

School Improvement Services 2022-23 – National and Local Consultation

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Schools Forum with the consultation response to the Department for Education's consultation '*Reforming how local authorities school improvement functions are funded*'.
2. The consultation response will help to inform Schools Forum decisions for setting the budgets for the 2022-23 financial year.

Background to Consultation

3. The Department for Education (DfE) released its consultation '*Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded*' on the 29th October 2021 with a closing date for responses of the 26th November 2021.
4. Colleagues from the Schools and SEN Working Group met to discuss a response to the consultation which was shared with schools in November 2021. All schools, governors and other stakeholders were encouraged to respond.
5. The two key questions which formed the mainstay of the DfE consultation were to:
 - a. **Remove** the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant (SIMB), which is currently allocated to local authorities to support school improvement activities; and
 - b. **Make provisions** within the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations for the financial year (FY) 2022-23 to allow local authorities to fund all of their school improvement activity (including all core school improvement activities) via de-delegation from schools' budget shares.
6. The SIMB has been provided to local authorities since 2017, to help fulfil their core improvement activities, which was originally based upon the number of maintained schools within the county.
7. The SIMB replaced the previous Education Services Grant (ESG) at a significantly reduced funding value. At this point in time, the DfE introduced an option for Schools Forum to agree to de-delegate funding for 'Education Functions'. From 2017, as a result of the SIMB and re-structuring of the School Improvement service, it was determined that a request for de-delegation would not be pursued.

The Consultation Response

8. The DfE published its [response to the consultation](#) on the 11th January 2022 and has confirmed its position following the consultation.
 - i. **Remove** the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant (SIMB), by 50% in 2022-23 and in full from 2023-24; and
 - ii. **Include** within the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations for the financial year (FY) 2022-23 to allow local authorities to fund all of their school improvement activity (including all core school improvement activities) via de-delegation from schools' budget shares.

9. The consultation was well supported with 565 individual responses, including a significant number of responses from Wiltshire schools, organisations, governors and the Council (over 40 responses and 7% of total responses were from Wiltshire).
10. The key argument put forward by the DfE for the removal of the grant surrounds its use. The DfE considers that the grant has been primarily used for providing improvement functions including early support and challenge to improve school performance rather than for exercising formal intervention powers.
11. There is a considerable argument in favour of early intervention to prevent the need for having to exercise formal intervention, however this appears to have carried little weight for the future funding of the grant. Indeed, the DfE's response concentrates on the grant having been provided in support of 'Schools Causing Concern', in accordance with their guidance of the same name.
12. The DfE provided further narrative to each of the 4 questions to help confirm and justify their decision including.
 - LA's focus more on the non-intervention aspects of their core school improvement activities as they prefer to act before performance deteriorates to the point of requiring formal intervention, and that this overlaps with wider (non-core) school improvement provision
 - the vast majority of respondents indicated their LA provides early support and challenge before intervention becomes necessary
 - the DfE expect MATs to fund school improvement activity via deducting the cost of the activity from their academy budgets, and for this reason, believe it is right to move towards removing this grant and putting school improvement funding on a more even footing
 - whilst de-delegation would put pressure on school budgets, the recent Spending Review has announced an additional £1.6bn of core schools funding in 2022-23 compared to 2021-22, which is on top of the £2.4bn year-on-year increase already announced as part of Spending Review 2019
 - in line with other de-delegation decisions, the Secretary of State will retain the power to approve the de-delegation contrary to the decisions of the Schools Forum, if satisfied that the council had demonstrated such de-delegation was necessary to ensure the council is adequately funded to exercise core school improvement activities
 - the DfE recognise that many respondents would prefer Government continuing to pay this grant, however removal will bring funding arrangements for LA's school improvement activity closer into line with those in the academy sector; and will enable councils to better adjust over time to the Government's longer-term ambition for all schools to become academies within a strong trust
 - the DfE will update the Schools Causing Concern guidance to make clear, core school improvement activity goes beyond exercising of formal intervention powers and provide further clarity over core functions

