

**DEVON EDUCATION FORUM
(Devon's Schools Forum)**

16 March 2016

Present:-

Schools Members

Primary School Head teachers

Mr A Dobson	Marwood Primary
Mr J Stone	Denbury PS
Mr P Walker	Sidmouth CE Primary

Primary School Governors

Mr M Dobbins	Exmouth Marpool Primary
Mrs P Furnival	Ivybridge, Woodlands Park Primary
Mrs Wallis	Whimble Primary

Secondary School Headteachers

Mr R Haring	Ivybridge CC
Mrs J Phelan	Cullompton CC

Secondary School Governors

Mr I Courtney	The Dartmoor Federation Chairman
Ms J Elson	Exmouth CC (<i>Academy member</i>)
Mr M Juby	Braunton Academy

Nursery School

Mr M Boxall	Maintained Nurseries
Mrs G Rolstone	Non Maintained

Special School Headteacher

Mrs F Butler	Marland School
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Non-Schools Members

Mrs B Alderson	Teachers Consultative Committee
Councillor J McInnes	Cabinet Member - Children, Schools & Skills

Apologies

Mrs A Blewett	Kings Nympton Primary
Mrs De Bernhardt Dunkin	(West England School and College)
Mr D Chapman	The Dartmoor Federation
Ms C May	Pathfield School
Mr M Shanks	Coombeshead CC (<i>Academy member</i>)
Mr A Walmsley	Exeter, St James

778 Minutes

DECISION:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2016 be signed as a correct record, subject to Mr Juby being shown under 'Secondary School Governors' in the attendance list.

779 Matters Arising from the Last Meeting and Report back on Issues Raised with Cabinet

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780 Finance Update and Schools National Funding Formula and High Needs Funding Reform

(a) Finance Update

DISCUSSION:

The Forum considered the report of the Head of Education & Learning and County Treasurer (DEF/16/03). The report (DEF/16/01) covered Month 10 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2015-16 budget monitoring relating to budgetary pressures within the High Needs Block and management actions being taken, the position for the Early Years settlement and planned carry forwards for 2016/17.

The report also covered:

- the Scheme for Financing Schools setting out the relationship between itself and the schools it maintained and on recent LA consultations about DfE revised guidance with all maintained schools on which no comments had been received;
- Independent Travel Training Update, and
- Music Education Grant/Local Learning communities.

The Forum also noted the minutes of the Schools Finance Group (SFG) of 2 March 2016

DECISION:

(i) that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) monitoring position as set out in section 1 of the Report be noted;

(ii) that the revised Scheme for Funding Schools 2016/17 as set out in section 2 of the report be approved;

(iii) that the Independent Travel training Update as set out in section 3 of the report be noted; and

(iv) that the revised Music Education Grant/Local Learning communities as set out in section 4 of the report be noted.

(Vote: all phases maintained and academy, PVI on the above)

ACTION:

County Treasurer (John Holme, Adrian Fox)

(b) Schools National Funding Formula and High Needs Funding Reform

DISCUSSION:

The Forum received an update and presentation from the Head Accountant - Education & Learning covering:

- Government consultation on a new schools national funding formula and high needs funding reform from 7 March to 17 April 2016 (stage one)
- overview relating to the case for change, principles and issues for consideration
- fairer funding principles
- the transition arrangements
- high needs funding reform
- review of the role, functions and memberships of School Education Forums
- support for school efficiency
- review of statutory obligations on Schools and LAs and implications for the Education Services Grant (ESG)
- funding of statutory duties

- removal of duties with LAs focussing on: (i) securing sufficient school places, fair access and transport policies, (ii) vulnerable pupils /SEND/promotion attendance/alternative provisions (iii) acting for parents and families
- process for responding to the consultation at this initial stage.

