

# Minutes - Sheffield Schools Forum

3.00-5.00pm, 26 February 2024, Learn Sheffield, Savile Street

Chair: Keith Crawshaw

## Schools Forum Members:

### **Primary Heads Representatives**

Nigel Brooke-Smith (Greystones)

Helen Kenyon (Pipworth)

Chris Holder (Lowfield)

### **Primary Governors**

Alison Warner (Grenoside)

### **Secondary Head**

Linda Gooden (King Edward VII)

### **Non-school Members**

Mo Andrews, Pye Bank CE Primary

Stephen Betts, Learn Sheffield

Karen Simpkin, Early Years providers

Fiona Hawksley/Lisa Smith, Trade Unions

James Smythe, Sheffield College 16-19

Sector

### **Academies**

Keith Crawshaw (Sheffield South East Trust)

David Dennis (Tapton School Academy Trust)

Jim Dugmore (Peak Edge Academy Trust)

Chris French (Mercia Learning Trust)

Stacy McKay (Springs Academy)

Morag Somerville (Steel City Schools Partnership)

### **Special Academies**

Joel Hardwick (Nexus Multi-academy Trust)

### **Special Schools**

Aileen Hosty/Laura Rzepinski (Bents Green)

1 x vacant seat

### **PRU**

Alan Richards (Sheffield Inclusion Centre)

**Apologies:** Mo Andrews, Cllr Dawn Dale, Jim Dugmore, Linda Gooden, Aileen Hosty, Joel Hardwick, Stacy McKay, Alison Warner

**Also in attendance:** Andrew Jones, Director, Education and Skills; Amanda Murray, Education and Skills (notes); Mark Sheikh, Head of Service, Resourcing and Business Planning

**Presenters:** Jacky Beatson, Resourcing Manager, Education and Skills; Helen Mansfield, Resourcing Manager, Education and Skills; Helen Sanders, 0-5 SEND Support Service Manager, Education and Skills

## **1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest**

Apologies were noted as per above and no declarations of interest were made.

## **2. Previous meeting minutes/matters arising**

Agreed as a true and accurate record. No matters arising.

### 3. Establishment of SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF)

Helen Sanders summarised the request to approve the establishment of the SEN inclusion fund as recommended by the Early Years Working Group and as per Paper 3:

- Local authorities are required to have a SENIF for all children with special educational needs (SEN) eligible for, or taking up, the new and existing entitlements.
- SEN inclusion funding arrangements have been reviewed as per Appendix 2. This moves away from a set hour formula to a banding system which can be applied for and agreed for the academic year but paid to early years providers termly.
- The banding system has been well received.
- The process is now clear and transparent, resulting in an increase in SENIF applications.
- There is a growing number of children with complex additional needs who may need to access early years provision from the age of 9 months.
- Increasing numbers of families are experiencing settings reporting that they cannot meet needs.
- The proposed applications and process will be funded from the £400k SENIF for 2-year-olds and under.

Further discussion can be summarised as follows:

- Members endorsed the proposal and acknowledged that the provision is at the heart of early intervention.
- The challenge is getting access to support promptly and guidance for staff. Helen Sanders clarified that the process no longer requires early years settings to have an open involvement with 0-5 SEND Support Service, ensuring support is prompt and that the new guidance has been shared widely, including with early years settings and schools and is also available on Sheffield Local offer.
- Panel dates are set in advance which means the process is set out for the academic year with early years providers being paid termly.
- It would be helpful to understand the scale of the growth.
- Clarification was sought regarding the voice of parents within the process - discussion takes place with parents via the Education, Health and Care (EHC) Panel.

#### **Actions:**

- Helen Sanders to clarify other parental involvement in the process with Rose Ward.
- Helen Sanders/Rose Ward to review growth/expansion of 2-year-olds and under with SEN and provide an update at the September Forum.

The Forum **approved:**

- The establishment of the SENIF for 2-year-olds and under.
- A 0.2 FTE permanent Business Support Officer from April 2024 to support the SENIF applications and process, to be funded from the SENIF.

