

**SCHOOLS' FINANCE GROUP
NOTES OF MEETING
2 March 2016
at Larkbeare**

		02/03/16
DCC		
John Holme	Assistant County Treasurer (People)	Apologies
Karen Powlesland	Head Accountant Education & Learning	✓
Adrian Fox	Senior Accountant (Schools)	✓
Heidi Watson-Jones	Service Support Officer (E&L)	✓
DAPH		
Jamie Stone	Denbury Primary	Apologies
Paul Walker	Sidmouth Primary	part
Jo Evans	St Leonard's Primary	Apologies
Jonathan Bishop	Broadclyst Primary	✓
DASH		
David Fitzsimmons	Holsworthy Community College	Apologies
Matthew Shanks	Coombeshead Academy	✓
Daryll Chapman	Okehampton Community College	✓
Lorraine Heath	Uffculme College	Apologies
SHAD		
Keith Bennett	Marland School	Apologies
Jacqui Warne	Ellen Tinkham School	✓
DAG		
Faith Butler	Special	✓
Malcolm Dobbins	Primary	Apologies
Jill Larcombe	Secondary	✓
EY Providers		
Gemma Rolstone		✓
In Attendance:		
Simon Niles	School Organisation	✓
Damien Jones	Transport Coordination	✓

1. School Admissions Service (Simon Niles)

Discussion:

- Admissions Service has been reviewed to prepare for an increasingly autonomous school landscape.
- Recognised that DSG funding to the service does not cover the cost of running the statutory admissions service (appeals and in-year admissions applications) on behalf of the Local Authority.
- The traded charging structure will therefore need to be reviewed for schools which are their own admissions authority (VA and Trust schools). Charges to Academies might remain largely unchanged.
- SN to return to May SFG meeting with costed proposals, which must ensure equity of service to all schools.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAPH and DASH raised issues of potential inequity across schools if a varied charging structure were introduced dependent on school governance category • Will need to be mindful of the role of the Diocese in the admissions process and that the national School Funding consultation is likely to influence outcomes. • Will need to include in the annual schools funding consultation in the autumn. • Noted that buy-back of the Free School Meal checking service has been very high. • The group discussed funding streams for Academies and maintained schools which contribute to the DSG 307 grant, to understand areas which may potentially be double funded. • It was felt this grant should cover the full cost of the statutory admissions service.
Key Decision / Issues for DEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update noted
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simon Niles to return to the 11 May SFG with costed proposals.
2. Minutes and Matters arising from meeting on 11 January 2016	
Discussion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAPH continue to be concerned about the DSG funding stream for the County Schools Safeguarding Champion. It was understood that this function would be funded through Core budget and not DSG. Noted a DSG contribution to DSCB was also agreed, and there are ongoing concerns about the funding source for proposed nine further locality-based safeguarding champions. • Noted EHE and CME funding falls under the Babcock contract (Alison Withnell now LDP contract manager). The group discussed difficulties around unpicking core and DSG costs relating to the commissioned Babcock contract outcomes. • DAPH sought clarification on the strategic leadership of the 0-25 SEND team. Noted that Julia Foster is currently leading the team. • Noted that outcomes around the Early Years 30 hour entitlement funding still awaited from DfE • Clarity was requested around the ongoing position re. Year 11 funding transfer from secondary schools to Schools Company for students on roll but not attending school. Dawn Stabb to be asked for an update at the May SFG. 	
Key Decision / Issues for DEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes agreed as an accurate record.
Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KP to consider the High Needs Block funding issues • SC to provide update on the Early Help developments to May SFG meeting • Dawn Stabb to provide update on Schools Company / arrangements for funding to be transferred for Yr 11 students attending Sch Co.
3. Independent Travel Training Outcomes (Damien Jones)	
Discussion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Travel Training programme has been operating successfully for some time, but demand significantly outstrips supply. Service to be reviewed to enable expansion of the programme from April 2016 with additional trainers joining the team. • SFG were pleased with the development of the programme. 	
Key Decision / Issues for DEF	Report noted
4. Delegation of Music Education Grant	
Discussion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted that a number of Learning Communities will no longer be in existence, and engaging with locality-based clusters of schools on a range of issues is proving difficult and inconsistent. • DAPH asked if schools not responding through LLCs have been contacted individually regarding music funding? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SFG felt that schools have had good opportunity to be in touch with Music Service regarding Music Education Grant and were happy with the proposals outlined for distribution of the grant for 2016/17. 	
Key Decision / Issues for DEF	Report noted. SFG agreed proposed distribution of Music Education Grant.
5. DSG Monitoring (month 10)	
Discussion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted proposed £90k carry forward for de-delegated services budget. Discussed emerging protocol for financially monitoring converting academies and the subsequent financial liability for both the emerging academy and the local authority / DSG. KP explained that monthly budget monitoring is now carried out when a school starts a conversion process. The LA are mindful of monitoring potentially abnormal spending patterns during the pre-conversion process. FIPS Strategic Planning day to take place on 24 March to review processes. Maintained Secondary Schools to be asked for an early draft of their budgets to review on that day. 	
Key Decision / Issues for DEF	Report noted
6. Closedown 2015/16 (Adrian Fox)	
Discussion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closedown deadlines now posted on Finance web pages. Noted some closedown deadlines moved forward to reduce the closedown timeframe to enable accounts to be closed on 15 April 2016. Schools to be asked to look earlier at projected costs for March. Local Payment Schools: debtor invoices to be raised by 10 March. Noted two schools will be moving back to central payments, leaving four remaining as LPS. Mutual Fund claims for February to be submitted by 10 March; March claims to be submitted by 18 March. PFI schools will be given estimated March figures. 	
Key Decision / Issues for DEF	Update noted
7. FPS Update (Adrian Fox)	
Discussion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schools attended one of the 10 training days. Good feedback albeit some tech issues. Roll-out has gone smoothly and schools seem to be well engaged in the new system. Dashboard function particularly helpful. System Updates sent to all schools now that DfE have agreed the Authority Pro-forma Tool. Schools asked to contact Finance or ScoMIS if any quirks are noticed (e.g. FSM6 Secondary percentage issue) Charges will be issued to schools this month prior to year end. 	
Key Decision / Issues for DEF	Update noted
8. Consultation: Fairer Funding	
Discussion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No information has been issued yet by DfE. Discussed Apprenticeship levy; Government promoting creation of apprenticeships in 	

