

Schools Forum SEN Working Group

24th February 2015, 2:00pm, Westwood Room, County Hall

Minutes

Present: Catriona Williamson (CW), John Hawkins, Bruce Douglas, Debbie Bennett, Chris Whitfield (CWd), Liz Williams, Susan Tanner

Apologies: Carol Grant

1	Minutes from Previous Meeting As it was a few months since the last meeting of the group no specific minutes from previous meetings were considered as all issues previously raised would already have been considered by Schools Forum.	
2	High Needs Budgets 2015-16 EW circulated a draft Schools Forum paper outlining options to reduce costs within the high needs block. EW outlined the calculations of anticipated pressures for 2015-16 and the impact of the additional funding received for 2015-16. It was estimated that there were still pressures on high needs budgets of £1.9m. A number of short term savings proposals were discussed. There was a lengthy discussion in relation to the proposals and the potential impact. Following discussion the group requested that savings be sought from the independent sector in addition savings from to maintained schools and academies. It was agreed to include a saving that could be achieved either through procurement savings (lower price) or through purchasing a smaller number of independent sector placements. <i>Action – EW to include additional saving in the list of proposals.</i> CW requested that the impact of savings from reductions in top up rates be made available at school level for Schools Forum so that the impact could be fully understood.	EW EW
3	Review of Funding for Hard to Place Pupils CWd presented a summary of expenditure to date. Expenditure is allocated via the Fair Access Panels and it was expected that approximately £0.2m would be spent in this financial year, leaving £0.2m to be rolled forward to the following year. This would enable the overall budget for 2015-16 to be £0.450m without increasing the level of base budget allocated from the High Needs Block. CWd highlighted the risks of not being able to predict the numbers of pupils coming through, numbers this year had been lower than in previous years.	
4	Split Site Allowance – St Nicholas Special School This item had been referred back to the working group following discussion at the January Schools Forum meeting. EW circulated a paper summarising the School's estimate of the additional costs of operating from a second site. These costs totalled £0.114m and were a combination of staffing and non-staffing related costs.	

	<p>Following discussion it was agreed that any split site allowance allocated from the high needs block needed to be equitable with the split site allowance contained within the mainstream funding formula with a maximum value equating to either the primary or secondary mainstream value. It was agreed that the recommendation of the working group should be for a split site allowance of £0.1m per annum be allocated to St Nicholas Special School. It was recognised that this would increase the cost pressure on the high needs block and that this needed to be built in to the high needs report to Schools Forum.</p>	
5	<p>Costs of Provision for Primary Aged Pupils at risk of Exclusion</p> <p>CWd circulated a paper highlighting the costs of provision for primary aged pupils at risk of exclusion. Due to the time there was only a brief discussion on this issue. CWd highlighted the lack of appropriate alternative provision and the need to develop local solutions. It was agreed that the additional places requested at Springfields Academy could form part of this solution but that other pilot schemes could be established if funding were allocated.</p> <p>EW to incorporate within high needs block cost pressures</p>	EW
6	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>To be confirmed</p>	