

MINUTES OF DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 21st October, 2014 at 6.00 pm
at Saltwells Education Development Centre,
Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Mr L Ridney - Chair

Mrs R Wylie - Vice Chair

Mr K Bate, Mrs J Belcher, Mr J Conway, Mr C Derham, Mrs N Jones, Mr J Kelleher, Mr P Nesbitt, Mr B Oakley, Mr B Patterson, Ms P Rogers, Mrs H Ruffles, Mr N Shaw, Ms M Stowe and Mrs G Withers.

Person(s) not a member of the Forum but having an entitlement to attend meetings and speak

Councillor T Crumpton (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning), Councillor M Mottram (Chair of Children's Services Scrutiny Committee) and Ms P Sharratt (Interim Director of Children's Services)

Officers

Mr H Powell (Acting Assistant Director of Children's Services - Education Services), Mr A Kinsella (Senior Information Analyst), Mr A Trim (Information Analyst (Attainment)) (Directorate of Children's Services); Mrs K Cocker (Children's Services Finance Manager), Mrs S Coates (Senior Principal Accountant) and Miss H Shepherd (Democratic Services Officer), Directorate of Corporate Resources

29. Introductions by the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

30. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Mrs A Garratt, Mrs A Hannaway, Mr B Jones, Mr D Ward and Mr B Warren.

31. Substitute Member

It was noted that Ms M Stowe was serving as a substitute member on behalf of Mr B Jones for this meeting of the Forum only.

32. Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 23rd September, 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed.

33. Matters Arising from the Minutes

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

34. The Pupil Premium – Dudley's Data

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted and a presentation was given at the meeting in respect of Dudley's Pupil Premium data and closing the gap analysis.

The Senior Information Analyst gave a detailed presentation on the allocation of Pupil Premium funding and how Dudley compared with its national, statistical and geographical neighbours and details in relation to Pupil Premium attainment analysis from both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 pupils were provided.

The Senior Information Analyst stated that a quadrant chart had been developed so that schools attainment achievements could be monitored and to identify Schools in receipt of Pupil Premium funding that were not achieving compared to the national average. The chart was used to identify Schools of a similar size, with a similar number of disadvantaged children so that like for like schools would be able to work together to improve their achievements and learn from each other's practices.

In response to a question raised, the Acting Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) stated that currently only data analysis was available in relation to attainment but information could be obtained on the progression in attainment that Pupil Premium students were achieving for the future.

A Primary School Head teacher representative made a comment in relation to the number of pupil premium students that were also captured into other categories, specifically referring to Special Educational Needs, which impacted on performance achievements and varied year on year.

Arising from a question raised by a non-school member it was stated that there was no similar comparison available with national authorities on attainment as the data presented was a locally determined analysis.

In referring to the quadrant chart, members raised concerns in relation to the number of schools that were placed in zone four of the chart which highlighted schools with above the national average number of pupil premium pupils for whom attainment was below the national floor standard for key stage 2 and key stage 4 pupils.

A Secondary School Head teacher representative agreed that the results were concerning but it was considered that the last academic year had been difficult and challenging with the changes implied by central government and supported the analysis of information in relation to the progress of Pupil Premium students being provided in the future.

The Information Analyst (Attainment) then gave a presentation on 'closing the gap' which related to the attainment gap between vulnerable and non-vulnerable cohorts.

Following the presentation, the Acting Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) reminded forum members of the role of Schools Forum and the importance of members being aware of how Schools within Local Authority control were performing and the impact of funding decisions made by the forum in respect of Dudley schools. Similar reports would be submitted for future consideration along the same theme of school improvement.

Arising from a question raised by a non-school member, the Acting Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) stated that particular focus had been given to primary schools to ensure that all primary schools obtained a 'good' standard from Ofsted and that Primary School Head teachers had met to discuss what each school was doing in relation to pupil premium and what benefits were being achieved. Secondary Schools would now be addressed and discussion sessions would be arranged to consider what could be done to close the gap and to share good practices.

Concerns were raised by Members as to whether Pupil Premium funding was being used effectively by schools to ensure that the required standards were achieved.

Resolved

That the information contained in the report submitted, and presented at the meeting in respect of The Pupil Premium – Dudley’s Data, be noted.

35. Feedback on the Consultation on Allocation from Dudley’s Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve for 2015/16 and 2016/17

A report of the Interim Director of Children’s Services was submitted to provide consultation feedback in order for Members to approve a methodology to allocate a one-off funding of £4 million to schools from the Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve over a two year period 2015/16 and 2016/17. An updated copy of Appendix 1 to the report submitted highlighting a summary of all responses received in relation to the consultation was circulated to Members at the meeting to reflect the full consultation responses.

