

SCHOOLS MANAGEMENT FORUM

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MICROSOFT TEAMS MEETING HELD ON:

WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE 2023 AT 9:15AM

PRESENT:

Maintained Primary School Representatives	
Adam Cooper	Abingdon Primary School
Beverley Hewitt-Best	Newham Bridge Primary School
Anita Jefferies	Archibald Primary School
Primary Academy Representative	
Helen Steele (Vice-Chair)	Caldicotes Primary Academy
Lisa Bostock	Berwick Hills Primary School
Sarah Lymer	The Legacy Learning Trust
Jackie Walsh	Green Lane Primary Academy
Emma Watson	James Cook Learning Trust
Maintained School Governor Representative	
Julie Rodwell	Park End Primary School
Maintained Special School Representative	
Susan Robinson	Priory Woods School
PRU Representatives	
Secondary Academy Representatives	
Mary Brindle	Endeavour Academies Trust
Helen Dalby	Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust
Simon Reader	Kings Academy
Andy Rodgers	Trinity College
Local Authority Officers	
Rob Brown	Director of Education and Partnerships
Karen Smith	Head of Achievement
Trevor Dunn	Head of Access to Education
James Glover	Trainee Accountant
Sheila Marley	Early Years and Family Hubs Manager
Also Present	
Amy Douglas	Governance Professional (Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council)
<i>In the temporary absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair Helen Steele took the Chair for today's meeting.</i>	
1.	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
	The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting, and a round of introductions took place.
2.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
2.1	Apologies had been submitted in advance of the meeting from Afzal Khushi, Jackie Lowe and. Kate Barkley.
2.2	RESOLVED to consent to the absence of the above-named members of School Management Forum (SMF).
3.	NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS
	No items were declared for discussion under Any Other Business.

4.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA
4.1	SMF members were given the opportunity to declare any pecuniary interests or other conflicts of interest relating to items on the agenda for the current meeting.
4.2	No such declarations were made on this occasion.
5.	MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 1 MARCH 2023
5.1	Minutes of the SMF meeting held on 1 March 2023 had been circulated in advance of the meeting, to be approved and signed as a true record. SMF members also had an opportunity to question progress with any matter discussed at that meeting which would not arise during the present meeting.
5.2	<u>Outcome</u> RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record.
6.	MEMBERSHIP UPDATE
	There were no updates to membership to share on this occasion.
7.	REPORT ON THE DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FINANCE POSITION
7.1	Purpose SMF members were guided through the report on the DSG 2022-23 outturn, with a recommendation that the outturn position and the carry forward be noted.
7.2	Discussion/Challenge
7.2.1	The DSG budget included schools, early years, high needs and the local authority (LA) central services blocks. Any underspend could be carried forward year on year. The report provided an update on the total DSG consolidated reserve balance. The final draft DSG outturn for 2022-23 showed an overspend of £2,808,359.94.
7.2.2	The School Growth Fund budget of £136,000 had been created to support the identified requirement for 30 additional Year 7 places from September 2022.
7.2.3	There had been significant pressure on the DSG budget, including a deficit since 2017-18, extraordinary levels of inflation owing to the pandemic, ongoing pressures relating to the support needs of children with increased complexity, increased high needs referrals and the volume of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) referrals.
7.2.4	Funding available for reallocation in 2022-23 was £58,517,621. Previous balances had also been included in the report for information.
7.2.5	SMF members acknowledged the demand driven overspend, particularly relating to permanent exclusions and an increase in EHCP requests.
7.2.6	SMF members noted their collective responsibility for the budget, and for the recovery of the budget. The overspend was significant for a LA the size of Middlesbrough. If the levels of demand did not change, the LA was unlikely to reach a recovery position and there was concern that the situation could worsen. The LA was working in partnership with the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme to establish innovative ways of working and to identify how spending could be reduced. An emerging theme from the DBV programme was that a priority would be meeting pupils' needs within mainstream settings.

