

SCHOOLS FORUM

THURSDAY, 16 OCTOBER 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**)
Rachael Mattey, Secondary Headteacher
Peter Wells, Secondary Headteacher
Bob Walker, Special Headteacher
Peter Crockett, Special Headteachers
Kevin Gray, Secondary Governor

Non-School Members: Sally Inskip, Diocese Representative
Phil Baker, Trade Union Representative

Officers: Ian Bickerton (Director Access and Provision), Paddy Bradley (Director Schools and Learning), Sue Wald (Director Strategy and Commissioning), Karen Murray (Group Finance Manager Children Services), Nicki Archer (Deputy Group Finance Manager Schools), Anne English (Principal Human Resources Officer), Carmel Burton (Sure Start Partnership Manager)

Apologies for absence were received from David Easter (Primary Governor), Steve Flavin (Secondary Headteacher), Debbie Waldron (Early Years Representative), Cathy Parker (Early Years Representative (Deputy)) and Jan Downey (14-19 Partnership).

11. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2008, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

12. Feedback from Meeting on 17 June 2008

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

It was commented that CRB checks were still very slow, taking about six weeks to clear. Reference was also made to the possibility of industrial action by the CRB unit, but there was no further information at present.

Frank Knight (Project Manager, Workforce Modernisation) sent his apologies for the meeting but confirmed that he would attend the next one to give an update on Single Status. Should any urgent issues arise in the meantime a special Forum meeting would be arranged.

The Chair provided an update on the recruitment of Parent Support Advisers. Chris Davis (Primary Headteacher) was concerned at the general lack of communication and Sally Inskip (Diocesan Representative) commented that clusters met infrequently and she felt that the process was being rushed.

Members noted that the item on place funding for education other than in school would be on the January agenda.

13. Schools Block Budget Monitoring

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 August 2008 in respect of the Schools Block Budget for 2008/09.

Of particular concern was the £238k projected overspend by the Special Educational Needs Allocation Resource Panel (SENRAP). Paddy Bradley (Director Schools and Learning) advised that one of the main contributory factors was the specific, complex needs that had to be addressed. He stated that funding was provided as demand required but commented that it may become necessary to move away from that approach.

Bob Walker (Special Headteacher) advised that currently all the special schools were full and although an additional three pupils would trigger extra funding, there was no scope to expand at present. He remarked that when Swindon first took over from Wiltshire County Council the cost for out of Borough placements was much higher than it was now. Mr Bradley stated that he was aware that many other councils were trying to reduce these types of placements and he was working with SENRAP to try and reduce the number.

Nick Capstick (Primary Headteacher) enquired whether any benchmarking against other councils had been carried out and how we compared with the cost of out of borough placements. It was noted that there were no residential schools in the town so the pressures would be different to those of a council that did have residential facilities.

Mrs Murray stated that about half the Challenging Circumstances budget had been distributed and the balance was provisionally allocated to set against the overspend. This could be altered at any time and the overall situation would be continuously monitored, but the main focus was to reduce the overspend.

Resolved – (1) That the 2008/09 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 for 2008/09 and bring budget monitoring reports to future meetings of Schools Forum.

Karen Murray (Group Finance Manager Children Services) presented a report by the Group Director Children regarding the final allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2008/09. It was explained that a small amount of surplus was always anticipated but the final figures for 2008/09 provided an amount of £961k and a proposed allocation was set out in Appendix A.

Members considered each of the proposals and discussed the following specific points:

Item 2, set-up costs for PS7 – the new school would be ready for September 2010 but it would operate in temporary accommodation from September 2009. New furniture and equipment would be required before that date though to ensure it was ready for the new term. Terri Menham (Primary Headteacher) stated that Reception and Year 1 were the most expensive year groups to set-up and an allocation of £70k would be very tight. It was suggested that funding be allocated for two years, 2008/09 and 2009/10, with any surplus being rolled forward to the new school or to East Wichel Primary, which, as an additional new school, would also require set-up funding. The proposal was generally accepted although it was queried why the set-up costs had not been taken into account in the original budget but were only now being addressed. It was suggested that the Sub Group should consider the general principles surrounding the funding for set-up costs to ensure there was consistency in every situation and the implications were fully understood. At present, set-up funding was only available through the DSG for additional schools in growth areas and the Sub Group was therefore asked to consider whether this approach should be extended to new builds where there were predecessor schools, particularly as this had been formally raised with the Authority. The Forum also asked for the Sub Group to come back with a programme for future set up costs that would fall on the DSG.

Item 7, Forest School initiative – Lauren Connor (Chair and Primary Headteacher) explained that she had proposed this item because of the benefits to be gained from the initiative and also to ascertain whether it was an appropriate way to bring an item to the Forum. Members enquired whether the proposed funding was to cover the organiser's post, or to support the training of Forest School Leaders and also raised several queries regarding possible funding for future years. It was agreed that a full report should be submitted to the next meeting and that the sum of £45k would remain unallocated until the subject had been properly examined and decided. It was also agreed that in the future similar issues should be submitted through the Group Director for the Forum's consideration.

Item 8, Swindon Young People's Empowerment Programme – it was noted that this would be an ongoing requirement and Mrs Murray explained that the service provider had been asked to provide a business case for submission to the Forum. In the meantime it was agreed that funding would be provided until March 2010 when it would be reviewed.

Item 10, Health and Safety – members recognised the importance of continuing training or briefing sessions but it was commented that there were different issues relating to PFI schools, so training needed to be specifically tailored to requirements. Ian Bickerton (Director Access and Provision) stated that although there were differences, the basic legislation applied across the board. He explained

that costs for the two planned events could either be met by a charge to the schools or by setting aside funds from the surplus DSG. The second option was preferred and he advised that it would also be helpful to set aside an amount in future years to fund events. It was appreciated that the £20k proposed was only an estimate, but any unused funding would be returned to the budget.

