

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 11 MARCH 2014

PRESENT: -

School Members:

Steve Colledge, Chair - Academy Headteacher
Paul Boyles, Vice-Chair - Academy Governor
Janet Urban, Primary Headteacher
Rhian Cockwell, Primary Headteacher
Alison Lowe, Primary Headteacher
David Easter, Primary Governor
Ray Williams, Primary Governor
Julie Tridgell, Secondary Headteacher
Jackie Smith, Special Headteacher
Richard Marshall, PRU
Nick Capstick, Academy Headteacher
Wendy Conaghan, Academy Headteacher
Andy Hazelton, Academy Governor
Andrew Henstridge, Primary Headteacher

Non-School Members:

Andrew Wild, Diocese - Bristol
Peter Smith, Trade Unions
Debbie Waldron, Early Years Representative
Ram Thiagarajah, BME
Ruth Lee, Diocese of Clifton

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fiona Foley, Rachael Matthey (Secondary Headteacher), Joanne Brown (Special Governor) and Andrew Miller (16-19 Partnership).

17. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

The Chair advised that following confirmation from the Department for Education that the Ridgeway School was to become a member of the White Horse Federation, he was now a Federation Director.

18. 2013/14 Dedicated Schools Grant Position

Steve Haley, Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, presented a report on the latest position of the 2013/14 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget.

Mr Haley advised that based on information at the end of January 2014, an underspend of £0.532m was projected against the retained DSG Budget for the current year. He confirmed that the final DSG figure would be submitted to the next Schools Forum in July 2014. He drew attention to the main reasons for the

increased underspend which included disadvantaged two year old funding, trigger funding payable to schools and a review of the Oakfield Project finances. This meant that the final DSG balance to be carried forward at the end of the financial year and available for distribution in future years was now estimated at £1.001m. This was £0.290m higher than previous forecast.

Resolved: That it be noted that the latest projection on the 2013/14 retained budget was an underspend of £0.532m.

19. 2014/15 Dedicated Schools Grant General Updates

The Forum considered a report by Steve Haley, Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, updating the Forum on the 2014/15 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement, including revised trigger funding estimates, notional Special Educational Needs funding details and mainstream funding per pupil values.

Mr Haley referred to the implications of Swindon Academy pupils being included in the schools block Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). He confirmed that discussions were on-going with the Education Funding Agency with a view to ensuring that there would not be a gap between the costs to the local formula and the additional DSG funding provided by the DfE.

Mr Haley reminded members that at the January 2014 meeting, they had agreed a revised policy for the payment of trigger funding and a budget of £0.515m for 2014/15. He advised that this has since been revised downwards and a reduced budget of £0.373m is required.

Mr Haley explained the basis of the Notional SEN funding and referred to the calculations which determined additional top up payments to some schools which were required to ensure notional costs matched notional funding. He also referred to the 2014/15 funding per pupil calculations which would be used to claw back funding when pupils were permanently excluded from schools or referred to the Tuition Service.

Resolved: That the Schools Forum notes:

- (1) The latest position regarding the implications of Swindon Academy pupils being included in schools block DSG and funded from the local formula.
- (2) That a revised 2014/15 trigger funding budget of £0.373m was required.
- (3) That notional SEN top up allocations are calculated at £0.280m and will be paid to relevant schools in April from the £0.350m agreed budget.
- (4) The 2014/15 per pupil funding rates that will be used by the Local Authority to recover funding where pupils are permanently excluded or have been referred to Tuition Service.

20. 2014/15 2 Year Old Early Education Places

Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment, introduced a report updating members on the progress made to meet the Department for Education targets regarding free nursery entitlement for disadvantaged 2 year olds and to further consider the hourly rate that should be payable in 2014/15. He explained that Swindon was making excellent progress and

was on track to meet future requirements and referred to the sustainable model that would need to be adopted.

The Forum has agreed a basic hourly of £4.95 for 2014/15 but deferred a decision on whether the £0.40p supplement should be repeated in 2014/15. Mr Bradley expressed his concerns on the range in quality of provision available and advised that funds could be re-directed centrally to build and expand provision across a different range of providers. He also drew the Schools Forum's attention to Point 3.6 of the report and requested members to consider whether additional budgetary provision should be made above the level of the 2 year old funding provided by the Department for Education. On balance it was decided not to continue to pay the £0.40p supplement beyond 2013/14.

Resolved: That the Schools Forum:

- (1) Approves an hourly rate of £4.95 per hour for 2014/15.
- (2) Notes the plans to create additional places and raise participation towards the Department for Education 2014/15 target.

21. Universal Infant Free School Meals

Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment, submitted a report updating members on the allocation of capital and revenue funding to increase capacity for schools to meet the new requirement to provide every Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 child with a free hot school meal from September 2014. He advised that a perceived benefit of this initiative was to combat child obesity and that, due to financial constraints, support was sought from Public Health. He referred to a programme coordinator to be recruited to work with Angela Milliken, Healthy Schools Programme Manager, to ensure the programme was in place before the end of the scholastic year.

Steve Haley, Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, updated members on recent communication from the Department for Education regarding the financing and future support for this project.

Resolved: That the Schools Forum:

- (1) Notes the capital and revenue funding allocations for the new requirement for the provision of a free hot school meal to every Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 child.
- (2) Notes the proposed methodology to allocate capital funding to Community and Voluntary controlled Primary Schools.
- (3) Agrees to receive a progress report at the July 2014 Schools Forum meeting.

22. Projected 2013-14 Year End School Balances

Steve Haley, Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, presented a report advising the indicative position regarding the level of projected 31st March 2014 school revenue balances as compared to the levels expected when 2013/14 schools budgets that were set in June 2013. He explained that six schools had reported significant changes to the predicted end of year balance and most of these were due to on-going capital programmes.

