

# Schools' Forum



City of  
**Stoke-on-Trent**

**Date:** Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018  
**Time:** 9:30 to 11:30am  
**Venue:** Watermill Special School  
**Chair:** Jonathon May  
**Minutes:** Emily Evans

## Attendees:

Jonathon May (**Chair for Schools' Forum**)  
 Emma Gater (**Vice Chair for School's Forum**)  
 Rob Faulkner (*Representing Lisa Hughes*) (**Special Schools Representatives**)  
 Lisa Sarikaya (**Nursery Representatives**)  
 Sarah Thursfield, Rosina Lee (**Primary Maintained Representatives**)  
 Jonathan Baddeley, Ian Beardmore (**Primary Academy Representatives**)  
 Nick Lowry, Mark Rayner, Gareth Jones (**Secondary Academy Representatives**)  
 Mark Kent (**16-19 Partnership Representative**)  
 Brian Tomkinson, Derek Gray, Harold Gurden (**Union Representatives**)  
 Louise Rees, Rob Johnstone, Jen Lomas, Helen Meigh, Andrew Brindley (**Local Authority Representatives**)  
 Councillor Janine Bridges – Cabinet Member for Education and Economy (**Cabinet Member**)

## Apologies:

David Alston (**Primary Academy Representative**)  
 Stephanie Moran (**Primary Academy Representative**)  
 Jon Lovatt (**Primary Governor**)  
 Lisa Hughes (**Special Schools Representatives**)

MINUTES			
	Item	Lead	When
1	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome and apologies were noted. Apologies were received from David Alston, Stephanie Moran, Jon Lovatt and Lisa Hughes. Lisa Hughes sent Rob Faulkner as representation for Special Schools.</li> </ul>		
2	<b>Minutes from last meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agenda item 2 – H Meigh requested that the Schools' Forum Constitution is carried over and discussed at the next meeting.</li> <li>Agenda item 6- JL advised she would send M Kent information on the agreed action plan from the pathway meeting. J Lomas confirmed that the meeting had not yet taken place so the information was unavailable.</li> <li>Agenda item 7 – J Baddeley requested a response on information</li> </ul>	HM JL	15.03.18 TBA

	<p>on local authority balances. L Rees confirmed that this was actioned.</p>		
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>High Needs DSG Action Plan – to be tabled</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H Meigh presented the High Needs DSG Action Plan. It was confirmed that the document was a working draft and that a copy of the action plan was being sent to the Department for Education (DfE) following Schools’ Forum. J Lomas confirmed that the High Needs DSG Action Plan would be presented to SASCAL on 19 January 2018.</li> <li>• The local authority is looking to have a split site at Portland School and Specialist College, this would extend SEMH places by 40. They are wishing to move the Inspire provision off the Watermill Special School site, which would allow an extra 25 places. They are also looking at placing in an EPI provision at Abbey Hill School and Performing Arts College, which would then extend another 30 places.</li> <li>• J Lomas shared that the local authority is going to put a bid in for a SEMH/SEBD free school and a PMLD/SLD/ASD free school. This would be separate to the extension at Portland School and Specialist College.</li> <li>• Bradford Council has put in a bid for a 72 place free school for young people with SEMH with therapeutic intervention on site. This is the bid that Stoke-on-Trent City Council wish to mirror.</li> <li>• The local authority is looking at combining social care and residential, in not only helping to manage the young person’s education, but also assist in managing the young person’s behaviour. The local authority is looking at stopping escalation and looking to bring back pupils from the independent sector.</li> <li>• R Johnstone advised forum members that he had met with the Regional Schools Commissioner regarding free school applications for SEMH, which they looked on favourably.</li> <li>• R Johnstone advised that this information had not been shared with the Opportunities Area Board, but that the whole concept of closing the gap for children with special educational needs had been discussed and the need for better quality provision in the city. The Opportunities Area board are clear that they want the LA to spend money out of the 6 million to close the gap for vulnerable children.</li> <li>• The LA is looking at additional resources, such as an ASD and SEMH provision. One of the focuses in SEMH are year 5 and 6 pupils. There are a number of young people that are not prepared when going in to secondary schools, which has meant the school has not been able to meet their needs.</li> <li>• For the first two years the government will fund the places in free schools. After two years, the money comes out of the DSG to fund places. The savings will drop after year three because the local authority have to pick up the funding. It was confirmed that capital monies will be available for the free school agenda.</li> <li>• Cllr Bridges confirmed that the free school is not for</li> </ul>		

alternative provision or excluded young people, but will be purely for young people where their home school cannot meet their needs.

