

Islington Schools Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 26 November 2020 at 2pm – held virtually (MS Teams).

PRESENT

Forum Members

Anita Grant (AG)	CEO, Islington Play Association
Andrew Bosi (AB)	Governor, Rotherfield Primary School
Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy (AM-L)	Head teacher, Newington Green Primary School (Chair)
Cassie Moss (CM)	Head teacher, Yerbury Primary School (left at 2.50pm)
Jo Dibb (JD)	EGA Secondary – Executive Head of Islington Futures Federation (Vice-chair)
Tanya Watson (TW)	Head teacher, William Tyndale (Primary Academy)
Lisa Horton (LH)	Head teacher, Hargrave Park Primary School
Fiona Maccorquodale (FM)	Head teacher, Prior Weston Primary School
Penny Barratt (PB)	Head teacher, The Bridge Special School (Academy)
Susan Service (SS)	Head teacher, Islington Arts & Media Secondary School
Francis Gonzalez (FrG)	Head teacher, Richard Cloudesley Special School
Maggie Elliott (ME)	Governor, Montem Primary School (Edventure Collaborative Federation with Drayton Park) (Vice-chair)
Paul Lasok (PL)	Governor, St Aloysius Secondary School (and St Joseph's)
Joe Simpson (JS)	Governor, St Peter and St Paul's (arrived 2.50pm)
Nigel Smith (NS)	Head teacher, New River College (Pupil Referral Unit)
Cllr Rakhia Ismail (RI)	Elected member
Mita Pandya (MP)	Executive Head, Archway and Willow Children's Centres

Other Attendees

Tim Partington (TP)	Head of Children's Services, Finance
Jane Wright (JW)	Manager Schools and EY Governance (Clerk)
Mark Taylor (MT)	Director of Learning and Schools
Debbie Stevenson (DS)	Head of Early Years and Schools Funding
Candy Holder (CH)	Head of Pupil Services

Apologies

Fiona Godfrey (FG)	Head teacher, Kate Greenaway Nursery School
Claire Hersey (CHe)	Principal Finance Officer, City of London Academy Trust

Not in attendance

Bryan Johnston (BJ)	Deputy Director of City and Islington Sixth Form College
Vicky Linsley (VL)	Head teacher, St Mary Magdalene Academy

	Agenda item	Action
1.	<p>Apologies for absence/not in attendance</p> <p>See above. ME chaired the meeting as AM-L had technical issues connecting to the meeting.</p>	

