

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2013

PRESENT: -

School Members: Steve Colledge, Chair - Academy Headteacher
Paul Boyles, Vice-Chair - Academy Governor
David Easter, Primary Governor
Ray Williams, Primary Governor
Rachael Matthey, Secondary Headteacher
Jackie Smith, Special Headteacher
Richard Marshall, PRU
Lynne Fletcher, Academy Headteacher
Nick Capstick, Academy Headteacher
Wendy Conaghan, Academy Headteacher
Andy Hazelton, Academy Governor
Bob Buckley, Swindon Association of Primary Headteachers
Jo Garton – Swindon Association of Primary Headteachers
Julie Tridgell – Swindon Association of Secondary Headteachers

Non-School Members: Andrew Wild, Diocese - Bristol
Ruth Lee - Clifton Diocese
Peter Smith, Trade Unions

Apologies for absence were received from Janet Urban (Primary Headteacher) and Rhian Cockwell (Primary Headteacher).

8. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2013 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

9. 2013/14 DSG Retained Budget Update and Grant Position

The Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, presented a report advising Forum members on the latest projected 2013/14 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) retained budget position and to brief members on the updated 2013/14 DSG settlement position which had been confirmed by the Department of Education in July 2013. Steve Haley, Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, commented on the positive retained budget position as at the end of August 2013 which indicated a projected underspend of £0.373m, although he advised that whilst this information was encouraging, given the volatile nature of the budget, it was too early in the year to conclude that this level of underspend would be achieved by the financial year end.

Steve Haley referred to the 2013/14 DSG settlement update that indicated a reduction of £0.106m which he explained arose from the January 2013 Early Years'

census. In response to a query regarding the implications of the “new post 16 responsibilities”, members were advised that the LA has been provided with additional DSG funding by the Department of Education (DfE) to commission provision for post 16 high need pupils in FE colleges and Independent Specialist Providers but that costs were originally envisaged to exceed the funding by £1m. Latest information was more favourable in that costs were now projected to exceed funding by £0.7m but this remains a significant area of concern.

Resolved – That the Schools Forum notes:

(1) That based on information available as at the end of August 2013, an in-year underspend of approximately £0.373m was projected against the 2013/14 retained budget.

(2) The latest 2013/14 Dedicated School Grant settlement confirmed by the Department of Education of £145.449m.

10. Post 16 High Needs Funding 2013/14 Update and Indicative 2014/15 Position

The Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, and the Commissioner, Routes to Employment, submitted a joint report updating the Forum on the progress made with regards to 2013/14 Post 16, high needs student funding since the 9th July 2013 Schools Forum report and to outline the indicative position for 2014/15.

Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning, Economy & Attainment referred to discussions undertaken at the previous Schools Forum meeting held on 9th July 2013 regarding funding for this area of provision. He commented on the Local Authority’s responsibilities that included identifying the high need students and ensuring appropriate places were offered. He referred to the uncertainty for future funding and advised that discussions would be undertaken in October 2013 between the Local Authority commissioners, local providers and the Education Funding Agency to review procedures for allocating places and funding to ensure the needs of post 16 high needs students were addressed. He further suggested that the Forum may wish to discuss this at a future meeting.

Steve Haley, Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, referred to the present underfunding that would need to be addressed in 2014/15.

Following the presentation of the report, Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning Economy & Attainment and Steve Haley, Finance, Education and Innovation responded to members’ questions on the following issues:

- With Schools Forum agreement the LA was offsetting the post 16 shortfall in 2013/14 by allocating surplus 2 year old nursery funding but this was not repeatable in future years. .
- As full year costs were now projected to exceed the funding available by £0.644m (compared to the original figure of £1.112m) approximately £0.468m earmarked for post 16 would be retained and any balance would be available for distribution in the 2014/15 budget.
- Confirmation that it was not possible to use Dedicated School Grant (which is provided for education purposes) to replace Children’s Centres funding which is provided through the LAs Core social care budget.

Resolved: That the Schools Forum notes:

(1) That the latest projected full academic year costs were estimated at £4.989m which was £0.468m lower than reported to the July Schools

Forum meeting.

(2) That in light of the reduced estimated spending, the full balance of surplus 2 year old funding would not be required in the current year.

(3) That the 2014/15 position remained unclear and there was still a £1m structural deficit between post 16 costs and funding which would need to be addressed as part of the 2014/15 Dedicated School Grant budget setting process.

(4) That the development of a strategy by the Local Authority for dealing with the 2014/15 post 16 shortfall, following a meeting with the Education Funding Agency on 24th October, in consultation with the Chair of the Schools Forum, be agreed.

(5) That, further to (4) above, the LA would explain the agreed strategy at the November school consultation events and at the next meeting of the Schools Forum to be held on 21st January 2014.

