

SCHOOLS FORUM

28 JANUARY 2015

Present: Head Teacher Representatives: Isabel Cooke, Richard Pilgrim (Chairman), Heidi Swidenbank, Gill Cocklin, Alison Penny, Nick Stevens (Vice-Chairman), Heather Clapp and Martin Tinsley.

Governor Representatives: Dan Jacoby and Phyllis James.

Non- School Representatives: Gina Kendall and Gillian May.

Officers: Edmund Bradley, David Scott, Allison Bradshaw, Simon McKenzie and David Cook.

PART I

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Alison Alexander, Helen McHale, Nathen Aspinall and Stuart Muir.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2014 were signed as a true and correct record.

Clarification was given that under De-Delegated Arrangements 2015-16 the contingency fund for exceptional unforeseen costs it had been resolved that only maintained primary schools had voted to de-delegate at the higher rate of £10.25 per pupil.

With regards to the Forum membership it was noted that there were academy places to be filled and that Gill Cocklin would be retiring at the end of the academic year. The Chairman thanked Gil for the contribution she had made as a member of the School Forum.

REVIEW OF EARLY HELP SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOLS

Simon McKenzie, Early Help and First Response Manager, and Allison Bradshaw Family Support Manager, attended the meeting to provide an update on the progress of the early help social workers in schools.

The Forum were informed that interviews for the social workers had been undertaken with three offers of employment being made, unfortunately one candidate declined the position a week before they were due to start. The remaining two social workers were in place and an advert for the remaining position had been placed. The positions had been branded as early help providers at the request of schools.

The service specification had been agreed with a role linking schools with social care to show what was available as part of the early intervention package. Implementation was being phased and was currently open to 20 schools, this would be increased to all borough schools once the third social worker was appointed.

A steering group had been established and contained six head teachers. The main focus of the group would be to develop and monitor the service, ensure that resources were used effectively, promote awareness of the new service to schools and act as a critical friend. The steering group had also helped develop the service specification.

The Forum were given examples of the work undertaken under phase one and this included, schools being able to directly contact Social Worker for support and advice when required, termly consultations being offered, there had been some direct work with families, systems had been developed to record work and assess impact of intervention and work had been undertaken to identify need within schools.

During discussion on this item a number of points were made in particular;

- Concern was raised that Ascot was not being supported, the Forum were informed that dedicated support would be provided when the third social worker was recruited.
- If future funding of the project was transferred to service level agreements there would be the risk that the service would become less viable.
- When evaluating the success of the service it would be beneficial to put it into the context of all services offered regarding early intervention.
- The social workers were on permanent contracts, if the funding for this project was not continued in the future the social workers would be offered roles currently filled by agency staff.
- It was suggested that the project should be run on a trial basis for a few schools to assess its impact and future viability. The forum were informed that it had been decided to roll out the support to all schools to assess its impact, however if requested this could be reduced.
- The social workers roles were very specific and they would not be used to cover work in other parts of the authority.
- Heidi Swidenbank said that Cox Green would be happy to provide information for the feedback report.
- If the Schools Forum agreed to fund the project beyond October 2015 to further assess impact then this could be done from DSG reserves.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the presentation and receive an impact assessment at its October 2015 meeting.

ALTERNATIVE PROVISION IN RBWM

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that this was a discussion item on the report presented to RBWM Cabinet meeting on 17th December 2014.

Heather Clapp, Pupil Referral Representative, informed the Forum that she had been appointed by the authority as the strategic lead for alternative provision.

The vision was to decrease the need to permanently exclude pupils with exclusion only being used as a last resort. Part of the work would be linked to early intervention to help prevent problems outside of school, such as issues at home, leading to problems at school and thus possible exclusion.

As there was no longer a physical Pupil Referral Unit any student whose behaviour was causing difficulties in school that required a short term placement the student could be placed at The Green Room (commissioned places), Haybrook College and other alternative provision settings (spot purchased). Additionally RISE offered advice and support for managed moves and for pupils at risk of exclusion.

With regards to staffing the Forum were informed that there was a full time RISE lead to work on placements and liaise with schools, there was a capacity issue but funding had been secured for another member of staff. There were also two RISE administrative staff (1.4 equivalent) and 0.4 work experience co-ordinator. The authority was looking to recruit an Education Access Officer.

In response to questions the Forum was informed that if a school needed additional funding for an alternative provision placement, that a request would need to be made to the Vulnerable Children and Young People Access (VCYP) Panel to agree additional top up funding. The process of managed moves was under review to see how greater flexibility could be introduced and although the offer today was better than 12 months ago there was still progress to be made.

The Forum was informed that managed moves would be co-ordinated via the RISE team and information on the procedures had been circulated to the cluster groups.

