

SCHOOLS FORUM
MEETING HELD ON 23rd OCTOBER 2018

PRESENT

Primary Maintained School Headteachers: Mrs S Richardson and Mr A Ruffell

Primary Academy Headteacher: Mrs J Armstrong

Primary Governors: Mrs M Dowson, Mr G Rickard and Mr C Wilson

Secondary Academy Headteacher: Mr A Ramsey

Secondary Governor: Mr J Thompson

PVI Representative: Mrs C Prendagast

LA Representative: Councillor Mrs C Clark

Trade Union Representative: Mr L Russell - Chair

OFFICIALS: Mr D New – Senior Finance Manager
 Mr G Waller – Accountant
 Mr M Gray – Director of Children’s Services
 Mrs N Fletcher – Secretary to the Forum

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Mrs A McCoy (SBC Member for Children and Young People) - Observer
 Mr R Matkin (NASUWT) – Observer
 Mr A Metcalfe (Teesside Gazette) - Observer

1. **EVACUATION PROCEDURES**

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

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

RESOLVED that the apologies for absence submitted on behalf of Mr E Squire, Mr S White, Mr C Walker, Mr E Huntington, Mr P Cook, Mrs L Spellman, Ms E Carr, Mrs C Taylor and Mrs C Thomas.

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. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

RESOLVED that Mrs S Richardson be appointed as Vice Chair for a period of two years.

5. **MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING – 3rd JULY 2018**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd July 2018, be approved as a

true record.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

6.1 High Needs – Excluded Pupils

In response to a question raised at the previous meeting regarding how much from the High Needs Budget was being spent on excluded pupils, D New reported that in 2016/17 £1.5m had been spent on excluded pupils and this year (2017/18) the spend had risen to £1.7m. He reported that there was an issue around capacity for excluded pupils within Stockton and a number excluded pupils were being home educated. **Members questioned what the age range was for excluded pupils.** D New reported that the majority were from KS3 and 4, but details could be provided at the next meeting.

D New

Member were informed that analysis was being undertaken as to the beneficiaries of High Needs funding, once completed the information would be shared with the Forum.

D New

7. DFE FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OTHER UPDATES

D New referred to the previously circulated paper DfE Funding Announcements and other Updates for 2019/20 and the following points were highlighted;

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

The DfE had published provisional funding allocations for each Local Authority for 2019/20 (schools block, high needs block and central schools services block), but these allocations would be updated based on the October 2018 school census and published in December 2018. Key features of the funding changes were:

- DfE move to a “Hard Formula” in 2020/21 had been deferred for two years, it had been confirmed that funding would be distributed to local authorities via a national funding formula for 2019/20 and 2020/21 and for these years local authorities would continue to determine allocations to schools using their existing local schools formula, referred to as “Soft Formula”.
- In 2019/20 three key aspects of the schools national funding formula were being updated;
 - In the school block the government were to provide at least a 1% per pupil increase for each school in 2019/20 through the national funding formula compared to their 2017/18 baseline;
 - The minimum per pupil funding levels were to increase to £3,500 for all primary pupils and £4,800 for all secondary schools
 - Gains cap had increased so that schools could attract gains of up to 6.09% against their 2017/18 baseline.
- Growth funding was to be provided to local authorities on a formulaic basis, but there would be no changes in the way local authorities could distribute growth funding.
- Primary low attainment factor value would be reduced to £1,022 to balance the increase in the cohort.
- A new funding floor factor had been created to enable local authorities to mirror the increase of 1% per pupil against 2017/18 baselines
- Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) for schools would continue and local authorities continue to have the flexibility to set a local MFG between -1.5% and +0.5% per pupil.
- Within the high needs block the government had provided for at least a 0.5% increase adjustment for population changes in 2019/20, which was reflected allocations to local authorities through the high needs funding formula.
- Schools block funding would again be ring fenced, with local authorities able to transfer up to 0.5% of their schools block funding with the approval of their Schools

Forum. Transfers of more than 0.5% had to be approved by the Secretary of State. Further details were outlined in the School Budget Monitoring and High Needs Report.

Teacher Pay Grant

The teacher pay awards were announced in July 2018 in line with the School Teachers Review Board (STRB) recommendations. Following this the DfE introduced a grant separate to the DSG in 2018/19 and 2019/20 to assist schools with the costs. The grant would fund the difference between the STRB recommendations and the 1% it assumed schools had already budgeted for. Then in September 2018 the DfE published the methodology for the Teachers' Pay Grant. It was to be awarded to schools based on pupil numbers, inclusive of 2 to 19 year olds, as the pay rise was applicable from September 2018 the allocations for 2018/19 would be 7/12ths of the allocation for 2019/20. Local authorities would pass the grant on to maintained schools and academies would receive it directly from the ESFA. There was no grant for centrally funded teachers i.e. TVMS and SEN Services.

