

Funding to support service children and additional pupil places

The following paper sets out to outline the budgetary challenges presented to Primary Schools in Rutland that serve service families as well as the financial pressure put on schools approached to alleviate the shortfall of pupil places identified for the academic year 2015-16.

**All school budgets are based on the October census. Therefore, an increase in numbers throughout the year can have a significantly detrimental effect on projected school budgets. Under normal circumstances the % of incoming and outgoing pupils in a school will be within 10% and generally manageable. An increase of more than 10% in most schools poses difficulties as staffing levels need to be adjusted to meet the needs of the children and to ensure that standards are maintained.**

### ***Service children***

In Rutland we have strong links with the MOD and good communication ensures that we are aware of probable unit movements and timelines. It should be noted, however, that changes within the MOD often occur and timelines can be fluid. This presents difficulties for schools waiting for pupils to arrive, particularly if pupil numbers are low for the October census.

The needs of service children are noticeably different to non-service children, particularly language (EAL and speech and language needs) and SEN which is often due to gaps in learning or social needs related to absent parents and/or settling into a new area.

It should also be noted that the data received from overseas schools can be scant or misleading. The financial constraints are less in some of the service schools abroad and children receive additional support without the paper trail of evidence needed to secure additional support here. Therefore, a decision needs to be taken about the cost of supporting children with additional needs when they arrive with us – often difficult as this can have a detrimental effect on and/or remove resources from other pupils.

Service children are a vulnerable group and it is therefore very important that they have rich and varied learning opportunities both within and outside of the classroom as well as support and encouragement to ensure they have high aspirations and reach their potential. Families are often isolated in the service community, with absent partners and a lack of extended family support so it is important for schools to engage with parents and the local community as much as possible through family learning opportunities, parental workshops and events.

### ***MOD funding***

The MOD is aware of the difficulties faced by families and schools and grants are available to support transitional periods and one off projects to enable community engagement. Local schools working with service families have all benefitted from MOD funding and this money has been used for specific school projects and/or to support a falling roll. It is possible to apply for grants on an annual basis and all Rutland Schools with service children do this each year.

The extent of the needs of the service families cannot be under estimated and I would suggest that the level of funding from the MOD in recent years goes towards financing pupil places and additional

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needs but does not cover the full cost as it is impossible to gauge the exact numbers of pupils to expect and the individual needs of the children joining us. If the additional pupil places were funded by the LA, based on actual pupil numbers for the current academic year, the MOD grant could be used specifically to support the additional needs of the children and their families. Two of the schools working with service families are an Ofsted RI category, making them vulnerable and in great need of the resources required to ensure good pupil progress/high standards, enrichment activities and support for the communities they serve. Finances are well managed at both schools and there is clear evidence of pupil progress but insufficient funding is a major concern for the SLT and governing bodies if the schools are to move forward and all pupils are to make at least expected progress and be fully engaged in their learning.

Please see attached breakdown of funding.

### ***Additional Pupil Places –***

A number of schools were asked to increase their PAN during the last academic year in order to meet the need for additional pupil places, specifically in Oakham and Uppingham. Three schools agreed to do this and building programmes (with capital funding) were agreed by RCC and the schools.

Two schools have each agreed to accommodate an additional 30 pupils – neither building programme is completed yet although one additional class is likely to be complete by Easter 2016. Potentially, funding for the additional pupils will not be in place until the following year, making it difficult for the school to provide the high quality education for all pupils.

The third school has already opened one more class – an additional 30 children – and another class is scheduled to open in January 2016. Funding for the additional pupils is not in place and, although the building was mainly funded by RCC, the school contributed a significant sum. Therefore, meeting the costs of the extra pupils is extremely difficult and was not budgeted for when the school budget was set in May 2015.

Please see attached sheet for breakdown

Therefore, I would ask that funding for additional pupils as detailed above is considered by School's Forum so that schools are reassured that the needs of all pupils can be met and standards maintained through appropriate funding. In the present instance there are two service schools and one school in Oakham greatly affected by the points above. The budget shortfall breakdown is supplied, using the AWPU for each additional child. Financial assistance to avoid the financial deficit highlighted is requested.

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