

SCHOOLS' FUNDING FORUM

SUBJECT:	Nursery Age Provision In Special Schools
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SUMMARY OF REPORT:

One of the outcomes of School Funding Reforms in 2013-14 was that the DfE stipulated that Special School Nursery Observation and Assessment Centres (OAC) had to be funded through the High Needs Place Plus funding system. DfE guidance for 2014-15 now dictates that only places for the age range 5 to 25 can be included in the Place Plus process. This paper informs members of the SFF of the proposed method for funding OACs.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 In 2012/13 special schools with nursery age provision received a lump sum in respect of such provision. The basis of these allocations had been 'lost in the midst of time' exposing the authority and the school funding forum to difficult potential questions about why different schools had received different amounts of money.
- 1.2 In 2012 and in preparation for the 2013/14 financial year, a substantial exercise was undertaken by the Schools & PVI team with the original intention of calculating a new lump sum of nursery funding for each of the schools concerned that would be based on a consistent and fair rationale and which would address the issue explained in 1.1.
- 1.3 During the course of the exercise in 2012 it became clear that this type of provision would have to be funded using 'Place Plus', a development that was accommodated without changing the underlying rationale that had previously been intended to produce a lump sum.
- 1.4 As a consequence of the above points, the authority finds itself in a position where it is well prepared to offer a replacement to 'Place Plus' in these provisions based on recent work. Such a move is also likely to be well received by the schools in question.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that each of the provisions will be funded by means of a lump sum, see appendix 1 for details. This model was presented to the Schools Funding Forum in December 2012 as the basis for the 2013/14 'Place Plus' funding, it is however equally suitable as the basis for a lump sum allocation. As explained above, the model was originally intended to calculate a lump sum of funding.

3. Implications of Proposal

- 3.1 Taking a schools perspective, the key implication of this proposal is to remove the uncertainty of funding inherent in the current system. Instead they could plan their provision for the year knowing how much funding will be available. The school would also benefit from no longer having to use the existing tracking process for these pupils which will also be a benefit for the authority.
- 3.2 Regarding the DSG, the proposal would create a certain cost for this type of provision. If all the provisions ran at exactly full capacity for the whole year then the cost would be the same as the current system but in reality the current system could provide either an overspend or an underspend.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Schools Funding Forum accept the proposal outlined within this document.