

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY 8 APRIL 2022**

In Attendance:-

Deborah Ball (Treeton Primary (Academy) (in the Chair);
Lianne Camaish, Aspire
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
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
Sharon Stones – Head of Arnold Nursery and Children's Centre
Nevine Towers – Diocese of Sheffield

Apologies were received from:-

Dom Curran – Aston (Academy)
Neil Hardwick – Head of Finance, CYPS
Andy Krabbendam – CEO JMAT (Academy)
Alan Richards – Secondary Governor

27. MINUTE'S SILENCE - JOHN COLEMAN

The Schools Forum held a minute's silence as a mark of respect following the recent death of long-standing Forum Member, John Coleman.

28. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest reported.

30. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 14TH JANUARY, 2022

Consideration was given to the minutes from the previous meeting held on 14th January, 2022.

Agreed:- That the minutes be approved.

31. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

32. UPDATE ON HIGH NEEDS BLOCK (HNB) OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE 2022/2023

Consideration was given to the report presented by Vera Njegic, Principal Officer (Schools Finance), which provided an update and built on previous reports which set out the main update to the High Needs Operational Guidance and, therefore, proposed recommendations to ensure compliance and financial sustainability.

The main update to the 2022/2023 High Needs guidance related to extended periods of absences.

While the DfE expect commissioning Local Authorities to work constructively with institutions to determine and agree the levels of top-up funding required, Local Authorities did bear the ultimate responsibility for decisions on top-up funding given that they were accountable for spending from their high needs budgets

In all instances, pupils or students with an Education and Health Care Plan must have their placement commissioned by a Local Authority and the amount of top-up funding to be paid should be confirmed in writing. Where provision was specified in an Education and Health Care Plan, there was no statutory requirement that a Local Authority had to pay top-up funding at a particular rate requested by a school or institution.

If a pupil or student's placement was interrupted temporarily for public health reasons, the school or college should make contact with the commissioning Local Authority to discuss alternative arrangements for their continuing access to education and support, and for the continuation of top-up funding for the provision being made.

If an absence was expected to be long-term, because a public or personal health issue affected the young person's attendance and ability to engage in their education, the Local Authority should review the Education and Health Care Plan and amend it if necessary, and commission a different provision as required.

Agreed:- (1) That the update to the 2022/2023 High Needs Operational Guidance be noted.

(2) That the guidance update and 2022-2023 funding allocations be noted.

33. EXCLUSIONS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report and appendix by way of a power-point presentation introduced by Dean Fenton, Head of Service, Access to Education, which detailed headline data on Exclusions (permanent exclusions) and suspensions (fixed term exclusions).

The briefing note also set out in detail how the Department for Education (DfE) had undertaken a period of consultation with stakeholders between 3rd February and 31st March, 2022 in relation to revised behaviour in schools and suspension and permanent exclusion guidance.

The Behaviour in Schools Guidance had now been rewritten to more effectively support schools to maintain high standards of behaviour and provide more practical advice for all school staff. The revised guidance was organised into four themes to support schools to address behaviour at all stages.

Section One - looked at how to create and maintain high standards of behaviour, with a focus on developing a clear vision of what expected behaviour looked like and the strong leadership needed to implement this vision.

Section Two - set out how schools should respond robustly to incidents of misbehaviour in order to deter further incidents, restore order and protect pupils from further disruption or harm.

Section Three - looked at how schools could prevent the recurrence of misbehaviour and reduced the likelihood of suspension and permanent exclusion.

Section Four - focused on how schools should respond to specific behaviour incidents.

In terms of the changes to the Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance, this built on the revisions made in 2017 and the evidence gathered through the Timpson Review of School Exclusions. The DfE were providing further clarifications to the guidance and proposing associated legislative changes.

The presentation provided insight into:-

- Exclusions and Part-Time Tables.
- Exclusions Data – 2018/19.
- Exclusions Data – 2019/20.
- Exclusions Data – 2020/21.
- Exclusions 2021/22 as at 1st April, 2022.
- Exclusions are returning to pre-pandemic levels, with Rotherham seeing incremental rises.

- Regionally Rotherham remains mid-range in both P/Ex and FTE and exclusions remain a key area of focus and challenge.
- Use of Part-Time Tables (PTTT).
- Building on the revisions made in 2017 and the evidence gathered through the Timpson Review of School Exclusions, DfE are providing further clarifications to the guidance and proposing associated legislative changes.
- Post pandemic pressures linked to escalating SEMH needs, entrenched persistent absenteeism, educational gaps, and disrupted transitions defining immediate challenges.
- Across a range of areas of inclusion a number of young people were being seen with very complex needs that span a range of need types, access a range of services, and were struggling to engage with the mainstream learning offer.
- As part of developments of the focus on inclusive practice it was vital not to fall solely into an education focus, any system wide developments needed to include CAMHS, Children's Social Care, and Early Help to support a system wide response across this area of education.

