

Schools revenue funding 2018 to 2019, Operational guide (September 2017)

The operational guide sections 119 to 120 apply to the transfer of funding between dedicated schools grant blocks.

How Buckinghamshire County Council has met these is described in the table below, which sets out the relevant operational guide sections in detail.

Operational Guide section / point	BCC response
119. Any proposal to transfer funding from the schools block should be presented along with a range of evidence to back up the proposal, both to schools as part of the local consultation, and to the schools forum in seeking their approval. Schools forum discussions should include appropriate representation from special schools, and other specialist providers.	A breakdown of the draft high needs budget proposals for the current and next 4 years was presented to the Schools Forum on 31 st October ⁱ 2017 and referenced in the main consultation document ⁱⁱ and mentioned in the accompanying roadshows that over 130 school representatives attended. The Schools Forum includes representatives from special schools and specialist providers.
120. We expect the evidence presented to the schools forum to include:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• details of any previous movements between blocks, what pressures those movements covered, and why those transfers have not been adequate to counter the new cost pressures	£3m was transferred with the approval of the Schools Forum in 2017/18. £79,755,000 budget agreed against £76.444m high needs allocation from DSG for 2017/18. The budget paper agreed by the Schools Forum ⁱⁱⁱ stated also that “The wider SEND change programme being led by the Authority will have limited impact on pressure in 2017-18 budgets.”

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a full breakdown of the specific budget pressures that have led to the requirement for a transfer 	<p>The full breakdown of budgets was provided which shows the specific budget pressures. As stated in the consultation also, the largest pressure is special schools funding but significant increases in budgets are also required for mainstream school funding for top ups, ARPs and high needs block.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> this should include the changes in demand for special provision over the last three years, and how the local authority has met that demand by commissioning places in all sectors (mainstream and special schools, further education and sixth form colleges, independent specialist provision and alternative provision) 	<p>A breakdown of the 2017/18 volumes where applicable was included in the high needs budget analysis for the Schools Forum in October 2017. An updated analysis is now included.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> it's particularly important that any changes in the provision for mainstream school pupils with high needs are highlighted so that those schools can understand both why a transfer of funds from the schools block might be needed, and how future transfers might be avoided 	<p>The increase in budgets proposed for mainstream schools was highlighted in the report on high needs to the schools forum and in the consultation document.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a strategic financial plan setting out how the local authority intends to bring high needs expenditure to levels that can be sustained within anticipated future high needs funding levels 	<p>The attached budget is a revision to the version provided to the Schools Forum in October 2017. Since October further agreements for special school and ARP places have been progressed and a more detailed analysis of the cost of independent school children has been completed.</p>

Operational Guide section / point	BCC response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the local authority should demonstrate an assessment and understanding of why the high needs costs are at a level that exceeds the expected final high needs funding allocation, and that plans are in place to change the pattern of provision where this is necessary, as well as to achieve greater efficiency in other ways 	<p>The reasons for the high levels of SEND spend and high numbers of pupils with EHCPs in Buckinghamshire was set out in the SEND strategy document referenced in the consultation which was agreed by the Council in February 2017. ^{iv}. The Strategy set out 7 priorities.</p> <p>Priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of the Integrated Services Board to bring together Education, Health and Social care to collaborate on a joined up approach to delivering the SEND reforms through effective integration. The Board will progress tripartite funding mechanisms alleviating pressure on education budgets for complex cases. The Inclusion Hub that will address capacity issues through a demand led approach to better meeting need so that we reconfigure our offer in response to demand reducing dependency on out of County placements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the schools forum can only give approval for a one-off transfer of funding out of the 2018 to 2019 schools block 	<p>The approval of Schools Forum is sought for 2018/19 and a further decision regarding 2019/20 will be sought in the Autumn Term of 2018.</p>

Operational Guide section / point	BCC response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the local authority should give details of whether the cost pressure is such that they would anticipate the need to seek schools forum approval for a transfer in subsequent years, and how they are planning ahead to avoid such transfers in the longer term 	<p>The consultation question asked about funding for two years, so that a further consultation with schools on this matter might be avoided in 2018 if the results of the consultation were clear. A decision in principle for funding to be transferred in 2019/20 is therefore also requested but this cannot be ratified until next year. Should circumstances change significantly in future and recommendation made now may not be relevant and a new consultation may be required.</p> <p>No transfer for future years are planned as the guidance does not allow this and the County Council fully supports the ring-fencing of the schools block from 2020/21 (regardless of whether the National Funding Formula is formally implemented).</p> <p>The budget planning indicates that pressures in future years will be managed through the success of the SEND inclusion strategy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> as part of the review and planning process, the extent to which collaborative working is being developed as a means of securing suitable high needs placements at a cost that can be afforded 	<p>The County Council is working with all Buckinghamshire special schools, ARPS, pupil referral units and other providers to collaborate on meeting the SEND demand within the DSG high needs block available. The biggest saving area is the cost of independent school placements.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> we expect effective partnership between the local authority, those institutions offering special and alternative provision (including mainstream schools), and parents; and between the local authority and neighbouring authorities 	<p>The County Council already places significant number of children in maintained special schools out of county and further collaboration opportunities with neighbouring providers on potential provision are being reviewed. It is too early in this process to discuss details.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any contributions from health and social care budgets towards the cost of specialist places 	<p>The analysis of independent school places provided in this report sets out the contributions from health and social care. The new Integrated Services Board will also support this. The majority of DSG funded cases are not joint funded but where DSG contributes in part, clearer guidelines on the share of costs is helpful.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how any additional high needs funding would be targeted to good and outstanding primary and secondary schools that provide an excellent education for a larger than average number of pupils with high needs, or to support the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools 	<p>No specific targeting of funding to good or outstanding schools has been included as the majority of our schools are good and outstanding. The high needs budgets set out clearly for the Schools Forum (and referenced in the consultation document) and the SEND strategy referenced in the consultation, discussed at the Schools Forum and in consultation roadshows clearly demonstrates the high needs budgets are supporting an inclusion model wherever possible. Outside of the Schools Forum a number of inclusion meetings have also taken place to take inclusion forward and a pilot in the Aylesbury vale area has been launched for SEN officers to work with schools and support them being more inclusive.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> examples of schools that illustrate how the local authority would support such inclusive practice are also useful 	<p>New ARP places have been agreed at least one school in Buckinghamshire to help meet need.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> details of the impact of the proposed transfer on individual schools' budgets as a result of the reduction in the available funding to be distributed through the local schools funding formula 	<p>As part of the illustration of the impact on schools of a decision to transfer funding from the schools block to high needs block, two models were included. Model 2 was a proxy for a full transfer and Model 3 was a proxy for no transfer. This was clearly illustrated by different types of schools and the indicative funding rates clearly set out in the appendix to the consultation document.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extent to which schools more generally support the proposal, including the outcome of local school consultations 	<p>The local consultation was held for two weeks between 6th and 19th November 2017 and was accompanied by five roadshows attended by more than 130 school representatives. The analysis of the overall response to the question on schools block transfer is set out in the consultation analysis appendix.</p>

ⁱ <https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/s104497/High%20Needs%20Block%20Budgets.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=4306>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/s92362/Appendix%201%20-%20DSG%202017-18%20Report.pdf> section J

^{iv} <https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=124&Mid=9225&Ver=4> Item 12