

LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM
Date of meeting 13 January 2022

Item No 7

Title: Recommendations of the Schools Block Working Group

Appendix A refers

Executive Summary

On 7 December 2021, the Schools Block Working Group considered a number of reports, including:

- Apprenticeship Levy Update;
- Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded
Government consultation;
- School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme;
- Healthy Relationships Training Programme Outcomes;
- School Feedback on Covid Catch Up Funding;
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) workforce fund to support schools with costs of staff absences;
- School Financial Management Information Software.

The Forum is asked to:

- a) **Note the report from the Schools Block Working Group held on 7 December 2021;**
- b) **Ratify the Working Group's recommendations.**

Background

On 7 December 2021, the Schools Block Working Group considered a number of reports. A summary of the information presented, and the Working Group's recommendations are provided below:

1. Apprenticeship Levy Update

This item was deferred, as complications have very recently arisen about the ESFA teacher programme and the apprenticeship levy team need to look at the structure of the apprenticeship teacher programme before sharing anything with forum/publishing further information to schools.

An update will be provided in due course.

2. Schools Block Funding 2022/23

On 27 October 2021, the Chancellor delivered his Autumn Budget and 2021 Spending Review

The Core school budget will increase by £4.7bn by 2024-25, compared to DfE's original 2022-23 plans. This includes £1.6bn in additional funding for 2022-23 budgets, on top of the year-on-year increase of £2.4bn already confirmed. This is intended to help the sector respond to the costs pressures faced by the sector including, for example increases in national insurance, on high needs, in managing Covid and in supporting children and young people to recover from the pandemic.

DfE have indicated that they will confirm in due course how this funding will be allocated in 2022-23 for schools and high needs, and it is anticipated that this will be part of the annual DSG allocation announcement which are expected mid December 2021.

It is also understood that the additional £1.6bn will be paid as a grant outside DSG for 2022/23 because the NFF has already been announced and that all schools will benefit from the additional grant, even those on MFL will see an increase. The grant will then be rolled into core school funding for 2023/24.

Beyond 2022-23, the DfE indicate that the funding announcement will mean that they can deliver year on year, real terms per pupil increases to school funding, equivalent to a cash increase of £1,500 per pupil by 2024-25 compared to 2019-20. DfE indicate that this will enable schools funding to return to 2010 levels in real terms.

Informally, the increase in core school funding may be as follows

Year	Additional Funding		
	Already Announced	Announced in Spending Review	Total
	£bn	£bn	£bn
2022/23	2.4	1.6	4.0
2023/24		1.5	1.5
2024/25		1.6	1.6
Total	2.4	4.7	7.1

In addition to the core funding, announcements provide a further £1.8 bn dedicated to supporting young people to catch up on missed learning. The dedicated recovery investment includes a one-off £1 billion recovery premium to support disadvantaged pupils in all state-funded primary and secondary schools, while £800 million will be allocated across the period to ensure all 16-19 students will benefit from an additional 40 hours of education across the academic year - the equivalent of one additional hour a week in school or college.

At part of the December report to the Working Group, the LA would normally include some early assessment of the likely 2022/23 Schools Block position, using local provisional data from the October school census. However, the complete local data only became available on the morning of the 7 December, so brief initial modelling was shared with the group.

It was noted that pupil predictions included in the School Place Provision Strategy, based on birth rate data, forecast that primary school pupils were now on a downward trajectory and secondary school pupils were still rising, but with a levelling off of overall pupil numbers in Lancashire.

The recently available October 2021 census data actually showed a rise in both primary and secondary NOR. Subject to final data from the DfE when 2022/23 DSG allocations were announced, this showed that total primary NOR had increased by 107 compared to October 2020, with a 1,127 increase in the secondary sector for the same period.

One of the risks identified in early forecasts for the 2022/23 Schools Block allocation related to a possible reduction in growth fund allocation. These NOR figures provided a revised growth fund estimate of over £4.5m, which was comparable to the 2021/22 allocation.

