



Wirral Schools Forum

Date:	Thursday, 6 October 2022
Time:	4.00 p.m.
Venue:	Virtual - Microsoft Teams

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AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND PROTOCOL FOR VIRTUAL MEETING
2. ELECTION OF CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR
3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14TH JUNE 2022 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. MATTERS ARISING
5. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS (Pages 9 - 12)
6. EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP UPDATE (Pages 13 - 16)
7. WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP (Pages 17 - 20)
8. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FUNDING FOR 2023-24 AND LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA CONSULTATION (Pages 21 - 24)
9. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT, MONITORING AND BROKERAGE GRANT - REQUEST FOR CONSULTATION FOR DE-DELEGATION (Pages 25 - 60)
10. SCHOOLS BUDGET VARIATIONS 2022-23 (Pages 61 - 64)
11. SCHOOL BALANCES UPDATE (Pages 65 - 68)
12. GROWTH & FALLING ROLLS FUND (Pages 69 - 74)

13. WORKPLAN (Pages 75 - 76)

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 14 June 2022

Present:

Adrian Whiteley (Chair)
John Weise (Vice-Chair)

Schools Group:

Charlotte Scott
Emma Johnson
Helen Johnson
John Bush
John McDonald
Julie Merry
Kathryn Kennedy
Margaret Morris
Mark Bellamy
Moiria Loftus
Simon Goodwin
Sue Ralph

Non-Schools Group:

Anne Rycroft
Gill Harris
Jessica Trigg
Joanne Proctor

In Attendance:

Asako Brown
Carol Fenlon
Frances Whiting
Gill Harris
James Backhouse
Julie Hudson
Kate Frost
Katy Bird
Sally Gibbs
Simone White
Sue Ashley
Trish Lewis

1 **WELCOME AND PROTOCOL FOR VIRTUAL MEETING**

The Chair introduced the meeting and welcomed members and attendees.
Apologies had been received from Mike Kilbride, Chris Mervyn, Brian

McGregor, Geraldine Fraser and Lisa Ayling. The Chair set out the protocol for the meeting and expected conduct for virtual meetings.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18TH JANUARY 2022

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of Schools forum meeting held on 18th January 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

No matters were raised.

4 LACES AND LAC PUPIL PREMIUM

Trish Lewis provided the Forum with an update on the work of the Looked After Children Education Services (LACES) Team and the Looked After Children Pupil Premium.

A breakdown of the current staffing arrangements in the LACES team was provided, alongside how the team is funded, partially through Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) and other grants. Within this, additional funding secured for the year 21-22 was set out. Further detail was provided on the PP+ side on the budget, and it was noted how out of the total PP+ per child, £410 is allocated to the Wirral Virtual School, whilst the remaining £2000 went to the schools. The Forum were pointed towards tables in the report, which provided a breakdown of how schools were using this funding, and a breakdown of how the Top Slice funding is used by the Virtual School.

A number of positive impacts of the LACES arrangements were noted, including a 98% completion rate of Personal Education Plans (PEPs).

An outline of how Recovery Funding has been utilised through management by Ranstad was also provided, whilst it was set out how School-Led Tuition funding had not yet been utilised due to a number of factors, but that LACES were working with partners to find creative ways to utilise this funding.

Trish Lewis concluded by setting out how there was sufficient funding in reserve to allow for the appointment of two Band H members of staff to ease capacity issues within the existing Team.

In the ensuing discussion, further clarity was provided on a number of topics queried by members including:

- The advertisement of vacancies as fixed-term positions.
- The potential clawback of grant funding if it is not used.
- How PP+ is circulated to schools and the timings of this.
- How the Local Authority (LA) compared to other LA's regarding caseload and numbers of Education Progress Officers (EPOs).

An updated report would be brought back to the School's Forum in January providing the information requested within the recommendations.

Resolved – That

- 1. The Forum noted the report**
- 2. Further information be provided by schools as to how they are using PP+ particularly in relation to 'other'.**
- 3. Further investigation of the impact of the spending of PP+ be provided.**

5 WIRRAL HOME AND CONTINUING EDUCATION SERVICE

Julie Hudson provided a summary on the work of the Wirral Home and Continuing Education Service over the past year.

The Forum were reminded of the primary aims of the Service as set out in the report. Members learned that there had been a climb in referrals from September this year, particularly from children within Year 7 and 8, which was attributed to circumstances relating to the transition to secondary school from primary, and the mental health impacts of this.

A number of changes to the Service were set out, including that the Service was in the process of moving to a new venue in Pilgrim Street, which it was hoped would facilitate supporting families in a more holistic way. In addition, following a Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) directive, changes had been brought in to the eligibility criteria for the service, which had removed the requirement for referrals to be supported by medical support from a consultant or senior CAMHS practitioner on an interim basis, with this support being widened to other medical teams (such as GPs) to avoid delays.

Details of the service's budget position were set out, with members noting that following an overspend in the previous year, the 2021-22 budget came in line with the allocated amount.

Following an open-vote to all forum members, the following was agreed by unanimously:

Resolved – That

- 1. The transfer of Age-Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) funding in Year 11 be replaced by the continued weekly charging system for all year groups as of the 1st September 2022.**
- 2. The transfer of Pupil Premium where appropriate be continued.**

6 EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Carol Fenlon provided an update on the work of the Early Years Working Group. Providing an overview of some of the key highlights within the report, it was noted that:

- There had been an increase of early years free funding entitlements across all take-ups, however this still remained slightly below pre-pandemic levels.
- Providers had been experiencing issues with recruitment and retention of staff across Wirral, however there was a national context behind this, and the Workforce Development Group had been developing activities to promote early years as a career option.
- There was continued pressure on the Early Years SEND provision outlined, noting the pressures of SEND officers supporting over 400 children, the pressures on the Inclusive Practice Fund (IPF), and the work being done to address these. For example, additional funding available for early years children with high level needs/complex needs and on the Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) pathway had been identified.
- There had been positive engagement with the Quality, Training and Practice Improvement Plan.

Members placed on record their praise for the service's work under continued pressures. In the ensuing discussion, clarity was provided on the perceived low early years uptake in Wallasey, and the work with other joined up services on improving uptake in low areas.

**Resolved –
That the report be noted.**

7 WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Frances Whiting provided an update on the membership of the Schools Forum. An overview of the current membership by group was outlined. Three vacancies in the Academy Group were noted, and members learned that since November, Kathryn Kennedy, Headteacher of Ganneys Meadow Nursery School, had been appointed as the Nursery representative, whilst Mike Kilbride had been appointed to the 16-19 Provider post and the table in the report would be amended accordingly.

**Resolved –
That the report be noted.**

8 HIGH NEEDS WORKING GROUP UPDATE

James Backhouse provided an overview of the work of the High Needs Working Group that met on the 8th March 2022 and the 10th May 2022, with a specific focus on the ongoing pressures in relation to the High Needs block and demands on Special School places. The report covered two main parts:

the base commissioning process, and budget forecasting for the High Needs block.

The Base commissioning process was highlighted in further detail, with a rationale provided for wanting to secure additional base provision relating to EHCP numbers, specifically relating to Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). It was noted that following the conclusion of the process, four schools had been successful in being awarded bases for the next academic year:

- St John Plessington Catholic College – 12 place ASC provision
- Egremont Primary School – 30 place SEMH provision (15 KS1 and 15 KS2)
- Riverside Primary School – 8 place SEMH/ASC provision
- Ganney's Meadow Maintained Nursery School – 12 place ASC/CLD provision.

Based on the additional base provision, the impact on the projected provision within Mainstream, Base Provision and Special Schools was set out, noting an anticipated increase in numbers within schools of 170 places, and that SEND colleagues were working with colleagues to make sure the additional capacity requested would be achievable and schools have the space available to support this extra demand.

In light of changes set out within the projected numbers used for budgeting purposes in relation to special school places, an updated forecast for the DSG budget over a 4-year period was provided, with the key implication being that the forecast position is 680K worse by 2025-2026, the deficit max position was £2.66m at the end of the 23/24 financial year, noting that the forecast then indicated an improving picture.

In the ensuing discussion, clarity was provided to members on the further work by commissioners to underpin the updated provisions in preparation for budget-setting next year, and the number of children on EHCPs in comparison to the national average, whilst an action was also agreed to organise a meeting of the High Needs Working Group in September.

Resolved – That

- 1. The report be noted.**
- 2. An additional report be brought to the Schools Forum in November from the High Needs Working Group.**

9 2022-23 BUDGET UPDATE REPORT

Asako Brown provided an update of the Schools Budget for the year 22/23. Members were informed of changes that had been made to the budget since it was last presented to the Forum in January 2022, including:

- Academy recoupment, reducing both the Individual Schools Budget and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) by £119,052,232.
- De-delegation, transferring funding of £1,819,643 from Individual School Budgets to the de-delegated block.
- Falling rolls/growth fund, identifying headroom of £131,378 following the application of the National Funding Formula (NFF).
- Early Years allocation had been split into Individual Schools Budget and Central Schools Cost.
- Re-analysis of staff budget of £58,564 from Home Tuition service and Support for Special Educational Needs (SEN).

**Resolved –
That the report be noted.**

10 **2021-22 OUTTURN REPORT**

Asako Brown provided the outline of the year end position for the year 21/22 school budget. It was noted that the accounts within the report were still provisional at this stage until the completion of the External Audit. Some of the highlights of the account set out to the Forum were as followed:

- Overall the school budget for the year had been overspent by £11k, which was an improvement of £308k since the position reported at the November 2021 meeting of the Forum.
- Areas of pressures included the High Needs Block, Special Educational Needs Statements and Top Ups, High Needs Contingency, and Independent Special Schools.
- The 2021-22 budget included a planned surplus of £2,683k in the High Needs Block that was to be carried forward into the reserve at the end of the financial year.
- The overspend of £11,041 generated in 2021-22 has resulted in an overall Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserve deficit of £1,690,030 at 31 March 2022.

In the ensuing discussion, members noted that the Local Authority were performing slightly better than anticipated, and clarity was provided that the External Audit was anticipated to be completed in the winter, although a definitive date could not be provided at this time

Resolved – That

- 1. The report and the financial position of the Schools Budget for 2021-22 be noted, subject to the confirmation of the final grant allocation for 2020-21.**
- 2. The DSG for 2021-22 includes a cumulative surplus of £120,608 of ring-fenced Early Years Disability Access Fund.**

11 **SCHOOL BALANCES UPDATE**

Sue Ashley provided the Forum with an update on the School Balances as of the 31st March 2022. The Forum were informed that as of this date, School Balances totalled £16.3 million, an increase of £2.8m from the previous year. It was noted that although the balances were high, there were 12 schools that ended the year with a financial deficit. It was noted that two of the 12 schools in this category were expected to set balanced budgets, six schools had or were working towards agreed licenced deficit plans, and four schools had a notice of concern, with the Local Authority continuing to work with those to manage their position. The action taken to date to support schools in budget setting were outlined, alongside actions going forward.

In the ensuing discussion, it was noted by members that the overall held balance was the highest for several years, and the factors behind growing balances were discussed, with further work that is needed to be done to understand why balances are growing was set out.

It was agreed that schools were to be contacted to better understand the underlying factors behind growing balances.

Resolved – That

- 1. The report be noted**
- 2. School balances are continued to be monitored.**

12 WORKPLAN

Members were provided with an overview of the Wirral School Forum's workplan for the upcoming academic year, including the dates of the meetings for the next year.

**Resolved –
That the workplan be noted.**

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other matters were raised.

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REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

MAINSTREAM SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a brief outline of Mainstream Admissions during the most recently fully completed 2020-2021 admission year. A summary is given on changes resulting from the 2021 School Admissions Code, and information is given regarding the number of applications from overseas applicants in 2021-22, including refugees.

