Meeting date:	17th October 2024
Report to:	Solihull School Forum

Subject/report title:	Dedicated School Grant Task and Finish Groups - Schools Forum Summary Report
Report in name of:	Director of Public Health, Education and Inclusion
Report author/lead contact officer:	Bern Timings – Head of Commissioning for Learning

Schools affected:

☒ All Schools |

Type of Report	For information
Forum Voting	Not a voting matter - for information item
Public/private report:	Public

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   This report provides a summary of matters considered and the recommendations put forward from the headteacher lead Dedicated Schools Grant Task and Finish Groups.

1.2   Following submission of the 2023/24 DSG Management plan it was agreed headteacher Task and Finish groups would be established to explore how cost to the DSG High Needs Block could be further mitigated.

1.3   Task and Finish groups were established around 3 key areas:

- Alternative Provision
- ARPs and ARCs
- Support Services

1.4   Each task and finish group lead reported back in September 2024, providing

confirmation of the matters and issues discussed and the subsequent recommendations and opportunities the group had identified.

1.5 These recommendations have informed the costed mitigations included in the draft 2024/25 DSG management plan, due for consideration by schools forum separately.

2. Decision(s) recommended

2.1 School Forum to note the recommendations provided by the headteacher Task and Finish groups

2.2 School Forum to note these recommendations have informed the formulation of the mitigations included in the draft 2024/25 DSG Management Plan and an option for use of the proposed movement of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2025/26

3. Matters for Consideration

3.1 Each Task and Finish group considered the issues and matters surrounding their area of focus. The themes discussed and recommendations from each group are summarised below.

3.2 Alternative provision

3.2.1 Themes of discussion:

- Existing offer from APs, complexity of differing pathways and costings
- The role of Solihull Inclusion, SISS, single panel and the high needs pathway offer in relation to AP
- Devolution of funding for Secondary schools to manage their own AP
- Potential impact of changes on existing providers, and transition arrangements needed
- Need for SEMH support at AP
- Role of AP as a destination for some pupils
- Flexibility of existing AP offer and pathways
- Transparency of existing system and effectiveness of monitoring
- Existing practice in other Local Authorities

3.2.2 Recommendations:

- Clarity on the offer and simplification of placement process for AP
- Increased flexibility in AP offer
- Requirement for AP with specific focus on SEMH needs
- Clarity on commissioning expectations and monitoring of AP
- Review of tutoring approach and associated spend
- Consideration of value for money and use of Blackwater AP provider alongside Solihull Academy

- Clarity on Local Authority responsibilities regarding AP
- Increased transparency
- Review of funding related to tiered provision/ support with increased focus on the lower cost tier 1 support
- Review of the £1000 LA top up for school commissioned AP placements
- A recognition from the LA that for some students AP is a destination

3.3 ARP's and ARC's

3.3.1 Themes of discussion:

- Current availability of ARP's and the creation of school funded 'hubs'
- The needs being met within the current ARPs and school-based hubs
- Current funding arrangements, inflexible or insufficient to assist meeting need and inequality between provisions,
- Underutilisation of existing provisions
- Good levels of attendance and access to mainstream provision for most children
- Suitability of placements to meet individual needs and impact of 'right' or 'wrong' placements, differences in referral process, clarity of provision profile
- Effectiveness of governance and monitoring, SLA's not reviewed regularly
- Misrepresentation of the inclusive practice that exists within schools
- Varying models of provision for school- based hubs, possibility of inconsistency of practice
- Support and provision for pupils with complex SEMH needs
- Definite need and requirement for ARPs in mainstream schools

3.3.2 Recommendations:

- Review of funding model in consultation with ARP providers
- Review of ARP placement criteria
- Increased access to support services, at reduced cost or free
- Review of involvement of ARP professionals in panel meetings
- Explore opportunities for ARP's to provide CPD, outreach and assessment services
- Review of commissioning and monitoring process for ARP's
- LA investment in developing alternative curriculum packages
- Local authority investment, or reallocation of funds into SEMH ARP's
- Provision of start-up funding for schools needing to set up their own internal provision

3.4 Support Services

3.4.1 Themes of discussion:

- Suitability of current traded offer to meet schools' requirements and value for money

- Frustrations exist with some of the pathways, waiting times for ASD diagnosis' in particular
- SEMH needs proving most challenging in all schools
- Comparison to other services accessed by schools, focus on upskilling school staff rather than working directly with children
- Consideration of what would be involved in an effective support service to meet schools' requirements
- Existing practice in other Local Authorities
- Success of the Connected Care Network, with positive outcomes experienced
- Existing pathways for support via current service and links to AP
- Positive impact of individual officers from SISS on the children, families and staff in schools
- Differing experience of SISS between schools

3.4.2 Recommendations:

- Review of SISS, including purpose, outcomes, and value for money
- Review of free support currently available to schools, SEMH focus rather than ASD
- Review of training offer available as part of LA support services
- Development of a SEND Hub, including outreach service from Special School's and ARP's, access to a range of therapies and external professionals, early intervention and a tiered support package for schools, link to Early Help and Family Hub services
- Every school to have half-termly access to a named Educational Psychologist

3.5 The full details of each report can be found in the attached Appendices

4. Next steps – DSG Management plan

4.1 The recommendations provided by the Task and Finish groups have been used to inform the mitigations noted in the draft 2024/25 DSG Management Plan under the following headings:

- Reduction in exclusions
- Review of the use of tutoring
- Review of Specialist placement costs
- Review of ARPs
- Review of Alternative provision
- Review of SEND support services

4.2 Detailed costs and timings for expected impact of these mitigation measures will be reported to Schools Forum separately as part of the DSG Management Plan.

4.3 In particular it should be noted the recommendations regarding Support Services have been accommodated in the proposal to create a new early identification and support

system. The work required to design and implement this is facilitated by the option for proposed movement of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2025/26. Details of this proposal will be reported to Schools Forum separately.

5.   List of appendices

5.1   Appendix 1 – Alternative Provision Task and Finish Group report

5.2   Appendix 2 - ARP's and ARC's Task and Finish Group report

5.3   Appendix 3 – Support Services Task and Finish Group report