

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY, 5TH APRIL, 2019**

In Attendance:-

Deborah Ball – Treeton Primary (Academy) (in the Chair)
Lianne Camaish - Aspire
Dom Curran – Aston Academy (Academy)
Pepe Di'lasio - Assistant Director, Education (RMBC)
Dean Fenton – Head of Service (RMBC)
Peter Gerrard – Nursery Schools (Maintained)
Neil Hardwick – Head of Finance (RMBC)
Peter Haynes - Woods Woods Academy Trust
Christina Hill – GMB Rep
Mary Jarrett – Head of Inclusion (RMBC)
Jenny Lingrell – Assistant Director (RMBC)
Sultan Mahmood – Unison Rep
David Naisbitt – Oakwood High School (Academy)
Vera Njelic – Finance (RMBC)
Tracey Priestly – Human Resources (RMBC)
Alan Richards – Secondary Governors
Paul Silvester – Newman Special School (Maintained)
Helen Simpson – Ferham Primary School (Maintained)
Marie Titterton – Herringthorpe Infant School (Maintained)
Nevine Towers – Diocese of Sheffield

Debbie Pons - Clerk

Apologies for Absence:-

Paula Dobbin - Redscope Primary School
Chris Harris - Wickersley Partnership Trust
Andy Krabbendam – KPI & Harthill Primary (EHT Maintained)
Kirsty Peart, Sitwell Infant School (Maintained)
Lynne Pepper – Herringthorpe Infant School (Maintained)
Steve Scott – PVI Rep
Jon Stonehouse – DCS (RMBC)

99. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

100. MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL FORUM MEETING HELD ON 18TH JANUARY 2019

Agreed:- That the minutes of the last meeting held on 18th January 2019 be approved as a true and accurate record.

101. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

102. SCHOOL FORUM REPRESENTATION & RESPONSIBILITIES

An updated copy of the Schools' Forum membership was circulated at the meeting, which was separated into respective group positions and provided as a reminder of the powers and responsibilities.

It was noted that schools and academies members together must number at least two-thirds of the total membership of the Schools' Forum and the balance between maintained primary, maintained secondary and academies members must be broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category.

The ESFA on 28th March, 2019 communicated to all Local Authorities the requirements and compositions of School Forums to ensure they were complying with governing regulations and the ESFA Schools' Forums good practice guide.

The four vacancies for Primary Academy representatives and the vacancy for a representative for the Diocese of Hallam were particularly noted.

The Forum looked at the various permutations where representatives may have a dual role as part of the membership and the voting arrangements accordingly.

Whilst every effort would be made to seek representatives to fill all the vacant positions, the Diocese of Hallam would need to be contacted to see if they specifically would like to nominate a representative.

Agreed:- (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That representations from the relevant groups be sought to fill as many vacancies as possible, particularly in respect of the Primary Academy Heads and this be advertised and shared with relevant officers to follow up to ensure this was in line with ESFA guidance and fit for purpose.

(3) That contact be made direct with the Diocese of Hallam to ascertain whether or not they wish to be represented on the Forum.

103. DSG DEFICIT RECOVERY PLAN

Neil Hardwick, Head of CYPS Finance, introduced the report which set out details of the responses from the Department of Education following circulation of a consultation document to all Local Authorities with education responsibilities, outlining proposed details of the recovery plan process and asking for comments.

This followed the Department for Education (DfE) previously announcing that Local Authorities would be required to submit a recovery plan if they had a cumulative deficit of 1% or more of their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), starting at the end of the 2018 to 2019 financial year. The plan should explain in detail how the Local Authority intended to bring its DSG account into balance.

Due to a number of Local Authorities asking if the DfE could provide a template for the recovery plans a template had been produced and published.

It was also noted that a number of Local Authorities had indicated that if they had a deficit of 1% or more, a five year rather than three year plan would allow them adequate time to bring their DSG deficits into balance whilst simultaneously budgeting within the resources available to them.

Given the urgency of the situation, DfE had decided to maintain the three year target, but if any Local Authority believed its recovery plan should extend over more than three years then detailed evidence must be provided explaining why this timescale was not achievable.

The template must be returned to the DfE by the 30th June, 2019.

The Forum discussed at length the current DSG deficit, timeframe for plans to be submitted, the need for further discussion at a sub-group, acknowledgement that this was a national problem and the need for a detailed repayment plan to be formulated.

Agreed:- (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That a sub-group be arranged and invitations sent to relevant Forum Members.

(3) That a further report be submitted to the Schools' Forum next meeting in June, prior to the deadline for the recovery plan to be submitted to the DfE.

104. SEND SUFFICIENCY/SEMH STRATEGY - IMPACT ON THE HIGH NEEDS BUDGET

Jenny, Lingrell, Assistant Director – Commissioning, Performance and Inclusion, and Mary Jarrett, Head of Inclusion, gave a presentation on the SEND Sufficiency/SEMH Strategy and its impact on the High Needs Budget.

The presentation specifically covered:-

- The High Needs Budget.

- Key Lines of Enquiry.
- £36 million Budget with £5.3 million Pressures in the areas of:-
 - Post 16 Transport (£160k).
 - Equipment Budget (105k).
 - Inclusion Services (£730k).
 - Total Budget of Special Schools (£13 million).
 - Out of Authority Provision (£4.4 million).
- The Five Year Plan.
- Forecast – EHCP Growth.
- Forecast – Population Growth Age/Key Stage Groups.
- Forecast – Primary Need Growth.
- Primary Needs.
- Forecast for School/College Provision.
- Forecast for School/College Provision Out of Authority Area.
- Phase 1 of the SEND Sufficiency Project.
- Phases 2 and 3.
- Increased Use of Inclusion Units – 50 Places.
- Timescales.
- Criteria for Business Cases and Evidence of Deliverable Outcomes from September, 2019.
- Next Steps.