11. DSG and School Funding Reform Changes 2014/15

The Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, presented a report advising Schools Forum Members of the latest position regarding 2014/15 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding and spending requirements including the potential impact of school funding reform changes which are required arising from the Department for Education (DfE) 4th June 2013 announcement. Steve Haley, Head of Finance, Education and Innovation commented on the LAs commitment to implementing a universal funding system covering SEN pupils attending specialist settings and referred to areas to be reviewed in determining the 2014/15 local funding allocations for mainstream schools. He informed the Forum of the consultation exercise to be undertaken with Swindon Association of Primary Heads (SAPH), Swindon Association of Secondary Heads (SASH) and the High Needs Task Group.

Steve Haley highlighted the main elements of the report and responded to questions put by members on the following issues:

- Indications of DSG funding levels for 2014/15 including concerns that DfE guidance was that LAs should plan on the basis that high needs block funding may be frozen regardless of increasing pupil numbers
- Detailed information on what constituted “Infrastructure funding”.
- School Planning Team predictions on planned expansions and the implications on pupil growth funding calculations.
- In relation to trigger funding, due to financial risk, clarity on whether the concept of a breakeven point could be introduced.
- Predicted reduction in external placement costs despite an expected increase in demand within the retained pre 16 high needs budget which is reflected in the proposed contingency budget.
- Retention of the retrospective supplement relating to the 2014/15 disadvantaged 2 year old position.
- Special School top-up banding whereby some Members expressed concerns that pupils with similar levels of need may be attracting different amounts of funding in different settings. Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning, Economy & Attainment explained that much had been achieved in clarifying funding for high needs students in the last couple of years and historic methods of funding would be re-visited in line with the requirements of the DfE school funding reform programme. He advised that the banding would aid continuity when a

pupil progressed from pre to post 16 education. Members noted the robust peer to peer moderation process undertaken by special schools.

- Difference in pre and post 16 funding for pupils, particularly where pupils continued to sixth form at school as opposed to attending college.
- Children's prior attainment was widely used by LAs but is an optional funding factor in the new formula. Members were advised that in the whole funding formula, only deprivation and basic pupil per entitlement were compulsory as part of the formula determination and that all other factors were optional.
- Views were expressed that deprivation and low pupil attainment were intrinsically linked and this could explain differences in regional benchmarking data.

Jo Garton, representing the Swindon Association of Primary Headteachers (SAPH) expressed her concerns that following an initial vote, the decision on the establishment of a reception uplift factor whilst calculating the 2014/15 school funding allocations, was to be deferred to the School's Forum meeting in January 2014.

Resolved – (1) That, with regards to indicative funding levels for 2014/15, the Schools Forum notes that the total value of 2014/15 DSG assumed at this stage is £146.880m.

(2) That, the Schools Forum notes that only the existing brought forward DSG balance of £1.160m should be assumed as being available for distribution in 2014/15.

(3) That, with regards to the Centrally Retained Budget, the Schools Forum supports a 2014/15 central items budget of £0.422m.

(4) That, with regards to Pupil Growth, the Schools Forum supports the allocation of set up cost funding of £11.500 per additional primary class at a cost in 2014/15 of £0.058m.

(5) That, further to (4) above, the Schools Forum supports the allocation of infrastructure set up funding of £35,000 per expansion class (subject to the LA clarifying the circumstances in which this would be payable) at a cost in 2014/15 of £0.105m.

(6) That, further to (4) above, the Head of Commissioning Economy & Attainment, as part of the consultation process, be requested to enter into discussions with SAPH regarding the infrastructure criteria.

(7) That, with regard to concerns raised by some primary head teachers that expanding schools could be financially penalised under the current Trigger Funding Policy if pupil numbers were lower than LA forecasts, the Head of Commissioning Economy & Attainment would review whether a "break even" option could be introduced. The policy and 2014/15 proposed trigger funding budget would therefore need to be considered further at the 21st January Schools Forum meeting.

(8) That the Schools Forum supports the start-up cost policy (whereby expanding schools will receive up to £50,000 prior to opening whilst new schools will receive up to £100,000) and agrees a 2014/15 budget of £0.150m.

(9) That, with regards to free school meals administration, the Schools Forum agrees a 2014/15 budget of £21,600 which will be recovered from maintained schools via de-delegation (approximately £10,850) and from Academies via Traded Service charges (approximately £10,750) at £4.80 per Free School Meal pupil per year.

(10) That, with regards to centrally held Pre 16 High Needs Budgets, the Schools Forum agrees that it would be reasonable for the LA to assume a 2014/15 budget of £5.337m.

(11) That the Schools Forum supports the 2014/15 allocation of £0.608m towards Swindon Borough Council overheads.

