

Minutes - Sheffield Schools Forum

3.00-4.30pm, 23 February 2021, via Zoom

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)
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, Laura Gillespie, Rod Padley, Alison Warner

Also in attendance: Tim Armstrong, Head of SEN; John Doyle, Director of Strategy and Commissioning; Andrew Jones, Director of Education and Skills; Cllr Mohamed, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills; Amanda Murray, Business Strategy (notes); Mark Sheikh, Head of Service, Business Strategy

Presenters: 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. No declarations of interest were made.

It was noted that further to communication with academies, David Dennis will continue on the Forum for another 4-year term and that elections are currently taking place for the vacant academy seat. In addition, Alison Warner and Nigel Brooke-Smith's terms are due to come to an end (both are willing to continue for a further term) and we have written to the primary sector regarding elections for these places.

2. Previous meeting minutes/matters arising

Agreed as a true and accurate record. Most of the actions are covered by the agenda with the exception of the Falling Rolls item which is still under consideration and will be brought back in June.

3. PRU/Inclusion Strategy

£1.5m transfer to High Needs Block – progress report

Nicola Shearstone summarised that the report is following on from the actions at the December Forum – to review the impact of the transfer of funds to date and to focus on how to monitor this going forwards.

Candi Lawson presented the Exclusion Prevention Fund slides, as previously published, which are summarised as follows:

- The focus of the work is to increase inclusion and reduce exclusions.
- There are a range of projects, as listed on slide 3, totalling:
 - £662k for the Sheffield Inclusion Centre (SIC) support to schools.
 - £457k for the Inclusion Gateway, sector leadership and infrastructure support.
 - £329k for other projects.
- The SIC prevention offer has seen a reduction in permanent exclusion (PX) rates following attendance at one of the SIC hubs and we have received positive feedback from schools. It should be noted that Covid-19 may affect the impact at the present time.
- Inclusion Gateway:
 - As of 4 December, there were 27 PX, 8 of which have been withdrawn and a further 9 avoided prior to headteacher decision where support has been put in place via the Gateway. This is compared to 50 PX for the same period last year.
 - Trauma Informed Schools training has been rolled out to 75 schools with a common approach across schools.
- 100% of parents are happy with the Locality A nurture provision.
- The Rowan Outreach support has seen good levels of schools' staff confidence in support strategies.
- ASD Parenting Support has expanded and there has been an increase in parental confidence and emotional wellbeing.
- The slides include several case studies which demonstrate successful outcomes as a result of the interventions.
- **Proposed approach to next phase:**
 - We need to review the work based on the desired outcomes and the most appropriate delivery model to meet those outcomes.
 - We will take a commissioning approach to review the funding, by considering the needs of the city and co-developing a model with the sector.
 - In considering the approach, we will apply the following principles:
 - i. That we don't want to 'pull the rug' from any provision.
 - ii. That we need to think long-term and develop sustainable services.
 - iii. We need a collaborative approach with the sector.
 - iv. We need to track outcomes so that we can see the impact and value for money.

- As per the diagrams on slide 9 and 10, we are currently working with sector leads to develop proposals, and we are planning a wider discussion in March and then to present a costed model to the Forum in June.
- Slide 11 lists additional projects that are currently funded. We need to ensure an appropriate lead time before any changes are made to avoid disruption to provision.

Comments from the Forum were as follows:

- The Chair felt the report was exactly what was requested by the Forum.
- This is a helpful update, but this year is not a good comparator – we need to see evidence of impact for past and future years as well.
- Some of the hub provision feels more like alternative provision rather than prevention – Tuesday Rhodes clarified that the child remains on roll and the individual school pays termly for fees, for example at Bumblebee.
- It was agreed that the time spent in provision is too long and we have been exploring the pros and cons of the model, for example outreach support.
- We need to understand the ongoing funding needs, not just the short-term or one-off needs.
- To identify where a child is being integrated back in to mainstream as this would demonstrate success. To also consider if the school can continue to build on the work already undertaken.

Locality funding in mainstream

This is included in Paper 4, and in addition Candi summarised that we are considering four options around this funding and are meeting with locality leads to explore this further, prior to bringing back recommendations to the Forum.

4. School Budgets 2021/22 including Central Services Schools Block (CSSB)

The Chair read out a question submitted in advance of the meeting by Jim Dugmore:

There are some services not delivering full services at the moment, which is causing some concern amongst schools (and in fact some are now not subscribing as in the past as a result of a perceived shortfall in 'quality', which I don't think is actually fair). Some are outside the scope of the meeting, for example NHS services such as Speech and Language, where practitioners are refusing to come into schools, but some are LA services. For some services, so say the Music Hub as one example, the risk assessments in place mean that services could continue, so I would like to understand what blocks exist, if any, given this is rapidly becoming a value for money issue.

