

Schools Forum Funding Group Meeting

11 January 2016, Aylesbury High School

Meeting opened: 12.30pm

Meeting closed: 3.00pm

Present

Members

Pete Rowe, Tessa Haddon, Alan Rosen, Michael Moore, Steven Sneesby, Wendy Terry, Sue Stamp.

Observers

Olwyn Davison-Oakley

Officers

John Huskinson and Nick Wilson

1. Apologies for Absence/ Changes in Membership

Apologies were received from Katherine Douglas.

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 12 December 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

4. DSG 2016/17 Proposals

Members were advised that there were two main streams to consider:

- The principle of the formula being similar to the national formula and funding models
- The views expressed because of the pupil premium gap and disadvantaged areas that Bucks should be different

Following discussions by Schools Forum Members about the models produced, two additional options/models were provided.

- Model 8 – AWPU Balance retaining ratio
- Model 9 – Secondary increase Lump Sum AWPU Balance.

During discussions the following points were made.

- A Headteacher in Buckinghamshire has advised that Ofsted were focussing on phonics, why the results in Buckinghamshire are lower, and the pupil premium gap.
- At the December meeting of Schools Forum (SF), comments were made that advance notification hadn't been received about the consultation and about the structure of the group/membership/representation on Schools Forum Funding Group (SFFG) and communication to SF members.
- Head teachers are not representing sector when sit as part of SFFG. They are trying to find what is best for Bucks.

- Concern was expressed about allowing others to speak at SF meetings apart from SF members but it was agreed they could do so at the discretion of the Chairman.
- The consultation was for all schools. It was not correct constitutionally for other parties to respond
- There was the limit of one voice per school this year responding to the consultation.
- Is one response per school fair on combined schools? Members were advised that financially combined schools are a single unit.
- There is the need to be mindful that the consultation process is open and transparent and about who is invited to respond.
- Communication – there are incredibly tight timelines within which decisions about funding have to be made. It would have been helpful to have dates setting out the timeline in terms of the start of the debate and the closing date.
- Clarification is needed of how funding works as there is still a lack of understanding.
- Clarification is also needed about the funding position, the pot, how this is divided up and how much funding is needed for early years and high needs.
- The basic costs needed to run schools needs to be taken into account
- There are limited factors available to address the needs of those pupils who don't fit the criteria for funding such as pupil premium, FSM etc.
- Can the formula put money into areas of need such as phonics? Unfortunately it is not possible to put money into specific areas – the criteria are set by national government.
- There are a series of schools in Bucks (because of the selective system), where it seems like the outcomes are statistically different from nationally (all secondary moderns). Is SF or the local authority able to do anything about this i.e. designated funding to specific schools via a mechanism? In the past funding has been delegated to Bucks Learning Trust (BLT) which they then put into specific schools with need. John Huskinson explained that funding of £2m was put into Wycombe/Aspire to address the issue of Narrowing the Gap.
- Within the commissioning function the expectation is that there would be an annual agreement to focus work in schools on the cusp of difficulty with Ofsted. The Education Champion BCC, has advised that there is a much sharper focus this year on BLT and areas where funding is needed. BLT are on the forward plan to provide an update on the services they provide.
- The London Challenge programme has transformed schools in the capital but this has not been without controversy. There are issues to consider such as partnerships between schools and migration due to increasing house prices which make simple comparison unhelpful.
- The average funding in London is c. £6000 per pupil which is out of kilter with Bucks.
- The non selective improvement strategy is based around getting help from the four teaching schools in Bucks which are grammar schools. There are fundamental difficulties with partnership working as non selective schools potentially need a different skill set.
- BLT business is commissioned by BCC. If secondary heads have an idea about support they should be able to contact the Education Champion who is the link for commissioning and BLT.
- Underachievement in primary schools is a sector that needs to be addressed.

- The reason for going to AWPU was this is a factor that it distributes funding across all sectors equally – i.e. Grammar schools would gain from this.
- The reason for going to AWPU was this is a factor that doesn't unfairly affect grammar schools.
- As a sector Prior Attainment would be the most effective as it puts money into where there is weakness in upper schools.
- Concern was expressed that there is a diverse range of schools and a single model is being used against underachievement i.e. money going into Prior Attainment wouldn't address EAL unless there was a 100% overlap.
- Is Buckinghamshire going to be facing an increase in EAL due to migration? John Huskinson said that after doing an analysis, EAL in primary schools seems to be an issue. In terms of FSM, all Shire counties use FSM6 apart from Buckinghamshire.
- The starting point needs to be the principles i.e. the reason why money is put into a specific factor.
- Children should not be disadvantaged going to school in Buckinghamshire i.e. child with specific characteristics receive good funding in other counties but are poorly funding when they come to Bucks.
- Would the model being put forward get the figures to 89%? John Huskinson explained that the proposed model would increase the figures more in line with statistical neighbours and increase the percentage into Basic Need.
- In terms of the 90%/10% model, if more money is put into FSM and EAL, where would the money come from i.e. out of AWPU or all factors would have to be reduced by 10%?
- If Bucks adopts the same formula this year how does this compare to the actual funding Bucks receives from Central Government? John Huskinson explained that there is some growth money and a small amount of additional funding. All additional money is for the extra pupils in Bucks.
- Some examples of where benchmarking authorities differ significantly in use of deprivation were given e.g. Surrey does not use IDACI for primary schools.
- Bucks does not currently put any money into Looked After Children. Bucks currently has 139 pupils classified as Looked After Children which at £1000 (MFL level) would cost approximately £140,000 gross.
- The following two proposals were suggested – increasing EAL to the affordable level of MFL and taking this money out of IDACI or not put it back in or giving LAC MFL at affordable level from IDACI. John Huskinson explained that the cost of these two decisions would be approximately £1.65m

Three models would be run

- 90%/10% AWPU and Lump Sum with the figures agreed for LAC, EAL and FSM (FSM reduced from £750 to £500)
- 89% with adjustments coming out of IDACI
- A model on a top cap and match to MFG. This would include the outcome when the cap is reduced by 1%, 2% etc.

Action: John Huskinson

5. Date of the Next Meeting

Friday 26 February 2016, 9.30am, Green Park, Aston Clinton