ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER, 2020

In Attendance:- Deborah Ball (Treeton Primary (Academy) (in the Chair);
Raymund Brent – Primary Maintained Governor
John Coleman – Nexus MAT
Dom Curran – Aston Academy (Academy)
Pepe Di'lasio – Wales High (Academy)
Neil Hardwick – Head of Finance, CYPS, RMBC
Nathan Heath – Assistant Director of Education, CYPS, RMBC
Janet Hodkinson – GMB Representative
Andy Krabbendam – Kiveton Park Infant and Harthill Primary (Academy)
Jenny Lingrell – Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Inclusion, CYPS, RMBC
Angela McComb – Primary Maintained Governor
David Naisbitt – Oakwood High (Academy)
Vera Njegic - Principal Finance Officer, RMBC
Nevine Towers – Diocese of Sheffield
Debbie Pons – Clerk, RMBC
Steve Scott – PVI Sector
Sharon Stones – Head of Arnold Nursery and Children's Centre
Paul Silvester – Newman Special School (Maintained)
Councillor Gordon Watson – Deputy Leader

Apologies were received from:-
Dean Fenton - Head of Access to Education
Ian Henderson, H.R. Officer, RMBC
Mary Jarret – Head of Inclusion, RMBC
Kirsty Peart - Sitwell Infant (Maintained)
Alan Richards – Secondary Governor

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest to report.

50. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26th June, 2020.

Agreed:- That the minutes of the last meeting held on 26th June, 2020, be approved as a true and accurate record.

51. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising that were no contained within the agenda items for this meeting.

52. DSG MID-YEAR UPDATE

Neil Hardwick, Head of Finance for Children and Young People's Service, introduced the report which provided an update on the wider dedicated schools grant (DSG) position for 2020/21 and to ensure Schools Forum Members were aware of the current year position of the wider dedicated schools grant (DSG) and the impact this had on the DSG reserve.

It was pointed out that on closure of the 2019/20 accounts the Council had not been notified of the final early years' adjustment for 2019/20 as a result of the January schools and early years' census. The Council estimated that this would be a £50k addition. However, on the 17th July, 2020 the ESFA provided the final allocations to local authorities and for Rotherham the adjustment was an increase in funding of £43k. The overall impact of the ESFA final allocations was that the Council received £7k less income than initially anticipated

In terms of the 2020/21 overall DSG position the initial allocations were issued in December, 2019 and the latest July, 2020 allocations were updated and detailed as per the submitted report.

The High Needs adjustment could be analysed with additional funding for Imported Places (Jan 20 Census) (£255k). This adjustment was to reflect any changes either in the placement by a local authority of pupils in schools and colleges located in other local authority areas (exports), or in the funding required by schools and colleges accepting pupils and students resident in other local authority areas (imports).

As at the end of August (period 5), the anticipated outturn position indicated that Early Years were currently forecasting a breakeven position at year end; the High Needs DSG had a forecast overspend of £0.420m based on the DSG recovery plan and included anticipated growth on EHCs numbers and the implementation of new developments linked to the SEND Sufficiency Strategy.

Based on the above, the level of DSG central reserves deficit would increase from a deficit of £19.892m (carried forward from 2019/20) to £20.312m at the end of 2020/21 and this would equate to 8.03% of the overall DSG allocation.

In summary, the financial sustainability of the High Needs Block remained a significant cause for concern for the borough which would require addressing for 2021/22.

It was also pointed out that an email had since been received from the ESFA on the 16th September, 2020 confirming a DSG management template had been devised for local authorities with a finance deficit. It was, therefore, suggested this be completed and presented to the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum in November, 2020 to outline the latest projections and strategies.

Forum Members welcomed the report, but expressed some concern with the impact of COVID-19 on the forecasts in terms of potential requests for more EHCP assessments. Whilst this was an area that could spike following the schools' return after the summer break, it would continue to be closely monitored.

Agreed:- That the current position be noted.

ACTION:- ALL

53. NEW FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vera Njegic, Schools' Finance, introduced the report which provided information relating to the recently announced School Funding Update setting out the key aspects to schools, high needs and central school services national funding formula for 2021/2022.

Provisional funding allocations for 2021/2022 through the schools, high needs and central services national funding formula (NFF) have been published. The 5-16 core schools and high needs budget would, compared to 2019/20 rise by £4.8 billion in 2021/22 and £7.1 billion in 2022/23.

Funding from the teachers' pay grant and the teachers' pension employer contribution grant, including the supplementary fund, had been added to schools' NFF allocations from 2021-22.

