

Consultation Summary 2020/21

1. Introduction

- 1.1 There are two consultations to respond to:
- (a) A consultation on West Berkshire Council's proposed school funding formula arrangements for 2020/21.
 - (b) A consultation on the potential transfer of up to 0.5% from the School's DSG funding to support High Needs.
- 1.2 The proposed areas of consultation have been discussed by Schools Forum at its meeting of 9 December 2019. The consultation will be open from 10 December 2019 to 31 December 2019.

2. How to respond to this consultation

- 2.1 Please e-mail your response to Melanie Ellis, Chief Accountant melanie.ellis@westberks.gov.uk by **31st December 2019**.

3. Consultation Questions

1. Do you agree that, subject to final affordability, West Berkshire should mirror the DfE's 2020/21 NFF and that this formula should be used to calculate funding allocations? If not, please let us know with your reasons why.

2. Do you agree that West Berkshire should introduce the mobility factor in the local formula in order to mirror the NFF? If not, please let us know with your reasons why.

3. Do you agree that any shortfall in funding is addressed by using Option 3, using a combination of reduced AWPU values and applying a cap on gains? If not, please let us know with your reasons why.

4. If you have any comments/suggestions on the additional funds proposal or the criteria set to access the other additional funds please provide details.

5. If you do not agree with any of the proposed services being de-delegated, please let us know with your reasons why.

6. Which of the following options would you support regarding a transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2020/21?
a) 0% b) 0.125% c) 0.25% d) 0.5%

Schools Funding Formula 2020/21 – Briefing & Consultation Document for Schools on the 2020/21 funding formula

4. How to respond to this consultation

- 4.1 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 by **31st December 2019**.
- 4.2 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

It remains a Local Authority decision on how the funding is allocated to schools through the formula factors. There is no requirement to stick to the NFF rates, or to use all the factors other than the mandatory minimum per pupil funding factor.

5. Purpose

- 5.1 The purpose of this consultation is to outline West Berkshire Council's proposed school funding formula arrangements for 2020/21 and the criteria to be used to allocate additional funds. The principle consulted on and adopted in previous years, was to move as closely as possible to the National Funding Formula (NFF). This has largely been achieved in West Berkshire which means there is little change to the formula for 2020/21.
- 5.2 The proposed areas of consultation have been discussed by Schools Forum at its meeting of 9 December 2019 prior to the release of the consultation. The consultation will be open from 10 December 2019 to 31 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.

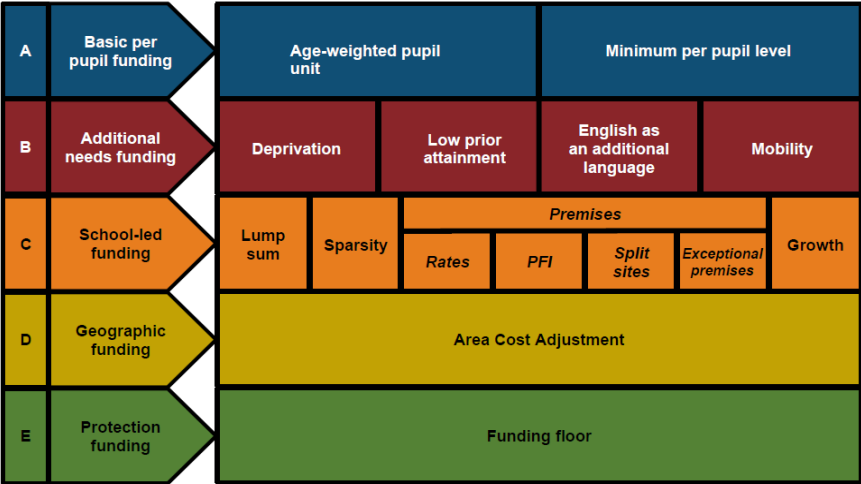
6. Introduction

- 6.1 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).