Deprivation data used in the Schools Block allocation was still awaited and the estimated shortfall of circa £4m on FSM allocation remained, so considerable pressure was still predicted in setting the Schools Block budget from April 2022.

Members discussed the report and the updated NOR data, together with the wider School Place Provision Strategy. It was agreed that the School Place Provision Strategy document would be circulated to the Working Group

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the report and the updated NOR data;**
- b) Noted that final Schools Block budget calculations would need to await the 2022/23 DSG allocations from the DfE, expected around 16 December 2021;**
- c) Requested that the School Place Provision Strategy document be circulated to the working group.**

3. Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded Government consultation

On 29 October 2021, the DfE issued a consultation on 'Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded'. A copy of the full consultation document was provided for the working group. The consultation sought views on DfE proposals to

- Remove the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant (the 'Grant'), which is 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 (including all core school improvement activities) via de-delegation from schools' budget shares.

The School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant is paid to the LA for 'core' school improvement activities undertaken by the LA and is not part of the DSG.

Whilst the main implications for this funding are for the LA, the proposals do impact on maintained schools and the schools forum going forward. As the closing date for this consultation was 26 November 2021, which was before the next meeting of the Forum/working groups, a draft Forum consultation response was circulated for approval using the Urgent Business Procedure.

By the closing date, responses had been received from 18 members, as follows:

- 17 responses supported the draft Forum reply without amendment
- 1 response supported the draft Forum reply but suggested amendments

The suggested amendments to the draft Forum reply related to typographical/grammatical edits and these were incorporated into the response. In addition, other members made general comments along with their response, the most common was concern about the possible timetable for introduction of the change.

A copy of the final forum response submitted to the DfE was provided for the working group and a copy is attached at **Appendix A**. The Forum response raised a number of concerns about :

- The negative impact the proposals may have on school improvement activity for maintained schools;
- The risk that schools will not choose to de-delegate;
- The loss of the grant funding to the school improvement system.
- The unrealistic timescale for implementation.

The consultation documentation indicated that that the DfE decision will be available in 'December 2021/January 2022'. As highlighted in the Forum response, such a timescale would leave very little time for any consultation with maintained schools about a possible 'school improvement' de-delegation from 2022/23, but this possibility exists.

The current arrangements provide the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant, based on the number of maintained schools in the LA, for 'core improvement activities' and allow funding to be de-delegated for 'additional improvement services', if agreed by the Forum. To date, Lancashire has funded school improvement activities from the Grant and from LCC's Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) allocation and has not chosen to propose an 'additional improvement services' de-delegation. In addition, a traded service is offered to schools from the School Improvement Service, which individual schools can choose to purchase each year.

The Lancashire grant allocation for 2021/22 equates to just under £2m and DfE proposals indicate that this would be reduced by 50% in 2022/23, potentially leaving a £1m shortfall in school improvement funding from April 2022.

The Grant is proposed to cease totally from 2023/24.

There is no indication in the consultation about what would happen to the Grant funding no longer being allocated to LAs. This could mean that cost of any school improvement de-delegation from 2022/23 would therefore be borne by maintained schools, from their school budgets, and this appears to be part of the DfE rationale, as funding is top-sliced by MATs from their academies to secure improvement support in the academy sector.

However, if the DfE took the suggestion in the response to transfer the grant funding into the DSG, this would provide assistance to maintained schools and academies, although it should be noted that formal DSG announcements for 2022/23 are expected on circa 16 December 2021, so this may be before any consultation decisions are taken.

Members considered the report and the consultation response and also noted that the County Council had submitted a consultation response.

