

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS FUND MONITORING GROUP
HELD ON THURSDAY 19TH APRIL 2007 AT THE STANNINGTON CENTRE**

Members of the SFMG present were: -

Mrs J Chart (Headteacher Rep. – Special) - Chair
Mrs M Brabban (Headteacher Rep. – Nursery)
Mr H. Brown (Vice-chair of Schools Forum)
Mrs D Butler (Governor Rep. – Secondary)
Mrs D Elliott (Governor Rep. – Special)
Mrs Y Gray (Chair of Schools Forum)
Mrs B Handford (Headteacher Rep. – Junior)
Mrs M Johnson (Headteacher Rep. – Community Primary Washington)
Mrs C. Jones (Headteacher Rep. – Community Primary Sunderland South)
Mr J Lishman (Governor – Primary)
Mrs J Lowther (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Sunderland North)
Mrs G Mitchell (Headteacher Rep. – Infant)
Mr T Walker (Headteacher Rep. – Primary Hetton/Houghton)

Together with: -

Steve Auster – Music Adviser
David Alexander – Principal Finance officer
Patrick Candon – Secondary Strategy Manager
David May – Finance Manager
Sue Morgan – Senior School Improvement Officer – Primary
Gary Robinson – Governor Support Manager

Catherine Jones and Maggie Johnson were welcomed to their first meeting of the group.

MG07/18 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from:
Dr E. Yeates (Secondary Headteacher)
Mrs M D Mitchell (Pupil Referral Unit)
Mrs K Elliott (Headteacher Rep. – Special)
Mrs S Hyland (Secondary Headteacher)
Lynda Brown – Head of Standards

MG07/19 Notes of previous inquorate meeting held on 8th March 2007

The notes were approved as a true record, subject to the following amendments: -

Dorothy Elliott had been omitted from those in attendance

Action Points

MG07/20 Matters arising from the minutes

Terms of reference – It was confirmed that the Schools Forum had considered the terms of reference and the quorum set for the SFMG at its last meeting in the light of the failure to achieve a quorum at the meeting of the SFMG held on 8th March 2007. The Schools Forum had agreed that the terms of reference remained appropriate and that the quorum should not be altered. This reflected the importance of the SFMG to accountability.

Standards Fund 2006/07 – David Alexander reported that the Standards Fund closedown had happened but a small amount of additional monies had been received. These had been distributed in accordance with the normal per pupil basis.

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.

MG07/21 Targeted Support for Primary and Secondary StrategiesPrimary

Detailed information had been circulated in advance of the meeting. This included a breakdown of the national strategy with specific guidelines. Sue Morgan outlined the different categories of primary strategy funding.

One category related to under-performing pupils (£350,520). The Chair asked who would undertake the quality assurance of how monies were used. Sue Morgan answered that the SIO was responsible for this but she made it clear that schools did not need to produce a new action plan.

Another criteria for devolvement of monies was support for under-performing schools (£25,000). Joy Lowther questioned whether these schools would be the same as those who received the most funding for under-performing pupils. Sue Morgan replied that this was highly likely but she highlighted the differences in the two grants.

Within the personalised learning agenda the underperformance of G&T pupils was recognised and £21,360 was available. This category allowed some funding to be directed to developing the role of leading teachers for G&T within clusters of primary schools. Sue urged all Headteachers to read all documentation regarding this. Headteachers' views were welcomed.

A project on oracy (amount allocated £8,000) and writing (£11,000) was coming to the end of its first year and the aim of this was to develop best practice. Eight schools were involved in oracy and eleven were involved in the writing project. Sue was questioned why this was the case. She answered that this was to enable previous work with small amounts of money to be carried on. Clearly the Authority would like to do more but limited resources meant that the number of schools needed to be restricted. Evaluation of the first year of these activities would be undertaken and views would be sought. Sue raised the possibility of establishing a group of Headteachers to monitor this.

Joy Lowther asked whether there was a list of schools that benefited from these initiatives, as they were not shown in the reports provided. Sue answered that she was happy to share this information with the group and would provide a list.

