

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS FUND MONITORING GROUP  
HELD ON THURSDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2007 AT PORTLAND SCHOOL**

Members of the SFMG present were: -

Mrs J Chart (Headteacher Rep. – Special) - Chair  
Mrs M Brabban (Headteacher Rep. – Nursery)  
Mrs D Elliott (Governor Rep. – Special)  
Mrs K Elliott (Headteacher Rep. – Special)  
Mrs Y Gray (Chair of Schools Forum)  
Mrs S Hyland (Secondary Headteacher)  
Mrs C. Jones (Headteacher Rep. – Community Primary Sunderland South)  
Dr E Yeates (Secondary Headteacher)

Together with: -

David Alexander – Principal Finance officer  
Margaret Ferrie – Chief Inspector  
Gary Robinson – Governor Support Manager

**Action Points**

**MG07/36 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr H Brown (Vice-chair of the Schools Forum)  
Mrs D Butler (Governor Rep. – Secondary)  
Mrs M Johnson (Headteacher Rep. – Community Primary Washington)  
Mr J Lishman (Governor – Primary)  
Mrs J Lowther (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Sunderland North)  
Mrs M D Mitchell (Pupil Referral Unit)  
Mr T Walker (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Hetton/Houghton)  
David May – Finance Manager

**MG07/37 Minutes of previous meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2007**

The minutes were approved as a true record.

**MG07/38 Matters arising from the minutes**

Confidentiality – Margaret Ferrie referred to the discussions that took place at the last meeting concerning the grants to schools for under-performing pupils. She highlighted the sensitivity of some of the information that was discussed at SFMG meetings and the need to treat the information accordingly. The Chair noted Margaret's comments and pointed out that she had highlighted the sensitive nature of the information concerning under-performing pupils at the last meeting. It had also been agreed that members needed to treat the details as confidential.

Members reminded to treat sensitive info as confidential

Grant 101a (Special Educational Needs) The SFMG had requested details of where money would be placed and how accountability would be ensured. The Authority's response was that provision had been developed as part of the city-wide response to provision for children with ASD which was agreed in consultation with schools as part of the LMS review process and by Schools Forum. The review and agreed proposals had seen the development of a lead school role at one nursery and five primary schools. Overseen by the Autism Outreach team in the primary sector and for the intended delivery through two resourced provisions in the secondary sector. All secondary schools were offered the opportunity to develop the provision in conjunction with the AOT and from this, Farringdon and Biddick were agreed as the most appropriate schools. As previously noted, the development at Biddick had been delayed because of links to BSF but the plans for Biddick recognised this facility within the development. Revenue funding for these provisions, and the lead school role in Primary sector, was through the ISB, hence consultations via LMS review process and Schools Forum consideration. With specific reference to the agreed expenditure at Farringdon, this expenditure was to support the necessary building works and equipping of the provision and was a one-off payment. The costs were charged to the Local Authority and would be funded as part of the Local Authority rather than the school as this was a city-wide provision which the school was prepared to support (in a similar way to resourced provisions for PD, sensory and other difficulties). Placement of pupils in the resourced provision would be via the Local Authority statementing process.

Dr Yeates commented that it appeared that the monies allocated to the Farringdon provision appeared to be being used for capital works. This was not his understanding of how the monies would be used as he had thought that the resources were needed for staffing. Gary Robinson confirmed that the Schools Forum had endorsed the SFMG's recommendation that the resources be allocated to the development of provision at Farringdon but the actual use of the money had not been specified. Sue Hyland felt that it would be helpful to be supplied with an accurate breakdown of how the monies had been spent. David Alexander noted this request and would ask the grant holder to supply the information.

Katherine Elliott confirmed that the Farringdon provision was a six form-entry unit (i.e. six pupils would be admitted each year).

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) – Members of the SFMG had requested a detailed analysis of what the grant of £7,805,000 would be spent on. The Authority's response was that this allocation of funding was subject to debate with the DCSF, as it had been issued without the need for draw down. Subject to the result of discussions this funding might be withdrawn until a later stage in the Wave 1 Quick Wins process.

#### **MG07/39 Standards Fund Report 2006/07**

The Authority had provided a report which set out the position of Standards Fund 2006/07 at July 2007. As part of the end of year procedures, a report was now required on the outputs which had been achieved from the Standards Fund allocations. This end of year report would be presented to the SFMG and would be referred to the Children's Services Review Committee in December. In order to complete this report, grant holders had been requested to provide a synopsis for the November meeting to advise members of the SFMG of the impact of the grant with as much quantifiable information as possible.

