

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 15th July 2015

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

De-delegated Services

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the current and estimated costs of services that have been de-delegated from school budgets in accordance with School Finance Regulations and provides a commentary on the actual and proposed use of funds.

2. COSTS

The costs of de-delegated services within the Schools Budget are as follows:

Budgets De-Delegated from Schools	Actual 2014-15 £	Budget 2015-16 £
Library Service	195,000	191,700
Insurances	30,100	32,300
MEAS	253,000	244,600
School Specific Contingencies	679,800	104,300
Special Staff Costs	790,300	667,600
Milk & Meals (Free School Meal Eligibility)	13,900	13,600
Behaviour Support	57,900	92,200

3. SERVICES

3.1 School Library Service

This area will be included as an item on the next agenda.

3.2 Insurances

The particular status of governing bodies in Voluntary Aided schools, means that they need to protect themselves against legal liability relating to those parts of the school's premises used for non-educational purposes. Insurance cover for this risk is arranged by the relevant Diocese and the governing body is invoiced annually, funded through the provision in this budget.

3.3 MEAS

The activities within this service providing support and advice to schools with pupils who are learning English as an additional language were reported to the last Forum meeting.

3.4 School Specific Contingencies

This budget is used for exceptional and unforeseen costs that it would be unreasonable for schools and governing bodies to meet. Such cost can vary each year but have included

- Rates adjustments, where actual charges differ from amounts estimated.
- Support for schools in Key Stage 1 where a larger than usual reception class (above the published admission numbers) requires additional staff.
- Support towards costs of back dated Teacher Pension arrears in specific cases.
- SEN costs in schools exceeding the 90% Low Cost High Incidence threshold
- In exceptional cases deficits arising from closing schools.

3.5 Special Staff costs

This budget is used for staff maternity, paternity and trade union facility costs for both teaching and non-teaching staff. It may also in certain circumstances meet additional costs arising from suspension.

Maternity costs make up approximately 85% of the overall spend. The cost of the member of staff on maternity is held centrally for the period away from school, whilst the school meets the costs of any supply required. Costs can vary greatly from year to year in 2014-15 it was £624k and in the previous 2 year it was £719k in each year.

This budget also meets paternity costs and will reimburse the cost of the supply cover for the statutory 2 weeks of paternity leave allowed.

Trade Union Facilities time is covered in another report on the agenda.

3.6 Free School Meal Eligibility

The entitlement and eligibility of Free School Meals is administered by the Benefits Team within the Finance Department, there have been a number of developments during the year.

The introduction of the Universal Infant Free School Meals programme has presented a challenging year for the administration of FSM in what is an already changing benefits environment. This brought a change in focus for Wirral's Benefits Team and a huge amount of work was done to invite and encourage parents and carers to apply for FSM to maximise the pupil premium. All benefit officers and customer service advisors were briefed about the changes and the importance of maximising take up, ensuring schools received as much income from the pupil premium as possible.

This challenge was combined with the Government's continuing Welfare Reform programme which affects benefits for those parents and carers who either claim out of work, disability or pensionable age benefits and most importantly the national initiative to move people into work, which has a very real impact on the numbers of people who can qualify for FSM.

Wirral's Benefits Team manage the FSM administration on a daily basis, updating records of those whose circumstances change fairly frequently, as they move between qualifying benefits and work (when they may not qualify) and vice versa.

During 2014/15 there were 3,388 transactions awarding FSM and 3,964 removing awards. These include new claims, repeat claims as circumstances change and school moves during term time. The annual mass calculation of all awards and removal of those pupils who have moved or left schools are carried out in addition to this for approximately 8,000+ pupils. The average live caseload during 2014/15 was 8,400.

Increasingly fewer families are qualifying for FSM as their income does not meet the qualifying criteria for the reasons mentioned above. One positive aspect of the Welfare Reform programme (in relation to FSM) is the roll out of Universal Credit. Receipt of Universal Credit confers FSM eligibility whether in work or not.

A pro-active take up programme is continually being applied to maximise FSM applications and Wirral's Benefits Team has retained a specific staffing resource to allow 120+ schools to have a dedicated point of contact.

3.7 Behaviour Support

The budget supports a small team working mainly with primary schools and embedded police officers in secondary and special schools.

During 2014-15 the team worked in the following areas:

- 40 children, all at risk of permanent exclusion, supported through regular meetings to set up and review actions.
- 2 primary Managed Moves.

- Chairing the Anti Bullying Steering Group and two sub groups of this group.
- Supporting a cluster of schools to work together to support children with challenging behaviour by attending meetings to advise on ways forward with regard to supporting challenging children.
- Conducting observations in schools and providing advice to staff about how to meet the needs of children with challenging behaviour.
- Leading the Community Works Pilot Project. This project works with the most vulnerable families in one school –Fender Primary School. It is now going to be set up at Rock Ferry Primary school.
- Attending Governors Disciplinary Meetings for permanently excluded pupils.
- Developing protocols for the SEBD Inclusion base.
- Delivering training to governors and head teachers.
- 128 requests for secondary managed moves have come in during this academic year
- 2 primary permanent exclusions and 46 (4 have rescinded part way through the process) secondary permanent exclusions.

Currently there are seven Safer Schools Police Officers embedded within Wirral schools. They are based at Bebington, Birkenhead Park School, Mosslands, Oldershaw, Ridgeway, South Wirral High School, in addition there is one PC with responsibility for Gilbrook, Kilgarth and Emslie Morgan Academy.

Each individual officer works within their schools to address a variety of issues essentially to help develop strong and positive relationships between the police and young people. They help deliver work around anti-social behaviour, promoting better relationships within their communities, restorative justice etc. During school breaks they offer a range of diversionary activities and are currently delivering a pilot based on the National Citizenship Award but targeting this with students in Year 7 and 8. Each officer brings their own particular skills to the role and therefore provides a bespoke service to each specific school. The service is highly valued by all schools within the partnership.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Forum notes the report

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Director of Children's Services