



SCHOOLS FORUM

18 September 2014

Oakfield Short Stay School Funding

Content Applicable to;		School Phase;	
Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools	X	Pre School	
Academies	X	Foundation Stage	
PVI Settings		Primary	X
Special Schools / Academies	X	Secondary	
Local Authority	X	Post 16	
		High Needs	X

Purpose of Report

Content Requires;		By;	
Noting	X	Maintained Primary School Members	X
Decision	X	Maintained Secondary School Members	
		Maintained Special School Members	
		Academy Members	X
		All Schools Forum	

1. This report presents an analysis of the funding streams required for Oakfield Short Stay School and the Proposed Outreach Services for Leicestershire.

Recommendations

2. That the centrally commissioned arrangement funding arrangement be carried forward for 2014-15.
3. That Schools Forum notes the use DSG reserves to fund an additional teacher for outreach work from January - April 2015 and administrative support from September 2014 to April 2015 at a cost of £31,090.

Introduction

4. The school funding system envisages commissioning arrangements for PRU's whereby schools are the commissioners for dual registered places and the local authority for permanent exclusions. This model is not in place in Leicestershire, Schools Forum has previously agreed that all places at Oakfield School would be centrally commissioned by the Local Authority from DSG. A continuation of this arrangement is sought.
5. New arrangements have been put in place with regard to access to Oakfield and to develop school-to-school support for pupils experiencing behaviour difficulties to build capacity and expertise across Leicestershire. These arrangements have initial set-up costs for which funding is being sought.

Background

6. In May 2014, Oakfield Short Stay School, Leicestershire's Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) for pupils aged 5-11 was judged by Ofsted to be a good school in all aspects having previously been in special measures. From 28th April the school has been a primary only facility. The school caters for pupils at risk of or who have been permanently excluded.

The Core Oakfield Budget

7. The 2013-14 Oakfield delegated budget was for £1.56m for 51 places. This was split on a weighted basis to reflect the different per pupil funding rates within the Leicestershire school funding formula for primary and KS3 pupil funding. The place and funding arrangements were for 30 primary places totalling £782,347; and for KS3, 21 places totalling £777,653. The latter amount was partially devolved to secondary behaviour partnerships from Easter 2014 and fully devolved from 1 September 2014.
8. During the school year 2103-14, Oakfield School was subject to a staffing reduction action plan which effected reductions in the overall staffing budget and created savings in running costs with canteen staff being replaced by the County Schools Meals Service, and the loss of one primary and three secondary teachers. In addition, Teaching Assistant and administrative posts were reduced in line with reduced pupil numbers. Oakfield School as a primary provision, has implemented measures to reduce its running costs; mothballing buildings in line with LCC procedures to safeguard the fabric and safety of the buildings and re-organising classrooms to establish a more effective and efficient provision.
9. School Funding reform introduced in April 2013, required that all direct state-funded PRUs received base funding of £8,000 per place, topped up by funding from the commissioning LA or school for each pupil admitted to the provision with the total cost of a KS1/2 place being £26,078. The top-up fee for schools wishing a placement at Oakfield is therefore £18,078 per year per pupil. Nationally there is concern about this model and the financial instability it introduces. Firstly, as the cost is in considerable excess of the pupil funding rate schools receive schools would be unlikely to pay this amount. Secondly, such a funding arrangement does not provide a stable structure on which the school can budget from year to year, the £8,000 per pupil place being insufficient to provide the stability required to maintain high-quality core functions of the school. The Department for Education (DfE) under the Fairer

Funding proposals for 2015/16 have increased the place fee to £10,000 which will reduce the top up funding to £16,078

10. Schools Forum, 20 February 2013 agreed funding to Oakfield School as a result of the School Funding Reform when considering the 2013/14 Schools Budget and that the Local Authority would act as the commissioner for the places at Oakfield School on behalf of all schools, the full cost of the Oakfield provision being sourced from the DSG. It is recommended that this centrally commissioned arrangement be continued until such point the DfE model becomes viable.

