

REDCAR & CLEVELAND SCHOOLS' FORUM
MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 23 JANUARY 2023 AT 3:00PM THROUGH MICROSOFT TEAMS

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Pupil Referral Unit Representative:

Mr L Beaumont, Archway (in part)

Special School Representative:

Mr P McLean, Kirkleatham Hall Special School

Academy Representatives:

Mrs C Chadwick, Saltburn Primary School (in part), Mr S Glover, Tees Valley Collaborative Trust, Mrs A Hill, TVED, Mrs A O'Gara, Ironstone Academy Trust, Mr M Robson, Northern Education Trust (Chair), Mr R Unthank, Galileo Multi Academy Trust, Ms S Walker, Skelton Primary School

Special School Academy Representatives:

Miss R Glover, Mo Mowlam Academy (Vice Chair), Mrs S Gunn, KTS Academy

Local Authority Elected Member Representative:

Councillor C Morgan

Trade Unions and Associations Representative:

Mrs R Richardson, NASUWT (in part)

Non School Representatives:

Mr J Faulkner, 16-19 Representative, Redcar College

Dr J Hawthorne, PVI Sector Representative

Non-Members/Officers:

Mrs K Boulton, Corporate Director, Children and Families Directorate

Mrs E Laird, Directorate Accountant

Mrs A Wellings, Lead for SEN

Mr G Smith, Lead for Inclusion

Mrs A Douglas, Clerk to Schools' Forum

The meeting started at 3pm. The required quorum was met at all times.

		ACTION
1	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
1.1	Apologies had been submitted in advance of the meeting from Clare Mahoney.	
1.2	RESOLVED to consent to the absence of the above-named member.	Clerk
2.	NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	No items were declared for consideration under Any Other Business (AOB).	
3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
3.1	Schools' Forum members were given the opportunity to declare any pecuniary interests or other conflicts of interest relating to items on the agenda for the current meeting.	
3.2	The Chair noted that his daughter currently attended a school within the borough and was undergoing the statutory assessment process at the time of the meeting.	
4.	MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING	
4.1	Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2022 had been circulated prior to the meeting. Having given members an opportunity to highlight any inaccuracies, the minutes were accepted as a true record of proceedings.	
4.2	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p><u>Matter Arising from Item 4.2.1</u></p> <p>The Chair understood that the updated directory of Tees Valley providers had been circulated by Clare Mahoney. The Clerk would contact Schools Forum members to invite them to contact her directly if they had not received a copy. All other action points were confirmed as having been completed.</p>	Clerk
4.3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px;"> <p>Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2022 were approved for signature by the Chair as a true record of proceedings.</p> </div>	

		ACTION
5.	DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT 2023-24	
5.1	<p><u>Purpose</u></p> <p>Mrs Laird guided Schools' Forum members through the report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The report informed Schools' Forum of the proposed use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2023-24, by way of an update on the four funding blocks, and sought approvals (where required) for the use of the funding.</p>	
5.2	<p><u>Discussion/Challenge</u></p>	
5.2.1	<p>The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was the main source of government funding for the provision of education services by local authorities, and was divided into four notional blocks – the schools block, the high needs block, the central school services block and the Early Years block. Each of the four blocks was determined by a separate national funding formula (NFF).</p>	
5.2.2	<p>The main change to the NFF to note was the use of the mobility factor, which created additional funding for 8 out of 54 schools at a cost of £39,349. Setting the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) to 0.5% would require £37,305 and would affect 6 schools, with one school gaining £18,929. Applying the factors to the October 2022 census figures had created a funding gap of £206,851 before the 0.5% transfer to High Needs. This would result in the gains made by schools to be capped to 3.51%, affecting 16 primary schools and 2 secondary schools. This was a result of the method of allocation used by DfE being at a higher level of detail.</p> <p><i>Mrs C Chadwick and Mr L Beaumont joined the meeting.</i></p>	
5.2.3	<p>In order to remain as close as possible to the NFF, the proposal was to reduce the growth fund, cap gains at 2.3% and keep the MFG at the highest level of 0.5%. All schools would see per pupils gains of between 0.5% and 2.3%.</p>	
5.2.4	<p>Mrs Laird shared an overview of the information contained within the report on the high needs block, including detail of the allocation for 2023-24 and how it was derived under the NFF.</p> <p><i>Mrs R Richardson joined the meeting.</i></p>	
5.2.5	<p>Information was shared on the Early Years block guidance and allocation. The funding for disadvantaged 2-year-olds would increase from £5.39 to £5.45 in 2023-24. The local authority would fund providers with early years' pupil premium at a national rate of £0.62 per hour per eligible pupil (£0.60 per hour 2022-23) up to a maximum of 570 hours. For 2023-24, the teachers' pay grant and teachers' pension employer contribution grants payable to school-based nursery schools would cease. It was</p>	

