

# **Schools Forum - Update on the progress of the SEND Clusters – 29th November 2018**

## **Purpose of Report**

1. To provide a briefing on the development of SEND Clusters and to provide an update on the progress of the pilot phase including any identified risks and issues.

## **Legislation and Policy**

2. The Schools Forum has a responsibility to act as a consultative body with the local authority on the strategic financial management of the Schools Budget and the DSG. A key priority is the efficient use of the DSG in respect of the high needs funding and specifically support for pupils with special educational needs at both SEN Support and those that have Education Health Care (EHC) plans.

3. The Families Act 2014 (including the SEN Code of Practice) is the key driver of this area of work. The SEN Code of Practice requires the LA and schools to implement a “graduated approach” in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. The development of a funding stream for SEND inclusion and the development of SEND clusters would support this area of work and allow a number of actions in both the Ofsted Written Statement of Action and the SEND Strategy 2018-2023 to be completed.

4. The SEND cluster pilot is viewed as a strategic LA project as its implementation is a critical element of our SEND Strategy and DSG Sustainability Plan. The ambition is that by releasing funding for pupils with SEND to schools working together in clusters, it will foster greater sharing of good practice across schools and provide funding for group interventions to meet the needs of pupils identified at SEN Support.

5. The pilot does not change any of the arrangements for pupils with EHC plans; the pilot is targeted to support groups of pupils at SEN Support.

## **Background**

6. As part of setting the Schools Budget for 2018/19 and following consultation with all Schools and the Schools Forum two funding anomalies were identified that created expenditure on a historic, ineffective and inappropriate basis. There were two elements to this historic spending as follows:

- Double funding the first £6k of Top-Up Funding
- High incidence funding that was spread much more widely than the school funding regulations intended.

As part of the consultation and decision making process for 2018/19 and beyond it was decided to cease those two anomalies and find more effective ways of investing those funds to both improve support for pupils with SEND and to have the biggest long term impact on reducing expenditure. The SEND Cluster Fund is an invest to save option using this funding that should deliver a much bigger positive impact on the DSG deficit over the long term than the alternative of simply using the funding as a short term measure to reduce the deficit.

7. The Schools Forum and the Schools Forum High Needs Working Group are involved in the development of the SEND Clusters as a pilot initiative to test out whether cluster working can deliver the desired outcomes. The outcomes are to support pupils in schools to improve outcomes for pupils at SEN Support, reduce the number of exclusions and reduce the requests for EHC needs assessments. The pilot was discussed at the Schools Forum meeting in July 2018.

<http://www.southglos.gov.uk/documents/Schools-Forum-Agenda-and-Papers-for-12-July-18.pdf>

The following recommendations were agreed at the Schools Forum in July 2018 that:

- a) Schools' Forum support the adoption of the five SEND clusters (cluster 5 merged with 4) for the purposes of the Pilot.
- b) Schools' Forum support the approach to the Pilot phase which will focus on one or a maximum of two clusters and request an update on progress in the Schools' Forum meeting in November 2018.
- c) Schools' Forum receive an evaluation Report in January 2019 to review learning from the Pilot and planning for the implementation of cluster working across the LA (planned for April 2019).

8. Letters were sent out asking for expressions of interest in the pilot in late July with a closing date of September 14<sup>th</sup>; the LA received two expressions of interest from cluster 2 and 3 by the deadline date and an expression of interest from a small number of schools in cluster 4 after the deadline date. Appendix 1 lists the schools engaged in the SEND cluster pilot from cluster 2 and 3.

9. The process of setting up the clusters has taken longer than anticipated and whilst recommendations (a) and (b) are moving forward recommendation (c) as set out in the July Schools Forum Report is delayed. A new timeline will be proposed and agreed. The delay has resulted for a number of reasons:

- Some schools have not previously worked together and it has taken time to set up the systems and meetings;
- It has taken longer to identify the interventions for the cluster than anticipated. Care is being taken to ensure that interventions are evidence based and will deliver on the three outcome areas;
- Half term break in the middle of the set up period.

There is strong support from headteachers and SENCOs with a real desire to engage with the pilot. This is a new area of delivery and as a result we have needed to introduce new systems (e.g. a SEND Cluster Board and SEND SENCO groups). A project plan for each cluster will be drawn up by the end of November. Interventions and training will commence from this date – Nov 2018. A decision has been taken by the LA Project Group (led by Mustafa Salih and Julie Cathcart) that the pilot should be extended and finish in July 2019 (rather than March 2019) recognising the delay in the implementation phase.

