



Schools Forum agenda

Date: Tuesday 10 October 2023

Time: 1.30 pm

Venue: The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF

Membership:

Ms S Barcock-Wood (National Education Union), Mrs G Bull (Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School), Ms R Chapman (Chiltern Wood School), A Cranmer (Cabinet Member-Buckinghamshire Council), Ms J Divers (Turnfurlong Junior School), Ms S Fahey (Brindley House School), Ms J Freeman (Rye Liaison Group), Mr A Gillespie (Burnham Grammar School), Ms C Glasgow (NASUWT), Mr E Hillyard (Holmer Green Senior School), Ms N Lovegrove (Early Years Representative), Mrs J Male (Alfriston School), Mr R Peters (The Misbourne School), Ms J Robertson (Brushwood Junior School), Mrs D Rutley (Aspire PRU), Mr K Shabbir (Cressex Community School), Mr A Sherwell (Thomas Hickman Primary Combined School), Ms F Smalley (The Sandcastle Nursey- Early Years), Ms E Stewart (Stoke Mandeville Combined School), Mr B Taylor (Special School Representative) and Ms J Watson (Lent Rise School)

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Agenda Item

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Schools Forum minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on Tuesday 21 March 2023 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 1.35 pm and concluding at 3.00 pm.

Members present

Mrs G Bull, A Cranmer, Ms J Freeman, Mr A Gillespie, Ms C Glasgow, Mr E Hillyard, Mr R Peters, Ms J Robertson, Mrs D Rutley, Mr A Sherwell and Ms E Stewart

Others in attendance

C Beevers, G Drawmer, S James, Ms C Marriott and E Williams

Apologies

Ms J Antrobus, Ms S Barcock-Wood, J Carter, Ms R Chapman, Ms N Lovegrove, Mrs J Male, Ms J Pearce, Mr K Shabbir, Ms F Smalley and Mr B Taylor

Agenda Item

1 Election of Chairman & Vice- Chairman

The meeting was informed that, as had been decided at the last meeting, there were co-chairs of the Schools Forum for the next round of meetings. Gaynor Bull would chair this meeting and the next meeting on 27 June 2023. Andy Gillespie would chair the meetings to be held on 10 October 2023 and 5 December 2023.

Janice Freeman had been appointed as the Deputy Chairman of the Schools Forum.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Bradley Taylor, Jo Pearce, Jinna Male, Francesca Elam, Julia Antrobus, Sarah Barcock-Wood, Nicky Lovegrove and Khaiam Shabbir.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was noted that one action from the Minutes relating to the terms of reference of the Schools Forum Funding Group would be reported to the June 2023 meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2023 be approved as a correct record.

5 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022-23

The Schools Forum received an update report on the current forecast for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget for the 2022-23 financial year, based on the spend to 31 January 2023 (period 10). The overall Dedicated Schools Budget was currently projected to overspend by £0.29m as at the end of January, an adverse movement of £0.57m compared with the previous reported position.

The early years block was projected to underspend by £1.3m mainly due to reduced take up of places for 3 and 4 year olds. The reduced take up reflected children taking less hours and changes in working patterns of parents post Covid. The take up of places by vulnerable 2 year olds, however, had increased from 62% to 92%. It was likely that a proportion of this underspend would be clawed back by the DfE during the 2023-24 financial year. The amount clawed back would be determined by the number of children taking up places as at the January pupil census date.

A summary of the current forecast against the high needs block was attached as an appendix to the report. High needs budgets were forecast to overspend by £1.4m, an increase of £0.6m compared with the previous report. The forecast took into account the unallocated contingency of £1.7m and included pressures against the budgets for both independent and Buckinghamshire maintained and academy special schools, personal budgets and mainstream top ups, alternative provision and integrated therapies. The Schools block was currently projected to break even. The Central schools services block was projected to overspend by £0.13m due to pressures against the budget for Premature Retirement Costs as costs continue to exceed the available budget. There are also small overspends against the Admissions Team and the budget for copyright licences.

The meeting was informed that any variance against the DSG was to be managed through the DSG reserve which was ringfenced. The DSG deficit at the start of the 2022-23 financial year was £3.57m, the current forecast would cause the deficit to increase to £3.85m. Other adjustments to the DSG reserve including the drawdown of Growth Fund to fund pupils in new and expending schools, and a positive DfE adjustment to the Early Years block for 2021- 22, resulted in a forecast deficit of £4.12m at the end of the current financial year.

RESOLVED –

That the Revenue Budget monitoring forecast as at the end of January 2023 (Period 10) be NOTED.

6 Report of the Schools Specific Contingency Panel

The Schools Forum received an update report on the decisions of the Schools Specific Contingency Panel meeting held on 28 February 2023 for the FY 2022-23.

