

SCHOOLS MANAGEMENT FORUM

NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON Wednesday 13th November 2019, 8:15am at Acklam Grange School Community Learning Centre.

ATTENDED:

Andrea Crawshaw	Chair / Acklam Grange School
Judy Libbey	Head of Resources and SEN – Middlesbrough Council
Dianne Nielsen	Senior Accountant – Middlesbrough Council
Trevor Dunn	Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision - Middlesbrough Council
Andrea Williams	Director of Education – Middlesbrough Council
William Guthrie	PVI
Afzal Khushi	PVI
Beverley Hewitt-Best	Newham Bridge Primary School
Sarah Lymer	Linthorpe Primary School
Helen Malbon	Viewley Hill Primary School
Adam Cooper	Abingdon Primary School
Emma Watson	
Jackie Walsh	
Julia Smith	
Helen Steele	
Nicola Russell	Observer
Jackie	
Amy Bailey	
Tracey	
Samantha Corbyn	Minute Taker – Middlesbrough Council

1. Apologies for absence

Leanne Chilton, RTMAT / Mary Brindle, Macmillan Academy / Anita Jeffries, Archibald Primary School / Craig Povey, Finance and Business Partner / Chris Wain, Park End Primary School / Amy Young

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting / Matters Arising

Raised that newly elected councillors do not understand legalities surrounding school admissions process. Several councillors have tried to enact decisions. AW reassured that information and possible training will be passed on to new councillors.

3. **Decision / Action Log**

School Improvements

Costings of MAP between September and March, income from SLA and bids from TVCA have been requested. Costing for staff between September and March are £57,500. Steve Munby cost £3000 for the whole of last year. AW believes this is generous considering the number of meetings he attends. Steve Munby has agreed to forgo costs of the upcoming year and give his time for free. It is likely he will reconsider his position in September 2020.

DN has spoken to Andy Evans (IT) who stated that IT Charges have been agreed with head teachers from July 2019. All schools should have received billing.

4. **Voting Rights Cards**

SC to create voting cards and supply at next meeting.

5. **Primary Heads Questions**

Funding Blocks and De-delegation

De-delegation only applies to maintained schools, ~~is available for~~ it is for primary forum members of maintained schools to vote on ~~in~~ with regards to whether they would like to continue with Local Authority services. Services can be offered to academies as buy-back. Areas of de-delegation are highlighted in the submitted report.

FSM Eligibility FSM Ever 6 is for the free school meal checking service administered by Middlesbrough BC. Income from de-delegation pays for the FSM checking service.

Liquid Logic will be reviewed on an annual basis and de-delegation will be discussed.

HM raised that schools have their own information management systems that they pay for and are also being charged for Liquid Logic which is a Preventions system. It is not understood why schools are paying for other departments tools. TD explained that Liquid Logic is a Social Care IT system and is used to record interventions. Virtual School, SEND and other services within the Local Authority access this system.

LCS is historically kept in the budget. This will be reviewed however, all academies would need to buy-back to keep the system fair.

Commented [DN1]: From highlights to highlighted

AW understands that some schools do not pay for the service as they have not bought in. Schools part-fund the system to support Social Care and Preventions. HM challenged this stating that schools also support preventions with the Early Help work already carried out in schools. AW suggested that a representative from financing attends the SMF to provide clarity on this issue.

Chair noted that clarity is needed about what the service provides and that it would be helpful for someone to attend the next meeting and explain. It is advisable to pool resources however a reasonable rate needs to be accepted. Item to be tabled for next SMF.

Central Services Block

The Central Services Block has reduced from £1.5m to £335,400. The Local Authority has continued to provide services up to the former value of ESG. These services are provided regardless of academy or maintained status.

HB raised that there was a distinction between academies and maintained schools when the budget was ESG. DN confirmed that when the ESG grant was withdrawn, the element regarding the responsibilities for all schools was put in to the CSSB block of the DSG.

Education Welfare, asset management and statutory duties – this is related to the education department and not connected to school. The Local Authority has a duty to provide certain elements such as HOS and Directors which is not a direct cost to schools. The central services block pays for this.

The forum would like a little more clarification of what statutory and regulatory duties are. A run-down of statutory and regulatory duties will be provided to the meeting.

HB is unsure what overheads pay for. Can this be used for staffing? There is currently insufficient funding from fines and the Local Authority cover this. There are 2 posts funded by fines, one permanent and one under annual review.

6. DSG Understanding

3 DSG is a ring fences grant split over four blocks:

- Schools Block
- Central Services Block
- High Needs Block
- Early Years Block

Schools block is funding for schools. Any transfers from the ~~Nothing is taken from the schools block~~ requires without agreement from SMF. Funding through schools is LAG based and the allocation coming through is based on the ~~previous~~ October census. It is vital that the census is submitted as accurately as possible. ~~Universal and free school meals are based on January census.~~

To give an example, DN advised that schools may miss ~~have~~ missed out on funding due to incorrect recording of students who have English as a second language. This can be as a result of parents not wanting to share that their children speak English as a second language. No adjustment can be made if incorrect data is submitted by schools.

