

## SCHOOLS FORUM

25 MARCH 2014

Present: Head Teacher Representatives: Isabel Cooke, Richard Pilgrim, Helen McHale, Gill Cocklin, Alison Penny, Nick Stevens, Stuart Muir, Nathen Aspinell, Eileen Hinds.

Governor Representatives: Phyllis James.

Non- School Representatives: Gina Kendall, Gillian May, Viv Robinson.

Officers: Alison Alexander, Edmund Bradley, David Scott, Simon McKenzie and David Cook.

### **PART I**

#### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Dan Jacoby, Cynthia Pitteway and Heidi Swidenback.

#### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

#### MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2013 were agreed as a correct record with the addition of Isabel Cooke and Stuart Muir both being present.

#### EARLY HELP AND SOCIAL CARE – PLANS FOR 2014-15

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that he had agreed to take Agenda Item 08 at the start of the meeting. The Panel were informed that the Forum had agreed to allocate funds towards Early Help social workers and this was the first progress report.

Simon McKenzie, Early Help and First Response Service Leader, informed the Forum that a task and finish group has been set up to determine the core functions of the proposed three Early Help social workers. The group would be responsible for overseeing the development of the job accountabilities as well as monitoring and reviewing progress.

The group included a head teachers from infant, junior and primary schools and two secondary schools so there is representation across all age ranges. And it was proposed to bring back a further update to the Forum in 9 months time.

**RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum agreed that the Task and Finish group lead in developing the three Early Help Social Work positions and that receive a progress report in nine months time.**

## HIGH NEEDS FUNDING 2014-15

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that officers were expecting the final DSG High Needs funding allocation for 2014-15 by the end of March 2014.

The Forum were informed that at their January 2014 meeting they were told that the projected expenditure on high needs was £15.650 million this was greater than the previous estimate by £0.756 million. The forum were informed that an increased responsibility for post 16 pupils in FE colleges and specialist units was an additional responsibility added to this years funding.

With regards to Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provision the Forum were informed that there would be continued allocation to PRUs and a report on the future of the units would be brought to a future meeting. Members were also informed that the profile of needs at Manor Green School had increased over the last few years and that it was expected that the take up would be greater than the funded 200 places.

The forum were informed that the arrangements for funding resource units in mainstream schools remained comparable with 2013/14 funding, however the count would be based on actual pupil numbers using the resource and not the number of available places.

The report also contained a list of central support services provided in 2014/15 for SEN. In response to questions the forum were informed that £58k for occupational therapy had been added to the list as this would now be funded by the DSG and that there had been a reduction in funding for Sensory Consortium to reflect income that had not previously been added to the budget line.

**RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the report.**

## EARLY YEARS FUNDING 2014-15

The Schools Forum were informed that early years funding formula and rate for hourly rates for two, three and four year olds would remain the same as 2013/14 and that they would be reviewed prior to the 2015/16 allocation.

A small working group would be established, with representatives from the Schools Forum, and would review this idea. The group would review hourly rates and demographical data. A paper will be presented to the Schools Forum in October 2014 and therefore to dlt in September 2014.

## UNIVERSAL INFANT FREE MEALS

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that the report before them summarised the guidance for arrangements for the funding of the Universal Infant Schools Meals. The report highlighted indicative allocations for 2014/15.

During discussion on the item the Forum a number of points were raised; in particular:

- Children who were currently eligible for free school meals would continue to receive meals, however it was important that parents reported the child's eligibility for the school to receive its pupil premium.
- Officers and Schools needed to be proactive in identifying children who would qualify for free school meals and encourage them to register.
- The LEA could see if it was possible to identify children's eligibility via the Department of Work and Pensions.
- The LEA would also look at those families who received Council Tax benefits to identify eligibility.
- There would be transitional funding for small schools; schools with less than 150 pupils. A school could go over this figure if they had nursery places.
- Clarification would be sought as to why school meal providers were informing some schools that the school would have to employ additional staff to handle the increase workload.
- Some small schools did not have kitchens and were reliant on the support of larger neighbouring schools; this support would be stretched with universal free meals.

**RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the report.**

#### CENTRAL FUNDING FOR PLANNED SCHOOL EXPANSIONS

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that the report provided information on arrangements for allocating additional funding for schools that were part of the boroughs expansion programme.

The forum were informed that the planned pupil growth funding was held centrally and was allocated outside the funding formula to cover the cost of additional classes where the pupil had not been on the October census. It was noted that the Forum had previously agreed the arrangements for funding planned pupil number growth that was attached to the report as appendix A. Under these arrangements, schools with temporary bulge classes were funded on a one year basis, whilst permanent increases in a school's admission number attracted funding longer term. This approach was unlikely to be financially sustainable given the rate of growth in primary pupil numbers. It was suggested that a working party should look at alternative 'growth fund' allocation models for implementation in 2015-16.

It was also noted that growth funding would only be available to schools where they could demonstrate a need for places, if a free school opened in an area where there was no need funding would not be available.

**RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the report.**

#### DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum noted the future meeting dates of:

- 20 May 2014 – 2.30pm.

- 9 July 2014 – 2.30pm.
- 22 October 2014 – 2.30pm.
- 10 December 2014 – 2.30pm.
- 14 January 2015 – 2.30pm.
- 25 March 2015 – 2.30pm

## MEETING

The meeting, which opened at 2.30pm, ended at 3.55pm.