

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM**  
**Minutes of the Meeting Held on 4 November 2014**  
**At 6.00 pm in Committee Room 1 at County Hall**

**Present**

David Baker, Julie Broadbent, Mike Davison, Joe Birkin, Peter Thorne, Martin Brader, Andrew Critchlow, Lindsey Partridge, Juile Cadman, Kevan Lomas, Shirley Harvey, Roger Tomlinson, Linda Du-Roe, Julian Scholefield, Karen Hudson, Andrew Large, Deborah Turner, Cathy Tattersfield, John Crofts, Sue Kennedy

**Substitutes**

Ian Robinson, Michelle Jenkins

**Observers**

**Officers/Others**

Chris Allcock, Mary Murkin, Phil Burrows, Kathryn Boulton, Ruth Lane, Nicole Chavaudra

**Apologies**

Brendan Hickey, Duncan Jackson, Jason Smith, Kevan Lomas, Andrew Wild, Philip Sunderland, Penny Pennington, Angela Comar, Chris Wayment, Cllr Jocelyn Street, David Allen, Ian Thomas

Martin Brader chaired the meeting.

**14/28 Apologies**

Chris Allcock read out the list of apologies, apologies for David Allen were received from the floor.

**14/29 Minutes of the previous meeting – 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed, subject to an amendment to reflect that Mill Hill Academy has been renamed Ripley Academy.

Matters arising:

A member of the Forum enquired which sector the departing member Paul Mason represented, Chris Allcock replied he was a primary school governor.

Chris confirmed he had written to the DfE concerning item 14/25 seeking permission to retain funding centrally in 2015-16 for several key projects. The DfE confirmed that they would approve the following:

- Funding to support improved school performance (£1.5m);
- Funding for High Needs capital projects (£1.5m);
- Support for Children in Care endowment (£0.5m) – agreed subject to Schools Forum agreement; and
- Early Years Education – conversion of DSG revenue to capital to support increased provision for vulnerable two year olds (£2.563m)

## **14/30 Endowment for Children in Care**

Nicole Chavaudra presented a report to explain the proposed endowment initiative for children in care and to seek support for the project's ambitions approval including a financial contribution from the DSG.

Nicole explained that the proposed scheme had been tested with 18 Year 9's who had £2,000 each available on a debit card and quoted two examples of how they had been used by children to attend a drama course and receive some specialist counselling. The pilot is still being evaluated, Derbyshire is the first LA to adopt this approach but other LA's are watching with interest. The DfE have indicated that they would approve a contribution from the DSG, subject to Schools Forum consideration of the project.

Forum Members asked a number of questions and made a number of points;

Would £250k be enough, what happens if more children are taken in to care?

- Nicole confirmed that the £250k was an absolute maximum, allocations would be scaled if necessary.

How do the cards work? Could drug habits be funded from these cards?

- The card is held by a nominated carer and up to £100 can be spent with receipts retained as evidence of purchases. Any purchases in excess of £100 have to be discussed with CAYA staff and the named social worker. The Graduation Fund would be controlled by a responsible adult.

What are the budget lines that have been decommissioned?

- A full report could be provided but they were 'pots of money' that previously could be accessed by carers but the process was lengthy and not everyone benefited. The carers have already suggested which budgets could be de-commissioned.

How many cards could an individual Carer have access too?

- It is possible for a carer in a children's home to have access to a maximum of 6 cards.

How will success be measured?

- Factors could include the progress children make and their engagement in their lives, reduced churn of foster parents/carers, better engagement in education etc.

Will SEN children have the endowment as well as Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCP) because if so children could have a lot of money by graduation?

- Yes this is additional to the EHCP, it will enable the children to have additional life experiences.

How were the amounts per year calculated?

- Carers and children in care were asked how much they thought was appropriate and then this was reduced slightly to calculate the amounts. We will learn from experience over the next two years whether the figures are correct.

Is this in addition to £1,900 Pupil Premium Plus?

- Yes.

Kathryn Boulton summarised that the endowments, and especially the graduation amounts, will enable carers to have real discussions with children and help them to make better plans and decisions about their future.

Forum agreed to support the children in care endowment project, including the funding requested, for a period of two years and to receive a further report on the outcomes at the end of the pilot. No longer term financial commitments were agreed at this time.

