

# Minutes - Sheffield Schools Forum

3.00-5.00pm, 21 June 2021, via Microsoft Teams

Chair: Paul Stockley

## Schools Forum Members:

### **Primary Heads Representatives**

Nigel Brooke-Smith (Greystones)  
Cathy Rowland (Dobcroft Infant)  
Paul Stockley (Bradway)

### **Primary Governors**

Alison Warner (Grenoside)

### **Secondary Head**

Linda Gooden (King Edward VII)

### **Non-school Members**

Mo Andrews, Pye Bank CE Primary  
Stephen Betts, Learn Sheffield  
Karen Simpkin, Early Years providers  
Toby Mallinson/Rod Padley, Trade Unions  
Mo Nisbet, 14-19 Sector

### **Academies**

Keith Crawshaw (Sheffield South East Trust)  
David Dennis (Tapton)  
Jim Dugmore (Oughtibridge)  
Chris French (Mercia Learning Trust)  
Stacy McKay (Springs Academy)  
Morag Somerville (Steel City Schools Partnership)

### **Special Academies**

Joel Hardwick (Nexus Multi-academy Trust)

### **Special Schools**

Laura Gillespie, Governor (Bents Green)  
Sacha Schofield, Head (Bents Green)

### **PRU**

Tuesday Rhodes (Sheffield Inclusion Centre)

**Apologies:** Stephen Betts, Jim Dugmore, Chris French, Joel Hardwick, Stacy McKay, Mo Nisbet, Rod Padley, Tuesday Rhodes (Ash Khan attended on behalf of)

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Dunn, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills; Andrew Jones, Director of Education and Skills; Amanda Murray, Business Strategy (notes); Mark Sheikh, Head of Service, Business Strategy, Rose Ward, Head of SEN

**Presenters:** Tim Armstrong, Head of Access and Inclusion; Jacky Beatson, Resourcing Coordinator; Candi Lawson, Strategic Commissioning Manager; Nicola Shearstone, Head of Commissioning for Prevention and Early Intervention – All age

## **1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

Introductions were made and apologies noted as above. Cllr Dunn was welcomed back to the Forum as the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, and stated that she is happy to be involved again and would like to thank schools on behalf of the Council and parents for their hard work and dedication.

Keith Crawshaw declared an interest in the PRU historical debts item.

## **2. Previous meeting minutes/matters arising**

Agreed as a true and accurate record. All actions are covered by the agenda.

### 3. PRU/Inclusion Strategy

#### £1.5m transfer to High Needs Block – review of interventions

Further to the paper at the February Forum, Candi Lawson gave an update on the interventions after undertaking a full review of progress, all as per Paper 3 and summarised as follows:

The funding allocation is broadly categorised into two areas:

- i. **The Inclusion Model** - the hubs and outreach model.
  - A lot of work has been involved in mapping out evidence of need.
  - The provision aims to link well with local schools ensuring they are more able to support mainstream due to local connections.
- ii. **Sector Leadership and Development** e.g. Trauma Informed Training
  - There is good support and partnerships within the sector.
  - We aim to increase SENCOs with a secondary focus.
  - We are working with sector leads to define a specification to be in place from September 2021 which will embed learning.
  - We are working with the Primary Inclusion Partnership (PIP) and the Secondary Inclusion Partnership (SIP) to increase provision.

The short-term nature of the work is challenging due to commissioning timescales and time to embed and develop new areas of work. Therefore, the longer-term requires consideration and a further update will therefore be brought back to the Forum in Autumn.

