

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2022**

In Attendance:-

Deborah Ball - Treeton Primary (Academy) (in the Chair)
Kelly Crompton – Head of Service, Inclusion
Dean Fenton - Head of ATE, CYPS
Neil Hardwick – Head of Finance, CYPS
Lynsey Hadfield – Executive Head, Arnold Nursery (Observer)
Nathan Heath – Assistant Director of Education, CYPS
Ian Henderson - H.R. Officer, RMBC
Angela McComb – Primary Maintained Governor
David Naisbitt – Oakwood High (Academy)
Vera Njelic - Principal Finance Officer, RMBC
Kirsty Peart - Sitwell Infant (Maintained)
Colin Price – NEU Representative
Steve Rhodes – Winterhill (Academy)
Steve Scott – Happy Kids (PVI Nursery)
Sharon Stones – Head of Arnold Nursery and Children's Centre
Adam Taylor - Aspire
Nevine Towers – Diocese of Sheffield
Pam Ward – Head of Service, Education, CYPS

Apologies were received from:-

Lianne Camaish, Aspire
Councillor Victoria Cusworth – Cabinet Member for CYPS
Andy Krabbendam – CEO JMAT (Academy)
Alan Richards – Secondary Governor

57. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

58. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Nominations were sought for the position of Chair of the Rotherham Schools Forum for the next two years.

Mr. S. Rhodes was proposed and seconded and would take up the position of Chair of Rotherham Schools' Forum at the next meeting.

Agreed:- That Mr. S. Rhodes be appointed Chair of the Rotherham Schools Forum for the next two years (2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years).

59. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Nominations were sought for the position of Vice-Chair of the Rotherham Schools Forum for the next two years.

Mrs. K. Peart was proposed and seconded and would take up the position of Vice-Chair of Rotherham Schools' Forum at the next meeting.

Agreed:- That Mrs. K. Peart be appointed Vice-Chair of the Rotherham Schools Forum for the next two years (2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years).

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

61. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 24TH JUNE, 2022

Consideration was given to the minutes from the previous meeting held on 24th June, 2022.

Agreed:- That the minutes be approved.

62. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Further to Minute No. 48 (Safety Valve Budget Monitoring) it was noted that it had not been possible to make the necessary arrangements for a meeting of the High Needs Sub-Group before the end of term.

63. MEMBERSHIP AND CONSTITUTION OF THE ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS FORUM

Consideration was given to the membership and constitution of the Schools Forum document circulated with the agenda papers presented by Nathan Heath, Assistant Director of Education.

The document set out in detail a number of changes following some resignations and the vacancies that existed and built on the very positive work undertaken by the outgoing Chair.

It was also suggested that, in addition to the recommended member inclusions, the terms of office for existing members be extended for a further four years. This would allow for continuity and build on the work that had already commenced.

It was suggested that the membership and constitution be included on future agendas as discussions to fill some of the vacancies were ongoing.

Agreed:- (1) That the nominated persons in the relevant categories as

listed be approved for a period of four years.

(2) That the term of office of existing members that were due to expire in the new few months be updated for a further four years.

(3) That thanks be given to the outgoing Chair on the positive work undertaken with building resilience in the Schools Forum.

64. SCHOOL FORUM HIGH NEEDS SUB-GROUP

Consideration was given to the latest position of the High Needs Sub-Group as reported by Nathan Heath, Assistant Director for Education.

Following some fairly recent changes to the membership and the news on the Safety Valve arrangement a meeting would be convened shortly with invitations extended to new members.

An agenda setting meeting would also be facilitated with clear areas of focus on SEND Sufficiency and the Safety Valve arrangement.

It was also suggested that Nathan Heath act as Chair for forthcoming meetings with a move to an Independent Chair in the near future.

Agreed:- That a meeting of the High Needs Sub-Group be arranged shortly.

Action:- Nathan Heath

65. UPDATE ON HIGH NEEDS BLOCK (HNB) OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE 2023/24

Consideration was given to the report presented by Neil Hardwick, Head of Schools Finance, which built on previous reports setting out the main changes to the High Needs Operational Guidance and proposed recommendations to ensure compliance and financial sustainability.

It was pointed out that the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) protection for maintained special schools and special academies in 2023 to 2024 was set by a condition of grant that applied to local authorities' DSG. The ESFA recognised the current schools' cost pressures and had set a 3% MFG in 2023/ 2024.

Local authorities would be required to identify for each mainstream school a notional amount to guide schools in their spending to meet the costs of additional support for the school's pupils with special educational needs. Although this was an indicative amount, it was important that it was sufficient for the reasonable additional costs that may be incurred by schools. The operational guidance would, therefore, help schools understand how the amount has been calculated and when it might be appropriate to seek additional resources.

Further information was provided on the detail around Special Schools Minimum Funding Guarantee, the Notional SEN Budget, calculation of the notional SEN budget and the targeted funding to supplement the notional SEN budget.