The budget for 2022-23 was £437,839 based on balances rolled forward from previous years. There was no de-delegation from schools in 2022-23. The group had considered applications from 13 schools totalling £421,974 and had agreed payments of £103,906. There was one claim where further evidence was required and this had been deferred to a future meeting.

All schools have been notified of the outcome of their requests. No appeal requests have been received, the Schools Forum would be updated of the outcome of any appeals in due course. Appendix 1 detailed anonymised applications and payments agreed for this financial year. Similar to previous years, successful bids included unforeseen staffing costs, pupil premium for traveller children and costs associated with additional pupils up to a maximum of 7/12 AWPU. Unsuccessful applications were those in which the case had not been made according to the Terms of Reference.

The meeting was also informed that the Schools Forum had previously agreed an amendment to the Terms of Reference for the contingency fund to enable claims for energy costs to be considered if schools are projecting an overall deficit for the financial year and were able to demonstrate that high energy costs had contributed to that deficit. 3 schools had submitted a claim for assistance with energy costs and 1 school had highlighted energy costs as a contributory factor in its forecast deficit but had not included energy costs within the claim. It was proposed that the minimum amount to be rolled forward for 2023-24 contingency claims should be £250,000 therefore the maximum amount to be available for the energy claims process would be £78,000 should the other unresolved claim be successful. Claims would be paid out at a maximum of 50% of the amount claimed however if the eligible claims exceeded the amount available the amounts would be scaled down.

The Forum considered the proposal for updating the terms of reference for the Schools Specific Contingency Fund, Appendix 3 to the report, and it was agreed that mention should be made in the TOR of what schools were doing to mitigate costs including taking a proactive approach to energy efficiency measures.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the outcomes of the Schools Specific Contingency Fund meeting be NOTED.
- (2) That the proposed to hold a further meeting in May 2023 to consider claims for exception energy costs be AGREED.
- (3) That the updated terms of reference for the Schools Specific Contingency Fund for 2023-24 (Appendix 3) be AGREED.

7 High Needs Budget 2023-24

The Forum received a report on the allocation of the High Needs Block in 2023-24, which was £123.5m, an increase of £11.5m compared to 2022-23. The funding settlement included an additional allocation of £5.059m. Local authorities are required to pass on a 3.4% funding increase to maintained special and alternative

provision (AP) schools, and special and AP academies (including free schools), based on the number of places being funded in 2022 to 2023. Local authorities must separately identify these allocations for the schools and pay them directly to the school, or in the case of academies and free schools to the academy trust. The payments must be made in full during the financial year 2023 to 2024. This indicated that the payment of additional grant was outside of the banded top up values and was applied both to place and top up funding. The estimated cost of this increase was £1.6m.

The report also contained information on the proposed budget, pressures and opportunities that had been taken into account, information on estimated cost pressures and mitigations, and risks and mitigations that would be monitored throughout 2023-24.

Discussions covered a range of issues including on independent sector placements, increases in education personal budgets, increases in the number of children being home schooled and the costs/pressures on the provider who monitored arrangements, EHCP monitoring cost pressures, the increased demand projections for students in Bucks (largely due to housing growth in the north of the county) and how this growth would be funded, and on the profile of placement changes and the DSG Expenditure Review Group. The Forum was also informed that, unfortunately, the bid to Government for a new special school in the county had been unsuccessful. However, the learning from this process would not be lost and it was intended to submit another bid in the coming year.

RESOLVED –

That the updated budget for the High Needs Block in 2023-24 be AGREED.

8 Report of the DSG Expenditure Review Group

The Schools Forum received an update on the DSG Review Group that had met on 2 March 2023 to consider the following agenda items:

- Membership of the Group.
- High Needs Budget 2023-24.
- Early Years Inclusion Fund.
- Delivering Better Value (DBC) in SEND.
- Buckinghamshire Context and the next steps, including on the Buckinghamshire DSG Recovery Plan, which was in line with the 10 priorities highlighted by the DfE research and the local authority guidance on sustainable high needs systems. A data grant of £45,000 had been received in order to support the data preparation for the DBV Diagnostic, which needed to be spent by 31 March 2024.

The following issues were raised during discussions:

- How best to get further representation from Head Teachers (primary and secondary) onto the Group.
- Feedback on use of the inclusion fund.

- On how many of the schools struggling with high needs were also part of the fair funding group.
- On ordinary available provision, although it was explained that any plan(s) had to be deliverable locally.
- That it was anticipated that information on the diagnostics would be available next term, with further information then available by the end of the Summer term.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the update on the work of the DSG Expenditure Review Group be NOTED.
- (2) That the information on the Delivering Better Value (DBC) in the SEND Programme be NOTED.

