

SSSFN Executive Heads report to the Governing Body

September 2014

Student Data

Later in the Autumn Term Governors will receive a detailed analysis of our Year 11 results from Summer 2014. This takes longer for the SSSFN than most mainstream schools as we collate the various vocational qualifications that our students gains from a range of other Alternative Provision providers. Raw results for GCSE entries are available which tentatively show that more students accessed GCSE qualifications than in the previous year and that there were positive grades throughout. However our English GCSE grades have followed national trends and are lower than we had hoped.

Attached with this report is the Spring Term Progress Report. Governors are encouraged to recall the difference between Attainment (Year 11 results) and Progress (how much the students have improved in the period they have been with us) The progress data shows fantastic progress for virtually all groups and should be celebrated.

Attainment is always harder for SSSFN to show good results with as attainment is based more heavily on the total time a young person has studied, whilst progress measures just the time they have been with us.

Budget Update

Governors will be aware that as an Academy our financial year is September to September so the finance team are currently working with our new auditors to complete the year end figures for the period from April (conversion) to September 2014.

We have prepared a budget for September 2014 – September 2015 which has been submitted to the EFA on their deadlines. This budget predicts a surplus in September 2015 of £18,881. However Governors are reminded of the strict fiscal targets which were highlighted in my previous Head Teachers report and which will be required in order to meet this target. However it is positive that the budget prediction now indicates a small surplus as we had previously predicted a deficit in this first full academy year.

There remains though the issue of the closing balance of our previous existence as an NCC maintained school. We initially expected this to close with a deficit balance of £175,000 however it has now come to light that there are a number of other amounts which NCC will apply to that deficit. These include £15,000 of contested items and £10,000 of NCC fees which they charge for our conversion. More concerning is that we have discovered two large additional amounts which will be added to the figure. £214,000 of maintained school spending was found by Gill Wardlow when we examined the Academy accounts. This was money which was attempting to be charged to the Academy which actually related to the period pre April 2014. Additionally it now transpires that NCC will also add a further £220,000 to the deficit figure. This last amount relates to the opening balance of the Short Stay School account. It appears that upon its opening the SSSFN was given an initial balance of £220,000 into its account to pay the first bills. This amount has never been previously mentioned in our conversations with the LA but has now been added to our predicted deficit. This means that a total amount of £601,645 will now be claimed by NCC from the EFA as our closing deficit.

This now means that we will be required to enter into discussions with the EFA on how this amount will be repaid.

Up to now we have had virtually no dealings with the EFA and therefore I am not in a position to comment on how this negotiation may go. However I shall be arguing that at least some portion of that amount should not be repaid by us. Governors will wish to keep abreast of the progress of these negotiations and their implications for future budgets.

Cash Flow

Governors will recall that in the early months of the Academy we have struggled with Cash flow as monthly income has not matched with the peaks and troughs of monthly expenditure.

We have now though had August and the arrival of several larger payments, most noticeably the increased income from the Child Support Team which NCC had withheld. This means that in August we were able to clear our backlog of invoices and paid fully every invoice we had in the system. We now hope that over the coming months the cash flow will even out somewhat to reduce this concern.

Finance Software

We are pleased to be able to say that the finance system now appears to be running well and the initial connection issues have been mostly resolved.

Additional Income

In light of the high deficit figure it is more important than ever that we seek to maximise additional income for the school. The following are the key measures which will bring in additional income and offset the likely repayment plan for the deficit

1) Earthsea

Successful negotiations with the LA have resulted in a proposal to make a block contract with the SSSFN for 6 places annually at Earthsea. This will be an additional income of £154,000 which was not included in the current budget or target figures. Governors will recall that our budget includes additional income targets for Earthsea – but these relate to our contracts with Childhood First. This NCC income will be additional.

NCC has also acknowledged that they failed to fund appropriately the Earthsea places in the summer term (since conversion) and have accepted an invoice for £12,000 which I have submitted for the under funding. However they refuse to repay the underfunding for the period April 2013 to April 2014 which I calculate to be £60,000. Needless to say this contributes to our deficit.

2) Summer term 2014.

I am currently in negotiations with NCC regarding the numbers on roll with the SSSFN in the summer term. Throughout this term the SSSFN was over capacity and therefore NCC needs to provide additional income to cover the fact that we went over our capacity. This negotiation is ongoing.

3) Increasing the Top Up

Governors will recall from my previous report that we need to increase our Top Up charge to NCC from £6k per child to £7k per child with effect from September 2015. I am currently about to start this negotiation process which will last until December.

