

SSSFN Executive Heads report to the Governing Body

July 2015

Student Data

Please see attached half termly data dashboard for the second half of the Spring term.

Budget Update & Financial Monitoring

The budget situation for the school is ever changing and evolving.

As a result of previous concerns we have put in place a range of measures to limit expenditure this year

These included :

- Reduction in Alternative Provision for Year 11 in the Summer term
- Ordering Blocks for two half term periods
- Tighter scrutiny of cover requests

However a continued increase in numbers of children and increasing staff absence has made this an upward battle. Most recent estimates indicate that despite negotiating increased funding from NCC we will still overspend this year. The most recent estimate indicate £70k but this is likely to increase. However we did start the year with a £240k overspend from last year – so anything below that will in fact be an improvement on the previous year.

Budget measures for the upcoming year include :

- Further reductions in alternative provision for Engagement pupils at KS4
- A new supply protocol to limit the use of supply teachers
- Appointment of Cover supervisors to aid in reducing supply costs
- Appointment of more classroom assistants

However Governors are reminded that some expenditure remains beyond our control.

The school must provide full time education for all children on our roll and must ensure that staffing levels remain safe within the school. These two factors account for most of increased expenditure. We regularly find ourselves in the invidious position of choosing to spend money we do not have because the alternative is to disadvantage young people.

Cash Flow

As with last year the cash flow situation for the summer months is very tight. This is due to the longer gap in large scale funding which arrives at the start of each term. The gap from April to September is longer than the gap between the starts of other terms.

We anticipate having a very small balance left at the end of June and again in July.

The ability to meet all invoices for August will rely upon the successful arrival of outstanding monies from NCC. We have repeatedly chased this income.

Staffing

Managing absence remains a key issue in staffing the SSSFN. We have 8 members of staff on the final stage of the absence management process with one heading towards possible dismissal. This process takes upwards of a year and in some cases the absence remains high despite being in the system.

The introduction of cover supervisors and classroom assistants will make the situation slightly easier in the new academic year – however this will depend on the rate of absence. Efforts to limit supply can prove counter productive as this increases pressure on the remaining staff and can lead to further absence. There is a danger of creating a vicious circle effect.

We have a larger than normal turnover of staff this year. We have had one senior leader step down during the year and two more leave in July. The lateness of the resignations for these two has meant we will have to have temporary arrangements in place in September.

We have a high rate of turnover for Teaching assistants and we will have many new staff in September.

In Brooklands we will have an almost entirely new team with a temporary leader, two new teachers and several new teaching assistants.

Compass Lingwood will also have a largely new team of teaching assistants

Two of our three Science teachers will be temporary replacements

This amount of new and inexperienced staff is a recognised risk in the autumn term as our students struggle with change and inconsistency of staffing.

The high turnover is due to three main factors

1. Low wages – our Teaching assistant wage is low and many staff enjoy the role but find better paid roles more attractive. This includes internally where a lot of TA's get internal promotion
2. Increased expectations – the turnover of senior leaders and teachers is predominantly related to increased expectations and workload in this area.
3. Challenge – this is a challenging environment and can impact negatively on staff members self esteem or emotional health. We attract staff with caring and sensitive natures and the role can lead to emotional burnout.

Sadly all three of these factors are largely outside of our control. However we have enacted the following :

Staff forum – to look at issues around wellbeing etc

Free Health Care – to provide access to as much medical support as possible – especially around emotional health.

CPD – we provide a lot of CPD opportunities to try and compensate for the lower wages however this tends to make our staff attractive when they apply for other better paid posts.

Capital Developments

We successfully completed the capital works from the Easter holidays :

- Computers installed in DBS
- Roof works completed at DBS
- New Office Spaces completed at Locksley

Still ongoing :

Creation of Primary Play area at DBS

New works for the summer holiday:

- Renovation of Lingwood and resiting of Compass to the new school
- Installation of new doors and lock system at Compass Belton
- Movement of staff room and office to make more primary space at DBS
- Additional fencing at Earthsea, Brooklands and Locksley.
- (In addition to this the wider trust will be undertaking work at Pinetree School)

Autumn term works

- Creation of new playground entrance at Locksley
- Creation of more primary space at Rosebery
- Further ICT upgrades

Other possible projects

- Additional Classbase at Earthsea
- Additional Primary base at Pinetree (Trust project)

There remains a real challenge in funding capital works as our capital allowance is pitifully small. So far we have been successful in bidding for larger projects such as the roof works and we have persuaded NCC to fund Lingwood and Compass Belton. However to achieve the further ICT upgrades we require we will need to locate additional finance.

