

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON
FRIDAY 20TH OCTOBER 2006 AT SUNDERLAND CIVIC CENTRE**

The following members of the Forum were present: -

Mr D Ambrose (Governor Rep. - Secondary)
Mrs K Bennett (Headteacher Rep. – Junior)
Mr H Brown (Governor Rep. - Secondary)
Mrs D Butler (Governor Rep. - Secondary)
Mr J E Clarke (Governor Rep. - Secondary)
Mrs S Collingwood (Headteacher Rep. – Infant)
Mrs D Elliott (Governor Rep. - Special)
Mrs Y Gray (Headteacher Rep. – Church of England Primary)
Mr J Hallworth (Headteacher Rep. – Community Secondary)
Mrs T Hambleton (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Hetton/Houghton)
Mr M Hartnack (Governor Rep. - Primary)
Mrs A Hodgson (Headteacher Rep. – Community Primary Sunderland South)
Mr D Litchfield (Headteacher Rep. – Community Secondary)
Mrs A Mackay (Headteacher Rep. – Roman Catholic Primary)
Mr A McCourt (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary (Roman Catholic))
Mr J. McKnight (Headteacher Rep. - Special)
Mrs J McLagan (Governor Rep. - Primary)
Mrs M D Mitchell (Non-schools Group – Pupil Referral Unit)
Mr C Short (Governor Rep. - Primary)
Mrs M Snaith (Governor Rep. - Primary)
Mrs T Stoker (Headteacher Rep. – Community Primary Sunderland North)
Mr S White (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary (Post 16))
Cllr L Williams (Non-schools Group – Early Years & Childcare Partnership)
Mr G M Wilson (Non-schools Group – Voluntary Sector)
Mrs S Wright (Headteacher Rep. – Community Primary Washington)

Together with: -

Mr D May – Finance Manager
Mr J G Robinson – Governor Support Manager (Clerk to the Forum)
Mrs G Danby – Head of Resources
Cllr Mrs P Smith – Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services

06/43 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mrs S Carter (Headteacher Rep. - Nursery)
Dr E. Yeates (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary (Church of England))
Mrs S. Hyland (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary (Foundation))
Mr M Foster (Headteacher Rep. – Community Secondary)
Mr R. Wilkinson (Headteacher Rep. – Community Secondary)

Action Points

06/44 Welcome and Introductions

The Clerk welcomed all colleagues to the first meeting of the Schools Forum since it was re-constituted. The Forum was now considerably larger than under its previous constitution and there was wider representation. Members introduced themselves at the meeting.

06/45 Membership of Forum

A membership list had been circulated in advance.

Some of the governor places had been contested whilst other places had been filled unopposed. There were just three vacancies outstanding. These were: -

Governor Representative – Nursery. There had been no nominations received from governors in this sector. In accordance with the procedure, the filling of this place had now been handed over to the City of Sunderland Governors' Association.

Govs Association
to fill Nursery
Governor place

Non-schools Group – Teaching Associations. The unions had been unable to reach agreement over who should occupy this place. This would be subject to further discussion at the next TALG meeting.

Teaching
Associations
vacancy to be
discussed at
TALG

Non-schools Group – Children's Trust Board. A report had been submitted to the Children's Trust Board seeking a nominee to serve on the Schools Forum. No nominations had been received and it would be subject to further discussion of the Children's Trust Board.

Children's Trust
Board still to
consider
nomination

06/46 Election of Chair and Vice-chair and determination of length of term of office

Before asking for nominations for the offices of Chair and Vice-chair the Clerk explained that it was necessary to determine the length of term of office that they would serve in this capacity. Views were invited on the merits of a one-year, two-year, three-year or four-year term. A vote was taken and it was resolved by a majority that both the Chair and Vice-chair would serve a four-year term.

Nominations were then invited for the Chair. Yvonne Gray was proposed and seconded for the office of Chair. There were no further nominations and she was elected unopposed as Chair of the Schools Forum.

Yvonne Gray
elected as Chair
and would serve
four-year term of
office

Yvonne thanked members of the Forum for electing her to this privileged position. She encouraged members of the Forum to commit themselves fully to their role on the Forum and she highlighted the support available from officers of the Authority.

Nominations were invited for the office of Vice-chair. Howard Brown was proposed, seconded and duly elected unopposed to the office of Vice-chair.

06/47 Minutes of previous meeting held on 6th July 2006

The minutes were approved as a true record.

06/48 Matters arising from the minutes

Workforce Remodelling Training – Lynda Brown was compiling attendance figures for courses and this information would be provided at the next scheduled meeting.

Service Forum – It was noted that the future of existing Service Forums was in question. Sally Collingwood asked whether there would be a replacement forum to enable Headteachers to be consulted about the way that services operated (e.g. Inclusion & Achievement services). Gill Danby confirmed that there would be some mechanism for consultation and monitoring.

School Meals – It was noted that Colin Ranson had given a useful presentation to a recent meeting of the Children’s Trust. It was understood that he was also willing to give a presentation to the Schools Forum and it was agreed that he be invited to the next meeting.

