

# Public Document Pack



**Schools Forum**  
**Wednesday, 21 February 2024 4.00 p.m.**  
**To be held remotely**

S. Young

**Chief Executive**

*Please contact Ann Jones - Tel: 0151 511 8276 or email:  
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The next meeting of the Committee is on 5 June 2024*

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH  
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Part I**

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<b>6. MEETING DATES FOR 2024-25</b>	
▪ 5 June 2024 at 4pm	
▪ 16 October 2024 at 4pm	
▪ 22 January 2025 at 4pm	
▪ 26 February 2025 at 4pm	

***In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.***

**SCHOOLS FORUM**

*At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 17 January 2024 held remotely*

Present:

A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC  
 N Shafiq, Financial Management, HBC  
 J. Farrell, Education, Inclusion & Provision  
 K. Landrum, (Chair) Primary School with a Nursery Representative  
 N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative  
 J. Wilson, Secondary Governor Representative  
 E. Haver, Special Academy Representative  
 A. Sheppard, VA Schools Representative  
 C. Dalton, Secondary Academy Representative  
 J. Robertson, Small Primary School Representative  
 M. Murphy, 16-18 Provision Representative (Sub)

*Action*

SCF31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Jane O'Connor (PVI); Ben Barton (16-18 Provision) but named substitute sent, Mary Murphy; Cathy Liko (Community Nursery Schools); and Jackie Coughlan (Primary Infants).

SCF32 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF33 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FUNDING FOR 2024/25

The Forum received a report advising of the Dedicated Schools Grant funding for 2024-25. The indicative individual school budget allocations schedule was emailed to Representatives before the meeting.

This was announced on 19 December 2023, at £154.497m and was broken down as follows:

Schools Block	-	£111,188m
Central Schools Services Block	-	£0,747m
Early Years Block	-	£15,554m
High Needs Block	-	£27,007m

It was noted that this was an overall increase of £11,104m compared to the £143,393m allocated for 2023-24.

The report explained each of the Schools Blocks' funding allocations and the National Funding Formula methods applied. It was noted that the High Needs and Early Years Block budgets would be presented at the February meeting of the Forum. Pupil numbers were highlighted as the primary sector had seen a reduction overall of 250 pupils, whilst the secondary sector had increased slightly by 16 pupils. Officers advised that the individual budgets and formulas presented today would be submitted to the ESFA for approval week commencing 22 January. Once approved the individual schools' budgets would then be distributed to schools.

The Forum was requested to decide the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to be applied to the Schools Block Funding Formula for 2024-25. A level of 0.5% was agreed in principle at the October 2023 meeting and Officers advised that this was still the recommendation following the DSG settlement. The Forum confirmed its agreement with the recommendation of 0.5% MFG to be applied to the Schools Block funding formula for 2024-25.

The Forum was also requested to support the continuation of the National Funding Formula methods, principles and rules for mainstream primary and secondary schools funding allocations and de-delegations for 2024-25. This was agreed by the Forum.

The following was also discussed by Representatives:

- The contingency pot for redundancies – there was some doubt as to whether this was still available so it would be confirmed after the meeting;
- The reductions in primary pupil numbers was occurring in Runcorn and Widnes and consideration of this was being given by the Council;
- Speech and Language Services *Chatterbug* – the handing over of case notes to the new provider was completed but new referrals were currently on hold. HBC staff conducted weekly meetings with the new provider; any further concerns on the services were requested to go to the Operational Director, Jill Farrell; and
- Further to a request for volunteers to sit on a sub-group meeting, Representatives Elaine Haver, Nigel Hunt and Angela Sheppard agreed; further information would follow.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

Operational  
Director - Finance

- 1) note the report;
- 2) support the continuation of the National Funding Formula methods, principles and rules for mainstream primary and secondary schools funding allocations and de-delegation for 2024-25; and
- 3) agree to an MFG level of 0.5% being applied to the Schools Block Funding Formula for 2024-25.

*Meeting ended at 4.30 p.m.*

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Schools Forum
<b>DATE:</b>	21 February 2024
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Operational Director – Finance
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Children & Young People
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	DSG Early Years Block 2024-25
<b>WARD(S)</b>	Borough wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update and seek Schools' Forum recommendations on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2024-25 for Early Years.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

Schools' Forum note and comment on the 2024-25 hourly rates and supplements for the Early Years Formula applicable from the 1<sup>st</sup> April which are currently being consulted on with the sector.

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 3.1 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement

The 2024-25 DSG settlement was announced on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023 allocating Halton a total of £154.497m, which is broken down as £111.188m for the Schools Block, £0.747m for the Central Schools Services Block, £27.007m for the High Needs Block, and £15.554m for the Early Years Block. The Early Years, this year is a significant increase on last year as the formula has been adjusted nationally to provide additional support for 2 year olds and under 2 two year olds.

