

Item 7

TITLE OF REPORT: Special Schools Formula Update

Purpose of the Report

To bring to Schools Forum the proposed amendments to the Special School Funding Formula to Schools Forum for Approval.

Background

There have been no changes to the Special Schools pupil related top ups for 2016/17. However it is anticipated that following DfE consultations and announcements changes will need to be made for 2017/18.

A short review of Special School fixed costs was undertaken to reflect some of the additional costs schools have incurred as a result of increased pupil numbers.

Special Schools Fixed Cost Top Up's have not changed since 2013/14 when the new formula was introduced, however two schools received additional funding in 2015/16 which are included in this report to formalise these arrangements.

Proposed Increases

Eslington

In September 2016 Eslington opened its second site at Eslington Rose Street. At the time of setting the 2015/16 budget the additional site costs were not known so were not included in the schools budget for 2015/16. However the school did receive a contingency payment of £62,078, which was the subject of a Schools Forum report in July 2015.

Following the opening of the new site, fixed costs for Rose Street have been monitored and the additional site costs are estimated at £85,455 for 2016/17. This estimate may change as the allocation of costs between the Rose Street occupants is further refined.

Furrowfield

Up until 2014/15, the cost of Furrowfield mini buses was funded centrally from DSG. From 2015/16 this arrangement changed and the cost of the mini buses was added to Furrowfield fixed costs. This was agreed by the Special Schools funding group, but not approved by Schools Forum. The estimated cost of the mini buses for 2016/17 is £22,500.

The Cedars

When the current fixed costs for The Cedars was calculated the school in 2012/13 the school had 85 places and pupils. The school now has 118 commissioned places, with 138

pupils attending in January 2016. This is over a 60% increase in children from 2013/14 to 2016/17. Taking this increase into account, the fixed costs of the Cedars were reviewed and compared to historic values. The outcome of the review is that fixed costs have increased substantially. As no school receives the full proportion of fixed costs in the fixed cost top up, the increase to The Cedars fixed costs has been calculated at £32,396.

Gibside

In September 2014, Gibside School expanded into Blaydon Children's Centre. To facilitate this, some alterations were made to the building and an annual base charge of £11,000 was estimated. These estimated costs were included in Gibside Schools fixed costs for 2015/16. Now costings have become clearer with the school being on site for a full year, the annual charge for the use of the Blaydon Children's Center is £13,000.

Proposal

That Schools Forum approves the increase of the Special Schools fixed costs for:-

- An increase in fixed costs of £85,455 for Eslington split site costs
- An increase in fixed costs of £22,500 for Furrowfield mini buses
- An increase in fixed costs of £32,396 for the Cedars increased pupil numbers
- An increase in fixed costs of £13,000 for Gibside split site costs

Recommendation

It is recommended that Schools Forum approves the proposed increases to the special schools fixed costs

For the following reasons

- To enable Special Schools budgets to be set for 2016/17 in accordance with Schools and Early Years (England) Regulations 2015.
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