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2	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 October 2020</p> <p>a. Accuracy – the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the following amendment:</p> <p>page 2, Item 12. Replace ‘Labour Party manifesto’ with ‘majority party manifesto’.</p> <p>b. Matters Arising – top of page 7, Item 8 – MT said that if it was needed, an Equality Impact Assessment would be done in relation to considering making the admissions appeals hearings remote to reduce the costs of the appeals clerking service.</p> <p>AGREED</p>	JW																																
3.	<p>Schools forum composition</p> <p>The clerk (JW) spoke to a report previously circulated.</p> <p>3.1. Apportionment of membership on Schools Forum</p> <p>The apportionment of the 14 places for primary and secondary maintained schools and academies/free schools was unchanged following the October Schools Census 2020.</p> <p>Table 1.1 Apportionment of pupils autumn 2020</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="177 1140 1291 1382"> <thead> <tr> <th>Phase</th> <th>Maintained (%)</th> <th>Academy/FS (%)</th> <th>Total (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Primary</td> <td>12,761 (56)</td> <td>1,718 (8)</td> <td>14,479 (64)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Secondary</td> <td>4,485 (20)</td> <td>3,682 (16)</td> <td>8,167 (36)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>17,246 (76)</td> <td>5,400 (24)</td> <td>22,646 (100)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Table 1.2. Illustrative Distribution of Mainstream Membership following Conversions</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="177 1496 1295 1738"> <thead> <tr> <th>Sector</th> <th>Maintained (%)</th> <th>Academies/FS (%)</th> <th>Total (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Primary</td> <td>8 (56)</td> <td>1 (8)</td> <td>9 (63)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Secondary</td> <td>3 (20)</td> <td>2 (16)</td> <td>5 (37)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>11 (76)</td> <td>3 (24)</td> <td>14 (100)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>3.2. Update on Membership</p> <p>Secondary academy vacancies</p> <p>Claire Hersey, Principal Finance Officer, City of London Academy Trust (COLAT), had been appointed on Tuesday 23 November to represent secondary academies. No objections or additional nominations had been received from other academies in</p>	Phase	Maintained (%)	Academy/FS (%)	Total (%)	Primary	12,761 (56)	1,718 (8)	14,479 (64)	Secondary	4,485 (20)	3,682 (16)	8,167 (36)	Total	17,246 (76)	5,400 (24)	22,646 (100)	Sector	Maintained (%)	Academies/FS (%)	Total (%)	Primary	8 (56)	1 (8)	9 (63)	Secondary	3 (20)	2 (16)	5 (37)	Total	11 (76)	3 (24)	14 (100)	
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	<p>response to a letter the clerk had emailed to them on 16 November. In that letter, the clerk had also asked them to let her know by 4 December who would be taking up the other secondary academy vacancy when it becomes vacant on 1 January 2021. The current representative, VL, is eligible to stand again.</p> <p>Primary governor vacancies</p> <p>The vacancies were due from 1 January 2021. Primary governors had been invited to submit nominations by 3 December 2020. The current primary governors can stand again.</p> <p>Primary head teacher vacancies</p> <p>One vacancy is currently due as of 1 January 2021. Schools Forum were invited to agree to the extension of the term of office of the head teacher concerned, LH, to 31 March 2021, so that elections to this position can be delayed until January and so after the primary governor elections. LH had indicated she would be willing for her term of office to be extended to 31 March 2021.</p> <p>An additional primary headteacher place had just become vacant due to the resignation of Greg Crawford. The clerk would call for nominations for this place in January 2021.</p> <p>Other future vacancies in 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Secondary head teacher (JD and vice-chair) – from 1 April 2021 b. Primary Academy headteacher (TW) – from 1 April 2021 c. Early Years Childcare provider (AG) – from 28 September 2021 d. PRU (New River College) (NS) – from 25 October 2021 e. Archway and Willow Children’s Centre (MP) – from 1 September 2021 <p>Proposed actions/actions to be noted</p> <p>Actions</p> <p>JW will arrange the necessary elections as needed in 2021.</p> <p>NOTED</p>	<p>JW</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) projected allocations (future year)</p> <p>DS reported to a paper (spreadsheet) that had been circulated.</p> <p>4.a. Schools Block</p> <p>The figures 2021-22 presented at October Schools Forum were illustrative – the figures presented at this meeting had been updated in line with the October census.</p> <p>There had been a significant roll drop – 302 primary and five secondary, equating to a loss of £1.7m. This was reducing the overall increase in funding announced in the September Spending Review from £8m to £6.3m. And £5.3m was to cover Teachers Pay and Pensions Grant which was being moved in to DSG.</p> <p>The October Census closed on 25 November – final allocations would be known in December. No changes were expected.</p> <p>4.b. High Needs – will have final allocations in December</p> <p>4.c. Early Years – will have indicative allocation in January</p>	

