

Schools Funding Working Group
27th September 2013
Minutes

Present: Liz Williams, Grant Davis, Neil Baker, Steve Clark, Martin Watson, Phil Cooke, Andy Bridewell

Apologies: Catriona Williamson, John Hawkins

	Item	Action
1	<p>Minutes from Previous Meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. The minutes had been considered by Schools Forum and there were no matters arising.</p>	
2	<p>Consultation outcome and formula issues</p> <p>GD circulated a summary of the outcomes of the recent consultation with schools. Overall the response rate had been 44.3% which was lower than in the previous year.</p> <p>Delegation of Central Services In general maintained primary schools had voted with a majority to retain services centrally with the results a little more mixed at secondary level in relation to EMAS, Travellers and Behaviour Support. These services have already been delegated to secondary schools.</p> <p>Primary Lump Sum There was an even split of responses in favour of each option for the lump sum with responses tending to be influenced by size of school. The working group requested that more detail be provided for Schools Forum on the cost per pupil for different sizes of school under each option.</p> <p>Secondary Lump Sum The majority of secondary schools favoured the higher lump sum of £175,000.</p>	EW
3	<p>Final DSG settlement & Budget Monitoring 2013-14</p> <p>EW presented a budget monitoring report showing the projected expenditure against the Dedicated Schools Grant. Overall it is projected that there will be an underspend of £2.8 million.</p> <p>It was noted that the projected underspend of £0.8m against the free entitlement for 2 year olds was a planned underspend and would be rolled forward to 2014-15 to support the hourly rate as take up increases.</p> <p>The largest underspend related to top up budgets for placements in maintained school and academy specialist provision (Special Schools, Resource Bases and ELP) and the Independent Special School (ISS) budget. Underspends against top up budgets had arisen because of unfilled places. EW outlined proposals to increase the top up rates for Resource Bases and ELP in 2014-15 which would mean this underspend would not arise in future years – these proposals would be presented to Schools Forum.</p>	

	<p>EW also reported that recent discussions had been held with Special School head teachers and governors at which it had been agreed that work needed to be carried out to review top up values for 2014-15 but that some work would also be done to establish whether top up values could be increased in year. This would be affordable within the current budget and proposals were being looked at. a number of options had been considered by the SEN Working Group and a key issue is to ensure that any in year increase does not have unintended consequences in 2014-15 as a result of the minimum funding guarantee – this would be particularly relevant if residential place numbers are reviewed. It was agreed that proposals will be presented to Schools Forum.</p>	
4	<p>Revenue Balances 12-13</p> <p>The group considered 2 reports in relation to revenue balances for 2012-13. The first report summarised the Intended Use of Revenue Balances statements submitted by schools at the end of the 2012-13 financial year. There was one schools that had not submitted a return, despite this being followed up, and it was agreed that the surplus balance for that school should be clawed back. The school would be notified of the clawback and invited to appeal.</p> <p>The second report summarised revenue balances for all maintained schools for 2012-13. Total balances now stand at £7.9 million which is a decrease on the previous year. It was noted that the report now included details of the DfE criteria for requesting further information on levels of balances or deficits in schools. Wiltshire did not trigger any of the DfE thresholds for 2012-13.</p> <p>It was further noted that this would be the last year of the Controls on Surplus Balances scheme and that proposals for a revised monitoring system would be brought to a future meeting.</p>	EW/GD
5	<p>MFG Exceptions 14-15</p> <p>A report detailing requests to disapply the minimum funding guarantee in 2014-15 was considered by the Group. The deadline for submissions is 30th September and so the recommendations would need to be agreed by the group so that the deadline could be met.</p> <p>It was agreed that the following exceptions should be requested:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New school allowances and new school new year group funding: To seek DfE approval to remove this funding from the MFG. 2. Rents, where the school no longer qualifies under the revised funding proposals - To seek approval from the EFA 1) to decrease the qualifying threshold from 1% to 0.75% of school budgets, and 2) to continue to remove rent from the MFG calculation. 3. Split site funding where a school no longer qualifies - To seek approval from the EFA to remove split site funding from the MFG where a school no longer qualifies under the revised definition. 	EW

	<p>4. Changes categories of, or spending on, central budgets – To seek approval from the EFA to exclude new additional categories or changes in spend on central services budgets should the consultation recommend such changes to the delegation or de-delegations.</p> <p>5. Schools with special units – to seek approval from the EFA to amend the baselines of schools with special units to reflect the new deduction of places from the number on roll, rather than the number of pupils, in order to calculate MFG protection on a consistent basis.</p> <p>6. Requests to vary the protection for special schools and academies – to seek approval from the EFA to allow amendment to the baseline of special schools and academies in order to not overfund the school via the MFG mechanism as day and residential pupil numbers have changed.</p>	
6	<p>AOB</p> <p>None raised</p>	
7	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Monday 2nd December 2pm, Uffington Room, Kennet House, Devizes</p>	