

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY 14 JANUARY 2022**

In Attendance:-

Paul Silvester – Newman Special School (Maintained) (in the Chair);
John Coleman – Nexus MAT
Dom Curran – Aston (Academy)
Councillor Victoria Cusworth – Cabinet Member for CYPS
Pepe Di’Lasio, Head of Wales (Academy)
Dean Fenton, Head of ATE, CYPS
Nathan Heath – Assistant Director of Education, CYPS
Ian Henderson - H.R. Officer, RMBC
Neil Hardwick – Head of Finance, CYPS
Janet Hodgkinson – GMB Representative
Angela McComb – Primary Maintained Governor
David Naisbitt – Oakwood High (Academy)
Vera Njelic - Principal Finance Officer, RMBC
Kirsty Peart - Sitwell Infant (Maintained)
Lynne Pepper – Herringthorpe Infant (Maintained) Debbie Pons – Clerk, RMBC
Colin Price – NEU Representative
Alan Richards – Secondary Governor
Steve Scott – PVI Sector
Sharon Stones – Head of Arnold Nursery and Children’s Centre
Nevine Towers – Diocese of Sheffield
Mick Burns – NEU (Observer)

Apologies were received from:-

Deborah Ball (Treeton Primary (Academy))
Rajmund Brent – Primary Maintained Governor
Lianne Camaish, Aspire
Andy Krabbendam – CEO JMAT (Academy)

15. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to today’s virtual meeting and introductions were made.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest reported.

17. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes from the previous meeting held on 19th November, 2021.

Agreed:- That the minutes be approved.

18. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

19. FEEDBACK FROM HIGH NEEDS SUB-GROUP

Nathan Heath, Assistant Director of Education, provided an update on feedback following a meeting of the High Needs Sub-Group.

It had been the intention to provide further information on the proposals for a "Safety Valve" position for Rotherham. However, no other detail was available until a decision was made by the DfE.

It was hoped that a full update could be provided at the next meeting of the Sub-Group in due course when the scene could be set and the challenges and future workstreams agreed with key areas.

At this stage a date for the next meeting had not been set until the decision from the DfE was known and key elements determined.

Agreed:- That the update be received the content noted.

20. 2022/2023 EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA

Aileen Chambers, Head of Service – Early Years and Childcare, introduced the report which set out the detail of the statutory guidance in place for the allocation of early education funding; the current position and proposals for the 2022/23 allocation.

Following the outcome of the Department for Education's (DfE) Early Years national funding formula consultation in 2016 a national single funding formula was introduced by the DfE in 2017/18 for the allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant Early Years Block early education funding to all schools and providers.

Local Authorities (LAs) were required to allocate the funding to early education providers based on a local funding formula made up of a single base rate and a mandatory deprivation supplement (for 3/4 year old early education). Local Authorities could retain 5% of the 3/4 year old early years funding allocation to fund central services.

The Early Years Block funding for 2022/23 was to be allocated initially as an 'indicative' allocation in January, 2022. The usual process was for the ESFA to allocate an indicative funding allocation based on the previous year January Census data with two further adjustments - one during the year (July) based on the January 2022 Census data and further adjusted in July 2023 based on 5/12ths of January 2022 Census and 7/12ths of January 2023 Census. The process was amended for the 2021/22 budget due to Covid , but this would revert to this formula in 2022/23.

The rate that the Local Authority received from the DfE was to increase in 2022/23 and it was noted that the funding rate had increased each year from 2020/21. Prior to that the funding rate had remained static for three

years.

The current local formula, was consulted on prior to introduction in 2017/18 and the deprivation supplement was reviewed again in January, 2018.

Details on the 2021/22 projections were outlined, whilst noting that the Early Years block typically generated a reserve due to the way in which the funding was calculated and distributed. The reserve amount had been used since 2018/19 to fund the Inclusion Support Grant at a cost of approximately £410k per annum.

Due to the impact of Covid, the DfE amended the funding allocation formula for 2020/21 and 2021/22 as well as the distribution requirements in 2020/21. These changes have had a significant impact on the overall budget. No reserve was generated in 2020/21 and the previous reserves were expected to be fully utilised to cover the Inclusion Support Grant (ISG) in 2020/21 and initially projected ISG allocation in 2021/22.

The demand for ISG had increased this year due to the impact of Covid on children's development and the ISG allocation was projected to exceed the identified allocation (£390k) by £150k leading to a total spend of £540k.

The EY Block had a reserve of £430k (includes Disability Access Fund (DAF)) and EY projections would generate a reserve of approximately £223k in year this year which would cover the ISG overspend and leave a reserve of £113k to carry forward.

It was uncertain whether this demand would reduce in 2022/23.

Further information was provided on maintaining the local funding formula, the Inclusion Support Grant budget being approved from EY Block Reserve (including DAF reserve) and High Needs Block and the temporary increase in capacity in EY&CS to review usage of ISG.

In terms of two year old early education it was noted how the Golden Ticket approach was being trialled in the Central area of the borough to increase take-up by reducing the barrier of carrying out eligibility checks on DfE identified families prior to taking up a place.

In addition, it was also proposed to implement a local criterion to fund Special Guardianship two year olds where they do not meet the DfE criteria.

Forum Members welcomed the positive report and were pleased to see the uptake within early years education in an area hit hard as a result of the pandemic and the positive use of the "Golden Ticket" for two year olds.

