Paper 3

Schools Forum briefing papers 22 June 2017

High Needs Review: Progress Report June 2017

1. Context:

The Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block (HNB) consists of all funding for education provision for high needs learners from age 2 to 25, Oxfordshire receives approximately £57m. The Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities to keep the provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) under review, the Department for Education (DfE) provided a one off grant in December 2016 to carry out an in depth and thorough review. This is particularly important when funding arrangements are changing (National Funding Formula) and where the educational progress of children with SEND and sufficiency of specialist provision are growing concerns. A large percentage of the HNB supports children with SEND. The grant funding has provided an opportunity to review the block as a whole, including the interface between the funding streams and provisions for all vulnerable learners.

One of Oxfordshire's key priorities is to improve the educational progress of vulnerable learners as set out in a [Strategic Overview 2016 – 2020](#) which sits beneath the [Education Strategy.](#) The High Needs Review and action plan supports the vulnerable learners strategy.

2. Awareness raising, exploration and defining stage of the High Needs Review

The first stage of the review has focused on awareness raising, listening to headteacher's views and engaging with key partners. Headteacher/Chair of Governor briefings, Chairs of Partnerships meetings and the Children's Trust Board have been the main forums, as well as a more focused approach in the Banbury area.

Over the last few months we have been laying the foundations to support the programme, including scoping ways of working to ensure that resources are focused on priorities.

Workstreams

3. Review of central services supporting vulnerable learners.

Where support services are retained and funded centrally it is essential that they are high quality, effective and value for money. A clear, concise summary of the services has been produced and a short survey is open until the end of June to gain feedback from headteachers. The results from the survey will be used to improve practice and inform developments.

Weblink <u>Have your say on services to support vulnerable learners</u>

4. Locality approach: developing the skills, expertise and confidence in each locality to support children at lower levels of need.

The aim of this workstream is to explore the potential of devolving some funding to partnerships to enable local schools , using their knowledge of local needs and trends, to plan and commission some services and provision. Where this practice is taking place in other parts of the country it has brought about greater awareness of performance and resources, and increased the skills, expertise and confidence to meet the needs of vulnerable learners.

Some exploratory work is taking place in Banbury with the headteacher's partnership group. At a meeting on May 4th, a comprehensive data set was shared covering numbers or children and profile of needs, absence and exclusions, attainment results, SEN data and funding. The aim of the meeting was to achieve a shared understanding of the challenges, a willingness to explore ways of making the best use of resources and services available and to identify priorities to work on together.

The mix of local authority representatives at the meeting, (Vulnerable Learners, Locality and Community Support Service and an agenda item on preventing exclusions) illustrated the commitment and wiliness to work together on some of our most challenging areas. A discussion document was produced for the Banbury Partnership meeting to help think about where we are now and where we could be, see Annex A. There was a strong appetite for working more closely together.

The locality data has been produced for Oxfordshire's 9 localities and will be shared at the Chairs of Schools Partnership meeting. It is intended to help support locality strategic planning and increase local involvement in decisions about spending on SEND and alternative provision.

5. Sufficient, good quality local specialist provision and reducing reliance on high cost placements.

In the latest free school programme (wave 13) Iffley Academy Trust was successful in its bid for a new special school in North Oxfordshire but the LA bid for the Parklands Site (Bessels Leigh) was unsuccessful. Further work is underway for the local authority to support a free schools bid for the Didcot Special School if /when a wave 14 programme is announced by the DfE.

The Special School headtechers working group has met for a second time and at the September meeting will look at the revised special school forecast data.

6. Leadership and research

This year's [Annual Inclusion Conference, Diminishing Difference](#) is focusing on improving outcomes for learners vulnerable to underachievement. Keynote Speakers include: Sir John Dunford (National Pupil Premium Champion 2013-15), Matthew Haynes (Senior HMI), Sarah Hubbard (HMI) and Peter Henderson (Programme manager at the Education Endowerment Foundation).

One of Oxfordshire's obsessions is 'Increasing school attendance – leading to improved attainment.' This is particularly relevant to vulnerable learners given the poor attendance rates across the vulnerable learner groups. The high needs review will ensure that it supports activities relating to this obsession. For example the Strategic Schools Partnership Board (SSPB) is commissioning a project on 'Reducing Persistent Absenteeism in Oxfordshire Schools' and some of the DfE grant could contribute to this.

The SSPB is also supporting a research project that will be led by Oxfordshire School Inclusion Team (OXSIT) and MBOX (Mulberry Bush School) focusing on the attainment and inclusion of learners with challenging behaviour, including pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. These examples illustrate how we are working in partnership as an Oxfordshire system to meet the current and future challenges.

Janet Johnson, Strategic Lead for Vulnerable Learners 12.06.17

Annex A

Current position and aspirations for vulnerable learners: a discussion document.

	From	To
Knowledge and collective responsibilities	Individual school data on the progress of vulnerable learners and local authority countywide monitoring and analysis.	Partnership VL data is used to plan and commission specialist provision, training and services.
Ownership	Centrally funded support services have limited opportunities to discuss strategic issues across mainstream and specialist settings.	Local schools and settings , and central support services, using their knowledge of local needs work together to ensure that support is used to maximum impact.
Facilities and resources	Increasing numbers and amounts of top up funding allocated on a case by case basis (Early years and primary) yet the attainment levels remain poor.	Greater transparency about the levels of spend in each partnership to raise awareness and understanding of the use of resources. Appropriate provision identified through strategic planning to meet the needs of children in each partnership, enabling access to a broader range of resources/provision.
Entitlement	Services and provision that is diagnostic/EHCP driven. Susceptible to individual pressures and demands.	Needs driven, evidence based provision identified through strategic partnership and planning. Proactive and informed decision making.
Capacity building	Inflexible provision and cyp falling between the gaps. Children and young people travelling out of county or placed in high cost independent schools, resulting in inefficient use of resources.	Greater local skills, expertise and confidence in meeting needs. More needs met locally. More informed commissioning and shaping services to meet need.
Value for money	Differences in services and provision available in each area for children with similar level of need.	Equity in access to specialist provision and services. Children have their needs met closer to home. More resources available for local provision.