2.0 Mainstream Admissions

- 2.1 Statutory roles of the Mainstream Admissions team include the administration and allocation of places in all primary and secondary schools, and representing the Council in school place appeals.

For entry to primary/secondary school in September 2021 there were over 3,400 applications for primary school (Foundation 2) and 3,900 for secondary schools (Year 7). The team co-ordinates admission to school with all own admission authority schools within Wirral and other admission authorities in England.

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	Any Preference	None	No Application offer
Foundation 2	3,126 (93%)	135 (4%)	24 (1%)	3285 (98%)	62 (2%)	65
Year 7	3181 (87%)	240 (7%)	63 (2%)	3487 (96%)	163 (4%)	43

On-time applicant offers by preference rank and non-applicant offers as at National Offer Day 2021. Wirral residents only, excludes late applications and pupils with an EHCP. "None" indicates a place was offered at a school not given as a preference.

- 2.2 The team produces appeal statements and presents appeals on behalf of all community and voluntary controlled (VC) schools as a statutory function. Academy, Aided and Foundation/Trust schools prepare and present their own appeals.

For information, the outcomes for the community and VC school appeals handled by the team are shown below.

	Withdrawn (%)	Refused (%)	Agreed (%)	Total
2018-2019	51 (48%)	44 (42%)	11 (10%)	106
2019-2020	39 (42%)	53 (56%)	2 (2%)	94
2020-2021	44 (44%)	53 (53%)	3 (3%)	100

Outcome of appeals lodged for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools by academic year. Withdrawn includes resolved and withdrawn appeals.

The outcome of appeals was similar to previous years.

- 2.3 The team administers the grammar school selection tests on behalf of the four non-Catholic grammar schools. Around 1,900 children are tested each year. The team is responsible for disseminating the outcome of the selective tests to parents.
- 2.4 As well as admissions to Foundation 2 and Year 7, the team also processes around 2,000 in-year transfers between and into/out of Wirral schools.
- 2.5 The Council's Fair Access Protocol applies to "hard to place" young people in specific categories, principally children without a school place due to being new to

the area with no place available locally. 82 young people were placed at Wirral secondary schools and 2 in Wirral primary schools, through the Fair Access Protocol in 2021-2022, compared to 99 secondary and 1 primary in the previous year. This excludes placements into Alternative Provision, placements into mainstream schools from the Progress School, or Managed Move decisions.

- 2.6 The role of the Fair Access Panel, with a wide membership including officers with responsibility for alternative provision special educational needs and educational psychology, exclusions etc. include decisions on Managed Move destinations, and re-integration decisions for young people with a single permanent exclusion.

3.0 **School Admissions Code 2021**

- 3.1 The School Admissions Code 2021 (the Code) came into force from 1st September 2021, the first update since 2014. Significant changes to the Code are highlighted here.

- 3.2 **In year transfers** - The Code now requires all own-admission authority schools to advise the Local Authority annually by the end of July whether or not they wish the Local Authority to continue coordinating in-year transfers for the following Academic year; opting out schools must take over the processes carried out by the Admissions team, keeping clear records, in addition to informing the Admissions team of every direct application and it's outcome. In the first year, only 1 school "opted out", this position has been maintained in the second year. The Code reinforces the requirement for all schools to respond to in-year transfer requests within 15 working days, and to provide vacancy information within 2 working days of a request.

- 3.3 **Fair Access Protocol** – The Code expands the existing categories to include children subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, children in a refuge; children in formal kinship care arrangements, children out of education for four or more weeks; and previously Looked After Children without a school place. The Code clarifies that locally agreed categories, such as poor attendance, are no longer able to be used and the Wirral Fair Access Protocol has been updated accordingly.

- 3.4 **Looked After Children** – The Code expands the definition of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children to include children who are or appear to have been in state care outside of England and have been adopted. Children adopted from overseas are now subject to the same priority for admission as children adopted in the UK.

- 3.5 **Published Admission Number** – The Code clarifies that for in-year admissions, simply reaching PAN is not by itself grounds to refuse admission, however schools may refuse where admission of another child would prejudice the provision of efficient education or efficient use of resources. The Infant Class Size limit still applies to Foundation 2, Year 1 and Year 2, and remains grounds to refuse, subject to the permitted exceptions.

4.0 **Overseas applications and refugees**

- 4.1 In May 2022, the Department for Education instigated a new monthly data collection from Local Authorities in England to examine the number of new to the UK applicants for school places. This is divided into Afghanistan, Ukraine and Hong Kong (published) and any other country of origin (unpublished).

- 4.2 The survey is voluntary to complete, leading to gaps in the national dataset. The DfE estimate that between 1st September 2021 and 26th July 2022 in the North West region, there were 1,300 Ukrainian applications, 2,100 Hong Kong applications and 900 Afghanistan applications for school places.

- 4.3 The Council's Refugee and Homes for Ukrainians teams have been working closely with the Wirral Admissions team to ensure that children and young people are placed

quickly and appropriately in local schools. The Wirral Admissions team has now put in place a process which will enable the Authority to identify pupils not only from the three main countries of interest, but also other refugee and asylum seeking families from the point of application. This is so grant funding can be targeted to those schools which children and young people attend.

- 4.4 Schools Forum may be interested in how Wirral compares to other authorities in terms of intake.

	Ukraine		Afghanistan		Hong Kong		Other	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Wirral	31	22	10		34	22	130	13
Calderdale	12	9	7		3			
Sefton	31	11	0		0			
Wigan	20	10	23	21	64	25		
Stockton on Tees	20	15	12	6	7			
Durham	74	39	1		1			
Redcar and Cleveland	13	4	0		0			
Cheshire West and Chester	79	89	4		44	35		

Children from outside the UK (DfE, July 2022) for Wirral, statistical neighbour authorities and Cheshire West and Chester, applications made by country of origin and phase. Statistical neighbours St Helens, Lancashire, North Tyneside and Darlington did not participate in the voluntary Data Collection, "0" may mean the Authority did not collect this information. Small numbers (5 or fewer) aggregated. Excludes new arrivals who are post-16, transitioning directly into Year 7 or Foundation 2 in September 2022, or who are pre-school age. Applications received 1st September 2021 to 26th July 2022. "Other" is all other countries of origin regardless of immigration status.

5.0 Finance

- 5.1 The overall budget for School Admissions in 2022-2023 is £387,581. The costs include:

Staffing (8.6 FTE)	£291,902
Software and implementation	£54,479
Selective tests	£40,000
Overheads	£44,600
Income/recharges	(£43,400)
Total	£387,581

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Forum notes the report.

Simone White
Corporate Director for Children and Families

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM 6th October 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

EARLY YEAR WORKING GROUP UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update Wirral's School Forum on recent Early Years performance and service updates.

2.0 Take up of Universal 2, 3 + 4 early years free entitlements & 30 hours extended (EYFE).

2.1 The take up of early years free funding entitlements remains slightly below pre pandemic percentage's, which in the main were above 90%.

2.2 There has been an increase in the number of 2 YO's taking up a free funded placement, from 82.82% to 87% in summer term. A robust engagement strategy to improve take up continues to operate through Wirral's Children Centres, gaining an understanding of barriers to take up. However, Wirral's percentage remains higher than the newly published National average of 72%.

2.3 We continue to receive anecdotal feedback that some settings are offering less 2YO places and opting to maximise their 3 & 4 year offer due to the lower ratio requirements, because of staffing issues. A workforce development post has been created and currently in recruitment process. This post will further understand and support the workforce and retention issues across the sector.

2.4 The take up of 3–4-year-olds combined remains at 87% which is slightly below the new national average of 92%. Again, this is being closely monitored with a specific focus on the Wallasey area which has the lowest take up, around 85% than that of Birkenhead and South & West Wirral.

Having previously identified a reduction in this funding figure we have investigated and discovered a discrepancy in the population figures used internally compared to the one the DfE use. Their population figure is supplied by ONS, and using this we would register a funding rate of 95%

2.5 The majority (97%) of settings providing places for 2, 3 + 4-year funding entitlements are judged "Good" or better by Ofsted. However, during the past 6 months there have been a number judged as "requires improvement" and "inadequate", which has resulted in funding being suspended, until quality judgements improve at next inspection.

3.0 Childcare Sufficiency

3.1 Childcare Provider Statistics

	Mar-22	Jun-22
Academies	3	3
Childminders	152	147
Day Nurseries	66	65
Extended Care	32	30
Independent Schools	3	3
Maintained Nursery Schools	3	3
Pre-Schools	30	30
Schools	55	55
Special Schools	2	2
Total	346	338

3.2 Some settings are capping the number of children they can take or closing rooms temporarily due to staffing issues for a number of reasons for example staff sickness, staff leaving, issues recruiting new staff or agency staff.

3.3 Still appears to be sufficient places available across the Borough, although not necessarily to meet requests of parents for specific days/sessions.

3.4 Whilst we are seeing several childminder resignations, new childminders are still coming through on a regular basis, quite a few recently through childminder agencies.

4.0 Workforce Development Working Group

4.1 The group has considered options and is now moving forward with a workplace programme alongside sessions focused on promoting childcare courses.

4.2 An 'Early Education and Careers page has been created to provide information to people interested in a career in the sector, <https://wirraleyquality.co.uk/careers/>.

4.3 A 30 second radio advert has been produced and is live on Gov.uk radio.

4.4 Working with Council comms manager to discuss a comms campaign possibly shared with care sector.

4.5 Student placements have been arranged for Prenton High School, Ridgeway High School, and Co-op Academy Bebington. Talks have taken place at Oldershaw

School and Ridgeway High, and a further talk is scheduled to take place at Prenton High later this month.

4.6 A recruitment event was held at the Floral Pavilion with attendance from a variety of providers, Wirral Met College, JM Training and Involve Northwest, along with a presentation from a Quality Officer about working in the sector. Attendance was good and lots of networking took place between providers and attendees. It is hoped that we can hold further events in the near future.

5.0 Quality, Training and Practice Improvement

5.1 The Effective Practice Quality Mark training package devised for this past year has been received well, this will now run as an annual quality mark. The training package covers key areas, pertinent to the current early years' climate and provider's needs, including: Child development, Key person, SALT and Curriculum (in total there have been 18 courses within the quality mark)

5.2 This year **94** providers gained the quality mark at some level Bronze, silver or gold, equating to **460** individual practitioners. (The EPQM has also generated an income of £2300 to date.)

5.3 A wide breadth of training has been delivered this year by the team, (including the EPQM above) as well as liaising with partners to diversify the offer.
Designated Safeguarding Lead (including suitable training for childminders and refresher courses)

5.4 The Managers Network has been a new implementation to support networking in the sector, sharing practice and creating a collaborative approach. Feedback has been hugely positive and engagement levels very good.

5.5 The Early Years Online Platform has seen engagement grow greatly, with **683** practitioners now registered. There is now **19** eLearning modules available ranging from conference recordings, knowledge refreshers and instructional videos. This has helped to greatly diversify our training offer and fits into a more blended offer post-Covid.

5.6 The platform has been a hugely valuable asset, allowing us to create training, manage bookings and invoicing independently. Creating a centralised support point for all providers has also been massively beneficial.

5.7 Currently there are **97%** of providers judged good or above by Ofsted. Within this, 3 settings are 'requires improvement' and 3 'inadequate'. All of these settings are being supported by a Quality Improvement Officer utilising the support framework.

5.8 Engagement (*this year to date, from Apr '22*)

Attendance at training- 196 providers (some providers attending multiple courses)

Targeted support visits- 34

Pre-registration visits- 5

Good or above visits- 31

5.9 Four settings committed to the expert and mentor pilot programme (Apr-July 2022), two successfully completed the programme with action plans submitted to the DFE.

