

Schools Forum

13 December 2021

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS HIGH NEEDS BLOCK 2021/22
OCTOBER 2021 MONITORING REPORT

This report is for Information

1. Recommendations:

That Schools Forum members:

- 1.1 Note the contents of the report in relation to the 2021/22 HNB Grant budget monitoring for the period 1 April – 31 October 2021.
- 1.2 Note the data provided on the commissioned places and occupancy for special provisions as at 30 November 2021.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 To provide Schools Forum with the HNB monitoring position as at 31 October 2021 projected to 31 March 2022 and special provision occupancy as at 30 November 2021.

3. HNB Budget 2020/21

- 3.1 The updated HNB grant for 2021/22 reported as at 31 August 2021 was £53.240m.
- 3.2 The DFE have further updated the grant allocation and made a positive adjustment of £0.315m so the HNB grant currently stands at £53.555m.
- 3.3 The anticipated in year surplus as at 31 August 2021 projected to 31 March 2022 was £1.332m, reported in September, has now been revised to a surplus of £1.408m.
- 3.4 The balance brought forward as at 1 April 2021 is £0.597m surplus.

3.5 Appendix 1 shows the 2021/22 High Needs Block Budget Allocation, the actual expenditure as at 31 October 2021 and the variance from budget

3.6 The Variances are explained below;

Variation 1

Out of borough placements, other associated costs, show a £20k saving and is due to the reduction in room hire costs for the delivery of support to students that are awaiting a school roll. During COVID these were delivered virtually and from September 21 normal face to face delivery has resumed.

Variation 2

There has been an increase in EHCP assessments which has resulted in a projected overspend of £514k on the delegated funding provided to mainstream schools and academies.

Sandwell Community School - Additional funding of £200k has been included here to be prudent to fund pupils placed at SCS requiring top up that is not included in the funding already allocated. SCS are funded 180 places at £10k per place plus Top Up for 80 places. This area is currently under review by a Task and Finish Group.

Variation 3

High Point opened on 1 September 2021. It was initially thought that the place element would have to be met through the HNB. The DFE clarified in July 2021 that this would be funded directly with no impact on Sandwell's HNB.

Variation 4

An amount £480k from the Early Years Grant is used to offset the early support for pupils in private provider settings and those in Mainstream early years settings. An additional sum of £70K has been allocated in this financial year bringing the overall funding to £550k. The support for pupils in mainstream schools is set against the schools' delegation and not shown separately. The £550k will

be insufficient to cover the full costs of meeting the needs of the pupils in these early years settings. Questions were raised at the SEND Consultation Working Group re the level of grant and the possibility that this could be increased going forward.

Variation 5

The total variances equate to a saving of £386k across 9 service areas. These are mainly due to staff turnover, maternity leave, opting out of the LA superannuation scheme and full time budgeted posts covered by staff on reduced hours.

Variation 6

Preventing Secondary Exclusions Team has not been appointed to so there is a saving of £199k in 2021/22. This is part of the SEND Consultation and it was agreed at last Schools Forum on 8 November 2021 that this would be used to fund the reintegration officer posts currently funded by schools through the exclusion levy. This will not impact on the HNB until next financial year so this will remain a saving in 2021/22.

Variation 7

Alternative Provision was budgeted at £843k in December 2020. Based on the leavers in July 2021 and the close monitoring of placements by the Alternative Provision Panel the saving is currently predicted to be £310k. Any changes in this will be reported and evidenced in future monitoring reports.

Variation 8

SEN Developments is showing an underspend of £760k – This budget head currently covers independent appeals and reports, and any funding agreed that does not clearly fit onto any other budget head. It also holds the HNB balancing figure of £440k, which is the difference between the calculated budgets as at 1 April 2021 and the HNB Grant initial settlement 2021/22. An underspend of £449k was reported on the previous monitoring and the increase is predominantly due to the additional grant received of £315k.

Variation 9

There is a favourable variance of £191k against the Children with Disabilities Team contribution. The HNB has previously contributed £95,800 to the CWD Team and questions have been raised

previously about what this contribution is for. As the contribution was not required in 2020/21 but was accrued, this has now been reversed and the funding has been transferred back into the HNB. It has also been reported that this funding will not be required in 2021/22 or any subsequent years.

Variation 10

There is a favourable variance of £97k against the Non Statutory SEN contribution from the HNB due to staff turnover.

4. Focus Provision and Special School Place Funding

- 4.1 Appendix 2 shows the Focus Provision, Special School and PRU commissioned places for the period 1/4/21-31/3/22 together with the average occupancy for the for the period 1/4/21-30/11/21.
- 4.2 A total of 1,103 commissioned places have been funded and allocated to schools and PRUs of which 79 are utilised by other local authority's pupils. An additional 25 places have been budgeted for which may be allocated to special schools should they exceed their commissioned allocations on average over the financial year.
- 4.3 Table 1 shows the new provisions / expansions in special provision from 1 September 2021.

Table 1 Commissioned places to be funded from 1 September 2021

Establishment	Commissioned places from 1/9/21
The Meadows Expansion	18
Westminster SPI	12
High Point	38
Total	68

- 4.4 The Focus Provisions overall average under occupancy as at 31 August 2021 was 12%. The under occupancy as at 30 November 2021 is 4%. Primary under occupancy is 1.6% while Secondary is 7.1%.
- 4.5 There are no vacant places across the 4 Special Schools.
- 4.6 The commissioned places are the places that the LA purchase at the beginning of the financial year and are not the actual numbers that the schools can accommodate (PAN).
- 4.7 The pupil tracking data for PRUs is now done on the same basis as the Focus Provision and Special schools for consistent reporting. The total places commissioned for the period 1/4/21-31/3/22 across the 3 PRUs is 255. The average occupancy as at 30 November 2021 projected to 31 March 2022 is 179 but the actual foot fall is 328. The average occupancy may change over the course of time due to the nature of the pupils entering the PRUs and the duration of their enrolment.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 That Schools Forum note the contents of the report.

Date: 25/11/21

Contact Officer: Michael Jarrett

Tel No: 0121-569-8204