		ACTION
	<p>proposed to use a quality supplement to compensate providers for this. In response to a query, Mrs Laird confirmed that this would need to be incorporated for nurseries as well as schools if they employed staff on teachers' pay and conditions.</p>	Mrs Laird
5.2.6	Discussion took place on whether Schools' Forum wished to be informed of which schools would be disproportionately affected by the outcome of the recommendations contained in the report. Members agreed that the decision should be made without individual school level information being shared, in order that votes would be made in line with the principle of funding being shared fairly across the borough.	
5.3	<u>Outcomes</u>	
5.3.1	Of the 10 members present with voting rights on the funding formula, 9 members voted in favour of the recommendations contained at item 8 in the report. The vote was cast by way of a virtual 'show of hands' using the functionality on Microsoft Teams.	
5.3.2	Mrs Laird would contact the maintained primary school representative following the meeting, in respect of recommendation 8.2, that mainstream schools would vote to continue with the de-delegation of funding for the free school meals eligibility service.	
5.3.3	Schools' Forum members thanked Mrs Laird for her offer of facilitating training on school budgets. On behalf of Schools' Forum, the Chair thanked Mrs Laird for her comprehensive report and for the further information shared during the meeting to support discussion and decision making.	
6.	COMMISSIONING STRATEGIES RELATED TO OUT OF BOROUGH PLACEMENTS	
6.1	<p><u>Purpose</u></p> <p>At the previous meeting of Schools' Forum, members had requested granular information on the current numbers and associated costs of placements for children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in independent placements. Mrs Wellings, Interim Lead for SEN, had circulated a paper in advance of the meeting which included an overview of pupils with EHCPs in the independent sector. Several case studies had been provided, which outlined the complex issues faced by the local authority when seeking appropriate placements for young people. The spreadsheet, also shared in advance of the meeting, contained anonymised information relating to pupils in independent placements, the associated costs, the pupils' primary needs, the provision they were attending and the school they had attended before transferring to the independent sector.</p>	

	ACTION
6.2 <u>Discussion/Challenge</u>	
6.2.1 At the time of the meeting, there were 111 active placements in independent schools funded by Redcar and Cleveland, at a predicted cost of £5.6m. Of those placements, the majority of the young people (49.5%) had social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) as their primary need. 30% of the young people had autistic spectrum conditions, and this was a growing need nationally. 76.5% of young people in independent placements were boys.	
6.2.2 40.5% of the currently active placements had been from secondary mainstream schools, with 15.3% from primary mainstream schools. The paper included information on which national curriculum year the young people were in at the time of their provision changing. In response to a query regarding information on numbers of pupils in independent provision being entitled to free school meals, or eligible for pupil premium funding, Mrs Wellings confirmed that the local authority figures were broadly in line with national averages. Redcar and Cleveland issued a higher-than-average number of EHCPs.	
6.2.3 Detailed case studies had been shared for information, which highlighted the complexity of a range of different scenarios. The purpose of the Delivering Better Value programme was for the Department for Education (DfE) to work with local authorities at a granular level, to review decisions made and consider what provision would be required in future.	
6.2.4 Schools' Forum noted a significant increase in numbers of female students being permanently excluded, and the Headteacher at Archway informed colleagues that he had requested the local authority to conduct a review of trends. Post-16 colleagues noted that the majority of attendance issues in this sector related to female students. Schools' Forum asked for information on how other local authorities were addressing the challenges of rising numbers of EHCPs and exclusions.	
6.2.5 There was a range of good practice elsewhere, including de-delegation of some functions that could be considered. The Delivering Better Value programme was a unique opportunity to collaborate with other local authorities and share learning. A Task and Finish Group could be established to consider high needs, including the impact on young people and the local authority when local schools were unable to offer places.	
6.2.6 Schools' Forum noted the number of young people in independent placements who had moved to that provision within a term of joining a secondary mainstream school. Members discussed the need for additional base places in secondary schools for children who found the transition to secondary education challenging, including following a 25-hour timetable, or adapting to the busy corridors. A nurturing transitional environment in each mainstream school would be beneficial. Mr Unthank noted the impact of the base at Freebrough Academy, and stated that some children would have required places in independent placements without that support. Members agreed that the model should be extended across the borough, and discussed the importance of a proactive rather than a reactive approach to providing the right environment for children, especially during the transition from Year 6 to Year 7. Mrs Boulton noted the importance of addressing unmet needs.	

