

Agenda Item 14

TITLE	School Improvement Grant
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Schools Forum on 14 October 2020
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

This reports forms part of regular reporting to Schools Forum, informing areas of statutory decision making and improving visibility and consultation on wider Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) financial matters.

RECOMMENDATION

Schools Forum is asked to note the contents of this report.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report provides Schools Forum with information on the use of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant to support deliver of the SEND Strategy and DSG Deficit Management Plan through a Therapeutic Thinking approach.

School Improvement Grant

01. Purpose of the Report

This report provides Schools Forum with information on the use of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant to support deliver of the SEND Strategy and DSG Deficit Management Plan.

02. Recommendation

Schools Forum is asked to note the contents of this report.

03. Background

The [school improvement monitoring and brokering grant](#) of £50 million per year was announced on 30 November 2016. The grant has been allocated to local authorities since September 2017 to allow them to continue to monitor performance of maintained schools, broker school improvement provision, and intervene as appropriate.

The grant is generally announced in 2 tranches per academic year; in October for the September to March period, and then a final allocation in April covering April to August. For Wokingham £177,244 was received for the 2019/20 academic year, with a further £95,713 recently announced for the first tranche of 2020/21.

04. Use of the Grant

While the grant is not ring-fenced, in recognition of the increasing demand for support for pupils with behavioural and SEMH, a targeted use of the funds has been considered. More pupils in mainstream schools are presenting with needs that require adaptation to provision. Exclusion and use of PRU support are also increasing. Specialist placements are highly expensive and result in children being placed out of their home communities.

In recognition of the above, and as part of delivery of the SEND Strategy and DSG Deficit Management Plan, the School Improvement grant for 2019/20 was held to support a holistic piece of work in developing system capacity and building sustainability in the offer that schools are able to make to their pupils.

05. Therapeutic Thinking Approach

Therapeutic Thinking is a philosophy. It focuses on how all children and young people are to be supported, particularly in terms of their emotional wellbeing and mental health; it also helps to develop an understanding of how to respond to those who may be communicating through concerning behaviours. The Therapeutic

Thinking approach is a school-led embedded ethos characterised by an inclusive culture, based on training and information that is underpinned by best practice, policy and plans.

Therapeutic thinking enables practitioners in schools to adopt a robust solutions focussed approach. It has a basis in trauma informed practice and calls upon detailed analysis of issues presented by children and planning to build on successes experienced.

Despite best efforts made by all colleagues across schools and beyond, partners recognise that some children are hard to include because of the behaviours they exhibit, however using a trauma informed, therapeutic approach we can recognise that excluding these children we are making them 'more unlucky' and increasing their vulnerability to poor mental and physical health, criminality, sexual exploitation, worklessness and premature mortality. Using a therapeutic thinking approach seeks to ensure that public services do not add further harm to those who have suffered adverse childhood experiences by making them 'more unlucky'.

A long term systemic solution needs to be adopted to address the increasingly 'ordinary' needs of pupils presenting in the mainstream. The mainstream system needs capacity and support to adopt approaches that can address the needs of this increasing number of pupils and prevent promulgation of a cycle of potential further disadvantage for pupils alongside reducing HNB expenditure. A therapeutic thinking approach follows trauma informed practice principles and seeks to ensure that those who have suffered adverse experiences are not further harmed by public services.

This approach sits comfortably as an umbrella for the SEND Improvement plan and a solutions focussed approach that will align effectively with Signs of Safety. It contains tools that are education setting specific, enabling practitioners to analyse and plan provision effectively at an individual level in the context of a setting that has this approach at its heart.

The approach is already developing in neighbouring LAs with great success and has benefit across borders where families are shared. Our multi-agency cross border partners are also committed to adopting a Trauma Informed Approach and this includes Thames Valley Police.

Since implementation Reading BC has seen a 58% reduction in exclusions across the borough. In other authorities, Cambridgeshire have reported a 28% reduction in permanent exclusions and Dorset and Essex have reported significant reductions in the number of physical restraints used on children and young people.

This is an 'invest to save approach'. A therapeutic thinking approach aims to reduce demand on out of borough placements and thus relieve pressure on the HNB.

The approach sits well within the new Ofsted Framework for Schools Inspection 2020, and aligns with the DfE advice to schools on behaviour management and inclusion (**Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, DfE, 2018**), particularly in terms of guidance on school policies, culture and graduated responses to behaviour issues.

06. Engagement with Schools & Timeline

As a result of initial promotional workshops undertaken during July 2020, feedback from schools indicates a system desire to commence work as soon as possible.

Due to Covid-19 plans may need to adapt, however, it is anticipated that the first Train the Trainer 3 day sessions will commence in late December 2020.

Timeframes would then be:

Autumn 2020- Task and finish governance group established

Autumn 2020- Project lead identified and supplementary capacity for roll out appointed

Spring 2021- Commissioned Train the Trainer sessions commence

Spring 2021- Embedding consultations with schools commence following attendance at training

Summer 2021 – network meetings for participating settings commence

Autumn 2022 – re-accreditation for first adopters commences

This work is not a short term fix but will build sustained benefits over a longer period of time. The School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant will be used to support the roll out of the programme within schools.

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