

Meeting at Luckington Community School

Mon 9th October 2017

Present

Julia Hind, Head Teacher

Gwen Pennington, Admin Officer

Susan McCraith, Governor

Ben Russell, Governor

Grant Davis, Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager, Wiltshire Council

Items for Discussion

- Small Schools with deficit budgets - responsibilities of Governors and County
- SEN Funding Principles
- Government pupil funding changes and current inability to forecast ahead for 5 year plan
- Changes to sports premium, sparsity funding

Agenda above supplied by Susan McCraith

Discussion

Governors & Grant introduced themselves.

Background: Schools strategic financial support is responsible for ~237 schools of which ~6 are our size and ~12 are of around 60 pupils. Grant has a list of other small schools we could consult. To the DfE 150 pupils is a small school. Budgets are set by the government but with the High needs block county has more discretion as it is allocated per pupil.

Small Schools with deficit budgets - responsibilities of Governors and County

SM: Luckington School has had no deficit budget prior to this year SEN budget is pushing us into deficit.

GD & GP: Budget was tight prior to SEN deficit. External donation was needed for this year.

SM: Situation has caused Governor anxiety, we want to make County aware of School budget problems

GD: There has been a meeting at County with SEN & Julia Cramp to discuss small schools as High needs in small schools does not work financially.

BR: Will this help us in long term/ short term?

GD: There used to be a High Needs Funding Factor for schools with a high proportion of needs, ours is 6%, we would have qualified for additional funding in the past. This is being discussed at the County meetings.

SM: As we are not an isolated case, what happens if we go into deficit

GD: County would issue a letter stating we had a problem. County would cover the deficit. We would then have to produce a 3 year plan to repay the money. County would assist with the plan.

BR: How do we have a budget recovery plan without cutting teaching.

GD: Staffing is greatest cost to school. There is no more funding at present for SEN

SM: What would we do in the event we had another SEN pupil.

GD: The school would go through the same process to raise awareness of the problem with County.

BR: Awareness does not help.

GD: Raising awareness causes the funding to be looked at

BR: The funding is not generous enough

SEN Funding Principles

SM: SEN element in school budget is already taken by another pupil. What will happen if we go into deficit?

GD: Send a letter to A&B Support and they will send someone to help us with our budget. The letter should say we are going in to deficit and then we should submit a budget to say how we will recover in 3 to 5 years.

SM: How much are schools expected to depend on outside funding?

GD: We can build externally generated income into our budget if the school is confident the money will come in.

SM: The school should not have to depend on it.

GD: 17 out of 150 primaries are in deficit. Luckington School is not the only one.

SM: Will having a deficit budget have a n impact on our number on roll.

GD: OFSTED are not interested in school finances. It will be noted on the Schools Forum report but is not likely to have an impact.

BR: Governors put a lot of work into the April budget not to go into deficit but we ended up with a deficit over summer anyway.

JH: Explained situation re SEN pupil. It felt wrong to have to turn a pupil away due to funding issues, but we had to say that we could only include with funding for full time TA. School was made to include pupil without this.

GD: Parent had contacted Grant to say they wanted the child to come here as we were an inclusive school with enhanced provision for the child.

SM: Does SEN panel consider school funding?

GD: SEN Banding is considered for each child - thought to be enough to support the child.

JH: As we are a small school our resources are not as flexible.

SM: How can we prevent this happening again.

GD: The process is the same. Larger schools are better able to absorb the costs.

SM: How do we give feedback?

GD: Contact Judith Westcott to give feedback on small schools budget and school improvement and effectiveness. Judith would encourage talks to give weight to her arguments to the committee.