		ACTION
6.2.7	Schools' Forum discussed the historical local agreement between secondary schools which sought to avoid permanently excluding students. There was a real commitment from mainstream schools which included commissioning placements at Archway, and members discussed whether a similar preventative strategy should be considered.	Lead for SEN
6.2.8	A high needs working group was proposed by Schools' Forum members to progress this area further.	
6.3	<u>Outcomes</u>	
6.3.1	In response to the proposal of creating a high needs working group, a briefing paper would be written, together with a draft constitution and terms of reference. Membership to be confirmed.	
6.3.2	On behalf of Schools' Forum, the Chair thanked Mrs Wellings for facilitating the discussion, and noted the importance of remembering and considering the children behind the data. The Chair thanked colleagues for their contribution to the discussion.	
7.	INFORMATION ON FUNDING TO BE RELEASED FROM THE LA TO SPECIAL SCHOOLS	
7.1	<u>Purpose</u> Mrs Laird guided Schools' Forum members through the report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The report informed Schools' Forum of funding arrangements for maintained special schools, special academies, pupil referral units and alternative provision academies.	
7.2	<u>Discussion/Challenge</u>	
7.2.1	The DfE used the NFF to allocate funding to local authorities, taking into consideration local factors including the population and deprivation indicators. The funding included a basic entitlement of £4,660 per pupil counted on the January 2022 alternative provision census, and the October 2022 school census. Funding was deducted from the total for those residents who were educated outside of the borough under the import and export adjustments. Total funding was then distributed according to the High Needs Operational Guides which were produced each year.	
7.2.2	Places at special schools were based on £10,000 per place per year regardless of the pupil occupying the place. The tariff appeared to have been set with a view to being £4,000 for the basic pupil cost (in line with mainstream) and £6,000 for specialist support. High needs basic entitlement funding to the local authority was increased by £660 per place in 2022-23 to compensate for the teachers' pay and pensions grants previously received directly from the ESFA for academies. This was	

	ACTION
<p>not reflected in the guidance that still referred to £10,000 per place. The local authority had made the additional £660 payments directly to schools through the monthly instalment.</p>	
<p>7.2.3 The MFG had been included in the grant conditions to protect special schools from increases in costs. For the 2023-24 academic year, the MFG would be 3% from a baseline of 2021-22. The 3% MFG was set to achieve broad equivalence with the MFG for mainstream schools over the same period (considering the schools supplementary grant funding that mainstream schools received in 2022-23). Further details of the MFG calculations were contained within the report. Mrs Laird would discuss the calculations, and the implications for each school, with Headteachers and School Business Managers.</p>	
<p>7.2.4 In 2022-23 the government provided local authorities with a supplementary special schools' grant (SSSG). The SSSG would not continue in 2023-24, as local authorities would be required to pass on 3.4% additional funding. The 3.4% would be applied to the total number of places funded in the 2022-23 academic year, plus the average associated top ups per place funded.</p>	
<p>7.2.5 In response to a query, Mrs Laird confirmed that support bases were not entitled to the additional funding as they already attracted additional funding on the age weighted pupil unit (AWPU) for any pupils in the support base.</p>	
<p>7.3 <u>Outcomes</u></p>	
<p>7.3.1 Schools' Forum noted the increase in the special school minimum funding guarantee to 3%, and the additional funding of 3.4% of the total budget.</p>	
<p>7.3.2 On behalf of Schools' Forum, the Chair thanked Mrs Laird for the information provided, which gave assurances to members.</p>	
<p>8. REPORT ON TRIBUNALS</p>	
<p>8.1 <u>Purpose</u></p> <p>To share an update, as requested at the previous Schools' Forum meeting, on the tribunals in which the local authority had been, or continued to be, involved with during 2022. Mrs Wellings had circulated a report in advance of the meeting for information.</p>	
<p>8.2 <u>Discussion/Challenge</u></p>	
<p>8.2.1 Mrs Wellings shared an overview of the number of appeals lodged by parents/carers with the SEND tribunal during the 2022 calendar year, and the outcomes from those appeals. The basis on which an appeal could be lodged were outlined, including decisions not to complete an EHC assessment, the decision not to issue an ECHP following assessment, decisions to cease</p>	

		ACTION
	<p>to maintain EHCPs and the content of a plan. The 2014 SEND reforms had placed a greater emphasis on parents/carers seeking independent mediation in advance of submitting appeals. Prior to mediation, the SEN case officers would seek to work closely with families.</p> <p><i>Mrs A O’Gara withdrew from the meeting.</i></p>	
8.2.2	The local authority would always seek, where possible, to reach agreement with parents/carers without progressing to tribunal. Very few tribunals found in favour of the local authority. Resolving issues, to meet a child’s or young person’s needs, was the priority. Parents/carers were always informed of their legal rights, but the local authority would seek to achieve the best outcome for the family without going through what was often a lengthy and stressful process.	
8.3	<p><u>Outcome</u></p> <p>Schools’ Forum noted the information contained within the report.</p>	
9.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	No items had been declared for consideration under any other business.	
10.	ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS	
	The Chair informed Schools’ Forum that when his term of office as Chair expired, he would not seek reappointment. The election of a new Chair would be an agenda item at the first meeting of the 2023-24 academic year and nominations would be sought in advance of the meeting.	
11.	DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS	
	The date and time of the next meeting was Monday 26 June 2023 at 3pm. The meeting would be held virtually.	

Meeting closed at 4:45pm.