	<p>LH asked if there was a similar situation in other London boroughs in relation to impact of falling rolls – DS confirmed there was though does not know the extent.</p> <p>CH pointed out an additional impact on funding – an additional 100 families have opted for home educating their children (across all age ranges).</p> <p>RI asked about the extent to which COVID has led to families opting for home education – CH said there were 110 families before COVID so the number had nearly doubled.</p> <p>NOTED</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>School Funding Consultation: (Results 2021-22)</p> <p>DS reported to a paper that had been circulated.</p> <p>A consultation with schools on School Funding 2020-21 had been held from 5 October to 6 November (extended by two weeks).</p> <p>There were 12 respondents to the consultation: 10 primary schools and 2 secondary schools. 11 respondents were from maintained schools and 1 from a primary academy. DS thanked those schools present that had responded. As in previous years, the final factor values used in the local formula will be agreed at the January Schools’ Forum following the December DSG funding settlement and the release of the October 2020 census data.</p> <p>Responses</p> <p>All but one respondent were in favour of using all factors and factor values of the National Funding Formula (NFF). DS commented that we are so far down the line with the NFF that we are avoiding schools being faced with a cliff edge when the NFF is imposed nationally.</p> <p>All respondents were in agreement with varying the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) level to ensure affordability of the available funding pot. Local authorities can set the MFG in local formulae between +0.5% and +2% per pupil. The MFG in Islington is 1.43% in 2020-21 – it is likely to be a similar figure in 2021-22.</p> <p>All respondents agreed with retaining funds for schools with additional/bulge classes (growth), and for those schools with falling rolls. DS confirmed that growth funding for an additional class is a one-time payment following the class as it goes through the school as pupil numbers post opening of class are included in formula allocations.</p> <p>There were several comments relating to retention of funds for falling rolls including references to amount of time allocated and rating of schools allowed access to funds. The criteria a school must meet to be considered for falling rolls funds include Ofsted rating; the criteria has to meet DfE requirements and be agreed locally. Funding is limited to three years, by which time it is expected that rolls will have increased and staffing adjustments will have been made.</p> <p>Forum was invited to read the other comments in the report.</p> <p>In relation to falling rolls, Islington is working with neighbouring boroughs on this – a wider strategy can be found on the Islington website - latest Place Planning report is here.</p>	

In Table 2 of the consultation document, the current services funded by de-delegation from maintained schools were listed and all respondents were in favour of continuing with this into 2021-22 at the same rates as now.

We also asked whether schools would consider de-delegation of additional monies for three services not previously included: Behaviour Support, Library Service, and Insurance. Only the 11 maintained schools were eligible to respond and their answers were as follows:

Behaviour Support	6 votes in favour	5 vote against
Library Service	5 votes in favour	6 votes against
Insurance	6 votes in favour	5 votes against

We asked whether schools wished Schools Forum to consider school membership, by phase, of the government Risk Protection Arrangement (see Item 7 below for more information). The response was 7 votes in favour and 4 against.

In relation to Higher Needs funding, the proposal of cluster funds by various groupings of schools (see Item 8 below) to strengthen SEND support resulted in a split vote:

- Existing associations and collaborations 5 schools in favour
- Geographical areas 2 schools in favour
- Needs led clusters 5 schools in favour

RI queried the consultation response rate. DS responded that she had spoken at Headteachers' and Governors' Briefing about it, the deadline for responses had been extended and the response rate was higher than in recent years. Given we are following NFF and there was nothing particularly controversial in the proposals, the response rate probably reflects that headteachers are comfortable with budgeting methodologies.

RI suggested that we explore ways of improving the response rate in future, perhaps with workshops. CM felt that the document may be overwhelming for pressured headteachers to understand – suggested this document be discussed at headteachers' briefings.

ME commented that the number of questions in this consultation had decreased significantly as it concerned a smaller pot of money.

Recommendations

- To continue to move towards the NFF as far as is possible
- To continue to retain Growth and Falling Rolls Funding – the principle now, with allocations to come to January 2021 Forum
- To continue to retain funding for services through the Central School Services Block as previously agreed with Schools Forum; final allocations will be presented at the January 2021 Forum
- To continue de-delegated services at the current rate
- To explore the provision of the additional de-delegated services
- To request information from the Insurance and Risk Protection team to allow discussion on RPA provision

AGREED

6.	Growth/Falling Rolls (2021-22)	
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DS spoke to a report previously circulated.

