

Bristol Schools' Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 29 January 2008 at 6.00pm at the Council House

Present:	Nicholas Adams	Governor, Air Balloon Hill Infant School
	Julian Anderson	Governor, Brislington Enterprise College
	Andrew Barnes	Governor, Weston Park Primary School
	Rachel Edwards	Headteacher, Filton Avenue Nursery School
	Keith Evans	Governor, Elmfield School for Deaf Children
	Marius Frank - Vice Chair	Headteacher, Bedminster Down Secondary School
	Chris Gardner	Headteacher, Ashton Park Secondary School
	Gus Grimshaw	Headteacher, Teyfant Community School
	Jack House	Diocese of Bristol Board of Education
	Catherine Hughes	Headteacher, St Bede's Catholic College
	Michael Keeling	Headteacher, Connaught Primary School
	Marion McMeechan	Principal, Whitehouse Centre PRU
	David Michel	Recognised Teaching Professional Association
	Lesley Newman	Headteacher, Broomhill Infant School
	Peter Overton	Headteacher, Knowle Park Primary School
	Laurence Pitt	Headteacher, Ashley Down Junior School
	Simon Read	Governor, Colston's Primary School
	Gordon Richardson	Governor, Little Hayes Nursery
	Clare Sanders	Governor, Elmlea Junior School
	Angela Thackray	Governor, Badock's Wood Primary & Wesbury Park Primary Schools
	Steve Walters – Chair	Governor, Withywood Secondary & Fairfield Secondary Schools
	David Yorath	Governor, Cotham School
Observers:	Peter Bentley	ESP Team
	David Capel	Headteacher, Kingsweston Special School
	Cliff Evans	NASUWT
	Gale Levingston	Bursar, Bishop Road Primary School
In attendance:	Nick Batchelar	Programme Director, Standards & Achievement
	Nick Jarman	Programme Director, Modernisation
	Gerry Mead	Finance Manager, CYPS
	Paul Taylor	Programme Director, Partnership & Localities
	Heather Tomlinson	Director of CYPS
	Ana Tsoucalas	Clerk

1.	Welcome and Introductions	
	The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome to everyone. This is an important meeting for the Forum and there is a key requirement to consider the LA proposals for the three year funding period.	
2.	Forum standing business	
	<p>Appointment of new members – Clare Sanders is now a governor at Elmlea Junior School so joins us as a Junior School Governor. Nicholas Adams, Infant Governor representative, Air Balloon Hill Infant School. Peter Evans, Special School Headteacher representative, Florence Brown Special School.</p> <p>Notification of vacancies – There are some long standing non-schools vacancies. This is being picked up by the LA as part of a piece of work to adapt the Forum membership in line with the new Schools' Forum membership regulations coming into effect in February 2008. The main changes are-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LAs can have up to a third rather than a fifth of the membership of the Schools Forum as non-schools members. ▪ Headteachers can pick other senior members of staff to represent them on the Forum. ▪ LAs which have non-schools members on the Forum are required to include members representing the local 14-19 partnership and private, voluntary and independent early years providers. ▪ LAs are required to make arrangements for substitutes on the Forum. <p>Apologies for absence were received from – Derek Bodey, Peter Evans, Florene Jordan, Gillian Powe.</p> <p>The clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate.</p> <p>Declarations of interest were noted as follows – Andrew Barnes - Item 13 David Capel - Item 6 Keith Evans – Item 6 Julian Anderson - Item 9 and 10 Marion Mc Meechan - PRU David Yorath – working on Hartcliffe Community Campus</p> <p>David Michel requested guidance on how Support Staff Trade Unions can supply a representative to the Schools' Forum. The clerk will progress this issue.</p>	AT
3.	Minutes of meeting held on 04/12/07	
	<p>Amendments -</p> <p><i>Item 8</i> Rachel Edwards requested that the minutes are altered to reflect the extensive discussion around the proposed change from 26 pupils to 30 when calculating AWPU for reception classes.</p> <p>Matters arising not on tonight's agenda: <i>Early retirement option</i> paper will be followed up at a later meeting.</p>	AT SW