Discussion ensued and was clarification sought on the top-ups for EHCP, specialist provision and whether additional special school special schools places were the answer, the high costs associated with out of authority placements (where children were accessing places in independent schools), adequacy of the budget and the three year programme to increase the number of SEND places by 125.

Jenny Lingrell advised that a reminder email was to be circulated to all Head Teachers, as of today, about the SEND Sufficiency process with a deadline of 31st May, 2019, to encourage any suggestions/thoughts/ideas about any alternative provision and to explore any pockets of good practice that currently existed in schools.

The Chair also sought further information on the number of children permanently excluded, how many were returned to mainstream and the need for intensive outreach work that may be required to prevent a permanent exclusion occurring.

The Forum were advised that as an Authority Rotherham mirrored what was happening nationally with exclusions and whilst the picture was negative, more students were being kept in school longer. However, the last two weeks had seen a rise in the number of students permanently excluded from school.

Whilst it was noted some schools were working incredibly hard to maintain

students who were at risk of permanent exclusion, the lowering numbers of support staff and limited resource were making this harder to achieve.

In terms of out of area placements further information was sought on the reasons for seeking an out of area placement, perception of parents, local provision, impact of such a provision on the budget and how Rotherham was also a net importer of students to our Special Schools.

It was difficult to determine how much in financial terms was coming in due to how the High Needs Block took off and added back in. This was a challenge for the Local Authority, but there was an appetite to work together with Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield.

There would need to be support to parents and to work with them to provide reassurance that Rotherham schools could meet the needs of their children and to challenge appropriately parental preference where there was sufficient evidence to do so.

Rotherham clearly needed to market its specialist provision more as it was unable to compete with the large multi-national organisations. However, its special schools were now full, but further work was needed on how to access short term resource within a mainstream setting.

Over the next year an Inclusion Review would look at developing access to additional SEN funding for children and young people in crisis to enable schools to respond more quickly to children and young people's needs.

Agreed:- That the presentation be received and the contents noted.

105. APPRENTICESHIP LEVY

The Chair welcomed Tracey Priestley from Human Resources who provided information on the Apprenticeship Levy which commenced in April, 2017. The Council paid approximately £57,000 a month into the online Apprenticeship Service account and the Government then added 10%. This Levy could only be used to pay for apprenticeship training and final assessments.

The Public Sector Apprenticeship Target Public Sector challenged employers to 2.3% of its employees starting an apprenticeship annually and the Council target was for 142 apprenticeship 'starts' each year until March, 2021; this also included Local Authority Schools.

These apprenticeships were work-based learning to meet employer needs and were open to anyone of any age and were for newly recruited apprentices or employees who were to be developed to meet current and future need.

The benefits to schools would not only enable proactive succession

planning, would improve performance, develop skills, knowledge and behaviours and assist with employee retention/engagement. This was a cost effective way for a school to develop a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce.

Further information was provided on how schools could tap into this resource, what apprenticeships may be available to schools, the application process and how this resource could assist with some of the budget pressures being faced with no limit to cost or places at the current time.

It was also pointed out that there were also a number of free retirement planning training sessions, which could be provided on a twilight basis. Further information was available and schools should make contact if they wished to become a host.

Agreed:- (1) That the presentation be received and the contents noted.

(2) That further information be shared with schools about the Apprenticeship Levy and the application process and the free twilight sessions that were also available.

106. UPDATE ON ROTHERHAM SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

Vera Njegić, Principal Finance Officer, introduced the circulated report which detailed a revision on the Rotherham Scheme for Financing Schools for the delegation of financial and managerial powers to Governing Bodies of schools and the regulations and conditions by which the Governing Bodies should abide, in order to remain accountable to the public and the Authority.

Details would be circulated to relevant schools to whom this applied and who were appended to the report.

Agreed:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

107. UPDATE ON SCHOOLS VOLUNTARY FUND POLICY

Neil Hardwick, Head of CYPS Finance, introduced the report which provided an update on the School Voluntary Fund which was to be created wherever money was collected from pupils, or other sources, to be spent for the general benefit of the pupils or the school as a whole.

A School Voluntary Fund, a private account run by the Governors of the school, was held alongside a school's public funds. The Head Teacher was responsible for ensuring that these funds were operated in accordance with the regulations, which were designed to assist and protect those involved in the operation of School Voluntary Fund activities and also to ensure that all monies were properly accounted for.

Details about the Schools' Voluntary Fund Policy was to be circulated shortly.

Agreed:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

108. INFORMATION ON NON-DSG GRANT FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR 2019/20

Neil Hardwick, Head of CYPS Finance, introduced the report, which provided an update as to the 2019/20 non-dedicated schools grant funding streams, teachers' pay grant, universal infant school meals, free school meals supplementary grant, pupil premium and Year 7 catch up premium.

Agreed:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

109. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Sub-Groups

Paul Sylvester confirmed that the Finance Sub-Group had not yet had a further meeting.

The Forum suggested that rather than having three separate Sub-Groups it was better to have one and for specific meetings to be dedicated to specific discussion items.

Terms of Reference for the Sub-Groups had already been agreed and it was suggested that consideration be given to suitable dates/times for 2019 for this Sub-Group to meet which would then be circulated to the relevant members.

Feedback from the Sub-Group should be included as a standing item on all future agendas to ensure information/feedback from the Sub-Group was provided to the Schools' Forum.

Agreed:- That consideration be given to suitable dates/times/venues of Sub-Group meetings moving forward.

110. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum take place on Friday, 21st June, 2019 at 8.30 a.m. at Rockingham Development Centre.