organisations of 250+ where a 0.5% levy is to be taken from these organisations' payroll bill. Maintained Schools will form part of the LA category, and Multi-academy trusts would also be eligible for the levy.

- Link to joint consultation to be circulated, with responses to be submitted by 4 March.
- SFG discussed how the funding might be taken and how schools could recoup through taking on apprentices.

Key Decision / Issues for DEF

Update noted

Actions:

KP to forward consultation link to Phase Associations.

9. Mutual Fund Board (Adrian Fox)

Discussion:

- Mutual Fund is currently predicting a year end surplus of £250k due to lower volume of claims this year than in the past.
- Claims for February and March to be submitted prior to year end to enable payments to be made in year.
- Noted a request has been received from a Gloucester school asking if they would be permitted to join the Devon scheme following the closure of their mutual fund scheme. The group considered whether a wider base would be helpful. Noted the Devon scheme is currently viable, but might want to investigate further why the Gloucs. scheme closed, and check the historical absence data for the school enquiring.
- Discussed the administrative implications of opening up the scheme more widely; a previous discussion had considered accepting schools or MATs which have at least one school within Devon.

Key Decision / Issues for DEF

SFG agreed that the Devon Mutual Fund will not accept schools from other local authorities at this time.

Actions:

AF to check SFG minute reference re. criteria Plymouth RC Diocese Academy criteria with a view to tightening the terms of reference

10. Items for DEF

Discussion: DEF Finance Report to include:

- Month 10 monitoring
- ITT outcomes
- MEG (for information)

11. Any Other Business

Discussion:

- SFG agreed to wait until 11 May SFG meeting to consider the outcome of the national schools funding consultation.
- Karen Powlesland announced that she would be moving to Children's Social Work and will swap roles with Julian Dinnicombe. SFG wished Karen well in her new role, and thanked her for her time.
- Next meeting on 11 May to be held at Okehampton College.