**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS’ FORUM**

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on 12th December 2016**

**At 4.00 pm Post Mill Centre South Normanton**

**Present**

Barbara Arrandale, David Beaumont, Linda Du-Roe, Shirley Harvey, Stephanie Marbrow, Liz Moorsom, Martin Brader, David Baker, Tracey Burnside, Julien Scholefield, David Plummer, Lisa Key, Andrew Critchlow, Karen Hudson, David Channon, Deborah Turner, Chris Wayment

**Substitutes**

Alan Thomas, Cathy Tattersfield

**Observers**

Cllr Caitlin Bisknell

**Officers/Others**

Chris Allcock, Mary Murkin, Russ Barr, Ruth Lane, Karen Gurney, Kathryn Boulton, Kathryn Pomerantz

**Apologies**

Joe Birkin, Bridget Hanley, Gill Hutton, Kam Grewal-Joy, Carey Ayres, Cllr Jim Coyle, Cllr Damien Greenhalgh, Cllr Joselyn Street, Andrew Wild, Sue Kennedy.

Martin Brader chaired the meeting and Chris Allcock confirmed it was quorate.

**16/32 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were given as noted above.

**16/33 Use of additional funding to support a collaborative approach to reducing exclusions in secondary schools 2015 -17 (to include summary of Derbyshire County Council Exclusions research Project)**

Russ Barr presented the paper with Kathryn Pomerantz, Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist, presenting the Executive Summary of the Exclusions Research Project.

Since the funding was originally agreed by the Forum the secondary sector landscape has dramatically changed which makes it very difficult to judge whether the situation would have deteriorated without the additional funding. Schools have generally approached the project very positively and extensive collaboration has taken place. However, due to the new Progress 8 method of measurement, and less money being available in schools, less alternative provision has been provided as a way of delivering a more suitable curriculum for some pupils.

The impact of the new Progress 8 measurement of disadvantaged pupils has still to be quantified, and teenage mental health is also a growing issue. There has been a cohort of pupils who have been recycled around Derbyshire schools which is having a negative impact on results. The coasting schools agenda, and sponsored academies, which have a higher rate of exclusions, also impact on the figures, the combined impact of which has created an almost ‘perfect storm’.

The exclusion figures for 2016–17 to date are very similar to those in 2015–16 when 101 pupils were permanently excluded throughout the whole year. Kathryn accepted that the schools and nurture agenda often conflict but detailed the background to the Executive Summary.

* The most important factor in preventing exclusions is the school ethos.
* Since the summary was produced Kathryn had been asked if there was a correlation between exclusions and school achievement. Interestingly, most of the schools involved in the research which had a high number of exclusions had lower rates of achievement whilst conversely those which had a low number of exclusions had higher rates of achievement.
* In interviews, staff in the lowest excluding schools emphasised the desire to work in partnership with other schools; this was not emphasised in interviews with staff from the highest excluding schools.
* Low excluding schools applied their policies consistently but were also flexible in their response to the most complex cases.
* Relationships between staff, pupils and others parties were very important in low excluding schools and spending time listening to students was considered vital.
* In general low-excluding schools recognised that they needed to attend to staff well-being and develop staff skills to take action to solve any underlying student problems. By contrast high-excluding schools often tended to complain about the availability of services and resources and sought to depend more on the LA.

David Beaumont said that current exclusion figures were actually higher than at this stage last year by 6-7 pupils. With regard to the money allocated to secondary schools, could we assess the impact on the pupils helped?

Russ Barr responded that we can see that clusters which had close collaboration were getting better results, for those who bought services from outside the results were less successful. Schools are required to feedback to the LA on the impact of the additional funding and further details can be provided to the Schools Forum in due course, if required.

Barbara Arrandale noted that Leicester and Leicestershire had very low rates of exclusions. Kathryn Boulton responded that their local partnerships were far more advanced and there was much less reliance on the LA.

Deborah Turner asked if any Academies were involved in collaborations, to which the reply was yes.

Martin Brader asked if Governors could have details of whether their own schools were high or low excluders of pupils. Russ Barr replied that the figures were available in Raise on-line but they were always time lagged.

David Baker asked if there was any feedback from Ofsted as to how they looked at exclusions and Progress 8 data. Russ Barr said schools are being encouraged to strip out the data of pupils who don’t meet Progress 8 data for genuine reasons and for which alternative curricula were pursued.