5.10 In August 22' several settings were put forward for the first phase of the project and four have been offered a place on the programme for the Autumn term 22'. An area lead, experts & mentors have been allocated to the settings. A meeting has been arranged for the Expert & mentor team to liaise with the Quality team to coordinate and compliment support for the settings during the term.

5.11 The Sally Tonge project is planned to begin in Jan 2023, with funding committed. The aim of the project is to explore storytelling/rhyme as a means of enhancing the development of children's communication and language. To offer practical ways to enrich language environments for young children. To upskill practitioners and give them the confidence and skills to engage the children in creating stories and music together.

RECOMMENDATIONS

School Forum is recommended to note the report.

Simone White

Director of Children, Families and Education

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM 6th October 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

Forum Membership Review

1. Executive Summary

This report describes the current representation of the Forum and membership changes.

2.0 Current Representation

The table below details the current makeup of the Wirral Schools' Forum representation and when the terms of office are due to expire.

Total Membership	Role	2018-2022	2019-2023	2020-2024	2021-2025	2022-2026	Total
5	Primary Headteachers			1	3	1	5
4	Primary Governors	1	1		2		4
1	Secondary Headteachers			1			1
1	Special Headteacher						0
1	Special Governors	1					1
1	Nursery Representative					1	1
13	Total Schools Membership						
9	Academy Representative		2		4		6
9	Total Academy Membership						
1	Non-teacher representative				1		1
1	Teacher representative		1				1
1	Catholic Diocese				1		1
1	Church of England Diocese				1		1
1	16-19 representative						0
3	PVI Early Years Providers				3		3
8	Total Non-Schools Membership						
30	Total Membership	2	4	2	15	2	25

There are currently 5 vacancies, 1 representative whose term of office came to an end in September and 1 whose term is due to end by the end of the year.

- There is 1 x Special Headteacher vacancy.
- There are 3 x Academy Representative vacancies, with one temporarily being filled by Lisa Ayling, until volunteers come forward.
- There is 1 x Primary Governor vacancy.
- There is 1 x 16-19 representative vacancy.
- There will be a vacancy for a Special Governor representative in November.

Expressions of interest have been sent out requesting nominations for all the current vacancies.

3. New Members

There have been no new members since the June report.

Appendix 1 identifies all current members and their role on School's Forum.

4. Membership Changes

Regulations governing the forum requires school/academy membership to take account of pupil weighting.

		Pupil no's			
Current		Jan 22 Census	Expected		
9	Primary	21,409	44.5%	8.5	
1	Secondary	3,770	7.8%	1.5	
9	Academy	22,934	47.7%	9.1	
19.0		48,113	100.0%	19.0	

RECOMENDATIONS

The Schools Forum is recommended to note the report.

Simone White

Director of Children, Families and Education

Appendix 1 –Wirral Schools Forum Membership

Group	Name	Category of Membership	School/Establishment	Term of Office	
Schools	Andy Ramsden	Primary Headteacher (Birkenhead S)	Oxton St Saviours	Sep-20	Aug-24
Schools	Sue Ralph	Primary Headteacher (Birkenhead N)	St Michael & All Angels	Sep-21	Aug-25
Schools	John McDonald	Primary Headteacher (Wallasey)	St Albans Primary	Sep-21	Sep-25
Schools	Emma Johnson	Primary Headteacher (Deeside)	Greasby Junior	Sep-21	Aug-25
Schools	Chris Mervyn	Primary Headteacher (Beb/Brom)	Brackenwood Infants	May-22	Apr-26
Schools	Charlotte Scott	Primary Governor	St Georges Primary	Aug-21	Jul-25
Schools	Roy Wood	Primary Governor	Hillside Primary	Oct-18	Sep-22
Schools	Julie Merry	Primary Governor	Overchurch Infants/Cathcart	Jan-21	Dec-24
Schools	Tony Norbury	Primary Governor	Prenton Primary	Sep-19	Aug-23
Schools	Simon Goodwin	Secondary Headteacher	South Wirral High	Sep-20	Aug-24
Schools	Margaret Morris	Special Headteacher	Elleray Park	Sep-18	Aug-22
Schools	John Weise	Special Governor	Hayfield Primary	Dec-18	Nov-22
Schools	Kathryn Kennedy	Nursery Representative	Ganneys Meadow	Mar-22	Feb-26
Academy	Moira Loftus	Academy Rep	Townfield Primary	Jun-21	May-25
Academy	Adrian Whiteley	Academy Rep (Chair)	St Anselms	Aug-19	Jul-23
Academy	Helen Johnson	Academy Rep	The Birkenhead Park School	Sep-21	Aug-25
Academy	Vacancy	Academy Rep			
Academy	Mark Bellamy	Academy Rep	Hilbre High School	Sep-21	Aug-25
Academy	Vacancy	Academy Rep			
Academy	Jon Bush	Academy Rep	Oldershaw Academy	Dec-21	Nov-25
Academy	Geraldine Fraser	Academy Rep	Prenton High School for Girls	Oct-19	Sep-23
Academy	Lisa Ayling (Temp)	Lisa Ayling (Temp)	Lisa Ayling (Temp)	Nov-19	
Non-Schools	Gill Harris	Non-teacher representative	Wirral Unison	May-21	Apr-25
Non-Schools	Anne Rycroft	Teacher representative	NASUWT	Aug-19	Jul-23
Non-Schools	Joanne Proctor	Catholic Diocese	Christ the King	Sep-21	Aug-25
Non-Schools	Brian McGregor	Church of England Diocese	Woochurch CE Primary	Sep-21	Aug-25
Non-Schools	Vacancy	16-19 Provider			
Non-Schools	Nicky Prance	PVI Early Years Providers	Barnston Buddies	Jan-21	Dec-23
Non-Schools	Simon Davies	PVI Early Years Providers	Penguins Nurseries	Jan-21	Dec-23
Non-Schools	Jessica Trigg	PVI Early Years Providers	The Mulberry Tree	Oct-21	Sep-25

Appendix 2

High Needs Working Group Members

Adrian Whiteley (Chair)	Chair (Academy Representative)
Margaret Morris	Special School Headteacher Representative
John Weise	Special School Governor Representative
Moira Loftus	Academy Representative (Headteacher Townfield)
John Bush	Academy Representative (Headteacher Oldershaw)
Mark Bellamy	Academy Representative (Headteacher Hilbre High)
John McDonald	Primary Headteacher Representative
Julie Merry	Primary Representative
Paula Waring	Secondary Special Representative
Jess Trigg	Early Years Rep (PVI)

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 6th October 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FUNDING FOR 2023-24 AND LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA CONSULTATION

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Forum on both the funding announcements for 2023-24 and the consultation process for mainstream Primary and Secondary schools.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 19th July, the Department for education (DFE) announced provisional funding allocations for 2023-24 through the schools, high needs, and central school services national funding formulae (NFF).
- 2.2 Provisional gross (i.e., before academy recoupment) funding allocations for Wirral, based on 2021-22 pupil numbers, are as follows:

	Schools Block	High Needs Block	Central Services Block
2022-23 Final Allocation	£243,948,516	£53,993,952	£2,120,348
2023-24 Indicative Allocation	£249,892,043	£57,592,970	£2,060,847
Increase/(reduction)	£5,943,527	£3,599,018	(£59,501)
Increase/(reduction)	2.44%	6.67%	(2.81%)

- 2.3 Whilst the provisional funding allocations for 2023-24 identify increased funding for Wirral overall, there are still challenges to overcome and these will be outlined in the relevant sections of this report.

3.0 DIRECT NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA

- 3.1 The DFE launched a consultation on 8th July 2021, 'Fair school funding for all: completing our reforms to the National Funding Formula' – which focused on the principles of moving to a direct formula, completing the reform of school funding that was started with the introduction of the NFF in 2018-19.
- 3.2 The response of the consultation was published in March 22, and DFE has confirmed that it will move forward with its plans to implement a direct NFF, whereby funding will be allocated directly to schools based on a single, national formula, without further adjustment through local formulae.

- 3.3 The DFE states that the move to a direct NFF supports the objective set out in the schools white paper 'Opportunity for all' and it will bring greater fairness, consistency, transparency and simplicity in the funding arrangements for schools.
- 3.4 The DFE expects to have moved to the direct NFF by 2027 to 2028 funding year by taking a gradual approach to transition. To ensure a smooth and delivering a more consistent funding system, local authorities will be required to start bringing own formulae closer to the NFF distribution from 2023-24, in particular,
- Local authorities will only be allowed to use NFF factors in their local formulae
 - Local authorities must use all NFF factors
 - Local authorities must move their local formula factor values at least 10% closer to the NFF, except where local formulae are already mirroring the NFF
 - Local authorities must use the NFF definition for the English as an additional language (EAL)
- 3.5 Wirral has mirrored the NFF for the last 4 years and it suggests that the proposals will critically have little or no negative impact on Wirral schools particularly during any transitional period to the full implementation of the direct NFF

4.0 SCHOOLS BLOCK

- 4.1 The provisional school block allocation includes the following changes:
- The core factors in the schools NFF (such as the basic entitlement, and the lump sum that all schools attract) will increase by 2.4%.
 - The funding floor will ensure that every school is allocated at least 0.5% more pupil-led funding per pupil compared to its 2022-23 NFF allocation.
 - Through the minimum per pupil funding levels, every primary school will receive at least £4,405 per pupil, and every secondary school at least £5,715.
 - Additional support directed to disadvantaged pupils, by increasing the FSM6 (free schools meals at any time in the last 6 years) and the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) factors in the schools NFF by a greater amount than other factors. These factors will increase by 4.3%, compared to their 2022-23 values.
 - Rolling the 2022-23 school supplementary grant into the schools NFF ensuring that this additional funding forms an on-going part of schools' core budgets.
- 4.2 In 2023-24 Local authorities will continue to set a MFG in local formulae, however, it must be between +0.0% and +0.5% as it is the first year of transition to the direct schools NFF. For 2022-23 an MFG rate of +1.25% was applied as agreed at the November 21 Forum and schools will be canvassed on their preferred rate for 2023-24 as part of the annual consultation process.

- 4.3 The consultation process is currently being undertaken until Monday 24th October and is open to all mainstream Primary and Secondary schools. Schools is consulted on options for the level of MFG and their views will be sought on the usage of any funding that may be left following the allocation of the confirmed 2023-24 schools block allocation.
- 4.4 The consultation process has been communicated to schools by e-mail and this communication is accompanied by a list that identifies the impact of the indicative funding for each school in 2023-24 for each of the proposed levels of MFG. The results of the consultation will be reported back to Forum at the November meeting.

5.0 HIGH NEEDS BLOCK

- 5.1 The 2023-24 High Needs provisional funding identifies an increase in gross funding of £3.6m (6.67%). Whilst this is a reasonable increase in funding, it should be noted that the average year on year increase in expenditure since 2018-19 has been around 12.43%. The table below compares the net (i.e., after academy recoupment) funding and expenditure over a 5-year period.

	2018-19 £m	2019-20 £m	2020-21 £m	2021-22 £m	2022-23 Forecast £m
High Needs Block	31.848	34.070	40.793	46.557	52.090
High Needs Outturn	34.087	37.723	41.522	45.946	54.366
Under/(Overspend)	(2.239)	(3.653)	(0.729)	0.611	(2.277)
Under/(Overspend)	(7.03%)	(10.72%)	(1.79%)	1.31%	(4.37%)
Outturn Trend		10.67%	10.07%	10.66%	18.33%

- 5.2 The financial impact of projected future demand and delivery options will be quantified as part of the 2023-24 budget setting process.

