

Item 12

Recommendations of the Schools Block Working Group

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Brief Summary

On 2 June 2023, the Schools Block Working Group considered a number of reports, including:

- **Health and Safety Update – Hiring Swimming pools on School grounds;**
- **De-Delegation Proposals 2023/24;**
- **High Needs Block Supplementary Grant Task and Finish Group;**
- **PFI updates**

A summary of the information presented, and the Working Group's views are provided in this report

Recommendation

The Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the report
- b) Ratify the Working Groups Recommendations

Detail

On 20 June 2023, 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. Health and Safety Update

Jill Cornwell, Service Delivery Manager Health, Safety and Quality attended the meeting to provide information around hiring swimming pool on school grounds. The authority are aware of this and had been working with the provider to create a suitable risk assessment for schools risk assessment



Following the meeting it was noted that current providers are unable to accommodate children with mobility needs or disabilities and difficulties who are unable to access the pool via the stepladders provided. There are no accessible facilities, therefore any school considering this model of delivery will need to consider the impact on children who need support to access a pool and make alternative arrangements for them to be able to take part in swimming lessons. Schools are advised to comply the guidance and risk assessments available on the Schools Portal.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report and thanked Jill for the update

2. De-Delegation Proposals 2024/25

At this point, it is anticipated that the school funding framework will continue to allow service de-delegations in 2024/25. Funding for de-delegated services must be allocated through the schools block formula but can be de-delegated for maintained mainstream primary and secondary schools. The DfE's operational guidance for 2024/25 will normally be issued in July 2023 and will confirm the final funding arrangements from April 2023.

De-delegations must be approved on an annual basis by the Forum and be subject to consultation with maintained primary and secondary schools.

In accordance with normal practice, it is envisaged that a de-delegation consultation will be issued to maintained primary and secondary schools in early September 2023, with responses being reported to the meeting on 17 October 2023, at which time the Forum will be asked to make formal decisions, by phase, on each de-delegation proposal.

In 2022/23, the Forum formally approved 4 service de-delegations, relating to:

- Staff costs – Public Duties/Suspensions
- Heritage Learning Service - Primary Schools Only
- Support for Schools in Financial Difficulty
- Inclusion Hubs - Primary Schools Only
- School Improvement

Relevant de-delegations were also offered to nursery schools, special schools and PRUs as pooled services buy-backs.

For 2023/24, the LA is again proposing to consult on the continuation with some aspects of the services as de-delegations, and possibly merging the Schools In Financial Difficulty and School Improvement de-delegation. Further information was provided on each service.

1. *Staff costs – Public Duties/Suspensions*

In recent years the 'Staff costs – Public Duties/Suspensions' de-delegation proposals included various options around the treatment of trade union duties, including:

- a) Continue the 'Staff Costs - Public Duties/Suspensions' de-delegation using the existing policy



- b) Continue the 'Staff Costs - Public Duties/Suspensions' de-delegation but with a reduced Trade Union Facilities Time contribution to reflect a smaller workforce
- c) Continue the 'Staff Costs - Public Duties/Suspensions' de-delegation but without any Trade Union Facilities Time contribution
- d) Completely discontinue the 'Staff Costs - Public Duties/Suspensions' de-delegation

In considering this de-delegation each year, the Forum has also asked for information arising from an annual review of the trade union facilities time agreement and the latest report, which had been produced by Schools HR colleagues, and was provided for members. The report included information about the historical position of the facilities time agreement, the legal requirements, recent union amalgamations and number of school staff supported from the de-delegation and how this has changed in recent years.

The HR manager has been invited to the next cycle of meetings to discuss the de-delegation further.

2. Heritage Learning Team - Primary Schools Only.

The Schools Forum have historically supported the work the Heritage Learning Team undertakes for primary schools to help meet the national curriculum and to support wider cultural learning and learning outside the classroom.

It is again proposed to consult on the continued de-delegation of this service for 2024/25, at the same level as currently de-delegated of £1.97 per pupil, in the primary sector only.

3. Inclusion Hubs – Primary Schools Only

The LA is also proposing to continue with de-delegation proposals for Primary Inclusion Hubs for 2024/25.

The Inclusion team have implemented feedback forms to Inclusion Hubs and will provide feedback in Autumn term meetings and a report is currently being developed and will be shared with the Schools Forum.

The Inclusion Hub Headteacher leader and a District Head have confirmed their attendance for the next cycle of Forum meetings and are working with the Schools Forum Clerk to provide additional information.

The proposed de-delegation 2024/25 initial modelling suggests the rate to remain at £11 per pupil.

