# Norfolk Schools Forum

**Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 10 January 2020**

**09:00 – 12:00 hours**

**South Green Park Mattishall**

**Present: Representing:**

Keith Bates, Eaton Hall Specialist Academy Special School Academy

Holly Bowman Nursery Schools

Chris Caddamy, (Vice Chair) City College 16-19 Representative

Ian Clayton Academies

Carol Dallas, Taverham High School Secondary Academies

Alan Evans Academies

Mike Grimble, Avenue Junior School Primary Governors

Bob Groome JCC

Clare Jones Academies

Howard Nelson Diocesan Board of Education

Peter Pazitka Academies

Joanne Philpott Academies

Sarah Shirras, (Chair) St Williams Primary Primary Schools

Joanna Tuttle Maintained Secondary

Vicky Warnes JCC (primary phase)

Martin White Primary Governors

Rachel Thornbury (sub) Alternative Provision

Martin Brock Accountant

Marilyn Edgeley Admin Officer

Dawn Filtness Finance Business Partner

Nicki Rider Senior Adviser – SEND & AP

Chris Snudden Assistant Director (Education)

**Apologies:**

Sally Cutting Senior Accountant

Glyn Hambling Alternative Provision

Sara Tough Executive Director Childrens Services

Sarah Young Maintained Special Schools

1. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Chris Snudden chaired the meeting for this item and asked Forum members for nominations for chair of Schools Forum.

Sarah Shirras was proposed, this was seconded, and Schools Forum unanimously agreed; therefore, Sarah was duly elected.

Sarah then asked Forum for nominations for the position of vice chair, Chris Caddamy was nominated, and this was seconded. Again, this was unanimously agreed therefore Chris was duly elected.

1. **Review of membership**

The membership of Schools Forum needs to reflect the proportion of pupil numbers in the different school sectors as per the Schools Forums (England) regulations 2012.

A list of designated substitutes for meetings is held by the authority and members should contact Marilyn if they are unable to attend a meeting.

For alternative provision there is only one organisation that can be represented, The Engage Trust which has now become part of The Unity Trust. Therefore a substitute needs to come from the alternative provision part of the Trust and Rachel Thornbury is attending today on behalf of Glyn Hambling. As we only have the one secondary school a representative has to be from Aylsham High School.

Primary maintained representatives can be either a headteacher or a governor.

It was highlighted that there is still a vacancy for a PVI representative on the Forum. Jo-anne Lamb Senior Advisor for Early Years has been asked to find someone willing to fill this position.

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**The local authority is required to review the membership of Schools Forum on a regular basis in line with updated pupil numbers. The representation remains correct. This paper is for information only and no changes are required to membership at this time.**

1. **Minutes of meeting held on 22 November 2019**

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

**Matters Arising**

* Admissions appeals – agenda item.
* Buyback of Services

This was accepted at last forum meeting however the maintained special school representative said she wanted to follow this up. It has now been confirmed that special maintained schools will buy back services in a similar way that maintained schools buy into de-delegated services.

Keith Bates has confirmed that Special School Academies do not want to buyback services.

Increased special school places – quality of referrals

Sarah Young raised this at the last meeting and has since contacted us to confirm she has spoken to Barbara Kewn, Interim Senior SEND Manager, and it has been agreed to amend the referral forms to make them fit for purpose and to include better information.

Special school heads have attended a recent training day for SEND Operations and were able to talk to the workforce about the nature of their schools and the pupil profile.

1. **High Needs Update from Nicki Rider**

Nicki attended in lieu of Michael Bateman.

**The High Needs Block report is in 3 sections**

Budget position update

Provides the period 8 position showing a forecasted deficit of just under £7.932m; an increase of £0.214m on last period. There has been an increase in Single and Joint Placements, Personal Budgets, Alternative Education and Specialist Equipment.

Forum is asked to note the current position.

High Needs Block 5-year recovery plan update

There is no current-in-year position information due to an impending meeting with the Department for Education (DfE) on 9 March. The DfE want to scrutinise our recovery plan and this may have an impact on our overall deficit. There will be key feedback from this meeting and more comprehensive information will be available at the March School Forum meeting.

Sarah Shirras will attend the meeting with the DfE.

Members comments:

* key for us to understand how the DfE view the transformation plan.
* understand the vulnerability of the debt
* Interest
* government changes
* how the recovery plan fits the bigger picture
* long term view
* to what extent will the High Needs Block be covered by the Schools Block
* although there has been an increase all needs have to be met
* my understanding is that the DfE are less interested in timescale of the recovery plan but focusing more on the in-year-deficit, and this is still increasing.

Officers said that the meeting may be bespoke to Norfolk and the questions from the DfE did relate to the long-term plan.

