

KIRKLEES SCHOOLS FORUM meeting

Friday 11th October 2013

Present:

	Nursery School Heads (1)
Michelle Lee [Chair], Diana Wilson	Primary School Heads (6)
Gary Johnson	Middle School Heads (1)
	High School Heads (2)
	Special School Heads (1)
Jo-Anne Atkinson	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), Steve Thomas (NUT)	Non-school members (5)
Angela Farmer (Senior Finance Officer) Warwick Firmin (School Funding Strategy Manager) [Clerk] David Gearing (Financial Delegation Manager); [Minute Clerk]	Officers in Support
Cllr Cath Harris, Cllr Peter O'Neill	Observers

1. Membership 2013/14

An updated membership list of Kirklees Schools Forum for the academic year 2013/14 was included with today's agenda papers. Schools Forum representatives are asked to check the dates showing for the expiry of their three-year term of office. The end date for the Pupil Referral Unit representative needs to be included in the table.

It was pointed out that the Director for Children Services (Alison O'Sullivan) and the Chief Financial Officer (David Smith, Director of Resources) both retain a legal right to attend Schools Forum meetings, but are usually represented at the meetings by the officers in support.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Pat Colling (Kirklees Governors), Mike Cook (Academy Heads) [Jo-Anne Atkinson attended as a substitute], Hazel Danson (NUT) [Steve Thomas attended as a substitute], Richard Dodd (KPH), Carole Hardern (Group Finance Manager), Kevin Higgins (KSHS), Kirsten Luff (KNSH), John McNally (Academy Heads) and Melanie Williams (KSHS).

3. Election of Chair and vice-Chair

In order to commence Schools Forum business for academic year 2013/14 the election of a Forum Chair and vice-Chair was conducted at a Schools Forum briefing meeting held on 20th September. Michelle Lee was elected to serve as Schools Forum Chair and John McNally was elected to the position of Schools Forum vice-Chair. No other nominations were received.

4. Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 12th July

The minutes were agreed to be a true record of the meeting. It was noted that Martin Ridge had sent his apologies for the last meeting but these had failed to be recorded.

5. Matters arising from the Schools Forum meeting 12th July

No matters were raised.

6. Proposed school funding strategy for 2014-15 and 2015-16

Funding year 2013-14 has seen the introduction of a radically different funding mechanism for schools / academies. To date the emphasis has been very much upon implementation of the new arrangements and there has been very little time to reflect on the significant structural changes that have been brought about. Accordingly, the Learning Board will be leading a review of the new school funding methodology.

The purpose of the review is to look at the impact of the new school funding arrangements and to determine whether the additional support factors represent good value for money in terms of the outcomes for different groups of children.

It is intended to establish an evidence base to inform the development of key funding principles and to inform future funding decisions.

It was suggested that there are nine main themes to be examined: -

- Weighting of the deprivation factors in relation to narrowing the attainment gap
- The value of the Looked-after Children funding factor
- The value of the Low Prior Attainment funding factors
- The value of the Lump Sum
- The Primary : Secondary funding per pupil ratio
- The funding of Small Schools
- Early Years funding
- SEN funding methodology
- De-delegation for maintained schools

It is proposed to establish a number of “task and finish” working groups to investigate these themes. The membership of each group would comprise three Schools Forum school members, one non-school Schools Forum member, two Council officers and some representation from other strategic groups (eg SEN, Early Years). Volunteers are sought to populate the task and finish groups. W Firmin will give some thought to the setting up of three such groups, possibly along the lines of the three blocks of school funding, and circulate a note for consideration.

The timeframe for each group to report findings back would be by the second Schools Forum meeting of the Spring Term 2014. The findings would also go to the Learning Board and other appropriate strategic groups. The Learning Board would then be tasked with agreeing key funding principles to inform both consultation and decision-making processes during the Autumn term of 2014, in time for implementation in the 2015-16 funding year.

The above timeline pre-supposes that local authorities continue to have some discretion over how the school funding formula operates. It is understood that the EFA is to undertake yet another round of consultation before the end of the year to inform progress towards a National Funding Formula. This could potentially remove much or all of the scope for local decision-making. Any funding review process we embark upon will clearly have to take heed of national developments.

