

GATESHEAD SCHOOLS FORUM**16 July 2015**

PRESENT: Ken Childs – Special School Governor
Steve Haigh – Secondary Academies
Chris Richardson – Maintained Secondary Heads
Allan Symons – Primary Governor
Ethel Mills – PVI Sector
Denise Henry – Nursery Sector
Matt Younger – Primary Heads
Jane Bryant – Special Heads
Christine Ingle – RC Sector
Peter Lague – Teacher Unions
Linda Alder – Secondary Academies
Steve Williamson – Behaviour Support Service

IN ATTENDANCE: Carole Smith – Corporate Resources
John Turvey – Corporate Resources
Neil Porteous – Corporate Services and Governance

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Clive Wisby, Councillor Malcolm Brain, Sarah Diggle, Mustafaa Malik, Julie Goodfellow and Elaine Pickering.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

3. RESEARCH ON FUNDING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEN

The forum received a report requesting it to note the outcome of research into funding for young people with special educational needs (SEN).

The research was undertaken by the Isos Partnership on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE). The Partnership was asked to advise on options for a Local Authority level funding formula through which the DfE would distribute funding through the high needs block within the dedicated schools grant (DSG). The Partnership was also asked to consider how setting level funding formula (for early years, schools and colleges) might need to be adjusted to take full account of SEN.

A summary of the research together with the partnership's 17 proposals were appended to the report.

Proposals 1, 3, 6, 10 and 11 could have a direct impact on all three blocks of the DSG and as such were outlined in the meeting.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

4. EARLY YEARS SINGLE FUNDING FORMULA

A report was presented proposing an amendment to the Early Years Single Funding Formula for 2016/17, needed to make the administration of the Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant more efficient.

The Forum was asked to consider proposals to:

- Convert the termly contribution to support costs into hourly rates,
- Make initial payments to PVI's based on estimates,
- Introduce an Amendments Procedure (for instances where estimates cause under or overpayments by more than 10%) and;
- Cease funding 2 year olds who start after headcount information has been submitted.

Concerns were raised about the funding cessation for 2 year olds who start after headcount information has been submitted, as it was commented that there would be a significant impact due to the 1:4 staffing ratio. It was agreed that Carole Smith liaise with Early Years colleagues to determine the likely impact and report the findings at the next meeting.

RESOLVED - i) That the proposals, as outlined in the report, be endorsed with the exception of the funding cessation for 2 year olds after headcount.

ii) That a decision on the cessation of funding for 2 year olds be delayed, until the forum has received and considered information relating to the potential impact of this change.

5. NOTIONAL SEN

The forum received a report detailing the findings of the review of Gateshead Notional SEN funding within mainstream schools.

It was noted that an initial review of school census information revealed some inconsistencies in reporting SEN provision. The forum also heard the difficulty in ascertaining other significant drivers to SEN other than low prior attainment or deprivation that are outside the funding

system, or if reporting inconsistencies exist across mainstream schools.

It was commented that the secondary sector is more consistent in regards to SEN reporting.

It was said that SEN identification varies and many schools identify SEN at entry, which could be the cause of inconsistencies. Therefore it was agreed that regional and national data be obtained and considered at a future meeting.

RESOLVED - That regional and national SEN data be obtained for consideration by Schools Forum.

6. MAINSTREAM SCHOOL CONSULTATION

The Forum was invited to comment on the Council's consultation document relating to education funding from April 2016.

RESOLVED - Schools Forum approved the consultation document.

7. COST OF CHILDCARE – CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Schools Forum received a report advising of the Local Authorities response to the DfE call for evidence on the cost of childcare.

The overall findings of Gateshead's call for evidence were that costs have increased, this is especially evident for direct employee costs, and funding has remained stagnant. All settings have also seen general inflationary pressures for goods and services which have impacted on costs.

The result of these costs pressures is that for Gateshead's maintained settings 90% subsidise their nursery provision from their mainstream budget, estimated at just over £1M and equating to underfunding of over 30%.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

8. SCHOOL BALANCE PERCENTAGES

At its meeting on 16 July, the Forum raised concerns that some maintained schools are not controlling their balances appropriately.

To address these concerns a report was presented with information on maintained schools' opening and closing balance for 2014/15, the total balance per school, the percentage balance and existing licences.

It was commented that the presence of additional grant funding in the balances gives the impression there is underspend. The forum was also reminded that many schools are saving as they are anticipating difficult financial challenges and some are saving for capital works.

It was noted that whilst each school will be able to explain how their balance is reached, the forum considered it appropriate to look at schools finances over a 3 year period along with their development plan. It was said that schools should be focussed on sustaining staffing levels.

Schools also need to be made aware of the licensing conditions impact of unspent monies.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted, pending any requests for further analysis.

9. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 15 October 2015 at 10am.