9 AOB

Three issues were discussed:

- (i) 5% Pay Award for support staff – it was explained that the Senior Appointments and Pay Committee (SAPC) had asked for further information on the whether a 5% pay increase was sufficient and at the same time affordable.
- (ii) Gender Pay Gap reporting – it was explained that schools needed to report back information to the Council, although there was only a requirement if the school had more than 250 employees. The deadline for the Council to collate the information received was 4 April.
- (iii) Energy procurement – it was agreed that information on energy procurement, possible buy out clauses if prices dropped be submitted to members of the School Forum and a report submitted to the next meeting. It would be important for schools to be able to consider this information as part of their budget setting processes.

10 Date of Next Meeting

1.30pm, Tuesday 27 June 2023, The Oculus, The Gateway offices, Aylesbury

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Schools Forum minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on Tuesday 27 June 2023 in The Paralympic Room, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 1.30 pm and concluding at 2.32 pm.

Members present

Ms J Antrobus, Mrs G Bull, Ms R Chapman, A Cranmer, Mr A Gillespie, Ms C Glasgow, Mr E Hillyard, Ms N Lovegrove, Ms J Robertson, Mr A Sherwell, Ms F Smalley and Mr B Taylor

Others in attendance

Ms S Bayliss, C Beevers, J Carter, Ms C Marriott and E Williams

Apologies

Ms S Barcock-wood, G Drawmer, Ms J Freeman, S James, Mrs J Male, Ms J Pearce, Mr R Peters, Mr K Shabbir and Ms E Stewart

Agenda Item

1 **Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

2 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from:

Ms J Freeman
 Ms S Barcock-Wood
 Ms J Pearce
 Mr R Peters
 Mr K Shabbir
 Mrs E Stewart
 Ms J Male
 Mr G Drawmer
 Mr S James

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting would be circulated after the meeting. Members of the School Forum were invited to send any comments on the minutes to Ms C Beevers (Buckinghamshire Council).

Action	Deadline	To Be Actioned By
Minutes to be circulated after the meeting.	ASAP	Ms C Beevers

5 Update from SFFG

Mrs G Bull gave an update on the SFFG in the absence of the SFFG Chairman. The SFFG had looked in detail at the outturn, the schools surplus and deficit balances and the Scheme for Financing Schools. It was noted that the reports on these items, which had been submitted to the Schools Forum, had taken into account the comments received from the SFFG.

6 Terms of Reference for SFFG

Ms E Williams, Head of Finance for Childrens Services (Buckinghamshire Council), gave an overview of the report provided.

Recommendations:

- a) To agree the purpose and meeting frequency of the Schools Forum Funding Group.
- b) To agree that the SFFG is required to meet twice a year, prior to the June and January Schools Forum meetings, with additional meetings if required, for example in response to DfE consultations on the National Funding Formula.

Resolved:

- a) **That the purpose and meeting frequency of the Schools Forum Funding Group as set out in the report be agreed.**
- b) **That the Schools Forum Funding Group be required to meet twice a year, prior to the June and January Schools Forum meetings, with additional meetings if required, for example in response to DfE consultations on the National Funding Formula.**

Action	Deadline	To Be Actioned By
To send out an email listing the memberships of all sub-committees.	ASAP	Ms C Beevers

7 Report of the DSG Spending Review Group

Ms E Williams, Head of Finance for Children's Services (Buckinghamshire Council), gave an overview of the report provided. Ms C Marriott, Head of Integrated SEND (Buckinghamshire Council), also provided an update on the SEND Sufficiency Strategy.

With regards to the SEND Sufficiency Strategy, Ms C Marriott advised that work was underway to refresh the data which informed the Strategy. Once this had been completed, the updated data would be submitted to the SEND Sufficiency Impact Group so that the Strategy could be refreshed in line with the updated data. The refreshed Strategy would then be shared with the Schools Forum.

In the discussion on the Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme, the importance of ensuring that there would be KPIs, which were focused on improving the outcomes for children and young people with SEND, was mentioned. Furthermore, the Chairman stressed the need to ensure that the progress, which was already being made to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND, would continue alongside the Programme.

Recommendations:

- a) To note the final outturn position for the High Needs Block in 2022-23.
- b) To note the update on the SEND Sufficiency Strategy.
- c) To note the information on the DBV Programme, including the full introductory pack, and the expected requirements of the DBV Diagnostic phase.

Resolved:

- a) **That the final outturn position for the High Needs Block in 2022-23 be noted.**
- b) **That the update on the SEND Sufficiency Strategy be noted.**
- c) **That the information on the DBV Programme, including the full introductory pack, and the expected requirements of the DBV Diagnostic phase be noted.**

8 Final Outturn Report 2022-23

Ms E Williams, Head of Finance for Children's Services (Buckinghamshire Council), gave an overview of the report provided.