6.1 Small Schools

The Schools Forum has previously asked for information on where pupils attending schools actually live – do they largely come from the community served by the school or are many of them travelling to their school from other areas? A scatter diagram analysis of the proportion of each school’s population who live outside the school’s Priority Admission Area (PAA) was

circulated. The analysis uses pupil information from the January 2013 pupil census. It was noted that PAAs have some limitations for making comparisons. The pattern of PAAs reflects historical catchment areas and have not always been reviewed when schools have been re-organised or when additional housing has been built. Additionally, some schools don't have geographical PAAs eg faith schools and some other own admission authority schools.

The scatter diagram analysis shows no easily discernible patterns amongst the distribution. There are small schools with high proportions of local pupils and others with quite low proportions. The same looks to be true for the larger primary units as well although there are more small schools with fewer than 50% of 'local' children than there are large schools. Questions were asked about whether some of the small schools with the higher proportions of non-local children are actually needed if there isn't sufficient demand for places in their immediate locality. The analysis will be made available to the relevant task and finish group which looks at small schools funding.

Also circulated to the meeting was a letter from the Minister of State for Schools, David Laws MP in response to an enquiry from Jason McCartney, MP for the Colne Valley, about the funding for Holme J & I School. The letter, although dated 17th July, had only recently been copied to the authority. It refers mainly to the new sparsity factor as being the way to support small schools where the distance a pupil would have to travel to their next nearest school would be unacceptably long. The letter does go on to say that Kirklees would not generally be viewed as having a scattered population and have a need to introduce a sparsity funding factor. But it also points out that there may be exceptional reasons why a school's nearest neighbour is deemed to be inaccessible and that it is possible to apply to the Secretary of State to treat that individual school as 'sparse'. [It is too late now to submit such an application as the deadline was 30th September 2013]. The potential to have differential lump sum values between primary and secondary schools was also cited as another way to support successful small schools. The letter will also be made available to the relevant task and finish group.

7. School Funding Reform: arrangements and changes for 2014-15: initial submission to EFA – feedback from Heads Group meetings

Today is the last Schools Forum meeting before the 31st October deadline for submission of the draft 2014-15 schools funding pro forma to the Education Funding Agency. The shape of the submission in terms of chosen formula factors and de-delegation of some budgets needs to be agreed today. The unit values attached to those factors will then need to be confirmed within the final 2014-15 EFA return due by 21st January 2014. Cabinet is due to consider the changes for 2014-15 on 22nd October and a report has been drafted to be published on Monday next week. The report will be updated to incorporate any recommendations agreed today.

Summary presentations were circulated to permit comparisons between the operation of the actual formula in funding year 2013-14 and the changes to be implemented for funding year 2014-15. All the figures are still based upon the government's October 2012 data set unless that has been specifically amended in respect of certain factors, eg secondary low prior attainment. The new data set from the October 2013 census will be available from a date in December and will inform the actual 2014-15 funding allocations.

The main changes already incorporated within the draft 2014-15 formula summary are: -

- The **new delegation** Age-Weighted Pupil Unit funding in 13-14 has been merged with the main AWPU budget to form a new base position for 14-15.
- In 2013-14 the authority was required to deduct from the number on roll, at relevant schools, the numbers of pupils attending their Specialist Provision (these pupils are funded by the High Needs block rather than the Schools block of funding). For 2014-15 we are required to **deduct the number of Specialist places** rather than the actual number of pupils occupying available places. Using the agreed place numbers for 2013-14 means 185 "pupils" are

deducted rather than the 122 pupils actually deducted in 2013-14. This would result in a fall in the Schools Funding Block by around £301,000. The authority has to declare the number of Specialist Provision places to be set for 2014-15 in a return to the EFA in December, so the deduction level could change again for the live Formula calculation.

