

Agenda Item: 9 (b)

Meeting: Schools Forum

Date: 29 June 2009

Subject: Diploma Funding – September 2009 Cohort

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children, Families and Learning

Summary: To brief the Schools Forum on the process of funding the introduction of Diplomas from September 2009 in respect of the first cohort of students.

Contact Officer: Kevin Green (01234 228744)

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Schools Forum to note the decisions and recommendations of the 14-19 Strategic Partnership and the Upper School head teachers, especially the use of the element of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) relating to Practical Learning Opportunities.

1. The introduction of Diplomas begins for 14-16 year olds in Upper Schools in Central Bedfordshire from September 2009.
2. The intention of the government is that there will be a total of at least 14 lines of study at Diploma level nationally for students to choose by September 2013. Local authorities are moving progressively forward introducing a number of Diploma lines each September in order to meet the offer in full for all students from September 2013, working through the local 14-19 Strategic Partnership.
3. The Bedfordshire 14-19 Strategic Partnership represents Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils, its Upper Schools, the LSC and FE Colleges (Bedford, Dunstable and Shuttleworth). Within this partnership are two area based consortia a) The North/Mid Bedfordshire comprising the Bedford Borough and five Central Bedfordshire Upper Schools and b) South Bedfordshire, comprising the other five Central Bedfordshire Upper Schools (including Northfields).

4. There are intended to be 4 lines of study in Upper schools in the North/Mid Beds Consortium from September 2009, namely Construction & the Built Environment, Creative & Media, Engineering and Hair & Beauty.
5. A number of authorities introduced some lines of study from September 2008 (Gateway 1). Central Bedfordshire is introducing its first lines of study from September 2009 (Gateway 2) in the North/Mid Beds Consortium and there will be further lines of study introduced in September 2010 (Gateway 3) in both consortia.
6. The government pays the authority Diploma Grant for each student commencing a study line in September. The grant is based on the academic year and is fixed for the two years of study. The grant amount depends on the line and level of study. In Central Bedfordshire for the academic year 2009-10 the amount per student per year is some £1,320 including enhancements for Area Cost Adjustment and a Sparsity factor.
7. Courses will be provided at Bedford College as well as at some Upper schools.
8. At the time of writing this report it is projected that there will be a total of 23 students, from Upper schools in Central Bedfordshire, across the 4 subject lines, pursuing the Diploma programme in September 2009. There will also be a projected total of 15 students from Upper schools in Bedford Borough following the same Diploma programme.
9. The costs to the providers, and the fees paid to them are being finalised, and together with transport costs, exam fees, accreditation etc. the costs, per participating student, will exceed the amount of Diploma Grant received.
10. There will therefore need to be a form of subsidy to enable this programme to proceed. The 14-19 Strategic Partnership and the Upper school headteachers have considered this matter and have resolved to accept a principle of cost neutrality, whereby any schools which have Diploma students should not contribute more, per student, than the appropriate element of the AWPU for that Key Stage of student. This equates to £1,400 based on a two day a week course and an AWPU at Years 10 and 11 of some £3,500.
11. The government recommendation is that as well as the Diploma Grant the DSG Practical Learning Opportunities funding is used to enable the financing of Diplomas to be delivered. These two funding streams, along with the £1,400 contribution from participating schools, can be used to enable Diplomas to operate from September 2009.
12. The DSG Practical Learning Opportunities provision totals some £601,000 in financial year 2009-10 and after a contribution from the participating schools of £1,400 per Diploma student, there would then be a partnership contribution per pupil by all Upper schools sufficient to meet the net cost of the Diploma programme.

13. After all net Diploma costs are met; together with commitments around vocational courses, the balance of the DSG Practical Learning Opportunities provision is allocated to all Upper schools on the basis of the total number of Yr 10 and Yr 11 students. It is anticipated that 75% of the estimated balance for financial year 2009-10, allowing for revenue/costs carried forward for the balance of the academic year, will be issued early in the autumn term. The remaining balance will be issued once all the revenues and costs are known, but in advance of the financial year end.
14. This method of funding accords with the views of the 14-19 Strategic Partnership and has been accepted by the Upper schools headteachers, who attended a meeting in May, after noting the possible financial implications for each Upper school.
15. It is also a clear principle that this proposed method of funding the Diploma programme is only for the two year course of the cohort commencing the programme in September 2009. Because there will probably be a wider programme with more students in the second cohort commencing in September 2010 there will need to be a fresh look at how this second year will be funded, and this will need to start soon in the autumn, learning something from this year's experiences.
16. The Schools Forum is asked to note the situation over the operation of Diplomas from September 2009, the endorsement of the funding principles contained within this report by the 14-19 Strategic Partnership and the Upper school headteachers, and the proposed use of the DSG Practical Learning Opportunities provision in financial year 2009-10 and subsequent years.