

SCHOOLS FINANCE GROUP on 11 September 2019 at Great Moor House

ISSUES FOR DEF ON 20 NOVEMBER 2019

Item 2	SEND Invest to Save Projects – allocation of identified underspend (re.DEF minute 107-iv) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SFG endorsed the proposed allocations of funding to six successful projects following an evaluation process by an independent Panel of SEN Officers during the summer.
Item 3	High Needs Block <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SFG recommended a shift in terminology and language used to describe the current financial pressure within the High Needs Block as a fundamental shortfall in high needs funding, rather than a deficit or overspend. SFG recommended that Headteachers be asked to ensure that if requests for statutory SEN assessments submitted late in summer term are accompanied by an undertaking from the school for an appropriate member of staff to be available during the summer break to respond to consultation requests and enquiries from the 0-25 team.

SCHOOLS FINANCE GROUP
Notes of meeting
on 11 September 2019 at Great Moor House

		Attendance		
		11/9/19	17/7/19	5/6/19
DCC				
Adrian Fox (Chair)	Head Accountant (E&L)	✓	✓	✓
Dawn Stabb	Head of Education & Learning	✓	part	part
Julia Foster	Senior Manager SEND	✓	✓	✓
Ancilla McKenna	Senior Accountant (Schools)	✓	✓	✓
Heidi Watson-Jones	Service Support Officer (E&L)	✓	✓	✓
DAPH				
Jonathan Bishop	Cornerstone Academy	✓	Apologies	✓
Alun Dobson	Marwood Primary	✓	✓	✓
Jamie Stone	Denbury Primary	✓	✓	✓
Paul Walker	First Federation	✓	✓	✓
Penny Hammett	Fort Federation		✓	
DASH				
Daryll Chapman	Dartmoor MAT	✓	✓	✓
Lorraine Heath	Uffculme Academy Trust	✓	✓	✓
Matthew Shanks	Education South West	✓	✓	Apologies
Sammy Crook	Tiverton High School	✓	✓	
Andrew Davies	Exmouth Community College	✓		
Julie Phelan	Cullompton Community College			✓
SHAD				
Keith Bennett	Marland School	Apologies	✓	✓
Jacqui Warne	Learn to Live Federation		Apologies	✓
DAG				
Faith Butler	Special	✓	✓	✓
Malcolm Dobbins	Primary	Apologies	✓	✓
Alex Walmsley	Secondary	✓	✓	✓
EY Providers				
Lydia Wright	Early Years – PVI providers	✓	✓	✓
In Attendance				
Katrina Harverson	Senior Accountant (E&L)	✓		

1. Item/Focus: Minutes and Matters Arising from meeting on 17 July 2019

Discussion:

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Key Decision/Issues for DEF: Minutes agreed as an accurate record.

Action: •

2. Item/Focus: SEND Invest to Save Project bids

Discussion:

- Julia Foster had led an evaluation Panel of SEN officers to consider bids submitted. SFG extended thanks to the team involved for this time-consuming task.
- The Panel had agreed evaluation and scoring criteria around the funding being used to promote system-wide SEN practice change, decreasing statutory assessment requests and

<p>reducing the number of children moving from mainstream schools, earlier intervention for SEN children and addressing SEMH and SLC needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £156k available; six appropriate projects were identified and recommended for funding. • SFG agreed that the evaluation process was thorough and endorsed the recommendations. • Agreed that consolidating learning through project case studies would be important to ensure that a positive difference can be identified and disseminated more widely. Agreed that SEN officers should continue to be involved in the analysis of the changes. • SFG agreed that the SEND Improvement Board would oversee the project analysis and reporting. • 	
Key Decision/Issues for DEF:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFG endorsed allocation of bid funding to the projects identified, as recommended by SEND Panel • £154k allocated, with £2k remaining which the group agreed would be used to manage the analysis and monitoring process • SFG agreed that successful bids would be required to produce feedback through case studies to SEND Improvement Board.
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JF/HWJ to notify the bidders of the agreed outcomes. • SEND Improvement Board (JF) to monitor the case studies and practice change.

