

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2016

PRESENT: Head Teacher Representatives: Isabel Cooke, Richard Pilgrim (Chairman), Heidi Swidenbank, Helen McHale, Nick Stevens (Vice-Chairman), Stuart Muir, Joolz Scarlett, Tony Dickens, Mike Wallace and Martin Tinsley.

Governor Representatives: Hugh Boulter and Jo Haswell.

Non- School Representatives: Gina Kendall and Anne Entwistle.

Also in attendance: Councillor Richard Kellaway and Councillor MJ Saunders.

Officers: Alison Alexander, Kevin McDaniels, David Cook and for item 4 Debbie Verity and Geoff King.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Alison Penny, Chris Tomes and Amanda Hough.

The Chairman informed that an urgent and confidential item had been added to the meeting agenda as a part II item.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2016 were approved as true and correct record subject to 'in October 2014' being added to page 7 for the Growth Fund discussion and Heidi Swidenbank replacing Heidi Swindenbank on page 9.

The Chairman informed that at the last meeting communication of decisions made by the Forum had been raised as an issue and requested that Forum members inform schools in their sector of decisions made as well as the LEA.

RBWM CONSULTATION ON HIGH NEEDS FUNDING

The Forum considered the report that proposed that the schools forum agreed to a period of consultation, leading to a revised process for allocating High Needs Funding to support Children and Young People eligible for an education, health and care (EHC) plan or statement of special educational needs.

Debbie Verity and Geoff King attended the meeting to present the report to the Forum.

The Forum were informed that process only applied to high needs pupils in mainstream schools or colleges and did not apply to high needs pupils in resource provision / units or special schools.

The Forum were informed that 1.4 of the report showed comparative spend on high needs block with other authorities, however as this was misleading additional information was circulated that showed the percentage of spend per SEN pupil. This additional information showed that RBWMs spend was comparatively high when looking at the percentage of DSG

spent. It was questioned why RBWM spend had not increased as much as other authorities and the Forum were informed that RBWM was still spending more when compared with our statistical neighbours.

It is proposed that, once evidence had been received that a pupil met the criteria for statutory assessment, a funding matrix would be used to assess the level of High Needs top-up funding that will be made available. The matrix would consist of the main categories of need as identified in the Code of Practice 2014 and in use by other authorities. The proposed matrix shown to the Forum was a starting point and could be changed / reviewed as required. Figure 2 of the report showed the proposed example matrix that would be used when consulting on the methodology.

The Forum were informed that the level of funding would not be decreased by the proposed process it was about how the level of funding was distributed. It was noted that the consultation was about the system and not the funding.

In response to questions from the Chairman the Forum were informed that the consultation would take place over the autumn term with the results and proposals coming back to the Forum on December 2016 with implementation in April 2017.

The Chairman mentioned that the following issues may arise from the consultation:

- Who would populate the matrix.
- What level of expertise would those have forming the matrix.
- Moderation and scrutiny.
- Staff planning.
- Existing pupils; what process for transferring existing pupils to the matrix.

The Forum were informed that it was assumed that there would be a transitional period with the use of the matrix being for new assessments and used on existing statements when they were reviewed.

In response to questions the Forum were informed that the consultation would be with as many stakeholders as possible including parents; however the overriding say would be with the schools.

Anne Entwistle questioned what would happen with child transfers and mentioned that we needed to be mindful of the FE sector. She also mentioned that the report did not mention requests for increases in place funding to support the additional high needs students on roll at BCA and that the BCA currently had a funding gap. In response the Forum were informed that it was the responsibility of the local authority placing the pupil to pay the top-up and with regards to the BCA funding gap this would be reviewed via the annual place number funding and commissioning process.

It was questioned what the timetable was for consultation and concern was raised that it would be taking place during half term and thus give the impression that it was being hidden. The forum were informed that it would be going to all schools and colleges and certain parents during half term.

Resolved unanimously: that the Schools Forum agrees to a period of consultation on proposals for a revised methodology to distribute High Needs top-up funding to mainstream schools

2016-17 FINALISED DSG SETTLEMENT AND GUARANTEED 2017-18 DSG FUNDING.

The Forum were informed that the report being considered was split into two parts. The first summarised changes in RBWM's 2016-17 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation as a result of the finalised settlement announced by the Education Funding Agency in July 2016; the impact on planned expenditure in 2016-17, and on the distribution of funding between the Early Years, Schools, and High Needs blocks.

The second part of the report summarised the changes to school funding arrangements for 2017-18 and RBWM's indicative 2017-18 DSG allocation.

The Forum were informed that there was an increase of £123k on the DSG settlement announced in December 2015, as reported to Schools Forum in March 2016. This increase was mainly due to an increase of 31 FTE three and four year olds compared with Jan 2015.

