

Item under consideration: Funding Schools for Deprivation

Date Considered: 17 September 2015

1. The Board heard from officers and Schools Forum representatives on the matter of deprivation funding for schools, and how the schools forum would be consulted on three options concerning the formula for deprivation funding.
2. It was recognised that this was a challenging issue, and that the higher funding for Surrey was reflective of the fact that the county had localised pockets of deprivation. The Board was asked to note funding formula changes introduced in 2013 had removed a “tiered deprivation” funding factor. Officers expressed the view that the contrast in funding was accentuated without the tiered funding formula.
3. The Board was advised by officers that a key priority was for Surrey schools to reach a joint conclusion on funding targeted to deprivation. It was clarified that both academies and non-academy schools were impacted by the funding formula for schools deprivation.
4. The Board acknowledged that there was a clear link between high deprivation and lower attainment, but emphasised the importance of monitoring progress of pupils throughout their school career and challenging the real impact that funding was having on attainment.
5. The Board was concerned about the attainment gap and suggested that opportunities should be explored to encourage schools to work in innovative and alternative ways, such as sharing resources to minimise the impact of funding pressures.
6. The Board was informed by Schools Forum representatives that a deprivation factor should be included in the Surrey funding formula for schools, over and above that from pupil premium. Before concluding their representations, the witnesses emphasised the importance of continuing the work that Surrey had done to campaign for a change to the national funding formula.
7. The Board referred to the Council’s policy of ‘no child left behind’ and highlighted the importance of ensuring the best chance of a positive outcome for all pupils, including those experiencing high deprivation but attending a low deprivation school.
8. The Board thanks witnesses for their contribution to the discussion on the funding for school deprivation.
9. It fully supports the efforts made by the School Forum and Council officers to work together to reach a consensus, and recommends:

Recommendations for Cabinet

That the Leader seeks to lobby national government for greater flexibility around the funding for deprivation and early help in order to improve linked pupil-centred support between schools and social care.

That the Cabinet seek to link the early help strategy in Children's Services to the issues identified through the school deprivation funding.

That the Cabinet are given the opportunity to review the full range of responses to the School Forum consultation - including evidence of the impact of each of the three options proposed and any other options considered- prior to any decision being made.

Recommendations for officers:

That officers proactively explore options with schools about how to best develop a collaborative alternative mechanism for targeting deprivation.

That officers develop a strategy with schools to encourage families to register children for Free School Meals where eligible, in order to ensure schools are receiving the appropriate level of Pupil Premium funding.

That officers support the Primary Phase Council in understanding the low response rate to the consultation, in order to develop a wider evidence base of how funding is used.

Mark Brett-Warbuton
Chairman of the Education and Skills Board