Clarification was sought on the figures contained within the presentation around the setting placements for some children, if this was part of the outreach provision, the process before permanent exclusion and the number of one-off incidents leading to permanent exclusion. It was also confirmed that the figures within the slides were only of notified data to the Local Authority and may not be a truly accurate picture.

The detail provided in the revised behaviour in schools and suspension and permanent exclusion guidance raised some concern in terms of the language used, the perception and the potential for further pressure on Heads in dealing with difficult behaviour.

Reference was also made to the high referrals to CAMHS and the level of support available when more specialist provision was required for students exhibiting more worrying behaviours.

It was also unclear what provision would be made available if Pupil Referral Units were full and there were gaps. It was uncertain how this compared regionally.

Forum Members welcomed the offer to provide further analysis and context to the permanent exclusion numbers from both secondary and primary sectors with more defined data. Whilst it was noted the tone and language was different this was similar to how it appeared in the White Paper.

There was also the option of providing a further briefing note with more context for discussion at the High Needs Sub-Group and an earlier meeting could be convened if this was believed to be more appropriate.

Discussion ensued on the difficulties being faced by CAMHS which was a separate entity to the Local Authority. The Cabinet Member whose portfolio this fell under would also pick this up as a matter of urgency and discuss with relevant personnel where the most vulnerable of children were not getting the intensive support they needed. This was an area that had been discussed by Scrutiny and further information should be shared on the numbers on waiting lists, how long students had been waiting and how Rotherham compared with the national picture.

Further insight was also provided on the trajectories of permanently excluded children being admitted to Aspire, the increase of one-off incidents and the actions that could be taken for some students to access an alternative mainstream provision.

Examples were given on behaviour related cases requiring urgent CAMHS provision and the various pathways students were placed onto. Very often the level of need was beyond what could be provided by professionals dealing on the frontline.

Further discussion ensured on the reliance of CAMHS support and the various provisions available working in partnership, especially for primary aged children (such as MIND). It was considered helpful to Forum Members to understand the changes and best practice and share data on comparisons both pre and post pandemic.

Agreed:- (1) That the briefing note and Appendix 1 be received and the content noted.

(2) That consideration be given to calling an early meeting of the High Needs Sub-Group to discuss further analysis and receive context as to the permanent exclusion numbers from both secondary and primary sectors with more defined data.

Action:- Nathan Heath/Dean Fenton

34. VIRTUAL SCHOOL UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Peter Douglas and Tina Hohn from the Virtual School to give insight and an update on the Virtual School.

It was noted that the Virtual School, and wider team supporting children, have maintained the quality of the support in place. The team of advisers, designated teachers, Social Workers, health professionals and carers remain the backbone of the child-centred approach and have provided a stable base and solid encouragement for young people to build from. The Covid pandemic provided an opportunity to develop and further build on the strong relationships of the team around the child.

By way of a presentation Peter and Tina highlighted and provided more emphasis on:-

- The Virtual School Context:-
 - COVID
 - SEND
 - Academic Assessment
 - Strong Working Relationships
 - Adaptive Child Centred Support
 - Training and Development
 - Extended Role – Virtual Head
 - Post 16 PP+

- Secondary and Post 16 – Priority and Investment:-
 - Trauma Informed Schools
 - Emotional Based Schools Avoidance (EBSA)
 - Reading
 - Aspirations
 - Tuition
 - Key Adult Support

- Early Years and Primary – Priority and Investment:-
 - Trauma Informed Schools
 - Emotional Based Schools Avoidance (EBSA)
 - Reading and Writing
 - O.T. and Sensory
 - Parents as Experts
 - Early Years Offer

Forum Members welcomed the excellent work delivered as part of the Virtual School and the support provided in Rotherham. The service was considered to be forward thinking and committed in its work with attachment and trauma.

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

35. SEND SUFFICIENCY PHASE 3 UPDATE

Consideration was given a verbal update presented by Nathan Heath, Assistant Director for Education, which outlined further action Post 19 as part of Phase 2 which involved DfE discussions with Thomas Rotherham College. This proposal provided for the 16-19 academy and for this to be moved forward.

