

to All Schools, Academies and Early Years Providers      date 31st October 2016  
Wirral Metropolitan College  
Birkenhead 6th Form

your ref  
my ref AR0007/MM  
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Dear Colleague

## **SEND Funding Consultation on Funding Changes 2017 -18**

Although the National Reform of Schools Funding has been deferred for 12 months and will now not be effective until 2018-19 it is good practice to review High Needs Budgets and make changes where possible to reflect changes in provision. However given there are only small increases to planned resources the scope of any change is limited.

Enclosed in this letter is a short consultation on proposals to change High Needs Budgets for schools in 2017-18. There have been a number of briefings with Headteachers regarding aspects of this, together with a paper to the Schools Forum on "High Needs Funding and Places 2017-18".

Please consider this letter and the questions asked and make any responses by the 21st November. Comments on issues other than High Needs Places can continue to be made until 5<sup>th</sup> December. Your views will be discussed at a meeting of the Schools Forum working party, prior to any submission on places to the Education Funding Agency on 24<sup>th</sup> November and subsequently at the Budget Meeting of the Schools Forum in January.

### **High Needs Places:**

#### **Special Schools**

The special school population has grown by 13% over the period 2010-16 reflecting national trends, whilst over the same period specialist base provision has reduced by 8%. The majority of provision in Wirral is full from September 2016. Over the last 5 years the sectors that have grown most significantly are provision for Complex Learning Difficulty (CLD) and Autism (ASC).

Place changes, where each additional place has a cost of £10,000, have been made on an annual basis in areas where there has been the greatest pressure to ensure there is sufficient provision. From 2017 it is recommended that places increase at Clare Mount School by 12. The school is currently funded for 204 places but has 216 pupils currently on roll. No other changes are planned in this sector.

## **Specialist Bases**

The position in specialist bases is mixed. No changes are proposed to Primary Bases which are all full or nearly full. At Secondary however there is a proposal to increase ASC provision at Hilbre from 15 to 30 in response to demand for places and to close MLD bases at Birkenhead Park and Kingsway Academy. Both of these bases make provision for 20 pupils, but have had in recent years low numbers (4 and 7 respectively) which will reduce further in 12 months' time.

Overall proposals will ensure that funded provision is fully utilised and will allow for growth in other areas of need. The LA will carefully plan future provision for those remaining children at the inclusion bases with the schools concerned.

## **Alternative Provision**

There has been an increase in both fixed term and permanent exclusions from 2014-15 to 2015-16. This rise has had a significant impact on the request for places at Emslie Morgan. In May this year the census indicated that there were 122 pupils on roll. The LA proposes to increase places at Emslie Morgan from 80 to 100.

## **Mainstream Schools Low Cost High incidence SEN (LCHI)**

For Primary and Secondary schools there is provision within the schools funding formula and delegated budget for LCHI SEN. In Wirral this is a budget based on prior pupil attainment and amounts to 4% of overall delegated school resources. This "notional budget" is intended to meet the first £6,000 of costs associated with pupils on the schools SEN register.

Previous discussions with headteachers advised that the current system is simple, useful and appropriate. However many authorities allocate a greater proportion of funding to this area, attributing amounts within the funding formula from Deprivation, AWPU and Lump Sums for example there are some statistical neighbours allocating more than 10% of delegated budgets to this.

Whilst any change would make no difference to the school budget allocations to individual schools, it would increase each the notional SEN budget amount and the number of schools whose SEN needs are met without seeking recourse to additional funding from the 90% guarantee - the guarantee that no more than 90% of a schools notional SEN budget should be used to support costs associated with Education and Health Care Plans and statements. The guarantee threshold and budget would then be reviewed.

With regard to the 90% guarantee some schools have questioned why the calculation is only undertaken once a year in the autumn term, when schools identify pupils requiring SEN support throughout the academic year. Your views on this and any alternatives would be welcomed.

## **Cost of IPFA's Statements and EHCP's**

As part of DSG for this year and the Schools Budget an amount of £3.8m has been identified to meet the costs of ongoing IPFA's, EHCP's and Statements. However during the year the number and associated support has increased and spend is currently projected to exceed the budget by £165,000 (4%).

The additional cost will be managed this year, but it is unlikely that there will be additional resources available to meet rising costs in future and based on the current overspend next year's unit rate would need to reduce from £1,090 to £1,050. Your suggestions are sought on how costs and demand pressures could be managed from within existing budgets. With the introduction of ring-fenced school funding allocations in the future this may be a necessary way forward in demand led areas such as this or High Needs Top Ups.

### **Post 16 Provision**

At meetings with Wirral Met College they have confirmed that High Needs Places have increased to 109 (from 72). In addition Birkenhead 6<sup>th</sup> Form has indicated that their numbers should increase from 60 to 65. In both cases this will commit additional place and top up funding.

### **Top Up Funding**

The system of Top Up Funding within High Needs provides additional pupil funding for pupils with High needs (ie over and above that determined by place numbers.) Some minor changes are being considered here.

### **Double Top Ups**

Special schools who admit pupils in year receive an additional termly top up payment up to the value the school would have received if the pupil had been admitted at the start of the school year. These payments are made to recognise the additional costs that may arise from in year admissions. The costs of this scheme are in the region of £170,000 pa. In future it is proposed that double top ups will only be paid where termly pupil numbers in schools exceed agreed places numbers. Schools who have existing capacity would not receive enhanced top up funding (but would continue to receive the standard funding based on top up bands). In practice as most schools are full this change may have little impact.

### **Exceptional Needs**

There is a small additional budget to support pupils in Special Schools, Alternative Provision and Resource Bases with exceptional needs. Exceptional needs are those needs that are over and above amounts taken into account in place and top up funding and are where enhanced staffing is necessary. In recent years spend has increased. In the current year the budget is supported by a one off allocation from reserves of £189,000. In discussion this year schools have been asked if they would accept that exceptional needs allocations are only agreed at one fixed point in time for example the end of the summer term. Any subsequent needs identified for example from new placements or from reviews would be absorbed within the school until the following year. This would make the budget allocation more predictable and certain. It may however also mean that funding for decisions taken may be deferred and not supported for 2 terms.

The questions on the areas described above have been summarised and are attached. Thank you for your responses which will help in the preparation of next year's budget. Please let me know if there are any areas where you need greater clarity or if a briefing would be useful.

Yours Sincerely.

Andrew Roberts  
Senior Finance Manager  
Families and Wellbeing

## Consultation questions on proposals for School High Needs Funding Changes in 2017-18.

1. Should places for Clare Mount Special School be increased from 204 to 216 with effect from September 2017?

Yes / No

Comments

2. Should places at Hilbre resource base be increased from 15 to 30 with effect from September 2017?

Yes / No

Comments

3. Should MLD bases at Birkenhead Park Academy and Kingsway Academy close?

Yes / No

Comments

4. Should Alternative Provision places at Emslie Morgan Academy be increased from 80 to 100?

Yes / No

Comments

5. Should High Needs Places at Wirral Met College and Birkenhead 6<sup>th</sup> Form increase from 72 to 109 and 60 to 65 respectively?

Yes / No

Comments

6. Do you agree that the National SEN budget should be increased and take account of other elements within the School Funding Formula?

Yes / No

Comments

7. Do you have any comments on how to meet or contain the additional costs identified with IPFA's, Statements or any other area within the High needs Budget?

Comments

8. Should double top ups only be paid where pupil numbers exceed planned place numbers?

Yes / No

Comments

9. Should Exceptional Needs decisions be taken on an annual basis only?

Yes / No

Comments

10. Do you have any additional comments?

Comments