

## Schools Forum

**Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2011 at 4.00 p.m. at Blakenall Village Centre, Thames Road, Blakenall, Walsall**

**Present:-** Mr. J. Baker (Chairman)  
Mr. A.F. Cheminais  
Mr. D. Brownsword  
Mr. G. Crowther  
Dame M. Brennan  
Mr. J.P. Clarke  
Ms. H. Lomas  
Ms. M. Cryan  
Mr. G. Deakin  
Ms. A. Barker  
Mr. S. Onions  
Mr. F. Hodgkinson  
Mr. N. Stubbs  
Mrs. M. Robinson  
Mr. D. Clough

**In Attendance:-** Ms. J. Taylor (Walsall Children's Services - Serco)  
Ms. A. Walton (Walsall Children's Services - Serco)  
Ms. D. Morris (Walsall Children's Services - Serco)  
Mr. D. Mortiboys (Walsall MBC)

		<b>Action</b>
<b>1. 18.1.11</b>	<b>Apologies</b>  Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Mr. S. Flynn, Mrs. V. Birch, Ms. J. Morgan and Mr. A. Bowater.	
<b>2. 18.1.11</b>	<b>Minutes - 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2010</b>	The minutes of the meeting held on 7 <sup>th</sup> December, 2010 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

<p><b>3.</b> <b>18.1.11</b></p>	<p><b>Matters arising from the minutes</b></p> <p><b>Early Years Funding Sub-Group - 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2010</b></p> <p>Ms. Taylor informed the Forum that an Early Years Specialist had not yet been appointed but it was felt that two posts may be required, one for administration and one for the early years specialism.</p>	
<p><b>4.</b> <b>18.1.11</b></p>	<p><b>Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)</b></p> <p><b>Resolved</b></p> <p>That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the item set out in the private part of the agenda for the reasons set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b> <b>18.1.11</b></p>	<p><b>Forward Plan</b></p> <p>The Forward Plan was submitted.</p> <p>Ms. Taylor informed the Forum that the Department for Education was still in the process of identifying an organisation to set up and manage the Education Endowment Fund and it was anticipated that the advertising of the availability of the Fund and invitation for funding should take place in the Spring.</p> <p><b>Resolved</b></p> <p>That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>	
<p><b>6.</b> <b>18.1.11</b></p>	<p><b>Changes to Grants 2011/12</b></p> <p>Mr. Mortiboys circulated a report to Members setting out the changes in funding from Central Government for 2011/12 and giving a broad overview of the impact on Walsall Council, as well as the potential impact for schools. Details relating to the grants that had ceased and the grants that had moved into other areas were set out in the report; information</p>	

	<p>relating to funding for the music support service was still awaited.</p> <p>The information contained in the Appendix to the report sets out the situation that existed prior to the settlement as well as the current situation with regard to grants.</p> <p>Mr. Cheminaiis requested that the information provided to schools should indicate clearly the funding that had ceased as this could impact on the services provided by schools.</p> <p>Ms. Taylor undertook to attend the Primary Forum and Secondary Heads meetings to explain the changes to the grants system and to respond to any questions that might arise. A budget manual would be prepared and sent out to schools and a short presentation on the main funding changes and impacts on schools might be useful.</p> <p>After consideration it was,</p> <p><b>Resolved</b></p> <p>That the report be noted and information be made available to show the funding source and its new location.</p>	
<p><b>7.</b> <b>18.1.11</b></p>	<p><b>Correspondence</b></p> <p>The Forum was informed that no correspondence had been received.</p>	
<p><b>8.</b> <b>18.1.11</b></p>	<p><b>Date and time of next meeting</b></p> <p>It was <b>NOTED</b> that the next meeting of Schools Forum would be held on Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2011 at 4.00 p.m. in the Large Hall, Education Development Centre (EDC), Pelsall Lane, Rushall, Walsall.</p>	