### **Update on Progress**

10. The LA are working with the two clusters led by Mark Freeman Headteacher St Michaels Primary Stoke Gifford (cluster 2) and Peter Barnard Headteacher Frampton Cotterell (cluster

3). Both clusters include primary and secondary schools. Both clusters have 20 schools engaged in the pilot which for cluster 2 represents the majority of schools (20 out of 21 – 95%) and for cluster 3 (20 out of 34 school - 59%). Cluster 3 is a large cluster covering 34 schools and our invitation to be part of the pilot suggested that a smaller group of schools in cluster 3 would be acceptable. In both clusters we have held the following sessions as part of the implementation phase of the pilot.

Name	Purpose	Membership
2 Twilight sessions for cluster 2&3	To outline the data for the cluster, the role of the Cluster Board, success criteria and outcomes.	SENCOs and headteachers Representatives from Integra, Inclusion Support, Public Health and Speech and Language Service attended the sessions along with Headteachers and SENCOs
1 SEND Cluster Board for cluster 2&3	Each cluster has had one Board meeting to agree the ToR for the cluster board, agree membership and agree a process for implementing the pilot. (Cluster 2 have a Board meeting on 21 <sup>st</sup> Nov to agree the project plan)	See Appendix 2 for Board membership for each cluster.
3 SENCO meetings For cluster 2	To work with primary SENCOs to identify the process by which requests for EHC needs assessments can be managed within the cluster. To look at a process to identify pupils that are at risk of exclusion or may need an EHC na. A separate meeting has taken place with secondary schools to look at ways to manage @risk of exclusion pupils	SENCOs and LA representatives.
2 SENCO meetings for cluster 3	These will take place w/c 19 <sup>th</sup> Nov - 2 dates have been offered	SENCOs and LA representatives.

11. Each cluster has defined their priority areas across their schools. These are summarised in the table below:

Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Improving social, emotional, mental health of pupils	Support children's mental health needs to enable them to access learning and to prevent exclusions due to behaviour
Managing behaviour that challenges more effectively	Support children with complex needs without the need for an Education, Health and Care plan
Developing speech and language skills and meeting the needs of pupils with ASC more effectively	Support children's speech and language needs including identifying of ASC earlier to enable them to better access learning and make better progress (including the provision of sensory strategies)
Meeting the needs of pupils at SEN Support – narrowing the gap	Improve outcomes children at SEN support, particularly with literacy and numeracy, in order to accelerate progress

12. The Terms of Reference for the SEND Cluster Board have been rewritten to include reference to the High Risk Group (HRG - a school led meeting that considers what interventions can be implemented to avoid a permanent exclusion). The cluster work will be

implemented prior to the HRG discussion so effective cluster working should result in a reduction of referrals to the HRG from cluster 2 and 3 schools. This includes the following secondary schools: Bradley Stoke Community School, Abbeywood Community School, Patchway Community School, Brimsham Green School and Winterbourne Academy. Appendix 3 provides key extracts from the Terms of Reference document for the SEND Cluster Board.

13. Appendix 4 provides the draft process map for pre-screening EHC needs assessments. This does not affect the timescales of 20 weeks that the LA must abide by once they receive a request for an EHCna to the Access and Response Team (ART). The intention is to provide an opportunity for SENCOs to discuss potential requests on a confidential basis. The pupil is anonymous and no identifying information is shared with the SENCO group. Requests for EHC needs assessments are only expected to be sent to the LA in exceptional cases. Draft criteria (to be discussed at the SEND Cluster Boards) are suggested should include:

- a) Sudden and significant change in EHC needs
- b) A pupil that has recently moved into the LA with significant and complex needs
- c) Request from a school with a new SENCO where significant and complex needs have not been identified previously

Pupils where criteria b apply should be discussed by the SEND Board and the school encourage to send paperwork to the LA as a matter of urgency. If the SEND Cluster Board supports a request there is no guarantee that the LA SEND panel will agree and all thresholds will need to be met in the same way as any other EHCna received by the LA.

The Year 5/6 pupils will be targeted as the LA are aware of an increase in requests for EHC needs assessments as pupils transfer to secondary schools.

A process map is being designed for pupils at risk of exclusion. The pilot team plan to work with Louise Leader (Pathways Learning Centre) to ensure that it supports the work of the High Risk Group (and sub groups/processes).

14. Project plans for each cluster will be drawn up and will outline all expenditure with expected success criteria and outcomes detailed within the plan. A full time speech and language therapist has been commissioned for a six month period (£25,000). The speech and language therapy service can provide training and support in a range of programmes e.g. Attention Autism, Talk Boost and other programmes for staff and parents.