The funding had been added to basic per pupil entitlement, to the minimum per pupil funding levels and to schools' baselines so that it was protected through the funding floor. This would simplify the allocation of this funding – worth almost £2bn a year – recognising the fact that these grants were part of schools' core budgets and providing reassurance to schools and local authorities that this funding would continue to be provided.

The minimum per pupil amounts were also set to increase; the current levels were £3,750 for primary and £5,000 for secondary schools. For 2021/2022 the these would increase to £4,000 and £5,150 for primary and secondary respectively. Schools would also receive an additional £180 and £265 per pupil respectively to cover additional teachers' pay and pension costs previously funded through the separate grants. In addition, for 2021/2022 the minimum funding guarantee would be between +0.5% and +2.00% (for 2020/2021 the MFG was between +0.5% and +1.84%).

Local Authorities would only be able to transfer 0.5% of their Schools block with School Forum approval. To transfer more than this or any amount without School Forum approval would require a disapplication request to the Secretary of State.

Within the allocations announced above, £730m had been included in 2021/22 to support children and young people with special educational

needs. The high needs NFF would ensure that every Local Authority received an increase of at least 8% per head of population.

Central schools services funding in 2021-22 would increase by 4% for the ongoing responsibilities that Local Authorities continue to have for all schools.

Agreed:- That the report be received, the contents noted and for all information to be shared with school/academies represented by Schools' Forum Members.

ACTION:- ALL

54. NEW FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vera Njegic, Schools' Finance, introduced the report which provided details of the recently announced School Funding Update relating to funding to support children and young people to catch up following disruption to their education as a result of Coronavirus (Covid-19) and Early Years this autumn term.

On 20th July, 2020 the Government announced £1 billion of funding to support children and young people to catch up. This included a one-off universal £650 million catch-up premium for the 2020/2021 academic year and a £350 million National Tutoring Programme for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

The £650 million of universal catch-up premium would be available for all mainstream and special schools and alternative provision. Funding would be provided for pupils with EHC plans who were educated in independent special schools. Schools' allocations would be calculated on a per pupil basis, providing each mainstream school with a total of £80 for each pupil in years reception through to eleven. Special and AP schools would be provided with £240 for each place for the 2020/2021 academic year.

It was noted funding would be provided in three tranches with an initial part payment in Autumn 2020. As the catch-up premium had been designed to mitigate the effects of the unique disruption caused by coronavirus (COVID-19), the grant would only be available for the 2020 to 2021 academic year. It would not be added to schools' baselines in calculating future years' funding allocations.

Schools have the flexibility to spend their funding and a support guide for schools with evidence-based approaches to catch up for all students had been published.

The £350 million National Tutoring programme also provided additional targeted support for those children and young people who needed the most help. Schools and academies would need to submit an application to the ESFA to access this programme and subsidised tutoring.

The Government had also announced its position on funding local authorities and childcare providers for the early years free entitlements for the 2020 autumn term, confirming that they would fund all childcare at the higher of the current and previous autumn terms numbers. This meant that even if providers were open, but caring for fewer children than they usually would be in the autumn term as a result of lower demand from parents or for public health reasons, they could continue to be funded as if the pandemic were not happening. This gave another term of secure income to nurseries and childminders.

Forum Members welcomed the report, but sought clarification on the application and funding process for the National Tutoring Programme and were advised the Programme had been allocated funding as part of the Government's £1 billion Coronavirus Catch-Up Package. This funding would be used to subsidise 15-hour programmes of tuition with 75% of the cost covered by the National Tutoring Programme and 25% by the school.

Agreed:- That the report be received, the contents noted and for all information to be shared with school/academies represented by Schools' Forum Members.

ACTION:- ALL

55. SEND JOINT COMMISSIONING STRATEGY, SEMH STRATEGY AND SEND SUFFICIENCY

Further to Minute No. 42 of the previous meeting held on 26th June, 2020, Jenny Lingrell, Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Inclusion, gave a presentation, using Powerpoint, on progress of the Rotherham Social, Emotional & Mental Health Strategy, SEND Sufficiency and SEND Joint Commissioning, a copy of which would be circulated to all Schools' Forum Members after the meeting.

The presentation drew specific focus to:-

- Within the Rotherham Social, Emotional & Mental Health Strategy:-
    - **Sufficiency:** develop local education provision that responds to need – this will include flexible and specialist provision:-

      Maltby Hilltop, Waverley, Milton Special, Wales High, Brinsworth and Thomas Rotherham College project developments.

      Developing 'turnaround provision' in partnership with the Willow Tree Trust and Wickersley Partnership Trust.

      Phase one: pilot with small number of children with identified need within the Trust and **Phase two:** development of

borough-wide offer with clear pathways and governance and would align with the Isos findings and recommendations and include joint work with the DfE to meet the guidance for the statutory processes.

