

Director of Children's Service Report to Governors

SPRING TERM 2011

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*DEVELOPING THE
EFFECTIVENESS OF
YOUR GOVERNING BODY*

For more information please
contact Sarah Beaumont,
Governor Services Manager
Tel: 020 8359 7622

1.

Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS): Cessation

Summary

You will be aware of Michael Gove's announcement on 15 November 2010 that FMSiS has been scrapped with immediate effect.

Schools in this year's phase have been advised that if they have already submitted evidence and this has either been assessed or is in the process of being assessed they can continue with the process to achieve accreditation. Schools that have substantially completed their evidence portfolio may also wish to submit this and complete the process to meet the Standard.

The government has advised that last year the Audit Commission said that FMSiS focused on processes rather than achievement of economy and efficiency. The government recognises the importance of ensuring schools have the right arrangements in place to manage their budgets effectively and so the Department will work with interested parties, including local authorities and schools, to develop a new, simpler way of doing this. It is hoped the replacement system will be introduced next year.

The authority's view is that, whilst the Standard process was cumbersome, there were many good elements to it that schools should continue with and guidance on key points is set out below.

Good Practice arising from the Financial Management Standard

Staff competencies

Determining the competencies of all staff who have financial responsibilities is an essential part of good management. Reference to written procedures and training on financial tasks/responsibilities is important for effective staff performance.

Governor Competencies

Schools should ascertain the skills and knowledge of governors to assess how they can best help the school. Equally governors should be encouraged to undertake in-school and/or external training to help them contribute to their role as governors. Knowledge of schools finance is a key area.

Minutes of meetings

Schools have always been clear that minutes of Governing Body meetings are essential. However this principle had not always been extended to the Finance Committee and other committees making important decisions or recommending action to the Governing Body. The requirement of FMSiS for minutes of the Finance Committee should be continued.

Financial Plans and the School Development Plan (SDP)

The requirement for medium financial plans to be submitted for schools in deficit is contained in the Scheme for Financing Schools. However such

plans are essential for all schools. The Financial Plan should contain references to the SDP. Also the SDP should state the cost of a proposal or project wherever this is tangible. A plan is only worthwhile if the school has the resources to deliver it.

Statement of Internal Control

The Standard required the school to evaluate its internal controls on an annual basis and for a statement to be prepared and approved by governors as to the satisfactory or otherwise nature of those controls. The best way for schools to undertake the review of its internal controls is by using the “Keeping Your Balance” checklist. It is recommended that schools continue to use this and that governors approve a Statement of Internal Control on an annual basis. To separate this from the budget preparation work the review and Statement should be done in the autumn term.

Governors’ Role Governors are asked to note the position with regard to FMSiS and ensure good practice is continued.

For action by All Governors

Contact **Nick Adams, Schools Finance Services Manager, Finance Directorate
London Borough of Barnet, North London Business Park, Oakleigh
Road South, London N11 1NP
Tel: 020 8359 7203
Email: nick.adams@barnet.gov.uk**

2.

Pupil Place Planning

Summary

There has been a substantial increase in the number of births in Barnet since 2001. These children have started to enter primary schools and more of them will reach Reception age in the next few years. This will feed through into increased demand for secondary school places, where additional capacity will be required from 2015/16 onwards.

Meeting demand for primary places

Reception

In September 2009 we added 60 permanent places and 115 temporary places to meet demand in the borough. In preparation for September 2010 we worked with schools to create 210 temporary Reception places in seven schools: Dollis, Monkfrith, Tudor, Woodcroft, Barnfield, Holly Park and Broadfields (30 places at each)

To ensure there is sufficient capacity for September 2011 an additional 11 forms of entry (FE) are required. Preparations have already begun and the below arrangements have been agreed.

- Three schools have agreed to take a 'bulge' year: Rosh Pinah (Edgware), Woodridge (Totteridge), and Danegrove (East Barnet).
- There are proposals for a further two schools, which would increase capacity for September 2011:
 - Edgware Jewish Primary School (Hale) aim to join maintained sector as of January 2011.
 - Mill Hill Jewish Primary School (Free School) aim to take pupils as of September 2011.
- It is proposed to permanently expand Broadfields Primary School from September 2011. A corresponding physical enlargement of the school would take place.

