

## Appendix C

# Primary and Secondary Schools Revenue Funding 2020/21

## Briefing & Consultation Document for Schools December 2019

### 1. How to respond to this consultation

- 1.1 Schools are invited to make comments on specific areas in the consultation. Please e-mail your response to Melanie Ellis, Chief Accountant [melanie.ellis@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:melanie.ellis@westberks.gov.uk) by **18<sup>th</sup> December 2019**.
- 1.2 Any suggestions for change should be accompanied by clear rationale on why your proposal is a better solution and fair and equitable for all schools in West Berkshire Council (WBC), and not just for your own individual school. You should also check that it falls within the current funding regulations. Policy and operational documents relating to the 2020/21 NFF can be accessed on these webpages:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-for-schools-and-high-needs>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/831848/Schools\\_operational\\_guide\\_2020\\_to\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831848/Schools_operational_guide_2020_to_2021.pdf)

### 2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this consultation is to ask for comments on the potential transfer of up to 0.5% of the schools DSG funding for 2020/21 to the High Needs Block. The Schools Block is ring fenced, but up to 0.5% can be transferred to other funding blocks subject to consultation with all schools and Schools' Forum agreement. Secretary of State approval is required for transfers above this limit or where the Schools' Forum has opposed the transfer but the Local Authority wishes to appeal.
- 2.2 This consultation has been discussed by Schools Forum at its meeting of 9 December 2019 prior to the release of the consultation. The consultation will last for 2 weeks from 10 December 2019. Due to short timescales, the results will be emailed to the Schools Forum members to review and comment on ahead of the meeting on 20 January 2020.

### **3. Introduction**

- 3.1 All mainstream (academies and maintained) school funding is allocated to the Local Authority (LA) through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The grant is split into four funding blocks: Schools, Early years, High needs and Central Schools Services (such as licences, admissions, education welfare).

### **4. High Needs Block**

- 4.1 The High Needs Block funds provision and services for children and young people with SEN & Disabilities (SEND), including the cost of Education, Health and Care Plans in mainstream schools and special schools, which form the bulk of HNB expenditure. It also funds the Pupil Referral Units. The HNB budget in 2020-21 is expected to be £21,595,683.
- 4.2 The HNB has been over spending since the 2016-17 financial year. This is mainly due to:
- increasing numbers of children with Education, Health and Care Plans moving out of mainstream provision in to special schools, including West Berkshire's own special schools (Brookfields and The Castle), other Local Authorities' special schools and independent / non maintained special schools. Most of the placements in other Local Authorities' special schools and independent / non maintained special schools are for children with SEMH or ASD.
  - increasing numbers and cost of children attending PRUs.
  - an increase of 33% in the number of children with EHCPs since 2014
- 4.3 There has been some additional funding from the Government for Local Authorities' High Needs Blocks in 2020-21, but in spite of this the HNB is predicted to overspend by £3.1 million in 2020-21, including rolled forward overspends from 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- 4.4 If the pressure on the HNB budget is to be reduced, schools need additional support to meet the needs of children with SEND so that the growth in specialist placements can be slowed down. This includes both access to services and direct financial support.
- 4.5 It is proposed that some funding is transferred from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for this purpose. There are three alternative proposals; transfer of 0.5% of the Schools Block, or 0.25% or 0.125%.

### **5. Proposed use of transferred funds**

#### **5.1 Increase Vulnerable Children Grant**

- 5.1.1 This is a small budget of £50,000 held by the Local Authority to support vulnerable pupils with complex needs. It can be used to help schools support their most vulnerable pupils on an emergency, unpredicted or short term basis.
- 5.1.2 The budget is well used and has helped to maintain children in their mainstream schools and avoid exclusions. Schools have appreciated being able to access funds relatively quickly for their most vulnerable pupils.

However, the grant is in high demand and has already run out for the current financial year, meaning no further children can be supported.

5.1.3 If this budget were to be increased, it would allow more support to be given to schools to help them meet the needs of vulnerable children, including those with social, emotional and mental health needs.

5.1.4 Option 1 would increase the Vulnerable Children Grant by £53,700, Option 2 would increase it by £125,400 and Option 3 would increase it by £384,400. (See 6.4 below).

5.1.5 Depending on the option chosen, and the amount of additional funding available, it would be possible to allocate this funding to schools to:

- Provide VCG funding for more children and / or for longer periods
- Provide funding to schools when they admit a child who has been permanently excluded from another school
- Support schools with implementation of Therapeutic Thinking approaches, eg. funding to support implementation of personalised therapeutic plans

## **5.2 Further roll out and support of Therapeutic Thinking approaches in schools**

5.2.1 Over 120 school staff and West Berkshire employees have attended therapeutic thinking engagement days which have helped them to understand how to support children and young people in schools in a trauma informed way. In addition, over 70 school staff and LA employees attended three day train the trainer training in order to upskill themselves to deliver training in therapeutic thinking in their own settings. Other local authorities that have adopted a similar approach have seen impressive outcomes. For example, one local authority found that in schools where head teachers were trained as trainers there was a 60% reduction in fixed term exclusions, an 89.5% reduction in exclusion days and no permanent exclusions. This was achieved within a year.

5.2.2 Both the engagement day training and the 3 day training have been evaluated very positively.

5.2.3 The Therapeutic Thinking project has had a significant impact on staff skills and reported practice. However, further progress will be severely limited by lack of dedicated capacity in the Local Authority to embed this approach.

