

Briefing Note

Title: Update on Clawed Back Finances
Date: 01/10/2018

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Job Title: Head of SEND

Intended Audience: Internal Partner organisation Public Confidential

Purpose or recommendation

1. The purpose of this brief is to advise Schools Forum on the use of Arbitration Panel underspends in supporting pupils with special educational needs to remain in local provision. Further the paper recommends that forum support the identified use of the funding.

Overview

2. At Schools Forum on 5 July 2018 it was agreed to use a portion of the unspent funding from 2017 Arbitration Panel funds to support pupils with additional needs to continue to be educated within the City of Wolverhampton and to support local provision to do so. This paper is reporting back to forum on the use of the funds and the overall cost savings achieved for the DSG high needs block.

Background and context

3. Outstanding Arbitration Funds to the total of £58,646 were identified for the use of maintaining pupils with Special Educational Needs in Wolverhampton Schools.
4. The rationale for the decision rested on the following principles
 - i. maximising the use of local provision in order to allow a more inclusive approach and give children and young people a better chance of being educated within their own community
 - ii. Maximising the efficient use of public funding.
5. Following the decision of Schools' Forum an analysis of placement decisions was undertaken. This analysis identified a cohort of 11 pupils did not fit the traditional profile of learners at Penn Hall School (the identified pupils having severe learning difficulties and /or ASD rather than particular physical disabilities) but who the school had agreed they could support with some reasonable adaptations to their site.
6. Due to the continuing rise in demand for special school places within Wolverhampton and nationally, particularly for children and young people with more complex needs there was no identified capacity within the local offer for these children. Without the funds agreed by Schools' Forum all 11 pupils would have been expected to attend an out of city special school most likely to be Cherry Trees School.

7. the SEN Service determined that the resources should be practically employed to support both the growth of Penn Hall School to meet identified demand and the extension of provision to cater for a broader range of needs and allow it to grow to meet both current and anticipated demand.
8. A specific breakdown of the Arbitration Panel money is hard to establish since it was used as part of a pooled budget. (Although this may be possible to do Schools' Forum request it). As an example, however, the funds were allocated to the following areas:
 - Staff training: Team Teach, CoolKids, ASD training etc
 - Staff restructure and recruitment
 - Increased therapies input – Particularly OT and SALT in the first instance
 - Class adaptations
 - Adaptions to site security – additional fob access and gating
 - Equipment
 - Funding for ICT/Access to assistive technology
9. An analysis of placement cost variances between Penn Hall school and Cherry Trees reveals that each place at Penn Hall is on average £5,506 cheaper than its equivalent at Cherry Trees (£12,714 against £18,220). Therefore, the first-year reduction in cost pressure in the high needs block is £60,566.
10. It is important to consider three factors when looking at the efficiency achieved from the use of the Arbitration Panel funds.
 - i. This is a year on year efficiency of at least £60,566 set against a one-off investment of £58,646
 - ii. In undertaking the analysis, we have used the “cheapest” alternative provision as Cherry Trees is a maintained school. There is no certainty that they could have accommodated such a number of Wolverhampton pupils and the average cost of independent provision as an alternative is in excess of £40,000 per pupil per year.
 - iii. In addition to the future efficiency for the high needs block and the obvious advantages in allowing children to be educated in their own community there are significant savings that will be made with regards to school transport.
11. Future savings from the changes at Penn Hall are dependent upon City of Wolverhampton Council Cabinet approving the changes currently out for consultation.