

# **Schools' Forum**

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

Schools' Forum

29 April 2008

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**Author:** Group Director, Children

**Parish / Wards Affected:** All

### **Purpose**

To provide feedback on the recommendations made at the last meeting of the Schools' Forum on 22 January 2008

### **Recommendation**

The Schools' Forum is requested to note this report.

## **1. Reasons**

- 1.1 The Schools' Forum has requested that feedback is provided at the following meeting on each occasion regarding the outcome of recommendations made by the Forum at its previous meeting.
- 1.2 This report, therefore, provides feedback about recommendations made at the last meeting of the Schools' Forum.

## **2. Detail**

- 2.1 A copy of the notes of the last meeting of the Schools' Forum, on 22 January 2008, is attached to the Agenda.
- 2.2 Feedback on each of the Agenda items considered at the last meeting is as follows:

- Criminal Records Bureau Checks (Minute 22)

At the last meeting of the Schools' Forum, there was discussion around CRB checks and concerns were raised that there were non-statutory requirements within the local arrangements, which could cause delay and extra costs for schools. At the same time, it was stressed that every precaution needed to be taken in such a sensitive area. However, it was agreed that a further review would take place.

The Children Services Leadership Team has since considered the points raised at the last Schools' Forum meeting. It was agreed at that meeting that the issue would be fully reviewed in line with the introduction of the new safeguarding arrangements that are being introduced in the Autumn of this year. It was also agreed that a letter

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Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Ian Bickerton on 01793 465724 or Email [ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:ibickerton@swindon.gov.uk).

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should be sent to all schools to outline the current arrangements and the procedures that can be followed in cases of exceptional circumstances, which allow for an individual to start work whilst awaiting a CRB disclosure. That letter was sent to all Head Teachers in early April.

- Swindon Capita Partnership Services to Schools (Minute 23)

As agreed at the last meeting, the Transformation Team, in conjunction with Capita, will submit an annual overview report on school issues to the Schools' Forum at its first meeting in each academic year and this has now been included on the Forward Plan.

- Schools' Block Budget Monitoring 2007/08 (Minute 24)

A further report on this issue is on the agenda for this meeting.

- Reform of Early Years Funding (Minute 25)

It was agreed at the last meeting that officers would undertake the work required on identifying a common approach to counting Early Years pupils and developing a single, local funding formula. A report on this matter will be brought to the next meeting of the Forum.

- 14-19 Diploma Provision 2008-2011 (Minute 26)

A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

- Schools' Block Budget 2008-2011 (Minute 27)

- (a) *School Development Grant*

A separate report on this matter is included elsewhere on the Agenda.

- (b) *School Lunch Grant*

At the last meeting of the Forum, a distribution proposal for the School Lunch Grant was agreed. However, further guidance was sent to all Local Authorities after the date of that meeting. This required funding to be distributed to those schools that bought in a contractor to provide school lunches. Discussions were subsequently held with the Chair of the Schools' Forum and an alternative funding distribution proposal was sent to all members of the Forum,

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asking for any comments. No responses have been received and it is, therefore, assumed that the Forum is content to agree this distribution method, based on the latest and final DCSF guidance.

(c) *Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant*

As agreed at the last meeting, the Head of Schools & Learning will be establishing a small working group to consider options for the best use of this Grant, with proposals being submitted to the Forum later in the year.

- Schools' Capital Funding 2008-2011 (Minute 28)

A separate report on this matter is included elsewhere on the Agenda.

- School Finance Regulations (Minute 29)

At the last meeting of the Schools' Forum, changes to the membership of the Forum were agreed, based on draft School Finance Regulations.

For the information of the Forum, the School Finance (England) Regulations 2008 have now been published by the DCSF. These Regulations can be found on the Teachernet page:  
[www.teachernet.gov.uk/schoolfundingframework/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/schoolfundingframework/)

In the covering letter from the DCSF, they confirm the Government's decision not to proceed with the proposed redistribution of 5% of schools' surplus revenue balances during this three-year funding period. However, they do stress that balances must be managed and the DCSF will review whether to reconsider the proposal for 2011.

Other key features of the new Regulations are as follows:

Payments of arrears of pay including those that have been capitalised to spread the cost of payment may be met from the schools budget. Where schools are incurring back pay (whether as back pay or as an award in lieu of pay owed) resulting from single status settlements these may be paid from the schools budget even if the local authority has borrowed the funding to pay them as capital.

Local authorities must advise schools in advance of the multi year funding period if they know that they are likely to make any redetermination of budgets within the multi year funding period.

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Changes to the **Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG)** are:

- Calculations for schools with rising rolls now mirror the calculation for schools with falling rolls.
- Funding for pupils in sixth forms in schools will no longer be included within the MFG calculations. Changes to the formula for funding from the LSC will have their own transitional arrangements, and will not in addition be protected by the MFG.
- The MFG has been set at 2.1% per pupil for each of the three years of the funding period for all schools.
- A local authority is able to redetermine the minimum funding guarantee for a school which was not confirmed as closing until after the start of the financial year.
- The **Schools Forum** has been able to approve changes to the operation of the MFG where these affect 20% of schools or less. Regulation 25 alters that limit to changes that will affect 50% of pupils in schools or less.

- Budget (Minute 30)

At the last meeting of the Schools' Forum, Karen Murray informed members that the budget was still subject to approval from the Secretary of State. This approval has now been received.

- ICT Remote Backup (Minute 31)

This has been discussed further with Sally Inskip and is being pursued separately, as it is not specifically within the remit of the Schools' Forum.

### **Alternative Options**

The Schools' Forum requested this report to go to each meeting of the Forum and, therefore, not alternatives have been considered.

#### **Risk Management**

##### *Financial and Procurement Implications*

There are no direct financial considerations for this report but, of course, there are for the individual items referred to above.

##### *Legal / Human Rights Implications*

None directly applicable to this report.

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<p><i>Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)</i> Promise 45: "We will make sure that schools will be at the heart of each community."</p>
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**Consultees**

The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

**Background Papers and Appendices**

None