

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Monday, 17 March 2014 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present:

J. Rigby, Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy (Chairman)
E. Cargill, Primary School Governor Representative
S. Clough, Children & Enterprise
J. Coughlan, Primary School Representative
D. Stanley, All Through School Representative
S. Broxton, Primary Representative
A. Jones, Democratic Services
M. Constantine, Special Schools Representative
L. Feakes, School with Nursery Unit
A. Jones, Financial Services
R. Collings, Primary Representative - Infant School
K. Landrum, Primary Representative - VA School
A. Brown, Nursery Schools Representative
N. Unsworth, Financial Services
J. Berry, Early Years PVI Sector
M. West, Policy, Provision & Performance
G. Monument, Education Funding Agency (Observer)
I. Hodkinson – Part (SCF42)
M. Musson – Part (SCF45)
D. Airey – Part (SCF45)

Action

SCF37 APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Ann McIntyre, Dianne Moran, Jamie Jardine and Andrew Keeley.

The Chairman welcomed new Forum member Jill Berry, representative for Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector.

Also Gavin Monument from the Education Funding Agency was introduced as an observer for today's meeting.

SCF38 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record subject to amending the time from 7.43 pm to 6.43 pm.

SCF 35 – Development of a School Family Support Service – this was progressing however an update would be sought regarding its status.

Ann McIntyre

SCF39 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Chairman advised the Forum that currently there was a vacancy for a secondary representative, recruitment for this had commenced. Also the requirement to have representation from the 14-19 category was removed and would be replaced with a representative from providers of 16-19 education. Simon Clough therefore would be replaced with a representative of Post 16 providers.

SCF40 ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

A report was presented to the Forum which provided an update on the implementation of the High Needs Students Assessment Framework for 2013/14 and revisions proposed for 2014/15. The *High Need Students Assessment Framework for 2014-15* document was appended to the report for reference.

The Forum was reminded that in April 2013 Halton Borough Council introduced the High Needs Students Assessment Framework in response to each local authority becoming responsible for managing the funding for education support for high needs students aged 0-25. Through the post 16 element of the Assessment Framework a total of 91 applications were received for high needs funding for Post 16 students from colleges and Independent Specialist Providers. These were processed through an assessment panel in summer 2013 and a total of 74 applications were approved. It was noted that contracts were in place for each of the 74 placements and the success of placements was being reviewed through monitoring arrangements.

It was reported that in reviewing the High Needs Students Assessment Framework for 2013/14 feedback was sought from the applicants ie, Future Education Colleges and Independent Specialist Providers, and from Panel Members. Based on this feedback, changes had been made to reduce and focus the evidence requirements for new applications and for continuing learners to documentation most beneficial in assessing the suitability of the placement and costs associated. Changes had also been made to the finance documentation, which asked applicants to breakdown the cost of the placement further, which would be useful when making future comparisons between costs in institutions.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum approves the High Needs Students Assessment Framework for 2014-15.

SCF41 HIGH NEEDS TOP UP FUNDING

The Forum received the Top-Up Funding Rates for 2014-15 which were appended to the report in table format at Appendices A and B, for the following:

- Special Schools;
- Resource Bases
- Resource Base Service Level Agreements;
- The Pupil Referral Unit;
- Enhanced Provision Funding; and
- High Needs Block Funding

Officers also tabled the '*Special Unit Top-up Values*' and a '*Summary of Special School Funding 2014-15*', and provided an explanation of the figures.

Resulting from debate on the Secondary Special Unit Top-up Values relating to The Grange, it was commented that the recommendations on the report were wrong, as the Forum was not required to make a decision on this item. Therefore they should be reworded to reflect that the reports presented are 'noted' by members, not 'agreed'.

It was noted that advice would be sought from Ann McIntyre when she returns regarding the allocations of funding. In the meantime members were happy to note the high needs top up funding.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum note the report and

1. note the top up funding levels; and
2. note the SLA Funding levels.

SCF42 FAIRFIELD PRIMARY UPDATE

The Forum received a request for financial support for the expansion of Fairfield Junior School to include infant aged children.

The Headteacher, Irene Hodkinson, presented a statement which outlined the requirements of Fairfield Primary School in order to further support the successful merger of the former two Schools, Fairfield Infant School and Fairfield Junior School, currently with two different identities.

She advised that the conversion date of the Schools to a Primary School was 1 January 2014. This date, which

was part way through the academic and financial year, had meant that preparations had to take place after the actual conversion instead of beforehand. Two transition days had been given to enable staff to work together without children being present at the School and financial out lay had already taken place. It was commented that although some actions had taken place, other actions were needed to enable the smooth transition for the staff and children in the new School; these were listed in the statement and explained to the Forum.

The Headteacher then put forward her proposals and objectives in relation to the required actions as discussed in the report.

The Forum debated the request for funding, taking into consideration the information before them and information supplied by the Headteacher. It was agreed that due to the fact that Fairfield Primary was now one school, the loss of the £125,000 lump sum would be offset by the staff savings it would experience. The request for funding was therefore refused.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum agree that the request for funding from Fairfield Primary School be refused.

SCF43 FREE SCHOOLS MEALS

Anne Jones advised the Forum that the most recent information regarding Free School Meals (FSM) was now on the Department for Education Website.