The Forum members' questions and discussion points with Officers included:

- this was a two stage consultation and there remained many uncertainties and outcomes would depend largely on weightings, noting the difficult national financial climate and expectation that overall allocations would be reduced with a continuing need to make efficiency savings by LAs and all schools
- less discretion for the LA in future with the proposed ring-fencing of the Schools Block
- impact relating to residential growth throughout Devon, particularly in and around Exeter
- unreliability of using FSM or IDACI data only as a measure for deprivation
- the role of the Forum under the proposed new arrangements and recognition that the Forum did not relate solely to financial matters but to all educational issues within Schools and the LA
- the current position where the allocation per pupil in Devon was around £270 below the average (£23 m below overall on the DSG) and the LA expectation that the Government allocations would be based on what it considered to be affordable
- the view (by the DfE and other local authorities) that lower funding for some was not necessarily 'unfair'
- the 'cap' on gain was not known and pace of transition would have to be managed carefully especially for Schools with diminished budgets
- the need for careful examination by this LA of the High Needs Block and eligibility and impact of the number of children in for example Elective Home Education and medically absent
- the valuable work of the F40 Group of LAs in this area
- the tight time-scale for analysis and drafting of the Local Authority response (Stage 1) with prior consultation with the Forum's Schools Finance Group members, the outcome of which would be shared with all Schools prior to the final LA submission to Government by 17 April, noting that schools were encouraged to make their own submissions directly.

The Forum thanked the Head Accountant - Education & Learning for her clear explanation of this complex area.

The Chairman also noted that this was Ms Powlesland's last meeting with the Forum and thanked her for her valued work within education and Members wished her well in her new role with the Local Authority.

781 Head of Service: Update

The Head of Education & Learning reported on a summary of exclusions (permanent and fixed term) for 2015/16 academic year to date which covered the number of exclusions by school type, school status, exclusions by pupil characteristics (i.e. children in care, statemented or FSM) and comparisons with previous years. She also referred to the close working with social care colleagues in this area and concerns relating to the increased number of permanent exclusion of younger children and reasons for that trend. The County Council had commissioned research by the LDP in this area. A People's Scrutiny Committee Task Group on exclusions had also recently produced a draft report which encouraged best practice by schools.

Discussion points with members' included:

- the commitment of schools to reduce permanent exclusion and the wider costs for schools, the Local Authority and across the system

- the need for support and training for schools in relation to address persistent disruptive behaviour
- the need for consistent social work support for individual children and for schools and learning communities
- the impact of the loss of Public Health grants for the Emotional and Well-being Service.
- Schools' reported difficulties associated with lack of engagement by parents
- the lack of Ofsted recognition of good practice relating to the work of schools to promote inclusion due to emphasis on performance.
- the reasons behind why Devon was higher than the national average for the rate of permanent exclusions at KS4 and the commissioning of LDP research into this area
- the need for all Governing Bodies to focus more on the needs of more vulnerable children who are at risk of exclusion.

The Head of Service also reported on a series of 3 open-discussion meetings with Head teachers from maintained schools across Devon relating to the role and relationship with the Local Authority and their expectations. Points which had been raised at those meetings related to:

- the unease of many in respect of forced 'academisation', loss of choice and autonomy
- the role of the LA in school improvement, ensuring fair and equitable access for vulnerable children
- communication by the LA was generally agreed to be good but more work was required in respect of multi-agency working, early intervention and help. A reduction in bureaucracy would be welcomed
- concerns relating to testing within KS 2 and guidance on the transition to the secondary phase "Secondary Ready".
- the changing examination systems at KS4 and the need for better communication with parents and employers about these
- concerns relating to recruitment and retention of teachers and school capacity issues particularly within the current budgetary climate.

782 Use of Egress Switch in Schools

The Head of Business Strategy and Support reported of the launch and operation of the email Egress System, which provided 3 levels of security for LA and external licenced users. It was recognised by the Egress team that there was a need to improve operational guidance for internal staff and external partners including schools. The Team was now working with colleagues within the County Council (Adult Social Care) and feedback would be used in further operational guidance. In the interim guidance notes would be circulated to the Forum members.

Forum members asked about future potential cost for Schools for all levels of security on which further information would be provided for the Forum.

ACTION:

Business Strategy and Support (Carolyn Jarvis)

783 Standing (and other) Groups

The Forum received the minutes of the Schools Organisation, Capital and Admissions (SOCA) meeting held on 5 January 2016. The Forum agreed (minute 6) that for the purposes of priority for capital maintenance funding, Special Schools would be assumed to be operating at full capacity.

ACTION:

Head of Education & Learning (Heidi Watson-Jones)

784 Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings to commence at 10am at County Hall, Exeter (unless otherwise indicated):-

Wed 22 June 2016
Wed 19 October 2016
Monday 16 January 2017
Wed 15 March 2017

The meeting started at 10am and finished at 11. 55 am.

The Schools Forum web is www.devon.gov.uk/schoolsforum