

The KIRKLEES SCHOOLS FORUM

(Schools Funding Consultative Group)
meeting held on **Friday 6th February 2009**
9:30am at the Deighton Centre

Item

2

27.02.09

Present:

Julie Helm	Nursery School Heads (1)
Graham Altoft, Jenny Chamberlain, Carol Crossland, Michelle Lee (Vice-chair), Gill Goodswen, Diana Wilson	Primary School Heads (6)
Caroline Thompson	Middle School Heads (1)
Jackie Eames, Christine Spencer (Chair)	High School Heads (4)
Philip Gibbins	Special School Heads (1)
Pat Colling (Kirklees Governors Association), Gillian Collins (ATL), Sarah Ellis (pre-School Learning Alliance), Howard Roberts (NUT)	Non-school members (6)
Angela Farmer (Senior Finance Officer, Resources & Support) Warwick Firmin (School Funding Strategy Manager, R&S); Clerk David Gearing (Financial Delegation Manager, R&S); Minute Clerk	Kirklees Children & Young People Service Officers in Support
Margaret Cobb (Learning & Skills Council)	Observers

1. Apologies for Absence

Mark Ayres (R&S), Jo Bailey-Taylor (NASUWT), Kath Benetis (KPH observer), Julie Bowdidge (Learning Service), Janet Tolley (KSHS).

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January

The minutes were agreed as a true record, with the exception under 3.1 of the reported need to consider further the expansion of the Head Teacher Wellbeing support programme. The position was clarified that only the Middle schools supported the proposal, with Special and Primary schools having decided not to support. The £15,000 commitment in V7 of the DSG Budget Strategy can now be removed.

3. Matters arising from meeting 23 January

3.1 PPP life-cycle costs [minute 3.3 of the 23 January meeting]

KSHS has not had chance to consider the further information provided about the schools which are bearing these costs currently. Their initial response was to not support the proposal. Given the now pressing timescale it was decided to remove the £31,800 involved from the DSG Budget Strategy list.

4. DSG overview

The meeting was reminded about the position last reached and which areas still need a decision. Version 7 of the DSG Budget Strategy shows a projected budget imbalance of £789,700. The proposals regarding PPP life-cycle costs and Headteacher Wellbeing can now come off the list. This just leaves the Pupil Referral Units to consider – ETHOS, Westfields and the Primary PRUs.

5. Feedback from Heads' meetings, confirmation of agreed recommendations

There was a brief run-through the DSG budget position reached at the last meeting to confirm the funding commitments agreed so far to come out of the £9,333,600 projected cash increase for the 2009-10 DSG.

Notation	Description of commitment	£
8.	ISB Personalised Learning increase	1,682,900
9.	Pay and price inflation	6,906,000
10.	Provision for PVI Nursery rise in demand	97,400
11.	Hedge against pupil numbers being worse than anticipated	150,000
12.	Single Status formula revisions – SEN and Catering staffs	646,000
13.	Replenishment costs in the DSG Early Retirement budget	26,000
14.	Admin cost of the School Workforce Census	23,000
19.	Premises funding issues – extensions, emergency movements	120,000
24.	Net effect of SEN Statement pressure and RP Unit Planned Place savings	113,000
	Total commitments to date:	9,764,300*

* [figure subsequently adjusted – see sections 5.1 and 5.4 below]

Constituent group representatives confirmed that items 18 (PPP life-cycle costs) and 23 (extension of the Head Teacher Wellbeing programme) were not supported and were to be removed from the strategy list.

This just leaves the Pupil Referral Unit proposals (ETHOS, Westfields and the Primary PRUs) for decisions to be made.

5.1 PRU Formula Funding

5.1.1 Westfields Pupil Referral Unit

At the last Schools Forum meeting there was general agreement that the proposed £88,700 of additional funds should be reduced by removing the new cover budget line (£25,100) on the assumption that the necessary internal cover flexibility would be provided by one of the two additional teaching posts contained in the report.

It was asked how the £6700 “pupil retention grant” charges made to secondary schools for the placement of individual KS4 pupils within alternative KS4 provisions related to the KS4 offer at Westfields. Was there a danger that this income had been wrongly ignored and could it therefore be factored in to reduce or remove the need to commit additional DSG funds to Westfields? Officers were not able to provide the necessary detailed answers but gave assurances that there was no omission from the financial content of the report and no “double-counting”. It was agreed to e-mail a briefing note to the Chair, vice-Chair and the Middle and Special school representatives to clarify the relationship in question.