4) Outside contracts – we have again this year gained a contract from Suffolk CC to provide provision for 6 students – a total contract value of £112,000 for the year. However governors should note that not all of this amount will be profit as some additional costs will come from providing for these young people.

Additionally we have been approached by a Suffolk based care home provider to quote for operating the educational provision for one of their care homes in Suffolk. Negotiations continue for this.

From the list above the current financial year has already accounted for £154,000 in additional income which was not originally budgeted for. With further additional income in the pipeline we should be able to meet a reasonable repayment schedule set by the EFA without further restructuring or job losses. However this does depend on the repayment terms they demand and as yet this is a large unknown.

Staffing Issues

We start the term with quite a large number of unfilled vacancies – mostly caused by support staff leaving late in the year.

We have five Teaching assistant posts and one PSA post vacant along with the Rosebery Engagement Teacher and Rosebery Secondary Leader posts. This means that we have a number of supply staff filling vacant posts and some staff “acting up” into vacant positions. This is particularly apparent at Rosebery where there are supply TA’s in every team and staff acting up at LT level.

Additionally we have a number of staff off at the start of term due to illness or operations as well as one teacher on jury service. This means that at the start of the term we are already using more Supply staffing that we had hoped. The pressure on the supply budget continues to be a major factor in sticking to the budget.

We currently have one member of staff undergoing a disciplinary process.

We have two further staff in the final stages of our absence management process which could result in their dismissal for poor attendance.

Two members of staff returned to work this month from long term absence.

Capital Developments

The significant piece of capital development in the summer holidays was the work done to Pott Row in preparation for its opening. This has been well led by Craig Page our Premises manager and the site is now open.

Additionally the LA did some reparative works at Belton after we highlighted H&S failings at the site, however we continue to be in dispute over the boiler at Belton which they are once again refusing to acknowledge needs replacing.

This term we await the outcome of our bid for capital money to fix a number of roofs across the SSSFN – most noticeably Rosebery and Locksley Primary.

This term we will also progress with the works resulting from our successful bid for improved PE facilities at DBS.

Lastly we continue to battle over the state of the Spinney – home of Compass Norwich.

As the LA cannot provide any further buildings we remain in the site - but the promised works to improve the building still have not materialised.

Child Support Team

The CST are also a key part of our strategy to improve income. Governors will recall that our current budget assumes and increase in CST income of £100,000 – since April 2014 we have already surpassed this target.

The team continues to grow and develop. This September our new Assistant Psychologist Lucy Wilcoxon starts – her role with significantly increase capacity for Dr Jude Hatton and will hopefully reduce the burden on our Educational Psychologist who has built up large backlogs.

This term will also see our Therapist pilot start with us providing therapists one day per week to two Norfolk High Schools.

This term we will also be redesigning our CST Brochure to include new offers including new opportunities for schools to purchase our support in setting up their own Inclusion units and running them.

Compass West

The opening of Compass West in Pott Row has proven to be somewhat challenging this summer. Although our part of the work in terms of preparing the building and recruiting staff was completed on time, the LA has struggled to acquire the appropriate funding for the therapy element of Compass.

Previously NCC has always funded the therapy element of Compass and then sought to reclaim such monies from the NHS. However now they have decided that they will not spend anything on therapy until the funding has been agreed by the NHS. They have however struggled to get the NHS to agree to any funding and have therefore not been able to provide any therapy for Pott Row.

Therefore we have opened Pott Row as an SSSFN short stay base and NOT a Compass. There are currently 9 children in Pott Row but without Therapy support.

This is obviously a very unsatisfactory arrangement and we are working with the LA to get funding approved quickly so that therapy staff can join the Pott Row team for January 2015.

Alternative Provision

Along with staffing Alternative Provision provides one of the biggest challenges to our budgeting. We are seeking this year to significantly reduce and control spending on

Alternative Provision in order to support the budget. However this is challenged by the need to provide full time provision for all students.

We have reduced our contract with ACE at Rackheath from £300,000 to just over £90,000 this year and negotiated free provision from TCHC for one day a week for most year 11. This company has the Youth Contract commission from central government and therefore has targets to meet in reducing NEET and hence is willing to provide the provision. However there are likely to be issues with engagement of learners in the TCHC provision.