6.0 CENTRAL SERVICES BLOCK

- 6.1 The central school services block (CSSB) within the DSG provides funding for local authorities to carry out central functions on behalf of all schools with the agreement of school's forums.
- 6.2 The block comprises two distinct elements, which are:
- Ongoing responsibilities – the funding for this element of the CSSB increases annually and covers the following activities:
 - Statutory and regulatory duties
 - Education Welfare
 - Asset management
 - Other on-going duties
 - Historic responsibilities – there should be no new commitments or increases in expenditure from that agreed prior to 2013-14, and DFE

expect that these costs will unwind over time and the funding for these commitments will continue to reduce by 20% on 2022-23 allocations. This element of the funding covers the following activities:

- Termination of employment costs
- Contribution to combined budgets

6.3 The table below identifies the change to CSSB funding from 2022-23 analysed across the on-going and historic elements.

	On-going responsibilities	Historic Commitments	Total
2022-23 Final Allocation	£1,641,320	£479,028	£2,120,348
2023-24 Indicative Allocation	£1,677,625	£383,222	£2,060,847
Increase/(Reduction)	£36,305	(£95,806)	(£59,501)
Increase/(Reduction)	2.21%	(20.00%)	(2.81%)

6.4 The impact of the reduced funding on the services delivered by the historic element of the funding and mitigating actions will be considered as part of the 2023-24 budget setting process.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That Schools Forum note the report.

7.2 That Schools Forum note the plans for the consultation process with schools and that the outcome will be reported to the November meeting (paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5).

Simone White
Director of Children, Families and Education

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to propose and seek Schools Forum's views on the consultation process in respect of the de-delegation of funding to mitigate the reduction in the School Improvement, Monitoring and Brokerage Grant (SIMBG) received by the Wirral Council.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The SIMBG has been allocated to local authorities since September 2017 to allow them to continue monitor performance of maintained schools, broker school improvement provision and intervene as appropriate. The grant allocation was based on the number of maintained schools within the area and replaced the previous Education Services Grant (ESG) at a significantly reduced funding value.
- 2.2 The Council received £333k for SIMBG for the financial year 2021/22 and the grant is used to fund service provision for core school improvement activities for maintained secondary, primary and special schools in Wirral.
- 2.3 In October 2021, Department for Education (DfE) launched the consultation "Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded" and its outcome was published in January 2022, which confirmed that the grant payment to local authorities that funds the provision of school improvement services to local authority maintained schools would reduce by 50% in 2022-23 and be removed entirely in 2023-24.
- 2.4 As per the DfE "Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded – Government consultation response – January 2022" the DfE have stated:
- "As such, we will (1) reduce the grant by 50% for the FY 2022-23 and bring it to an end in FY 2023-24 and (2) include provision in Part 7 of Schedule 2 to the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations for FY 2022-23 which would allow councils to de-delegate for all improvement expenditure, including all core improvement activities."
- 2.5 In line with the guidance issued by the DfE in the consultation response document, this report is seeking Schools Forum's views on schools to de-delegate funding in the financial year 2023-24 to recoup the loss of income from maintained.

- 2.6** Due COVID and school closures which impacted on delivering school improvement services 2020-21 and 2021-22, the unspent SIMBG was carried forward to 2022-23. This has assisted with the funding needed for 2022/23 in continuing to provide school improvement services and there was no need for the request for de-delegation for 2022/23.

3.0 CONSULTATION: MODELS FOR THE DE-DELEGATION

- 3.1** To recoup the loss of the income in 2023-24 at the same level with the 2021-22 SIMBG, two models for the de-delegation are proposed: a tiered funding model and a per pupil model
- 3.2** The tiered funding model is to group the maintained schools into 4 groups by their pupil numbers using the October 21 census. 4 groups and each tier's contribution rate are proposed as the table below:

	Rate per school
For Schools with 199 pupils or less	£2,200
For Schools with 200-399 pupils	£3,400
For Schools with 400-699 pupils	£5,700
For Schools above 700 pupils	£12,000

- 3.3** The alternative model is the per pupil model, which is proposed to be £13.00 per pupil as the de-delegation rate.
- 3.4** The DfE schools' revenue funding operational guidance states that de-delegation does not apply to special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), where de-delegation has been agreed for maintained primary and secondary schools, the DfE presume that the local authority will offer the service on a buy back bases to those establishments that are not covered by the de-delegation.
- 3.5** The consultation paper will be distributed to the maintained secondary and primary schools on xxx . Schools will be consulted on their preferred model for the de-delegation and their views will be sought. The results of the consultation will be reported back to Forum at the November meeting.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1** That Schools Forum note the report.
- 4.2** That Schools Forum note the plans for the consultation process with schools and that the outcome will be reported to the November meeting (paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5).

Simone White
Director of Children, Families and Education



Department
for Education

Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded

Government consultation response

January 2022

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Introduction

In October 2021, we launched a consultation seeking views on our intention to remove the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering grant ('the grant'), currently allocated to local authorities to support school improvement activities and 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 via de-delegation from schools' budget shares.

The public consultation exercise sought views on making these changes and allowed respondents to express comments, views or concerns.

Who this was for

The following stakeholders were identified and consulted on the proposed changes:

- Local authorities (LAs)
- Schools and colleges
- Any other interested organisations and individuals

Consultation period

The consultation took place from 29 October 2021 to 26 November 2021. It was conducted online using the government's consultation software, or alternatively, respondents were able to email or send a response form.

About the consultation

Context

Since 2017, the Local Authority School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering grant ('the grant') has been allocated to local authorities (referred to here as 'councils') to support them in fulfilling their statutory school improvement functions under Part 4 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#) and their additional school improvement expectations as set out in the [Schools Causing Concern \(SCC\) guidance](#) (collectively referred to as core school improvement activities). In summary, these activities require councils to monitor performance of maintained schools, broker school improvement provision, and intervene as appropriate. The grant is currently ringfenced and must be spent solely on the school improvement activities for which it is provided.

Since 2017 councils have also been permitted, with the agreement of their local schools forum, to de-delegate funding from their schools' budget shares, to fund the provision of additional school improvement services. These are activities that go above and beyond their core school improvement activities, and may include, for example, providing or funding access to school improvement support. Many councils will also provide additional school improvement and other services to schools on a traded basis, where school leaders choose to buy in services provided by the council.

The current funding arrangements presume that there is a clear distinction between core school improvement activities, for which the grant is provided, and additional activity, which councils fund through de-delegation or as a traded service. We believe this distinction no longer reflects the reality of how effective councils operate. Rather, we believe that, in practice, activity connected to their core school improvement activities forms part of a continuum of wider school improvement activity that councils may choose to undertake. In that context and taken together with the Secretary of State's responsibility to convert the poorest performing maintained schools (that Ofsted has judged 'Inadequate') into academies, it is unsurprising that whilst most councils continue to spend the full value of the grant, instances of councils exercising their intervention powers remain relatively low. This implies that the grant is predominantly used on early challenge and support in cases of potential underperformance, rather than use of formal intervention power.

Proposals

In view of this we proposed to (1) remove the grant over the course of FY 2022-23, and (2) include provision in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations for FY 2022-23 which would allow councils to de-delegate for all school improvement expenditure, including all core school improvement activities, from maintained schools' budget shares.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation, we proposed that the grant would be ended with effect from the start of FY 2023-24, phased so that it would be reduced to 50% of the current amount on a per school basis in FY 2022-23 to give councils and maintained schools time to adjust to these new arrangements.

To ensure that councils remain adequately funded to exercise their statutory intervention powers we proposed to give councils the power in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations to fund all school improvement activities, including core school improvement activities, via de-delegation of funds from maintained schools' budget shares, with the agreement of their local schools forum or the Secretary of State.

We asked respondents whether they agreed that in exercising their core school improvement functions that local authorities focused on early support and challenge; whether they agreed that our proposals would allow local authorities to ensure they remained adequately funded; whether we could usefully update any of our guidance to local authorities on their school improvement responsibilities; and whether they believed any of our proposals had the potential to have an impact on specific groups compared to others, in particular those who share protected characteristics.

Summary

In total there were 565 responses to the consultation. We have grouped the respondents by organisation type to support analysis of findings (see figure 1 below). We also discussed these proposals with several local authority and representative organisations during the consultation period.

Figure 1 – Breakdown of consultation respondents

Type of respondent	Total
Council	156
Local authority-maintained school	215
Academy or multi-academy trust	55
National organisation	16
Other	58
Not applicable or no response	65

A list of the organisations that responded can be found at Annex A, other than those who asked for their response to be kept confidential.

Overall, whilst many responses indicated that they understood the rationale for these proposals, we recognise the majority of respondents, in particular those from the maintained sector (councils and local authority-maintained schools), raised concerns. These centred on whether schools and councils would be able to absorb further funding pressures; what would happen if schools forums did not agree to de-delegation for core school improvement activity; and the desire for further clarity on what is considered core school improvement. Others noted the challenging implementation timescales.

We recognise the strength of feeling in the responses and have carefully considered the concerns outlined, and how they could be mitigated. Our detailed response with full analysis of the responses is set out below. Note, the total number of responses associated with each response type does not always equal 565 and the respective percentages do not always total 100, due to some respondents providing comments falling under more than one category, or not providing a response to that question.

Question analysis and government response

This section provides a breakdown of the responses received for each consultation question following a categorisation process and provides the government's response to the issues raised.

The consultation included 13 questions, the full list of which can be found at Annex A. The first nine questions gathered basic details about the respondent such as name, organisation and role. The remaining four questions are analysed below.

Question 10

We believe that instances of councils exercising formal intervention powers remain relatively low, and that since its introduction, this grant has primarily supported improvement functions such as early support and challenge to improve individual school performance, which overlaps with wider (non-core) improvement provision. Do you agree that this is the case? If not, please explain

Figure 2 – Breakdown of responses to Question 10

Response type	Number of responses	%
Agreed that this is the case	203	35.9
Disagreed that this is the case	175	30.9
Of which:		
- <i>Because they see no overlap in core and non-core functions</i>	22	3.9 (12.5)
- <i>Because the LA has used the grant for intervention and/or examples were provided of formal intervention</i>	36	6.3 (20.6)
- <i>Because LAs provide support before intervention becomes necessary and/or support before intervention is positive and/or the local authority has a school-led collaborative support system in place</i>	117	20.7 (66.9)
- <i>Other or no further reason given</i>	42	7.4 (24)
Not clear, or question not addressed / answered	187	33.1

** Numbers in brackets represent the percentages of those who disagreed. Note, the percentages do not always total 100, due to some respondents providing comments falling under more than one category, or not providing a response to that question.*

Government response

Our Schools Causing Concern guidance sets out the core school improvement activities of councils, for which the local authority school improvement monitoring and brokering grant has been provided. This includes, but is not limited to, use of formal intervention powers.

The consultation set out our conclusions based on research and informal engagement with local authorities to date, which suggested that councils 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 largest proportion of respondents (35.9%) agreed this to be the case.

There were a substantial minority (30.9%) who disagreed. These responses have been analysed further, and it is clear only a very small minority have indicated they disagreed because they felt there was no overlap between core and non-core school improvement activity.

In contrast, the vast majority (66.9% of those who disagreed) indicated they disagreed because either their council provides early support and challenge before intervention becomes necessary; because their council has a school-led collaborative support system in place; and/or because they support councils providing support before intervention becomes necessary. While these respondents have indicated they disagreed with the question, we consider that their responses support the broader proposition that councils primarily exercise their core school improvement activities via early support and challenge rather than formal intervention.