The working group expressed support for the work undertaken by the School Improvement Service in Lancashire and were extremely concerned about the possible timescales set out in the consultation, which may mean decisions impacting on 2022/23 financial year Schools Budget are only announced by the DfE in 'December 2021/January 2022'; This is putting the school improvement functions offered by Lancashire in jeopardy and creating uncertainty for the service and even for colleagues employment going forward;

Members recognised that it was extremely difficult for the authority to make definitive plans for School Improvement functions from April 2022, without knowing the outcome of the government consultation, but asked if the Service could be considering relevant options. The Group also expressed a view hoping that whatever decision are taken by DfE that implementation is delayed giving all involved reasonable notice of the changes.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;**
- b) Noted the Schools Forum consultation response agreed under the Urgent Business Procedure;**
- c) Expressed further concerns about the DfE proposals on Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded and expressed a view hoping that whatever decision are taken by DfE that implementation is delayed giving all involved reasonable notice of the changes.**

4. School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme

Each year, reports are presented to the Forum about the arrangements for the School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme. This report set out proposals for the 2022/23 Scheme changes for consideration.

2020/21 Outturn Position

It was noted that the 2020/21 outturn report indicated that the Scheme reserve at 31 March 2021 was at circa £1.9m, following an in-year surplus of circa £0.9m.

The Forum recommended that the scheme reserve be held at that level to mitigate against the risk of high costs being incurred in 2021/22, particularly relating to the pandemic. It was agreed that the supply scheme position would be reassessed at March 2022, when judgements could be made about the appropriate level of reserves going forward.

2021/22 Scheme Arrangements

The scheme arrangements agreed with the Forum for 2021/22 looked to increase premiums to take account of the amended scheme operation, which included provision to support some additional COVID related absences, for example self-isolation, and the possible increase in the number of sickness absences that may occur in year as a result of the pandemic and the possible increased duration of absences eg from long Covid.

Following finalisation of the supply scheme arrangements with the Forum in January 2021, individual offers were issued to schools and academies for consideration.

It was noted that 416 schools joined the scheme in 2021/22, which was one fewer than in 2020/21.

2022/23 Scheme Proposals

Scheme Operation

The operation of the scheme has been flexible in recent years to respond to changes in general government advice on the pandemic, and it is proposed that the scheme should continue to react to any update government guidance throughout 2022/23. However, it is proposed that the scheme rules operating in 2021/22 should form the starting point for 2022/23, including:

- Self-isolation. Staff who are self isolating due to COVID-19 symptoms or as a result of test and trace will continue to be covered by the scheme, where the school is incurring additional costs by covering the absence as if staff were off ill, and subject to the normal scheme rules, for example, the waiting periods chosen by the school and subject to the school remaining open and scheme reimbursement rates.
- In year changes to the level of cover provided will remain suspended in 2022/23 so that the scheme reserve can be protected in order to cope with the demands caused by the pandemic.
- Ongoing government guidance for workers who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) is that that they no longer needed to shield. Staff in Lancashire schools can return to work as long as the workplace is COVID secure and supply cover is not therefore supported by the scheme in 2022/23. However, the scheme will respond to any specific guidance or in year changes to government/LCC Schools HR advice in respect of Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) staff.
- No other changes are proposed to the Scheme SLA.

Scheme Premiums

During 2021/22, the demands on the supply scheme have fluctuated depending on the government guidance applicable for schools at the time.

This uncertainty made assessing the scheme's financial position more difficult, but information on the end of November 2021 position was shared with the working group at the meeting.

- The scheme has paid out circa £0.5m more at this point in 2021/22 than it had in 2020/21,
- This may broadly mean that the outturn position could be net nil for the scheme at March 2022.
- A number of uncertainties with the comparison remain, and current year supply costs appear to be highest since September 2021, so there is a risk the scheme will overspend this year.

Another factor to consider for 2022/23 relates to possible pay awards. A 3% increase is currently forecast for both teaching staff and support staff. It is usual practice to increase teaching and support staff premiums annually so that reimbursement rates can also increase in line with likely pay rises for the different categories of staff.

The Scheme reserve was held at an increased level at the end of the 2020/21 financial year to mitigate the risks associated with the pandemic, it is therefore judged that premiums from April 2022 should simply be increased by 3% for both the teaching staff and support staff elements, to match the forecast pay awards, a number of uncertainties with the comparison remain, and current year supply costs appear to be highest since September 2021, so there is a risk the scheme will overspend this year.

