

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

GATESHEAD SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

Thursday, 9 December 2021

PRESENT:

Peter Largue (Chair)	Trade Union Representative
Jacqui Ridley	Primary Governors
Alison Hall	Primary Maintained Schools
Paul Harris	Primary Maintained Schools
Denise Kilner	Nursery Sector Representative
Elaine White	Diocese Representatives
Julie Goodfellow	Primary Academy Headteachers
Steve Haigh	Secondary Academy Headteachers
Mustafaa Malik	Primary Headteachers
Andrew Ramanandi	Primary Headteachers
Domenic Volpe	Maintained Secondary Headteachers
Christina Jones	Pupil Referral Unit
Councillor Sheila Gallagher	Elected Member
Julie Vincent	Special School Headteachers

IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Gary Haley	Gateshead Council
Carole Smith	Gateshead Council
Terence Appleby	Gateshead Council
Jenny Edwards	Gateshead Council
Steve Horne	Gateshead Council
Julie McDowell	Gateshead Council
Anthony Ward	Gateshead Council
Maxine Caine	Gateshead Council
Rosalyn Patterson	Gateshead Council

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Ethel Mills, Sarah Diggle, Clive Wisby and David Brophy.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

At the last meeting of the Forum it was agreed that representatives would consult their respective phases on the de-delegation for maternity credits and TUFT. Forum therefore agreed the de-delegation of maternity credits and TUFT.

3 FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY FUNDING

Following discussion at the last meeting, it was confirmed that regulations have been checked and a question raised with the DfE as to the use of surplus reserves. Forum was advised that there is nothing to state that DSG reserves cannot be used for schools in financial difficulty and that in the past reserves have been used at the discretion of the Forum.

An alternative methodology was put forward but this would be only for mainstream schools and therefore would not include all sectors. If the alternative method were adopted it would allocate additional funding to all mainstream schools and would mean using just under £1m of additional reserves, rising from £1.533 to £2.498.

The point was made that reserves are from every school in Gateshead and there were concerns that it is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure schools are viable and that this type of funding may be using reserves to subsidise unviable schools which would cause potential issues if continued. It was confirmed that Schools Block contributes very little to the reserves, which are usually made up from underspends in the High Needs Block and Early Years Block. Reassurance was also provided that the local authority constantly looks at the viability of schools and that decisions would not be made that do not meet the long-term needs of school places in the borough. It was also noted that schools can be in financial difficulty for a number of reasons and this funding is not used to prop schools up.

RESOLVED - That the Schools Forum noted the content of the report and agreed the use of DSG reserves to support schools in financial difficulty.

4 FAIR ACCESS EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGIST

Schools Forum received a report requesting the de-delegation of funding from maintained primary schools to fund the Education Psychologist (EP) post for the Fair Access Panel (FAP).

It was noted that the FAP was set up in 2014 and at that time primary schools agreed to fund an EP post through de-delegation.

Work of the EP includes school consultations, work with individuals and groups to offer therapeutic work and training with schools.

It was reported that since 2014 the EP has accepted 128 pupil referrals and there are currently 26 active cases in 2020/21.

In terms of area of need, the biggest area remains social, emotional and mental health and there is also increase communication and interaction needs.

An annual training programme has been rolled out since 2016, this allows all schools in Gateshead to access the service even if they have not used the service within their schools. 102 live training sessions have been held since 2016 with over 2000 participants. All training packages are available on line since the start of the

pandemic.

The Forum praised the high quality of the service however issues were raised about agreeing a price today which may increase in the future if not all schools buy back the service. It was noted that the figure quoted in the report is based on all primary schools paying in and that any increase in price would be brought back to the Forum for further agreement.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Schools Forum approved the de-delegation of funds for the Primary Fair Access Educational Psychologist based on £5.50 per pupil.
 - (ii) That any increase in cost would be brought back to the Forum for agreement.

5 ETHNIC MINORITY AND TRAVELLER ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE

Schools Forum received a report on the work of the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) to consider de-delegation for the financial year 2022/23.

It was reported that there has been a slight rise in the number of ethnic minority and Gypsy Roma and Traveller children attending schools in Gateshead, the figure is now just over 13%. The number of pupils identified as having a first language that is other than English has also slightly increased to 8.4%.

The service remains the same with the same number of staff, however a short term post was developed for an EAL Inclusion Officer who was in post from January to August 2021.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Schools Forum noted the work undertaken by EMTAS to support the educational achievement of all ethnic minority and Traveller pupils in Gateshead schools, and approves the de-delegation of funding for EMTAS at rates of £3.00 for every maintained mainstream primary pupil and £250.00 for each primary maintained mainstream EAL pupil.
 - (ii) That any increase in cost would be brought back to the Forum for agreement.

6 BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT SERVICE

The Forum received a report on the Primary Behaviour Support service and a request for further de-delegation for 2022/23 financial year.

It was reported that there were 55 referrals last year, with a significant increase in referrals from reception and year 1. It was confirmed that the majority of referrals did return to their mainstream school.

The Forum felt that the service works very well and the training has been valuable.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Schools Forum approved the de-delegation of funds for the Primary Behaviour Support Team special needs assistants.
 - (ii) That any increase in cost would be brought back to the Forum for agreement.

7 EMOTIONALLY BASED SCHOOL AVOIDANCE (EBSA) MENTORS

The Forum received a report on the work of the EBSA Learning Mentors.

It was reported that in 2020/21 79 referrals were made, 70 of which were directly linked to EBSA and 53 were appropriate referrals. Of this 53, 26 requested a EBSA Learning Mentor.

It was acknowledged that it has been a difficult year in terms of staffing, there are now 1.6 FTE Learning Mentors when this was previously 1.8 FTE. The service has looked at its processes and, as a pathfinder, this is a learning process and work is underway to sharpen processes going forward. It was noted that this is not a huge resource but is vitally important. The service has been reflective and refined the process so that it is right for schools and young people.

The Forum agreed that this is a much needed service but that more resource is required within the service to offer a more robust approach.

The point was made that some schools are already employing staff to do similar roles and therefore they may not need to draw upon this service. It was noted however that the earlier intervention at primary school stage through this service would save intervention at secondary stage. It was also acknowledged that primary schools do not have the funding to offer such a service in the way that secondary schools could.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the Schools Forum agreed to de-delegate for maintained mainstream schools for a EBSA Learning Mentor to support children / young people with EBSA.
 - (ii) That Academies and schools that cannot de-delegate agree to pay towards the cost of a EBSA Learning Mentor to support children / young people with EBSA.

8 MAINSTREAM SCHOOL FUNDING CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Forum received the outcome of the Mainstream School Funding consultation. The majority of responses received were positive.

- RESOLVED -
- That the Schools Forum noted the consultation responses and comments.

9 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT - Q2

Forum received a report on the quarter 2 projected outturn position for DSG for 2021/22.

There is a projected underspend of £1.392m. The main areas of underspend relate to Early Years payments to PVI's, independent schools top ups, special schools top ups and the PRU partially offset by maintained and academy top ups and alternative provision.

It is expected that the DSG reserve balance will increase to £3.403m at the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED - That the Schools Forum noted the content of the report.

10 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 6 January 2022 at 2.00pm.