5.2.4 In order to sustain change across West Berkshire it is proposed that a fixed term post of Therapeutic Thinking Officer is created to lead network meetings for school leads, develop policy and practice within West Berkshire and in schools and to continue to deliver the engagement and train the trainer courses. The post is likely to be a Band K post which equates to a salary range from £36,876 to £44,632. Assuming an appointment at the mid-point of the scale, and taking on costs and start-up equipment purchase into account, the estimated annual cost of the post would be £58K.

5.2.5 Without this post there is a serious risk that the potential of the Therapeutic Thinking initiative to support children with complex needs will not be realised.

The initiative has the potential to improve behaviour in schools, reduce exclusions, reduce pressure on PRUs and potentially bring down the numbers of children moving to specialist placements but there needs to be capacity to move it forward in order to see real and sustained change.

### **5.3 Removal of charges for Language and Literacy Centre places**

- 5.3.1 In September 2018, charges were introduced for placements at the Language and Literacy Centres at Theale and Winchcombe schools. Charges are based on 50% of the real cost of the place. These charges were introduced in order to alleviate pressure on the High Needs Block.
- 5.3.2 The LALs can provide 48 places per year for Year 5 students who have persistent difficulties with literacy and need an intensive programme delivered by a teacher qualified in specific literacy difficulties. Outcomes data for pupils who have attended the LALs shows that they make very significant progress prior to returning to Year 6 and then transitioning to secondary school.
- 5.3.3 Prior to the introduction of charging, all 48 LAL places were taken up every year. Since charging was introduced, the number of children accessing the LALs reduced to 33 in 2018 and 26 in 2019 and could fall further again in 2020 given the significant financial pressure on schools.
- 5.3.4 A survey of primary school headteachers has clearly demonstrated that a large number of primary schools would like to refer pupils to LAL but cannot afford to do so.
- 5.3.5 There is some emerging evidence that the reduction in children being able to access LAL is linked to an increase in requests for EHCPs and an increase in potential appeals to the SEND Tribunal for places in specialist schools for children with dyslexia, with associated costs.
- 5.3.6 It is also possible that secondary schools will begin to see an impact of the reduction in children accessing LAL in terms of literacy levels of Year 7 cohorts and the numbers of children needing intensive support for literacy.
- 5.3.7 It is proposed that the charges for LAL places are removed so that all children who need this provision can access it and in order to avoid pressure for EHCPs and specialist placements for children with literacy difficulties.
- 5.3.8 The LAL budget is already subsidising places by 50% of the cost and fully funding the vacant places, so the cost of removing charging altogether would be relatively low at £17,800.

### **5.4 Expansion of the ASD Advisory Team to include Specialist Higher Level Teaching Assistants for deployment in schools**

- 5.4.1 The number of children diagnosed with ASD has increased very dramatically over the last 10 years and continues to increase. Schools have developed good skills in meeting the needs of children with ASD and have access to support and training from the ASD Advisory Team. However, children with ASD can be challenging for schools to support and manage. We are seeing an increase in exclusions of children with ASD as well as an increase in specialist placements for children with ASD.

- 5.4.2 The West Berkshire SEND Strategy 2018-23, which was coproduced with parents, schools and other stakeholders, includes a proposal to recruit two Higher Level Teaching Assistants to the ASD Advisory Team, subject to identification of resources. There are currently two teachers in the team and one Autism Adviser who works with families. Service evaluations show that the support of the team is highly rated by schools, but team members are very thinly spread across the 1,152 children with ASD in our mainstream schools. The addition of HLTAs to the team would be a cost effective way of increasing capacity.
- 5.4.3 The objective of this additional resource would be to build capacity and expertise in schools, help schools to meet need effectively, maintain children in mainstream wherever possible and to support joint working between home and school, working alongside the Autism Adviser for Families
- 5.4.4 The HLTAs would work with individuals or groups of pupils in order to model strategies suggested by Advisory Teachers in class and support in producing and using resources. They could also run workshops for TAs in school and other staff. Work would have to be time limited but could help to avoid situations reaching crisis point.
- 5.4.5 The posts would be graded E to F. Assuming appointments at the mid point of the scale the cost would be £57,800.

## 6 Consultation Proposals

6.3 There are three proposals for consideration:

- Transfer 0.5% of Schools Block to High Needs Block
- Transfer 0.25% of Schools Block to High Needs Block
- Transfer 0.125% of Schools Block to High Needs Block

6.4 The table below shows how funds could be allocated against each of these initiatives for each of the three proposals.

	<b>Option 1</b> <b>Transfer 0.125%</b>	<b>Option 2</b> <b>Transfer 0.25%</b>	<b>Option 3</b> <b>Transfer 0.5%</b>
<b>Vulnerable Children Grant</b>	53,700	125,400	384,400
<b>Therapeutic Thinking</b>	58,000	58,000	58,000
<b>Removal of LAL charges</b>	17,800	17,800	17,800
<b>Specialist HLTAs for ASD</b>	0	57,800	57,800
<b>Total £</b>	<b>129,500</b>	<b>259,000</b>	<b>518,000</b>

1. Do you support a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2020/21? If not, please let us know with your reasons why.

2. Do you support a 0.25% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2020/21? If not, please let us know with your reasons why.

3. Do you support a 0.125% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2020/21? If not, please let us know with your reasons why.