The Local Consultation

13. To provide Schools Forum with a steer, a local consultation was arranged and presented to the December 2021 meeting of Schools Forum. (The December report is appended to this report, as Appendix 1).
14. A proposal was brought to the meeting and both Governors and Representatives for maintained schools asked if the decision could be deferred to enable further information to be provided and also further consultation with maintained schools, by their representative bodies.
15. The Primary Heads Forum Executive liaised with its members and the Director of Education and Skills arranged two information sessions, including a Q&A opportunity for schools to raise any concerns or queries.
16. A straw-poll was conducted to canvas views from schools at the information sessions to gain a feel for the support for de-delegating funding for School Improvement. The results from the two sessions supported the views expressed in the local consultation held before the December 2021 Schools Forum.
 - *Local Consultation – 86% of respondents in support of de-delegation*
 - *First Information Session – 100% of respondents in support of de-delegation*
 - *Second information Session – 87% of respondents in support of de-delegation*
17. The local consultation process has been very engaging and the opportunity exists for maintained schools to participate in shaping the future of School Improvement services in the future.
18. The consultation for the de-delegation of funding for services for maintained schools must be performed annually. In Wiltshire, this is carried out in the Autumn each year, ready to inform Schools Forum members and for 'in principle' decisions to be taken ahead of the budget setting meeting in January.

Proposals

19. Schools Forum is asked to note the outcome from the DfE's consultation and the local consultation responses in relation to the school improvement services for the 2022-23 financial year.
20. Schools Forum is asked to consider de-delegating funding in support of School Improvement services being provided for the 2022-23 year.

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APPENDIX 1

Wiltshire Council

Schools Forum

9th December 2021

Local Consultation – School Improvement Services 2022-23

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Schools Forum with the results of the recent consultation with maintained schools relating to;
 - removal of the ‘*School improvement, monitoring and brokering grant*’ 2022-23 and 2023-24
2. The survey results will help to inform Schools Forum decisions for setting the budgets for the 2022-23 financial year.

Background to Consultation

3. The Department for Education (DfE) released its consultation ‘*Reforming how local authorities’ school improvement functions are funded*’ in late October 2021 with a closing date for responses of the 26th November 2021.
4. Colleagues from the Schools and SEN Working Group met to discuss a response to the consultation which was shared with schools in November 2021. All schools, governors and other stakeholders were encouraged to respond.
5. The two key questions which formed the mainstay of the DfE consultation were to:
 - c. **Remove** the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant (SIMB), which is currently allocated to local authorities to support school improvement activities; and
 - d. **Make provisions** within the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations for the financial year (FY) 2022-23 to allow local authorities to fund all of their school improvement activity (including all core school improvement activities) via de-delegation from schools’ budget shares.
6. The SIMB has been provided to local authorities since 2017, to help fulfil their core improvement activities, which was based upon the number of maintained schools.
7. The proposals from the DfE are to reduce the grant by 50% in 2022-23, with full removal in the 2023-24 year. Local authorities would have the opportunity to fund improvement services through either de-delegation or on a traded basis.

The Local Consultation

8. In order to provide Schools Forum with a steer, a local consultation was arranged to provide a basket of options, with schools being asked to rank each of the options in order of priority. A copy of the consultation is held at Appendix 1.
9. The consultation was open to all maintained schools and a total of 28 responses were received, which can be broken down as follows.
 - 2 secondary schools
 - 25 primary schools
 - 1 special school

10. Of the schools that responded, the results can be summarised as detailed in the table below;

Scoring	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
First preference	27	0	1	0
Second preference	1	24	2	1
Third preference	0	2	14	8
Fourth preference	0	1	9	16
TOTAL	28	27	26	25

11. This data will inform the decision making around the 2022-23 budget for school improvement services. A breakdown of individual responses is detailed at Appendix 2.

