

Leicester City Council Schools' Forum Minutes

Minutes of the Microsoft Teams meeting held at 1:30pm on Wednesday 21 September 2022.

Present

Schools Members

Mainstream Academies

Name

Amelia Smith, Jane Ridgewell, Mike Hobbs,
Rose Angus

Chair of EIP & SBM network

Julie Aquilina

Special Academies

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Special School Governors

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Special School Heads

Steph Beale

Secondary School Head Representatives

Anna White, Louise Glasby

Primary School Governors

Glenys Mulvany

Primary School Head representatives

Matt Potts

Pupil Referral Unit:

Shaun Whittingham

Non-School members

Name

Teaching Unions

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School support staff Unions

Samuel Randfield (Chair)

16-19 Providers

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Early Years PVI providers

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In Attendance

Role

Clare Nagle

Lead Commissioner - LCC

Cllr Elly Cutkelvin

Lead Member for Education - LCC

Jane Pierce

Programme Manager – LCC

Martin Judson

Head of Finance – LCC

Nu'Aimaan Shaikh

Business Support – LCC

Simon Walton

Principal Accountant, Finance – LCC

Sophie Bower-Scott

Business Change Commissioning Manager

Tracie Rees

Director, SEND – LCC

Sue Welford

Principal Education Officer LCC

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Julie Selby, Julie Robinson, Sarah Osborne, Steve Wilson, Janine Gibson, and Sophie Maltby.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings. The chair went through each page of the previous minutes asking if there were any objections. There were none apart from minor amendments which are detailed below.

4. Matters arising from previous minutes

When going through the previous minutes the following changes needed to be made:

Shaun Whittingham was specified as in the 'people referral unit' when it needs to be 'pupil referral unit'

Jane Ridgewell was incorrectly spelt as Joseph Ridgewell

After the minutes were agreed, an action log, which was circulated prior to the meeting was analysed to see if actions had been carried out since the last meeting. The chair went through the points presented in the log. There was an action presented which was 'check with payroll the number of schools implementing one pound teacher pay increase in connection with pension indexation', it was discussed if anyone from the LA had heard about this before. There was no confirmation of this therefore Sue Welford said she will follow it up after the meeting.

The next item on the log was 'Raise concerns regarding redundancies at Oaklands directly with the head teacher', Samuel Randfield confirmed he had carried out this action extensively during the restructuring process.

The action 'share schools first time admissions data outside the meeting' was confirmed to have been done by Sue Welford but she also confirmed this can be done with Forum members too. The item of 'Consultancy fees for WPL (Workplace Parking Levy)' was said to be followed up by Sue Welford as she has asked for it but not yet received it.

The action of 'Ask Karen Mills to provide a written update on capital projects' was discussed and was confirmed that there are a whole range of capital projects. It was also confirmed by Sue Welford that they will get Karen to bring this in on the next Forum meeting.

It was discussed that some actions on the log provided had been mixed with actions of other meetings and it was then agreed to move on. The Chair asked the Forum if he had missed anything critical however no response was received therefore the meeting moved to the next item on the agenda.

5. SEND review consultation – briefing on response to consultation from SEND Improvement Board

Jane Pierce led the briefing of this item on the agenda. Jane initially clarified that all the papers related to the SEND review consultation briefing had been circulated prior to the meeting. She identified that in the pack provided was a covering report, a slide deck on the education white paper and the SEND review green paper, and a submission on the final response.

Jane then provided a brief background on the SEND review itself. She mentioned it started in 2019 and then the government initiated a consultation on those proposals for the green paper which was the 'right support, right place, right time' SEND review. The government