3. Item/Focus: High Needs Block Update

Discussion:

- Only 4 vacant maintained special school places currently available for the 2019/2020 academic year. Looking corporately and internally within SEN about possible strategies for increasing provision.
- Corporate capital bid for £15m has been accepted for consideration (first stage) to create 300 additional places in the expansion of Devon's special schools, as identified within the SEN strategic review. This includes increasing capacity in maintained specials schools, plus another special school through free school wave (if announced by DfE) or consideration for DCC funding for presumption. Each Devon special school site has already been visited to identify best use and possibilities for additional capacity.
- Headteacher Board meeting 15/9 to consider development of SEN satellite provision through ACE. *Date confirmed post SFG – was believed to be held on 11/9.*
- Need to manage demands for HNB alongside demands for children to be placed in a specialist provider; a noticeable increase in independent provision fees has been identified for the current academic year. Suggested that a DEF discussion on this situation may be helpful.
- SFG suggested that high profile /high cost cases continue to be monitored and notified to f40 as further evidence.
- Noted that additional funding has been committed nationally to more timely management of autism diagnosis through CCG.
- Noted increase in parental requests for placement in mainstream independent schools, with tribunal rulings usually in favour of the placement. Quality Assurance monitoring for all of these settings is in place through SEN team, alongside a contractual agreement with the LA.
- Noted requests have been received for Year 11 learners to move back to DCC mainstream secondaries for exams following a placement in an independent mainstream school.
- Noted significant increase in number of requests for EHCPs received by the SEN team in July, increasing anxiety for parents as we are not able to obtain information and putting significant pressure on LA corporate timeliness statistics as schools are unavailable during school holiday to provide further evidence. Heads suggested that requests submitted at this time should be accompanied by an undertaking from the school to respond during the summer. Raised parental expectations can be difficult for the team to manage, as new school placements can normally not be made until the 20-week assessment is completed and parents are anxious about September start dates. SFG suggested that issues are sometimes identified late in the summer term following secondary school transition taster days.
- Noted that recent Government announced SEN Review will maintain a focus on the parental involvement in co-production of statutory plans.
- Early Help and SEN survey extended, with 1000 responses already received. Heads were asked to ensure that all school staff and Governors are asked to complete, providing a baseline for

<p>Written Statement of Action monitoring by Ofsted. The survey can be completed here. Online training to be issued shortly, which all school staff and Governors should be asked to complete when launched.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Action continues to be a focus, with ongoing close working with Adult services for appropriate management of Plans post-18. • A fundamental shortfall in funding now exists between what the LA is statutorily required to provide for high needs learners, and the funding provided to the local authority. A change in terminology is needed to recognise that the HNB deficit cannot be curtailed through LA management action alone. DCC Members continue to lobby Government to highlight this issue and to request additional and appropriate funding levels for Devon children. Creation of 300 additional special school places will enable the LA to avoid the placement of learners in the costly independent sector. LA is clear that SEND provision to learners in Devon has not been reduced, in spite of increasing pressures. • Legal processes are also impacting on parental action and expectation of success in securing a specialist placement through the introduction of EHCPs. • Adrian Fox updated SFG on recent DfE announcement for school funding. Noted this did not include any detail around capital funding, which could better enable the LA to provide new special schools. • Schools funding settlement normally expected December. 	
Key Decision/Issues for DEF:	Report noted SFG agreed that terminology used would move from 'overspend' to 'shortfall in high needs funding' to more accurately reflect the current HNB situation.
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JF to look at which year groups children are moving to independent mainstream provision. • JF to look at learner profile for late summer statutory assessment requests received by the team, and whether these were school or parental requests. • Heads to be asked to ensure EHCP assessment requests submitted at the end of the summer term are accompanied by an undertaking from the school to respond to enquiries during the summer. • Heads requested to ask all school staff to complete the Early Help and SEN survey, as circulated recently by Dawn Stabb. • DS to reiterate messages about the implications of the SEND funding gap to all Devon headteachers to improve understanding of the situation.
4. Item/Focus: DSG Monitoring - Month 4	
<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted DSG overspend of £12.3m projected, after allowing for £3.5m from reserves. • Trades Union budget line was discussed; noted some confusion and backlog of timesheet processing for union representatives. AF Looking into processes to inform de-delegation proposals for 2020/21. • Noted AP overspend predominantly relates to education placements of medical students. • Considered the increase in funding required to appropriately keep SEN learners in mainstream, mainly due to the increase in the number of learners with EHCP and the allocation of Plus Packages. • Independent sector placements continue to increase during the autumn term. • Considered ESFA funding adjustment for import and export of placements in other LAs; ESFA data assumptions have been challenged by DCC Finance. • Discussed support centre provision. Noted Tavistock CAIRB gave LA formal notice of closure last year. New provision to be developed in Exmouth will focus on SEMH needs, the SEMH support model will be tested with a view to further roll out if appropriate, and dependent on capital funding being available. • Noted no further updates yet received from ESFA on HNB management strategies. 	
Key Decision/Issues for DEF:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report noted
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF to provide information on allocation and cost of Plus Packages over last academic year.

