

Sandra Mitchell undertook to send out further information regarding year-end balances.

Headteachers hoped that monitoring of budgets would become easier with the new financial system now in operation.

05/28 Date, time and venue of next meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Forum was 9.00 a.m. on Friday 15th July 2005 in Committee Room 6, Sunderland Civic Centre

Action Points

Sandra Mitchell to send out further information regarding year-end balances

Signed _____
Mrs Y. Gray
Chair of Schools Forum

consider special school issues. Special Heads had been asked to consider how they were supporting inclusion and the remit of special schools in the City had therefore been drawn up. Partnership Agreements had also been developed. The other area that had been considered by the special school group was the definition and funding of mainstream SEN pupils. The next meeting of the special school sub-group would take place soon.

Suggestions regarding the LMS formula included PPA time, SANA (specifically IMD) and there had been discussion around the next stages of SEN review including unit provision. There was discussion regarding the banding of CAP unit pupils and the location of specialist provision.

There would further meetings of the LMS/LMSS Review Group as there was a great deal that needed to be examined.

Sally Collingwood again raised the issue of early identification of special needs. She stressed that it was important to have Infant and Nursery Headteacher representation. Sandra acknowledged that this had not yet been addressed and would take this up with the LMS/LMSS Review Group.

Colin Short questioned Sandra regarding the 'spend to save' exercise in special needs placements. Sandra explained that this centred mainly around sensory provision and she reminded colleagues of the very high cost of out-of-Authority placements. She added, however, that this was not just a special school issue.

Sally Collingwood asked about progress in relation to ESL children and highlighted the budget cuts suffered by schools with high proportions of non-English pupils some years ago. She pointed out that these schools had never recovered this budget position. Sandra Mitchell replied that a great deal of work had already been done but the LMS/LMSS Review Group had agreed to further consider how ESL provision was funded.

Minutes of the last meeting of the LMS/LMSS Review Group would be circulated to all Headteachers and would be considered by the Schools Forum at its next meeting.

05/27 Year End Balances

It was reported that balances had risen by around £300,000. Nursery schools were now included and most seemed to have balances in excess of limits although Susan Carter explained the difficulties faced by nursery schools with such small budgets. The percentages could appear high in some cases but the amounts of money involved were relatively small.

There were some schools with significant year-end balances. There would be schools that would be making their second application for a licensed surplus. It was agreed that Headteachers of such schools would be invited to the next meeting of the Forum.

Sandra Mitchell to raise the issue of early identification with the LMS/LMSS Review Group

Minutes of LMS/LMSS Review Group meeting to be circulated to all Headteachers and considered by the Forum at its next meeting

Headteachers of schools making their second application for a licensed surplus to be invited to the next meeting of the Forum when applications would be considered

schools in the activities but asked about opportunities for secondary age special schools to become involved in G&T and sharing best practice. Lorraine recognised that there were some G&T pupils in special schools and replied that the partnership had taken the decision on the involvement of special schools. This action had been taken despite several years of advice from the DfES that it was not possible to include special schools in EiC.

Dr Collins commented that he felt that insufficient information had been given to Governing Bodies about EiC expenditure. Secondary Headteachers disputed this view.

The Forum considered it very important that they were kept fully informed of EiC expenditure. It was important to get this accountability, as was the case in other funding areas. Lorraine indicated that there was no problem in giving detailed information to the Forum. Lorraine confirmed that underspends had occurred in some areas because of the late start in employing staff and this was a direct result of the timescale for some grants. She explained how funding was monitored and reported.

Lorraine made reference to EiC continuity until 2008. Members of the Forum made it clear that they would have liked to have been involved in the decision making process. Lorraine confirmed that monies would be given directly to schools but there was an agreement that some money would be given back to the central EiC team. Members of the Forum pointed out that Headteachers did not have the right to make such a decision to give monies back to the central EiC team. Governing Bodies needed to make this decision. Lorraine noted the comments made by Forum members. She added that the EiC team also needed to be clear about the remit of the Schools Forum.

Lorraine confirmed that the LIG (secondary schools only) would end.

Lorraine was thanked for her input and she withdrew from the meeting at this point.

05/25 Proposed Code of Conduct for Forum members

In discussions with LEA officers, the Chair had felt that it would be appropriate to have a code of conduct for present and future members of the Schools Forum. The Governor Support Team had therefore drawn up a possible code of conduct for consideration. There was some negative reaction at the meeting and some amendments to the draft were suggested. There would be further discussion of the code of conduct at a subsequent meeting.

Further discussion re. possible code of conduct for Forum members at a subsequent meeting

05/26 Feedback from LMS/LMSS Review Group

The minutes of the last meeting of the LMS/LMSS Review Group had not yet been circulated. The recent meeting had been the first since the constitution of the LMS/LMSS Review Group had been changed. The constitution included representation from Headteachers with CAP units. There was also a sub-group of special school Headteachers to

apparently no one in education had been consulted by the working party that was looking into the feasibility of academies. Members of the Forum felt it essential that they had an opportunity to feed into the consultation process and highlighted the importance of equality of funding for all schools. Sandra Mitchell pointed out that affordability of BSF could actually be helped by the introduction of academies. Harry O'Neill would be invited to attend the next meeting to address the Forum.

Gill Wall offered to speak to Harry O'Neill regarding the communication issues. She temporarily withdrew from the meeting to make further enquiries. Upon her return, she reported that an update on the business case and options would be presented to cabinet on 13th July 2005. At present, the scheme did not have the go-ahead from the DfES and was therefore still subject to change. There may be a further special meeting of the Cabinet before September.

It was clear that after Harry O'Neill left his position in the Authority there would need to be someone in post to carry on this work.

