

REPORT TO: Schools Forum
DATE: 17th January 2024
REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director - Finance
SUBJECT: DSG funding for 2024-25
WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To report to the Schools Forum the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2024-25.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 2.1 The report is noted.
- 2.2 Schools Forum support the continuation of the National Funding Formula methods, principles and rules for mainstream primary and secondary school funding allocations and de-delegation for 2024-25
- 2.3 Schools Forum agree to make a decision on the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to be applied to the Schools Block funding formula for 2024-25.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Grant settlement

The Dedicated Schools Grant allocation for 2024-25 was announced on 19th December at £154.497m broken down as follows:

Schools Block	£111.188m
Central Schools Services Block	£0.747m
Early Years Block	£27,007m
High Needs Block	£15,554m

This is an overall increase of £11,104m compared to the £143.393m allocated for 2024-25.

From the allocation for 2024-25, an estimated £3,180m will be recouped by the Department for Education from the High Needs Block. This is for academies and other educational establishments for the commissioned High Needs Place funding, reducing the High Needs Block allocation that we receive to £23,827.

3.2 Pupil Numbers

Pupil numbers in the primary and secondary sectors have decreased / increased overall, details as below:

	2024-25	2023-24	Variance
Primary	10,181	10,431	-250
Secondary	7,649	7,630	19
Total	17,830	18,061	-231

3.3 Current Position

As in previous years we are still in the process of calculating and checking the individual Schools Block Budgets. These will be issued shortly before the meeting.

After the provisional Schools Block budgets have been shared with Schools Forum at the January meeting we will submit the formula to the Education and Skills Funding Agency for approval. Once this is received we will notify all schools of their confirmed Schools Block budget for 2024-25.

3.4 Minimum Funding Guarantee

We are required to agree the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to be applied to the Schools Block funding formula for 2024-25. The MFG continues in 2024-25 with a permissible range of 0.0% to plus 0.5%, meaning that a school's per pupil amount must increase by a minimum of 0.5% compared to the previous year. The recommendation for the level of MFG, which depends very much on what we can afford based on the grant settlement, will be issued shortly before the meeting.

3.5 De-delegation

The de-delegated budgets and income sit within the Central Schools Services Block. The proposed budgets are still being finalised and details will be issued shortly before the meeting. We are required to ask maintained school representatives from the primary and secondary phases to decide on whether they wish to de-delegate these funds for 2024-25.

3.6 Pupil Premium Grant

The Department for Education has set the funding rates as below:

Primary Free School Meal Ever 6 pupil	£1,480
Secondary FSM6	£1,050
Looked After Children	£2,570
Post-LAC	£2,570
Service Children Ever 6	£340

The allocations to the LA and to individual schools will be announced by the Department for Education during the Spring term.

3.7 Central Schools Services Block budgets for 2024-25

The CSSB allocation for 2024-25 is £0.747m. This is an increase of £0.009m to the 2023-24 budget of £0.738m.

Alongside the De-delegated budgets we have a number of budgets from the CSSB. A full list with proposed budgets will be issued prior to the meeting as we are still in the process of finalising these budgets.

3.8 Early Years Block budgets for 2024-25

The indicative Early Years Block grant allocation has been issued at £15,554m. This is due to an increase of £5,903m compared to the 2023-24 indicative budget of £9,651m. Reasons for the increase are due to a number of factors which include an increase in the hourly rate for 3&4 year olds; an increase in the hourly rate for 2 year olds plus also entitlement covering disadvantaged 2 year olds to now include 2 year olds with working parents and also to disadvantaged under 2 year olds.

The Early Years funding formula will, as normal, be brought to the February meeting.

3.9 High Needs Block budgets for 2024-25

The High Needs Block allocation for 2024-25 is £27,007m less recoupment of £3,180m to give £23,827m. This is an increase of £1,881m compared to the 2023-24 allocation of £23,001m. As costs are increasing year-on-year we do not have sufficient funding to clear the cumulative deficit and fully fund the expected costs for next year.

The detailed budget for 2024-5 is still being finalised and will be brought to the February meeting as normal.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 We are required to set a local funding formula in line with the Schools Block operational guidance for 2024-25. Failure to do so will result in the DfE imposing a funding formula on us.

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 We need to comply with the regulations otherwise could have formula imposed on us.

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

- 8.1 None identified.