5. Item/Focus: Split Site Funding

Discussion:

- Interests declared by Paul Walker and Alex Walmsley who left the meeting for this item.
- DfE amendment was requested by a MAT re. local funding criteria for split site funding, which ESFA referred back to Schools Forum for decision.
- Local complexities at Sidmouth Primary, (currently operating across 3 sites with a total of 519 pupils), have resulted in a one-off split site funding request (£90k) for the coming financial year, while decisions around a reduction in PAN are being considered by DfE. The LA have considered that the current PAN is required to provide sufficient school places for local children.
- Data on key stage class sizes and staffing across sites has been carefully considered by LA finance officers and the Head of Education and Learning.
- SFG considered that as the school is part of a large MAT, support should therefore be available from across the wider trust and not specifically found within the single school's resources, especially if this is a short-term issue. SFG enquired whether the wider MAT had been approached for support.
- The three sites have created pressures through the necessity to duplicate key facilities/equipment at each site and costs relating to cleaning and caretaking, reception and mealtime staffing, KS1 teaching and leadership at each site.
- SFG noted the growth funding equivalent for a similar school is £49,450. There were concerns from Heads that if the request was to address an ongoing structural issue, this would indicate a need for a proposed change in local formula criteria, and that the MAT should be approached for a short-term arrangement.
- Dawn explained that the overall MAT surplus balance was not considered, however she felt that additional funding was required to facilitate the appropriate staffing and safeguarding of the children on roll. Comparison was drawn between the circumstances at Sidmouth Primary school and QE for whom an exceptional circumstance had previously been agreed which increased the split site funding significantly. (*sites significant distances apart, different key stages*)
- Following considerable discussion, SFG proposed that the request be rejected taking into consideration:
 - the existence of a clear split-site funding criteria,
 - the absence of short-term financial support from within the wider MAT, and
 - the precedent that this would set for other Devon schools who struggle to make complex management decisions around class structures and restrictions of their school buildings.

Key Decision/Issues for DEF:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFG recommended to DEF that, with regret, the request for additional split-site funding be rejected
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Action:	
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6. Item/Focus: Mutual Fund Board and appeals

Discussion:

- Stable surplus in the fund.

Key Decision/Issues for DEF:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report noted
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Action:	
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7. Item/Focus: Items for DEF finance update report

Discussion:

- Update on HNB and DSG
- SEN Invest to save projects evaluated, with case work
- Funding Gap / funding shortfall terminology change
- EHCP Requests submitted late summer will require contact details for consultation with SEN team during the Summer.

Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report noted
Action:	

Next meeting:

Wednesday 6 November 2019 (9.15 – 2pm) – at Great Moor House – Room M8b