Clarification was sought on the use of thirty hour places on the ISG rate increases.

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

(2) That the Local Authority centrally retain 5% of 3/4 year old and 30 hour budgets.

21. **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT MONITORING & BROKERING GRANT CONSULTATION**

Nathan Heath, Assistant Director of Education, provided an overview of the report now submitted which detailed how the DfE had launched a consultation on future funding arrangements beyond March 2022.

The proposal was to remove the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant and enable all improvement activity, including that provided in connection with core improvement activities, to be funded in the same way via de-delegation from schools' budget shares.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation, DfE were proposing to phase in this change over two years, with the grant being paid at a 50% level in 2022-23, with full removal taking place in April, 2023.

The DfE rationale for the change and consultation was to create greater parity between how school improvement was funded in the maintained sector and the academy sector, by enabling Local Authorities to ask maintained schools to contribute to the cost of it.

This proposal linked to the Government's longer-term ambition for all schools to become academies – where Councils would no longer maintain schools.

The Council had consulted with maintained schools around de-delegated funding to support core school improvement activities currently utilised through School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant and responses received.

It was noted that schools funding was increasing by 3.2% overall in 2022/2023. As a consequence all schools would see an increase in their funding allocation compared to 2021/2022. Agreement to de-delegate would have limited impact on individual school budgets due to this year on year % increase.

RMBC are seeking the views of all maintained school on two options:-

Option 1

De-delegate at a rate of £10 per pupil, to continue current core school Improvement activities. In 2022-2023 financial year this will equate to 50% of the reduction in school improvement brokerage grant as outlined below.

Option 2

De-delegate at a higher rate of £19 per pupil to support additional improvement services beyond the current core school improvement activities.

Questions were asked of the percentage returns of consultation and this was confirmed at 70%, but overall Option 2 was supported.

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

(2) That Option 2 be supported.

(Vote:- 2 For 0 Against)

22. 2022/2023 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT SCHOOL BLOCK FUNDING FORMULA

Consideration was given to the report presented by Vera Njelic, Principal Officer (Schools Finance), which provided an update as to the 2022/2023 Dedicated Schools Grant funding for Rotherham.

On 16th December 2021, the Department for Education issued the indicative DSG allocations for the 2022/2023 financial year. Details of Rotherham's allocations were set out in the report submitted and totalled £285.954m.

The final allocation was mainly based on funding rates of £4,658.05 for primary children (£4,525.65 in 2021/2022) and £6,138.15 for secondary children (£5,997.26 in 2021/2022) as at the October 2021 pupil census count plus actual amounts for premises related costs and historic pupil growth.

The October 2021 census count showed that there are a total number of pupils across the borough of 39,884; this was an increase of 184 (-124 in primary and +308 in secondary) pupils from the October 2020 census count.

The overall school block funding allocation had increased from £211.31m in 2021/2022 to £218.36m in 2022/2023.

The Forum at its meeting on the 19th November 2021 agreed to a request to transfer 1.5% from the school block to the high needs block to be submitted to the Secretary of State. If this request did not gain approval 0.5% would be transferred, and required the Local Authority to submit two versions of the Pro-forma Tool (APT) in respect of DSG schools block allocation.

A further report providing details of the rates applied to the individual formula funding rates would be presented to Schools Forum at the next

meeting in April 2022. The rates applied would continue to be in line with the previous decisions reached in respect of the gradual transition to the national funding formula.

Further information was provided on the comparisons for the Central Services Schools Block and the arrangements for pupil premium.

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

23. SCHOOLS SUPPLEMENTARY GRANT 2022 TO 2023: METHODOLOGY

Neil Hardwick, Head of Schools Finance, presented the report which detailed how the autumn 2021 spending review confirmed £1.6 billion funding for schools and high needs, for the 2022 to 2023 financial year, above the previous DSG settlement for that year.

In the 2022 to 2023 financial year, schools would be allocated £1.2 billion of this additional funding (£6m to Rotherham), to provide support for the costs of the Health and Social Care Levy and wider costs. This funding would be allocated through the Schools Supplementary Grant 2022 to 2023.

In addition to the Schools Supplementary Grant, Local Authorities have been allocated £325 million additional high needs funding for 2022 to 2023 (£1.7m to Rotherham), on top of the dedicated schools grant high needs block allocations, calculated under the national funding formula.

Details of the eligibility for the grant, how this would be paid and the funding rates were provided.

School-level allocations would be published in spring 2022 and would show the total funding allocated for each applicable phase of provision. Conditions of grant would be published alongside the school-level allocations for early years, 5 to 16 and Post 16.

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

24. SAFETY VALVE

Nathan Heath, Assistant Director of Education, confirmed there was no additional information to report at this stage, but would provide an update once the DfE had confirmed their intentions.

25. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following issues were highlighted:-

(a) Free School Meal Allocation

Free School Meals would continue to be paid for February Half Term and Easter, 2022. The validation process would again commence.

(b) Covid-19

Information had been shared with schools about reclaiming any Covid related costs.

(c) Rotherham's Year of Reading

Councillor Cusworth, Cabinet Member, extended an invitation to any school if they wished her to be involved in any reading with students and to share her love of books.

26. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Schools' Forum take place on a virtual basis on Friday, 8th April, 2022 at 8.30 a.m.