

CABINET MEMBER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE
8th November, 2011

Present:- Councillor Rushforth (in the Chair) and Councillors Andrews and Dalton.

F30. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18TH OCTOBER, 2011

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning and Culture, held on 18th October, 2011.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Member held on 18th October, 2011 be signed as a true record.

F31. 16-19 BURSARY FUND - RMBC POLICY FOR LEARNERS ON ESF PROGRAMMES

Consideration was given to the report presented by Marie Boswell, Consultant, School Effectiveness Service, Children and Young People's Services, which provided an overview of the Local Authority and Rotherham's post-16 providers' policy that governed the allocation and management of the 16 - 19 Bursary Fund to learners on ESF programmes. It was noted that this policy would only cover the allocation and management of the Bursary Fund to Vulnerable Groups as ESF funding covered all course-related costs.

It was noted that all eight of Rotherham's School Sixth-Forms have received their allocations and were developing their own individual policies based upon a model template designed by Rotherham partners. It was also noted that Rotherham's three Special Schools with Sixth Forms had opted to take full responsibility for administering the Bursary for their learners and would write their own administration policy.

The 16-19 Bursary Fund (Bursary) was designed to help students continue in education when they would otherwise be prohibited from doing so on financial grounds. This funding replaced both the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and the Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF), and was available to young people in full- or part-time education from August 2011, subject to meeting eligibility criteria, some of which would be set by providers.

The use of the Bursary award was to be used towards essential course-related expenses and other costs associated with living and learning. Nationally, the Bursary was substantially less than the funding that was available for Educational Maintenance Allowance (£180m compared to £550m per annum), which could impact on participation and increase the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Post-16 providers indicated that their Bursary allocations were unlikely to support all the learners they would wish to support.

ESF provision funded by RMBC aimed to engage, support and prepare young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) to access mainstream education, training or employment (EET).

This included commissioning provision that removed any barriers young people faced in making a successful progression into education, employment or training, and included supporting travel costs, course equipment, exam fees, costs of placements, outdoor activities, visits and trips.

The 16-19 Bursary Fund comprised of two elements:

- Vulnerable Groups Bursary: £1200 per year for young people in care, care leavers, young people in receipt of income support and disabled young people in receipt of both Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance.
- Discretionary Bursary: Distribution of remaining funding was at the discretion of individual providers and was targeted towards young people facing the greatest financial barriers to participation and is subject to affordability.

Discussion ensued and covered the following points:

- Shortfall in funding to Special Schools and ESF learners, which had followed a mismatched sample analysis to determine allocations. It was noted that the Young People's Learning Authority had reassured Local Authorities that there would be no financial risk as contingency funding would be available to support the learning of Vulnerable Groups.
- Transition arrangements between compulsory education and post-16 provision could result in loss of learner information and breakdown of systems. It was suggested that the Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Steering Group be commissioned to look into this issue and ensure safeguards were in place as appropriate;
- Potential issues that would result in the late / delayed payment of the Bursary to learners, and the negative impact this could have on their learning experience;
- Eligibility criteria applied to the receipt of the Bursary and the discretionary elements applied by individual providers, which could include achieving minimum standards of attendance. It was noted that there would be certain leeway for providers to recognise authorised absence resulting from disability.

Resolved: - (1) That the Policy for Learners on ESF Programmes be approved.

(2) That the Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Steering Group be commissioned to investigate whether appropriate safeguards are in place to ensure that the transition experience for learners in respect to receiving the Bursary is as seamless as possible.

F32. PROPOSAL FOR THE FUTURE ALLOCATION OF THE PUPIL PREMIUM FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN ROTHERHAM

Consideration was given to the report presented by Martin Fittes, Assistant Head of School Effectiveness Service for Vulnerable Groups and Virtual Headteacher, Children and Young People's Services, that outlined the eligibility criteria and current and proposed practice for the future allocation of the Pupil Premium for Looked After Children in Rotherham.

It was noted that children and young people would be eligible to receive the Pupil Premium Grant, in addition to their Pupil Premium allocation, of £488 on 1st April 2011 if (a) they had been looked after continuously for at least six-months, and (b) they are in the Year Groups R to 11 during the 2011-12 financial year.

The Conditions of the Grant stated that the Pupil Premium Grant 'may be spent by maintained schools for the purposes of the school; that was to say for the educational benefit of pupils registered at that school to raise attainment. It was the responsibility of Headteachers to determine how money would be best used.' Schools would be required to report to parents on the use of the Pupil Premium Grant.

A number of issues were highlighted within the current framework in relation to the administration of the Pupil Premium and Pupil Premium Grant:-

- Schools that had a looked after Year 11 pupil on roll were allocated the full £488 for the financial year April 2011 – March 2012 even though they would be educating the young person for only a few weeks before they completed their exams and left School.
- Primary Schools where there was a looked after Year 6 pupil on roll were allocated the full £488 for the financial year April 2011 – March 2012 even though these children were moving on to Secondary School and the receiving school had not received an allocation.
- Allocations of the Pupil Premium and Pupil Premium Grant to schools had been made on a yearly basis, but the frequent movement of looked after children means that they were rapidly out of date.
- Children who met the eligibility criteria mid-year needed to be allocated a proportion of the £488 when they met the criteria.
- For eligible children attending special schools, the Local Authority could decide how to allocate funds.

