

Forum Newsletter

**SOLIHULL SCHOOLS FORUM met on 9th July 2018,
the following is a précis of business undertaken**

Finance Work Group

David Lewis explained the latest discussions around the Trade Union Facilities Time scheme run by the Local Authority and the proposals to reduce the current cost from £7.50pp to around £5.00pp. The proposals are to encourage more academies to buy the service; to reimburse local TU reps at the supply rate rather than the full cover cost and to reduce the number of support days. The LA may negotiate further with schools before moving ahead with the proposals.



Funding Factor for Schools with Exceptionally High Levels of EHCPs

Steve Fenton explained the proposed funding solution that will ensure the small number of schools with an exceptionally high number of EHCP pupils will be more adequately supported. Based on the current number of schools in this category, the solution will cost £102k pa which will be found from within the existing SEN budget. For schools that have a high level of EHCPs plus an ARP, there will be an additional financial enhancement. The proposal is intended to further incentivise inclusion, but will not respond to concerns raised by schools where there are very high levels of 'k' (school support) pupils. Members accepted the proposal.

High Needs Block Budget Position

Following last year's £248k overspend and the prediction that this will rise to around £1.5m by the end of 2018-19, the LA will be working with schools on a number of strands including funding to incentivise inclusion, assessing the effectiveness of existing provisions, monitoring the application of the Banding system and smarter commissioning of places through implementation of the upcoming SEND Commissioning Strategy, together with a continuing commitment to 'spend to save' investments to reduce reliance on ex-borough places and plans for a specialist Autism Free School.

Director of Children's Services & Skills

Sally Hodges talked through a range of issues that Education and the wider Children's agenda are facing locally, regionally and nationally. These included:

- The rise in the number of Looked After Children, the growing complexity of their needs and the strain this is putting on resources.
- Staff retention and the need to grow and develop future leadership.
- The need for schools to familiarise themselves with and be able to recognise a new form of child exploitation known as County Lines. Sally encouraged schools to accept offers of advice and guidance in this area.
- The concept of off-rolling, where children are not on-roll of a school or other educational establishment, are not being home educated or following an alternative curriculum. Local authorities will be expected to identify these young people, understand their level of need and respond appropriately to it, with data likely to be included in Ofsted inspections.
- The Local Authority inspection regime has changed and now includes Focused (targeting a particular theme, service or cohort of children) and Standard (rigorous, intensive and child-focused lasting 2 weeks) Inspections.
- The issue of Special Educational Needs is a major focus nationally and is a particular issue for Solihull due to the high level of young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, either diagnosed or suspected. This is impacting on the Authority's increasing reliance on expensive out-of-borough provision plus transport costs. In response to this unsustainable trend, the LA is considering a number of solutions, including an 80-100 place Centre of Excellence for Autism, funding for which will be sought through the DfE bidding system and a more imaginative approach to using existing High Needs funding to better support inclusion in Solihull mainstream schools.

National Funding Formula 2019-20 DfE Update

Steve Fenton presented the main headlines and changes to funding for 2019-20, including:

- Although no information is available beyond 2019-20, it remains the Government's intention to move towards a hard formula from April 2020.
- For 2019-20 the funding floor will increase to 1% (from 0.5%) and the Government cap will increase to just over 6%. Minimum per pupil funding will rise to £3,500 for primary and £4,800 for secondary.
- For Pupil Growth, the DfE will move towards a standard formula calculation based on pupil numbers rather than basing it on actual spend from the previous year. Funding will continue to be lagged.
- Despite pressures on the High Needs Block nationally, no additional funding is planned in this area for 2019-20.
- Blocks will continue to be ringfenced, but there is still the option to transfer 0.5% from Schools Block to the HNB, with Schools Forum agreement. There are no plans for Solihull to do this for next year.
- The DfE is due to release a formal statement later in July.

Full minutes and papers are available to view and download on the [Schools Forum website](#).

