

MINUTES

Title of Meeting:	School's Forum High Needs Working Group	
Purpose or Mandate:	To oversee the HNB of the DSG	
Date:	Thursday 10 th September 2020	
Place:	Teams Meeting	
Times:	3:00 – 5:00 pm	
Attendees:	Gemma Morgan (Chair)	Head of SEND Funding and Provider Services, SCC
	Michael Quinton	Schools Funding Policy Manager SCC
	Allison Bowman	Governor, Earl Soham Primary School
	Allison Coleman	Governor, Federation of Fairfield and Colneis Schools
	Graham Alcock	Headteacher, Chalk Hill PRU
	Calvin Marshall	Director of Inclusive Learning, West Suffolk College
	Sally Garrett	Headteacher, Ashley School
	Jan Hatchell	Headteacher, Riverwalk School
	Sophie Harbut	Apprentice Business Support Officer, SCC
	Steve Newman	SEND Policy and Funding Manager, SCC
	Joy Settle	High Needs Funding Moderation Lead, SCC
	Sue Prickett	Representative for Lawrence Chapman
	Wendy James	Sidegate Primary School

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1.	Welcome and Introductions Apologies: Lisa Jones, Darron Jackson, Ashlee Jacobs, Lawrence Chapman	GM
2.	<u>Actions from the last meeting:</u> GA extended an invite to the July PRU Heads meeting to GM and JS who both attended. The band 1 review mechanism is still ongoing. The Dual Placement Policy will be updated later in the meeting. Adjustments are currently being made from Early Years and Family Services to ensure everything is captured in the policy to meet their requirements. CM and GM have had conversations regarding FE and the FE sector and how different it is to other providers. GM is currently finalising the School's Forum paper which is going to DMT next week and she will share with the group once finalised.	GM
3	Schools' Forum Paper – SEND Funding: GM has worked with group members to look at the deficit in the High Needs block and how to deal with recovery of that. GM wasn't in a position to share	GM

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	<p>the draft with the group before this meeting as it wasn't ready. At the end of the financial year we will have a £16 million deficit in the High Needs Block and this needs to be paid back over 2, 5 or 7 years. To do this we either need to request more money from schools or reduce top up funding. It is possible that we can do neither if we can pay it back in a reasonable time. Demand is still growing, and the demand is outstripping supply. JS did some work around the mainstream funding for bands. The two options are either we pay it over 3 years, but this isn't feasible as we would have to reduce top up funds and take money from the School's Block. It has been indicated we will get additional money for the next financial year. Once we have taken off all teachers pay and pension it is around £7.4 million which has been factored into these scenarios. We need to consider predicted growth and modelling the potential spend allowing for growth. They looked at recovery over 5 years, but this still leaves them in deficit, based on the gross predicted for 2021-22. In order to do so they would have to take money from top up band values or ask for smaller (0.25%) from the School's block so 5 years isn't too favourable. It is difficult to predict the growth between 2021-22. They are doing work on SEND sufficiency which may put them into a position to help predict the growth for 2021-22. If they recover over 7 years, then the proposal is that they could pay more back at the end of each year. £2.2 million a year could be paid back and if demand goes down, they could pay back more and wouldn't need to take money from the school's block. It will be taken to Schools Forum and they will decide which option is best.</p> <p>SP asked what we would pay back with and GM replied that it would be taken out of the High Needs Funding budget. This would be same for all options (3,5 or 7 years).</p> <p>SG confirmed the deficit is £16 million at end of this financial year - potentially £7.4 million additional each year. MQ agrees, the High Needs block will eventually grow, and the additional funding will pay back the deficit. Of the £7.4 million, we would look to pay £2.2 million over 5 years or £5.3 million over 3 years.</p> <p>GA asked what the £9.1 million is for, where has it come from and is it part of the problem that the revenue from the DFE can be unpredictable and so we don't know what we'd get over the next few years. GM added that 2021 – 22 is an ongoing amount but we don't know what this funding will be. We are poorly funded compared to other councils, but we can't confirm that they will give us more. Last year we overspent by £12 million and so that £9 million has covered this level of spend.</p> <p>GM is hoping to finalise her paper later today and she will share it with the group. It is due to go to DMT next week and then Schools Forum on October 15th and they will make the decision on whether it will be over 3, 5 or 7 years.</p> <p>AC stated that there is always more demand than we have money for and asked if the paper look at prediction for increased pressure on the budget and if it is realistic on how much demand we will meet. GM has spoken about this in her paper and it is difficult to predict growth over 2021-22. We have seen an increase in survival rates of children and so the number of children requiring a SEN has increased. Lots of children are currently in inappropriate settings and there is future work which needs to be done to look at those. This needs to be worked on with Family Services and other teams in the Inclusion Service. It is predicted an additional £4 million will be needed for the next financial year based on the demands. We can say that we are offering more in the Local Offer over next few years, we have a new school opening and 4 new special</p>	

