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MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 12 MARCH 2019

Present:

Primary School Head Teachers/Representatives

Ms J Hirst, Bispham Endowed (Chairman)

Primary School Governor Representative

Ms M Lonican, School Governor, Our Lady of the Assumption

Academy School Representatives

Mr S Brennand, Unity

Mr R Farley, Westminster

Ms J Heywood, Revoe

Mr E Vitalis, Bright Futures

Ms J Carroll, Roseacre (For Dean Logan)

Special School Academy Representative

Ms S Fielder, Park Academy

Special School Maintained Representative

Ms K Haworth, Woodlands

Non-Schools Members

Ms A Baines, Staff/Teacher Associations

Mr N Adams, Staff / Teacher Associations

Mr R Rendell, Early Years Strategic Group

Mr S Hughes, Blackpool and the Fylde College

In Attendance:

Mr P Sharples, School Funding and Private Finance Initiative Manager

Mr P Thompson, Head of SEND

Mr S Thompson, Director of Resources

Mr P Turner, Head of Schools, Safeguarding and Inclusion

Mrs H Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources

Mrs D Bowater, Democratic Governance Adviser (minutes)

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Introductions were made and apologies for absence were received from Elaine Allen, St John Vianney, Tracy Harrison, Thames, Dean Logan, Achievement Through Collaboration, Derek Metcalf, St Georges, Wendy Casson, Educational Diversity, Mark Golden, Finance Manager, Lynn Donkin, Consultant in Public Health and Councillor Benson.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were noted.

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 12 MARCH 2019

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Schools Forum held on 15 January 2019 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting pending the correction of Achievement Through Collaboration (ATC) in the attendance list and the removal of a sentence at item 10, paragraph seven.

Matters arising from the minutes were considered:

Item 5: Children's Centre finance, it was noted that a letter had been issued to Schools Forum members from Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services but as no timeline was available, an update would be presented at the June 2019 Schools Forum.

Item 9: Illuminate funding, assurances were provided that backdated payments from September 2018 would be allocated to schools who met the criteria.

Item 10: Dedicated Schools Grant Funding, Jo Hirst would request that the Joint Consultative Group discuss how Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) audits could be co-ordinated.

Item 13: Schools Funding Formula, it was reported that the Local Authority maintained the request for the 0.5% transfer in line with discussions at the Schools Forum.

Item 13: High Needs pressures to be raised at the Opportunity Area Board, it was reported that the Board was aware and local MPs continued to lobby to encourage funding to be allocated based on need. An increasing demand from the High Needs block was recognised. It was noted that should the deficit of the Dedicated Schools Block exceed 1%, the Department for Education (DfE) would require a three-year recovery plan to be submitted.

Item 15: De-delegation of Services and retention of funding for education functions, the final figures for insurance for 2019/2020 had not yet been finalised.

4 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion provided an update. Following the recent Ofsted inspection, the local authority response and plans were underway and the Improvement Board met monthly to monitor progress.

The promotion of partnership engagement was a highlighted inspection outcome and a number of developments were in progress to address this.

Paul Turner reported that extra support would be commissioned targeting maths and an inclusion focus in schools. A dedicated Elective Home Education Officer would be appointed to encourage families to re-engage with the school system. A service provided by a dedicated charity would commence in March 2019 until August 2020 and be available to schools to support those close to exclusion and to elective home education. Furthermore, two posts would be created to support schools with harder to educate young people. It was noted that the moderation plans had been issued for early years and foundation.

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 12 MARCH 2019

In relation to safeguarding and exclusions a dedicated advocate now attended the exclusion meetings to support parents through the process. The newly appointed Schools Safeguarding Advisor was supporting schools well.

Buy in from schools for the music service had increased as had the buy in for pupil welfare services provided by the local authority.

Finally, it was highlighted that there was funding available through the local authority for projects to be undertaken in schools through the 'Success for All' initiative. The criteria to gain funding was specific with a requirement to have focussed, cross-phase results and to reach as many young people as possible. Applications for the funding to date had been limited but a positive project had been undertaken at Hawes Side School. Following a question, it was reported that the funding for projects such as the 'Success for All' initiative at Hawes Side School had come from the local authority school improvement budget.

It was requested that the information presented be summarised in a document and circulated to the Schools Forum members.

Resolved:

- **A written overview of the local authority update be circulated to the Schools Forum members for information.**

5 ACADEMY AND FREE SCHOOL UPDATE

Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion provided an update. Devonshire Primary Academy and Highfield Leadership Academy had received Ofsted inspections with Devonshire Primary Academy requiring improvement and Highfield Leadership Academy in special measures. In response to both inspections, the schools were rebuilding processes and trying alternative methods to address the issues identified and improve standards.

The update was noted.

6 INCLUSION UPDATE

6a Inclusion

Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion provided an update. The format of the Blackpool Education Registers and Admissions (BERA) Panel Data Extract had been revised to provide more information and increase transparency. It was also noted that a full review of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) had been commissioned.