In response to a question about whether any schools in Rotherham had challenged the guidance, the Head of Finance confirmed one had, but had not met the criteria.

Further information could be provided at the next meeting if this was felt appropriate.

Agreed:- (1) That the changes to the 2023/24 High Needs Operational Guidance be received and noted.

(2) That the 3% Special Schools Minimum Funding Guarantee change and how Notional SEN budgets are calculated and when it might be appropriate to seek additional resources be noted.

66. SEMH SCHOOL

Consideration was given a verbal update presented by Nathan Heath, Assistant Director for Education, on the progress date of the new SEMH Free School.

The school was now open for the initial cohort with a clear transition plan for students who previously attended Rowan and Aspire.

The funding agreement was in place and as part of the SEND Sufficiency Plan Phase 4 (being presented to Cabinet in October, 2022) an additional forty spaces (20 in primary and 20 in secondary) were proposed as part of the opportunities facilitated via the Safety Valve arrangements.

In response to a question about whether the places provided within this school would impact on Aspire PRU, it was confirmed there would be no detriment to Aspire as a clear plan with clarity had been adopted for the short and medium term.

It was also noted that all options would be looked into with generic growth and analysis on the figures post pandemic. It was suggested information be provided in graphical format and presented to the next meeting.

The wider challenges in early years and the capacity to meet demand were acknowledged.

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

(2) That further detail on demand figures be provided in graphical format for consideration at the next meeting.

Action:- Julie Day

67. OUTREACH SERVICES (NEW SECONDARY OUTREACH SERVICE)

Consideration was given to an update on the Outreach Service presented by Kelly Crompton, Head of Service, which confirmed how in the spring term 2020, the ISOS Partnership was commissioned to undertake a strategic review of support for Inclusion and Alternative provision (AP) for pupils KS1 – KS4 in Rotherham.

The aim of the review was to identify factors needed to strengthen support for inclusion and the use of Alternative Provision (AP) in Rotherham which included secondary outreach.

Consultation had, therefore, taken place with schools on the development of a secondary outreach model that met the needs of Rotherham pupils and school with a strong emphasis reducing the need for permanent exclusion, support for school staff to meet short and long term SEMH needs and driving system wide improvements in inclusive practice across our schools.

This included direct support with pupils, access to staff training, advice on graduated response, modelling techniques with staff and development of inclusive learning environments within school settings and provision of family support sessions on school site.

The provision was to be tailored to the young person and, following referral, designed in consultation with the young person and commissioners.

Details of the providers considered along with the proposed offer and impact were outlined and it was confirmed that Secondary Outreach was to be provided by Aspire following collective decision as the current preferred provider.

The Outreach offer and pathway had been shared with secondary school/academy leaders in summer term 2022 and at first Inclusion Event on 1st July 2022 as well as summer term 2022 SENDCo Network events.

Secondary Outreach provision began on the 1st September 2022, and partnership meetings would take place each week. Secondary Inclusion Panels would also take place on a monthly basis as the referral routes to outreach provision.

The representative from Aspire also confirmed the processes for Outreach were now in place, including recruitment to outstanding posts. An update was provided on what was required and what was being captured as a vehicle to support. Further information would be forwarded to Forum Members.

Other representatives asked about the scope for this provision to be extended given that children with more complex needs were presenting much earlier and who would greatly benefit from some form of outreach provision.

It was pointed out that secondary outreach was part of the Safety Valve arrangements within a four to five year plan. This detail was commensurate with other areas of mainstream need and Early Years provision. There was provision to focus on other areas with some flexibility.

It was noted that the High Needs Sub-Group had been looking into the detail provided by the ISOS Partnership and the challenges being faced in primary years, some of which were very complex.

The Forum, therefore, would investigate the opportunities that may be available to look at transitions through the primary phase and how this could link to existing options and whether there was any mechanism to shape services. This would identify and fill gaps, especially for those children who were elective home educated where their access and need may be limited.

It was, therefore, suggested that these issues and concerns be brought back to the next meeting in order to provide reassurance with graphical data in the form of a presentation and for this to be on the agenda for the High Needs Sub-Group to also consider, especially with the increased concerns for challenges following the pandemic.

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

(2) That consideration be given to a further presentation on the challenges facing Early Years and primary education with children presenting more complex needs.

Action:- Kelly Crompton/Nathan Heath

68. SAFETY VALVE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the latest position of the Safety Valve Intervention Programme as reported by Nathan Heath, Assistant Director for Education.

Information on the Programme was not yet widely available and would be shared with the High Needs Sub-Group in due course.

However, it was noted that the Programme had outlined nine key areas with the strategic aim to enhance mainstream SEND capacity to meet a wider level of need across all schools and mitigate the need for children, young people, and young adults to be educated in settings outside the

Borough and promote inclusive practice.

As part of this agreement, additional SEND Capital of £4.32m was provided to Rotherham to support the development of SEND provision as set out in the Safety Valve Agreement. This funding was in addition to the £3.16m High Needs Provision 2022-2023 capital allocations that were proportionally awarded to all local authorities.

