

## West Berkshire Schools' Forum

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>High Needs Funding Arrangements for Mainstream Schools 2014-15</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup> July 2014</b>
<b>Contact Officer(s)</b>	<b>Jane Seymour</b>

### For Decision

#### 1. Background

1.1 The current SEN funding system for statemented pupils in mainstream schools was put in place in 2013-14 as part of the implementation of Government led SEN funding changes which came about at that time.

1.2 The system includes 7 funding bands for statemented pupils, as follows:

<b>Funding Band</b>	<b>TA Hours</b>	<b>£ Value</b>	<b>Top up</b>
Band G	17.5	6,760	760
Band H	20	7,720	1,720
Band I	22.5	8,730	2,730
Band J	25	9,770	3,770
Band K	27.5	10,820	4,820
Band L	30	11,880	5,880
Band M	32.5	12,920	6,920

1.3 Schools fund the first £6,000 of each Statement. The Local Authority provides the "top up" funding shown in the final column.

1.4 This system has now been in place for nearly four terms. Experience has shown that the very small steps between bands of just 2.5 hours of teaching assistance per week are unnecessary with the result that some bands are very underused.

1.5 Bands are currently expressed as a number of teaching assistance hours and this is also how resources are expressed in Statements of Special Educational Needs. This is a system which West Berkshire has used, in common with many other Local Authorities, as a means of meeting the requirement to specify and quantify resources in Statements. This has, however, been unhelpful in some respects for the following reasons:

- Schools have been expected by parents to provide an exact number of TA hours, which has reduced schools' ability to use resources flexibly.
- The number of TA hours with which each funding band is deemed to equate is based on an average TA salary. If schools are employing

very experienced and well trained / qualified staff they may be paid a higher hourly rate and therefore the funding band may not fund the number of hours set out in the Statement, which can again lead to difficulties with parents.

- Expressing resources in Statements in terms of TA hours promotes the use of TAs to meet the needs of children with SEN. TA support can be effective when used well, but attaching a large number of TA hours to a child with SEN may not be the best or most effective use of resources. We wish to encourage a wide range of approaches to meeting SEN, including small group support with teachers or properly trained TAs following specific intervention programmes; regular one to one support from trained TAs following specific programmes; better quality differentiation of the curriculum; adaptation of materials and resources; use of specific teaching strategies and approaches with support and advice from SEN support services. Some schools achieve a very good balance of these different approaches, but others are over reliant on one to one TA support as a standard response to a child with SEN.

1.6 The SEND Reforms which will be implemented in September 2014, resulting in the replacement of Statements with Education Health and Care plans, strongly encourage a focus on outcomes for children and on flexible and creative use of resources to meet needs. It is therefore timely to consider whether our systems for funding children with Statements / EHC Plans need to be adapted in order to promote this type of approach.

## **2. Proposed changes to mainstream school high needs funding arrangements**

2.1 In order to address the issues set out above, it is proposed that:

- (i) The number of funding bands for children with Statements of Special Educational Needs / EHC Plans in mainstream schools are rationalised from 7 to 4.
- (ii) Funding for Statements / Education Health and Care Plans should be expressed as a sum of money rather than as a number of TA hours.

2.2 The proposed funding bands would be as follows:

<b>Funding Band</b>	<b>£ Value</b>	<b>Top up</b>
Additional Funding	6,760	760
Significant Funding	8,730	2,730
High Level Funding	10,820	4,820
Exceptional Funding	12,920	6,920

- 2.3 This would be a more streamlined approach to funding children in mainstream schools with Statements / EHC Plans which should encourage more flexible and effective use of resources.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the new system would be introduced on a phased basis starting within the current financial year when the first EHC Plans will be issued.
- 2.5 Existing Statements will be converted to EHC Plans between September 2014 and April 2018. Where a Statement is being converted to an EHC Plan, (through the Annual Review process), one of the new funding bands will be allocated. However, where a Statement is not due for conversion until year 2 or 3 of the three year transition to EHC Plans, a traditional annual review will take place and the existing banding will remain (assuming the same level of resources is still justified). This will mean that effectively the current mainstream funding system for statemented pupils and the new mainstream funding system for pupils with EHC Plans will be run in parallel until all Statements have been converted to EHC Plans by April 2018.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Schools' Forum is asked to approve the proposed changes to funding arrangements for children with Statements / EHC Plans.