Free School Meals

The Government had announced transitional protection to protect pupils from uncertainty during changes to free school meals (FSM) eligibility. Those pupils in receipt of FSM immediately prior to 1st April 2018 and those who become eligible during Universal Credit rollout would retain eligibility until the end of this rollout period. Following this if they were still in education they would continue to be eligible until the end of their phase of education. This means that schools should not remove FSM eligibility from pupils until at least 2013, continuing to offer them meals and record them as eligible on the school census.

Healthy Pupil Capital Fund (HPCF)

Stockton's allocation of the HPCF for 2018/19, which was available to LA maintained primary schools and PRUs was £107,667. Bids had been invited for projects with a closing date for applications of 30th November 2018.

Opportunity North East

£24m had been pledged to tackle issues holding young people from all communities back and that could risk areas feeling "left behind". Opportunity North East aims to tackle the issues raised by;

- Investing £12m in targeted approaches to improve transition from primary to secondary schools, driving up standards and improving outcomes for pupils post 16;
- Engaging with secondary schools and colleges to encourage young people to consider university, degree apprenticeships and other high quality technical education options;
- Partnering with local businesses to improve job prospects for young people across the region
- Invest a further £12m to boost early career training for new teachers and help improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in the region's schools.

M Gray informed members that Stockton had not been named as a primary beneficiary of the £12m funding, he highlighted that the fund was across 12 local authorities in the north east.

Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide

The Guide including a self-assessment toolkit had been circulated to all members of Schools Forum. D New proposed that the toolkit be completed in the first instance by officers and brought to the next meeting for consideration.

D New

RESOLVED

- a) to note the changes to Schools Funding for 2019/20;
- b) that the completed Good Practice Self-Assessment be considered at the next meeting.

8. DELEGATION / DE-DELEGATION 2019/20

D New referred to the previously circulated paper, highlighting that the issues were for consideration by Schools Forum in readiness for maintained schools members to vote on de-delegation of services. D New explained that funding for de-delegated services must be allocated through the formula but could be passed back, or de-delegated for maintained primary and secondary schools with Schools Forum approval. The Local Authority was proposing the option of de-delegation for the following areas in 2019/20;

- Contingencies
- Contingencies – Support to Schools Partnership Fund
- Staff costs supply cover – Union facilities time
- Behaviour and Support Services
- Free school Meals eligibility

Outlined in the report were the breakdown of the funding for each area split between the primary and secondary sectors. ***It was questioned how many maintained schools were in each sector, D New reported that there were 27 maintained primary schools and one maintained secondary school.***

A member questioned whether the Local Authority received feedback on the services provided. M Gray explained that feedback was received during discussion on the Behaviour and Support Services, but he was unclear as to whether formal feedback was received.

In response to a further question as to whether the services for the Trade Union facilities time funded by the 28 maintained schools were only for the maintained schools. D New confirmed that this was the case.

S Richardson suggested that as there were only two primary maintained school Headteachers present decisions on de-delegation be deferred to the next meeting and in the meantime consultation would be undertaken with Headteacher colleagues from the maintained schools in each sector. ***Members questioned whether each of the proposed areas could be considered separately, D New explained that a separate decision could be taken on each area, but the decision would be binding to the sector.***

S Richardson

RESOLVED that a decision on de-delegation be deferred to the next meeting in order for consultation to be undertaken with Headteachers of maintained schools from each sector.

9. SCHOOLS BUDGET MONITORING 2018/19 AND HIGH NEEDS

D New referred to the previously circulated report and the following was highlighted;

Introduction

The current projected outturn position on schools budget (based on information to the end of September 2018) was that there would be a deficit of £2.327m by the end of the 2018/19 financial year, this included the overspend of £1.413m bought forward from 2017/18, which had to be re-paid from this year's DSG. Given this position the proposal was to seek the views of Schools Forum and undertake consultation to request approval from the Secretary of State to transfer above 0.5% of the Schools Block to High Needs in 2019/20 given the overspend and pressures within this area.

School Budget

Appendix 1 showed the revised budget against the projected outturn for 2018/19 on the Schools Budget as at 30th September 2018 and the reasons for the significant variances were detailed within the report. Members were advised that any surplus or deficit on the Schools Budget supported by DSG had to be managed in the following financial year. The DfE intend to require a report from any Local Authority that had a DSG deficit of more than 1% as at 31st March 2019. The report would need to be discussed with Schools Forum and the LA must set out their plans for bringing the DSG account back into balance.