- 6.2 The Schools Block is only for Primary and Secondary school formula allocations, plus growth funding for new or growing schools (such pupils are not included in the funding allocation as they did not exist in the previous census).
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 2020/21 is the third year of the National Funding Formula (NFF). The government has confirmed its intention to move to a single ‘hard’ NFF to determine every school’s budget, and will work closely with local authorities and other stakeholders in making this transition in the future.
- 6.5 In 2020/21, as in previous years, each LA will continue to have discretion over their schools funding formulae, in consultation with local schools. The LA is responsible for making the final decisions on the formula. Political ratification by the Council’s Executive must be obtained before the 21 January 2020 deadline.
- 6.6 Provisional 2020/21 NFF allocations were published at a local authority level by the Department for Education (DfE) in October 2019, including notional school level allocations. Funding levels and allocations were announced later than in previous years, giving LA’s less time for modelling and consultation.
 - In December 2019, the funding will be updated for the October 2019 Primary and Secondary pupil numbers to produce the Schools Block DSG allocation.
 - A sum for growth funding is added which will be calculated separately for 2020/21 to give the final DSG total.

7. The National Funding Formula (NFF)

7.1 The basic structure of the NFF is not changing for 2020/21. The factors that will be taken into account when calculating schools block DSG funding through the NFF are shown in the chart below.



- 7.2 The NFF assigns funding rates to each of the factors. All key factors in the NFF have been increased by 4%. For some local authorities the factors are uplifted by an area cost adjustment (ACA). For West Berkshire this is 1.0347.
- 7.3 The minimum per pupil level (MMPL) is being increased to £3,750 for primary and £5,000 for secondary in 2020/21, and is being further increased to £4,000 for primary schools in 2021/22. The government has made the use of the national MMPL a mandatory factor in local formulae from 2020/21, taking into account all factors except business rates.
- 7.4 The 2020/21 funding floor is set at 1.84% above the 2019/20 funding floor baselines – again taking into account all factors except rates.
- 7.5 There will be no NFF gains cap, so that all schools attract their full allocations under the formula. LA's will still be able to use a cap in the local formula.
- 7.6 The free school meals factor has been increased by 1.84% in line with inflation. Premises funding will continue to be allocated at a LA level on the basis of actual spend in 2019/20.
- 7.7 LAs will continue to set a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) which must be between 0.5% and 1.84%.
- 7.8 In 2020/21 the government has introduced a formulaic approach to allocating mobility funding based on tracking individual pupils through censuses from the past three years. In previous years the mobility factor has not been used in the local formula, but this consultation proposes introducing this factor based on the principle of mirroring the NFF.
- 7.9 Table 1 sets out the national rates and West Berkshire's cost adjusted rates.

Table 1: Factor	National Rate	WBC National Rate (with ACA)	National Rate	WBC National Rate (with ACA)	WBC Total	WBC Total
	2019/20		2020/21		2019/20	2020/21
1.Basic Entitlement:						
Primary	£2,747	£2,841	£2,857	£2,956	£37,798,558	£39,330,457
Secondary KS3	£3,863	£3,994	£4,018	£4,157	£22,805,740	£23,738,868
Secondary KS4	£4,386	£4,535	£4,561	£4,719	£16,530,075	£17,201,739
2.Deprivation:						
Primary current FSM	£440	£455	£450	£466	£463,190	£474,001
Primary FSM Ever 6	£540	£558	£560	£579	£914,543	£949,666
Primary IDACI Band F (0.2 – 0.25)	£200	£207	£210	£217	£95,037	£99,761
Primary IDACI Band E (0.25 – 0.3)	£240	£248	£250	£259	£135,256	£141,081
Primary IDACI Band D (0.3 – 0.4)	£360	£372	£375	£388	£22,021	£22,968
Primary IDACI Band C (0.4 – 0.5)	£390	£403	£405	£419	£60,957	£63,385
Primary IDACI Band B (0.5 – 0.6)	£420	£434	£435	£450	£84,307	£87,432
Primary IDACI Band A (over 0.6)	£575	£595	£600	£621	£0	£0
Secondary current FSM	£440	£455	£450	£466	£295,750	£302,653
Secondary FSM Ever 6	£785	£812	£815	£843	£1,174,462	£1,219,704
Secondary IDACI Band F	£290	£300	£300	£310	£122,802	£127,063
Secondary IDACI Band E	£390	£403	£405	£419	£151,705	£157,747
Secondary IDACI Band D	£515	£533	£535	£554	£60,274	£62,599
Secondary IDACI Band C	£560	£579	£580	£600	£70,910	£73,498
Secondary IDACI Band B	£600	£620	£625	£647	£84,362	£87,993
Secondary IDACI Band A	£810	£838	£840	£869	£0	£0
3.Prior Attainment:						
Primary	£1,022	£1,057	£1,065	£1,102	£4,078,134	£4,252,363
Secondary	£1,550	£1,603	£1,610	£1,666	£2,935,621	£3,051,156
4.English as an Additional Language:						
Primary EAL 3	£515	£532	£535	£554	£423,021	£440,164
Secondary EAL 3	£1,385	£1,432	£1,440	£1,490	£133,285	£138,680
5.Sparsity						
Primary	£25,000	£25,852	£26,000	£26,902	£112,176	£116,732
Secondary	£65,000	£67,216	£67,600	£69,946	£53,100	£55,257
6.Lump Sum:						
Primary	£110,000	£113,751	£114,400	£118,370	£8,711,431	£9,065,145
Secondary	£110,000	£113,751	£114,400	£118,370		
7.Rates:						
Primary	17/18 estimate		18/19 estimate		£1,487,173	£1,487,173
Secondary	17/18 estimate		18/19 estimate			
8. Mobility						
Primary Mobility	n/a	n/a	£875	£905	£0	£54,723
Secondary Mobility	n/a	n/a	£1,250	£1,293	£0	£0
Total Allocation (excluding minimum per pupil funding level and MFG funding total)					£98,803,890	£102,802,008