Growth and Falling Rolls funding forms a part of the Schools Block but is outside of the funding formula allocations. It covers:

- implicit growth – funding to support growing schools (Whitehall Park and COLPAI) where the increased numbers are included in the funding formula
- explicit growth - allocations made in accordance with funding guidelines issued by the DfE - fund either bulge, permanent expansions or additional adhoc classes.
- falling rolls – funding to support schools who are experiencing short-term roll number reductions

Both explicit growth and falling rolls funding are top-sliced, in agreement with Forum at the January Forum. Current funding arrangements are £300k and £400k respectively. Final DSG allocations will be announced in December and final budget recommendations will be presented at the January Forum. For now the assumption is that these sums will remain for 2021-22.

In 2021-22 the DfE will allocate **growth** funding at LA Level, based on increases in primary and secondary pupil numbers at Middle Layer Super Output Areas between the October 2019 and 2020 school censuses. Local authorities that received growth funding protection in 2020-21 will continue to receive protection in 2021-22, meaning the maximum reduction in growth funding for these local authorities will be set at -0.5% of their total DSG schools block allocation in 2020-21.

Appendix A of the report sets out the growth allocation that the LA expects for 2020-21 - £933K, representing an increase of 0.08%:

It was anticipated that Growth funding needed in 2021/22 would be £307K across five schools:

- Moreland, Central Foundation, City of London Academy Highgate and Tufnell Park for permanent expansions
- Winton – bulge class – due to get its last allocation in 2021-22 as the class has moved through the school.

The projected overspend £7k would be met by existing underspends within the DSG, if required. The full sum may not be needed – allocation will not be confirmed until after closure of the October Census 2021.

Falling Rolls

For 2020-21, Schools Forum agreed to increase the Falling Rolls budget to £400k, reducing growth to £300k. These changes reflected the position in Islington where more schools were experiencing falling rolls with less need for growth funding.

The full set of criteria and funding methodology for Islington has been agreed as follows:

- The school must have been judged good or outstanding at their last Ofsted inspection. *DfE requirement*
- The total number of pupils on roll (NOR) has dropped by at least 5% between last October census and the previous year's October census. *Islington requirement*
- Vacancy capacity of the school is a minimum of 15% of PAN (Published Admission Number). *Islington requirement*
- Local planning data shows the places will be required within the next 3-5 years.
- Schools receiving growth funding are excluded

Funding has been provisionally allocated for 2021-22 to nine schools meeting these criteria. An underspend of about £7K is anticipated which could cover the overspend on Growth Funding. The schools are:

- Blessed Sacrament
- Christ the King
- Duncombe
- Highbury Quadrant
- Montem
- New North Academy
- Pooles Park
- Rotherfield
- St Jude's and St Paul's.

The Islington schools funding consultation stipulated that from 2021-22, falling rolls funding at a school level will be limited to a maximum of three consecutive years. This would allow the benefitting schools time and additional resources to adjust their workforce. During the three-year period of protected funding, Islington would require these schools to remain in a sustainable financial position. The falling rolls funding should not be used to mask a longer-term financial issue in the school. All 12 respondents to the consultation agreed to continue with falling rolls funding under this additional criteria.

FM asked why some schools were receiving growth funding while other schools had falling rolls. DS explained that the growth funding had been agreed before falling rolls had started to impact. The Places Planning document at that time indicated the increased places were needed. MT added that we are now more confident in our own modelling. Overall there were no new plans for growing maintained schools, although there was need for more SEND places (see Item 8 below). Academies can expand (decision of the Regional Schools Commissioner) but the LA view is there is no need.

LH asked if the Growth funding last year was fully spent given it was based on Published Admissions Numbers (PANs). DS replied there was likely to be an adjustment on spend – to bring to Forum in January 2021.

