



SCHOOLS' FORUM

30 November 2023

THE DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) AND THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) RECOVERY PLAN

Report from Andrew Merry, Head of Finance, RCC

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Schools' Forum:

1. Agrees to setting up a Finance Sub-Group of the Schools' Forum.
2. Notes the contents of the report.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) SEN Recovery Plan and to recommend the creation of a Finance Sub-Group of Schools Forum.

2 SEN RECOVERY PLAN & INVESTMENT FROM THE SCHOOLS BLOCK

- 2.1 The total budget for the Recovery projects is £364k. This investment from the schools' block was approved at Schools Forum in October and facilitates the Councils recovery plan, specifically:

- Schools Support Partnerships (including Nurture project)

- 2.2 Alongside this the Council also have the additional interventions supporting the recovery plan.

- Capital Developments in SEN Provision
- Early Years Pathway
- Delivering Better Value (DBV)

2.3 Schools Support Partnership (SSP)

2.3.1 Primary Model

The SSP model is further evolving with the new Primary Guidance Flowchart to access support for Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. This ensures the wide range of RCC / non RCC accessible support services are considered before any of the funded toolkit of SSP resources are allocated. Full SSP referrals are decreasing in the

primary phase reflecting the robust Graduated Response followed by schools and the increased level of confidence, knowledge and understanding of SEMH within the wider context of early identification.

Year	Spring Term	Summer Term	Autumn Term	Annual Total	Influencing factors
2020	5	7	37	49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership launched 28/01/20. Covid Lockdown March - June Spring referrals paused until summer term processing
2021	17	23	37	77	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covid Lockdown Jan - March SSP professionals unable to access schools
2022	31	15	17	63	
2023	18	15	11	44	
Total				233	

The following has been offered and accessed to facilitate this:

- 14 of the 17 Primary schools completed SSP Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) training 'Behaviour and SLCN: Making the Link and Communicating Friendly Environment' audit and action planning.
- A New Sensory Environmental audit support offer is now accessible for schools with action planning for each school.
- The new Nurture Nest Outreach Lead is now established. There is a joined-up approach with the SSP with monthly case discussions and effective communication. Feedback from schools is positive. The model is moving away from generic attachment training to a more bespoke coaching and mentoring strategy model. Support for developing nurturing environments in school is highly effective and positively impacting on the ability to meet the needs of pupils with attachment needs.
- Multi agency approach model (meetings every 3-6 weeks case dependant) for escalation and placement risk is continuing to be an effective method of ensuring a well communicated plan is devised and monitored to prevent exclusion. Currently, 7 primary cases are under this model coordinated by SSP Coordinator.

2.3.2 Secondary Model

- Termly meeting (6 x year) with each secondary school, SSP professionals and Inclusion team discuss current cases and identify new emerging risk.
- Meeting remodelled to encourage referral of early Anxiety Related Non-Attendance cases before entrenched and the window of opportunity is missed.
- Referrals are rising and in some meetings are still raised at crisis level rather than at early stages of concern. This reflects the pattern of the primary phase in the first initial stages of SSP.

- New Rutland Education Access Board (REAB) model will aim to coordinate appropriate pathway for cases at SSP level and those at placement risk.
- SSP SALT universal training and support is fully accessed by each school. Referrals for pupil SALT interventions are high.
- Universal offer of training and development discussed at each meeting.

2.3.3 Early Years Model

- SSP SALT continues to work collaboratively with EY Inclusion team and Early Education and Childcare and EY Specialist teacher. There is joint planning & training delivery with the EY Specialist teacher offering termly consultations resulting in engagement from settings previously hard to reach.
- All settings are now accessing advice/ support and training to support early identification. Drop-in parent SALT sessions ensuring timely accessing of appropriate pathways. Sessions are well attended.
- Thriving Through Change EY phase steering group is ongoing ensuring a robust transition process. Changes to funding access, communication of information and access to resources such as the SEMH specialist teacher team without delay have been developed. 6 EY pupils allocated Higher Needs funding in place at start of school term through the pilot project. Joint tracking will continue. Feedback for the transitional period (summer / autumn 2023) received from schools and settings is overwhelmingly positive.

2.3.4 OFSTED Commentary

The Council had an Area SEND inspection of Rutland Local Area Partnership 15th to 19th May 2023. This inspection received the highest outcome with the following comments supporting the impact these arrangements are having.

- The local area partnership's arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed.
- Children and young people benefit from an effective school support programme. There has been a significant improvement in the identification and assessment of the needs of children and young people in mainstream schools. For example, pupils who require it benefit from access to speech and language therapy within a few weeks. The anxiety related non-attendance project has led to the accurate identification and coherent support of children's and young people's mental health needs.
- Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND. They have a vision to remove barriers to opportunity, to improve equality of access and to enable children and young people to achieve their maximum potential. The introduction of the targeted school support programme is an example of how leaders are realising this vision.
- Leaders have introduced the school support programme across all primary and secondary schools. This programme has transformed the provision for pupils at the SEND support level. Pupils now have timely assessments and early interventions

from health professionals, which means they can continue to access and benefit from their school placement.

2.4 Capital Developments

2.4.1 RCC will open an Expression of Interest process imminently to meet priorities for SEND in line with Rutland's Inclusion Strategy and the Government's proposals in the SEND Green Paper and the DfE Special Provision Terms of Grant. Our schools have told us the priorities would be:

- To develop and equip, an alternative provision in secondary education for Rutland students, some of whom will not have an Education Health and Care plan but are at risk of being excluded from receiving their educational entitlement. To provide short term interventions expected to be between 3 months and 2 years, offering a more sustainable alternative to provisions usually commissioned by Rutland.
- Early Years and Primary Mainstream small group facilities – up to 3 class groups across schools, that may be utilised as Family Hub facilities as well. Building on the learning from the Secondary mainstream-plus small group arrangements (at UCC) developing Mainstream plus places 2024 onwards.
- To create primary nurturing environments, potentially 8 across county, minor refurbishment through a grant process, to create break out spaces in Primary Schools, to enable children's specialist or emerging needs to be met.