In addition, there were a smaller number who indicated they disagreed because their council has formally intervened, in some cases providing examples of where they had done so, although not suggesting that is primarily how they have used the funding. As above, we are clear that councils' core school improvement activities are not limited to use of formal intervention powers, and we are not seeking to limit councils to only exercising their formal intervention powers.

We conclude therefore that consultation responses largely support our initial conclusions that with their considerable freedom to decide how to exercise their core school improvement activities, councils focus more on the non-intervention aspects of their core school improvement activities, and we agree that this is often the right approach to school improvement.

As the consultation noted, we are clear that councils are best placed to determine how to deliver the core school improvement responsibilities. However, the emphasis on early challenge and support also brings into focus that we do not provide a separate grant to Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) to carry out the same sort of activity with their academies.

We instead expect MATs to fund this activity via deducting the cost of the activity from their academy budgets, and for this reason, we believe it is right to move towards removing this grant and putting school improvement funding on a more even footing

Question 11

We are proposing to (i) remove the grant (Proposal 1), and (ii) enable councils to de-delegate funds via their schools forum to ensure they are sufficiently funded to exercise all of their improvement activities, including all core improvement activities. Do you agree that, taken together, these proposals will allow councils to continue to ensure they are adequately funded for core improvement activities; and therefore do not impose a new burden? If not, please explain.

Figure 3 – Breakdown of responses to Question 11

Response type	Number of responses	%	Council	Local authority-maintained school	Academy / Trust
Agrees	71	12.5	6	27	30
Disagrees	399	70.6	126	154	14
<i>Of which:</i>					
- <i>Because this will put pressure on school budgets, (in particular small, rural schools)</i>	272	48.1 (68.2)			
- <i>Because schools forums may not de-delegate sufficient funds and/or may lead to schools receiving inadequate support and/or LAs may not have sufficient funds to provide support</i>	227	40.2 (57)			
- <i>Because they want Government to continue providing funding to LAs for school improvement and/or because the system works well at present</i>	129	22.8 (32.3)			
- <i>Because there is insufficient time</i>	119	21.1 (29.8)			

Response type	Number of responses	%	Council	Local authority-maintained school	Academy / Trust
- <i>Because LAs provide local intelligence support to RSCs, particularly during the pandemic response</i>	106	18.8 (26.6)			
- <i>Because LAs have responsibilities for academies</i>	88	15.6 (22.1)			
- <i>Because they felt the proposals may incentivise academisation</i>	68	12 (17)			
- <i>Other or no further reason given</i>	180	31.9 (45.1)			
Not clear or question not addressed / answered	95	16.8	24	34	11

* Numbers in brackets represent the percentages of those who disagreed. Note, the percentages do not always total 100, due to some respondents providing comments falling under more than one category, or not providing a response to that question.

Government response

Most respondents (70.6%) disagreed that our proposals would enable councils to ensure they are sufficiently funded to exercise all their core school improvement activities. These responses have been analysed further to understand why respondents disagreed – with the vast majority indicating they disagreed because this would put a pressure on school budgets and/or that schools forums may not de-delegate sufficient funds to councils.

We recognise the concern that this change will put an additional pressure on school budgets. However, while we are not rolling the grant into dedicated schools grant (DSG) allocations, 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. While we recognise schools' budgets face other pressures as well, the scale of this increase significantly offsets the pressure that may be felt through the loss of this grant, forecast to be worth c.£41m next financial year. And 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.

Having addressed these points, our view remains that councils will therefore be able to access sufficient funding to deliver their core school improvement activities, and that this change does not impose a significant new burden on them.

In addition, we recognise that many respondents would prefer Government continuing to pay this grant – however, as set out in the consultation, we believe this change will support our drive towards a school-led improvement system through putting more decisions about school improvement provision into the hands of school leaders; will bring funding arrangements for councils' 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 responses to the previous question underline that we need to put school improvement funding on a more even footing.

We note too that a number of respondents felt there would not be sufficient time for local authorities and schools forums to agree de-delegation ahead of the next financial year, with a number highlighting it would be impossible to do so by the date of 21 January for making their Authority Proforma Tool (APT) submission to the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). We recognise these timescales will be more challenging than in other years but want to clarify that whilst councils need to submit their APT by 21 January, they only need to confirm schools' budget shares before de-delegation by 28 February, and confirm schools' budget shares after de-delegation by 31 March. ESFA are therefore happy to talk to councils on a case-by-case basis if, as a result of these changes, flexibility is required on timings for confirming de-delegation amounts and rates following the APT submission.

- NB. In APT submissions, councils will be able to deduct funding from maintained schools' budgets (with the consent of maintained school members of the schools forum) in much the same way as for existing de-delegated items in order to fund these services. The Education Functions worksheet should be used as it collects data on the services relating to maintained schools which local authorities can fund from the maintained school budget shares. This is a change from 2021 to 2022 arrangements where school improvement was included in general de-delegation not Education Functions.

We also note objections on the basis that through this core school improvement activity, councils are able to provide local intelligence to Regional Schools Commissioners, which in particular has supported responding to the pandemic. We recognise and value this close working, and by enabling de-delegation of budgets to cover school improvement activity, alongside continuing to pay the grant at 50% in 2022-23, we will ensure that this capacity can be protected.

We also received objections that councils have wider responsibilities, including towards academies. Whilst we recognise that councils will continue to have wider responsibilities, our guidance is clear that this grant has only ever been paid in relation to local

authorities' core school improvement activities relating to maintained schools, and further, the changes made to the conditions of grant in July 2021 formalised this position, such that this funding should not be used for wider purposes.

Finally, there was a not insignificant number who objected on the grounds that the proposals may incentivise further academisation. While we don't consider this a reason why councils would not be able to sufficiently fund themselves to exercise their core school improvement activities, we recognise there is a strength of feeling on this issue.

Question 12

Bearing in mind Proposals 1 and 2, are there any aspects of our guidance to councils on their role in school improvement which could usefully be clarified to aid understanding of what councils are accountable for with respect to improvement and how it should be funded?

Figure 4 – Breakdown of responses to Question 12

Response type	Number of responses	%
Yes	197	34.9
Of which:		
- Guidance needed on what is considered core school improvement activity that LAs can seek de-delegation for	95	16.8 (48.2)
- Guidance needed on what LAs are accountable for if they do not receive adequate funding to deliver core school improvement activity	30	5.3 (15.2)
No further guidance required	84	14.9
Not clear or question not addressed / answered	284	50.3

* Numbers in brackets represent the percentages of those who provided suggestions.

Government response

Feedback showed that by far the most common theme arising in response to this question (48.2% of those who provided suggestions) was that respondents would welcome greater clarity on what is considered core school improvement activity that councils are expected to deliver. In light of this feedback, we will update the Schools Causing Concern guidance to make clear, as in the consultation, that as per page 36 of the guidance, core school improvement activity goes beyond exercising of formal intervention powers, and that councils should:

- Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any that are underperforming, while working with them to explore ways to support progress;
- Work closely with the relevant RSC, diocese and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need to improve;
- Where underperformance has been recognised in a maintained school, proactively work with the relevant RSC, combining local and regional expertise to ensure the right approach, including sending warning notices and using intervention powers where this will improve leadership and standards; and
- Encourage good and outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement, support other schools; and enable other schools to access the support they need to improve.

In updating the Schools Causing Concern guidance we will also make clear that these core activities only relate to maintained schools and not academies.

Beyond this, councils have considerable freedom to agree arrangements and associated funding with their schools forum, but to support such discussions, we will also clarify that the guidance does not require councils to provide or fund support themselves; and that we would normally expect the majority of activity to focus underperforming schools, rather than those rated good or outstanding.

The next most common theme was of respondents seeking guidance on what councils would be accountable for if they do not receive adequate funding to deliver core school improvement activity. As set out in the consultation, we intend to change the Schools and Early Years Finance regulations to enable local authorities to deduct funding from maintained school budgets to support this activity; and the Secretary of State would retain the power to approve the de-delegation contrary to the decisions of the schools forum, if satisfied that the local authority had demonstrated such de-delegation was necessary to ensure the local authority is adequately funded to exercise core school improvement activities.

Question 13

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires that public bodies consider the potential effects of key decisions on groups with protected characteristics. The relevant protected characteristics for the purposes of the PSED are: sex; race; disability; religion or belief; sexual orientation; pregnancy or maternity; gender reassignment; and age. Please let us know, providing evidence where possible, if you believe any of the proposals set out in this consultation will have the potential to have an impact on specific groups, in particular those with relevant protected characteristics.

Figure 5 – Breakdown of responses to Question 13

Response type	Number of responses	%
Would not expect a disproportionate impact on specific groups	50	8.8
The proposals will, or may potentially, have a disproportionate impact on specific groups	295	52.2
<i>Of which:</i>		
- <i>Because there would be reduced funding for LA support provision</i>	214	38.1 (72.5)
- <i>Because of the impact on school budgets</i>	105	18.6 (35.6)
Not clear or question not addressed / answered	220	33.6

* Numbers in brackets represent the percentages of those who believed the proposals will, or may potentially, have a disproportionate impact on specific groups.

Government response

Of those suggesting there will or may be potential negative impact the vast majority (72.5%) indicated this would be because of councils reducing the support they provide because of reduced funding going to councils. As set out above and in the consultation, we intend to change the Schools and Early Years Finance regulations to enable councils to deduct funding from maintained school budgets to support this activity; and the Secretary of State would 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 they were adequately funded to exercise core school improvement activities. This means councils need not reduce the school improvement support they provide to maintained schools because of these proposals.

On which, there were also a significant minority who indicated there will or may be a potential impact on specific groups as a result of the impact of councils deducting funding from maintained school budgets. We have explored this further, comparing the potential impact in those councils where the impact on maintained school budgets may be comparatively higher than the national average, both in proportional and absolute terms.

Overall, this indicates that:

- Pupils attending religious schools make up a slightly higher proportion of maintained school pupils (35.3%) in those 15 councils in receipt of the largest

grant allocations (as a proportion of total maintained school budgets) than they do nationally (29.6%).

- Pupils from a minority ethnic background make up a lower proportion of maintained school pupils (23.0%) in those 15 councils in receipt of the largest grant allocations (in absolute terms) than they do nationally (36.2%).

While this analysis indicates a potential disproportionate impact on pupils attending religious schools, we note that in those 15 councils in receipt of the largest grant allocations as a proportion of total maintained school budgets, the current absolute level of the grant is on average low, with many councils receiving the minimum payment of £50,000, indicating any potential disproportionate impact on these pupils is likely to also be low.

Conclusion

We are grateful for the responses received, and for the ongoing role that councils continue to play in supporting schools and their pupils. We have carefully considered the key themes in the responses, which will shape how we implement these proposals. In particular:

- Councils and local authority-maintained schools value the early support and challenge which councils provide to maintained schools as part of their core school improvement activities and want this to continue. We will enable councils to deduct funding from maintained school budgets to ensure this can remain the case going forwards.
- There are concerns that these proposals will place a burden on maintained schools, and as a result schools forums may not de-delegate councils sufficient funds to deliver their core school improvement activities. We will reserve the right to permit de-delegation against the wishes of a schools forum in order to ensure councils are in sufficient funds to deliver their core school improvement activities, if satisfied that the local authority had demonstrated such de-delegation was necessary to ensure they were adequately funded to exercise their core school improvement activities as set out in the Schools Causing Concern guidance.
- There are concerns that there may be insufficient time for councils to arrange de-delegation in advance of financial year 2022-23. We have clarified that while councils need to submit their APT by 21 January, they only need to confirm schools' budget shares before de-delegation by 28 February and confirm budget shares after de-delegation by 31 March. ESFA are therefore happy to talk to councils on a case-by-case basis if flexibility is required on timings for confirming de-delegation amounts and rates following the APT submission.
- There were calls for greater clarity on what is considered core school improvement activity that councils are expected to deliver. We will update the Schools Causing

Concern guidance to make this clear, in particular that (i) core school improvement activity goes beyond solely exercising of formal intervention powers, and (ii) that the grant is provided to support core school improvement in maintained schools only; and does not require councils to provide or fund school improvement services themselves.