Kathryn Pomerantz commented that the Educational Psychology Service are concerned that the upscaling of the national curriculum and government tests ‘may’ be a factor in the rise in the exclusions of younger children and they are conducting further research into the exclusions of children in Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1 and looking at the KS1 curriculum verses child development.

Deborah Turner asked about the cost recovery arrangements from school budgets for pupil exclusions and the alternative costs of education. Kathryn Boulton replied that the paper previously presented to the Forum looked at the resources required for SEND pupils and it was not about fining schools. This needs to be about Locality Childrens Partnerships developing a sensible way to finance these pupils education.

Chris Allcock added that whatever system is applied it should be the same financially for schools and academies. The last time this was considered the key issue was that when a school permanently excludes a pupil should the additional costs be recovered from the individual school or should there be an overall shift of resources from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block? The current position is the DSG funding blocks are becoming increasingly ring fenced and thus any increased pressures on the High Needs Block resulting from exclusions cannot be met by a general top-slice from schools’ budgets. The costs would have to be funded either by re-shaping planned High Needs spending or by charging the schools which exclude.

Kathryn added that there had been a pilot that when a school excluded a pupil they continued to be attributed with their results but this has ceased.

Cathy Tattersfield commented that the report was fascinating, her experience when a national curriculum was introduced into special schools, was that more challenging behaviour was seen. Also, governors were only involved at the final stage of exclusion and worked on the headteacher’s advice. Could they be more involved in developing school strategies to prevent a situation deteriorating to the extent where exclusion was considered? Could governors be trained on this report?

Russ Barr agreed it is a very important issue for governors and it is on their agenda but they need to understand better the whole exclusion strategy in their school.

David Beaumont emphasised that the best schools liaise with other schools. Also there has been a real reduction in SEN departments in schools and in independent SEN experts to support governors in questioning SEN strategy in schools. There is a duty on the LA to sponsor an independent SEN advisor.

Kathryn Boulton replied that this last point would be looked at.

Linda Du-Roe asked whether the schools with low exclusion numbers had low numbers because they used managed moves around the schools they worked in collaboration with rather than excluding pupils. The reply was yes. Linda also enquired how the Early Help Offer fitted within exclusions in schools. What is happening with the Rethink of the Early Help Offer (REHO)?

Kathryn Boulton replied that a report on REHO could be bought to the next meeting and that the evaluation of the Local Children Partnership shows that the schools doing well meet the needs of individual pupils and work closely with the parents.

The Forum agreed to note the reports.

**16/34 Minutes of the previous meeting – 10th November 2016**

Matters of accuracy

No points were raised.

Matters arising

No points were raised.

**16/35 National/local funding - update**

Chris Allcock presented a bullet point paper of a list of what was known regarding the mainstream and early years funding positions. The DfE have yet to publish much of the keenly awaited information, including the 2017-18 settlement and the second consultation document on the national funding formulae.

Chris Wayment asked for an explanation of the point ‘ Schools Forum maintained sector members can agree to de-delegate further funding from maintained schools for additional school improvement provision, in 2017-18 – if forum don’t agree then the Authority can make an application to the Secretary of State’. Chris explained that it worked in much the same way as other currently de-delegated funding such as Trade Union and Maternity provision, the LA could ask Forum for permission to de-delegate an element of funding for School Improvement provision, if the request was refused the LA could seek permission directly from the Secretary of State instead.

David Beaumont asked if any alternative methods of allocating budgets would be modelled for 2017-18 or whether the format would be basically the same as in 2016–17. Would the Forum have any influence on changing the formula if it wished to do so?

Chris Allcock relied that any changes would only be at the edges of the formula. For example, if the National Funding Formula (NFF) proposals are available then the Forum could consider what changes to make for 2017-18 as part of the transition to the new national formula. Wholesale changes to the local formula are unlikely due to the proposed introduction of a NFF and the timescales involved as there is now no opportunity to consult schools and academies

David responded that if we can’t move to a radically different formula, the Forum may still want to move in a different direction from the existing formula. Chris replied that we need to remember that any changes which took us away from the NFF would be time-limited in nature and would, in effect, be reversed by the national arrangements, potentially from 2018-19.

David Beaumont commented that following the Early Years consultation, there were clearly a number of distressed comments from people involved in this sector. Following government clarification it would now seem as though some of the suggestions made were unfounded.

