

Schools Forum Briefing – May 2023

Schools Forum members have for some time been considering how we can best communicate with those we represent and this 'Briefing' is intended to provide a brief summary of the discussions and decisions taken by Forum at their most recent meeting. The notes below are intended to be brief and largely capture just the headlines. However, if you want to find more detail, the minutes and papers from all meetings are in the public domain and can be found on the Norfolk Schools website at <https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/school-finance/norfolk-schools-forum>, along with contact details for Forum representatives.

Local First Inclusion

Michael Bateman presented an update on progress with the Local First Inclusion Programme. Key points were;

- During the initiation phase of the programme we have established the programme in full with 5 Workstreams overseeing a total of 80 individual projects
- Implementation is ongoing in key areas including the successful recruitment to the new School & Community Teams which will go live in phases from the summer term onwards
- There is increased take up from schools to the INDES and IPSEF frameworks for mainstream school inclusion (to near 90% coverage) which is very positive
- There has been a high rate of expressions of interest for the first wave of new primary school Specialist Resource Bases
- At the current time we are still seeing higher and higher rates of referral for EHCP as well as higher rates of request for element 3 funding

The update covered the planned triannual reporting to DfE. A subset of the Key Performance Indicators was presented to forum to be monitored in line with Forum's responsibilities.

Forum was asked for their thoughts on why the number of requests for EHCP assessment continues to rise and what can be done to reduce those and meet needs in a more efficient way.

- Representatives noted that the necessary culture change to reduce demand for EHCP assessment needs to include a focus on parents as well as professionals.
- Colleagues raised concerns that when schools say that an EHCP is not the right path for a child the process goes through anyway where parents have requested this.
- Forum members highlighted the need to simplify and join up the way in which schools can access forms of inclusion support which can be complex when multiple needs and services are involved

These discussion points will be fed directly into the Local First Inclusion Programme working groups.

It was agreed that additional members of the Executive Board for the programme will be identified to ensure there is sufficient representation from the key areas of the system and mainstream schools leadership in particular

Learning Strategy

Forum discussed the communication previously sent out from Sara Tough in relation to the creation of a new Learning Strategy for Norfolk to drive improvement across the county.

The communication is intended to outline the potential framework and key themes for the strategy – but critically to seek engagement and views from all parts of the education landscape. As such Forum members were encouraged to support the reach of the communications and engagement

Catering Contract

Forum received an initial briefing on the review of the school Catering Contract Arrangements work from the Local Authority Commissioning Lead, ahead of a fuller discussion at the July Forum meeting.

- The current position is that we have a contract with Norse in place which has been extended to March 2024 in order to allow for a review of the model and approach.
- The Local authority team is currently gathering information about requirements and scope and is engaging with representative from the sector to gain initial views.
- Forum members expressed a desire that all options are considered and that there was an open process in order that the right approach and provision is in place for the future.

A fuller analysis and consideration of options will be presented to the July Forum meeting.

Election for Academy Representatives

Two applications were received, so no election was necessary.

- Jo Philpott will commence a new term of office.
- Daniel Thrower (CEO of the Wensum Trust) is the new academy representative.

Dedicated School Grant - 2022/23 Outturn

Forum received a report of the 2022/23 outturn position. Key points were;

- Maintained schools' balances have reduced from £17.684m as at March 2022 to £15.797m as at March 2023.
- The overall DSG outturn position for all four blocks was £19.9m overspent for 2022-23.
- This is primarily driven by the continued reliance on specialist and independent sector placements which over time will be addressed through collective action around the Local First Inclusion Programme.
- The overspend also reflects a significant increase in element 3 funding during 2022/23. Higher element 3 funding had been anticipated and aligns with the strategy – but the actual level was even greater than expected reflecting the level of need being seen within the system at the current time.
- Officers also highlighted a significant underspend on the Early Years block as a result of actual take up of funded hours for 3- and 4-year-old children being lower than DfE calculations from census data.
- Forum discussed the need to analyse whether this is likely to have been a one-off underspend or a recurring pattern. Forum concluded that if there is the potential for it to be repeated then we should consider the options we have to set the budget differently so that all funding is deployed to support early years and inclusion outcomes.

Schools Forum agreed that LA Officers and sector representatives should further investigate together how we can maximise available funding to early years providers.

Your School, Forum Representatives

Present at May Meeting:

Adrian Ball, Diocese of Ely Multi Academy
Steven Dewing
Lacey Douglass
Mike Grimble, Avenue Junior School
Glyn Hambling, Unity Education Trust
Georgie Howell, (Sub) West Norfolk AT
Carol Jacques
Karen McIntosh, (Sub) City College
Joanne Philpott, City of Norwich School
Sarah Porter, The Heart Education Trust
Sarah Shirras, St Williams Primary
Joanna Tuttle, Aylsham High School
Martin White, (Chair) Nebula Federation
Vicky Warnes

*Martin Brock
Michael Bateman*

*John Crowley
Marilyn Edgeley
Dawn Filtness
Sam Fletcher*

Victoria Groom

Simon Paylor

*Nicki Rider
Sara Tough
James Wilson*

Apologies:

Martin Colbourne, City College
Bob Groome
David Hicks
Clare Jones, Boudica Schools Trust
Rachel Quick, The Wherry School
Rebecca Wicks, The Clare School
Daniel Thrower, The Wensum Trust

Representing

Academies
Academies
Early Years Representative
Primary Maintained Governors
Alternative Provision
Academies
Maintained Nursery School
16 – 19 Representative
Academies
Academies
Primary Maintained Schools
Secondary Maintained Schools
Primary Maintained Governors
JCC

*Accountant (Schools, SEND & EY)
Assistant Director, SEND Strategic
Improvement & Early Effectiveness
Assistant Director, Learning & Achievement
Admin Officer
Finance Business Partner
Interim Assistant Director, Education
Strategy & Infrastructure
Senior Advisor Strategy and
Partnership
Strategic Commissioner, Health &
Disability
Assistant Director High Needs SEND
Executive Director Children's Services
Director of Sufficiency, Planning and
Education Strategy*

16 – 19 Representative
JCC
Academies
Academies
Special School Academy
Maintained Special Schools
Academies