15. There are three priority areas where the pilot needs to engage with teams and services to ensure effective processes and activities are in place across the LA. Those working on the pilot are keen to ensure there is a seamless process and where training and good practice already exists it is accessed by the pilot. The pilot needs to consider the following:

- a) linking with the three Teaching Schools in South Gloucestershire so schools in the cluster can not only engage with training that is already designed and available but also access SLEs to support in reach work in schools
- b) linking more effectively with Pathways Learning Centre in respect of managing pupils @ risk of exclusion and the referral routes and protocols for the HRG
- c) Linking with the work underway in the Early Help services so that duplication is avoided and processes are streamlined and effective

16. The overarching timescales and plan for the pilot have been amended. The pilot will now run until July 2019 with an evaluation report being submitted to the Schools Forum and other stakeholder groups in May 2019. Decisions as to whether the pilot will be extended to the other clusters will be made in June (post May elections). Meetings and dates will be set up in June for the remaining clusters so that a go live date can be fixed for September with all preparation meetings completed in June/July 2019. Stakeholder groups like the Primary Executive Group have asked for early impact information which is not yet available due to the delay in setting up the clusters.

17. The commitment from the headteachers and SENCOs has been immensely positive and their involvement has demonstrated a real desire to change the way in which pupils at SEN Support are supported in order to meet need earlier and reduce the need for EHC needs assessments and exclusions.

There have been a number of issues that have arisen during the set up phase and these are listed below:

- The pilot is operating in a climate of significant reduction in school budgets; SENCOs have higher teaching commitments and the reduction of teaching assistants means that releasing them from class to commit to training can be difficult. Some headteachers external to the pilot are sceptical of the pilot questioning why funding was made available;
- The pilot is currently heavily reliant on LA support to facilitate meetings and drive the pilot. The intention is that this will be reduced and schools can take on this role once the pilot is up and running;
- The pilot requires time from schools in the set up phase; this has been given by schools but it is sometimes difficult to get all pilot schools fully engaged.
- It has taken longer to agree a project plan for cluster 2 and 3 and to list how funding will be spent. This is because schools are taking time to select evidence based interventions and there is not a history of working together as a group;
- There have been many discussions about the need to reduce EHC needs assessments and permanent exclusions with pilot schools; the LA would like the baseline date to be the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018, however the schools have not received funding to date. It is also possible that schools could 'hold requests' during the pilot and then request EHC needs assessments or exclude after the evaluation period. To mitigate this risk and to ensure that all understand the desired outcomes, each headteacher is asked to agree to the pilot requirements and to state that they have discussed this with their Chair of Governors (see Appendix 5)

## **18. Next Steps**

1. Greater engagement and better communication with a wider stakeholder groups – headteachers external to the pilot, parent/carers groups, health, social care colleagues. Updates and lessons learnt shared with a wider stakeholder group.
2. Evaluate the pilot in April 2019 and present a report to Schools Forum on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2019.
3. Decision reports presented to Executive Members at the end of May 19 with an outline of the evaluation of the pilot and setting out recommendations for expansion of the clusters if the evaluation is positive.

## **19. Recommendations**

1. Schools Forum to note the progress outlined in this Report and that the pilot has been extended to July 2019.
2. Schools Forum to note that a report will be presented at the May 9<sup>th</sup> 2019 meeting of the Schools Forum which will provide an evaluation of the pilot and further recommendations.

Kate East, SEN Consultant

## Appendix 1 – Schools involved in the Pilot

Cluster 2 – 20 schools (not including BTEA)

Group 1	Group 2
1. Bowsland Green	1. Bradley Stoke Primary
2. Callicroft Primary	2. Bailey Court Primary
3. Holy Family Primary	3. Charborough Road Primary
4. St Chads Primary	4. Coniston Primary
5. St Michael's, Stoke Gifford	5. Filton Hill Primary
6. Shield Road Primary	6. Holy Trinity Primary
7. Stoke Lodge Primary	7. Little Stoke Primary
8. Wallscourt Farm	8. Meadowbrook Primary
9. Wheatfield Primary	9. St Mary's Yate