The authority has a meeting with a DfE Regional SEND Adviser on a termly basis where our plans are scrutinised and this helps to give the DfE a clear view of what we are trying to achieve.

The final Norfolk area SEND Strategy for 2019-22 has been published on the SEND Local Offer. The area strategy alongside the SEND and AP Transformation Programme continues to progress and underpins the HNB recovery plan.

December editions of Norfolk SEND Newsletters provide updates and information on the current activity/progress and can be accessed here:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKNORFOLK/bulletins/2713cb0>

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKNORFOLK/bulletins/26d9893>

HNB Deep Dive – CAMHS and associated areas

CAMHS – General

As mentioned at previous School’s Forum meetings, significant transformational activity is underway between NCC and the Clinical Commissioning groups (CCGs) regarding CAMHS.

The report provides some indication of travel of the work. The budget is in scope to redesign the structure to a more responsive and open access and move away from referral, triage and assessments. This work is ongoing.

There is an Education Work Group being set up and the chair asked Forum members to consider representation on this group.

Rebecca Hulme is the Associate Director Children’s Services and the CCG, this is a jointly funded post and will oversee governance and monitoring. Behind this sits a mental health strategy board.

Members asked for information on how Norfolk HNB contribution to CAMHS compares to other LAs. Chris advised that the LA may be able to obtain information from other LAs, but this is not guaranteed.

**Action: Chris Snudden to provide for next meeting**

A Mental Health Support Team pilot scheme is running in the north and west. This was a result of a bid by the Norfolk and Waveney Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) to a national “trail blaze” scheme. Team of mental health workers will be deployed into approximately 40 schools to work with children with mild to moderate mental health needs. It is funded by the DfE and DoH and the teams will provide talking therapies, group support and consultation and supervision for staff.

Members commented on the PATHS Scheme saying some schools had found alternative schemes which they said were better.

The authority made a commitment to review the PATHS scheme.

High Needs contributions to pupils in hospital - officers advised that this is a difficult area for any authority to manage as children are placed into mental health hospitals by NHS England and this is usually some distance from Norfolk. It is incumbent on the authority to arrange their education.

Personal Budgets (PB)

A small number of PBs are in place to deliver direct therapy.

Joint Funded Places

Placements made in special residential schools or children’s homes with aligned day education for looked after children with the most complex needs who require integrated care, education and therapy provision.

Compass Schools

Overview of compass schools – part of Short Stay School for Norfolk.

There will be a strategic review of the compass schools as part of the transformation work.

**Members asked that they be provided with updates on the CAMHS redesign.**

1. **Proposed Schools Budgets including central costs**

The total Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2020-21 was confirmed in December and totals £646.495m before academy recoupment.

The Schools block is £507.007m, this is an increase of £24.995m and £6.475m is due to an increase in pupil numbers.

Officers are now in the process of generating school budgets based on the national funding formula.

The central services block is £3.4m an increase of 57p per pupil.

The Early Years Block is based on old data from last January census and has an 8p per hour uplift; this will be updated again in July with census figures from this January.

The total DSG increase amounts to £36.977m.

The Teachers pay grant will continue.

Members asked if any information had been released from the government on grants. The authority is still waiting for this information. However, the government has said that The Teachers Pay Grant and The Pension Employer Grant will continue.

**A decision is required: Schools Forum are asked to vote to retain centrally 5% of the 3 and 4-year-old funding, approximately £1.854m (£1,854,257) for the Local Authority to continue to provide central support and payments to all providers of Early Years Education, in schools and in private, voluntary and independent settings.**

**For 16**

**Against 0**

**Abstain 0**

It was highlighted that regarding Teachers pensions schools can apply for the difference if their pension costs are significantly higher than what the formula has projected.

If colleagues are unsure the system will work this out for you – the deadline to apply is Friday 17 January.

**Action: Sarah Shirras will forward the link to colleagues.**

It was highlighted that with teachers pay-scales - the thought was that the increase would be similar for two more years but is in fact significantly higher.

**Action: Chris Snudden will check this with Carole Human**

1. **Pupil Variations for 202/21**

Pupil variation information is provided by the authority to school forums annually.

For the last 2 years authorities no longer have to submit pupil variations to The Secretary of State instead these are entered into our authority proforma tool for schools where:

* there has been, or going to be, a reorganisation, or,
* a school has changed, or is going to change, its admission limit.

The ESFA does however expect authorities to present any pupil variations to their School Forum.

The exception to this is that any request for a negative pupil variation adjustment would still require a disapplication with compelling evidence as to why it should be approved. Norfolk has not requested any negative adjustments in 2020/21.

The spreadsheet circulated shows planned changes with the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) worked on 5/12 of October census and 7/12 estimate of September.

The difference due to Pupil Variation is £629,496.81 -this is still illustrative.