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	<p>schools over the next 2 - 4 years which will reduce pressure. It's difficult as children may already be comfortable where they are currently placed, and it is parental choice whether they move. They have tried to suggest the 7-year plan as they don't want to make it worse.</p> <p>SP asked what the likelihood is they will accept that proposal. AC said that all schools have needs to be appropriately funded but we've always been underfunded so we have always been under pressure, but we can't always ignore this. 7 years is a long time but for reasons given more people would be prepared to accept this, so we don't have to take money out of school's block or top up values. There is head room for extra support meaning we've got plans in place to work towards this. They won't want it taken out of the school's block.</p> <p>It was asked who we owe the money to and GM answered that it is Suffolk County Council's reserves and the deficit sits in the Out of County reserves. Regulation suggests that we can't hold DSG reserves. We are thankful that the DfE has relaxed this as it's not viable to settle in the previous window.</p> <p>SG states that she thinks Schools Forum would likely favour the 7-year proposal as both other options have a large knock on effect.</p> <p>CM asked who in Schools Forum represents post 16 providers and AB replied that she believes it is Helen from Thurston High School. CM expressed his concerns that this paper effects FE but could be voted by people who don't represent FE colleges which is his concern.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>GM to share the Schools Forum paper with the group once completed.</p>	
4.	<p>Policy Updates – PEX, Dual Placement, Part Time Timetable:</p> <p>The Dual Placement Policy is currently still being worked on. Adjustments have been made from Early Years and we are waiting for feedback from the Suffolk Parent Carer Network who offered to make adjustments so that it was more parent carer friendly. We believe that the summer holidays have delayed this. They still need to work with Family Services to finalise their points. They have been busy working on the BSL training policy alongside Andrea Carron, the ATS medical policy with Maria Hough and the PEX policy. All three have gone through the Policy and Procedure group and SN is now part of the group which helps support colleagues from the Inclusion Services when we submit future Policies. The documents will be published on Suffolk Learning and SN is currently liaising with a Ben Scarfe to do so.</p> <p>In the future he is looking to do work on part time timetables. The Provider Development team are working on this. They are creating a process to ensure if children are on a part-time timetable at a PRU setting then it is on agreed conditions. This is currently being finalised.</p> <p>JH states that lots of mainstream schools are managing SEND by putting through part time timetables but they're not doing it officially. This was challenged as many schools are following the policy. It was asked that we finalise this to ensure it applies to all provisions.</p> <p>AB asked about the ETA for the Dual Policy. SN said the will provide this to the group at the next meeting in November but could not be shared before this.</p> <p>The Policy Panel and EIA review group meet on a monthly basis and they need to get everyone to agree. They have missed getting it out for this academic year but are hoping to get it out in January.</p>	SN

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	<p>SP asked if the Dual Placement cover follows that child and GM confirmed that it does.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>SN to continue working on part time timetable policy and to provide the group with an update on the Dual Policy at the next meeting.</p>	
5.	<p>High Needs Moderation Update:</p> <p>During the last meeting we were unsure about how the moderation would work for the summer term. We weren't able to have moderators in but luckily there wasn't a high number of spreadsheets to moderate. We are positive that we will be able to put a panel in place for the autumn term as it will be a much bigger job. We are currently looking at Endeavour House as an option and have got the guidelines for this.</p> <p>During the 2019-20 academic year mainstreams started with a cost of £7.8 million when we began last autumn, and the requests were for £3.5 million. Mainstream would have ended up on £11.3 million but ended on £9.5 million due to the moderation which saved £1.8 million. The cost of the moderation was around £30,000 so as we managed to save £1.8 million, we believe it was money well spent. SN is working on spreadsheets and an in-depth analysis for the next academic year. The website now has been updated and all the links are working. JS has waited a few weeks as there is confusion with the Early Years work. The Early Years deadline is within the next week and people can get confused with this. They will wait for their deadline to pass then give them the new arrangements.</p> <p>The deadlines for the autumn term will be Wednesday 21 October for the spreadsheets and Friday 6 November for the evidence. They are expecting a large volume to come in for the autumn term.</p> <p>Over the Summer they completed lots of QA work. Part time timetables was their focus in the spring term, and they are starting to set the process in place where anyone with a HNF banding could be pro rated if they had a part time timetable. This fell apart due to COVID 19 but will be continued to work on. They're currently looking at settings and what funding they are expecting which is giving them a good idea of some settings to look at and potential challenges. They aim to have another year of data and then will begin to work on the comparative work.</p> <p>HNF will be audited internally by Suffolk County Council. They wanted to come during the summer moderation, but we didn't agree as this wasn't very representative. The whole system is a high-risk rating due to inconsistent banding. JS is confident we have moved forward from this and they will be inspecting during the autumn term.</p> <p>JH raised that her experience with being 6 months away from schools has had a big effect on children with SEN needs and so they haven't had a chance to explore the mental health impact. She asked if we are prepared that they may need greater support due to the impact from COVID. JS said that it is difficult to predict and that the summer term ensured learners didn't lose out on funding. It's a case where they need to just wait and see what comes in. They will do it on an individual basis for each individual child. In a few weeks' time they will have greater idea.</p> <p>SG queried the AP bandings and GM assured that the level of bandings aren't due to be reviewed so there are no plans to review AP bandings place funding.</p>	JS