	<p>Academy deficits – a letter has been sent to Carew Reynell. <i>FMSiS</i> assessment fees will be followed up at a later meeting. <i>Primary Review</i> – a meeting has been held and the next step will be to consider LA proposals in due course. <i>Rates on new builds</i> – Gordon Clements, PFI Consultant, has contacted the Valuation Team and Gerry will chase up a response. <i>Connexions allocation</i> – The Chair would like some feedback on how secondary schools are proposing to monitor the allocation of £265k agreed at our last meeting. Marius agreed to discuss this with secondary headteachers and report back. Barton hill – There were still issues regarding possible compensation from builders due to later delivery of new buildings resulting in Schools’ Forum having to provide additional funding to cover split site costs. <i>BSF/PFI</i> – The Legal Team feels that schools were given funding for independent legal advice and should have been aware of implications when the contracts were drawn up. Nevertheless concerns had been expressed to the Forum by those schools affected, and the Forum requested a proposal from the LA be submitted at our next meeting to remove AEN funding from the calculation.</p>	<p>SW</p> <p>MF</p> <p>GM</p> <p>MF</p> <p>GM</p>
4.	Correspondence	
	<p>The Chair has received lots of emails following his briefing to primary headteachers. Concern has been raised about AWPU for reception classes. This issue is covered on tonight’s agenda.</p> <p>The Chair has received a letter of thanks from Ashton Gate Primary for funding from the Schools in Financial Difficulty budget.</p> <p>There has also been email correspondence about the Catering contract. This issue is covered in tonight’s agenda.</p>	
	OFF AGENDA STATEMENT FROM BRISTOL SCHOOLS’ FORUM CHAIR, STEVE WALTERS	
	<p>[The meeting came off the agenda while the Chair, Steve Walters, read out a statement. The statement had been emailed to Heather Tomlinson, Director of CYPS, one hour before the meeting, to allow her time to provide a response at the meeting, should she wish. A full copy of the statement is available on the Bristol Schools’ Forum website - http://www.bristol-cyps.org.uk/policies/schools_forum.html]</p> <p>Following the statement from the Chair, Heather Tomlinson thanked Steve Walters for his hard work as Chair over the last two years. Good progress has been made; the Forum is going from strength to strength and the partnership between the Forum and the LA is much better now. Inroads have been made into issues that need to be tackled collectively in order to address the education priorities. Heather appreciates the frustrations experienced by Steve. There remain two key issues over documentation issued to the Forum - timeliness and quality. Steve is right to highlight these issues. The LA has been working to improve the documentation and will continue to do so. Nick Jarman has joined CYPS to help strengthen CYPS work on finance, and Nick will be working with Steve in the future. Heather recognises that the LA has let Steve down, and confirms that the situation will be resolved.</p> <p>The Chair then advised that at the next Schools’ Forum meeting -</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There may be a discussion around the content of tonight's statement and a decision about possible censure of the LA. ▪ There may be a need to appoint a new Chair. <p>The meeting then returned to the published agenda.</p>	
5.	<p>Outstanding issues re Contingencies 2007/08</p>	
	<p>There has been one significant movement since the last Forum meeting, regarding Infant Class Sizes for the Knowle Park amalgamation and other schools. The September pupil count has now been confirmed so a further £150,000 has been allocated under the Infant Class Size grant to eligible schools. This is a statutory requirement.</p> <p>Updates</p> <p><i>Kingsweston</i> At the last meeting £70,000 was set aside for ASD provision at Kingsweston. This issue is still under discussion and the money has not yet been allocated.</p> <p><i>Schools in financial difficulty</i> There is £700,000 set aside for schools that are closing in August 2008 to become academies.</p> <p><i>Redland Green School</i> The Finance Team has asked the school for its budget, as requested by the Schools' Forum but this information is not yet available. This item is covered in more detail later on the agenda.</p>	
6.	<p>Report on Inclusion funding</p>	
	<p>The Chair made the decision that this was to be deferred to the next meeting because the supporting paper arrived after the deadline, and could not be distributed until Monday 28th January - far too late for members to read and digest the details.</p>	
7.	<p>Schools budgets 2008-11</p>	
	<p>Supporting Papers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Use of Headroom 2008/09 – 2010/11</i> ▪ <i>MFG Top Up Spreadsheet</i> <p>This item is a continuation of the paper presented to the Forum in December. Please note that the figures are an estimate because the January pupil count is not yet available.</p> <p>The Forum previously discussed issues that created additional funding and these are outlined in Table 1.</p> <p>The Finance Team has been working with the sub-committee to discuss proposals on how best to target this money on raising standards and attainment. This was followed by a discussion at Directorate. The proposals are included in the paper.</p> <p>Key background points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bristol currently meets 89% of its DCSF target for deprivation funding. ▪ The current formula was developed several years ago. 	

