

ALTERNATIVE PROVISION FREE SCHOOLS

Purpose of the Report

1. To advise the Schools Forum on the benefits and challenges of developing Alternative Provision (AP) Free Schools in Nottinghamshire.
2. To advise the Schools Forum on next steps to inform the strategy.

Information and Advice

3. There are Nottinghamshire children and young people with complex needs who are currently receiving their education away from a mainstream school setting. Some of these pupils remain on the roll of a mainstream school, some are on the notional roll of the Local Authority, known as Educated Other than at School (EOTAS), and some are on the roll of the setting itself. These settings include special schools, independent, non-maintained schools, and Alternative Provision.
4. The funding arrangements for this full range of types of provision where children have their complex needs met is itself varied, but in all cases the funding is drawn from the *High Needs Block*. It follows that the development of any one type of provision will have a potential financial impact on all other types of provision, including funding currently available to primary and secondary Behaviour and Attendance partnerships.
5. In planning the development of different types of provision, the aim would be for pupils to access the least costly but appropriate type of provision in order that *best value* is achieved for the *High Needs Block*; this would benefit all schools.
6. The Local Authority is aware that a number of Trusts are considering making an application to the DfE to open an AP Free School in Nottinghamshire in the near future.
7. Place funding for pupils attending AP Free Schools is provided by the DfE for the first two years following the opening of a new AP Free School. Thereafter the £10,000 per pupil place funding comes from the *High Needs Block* of the relevant Local Authority. Where children are on the roll of a Nottinghamshire school, but accessing provision in an AP Free School, any top-up funding would be paid by the school at which the pupil is on roll. However, where children are on the roll of the Free School, any top-up funding will also be drawn from the *High Needs Block* of the relevant Local Authority. This means that the development in use of AP Free Schools could have a significant impact on the amount of funding remaining in the *High Needs Block*.

8. There is a need for a shared understanding around current use of the *High Needs Block*, and for this shared understanding to inform the strategic development of different types of provision in ways which are beneficial to children with complex needs, more cost effective and remaining fair across Partnership Development areas.
9. We are therefore proposing to review the numbers of pupils currently accessing funding from the *High Needs Block* in each of these different types of provision. This data will be presented alongside the total cost and average cost per pupil, by Partnership area. (see appendix 1) The intention would be to meet with Primary and Secondary Partnership Leads to verify the data and invite commentary which will then be used to inform a Nottinghamshire strategy on AP Free School development to bring back to Schools Forum in October 2017 for further discussion.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Schools Forum:

- 1) That Schools Forum members feedback to local area headteachers and encourage them to engage in the data gathering and verifying activity.

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