#### **14/31 De-delegation of budgets – response to consultation**

Chris Allcock presented the paper to seek decisions from Schools Forum Members in relation to the de-delegation (re-pooling) of funds for 2015-16. Schools had been asked to give their views on the de-delegation proposals for 2015-16 and in all cases a significant majority of respondents supported the LA's approach.

Votes were taken by both primary and secondary school representatives who agreed the de-delegations for their sectors.

In addition the report highlighted that, where a school becomes a sponsored Academy, any deficit stays with the LA. The deficit could be met from the school contingency fund but only with the approval of the Schools Forum. The Authority was now formally seeking the Forum's approval to allow these charges to be met from the contingency fund.

Following debate the LA's request was put to a vote of primary and secondary school representatives and the request was rejected.

#### **14/32 Two Year Old Provision – Capital Investment from DSG**

Sue Ricketts and Amanda Gordon presented a report to seek approval to use funding for two year olds within the DSG to fund capital projects in identified schools to address issues of undersupply of two year old places in areas of high need.

Amanda Gordon summarised that Derbyshire needs to provide a further 1,245 places over two years either by the LA or by PVI partners. Despite the department's best efforts it has been unable to attract enough additional places in vulnerable areas, therefore existing settings need to be expanded to provide the additional places. The latest estimates for the 2014-15 allocation for vulnerable two year olds within the Early Years Block of the DSG indicates an underspend of £3.3m. Development section are undertaking a feasibility study for a number of schools and it is proposed to provide an additional 440 places at a cost of £3.6m in 11 settings by either converting existing buildings or building new classrooms. The DfE have agreed a request to convert DSG from revenue to capital funding to support this development.

A discussion took place about using existing premises, private alternatives and who would be responsible for the new places. Amanda confirmed that the vision is that the new facilities would be part of existing LA schools and targeted in the most deprived areas.

The Forum agreed the conversion of £2.563m of DSG for capital spend on two year old provision.

### **14/33 EYFS Benchmark Data 2013**

Sue Ricketts presented an information only report about Derbyshire's performance against key indicators in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) benchmark data 2013.

Sue highlighted that data re three year olds indicated that reducing numbers of children were taking up places, however this was felt to be due to more stringent auditing of data rather than a true reduction.

There is a current concern following the introduction of the new Early Years Educator (level 3) qualification meaning that from September 2014 anyone wishing to take the qualification will already need to have secured GCSE A\*-C/O 'level' or its equivalent in maths and English. Whilst it is good that the qualification will be at a higher level, it may cause a short term problem as a number of pupils who would previously have been attracted to childcare may not have the appropriate level of qualifications and be deterred from entering the profession.

A Forum Member stated that if people are more qualified pay may need to be increased which would have a subsequent effect on the funding required for the sector.

The way in which children were assessed at the end of EYFS changed in 2013 and Derbyshire's performance dropped when compared to other authorities. Actions were taken to ensure outcomes improved in 2014 and the recent (presented separately) published data indicated that Derbyshire has improved to be back above the national averages which was down to the hard work of children and teachers alike.

Forum agreed to note the report.

### **14/34 Funding Review Group - Update**

Chris Allcock presented a paper to inform the Forum of the work undertaken by the Schools Forum Funding Review Group to date.

Meeting 1 – heard that Derbyshire was to receive an indicative figure of £14m extra DSG in 2015–16 as a result of being recognised as being one of the worst funded LAs. It was agreed that the Single Status cash allocations should be embedded and a general rise of 2% in funding for each sector.

Meeting 2 – looked at a number of issues including the lump sums for primary and secondary schools. Derbyshire's allocations are high both in terms of the amount per school and the total allocated; the latter is high due to the number of schools in Derbyshire relative to the size of the pupil population. Kevin Firth would be attending the February 2015 Forum meeting to discuss overall pupil demographics and school places across the county for the future.

Special schools funding was also discussed and it was agreed that both the schools and the LA would return to the next meeting with some financial information to enable further discussions to take place.

Meeting 3 – was predominately concerned with special schools' funding. The sector had undertaken some preliminary provision mapping which showed that the cost of basic

support, before the inclusion of specific costs, were above the national £10k per place value. The shortfall was effectively using up some of the need-based top ups.

