



SCHOOLS FORUM ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

1.0 Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an annual report of the work of the Forum covering the period 8 July, 2014 to 10 March, 2015.

2.0 Christchurch Primary School – Contingency

8.7.14

Schools Forum approved the allocation of contingency funding to Christchurch C.E.JMI School to enable an additional reception class to be staffed from September, 2014.

3.0 School Balances

8.7.14

Schools Forum noted that uncommitted balances were measured against the balance control mechanism and although there was no longer a legal requirement to have a balance control mechanism in place, it did prove useful in these instances.

4.0 SEN Review

8.7.14

Schools Forum had expressed concern about the insufficient number of SEN places in the primary and secondary sectors which was resulting in pupils' needs not being met, this also impacted on other pupils in the schools.

4.1 SEN Update

9.12.14

Schools Forum noted that consultation with special schools, including staff, parents and young people at the schools, had been completed. Further consultation on the budget changes would be taking place; the Council was still working to a September, 2015 timeline.

- 4.2 Schools Forum noted that the Education Funding Agency had rejected the request to increase the number of high needs places; members were concerned that the primary sector had lost 40 places and should this trend continue as the older children carried on through the system, primary would continue to lose place allocations. The Local Authority could still agree to fund the places from the existing funding.

13.1.15

4.3
10.3.15 The Forum noted that two additional primary additional resourced provision (ARP) places were being considered and expressions of interest should be submitted by primary head teachers and governors to ensure an inclusive environment. It was suggested that nursery ARPs be included in the 0 – 5 strategy so that the inclusion strategy would include a strand to support mental health and social behaviour of very young children.

5.0
8.7.14 **Schools Admissions Funding**

Schools Forum was informed of a shortfall in the actual cost of the admissions service which had arisen as a result of the service reverting to the Local Authority from Serco. This shortfall would require additional funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to ensure that the service was retained in its current form.

5.1
9.12.14 Schools Forum noted that the cost of admissions service was more than the provision included in the DSG and recommended to the Education Funding Agency an increase in funding from DSG for the financial years 2015/16 and 2016/17 to enable officers and schools to work together to develop the best service for children, parents and families.

5.2
10.3.15 **Feedback on Admissions Service**

Schools Forum noted the statutory requirement to publish the Information for Parents booklet by 12 September; consultation on term dates took place with other local authorities, including West Midlands authorities when agreement would be reached on half term dates and representations were invited from the Primary and Secondary Forum on the dates selected.

6.0
8.7.14 **Early Years Funding 2015-16**

Schools Forum was informed of proposals to introduce an Early Years Pupil Premium for all disadvantaged three and four year olds from April, 2015 and on moving to participation funding for the early education entitlement of two year olds from 2015-16. The Early Years Pupil Premium would give additional resources to early year's providers that take disadvantaged three and four year olds.

7.0
8.7.14 **Pupil Premium in respect of Looked After Children**

Schools Forum noted the principal changes to the pupil premium for looked after children whereby the pupil premium is linked to progress and attainments for the looked after child. The personal education plan would identify how the premium would be spent to support the child in making progress and attainment. The Local Authority would retain £200 per child to cover functions that could be carried out collectively.

8.0
8.7.14 **Schools Forum Membership**

Schools Forum noted that no changes were required in schools and non-schools membership this year.

