

THE KIRKLEES SCHOOLS FORUM

meeting held on **Friday 26th April 2013**

9:30am at the Deighton Centre

Present:

Julie Helm	Nursery School Heads (1)
Kath Benetis, Richard Dodd, Kyrstie Joslin, Michelle Lee [Chair], Diana Wilson	Primary School Heads (7)
	Middle School Heads (1)
Kevin Higgins, Melanie Williams	High School Heads (3)
	Special School Heads (1)
Mike Cook, John McNally (vice-Chair)	Academy Heads (2)
Martin Ridge	Pupil Referral Units (1)
	Kirklees Governors (1)
Jo Bailey-Taylor (NASUWT), Gillian Collins (ATL), Sarah Ellis (Pre-School Learning Alliance), Hazel Danson (NUT)	Non-school members (5)
Anita Davis (Acting Asst Director for Learning) Angela Farmer (Senior Finance Officer, Children & Young People) Warwick Firmin (School Funding Strategy Manager) [Clerk] David Gearing (Financial Delegation Manager); [Minute Clerk]	Officers in Support
Cllr Peter O'Neill	Observers

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies have been received from Pat Colling (School Governors), Cllr Cath Harris, Catherine Lockwood (KPH), Simon Sloan (KPH), David Smith (Director of Resources) and Chris Sylge (KSH).

2. Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting 14th December

The minutes were agreed to be a true record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising from the Schools Forum meeting 14th December

No matters were raised.

4. Matters arising from briefing notes including Kirklees Schools Forum response to DfE consultation

The meeting considered a document which summarised the main items of business dealt with at the Schools Forum briefing meetings since the December 2012 public Schools Forum meeting. This document has been registered on the Council's meetings website and covers the following topics: -

- New arrangements for the Schools Contingency (including the Schools in Financial Difficulty protocols) and the Pupil Growth Fund.
- SEN funding arrangements under the School Funding Reforms – refers to an explanatory letter sent to all schools covering how the new SEN funding mechanisms will operate and the new top-up funding matrix. There is also a frequently-asked questions section.

- Schools Forum's response to the recent DfE consultation containing 23 questions about potential further changes to school funding arrangements for 2014-15.

5. LGA response to DfE consultation

The Local Government Association's own response to the DfE's recent consultation about the 2013-14 school funding reform changes was also included amongst today's agenda papers. It is quite striking how the LGA's responses largely mirror those made by Kirklees Schools Forum. In their response, the LGA raise a particular concern that the transfer of post-16 high needs funding into the Dedicated Schools Grant system can produce undue pressure within the new unified system. Officers are undertaking an exercise to determine locally whether the demand for post-16 high needs funding support outstrips the amount of specific post-16 funding transferred into Kirklees' DSG account.

6. Future meetings of the Kirklees Schools Forum 2012-13

- 12th July 2013

7. Any other business

7.1 Changes to Kirklees' Scheme for Financing Schools from 1st April 2013

Local authorities are required to publish a Scheme for Financing Schools which sets out the financial relationship between them and the schools they maintain. The DfE periodically issues instructions to update authority schemes to reflect regulation changes and other contextual developments. Many of the instructions are mandatory but they are still required to be reported to and approved by the Schools Forum.

The instructions issued for implementation from April 2013 have largely arisen from the reforms to school funding and underpin many of the changes which the authority has discussed and agreed with the Schools Forum in the build-up to April 2013 school funding allocations.

A summary of the scheme revisions that have been put into effect was presented to the meeting and a full copy of the revised Kirklees Scheme for Financing Schools was made available. The changes were formally agreed by the Schools Forum.

7.2 Consultation on proposed changes to the role of the local authority in early education and childcare

As part of the roll-out of the new early education programme for two-year-olds from lower income households, the Government is consulting on its proposals to reform the role local authorities will play in early education and childcare. The response deadline is 6th May. The following changes are proposed...

A guaranteed offer of funding for all providers of a quality assessed by Ofsted, or an inspection body approved by the Secretary of State, as 'satisfactory', 'good' or 'outstanding' where there is an eligible child wanting to take up an early education place.

Local authorities should in future make decisions on whether to fund early education providers to deliver places solely on the basis of Ofsted inspection judgements. Authorities should no longer undertake separate quality assessments of their own. Longer term, authorities will be expected to fund three and four-year-old places at early education providers rated as 'satisfactory', 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted and to fund places for disadvantaged two-year-olds delivered by 'good' and 'outstanding' providers. The 'satisfactory' category can only be used in the interim if there are insufficient local places to deliver the two-year-old expansion.

