

# CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) - 25<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
John Joseph Kelly	Cabinet Member for Children's Services	September 2018

## **Appointment of Local Authority Governors**

Latest guidance on the appointment of local authority governors states that LA governors must govern in the interests of the school and not represent or advocate for the political or other interests of the local authority; it is unacceptable practice to link the right to nominate local authority governors to the local balance of political power.

For LA Governor appointments, a board should make clear its eligibility criteria including its expectations of the credentials and skills prospective candidates should possess. LAs must then make every effort to understand the board's requirements in order to identify and nominate suitable candidates. It is for the board to decide whether the local authority nominee meets any stated eligibility criteria and, if it chooses to reject the candidate on that basis, to explain their decision to the LA.

Nominations will continue to be sought from political groups but prospective governors will be recommended based on the skill requirements of the school rather than the political balance as per previous practice.

## **Designated Teacher for Looked after Children**

The Department for Education recently issued statutory guidance on their roles and responsibilities of the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children under sections 20(4) and 20A(4) of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.

The guidance brings in the new responsibilities for previously looked after children and the governing bodies of maintained schools, academy proprietors and the designated staff member at maintained schools and academies must have regard to it when promoting the educational attainment of looked-after and previously looked-after children. The local authority will be working with schools to embed the guidance.

## **High Needs Funding**

High Needs Funding which supports provision for pupils with SEND is over committed and funding has been found through schools to meet the demand in the current year. This is not a sustainable position and the local authority received some funding from central government to undertake a review of SEND to provide a longer-term picture of demand and a plan to meet this. Southport schools met with the Secretary of State before schools broke up for the summer and lobbied directly for more funding to support schools and pupils with SEND.

## **School Balances on conversion to an academy**

Government changed the regulations regarding balances for 'forced' academy conversions where previously negative balances remained with the local authority but positive balances transferred to the trust.

Now, the local authority can retain positive balances for these types of conversions and the Cabinet Members for Children, Schools and Safeguarding, and Corporate Services have agreed Sefton should do this in future unless there are exceptional circumstances.

### **Sand Dunes Nursery school**

A consultation is underway on the proposed closure of Sand Dunes Nursery school. This follows a request from the governing body because they are unable to set a balanced budget. Officers have been working with the school for a number of years and despite all of the hard work by the school to become more efficient, rising costs and reducing income has meant they can no longer set a balanced budget. The consultation runs until October.

### **SEND and the role of Schools**

The local authority has been working with schools to ensure the role of schools in supporting pupils with SEND is understood. This includes what governors should do, staff training, the role of the SENCO. Schools also need to keep parents informed and publish information on how they support pupils with SEND on their website.

### **Children Social Care demand and budget**

Children social care is currently experiencing rising demand on its services, with the number of child protection and looked after children increasing, this is having a consequential knock on to the budget as many of these children and young people circumstances are complex.