

SCHOOLS FORUM
MEETING HELD ON 21 OCTOBER 2014

PRESENT:

Primary School Headteachers: Ms M Carlton and Mrs J Rea

Primary School Governors: Mr H Smith and Mr C Wilson

Secondary School Headteachers: Mr C Walker and Mr S White

Secondary School Governor: Mr L Wadey

Special School Headteacher: Mrs E Horne

Diocesan Representative: Dr P Mackie - Chair

L A Representative: Councillor Mrs C Clark

14-19 Representative: Ms J Bailey

Academy Representative: Mr B Jordan

Officials: Mr D New – Senior Finance Manager
Mrs L Brown – Head of Education, Early Years and Complex Needs
Cllr A McCoy – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Mrs E Barrett – Secretary to the Schools Forum

Also in attendance: Mrs J Harvey – Early Years and Complex Needs Manager
Mrs C Kiernan - EFA observer

1. **EVACUATION PROCEDURES**

Members noted the evacuations procedures to be used to exit the building in an emergency.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Ms J Humphreys, Mr D Campbell, Mrs M O'Connor and Mr T Gittins.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made to Mrs C Kiernan in her capacity as an EFA observer.

3. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Members were invited to declare any personal or business interests they may have in any item included on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

4. **MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING – 8 JULY 2014**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2014 be approved as a true record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

5.1 Academy balances

P Mackie updated members on Academy balances and availability of data. He outlined that his School was part of the Carmel Trust Academy and as such they had a funding agreement to make accounts available to the public. Minutes of meetings were available upon request. Members noted that they could request information from Companies House at a nominal charge.

6. SEND REFORMS – JH

J Harvey updated Schools Forum on the SEN reform implementation which had been outlined in her report, circulated to members prior to the meeting. The following points were highlighted and:

- A summary of the legislation was provided in section 3.2 of the report;
- Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) had replaced Statements with SEN and Learning Difficulty Assessments ;
- A Code of Practice had been published on the DfE website;
- The majority of needs were met within local mainstream early years, schools and college settings;
- Children with more complex needs may need more detailed assessment and may need a EHCP
- An assessment may not always mean a child or young person receives a EHCP but it can provide extra information to help the education provider meet their needs.
- There were 16 cases currently under review as part of the new process;
- The format of the LA EHC Plan had been deemed compliant with the DfE Code of Practice;
- The Local Offer was now accessible through the LA website Two grants had been received from Government to support the implementation of the SEN reform legislation and the report set out how this was to be utilised;
- Parents could request High Needs top up funding as part of their personal budget, it was noted that there had been no requests for this to date;
- A working group had been established to continue work on the SEN reforms;
- The next steps for implementation were highlighted in the report.

A McCoy confirmed that the Children's Health and Wellbeing board would be reviewing the SEN implementation.

A member questioned if there would be any joint commissioning. J Harvey confirmed that therapy was offered as a joint commission with Education and Health Care and cases were reviewed where there was a funding collaboration.

Members questioned if the process of applying and receiving an EHC Plan was harder than the previous Statementing process. J Harvey confirmed this should not be the case as all previous children with a Statement would move across to an EHC Plan. New applications should follow the same process.

It was noted that the biggest challenge would be provision for young people in post 16 education.

Members discussed the application process for settings to apply for top up funding.

RESOLVED that Schools Forum note the report.

J Harvey withdrew from the meeting.

7. EDUCATION SERVICES GRANT (ESG) 2015 – 2016 – DFE CONSULTATION OUTCOME

D New updated members that both the LA and the Forum had submitted a response to the Education Services Grant 2015 – 2016 consultation. The outcome had been announced over the Summer break. The following points were noted;

- The outcome of the consultation was to implement the reduction in the ESG as initially proposed;
- The general funding rate would be reduced by £26 to £87 per pupil in 2015 – 2016;
- The impact to the LA would be a reduction in ESG funding of approximately £900,000 per annum;
- Consequently there would be a review of Service Areas and budgets to consider savings.;
- There would be an impact on Schools converting to Academy status as their funding would move to £87 per pupil compared to those who had previously converted as they had a level of protection;

L Brown confirmed that Service Reviews were being considered across Children's Services which would also assess levels of succession planning. A new structure would be consulted in the coming months. The intention would be that Headteachers would be included in the consultation . It was anticipated that a new structure would be implemented in 2015/6.

RESOLVED that Schools Forum note the report.

8. SCHOOLS BUDGET 2015 - 2016

D New outlined that there had been a number of updates and key changes to the Schools Budget / Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2015 – 2016. He outlined the following:

Fairer Schools Funding

The DfE had consulted on a Fairer Schools Funding proposal with the aim of increasing funding to those LA's who were least well funded. The outcome announced on 17 July 2014 was that an additional £390 million would be allocated to eligible LA's. Members noted that Stockton did not qualify for any additional funds.

