

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY 15 JANUARY 2021**

In Attendance:-

Deborah Ball (Treeton Primary (Academy) (in the Chair);
Raymund Brent – Primary Maintained Governor
Lianne Camaish, Aspire
Aileen Chambers, Head of Early Years and Childcare, RMBC
John Coleman – Nexus MAT
Pepe Di'lasio – Wales High (Academy)
Neil Hardwick – Head of Finance, CYPS, RMBC
Nathan Heath – Assistant Director of Education, CYPS, RMBC
Ian Henderson, H.R. Officer, RMBC
Janet Hodgkinson – 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 Njelic - Principal Finance Officer, RMBC
Alan Richards – Secondary Governor
Lynne Pepper – Herringthorpe Infant (Maintained)
Debbie Pons – Clerk, RMBC
Steve Scott – PVI Sector
Sharon Stones – Head of Arnold Nursery and Children's Centre
Paul Silvester – Newman Special School (Maintained)
Nevine Towers – Diocese of Sheffield
Councillor Gordon Watson – Deputy Leader

Also in attendance:-

Alison Adair (Observer)

Apologies were received from:-

Dean Fenton - Head of Access to Education
Kirsty Peart - Sitwell Infant (Maintained)
Mary Jarret – Head of Inclusion, RMBC

76. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

77. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest to report.

78. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th November, 2020.

Agreed:- That the minutes of the last meeting held on 20th November, 2020, be approved as a true and accurate record.

79. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

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

80. PRESENTATION FROM THE ISOS PARTNERSHIP

The Chair welcomed Ben Bryant, from the Isos Partnership, and invited him to deliver his presentation on Strengthening inclusion and the use of AP in Rotherham.

His presentation summarised the findings, recommendations and implementation, drawing particular attention to:-

- Introduction and aims of the Project.
- Key findings and case for change.
- Nine recommendations and how these could be put into practice.
- Implementation and next steps.
- Identifying what was needed to strengthen support for inclusion and the use of AP in Rotherham.
- Working co-productively with schools, LA and AP leaders throughout each of the three phases.
- Membership of the Primary Inclusion Working Group: School Leaders.
- Membership of the Secondary Inclusion Working Group: School Leaders.
- LA officers who have been members of and supported both Working Groups.
- The case for change:-
 - ❖ Increasingly complex needs and growing pressure on the system.
 - ❖ A mismatch between current needs and the offer of AP
 - ❖ A lack of strategic clarity, consistency and operational “grip” of decision-making processes and structures.
- Key implications for Schools Forum Members.
- Recommendations: The inclusion continuum in Rotherham developed by the two Inclusion Working Groups.
- Three Recommendations relating to underpinning infrastructure.
- Six Recommendations relating to aspects of a new inclusion and AP

continuum in Rotherham.

- Implementation: Five immediate steps to create the conditions in which the new system can be embedded.

Nathan Heath and Jenny Lingrell positively endorsed the presentation and the findings from the Project and would work collaboratively with School Leaders in moving the Project forward.

Forum Members welcomed the presentation and asked a number of questions which were clarified. These covered:-

- Inclusion age groups and the need for this to be distinct into two separate areas.
- Period of data collection and analysis.
- Strategic governance arrangements and timeframes for the Project in light of the current pandemic.
- Strategic leads and delivery and shaping of the Project.
- Comparative Projects in Yorkshire.
- Clear visions for the future and evolution of the Project.
- Distinct collaborative approaches to delivery and key actions.
- Aspirational targets and the need to align the stringent process.
- Managing expectations and key priorities.

Agreed:- (1) That Ben Bryant be thanked for his attendance and very informative presentation.

(2) That copies of the presentation and the final report be circulated to all School Forum Members.

(3) That an update on progress of the Project be provided to the Schools Forum in due course.

ACTION:- Clerk

81. FEEDBACK FROM HIGH NEEDS SUB-GROUP

Nathan Heath, Assistant Director for Education, gave an update from the High Needs Sub-Group which had taken place before Christmas.

The Sub-Group had considered a number of areas:

- High Needs provision and spend.
- Context of the different budget strands including the mainstream element.
- Special School Sector.
- Overview of shared data.
- Level of SEN and alignment of spend.
- Funding following a child.
- Strategic elements dovetailing with Isos.

The distinct discussions of the Sub-Group were found to be invaluable and a number of key areas needed further focus. It was, therefore, suggested that a further meeting be held with provisional mapping against plans and how key areas aligned. Recommendations would then be made back to the Schools Forum for consideration.

Forum Members suggested that this Sub-Group be well balanced and lead jointly by Nathan Heath and Paul Silvester with clear Terms of Reference.