We have shared the latest projections with primary and secondary heads and are in discussion with a number of schools to help further increase capacity for September 2011. Capacity is particularly needed in the west of the borough, although there is widespread demand throughout Barnet.

Year 1

The children placed in the additional reception classes last year have now moved into year 1, which has left us with very little surplus in this year group to accommodate children who move into the borough and require a school place. As such, this autumn we experienced significant pressure on year 1 places. Around 50 children could not be placed. Wessex Gardens and Dollis Infant School agreed to take an additional Year 1 class each and other children were placed through the Fair Access Protocol. This has enabled us to meet this additional demand so far although applications continue to come in.

Approach to meeting future demand for primary places

Meeting demand for school places needs to be the key driver for our investment in primary schools. A report setting out our priorities for investment was considered by Cabinet in September and can be accessed here: <http://committeepapers.barnet.gov.uk/democracy/reports/reportdetail.asp?ReportID=9554>

The report identified our permanent expansion priorities as:

- Colindale area – 2 forms of entry (FE)
- Jewish provision - 1FE to 2FE expansion to Jewish provision.
- Edgware area - 1FE (Broadfields will be expanded, subject to statutory consultation and planning processes)
- Finchley area - 1FE expansion in the Finchley area
- East Barnet area -1FE expansion in the East Barnet area

Meeting demand for secondary places

The increase in births will feed through into increased demand for secondary school places in Barnet, while migration and regeneration will also have an impact. Additional capacity is likely to be required from 2015/16 onwards and this will need to be a focus of our investment in secondary schools. Investment in specialist provision may also be required as the number of pupils with additional requirements increases due to an overall increase in births.

There are some uncertainties surrounding secondary place planning. For example, a number of secondary schools have converted to Academy status, and others will be doing so soon. It is not yet clear how Academies and indeed, any Free Schools that may be established in Barnet, will receive capital funding to help contribute to increasing demand.

Meanwhile, this autumn we experienced increased demand for year 11 places. There is little surplus capacity in year 11, and we will continue to closely monitor the situation.

Investment in secondary schools

The government has indicated that the drivers for any future government capital funding are likely to include meeting demographic pressures; condition; expanding successful schools and meeting parental choice and demand. However, we will not know until the government's settlement in December what resources might be available for investment in secondary schools.

Meanwhile, we would like to thank all of the schools that have worked so hard with us to ensure that all of Barnet's children have a school place.

Governors' Role For consideration by

- To note the above information

All Governors

Contact

**Elaine Tuck, Strategy and Projects Officer, Children's Service
London Borough of Barnet, Building 4, North London Business Park,
Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP
Tel: 020 8359 4191
E-mail: elaine.tuck@barnet.gov.uk**

3.

Barnet Partnership for School Improvement

Background

The previous Government set out a very different relationship between Local Authorities (LAs) and schools with regard to School Improvement, which is continuing with the Coalition Government.

The National Strategies are ceasing at the end of March 2011 and the funding for these strategies, as well as other grants that were coming to the LA, will now be going direct to schools. Headteachers and governors will be making the decisions as to what school improvement support they require and from where to access this support.

We consulted with primary headteachers between October 2009 and May 2010. Our initial consultations with Barnet primary headteachers showed that there was a genuine 'appetite' from schools for Barnet to create a School Improvement Service as a Traded Service, out in the market place alongside other providers. We tried to retain all of the elements of what schools value about the current School Improvement Service as well as looking to improve on the current support offered. Five draft models for a Barnet Partnership for School Improvement (BPSI) Service were consulted on and a decision was made to further develop a service based on one of these models.

BPSI

Using the good practice as demonstrated in the Excellence in Clusters (EiC) and School Sports Partnership models, the BPSI has a Steering Group, which is made up of the Barnet Head of School Improvement, the Manager of BPSI, one Learning Network Inspector and 10 Headteachers (at least 2 from each network ensuring as many phases and types of schools as possible are represented).

This Steering Group will meet termly to review the work undertaken by the BPSI and assist the Manager in the strategic direction of the partnership. It has already met three times this term in order to plan for the establishment of the BPSI and prepare the Traded Service Agreement for schools.