Within the Safety Valve negotiations between the Council and the DfE, the capital requirements needed to enact the Council's Safety Valve agreement were shared with the DfE and these plans sat within the Dedicated School Management Plan.

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

69. SEND SUFFICIENCY PHASE 4

Consideration was given to the latest position of the SEND Sufficiency Phase 4 as reported by Nathan Heath, Assistant Director for Education.

The proposed focus of SEND Sufficiency phase 4 was to create ten additional SEND resource bases within mainstream education settings which would create a minimum of one hundred additional SEND places over the next three academic years; subject to Cabinet approval.

The proposed would be to create four Social Emotional Mental Health resource base provisions – two primary and two secondary; four Communication and interaction resource base provisions – two primary and two secondary and two Secondary Moderate Learning Difficulty resource base provisions.

The accessibility funding streams would create two funds of £375k per annum (total – £1.5m in each funding stream, £3m in total) across four years, one for special schools and one for mainstream settings. The proposal would allow schools to apply for capital investment to adapt buildings, classrooms, or other education buildings so that children with a higher threshold of SEND could be accommodated.

Agreed:- That the information be received and noted.

70. EDUCATION SAFEGUARDING

Consideration was given to a presentation by Pam Ward, Strategic Lead for Education, which provided an update on Education Safeguarding.

The presentation set out:-

- The key areas of focus.
- Current structures and support.
- Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership – Business Plan

2021/23.

- White Paper Chapter 4 – A stronger and fairer system.
- Final report of the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care.
- Education Safeguarding Support 2021/22.
- Key areas of development.
- Proposed Role and Responsibility of Education Safeguarding Lead.
- Option Considerations:-
 - Option 1 – Continue with current arrangements.
 - Option 2 – Enhance support through development of an Education Safeguarding Officer. Funding to be provided through the partnership and schools – approx. £350 contribution.
 - Option 3 - Safeguarding to be a school/trust led responsibility.

With these in mind it was recommended that the Forum consider the three options set out above in order to close the gaps that had been created with the former Safeguarding Lead leaving and to ensure a consistent local approach to safeguarding across the borough.

Whilst Forum Members noted schools could not be forced to contribute to a Safeguarding Lead it made sense for a collaborative support approach for Rotherham. In order to fill the vacant position it would cost in the region of £44,000.

As a result of several questions about funding, progression of the three year audits, if the funding would be top sliced from budgets and the impact on schools who had far less students than others, the Assistant Director of Education confirmed consideration could be given to a tiered approach, but it would be for all schools to fund the amount as this was integral to working practices.

Forum Members in discussing how best to obtain agreement with all schools were advised that a vote was, therefore, required to agree on which option the Forum would then recommend.

Following observations of the unanimous vote, Option 2 was recommended.

Agreed:- (1) That Pam Ward be thanked for her presentation.

(2) That the presentation be received and the content noted.

(3) That the Local Authority take forward Option 2 - the proposal to enhance safeguarding support to schools through the development of an Education Safeguarding Officer through a collaborative approach between Rotherham Children’s Safeguarding Board and all schools in Rotherham.

Action:- Nathan Heath

71. FUNDING FOR UKRAINIAN CHILDREN

Consideration was given to a verbal update by Neil Hardwick, Head of Schools Finance, which confirmed the availability of a fund to support local schools with funding places for sponsored Ukrainian children displaced by the war in Ukraine under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

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

72. FREE SCHOOL MEALS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a verbal update by Nathan Heath, Assistant Director for Education, which confirmed the latest position with regards to the rolling programme for children claiming free school meals during the school holiday periods.

The Council were continuing with the same process up to and including Easter, 2023 to help support families experiencing difficulties made worse by the cost of living crisis.

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

73. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair invited Forum Members to share any other items for business.

(a) IR35

Donna Bland, Taxation, provided a summary of the methods to be followed in line with guidance provided by HMRC relating to the payments for all schools for services like tutors or others engaged by invoice under employment status. There was an obligation for an assessment to be undertaken so schools were advised to contact Taxation Services for this to be carried out.

Agreed:- That the information be noted and appropriate action taken.

(b) Energy Support Scheme

Neil Hardwick, Head of Schools Finance, confirmed applications were open for schools to apply where pressure on utilities existed. A link to the scheme would be circulated.

Agreed:- That the information be noted.

(c) Teachers' Pay Award

Colin Price, NEU, highlighted the likely impact on school budgets following implementation of the Teachers' Pay Award and extended his invitation to schools to visit to give advice.

It was suggested that this issue be included as an agenda item for consideration at the next meeting.

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

(2) That the issue be included as an agenda item at the next meeting.

Action:- Ian Henderson

74. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- That the next meeting of the Schools' Forum take place on Friday, 18th November, 2022 at 8.30 a.m. at Rockingham Professional Development Centre.

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

Friday, 13th January, 2023

Friday, 28th April, 2023