Factor	National Rate	WBC National Rate (with ACA)	National Rate	WBC National Rate (with ACA)	WBC Total	WBC Total
	2019/20		2020/21		2019/20	2020/21
Total Allocation (excluding minimum per pupil funding level and MFG funding total)					£98,803,890	£102,802,008
Additional funding to meet the minimum funding level	Primary				£98,040	£326,678
	Secondary				£343,074	£373,246
Total Allocation including minimum funding adj					£99,245,004	£103,501,932
Funding floor adjustment					£578,508	£0
Total Allocation including funding floor protection					£99,823,512	£103,501,932
MFG adjustment					-£369,710	£150,315
Post MFG budget					£99,453,802	£103,652,247

7.10 The NFF has been replicated at this point however, the final amount of funding available to allocate to schools could go up or down for the following reasons:

- (1) The final funding allocation will reflect the October 2019 pupil numbers.
- (2) The final allocation will **not** reflect any changes in pupil characteristics (such as deprivation and prior attainment).
- (3) Actual business rates used in the local formula may be greater than the amount allocated through the DSG formula allocation.
- (4) Funding requirements in other blocks such as high needs, would require approval of a transfer of funding out of the schools block (subject to a maximum of 0.5%), and would reduce funding available.

7.11 In addition to agreeing on the funding formula, a decision therefore needs to be taken on how to allocate any surplus or shortfall. An example is given below:

Indicative funding available for school funding allocations	WBC Total
	2020/21
Indicative funding received	£103,652,247
Less: estimated business rates increase	-£8,000
Less: transfer to other blocks (0.5%)	-£512,000
Total available for school formula	£103,132,247

8. Consultation Proposals

8.1 It is proposed in principle to mirror the NFF as closely as possible to ensure that West Berkshire schools are in a good position when the full NFF is introduced. The minimum per pupil guarantee of £3,750 for primary pupils and £5,000 for secondary pupils is mandatory and included in the local formula.

7. Do you agree that, subject to final affordability, West Berkshire should mirror the DfE’s 2020/21 NFF and that this formula should be used to calculate funding allocations? If not, please let us know with your reasons why.

8.2 The main change to the NFF is the change in the data set for the mobility factor. The authority is proposing to include this factor for 2020/21. The cost is included in the allocation the LA receives from the DfE as part of the NFF, so it does not create additional cost or a need to reduce other areas of the formula.

8. Do you agree that West Berkshire should introduce the mobility factor in the local formula in order to mirror the NFF? If not, please let us know with your reasons why.

8.3 After funding business rates uplifts, pupil characteristic changes and any transfers of funding to other blocks, the formula will need to be altered to ensure we remain within the total funding available. There are a number of

options for ensuring affordability, which effectively means deciding on a methodology for allocating any funding shortfall or block transfer. (Note: the same methodology would apply to any surplus). The options are outlined below:

- (1) Reducing the AWPU values. This would restrict the gains of all schools, although would result in additional MFG and MMPF to protect some schools.
- (2) Applying a gains cap, so that schools that gain the most funding compared to last year, are limited in the amount they are able to keep.
- (3) A combination of a reduced AWPU and a gains cap.
- (4) Reducing the MFG from 1.84% to 0.5%, however this only generates £34k. This impacts the lower funded schools the most.
- (5) Reducing the additional needs factors. This would impact those schools with pupils that require extra support.
- (6) Reducing the lump sum. This detrimentally affects small schools due to the amount of funding they are able to generate through pupil led factors.