Recommendation:

Schools Forum is asked to note the final outturn position against the Dedicated Schools Grant in 2022-23 and the impact on the DSG reserve.

Resolved:

That the final outturn position against the Dedicated Schools Grant in 2022-23 and the impact on the DSG reserve be noted.

9 Schools Revenue Balances

Ms E Williams, Head of Finance for Children’s Services (Buckinghamshire Council), gave an overview of the report provided.

Recommendation:

To note the surplus and deficit balances for maintained schools at 31 March 2023.

Resolved:

That the surplus and deficit balances for maintained schools at 31 March 2023 be noted.

10 Buckinghamshire Scheme for Financing Schools

Jonathan Carter, Schools Accountant (Buckinghamshire Council), gave an overview of the report.

Members of the School Forum were invited to send any comments that they had on the Scheme, which was attached at appendix 1 to the report, to Ms C Beevers (Buckinghamshire Council) within the next week. Any comments would be taken into account before the Scheme was published. Members were advised that other than changes to update names, titles etc there were no major changes. The revised Scheme now took into account all of the latest guidance from the DfE.

Action	Deadline	To Be Actioned By
Members of the School Forum to send any comments that they have on the Scheme for Financing Schools to Ms C Beevers	Within a week of the meeting	Members of the Schools Forum (if Members of the Schools Forum have any comments)

11 Early Years - increase in hourly rates (as announced in the Budget)

Ms E Williams, Head of Finance for Children’s Services (Buckinghamshire Council), gave an overview of the report provided. Ms S Bayliss, Early Years Manager (Buckinghamshire Council), also provided an update following a recent Government announcement regarding the early years funding.

Ms S Bayliss, Early Years Manager (Buckinghamshire Council), explained that the Early Years Forum had met and discussed how any increase awarded to early years funding should be applied to the current Early Years Single Funding Formula. A proposal was made to retain the amount as of April in all funding elements and to apply any increase, less the < 5% the Locally Authority was permitted to retain for central costs, through to the base rate only. This proposal was unanimously agreed to. Ms S Bayliss advised that the Schools Forum were being asked to ratify that decision and to agree that if funding announcements were made for implementation

in September 2023, it should be delegated to the Early Years Forum to determine how that would be applied in the Early Years Single Funding Formula (in line with DfE guidance). The Early Years Forum would meet again in August if new conditions were imposed in the DfE operational guidance expected in July.

Ms S Bayliss advised that the Government had announced last week that Local Authorities were not actually required to consult on how the increase should be applied and could use it as a supplementary grant and decide themselves how it should be applied. However, Ms S Bayliss advised that the Local Authority felt it was important to consult with and be in agreement with the Early Years Forum as to how the increase should be applied.

Recommendations:

- a) To note the funding update for Early Years entitlements following the Spring Budget 2023.
- b) To agree that if funding announcements are made for implementation in September 2023, it should be delegated to the Early Years Forum to determine how that is applied in the Early Years Single Funding Formula (in line with DfE guidance).

Resolved:

- a) **That the funding update for Early Years entitlements following the Spring Budget 2023 be noted.**
- b) **That if funding announcements are made for implementation in September 2023, it should be delegated to the Early Years Forum to determine how that is applied in the Early Years Single Funding Formula (in line with DfE guidance).**

12 Report from the Schools Specific Contingency Panel

Ms E Williams, Head of Finance for Children's Services (Buckinghamshire Council), gave an overview of the report provided.

Recommendation:

To note the outcomes of the Schools Specific Contingency Panel meeting held in May 2023 to review applications for support with energy costs.

Resolved:

That the outcomes of the Schools Specific Contingency Panel meeting held in May 2023 to review applications for support with energy costs be noted.

13 AOB

Ms C Beevers (Buckinghamshire Council) advised that an email had just been received from the Trade Union representative with an item on de-delegation. The Chairman suggested that this could be considered by the De-Delegation Committee which is due to meet in the Autumn.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Schools Forum, thanked Ms E Williams, Head of

Finance for Children's Services (Buckinghamshire Council), for all her hard work and contributions over the last few years and wished her well for the future.

14 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 10 October 2023 at 1.30pm

The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF.



Report to Schools Forum

Date: 10th October 2023

Title: Membership 2023-24

Author: Falil Onikoyi, Head of Finance – Children’s Services

Recommendations:

- a) **To review the actual representation to ensure the various sectors are line with the current constitution and to seek additional members where necessary.**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this agenda item is to review the membership of schools forum to ensure it is in line with the pupil numbers in academies and maintained schools, and to confirm that no changes are needed to the constitution.
- 1.2 Elections will then need to be held to seek representatives for vacancies on the schools forum.