In response to the reported issues, a number of measures were now proposed for approval:-

- The budget for Pupil Premium Grant would be managed by the finance team using information provided termly by the Get Real Team.
- The £488 would be sent to schools on a termly basis – September (£188), January (£150) and April (£150) - to ensure that children who moved schools benefitted from the funding, and that children who were no longer eligible did not continue to receive funding. This would then release funds for newly identified children.
- If schools wished to use the money in one lump sum (i.e. for 1:1 tuition) then they may do so, by agreement with the Virtual Headteacher. If the child later moved school, the receiving school would not access new funding until the following April.
- The use of Pupil Premium Grant would be identified on Personal Education Plans so that it could be discussed during planning meetings and would be tied into the child's education needs. Independent Reviewing Officers had been made aware of the funding and would refer to it during Reviews.

- Children who met the criteria mid-way through the year would be allocated the termly payment in the term after they became eligible. For example, a child who met the criteria in October would then receive the funding in January.
- Funding for children in Special Schools would be allocated in line with all other allocations and monitored via the child's Personal Education Plan. The Get Real Team would re-design the form so that the impact of the Grant would be assessed,
- Funding for looked after children in Academies would be paid to the Academy on a termly basis.
- Funding for eligible children educated out of authority would be automatically passed to either the authority or the school that educated the child. The Finance Team would be responsible for undertaking this.

Discussion ensued about the issues raised. It was noted that:-

- The new Ofsted Framework had a strong emphasis on the increased attainment of Vulnerable Groups;
- The use of live data was being used to challenge schools on the progress of their looked after children and the effective use of the Pupil Premium Grant;
- The role of Looked After Children Designated Governors to champion the use of the Grant.

Resolved: - (1) That the proposals as set out in the report be approved.

(THE CHAIRMAN AUTHORISED CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM IN ORDER TO PROGRESS THE CONSULTATION PROCESS REFERRED TO)

F33. POTENTIAL EXPANSION OF THORNHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Further to Minute F15 of the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning and Culture, held on 6th September 2011, consideration was given to the report presented by Helen Barre, Manager, School Admissions, Organisation and SEN Assessment Service, Children and Young People's Services, following the end of the pre-statutory consultation process that had taken place in relation to expanding Thornhill Primary School. This report detailed the outcomes of the pre-statutory consultation outcomes and requested permission to commence the statutory consultation.

It is proposed to expand the numbers on roll at Thornhill Primary School from September 2012 to accommodate 45 children per statutory year group (45 x 7 = 315 places). The School's current capacity was 30 children per year group (30 x 7 = 210 places). The School would have an amended Published Admission Number (PAN) of 45 per year group. The non-statutory Nursery (F1) year group published admission number would also be increased to a published admission number of 26 full-time places.

It was noted that consultation meetings had taken place with Thornhill Primary School and their neighbouring Primary Schools Ferham, Kimberworth and Meadow View. Separate meetings had taken place with Thornhill Primary School governors, staff and union representatives, and parents, and meetings with the Governing Bodies of Ferham, Kimberworth and Meadow View Primary Schools. Consultation papers had been provided to Ward Members, the MP and to the local Parish Council.

Pre-consultation responses submitted by stakeholders were noted by the Cabinet Member, as were actions Local Authority Officers had taken to mitigate these concerns. These included:

- The building timescale appeared very tight and could potentially cause a large amount of disruption to Thornhill Primary School if works had not been completed by 1st September 2012. It was noted that Rob Holsey, Principal Project Manager, was working closely with the School and Balfour Beatty and was satisfied that the timescale was achievable.
- Concerns that funding for the financial year 2012/3 would not be sufficient as additional children will join the School in September 2012, mid-way through the financial year, and will not have been included within the School Census. Helen Barre had agreed to monitor the situation and submit a report to the Rotherham Schools' Forum to request Dedicated School Grant funding to cover the shortfall between September 2012 and March 2013. Thereafter, it is expected that AWPU funding will cover the increased staffing costs.
- A number of Human Resources issues were raised around recruiting additional staff pre-September 2012, and following this time if pupil numbers did not rise as expected. The Human Resources Manager for CYPS and Schools would work closely with the School throughout this period.

Helen Barre had given a commitment to maintain contact with the Governing Bodies of the Schools concerned and would be in further contact with Thornhill's Governing Body following the close of the January 2012 deadline for preferences to be received for September 2012 entry to the Reception (FS2) year.

Resolved: - (1) That Statutory Consultation be approved on the proposal to expand Thornhill Primary School as detailed within the timetable shown at Appendix A.

(2) That a further report be submitted following the end of Statutory Consultation that detailed the outcomes of that process.