It was observed that there were high levels of mobility in the borough – anecdotally stable schools were continuing to be so, but for other schools, there had been significant mobility. There was a request to provide the context of schools being funding – DS said this could probably be done.

RI asked about falling rolls funding for schools that are not good or outstanding or are struggling. DS said the LA has raised this with the DfE. MT will raise again with them, though the Government's policy is to support good rather than struggling schools

JS commented that the fall in primary rolls will impact on secondary schools in 3 to 4 years' time. The south of the borough could be affected by the opening of an academy in Haggerston.

MT commented that falling rolls was an issue coming up at London Leaders meetings, compounded by the impact of COVID and rising staffing costs.

TW left the meeting at 15.01.

DS

	<p>Schools Forum were asked to agree the continuation of explicit growth funding and note the potential allocations.</p> <p>Falling Rolls - Schools' Forum were asked to agree the continuation of falling rolls funding and note the potential allocations.</p> <p>AGREED</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA)</p> <p>TP spoke to a paper that had been circulated prior to the meeting, prepared by Steve Walsh, Insurance and Operational Risk Manager at the council.</p> <p>The Council's provided insurance cover runs until financial year beginning 1 April 2022, when the current 5-year policy for the Council's main insurance covers (property and liability) ends. There is an annual opt-out but we are now past the 5-month cut-off point for advising our insurers.</p> <p>Schools can now opt for the RPA – an insurance scheme originally set up by the DfE for academies.</p> <p>The paper set out what the RPA covers compared to the council scheme.</p> <p>Schools that do not wish to be covered by the Council's provided insurance cover from 2022-23 are asked to advise the Council in writing by the end of March 2021 at the latest, as the procurement process for the next period of insurance cover is already underway.</p> <p>The cost of RPA was £18 per pupil. TP will email round the charge for the council scheme.</p> <p><i>At this point, ME lost sound, so JD, the other vice-chair, chaired the meeting.</i></p> <p>The general feeling was that heads needed more information before making a decision.</p> <p>It was agreed to invite Steve Walsh to speak with heads at a headteachers' briefing or SBM.</p>	<p>TP</p> <p>TP/DS</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>High Needs Strategy</p> <p><i>At this point, ME recovered sound and resumed chairing the meeting</i></p> <p>CH shared a presentation with the Forum. This item was for information only.</p> <p>Key points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) increasing at an exponential rate, especially children with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) • This is an international trend. • Increasing complexity of needs • This is becoming an equality issue – we need to meet the needs of these children who have equal rights – we need to upskill school staff • We also need more resource to cover increased costs of assessments, annual reviews and tribunals – the latter have doubled over the past 3 to 4 years 	

- 70% male, 30% female with complex health and education needs – gender imbalance increasing
- 14-17 year olds with very late diagnosis of ASC. Anxiety, eating disorders, self-harm, school refusers.
- Year 1 profile – 22% of children with Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are Somali (9% in Year 7 and 5% in Year 11) – so percentage likely to increase as some at least of these children move through the school system
- Costs of EHCPs – in 2021 £750K to stand still; in 2022 will need another £0.5m
- Referrals to Social Communication Team (for early years children) for assessment – over 200 on the waiting list, longer for older children.

So a review of SEND is being carried out to look at what we can do to meet the increasing demand. One option being explored is delivering services for some SEND children within mainstream settings. CH had taken a temperature check at Headteachers' Briefing on 25 Nov in relation to two options – 38 heads responded:

- 46% preferred hosting services delivered by external providers within mainstream schools
- 19% preferred for their school to deliver the services
- 35% were undecided.

This review has been discussed at the HN subgroup of Forum, and further work will take place in January and February.

One action soon is to trial additional resources (Additional Inclusion Funding or AIF) to schools working in schools-led networks or clusters – this was referred to in Item 5. This funding is for innovative practice / joint commissioning of resources or teachers

AIF available (2020-2021: £300,000; 2021-22: £600,000 (fixed envelope) across 3 networks

The funding is to benefit children at Islington schools even if resident outside Islington.

