

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

Notes of the SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group held on Monday 27 March 2006 at The Westmorland Hotel, Tebay.

Present: Mrs N Bates (Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary), (Mrs J Blacklock (Small Schools), Mr S Bowditch (Special Schools), Mr C Brooksbank (South Lakeland Primary), Mrs S Fearn (representing Canon Jenkins), Mr K Little (Labour Group), Mrs J Mansfield (Community Secondary), Mr E Tumelty (RC Diocese), Mr D Johnston (LA), Mr S Goodall (LA), Mr H Slater (LA), Mrs N Shiels (LA)

Apologies: Mrs E Barraclough, Mr A Bryant, Mr A Hodge, Mr A Rutter

1. Appointment of Chair

It was agreed that Mr C Brooksbank be appointed as Chair of the group.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

It was agreed that Mr S Bowditch be appointed as Vice-Chair of the group.

3. Notes of the Meeting held on 24 June 2005

Subject to amendment to the figure of £150,000 on page two (£150,00 – additional 0 required) the notes of the meeting held on 24 June 2006 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. BSS, PRU, Combined Services

Stuart Goodall attended the meeting to respond to specific questions that had arisen at recent meetings of the Schools' Forum relating to identified pressures in funding for BSS, PRUs and Combined Services.

BSS – the peripatetic behaviour support team would provide support to school action plus, whole school work and teaching assistants. A review during the previous year had identified an additional £150k for secondary schools. This amount had been outside of the education budget but had been added in for this year to allow the work to continue. A further increase would allow the work to extend into primary schools. The funding was delegated based on pupil numbers, agreed action plans, priorities and permanently excluded pupils. It was hoped that this could be secured and extended to target early intervention and prevention. There was also an element for youth service activity.

Initiatives in primary schools included nurture groups. In recognition of concern at all levels, it was necessary to target support for behaviour to early intervention

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and need in primary schools eg. particular projects rather than spreading the resource very thinly over all the primary schools.

PRUs – In order to meet the 15 day target for permanently excluded pupils that the LA had set, 8 schools and one consortia were now assuming responsibility for permanently excluded pupils. The additional expenditure was to extend PRU provision in partnership with the schools, to share the resource and share the responsibility. Rather than increase the number of places available in PRUs it was hoped that the funding could be used more creatively to work with schools to prevent permanent exclusion.

There were some concerns about the possible impact, on other pupils, of permanently excluded pupils being retained in schools – disruption to other pupils, staff stress. It was important to create a balance that would ensure that there was no adverse effect on pupils and staff.

Discussions would take place at local levels to determine the best possible use of the funding, which hopefully would be preventative work, but PRUs could be extended if there were no other available options.

It was reported that, at present, the most severe problems were to be found in the Carlisle area. The group asked if there was any investigative work underway to determine why there was such a problem that particular area. Another problematic area was the west of the county, unfortunately there were no easy answers historically, these areas had been more problematic than others.

Whilst the group had welcomed the explanations and the opportunity to ask specific questions, it was felt that it would be very helpful for the group to receive a further update on how the funding was being used, later in the year.

5. Social Deprivation

In a letter dated 22 December, the Secretary of State had requested that all authorities identify and provide a report, by 5 May, on their current practice and policy for distributing funding targeted to meet the effects of social deprivation in schools.

The Government was concerned at the effects of deprivation upon pupils' opportunities as highlighted in the report 'Child Poverty – Fair Funding for Schools' published by the DfES in July 2005. Effective education was seen as an opportunity to increase the life chances of children from low-income households. The purpose of targeting resources on pupils from low-income families was to attempt to compensate for a pupil's lower attainment and provide all children with equal learning opportunities. Children eligible for free school meals had, on average, lower key stage results than other children. The performance gap between the two groups increased with the age of the pupils. There appeared to be no current evidence that the targeted extra resources were meeting the needs of pupils from low-income families.

A report was circulated that identified the Authority's allocation of funding for 2006-07, which was targeted to meet the additional costs in schools arising from Social Deprivation. This report was the beginning of a lengthy process. A factual

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statement of expenditure would be submitted as had been requested but it was suggested that the SEN Group look at this in much more detail over the coming months. The research would establish:

- The teaching methods and other services provided to target results of deprivation
- The existing budget and distribution to schools
- Practices in other local authorities

The group discussed this at length. In previous debates at the full Forum there had been concern expressed at the cumulative effects of funding related to deprivation that was going into schools. Did all schools have adequate resources to meet their objectives as a school? There was also some discussion relating to whether or not basing the allocation of deprivation funding on free school meals was the most appropriate method. A colleague, now based in one of the secondary schools, had already undertaken some research into this issue and the group had resolved to invite her to attend their next meeting to give a presentation on the work.

The SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group then:

- i) noted that the report would form the basis of the Authority's submission to the Secretary of State
- ii) determined to undertake further work as set out on paragraph 5.7 of the report (as outlined above)
- iii) agreed to invite Ms S Shepherd, head of Solway Community School to attend the next meeting of the group to give a presentation on the work that had been undertaken on deprivation

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6. **SEN, Social Deprivation, Access and Inclusion Working Group Brief**

On 2 March 2004, the terms of reference if the SEN Group had been agreed as:

'To examine all matters of school funding relating to SEN, Social Deprivation and Access and inclusion with a particular emphasis on the social deprivation factor within the delegated formula'

There were, however, a number of other groups that met around the county to discuss SEN issues eg. CASH A+I, PHA A+I, Special School heads. It was important that the SEN Group concentrated on funding issues, however, they should be aware of the issues that the other groups were looking at.

It was possible for the Schools' Forum SEN group and CASH A+I and PHA A+I groups to exchange notes of the meetings and it was also suggested that some common membership between groups might be beneficial.

The group did feel that it was important to establish clearer lines of communication between the different groups.

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7. **Any other Business**

Date of Next Meeting – it was agreed that the next meeting of the group would be held on Monday 12 June 2006 commencing at 1.00pm. Venue to be confirmed.

Attendance – the good attendance at the meeting was noted.

P&R/NJS
31 May 2006