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

(2) That a further Sub-Group be arranged in due course.

ACTION:- Vera Njegic

82. 2021/2022 EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA

Consideration was given to the report, presented by Aileen Chambers, Head of Service – Early Years and Childcare, which detailed the statutory guidance in place for the allocation of early education funding; the current position and proposals for the 2021/22 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). LAs can retain 5% of the 3/4 year old early years funding allocation to fund central services.

The rate that the Local Authority received from the DfE would increase in 2021/22 from £4.38 per hour to £4.44 for 3/4 year olds and from £5.28 per hour to £5.36 for 2 year olds. Prior to an increase in 2020/21, the funding rate had remained static for 3 years.

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

Further information was provided on the 2020/21 Budget Projections and how 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 and prior to Covid, it was projected that the EY Block would generate a reserve in 2020/21.

This year the DfE amended the funding allocation and distribution requirements due to the pandemic. The annual funding would be based

on 9/12ths of January 2020 census and 3/12ths of January 2021 census. Local authorities were also required to fund all early education providers in the Autumn term 2020 at Autumn 2019 take-up levels as a minimum. This requirement had had a significant impact on the overall budget.

Due to changes in take-up patterns, whilst a number of providers received top-up funding to last year's levels, a significant number of providers had higher take-up levels than last year and received an increased level of funding. This resulted in an increased cost of delivery for Autumn 2020 and it was projected that there would be no contribution to reserves from this year's funding allocation. Depending on January 2021 take-up levels there could be an in-year deficit budget of £50/£100k. This could be offset by utilising the reserve. The DfE have confirmed that funding should be distributed to providers in January 2021 at actual take up levels.

The Disability Access Fund (DAF) had a reserve of £67k carried forward from 2019/20 into 2020/21, which is anticipated to increase in 2020/21 to £98k.

The Early Years block (excluding DAF) has a reserve of £705k carried forward from 2019/20 into 2020/21 it is anticipated that this reserve will reduce to £360k in 2020/21.

The report, as submitted, also detailed the Disability Access Fund and Inclusion Support Grant and how they were funded and made specific reference to the proposal to retain the current local funding formula in 2021/22 as follows:-

Retention for Central Spend	5% of 3 / 4 year old and 30 hour budg
3 / 4 year old hourly rate	£4.14 plus deprivation suppleme eligible (increase of 6p per hour)
3 / 4 year old Deprivation Supplements	Up to 2% of 3 / 4 year old and 30 budgets to be distributed as an addi hourly rate as detailed above, mainta the 10p / 15p supplement
2 year old hourly rate	£5.36 (increase of 8p per hour)
Nursery Stability Funding	Lump sum to be passported to 3 nu schools as required by guidance.

Schools Forum Members were requested to give consideration to the report and recommendation for 5% central retention of the Early Years Block to cover Early Years and Childcare Service delivery costs.

Forum Members welcomed the report, but asked about the rationale when the uptake for disability benefits was low and whether this was more to do with parents not wishing to share their financial details.

The pressure on the sector and the reliance on funding was high. The Department for Education had confirmed the maintained nursery school supplementary funding allocations for April – August 2021, but had highlighted that September 2021 to March 2022 allocations were conditional and they may be subject to change. Confirmation has been received that the Government's commitment to the long-term funding of maintained nursery schools was unchanged and that further information would be available in early 2021.

Forum Members noted the 2021/22 increases in hourly rate for early education providers would only be the second increase they have received in 4 years. This increase was essential for ongoing sustainability as the cost of delivery had increased significantly over the last four years with increases in minimum wage, business rates and running costs. In addition, the increases in delivery costs and reduced take-up due to Covid have had a significant impact on sustainability of the childcare sector.

There was an anticipated DAF reserve of £98k by the end of this year so it was proposed to cease the 2 year old DAF award and allocate the surplus to the Inclusion Support Grant budget in 2021/22.

It was proposed to maintain the current Inclusion Support Grant formula 2021/22. The Inclusion support grant currently topped up the hourly rate paid to £9.23. Due to planned increase in the early education funding hourly rate from April 2021, it was proposed that from April 2021 the inclusion support grant tops up the hourly rate paid to £9.29 per hour. This was an increase of 6p/hour; the hourly rate for two year olds is being increased by 8p/hour, therefore, Inclusion Support contributions for two year olds would reduce by 2p/hour to maintain the same top up rate across both age ranges. The budget was needs led, but was anticipated that spend would remain consistent at £410k.

Should there be a shortfall of carry forward funding/in year EY Block to cover ISG spend it was proposed to carry deficit forward to EY Block in 2022/23.