We have also renegotiated the Year 11 Arrivals contract which we do with Norwich Schools each year. This new deal means that we should get the full £70,000 fee for the project as we are reducing the number of year 11 students we receive under the scheme. Last year we fell well short of receiving the £50k we charged schools and received over 30 year 11's.

Creating Consistency

Governors will be aware that one of our largest challenges in terms of being graded positively at Inspection is showing that we are a single school with one ethos and policy. Great strides have been made in this area since April 2013 when the current staffing structure was implemented.

We are now moving into some of the more tricky to implement areas. This year all staff have a staff id badge with the SSSFN logo. This moves us away from local base logos and will be particularly challenging for bases like Compass who have a strong affiliation to their separate identity.

We have also put in place a single admin handbook for the whole SSSFN which standardises a number of processes and procedures and allows us to deliver better comparative data on bases.

Staff Wellbeing and CPD

Staff wellbeing is a topic which acquires constant attention in the SSSFN. The nature of our work combined with increased pressure for ever better results and reduced staffing means that wellbeing has the potential to suffer.

This year the implementation of new procedures to support any staff member whose teaching is graded as less than good, and tighter controls on paid leave are both likely to cause upset for some staff – yet both are totally necessary.

This term we will be working with the Staff Forum to look at how wellbeing committees operate in each base and to strengthen this work.

CPD is now overseen by a member of XLT working alongside Vicki Setters. Vicki will be putting together individualised CPD programmes based on the strengths and weaknesses identified by our monitoring of teaching and learning.

Improvement Planning

This year our Improvement planning has been given a total overhaul – mostly by Vicki. We have four overarching priorities

- 100 Good or Better teaching
- Increasing Attainment
- Still Better Progress
- Consistency

These priorities (and others) are contained within our draft school development plan (attached)

Governors will note that the development plan is longer than previously and has now been split across different areas to fit with Ofsted. Governors will themselves be adding a Governance Improvement plan to those attached.

I have also attached a blank governor monitoring form in the hope that some of you may wish to feedback your views or possible amendments/ additions to the plan. If you do this on a monitoring form I can capture it as evidence of governor involvement and challenge.

Staff teams have all been introduced to this draft plan and are currently working on their local subject and team plans based on the priorities identified in the draft. Once this is complete and feedback from Governors has been received we will issue a final version of the plan.

Safeguarding

Governors received the annual Safeguarding report in January 2014 and will receive the next in December 2014. All staff received a three hour safeguarding training on September 1st 2014 and any staff who were absent for that training will be picked up in catch up sessions each term.

SSSCAT Updates

Trustees will shortly need to sign the Pott Row lease and formally agree the co-operative articles and memorandum for the Trust so that these can be lodged with Companies house.

Work is underway to apply for the SSSCAT to be recognised as an Academy Sponsor, this is a precursor to any possible bid for the new EBD Special school commission which will be launched this term.

Educational Challenge Partner visit

In July we had a visit from an Educational Challenge Partner. This is a role which has been commissioned by NCC to visit each school for one day to "risk assess" whether the school will be successful at their next inspection. The visit resulted in a positive report which I have attached.

Website

The www.sssfnc.co.uk has been updated over the summer. Governors are reminded that under the Governance menu item are pages they should be familiar with. The Governing Body page contains a wealth of previous minutes and reports and now includes the reports from the Governor Scrutiny day in June.

The three Ofsted Data pages contain all the materials which will be provided to Ofsted when they inspect us. These pages are password protected but Governors can access them if they ask for a password.

Ofsted Inspection

As with my last report – I wish to reflect on the work undertaken against our Ofsted improvement points.

Differentiation – This continues to be a focus and on the September PD day the secondary phase TA's had training to enhance and develop their differentiation practice.

Consistency of Behaviour Management – Reporting on Behaviour Management has now been added to the termly data reports produced by each team to allow Governors to better compare the effectiveness of Behaviour Management at each base.

Behaviour Tracking – This is now in place in Secondary and will be used to provide data for the new progress reports termly.

Marking and Feedback – This was discussed with staff on the PD day at the start of term and will be a focus for all staff in the term ahead.

Literacy – Increased literacy interventions start this term with specific staff members being trained to deliver additional literacy work with selected students.

Lesson Observation – A new internal review process will be introduced this year led by Vicki. This will include joint observations with senior leaders to moderate grading.

Consistency – See previous section

Items to Celebrate

Successful PD day

Increased income for Earthsea places

Opening of Pott Row building on time.

Positive Educational Challenge Visit

Des Reynolds

September 2014