- **Seamless Pathways:** ensure that pathways to support are connected and aligned and develop a clear behaviour pathway that includes responses to attachment and trauma:-

  Phase one: implementation of the mental health trailblazer
  Phase two: pathway review

  - Refreshed neuro-developmental pathway will be launched before end September.
  - Commencing review of psychological therapies pathway.
  - Aligning with Covid-19 responses and learning.

  The Wellbeing for Education Return project had two elements; a new national training package providing guidance and resources for education staff on responding to the impact of Covid-19 on the wellbeing of their students and pupils and funding to local authorities to help put local experts in place to work with partners to adapt this training, deliver it to nominated staff in education settings, and provide ongoing advice and support until March 2021

  This does not replace the long-term strategy to introduce new mental health support teams, but developed training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges and tested approaches to delivering four week waiting times for access to NHS mental health support.
  The Anna Freud Link Programme aimed to bring together education and mental health professionals so that more children and young people got the help and support they needed, when they needed it. Online workshops would be facilitated by Anna Freud Centre and participants would need to complete a self-study module prior to attending the workshop and specific requirements for each cohort.

  The Ambition aligned to Rotherham's SEMH Strategy as it built confidence and shared understanding across the workforce, identified and met need early, managed capacity across the system, aligned pathways, avoided duplication, confusion and frustration.

- **Partnerships:** develop and sustain robust inclusion partnerships that enable schools to meet need through a collective approach to responding to the needs of individual children.

- **Evidence-Based Approaches:** ensure that the local authority offer (from Early Help and Inclusion services) is underpinned by evidence-based approaches and aligned with clear pathways.

  Identifying the aims and approach to the project.

  The guiding principles for the Isos Project.

  Continuum of primary inclusion support in Rotherham already starting to be developed through discussions to date and the associated timescales.

- **Workforce:** develop a robust training and support, enabling practitioners to feel confident in responding to the needs of children and young people with SEMH need. This would involve:-

  - Completing a full audit of the current offer of training and workforce and development.
  - Co-producing with stakeholders a comprehensive training offer to support the workforce and families to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.
  - Ensuring that the recommended models are evidence-based or evidence-informed.
  - Making recommendations of where training currently delivered by in-house providers across the system should continue to be commissioned, and where it should be potentially de-commissioned.
  - Ensuring that the offer is clear and that there is no duplication across the system.
  - Researching and recommend options for commissioning external providers of training where this offers high quality and represents value for money.
  - Designing a web-based interface that will enable the children's workforce to identify which training will meet their needs, and support them to access this training.
  - Identifying any gaps, and commission/procure training to meet these needs.
  - Embed the four cornerstones of co-production into the approach.

  Analysis of 14 training providers across Rotherham identified 135 potential training and CPD opportunities (including 7 online).

  Analysis by category of SEND need, conclusions and recommendations.

- Rotherham SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy:-

- Joint work between Rotherham CCG, The Rotherham Foundation Trust and Special Schools to develop Core Competencies Framework and Documented Roles and Responsibilities.
- Roll-out the Health Offer approach across all community health services, so as to provide clarity to schools and wider partners as to health roles and responsibilities.
- Develop joint commissioning arrangements for Home Care arrangements Re-commission short-breaks, identifying opportunities for alignment between the Local Authority and Rotherham CCG. Review Joint Equipment Panel.
- Develop clear joint pathways of support for children and young people who are accessing specialist school places (SEND Education Sufficiency Strategy) Develop an SEN Support Toolkit.
- Review the offer of speech and language to ensure that it is targeted appropriately at need.
- Develop pathways to support the transition for children and young people with long-term conditions.

The Forum were advised that Isos Partnership, engaged to lead a review of Alternative Provision and Partnerships in Rotherham, had been working on the continuum of inclusion support and AP (with a clear understanding of the roles and pathways), the decision-making processes and responsibility for pupils requiring inclusion support and AP; and the funding system, ensuring this supported strategic priorities and the day-to-day operation of inclusion support and AP. It was suggested that the Isos Partnership be invited to the meeting in January, 2021 and present their findings.

Forum Members found the presentation very informative and welcomed the approach being taken forward. An update on progress in due course was welcomed. The whole school understanding of the issues was invaluable.

Discussion ensued on the mandatory training of newly and recently qualified teaching staff and how this could be explored further and strengthened.

Agreed:- (1) That Jenny Lingrell be thanked for her informative presentation.

(2) That the presentation slides be circulated to Forum Members after the meeting for information.

