



Walsall Council

Walsall Children's Services

Item No. 8

Report to: Schools Forum

Date: 24th September 2013

Subject: Special Schools Funding Review

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Purpose of the report: This report outlines the progress to date of the funding review for Specials Schools.

Recommendation: To note the content of the report

Special Schools Funding Review

1. Background

The March 2012 School funding reform announcement set out the changes to the way high needs pupils were to be funded.

A report to Forum in March this year outlined the approach the local authority had agreed to adopt in respect of the funding of special schools in the 2013-2014 financial years.

Section 6 of the report also outlines the intention to undertake a full review of the special schools funding matrix.

Two meetings have been held with special school heads to progress the review, one in July and more recently on the 12th September.

2. Review to date

2.1 The group have agreed the following principles:

To seek a funding methodology that reflects needs and enables those needs to be met appropriately so that children and young people –

- Stay in Walsall
- Make good and outstanding progress
- Show good and outstanding achievement
- Are well prepared for the next step

It is understood that the local authority must ensure it has established a sufficient number of high needs places and that these places are matched to the “needs” of the pupil population.

Funding in schools must be targeted to make provision for pupils currently in school – this year’s funding for this year’s pupils.

The local authority’s local offer and schools’ local offer must be inter-linked and correlate with funding. The funding methodology should, as far as possible, be simple and transparent.

2.2 **The Funding Matrix** – The existing Walsall matrix is complex and inconsistent and it was proposed at the review meeting that to aid simplification a reduction in the number of funding bands could be considered, identifying exceptions for very complex need on the basis of individual pupil need.

Discussions have taken place about desirable staffing ratios across the differing range of provision in our special schools, the ratios becoming the basis of the new funding matrix.

A special school funding review is a task a number of West Midland's authorities are undertaking during 2013-14 and some have already completed their review – one such authority is Wolverhampton. Information is being shared across local authorities and this approach is being encouraged by the DfE who hope that shared common funding principles will smooth the transition to the introduction of a national funding matrix. At a recent regional funding group a number of authorities indicated that they intend to use the Wolverhampton model as their starting point, including Birmingham and Coventry.

Having now researched a number of other LA's funding formula it was proposed, at the group's meeting on 12th September, that the model for Walsall should also use the Wolverhampton structure as a basis, but recognising that it may be necessary to add other variables in order to minimise turbulence.

At their recent meeting the group discussed a paper detailing the proposed bands and staffing ratios across each of the special schools together with other proposed funding elements to be used in the new funding matrix.

Below is an illustration of the proposed staffing ratios:

	BESD 1	BESD 2	MLD 1	MLD 2	SLD 1	SLD 2
Teaching	1:7	1:7	1:10	1:10	1:7	1:6
Education Support 1	1:7	1:5	1:10	1:7	1:7	1:5
Education Support 2	1:14	1:10	na	1:15	1:14	1:10
Lunchtime support	1:10	1:10	1:15	1:15	1:7	1:6
Care Staff	na	Na	na	na	1:3	1:3

Other funding elements will be added to the funding matrix and will cover premises, learning resources, administration, services and management costs.

3. Next Steps

The above staffing ratios and other elements will be costed into funding model, which will in turn be used to model a budget for each of the special schools. Individual school meetings have been arranged for the end of September where the impact of modelled budgets will be discussed.

The review group will meet again on Friday 4th October when it is hoped to agree a funding matrix for 2014-15.

4. Recommendations

School Forum is asked to note the contents of this report.