The information presented on in-year fair access referrals for 2018-2019 illustrated a significant pressure on Educational Diversity places. Consideration was given as to whether short term placements, enabling a greater impact on more children, would be reflected in the review due for completion by June 2019.

It was reported that visits to Warrington and Wigan local authorities to identify good practice relating to their inclusion arrangements were being considered to identify what might be replicated in Blackpool.

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 12 MARCH 2019

Finally, it was recognised that Blackpool produced a significant amount of data in comparison to other authorities but evidence of impact data was required.

The update was noted.

6b Illuminate Funding

Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion provided an update. Assurances were made that backdated payments from September 2018 would be allocated to schools who met the criteria for illuminate funding.

It was reported that there may be surplus funds available following the allocation of the illuminate funding requests. A decision would be required as to how to allocate the remaining funds and it was suggested that a specific criteria would be required. It was agreed that a formula and threshold would be discussed by Paul Turner and Hilary Wood.

Resolved:

- **Paul Turner and Hilary Wood to discuss options (including a formula and threshold if required) of how to allocate the remaining Illuminate funding.**

7 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING 2018-19

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources, provided an update. It was highlighted that the main pressures were within the High Needs block with four areas of concern being: the numbers in special schools being higher than planned; the numbers at the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) being higher than planned but acknowledged that the planned use of the PRU function provided a saving compared to use of the out of area options; the numbers in Post 16 education following the September 2018 intake being higher than planned; and the additional growth of out of borough placements.

It was acknowledged that the additional funding of £296,160 received for children with special educational needs and disabilities for the next two years had offset some pressures however a deficit of £536k was forecast by March 2019. It was noted that a recovery plan from the Department for Education would not be triggered this year, as the trigger point was 1% of the total Dedicated Schools Grant, which equated to approximately £1.9million.

The report was noted.

8 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources, provided an update. It was reported that Blackpool was experiencing financial pressures on the High Needs Budget. A three year plan sought to bring expenditure within available funding by 2020/2021. It was recognised that the forecast overspend on the High Needs block in 2018/2019 had worsened from £490k to a predicted £585k, over and above the £800k funding transferred from the Schools Block and Council resources.

A significant area of forecast growth reported was expenditure in special school placements and numbers were anticipated to increase to an unsustainable level both

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 12 MARCH 2019

financially and for the physical capacity of the school buildings.

It was suggested that SEND audits in schools could identify provision gaps and also staff training gaps within primary schools and academies. Visits to other local authorities to ascertain how they managed the high needs block were planned as was making use of the good practice in relation to SEND provision existing in Blackpool. Park special school had offered to carry out a review of SEND support in schools to make recommendations as to how practice could be improved.

It was queried whether the projection of spend had been considered for 2024-2025 as the financial need might increase further.

The report was noted.

(Paul Turner left the meeting)

9 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET PROPOSAL 2019-20

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources, provided an update. Schools Forum was asked to agree the proposal for the future use of the Dedicated Schools Grant as outlined in the report.

As the predicted budget was in deficit of £1.2million by 31 March 2020, it was recognised that the Secretary of State might issue a recovery plan in order to ensure the deficit was closed within a given timeframe. Schools Forum wanted to be confident that all options had been considered to try to address the deficit.

It was suggested that the funding not allocated to schools where children left to become elective home educated should be reinvested back to schools, as this represented a saving to the Department for Education.

It was acknowledged that the Task and Finish Group to look at the high needs pressure continued and had increased in membership to look to a systematic solution for the deficit.

It was recognised that learning from other local authorities was being considered as well as learning from other Blackpool school settings.

It was suggested that investment in Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) training could be considered. This would support new and current SENCos to meet the special educational needs of children.

It was commented that the quality of education provided and finance available within schools needed to be balanced.

Resolved:

- **The Schools Forum agreed to support the Local Authority proposals outlined subject to ongoing efforts to reduce the deficit.**

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 12 MARCH 2019

10 EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA 2019-20

Paul Sharples, Schools Funding and Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Manager provided an update. Schools Forum was asked to consider the local authority's proposed formula for three and four year old early education as outlined. No increase in funding had been received, so it was proposed that the funding rates to providers remained unchanged. It was highlighted that discussions would continue on a national level to try to increase funding for early years provision.

It was noted that the Early Years Strategy Group had been reconstituted to enable a more focussed attention for birth to five year olds to ensure they were ready for school.

Resolved:

- **The Schools Forum agreed to the local authority's proposed formula for three and four year old early education as well as the value of the Inclusion Fund for 2019-2020 and noted the local authority's funding rate for two years olds at £5.00 per hour but stated that they were extremely concerned by the inadequate funding of early years provision.**

11 SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

Paul Sharples, Schools Funding and Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Manager provided an update. Schools Forum was asked to approve the revisions for incorporation in Blackpool's Scheme for Financing Schools as outlined.

It was requested that the draft document inclusive of the technical changes outlined be circulated to schools for information.

Resolved:

- **The Schools Forum agreed to the revisions for incorporation in Blackpool's Scheme for Financing Schools as outlined.**

12 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Schools Forum was agreed as Tuesday 18 June 2019 at 9.15am, @the grange.

Chairman

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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