



worcestershire county council

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM (WSF)

Tuesday 15th September 2020
Remote Meeting Held Via Zoom

The meeting started at 2.25 pm

The meeting start was delayed due to IT connectivity issues.

IN ATTENDANCE:

WSF Members

Malcolm Richards (Chair)	-	Governor, Bromsgrove
Marie Pearse	-	HT Evesham Nursery School
Paul Essenhigh	-	Executive HT Catshill Middle, Catshill First and Nursery Schools
Emma Pritchard	-	Principal The Black Pear Trust
Bryn Thomas	-	HT Wolverley CE Secondary School (until 3.20pm)
Chris King	-	CEO Severn Academies Educational Trust
Lorraine Petersen	-	Governor, Bromsgrove
Jeff Robinson	-	Governor, Malvern Hills
John Bateman	-	Governor, Aspire Alternative Provision (AP) Free School
Stephen Baker	-	Union Representative
Tricia Wellings	-	PVI Sector

Local Authority (LA)

Phil Rook	-	Director of Resources Worcestershire Children First
Sarah Wilkins	-	Director of Education and Early Help Worcestershire Children First (until 3.30pm)
Andy McHale	-	Service Manager Funding and Policy Worcestershire Children First
Caroline Brand	-	Schools Finance Manager Worcestershire County Council

2. APOLOGIES

Nathan Jones	-	HT Meadow Green Primary
Adrian Ward	-	HT Trinity High School
Bec Garratt	-	HT Wyre Forest School
David McIntosh	-	Governor, Wyre Forest
Tim Reid	-	Church of England Board of Education
Greg McClarey	-	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Edward Senior	-	16-19 Providers

Councillor Marcus Hart

- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for
Education and Skills
Worcestershire County Council

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

3.1 The Chair welcomed Emma Pritchard, Principal The Black Pear Trust, to her first WSF meeting in the Primary Headteacher category.

3.2 In response to a query from a member of the WSF, Andy advised prospective PVI representatives had been contacted and invited to attend the WSF as observers, but none had taken up the offer. The Chair further advised Tricia Wellings would represent the sector until replacements were secured.

4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

5. DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTERESTS WITH ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

None.

6. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (9th July 2020)

Agreed.

7. MATTERS ARISING

7.1 Covid 19 Issues Update

(a) Phil advised that schools had been able to claim for additional costs from the DfE, but the conditions of grant funding were quite restrictive. Phil further advised that claims for £0.2m had been approved by the DfE and schools who claimed would receive the money shortly. This was split between premises costs £0.09m, free school meals £0.08m and cleaning costs £0.03m.

(b) The WSF commented as follows: -

- Schools are picking up significant costs just to stay open and there is a need to know the Government position together with if there is a further opportunity to make additional applications in the Autumn Term.
- Schools were actively canvassing their local MPs on the position on additional financial support with a member of the WSF meeting their local MP later in the week.
- No additional funding will result in both partial and full school closures and the ESFA are not giving academies any real support.
- The list of areas for claiming is very limited and additional staffing due to cover self-isolation and additional accommodation costs are significant.
- Data collection on this by the DfE needs to be more dynamic and there are the current daily returns on absence that could be enhanced to support this.
- Track and trace are not effective with schools registering as priority but with no confirmation received.
- When will schools receive the grant funding?

- Early years settings have not been targeted for funding by the DfE.

(c) The LA responded as follows: -

- Sarah advised the LA has daily meetings with the DfE and the LA continues to raise issues on additional costs, the capability of the testing capacity and data collection.
- The WSF were requested to send specific details on additional costs for use in these meetings and for the MP meeting.
- Phil indicated there was likely to be another claims window.
- Caroline confirmed the grant funding had just been received by the LA and would be distributed to those qualifying schools in receipt of grant funding as soon as possible.

7.2 F40 Group Letter

(a) The WSF noted the contents of the letter from F40 to the DfE and the suggestions for supporting school additional cost pressures.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. WSF ATTENDANCE RECORD 2019/20

9.1 The WSF noted the attendance list from the last academic year 2019/20.

9.2 The WSF noted the number of vacancies continues to be high in specific categories and were encouraged to canvass their respective groups for nominations.

10. SCHOOL AND LA FUNDING UPDATE 2021-22

10.1 DfE Funding Announcements July 2020

(a) Andy advised the DfE had announced their policy direction for 2021-22 on 20th July 2020. The key issues were as follows: -

- The ESFA have published provisional funding allocations for 2021-22 for the schools, high needs and central school services national funding formulae (NFF).
- The DfE will publish provisional DSG allocations for LAs for 2021-22 in December 2020 based upon the October 2020 census and other 2020 data sets.
- For the **Schools NFF**: -
 - This will continue to have the same factors as in 2020-21.
 - Funding for supporting the costs of teachers' pay and pension employer contribution, currently funded by specific grant and the supplementary fund, **has been added by the DfE to the NFF from 2021-22**. This is on a per pupil rate into the AWPU – primary £180 and secondary £265.
 - Key factors in the NFF will increase by approximately 3%.
 - The minimum per pupil funding levels will be set at £4,180 for primary, £5,215 for KS3, £5,715 for KS4 and £5,415 for standard secondary schools with 5-year groups. These rates reflect the impact of the mainstreaming of the pay and pensions grants.
 - The NFF funding floor will be set at 2.00% per pupil.
 - The policy of no gains cap in the NFF will continue.