- The Schools' Forum has previously raised concerns that the AWPU is below Bristol's statistical neighbours.

[Proposals were then discussed and approved, rejected or deferred]

Formula funding April 2008 onwards

[Paragraph numbers refer to the Headroom Paper].

4.1 Schools currently receive funding to commission advisory services based on a lump sum and an amount per pupil. It is proposed to add the lump sum to Curriculum Specifics and to add the 'per pupil' element to AWPU in line with funding for other delegated management services. The lump sum payment benefits small schools whereas the AWPU benefits large schools. This proposal is fair to both groups and immediately adds £6 to AWPU. It also brings the primary phase in line with the secondary phase.

At this stage, the Chair read out the following section of the Bristol Schools' Forum constitution, to remind members of their obligations –

"Members are not delegates or representatives of their particular group or subgroup and should duly consider proposals and vote in accordance with what they consider to be in the best interests of education in the City of Bristol.

It is recognised that all Schools Group members will have an interest in at least one school. It is important that members should declare if the item under discussion could make a material difference to that school, or where they may have a personal or prejudicial interest. Notwithstanding this, a member may continue contributing to the discussion, but should not take any part in any decision made concerning that particular proposal which uniquely changes funding for their particular school/ schools."

This proposal was agreed by the Forum.

4.2 Primary schools currently receive a lump sum and an amount per pupil for collecting dinner money. It is proposed to add the lump sum to the Floor and Site Area factor and the per pupil element to AWPU. This would add £4 per pupil to Primary AWPU.

This proposal was agreed by the Forum.

Gerry will look into this issue for special schools.

4.3 Funding is provided to recognise extra administration in schools with pupil turnover above 20%. It is proposed to delete this factor because school funding is based on January pupil count, and only £777 was allocated through this factor in 2007/08.

This proposal was agreed by the Forum.

4.4. DCSF guidance requires a move away from including an element in AWPU for the average actual cost of a teacher. **It is proposed that once the above factors are consolidated into AWPU, this revised value becomes the basic unit of**

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funding and will only be amended in line with the MFG and agreed changes in funding.

This proposal was agreed by the Forum.

4.5. AEN funding is allocated to primary schools on a banding system. Secondary schools operate 80% prior attainment and 20% deprivation. In primary schools, movement of one child can lead to significant changes. Prior attainment should be one of the key criteria as this will target funds at under-achieving groups. The current data not robust enough to move towards that now. It is therefore proposed to phase out the use of FSM over the three year period and replace it with a national index that measures multiple deprivation by post code. No change is proposed this year because additional funding would need to be provided to schools that might lose money which is not available this year.