Reimbursement rates

It is proposed that the reimbursement rates be increased by 3% for 2022/23 to mirror forecast pay awards, in line with the proposed increase in scheme premiums.

Alternative options were also considered including:

- The level of increase on premiums for 2022/23 could be scaled back in recognition of the cost pressures facing schools, but this increases the risk that the scheme reserve would be exhausted, placing a greater burden on the DSG reserve;
- Premiums could be increased further in order to reduce the risk to the scheme reserve, which is underwritten by the DSG reserve.

Service Offer to Schools

Once scheme arrangements and charging/reimbursement rates are finalised by the Forum in January 2022, a formal individualised 2022/23 scheme offer will be issued to all schools and academies.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;**
- b) Noted the uncertainties around the current scheme monitoring position for 2021/22;**
- c) Supported the proposed 3% increase on premiums and reimbursements.**

5. Healthy Relationships Training Programme Outcomes

In 2014/15, the Forum allocated a non- recurrent resource of £600K to commission a number of projects to enable staff in schools to develop the confidence, skills and resources needed to deliver effective Healthy Relationships Education and therefore support young people to form healthy relationships now and in the future.

Resources were not fully utilised at the end of the project, and, following an outcomes report in November 2017, the Forum supported the carry forward of unspent resources in subsequent years to maximise the course provision that could be made for schools for healthy relationships training.

In supporting the carry forward, the Forum requested a summary report around the overall use of this funding and the outcomes achieved at the end of the project.

The completion and presentation of the outcomes report has been delayed due to the COVID pandemic, but a finalised report is now available and was provided for the working group.

This final report captures the impact of the programme 2017–2019 and combines the data for the whole programme to show the total of what was achieved between 2014 and 2019, including data analysis on the number of schools benefiting from this training in total, by districts, phases and the roles in school of the delegates who attended.

The report included conclusions from Kate Piercy PSHE and Healthy Schools Teacher Adviser and it was noted that the two main aims of extending the programme were:

- To engage with schools that had not done so previously
- To support schools with the growing needs in relation to emotional and mental wellbeing.

Overall, 72% of the schools engaged with this training programme 2014 – 2019 and the evaluations of all the courses show the success in meeting people's training needs and in their grading of the quality of training provided by partners and the Teacher Advisers.

The Group welcomed the report and note that the changed rules around DSG central expenditure meant that it was not possible to fund any further training of this kind from the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB).

Members also discussed services offered to schools and staff and noted that in some other LAs a 24 hour helpline was available to school staff for wellbeing. Officers agreed to make enquiries around Lancashire's position.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;**
- b) Expressed thanks to Kate Piercy and her colleagues for the report and the training provided since 2014;**
- c) Asked that enquiries be made about any school staff helpline considerations that had taken place in Lancashire.**

6. School Feedback on Covid Catch Up

The Government has made a number of additional funding streams available to schools to assist with the educational recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included:

- The Coronavirus catch-up premium;
- The National Tutoring Programme;
- The Recovery Premium funding for the 2021/22 academic year;
- The school-led tutoring grant.

The County Council's Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee receives regular reports about pupil attainment in Lancashire, but at a recent meeting questions were raised about the impact of the DfE catch up funding. It was agreed that this supplementary information should be presented to the Committee as part of the attainment report due to go to the committee in February 2022.

School Improvement colleagues will collate a report about attainment data and any intelligence on the impact of covid and catch up funding on pupil performance.

However, Forum members were specifically asked about funding related feedback on the catch up grants.

Some representatives expressed a view that the National Tutoring Programme, although it was noted that accessing the systems was not easy at first.

Many members also welcomed the Recovery Premium, as the similarities to the ongoing Pupil Premium Grant meant that schools were already organised for expenditure of this type and the reporting requirements.