- Jim added that this has been discussed in leaders' meetings and there is a perception that the NFF gives with one hand and takes away with another.
- David Dennis commented that this is a pertinent value for money question – there is a need for the services so how do we mobilise resource? There is a danger of mistrust across providers. How do we make this functional and coherent with schools and providers? The same issue also affects early years.

Action: to consider this at the Funding Working Group and provide a response – Mark Sheikh.

Mark Sheikh shared a presentation which summarises the key points and recommendations in the School Funding papers:

- Slide 2 shows the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) provisional allocation for all blocks and the variance for 2021/22.
- Key points are highlighted as per slide 4 and include that:
 - There is a £12.7m increase in Individual Schools Budget funding.
 - The allocation includes conversion of grant increase of £15.7m for teachers' pay and pension grants.
 - There is £2.18m growth funding and we expect to receive a further £0.29m (5/12th for academies growth).
 - Overall £ per pupil average for primary and secondary increase of £186.
- Slide 5 summarises the main changes to the funding formula which ensure continued transition and alignment with the NFF:
 - The Minimum Funding Level (MFL) has brought 30 schools above this level.
 - One point to emphasise is the change in Pupil Premium Data Collection which now the October Census. There has been an increase in the number of eligible pupils as a result of Covid-19 and we will lose out on these numbers in the first year due to the change in Census date.
- The principles for continued transition to the National Funding Formula (NFF) are as presented to the December Forum and as listed on slide 6.
- Slide 7 shows the impact on the funding formula and in particular that pupil numbers overall increased by 429 (a loss in primary of 179 and an increase in secondary of 608).
- The analysis in the table on slide 8 shows the impact on all schools, for example 72 primary schools saw an increase in pupil numbers, but 109 primaries received a cash increase.
- The CSSB has two elements (slide 10): ongoing which is based on pupil numbers and funding for historic commitments which is decreasing by £948k, with an expectation that it will continue to decrease – this is built into our medium-term strategy and the reduction is being funded by a Sheffield City Council (SCC) cash allocation.
- The breakdown of CSSB historic commitments is shown on slides 11 and 12 and has reduced from £5.9m to £3.7m over the last two years.

Additional comments from the Forum included:

- To note that the £2m reduction on CSSB is part of the Government shortfall and that it is being funded by SCC.
- The Chair requested an update on Sheffield's position compared to other authorities and core cities to see where we now sit in terms of funding – **Mark to prepare for the June Schools Forum.**
- The Chair commented that the summary slides were very useful.

The Forum:

- i. **Approved** the 2021/22 budget for primary and secondary schools set at £382.4m – Appendix 1.
- ii. **Noted** the growth funding allocation of £1.88m.
- iii. **Noted** the transfer of £1.5m from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block towards costs of remodelling provision for pupils at risk of exclusion and those permanently excluded.

- iv. **Noted** the de-delegated budgets of £1.9m and for maintained schools to agree de-delegation of £0.6m of services – Appendix 2.
- v. **Noted and agreed** the contribution to the Central School Services Block budget.

5. High Needs Budget 2021/22

Mark Sheikh summarised Paper 5 in the presentation as follows:

- The allocation is still indicative and has increased by £8.8m (including the combined amount of the teachers' pay and pensions grants of £827k) to £75.5m.
- Growth in the allocation to each authority has been capped at 12% against 2020/21 baselines.
- The ESFA launched a 6-week consultation, on 10 February, on the High Needs NFF and we will be responding via the Funding Working Group.
- Key points to note are all as per slide 17 and include:
 - Demand pressures - a £3m provision has been made to fund additional pupils requiring specialist provision during the year (in-year growth, plus September 2021 growth).
 - There is a provision to increase the localities budget by £1.1m which links to the work that Candi is undertaking, and a paper will be brought back to the June Forum.

The Forum noted the recommendations from the paper as follows:

- i. Overall arrangements and 2020/21 budget requirements for pupils and students with high needs.
- ii. The £380 increase in place funding for special schools and integrated resources.
- iii. The £3m provision being made for growth in the specialist sector, including additional places in special schools from September.
- iv. That a budget provision has been made for £1.1m for mainstream top-up funding in 2021/22, and that proposals for an allocation process will be brought to the June Schools Forum meeting.
- v. The increase in funding for the Sheffield Inclusion Centre.
- vi. The increase in spending on Specialist Support Services.

