

SCHOOLS FORUM
6th December 2012

SECTION 251: COMPARISON OF LOCAL AUTHORITY SPENDING 2012/13

Introduction

- 1 This report informs the Schools Forum of the information published in September by the Department for Education (DfE), based on the section 251 returns for all Local Authorities (LA) and giving the planned expenditure comparison for 2012/13.

Background

2. Under Section 251 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, the Secretary of State is obliged to publish comparative details of every LA's expenditure on education and social care.

Section 251: Comparison of Budgeted Expenditure by LAs

3. Benchmarking data on LA expenditure was published by the DfE in September. This consisted of a number of tables, all of which are available on the DfE website or from the Children's Services Finance Team should members of Schools Forum wish to study the detail. The DfE tables show both gross and net budgeted expenditure per pupil for each LA in respect of all lines included in the Section 251 Budget 2012/13 Return. The net (or gross) budgeted expenditure for education services is calculated by dividing the net planned expenditure by the total full time equivalent for all pupils aged 3 to 19 on roll, including those three and four year olds in private, voluntary and independent settings, whose places were funded by the LA. For non education services the population aged 0-17 is used.
4. A further table published by the DfE gives year on year comparisons for certain lines on the Section 251 return.
5. As in 2011/12 the data has been presented for schools forum showing the trend from 2007/08 (where available) to 2012/13 compared with the national average for all authorities and with the average for Wiltshire's Children's Services statistical neighbours. The data is shown both as data tables and graphically in Appendix 1. It is hoped that showing the data in this format will help to identify any trends as well as areas where Wiltshire is similar or different from other authorities.
6. For the purposes of this analysis Wiltshire's statistical neighbours are:

Shropshire
Worcestershire
Hampshire
West Berkshire
Oxfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Suffolk
Somerset
Dorset
Gloucestershire

7. For some tables within Appendix 1 data has only been captured on the return since 2008/09.

Analysis of the tables

Schools Budget

The main findings in relation to the Schools Budget are that:

8. Funding levels – Wiltshire has the lowest Guaranteed Unit of Funding of the 11 LAs in the group, this is the per-pupil amount used in the DSG calculation and therefore the level of funding coming in to Wiltshire is lower than its comparator authorities. The range is £4,593 (Wiltshire) to £4,891 (West Berkshire). In comparison to this, the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) per pupil delegated to Wiltshire Schools is the 5th highest in the group indicating that a higher proportion of funding is delegated in Wiltshire than some comparator authorities.
9. Wiltshire has 17% of primary schools and 8% of secondary schools receiving the MFG. The range within the comparator group is 2% to 67% for primary schools and 0 to 40% for secondary schools. One special school in Wiltshire receives the MFG and the range across the group is 0 to 42%.
10. Wiltshire is 8th out of the 11 comparator authorities for SEN spend retained centrally. This is a significant movement from previous years when Wiltshire benchmarked high for these services.
11. For expenditure on Behaviour Support Wiltshire is in line with statistical neighbours.

LA Funded Services

12. Wiltshire still spends above the national average and the average for statistical neighbours on LA funded SEN services which include the Psychology Service, Speech and Language Therapy, Statutory SEN and administration and management.
13. Expenditure on School Improvement has decreased in Wiltshire in 2012-13 and has moved closer to that of other authorities. Wiltshire has prioritised investment in narrowing attainment gaps within its business plan for 2011/12 and 2012/13.

Proposal

14. Schools Forum is invited to note this report.

CAROLYN GODFREY
Director, Department for Children and Education

Unpublished documents relied upon in the production of this Report: None

Report Author: Elizabeth Williams, Head of Finance
Telephone 01225 713675
Email elizabeth.williams@wiltshire.gov.uk