Looked After Children – David May explained that there would be a contingency sum to correct the anomaly of distributing funds in respect of Looked After Children and Children at Risk registers.

BSF/Academies – It was agreed that this would be a standing item on subsequent agenda. An officer would be invited to give a presentation at the next meeting of the Forum.

Departmental restructuring – Gill Danby circulated an overview of the structure of the Children’s Services Department. The Director had been in post for almost one year, and the new Deputy Director would take up his post in late November. The Deputy was Keith Moore who had a background in Social care and currently worked in Gateshead. Heads of Service had also been appointed. These were Lynda Brown, Gill Danby, Judith Hay, Barbara Williams and Marc Hopkinson (who also had TPCT responsibilities). Norma Hardy had temporary responsibility for Policy & Planning and preparation for JAR. A report would be produced in November which would address the structure below Heads of Service.

Howard Brown noted that out of the top team of seven people, only two were from an Education background and he was concerned that Education had a lower status compared to Social Services in the structure. Gill Danby replied that regardless of background all of the senior people in Children’s Services were working together to meet the new agenda. She added that Helen Paterson’s role was different to the previous role of Director of Education. Schools were very much a focus of weekly meetings. Howard Brown repeated, however, that the lower status of Education in the partnership was a genuine concern. Gill offered to feed these comments back to the Director. Councillor Mrs Smith responded to Howard’s comments by stressing that the focus was on services for children and young people. She commented that there needed to be a balanced view of the new agenda.

Howard pointed out that the only area that massively overspent was Children’s Social Care. It was a matter of concern that this could jeopardise funding for Education. David May gave an assurance that much of the Direct Schools Grant was ring fenced to schools. Howard accepted David’s comments but he stressed that this needed to be

Action Points

Attendance figures on workforce remodelling training to be presented to Forum Members at subsequent meeting

Colin Ranson to be invited to next meeting.

BSF/Academies to be a standing item

BSF update to be given at next meeting.

Gill Danby to feed back Howard Brown’s comments regarding lower status of Education in Children’s Services Dept.

carefully monitored. It was suggested that the funding of the Children's Services Department be a topic for future training for members of the Schools Forum.

David Litchfield felt that there were concerns at the next levels of the structure in terms of providing joined up services. He questioned whether there was sufficient communication between service areas to meet the Children's Services agenda. Gill Danby replied that such concerns were understandable and this was receiving attention within the department. Discussion took place on individual areas where there seemed a lack of clarity. Gill noted the comments and made it clear that the new structure represented the beginnings of the journey. She also highlighted the forthcoming JAR. This was not intended to be a permanent structure and more changes were likely as the journey went on. David Litchfield felt that the urgency was about support to individual children.

Members of the Forum asked that any changes or further developments to the structure be reported to them. It was agreed that this would be a standing item on the agenda until the structure was settled.

Vocational Hubs – A list of vocational centres was tabled at the meeting. John Hallworth questioned whether Sandhill View School were solely responsible for the Pallion development as indicated on the information tabled at the meeting. He felt that it was more accurate to describe this as the responsibility of a partnership of schools in Sunderland South.

Revenue and Capital – In reply to a question, David May confirmed that the slippage referred to in respect of Children's Centres would be utilised for its intended purpose but the programme had been delayed.

Unallocated school resources – A report on ISB contingency would be issued to the Schools Forum later in the financial year.

Year End balances - John Hallworth gave an update on the discussions in respect of Thornhill School's unallocated resources. The sports hall had opened at the start of term and was now in use. The Forum agreed that a further report was now unnecessary.

Free Meals – The issue of free meals eligibility and criteria had been the subject of a report to the last meeting. A further report would be available after December

Sally Collingwood raised the question of nursery pupils' eligibility to register for free meals. She explained that, where the child did not access education after lunch, the parent had to pay for meals. David May confirmed that this issue was receiving attention and would be subject to a pilot.

06/49 Feedback from Standards Fund Monitoring Group

Minutes of the past two meetings of the Standards Fund Monitoring Group were tabled at the meeting.

06/50 Feedback from Standards Fund Monitoring Group

The Clerk explained that, whilst the Schools Forum was a statutory body and had been in existence since 2002, the SFMG had existed

Action Points

Children's Services departmental structure to remain as standing item on agenda until structure had been settled

Report on ISB contingency to be issued to Forum later in Financial year

Agreed no further monitoring of Thornhill's year end balances necessary

Further report on free meals issues to be available after December

prior to the inception of the Schools Forum. It was not statutory but was formed out of a local arrangement to provide scrutiny and accountability for Standards Fund resources that were either centrally retained or devolved to schools. In recent years, the SFMG had been regarded as a sub-group of the Schools Forum and it had provided reports on its work to members of the Forum accordingly. The SFMG's status as a sub-group of the Schools Forum, however, was difficult to reconcile in the form in which it has existed during the past four years, as members of the SFMG were neither drawn from nor appointed by the Schools Forum. The majority of the members of the Schools Forum had hitherto been unrelated to the membership of the Schools Forum. With the re-constitution of the Schools Forum, the time was right to review how the SFMG was constituted and how it operated.

