

Schools Forum SEN Working Group

23rd September 2013, 9.00am, Powell Room, Shurnhold, Melksham

Minutes

Present: Liz Williams, Martin Cooper, John Hawkins, Carol Grant, Rob Parsons, Phil Beaumont, Grant Davis, Aileen McCoy

Apologies: Julia Cramp, Susan Tanner, Debbie Bennett, Karina Kulawik

1	<p>Minutes from Previous Meeting</p> <p>The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed. The minutes had been considered at the last Schools Forum meeting in June.</p> <p>Support for Special Schools</p> <p>EW updated the group on the discussions at Schools Forum in June. It had not been agreed that DSG underspend from previous years should be used to support special schools in 2013-14. Instead Schools Forum had requested an analysis of the overall spend against the High Needs Block and any supporting proposals that might enable support for special schools in the change to the new funding system. EW indicated that a proposal would be considered elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting in relation to Special School top up values in the current year.</p> <p>Top Up Payments for Non-Wiltshire pupils</p> <p>Schools Forum had supported the proposal from the group to move to a consistent method of funding for all pupils with 1 year transitional support from the High Needs block however a revised threshold of 0.75% of budget as a trigger for transitional support was agreed.</p> <p>Alternative Provision – funding for pupils with statements of SEN</p> <p>KK had attended the Wessex Federation meeting to discuss this further. CG felt that it was going to be an ongoing issue because of the lack of access to outreach in the south of the County. Trystan Williams (Springfields School) would be attending a future meeting of the Wessex Federation to discuss further.</p>	
2	<p>Analysis of Expenditure within the High Needs Block</p> <p>EW presented a paper analysing expenditure within the High Needs block as shown on the Section 251 Return. A budget monitoring summary for the Top Up budgets (including ISS and post-16 placements) was also presented and it was noted that top up budgets are projected to underspend significantly in the current year – projected underspend at end of August was £2.4 million.</p> <p>EW noted that it had been difficult to set appropriate top up rates to balance the budget and the potential level of unfilled places and that the projected underspend indicated that in some areas more risk could have been taken in setting top up values. For Resource Bases and ELP this would be addressed through the proposals for revised top up values in 2014-15 but there was more work to do on the levels of top ups for pupils in special schools.</p> <p>The top up budget for post-16 placements was projected to break even and a number of issues were discussed including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty in confirming uptake of places in 6th forms and FE	

	<p>colleges. It was agreed that now that students have started on their courses a review could be held of the numbers now in FE colleges and in schools so that the right number of places could be funded in the right places.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential cost pressure for social care budgets of the new responsibility for funding placements with Independent Specialist Providers (ISPs). Previously the full cost of these placements would have been picked up by the EFA however now that the funding had been transferred in to DSG this was generating more discussion about how these placements are funded. 	
<p>3</p>	<p>Resource Bases – Review of Banding Descriptors and Top Up Values</p> <p>At the previous meeting the Group had been updated on the work to develop new banding descriptors for Resource Base provision in mainstream schools. The aim of the project is to establish a continuum of banding descriptors for different levels of need across all resource base provision and that this should link both to the descriptors for special schools and for Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP).</p> <p>Following completion of the work on the banding descriptors new band values had been calculated based on the staff:pupil ratios in the special school banding model and the fixed costs previously calculated for resource bases.</p> <p>It was noted that the historical position had been that ELP values were on an equivalent level to Bands 4-5 in Special Schools and the banding values for Complex Needs Centres in resource bases and that therefore any changes to resource base top up values should also be applied to ELP bands.</p> <p>EW informed the group that initial indicative figures showed that there would be a cost pressure of approx £0.200 million to implement the new bands in 2014-15 for resource bases. The cost for implementation across ELP provision had yet to be calculated. The analysis of the high needs block and the current underspend against top up budgets would indicate that the increase could be funded from current budgets.</p> <p>A further cost pressure would arise as it had been proposed that equipment costs for Hearing Impairment centres would be funded outside of the top up values in order to be consistent with other types of resource base. This had yet to be quantified but again it was expected that it could be funded from within existing high needs budgets.</p> <p>It was agreed that the new banding descriptors and top up values for resource bases should be recommended to Schools Forum.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>Review of Top Up Values in Special Schools</p> <p>EW reported that a number of meetings had been held with special school head teachers, business managers and governors in relation to the impact of the new funding system on special school budgets. At the most recent meeting it had been agreed that detailed work, similar to that carried out for resource bases, now needed to be carried out to review top up levels for special schools. It had also been agreed that as</p>	

	<p>these changes could not impact until 2014-15 some work would be done to look at whether top up rates could be amended in year as a one off "fix" to mitigate against losses in funding resulting from funding reform.</p> <p>The analysis of high needs budgets indicated that the budget for top ups is likely to underspend in 2013-14 and that would leave scope to increase top up values on a one off basis. EW noted that any increase needed to be considered against the overall budget level, how Wiltshire top up rates compared with other authority rates (particularly the split between day and residential) and the potential impact of the minimum funding guarantee in 2014-15 if rates were set too high.</p> <p>A number of options for percentage increases in top up rates for 2013-14 were considered by the group. It was agreed that any increase should be targeted at rates for day places but after discussion the group did agree that some increase should be applied to residential rates if affordable. A further option of 7.5% increase for day rates and the same cash increase to be applied to residential rates was requested to be modelled for Schools Forum.</p>	GD
	<p>SEN and Disability Service Update</p> <p>EW referred members of the group to Carolyn Godfrey's letter to all schools outlining proposed changes to support services for young people with SEN and disabilities.</p>	
5	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None raised 	
6	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Monday 25th November, 2pm, Melksham</p>	