**Norfolk Schools Forum**

**Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 29 September 2021**

**09:00 – 11:30 hours**

**Teams Meeting**

**Present: Representing**

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne Academies

Adrian Ball, Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Academies

Trust

Keith Bates, Eaton Hall Specialist Academy Special School Academy

Chris Caddamy, (Vice Chair) City College 16 – 19 Representative

Lacey Douglass Early Years Representative

Mike Grimble, Avenue Junior School Primary Maintained Governors

Bob Groome Association of Teachers & Lecturers

Glyn Hambling, Unity Education Trust Alternative Provision

Howard Nelson, Diocese of Norwich Diocesan Board of Education

Carol Jacques Maintained Nursery School

Clare Jones, Boudica Schools Trust Academies

Peter Pazitka, SJB CMAT Academies

Joanne Philpott, City of Norwich School Academies

Sarah Porter, The Heart Education Trust Academies

David Shaw, Creative Education Trust Academies

Sarah Shirras, St Williams Primary Primary Maintained Schools

Joanna Tuttle, Aylsham High School Secondary Maintained Schools

Martin White, (Chair) Nebula Federation Primary Maintained Governors

Rebecca Wicks, The Clare School Maintained Special Schools

Michael Bateman Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement & Early Effectiveness

Martin Brock Accountant, Schools, SEN and Early Years

Sally Cutting Senior Accountant

Marilyn Edgeley Admin Officer

Nicki Rider Interim Head of High Needs SEND

Lisa Roll Finance Officer

Chris Snudden Director of Learning & Inclusion

**Apologies:**

Dawn Filtness Finance Business Partner

Chris Snudden Director of Learning & Inclusion

Sara Tough Executive Director Childrens Services

1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Chris Snudden, Dawn Filtness

1. **Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

It was agreed the minutes were a true record of the meeting.

* **Joint letter to the government with other School Forums in the Eastern Region on insufficient funding for the High Needs Block.**

An email has been sent to Eastern Region School Forums with the proposed draft letter.

* **Review of demographic changes in Norfolk**

Sebastian Gasse confirmed that Headteacher meetings have taken place.

* **Future Meetings**

It was confirmed that the meetings on 17 November and 19 January would need to be face to face meetings at South Green Enterprise Centre Mattishall due to the decisions required at those meetings, and that the March meeting could be a remote meeting.

**It was agreed to change the agenda order and discuss item 3c. before item 3b. to allow Nicki Rider to participate in the Special Schools’ Funding Review discussion.**

1. **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)**

**3a. SEND Strategic Improvement - Including Capital update**

Officers have provided this high level update on SEND Strategic Improvement. Schools Forum can return to any particular part of this at future meetings.

Every local authority has to have a SEND Strategy we compiled this in 2019 and refreshed earlier this year.

NCC Childrens Services is currently compiling 3 areas of work which, taken together combine to set our overall SEND Strategic Improvement planning, these are:

* Area SEND Strategy (2019-2022)
* SEND & Alternative Provision Transformation Programme (2019-2024)
* Ofsted/CQC Written Statement of Action (2020-2022)

Forum members were pleased to see the opening of Bure Park Specialist Academy in Great Yarmouth, the proposed opening of Fakenham ASD (Duke of Lancaster) spring 2022, and the Easton Complex Needs opening 2023.

Other points highlighted from the report:

Each of the new schools has a plan to build up to full capacity, on average this takes about 2 years.

Written Statement of Action, there were three areas of weakness:

* Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPS)
* 18 – 25 services, we have reinterpreted this from ofsted to 14 -25 services
* Communication and co-production- a cross cutting theme that we were not communicating our strategic plan sufficiently to parents and health care professionals.

We have increased the number of EHCP co-ordinators and our figures have moved from 8% to 52% accumulative for the year. This is good news, however EHCPs have increased to 8,000.

Officers said this was a very brief presentation and there is a lot more detail in the paper of all the work that is being carried out.

It was noted that there will be a survey 2nd half of term with particular questions for education professionals and we would like Forum members to promote this.

Members asked for details on the particular age groups of the increased EHCPs. The SEN 2 statistical return and work officers are doing with Mastodon has shown a growth in post 16.

**Action: provide information on the above at next meeting.**

Comment - It is not just about writing the initial EHCP plan, but making sure they are kept up to date and the targets/objectives remain relevant. Is there any data about how many EHCP's are in place, but out of date and need the coordinators to update the paperwork?

Members said it would be useful at key times to have feedback as a Forum. Will the transformation have to adapt due to the pressures? Would be useful to see the strategy behind the 4 strands.

Officers were looking at the work being done with Mastodon to help the transformation to adapt to changing pressures. The authority should get initial feedback from them at the start of the spring term.

It was highlighted that there will be an open day at Bure Park School on 20 October and members should contact Keith Bates or Clare Jones if they would like to visit.

Nicki Rider is involved in two large areas of work one is the quality issue of EHCPs and the backlog of annual reviews. Of all 7500 EHCPs 32% have the potential to be completed on time. The challenge is to make sure they do not slip into the remaining 62%.