2 Constitution

- 2.1 The Schools Forum constitution has been reviewed and it is proposed that no changes are needed.
- 2.2 The Schools Forum’s constitution sets out the rules for schools forum membership and this is set in line with the DfE’s guidance on schools forum structure.
- 2.3 DfE guidance is that the split of membership for maintained and academy schools should be reflective of the proportion of pupils in each sector. Within Buckinghamshire it has been further agreed that the split of membership should also reflect local circumstances, namely to clearly set out secondary upper and secondary grammar schools representation.
- 2.4 The current constitution details the school membership of schools forum as follows:
- i. One maintained nursery school member (either head teacher or governor);
 - ii. Three special school members
 - a. Two maintained special school members (preferably one head teacher and one governor);

- b. One academy school member (either head teacher or governor);
- iii. Eight secondary school members
 - a. One maintained secondary school
 - b. Four academy secondary schools (preferably two head teacher and two governors);
 - c. 3 academy grammars
- iv. Two pupil referral unit (PRU) members (preferably one head teacher and one governor);
- v. Ten primary school members
 - a. Two maintained infant school members (preferably one head teacher and one governor);
 - b. Two maintained junior school members (preferably one head teacher and one governor);
 - c. Three maintained combined school members (preferably two head teachers and one governor);
 - d. Three academy school members (preferably two head teachers and one governor).

3 Review of Current Membership – mainstream schools

3.1 In order to ensure that the membership of schools forum is representative of pupil numbers in each type of school have been reviewed and compared to the current constitution. The outcome of that review is summarised in the table below.

Review of pupil numbers and Schools Forum membership: Based on January 2023 Census Data

Schools by Type and Pupil Numbers				Membership Based on Pupil Numbers		Current Constitution		Current Members	
School Type	Total Schools	Pupil Numbers	% of Total Pupils	Maintained	Academy	Maintained	Academy	Maintained	Academy
Primary Maintained	139	33353	38%	7		7			
Primary Academy	46	13481	15%		3		3		
Secondary Maintained	5	6117	7%	1		1			
Secondary Academy/Free/UTC (Upper)	19	17692	20%		4		4		
Secondary Academy (Grammar)	13	16943	19%		3		3		
Sub Total	222	87586	100%	8	10	8	10	0	0
Nursery Maintained	2	249		1		1			
Special Maintained	8	1291		2		2			
Special Academy	2	385			1		1		
Pupil Referral Unit	3	83		1	1	1	1		
Total	237	89594		12	12	12	12	0	0

- 3.2 The data indicates that the current constitution is representative of pupil numbers. Currently we have not been able to confirm the current membership, this needs to be reviewed to see if further sector representatives are needed.

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Report to Schools Forum

Date: 10th October 2023

Title: National Funding Formula and Operational Guidance 2024-25

Author: Falil Onikoyi, Head of Finance – Children’s Services

Recommendations:

- a. To note the information contained in this report.
- b. To agree the principles to be applied for the 2024-25 local funding formula.
- c. To agree any consultation to take place over the autumn term for the potential to move funding between Blocks.
- d. To note that the local funding formula for 2024-25 will be brought back to Schools Forum for consideration in December.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update Schools Forum on Department for Education’s (DfE) Operational Guidance on schools’ revenue funding for the 2024-25 financial year and to agree principles for the local funding formula in 2024-25.

2. Background

- 2.1. In August 2023, the DfE updated the published, the Schools Revenue Funding 2024 to 2025 Operational Guide. This guide is provided to help local authorities, and their schools forums, to plan the local implementation of the funding system for the 2024 to 2025 financial year.
- 2.2. The guidance confirms that in 2024 to 2025, as in previous years, each local authority will continue to set a local schools funding formula, in consultation with local schools.
- 2.3. In July 2021, the DfE also published a consultation on proposals for completing the reforms of the funding system, whereby individual school’s budgets would be set directly through one single national formula, rather than local funding formulae. The DfE is taking a gradual approach to transition to the single, national formula. For 224-25, each local authority will continue to set a local schools funding formula, in consultation with local schools, with local authorities expected to continue to be required to bring their own formulae closer to the schools NFF. These proposals do not apply to Buckinghamshire because it already mirrors the NFF.