started the consultation and then closed it on the 22 of July of this year. Jane described the process and mentioned that individual responses were welcomed by everywhere, and then the government and DfE set about many consultations across the country and had various groups attend. Many of our parent/carer forums from across the East Midlands attended. The SEND Improvement Board of Leicester City agreed to collate a response and have a collective response from the SEND Improvement Board and these papers are to brief the schools' forum on the response that the SEND Improvement Board provided because of the consultation. There was a large amount of responses as the SEND Improvement Board and Leicester City Council encouraged individuals to also respond. There were 22 questions which were covered by the proposals. They had a focus on inclusion, alternative provision, the fact that the SEND system is broken and needs to be significantly repaired, and looking at creating a standard across the country and making a consistent SEND offer. Jane summarised the brief by saying the SEND improvement board produced a response which is on appendix three. The summary was that we agreed that the ambitions and the SEND green paper were welcome, but there were many challenges. An example was alternative provision, and this is reflected in the education white paper. However, with greater support and capacity, the green paper offers real hope for reform. The Government have increased the high needs block to 9.1 billion for 22-23, they have provided 2.6 billion for new specialist places for children with SEND and they have sent out a call for evidence to understand the use of unregistered provision. It was confirmed by Jane that the call for evidence has a closing date of 30 September 2022 and Leicester City Council are in the process of submitting this. It was discussed that the Government have also confirmed the next steps because of the consultation. This includes setting up a SEND and AP board and producing and publishing a SEND and AP improvement plan by December 2022.

This concluded Jane's briefing, and she and Samuel Randfield, then asked the rest of the forum for any questions in relation to Jane's briefing. There were no questions and therefore the forum moved on to the next item on the agenda.

6. SEND Inspection Framework consultation – briefing

Jane Pierce also presented this item on the agenda. She started with a clarification that everybody will have received the papers which give a presentation and explanation of the consultation questions and what the consultation is about. She confirmed there were 9 questions. The SEND Inspection framework is a side shoot of the SEND review green paper consultation. The framework is similar to what we call the ILACS inspection, which is the inspection of local authority service. These inspections are set to have three different outcomes and a different set of expectations of the local area partnership will be required. If the inspection is identified as consistent with meeting the needs and outcomes of children or young people with SEND, then there will be a plan required of any recommendations made by the inspections and this would link into a cycle of inspections over five years. If it is identified as not being consistent with the needs of young people with SEND, then further recommendations would be made with increased level of requirements in terms of delivery plans and the addressing of shortcomings and failings of what they have found in the inspection. This would then lead to an inspection round of every 3 years. If the inspection judges that there are serious concerns or significant failings from the local area partnership, then there would be a tightened and heightened requirement for monitoring this by the government and the DfE. This would lead to an inspection cycle of every three years and every 18 months there would be a check on progress.

Jane Pierce also mentioned that this is the first part of the inspections, and they will also be carrying out 'themed inspections'. Jane confirmed this will not be for all local areas but only for some areas. It would work by picking out six to ten local areas and they will have a theme of what they would want to explore and produce something which would share good practice or share sort of areas for improvement for other local areas to consider and improve. There will also be an annual conversation which would be held with the local area partnership by inspectors to have a check on how the progress of the local SEND area is.

Jane Pierce then concluded this briefing and Samuel Randfield asked if there were any questions for this briefing and there were no questions asked from the forum.

7. Ash Field Funding Review

Before the discussion of the Ash Field Funding Review, Samuel Randfield clarified that he asked for this item to be added to the agenda and was later informed by Tracie that she was intending to present this to the forum. Samuel then confirmed he had heard of what the proposals were going to be from the school, and he expressed that he personally felt that this should have been brought to the last forum meeting so there could have been discussions on this before the process started and he hopes that they will do this going forward in similar situations.

Tracie Rees started the presentation by going over the background and explaining that they periodically review services and with strategic commissioning reviews to determine if services are still required. She confirmed they have done engagement with the school, and this is the formal consultation process that is going to start on Monday which is why she has brought this to the forum. Tracie described the background on the Ash Field residential provision where students can stay overnight if necessary. Tracie confirmed there will be another consultation that will be starting towards the end of the calendar year, which relates to the review of the banding of the school.

Tracie provided some national context as part of the presentation. It contained figures and statistics to show the children with an EHCP plan in England and it supplemented the fact the numbers were increasing. The national context also showed the pressures on the dedicated schools grant and authorities experiencing an overspend. It was also discussed that there is a national recovery programme in place. Tracie confirmed Leicester City is not subject to a formal process but have had contact with the ESFA to discuss recovery in terms of the overspend. Tracie then discussed the local context and mentioned it is mirroring the national context. She also confirmed the deficit for 2022/23 was likely to be £5.7m. Tracie then discussed the engagement with Ash Field Academy and explained that they had carried out feedback with various members of staff, pupils, parents, and governors. It was also stated that the service currently costs around £400,000 per year and the money is funded directly from the high needs block. Tracie confirmed that there is no requirement on any of the EHCP plans for there to be residential provision. Tracie confirmed that they are proposing to cease funding for the residential provision, and this will be in effect from September 2024.

