

THE KIRKLEES SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING

held on Friday 13th December 2013

9:30am at the Deighton Centre

Present:

Kirsten Luff	Nursery School Heads (1)
Michelle Lee [Chair], Jane Richardson, Tim Scargill, Simon Sloan, Diana Wilson	Primary School Heads (6)
Gary Johnson	Middle School Heads (1)
Ian Ellam, Kevin Higgins	High School Heads (2)
	Special School Heads (1)
Jo-Anne Atkinson, Mike Cook	Academy Heads (2)
Martin Ridge	Pupil Referral Units (1)
	Kirklees Governors (1)
Jo Bailey-Taylor (NASUWT), Hazel Danson (NUT), Sarah Ellis (pre-School Learning Alliance), Alison Whiteley (ATL)	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, Loz Wilson	Observers

1. Membership 2013/14

An updated Kirklees Schools Forum membership list was included with today's agenda papers. John McNally has withdrawn from the Schools Forum representation so a replacement Academy representative needs to be elected. It was also noted that Alison Whiteley is to share representation of the ATL with Gillian Collins.

It was also noted that the role of Schools Forum vice-Chair needs to be filled. As the position of Chair has been filled by a representative from the primary sector, for the purposes of balance, practice has dictated that the vice-Chair should come from the secondary sector. Secondary colleagues were asked to consider nominations from amongst their ranks for the position.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Carole Hardern (Group Finance Manager) and David Smith (Director of Resources).

3. Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 11th October

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

4. Matters arising from the Schools Forum meeting 11th October

No matters were raised.

5. School Funding Reform: arrangements and changes for 2014-15 submission to the Education Funding Agency

The Education Funding Agency had indicated that the new data set to govern 2014-15 funding allocations would be made available to local authorities on 10th December. However, as of this morning, it had still not been issued. This means that items 4 and 5 on today's agenda cannot now be considered. However, there can be no shift in the timescale for getting local political approval of the 2014-15 schools block formula to fit in

with the EFA response deadline of 21st January 2014. To satisfy the requirement to consult the Schools Forum about the shape of those funding arrangements, an extra ‘emergency’ meeting needs to be arranged. Following discussions this was set for 8:30am on Thursday 19th December as a single agenda item meeting.

5.1 Proposed formula to support disproportionate SEN numbers

The Schools Forum considered a proposal to create a protocol for identifying schools which are under financial pressure because of a mismatch between their funding responsibility for High Needs pupils and the funding they receive to support those pupils. A formula-based support allocation would be made to such schools providing certain conditions are met. The methodology has evolved following further review of Kirklees’ Notional SEN budget position.

5.1.1 The Kirklees notional SEN budget

For 2013-14 the authority had declared 100% of its Low Prior Attainment factor budget as being its notional SEN budget. Benchmarking of this position has revealed that Kirklees is out of step with how the vast majority of authorities view the composition of their notional SEN provision. Most have declared proportions of several schools block funding factors as being SEN-related. Starting from an assumption of roughly 2% of Kirklees children having a formal Statement of Need, a constant cash amount within the age-weighted pupil unit has been determined as SEN-related. Proportions of other support factors have also been used, reflecting general practice amongst other local authorities. The proposed notional SEN budget declaration for 2014-15 is shown below.

Primary Age-Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU)	3.34%
KS3 AWPU	2.34%
KS4 AWPU	1.90%
English as an Additional Language	20.00%
Deprivation factors	25.00%
Low Prior Attainment	75.00%

When the above percentages are applied to 2013-14 funding allocations they produce an overall notional SEN budget of around 10% of the Schools Block. This would place Kirklees at slightly higher than the derived national average SEN proportionate budget of 9%.

It was asked why the percentages of AWPU were so low when the authority used to declare a larger percentage as being SEN-related. There is a significant difference between what the old AWPU structure was intended to fund and what the current AWPU covers under the recent funding reforms – the majority of previous premises funding, for example, has been added into the AWPU. It would not be appropriate to count any of this element of the AWPU as being notionally SEN. The percentages of AWPU above were derived from an assumption that 2% of Kirklees pupils have a formal statement of need.

5.1.2 SEN disproportionality support funding

The notional SEN budget picture will be reflected within the SEN disproportionality support funding mechanism.

Schools will be identified as having a potential SEN disproportionality issue if...

- **The number of their SEN statement children accounts for more than 2% of their total number on roll AND...**
- **The school’s notional SEN budget “allocation” amounts to less than 80% of the sum derived by multiplying their number of SEN statement children by the maximum £6,000 expected school contribution.**

- **Small primary schools with fewer than 106 pupils on roll will also automatically be scrutinised for SEN affordability problems.**

Once a school is “flagged” as having a potential issue, the next stage would be for the SEN Assessment & Commissioning Team to check the High Needs top-up allocations to that school to ensure that they accurately reflect the current needs of the pupils. The relevant Schools Budget Officer would then work with their flagged (maintained) schools to determine whether the school has a budget problem or not and whether that problem is due to SEN pressure. Flagged academies would also be contacted and would need to provide details of their budget plan to evidence any financial difficulty.