Heather Clapp informed the Forum that £2k would be devolved to schools willing to take a managed move for the specific purpose of supporting the pupil and, hopefully, securing a successful outcome. If a child / young person is found to have additional learning needs then the school could apply for further top up funding with specific evidence.

Where a child is permanently excluded there would be a re-charge to the school with the funds held centrally so the admitting schools budget could be adjusted accordingly. An individual funding agreement (IFA) would be drawn up between the referring school and RISE.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the update and agree the three recommendations in the report:

- **To allocate £2k to schools for each managed move to provide additional support.**
- **To deduct from schools budgets the pupil led funding relating to any permanently excluded pupils and to allocate the relevant funding to schools which take a pupil following a permanent exclusion**
- **Where additional funding has been agreed by the Vulnerable Children Young Persons Access Panel, to draw up Individual Funding Agreement between the referring school and RISE/ the Alternative Provision setting to identify the contribution to be made by the referring school and the top-up funding allocated to the provision.**

2015-16 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT SETTLEMENT

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that the report provided information on RBWM's 2015-16 indicative DSG settlement. The indicative schools block allocation was confirmed as £81.307m which was an increase of 5% in cash terms compared to the previous year. The increase was due to the two new free schools add to the allocation, an increase in RBWM's SBUF and an increase in pupil numbers.

With regards to the early years block the Forum were informed that funding would be based on January 2015 pupil numbers and adjusted for January 2016 number. The adjustment to RBWM's Early Years Block allocation for January 2015 early years pupils would be made in June. The 2015-16 early years funding formula rates were remaining the same as in 2014-15 so early years providers would be able to estimate funding based on current knowledge of pupil numbers. Indicative 2015-16 budgets would be sent out in March, with adjustments for actual uptake three times a year, as now..

It was noted that even though the population was increasing the 3 and 4 year olds the estimate of January 2015 pupil numbers based on autumn term figures was a reduction of 60. The Forum were informed that the autumn terms pupil numbers were not a reliable indicator of January numbers because pupils numbers varied between each term. , However any reduction in grant because of fewer pupil numbers would be matched by a corresponding reduction in the budget required by providers to deliver the free entitlement.

With regards to the high needs block although there had been additional funding of £134k for 2015/16 this would not be sufficient to cover the expected increased use of Manor Green and Forest Bridge. There was some flexibility in high needs funding and a report would be brought to the March meeting on how each of the funding blocks would be allocated across expenditure budgets.

Page 13 of the report showed a list of agencies that the DFE had agreed to purchase a single national copyright licence for all state funded schools. This meant that schools would no longer need to negotiate individual licenses or pay for them out of their delegated budget.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum note the report.

2015-16 FINALISED SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA

Richard Pilgrim, Chairman of the Schools Forum, informed the Forum that the report provided details of the RBWM 4-16 school funding formula for 2015-16 that had been submitted to the Education Funding Agency on 20th January 2015. The formula allocations were based on the October 2014 pupil data. The key points were found on page 17 of the agenda with the Chairman highlighting the following two:

- As a result of the additional funding allocated through the formula, only eight schools now receive funding protection through Minimum Funding Guarantee compared with 21 schools in 2014-15. The cost of protection has reduced by £359k, from £565k to £206k.

- As MFG protection is funded by gaining schools, this reduction in MFG means that schools which gain under the formula now keep more of their gain than previously. In 2014-15 gaining schools saw their gain capped at 2.32% per pupil. In 2015-16 the cap has increased to 6.12%.

RESOLVED: That: The Schools Forum note the final 2015-16 funding formula allocations and the individual school budget shares as set out in the report.

USE OF SCHOOL CONTINGENCY FUND

David Scott, Head of Education, Strategy & Commissioning, informed the Forum that page 20 of the agenda showed analysis of contingency claims.

In response to questions the Forum were informed that they had agreed that additional costs of suspended teachers would be covered by the contingency fund and expenditure may be high pending any police investigation. It was agreed that policies approved by the Forum would be brought to a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That: The Schools Forum note the use of the contingency fund.

DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT RESERVES

David Scott, Head of Education, Strategy & Commissioning, informed the Forum that he had been asked to look at how the schools forum can utilise the £600k held in reserves and get the money back into schools.

It was recommended that a report be brought back to the Forum detailing how the money can be used within the regulations. David Scott recommended that the money could be used to support schools that were inadequate or requiring improvement. When schools fell into this category there was a negative impact on pupil numbers therefore the LA would like a local policy to support them.

The Forum recommended that the report also contained options for re-allocation of reserves back to schools, support for school nursing and support for children with mental health issues.

RESOLVED: That: The Schools Forum note the update.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum noted the future meeting dates of:

- 25 March 2015 – 2.30pm

It was agreed that when appropriate a report would be brought back to a future meeting detailing the outcomes of projects that have been funded by the Forum.

MEETING

The meeting, which opened at 2.30pm, ended at 5.00pm.