

Report To:	SCHOOLS FORUM
Date:	18 October 2016
Reporting Officer:	Bob Berry – Assistant Executive Director - Learning Deb Hill – Headteacher of Virtual School
Subject:	PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS PAYMENTS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC)
Report Summary:	A proposal to amend Pupil Premium Plus payments in order to increase Special Educational Needs (SEN) support for Tameside’s Looked After Children (LAC).
Recommendations:	Members are requested to comment on the proposed changes to the management of the Pupil Premium Plus funding allocation from 1 April 2017 and recommend a way forward.
Links to Community Strategy:	There will be an increased capacity to support schools in identifying and meeting individual children’s needs in an expedient manner.
Policy Implications:	The proposed changes will better meet the DFE criteria to ensure that Pupil Premium Plus funding is allocated according to children’s needs.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)	<p>The Pupil Premium Grant is a ring fenced grant solely for the purposes of schools and pupil related expenditure. The grant conditions for the element of the grant that relates to current Looked After Children, (LAC), allow the Virtual School Head Teacher to control the allocation and use of this funding.</p> <p>The proposal will require the procurement of Education Psychology support via external associates. It will also require the employment of a LAC SEN Caseworker on a 2 year fixed term contract. It should be noted that the Council’s procurement and recruitment procedures will need to be followed for these proposals.</p> <p>The associated expenditure will be funded via a reduction of £133 to the termly (£399 for the financial year) Pupil Premium allocated to schools for each Looked After Child as referenced in section 2.1 of the report.</p>
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	It will be necessary for the Council and Schools to comply with any regulations and guidance relating to Pupil Premium. Additionally should this proposal be agreed it will need to apply to all schools to recruit the necessary staff in accordance with council policy.
Risk Management:	The correct accounting treatment of the Pupil Premium Grant is a condition of the grant and procedures exist in budget monitoring and the closure of accounts to ensure that this is achieved. These will be subject to regular review.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

NON-CONFIDENTIAL

This report does not contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the Press or members of the public.

Background Papers

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Deb Hill – Virtual School Head Teacher, Access and Inclusion, Learning by :



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1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The current policy in Tameside is to devolve the Pupil Premium grant for current Looked after Children (LAC) fully to schools. Whilst the Council has control over this funding in accordance with the grant regulations the Virtual School Head Teacher committed to consulting with Schools in advance of any changes to this policy. The current policy is that Schools receive termly installments of the grant based on the production of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) that are approved by the Virtual School Head Teacher. The annual value of the Pupil Premium grant per Looked After Child is £1,900.
- 1.2 Additional funding to support children in crisis has been allocated through not paying Pupil Premium Plus to any LAC attending independent special schools. Further funding has been allocated in previous financial years from unspent Pupil Premium grant as a result of the non-completion of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) by some Schools in Tameside. In the current year £80,000 has been ring-fenced for the provision of support for children in crisis whilst schools undertake Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) applications.
- 1.3 There is a clear requirement from the DFE to be able to demonstrate that funding is, at least in part, allocated on the basis of a child's needs.
- 1.4 Children with the most extreme needs require rapid responses, both in terms of Education Psychology assessments and the processing of EHCP applications. These are particularly problematic when a child experiences multiple changes in care or school placements. Schools often struggle to fund and manage these processes very quickly and the Virtual School has no capacity to provide additional, specialist support.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Working on the basis of there being at least 320 Tameside LAC then reducing the Pupil Premium Plus termly payments from £633 per term to £500 per term would reduce total allocations to Schools by approximately £127,680. It is proposed that this funding is then used to enable the Council to recruit a full time equivalent Educational Psychologist (via external associates) and a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Caseworker on a 2 year fixed term contract. The approximate cost of these posts would be £116,800 per annum and any difference between their actual cost and the reduced funding being allocated to Schools could be used to target funding at specific LAC with additional needs.
- 2.2 This proposal would enable all schools to be able to request an Education Psychology assessment for a Tameside LAC at no cost. It would also ensure a earlier response is provided and will allow schools to commission free training support for staff seeking to better address the needs of named children. Having a named SEN caseworker at the Council for LAC would allow schools to access direct advice and support in applying for EHCPs. The proposal would provide the capacity for that designated worker to monitor and ensure the provision of evidence that is necessary during the statutory assessment process. It would also enable the Council to substantially improve the management of SEN provision for Tameside LAC placed outside of the borough.
- 2.3 If this proposal is supported by Schools Forum it is expected that the Council would recruit the Education Psychology support via external associates. This is the model of provision used for the majority of the current Tameside Education Psychology support and provides additional flexibility compared to a permanent post. It is proposed that the SEN caseworker would be recruited on a 2 year fixed term trial basis. This would enable the Council and Schools to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of this new provision. The proposal will be progressed for an initial 2 year period with implementation from 1 April 2017.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 As stated on the report cover.