

Allocation of Funding to Support Transition in to Primary School for High Needs Pupils

Purpose of the Paper

1. To consider proposals for additional funding to be allocated to support transition for high needs pupils in to primary school.

Background

2. At the meeting on 16th January 2014 Schools Forum resolved “to formalise a proposal for consideration at the next meeting for a fund to support the transition of pupils with high needs in to Reception, to be funded in 2014-15 from the DSG Reserve”.
3. Since that meeting further discussions have been held with a small working group including Head Teachers nominated by PHF and officers to look at the purpose of any such funding and how it could be applied. The proposal was discussed at the Schools Forum SEN Working Group on the June 2014.

Main Considerations

4. The working group focussed on 3 main questions:
 - i. Who are we trying to support?
 - ii. What should the process be for agreeing any additional funding?
 - iii. What funding should be allocated for this purpose?
5. In response to the first question it was agreed that any additional funding should be aimed towards pupils who do not have a statutory support plan but who could still need additional support in making the transition in to primary school. These pupils may have already attended a pre-school setting, and therefore be known to schools and LA staff, or may be pupils who are not previously known and who present with additional needs.
6. In response to the second question it was agreed that any process needed to be simple and not add unnecessary bureaucracy to the system. It also needed to be able to be built in to the processes already being developed within the SEND Service so that it was not operating outside of the agreed assessment and support processes.
7. In relation to funding it was noted that this would need to be funded from one off DSG reserves in the current year but needed to be affordable moving forward. Comparisons were drawn with the previous mechanism of TISM funding which allowed funding of a maximum of £514 per term, for a maximum of two terms, for any child agreed to be eligible for support. It was also noted that at the time the previous mechanism was in place schools had lower levels of SEN funding delegated within the funding formula.

Proposals

8. Bearing the above principles in mind it is proposed that:
 - a) To be eligible for access to transitional funding children must already have a Support Plan. They must also be thought to require/ evidence the need for more than 15 hours of support once they move in to school. This will include children who may move on to be assessed for an Education, Health & Care Plan or children who after some support for transition do not require further support over and above 15 hours. The Support Plan could already be in place for children who have been in a pre-school setting but for a pupil who joins a school having not previously been identified with high needs the starting point would be to agree a Support Plan. The need for additional support would be discussed and agreed as part of the review meeting and writing of the plan and this will be submitted as the request for funding. Decisions in relation to funding will be made by Officers within the SEND & Early Intervention Service and will be final.
 - b) Funding will be agreed for one term (6 weeks) initially and any further funding allocation would be as a result of further review. It would be the responsibility of the school to put the review process in place.
 - c) Funding should be front loaded and allocated for a maximum of 2 terms. It is proposed that for the first 6 week period the funding allocation is £500, to be reduced to £300 in the second term if further funding is agreed.
 - d) There will be admin time that will need to be agreed as part of the process.

Financial Implications

9. In previous years the allocation of funding through TISM meetings, which is the best comparable mechanism, has cost an average of £0.200m per year with approximately 150 pupils attracting funding in any one year.
10. It is proposed that £0.200m be set aside from the DSG reserve to enable the process outlined in paragraph 8 to be piloted in 2014-15. Any funding in future years would need to be agreed as part of the budget setting process and consideration of priorities within the high needs block. It is proposed that a review of the costs, numbers of pupils and outcomes of the proposed scheme should be reported to Schools Forum in January or March 2015 in order to allow those budget decisions to take place.

Recommendation of the SEN Working Group

11. The SEN Working Group considered the proposal on 5th June 2014 and supported the recommendation to allocate £0.200m from the DSG Reserve in 2014-15.
12. The Working Group discussed the evaluation of the scheme and it was agreed that the evaluation would consider whether the funding had supported the outcomes agreed in the Support Plan.

13. The Group also discussed transition in to secondary schools and whether a similar scheme could be successful in supporting pupils with high needs making the transition in to secondary school. It was agreed that this might be something that Schools Forum would want to consider once the initial pilot has been evaluated.

Recommendation

14. Schools Forum is asked to agree the scheme outlined in paragraph 8 of this report and the allocation of £0.200 million from the DSG Reserve in 2014-15 to fund it in the current year.

Report Author: Liz Williams, Head of Finance

Tel 01225 713675, e-mail Elizabeth.williams@wiltshire.gov.uk