

Dedicated Schools Grant Consultations 2024-25

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Schools Forum with the results of the recent Autumn consultations relating to.
 - De-delegation of central services - Maintained Schools only
 - De-delegation in support of former LAMB grant – Maintained Schools only
 - Transfer of funds from Schools Block to High Needs Block – all schools
2. The survey results will help to inform Schools Forum decisions for setting the budgets for the 2024-25 financial year.

De-Delegation of Central Services Consultation Responses

3. Under the “soft formula”, funding should be fully delegated to all schools, however certain centrally provided services can be ‘de-delegated’ for maintained schools only, with approval of the respective maintained Schools Forum representatives.
4. The funding regulations require that all maintained schools are consulted and given the opportunity to express their preferences for the services which can be de-delegated. The services consulted as part of the 2024-25 consultation process were:
 - Free School Meal Eligibility Checks
 - Access Budget Planning Software Licence
 - Trade Union Facilities Costs
 - Maternity Costs
 - Ethnic Minority Achievement Service
 - Traveller Education Service
 - Behaviour Support Service
5. The consultation regarding de-delegation took place through Right Choice during the Autumn term, to enable maintained schools to consider their responses. The consultations closed on 17 November 2023. Schools Forum members can see the questions and results of the consultation, detailed in Appendix 1.
6. A total of 25 responses were received, 23 responses from Primary Schools and 2 from Secondary Schools. This compares more favourably than the consultation for the 2023-24 year where 21 responses were received. It is widely known that the majority of maintained schools rely on their Schools Forum colleagues to make the appropriate decisions on their behalf.
7. The results received were overwhelmingly in favour of retaining the de-delegated services in both the Primary and Secondary schools which will inform eligible Schools Forum representatives when voting on the school budgets for 2024-25.

De-Delegation – School Improvement Services 2024-25 (LAMB Grant)

8. The Local Authority Monitoring and Brokering (LAMB) Grant had been provided to local authorities since 2017, to help fulfil their core improvement activities. Funding was based on the number of maintained schools and the Department for Education (DfE) reduced the grant by 50% in 2022-23 and removed it fully in 2023-24.
9. Local authorities can fund improvement services through either de-delegation or on a traded basis. For the 2022-23 year, maintained schools' members of Schools Forum agreed to fund the loss of 50% of the LAMB grant through de-delegation and for the 2023-24 year, agreed to fund the full removal of the LAMB Grant (£459k).
10. In order to provide Schools Forum with a steer for the 2024-25 year, a local consultation was arranged to provide maintained schools with the opportunity to express their preference regarding continuing a contribution to support the loss of LAMB Grant funding. A copy of the consultation is held at Appendix 1.
11. The consultation was open to all maintained schools and a total of 14 responses were received (down from 39 for 2023-24), which can be broken down as follows.
 - 2 secondary schools
 - 11 primary schools
 - 1 Special school
12. Of the schools that responded, the results can be summarised as below.

All Schools						
Option	Impact	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Schools don't fund any loss of LAMB	Reduction in Services - £459k	2	1	0	0	11
Schools fund 50% loss of LAMB	Reduction in Services - £229.5k	4	2	0	8	0
Schools fund 75% of LAMB	Reduction in Services - £114.8k	0	3	11	0	0
Schools fund 87.5% of LAMB	Reduction in Services - £57.3k	0	8	3	3	0
Schools fund 100% of LAMB	Existing service maintained	8	0	0	3	3

Primary						
Option	Impact	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Schools don't fund any loss of LAMB	Reduction in Services - £459k	2	1	0	0	8
Schools fund 50% loss of LAMB	Reduction in Services - £229.5k	3	2	0	6	0
Schools fund 75% of LAMB	Reduction in Services - £114.8k	0	2	9	0	0
Schools fund 87.5% of LAMB	Reduction in Services - £57.3k	0	6	2	3	0
Schools fund 100% of LAMB	Existing service maintained	6	0	0	2	3