The Forum noted that the funding arrangements for 2017 to 2018 would remain broadly similar to last year, as the DfE had announced that implementation of the national funding formula would be put back to 2018-19. LAs' 2017-18 allocations for the schools block and high needs block would be based on adjusted baselines reflecting LAs' pattern of planned spend in 2016-17 rather than how government previously allocated funding.

On page 25 of the report table 4 showed the calculation of the 2016/17 adjusted baseline to be used for the indicative 2017-18 allocations, including the transfer of £315k Education Services Grant (ESG) retained duties funding in to the schools block DSG and the transfer of £492k of place funding from the EFA's post 16 budget into the high needs block for high needs places in further education (FE) colleges.

The Forum were informed that RBWM's schools block guaranteed unit of funding for 2017-18, £4,421.73 was £34 per pupil less than in 2016-17 due to the amount of schools block funding that had been transferred into the high needs baseline.

With regards to the education services grant general funding rate the Forum were informed that the grant would cease in September 2017 as planned. This grant is currently paid to LAs for its maintained pupils and separately to academies, at the rate of £77 per pupil.

As well as delegated and central schools block expenditure, schools block funding in 2017/18 would now include £315k previously paid to the Council as the retained duties element of the education services grant to support statutory services provided centrally on behalf of all schools. This was a transfer of funding from the LA to the Schools Block, not additional funding and the Forum were asked to approve the retention of £315k in the 2017-18 schools block central expenditure budget to continue to support the provision of the statutory services.

Resolved Unanimously: that the Schools Forum approved the retention of £315k in 2017-18 for the statutory services set out in paragraph 5.9 previously funded by the retained duties element of the Education Services Grant.

The Schools Forum were also asked to comment on and give an in principle agreement to:

- Leave the 2017-18 local school funding formula unchanged from 2016-17 in light of the turbulence expected in 2018-19 when the national funding formula would be implemented
- Use the 2017-18 basic per pupil entitlement rates across all key stages to balance the schools budget if pupil numbers turn out differently from the estimate.
- Retain maintained schools DSG funding in 2017-18 at the rate of £11 per pupil and to seek voluntary contributions from Academy schools at a similar level, to part fund school improvement / governor services currently funded by the Education Services Grant general funding grant that is ceasing in Sep 2017

The additional £11 per pupil contribution was being asked for as there had been a reduction in funding to the LEA but there had been no reduction in statutory duties.

(Alison Alexander joined the meeting)

Mike Wallace questioned what the impact would be if the Forum refused the request for £11 per pupil and was informed that if additional funding for the services could not be found then the continued delivery at current levels of services such as school improvement would need to be reviewed.

Nick Stevens mentioned that there was a perception that school improvement services were already under resourced and was informed that there were fewer directly employed officers in this area.

Clarification was sought regarding getting funding from academy schools and the forum were informed that they would be written to and asked to contribute. The LA currently provided improvement support to all schools; however if academies say no to this proposal then this offer would have to be reviewed.

Mike Wallace said he would like to get the views of academies on this proposal before the Forum make a decision as if they said no this would change the proposition.

Isabel Cooke and Heidi Sweindenbank both felt that academies would not support this proposition.

Resolved unanimously: that the Schools Forum note the report.

DFE'S EARLY YEARS NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA PROPOSALS

The Forum considered the information report regarding the DfE's proposals for an early years national funding formula and RBWM's illustrative 2017-18 early years DSG allocation. A further report would be brought back to the Forum in December 2016 regarding what early years funding would look like.

The Forum were reminded that from September 2017 working parents would be entitled to 30 hours of free childcare and that the rates paid to providers by LA had to be reviewed.

The EFA's intention is to increase funding rates at the local level to incentivise delivery of the additional hours for working parents. . This would mean that the average national hourly funding rate would increase from £4.56 to £4.88 for 3 and 4 year olds. RBWM's provisional funding rate, (the rate used to calculate RBWM's allocation of funding from the EFA), would be £5.00 per hour, an increase of £0.61 per hour from the current funding rate of £4.39.

The Forum were informed that the proposed increase in RBWM's funding rate for 3 and 4 year olds resulted in a provision 2017-18 allocation of £7.647m, for the free entitlement, an increase of £0.927m on the 2016-17 baseline. In addition, a provisional amount of £1.2m would be allocated for the additional hours for working parents covering the period September 2017 to March 2018. . Table 2 of the report gave a summary of the changes in funding.

With regards to disabled or SEN children the Forum were informed that there would be a ringfenced Targeted Early Years Disability Access Funding to support access for disabled and SEN children. This would be paid to all providers for each child in receipt of Disability Living Allowance taking up a place in their setting. In addition, LAs would be required to earmark an early years inclusion fund enabling providers to access funding for SEND children more easily.

(Cllr Kellaway left the meeting)

Resolved unanimously: that the Forum note the update and that a working group be established.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The meeting, which began at 2.30 pm, finished at 5.05 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....