Comments and questions from the Forum are summarised as follows:

- The impact of the Trauma Informed training will be measured by looking at the reflective practice provision that's in place. There is a meeting with locality leads and heads w/c 21 June to discuss this and to look at case studies and feedback.
- The Trauma Informed work is the bedrock of the Healthy Minds Programme and Candi is happy to present information on this to localities.
- To ensure that the long-term planning is added to the recommendations for approval as we need a longer-term strategy. The £1.5m transfer is necessary due to the funding deficit (we are limited to the level of transfer between blocks by DSG rules). **Action: a paper will be brought to next Forum that explores the longer-term funding options.**

#### SEND Funding Review

Candi summarised that:

- We are reviewing Element 3 funding.
- There has been a huge amount of work undertaken around the data and case studies.
- We need to unpick the model and look at what we need to change.
- Our locality model has achieved increased collaboration and partnership working which enables a better understanding of the needs of our pupils.
- We are working with localities to define the process. **Action: bring back the proposed model for good practice once this has been agreed in localities.**

## Sheffield Inclusion Centre (SIC) Funding for Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Pupils

Further to previous discussions at the Forum regarding funding following the child. We were mindful of barriers but agreed in principle. A way forward has now been determined as set out in Section 4 of Paper 3.

Additional discussion included:

- There is evidence of individual projects being successful in terms of preventing permanent exclusions. There has been a slight reduction in numbers – we currently have 63 permanent exclusions (55 of which are secondary) which is down from 71 last year.
- Sacha Schofield would be interested to see which projects are making a difference and whether or not they are locality-based - there is an anonymous questionnaire carried out after the panel that identifies the cohorts and what interventions have taken place.
- The Chair requested further information regarding access to support.  
**Action: Candi to provide.**
- David Dennis commends the work of the inclusion panels but feels we have not got a global picture at school level.

## PRU Debt

Mark Sheikh updated the Forum as per appendix 2 – there is currently £634k debt outstanding. We are proposing that we send out a joint communication to chase up these outstanding debts and hold the provision that was made for writing them off in the meantime.

It was highlighted that the largest debt of over £400k is owed by a trust based outside of Sheffield and that the money should be used for Sheffield children.

## Recommendations

As per the paper, the Forum:

- **Noted** the progress and planned commissioning activity for the £1.5m prevention funding.
- **Noted** the update of the SEND funding review.
- **Agreed** the proposal for EHCP funding allocation where a child is excluded.
- **Agreed** to send a joint communication to schools/academy trusts to pursue the historical PRU debts.
- **In addition**, the Forum **agreed** that longer-term planning for the prevention funding requires consideration and that a further update be brought back to the Forum in Autumn.

## **4. Early Years Investment Options**

Nicola Shearstone presented Paper 4, key points as follows:

- Further to the action from the February Schools Forum, the Early Years Working Group recommend that the £600k investment fund be reinvested into provision across the city in recognition of the continuing financial challenges being faced.
- The funding will be distributed in August 2021, based on the number of hours paid to providers in 2019/20.

The Forum **approved** the above recommendation.

## 5. Specialist Equipment

Tim Armstrong presented the proposals as per Paper 5 - these have previously been agreed at the Funding Working Group:

- We are asking the Forum to agree that mainstream schools would contribute up to £1k costs towards hearing impairment (HI) and visual impairment (VI) equipment.
- Equipment is mainly provided in primary schools and this includes an upgrade for pupils in Y6 in preparation for secondary (this cost would be requested from the secondary school). The equipment follows the child.
- The equipment would be maintained by the local authority – it will become the property of the HI and VI Service who would be responsible for maintaining it.
- Between April 2020 and January 2021, the total cost of equipment for 53 children was £30k.

Further discussion clarified the following points:

- This would be equipment-led – only applies to the school where the child attends and is based on what equipment the child requires.
- If a small school has an unusually high number of instances, or if the child has complex needs (over and above this level) this could be escalated for consideration by the Director of Education and Skills.
- Y6 is the end of the equipment lifecycle, not other transition points e.g. to junior school. However, to build this in to the policy in the event that there is a requirement.

**Action: Tim to amend wording.**

**The Forum noted the proposals and agreed** that mainstream schools would pay up to £1k for equipment from notional SEN funding.

## 6. Falling Rolls

Nicola Shearstone presented the update to the Forum:

- The falling rolls are due to falling birth rates since 2012 and are now impacting on primary. This will be a trend for a few years and most schools will be affected, but the policy is not about school closures.
- We have worked on the guiding principles and criteria – all as per the paper and including:
  - Support is not limited to Good or Outstanding schools.
  - A RAG system will be used for information.
  - Funding will not be based purely on a formulaic approach.
  - Support will not be limited to financial support.
  - The maximum award will be for three academic years.
- The criteria, as per Section 4, has been set out to ensure transparency.

