
**FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE ADMISSION OF VULNERABLE PUPILS
IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

Purpose of Report

1. To seek School Forum support for the Local Area Primary Panel's (LAP Panels) to draw down funding from the High Needs element of DSG to support the admission of vulnerable pupils as part of the Fair Access Protocol.

Background

2. During September and October 2013, Primary School Head Teachers developed a Fair Access Protocol to manage the admission and transfer of vulnerable pupils between primary schools. The new protocols came into effect from 1st November.
3. At the time of the School Forum meeting each locality will have met once, with future monthly meetings scheduled for the rest of the academic year.
4. Although the primary protocols are in their infancy each locality meeting has discussed some complex cases, attendance has been good and agreement has been reached on the admission of all children presented to the panels.
5. During the consultation and development period, Head Teachers expressed strong concerns about the ability for Primary Schools to manage additional vulnerable children if there are already difficult or challenging circumstances being managed within the school. Head Teachers did not want these circumstances to be a barrier to admitting children through the protocol and as such have requested the submission of this paper to Schools Forum.

Support Funding

6. This paper requests School Forum's consideration for the Local Area Primary Panel's to be able to draw down funding from the High Needs element of the DSG budget to support the successful admission of vulnerable children under the fair access protocol arrangements.
7. It is recommended that this funding is only made available in exceptional circumstances, e.g.
 - a) A managed move of a pupil already exhibiting significant behavioural difficulties or where there have already been a number of unsuccessful transfers (more than 2).
 - b) The arrival of a child from out of authority where significant concerns are known before the child's arrival or quickly identified upon admission to a school.
 - c) To support transport arrangements where attendance may be at risk due to family circumstances.
 - d) To support a school to retain a child, rather than sanction a managed move/transfer when there are significant safeguarding concerns or the child is in year 6.

8. The release of this funding is intended to act as early intervention support and to provide flexible solutions to address the needs of the most vulnerable children. It is hoped that in some cases this early support will prevent the need for high costs if the situation was left to escalate and was not addressed.
9. Until more cases are reviewed by each LAP Panel it is difficult to identify the exact situations that may require funding or how much funding would be required to support a case. However, a proposal to provide £25,000 to each area has been put forward on the basis of the following assumptions:
 - Assume an HLTA at approx. £25,000 per area
 - Divide the £25,000 by 190 teaching days = £132 per day
 - £132 per day x 30 days (6 weeks) = £3,947 per 6 week trial period per school.
 - This allows for at least 6.3 such assessment periods per area.
10. Therefore the following conditions are recommended when considering release of funding:
 - a) No more than £4,000 is approved at any one time for each request.
 - b) Funding is intended to be for short term support and therefore must not be in place for more than 6 weeks, without being reviewed by the LAPP.
 - c) A funding request can only be agreed by the majority vote at a LAPP meeting.
11. This proposal would require an initial release of £75,000 as a contingency fund across all three areas. If greater demand is made in any one area the money could be redistributed to the area(s) with greatest need or used to further support schools who need longer period of support than the 6 weeks, following agreement of the panel.
12. It is recommended that a review of all funding requests should be undertaken at 6 months and 12 months from the date the LAPPs were established. These reviews will be conducted by 6 Primary Head Teacher representatives (2 from each locality) and a report will be presented to the Behaviour and Attendance Partnership and School Forum in due course. The review will identify how the funding was spent and the equality of spending across the three areas, it will also challenge whether the short term support through this package helped to reduce the long term demand of high costs from the High Needs element.

Recommendations

13. That School Forum approve that each LAPP's be allocated up to £25,000 funding from the high needs element of the DSG, in line with the conditions outlined in this report.
14. That the situation is reviewed again in 6 and 12 months before a decision is made to extend the access to this funding.

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