### Group 3 – secondary

1. Bradley Stoke Community School
2. Patchway Community School
3. Abbeywood Community School

### Cluster 3 – 20 schools involved:

1. Elm Park Primary	1. Abbotswood Primary
2. Frampton Cotterell Primary	2. Broadway infants
3. Frenchay Primary	3. Hawkesbury Primary
4. Hambrook Primary	4. Iron Acton
5. Rangeworthy Primary	5. Marshfield
6. St Michael's Primary - Winterbourne	6. North Rd Primary
7. Watermore Primary	7. Pucklechurch
8. Winterbourne Academy – OAT	8. St. Andrews Primary
	9. St Mary's Primary – Yate
	10. The Ridge Primary
	11. Wick Primary
	12. Brimsham Green School

## Appendix 2 – Board Membership for cluster 2 and 3

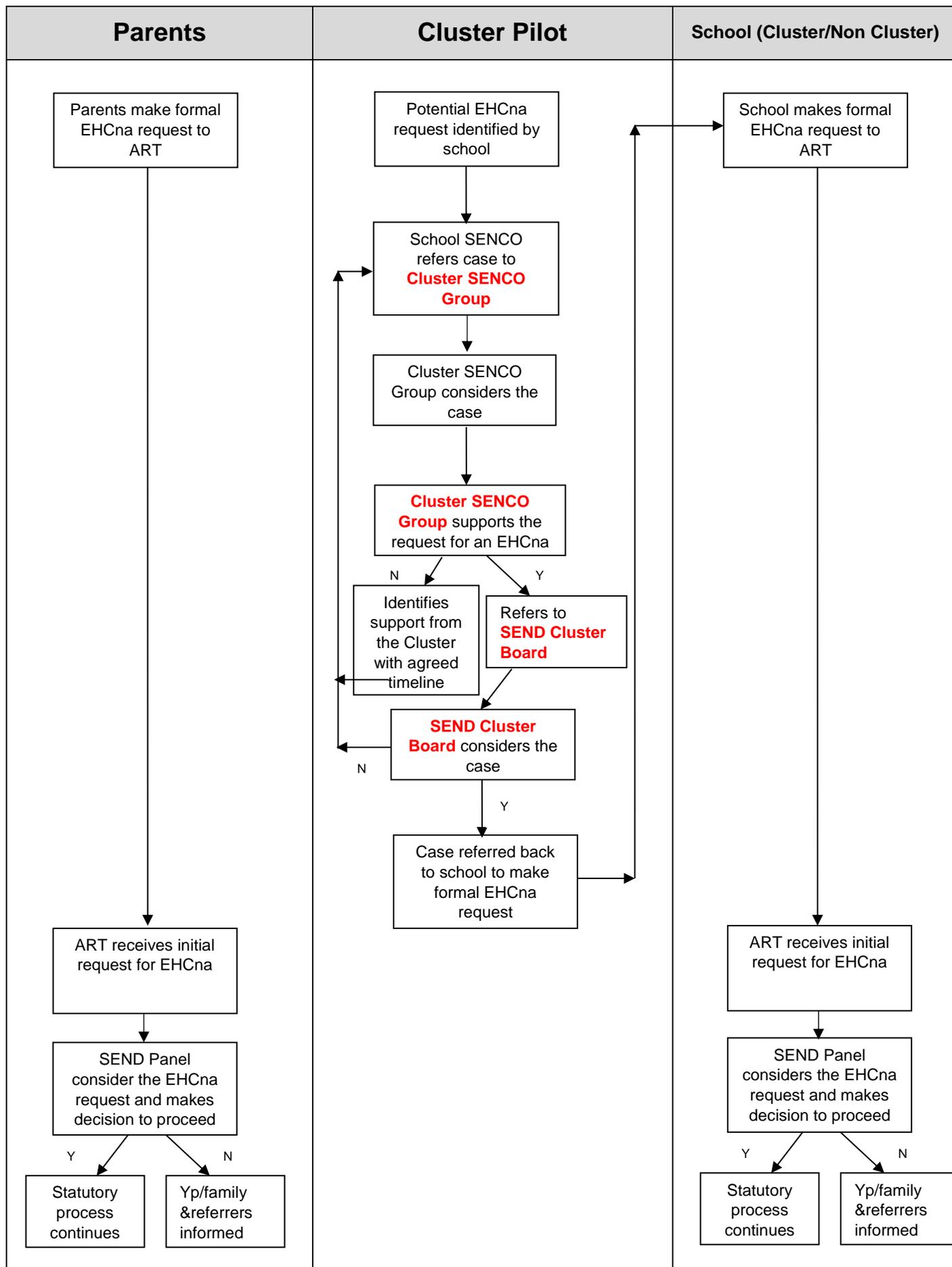
Mark Freeman	Headteacher St Michaels Primary	Grace Pittman	SGC Educational Psychologist
Kirsten Lemming	Headteacher Filton Hill Primary	Anna Carr	SENCO St Michael's Primary
Karen Cornick	Headteacher Patchway Community School	Sue Anstey	SENCO Little Stoke Primary School
Erica Wolstenholme	SENCO Bradley Stoke Community School & Abbeywood School	Sarah Hayes	SGC Strategic lead for SEND / Principal Educational Psychologist
Kate East	SEN Consultant		