The complexity of the school-led tutoring grant was emphasised with members indicating that the administration of the grant was onerous. Concern was also expressed that the grant conditions were burdensome and the DfE have indicated that they will claw back unspent grant or grant funding not used in accordance with the conditions. The group were also worried that many schools maybe unaware of the conditions and therefore at increased risk of the clawback, although it was noted that the LA had published information on the portal about the grant conditions and the full list of school allocations

Comment was also made that the DfE level of contribution dropped in future years making the costs associated with the administration even less appealing to schools.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;**
- b) Asked that the views expressed about Covid Catch-Up Funding be considered fed into the wider Scrutiny report.**

7. Coronavirus (COVID-19) workforce fund to support schools with costs of staff absences

At the Forum meeting in October 2021 members had noted that the demands on school supply costs were significantly increasing in response to the government's latest covid guidance and increased staff absence.

Forum made representations to the DfE about this, but the response indicated that no further funding would be made available to support schools.

Subsequently DfE have announced that the government have reopened the Coronavirus (COVID-19) workforce fund to support schools with costs of staff absences. The new window of support will only cover 22 November to 31 December 2021 and strict eligibility criteria are included in the fund conditions.

Whilst the group welcomed any support for schools in challenging circumstances members note that the limited time window, and strict eligibility criteria meant that few schools would qualify for this grant and any allocations would be limited. Members also noted that it was difficult for schools to access supply staff at the current time.

The Working Group:

a) Noted the report.

8. School Financial Management Information Software

A small number of schools are considering changing their School Financial Management Information Software.

Such arrangements were previously discussed with the Forum in 2017, when it was confirmed that a decision about the appropriate Financial Management Information package to be used by a school is a matter for each school but highlight that the Scheme for Financing School specifies that whatever system a school chooses, they must be able to provide the County Council with their accounts in the required format or meet the costs of modification.

The costs associated with any development work to ensure new systems could provide data to the County Council in the required format were estimated at around £4,000 the first time a new supplier was engaged by a Lancashire school. This figure may reduce for schools subsequently using the same supplier. Costs are being reinvestigated by finance team, as ICT is now back in house with LCC, and those schools that are currently taking forward a request appear to be favouring a system already operated by other Lancashire schools.

Discussions took place with the Schools Forum about whether any central funding could be provided to assist schools with these costs, particularly where they are the first Lancashire school to engage with a supplier. The Forum determined that no central support could be provided in such cases. Forum members concluded that to support school costs arising from individual decisions they had taken would set a dangerous precedent and felt that schools needed to consider the full cost implications alongside any advantages or savings they believed would accrue from changing their system.

It was also noted that the county council was developing a proforma that could be used to inform the finance team of an intention to change provider and that a period of notice (perhaps six months) should be provided to enable time for the relevant compatibility developments to be made.

Members commented that the increased recent interest in alternative providers may have been caused by concerns over recent communications from SIMS, where the new owner is automatically extending the contract from one year to three years from February 2022.

Members also reported that the DfE had advised schools not to sign up to the new agreement yet and some colleagues indicated that they had given notice of an intention to withdraw from SIMS in order to keep options open going forward.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;**
- b) Reiterated their original view around costs and notice periods where schools choose to change their School Financial Management Information Software;**
- c) Asked that officers seek advice from Lancashire County Council Education Digital Services about the SIMS contract position.**

Response ID ANON-JNAN-G7C2-T

Submitted to Reforming how local authority school improvement functions are funded
Submitted on 2021-11-26 10:24:37

Introduction

1 What is your name?

Name:

Paul Bonser

2 What is your email address?

Email:

schoolsforum@lancashire.gov.uk

3 Are you responding as an individual or as part of an organisation?

Organisation

4 What is your organisation? (if applicable)

Organisation:

Lancashire Schools Forum

5 What type of organisation is it?

Organisation type:

Other

6 What is your role? (if applicable)

Role:

Clerk to Schools Forum

7 What local authority area are you based in?

Local authority area:

Lancashire

8 Are you happy to be contacted directly about your response?

Yes

9 Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?