i) Access to Oakfield School

11. The Locality Support Team budget was delegated in April 2013 at a rate of £6.43 per primary pupil to help schools meet the needs of their pupils with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties. The service continued until August 31st 2013 funded by the local authority. Over the last year the number of referrals and requests to Oakfield has been rising and the school was almost full at the end of the summer term 2014. 18 pupils were on roll at the start of September 2014 with a further 10 waiting places who will have their induction period in early September; this is compared to 19 at the start of September 2013 and 13 in September 2012. This may be due, in part, to the disestablishment of locality support teams which happened in July 2013 when funding was delegated to schools. Although some schools, including groups of schools, have taken the opportunity to begin to build local capacity and expertise, others have expressed concern that they neither have the expertise nor know where to access support when they have a child with challenging behaviour. Where schools are accessing support, for example, through Education Psychology Service, there is limited capacity to provide the volume of universal support that is required.
12. In November 2013 the local authority agreed to meet with Leicestershire Primary Headteachers Group, Oakfield school management committee and ex-chairs of primary behaviour partnerships. The purpose of these meetings was to gather views in order that a number of options can be considered which will provide a structured framework that ensures that schools are supported to deal with challenging pupils through early identification and intervention. The three key areas which schools identified as critical to improving this type of provision are:
 - Ensuring a fair admissions process: since the disbanding of local partnerships, the gate-keeping process has been removed.
 - Sharing information, advice and guidance: schools requested that local partnerships are established where there is an opportunity to share issues, access expertise, signposting and guidance which would reduce the demand for places at Oakfield.
 - Access to expertise: Oakfield staff has a wealth of expertise and experience which could support schools in building local capacity and expertise. Developing outreach and a training programme which is part of a wider departmental offer to schools would support the principles of a self-improving school system.
13. A two-fold approach has been developed through this consultation. Firstly, a Primary Behaviour Forum is being set up across Leicestershire which will enable schools to discuss specific cases causing concern. It is proposed that the forum will be held around the County and become aligned to the secondary partnership areas and Early Help structures. A vital part of this structure is the school-to-school support that will be facilitated at these meetings. Experienced and current practitioners from

Oakfield will attend these meetings offering further advice and guidance. To enable this to happen, job descriptions at Oakfield will be re-negotiated and further capacity in the system will be required to backfill the time spent on outreach work. In addition, Oakfield will host a “One –Stop Shop” each month enabling schools to bring cases to Oakfield where a placement is being considered.

14. It should be noted that secondary behaviour partnership Chairs have also indicated that they would support any developments in localities for primary schools. Discussions are on-going with headteachers about the development of early help locality support. Any long term development needs to take account of this and the wider departmental and multi-agency offer.
15. The Primary Behaviour Forum and the One-Stop Shop will require co-ordination and administrative support ensuring that the cases brought in a timely manner with appropriate supporting information distributed in advance of the meetings. The system will be trialled over the remainder of the academic year so that primary schools can evaluate the strategy and confirm with the Local Authority that this is a viable method of support for pupils with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties. The plan from April 2015 will require that full-cost recovery is in place for both the One-Stop Shop and the Primary Behaviour Forum with schools contributing for that service. The detail of this structure will need to be worked up with schools via the Primary Partnership Consultation Steering Group once the trial has been evaluated.

Resource Implications

As an interim measure, it is recommended that DSG reserves are used to fund the additional teacher from January - April 2015 and administrative support from September 2014 to April 2015 at a cost of £31,100

It is intended that if this model proves successful, a traded model will be developed in consultation with schools with schools bearing the cost.

Equal Opportunity Issues

A significant number of pupils accessing provision at Oakfield leave to move on to specialist provision and have a statement of educational need.

Background Papers

Schools Forum, 20 February 2013 – 2013/14 Schools Budget.

Funding, staffing and legislation for pupil referral units (PRUs) from April 2013. Department for Education, available at www.education.gov.uk.

Officers to Contact

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