

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Tuesday, 19 March 2013 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: E. Cargill - Primary Representative
Councillor Philbin, Executive Board Member Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People & Families
L. Bowles, Nursery Schools Representative
S. Clough, Children & Enterprise
M. Constantine, Special School Representative
A. Keeley, Secondary School Representative
D. Stanley, All Through School Representative
L. Feakes, Primary School Representative
J. Rigby, Secondary Academy Representative
S. Broxton, Primary Representative
C. Owen, Secondary Community School
A. McIntyre, Children & Enterprise
A. Jones, Financial Management
A. Jones, Democratic Services
J. Jardine, Academy Representative

Action

SCF38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Jackie Coughlan, Claire Dawes, Dianne Moran, Joanne Galloway and Naheem Shafiq.

SCF39 MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes from the previous meeting held on 29 January 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

Membership - It was noted that Mrs Heather Mullaney would be replaced on the Forum by Mr Jamie Jardine, the new Headteacher at the Heath, as she had been appointed Executive Principal at the Heath Multi Academy Trust.

The Forum was also advised that as Wade Deacon had now converted to Academy status, Mr John Woodroffe had stepped down as a member of the Forum therefore creating a vacancy. This would also mean a new Chair would need to be elected at this meeting or via an election process. It was proposed by one Member that Ellen Cargill be elected to Chair; this was agreed by a show of hands. Mr John Rigby was proposed as Vice Chair, this was agreed by a show of hands.

It was explained that the Forum needed to maintain a balance of head teachers and governor representatives. One replacement therefore would be sought from Wade Deacon, Sandymoor School or Saints Peter and Paul to cover the vacancy created by Mr Woodroffe. They would be contacted and requested to nominate volunteers who should be a head teacher, a governor or chair of governors.

Additionally to this it was noted that there was a temporary vacancy whilst Mr Paul Towey had been seconded to the Diocese so again schools would be contacted for a volunteer to cover his absence on a temporary basis.

SCF 30 – Schools Block: Pupil Growth Fund – it was noted that a report would be submitted to the June meeting regarding this.

Since the Schools Forum Meeting has taken place, advice has been received from the Education Funding Agency who has advised that the Chairmanship of the Forum cannot be held by an Elected Member as described in Regulation 8 (6). Therefore the election of the Chairperson will be carried out at the June meeting of the Schools Forum.

SCF40 FUNDING FORMULA FOR EARLY YEARS PROVISION 2013-14

The Forum received a report informing them of the Early Years proposals for 2013-14.

It was reported that following consultation, the maintained sector showed support for the proposed funding factors of Basic Per Pupil, deprivation, Lump Sum and Local Authority Rates. The nursery schools were given a number of options regarding a cash balance to be allocated through a funding factor. All three nursery schools opted for the cash balance to be allocated through the Basic per Pupil element and this had been adjusted accordingly.

Appendix A detailed the proposed funding formula with cash values for the maintained nursery schools and nursery units plus the indicative budgets for 2013-14, for which agreement was sought by Schools Forum.

The Forum was advised that the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector consultation results again showed support for the proposed funding factors of Basic per Pupil, Deprivation and Local Authority Rates. Within the PVI sector the use of a lump sum caused increased

turbulence of funding between providers. It was noted that by modelling various options the Finance team was able to prove that the lowest level of turbulence was provided by not using the lump sum factor but by allocating that cash funding through the Basic per Pupil factor.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

1. Agree the mapping of current funding factors to the most appropriate funding factor;
2. Agree that funding is kept as much as possible within each funding factor;
3. Agree the use of a Lump Sum funding factor for the Maintained Sector Nursery Schools and Nursery Units;
4. Agree that the Lump Sum funding factor would not be used for the Private, Voluntary and Independent Sectors; and
5. Agree to fund the previously agreed Private Finance Initiative costs at The Grange.