ACTION:- Clerk

56. THE SCHOOL INFORMATION (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2020 - FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY OF MAINTAINED SCHOOLS AND ACADEMY TRUSTS

Vera Njegic, Schools' Finance, introduced the report which provided details of how in 2019 the Department for Education ran a consultation entitled "Financial transparency of local authority maintained schools and academy trusts" and began implementing the proposals as per the Government response.

Further to the consultation, proposals would be implemented as of 1st January, 2021 and would include, amongst others, the DfE publishing names of Local Authorities on gov.uk if they failed to comply with deadlines for returns to the Department.

The DfE would also collect the number of schools with suspended budgets and notices of financial concern through the existing DSG assurance statement signed by the LA Chief Financial Officer (CFO) at the end of the financial year (due September 2021). A new section would be added to the DSG assurance statement that captured the amounts that Local Authorities have recovered from investigating fraud. (September 2021)

A directed revision would be made to Local Authorities schemes for financing schools to make it a requirement for maintained schools to provide them with three-year budget forecasts (starting in 2021/2022) and schools would, therefore, be required to append a list of Related Party Transactions (RPTs) to their response to the question in the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) about their arrangements for managing RPTs.

There would also be a directed revision to LAs' schemes for financing schools, requiring schools to submit a recovery plan to their maintaining authority when their deficit rose above 5%.

The DfE would formalise the approach to working with Local Authorities and include a request at any time during the year for high level action plans.

Under the New Burdens Policy, the Department would compensate Local Authorities for the additional burden that these changes would impose and during 2021-22 through a direct grant to each one, in proportion to the number of maintained schools in that area. An update would be provided to all maintained schools.

Agreed:- That the report be received, the contents noted and for all information to be shared with school/academies represented by Schools' Forum Members.

ACTION:- ALL

57. SCHEME FOR FINANCING LOCAL AUTHORITY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

The details covering this agenda formed part of the discussion as part of the report above.

58. FALLING ROLLS FUND

Neil Hardwick, Head of Finance for Children and Young People's Service, introduced the report which provided information on the operational guidance on falling roles funding.

This funding if approved by Schools Forum after consultation with schools allowed Local Authorities to set aside schools block funding. The fund to support good and outstanding schools with falling rolls, where local planning data showed that the surplus places would be needed within the next three financial years.

The Falling Rolls Funds is ring-fenced and operated in a similar way to the Growth Fund, in the sense that both maintained schools and academies are top sliced for the cost of the Fund and both were eligible to receive support through it.

Criteria for allocating falling rolls funding should contain clear objective trigger points for qualification and a clear formula for calculating allocations.

Discussion ensued on the rationale and validation of the criteria and eligibility of schools and how legitimate approval checks would be made. Guidance on the Fund would be circulated and form part of the consultation.

It was suggested that as part of the consultation on how this Fund could be established, a Sub-Group be arranged and the details shared further.

Agreed:- (1) That the report be received, the contents noted and for all information to be shared with school/academies represented by Schools' Forum Members.

(2) That a Sub-Group be arranged and the Fund on how it could be established and operated in Rotherham be considered.

ACTION:- ALL/Vera Njegic

59. PRIOR ATTAINMENT - FUNDING FORMULA FACTOR

Vera Njegic, Schools' Finance, introduced the briefing note which provided some guidance and definition of the funding formula factor for prior attainment at both primary and secondary level.

Since 2017 to 2018, the DfE have weighted the low prior attainment factor for some secondary year groups so that those who have sat the more challenging KS2 tests introduced in the 2015 to 2016 academic year did not have a disproportionate influence within the total for the prior attainment factor in the mainstream formula.

In 2020 to 2021, the weightings used in 2019 to 2020 for the year 7 to year 9 cohorts have been carried forward, so they will apply to the year 8 to year 10 cohorts respectively.

For the financial year 2020 to 2021, the weightings were:-

- pupils in year 8 in October 2019: 64%
- pupils in year 9 in October 2019: 58%
- pupils in year 10 in October 2019: 48%

This was included under Schedule 3, Paragraph 4 of the 2020 Regulations.

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

ACTION:- ALL

60. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Future nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair of the Rotherham Schools' Forum

The Clerk advised Forum Members of the forthcoming election for Chair and Vice-Chair at the November, 2020 meeting.

It was suggested that consideration could be given to extending the current Chair and Vice-Chair positions for a temporary period given the current position with the Covid-19 pandemic and the virtual arrangements currently in place.

Decisions on the Chair and Vice-Chair positions would be confirmed at the next meeting.

61. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of Rotherham Schools' Forum take place on Friday, 20th November, 2020 at 8.30 a.m. and that it be on a virtual basis unless otherwise indicated.