

High Needs Working Group – 26/11/2024

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

10a.m. to 11:30a.m.

Attendees:			
Fiona Robinson (FR) Chair	Headteacher – Bensham Manor	✓	
Shelley Davies (SD)	Director of Education	X	
Priya Perera (PP)	Head of Service, SEND Transformation & Delivery	✓	
Mark Southworth (MS)	Consultant Lead, Locality Inclusion Project	✓	
Charles Quaye (CQ)	Finance Manager Education	✓	
Keran Currie (KC)	School Governor – Norbury Manor Primary School	✓	
Katie Goodwin (KG)	Headteacher – St Nicolas’	X	
Clare Cranham (CC)	Headteacher – Kensington Avenue	X	
Julie Evans (JE)	Headteacher – Priory	✓	
Stephen Hehir (SH)	Headteacher – St Giles	✓	
Alfred Donkor (AD)	Commissioning & Contracts Manager	X	
Diana Mitrea (DMi)	SEND Finance & Quality Assurance Manager	✓	
Elizabeth Webster (EW)	SEND Internship Pathways Officer	✓	
Darran Money (DM)	Education Business Support Lead	X	
Mori Bates (MB)	Clerk	✓	
Abioye Aimolowo (AA)	Finance Manager	✓	

Agenda Items

1	Apologies and welcome	FR
	Apologies received by MB from SD, SB, MAS, CC, EW, KC and AD	
2	Previous Minutes and Actions	FR
	2.1 Previous minutes read and reviewed – agreed to be a true record.	
3	Forecast Outturn/Proposed Budget 25/26	CQ
	3.1 CQ presented a finance paper for the High Needs Block forecast Outturn. The initial allocation for 24/25 was £84.124m which was later reduced by the ESFA by £3.147m to £80.977m. 3.2 The quarter 2 forecast outturn for 24/25 was £82.473m with a budget of £82.197, which is made up of £80.997 from the High Needs Block and £1.2m from the Schools’ block via the disapplication request. It was noted by CQ that there is a risk that Forum will not agree to the disapplication request. 3.3 This year, we will potentially receive £3.2m from the Safety Valve this year. By 26/27, we will have received the £27m from the Safety Valve agreement.	

	<p>3.4 The paper highlighted the need to mitigate the increased demand for SEND support, therefore we are looking to request additional funding to meet the complex needs of children in the LA.</p> <p>3.5 Appendix C shows the expenditures to date with the exception of two schools where there are twelve commissioned places.</p> <p>Q1: MS: If a school receives money already for a child, should they then not get SENIF funding? A1: CQ: It would depend on a case by case basis and what support the child needs. (CQ emphasised that his expertise is finance based and not SENIF based.)</p> <p>Q2: TS: The £1.2m disapplication request – what is this for and where does it come from? A2: CQ: This is from the disapplication request whereby we are allowed to move money from the Schools’ Block to the High Needs Block. The opportunity to apply is available again and the money can go to those children with additional needs in mainstream schools.</p> <p>3.6 It was noted that the money from the disapplication request could be seen as money coming from the Schools’ Block going into the High Needs Block and spent through various channels like the CLSS. This movement would make the money effectively go back into the mainstream schools to support their children with SEND.</p> <p>3.7 TS added that it is good to see work being done surrounding the Early Intervention and SENIF funding. By looking at the breakdown of the spends, it showed that we are in a good position.</p> <p>Q3: FR: Last year, there was a delay in receiving money for the special schools – is there a timeline for when we will get the money and how much money? A3: CQ: We are in the process of organising the finances to avoid this happening again. A finance paper on the funding will be presented at January’s meeting. DMi has been working on collating data for individual school in connection to finalising the budget.</p> <p>3.8 The recommendations were noted from the paper by the working group.</p>	
4	SENIF Working Group Feedback	MS
	<p>4.1 MS provided the working group with a verbal update on the SENIF working group. The DfE allows authorities to take SENIF funding either from the High Needs or Early Years block or both, of which Croydon normally takes this from the High Needs budget</p> <p>4.2 Issues have arisen when the CLSS were asked to take over the SENIF funding for maintained nurseries or schools with nursery class as there lacked clarity as to where the funding was coming from and specifically how much.</p> <p>4.3 In the past, Kathy Roberts had said that £100K had been allocated to SENIF, though this money appeared to have come from Early Years. It was later discovered that this money may have been originally intended for the Early Years Intervention programme.</p> <p>4.4 MS said that a fresh start on the SENIF funding may be needed in order to work out what we know historically about where the money for this will come from. The original budget would have included children from both maintained nurseries and PVI's, but there is little historic data to show where SENIF funding was being distributed. There should be an indicative budget for SENIF in the same way that the CLSS does.</p> <p>4.5 TS added that there is a huge pressure from the increased demand for specialist places, and a decrease in the demand for mainstream places.</p>	
5	AOB	ALL
	<p>Q4: FR: How are we doing with in-borough places for September – what are the thoughts behind any planning to make sure we have special places in the borough? A4: PP: We are trying to keep children placed within the borough and are starting to have planning meetings so more information will follow in due course.</p>	

	There was discussion centring around the commissioned agreement with the NHS Tulip as to what the school will pay for and what the NHS Tulip will pay for – JE suggested that this go on the Special Heads agenda.	
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AGREED ACTIONS		
Actions from previous minutes		

Next Meeting Date – 9th January 2025 @ 1pm

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