#### 4. SEND Consultant's Review

Helen Sanders presented the item on behalf of Rose Ward - the background and findings - all as set out in Paper 4. The Forum was asked to consider the findings of the report and provide insight/feedback and details of any follow-up information required. Forum discussion can be summarised as follows:

- The paper reads as though small changes are required, but they are hugely significant (the process, procedure and funding will be discussed by the working group). A **strategic** response is required.
- It would be helpful to measure the satisfaction of parents – individual services in SEND seek opinions, but these could/should be collated to give an overview of satisfaction.
- Despite all schools saying they were committed to being inclusive, it was felt that some schools are more positive towards inclusion, not just in words but in their response and actions with children and young people with SEND.
- The paper demonstrates incoherence in meeting needs. How do we ensure children and young people get the help required and how do we measure the impact of failing to meet those needs?
- The report mentions creating hubs, but the ones already in existence are not meeting needs.
- This links into the work around sufficiency and funding/capacity within mainstream. In addition, by helping to support children in mainstream settings, we should then in theory be able to reduce other costs e.g. transport.

Andrew Jones added/clarified:

- That a great deal of work is under way for example around governance, including the remit of the Inclusion Taskforce.
- Projections demonstrate that even though we are building two new special schools, these will not be adequate to meet future need.
- We need to solve the issues across the system and avoid escalation from mainstream settings.
- Tribunals arise for example because a place is requested at a specific school when there isn't space. Most tribunals are found in favour of the parent, but they are not always consistent – there is a disconnect between the information provided and the decision taken. Decisions may require significant additional staffing.
- Matt Peers will be bringing a sufficiency paper to the June Forum.

**Action:** Helen Sanders/Rose Ward to share tribunal statistics with the Forum.

The **Forum noted** the contents of the report.

#### 5. Funded Early Learning (FEL) Rate and Allocation 2024/25 and Early Years Outturn

Jacky Beatson summarised Paper 5a:

- Early years funding is based on actual participation as per the January Census and is revised each July to reflect take-up. The January 2024 Census provides 5/12ths of funding for the period April to August 2024 and the January 2025 Census provide the remaining 7/12th for the period September 2024 to March 2025.

- The table at section 1.3 shows the income funding streams – an increase overall of £19.18m for 2024/25.
- In line with previous Forum agreement, Sheffield will continue to provide a 100% pass-through rate to providers for all 2-year-old funding including extended entitlements.
- Section 2.6 outlines the new deprivation supplement arrangements.
- A consultation was carried out regarding the Deprivation rate (as per Paper 5c) and the outcome was that we fund deprivation with the same principles and methodology that is applied consistently across all age ranges, as recommended at the Early Years Working Group.
- The table at 3.1 details the hourly rates that will be paid to Sheffield and table 5.1 shows the indicative hourly base rates that are payable to providers, subject to the Forum's approval.
- We are introducing the new mandatory SEN Inclusion Fund of approximately £400k, as per Paper 3, and recommendations were agreed with the Early Years Working Group. The level of funding to be reviewed on an annual basis.
- Disability Access Funding (DAF) is increasing by £29 per year to £910 for eligible pupils.
- Early Years funding is driven by the Early Years National Funding Formula and due to protection being built in for all local authorities, our funding is still capped.

Mark Sheikh added that:

- Further to previous discussions around pressure in the early years sector, we are proposing to continue with the 100% pass-through rate for all 2-year-old funding.
- That the overall expected increase in funding of £19m is subject to the sector responding to the supply requirements.
- The process to bid for the £900k capital fund is now open to providers.

Forum discussion included:

- The under 2s provision is not feasible due to the 1:3 ratio and there will still need to be a cost to parents.
- There is support for the work being undertaken, but there is uneven provision, geographically, for under 2s. (This is being addressed by the Childcare Planning Sufficiency team.)
- It would be helpful to have an update on the response regarding supply from providers.
- The demand for Family Hubs also forms part of the sufficiency work.

The Chair thanked the Early Years Working Group for their work and **the Forum noted:**

- The increases to Sheffield's allocation and the hourly rates and the new funding streams for working parents.
- That an additional £0.44 per hour deprivation supplement is accessible for all children who fulfil the deprivation criteria across all early years provision.

**The Forum approved the recommendations:**

- To pay eligible under 2-year-olds (of working parents) a base rate of £10.31 per hour.
- To increase the base rate funding for 2-year-olds (for pupils from both disadvantaged backgrounds and working parents) to £7.58 per hour.
- To increase the base hourly funding rate for 3&4-year-olds to £5.06.
- To pay an hourly rate of £0.44 as a deprivation supplement for each eligible pupil across all 2-year-old and under age ranges.

