

# GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

## GATESHEAD SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Thursday, 16 March 2023

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Peter Largue (Chair)	Trade Union Representative
	Sarah Diggle	Secondary Maintained Governors
	Jacqui Ridley	Primary Governors
	Brendan Robson	Secondary Faith Academies
	Alison Hall	Primary Maintained Schools
	Paul Harris	Primary Maintained Schools
	Denise Kilner	Nursery Sector Representative
	Julie Goodfellow	Primary Academy Headteachers
	Mustafaa Malik	Primary Headteachers
	Ethel Mills	PVI Sector Representative
	Domenic Volpe	Maintained Secondary Headteachers
	Christina Jones	Pupil Referral Unit
	Councillor Sheila Gallagher	Elected Member

<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Carole Smith	Gateshead Council
	Terence Appleby	Gateshead Council
	Sue Waugh	Gateshead Council
	Melvyn Mallam-Churchill	Gateshead Council

### 1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Fowler and Michelle Richards.

### 2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

### 3 QUARTER 3 DSG MONITORING

The Forum received a report providing information of the January 2023 projected outturn position of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2022/23.

It was reported that at 31 January, the projected year-end outturn for the year was £102.287m with an underspend of £2.714m. It was noted that the main areas of underspend relate to: additional HNB funding, special schools top-ups, ARMS, SEN Support Services and support for Inclusion which are partially being offset by maintained, academy and independent school top ups.

The Forum were advised that the balance of the DSG reserve at 31 March 2022 was

£2.255m. It was stated that by factoring in the in-year underspend of £2.714m and the Early Years adjustment for 2021/22 of £0.043m, it is forecast that the balance will increase to £4.926m at 31 March 2023. The Forum acknowledged that this was a positive position.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Schools Forum noted the content of the report.

#### **4 MAINSTREAM ADDITIONAL SEND FUNDING**

The Forum received a report providing information in relation to applications from 5 schools for additional mainstream special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) funding for the financial year 2022/23.

The Forum were reminded that this process was developed to enable schools with large proportions of children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP's) and large numbers of children on their special educational needs (SEN) register to apply for additional high needs block (HNB) funding due to the anomaly in the mainstream funding system that puts inclusive schools at a financial disadvantage.

It was reported that a total of £99,910 had been awarded to 4 schools.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Schools Forum noted the outcome of the funding applications.

#### **5 MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS HIGH NEEDS TOP UPS**

The Forum received a report providing information in relation to the proposed Mainstream school top up rates from April 2023.

It was noted that when the top up structure was introduced in 2013/14 funding was based on an hourly rate of a level 3 Teaching Assistant (TA). The Forum further noted that as funding has not kept pace with the increase of staffing costs, top ups have previously been either increased or decreased in line with MFG. It was stated that because of this prior to 2022/23, the gap between funding and costs had widened.

It was reported that due to the additional funding, it was proposed that tops ups were increased in line with the hourly costs of a level 2 TA of £16.28 per hour; this represented an average increase of 12.41%. It was proposed that TA level 2 point 6 be used for the mainstream top up rate, and this would give an estimated hourly rate of £17.55, an increase of £1.27 and 7.81%.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Schools Forum approved the mainstream top up increases for 2023/24.

## **6 COMMISSIONED NUMBERS**

The Forum received a report proposing commissioning arrangements for High Needs Places for 2023/24.

From the report, the Forum were advised that as in 2022/23, all special schools and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) will receive funding of £10,000 per commissioned place. It was also noted that Resourced Mainstream Schools (ARMS) will receive £6,000 per place for a pupil that is main or current registered at the school and £10,000 for a vacant place or a pupil subsidiary registered at the school.

It was highlighted that the local authority will pay a locally agreed top-up to settings if and where they are necessary. The Forum noted that the top-ups may vary between settings depending on the complexity of pupils' needs and this top-up will only be paid for pupils on roll and will move in real time with the pupils.

The Forum were provided with a table showing the proposed commissioned places for 2023/24; it was noted that Whickham School have 5 additional commissioned places from September 2023.

A request was made that the name 'Pru' be changed to River Tyne Academy in future reporting; this was agreed.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Schools Forum noted the report.

## **7 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

## **8 FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY FUNDING**

The Forum received a report providing an overview of requests for financial difficulty funding by 3 schools.

Denise Kilner and Sarah Diggle left the meeting prior to each case being discussed due to declarations of interest.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Forum discussed and deliberated on each case carefully with the following recommendations:

Bensham Nursery School

The Forum approved the full amount of funding requested.

Furrowfield Special School

The Forum requested additional and more detailed information.

Hill Top Special School

The Forum requested additional and more detailed information.

**9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

**10 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 18 May 2023, 2pm.