Should the above process confirm the need for additional funding support, then a formula basis to determine the amount will be applied. An example was provided in the briefing paper: -

A school has a notional SEN budget of £47,523 and 11 SEN statement children on roll with an expectation that its budget will support the first £6,000 of additional cost for each pupil, ie £66,000. The disproportionality allocation, if proven to be fully needed, would be based on £66,000 - £47,523 = £18,477, rounded down to the nearest multiple of £6,000, ie £18,000.

It is not known whether the cost of future SEN disproportionality allocations will be able to be accommodated within the existing High Needs funding block budget. Officers intend to monitor the situation closely during the year.

Two primary schools had fed comments back to their Schools Forum representatives by e-mail. One is a small school trying to manage the costs of their existing SEN pupils and working with the SEN Team to suggest that the school would not be an appropriate placement for additional SEN children. The other school talked about the problems caused by three SEN children being admitted after they had set their budget plan for the year. The SEN disproportionality support funding approach would help both these schools if their budget situation merits.

There was general welcome for the proposal and the new methodology was agreed.

5.2 Proposed Falling Rolls Fund

The meeting considered a paper which set out how a Falling Rolls Fund arrangement might operate. The paper had been to a Kirklees High School Heads meeting and emailed to primary heads. KHSH had raised no objections to the proposal to create a Falling Rolls Fund from 2014-15. The paper provided (fictitious) examples of four secondary schools each experiencing a fall in pupil numbers to differing degrees. The example tables showed how the number on roll fluctuations would affect the numbers of class “groups” in each year group over time.

The Fund can only be used to support schools with a ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ judgement at their last Ofsted inspection and in circumstances where the fall in roll is projected to reverse within three funding years at maximum. The aim is to help the school retain good staff during the short-term dip in pupil numbers.

In the examples provided one school would not qualify because the falling roll trend does not turn around, whilst in another school the projected recovery begins beyond the three-year limit. The other two example schools could trigger some short-term support from the Falling Rolls Fund. This would, however, depend upon the financial circumstances of the individual school – there would be an expectation that the school should first of all look to use its reserves to manage the situation. The Falling Rolls Fund would only be used in cases where the school could not afford from its own resources to manage the situation. An illustration was also given showing the timing of potential support input over the period of the pupil number dip.

Falling rolls are currently more of an issue within the secondary sector. Numbers in the primary sector are generally increasing at the moment. The Falling Rolls Fund has some symmetry with the Pupil Growth Fund, which has much more of a primary focus to address the effects of the current increased demand for primary school places. It is difficult, in advance of the provision being created, to estimate how much money should be set aside to establish a Falling Rolls Fund. A sum of up to £0.5m was proposed in the paper with any unused funds automatically being returned to the DSG the year after.

There were several comments made about the proposal.

It was suggested that schools can be unrealistically optimistic about prospects for recovery from a dip in numbers. However, school planning data would be used to either confirm or challenge a school's views on projected numbers.

There was some question as to whether the assumption of notional KS3 group sizes of 25 and KS4 group sizes 20 was representative of practice amongst schools – but it does at least build a consistency of approach into the proposed methodology.

The Chair reported some schools' concerns about how decisions would be scrutinised – all prospective allocations from the Fund will be reported to the Schools Forum for consideration (as happens with the Pupil Growth Fund).

It was said that the Fund should be balanced against strategic school organisation decisions and not used to delay / put off any necessary structural actions.

Is it fair to ask schools to commit their reserves before support funding can be considered? The approach is consistent with that recommended by the EFA for the operation of the Pupil Growth Fund. As such funds are created by top-slicing funding from all schools / academies, there is a responsibility to ensure that support is only given to those that need it. It would therefore be unfair to allocate additional funding to schools with access to reserves.

What happens if a school's Ofsted classification drops below 'good' during a period of agreed support? The assumption is that support funding would be withdrawn from that point? Similarly, a school might become eligible for support if they attained the 'good' classification.

The proposal to create a Falling Rolls Fund of up to £0.5m was agreed.
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6. Schools Forums: Operational and Good Practice Guide

Schools Forum members were reminded to read through the operational and good practice guide and consider whether there are any changes that could be made to improve the arrangements in Kirklees. This will be an agenda item for the 28th March meeting.

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

- **28th March 2014** - It was reported that Andy Humphries from the Education Funding Agency will be attending this meeting as an observer. Schools Forum members were reminded that the agenda papers for the meeting will be placed on the Kirklees website by the Monday of that week and minutes from previous Schools Forum meetings are also available there.
- **11th July 2014**

8. Any other business

No other business was raised.