Agreed: that, subject to satisfactory clarification on how the PRG income relates to Westfields KS4 activity, an additional £63,600 be added to Westfields base budget provision.

5.1.2 ETHOS Pupil Referral Unit

At the last meeting, the Schools Forum charged relevant officers with looking again at the funding arrangements for ETHOS and coming back with a figure which represented a realistic target for the service to manage within. Lynn Nickson, Principal Improvement Manager for Inclusion had met with ETHOS management to look at the issues. A short note of the outcomes was circulated to the meeting. (Lynn had hoped to attend today's meeting but the snow had prevented her travelling up from Derbyshire).

The two main ideas for reducing the proposed DSG commitment were.....

- reduction in the one-to-one budget by the equivalent of 0.25fte teaching time (would save £11,400)
- bring Genesis and Phoenix into line with the funding regimes for other KS4 alternative providers, ie for direct pupil transfers from secondary schools the pupil retention charge (approx £6,700 per pupil) would in future be levied. Based on recent patterns, on average 12 pupils per year fall into this category. This level would generate £81k of income for the service each year.

Taken together, these two actions would reduce the proposed DSG funding commitment by £92,400. There were also some longer-term ideas for reducing ETHOS costs listed in the briefing note; removing the Genesis crèche provision, better control and management of 1 to 1 tuition, and switching to cheaper staff options whenever the opportunity presents itself. Lynn also intends to look at the issues with the PRU Management Committee.

The idea put forward to treat Genesis and Phoenix as alternative KS4 providers will need to be debated further at KHSH. There are issues about whether the individuals concerned should come off their school's role or should they be dually-registered. It was also suggested that a funding transfer based on the relevant AWPU value instead should be used. These issues clearly need to be explored further but the time has come where a decision about what to do for 2009-10 is needed from Forum. An interim decision was therefore reached.....

Agreed: to allocate to ETHOS 50% of the additional £173,500 originally proposed. The service must then consider and implement strategies for managing within their new budget level. The Schools Forum will keep the position under regular review during the year ahead.

5.1.3 Primary Pupil Referral Unit provision

The concerns voiced at the Schools Forum regarding this proposal are to do with alternative premises for the service not yet being secured. There is a reluctance to commit further DSG resources without the certainty that the changes will actually be able to go ahead. The Primary PRU is temporarily located at Nortonthorpe Hall Special School. Matters are coming to a head because the school is quitting its KS4 annex based at the Fitzwilliam Centre in Huddersfield and needs to accommodate some of the KS4 provision back at their main Scissett site. This means that there is an urgent need to relocate the Primary PRU provision for September 2009. Lynn Nickson is understood to have a couple of possible locations in mind but the weather this week has postponed intended site visits. She had planned to give Schools Forum an update today.

Agreed: to set aside the £50k part-year budget as requested, on condition that any uncommitted amount is returned to general DSG funding during the year. Regular updates on progress will need to be given to the Schools Forum.

5.1.4 Claremont Behaviour Support Service

The report covering the Primary PRU relocation also talks about creating a more cohesive Behaviour Support Service for Primary schools to bring them more in line with arrangements for the secondary phase. The new Head Teacher / Manager to be paid for out of the £50k above, it is proposed, will be responsible for the Primary PRU, the primary arm of the Exclusion and Reintegration Service and the Claremont Behavioural Support Service. This latter service is something of an anomaly in funding terms – all other behaviour-related services are organised and budgeted centrally but Claremont's budget is delegated to schools via the ISB and operates

as a traded service. The decision to delegate harks back to a time when the Department was putting local authorities under a huge amount of pressure to increase the amount of funding delegated to schools. This decision put the service out of step with other behaviour support systems for schools, has caused operational difficulties in managing the offered service and resulted in a recurrent budget problem for the centrally-retained DSG as the service has struggled to stay within the reduced income level secured from schools. The proposal is to “de-delegate” Claremont and take the £305k budget back to the DSG centre.

Some concerns were raised about the financial impact which would fall upon around a third of primary schools which currently opt not to buy into Claremont. Some of these schools were reported as employing their own behaviour improvement staff from the resultant saving.

Agreed: to withdraw Claremont from delegation to primary schools from April 2009 and transfer the budget to the retained portion of the DSG. However, in order to cushion the effect for those schools hitherto opting out of the service, the change will be phased in over two financial years but only in those schools which show as net losers within the funding movements illustration presented to Schools Forum last time. [To be updated to reflect decisions reached today].