The SFMG was currently constituted as follows: -

Stakeholder Group	Method of appointment
2 x Secondary Headteachers	Appointed by the Secondary Headteachers' Group
4 x Primary Headteachers	One appointed by each Area Primary Headteachers' Group
1 x Nursery Headteacher	Appointed by the Nursery Headteachers' Group
2 x Special Headteachers	Appointed by the Special Headteachers' Group
3 x school governors (1 special, 1 primary, 1 secondary)	Selected by the City of Sunderland Governors' Association
Authority officers	Invited by other members of the group

The SFMG had met at least once per term and, in recent times, attempts had been made to ensure that these corresponded with the Schools Forum meetings to facilitate a reporting mechanism. The Governor Support Team were appointed as the Clerk to the SFMG in late 2005 and minutes of SFMG meetings were presented to the Schools Forum at regular intervals.

Traditionally the Forum had been Chaired by an officer of the Local Authority. It was suggested, however, that this conflicted with the SFMG's status as a sub-group of the Schools Forum and it might therefore be deemed more appropriate for either a member of the Schools Forum to be Chair of the SFMG or that a Headteacher or Governor Representative of the SFMG should be elected to this office. This would in no way minimise the contribution or support offered by the officers who attended SFMG meetings.

Members of the Forum proceeded to discuss the questions surrounding the way forward for the SFMG.

- It was agreed that the SFMG would formally be recognised as a sub group of the Schools Forum.
- It was further agreed that the terms of reference of the SFMG would be to consider Standards Fund issues and report recommendations back to the Schools Forum for ratification. The Chair of the Schools Forum would have emergency powers to act on behalf of the Schools Forum where any delay in ratification would be detrimental to the Forum, the Authority or its schools.
- It was agreed that detailed proposals on the constitution of the SFMG be presented to the next meeting of the Schools Forum. The principles surrounding representative groups would continue unchanged but with the addition of a representative of the PRU,

SFMG to be formal group of Forum

SFMG to make recommendations to Schools Forum. Chair of Forum had emergency powers

Detailed constitution of SFMG to be brought to next meeting of Forum

an Infant School representative, a Junior School representative plus the Chair and Vice-chair of the Schools Forum. Academies would need to be considered in the future.

- It was not considered necessary for the Schools Forum to appoint members of the SFMG and it should continue to be the representative groups that determined who would be appointed.
- Officers of the Authority would not be members of the SFMG but would be asked to attend to support the group.
- Officers would not be eligible to serve as Chair or Vice-chair of the SFMG (i.e. henceforth these positions would be occupied by a governor or Headteacher)

Members then proceeded to discuss the status of the LMS/LMSS Review Group. It was agreed that, because the Schools Forum was always consulted about changes to the LMS/LMSS formula, the LMS/LMSS Review Group needed to be independent and therefore would not be regarded as a sub-group of the Forum. Furthermore the membership of the LMS/LMSS Review Group would remain fundamentally unchanged although there was scope for additional governor representation along with additional representation from a school with a Children's Centre, a school with a CAP Unit and the PRU (volunteers to contact David May). This was an important group and it was suggested that some pre-training should be offered to members of the LMS/LMSS Review Group.

It was agreed that henceforth minutes of both the Standards Fund Monitoring Group and the LMS/LMSS Review Group would be circulated to Chairs of Governors in addition to Headteachers.

It was further agreed that minutes of the SFMG would be added to the Schools Forum web-page (minutes of the Schools Forum were already available on-line). The Schools Forum web page was accessible from the Governor Support Team's website: - www.sunderland.gov.uk/schoolgovernors

06/51 Planning for Schools Forum awayday

The Forum awayday was scheduled for Thursday 23rd November 2006. A venue would be arranged by the Chair and Clerk.

To inform the planning for the day, David May had circulated a questionnaire to Schools Forum members to ascertain training needs. The most favoured areas for training according to responses were: -

- Decision making powers of the Forum
- Children's Services Funding
- Standards Fund

The consultation had shown that members of the Schools Forum did not wish to have a full day session for the awayday. It was therefore felt that a half-day formal session be organised with optional training after lunch.

06/52 Date and time of next meeting

A schedule of dates of the Schools Forum and Standards Fund Monitoring Group was agreed as follows: -

Action Points

HT and governor groups continue to appoint to the SFMG

LA Officers no longer members of SFMG and not eligible to be Chair or Vice-chair

LMS/LMSS Review Group not to be a direct sub-group of the Forum

Agreed additional representation on LMS/LMSS Review Group from PRU, more govs, schools with Children's Centre and schools with CAP provision

Minutes of LMS/LMSS Review Group and SFMG to be sent to Chairs and Headteachers

SFMG minutes to be added to web pages

Awayday 23-11-06 venue to be confirmed

Schools Forum

23rd November 2006
11th January 2007
15th February 2007
22nd March 2007
17th May 2007
5th July 2007
27th September 2007
29th November 2007

SFMG

1st February 2007
8th March 2007
3rd May 2007
21st June 2007
13th September 2007
15th November 2007