- 9.0
23.9.14 **Application for continuation of music funding for 2015/16**
- Schools Forum agreed to continue to support the Forest Arts Music Support Service with £38,000 for the 2015/16 financial year.
- 10.0
23.9.14 **Education Services Grant (ESG)**
- Schools Forum noted that the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) was no longer efficient and there were issues about how increased academy conversions could impact local authority funding. As a result of this, the Department for Education established the Education Services Grant (ESG) which resulted in Walsall losing funding. The ESG was paid directly to academies but was retained centrally to fund various education services for maintained schools.
- 11.0
23.9.14 **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) minimum funding changes - fairer schools funding – arrangements for 2015-2016**
- Schools Forum noted that Walsall would receive pupil DSG funding in the 2015/16 financial year at the same level as that received in 2014/15. Funding for pre and post 16 high needs places provision would remain at 914 places although additional funding could be requested. The review of high needs was still ongoing.
- 12.0
23.9.14 **Dedicated Schools Grant minimum funding levels – Walsall's funding formula for mainstream schools and academies for 2015/16**
- Schools Forum approved the funding factors to be used in the 2015-16 funding formula including the minimum value for age weighted pupil unit (AWPU) for primary and secondary schools. The focus of funding was on deprivation.
- 13.0
23.9.14 **Traded Services**
- Schools Forum was advised that an on-line traded services offer for schools, academies, school staff, governors and parents was being introduced; facilities available would be across the Council's services.
- 14.0
14.10.14 **Maintained Schools De-delegation 2015/16**
- The maintained primary and secondary school representatives on Schools Forum voted on a number of services they wished the Council to provide on their behalf at appropriate costs.
- 15.0
14.10.14 **2 year old place creation**
- Schools Forum approved funding from the DSG to be used to create nursery places for disadvantaged 2 year old children and requested approval from the Education Funding Agency /Secretary of State in order to accomplish this.

16.0
9.12.14 **Update from Property Services and report to Cabinet 29 October 2015**

Schools Forum noted the restructure proposals for Property Services with effect from 1 April, 2015 which included a contract with Solihull MBC for the supply of works and services through two framework agreements. The restructure would result in a saving to the Council and to schools.

17.0
9.12.14 **Role and responsibilities of Schools Forum**

Schools Forum noted that they had no powers around capital spend; an induction pack for new members, in line with best practice, was subsequently introduced, together with a template for reporting to include value for money issues.

18.0
9.12.14 **Ofsted School Inspection letter**

Schools Forum was informed that the action plan had been presented to the Challenge Board on 5 November, 2014; the action plan was based on the actions identified in the Ofsted letter. Schools Forum agreed to analyse and challenge balances, ensure that regular benchmarking took place and to consider school improvement when making decisions.

19.0
9.12.14 **Feedback from National Funding Conference**

Schools Forum noted the feedback from the National Funding Conference which included details on the implementation of the early years' pupil premium which would form part of DSG. Guidance on the development and administration of the premium would also include attracting the 2 year old entitlement.

The DfE confirmed that it was still committed to producing a national funding formula for high needs and fundamental changes were expected in 2017 onwards.

20.0
9.12.14 **Early Years single funding formula and high needs funding formula**

Schools Forum supported the funding methodology for special schools and early years' settings for 2015/16 which confirmed that there would be no changes to the funding methodology next year. Commissioned places would depend on responses on high needs at the end of December and top up funding would be based on the needs of the child and the number of weeks the provision was taken up.

21.0
9.12.14 **Approval of Central Expenditure (including Early Years) and further De-Delegation commentary**

Schools Forum approved Central Expenditure as determined by the Education Funding Agency and described in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2013. The central services included schools admissions, the music service and servicing Schools Forum and

admissions appeals. Central schools expenditure included licenses and pupil growth.

22.0
9.12.14

Learning Consortium

Schools Forum noted that the £50,000 of Local Authority monies within the budget had been shared out with the 10 clusters giving £5,000 each for literacy, numeracy, boys writing and closing the gap.

23.0
13.1.15

Final Schools Funding Formula for 2015/16

Schools Forum agreed the preferred option for the distribution of additional funding based on age weighted pupil unit (AWPU).

24.0
10.3.15

Free School Meals Service – presentation on current work and options to increase take up

Schools Forum received a presentation on free school meals take up when it was found that schools were not aware of the service provided by the Council despite this being a de-delegated service and some schools were engaging a private company for information on eligible pupils.

25.0
10.3.15

Proposed Early Years funding formula review

Schools Forum set up a working group to review the early year's single funding formula model.

26.0
10.3.15

Walsall Governors Association

Schools Forum noted that Walsall Governors Association had created a website for all governors to sign into and a governor's conference would take place on 25 April, 2015; all schools attending the conference would receive a free subscription to the National Association of Governors.

