

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)
10 July 2018**

Councillor	Portfolio	Date
John Joseph Kelly	Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Safeguarding	June 2018

Schools Funding

During 2017/18 Maintained schools balances increased. In the year, 64 Schools, including special schools and maintained nurseries, had increased balances during 2017/18; whilst 30 schools saw balances decrease. Two Schools have a licensed deficit balance to carry forward.

The High Needs funding block overspent by £1.9m and this was covered by underspends from previous years and moving funding between the blocks.

A full report is available at the Schools Forum section of the Council's website.

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/schools-learning/schools-forum.aspx>

Academy Conversions

Litherland Moss and Shoreside primary schools are in the process of converting to become academies by 1 September. Kew Wood and Churchtown primary schools have applied to become Academies but no conversion date has been set.

Sefton School led School Improvement System

The school led system of school improvement in Sefton has been officially launched by schools and they are now working in 8 school improvement groups to support and improve. In their mission statement schools stated that: 'We are committed to providing the best possible outcomes for all Sefton's children and young people through the raising of standards and the elimination of underperformance in our schools. We believe that school leaders are the best people to meet this challenge and achieve our vision. A collective moral purpose, commitment to excellence and learning through partnership will underpin our approach'.

Free School Meal Eligibility Changes

In April 2018, the criteria used to determine which pupils are eligible for free school meals was updated to reflect the introduction of Universal Credit and the phasing out of other income-based benefits. The updated criteria were introduced following a public

consultation. Under the updated criteria, government estimate that by 2022 around 50,000 more pupils will benefit from a free school meal compared to the previous benefits system. However, other reports suggest that will not be the case.

In the short term there is protection in place for those currently receiving FSM but the impacts over the longer term are not fully known.

SEND Inspection Letter

The local authority received a letter from Minister Nadhim Zahawi following the first 12 months monitoring following our SEND inspection. In the letter the Minister stated 'I am pleased to see evidence of strong progress with your Written Statement of Action over the last 12 months. I am encouraged by the commitment to joint working across partners, including with schools, to improve attainment of children and young people with SEND.....I am reassured that SEND services in Sefton are improving and grateful to you, your colleagues and partners, including schools and families, for the energy and commitment you are showing to continuing the progress you have made so far.'

The Minister asked for an annual update on progress against the action plan. A full copy of the letter is available on the local offer

<https://www.seftondirectory.com/kb5/sefton/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0>

School Absence

The latest school attendance data shows that absence figures have improved slightly over the last period. Overall absence in primary schools is 4.3% (compared with 4.4% in the previous year) which is the best in the LCR but still above the national figure of 4.0%. Overall absence for secondary schools is 5.6% which is the joint best in the LCR but still above the national figure of 5.4%. This figure is the same as the previous year but LCR and national figures have worsened.

Family Care Associates

Authority was sought to approve the 12month block contract with 2 x 12 month extensions for the Family Care Associates, at the annual value £311,272 per annum. Family Care Associates currently deliver a SEN residential provision from a Sefton owned property in Links Avenue, Southport. They are a provider who has consistently delivered high quality care to our most vulnerable young people.

They are in the final process of moving their venue from our property to one which they are purchasing in Formby. The current property is too small; it does not have sufficient space for adaptations to meet the needs of physically disabled children.

The approval is to block purchase 2 beds as a minimum. This would be filled through the existing two placements, and for Sefton to have first option to spot purchase the other beds when required. If due to compatibility it is not possible for Sefton to take the placement, the option would be put out to Liverpool City Region Commissioners.

Enhancing Elected Members Involvement with Children's Social Care

During April 2018, the Local Government Ombudsman undertook a Care Practice Diagnostic into Children's social Care. They made the following recommendation,

Provide opportunities for a wider range of members to engage with children's social care, to enhance understanding of front-line delivery, and take advantage of the intake of new councilors following the elections to further raise the profile of the corporate parenting role.

Proposals to develop a regime of elected member undertaking visits to frontline teams put forward to ensure that members understand the work of the service.