There was a discussion and the key points were –

- Post code deprivation factor is very precise (down to a couple of streets/houses).
- Schools that currently receive high AEN funding will receive slightly less in future. Schools that receive little or no AEN funding will receive more.
- A faster process would be desirable to some schools but it was generally agreed that a gradual process is the most appropriate approach, given the need to provide some protection to those schools losing the most, and to enable schools to plan ahead.
- The Finance Team will work with any schools that could find themselves in financial difficulty as a result of this change.

The majority of the Forum voted in favour of this proposal.

4.6 SSESNA is a fast track funding system for pupils with less complex special needs and was set up as an alternative to statementing. Funding is based on a snapshot of pupils in receipt of funding several years ago and is now out of date. It is proposed to consolidate this funding into AEN using the proposed deprivation factor for primaries and the existing secondary formula. It is not proposed to change this year to minimise the impact of the AWPU changes. It is therefore proposed to make the change in 2009/10, when the appropriate funding will be available.

The majority of the Forum voted in favour of this proposal.

It was noted by Gerry that this SSENA funding is excluded from the PFI schools' contribution calculation.

USE OF HEADROOM 2008/09

5.3 The Directorate proposed to reduce the level of central contingencies in 2008/09 by £300k and to release £400k of unallocated funding arising from 2007/08 financial year. This increased funding available by £700k.

5.4 Statements budget in schools and nurseries is forecast to overspend by £300k. It is proposed to cash limit the funding per 'matrix unit' which would save £200k. The key points of the following discussion are-

- There is a concern that this is not a child centred approach – they will still have

needs.

- Nurseries do not get a budget for special needs so this is the only way to receive funding for this issue.
- Schools with a high number of pupils with special needs may lose significant funding.

The Forum took a vote and there were 8 votes in favour and 8 votes against this proposal. The Chair took a casting vote and **rejected the proposal**, on the grounds of the concerns raised by a significant number of members.

5.5 There is currently a consultation underway to close a special school. If the decision is taken to close the school, the LA proposes to allocate the £1m revenue savings to the SEN Provision Strategy which will deliver savings in the long term. There was a comprehensive discussion and the key points were –

- The report on the closure proposal has been based on the premise of cost saving and this is already in the public domain. The final decision is due to be made at the end of March.
- The LA needs to start making plans now, so that if the closure is agreed, the appropriate action can be taken without delay.
- The Forum is concerned that this issue should not be discussed before the final decision has been made.

The Forum took a vote and there were 10 votes in favour and 10 votes against this proposal and 1 abstention. The Chair took a casting vote and **rejected the proposal**, on the grounds that this school is subject to a closure consultation process and no decision should be made until this is complete. The funds will remain earmarked for the special school until this decision has been made about the closure of the school.

5.6 An additional £250,000 was allocated to schools in 2006/07 and 2007/08 to allow for the large increases in energy costs. It is proposed to cease this temporary arrangement and re-direct this funding back into headroom for distribution. Some concern was expressed about the recent energy price rises and the impact of ceasing this funding.

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The majority of the Forum voted in favour of this proposal.

5.7 It was noted that the first call on the 2008/09 headroom must be any 2007/08 overspend. This overspend was caused by the SEN pressures.

This was agreed by the Forum.

5.8 Part of the cost of the building work at the amalgamated primary schools was funded by prudential borrowing, whereby the loans and charges are met from the revenue savings created by the amalgamations, and funded from the DSG. In 2007/08 the financing costs were funded from the headroom. It is necessary to increase this funding by £366,000. The key points of the following discussion were –

- The supporting paper needs to be amended to show the correct figure of £366,000.
- It was noted that any further requests for prudential borrowing must be agreed by the Forum.

- It is a fixed cost for the next 9.5 years.

The majority of the Forum voted in favour of this proposal.

