

Schools Funding Working Group

26th February 2014, 8.30am, Longleat Meeting Room, County Hall

Minutes

Present: Liz Williams, Grant Davis, Martin Watson, Phil Cooke, Neil Baker, Catriona Williamson, Andy Bridewell, John Hawkins

Apologies: Steve Clark

1	<p>Minutes from Previous Meeting</p> <p>The minutes from the meeting of 2nd December 2013 had been considered by Schools Forum and there were no matters arising.</p>	
2	<p>Budget Update 2014-15</p> <p>EW presented an update on schools budgets for 2014-15.</p> <p>Schools budgets would be issued to maintained schools later that day and that would be issued electronically. Budgets for Academies were expected to follow a similar timescale.</p> <p>It was requested that detail be provided to Schools Forum on the cost of the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) for 2014-15, the numbers of schools in receipt of MFG and the numbers to be capped in order to fund it.</p> <p>Changes to the conditions of grant for Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) for looked after children were discussed. The grant is required to be held centrally by the Virtual School Head Teacher for allocation as part of the agreed plan for each child. This mirrors current practice in Wiltshire however members of the group were concerned that this results in delays in funding reaching schools and that there was a lack of clarity about what it should be spent on. It was agreed that EW would meet with the Virtual School HT to discuss the process.</p> <p>EW fed back that the key concerns coming out of the budget roadshows were concerns about the funding and implementation of the Universal Infant Free School Meal Entitlement in September, and concerns about the impact of the military re-basing across the Salisbury Plain area and the impact on funding for schools.</p>	<p>GD</p> <p>EW</p>
3	<p>Free School Meals Pool</p> <p>EW reported that work was taking place to calculate the year end balance on the Free School Meal Pool so that Schools Forum could consider whether any cashback could be allocated to schools for 2013-14.</p> <p>There were also a number of issues that needed to be considered in relation to the pool:</p> <p><i>Rate per meal</i> – since the change to the school funding formula there is no longer a specific allocation made to schools in relation to free school meals. Premiums are currently calculated based on the number of pupils eligible for FSM multiplied by a rate per meal. The rate had not been updated in recent years and some schools had fed back that it was now out of step with the</p>	

	<p>cost of delivery. It was noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a higher rate is to be paid out from the pool then a higher rate must be charged to schools in the first instance; • It is difficult to arrive at a truly representative rate as costs vary from school to school depending on how meals are provided. <p>The recommendation of the group was that if the pool is to be continued the rate should not be changed as the funding allocated to schools has not been increased.</p> <p><i>Impact of Universal Infant Free School Meals</i> – it was agreed that the pool could not be expanded to include the universal entitlement. After some discussion the group considered that the pool would no longer be fit for purpose following the implementation of the universal entitlement for infants and that a paper should be brought to Schools Forum to present options for the closure of the pool from September 2014, including how any balance remaining on the pool should be distributed back to participating schools.</p>	
5	<p>AOB</p> <p>There was no AOB at this meeting</p>	
6	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Wednesday 5th June 2014, 8.30am, County Hall</p> <p>It was also agreed that if a consultation was issued by DfE on a national funding formula then an earlier meeting of the group may be required.</p>	