8.4 The LA has modelled a number of scenarios to determine the impact of these options on individual school budgets. Options 4, 5 and 6 above have not been taken any further. The scenarios modelled assumed a requirement to reduce the funding available to schools by £520k to fund both business rates and a block transfer. If the block transfer did not happen, then the total funding available would be higher in this example.

8.5 In consultation with the Heads Funding Group, it is recommended to use Option 3, a combination of a cap on gains and a reduction to the AWPU. This option protects 17 schools from any reduction in funding, and provides the most even distribution across the remaining schools. The formula replicates the NFF rates, uses a 1.84% MFG, a cap on schools that gain over 6.8% and a reduction in the AWPU of 0.9%. The model assumes no change in pupil numbers. **Actual individual school allocations will be dependent on the October 2019 census data.**

9. Do you agree that any shortfall in funding is addressed by using Option 3, using a combination of reduced AWPU values and applying a cap on gains? If not, please let us know with your reasons why.

9. Additional Funding Outside the School Formula

9.1 School funding regulations allow for a few exceptional circumstances to be funded outside the formula and be top sliced from the DSG. For each fund the Schools' Forum need to agree clear criteria setting out the circumstances in which payments could be made and the basis for calculation.

(1) Growth Funding

- (a) Growth funding is within the Local Authorities' Schools Block NFF allocations. For 2020/21, as in previous years, growth funding will be allocated to Local Authorities based on the growth in pupil numbers between the October 2018 and October 2019 censuses.
 - (b) The NFF does not yet include a methodology for how Growth Funding should be allocated at individual school or academy level. LA's therefore retain responsibility for determining the arrangements locally, albeit within tight regulations.
 - (c) Our proposed arrangements are based on growth in pupil numbers between the October 2018 and October 2019 censuses. The growth fund can only be used to:
 - (i) Support growth in pre-16 pupil numbers to meet basic need
 - (ii) Support additional classes needed to meet the infant class size regulation
 - (iii) Meet the costs of new schools.
 - (d) The growth fund must not be used to support schools in financial difficulty or general growth due to popularity.
 - (e) The costs of new schools will include lead-in costs, post start-up costs and diseconomy of scale costs.
 - (f) Any unspent growth funding may be carried forward to the following funding period, as with any other centrally retained budget, and Local Authorities can choose to use it specifically for growth.
- (2) A falling rolls fund, where a school has surplus places and faces a funding shortfall but an increase in pupils in the near future is expected. In 2018/19 the Schools Forum agreed to cease the Falling Rolls fund because only one school in four years had qualified for a payment.
- (3) Funding for schools in financial difficulty where a school phase has agreed to de-delegate this funding (primary phase only in West Berkshire).
- (4) Funding can be used from the high needs block to allocate additional funding to schools which have a disproportionate number of high needs pupils which cannot be reflected adequately in their formula funding. This has to be determined by a formulaic method.

10. If you have any comments/suggestions on this proposal or the criteria set to access the other additional funds please provide details.

10. De-delegations 2020/21 (maintained schools only)

- 10.1 From 2013/14 schools received funding for newly delegated central services. For some services (where offered by the Local Authority), maintained Primary and Secondary schools can collectively opt for the service to be de-delegated – which means that the funding is deducted from the formula allocation and continues to be centrally retained for the benefit of all maintained Primary and Secondary schools, and individual schools cannot make that choice for themselves (Academies may be given the option to buy into the service, as can Nursery schools, Special schools and PRUs). From 2017/18, statutory services previously funded by the Education Services Grant were also added, and the de-delegation for these services relate to all maintained schools. The de-delegations need to be re-determined on an annual basis.
- 10.2 The relevant Schools' Forum representatives for each phase will vote on whether each service is to be de-delegated or not. The services currently and proposed to be de-delegated are as follows:

Primary and Secondary only:

- Behaviour Support Services
- Ethnic Minority Support
- Trade Union Local Representation
- Schools in Financial Difficulty (primary schools only)
- CLEAPSS

Funds cannot be de-delegated from Special and Nursery Schools and PRUs for these services, but those schools will have the option to buy back these services.