**Action:** The Chair requested an update in autumn regarding the response to supply and with regard to the capital funding – Early Years Working Group to action.

Paper 5b - was provided for information only regarding this one-off funding. **The Forum was asked to note that:**

- The 2022/23 positive outturn of £1,047k was paid to Sheffield early years providers in Spring 2024 in line with the process agreed in the September 2023 Schools Forum meeting.
- The £183k DAF balances, from the 2022/23 outturn, were distributed in line with the process agreed in the September 2022 Schools Forum Meeting.

Paper 5c – was provided for information only, regarding the consultation outcomes, which informed the allocation details in Paper 5a.

## 6. High Needs Block Funding 2024/25

Mark Sheikh, with input from Helen Mansfield, highlighted key points from Paper 6:

- The paper is for information only as the responsibility for the High Needs Block sits with the local authority.
- Section 1.3 outlines the increase in EHC Plans/rising demand and the issues with supply.
- The funding does not keep pace with growing demand, and due to a lag in the system, we have a shortfall of £3.7m for 2024/25.
- Work has been carried out with the SEND Funding Working Group to review the costs of schools with split sites, and a one-off payment of £50k has been approved for 2024/25 to help with cost pressures.
- The Operational Guidance recommends an increase in rate for special schools of between 0-0.5%. However, Sheffield has agreed an average of 2% - an increase of £438 per special school place.
- A provision of £6m has been identified to fund additional specialist pre- and post-16 provision, but this may not be adequate.
- Base funding for integrated resources (IRs) is also being increased by an average of 2% - from £10k to £10,568.
- The number of IRs has increased from 291 to 343 in 2024/25 and up to 114 are planned to open during the financial year (a provision has been made).
- Our investment in the locality model is expected to be just over £6m and further details will be shared at the June Schools Forum.
- The Sheffield Inclusion Centre budget has been set at £4.6m.
- Section 5 details funding for post-16. We have made a provision to increase the number of college places – an allocation of £3.8m for Longley Park, Sheffield College and Sheaf Training.

- An amendment should be noted to the table on page 7: the Home and Hospital Education figure should be £1,479k not £1,255k.
- A review of the £1.5m redirection of funds was requested, but it is suggested that a review on the High Needs Block be carried out mid-year as the Block may be overspent.
- The challenge is bringing back out of city placements in city. Investment in localities may help IRs and we would like to invest more into mainstream schools.

Additional discussion clarified that the £3.8m for post-16 in section 5.6 is Element 2 funding, and that we have not yet prepared an estimate for Element 3 for 2024/25, but we are expecting growth which would be funded via the £6m growth fund.

#### **The Forum noted:**

- The overall arrangements and 2024/25 budget requirements for pupils and students with high needs.
- The 2% Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) for special schools, integrated resources and the Sheffield Inclusion Centre against the financial year 2023/2024.
- The £6m provision being made for growth in the specialist sector, including additional places in special schools from September, pre- and post-16 growth in places.
- The continuation of the £1.5m transfer from the Schools Block to locality funding.

### **7. School Budgets (inc. Central School Services Block, de-delegation) 2024/25**

Jacky Beatson presented key information from Paper 7:

- The table at 1.5 summarises the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation across all blocks. Overall, Sheffield will receive an increase of £52.11m for 2024/25.
- The Mainstream Schools Additional Grant of £15m has now been rolled in to DSG.
- Sheffield's school population is increasing slowly and the peak is in secondary in 2024/25 but primary numbers are lower.
- We continue to move significantly, but proportionately, closer to the National Funding Formula (NFF) using the principles agreed at the December 2023 Forum and as detailed in section 1.7, including:
  - Ensuring all schools gain by optimising the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) at +0.5%.
  - Continuing to re-align factors to meet the 10% threshold minimum value, which changes the primary:secondary ratio to 1:1.36.
  - Keeping Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) stable for primary and in line with the NFF for secondary.
  - Re-aligning Social Deprivation as closely as possible with the NFF, with particular focus on high levels of deprivation, subject to affordability.
- Budget models have been updated with October 2023 Census information and the final Schools Block allocation.
- £1.5m has been redirected to the High Needs Block in line with the December 2023 Forum decision.