- The draft 14-15 Formula summary shows a sum of £182,000 against “**Lump Sum (merged schools)**”. This covers two merged primary schools – Westmoor Primary (formed from the technical merger of Knowles Hill I & N and Westmoor Junior Schools in 2013-14 and Brownhill CE(VC) Primary (to be formed from Brownhill Infant and Brownhill St Saviour’s CE(VC) Junior schools coming together at 1/4/14). Each new school will receive a transitional support allocation of £91,000 in 2014-15. This is derived from taking 85% of the two previous lump sum allocations and deducting the continuing single lump sum for the merged school, ie (2 x £130,00 x 85%) less £130,000. [A decision from the Secretary of State is still awaited about whether Westmoor Primary can be treated as a merged school].
- The remaining factor budgets have all been updated to reflect changes going into 2014-15. The **split site** budget has been reduced in line with Westborough High School using just its original site from Summer next year. **Business Rates** allocations have been updated to reflect actual 13-14 bills rather than estimates and the **premises rental** budget now reflects a small increase in the numbers of rented modular buildings from September 2013.
- The above changes have slightly altered the **primary: secondary per pupil funding ratio** from 1:1.2533 to 1:1.2516. The outcome could be significantly different when the new data set is used to distribute the funding and this will need to be considered by the Schools Forum at the appropriate time. When the **new Private Finance Initiative (PFI) ‘affordability gap’ funding** of £1.54m is added from the Council budget into the allocations of the 19 PPP1 schools / academies the primary: secondary ratio on the bottom line is further distorted.
- The **AWPU values** have had to be reduced very slightly to pay for increases in other factors – the merged school lump sum protections and the premises rental factor. (This might not actually be necessary in the live 2014-15 allocation).
- The **de-delegation** amounts per pupil have reduced from 2013-14 levels due to the phased withdrawal of Nurture Group funding for a small number of primary schools – only one third of their previous funding level will be added to their allocation in 2014-15 rather than the current two thirds.
- The unit value of the **Secondary low prior attainment factor** reduces from £2,506.89 to £1,126.18 in response to the change in how secondary LPA will be measured in the government data set. Counting children falling behind in English or Maths (rather than in both subjects) more than doubles the identified numbers. The fall in unit value stems from application of the existing level of budget to the higher number of pupils in the data set.

Due to the imposition of a 10% threshold within the **Pupil Mobility factor**, the number of schools that would score against this factor has dramatically reduced to the extent that it is felt to be no longer practicable to maintain the factor within the funding formula. In 2013-14 only the primary sector had a pupil mobility factor. The Schools Forum was asked to consider where to re-direct the £491k mobility factor budget. The schools with the highest pupil mobility rates are often those which serve communities with high levels of socio-economic deprivation. It would make sense, therefore, to retain a deprivation-led focus for the displaced funding.

Agreed: that the £491k be added to the Primary IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) factor budget for 2014-15 allocations

The only remaining issue is whether to establish a **Falling Rolls Fund** to support good or outstanding schools which experience a temporary drop in pupil numbers. The fund would be

used to preserve capacity in such schools until the numbers recovered (which would have to be within three funding periods at a maximum). It is not clear what would happen though if a school slipped below the Ofsted category of 'good' whilst in receipt of Falling Rolls Fund support.

To assist the debate, a table was circulated showing projected student numbers for the next six years for a number of local high schools (school names were not supplied). The table illustrated how numbers are expected to fall over the next three or so years, to varying degrees, to then recover thereafter. One of the projected falls is negligible but the others will have a significant impact upon the school's funding level.

It was agreed that the issue requires further consideration, including some explanation of how the fund would operate and how much funding would need to be diverted for the purpose. For the October EFA return, officers will look to declare an intention to have a Falling Rolls Fund but will not actually put a value against it yet. In this way a value of £0 could be chosen for the final return if it is decided not to operate such a fund following further discussions.

8. Future meetings of the Kirklees Schools Forum 2013-14

- 13th December 2013
- 28th March 2014
- 11th July 2014

9. Any other business

9.1 Dedicated Schools Grant 2013-14 final allocation

The meeting considered a briefing paper setting out the final picture of Kirklees' Dedicated Schools Grant allocation for funding year 2013-14. The funding allocations made to schools in 2013-14 were made in full knowledge of this final DSG figure. The final figure included additional funding for specific purposes - £4.3m to fund extra childcare places for disadvantaged 2 year olds, an extra £89k to reflect the transfer to schools of the statutory duty to provide induction training to newly-qualified teachers and an extra £122k for a planned increase to the number of special school places in Kirklees. In addition to these amounts there was a further overall rise in DSG compared to the working figure used. These new funds were added into the High Needs block to deal with identified shortfalls in the threshold costs transfer for special schools and in the SEN Contingency.

The Schools Forum noted the final DSG amounts allocated to the three funding blocks – Schools block, Early Years block and the High Needs block.