It was highlighted that Wymondham Prep School is not listed.

**Action: Martin Brock will check if this is an error.**

**Martin Brock to bring updated pupil variation figures to the March meeting of Schools Forum.**

**Schools Forum noted the information provided.**

1. **Admissions Appeals**

The question was raised at the September meeting by an academy representative about the authority’s decision to charge academies admission appeal costs when other authorities do not. Also, a request was made for some further information on the following points:

* How the charges for appeals are derived?
* Where the money goes?
* Could there be a capping mechanism?

Officers said that the majority of authorities do charge academies.

The authority uses the NCC budget not the DSG for community, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided and foundation schools, but can charge academies.

The charges are listed on the circulated report.

Academies can choose if they wish to buy into this service.

A list of appeal services is provided in the report.

The level of costs incurred are driven by the level of appeals, therefore, it would not be appropriate to have a capping mechanism. However, the charge for multiple appeals is significantly lower than the charge for a single appeal.

There is no charge made for advocacy for academies in cases where an appeal relates to a decision made by a Fair Access Panel which academies are under a statutory duty to take part in.

The report includes a tabled paper showing the split of cases and outcomes.

Members highlighted an anomaly that as the money does not come from the DSG voluntary aided and foundation schools should not be included. Members asked why the diocese schools are being paid for?

Officers advised that this anomaly came apparent to NCC whilst reviewing the current approach and the guidance to respond to the questions raised.

If we were using the DSG budget, rather than an NCC budget, all schools would need to be treated the same.

Members asked is it fair that the authority pays for only some of the appeals of all Norfolk children?

Officers said that the philosophy is that academies are their own admissions authority.

Jo Philpott who raised the academy appeals issue said that the information and breakdown of the service provided was helpful.

She was sympathetic to the issue of parents right to have school of their choice but highlighted lack of advice available on appeals and information on success rate.

In effect, successful schools are being penalised with this process.

She was uncomfortable with the costs charged to academies. Academies choose to use NCC to make it a neutral process.

Members said that some academies are talking about using a different process, but shared concerns that this could create inconsistent approaches for Norfolk children. .

Members raised the following points:

* Likelihood of success
* Cost of venues used for appeals.

Officers said that they were keen that the service works and, whilst efforts are already made to keep the costs low, they will look at cost of venues and ensure transparency as to actual costs of service.

**Action**

**Officers suggested that an initial meeting or task and finish group should be arranged with Forum representatives to look at all the issues:**

* **Cost of venues**
* **Transparency of costs**
* **Communication of appeals process and success rate**

**Members suggested this should include looking at the DSG question and what costs would look like if free to everyone**

The following members volunteered to sit on the task and finish group:

Jo Philpott

Clare Jones

Ian Clayton

Peter Pazitka

**Action: Chris Snudden to investigate the issue of the Diocese schools appeals coming out of the NCC budget.**

1. **Disapplication of MFG for The Wherry School.**

Under the conditions of grant for High Needs, special schools are subject to -1.5% Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) protection in 2019/20 and this protection is being raised by the DfE to 0% protection in 2020/21. The MFG calculation is based on a comparison of funding between financial years based on the assumption of the same number and type of places in each year (like-for-like). Exceptions to this funding protection can be made by a request from the Local Authority to the Secretary of State for a disapplication of the conditions for MFG.

In the past, the Local Authority has never had to apply for a disapplication to MFG because the top-up values for special schools have not been reduced, so special schools have always been funded at or above the MFG level.

The request for disapplication is about establishing fairness for Special Schools.

The agreement with the Wherry School agreed top up funding that built in diseconomies of scale. Then as the school built to full capacity the top-up funding would reduce.

To do this NCC are required to make a disapplication request and will include the letter from the Wherry School agreeing to the funding arrangements. The Authority would like to be able to say that they have the support of the Schools Forum.

NCC are asking that Schools Forum understand and support our disapplication to the DfE to removing the MFG so that we can fund the school on a funding profile agreed with them and reduce funding in years 3 and 4.

**Decision**

**Schools Forum unanimously agreed.**

In addition, NCC will need to transition the Wherry School fully to the standard special school matrix in year 5 and we will need to submit a disapplication request for this. We are requesting Schools Forum support for this future disapplication.

**Decision**

**Schools Forum unanimously agreed**

1. **Communication**

It was reported that the Head Teacher Associations are looking to re-connect with existing and new Members of Parliament regarding school funding.

1. **Future agenda items**

Schools and growth

1. **Meeting dates for next year**

A list of dates was tabled – members should contact Marilyn Edgeley by Friday 18 January if they think any of these dates would clash with significant events involving several members.

1. **Date of next meeting**

18 March 2020 – 09:00 to 12.30 at South Green Enterprise Centre Mattishall.