- Schools who previously received Split Site funding but are no longer eligible will be protected by the operation of the MFG.
- To support schools with the existing cost pressures, it was previously agreed that we don't make any changes to the Notional SEN for 2024/25.
- We have increased primary AWPU by £20 per pupil over the NFF level to support smaller schools and those without high levels of deprivation.
- Basic Entitlement rates are set out at 2.5 – our primary AWPU is higher than the NFF and secondary rates are in line with the NFF.
- Section 2.2 reminds schools that they will receive a copy of their rates bill for 2024/25, **but this should not be paid. However**, we are advised that **academies should pay and claim back any previous years' bill adjustments** that are received in 2024/25.
- The cost of the MFG is £698k – a reduction of £86k – a sign that the formula is beginning to stabilise and there are 34 primaries and one secondary school protected by the MFG.
- The table at 3.5 show the distribution of funding across the factors.
- The table at 3.6 shows the number of cash gainers/losers. Any school losing cash is as a result of a reduction in pupil numbers.
- The Pupil Premium rates have increased by 1.6% on average and more information can be found in section 5.
- Section 6.2 details the Teachers' Pay Additional Grant which will continue to be paid as a separate grant.
- The one-off grant for Additional Support for Schools in Financial Difficulties will be distributed in line with requests from the local deficit recovery support plans.
- Sheffield's Growth Funding has been significantly reduced from £2.9m to £1.6m.
- The Central School Services Block (CSSB) has a net decrease in funding of £386k of which £486k relates to historic commitments. Historic commitments relate to support for the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy.

Mark Sheikh added that:

- With regard to the NFF, the level of local flexibility is being reduced each year.
- The Growth Funding Policy will be reviewed in June and that we are not eligible for any Falling Rolls funding, but we have a pot of funding for this that will be rolled forwards. We will honour any previous agreements for Growth funding, but the new criteria will apply going forward.
- The Council has committed to continue making a funding contribution to offset the reductions to the historic commitments to the CSSB.
- The summary slides as shared at the meeting give a re-cap of the settlement and draw attention to the annual entitlements for pupils across the stages. The charts show that as a result of the NFF the Schools Block is levelling out nationally, however the High Needs Block national distribution is still inequitable.

In response to further discussion, Jacky confirmed that the Government has announced that further funding for the increase in Employers' Contributions for teachers' pension costs would be received, but the DfE has not yet published any further details.

**Action:** Jacky to check on progress re. funding for Teachers' Pension Employers' Contributions.

The Chair thanked Jacky for her work and **the Forum**:

- **Approved** the 2024/25 budget for primary and secondary schools set at £453m as per Appendix 1.
- **Noted** the growth funding changes and total allocation of £1.567m to fund both growth and falling rolls. (£1.467m growth £100k falling rolls).
- **Noted** the distribution of the Additional Funding for Schools in Financial Difficulty.
- **Noted** the transfer of £1.5m from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.
- **Noted** the de-delegated budgets of £1.95m and for maintained schools to agree de-delegation of £0.591m of services as per Appendix 2.
- **Noted and agreed** the contribution to the Central School Services Block budget.

## 8. Historical Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) Debt Update

Mark Sheikh summarised the progress made and proposed next steps:

- As previously agreed, letters were sent out by the Director of Education and Skills on behalf of the PRU at the beginning of November 2023, and as a result, payments totalling £53k have been received.
- The reason cited for non-payment was the lack of legal justification for the charge.
- It is proposed that a further letter now be sent reminding schools of their moral obligation.

**The Forum noted the update/endorsed the next steps** and the Chair suggested that we be clear in the letter that any unpaid charges will have a financial impact on all schools as they will be required to contribute towards any write-off; and it was also suggested that those who continue to refuse to pay be named.

## 9. AOB

### Forum Title

Karen Simpkin previously asked if the Forum would consider changing its name to include Early Years in the title.

This was discussed at the Chairs' de-briefing session, and it was agreed that by including Early Years in the title, this would exclude other sectors represented on the Forum, for example post-16. It was concluded that the Forum should instead therefore be renamed **The Sheffield Education Funding Forum** to ensure inclusivity of all education sectors involved and represented.

### Business Rates

Further to an earlier enquiry made by Karen, it was confirmed the Council is not in a position to be able to offer rate relief to one sector and not others.

**Date of next meeting:** 25 June 2024, 3.00-5.00pm, Online via Teams Meeting.