All Maintained Schools:

- Statutory & Regulatory Duties (health & safety, internal audit, statutory accounting, pensions administration)

Academies and other non-maintained schools may be able to choose to buy into the above services, subject to provider agreement.

- 10.3 The primary schools in financial difficulty fund had £252k remaining at the end of 2018/19 and it was not topped up in 2019/20. Bids amounting to £71,000 have been approved in 2019/20, leaving the reserve at £181,000. The de-delegation of this service in 2020/21 would require the fund to be topped up to the previously agreed level of £250k.
- 10.4 Information about these services is reported to the Schools' Forum on an annual basis. The final decision on each de-delegation will be made by the relevant Schools' Forum Members for each phase on 20th January 2020. Schools may wish to contact their Schools' Forum representative direct to express their view, or respond as part of this consultation.

11. If you do not agree with any of the above services being de-delegated, please let us know with your reasons why.

11. Timetable

11.1 The timetable for determining the school formula and schools budgets for 2020/21 is as follows:

Date	Deadline	Who	Item
13.9.19		DfE	Operational guidance published
Oct to Nov 2019		DfE	NFF illustrative allocations published and APT issued
Oct to Nov 2019		LA	Modelling of new primary & secondary school formula (once received national formula rates from ESFA)
1.10.19	24.9.19	HFG	
16.10.19			School Admin (finance staff) briefing
14.10.19	8.10.19	SF	
Nov 2019		LA	High needs and Early years initial budget proposals worked on by officers
26.11.19	19.11.19	HFG	Review school formula options and make recommendation to Schools' Forum. Review high needs budget proposals.
3.12.19	27.11.19	Corporate Board	Draft formula proposals
9.12.19	3.12.19	SF	Agree formula for consultation with schools. To agree de-delegations and funding/criteria for additional funds. Need to consult and agree to any funding block transfers. Review central schools, high needs, and early years' budget proposals.
4.12.19	31.12.19		Consultation with schools
Mid Dec 2019		DfE	DSG funding allocations and APT containing census data for final formula issued
Mid Dec 2019		LA	Updating by officers of formula and the funding rates in light of actual DSG funding
19.12.19	12.12.19	Operations Board	Final formula proposal based on final funding allocation (subject to consultation responses).
8.1.20	2.1.20	HFG	Review funding formula consultation responses and final formula calculations and make a recommendation. Review budget proposals for central schools, high needs, and early years in light of funding announcement.
16.1.20	7.1.20	Executive	Approval of School Formula
20.1.20	14.1.20	SF	Review HFG recommendations, final calculations and final formula. Review budget proposals for central schools, high needs, and early years. Agree budget strategy and determine any further work.
21.1.20	21.1.20	LA	Deadline for submission of final APT to ESFA
21.1.20 to 18.2.20	18.2.20	LA	Finalisation by officers of central schools, high needs, and early year's budget proposals.
25.2.20	18.2.20	HFG	Review final proposals and make recommendation to Schools' Forum.
29.2.20	29.2.20	LA	Statutory deadline for providing primary and secondary maintained schools with funding allocation
9.3.20	3.3.20	SF	Agree final budgets.

Appendix E

Schools Funding Formula 2020/21 – Briefing & Consultation Document for Schools on a transfer of up to 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block

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 by **31st 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

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 be open from 10 December 2019 to 31 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 four alternative proposals; no transfer, transfer of 0.125%, 0.25% or 0.5%.

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 A 0.125% transfer would increase the Vulnerable Children Grant by £53,700, a 0.25% transfer would increase it by £125,400 and a 0.5% transfer 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 four proposals for consideration:

- (a) Transfer 0% of Schools Block to High Needs Block
- (b) Transfer 0.125% of Schools Block to High Needs Block
- (c) Transfer 0.25% of Schools Block to High Needs Block
- (d) Transfer 0.5% 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 proposals.

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

6. Consultation Question

12. Which of the following options would you support regarding a transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2020/21?

- (a) 0%
- (b) 0.125%
- (c) 0.25%
- (d) 0.5%

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

Strategic Priorities Supported:

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

- PC1: Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes**

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