

Schools Forum

Title: Funding Mechanism for Special Schools 2019-20

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Local members affected:

For press enquiries concerning this report, please contact the media office on 01296 382444

Summary

This paper outlines the way in which special schools will be funded in 2019-20 and the timeline for moving towards a needs led funding mechanism for special schools.

Recommendation

The Schools Forum is asked to:

- 1. Note the proposed funding mechanism for Special Schools in 2019-20**
- 2. Note and agree the proposals to move to a banded funding mechanism that reflects need from April 2020**

Key considerations:

The current budget for maintained school and academy special school provision in Buckinghamshire is £32.277 million. This is after investment of £2.7 million in the current financial year. A further budget of £0.5 million is held for additional places and exceptional support. The increase in funding was reported to Schools Forum in January and June 2018.

The report to Schools Forum in June 2018 confirmed the intention to move towards a new funding formula for specialist provision within Buckinghamshire. This is in line with Priority 7 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy 2017-2020. The new formula is to be a needs led funding mechanism which will enable schools to be funded for the level of need identified for the pupils on their roll. It should be noted that initial work had been carried out

with special schools to start to develop the model in 2018-19 and this project will need to build on that work.

Currently special schools within Buckinghamshire are funded based on a provision led model and the costs on which top up levels are based were reviewed in 2017-18. In the absence of the new formula it is intended that the same mechanism is used for 2019-20 however the cost base is being updated to recognise the current pupil cohorts. It is then intended that a needs led funding system be implemented from April 2020.

A needs led funding mechanism will be based on a set of bands that reflect needs and have financial values attached. Work will need to take place to develop the banding descriptors and consult with schools. It is proposed that the banding approach will be across mainstream and specialist provision and that a Task and Finish Group be established, including representatives from mainstream and special schools, to work on proposals for consultation with schools.

A draft timeline to achieve the new funding formula for special schools is set out in the table below:

Mar-19	Agree task and finish group, through the Inclusion Hub, to review Banding options and descriptors
Apr-19	Research and develop banding descriptors. Develop proposals for consultation
May-19	Agree and issue consultation
Jun-19	Consultation with schools on proposed banding descriptors
Jul-19	Outcomes of consultation Modelling of new banding to allocate pupils to bands and
Aug-19	confirm initial financial values
Sep-19	
Oct-19	Schools Forum to sign off approach and initial modelling agree any transitional arrangements for gains and losses
Nov-19	
Dec-19	Final sign off from Schools Forum for band values, moderation process, etc
Jan-20	
Feb-20	Issue provisional budgets based on existing pupils, in same time scale as mainstream schools
Mar-20	
Apr-20	Funding for High Needs pupils in place

There are a number of other workstreams that are linked to this specific project, including the development of the SEN Sufficiency Strategy and the development and review of the graduated approach.

Resource implications

Funding for special schools and other provision for pupils with high needs is to come from the High Needs Block. The financial implications of the new funding mechanism will be modelled as the work progresses and will be reported to Schools Forum according to the timeline above.

Legal implications

None

Other implications/issues

There are interdependencies between this workstream and other key workstreams within the Inclusion Hub and the SEND Improvement Plan, including the development of the SEN Sufficiency Strategy.

Feedback from consultation, Local Area Forums and Local Member views (if relevant)

Schools will be consulted on the development of a banding matrix and the financial implications will be brought to Schools Forum.

Background Papers

Schools Forum papers and minutes from January and June 2018