We recognise that there is significant concern, particularly from councils and the maintained sector about removing this additional source of funding. However, given one of the rationales of these proposals is to create greater parity between how school improvement is funded in the maintained and academies sector, which does not receive such additional school improvement funding, after careful consideration of the responses, the government intends to proceed with implementing the proposals.

As such, we will (1) reduce the grant by 50% for the FY 2022-23 and bring it to an end in FY 2023-24 and (2) include provision in Part 7 of Schedule 2 to the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations for FY 2022-23 which would allow councils to de-delegate for all improvement expenditure, including all core improvement activities. We will monitor the impact of the changes during the year.

Next steps

- **Mid-January 2022:** School and Early Years Finance Regulations 2022-23 (England) due to be laid in parliament
- **21 January 2022:** APT submission
- **28 February 2022:** Councils agree maintained school budget shares
- **By April 2022:** School and Early Years Finance Regulations 2022-23 (England) come into effect, permitting de-delegation of budgets
- **By end-April 2022:** Penultimate grant payment
- **By end-October 2022:** Final grant payment

Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation

Achieving for Children

ADCS

ADCS - East Midlands Region

ADCS Yorkshire and the Humber

Air Balloon Hill Primary School

Albright Education Centre

All Saints'

All Saints C of E Primary School

All Saints' N20 Primary School

Area-Based Education Partnerships Association (AEPA)

Arnhem Wharf Primary School

Asby Endowed School

ASCL

Ashfield Junior School

Ashlands and Misterton Federation

Aston University Engineering Academy

Baginton Fields School

Barnet Education and Learning Service

Barnet Education and Learning Service Limited, responding on behalf of the London Borough of Barnet

Barnsley Council

Bartley Green School

Baysgarth School

BCP Council

Beacon Hill Community School

Beatrice Tate School

Beckington C of E VC First School
Bedford Borough Council
Bedgrove Infant School
Bellefield C of E Primary & Nursery School
Bellefield Primary and Nursery School
Bellevue Place Education Trust
Bildeston and Whatfield Federation
Birchfield Community Primary School
Birmingham City Council
Birmingham Education Partnership
Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership
Birmingham Schools Forum
Bishop's Hull Primary School
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Black Combe Junior School
Blackpool Council
Bleakhouse Primary School
Blue Gate Fields Junior School
Bonner Primary School
Borrowdale CE Primary School
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) SACRE
Bow School
Brandhall Primary School
Brent Council
Brent Strategic School Effectiveness Board
Brigg Primary School
Brighter Futures for Children (Reading)
Brighton and Hove Local Authority

Brighton and Hove Schools Forum

Bristol City Council

Broadleaf Partnership Trust

Brough Community Primary School

Brunswick School

Buckinghamshire Council

Bury CE Primary

Bury Council

Bushy Hill Junior School

Buxton Junior School

Calderdale MBC

Cambridgeshire County Council

Camden Council

Camden Learning

Castlebar School

Catholic Diocese of Northampton

Catholic Education Service

Central Bedfordshire Council

Central Foundation Girls' School

Cheshire East Council

Cheshire West & Chester LA

Cheshire West & Chester Schools Forum Finance Subgroup

Chilmark school

Chilthorne Domer Church School

Chilton Foliat CA VA Primary School

Christ Church CE Primary School

City of Westminster

City of Wolverhampton Council

City of York Council
Cockfield Primary
Colerne CE Primary School
Confederation of School Trusts (CST)
Congerstone Primary School
Coombe Bissett School
Cornwall Council
Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School
Coundon Court School
Coventry City Council
Coventry Extended Learning Centre
Coventry Schools Forum
Coventry Secondary Headteacher partnership
Coventry Secondary Headteachers' Partnership
Crosby Ravensworth C of E School
Crudwell CE Primary School
Cuddington and Dinton C of E School
Cumbria County Council
Delta Academies Trust
Denbury Primary School
Derbyshire County Council
Devon County Council
Diocesan Secondary School
Diocese of Bristol
Diocese of Ely multi academy trust
Diocese of Peterborough
Diocese of Worcester - Education Team
Discovery Schools Academy Trust

Dorset Council

Dover Grammar School for Girls

Dudley MBC

Dunraven Educational Trust

Durham Johnston Comprehensive School

Durrington CE VC Junior School

Ealing Local Authority

East Sussex County Council

Eastbury Community School

Eastern Green Junior School Coventry Local Authority

Edgewick Community Primary School

Education and Children's Services Group of Prospect

EKC Group and EKC Schools Trust

Ellingham Primary School

Elmfield School for Deaf Children

Enfield Council

Essex County Council

Essex Schools Forum

Evolution Academy Trust

F40 group

Fairlop Primary School

Farmor's School

Ferndown Upper School

Frederick Bird Primary

Frederick Gough School

Frogwell Primary School

Fynamore Primary School

Gateshead Council

GLA

Glade Primary School

Gloucestershire County Council

Grange Primary School

Grove Vale Primary

Guildford Diocesan Board of Education

Hallfield Primary School

Halton Borough Council

Hamilton School

Hammersmith and Fulham

Hampshire County Council

Hamstead Junior School

Hardenhuish School Governing Body

Haringey Education Partnership

Harnham Junior School

Harrow Council

Hawkesbury Primary School

Heddington Primary School

Herefordshire Council

Herringthorpe Infant School

HHJS

Hilmarton Primary School

Hitherfield Primary School

Holbrook Primary School

Ibstock Junior School

Imperial Avenue Infant School

Inspire Learning Partnership

Inspiring Primaries Academy Trust

Institute of School Business Leadership
Isle of Wight Council
Islington Council
Joint Coventry trade unions NEU, NASUWT and NAHT
Kent County Council
Killamarsh Infant and Nursery school
Kings Lodge Community School
King's Wood School and Nursery
Kirk Merrington Primary School
Kirkbampton CE Primary School
Kirklees Education and Learning Partnership
Kirklees Local Authority
Kiwi School
Knowsley Council
Kobi Nazrul Primary School
Lacock Primary School
Lancashire Schools Forum
Leeds Learning Alliance
Leicester City Council
Leicestershire County Council
LGA
Lincolnshire County Council
Lincolnshire Learning Partnership Board
Lincolnshire Local Authority
London Borough of Bexley
London Borough of Bromley
London Borough of Croydon
London Borough of Hackney

London Borough of Haringey
London Borough of Havering
London Borough of Hillingdon
London Borough of Lewisham
London Borough of Southwark
London Borough of Sutton
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
London Coordinators of Governor Services (LCOGS)
Lowther Primary School
Ludgershall Castle Primary School
Lumley Infant and Nursery School
Luton Borough Council
Lyneham Primary School
Lyng Primary School
Lytchett Minster School
Magdalen Gates Primary School
Magna Learning Partnership
Manchester City Council
Manor Fields Primary School
Marlbrook, Little Dewchurch and St Martin's Primary Collaboration
Marwood School
Mayflower School
Medway Council
Merton Council
Milborne Port Primary School
Milverton Community Primary and Pre-school
Moat Farm Junior School
Moat House Primary School

Monkton Park Primary School
Morland Area Primary School
Morpeth School
Much Wenlock Primary School
NASUWT
NASUWT - The Teachers' Union - Coventry Association
National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
National Education Union
National Governors Association
NEston Primary School
Neston Primary School, Wiltshire
Nether Stowey Primary School
Newcastle Board of Education
Newton Burgoland primary
Newton Hall Infants' School
Newton Tony Primary School
Nexus MAT
Norfolk County Council
North Somerset Council
North West Association of Directors of Children's Services
North Yorkshire County Council
Northumberland County Council
Nottingham City Council
Nottingham Schools Trust
Nottinghamshire County Council
Nova Primary School
Oakfield Academy
Old Oak Primary School

Old Park Primary School
Oldham Council
Oliver Tomkins Schools
Osmani Primary School
Otley and Witnesham Partnership
Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School
Oxfordshire LA
Parkhill Junior School
Pennine Way Primary School
Phoenix school
Plymouth City Council
Polden Bower School
Primary School
Prince Regent Street Trust
public health Somerset County Council
RCBC
Rochdale Council
Rochdale Pioneers Trust
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Royal Latin School
Saint John Wall Catholic School
Salford City Council
Sandwell Borough Council
Sarum St Paul's Primary School
Schools Alliance for Excellence
Schools Forum
Sefton LA

SESLIP - the South-east Sector-led Improvement Partnership

Seven Sisters Primary School

Shaftesbury Junior School

SHARE Multi-Academy Trust

Sheldon School

Shirehampton Primary School

Silverwood School

Slough Borough Council

Society of County Treasurers'

Solihull MBC

Somerset County Council

South Gloucestershire Council

South Park Primary School

South West ADCS

Southampton City Council

South-east Sector-led Improvement Partnership (SESLIP)

Southwick CE Primary School

Special Educational Consortium

Sprowston Infant School

St Edward's School

St Helens Borough Council

St James cofE Primary

St John's and St Clement's Primary

St Johns Primary School

St Joseph's Catholic School

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

St Mary's C of E Primary School

St Nicholas School

St Nicholas School Bromham
St Paul's C of E Combined School
St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary school
St. Margaret's CE Primary
St. Paul's CE Junior School
Staffordshire County Council
Stanley Primary School
Stockport MBC
Stockton Local Authority: Education Improvement Service
Stone CE Combined School
Surrey County Council
Sutton Road Primary School
Sutton Veny CofE Primary School
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
Telford and Wrekin Council
Telford and Wrekin Local Authority
The Arun Villages Federation
The Church of England Education Office
The Claxton Trust
The Education People
The Grange School
The John of Gaunt School
The MFG Academies Trust
The Village Federation
The Weald and Downlands Schools Federation
Thomas Buxton Primary School
Thomas Hickman School
Thomas Hickman School, Aylesbury

Thornton-in-Craven CP School
Together For Children Sunderland Children's services
Tove Learning Trust
Tower Hamlets Council
Tower Hamlets Education Partnership
Tower Hamlets LA
Trafford Council
Tylers Green First School
Uckfield College
UNISON
Uplands Manor Primary School
Urchfont CE Primary School
Villa Real School
Villa Real Special School
Wakefield Council
Wandsworth Council
Warrington LA
Warwickshire County Council
WASSH
Water Mill Primary School
Wendover CE Junior School
West Berkshire Council
West Bromwich North Learning Community
West Coventry Academy
The Romero Catholic Academy
West Midlands Education and Skills
West Sussex County Council
White Woods Primary Academy Trust

Whitecrest Primary School

Wigan LA

William Davis school

William Murdoch Primary School

Wiltshire Council

Winterbourne Earls Primary School

Winterton Community Academy

West Midlands Local Authorities

Woodgate Primary School

Woodmancote School

Wootton Bassett Infants School

Worcestershire County Council

Yew Tree Primary School

Copy of all consultation questions

Preliminary questions

1. What is your name?
2. What is your email address?
3. Are you responding as an individual or as part of an organisation?
4. What is your organisation? (if applicable)
5. What type of organisation is it?
6. What is your role? (if applicable)
7. What local authority area are you based in?
8. Are you happy to be contacted directly about your response?
9. Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?