In summary she advised that an amount of £2.30 was allocated per meal for newly eligible take ups of FSM. Schools would be notified of their provisional allocation in June 2014 and the first payment would be made at the end of June for Maintained Schools and early July for academies. This payment would fund the Autumn 2014 and Spring Term 2015 terms and would be based on the January 2014 census with an assumption that take up would be 87% of the newly eligible pupils. Schools with fewer than 150 pupils would get transitional funding for 2014/15 only as a lump sum.

It was noted that if pupils were entitled to FSM they would not have to apply as they would be picked up when benefits were applied for by the parents.

More information would be provided at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

SCF44 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2014-15

It was reported that in December 2013 the DfE announced the schools capital grant allocations for 2014-15. A summary was provided to The Forum of the capital programmes for 2014-15, for the Children and Enterprise Directorate. Information relating to the funding received was provided in the report in paragraph (3.1). The Capital Repairs Programme 2014-15 was appended at Appendix A.

The report also presented information relating to:

- Capital Maintenance and Capital Expenditure Revenue Account Funding;
- Basic Need Capital Funding;
- Halebank Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School; and
- Universal Infant Free School Meals (Appendix 2).

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum note:

1. the capital funding available for 2014-15;
2. the position in respect of Basic Need;
3. the proposals to be funded from Universal Infant Free School Meals capital;
4. the proposals to be funded from Capital Maintenance and Capital Expenditure Revenue Account;
5. the proposals for the Halebank Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School; and
6. that full Council would be required to approve the Capital Programme for 2014-15.

SCF45 LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

The Forum was requested to consider the continuation of the provision from Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC) and Edufocus the provision of Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC), Visits and Outdoor Education advice and guidance to Halton schools, and for Halton Schools Forum to make a decision about funding this provision from April 2014.

The Forum was advised that learning outside the classroom and off-site activities provided a valuable opportunity for pupils and young people to encounter experiences that were not available to them in the classroom. They were an opportunity to extend the learning

of all pupils and could enable young people to learn through new experiences and develop their initiative and independence, and enrich their understanding of themselves, others and the world around them. They could also be a catalyst for positive engagement in education, improved personal performance, and promote a lifetime interest; and in some cases lead to professional fulfilment.

It was noted that for the past 5 years Halton had engaged the services provided by CWaC Quality Learning Partnership Outdoor Education Adviser (QLP OEA) and Edufocus to manage the risks associated with LOtC activities and to operate within the requirements of legal frameworks governing the health, safety and welfare of employees and pupils/young people in the context of LOtC, educational visits and outdoor education. Last year the service supported 95,430 Halton pupils taking part in 4632 visits.

The Forum agreed that the combined service provided by CWaC and Edufocus provided outstanding support for LOtC, offered good value for money and delivered the service in a cost effective way. The Forum agreed to support the provision of the LOtC Service as requested.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum supports the provision of the LOtC Service provided by CWaC at a cost of £41,371 for 2014/2015 and £6,437 for Edufocus for the period 17 December 2014 to 31 March 2016.

SCF46 SCHOOLS AND EARLY YEARS FINANCE REGULATIONS 2014-15

The Forum received an update on the new features in the school and early years finance regulations 2013 and the DSG conditions 2014-15.

It was reported that the Education Funding Agency (EFA) issued the summary of new features in the Schools Finance (England) regulations 2013 and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) conditions of grant for the financial year 2014-15, a summary of this was attached with the report.

Members were drawn to the following new feature in the Schools Finance Regulations 2014-15:

Regulation 3 – included an amendment to the Schools Forum Regulations 2012 to require the election of a representative of providers of 16 to 19 education to the

Schools Forum, and to remove the inclusion of a representative of the local authority's 14 to 19 partnership of the Forum. Eligible institutions were those in the further education sector and other post school institutions that specialised in Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD) provision, Independent Specialist Providers, where 20 % or more of their students resided in the authority's area.

It was noted that this change came into force on 1 January 2014.

RESOLVED: That the report and summary be noted.

SCF47 EARLY YEARS FUNDING 2014-15

Schools Forum was advised of the proposals for Early Years Funding for 2014-15.

Officers proposed that for Nursery Schools and Units, the funding factors stayed the same – namely Basic per Pupil, Deprivation (using IDACI), Lump Sum and LA Rates (for nursery schools only). It was noted that since the publication of the report calculations had been made to ascertain the cash values of the funding factors which were tabled at the meeting.

The proposal for Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Sector Providers was also not to change the funding factors used – so to keep Basic per Pupil, Deprivation (IDACI) and LA Rates. Details of the cash values had now been calculated and were presented on the above document that was tabled.

The Forum queried on whether there was a funding factor for low level SEN funding for PVI Nursery Schools. Anita Parkinson would be contacted in this regard.

Anne Jones

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum:

1. notes the report;
2. agrees the funding formula for Maintained Early Years settings; and
3. agrees the funding formula for the PVI settings.

SCF48 FUNDING UPDATE

The Forum was advised that consultation was ongoing regarding the National Fair Funding Formula for 2015 – 2016 onwards. It was noted that there was no

obligation for the Council to change its funding levels.

Finance staff would be attending a national conference on 4 June 2014 and would report back at the next meeting.

The Education Funding Agency announced last week £350m of additional funding for 62 Local Authorities whose Guaranteed Unit of funding fell below that required for the average funding levels of the 2014-15 formula. Unfortunately Halton was not one of these authorities and no additional funding was due.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

Meeting ended at 5.40 p.m.