

Report and Recommendations from School Forum Working Group – Special School Allocations

Meeting at Combe Pafford School 14th March 2018

Present: -

Mike Lock	Combe Pafford School
Matt Caunter	Brunel Academy
June Palmer	Mayfield School
Stephen Hulme	Burton Academy
Rob Parr	LA Finance Team

Background to the meeting

Torbay was allocated an additional £2.2 million in the 18/19 DSG Schools Block, as a result of being an historically underfunded LA's. This funding could only be allocated to mainstream schools and no additional funding has been received for Special Schools (through the High Needs block). Torbay currently has significant pressures on its High Needs block contributing to an overspend within the DSG. Martin Phillips (Head of Finance) at Torbay Council had been approached regarding additional funding for Special Schools but due to current pressures facing the High Needs and no increase from the ESFA, felt unable to agree to an increase. ML approached Rachael Williams and Andy Dempsey about this, as special schools are facing the same cost pressures as other schools. Papers were taken to 8/3/18 Schools Forum, showing a model for additional funding based on increases of 1%, 2% and 3% of the top up funding only (which in Combe Pafford's case equated to 0.4% of their total funding). A discussion was had at Schools Forum and a vote taken, agreeing to Special Schools being allocated 2% of their total allocation of £10.196m, this equated to £204k.

Purpose of the meeting

To discuss the fairest way to split the 2% (£204,000) allocated between special schools.

Main points of the discussion were

Rob Parr said he could see why, but not necessarily agree with the decision, he felt the reason that it should only be 2% of top ups was because the £10k per place led funding comes direct from the ESFA and the ESFA did not increase the £10k per place funding. Matt Caunter said that this should have been made clear at the meeting. June Palmer agreed with this. They all agreed that Special Schools have the same cost pressures on them as mainstream schools including staffing pay increases. Mike Lock showed a document which demonstrated that out of 10 special academies, Combe Pafford had the lowest per pupil funding at £15,764, the highest being £39,000 and the average special school £26,000.

In discussion about the High Needs pressures, which belongs to all Torbay Schools, Rob said he had recently been to a regional meeting regarding school funding and that other LA's were applying a range of measures, including the use of the disapplication process to address the pressures all are facing within High Needs. It was discussed that all schools need to acknowledge that the current financial position needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency and take joint ownership of the contributing factors.

Matt Caunter asked who makes the decision as to how long the overspend can be carried forward. Obviously, this is of concern to the wider council financial position, but remains an issue which needs to be addressed by the Local Area and dealing with the on-going pressures remains a Dedicated School Grant (DSG) issue.

Rob also mentioned the High Needs pressures were discussed at length at the regional meeting he recently attending. Some attendees felt that HN issues are proving difficult for ESFA to address and by the introduction of the National Funding Formula in 20/21 the High Needs block may no longer form part of the DSG. The High Needs funding could be subsumed within LA funding which would to a degree, alleviate the problem for the ESFA.

Rob prepared and shared a spreadsheet showing the impact of the proposed 2% increase for each of the special schools. It was felt that the best option is to build the increase into the per pupil top-up bandings.

Mike Lock explained that Tim Stevens (Primary Academy Governor) rep on SF had phoned him asking about additional funding in Enhanced Provisions within mainstream schools, if 2% was applied to those, this would equate to an additional £11k on top of the £204k agreed at 8/3/18 Schools Forum.

Heads were in agreement that to be consistent, the top-up rates within Enhanced Provisions should also be increased, as they are also funded on £10k per place.

Outcome of the meeting

Rob to recalculate the apportionment of the money to the four special schools and Enhanced Provisions and circulate to the people present and then attach to these minutes in preparation for the next Schools Forum.

Meeting closed at 11am

Mike Lock

Head of Combe Pafford