Communication with electorate – The importance of Headteacher groups considering feedback from the Schools Forum was again highlighted. It was clear that this was operating more successfully in some Headteacher groups than in others.

05/24 Update on EiC

Lorraine Johnson was welcomed to the meeting. She began by explaining her role as EiC Manager and tabled information at the meeting.

This was fifth year that EiC had been operating and the different strands were outlined. Lorraine commented on the efforts to avoid working in silos and commented that the re-engineering of EiC had been focussed on how to improve. The expansion of EiC had meant that £987,199 was available for the primary school roll-out. Sunderland was one of very few LEAs where every school was part of the EiC activities.

Another zone had been created called the Sunderland Light Zone. This was made up of parts of the discontinued statutory zone. This development meant that there were now four zones operating.

Some areas of EiC monies were fully devolved and some were partially retained for management. The EiC team was very small compared to other LEAs with just £229,000 retained for central resources. Some additional funding was allocated for a focus on gifted and talented provision. Lorraine highlighted the benefits to all pupils.

BIP monies were held centrally for the BEST team. The amount was decided by the partnership in a plan submitted to the DfES.

In reply to a question, Lorraine confirmed that infant and nursery schools were included. Mrs Chart welcomed the inclusion of special

Action Points

Agreed to invite Harry O'Neill to next meeting to respond to concerns

Page 3, first line should read – ‘mobility allowance and that therefore LEAs should **not** be paying for this.’

Page 3, paragraph 6, third sentence should read. ‘It was therefore important **to** get the arrangements right from the outset.’

05/23 **Matters arising from the minutes**

SEN early identification – Sally Collingwood believed that there had been little development in this area. The ‘Pathways’ system was not yet proving effective. Susan Carter supported Sally’s view on this matter.

Membership of the Forum – Harry O’Neill would be appointed as Diocesan Director of Schools for the Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle from September. A question was raised on behalf of the Secondary Headteachers’ Group as to whether he would therefore be removed from the Forum. Gary Robinson explained that whilst the Secondary Heads Group had elected Mr O’Neill, he was also the representative of the Roman Catholic Diocese on the Forum. Mr O’Neill’s position would need to be clarified.

Home-School Transport – Dorothy Elliott confirmed that the DfES were urging caution on the means testing of home-school transport.

SEN funding – The issues previously raised regarding funding of SEN would be covered under feedback from the LMS/LMSS Review Group.

Membership of Sub-Groups – It had been intended that this item would be discussed at this meeting. The Chair explained that she had subsequently sent out a joint letter with Sandra Mitchell which referred to the structure of the LMS/LMSS Review Group. However, it was agreed that this item would appear on the agenda for the July meeting. Dr Collins pointed out that there were no secondary school governor representatives. It was explained that the letter that had been sent out had asked for governor representation on the group but this had not been clear to some members.

U3 grant – Val Thompson had been requested to supply more detail about the figures in respect of U3 payments to schools. The request for information would be made again.

BSF/Academies – Members of the Forum discussed the connection between the Building Schools for the Future programme and the possible introduction of City Academies. Members commented that they would prefer to receive information on this matter from Authority Officers rather than through the Sunderland Echo. The sensitivity of this subject was noted. The Forum felt strongly that they should have been part of the formal consultation. They stressed that they could not be in agreement with any model that took control of any academy away from the Local Authority. Sandra Mitchell pointed out that there was more than one model for academies. The Forum expressed grave concerns about the consultation process and questioned why

Action Points

Harry O’Neill’s position on the Schools Forum to be clarified.

Membership of Sub-Groups to be placed on the agenda for July 2005 meeting

Val Thompson to be asked again to supply U3 grant figures

Forum expressed serious concern at not being included in consultation process with regard to the development of academies.

CITY OF SUNDERLAND

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON MONDAY 20TH JUNE 2005 AT SUNDERLAND STADIUM OF LIGHT

The following members of the Forum were present: -

Mrs Y Gray (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Sunderland South) – Chair of Forum
Mr K McDermid (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary)
Mr M. Foster (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary)
Mrs S Carter (Headteacher Rep. – Nursery)
Mr C Short (Governor Rep. – Primary)
Mr A Falconer (Governor Rep. – Primary)
Mr J Lishman (Governor Rep. – Primary)
Mr H. Brown (Governor Rep. – Primary)
Mrs D. Elliott (Governor Rep. – Special)
Mrs V. Ingleton (Governor Rep. – Nursery)
Mrs P. Gibson (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
Mr J E Clarke (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
Dr P B D Collins (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
Mrs S. Collingwood – Early Years & Childcare Partnership

Together with: -

Mr J.G. Robinson – Governor Support Manager, Sunderland LEA
Mrs G. Wall – Head of Strategy & Performance
Mrs S. Mitchell – Acting Head of Service (Strategy & Performance), LEA
Mrs L. Johnson – EiC Manager
Mrs J. Chart – Headteacher, Portland School (substitute for Mr J. McKnight)

Action Points

The Forum agreed to the attendance of all of the LEA officers at the meeting.

05/21 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr D Ambrose (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
Mrs A Mackay (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Sunderland North)
Mrs J Hobbs (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Hetton/Houghton)
Mr J. McKnight (Headteacher Rep. – Special)
Dr E. Yeates (Headteacher Rep. – Secondary)

05/22 Minutes of previous meeting held on 7th March 2005

The minutes were agreed as a true record subject to the following amendments (changes shown in bold): -

Page 2, paragraph 6 first sentence should read – ‘Sally Collingwood asked about children entering nursery or reception classes who had complex needs but did not **have** a statement’