**3c. Indicative Dedicated School Grant (DSG) for 2022/23 and Schools Block Fair Funding Consultation options**

Paper very similar to the last two years, this year is the last of the addition of £14 billion government money for schools over three years. The indicative DSG allocations are published online plus there is a growth factor calculated by the LA (which is not published by DfE in their indicative allocations). This gives us an estimated DSG for the next year and will be updated in December.

We are at present working on the autumn Consultation with schools, this will be launched next week and run for 3 weeks.

The proposals are:

* Mirroring of updated National Funding Formula factor values;
* Indicative Minimum Funding Guarantee and Cap values.
* Potential levels of transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block to meet ongoing demand upon high needs placements and support, and as part of the DSG Deficit Recovery Plan.

We will also add the option chosen by the Admissions Group for funding admissions appeals, for charging all schools that are their own admissions authority for appeals services.

The additional indicative DSG funding for Norfolk for 2022/23 compared to 2021/22 is £28.205m. There are links to this information in the paper.

Schools Block allocation, we believe will be approximately £565m an increase of £17m. There is a new operational guide and we intend to consult on mirroring NFF formula changes. We expect that the DfE will issue further technical guidance on business rates. There is an £11m increase for High Needs for 2022/23, however, an increase had been expected anyway and this is not sufficient to meet our needs.

Early Years - Indicative allocations are normally published in December.

Progress to Hard Formula – government continues to work towards this and there is a DfE consultation online about approach which closes on 30th September.

Local Formula – Norfolk continues to mirror the hard formula.

The next DSG recovery plan update will be brought to the autumn meeting.

**Comments:**

* Officers confirmed consultation will include a section on the DSG Recovery Plan.
* Officers confirmed that, as last year, the survey will add questions about how many pupils respondents represent.
* Members said it would be useful for officers to attend headteacher briefings to highlight the consultation.
* It was agreed to publish consultation at governors’ conference.

**Schools Forum noted the increase in overall DSG funding for 2022/23**

**3b. Special Schools Funding Review**

Lisa Roll attended Forum meeting for this item.

The report summarises research carried out and possible questions for inclusion in the Autumn Fair Funding Consultation with schools. The group worked towards a timeline to consult for changes in 2022/23 financial year. The final decision on changes will be with the authority and will take into account the DSG deficit situation and discussions with the ESFA. Launch of the consultation is intended to follow the same timeline as the mainstream school consultation (4th-22nd October).

**Rebecca Wicks left the meeting at 10:29.**

Officers ran the changes discussed through the model, the table in the report does show some significant increases. Two schools Eaton Hall and Chapel Green would have a decrease of funding. This is because both these schools received 30% on top-up values historically as they were very small schools. Eaton Hall has not seen significant growth however Chapel Green has increased in numbers over time.

**Questions and comments:**

**Q.** In relation to the benchmarking regarding staffing levels etc. what review profiling of need was considered across the complex needs schools?

**A.** *Yes, good question and ultimately, it's pretty much impossible to benchmark on needs profile unless you go in and audit children against a standardised set of criteria / benchmarks. We did consider number of special school placements against the overall EHCP school age population which showed some LAs as outliers and may mean they are placing lower levels of needs in complex needs school but ultimately, there is no way to empirically tell.*

**Q.** Presumably this growth funding would also be considered in relation to those that are growing or moving to split site provision?

**A.** *Funding for existing schools that are growing is organised under a different methodology*

Officers said that the decision on any changes will be made by the authority and that the consultation would be used to gather feedback before/if any changes are implemented.

Any decisions will be in line with the DSG deficit and in dialogue with the Education and Skills Funding Agency as we are in a DSG deficit and our recovery plan is under department scrutiny. It should also be noted that the relevant time for giving feedback to the consultation will be quite short.

**Comment** – Thank you to the working group for an excellent piece of work.

**Q.** Is there any risk that government will do something similar to the National Funding Formula? When will any schools come off an agreed format of payment and in that case would they go onto the formula we are now talking about?

**A.** Yes we think the DfE will look at Special Schools. Transition from the current funding - new schools are subject to a growth plan funding model which is agreed with the authority and the trust of the school and the EFA when a school is commissioned. On full capacity the school moves to the standardised funding model. Prior to this what happens is ghost auditing. The authority has to determine if there will be a surplus or deficit and how far we want to apply protection.

Officers confirmed that schools with pools that receive income from other uses has been taken into consideration.

**Comment** - remember that many of the pools are hydrotherapy pools that are limited to use for other external parties.

Officers said that it intends to consult with all stakeholders.

**Comment** – Any changes to funding for special schools will affect mainstream schools in some way therefore should be a wide consultation.

**Action: Officers agreed this should appear alongside the main consultation with school.**

**Schools Forum noted the information provided.**

1. **Forward Plan**

Early Years – waiting for information from government.

November meeting:

* Voting on de-delegation, top-slicing, and growth fund
* Schools Block Funding
* Special School Review
* DSG Recovery Plan

1. **Date of next meeting**

17 November 2021 09:00 – 11:30 at Southgreen Park Mattishall