- For the **Local Schools Funding Formula (LSFF)**: -
 - LAs will continue to have discretion over their LSFF and in consultation with schools, will ultimately determine allocations in their area.
 - The DfE will continue to make the use of the national Minimum Funding Levels (MFLs) per pupil, at the values in the school NFF, compulsory for LAs to use in their LSFF.
 - LAs will continue to set a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) in the LSFF, which in 2021-22 must be between +0.50% and +2.00%.
 - LAs can only transfer up to 0.5% of their School Block to other blocks of the DSG, with Schools Forum approval.
- The **High Needs DSG** will continue to have the same factors as at present and will be increased by a further £730m, or 10%, in 2021-22.
- Information for the **Early Years DSG** will be published later in the year.
- The **Central School Services DSG** will increase by 4% in 2021-22 for the ongoing responsibilities that LAs continue to have for all schools, while funding for historic commitments within this block will decrease by a further 20% for those LAs in receipt of this funding. The latter will have significant implications for the Early Intervention Family Support Service (EIFS)

(b) The WSF noted and changes and the indicative DSG allocations and NFF funding rates for the mainstream schools funding formula in Appendices A and B. The WSF commented as follows: -

- The DfE policy to mainstream the specific grants supporting pay and pensions is a key issue for schools in terms of budget planning and needs to be communicated effectively to schools. This is not a LA 'top slice' but a change in DfE policy.
- Can the mainstreamed grant be tracked and matched to actual costs given there is a national shortfall estimated to the £455m?
- How can the exceptional funding still available in this year be claimed?
- How has the former grant been mainstreamed for special schools?
- There will be a further significant impact on the work of the EIFS.

(c) The LA responded as follows: -

- Andy advised the amount included in the NFF for the former grants can be tracked into the DSG as the NFF AWPU rates, as well as being increased by 3%, have been further increased by £180 in primary and £265 in secondary, as shown in Appendix B of the report.
- Andy further advised it will not be possible, as now, to align the grant to actual costs as it is allocated on a per pupil rate and schools are assumed by the DfE to fund some of the pay costs. With the grant to be included in the NFF it will be subject to the MFG and capping (if any).
- The WSF noted, the mandatory NFF MFLs have been increased by the former grant per pupil rates e.g. primary MFL will be £4,180 not £4,000 as previously advised. For special schools, Andy confirmed the former grant had been included in the DfE High Needs NFF by increasing the basic entitlement factor.
- Sarah advised the current EIFS funding gap was being supported through the troubled families reserve but there will be a review of the Early Help functions given the DSG position as part of the budget process. Sarah confirmed the Wyre Forest and Hagley provision was in the process of being TUPE transferred into WCF, this will take place on 1 October 2020.

10.2 Local Consultation Process for 2021-22

(a) The WSF were requested to consider the consultation process issues for 2021-22.

(b) Andy introduced the report which detailed the areas for consideration – the LSFF, transfers from the Schools Block to High Needs, de-delegation for maintained schools and the provision of central services for all schools.

(c) Given the continuation of existing DfE national policy into 2021-22, the LA recommended to the WSF the following: -

- For the last 3 years schools have supported the decisions detailed above, so the usual full consultation document need not be issued.
- The WSF endorse and approve the continuation of the 2020-21 arrangements into 2021-22.
- A communication is sent to schools to that effect, giving details of the continuing DfE policy for 2020-21 continuing into 2021-22 and that no change is proposed to the current local policy.
- A brief report is considered by WCC Cabinet at their meeting on 10th December 2020 to approve continuing with the current arrangements into 2021-22.
- The WSF at its meetings in November 2020 and January 2021 formally approve the arrangements as required for de-delegation and centrally retained services together with the endorsement of the completion of the APT for 2021-22 to the ESFA by 21st January 2021 as required.

(d) The WSF commented that stability for schools is key and agreed to endorse and approved the LAs proposed approach detailed above.

RESOLVED –

The WSF endorsed and approved for 2021-22: -

- **Not to issue the usual consultation document;**
- **The LSFF to continue as far is affordable and practicable to be based upon the DfE Year 4 NFF parameters;**
- **No transfer of 0.5% of the Schools Block funding to support High Needs budget pressures;**
- **Continuing the current arrangements for delegation or de-delegation for maintained mainstream schools and for the central retention of designated centrally retained services;**
- **For a communication to be circulated to this effect to all schools, including details on the DfE policy arrangements for 2021-22.**

10.3 DfE MFG Variation Approval Requests

The WSF noted the required application process and timelines for LAs to request any disapplication to the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations in 2021-22.

11. REQUIRED CHANGES TO THE SCHEME FOR FINANCING MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

11.1 Andy advised of some required directed DfE changes to the Scheme from April 2021 because of updates to the DfEs statutory guidance. These related to requirements for 3-year budget forecasts and submission of deficit recovery plans for deficits in excess of 5%.

11.2 The WSF noted the requirements and the maintained school members approved the changes.

RESOLVED –

The WSF maintained school members approved the required changes to the WCC Scheme for Financing Maintained Schools from April 2021.

12. OTHER MATTER

12.1 Sarah advised the DfE are being pressed upon funding for catch up premium and supporting the cost of free school meals. A member of the WSF commented the DfE national funding mechanism works extremely well and so needs to be retained.

The meeting closed at 3.40pm

The date of the next WSF meeting is: -

Thursday 5th November 2020 at 2pm
Via Remote Meeting MS Teams