

Draft – Subject to approval at the next meeting of the Working Group.

## **Notes of the Gloucestershire Schools Forum Working Group Thursday 17 October 2019, in the Claydon Suite Board Room, Shire Hall**

**Present members:** Brian Bartlett, Primary Governor; Colin Belford, Secondary School Headteacher, Lyn Dance, Special School Headteacher (Substitute), Andrew Harris, Community Representative (Chair), Lisa Jones, Primary School Headteacher, Steve Savory, Primary School Headteacher.

Also in attendance: Paul Holroyd, Secondary School Headteacher; Nick Stanton, Alternative Provision.

**Officers:** Philip Haslett, Head of Education Strategy and Development; Jamie Ford, County Inclusion Development Lead; Neil Egles, Finance Manager, Schools, Strategy and Capital; Joanne Bolton, Democratic Services Adviser and Clerk to the Schools Forum.

**Apologies:** Elisa Entwistle, Alternative Provision; Peter Hales, Primary School Governor; Kirsten Harrison, Secondary School Headteacher; Amanda Horniman, Early Years; David Metcalf, Primary School Headteacher; Will Morgan, Secondary School Headteacher; Sarah Murphy, Trade Unions; Clare Steel, Special School Headteacher.

### **1. Funding Inclusion and Early Intervention**

1.1 The Group considered the document which set out the draft proposal to deliver the recommendations of the 'The Timpson Review of School Exclusion', and the government's response, by transforming the way in which Gloucestershire utilised High Needs funding to support inclusion and thus, reduce rates of permanent exclusion.

1.2 The Group was informed that working with Gloucestershire schools, the local authority was proposing a partial devolvement of High Needs Block Funding to schools in order to provide earlier targeted interventions for children to reduce the risk of exclusion and better support for their challenging behaviour. The development of a new SEND funding model would also be explored that was focused on ensuring funding was available to provide intervention and support at the earliest opportunity (including outside of the Education Health and Care Plan process).

1.3 It was noted that a significant proportion of permanent exclusions both nationally and in Gloucestershire took place in the secondary phase; in 2018/19 there were 96 permanent secondary exclusions. The rates of permanent exclusions in primary schools had reduced significantly over the last 18 months with 17 permanent exclusions in 2018/19, down from 30 in 2017/18. The plan was to build on the improvements that were seen last year. At the current levels the authority would still be spending too much money on supporting children and young people that had already been permanently excluded, and not enough on identifying and supporting those at risk of permanent exclusion.

1.4 The Head of Education Strategy and Development outlined to the members the three core elements of the proposal. He emphasised that the purpose of the meeting was to review and agree the key principles, and to seek their feedback on moving forward with this approach.

1.5 The Group was informed that Jamie Ford, County Inclusion Development Lead, would be working with secondary headteachers to explore what the secondary local cluster collaborative support and intervention arrangements would look like. It was explained that once the school and local cluster had exhausted the options to support a child or young person to stay in the mainstream, the local cluster would be able to commission a place in a specialist Alternative Provision Service. The aim was to provide support and intervention

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much earlier in a child's education so that a move to a specialist Alternative Provision Service was avoided before KS4.

1.6 In regards to the primary phase should the support from the school and from the Primary Local Inclusion Clusters (LINC)s not prove effective in allowing the child to access mainstream education, the school would work closely with the Local Authority to agree the most appropriate provision for the child to transition. The aim was to set the expectation that no child would be permanently excluded from primary education.

1.7 Members discussed the key principles of the proposal and the following points were raised:

1.7.1 A member stressed that the primary schools would need to reach a clear and equitable baseline for the inclusion of children in mainstream education. Primary school headteachers were experiencing children with challenging behaviour in the reception year and year 1, and therefore the pace of being able to access the funding and support services needed improvement. It was critical that support could be accessed as soon as it was needed, instead of at the time of when a child had been permanently excluded. It was emphasised that local arrangements needed to be in place to facilitate an immediate assessment of the child's needs and the services available, to avoid a permanent exclusion.

1.7.2 There was recognition amongst the members that schools currently had different thresholds of measuring persistent disruptive behaviour, and therefore establishing a consistent baseline would be a positive step, particularly in regards to improving the success of managed moves. However, the issue of dealing with a one-off serious breach of the school behaviour policy remained a challenge. A member made the point that the new model required the flexibility to manage this type of incident, if permanent exclusion was to be avoided. However, heads would still need to ensure that they were complying with the law relating to the exclusion process, and managing parental expectations accordingly. There was recognition that alternative approaches to permanent exclusion following a one-off serious incident was a grey area and needed further development.

1.7.3 The County Inclusion Development Lead explained that in order to make a different solution from permanent exclusion available, where applicable, there needed to be a rapid response in providing specialist support. It was noted that the proposal was for this to be undertaken by a cluster inclusion improvement panel and in addition, a referral to a strategic behaviour support panel.

1.7.4 A member raised the point that if there was to be an increase in managed moves through the secondary inclusion clusters, then the issue of who held the responsibility of transport costs needed to be considered (i.e. the home school, the local authority or the local inclusion cluster). It was acknowledged that the responsibility of transport costs would affect the level of funding devolved to the secondary inclusion clusters.

1.7.5 A member commented that in his experience what worked well at present was having a single point of contact at the local authority to advise schools on the services that were available, and to provide an element of co-ordination. He was concerned that this may be lost in the development of the secondary inclusion cluster model. He added that there needed to be a centralised record of the support services available. The question was posed as to how accessible the services would be under this model.

1.7.6 A member underlined the point that for those pupils who had been permanently excluded from two or more schools, the option of securing a place at a special school, should be accessible to headteachers much earlier than currently. He stressed that the lack

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of availability of special school places was having an adverse impact on mainstream schools.

1.7.7 The County Inclusion Development Lead explained that further development was required on how the local authority services and health care services would be accessible to the local inclusion clusters, and if applicable how a referral strategy would work.

1.7.8 A member made the point that for the local inclusion clusters to work equitably then it was critical that they had a consistent approach across the board, to standard processes, and in the provision of, and providing access to services.

1.7.9 There was concern raised around the capacity of SENCOs and other school staff being able to take the necessary time out of schools to provide the support to the local inclusion clusters, given that school resources were already stretched.

1.8 It was felt that local decision making with multi-agency support through local inclusion clusters should be chaired by Gloucestershire Association of Special School Headteachers, with heads from the different areas.

1.9 The Group discussed the plans to re-design and develop the Specialist Alternative Provision Service. A member commented that the directory of Alternative Provision required a clear and transparent funding model outlining the funding responsibilities of the secondary inclusion clusters and the local authority. It was recognised that some schools would set up their own service within the local clusters, through the use of the devolved funding. The Alternative Provision Service would form part of the provision from which clusters could purchase their services from. A member emphasised that high quality teaching was a key component to ensure the best outcomes for the child and to meet the requirements of an Ofsted inspection, as the child's education would remain the responsibility of the home school.

1.10 The Head of Education Strategy and Development explained that consultation on the core elements of the proposal would continue with feedback sought from Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers and Gloucestershire Association of Secondary Headteachers.

1.11 Members, on the whole, indicated that they were in agreement with the key objectives of the proposal, but they also looked forward to receiving further details on how the objectives would be achieved, and the associated financial model, as the new approach was developed.

1.12 The Head of Education Strategy and Development explained that at the next meeting of the Working Group on 27 November 2019, further details on the funding options, would be presented for discussion.

Ends.