

SSSFN Executive Heads report to the Governing Body

March 2015

Student Data

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

Budget Update & Financial Monitoring

The FMG monitoring group has met each month to monitor expenditure against the budget.

At our most recent meeting we were able to monitor December's figures. At this point the overall expenditure was within 3% of the expected budget but there were notable overspends.

The staffing budget overall was within the expected budget but supply costs were considerably overspent. These overspends though have been largely compensated through vacant posts.

The Alternative Provision budget remains a concern as it had over spent by December. To alleviate this a plan has been put in place to dramatically cut alternative provision placements for Year 11 students in the summer term and hence limits costs.

The school has been successful in gaining several items of unbudgeted income in the first term including additional Pupil Premium income and funding for the KS1 SRB from last summer term which had not been paid. These additional amounts along with the increased Top Up which was agreed in December and comes into force in April – will mean that our planned budget revision in March will give us a more accurate picture of the financial situation. The intention is to use additional income gained to increase the budgeted allowance for Alternative Provision.

Cash Flow

The FMG continue to monitor cash flow on a monthly basis and although it remains an ongoing concern, we continue to have surplus funds each month for the next three months.

Staffing Issues

We have been very badly hit by staff absence in the first half of the Spring term with multiple members of staff absent through sickness almost every day. This has had an ongoing impact on the management of students and seen an increase in difficult behaviour.

The first set of classroom assistants have taken up post and are being regularly used. However it has become apparent that the initial advert mostly attracted Norwich based staff. We are now advertising again and specifying the need for staff in Kings Lynn, Great Yarmouth and North Norfolk.

We currently have three members of staff on long term sick and one awaiting a final settlement before terminating her employment. We also have two members of staff in the final stages of absence management and a further two entering the system. We have one member of staff undergoing a phased return to work from long term sickness.

Our new Secondary Leader James Cox has taken up his post at DBS. This has resulted in a vacancy for Maths teacher in Locksley – which although filled, the candidate cannot start until April. Alongside a Science teacher and English teacher who have both had bouts of long term sickness – this creates a particularly challenging situation in our largest base.

The Senior Leader at Brooklands has also had two long periods of sickness absence this term and remains off sick at the time of writing.

The new "Maintaining Good" protocol has been used with a number of staff whose lesson observations were graded below the acceptable standard. This means that those colleagues have been designed a bespoke support plan to address the issues and will be observed again in the next term. Should the appropriate improvements not be forthcoming it may be necessary to move to a more formal process around capability.

Capital Developments

The building works which we successfully bid for earlier in the year are now ongoing, with the most substantial works underway at DBS. This has caused some disruption to parking but will be worthwhile in the longer term.

The successful bid for a Multi Use games area (MUGA) in DBS for Primary students has met an issue with the location. The suggested location will require the creation of a hard standing area which was not in the original budget. Since the school cannot fund this additional work, it will instead be met from the project costs at the expense of other pieces of the project. The net effect is that the climbing boulders which were also part of the project will no longer be possible.

The Premises and Health and Safety committee will be looking at two projects at their next meeting, for the use of our capital funds for this year. These are

- 1) Phase 1 of ICT infrastructure renewal. Essentially this is the replacement of PC's at DBS
- 2) The creation of additional office space at Locksley through the conversion of unused female toilets.

In addition to these large scale projects we are currently reviewing fencing and site security at a number of sites due to an increasing level of absconding. Traditionally our sites have been very open – but as the level of challenge (particularly from primary students) has grown we need to consider more substantial barriers.

We have already increased the lock system at Locksley and have quotes for increased fencing at DBS and Pott Row. A similar fencing project is likely at Locksley for secondary students.

Child Support Team

The CST continues to grow with a small but steady stream of new schools signing up each month. Our termly network meetings are now well attended and a source of many positive comments.

However the increased level of signups does bring with it increased work pressure. This has been felt across all teams as the number of referrals rises.

We are particularly struggling with the demand for Assessment places at Secondary level and so will be putting in place a temporary additional Assessment Unit at Brooklands for the summer term. We hope that this will alleviate long waits for assessment places. We shall then have to consider whether this should be a permanent addition to the school.

The previous proposal to create an Emotional Wellbeing Service to run alongside the CST did not generate enough response or interest from Schools to warrant further investment. However we are looking to add some additional resource to the team through a partnership with the Magdalen Group to add a specialist Child Sexual Exploitation worker to the team. In addition we are also in conversation with an EAL specialist to make her expertise also part of the CST package.