Consultation questions

10. We believe that instances of councils exercising formal intervention powers remain relatively low, and that since its introduction, this grant has primarily supported improvement functions such as early support and challenge to improve individual school performance, which overlaps with wider (non-core) improvement provision. Do you agree that this is the case? If not, please explain
11. We are proposing to (i) remove the grant (Proposal 1), and (ii) enable councils to de-delegate funds via their schools forum to ensure they are sufficiently funded to exercise all of their improvement activities, including all core improvement activities. Do you agree that, taken together, these proposals will allow councils to continue to ensure they are adequately funded for core improvement activities; and therefore do not impose a new burden? If not, please explain
12. Bearing in mind Proposals 1 and 2, are there any aspects of our guidance to councils on their role in school improvement which could usefully be clarified to aid understanding of what councils are accountable for with respect to improvement and how it should be funded?
13. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires that public bodies consider the potential effects of key decisions on groups with protected characteristics. The relevant protected characteristics for the purposes of the PSED are: sex; race; disability; religion or belief; sexual orientation; pregnancy or maternity; gender reassignment; and age. -Please let us know, providing evidence where possible, if you believe any of the proposals set out in this consultation will have the potential

to have an impact on specific groups, in particular those with relevant protected characteristics.



Department
for Education

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 6th OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

SCHOOLS BUDGET VARIATIONS 2022-23

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the anticipated variations for the current year 2022-23 schools budget.

2.0 2022-23 SCHOOLS BUDGET

- 2.1 Overall the schools budget is forecast to overspend by £1.904 which is mainly due to pressure in the High Needs Block. This reflects an increase in the overspend of £1.7m from the position reported at the June 2022 meeting. The table below summaries the outturn position by funding block and a more detailed analysis is attached in Appendix 1.

	2022-23 Budget £	2022-23 Forecast £	2022-23 Variation Under/-Over spend £
Schools Block	119,142,322	119,142,322	0
Schools Block de-delegated	1,819,643	1,801,936	17,707
Central School Services Block	3,579,849	3,533,583	46,266
High Needs	52,379,430	54,366,448	-1,987,018
Early Years	20,183,630	20,198,430	-14,800
DSG Grant Income	-195,355,485	-195,389,569	34,084
Total before contribution to/-from Reserve	1,749,389	3,653,150	-1,903,761
Movement on DSG Reserve	-289,889	-2,193,650	1,903,761
Total after contribution to/-from Reserve	1,459,500	1,459,500	0
Cumulative reserve balance b/fwd from 2020-21			-1,690,030
In-year contribution to/-use of reserve			-2,193,650
Cumulative reserve balance c/fwd to 2022-23			-3,883,680

- 2.2 The 2021-22 financial year closed with a Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserve cumulative deficit position of £1.690m. The current forecast outturn position means that the year-end addition to reserve balance will be increased to £2.194m thus delivering a cumulative £3.884m deficit position at the end of 2022-23.

3.0 2022-23 BUDGET

- 3.1 There have been no changes to the budget since the position reported at the June 2022 meeting.

4.0 2022-23 FORECAST BUDGET VARIATIONS

The budget variations that make up the £1.904m overspend are identified in the table attached in Appendix 1. The reasons for the variations as well as comments on specific budget areas are given below.

4.1 Special Schools £194K adverse

The budget includes additional places to address demand, and as reported at June 2022 meeting, the anticipated increase in number of places will exceed the budget set aside for 2022-23. The forecast reflects the allocation of additional 155 places on a temporary basis from September 2022. The final number of the places to be allocated to the special schools might increase further depending on the demand.

4.2 SEN Bases £8K adverse

An overspend position of £8k is due to the base project – it has created additional 36 base places in 3 schools from September 22 and additional 20 places in 2 schools from January 23.

4.3 Early Years £15k adverse

The forecast position assumes that the take-up of 2- and 3–4-year-old provision will be in line with planned activity. The position will be monitored during the year as more information becomes available. The in-year overspend relates to the Disability Access Fund ring-fenced funding which is confirmed £14,800 more than the figure included in the budget - £116,800 for 2022-23.

4.4 Schools Block de-delegated £17.7k Favorable

A small favorable variance related to the insurance costs which is forecasted to be the same level of as the past years.

4.5 Central School Costs £46K favorable

- Admissions - £15k favorable variance due to staff costs.
- Schools Forum - £5k favourable. Although there is no formal spend plan for this budget at this time, it is expected that a return to face to face meetings later in the year will incur meeting related costs.
- Contingency - £25.4k favourable. No potential calls on this contingency have been identified at this time.

4.6 Special Education Needs - Additional resources £900k adverse

Demand on this budget is expected to grow in line with the requests for Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments. Requests increased by around 28% in the period to August 22 compared to last year. Not all the requests will result in a financial outcome, but it is expected that a significant portion will result in Units of Resource being awarded and this will result in an overspend of £720k for Primary school pupils and £254k for Secondary school pupils. Currently additional EHCP Coordinators are engaged to address the backlog of the outstanding assessment and the number of EHCP issued has been significantly increased. The total number of the EHCP issued in the period between April to August 22 is 364, compared with 373 issued in 2021-22.

The position will be monitored closely, and the forecast position re-assessed as more up-to-date information becomes available.

4.7 Special Education Needs – Top Ups £523k Favourable

The table below analyses the forecast position across the various activities that form the overall Top-Ups budget.

	Budget	Forecast	Variation Under/-Over spend
	£	£	£
Top-Ups for Maintained Special Schools	9,625,088	9,257,504	367,584
Top-Ups for Resourced Provision	2,217,681	2,094,264	123,417
Alternative Provision	1,318,200	1,318,200	0
FE & 6th Form Top-Ups	2,225,000	2,426,668	-201,668
Additional Nursing Support	160,000	160,000	0
Exceptional Needs	1,390,500	1,158,108	232,392
Total	16,936,469	16,414,744	521,725

Whilst the budget is forecasted as an underspend in 22-23, the forecasted expenditure is £1.49m higher than the total expenditure in 21-22. The budget has been increased significantly in 22-23 reflecting the increase in demand.

The need for this budget will be increased according to the increase in the number of places in the special schools and SEN bases. The position will be monitored closely, and the forecast position re-assessed accordingly.

4.8 Independent Special Schools £0.946m adverse

The demand continues to increase more than anticipated and forecasted to be an overspend of £946k despite the budget has been increased in 22-23.

The current forecast for 22-23 is based on 158 pupils and total forecasted expenditure is £7.996m. 21-22 saw a significant increase in the number of pupils in the independent special schools – 97 pupils at April 21 increased to 140 at the end of March 2022.

4.9 Support for SEN £12.5k favourable

There are several activities and services that are delivered by this budget including Hearing and Vision, Communication Differences, Vulnerable Children, Pre School Portage and Physical/Medical Impairment and all are expected to be delivered within the overall 2022-23 budget with a small underspend.

4.10 Dedicated Schools Grant £34k favourable

The favorable variance relates to the following adjustments:

- High Needs Recoupment £5,833
- High Needs Import Export £6,000
- Early Years 21-22 grant adjustment £7,451
- DAF allocation adjustment £14,800

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That the Forum notes the report and the forecast financial position of the Schools Budget for 2022-23.

Simone White

Director of Children, Families and Education
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Appendix 1 - Budget Variations 2022-23

	2022-23 Budget	2022-23 Forecast	2022-23 Variation
Individual Schools Budget			
Primary	96,718,989	96,718,989	0
Secondary	22,291,955	22,291,955	0
Special	13,411,216	13,605,585	-194,369
Wirral Hospitals School	1,589,422	1,589,422	0
SEN Bases	1,112,565	1,120,677	-8,112
Sixth Form/Further Education	268,000	268,000	0
Early Years	19,199,369	19,214,169	-14,800
Growth and Falling Rolls Fund	131,378	131,378	0
Individual Schools Budget Total	154,722,894	154,940,175	-217,281
Central School Costs			
Early Years Costs	534,261	534,261	0
Admissions	388,009	372,674	15,335
School Redundancy Costs	76,000	75,803	197
Licenses and subscriptions	259,856	259,856	0
Schools Forum	10,600	5,300	5,300
Contingency	25,434	0	25,434
Contribution to combined budgets	630,450	630,450	0
PFI Affordability Gap	1,459,500	1,459,500	0
Retained duties Central (ex-ESG)	730,000	730,000	0
Costs delegated to/de-delegated from schools			
Library Service	183,783	183,783	0
Insurances	24,909	7,202	17,707
School Specific contingencies	31,245	31,245	0
Special Staff Costs	785,478	785,478	0
Behaviour Support	142,131	142,131	0
School Improvement	149,999	149,999	0
Retained duties de-delegated (ex-ESG)	502,098	502,098	0
High Needs Pupils			
Additional resources	9,665,491	10,565,928	-900,437
SEN top-ups	16,936,469	16,414,744	521,725
High Needs contingency	561,104	1,033,740	-472,636
Independent Special Schools	6,734,980	7,680,623	-945,643
Home Tuition	364,166	364,166	0
Support for SEN	2,127,817	2,115,363	12,454
Special School Transport	58,200	58,200	0
Non-delegated school costs Total	42,381,980	44,102,544	-1,720,564
Total Costs	197,104,874	199,042,719	-1,937,845
Funding			
Dedicated School Grant	-195,355,485	-195,389,569	34,084
Total before Movement in DSG Reserve	1,749,389	3,653,150	-1,903,761
Contribution to/-from DSG Reserve	-289,889	-2,193,650	1,903,761
Grand Total	1,459,500	1,459,500	0

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 6th October 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

School Budgets and Indicative Deficit Balances

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a regular report presented to Schools Forum describing the current and projected financial position for schools together with action that is being taken. The position remains challenging due to increased costs during 2022-23, even with additional supplementary funding provided for 2022-23 financial year.

2. BACKGROUND

There are ongoing cost pressures in schools arising from pay awards, utilities, other inflationary pressures, changes in pupil numbers and the continuing effects of COVID. There has been additional funding through the Supplementary Grant for 2022-23, which for mainstream schools will be added to the formula budget for 2023-24. There will be further increases in DSG for 2023-24, but not at the same rate as current inflationary costs.

3. Indicative Balances

The final cumulative school balances as at 31st March 2022 were £16.3m, which was an increase from the previous year of £2.8m.

When schools set their budget for 2022-23 they also review their financial position for future years. The table below summarises this position and indicates that balances may reduce by £3.46m in March 2023 and a further £7.7m in March 2024. Due to the unexpected increase in balances in March 2021 and again in March 2022 this prolongs the time in which school budgets will be an overall negative balance.

At budget setting income targets for such areas as meals, nursery provision and hire of rooms/grounds remain conservative until it is clear that these areas will bounce back to 2019 levels.

Table 1

	Actual Balances at Mar 2022 £	Expected Balances at Mar 2023 £	Expected balances at Mar 2024 £
Nursery	336,203	101,186	-151,502
Primary	12,596,338	10,757,114	5,239,191
Secondary	1,142,929	1,385,139	1,393,269
Special	2,231,930	599,971	-1,322,509
Total	16,307,400	12,843,410	5,158,449

These figures do not take into consideration updated pay award estimates since budget setting:-

- Support staff salaries were increased by 3% at budget setting, but a flat rate offer of £1,925 is still being discussed – this amounts to pay awards between 10.3% for lowest paid to 3.1% for highest paid support staff.
- At budget setting Teacher salaries from September 2022 were increased for M1 – M6 between 8.9% & 4% respectively with all other grades at 3%. The new offer has not

changed for M1 -M5 grades, but grade M6 upwards have been offered 5%. This means an additional 1% for M6, with 2% for all other grades above this.

These salary offers have not yet been agreed so may increase further, but the current offers will be built into period 6 monitoring reports.