No

Reasons for confidentiality:

About this consultation

Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded

Background: Councils' school improvement functions and how they are currently funded

Proposal and rationale

Proposal 1: Removing the Grant

Proposal 2: Including provisions in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations to enable councils to fund all core improvement activities via de-delegation

Clarifying guidance provided to councils with respect to school improvement

Timeline

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.

Response to question 10:

We do not agree.

Whilst we agree with the statement that LAs use of formal intervention powers remains relatively low, we note that the consultation document indicates that it is 'understandable: councils will want to act before performance deteriorates significantly and formal intervention becomes an inevitability, for example, by putting in place arrangements to spot signs of potential underperformance early and challenge it; and only moving on to formal intervention through warning notices and further intervention powers where this hasn't worked and performance has deteriorated'.

In Lancashire, 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. This has helped to improve performance.

We are of the view that the schools brokering grant has been effectively used to target sustainable improvement across the sector. The LA has a well-developed 'schools requiring additional support strategy' that is much more rigorous than the 'early support' envisaged in this consultation. This strategy ensures that all settings have access to this support funded by the grant.

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 (Proposal 2).

Response to question 11:

We do not agree,

We have a number of significant concerns and believe that this proposal does place an additional burden on LAs.

We are also concerned that this proposal places an unnecessary risk on the school improvement process for maintained schools, as there can be no guarantee that schools/schools forum will vote for a de-delegation. We understand the motivation to ensure that there is equity between maintained schools and academies, however the decision to top-slice money from an academy for school improvement functions rests with the MAT. This proposal is not bringing equivalence to the system for maintained schools.

We acknowledge that the LA could appeal a decision not to de-delegate to the Secretary of State, but this would bring the LA into conflict with the Forum, and this would be undesirable, especially given the good relationship between the Forum and LA that currently exists in Lancashire.

If the schools forum does not agree to de delegation it would pose a difficulty to Local Authorities meeting their statutory duties.

Even if de-delegations are approved, this agreement is for only for a year at a time, which would create significant uncertainty about planning for future years and retaining staff without the security of a clear funding model.

If DfE does proceed with this proposal, we would urge the government to transfer the funding being saved by discontinuing the grant into the DSG. This would at least mean that the level of funding being targeted at school improvement is not reduced at this particularly difficult time in the educational recovery from the pandemic. A reduction in school improvement funding at the current time would seem totally counterproductive and a transfer of grant funding to DSG would benefit maintained schools and academies.

The argument in the consultation document that the 3.2% uplift in funding in 2022/23 allows the funding to be found from DSG does not take account of the significant cost pressures facing the sector. Our latest estimate of teachers pay increases is circa 3%, there are increased employer NI charges and the new £30k starting salary, plus general inflation estimated at 5% plus and significantly higher uplift forecast for energy costs. Even with the extra core school funding announced by the Chancellor, the school sector will likely be facing a real terms reduction in 2022/23 and, without transferring the grant funding to the DSG, this will be another burden.

A further concern about the proposals relates to timing. FY 2022/23 is too soon for a smooth transition to revised arrangements. In Lancashire, we have already consulted on de-delegations for 2022/23.

The consultation document indicates that decisions will be available in 'December 2021/January 2022'. This leaves too little time to formally consult and agree any new de-delegations from April 2022. The schools budget setting timetable is already unrealistic, with DSG notifications not expected until circa 16 December 2021 and APT submissions, containing formal Forum and council approvals, required by 21 January 2022.

If government do introduce revised arrangements, we would urge a more realistic timetable of introduction to be followed, with the transitional year being implemented in 2023/24 and full implementation from 2024/25.

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?

Response to question 12:

If DfE amends the school improvement arrangements, then the updated position must be reflected in the statutory guidance and regulations.

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.

Response to question 13:

The removal of the grant may limit the LA's capacity to respond to a school or setting which is in need of additional support. This in turn will compromise children's educational outcomes at a time when we should be focusing all of our resources on supporting their catch up given the disruption of the last two years.