

## **SCHOOLS FORUM**

**TUESDAY, 29 APRIL 2008**

PRESENT: -

**School Members:** Nick Capstick, Primary Headteachers  
Lauren Connor, Primary Headteachers (**Chair**)  
Chris Davies, Primary Headteachers  
Debbie Kalynka, Primary Headteachers  
Terri Menham, Primary Headteacher  
Paul Boyles, Primary Governor (**Vice Chair**)  
David Easter, Primary Governor  
Steve Flavin, Secondary Headteacher  
Rachael Matthey, Secondary Headteacher

**Non-School Members:** Sally Inskip, Diocese Representative  
Phil Baker, Trade Union Representative  
Debbie Waldron, Early Years Representative  
Jan Downey, 14-19 Partnership

**Officers:** Ian Bickerton (Director of Access and Provision), Martin Coles (Director Quality and Standards), Geoff Hogg (Director Services to Children and Young People), Sue Wald (Director Strategy and Commissioning), Karen Murray (Group Finance Manager Children Services), Anne Mackay ((Finance, Children Services), Stuart McKellar (Director of Finance), Mandy Wishart (HR Business Partner), Huw Ford (IT Business Partner)

Apologies for absence were received from Steve Colledge (Secondary Headteacher) and Peter Wells (Secondary Headteacher).

### **32. Minutes**

Resolved – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **33. Feedback from Meeting on 22 January 2008**

Ian Bickerton (Director of Access and Provision) presented a report by the Group Director Children to provide feedback on the recommendations made at the previous meeting.

He informed members that the Local Authority (LA) had initially been informed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) that there was to be a national review of Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks this autumn. Accordingly

a letter had been issued to all head teachers on 1 April advising that it was proposed to wait until this had been completed before further reviewing Swindon's system. However, the DCSF had subsequently informed all LAs that the national review had been delayed by one year. The subject would therefore be considered by the Children Services Leadership Team again at their May meeting to progress the issue.

Karen Murray (Group Finance Manager-Children Services) advised that it was hoped to bring a progress report on the reform of Early Years funding to the next meeting. A sub-group was required, for which Debbie Waldron volunteered and other members were asked to contact Sue Wald (Director of Strategy and Commissioning) direct.

Martin Coles (Director Quality and Standards) stated that there had been a relatively high number of registrations to study for the 14-19 Diploma in September. Details of the funding had now been received from the Department for Children Schools and Families and he confirmed that it would follow the students through their course and would be passed directly to the schools. With regard to the Ethnic Minority Grant, he advised that he had been waiting on further developments before setting up the review group. Progress was now being made so he wished to establish the working group, which was confirmed as Nick Capstick, Steve Flavin and Sally Inskip, as determined at the last meeting.

The Chair referred to the letter tabled by Rachael Matthey (Head, Isambard Community School) at the last meeting and circulated a response from Andrew Fleet (Head, Nova Hreod) for information.

#### **34. Harnessing Technology Grant 2008-11**

Ian Bickerton (Director of Access and Provision) presented a report by the Group Director Children to advise the Forum of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Harnessing Technology Grant 2008-2011 and to seek recommendations on the Local Authority proposal for allocating the funding. Huw Ford from IT attended for this item.

It was noted that the total grant amounted to £1.9 million and the proposal was to initially, retain 25% centrally and devolve the remainder to schools. The proposed allocations were detailed in Appendix A to the report.

Rachael Matthey (Secondary Headteacher) enquired whether schools that had already invested in an appropriate system would be reimbursed and it was agreed that this required further investigation. Reference was also made to the use of 2007 census data as a basis for the grant allocation as the 2008 details were more relevant.

Resolved – That the Director of Access and Provision investigate the possibility of reimbursing those schools that have already purchased an appropriate system and also to calculate the individual schools allocation based on 2008 census data, with the revised details being submitted to the next meeting of the Forum.

### **35. Schools Block Budget Monitoring 2007/8**

The Forum considered a report by the Group Director Children, as presented by Karen Murray (Group Finance Manager - Children Services), on the latest budget monitoring information, to the end of February 2008, in respect of the Schools Budget for 2007/8.

