At a meeting of the Schools Forum held in Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Monday 16 September 2019, 3:00 PM — 5:10 PM

**Present**

Miss K Hayward (Chair), Sandy Secondary School
Mr J Creswick, (Vice-Chair), Ivel Valley School

**School Members:**

Mr S Barnard, Governor, Dover Down Lower School
Mr T Clarke, Headteacher, Gothic Mede Academy
Mrs L Collins, Headteacher, Westfield Nursery
Mr C Field, Governor, Alameda Middle School
Mr M Howe, Governor, Leighton Middle School
Mr J Hughes, Headteacher, Beecroft Academy
Mrs J New, Headteacher, Flitwick Lower School
Mr J Selmes, Headteacher, Weatherfield Academy Special School
Mrs M Smith, Headteacher, Priory Academy
Mrs S Teague, Headteacher, Caddington and Slip End Lower School
Mr S Tiktin, Governor, Beaudesert Lower School
Mrs C White, Headteacher, Harlington and Sundon Academy

**Non-School Members:**

Mr P Burrett, Church of England Diocese

**Apologies for Absence:**

Mrs C Earp, Headteacher, Henlow Middle School
Mr M Foster, Trades Union Representative
Mrs S Harrison, Director of Children’s Services
Mr D Penfold, Governor, Cranfield CofE Academy
Cllr D Shelvey, Chairman of Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Mrs S Wells, School Governor, St Andrew’s Lower School

**Officers in Attendance:**

Mrs L Bartos, Head of Service for SEND
Ms S Bellamy, Acting Senior Finance Manager, Children’s Services
Mr P Fraser, Assistant Director Education
Ms S Griffin, Committee Services Officer
Cllr S Clark, Executive Member for Families, Education and Children
Mrs S Tyler, Assistant Director Business and Supporting Services

**Others in Attendance:**

Mrs B Bourn, Manager Early Years SEND Team
Mrs C Clough, Speech and Language Therapist
Mrs J Redding, Head of Service, The Jigsaw Centre
Mrs S Salisbury, Head of Outreach, The Jigsaw Centre
Mr N Shaw, Head of Schools for the Future
Mrs M Smithers, Heath Barn Pre School
1. Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 10 June 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Item 9 - Dedicated School Grant Contingency Budgets
The balance for Ashton Middle School would be transferred to the Diocese of St Albans for dissemination.

2. Chair's Announcements and Communications

The following announcements and communications were made:

- The appointments process had taken place for vacancies on the Schools Forum. The following representatives had been elected and were welcomed to the meeting:
  - Mr S Barnard, Primary Maintained School Governor
  - Mr T Clarke, Primary Academy Head Teacher
  - Mrs L Collins, Nursery School Head Teacher
  - Mr J Hughes, Secondary Maintained Head Teacher
- Mrs S Wells had resigned from her role as Primary Maintained School Governor on the Schools Forum. Thanks, were given to Mrs Wells for her time and support as a member of the Forum.
- Elections would take place for the following membership vacancies prior to the November meeting of the Schools Forum:
  - Primary Maintained School Governor
  - Secondary Maintained School Head Teacher
  - PRU/AP Academy Head Teacher

3. Schools Forum Powers and Responsibilities

NOTED

the Schools Forum powers and responsibilities summary document issued by the Education Funding Agency in September 2018.

4. Early Years Block 2019/20

The Schools Forum received a report on the updated allocation to the Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, and the spend to the end of the first term of 2019/2020.
Points and comments included:

- The updated allocation for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) issued by the Department for Education had resulted in an overall increase over the initial allocation of £737k.
- The Early Years SEND team was originally set up to work with Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers. Work had also taken place with some nursery classes and pre-schools run by Lower and Primary schools. However, the resources have never been made available to work with all Lower/Primary Schools through the Year R provisions.
- In January 2019 the Early Years team was extended to work with children with SEND in Year R for one year as part of the High Needs Block Early Intervention Project.
- The additional spend of £300k per annum would enable the provision of additional advisory teachers and some specialist practitioner time and all Year R provision in Central Bedfordshire to be appropriately supported.
- The current staffing level of 5 teachers and 8 Early Years practitioners would remain the same. The team would work across the piece to ensure a seamless transition.
- All maintained schools and academies in Central Bedfordshire would be able to access this provision.
- Part of the project included the development of a toolkit with the aim of all schools being able to use this resource independently.

**NOTED**

the updated allocation of the Early Years Block 2019/2020 and the spend to the end of July.

**RESOLVED**

that the additional spend on the Early Years SEND team be agreed.