A guaranteed offer of funding for new early education providers which have been registered with Ofsted prior to their first full Ofsted inspection.

The government wants to guarantee an offer of funding for all newly-established early education providers that have been successfully registered with Ofsted and wish to offer government funded places. This funding would initially be provided until the date their first Ofsted inspection judgement is published (funding could be withdrawn if the judgement was less than satisfactory). The pre-registration checks undertaken by Ofsted look at the safety of the provider's premises, the suitability of the staff to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and that they have an appropriate educational programme in place.

A limit on the extra conditions that local authorities can place on private, voluntary and independent (PVI) early education providers in order for them to qualify for funding to deliver places.

Currently, some local authorities place additional conditions on PVI providers as part of their funding agreements. Typically, these relate to quality improvement, flexibility of the provision, training and financial management requirements. The government proposes that in future the only conditions that could be set are those which guard against the misappropriation of public funds, prohibit the charging of 'top-up fees' and support the flexible delivery of early education places. Quality-related conditions will no longer be permitted.

Removal of the existing duty on local authorities to secure information, advice and training for childcare providers, but give local authorities power to offer it.

Currently there is a legal duty placed on local authorities to secure information, advice and training for all childcare providers or potential providers. The types of training to be made available are set out in regulations. Some authorities require providers to undertake local authority-delivered training as a condition of receiving funding. The proposal is to remove the legal duty. The intention is to encourage new training providers into the market, driving up quality and choice and reducing the financial burden for local authorities. Authorities will be allowed to continue to deliver training 'at a reasonable rate' for those providers that want it but they will no longer be allowed to make participation in LA training a condition of receiving funding. The list of prescribed training requirements will also be slimmed down.

Reform of the early education funding system by encouraging local authorities to simplify their funding formulae and to limit the amount of centrally retained spend.

In line with the national funding formula agenda, the proposal is to simplify Early Years Funding Formula arrangements in future. The new two-year-old funding will have to be allocated to providers through a single flat base rate. Whilst such provision is increasing there will remain an option to fund individual providers on a place-led basis. For the three and four-year-old funding, the proposals are to limit funding structures to a maximum of three base rates and two bands. Lump sums would need to be more explicitly focused on meeting unavoidable costs. The regulations will be reworked to provide clarity about what local authorities can and cannot retain as central early years expenditure in future. In general, central spend will only be allowed on activities related to improving access and support for disadvantaged children and those with SEN and other additional needs. There may be a percentage limit placed on the amount of central retention.

The meeting focused upon the range of questions relating to the operation of the Early Years funding block...

Q9: Do you support the proposal for a single flat rate within a local authority for two-year-old early education?

Kirklees' early years funding formula has a single hourly base rate unit of funding so it would make sense for that approach to be extended to the two-year-old funding.

Q10: Do you support the proposal to limit the number of base rates and bands for three and four-year-old early education?

This was felt to be a good idea – simplification makes for easier understanding and predictability.

Q11: What are your views on the limits proposed for three and four-year-old early education (a maximum of three base rates and no more than two bands)?

See the answer to Q10. Any new arrangements would need to retain the ability to direct block grant funding to our Nursery Schools.

Q12: What are your views on removing, for three and four-year-olds, all supplements (and factors) other than for deprivation?

There was general support for the removal of supplement factors. It might be helpful if a minimum percentage figure was specified for the deprivation factor?

Q13: Do you support the changes proposed for early years centrally retained DSG spending? Can the definition be improved?

Yes, improving the definition of what can be retained would be helpful but the amount of retention should be left to local discretion and be a joint decision with the local Schools Forum. The current amount of base funding retained in Kirklees accounts for just 1.3% of the overall DSG early years block funding.

Q14: Do you think that a 10% limit on early years DSG central spend is appropriate? If not, please explain why and include any comments on the impact that this would have in comparison to a 15% or 20% limit.

10% would seem to be the most appropriate of the three but there should be scope permitted for local discretion. (The trajectory funding for expanding provision for disadvantaged two-year olds will temporarily put Kirklees in technical breach of this percentage).

Carol Lancaster, Senior Manager for Early Learning & Childcare is putting together the local authority response to the consultation. Officers will ensure that the Schools Forum's comments above are reported within that response.

It was asked whether the authority would consider issuing guidance to early years providers about the minimum pay rate expectations that the funding enshrines. It was acknowledged that the rates cannot be imposed but it would be helpful if the authority would make a statement on the issue. It was agreed that this should be discussed at the next meeting of the Early Years Working Group.