5.9 The Consultant who attended the Forum meeting in September indicated that Bristol's primary AWPU is below its statistical neighbours. Analysis showed that class size was probably the main reason for this difference. It is proposed to allocate an additional £520,000 to fund class sizes of 30 in the primary sector. Infant AWPU will fall, but KS1 and KS2 will rise. Some schools that will lose out will be protected by MFG. Nevertheless there would be some schools who, if this had been implemented in April 2007, would have lost income. To assist these it was suggested that there is sufficient money in the Schools in Financial Difficulty fund for schools that lose significant amounts to apply for assistance. The key points of the subsequent discussion were -

A handout was issued to the Forum, showing anonymous winners and losers, had this change been implemented last year (April 2007). This showed that out of 111 schools in the primary sector, 30 (10 infants and 20 primary) would have experienced a loss in income ranging from £682 to £16682. Expressed as a percentage of total 2007/08 allocations this varied between -0.08% to -2.49%. The largest percentage loser was not the largest £value loser.

- The sub-committee has only scratched the surface with this issue and important issues are still coming to light.
- Little time had been made available to undertake appropriate consultation – the Primary Headteachers had only been provided with indicative AWPU figures the preceding Thursday.
- It is nationally recognised that education needs at foundation stage are different.
- This proposal has more impact on infant schools, and some primary schools, depending upon the relative size of their reception classes.
- There are high levels of concern about the impact of the proposed reduction in reception AWPU within the primary sector. A change from 26 to 30 may require more staff in each class (the old 26 was based upon two qualified adults in each class with a maximum of 13 pupils per adult).
- One of the reasons for suggesting the use of the Schools in Financial Difficulty fund was to prevent the need for adding further calculations with MFG rules to provide additional support to schools losing out as a result of these changes.
- This proposal comes as a package and it is not possible to treat each key stage differently.
- Early Years funding will be subject to a different review as required by DCSF.
- The supporting paper needs to be amended to change the wording to accurately reflect the difference between nursery classes and early years.
- The Forum discussed whether there are ways to move to a rational class size (e.g. 30) but increase funding for reception classes.
- The Forum acknowledges the need to make the right decision now so that the formula works effectively in the future.
- It was suggested that the Forum agrees the proposal in principle but applies caps in order to reduce large winners or losers, and that the cap is reviewed each year.

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The LA amended the proposal as follows –

An additional £520,000 is allocated to fund class sizes of 30 in the primary sector,

and a cap is applied so that no school experiences a funding loss of more than 1% of its total allocation in 2008/09. This cap will be reviewed in the summer.

The majority of the Forum voted in favour of this proposal.

5.10 This item has been discussed in a previous meeting and is therefore for information only.

No decision required.

5.11 It is proposed to continue with the same level of top-up contingency funding for Redland Green School, pending receipt of the proposed school budget. Their proposed budget will be scrutinised by the Finance Team and Senior SIO, and it is possible that the current top-up funding held in the contingency budget can be reduced.

Nick Jarman left the meeting.

There was extensive discussion around this issue and the key points were –

- RGS should be accountable for the money allocated by the Forum.
- A Senior Finance Officer is working closely with the school.
- The Forum is unhappy with the situation given that the Forum has not received any figures for 2007/08.
- The LA does not feel that it is prudent to make a change without first scrutinising the budget.

It was agreed that the RGS budget must be submitted to the Forum by 5 March 2008, for discussion at the next Forum meeting. The top-up proposal of £460,000 will be set aside, subject to review at the next Forum meeting.

5.12 The LA is not proposing to increase the amount set aside for maternity pay because the LA will no longer be liable for maternity pay at the academy schools.

This proposal was agreed by the Forum.

Michael Keeling and Rachel Edwards left the meeting.

USE OF HEADROOM 2009/10 AND 2010/11

After discussion with the Director, as none of the remaining items on this paper, or in the remaining agenda were critical for the purposes of issuing indicative three year budgets to schools, it was agreed to defer all other items on the agenda until the next Forum meeting.

There was also a suggestion that the Forum reconsiders the timing of their meetings and perhaps replaces some evening meetings with day time meetings.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.