Secondary & Special						
Option	Impact	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Schools don't fund any loss of LAMB	Reduction in Services - £459k	0	0	0	0	3
Schools fund 50% loss of LAMB	Reduction in Services - £229.5k	1	0	0	2	0
Schools fund 75% of LAMB	Reduction in Services - £114.8k	0	1	2	0	0
Schools fund 87.5% of LAMB	Reduction in Services - £57.3k	0	2	1	0	0
Schools fund 100% of LAMB	Existing service maintained	2	0	0	1	0

13. This data will inform the decision making around the 2024-25 budget for school improvement services. The key points from the consultation are.
- ✓ 8 of the 14 respondents supported continuing to fund at the 100% level
 - ✓ Only 2 schools set their first preference as being not to fund at all (one school is a very small school, who proposed this due to financial constraints)
14. The DfE have confirmed that any commitment to fund School Improvement services will come under the de-delegation methodology and will be subject to annual agreement.
15. As with the centrally de-delegated services, it is widely recognised that the majority of maintained schools rely on their Schools Forum colleagues to make the appropriate decisions on their behalf.

Transfer of Schools Block to Support the High Needs Block

16. Schools have been consulted during recent years regarding a potential transfer of funds between the Schools Block and the High Needs Block of the DSG. Whilst it has been a generally unwelcome question to ask schools, members of Schools Forum have acted with integrity and in the greater interests of schools and supported a transfer of funds to help with the increasing demand and costs of SEN, within the county.
17. The funding regulations do allow for a transfer of funding between the Schools Block and other blocks within the DSG. In the last five financial years, Schools Forum agreed to the following transfers.
- 2019-20 - £2.2m which equated to **0.8%** of Schools Block funding
 - 2020-21 - £2.065m which equated to **0.7%** of Schools Block (subsequently reduced to 0.5% by the Secretary of State.)
 - 2021-22 - £1.517m which equated to **0.5%** of Schools Block funding
 - 2022-23 - £1.628m which equated to **0.5%** of Schools Block funding
 - 2023-24 - £1.716m which equated to **0.5%** of Schools Block funding
18. Local Authorities have the flexibility to move up to 0.5% of the Schools Block of funding, with the agreement of its Schools Forum. Anything higher would require approval from the Secretary of State through a disapplication request.
19. It was agreed at previous Schools Forum meetings that a request to transfer greater than 0.5% would not be applied for, due to previous decisions of the Secretary of State, unless the results of the consultation supported a greater transfer. It should be noted that if the Council has a Safety Valve agreement in place it is likely that a request to transfer greater than 0.5% would be looked on favourably by the Secretary of State via a disapplication request.
20. In order for Schools Forum to make a decision about a potential transfer, the autumn consultation was issued through Right Choice as a survey with a closing date of 17 November 2023, enabling schools to consider their responses.
21. Schools Forum members can see the questions and results of the consultation, detailed in Appendix 2.

22. This consultation was open to all schools, both maintained and academy schools and a total of 16 responses were received, down slightly from the 21 responses received last year and can be broken down as follows.

- 2 secondary schools
- 12 primary schools
- 2 special schools

23. Of the schools that responded, the results can be summarised as below.

- All 16 respondents supported a transfer of funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, with the majority supporting a 0.5% transfer.
- No respondents supported a reduction in Top-Up values to reduce expenditure within the High Needs Block.
- No respondents supported a 'Hybrid' option of a lower block transfer and a reduction in Top-Up values.
- The breakdown of transfer values and levels of support is detailed in the table below.

Value	Schools	% Support
£0.5m (0.14%)	2	12.5%
£1.0m (0.27%)	1	6.25%
£1.5m (0.41%)	1	6.25%
£1.8m (0.5%)	11	68.75%%
£2.0m (0.55%)	1	6.25%

24. The data from these consultations will inform the decision making around the 2024-25 budget for both De-delegation in maintained schools and a transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.

25. Decisions in relation to any transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block will also need to be made in the context of the Council's proposed Safety Valve agreement which will be presented to Schools Forum on 5 December and submitted to the Department for Education on 15 December. The Council will be required to incorporate assumptions for block transfers over the period of the plan and will link any proposal to additional support for mainstream schools.