These decisions increase the funding commitment set out in the table at 5 above from £9,764,300 to £9,964,600. The revised gap to the £9,333,600 estimated cash available is therefore £631,000.

5.2 Additional Pupil Needs model

The new funding model presented to the last Schools Forum meeting was approved by phase representatives in the absence of constituent group meetings this week due to the wintry weather. The model uses a threshold level set at 35% assistance with, at 2008-09 prices, £475 allocated per assisted pupil in excess of this threshold and around £94 per assisted pupil below the threshold. £0.5m is to be top-sliced from the AWPU budget to increase the APN budget to deliver the agreed method.

5.3 SEN New Approaches model

The replacement method for distribution of the New Approaches budget agreed at the last meeting was confirmed by all Schools Forum reps. It was also confirmed that the phasing-in approach would apply to the three Nursery schools previously in receipt of New Approaches funding.

5.4 Balancing the DSG

The changes agreed above have reduced the gap to available funding resources to £631,000. There was unanimous agreement over how this should be dealt with to bring the DSG strategy to a balanced position. In times when schools have enjoyed real terms growth, the benefit has been distributed proportionate to Age-Weighted Pupil Unit and Planned Place funding. It would seem sensible therefore to mirror this approach and spread the necessary reduction in budgets over AWPU and Planned Place funding as well.

Agreed: - that the £631k gap be closed by proportionate reductions to AWPU and Planned Place budgets across the sectors.

6. Wider Opportunities: Standards Fund 1.11 (KS2 Music)

Currently this funding is distributed to Primary schools with KS2 provision via a simple block grant of £1516. There is a proposal to change the allocation method to one which still uses a (smaller) block grant but also has a sliding scale element to reflect pupil numbers. As the grant only affects primary schools it is intended that the supporting papers be sent out to KPH directly for them to provide feedback.

7. Week 40 DSG Monitoring

The latest DSG budget monitoring report was circulated to the meeting. The projected year end position is not substantially different from week 36 – the bottom line is currently forecast to be in deficit by some £692k but that is with the benefit of a projected surplus in the insurance cover scheme of around –(£400)k. There is a new overspend of £100k identified in the report within the Protection of Employees traded service. This is linked to the absence insurance underspend. There have been numerous cases during the year where an Employee Healthcare and/or GP recommendation has been made for teachers absent long term with work-related stress to be helped back to work by a one or two school term supernumerary placement at another school. The cost of this is borne by the Protection account but there are related savings as a result which surface in the insurance arrangements. For this reason the insurance underspend should really be offset by the £100k problem in the Protection account. This effectively means that the 2008-09 DSG is approaching a £1m overspend if the insurance arrangements are to be treated separately. There is still time for the position to change before year end. Any uncleared deficit needs to be made good in the next financial year. There was some discussion around redeeming the deficit by debiting each school in proportion to AWPU and Planned Place allocations but also redistributing the surpluses from the 2007-08 and 2008-09 absence insurance accounts (an estimated –(£750)k) to member schools to cushion the effect of this. Forum will need to give careful consideration to the year end position once declared.

Schools may need to take into account the potential DSG deficit recharge when drawing up their 2009-10 budget plan. Schools should also be mindful of the 1% efficiency savings target built into both the 2009-10 and 2010-11 DSG budget settlements.

Looking ahead to next year, some of the funding decisions taken this time (increases to PRU funding and taking Claremont funding back to the centre) should partially ease the pressure evident within the retained DSG budget.

8. Any other business

8.1 Outstanding Standards Fund issues

Forum still needs to consider the funding regimes going forward for the new making Good Progress grant and for the Extended Schools programme.

8.2 Change of date of next meeting

There is a problem with officers attending the next scheduled Forum meeting set for 6 March. It was therefore agreed to bring the meeting forward one week to Friday 27 February. This will mean consideration of the latest Nursery/PVI sector funding issues report will have to be pushed back to the 3 April meeting as a result.

8.3 Access to Schools Forum minutes

It was reported that the Kirklees website will be fully updated to show recent Schools Forum minutes in the very near future.

Date and Time of next meeting

Friday 27 February 2009,

9:30am to 11:30am at the

Chestnut Centre, Woodhouse Hill, Fartown, Huddersfield.