Resolved – (1) That it be noted that items 4, 5, the first part of item 6 (£20k) and the first proposal for item 12 detailed in Appendix A to the report have previously been agreed.

(2) That the allocation of funds, as set out in Appendix A to the report and detailed below, also be agreed:

- Item 1 - £55k
- Item 2 – set-up costs of £70k for two years, 2008/09 and 2009/10.
- Item 3 - £50k
- Item 6 – part 2 - £100k
part 3 - £35k
part 4 - £14k
part 5 - £30k
- Item 8 - £40k – on the understanding that it was fixed until 2010 and would then be reconsidered.
- Item 9 - £80k
- Item 10 - £20k

(3) That the Sub-Group consider and examine the general principles regarding the funding of set-up costs to schools to ensure consistency and that all implications were fully understood and to suggest a programme for future set-up costs that would fall on the Dedicated Schools Grant.

(4) That a report be submitted to the next meeting regarding the Forest Schools initiative to fully explore the funding issues for this and future years.

15. Early Years Flexible Offer

Carmel Burton (Sure Start Partnership Manager) presented a report by the Group Director Children to advise of the progress made in the delivery of the flexible offer for early education. She explained that the report was to address the issues that members had raised at the previous meeting. From September 2009, the increased and more flexible early education provision would be introduced for the 25% of children in the most disadvantaged areas before it became generally available in September 2010. To identify the relevant children for September 2009, it was proposed that the location of the nursery or care provision should be used, as explained in paragraphs 2.12 and 2.13 of the report.

Resolved – That the progress made with the project plan for the delivery of the flexible offer for early education be noted and the selection process for the children to receive additional funding and flexibility in September 2009 be approved.

16. Review of Local Authority Provision for Pupils with Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development 2008/09

This item had been incorporated within item 5 on the agenda Final Dedicated Schools Grant 2008/09 (Minute 14) and therefore no separate decision was made.

17.

Extended Services Funding

Carmel Burton (Sure Start Partnership Manager) presented a report by the Group Director Children to inform the Forum of changes to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance concerning the funding of extended services in academies.

Although the funding arrangements for extended services had been agreed, the DCSF had issued revised guidance in September 2008, which excluded existing academies. As Swindon allocated funding based on clusters, two options were put forward as a way of revising the allocation in line with the new guidance.

Members were concerned that the Academy should not receive double funding and also considered that the other schools within the cluster should be asked for their views on the process.

Resolved – That a report be submitted to the next meeting with further information and proposals to specifically address the concerns referred to above.

18.

Dates of Future Meetings

It was noted that future meetings would be held on 27 January and 21 April 2009.

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Extended Services Funding

Schools' Forum

Date: 15th October 2008

Author: Group Director, Children

Parish / Wards Affected: All

Purpose

- To inform Schools Forum of changes to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance concerning the funding of extended services in academies.

Recommendation

- Schools' Forum is requested to consider the options for incorporating the DCSF revised guidance in the funding methodology for extended services and to decide which model to adopt

1. Reasons

- 1.1 The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) published revised guidance to local authorities in late September 2008.
- 1.2 The revised guidance states that 'The DCSF would not now expect local authorities to include existing academies in their extended schools allocation'.
- 1.3 It goes on to state that 'Up to 2007-2008, Standards Fund grants have generally been payable to academies through local authorities, although some specific grants were already being paid direct to academies by DCSF. From 2008-09, DCSF will pay all specific grants direct to academies which are open before the start of the financial year'.

2. Detail

- 2.1 Currently the funding for Extended Services is allocated to clusters as a lump sum plus an additional allocation based on pupil numbers. Each cluster is allocated a lump sum of 60% of the total budget. The remaining 40% is allocated based on pupil numbers with a weighting for the Special Schools.
- 2.2 This method of funding means that funding is allocated to the Academy cluster using the same methodology for all schools across the cluster. This means that those schools which are part of the academy are funded both through direct funding from the DCSF and through extended services funding.

Extended Services Funding

Schools' Forum

Date: 15th October 2008

- 2.3 The first option would be to continue the funding as now. This would still comply with the guidance as the funding is not specifically for a school but is for a cluster and it is a local decision how that funding is allocated between and within clusters. This would mean that the Academy has two sources of funding for its extended services delivery, its cluster funding based on all pupils within the cluster and its direct DCSF funding.
- 2.4 The other option would be to reduce the funding to the academy cluster. Funding would be recalculated based on revised pupil numbers, which would only include those children within the cluster who do not attend the academy. The lump sum would not be affected as this is paid to all clusters irrespective of pupil numbers. This option would mean that the funding methodology was consistent across all mainstream clusters.
- 2.5 The funding released would then be reallocated across all clusters, including the Academy cluster.

Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications –

The DCSF has allocated a grant of £2,947,945 for the delivery of extended services from 2008 to 2011. Therefore the costs relating to this report will be funded through this grant at no additional cost to the Council.

There are no procurement implications.

Legal / Human Rights Implications – Extended services are at the heart of schools delivery of the Children Act 2004 outcomes for children.

Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises) –

Children are at the heart of the Corporate Plan and the Children & Young People's Plan. The role of schools in the delivery of extended services is emphasised in Promise 45 "We will make sure that schools will be at the heart of each community delivering a range of services to meet the community's need".

Consultees

- The Director of Finance and the Director of Law and Democratic Services are consulted on all reports.

Background Papers and Appendices

None