For all schools who purchase their utilities through the LA (Crown Commercial) the contract remains in place until 31st March 2023, the wholesale rates purchased through this contract are lower than the cap the government have recently announced for businesses. There is no information for future financial years currently.

Additional costs highlighted above will be built into period 6 monitoring reports.

4. Individual School Deficits

There are currently 3 schools with licenced deficits and agreed budget plans, with 3 schools who have moved back into a credit position this year. In addition, there are 4 schools who will be issued with a Notice of Concern.

On the basis of table 1 the number of schools who may have a deficit budget as at March 2024 would increase to 24 (12 in March 2022), each school with an average deficit of £138k.

Table 2 – expected deficits in March 2024

	Number of schools	Expected number of schools with a deficit	% schools with a deficit
Nursery	3	2	67%
Primary	77	15	19%
Secondary	4	1	25%
Special	11	6	55%
	95	24	25%

The position remains static for all phases, except for Special Schools where budget challenges remain. However, those schools with small credit carry forward balances into 2022-23 may move into a deficit position with the additional salary costs identified above, increasing the number of schools in deficit in future years.

5. Action Taken to Date

- Licenced deficit plan is in the process of being agreed for one school that cannot set a balanced budget in 2022-23, with the other 2 schools still working through already agreed plans.
- The Notice of Concern process is currently being reviewed and it is expected that 4 will be managed within this process.
- LMS and HR continue to work with schools to balance budgets and plan any reduction in staff numbers or hours. Where schools are reviewing staffing levels this is in a number of cases leading to a consideration of redundancies.
- There are continued discussions with Headteachers and school finance staff where budgets are not balancing in future years.
- School Bursars continue to support Headteachers and governors with more detailed projections.

6. Future Action

- To review the position of school balances after Period 6 monitoring, taking account of additional staffing costs already detailed and identify schools who will move into a deficit position.
- Contact schools with large projected deficits in future years to discuss ways to reduce in year deficits going forward.
- Schools requesting a licenced deficit are required to demonstrate how the budget will come back into balance within 3 years (4 years in exceptional circumstances).
- Where agreement cannot be reached a Notice of Concern will be issued, requiring an immediate action plan to be agreed by governors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Forum notes the report
2. That school budgets continue to be monitored.

Simone White
Director of Children, Families and Education

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 6th October 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

2022-23 FALLING ROLLS AND GROWTH FUND

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to propose the option of how the falling rolls and growth fund is distributed for 2022-23.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following consideration by Schools Forum meetings in November 2020, the criteria for distributing the falling rolls and growth fund for 2020-21 was agreed as:

- the growth and falling rolls fund would be one fund, and
- allocation of the fund will be based on 3-year pupil number changes (not percentage growth or fall),

- 2.2 The total fund of £466k was distributed to 23 schools applying the above criteria in 2020-21

- 2.3 As the value of the falling roll and growth fund for 2021-22 (£153k) was significantly less than the value of 2020-21, to explore more effective use of the fund, several potential criteria for allocation of the fund were identified and presented at the June 2021 meeting. The options considered were listed as below - further details of each option as presented at the meeting is as appendix A:

- Option A – as set in 2.1 above
- Option B - option A but where the cumulative % change is 10% or more.
- Option C - falling rolls as per option A. Growth based on one year change in number of pupils
- Option D – option C but where financial award is not less than £3,500.
- Option E – option C but where the growth reflects a change of 5% or more for Primary Schools and 2.5% for Secondary Schools

- 2.4 The Forum agreed to adopt option B and resulted in 14 schools benefiting from the distribution of the fund in 2021-22

- 2.5 The value of the falling rolls and growth fund for 2022-23 is reported at the June 2022 meeting as £131k. The value of the fund is currently determined by the 'headroom' in the Schools Block allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) after the funding formula has been applied. Following consultation with schools in October 2021, it was agreed that the 2022-23 funding formula would include a

+1.25% minimum funding guarantee (MFG) to secure the widest possible distribution of the allocation directly to schools. Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) regulations do allow for distribution to exceed the value of the fund but overspends will form part of the overall DSG surplus or deficit balance.

3.0 DISTRIBUTION OF THE 2022-23 FUND

- 3.1 The table below is the summary of the outcome of applying the options listed in 2.2 above - Appendix B shows the detailed allocation outcome of applying these options:

		Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D	Option E
Growth	Primary	4	1	30	30	8
	Secondary	10	5	14	14	5
Falling Rolls	Primary	10	3	10	10	10
	Secondary	1	0	1	1	1
Total Number of schools receive allocation		25	9	55	55	24
Average Allocation per school		£5,255	£14,598	£2,389	£4,122	£5,474

Please note that application of Option D exceeds fund thus overspend will form part of the overall DSG surplus or deficit balance.

- 3.2 Option B is felt to be the most appropriate basis for allocation of the fund as it provides consistency with previously agreed criteria whilst providing useful individual allocations that support their effective use within the confines of a limited fund.

4.0 FUTURE FOCUS

- 4.1 The current basis for allocating the falling rolls and growth fund focus on overall cumulative/year-on-year changes with little consideration of the factors that drive the changes and further development should be considered.
- 4.2 Following the Direct NFF consultation in 2021, DfE states that its preferred way is to continue to operate the falling rolls and growth funds locally but combining local flexibility with more prescription and regulation. It is probable that the DfE would make changes to legislation to mandate that local authorities prepare more consistent policies and restrict the operation of these funds.
- 4.3 The further outcome of the consultation and/or the government decision will be presented in the future meeting when they are published.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That Schools Forum adopt Option B as the basis for distributing the 2022-23 Falling Rolls and Growth Fund as this option aims to target the significant impact

of falling rolls and growth whilst allocating funding on a basis to support its effective use

5.2 That the Forum notes the future focus set out in section 4.0.

Simone White
Director of Children, Families and Education

Appendix A

	Features	Advantages	Disadvantages
A	Takes account of consistent 3-year change.	Consistent application across years.	Financial awards relatively small due to size of fund and growth in number of recipients thus impact may not be effective in each school.
B	Takes account of consistent 3-year significant change.	Financial award more meaningful value to support effective use.	Limit to number of schools that benefit.
C	Takes account of consistent 3-year change for falling rolls and one year change growth.	Focus on continuing falling rolls and new growth. Maximises distribution across schools	Financial awards relatively small in some cases due to size of fund and growth in number of recipients thus impact may not be effective in each school. Does not take account of on-going growth impact.
D	As per option C but with minimum funding level.	Focus on continuing falling rolls and new growth. Maximises distribution across schools whilst providing a meaningful financial award.	Application exceeds fund thus overspend will form part of the overall DSG surplus or deficit balance. Does not take account of on-going growth impact.
E	As per option C where growth change is significant.	Focus on continuing falling rolls and new significant growth. Financial awards meaningful to ensure effective use of overall funding.	Limit to the number of schools that will benefit. Does not take account of on-going growth impact.

Appendix B

Ref	2022-23					
	Falling Rolls/ Growth Fund	Distribution based on existing criteria	3 Yr. consistent growth or fall where cumulative change is based on an impact of 10% or more	Falling Rolls = 3 year consistent change. Growth = 2022-23 increase	Falling Rolls = 3 year consistent change. Growth = 2022-23 increase (minimum award of £3,500)	Falling Rolls = 3 year consistent change. Growth = 2022-23 increase where the increase reflects a change of 5% or more for Primary and 2.5% or more for Secondary
		Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D	Option E
		£	£	£	£	£
A001	G	1,436	0	778	3,500	0
A003	G	0	0	2,802	3,500	0
A004	G	0	0	1,557	3,500	0
A006	G	6,461	0	3,263	3,500	0
A005	F	3,384	13,559	5,137	5,137	7,131
A007	G	13,333	17,216	6,226	6,226	8,643
A014	G	7,897	0	467	3,500	0
A019	G	7,487	0	2,335	3,500	0
A020	G	0	0	2,024	3,500	2,809
A024	F	7,384	17,375	11,208	11,208	15,558
A025	F	1,538	0	2,335	3,500	3,241
A026	G	0	0	623	3,500	0
A028	G	0	0	1,090	3,500	0
A030	G	0	0	934	3,500	0
A032	G	0	0	311	3,500	0
A034	G	3,179	0	2,335	3,500	0
A036	G	4,000	0	2,958	3,500	0
A038	G	0	0	623	3,500	0
A041	G	0	0	778	3,500	0
A042	G	0	0	2,179	3,500	3,025
A044	G	0	0	3,892	3,892	5,402
A045	G	0	0	1,712	3,500	0
A050	G	0	0	2,179	3,500	3,025
A051	G	0	0	156	3,500	0
A055	G	0	0	467	3,500	0
A056	G	0	0	156	3,500	0
A058	F	1,744	0	2,646	3,500	3,673
A060	G	18,666	22,127	8,250	8,250	11,452
A061	G	0	0	623	3,500	0
A064	F	1,231	0	1,868	3,500	2,593
A040	G	3,590	11,446	156	3,500	0
A066	G	14,871	15,784	9,340	9,340	12,965
A070	G	0	0	1,401	3,500	1,945
A072	G	9,128	9,237	9,184	9,184	12,749
A054	G	0	0	1,868	3,500	0
A073	F	4,205	10,770	6,382	6,382	8,859
A075	F	1,026	0	1,557	3,500	2,161
A077	G	3,282	0	467	3,500	0
A078	G	0	0	467	3,500	0
A079	G	0	0	3,892	3,892	0
A081	F	615	0	934	3,500	1,296
A084	G	0	0	311	3,500	0
A088	G	0	0	3,892	3,892	5,402
A090	F	1,231	0	1,868	3,500	2,593
A093	G	12,512	13,865	5,292	5,292	7,347
A095	G	1,128	0	311	3,500	0
A098	F	820	0	1,245	3,500	1,729
A099	G	0	0	1,712	3,500	0
A101	F	1,231	0	1,868	3,500	2,593
A102	G	0	0	2,179	3,500	3,025
A103	G	0	0	1,245	3,500	0
A107	G	0	0	778	3,500	0
A108	G	0	0	1,557	3,500	2,161
A109	G	0	0	623	3,500	0
A111	G	0	0	934	3,500	0
		131,378	131,378	131,378	226,694	131,378

Assumptions/Factors applied:

* Growth relates to pre-16 pupil numbers to meet basic need.

* Falling rolls support is available only for schools with a good or outstanding Ofsted inspection

* Pupil numbers used in calculations are those presented in each October census.

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Workplan

Meeting Date	Tuesday 22nd November 2022	Tuesday 17th January 2023	March 2023 Provisional meeting	Tuesday 13 th June 2023
Virtual / Physical				
Budget	Budget Monitoring 22-23 Update	Budget Monitoring 22-23 Q3 Schools Budget 23-24 De-delegation of budgets School Balances update		Provisional outturn 2022-23 Schools Budget 2023-24 School Balances update -
Consultation	National Funding Formula Update for 2023-24			- - - -
DfE Regs & guidelines	Schools Forum Membership If updated · DfE Operational Guide · School Finance Regs Scheme for Financing Schools	Schools Forum Membership If updated · DfE Operational Guide · School Finance Regs Scheme for Financing Schools		Schools Forum Membership If updated · DfE Operational Guide · School Finance Regs Scheme for Financing Schools
Working Groups	School Formula High Needs	High needs Early Years		High Needs Early Years
Other	De-delegated services · Contingency, Spcl Staff Costs, Insurance · Library Service · School Improvement · Behaviour Support Edsential Update	Sensory Support Service Update Energy update Wirral Alternative Provision Update		LACES /LAC PP Update Home Continuing and Education Service (HCES) update Agree Meeting Dates

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