2.4.2 The three key proposals have the following indicative capital investment allocations:

	Proposal	Amount	Commitment
1	Mainstream Plus Primary 3 class groups. <i>Build and equip- EOI</i>	£600k total	£636k incl contingency and up-front feasibility costs
2	Primary break-out spaces up to 8 across county <i>Equip, minor refurb through straightforward grant type process</i>	£3-6k per site	£50k
3	Alternative Provision development- 1 Secondary site – remaining budget dependent on site. <i>Build and equip - EOI</i>	Remaining budget	Up to £362,580

2.5 Delivering Better Value Programme

2.5.1 Project update provided at the last schools forum
<https://rutlandcounty.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s27608/DfE%20Delivering%20Better%20Value%20SEND%20Recovery%20and%20Capital%20Schools%20Forum%20October%202023.pdf>

2.6 Early Years Pathway

- 2.6.1 Early Years (EY) Providers in the Private Voluntary and Independent Sector were in favour of developing greater confidence and practice in inclusion in their workforces. A highly experienced Specialist Teacher is now linked with each setting. See 2.3.1 above.
- 2.6.2 This work also underpins the learning from the recent Local Government Association Mini Review which centred on Speech and Language support. Good practice areas for development include:
- Utilising the Recovery Plan as a good vehicle for promoting better partnership working to meet speech and language needs,
 - Makes access to Speech, Language and Communication clearer so that all partners and parents understand how to access support,
 - Developing a school readiness strategy owned strategically to make sure that children's needs are picked up early and supported appropriately.
- 2.6.3 The EY Support Partnership type work is coalescing with the Family Hub developments to ensure consistent support for parents, and increased help for children who develop SEND.
- 2.6.4 Additional places have been created at the DSP at Oakham Primary Academy - 4 in September 2023 with a further 4 in September 2024, to increase capacity for children with EHCPs.
- 2.6.5 The launch of the public consultation on the future of the Parks Special Nursery School is now live. Full details of the proposals have been published on Rutland County Council's website and can be found at www.rutland.gov.uk/theparks. Comments and representations can be made by emailing: parksproposal@rutland.gov.uk before consultation closes at midnight on Sunday 3 December 2023.

3 FINANCE WORKING GROUP

- 3.1 The Finance Working Group would provide additional support and time to consider information and data in order to inform the development of key budgetary options, recommendations and decisions relating to the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- 3.2 This group if established would operate as a permanent advisory sub-group of the full Schools' Forum. Importantly, it would report to Schools' Forum and would not be a decision-making body.
- 3.3 The key operating principles of the group would be:
- To assess financial information prior to presentation to the Schools' Forum.
 - To consider implications of any financial proposal.
 - To provide considered information and advice to support the work of the full Schools' Forum around financial matters.
- 3.4 Leadership of the group should be provided by a nominated member of the Schools' Forum, who would work with the Local Authority when reports are taken to schools.
- 3.5 Membership of the group could include Finance Officers from schools but would also need representation from the Schools' Forum.

4 CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION

4.1 The table below summarises the current forecast on the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2023/24.

	Schools £000	High Needs £000	Early Years £000	Central Schools £000	Total £000
Surplus/(Deficit) Carry Forwards from 2022/23	(4)	(1,515)	108	86	(1,325)
DSG Allocations prior to recoupment	30,294	5,656	1,609	198	37,757
Transfer between blocks	(151)	151			0
Academy Recoupment	(29,158)	(310)			(29,468)
Expenditure in Year					
Schools' allocations	(985)				(985)
Nationally Agreed School Licences				(41)	(41)
Admissions Service- staffing costs				(63)	(63)
Statutory & Retained Duties				(94)	(94)
Education for under 5's			(83)		(83)
Early Years Pathway Development			(48)		(48)
3 & 4 Year Old Funding			(1,409)		(1,409)
2 Year Old Funding			(117)		(117)
SEN Funding Maintained Schools and Academies		(3,107)			(2,774)
SEN Funding Post 16		(178)			(137)
SEN Recovery Plan Expenditure		(309)			(378)
SEN Funding - Independent Special Schools		(1,406)			(1,377)
SEN Funding EOTAS & Tuition		(795)			(521)
SEN RCC Recharge		(197)			(197)
Early Years Inclusion (SENIF)		(50)			(50)
Under/(Over) spends in 2023/24	0	(545)	48	0	(304)
Surplus/(Deficit) Carried Forward to 2023/24	(4)	(2,060)	60	86	(1,918)

4.2 The High Needs Block continues to be the biggest area for concern, despite the positive impact from the recovery above.

- 4.3 The Council saw an increase in 35 (12.5%) new EHCPs from January 2022 (SEN2 Government Return) to January 2023. This trend has continued in 23/24 with an additional 33 (11%) EHCP's and is expected to be above the 35 we saw in the previous year by the end of the reporting period.

5 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 This report gives an update on the recovery plan actions the council is currently undertaking an update on the finances and drivers behind this.
- 5.2 The recommendation to set up a Finance Sub-Group of the Schools' Forum is to give the Forum greater oversight on the position on the DSG and also for schools to impact policy at an early stage.