That said we have also just heard that our appeal for capital funding for Window works has been agreed.

Child Support Team

From September the Child Support Team will become part of Engage Educational Services and will no longer be part of the Short Stay school. It remains however part of the overall Trust.

The rate of secondary sign up remains high – however the primary sign up rate is stubbornly unchanging at approx 166 schools.

NCC is expected to ask Schools again in the autumn whether they wish to “de-delegate” behaviour funding. If this is de-delegated the funding that schools use to purchase the CST subscription will be given direct to NCC from April 2016. This is a potential challenge – but could equally lead to a new commission from NCC for a universal service.

Currently CST is overspending by approx. £70k per year and so a restructure of the team is planned in the autumn term. Staff are aware of this.

It is likely to be necessary to look again at the overall offer for CST. NCC remains ambivalent regarding the service and recent conversations led to a short term ending of supported placements. This has been reinstated – but there remains an issue around NCC relationships with CST.

Compass

Pott Row – Therapy team now in place and the base is much more settled and stable. Some long term illness for one teacher – but generally now an established base.

There is some capital development being looked at for improved Therapy spaces

Belton – This site has had a very difficult term and requires some additional investment in capital works. Negotiations with NCC continue to look at the maintenance and lease of this building. It will return to 4 groups (from 5) from September and this will aid its renaissance

Norwich – doubts over its future location have led to an exodus of staff and one long term sickness. The new home though at Lingwood will be an excellent facility once completed.

Leadership – The Compass leader post is vacant from September and has been filled through a two person secondment for one year prior to recommissioning

Staffing – we have increased the staffing complement across Compass in recognition of the difficulties which Belton has faced this year.

Recommissioning - NCC have indicated they wish to have a single provider process involving just us (and NFST) however no further meetings have yet been organised.

Alternative Provision

From September all Alternative Provision for KS4 will be limited to 2 days per week per student.

The Engagement teams are currently planning for how they will manage this and still maintain full provision for all students. This will be a massive challenge.

Teaching and Learning

Vicki S is now completing the current round of Internal reviews. The initial evidence shows a clear impact of our Maintaining Good protocol and massive improvements in quality of marking and feedback resulting from the introduction of Mandatory Marking grids.

Staff Wellbeing and CPD

Wellbeing continues to be a focus which we keep in our minds.

We have put in place free healthcare from September as well as looking again at staffing levels. However budget restrictions, reducing Alternative Provision, tightening supply protocols and generally higher numbers are all factors which contribute negatively to wellbeing

We have put on a series of Twilight training sessions this term on areas such as marking and feedback. For XLT members we have also arranged a leadership development course which will run throughout the next academic year.

Improvement Planning

Governors have previously scrutinised the improvement plan throughout the year and have seen the RAG rated evaluations of progress against this plan.

We are now beginning the process of improvement planning for the next academic year.

The likely priorities in this coming academic year will be :

- Maximising progress and attainment – but with a specific focus of measuring progress without levels.
- Improving the monitoring and reporting of progress in mental health and personal development.

Engage Trust Updates

The Trust continues to grow and develop. The Thetford AP Free school is now a fully fledged member of the Trust and the CEO and CFO roles are embedded. The TUPE of staff into Engage Educational Services happens on 1st September.

The ongoing projects are :

Involvement with Suffolk through either PRU Sponsorship or Free School bids
Sponsorship of other Eastern region AP environments.

The informal target is to locate another sponsorship opportunity for January 2016.

Inspection

The SSSFN is highly likely to be inspected in the Autumn term. It is therefore key that Governors are both aware of and able to talk about the superb work that they have collectively undertaken to improve standards in the SSSFN. At inspection Governors should be prepared to talk with pride about :

Governor Scrutiny and involvement with the School Improvement plan

Governor visits to schools

Governor involvement with the internal review process

Governors challenge over items such as Pupil Premium and Alternative Provision spending

The impact of events such as the Governance Away day.

All of these are things which regularly happen and which Governors should be proud to discuss.

Governors are also provided with a large amount of data about school performance – it is important that you continue to actively read and ask questions about the data

A key question to ask is always – SO WHAT ?

What does this data mean in terms of pupil progress and improved outcomes for our kids?

Items to Celebrate

Improvements in Teaching and learning (particularly marking and feedback)

Capital developments at Lingwood and Belton

Increased numbers of students taking GCSE's

Des Reynolds
July 2015