Mrs Murray explained that the Primary Care Trust had now agreed to contribute towards out of Borough placements and this would increase the year-end under spend to about £300K. She suggested that this sum form a reserve against the impact of introducing single status later in the year. Members had concerns about this and it was commented that there was no information available on the financial impact of single status. Mrs Murray agreed to ascertain whether further information was available and advised that the next report would include final year-end figures and definite proposals for any resulting under spend.

Resolved - (1) That the 2007/08 financial projections in respect of the Schools Budget for the current financial year be noted.

(2) That the Group Director, Children continue rigorous and robust monitoring of the Schools Block budget and bring budget monitoring reports to future meetings of Schools Forum.

### **36. School Development Grant 2008-09**

Karen Murray (Group Finance Manager-Children Services) presented a report by the Group Director Children regarding the allocation of the headroom within the schools development grant for 2008/09.

Two options for allocation were detailed in the report and the Chair proposed that members support Option 2, based on the number of pupils on roll, as this most closely followed the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance that the grant be used for any purpose to support improvements in teaching and learning in schools, leading to higher standards of attainment for every learner. Members generally agreed but considered that a better indicator than free school meals eligibility should be looked into as an alternative option for future years.

Resolved – (1) That the Forum recommends to the Local Authority that the surplus headroom within the school development grant 2008/09 be allocated as set out in Option 2 in Appendix A to the report.

(2) That the Forum Sub-Group consider alternative, appropriate indicators or methods for allocating the surplus balance in future years.

### **37. Formula Review 2011-12**

Karen Murray (Group Finance Manager-Children Services) presented a report by the Group Director Children regarding a Government review of the distribution formula for the dedicated schools grant (DSG) 2011/12.

It would be necessary for a sub-group to consider and respond to the consultation and in view of the excellent work undertaken last year, Karen Murray suggested that the same members carried out this task. Those present indicated their willingness to continue, although Sally Inskip commented that it could be an alternative Diocesan representative that attended on occasions. The two members who were not present would be asked if they wished to remain on the sub-group.

Karen Murray also explained that additional resources might be needed to help with the consultation exercise and suggested that the Dedicated Schools Grant underspend of £41k be carried forward to cover any additional expenses.

Resolved – (1) That the Forum Sub-Group membership be Terri Menham, Rachael Matthey, Lauren Connor, Sally Inskip and subject to their agreement, Bob Walker and Steve Colledge, to consider and respond to the consultations.

(2) That the Dedicated Schools Grant underspend of £41k from 2007/08 be carried forward to 2008/09 cover any additional funding required as a result of the review.

### **38. Parent Support Advisers**

The Forum considered a report by the Group Director Children, as presented by Sue Wald (Director of Strategy and Commissioning) regarding proposals for the delivery of Parent Support Advisers.

Ms Wald distributed a revised report with amended recommendations and advised that the Sub-Group had considered the issues and recommended Model 2 as the preferred line of management. Concern was expressed that this was introducing yet another level of bureaucracy but it was stressed that the Advisors would simply bring additional expertise and would be managed through existing systems. It was remarked that there were already some forms of expertise in place and therefore it would be necessary to ensure there was dovetailing of the various services.

Sally Inskip (Diocese) commented that there were great implications for the schools but so far, the clusters had not had a chance to discuss the proposals. There was general support for this idea and it was agreed the outcome of the discussions should be fed back to the Sub-Group before coming back to the Forum.

Resolved – That the proposals for the delivery of Parent Support Advisors be discussed within the school clusters, with the outcomes being referred to the Sub-Group before a further report is submitted to the June meeting of the Forum.

### **39. Draft Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011**

Sue Wald (Director of Strategy and Commissioning) introduced a report concerning the Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011. She explained that the draft Plan had been circulated to schools about six weeks beforehand but it had not yet been finalised and members were invited to comment.

Rachael Matthey (Headteacher) remarked that the data given for north Swindon was very out of date and with other areas of the town also developing, there was a need to ensure the information was kept up to date. Reference was also made to the

increasing ethnic diversity within the town and the impact this had on schools and associated services. It was noted that this would add increasing pressure to the ability to maintain or improve standards within schools.

Resolved – That the report be noted.