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	<p>Not all students in an AP setting have a banding. The notional gives settings a starting point and saves setting lots of work if they agree with that notional band. They only need to challenge it if they feel it needs changing. JS has tried to get them banded but it is a work in progress. AT the moment it is a termly process and those going in and out of PRU's wouldn't have that time frame. JS has looked at independent settings and gave some notional bandings and could do this in future. She can't go and visit all children but can get an idea from what their EHCP tells them.</p> <p>GA pointed out that they went through a long process establishing the banding and whilst he takes on board Sally's comments it was purely in terms of reflecting the high level of turbulence of running a PRU. Thus, why they did a separate moderation process to represent overall profile so feels disheartened at reopening this as he understands the philosophy of funding being attached to individual child, but this is very difficult practically.</p> <p>SP outlined that it is difficult for the schools to know when a child with a part time timetable is likely to end. As staff may be hired for the individual child and so they can't waste that money. JS stated that parents need to agree to on the part time timetable and could cancel it any day. They can't spend the full amount on anyone or anything other than that learner so if the money is not required it needs to go back to the Suffolk County Council HNF pot. Staffing could have been in a difficult position in the first term but in the second term it differs. It would be bad planning taking in permanent staff for a child on a part time timetable. HNF is just a top up for the school. Unless band H, notional funding covers the first term for a child.</p>	
6.	<p>Finance Update:</p> <p>At the end of the Summer term there was a funding update which is good news. Although, we are still a low funded LA and MQ continues to work with MP's to try and increase funding to Suffolk. Norfolk has the same demographic and is the same size as us but get £10-15 million more than us.</p> <p>There is 3.24 % pupil increase for 2021 - 22 but the HNF has increased by 12%. Teachers' pay and pension and has now been embedded into the school's block. We need to find savings through the Central Services block. The Central Services block had a 20% cut so we will continue to work with key members of the forum on how we can make the changes.</p> <p>There is a COVID catch up premium of £80 per pupil mainstream and £240 for specials, AP and PRUS.</p> <p>WJ contacted Judith during the summer term regarding catch up funding. She said schools would only get the £80 if they are in a mainstream school with a specialist unit. She believes units within a mainstream setting should be getting higher rates. MQ to feed back to DMT.</p> <p>There has been a £2.6 million overspend on DSG. Areas for concern are independent places, top up numbers are increasing 290 additional places in small provisions in this year. There was a £16 million deficit and so we need to work with the DfE as they want to know how we can recover this.</p> <p>SP stated Covid funding for pre 16 and post 16 are different rates. £240 per pupil as a blanket rate. MQ to check if this a variable.</p> <p>It is unclear how the Covid funding will be released. AB confirmed it states 3 tranches with £150 of the £240 to be paid by spring. SN, GM and MQ to look at this and come back to all.</p>	MQ

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	<p>MQ to revisit the details as there have been several iterations of the guidance and when we have the allocation, we can share this when we get the final information.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>MQ continue to work with MP's to try and increase funding to Suffolk. SN, GM and MQ to look into how COVID funding will be released and come back to all.</p>	
7.	<p><u>A.O.B:</u></p> <p>No other business from anyone around the table.</p>	All
	<p>High Needs Working Group Future Meeting Dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10th Sept 2020 – Endeavour House ▪ 5th Nov 2020 - G01 Landmark House <p>Venues to be confirmed pending lockdown arrangements.</p>	<p>Schools Forum Dates:</p> <p>Thurs 15th Oct 2020</p> <p>Thurs 26th Nov 2020</p>