Proposals

26. Schools Forum is asked to note the local consultation responses in relation to the schools delegated budget for the 2024-25 financial year.

27. Schools Forum is asked to make 'in principle' decisions in accordance with the consultation responses as below.

- **De-delegation** of central services for Maintained schools
 - FSM – primary and secondary
 - Licences – primary and secondary
 - Trade Union – primary and secondary
 - Maternity – primary and secondary
 - Ethnic Minority Support – primary only
 - Traveller Education – primary only
 - Behaviour Support – primary only

- **De-delegation** of funding to support school improvement services for maintained schools. To continue to fund at the rate of 100% loss in funding (£459k).

- **Block transfer** between Schools Block and the High Needs Block, subject to affordability when school funding for 2024-25 has been confirmed.
 - In principle, transfer of 0.5% of Schools Block to the High Needs Block, the maximum allowable without Secretary of State approval which equates to approximately £1.8m.
 - To consider transfer of 0.55% of Schools Block to the High Needs Block. Such a transfer would equate to £2m and will require the submission of a disapplication request.

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Appendix 1 – De-Delegation Consultation

Questions

DfE Heading	Wiltshire Budget	Delegate?	Retain Centrally?
Free school meals eligibility	Free School Meals Eligibility Service		
Licences/subscriptions	HCSS Licence		
Staff costs – supply cover	Trade Union Duties		
	Maternity Costs		
Support for minority ethnic pupils and underachieving groups	Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) – Primary		
	Traveller Education Service – Primary		
Behaviour support services	Primary Behaviour Support Service		

Results

A summary of the results is set out below.

PRIMARY	FSM	Licences	Trade Union	Maternity	EMAS	Traveller Education	Behaviour Support
Delegate	0	0	0	0	4	2	1
De-delegate	23	23	23	23	19	21	22
Total	23	23	23	23	23	23	23

SECONDARY	FSM	Licences	Trade Union	Maternity	EMAS	Traveller Education	Behaviour Support
Delegate	0	0	0	0	N/a	N/a	N/a
De-delegate	2	2	2	2	N/a	N/a	N/a
Total	2	2	2	2	N/a	N/a	N/a

Appendix 2 – Block Transfer Consultation

Qu 1 – Please enter your DfE Number and school name here:

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Qu 2a – Taking the factors above into account, do you support a transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block?

Yes	
No	

Qu 2b – If you support a transfer, please indicate the amount of transfer:

Value to Transfer	£/Pupil	Please select
£0.0m (0.0%)	£0.00 / pupil	
£0.5m (0.14%)	£7.77 / pupil	
£1.0m (0.27%)	£15.54 / pupil	
£1.5m (0.41%)	£23.31 / pupil	
£1.8m (0.5%)	£28.55 / pupil	
£2.0m (0.55%)	£31.08 / pupil	

Qu 2c - No transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2024-25. The impact of this would be that Top-Ups and Named Pupil Allowance (NPA) funding levels would have to be reduced to help with cost pressures in the High Needs Block. Do you support a reduction in these rates?

Yes	
No	

Qu 2d - Would you prefer to see a hybrid of the above with a transfer from Schools Block to top up the High Needs Block together with reduced values for top ups and Named Pupil Allowances?

Yes	
No	

Qu 3 - If you do not agree to the transfer of funds or the reduction of top-up funding levels, how else do you suggest that we fill the funding gap that we have for High Needs?

Appendix 2 – Block Transfer Consultation

Consultation Responses

Value to Transfer

School	Support Transfer	Value to Transfer					
		0% (£0m)	0.14% (£0.5m)	0.27% (£1.0m)	0.41% (£1.5m)	0.5% (£1.8m)	0.55% (£2.0m)
P1	Yes		✓				
P2	Yes					✓	
P3	Yes					✓	
P4	Yes			✓			
P5	Yes					✓	
P6	Yes					✓	
P7	Yes					✓	
P8	Yes					✓	
P9	Yes					✓	
P10	Yes						✓
P11	Yes				✓		
P12	Yes		✓				
S1	Yes					✓	
S2	Yes					✓	
Sp1	Yes					✓	
Sp2	Yes					✓	