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

(2) That the 5% central retention of the Early Years Block to cover Early Years and Childcare Service delivery costs be approved.

83. FALLING ROLLS FUNDING CRITERIA

Consideration was given to the report which sought to inform the Schools Forum of the criteria for a Falling Rolls Fund.

Following consultation with all schools a small fund of £50,000 was to be set aside in 2021/2022 to support good schools with falling rolls. It was proposed the criteria for allocating falling rolls funding contained clear objective trigger points for qualification and a clear formula for calculating

allocations.

Further information was provided on the value of the fund and the criteria for allocation. The Forum would be consulted upon before expenditure was incurred.

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

The criteria for the Fund and the Funding Distribution Methodology were set out in detail as part of the report circulated within the agenda packs.

Forum Members welcomed the report, but sought clarification on whether schools would be informed by the Local Authority if they met the criteria or would this require pre-determination before an approach to the Fund was made.

It was noted that all options would be explored, but eligible schools would need to apply.

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

(2) That Forum Members should ensure they made school/academies they represented aware of this information.

84. 2021/2022 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT SCHOOL BLOCK FUNDING FORMULA

Consideration was given to the report presented by Vera Njegic, Schools Finance, which provided an update as to the 2021/22 Dedicated Schools Grant funding for Rotherham along with proposals on the formula for allocation of the schools block and the central schools block element of DSG.

The Department for Education issued the final version of the Authority Pro-forma Tool (APT) to local authorities, with the Autumn 2020 pupil census information shortly before Christmas. The Local Authority had until 21st January 2021 to submit the final version back to the Department for Education.

In October 2020 the Local Authority consulted on the local funding formula decisions as set out in the regulations and the information within the report contained summary information on the impact of those decisions.

On 17th December 2020, the Department for Education issued the indicative DSG allocations for the 2021/22 financial year.

The final allocation was mainly based on funding rates of £4,525.65 for primary children (£4,186.71 in 2020/21) and £5,997.26 for secondary children (£5,604.92 in 2020/21) as at the October 2020 pupil census counts plus actual amounts for premises related costs and historic pupil growth.

The October 2020 census count showed that there were a total number of pupils across the borough of 39,695; this was a decrease of 47 (+202 in primary & - 155 in secondary) pupils from the October 2019 census count.

From the census data it was identified that 64 schools/academies have seen overall decreases in pupils, 7 have remained static and 40 have seen an overall increase in the number of pupils on roll.

As noted previously, MFG protection was on a per pupil basis and did not safeguard against overall reductions in the numbers of pupils within a school/academy.

The report detailed how the overall school block funding allocation had increased from £197.068m in 2020/21 to £211.31m in 2021/22. The increased allocation was due to an increase in funding rates and the funding previously allocated through the teachers' pay and pensions grant now added into the Dedicated Schools Grant.

As agreed at the Schools Forum meeting on the 20th November 2020 a request to transfer 1.5% from the school block to the high needs block was submitted to the Secretary of State on the 23rd November, 2020. If this request did not gain approval 0.5% would be transferred, therefore the Local Authority was required to complete two versions of the Authority Pro-forma Tool (APT).

The report also detailed the Central Services Schools Block and agreed 2021/22 budgets with 2020/21.

Arrangements for pupil premium in 2021 to 2022 were announced on 17th December 2020 showing:-

- From April 2021, pupil premium allocations will be calculated based on the number of eligible pupils recorded by schools in their in October 2020 census.
- Pupil premium and service rates will remain unchanged for the 2021 to 2022 financial year.

Forum Members welcomed the report and the detail in the spreadsheet which was further explained, but sought clarification on the percentage differences of transferring 0.5% and 1.5% from the school block to the high needs block.

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

85. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following items of business were raised:-

(1) Free School Meals

Further to Minute No. 73 of the last meeting of the Schools Forum held on 20th November, 2020 it was noted that the Cabinet had approved the COVID-19 Winter Grant Scheme for free school meals. It was proposed that a similar voucher system would be issued for February half term and allow for consistency across the borough.

Further information would be provided to schools shortly

(2) Dates/Times of Future Meetings

The schedule of meetings for 2021/22 was to be presented for approval to the Council Meeting in March, 2021 and clarification was sought on the proposed date of the Forum's meeting in April, 2022 given the Easter break. It was suggested this be pulled forward to the 8th April, 2022.

(3) Disapplication Request

It was suggested that once this was finalised the Disapplication Request would be circulated to Forum Members for information.

86. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of Rotherham Schools' Forum take place on Friday, 16th April, 2021 at 8.30 a.m. and that it be on a virtual basis unless otherwise indicated.