Peter Barnard	Headteacher Frampton Cotterell Primary	Phillippa Tilley	SENCO Marshfield Primary
Rob Cockle	Headteacher Abbotswood Primary	Liz Knight	SENCO Frampton Cotterell
Chris Jackson	Assistant Principal Winterbourne Academy	Carol Bond	Dep Head/ SENCO Elm Park
Kim Garland	Headteacher Brimsham Green School	Sarah Hayes	SGC Strategic lead for SEND / Principal Educational Psychologist
Kieran Mogford	SENCO Winterbourne Academy	Grace Pittman	SGC Educational Psychologist
Kate East	SEN Consultant		

### **Appendix 3 - Key extracts of the Terms of Reference - Responsibilities of the Schools' Cluster Board**

1. To identify and agree the priorities for the cluster for which the SEND Fund allocation will be used.
2. To agree the specific interventions to be undertaken and the corresponding allocation of funding to those interventions. A list of possible interventions from which the Cluster Board can draw from will be made available to the Board and other working groups as necessary; alternatively the Cluster Board can identify other suitable interventions.
3. To review the baseline data and agree success measures against the key performance measures that will be used to assess the success of the interventions. If the Board decides that it would like to adopt additional outcomes and performance measures, it can do so. The intention is to provide as much flexibility as possible for the Board to determine the interventions that will make a difference but due regard must be given to the cost-effectiveness and the priority areas of focus for the pilot – namely reducing exclusions, improving attainment and reducing the number of requests for EHC needs assessment.
4. To provide robust challenge across all of the above to ensure that the priorities and areas of focus are the right ones; to ensure that the interventions selected will deliver improvement and provide value for money; and to ensure that the performance measures are appropriate and that the success measures set are stretching.
5. To receive feedback from schools staff and other key officers on progress and the impact of the interventions. The Board will need to challenge accordingly and will have responsibility for deciding when an intervention is not working and needs to be ended or changed.
6. To maintain a record of how the Intervention Fund allocation is used. This should include the priority area to be addressed, the type of intervention, duration, cost and impact. A simple excel spreadsheet will be available for the Cluster to record this information.
7. To provide progress updates on the success of the Intervention Fund programme (including spend and performance) to all schools within the cluster, other school clusters within SG, the High Needs Working Group and the Schools Forum.
8. To moderate and co-ordinate requests from schools/parents for EHC (Education, Health and Care) needs assessments within the school cluster area prior to submission to the 0-25 SEND Panel. This will also require robust challenge to ensure that all local options of support have been explored and implemented allowing time for the Assess Plan Do Review (APDR) process has been implemented and requests are appropriate and are completed correctly and in a consistent way.
9. To review potential permanent exclusions and discuss whether other suitable options are available that should be pursued first through cluster working. This review process as part of the SEND Cluster Pilot is expected to take place prior to a referral to the High Risk Group (HRG). It is the school's responsibility to make a referral to the HRG as and when they feel it is appropriate. This will include monitoring and reviewing referrals to the PLC. This will require robust challenge to ensure all avenues have been explored fully.

**Appendix 4 – Draft pre-screening process for consideration of pupils for an EHC needs assessment request.**



## **Appendix 5 – Sample email for headteachers to sign**

Dear Headteacher,

Thank you for your support and participation in the SEND Cluster pilot. This is an exciting initiative that will hopefully deliver significant benefits, particularly improving outcomes for pupils at SEN Support, reducing the number of exclusions and reducing requests for EHC needs assessments.

Further details regarding the outcomes and how the pilot will work are set out in the SEND Cluster Board Terms of Reference (attached). Clearly, the success of the pilot is reliant on the continued involvement and support of all participating schools in the cluster. It would therefore be appreciated if could confirm by e-mail, having firstly discussed with your Chair of Governors, that you understand the desired outcomes and your responsibilities in supporting the pilot.

Of course, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact myself or Kate East, SEND Consultant and Lead for the pilot programme. Many thanks.

Regards

Julie Cathcart

Interim Head of Education Learning and Skills