High Needs

Locally and nationally High Needs budgets had rapidly become a major issue. Reasons for the deficit and the issues affecting this included;

- An increase in the population of children and young people in Stockton, with an associated increase in those with High Needs. Also there was an increase in the proportion of the population with high needs and greater complexities and a rising number of pupil exclusions.
- In recent years there had been an increase in the age at which high needs funding could be allocated, rising from 19 to 25 years of age.
- The small increases in the amount of DSG funds allocated to the High Needs Block had not kept pace with the significant cost pressures. The provisional allocation of high needs funding for Stockton of £24.05m in 2019/20 gave an increase of £0.19m (0.8%) on 2018/19, which was below the national average rise of 2%.

To try and address the situation a number of measures (outlined in paragraph 9) had or were being taken, including obtaining Schools Forum agreement to move 0.5% (£0.6m) from schools block into High Needs Block in 2019/20. Current medium term planning indicated that the in-year High Needs budget gap would continue to grow rising to £3.0m deficit in 2021/22. Members were advised that in 2019/20 Schools Block funding would no longer be required to support the growth of the two Free Schools in Stockton, therefore a combination of this and the earmarked £0.6m in the current year to transfer to High Needs (approximately £1.4m) could be used in 2019/20 to partially offset the High Needs deficit. If £1.4m was transferred from Schools Block to the High Needs Block schools would still receive a 1.3% increase in overall budget through the school funding formula and allow the Local Authority to move closer to the DfE published national funding formula values. As the transfer would be more than 0.5% the proposals were;

- for the Local Authority to consult with all maintained schools and academies and that Schools Forum take the view of schools/academies into account when making the decision;
- the Local Authority must submit a request to the Secretary of State to move more than 0.5% by 30th November 2018;
- that a meeting of Schools Forum take place during the last week of November in order for the consultation responses and request to be considered prior to submission.

A member questioned whether DSG was taken from all schools (both maintained and academies) and was it a “one size fit” for all Stockton schools. D New explained that the Local Authority had always worked in partnership with Schools Forum, to move more than 0.5% the Local Authority had to consult with all schools / academies in receipt of state funding and the consultation responses had to be feedback to Schools Forum, but the Local Authority could still submit a request to the Secretary of State even if it was not agreed by Schools Forum.

M Gray explained that officers of the Local Authority were taking every opportunity to raise the issue of High Needs funding at national level. This was a huge national issue and Stockton was no different from any other Local Authority.

C Prendagast stated that other Local Authorities were in similar positions, she considered that there needed to be transparency as to where the spending was in High Needs and could savings be made by bringing services together.

D New reminded members that a High Needs Action Plan had been considered in detail at the previous meeting and the plan was a key area for the Children’s Board.

A Ruffell considered that increased budget pressures were due to the greater complexities of need and increased levels of pupil exclusions.

D New highlighted the three key areas of pressure where;

- increasing levels of High Needs top up funding;
- out of Borough specialist places
- rising numbers of pupil exclusions.

RESOLVED

- a) to note the current financial position on the schools budget;
- b) a consultation exercise would be undertaken with schools/academies to transfer above 0.5% of the Schools Block to the High Needs Block;
- c) that Schools Forum would meet on 27th November 2018 to consider the responses from the consultation.

D New

10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS10.1 Partnership Working

C Prendagast outlined the difficulties being experienced by Private Nurseries when schools admitted children immediately after their third birthdays, even if this was mid-term. She questioned whether there could be more partnership working / transition between the private nurseries and schools to alleviate the problems.

J Armstrong highlighted that it was parental choice as to when pupils transferred to schools.

S Richardson stated that each school had a nursery admissions policy which both they and parents followed.

Members AGREED that Schools Forum was not the correct forum for this discussion.

10.2 School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool

D New informed members of an e-mail received from E Nunn – DfE Funding Policy Unit offering a demonstration to Schools Forum of the DfE's recently published School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool. The Self-Assessment Tool was designed to support schools assess their use of resources and to provide a robust and consistent method to help schools and trusts identify where a school sits in the distribution of data across the sector; to identify reasons for that position and to decide if changes in how resources were managed was required. The first version was aimed at academies, with version for maintained schools to be published in the new year, which would replace the School Financial Value Standard (SFVS) from 2019/20.

S Richardson suggested that the demonstration would be better directed to governors via School and Governor Support Services.

Secretary

11. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting be held at 1:30pm on Tuesday 27th November 2018, this meeting would replace the meeting scheduled to take place on 11th December 2018.