

Cumbria Schools' Forum – SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group

Notes of the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group held on Friday 24 June 2005 at The Westmorland Hotel, Tebay.

Present: Mr A Abernethy (Carlisle Secondary), Mrs J Blacklock (Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary Schools), Mr S Bowditch (Special Schools), Mrs S Fearn (representing Mr B Thomas), Mr A Rutter (Teachers' Professional Associations), Mr P Shaw (Allerdale Secondary and Chair of the Group), Mr D Johnston (LEA), Mr D Henderson (LEA), Mr H Slater (LEA), Mrs A Gibson (LEA), Mrs N Shiels (LEA)

Apologies: Mr R Alston, Mr C Brooksbank, Ms S Gaston-Parry

Mr Shaw, Chair of the Group would arrive a little late so Mr Rutter opened the meeting.

Action

The Group noted that there were a number of members not present.

1. **Notes of the Meeting held on 24 February 2005**

The notes of the meeting held on 24 February 2005 were agreed as an accurate record.

2. **Matters Arising**

It was reported that John Atkinson would replace Gordon Weallens as PHA Support Officer from September 2005.

3. **Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant**

At the meeting of the group held on 24 February, it had been agreed that Bob White or Angela Gibson should be invited to attend the next meeting to give a short presentation and answer questions that the group might have regarding the use of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG). The SEN Working Group did stress that they were not challenging the EMAG but that they wanted to be better informed.

Angela Gibson (AG) joined the meeting to give a short presentation relating to the use of the EMAG. She explained the different sources of funding and outlined a number of different examples that illustrated how the funding was used.

Part of the work related to the monitoring of racist incidents. This was currently a paper-based exercise with a return rate of approximately 65%. The rate needed to improve and it was hoped that the introduction of an electronic system, which should be in place by September, would help. School Improvement colleagues were also raising this issue at the termly link visits to schools. It was also suggested that CASH and PHA could assist with raising awareness. AG to

contact Arthur Capstick (CASH Support) and Gordon Weallens/John Atkinson (PHA Support).

AG

There was a view that many schools simply did not recognise ethnic minorities within schools and therefore did not report racist incidents. SF suggested that it would be worthwhile to include a reference in school handbooks for parents. The group agreed but felt that all schools should give the same message and that the production of a county model statement that could be circulated to all schools would be helpful.

AG?

As a result of the presentation the SEN Group agreed that the EMAG was being used effectively. It was felt important to maintain awareness in schools through CASH and PHA, and revisit regularly. AG was thanked for her presentation, a copy of which would be circulated with the notes of the meeting.

4. **Strategic Facilities Funding**

The Chair welcomed Mrs J Blacklock to her first meeting of the group.

At the meeting of the group held on 24 February, David Henderson had presented a report and explained an initial proposal to allocate an additional £150,000 to Strategic Facilities. The group had expressed a number of concerns, the greatest of which was that of the different amounts for the different age ranges. The SEN Working Group had therefore requested that some further work be undertaken on the calculation of the additional allocation.

David Henderson presented a further report that included re-worked figures and more detail regarding the proposals. He explained that the previous report had included the initial proposal, a 'first shot'. The Strategic Facilities Development Group had been working with officers to agree how the funding was allocated and a position had now been agreed. All facilities would receive a minimum amount to ensure that funding was available for the equivalent of 1 FTE specialist teaching assistant and five hours specialist teaching time per week. There would then be an additional allocation based on differences in AWPU values for all registered pupils in a facility less the value of any statements. A number of criteria for the basis on the allocation for 2005/06, and future years were also proposed. It was felt that there was now a fairness, which was based on a rationale that was fair. SF thought that this was a step in the right direction but pointed out that it didn't deal with the inadequacy of funding for individual statements. DH explained that this was an attempt to apply some stability of funding which would enable the retention of core staff in schools. As the Strategic Facilities Development Group had been involved with the development of the proposals, the SEN Group felt that they should take the advice of the SFDG.

The proposals outlined in the paper to allocate the £150,00 to Strategic Facilities were therefore agreed.

DH

Post 16 – The Chair again raised the issues relating to funding of statements for

post 16 students. This was a national issue however work was ongoing to reach a resolution.

5. **Strategic Facilities Development Group**

The SFDG would meet, following the meeting of the SEN Group. DH explained that the group generally met once per term with additional meetings convened as necessary. The purpose of the group was to clear up anomalies and look at how strategic facilities delivered their business. The group also considered the development of new strategic facilities within the context of the existing facilities. It was recognised that these had developed haphazardly, but for all the right reasons.

The Chair of the SEN Group had some concerns regarding funding. In West Cumbria a funding mechanism had been developed that gave stability and he hoped that changes would not be agreed that could effectively result in a worsening position. DJ stressed that any proposals relating to funding would have to be reported back to the Schools' Forum.

It was noted that the five Special Schools heads had consistently stated that children in mainstream schools with similar difficulties were funded at a higher level than those in special schools.

6. **Special Schools Formula Review**

Work was underway to produce a comprehensive model of spending for mainstream and special schools. There were two different models and, following a meeting with the five special school headteachers on Monday, 20 June a reworked model was presented. Work on the models would be ongoing and a further report would be presented to the Schools' Forum on 13 September. Following that meeting, final adjustments would be made prior to consulting with all schools about the models. HS had been working with the special school heads on the model of spending which was based on what was needed to run a class, and then adding things required to run a school.

It was emphasised that this work was an attempt to identify the minimum sum needed to run a class. This was the first stage of the process and was not a proposal to reduce budget. This was the starting point. Once a model of spending was in place, a governing body could not be asked to spend below the model.

There were continued concerns relating to this area of work, and non-special school members had similar concerns about the modelling work for mainstream schools. However, the group did feel that this was a genuine attempt to identify a level of spending that was required to run a school. If a school was deemed necessary, then it should be funded properly. Some of the concerns were related to the fact that different schools had addressed issues in differing ways previously.

Despite the concerns, there was a broad agreement from the group that the work was necessary and would be of value in the future. Having a model spend in place would illustrate clearly the level of resources that were needed and it would therefore be more difficult to make reductions. Assurances were given to the Special Schools representative that primary, secondary and (the LEA) would undergo a similar process.

The modelling work would continue and a further report would be presented on 13 September 2005.

7. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

8. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Group would be held on Thursday, 20 October 2005, 9.30am at the Westmorland Hotel, Tebay.

P&R/NJS
26 July 2005