Raising standards in Literacy and Mathematics was one of the strands. A sum of £203,250 was allocated and 96 schools benefited from this. Sue Morgan was now managing this and she invited views on how the funding was divided up.

A small amount of money was retained for the Foundation Stage (£24,750). Money was also available from the Early Years & Childcare Partnership.

A sum of £42,600 was earmarked for Behaviour and Attendance. £26,369 of this was used by the LA to fund time from locally based LA staff to manage the SEAL programme initiative and to provide training. £16,231 was for supply cover to allow staff from each school to attend training. Again, Sue was happy to hear views on the use of these funds. Sunderland was said to be behind some other Authorities in this initiative.

£169,512 was available to support primary languages. Chris Campbell was leading this. Sue was asked whether there was a list of lead schools that received funding under this strand. Sue Morgan undertook to provide this information.

Sunderland had been selected as a centre of regional support for Primary English as an Additional Language (EAL) and £6,000 was retained for this.

Secondary

Patrick Candon summarised the use of funding under Grant 108 (Secondary Strategy School Targeted Support). Support for under-performing schools (£64,507) was structured on a hubs and spokes model. Patrick had consulted secondary Headteachers regarding the elements that made up this grant. Leading schools had certain expertise.

Support for under-performing pupils (£363,470) was distributed on a per pupil basis according to data which identified which pupils needed support to attain level 5. So far results from this intervention was said to be good.

Schools themselves had identified which cohorts of pupils should participate in the Support for Under-performing pupils Personalised Learning initiative (£235,000 available). Schools were asked to look at inventive ways of improving results in English and Mathematics at Y4. The Chair asked what strategies were in place for special schools to benefit from this strand of funding. She commented that special schools were not involved in the secondary strategy in the same way that they were involved in the primary strategy. Patrick responded that there was no reason why special schools could not apply for funds but it was directed to achieving 5 A-C grades. Mrs Chart commented that, in this instance, it should be applied to under-attainment in special schools.

Yvonne Gray asked for clarification of the distinction between under-performing and under-attaining. Patrick replied that there was some

Action Points

Sue Morgan to provide a list of schools that benefited from initiatives

Sue Morgan to provide a list of lead schools for primary languages

professional autonomy for schools in identifying appropriate cohorts. Sue Morgan noted the difference in available data between secondary and primary in attainment data.

Patrick was asked to clarify how schools accessed the monies in the various strands. He explained that all secondary schools could bid for this money and there was a quality assurance group which examined all bids. At the end of the process all schools had received the same amount of funding irrespective of how many bids they submitted. The bidding process had, however, shown that there were many good thoughts within schools. Members of the group asked why a residential was used to prepare bids when all schools had received the same amount. Patrick replied that the residential would have happened anyway and was not very expensive.

Patrick explained the role of consultants in the Raising Standards in Core Subjects strand (£143,886). Patrick highlighted the school/consultant agreement and the evaluation of consultancy support. It was felt that the Authority had been successful as Sunderland was the 14th most improved Authority in improving KS3 results.

Key Stage 4 Study Plus Pilot (£16,000) involved five schools.

A sum of £17,500 was earmarked for additional consultancy support for science. Eight secondary schools had been identified to receive additional funding to address the decline in students taking science at A-level. Dorothy Butler commented that the secondary school curriculum did not equip schools for A-level. Yvonne Gray remarked that science results at the end of KS2 were good and she therefore questioned why there was a decline in the secondary sector. Margaret Brabban and Gillian Mitchell expressed the view that monies being made available earlier than secondary phase would bring greater results.

Patrick Candon and Sue Morgan withdrew from the meeting at this point.

MG07/22 Music Strategy

Steve Auster joined the meeting. He tabled copies of a briefing note outlining the music strategy and activities in Sunderland together with minutes of his Standards Fund Music Group which included Headteacher representation. Yvonne Gray questioned how the Headteacher representatives had been sought. She stressed that the representative should be a communicating role.

Steve provided a breakdown of how available monies were used. He referred to funding streams and indicated that any cessation of grant 116(a) would have a major impact on the country. Sunderland was slightly different to other Authorities because it used self-employed part-time personnel and the impact would be different.

