

**Meeting of the Schools Forum
Tuesday 10 March 2015 at 1.30 p.m.
at Bedford High School Leigh**

Present:

Members: P Dahlstrom (Vice Chair (In the Chair) , J. Seddon, F. Quinlivan, V. Birchall, G. Hayes, H. Phillips, A. Dawson, A.R. Birchall (deputising for D. Lythgoe), R. Halford, K. Pilkington, A. Isherwood, R. Lewis, J. Holland, P. McGhee and A Wells.

Authorised Observers: C. Gore (GMB), M. Atkins (NUT)

LA Officers:

K. Nelson (Assistant Director of Education)

J. McDonald (Strategic Finance Manager)

C. Myers (Group Finance Manager)

D. Winter (EBI Manager)

F. Gore (Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from A Hardy (Chair) D. Winstanley and D. Lythgoe; and from T. Warren (Liverpool Archdiocese) Cllr J. Platt (Cabinet Member) and S. Wilson (NAS/UWT)

2. Items for inclusion under AOB -

- **School Banking Arrangements - Update**
- **Supplementary Funding Bids**

3. Minutes

It was agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27th January 2015 be approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

None.

4. Special School Funding Review 2015/16:

Mr McDonald presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) informing members that Local Authorities had the responsibility for planning and funding provision for High Needs pupils and students aged 0 – 25 and that there was now a need to:

- review the current allocation of funding to special schools and resourced units
- assess the current banding levels with special school providers and judge whether they are still applicable or reflect each school's need/provision
- review the percentage allocations for each school
- compare the current banding levels against other Local Authorities
- review the 1:1 support allocations

- agree and recommend a method of allocation which reflected need more accurately .

He reported that there was limited scope to redistribute funding due to the uncertainty of the new funding formula and budget allocations in 2013/14 and set out the current and options for future national funding and details of how Wigan operated the five currently agreed funding bands which provided the “Plus” element of “Place Plus”.

Appendix A contained the current detailed allocations for each special school. Appendix B contained information from other Local Authorities in respect of their level of top ups across the different bands.

As a result of the issues identified above there had been a number of questions that special school Headteachers had met to consider, these were summarise in the report. Following those responses 4 options had been identified and the majority of special school Headteachers had chosen the option to change the percentage allocation but keep the banding amounts (the implications of which had been set out in Appendix A(2))

Representatives asked why those mainstream schools (5 in total) with Resource Provision Places had not been included in the review? It was reported that had been the previously agreed position but that could be considered as part of the further work planned.

The Chair reported that it was the long term intention to move the funding bands so that they better reflected the national average for the respective bands.

It was agreed: (1) The revised funding of special schools in line with appendix A (2) for 2015/16 be approved.

(2) That a more detailed financial review of the funding for Newbridge and New Greenhall schools together with those schools with Resource Provision Places be undertaken.

(3) That the national position continue to be reviewed in light of the “call for evidence” review.

5. School High Needs Block Allocation 2015/16:

Mr McDonald presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) informing members that in accordance with the decision taken at Minute 5 of the last meeting, the following High Needs Block budget allocations had now been made been

| <u>High Needs Funding Block 2015/16</u> | £m |
|--|-----------|
| Maintained Special Schools | 12.678 |
| Statements | 2.000 |
| Sensory/TESS | 1.651 |

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Independent Special School Fees | 1.600 |
| Post 16 Base Funding Top Up Funding (External) | 1.300 |
| Alternative Provision (Top Up Funding) | 1.106 |
| Support Services | 1.063 |
| Resourced Provision | 0.481 |
| Contingency | 0.240 |
| Children in Care Team | 0.172 |
| Disproportionate SEN allocation | 0.100 |
| | <u>22.391</u> |

A representative asked if the contingency sum would be available for all schools to bid for in relation to meeting SEND needs in those schools? Ms Nelson confirmed that the contingency fund related to exceptional needs from special schools only and mainstream schools would be eligible to make bids for funding from the supplementary fund (see Minute 9.2 below)

It was agreed: That the report be accepted.

6. **Proposed Establishment of an Observation and Assessment Provision to Support Children in Key Stage 1:**

Mr McDonald presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) informing members of proposals for the establishment of observation and assessment provision to support children in Key Stage 1 (R-Y2) who were at risk of permanent exclusion and additional permanent KS1 places for children assessed as having social emotional and mental health needs (SEMH)

Ms Nelson identified this as a long standing problem and that a number of options to resolve this situation had been considered, including :

- Extend the age range within the PRU
- Develop provision in an existing resourced school which offers observation and assessment places
- Develop provision within a special school

The preferred option was to develop this provision within Willow Grove School and the report identified the reasons for that proposal. The report set out the various options and risks associated with those options.

Representatives asked if there was provision elsewhere in the Borough and Ms Nelson confirmed that whilst there was some resource provision there were no places available on demand as was often required.

It was agreed: (1) That the proposal to develop an additional 7 planned places within Reception and KS1 at Willow Grove School and 6 observation and assessment places to be funded when needed, be approved

(2) That the creation of the above places to be facilitated using capital funding of £0.080m - £0.110m from the basic need capital funding contingency and the balance of £0.120m met from the under spend in the 2013/14 High Needs Block. The revenue cost of additional places to be met from the 2015/16 High Needs Block allocation.

7. Review of Constitution and Working Practices:

The Clerk presented a report (circulated prior to the meeting) on a review of the Constitution of the Forum and areas for consideration in relation to present working practices so that they met the DfE Good Practice Guidance.

Representatives asked for clarification of the arrangements for determination of school representatives on the Forum.

It was agreed: That consideration of this item be deferred to the next meeting and the information now requested be reported at that time.

8. Universal Infant Free School Meals Data.

Mr Winter presented a report (circulated at the meeting) on the latest data relating to applications for free school meals (FSM) following the decision by the Government to provide infant aged children with universal access to school meals. One of the consequences of the decision had been to reduce the number of parents applying for FSM which would in due course impact on the number of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium Funding.

The Authority continued to work hard to ensure parents continued to make application and where possible to grant automatic entitlement to those pupils where the existing information showed they were eligible for FSM. The Authority was working with schools to help raise awareness and understanding of the broader educational implications for parents should they decide not to make application for FSM where eligible.

School representatives reported on initiatives they had taken to inform parents and encourage them to continue to make application for FSM; however the application process was complex and there was evidence of reduced levels of application.

Ms Nelson highlighted the need for the Benefits Service to communicate as early as possible with schools on take-up of FSM and actions taken by the LA to promote take-up.

It was agreed: That the report be accepted.

9. Any Other Business:

9.1 School Banking Arrangements - Update

Further to Minute 11.3 of the meeting of the Forum held on 9th October 2014, Mr Myers reported on the process for Barclay's Bank to provide banking services to Wigan schools from April 2015. He reported on the planned benefits to be rolled out to schools, including access to on-line banking; BACS payment facilities; and direct debits for LA services. Detailed information on this would be issued to schools shortly in the regular Newsletter.

A representative asked if it would be possible for staff in schools to have access to their pay-slips on-line? Ms Nelson agreed to raise this with Resources Directorate.

It was agreed: That the report be accepted.

9.2 Supplementary Funding Bids

Ms Nelson reported that school would shortly receive information on the process and timescale for any applications for supplementary funding.

10. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 5 May 2015 at 1.30 p.m. at Hawkley Hall High School. (members to note venue).

meeting closed at 2.30 p.m.