TD added that it is worth looking out for children that were previously LAC, adopted and SEND children to allow for the full Pupil Premium Plus to be paid into school budgets.

Schools have been notified of indicative notification from DFE. There are very little parameters for this and the hard formula has not yet been implemented.

~~4.2~~ Central Services Block - This is based on pound per pupil and includes historical duties that Local Authority have carried out. A reduction in this block will begin in 2021 of 20%. The Central Schools Services block is paid to LA's to cover statutory duties the authority has for schools.

High Needs Block – provides additional funding for High Needs and SEN. This block is additional to funding schools receive with the school budget share for SEN.

Early Years block ~~covers 2 and 3 year olds.~~ – funds universal free entitlement and qualifying 30 hours entitlement for 3 & 4 year olds. 15 hours funding for qualifying 2 year olds, EY pupil premium and disables access.

AC would like a summary of requirements prior to the January 2020 subgroup. Increases need to be factored in. It is proposed that a report be sent to schools before Christmas holidays.

7. **Growth Fund**

The DFE has recommended that a growth fund is in place to support with the 2020 intake. The principles behind growth fund should be read to clarify how it will be applied. .

AW discussed the previous lack of growth fund. Data received on pupil projections was accurate however was not reflected well in the

2019 intake. Middlesbrough Council funded £1 million for 92 places. Central Middlesbrough is not under as much pressure.

JPH discussed setting money aside to support with international arrivals. Families choose to settle in Middlesbrough as a result of cheap housing. It was raised that Middlesbrough Council received monetary incentives to accommodate international new arrivals. AW was not aware of any funding received in regards to the economic migrant community. The Local Authority receive funding for asylum seekers and refugees which covers their costings and is not an income generating factor.

Guidance in regards to the growth fund is strict and is to meet need in terms of planned places and not choice.

~~There needs to be clarification of the growth fund in terms of delegation in pounds per pupil as this will not be the same for every school.~~

The Growth Fund is funded by the school's block and cannot be taken from central or offset from any other funding block. The Growth Fund covers both primary and secondary schools but is aimed at year 7 as this is the problem cohort.

The indicative growth fund budget allocation requested is £300,000. Schools approved the Growth Fund criteria. The decision is very time sensitive, allocations need to be discussed according relevant data. DN advised that the Growth Fund is agreed on a year on year basis. It is likely that a Growth Fund will be needed by 2021. ~~There~~ is A new school to open at Riverside which will offer around 200 places.

TD discussed that schools will admit children in any event. If schools are short of places next year there will be a similar situation. It is no one's fault. Appeals panel stated that places could not be funded by the growth fund anyway. There is a difficult in schools being unable to refuse appealed places. It is not appropriate to await the outcome of appeals.

JPH discussed awaiting the census so that the mobility of pupils is better understood.

AC raised concerns around the lack of a Middlesbrough Appeals Panel. It is beneficial to say that an objective Local Authority is hearing appeals however it may be positive to have Middlesbrough looking at other authority's appeals.

ACTIONS:

Query around how many students of the 92 places allocated were placed after appeals. This needs to be included as part of the modelling.

SMF March Meeting

Agreed March meeting will take place on 18th March 2020.

Caldicotes Primary and Outwood Acklam will not attend.

TVCA

8.

Education and Innovation Funding has 4 streams:

- STEM
- Teaching and Learning
- Leadership
- Inclusion

9.

There is £2 million overall. How funding will be delegated to schools is a developing process.

The Tess Valley Mayor is insisting on a bidding process. There have been expressions of interest. Lead applicants will have conversations with TVA about requests for funding.

Some bids are still being produced, some at the request for funding stage that will be considered for cabinet approval.

Criteria for Inclusion Pit has not been drawn up and is with Sandra Evison who chairs the Innovation Board. This will be sent to people who have submitted expressions of interest.

SL raised that the bureaucratic nature of the application process is a disincentive for schools due to the work hours involved. AW explained that applications are needed for 2nd December 2019.

AW is concerned that there has been £2million in funding available for the last 2 years and schools have yet to access it. Forms that are being submitted at the minute are not bids but expressions of interest. Feedback will be sent via email.

Attendance Report

Section 2:

10.

There has been an increase in fixed penalty notices. The statute states that funds raised from FPN must be used by the Local Authority for the purposes of the Local Authority to cover legal costs around the process.

There is a reasonably straight forward and robust system in place. It is understood there is a degree of work on school's part. Work is being conducted with UCA to look at best practice.

AC raised that attendance has not improved on an authority level and there is no consistency in FPN as it is at schools discretion whether or not and when they are enforced.