It was hoped that schools would take advantage of the competitive deals struck with musical instrument suppliers. Major issues to progress were achieving best value with the new music standards fund grant (116b) to boost instrumental teaching at KS2, planning strategically as far ahead as possible and confirming the level of funding from the LA for the next five years and how it would link with the funding from DfES, especially post-2008.

Yvonne Gray asked whether it was schools that had a particular interest in music that accessed the music service provision the most. In her own school Yvonne did not feel that she had the ability to access the service as much as she would like. She would therefore prefer to buy into a service level agreement at an appropriate level for her school. Jennifer Chart supported this view. Steve answered that, because they were self-employed tutors, it would not be possible to have an SLA. The service could advise schools on the quality of instructors. Yvonne stressed that schools needed differentiated levels of service and the Headteacher was in a position where they needed to monitor and evaluate. Steve replied that he could help Headteachers with this.

Dorothy Elliott asked if Steve could give some clear indication of what could be offered to schools. Steve explained that advice and support was accessible.

Catherine Jones had been impressed with the input of Chris Little who worked with Steve Auster but she felt that schools did not know the support that was available. Joy Lowther had also found Chris Little to be helpful but she pointed out that some schools could afford to invest more heavily in music than others.

Tom Walker remarked that Steve Auster did communicate well with schools about what was available, mainly by e-mail. Steve thanked Tom for this comment and explained that, because of the amount of activity, e-mail was the best way of communication. He queried whether school office staff were passing on the messages to the appropriate staff within school.

Steve advised Headteachers that, because schools engaged music tutors directly under a contract of services, they did not need to continue to use them if they were not proving effective. Steve could help to advise on the best tutors and he was available at any time to assist Headteachers.

The Chair commented that Headteachers were now operating in an environment with SLAs and constant monitoring. Heads were therefore uncomfortable with the notion of one school receiving more benefit than others from a service. Steve replied that there were examples of how this balanced out. The Chair asked Steve to identify which schools had not accessed any service in recent times.

Steve Auster withdrew from the meeting at this point.

MG07/23 Standards Fund Report 2006/2007

Detailed information had been supplied in advance. Small additional amounts had been received from the government.

Questions from members were invited. David May suggested that, henceforth, all questions be submitted in advance where members knew that they wanted answers. The Chair agreed that this would be helpful.

David Alexander drew attention to the centrally retained grant holders where high balances existed.

Joy Lowther asked for clarification of the Early Accessibility Officer funding. David Alexander explained that money was left in the budget and he would clarify how this would be distributed.

Action Points

Steve Auster asked to identify which schools had not accessed the music service for some time.

Members to submit questions in advance where possible

D Alexander to clarify how Early Accessibility Officer funding was to be distributed

Joy Lowther also sought clarification of PIVATS. The Chair replied that special school staff had been offering training to mainstream schools and this had been advertised. Jennifer invited any interested mainstream Headteachers to contact her for further information concerning this.

A further question from Joy Lowther related to SEN funding devolved to support under-achieving groups. David Alexander would clarify this with Sandra Mitchell and inform members.

MG07/24 Standards Fund Report 2007/2008

Detailed information had been circulated to members. Mr Lishman and Mr Walker had submitted some questions in advance of the meeting. It was agreed that this list of questions would be circulated to relevant grant holders and then circulated to members of the SFMG with responses. Any additional questions could be submitted to David Alexander.

A new grant in excess of £20,000 had been received for sustainable travel. This was to be retained by the Authority to take account of free transport for low-income families and sustainable home-school travel.

MG07/25 Any other business

There was no other business raised.

MG07/26 Date and time of next meetings

Meetings of the SFMG were scheduled as follows: -

21st June 2007 at 1.30 p.m. to be held at Portland School
 13th September 2007 at 1.30 p.m. (venue to be confirmed)
 15th November 2007 at 1.30 p.m. (venue to be confirmed)

Action Points

D Alexander to seek clarification of SEN funding for under-achieving groups

List of questions from members to be circulated to grant holders and then circulated to all members of the SFMG with responses