Buying into BPSI will bring a number of benefits to member schools:

- Open access to a training programme of approximately 195 days (or equivalent) over the year on areas of school improvement as identified by the member schools and a specific number of consultancy hours per year based on the school size
- Support will be provided by Barnet staff rather than staff working for a company that would be interested in making a profit
- Economies of scale will mean high profile speakers can be booked at a cheaper rate. It will also provide excellent value for money compared to the cost of external training and consultancy
- BPSI will facilitate school-to-school support by organising cluster training/consultancy for schools with similar school improvement areas and linking schools with strengths to schools with that area of development
- The training and consultancy that BPSI will offer will be led by schools' own school improvement needs
- BPSI will organise Subject Leader Meetings - giving updates,

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- sharing good practice, facilitating links between schools
 - BPSI is fully funded and sustainable allowing all schools to have up to their maximum hours of consultancy entitlement. Schools will be able to monitor the number of hours they have used and the number of hours still available
 - Any money over at the end of the year will be fed back into BPSI either with refunds to schools or paying for high profile speakers at conferences

The BPSI will be a service for schools, controlled by schools, meeting the individual school requirements for school improvement. Schools buying into the BPSI will become members of this partnership and will be able to access the whole host of benefits that being in this partnership brings.

However, in order to establish BPSI, we need a minimum number of schools buying in to the service. If we do not get this then there will be no Barnet school improvement service and schools will be forced to access their school improvement support from external providers. The cost of buying into BPSI will be circulated to schools in January 2011 (the cost being based on pupil numbers).

Governors' Role

- To note the above and discuss as Governors in order to make a decision about whether to buy into this new Traded Service
- To inform Barnet as soon as possible about this decision to enable Barnet to staff BPSI ready to launch it on 1 April 2011

For action by All Governors in Primary Schools and Primary Special Schools

Contact

**Neil Marlow, Learning Network Inspector, Children's Service,
London Borough of Barnet, North London Business Park,
Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP
Tel: 020 8359 7725
Email: neil.marlow@barnet.gov.uk**

Development of the Multi-Agency Groups and the Multi-Agency Support Team

Summary

Since June, work has taken place to develop the infrastructure for the new Multi-Agency Support Groups (MAGs), one for each Learning Network Area. This has included agreeing the terms of reference, deciding the membership, drafting the paperwork to be used by the Groups, producing guidance for practitioners, developing a new web page for Barnet Online and creating new publicity materials.

The MAGs have a trouble-shooting role with regard to 'stuck' Common Assessment Framework (CAF) cases and resolve inter-agency difficulties. They also monitor CAF activity in each network and log emerging/unmet needs to inform commissioning. CAFs can be referred to the MAGs by CAF practitioners/Managers, other multi-agency panels such as Targeted Youth Support Panel or Risk of School Prevention Panels, as well as by the Multi-agency Coordinators.

Between September and December, briefings have taken place to launch the MAGs to all key teams, and agencies; where possible using existing forums and staff events.

The MAGs have been up and running since September 2010, and have generally been well attended by managers from key agencies/teams: Police, Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Education Welfare, Education Psychology, Social Care, Voluntary Sector, School Head Teacher Reps, Youth and Connexions, Children's Centres and Housing. Representation from Adult Services is still being explored.

On average 4 CAF/pre-CAF cases have been brought to the first round of MAGs, with cases being brought back for review to the subsequent MAG. The numbers of cases presented to the MAGs however should increase once the Multi-Agency Coordinators (MACs) roles are more fully established within their Networks (the MACs only started in role the week before the first MAG meetings).

It is hoped that once the MAGs become better established, more practitioners themselves will start to refer cases to the MAGs for support, as well as those cases identified by the Multi-Agency Team and by other existing Panels. The MAGs are being actively promoted via the CAF Practitioner Group, and at various staff forums. Also, once the Multi-Agency Coordinators begin to build relationships with settings/teams within their Network Areas, they will actively promote access to the MAGs, and assist practitioners to identify CAF/pre CAF situations that may benefit from discussion at the MAG.

A review of the MAG Process is planned for the end of Jan 2011 to ensure that the MAGs are making a positive difference. This review meeting will also look at the emerging needs/unmet needs logs completed at each of

the MAGs, to identify common themes.