National Funding Formula

GD: Wiltshire are a poorly funded region especially when compared against London. From 2018-19 guidance will be coming through Nationally, we will still have the schools forum in 2018-19 but the Local Authority will be using the National Formula. This will be good news for Luckington school as we should receive another ~£5000 next financial year, the year after we should receive another ~£4000. The step in funding is because the government have capped the initial increase to 3% The School Forum could decide to change that for 2017-18 but they are likely to follow the National Funding Formula. The Dfe will fund Wiltshire for growth but they may need to claw it back from the National funding formula if they have to.

SM: Governors are pleased that the lump sum element to the budget has gone up from £85,000 to £110,000

GD: Yes that is good for Luckington but the other factors in the budget will reduce, such as awpu, so Luckington will come out with around 5K more. Schools will be issued with an advance budget as soon as government confirmation is through.

SM: Can we influence the outcome?

GD: Yes but schools are likely to get more money so schools are likely to accept the National Funding Formula.

Changes to sports premium, sparsity funding

SM: Are there other area of funding we can access?

GD: Yes we are expecting £16,000+ for each school for Sports funding

SM: Another £16,000 would get us out of deficit

GD: There are creative uses for Sports funding that may help with the deficit

BR: Should we train teachers in sports and then use the money to cover that teachers salary? It is crazy to have a large pot of money we struggle to spend when we can't afford to pay for Teachers.

GD: explained that Sports money came from the Sugar tax and the figures will be allocated by County in October.

BR: Is it safe to allocate now?

GD: The government committed to ongoing sports funding until 2021 but they are very late in giving us the details. This financial year we will be allocated 7/12 of the £16k fund as sports funding is for the academic year not financial.

JH: We have to account for how we spend the sports funding - there are criteria for this, which we report on.

GD: Unfortunately the Local Authority is overspent on High Needs so there will be no further funding.

BR: There is no motivation for talks if there is no money to give us. SEN funding should cover the costs of the child at whatever school the parents choose.

SM: Will we get sparsity funding?

GD: Unlikely as we did not get it last year. Our average distance per child to the nearest school was ~1.8miles and it needs to be at least 2 miles. It is worked out annually and can change depending on where children live in relation to the school. So for some years we

might qualify for it. It will be affected by the 3% funding cap so we would not get the full amount.

BR: FOLS are providing the school money to cover teaching so that we do not go into deficit this year but this is not sustainable. How do we go forward?

GD: There is a tendency towards more schools going into deficit. Primary balances have dropped from 8 million to 6 million this year which shows schools are having to draw on their reserves to keep going. So it is still not fairer funding. More schools are in financial deficit. Schools are changing staffing structures. Headteachers are being shared across schools and more Head teacher time is spent teaching in class. The National funding formula is capped at 3% so it is frustrating that we will not get the full amount.

SM: Do Academies get more funding?

GD: Academies are funded by the same formula but they have more costs. There would be no funding benefit to becoming an Academy.

SM: So our action moving forward is to update the budget with the new SEN figures.

GD: Phasing in the new funding formula makes it difficult to forward plan.

BR: In future we need to be firmer earlier on in the process (Re:SEN)

SM: Write to Judith to raise the issue. SM had compared benchmarking figures for teaching costs and we were average.

GD: Primaries need to consider that the more expensive staff leaving helps the budget most. Cutting cleaning hours does not really help. The other way is to increase school numbers. Market to parents who would like their child to go to a niche school. Malmesbury school is currently full and the overspill tends to go to Lea & Garsden but there is a possibility to attract them here.

Small schools in the same situation as us who we can contact to see how they handle their staffing structure etc.

Cherton (47 on roll)

Newton Tony (48 on roll)

Chalbourne (54 on roll)

Hungerford (No deficit)

Hindon (42 on roll)

Shaftsbury

In our area

Seagry (25 on roll)

Somerfords (45 on roll)

Things for us to consider : Costs, Staffing Structure, Teaching Structure and classes
Can we benefit from the overspill from Malmesbury? Can we attract children from Gloucestershire?

Governors thanked Grant for visiting our school and explaining the situation. It was informative to find out the situation at County.