4. Schools who Require Additional Support

The previous 'Schools in Financial Difficulty' de delegated buyback is re-named 'Schools who require Additional Support' buyback and schools are asked to pay what they can on a sliding scale for support required.

This support could be financial, HR resource, or Intervention work provided by other education improvement services. Eg. Consultancy support, extra advisory support, training, resources etc.



- Schools who are in deficit or have a surplus balance below 1% CFR income pay 20% of the cost, the grant pays 80%.
- Schools who have balances between 1% and 4% CFR Income pay 50% of the cost and the grant pays for 50%.
- Schools above 5% CFR pay 80% and the grant pays for the other 20%.

Costings to be finalised shortly.

This is reverting back to the previous model where schools will pay for their own support if they have the budget to do so rather than the de-delegation funding this.

Under the new School Improvement handbook all schools will receive one visit a year from an advisor and schools who require additional support with receive three. These will be funded through council budgets and not through the de-delegation as it is a statutory duty toward non-academy schools.

However, due to the rise in these visits we have increased the costings slightly from the previous year's Schools in Financial Difficulty costs. This is because visiting every school the LA feel may require support and want to ensure there is funding to provide the support needed. More schools are also being judged requires improvement or inadequate than before which requires more support. Any surplus de-delegation funds will be allocated back to the forum.

This year 2023/2024 primary schools, nurseries and PRUs who voted in favour of the school improvement grant have been receiving intervention support from education improvement services without having to pay extra for this and regardless of their own school's financial situation. In the October forum meeting, we will be able to present the 6 monthly figures as to how much of the School Improvement buyback from last year has been spent. This will inform our ask for costs as above in October but it unlikely to be significantly different.

The Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the proposals
- b) Express any views

3. High Needs Block Supplementary Grant Task and Finish Group

Following discussions with the Forum, it was agreed that the High Needs Supplementary Grant would be calculated in two parts:

- A payment to all Special Schools and PRU's as per the DfE guidance and conditions of grant.
- A further allocation of a WPN element of additional high needs funding for Primary and Secondary schools, as well as the FE Colleges, will follow a similar process as last year but with additional consideration for Early Years settings for pupils with EHCP plans.

Using this methodology, £2.5m remained unallocated. During the Spring Term Forum meetings, it was agreed to set up a task and finish group to allocate the remaining funding.

In Summary the funding was allocated;



- £600k to create two central Inclusion Engagement Support Teams to support children without an Educational Health Care Plans, funded for one year.
- £400k allocated to Y11/12 transition teams for Alternative Provision schools, administered through SEND central team.
- £150k Support for transition between EYFS/Reception to be funded through the inclusion hub banker schools.
- £300k Support for transition between Y6/7 to be to be funded through the inclusion hub banker schools.
- £1,050,000 to be transferred back to Reserves for High Needs Block.

The letter found in Appendix B was sent to all schools on 30th March and the minutes, Appendix A, was distributed to members and will be reported at the Full Forum in July.

Following conversations with the High Needs and Early Years working group a number of concerns were raised regarding the distribution of the transitional funds by the Inclusion Hubs.

Originally the LA is proposed to reconvene the High Needs Block Task and Finish group to establish a best practice to distribute the transitional funding. Officers attended the Inclusion Hub District meeting on 22nd June 2023, each district hub in attendance provided a brief update on their plans for the funding. Once the information has been received from all district hubs, it will be provided to the schools Forum. A report will also be provided in December to review the funding.

In addition, the IEST Teams are currently being recruited and should be operational by the Autumn Term.

The Forum is asked to:

- Note the information**

4. PFI updates

PFI historic Commitments

Following the submission of the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) in December 2022, the ESFA raised concerns in February 2023 around PFI funding. The Local authority were instructed to remove any historic PFI commitments by the ESFA. Unfortunately, this led to a reduction in PFI funding for six settings in Lancashire.

A presentation was presented on 16th March at the Lancashire Schools Forum to highlight concerns around the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) pressures. PFI funding formed part of this discussion, however prior to this, individual schools should have been notified of the budget implications before budget statements were released to all settings in 22 February 2023.

The Authority would like to apologise for the delayed communications to these schools. A letter was issued 15th June 2023 to the affected schools.

PFI Hameldon Site

Officers, Paul and Kevin, were finally successful in getting the DfE to support the authority in transferring, and therefore retaining, the PFI Funding for the Hameldon



Site. To note, the PFI Gap funding will no longer grow each year as previously within the Schools Block, however, this is similar to the PFI Gap funding for all the other Special Schools.

The forum would like to pass on thanks to Paul Bonser and Kevin Smith for all their work in securing this funding.

The Working Group is asked to:

- a) Note the information**
- b) Thank Officer for their work on securing the funding**