AW – FPN are not a prime way to ensure improved attendance and it has not had an impact on when families take holidays as they are cheaper in term time.

Attendance on an authority level has not improved. A supportive rather than punitive system of how to improve attendance has been discussed. There has been little take up of this offer. It is disappointing that this has not been progressed.

HB stated that the centrally provided posters were provided when work was already being completed in schools however there is a gap in consultation. TD agreed that working with schools to create a supportive network will have a positive impact on attendance. Preventative and supportive work is being done within schools. There are several incentives that are paid for individually.

Beverley school raised that due to the nature of their student's needs they do not routinely fine parents for taking their children on holiday. Parents may end up distrusting schools, building resentment. Parents view the fine as not that much of a penalty in relation to paying for a different holiday.

There is a difference in parents who just do not bring their children to school or do not enforce attendance and children who have 100% attendance and are given fines for going on holiday. Holidays in this event take up around 0.5% of attendance.

High Needs Update

Recovery plan was last presented on 3rd July 2019 following the closure of the account deficit at 1.15million. There have been some savings in the SEN budget and against independent schools.

11. There is a significant demand for year 11 places as a result of permanent exclusions.

Schools that are behind on payments have been worked with to devise repayment plans.

There are ongoing issues with individual pupil charges that are taking some time to resolve. There is a clear policy on recoupment charges.

Agenda Item 2

It was queried whether schools that do not pay within a certain period will have their debts written off. In this financial year the challenge is around £35,000 and there will be a meeting with the Heads to discuss this. Total debt written off is around £150,000. TD clarified that where debt has been written off it is not that the schools have refused to pay but more misunderstandings around charges that have been ongoing for around 2 years. Charging rationale was not clear and documentation of Local Authority officers was received stating differing duplicate amounts not as a result of reluctance to pay.

There are disputes. This is not as a result of schools refusing to pay for charges and where deliberate stalling is suspected payment is discussed. Everyone involved in AP policy is clear about intervention charges. It is worth minding that recoupment is an ongoing issue and this needs to be monitored moving forward.

There are still pressures in recoupment. The nature of independent provision can impact on the budget. The needs of SEMH provision are becoming more complex. There has been development of local provision, increasing capacity of resource bases and adding new post-16 pathways.

A meeting is arranged for the new year to ensure that support is being provided in the right places at the right level. The indicative budget for 2020 will be determined in December. This may be slightly delayed due to the state of purdah. Budget models will be presented at the January meeting.

It is not expected that there will be a deapplication for DSG funding this year. There is still pressure around AP and independent schools. ESFA have taken the pressure off with more time to pay back deficits.

JL – Schools have been transparent and strict in claims, there have not been fewer claims. There will be a matrix meeting to discuss this. Confident that schools have submitted forms with integrity. Schools have been positive in providing critical challenge. There is a good understanding of what SEN looks like.

National Funding/OFSTED monitoring will go down the same route as PPP monitoring. High needs funding will be scrutinised to see how SEND is being spent nationally. AW shared that officers are looking at every opportunity to be more cost effective in the SEND area. As much money as possible goes to children at the front line.

£335,000 is being looked at to be built into the budget next year. This has been consolidated into the budget.

SEMH School

Evaluations and submissions have been submitted and are still at the confidential stage. This is being evaluated by 4 Local Authorities. DFE will be contacted on Friday to discuss the interview and evaluation with prospective bidders. There is provisionally 100 places for reception and post-16. A site has been identified in Grange Town. There will be 25 places spread equally across 4 Local Authorities. Hoping to open around 2021. Beverley school noted that autism being identified as a secondary need is an issue as it is always the primary.

AOB

12. AK raised that he has heard that 1 PVI nursery has been offering cash incentives for children to attend their provision and has requested that this be stopped. AW suggested that the name of the school that this allegation is made against be sent to her as this is a misuse of funding. AK added that he cannot verify these allegations and does not wish to release the name of the setting in question.

It has also been discussed that some nurseries have accepted children to attend their provision before their third birthday. It was raised that this is an issue as staffing is allocated based on projected pupil numbers. AW stated that some parents move their children to primary school 2 year provision as this is the school they will be attending in the future and will give them time to settle before starting mandatory schooling. School will employ additional staff to cover this at a cost to themselves. AW is not sure how this can be mitigated against as it is down to parental choice.

TD stated that looking at the falling birth rate and demand may be helpful.

DN advised that the Early Years hourly rates had not been distributed by the DofE. It is assumed that the rates have to be set by 28th February, which is based on last year's guidance and notify initial budgets to providers by 31 March 2020.

Chair noted this to be Andrea William's final attendance at SMF. Chair and the forum thanks Andrea for everything she has contributed.

13. **Date of next meeting:**

15th January 2020, 8:15am, Community Learning Centre

Agenda Item 2