3. Schools Block – key changes for 2024-25

3.1. Key changes in the operational guidance are:

- a) introducing a new formulaic approach to allocating split sites funding in the NFF in 2024 to 2025, replacing the previous locally determined split sites factor.
- b) rolling the 2023 to 2024 mainstream schools additional grant (MSAG) into the NFF by:
 - adding an amount representing what schools receive through the grant into their baselines,
 - adding the value of the lump sum, basic per pupil rates and free school meals Ever 6 (FSM6) parts of the grant onto the respective factors in the NFF
 - uplifting the minimum per pupil values by the mainstream schools additional grant's basic per-pupil values and an additional amount which represents the average amount of funding schools receive from the FSM6 and lump sum parts of the grants
- c) increasing NFF factor values (on top of the amounts we have added for the mainstream schools additional grant) by:
 - 2.4% to the following factors: basic entitlement, low prior attainment (LPA), FSM6, income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI), English as an additional language (EAL), mobility, sparsity and the lump sum
 - 2.4% to the minimum per pupil levels (MPPL)
 - 0.5% to the funding floor
 - 1.6% to the free school meals (FSM) factor value with the gross domestic product (GDP) deflator forecast for 2024 to 2025
 - 0% on the premises factors, except for: (i) Private Finance Initiative (PFI) which has increased by Retail Prices Index excluding mortgage interest payments (RPIX) which is 10.4% for the year to April 2023 and (ii) split sites funding which has been formularised
- d) introducing, for the first time, a methodology for calculating and allocating funding for falling rolls.

3.2. The department has confirmed the following aspects of the high needs NFF for 2024 to 2025:

- a) the funding floor is set at 3% so each local authority will see an increase of at least 3% per head of their 2 to 18 population (as estimated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS))
- b) the gains limit is set at 5%, allowing local authorities to see gains up to this percentage increase under the formula, again calculated on a per head basis of their 2 – 18 population.

3.3. There will be a separate pay grant for teachers' pay made to cover pay increases in 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025. Further details on the TPAG can be found at teachers' pay additional grant: 2023 to 2024.

- a) Minimum per pupil levels (MPPLs) will remain mandatory, at the new NFF values.
- b) Local authorities have the freedom to set the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) in local formulae between +0.0% and +0.5% per pupil.
- c) Local authorities continue to be able to transfer up to 0.5% of their schools block to other blocks of the DSG, with schools forum approval. A disapplication is required for transfers above 0.5%, or any amount without schools forum approval; this applies to any transfers even if the minister agreed an amount in previous years.

4. Schools Block - Principles to be applied to the local funding formula in 2024-25

4.1. Last year Schools Forum agreed the following principles to be adopted for 2023-24 within the over-arching principle that the local funding formula reflects the NFF:

- a) Adopt the National Funding Formula factors.
- b) Adopt the Minimum Per Pupil funding levels at the values defined in the NFF and prorate (scale) of all other factors in the formula to match the available allocation of funding from the DfE. (In 2021-22 Buckinghamshire formula factor rates are in line with the published NFF values.)
- c) Set a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) at +0.5%.
- d) Use capping of gains per pupil to pay for the cost of protecting schools where the formula reduces their budget by more than the MFG of 0.5%.

4.2. Schools Forum is asked to confirm the principles for the local funding formula.

4.3. Schools Forum is asked to confirm any consultation that needs to take place during the autumn term. A consultation would need to take place for:

- Any proposal to move funding between DSG blocks – no proposal to move funding between blocks has been brought forward to this meeting.
- Proposals for De-delegation – a separate report on this agenda includes a proposal to consult with the Maintained Schools Sub-Committee on de-delegation for 2024-25.

5. High Needs Block – key changes for 2024-25

- 5.1. The operational aspects of high needs funding and the process for finalising local authority allocations of high needs funding and institutions' allocations of place funding remain largely unchanged from 2023 to 2024.
- 5.2. The funding floor factor in the high needs national funding formula for 2024 to 2025 provides for every local authority to receive an underlying increase of at least 8.5% per pupil. The provisional high needs allocation for Buckinghamshire in 2023-24 was £114.73 million, an increase of £7.4 million compared to the previous year.
- 5.3. The minimum funding guarantee for special schools remains at 0% in 2024-25 and therefore a disapplication request will be required if funding for any special school falls below the guaranteed level. The approved disapplication for 2021-22 was only for one year however, this has been rolled forward and therefore a further request will be required to support the agreed transitional arrangements for the implementation of banded funding across our special schools. The financial modelling to support this will be brought to the next meeting.

6. Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)

- 6.1. The CSSB continues to provide funding for local authorities to carry out central functions on behalf of maintained schools and academies, comprising two distinct elements:
 - ongoing responsibilities
 - historic commitments
- 6.2. Local authorities will continue to be protected so that the maximum per-pupil year-on-year reduction in funding for ongoing responsibilities is -2.5%, while the year-on-year gains cap will be set at the highest affordable rate of 6.45%.
- 6.3. In 2022-23 historic commitments funding was reduced by 20%. The indicative impact on the historic commitment allocation for Buckinghamshire Council was a reduction of approximately £631k and savings proposals will be brought to Schools Forum in December and January as part of the budget setting process to ascertain the impact of any additional reductions announced for 2024-25, and consequential savings required.