SCF41 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK TOP UP RATES

An update on the work undertaken on developing the processes and funding for high needs pupils and students was provided to the Forum.

They were advised that two funding options had now been developed for the arrangements for top up funding for the four special schools. Both models were based on 2012/13 cash budgets and 2013/14 estimated numbers. The proposed top up levels for each of the options were provided in the report.

The four special schools had since been consulted on the two funding options which were described in the report. A further paper was provided on the consultation for the top up funding for the four Halton Special Schools and High Needs Assessment process for students aged 0-25 years.

Each of the four special schools was asked to indicate which of the two top up options they would prefer for 2013-14. Three of the four special schools indicated their preference for the second banded option. It was therefore recommended that the second banded option was used as the proposed funding model for 2013-14. A review of the impact of this banded top up level would be undertaken in 2013-14.

Following the meeting of a task group set up to

consider the changes required to the High Needs Assessment process, the Forum was advised that they had developed a High Needs/Student Assessment Process so that Halton had documented procedures to assess the needs of all pupils/students with high needs from 0-25 years old for the year 2013-14.

The *High Needs Students Assessment Framework for 2013-14* document was attached with the supplementary information and approved by members. Additionally a flow chart (Appendix 1) showing the assessment process and the current criteria that had been adapted was included with the supplementary information.

The attention of the Forum was drawn to the additional needs criteria which was agreed as:

'Exceptionally, a successful inclusive school may find themselves in a situation where they were attracting high needs pupils, yet they have low levels of additional needs funding and believe it was unable / unreasonable for it to fund the notional SEN for all their high needs pupils. In these circumstances any school that thought they should be treated as an exception would need to provide appropriate evidence to a moderation panel, a sub-committee of the Schools Forum. Critical factors would be: the overall number of high needs pupils and the relative level of the school's notional SEN budget. Advice from the School Psychologists may be helpful in judging whether the particular circumstances were affecting a particular school. A Schools Forum Sub Committee would agree additional guidelines to assist in determining whether they might be regarded as exceptional in this respect'

Following a discussion on the membership requirements of the subcommittee to take on the above role, volunteers were requested. Lesley Feakes (Infant representative) Linda Bowles (PVI representative) and John Rigby (Secondary representative) had volunteered. One member of staff from the SEN team and one Finance Officer would be needed as well, the names of who would be confirmed later. It was agreed that guidelines would be needed for the Sub Committee who would operate within delegated powers to make decisions; however, they would be required report to Schools Forum.

Forum members agreed to the membership and it was noted that the group would be coordinated by Ann McIntyre, Operational Director for Children's Organisation and Provision.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

1. Notes the progress made to date;
2. Agrees the banded option of providing top up to the four special schools for 2013-14; and
3. Approves the High Needs Assessment Framework for 2013-14.

SCF42 PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS (PRU'S)

The Forum received a summary of the changes to the funding of pupil referral provision and sought approval to carry forward any underspend from 2012/13 into 2013/14. The PRU budget calculations for 2013-14 was circulated to the group.

It was reported that as part of the funding reforms the Local Authority was required to put in place arrangements for PRU's to have delegated budgets by April 2013. This was to allow Management Committees to have the delegated powers necessary to run PRU's. Under the new funding arrangements, PRU's would be funded from the high needs element of the DSG. They would receive base funding of £8,000 for the number of places agreed with the Authority in August 2012. The place numbers agreed for the Key Stage 4 PRU was 40, giving a base budget of £320,000 and the numbers agreed for Key Stage 3 provision was 20, giving a base budget of £160,000. The final top up rates per annum for both PRUs from April 2013 were: KS3 £28,017.87 and KS4 £9,078.55.

Concern was expressed by Secondary members on the value of the top up required to sustain the PRU in 2013/14. Ann McIntyre agreed to meet secondary heads to discuss the funding levels for the PRU and future PRU provision.