<p><b>9. 18.1.11</b></p>	<p><b>Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)</b></p> <p>It was <b>agreed</b> that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item under Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972.</p>	
<p><b>10. 18.1.11</b></p>	<p><b>The School Funding Settlement 2011/12</b></p> <p>A report was submitted.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Members of the Sub-Group for attending the Sub-Group meetings and thanked the officers for preparing and presenting the information.</p> <p>The Chairman indicated that a great deal of the grant paid out through Standards Fund would now be paid through Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG); it had been hoped that the process would include flexibility to remove some anomalies but the Government had introduced the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) which removed some of the flexibility and to ensure that schools did not fall below a minimum level.</p> <p>Ms. Taylor circulated an additional paper setting out the estimated value of the pupil premium in Walsall schools based upon the October, 2010 schools census.</p> <p>(see annexed)</p> <p>She confirmed that the Government would be working on a one year settlement. The two main changes next year related to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil premium which was new money to schools</li> <li>• Approximately £30 million worth of Standards Fund Grants to be added to the Dedicated Schools Grant</li> </ul>	

Ms. Taylor confirmed that the report was confidential as the information contained therein was not yet completed and was based on October, 2010 census data. Ms. Taylor enlarged on the information contained in the pupil premium section of the report. She confirmed that the money was not ring fenced at school level but measures would be introduced to amend performance tables in order to capture the achievement of the pupils covered by the premium. It would be a requirement to publish on-line full details of how the money had been used to show what had taken place to close the achievement gap.

With regard to calculations for free schools meals, it was anticipated that, in the future, it might be necessary to look at whether a child's family had "ever" received free school meals.

Ms. Lomas referred to the need to ensure that data relating to eligibility for free school meals could be made available to schools and requested whether the option could be explored whereby information on those in receipt of benefits could be passed to schools.

Ms. Taylor confirmed that there was some co-ordination with the Council and the information held on SIMS but there were problems relating to information from benefits as it did not always match the information held at school level and may not reflect if a child has changed schools. A data cleaning exercise has been done to try to get as accurate a picture as possible. There is a Working Group looking into this matter with a view to providing a common, unique reference for each child. It was agreed that a co-ordinated approach with benefits would be preferred. Ms. Taylor confirmed that information relating to free school meals was taken from the schools census returns and not benefits office but validation checks are made against the benefits data.

With regard to the pupil premium, Ms. Taylor re-iterated the importance of ensuring the schools census figures were correct to ensure the additional grant is attracted. Under the new arrangements, schools would receive their delegated budget plus the pupil premium.

Ms. Taylor enlarged on the information contained in Paragraph 3 of the report on the Dedicated Schools Grant and confirmed that Table 1 of the report set out the grants that were transferring into DSG. The funds going into the dedicated schools budgets would not be ring fenced, therefore, schools could decide how the money was spent, subject to complying with the conditions as set out in Paragraph 3.8 of the report attached.

Ms. Taylor confirmed that a minimum funding guarantee for 2011/12 had been set by the Government at 98.5% for every school and Schools Forum's powers were set out in Paragraph 4.3 of the report attached.

Table 2 to the report sets out the details relating to the grant, the 2010/11 distribution methodology and the 2011/12 proposed methodology, together with the impact on schools.

Mr. Cheminai recorded his thanks to the Sub-Group for producing such a clear and excellent piece of work.

The Schools Forum supported the continuation of the AST scheme in Walsall from the former School Development Grant with the funding for ASTs continuing to follow the teachers. In addition, a sum of £10k will be retained centrally from the DSG to manage the AST scheme as now.

Ms. Taylor reported that, with regard to the primary strategy, it was proposed that the lump sum element be retained with the remainder being allocated on a "per pupil" basis. The existing funding strategy could be retained for the secondary sector.

£60,000 would be allocated to the Authority next year for Diplomas, the amount of funding was dependent upon take-up. The funding would go to the schools specific contingency and provided to those schools with the learners when these had been confirmed.

With regard to Paragraph 6, the Forum was requested to disregard swimming pool proposals as the information would not be available in time for budget setting.

	<p>The Chairman thanked officers for their work on this issue.</p> <p><b>Resolved</b> (1 abstention)</p> <p>(1) That funds be exempted from “every reader” and “every child counts” from the minimum funding guarantee;</p> <p>(2) (Unanimously)</p> <p>That the Forum support in principle the table as set out in Paragraph 3.4 of the report setting out consolidation of Standards Fund Grants in the DSG (including Academy allocations), subject to resolution (1) above;</p> <p>(3) (Unanimously)</p> <p>That the Forum support the transfer of free school meals from “take-up” to “eligibility”.</p> <p>(Exempt information under Paragraph 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972) (as amended)</p>	
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The meeting terminated at 5.30 p.m.