Chris Allcock replied that the Authority had considered carefully the pros and cons of consulting with the early years sector in advance of the government publishing its final proposals. On balance the Authority considered that opening a dialogue was beneficial in raising awareness of the issues and challenges facing the sector. The issues raised around the country have been highlighted at a national level and may have helped to influence the government to provide the extra support to nursery schools set out in its latest proposals.

The Schools Forum agreed to note the report.

**16/36 ISOS report – Report of the future of School Improvement in Derbyshire**

Kathryn Boulton presented the paper. The report had been commissioned as a response to the announcement of the reduction to the Educational Services Grant (ESG). It was an in-depth, speedy review building on work already done within the LA which delivered a number of useful findings, some of which are summarised below:

* Systems leadership was not mature enough in Derbyshire to lose the LA School Improvement offer yet
* It was previously thought that we may move towards a different vehicle for the School Improvement offer and the report suggests we move towards a traded service offer; meetings with stakeholders have confirmed this is the approach to make.
* Details of the offer will be confirmed in January/February 2017 so that schools can make purchase decisions when setting budgets
* The LA’s vision for School Improvement is clear, however, the strategic direction for achieving the vision was less so
* In respect of the current provision from the ESG for School Improvement, some activities could be de-delegated, with Forum approval, and others will become a traded service
* The Local Partnership in Derbyshire is looking at its own role within the wider system. Schools will need to work with a number of different alliances and there is work still to be done on these structures and relationships
* There is a real need to maintain the pace of development of this work.

A further report will be provided at the January 2017 Forum meeting.

David Channon said that he uses a wide range of partners within his organisation and that Multi Academy Trusts need to be used as a method of School Improvement. Kathryn Boulton agreed that many organisations are making a difference to the lives of children.

David Beaumont said that Derbyshire has borders with other counties which have less strong local authorities and that Teaching Alliances based in these counties may impact on Derbyshire School Improvement services. He had spoken to a local Headteacher who likes the fact that a wide range of Improvement Services are available.

Kathryn Boulton replied that this is not about Derbyshire schools being given a limited choice of services, it is about working hard to have a defined offer from Derbyshire that can be clearly understood by schools. It is likely that a school will access different services from a range of providers.

Julien Scholefield wondered how this will progress. Will the School Improvement Service offer advice to partnerships not just schools and Russ Barr confirmed this is likely to be the case.

Chris Wayment stated that schools need to be clear what they are purchasing and Russ Barr replied that the LA will need to have a clear separation of its statutory duties and traded services offer.

Barbara Arrandale asked what happens if the School Improvement Advisory Board fails?

Kathryn Boulton replied that a plan, and accountability for the plan, still need to be defined, however school improvement is ultimately the responsibility of each individual school. Longer term it may be that a school- owned Board might be formed in the future but it is likely that this would take 2/3 years to set up.

Martin Brader confirmed that the Schools Forum’s task was to make sure that funding was distributed fairly. The statutory element will be for LA schools only, but Academies could buy in to services and would have to pay extra if de-delegation occurs.

Kathryn Boulton finished by saying that the Government’s move towards all schools becoming academies appears to be back-tracking and LAs are retaining a bigger role than previously thought.

Schools Forum agreed to note the report.

**16/37 Early Years Funding: Responses to consultation**

Chris Allcock presented the responses to the recent consultation. Early Years funding will be revisited at the Forum meetings in the spring and no comments were raised by Forum members.

Schools Forum agreed to note the report.

**16/38 Use of additional funding to support under-performing secondary schools 2015-17**

Russ Barr presented the paper and noted that the proportion of students attending a good or better secondary school in Derbyshire continued to improve. However, there still remains a challenge in relation to outcomes. As previously mentioned, the performance measure has changed to Progress 8 and hence comparisons with previous years’ results are more difficult. None of the funded schools has declined in terms of Ofsted categories and the three schools previously in a category had all improved.

The question was raised about what type of academies on conversion left any debts with the LA and what type took their deficits with them. The Authority agreed to seek clarification on this from the DfE.

Schools Forum agreed to note the report.

**16/39 Dates of future meetings**

Future meeting dates were advised as follows;

9th January 2017 (4-6pm) Sandpiper Hotel, Chesterfield, S41 9EH (additional meeting)

9th February 2017 (4-6pm) Rangewood Room, Post Mill Centre, South Normanton

22nd June 2017 (6-8pm) Committee Room 1, County Hall

The meeting closed at 5.50pm.