The role of the LA is to support initial management of scheme, triage of applications – LBI will deal with the admin for now.

ME thanked CH for the work and the funding.

CM asked if surpluses at schools would be taken into account. CH said we would have to work out the rules of engagement. DS and TP said that surpluses could not be the sole criterion.

ME asked if the increase in Black Somali children with EHCPs was more recent. CH confirmed that it was and that she was following up through the Somalian Task Group among other considerations.

CM commented that adult to children ratios need to be taken into account – some schools had already reorganised and so had fewer staff than others.

CH said the next steps were to agree the networks / network leads, who will drive through this work. She confirmed that decisions about best use of allocated funding will be made at network level.

NOTED

<p>9.</p>	<p>Pensions 2021-22</p> <p>TP spoke to a paper that had been previously circulated. The item was for information.</p> <p>In brief, the contribution of maintained schools into the pension fund of non-teaching staff will rise in April 2021 from 18.9% to 22.1%.</p> <p>Pensions for non-teaching staff in schools are provided through the Islington Council Pension Fund. The Council's pension fund undergoes a statutory revaluation by an independent actuary every three years. The last revaluation of the Council's pension fund took place in 2019/20 and set the contribution rates for 2020/21 to 2022/23 financial years.</p> <p>The employer rate for schools is currently 18.9% for non-teaching staff in the Council's pension fund. At the last revaluation, the primary employer contribution rate increased to 22.1% from 1 April 2020. The revaluation came through too late to be applied to maintained schools in the current financial year – instead this is being met from a historic balance of pension fund contributions. The new employer rate of 22.1% will therefore apply to non-teaching staff in schools in the Council's pension fund from 1 April 2021. The next pension fund revaluation is due in 2022/23 with effect from 1 April 2023.</p> <p>NOTED</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>Schools Forum Workplan</p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>New to January Forum is the reappportionment of overhead costs within the Central Schools Service Block. Also now to include RPA/Council Pensions schemes.</p> <p>Capital Subgroup – ME – will look at future match-funding criteria in February 2021. ME reported that the Council's Asset Management Plan was proceeding – she acknowledged the team had been working very hard to support schools.</p> <p>MT commented that the Capital Asset Plan and Schools Asset Plan were working more in tandem.</p> <p>NOTED</p>	<p>DS</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>AOB and close of meeting</p> <p>DS raised a small technical issue which needed Schools Forum approval. She was asking Forum to agree retrospectively to the LA applying for a General Disapplication for applying the MFG against the two affected Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schools (EGA and COLA Highbury Grove). The request is that additional funding arising from the application of an annual inflationary increase to PFI allocations is exempt from MFG calculations. The rationale for the request is ensure the increased funds are fairly apportioned and received by the two affected schools and the unintended impact of MFG regulations does not affect their budget allocation</p> <p>AGREED</p>	

ME was thanked for chairing, and the meeting closed at 3.55pm

Dates of future meetings overleaf:

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

SCHOOLS FORUM

Thursday 21 January 2021, 2-4pm

Thursday 20 May 2020, 2-4pm

Thursday 15 July 2020, 2-4pm

DSG SUBGROUP

**CHAIRS' AGENDA
PLANNING SUBGROUP**

Thursday 14 January 2021 2-3pm

3-4pm

Thursday 13 May 2021 2-3pm

3-4pm

Thursday 8 July 2021 2-3pm

3-4pm

EARLY YEARS SUBGROUP

Friday 4 December 2020, 1-3pm

Friday 15 January 2021, 1-3pm

Friday 7 May 2021, 1-3pm

CAPITAL SUB GROUP

Thursday 24 February 2021, 12.30-2pm

Thursday 13 May 2021, 12.30-2pm

HIGH NEEDS SUB GROUP

Monday 1 March 2021, 11am to 1pm

Monday 17 May 2021, 11am to 1pm