
Resource Units – Additional Funding for Exceptional Circumstances

Report being considered by: Schools Forum
On: 17/07/2017
Report Author: Claire White, Ian Pearson
Item for: Decision **By:** All Forum Members

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To set out a proposal to provide additional funding for resource units who need to stagger the entry for new pupils due to start at the unit at the same time.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Heads Funding Group recommends approval of the proposal set out in paragraph 5 of this report.

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| Will the recommendation require the matter to be referred to the Council or the Executive for final determination? | Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> | No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 West Berkshire currently has nine resource units sited at primary or secondary schools (a tenth unit is due to open in September 2017). Each provides specialist support and in West Berkshire there are units for physically disabled, speech and language difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), hearing impaired, and specific literacy difficulties.
- 3.2 Each unit receives funding of £10,000 for the number of places it supports. This is instead of formula funding received in the main school budget (the number of places funded is deducted from the pupil numbers used in calculating the main school formula). Sixth form places are funded at £6,000 in addition to the sixth form funding.
- 3.3 In most units the place funding does not cover the costs, so in addition top up funding is paid for each pupil in the unit. This funding “follows the pupil” and is paid by the local authority where the pupil lives. In West Berkshire there are three top up funding bands specific to each unit. These were originally calculated in 2013 when the current high needs funding system was introduced. The funding rates were based on staffing ratios for the number of pupils in the unit, and at the relevant salary costs at that time, plus an allowance for non staffing costs.
- 3.4 The place funding and top up rates have not increased for inflation since they were originally introduced, and in 2017/18 they were reduced by 0.5% as part of the high needs block savings requirement. Schools have therefore needed to operate the units more efficiently, and ensure they are not subsidised by the main school budget.

4. Exceptional Circumstances

- 4.1 Although place funding is fixed for the year, top up funding can vary if there is movement of pupils. Generally, the number of pupils will stay much the same for the year, and as and when pupils leave, their places are refilled as soon as possible. Schools can therefore plan their unit budgets and staffing structures around the number of places and expected pupil numbers.
- 4.2 An exceptional circumstance to this has arisen at Theale Primary ASD Unit. The unit is for ten places, nine of which are filled, and three pupils are currently in year six and due to leave at the end of the summer term. Due to the complexity of their needs, it is not possible to admit three new pupils into the unit at once, and each new pupil will need to be integrated at different times. The annual top up funding at the unit ranges from £13,037 for level 1 to £19,603 for level 3, so by not replacing all three pupils at the same time this has an impact on the unit's funding (approximately £10k shortfall). Based on the staggered transition to the unit of new pupils, the unit is currently forecasting a deficit for 2017/18 as it is not possible to temporarily reduce all staffing costs (TA hours have been reduced). Having to pay back this deficit may disadvantage pupils in the unit.

5. Proposal

- 5.1 It is proposed that if any unit meets specific criteria for this exceptional circumstance that additional funding will be payable, as set out in the paragraphs below.
- 5.2 Criteria to be met:
- If two or more places become vacant at the same time (probable for year 6 and year 11 leavers)
 - and
 - There are pupils available to fill the places
 - and
 - Due to the significant specific needs of these pupils it is not possible for them to start at the unit at the same time
- 5.3 Additional funding will be calculated at the relevant top up rate from the date the pupil(s) would have commenced in the unit to the date they actually start.
- 5.4 The Head of Education is to verify that the criteria have been met and approve the funding from the High Needs top up budget.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The resource units provide necessary and good value high needs provision for West Berkshire pupils, reducing the necessity to place pupils in more expensive out of county provision.
- 6.2 In order to ensure that funding is fair and the school is not disadvantaged by an exceptional circumstance beyond their control, additional funding as proposed will ensure that other pupils in the unit are not disadvantaged in any way.