Schools' Forum approved the Schools and Central Schools Support Services (CSSB) block determinations and formula unit values at their meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024, with Early Years and High Needs to be considered at this meeting, 21st February 2024.

### 3.2 Early Years Block

The DSG announcement has provided an indicative Early Years allocation which includes the up-to-date hourly rates to be used in Halton's determination of the under 2, 2, 3 and 4 year old early education funding entitlement to Maintained Nursery Schools, Nursery Classes, and Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings including Childminders.

The 2024-25 allocation remains indicative until after the January 2024 early years headcount has been collated, validated and used by the DfE to inform Halton's actual Early Years Block allocation to be notified in July 2024.

The indicative allocation for 2024-25 is £15.554m which is £5.779m greater than 2023-24, this reflects the national change to enhance the 2 year old offer and create a new under 2s offer. This indicative amount may decrease in line with the current demographic trends. Forum should be aware that, whilst the level of funding allocation may ultimately decrease, this will not cause any financial burden on the Early Years DSG position as there will be a corresponding reduction in funding allocated to providers due to their decreased pupil numbers on roll.

The indicative rates and DSG allocations are provided within the table below:

Funding Stream	Hourly Rate/Rate	Number of Entitlements	Total Indicative Funding	Hourly Rate Variance to 2023/24
Universal Entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds	5.72	1700.73	5,545,060	0.52
Additional 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of 3 and 4 year olds	5.72	883.51	2,880,596	0.52
2 year old disadvantaged entitlement	8.20	423.34	1,978,691	2.49
2 year old entitlement for working parents	8.20	539.57	2,521,950	-
Under 2s entitlement	11.18	273.38	1,742,141	N/A
Early Years pupil premium for 3 and 4 year olds	0.68	462.53	179,277	
Early Years pupil premium for 2 year olds	0.68	269.23	104,354	
Early Years pupil premium for under 2 year olds	0.68	13.46	5,217	
Disability Access Fund for 3 and 4 year olds	910	94	85,540	
Disability Access Fund for 2 year olds	910	33	30,030	-
Disability Access Fund for under 2 year olds	910	9	8,190	-
Maintained Nursery School supplementary funding	4.64	179	473,419	0.84
<b>Total Early Years Funding Block</b>			<b>15,554,465</b>	

As mentioned above, a consultation exercise with the sector has been undertaken and the results are currently being collated and findings will be taken into consideration. Given the changes within the block it was thought appropriate to consult more widely and this is in line with the majority of other local authorities. The consultation presented a proposed methodology for allocation and asked a number of questions around the methodology, the key slide is below along with the proposed indicative rates to providers.

Proposed Banding Allocations						
Funding Stream	LA Retention	Base Rate	Depreavation	Quality	SENIF	Contingency
Under 2 year olds	2.5%	96.0%	0%	0%	0.5%	1%
2 year olds	2.5%	96.5%	0%	0%	0.7%	0.3%
3 and 4 Year olds	2.5%	90.8%	3%	2.5%	1%	0.2%

Proposed allocation by percentage across the funding elements.

**Schools' Forum are required to comment on the hourly rates and supplements to be applied to the 2023-24 Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) determinations for all providers as follows:**

<b>Halton's Indicative Funding Rates</b>			
	Base Rate	Deprivation Rate	Quality Rate
3 and 4 year olds	5.19	0.17	0.14
2 year olds	7.91	0.00	0.00
Under 2s	10.73	0.00	0.00

It is also proposed to passport the full Maintained Nursery Supplementary grant direct to maintained nursery schools. Actual deprivation allocations will vary by postcode analysis.

The pass-through rate is proposed at 97.5% which is consistent with the previous year.

#### 4.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The financial aspects outlined throughout this paper have been developed accordance with statutory financial regulations and operational guidance relevant to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) requirements.

4.2 The proposals included within this paper are all funded from within the available Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) block allocations provided for 2024-25.

#### 5.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### 5.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

To ensure that in Halton children and young people are safeguarded, healthy and happy, and receive their entitlement of high quality services that are sensitive to need, inclusive and accessible to all.

##### 5.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

To create an economically prosperous Borough that encourages investment, entrepreneurship, enterprise and business growth, and improves the education, skills and employment prospects of our residents and workforce so they can share in all the opportunities Halton affords.

##### 5.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None

##### 5.4 **A Safer Halton**

None

##### 5.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None



**6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 Failure to comply with the statutory financial regulations and operational guidance relevant to Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) requirements could result in formal intervention by the Department for Education (DfE).

**7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 The Local Authority must discharge its statutory responsibilities in relation to all schools and settings.

