

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES of the meeting held at Loxley House, Nottingham on 13 February 2018 from 1.45 pm - 2.54 pm

Membership

Present

Sian Hampton (Chair)
Judith Kemplay (Vice Chair)
Caroline Caille
Sally Coulton
David Holdsworth
David Hooker
Andy Jenkins
Stephen McLaren
Janet Molyneux
Tracy Rees
David Stewart
James Strawbridge
Sheena Wheatley

Absent

Maria Artingstoll
David Blackley
Debbie Simon
Terry Smith

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Alistair Conquer	- Head of Educational Curriculum & Enrichment
John Dexter	- Director of Education
Jennifer Hardy	- Project Manager
Nick Lee	- Head of Access & Inclusion
Sophie Russell	- Head of Children's Strategy & Improvement
Kathryn Stevenson	- Senior Commercial Business Partner
Ceri Walters	- Head of Commercial Finance
Phil Wye	- Governance Officer

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Maria Artingstoll
Debbie Simon
Terry Smith
Alison Michalska

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

20 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

21 WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme for the remainder of the 2017/18 academic year was noted.

22 PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS - PROPOSED NEW ALTERNATIVE PROVISION MODEL

Nick Lee, Head of Access and Inclusion, and Ceri Walters, Head of Commercial Finance, introduced the report and delivered a presentation highlighting the following:

- (a) a multi-agency working group to explore early intervention and other models to decrease the rate of exclusion has been meeting monthly since from September 2017 to January 2018, with representation from secondary, primary, PRUs, education support services, social care, the youth offending team, the police and mental health services;
- (b) a problem profile was created and used to explore the impact of high exclusions on different phases of education. Learning was taken from the experience of five schools that took part in a pilot of having no permanent exclusions;
- (c) early intervention models being developed focus on behaviour support and early identification of indicators, priority families, and approaches to high profile issues such as knife crime and drugs;
- (d) there has been wider consultation of school stakeholders through the SEND Strategy consultation in November 2017, and local concerns have been identified with the Department for Education, Regional Schools Commissioner and Ofsted at a strategic level;
- (e) the working group and consultation has found that a reduction of secondary permanent exclusions is critical to provide both capacity in the system and financial sustainability. There is strong support from all sectors for a model of internal capacity building for mainstream schools in behaviour management and clearer referral pathways for children identified with behaviour challenges. There is also strong support for a resource unit model to enable referral for targeted short term intervention;
- (f) the pilot of schools not permanently excluding demonstrates that the model could work but that a total exclusion ban is very challenging given the inevitable occurrence of a small number of high profile incidents of serious concern. Permanent exclusion therefore needs to be an available option as a genuine last resort. It is critical that more excluded pupils are reintegrated to mainstream education and the managed move process is made more effective;
- (g) the revised model for secondary permanent exclusion detailed in the report should reduce the rate of permanent exclusion, and continues the work undertaken by the pilot schools. It is a quota model with penalties for exceeding

the quota of permanently excluded pupils;

- (h) it is proposed to launch and roll out the Routes to Inclusion model, a toolkit being designed by SENCOs, focussing on pupils at risk of exclusion at primary and transition into secondary;
- (i) a Service Level Agreement (SLA) will need to be signed by secondary schools to begin the new model. Following this, a quality assurance model and expectations for Alternative Provision (AP) are being established, and outcomes for all pupils subject to AP will be tracked rigorously;
- (j) Fair Access Protocol management will be transferred back to the Local Authority (LA) from April 2018, which will allow information to be shared more seamlessly;
- (k) additional capital funding for resource units may be available through the SEND Strategy when it is published. Also, the LA is developing a Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF) Behaviour bid in partnership with Derby City Council;
- (l) the LA's current exclusion strategy is unsustainable due to limited Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserves. If the new model is not implemented this will impact schools' budgets, as the LA will have no alternative than to take the funding required from the Schools Block and transfer it to the High Needs block. This may require Secretary of State approval, dependent on the percentage required. An agreed approach is necessary with clear measures and approaches to non-compliance, signed off by all partners, to enable implementation;

The following points were raised during the discussion which followed:

- (m) identification of children at risk at the Early Years Foundation Stage is key in many cases. The Early Years team is involved in the Routes to Inclusion model, and there is dedicated support for the Early Years PVI sector;
- (n) increased numbers of children at primary schools makes the need to ensure transition work has an impact even more important for when these children transition to secondary education;
- (o) secondary schools must be properly staffed and resourced to cope with the new model of increased short-term intervention and fewer permanent exclusions;
- (p) if all secondary schools sign their SLAs, this model will save money compared to the current model. This should result in reserves being available to fund intervention at primary schools;
- (q) the curriculum at secondary school must be suitable for all pupils, including SEND pupils, as these are often disadvantaged;
- (r) protection should be available for schools that admit pupils through the Fair Access Panel, as these have high levels of need and often go on to be permanently excluded;

- (s) Free School Meals is used as an indicator of need, and informs the quota model for each secondary school. This is a national measure for deprivation and there is a proven link. However, there are other measures for disadvantage such as levels of SEND;
- (t) the SSIF bid includes a commitment to work with primary schools as well as secondary schools;
- (u) AP across the city is variable, and there needs to be a clear city-wide strategy for improvement of this. Some providers are cheaper through individual schools than through the LA. This is an issue nationally and not just in Nottingham City;
- (v) it would be helpful for secondary schools if primary schools make sure that their records and Education, Health and Care Plan information is complete prior to transition;
- (w) there is AP available in the voluntary sector, and not all schools are aware of this. In the new model the LA would like to link schools better with the voluntary sector provision;

Forum members were generally supportive and welcoming of the proposals and found them to be an improvement on the pilot, however some members had concerns for the following reasons:

- (x) Free School Meals is not a reliable indicator, as many pupils who require support do not qualify due to being new to the country, or subject to a lot of movement, and not school-ready;
- (y) the quota system is unsuitable as there may be one-off incidents where permanent exclusion is required and the quota is exceeded, leading to the school being punished financially and a possibility of losing staff;

Dialogue will continue between the Director of Education and secondary schools and academies, with the intended aim that SLAs will be signed by all. Ultimately, however, schools and academies cannot be forced to sign.

RESOLVED to

- (1) note the proposed new model of funding for secondary aged pupils at risk of exclusion;**
- (2) note the requirement to draw down a further £1.437m from the DSG reserve to support the 2018/19 high needs budget incorporating these proposals;**
- (3) note the requirement to ring-fence a further £0.788m from the DSG reserve to support these proposals in 2019/20.**