Compass West

The Western Clinical Commissioning group approved the funding for the majority of the Pott Row students in December and funding has been released to NSFT to put therapy staffing into Pott Row. Currently they are only able to provide a Psychologist one day per week, but have adverts out for full time staff.

In the meantime we have been concerned about the provision at Pott row due to an increase in behaviour incidents and use of restraint. To alleviate this further support has been put in place from half term with the Senior Assistant Compass Lead from Norwich being based in Pott Row full time for half a term.

Alternative Provision

As mentioned previously we have put in place a plan to limit the amount of Alternative Provision used for Year 11 students in the summer term. Instead we have devised a programme of work experience, college visits and exam opportunities which will

maximise the chances for this year group to gain accreditation and hopefully reduce the likelihood of young people becoming NEET.

Creating Consistency

Vicki Setters has undertaken a high quality piece of work with the core subject leaders to put in place common curriculum models for English, Maths, ICT and Science. These now have common assessment points embedded into the curriculum.

On-going internal reviews will be used to monitor the impact of this work on standards.

Staff Wellbeing and CPD

This has been a very hard half term for staff with high levels of absence and high levels of difficult behaviour. The exceptional numbers of students and increasing challenge have made conditions very hard. At the same time we have put in place new systems and new expectations for staff which have not been easy for some colleagues.

All staff received training in the January PD day on marking and feedback.

Several members of the XLT have accessed additional Safeguarding training.

Improvement Planning

The School Improvement plan is in place and being reviewed this term.

In response to the concerns which arose from the Autumn term internal reviews, we have implemented a new Mandatory Marking Grids from January onwards.

This means that all staff now complete the same marking grid for every student in every lesson. This marking grid ensures that the lesson objectives and success criteria for each lesson are clearly recorded alongside a teacher assessment and a self assessment of the progress that the student has made.

These Mandatory Marking Grids (MMG) have dramatically increased the amount of marking being evidenced in students books and provide much better proof of ongoing progress over time.

The rigor of having a marking grid has also supported colleagues in ensuring that lessons are well planned with appropriate lesson objectives and success criteria.

Engage Trust Updates

Governors will recall that the Short Stay School Co-operative Academy Trust (SSSCAT) was successful in applying to the DFE to become a Sponsor of other academies. We are now in the process of transforming the SSSCAT into the Engage Multi Academy Trust.

Also this term the Engage Trust has been approached to take over the sponsorship of the Thetford Alternative Provision Free School. After consultation and investigation the Engage Trust has decided to accept the invitation to become the sponsor of the Thetford Free School. After further legal and logistical work, the Thetford AP Free School will become the second (after the SSSFN) Academy in the Engage Trust from 1st April.

The process of becoming a Multi Academy Trust and acquiring Thetford Free School will result in the current Trustees of SSSCAT taking on new roles in the Engage Trust. Some SSSFN governors have also agreed to join the new Trust as Directors. However all that wish to, can continue to serve as Governors on the SSSFN local Governing Body.

The main change to the SSSFN governance will be that a scheme of delegation will be put in place which defines the powers of the Local Governing Body and clearly delineates which powers are reserved by the Trust Board of Directors.

This scheme of delegation will be discussed at a future Governing Body meeting.

We are still awaiting the outcome of our bid to sponsor the new BESD school in Kings Lynn. We hope to have an answer about this by Easter.

Educational Challenge Partner visit

We had a visit from the Educational Challenge Partner in December and her report is attached. It is worth noting that my attempt to downgrade us to Requires Improvement due to the issues we identified with marking and feedback was rejected by the Challenge Partner who continued to grade us as Good.

Quality of Provision

As outlined in my November report the school faces ongoing challenges in maintaining its Good grading in the light of the changing expectations from Ofsted.

The work undertaken at the start of this term to implement mandatory marking grids and improve the quality of curriculum in core subjects has helped to alleviate these concerns but additional work is still required.

Whilst marking grids are now in place we must now look in more detail at the quality of the comments being made by staff. In addition we must continue to address the need for high quality planned lessons throughout the school, and a common strong curriculum which ties lessons together into a meaningful planned programme of study.

Whilst this work is well underway in areas like Science and Maths, in other places it still need further work, particularly in ICT and English. However it is worth noting that our Primary teams have made the strongest progress in this area and have a well developed model of joint working.

Items to Celebrate

Implementation of the Mandatory Marking Grids

A positive report from the Educational Challenge Advisor

Thetford Alternative Provision Free School to join the Engage Trust

Des Reynolds
February 2015