Resolved: That the Schools Forum notes:

- (1) The majority 34 of 42 (81%) of Swindon maintained schools current estimates of their year end balances are close to the estimates

provided when budgets were set as measured by the thresholds agreed by Schools Forum and are commended.

- (2) Only 6 of 42 (14%) schools have reported significant variances between their current and initial estimates of their projected year end balances.
- (3) Latest estimated school balances (adjusted to exclude in-year Academy conversions) are forecast to be £3.7m which is 57% higher, than initial estimates of £2.4m. No maintained schools are anticipating being in deficit at 31st March 2014.
- (4) The Local Authority will present further information on school balances at the July 2014 Schools Forum showing how each schools estimate compared to their final year end positions.

23. 2014/15 High Needs Specialist Funding for Schools

The Forum considered a report by Steve Haley, Head of Finance, Education and Innovation, updating the Forum on the latest position regarding the 2014/15 High Needs Dedicated School Grant (DSG) funding for schools and to secure support for the 2014/15 funding proposals applicable to specialist schools and alternative provision setting. He referred to the High Needs Task Group which had been set up to replace the existing values by implementing a universal approach to top up funding for all specialist schools.

Mr Haley circulated paperwork relating to Pre-16 external and other Local Authority placement costs, new specialist setting top-up and supplement values 2014/15 and a summary of special schools and Special Resource Provision (SRP) funding 2013/14 to 2014/15. He commented on the 2014/15 High Needs funding available and referred to the projected net pupil increase in high need schools places next year. He further explained the various high needs elements encompassed within the overall funding available.

Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment and Mr Haley commented on the various issues that influence funding allocations. These included:

- The views of the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for the future funding of the provision at Nylands Pathway Assessment Class / Mountford Manor Special Resource Provision (SRP) facilities.
- In order to comply with EFA regulations, there would need to be changes to the funding of services provided by the Primary Behaviour Support Team in 2015/16. This would involve consultation on de-delegation of funding from maintained schools and traded service contributions from academies.
- The impact of indicative top up values. Mr Bradley confirmed site visits had been undertaken to review service provision at Eldene CLD Special Resource Provision and Red Oaks LDDs RP and gave a summary of the issues and proposed resolutions for each setting.
- BESD Pupils. The impact on St Lukes and Nylands Schools following a reduction of funding whilst maintaining the same number of pupils on roll. The Local Authority felt that a premium should be maintained for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) to help sustain the budgets for St Lukes and Nyland Schools.
- Therapy Supplements. Mr Bradley referred to an inconsistent approach for payment of services within some settings and summarised the new position

for funding for all therapy services. He referred to the uncertainty of future funding for the service provision.

- Centrally Commissioned Outreach and Support Services for High Need Pupils. Mr Bradley confirmed that a range of services were operating from a range of different schools and the 2014/15 indicative funding was based on projected future work to be undertaken.
- External Placements. No inflationary increases were being forecasted.
- High Needs Contingency Budget. The DSG Balance was increasing and it was envisaged that this could absorb the pressure of reducing the contingency budget allowing £0.200m to be allocated to specialist settings via the top up rates.
- Specialist and Alternative Provision Places. Mr Haley confirmed that due to changes in school place provision, there were minor changes to funding and this was now £7.471m.
- Specialist and Alternative Provision Top Up Values. Mr Haley referred to Appendices 2 and 3 of the report that confirmed the Local Authority ability to standardise most band values to ensure similar levels of funding per pupil were allocated and explained the estimated impact for each specialist setting of implementing the top up and supplement values in 2014/15 based on the current / estimated pupils.
- Proposed changes in mainstream funding for High Needs pupils. Mr Bradley referred to differences that would need to be harmonised and explained that the introduction of the Education and Health Care Plans could be a means of implementing this.

Mr Bradley and Mr Haley responded to the Forum's queries regarding the following points:

- Funding towards provision of Speech and language Therapy at Even Swindon Primary School.
- The ability for Special Schools to apply for the 2014/15 Specialist High Need Supplements.
- The difference between Education Funding Agency allocated budgets for high needs service provision and the agreement of funding allocation at School Forum meetings.

Resolved: That Schools Forum:

- (1) Notes the revised treatment of the Nylands / Mountford Manor BESD Pathway classes and support a 2014/15 top up value of £2,550 per pupil
- (2) Notes the need to consult during 2014 over the 2015/16 funding of the Nylands Primary Behaviour Support Team;
- (3) Supports the 2014/15 allocation of £1.200m for centrally commissioned outreach and SEN support services;
- (4) Supports the LA's proposal to reduce the 2014/15 contingency budget to £0.200m on the basis that any overspend would need to be met from the DSG balance;
- (5) Supports the proposed 2014/15 Top up and Supplement values as shown at Appendix 2 and note the impact of these rates on individual settings as shown at Appendix 3 (noting that proposed top up values may need to be marginally reduced to result in £0.2m lower spending if additional DSG is not received);
- (6) Notes the particular positions at Ridgway HI Special Resource Provision, Redoaks LDD Special Resource Provision, St Lukes

Special School and Nylands Special School and support the allocation of temporary additional funding of £0.058m, to Ridgeway and up to £0.020m for Redoaks from the unallocated DSG balance;

- (7) Notes that the resulting unallocated DSG balance will be £0.923m;
- (8) Reconfirm support for the Local Authority to seek Department for Education exemption to the MFG protection system for specialist settings in 2014/15;
- (9) Supports the continued review of top up and supplements values by the High Needs Task Group during 2014 to ensure value for money is being provided and to identify funding proposals for 2015/16.