- J Lomas confirmed that the local authority does not want to bring back all pupils from out of city placements. The local authority would not look at bringing back pupils in year 10/11. Equally, the local authority would not want to bring back a child who was thriving at their placement or where it may be in specialist provision.
- J Lomas advised that she is looking at small group homes specifically attached to schools rather than residential sites to schools as it was felt small group homes work better.
- N Lowry asked for the percentage of young people that the local authority would look at bringing back in to the City. J Lomas responded that the local authority is looking at 40, but that this was not a target assumption.
- D Gray asked whether there were any residential places in the City. J Lomas responded that there were pupils attending Special Schools in small group homes.
- Cllr Bridges shared that the local authority are buying extra small group homes with a view to increasing provision.
- J Lomas advised forum that the local authority is looking into the development of the Loquela and AU5 provision. A discussion needs to be had with Secondary Schools colleagues as to whether these could be extended due to the EAL and SEN need.
- J Lomas shared that there is a lot of work going through the SENCO and SEMH working group around reducing the number of EHC's. There are currently 196 EHC assessments going through the system currently. The majority of these assessments are made through referrals, some of which have been due to outer city placements. There has been a rise in parental requests for EHC assessments due to parental frustration over the provision in place not meeting the child's need.
- The local authority is looking at the reasons for EHC, and these are usually due to SEMH needs. The LA is looking into mental health and ensuring that there is good staff training in place. There is a project that will be rolled out to 60 schools where they can access training for SEMH for staff within schools. Potential crisis points and rapid reaction in schools needs to be looked in to, along with quicker access to CAMHS.
- S Thursfield asked whether the local authority have looked at pupils that have already got a place in a Special School. J Lomas responded that one of the things the local authority is looking at doing is bridging pupils back from Special School provision into Mainstream provision.
- It was noted that Westfield Nursery School will close and will re-open as a 20 place Early Years SEND provision. This is subject to final consultations in September. The provision will implement support at a nursery school age which can

support the child to go in to a mainstream school.

- Cllr Bridges shared that the local authority has re-profiled the early help provision. The local authority is now looking at funding other places. Cllr Bridges shared that the local authority will have a framework for section 106 monies, so we can start providing capital for some of the works. She also advised that she had a meeting with JCB to seek funding for these works.
- R Johnstone commented that Cllr Bridges was working hard in the background to ensure the strategy is developed.
- J Lomas shared that there has been a lot of work done on the school's Matrix, and what can be reasonably expected from schools before they say they are unable to meet the needs of the child.
- The local authority is responsible for children up to the age of 25. As funding changes to colleges and Post-19 training providers, people are looking for young people to stay on EHC plans.
- J Lomas shared that the local authority is looking at making a case for a Post 16-19 Co-ordinator for supported internships. The grant is coming through and the local authority will look at how to work the plan out.
- J Baddeley said that he is interested to know the effectiveness with Social Care in working with these families. He enquired how many of the families have had intervention at early intervention, CIN and CP level. If the local authority knows that we have a demand in our city for Special School places, how effective are Social Services in working with these families to effectively intervene in how parents operate and support them to do the best they can for a young person with complex, social and mental difficulties.
- R Faulkner shared that in terms of impact of Social Services, the Better Together project has saved £65k as it saved a pupil to remain at his school.
- H Gurden questioned whether schools are paying the penalty for the local authority closing down Children's Centres. L Rees responded that it was too soon to say the effects of changes on Children's Centres. The local authority would contest to say that Childrens' Centres have not been closed down, but that services have been cut. Cllr Bridges also commented that the local authority was noticing families who were most vulnerable were not accessing services. The service provision has been re-tendered and is focused more on the young person and engaging with the family.
- L Rees then went on to say that in the past year the local authority is at its lowest point since December 2016 for the total number of contacts in to Social Care. Referrals have dropped and admissions in to care are at their lowest. We have refocused a lot as a result of staff reductions, it is now a child and family focused service.
- E Gater commented that anti-social behaviour and criminal activities are escalating and becoming more of an issue for