**8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

None

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Background papers and further information, including the statutory guidance that has informed this report, can be obtained via Gov.uk

For any enquiries contact [Naheem.Shafiq@halton.gov.uk](mailto:Naheem.Shafiq@halton.gov.uk).

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Schools Forum
<b>DATE:</b>	21 February 2024
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Operational Director – Finance
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Children & Young People
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	DSG High Needs Block 2024-25
<b>WARD(S)</b>	Borough wide

## 1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To update and seek Schools' Forum recommendations on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) 2024-25 for the High Needs Block.

## 2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the contents of this report are noted.**

## 3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### 3.1 **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement**

The 2024-25 DSG settlement was announced on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023 allocating Halton a total of £154.497m, which is broken down as £111.188m for the Schools Block, £0.747m for the Central Schools Services Block, £27.007m for the High Needs Block, and £15.554m for the Early Years Block.

### 3.2 **High Needs Block**

The High Needs Block allocation has been announced as £27.007m before Academy and Further Education (FE) recoupment, but including the deduction in respect to net exports of SEND children being educated in other areas.

Academy and FE recoupment will be £3.180m for the per place funding element deductions as identified by the DfE published allocations. No intra block transfers have been applied this year. For 2024-25 Halton has £23.827m for distribution to specialist provisions and to contribute to supporting the ongoing cost pressures being faced by the High Needs block.

Schools' Forum are requested to note the funding rates to be applied to the High Needs block allocations on the basis of Place-Plus (top-up) funding for specialist provision including Mainstream SEND Units.

### **Mainstream Schools with Resource Units - Funding 2024-25**

Mainstream units are funded on a Place-Plus basis where the Place funding element is set at £6,000 per Occupied place and £11,000 for Un-Occupied places. The Occupied rate is only £6,000 as it is expected that the children being supported in the special units will be on roll at the school and are therefore included in the main school formula funding allocation – so called Notional funding.

The Plus element is the top-up funding provided for occupied places and subject to Forum approval as per the table below.

School / Academy	Unit	2023-24 rounded	2024-25 rounded	2024-25 Uplift
<b><u>Primary</u></b>		£	£	%
Weston Point	EBD	5,355	5,462	2%
Halton Lodge	SEMH	6,051	6,172	2%
The Brow	Assessment	3,174	3,237	2%
Woodside	EBD	4,331	4,418	2%
Beechwood	SEMH	6,089	6,211	2%
Kingsway Academy (Simms Cross)	ASD KS1/2	4,793	4,889	2%
Oakfield	Assessment	4,343	4,430	2%
The Grange	ASD KS1/2	6,164	6,287	2%
<b><u>Secondary</u></b>				
The Grange	ASD KS3/4	7,044	7,185	2%
Sts Peter & Paul	ASD KS3/4	5,747	5,862	2%

### **Special Schools and Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)**

Special Schools and PRUs are funded on a Place-Plus basis where the Place funding element is set at £11,000 per Occupied or Un-Occupied places. For Special Schools the Plus element is the top-up funding provided for occupied places only and is based on a Banding system which recognises the severity of SEND and associated support requirements in accordance with the individual pupils' Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The top-up banding values vary per school due to recognising the differing running costs of each school.

The PRU top up value is intended to contribute to all running costs including vocational courses for pupils. Where schools and academies commission any places directly with the PRU then they are responsible for funding the top-up element.

Plus (top-up) Funding per Special School and PRU:

School	Banding	2023-24	2024-25	2024-25 Uplift
		£	£	%
Ashley	Level 1	7,995	8,155	2%
	Level 2	10,658	10,871	2%
	Level 3	16,010	16,330	2%
Chesnut Lodge	Level 1	10,661	10,874	2%

	Level 2	12,776	13,032	2%
	Level 3	16,094	16,416	2%
Brookfields	Level 1	6,515	6,645	2%
	Level 2	9,844	10,041	2%
	Level 3	16,578	16,910	2%
Cavendish	Level 1	8,158	8,321	2%
	Level 2	10,699	10,913	2%
	Level 3	15,941	16,260	2%
The Bridge - PRU	Level 1	16,269	16,594	2%

For transparency, all Special Schools and the PRU will be provided with confirmation of their 2024-25 budget allocations with an individual notification highlighting all funding factors, values, termly payment profile, and ESFA recoupment where applicable.

### **Further Education (FE) Element 3 Top-Up Funding**

The High Needs DSG statutory guidance stipulates that the Local Authority must treat FE establishments fairly and consistently when making arrangements to fund young people with high needs.

Halton proposes to apply a 2% uplift to FE element 3 funding with effect from April 2024. The cost of this uplift will be covered within the overall DSG 2% uplift.