Due to the new funding arrangements being likely to impact on the current funding levels and potentially cause some uncertainty for 2013/14, Schools Forum was requested to agree that any underspend on the two PRU budgets for 2012/13 was carried forward and used to support the provision in 2013/14. This was agreed by Forum Members.

Members noted that under the funding reforms where early intervention was provided at either of the PRUs but the pupil remained on the mainstream school roll in 2013/14,

this provision would continue to be offered at no costs to the mainstream school, which was a temporary arrangement, agreed with the EFA for one year only.

Members discussed the future of the PRUs beyond this date and the membership of the Management Committee. It was noted that if a school representative wished to raise matters with the Committee, then they were welcome to approach them directly.

It was also noted that from 2014/15, the relevant proportion of the high needs budget would be delegated to the schools who would then be responsible for paying the top up element direct to the PRU.

RESOLVED: That

1. Schools Forum note the delegation arrangements from April 2013;
2. Approve the carry forward of any unspent PRU balances within the DSG from 2012/13 to 2013/14.

SCF43 SCHOOL BUDGETS

The Forum was advised of the Schools Block One Line Budgets for Primary and Secondary phases for 2013-14.

It was noted that the last Schools Forum meeting the final funding formula cash values were agreed for the Primary and Secondary phases from the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The Indicative Schools Block One Line Budgets were distributed to Head Teachers on 31 January 2013. Following the submission of the Budgets to the Education Funding Agency, head teachers had been contacted and informed that their indicative budget figures were confirmed.

Attached at Appendix A was the final Schools Block Budgets plus indicative Special Unit and Nursery Unit budgets. It was noted that outreach services, signers in Hearing Impaired Units, enhanced provision, sixth forms, pupil premium and Additional Grant for Schools was not included within the figures.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SCF44 CONTINGENCY

A report was presented to the Forum which provided a summary of the requests from a number of schools for contingency funding. Schools Forum was asked to consider each of the requests.

It was noted that in January 2013, a balance of £24,180 was identified on the general schools contingency budget in 2012/13 and £1,785,881 on the DSG centrally held contingency.

Due to exceptional unforeseen costs as described in the report, Farnworth Church of England Primary School and West Bank Primary School had applied for contingency funding. Forum members discussed the individual cases and agreed to fund the requests as exceptions, taking note that this would leave a balance in the fund of £500.

The request from Cavendish School was not supported as it was not in line with the previously agreed Schools Forum policy on premature retirement of staff.

It was noted by the Forum that following a brief consultation by the DfE on the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG), from 2012/13 any school converting to an academy would now take a proportion of the schools contingency budget. This funding would be recouped from the budget in year.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

1. Agrees to the request for funding by Farnworth C E Primary School;
2. Agrees to the request for funding by West Bank Primary School;
3. Notes the decision on the request for funding by Cavendish School; and
4. Notes that funding would be recouped from the budget in year for academies.

SCF45 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Primary School Sport Funding – Anne Jones announced that following a Government announcement yesterday, all schools with 17 or more primary aged pupils would receive a lump sum of £8000 plus a premium of £5 per pupil, to spend on improving the quality of sport and PE for all their children. Smaller schools would receive £500 per pupil. This would be paid for the two academic years

2013/14 and 2014/15.

It was stipulated that schools would have to spend the sports funding on improving their provision of PE and sport, but they would have the freedom to choose how they do this.

Possible uses for the funding included:

- Hiring specialist PE teachers or qualified sports coaches to work alongside primary teachers when teaching PE;
- New or additional Change4Life sport clubs;
- Paying for professional development opportunities in PE/sport;
- Providing cover to release primary teachers for professional development in PE/sport;
- Running sport competitions, or increasing participation in the school games;
- Buying quality assured professional development modules or materials for PE/sport;
- Providing places for pupils on after school sport clubs and holiday clubs.

It was estimated that Halton would receive £455,000 for its primary schools.

Meeting ended at 6.55 p.m.