	<p>schools. J Lomas agreed and went on to say that gang issues are becoming problems for schools and we don't acknowledge the impact on young children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D Gray said that it concerns him that there are a number of EHC plans avoided. He asked what was going to be the impact on teachers in schools if additional resources are not bought in. J Lomas advised that the local authority have to assess whether an EHC is required or whether there are other ways in supporting the young person. The local authority does not refuse EHC plans, we don't go to tribunal and the number of EHC plans is higher to other neighbours. We need to question are other local authorities providing effective support at school level so people do not feel the need to escalate to EHC.</li> <li>• N Lowry advised that he has been doing work on student number projections. Last year there were 11,477 secondary school aged children in City. Over the next few years this will be increasing to 14,986 children. There are going to be more EHC plans and the local authority is going to save this proposed money, but how? H Meigh responded that she has allowed an increase for EHC plans in the pressures line. L Rees responded that N Lowry made a good point in being explicit in some of the assumptions and figures will need to change as part of sensitively testing. These will need to be re-visited at forum and figures will need to be amended.</li> </ul>		
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Application to transfer 0.5% from schools block – vote</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A vote was held for the application to transfer 0.5% from the schools block. There were 12 in favour, 1 against and 2 abstentions. The application will be now be submitted through to the Department for Education.</li> <li>• G Jones commented that schools had previously received spreadsheets showing the financial impact on individual schools. G Jones requested if schools could receive a copy of this again. A Brindley confirmed it will be £811k based on October 2017 numbers.</li> <li>• H Meigh read an email received from Stephanie Moran, which confirmed that all schools whom she represents, except one, agreed to the top slice.</li> </ul>	<b>LR/HM</b>	<b>18.01.18</b>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Update on Early Years central allocation (from query raised at previous meeting)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• L Sarikaya explained that PVI's received visits and support and forum asked whether this was available for all schools too. From a sufficiency point of view there is a change to funding hours for nurseries. Schools are not aware of the training and support that is available to them. However, following the last Early Years working group meeting, it was felt that it was fairer and equitable that thought of initially.</li> <li>• R Johnstone shared that the availability of Early Years Advisors had not been marketed to all schools and that schools had not</li> </ul>	<b>RJ</b>	<b>15.03.18</b>

	<p>been given clarify on what support is available to them. It was noted that Debbie Jacobs has sent a link for statutory guidance and that this link can be sent to the Schools' Forum members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillor Bridges shared that the local authority has supplemented Early Years via the School Readiness Programme and that the local authority has asked the Opportunities Area to take this up and carry on with this.</li> </ul>		
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Update on Admissions charging (from query raised at previous meeting)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions are funded through the DSG through the central retained element. Some schools bought into the SLA and wanted to know the difference in what is provided in the DSG pot and what is provided in the SLA pot.</li> <li>• E Gater questioned why maintained schools were not being charged an SLA, and academies were. We want to stop charging extra money and charge all schools the same amount.</li> <li>• I Beardmore then went on to explain that his school pays a separate SLA for free school meals.</li> <li>• G Jones advised that his school pay out an additional £2k for the SLA and there was no difference in the process. It was questioned that if it is coming from a centralised pot then why do academies have to pay twice and shouldn't the money from DSG cover all of this for schools.</li> <li>• G Jones requested that this agenda item is discussed at the next Schools' Forum meeting and regular updates are provided.</li> <li>• R Johnstone advised that he would have further discussions with Paul Gerrard around this matter and update colleagues at a future meeting.</li> </ul>	<p><b>JM/EE</b></p> <p><b>RJ</b></p>	<p><b>15.03.18</b></p> <p><b>15.03.18</b></p>
<b>7</b>	<p><b>SEN matrix for top up funding – discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local authority is re-defining the boundaries for funding and looking at what is reasonably expected at each stage to determine whether the range is a Special School need or an independent need. Every type of need is met under the High Needs will be recognised by a separate matrix.</li> <li>• J Lomas confirmed that the Matrix need is made up of mainstream, Special School representatives and SEN Advisors. J Lomas confirmed that the Matrix was being finalised and once complete this would be sent out to schools for their comments.</li> <li>• H Meigh confirmed that the local authority want to get the Matrix running by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. J Lomas commented that she wants experienced SENCO's to trial it and see how it is working for schools. It was agreed for schools to view the draft matrix before it goes live. H Meigh and J Lomas to arrange a session for this at the Bridge Centre.</li> <li>• The local authority want a graduated response process to show what criteria schools would need to meet before putting in a request for an EHC assessment.</li> </ul>	<p><b>HM/JL</b></p>	<p><b>15.03.18</b></p>

8	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderation charges were raised. I Beardmore raised that he was paying for moderation charges and not getting money back for it. R Johnstone to look into this matter.</li> <li>• Final bid money was discussed. 4 ½ million was given out to schools and the local authority would like to know if this money has made a difference to schools, and what this has been spent on. A discussion took place around money that hadn't been spent and whether there should be a clawback on this.</li> <li>• It was suggested that the local authority writes to all Headteachers within the City advising that there will be a review on the final bid money, advising that an impact is expected to be seen or there may be a clawback.</li> <li>• N Lowry advised that there has been new Headteachers starting in schools who may not know about this money.</li> </ul>	RJ	15.03.18
<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p><b>Date:</b> Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018  <b>Time:</b> 09.00 – 11.00am  <b>Venue:</b> Watermill Special School  <b>Chair:</b> Jonathon May</p>			