High Needs Funding

There had been two applications submitted by the LA to EFA for additional high needs funding through the DfE exceptional submissions process. This was for Ash Trees School and Greengates. A decision would be made in December 2014 and would confirm if the LA were successful in their bid. It was noted that if the additional High Needs funding was not granted this would impact on the use of DSG in 2015/16.

Early Years

There would be a change to the funding allocated for disadvantaged two year olds. This would be based on participation census data from January 2015. It had previously been funded on estimates of eligibility. It was imperative that settings get as many two year old children as possible registered for the January census.

£900 funding per child per term was available through Families Information Service (FIS) for two year old children accessing nursery provision. Very few schools were currently accessing this funding and should be encouraged to do so. Members discussed the importance of passing this information to Schools.

Free Schools and Non Recoupment Academies

From 2015 – 2016 Non Recoupment Academies and Free Schools would be incorporated into the LA DSG. At present Stockton did not have any Non Recoupment Academies but there was one Free School with a second planned. This would have an impact on the DSG and Growth Fund. The DfE were considering responses made to the consultation.

It was discussed that the Growth Fund applied to LA planned increasing numbers on roll at Primary Schools.

Submission of Draft Local Formula Proforma to DfE

A provisional local Formula proforma is due to be returned to the DfE by 31 October 2014. The same process had been used as in previous years. In order to maintain stability in school funding no changes were proposed to the local funding formula for 2015/6 at this stage in terms of factors and unit values. A final Proforma return to DfE is due in January 2015.

Universal Free School Meals (UFSM)

A new indicator had been introduced for the schools census to capture Universal FSM eligibility children taking a meal. The DfE had made an assumption that 87% of Key Stage 1 children would take up the free meal offer which would equate to 190 meals per child per academic year. Funding allocation would be based on the average of both the October 2014 and January 2015 census data.

Small Schools with less than 150 pupils would receive additional funding for one year only.

It is imperative that if Pupil Premium funding is to continue to be maximized that eligible families made the application for Free School Meals.

RESOLVED that Schools Forum:

- a) note the report;
- b) support the submission to the DfE of the provisional local formula proforma on the basis set out in paragraph 16 of the report.

9. DELEGATION / DE-DELEGATION 2015 - 2016

It was noted that a vote would be undertaken at the next School Forum meeting regarding Delegation and De Delegation. Relevant headteachers and governors would also discuss the paper and consider the options provided.

Members discussed the budgets proposed for continued De Delegation. L Wadey queried the numbers for Secondary Schools. D New would review the data, confirm how the calculations were made and resubmit to Schools Forum.

L Wadey reiterated with regards to Secondary Schools, there were only 4 who paid into the fund and therefore should it only be the 4 Schools who made the decision on Delegation and De Delegation.

RESOLVED that:

- a) Schools Forum note the report:
- b) new data and explanations of calculations be provided to Schools Forum members before consideration was given to the proposal.

10. SCHOOL BUDGET MONITORING 2014 - 2015

D New gave members an update on the projected outturn positions on Schools Budget based on data to the end of September 2014. The following points were noted:

- A £469,000 under spend was predicted at the end of the Academic Year;
- A variance of £600,000 was noted under the low uptake of the two year old provision and consequently funding;
- £180,000 over spend was noted on maintained schools High Needs top up funding;
- £60,000 over spend noted on Academy and Free School top up funding;
- £20,000 under spend on Independent Provider top up funding;
- Only two Primary Schools had met the criteria for Growth Funding which resulted in an underspend of £70,000;
- £529,000 was still to be committed.

D New

RESOLVED that members note the current financial position.

A member highlighted that if the numbers of children accessing Primary Education rose then there would also be a percentage increase in the numbers who would be classified as SEN. This would impact on the High Needs Top up Funding.

Members discussed if the LA needed more financial modelling. It was noted that top up funding had to be met by current funding and as these were exceptional cases it was difficult to budget for. The LA would continue to highlight to both the DfE and EFA of the continued pressures on the Schools budget with regards to additional support needed.

11. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

11.1 Chair

Dr P Mackie announced that he would be retiring at the end of December 2014. He did agree to chair the final meeting on 9 December 2014 and members noted that the Diocese would appoint a replacement Schools Forum Representative. Appointment of Chair would be an agenda item at the next meeting.

Clerk

12. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting would be held at 1:30pm on Tuesday 9 December 2014 at the Media Centre, The Grange Field Academy.