(12) That, with regards to Early Years Funding, the Schools Forum notes the 2014/15 disadvantaged 2 year old nursery position and

- a) Agrees to retain the hourly rate of £4.95.
- b) Agrees, that subject to an annual review, the Local Authority be allowed to continue to retain £0.055m towards early years staffing costs.
- c) Agrees to defer a decision on retaining the £0.40p retrospective supplement and therefore the total early year's budget until the overall 2014/15 DSG budget position is reviewed at the next School Forum meeting on 21st January 2014.

(13) That the Schools Forum notes the 2014/15 3 and 4 year old funding position and:

- a) Agrees to retain current hourly rates and deprivation payments.
- b) Agrees to change quality payments to £500 for providers rated outstanding and £250 for providers rated good by Ofsted.
- c) Agrees a 2014/15 budget of allocation of £7.823m.

(14) That, with regards to specialist settings funding issues, the Schools Forum notes that for planning purposes approximately £2.103m will need to be allocated to Alternative Provision settings in 2014/15.

(15) That the Schools Forum agrees to the Local Authority seeking approval to exclude the reduction in Behavioural and Emotional Support Difficulties (BESD) premium funding from 2014/15 Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) calculations.

(16) That, the Schools Forum supports the proposed 2014/15 specialist setting funding framework.

(17) That the Schools Forum agrees that the Local Authority should seek DfE exemption to the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) protection system to allow specialist setting funding transfers to be implemented over no more than 3 years.

(18) That the Schools Forum agrees that the Local Authority should establish 2014/5 specialist setting budgets within an assumed overall funding level of £16.0m subject to review should any additional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) be receivable.

(19) That the Schools Forum supports the principle of the Local Authority providing funding for outreach and commissioned SEN services which reflects best estimates of the actual direct additional costs of the provision.

(20) That, with regards to mainstream settings, the School Forum notes that after providing funding to meet known unavoidable cost pressures, existing mainstream funding values are retained as far as possible unless there is an overwhelming case to make specific changes. T

(21) That, the Schools Forum supports the increased delegation of £398,900 via a secondary BPPE enhancement of £39 per pupil to 2014/15 funding rates so that schools have sufficient funding to pay top up fees for emotionally vulnerable pupils attending Riverside.

(22) That the Schools Forum supports the increased delegation of any funding relating to Nylands PRU, Nylands assessment class and Mountford Manor

Special Resource Provision (SRP) via a primary Basic Per Pupil Entitlement (BPPE) enhancement to 2014/15 funding rates so that schools have sufficient funding to pay top up fees for pupils attending these settings subject to DfE confirmation that this is the appropriate funding methodology for these services.

(23) That the Schools Forum, subject to affordability, supports

a) The retention of the temporary £54.77 primary BPPE increase – enhanced if affordable.

b) The review of secondary LPA funding – funded via the re-distribution of secondary BPPE funding (subject to the consensus view of SASH) and / or by a direct increase to LPA funding if this is affordable

c) The review of secondary EAL funding, to include deprivation (subject to the consensus views of SASH) with any proposals reported back to the Schools Forum on the basis that corresponding changes are restricted to the secondary sector.

(24) That Schools Forum agrees to the LA, as a precaution should this prove unaffordable, seeking approval to exclude the one-off £54.77 boost to primary funding from the 2014/15 Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) calculations.

(25) That the School Forum agrees to defer a decision on the establishment of a reception uplift factor until the Forum meeting on 21st January 2014.

(26) That the School Forum supports the creation of a new sparsity factor which provides eligible schools with £565 per pupil below the Department of Education threshold of 150.

(27) That, with regards to Sector Lump Sums the School Forum agrees that:

a) The primary sector lump sum value is to be retained at £106,700.

b) The secondary sector lump sum value is to increase to £175,000 with corresponding reductions to secondary BPPE rates.

(28) That with regard to the proposal to introduce a Looked After Children (LAC) factor in the local formula, the LA was withdrawing this proposal in view of the big increase in LAC Pupil Premium recently announced by DfE. The Forum noted that SASH had requested a report on the effectiveness of the partial use of secondary Pupil Premium to fund the LAs LACES team.

(29) The Schools Forum noted comments by SASH representatives regarding the optional split site funding factor and voted not to introduce this.

(30) That the Schools Forum notes the increased eligibility for secondary sector pupils, confirm the retention of Low Prior Attainment as a funding factor and notes the SASH request for modelling to be undertaken.

(31) That the Schools Forum members agree that NNDR and primary Deprivation funding factors should remain unchanged and that the LA will seek to centralise PFI Affordability gap funding if this is allowed by DfE.

(32) Further to (31) above, Head of Finance, Education and Innovation be requested to submit a review to SASH regarding secondary deprivation funding.

(33) That the Schools Forum members agrees that pupil mobility, temporary falling rolls and exceptional premises factors will not be used in 2014/15 but will be kept under annual review.