**5. High Needs Block 2018/2019**


Points and comments included:

- A revised allocation was issued in July 2019 which increased the High Needs Block allocation to £29,062,896.
- A range of approaches discussed at a previous meeting of the Schools Forum as future mitigations for the overspend on the High Needs Block were now in place.
- Similar lines of spend such as Post 16 had been updated and consolidated where possible to provide greater clarity of the budget and forecast spend.
- Spend for out of county placements remained high. Work that had taken place to look at out of county placements had resulted in the identification of 6 children who could potentially be placed back in county.
- Concern was expressed that all Special Schools in Central Bedfordshire were full and over capacity. Planning needed to be in place to accept children placed back in county, especially those with high needs.
• Work was taking place to address the overspend as part of Schools Improvement and Schools for the Future which included the development of the existing provision.
• The Head of SEND advised that the data had shown EHCP Needs Assessments in Central Bedfordshire had 21% completion in terms of the final plan being issued within 20 weeks in January 2018. In January 2019 they were at 75% with a number of months this year over 80% with some 100% achievement.

NOTED

the current spend against budget for 2019/20.


The Schools Forum received an update on the current position of School Forum Budget.

Points and comments included:

• A budget of £3,000 for 2019/20 had been set for costs associated with the operation of the Forum, with the continued membership of the F40 group and £2,000 delegated to the Chairman of the Schools Forum to fund the commissioning of consultancy and administration support. The level of the budget would be reviewed annually.
• The budget amount of £11,684 included a carry forward amount of £8,684 from 2018/19 and a budget allocation of £3,000 for 2019/20.
• Total spend to date was £768.00.
• The current balance was £10,916. The costs for an external presenter and venue hire for the induction programme for Schools Forum members in September and October 2019 would be taken from the Schools Forum Budget.

NOTED

the School Forum spend for year to 31 July 2019.

7. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

The Schools Forum received an update on the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant for the financial year 2019/20 and funding arrangements for 2020/21.

Points and comments included:

• The Dedicated School Grant would continue to have four blocks; Schools, Central School Services, Early Years and High Needs.
• The ESFA had updated the allocations for each block in July 2019. The Early Years Block had been updated based on the January 2019 census and had increased by £737k.
• The High Needs Block had also been updated for the import/export adjustment based on the January 2019 census and had been increased by £141k.
• There was a carry forward to 2019/20 of £1,937,980.
• The DfE had released a consultation seeking the views on the implementation of the mandatory minimum per pupil funding levels in the national funding formula for 2020/21 which are to be used by local authorities in their local formula. Central Bedfordshire Council would be submitting a response on behalf of schools in the area. Schools were also encouraged to submit individual responses to the consultation. The closing date for submission of responses was 22 October 2019.

NOTED

the update to the 2019/20 Dedicated School Grant (DSG).

8. Dedicated School Grant Contingency Budgets

The Schools Forum received an update on the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant Contingency Budgets for the financial year 2019/20.

Points and comments included:
• The balance brought forward for 2019/20 of £274,921 is ring-fenced de-delegated funding for Maintained schools only of £123,776, £121,675 for all schools and £29,470 for the Ashton Middle School Fund Account Balance.
• The amount of £10,475 of unallocated DSG for 2019/20 had been added to School Contingency.
• Adjustments of £67,991 had been made to the budgets for Maple Tree Primary School and £27,406 to Fairfield Park Lower School.
• The Assistant Director Education explained that the adjustment made to the budget for Fairfield Park Lower School was due to its split site. The adjustment made to the budget for Maple Tree Primary School related to the decision in 2017/18 to change the age range at the school and the agreement from the Regional Schools Commissioner to close Sandye Place Academy. This had resulted in Maple Tree Primary School accommodating 22 pupils in 2018 at the request of the local authority which the school was not funded for. Funding was usually part of a co-ordinated change and disapplication process but due to time constraints Schools Contingency was used to fund this process. A meeting was being arranged with Sandye Place Academy to look the remaining funding when the Academy formally closed at end of year.
• There was no carry forward for the High Needs Contingency as the block was overspent and funded by reserves.
• The recoupment adjustment of £445,191 following a reduction in post-16 places, the allocation of £306,000 import/export adjustment to the High Needs Block and an allocated amount of £2,300 has resulted in a current budget of £753,491.
• High Needs Contingency would be used to fund any overspend in the High Needs Post-16, EHCP and provision top-ups. If the forecast overspend on these budgets continued to increase as the year progressed there is the risk that the contingency budget will be insufficient to fund, and the block may overspend.
• Early Years Contingency had a current balance of £1,897,128. Funding may be required for adjustments to PVI, school and academy payments for census updated for both universal 15 hours and the additional 15 hours entitlement.
• Central School Services Contingency has a balance of £181,028 with no anticipated further spend this financial year.
NOTED

the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Contingency spend for the financial year 2019/20 to 31 July 2019.