In terms of Phase 3 it was noted that the free school delivering SEMH provision was due to open in September, 2022 at the start of the academic year. Further work was still required on progress towards officially opening and students admitted to the new school would follow normal admission routes.

The rebuild of Newman Upper School as part of Phase 3 was also in its final stages and would be delivered this academic year.

The High Needs SEND Sufficiency Phase 4 incorporated the "Safety Valve" (an item on this agenda).

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

36. SAFETY VALVE

The Chair invited Nathan Heath, Assistant Director for Education, to provide the latest position with regards to the Dedicated Schools Grant 'High Needs Safety Valve' arrangement. By way of a presentation information shared included:-

- The Background.
- Rotherham Improving Financial Position.
- Potential Risks.
- Key Facts about the High Needs Safety Valve Arrangement.
- Funding Arrangement.
- Commitments as part of the Rotherham Safety Valve Agreement.
- Financial Implementation.
- Key areas of focus which underpin strategic planning – the scaffolding across the SEND system.
- Overview of the Agreement.
- Next Steps.

It was noted that the Council had submitted the additional capital allocations application linked to the Safety Valve, with projects moving to delivery in the next academic year with a capital programme sequenced to address key areas of demand in the first instance.

Feedback to all stakeholders including Education/Health/CCG would be linked to the Safety Valve Agreement to make sure interdependencies were understood and full consultation linked to SEND sufficiency developments.

Updates would also be provided to the Schools Forum against DfE activity with implementation considerations developed through the High Needs Sub-Group.

Agreed:- That the update be welcomed, received and the contents noted.

37. SCHOOL WHITE PAPER

The Chair invited Pam Ward to give an update on the 'Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers for your child' – the White Paper which

was published on the 28th March, 2022. By way of a presentation information shared included:-

- The two “new ambitions”.
- Series of new measures in four new key chapters.
- Chapter 1 – An excellent teacher for every child.
- Proposed new policies.
- Chapter 2 – Delivering high standards of curriculum, behaviour and attendance.
- Proposed new policies.
- Chapter 3 – Target support for every child who needs it.
- Proposed new policies.
- Chapter 4 – A stronger and fairer system.
- Proposed new policies.
- Defining a strong trust.
- Upcoming consultations to support the proposals of the White Paper.

Schools Forum welcomed the detail on the White Paper.

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

38. SEND GREEN PAPER

The Chair invited Julie Day, Head of SEND, to give an update on the ‘Green Paper. By way of a presentation information shared included:-

- The SEND Review.
- Key Facts.
- Three Challenges.
- Goals in Pictures.
- Overall Aim.
- Timeline – Proposals to be done by.
- Inclusive White Paper.
- If a child falls behind in English and Maths – Getting on track.
- A single national SEND and Alternative Provision.
- National Standards.
- Excellent provision for Early Years to Adulthood.
- Further Proposals.
- A Reformed and Integrated Role for Alternative Provision.
- Accountability, System Roles and Funding Reform.
- Delivery change for children and families.
- Inclusive Education
- Consultations.

Forum Members welcomed the update and sought clarification on Alternative Provision. It was confirmed that if 77% children were in school, 23% were more than likely to be elective home educated,

especially where there was a lack of parental confidence in the system and there was growth in relation to social, emotional and mental health need.

This could also be attributed to children who were on role in mainstream schools whose parents would prefer them to be in special education.

Evidence suggested that there was now more children with Education and Health Care Plans going to Rowan and Aspire.

Rotherham had recognised and embraced the opportunity to move forward with the new special school specifically for young people with social, emotional and mental health needs and this school would be open from the start of the next academic year.

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

39. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Schools Forum were asked to note two resignations. Firstly by Paul Silvester, Head of Newman School and former Vice-Chair. This would be included as an item for consideration on a future agenda.

Secondly from Rajmund Brent, Primary Governor, who had reviewed his commitments locally. He wanted to formally thank the Forum for insight into its business and wished everyone well.

The Chair, on behalf of the Forum, thanked Paul for his support to the Chair and for his work with the HNB Sub-Group and to Rajmund for his input to Forum activity.

Agreed:- That the resignations from the School Forum be noted and action be taken to fill the respective vacancies.

Action:- Clerk/Nathan Heath

40. DATES OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Schools' Forum take place on a virtual basis on Friday, 24th June, 2022 at 8.30 a.m.

(2) That the dates of future meetings of the Rotherham School Forum at 8.30 a.m. be noted:-

Friday, 16th September, 2022

Friday, 18th November, 2022

Friday, 13th January, 2023

Friday, 28th April, 2023