7.3	Outcomes
7.3.1	SMF noted the current 2022-23 outturn position of £2,808,359.94 overspend.
7.3.2	SMF noted the carry forward of the total DSG reserve deficit balance of £6,564,618.07 for 2022-23.
7.3.3	An update from the DBV programme would be shared at the next meeting of SMF.
8.	PRIORITY INVESTMENT AREA
8.1	Purpose To inform SMF of how funding allocated from the Department for Education (DfE) would be invested.
8.2	Discussion/Challenge
8.2.1	£1.7m had been allocated to the LA from the DfE, for areas that were deemed to require improvement. The aim was for all schools and trusts to be involved. A board comprising cross-sector representation had been established.
8.2.2	The board had decided to invest money into attendance. A pilot, known as Watch Tower, which was facilitated by Barnado's, had been established. The aim was to drive improvements in attendance by understanding the wider issues that affected children's ability to attend school. Consideration was being given to how attendance advice from the LA would be available to all schools, to compliment the ongoing work in schools. Regular school attendance ensured that children were safeguarded, they had good oversight from professionals, and it secured better outcomes.
8.2.3	A working party had established three key priorities, around achieving the ambitions set out in the White Paper. For secondary schools, the focus would be on developing strong teaching in mathematics. In primary settings, the focus would be on literacy and early reading. The third priority was to support children in improving their speech, communication, and language skills, in order that they were able to read fluently and speak confidently by the time they joined secondary school.
8.2.4	The board had clear action plans underpinning the targets. The project required the support of all Headteachers and CEOs, and a collective commitment to achieving the aims was integral to the success of the project. The board had met several times and a further meeting would be held on 11 July 2023 to plan next steps.
8.2.5	The DfE had established an attendance portal which enabled the DfE to view attendance on an individual school level. Overall attendance in the LA was relatively low, and levels of persistent absence were high. The LA had a responsibility to provide attendance support to schools. The LA was in the process of recruiting two members of staff, and from September 2023, meetings would be established with schools.
8.2.6	The DfE had allocated funding for one year, of around £340,000. The remit for spending was tightly controlled and would be used to employ five or six Attendance Officers. The roles were to support schools with their school-based duties as outlined in the White Paper. It was envisaged that the Attendance Officers would be allocated to schools for fixed periods of time to provide additional capacity. The DfE envisaged that schools would consider SLA arrangements to continue accessing the support once the funding had ended.
8.2.7	A colleague from NPCAT advised that the trust had an established centralised team that monitored attendance, with Attendance Officers providing direct support to schools. SMF agreed this was a good opportunity to share best practice.

8.3	<p>Outcome</p> <p>SMF noted the priorities and actions plans outlined, which would be key to setting individual school improvement priorities.</p>
9.	FAMILY HUBS
9.1	<p>Purpose</p> <p>To inform SMF of how the family hub model would be implemented.</p>
9.2	Discussion/Challenge
9.2.1	£3m had been secured to implement the family hub model, which was similar to the Sure Start model. The LA had been tasked with implementing services for families by 2025 and embedding a sustainable model in the longer term.
9.2.2	The aim of family hubs was to make a positive difference for families, by providing joined up services working in co-locations, and providing the right support at the right time. A key aim was to offer a 'front door' model, underpinned by a comprehensive start for life offer. The ultimate aim was to reduce the number of referrals that families might need.
9.2.3	A local needs assessment had been created in collaboration with health colleagues. The four locality areas would be in West Middlesbrough, Hemlington, Thorntree and Park End.
9.2.4	Short term aims were to ensure that services worked collectively to address immediate pressures. Longer term aims were to ensure that actions taken now led to a decrease in social care referrals, and an increase in employment opportunities.
9.2.5	Information was shared on funding allocations and the workstreams that had been devised to facilitate implementation, including parenting support, infant feeding support, early language and the home learning environment, and publishing the Start for Life Offer.
9.2.6	Funding would cease within 2 years, so a significant amount of work would be required to ensure the work was sustainable. SMF members agreed that it was essential that issues were addressed at the earliest opportunity, through quality support. Family Hubs appeared to be an excellent model to provide bespoke support to families in a very effective way.
9.3	<p>Outcome</p> <p>Family Hubs would be officially launched on 11 and 12 July 2023.</p>
10.	APPRENTICESHIPS: NEW STARTS AND STAFF CPD VIA APPRENTICESHIP ROUTE
10.1	<p>This item was deferred in the absence of the guest presenter.</p> <p><i>Anita Jefferies withdrew from the meeting.</i></p>
10.2	Discussion took place on the apprenticeship levy, which was a significant pot of money that schools could access. It was hoped that further clarity would be provided at the next meeting.
11.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
	No items were declared for consideration under Any Other Business.

12.	ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS
	<p>The following matters were declared for discussion at the next meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An update on planning to recover the deficit, and the progress of the DBV programme. - Presentation on apprenticeships: new starts and staff CPD via the apprenticeship route.
13.	DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS
13.1	<p>The proposed dates of the future meetings of the Schools' Management Forum were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wednesday 11 October 2023 - Wednesday 17 January 2024 - Wednesday 6 March 2024 - Wednesday 12 June 2024
13.2	All meetings would be held via Microsoft Teams and would start at 9:15am.

Meeting closed at 10:10am.