7. DSG Deficit Balances

- 7.1. Starting in 2020 to 2021, DfE extended the rules under the DSG conditions of grant, they now provide, that any local authority with an overall deficit on its DSG account at the end of the 2020 to 2021 financial year, or whose DSG surplus has substantially reduced during the year, must cooperate with the department in handling that situation by:

- providing information as and when requested by the department about its plans for managing its DSG account in the 2021 to 2022 financial year and subsequently.
- providing information as and when requested by the department about pressures and potential savings on its high needs budget.
- meeting with officials of the department as and when they request to discuss the local authority's plans and financial situation.
- keeping the schools' forum updated regularly about the local authority's DSG account and plans for handling it, including high needs pressures and potential savings.
- the guidance in relation to managing DSG deficits remains in place.

7.2. DSG management plans should be discussed with the school's forum on a regular basis and should set out the local authority's plans for bringing the DSG spend back into balance. The DfE expects the DSG management plan to be co-produced. Relevant leads in the finance and special education needs (SEN) areas should sign off each version, (with sign off to be at least at assistant director level). Buckinghamshire's participation in the DBV SEN Programme is part of the authority's strategy to help manage the DSG deficit reserve balance, which is experiencing pressures in its High Needs Block.

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Report to Schools Forum

Date: 10th October 2023

Title: De-Delegation Proposals 2024-25

Author: Falil Onikoyi, Head of Finance – Children’s Services

Recommendations:

To consider and agree the proposals for de-delegation in 2024-25 based on the recommendations of the Maintained Schools Committee.

Reason for decision: to agree items included in de-delegation and review rates for 2024-25.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of this report is to set out the proposals for existing de-delegations and former ESG funded services de-delegations 2024-25 for consideration by Schools Forum. The DfE Operational Guide published in July 2023 makes no changes to the De-delegation definition or guidance. The guidance includes provision to allow the de-delegation of funds to support core and additional school improvement activity.

2. “Existing” De-delegated Services

2.1. It is recommended that de-delegation for “existing” de-delegated services across primary and secondary schools should continue as follows:

- Contingency fund for schools in deficit - It is recommended that there is no de-delegation in 2024-25 due to the amount that has been rolled forward from previous years. This is to be reviewed on an annual basis.
- Contingency for deficits of closing schools – it is recommended that there is no de-delegation in 2024-25 and that this should be reviewed on an annual basis.
- Trade union facilities – this is currently de-delegated at 70p per pupil however, there is a need to review the funding arrangements to align with the activity, which will be undertaken as part of the budget allocation.
- Supply cover for small schools – it is recommended that there is no de-delegation in 2024-25 and that this should be reviewed on an annual basis. This is due to the amounts rolled forward from previous years.

3. Former ESG funded Services

3.1. It is recommended that the current rates for de-delegation of former ESG funded services should be reviewed as part of the 2024-25 allocation process to consider the impact of cost increases. The current rates are as follows:

- Finance support for schools in financial difficulties – £2.75 per pupil primary and secondary/ £10 per place Special and PRU
- Educational Visits Service - £1 per pupil for primary and secondary/ £4 per pupil Special and PRU

4. School Improvement Activity

4.1. Similarly, it is recommended that de-delegation for school improvement activity, currently £2.40 per pupil for 2023-24 is reviewed for 2024-25.

5. Recommended De-Delegation 2024-25

5.1. The total recommended de-delegation for 2024-25 should be reviewed and set at the minimum values as summarised in the following table reflecting 2023-24 rates:

Table1 - 2023-24 De-delegation rates

Service	Primary/Secondary per pupil (£)	Special School per Place (£)
Contingency Fund for schools in deficit	-	-
Contingency for deficits of closing schools	-	-
Trade Union Facilities	0.70	-
Supply cover for small schools	-	-
Finance Support for schools in financial difficulties	2.75	10.00
Educational Visits Service	1.00	4.00
School Improvement	2.40	-
Total proposed de-delegation per pupil/place	6.15	14.00



Report to Schools Forum

Date: 10th October 2023

Title: Dedicated Schools Budget – Month 5 Forecast Outturn 2023-24

Author and contact officer: Falil Onikoyi, Head of Finance (Children’s Services)

Recommendations: Schools Forum is asked to note the Forecast outturn position against the Dedicated Schools Grant in 2023-24 and the impact on the DSG reserve.

Reason for decision: For Information

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1. This report updates Schools Forum on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation, forecast outturn at Period 5 for 2023-24, the DSG Reserve, and the impact of 2023-24 outturn on the 2024-25 financial year.

