

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS FUND MONITORING GROUP  
HELD ON THURSDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> JUNE 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 Butler (Governor Rep. – Secondary)  
 Mrs D Elliott (Governor Rep. – Special)  
 Mrs K Elliott (Headteacher Rep. – Special)  
 Mrs S Hyland (Secondary Headteacher)  
 Mrs C. Jones (Headteacher Rep. – Community Primary Sunderland South)  
 Mrs J Lowther (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Sunderland North)  
 Mr T Walker (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Hetton/Houghton)  
 Dr E Yeates (Secondary Headteacher)

Together with: -

David Alexander – Principal Finance officer  
 Lynda Brown – Head of Standards  
 Gary Robinson – Governor Support Manager

**Action Points**

**MG07/27 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mrs Y Gray (Chair of Schools Forum)  
 Mrs M Johnson (Headteacher Rep. – Community Primary Washington)  
 Mr J Lishman (Governor – Primary)  
 Mrs M D Mitchell (Pupil Referral Unit)  
 Mrs G Mitchell (Headteacher Rep. – Infant)  
 David May – Finance Manager

**MG07/28 Minutes of previous meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2007**

The minutes were approved as a true record, subject to the following amendment: -

Mrs K Elliott had been omitted from those in attendance

**MG07/29 Matters arising from the minutes**

Music Service – Steve Auster had provided a list of which schools had accessed music service provision. He had given an assurance that most had benefited from the service in some way. Any school that did not participate should contact Steve Auster.

Questions from members – Members of the SFMG were reminded that it was best, where possible, for questions to be submitted in advance of meetings.

Where possible members were asked to send questions in advance of meetings

Recommendations to the Forum – It had not been possible to take formal decisions at the inquorate meeting of the SFMG and the reports had therefore been reproduced for members of the Schools Forum to take a decision on. The Forum had given approval to all of the recommendations detailed in the reports.

**MG07/30 Information from Sue Morgan re. distribution of Primary initiative funding**

Sue Morgan had provided a breakdown of which schools benefited from grant funding to support under-performing pupils. Tom Walker commented that the naming of these schools was a potentially sensitive issue and could put the schools in a difficult position. Whilst the detail of the report had not been circulated any more widely than the SFMG, members were asked to treat the information concerning under-performing pupils as confidential. It was also hoped that all of the schools named as needing these extra resources knew that they were on the list.

Members asked to treat info on under-performing pupil grants as confidential

**MG07/31 Questions submitted by governors in respect of last meeting and responses from grant holders**

Copies of the questions raised by members and appropriate responses had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Lynda Brown welcomed the questions and felt that this demonstrated the accountability of Authority officers. The Chair agreed that the questions and answers made the figures meaningful.

With regard to Grant 101 (a) Lynda Brown explained that Sandra Mitchell was now responsible for managing this area. One of the effects of her involvement was that there was an underspend of £70,000 in this grant. This money could either be devolved to schools or could be invested in autism outreach provision at Farringdon School. Sue Hyland questioned whether this should have been raised with the Secondary Headteachers' Group before being discussed at SFMG. Lynda responded that this was funding specifically for SEN provision.

Dorothy Butler asked for clarification of why Farringdon needed £70,000. Katherine Elliott highlighted the rise in incidence of ASD and explained that an audit of provision last year had shown a lack of provision in the secondary sector. Initially the possibility of two secondary provisions had been explored (Biddick and Farringdon) but this possibility had been affected by the BSF programme. Therefore Farringdon had been identified as the school that could meet the needs of the whole City. There had been six ASD pupils placed at Farringdon in the past year and this would increase to twelve in the next year. The additional funding would also enable Farringdon to offer service to other schools. Farringdon was part of a wider plan and the Secondary Headteachers' Group had considered this two years ago.

Sue Hyland asked whether the funding was specific to autism provision. Lynda Brown replied that it was earmarked for SEN provision but not specifically autism. It was also not specifically for the secondary sector but Lynda felt that this provided an opportunity to implement necessary improvements.

Catherine Jones asked whether this provision would be developed anyway. Lynda Brown responded that funding had been provided to Farringdon for this provision anyway but more was needed to meet

the needs of the whole City. The extra £70,000 for Farringdon would have an impact on ASD provision at all secondary schools.

Dr Yeates stressed the need to include checks and balances to ensure that this did benefit all secondary schools and did not just become a Farringdon resource. Lynda Brown replied that these mechanisms were already in place as Katherine Elliott (who was the lead school for ASD) provided a report to the Authority on what provision had been made. Lynda also felt that monitoring and discussion would take place at the Secondary Headteachers' Group.

Having considered the matter, members of the SFMG agreed unanimously to allocate the £70,000 to support provision at Farringdon. They asked, however, for clarification of where the money would be held and requested details of how checks on accountability would be managed. This decision was subject to ratification at the Schools Forum meeting.

**Action Points**

Agreed to recommend £70,000 be allocated to ASD provision at Farringdon subject to Schools Forum decision. SFMG requested details of where money would be placed and how accountability would be ensured

### **MG07/32 Standards Fund Report 2006/2007**

Detailed information of centrally held standards fund codes was supplied at the meeting. Overall, the levels of balances remained the same.

With regard to the 'Computers for Pupils' initiative funds it had been made clear to the DfES that the Authority would prefer to handle this spending centrally and the DfES response was awaited. The monies needed to be devolved to schools and then brought back in by August 2007.

David Alexander responded to members' questions and confirmed that there were no centrally held budget headings giving any cause for concern. EiC held balances but most of the spending from these codes took place in the final three months of the standards fund period.

Details of schools' 2006/07 standards fund were also given. Currently some schools were overspent because some transactions had been wrongly coded to the 2006/07 budget instead of the 2007/08 codes. Finance Liaison Officers monitored this and contacted schools as necessary to maximise effective use of these resources.

### **MG07/33 Standards Fund Report 2007/2008**

The 2007/08 Standards Fund was £48 million including Capital Grants.

It was noted that grants arrived without notification from the DfES. Recently received grants were highlighted.

David Alexander confirmed that central budget holders were aware of the need for scrutiny by the Standards Fund Monitoring Group. The BSF programme accounted for £7,805,000 and the Capital Team had been asked to specify how this would be used.

Members noted that it was still a very early stage of the 2007/08 period.

David Alexander replied to questions regarding Grant 104 (hard to shift primary schools). Two schools were in receipt of £12,500. Catherine Jones stressed the importance of schools being informed

that they were in receipt of this funding and why they had qualified.

There was no indication yet of next year's standards fund allocation. This would depend on changes in government leadership.

**MG07/34 Any other business**

Headteachers were encouraged to provide feedback to area groups and to bring any questions back to the SFMG.

**MG07/35 Date and time of next meetings**

Meetings of the SFMG were scheduled as follows: -

13<sup>th</sup> September 2007 at 1.30 p.m. (Portland School)

15<sup>th</sup> November 2007 at 1.30 p.m. (Portland School)

**Action Points**

Headteachers encouraged to provide feedback to area groups and bring forward any questions