The Authority shared its benchmarking information of special schools funding, this was inconclusive in determining whether or not Derbyshire special schools were under/over funded compared with other those in other LAs.

Special schools were asked at the meeting to indicate how they would use any extra funding and details of their responses were appended to the report to Forum.

The report to Forum also identified some potential changes in the profiles as some of the current funding differentials are considered to be too wide. The report highlighted a list of potential issues for the LA, Schools Forum and special schools to consider.

Julian Scholefield commenced the discussion indicating that it was in the interest of all schools to fund special schools at a higher level to prevent children going 'Out of County' for their provision. Julian gave examples of two non-LA providers who charge £110k and £85k per annum compared with approximately £25k per annum at his own school. Special schools also take many pupils from mainstream schools thus reducing the pressure on them. Pupils are being turned away from special schools because they are struggling financially.

A Forum Member questioned that the group hadn't looked at the structure of school budgets and suggested there must be ways of achieving a more equitable split, possibly by reducing the primary lump sum and the giving some of the money released to special schools. The Chair replied that in future schools' budgets were unlikely to increase year on year and if that happens it would be necessary to review the school estate to achieve savings; any proposals to reduce the number of schools would need to be handled very sensitively.

Michelle Jenkins asked if SEN pupils could be funded in some way pending the issue of a statement as this was a real problem for infant schools, and nurseries don't seem able to do preparatory work for when SEN children arrive in school. This was confirmed by another Forum Member who stated that pupils' needs needed to be assessed before they reached school but the bureaucracy encountered causes numerous delays. Kathryn Boulton confirmed that this issue is being looked at.

A Forum Member commented that mainstream schools have SEN pupils with very little additional funding provided who, if they transfer to a special school, suddenly get a lot more funding and all schools could argue that they don't receive enough. On this basis every sector should be asked what funding they require.

Forum Members stated that the whole system of 'Out of County' provision needs reviewing but it seems sensible to reduce these costs and provide more funding to LA Special Schools to provide places and services for pupils.

Kathryn Boulton summarised that the SEN reforms will redesign services and access will be reviewed.

At this stage the Funding Review Group doesn't intend to meet again, once the 2015-16 DSG settlement is announced in December a further report would be submitted to the

Forum to seek views on how the LA might respond to the issues raised by the group, in particular in respect of special schools.

The Forum noted the report.

### **14/35 Alternative Provision Pilot**

Kathryn Boulton presented a report giving further details regarding the proposed commissioning pilot in respect of Alternative Provision (AP).

A DfE School Exclusion trial has operated for three years to test the benefit of schools having greater responsibility for meeting the needs of permanently excluded pupils and those at risk of exclusion. The results show that better outcomes have resulted for those schools within the trial.

It is intended that Derbyshire initiates its own pilot whereby Behaviour Partnerships are given £0.5m per annum for two years. This would give the Partnerships greater flexibility to commission support for pupils with the aspiration to achieve zero exclusions. The results of the pilot would be monitored and, at the end of the two years, an overall evaluation would be completed and reported to the Schools Forum. The Behaviour Partnerships have been consulted on this initiative and support the proposals.

A Forum Member asked how realistic is a zero exclusions policy? Kathryn replied that schools do not exclude pupils lightly and the LA needs to look at alternative provisions, it isn't always necessary for a pupil to be educated solely on-site. Given the impact that exclusion can have on a child's life chances it will always remain the final option.

Other Forum Members commented that there does need to be alternatives to mainstream school or exclusion and the local partnership working in High Peak is working extremely well. The time and effort teachers spend working with these children is tremendous and not always appreciated by those outside the education sector. The remainder of a school's pupils can suffer as a result of the time spent with just a few pupils.

Kathryn Boulton summarised that there is a downward trajectory of permanent exclusions in Derbyshire but our figures are in line with the national average. The needs of these pupils need to be addressed earlier to provide alternatives for them rather than exclude at year 10/11 as this often has a very detrimental effect on their education and life chances. We are lucky in Derbyshire that we have three centres available to support pupils.

The Forum agreed to support the project.

The date of the next meeting will be 16<sup>th</sup> December 2014 at 6.00pm at County Hall.

**The meeting closed at 8.15pm.**