2. DSG Allocation 2023-24

2.1. The final DSG allocation for 2023-24 is as follows:

Table 1: DSG Allocation 2023-24

DSG Block	Allocation prior to Academy Recoupment and other Deductions £'000	Less: Academy Recoupment and other Deductions £'000	Final allocation After Recoupment and Other Deductions £'000s
Schools block	413,865	240,201	173,664
High needs block	123,578	8,850	114,728
Early years block	37,022	0	37,022
Central school services block	4,935	0	4,935
Total DSG allocation 2023-24	579,399	249,051	330,348

3. Forecast Outturn 2023-24

3.1. The forecast outturn position as at August for 2023-2 is a net overspend of 1.281m million against the overall Dedicated Schools Budget. This is an adverse movement of £1.228m from the previous months position. The reasons for the variance are summarised in the following paragraphs.

Table 2: Forecast Outturn 2023-24

	Budget £'000	Actual £'000	Forecast Out-turn £'000	Forecast Variance £'000	Prior Month Forecast variance £'000	Variance Move- ment £'000
Schools block	414,418	33,316	414,418	0	0	0
High needs block	114,655	55,076	115,756	1,101	-155	1,256
Early years block	37,070	20,278	37,070	0	0	0
Central block	4,935	2,598	5,114	180	208	-28
DSG Total	571,077	111,269	572,358	1,281	53	1,228

3.2. Underspend against the pupil growth fund of £0.782m for 2022-23 was rolled forward into earmarked reserves and is expected to be drawn down during 2023-24. The agreed plan for growth funding in 2023-34 requires utilisation of the underspend from 2022-23.

3.3. The **High Needs Block** is forecasting £1.101 million overspend at the end of the year against the budget of £114.65 million. This is a adverse movement of £1.256m compared with the previous forecast. The main reason for the overspend is summarised as follows:

- 1) **Pupils with EHCPs** - £0.120m overspend
 - **Post-16 spend** – underspend of £0.4m
 - Decisions re Continuing Health Care contributions not always clear or timely and therefore health income not fully forecast during the year.
 - Data quality – including data on placements in FE Colleges
 - **Early Years** - £0.52m overspend
 - Increased demand for EHCPs from the age group
- 2) **Pupils without EHCP** – overspend of £1.417m
 - **School age children HNBF** - £410k overspend
 - **Early Years** - £1,007k overspend
- 3) **Integrated Therapies** – underspend of £0.497m

4) **Specialist Teaching**– underspend of £0.132m

3.4. The **Central Block** is forecasting £0.180m explained as follows:

- 1) **Appeals & selection** - £0.143k overspend.
- 2) **Historic Pension obligations** - £0.080m overspend.

3.5. Both **The Early Years** and **Schools** block are currently forecast to be in line with budgets.

4. DSG Reserve

4.1. Any variance against the DSG is to be managed through the DSG reserve which is ringfenced. At the end of the 2022-23 financial year the council had a deficit of £1.653m against its DSG reserve. This was a reduction of £1.913m in the council's DSG deficit compared with the previous year. It is important to note that this includes the transfers to reserves from the Schools Block (para 3.2 above) and an underspend against the early years block, which may be subject to clawback.

Table 3: Summary of DSG Reserve 31 March 2023

DSG Reserve - Surplus/(deficit)	£'000
Opening Balance 2022-23	(3,566)
Recovery Actions agreed by Schools Forum	
Unallocated Historic Commitment funding to hold against pressures in future years as part of agreed savings plan	241
Balance following agreed Actions	(3,325)
Drawdown from Reserves 2022-23	
Drawdown of last years reserve - Growth	(1,681)
Contingency Payments	(104)
Total Drawdowns from Reserve	(1,785)
Contributions to Reserves 2022-23	
Growth Fund underspend - committed in 2023-24	783
Early Years cash adjustments - additional income for 2021-22	497
Total contribution to reserve	1,280
Contribution to reserve for in year Underspend	2,176
Closing Balance 2022-23 - Surplus/(Deficit)	(1,653)

4.2. The current projections (excluding other adjustments for school's balances) is for an increase in the deficit on the DSG Reserve to £2.934m. A series of management actions, in addition to existing plans, will need to be developed to mitigate the pressures.

Figure 1: DSG Reserve 2018-19 to 2022-23



5. Impact on 2024-25

- 5.1. The budget for 2024-25 includes an increase through the mainstream schools national funding formula (NFF) which is increasing by 2.7% per pupil, compared to 2023-24. However, Buckinghamshire's allocation has not been notified at the time of writing and will be communicated at the next forum.
- 5.2. The Council is engaging with the Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme, which will support us to further understand trends in expenditure and develop plans for a more sustainable high needs system. More detail is provided in the report of the DSG Spending Review Group.
- 5.3. The government has extended the statutory override on DSG deficits until 2025-26. Latest information from the DfE confirms the intention that this will be a one-off extension. This continues to be a risk because the deficit is forecast to increase.