

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 18 January 2023 held remotely

Present: Councillor T. McInerney (Observer)
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
N Shafiq, Financial Management, HBC
J. Farrell, Learning & Achievement
S. Goodwin, Financial Management, HBC
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary Representative - Infant School
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
J. Wilson, (Vice Chair in the Chair) Secondary Governor Representative
E. Haver, Special Academy Representative
C. Liku, Community Nursery Schools Representative
J. Thompson, Community Special Schools Representative
B. Barton, 16-19 Provision Representative (sub)

Action

SCF13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Thalia Bell (sub sent) and Karl Landrum.

SCF14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF15 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FUNDING FOR 2023-24

The Schools Forum received a report of the Operational Director – Finance, which presented the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding for 2023-24.

The DSG settlement, announced on 16 December 2022, allocated Halton a total of £143.393m, which was broken down as follows:

Schools Block	- 106.745m
Central Schools Services Block	- 0.738m
High Needs Block	- 26.135m
Early Years Block	- 9.775m

The report presented detailed commentary on each of the schools blocks' funding allocations and the National Funding Formula methods used. It was noted that the High

Needs Block budgets and the Early Years hourly rates and supplements would be presented at the February meeting.

In addition to the DSG allocation stated above, Halton had received £4.796m as part of the recent £2 billion commitment for Education from the Autumn 2022 budget announcements. The indicative school funding allocations including this Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) was presented in Appendix B.

Officers' sought approval from Representatives on the continuation of the National Funding Formula methods, principles and rules for mainstream primary and secondary school funding allocations; and from maintained schools Representatives, to agree the de-delegation for 2023-24. The Schools Block Funding Formula Factors were presented in Appendix A to the report. The Forum agreed these and the maintained Representatives approved the de-delegation, as presented in the table in paragraph 3.7.

Officers requested a decision on the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to be applied to the Schools Block funding formula for 2023-24. As described in the report, the Local Authority recommendation was that the Forum applied the maximum MFG protection of 0.5% to the 2023-24 funding formula – the rationale for this was explained. The Forum agreed with the recommendation, so the maximum MFG protection of 0.5% would be applied to the Schools Block Funding Formula for 2023-24.

Schools Forum were also asked to agree the preferred option from (a), (b) or (c) on the allocation of the surplus DSG for 2023-24; details of these were outlined in paragraph 3.5. It was noted that the reason for the surplus funding was due to un-allocated growth funding that was included within the Schools Block allocation. The three options were discussed and Officers provided responses to questions from Representatives. The Forum's consensus was that the surplus should be transferred to the High Needs Block (option B); which was supported by the recommendation from Financial Management. Representatives recognised the continuing pressures on High Needs budgets, which was forecast to continue into next year with the demand for places at special schools increasing.

In response to questions on how the surplus would be allocated, this would be in consultation with Schools Forum. It was agreed by Representatives that there should be value for money and careful consideration on how it was spent

and this would be monitored by the Forum. The Forum agreed that Option (b) be used to allocate the surplus DSG funding of £200,000.

The following additional information was provided on the DSG funding, following questions from Representatives:

- The Early Years indicative allocation of £9.775m would probably reduce after the January 2023 headcount data is received;
- It was not possible to remove the quality supplement from Early Years, as this was fixed with the Department for Education (DfE) so must be complied with. New regulations were expected on the quality supplement following a consultation by DfE so this could be reviewed. There would be an opportunity for the Local Authority to provide feedback on behalf of the PVI and maintained sectors;
- Nursery schools do pay business rates, some specialist provision was exempt; and
- Reference to Appendix B – reductions in pupil numbers in some schools has affected funding (variances shown in end column).

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

- 1) note the report;
- 2) supports the continuation of the National Funding Formula methods, principles and rules for mainstream primary and secondary school funding allocations and de-delegation for 2023-24;
- 3) agree that the level of MFG to be applied to the Schools Block funding formula for 2023-24 is 0.5%; and
- 4) agree that Option (b) Transfer to High Needs Block, be used for the allocation of the surplus DSG for 2023-24.

Operational
Director - Finance

Meeting ended at 4.50 p.m.