

DARLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING TUESDAY 7TH JULY 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT:

D Judson (Swift Academies (In the Chair)); P King (The Federation of Mowden Schools); P Ayto (Reid Street Primary); M Butler (Education Village); S Welsh (Whinfield Primary); J Moorhouse (Carmel College); N Gibbon (St Aidans CE Academy); K A Lyle (Rydal Academy); C Large (St Johns CE Diocese); M Shorten (Carmel College); M Taylor (St Bede's RC Primary); E Hickerson (Rise Carr College); S Crowther (Mt Pleasant Primary); K Reid (Polam Hall School); Mike Fryer (Hummersknott Academy)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

B Nielsen (Finance Manager); E Marshall (School Forum Monitoring and Support Officer); H Ellison (Head of Learning & Skills and 11-19).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Hughes (Lead Member Children and Young People)

APOLOGIES

P Richardson (Head of 16-19); E Calvert (William House Nursery); T Murphy (Head of Education & Inclusion); E Sayers (Finance Officer);

Welcome, Introduction &

Register/Declaration of business interests

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

There were no declarations of interest.

1. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes (previously circulated) of the Schools Forum meeting held 22nd May 2018 were agreed as a true record.

It was noted that M Fryer had been missed off the apologies.

The School Forum Officer confirmed that the SEND Capital Fund would be an item for discussion at the next meeting of the Education Consultative Group.

2. High Needs Update

The Finance Manager presented the previously circulated paper outlining the changes to mainstream school top up payments from September 2018 and an update with regard to Behaviour & Attendance changes.

It was noted that from September 2018 that secondary schools would begin to receive top ups for children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and as a result would receive reduced lump sum payments. In addition all lump sums would be stopped, but to ease the reduction in funding that lump sums would be phased out during the 2018/19 academic year.

It was also noted that there would be an additional protection during 2018/19 to take account of the funding changes.

The key of the proposed changes was to ensure that funding follows the child.

A discussion took place within the group regarding the proposed changes the key points being as follows,

- It was asked if only children with EHCPs would receive top ups under the new system. It was noted that yes that is the case, though the Authority would look at special circumstances if a child was to be disadvantaged.
- It was mentioned that many schools undertake a lot of work in preparing for statutory assessment for children who subsequently leave the school which causes a pressure on schools without any benefit. It was asked if there was a plan to allocate funding to schools that prepare for assessment where top up funding is received by another school. No funding will be paid to schools for work towards statutory assessment.
- It was asked if the proposals would make a saving on the budget. It was noted that in the illustrative figures (the appendices) there was a small saving but really the change was budget neutral. However no growth had been built into the figures for any additional EHCPs, so if there is growth there would be no saving in 2018/19.
- Forum was informed that the figures in the appendices were for illustration as the actual payments would be dependent on the actual children in school during the 2018/19 academic year. It could not be quantified exactly therefore what the financial position would be, however the latest information was used in the modelling.

- It was asked where any additional spend would be paid from. Any additional spend would add to the pressure in high needs. This would be picked up by the ongoing review of all high needs funded services/placements. The key was that funding follows the child. There would be further savings in 2019/20 (on the assumption of no further changes) as there would be a full saving of lump sums.
- It was outlined that for the 2019/20 academic year that any proposed changes would be consulted upon over the autumn term and onwards. The work that has already been undertaken would continue with work taking place over the summer to feed into any proposed changes for future years.
- St Aidan's questioned why they receive no lump sum. It was noted that they received no lump sum as no funding was removed from their budget share as the school was not part of Darlington's school budget share calculation back when the lump sums were calculated.
- Discussion took place regarding transitions and the work that is undertaken in primary schools for children that are moving up to secondary levels. It was mentioned that there is a requirement to look at transitions to ensure that their needs are highlighted and secure transition arrangements put in place.
- It was commented that the paper had been issued very late and that this was very tight for schools in planning for budgets. It was asked if any future changes could be notified much sooner so that schools could plan accordingly.
- The financial position of high needs budgets was discussed and it was noted the proposed changes to mainstream top ups would not result in a balanced budget. Forum asked if they could have sight a strategic plan of how the LA will be reviewing each part of the high needs budget and where the high needs savings will come from as soon as it is available.
- It was asked if the figures included in the report took into account the ranges moderation from previous work undertaken to develop ranges. It was confirmed that the figures did not reflect this work; they are based on the bands children are currently allocated.
- It was commented that proposed changes were not as some expected, in that the moderation of EHCPs against the ranges is not in the figures. It was felt that as this work had been done that we should have progressed with new bandings. It was felt by some that what schools had been "sold" as changes that would occur are not.

- Forum members were informed that if proposed changes require a change of policy then there are political processes to follow. The Council needs to ensure that the correct decision making processes are followed, with meaningful consultation carried out with relevant stakeholders if required. This means that decisions can take time to be implemented, but ensures the decision making process is correct and can stand up to any challenge.
- It was noted that, the work on the moderation and ranges was not lost, and had already delivered benefits in terms of quality assurance and SEN practice, but would be used to continue the work already undertaken with any proposed changes being consulted upon from the autumn onwards.
- It was commented that in special schools all EHCPs had been moderated against the draft ranges as the current system was not fit for purpose. It was expected that a new funding system informed by that moderation work would be implemented in 2018/19 to ensure the system was robust going forward.
- It was asked if any communication would be circulated to all schools following this meeting. It was confirmed that this would be the case.
- It was noted that the NAHT union had undertaken some research on high needs pressures across the region. There is to be a lobby day in September to raise the issue with Government.

School Forum noted the report.

3. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Date/Time/Location of next meeting

18th October 2018, 10am Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Darlington