

LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

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| Meeting / Date | SCHOOLS FORUM 13 NOVEMBER 2013 | Agenda Item | 4 |
| Report Title | High Needs Block 2014-15 Progress Report on place-allocation for High Needs Low Incidence (HNLI) Pupils | | |
| Decision/ Discussion/ Information | For Information | | |
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| Appendices | Appendix A: Task & Finish Report - Place Monitoring for 2013-14 and Potential Underspends 2013-14 Appendix B: Task & Finish Report - Process Planning for 2014-15 | | |

1. SUMMARY

- 1.2 This is a follow-up report to information on demand for special school and college places presented at Schools Forum on 18 September 2013 and the High Needs Block Task and Finish Group which met on 15 October 2013. **Appendices A and B** are the two reports submitted to that meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Schools Forum notes

- 2.1 The Task and Finish Group agreed the process to prepare for the submission of the High Needs places return to the Department for Education (DfE) due on the 23 December 2013. See **Appendix B**.
- 2.2 The High Needs place numbers and funding in Special Schools/Academies, Special Resource Provisions in mainstream schools, Colleges and Pupil Referral Units in 2014-15 will be presented to Schools Forum on 15 January 2014.

- 2.3 The **commissioning fees** for high needs pupils in mainstream schools and any transitional SEN support for schools will be presented to Schools Forum on 15 January 2014.

3. REASON

- 3.1 The High Needs Block (HNB) remains a highly volatile area in respect of forecasting actual demand and take-up of places for High Needs Low Incidence (HNLI) pupils. Special Schools/Academies, Special Resource Provisions in Mainstream Schools, Colleges and Pupil Referral Units account for approximately **£20 million** or **61%** of the total High Needs Block of **£33.198 million**. Any significant change in the number of placements can have a significant effect on the budget.
- 3.2 Any increase in the number of HNLI pupils does not automatically generate additional funding for the HNB. This is because the Education Funding Agency (EFA) at the DfE has limited the High Needs Block funding to Local Authorities to that which was agreed in 2013-14
- 3.3 The only exception is where the EFA agrees with a submission by a Local Authority that there is a demonstrable need for additional places that cannot be met by reallocating existing provision between existing providers. For example, in 2013-14 the EFA allocated Waltham Forest an additional **£0.461m** as a contribution to the **place-led** funding costs of an agreed **45.8** additional places averaged over the year. However, the EFA have indicated that for 2014-15 the burden of proof required to attract additional funding will be raised and any additional cost will result in a reduction of the national funding pot for SEN which means that all Local Authorities will find their funding reduced to meet the cost of any additional places agreed nationally.
- 3.4 Therefore, the Local Authority (LA) has to rigorously review current funding and placements to see whether it is possible to fund changing needs by reallocating places among HNLI specialist provisions.
- 3.5 If more places are needed, the LA will still need to identify resources from within the HNB. This is because even if the EFA were to agree to extra places being funded, they only provide the place led funding and the LA has to meet the additional commissioning costs.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The HNB Task and Finish Group received two reports at its meeting on 15 October 2013:
- HNB Monitoring for 2013-14 and Potential Underspends 2013-1 (**Appendix A**); and
 - HNB Process Planning for 2014-15 (**Appendix B**).

- 4.1 Appendix A Table 1 shows that the take up in places in Special Resourced Provision of **158** marginally exceeds planned places of **156**. However this is the net effect of additional placements for Social, Emotional & Behaviour Difficulties (SEBD) provision at the PRU, new resource provision at Hillyfield and unfilled places at Highams Park and Oakhill SRPs.
- 4.2 **Appendix A** Table 2 shows that the actual take up of places in Special Schools and Academies as at August 2013 was **690** compared with **716** average planned places for 2013-14. The main reason for this was a large shortfall in the number of placements at William Morris Special School. The number of places commissioned by the LA both at pre-16 and post-16 was lower in August 2012 than that expected by the LA when determining the number of places required in January 2013.
- 4.3 Appendix B outlines the process for planning provision for 2014-15. The report highlights the potential pressure points and risks for 2014-15. These were:
- An increase in out-borough and independent placements.
 - A reduction in placements by other LA's in special schools/ Academies as an increasing number of these places are being taken up by Waltham Forest pupils.
 - A continuation of a trend of increasing the resource levels of individual funding of statemented pupils after placement in schools/Academies.
 - Increase in the number of HNLI pupils, possibly as a result of growth in the Waltham Forest school population of over 750 pupils a year.
 - Additional SEN support which will be needed for Early Years settings as the number of 2year olds receiving 15 hours free education a week rises from 300 in March 2013 to 1900 by September 2014 as a result of central government policy.
 - Increasing provision for post-16 education including support up to the age of 25 as a result of changes to the school funding formula.
- 4.4 The LA needs to be certain about the potential demand for places in 2014-15 since it is required to submit detailed information for each specialist provision for HNLI pupils to the EFA by 23 December 2013. Appendix B Section 4 sets out the issues on forecasting places for 2014-15. Appendix B Section 5 contains the recommendations that were agreed by the Task & Finish Group.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The LA has started reviews and had discussions with some of the specialist settings. The key issues that have emerged are:
- 5.2 Funding for post-16 (16-25 year olds) is based on an academic year September – August period, so funding arrangements have already been determined up to the end of the academic year 2013/14. Current discussions relate to the academic year 2014/15. The number of post-16 places required will be based on returns of the numbers of actual Waltham Forest students in Colleges combined with the LA projections of how many continuing and new placements are required.

- 5.3 Funding for pre-16 students is based upon a financial year and is therefore an annualised figure which combines the number of places required in April – August (2013/14 academic year) and September – March (2014/15 academic year). For financial year 2013-14, the LA made a case for growth in provision from September 2013 which was accepted by the EFA. The assumption being made is that the EFA will fund this growth as it is the full-year effect of the increase capacity they agreed to fund for 2013-14. However, the LA will still need to fund the cost of the additional provision from the HNB. It should be noted that half of that growth relates to William Morris where numbers have fallen short on planned places. Therefore, it is proposed to restrict the annualised places at the school to the number agreed for 2013-14 which would free up these places for reallocation.
- 5.4 Discussions have taken place with the Hornbeam Trust (Brookfield House, primary, and William Morris, secondary) concerning a re-designation of William Morris so that it could take HNLI pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other complex needs. This would allow the LA to place such pupils at the school from September 2014. If this were the case, the LA could maintain the current number of places funded at William Morris. In addition, the LA has secured EFA approval (including additional capital funding) to make provision for 2 year olds at the Brookfield House site which should assist with assessment for very young HNLI pupils.
- 5.5 The LA is currently considering its position on the balance of age range in special schools to enable an accurate mix of pre-16 and post-16 pupils in its submission to the EFA in December 2013.
- 5.6 In the medium term, Whitefield has received approval from the EFA (including capital funding) through the Targeted Bid Programme to expand provision for ASD pupils. This expansion would take place on the current Joseph Clarke site as part of the new Academy arrangements (yet to be approved) for the two schools. This should increase the capacity for ASD pupils within Waltham Forest from April 2015.
- 5.7 For special resourced provision in mainstream schools, the LA requires 6 new primary ASD places at Hillyfield Primary Academy from September 2014 and 6 extra SEBD places at the PRU.
- 5.8 The LA expects to meet current demand from within the provisional number of specialist places identified by the EFA. As explained earlier, there will be some additional costs incurred for funding the additional needs from the HNB. The LA will provide information on this and any other costs arising from changes in the distribution of HNLI pupils. The HNB budget is presented for approval on 15 January 2014.