Proposals

12. Schools Forum is asked to note the local consultation responses in relation to the school improvement services for the 2022-23 financial year.

13. Schools Forum is asked to consider the making of an 'in principle' decisions in accordance with the consultation responses as below;

- ***Pending the outcome of DfE consultation, funding to be de-delegated in the 2022-23 year, based upon the removal of 50% of the SIMB grant, using Key Stage Funding Weighting or not.***
- ***In the event of the SIMB grant not being reduced, any de-delegated funding to be passed back to maintained schools.***

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Appendix 1 – Future Funding of School Improvement - Consultation

Please rank the options below in order of priority, where 1 is your preferred option and 4 is your least favoured option?

Options	Detail	Rank																				
Option 1	<p>To retain the status quo.</p> <p>The DfE continue to appropriately fund local authorities for core activity or, to transfer the grant into the central school services block to allow local authorities and Schools Forum to have local control to respond to local need.</p>																					
Option 2	<p>To fully de-delegate funding for School Improvement services.</p> <p>(Maintained schools would de-delegate funding from their school budgets to fund School Improvement services)</p> <p>(Academy schools could access School Improvement services on a fully traded basis.)</p> <p><i>There were 25,072 pupils attending a maintained school in Wiltshire in the October 2021 census. On this basis, de-delegation per pupil could be:</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th colspan="2"><i>NOR no weighting across sector (per pupil)</i></th> <th colspan="2"><i>NOR with Key Stage Funding weighting (per pupil)</i></th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th>Primary</th> <th>Secondary</th> <th>Primary</th> <th>Secondary</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>22-23 (50% grant removed)</td> <td>£9.39</td> <td>£9.39</td> <td>£8.88</td> <td>£13.14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>23-24 and thereafter (100% grant removed)</td> <td>£18.79</td> <td>£18.79</td> <td>£17.76</td> <td>£26.28</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		<i>NOR no weighting across sector (per pupil)</i>		<i>NOR with Key Stage Funding weighting (per pupil)</i>			Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	22-23 (50% grant removed)	£9.39	£9.39	£8.88	£13.14	23-24 and thereafter (100% grant removed)	£18.79	£18.79	£17.76	£26.28	
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Option 3	<p>Cease LA School Improvement Services funded by the grant.</p> <p>This means that the current supportive and preventative approach, such as the School Improvement Adviser programme,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - which reduces the need to exercise formal intervention powers, - ensures that rapid progress is made, - pupils receive the <i>suitable education</i> they deserve <p>will no longer be possible.</p> <p>Posts within the School Improvement service will therefore be deleted.</p> <p>(All support to academies is fully chargeable.)</p>																					
Option 4	<p>Secretary of State to override a local Schools Forum Decision</p> <p>For the Secretary of State for Education to override any local Schools Forum decision not to de-delegate and impose de-delegation for School Improvement services, at the amounts detailed in Option 2.</p>																					

Please respond to the consultation by sending your completed response to absupport@wiltshire.gov.uk by Monday 6th December 2021

Appendix 2 – Summary of Responses

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
	Ranking			
School 1	2	4	1	3
School 2	1	2	4	3
School 3	1	2	3	4
School 4	1	2	3	4
School 5	1	2	3	4
School 6	1	2	4	3
School 7	1	2	3	4
School 8	1	2	4	3
School 9	1	2	3	4
School 10	1	2	3	4
School 11	1	2	4	3
School 12	1	2	3	4
School 13	1	2	4	3
School 14	1	2	3	4
School 15	1	2	3	4
School 16	1	*2/3	4	*2/3
School 17	1	2	3	4
School 18	1	2	3	4
School 19	1	3	4	2
School 20	1	2	4	3
School 21	1	2		
School 22	1	2	4	4
School 23	1	2	3	4
School 24	1	2	3	4
School 25	1	3	2	4
School 26	1	2	3	4
School 27	1		2	
School 28	1	2		

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