Tracie outlined the consultation approach with there being an online consultation, schools Forum, meeting with governors, Staff and Families. Tracie also confirmed the timelines where the consultation will run from 26 September until 18 December 2022. The results would then be collated and analysed. Tracie then concluded her presentation and asked if anyone had any questions.

The following questions were asked:

Rose Angus: How many students does this affect?

Clare Nagle: On average, between 34 and 44 pupils at the schools are able to attend the overnight provision, so a small percentage of overall pupils.

Jane Ridgewell: Can you clarify what you said about the review of the banding mechanism? And when is that going to happen? And how does that fit in to the timeline of the consultation of the review?

Tracie Rees: Ashfield wasn't included because of the timeline, the councils-maintained schools have a different funding timeline. The banding review is in progress currently and there are ongoing discussions with the school. The work hasn't been concluded yet and will be likely towards the end of October to November time but can move in towards January to February.

Jane Ridgewell: What scenario would a child have residential provision on their EHCP?

Tracie Rees: Normally they don't have that however we have a statutory duty to provide respite.

Steph Beale: Why does Ashfield have a different banding formula to the other special schools and is the desired outcome to make this more equitable across special schools?

Martin Judson: It's a historic thing, they had many more bands because of the degree of complexity of the children they had at the school. The idea is to bring them into line with our own formula. We are going through that process at the moment.

Anna White: What are the strategic plans around providing residential provision for young people?

Tracie Rees: There is a strategic review in place for the respite and we are looking at how that can be delivered. We are looking at potentially expanding the provision to be open to all children. There are respite support bids now available and the next bidding is going to be open on Monday 26, so we will be looking at what is currently provided.

Samuel Randfield: Are the staff at the school invited to the meetings?

Tracie Rees: There are going to be discussions this afternoon with the school so that should be offered. I'm more than happy to meet with the staff and as far as I am concerned the staff will be invited and they should be informed this afternoon

Samuel Randfield: Are the unions going to be invited to the meetings?

Tracie Rees: Yes, we have asked the headteacher for a list of all the unions. Over the next couple of days, we will be writing out to all included in the comms plan.

Samuel Randfield: what were the staff specifically asked to provide?

Tracie Rees: We provided the school with a scoping document, they knew that the review would be looking at costings, the outcomes that it had for the children. I also met with them to talk about the reviewing and what it would include.

No other questions were asked, and this item of the agenda was concluded.

Consultation on de-delegation for 2023/24

Martin Judson started his briefing on this item on the agenda by confirming that they are at the time of the year where they need to consult with maintained schools to see whether they want to de-delegate funds for the various services that are on offer. Martin confirmed they are proposing to send out a consultation document in the same format as to how they have done in the past. This is planned to circulate at the beginning of October for a three-week period. Martin confirmed the document was not ready for this Forum meeting however it will be circulated the day after the forum meeting for forum members to look at and advise of any amendments. Martin informed the members to advise of changes by next Wednesday so that the document can go out on the 3rd of October. Martin confirmed last year they had an issue with the union facility cover and the LA agreed to provide additional information on the use of that service. However, Martin confirmed that rather than include that additional information as part of the consultation document, it will be shared with Anna White and Matt Potts on a one-to-one basis. Martin also mentioned that if there is a delay of the consultation result then they would delay the decision on the Union duties until January next year. In terms of the rates, the people who provide the services have come forward with rates which are slightly amended from the 22 rates.

Martin also specified that in the consultation document they will be asking for a basic yes or no, however if it is a no, then they will ask to comment exactly why. Sue Welford confirmed that she has started a conversation with LA maintained schools and they've asked to meet again to have a further conversation about what activities we used the fund for.

This concluded Martin's briefing on this item of the agenda.

Questions:

Anna White: Is it possible for Matt and myself to be included as an observer?

Sue Welford: Ofcourse, I'll make sure you've got the dates.

Any other business

No other business was declared in this meeting.

Samuel Randfield confirmed the next meeting as on the 9 November 2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:41pm on 21 September 2022.