**Schools' Forum are therefore requested to support the uplift for 2024-25 as outlined above.**

## **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The financial aspects outlined throughout this paper have been developed accordance with statutory financial regulations and operational guidance relevant to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) requirements.

4.2 The proposals included within this paper are all funded from within the available Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) block allocations provided for 2024/25.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **5.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

To ensure that in Halton children and young people are safeguarded, healthy and happy, and receive their entitlement of high quality services that are sensitive to need, inclusive and accessible to all.

### **5.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

To create an economically prosperous Borough that encourages investment, entrepreneurship, enterprise and business growth, and improves the education, skills and employment prospects of our residents and workforce so they can share in all the opportunities Halton affords.

5.3 **A Healthy Halton**  
None

5.4 **A Safer Halton**  
None

5.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**  
None.

## **RISK ANALYSIS**

Failure to comply with the statutory financial regulations and operational guidance relevant to Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) requirements could result in formal intervention by the Department for Education (DfE).

## 6.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

The Local Authority must discharge its statutory responsibilities in relation to all schools and settings.

7.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**  
None.

## 8.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Background papers and further information, including the statutory guidance that has informed this report, can be obtained via Gov.uk

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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Schools Forum
<b>DATE:</b>	21 February 2024
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Operational Director – Finance
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Children & Young People
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	DSG Forecast Outturn for 2023-24
<b>WARD(S)</b>	Borough wide

### 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To report the Dedicated Schools Grant forecast outturn for 2023-24.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

2.1 The report is noted.

### 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

#### 3.1 Grant settlement

The Dedicated Schools Grant allocation for 2023-24 is £143,393,022 broken down as follows:

Schools Block	£106,745,453
CSSB	£737,941
Early Years Block	£9,774,577
High Needs Block	£26,135,051

Of this, £52,623,991 is recouped from the Schools Block and an estimated £3,166,667 is recouped from the High Needs Block for academies and further education.

#### 3.2 Schools Block

A transfer to the High Needs Block of 0.2% was approved by Schools Forum resulting in £235,721 being transferred from the Schools Block to help support the ongoing High Needs pressures. The balance of £106,509,732 was fully devolved to mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies through the funding formula.

We are mirroring the National Funding Formula (NFF) factors and criteria as well as the NFF cash values for all formula components.

#### 3.3 Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)

The CSSB of £737,941 is currently forecast to budget in respect to the central services supported by this block.

3.4 Early Years Block

The Early Years Block of £9,774,577 is currently forecast to budget and is subject to future variation based on termly headcount data.

For information the DfE announced in July last year additional funding for 2023-24 in respect to the Early Years Supplementary Grant (EYSG) which provided all Halton's Early Years providers with an increase to the 2 year old funding of 32.4% resulting in an increase of £1.85 to the hourly rate. For 3 and 4 year olds the grant provided an increase of 5.4% equating to £0.28 per hour to be allocated through the combined Base rate and Deprivation hourly rates. The EYSG was applicable from September 2023 and overall funding estimates were notified by the DfE in September.

3.5 High Needs Block

The High Needs block allocation of £26,135,051 is reduced by FE recoupment of £924,000 and the balance of £25,211,051 is insufficient to meet the total estimated expenditure required for 2023-24 of £27,437,555 resulting in a forecast in-year overspend of £2,226,504. Taking into account the schools block transfer of £235,721 plus a grant for Maintained sixth forms of £4,034, we are currently facing a net in-year deficit of £1,986,749 within the High Needs Block.

The recurring areas of pressure are as a result of increasing volumes of children referred for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and associated costs including:

- Top-up funding       £3,617,647
- Resource Units       £2,068,105
- Out-Borough         £7,194,302

3.6 DSG Balances

Taking into account the deficit brought forward from 2022-23 of £2,892,585 and anticipating the ongoing pressures specifically faced by the High Needs Block forecasting an in-year deficit of £1,986,749 the cumulative forecast deficit by the end of 2023-24 is £4,879,334.

The accumulating deficit has resulted in Halton being included in tranche 3 of the DfE intervention 'Delivering Better Value (DBV) in High Needs where work is currently in progress to develop a realistic and robust recovery plan that will require the approval of the DfE.

**4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Further savings and reducing overspends are essential to getting back to a balanced DSG position.

**5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

**5.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

It is essential that schools and education support services receive sufficient funding to allow them to support all children and young people.

**5.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None.

**5.3 A Healthy Halton**

None.

**5.4 A Safer Halton**

None.

**5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

**6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 Continued overspending against DSG will impede plans to change and improve services and provision.

**7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 The Local Authority must discharge its statutory responsibilities in relation to all schools and settings.

**8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

None.

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

9.1 Background papers and further information, including the statutory guidance that has informed this report, can be obtained via Gov.uk

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