Forum discussion can be summarised as follows:

- To include governors in meetings when discussing this.
- The 3-year period is the maximum as it is not about individual school year groups, but the whole school PAN.
- We use the RAG rating at a planning level, but have been contacting schools rated Red.
- It was suggested that there are bigger revenue implications in the longer-term – we will continue to monitor the situation on an ongoing basis via the Funding Working Group.
- Where a some schools within a Trust have balances, this should take into consideration the Trust as a whole.
- To ensure we separate popular demand based on choice.

Jacky Beatson expanded on the financial criteria:

- We have undertaken research of other local authorities' policies.
- Criteria is set out in section 4 and includes that:
  - Schools would be expected to cover a temporary shortfall from existing carry forward balances.
  - No funding is to be paid where a school is already being supported through the existing Growth Fund.
- The methodology for claiming is straight forward and the flowchart on the appendix sets this out.

Additional points raised included.

- The process will be reviewed and a moderation panel will be set up – the panel will be a sub-group of the Funding Working Group.
- The policy will be published on SchoolPoint and schools will need to apply, although we are already working with those rated Red.
- To be mindful that parental choice is not detrimental to schools in other areas. With regard to the South-west, the catchment numbers are currently the cause of increased demand.

The Forum:

- **Noted** that the Policy is around strategy and not purely formulaic. No two schools will be the same, a way forward will need to be agreed upon by the Panel and the Moderation Panel will agree and process all payments.
- **Agreed** to the recommended criteria for the Policy.
- **Agreed** to the proposed methodology and process Policy.
- **Approved** the preferred option of methodology for the distribution of funding.
- **Agreed** that the Funding Working Group will develop the terms of reference for the moderation panel.

## 7. Growth Policy

Mark Sheikh briefly summarised Paper 7 as follows:

- The Growth Policy has been reviewed and there are no major changes.
- To note that the growth funding for 2021/22 has reduced by £100k to £2.18m.

The Forum:

- **Agreed** to continue to use the updated Growth Funding Policy for 2021/22.
- **Agreed** the planned growth funding payments of £763k to be paid to Sheffield schools as detailed in (Appendix 2).

## 8. DSG Benchmarking

Mark Sheikh updated the Forum as per the presentation:

- Slide 2 summarises the increase/decrease in funding for each block and includes the adjustments for increased pupil numbers. We have an overall increase in funding of £86.07m from 2018/19 to 2021/22.
- Regarding the Early Years Block, the historical anomalies remain static as most other core cities have received a similar percentage increase.
- During the period 2018/19 to 2021/22 our position in terms of Schools Block Funding has improved from 83 out of 150 local authorities to 53, and we have seen a 16.7% increase change on per pupil funding. However, there is still a £4.5m gap in funding.
- The Central Services Schools Block settlement will continue to decrease and we are currently funding the shortfall from the Council's cash budget.
- We have seen a welcome increase of £21m High Needs Block funding since 2018/19, part of which is to fund the increased demand.
- The Early Years and High Needs Block funding requires further challenge.

**Action: to write to Government of behalf of Cllr Dunn and the Schools Forum – Mark Sheikh to arrange drafts in liaison with working group members.**

## 9. Covid-19 Recovery

Paul Stockley led this discussion item and asked members to continue to share ideas going forwards:

- There are issues and consequences, with pupil behaviour for example. The Trauma-Informed training will help with this.
- There is also an impact in terms of staff on maternity leave.
- There isn't a recovery narrative as there isn't something that covers all the impacts/circumstances.
- It was suggested that there is a need to break down silos more than ever for example Health and Social Care.
- Concerns were raised regarding leadership fatigue.
- There has been an increase in special school placements being requested as a result of Covid-19 – parents have more insecurities around transition.

## 10. AOB

Thanks were expressed for John Doyle's involvement in the Forum prior to his retirement in May.

**Date of next meeting:** 21 September 2021, 3.00-5.00pm, venue TBC/Online