For further information about the CAF Process and about the MAGs please refer to the dedicated web pages on Barnet Online:

www.barnet.gov.uk/caf-practitioner-info

www.barnet.gov.uk/multi-agency-groups

Or contact the Multi-Agency Support Team on: 020 8359 4405
e-caf@barnet.gov.uk

**Governors’
Role**

- To note the above information.

**For
information**

All Governors

Contact

Michaela Carlowe
Multi-Agency Support Manager
Building Resilience, Supporting Independence Division
Children’s Service, London Borough of Barnet, North London
Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP
Tel: 020 8359 7640
email: michaela.carlowe@barnet.gov.uk

5.

Team Around the Setting

Summary

In association with the formulation of a new Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy, Children's Services are considering with partners the development of a Team Around the Setting (TAS) approach to deliver better co-ordinated multi-agency working to schools and other settings for children and young people.

The work of the TAS will underpin the activity of the Multi-Agency Groups (MAGS). The model seeks to bring together in closer alignment services such as Educational Psychology, specialist advisory teachers, youth support and diversionary services to prevent offending, parent support and family intervention workers. It is hoped to include some links into medical services and Child and Adolescent Mental health Services, as well as community based services.

A central aim is to maintain access of vulnerable children and young people to universal services and prevent escalation of concern, in relation to their education and care. Opportunities are being considered to begin establishing the model in a "try out" phase with some schools and children's centres at the start of the new year. On-going consultation will be part of this process.

Governors' Role

- To note the above information.

For information

All Governors

Contact

Brian Davis Principal Educational Psychologist
Children's Service, London Borough of Barnet, North London
Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP
Tel: 020 8359 7664
email: brian.davis@barnet.gov.uk

6.

Preventing Exclusion Meetings

Summary

The recent year-on-year rise in permanent exclusions in Barnet has begun to level off and may potentially be slightly reducing. It is appreciated that no school management group wants to exclude pupils and that much effort is put into preventing the occurrence where possible. Some schools have been very successful in contributing to reducing the rate, through a range of school-based initiatives. However, the permanent exclusion rate continues to cause some concern when compared with national figures.

Preventing Exclusion Multi Agency Meetings is a joint initiative, across secondary schools, community based services, children's services, and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), which is now in its second year and targeting a fourth cohort.

An offer is currently again being made to schools via a letter to headteachers, to have such a meeting established for them in order to discuss and plan for young people who are considered to be at risk of exclusion. Feedback and lessons learned from schools on the effectiveness of these meetings will help inform the development of the Team Around the Setting arrangements outlined in item 5.

Governors' Role

- To note the above information.

For information

All Governors

Contact

Brian Davis Principal Educational Psychologist
Children's Service, London Borough of Barnet, North London
Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP
Tel: 020 8359 7664
email: brian.davis@barnet.gov.uk

7.

Consultation on the Future of Barnet Children's Centres

Summary

The Government's spending review has reduced the amount of money available for the council to spend over the coming years. This will mean some difficult decisions on how we prioritise our spending on services. Children's Centres are currently paid for entirely out of the Sure Start Grant; this funding will now be included in the Government's Early Intervention Grant which covers children aged from 0-19 years old.

We have developed a series of options for the future of Children's Centres and the services they support and we are undertaking consultation widely with various stakeholders etc across the Borough. A consultation meeting for School Governors has been organised to take place on **Wednesday 19 January 2011 at 7.00pm – 8.00pm at NLBP Building 2**. Your views and opinions are important to us and will help us to make decisions.

To book a place please contact

childrens.serviceconsultation@barnet.gov.uk or call 020 8359 7677

If you are unable to attend, you have the opportunity to send your comments and suggestions at

childrens.serviceconsultation@barnet.gov.uk

Further information is available on the council website:

www.barnet.gov.uk/childrens-service-consultation

Governors' Role

- To note the information
- Children's Centre School Governors to book a place for consultation meeting

For action

Children's Centre School Governors

Contact

**Kay Sinclair, Early Years Services Manager,
Children's Service
London Borough of Barnet, North London Business Park,
Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP
Tel: 020 8359 7395
email: kay.sinclair@barnet.gov.uk**