED:**   1. to note that the work to support the Forum is in hand and, 2. if recruitment is successful, a new support officer will be in post for the Forum’s meeting in June. They will then commence the work of developing an appropriate training and development plan. This should be in place for the academic year starting September 2024. |  |
| **8. Date of next meeting**  25 June 2024: 10.00-14.00 |  |

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