#### **Action Points**

Grant holder to be asked to give breakdown of how Farringdon ASD monies had been spent

Members to receive end of year report from grant holders at November meeting

David Alexander explained that two years of Computers for Pupils grants had been brought together. These funds would not be devolved.

There was a small underspend on e-learning credits. It was necessary to set some of this aside for claims from private nursery providers. None had so far claimed this and David confirmed that they had been given this opportunity.

With regard to schools, current balances showed the July position and therefore did not reflect August salaries.

Yvonne Gray noted that there were some very large underspends in school standards fund allocations. David Alexander confirmed that the Finance Liaison Officers were aware of this and needed to tackle it. Yvonne pointed to the new limits on school finances being carried forward, which henceforth would include standards fund monies. She was concerned that the balances still held by some schools in their standards fund codes could mean that schools exceeded their specified limits. David was confident that schools' balances would reduce before the end of the financial period. He added that it was only some parts of standards fund codes that would be included in the calculation of overall balances.

#### **MG07/40 Standards Fund Report 2007/08**

Revised spending plans in respect of the following grants had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting: -

101d - School Support Staff: Training & Development  
 101h – Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP)  
 105a – Targeted School Meals  
 115 – School Improvement Partners  
 126 – Choice Adviser  
 201 – Devolved Formula Capital  
 201c – School Travel Plans  
 202a – Modernisation Primary Need – Capital  
 202b – Modernisation Secondary Need – Capital  
 204 – Building Schools for the Future  
 205a – Diploma Gateway  
 206a – Early Advance of Schools Capital Investment

New or amended grants since the last meeting were: -

105a – Targeted School Meals – grant reduced by £3,937 to £284,204 to reflect pupil numbers used by the DCSF in calculating this grant.

108 – targeted Support for Secondary Strategy: Additional Funding - £34,452 for the following elements: -

- Secondary Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning – Teacher release, staff development, LA central costs - £15,912
- Special Educational Needs Hubs – Development and central co-ordination costs - £9,000
- Modern Foreign Languages – three strategic leaning networks - £9,540

201c – School Travel Plans – A new capital grant of £21,005 awarded to additional schools which had an authorised School Travel Plan in place at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

205a – Diploma Gateway – Capital Grant of £1,429,000

**Action Points**

305 – Extended Rights to Free Travel - £2,716 – A new grant to support the extension of free travel rights to primary school children from low-income backgrounds.

The Authority's report outlined the School Development Grant which totalled £15,487,937. The initial guaranteed allocation to schools was £12,195,440. The amount retained by the Local Authority was £3,176,190. The balance to allocate was £116,307. The DCSF was very specific about how this needed to be distributed. The additional funding of £116,307 needed to be included in the guaranteed per pupil increase for 2008-2009. As schools received their funding based on pupil numbers (PLASC January 2007) it was recommended that the balance be allocated on this basis. This was the basis that £92,607 was allocated last years. Dr Yeates asked whether the Authority could use the September 2007 pupil numbers for accuracy rather than to use the January 2007 figures. Sue Hyland supported this proposal. Having discussed this, it was agreed to recommend to the Schools Forum that the additional SDG monies be allocated on the basis of September 2007 pupil numbers.

Agreed to recommend to Schools Forum that additional School Development Grant be allocated on the basis of September 2007 pupil numbers (not January 07 PLASC)

**MG07/41 Any other business**

The Sunderland South Area Primary Headteachers' Group had raised questions around free meals for nursery pupils. The DCSF (formerly DfES) had confirmed that nursery pupils could be both eligible and entitled to receive free meals provided that they received education before and after the lunch period. However, the City Council had looked at the funding implications of providing these free meals and had refused to finance this provision. The Sunderland South Area Primary Headteachers' Group had therefore asked that the SFMG consider how funding could be diverted to support these costs, as it was in the interests of the school and the Authority to increase eligibility for free meals in view of the impact on deprivation factors which affected funding. It was known that there were two pots of money held by the Early Years team for the 3-4 year old flexible offer pilot and it was questioned whether these funds could be accessed.

Although this was not considered to be an issue for the SFMG, the Chair thanked Yvonne Gray and Catherine Jones for raising the point. It was agreed to ask the Schools Forum to consider this request. As Chair of the Schools Forum, Yvonne asked who monitored the use of these funds within the Local Authority. Dr Yeates added that it was important to ensure accountability.

Schools Forum to be asked to consider how nursery free meals could be funded.

Forum also to be asked to ascertain accountability for retained early years funding in respect of 3-4 year old flexible offer

**MG07/42 Date and time of next meetings**

The next meeting of the SFMG was scheduled for Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2007 at 1.30 p.m. (Portland School)