6. Early Years (EY) Budget 2021/22

Mark Sheikh also summarised the EY budget paper on the presentation:

- This is the most complex of the funding arrangements and the diagram on slide 21 demonstrates how the payments are calculated.
- There is concern around low numbers and if next year's allocation is based on the January 2021 Census, we stand to lose funding. A new safety net is being applied where if funding is less than 85% compared to the January 2020 Census, we can make a case to apply for a top-up, however we still stand to lose 15%.
- Key points are summarised on slide 22, including the increase in hourly rates, and to also note that:
 - We have now received further guidance on how the teachers' pension costs funding will be allocated to the sector and we are in the process of clarifying this, but nurseries will receive £180 per pupil based on the January Census (Census date to be confirmed).
 - Proposals to set up a contingency fund of £500k and a one-off investment of £600k will be considered by the EY Working Group.

- Cllr Mohamed has requested that we write to the Secretary of State to highlight the implications of the change in Census and the potential impact for the city.
- Slide 25 highlights options for consideration for a one-off investment fund of £1.1m – to either:
 - Create a £500k contingency fund to offer some protection to our anticipated reduced DSG settlement in 2022/23, and the combination of reduced uptake of FEL places due to Covid-19 and a decline in the birth rate.
 - Create a £600k one-off investment in the sector to either support inclusion services across the early years sector, or as a one-off contribution to providers based on 2019/20 FEL hours of participation, or a hybrid of both the options.

Forum discussion raised the following comments and questions:

- Karen Simpkin confirmed that the low uptake is a national issue at present.
- The Government has launched a consultation which we will respond to.
- Cllr Mohamed has been inundated by questions from providers and has raised the issue with MPs and it has also been considered in the Houses of Parliament, but the anticipated response did not transpire. She therefore now plans to write to the Secretary of State to express concerns over the serious issue of whether providers will be able to stay open.
- Regarding the options for the lump sum:
 - Karen explained the EY providers found the last one-off payment extremely useful and would prefer a one-off payment rather than investment in inclusion services.
 - Other Forum members suggested that we have a sufficiency issue in the sector and are struggling to meet the needs of children in our care, and that the £600k could allow for sustainable investment and an opportunity for partnership working – to be used in a creative way and support the sector more widely.

The Forum:

- i. **Noted** the overall Early Years income allocation of £36.09m to Sheffield in 2021/22.
- ii. **Approved** the recommendations of the Working Group to increase the funding for 2-year olds by the additional 8p per hour to £5.10 per hour, ensuring that the additional 8p per hour Sheffield will receive is passed on in full to providers.
- iii. **Approved** the recommendations of the Working Group to increase the funding for 3&4-year olds by the additional 6p per hour, increasing the base rate to £4.26, ensuring that the additional 6p per hour Sheffield will receive is passed on in full to providers.
- iv. **Agreed** that the 2019/20 Investment Fund be further considered by the Early Years Working Group and their recommendations be brought back to the June Schools Forum meeting.
- v. **Agreed** to set-up a contingency of £500k to manage the risk on the Early Years Census and to receive a further update in September 2022 on the use/availability of this contingency fund.
- vi. **Noted** the proposals for a one-off investment of £600k and provided a steer (as per the above discussion) to the Working Group on the investment options.

7. AOB

Building Condition Grant

Paul Stockley reminded officers about his concerns around primary building condition and the need to write to Government to follow up previous communications about capital funding – **Mark Sheikh to action.**

School places - falling rolls in primary and capital expansion/surplus in secondary

- Cllr Mohamed asked how capital expansion in the south-west will affect schools in the north. We need to reduce the north/south divide. Cllr Mohamed will be writing to the Regional Schools Commissioner and would welcome wider discussions, including at the Forum.
- Mark confirmed that this will form part of the Falling Rolls discussion and policy which is on the June agenda.
- Linda Gooden expressed the need to pull the thinking around this together – for example the work being undertaken by the Secondary Working Group.
- We need to discuss the principles on which we're planning for the future to avoid unintended consequences of expansion.
- To factor in the additional places which may arise from the Hong Kong visas.
- Work to date has focussed on primary, but to also include secondary – **Nicola Shearstone to report to the Forum on pressures and the impact of this.**

Date of next meeting: 21 June 2021, 3.00-4.30pm, via Zoom