The Senior Principal Accountant stated that the Head Teachers Consultative Forum – Budget Working Group had considered a number of methods for the funding to be distributed and a recommendation was made for the allocation to be made via the Lump Sum Factor within Dudley’s School funding resource allocation formula. Two options for the allocation through the Lump Sum were proposed, as indicated in Table 1 of the report submitted.

The Senior Principal Accountant referred to each question of the consultation individually and members expressed their views and voted on their preferred proposal option as follows:

Question 1 Do you agree that any allocation from Dudley’s Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve for 2015/16 and 2016/17 be allocated through the Lump Sum factor within the Dudley School funding resources allocation formula?

Decision: All Members present at the meeting and eligible to vote agreed with the proposal.

Question 2 Option 1: £18,500 for all schools

Decision: No member present at the meeting voted in favour of this proposal.

Option 2: £14,000 for mainstream primary schools, special schools, PRU's and maintained nursery school and £38,500 for mainstream secondary schools

Decision: All members present at the meeting and eligible to vote agreed with the proposal.

Resolved

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted and as circulated at the meeting in relation to the consultation on the allocation from Dudley's Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve for 2015/16 and 2016/17, be noted.
- (2) That the views and comments of the forum members as referred to above be taken into consideration by the Interim Director of Children's Services when implementing the arrangements for the allocation of £4 million from the Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve over the 2015/16 and 2016/17 financial years.

36. Schools Revenue Funding Arrangements in 2015/16 – Growth Fund

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on the proposed criteria and methodology to be applied in respect of the allocation of funding to schools from a centrally retained Growth Fund Contingency in 2015/16.

The Senior Principal Accountant referred to the increased pressures and demands for Primary School places and stated that it was expected that there would be an increase in Primary School population of approximately 400 pupils in September 2015. Some contingencies to accommodate the additional pupils had been arranged and a number of Primary Schools had created additional places to meet the demands, however concerns had been raised in relation to the allocation of Individual Schools Budget funding as this was based on the number of pupils in School at the previous October School Census and therefore there would be a delay between admitting pupils at the start of an academic year and receiving funding for the additional pupils by the school's affected.

It was considered that a contingency fund should be made available to support the Schools that satisfy the eligibility criteria and admit additional pupils from September 2015. It was proposed that this funding would be allocated from the Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve and not from a top slice of local schools budgets during the 2015/16 financial year.

The Senior Principal Accountant referred to the proposed criteria and methodology, as outlined in table 1 of the report submitted, that would be applied when allocating the funding and stated that the allocation would be for the period of September to March for maintained schools and September to August for Academies as they were funded on an academic year basis.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report submitted be noted.
- (2) That the proposals made by the Interim Director of Children's Services to create a Growth Fund for 2015/16 and the criteria and methodology as outlined in table 1 of the report now submitted, be approved.

37. DfE Section 251 Planned Expenditure Benchmarking Data for 2014/15

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted in respect of the DfE's national Section 251 statistical benchmarking data relating to planned expenditure for the financial year 2014/15.

The Children's Services Finance Manager presented the report and made particular reference to data included in appendices 1 to 3 of the report submitted.

Following the presentation of the report, a Primary School Head teacher raised an issue in relation to Appendix 2a and Dudley's excessive figure in column 25 for Central expenditure on children under 5, in comparison to its statistical neighbours. The Children's Services Finance Manager stated that Dudley's figure incorporated the funding received for the early education of 2 year olds allocated to the authority, which was recorded as advised by the DfE to be held centrally until allocated, which explained the high figure and it could only be assumed that other Authorities had dealt with their funding in a different manner.

Resolved

That the information contained in the report and the appendices to the report submitted in relation to the DfE Section 251 Planned Expenditure Benchmarking Data for 2014/15, be noted.

38. Effective Schools Forum

A report of the interim Director of Children's Services was submitted in respect of Section 2 – Effective Schools Forum of the Education Funding Agency's operational and good practice guide, a copy of which was re-circulated to Members as appendix 1 to the report now submitted.

Resolved

That the information contained in the report and the appendix to the report submitted in respect of an effective schools forum, be noted.

39. Other Business

A Secondary School Governor representative requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting of Dudley Schools Forum in relation to the Universal Free School Meals initiative that had been operational since September 2014 and requested details on how the £860,000 capital funding allocated to the authority to support the implementation of the initiative had been spent and if the local authority had exceeded the funding amount provided how this would be addressed.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm.

CHAIR