9. School Finance update

The Schools Forum received an update on the school surplus balances at 31 March 2019 and current RAG rating.

Points and comments included:
• The balance control mechanism in the Scheme of Financing Schools for 2016/17, section 4.2 defines excess balances as 10% (secondary and Special schools) and 15% (Nursery and Primary schools) of the current year’s individual school budget share.
• The Schools Finance team reviewed schools returns and examined funds declared as committed against agreed criteria and challenged as appropriate. Nine schools were identified as holding excess uncommitted balances, one nursery, five lower schools, two middle schools and one Special School.
• A sub-group of Maintained School representatives would be convened to consider the explanations provided by the schools and make recommendations back to the Authority. An update would be given at the November meeting of the Schools Forum.
• Following the year end and confirmation of the 2018/19 balances held by schools, schools had been assessed and risk rated against the criteria agreed by the Schools Forum. The number of schools rated red had increased by two in comparison with August 2018. The increase was a result of an increasing number of schools forecasting a deficit budget at March 2020.

NOTED

• the list of schools holding excess surplus balances to be reviews at the Sub-Group meeting
• the Finance RAG rating for schools.

10. SEND Workstreams update

The Schools Forum received a presentation on the Children’s Services Early Intervention project – SALT.

Caroline Clough, Speech and Language Therapist, Central Bedfordshire Council gave an overview of the Early Years work stream.

Points and comments included:

• The rationale for the workstream was to empower schools in supporting children with Speech Language and Communication Needs.
• The workstream commenced in June 2019 and would run through to March 2020.
• The toolkit for SENDCo's was aimed at children from Year 1 although it was hoped that there would be flexibility to include Reception Year.
• Research has shown that children with speech, language and communication needs were at risk of exclusion and have poor attainment at school. One of the aims of the toolkit was to reduce the number of children excluded from school and to provide them with the necessary support.
• The content of toolkit would include background information about speech, language and communication skills and issues such as Developmental Language Disorder. The aim was to create a protocol for schools to use to assist with early identification which supports a universal, targeted and specialist approach. The toolkit also would include guidance about the referral process in terms of who to refer to and when and other specialist support that should be considered such as Educational Psychologists. There would also be a section on English as an Additional Language.
• The toolkit is not a document to stop referrals to the team. Referrals can be made straightway or after the child has received targeted support. The toolkit refers to the benefits of having targeted support first, to support referrals being made at the right time with the right information.
• School visits had highlighted that assessments might be being used but that the next steps were not always be taken. This is where the toolkit would be of benefit.
• Work had also taken place to look at local pathways and current provision in Central Bedfordshire and a questionnaire sent to schools regarding the current training provision. Discussions had also taken place at PAN Bedfordshire meetings, CBC working groups and with other professionals.
• There is the recognition that the toolkit is a small part of this process. Thought needed to be given about how the toolkit fits into wider workforce, training and the development model.
• The progression tools (which it was hoped would be part of the toolkit) are for non-speech and language specialists to use. Guidance documents and videos are provided by the communication trust which explain how to use the progression tools. The provision of training/workshops to support schools in using the toolkit was being looked at.
• The vision and next steps include children having access to the right level of support at the right time and every child benefiting from an environment that supports speech and language development.
• Three school SENDCos had undergone the training for the toolkit. An initial pilot would take place with a few select schools followed by wider presentations in the spring/summer of 2020. The toolkit would then be rolled out within the High Needs Block project.

NOTED

the presentation on the SALT Early Intervention workstream.

11. Work Programme

Members received and considered the Work Programme for the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum.
RESOLVED

that the Work Programme be approved subject to the following additions:

18 November 2019
• Update on the review of academy budgets
• Early Years and High Needs Block (verbal updates)
• Presentations on two SEND workstreams
• Update on Schools for the Future and funding following pupils

13 January 2020
• Early Years and High Needs Block (written updates)

12. Exclusion of the Press and Public

13. Review and repurposing of the Jigsaw Service

The Schools Forum received a report on the review and repurposing of the Jigsaw Service.

RESOLVED

that the principal of providing additional funding by a transfer from the Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Block to the High Needs Block to support the implementation of the proposal, once the regulations and allocations for 20120/21 are available be agreed.

14. Date of the Next Meeting

Monday 18 November 2019