

Higher Needs Recovery Group

Context

The Higher Needs Recovery group (HNRG) is tasked by School Forum with addressing the overspend on the higher needs block within the DSG.

Since the last Forum meeting, the HNRG has met twice and considered information, data and financial reports to make some recommendations.

The following paper provides a synopsis of the two meetings, for your information the full minutes and reports are also included.

Meeting held 19th April 2018

The group considered the following agenda items;

1. Statistical information
2. Exclusions and recoupment
3. Vision for managing pupil movements
4. Business case for Paignton Community and Sports Academy
5. Business case for Play Torbay
6. Identification of priority area

The group discussed at length proposals to re-design the local system to ensure equity and transparency in the management of pupil movements outside of admission round. The group agreed with the Officers recommendations to;

- Apply MFG to the recoupment process for Permanent Exclusions
- Add a staged "Managed Transfer" process to the Torbay model for managing pupil movements
- Adopt a 3% of the school roll limit for each year to help manage pupil referral placements with equity

Following the meeting the Head of Vulnerable Pupils has given the same presentation to Secondary and Primary Headteachers. All parties have been provided with an opportunity to feedback on the proposal. Where questions have been raised, an individual school visit has taken place.

The HNRG also received two invest to save projects for consideration;

- The development of an area based provision at Paignton Academy for six KS3 pupils that are currently taught out of area
- The investment in a pilot project with Play Torbay and the Youth Trust to provide re-integration support to pupils returning to mainstream from alternative provision

Following the meeting a letter was sent to all School Forum Members seeking agreement to proceed with the projects. Sufficient votes in favour were received, this has enabled Officers to proceed with the establishment of the projects.

Meeting held on the 25th May 2018

At this meeting the Assistant Director for Education presented a comprehensive paper providing information on the possible mechanisms that are available locally to deal with the deficit and future budget pressures. The paper covered the;

- Virement process and outcome of Local Areas seeking approval to move funds across blocks above the 0.5% permitted cap
- Budgetary implications of reducing the Element 3 top up payments to schools
- Capping or reducing the commissioned number of specialist placements at Special Schools, Alternative Provision or Independent Placements

The group considered all options and agreed that a combined approach including the use of a virement application might be the best way forward.

The group recommends to Forum that Officers work on building a proposal using a combination of the above that can be consulted upon with schools post forum approval.

Recommendations

1. To accept the Business Case for establishing an enhanced resource base to reintegrate children from out of area provision. This would be managed by PCSA for Key Stage 3 students at the Yalberton site.
APPROVED
2. To run a pilot programme with the Youth Trust/Play Torbay securing effective reintegration into mainstream settings from alternative provision. This programme would run from 9-12 weeks and be managed by Play Torbay. The students targeted are from across all key stages and would benefit from a programme that includes support from parents and an offer outside term dates.
APPROVED
3. To adopt a proposal that all schools have an expectation that they will accept a limit of children on managed moves or reintegrating from alternative provision. There will be an agreed limit which is intended to ensure equity and clarify the places available to the Pupil Referral Panel under Fair Access. The proposed figure is 3% of the school roll for each year based on the October school census.
APPROVED
4. To use MFG as a mechanism for recoument of Permanent exclusions.
5. To adopt a 'managed transfer' in addition to a 'managed move' process to support the movement of pupils outside of admissions round.
6. To task Officers with creating a full business plan for the recovery of the higher needs deficit using a combined approach of limiting commissioned numbers, reviewing Element 3 'top up' payments, and seeking a virement application via Schools Forum or a disapplication to the Secretary of State. The full business case would be presented to School Forum and if agreed be consulted upon with the sector in September/October 2018.

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